

# THE RIVERS OF SUSSEX.

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## PART I.

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THE chief topographical features of a district are its mountains and its rivers. The county of Sussex cannot boast of any eminences that may properly be called mountains, although its famous South-Downs, and its beautiful Wealden Heights, known as the Forest Ridge, possess characteristics of no ordinary kind, and there are many European mountains which do not claim an interest superior to that which attaches to Beachy-Head, Crowborough, Caburn, Mount Harry, Cissbury, Chanctonbury, or Rook's Hill. All these eminences and many more were, during the middle ages, crowned with piles of fuel, ready to become beacon-fires on the approach of any invader. Happily, however, the necessity of lighting them was of very rare occurrence, and perhaps the most remarkable instance of their being "all ablaze" was at the Spanish invasion of 1588, when

"From Eddystone to Berwick bounds, from Lynn to Milford Bay,  
The time of slumber was as bright and busy as the day;  
When swift to east and swift to west the ghastly war-flame spread,  
High on St. Michael's Mount it shone; it shone on Beachy Head!"<sup>1</sup>

Our Rivers, though not widely renowned, either for their picturesque beauty or for their commercial importance, likewise possess many interesting associations, which it may be worth while to note down. Most of these bear the names which were given to them by the Celtic population who na-

<sup>1</sup> A much more glorious and hardly less stirring a sight it was to behold on the tenth of March in the present year, on all these heights, the kindling fires

which welcomed from the once hostile shores of Denmark a Princess, who, please God, shall be the mother of a long line of illustrious English kings.

vigated them in canoe and coracle long before Cæsar's Roman galleys approached our shores, and several have been connected with incidents in our national history, such as to invest them with a more than merely local interest.

In his "Britannia," Camden remarks that Sussex, in its civil capacity, is divided into six parts, designated by the peculiar name of Rapes, every one of which, besides its several hundreds, has its castle, its river, and its forest :—" *Dividitur hæc regio universa politica partitione in sex partes quas peculiari vocabulo vocant Rapos, scilicet de Chichester, Arundel, Brembre, Lewes, Pevensey, et Hastings, quarum unaquæque, præter suas centurias, suum habet castrum, flumen, et saltum.*" This remarkable assertion, though not true in every particular in Camden's own day, had been so in earlier times, and the great antiquary doubtless makes use of a proverbial remark derived from those times.

Before proceeding to survey the Sussex rivers *seriatim*, let us say a few words respecting these rapes, castles, and forests, to show their association with the rivers; and first respecting the rapes.

The word Rape seems to be peculiar to Sussex, unless it may be considered identical with the *Hrepp* of Iceland. That remote but interesting island "was divided into four quarters, each of which was partitioned into prefectures, or sheriffdoms, and these again were subdivided into small districts, called *hrepps*, consisting of the families who lived contiguous to each other. Generally, they were of the size of the present Icelandic parishes, and over each of these was appointed a *hreppstiori* or bailiff, who had the immediate inspection of his own bailiwick"<sup>2</sup> From this it would appear that the Icelandic *hrepp* was a much less important territory than the Sussex Rape. The etymology of the word is uncertain; but it seems to be connected with the Welsh *rhaff*, the Anglo-Saxon *ráp*, *ræp*, the Danish *reep*, *reeb*, and the Gothic *raip*, signifying a rope. It was a practice among the Teutonic tribes to set out allotments of land by means of a cord or rope, just as a modern land-surveyor employs his Gunter's chain for the same purpose, and in Iceland the measure of land is still by the rope. In a very recent publication by an able French anti-

<sup>2</sup> Henderson's Iceland, 1818, vol i., p. xxi.

quary, we meet with the following passage:—"We shall there find (in Normandy) a great number of the names of those chiefs to whom Rollo distributed Neustria by the cord:—*Suis fidelibus terram funiculo divisit.*"<sup>3</sup>

The following appear to be the rivers, castles, and forests belonging to the several rapes.

**HASTINGS RAPE.**—The Rother, the castle of Hastings, the forest of Dallington.

**PEVENSEY RAPE.**—The Cuckmere, the castle of Pevensey, the forest of Ashdown.

**LEWES RAPE.**—The Ouse, the castle of Lewes, the forest of Tilgate (or of Worth?).

**BRAMBER RAPE.**—The Adur, the castle of Bramber, the forest of St. Leonard.

**ARUNDEL RAPE.**—The Arun, the castle of Arundel, the forest of Arundel.

**CHICHESTER RAPE.**—The Lavant, the castle of Chichester, the forest of Charlton.

The castles of Hastings, Pevensey, Lewes, Bramber, and Arundel are still represented by remains of greater or less extent. That of Chichester, which belonged to the same owners as Arundel was dismantled in early times, and a house of Grey-Friars erected on its site, in what is now called the Priory Park. The forests have for the most part disappeared—they remain in little more than in name.

The Sussex seaboard presents to the observer of river outfalls the two geographical extremes of bold cliffs and marshy plains. Hence the Ouse, the Adur, and particularly the Cuckmere, in the lower part of their course, are restrained within certain limits by hills on either side of greater or less elevation and abruptness, while on the other hand, the Rother and the Lavant seek the ocean through wide expanses of alluvium, and hence the debouchure of those streams has varied with the various geological and tidal influences which have been in operation within the historical period, and the actual contact of fresh and salt water has occurred at points widely

<sup>3</sup> "Nous retrouverons là un grand nombre de ces noms de chefs auxquels Rollon distribua la Neustrie *au cordeau* :

*Suis fidelibus terram funiculo divisit.*" Hérischer, Hist. et Gloss. du Normand, &c. 1862., tom i., p. 145.

differing at different epochs. And it is a noteworthy fact that of the various rivers which irrigate and adorn the county and fall into the English Channel, every one has its source within the boundaries of the shire. A few inconsiderable streams, rising on the northern slopes of the forest ridge, send their waters to the Thames and the Medway.

Commencing from the east, the first river of Sussex is the *Rother*, which now meets the sea at Rye harbour, though it formerly had its outlet much farther eastward. It rises at Rotherfield, and gives name to that parish which in ancient documents is called Ritheramfeld. Its source is about a mile southward of the town, and westward of the eminence known as Argas, Argos, or Argots Hill. It is worthy of notice that from three points of this elevated ground there proceed three streamlets, one being the Rother, whose waters flow to Rye, the second a branch of the Ouse which finds its outlet at Newhaven, and the third a tributary of the Medway, whose waters flow into the German Ocean. These several sources are within a very short distance of each other, and the place was traditionally known as the "Three Lords' Well," in consequence, I believe, of three Manors meeting there. From almost its very source the Rother is well supplied with tributary brooks and streamlets, and becomes useful for the purpose of driving water-mills, some of which stand upon the site of ancient iron-works. About four miles from the source it reaches Scotsford Bridge, an anomalous expression not uncommon in these parts. Although the stream is crossed by a Bridge the old word *Ford* is still retained. At Bibleham, more to the eastward, an ancient manor, and once the seat of considerable iron trade, it receives another affluent from the north-west above Mayfield. About a mile further down at Withernden, the ancient estate of the Newingtons, it receives another stream also from the north-west. At Echingham it is swollen by two more streams, one of which, rising to the north of Heathfield Park, passes the site of Burwash Park, anciently the seat of the Barons Burghersh; the other rises to the south-east of Wadhurst. Echingham church was formerly moated, and the waters of the moat were supplied from the Rother. Near this stood the castle of the De Echinghams.

Here the river takes a somewhat sudden turn to the south-east, and after receiving a stream from Socknersh, famous for its iron-works carried on by the Collins family from a very early date, it passes Boxhulle (hodie Bugzill) in Salehurst, erst the seat of Alan de Boxhulle, the 53rd Knight of the Garter, and thence to Robertsbridge, near which it receives a streamlet from the south-west which has its source in Darvel Forest, another important seat of the ancient iron manufacture.

The name of Robertsbridge has been generally considered to be a corruption of *Rother*bridge. If so, the corruption must needs be of early date, since the Cistercian Abbey founded there by Alfred de St. Martin,<sup>4</sup> in the reign of Henry II., was always known as that of Pons Roberti.

Pursuing its easterly course, the Rother passes Bodiam Castle whose fine moat is fed from its waters, and farther on it receives a considerable stream, which, from the fact of its forming the boundary between Sussex and Kent, is called the *Kent Ditch*.<sup>5</sup> Thus far the river is called, in a plan given in Dugdale's "History of Imbanking," "Robertsbridge Bay." Then flowing under Newenden bridge it receives a streamlet, which, passing the lands called Exden or Hexden, north of Newenden is dignified by the same authority as "Exden Bay." We are now fairly in the alluvial district known more to the eastward as Romney Marsh, and from this point the Rother has, throughout the whole of the historical period, at various times changed its course and its outlet.

To the eastward of Newenden (supposed by Camden and others, upon very insufficient evidence, to be the Anderida of the Roman legions) the stream divides into two channels forming an island known as the Isle of Oxney. These waters unite at a spot eastward of Iden and thence pass concurrently to Rye harbour.

<sup>4</sup> The Rev. G. M. Cooper thinks that *Robert* de St. Martin was the actual founder of the abbey, and that he built a bridge here, which was called after him Robert's Bridge. See conjectures on this subject in *Suss: Arch: Coll: vol. viii.*, pp. 142—144. In Rouse's *Antiquities of Sussex* (vol. i., p. 111), is the following sentence, quoted apparently from some Chronicle, but without any

reference: "Anno 1176, Robertus de Sancto Martino, regnante Henrico Secundo, eique familiaris, condidit *super flumen Rothori* abbatiam de Ponte Roberti."

<sup>5</sup> The name of *Kent-Ditch* is likewise given to a sewer running from Iden to a point about 1½ mile to the east of Rye old harbour, and forming also the boundary between the two counties.

The northern channel is called the *Tweed*,<sup>6</sup> a designation also applied to the great river between England and Scotland, and signifying like it a border or limit (Celtic *tuedd*), which it originally was between the ancient Cantium and what is now called Sussex, although at present the Isle of Oxney is included in the county of Kent.

Somner, in his valuable treatise on the "Roman Ports and Forts of Kent," devotes much space to the discussion of the ancient state of this river, which to the eastward of Appledore, on the authority of early documents, he styles the *Limene*. It is also clear that it was sometimes called the *Romney*, from its having had its outlet at or near that town. But that the true ancient name of the whole river, and especially of the eastern part, was *Limen*, is apparent from the fact that its eastermost, and perhaps its original, outfall was at Lymne, the Roman *Portus Lemanis*, where considerable remains of an important castrum are still extant.<sup>7</sup> Whether the *Novus Portus* of Ptolemy was there, or more westward at Old Romney, is a moot point, though there is no doubt at all that those names were applied to the outlet of our Sussex river, the Rother. Somner cites a charter of Egbert, the first Saxon monarch of all England, to one Goding, in the year 820, of two ploughlands at Warehorn in the marsh, stretching from the east towards the south beyond the river Limen, as far as the boundary of the South Saxons. *On east-healfe se rece suth ofer Limen-ea oth Suth-seaxena mearce.* Nor was the name restricted to the eastern part of the river—it was called Limen even at its very source. In an "extent" or survey of the archiepiscopal manor of West Tarring, under the title of *borga de Maghefeud* (borough of Mayfield), Martin le Webb is stated to hold a quarter of a rood of land at the Limen (*apud la Limene*) for which he paid one farthing at the feast of St. Michael.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Inf. W. D. Cooper, Esq., F.S.A. In Dugdale's map it is called "the *Doure Chanell*." This may be the old Celtic word *dwr*, as found in our Sussex Adur, the French Adour, and the Spanish Douro: it simply means water. Or it may be only the last syllable of Appledore, and this is not unlikely, as the map just alluded to calls this part of the river, Appledore Bay. We all know the disposition of sailors,

fishers, et hoc genus omne, to shorten words as much as possible. The etymology of Appledore itself is perfectly clear, namely A.-Sax. *Apuldre*, the Apple-tree, a word often found in various modifications in the local nomenclature of England.

<sup>7</sup> See an elaborate and accurate description in Mr. C. R. Smith's Report of Excavations at Lymne. London, 1852.

<sup>8</sup> Somner, p. 40.

Much more might be said respecting this river ; but the most interesting features of its history and archæology are more connected with the county of Kent than with our own.<sup>9</sup>

Three small independent rivers flowing from the westward meet the estuary of the Rother near Rye.

The first of these, rising at Beckley, passes to the south of the lands called Tillingham, and is from that circumstance named *Tillingham Water*.

The second, a much more considerable stream, has its principal source near Beche mill, in Ashburnham Wood, but in the parish of Battel, and flowing towards Watlington there receives a rivulet running down from Mountfield, and thence it passes on to Sedlescombe Street, near which it receives a streamlet rising on the north side of the town of Battel and skirting in its course Bathurst wood, which gave name to the noble family so surnamed.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Few havens have undergone more vicissitudes than that of Rye within the last 300 years. In 1570 there was such a sudden incursion of the sea that, according to Holinshed, the water rose at midnight "eight or nine foot in men's houses," and but for the exertions of one William White some would have been drowned, but he "fetched a great company of them out of their windows, and carried them to dry land" in his boat. The result of this outburst was that many marshes were submerged, so that where a cockleboat could heretofore scarcely pass at low water, "at full sea the greatest ship the Queen's majesty hath may come in." *Holinshed's Chron.* iii. 1223. Widely different from the humane character of William White was that of a certain gentleman of Rye in those days. This personage had a marsh near the town, "wherein upon poles fishermen used to dry their nets, for which he received of them yearly a sufficient sum of money ; but at length not being content with it, he caused his servants to pluck up the poles, not suffering the fishermen to come upon his ground any longer, except they would compound at a larger rate ; but it came to pass the same night that the sea broke in, and overwhelmed all his marsh." Wanley quotes this from Holinshed as "a strange example of God's judgments upon a covetous oppressive gentleman, and one that desired to grind the faces of

the poor." Anno Dom. 1570. *Wonders of the Little World*, p. 349. Among the State Papers is a map of the Haven of Rye at this time. At the date of Camden's *Britannia* there was considerable traffic between Rye and the ports of Normandy ; but not long after, in 1618, the Mayor and Jurats of Rye addressed to the Lord Warden a bitter complaint of the decay of their harbour, and the consequent poverty of their town. In *Brome's Travels*, 1700, matters were still worse, and the haven is declared to be "almost quite choaked up." Lastly, Dyer, upwards of a century since, thus refers to Rye :—

"Some Thanet's strand  
And Dover's chalky cliff behind them turn,  
Soon sinks away the green and level reach  
Of Romney marish, and Rye's silent port  
By angry Neptune closed."

*The Fleece*, Book iv.

<sup>10</sup> Collins says : "This family were originally seated at a place not far from Battel-Abbey, of which they were dispossessed, and the *Castle demolished*, in the troublesome times of the dispute between the houses of York and Lancaster ; and nothing now remains but a wood called Bathurst Wood *where may be found some of the ruins*." *Peerage*, Ed. 1768, vol. vii., p. 194. Though there is no doubt of the origin of the family at this spot, the ruins of the demolished castle (if castle it was) would be difficult to find at present. *Etiam periere ruinae*.

After receiving a bifurcated rill flowing from Westfield, it passes Brede, from which circumstance it is known as the *Brede River*; thence in a due easterly course it now skirts, as it anciently defended, the town of Winchelsea, and loses itself in the ditches and sewers eastward of that town.

The third and least important of these streams flows from Pickham mill, near Guestling, to Pannel Bridge, and after receiving a small tributary joins the Brede to the eastward of Winchelsea. The military canal extending from Cliff-end, in Pett, to Shorncliff by Hythe, a distance of about 23 miles, comes in contact with the Rother and its tributary streams (if such they may be called) at various points.

Proceeding westward we reach Hastings, the chief of the Cinque-Ports, but at present no port at all, if by port we are to understand a haven and contact of fresh water with the sea. We know historically that in old times Hastings was a place of great maritime importance, and that it furnished forth ships of war which were formidable to Frenchmen and other foreigners, though it would puzzle a modern visitor to that abode of fashion to discover any traces of a harbour. And this has long been the case, inasmuch as Taylor, the "water-poet," almost two centuries and a half since, in his "Discovery by Sea from London to Salisbury," says:

—"Off Hastings we perceived  
The lee-shore dangerous, and the billows heav'd ;  
Which made us land, to 'scape the sea's distress,  
Within a harbour almost harbour-less."

Railway trains now deposit thousand of travellers, where in the middle ages a few shipmen had an occasional resort. The railway station is on the site of the ancient port of Hastings, and near it stood the Priory, which having been submerged by the sea, was in the fifteenth century removed to Warbleton. The streamlet which the Ordnance Map shows us at Hastings, running from Fairlight, but which can hardly be perceived by the traveller in that locality, was called the *Bourn*.

But if we travel a little further towards the west we meet, beyond St. Leonards, with traces of a river of more importance which bears the name of *Asten*. In the absence of better evidence, and more local knowledge than I possess, I should be sorry to increase the rivalry which unfortunately



seems already to exist between Hastings and St. Leonards, but I can hardly help believing that the original *Hastinga-ceaster*, the settlement of the old Northman, was to the westward of St. Leonards, and that there is some connection between the word Hasting (as it was ordinarily spelt) and Asten, the name of this river, which in old times debouched at Bulverhythe—"the Haven of Bulwer." Who the Teuton that gave name to this ancient river outlet was, I know not; perhaps his namesake and probable descendant, Sir Lytton, could inform us.

The streamlet has derived poetical interest from Drayton's allusion in the *Polyolbion* of 1612:—

. . . . "Asten once distained with native English blood;  
Whose soil, when yet but wet with any little rain,  
Doth blush, as put in mind of those there sadly slain,  
When Hastings' harbour gave unto the Norman powers,  
Whose name and honours now are denizen'd for ours.  
That boding, ominous brook!"

A subjoined note informs us that—

"In the plain near Hastings where the Norman William, after his victory, found King Harold slain, he built Battel Abbey, which at last (as divers other monasteries) grew to a town enough populous. Thereabout is a place which after rain always looks red, which some have (by that authority the Muse also) attributed to a very bloody sweat of the earth, as crying to Heaven for revenge of so great a slaughter."

The Asten rises close to the town of Battel, and passes the widely-known powder-mills there. Thence it flows past Crowhurst, to the south-east of which it forms a junction with another stream running down from Ninfield, past Buckholt, and so in a south-easterly course towards Bopeep,<sup>11</sup> close by St. Leonards. Anciently, as we have intimated, it must have taken an abrupt turn to the westward, and formed the *hythe* or haven called Bulverhythe, which was of sufficient importance to be reckoned a member of the Cinque Port of Hastings. The redness of the water of the Asten, it is hardly necessary to remark, is attributable to the presence of ferruginous matter in the soil.

<sup>11</sup> *Bopeep*. I suspect that the name of this place is of no very remote origin. It is the designation of a childish game played by nurses, *se cachant le visage et puis se monstrant*. (Sherwood, quoted by Halliwell.) Butler, speaking of the celebrated Conjuror Kelly, says that he

"did all his feats upon  
The Devil's looking-glass, a stone;  
When playing with him at *bo-peep*,  
He solved all problems ne'er so deep."  
*Hudibras*, ii., 631.

The name Bopeep is applied to one or two other localities not far from the Sussex coast, and has reference, I believe, to the "hide and seek" proceedings of smugglers.

At Bexhill, a small nameless stream, not more than a mile or two in length, finds its way into the sea beneath the shingle.

The *Ashburn* rises to the northward of the village of Ashburnham, to which it gives name; and after feeding the ponds formerly connected with Ashburnham furnace and Ashburnham forge (the last site of iron works in Sussex), and also receiving a supply from the beautiful waters in the park, forms a confluence with a stream from Warbleton Priory, and Bochstepe (*hodie* Bucksteep). It shortly afterwards coalesces with another rising at Rushlake, and passes Batsford, which of old denominated the family of De Batlesford. These waters meet just above Boreham bridge, in the parish of Wartling, and then proceed through a marshy plain towards Pevensey, almost washing the ancient walls of Anderida, and finally pass by a noiseless and invisible outlet to the English Channel. Pevensey, like Hastings, has long ceased to be a port, except in name; albeit it was here that many very stirring events in our early history, in connection with maritime affairs, occurred. Almost the only tangible evidence of the former importance of Pevensey as a port, is to be found in its massive corporate seal, ensigned with gallant ships.<sup>12</sup> Connected with the Ashburn are other waters. From the eastward, two streamlets running from Hooe and Barnhorn meet at Pevensey Sluice, and flow silently into the sea. From the west, streamlets rising in the eastern part of Hellingly parish, and from Hurstmonceux Park, coalesce at Pevensey bridge, a spot once formidable to offenders against Cinque Port laws.<sup>13</sup> But the most delightful tributary of the Ashburn, which

“ At Pemsey pours her soft and gentle flood—”<sup>14</sup>

is a brooklet, which springs out of the hill near Filching in Jevington and passes through a little wooded glen of great picturesque beauty, in the direction of Polegate. Thence it flows by Langney, and reaches the Pevensey stream near the bridge. From the appearance of the lagoon called Crumble pond, southward of Langney manor-house, it is probable that this rivulet formerly had an independent outlet to the sea,

<sup>12</sup> See Suss. Arch. Coll., vol. i., p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> See Suss. Arch. Coll., vol. iv. p. 213.

<sup>14</sup> Drayton.

and that the great accumulation of beach forming Langney Point drove it eastward into its present course.<sup>15</sup>

At Eastbourne there are small traces of a stream called the *Bourne* (A.-Sax. *burne*), which doubtless gave name to the parish. Its course is now arched over, and consequently imperceptible. Its source is at Motcombe, near the parish church, whence it passes by the Star brewery, and so on by the moated enclosure between the old town and the railway station—the site probably of the mansion of the De Badlesmeres, feudal lords of Eastbourne—and thence to a point eastward of the Sea-houses, formerly called the Broad-bourne, where within living memory there was a large pool. The water now passes by a culvert under the shingle.

All the Sussex waters I have hitherto enumerated run in an easterly or south-easterly direction. But we now reach the South Downs, which terminate in the bold promontory of Beachy Head, beyond which most of our streams pursue a course more or less southerly.

The first of these is the *Cuckmere*, so named from the place where it enters the English Channel, anciently a kind of *mere* or lake—a form which it now occasionally assumes after a heavy rain has sent down its floods from the Weald. This river has two principal sources, one in Heathfield Park and the other near Possingworth, in Waldron. The Heathfield stream passes through Warbleton and Hellingly, receiving several rivulets in its course; and near the village of Hellingly meets the Waldron branch, which, forming a boundary between that parish and East Hothly, passes by Streame, the site of the great iron-works of the French family in the parish

<sup>15</sup> The following account of the *Ashburne* is given by Harrison, in the description of Britain prefixed to Holinshed's Chronicle:—

“Into Peuensie hauen diuerse waters doo resort, and of these that which entereth into the same on the east side riseth out from two heads, whereof the most easterlie is called *Ash*, the next vnto the *Burne*, and vniting themselves not farre from Ashburne (ham) they continue their course vnder the name and title of *Ashburne Water*, as I read. The second that commeth therinto issueth also of two heads, whereof the one is so manie miles from Boreham,

the other not farre from the parke east of Hellingstowne (Hellingly), and both of them conuerring southwest of Hirstmowsen (Hurst-Monceux) they direct their course toward Peuensie, beneath which they meet with another rising at Foington (Folkington), and thence go in one channell for a mile or more, till they fall together into Peuensie hauen.” This description is not topographically accurate, as will be seen by reference to the Ordnance Map; and the discrimination of the two forks of the main stream into the *Ash* and the *Burne* I take to be a mere figment of Harrison's informant.

of Chiddingly, and is swollen by several minor rills in its course. From Horsebridge, a hamlet of Hellingly, it proceeds to Michelham Priory, where its waters form a strong defence by way of moat—thence to Sessingham, once possessed by the De Sessinghams, and to Longbridge near Milton-Court. This bridge (no longer a *long* one, which it must have been in the days when the lower part of the Cuckmere was a considerable estuary,) gives name to a hundred which comprises the parishes of Arlington, Folkington, Berwick, Litlington, and Wilmington—a district rich in archæological associations. At Longbridge it assumes the proportions of a navigable stream, and flows past the town of Alfriston to Excete bridge, which is connected with a long causeway on the old coast-road from Brighton to Eastbourne, &c. Here the alluvium, bounded at various points by low cliffs of chalk, shows the bed of an ancient estuary of considerable width. The outfall is at Cuckmere haven, bounded on the east and west by cliffs of considerable altitude. Unprotected by piers, this little harbour is constantly undergoing changes, being choked up from time to time by shingle which the set of the tide under the action of the south-west wind accumulates on the spot. In order to afford the fresh water a direct outlet to the sea, recourse is had to a contrivance called ‘harbour ploughs,’ by which the shingle is removed. In the opinion of engineers a safe harbour might easily be constructed, and there is a tradition, carefully cherished by the folk of the vicinity, that the Dutch once offered the English government a million sterling for the privilege of forming and enjoying the use of such a port; but I cannot find any documentary evidence of such an extraordinary overture having ever been made by a power not always on the most friendly terms with the English people.<sup>16</sup>

Our next river is the *Ouse*, a name borne in common by several English rivers. The etymon is the Celtic *isca*, water, which has been the common parent of Usk, Ax, Ex, Wisk, and many other rivers of Western Europe, from the calm and placid Isis to “Iser rolling rapidly.” *Isfield*, North-*ease*,

<sup>16</sup> The fishery of Cuckmere haven was vested in the St. Cleres, Lords of Firl and owners of Excet. (Inq. p. m. 1 Henry VI., No. 30.) Their heritors,

the Gages, and the burgesses of Seaford, had a lawsuit as to this right in 1670, for the details of which see Suss. Arch. Coll., vii., p. 105.

and *South-ease*, places in close proximity to the Sussex river, seem to be connected with this etymology, as well as the less-known *Totease*, *Littleease*, and *Cockease*.

This river, whose "basin" is extensive, is more ramified than any other in the county, and it would be no easy task to particularize the various streamlets which furnish their contingent of pure water to the high stream. It is not even ascertained which is the principal *fons et origo* of the river. I incline to the opinion that it is to be found on the western borders of Wakehurst Park, in Ardingly, whence a stream passing southward feeds the beautiful sheet of water known as Balcombe Pond, and so goes on towards the estate of Nelond, now Balcombe Place, near which it is reinforced by another stream also rising in Wakehurst Park. A little lower down it meets a rivulet, which, rising at Plummer's Plain, southward of St. Leonard's Forest, flows in an easterly course, past the ruins of Slaugham Place, and afterwards receives a streamlet from Dillions on the north, and another from Slough Place on the south. All these waters become concurrent near the southern end of Balcombe parish, and are crossed, at a place called the Ouse Valley, by the magnificent viaduct of the Brighton railway which bears that name. In earlier days I have easily leaped over the stream which is now spanned by one of the noblest bridges in Europe. It is in fact at this point a mere rivulet, although within a very short distance it becomes a navigable river. More to the south-east the Ouse receives a branch which appears to originate in the forest ridge near Wych-cross, and flows past Broadhurst, and then, near Trenmontes or Trimmens, is enlarged by an affluent from the beautiful dell between Dane-Hill and Horsted-Keynes.

After passing the wood of Werpesburn, a Domesday locality (now in Sussex vernacular 'Wapses Boorn'), the Ouse receives, at Sheffield bridge, a small rill from Wivelsfield,<sup>17</sup> and then partially surrounding Sheffield Park accepts some tributary waters from that beautiful domain, originally springing from the higher grounds near Chelwood Common. Lower down, between Fletching bridge and Gold-bridge, comes in a small tributary from Nutley, and yet lower a bifurcated stream, one

<sup>17</sup> At Wivelsfield a place called *Cleave-water* indicates the respective 'water sheds' of the Ouse and the Adur.

branch of which passes Ford Green and Maresfield Park, the other coming from Oldland, the seat of the Roman iron-works, and Maresfield village and pond. In the bed of one of these streams the Rev. E. Turner some years since discovered an ancient British canoe, hewn, like that described in a former volume of these Collections,"<sup>18</sup> out of a solid oak-tree. In the days of our Celtic forefathers these forest streams must have formed almost the only highways of communication from point to point.

Near the peaceful, pleasant church of Isfield, there flows into the Ouse a tributary of more importance than any that I have yet enumerated. Springing from a spot close to the source of the Rother, in the parish of Rotherfield, it passes Hugget's Furnace, a well-known seat of the iron-trade, and by Hastingford, a name suggestive of Danish proprietorship. Several sub-tributaries swell its stream before it passes under Uckfield bridge, especially the Tickeridge mill rivulet at Buxted, and the Barnard's Wood stream flowing by Framfield. Before it reaches Isfield it receives a rivulet which rises near Halland, the former residence of the Pelhams, by Tarble Down,<sup>19</sup> and Bentley, an ancient manor-place of the Gages, and so to Worth, in Little Horsted.

Just below the confluence of this tributary (generally known as the *Uckfield River*) with the Ouse at Isfield, the latter receives another, which, rising to the west of Chailey, feeds the moat of the parsonage-house there—a singular feature, suggestive of the "good old times" (?) when even a parish priest was fain to fortify his dwelling. Thence it passes by Newick Park to the main river. This Chailey stream I have seen dignified in a local publication as "the river *Chay*," though I believe there is no better foundation for that name than a joke of a neighbouring land-owner well-known to most readers of these "Collections."

<sup>18</sup> Vol. X., page 149.

<sup>19</sup> At Tarble Down the Archbishops of Canterbury formerly had a *mansio* or resting-place, some remains of which are said to have been visible within the last century. The name is most commonly pronounced *Terrible-Down*, and local tradition — always ready to account for names—makes it the scene of a *terri-*

*ble* battle, in which the combatants fought "up to their knees in blood!" There may be, nevertheless, some modicum of truth in this statement, for I was assured more than thirty years ago, by a respectable and trustworthy labourer, that he had in his earlier days ploughed up, in a field hard by, some iron relics which he described as 'old swords.'

Near Barcombe Mill we encounter a rivulet called the *Black-brook*, which rises between Street and Ditchling, and flows eastward to Hurst-Barnes, near which it meets with a fine stream which rises in the moat of the old mansion of Plumpton Place, and drives the machinery of several mills. These commingled waters flow under Bevan and Barcombe bridges and so on to the Ouse. In old maps Bevan bridge is called *Beve-horn* bridge, which is doubtless the correct name, and may have originated in the fact that like many other buildings it once had a pair of bullock's or *beve's* horns affixed to it.<sup>20</sup>

Further down is the Cooksbridge stream, which rises near the manor-house of Allington.<sup>21</sup> Its original source may have been at St. Olave's Well (now corruptly Tully's Wells), on the estate of the Rev. Sir Geo. Shiffner, Bart. It reaches the Ouse not far from Coneyborough Park, below Barcombe. There is a rustic tradition that Cooksbridge derives its name from the fact that when in 1264 Simon de Montfort's forces were marching from Fletching to the scene of the great battle of Lewes on Mount Harry, they stopped here to *cook* their breakfast!<sup>22</sup>

On the eastern side, the Ouse receives two or three other water-courses; the first from the Mote near Plashet Park, another seat of the Gages; the second from the Broyle, once a manor-place and park of the Archbishops; and the third from Ringmer Park, formerly the abode of the Thatchers. A sub-tributary of this small stream is fed by Rider's Wells, the Redrewelle of Domesday Book. At Hamsey the old bed of the Ouse forms a peninsula in which stands the dilapidated and deserted parish church, hard by the site of the ancient castle of the De Sais. Lower down, the river passes between Lamport (corruptly Landport) on the right, and Old Malling

<sup>20</sup> At Hornchurch, co. Essex, there is a remarkable instance still remaining. Qu: had this practice originally anything to do with the cultus of Diana?

<sup>21</sup> A chapelry of St. John's in Lewes. I have lately inspected the foundations of the long-demolished chapel, and near the farm-house I have discovered what I believe to be a portion of the font which formerly belonged to that edifice. There

are clear indications of a moat close to the present farm-house.

<sup>22</sup> A little to the northward is an eminence called Restnoak Hill. This, on the same trustworthy authority, is said to signify "the Resting Oak," because Simon and his staff sat down there to rest themselves after their long breakfastless march!

(the oldest site of Christianity in East Sussex) on the left, and so past Malling Deanery to Lewes. Southward of that town two small streams flow into it—the *Winterbourne* (so called from its bed being usually dry in summer) which rises near the foot of Falmer Hill, and the *Cockshut* which originates in the parish of Kingston.

Near Beddingham the Ouse receives what should be called its principal tributary, inasmuch as it is navigable for a considerable distance. This is the *Ritch*, or as it is sometimes called the *Glynde Reach*, a word synonymous with creek, from the Anglo-Saxon *ræcan*. It is composed of four principal heads of water, rising respectively at Laughton, Rype, Ringmer, and Firle. The Laughton stream is navigable by barges as far as Laughton Place, the ancient fortalice of the Pelhams, which it strengthens with a moat. Rype, whose Saxon appellation was Eckington, probably derives its more usual, though not more modern, name from the Latin *ripa*, from the circumstance of a large portion of the parish being on the shore or bank of the stream which it sends to the Ritch. On that shore, at the time of the compilation of Domesday Book, there existed eight salt-pans, a clear proof that the estuary of the Ouse, or rather its tributary the Ritch, was then subject to tidal influences up to this now distant point. Ringmer may possibly owe its final syllable to the little *mere* or brook which rises there. The Firle stream, rising near the domain of the Saynt Cleres and the Gages, passed under *Stanford*-pound bridge; and near it, as in many similar places, stood a wayside Cross, the base of which is still remaining in a cottage garden. In old times rivers presented to the wayfarer his main obstacle and his greatest danger, and therefore his grateful piety dictated the bridge chapel, and the wayside cross by the ford; yet one can hardly imagine that this *olim* ford was ever a dangerous one. A smaller rill originating in the northern part of the parish of Glynde gives name to Glyndebourne, the ancient seat of the Hays, rendered classic ground by the residence of the author of "*Religio Philosophi*."

The Ritch, as it is the largest, so it is the last of the Ouse's tributaries. At the confluence of these waters the villages which skirt the shores of the ancient estuary are known as



“the Brookside.” *Brook* in modern English is equivalent to a small stream, but in ancient times it meant much more. Verstegan says, “A Brook we now take to be a small running water, but I find it in the Teutonick to be that which *palus* is in Latine, a waterish or moorish ground. The city of Bruxels” (Brussels) he adds, “took name of the Brook-land or moorish ground lying on the north side thereof.”<sup>23</sup>

In ancient times the Ouse had its outlet under the cliff to the south-eastward of Seaford, and that town has from a very early period enjoyed the privileges of a Cinque-Port. Sharing the fate of its mother port, Hastings, and its sister Pevensey, it is, however, only nominally a port, the “haven of ships” having totally disappeared. The earliest historical mention of Seaford as a port, that I have met with, is in the legend of Saint Lewinna, in the eleventh century, elucidated by Mr. Blaauw in the first volume of these *Collections*. The last hint of its having been a port at all may be seen in my own “Memorials of Seaford” in our seventh volume. For upwards of three centuries the waters of this river have sought a more direct course,<sup>24</sup> and their debouchure has been at the village of Meeching, now called *Newhaven* from that circumstance.<sup>25</sup> Drayton thus alludes to this change:—

“The Ouse, a nymph of very scornful grace,  
So touchy wax'd therewith, and was so squeamish grown,  
That her old name she scorn'd should publicly be known;  
Whose *haven* out of mind when as it also grew,  
The lately passèd times denominate the *New*.”

Here for the present I must pause. I hope in the next volume to resume the subject, and to deal with the rivers of West Sussex and their associations, as well with those which rise to the northward of the Forest Ridge, and so do not send their waters to the English Channel.

<sup>23</sup> “Restitution of Decayed Intelligence,” edit. 1605, page 314.

<sup>24</sup> The old bed of the Ouse is clearly discernible throughout the whole of the distance from Newhaven, by what is called the Tide-mill Creek, and thence past Blatchington, to Seaford.

<sup>25</sup> A notice of the early commissions of Lewes, from “Flecchyng to Seford juxta mare,” has been given in Vol. X. of the Suss. Arch. Coll., p. 95.