

“THE VALLEY OF HOLMESDALE.”

ITS EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT.

BY CAPT. H. W. KNOCKER.

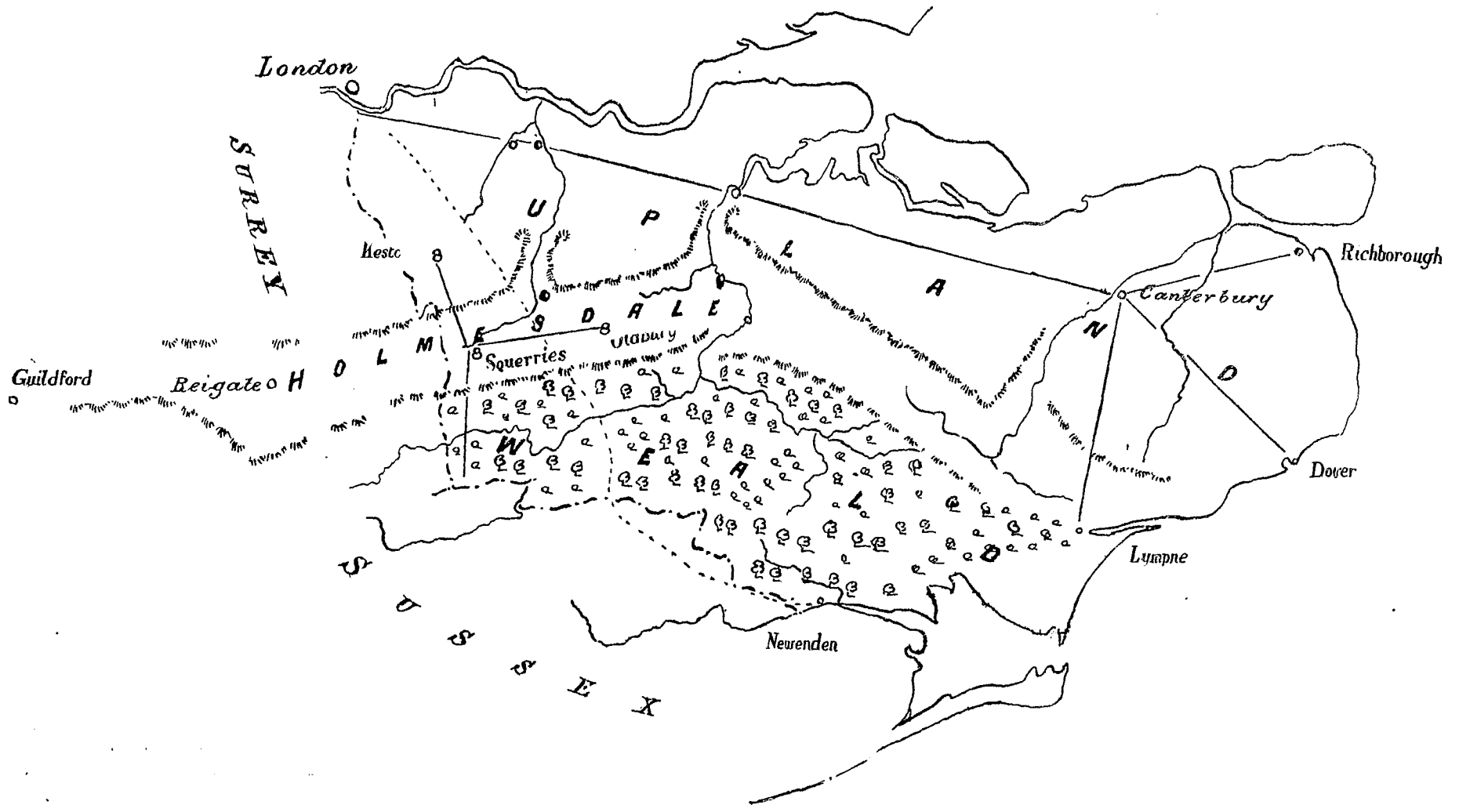
THE Vale of Holmesdale is not confined to the county of Kent, its limits being commonly reputed to be the Castle of Guildford to the west and the Castle of Rochester to the east, the chalk hills forming its northern boundary and the sandstone ridge separating its southern confines from the Weald. The motto of our county indicates our claim to have never yet been conquered, but that of the Holmesdale goes one better, indicating that we never shall be.

The sentiment is perpetuated in the old rhyme, the second half of which is adopted in recent years by the Borough of Reigate as its motto: “The Vale of Holmesdale. Never wonne nor never shale.”

As to the name, Lambard, writing in 1570, refers to Reigate Castle “which Alfrede de Beverley calleth Holme, and which the Countrie people do yet terme the Castle of Holmesdale. This tooke the name of the Dale wherein it standeth, which is large in quantity, extending it selfe a great length into Surrey, and Kent also, and was (as I coniecture) at the first called Holmesdale, by reason that it is (for the most part) Convallis, a plaine valley, running between two hils, that be replenished with stoare of wood: for so much the very word (Holmesdale) it selfe importeth.”

East of Rochester there is, apparently, no record of the name being attached to the geographical continuation of the same formation, but as far as West Kent is concerned we have from an early date three natural divisions: first, The Upland; secondly, The Weald; and thirdly, The

No. 1.
KENT.
Pre-Saxon Physical Features.



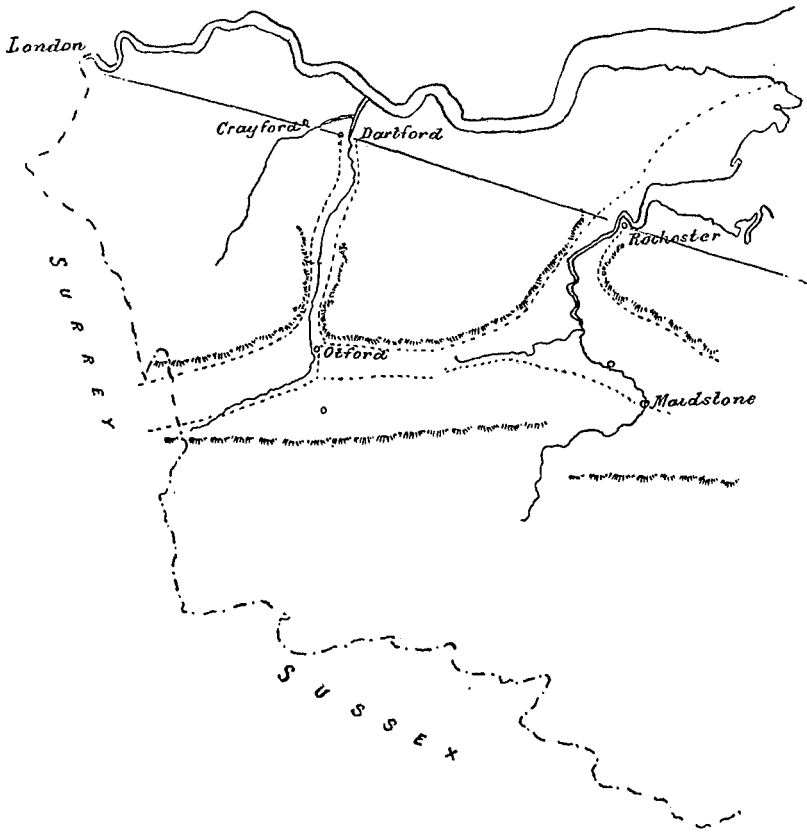
Holmesdale, lying between the other two. East Kent contents itself with the simpler division of Upland and Weald. Diagram No. 1 makes this clear.

The principle of communal responsibility for individual action was approved and enforced by our Saxon forefathers at a very early date, and this has a most important bearing on our subject, and it is proposed in this article to trace the evolution of the Holmesdale, and to trace it by the help primarily of the basis of population, upon which it is generally admitted our county was first subdivided by our Saxon forefathers, who desired to give effect to this principle. As a natural sequence of this enquiry, we have the deductions to be drawn from the relative positions of the places from which such subdivisions drew their nomenclature.

Such an enquiry must practically be limited to the period covered by existing documentary evidence, and before touching upon any evidence so comparatively recent as the records in question, a short reference to the earlier surviving local indications of man's handiwork may not be out of place.

In the progress of the inhabitants of any given area four stages can usually be noted. We have first the savage huntsman, secondly the pastoral herdsman, thirdly the agricultural ploughman, and fourthly the manufacturing artisan. At the date of the Roman occupation we find that while East Kent was already in the third, West Kent was hardly out of the second, and the Weald had not emerged from the first; no part of the county had yet reached the fourth stage. The development of our county has been largely a question of accessibility. Forming, as it does, the nearest point of communication between England and the rest of Europe, we should readily expect to find the Upland intersected, as it in fact is, by a great highway running from west to east and thence to the coast. In Diagram No. 1 this highway is marked in a firm line. It will be noticed that it passes outside and to the north of the Holmesdale Valley, and runs from London to Canterbury, and there breaks up into three branches, communica-

Nº 2.
THE HOLMESDALE.
Some Pre-Norman Roads.



ting with what were originally the three principal harbours or landing-places at the eastern extremity of our county—Richborough, Dover and Lympne. The reasons for this arrangement are excellently set forth in Mr. Belloc's book, *The Old Road*, though many of his deductions are open to question. This road and its three branches were doubtless improved, if not originally constructed by the Romans. As regards the Weald itself, the majority of the roads or droveways ran due north and south, the object doubtless being to reach as soon as possible the greater highway in the Upland running east and west.

But somewhere in a south-easterly direction lay one other route or droveway, traversing the Wealden forest and giving more direct access from the Newenden and Rye district to London. This road is also roughly indicated by a dotted line on Diagram No. 1. So also are portions of three roads commonly reputed to owe much to Roman hands, and doubtless extending to link up other centres. The portions marked are those connecting the four British or British-Roman fortresses in or near West Kent—Keston, Oldbury in Ightham, Squerries in Westerham, and Camp Hill by way of Edenbridge.

In addition to the highways constructed principally for the continental traveller or merchant, the needs of the actual resident must not be overlooked. A glance at Diagram No. 1 shews the physical features of the county, while Diagram No. 2 shews the same thing on an enlarged scale for West Kent, and one of the first requirements of any inhabitant of a sparsely populated district engaged in pastoral or agricultural enterprise must ever be some facility for moving his flocks to successive pasture grounds, or, as the quantity of his produce increases, for enabling him to reach new markets or ports. We know that the whole country lay unfenced, the Weald valley and the higher Uplands being for the most part densely wooded, whilst the lowest portions of the open valleys were at all times liable to inundation by floods. The earliest roadways we should naturally expect to find on the slopes of the most open foot

hills, safe from the floods in the valley below and also comparatively safe from wolves, as well as the human despoilers likely to be found in the woods. Roads in this position would require the least upkeep. On Diagram No. 2 the approximate positions of some of these earliest roadways affecting the Kentish Holmesdale are indicated by thin dotted lines.

The first roadway marked on the diagram is that from the Surrey county boundary near Westerham to the Darenth river ford at Dartford. The second, from the same ford along the opposite side of the Shoreham Valley and thence north to Rochester. The third, from Rochester along the opposite side of the River Medway towards Canterbury. Each of these roadways lies in more than one valley, and it is obvious that a means of crossing the River Darenth at the point where the Holmesdale Valley meets the Shoreham Valley would be of the greatest convenience, and it is without the least surprise that we find at this point a ford of great antiquity giving its name to the adjacent village of Otford. Further west there was doubtless a means of crossing the Medway in the vicinity of Snodland—perhaps more than one. In any event, by linking up the roads across each of the two rivers, and by continuing our Holmesdale Valley in an easterly direction, we can piece together stretches of different roadways which may well have been used as one. And so irresistible has this suggestion proved, that many persons see in these several portions one great continuous highway, which they trace from Winchester to Canterbury, or even from Stonehenge to the Straits of Calais, and to which they point as being the great and only highway from the west to the east of England, calling it the "Pilgrims' Road." The present writer has studied with some care the exhaustive treatises of Mr. Belloc and Mr. Hope Moncrief, not to mention those of Mrs. Ady and General James, but their conclusions are based on arguments many of which can only be termed fantastic.

It is, of course, admissible that the foot hills on which the roads lie were some of the earliest cultivated portions

of the country side, and therefore included commonly in the demesne lands of the later manors through which the road runs. It is, perhaps, equally well known that our parish churches are almost invariably built near the manor house, or at the least within the lord's demesne. The presence of a road would doubtless assist the parishioners to reach their church, but our imaginative friends point to the situation of these very parish churches as evidence that the road in question was developed, if not primarily constructed, for the religious movement represented by the pilgrimages of the Middle Ages. There is, however, no reason to believe that the lengths of road alleged to make up the Pilgrims' Road are more ancient than the four extensions leading in a northerly direction to Dartford and Rochester (as shewn upon the Diagram No. 2), nor have I seen any evidence that the name of "Pilgrims' Road" is of earlier origin than say the reign of Queen Anne.

The fourth road marked upon the same diagram as running from the Surrey boundary through Maidstone, possibly quite as ancient and probably always of more importance, attracts but little attention from the authors cited.

So much for our roads, which are at least suggestive of a higher civilisation in the Upland than the Weald, and of populous places at their termini and points of intersection. Populous centres would also develop at an early date where the great highways crossed the streams or rivers by bridge or ford.

To return to the more precise line of our argument, we know the system of colonization followed by the Romans, and this finds a parallel in the course adopted by our own Empire in modern times. In Britain there was no extermination of the aboriginal inhabitants, and so far as existing systems could be utilized they were made to conform to the requirements of the Roman law. A survey of the new district as a basis for the future land tax, and a census of the inhabitants for the purpose of the collection of the poll tax, were doubtless made by the Roman governors of Britain. Unfortunately no trace of such records has sur-

vived, for after the withdrawal of the Roman legions the Saxon invader either exterminated or expelled the bulk of the native inhabitants and destroyed, as far as he was able, every trace and record of the Roman occupation.

To the Saxon succeeded the Norman, and it is to the documentary evidence surviving from a date just prior to the commencement of the Norman period that we must look for our earliest information of place-names, not because they were new at that date, but because, speaking generally, no earlier record is forthcoming.

With the introduction of Christianity in the 6th century, two influences were simultaneously at work in the subdivision of our county—the one lay, the other spiritual—the former naturally being the older. Both will be found to support the main argument in this article, namely, that the development of the county was roughly from east to west, while as regards West Kent the trend was from north to south. It must not be forgotten that in point of time the Christian community came first, and the church in which they worshipped followed. The delimitation of the ecclesiastical parish under the spiritual care of its parish priest, for whose maintenance the tithes arising from such parish became payable, would be likely to follow the boundaries of the estate or estates of the landowner or landowners for whose benefit the new cure was constituted. Such estates might, from the point of view of tenure or service, be held by such landowners under more than one over-lord, while from the point of view of criminal or other lay jurisdiction the parishioners might be under the protection or within the jurisdiction of more than one individual or civic tribunal. In other words, the new parish might embrace lands held of more than one manor, and include parishioners and their homesteads which were within the area of the court leet or other franchise of more than one over-lord, or were within the jurisdiction of the court of more than one liberty or hundred.

The annual payment of tithes growing in value with the improved condition of the agricultural inte-

rest, and coupled with the fear of eternal damnation, or at least temporary exclusion from church privileges, if the church's dues were withheld, as well as the practice of beating the parochial bounds, would all serve to perpetuate the precise limits of the parish.

But the relatively smaller and progressively dwindling revenue to be derived from Courts Leet, Hundred Courts, and similar franchises, coupled with the introduction of other and better tribunals, has tended to obscure the territorial limits of these jurisdictions.

Successive county historians—Lambard, who wrote in 1570, and Kilburn, who followed in 1659, each made a brave effort to perpetuate what was then known. Both point out that the boundaries of both lathes and their component hundreds do not necessarily follow the actual boundaries of parishes, but in many cases intersect them. Lambard compiles his tables from the point of view of taxation, giving the fixed contribution for each place to the Tenth and Fifteenth, and this has the merit of shewing the early proportionate values of the several portions of each parish lying within each hundred. Kilburn, on the other hand, takes pains to explain which lathe and hundred claims the parish church of each intersected parish. There are considerable discrepancies between the two records, and both are often at variance with Edward Hasted, who wrote shortly after 1790. Lambard's apparent omissions are bewildering. Generally speaking, the entirety of each hundred lies in the same bailiwick, and the entirety of each bailiwick lies in the same lathe. But there are exceptions. These exceptions may indicate nothing more than that the increase or variation in density of the population from time to time made an alteration necessary or more convenient. Hasted's maps and arrangement are apparently based more or less on Lambard and Kilburn, but the maps are obviously only approximate and do not indicate all the details mentioned by either of the earlier writers, nor do they quite agree with the more modern tithe maps or ordnance surveys.

Starting then with line 12 of page 303 of Kilburn's first

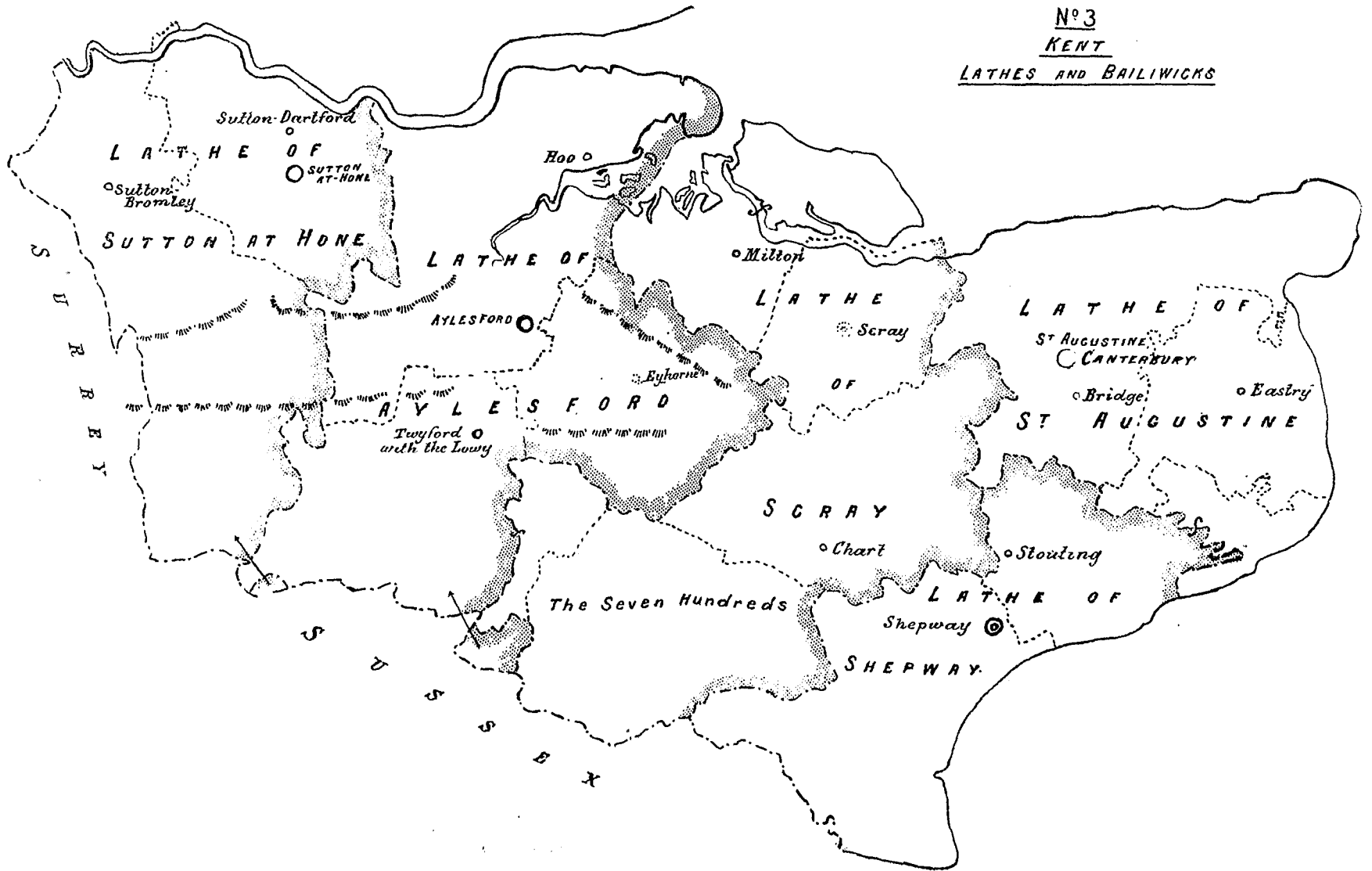
edition, we learn that Kent is divided into two divisions, viz., West and East. He then traces the boundary line between the two portions of the county through some 27 parishes. I say "through" advisedly, for we note that Kilburn makes this boundary line intersect every one of the 27 parishes, leading the reader on from church to church like a veritable steeplechase, and this is a very real difficulty, for it is found that the better defined ecclesiastical area often, and apparently needlessly, overlaps the presumably older boundary which had previously proved the most convenient in matters of lay jurisdiction.

For the purpose of the Diagram No. 3 an attempt has been made to follow the line laid down by the Ordnance Survey of 1868. There is, however, some discrepancy, the Ordnance Survey introducing as separate hundreds areas which by Kilburn are not subdivided. Greater accuracy may be attained if and when the land-tax parishes of the present time are accurately defined, a matter of no little difficulty. The precise bearing which the modern land-tax parish has in the matter is explained below.

The first subdivisions of our county are clearly the lathes (see Diagram No. 3), of which seven are mentioned in Domesday. Of these no less than five are situated in the eastern half of the county, namely, Borowart, Estrei, Middeltune, Wiwarlet, and Limowart, leaving only Sudtone and Elesford to occupy the western half of the county. And it is to the men in the lathes in East Kent that William referred for evidence as to the crown rights in the county, not only in their own area but also in the two lathes of West Kent.

Kilburn gives to West Kent half of the lathe of Scray. This half is the lower division constituting "the Seven Hundreds" in the Weald, but Furley, who has a most interesting chapter on the origin and subsequent consolidation of this area, contends that as late as the fourteenth century this division had not become an actual part of any one of the great lathes in the county. The same point arises in regard to the lowy of Tonbridge. Lambard treats the lowy

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KENT
LATHES AND BAILIWICKS



as part of Twyford bailiwick. Kilburn considers it an independent area, though both place it in the lathe of Aylesford. It is clear, however, that neither the Constable of the town of Tonbridge nor any other one constable had responsibility, as such, for the entire lowy, and therefore Lambard's arrangement has been preferred to Kilburn's.

Assuming the Saxon subdivisions to have been based on the number of the inhabitants, the existence of five lathes in East Kent, occupying an area for which two lathes suffice in West Kent, is evidence that the development of the county was from the east westwards.

Incidentally, Lambard, in his tables of taxation, enumerates his lathes from the east westwards, doubtless the order of original importance, and the Domesday of Kent begins with Dover. Kilburn, a century later, reverts to the more natural order which later writers also follow, and commences with West Kent. As regards the names of the lathes, Borowart and Estrei early became united as the lathe of St. Augustine with its two bailiwicks, which may well represent the two earlier lathes. Middeltune and Wiwarlet of Domesday Book become the lathe of Sherwinhope, which, with the addition of the seven hundreds and the hundred of Marden, now figures as the lathe of Scray. Limowart becomes Shipway, Elesford remains as Aylesford. But the bulk of the bailiwick of Twyford, now forming part of Aylesford, is probably a later addition, only the most northerly of its five hundreds being mentioned in Domesday. Sudtone became Sutton-at-Hone. Each of the lathes was subdivided into two or more bailiwicks. These are also shewn on Diagram No. 3, and it is noticeable that, as regards West Kent at least, the places giving names to both the bailiwicks and the lathes are situated at the northern rather than the southern extremity of the area which they denote. It is not suggested that the spot giving its name to the lathe or bailiwick was necessarily of importance from the point of view of its own large population, but rather that it formed the most convenient meeting place for the bulk of the inhabitants occupying the whole of the area in

question. The fact that the place-name is found in the northern rather than the southern extremity of each of such areas would support the contention that, as regards West Kent itself, its civilization and development moved from the north in a southerly direction. As regards "spiritual" subdivision, it should be borne in mind that the Cathedrals of Canterbury and Rochester both lie to the eastern rather than the western end of our county, while the original Rural Deanery covering the bulk of the Kentish Holmesdale derives its name from Shoreham at its northern extremity.

It may well be that the "conversion" and subsequent ecclesiastical control of both the Holmesdale and the western portion of the Weald of Kent emanated and continued to be directed from Shoreham.

To return to our plan of tracing development by the place-names, the subdivision of the bailiwick was the hundred, just as the subdivision of the hundred was the tithing or borough.

In spite of variations and changes in the tithings recorded from time to time, and to a lesser extent in the hundreds found in our county, we may with confidence look upon the successive divisions of tithing or borough, hundred and lathe, as an actual survival to the present day of a system which was in existence at the landing of St. Augustine, and was still better established on the arrival of King William. If this suggestion be right, we have in our tithings or boroughs units of local government or control older than the parochial system subdivided out of bishopric, arch-deaconry, and rural deanery older than the advent of Christianity itself, and which perhaps represent the nearest approach we can make to the foundation of society as we see it among us to-day.

These Kentish boroughs must not be confounded with the better known municipal borough, indicating something in the nature of a large provincial town. The Kentish borough may well have been but a hamlet or a cluster of farm buildings grouped together for the purposes of com-

munal responsibility and represented by a head man, tithing man or decener at the hundred court.

It is stated above that, speaking generally, the bailiwick is not subdivided. Two exceptions should be mentioned. First as to the bailiwick of Stouting. The place-name of this bailiwick is on the extreme western boundary, and near to the place-name of the lathe of Shipway, of which it forms part. But the easternmost hundred, called Buesborough, figures in the adjoining lathe of St. Augustine, and not in the lathe of Shipway as do the four other hundreds belonging to this bailiwick. Buesborough hundred is intersected by the Roman road leading from Dover to Canterbury, and the inhabitants could reach Eastry or St. Augustine's at Canterbury, the successive place-names and presumably the points of assembly of the bailiwick and lathe to which their hundred appears to have been transferred, with much greater ease than they could have reached Shipway.

Similarly as regards the bailiwick of Twyford, in the lathe of Aylesford, the hundred of Marden in its south-eastern corner figures as part of the adjoining lathe of Scray. The reason may be somewhat the opposite of our previous instance. Marden was always an appendage of far distant Milton, itself a place-name of a Domesday lathe afterwards made a bailiwick of Scray. Here it would be a convenience for the men of Marden to meet at a bailiwick muster in Twyford rather than Milton, though, as soon as the seven hundreds and Milton were all included in the lathe of Scray, Marden might well be similarly embraced.

As regards hundreds which figure in more than one bailiwick, Kilburn mentions two only. The one is Kinghamford, one parish of which, namely Wootton, is included in the bailiwick of Eastry rather than the bailiwick of Bridge. The advantage is less apparent here. The second instance lies in West Kent. Here the four Cray parishes with Bexley, all of which lie in the hundred of Ruxley, itself a part of the bailiwick of Sutton-Bromley, appear in the bailiwick of Sutton-Dartford. The consideration of convenience would apply here, with the added advantage of doing some-

thing towards equalizing the two bailiwicks constituting the lathe of Sutton-at-Hone.

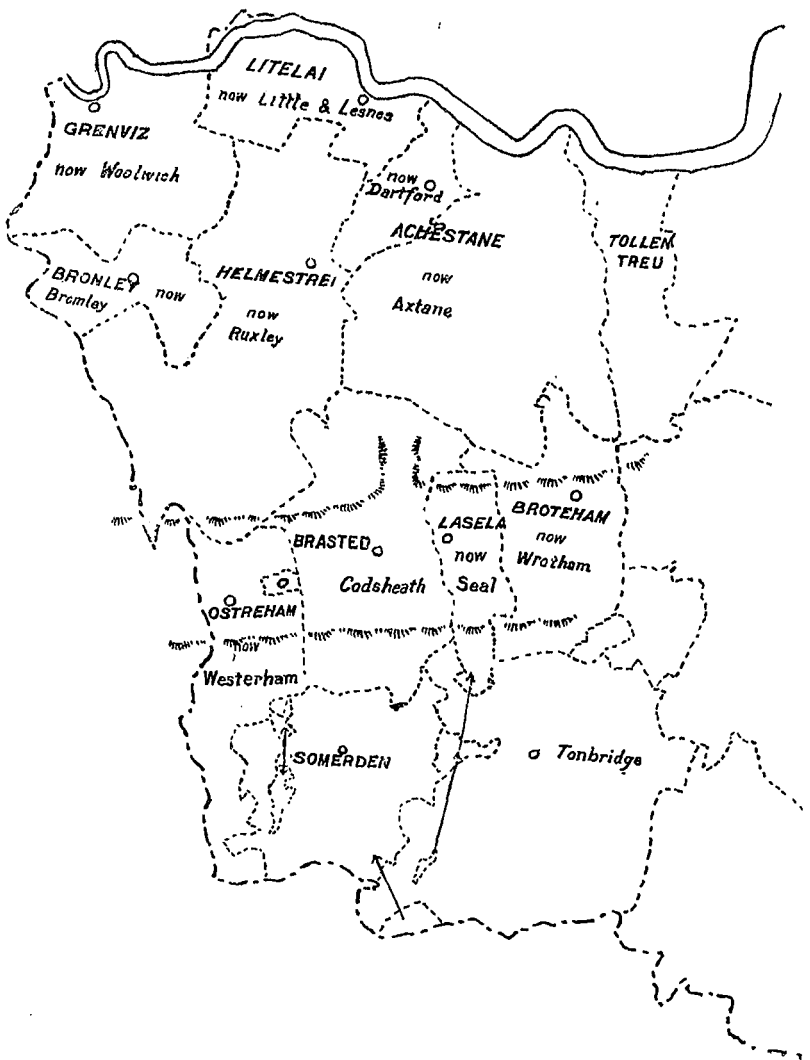
It should also be noticed that the bailiwicks as shewn on Diagram No. 3 include several towns which had constables of their own, and also areas which were within the liberty of the Cinque Ports, and as such the areas in question were "exempted from the acting of the Bailiff of these bailiwicks," as Kilburn puts it.

If we now glance at Diagram No. 4, we see the approximate outline of the hundreds lying in West Kent and which are mentioned in Domesday Book, and of these, those to the north are doubtless more constant and accurate than those in the south. In this connection the method of the compilation of Domesday Book must not be forgotten.

Just as the Roman Governor needed his poll tax and his land tax to provide the financial sinews with which alone he could establish order and exact a proper return from the newly occupied territory, so William the Norman found it advisable to have a correct return made to him of the yearly values of the whole of the lands in his kingdom which were liable to contribute to the national revenue, or which had been expressly granted on the basis of contributing to the national defence. As a result commissioners were sent into every county, at whose instance the several hundred courts throughout each county were successively convened. Here all and sundry were required to make a sworn return as to all lands within the hundred and the annual value of such lands, together with the names of their owners and the feudal service due from each.

It is a matter for profound regret that these sworn returns, at least as far as Kent is concerned, have perished. But prior to this accidental or intentional destruction the documents themselves were delivered to government clerks, who rearranged the subject-matter for each county, not according to the hundreds in which the various estates lay, but according to the several great landowners by whom they were held. As a result we get in Domesday Book a return in fiefs of each of the great spiritual and lay landowners in

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HUNDREDS IN WEST KENT
COURTS LEET IN HOLMESDALE



the county, under whose names appear in succession as subdivisions the several hundreds in which they owned land. An examination of Domesday Book at once makes it clear how easy it would be to omit altogether the name of any hundred, especially if the whole of its area were in one landowner's hands. The hundred of Codsheath in the Holmesdale Valley is a case in point. I do not doubt its existence as an ascertained and named hundred, but the whole is answered for under the name of Otford, and although Otford is mentioned (as, apparently, part of Axtane hundred), the hundred of Codsheath escapes enumeration. Codsheath is the modern Riverhead. Brasted Upland is part of Westersham hundred, but is not so recorded. La Sela, the modern manor of Kemsing and Seal, is mentioned as part of Helme-trei (now Ruxley) hundred, doubtless an error. The whole is now considered part of Codsheath hundred, but, as appears below, the inhabitants answered to a separate court leet of their own and not to Codsheath. The ville of Brasted similarly possessed its own court leet and was outside any hundred. In or near the area marked Somerden are indicated parts of Leigh and Speldhurst parishes which answered at the court leet of Kemsing and Seal, and parts of Hever parish which are detached portions of the hundred of Ruxley. The area in which Tonbridge is marked is Washlingstone, a hundred not mentioned in Domesday Book. This includes the whole or parts of the parish of Tonbridge (which answered to the courts leet of the Town borough, the Hilden borough, or the South borough respectively), and also the whole or parts of the parishes of Speldhurst, Pembury, Bidborough, Tudeley, Penshurst, etc., which answered at the hundred court of Washlingstone. There does not seem to have been any court for the lowy of Tonbridge as such.

Other than those mentioned, I do not know of any court leet within the Holmesdale Valley. Hasted writes of a court leet for the manor of Chevening, and a copy of the Parliamentary Return of 1650 which he quotes is before me. The Manorial Records, however, make it clear that there was no such court leet.

Forest courts were held for the Frith forests in Tonbridge, and probably for Whitley forest near Ide Hill. There were certainly pannage rights over the latter needing regulation.

The place-names where the men of the several hundreds presumably met are, it will be noticed, in the north rather than the south part of each hundred. Some place-names I cannot indicate. After all, the hundred, except for the purpose of roughly indicating the situation of the fief, has no importance in Domesday, the hundred court, as a source of revenue, being probably included in the value of the manor or honor of which it was an appendage. Possibly the bulk of the hundreds of Somerden and Washlingstone consisted of outlying portions of Upland hundreds, with which they lost touch at an early date.

The Diagram No. 4 must therefore be considered but a faulty record, and this is the more certain when it is remembered that, owing to omissions and mistakes of the clerks who compiled the Domesday records, places so wide apart as Brasted and Ulcombe are returned as being in the hundred of Axtane; that Malling, Trosley and Snodland are all returned as part of Bromley hundred; while Northbourne and Eastry, lying on the east fringe of the county, figure as part of Somerden hundred, which lies in the extreme southwest corner of West Kent.

This rearrangement from hundreds to fiefs is complicated by a further occurrence. The Holmesdale adjoins the Wealden forest or valley, and it is found that every Domesday manor in the Holmesdale originally extended for a considerable distance into the Weald. This inclusion of portions of the Weald in the manors outside its limits is the rule rather than the exception, and surviving records shew that in perhaps every instance of an early grant of a manor or estate in the Upland of Kent some integral part of the Weald or some rights thereover, restricted in kind though indefinite as to locality, were included in such grant. It may well be that all these rights were at first exercisable over the whole valley and did not carry with them precise ownership of any

portion, but I think that, anyhow, they ultimately crystallised into the absolute ownership in severalty of some ascertained portion of the Wealden valley, and that as a set-off against this all rights over any other portion were relinquished. And this is the probable explanation of the denes which Mr. Furley, in his *History of the Weald*, enumerates in so large a number. Each of these may, I suggest, represent an original grant of pannage for a defined number of hogs and other right throughout the valley, which afterwards evolved into the absolute ownership of a small farm holding, the general pannage and other rights over the entirety being given up.

For the subdivision of the hundreds we must look to the boroughs or tithings, and in this connection we have a most interesting survival. The national revenue, as raised for the national defence, was known from a very early date as "scutage," being the shield money, primarily a composition or fine paid in lieu of the personal attendance of the individual landowner, though later we find the word loosely used not only to indicate the levy strictly so called, but also embracing the various *dona* and *auxilia* demanded and received by the crown on the same occasions. At a later date we find the scutage represented by the lay subsidy, and, although scutage was originally collected on a fief assessment, it became convenient to collect the lay subsidy on a lathe, hundred, and borough assessment throughout the country.

We know that the hundred court was constituted by representatives from each of the tythings or boroughs within its limits, and the court leet or view of frankpledge, which we so often find as a component part of the jurisdiction of the lord of the hundred (or manor) court, was commonly held at the same time. But long after the view of frankpledge had ceased to have any real importance, and the hundred court as such had ceased to be of any effective use, we still find the borough appearing as a unit for the collection of the lay subsidy. With the passing of the lay subsidy for the better known imposition of the land tax, we still find

the borough as the unit of assessment, and it is a most interesting fact that when the land tax assessment was made permanent in 1794 the borough was then and is still retained as the unit of assessment and collection.

In many cases the borough has the same name as the corresponding parish, but, even where the name is identical, it will be frequently seen that the boundaries are dissimilar, while in other cases it will be found that although the whole of the civil parish pays land tax there is no borough of corresponding name, but the parish in question is still subdivided amongst various land tax boroughs of totally different nomenclature.

The boundaries of these boroughs, or land tax parishes as they are called, is a fruitful source of complaint, as they have never been delimited by way of record, nor is even the oldest inhabitant in any way able to give information of the least use, while the collector himself is usually thankful if he can get in his quota of tax, and his statutory surplus for his own pocket, without troubling too much from what land he gets it. But none the less we may look to the modern land tax parish as representing a unit of assessment at least as old as the imposition of scutage, and possibly as old as the Dane Geld.

As regards the actual boundaries of the boroughs, I had attempted to present an approximate diagram. The difficulties of this, however, are so great without an immense amount of study of the surviving Land Tax Assessments, that it must be postponed and a short enumeration substituted. Commencing with the surviving Rolls for Westerham hundred, we find four tythings represented by their tything men, viz.: Westerham Town, Westerham Upland, Edenbridge, and Brasted Upland. Brasted Town or Ville has separate jurisdiction. These five boroughs still survive, with the same names as the land tax parishes. Proceeding eastwards into Codsheath hundred in the Rolls of, say, 1533, we have these boroughs or tythings: Halstead, Shoreham, Upseham (in Shoreham), Chevening, Otford, Riverhead, Sevenoaks, and the Bailiwick (of Sundridge). A hundred

years later Upsepham disappears, but Sevenoaks Weald returns a separate tything man. With this alteration the whole eight boroughs have survived as modern land tax parishes.

It may be mentioned that the jurors at the hundred court appoint aletasters for Sevenoaks, Otford, Shoreham, and Chevening boroughs, and a leather searcher, a leather sealer, and a leather register for the market borough of Sevenoaks.

Still proceeding eastwards we find separate boroughs or tythings for Kemsing, Seal, and parts of Leigh and Speldhurst represented at the court leet for Kemsing-and-Seal, with jurisdiction outside the Codsheath hundred court.

Proceeding into the Wealden valley, the hundred of Somerden is attended by tything men from the tythings or boroughs of Stanford (principally in Edenbridge), Cowden, Chiddingstone, Frinden Borough (in Chiddingstone), and Penshurst. By 1670 Penshurst has become subdivided into the boroughs of Penshurst Town and Penshurst Upland, and Groombridge appears. Sherbourne Borough *alias* Hallborough (in Penshurst), and Kingsborough (in Chiddingstone) also appear as separate boroughs with separate courts leet or views of frankpledge.

The whole of the above names are still found as land tax parishes, except that Frindsboro' and Chiddingstone appear as Chiddingstone North and Chiddingstone South. Charcot (in or near Leigh) now appears as a land tax parish, though not as a borough represented at the Somerden hundred court. And excepting the land tax parishes of Hallborough and Groombridge (now in the Tonbridge land tax division), the whole of the hundreds of Westerham, Somerden, and Codsheath, with Kemsing and Seal, are now grouped together as the Sevenoaks land tax division.

In recent years the land tax parish of Linkhill (principally in Hever and previously administered from Bromley) has been transferred to the Sevenoaks list. In the area touched on, Hever is the only civil parish which has no counterpart as a land tax parish. But how many are there

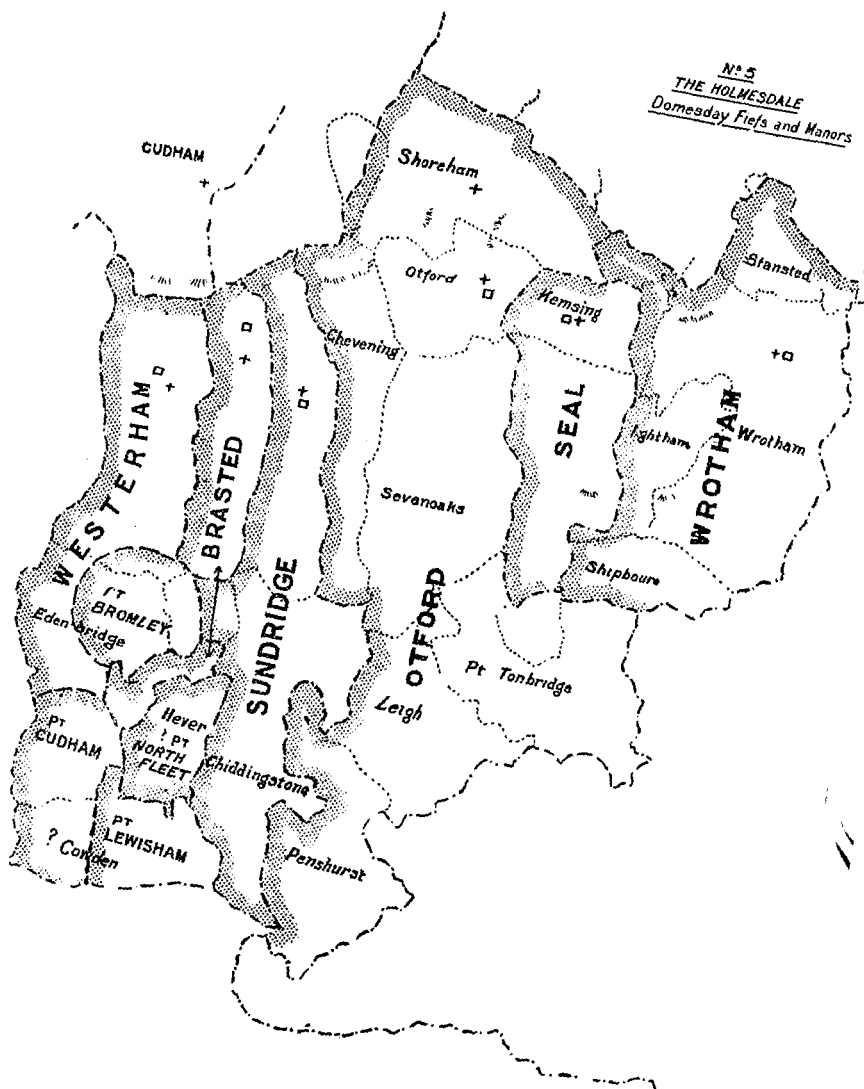
amongst my readers who could define the present land tax parishes of Linkhill, Stanford Borough, Charcot, or Kingsborough, none of them being very far from Hever; or, to pass eastwards into the Tonbridge division, the land tax parishes of Hallborough, Badmenden, Sinningley, and Teperidge?

We now come to Diagram No. 5, in which I have attempted to indicate the manors or fiefs mentioned in Domesday, and which embrace the western portion of our Kentish Holmesdale. In this connection we must bear in mind the existence of the Wealden portions of the Upland manors. Perhaps the most noticeable instance of this is found in the estates of Richard of Tonbridge, which are recorded in Domesday. The castle of Tonbridge was doubtless not, as such, liable to Dane Geld, and Tonbridge itself is not returned in Domesday. But in the case of at least twenty-two of the Upland manors of West Kent, we find repeated seriatim "what Richard of Tonbridge holds in his lowy is worth" so much. The lowy of Tonbridge is the district immediately surrounding the castle of the same name, and it is inconceivable that the portions held by Richard of Tonbridge in this lowy lay anywhere else than the approximate neighbourhood of the castle. When it is found that the Upland manors in question include places such as Farningham, Northfleet, Stone, Frindsbury, Meopham, Milton, Ash, Halling, Cowling, etc., the only logical conclusion is that the portion of each of these manors held by Richard was a severed portion lying in the Weald of Kent, and that Richard of Tonbridge had, at the date of the Domesday survey, succeeded in acquiring the whole of such severed portions and consolidated them into one great estate.

It may not be generally known that the western half of the parish of West Peckham, next Hadlow, still represents a severed part of the hundred of Hoo. Kilburn and the Ordnance Survey agree here. The present estate of Meopham Bank in Hildenborough may be an interesting and accurate survival of a feudal connection.

To return to the diagram. The Domesday Westerham

Nº 5
THE HOLMESDALE
Domesday Fiefs and Manors



undoubtedly included the greater part of the present parish of Edenbridge, and is so shewn. As to the residue of Edenbridge, the Marsh Green portion appears, from the records in my own hands, as part of the manor of Cudham, while the western portion constituted the little manor of Broxham, of which I happen to be steward, and which was itself a severed portion of the Upland manor of Bromley extending into Westerham, Hever, and Chiddingstone. Similarly the greater part of the parish of Cowden was comprised, according to the records in my own hands, in the manor of Lewisham, and the records of Lewisham manor shew clearly that at an early date this severed portion in Cowden was just as much a part of the manor of Lewisham as the larger area now constituting part of the county of London.

The Domesday Brasted probably comprised neither more nor less than the whole of the present parish. The manor records in my care bear this out.

The Sundridge of Domesday was quite a different matter. The court rolls in my own hands make it quite clear that the manor of Sundridge not only comprised the whole of the parish of that name, but the bulk of the present parish of Chiddingstone, a portion of Hever, and possibly of other parishes, but some portion of Chiddingstone, as well as of the adjoining parishes, may well have represented the Wealden portions of other Upland manors.

The Domesday Otford is, perhaps, the most interesting of all the Domesday manors in our district. I conjecture that in early Saxon times the Otford manor included the manors of both Brasted and Sundridge, and from almost every conceivable point of view Otford must originally have been one of the most important places in West Kent. At the time of Cranmer's surrender to King Henry VIII. the revenue of Otford manor, and the area of the land actually retained in the Archbishop's own hands or let by him at rack rentals, proves that it remained to that date one of the most valuable estates in the district. At the date of Domesday it undoubtedly included the parishes of Shoreham, Otford, Chevening, Sevenoaks, Penshurst, and parts of other

adjoining parishes. In the early records in my own charge Penshurst figures as Penshurst Halemote *alias* Otford Weald, and ultimately Shoreham, Chevening, Sevenoaks, and Penshurst Halemote became separate reeveships or manors.

With Otford, from the earliest times, went the hundred court of Codsheath, and for a long, if perhaps a lesser, period the hundred court of Somerden. The manorial estates with their palatial halls of Penshurst Place and Knole were undoubtedly merely sub-manors of Otford, the sub-infeudation of the former, equally with other sub-manors in the Penshurst district, which are now but farm estates, being conclusively proved by the records in my hands.

As regards Knole, both Otford and Knole were from an early date simultaneously in the hands of the Archbishops, but the early connection between Knole and the adjoining manor of Kemsing, upon which Hasted lays so much stress, may be largely disregarded.

Proceeding still in the westerly direction we come to the manor of Kemsing and Seal. This area figures in Domesday as La Sela, and by reason of the hundred in which La Sela is there placed, Hasted erroneously concludes that La Sela is the manor of Langley-by-Bromley. The manor in question is, however, found described sometimes as "The Manor of Kemsing with La Sela," or, "with the Seal lands," or in later times as "The Manor of Kemsing and Sele." I have no doubt that the explanation of the whole is that there was a separate and distinct area lying outside the jurisdiction of the neighbouring hundred courts of Codsheath and Wrotham respectively, but including the Saxon boroughs of Kemsing and Sele, and also a third, or possibly two other boroughs situated in Leigh and Speldhurst. In any event, in the earliest remaining records, the bulk of which are in my own hands, we find that the residents in the three areas did not attend the hundred court of Codsheath or that of Wrotham, but had their own court leet at Kemsing, attended by deceners or tithing men with their tithings from Kemsing, Sele, and Leigh with part of Speldhurst respectively.

From a point of view of territorial sub-infeudation the claim of the tenant *in capite* as over-lord was, or early became, rather less extensive than his jurisdiction as owner of the court leet, being apparently limited to the modern parishes of Kemsing and Seal.

A castle is reputed to have been erected at Kemsing at an early date; possibly it was one of the adulterine castles erected in the troublous reign of King Stephen, and shortly afterwards demolished. The name is perpetuated in "Castle Bank Cottages," still so called, in Kemsing village. The importance of the castle may well have led to the "La Sela" of Domesday giving way to the "Kemsing and Sele," which was the later description of the manor.

Still proceeding westwards we come to the Domesday Wrotham, an area which doubtless included the Domesday "Little Wrotham," a name still perpetuated within the district and marked on the ordnance maps. This Domesday Wrotham included the modern parishes of Stansted, Wrotham, Ightham, Shipbourne, all of which subsequently became separate reeveships or separate manors, but, except for Shipbourne, which appears to have been detached at an early date, the remaining three manors and the hundred court of Wrotham have continued to the present time in the same hands. Mr. John Knocker is steward. This manor was, equally with Otford, part of the estates surrendered by Cranmer to King Henry VIII.

A study of Diagram No. 5 will shew that on the whole the number of the boroughs lying within the jurisdiction of the several hundred courts or courts leet at the date of Domesday (see page 170) was generally larger than the several reeveships or manors into which the original Domesday manors gradually evolved. But these manors, thus created by subdivision, must not be confused with the subsidiary estates created by express sub-infeudation and themselves held of the greater manor or honor with which we have been dealing.

The question of sub-infeudation raises a further and last point for the purposes of this Paper, and the concludin

Diagram, No. 6, represents an attempt to classify these various sub-manors.

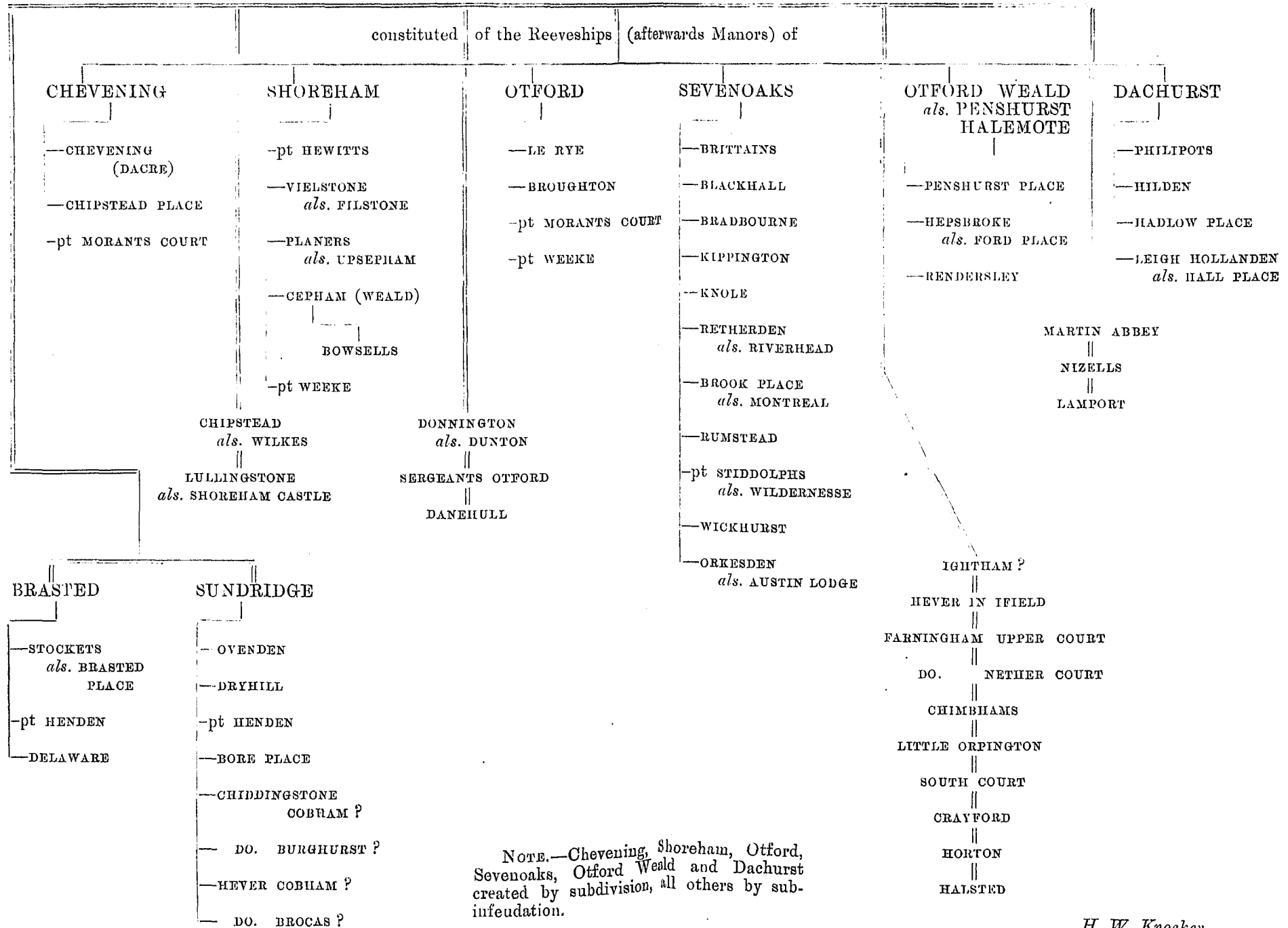
One of the Domesday manors in question, namely Otford, subsequent to its surrender to the crown, became elevated into an honor. It must not be forgotten that the greater manors throughout England were, in many instances, repeatedly forfeited to the crown, and upon their re-grant the system of sub-infeudation was on occasion varied. Nor have I in every case conclusive evidence to offer as to the grouping of the various sub-manors in the table. It must be accepted in certain respects as conjectural.

What then is the conclusion? That, as part of the lathe of Sutton at Hone (Diagram No. 3), the development of the Holmesdale was less rapid than the Upland portion of the lathe in which the place-name is situate, but more rapid than the Wealden portion, which occupies a still more remote position. And the same result is reached if the enquiry is limited to the bailiwick of Sutton-Bromley, of which the Holmesdale forms part.

Turning now to the question of hundreds (Diagram No. 4), we notice the comparatively large size of the two hundreds of Ruxley and Axtane, which bound the Holmesdale on the north. The position of the place-names of those hundreds suggests greater development to the more open north rather than the south, which is reputed to have been densely wooded. The positions of the place-names of the hundreds, or court leet areas within the Holmesdale, as well as their number, clearly suggest a development of earlier date and intensity than in the Wealden Valley to the south, and, equally of course, than in the southern portions of the Upland hundreds of Ruxley and Axtane.

From the point of view of Fiefs (Diagram No. 5), the conclusion is more striking. Here we have half a dozen manors, extending in two instances to the Sussex boundary. All the manor houses lie along the middle line of the Holmesdale and near the northern extremities of each manor, pointing to the same superiority of the Holmesdale

THE HONOUR OR MANOR OF OTFORD (with the Great Park and Whitley Forest),



NOTE.—Chevening, Shoreham, Otford, Sevenoaks, Otford Weald and Dachurst created by subdivision, all others by sub-infeudation.

over the Wealden Valley, and, to a progressive development from the north, southwards.

As regards the order of importance of the several great manors within the Holmesdale itself, Otford (including certain fee farm rents payable from Sundridge and Brasted) comes easily first; Wrotham and Westerham follow in the order named, with Sundridge and Brasted, each held under Otford, next in order. Kemsing-and-Seal is in a peculiar position. From an early date there seems to have been no manor house, *Nihil in dominio*, except the manor wastes with probably some water meadows on the Kemsing boundary.