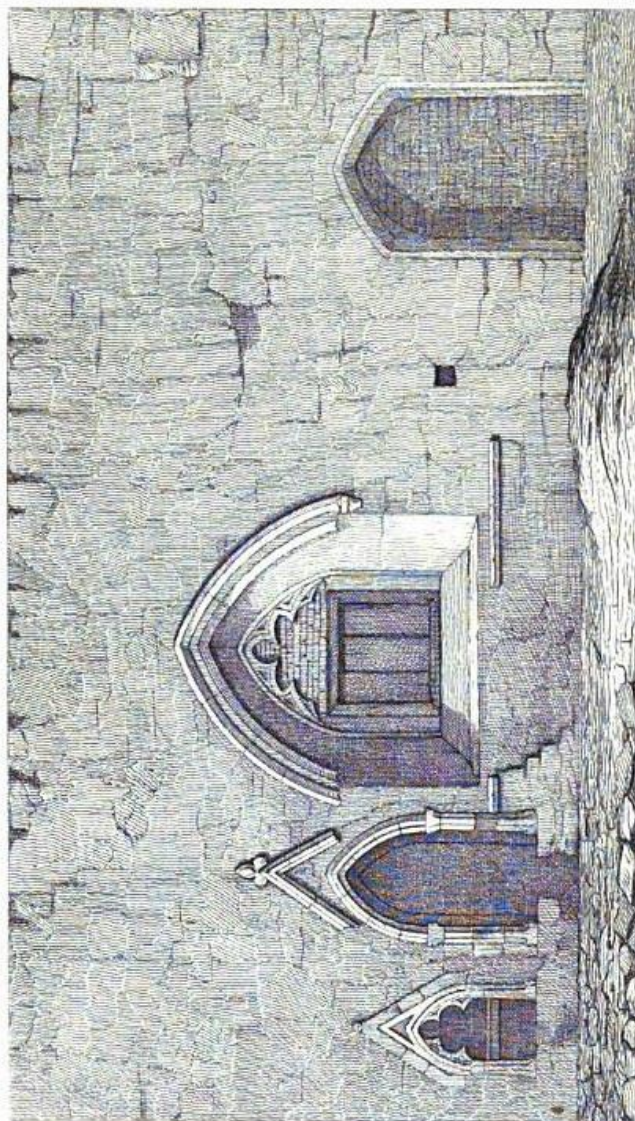




OTHAM CHAPEL.
South Wall of Interior.

Marbleway lower, 404.

RESEARCHES INTO THE HISTORY OF THE ABBEY OF OTTEHAM.

BY THE REV. GEORGE MILES COOPER.

A PART of the Parish of Hailsham, now known as "Otham Quarter," was the seat of an early monastery of the Premonstratensian Order. The time of its establishment cannot be fixed with accuracy, there being no dates to the documents relating to its first foundation; but it was some time during the reign of Henry II, and therefore between the years 1154 and 1189. The first house of this order, erected in England, was Newhouse, in Lincolnshire, A.D. 1143; and the whole number suppressed at the Reformation has been computed to be about thirty-five.

These monks derived their name from Premonstré, in Picardy, where their first monastery was founded, A.D. 1121, by Norbert, a German of noble birth, who having entered into holy orders, became, eventually, Archbishop of Magdeburgh, and died in the full odour of sanctity, after signaling himself in a high degree as a reformer of the Regular Canons, whose discipline he had found greatly relaxed.

According to the legendary history of the order, he was wandering through the diocese of Laon, with the sanction of Bartholomew, bishop of that see, intent upon his designs of reformation and searching after a fit site for the erection of his monastery, when the Blessed Virgin appeared to him in a solitary and uncultivated place, surrounded with angels and glittering with light, and signified to him that his prayers were heard, and that this was the spot whereon to build the head house of his reformed order. At the same time she showed him what was to be their canonical habit, and uttering the words, "Son Norbert, accept a white dress," disappeared from his sight with her heavenly retinue. From these circumstances the place took its name of Premonstré

(*Præmonstratus*, foreshown); and the order, assuming as their appropriate dress a white cassock, surmounted with a rocket, a long white cloak, and cap of the same colour, acquired also the name of the White Canons.

They adopted in the main the rule of St. Austin, with the addition, as was usual in such schemes of reformation, of certain severe laws of their own; and were at first as remarkable for poverty and austerity of life, as they became afterwards for their wealth and luxury. The abbots of Premonstré retained jurisdiction over their monks in this county, till so late as A.D. 1512, when by a bull of Pope Julius II, confirmed by King Henry VIII, it was taken from them, and the Abbot of Welbeck, Notts, was made the superior of all houses of this order in England and Wales.

From the charter of foundation it appears that a Chapel already existed at Otteham, or Hotteham, and that certain of these monks had settled there, conducting the religious services of the place. The Abbey was founded by Ralph de Dene, one of a Norman family, settled from the Conquest at West Dean, near Seaford.¹ For the good of his body and soul, as well as those of Robert, his son and heir, and of King Henry and his children; for the souls also of his father and mother, and of all his predecessors and successors, he gives to God and the Holy Mary, to St. Laurence of Hotteham, and the Canons of the Premonstratensian order, there serving God, for the purpose of building an abbey, all his lordship of Hotteham, and its appurtenances, with the chapel of that place; his men of Dudintone, to wit, Gladuwine, the brother of Speg, with five solidates² of land, John Cnokedune, Gilbert the carpenter, William Cnokedune, Hugo, Thomas de Farnstrete with his land, Robert Bunt, Wulsy Wiver, with his heirs and the heirs of his brother Grig, Sewal, Ulward, and Walter; also the land which Fulker held of him in Seford, for an annual rent of j lb. of pepper, and viij lbs. of wax; the marsh of Begeham, as Ralph, (de Dene), his uncle held it; all the marsh

¹ He was the son of Robert Pincerna, alias Dene, who had six knights' fees in Chelvington, of which manor Buckhurst was parcel. The former name begets a suspicion that Robert held the situation of butler in the household of Earl Moreton at Pevensy, of whom Dene was holden.

² 'Solidata terre,' according to Cowell, is twelve acres of land; according to Spelman, five acres, or one-fourth of a virgate.

which belonged to Ulric, and the new marsh as far as pertained to him, for a free and perpetual alms.³

In a supplementary charter Fulker's land appears to have been partly in "Alurichestune" (Alfriston), and the founder gives in addition the hide of Ambefeld⁴ held by him of Richard de Horsenden (Horsemonden).

Robert de Dene, his son, added all his land in Telletune (Tilton, parish of Selmeaton), with his fishery in the marsh. By another charter, the original of which, with the seal of green wax,⁵ is preserved in Anthony Wood's collection, in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, he grants 20s. of yearly rent in the village of Dene—viz. the tenement of John of the Tye (de Tya) paying 4s.; that of Robert the shepherd (Bercarius) paying 6s.; of Simon of Pevensel, paying 7s.; of Walter Newman (Novi hominis) paying 2s.; and of Ralph the "Frankelcin," paying 12d.; with the tenements and men themselves. Also half a mark's rent in Mereshale, and the advowson of the church of Westdene.⁶

William de Bugele gave all the land which he held in the marsh lying between Pevenses and Heilesham, belonging to



³ Grants so made in 'Frankalmoin' (in liberam et perpetuam elemosynam) excluded all power in the donor of reserving corrodiæ or allowances for himself or his dependants; and the land was held of the lord and his successors for ever, as a tenure of spiritual service only, and relieved from all temporal.

⁴ In the Inquisitiones Nonarum mention is made of Ambefeld and Ambeleggh, tenements in Hellingly, where the name seems to be retained in the farm now called Amberstone.

⁵ I am indebted to the kindness of the Rev. Edward Turner for the use of his transcripts of the documents relating to Otteham and Begeham in the Ashmolean Library, which will be found among the most interesting of my materials.

⁶ This must be understood of the chapel of Exceit, which we know belonged to Bayham. (*Suss. Arch. Collections*, IV, p. 46.) The church of Westdene, properly so called, had been previously given by William, Earl of Moreton, to the Abbey of Grestein.—Ib. p. 41.

the fee of "Rikeward of Hellingly," subject to the payment every Christmas eve of half a pound of pepper to the lord, in lieu of every service and secular exaction.

Ela de Saukeville, the founder's daughter and co-heiress, in two charters confirmed the donations of her father and brother, and added on her own account, land at Thorn, Twisely, and Farnstrete,⁷ with all that Alirinus Crop held of her father in the marsh of Pevenham.

The preceding grants all received confirmation from Geoffrey de Saukeville, Ela's son by Jordan de Saukeville, and afterwards from Gilbert de Aquila,⁸ in whose barony most of them were, and who included also in his confirmatory charter the gift, not previously mentioned, of the Church of Hellinges (Hellingly) by Richard and Randolph de Brade, in equal moieties.

There are no fewer than twenty charters in the Monasticon relating to the abbeys of Otteham and Begeham, which, as will be presently seen, were soon united. Of these the eight above cited and that numbered IX belong exclusively to Otteham, while the remaining eleven are chiefly connected with Bayham. Several charters, with other original documents belonging to these monasteries, are to be found in the Ashmolean Museum; and some such deeds of gift by private benefactors have perished: we may, however, gather from the royal confirmatory charters of King John and Edward II (Nos. xviii and xix)⁹ what their benefactions were. In the present essay I propose to extract only such as, from their vicinity to Otteham, may be most naturally referred to that abbey:—

These are—"The gift by Gilbert de Aquila of 120 acres of land upon the 'Dikere,' near Wiske (the Wishe?) above Pevenham; of two trees also, one oak and one beech, to be received annually within the octaves of St. John Baptist,¹⁰ in his forest, under the inspection of his foresters; sixty cart-loads of peat¹¹

⁷ Or Farnstrete. These were all hamlets or homesteads near the abbey, but the names are lost.

⁸ The second of that name, who died in Normandy, 6th John, A.D. 1205, leaving as his successor a son, the third Gilbert, and last lord of Pevensey of that family, who founded Michelham in 1232.—Add. MS. Brit. Mus. 6359, fol. 152.

⁹ The references in Roman numerals are to the charters in the Monasticon.

¹⁰ There were two feasts of John the Baptist, viz. his Nativity, June 24, and his Decollation, August 29: the trees were to be claimed within eight days after the former.

¹¹ 'Carectas turbæ.'

annually in his bog of Pevenham, as long as the bog should last; and afterwards a rent of 2s. 6d. in the town of Pevenham; also twenty swine quit of pannage¹² in his forest.

By another charter¹³ he likewise gives sixty acres of land, situate between Eppehall and the Castelry (Castellarium) of Otteham, in exchange for all the land which the Abbot and Convent had at Michelham.

A grant by Richard and Randolph Brade (or le Brode), and Alianora, daughter of the former, of the mill in Hellingly, the rush-bed (juncheria), the island or field called Melinhe or Melnye (mill-island), and the moor (mora) or peatmoss of Langney. The former also grants all the land which Richard de Ponte held, land in the marsh, and his share in that called Croke (?); also a croft near the church of Hellingly, which Wm. Scarlet rented for 4d. a year, and six perches in length and breadth adjoining to the houses of the church, for the purpose of enlarging its precincts. The latter gives land which he possessed above 'Rede' in demesne, near the church-lands, with Melgrave and Cnolgrave.

Another of the same family, Nicholas de Brade, gives half a yard-land of the fee of Richard de Kaines.

Philip de Herst, and his wife Johanna, grant a certain weir (warn) of water at Hellingly. There appear also grants of half a hide of land in Langport (described afterwards as 'Lamporte in Borne'), by Thurstan, son of Gilbert de Hoding; land in Michelham, by William and Robert de Sessingham, holden of them and Loreta, by Godwin Cnoke and Sigar; land in the same place by Robert de Horsenden, holden of him and Loreta by Ulric, together with the same Ulric and his heirs; the land of Petley by Richard de Alurichestune; six acres in the plain called Yeldelond,¹⁴ next to the land which Ralph de Farnstret held, by Robert Folconer, of Wudetone; one hide of land in the manor of Burne, by John de Horsenden; all his land of Kenrede, by Wm. Maufe; the land which Geoffrey de Dittone held of him at Dittone, together with the said Geoffrey and his children, by Henry de Palerna; a third part of the salt-pan called the 'Golden,'¹⁵ situate in the marsh between Pevenham and Pepplesham, by Ralph de Val (elsewhere 'Beval,' or 'de Bevallo'); land which the canons held of his fee of 'Oteham,' by Hugo de Diva; two Flemish acres in the new marsh of

¹² 'Pannagium' is sometimes used to signify 'alimentum quod in silvis colligunt pecora'—sometimes, as here, for the money exacted by the lord from those who turned hogs into his forest.—Jacob.

¹³ Add. MS. Brit. Mus. 6037. From the Treasury of Canterbury Cathedral; an abstract of the Chartulary of Beigham, made by Sir Edward Dering of Surrenden, and re-written by Oliver Marshall of Cambridge, A.D. 1630.

¹⁴ Described in Carta 95, f. 9, Add. MS. 6037, as situated "ad chimum de Lewes"—the object of this grant is there added: "To furnish a light on St. Laurence's day for the souls of my father and mother, and of Matilda my wife, who is buried there."

¹⁵ "Saline que dicitur Aurea" There is still a 'Pepplesham' about midway between Bexhill and St. Leonards', but this seems too remote to mark the position of the 'Aurea Salina.' I rather incline to think the place here meant was in Wartling, and identical with the 'Peplestun' mentioned in the Nonne Returns as of that parish.—See also mention of Pepplesham, in connexion with a Wartling family, in vol. IV, p. 148, *Suss. Arch. Collections*.

Iclesham, and one 'bescate'¹⁶ of land in the same, to be enclosed at the expense of the canons, with an engagement on their part to keep out the sea, by Ralph de Iclesham, for the soul of his grandfather, the founder; sixteen acres and one rood of land in 'Charlokeston' (Charlton), in the parish of Ferles, with the roads, paths, pasture, and common, belonging to it, by Egidius de Syrynton (Sherrington, in Selmeaton parish), son of Simon de Syrynton, called 'de Dovorria.'

Then follows a grant by Ralph de la Water, jun., son of Wm. de la Water, of Wertlinges (Wartling), of all that land which the father held of the canons in villenage; and finally, William of Northiam, knight, gives poor Will of the water himself, with all his family and chattels,¹⁷ together with all the lands which the said Will, 'called of the water,' Peter le Large, and William, son of Simon de la Heche (deriving his name probably from his 'hache,' a hatchet or pick), his born serfs (nativi sui), held of him 'in nativitate' at Rokeland,¹⁸ and in the village of 'Werkinggs.'

In addition to these, Geoffrey de St. Leger, by a charter now in the Ashmolean Museum, grants to the Canons of Ottenham 'Eadward Crepps,' for a free and perpetual alms; and, in Sir Edward Dering's abridgement of the Beigham Chartulary, we find farther that Randulfus de Horsyc gives one acre near the house of Richard Gulafre (Alfrey ?); that William de Warberton gives "Robert Macon and his land," Daniel, son of Adam, all his rent of Hertham, Hya, and Horsia: Robert, Abbot of St. Mary's of Grestene, remits to the Abbot and Canons of Otenham iij virgates belonging to his fee in the village of Telletun on Sunday before the feast of St. Margaret the Virgin, in the third year after the coronation of King John; and A. Archdeacon of London, certifies that Agathe, daughter of Robert son of Ralph, and Bertran son of William de Calverdon, husband of Alicia (her sister), have sworn to keep the agreement made with the convent of Ottenham, as to land once belonging to Ralph de Dene, their ancestor."

The soil about Otham, even at the present day, with all the appliances of modern ingenuity and skill, does not yield a very grateful return for the labours of the husbandman; and, in those early times of which we are treating, it must have been sterile indeed, for the monks had completed but a few years of their residence when they were fairly starved out. Few and simple as their wants would be, according to the rigid rule by which they had bound themselves, even these were not satisfied, and they were driven to apply to Ela de Saukevile,

¹⁶ 'Bescate'—(French besche, or bêche, a spade)—signifies either a piece of land cultivated with the spade—a garden, as distinguished from a field; or so much land as one man can dig with a spade in one day.—Jacob.

¹⁷ "Cum omni sequela sua at catallis suis."

¹⁸ Now Rockland, between Boreham-street and Wartling Church, where a weekly market on Thursday, and a fair to last three days, commencing the day before the feast of St. John Baptist, were granted to the Abbot and Convent by Henry III, on the 6th of March, 1251.

their founder's daughter, to authorise their removal to some happier spot. They had for some time meditated such a step, for Rikeward and Randolph de Brade had previously given their permission that the site of the Abbey should be transferred either to the church of Hellingly, or to Melgrave, or to whatever place the monk's might prefer.¹⁹

It happened that about the same time these Premonstratensian monks settled at Otham, others of the same fraternity established themselves at Brokely, in the parish of Deptford, or as it was then called, West Greenwich, where a monastery was founded for them by Juliana, Countess of 'Brocele.' Here they had gained the favour of Michael de Turneham, who bestowed upon them lands and houses; and afterwards, of his nephew Robert, a distinguished soldier, who fought with renown in the Holy Land, under the standard of Cœur de Lion.

Sir Robert de Turneham, by his charter (No. viii), granted to the Deptford monks all his land of Brokely, together with other possessions in Kent and Sussex, which (as properly belonging to the foundation of Begeham) it would be foreign to my present purpose more particularly to mention here; and also added, with the consent of Richard, Earl of Clare, in whose lordship it was, all his land of Begeham (the modern Bayham) on the N.E. border of the county of Sussex, in what is now the parish of Frant, that they might build there, in a pleasant spot called 'Beuliu,' an Abbey in honour of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

There seems from the outset to have been a connection between the two monastic bodies settled at Ottenham and Brokely. One would naturally suppose that among members of a new Order, lately introduced into this country, a certain degree of mutual adherence and correspondence would be maintained; a supposition which is strengthened by observing that Michael de Turneham, the earliest patron of the Brokely monks, is one of the attesting witnesses to the foundation charters of Ralph de Dene; that in these documents Ralph grants marshland at *Begeham* to the monks of Ottenham, and that Buckhurst, in the immediate neighbourhood of Begeham, belonged to him. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that

¹⁹ Add. MS. 6037.

a friendly intercourse, and to a certain extent a community of patronage, existed from the first between these rising houses. Accordingly, when the canons of Otteham, in their difficulties, applied to Ela, their patroness, for permission to remove the seat of their Abbey, it was arranged between her and Sir Robert de Turneham that they should be transferred to Begeham, and there form one community with their brethren from Brokely. The charters of both these personages, granting permission to this effect, may be found in the Monasticon, and both state in exactly the same words the reason for the change, viz.: "Propter magnas et intolerabiles inedia loci de Otteham." This removal took place about the year 1203, early in the reign of King John. Ela was then a widow, speaking of herself as acting "in viduitate et ligiâ potestate meâ;" and she reserves to herself and her heirs the advowson of the Abbey: "Salvâ reverentiâ et dignitate advocacionis quam mihi et hæredibus meis, tam in vitâ quam in morte (*canonici*) tenentur exhibere." She had previously, by her marriage with Jordan de Saukeville, carried Buckhurst into the Sackville family, and with them the patronage of the Abbey ever after remained.

After this transfer the house at Otham and the Chapel were kept up—of course, on a very reduced scale—as a shrine of St. Laurence. For Ela in her charter of translation, gives her land at Thorne and Twisely, "to keep one lamp continually burning, day and night, before the altar of St. Laurence."²⁰ By a subsequent deed, given in the Chartulary, William de Marci and Ela (who must, if the same Ela, have married again, for he calls her "*uxor mea*"), release "to the Canons serving God at Otteham," a quit-rent of sixpence, payable to them yearly by the said Canons out of the land of Robert Rug, to be applied to the improvement of their fare upon St. Laurence's Day²¹ (August 10). With the exception of this sumptuous festival, no mention is made of any improvement in the commons of the brethren, whose ordinary fare was

²⁰ "Ad inveniendum oleum ad unam lampadem quæ singulis diebus et noctibus ardet in ecclesia de Otteham ante altare Sⁱ Laurentii in perpetuum." Thorne was somewhere in the marsh, and Twisely or Twissle is described as in the fee of Gilbert de Aquila.—Cart. 37-40, f. 5, Add. MS. 6037.

²¹ "Hij sex denarii sint ad emendacionem refectionis conventus in die Sⁱ Laurentii."—Ib. c. 41.

doubtless meagre enough. Two of the witnesses to the last named charter are, Ralph the chaplain, and Ailfred the chaplain; and it seems clear that a few monks remained at Otham to perform the services of the Chapel.

Some two hundred years after the removal to Frant, in a lease, dated the Feast of the Annunciation, 6th Hen. IV (1405), Robert Frenesbury, Abbot, and the convent of Begeham, let their manor of Otteham, with all its appurtenances, for twenty years, to Henry Bahere of Bergehersh (*Burwash?*) and John Drew of Otteham, at the yearly rent of thirty marks; five marks to be paid to them, and twenty-five to the Prior and Convent of Michelham.²² In this lease reservation is made to the Abbot and Convent of all the oblations which should be made during its continuance "at the altar there, and the image of St. Laurence, in gold, silver, and wax;" together with one chamber and one stall, with liberty of ingress and egress at pleasure, for themselves or their deputies. They take upon themselves payment of the king's tenths, the support of the chaplain, and repairs of the Chapel and other buildings belonging to the manor, with the exception of such minor repairs of the windmill (at Thorne), as might be done by the tenants at the cost of fourpence: covenanting, however, for a sufficient supply by the latter of straw, for the reparation of the thatch and walls (*tecture et murorum*) of the Chapel and houses, with full liberty of access to every part of the estate, and of carrying out timber and underwood. They agree to allow the tenants due supplies of wood for fences and fuel,—"*haybote et fferbote*,"—but bind them to deliver up at the expiration of the lease "one leaden weight and one handmill (*querna*)," which are specially mentioned at the commencement; and to leave 6 acres 3 roods of land sown with bread-corn (*frumento*), 2 acres with beans and peas (*peciis*), and 21 acres 1 rood with oats. This lease is of considerable length, and enters into all the usual stipulations for manuring, &c., in very minute detail.

²² This appears to have been a fixed rent-charge on the manor of Otteham assigned to the latter monastery. For among the revenues of Michelham at the suppression in 1535 occurs—"Otham, Firma maner', £16. 13s. 4d."—exactly 25 mares; whilst in those of Bayham we find "Otham, Firma maner', £18. 8s. 2½d."—an increased rent from the improved value of the property.

In a second lease²³ for forty years (without date, but probably about A.D. 1500), of a certain piece of land called 'Grete Otham,' the tenants, "John-a-Wode, and Joan his wife, of the parish of Jevynton," are bound "well and truly to pay tithes to the Chapel of Otham." The land was let at a rent of 10s. and three weeks' court-service annually, and seems to have been taken out of the waste, for the tenants undertake to extirpate and banish the *furzes* with which it was overrun, ("omnem subbosum vocatum *ffyrres*"), to surround it with hedge and ditch, and render it fit for tillage or pasture.²⁴

In this way the chapel was kept up till the general dissolution of the monasteries; but, with the exception of the chaplains left for its service, the monks migrated in the beginning of the thirteenth century to Bayham. There, with their confreres from Deptford, they formed a small but flourishing community, without, apparently, any serious difficulties to contend against, until they fell at last under the stroke of that 'Malleus Monasticorum' King Henry the Eighth.

The Abbey of Otteham in its separate state was too short-lived to leave us any documentary evidences of its internal proceedings, which indeed were probably quite unimportant. A few obscure monks painfully struggling for a scanty subsistence are not likely to have done or said much that was worth remembering. But upon the description of their property, and its identification in a few instances with property now existing, and upon the names of some of the attesting witnesses to the charters, I will venture to add a few observations.

They who are familiar with the records of those early times are well aware of the abject state of servitude in which the tillers of the soil then lived, native Saxons for the most part under Norman masters, designated by the terms 'servi,' 'villani,'

²³ Both leases are in the Ashmolean Museum.

²⁴ Weever, in his *Funeral Monuments*, p. 318, Harris, and some other writers, confound our Otham with another place of the same name in Kent, about two miles S.E. of Maidstone; but no one who examines the description of the Abbey lands, can entertain a moment's doubt upon the subject. In the lease last mentioned 'Grete Otham' is described as lying within the bounds of the manor of Otham and in *Sussex*—"infra situm de Otham in comitatu Sussexie," and as bounded on the west and north by the roads respectively leading "from Borne to Haylesham," and "from Perensei to Leceya." Abundance of similar proofs might be adduced, if necessary.

'bordarii,' 'cotarii,' and other names of servile import. But it strikes the uninitiated with some degree of painful surprise to find Ralph de Dene's men of Dudintone, Speg, Bunt, Grig, and others, transferred with the land, like so many cattle, at the will of their owner. Similar instances, it will be observed, occur in the cases of Ulric, given to the monks by Robert de Horsenden, of Geoffrey de Dittone and his children, of Eadward Crepps, of William de la Water, and some others.

The rent paid for land is deserving of notice—a certain weight of pepper or wax, then of higher comparative value than at present, some vestige of which remains in the term 'peppercorn rent' now used to denote a rent of mere nominal value.

It will be seen that certain kinds of property, in those times highly valuable, have ceased wholly or in great measure to be so, from alteration of circumstances.

A value, for instance, was then attached to *inland fisheries* and ponds, which in our days seems exaggerated, but admits of easy explanation. Of sea fishing there was then little or none, while that of the marshes possessed an importance which has long ceased to belong to it. Large meres, interspersed with 'eyes' or islands, supplied the place of what is now presented to our view as rich tracts of marsh-land, intersected with well-formed ditches. Drainage and the gradual reclamation of lands, by sea or river banks, from the overflow of water, have produced this change, and good fattening pastures been substituted for fisheries of comparatively little worth. But in the middle ages such fisheries were considerable gifts, and *ponds* even were much more thought of than they now are. At the time of the dissolution of religious houses, a pond in Borcham, belonging to Otham or Bayham, is estimated at an annual rent of one pound. Moreover, it must be remembered that, according to the rule of the Church, on Wednesdays and Fridays, and during the whole of Lent, fish might be eaten, though flesh might not. Hence an additional value was conferred on these grants, which were calculated to furnish a supply of wholesome and palatable food when other kinds were interdicted. In most of the foundations of religious houses in those early ages, especially upon the sea-coast,

these grants of fisheries, and the tithe of fish taken in them, are of frequent occurrence.

Salt-pans were then a valuable acquisition for the supply of that most necessary condiment at a time when salt-mines and rock-salt were here unknown,²⁵ and our ancestors were dependent upon these pans for a course and imperfect substitute, in place of that purer crystal which may now be found in abundance at the humblest tables. By them, too, fresh meat could not be had from Michaelmas to Ladytide; what was killed in October was salted for provision through the winter. The grant, therefore, to Otham of what was magnificently termed "the golden salt-pan," situate 'somewhere in the marsh between Pevensy and Wartling, was doubtless esteemed an acquisition of value, though now and long since, this and all the other salinæ of inferior name and pretension have entirely sunk into oblivion in these parts of Sussex. Salt-works at Apuldram, in the western division of the county were in use so lately as A.D. 1815, and were the only ones remaining for the manufacture of salt from sea-water on the coast;²⁶ but even these have, for some years past, been discontinued.

By a deed,²⁷ dated at Bramber, on the Feast of All Souls, 5^o Henry IV, 1403—

"John Shad and Alice his wife, and Matilda her sister, daughters and heirs of John Herberd of Bramber, grant to John Haycok of Bramber a salt house (*colagium salinum*) with its appurtenances in Bramber, which is situated between the marsh of the lord of the barony on the south side, and the marsh of the Lord Abbot of Dureford, held by Robert Lymeneve, on the west side, and the shore of the sea water, flowing down in its course from Spottesmersh towards the bridge of Bramber on the north side (*ripam aque maritime descendens in suo curau de S. versus pontem de B.*) and a certain other salt house, held by the said John Haycok, on the east side."

This shows to how late a period salt water flowed above Bramber bridge.

Peat, again, is a substance at present unknown as a local production of this neighbourhood; the drainage of the levels

²⁵ The salt-mines in Staffordshire were discovered in 1670.

²⁶ Dallaway's *Western Sussex*, i, 98. The Domesday Survey informs us that there were then in Sussex 285 salt-pans and thirty fisheries.

²⁷ MS. in the Chapter House Record Office, kindly communicated by J. Burt, Esq. —Dureford, mentioned in the extract, was the only other Premonstratensian abbey in Sussex besides Bayham.

has put an end to the supply, and converted bogs into land of great fertility. Were it known, it would be little esteemed now that good and cheap coal has almost banished wood fires from general use, and much more effectually superseded such inferior fuel as turf cut from morasses. But when Gilbert de Aquila made his grant to the monks of Otham, of sixty 'carecates' of peat annually, from his 'turbary,' in the Pevensy level, and when the Brades of Hellingly gave in equal moieties their 'mora' (moor or peat-moss) of Langney, though wood was plenty, sea-borne coals were unknown, and this combustible turf was of great use to give body and durability to fires, while at the same time it was abundant and easy of access.

I might further instance the grant of *Pannage*, or the right of turning hogs into the woods in autumn, to batten upon the beech-mast, acorns, and other wild fruits with which the ground was copiously strewed at that season of the year. It is indeed still customary for landholders to turn their swine for this purpose into their own woods; but I am not aware of a common right now possessed by any to turn their hogs into the woods of their neighbours. When however these grants were made, vast districts of the country were unreclaimed forest, where oaks and beeches of primeval date and huge growth scattered around them an abundance of this kind of provender; and when an abbot had the privilege conferred upon him of turning his twenty, thirty, or fifty hogs into his lord's woods, it brought no slight addition to the winter stores of the convent, and would be valued accordingly. Enclosures, the destruction of timber, and the gradual breaking-up of forest lands for the purposes of tillage, have curtailed this privilege till it is almost extinct, though enjoyed yearly upon a large scale in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and even much later.

The Dudintone of Ralph de Dene was some hamlet or farm near to Otham, but the place meant is now unknown. Ditton, in West Ham, called Didtuna in the charter of Henry de Palerna, might perhaps have been thought the same, had they not *both* been mentioned together in an ancient rent-roll, which will be noticed presently. There is, however, in the manor a field called *Duddleton*, which looks like the ancient name slightly altered, and may mark the locality.

In the family of Brade, De Brade, or Le Brode, we recognise the name of 'The Broad,' still attached to a valuable property in Hellingly, lately the munificent gift of the Rev. Dr. Warneford to the Radcliffe Infirmary at Oxford.

The mill given by the Brades in equal mediocrities has its representative in the humble structure which, with its *weir*, still spans the stream between Hellingly Church and Tinker's Corner; but the 'melye,' or mill-island, is no longer distinguishable from the adjacent land, nor can the 'juncheria,' or low swampy ground, be now identified, which supplied the monks perhaps with reeds for thatching, and rushes which might serve to make their fish-baskets, or to strew the floors, when carpets were as yet unknown.

The portions of marsh-land given in these early charters are particularly difficult to identify, and for an obvious reason. As the process of recovering such lands from the inundations of salt or fresh water advanced with advancing civilization, new divisions and distributions would be continually made, fresh names given, and old ones forgotten. The frequent occurrence of the term *new* marsh indicates this fact; and whoever attempts to fix the precise locality of these grants will find it in numerous instances a hopeless task to trace a species of property so changeable in its extent and form.

The 'guldene saltkote'²⁸ of Ralph de Val, between Pevenham and Peplesham, with the peat-moss of Gilbert de Aquila, have passed away, and now rank among the things that are forgotten. Those goodly trees, too, of gigantic size, the oak and the beech, which once gave shelter to the wild deer and wolves, "*ingenti ramorum—umbra*," and of which a couple were granted yearly to the monks for the repair of their buildings, by the liberality of the Lord of the Eagle, have now disappeared from our open forests, and found a last refuge in the parks of the gentry.

²⁸ So called in Add. MS. 6037.—'Saltcot,' in Essex, a low marshy parish on the Verley channel, is the same word, as also 'Salthouse' on the coast of Norfolk, 'cote' (cot) and house being convertible terms. Perhaps the *yellow colouring* of the house in which the brine was boiled might give its name to this salt-pan, according to a German practice mentioned by Tacitus, "*Quaedam loca diligentius illinant terrâ, ita purâ ac splendente, ut picturam ac lineamenta colorum imitetur*" (Germ. 16), where ochreous earth of some bright colour seems to be indicated.

But names still linger in the immediate neighbourhood, as Cane Heath and Hay Rede, which remind us of the De Kaines and De Haiâ, the Rede and Kenrede of the charters, though we are unable to establish their identity.

Philip de Herst and Richard de Ponte were probably both inhabitants of that part of Hellingly, which now bears the name of Horsebridge, a corruption of Herstbridge. Falconer of Woodtown must have been well placed for the pursuit of his avocation; and William of the Water lived perhaps near the pond at Boreham, where ponds were scarce enough to make the circumstance distinctive. Simon de Syrynton 'of Dover,' was perhaps so called, from having held there some public office: as families of distinction have been possessors of Sherrington in ancient times, possibly he may have been constable of that famous seaport.

The witnesses to these charters are for the most part Norman gentlemen, or ecclesiastics, generally kinsmen or near neighbours of the donor, and in many cases themselves founders or benefactors of religious houses. Among those to the founder's charter are—

William de Warenne, sixth earl, whose sister was married to Gilbert de Aquila.

Adam de Puninges (Poynings).

Geffrey de Saccavile, son of Jordan and Ela, the founder's daughter.

Robert de Hicclesham, who seems to have been also a family connection.

Ralph, clerk, and Henry, clerk, probably his relations; and Michael de Turneham, the patron of the Deptford monks.

To the charter of Robert de Dene, the first witness is Robert de Gattun, his uncle; and here we find also Roger the *Englishman* (Anglicus), who would be the single exception to the general observation made above, were it not that, in the same deed, among such lofty signatures as Roland de Asquitade, and Reinald de St. Albans, we presently meet with the very humble name of Alexander Tripe, and afterwards of Master Giles Burn.

William de Bugele has among his witnesses Waleran de Herst, and William de Monceaux, father and son, successively

lords of Herstmonceaux. (*Sussex Arch. Coll.* IV, 131), and Robert Mortimer (*De Mortuo Mari*).

Ela, the founder's daughter, has in her two charters for witnesses three abbots—Robert of Boxley; William of Robertsbridge; and William of Cumbwelle (an abbey for Augustine canons, in the parish of Goudhurst, co. Kent, founded by Sir Robert de Turnham); also Geoffrey de Saukeville, her son, Randolph de Haiâ, Hugh and Reginald de Fokintun. Geoffrey de Sancto Leodegario (*St. Leger*), with Henry de Cobeham, and Reginald de Clifton, ancestors probably of the noble family of Darnley.

In the Add. MS., 6037, two charters of Geoffrey de Saukeville are mentioned, to one of which "*Jordan, Abbot of Ottenham*," is a witness, being the only Abbot of our monastery whose name stands on record.

To the charter of Gillebert de Aquila are appended the names of the Lady Edelina, his mother, Richer and Engenulf, his brothers, William de Caines, Hugh de Hasscham, John de Aurichestune (*Alfriston*), and William Maufe, himself a donor to Ottenham.

The charters being without date, the names of the witnesses are often of use in fixing it within certain limits, since in many cases it is known from other sources at what time they lived.

Among the documents relating to Ottenham and Begeham in the Ashmolean Museum, is a small slip of parchment, the writing on which Mr. Turner informs me is much effaced, and in some parts illegible; but which is clearly shown from internal evidence to be a rent-roll of the Abbey of Ottenham, about the time of its removal to Begeham. Names of tenants occur which are found in the earliest charters, as Hugo of Dudintun and Elwinus Crop; and Jordan de Saukeville, the founder's son-in-law, is mentioned as then paying *iijs. iiijd.* for sheriff's aid. Of this relic of antiquity, a slight account may not be unacceptable to the curious in such matters.

The tenements appear to have been all holden in villenage, subject to the payment of a small money-rent, often not more than a few pence, with the addition of one hen and a certain number of eggs, generally thirteen. The names of the tenants indicate their condition of life, as Adam the shepherd (*bercarius*),

Ralph the salter, Peter the thatcher or tiler, ('*coopertarius*,' elsewhere "*le coverur*"), Edwin the carpenter, Thomas the tailor, &c. Some derive their surnames from their places of residence, as Richard de la Dune, Edwin de Heppenhalle, John de Dittun, Simon de Hidenne, Alphege de Mereschal;²⁹ one or two, perhaps, from personal qualities, as small size or fleetness of foot; Richard Mus (mouse?), and John le Herre (hare?). In Thomas de *Dru*i, we probably see a forefather of the John Drew, who long after became a tenant of the manor.

After the list of rents payable to the abbot and convent, comes a statement of the annual payments due from them in respect of their manors of Teletun and Ottenham.

For the former they paid *jd.*, as '*Rome-fee*' on the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula,³⁰ and half a mark for watching and warding the Castle of Pevensey, being the tax for one knight's fee, and the composition for doing '*heccage*' for the same castle when it should be required.

With respect to this last service, a memorandum follows, that their tenants should do one eighth-part of the '*heccage*,' and themselves be answerable for the rest, "except the service which Adam is bound to perform." They also paid *xvs.* annually to "*Wilmentun*," and to the same court *vijj. ½d.* for sheriff's aid.

The explanation of '*heccage*,' given in the glossaries, which makes it a fee paid for the privilege of fishing with a net called '*heck*,' is evidently inapplicable here. The text shows it to mean some manual service occasionally done for the castle, in the way of defence, as by hedge, earthwork, or palisade. The words are—

"*Ad gardam castri de Pevenes dimidiam marce scilicet defendendo pro feodo unius militis, et faciendo eidem castro Heccagium quando accidit, unde reddimus de proprio, vis. viii. iii. quadrantes, et sciendum quod quum Heccagium evenerit, tenentes nostri facient octavam partem, et nos tenemur facere de proprio totum residuum, excepto servicio quod Adam tenetur facere.*"

²⁹ 'Hepphale' is still the name of lands forming part of Green Lee Farm in the manor of Otham; 'Dittun,' a farm of Lord Burlington's, in West Ham; and there are now in the marsh of Willingdon both a Great and Little 'Hidney.' I can find nothing nearer to 'Mereschal' than Marches Field in the adjacent farm of Sareland.

³⁰ This was the penny paid to Rome annually for every family or household—the well-known 'Peter's pence.'

In the Manor of Otteham they paid the Rome-peny for Farnstrete; for castle-guard of Pevensey, iij s. iiij d. on account of Dudintun and Thorn, whereof their tenants paid v d. for Farnstrete; xij d. at Michelham; and xij d. to the church of Wilendun, within fifteen days after Easter.

For each manor they paid to the sheriff (in subsidium sui oneris) for preserving the peace of the Hundred, iiij d. annually as Hundred-pence.

Perhaps the most curious part of this ancient record is the enumeration of villein services, due from the tenants, a literal translation of which, as it stands, may be thought worthy of insertion.

"Services which are due to the Court of Otteham."

"Hugo de Dudintun is bound to carry manure (cariare compostum) for iij days; also to work (averare) one day in every fifteen; ³¹ also in autumn there are due from him iij parts (see note 34) at Otteham, or at Teletun.

"Moreover, he is bound one day to mow grass (falcare pratum), another to collect, and a third to bring to the stack (introducere).

"He is bound, also, for j day to cut bushes or heath (falcare brueriam) wherever it may be appointed him; j day to carry the same; also, [he owes] one cartload of underwood (unum cariagium de bosco).

"Item, one day to dig peat (fodere turvam), and to bring it home (introducere) as long as it shall last. ³²

"One day also to bring green stuff from the marsh, or to collect it (cariare bladum de marisco vel tassare); ³³ j day to carry hay in the marsh; j day to wash the sheep and another to shear them; so likewise the lambs.

"Item, he owes one ploughing (unum partem caruce sue) in winter, and one day to harrow (herciare); and in Lent, j ploughing ³⁴ and two days to harrow. So also do the other (tenants.)

"Besides, every man of Dudintun who has half a yardland is bound to make half a seme (or seam) ³⁵ of oatmeal against Christmas. So, likewise, is Adam de Hleppehall.

³¹ 'Averare' often means 'to carry,' whether on the backs of animals or in carriages drawn by them—from 'averia,' animals used for draught or burthen—a word not unknown to modern literature; Sir W. Scott makes Auchtermuchty sleep off the fumes of his aqua vite beside his 'cart-avers.'—Abbot, vol. iii, p. 222. But from the context I think it here means simply 'operare,' as 'avera,' in Domesday, signifies 'a day's work:' one day in fifteen, deducting for Sundays, would amount to about three weeks in the year, the court-service exacted of John-a-Wode, p. 164.—See Spelman, in Verb.

³² 'Quamdiu durabit'—the very expression used in the Charter implying an expectation that it would fail—another proof that the writings are nearly of the same date.

³³ From 'tassa,' cumulus, strues, &c.: Anglice, a haycock, mow, or stack.—Spelman.

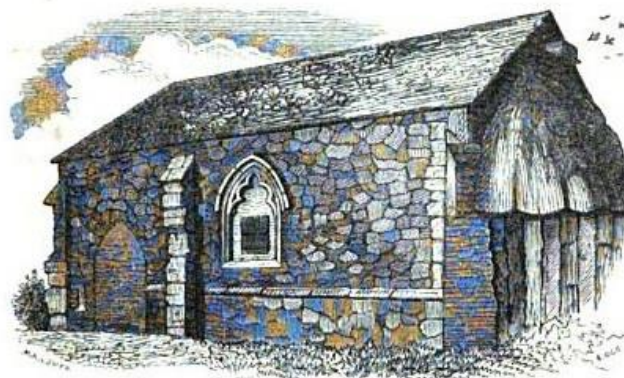
³⁴ That is, of his ploughing three-fifths was to be done in Autumn, one in Winter, and one in Lent.

³⁵ 'Summa,' what is now called a quarter, or eight bushels.

"Moreover, each of them has to bring j amber ³⁶ of salt from the Otteham salt-pan, to wit all who have a half-yard of land.

"Robert the collier (sutor) is bound to share all (omnia participare) with the aforesaid Hugh of Dudintun."

Very little of the ancient building remains; of the habitation of the canons apparently nothing, unless it be a small portion of the basement story of the present farmhouse, or the north side, with here and there a few squared stones, or a plain stone window-frame, worked up as materials in the more modern part of the edifice, which may be some two hundred years old. The well, from the solidity of its structure, one might judge to be original. It was scarcely to be expected that the Abbey which afforded these monks so transient an abode, should be other than small and insignificant.



The shrine of St. Laurence has proved more enduring. The monks found it in existence when they came; it continued little changed till the Reformation stripped it of its accustomed services, and, during the three hundred years which have since elapsed, it has preserved much of its character, amidst neglect and contumely. A small oblong building, distinct and detached from the rest, it had buttresses at the four corners and on the south side, now very dilapidated.

³⁶ 'Ambra,' or Saxon measure of salt, beer, butter, &c., the quantity now unknown.

The principal entrance was on the west, by a doorway of large dimensions, relatively to the size of the chapel. This was in use not many years ago, but is now stopped up; as also is a smaller door on the south side, which communicated more directly with the Abbey. The present entrance is by an opening broke through the north wall. Of the principal window at the east end nothing is left but the outer frame work, and it is entirely closed. Two corresponding windows, delineated in the views which accompany this essay, are on the north and south sides of the altar-place, their tracery destroyed, and its place filled with brickwork. If there were any window over the western entrance, it has been entirely demolished, no vestige of it being visible.

This venerable chapel is now used as a stable, the interior of which, with its mutilated sedile and piscina, awakens thoughts of St. Laurence, and the votive offerings once presented at his altar, according to the usage of medieval piety, strangely at variance with the impressions made by its present application. The drawings, which I owe to the obliging assistance of Mr. M. A. Lower, present a faithful representation of its most interesting features.³⁷

I can find but few traces of their old names attached to the manor lands. 'Fair place' field probably derived its name from the 'Beau lieu' of Bayham; the 'Castle fields' give a faint indication of the former connection between Pevensey and Otham; while 'Cook's field' and 'Kitchen field' raise visions of good fare, denied, it would seem, except on St. Laurence's day, to the Premonstratensians. One field has the odd title of *Pookhole*, apparently identical with 'Puchehole,' a local name found in the Chronicle of Battel Abbey. (See *Lower's Version*, p. 15; and *Mr. Blencowe's explanation*, *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, III, p. 124.) Adjoining to the demesne lands, and within the limits of the manor, are lands called the Great and Little 'Millands,' comprising sixty acres, probably the ancient Thorne, and deriving their name from the mill which stood there.

³⁷ Mr. Lower informs me that "the interior is drawn to scale—onequarter of an inch to a foot—but additional height, to the extent of three feet, is given to the wall, to show the state in which it really existed about twenty-six years since, when the thatched roof was removed, and the present ugly slate substituted."

The monks endeavoured to supply the natural deficiency of water at Otham, by forming three small ponds near their dwelling.

In the disposal of the property belonging to Bayham Abbey after its suppression, the manor of Otham seems to have been early separated from the rest; for whilst the site of Bayham, with the property adjacent, was granted, in the reign of Elizabeth, to Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, I find James Roots to have been lord of this manor in 1646, and John Acton in 1669.

In 1739 it was in the possession of the Medleys, and by the marriage of an heiress of that family, was conveyed, in 1796, to Sir George Shuckburgh Evelyn, Bart., whose daughter again carried it in like manner to the late Earl of Liverpool.

The other manor of Tilton, Robert de Dene's gift to the Abbey of Otham, has long been in possession of the noble family of Gage.