

ON THE LANDING-PLACE OF  
ST. AUGUSTINE.

BY GEORGE DOWKER, F.G.S.

It may seem presumption in me to re-open the question of the landing-place of St. Augustine after the learned Antiquaries who have written on the subject, so that my essay requires a few words of introduction. I have been led to this enquiry because there seems no agreement among the writers as to the exact locality of the place called Ebbsfleet.

In Dean Stanley's *Historical Memorials of Canterbury*, at the conclusion of the chapter relating to St. Augustine (page 54), he reviews briefly the various places where the event is supposed to have taken place:—

“First, *Ebbsfleet*: for this the main reasons are, 1st, the fact that it was the usual landing-place in ancient Thanet, as shewn by the tradition that Hengist, St. Mildred, and the Danes came there (Lewis, page 83; Hasted, iv., page 289). 2nd, the fact that Bede's whole narrative emphatically lands Augustine in Thanet and not on the mainland. 3rd, the present situation with the local tradition (page 29).

“Secondly, The spot called the *Boarded Groin* (Lewis, page 83), also marked in the Ordnance Survey as the landing-place of the Saxons. But this must then have been covered by the sea.

“Third, *Stonar*, near Sandwich. Sandwich MS., in Boys's *Sandwich*, page 836. But this, even if not covered by the sea, must have been a mere island (Hasted, iv., page 585).

“Fourth, *Richborough*. *Ibid.*, page 838. But this was not in the Isle of Thanet, and the story is probably founded partly on Thorn's narrative (1242), which, by speaking of Retesburgh in *Insula Thaneti*, shews that he means the whole port, and partly on its having been actually the scene of the final debarcation on the mainland, as described in a previous

page." Following this summary Stanley gives us a Map of the Isle of Thanet at the time of the landing of St. Augustine.

In all the accounts of this event that reach us the historical facts have been supplemented and explained upon the views which the authors held respecting the physical, I might almost say geological, changes that have taken place on this coast since the events then referred to.

It has been my endeavour as a geologist to trace back the various changes that have taken place in the River Stour and Wantsum estuary for some years past. In the year 1880 I read a Paper before the East Kent Natural History Society, entitled "The Changes which have taken place in East Kent, in the coast and river valleys since the Roman occupation of Britain." This Paper appears to have influenced the British Association on Coast-erosion to ask me to undertake for them a detailed examination of this part of the coast, and report thereon; moreover, I was then furnished with maps and historical data to help me in the enquiry. I had, previously to this, while engaged in the excavations at Richborough, examined the surrounding marshes, and drawn a map which was published with the account in Vol. VIII. of the Proceedings of the Kent Archaeological Society.

Mr. Green, in the Preface to his book on *The Making of England* (page vii), writes: "Physical geography has still its part to play in the written records of human history to which it gives so much of its shape and form."

It is then to this physical geographical aspect of the question which I would now direct attention.

I have quite lately read a Paper before the East Kent Natural History Society on "The Mouth of the Stour." It will be seen that the ancient limits of the Isle of Thanet are inseparably bound up with this question.

After the most attentive study of the historical facts relating to Ebbsfleet, I am forced to the conclusion that little is to be gained from the documentary evidence, and that the chief reliance must be placed on the physical aspect of the question.

I must necessarily refer to the documentary evidence, which

has been translated and commented upon by so many writers, to which there is nothing of consequence to add. I shall, however, in quoting their statements make some remarks on the same as I proceed. Firstly, we find in 449, according to the Saxon Chronicle, "Hengist and Horsa, invited by Vortigern, King of the Britons, landed in Britain on the shore which is called Wippidsfleet." According to another reading, 449, "Vortigern invited the Angles thither, and they came to Britain in three ceols at the place called Wippidsfleet."

A.D. 465, "This year Hengist and Æsc fought against the Welsh near Wippidsfleet, and there slew twelve Welsh ealdormen, and one of their own Thanes was slain whose name was Wipped."\*

Mr. Green (*Making of England*) writes on the landing of the Jutes, 449—450: "A band of warriors was drawn to the shores of Britain by the usual pledge of land and pay, in three keels (so ran the legend of their conquest), and with their ealdormen Hengist and Horsa at their head they landed at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet." And he goes on to inform us, "the English Conquest as a whole rests on the authority of the English Chronicle; the annals of 449 to the end of the English conquest were probably embodied in the Chronicle in the middle of the ninth century."†

This foundation of the whole story is cloudy enough; according to it the landing-place was called after *Wipped*, one of the Jutish Thanes slain there. But we do not get any nearer to the exact locality. As these Jutes came at the invitation of Vortigern, King of Kent, who probably fixed his residence at Richborough, we should of course conclude that they came with their ships to the Rutupian Harbour, which was probably situated between Stonar and Richborough. And if the events of 449 were not recorded till the ninth century there is an additional source of uncertainty. Ebbsfleet, moreover, is not mentioned—it is a mere conjecture that Wippedsfleet meant Ebbsfleet, the latter term being supposed to be derived from ebb and flow.

\* Bede's *Ecclesiastical History and Saxon Chronicle*, Giles's edit.

† *Making of England*, note, page 28.

Now we come to St. Augustine's landing, A.D. 597. According to Bede, "On the east of Kent is the large Isle of Thanet containing, according to the English way of reckoning, 600 families, divided from the other land by the River Wantsum, which is about three furlongs over, and *fordable* only in two places, for both ends of it run into the sea. In this Island landed the servant of our Lord, Augustine, and his companions, being, as is reported, nearly forty men."\*

We learn from subsequent writers that the two fordable places mentioned by Bede are Sarre and Sandwich; fordable has been surmised to mean passable by boats. And we know that a ferry existed in early times at Sarre and one at Sandwich crossing the river to Stonar.

It will be seen that the exact spot where Augustine landed is not mentioned by Bede, only that it was in the Isle of Thanet. In a note to Dean Stanley's *Memorials of Canterbury* (page 53), with regard to Ebbsfleet in Thanet, he writes, "It must have been at this place, from the fact that it was the *usual* landing-place in ancient Thanet, as is shewn by the tradition that Hengist, St. Mildred, and the Danes came there, and the fact that Bede's whole narrative emphatically lands Augustine in Thanet and not on the mainland,"—the place indicated by Stanley being the spot where the farm called Ebbsfleet is situated. But Stonar, near Sandwich, would be equally in the Isle of Thanet, and close to Richborough, where, according to Thorn and Thomas Sprott,† Augustine and his companions landed, waiting in the Isle of Thanet until it pleased King Ethelbert to receive them: "Which thing the King hearing came shortly after into the Isle of Thanet unto his pallace or castle of Rupichester, situate nigh the old citty of Stonehore, and the King sitting under the cliff or rock whereon the castle is built, commanded Augustine with his followers to be brought before him."‡ A difficulty has been found in accepting this conclusion because Richborough is not in the Isle of Thanet,

\* *Ecclesiastical History*, Giles, page 37.

† *Catalogue of British History*, iii., page 208.

‡ See also Canon Jenkins in *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. VI., page lix.

and Thorn speaks of "Retesburgh in *Insula Thaneti*." But he was probably alluding to the general name of the port,\* or confused the first landing with the scene of the final debarcation on the mainland—for the Missionaries crossed the ferry to Richborough, and from thence advanced by the Roman road to Canterbury.

Tradition is not a very safe guide, especially when the traditions are at variance. The mention of St. Mildred as landing at Ippedsflete is recorded in Lambard and Thorn: "This woman (saith he) was so mightily defended with divine power that lying in a hot oven, three hours together, she suffered not of the flame; she was also endued with such godlike vertue, that coming out of France, the very stone whereon she first stepped at Ippedeflete in this Isle received the impression of her foot, and retained it for ever, having besides this property, that whithersoever you removed the same, it would within short time, and without help of man's hand, return to the former place again." †

The former landing-places were mostly fleets or streams leading into some large river—as we find in the names of Purfleet, Northfleet, Fleet Street, etc., names of like import on the Thames and suitable landing-places for the ships of those days. Ebbsfleet in this case would perhaps mean a stream leading into a river that ebbs and flows.

Formerly Ebbsfleet was supposed to be situated where the farm-house of that name stands, and is so placed in the Ordnance Maps of Thanet; of late the spot has been shifted to near "The Sportsman," and by a spring of water called St. Augustine's Well, chiefly on the representation of the late Mr. W. R. Bubb, who resided at Minster; he walked with me to the spot where the present memorial cross is erected, and explained his reasons for concluding that the landing must have been there, and not at or near the Ebbsfleet Farm, as usually represented. These reasons were chiefly the presence of a large oak tree that was said to

\* "The plural form of the name Rutupia suggests the existence in Portus Rutupensis of a second town, which would naturally be situated on the Eastern shore, as Richborough stood on the Western bank, of the estuary." (*Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XII., p. 330.) This town may have been Stonar.

† Lambard, *Perambulation of Kent*, page 100.

have formerly grown there, and the proximity of the place to Cottington-field, which he thought a corruption of Godman-field.\* The said oak tree referred to is mentioned as coinciding with the account given in Lewis's *History of Thanet*. The latter, quoting Bede, states: "Some days after the King himself came into the Island, and mistrusting they might use some magical arts to deceive him, appointed to give them audience in the open air, *under an oak which grew about the middle of the Island, which tree the German Pagans had in the highest veneration.*" It will be seen at once on reference to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* that this is a *mis-quotation*. Nothing is said in Bede about an oak. The account of this great oak by Mr. W. Bubb is rather strange, for at the present time the oak is quite a rare tree in the Isle of Thanet. Boys, in his general view of the agriculture of the Island of Thanet, quoted by Hasted, vol. iv., page 292, states: "The timber growing in this Island is in general elm, which in the lower part of it, about Minster and Monkton, grows to a good height. Just by the house of Powcies farm there was till lately a small grove of oaks, the only one in the Island, but the unthriving state of them shewed how unkind both soil and situation were to them."†

It must strike every one who reads any modern account of Ebbsfleet how all the writers draw their conclusions from the supposed configuration of the county in early times, and as far as I am able to learn they possessed very small ability to comprehend geographical and physical forces. I need not repeat instances, for they appear in all the writers of the last, and some even of this, century.

Mr. Green, in his *Making of England*, speaking of the Jutes in Thanet, writes: "Their quarters in Thanet would satisfy the followers of Hengist, who thus lay encamped within sight of their fellow pirates in the Channel, and who felt themselves secure against the treachery which often proved fatal to the Germans that Rome called to her aid, by *the broad inlet* that parted their camp from the mainland. Everything in the character of the ground *confirms* the

\* See Bubb's *History* (in the Thanet Guide), Hutchings and Crowsley.

† Hasted, folio, vol. iv.

tradition which fixes this spot at Ebbsfleet, for great as the physical changes of the county have been since the fifth century, they have told little on its features. At the time of Hengist's landing a broad *inlet* of the sea parted Thanet from the mainland of Britain, for the marshes which stretch from Reculver and Sandwich were then, as they remained for centuries, a wide sea-channel hardly less than a mile wide."\*

Again, Stanley writes: † "You all remember the high ground where the white chalk cliffs of Ramsgate suddenly end in *Pegwell Bay*. Look from that high ground over the level flat which lies between these cliffs and the point where they begin again in *St. Margaret's* cliffs beyond Walmer. The level ground which stretches between the two cliffs was then in great part covered with water. . . . Moreover at that remote age Sandwich Haven was not yet choked up, so that all the ships which came from France and Germany on their way to London sailed up into this large port, and through the river out at the other side by Reculver; or if they were going to land in Kent, at Richborough or the mainland, or at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet."

When any of these writers give us an authority for this statement it invariably turns on Bede's *History* and the map in Battely's *Antiquitates Rutupinæ*. I have been much puzzled to account for the map in Battely, seeing that he gives us no description of it in the letterpress, but rather argues against such a supposition; but I believe I have at last cleared up the mystery. Battely's *Antiquitates Rutupinæ* was published some time after his decease, the first edition in 1711 and the second in 1745, in which the map I allude to is found. In a *History of the Isle of Thanet*, by John Lewis, 1723, and from a Paper he read before the Society of Antiquaries, October 11, 1744, it appears he then undertook to shew that Battely was wrong in his account of the boundaries of the ancient port of Richborough, and he goes on to state that the mouth of the estuary extended from Ramsgate cliff to Walmer.

This map is again copied into Hasted's *History of Kent*,

\* *Making of England*, page 29.

† *Memorials of Canterbury*, page 29.

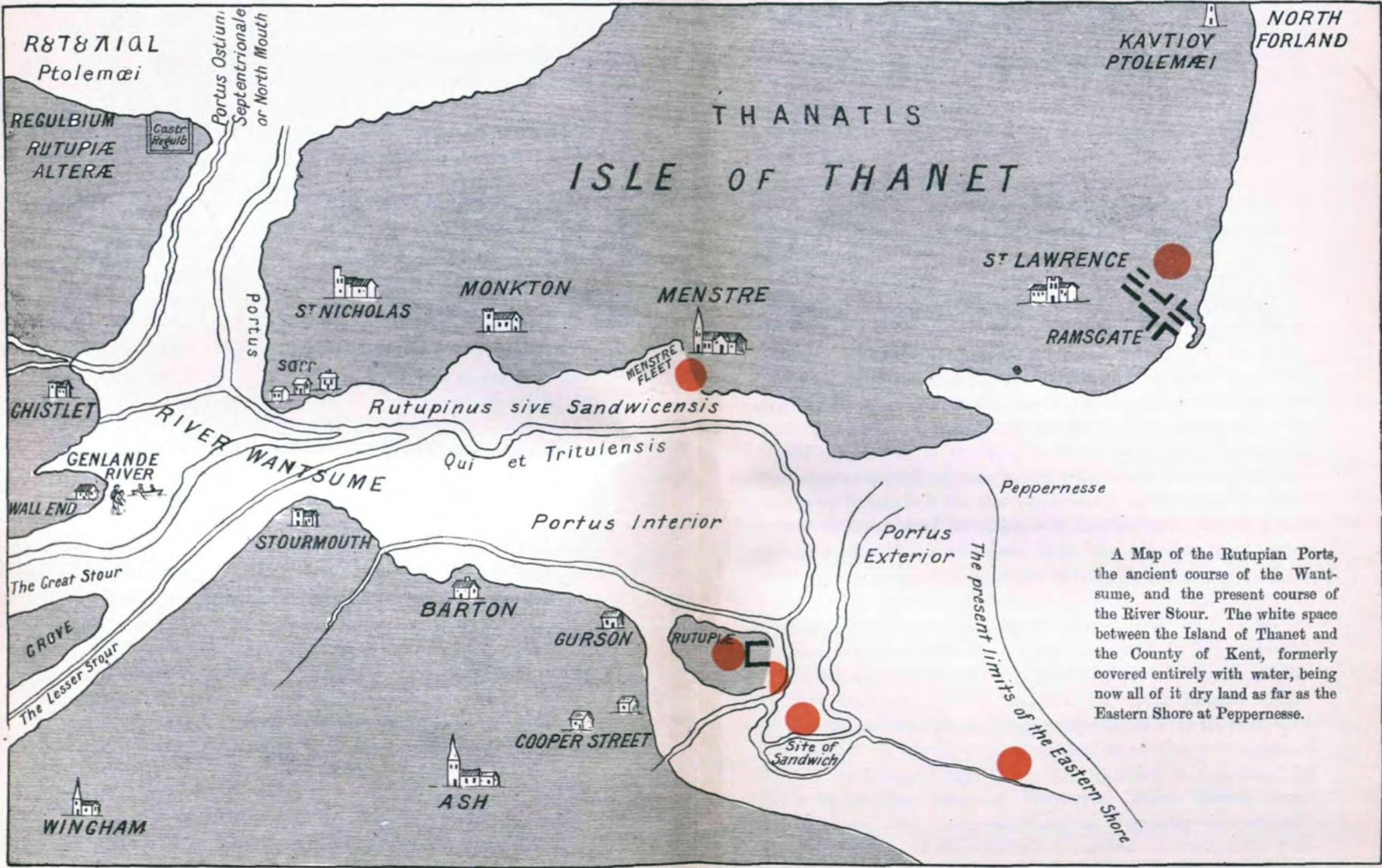
vol. iv., pages 288-9, and up to the present time it seems generally to have been received as the true explanation of what must have been the state of the ancient Portus Rutupensis. With regard to Mr. Lewis's quotations they are often erroneous, his description of Bede's account of the Wantsum being a case in point.

The map in Battely's *History* is not taken from any more ancient source than that of his own time, in the last century; it is merely copied from a map giving the outlines of Thanet and the mainland, omitting altogether Sandwich and Stonar, which he supposed to be beneath the waters of the Wantsum; and he omits to give us any historical or physical data for his broad assertions. It represents the sea-level as then so greatly in excess of the present high-water mark as to overflow lands that are now more than thirty feet above Ordnance datum line, making the sea occupy all the marshland from Deal to Minster. But I cannot, after a study of the physical changes and actual evidences presented to a geological observer at the present time, accept this interpretation. And when I enquire into the historical evidences I do not find one *single fact* to support such a conclusion. Although it is stated again and again that Ebbsfleet was the usual landing-place in the Isle of Thanet in ancient times, the only instances adduced are the landing of Hengist and Horsa, the landing of St. Augustine, St. Mildred, and the Danish invaders; and the locality of this Ebbsfleet is equally obscure.

With regard to the supposed presence of this great estuary, with a mouth opening from Walmer to Pegwell Bay (a distance, remember, of 8 miles), and 2 miles wide between the mainland and Thanet inside Richborough, opening out into the mouth of the Thames with a width of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile—such an inlet, washed by the waves of the Straits of Dover, must have left behind it evidences of its presence in cliffs along its entire length; and where are they? Then it must have left inside some sort of beach; where is it? Then the bed of this sea must be strewn with shells of the molluscs and other denizens of the sea, of which we find no evidence whatever except a few cockle-shells and occasional shells of

IN BATTELY

NORTH FORLAND



A Map of the Rutupian Ports, the ancient course of the Wantsume, and the present course of the River Stour. The white space between the Island of Thanet and the County of Kent, formerly covered entirely with water, being now all of it dry land as far as the Eastern Shore at Peppernesse.

MAP COPIED FROM HASTED'S "HISTORY OF KENT,"

With red dots added where Roman remains have been met with. Cliffsend is not given in the Map, but its position is where the black dot is placed.

brackish-water origin. The tradition about the famed Rutupian oysters will not bear investigation.

And so far as the relative height of the water in Roman times is concerned, we have evidence that the foundation of a Roman house was cut through when the South-Eastern Railway was laid below the Castrum, and but little *above* the present level of the water in the river close by at high tide. And it is easy to shew from other parts of the coast that at the period of the Roman occupation of Britain the sea rose no higher than it does now; nay, the evidence is rather the other way, viz.: that the land stood relatively higher than at present.

Such an estuary as I have pictured must have, in the Roman period, presented at low tide a series of mud-flats on either side of the main river, which were only covered by water at high tide, and some portions only at spring tides. Through these mud-flats the spring water from the chalk hills of Thanet (which dip down to the Marsh) would find their way into the main river as fleets. At high tide they would be covered by the sea, in this case exactly resembling the present mouth of the Stour, which runs across Pegwell Bay, and is marked for the purpose of navigation by poles driven into the mud on either side of the river. Such, I take it, must have been the case with the Minster fleet, which received the greater part of the spring waters from the chalk hills.

Putting aside then all these hypothetical notions of the physical changes that have been supposed to have existed, let us see what sort of historical evidences we have in respect to this estuary. First, Solinus, the first Roman writer who mentions the Isle of Thanet, says that: "It is washed by the Straits of Gaul, and separated from the continent of Britain by a *small estuary*." The estuary is described by Bede under the name of Wantsum, which Saxon name clearly has the same meaning as "greatly decreasing" has in English. Although it is described as about three furlongs in breadth, we are not informed where this is measured from, and taking the present marsh to represent the course of the estuary this would only be true at its widest part, and

I may add at spring tides; that it was but a shallow estuary for most part is also apparent by Bede's adding "and fordable only in two places."

The Roman writers on the Portus Rutupensis, by way of description, term it "Stationem Britannicæ tranquillam,"\* quiet or calm station or bay for ships, as stated by Somner.† Battely writes: "The Isle of Thanet, opposite the coast of Kent, forms such a haven as Virgil describes:—

' Sheltered from the rolling sea  
An Island forms a port.' "

The advent of Theodosius is thus described. When he had come to Bononia, which is separated from the opposite coast by a narrow channel—where the sea is subject to transitions from violent tempests and tides to the smoothest calms and safe navigation—he crossed over, and arrived at Rutupicæ, a *safe* and quiet station opposite.‡

Mr. Battely, quoting from Giraldus Cambrensis, writes: "The *outer haven* of Sandwich, which agrees with my supposition, for the outer haven was that part of the river which lay between Sandwich and the sea; the inner was that which extended from Sandwich as far as Reculver, and these two together formed the haven of Rutupicæ."§

I may note that in the map accompanying Battely these are represented by Portus interior and Portus exterior, but as the map omits the Stonar beach, which, as I shall shew further on, shuts off the waters of the exterior from those of the interior by a barrier opening only between Stonar and Sandwich, this division must have been absurd, no division being shewn in the map between them; but by placing the Stonar beach in its proper position this division would be quite apparent, and it would also account for the Rutupian harbour being the quiet harbour that is represented by the Roman writers.

I will now draw attention to Stonar. In the last 6-inch

\* Ammianus Marcellinus Rutupicæ.

† *Roman Ports and Forts in Kent*, page 3.

‡ See Roach Smith's *Antiquities of Richborough, Reculver, and Lynton*, page 8.

§ Battely, abridged, page 10.

Ordnance Map we find it recorded on the piece of ground just behind the present residence, "Roman coins, urns, swords, axes, portions of armour, and human remains found here."

The site of the town destroyed in the reign of Richard II. is given, and it is called the supposed *Lapis Tituli*. I will not presume here to argue the vexed question as to the place called by Nennius *Lapis Tituli*, which is by many learned historians described as at Stonar in Thanet. Somner would have it that this place was at Folkestone; but I believe he stands alone in this supposition. I may mention as my authorities Nennius, Camden, and Usher. The name of the place has been variously described as Stonar, Estanore, Eastanores, and Scorastan.

I have previously related that it was one of the reputed landing-places of St. Augustine and his followers in A.D. 597. Hasted, folio, vol. iv., page 384, following Battely, states: "Here Tuskill the Dane is said to have landed in the year 1009, and to have fought the English and afterwards to have burnt the town, which was however not long after rebuilt, and notwithstanding the increasing prosperity of its opposite rival remained a port some time after the Norman Conquest. In 1216, Lewis, Dauphin of France, landed here. In 1350, King Edward III. lodged here in Stonar, waiting to embark at Sandwich for foreign parts." In the same year there was a great inundation of the sea for the space of three miles on from Cliffsend to Stonar.

In the reign of Richard II., A.D. 1385, the French landing here first plundered, and afterwards burnt, the town. The Rev. Canon Scott Robertson, in Vol. XII., *Archæologia Cambiana*, page 330, in an essay on the Port of Stonar, identifies this place with the ancient Lundenwic, and I think with great show of reason, and he concludes "that Estanore or Stonore existed centuries before Sandwich was heard of." If this is the case, the early arrivals at the Port of Sandwich, which most authors have claimed as the ancient *Lundenwic*, must be shifted to Stonar. At any rate Stonar as a port and town existed at such a remote date that it precludes altogether the notion that it was covered by the

waters of the sea at the Roman period, as represented in the map I have previously alluded to. Another fact shews that at the time of the Roman occupation of Britain, not only did Stonar exist as dry land, but that part of the sand-hills between Sandown Castle and Sandwich were in existence. I allude to the discovery of Roman remains and of a hoard of Roman coins there. Mr. Roach Smith mentions this discovery in his *Retrospection*, vol. i., pages 2, 7.\* I have of late had the position of these Roman vestiges pointed out to me, and have seen them with Mr. Manser of Deal, near the Rifle Butts in the sand-hills of that town.

I have sought in vain for any authentic notices of the landing of ships at the spot indicated by the traditional Ebbsfleet. In Canon Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places*, under the head of Ebbsfleet, he writes: "Ebbsfleet, which is now half a mile from the shore, was a port in the twelfth century, and its name indicates the former existence of a tidal channel at the spot." On writing to Canon Isaac Taylor I find from his reply that the Abbey of Minster in Thanet is supposed to mark the site of Ebbsfleet, the traditional landing-place of St. Augustine in 596. But he adds, "All the traditions must be taken for what they are worth." He referred me to Freeman's *Historic Town Series*, under Sandwich and the Cinque Ports; but states that in Freeman's own book there is much nonsense about Ebbsfleet, a "name which merely implies that the channel which made Thanet an isle was tidal."

The mention of the Minster fleet as a port appears in Thorn's *Chronicle*, under date of 1242, which is recorded in Boys's *Collections for a History of Sandwich*, page 658: "The prior and chapter of Christ Church, Canterbury, entered into a composition this year with the abbot and convent of St. Augustine, respecting their respective possessions at Sandwich, Stonar, and other places in that neighbourhood. The prior and his chapter grant to the abbot and monks a free passage by Sandwich river to Menstre flete, reserving to themselves their maritime dues from such vessels

\* Also *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. ii., page 259.

as shall cast anchor in the said river before the fleet, whether to load or unload, or do any other business there. In the fleet itself they will not for the future claim any jurisdiction, but they reserve to themselves and their tenants to be as free from duties there as heretofore, and stipulate that the abbot, etc., shall not wantonly fill up the said fleet.”

Again, in A.D. 1313, Mr. Boys transcribes from Dr. Farmer's Manuscripts the following notice of the said fleet: “A presentment was made at the same session, that the water-course called Minster flete used to run from a branch of the river to the village of Minster, to which place vessels resorted with various kinds of merchandize to the great convenience of the whole country; that the King took tonnage and his other customs in the said flete, till Roger, abbot of St. Augustine's, the predecessor of the present abbot, stopped up the water-course to the King's damage and the detriment of the whole county (we find in 1290 the monks of Christ Church had given up to King Edward their Port of Sandwich, and all their rights and customs with certain exceptions). The abbot alleged that the current of the said flete ran through his own ground, and that on account of a raging tide and an extraordinary inundation of the river over his ground, his predecessor expecting his lands in the neighbourhood below would be drowned, by which he would have lost the profit of about a thousand acres of his land, that his said predecessor therefore had filled up the flete, as he had a right to do, it being upon his own ground, and agreeable to the custom of the country, and what was usually done in marshy and fenny places for the preservation of cultivated grounds. The jury find that the prior of Christ Church used formerly to receive custom from every vessel and boat anchoring before the mouth of the said flete in the stream, and without the soil of the abbot, in right of his manor of Sandwich, then belonging to the prior, which custom was annually worth half a mark.\* That the flete is part of the King's stream running over the soil of the abbot to the abbot's town of Minster, and used to be so wide that two coggles might turn

\* See Boys's *Sandwich*, page 666 sqq.

therein clear of one another, that before the filling up of the said flete the abbots made walls for the defence of their lands, which walls had been since neglected; and that no hazard or loss could accrue to the said abbot with respect to the lands aforesaid by opening the flete, provided the walls were made as good as they used to be. They find further, that after the flete was stopped the manor of Sandwich came into the King's hands in exchange for other tenements; after which the King never took any custom in the place mentioned without the flete; and that instead of carrying their things by water through the flete to the town of Minster, the people of the county cannot now come near it by four miles, by which they are injured to the amount of £15 a year. And lastly that the flete should be repaired and made navigable to the town of Minster."

The description of this Minster flete will serve to shew how, up to the thirteenth century, the Sandwich navigable rights over Minster had been maintained, and it must in previous times have been the *usual* landing-place—meantime we read of no mention of Ebbsfleet or any other fleet connected by the ocean, except through the Sandwich Haven. It is true that in the annals of Sandwich we find (in a controversy between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the monks of Christ Church on the one part, and the abbot of St. Augustine on the other, concerning the jurisdiction over the Port of Sandwich, and the maritime customs on both sides of the river) *Marksfleet* mentioned in the early part of the twelfth century, and also the men of Sandwich burning a water-mill belonging to the abbot of St. Augustine at *Hepesflete*. These two fetes were probably between Minster and Sevenscore, or where the Ebbsfleet Farm is now situate, and it shews that the fetes were small streams running through the marsh. We have not the slightest historical evidence of any great landing at any other place than the Sandwich Haven, or Lundenwic, or the Portus Rutupensis of former years. As early as the seventh century we have notices of landings in Sandwich Haven; both Danes and French came there, and the Danish landings in Thanet and Minster must have been from *within* the estuary. At that time a part of

it was a much deeper channel, through which ships made their way out to the north mouth by Reculver, but we have no reason to suppose that the whole of the marsh was occupied by these deep waters, and the mention of these *fleets* is suggestive of the shallow water that was found on either side of the main course of the river, the fleets by their running water opening up a channel to the land. So the quotations by authors of the ships of the Danish invaders sailing through the estuary by no means proves that it was a broad channel extending from Cliffsend in Thanet to beyond Walmer, or even from the Port of Sandwich to Minster.

With respect to Stonar, Lewis supposes it to have been formerly an island, quoting Kilburne, who states : "It was antiently compassed with the water, then called Stour, and by the Britains the Doure."\* He concludes that in Bede's time the Isle of Thanet must have been much larger than at present, notwithstanding the addition of Stonar to it. I can find, however, no other authority for the assertion that Stonar was an island, and there seems to be insuperable objections to such a supposition. First, Bede makes no mention of two mouths to the south, as in this case there must have been, nor do we anywhere find any record of the stopping-up of an opening between Cliffsend and Stonar. If the waters of the Wantsum had originally two outlets—one between Stonar and Sandwich and the other between the assumed island of Stonar and Cliffsend, Thanet—we have no historical notices of this closing of the latter outlet; nor does it seem at all likely that it, being the more direct cut for the water to the sea, should have forsaken its course for the more circuitous way round by Richborough and Sandwich.

Kilburne states that Stonar belonged anciently to the Abbey of St. Augustine, which by the grant of King Henry I. had a fair holden yearly five days before and after the translation of St. Augustine (being the 26th day of May), but long since discontinued.

I have now exhausted all the historical notices of any

\* *Survey of Kent*, page 260.

importance in support of the theory of the broad estuary of the Wantsum (at least from the earliest Saxon period), and found no ground for the supposition that St. Augustine and his followers took any route but the usual entrance to the Port of Richborough, and in that case the suggestion of Sprott that he landed in Thanet at Stonar has the greatest claim to our acceptance.

The present position of the monument erected to commemorate St. Augustine's landing may seem to some to offer a solution of the difficulty, inasmuch as it is supposed to have been in the little bay that existed beyond Cliffsend that the landing took place; but of course this necessitates our abandoning the notion of any flete in the case. If this be so, I cannot conceive that a worse place could have been selected; we must remember that at the present time at low-water an immense expanse of mud-flat is met with, extending to a distance of one mile at least from the shore, and it is only at high-water at spring-tide that the sea approaches the shore, and is so shallow that a common rowing boat cannot land. If St. Augustine with his ships for forty followers had chosen this spot he certainly would not have landed on the "mainland," nor in the Isle of Thanet, but most assuredly in the sea of Pegwell Bay.

We must not assume that the landing-place of Hengist and his followers, or of St. Augustine and his, was a matter of chance; in the first case we are expressly told (as is recorded by Green in his *Making of England*, page 31), "The Jutes who landed under Hengist landed not as enemies but as friends, and their place of landing was the result of a settled design. In the first year that followed after their landing Jutes and Britons fought side by side." The fortress of Richborough still remained in the hands of the British troops. Here under shelter of the place rested the British fleet; the far-famed Rutupine Port was here, the entrance to this tranquil harbour was by Stonar and Sandwich; and everything points to the conclusion that the landing of the Jutes in Thanet was at Stonar and not Pegwell Bay.

The Saxon pirates had again and again invaded Thanet in the past. They made their sudden descents upon the island

at Margate and Kingsgate, at Broadstairs and Ramsgate, in all probability on these occasions coming and going "like a thief in the night." The caves and hiding-places in the woods in Thanet testify to the terror in which the inhabitants dwelt of these pirates, who came in flat-bottomed boats propelled by oars. In Vol. XI. of *Archæologia Cantiana* I gave an account of a cave near Margate where in all probability the Roman-British inhabitants of Thanet had hidden themselves from these invaders. Under these circumstances, the Saxon landed at any part of the coast where the cliffs were cut through so that they might gain access to the land; but we must not conclude in this case that there was any usual landing-place, nor would this Cliffsend Bay present any facility for their purpose.

In the case of St. Augustine we are told that he landed on the spot where Hengist had landed more than a century before. His coming was preceded by negotiations with Bertha and with the King himself; and, if we conclude that Ethelbert had a palace or fortress at Richborough, nothing would have been more reasonable than to ask St. Augustine to remain at Stonar in the Isle of Thanet waiting his advent to his castle at Richborough.

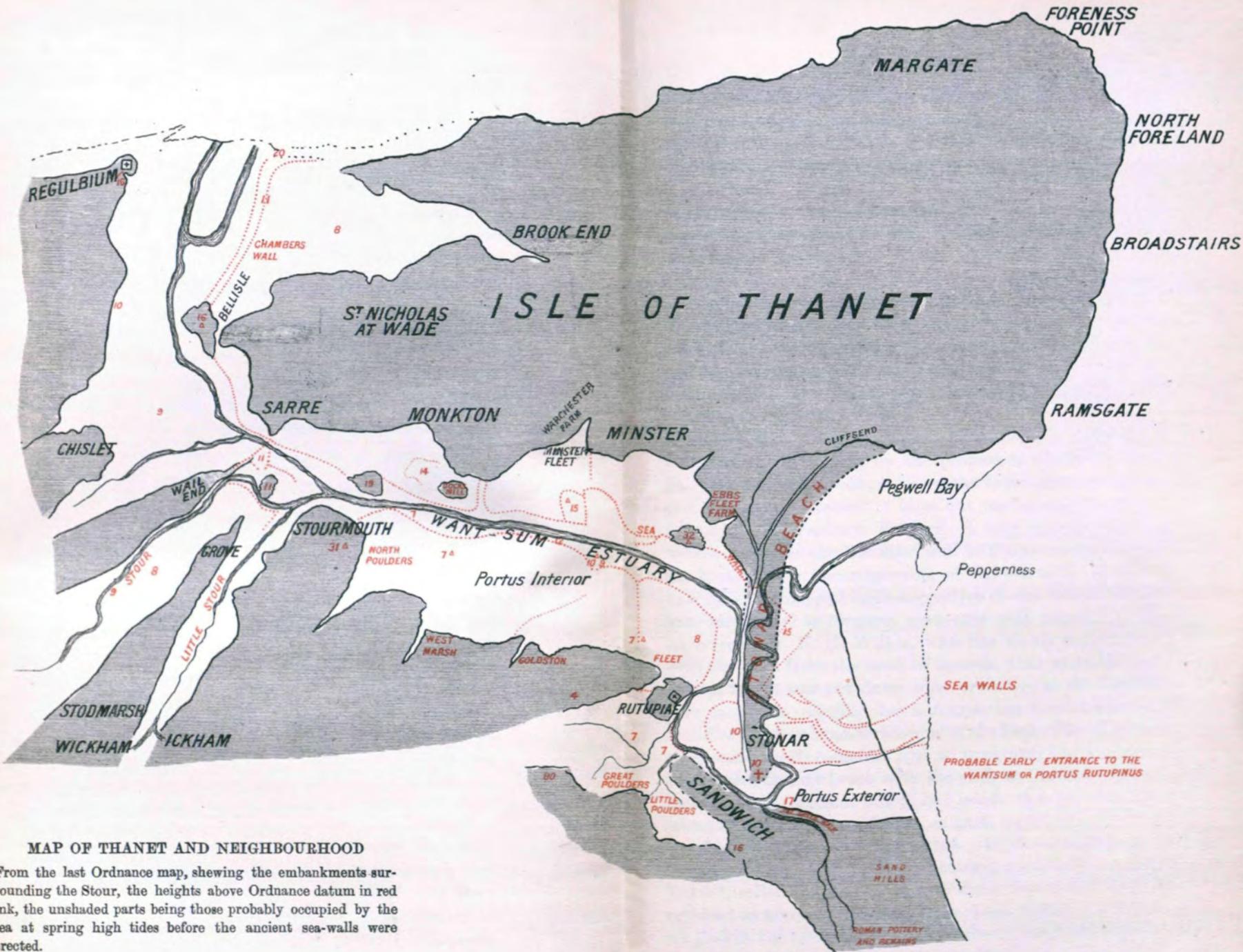
If local tradition is to be our guide, not only does it point to Stonar as the landing-place of St. Augustine in Thanet, but that he went from thence to Richborough; and Leland informs us that in his time it was considered a portion of the Isle of Thanet—that the Holy Missionary, on leaving the ship, trod on a stone which retained the print of his foot as though it had been clay, that this stone was preserved in a chapel dedicated to St. Augustine after his canonization, and yearly, on the anniversary of its deposit, crowds of people flocked thither to pray for and receive health (see C. Roach Smith's *Antiquities of Richborough*, pages 160, 161, and Planche's *Corner of Kent*, pages 28, 29).

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## THE PHYSICAL CHANGES.

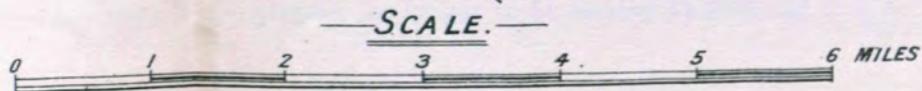
First of all then we have found that the great tongue of low-land reaching from Cliffsend in Thanet to the ancient town of Stonar near Sandwich must have been caused by a very ancient beach, which formerly existed along the *entire distance*, and of which we have evidences in scattered portions which have not been cut away by the bendings of the River Stour, or the Sandwich Haven as it is here termed, between Sandwich and Pepperness. This Stonar beach shews evidences that it had travelled from north to south, or from Thanet Cliffs towards Sandwich; that it was the result of marine currents that flowed at the time it was formed in exactly an opposite direction to the sea currents of the present time and for many ages past, which have driven the Walmer beach from south to north. This change in the direction of the currents was probably due to the widening of the English Channel between Dover and Calais, which has caused the great tidal wave that enters the Channel from the south and west to prevail to a greater extent over the opposite tidal wave that enters from the North Sea, and consequently the place where these two currents meet and neutralize one another has been shifted more northward. So that to go back to the time when the Stonar beach was formed we must date back to the Pre-historic period. Now all the historic evidences we have met with point to the same conclusion, that the Stonar beach and its connection with the Isle of Thanet date back previous to the Roman occupation of Britain. This great natural barrier not only kept the sea from coming directly into the Wantsum Estuary, but compelled the retreating exit-waters of the river to make a circuitous course round by Sandwich.

A study of the most ancient authentic maps that have been made from time to time shew quite conclusively that the Sandwich Haven, or the mouth of the Stour, has been progressing more and more northward, so that whereas in the reign of Queen Elizabeth it had been somewhere opposite the Stonar Cut, and pointed out eastward, it has from the



**MAP OF THANET AND NEIGHBOURHOOD**

From the last Ordnance map, shewing the embankments surrounding the Stour, the heights above Ordnance datum in red ink, the unshaded parts being those probably occupied by the sea at spring high tides before the ancient sea-walls were erected.



shore-drift been directed more and more westward and northward, as we find in each subsequent map. Moreover we find outside this ancient beach that the bay that existed had been in some places so far silted-up that the mud-flats had been covered with grass. It seems that from time to time extra high tides and storms had in places swept over the beach, and at or about the mouth of the river there had been considerable removal of ancient beach and mud-flat so as to endanger the level or marsh-land from Canterbury to the sea. Such appears to have been the great inundation in A.D. 1364. It appears probable that soon after this artificial walls were erected to exclude the sea near the place called *Hippesfleete*, and beyond, and a bank called the *boarded groin* may have been erected. It was this place that Lewis first pointed out as the position of Ebbsfleet.

Seeing that either the name of Ebbsfleete, or Hippelsfleete, is recorded as existing on the properties of the monks of St. Augustine at Stonar, between the latter place and Cliffsend, I have endeavoured to trace out the connection of this fleete with the Wantsum Estuary. I may premise that the wall described as the Ebbsfleet wall in Thanet is described in the books of the Commissioners of Sewers as in the *Stone Lees* valley, a name at once suggestive of the beach which I have mentioned as formerly connected with Stonar. And I learn from Mr. K. H. Wilkie, who has kindly furnished me with the data from the Book of Sewers, that when the most distant target was put down some years ago at the Cliffsend rifle range, in digging for a foundation *beach-stones* were found twelve feet beneath the mud of the Bay. The position of the stones exactly coincides with an imaginary line connecting the present Stonar beach with the cliffs at Cliffsend, where I had traced the ancient beach, and inside this line the beach seems to have been swept away in part, especially near where the "boarded groin" was erected. In the Commission of Sewers' Books, 1605, "we find Ebbsfleet wall next the cliffs of Thanet, called the groyne, in very dangerous condition to be repaired as heretofore by the Stone Lees Valley." In 1652 we find in the same books: "New sluice made through the groyne; no longer to be scotted to Minster." So it seems

it had previously been scotted to Minster. In the map and survey of the Town and Port of Sandwich, made by C. Labelye for Sir George Oxenden, the River Stour is represented as having a branch that runs parallel to the Haven. This map was made in 1735. It may be that this branch of the Stour is not correctly drawn, but we know that the Stour has made several turns in its course, and that before the Stonar Cut was made in 1735 a stream did enter the river here and in the Minster level.

Lewis and others have represented the beach wall between Cliffsend and Ebbsfleet Lane as an artificial wall made by the monks of St. Augustine, and in proof of the assertion quote the Writ of Inquiry, issued in 1280 at the suit of the Abbot, who sets forth "that he has a wall of sand and stone between Stanore and Clivesend, by which his manor of Menstre is protected from the rage of the sea, and that the people of Sandwich by force dig up the materials and carry them away in their boats, and will not suffer the Abbot's officers to distrain in a legal way for the trespass, but even bring armed men in their boats for the purpose of preventing such distress. And that he has a marsh belonging to himself in right of his barony between Stanore and Hippelesflete, into which the people of Sandwich come without leave, and against the peace and consent of the said Abbot dig the soil and carry it away in their boats by force to Sandwich," etc.\* MS. *penes* Ric. Farmer.

This proves nothing more than (as I contend) that the Stonar beach was continuous to Cliffsend. The walls erected by the Abbots of Augustine were not made of sand and beach, but of good stiff clay, and the wall alluded to was the wall or beach cast up by the sea, and the Sandwich people took it as a common right, even as is done by people at the present time with these sea-shore accumulations.

Moreover, if we examine the said wall which now remains by the turnpike road near "The Sportsman," we shall see it is a natural littoral accumulation of beach and sand, which extends inland beyond the turnpike road, and from its uneven aspect appears to have been quarried for

\* Quoted in Boys's *Collection*, page 660.

material. At Stone Lees the remains of a beach are visible, but it extends nearly to Stonar, and (where absent) it is evidently owing to the encroachments of the winding mouth of the river. Nearer Stonar the beach may be seen to have been cut through at every bend of the river.

If my reasons are cogent, and I believe they are, they prove firstly, that the most probable place where St. Augustine landed was at Stonar; secondly, that if it were near Minster the way thither must have been round between Stonar and Sandwich; thirdly, it could not possibly have been near where the present monument is erected to commemorate the event; and fourthly, the map which appeared in Battely's *Antiquitates Rutupinæ*, and has been copied into Hasted, gives a most erroneous notion of the state of the Rutupian port.

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#### DESCRIPTION OF THE MAPS.

1. Copy of Battely's and Hasted's Maps, with red dots shewing where Roman remains have been met with.

2. Map of Thanet and neighbouring parts of Kent, from Ordnance Map of 1892, with parts of the Stonar beach restored from the fragmentary portion, with the Ordnance datum levels, and shewing the river and sea banks in red ink.