

THE PARISH, AND REPUTED MANOR OF OXNEY NEAR DOVER.

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TILL 1938 Oxney had received little notice beyond such mention as might have been expected in the County Histories. The following paper has been compiled from the material mainly collected by the late Dr. Hardman up to that date with the help of the late Mr. Arthur Hussey, and from surveys by the other authors of the ruined church, house and estate.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY.

The level of the parish varies in height O.D. from 143 feet at Oxney Bottom to 277 feet. It is bounded by the parishes of Ringwood to the east, by St. Margarets-at-Cliffe to the south and west, by East Langdon to the north and west, and by Waldershare to the north. Chalk forms the sub-soil and occupies the surface on the higher parts, but is mainly covered by deposits of clay with flints, and loams. The clay is due to the insoluble remains of the chalk—flints and iron-loaded clay—and occurs let down into pipes in the chalk, while the loams are the redeposited shallow water Thanet sands and Woolwich Beds of Tertiary age. These beds formerly covered the chalk, and still dominate large areas about Woodnesborough and Ash. While the chalk forms the downland area of Oxney the later deposits have favoured the luxurious vegetation which is so obvious a feature of the parish and which, under the neglect which has overtaken the estate, gives as good an example of conditions which, in the tropics, would be jungle. Vigorous growth, maximum height, senile decay, rotting timber, natural regeneration, and the survival of the fittest in vegetation can still be studied here in perfection, although tree felling is now in operation on a considerable scale (see page 83).

WATER.

The typical downland estate of the district is one of sheepwalks with dew ponds where depressions in the clay with flints hold water or where the technique of dew pond construction is followed. As previously stated, much of the area of Oxney is covered with the clay or loams which favoured the growth of the timber typical of the estate. Besides this the many parallel valleys running north-easterly from above Dover into the Straits or into the Stour valley were formerly water courses or lines of drainage in which water could be found at

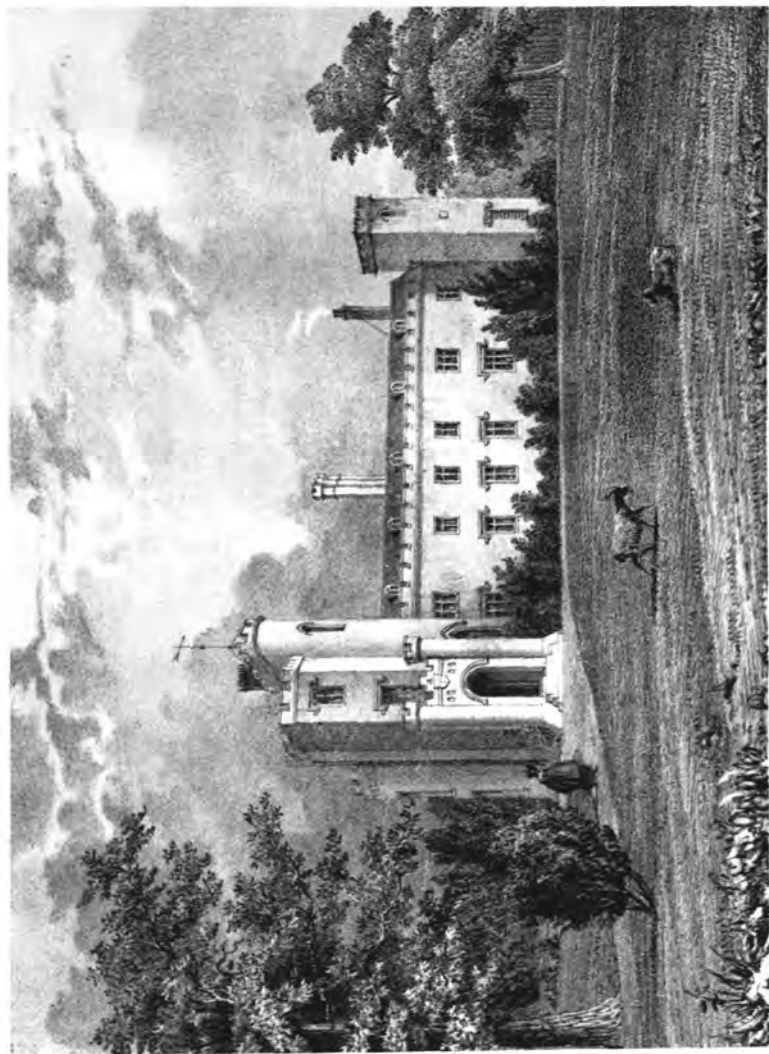
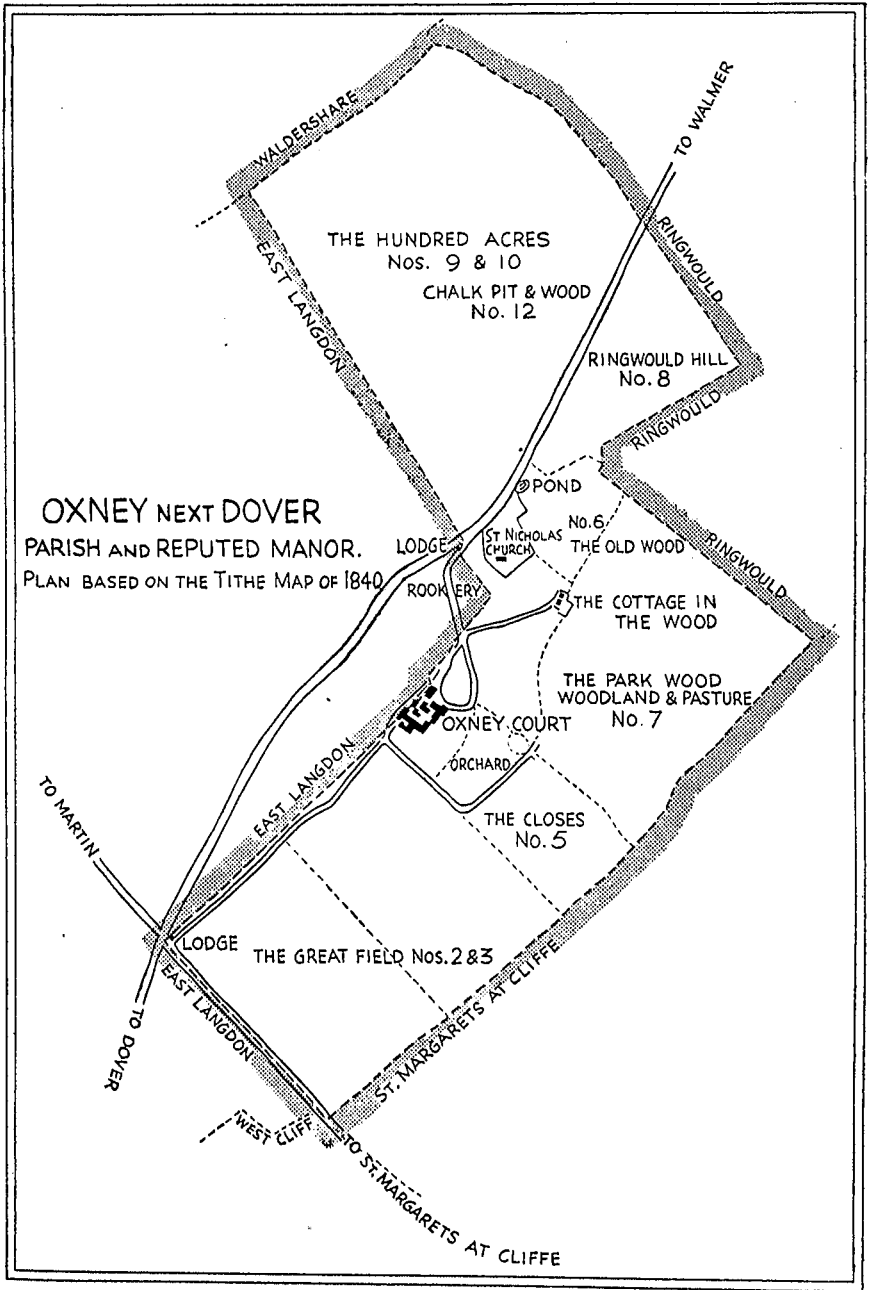


PLATE I. OXNEY COURT, THE SEAT OF RICHARD ROFFEY. From a lithograph dated 1838.



depths of 100 to 200 feet. At Oxney Bottom a seasonal winter flow down the valley from Guston fed a pond below the site of the parish church, and this water used locally to have the reputation of great purity. To supply the house and farmstead a well had been dug to a depth of over 100 feet, and the water raised by a donkey wheel (now in a ruinous state) of the type famous at Carisbrook Castle. A similar wheel formerly existed at Martin, a mile to the north-west.

THE PARISH AND ADVOWSON.

Oxney in the Hundred of Bewsborough is one of the smallest parishes in Kent. Its acreage in the Tithe Commutation of 1839 was 312—3—9, including 4 acres of glebe, but it is now calculated as 319 acres. The population (mansion and farm) in 1801 was 11, but only 7 in 1831 when presumably the house was unoccupied. In 1851 it was 20, in 1911 22. To compare, Bircholt's acreage is 300 with a population of 16, and Ham with 321 supports 55. At the other end of the scale Ash next Sandwich runs to 7,021 acres and inhabitants 2,049.

From its situation with the evidence of Bronze Age man on the Freedown Oxney must have been occupied from an even earlier period, but its history, like that of Walmer, is associated with Folkestone, not with Ringwould or Deal. Charter evidence carries this history back to the time of Edward the Confessor.¹

Oxney does not appear to be mentioned by name in Domesday Book, but in 1166 Daniel de Crevequer, the Lord of Folkestone, certified that Robert de Oxeneia (Exonia), an Auberville, held of him one third of a knight's fee.² The place certainly formed part of the Honour or Barony of Folkestone, and the particulars of the proposed sale in 1819 stated that there was a Quit Rent of 6d. per annum payable to the Manor of Folkestone. This payment may be still claimed. The Aubervilles, sub-tenants of Oxney, were a distinguished Norman family who, with the Crevequers, had come over with the Conqueror and were tenants in chief of estates in Hertfordshire, Suffolk and Somerset. They had their seat at Westenhanger, and were great benefactors of the church. In 1192 their descendant William founded the Premonstratensian Abbey of West Langdon, and he included in his grants to it for its sustentation, with the advowsons of West Langdon, Walmer and Ledene (Lydden), the dues payable to the Church of St. Nicholas of Oxeneia. Possibly of the same date is a confirmation by

¹ 1038-44, *K.C.D.*, "Oxena gehay", Kemble IV, 77; Wallenberg, *Kentish Place Names*, p. 322; Elkwall, *English Place Names*, p. 339. 1042-44, B.M. ? Enclosure for Oxen. Other forms of the name are: 1240, Oxenae, *Black Book*; 1242-3, Oxen(o)ja Fees, 655-72; 1270, Oxeneye, *Assize Rolls*; 1278, Oxene, *Assize Rolls*; 1291, Oxene, *Tax Pope Nicholas IV*.

² *Red Book of Edward I*, 190. Such a fee does not imply a particular acreage of land, but was calculated as a sufficient estate to sustain a knight. It varied from 2 hides upwards.

Simon de Abrinciis (Averanches), who then held the Honour of Folkestone. There is architectural evidence that all the above churches are not very far apart in date.

1240. Tithes of Oxney, both greater and lesser, held by St. Augustine's Monastery.

By an indenture of this date the above tithes, with those of Martin (Meretun), and the greater tithes of Winkeland, which pertained to the Court of St. Augustines at Northbourne were transferred from the Almoner to the Chamberlain (there was still in 1919 a Quit Rent or more probably a composition for tithes, payable to the Manor of Northbourne by Oxney of £1—14—4); and the latter was directed to pay annually to the Abbot of Langdon or to him who for the time performs divine service for our tenants of "Oxenal" 3 bushels of barley and 5 marks sterling (£3—6—8) on each 22nd of February.¹ The stipend remained unchanged until the Dissolution (*Dugdale*, vii, 899).

1250, about. The estates of the Auberville family in Oxney and Walmer passed by marriage to the family of Criol or Kerial, and in 1302 Sir Nicholas de Cryoll confirmed the grant of his predecessor to the Abbey of its churches.

1291. In the *Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV* the following list of benefices belonging to Langdon Abbey with their value is entered:—

Ecclesia de Oxene	2	0	0
„ „ Walemere	10	0	0
„ „ Westlangedone	6	13	4
„ „ Walworssar	12	0	0
„ „ Riddelingwalde	17	6	8

1384. In the Ecclesiastical Taxation of this date the value of Oxney is confirmed, and the same list of the "Spiritualia" of the Abbey is repeated (*Wm. Thorne's Chron. of St. Augustines* (Davis), p. 625).

1387. Oxney, always a small estate, seems never to have had a resident parson. It lay near the Abbey, under two miles, and so could easily be served by one of the monks. Some question seems to have arisen as to this practice and in September 1387 Archbishop William Courtenay when at Saltwood Castle gave licence to the brethren of the monastery as a matter of economy to supply from their own body this church of Oxnea and others "because of the poverty and indigence with which your monastery now at the present time is well known to be oppressed".²

¹ *Black Book*, 539; *Thorne's Chronicle*, ed. Davis, 1934, p. 205.

² *Records of Walmer*, Rev. C. R. S. Elvin, 1890, pp. 74 and 396.

In 1409 and 1433 the Wills of John Oxneye, a grocer of London, and Salomon Oxneye, a goldsmith, were proved. The former gave lands and tenements in Northbourne and Sholden, and other property in Finglesham and Cotmanton (?Cottingham) to his wife for life. Solomon his brother to be one of the Executors. Wills in Husting Court, London. Vol. II, 407.

In 1479 a James Oxney (? of this Oxney) became a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury. He then had charge of the Chapel of Blessed Mary in the Crypt. He died at the age of 44 in 1504.¹

In 1535 William Sayer, the last Abbot, with the religious of his house (10 monks) surrendered the Abbey and its possessions to the King. Henry VIII² commissioners reported that the house "is sore in decay," The record is as follows:—²

The Abbot of Langdon . . . for the yerely fermes and rents belonging to s ^d Abbey with the parsonage of Lyden to ferme with his manor of Lyden	59 12 0
and for the parsonage of Walmer, Westlangdon Oxney and Tong appropriated unto the s ^d Abbey with the glebe lands pertaining to the same	20 10 8
Item the profits of woods to be sold called Southwod Canewodd, Capelwod and Holyrode Parke extend yerely unto the some of	— 20 8
	<hr/>
	£81 3 4
Among the deductions are :—	
Pension to John Yorke late Abbot	9 0 0
Yerely pension to Vycar of Lyden	3 11 8
do do Tong	26 8
Proxies and Synodes for Churches of Walmer West Langdon, Leden and Oxney	17 6
One prest to serve the cure at Oxne [4 marks]	53 4
do do at West Langdon	40 0
In rent resolute to the Castell of Devorre for castell warde for the maners of West Langdon, Enbroke, Lyden, Maulton and Southwod	3 18 9
The Abbot of St. Austens next Canterbury	24 0
The Prior of Martyn (? St. Martins, Dover)	4 0
Sir Wyllyam Kempe, Knt. for his maner of Walmer	3 4
	<hr/>
Remainder (net value)	£56 6 9

1538 (30 H. VIII). *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic.*

Grant to Archbishop and his successors of the reversions and rents reserved upon the following Crown leases :—

(Inter alia)

Advowsons of the Churches and rectories of Leden, Tong, Walmer, Oxney, Westlangdon and Waldershare, which belonged to Langdon.

¹ "Priors and Monks of Christ Church" in the *Chronicle of John Stone*, edited by W. G. Searle, 1902, p. 191.

² *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 27 H. VIII, p. 43.

1539 (31 H. VIII). *Domestic State Papers.*

Leases belonging to Archbishop

Oxney Parsonage, except advowson and timber, rent £3—6—8, lessee John Birchall, 21 years.

Renewed 16th October, 1595, to James Jeken of Oxney as lessee, and the two old leases surrendered. On 15th December, 1599, the advowson was granted to Jo. Selby, he already being owner of the estate.¹ At this time the Church, from evidence below, seems to have been disused, and the services to have been discontinued.

In the third year of Queen Mary's reign (12th August, 1557), a MS. volume, folio 27, in the Cathedral Library, Canterbury, records a Visitation of Archdeacon Harpsfield.

Rectory—Appropriator the Abp. of Canterbury.

Parishioner—George Jenkin [*sic*].

Number of parishioners receiving the Sacrament of the altar . . . [*blank*]

First, George Jenkyn saith [there are] no ornaments of the church but such as he hath bought within this 5 or 6 years since he came thither, and saith that M^r Sydley doth say where he payeth to my Lord Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury the sum of 5 marcs [£3—6—8], the which if my Lord will give towards the finding of a priest, the said M^r Sydley will give so much a year [in addition]. And the said Jenkyn saith as for the small tithes he thinketh his master hath the same in lease.

The said Jenkyn saith that he hath three or four shieth [? sheets] of lead, and that the chapel [*sic*] was decayed like to fall down, whereupon he hath bestowed £13—6—8, and saith further that Mistress Blackinden of Walmer hath a bell of the said church.

In 1586, 19th September, the will of George Jekyn of Oxney, father of James, was proved in the Probate Court of Canterbury (Book 46, folio 206). He left various sums in cash to his wife, two sons and two daughters. His possessions were valued at £156—6—8 and included the pewter, which was to be equally divided, and two fetherbeds, two blankets, two bolsters, two chests—the ship-chest in parlor and the little chest in my chamber—a form with two wyned [? joined] stools, three candlesticks and a "fyre harth" of brass being in the chamber wherein I lie. Two kine or cows, the white nag, six ewes and four wethers, two hogs, one lame sow with the three stocks of bees at his wife's choice, a brood goose, with six ducks, one mallard, four hens, one cock.

In 1647 a survey was made of the Rectory by order of Parliament. The following document, under Parliamentary Surveys, is in Lambeth Palace Library, Vol. B, folios 43-5 :—

THE PARISH AND PARSONAGE

A true and perfect survey taken by Edward Boys, and Daniel Shatterdon, esquires, Ralph Watts and George Northcote, gentlemen, with the assistance of the Jurors hereafter mentioned, the 22 July 1647 of the

¹ *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. 1598-1601, p. 529.

aforesaid Rectory of Oxney with all and singular they and every of them appertaining thereunto belonging.

Imprimis—We find a lease dated the one and twentieth day of November in the thirteenth year [1637] of the reign of our sovereign Lord, King Charles that now is, and made by William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury on the one part, and William Sherman, esquire, of the other part, for and in consideration of the surrender of a former lease, and for divers other causes him thereunto moving, did demise grant and to farm let unto the said William Sherman, all that his rectory and parsonage of Oxney with the appurtenances in the County of Kent, and of all manner of tithes lands tenements profits commodities whatsoever to the said parsonage belonging. To have and to hold the aforesaid rectory of Oxney with all and singular their appurtenancies, unto the said William Sherman his exōrs administrators and assigns from the date hereof unto the end and term of one and twenty years from thence next ensuing and fully to be completed and ended, yielding and paying yearly to the said Lord Archbishop and his successors £3—6—8 at Lady Day and Michaelmas at their place of residence, and in default of payment thereof by the space of one month, to be void. The lessee to keep and repair the chancel and house, the lessee performing the covenants is to enjoy the premises quietly.

Item—We find upon the said parsonage neither house, barns, or any other kind of building.

Item—We find no orchard or garden nor glebe land belonging to the said parsonage.

Item—We value the sites belonging to the rectory together with the Bishop's rent to be worth yearly £20.

Item—The rent payable to the Archbishop £3—6—8.

Item—The tithes as they are now valued to be worth yearly £16—13—4.

All which with the appurtenances amounteth to the aforesaid sum of £20, and is as much as it was worth in the year 1641.

Signed by the four Surveyors.

1719. John Jeken's will of this date was proved in the Probate Court on 5th October, 1722 (Vol. 86, fol. 15). He left £5 each to his four daughters, to his son Valentine the "mare I usually ride" and to his other son James all his lands and tenements whereof I am seized in fee simple, being 22 acres with appurtenants in Oxney or elsewhere. The parsonage of Oxney in his own occupation "as to one moiety I am fully entitled to after the decease of my daughter in law Martha, the widow of my son John" to James. John, described as Captain in *Parson's Monuments*, died age 75, and was buried at Ringwould.

1746. James Jekin's will of 1742 was proved on this date in the Probate Court of Canterbury (Vol. 92, fol. 106). He left "My parsonage or rectory of Oxney beside Dover with the glebe lands of four acres" to wife Mary for life, then to son James in fee. To two of his daughters and a son-in-law he only leaves one guinea of gold to buy them rings. To his wife, who died in 1760, he leaves all his plate and linen. This included "a silver tankard marked with the letters M.W.M.C."

In 1839 there was an apportionment of the Rent Charge in lieu of Tithes in the Parish of Oxney. In it the whole parish of Oxney



PLATE II. 1. OXNEY BY DOVER.

St. Nicholas Chapel ruins, now used for burials. Five of the Banks family are interred here. North-west view with ruined angle buttress and north doorway.



PLATE II. 2. OXNEY BY DOVER.

Part of the old Chapel ruins from the south-west and showing the filled-in arcade between the nave and the long destroyed south aisle.

contained by estimation 312 acres 3 roods and 5 perches. Of this the glebe [the area round the church] amounted to 4 acres. James Jeken was the Archbishop's lessee for a term of 21 years, and Richard Roffee was the sole owner of all the lands. The Charge was then fixed at £114—2—6, including the charge of 10s. on the glebe. In 1907 the tithe paid on the estate was £77—19—0.

THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS. (Plate II, 1 and 2.)

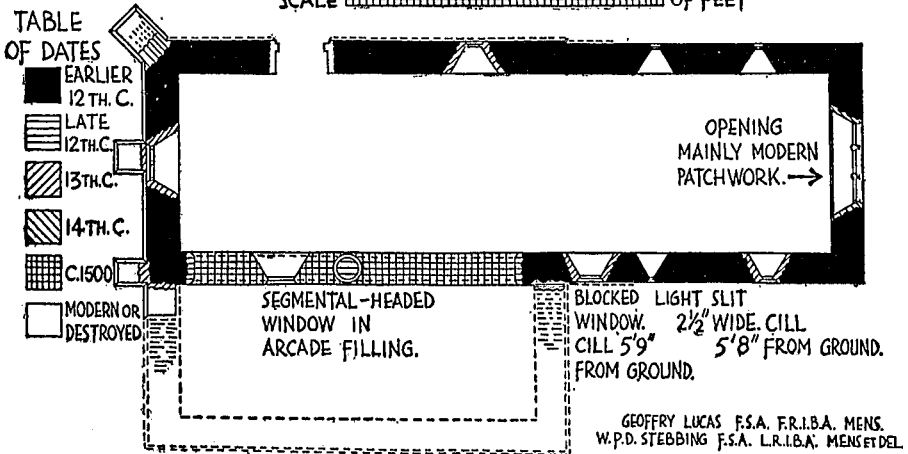
The pre-Reformation history of this small building and the Parish is bound up with the rise and fall of the Abbey of Langdon.

Oxney is not mentioned in Domesday Book, but a charter of 1038-4 mentions it (v. p. 84). A study of the ruins of the church gives a date of 1170-80. It is built of flint with quoins and mouldings of Caen stone but base courses and the north-west buttress show the use of the rougher Hythe stone. The plan shows it as originally consisting of a small nave, a south aisle of two bays and a chancel of almost the same width as the nave. There is now little evidence of a ritual division. Externally the north wall of the chancel is set back for four inches. The south aisle was divided from the nave by an arcade of two pointed arches carried by a round shaft with bell-shaped capital and necking, and square impost. The two responds were rectangular with square imposts. The height of the capital and impost was 13 inches. This latter was 18½ inches square.

Dimensions give us a nave internally 26 feet long by 13 feet wide, a chancel 19 feet by 13 feet, and a south aisle 26 feet by 8 feet 9 inches. There was a north doorway, but all its cut stone mouldings have disappeared. The width is now 3 feet 1 inch.

ST. NICHOLAS, OXNEY. (RUINED)

SCALE 4 8 16 24 32 40 OF FEET



The ruined buttress at the north-west angle is an angle one and not an early feature. At some period the south-west angle of the nave, probably during its late use as a barn, had fallen. It has been rebuilt in rough flint with the two buttresses shown on the plan. These stand on their original chamfered base courses. (Plate II, 1 and 2.)

The existing window in the nave is a thirteenth century trefoil-headed lancet 16 inches wide. It is set high in the north wall. The west window shows now as a two-light opening but probably replaces a single lancet. The chancel retains its two round-headed lights in the north side. These are only 13 inches wide and placed rather lower in the wall than the nave light. Traces of the east window indicate it as of three lights of probably late thirteenth century date. The wall here has been rebuilt from the cill upwards, but the gable has gone.

The south side of the chancel shows traces of a small opening probably similar to those on the north side and opposite the eastern one.

Immediately to the east of the junction of the east wall of the destroyed aisle with the chancel was a small window. As its cill was about 5 feet 9 inches from ground level its sole purpose was to light a desk below. The external mouldings are gone, but its width was about 1 foot 10 inches. Its western jamb was about 9 inches from the aisle wall. To the east of this opening, and 6 feet from the aisle, is a tiny slit. The actual opening is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide by 19 inches high. The overall external width is 6 inches, and height from the ground 5 feet 8 inches.

The lower part of the nave arcade is now filled in with rubble stone and flint, and the upper part of the eastern arch with re-used squared stones. The eastern respond where it was worked into the wall of the south aisle was shoddy work in chalk but was probably cemented. The arcade wall is reduced from 2 feet 6 inches to 2 feet 3 inches in thickness. From the evidence of the filling in but more clearly from the interesting little depressed three-centred window inserted out of the centre of the blocked western arch of the arcade, it looks as if the aisle had become ruinous in the late fifteenth century or a little later. The window, 1 foot 11 inches wide, can be dated c. 1500, and may be contemporary with a doorway to the great stone-built barn at Westenhanger. We may speculate that the lead mentioned by George Jeken in Archdeacon Harpsfield's Visitation in 1557 (v. p. 87) came from a flat-pitched roof over this aisle.¹ (Plate II, 2.)

For the plan in its main features and dimensions I must thank my friend Mr. Geoffrey Lucas, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A. The little ruin is now so much overgrown that details are mostly hidden. The old photographs,

¹ William Forstall of East Langdon (where he was buried) by Will proved 16 Oct. 1534, gave;—To the parish church of Oxeney 20d. (A. vol. 20, folio 7.)

which I owe to the kindness of Mr. Gardner, show the building in a rather better state than it is at present.

DESCENT OF THE ESTATE AND INCIDENTAL REFERENCES.

Oxney has never been a manor. It has never had the requisites and incidents of a manor, which would necessarily include a body of free tenants forming the homage and owing customary service to a lord, and entitled to customary rights against him. We do not find the division of the estate into the lord's demesne, the tenants' holdings and the waste, nor the holding of courts, a steward, court rolls, presentments, quit rents, suit of court, etc.

Philippott called Oxney "an ancient seat", and believed it was in the manor of Ringwoud. He is followed by Harris. Hasted is the first writer to speak of Oxney as a manor but says no court is held for it. Since his day the practice has arisen of styling it "the manor or reputed manor of Oxney or Oxney Court" but quite without historic warrant. Sale particulars, when the estate was put up for sale by auction on the 7th October, 1819, are headed "The Manor of Oxney, or Court Lodge Mansion House and Estates".

Oxney was in fact from the earliest times a single estate or farm belonging at all times to a single owner who had for his own and his tenants' use what was not much more than a private chapel, and forming a parish of itself.

The following references give some details of ownership and descent.

1242-3 (27 Henry III). *Book of Fees*, pp. 655, 672. William de Albrinville [Auberville] holds one knight's fee in *Oxenia* of Hamon de Crevequer, who himself holds of the lord King.

1250. By the marriage about this date of Joane, only daughter of Sir William de Auberville, this fee came to Nicholas Criol or Kerial. In the reign of Edward II John de Criol died *s.p.* By his sister Joan the overlordship went to Sir Richard de Rokesley but then, in default of issue, it passed through the marriage of another daughter to Thomas Lord Poynings. His successor was Richard, Lord Poynings, died 1391-2. In the *Escheat Rolls* for this date we find him as Ricūs Pongynges, Ch'r [Chevalier] assessed one fee for Oxeneye.

1279 (7 Edward I) *Patent Rolls*. (? this Oxney.)

Pardon to John son of Roger de Fonte for the death of William, son of Walter de Oxeneye, on testimony before John de Reygate and his fellows, justices in eyre in the County of Kent that he killed him in self defence.

1306 (35 Edward I) *Patent Rolls*. (? this Oxney.)

Pardon to John Site of Oxene of his outlawry for non-appearance before the King when indicted of trespass against the peace in the Co^y of Kent.

1346 (20 Ed. III). Under the assessments in Kent for knighting

the Black Prince:—Johanne de Cryel paid 40s. aid for one fee that Nicholas de Cryel and Wm. Hokymour held in Oxeneya of the Baroney of Folkestane (*Arch. Cant.*, X, 131). In Hokymour we probably have preserved the name of the farmer and actual occupier of Oxney 500 years ago.

1378 (2 Richard II). Sir Nicholas de Criol died seized of the estate. His son Sir William alienated it to one Tame and in 1402 (4 Henry IV) Robert Tame paid aid for it at the marriage of Blanche the King's daughter.

1504 (19 Henry VII). Grant to John Sedley of Scadbury in Southfleet (one of the auditors of the Exchequer) and others to his use by Roger Lychfield of Northbourne of pasture of 100 sheep on the Freedown in Ringwold. This right had descended to Roger after the death of Joan Lychfield, daughter and heir of William Byng. In the sale particulars of 1819 this right over the Freedown, in common with Ringwold and other manors, went with the estate, and the same right of grazing was included in sale particulars in 1919.

1616 (13 James I) *Patent Roll*. Grant to Sir Thomas Edolph free warren within his Manor of Ringwolde orwise Kingwolde. No one to be excluded from his Common.

1620 (18 James I) *Patent Roll*. Grant to Sir John Sedley of Aylesford of free warren in Manor of Oxney &c and in his lands in Ringwold.

1622 (20 James I) *Domestic State Papers*.

Wm. Marsh to Lord Zouche [Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports 1615-24].

Has called a Coroner's inquest on the body of Wm. Parker of Folkestone and the verdict is given of wilful murder against John Jeken of Oxney near Dover: but as the murder was committed at Cheriton about a mile out of the Liberties of the Cinque Ports the trial must take place at the Kent Assizes.

About the middle of the eighteenth century the estate passed from the Sedleys to Rose Fuller of Sussex who in 1777 bequeathed it to his nephew John Traylor Fuller. In 1810 the "Manor" was offered for sale by auction, probably on the death of Mr. Fuller. It was then in the occupation of James Jeken at the rent of £200 a year. It did not sell at this time, but in 1812 it was purchased by John May, the well-known banker, solicitor and scrivener of Deal. The price appears to have been £14,500 plus a valuation of £900 for timber, growing crops, etc.

In 1819 "Oxney Court" was again offered by auction but did not sell. At the end of 1827 John May got into difficulties due to the depression following the end of the Napoleonic wars, and the Deal bank closed its doors. Oxney was then sold to Richard John Roffey, who resided there till 1838 or so (v. Plate I) when he sold it to Sir Edward



PLATE III. OXNEY BY DOVER.
The Mansion in 1907.

Banks. His younger son William John, who died in 1901, was a great cricketer. He was spoken of in Lord Harris' *The History of Kent Cricket* (1907) as "a most entertaining old gentleman, full of cricket lore". The last Banks possessor—Major Herbert Delemark Banks—died in 1937.

The sale particulars of 1819 say that the Estate is "in the Occupation of the Proprietor who has expended a considerable Sum of Money in embellishing, manuring and improving the same". It is "well adapted for a Family of Respectability" and "well supplied with spring and rain water, has plenty of game" and the property, with the freehold farm called Martin, "is admirably situated for corn markets, both by Land and Water Carriage". Of the total acreage of 329 acres, 3 roods, 21 perches, the area round the house accounts roughly for $11\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and the five plantations to nearly 23 acres. A paddock accounts for 62 acres. Mr. May is said to have done much planting of oak, elm and ash and many of these trees now contain many cubic feet of timber "ripe for conversion", as the merchants would have it. Happily the Town and Country Planning authorities have stipulated that wide belts of trees shall remain round the confines of the estate so that there will not be an unrelieved wilderness where once rose neglected but still magnificent woodlands.

THE MANSION. (Plate III.)

The house, according to Philipott (*Villare Cantianum*, p. 281) was much added to about 1500 by John Sidley. It is hard to reconcile this statement with what can now be seen. However, the evidence of the survey taken in 1647 relates only to the rectory where at that date was "neither house, barns, or any other kind of building" (v. p. 88).

Mr. John May, with money to burn through valuable contracts made during the long continued fighting, transformed a small house into a Roman-cemented Strawberry Hill-Gothic towered and battlemented mansion. It probably took on this aspect between 1812 and 1818 when building was still in progress. In the latter year it was described and illustrated in Neale's *Gentlemen's Seats*, Vol. II, 2nd series.

In the sale particulars of 1819 the house is approached by "a handsome Drive from the Turnpike Road, and at the entrance therefrom is a neat Lodge". This lodge, now a ruin, is a typical little Strawberry Hill-Gothic stuccoed box, well embowered in trees on a cramped northern slope never reached by the sun. "The greater Part of the HOUSE has been lately erected in the most substantial Manner, at a very considerable Expense, in a superior style of Gothic Architecture" (Plate I). Besides a range of large reception rooms, between 12 and 13 feet high, but two "not quite finished", there was—the place is now not much better than a ruin—"a noble staircase, lighted by a very fine Gothic Window with Painted Glass". There was "a

Water Closet" . . . "a Brew-House and Well-House, and a capital Dog Kennel". There is a large brick-lined tank close to the house for storing rain water.

The 1919 sale particulars speak of the house as a "Moderate Sized Mansion of early English design, with lead roof of the Elizabethan period" ? There are now three W.Cs. and two bathrooms (h. and c.). The double drawing room on the first floor was 42 feet long. At this date it was unoccupied.

Plate I shows the low central part of the house flanked by Mr. May's grandiose additions. This centre seems to be a much altered structure of the seventeenth century, as the staircase in it is a good example of this date with its short straight flights with square newels, turned balusters and moulded handrail. At the back, but now inside the building, is a short length of a moulded brick base course which might even be work of the first Sedley early in the sixteenth century. Another original feature is a huge fireplace. All the beams in the ceilings seem to have suffered in Mr. May's gothicizing zeal. Plate III shows the state of the house before the encroaching vegetation had taken full possession.