

THE LOWY OF TONBRIDGE

By W. V. DUMBRECK

THE origin, nature and extent of the Lowy have interested many writers and produced not a little fiction. Lambard starts a story about Richard FitzGilbert being granted an area of land around Tonbridge castle equal to the area he had possessed at Brionne in Normandy, precisely measured by a piece of rope. Harris elaborates this story and gives particulars of the separate judicial rights of the Lowy and perambulations of the boundary made in 1259 and 1279, acknowledging that they were supplied by "Captain George Weller of Tunbridge Town". The source of Harris' information is amongst the Weller-Pooley documents now in Kent Archives (KAO U38/Z2) and is marked "Copy taken out of an old copy". They are notes made by Thomas Weller (1602-1670) the parliamentary lawyer in Tonbridge and lessee of the castle and manor.

Why were two perambulations necessary and how are the differences between them explainable? The second followed the complaints of encroachments by Richard de Clare and his bailiff which are detailed in the Plea Rolls. We cannot rely on the names given by Harris (and copied by Hasted) as many mistakes have been made in the copying and re-copying. Fortunately the Archbishop's copy of the 1279 perambulation is still in the Chapter House library at Canterbury (Ch. Ant. T32). It is written in a clear thirteenth century hand and is in excellent condition. It repays detailed study.

The jury was as follows:

	Lord Johannis de Pekham	
	Lord Henrici son of Henrici de Apeldrefeld	
	Lord Bartholomew de Wateringebery	
	Lord Johannis de Morlay	
Knights	Ricardi Rodland	
	Reginald de Sinderhell	(Leigh)
	Willelmi Elnold	
	Willelmi de Erneregg	
	Petri de Chidingestone	(Chiddingstone)
	Ade Wikyng	
	Willelmi de Chitelcrofte	
	Roberti de Shibburn	(Shipbourne)
	Walteri de la Hale	(Chiddingstone)
	Gilberti ffromund	(Hadlow)

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Willelmi ffromund	(Hadlow)
Mertun de Badesell	(Tudeley)
Elye Brouning	(Chiddingstone)
Willelmi Godard	
Johannis Dragoun	
Willelmi de Durkynghale	(Leigh)
Gilberti de Chelcote	
Jocey Underevere	(Under River)
Willelmi Godefrey	
Willelmi de Polle	(Leigh)

Most of these names are those of properties which still exist near or adjoining the Tonbridge, Leigh, Hadlow and Tudeley parish boundaries. They were obviously chosen for their local knowledge and their lands indicate where the boundary ran.

The main text of the perambulation is given by Harris. In the first half of the document it makes twelve references to the boundary proceeding to houses or messuages but in the second half to only three messuages. The inference is that the eastern half of the Lowy was already well-settled country and the western half had few habitations. In the original the words used are *domus*, *messuagium* and *aula*, translated by Weller as house, messuage and hall respectively. However settled the country might be it seems unlikely that so many dwellings would lie so conveniently on the exact line and it is considered that by *domus* is meant "domain" or "demesne". Such a translation agrees with known boundaries of properties in the Hadlow area.

But the chief value of Ch. Ant. T32 is that it contains the hitherto unpublished findings of the jury, for which the following translation, with modern spelling, is suggested:—

These are the fees tenements and tenants, written below and on the back, found by the said jurors to be within the said perambulation which are not of the fee of the lord Archbishop of Canterbury :

They say that the tenants of John de Peckham in Hadlow, namely William the cheesemoñger, Ralph Boneburn, Roger Newman, William Adam, William Frankeleyn, John Raer and his brother, John Hamenet, Emma Rodland, Simon of Crongebery are of the service of lord Roger of Peckham and owe nothing to the earl and are of the hundred of Little field which is the king's and owe suit and service outside the Lowy at the court of Peckham. Item. They say that William de Brampton holds one third of a knights fee in Hadlow of lord Henry Huse of the fee of Gloucester, which is within the bounds, and owes suit and service without to the court of Chekesell.

Item. They say that Nicholas de Weald holds one twentieth of a

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knights fee in Hadlow of Addington, which is part of the barony of Monchenesey and is within and owes suit and service without.

Item. They say that the town of Hadlow which is within is of the Hundred of Littlefield and owes suit to the hundred and owes 10s. per annum to the sheriff's tourn.

They say also that the said Stephen of Penshurst holds the manor of Ashour in the parish of Tonbridge with all its tenants, which is within, for half a knights fee and is of the fee of Clare. Part of this manor, however, is a hundredsland, belonging to the Hundred of Wachlingstone.

Item. They say that the said lord Stephen holds the manor of Ensfield and Ramhurst with its tenants, which is within the parishes of Leigh and Tonbridge, for half a knights fee of the lord earl, and is of the honour of Clare. Part of Ensfield, however, is a hundredsland, belonging to the Hundred of Wachlingstone.

They say also that Tapners is held by the same Stephen for one quarter of a knights fee, which is of the fee of Kemsing, and is in the parish of Leigh. Part thereof, however, is a hundredsland, belonging to the Hundred of Wachlingstone, and used to attend the court of Kemsing every three weeks.

Item. They say that West Haysden in the borough of Barden, which is within and in the parish of Tonbridge, is of the fee of the Abbott of the Hyde. However it is a hundredsland belonging to the Hundred of Wachlingstone.

Item. They say that East Haysden in the same borough and of the same parish is held of the Prior of Newark in Surrey (?) and is a hundredsland belonging to the hundred of Wachlingstone.

Item. They say that Peter of Barden holds Barden for one knights fee in the aforesaid parish and is of the fee of Dannmartin (? St. Martin).

Item. They say that Laurence Chaun holds Bidborough of the lord earl for one knights fee and is of the honour of Clare.

Item. They say that all the tenants of Laurence Chaun of Leigh and Holbeame, except the fee of Watevill, are held of Kemsing in the parish of Leigh and used to attend the lawday of Kemsing and scot and lot there until Roger de Horne made them do suit at Hilden in the time of king H. and in the time of earl . . .

Item. They say that the said Stephen of Penshurst holds Bokyngherst of Laurence Chaun of the fee of Watevill in the parish of Leigh.

Item. They say that all the tenants of West Leigh in the parish of Leigh are of the fee of Fawkham and used to do suit at the Hundred of Somerden and suit to the court without at Fawkham

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until John de Stanigrave made them do suit at Hilden in the time of king H. and earl R.

Item. They say that all the tenants of Pauls in the parish of Leigh used to do suit at the Hundred of Somerden until John de Stanigrave made them do suit at Hilden in the time of king H. and earl R. and are of the barony of Horton.

Item. They say that all the borough of Kyngelond in Leigh, which is within, is of the barony of Dartford and used to attend the borough of lord Roger de Cransted until John de Stanigrave made them do suit at Hilden in the time of king H. and earl R.

Item. They say that lord Stephen of Penshurst holds Swartlingeragg and a field called Redeland and Enchidenne in the parish of Penshurst and of Leigh which the Prior of Tonbridge holds there and are of the fee of Lullingstone and in the barony, and all tenants of Swartlingeragg used to do suit to the Hundred of Somerden until John de Stanigrave made them do suit at Hilden in the time of king H. and earl R.

Item. They say that the land of Enchidenne in the parish of Leigh which is held of lord William Payfrere and of Simon of Etchingham is of the fee of Lullingstone and is in the barony and owes suit and serving without.

Item. They say that Alice who was the wife of Ralph of the Lese in the parish of Leigh has tenants within who pay 12s. per annum and are of the fee of Montbray and used to do suit without and do service and attend the borough of Hilden.

Item. They say that Laurence Chaun has tenants in Ramshurst in the parishes of Leigh and Tonbridge who are of the fee of John de Wauton and are of the honour of Clare and attend lawday at Hilden.

Item. They say that whatever lord Stephen of Penshurst holds at Durkinghole is of the same fee.

Item. They say that the aforesaid lord Stephen holds the manor of Penshurst in the parishes of Penshurst, Leigh and Tonbridge, which is of the barony of Clare and within the bounds.

Item. They say that William Dodebyn holds one quarter of a knights fee in the parish of Tonbridge and is of the barony of Clare and in the Hundred of Wachlingstone.

In considering the numerous excluded lands in these findings it is necessary to keep the origin of Wealden settlement in mind. It is well established that "dens" belonging to outside manors were formed within the forest. The *Victoria County History for Kent* (III, 190) makes the surprising statement that "the physical location of lands held of outside manors was far removed from the Lowy . . . they had no physical connection, as a rule, with the castle and lands around it".

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But the Tonbridge area was no exception, as was recognized by Furley (*Weald of Kent*, I, 122). The jury's findings, for example, that "the tenants of John de Peckham in Hadlow . . . owe nothing to the earl" are confirmed by the West Peckham and Swanton manor rolls (KAO 47/45 M21 etc.), which show that several areas in Hadlow, including the Ville, were dens of that manor. In the *Inq. P.M.* of 1293 on John de Peckham (PRO E152) they are furthermore called "the pasture of Haeseholte," confirming Dr. Gordon Ward's identification of Hadlow with Haeselholte in *Arch. Cant.*, XLV, and taking their origin back to Saxon times.

Domesday lists the following manors which had lands held by Richard de Tonbridge "in his Lowy":

<i>Held of the Archbishop.</i>	<i>Held of the Bishop of Rochester.</i>	<i>Held of the Bishop of Bayeux.</i>
Otford	Stone	Ridley
Northfleet	Southfleet	Ash
Wrotham	Halling	Swanscombe
Eynsford	Frindsbury	Seal
Meopham		Leybourne
East Farleigh		Eccles
East Peckham		Milton
Farningham		Luddesdown
		Offham
Darenth (Monachorum)		Hoo
		Little Wrotham
		Cooling

The value of these manors totalled approximately:

Archbishop	£39 and woodland for 73 swine.
Bishop of Rochester	£3
Bishop of Bayeux	£30 and woodland for 70 swine.

For comparison, the manor of Hadlow was valued at £30 and woodland for 60 swine, so that the figures for the Lowy dens give a good indication of the extent of Richard de Tonbridge's holdings in similar country. It certainly cannot be assumed that all the dens were near the Castle, but the fragmentary nature of the Lowy, as already shown, makes it very probable.

As the Lowy was not a continuous area the boundary described must have been an outside limit to ensure that all lands were included. It was the purpose of the perambulation to define the Archbishop's lands, which by that date included most of those formerly held by the Bishop of Bayeux. These were interspersed with other lands of de Clare and other owners. With the resources then available it would have been quite impossible to identify accurately all these detached holdings

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and the jury get over the difficulty by stating “. . . so that land which is not of the fee of the earl be always without.”

The parish boundaries were better known and there would be a tendency to follow them. An example occurred in the Shipbourne-West Peckham area, where the jury wandered into neighbouring Hundreds by following a parish boundary. There is confirmation of this in the Hundred Rolls (*Weald of Kent*, II, 129).

“The earl of Gloucester and his bailiff made an encroachment on the king in the Hundred of Hoo, beginning at the free Lowy of Tunebrigg, viz, three messuages, a corn-mill, a fulling-mill and 100 acres of land and wood.”

Fig. 1 shows this area. It was part of the borough of Oxenhoath, i.e. the western portion of West Peckham parish up to the Hadlow-Puttenden highway and contained Oxenhoath corn-mill, Hamptons fulling-mill and Clearhedges wood. It is the area contained in the boundary described in the 1259 perambulation up to the Horsegate in Hadlow. From there it followed the Hadlow parish boundary. The relevant entries in the two perambulations are:

1259. Weller

1279. Ch. Ant. T32.

“and so to the mill called Oxenhoath without; so that Slewewithmede be within; and so to the Horsegate . . . in the parish of Hadlow, which is within the Lowie; whence going unto the house of Browning which is without, and so straight over the field to the house of John de la Brooke, which is without; and so by the king's highway to the house of James Lomewood which is without; and by Lomewood (so that Lomewood be within) to the house of Benedict of Woodhall which is without; and so to the house of Hugh Perlaben . . .”

“ . . . and so from Claygate to Larkhale as the pales and hedge include the said forest, so that the said forest be within the Lowy and Larkhale (? within); and from Larkhale to the *domum* of Henry Newman, so that the same *domus* be without; and from the same *domo* by the middle of Lomwode to the message which was Richard Perlabens . . .”

Particulars of the de Clares possessions in the Lowy are contained in *Inq.P.M.* of 1296, 1306, 1315 and later. Summarized they were:

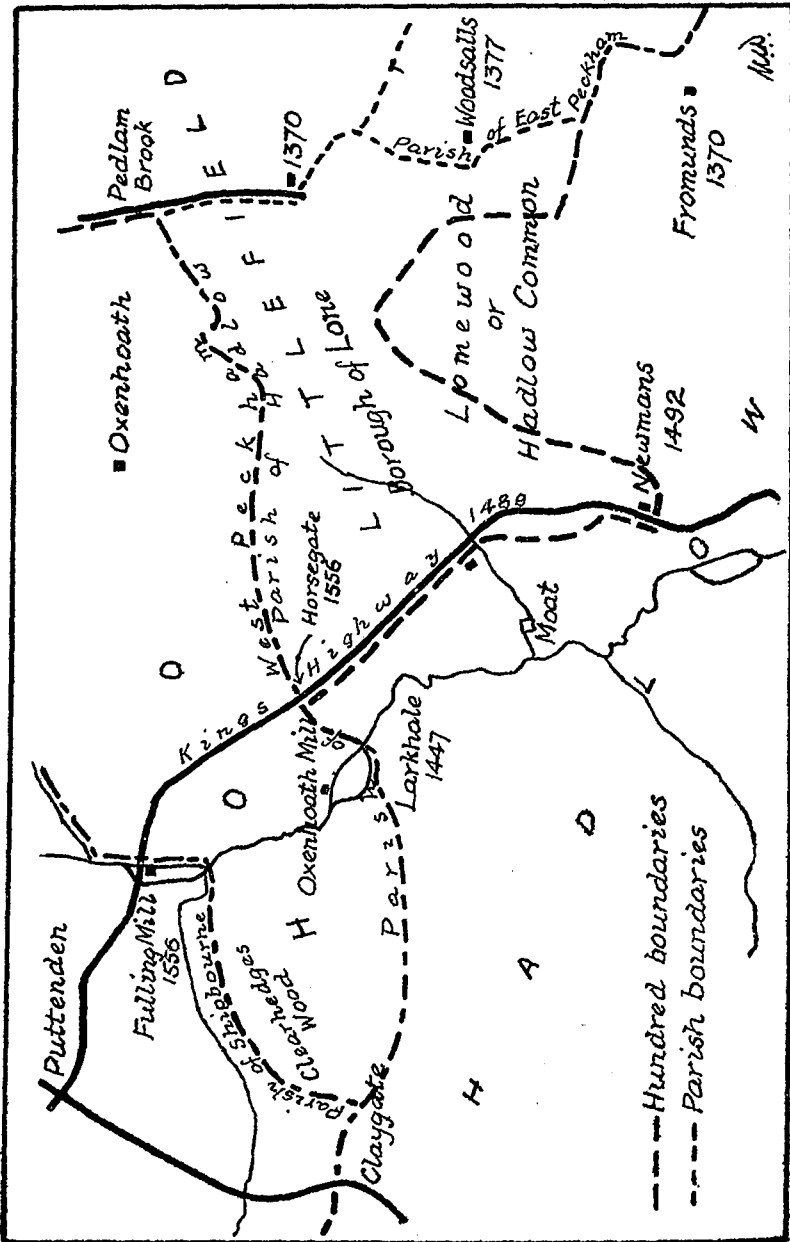
Castle and borough of Tonbridge

Manor of Dacherst (or Hilden) member of the honour of the castle, common fine of Hilden and South and herbage and mast of the chase

Manor of Hadlow

Six knights' fees.

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Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with the Sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office

FIG. 1.

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These are confirmed by later rentals and manor rolls of 1380 (Ch. Ch. Cant. Bedell Rolls), 1478-1481 (BM Add. Ch. 23788-23791) and 1556 (KAO MR 38/M1). The latter is a detailed rental which gives the sub-manors held of Tonbridge castle and confirms that much of the Lowy was held by sub-infeudation, usually by castle-guard and rents in kind. The chief sub-manor was that of Hadlow Place, the demesne lands of which were at what is now the "Plough" publichouse at Little Hawden. Its manor rolls and rentals (BM Add. Ch. 25980) show that it extended throughout the north-western part of Tonbridge parish and of Leigh and that it held lands in Leigh at, *inter alia*, Moorden, Charcot, Durkinghole, Wickhurst and Hollenden.

The 1259 perambulation included these places by following the parish boundary between Redleaf and Wickhurst, two places, Herings Heath and Ritherden, being identifiable from the tithe map. In 1279 the jury give an involved itinerary to the localities subordinate to Hadlow Place manor, adding the usual excluding clauses about lands "not of the fee of the earl". The isolated character of these localities leads to the conclusion that they were originally dens of the upland manors.

From the examples quoted it is clear that the 1259 perambulation generally followed parish boundaries. The later seizures of land by de Clare and his bailiff were assisted by the uncertainties this created. When the Hundred Rolls were compiled another survey was therefore necessary to examine the disputed lands.

The boundary of the Lowy, as a unit of local government, is shown in the first (1866) edition of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map. Fig. 2 is based on this map, with minor additions from the Land Tax records. It can be seen that the boundary is in remarkable agreement with the 1279 jury's findings, although it must include lands not belonging to the Archbishop, which could not therefore have been very extensive. It also agrees substantially with Hasted's map, where Somerden Hundred is indicated but not delimited.

Hadlow, at this date, was part of the Lowy, but in Domesday it is described as a manor of the Bishop of Bayeux in Littlefield Hundred held by Richard de Tonbridge. Although held with the Lowy it is always referred to separately. The manor was only part of the parish, which had in addition eleven sub-manors held by knights' fees varying from one-twentieth to one-half. Between Hadlow and Tonbridge Town lay the borough of Hadlow, which Harris and other writers confuse with the parish and manor.

The numerous references to Hadlow need further explanation. There was the parish, substantially the same as the modern parish; the manor, which included part of Capel; the borough, being the land in Tonbridge parish between Hadlow parish and Tonbridge Burgus;

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Hadlow Place manor at Little Hawden, which derived its name from the Hadlow family; and Hadlow Place in the south of Hadlow parish, the manor house of Thomas Fromonds or Goodins and so named by the Fanes in 1515.

CONCLUSIONS

From the evidence now available the following conclusions are reached:

1. The 1259 Perambulation followed parish boundaries, occasionally the wrong boundary; that of 1279, where differing, described the outermost dens.

2. The Lowy was not a continuous area. It contained lands held (a) by de Clare of (i) the Archbishop, (ii) other tenants-in-chief and (b) other dens of upland manors.

3. The greater part of the Wealden forest in the district had been cleared before the Conquest.

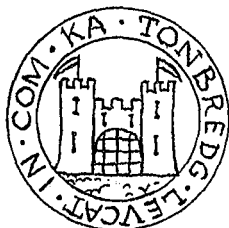


FIG. 3.

4. There was no large unified area around the site of the castle in Saxon times. At least two dens, later Houselands and the borough of Hadlow, were adjacent to the present castle precincts. It is therefore unlikely that a castle existed prior to the Conquest.

5. FitzGilbert would be allotted an area of land around the castle equal to the area he had possessed in Normandy, as it would have similar responsibilities. It necessarily consisted of dens already granted, with their parent manors, to superior lords. The rope story, which even our respected journal repeats (V, 123), may have had its origin in the circular shape of the parishes affected.

6. The primary purpose of the Lowy was the maintenance and defence of the castle. This is illustrated by its seal, as given by Weller (Fig. 3). The sub-manors into which it was divided were held by castle-guard and rents in kind. It subsequently became valued for its special judicial privileges and continued as an administrative area.

The writer desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to Dr. Gordon Ward's notes on the Lowy, now in the Society's library, of which he has freely availed himself.