

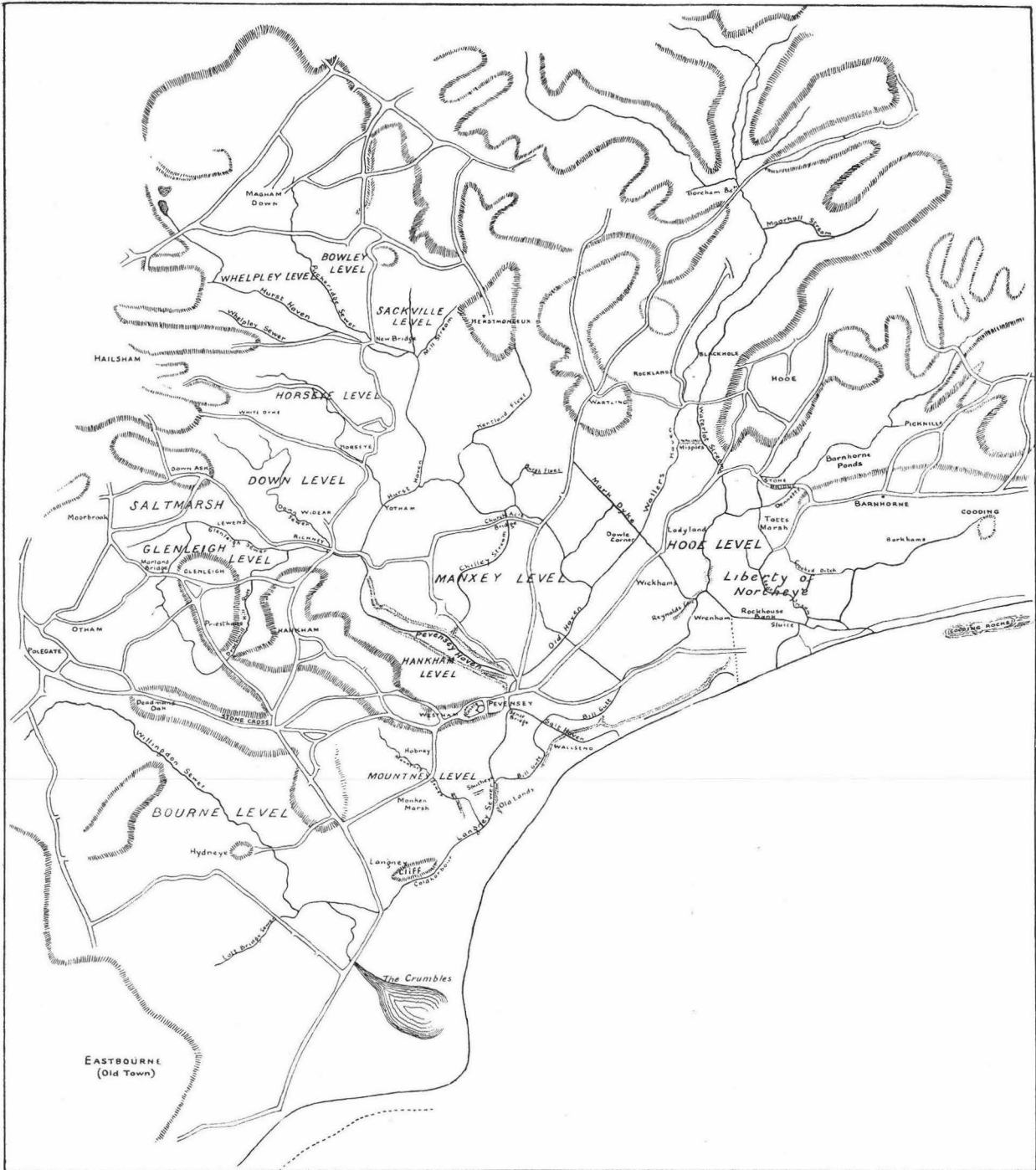
THE INNING OF PEVENSEY LEVELS.

BY L. F. SALZMANN.¹

IN his paper on "The Sussex Coast Line," Mr. Ballard has pointed out the former existence of a great inlet to the east of Beachy Head. All the rich grazing lands of Pevensey Level must have been for centuries one great lagoon. What the appearance of this district must have been when the Romans looked out from the walls of their fortified station of Anderida could be realised by anyone who saw the Levels during the exceptional floods in the early winter of 1909, when the whole country resembled a great lake. From the figures given by Mr. Ballard we learn that high tide in Pevensey Bay is from 9 to 10-ft. above the mean water, which is taken as the Ordnance datum; it follows therefore that if the protecting sea banks were removed all land of which the height is given on the Ordnance maps as less than 10-ft. would be overflowed by the sea at high tide. Taking into consideration the rise of the ground during the course of centuries, a rise particularly rapid in the case of land lying at the foot of hills and constantly liable to inundation, we shall probably be well within the mark if we consider that all land below 12-ft. was submerged at high tide during the Roman period.

The boundaries of this great lagoon are formed by the bases of the high hills of Eastbourne and Willingdon on the west, Hailsham on the north-west, Herstmonceux and Wartling on the north-east, Hooe and Bexhill on the east, with an arm of low land pushing up between Wartling and Hooe as far as Ashburnham. From Polegate, on the borders of Hailsham and Willingdon,

¹ For much assistance in the preparation of this paper, especially in the identification of local names, I am indebted to Mr. J. E. Ray, of Bexhill.



MAP OF PEVENSEY LEVELS.

Based on Yeakell & Gardner's Survey, 1780.

a ridge of high ground pushes out into the Level, dividing at Stone Cross, one branch turning south and ending at Langney, a second stretching east to Pevensey, and a third turning north to Hankham and Rickney. Just to the west of this Hankham ridge, but separated from it by a narrow valley, is the island of Glenleigh, with Priesthawes at its southern end, and north of this island a tongue of high land runs down from Hailsham to Down Ash. Horsey and Chilley, at each of which a height of about 30-ft. is recorded, must have stood out as islands, as indeed their names imply, and a number of little hillocks extend westwards from Bexhill as far as Northeye.² Two main streams, one from Bodle Street and Ashburnham, sometimes called the Ashburn, but more often Wallers Haven and the Old Haven, and the other Hurst Haven, from Herstmonceux and Magham Down, formerly united at Pevensey, after receiving various tributaries, such as Chilley Stream, to form Pevensey Haven, the mouth of which formed the port of Pevensey; the Ashburn, however, was afterwards diverted and runs out at the sluice by Northeye. The high ridge running from Stone Cross to Langney cuts off a portion of the Level at the back of the present town of Eastbourne, and through this Bourne Level a stream runs down from Willingdon and formerly entered the sea at the Crumbles.

The general height of the marsh land appears to be about 8-ft. At New Bridge and for some distance east and west 8-ft. is recorded, falling on the north to 7-ft. and on the east at the point where the footpath from Herstmonceux Church meets the trade, or marsh road, from New Bridge to $6\frac{1}{2}$ -ft. White Dyke, in Hailsham, shows a height of 9-ft., but a little further east, along Horseye Sewer, 5-ft. and 6-ft. are shown, and the general elevation of Horseye Level is not above 7-ft., while at Widemar Marsh, half-way between Horseye and Rickney, the ground sinks to 4-ft., the lowest recorded on the map. The road from Marshfoot in Hailsham to Eastbourne and the Church-acre Drove average 8-ft.; along Wallers Haven

² Rockhouse Bank is of different formation to the other low hills, being of brown sand. Mr. Ray considers that it may be of comparatively recent date.

banks 9-ft. is shown, but this falls to $7\frac{1}{2}$ -ft. at the foot of the Hooe hills, and a similar level occurs between Otham and Priesthawes. Round Chapel Bridge, part of Northeye in Bexhill, 9, 8 and 6-ft. are shown. In Bourne Level Hideney Bridge is 9-ft. and Lott Bridge 8-ft., while 7-ft. is shown along Lott Bridge Sewer and close to the Eastbourne Gas Works. As a whole the lowest ground is found round the edge of the levels at the foot of the hills, where the scouring of the tides would have had the greatest effect, and everything points to these portions being some of the latest to be drained.

When we come to the question of how and when the Pevensey Levels were drained we are driven to the piecing together of circumstantial evidence. It seems fairly certain that the work was very largely assisted by the natural action of "the eastward drift." The Channel currents, with their persistent eastward tendency, find in Pevensey Bay a suitable place to deposit their spoils of shingle quarried from the western shores and from the cliffs of Beachy Head, and so a bank of shingle was gradually accumulated all along this coast. The outward scour of the immense body of water from Pevensey Level was enough to keep the channel of the Haven open, but at quite an early date the mouth of the Bourn Level Stream must have been blocked at Langney, and the stream was gradually forced eastwards until at last it found an exit by the common Haven. How soon men began to imitate the action of nature and build embankments to shut the waters out seems impossible to say. Although the Romans had a strong coastguard station at Pevensey (Anderida) and something of a settlement at Eastbourne there is no evidence of their having done anything for the drainage of these marshes, and they certainly attempted nothing on the scale of their operations in Romney Marsh. That the work of recovery began in a small way at an early date seems probable, for in the charter³ by which Offa gave land at Bexhill to the See of Selsey in 772 the boundaries recited include "tha ealdan

³ Lambeth MS., 1212, f. 387.

merc dic," "andlang stremes west abutan tham sealtan merse" and "up on the ealdan dic and lang dice." The charter is usually admitted to be a forgery, but it is no doubt based on a genuine grant, and the boundaries may be accepted as at least pre-Conquest. If therefore these dykes were already "old," it is clear that in the neighbourhood of Cooding and Barnhorne some land had early been reclaimed.

The term PEVENSEY LEVELS is used to denote all the marsh land between Bexhill and Eastbourne. These Levels are divided and sub-divided into several smaller portions for the purpose of drainage and assessment of scots or rates for the works carried out by the Commissioners of Levels for the protection of the marsh lands. The three principal divisions are:—^{3a}

1. Willingdon Level, comprising the marsh between Eastbourne, Polegate and Pevensy.
2. Pevensy Level, being the main portion of the marshes between Pevensy and the borders of Bexhill.
3. Hooe Level, comprising the remaining portion in the parishes of Hooe and Bexhill.

These are, or were, separately drained into the sea, the first at Langney, the second at Pevensy and the third at Northeye, though the first and second now both flow into one outlet.

One of the principal sub-divisions of Willingdon Level is MOUNTNEY LEVEL, drained by Mountney Sewer, which flows into the Langney Sewer.

PEVENSEY LEVEL properly is made up of the following levels, commencing at the north-west:—

WHELPLEY LEVEL. This is bounded on the south by Marshfoot and Horseye Level and on the north by Hurst Haven; it runs to a point on the east where the Whelpley Sewer, which drains it, enters the Hurst Haven at New Bridge.

MAGHAM LEVEL adjoins Whelpley on the north, and has for its southern boundary Hurst Haven, and for its

^{3a} I have to thank Mr. Ray for this list of the Levels and their boundaries.

north-eastern Puckeridge Sewer; it is drained through the centre by Magham Sewer, which enters Puckeridge Sewer just above New Bridge.

BOWLEY LEVEL lies to the north-east of Magham Level. It has the Puckeridge Stream for its eastern boundary and Bowley Sewer for its western. At its southern end it runs to a point, like all these northern levels.

SACKVILLE LEVEL, on the east of Bowley, also comes to a point on the south where its sewer enters Hurst Haven at a place anciently called "Sakevylestrow."

BAWLEY LEVEL is a small level between Sackville Level and the upper part of Manxey Level. It is drained by the Mill Stream on its south-eastern border.

HORSEYE LEVEL lies to the south of these, and is, unlike them, within the Liberty of Pevensey. It is bounded on the south by the road from White Dyke to Rickney and on the east by Hurst Haven, and is drained by Horseye Sewer, which falls into Hurst Haven at Yortham.

DOWN LEVEL is immediately south of Horseye. It has Downash to the west of it and Hurst Haven to the east. The southern boundary is Glenleigh Sewer, which falls into Hurst Haven at Rickney. It is drained by Down Sewer, which enters Hurst Haven at the same place.

SALTMARSH LEVEL is a small level to the south-west of the last, with the portion of Glenleigh Level drained by Holm Sewer to the south of it.

GLENLEIGH LEVEL is divided into three portions, drained respectively by Holm Sewer, Marland Sewer and Drockmill Hill Gut.

HANKHAM LEVEL is to the north of Pevensey Castle, and its western boundary is Hurst Haven. It is sub-divided into portions drained by Martens Gut, Hankham Gut, &c.

PEVENSEY BRIDGE LEVEL, anciently called "Besten-over," lies south-east of Pevensey Castle, and is bounded

on the north-west by Langney Sewer and the Old Haven, while it adjoins the sea on the south. It was formerly drained by the Bill Gut, but now the Salt Haven runs through the middle of this level.

MANXEY LEVEL is the largest division of Pevensey Level, and in the fifteenth century was sometimes called a parish. It is bounded on the west by Hurst Haven and on the east by the Hooe Levels. Its sub-divisions are drained into Chilley Stream, which in its turn enters Hurst Haven. Its sub-divisions are as follows:—

The northern portion, as far south as the Church-acre Drove, is drained by the Kentland Fleet. East of this is a portion drained by Burg Fleet. South of this is a portion comprising Lampham, through which runs the Dowle Stream, bounded on the west by the Wartling Trade Road. To the west of this is the main portion, drained by the Chilley Stream itself, having Hurst Haven for its southern boundary.

There remain two portions, one between the Hooe Trade Road and the Old Haven, and the other immediately to the south, bounded by Wrenham Stream.

Anticipating the results of an examination of the documentary evidence, we may say that the main changes in the methods of draining the levels were as follows: (1) From the first inning down to the end of the fourteenth century all the levels drained out at a point on the borders of Pevensey and Westham, due south of the Castle. (2) In 1396 a large cut was made from Fence Bridge to Wallsend, to replace the former outlet. (3) In 1402 the greater part of the Ashburn, draining Hooe Level, was diverted to the Sluice. (4) The diversion of the Hooe drainage was completed in 1455 by a new ditch in Northeye. (5) As a result of the diminished volume and decreased scour of the water the outlet at Pevensey silted up and the mouth of the Haven was forced eastward until it eventually reached the sluice, though on a number of occasions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries its mouth was

re-opened at different points between Wallsend and the Sluice.

The Domesday survey of 1086 shows that the salt water still flowed freely over much of the marsh. In Hailsham there were thirteen salt pans,⁴ in Bowley four, and in Hooe four. That all these places lay on the edge of the marsh,⁵ while the more central estates, such as Horseye, Horns in Glenleigh, and Peeling, had no salt pans, bears out what has already been said about the borderlands having been the last to be drained. At the time that Otham Abbey was founded by Ralph de Dene, about 1180, the founder granted, amongst other lands in the neighbourhood, his "new marsh,"⁶ which indicates that enclosure and drainage was at that time in progress. About the same time Gilbert of L'Aigle granted to the same house the right to take sixty cart loads of peat yearly in his moor of Pevensy, "so long as the moor shall last," agreeing to pay them 2s. 6d. yearly when the moor came to an end.⁷ Another hint that conditions were changing is to be found in a deed of the second half of the twelfth century, by which Richard, the Porter of Pevensy, granted to the monks of Lewes "that the sea water may have free entrance and passage to their mill of Langney through my marsh, which is close to that mill, and this entrance they shall hold of me and my heirs so long as the mill stands, for 12^d."⁸ This suggests that difficulties had arisen about the supply of water for the mill, apparently worked by the tides, and that even with this new arrangement there were doubts as to the permanence of the mill.

More light is thrown upon the question by a conveyance of land executed in 1223, by which Gilbert of

⁴ Places for making salt from sea water.

⁵ There were five salt pans attached to "Lodintone," but the identity of this manor is uncertain. In *V.C.H. Sussex* I have suggested Duddington; this was part of the manor of Otham, and it is worth noting that there was a salt pan at Otham about 1200 (Salzmann, *Hist. of Hailsham*, p. 177).

⁶ *Hist. of Hailsham*, p. 174.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁸ *Dy. of Lanc. Misc. Bks.*, 112, f. 52.

L'Aigle granted to Hervey Gazel 100 acres in Pevensey,⁹ namely:—

All the old wall which leads from the house of Wudman to the house of Stephen le Stunt and all the land which lies between the same wall and the ditch which is the boundary between the lands of Edmund de Hastings and Petronilla his wife and of Ralph Baret and of Eilward Willard and of Stephen Stunt and the ditch which divides the demesnes of Edmund and Petronilla de Hastings and the land which Adam de Bavent holds of them, except two acres of land which lie near Widhers where were the houses of Walter Luke, which shall remain to Edmund and Petronilla and her heirs; also all the land lying between the ditch which goes in a straight line from the land of Ralph Baret to Fischfiet and between the path which leads from the house of Stephen le Stunt to Sleigat and from Sleigat by the little ditch to Fischfiet; also half the fishery of Fischfiet so far as those 100 acres extend; and for $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land the whole fishery between the first wall of Widhers as far as the head of Godwin Stunt's land which is towards the west, so that so long as the water of the fishery is there the whole fishery shall remain to Hervey and his heirs and if perchance it becomes firm land then the half of that land nearest to Hervey's land shall remain to him and his heirs and the other half to Gilbert and his heirs.

The land, or rather water, here in question, "Widhers," is that Widear Marsh which we have already mentioned as showing the lowest level marked on the Ordnance Map. It is rather a suggestive circumstance that the boundary between Hailsham and Pevensey parishes, after following Down Sewer to the south-west corner of the Widear Marshes, suddenly strikes across a field to the Rickney road. This road then forms the southern boundary of Hailsham, while the Glenleigh Sewer, which at first runs parallel and almost in contact with it, forms the northern boundary of Westham. The space between the road and sewer forms an intruding tongue of Pevensey parish, only a few feet wide for the first quarter of a mile or so, but then spreading out to enclose the Lewens, to the west of which it is some 500 yards broad. At this western edge of the Lewens the Hailsham boundary turns south, and again cutting across a field from one ditch to another, reaches Glenleigh Sewer, from which point the sewer becomes the common boundary between Westham and Hailsham. These eccentricities of the boundaries would

⁹ *Feet of Fines* (Sussex Record Soc.), No. 186.

become explicable if, at the time that the parish boundaries were laid down, Widear and the Lewens were both "fisheries" or tracts of permanent water. Their western limits, forming the bounds of Hailsham, might well not coincide with the ditches dug after they were drained, while in the case of the Lewens, the Westham boundary might have been formed by the southern border, the Glenleigh Sewer (? Fish Fleet), and that of Hailsham by the northern, the line of Rickney Road, the fishery being unassigned, but after it was drained considered as in the parish of Pevensy.

Coming down to 1263, we have a record of the enclosure of another portion of the Level.¹⁰ Agnes, widow of William Montacute, had as part of her dower a third part of her husband's lands, including part of a lagoon or swamp (*mareckum maris*), two-thirds of which were held by Ingeram de Mankesey, who subsequently gave them to his brother Ralph. Agnes, with William de Northeye and others, who had holdings in the lagoon, took steps to enclose it with a sea dyke, and as Ralph refused to contribute towards the cost, Agnes defrayed the expense of enclosing his two-thirds with her own third, and retained them in her own hands until she should have recovered her outlay, "for such is the custom of the sea coast." In the end Ralph, for a payment of 20 marks, granted his share to Agnes and her second husband, Nicholas Malmeynes, to hold for their lives, with reversion to the Prior of Michelham, the chief lord of the fee. The Montacute lands we know from various references to have been principally in "Bestenover," which is that part of the Level lying south of Hooe Trade between Pevensy and the Liberty of Northeye. For instance, in 1220 John Montacute granted to Martin de Bestenover for life 100 acres in Bestenover, Martin undertaking to keep up the walls belonging thereto, "both the head wall (*capitalem*) and the other."¹¹ As the only lands in Bestenover belonging to the Priory of Michelham appear to have been Wrenham, on the borders of the Liberty of Northeye, it

¹⁰ Assize R., 912, m. 16b.

¹¹ *Fleet of Fines* (Sussex Record Soc.), No. 170.

would seem that this must be the holding referred to. In this same level of Bestenover was Wildmarsh, and the Assize Roll for 1263 records¹² that Stephen, father of Geoffrey de Wyldemers, held 50 acres in Pevensey, which he could not protect from the sea, so he made agreement with "a certain Prior of Winchelsea,¹³ the predecessor of the present prior," and leased the land to him for 40d. apparently on condition that the prior should defray the cost of protecting it. The failure of any landowner to act with his neighbours in constructing, maintaining or repairing banks and dykes would, of course, render their actions of no effect, and we therefore find that if any tenant refused to recover his land when it had been inundated the neighbouring landowners would do the work, and he would incur "the penalty according to the law of the sea coast, which is called *bisquet et trisquet*,"¹⁴ but what exactly that penalty was is not stated. It would seem, however, that it is referred to in the agreement between the Abbot of Battle and William de Codyng that if either failed to repair their joint dykes the other should do all the repairs, and if the defaulter did not pay his share "before the morning of the next day" he should pay double, and if he failed to pay the double costs within two weeks he should pay treble.¹⁵

In no other class of landed property was it so necessary to cultivate good relations with neighbouring landowners, for arrangements had constantly to be made for the drainage of one property by means of ditches running through other properties. Several such agreements were made by the Abbey of Battle with regard to their estates at Barnhorne during the thirteenth century. In 1248 the Abbot granted to William de Northeye¹⁶

¹² Assize R., 912, m. 13.

¹³ This must have been the prior of the Grey Friars, unless there is some mistake. The prior of Michelham is much more probable.

¹⁴ Assize R., 929, m. 25d. The reference is to marshes in Icklesham, but would also apply to those of Pevensey.

¹⁵ Add. MSS., 6,344, f. 172. Mr. Ray makes the very probable suggestion that "*bisquet et trisquet*" is intended for *bi-scot* and *tri-scot*.

¹⁶ *Feet of Fines* (Sussex Record Soc.), No. 499. Cf. the agreement made with William de Hastings, lord of Northeye, in 1304: Thorpe, *Battle Charters*, 20, 56.

All the land which is outside the marsh called Stuttesmersse (Totts Marsh near Barnhorne) on the west side of the green wall and the wall itself with all the land between Stuttesmersse and William's demesnes in la Tunge¹⁷ towards the Brok of Hooe so far as the said demesne of la Tunge extends; also all the pasture called la Trade, saving to the Abbot right of way with his cattle, so that they do not graze there, and the right of making and repairing his gutts; and it shall be lawful for the Abbot to drain (*assewiate*) his marsh of Stuttesmersse through the middle of William's demesnes of Northeye¹⁸ as far as the middle of the gutt of Babbingflet¹⁹ at his own costs, and if they cannot drain the said land by the said gutt they may drain it at their own costs by the gutt of Swanflet; moreover the Abbot may drain his marshes between Bercham²⁰ (Barkhams near Cooding) and la Trade by the said gutt of Swanflet and at his pleasure may put a gutt between Bradeteghe and Northeye, provided William's road is not interfered with, and the Abbot may likewise make another gutt where it seems most useful to him; and whenever it shall be necessary to make or repair the said gutts the Abbot and his successors shall provide two thirds of the cost and William and his heirs the other third.

It would seem that the greater part of Mountney Level, lying between Langney Cliff and Pevensey, must have been reclaimed by the middle of the thirteenth century. But the sea had not yet relinquished its claims, and continual care was necessary to preserve the reclaimed lands. In particular, we find the patch of land containing 36 acres between Langney Sewer and the sea, known as Oldland or the Island, requiring special attention. In 1282 two furlongs of wall at Ylond were mended at a cost of 7s. 4d., some small repairs were done to three rods of wall towards the sea and a gutt was repaired.²¹ Next year 13 men were employed one night watching the wall at Ylond on account of the exceptionally high tide (*pro nimio fluctu aque salse*), and 1 furlong 2 rods of the wall were repaired, as well as a gutt. Two years later, in 1285, 16 rods of this wall were mended and 33 rods of ditch were dug at

¹⁷ La Tunge was near Tonlegh Bridge, now Stone Bridge.

¹⁸ That is, by the East Stream.

¹⁹ ? Crooked Ditch.

²⁰ About 1230 Abbot Richard of Battle made an arrangement with William de Codinge for the upkeep of the gutts between Bergham and Codinge: Thorpe, *Battle Charters*, 12; Add. MSS., 6,344, f. 172.

²¹ Mins. Accts., 1,027, No. 17.

Eldelond, and in 1290 90 perches of the wall at Ylond were heightened, possibly as a result of an accident in the previous year, when the sea made a breach in the wall by the beach (*juxta perarium*).²² It must have been about 10 or 15 years later that Gervase Alard of Winchelsea, the famous Admiral of the Cinque Ports, petitioned the King²³ for a grant of "a small piece of land of the fee of the Barony of Egle at Pevensey called le Iland, lying right on the sea," which had been held by Berenger Tyrel, whose heir he apparently was. It would seem that before his request was granted both King and Admiral had died, but Edward II. in 1307 gave the land to Henry Alard. The inquisition²⁴ held before the grant was made showed that the place called Ilonde contained within the walls 36 acres, worth 10d. an acre or 30s. in all. With this was given 400 acres of salt marsh adjoining the sea, of which 200 acres were covered with beach and shingle, the whole being valued at only 20s. These 400 acres were to the east of Oldland, in Bestenover, as in 1326 Robert, son of John Alard, founded a chantry in the church of St. Thomas of Winchelsea for the souls of his wife and his brother Henry, and endowed it with 100 acres in Bestenover.²⁵

These 36 acres of "la Hylonde" were entered in a rental of 1292 as sheep pasture, and with them are given 100 acres in Godlesesond and Forhavene.²⁶ As the latter are only valued at 20s., while all the other pasture is put down at 12d. the acre, it is probable that they were only partly reclaimed, and in 1318 the King licensed Robert de Sapy and Alina his wife to reclaim the marsh called Godleasesond, which was then overflowed by the sea; they were to pay a pair of gilt spurs yearly for rent, and it was calculated that it could be enclosed for £200, and that it would then be worth 12d. an acre, but how many acres there were could not be said, owing to its being under water.²⁷ Four years later,

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Anct. Pet., 1,471.

²⁴ Inq. ad qd. damnum, 69, No. 9.

²⁵ Harl. MS.

²⁶ Rentals and Surveys, 663.

²⁷ Inq. ad qd. damnum, 129, No. 11.

however, the King's charter was returned for cancellation,²⁸ the grantees not having enclosed any of the marsh, probably regarding it as too expensive and speculative a venture. But it would seem that in course of time circumstances permitted of the marsh being reclaimed, as in 1353 Alyna de Sapy held, by a charter recently acquired, 300 acres of land called Newelond, paying therefor 50s. 2d. yearly,²⁹ and Godlesesond is elsewhere stated to be 300 acres in extent.

About this time the reclamation of the marsh was evidently proceeding rapidly. In 1336 John de Shelvestrode, who held Bestenover, inned four parcels of salt marsh, containing 36 acres, without the King's licence, and Philip de Hydenye inned 20 acres in Wyldemerssh,³⁰ and before 1342 John Lot had inned $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres near the port of Pevensy, John Westcote four acres by the Castle, and Robert de Lampham two acres near Lampham. "By the inning of the said lands and by the walls by which the course of the water is restricted the port of Pevensy is much injured."³¹ Here, as in the Rye and Romney marshes, the extension of the dry land diminished the volume, and therefore the scouring effect of the tidal water, with the result that the haven soon began to silt up.

Although most of the entries we have given so far refer to the marshes on the coast and round the mouth of the Haven, work was going on all the time further inland. Between 1283 and 1286 we find dykes dug at Moorbrook (22 rods long), Castelwisse (31 rods), on the north side of the Castle, and at Cheesehouse, apparently the same as "the Dairy," where part of the ditch was made into a watering place for the cattle.³² The manorial court of the Lowey was also busily engaged keeping the

²⁸ Close R., 15 Edw. II., m. 32.

²⁹ Rentals and Surveys, 666.

³⁰ Another 30 acres called Wiltemerssh by the Haven of Pevensy had been inned by John de Batelesford and were granted to him on payment of a fine in 1356: Mins. Accts., 1,028, No. 3.

³¹ Assize R., 941, m. 11D.

³² Mins. Accts., 1,027, No. 17.

various landowners up to the mark. In 1357 the Abbot of Bayham was fined for failing to repair a bridge at Brokebrigge (12d.) and a wall at Rockland (12d.), also 3s. 4d. for a blocked ditch at Moorbrook, and 40s. for allowing "a ditch between Boreham and the sluice of Pevensey" (*i.e.* Wallers Haven) to become choked, and other offenders were fined for broken walls and bridges and paths.³³ But it was early felt that some additional control was desirable, and this was emphasised by the disastrous floods of 1287, when Old Winchelsea was swept away. That Pevensey Levels suffered at that time is clear from a significant entry of the cost of collecting 172 sheep and tegs which had been drowned by the sea in the marsh, carrying them to the boat and so to the Castle, and there skinning and salting them.³⁴ Accordingly in 1289 Roger Lewkenor and Luke de la Gare were appointed Commissioners of Sewers for the coast of Sussex,³⁵ which office they held for the next six years; and from that time the appointment of such commissioners for the county, or, more usually, for the particular Levels, became almost an annual occurrence. The beginning of the experiment was not very happy, as in 1290 the Abbots of Battle and Bayham and others complained that Roger and Luke, with the Prior of Michelham and others, had begun to make a bank across the Haven of Pevensey with a sluice, whereby the fresh water would be checked in its course and the land flooded; John de Lacy and William de Etchingam were therefore ordered to inquire into the matter, and if necessary undo the commissioners' work.³⁶

Unfortunately few reports of the proceedings of the Commissioners of Sewers have survived. The earliest of these records the report made by a sworn jury to the Abbot of Bayham, the Prior of Michelham, Sir William Fiennes, William Makenade and John Broke at

³³ Court Rolls, 206, No. 19.

³⁴ Mins. Accts., 1,027, No. 17.

³⁵ Pat., 17 Edw. I., m. 21b.

³⁶ Pat., 18 Edw. I., m. 16b.

Westham on St. Matthew's Day, 20 Richard II. (21st September, 1396):—³⁷

. . . The bank beginning at Borhambrigge and going to the land of Sir William de Hoo is in decay, through the fault of the Abbot of Bayham and his coparceners. From thence the bank leading to the land of Stephen Playsted, through the fault of Sir William de Hoo; and from thence the banks reaching to the boundary of Marcopson, through the fault of Stephen Waller and Walter Sompter; and the banks reaching from that place to the land of John Sweteblood, through the fault of Sir Philip Sentcler; and thence the banks leading to the land of Sir Philip Mested, through the fault of John Sweteblood; and thence the bank stretching to the land of Sir William Fienles, through the fault of Sir Philip Mested; and thence the bank leading to the land of Simon Lot, through the fault of Sir William Fienles; and thence the bank leading to the old sluice of Pevensy, through the fault of Simon Lot. All which persons, by reason of their land holdings within the said marsh, were obliged to repair and maintain those banks by parcels, their ancestors and those whose estates they had having so done time out of mind. Through such their neglect many losses had befallen those parts.

The jury also presented that—

The sewer beginning at the bounds of Squabber and extending to Gorebreggs, and so to Sakevylestrow and so to Yoztham, and thence to Rikenebrigg and so to the old sluice of Pevensy, and thence to Wyllndonestrow and so to the gutt made through the midst of a hillock (?) by which the fresh waters descending to the sea from 6358 acres $3\frac{1}{2}$ roods of land, meadow and pasture were wont to pass,—from the said bounds of Squabber to the said old sluice of Pevensy is filled up and obstructed with grass, reeds and other filth suffered to accumulate there, and also from the said sluice to the said gutt so that by the shallowness thereof the course of the water is much obstructed,—through the fault and negligence of all the tenants of the said 6358 acres $3\frac{1}{2}$ roods, who according to their proportions ought to do these repairs, namely:—the tenants of 209 acres in the marsh of Megham, 2 furlongs 17 perches of the sewer, from Squabber to Gorebriggs; the tenants from Gorebriggs to Sakevylestrow one moiety of the said sewer towards the north, and all the other tenants holding 190 acres in the marshes of Megham and Whelpelle the other moiety towards the south, containing in length 16 furlongs; the tenants of 316 acres in the marshes of Boghele, Balle and Herstmonseux, from Sakevylestrow to Ladytrowe, 7 furlongs of the said sewer; and from Ladytrowe the tenants of the said lands in the marshes of Megham, Whelpelle, Boghele, Balle and Herstmonseux, 7 furlongs unto the place of Yoztham; from thence the tenants of 8-4 acres in the marshes of Horsye and Doune, 3 furlongs 9 perches unto Rikenebrigg; and from thence to the old sluice of Pevensy and thence to Wyllindonstrow the

³⁷ Chanc. Misc., bdle. 86, file 1, No. 24; printed in Dugdale's *Hist. of Embanking*. The original record is a good deal damaged and in places illegible.

sewer ought to be repaired by all that hold the said lands in Wertling Otham Herstmonceux Horsye Mankesye Haylesham Westham and Pevensy, in common, because that in the evacuation of the fresh water by the said sewer if it should be enlarged they should have benefit and full security,—and there should be no contribution made from lands and tenements in Bourne Langenye and Willyndon, which ought not in future to contribute to their repair, as those lands could not in anywise be preserved by the said sewer.

Another sewer beginning at the Hokes and extending to the Clyve of Langene and so to Wyllindonstrow, by which fresh water in the marshes of Bourne, Langeneye and Willyndon descending to the sea were voided, which sewer the tenants of the said lands ought to repair. The said sewer in Willindonstrow unto the said gutt ought to be repaired by all the landowners within the above specified limits in common, because the fresh water being conjoined by both the said sewers passes to the said gutt, which gutt ought to be repaired at the common charge. From the sluice of Pevensy to the said place called Wyllindonstrow it ought to be repaired at the charge of all the tenants in Wertling Otham Herstmonceux Horsye Mankeseye Haylesham Westham and Pevensy, and thence to the said gutt at the expense of the tenants of the whole marsh. It is necessary for the safety of the marsh to enlarge the said sewer in breadth 2 perches and in depth 3 feet at the charge of all the tenants of the marsh.

From Wyllindonstrow by the side of the said old sewer on the east it would be well to have a new sewer made in the common marsh, in breadth 3 perches and in depth 15 feet extending to the said hillock; also a new gutt through the said hillock, in length 20 perches, in breadth 8 feet and depth $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and to enlarge the old gutt to 60 feet in length—the estimated cost being £200. . . The tenants being summoned before the Constable of Dover denied that they were bound to repair the sewer from Squabber to Gorebrigg, to Sakvylstrow, to Yorthan, to Rikenebrigg and so to the old sewer, or that it was of use to them. But they said that there was a sewer called Mankeyesstrem beginning at Herstbolt and extending below Wallers Haven to the old port of Coding, which they used, so far as their lands in that district were concerned.

The sewer beginning at Squabber is Hurst Haven, and Squabber is probably the same as “Scoperedes,” to the east of “Ambeleghisbrigg,” *i.e.*, Amberstone Bridge.³⁸ Measurement shows that Gorebrigg is Spindle Bridge; Sakevylestrow was evidently a quarter of a mile east of New Bridge at the point where the Sackville Sewer enters Hurst Haven; Ladytrowe was half-way between that point and Yotham, which is the point at which Horseye Sewer enters Hurst Haven, $3\frac{1}{4}$ furlongs above Rickney Bridge. The old sluice must have been at the angle of

³⁸ *Hist. of Hailsham*, 93.

Pevensey Haven, where it is joined by Old Haven, or Wallers Haven; and Wyllindonstrow was south of Pevensey village, where Willingdon, or Langney, sewer joined the Haven, probably close to Old Lands. The hillock (*hokum*) through which the gutt passed, apparently to the sea, is not so evident, but may have been an artificial embankment. The second sewer started at the Hokes, clearly Deadmans Oak, the western limit of Westham parish; a name of some interest, as the "Oak" is thus shown to be a corruption of Hook, or Knoll, referring to the little hill at this point, while the "Deadmans" suggests the Wahztrew,³⁹ the place on the borders of the Liberty, at which criminals were hanged, according to the Pevensey Custumal.⁴⁰ Langney Clyve, or cliff, is the southern end of the high ridge running down from Stone Cross. As to the Mankesye Stream, I am inclined to think that Herstbolt was the south-western limit of Herstmonceux parish, on Hurst Haven; the port of Cooding was in Bexhill parish, east of Northeye, and it may be added that Wallers Haven at this date did not turn eastwards, but continued down what is now known as Old Haven, to Pevensey Haven. The new sewer, made as recommended, must have been the cut from Fence Bridge to Wallsend.

In 1402 the Prior of Michelham, Thomas Earpyngham, William Brenchesle and other commissioners for Hooe Level took evidence and reported, that:—⁴¹

The common watercourse between Ashburnham Mylle and Batesford and Godyngeshaven was so obstructed with sand, mud, grass, &c., that 3783 acres of land were drowned. The common channel from Morespicheswalle to the Mark Dyke, 6 furlongs in length, ought to be scoured, which channel all landowners above Boreham Bridge, at Rokland, Morhale, Hoo, Ladyland, Cralle and in the land formerly held by Cristiana atte Mershe ought to scour. Also the channel from Markdyke to Pevensey, 13 furlongs in length, was filled with mud and

³⁹ Wahztrew = vargtre = gallows.

⁴⁰ *S.A.C.*, Vol. XVIII., p. 51. But "Wartrow" occurs as a field name in the Horseye Quarter, Vol. XLV., p. 176.

⁴¹ *Chanc. Misc.*, vii., 5. Printed in Dugdale's *Hist. of Embanking*. It was at this time that the commissioners drew up the Statutes of Pevensey Marsh, printed in *S.A.C.*, Vol. XVIII. Statutes on the same lines had been drawn up by the commissioners under Richard II., but they were to be considered, amended if necessary, and returned into Chancery: *Pat.*, 3 Hy. IV., p. 1, m. 26.

sand by the ebb and flow of the tides. A new sluice was therefore needed at Pevensey Bridge, which should be 20 feet long, 14 feet broad and 4 feet high, and would cost £10.

To the cost of scouring the sewer and making the sluice the tenants of the lands above mentioned, with the exception of 20 acres belonging to John Ashburnham above Borehambrigge in Brodewyshe and Cornbroke, ought to pay a full contribution. Tenants from above Tonleghebrigge to Coudennesbrigge should pay half a share, and those on the south of Morespichewalle half. Tenants in the marshes of Mankesye, Bestenoure, Marchalls, Bakers and Wykham⁴² should this time pay a quarter share, but it should not be demanded of them in future.

It was also considered necessary for the safety of Pevensey haven that all banks on the other side upon the salts, from Morespichewalle to the sea, should be broken and removed. If the old haven of Pevensey should again be stopped up with mud and sand by the ebb and flow of the tides, so that the fresh water from the sluice cannot have its course, then it would be needful to pull up the said new sluice and set it down anew at Wyldemershe between the sluice of Hoo and the sluice of Mankesye, and to make a new sewer from the sluice so placed through the midst of the land of John Aske to the Kokyr of Mankesye, paying for the land of the said John Aske according to the law of Romney Marsh.

It would also be beneficial for the lands of the Abbot of Bayham at Rokland to have a little sewer with a bolt fastened below the common watercourse at the Brooks⁴³ of Hoo for evacuation of the dead water from rain and springs in the said lands of Rokland, this to be made at their own cost, the abbot to maintain the said watercourse from that bolt called Morespicheswalle and if the water of the said channel should go out of its course the tenants of Hoo might shut up the said bolt until the abbot recompense them.

Here Wallers Haven is under consideration and we see that it still ran from the Mark Dyke to Pevensey by the Old Haven. Morespicheswalle, which occurs frequently as a landmark, still survives in the shortened form of Mispies, but Cralle is lost, though it clearly lay just south of Ladyland marsh. Tonlegh Bridge⁴⁴ was Stone Bridge at the foot of Barnhorne, and Coudenne, or Cooding Bridge, was somewhere near the present Sluice. Wildmarsh, as we have seen, was in Pevensey Bridge Level, but where the sluices of Hooe and Mankey were is not quite clear, but the suggested new sewer may

⁴² Wykham Marsh, just north of Wrenhams.

⁴³ *Brocum* = brookland. The water meadows at Lewes are called "The Brooks."

⁴⁴ "Tonlegh" and "Tunylegh" occur in the fourteenth century Court Rolls of Wartling Manor.

have been the straight piece of Wallers Haven from Dowle Corner to Reynolds Gut. Half a century later, in 1455, a session was held at Morespicheswalle⁴⁵ by the Abbot of Battle, Bartholomew Bolney, John Cobey, bailiff of Hastings, and John Broke, steward of Eton College, for their demesnes of Hooe.⁴⁶ The viewers then reported as follows :—

The common watercourse between Batesford and Assheburnehamesmylle and Godyngeshaven and from the bridge of Pevensey to the Newescluse of Wallereshaven and thence by the sea to the point of Godyngeshaven and thence to Romestrete,⁴⁷ to Bellamsgutte, to Densexgutte,⁴⁸ to Pykelidbrigge⁴⁹ and thence to Swyneshambrigge⁵⁰ is choked with sand and mud by the ebb and flow of the sea and with grass, reeds and other filth and by the accumulation and "swaryng" (scouring?) of fresh water, and 1,072 acres of land are drowned by the fresh water, of which each acre used to yield yearly 2^s, and now they yield nothing. It is needful for the saving of these lands that a new sewer and trench for the common course of the water from Esthaven to the sea shall be constructed, 30 feet broad and 6 feet deep and 8 furlongs in length, within the bounds of Northie, which trench can be made for £40. And 6 acres of land or less will be sufficient for making the trench. And the lord of Northie cannot take any harm therefrom but rather advantage, for 300 acres of his lands which are now drowned will be saved during the winter by that trench. Also it is reasonable that the lord of Northie shall be recompensed for each acre so cut away for the sewer and trench according to the custom of Romney Marsh and not at a higher rate.

Beginning at Esthaven beyond Northie at the sea the sewer would go through the piece of land called Gretewrenham in Northie and so beyond the Flete there and thence into another piece of land called Littlewrenham and again to the said Flete and so beyond Speltysmershe to Hastyngwalle and a sluice shall be newly made and put there 24 feet long and 20 broad and 4 feet high, which sluice could be made for 20 marks. And if the fresh water coming down from the upper ground cannot have sufficient passage to the sea by the said sluice, then the said sluice must be pulled up and set down anew in Hastyngwall where it may seem most useful. Also it is necessary that the water in Wallereshaven shall in future be received between Markedyke and Blakewalle⁵¹ where it may seem most convenient, and if it be received at Markedyke, then to run thence direct to the new

⁴⁵ Chanc. Misc., bdle. 81, file 1, No. 29. Not printed by Dugdale.

⁴⁶ Granted to Eton on the seizure of the property of foreign monastic houses, the Abbey of Bec having a grange in Hooe.

⁴⁷ Probably near Cooding Moat.

⁴⁸ Dennetts Marsh.

⁴⁹ Pickmill.

⁵⁰ Probably Whydown Bridge.

⁵¹ Blakewalle, now Blackhole.

trench in Northie aforesaid, 5 furlongs in length; and if it is received in some other place higher up towards Blakewall or at Blakewall then to run direct to Landeye and so into the Esthaven.⁵² And Wallereshaven shall be cleansed from the place where it is so received as far as Horewythy both by scouring and by digging always to the bottom in all places where it requires cleansing. Also all tenants on the south side of Morespechiswalle shall thoroughly repair Morespechiswalle and a new gutt with two bolts shall be put there and so they shall keep the same wall and gutt at their own costs, so that the water shall run down from the said gutt, as set out by the advice of the said tenants or of the greater part of them, as far as the Esthaven. Also it is needful that the gutt of Morehale⁵³ and the gutt of Rokeland⁵⁴ be well repaired and kept in the same way as in former times, and also all the walls from Borehambrigge to Markedike.

So it is agreed that the trench and sluice be made as aforesaid and that all the owners and tenants of lands in the marsh of Hoo both above Borehambrigge and below whose lands are drained by the said sewer shall maintain and repair the sewer and sluice on behalf of the lord of Northie at their own charges, and if the lands of the lord of Northie are in future drained by the said sewer then he shall pay his contribution in proportion to the quantity of his lands so drained. And the tenants of land above Borehambrigge, Rokeland, Morehale, Hoo, Ladyland, Cralle and the lands once of Christiana atte Mershe and lands from above Tonleghbrigge⁵⁵ as far as Cowdennesbrigge shall pay a full share towards the making of the sewer and trench; and in future all tenants south of Morespechiswalle and all from above Tonleghbrigge to Cowdennesbrigge shall pay a half share in proportion, as in former times. And all tenants outside the limits aforesaid, whether within liberties⁵⁶ or without, who in the future are drained by the said sewer shall pay their share by the assessment of the bailiff and twelve shawers (*scawatores*). And it is needful that there be elected a bailiff, a collector, a treasurer (*expenditor*) and other shawers from the leading tenants of the lands so drained who shall have power to act in this matter according to the law of the marsh of Romene, and it would be also for the advantage of the same marsh of Hoo that the Commissioners, by advice of the lords and commonalty of the marsh should frame new rules and regulations on the lines of the customs of Romene Marsh and that they should be returned into Chancery and ratified under the Great Seal.

[William Cheyne, esquire, was then chosen as bailiff, John Kneller as collector, Robert atte Mille, clerk, as treasurer and twelve others as shawers.] The said shawers so chosen and sworn then and there assessed the scot for making the said sewers and trenches at 2^s on every acre.

⁵² The Blakewall scheme would have diverted the water into Waterlot Stream.

⁵³ In Ninfield parish.

⁵⁴ In Wartling parish.

⁵⁵ Stone Bridge.

⁵⁶ *I.e.*, privileged districts, such as the Cinque Port Liberty of Northeye.

The tenants assessed to the scot were: Thomas Assheburnham, *John a Broke* of Ashburnham, Richard Ladde, Richard Bratte, Stephen Lonceford, Sir Richard Fenys, the Lady of Wartling, Lord de Say, Ralph Motte, Alice atte Mille, Thomas Colbrond of Boreham, Thomas Colbrond carpenter, Thomas Playstede, James Tysehurste, John Smyth, John Bray senior, John Webbe, *William Wright*, Robert Standard, John Neston, Richard Holier, Robert atte Mille, the Lord of Morehale, Geoffrey Hayward, Thomas Newyn, John Kneller, Richard Borell, *Thomas Germainy*, *John a Wellis*, Robert a Crouche, John Iden, *John Parker*, *William Scot*, Henry Faukes clerk, *Thomas Broker, junior*, *William Ingram* of Hooe, *John Jakelyng*, William Shirlot, Richard Elfrith, John Palmer carpenter, Thomas Burdon, John Fynche, William Cheyne esquire, Henry Elfrith, John Whityng, Peter Palmer junior, *William Nutbron* of Hooe, *Richard Ingram*, John a Broke of Ninfield, the Lord of Hooe, Robert Farnham, Elizabeth Shosewell, John Jane (?), William Greneworde, Robert Baker, John a Clyve, Richard Nutbron, John a Crouche smith, John Lonceford, the Abbot of Battle, *Simon Welhill*, William Nutbron of Bernhorn, John Umfray, William a Crouche, the Abbot of Bayham, John Coggar and John Bokeland. The twelve names in italics are those of the shawers.

Then follows a summary of the laws and regulations to be observed in future, practically identical with those drawn up in 1402 for Pevensey Marsh, which had not previously applied to Hooe Level. They provide for the holding of a chief Last, or water court, yearly at Michaelmas at which the shawers and overseers shall be elected; the shawers to take an oath to deal fairly and without favour; in the event of tenants refusing to pay their scots their goods to be distrained upon and kept three days at most and then, as the tides wait for no man, to be sold and the money applied as required.

The eventual decision of the shawers was evidently in favour of taking the water from Mark Dyke, as suggested, through Northeye, and we can thus date the disuse of the Old Haven channel of Wallers Haven and the

diversion of the latter eastwards to the neighbourhood of the present sluice to 1402, and the new channel at the sluice to 1455.

No further reports of the Commissioners are known, and we are dependent for our knowledge of the struggle between the land and the sea upon isolated notices. In 1428 the sea had overflowed the much tried "Eylond alias Oldelond," and also Homstall, Hailsoppis and Stonrugge.⁵⁷ Ten years later, in 1438, the portreeve in claiming that certain items should be written off mentions: "Two Dokkes near the port of Pevensey made for boats to land at and lie in, formerly in the tenure of Simon Cokeman at a rent of 4^d, now lying empty and unoccupied because a sluice has been made between the said Dokkes and the sea so that no boat can land at the said Dokkes. Also two places called Botehouses lying upon Stonyrugge by the sea shore formerly held by Simon Cokeman and John Martin at a rent of 16^d, and 8 acres of land lying below Stonyrigge, formerly in the tenure of Simon Goodwyn at a rent of 3^s 5^d, now in the lord's hands because the said places and land are totally destroyed by the inundation of the sea."⁵⁸ Docks of the kind here mentioned, little bays cut in the side of the dykes, are to be seen in many places in the marsh, especially near the sea, to the present day, though for the most part they have long been disused. The portreeve in 1463 claimed allowance of a rent of 4d. "for a parcel of land called the Dokke by the Haven of Pevensey, late in the tenure of Simon Hendy, because the tenants of the manor are not willing to allow Simon to occupy it on account of the excessive injury which would result to the lord King and the said tenants."⁵⁹ Two years later this same piece of land was overflowed by the sea; the Ilonde was in its usual condition of submersion, and the sea had even broken in and flooded 35 acres at Hobney.⁶⁰ Four years later, in 1469, there was a serious

⁵⁷ Mins. Accts., 442, No. 7,114.

⁵⁸ Mins. Accts., 442, No. 7,120.

⁵⁹ Mins. Accts., 443, No. 7,130.

⁶⁰ Mins. Accts., 1,028, No. 6. Hobney is in Westham, south-west of the Castle.

incurSION of the sea which drowned 300 acres of Thomas Sackville's land at Highland and another 66 acres called le Wynsland.⁶¹ In 1481 also considerable injury was done by the sea, which overflowed 60 acres belonging to John Alman, as much belonging to Thomas Reder, another 60 acres called Wyllyesland, 134 acres of William Onsty's and another 100 acres belonging to other tenants, including John Aske and William Alard. These lands had not been recovered in 1485, when an inquiry was ordered.⁶²

The 300 acres mentioned above as drowned in 1469 must have been held by Sackville of the prior of Lewes, or else, which is more likely, the priory were given leave to reclaim as much as they liked of it. At any rate, in 1508 it was reported that John, prior of Lewes, and his predecessors had recently reclaimed 92 acres thereof at great cost to themselves.⁶³ This reclaimed land, which appears to have been that on the east of Pevensy Haven afterwards known as "the Hundred Acres," was again overflowed somewhere about 1542, as appears from certain

Instructions concerning Pevensy Marshe to be minystrred unto the Kinges Generall Surveyours of his Graces Landes.⁶⁴

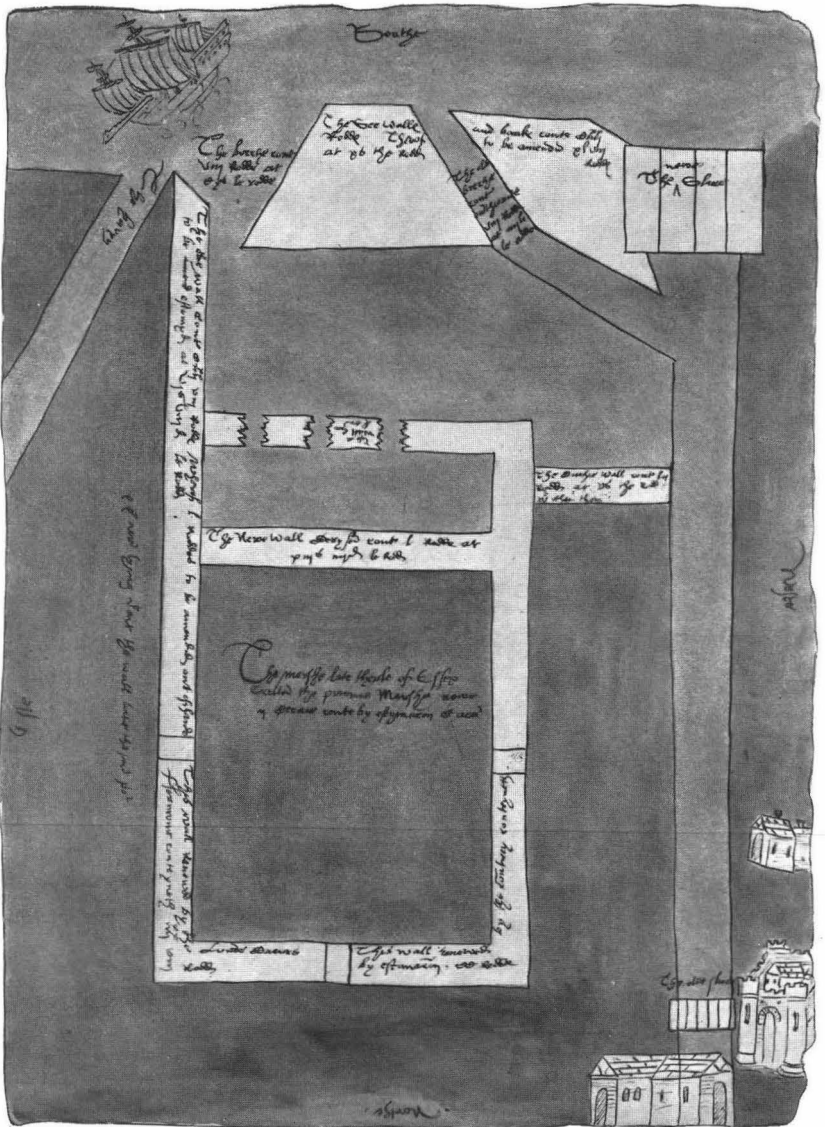
M^d There is in all Pevensy Marshe lying and being within the Duchie of Lancastre in the Countie of Sussex vj^m D iiiij^{xx} xviiij (6,598) acres whereof DCCC acres be in one Levell called Bestenover Levell. And the Landholders therof ys charged and be contrybutaryes to the making and repaying of the see walles being and lying within the said Levell. That is to saie Sir Anthony Browne, knight, for iiiij^{xx} xiiiij acres: John Parker for l acres: William Wybarne for l acres: Thomas Devenyshe for lx acres: the late Lorde Dacres for xxx acres nowe being in the kinges graces handes by the forfeiture and attaindre of the same lorde. And cccc acres late John Aske nowe also in the kinges graces handes by exchange of other Landes. And also one hundred acres belonging to the late monastery of Lewys called the Priours Marshe and after that in thandes of the late erle of Essex and nowe in the kinges handes by thattaindre of the said late erle of Essex. Whiche said DCCC acres were surrounded and drowned by the salt water in default of one wall nere adjoyning unto the see there standing upon the said marshe. And whiche was wont to be fenced maintayned and kept at the proper costes and charges of the

⁶¹ Mins. Accts., 443, No. 7,136.

⁶³ Mins. Accts., 444, No. 7,144.

⁶² Dy. of Lanc., Decree Bks., II., 8.

⁶⁴ Dy. of Lanc., Spec. Com., 224.



SIXTEENTH CENTURY PLAN OF MARSHES AT PEVENSEY.

The dark tint represents land, the lighter tint water ; the banks are shown untinted.

said priours of the said Monastery. And about xl yeres paste was Inned and Recovered by the same late Monastery.

An estymate of the costes and charges in making of the sea wallys in Pevensey Marshe aforesaid nowe in Ruayne and Decaie.

That is to saie

Tholde Walle

Furste from the landes late the lorde Dacres. The said olde walle being now in decaye conteynethe unto the late breche ciiij^{xx} viij Roddes whiche the said Priour in his tyme repayed mayntayned and kepte. And is Rated by the Countrey for mending of the same every Rodde at vj^s viij^d and amounteth to the Some of lxiijⁱⁱ xiiij^s iiij^d

Item the late breche conteyning viij Roddes, for the making of every Rodde cx^s whiche amounteth to the some ofxlviijⁱⁱ

Item the xlviij Roddes to be made and repaired joyning to the sandes and gravell in the see bankes towarde the olde breche y^s Rated at xv^s the Rodde and amountethe to the some ofxxiiiijⁱⁱ

Item the Olde Breche conteyning viij Roddes ys Rated by estymacon at iiiijⁱⁱ the Rodde and amounteth to the some ofxxxijⁱⁱ

In { Roddes celiij
Money clxijⁱⁱ xiiij^s iiij^d

The Newe Wall

Furste from the foresaide late Lorde Dacres landes of the olde wall unto the newe wall appoynted conteynethe clxviij Roddes over and besyde xxx Roddes abbated of the foresaid some of ciiij^{xx} viij Roddes for the decaie of the said Marshe every Rodde Rated at vj^s viij^d the Rodde and amounteth to the some ofliijⁱⁱ xii^s iiij^d

Item the l Roddes of the Newe Wall ys rated at xiiij^s iiij^d and amountethe to the some ofxxxiiijⁱⁱ vj^s viij^d

Item liij Roddes belonging to certain landes of the Duchie of Lancastrexiijⁱⁱ x^s

Item the said viij Roddes of the olde breche before rated at iiiijⁱⁱ ys parcel of the charge of this wall And yet there be more Walles belonging to this said wallxxxijⁱⁱ

In { Roddes cclxxviij
Money cxxxⁱⁱ x^s

The making of the wall by the see ys more charge by xxxijⁱⁱ iij^s iiij^d then the newe wall ys. But yet l acres of grounde ys saved therby.

M^d also here ys xxvj Roddes more than the see wall ys in circuyte.

To illustrate this scheme, or rather these two alternate schemes, a rough diagrammatic plan⁶⁵ was prepared, of which, by the courtesy of the authorities at the Public Record Office, we are able to reproduce a tracing. This shows all the points referred to; the broken wall, the suggested new wall within it and the old sea wall outside

⁶⁵ Dy. of Lanc., Maps, No. 11.

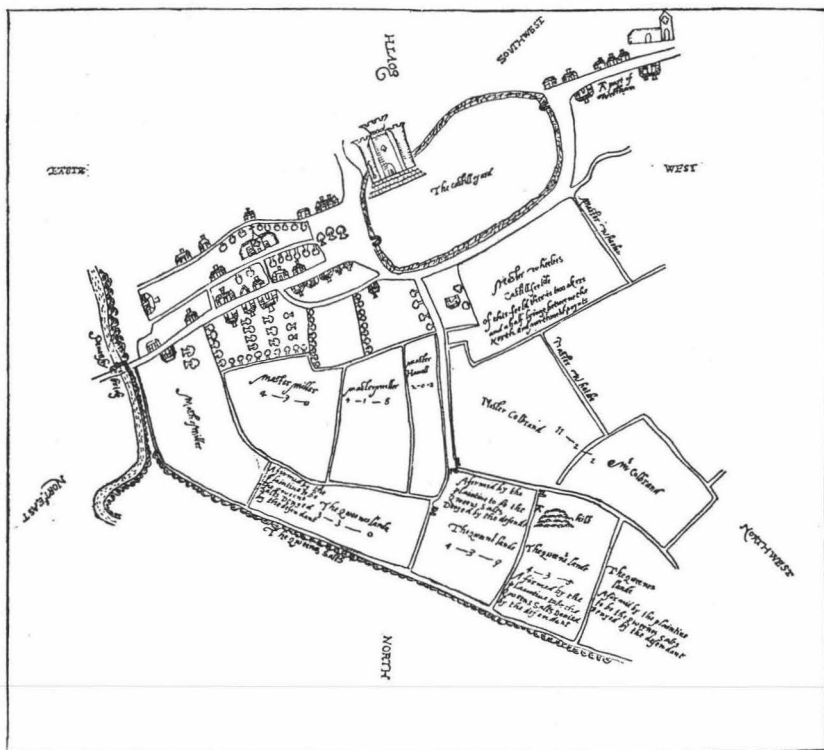
it, more costly to repair but enclosing half as much land again as the other. The marshes, walls and streams are here treated with as little regard for meticulous accuracy as the Castle itself, but the stream running from the old sluice to the new sluice must be Langney Haven, while from the appearance of the Haven on the other side it would seem that the mouth of the Salt Haven at that time ran pretty much on the course of the present Bill Gutt.

During the next reign we find that other suggestions were made for improving the drainage of the marsh by allowing the salt water to flow higher up. William Threele, of Bexhill, who had a lease of the Queen Salts from Henry VIII., complained that "by the procurement of certen gentylnen . . . for theire singular lucre and advauntage" a suggestion had been made to the Commissioners of Sewers by the twelve shawers "that yef the olde guttys and slewsis at Pevynsyne Bryge were taken upp and newe made at a place called Rickneybrygge and the olde banke or wall at every syde of the haven unto Rykeneybrigge were suffycyentlye made, that then the cuntrye uppwarde shulde be well sewed and dried." The suggestors not realising the danger and some of the commissioners being "lytle usyd to the opperacon and warkyng of the see in cryckes and merches," this was ordered to be done. But if the old sluice were removed the salt water would overflow the Queen Salts; he therefore desired, and no doubt obtained, "a supersedeas to the baylyff spendours juratours and officers of the said level of Pevensey" to refrain until a duly appointed commission had reported upon the matter.⁶⁶

The Queen's Salts here referred to lay just north of Pevensey village, between the south bank of Pevensey Haven and another bank further south. They were demesne lands of the manor and a dispute as to their extent in 1595 resulted in the drawing up of a plan,⁶⁷ of which the Public Record Office authorities have kindly permitted me to make a tracing. The plan is interesting, as the draughtsman included not only the lands in

⁶⁶ Dy. of Lanc., Pleadings, Vol. 32, T. 2, temp. Edw. VI.

⁶⁷ Dy. of Lanc., Dep., 38 Eliz., No. 43.



PLAN OF THE "QUEEN'S SALTS" AND OTHER LANDS
AT PEVENSEY, 1595.

dispute and the fields immediately adjacent, but also the town of Pevensey and part of Westham. The large house shown to the east of the Castle can be identified with the old timbered manor house which stood on the site of the present market until about sixty years ago, but a comparison of the drawing with an earlier Elizabethan survey of the burgages suggests that the placing of the remaining houses is not reliable, and the artist has certainly omitted the house which stood in 1563,⁶⁸ and still stands, beneath the north-west angle of the Roman wall. The point which concerns us here, however, is the existence of this bank to the south of the present containing bank of the haven, and of a similar bank on the north side. All along the south bank of Pevensey Haven and its inland continuation, Glenleigh Sewer, occur similar strips of demesne lands known as Queen's Salts or King's Salts, and it would seem that the outer banks⁶⁹ mark the former limit of the haven and sewer, and that as the volume of the water decreased these strips were recovered, and the streams confined within the narrower limits which they now possess. The occurrence of the name, King Harry's Salts at Glenleigh, suggests the reign of Henry VIII. for the date of this reclamation.

From the careful survey of the Sussex coast made at the time that the Spanish Armada was expected (1587-8) it would seem that the mouth of the Pevensey Haven had been forced considerably eastwards, and that much of the water which formerly passed into the sea at this place now found its way as far east as the sluice near Northeye. The eastward drive continued apace, and in 1609 the blocking up of the haven had become so common an occurrence that it was stated⁷⁰ that "as often as the sea by reason of raging and violent winds shall or doth swerve or fill up the small haven at the mouth" of the stream from Pevensey Bridge to the sea, "in whose

⁶⁸ Dy. of Lanc., Misc. Bks., Vol. 112.

⁶⁹ These were evidently "the olde banke or wall at every syde of the Haven" referred to above.

⁷⁰ Dy. of Lanc., Deps., 8 Jas. I., No. 60.

liberty soever the same falleth the same is to be opened again and usually hath been opened again for the preservation of all the Levels, at the charge of the country by the Commission of Sewers." At this time Richard Carpenter, gentleman, a man of only forty-six, deposed that within his own memory the haven mouth had moved a mile east, and John Saxpes, of "Cowden" (*i.e.*, Cooding), deposed that "ten years since there was a haven at Pevensey which is now gone up into the Rape of Hastings eastwards about half a mile; it was two miles distant from Pevensey Castle and is now two miles and a half." The Sluice, indeed, had supplanted the old haven as a port of lading until, about 1580, Herbert Pelham and Mr. Stolion had started bringing iron, the principal export of the district, down the ditches in barges in the winter when the "tuggs" or waggons were unable to use the marsh roads. This water-borne iron was stored close to Pevensey Bridge and exported from the haven, so that the old port of Pevensey enjoyed a brief renewal of its ancient activity.

The sea, which had so long attempted to reconquer Pevensey Level, now began to relax its efforts and to yield up the debatable ground along its borders. A survey of "derelict" lands in 1633⁷¹ mentions 50 acres of salt marsh until recently overflowed by the spring tides, extending from the stream leading from Pevensey Sluice on the east, to Pevensey Haven on the west, abutting on the Uplands of Pevensey and Bexhill on the north and on the sea south, then held by Philip Drinker, of Udimore, and Abraham Kentesley, of Westham; and another 20 acres in Pevensey held by the same Abraham Kentesley, adjoining Pevensey Haven on the east; and yet a third parcel of 40 acres in Bexhill parish, adjoining Pevensey Haven on the west, enclosed by the Earl of Dorset 30 years before. In 1663 a similar survey⁷² showed a piece of marsh called the Salts, abutting on Coleharbour house on the west and the port of Pevensey on the east, and containing 80 acres which had long been "left bare and dry by the sea." And, finally, in 1696

⁷¹ Exch. Spec. Com., 6,013.

⁷² Exch. Spec. Com., 6,504.

an inquiry was held about two other pieces of land reclaimed upon the edge of coast.⁷³ One of these, containing 50 or 60 acres, was known as Sampson's Salts, alias Crumble, or Grumble, Creek; these salts adjoin Pevensy Haven on the east, Old Lands on the west, and the sea beach south; the sea overflowed all this to such an extent that small boats could row up the creek, until "about six years since," when the Earl of Sussex caused William Stone and John Tilly to enclose it; if the banks were thrown down the sea would again cover the land. The other parcel was Rocklease Salts, containing 15 acres, adjoining Bexhill parish and abutting eastward on Pevensy Haven, south on the sea beach, north-west on Rockhouse land; this had been inned about 10 years before.

By this time the Levels had practically reached their present condition,⁷⁴ and Pevensy, which had once played an honourable part in the confederation of the Cinque Ports, had ceased to be a port. When commissioners were appointed in 1698 to survey the southern coast and discover the best place for a great naval base they conscientiously visited Pevensy, made a careful map, which shows that the recognised harbour occupied the present position of the mouth of the Salt Haven, a mile and a quarter south-east of the Castle, while the "Old Outlet" is indicated close to the present hotel at Wallsend, and reported that, "About four or five years since vessels of 50 and 60 tons took in their loading at the bridge of the town, but of late a shut hath been made upon the river very near the haven's mouth, beyond which no vessels can now pass. A vessel of 14 tons now meets with great difficulty to get within the mouth of it."⁷⁵ They therefore decided, and, I think, rightly, that Portsmouth would be more suitable for a naval base than the ancient and extinct port of Pevensy.

⁷³ Chanc. Petty Bag, Spec. Com., bde. 6, No. 4.

⁷⁴ The alteration of the coast line by the rapid accumulation of shingle, and the consequent blocking of the channels, still continued. Between 1739 and 1748 the mouth of Hooe Haven had become blocked and a fresh cut had to be made at a cost of £1,100. *Ex inf.*, Mr. J. F. Ray, from a survey in the Hastings Corporation Records.

⁷⁵ Sloane MS., 3,233.