

## RUTUPIÆ.<sup>1</sup>

By HENRY SHARPE.

There is no reason to doubt the correctness of the generally received opinion that Richborough Castle is the remains of the Roman military station Rutupiæ. It would therefore be a waste of time to discuss that point. There are, however, two other questions not yet settled, and which, as far as I can ascertain, have never been discussed. They are—Where was the harbour of Rutupiæ?—and How is it that there is no road from Canterbury to Richborough Castle? Richborough Castle is several miles from the sea. The principal road in those parts is the one from Canterbury to Sandwich, and a small road branches out at right angles to it and goes to Richborough Castle.

In order to work out these questions I have been to Richborough Castle, Sandwich and the neighbourhood, and have examined the country as far as Dover and the road from Dover towards Canterbury for a few miles.

Rutupiæ is mentioned in the following places in the classics. The quotations are arranged in chronological order, as far as possible :—

*Lucan*, A.D. 65, *Pharsaliæ*, Lib. 6, v. 64, poetry—

“Rutupinaque littora fervent.”

*Ptolemy*, A.D. 160, Lib. 2, cap. 3—

“Post quos maximi orientales Cantii, in quibus urbes Londinium, Daruerninm, Rutupiæ.”

*Antoninus*, A.D. 300, *Itinerary*—

“Iter Britanniarum.

“A Gessoriaco de Gallis Ritupis in portu Britanniarum stadia numero CCCCL.”

“A vallo ad Portum Ritupis.”

“Ad Portum Ritupis.”

*Ausonius*, A.D. 350, poetry—

“Rhutupinum latronem.”

“Rhutupinus ager.”

“Tellus quem Rhutupina tegit.”

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Canterbury Meeting of the Institute, July 27th, 1896.

*Animianus Marcellinus*, A.D. 375, Lib. 2, cap. 1—

“Ad Rutupias sitas ex adverso defertur.”

Lib. 27, cap. 8—

“Defertur Rutupias stationem ex adverso.”

*Peutinger's Tables*, A.D. 399, Segment I—

“Ratupis.”

*Orosius*, A.D. 417, Lib. I, cap. 2, par. 17—

“Quæ dicitur Rhutupi portus.”

*Notitia Imperii Romani*, A.D. 425—

“Rittubis.”

“Rutupis.”

The spelling varies very much, and, what is more important, the name varies. Sometimes it is Rutupiæ, sometimes the harbour of Rutupiæ, and once the military station Rutupiæ. I avoid the use of the word “port,” because that is used sometimes for “harbour,” sometimes for “town.” The variation in the name seems to suggest that the military station and the harbour were not close together. In addition to the quotation given about the military station, we know from the *Notitia Imperii Romani* that a legion was quartered here.

In order to make my case clear it is necessary to examine the principal roads in this part of the country and to show what changes have taken place in the coast for some distance on each side of Richborough Castle.

Antoninus, in his *Itinerary*, makes the road from London divide into three at Durovernum, now Canterbury, and go—

“Ad Portum Ritupis XII m.p.

Ad Portum Dubris XIII m.p.

Ad Portum Lemanis XVI m.p.”

His distances, as usual, are not very exact. These roads may be seen on the one-inch Ordnance map, leading, roughly speaking, to Sandwich, Dover, and Lympne.

To begin with the last of the three: it runs from Canterbury a little to the west of south. It is very straight, and is marked on the Ordnance map as a Roman road. It points to Lympne, but does not go quite so far. The Canterbury end of it is also missing. As the Portus Lemanis has ceased to exist, the road is very little used and partly obliterated. The sea formerly ran up between

Romney marsh and the solid ground of Kent, as Camden tells us in his *Britannia* 1607, translation by Gibson 1753, column 255 :—

Hith	“At four miles distant, is Hith, one of the Cinque
or	Ports, from whence it had that name hīð in Saxon
Hide.	signifying a port or station, though at present it can
	hardly answer the name, by reason of the sands heaped
	in there, which have shut out the sea at a great
	distance from it. Nor is it very long since its first
West Hythe.	rise, dating from the decay of West-hythe; which is a
	little town hard by to the west, and was a harbour
said in 1607.	till in the memory of our grandfathers the sea retired
	from it. But both Hythe and West-hythe owe their
	original to Lime, a little village adjoining and formerly
Portus.	a very famous port before it was shut up with sands
Lemanis.	cast in by the sea.”

At the point beyond Lympne, where this road formerly reached the coast, are the remains of a Roman fortification now known as Stutfall Castle.

The second road, from Canterbury to Dover, is not very straight. There are several turns in it near Dover. There are straight pieces nearer Canterbury, but on the whole it is not so straight as a Roman road ought to be. It is not like the one from Canterbury to Lympne, or the one to be described later. The Romans may have used and improved the road made by the Britons. We know that the Britons did make roads, because Cæsar tells us in his *De Bello Gallico*, Lib. 5, cap. 19—

“Omnibus viis notis semitisque essedarios ex silvis emittebat.”

“He sent his chariot soldiers out of the woods by all known ways and lanes,—or, by highways and bye-ways.”

Dover at the time of the Romans was different from the present town. The present harbour, and nearly all the ground in front of the cliff, are the result of works begun in Henry VIIIth's time. Shortly before that there was sea between the two cliffs, and Leland, writing at the same time, says that cables and anchors have been dug up in the ground between the hills. The old harbour is said to have been silted up in the time of the Saxons; but something of it remained in the time of Domesday book. In the time of the Romans the sea is supposed to have run a mile up the valley.

The third road from Canterbury, towards Sandwich, is a good road, but not straight. It may have been a British road improved by the Romans. It cannot have run to Sandwich in Roman times. Montagu Burrows, in his *Cinque Ports*, 1888, p. 30, says—

“Sandwich and Stonar were wholly English. No Roman remains have been found at either.”

It will be shown that Sandwich is not mentioned till more than 200 years after the Romans left, and that there is good reason to suppose that the land upon which it stands and the land over which the Sandwich end of the road runs were not formed when the Romans were here.

The latest mention of Rutupiæ in history is by the Venerable Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*, written in 736; that is, 300 years after the departure of the Romans. He is partly copying from Orosius, but appears to know the town that he is writing about. In Book I, chapter 1, par. 4, he says—

“Habet a meridie Galliam Belgicam, cujus proximum litus transmeantibus aperit civitas quæ dicitur Rutupi Portus, a gente Anglorum nunc corrupte Reptacaestir vocata.”

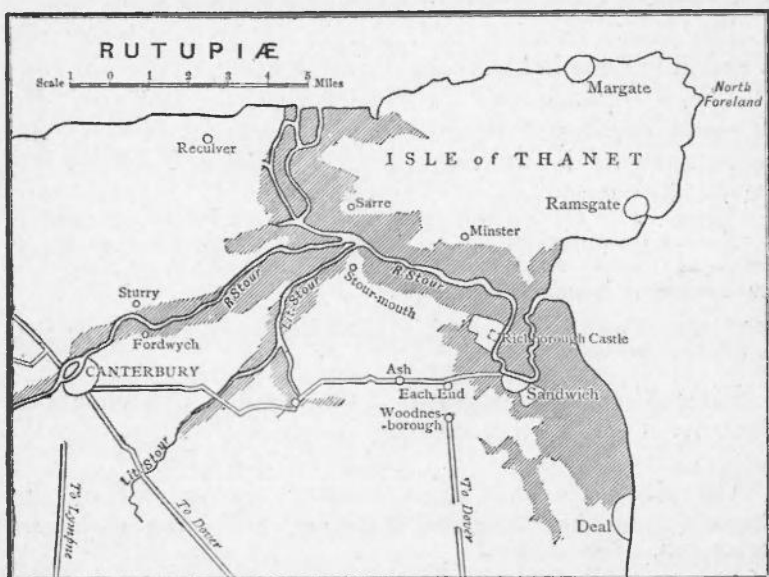
“Rutupi Portus, now corruptly called Reptacaestir by the Angles, is the nearest port to France.”

King Alfred, in his version of Orosius, written about 900, gives part of the sentence in which the above quotation occurs, but omits the part about Rutupiæ.

The *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, after the arrival of the Saxons, does not mention Rutupiæ, but often mentions Sandwich.

Since the time of the Romans great changes have taken place on the coasts of Kent and Sussex. The western half of Romney marsh has been formed. The strait between the Isle of Thanet and Kent has been filled up. The Isle of Sheppey, which in the time of the Saxons was described as in the Thames between Essex and Kent, but nearer to Kent, is now only separated from Kent by a small stream, and is several miles from Essex. Many harbours have been filled up. No information is available about what land has been washed away. It is the forming of the land between the Isle of Thanet and Kent that most concerns us here.

The one-inch Ordnance maps of the first edition give important information, which is not to be found in those lately issued. In the earlier ones marsh formed by the deposit of mud and shingle banks are marked in a different way from solid ground. This shows what parts are now dry land, which were under water at no very distant time. In Sussex these places are called levels, as Pett Level, Pevensey Level, and the levels at Brighton. It is a very useful word, because it is often not possible, by looking at the surface, to see whether there is marsh, or shingle underneath. For my purpose it is immaterial



which it is. The map shows these levels hatched. It is taken from the Ordnance map, with some slight corrections near Sandwich from my own observations.

Solinus, who wrote about the year 238, says in his *Polyhistor*, Chapter XXV—

“Thanatos insula alluitur freto Gallico; a Britanniae continente æstuario tenui separata,”

which may be translated into English thus—

“The Isle of Thanet is situated in the Straits of Dover, and is separated from the mainland of Britain by a narrow strait.”

Bede, in his *Ecclesiastical History* written about 736, says in Book I, Chapter XXIV.—

“Est autem ad orientalem Cantiae plagam Tanatos insula non modica, id est magnitudinis, juxta consuetudinem æstimationis Anglorum, familiarum sexcentarum, quam a continenti terra secernit fluvius Vantsumu, qui est latitudinis circiter trium stadiorum et duobus tantum in locis est transmeabilis, utrumque enim caput protendit in mare,”

meaning—

“The Isle of Thanet is separated from Kent by the river Wantsome, which is about three furlongs wide, and can be crossed only in two places.”

By “transmeabile” he probably means fordable, as of course it could be crossed anywhere.

After this the strait was filled up by degrees, until, in the time of Henry VII, a bridge was built over it at Sarre, on the road from Canterbury to Ramsgate. Montagu Burrows, in his *Cinque Ports*, page 245, says—

“Sarre. In 1485 we find from the Rolls of Parliament that a bridge was permitted to take the place of the ferry, which was so ‘swathed, growen and hyged with wose mudde and sand that no fery or other passage may be there.’”

Possibly this bridge was not built till later, or it may have been a drawbridge, for John Twine wrote 105 years later, in 1590, in his *De Rebus Albionis*, page 25—

“Thanatos enim nostro fere ævo, ex insula facta est peninsula sive Chersonesus, superantibus adhuc octo fide dignis viris, qui non modo cymbas minutiores, verum etiam grandiores naviculas, onerariasque measse et remeasse inter insulam et nostram continentem, frequente navigatione vidisse se aiunt.”

“Thanet was almost in our time changed from an island into a peninsula, as eight reliable men now living affirm, who have seen not only small vessels, but large merchant ships pass and re-pass between the island and the mainland.”

Reasoning backward, if the bridge was authorised in 1485, and the strait was three furlongs wide in 736, we may conclude that at the time the Romans were here, from 43 to 436, the strait was considerably more than three furlongs wide. The width of the level is in one place rather less than a mile. In most places it is between one and two miles wide. Fortunately, we have evidence of the width of the strait in the time of the



Romans. Boys, in his *History of Sandwich*, 1792, page 865, writes :—

“The extensive tract of marsh land lying between Thanet and Walmer, and extending from the shore to Canterbury, was formerly the bed of the Portus Rutupinus, and in all probability was covered with the sea at the time the Romans were in this country. A strong presumptive proof of this is, that no remains whatever of that people occur anywhere throughout this flat district, whereas we meet with coins and other Roman matters the moment we ascend the rising borders of the marsh.”

E. Hasted, in his *History of Kent*, 1778–99, Vol. III, page 386, note b, writes :—

“Richborough. This tract of land is supposed to have been an island, in the antient state of the country, and it is at this time cut off from Guston by a narrow slip of marsh, across which, even now, in wet times, the water flows, insomuch that people passing along from Ash to Richborough are obliged to pass through it.”

Except the passage quoted from Bede, no mention can be found of a harbour at Rutupiaë or Richborough after the time of the Romans. The statement by Gocelinus in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, that St. Augustine landed at Richborough in 597 is not considered reliable. No earlier histories mention the place where he landed.

The harbour which took the place of Rutupiaë was Sandwich. The first reliable mention that we have of this place is in the *Life of St. Wilfrid*, by Eddi, chapter 13, written in 711. The event recorded was in 666—

“Gloriose autem a Deo honorificati, gratias Ei agentes, vento flante ab Africo, prospere in portum Sandwicie salutis pervenerunt.”

“With the help of God, and giving thanks to Him, they arrived safely at the harbour of Sandwich with a south-west wind.”

In the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* between the years 851 and 1066 Sandwich is often mentioned. Large fleets sometimes lay in the harbour. The only other harbour on that coast capable of containing a fleet appears to have been Pevensey. Sandwich and the four other Cinque Ports received a charter from Edward the Confessor about 1050. Other ports were added from time to time. They were bound to furnish the King with ships and men for a short time every year, and in return had certain immunities. The original number of ships that they were bound to furnish was fifty-seven. The numbers

varied from time to time, but they continued to furnish a large number down to the time of Queen Elizabeth. Hastings alone supplied twenty ships to oppose the Spanish Armada. In 1626 the Ports made their last contribution—only two ships, on the demand of Charles I. By that time the harbours had been nearly filled up by deposits from sea or river. Sir Walter Raleigh, writing to Queen Elizabeth, *A Discourse of the Sea ports, principally of the Port and Haven of Dover*, says—

“ . . . Henry the 8th in his time . . . when Sandwich, Rye, Camber and others were good havens . . . (these havens being now extreemly decayed) no safe Harbour being left in all the Coast almost between Portsmouth and Yarmouth.”

Sandwich harbour has disappeared. The town is apparently built upon the level. There are marsh and ditches inside the wall. I have not been able to find any part of the town which is decidedly above the level, though of course in a town of that age some streets are a little higher than others. The site of the wall is now shown by a raised walk. Outside the wall to the south-east is some ground a little above the level, which must formerly have been an island. The railway passes through it in a cutting. I have not found any book or map which shows upon which side of the town the harbour was. I enquired at Sandwich and was told that there was no old map there. The town is almost in the shape of a semi-circle, the straight side facing north-east, and along this side the River Stour runs. It is surrounded by a wall except on the north-east, so that the harbour was probably on that side when the wall was built, in the time of Edward IV.

The original Cinque Ports were Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover, Sandwich. These, with the two ancient towns Rye and Winchelsea, which were added shortly afterwards, were called the Head Ports. All their harbours are gone. Hastings had two: One is filled up and used as a cricket ground, the other cannot be found. The first Winchelsea was washed away by the sea, the second was left high and dry by the retiring of the sea. Rye is on a river some miles from the sea. Romney is half a mile from the shore. Hythe is a mile inland. Dover old harbour is filled up, and the entrance



to it is half a mile from the sea. Sandwich is on a river four miles from its mouth. It is no wonder that there is difficulty in finding the more ancient harbour of Rutupiæ.

Taking into consideration all the changes in the coast that have been mentioned, and the width of the strait given by Bede, and the building of the bridge, there is every reason to suppose that the whole, or nearly the whole, of the level between the Isle of Thanet and Kent shown in my map was not formed in the time of the Romans, and that its place was occupied by water. This would leave the military station Rutupiæ upon an island on the north side of the entrance to a harbour a mile and a-half long by a mile wide. It may seem awkward to us to have a military station upon an island. It was probably placed there for safety. On this coast there were several towns or villages upon places that were islands before the level was formed—Pevensey, Hydney, Northeye, the two Winchelseas, Rye, Appledore. Going further off we find Cadiz, Venice, Tyre.

We now see why the road could not run to the military station at Richborough Castle. It could only run to the harbour, "ad Portum Ritupis," as said in the *Itinerary* of Antoninus. We do not know what reason there was for reaching the harbour at the particular place where it does—the little village of Each End. It may have been made by the Britons in time of peace, and the island may have had nothing to do with it. It keeps along the high ground as much as possible.

There is another reason for supposing that Each End was at the end of the road and the place where the boats left the mainland for the island. Richard of Cirencester wrote or might have written his *De Situ Britannicæ* in 1400. It is the opinion of many competent persons that this is a forgery compiled by Bertram, by whom it was published in 1757. It is thought to have been partly taken from Camden and other writers later than Richard. The part about to be referred to does not appear to be taken from these writers, and it does not seem to matter much whether we connect it with the name of Bertram or Richard. Both were so far away from the time of the Romans that they had to gain their information from

writings and not from tradition. The part in question is an *Itinerary*, in the style of Antoninus, but not a copy from his. Even if the whole thing is spurious, it is useful, because it calls our attention to a fact. In *Iter. XV* a road is mentioned from Dover to Rhutupis colonia, ten Roman miles. Antoninus does not mention this road. It is marked on the Ordnance map as a Roman road, and if complete would run from Dover to Each End, not to Richborough Castle or Sandwich. I have walked over the greater part of this road. Up the steep hill from Dover I could find no straight road. From the top of the hill, a mile from Dover, it appears to have run in a straight line to Woodnesborough. The last mile, from that place to Each End, is missing. At the Dover end for nearly two miles it is straight, with only one deviation round a farm, and it is hardly wide enough for a cart, and much overgrown. Further on there are more breaks, but the road soon comes back again into the old line. It runs almost due north and south. Nearly all the other roads in this part run north-east and south-west, or north-west and south-east, in consequence of the lie of the ground. The road is not wanted for modern traffic, and appears to have no object at its north end. Richard of Cirencester says that it goes to the colony of Rhutupis, by which he may be understood to mean the mercantile settlement as distinguished from the military station upon the island. This is the only place in which I have found the word "colony" used in connection with Rutupiæ. The road is said to be ten Roman miles. From Dover to Each End is eleven Roman miles, and Richborough Castle is a mile and a-half further, and not in a straight line. Not much reliance can be placed upon this, because the distances in the *Itinerary* of Antoninus are not exact, and there is no reason to suppose that this one is more correct.

We will now go back to the question which was passed over before—why we should think that the roads from Canterbury to Dover and to Each End are the same as those used by the Romans. It was shown that the two unimportant roads, from Canterbury to the Portus Lemanis and from Dover to Each End, remain in great part to the present day. It is therefore next to impossible that the two more important roads, from Canterbury to Dover

and to Each End, can have been quite obliterated. The harbours they led to were used in the time of the Romans, and with slight change of position have been used ever since, or at any rate to the time of Elizabeth. There may have been some deviations from the old roads. The road from Canterbury starts straight for Each End, and the road from Each End starts straight for Canterbury. In the middle there is a deviation to the south to avoid the two branches of the Little Stour. Originally the road may have run across the marsh and over two bridges. In the troubled times after the Romans the bridges may have been allowed to get out of repair, and the traffic may have been diverted to the higher ground where the present road runs.

In the 400 years that the Romans were here the sea probably receded considerably, but the newly-formed land would not be good enough for building on. A little to the east of Each End a tumulus or small island rises out of the level. It is eighty yards to the west of the sixty-seventh milestone and about half that distance to the south of the road. If it is a tumulus, and the date of its erection can be ascertained, it may throw some light upon the date of the formation of the level in that place.

In *Archæologia*, 1888, Vol. LI, Part II, page 449, "Archæological Survey of Kent," is the following passage:—

"The Kent Archæological Society, during the autumn of the past year, caused the land to the north and west of the castrum at Richborough to be excavated under the supervision of Mr. Dowker and a committee, but the results were disappointing, and proved that the site of the vicus and cemetery must be looked for in another direction."

The Kent Archæological Society having failed in their attempt to discover the town of Rutupiaë just outside the walls of Richborough Castle, search should be made for it at Each End.