

THE EARLY HISTORY OF ASHFORD.

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IT shall be my endeavour this evening to interest you with a brief account of the early history of Ashford. I cannot point to its great antiquity. The Anglo-Saxon chronicles and charters, while referring to Brook, Wye, Chart, Westwell, and other neighbouring places, do not mention Ashford. From the *Domesday Survey* we collect that previous to the Norman invasion the most important portion of Ashford, with its church and mills, formed part of the possessions of King Edward the Confessor; another portion belonged to St. Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury; and the remainder was held by the famous Earl Godwin, the father of Harold. To Hugh de Montfort, his companion in arms, the Conqueror allotted what had been held by the Confessor and Earl Godwin; but the Abbot of St. Augustine's retained Ripton, as very few of the ecclesiastics were disturbed in their holdings.

However dry and uninteresting the *Survey* may be, I must briefly refer to its entries respecting Ashford, as they are not ordinary ones, first reminding you that it was compiled by Normans (imperfectly understanding the language) from information supplied by bitter enemies. The lands were classified under Laths and Hundreds. The whole of Ashford was then in the lath of Wye, but part of it was in the hundred of Longbridge, and the remainder in the hundred of Chart, then two distinct hundreds; not separate half-hundreds, as stated by Hasted. He had forgotten that hundreds were not divided until the reign of Edward I. The western portion was in Chart, and the eastern in Longbridge.

Under the hundred of Chart, "Rapentone," *i.e.* Ripton, is returned as part of the lands of the Abbot of St. Augustine's; and under the lands of Hugh de Montfort, in the hundred of Long-

bridge, we meet with "Estefort," "Essella," and "another Essetesford," mentioned in consecutive entries.

This leads me to the origin of the name. In tracing the early names of places the first syllable is often so disguised by lapse of time as to render it difficult to discover its meaning. This is the case with Ashford. One thing we are certain of, viz., that E generally formed its first letter until the latter end of the sixteenth century. I have two editions of our earliest local historian, Lambarde. Ashford is not described in the first one, published in 1576. Was it because he did not consider it of such antiquity and importance as Wye and Chilham? In the last edition he tells us it is written in some old records "Essetesford," which, he says, may be interpreted as the ford or passage over the water Eshe or Eshet, supplied from brooks on the south-east and north-west sides of the town, and that the river was not rightly called Stour, but Eshe or Eshet, until it had passed the town. Then we have Philipott, whose *Villare Cantianum* was published in 1659, about the same time that Kilburne published his *Survey* (both being nearly 100 years later than Lambarde). The former agrees with Lambarde as to the original writing of the name, but says it implied "the number of ash-trees growing about the ford;" while Kilburne thus describes it: "Ashford, Eshetisford, Echetiford, Etisford, Eshford, lieth on the south-east part of the county, by the river anciently called Eshe or Eshet, now Stoure." Dr. Harris quotes both Lambarde and Kilburne. Hasted gives the two *Domesday* names, and also Lambarde's remark about the river Eshet, which, in his time (now 100 years ago), he says, appears to have been forgotten, adding, "the river from its first rise at Lenham hither being known by the Stour only." Who is right?

MANORS.

I will next speak of the manorial property returned in this *Survey*, reversing the order in which the manors appear. Here, as in the large majority of cases in Kent, the principal manor was not conterminous with what afterwards became the boundary of the parish; the parish being often made up of lesser manors or parts of them. Ashford ("another Essetesford") was the chief manor, and was held of the sovereign in Anglo-Saxon times. Its earliest courts, first held in the open air, assembled at a spot near the Whist which acquired the name of "The Manor Oak." All that we need notice here is that a church and two mills then formed part of it, as well

as a dene for the pannage of hogs, in the Weald, situate at Iborn-dene in Biddenden, which has been appendant to it from time immemorial.

Of "Essella," now known as East Stour, the *Survey* records that "three men held it of King Edward, who could go whither they pleased with their land." By the feudal system every man, besides owing allegiance to the sovereign, was bound to attach himself to *some* lord. I therefore take this entry to mean that these three were freemen, and it was their privilege to choose their own lord, as well as the church to which they would pay their tithes and offerings; hence we find East Stour treated as a lesser manor and held of the manor of Ashford.

"Estefort," wrested from Earl Godwin or those who succeeded him, was given to Hugh de Montfort. This I take to be the borough of Rudlow, of which the yoke of Beavor on the south side of the Stour formed part. At that time Ashford was a Liberty, and for municipal purposes was separate from the hundred, but its boundaries did not include the borough of Rudlow. This will account for the two Ashfords. I alone am responsible for this conclusion. But I must say a little more about the borough of Rudlow, which is of considerable extent. Until recently it was easily distinguished from the Liberty by possessing a defined boundary; the inhabitants living within it had to contribute towards the repair of Buxford bridge, one of the Hundred bridges repaired by the ratepayers until recently. The property situate within this borough is still separately assessed for the land-tax. To beat its boundary, you would start from the Board School at the Old Polebay, near the South-Eastern railway station, include the Beavor district, and all the lands south of the Stour as far as Kingsnorth and Great Chart, thence go by Ripton to Barrow Hill and New Rents, passing the spot where a windmill formerly stood, and then return to the Board School.

I will now speak of the owners of these manors after the Conquest, bearing in mind that the manors of Ashford and Ripton (*Rapentone*) had distinct owners, and were never united.

Manor of Ashford.

By the treason of Robert, grandson of Hugh de Montfort, this manor reverted to the Crown in the reign of Henry I. It passed next to William de Asshetesford, and ultimately to an heiress of that family, the wife of Simon de Criol. The manor was held

of the king *in capite*, by ward to the castle of Dover. Simon de Criol obtained a charter of free warren, and his widow possessed the manor in the reign of Henry III. From her it passed to Roger de Leybourne in exchange for property in Essex and Huntingdon. Litigation followed, for Criol's son sought to recover back the manor before the Justices in Eyre. Leybourne submitted that the exchange was completed, but offered to return it on receiving back the property he had given up. Here the matter appears to have ended. Sir Roger Leybourne was succeeded by his son William. It, however, appears that Sir Roger had married Alynora, Countess of Winchester, who on his death is returned in the Hundred Roll as claiming the manor, possibly in respect of her dower, and she is accused of appropriating to herself free chase and warren, and three of her dependants were imprisoned in default of paying a fine for trespassing on the warren and waters of the manor. Upon an inquisition on the death of William it was found that his granddaughter Juliana was his heiress, who from her vast possessions was called the Infanta of Kent. She was three times married. In the Hundred Roll she is returned as tenant *in capite* of the king. While the Earl of Huntingdon (her second husband) was in possession, in the reign of Edward III., he paid the aid assessed on it for making the Black Prince a knight. We find him also indicting an offender for entering his warren of Ashford, and that of the Abbot of Battle at Wye, and also in Kingswood, and carrying away hares and rabbits for a whole year. The man pleaded guilty, and a fine of £20 was imposed—a heavy sum in those days. The Infanta survived her three husbands, and died in 1367, having left no issue.

There has been hitherto some little confusion in the devolution of the title from the Infanta, which I will endeavour to clear up.

It would appear that on the death of Lady Juliana Leybourne her vast possessions escheated to Edward III. in default of any lineal or collateral relations. That king enfeoffed the Duke of Lancaster, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and others with certain manors and lands in Kent, including the manor of Ashford; and he ordained by his will that these feoffees should settle them upon certain religious houses, and they conveyed, amongst other manors, Ashford with its demesne lands to the College of St. Stephen, Westminster. Richard II. revoked this grant through the artful conduct of Sir Simon de Burley, upon whom he settled these estates, but on his attainder they were restored to the dean and canons.

The charter by which Richard II. restored the estates recites that he did so in fulfilment of the will of King Edward III. his grandfather. This grant was confirmed by Henry IV., Henry VI., and Edward IV., who also granted a fair; and the lands were held by the College of St. Stephen until the first year of Edward VI., when they were surrendered to the Crown. Two years afterwards Ashford manor with its manor-house, demesne lands, and manorial rights, as well as the lesser manor of East Stour, were granted to Thomas Colepeper, and by him (without licence from the king) to Sir Anthony Aucher, who mortgaged them to Sir Andrew Judde. As Sir Anthony could not redeem the manor, Sir Andrew took possession; and he was succeeded by his son John, for in an inquisition taken in the first year of Elizabeth, it is recorded that Andrew Judde, Knight, father of the said John, died seised of the manor of Esshetesford otherwise Assheford; of a watermill there in tenure of Robert Robinson; of the manor of Esture, and 110 acres of pasture, 36 acres meadow, and £6 13s. 4d. of rent to the said manor of Esture belonging; and that he by his will, dated 2 September 1558, in which he is described as Alderman of London, bequeathed these manors to Dame Mary his wife for life, in recompense of her jointure or dower, with remainder to the said John Judde his son, and in default of issue to his son Richard, with remainder to his daughter Alice, who married Sir Thomas Smythe (the farmer of the Customs of the Port of London), and he in her right became possessed of the property. His descendant, Sir John Smythe, in the reign of James I., obtained a grant of a Court of Record. The Smythes were afterwards ennobled by the title of Viscount Strangford.

EAST STOUR MANOR with its demesne lands may be briefly disposed of. This was a favoured spot. It has been coupled by some writers with the manor of Ashford, having been included in the Conqueror's grant. At an inquisition taken in the reign of Henry IV. it was found that William Carrington held it, and in the reign of Edward I. William de Leybourne held it of Robert de Esture. It was afterwards held by the Infanta with Ashford, and one of her three husbands (the Earl of Huntingdon) paid aid for it on the knighting of the Black Prince.

RIPTON, another manor referred to in the *Survey* (sometimes called Great and Little Ripton), next claims our attention.

In point of tenantry and dependants it was of minor importance to Ashford; but it far surpassed it with respect to its manor-house

and demesne lands. It may be doubtful whether any of the lords of the manor of Ashford ever resided here, while Ripton was occupied by its different owners for centuries.

The powerful family of Valoigns was amongst its earliest lords. They held it for more than two centuries, extending over the reigns of eight sovereigns, commencing with that of King Stephen, without an escheat or forfeiture, as far as I have been able to discover.

During this long period, different members of this family served the offices of Sheriff, Knight of the Shire, and representative in Parliament for Canterbury. After Edward I.'s marriage at Canterbury with Margaret of France, he passed through Kent, spending Sunday at his country seat at Newenden, proceeding thence to Ashford. As there was no religious house in or near, we may conclude he was the guest of William de Valoigns, whom he had knighted at Caerlaverock. From a female branch of this family the mansion and manor passed to Sir Francis Fogge and was inherited by his descendants, many of whom served their country faithfully on the field of battle and in the senate.

SIR JOHN FOGGE.

I pass on to Sir John Fogge of Ripton, of whom Ashford is so proud. He lived in perilous times, in the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., Edward V., Richard III., and Henry VII., when thirteen pitched battles were fought in the War of the Roses, and no man possessed of property, combined with honesty and integrity, was safe. Sir John was a great benefactor to the town, especially to the church. This liberality was the more meritorious when we consider that the church was not appendant to his manor. He acquired the confidence of Edward IV., who rewarded him in various ways. He became the Treasurer of the Royal household and a Privy Councillor, and the King gave him the adjoining manor of Hothfield, which he had acquired by forfeiture. Sir John's attachment to his sovereign brought him into trouble in the next reign; and though Richard III. promised to protect his person, his estates were forfeited, as appears from a grant to Sir Ralph de Assheton which I have recently met with, and which includes "Mekill Repton, Litill Repton, and Asshford." The reason the King assigns for this gift to the Knight is significant; it was "for his good advice in helping the King to the crown, and in opposing traitors." Ripton and most of the possessions were restored to Sir John on the accession of Henry VII.

Sir John had a private chapel at Ripton, and its furniture and ornaments, we are told, were costly. The grounds of the mansion were extensive and supplied with fish-ponds. Portions of the house remained until the early part of this century, when the present farmhouse was built on its site. A cellar and some fine chimneys are still left.

I shall again have occasion to refer to this family; but it is needless to pursue their history here. They had their reverses. Ripton was sold in the reign of Elizabeth to Sir Michael Sondes of Throwley, and it passed from him to Sir John Tufton, whose son became Earl of Thanet in the reign of Charles I.

“ESTEFORT,” mentioned in the *Domesday Survey* under the hundred of Langebrige, was not, I am disposed to think, included in the Liberty of Ashford.

LESSER MANORS AND YOKES.

The little manor of Wall or Court at Wall had the same owners as East Stour until the last century, when it became part of the Godington property. The demesne lands are in the south-western part of the parish, and the old manor-house may be seen on the eastern side of the road from Ashford to Great Chart. The court was formerly held on Chart Leacon.

Then there was a little manor of Licktopp; this for a time was held by Wye College, and on its dissolution it was granted by Henry VIII. to Sir John Fogge, and held with Ripton.

The yoke of Henwood or Hewitt, now belonging to Mr. J. R. Lewis, at the east end of the town, extended into Willesboro', the boundaries running through the old farmhouse on the north side of the road; it was a borough within the Liberty of the manor of Wye. The borough of Henwood and the borough of Rudlow were exempt from the jurisdiction of the Liberty of Ashford.

The yoke of Beavor, within Rudlow borough, included a green or common, portions of which were built upon and formed a hamlet. It derived its name from one of the followers of the Conqueror. John de Beavor held it in the reign of Henry II. The interesting remains of the family residence may be seen on the east side of the road to Kingsnorth. It was separated from the Liberty by the river, at the spot called Pole-bay, recently altered in the construction of the South-Eastern Railway and its station.

The yoke of Ashford, otherwise Leybourne, was held by the lords of the manor of Ashford from the Prior of Christ Church, as part of the manor of Great Chart.

Philipott and Dr. Harris (who closely followed Philipott) have treated the manor of Merdall as part of Ashford. This is a mistake. Merdall is in the neighbouring parish of Boughton Aluph, and was acquired by Thomas Finch, Earl of Winchelsea, in the reign of Charles I.

THE WOODWARDS' MANSION, NOW BROOK PLACE.

An old mansion, taken down many years ago, which stood on the site of Brook Place, was held by a family named "Woodward" for a longer period than has been generally supposed—I may say 300 years. Richard Woodward in his will, dated 21st February 1516, bequeathed his soul to God, to our Lady of Pity, and to the blessed company of Heaven, and his body to be buried in the parish Church of Essheford beside Elizabeth his first wife, on her left hand; 6s. 8d. to the High Altar there for tithes negligently forgotten; 3s. 4d. to the Light of Jesus; 3s. 4d. to the Light of our Lady of Pity; 3s. 4d. to the Light of St. Anne (apparently a favourite Saint in Ashford); 3s. 4d. to the Light of St. Margaret and St. Katharine; 20d. to the Light of St. Clement; and 20d. to the Light of St. George; 24 ozs. of silver to be made into a chalice for the said church, with the sign of Jesus and the name of Edward engraved at the foot, to be used at Jesus's altar; also a vestment, value £5, to the mass of Jesus; 20d. to a priest to sing for the souls of his father and mother, himself and his wives, and all Christian souls for two years; the residue of his goods to Edward his son, whom he makes his executor; John Halys to be overseer of his will, to whom he gives £3 6s. 8d.

His lands in Esshetisforde, Wyllesborough, Sevyngton, Throwley, West-well, Ospringe, Bilsington, Newchurch, Rokyng, and the Isle of Harty in Kent, had been enfeoffed by him to John Halys, William Twesynden, Robert Hall, and Richard Hall. He desired that Alice his wife should receive the profits of his messuage, with the appurtenances both freehold and copyhold thereto belonging, with his tenement at the Bridge of Assheford, for all the term of her life natural and half a year after her decease; and he gave to her all the bedding in the great chamber next the porch of his house, and the bed in the same porch.

CIVIL HISTORY.

The division of Kent into laths, hundreds, and boroughs, as most of you are aware, was for municipal purposes; and if it was not of Roman origin, it existed for centuries before any parochial system was established. In support of this proposition I could not select a better example than Ashford with its four distinct references in the *Survey*, three in one hundred and one in another, intersected with branches of the River Stour, fed by numerous rivulets which united here. Each hundred had its constable or chief officer, but Ashford was in its own Liberty, and was exempt from the jurisdiction of the adjoining hundreds of Chart and Longbridge, which surrounded it. It was also significantly called "within the Foreign." The King and Archbishop were Lords of the Hundred of Chart, and the King, the Archbishop, and Abbot of Battle were the Lords of the Hundred of Longbridge, while the Liberty was presided over by the Lord of the Manor of Ashford.

This Liberty, however, formed only a portion of what afterwards became the parish, and must have been originally conferred by the sovereign. Ashford, we have often been told, did not rise until after Great Chart had been devastated by the Danes in the time of King Alfred. Was this privilege conferred by him for the better protection of the inhabitants?

Within the Liberty the lord of this manor held his freehold and copyhold courts, and courts leet, his markets and fairs, and his assize or regulation of the sale of bread and ale, over which his steward, constable, borsholders, and clerks had the supervision.

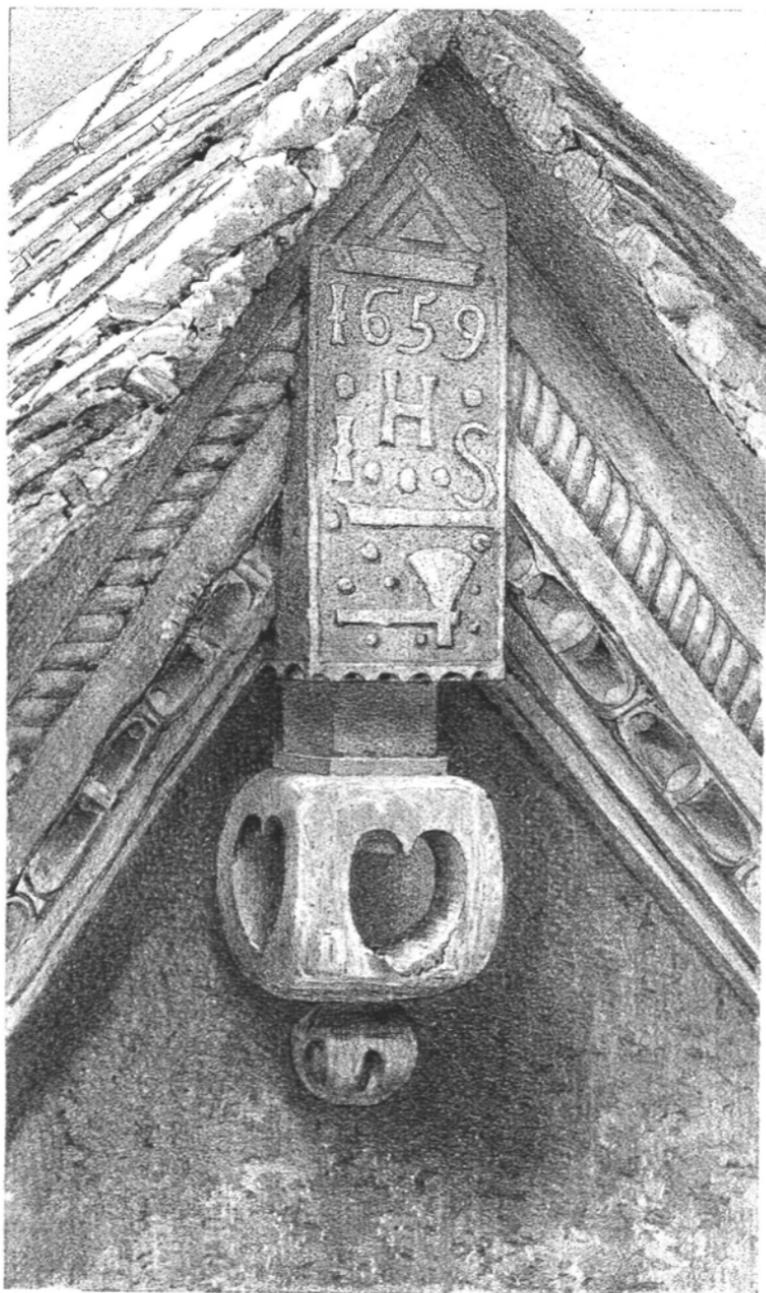
The manor-house stood on the spot where we are now assembled (the "Saracen's Head"); the demesne lands adjoined it; they were not extensive, but they acquired the name of a park.

In olden times there were at least 150 tenants of Ashford Manor, about one half being freeholders and the other half copyholders; while there were about 300 different holdings, extending over the whole of the Liberty. Some of these copyholds were very small and measured by feet. The copyhold courts were held when necessary, the other courts were held yearly. The manor possessed its dene or liberty of pannage; for the mansion at Iborndene in Biddenden and some adjoining lands were held of Ashford manor. Other outlying lands held of the manor were situate in Mersham and Sevington, but they were of no great extent.

THE STREETS IN ASHFORD.

The High Street, now an imposing one, was in olden times confined to the space between Mr. Coulthard's and Mr. Thompson's shops. The latter shop was originally erected on the lord's copyhold waste; which extended on the west to the new entrance to Bank Street, and on the east to the corner of Marsh Street. The copyhold boundary was clearly defined, by an open channel or gutter which ran down the centre of the High Street, separating the roadway from the waste; portions of which remained until recently. This waste originally occupied the site of all the houses and shops between the churchyard and Mr. Crust's corner; it included St. John's Lane, often called the Copyhold Lane, and terminated in Marsh Street. On the north side of High Street the greater part of the property was freehold; but on the south side it was copyhold, commencing with the channel or gutter. Copyhold tenure prevailed over this waste, upon which stood the lord's markets. At the west end was the fish market, and next to it the corn market, where the corn was pitched—now the site of the public room. All that remains of the corn market is a stone fixed in the wall of Messrs. Marshall's coach repository with this inscription: "1602 God set." Then came the butchery (occupying the greatest space), where may still be seen on the gable-head of one of the old houses, carved in oak, a butcher's cleaver, with "1659 J. H. S."; and, lastly, there was the butter market, which stood near the entrance to St. John's Lane. The site of the town pump was at the east of Mr. Thompson's shop, and the stocks were near it; while narrow passages preserved the approaches to the church and markets. The shops and stalls were of the rudest description. Portions of the copyhold waste were enclosed with rough fences.

Mr. Henry Creed, who lived towards the end of the last century, was a public benefactor in his day, and assisted in removing, I believe, the last of these excrescences, when a cattle market was first established in the centre of the town. The "Man of Kent," and shops and residences covering the middle row, were erected at a later period. The Cage, for the temporary confinement of evil-doers, stood at the north-east corner of Mr. Thompson's shop, the steps descending into it remain; and the lord's prison was at the top of the High Street, beyond Mr. Brothers' shop. The poor-house stood at the top of New Rents, west of the lane leading to Great Chart. The old Bridewell stood in Marsh Street, on part



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GABLE-HEAD IN THE OLD BUTCHERY AT ASHFORD.

of the site of the Baptist chapel; the manor pound and a pest or leper's house were near it.

Gravel Pit Lane (now Brewer Street) points to the hollow spots near the cemetery where the gravel was procured. It is said that the stone for the church was dug in this locality. Town's-end-field, at the top of New Rents, denoted the end of the town in that direction. Gore Hill and Barrow Hill (where there was a green) have been connected with the nomenclature of Ashford for many years, as well as Hemstead and Hook Wood, both formerly covered with timber and underwood. I often regret that in the modern commutation of the tithes, and in the subsequent preparation of the Ordnance map, greater care was not taken to connect the ancient names of farms and fields with the present ones.

As in our day, there was no lack of ale-houses. The "Oak" and the "George" still stand where they did; then there was "The Naked Boy." The "Crown" formerly stood on the site of the residence of Mr. J. D. Norwood. The "Six Bells" was on the east side of the entrance to the churchyard, and a baker's shop appears to have stood on the western side from time immemorial. The "Red Lion," in the North Lane, and the "Forge," opposite, stand where they did, but the latter has lost its frontage. Ale-houses in short appear to have reared their heads in every direction. Many of them had their sign-boards on posts fixed in the highway, for which they paid an acknowledgment to the lord of the manor.

The Martyrs' Field was near the bridge, where it is supposed the Marian executions were carried out. Kent furnished fifty-six cases—the greatest number next to London; the sufferers were chiefly Protestants from the Weald.

The course of the River Stour as it approaches the present bridges has been altered at different times. The *Domesday Book* refers to two mills under Essetesford. As a rule, water-mills form some of the best boundaries, and I can only account for the loss of one of them by supposing that the lord had a separate mill on each branch of the river; and that when the new channel called the Lord's Cut was made, he took down one mill, to improve the drainage of the neighbouring land, and to increase the power of the remaining mill, where the lord's tenants had the right to grind their corn. Under Ripton the fourth part of a mill is mentioned—not uncommon at that time. In the present day there are two bridges on the Hythe road a short distance from each other, and the Trumpet bridge on the

Marsh road, all kept in repair by the county. Then there is the old Hundred bridge at Buxford on the Chart road, now also repaired by the county, but formerly the borough of Rudlow contributed.

Ashford had its butts, and numerous statutes were passed relating to the use of bows and arrows, by artificers, labourers, and servants on Sundays and holidays. On the 1st of October 1569, William Brooke, Lord Cobham, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, attended at Ashford, with other Commissioners for Musters in Kent, and prepared a long report to the Privy Council touching the increase of harquebuses, and discontinuing the use of bows and arrows. In this report the Commissioners take the Privy Council to task.

In all the three Kentish rebellions of Wat Tyler, Jack Cade, and Sir Thomas Wyatt the men of Ashford took part, and generally sided with the people.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

From the civil we pass on to the ecclesiastical history of Ashford. The parish is in the diocese of Canterbury and deanery of Charing, and was formerly in the archdeaconry of Canterbury, but is now in that of Maidstone. It is not my intention to refer to the fabric of the church dedicated to St. Mary, described by the Rev. A. J. Pearman. In speaking of its early history, the *Survey of Domesday* must be again my starting-point. We find there that Ashford possessed a church; built probably of stone, from the facility which existed of obtaining it. As it was appendant to the principal manor, there can be no doubt that it stood where the present church does, it being near the manor-house and park, while the whole of the property which surrounded it was held of the lord either by freehold or copyhold tenure. When lay-lords of a manor were patrons, the boundaries of a parish were settled by them, with the consent of the diocesan; and the lord gave the glebe lands, and provided for the payment of the tithes and church offerings. One of his privileges was to sit in the chancel, and he, his family, tenants, and dependants, could claim the services of the priest. Thus the work of the missionary in process of time terminated.

In settling the boundaries of a parish in Kent no general rule was adopted; the boundaries of the hundred were not considered, but those of a borough at times regulated it. It was the same with

regard to manors; small manors were often grouped and large ones severed.

The advowson of Ashford Rectory was given to the priory of Monks-Horton in Kent, at its foundation, and the gift was confirmed by King Stephen, Pope Lucius, and Henry II. But here an important fact is wanting, which, as yet, has not been supplied by any writer that I am aware of: When was the church severed from the priory and re-united to the manor of Ashford?

From the reign of Henry I. to that of Edward III. (an interval of more than two hundred years) all our writers are silent as to the rectors and vicars of Ashford. On referring, however, to Archbishop Peckham's Register between 1279 and 1292, I find Robert de Derby returned as rector, and he took an oath that he would personally reside at Ashford, the patron being the lord of the manor (William de Leybourne).

During a vacancy of the See of Canterbury, between the death of Archbishop Peckham and the election of Archbishop Winchelsea in the reign of Edward I., there was a long controversy between the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, and the Archdeacon (Richard de Ferrings), who died on his return from Rome, where he had been to prosecute his suit respecting the jurisdiction of his office. Robert de Derby, the rector of Ashford, sided with his Archdeacon; on hearing, however, that the commissary of the Prior had threatened mischief to all who did so, he appealed to Rome for protection.

Again in 17 Edward III. (1343) that King, at the request of the Earl of Huntingdon, owner of the manor in right of the Infanta, his wife, granted a licence to Henry de Sodington (described as rector) to assign two chaplains daily to celebrate divine service for the good of the King, and the founder, and all the faithful, in a certain chapel in the church of St. Mary of Esshetisford, newly to be founded in honour of the Virgin, of St. Anne, St. Elizabeth, St. Catherine, and All Saints, which chantry was endowed with lands and rent in Ashford, Charing, Willesborough, and Kennington. This was done more than 120 years before Sir John Fogge's restoration of the church. The chantry was not suppressed until the reign of Edward VI.

In further proof that the parsonage appropriate with the advowson of the vicarage must have been still held with the manor, I may state that the Lady Juliana, desirous of making over to Edward III., for religious purposes, some of her vast possessions during her life, levied a fine in the thirty-sixth year of that King's reign con-

cerning this advowson, as well as other property in Kent, wherein she acknowledges the right of Adam de Warrewyk, then parson of this church, who was to hold it as of the Countess's gift for his life, but it was to become the property of Edward III. at her death, which took place in the year 1367. Seven years afterwards we find a grant from this King of twenty marks yearly towards sustaining one chantry of six chaplains regularly founded in the Castle of Leeds, "until the church of Ashford, the advowson whereof we lately gave to the prior and convent in aid of the said chantry, shall be appropriated to them." (Patent 48 Edward III, p. 1, m. 20.)

Five years later (2 Ric. II.) we find in the Register of Archbishop Sudbury (A.D. 1379) the institution of Sir Richard de Cotyngham, priest, as rector of Ashford, "on the presentation of the prior and convent of Leeds, the true patrons thereof." In the following year Cotyngham exchanged with Solomon Russell, vicar of Goudhurst. When the appropriation was fully completed I am unable to state; but Solomon Russell, it would appear, first held the vicarage under Leeds Abbey. The preceding incumbents had been called rectors. Where the original vicarage-house stood seems to be doubtful.

Thus in the fourteenth century we find the manor of Ashford with its demesne lands held by the dean and canons of the King's free chapel of St. Stephen's, Westminster, and its church, held by the prior and convent of Leeds, reduced from a rectory to a vicarage. I shall not therefore assume too much if I suggest that the kind offices of Sir John Fogge were exerted to improve the worldly position of its vicar, for we find Edward IV., in the eighth and again in the thirteenth year of his reign, granting his licence to the dean and canons of the chapel of St. Stephen to give and grant to Thomas Wilmote, the vicar, one acre and a half and a messuage, and thirteen acres of land, parcel of the manor of Ashford and the foundation lands, granted to them by Edward III., upon certain conditions made between the parties, reserving to the dean and canons 17s. yearly, as also 5s. 8d. as a relief "whenever the said church of Ashford of a vicar shall be vacant," with a power of entry and distress.

With the priory of Leeds the church of Ashford remained until, in the words of Philipott, "the rough hand of Henry VIII., like that of Æolus, scattered our religious houses to the winds," and the parsonage appropriate together with the advowson of the vicarage were finally settled by him on the dean and chapter of Rochester.

In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII. there is a return by Richard Parkhurst, the vicar, inserted in its proper place under the deanery of Charing, which comprises "the ground where the old vicarage stood," and thirty acres of wood. This return is printed in italics, and there is a marginal note that it is cancelled, because the valuation thereof is reformed, and a fresh one appears at the end of the deanery of Sutton, of which the following is a translation :—

"Reformation of the Valuation of the Vicarage of Asshetisford underwritten ; as well by virtue of a Royal Commission in the term of Michaelmas, 4 Edw. VI., as by force of a Decree in the Court of First Fruits and Tenths.

Asshetisford Vicarage, whereof John Poynt, Bishop of Rochester, is incumbent, is by the certificate of Thomas Moyle and Ronald Scott, Knights, and Walter Moyle, Esq., Commissioners in that behalf, worth as follows, viz. : In respect of the mansion, with two barns, one stable, one garden and orchard containing 2 acres, and of 7 other acres lying in Asshetisforde (besides 17^s yearly repaid out of the same to the Dean and College of the late College of St. Stephen of Westminster), 13^s. In respect of one enclosure containing by estimation 5 acres called the old Vicarage, 12^s. In respect of one barn called Court barn, with 41 acres of land, which the Sheriff there holds by copy of court roll, 67^s. And in respect of all other profits within the term aforesaid, £10. Sum, 14^l 12^s

Thereof paid yearly for synodals and procurations, 7^s 6^d

And so there remains clearly, 14^l 4^s 6^d

But nevertheless it is considered by the Chancellor and Council of the Court aforesaid that notwithstanding that the said vicarage, by reason of the conversion of pasture into tillage, and by reason that the private tithes and oblations there accustomed to be paid are all taken away (except four days of oblations) and are not now paid, is decayed and diminished to the yearly value of £6, as by such Certificate it more fully appears ; nevertheless there shall be allowed to the Vicar of the same Vicarage, of the said £6 decayed, but only 40^s. And so the said Vicarage is worth by the year clearly (besides 105^s 0^l^d yearly to be paid to the Lord the King for the tenth part of 52^l 10^s 4^d for the value of the Manors of Preston, Bekehelden, and Hoo, in the County of Sussex, 30 acres of wood there, and 13^l 6^s 8^d of yearly rent, formerly appertaining to the said vicarage and now alienated) 18^l 4^s 6^d. The tenth of which is 1^l 16^s 5^l^d."

In the present day I believe there are about twenty-six acres of glebe, which have been recently alienated from the rectory; and about eleven acres belonging to the vicarage.

Having endeavoured, I hope successfully, to trace the devolution of the title to the manor of Ashford, as well as its church, I will proceed to notice the College. But before I do this I must briefly refer to the will of Sir John Fogge, in 1490 (5 Henry VII.), and the deed afterwards executed by Dame Alice his widow, by which some of the property was given for the support of the fabric of the church (producing, with other gifts from the pious and benevolent, in the present day a yearly income of nearly £300). Passing over the superstitious uses in the will, I will only notice the gift to the church of the jewels and ornaments, which were to be placed in the keeping of the best-disposed man dwelling in the town, so that the churchwardens might have recourse to them at all such times as might be thought most for the honour and worship of God. Additions continued to be made to these jewels and ornaments up to the eve of the Reformation, for in 1503 we meet with a bequest of costly ornaments and vestments to the church by Sir John Goldstone, rector of Ivychurch, who was buried in the chancel of Ashford Church.

THE COLLEGE.

The history of the college or choir may soon be told.

Its foundation originated with Sir John Fogge, with the licence and in the name of Edward IV., at the commencement of his reign, and it was endowed with grants made by that King to Thomas Wylmote, the vicar. They comprised, amongst other property, a manor and advowson in Essex and a manor in Sussex, to hold to him and his successors in frankalmoigne; the condition being that two fit chaplains and two secular clerks should be provided, to celebrate divine service in Ashford Church, for the good estate of the King and of his kinsman George, Bishop of Exeter (afterwards created Archbishop of York), and of his well-beloved and trusty John Fogge, Knight, and Alice his wife, and Thomas Colt, while they lived, and for their souls and for the souls of the very dear Prince Richard, late Duke of York, the King's father, Edmund, late Earl of Rutland, his very dear brother, and for the souls of all other faithful people of the county of Kent, lately killed in the conflicts at Northampton, St. Albans, and Sherbourne. A proviso is added that the grant shall take effect notwithstanding

any previous grant of the three Henrys, IV., V., and VI., *de facto* and not *de jure* kings of England, to any religious house. These grants also provide that this chantry was to be founded according to the ordinances and statutes of Sir John Fogge, who constituted the vicar for the time being the master or prebendary, and gave to it books, jewels, and ornaments.

Edward IV. died in 1483, before Sir John Fogge, ere the foundation of this college was finally completed and before a common seal had been obtained. Only three masters had been appointed when the College was dissolved. Ashford was one of the two last colleges founded in Kent before the Reformation. Wye was the other.

CORRESPONDENCE, TEMP. HENRY VIII., ABOUT ASHFORD.

Between 1536 and 1540, on the 26th September, Sir John Fogge (who died in 1564, grandson of the Founder) wrote from Ripton to inform Cromwell (then Lord Privy Seal), that one Sir William Marshall, Parson of Mersham, "situate within two miles of his (Fogge's) poor House," had used language in the last commotion unlike a true and loving subject, and was guilty of extortion, especially towards the bearer of the letter (Thomas Green), and he besought Cromwell to direct letters to William Goldwell and to Anthony Aucher, and to one of the King's justices, to examine into the matter, assuring him that he was not influenced by malice.

In the following month Goldwell and Aucher reported to Cromwell that they had inquired into the behaviour of the Mersham parson, "as well against the King's Highness in this last insurrection in the north, as against other his neighbours;" and they had examined John Blechynden, John Knatchbull, and five other witnesses, who say that, on the eve of All Saints, Mr. Reginald Scott, on the receipt of the King's letters to prepare himself and his retinue, and proceed into Yorkshire, sent to Marshall the parson for one or two of his horses, who promised to furnish a couple, which he failed to do, and left Mersham the same night with them, and did not return to the parsonage until St. Andrew's Day. Marshall, in his defence, said the horses were his son's, and he lent them to Sir Anthony St. Ieger; and with respect to the extortion on Thomas Green, he had recompensed him with £6 13s. 4d. The report is signed by Goldwell and Aucher, and thus concludes: "And so the Holy Ghost have your Lordship in his most gracious keeping long to continue in honor."

Another letter written about this time from Fogge to Cromwell must not be passed over. He "advertizes" Cromwell that Dr. Goodryke, parson of Hothfield, came when Fogge was very sick, and reported that an enormous table had been set up beside a crucifix in the north aisle (the Ripton chancel) of the church of Esshetsford, and that he had "shewed the matter to his uncle Goldwell, a justice of the peace, and he caused as well the rood as the table to be taken away, but he would not take upon himself to punish the offender, nor the priest for his unfitting demeanor before he knew Cromwell's pleasure." Fogge excuses himself for not waiting on Cromwell in consequence of his great sickness, and concludes by soliciting Cromwell to procure for him, from the Dean of St. Stephen's, Westminster, the Stewardship of Esshetsford, "because it is the place of his birth." He sent by the bearer of the letter a *white* partridge, "which for the rareness of the thing I send unto your Lordship for a token."

ARCHBISHOP LAUD'S RETURN TO CHARLES I.

Religious dissent now made its appearance. In the reign of Charles I. we meet with proceedings before the High Commission against some inhabitants of Ashford called "Separatists." Archbishop Laud made annual returns to the King on the state of his diocese. In 1634 he refers to this body, "especially about Ashford side," and says that some of them had been called before the High Commission, and if found guilty he promises "not to fail to do justice upon them." Three years later (1637) he gives the King to understand that the Separatists continue to hold their conventicles at Ashford, notwithstanding the excommunication of so many of them. He describes them as of the poorest sort and very simple. He mentions Fenner, Brewer, and Turner as the ringleaders.

Towards the close of the reign of Charles I., John, second Earl of Thanet, fenced in and enclosed Great and Little Ripton, and the warren and adjoining woodlands, as a park of about seven miles in circumference; but it was found so far from the mansion at Hothfield, and so near Ashford, where soldiers were quartered during the rebellion, who could not be kept from killing the deer, that the Earl disparked it about 1655, and turned the land again into farms.