

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

JOHN BOYS OF MARGATE

Following the publication of my paper 'Lee Priory and the Brydges Circle', in Volume LXXVII of *Archæologia Cantiana*, I received from our member, Major C. Matson, M.C., the following note concerning John Boys of Margate.

'*John Boys*, 1782-1861, 3rd son of John Boys (1749-1824) of Betshanger Home Farm, the noted Agriculturalist.

Solicitor and 27 years resident of Margate.

Magistrate: Antiquarian; and Genealogist.

M.I. on the wall of Betshanger Church.'

Major Matson has 'little doubt' that this identification is correct. His 'direct line ancestors' were John Matson (1671-1731) yeoman of Sibertswold (Shepherdswell) who married, 1703, Ann Boys, y.d. of Robart Boys of Betzhanger.

R.H.G.

THE CHURCH OF S. JAMES IN THE ISLE OF GRAIN

This church is twelfth century in origin when it was of the usual Norman plan of nave and chancel to which it has now reverted. The nave is 56 ft. long by 22 ft. wide and the chancel 28 ft. by 19 ft.; thus the whole length of the early church was 84 ft. which was large for an early Norman church.

The building was enlarged in the thirteenth century by the addition of N. and S. aisles to both nave and chancel; this was done by opening up the Norman walls for the insertion of Early English pointed arches forming a four-bay arcade on the N. and S. of the nave and a similar one-bay arcade on the N. and S. of the chancel. A painting dated 1809, which hangs in the porch, shows this enlarged church having a small bell cote at the west end but no tower.

In 1815 the aisles were pulled down and the arcading filled in, as can be seen in the walls today. The original porch was necessarily destroyed at the same time and replaced by a new one in brick but in a different position (see plan). The ugly brick buttresses were added at the same time to the walls of nave and chancel.

Mr. John Evans and the writer probed for the foundations of the outer walls of the destroyed aisles and found them to run about 10 ft. from the present nave walls; they appeared to be about 20 in. thick.

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We also traced the foundations of the original S. porch which occupied a site one bay further to the E. than the present one. These details are shown on the plan (Fig. 20).

In 1840 the church was further repaired and 'beautified' but we have no details of what was done; probably, among other things, the inner sides of the walls were plastered and their outer aspects rendered.

We can only conjecture why an already large church in this remote island was further enlarged in the thirteenth century. The Church belonged since ancient times to the Nunnery of St. Sexburga of Minster, in Sheppey, but it was probably due to the munificence of a de Cobham, who were lords of the manor, that the extension was carried out.

We have no such doubts as to why it was possible for the parish to undertake additional building between 1903 and 1905. This was due to the existence of both the Port Victoria railway terminus on the shore opposite Sheerness and of the Royal Corinthian Yacht Squadron Station established in the river offshore; while to the south of the Church a battery of Heavy Garrison Artillery was maintained in the large fort, which was demolished in 1962. To these stations came members of the Royal family and foreign royal and imperial personages, and it was largely to their donations that such extensive work was possible. A tower 31 ft. high was built and a sacristy, this latter being on the site of the thirteenth century N. aisle of the chancel. Ill-advisedly the external rendering on the walls was removed and the stonework pointed; this removal exposed the soft stonework of the once interior arcading to the weather with results which should have been foreseen, for the stonework has since had to be protected by a hard mortar pointing.

The only indications of Norman work which remain today appear in the chevron decoration of jambs of the high and striking chancel arch, in the capital of a pillar in the S.W. corner of the nave and in the traces of two round headed, narrow windows high in the S. wall of the nave.

Thirteenth century work can be seen in the arcading visible in the nave and chancel walls, the chancel arch, two windows in the W. wall, five windows in the chancel, the west door and the wall paintings in the arched recesses on either side of the chancel arch.

In the chancel are two aumbries, two piscinas and magnum sedile. An opening behind the altar is either a credence shelf or an Easter sepulchre.

E. LAURENCE NICHOL.

DOVER HARBOUR BENEFACTOR—1721

In the year 1620 a second son was born to Robert Matson, Yeoman, of Upton Court, Sibertswold—or Shepherdsweil—in the county of Kent.

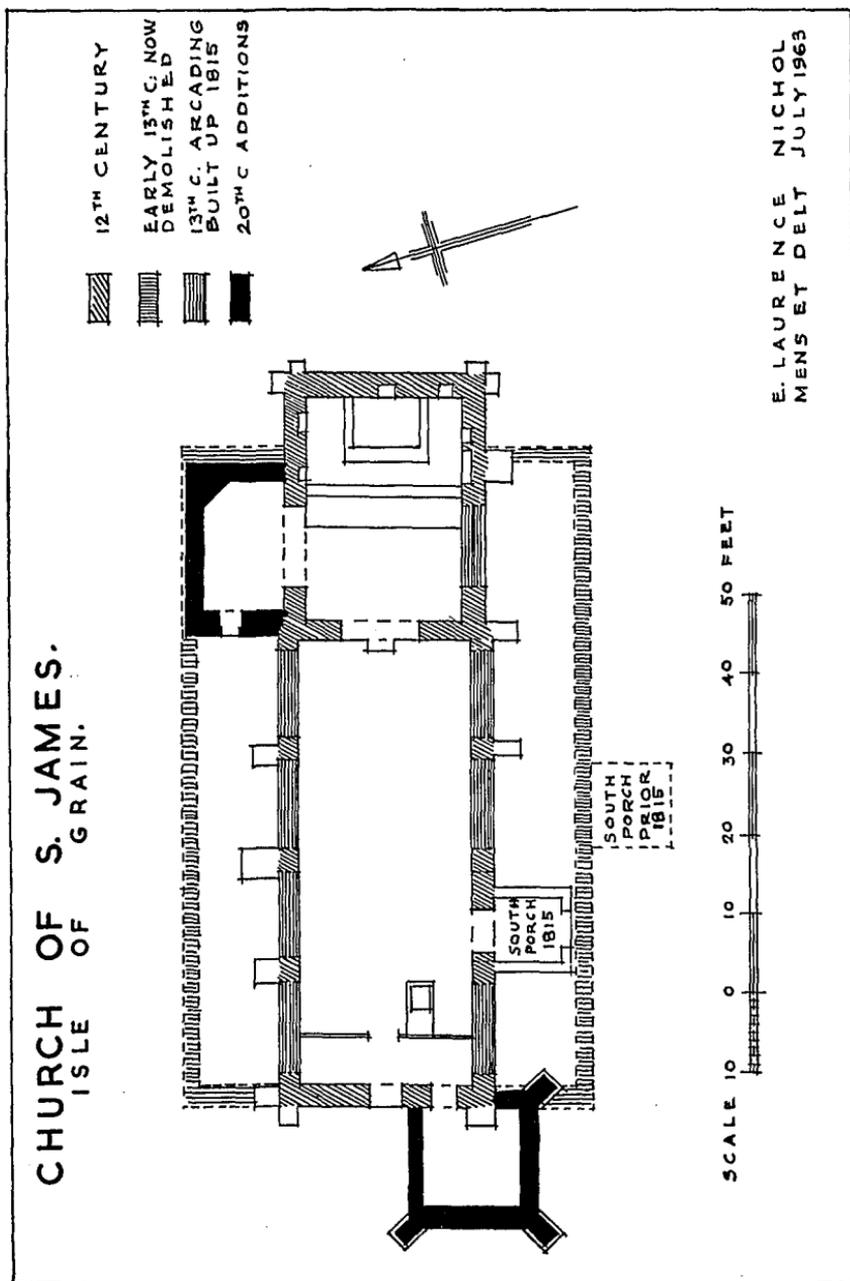


FIG. 20. S. James, Isle of Grain.

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This village is to be found on the rising ground five-and-a-half miles to the north-west of Dover and it is shown on the ordnance map with its alternative place-names—the only case of this kind within the knowledge of the writer. Sibertswold is the ancient name, and clearly means the weald or wood belonging to Sibert, the Saxon chief. Shepherdswell is one of the many distortions of the older name and has had no special association with a well or with shepherds. It is a new name only by comparison, and was certainly in frequent use in the seventeenth century.

At an early age John Matson (1620-86) left home and farm at Upton Court in order to proceed to the town and port of Dover and there become an apprentice to a merchant. It is clear that he did well from the start and we can safely credit him with character, ability, and energy. The apprentice developed into a successful merchant and the merchant duly became a prominent citizen who was twice elected to be the Mayor of his adopted town. John Matson married Mary Loom and she bore to him twelve children. Of these ten were sons and it is a remarkable genealogical fact that, with one short-lived exception, not one of them left issue behind him. Eventually most of the accumulated wealth of the family fell into the hands of the youngest son.

In the year 1676 a thorough survey was made to point out the limits of the Port of Dover seaward, and also the quays and wharves in the Harbour. 'John Matson's Quay' was then clearly described and the position and measurements of it were definitely stated. The site of it was on the north-west side of the Basin—now known as Granville Dock—and this was indicated to the writer by the late Mr. John Mowll who, in addition to being Register of Dover Harbour Board, was also a learned, enthusiastic, and kindly antiquary with regard to the history and affairs of the famous Cinque Port. John Mowll's assistance was of great value and was received just in time. Within the space of the next twelve months both he and his brother Rutley, the joint Register, had died, and from that time the special appointment was merged with that of the General Manager.

In the early years of the eighteenth century there lived in Dover a wealthy and eccentric shipping merchant. He was the youngest son of the John Matson to whom we have referred. We can read about Henry Matson (1667-1721) in Hasted's *History of Kent*, Lyon's *History of Dover*, the records of the Dover Harbour Board, and in his own last will and testament. By these means it has been possible to form some opinion on the life and outlook of this eccentric character. He was a bachelor and, by the time he had reached middle age, eight of his nine brothers had already died. With no near kith and kin upon whom he could lavish his affections, and to whom he could eventually devise and bequeath his real and personal estate, this wealthy merchant

seems to have developed a sentimental and dominating interest in the maintenance and prosperity of Dover Harbour. Whether he also took an active part in the control and administration of the port is not related, but it seems to be quite clear that his regard for it became the ruling passion of his life.

It is on record that Henry Matson was once walking round the pier in the company of a friend and sporting his favourite gold-headed cane, as was his regular habit. Just when he was pointing out some defect in the structure, he let slip that precious cane so that it fell through a hole in a plank into the sea, to be irretrievably lost to its owner. This apparently trivial accident was to have a serious influence upon the destiny of a considerable private fortune and upon the future prosperity of Dover Harbour.

In the year 1721 Henry Matson died at the comparatively early age of fifty-four and the terms of the will, which he had executed in the previous year, at once became the object of serious consideration. Certain bequests of sterling, shares, and real estate were made to relatives, friends, and personal servants and a comparatively small trust fund was created for the testator's 'Poor Relations of the name of Matson when ever they shall be in want.' This special fund has been administered ever since, and is now under the control of the trustees to the Dover Municipal Charities. These various bequests are of little interest outside the family circles, and call for no further comment here. We will now consider the sentimental and extravagant benefaction which absorbed the bulk of the testator's estate.

'It is my mind and will that my Executors shall purchase or convey the value of £150 per annum in lands and in ye name of ye Warden and Assistants of Dover Harbour for ye time being for ye use and repair of ye said Harbour for ever. But as I have observed a very great defect in ye workmen of Dover Harbour in not stopping ye Trunnel holes in ye Piles of the said Harbour I do hereby declare this Legacy to be upon condition that ye Warden and Assistants shall take care to have ye Trunnel holes stopt and constantly kept so and ye Pinns cut off close and even Else this gift to be void.' And so it came to pass for many years to come, as once a year the Mayor and Jurats as Surveyors of the said Harbour, together with the Clerk of the Cheque, the Overseer of the Workes and his band of carpenters, solemnly made their tour of inspection and attention. After it was over the whole party used to adjourn to an Inn to celebrate the 'Annual Trunnel Feast'. On the following morning a report was prepared for entry in the minute book of the Harbour Commissioners. This procedure was continued each year until 1835, by which time it had become something of a farce.

The reader—like the author—may be curious concerning the 'trunnel holes' which are so specifically mentioned in the will of Henry Matson.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary 'trunnel' was one of several variations of the word 'treenail', which was a wooden pin used instead of a metal nail, especially where there was exposure to the action of water. This was just our case. In the structure of piers and quays in a harbour, trunnel holes were those through which the wooden pins or treenails were driven for the purpose of securing the planks above to the timbers beneath. Even to an amateur carpenter it is obvious that such holes should be well stopt, and that the pins should be cut off close and even.

The haven between the Eastern and Western Heights of Dover was a natural port when Julius Caesar attempted to land there in 55 B.C. Dover has been distinguished as one of the historic Cinque Ports since the days of the Norman Conquest and the importance of its harbour has developed with our national history. As with most harbours, Dover has had its vital problems in the struggle against the action of wind and tide. In particular, there was the ever present danger of the harbour becoming unserviceable on account of the accumulation of sand and mud in its entrance. Vast sums of money were spent in successive attempts to deal with this trouble and still more capital expenditure was always needed. The Harbour Commissioners must have appreciated the public spirit of their benefactor but it is not unreasonable to consider that they became impatient with the periodical wait for the annuity, and turned their thoughts towards the acquisition of the capital money.

In 1772 the Court of Chancery decreed that the ownership of certain properties of Henry Matson's estate, which had hitherto been charged with the annuity, should be vested in the Harbour Commissioners and in 1862 they obtained permission to sell those properties and apply the proceeds to the improvement of the harbour. By that time the real estate had greatly improved in value and at the auction held at the Fountain Hotel, Canterbury, on the 25th July in that year the several properties realized the figures shown below:

Digges Place, Barham, House and Farm	£10,000
Singledge Farm, Coldred	£5,260
Horsehead Farm, Barham	£1,260
Beerhouse at Barham	£180
Barham Mill, House and Land	£150
Standing Timber	£270

Solton Farm, West Cliffe, had been sold in 1800 for £4,140. So that the total capital money accruing to the Commissioners of Dover Harbour from the estate of Henry Matson was £21,260.

The author of this note is grateful for this opportunity to express his sincere thanks to the General Manager and the Chief Engineer of

the Dover Harbour Board for the kindly reception and the generous assistance which they have given to him in this sphere of his search for family history.

COLIN MATSON.

THE FIELD SYSTEMS OF KENT

A. R. H. Baker, *The Field Systems of Kent*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of London, 1963.

Since H. L. Gray's account in 1915 of English field systems, further studies have extended the limits of the midland common field husbandry. Ambiguity about the Kentish field system has remained, there being too few exhaustive studies of individual townships. This thesis examines in detail the history of field arrangements in Gillingham, Wrotham and Deal, localities having open fields bearing some resemblance to those of the midlands. A clear picture of the effects of gavelkind tenure emerges. Partitioning of almost compact family holdings produced a field system superficially resembling the midland common field system, but with three important differences: first, isolated farms and hamlets were as much an element of the landscape as nucleated villages; secondly, partitioning of arable fields could produce, within a single township, many fields subdivided into unenclosed parcels, multi-field rather than a two- or three-field system; thirdly, there was no common pasturing over the fallow arable, except by private agreement. Differences between field systems in the midlands and in these three Kentish localities are important enough to justify the distinction originally drawn by Gray but lately under fire. An attempt is made to place the studies of Gillingham, Wrotham and Deal in a county setting, bearing in mind that this thesis is not primarily concerned with the pastoral, later-settled Weald, nor with marshland regions. Surveys of the whole county in the seventeenth century and again in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries suggest that differences between field systems in various parts of Kent reflect different inheritance practices, physical environments, periods of settlement and types of farming, but that these are small by comparison with fundamental differences between open fields in Kent and those in the midlands.

FILMSTRIP

A film-strip, which is being produced with help from the Lower Medway Archæological Research Group, is nearly completed. Entitled 'The Antiquities of Kent', this film-strip deals with the archæology of Kent from the Palæolithic occupation of Oldbury to the end of the Romano-British period. Its object is to provide an outline of the

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history of the county between these periods by considering the remains still to be seen in the county.

It is also hoped that, besides providing a picture of the methods used in archaeological research, it will stimulate 'fireside archaeologists' into active participation in field work.

We hope to have this film-strip finished by the end of 1963. Its price will be 15s., including comprehensive notes. We should be glad to hear from any member who would like a copy and grateful for any help towards publicising the existence of this film-strip among friends and others likely to be interested in it.

D. BARTRAM.
P. WHITEOAK.