

MARITIME EAST MALLING

By C. L. SINCLAIR WILLIAMS

WHEN a new inn-sign for 'The Ship', East Malling, was under consideration recently, the derivation of the name came into question. It seemed incongruous that an inn so far from the sea should be called 'The Ship'. As the son of a shepherd the landlord recognized the possibility that the inn derived its name from the old Kentish pronunciation of 'sheep'; but renaming was out of the question, and the sign now portrays a vessel which Admiral Blake might well have commanded.

That the name is not inappropriate becomes clear when account is taken of New Hythe, an ancient hamlet in the north of the parish of East Malling, lying on the west bank of the Medway. 'Hyth' is, of course, OE: 'shore, haven, landing-place, harbour, creek, port'.¹ Wallenberg's earliest reference to the hamlet, which is not noticed by Ekwall, is 'La Newehethe' 1254.² Before it was submerged in industrial development, and severed from East Malling village by the London Road (A20), New Hythe was an integral part of the parish. Some of the leading yeoman families had their homesteads and holdings there, but their lives centred around East Malling parish church where their remains now lie.

The Fabric Roll of Rochester Castle shows that in the time of Edward III New Hythe was of some importance as a loading place on the Medway.³ During the period 1367-1369, when the castle was under repair, there are references to the carriage of great quantities of timber to New Hythe for shipment. As many as 66 waggon-loads are mentioned in one entry. The scale of these shipments of timber suggests that the vessels berthing at New Hythe in the fourteenth century were no mere dinghies or wherries, and one entry specifically refers to ships:

'To John Halle and his fellows, for the carriage of timber at Newheth, in ships, for the whole year, in gross 23s. 4d.'⁴

A century later, the Cely family of wool merchants were conducting their trade in London and Calais. Their correspondence over the years 1475 to 1488, mainly between their London office and their representative in Calais or, occasionally, Bruges, is preserved, together with related

¹ John R. Clark Hall, *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, London, 1898, 191.

² J. K. Wallenberg, *The Place-names of Kent*, Uppsala, 1934, 149.

³ *Arch. Cant.*, ii (1859), 111-32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

memoranda, in the Public Record Office. Selections were published by the Royal Historical Society in 1900.⁵ The Celys exported their wool to the Calais Staple in ships hailing from a number of little ports along the Thames and the Medway as well as in ships belonging to London. The documents often go into great detail, giving the description and quantities of the wool, the name of the ship with its master and home port, and occasionally even the position where the packages were stowed aboard. Thus, in an undated letter (probably 1480), Richard Cely the elder writes from London to his son George at Calais advising him of a large shipment where one consignment appears as:

'Item in the Mary of Malling, John Underwode mayster
ij sarplers.'⁶

In 1481 William Cely writes from London to George:

'Syr ye schall receyve by the grace of God of the Thomas of Newwhythe Robert Ewen master j pack half a c xiiij felles lying nexte the maste afte warde under the felles of Thomas Bettsons' and a few broken felles and pesys bownde together marked wt my master marke and they lyeth uprest nexte the maste and they be the last end of all my masters felles . . .'⁸

Again, in 1481:

'Item in the Thomas of Newwhythe Robard Hewan master a packe lxxiij fellz Cottysowlde thay ly behynde the maste and Bett sonsz fellz ly above them.'⁹

Both these letters of 1481 also mention the *Thomas of Maidstone*, Harry Lawson master. Possibly this ship berthed at New Hythe.

A book of memoranda dated 1478 records a payment to 'John undyr Wode, master in the Mare Mallyng' for wool shipments,¹⁰ and there is a similar entry, concerning a payment to 'Wylliam Spryng master in the Barbara of Maliun.'¹¹

Until recent times, East Malling was a parish of the Deanery of Shoreham, a peculiar of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Probate records of the Deanery earlier than 1614 have been lost, and the only surviving wills of people whose principal property was in East Malling are some twenty which were proved and copied in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and are now preserved in the Public Record Office. Among this small number of surviving copies no less than five

⁵ Henry Elliott Malden, M.A., (editor), *The Cely Papers*, Camden, 3rd Series, vol. I, Royal Historical Society, London, 1900.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷ Thomas Betson, merchant of the Staple, is the subject of a chapter in Eileen Power's *Medieval People*, London, 1924, 111-45.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, in 5, 72.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

MARITIME EAST MALLING

are the wills of mariners or people otherwise concerned with ships, and a sixth is the will of the widow of one of the mariners.

The earliest was proved in 1512, and the testator describes himself as 'Simon Lewty of Larkfield in the parishe of Estmalling'.¹² His calling is not stated. He willed that his wife Alice 'shall take and have to her own use all the profett and advantage comyng of my Shipp called Litill Mary during one hoole yere next insuyng my decesse And yf the same Alice will by the same Shipp I will thanne that she have the same in full payment of the XX l which I willed to be paid wtin the said xij monthes Item I woll that the same Alice to her alone pper use the one halfe or moyte of my Shipp called the Cristofere wherof John Tamlyn is Coopten.' Simon had one son, John, who no doubt inherited his father's ships in due course. John Tamlyn was probably an ancestor of the Tomlyns who became the most extensive yeoman family in East Malling in the following century.

Richard Clements, whose will was proved in 1518, describes himself as 'Maryner of newe hithe in the pisshe of Estmalling'.¹³ He desired that his 'executor doo make sale of my Catch wt hir Cok'¹⁴ and all other takylls to hir belonging Immediately after my deth . . .' It seems that he must regularly have berthed his little ship just below the Tower of London, for he makes 'John Dallows dwelling at Saint Kateryns' one of his executors, and his witnesses include 'Thomas Alcock curat in saint Kateryns next the Tower of London' and several others of the same parish.

The will of 'Thomas Gybson of East Mallyng in the countye of Kent marryner and in the Deanery of Shoreham' was proved in 1563,¹⁵ but it throws no light on his seafaring activities. The will of 'Thomas Woolett of the parish of East Mawlinge . . . marriner' which was proved in 1589¹⁶ is similarly unrevealing.

That ships were repaired, perhaps built, in East Malling emerges from the will, proved in 1597, of 'James Maylim of Newhide within the pishe of East Malling' who is described as 'Shipwright'.¹⁷ If the rest of his estate were insufficient to cover his debts he wished his overseers to sell 'the house I dwell in with the Barne and Garden Wharfe or Keye and the ferry yearde and one piece of Lande in the meadowe called Kinges meadowe . . .'

The seventeenth century, generally the most prolific with records, yields little information about East Malling's nautical activities until towards it close. That ships or boats were still built or repaired here

¹² P.R.O., P.C.C., 9 Fetiplace.

¹³ P.R.O., P.C.C., 12 Ayloffs.

¹⁴ Cookboat. 'Small ship's boat.' (*O.E.D.*)

¹⁵ P.R.O., P.C.C., 1 Stevenson.

¹⁶ P.R.O., P.C.C., 38 Leicester.

¹⁷ P.R.O., P.C.C., 3 Cobham.

may be inferred from a deed dated 1667 which makes passing reference to 'James Fletcher the younger of East Malling Shipwright',¹⁸ and from the Parish Register where William Falsbury, at the baptism of his son Edward in 1698, gives his occupation as 'Sailmaker'.

It is in the seventeenth century, however, that we first hear of hoys and hoymen in East Malling. The *Oxford Concise English Dictionary* defines 'hoys' as: 'Small vessel, usually rigged as sloop, carrying passengers and goods esp. for short distances.'

Here it might be worthwhile to reflect on the sizes of the vessels we have been discussing. The editor of *The Cely Papers* observes in his introduction: 'The ships from the little Medway ports could scarcely have been of thirty tons to navigate the river safely. The Thomas of Maidstone can have been only a barge if she had to pass Aylesford Bridge.'¹⁹ This is a correct inference, for ships plying between Britain and the Continent in the fifteenth century rarely exceeded fifty tons and were often considerably less. Columbus' *Santa Maria* was about 100 tons, but the two vessels that accompanied her into the unknown were about 50 and 40 tons respectively. The little ships which sailed from East Malling to London to collect the Celys' and Bettsons' wool for shipment to Calais were probably under 30 tons. Ships rapidly increased in size during the Tudor period. Hoys, although designed for shorter hauls, were generally larger than the adventurous little ships we have discussed so far, and by the time of Elizabeth I could be as much as 200 tons.²⁰

George Westerby 'of Newwhite [*sic*] in the parish of Eastmalling . . . Mariner' who died in 1689,²¹ bequeathed to his 'daughter Mary the wife of John Hoysted²² all that my quarter parte of the Hoy called the George.' His messuage and wharf, with a piece of land at New Hythe, he bequeathed to be shared between his two daughters.

The Maylim family, a member of whom was noted above as a shipwright in 1597, continued their association with sail. The parish register records the burial of James Maylim, hoyman, in 1653. Possibly his son, another James Maylim of East Malling, waterman, died in 1684.

Hoymen continued to be in evidence in East Malling in the eighteenth century. Among the relatively few entries in the parish register

¹⁸ K.A.O., U838—T213.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, in n. 5, xxxviii.

²⁰ In 1549 Edmund Drake, father of the future Sir Francis, was a refugee from religious disorders in Devon. He brought his large family to Kent where later he became vicar at Upchurch. Here the young Francis began his sea life in the coastal trade. Thus, it is probable that Drake learnt seamanship in a Medway hoy.

²¹ P.R.O., P.C.C., 167—397.

²² If, as seems likely, Hoysted was a hoyman, one must avoid the snare of deducing a late occurrence of an occupational surname. 'Hoy' in this surname probably derives from 'haugh'.

MARITIME EAST MALLING

where occupations are stated is one recording the burial in 1721 of 'Mr. William Norman of Newhied, highman', and another for the burial of 'James Sigstone of new hythe, himan', later in the same year. William Norman, it will be observed, is raised above yeoman status by the use of the title 'Mr.'

In 1741 Sir Roger Twisden, Lord of the Manor, was required to give security for the maintenance of the footway between Larkfield and East Malling Cross, the route which northern parishioners needed to take to attend church or for any business in the village.²³ Twelve parishioners formed the third party to the deed. Their occupations were stated, and these summarize as follows:

Gentleman	—	1
Yeoman	—	5
Hoyman	—	4
Cordwainer	—	1
Papermaker	—	1

The study has not been carried beyond the middle of the eighteenth century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my friend Dr. Glynn Burton, M.A., D.Sc., of East Malling, for information about the displacements of early ships, to Mr. A. P. Detsicas, M.A., F.S.A., for his helpful comments on the original draft, and to the staffs of the Public Record Office and Kent Archives Office for their indispensable services. I am grateful to the Royal Historical Society for permission to quote from their edition of *The Cely Papers*.

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© Kent Archaeological Society

²³ K.A.O., U49-E.3