

NOTES ON THE CHURCHES OF NEWHAVEN AND DENTON.

PARTLY READ AT THE NEWHAVEN MEETING, 25TH SEPT. 1856.

BY MARK ANTONY LOWER, M.A., F.S.A.

AT a period when a feeling in favour of church-restoration is widely prevalent, it is most desirable to collect memoranda concerning our old churches, previously to their undergoing that process. Posterity may wish to know what any parish church was like antecedently to the great changes in form, arrangement, and decoration, which are now going forward; but, without some records of this kind, it will in many cases be hard to judge what portions of the edifices have been removed, altered, or retouched. Far be it from me to condemn the prevailing desire to enlarge and adorn these temples of the Most High, or even, upon sufficient authority, to restore them to their ancient architectural condition. But it is the duty of every true antiquary to protest against much of what is *called* restoration, and which is too often rather a destructive than a conservative process. I am sorry to say that instances are not rare, even in archæological Sussex, in which ancient features have been so tampered with, that it will henceforth be difficult to decide what is original and what is merely imitated; and, without exemplifying my remark, I will simply observe, that more injury has been done to Sussex churches, within the last fifteen years, by the application of zeal without knowledge, than has accrued from the neglect of centuries, or the white-washings and other "beautifications" of a thousand churchwardens of the old school. If I might be permitted to make a practical suggestion on this subject, I would say to the gentlemen officially concerned with parish churches everywhere:

If you are not conversant with medieval architecture, be careful before you remove a single stone, or even before you call in the aid of your architect, to consult some experienced antiquary who knows your church and has studied its minutest features. Such a person will generally have a keener perception of what ought to be retained, than the professional church-builder, who is not unfrequently biassed by his own views of the beautiful and of the structurally convenient, to say nothing of the flights of fancy and the violent anachronisms, in which *some* of that fraternity occasionally indulge.

These remarks have not been called forth by any proceedings connected with this locality. Of the two churches brought under our notice to-day, one stands much in need of restoration; the other has been partially rebuilt without the injury of a single ancient feature.

Of the *history* of Newhaven church little is known. Newhaven is a comparatively modern name, having originated within the last three centuries, and since the river Ouse has been made to debouche here, instead of, as formerly, at Seaford. The ancient name of the parish, and manor, Meeching, though clearly of Saxon origin, is not mentioned in Domesday Book. The place must however have been of some little importance in Norman times, since the church clearly belongs to that period. The first mention of the church I have met with, is in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of Pope Nicholas, 1291, in which its annual revenues are rated at £5. 6s. 8d. Fifty years later, namely in 1341, we find the following notice of it in the *Nonæ* return:—

“This indenture testifieth, that an inquisition was taken before Hen. Husè and his fellow collectors, venditors, and assessors of the ninths of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs, and the fifteenths assigned to our lord the King in the county of Sussex, at Lewes, on the sabbath day next after midlent Sunday, in the fifteenth year of King Edward, the Third of that name after the Conquest of England, and the second of his reign over France, upon the true value of the ninths of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs, according to the tenor of the commission of our lord the King to the said Henry and his fellows directed,

by the oath of Andrew le Frye, John ate Nelne, Ralph Russell, and Walter Nynman, parishioners of the church of *Mechyng*, who say upon their oath, that the ninth of sheaves this year is worth four marks, three shillings, and fourpence; the ninth of fleeces six shillings; and the ninth of lambs four shillings. Item, they say that the Prior of Lewes receives for tithes of sheaves in this parish ten shillings—of fleeces two shillings—and of lambs sixteen pence. The sum of the said ninths with the portion of the Prior is six marks. And they say that the ninths aforesaid could not answer nor reach to the taxation of the church aforesaid, which is rated at eight marks [the £5. 6s. 8d. of Pope Nicholas]. And that the rector of the said church hath one messuage with nine acres of land and pasturage worth 13s. 4d. Item, he hath oblations worth 10s. per annum. Item, the tithe of hay is 4s.; the tithe of mills, 3s. 4d.; the tithe of cows, calves, and *dayrie*, 2s. 6d.; the tithes of honey, pigs, geese, and eggs, 2s.; the tithe of hemp, 12d. The tithe of pasture is worth per annum 3s. 4d. And thus the sum excepted is 40s. 6d. And they say that there are not in the said parish any chattels beyond the value of 10s. except of those who live by their lands and tenements. In witness whereof the said jurors have to this indenture affixed their seals.”

In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of Henry VIII., the value of the rectory of *Mechyng*, then held by Richard Glover, was £13. 3s. 3½d., besides, 16s. 8d. payable to the Prior of Lewes, 6s. 8d. to the archdeacon, 18d. for synodals, and 10½d. for procuration.

In Bishop Bower's visitation, 1724, the following account is given of “*Meeching* alias *Newhaven* Rectory:” Patron: the King. Rector, Ezekiel Bristed, A.M., of Aberdeen in Scotland; instituted 1694. Church and chancel in good repair without, but the walls, floor, and some seats of both very nasty and indecent within; the communion table indifferent, but the cloth bad; a small silver chalice and cover, and pewter plate pretty good; the pulpit and desk very dark; the pulpit cloth and cushion *scandalous!* No carpet for the communion table; the surplice, bible and common-prayer books in good order; the steeple and one bell the same; two other bells lost many years ago; no chest nor poor box. The chancel repaired

by the rector. Parsonage house &c. in good order. Families 49—no dissenters—no papists. Value in the king's books £8. 8s. 4d., discharged from first-fruits. Divine service and sermon by the rector; the holy sacrament administered at the three solemn sacraments and at Michaelmas. Communicants about 15. Nine acres of glebe.

The church at that period was extremely small, consisting, besides the tower and apse, of a nave only. Subsequently the latter was considerably enlarged in the worst possible taste. Quite recently, it has undergone a thorough renovation.

The only ancient portions of the building are the tower and the very small semicircular apse attached to its eastern side. The Rev. J. L. Petit, in his account of this church, in the *Archæological Journal* (vol. vi. p. 138), observes, that it is "almost, if not quite, unique, as an English specimen of a tower with an eastern apse immediately annexed to it without the intervention of any other chancel." He adds, "The arrangement is common enough on the Continent." Though I have a great *penchant* for continental churches, I cannot boast of a large acquaintance with them, and the only one I have seen, in this respect like Newhaven, is at Yainville in Normandy, on the right bank of the Seine, between Duclair and Jumièges. This I encountered, quite unexpectedly, in a summer excursion during the present year. When, at a sudden turn in the road, it burst at once upon my view, I involuntarily exclaimed, "Why, here's Newhaven church!" As a matter of course I sketched it; and having subsequently taken a sketch of Newhaven from the same point of view, one may on inspection easily note the extraordinary points of resemblance—the same corbelled band beneath the eaves; the same double belfry-window in each face of the tower; and the same flat-buttressed, semicircular apse, with the same diminutive eastern window. There are however some points in which the Norman and the Sussex churches disagree; yet so strong is the general likeness of these sister edifices, that there is no great stretch of probability in assigning them both to precisely the same epoch, if not actually to the same architect, in the twelfth century.

I may observe here, that both Mr. Hussey,¹ in his account

¹ *Notes on Churches*, p. 258.



M. A. LOWER.
F. S. A.

H. Southton 1856

YAINVILLE, NORMANDY.



M. A. LOWER
F.S.A.

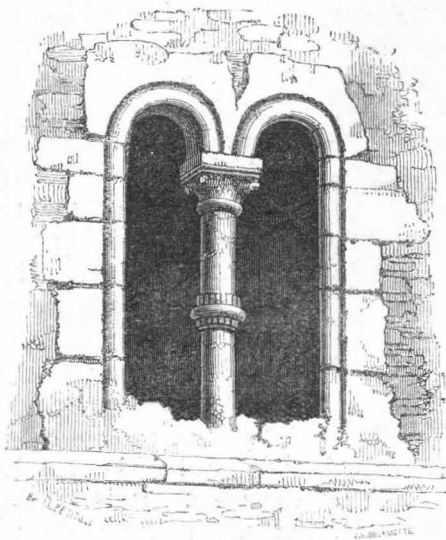
J. Southton. 1856

NEWHAVEN, SUSSEX.

of this church, and Mr. Dawson Turner² in his notice of Yainville, describe the towers as "central," which appears to me to be an incorrect use of terms. In general effect the towers of both churches stand, not in the centre, but at the east end of the buildings; and I need not inform the people of Newhaven of the Irish sailor's joke, that their church sails "stern foremost." Since I have mentioned Yainville church, it may be interesting to remark, that the apsis of that building, with its peculiarly high-pitched roof, so strongly resembles the upper portion of the much-debated Round Towers of Ireland, that Mr. Turner concludes that the latter were "undoubtedly of Norman origin."

The following is Mr. Petit's architectural account of Newhaven church, illustrated (by the liberality of the Committee of the Archæological Institute) with the original woodcuts, as they appear in vol. vi. p. 138, &c. of the *Archæological Journal*:—

"The tower is extremely massive in two stages, of which

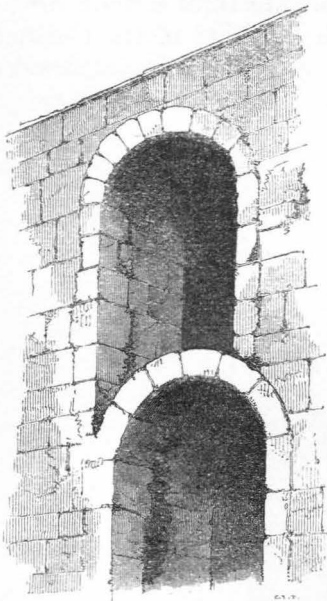


East Window of Tower.

the upper appears to be an addition, though both are Norman.

² *Tour in Normandy*, i. p. 134.

The upper stage has a double belfry window in each face, with a banded shaft; the capital seems to have been enriched with foliage, and has a square abacus; the arches have a torus forming a continuous impost where they are not stopped by the capital of the dividing shaft, there being no corresponding shafts on the jambs. The angles of this stage, and the upper half of the stage beneath it, have a torus. The tower is finished with a course of Norman corbels or brackets, and is roofed with a low, shingled, broach spire. The interior of the tower, above the arches which support it, is quite plain, and appears never to have been open as a lantern. The arch of the belfry window internally does not correspond with that of



Inside of Belfry.

the window in the lower stage, from which it seems reasonable to suspect that they are of different dates. The western arch of the tower is of one order, square, but having a torus on its western edge, which is also carried down, though not in quite a direct line, below the abacus of the impost. The eastern face of the same arch has a label and two plain orders without the torus, the impost having Norman shafts at the edges. The western face of the chancel arch is similar to this, with the addition of a torus on the outer edge of each order. The eastern face of the chancel arch has only one order, square and plain, and without a label, but the impost has a torus on the edge. It is evident there have never been transepts, but north and south windows with large splays. The apse is nearly semicircular. It had originally three small Norman windows, which are now stopped up; two Pointed side windows are now inserted in different positions from the old ones, and breaking through the

old string-course ; at present there is no east window open. [Subsequently, however, the small east window was reopened and filled with painted glass by the Rev. C. Williams, the late rector.] This apse, and the lower part of the tower with its arches, may, I should think, be assigned to an *early* Norman period. The nave is modern, though a part of its south wall, retaining no architectural features, may be original." This description was printed in 1849 ; since which year the portions of the church westward of the tower have been enlarged and rebuilt, without, as before intimated, the destruction of anything that was worthy of preservation.

The dedication of this church to St. Michael was evidently suggested by its lofty position. The elevated rank of the archangel in the celestial hierarchy was pointed to in the choice of such spots as St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall, and the still more celebrated Mont St. Michel in Normandy.

DENTON CHURCH.

No mention of Denton, at least under that name, occurs in Domesday Book, nor is there any evidence of a church there in Norman times, unless indeed the very curious font may be referred to that era. In Pope Nicholas's Taxation, 1291, the rectory of Denton is estimated at £6. 13s. 4d. The Nonæ return of 1351 is to the following effect:—

“This indenture testifieth that an inquisition was taken before Henry Husee, &c. of the ninths of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs, and of the fifteenths, &c. at Lewes, on Monday next after the feast of St. Gregory the Pope, 15th Edw. III. &c. upon the true value of the ninths of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs . . . upon the oaths of John ate See, Henry Dourhute, John Ambrays, and William Hamond, parishioners of the church of Denton, who say upon their oaths that the ninth part of the sheaves there is worth this year fifty-six shillings; the ninth part of fleeces 6s. 8d.; and the ninth part of lambs four shillings. And thus the sum of the whole ninths of sheaves, fleeces, and lambs is £3. 6s. 8d. And the church aforesaid is taxed at £6. 13s. 4d. [Pope Nicholas.] And they say that the foresaid ninths can not answer or reach to that taxation, because the rector hath a messuage newly endowed with a curtilage and garden worth per annum 10s. Also he hath five acres of land, arable and pasture, worth 23s. The tithe of apples is worth 3s.; and that of pigeons, pigs, geese, and eggs, 7s. Tithes of hay, 5s. Also he hath tithes of cows, calves, and *dayerie*, 4s. 4d. per annum; tithe of mills, 18d.; that of linen flax, 12d. The oblations are worth 12s. And they say that there are none resident there who live otherwise than by the land only. In witness whereof, &c.

In the ecclesiastical valuation of *temp.* Henry VIII. we find Denton fixed at £14. 19s. 8½d., besides 6s. 8d. payable to the prebend of Bishopston, synodals 18d. and procuration 13d.

The following returns relative to the church and parish of Denton are preserved in the Registrar's office at Lewes.

“1603. *Denton*. John Hochekis, B.D. rector. Number of communicants about 29.—The parish of South Heigh-ton whereof I am parson hath about 36. No recusant in either parish. The patronage of the rectory is be-tween Sir Thos. Floyd and one Mrs. Shelley, and de-pends upon a suite in law.

“1686. *Denton*. The steeple and the roof adjoining a little out of repair, and the windows in a similar condition. The pavement wants repairing.—The porch in danger of falling down if not timely repaired.—Several arti-cles enjoined by the canons are said to be wanting.

“1724. *Bishop Bower's Visitation*.

“*Denton*, a rectory, of which Robert Mitchell, Esq. is patron. The present incumbent, Wm. Edwards, A.B. of St. John's Coll. Cambridge, instituted 1687. The church in good repair—the bible wants binding—the common prayer-book good—one pewter flaggon—one silver cup and cover—one linen cloth for the commu-nion table—a good cloth and cushion for the pulpit—no poor-box nor chest—two bells. The chancel in good repair. A small matter wanting to the mansion house &c.—Nine families—no papists nor dissenters.—Value in the king's books £4. 19s. 9d. Discharged.—Divine service and sermon every fortnight. The living supplied by a curate, Mr. Alex. Patison. Sacrament administered three times in the year. No. of communicants about 9.—Six acres of glebe, all arable.”

The church, which is dedicated to St. Leonard, consists of a single pace or nave, with no interior distinction of chancel. The west end is surmounted by a small bell-turret of wood and tile. A ceiling hides from view a very good timber roof much resembling that of Godshill, in the Isle of Wight.³ From the occurrence of two Early English windows in the nave, Mr. Hussey thinks the building may have been originally of that period; but the church underwent considerable improvement

³ Hussey's *Churches*, p. 221.

in the Decorated period, as is evident from the fine tracery of the east window, now unfortunately stopped up. In the south wall, near the east end, are a broad sedile, under an ogee arch, and a canopied piscina, of excellent work and in good preservation. The Font, which strongly resembles that at St. Anne's, Lewes, in its basket-like form and ornamentation, is well known to ecclesiologists, and is engraved in Horsfield,⁴ and elsewhere.

Of early monuments Denton possesses but one. It is a slab incised with an inscription round the verge in Lombardic characters, some of which only are legible, namely, the words

HIC JACET WILLELMUS DE * IRBY * * MILLIO CCCLXVIII.

To this relic of ancient times the words of the poet are strictly applicable—

“And monuments themselves memorials need”—

a thing much to be regretted in this instance, because there is no doubt from the situation of the slab, close to the north wall, in the eastern part of the building, that the person commemorated was a benefactor or re-founder of the church. The date of his death, 1368, agrees sufficiently with that of the introduction of the great east window, which I have little hesitation in assigning to him.

In connection with Newhaven and Denton, to both of which parishes the river Ouse forms a boundary, it may not be amiss to add a few words relative to the early history of the port of Newhaven.

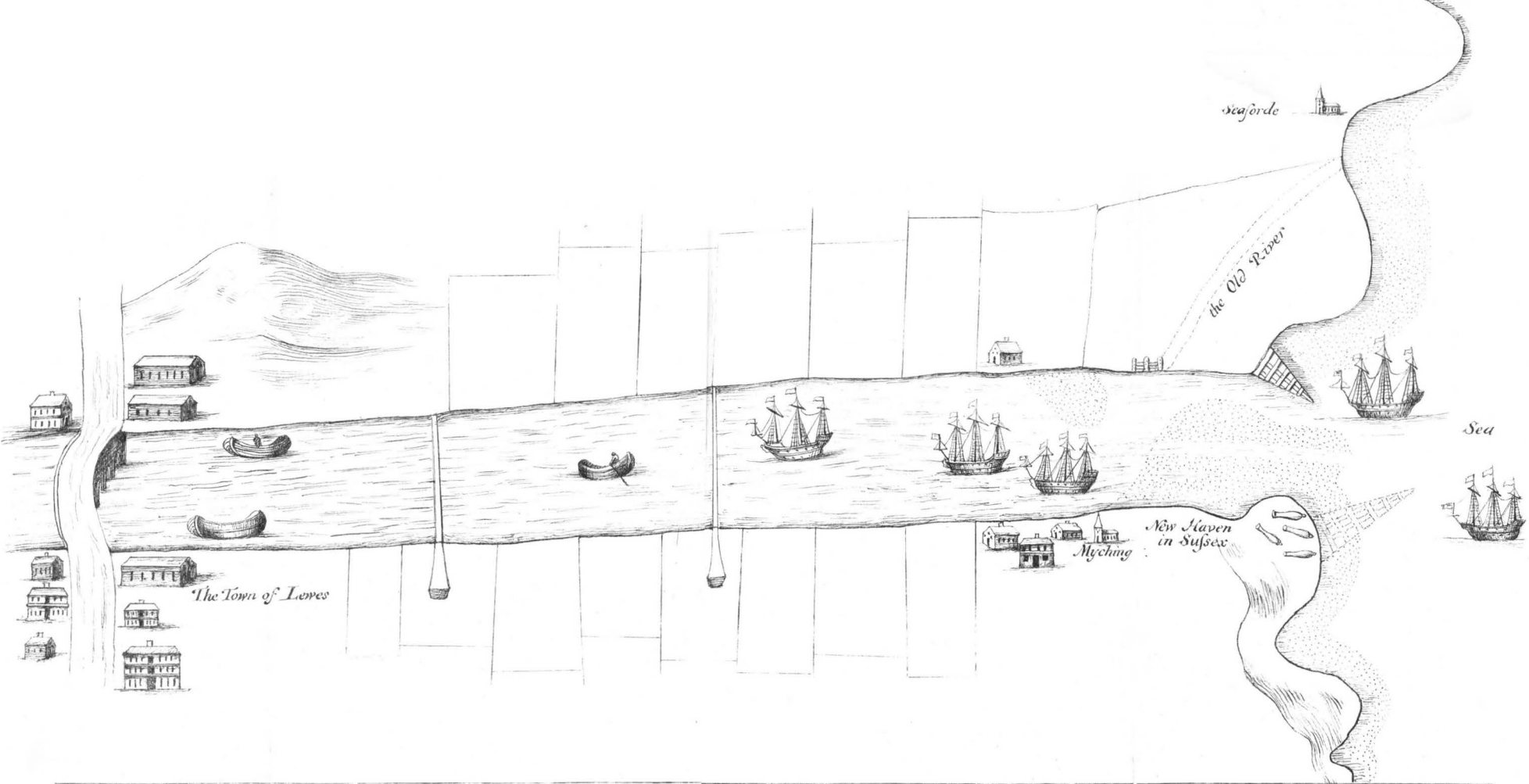
Down to the reign of Henry VIII. the Ouse, after passing southward from Lewes to a point near the village of Meeching, took a sudden and almost rectangular turn to the south-eastward, nearly in the direction of what is now called the Tidemill Creek, and so forward in a line almost parallel with the seashore, and only divided from it by a strip of shingle, to the town of Seaford, where it found its outfall to the English Channel, at a point just westward of the cliff. A slight glance at a map, however, will show that the true and natural de-

⁴ *History of Lewes*, ii. 268.

bouchure of the river was at a point southward of Meeching—in fact at the very point where Newhaven harbour at this moment exists. And that the outlet was there in Roman times seems pretty evident from the great earthworks of that era overhanging the western side of the port, and called “*Castle Hill*.” The prevalence of south-west winds, however, is well known to have, on this coast, the effect of causing a great accumulation of shingle, and of driving river currents to seek a more easterly outlet, as exemplified in the Adur, the Cuckmere, and other Sussex rivers. At what precise epoch the ancient mouth of the Ouse became choked up it is impossible to conjecture, though it is evident from the legend of St. Lewinna, detailed in *Sussex Arch. Coll.* Vol. I. p. 46, *et seq.* that the port of the Ouse was at Seaford in the middle of the eleventh century; and it was in consequence of this position that Seaford at no great interval of time became one of the Cinque-Ports. In the time of Queen Elizabeth the port of Seaford fell in its turn to decay, and the outfall being retransferred to Meeching, that place gradually lost its ancient designation in that of Newhaven. In a survey of the Sussex coast made in May 1587, in anticipation of the Spanish Invasion, by Sir Thos. Palmer and Walter Covert, Esq., the village is called *Michin*, and the port Newhaven. The latter had been defended with ordnance, which is described as “vnmounted and of littell worthe.” It is recommended by the surveyors to construct a “Bullwarke of earth for the plantinge of one dimy culveringe and two sacres.” Throughout the seventeenth century the harbour seems to have been greatly neglected, and it was not until the beginning of the eighteenth that it began to receive any considerable share of attention.

The above remarks are merely prefatory to a very curious notice of the port of Newhaven and its capabilities, published in 1677 by a projector of many ingenious schemes, Andrew Yarranton, Gent., in a work entitled, “*England's Improvement by Sea and Land*.” As the work is very scarce, and the matter consequently new to most readers, I make no apology for quoting the passage *in extenso*, and adding a *facsimile* of the rude map which accompanies it.

“But I find it is not my own single opinion, that safe and



seajorde

the Old Power

Sea

The Town of Looes

New Haven in Sussex
Myching

convenient Harbours, are things to be prized, but I find also that some Persons of Honour, and great parts, have been aiming at the same thing, and within some late years have fixed upon a place in *Sussex*, to make a safe Harbour for Shipping, which I may without arrogancy say, that no one place in this Island doth or can exceed it for the great relief of all Vessels and Ships sailing through the narrow Seas, as also for the benefit and relief of our Men of War, in the times both of War and Peace; this place is *New-Haven*, in *Sussex*, where some progress hath been made towards the advancing so generous and Noble a design, wherein I presume Four or Five Thousand pound hath been expended, and the work in some measure advanced, but in this, as in most other publick things, I suppose there was not that helping hand given to it by the publick as it merited; nor I fear countenanced as it deserved by the Gentlemen of the Countrey; but why such a place so fitted and adapted for such good uses, should lie unfinished, and not encouraged by the Publick, I know not; I having at the desire of a Person of Quality, and the Inhabitants of *East-Greensted*, in *Sussex*, surveyed that place; I here give you my observations thereof.

“ First, Of its usefulness, if once perfected.

“ Secondly, Of the reasons of its being at present choaked up. And

“ Thirdly, The means to be used for perfecting the same, with the Charge it will cost.

“ First, *New-Haven* lyeth over against the Naval of *France*, and there is no safe or convenient Harbour to secure Shipping all along that Coast, for at least Sixty Miles; and what strange Rekes and Damage are our Merchants and Strangers put unto continually upon that Coast; and if some of our greatest Merchants are not mistaken, that Harbour, if well opened and secured, would be to them and their Trade very advantageous, and in the time of War, the King's Ships which draw not above Twenty Foot Water, may there lie well secured, and upon all occasions be quick out at Sea, and there small Ships of War may be built and repaired; many Shipwracks prevented, and certainly it will invite all persons sailing that way to set a great value upon that Harbour, as now they do on *Plimouth* and *Falmouth*.

“Secondly, I conceive one great reason, why this so beneficial a work was not perfected, was the want of an Act of Parliament to support the doing thereof, as also it is possible the Engineer first employed, was not so knowing as was requisite in so great an undertaking, for as the thing now stands, there was one Peer made, which is on the North, but had the Western Peer been first Finished, then the quantities of Sands now lodged in the mouth of the Harbour, had been carried away to Sea, and the freshes of water descending out of the River, would have kept open the mouth of the Harbour.

“Thirdly, This Noble work may be brought to perfection, by making of a Western Peer, as in the Map is described; and thereby all the Sands and Earth which falls from the sides of the Hills and Clifts will be carried to Sea; as also two Turnpikes to be made in the River, to let down flashes of water upon all necessary occasions, to drive and keep out those Sands already lodged in the mouth of the Harbour, or that may hereafter chance to be brought in; and I suppose all the work may be compleated for about Six Thousand Pounds. The Map of the place, and how the work may be Accomplished, is hereunto affixed.”—Pp. 97-99.

Could the good Mr. Yarranton revisit Newhaven at the present day, he would behold, in the substantial “western pier” and other improvements connected with the harbour, a partial carrying out of his views. Still, very much remains to be done for the full development of the natural capabilities of a port which is destined to occupy a high rank among the harbours of England. Fortunately the supineness of the country gentlemen of the seventeenth century upon this subject is not manifested by their descendants of the nineteenth, and as these latter possess influence in a quarter more remote than East Grinstead (and due north from that good old town), Mr. Yarranton’s brightest visions must ere long become *un fait accompli!* These anticipations, however, belong not to Archæology.⁵

⁵ I am indebted to R. W. Blencowe, Esq., for calling attention to Yarranton’s wish; and to J. H. Hurdis, Esq., for

etching in his own excellent manner, Newhaven and Yainville churches.