

MARY-LE-BONE HILL, SANDWICH

By J. D. OGILVIE

MARY-LE-BONE Hill is a mound in the South Poulders marshes immediately west of the town of Sandwich. It is approximately 330 yards long and 150 yards wide, and before 1959 rose to a height of about 12 feet above the surrounding marsh. There were then two summits, the north-easterly being smaller but better defined than the south-westerly. It is separated almost completely from the surrounding flat marsh by a deep dyke. The marsh here averages 7 feet above O.D. (Newlyn), which means that the hill would be surrounded by sea at high tides were it not for the imbanking of the marshes.¹

The hill recently changed hands and the new owner and tenant, in the interests of agriculture, embarked on a scheme, in the summer of 1959, of bulldozer levelling and draining. The Ministry of Works was informed and the site was visited before and during the operations by Mr. E. Stuart Rigold, F.S.A. The Ash Archæological Group were also informed and a rota of observers was organized.

THE BULLDOZING

The bulldozer removed depths of about 6 feet of soil from the north-east summit, and about 3 feet from the south-west summit. The former was found to consist of tenacious blue-grey clay, and the latter of typical marsh red-brown brick-earth.

The surface layers contained a variety of small objects, including broken roofing tiles ; oyster shells ; corroded nails, horse-shoes and a spur ; a shilling of George III (1819) ; a fragment of black glass from an early 18th century ale-bottle ;² and sherds of glazed and unglazed pottery, mediaeval and modern, and of stone-ware. Of the datable objects none were found in predominating or great quantity. No outlines of buildings or occupation sites were seen near the surface.

THE FOUNDATION

On the south-west summit at a depth of 18 inches the bulldozer exposed a chalk foundation. With the co-operation of the farmer and the driver, work was stopped at this part of the site for 2 days to allow investigation.

¹ For the relationship between tides, O.D. and imbanked marshes see Evans (*Arch. Cant.*, LXVI).

² Date 1710-20 from a complete specimen washed up in Sandwich Bay, and now in the possession of Major F. W. Tomlinson, F.S.A.

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The foundation appeared to be that of a rectangular building, with external measurements of 30 feet by 20 feet, with the long sides lying east and west. There was a smaller rectangular projection at the east end, 12 feet long, the whole structure being in the form of a nave and chancel.

The bulldozer had been working diagonally to the north-west. The south-west half of the "nave" had been levelled to a flat layer of chalk, apparently a floor. This was separated by a bank of disturbed earth from the north-east half which had been sliced off horizontally 9 inches lower, exposing the deep part of the wall foundation. This layer was estimated to be 2 feet below the original surface level.

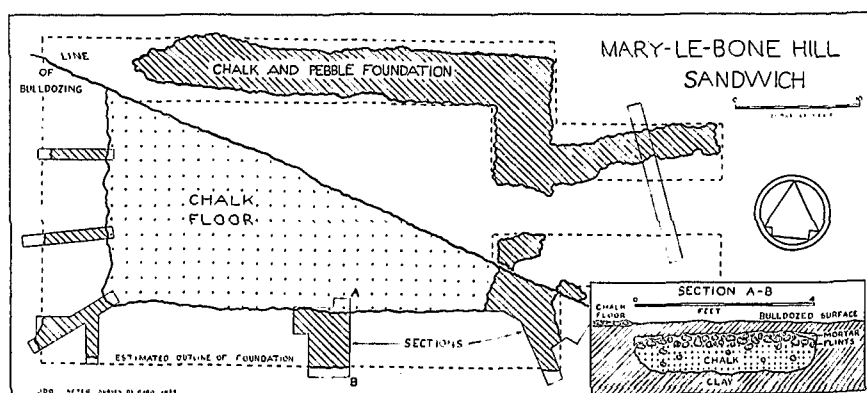


FIG. 1.

THE "NAVE"

The floor was cleaned and sectioned. It was found to consist of a 2 inch thickness of chalk, containing a few pebbles. Immediately underneath the floor was found one piece of glazed pottery (Find 1, below). Apart from this, the floor lay on apparently undisturbed soil.

Sections were cut to the south and west of the floor and, as expected the wall foundation was found to match the parts exposed by the bulldozer. It was composed of a mixture of chalk and black Woolwich-bed pebbles, which had been laid in an irregular trench to a depth of 1 foot. The upper surface was 4 feet wide and contained rolled flints up to 2 inches in diameter, levelled and then covered with mortar. The mortar was thickest towards the edges. The outer edge of the floor was 4 inches vertically above the inner edge of the wall.

No remains of wall structure were found on the foundation, but nearby were two pieces of marble (Fig. 2, 19 and 20) and a fragment of Roman tegula.

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The rest of the "nave" wall foundation exposed by the bulldozer appeared to be similar in structure. In it were found a glazed pottery fragment (Find 2, below) and a white rim (Fig. 2, 3).

THE "CHANCEL"

One limb remained, 6 feet long and 2 feet wide and deviating slightly to the north. A similar southern limb had been noted while the bulldozing was proceeding. No evidence was available as to the nature of the eastern extremity.

Several large stones were lying in the centre of the floor of the "chancel". Excavation below them and section across the "chancel" produced no more facts.

The foundation was devoid of roofing tiles, ash or timber, and no building stone was found apart from that already mentioned.

THE HEARTHES

Several hearths were found outside the foundation and at the same level and at distances of from one to fifty yards. In general they consisted of circular patches of burnt earth and ash, 3 to 6 feet in diameter, containing fragments of cooking vessels (Fig. 2, 4-18). One hearth was roughly made over a base of large rolled flints.

A band of discoloured soil was seen to extend southwards for 30 yards from the east end of the foundation. It was sectioned and found to be a filled-in trench, 3 feet wide and 3 feet deep.

THE FINDS

POTTERY

From Foundation

1. Fragment from under floor. Pale red smooth material; inside surface buff; outside, orange glaze, speckled green. Dated on the site by Mr. Rigold as thirteenth century. Not illustrated.
2. Identical fragment from foundation wall of "nave". Not illustrated.
3. Rim from foundation wall of "nave". Hard, smooth, creamy texture, white on section. Concave upper surface with external beading. Sharp carination 1 inch below. Thumb depression above where handle pressed on. No glaze, but other pieces of similar material found on the site had remains of green and yellow glaze. A jug handle and rim of this material found at Crixhall Manor, 6 miles away, by the Group, were identified by Mr. Gerald C. Dunning, F.S.A., as thirteenth century imported Gascony ware. Mr. W. P. D. Stebbing,

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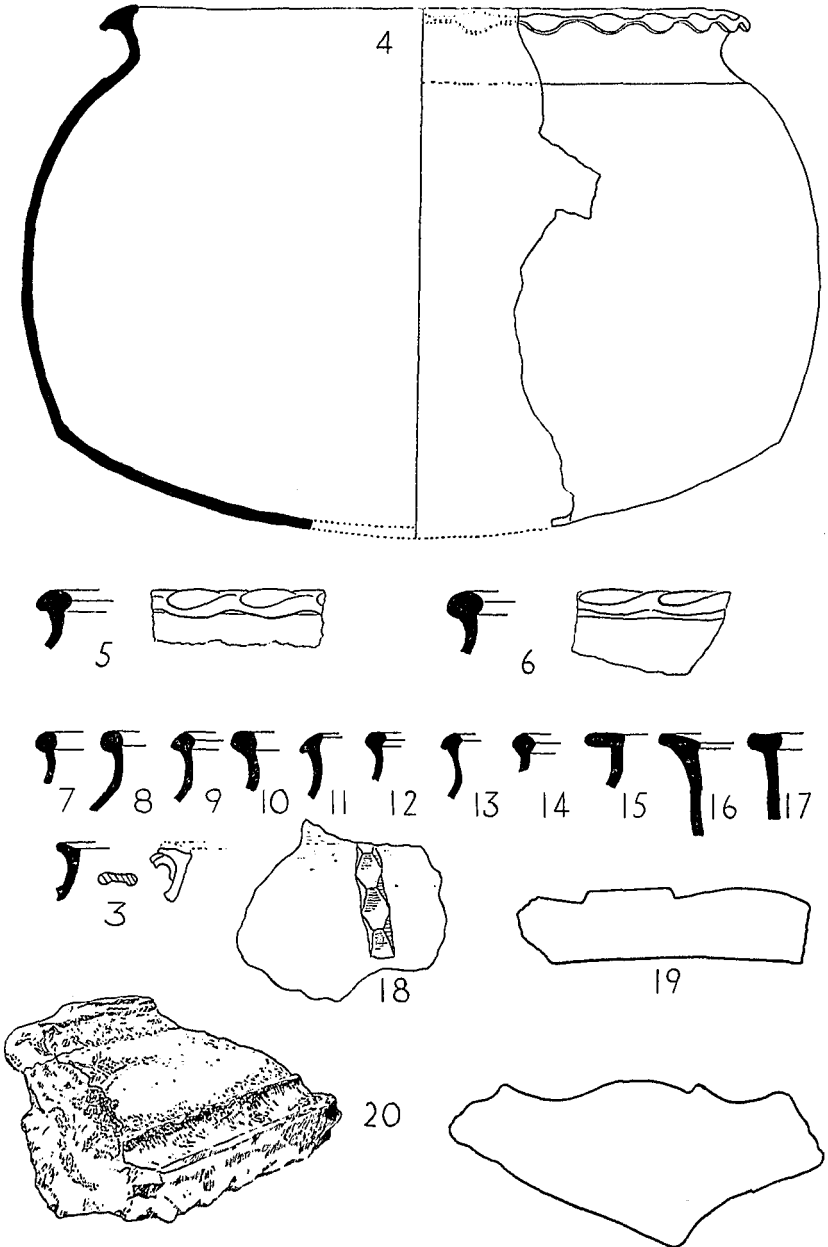
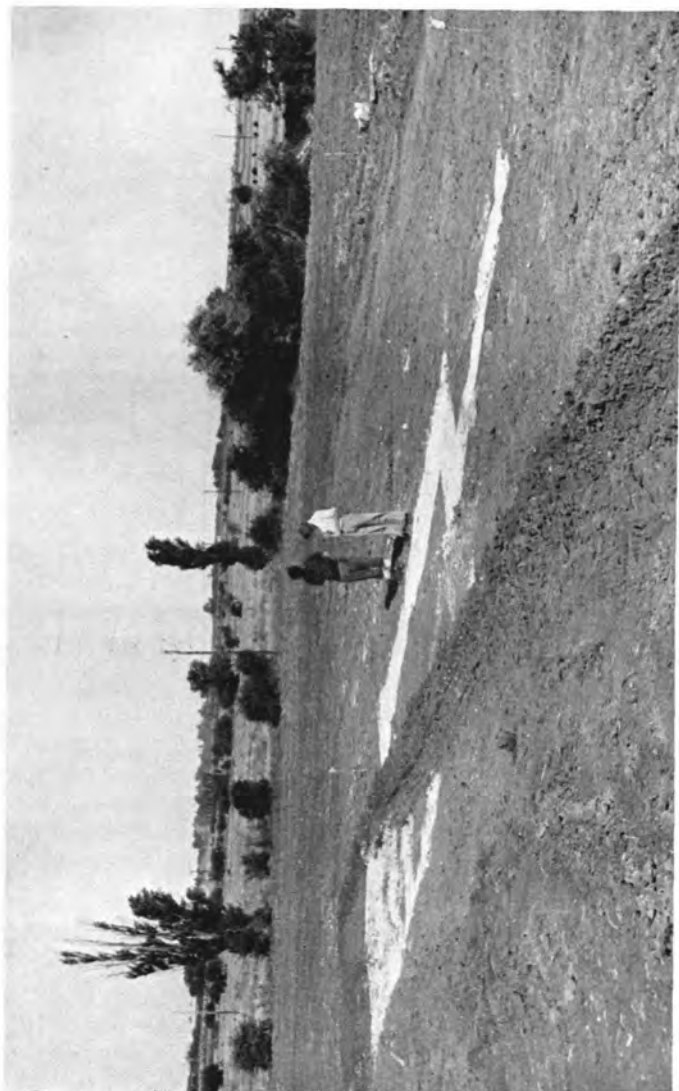


FIG. 2. ($\frac{1}{2}$).



Mary-le-bone Hill. Foundation from South-East.

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F.S.A., found quantities of this pottery at the nearby site of Stonar.¹

From Hearths

4. Large cooking pot from hearth immediately south of foundation at same level. The only sherds in this hearth. Hard, red, sandy, material. Transverse thumb impression sloping outwards on rim. Inside diameter of rim 16 inches.
5. As 4, but colour grey and thumb impressions oblique and horizontal.
6. As 4, but thumb impressions oblique and sloping inwards.
- 7-14. Rims from smaller cooking pots. All of the same hard sandy ware. Colour from grey to red. Some blackened by fire. Internal diameters $7\frac{1}{2}$ -13 inches. Basically identical round rim sections with internal projection (8), with variations due to the flattening of upper and outer surfaces.
15. Similar material. Diameter 12 inches. Flattened to form marked outer flange. Horizontal rilling on outer surface of neck.
16. Rim of large dish. Diameter 16 inches. Coarse, gritted, buff with red surface. Slight internal beading.
17. As 16, but finer material. Concave upper surface and marked internal beading.
18. Fragment of shoulder of large cooking pot. Hard, sandy, red material. Applied vertical strip with thumb impressions. These applied strips have appeared on pottery recently found in the locality at Wenderton, Crixhall and Grove. It is also noted on specimens from the Canterbury Rose Hotel site (*Arch. Cant.*, LXVIII).

Except for rims 16 and 17, there was no obvious shell content. Prick marks were absent. Bases found were plain.

All this material seems to be datable to the thirteenth century.

MARBLE

Several pieces of Carrara marble were found close to the foundation. Sections of two are shown (Fig. 2, 19 and 20). The "fish scale" tool marking and profile are exactly paralleled by specimens at Richborough Castle, presumed to be relics of the monument there, and pieces similar to 19 were found in the road surface of the Fleet Causeway, and at Ash village.

¹ See Mr. Dunning's description of polychrome pottery from Stonar (*Arch. Cant.*, LIV).

DISCUSSION

The foundation is thought, from the above evidence, to be that of a thirteenth-century chapel. Its ecclesiastical nature is favoured by the shape, suggestive of nave and chancel ; by the East-West orientation ; and by the absence of occupation debris. The pottery fragments, in the wall and under the floor, suggest the date.

The hearths appear to be contemporary, and it is suggested that they could have been used by the workmen employed in building the structure.

The wall foundation section shows that the super-structure was substantial, and that it extended to the full 4 feet width at its base. The smoothness of the upper surface of the foundation and the absence of rubble are in favour of a systematic destruction, and the paucity of occupation debris in the vicinity points to a short life of the building. Of the few stones remaining, the high proportion of Roman material—tegula and marble—and of large rolled flints gives rise to the possibility that Richborough Castle provided the quarry for the supply of stone.

The small size of the chancel is noteworthy. The opening from the nave could have admitted a moderately rotund person only with difficulty. Could the position of the stones in the floor indicate that it served only to house the figure of the appropriate Saint ?

When considering the possibility of a removal of the structure elsewhere soon after its erection, it is perhaps pertinent to note the liability of the site to flooding. Boys for example describes one great inundation in 1365, when Stonar was destroyed and the "marches towards Canterbury" endangered.¹

Two negative results are perhaps worth noting. Firstly, Mr. M. W. Thompson's article in *Arch. Cant.*, LXX led us to expect that evidence of mediæval salt-panning might be found at Mary-le-bone. No traces of this appeared.

Secondly, the site seemed likely to be of Roman significance. The map (Fig. 3) shows the extent of the low flat marsh in this area. The outline of this probably approximates to the Roman coastline.² An investigation is being carried out on the archæology of this shore. The presence of the Fleet Causeway has already been reported,³ though its position differed from that suggested by Margary.⁴ Winbolt's harbour⁵ (Fig. 3, H1) is supported geologically by recent deep excavation for farm drainage, and the Cooper Street crossing by finds of Roman

¹ *History of Sandwich*, p. 669. Dugdale's *History of Imbanking* 1662 Edition, p. 44.

² For discussion of this see Hardman and Stebbing (*Arch. Cant.*, LIII-LV), and the earlier article by Dowker (*Arch. Cant.*, XXII).

³ *Journal of Roman Studies*, 1968.

⁴ *Roman Roads in East Kent* (*Arch. Cant.*, LXI).

⁵ *Roman Folkestone*.

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material. Harbour or ferry sites additional to those suggested by Margary and Winbolt are proposed. The road from Dover to Woodnesborough has been sectioned at Telegraph Farm (TR 312511). It has been noted that the ridge of high ground running to the East from

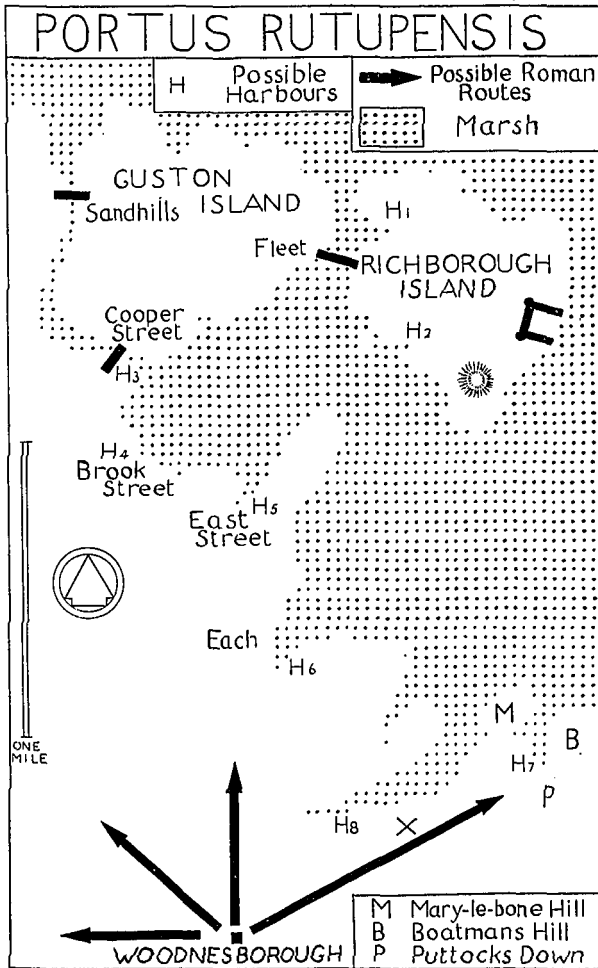


FIG. 3.

Woodnesborough terminates in three eminences, Mary-le-bone Hill, Boatman's Hill and Puttock's Down. The Roman road along here, proposed by Margary, and so admirably supported by alignment of road, footpath and boundary, has been confirmed by the finds of tegula and pottery fragments in the spoil from a sewer trench (Fig. 3, X).

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The nature of the destination of this road is unsolved. Mary-le-bone Hill seemed likely, but the only Roman material found could be explained by the use of Richborough Castle as a quarry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The specimens recorded here are deposited at the Royal Museum, Canterbury. We are grateful to the Curator, Miss Jean Cook, for assistance.

We are indebted to Mr. W. E. Drew and Mr. D. J. Larkins, for permission to carry out the investigation, and for their help; to the bulldozer driver, Mr. John Head, for his co-operation; and to the many landowners and tenants who have allowed us to carry out field-work and digging on their farms, particularly, in the case of the other sites mentioned in this report, Messrs. F. A. and H. V. Goldup, Mr. H. Huntley, Lord Northbourne, and Mr. Stevens.

Of the members of the Group, I would like to thank Mr. D. G. Downes for his historical investigations; David Ogilvie for surveying and for help with the drawings; these two, with Major W. F. J. Harvey, Donald Stewart and Christopher Ogilvie, for sharing the work on the site; and Mr. A. G. Southam for help with the field work, particularly in relation to Telegraph Farm.

HISTORY

By D. G. DOWNES, M.A.

FIRST a few words about the place-name Mary-le-bone Hill which seems at first sight obviously, perhaps too obviously, significant. Wallenberg does not mention it in either of his two volumes on Kent place-names.¹ Neither Boys (1792) nor Hasted (1799) mentions it. The hill is shown but un-named on the original 2-inch to the mile survey by the Board of Ordnance in 1799-1802. On the first edition of the 6-inch Ordnance Survey plan of 1871 it is called "Marrowbone Hill".

In the absence of any known early form of the name, its meaning can only be guessed at. The Marylebone in Middlesex, originally Tyburn, was altered in the fifteenth century to Maryborne from a church dedicated to St. Mary, and by popular etymology to Mary-le-bone (as if "Mary the Good")². Could something similar have happened here? Is the change here more conscious and more recent? Pepys referred to the Middlesex Marylebone as "Marrowbone".³ The full Wheatley edition of his Diary was published in 1893-99. Is it

¹ *Kentish Place-names* (1931) and *Place-names of Kent* (1934).

² Elkwall, *English Place-names*, 4th ed., 1960, p. 317.

³ *Diary*, 7 May, 1668.

possible that a local antiquarian, reading the Diary, assumed a similar corruption at Sandwich which had never in fact occurred and had it "corrected" for the next edition of the Ordnance Survey plan in 1907? (As will be seen below, the hill did at that time form part of the glebe of the vicarage of St. Mary, Sandwich: that fact might have helped bait the trap.)

If "Marrowbone Hill" is a true derivative of a lost early form, may the first element perhaps be OE *mersc* "marsh" or even OE *maer* "boundary"? Either seems more likely than OE *mere*, even in its secondary meaning of "sea". It should perhaps be noted that Wallenburg regards the neighbouring Boatman's Hill as a manorial name to be associated with a sixteenth-century Harry Bateman.¹

The hill is, since a boundary revision of 1936, in the borough of Sandwich. Before then it was in the parish of Woodnesborough and outside the Liberty of the Cinque Ports, and had evidently been so since before the fixing of the Liberty boundaries recorded in the Custumal of Sandwich of c. 1300.

I have not traced any mediaeval historical record of a chapel or other ecclesiastical foundation in the parish of Woodnesborough, except the parish church, the dedication of which is to St. Mary. The hill was, of course, always close to the borough boundary but, of the several ecclesiastical foundations in Sandwich, the sites of all are fairly safely known.

There was, however, at Sandwich a leper hospital, dedicated to St. Anthony, and commonly known as "The Maldry". Boys wrote "a small piece of land on the north side of the causey leading to Each-end is now called the Maldry and probably was part of the estate belonging to this house".² This piece of land seems to be that adjoining the main Canterbury-Sandwich road on its north immediately west of the now dismantled East Kent Light Railway: it is now used as a wood-yard. It is now and has always been in Woodnesborough parish. If this was ever its site, the hospital must have moved at least once. In late fifteenth century wills it is referred to as the hospital of "St. Anthony upon Eche Wall".³ Each is also in Woodnesborough parish, and not far from the piece of land called the Maldry or from Mary-le-bone Hill. Could the hospital have begun on Mary-le-bone Hill and, perhaps for health reasons, have quite soon moved further away from Sandwich, to Each?

Until very recently the hill formed part of the Sandwich glebe; but that seems to be without significance. It seems certain that it had only done so since the eighteenth century as a result of an augmen-

¹ *Place-names of Kent* (1934), p. 592.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 189.

³ *Testamenta Cantiana* (East Kent), p. 294.

tation of the vicarage of St. Mary, Sandwich by the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty.¹

In addition to the possibility, mentioned above, of removal because of threatened inundation it should also be remembered that the neighbourhood suffered violence in 1217 when, as Boys put it, "Lewis, the French King's eldest son, landed at Sandwich with 600 ships and burnt the town".²

There remains one quite interesting possibility. The Priory of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, Leeds was founded in 1119. Three years later Ascelina de Wodenesbergh granted to the new foundation the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Woodnesborough.³

In 1299 a special commission of oyer and terminer was appointed to settle a complaint by the prior that his servants had been assaulted and imprisoned at Woodnesborough.⁴

At the Eyre of Kent in 1313-14 the prior was presented that he had, six years previously, enclosed with a wall a piece of land in the villa of Woodnesborough containing half a rood of ground, which the tenants of Woodnesborough had been accustomed to use as common pasture. The prior appeared by attorney before the Court and maintained that the land was "the soil of him the Prior and of his church of Leeds and since a time to the contrary of which the memory of man runneth not, it has ever been the soil of the predecessors of him the said Prior and of their said church; and he further says that he did so enclose it, as he was well entitled to do". The jury, however, found that the enclosed piece of land was not and never had been the property of the Priory, and that the true owners were John de Malemeys and John de Shelvyng but that neither of them could enclose it "without wrong done to the men of Woodnesborough".⁵

Is it too far-fetched, in the absence of more evidence, to see here a possible explanation of how this small, apparently thirteenth-century, ecclesiastical building came to be deliberately demolished after only a short occupation?

¹ Hasted, Kent, IV, p. 280.

² *History of Sandwich*, p. 658.

³ *Arch. Cant.*, LXIV (1951), p. 27.

⁴ Pat. 27 Edw. I, m. 13 d. (Quoted in *V.C.H. (Kent) II*, 163.)

⁵ *The Eyre of Kent, 6 & 7 Edward II A.D. 1313-1314*, Vol. I (*Selden Society*, Vol. XXIV, 1910), pp. 59-60.