

THE UPCHURCH MARSHES IN THE TIME OF THE  
FIRST ELIZABETH

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THAT the marshes of the lower Medway were once much more extensive than today is not in doubt, for it is confirmed by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century maps, and, in respect of an earlier age, by the discovery of Roman material both below the surfaces of present day fresh and salt marshes but also of the ooze or mud exposed at low tide. A certain amount of this diminution is due to the extensive mud digging which went on in the estuary from about 1850 to 1914-18. Not only did the mud diggers remove great quantities of marsh clay in the Stoke, Hoo and Upchurch marsh areas, but such activities often laid open the marshes to destruction by the tides. For when a great homogenous marsh as was that of Stoke is dissected into many small islets, some made up of the rejected top soil, the high tide floods into the many artificial channels created and scours them when the tide turns and the great mass of water runs off. Another cause has been the breaching of sea-walls by exceptionally high tides such as that which occurred in 1953 ; when the walls are not immediately repaired the high tide constantly floods through them, and turning, scours out the breaches into channels which soon make it impossible to close the gaps. This has occurred at Slayhills, Milfordhope and Barksore. There does not now remain a single island marsh in the Upchurch area protected by a closed sea-wall, for all, Burntwick, Greenborough, Slayhills, Milfordhope and Barksore are now reduced to saltings, and will eventually be broken up into smaller units by tidal channels.

In a previous communication<sup>1</sup> the writer discussed the information revealed by a series of estate surveys of marshes in the Isle of Grain, the earliest of which went back to the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and it is the purpose of this note to call attention to similar surveys made in 1593 of marshes in the Upchurch area, and to discuss them briefly.

Hasted tells us that the Manor of Horsham in Upchurch "seems to have been settled by Archbishop Chichele in the reign of K. Henry VI on the College of All Souls in Oxford, then founded by him, part of the revenues of it still continues, being at this time (1782) the inheritance of the Warden and Fellows of that College". And also, "K. Henry VI in his 17th year, on the foundation of All Souls College in Oxford granted

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Cant.* LXVIII, 184 (1954).

this (i.e. Upchurch) church, together with the advowson of the vicarage to that college, part of the endowment of which it remains at this time". Further, dealing with Halstow parish, "The College of All Souls in Oxford is possessed of much land in this parish belonging to their Manor of Horsham." Moving inland, in order to complete the record in this part of the county, we read, "for that King (Henry VI) in his 27th. year, granted the patronage and advowson of his church or rectory at Heryetsham to the Warden and Fellows of All Souls College in Oxford, who still continue in the possession of it".<sup>1</sup>

So much from Hasted and we now come to the Surveys of their lands made for All Souls College in the year 1593 of which photostats of seven such have come into the hands of the writer through the courtesy of Mr. Michael Nightingale. These seven photostats have been reduced to a scale of 6 in. to the mile which makes comparison with modern 6 in. O.S. Sheets much easier. A schedule is given here, the indicative lettering being the writer's ; both here and throughout this Note the 1593 names are shown in *italics*.

- A. Covers seven parcels of land in the parish of *Neweington* and lands appertaining to the parsonage of *Harrisham*.
- B. Covers sixteen parcels of land in the parishes of *Raineham* and *Hartlepe*.
- C. Map of the Manor of *Horsham* in Upchurch.
- D. One half of this map shows *Farre Nashe* in *Burnte-Wike* marsh, Upchurch, and the other half *Higham* marsh in *Iwade*.
- E. Five areas of lands in the parishes of *Neweington*, *Halstow* and *Upchurche* (Manor of *Horsham*).
- F. *Bauer* marsh in *Upchurche* and *Terlockes* and *Horsham hookes* salt marshes in *Ham* and *Wheateham*, *Upchurche*.
- G. Five areas of land lying in Upchurch and Halstow. A copy of the original in a Volume of Mappes which was lost by Mr. Harding, then tenant of Horsham farm about 1710. Copied in May, 1724, from the original "draught".

The first six of these estate maps are clearly dated July, 1593. They are all of very great interest as regards boundaries, tenures and field names and for this Note of the extent and boundaries of marshlands. Four of the maps, namely C, D, F and G, depict areas of marshlands and these will receive further consideration herein.

Map C. This covers the southern half of Upchurch parish being that part which lies immediately to the east of Otterham Creek, which appears crossing the lower left hand corner of the map. The modern (1961) 6 in. O.S. Sheet which covers this area is TQ 86 NW.

<sup>1</sup> Hasted, Folio Edn. 11, 543, 545-6, 547 and 462.

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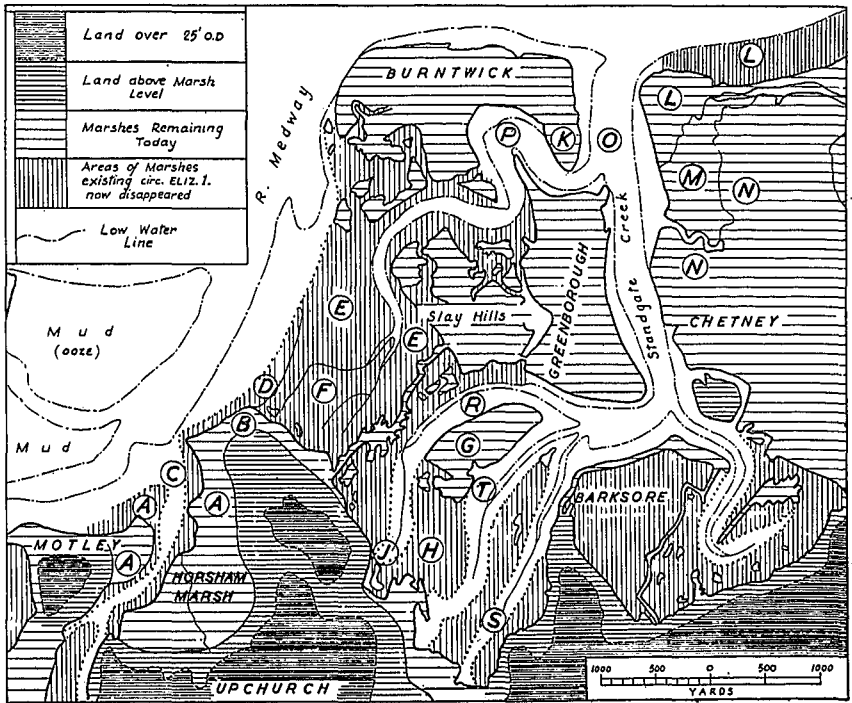


FIG. 1. The Upchurch Marshes.

Key to Map (Figure 1).

Modern identifications in brackets, where appropriate.

- A. St. Katherine's Marsh, belonging to Beringrave Farm.
- B. Bauor Fresh Marsh.
- C. The Flete or Atterham Channell (Otterham Creek).
- D. Bauor Salte Hooke (in Ham Ooze).
- E. The Quene's Ferrye Marshe (Kingsferry Saltings).
- F. Terlocke's Salte Marshe (Ham Green Saltings).
- G. Willflete Hoape (part of Millfordhope Marsh).
- H. Horsham Hooke in Wheatham (south part of Millfordhope).
- J. Hammes Milne Fleet (south end of Millfordhope Creek).
- K. Farre Nashe in Burnte Wike (Burntwick).
- L. Swale Marsh (Deadmans Island and adjacent).
- M. Higham Salte Marshe alias Bylette Marshe (part of Chetney).
- N. Chette Neye Marshe.
- O. Stand Lette Creek (Stangate Creek).
- P. Sharfleet Creek (mod).
- R. Millfordhope Creek (mod).
- S. Halstow Creek (mod).
- T. Twinney Creek (mod).

The Elizabethan survey is amazingly accurate, for when a tracing of it is placed on the above O.S. Sheet all the roads in the parish, many of the existing land boundaries and even obsolete inland sea-walls are seen to be in precise register. The main interest of the survey is that it shows clearly the original course of the *natural* Otterham Creek, named hereon as *Atteram Channell* (C. of Fig. 1). The present creek is largely of artificial manufacture due to the intensive labour of mud-diggers. The narrower natural channel shown on the survey follows the present channel for the northern half of its course, but it then trends eastwards against the present east bank until it flows over the site of the present wharf, up against the 50 feet bank, to join its parent fresh-water stream. A large area of marshland on both sides of the original creek is named as *St. Katherine's Salte marshe* (A, A, A, of Fig. 1), a name which has now disappeared. Several of the inland marshes of what is now called Horsham Marsh are shown as walled and described as fresh.

Map D. Two maps appear on this sheet of the survey and they cover areas of marshland on opposite banks of Stangate Creek near its mouth at the Medway. The 6 in. O.S. Sheet TQ. 87 SE covers both areas.

The plan of the west side of the Creek shows only the easternmost quarter of Burntwick Island (*Burnte Wike*) with a reach of Sharfleet Creek, named here as *Coombe Reach*, and small areas of *Sleye Hill* marsh and Greenborough marsh on the southern border of the area covered. The eastern end of Burntwick Island turns south in a tongue-shaped piece of saltings called today Sharfleet Saltings (K on Fig. 1), but named on the survey as *Farre Nashe*. The significant difference between conditions today and those obtaining in 1593 lies in the small narrow piece of saltings which lies above the Nashe, and is today divided from it by a short and insignificant creek which runs up to the ruined sea-wall. On the survey this creek is shown to be as wide as Sharfleet, then and now, to be named *Swere* and its junction with Stangate called *Swere Mouthe*, while the area of saltings on the north side of it is much larger than the fragment remaining now.

The second map illustrates an area in the north-west corner of the great marsh of Chetney, on the opposite bank of Stangate. Hereon two sizable creeks flow from Stangate in a north-easterly direction to a point on the top margin of the map where they are joined into one large creek. The mouth of the southermost of these creeks can still be seen in the banks of Stangate (between M and N on Fig. 1), while the conjunction into one creek still occurs in the western end of what is today called Deadmans Island, and, as Shepherds Creek, flows easterly into the Swale. These two creeks formed two island marshes of the area, one (M of Fig. 1), is named on the survey *Higham, a salte marshe, alias*

*Bylette marshe* and the other *Swale salte marshe* (L, L). The main marsh, N, N, is called *Chett Neye* as today. Swale marsh extended further northwards than its present-day relic Deadmans Island.

On this second map the course of the Stangate is shown in a wide bend where it should be straight ; it is correctly mapped on the first, westerly map. Apart from this, this sheet of the survey maintains the same high standard of accuracy, of which we have a striking example. On the survey two "Quenches" (i.e. drinking ponds) are shown in Bylette marsh and they fall exactly onto the same two ponds which are shown on modern maps.

Map F. This survey map shows two contiguous areas of marshland ; that on the west (L.H. side) being a northward continuation of Map C already described, and also southward of the area shown on the R.H. side, to the east. O.S.6 in Sheets TQ 86 NW, TQ 87 SW and TQ 87 SE refer.

Dealing first with the west side the area shown is covered by A, B, C and D of Fig. 1. A narrow marginal salt marsh is drawn alongside the sea-wall of Bauor Fresh marsh (B), and this is continued northwards as a separate marsh called *Bauor Salte Hooke* having the *Quene's Ferrye Marshe* on the eastern and landward side (E). Needless to say both marshes have long since disappeared.

The R.H. side of this map displays a most interesting survey of a large area of marshland which has now almost entirely disappeared. It is covered by E, F, G, H and J on Fig. 1 and it will be seen on the 6 in. O.S. Sheets TQ 87 SE and TQ 87 SW. It is bounded on the east and south by Twinney Creek, on the west by the land around Ham Green and part of the *Quene's Ferrye Marsh* (Kingsferry Saltings), and on the north by Sharfleet Creek by Burntwick.

Once again the astonishing accuracy of the survey must be noted, particularly in view of the difficult nature of the terrain surveyed. The various parts are indeed completely so but their axial relationships one to the other are sometimes in slight error. But the reconstruction of the now destroyed marshes can be made with certainty. Over the greater part of what is now Hamgreen Saltings extended *Terlockes Marshe* (F of Fig. 1), containing 144 acres, bounded on the west by Bayford, on the north and north-east by parts of the large *Quene's Ferrye Marshe* (E, E) and on the east by *Sley Hill* marsh. The destroyed southern half of what is now known as Millfordhope Saltings appears as *Horsham Hooke*s in *Wheateham* (H) of 85 acres. The northern half of Millfordhope is hereon named as *Willfete Hoape* (G). The present somewhat hazardous path along the narrow ridge of saltings between Ham Green and Slayhills along which so many hopeful "mud" archæologists have walked, is shown on the same course across the southern corner of Terlockes and marked, "The Drove Way called the

THE UPCHURCH MARSHES IN THE TIME OF THE FIRST ELIZABETH Strey". Horsham Hookes was dug away by man, but it has been the tidal set of Medway which has throughout the centuries eroded away Bauor Salte Hooke (D), the Quene's Ferrye Marshe (E) and Terlockes marsh (F).

Map G. As will be seen from the description of this map in the schedule it is not the original but there is no reason to doubt the statement on it that it is a faithful copy, nor that the original was one of the 1593 series. Of the five parcels of lands shown only one includes marshland which lies immediately north of Lower Halstow Church at the southern end of Halstow Creek. From the shore here, in part a wharf, there is now only a vista of shallow water at high tide and mud at low water extending for more than a mile to Stangate Creek. But from in front of the church, extending north-eastwards for more than a mile, with Twinney Creek on the west and Halstow Creek on the east side of it, there was once a marsh shaped like a spear-head, and which had long since lost its medieval name. The few last vestiges of the marsh have disappeared during the last fifty years, but the main destruction was wrought by mud-diggers during the last years of the old century, who appear to have come upon Roman material while doing so.<sup>1</sup> The College marshes mapped hereon formed the lower or southern third of the unnamed marsh, and one was then named Twinney Marsh.

Only those parts of the All Souls' College lands which were marshes in the Upchurch area have been briefly noted here, nor do the seven sheets of the schedule given cover all the survey of the college possessions in Kent. Its interest for the local historian and topographer need not be emphasized.

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<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Cant.* XXIV, lix, 1900.