

SAND TUNES BOC.

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THESE three words, sand tunes boc, are endorsed on a charter of the year 732 which is in the British Museum (Cotton, Augustus II, 91). The charter has reference to a place called Sandtun which is the subject of a grant by Aethilberht, King of Kent. This grant is repeated by Ecgberht in the year 833. His charter is also in the British Museum (Cotton, Augustus II, 102). Both charters are printed by Birch in the first volume of his *Cartularium Saxonicum*, as numbers 148 and 411 respectively, and here also will be found other references. These charters derive their chief interest from the fact that they throw some light on the decay of the *Portus Lemanis*, one of the chief Roman stations in South Britain. It is proposed to discuss them from a topographical point of view, leaving aside the various other problems to which these charters give rise. The accompanying sketch map includes most of the places to be mentioned.

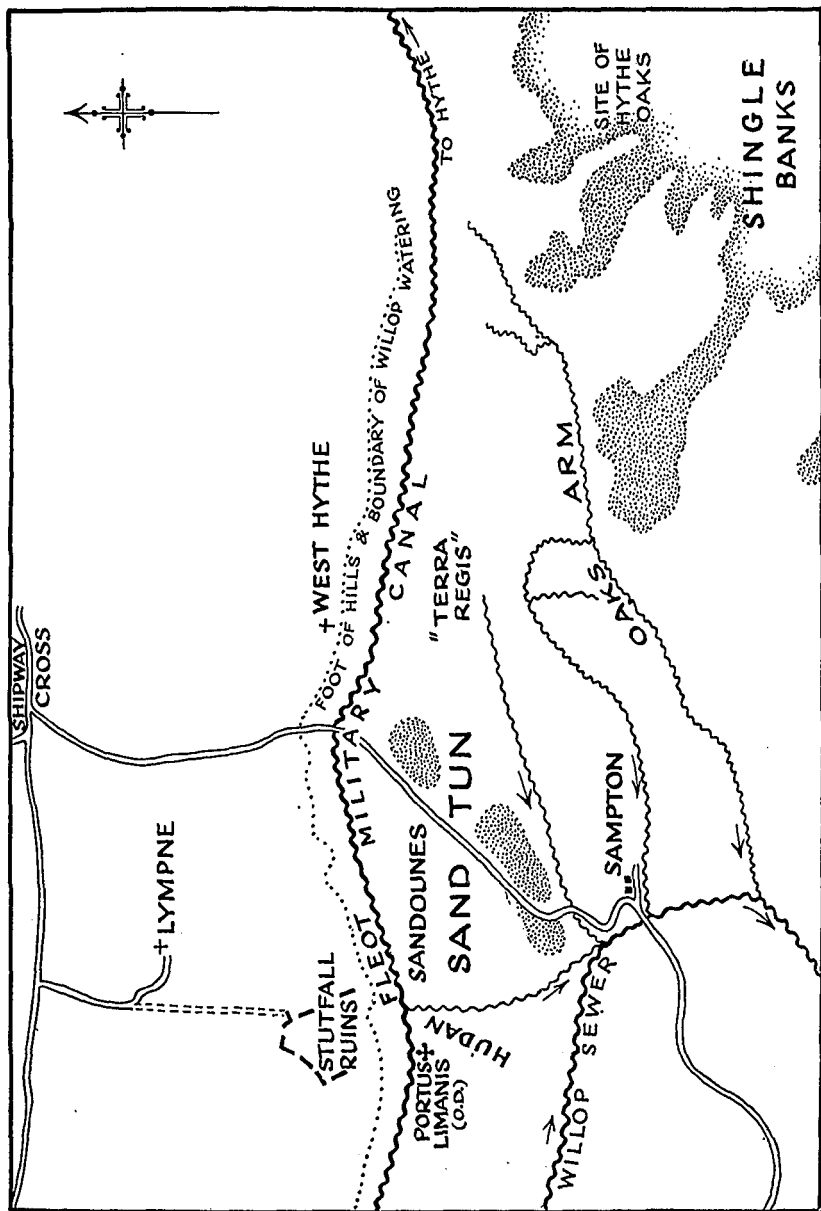
In the charter of 732 two pieces of land are mentioned (a) "quarta pars aratri unius juxta Liminaee sali coquendo accommoda" and (b) "centum jugera ejusdem ruris. in loco qui dicitur. Sandtun. termini vero terrae illius hec sunt. ab oriente terra regis. ab austro fluuius qui dicitur Liminaee. ab occidente et in septentrione hudan fleot." In the 833 charter the wording is (c) "centum quinquaginta jugera . . . in loco qui dicitur Sandtun. et in eodem loco salicoquenda juxta liminae . . . et his limitibus haec telluris particula circumgyrari videtur. ab oriente terra regis. ab austro fluuius qui dicitur liminaee. ab occasu et in septentrione hudanfleot." The original punctuation is preserved above. The following translations are suggested:

- (a) One quarter of an aratrum near Lympne suitable for a Salt works.

- (b) One hundred acres of that country at a place called Sandtun. The boundaries of this land are these On the east land of the King ; on the south the river Liminaee ; on the west and north Huda's fleet.
- (c) One hundred and fifty acres . . . at a place called Sandtun ; and in the same place a Salt works near Lympne . . . and this land is seen to be surrounded by the following boundaries. On the east land of the King ; on the south the river Liminaee ; on the west and north Huda's fleet.

The identifications suggested require a word of explanation. Birch translates "juxta Liminaee" by "at Liminge," this latter being a village five miles to the north of Lympne and an equal distance from the sea. Such a position is neither suitable for a Salt works nor in accordance with the statement of the 833 charter that the Salt works was at Sandtun. But it must be admitted that "near Lympne" may also be incorrect. The present village of Lympne is on the hill top overlooking the old port whereas the Salt works was presumably in the marsh at the foot of the hill, There are so many variant spellings that almost any one may apply to either the village of Lympne, the village of Liminge, the Roman port or the river. There was probably a fifth meaning so that some of these forms may have included the whole district, the nucleus of the Limowart Lathe of Domesday Book. Of this district Lympne was probably the centre in 732, and in 833, and the translation "near Lympne" is accordingly adopted as being less open to objection than any other and not forbidden by the terms of any charter with the solitary exception of Birch 160 (of the year 740) in which the words "in Liminiaee" seem definitely to refer to the whole district.

In connection with the Salt works there is, in both charters, a grant of wood to be used for roasting the salt (or evaporating the brine) and in that of 833 this wood is to be taken from the forest of Andred. Remembering this fact, Birch has the following note : "The site of the land here



SKETCH MAP.

Approximate Scale 3 in. to 1 mile.

mentioned appears to be in the neighbourhood of Sandgate, on the south-west of Kent; perhaps the modern name of Saltwood is explained by the terms of this grant." Sandtun is in fact about two-and-a-half miles west of Sandgate, and only half that distance from Saltwood which is the Salteode of 1086 (D.B.) and the Saltunda of a charter of 1026. The identification is therefore rather attractive but it seems a little unlikely that the forest of Andred was ever held to extend so far to the eastward. Moreover the Latin "saltus" means a forest and this word the Saxons may have found in use locally, and added thereto the syllable "wood."

SANDTUN.

Birch identifies this with "Sampton in West Hythe" a place which is not shown on modern maps but which appears in that of Andrewes and Drury (1769) and in various others. It consists of two or three houses only and can afford only a rough guide to the precise position of the 100 or 150 acres mentioned in the charters. An unpublished map in the office of the Lords of the Level of Romney Marsh at New Hall, Dymchurch, is of more interest. I am indebted to Mr. Charles Stokes for giving me every facility for examining the documents in this office. This map has the names "Sandounes or Samptons" written across certain fields of which the area is presumably about 60 acres. They are separated from the houses of Sampton by the Willop Sewer. The remaining acreage probably lay to the east of this 60 acres for it is in this direction that those still existing sand dunes extend from which Sandtun surely derived its name.

THE "TERRA REGIS."

This was the eastern boundary of Sandtun. Its interest lies largely in the way in which it is described. These charters are written as if from dictation by the King speaking in the first person singular and we usually have such phrases as "my land" or "land of my right." It is therefore possible that the words "terra regis" ought to

be rendered by some such formal phrase as "Crown lands" in contra-distinction to the more usual personal and possessive form. There were, at a later stage in our history, certain lands which were from their nature Crown lands. These included land gained from the sea, not by accretion to the foreshore but by the formation of shingle spits and the like. Of just such a nature must have been the land to the east of Sandtun when the river Limene ran due east past West Hythe. That it did once take this course is strongly suggested by geological considerations as well as by the situation of the military canal made early in the nineteenth century. The use of the phrase "terra regis" so early as 732 thus affords some ground for supposing that these particular rights of the Crown were recognised at that early date. The proof is far from absolute but we have so little written history of the eighth century that we cannot well afford to neglect even vaguely presumptive evidence of this character.

THE RIVER LIMENE.

The north-western boundary of Romney Marsh is formed by a line of hills and the lowest land in the marsh is immediately adjacent to these hills. It is commonly supposed that this broad ribbon of low-lying land represents the old course of the river Limene. This is supposed to have entered the sea, in Roman times, at the Portus Lemanis adjacent to the existing ruins of the castrum called Stutfall Castle. The name of West Hythe suggests that the haven at Stutfall became silted up and was replaced by another further to the east. The position of Hythe seems to betoken another stage in the same process. There is a spot called Old Haven between these two places. This process of silting up of the mouth of a river with the formation of a shingle bank on the seaward side is normal on our south-east coasts and is caused by the steady up-channel drift of shingle and sand impinging on the alluvial outpouring of the rivers. Cuckmere Haven in Sussex is one of the best existing examples. It is entirely probable that this process did affect, and later abolish, the

outflow of the river Limene on a line which moved eastward from Stutfall to Hythe. But when this happened and what happened subsequently have never been decided. It seems from these charters (*a*) that the old river mouth was already closed in 732 and (*b*) that a new mouth had formed or been made somewhere south or south-east of Sandtun, or, alternatively, that some pre-existing but secondary outlet in this position had now become the chief mouth of the river.

All that these charters actually tell us is that the river Limene ran to the south of Sandtun in 732. The implications of this statement have now to be considered.

WILLOP SEWER AND WATERING.

It will be noted that the sketch map shows a water course on the south of Sandtun and that this is named Willop Sewer. It has an irregular eastern branch called the Oaks Arm. The area drained by this water-course is called Willop Watering. The whole marsh is divided up into waterings for purposes of assessment to the rates which finance the drainage system. These rates are called scots, a name which has certainly persisted since Saxon times. These scots are imposed on the different areas drained by each of the main sewers and are variable as between one watering and another. They are collected by the authority of the Lords of the Manors which have holdings in the marsh and who are, *ipso facto*, Lords of the Level of Romney Marsh. There is no written or traditional record of the origin of this machinery of administration, of the demarcation of areas or of the making of the sewers. Mr. Chas. Stokes, who is Clerk of the Level, is of the opinion that the first sewers were the natural drainage channels of the marsh and the writer feels no doubt that this view is correct. These considerations are adduced as evidence that the Willop Sewer is no mere modern drainage cut but a water channel of immemorial antiquity.

It finds the sea a considerable way to the south of Sandtun and it is interesting to note that in the map engraved by S. Parker in 1719 this outfall is labelled "The last mouth of

the Limen." This legend does not occur on Symondson's sixteenth century map from which Parker was working, and the writer does not know on what writing or tradition it was based.

THE DELTA OF THE RIVER LIMENE.

The suggestion that the river Limene of 732 followed the course of the Willop Sewer of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not free from difficulty. There are some grounds for supposing that it may have followed that course as far as Botolph's Bridge and then have reached the sea in the line of the Oaks Branch (in which the water now runs in the opposite direction). If we consider also the relatively isolated position of the sand dunes at Sandtun and the conformation of the shingle banks towards Hythe, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that there was once a delta of the Limene at this eastern end of Romney Marsh. We have at least three possible courses of the Limene at its termination, *viz.* : (a) by Stutfall and West Hythe towards Hythe ; (b) by the Willop Sewer and Oaks Arm to an outfall near West Hythe Oaks ; (c) by the Willop Sewer to Botolph's Bridge and then southwards to an outlet east of Dymchurch.

Such views are not orthodox (and are certainly not in any way final) but, if once we admit that our two charters are correct in describing the Limene as running south of Sandtun, they become very nearly inevitable.

ON THE WEST AND ON THE NORTH HUDA'S FLEOT.

That "hudan fleot" may be read as meaning Huda's fleot is the opinion of competent authorities (e.g. McClure) but the nature of a "fleot" requires investigation. Bosworth and Toller make it equivalent to "A place where vessels float, a bay, a gulf, an arm of the sea, estuary, the mouth of a river, stream." They instance Northfleet and Southfleet in Kent and Fleetditch (*sic*) in London. This meaning does not precisely accord with that which seems to have been in use in Kent. An arm of the sea was denoted by the termination of such words as Sandwich, Fordwich, Greenwich,

etc. A fleet or fleet was rather a reedy lake of fresh water which might or might not be connected with any estuary. This was certainly the nature of Bletching Fleet, near Lydd which has now dried up entirely. The Saxon "fleode," a water lily, possibly reflects this shade of meaning.

We are therefore justified in supposing that Huda's fleet was not necessarily or even probably an estuary in 732, whatever it may have been at some earlier stage. But it was certainly a considerable expanse of water, since it was the northern and eastern boundary of an area of at least 100 acres. Sandtun comes so near to the hills that the northern part of Huda's fleet must have been an arm occupying the presumed site of the first outlet of the Limene. On the west of Sandtun it clearly occupied the site marked with a cross on the Ordnance Map (Kent 6 in. LXXIV. S.W.) as "Portus Limanis (site of)." We are bound to suppose that Stutfall Castle was so placed as to be convenient of access to the Portus Lemanis and it is therefore almost impossible to doubt that the Ordnance Map is correct and we may further state that Huda's fleet was actually all that remained in 732 of the old Roman harbour. It would seem quite possible that it still communicated with the Limene on the south but not on the east, as has generally been supposed.

CONCLUSIONS.

We may now sum up the conclusions which the "Sand tunes boc" suggests or justifies :

(1) That in the year 732 the Portus Lemanis was represented by a "fleet" or reedy lake of a sort well known in Romney Marsh (many are represented in Poker's map of 1617).

(2) The River Limene had still an opening, or more than one, on the eastern side of the marsh.

(3) The marsh must therefore have been at a higher level than today, at least above the level of high tides.

(4) The Limene ran south of Sandtun, of which the position is identified, whereas its former course is assumed to have been north of that area.

(5) Sandtun was suitable for the purpose of Salt works so that some part of it was probably within tidal limits. This part may well have been its eastern portion, somewhere on the course of the Oaks Arm.

(6) The Willop Sewer possibly preserves an old course of the Limene.

These conclusions are open to various objections but the chief of these latter are so radical that they would dispute the existence of any River Limene near Lympne, at this period, and would suppose that the marsh was already protected from the sea's inroads by the barrier of Dymchurch wall. It is not possible to deal with such objections in anything short of a formal treatise of forbidding proportions. There are other Saxon charters bearing on these questions and all must be studied before anything approaching finality can be reached.