

OUTLINE OF THE SEA COAST OF CHESHIRE.

By the Rev. A. Hume, D.C.L., &c.

(READ 19TH MAY, 1859.)

The adjoining county of Chester, which constitutes part of the field of investigation of this Society, presents but a small portion of its border to the sea; but that portion exhibits some features of great interest. In examining its ancient condition, there are three distinct lines of inquiry. For example, we might examine it first, in *time*, viz. its History; second, in *place*, viz. its Topography and local relations; or, third, its *evidences* on these and other subjects, viz., illustrations of History and Topography. It is the second of these subjects which lies before us at present; or rather a particular department of it;—the comparison of Maps of the Hundred of Wirral, or of that portion of it which adjoins the sea.

The subject of Topography, taking the term in a wide sense, is one full of interest; but I am afraid it will not be so at present, from the mass of dry detail which I am about to produce. It is also imperfect, indeed I may almost say intentionally so; that, like a catalogue of books on some subject of interest, it may from time to time receive additions from other hands.

In the more ancient English treatises there is a vagueness of expression which bewilders and surprises one who is accustomed to the mathematical accuracy of modern times. Every one knew when he turned to the right or left, but he perhaps paid little attention to the angle; and he journeyed for a long or short distance in a particular direction, measuring by the time spent. Thus, in the two important elements of direction and extent, none but *vague ideas* were received or conveyed; and of course the maps formed from such impressions are frequently such as very inexperienced school boys would draw upon their slates.

An Anglo-Saxon map of the tenth century, is one which exhibits these characteristics; and I notice it because it is published in Knight's Pictorial History of England, and therefore easily referred to. It exhibits most of the world as then known, but of course very incorrectly in magnitude and

direction. The east is at the top; the British isles occupy the north-western corner, and Great Britain hangs like two door posts and a lintel over Ireland and the Isle of Man. Wales appears to project from the most northerly point, and the sea beyond is studded with islands, almost equal in area to Ireland or Britannia proper. (*Map No. 1.*)

One which gives us a more accurate view of our own part of the World, is a map of the British Islands about the middle of the 16th century. It is taken from the "Cosmographia Universalis" of Munster, my own copy of which is dated 1559, though the book was printed at Basle in 1550, and dedicated to the Emperor Charles V. It gives Anglia, Scotia, Wallia, Cornewall and Hibernia; and the towns are Edinburg, Londis, Ochsenfurt, Douer, and Vatford, in Ireland. There appear to be forests in various parts of England, Scotland and North Wales, but nothing can be conjectured respecting the modern districts of Lancashire and Cheshire.

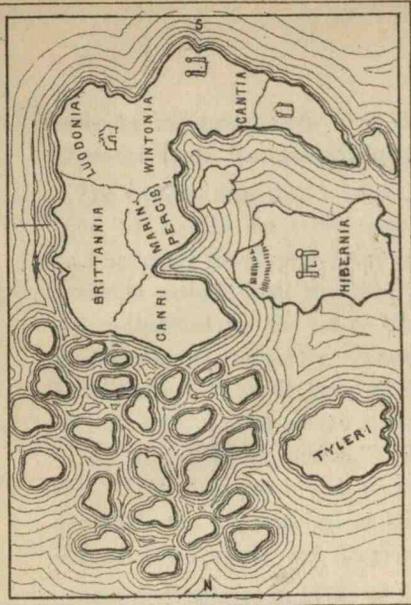
Perhaps this is the proper place to mention that the earliest map which pretends to give individual places in these shires, is also the earliest with which we are acquainted, viz.: Ptolemy's. There had been numerous general accounts of the island and its inhabitants previous to his time, but none in local detail. He seems to fuse the two rivers Mersey and Ribble, and has thus presented a puzzle to antiquarian inquirers and geographers ever since. (*Map No. 3.*)

Among the attempts made to explain Ptolemy, is one in "Horsley's *Britannica Romana*," 1732, fol. He reduces the statements as far as possible to order, and tries to make his statements harmonise with the facts of modern topography. This of course presents serious difficulties; for it assumes that the relative condition of land and water has remained nearly unchanged for a period of 1600 years: whereas we know that even since Horsley wrote, changes of considerable importance have been going forward. (*Map No. 4.*)

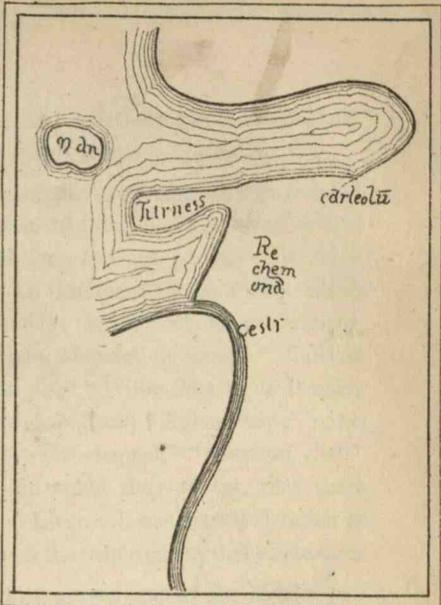
In the King's Library, British Museum, there are two maps in the MS. of Matthew Paris,* supposed to have been drawn by his own hand about the 13th century, "*Britannia, nunc Anglia, quæ complectitur Scoziam, Gallweiam, et Walliam.*" To the east of London, part of the country is wanting, and there is written, "si pagina pateretur, hinc, total insula largior esse debet." The north-western counties are very peculiar; they could

* Published in Gough's *British Topography*, vol. i.

MAP 1.

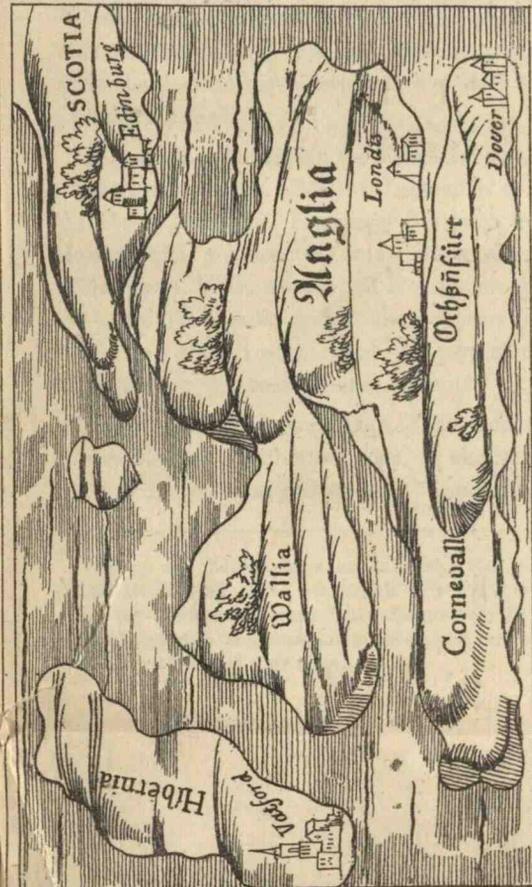


MAP 2.



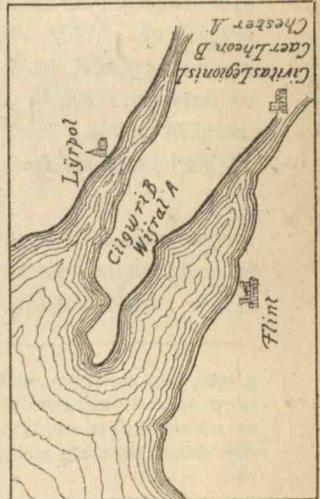
MAP 3

Oriens



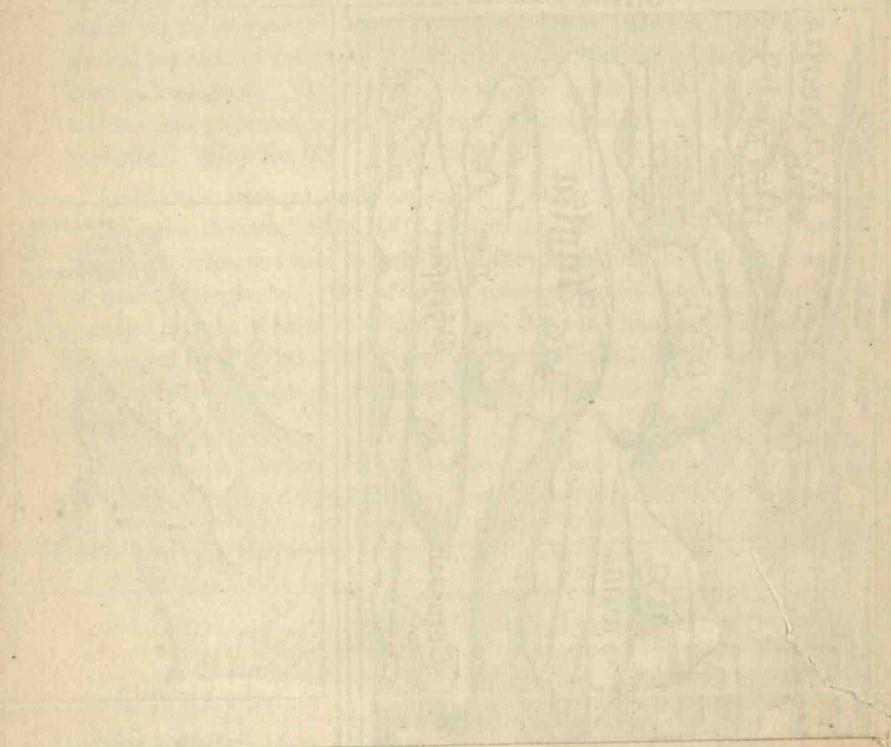
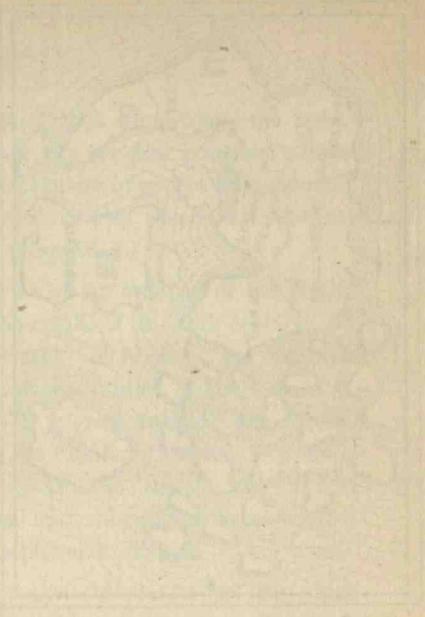
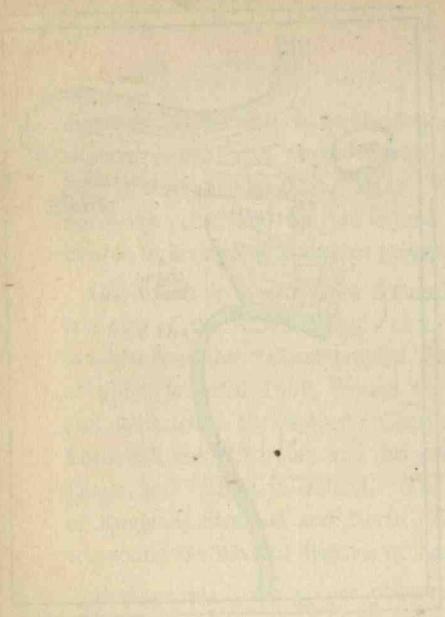
Occidens

MAP 4.



Cambri Typus.
Cir 1575.





never be recognised from their shape, and only four places are marked. These are Cestr, Rechemond, Carleolum, and Furniss. (*Map No. 2.*)

The earliest map that I have found of this particular district is dated 1565, but it does not exhibit any portion of Cheshire. A broad belt of sand lies along the Liverpool side of the river, and the portion of it which I exhibit extends from the Alt river to Garston. It is a map which was constructed for the use of the Heralds; and it contains, accordingly, the mansions of the gentry. Thus "Robt. Blundell de Ince," "Blundale de Crosbie," "Ric. Molonex de Sefton Ar.," "Willm. Moore, de Bancke-howse Ar." The places are "Formby chap.," and "Anker chap.," north of the Alt; "Sefton church," "Leverpoole chappel," "Garston chap." and "Tockestath parck and towre." It would thus appear, that three centuries ago, the principal building of Liverpool was regarded rather as belonging to Toxteth; and the pictures on the map confirm this impression.

In a work printed in 1575, we find an engraved map of the district on a small scale. It is in "Cambriæ Typus, Auctore Humfredo Lhuydo "Denbigense, Cambro-Britanno." The tongue of land known as Wirral stretches far out into the sea; there is no island but a *peninsula*; and it gives one the idea that a large piece of land is nearly separated,* but still partially attached.

In a double folio atlas in the King's Library, is an engraved County map, "Cestriæ Comitatus, (Romanis Legionibus et Coloniis, olim insignis,) vera "et absoluta effigies. Franciscus Scatterus Sculpsit 1577." In this, the internal hills are denoted, as at Wallasea and West Kirkby; Grange, Melse parva, Melse magna, and Moreton are given; Bydston represents an enclosure like a park; and Poulton appears as "Poton" beside Wallasea. Hilbre is a distinct island: but the part of the coast opposite it projects much further to seaward than at present.

That this was the actual shape of the land, and that it was not merely so represented on an ill-drawn map, is obvious from the outline given of another in the same collection. "Lancashire Comitatus pelatin: vera et

* There is a tradition that a map in Mostyn Hall, Flintshire, represents cattle grazing on the Hoyle Bank; but I was unable to see it, if it really exist, when I called for the purpose. Cattle could reach Hilbre Island from the shore at present: and besides the ancient engravers and draughtsmen were not very scrupulous about the animals with which they decorated their maps.

"absoluta descriptio, 1577." Both maps appear to have been in the possession of a Herald; for on the back of the Cheshire map is a list of the magistrates of the county including Ricardus Birkenhead; there are also the posting regulations, the distances and the prices, from London to Ireland, in 1580-1. On the back of the Lancashire map is a MS. memorandum of the gentry in the various Hundreds of the county. It was common, at the time, to write over or under particular places on a map the names of families resident there who were entitled to armorial distinctions; and on the face of the Cheshire map there is an illustration of the practice. Under Seacome is written the word *Melsh*; showing that a gentleman of the name of Meols, taking his name from an adjacent township, popularly called "Melsh," resided* there.

Several editions of Saxton's map appeared from 1579, for upwards of half a century; but little change appears to have been made to that of 1630, except in the title. "Walase" is a peninsula with no town marked on it; Bidston, Mortyn, and West Kirkby are marked; but no other place appears towards the sea. In Lancashire, Meols is given beyond the modern Southport, and Formby is at the extremity of the cape or projection.

In the Rawlinson MSS. in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, there is a map dated 1588. Its full title is "A Description of the Countie Pallatine of Chester, a work deserving to be better handled. But want of cunning in ye author was ye cause. Collected and Sett. down by Wm. Smith, citizen of Noremburgh." In this, the market towns, castles, parish churches, gentlemen's houses and villages are distinguished by separate marks: and places of various kinds are given, to the number of about 68, in the Hundred of Wirral. "Meoles m:" and "Meoles par" are both given as villages: and the shore still projects far to seaward. The places on the Lancashire side of the river are very suggestive, "Lirpole" being both a market town and a castle, and "Earton" a village. Below both Neston and Ness is "ye noo key," like a little island in the water; the mouth of the Mersey is called "Lirpole Haven," with, of course, the Black Rock, the site of the modern Rock Lighthouse.

A map of Lancashire, by the same hand, ten years later, tells us who he was. The visitation of Lancashire, made in 1567, is copied in 1598, by

* On the Lancashire map, under Bankehall is written "Moore," and over Liverpoole, "Duch. Lancastr."

"William Smith, Rouge Dragon." Of Cheshire, nothing is given but "Werall part of," showing a large projection into the sea at the Dove Spit; and "Helbree Insula," very large in proportion to its actual size. As spelling proceeded, in those days, a good deal on phonetic principles, we have the pronunciation of such words as Darby* Hundred, West Darby, Marsey fluvius. The mode of connecting persons† and places, already noticed, is here fully exemplified.

The maps of the seventeenth century are better known; and the excellent one of Speed, himself a Cheshire man, requires only to be alluded to; especially as my object is to refer to those which are less known, noticing not only their special points but their coincident testimony.

Michael Drayton's "Polyolbion," written in 1612, alludes only in general terms to the natural features of this district; and his map is a figurative one,‡ personifying Mersey, Dee, Hilbre, Chester, Delamere Forest and the "Corner of Werrall." It represents a considerable projection to seaward at Meols; and one would infer from his lines that there was danger§ of the water making inroads on the land.

* An ancient building with the inscription "West Darby Work House," was taken down in Low Hill, a few years ago; and in pure English Clerk, Ser-geant, still retain the old sound.

† Lerpole (Cross), Crosby (Blundell), Bankhall (Moore), Lidiate (Ireland), Speke, (Norris), Hut (Ireland), Melling (Molineaux), Croxteth Hall (Molineaux), Sefton (Molineaux).

‡ Delamere Forest is a huntress, with the dogs in full chase of a stag; Chester is a venerable lady with a mural crown; Mersey and Dee are river-gods rising from the waves; and Hilbre and the Corner of Werall (West Kirkby), are men each apparently looking out from his elevation.

§ Here where the Rivers meet, with all their stately traine,

Proud *Mersey* is so great in ent'ring of the Maine,
As hee would make a shewe for Empery to stand,
And wrest the three-forkt Mace from out grym *Neptune's* hand,
To *Cheshire* highly lough, for that his watry store,
As to the grosser Loughs on the *Lancastrian* shore.

[These rivers] come at length, where *Mersey* for more state

Assuming broader banks, him selfe so proudly beares,
That at his sterne approach, extended Wyrall feares,
That (what betwixt his floods of *Mersey* and the *Dee*)

In very little time deuoured he might be;

Out of the foaming surge, till Hilbre lifts his head,

To let the foreland see how richly he had sped.

Which *Mersey* cheeres so much, that with a smyling brow,

He fawnes on both these Floods, their amorous arms that throw.

In Hollar's maps, otherwise known as the Quartermaster's maps, 1644, "Wallasse" is a complete island with a town; Bydston and W. Kirkby are marked; and Formby in Lancashire, is as before. In Jansson's "Angliæ Regnum," 1645, Wallase and Oldfield (near Neston,) are the only places in "Werall."

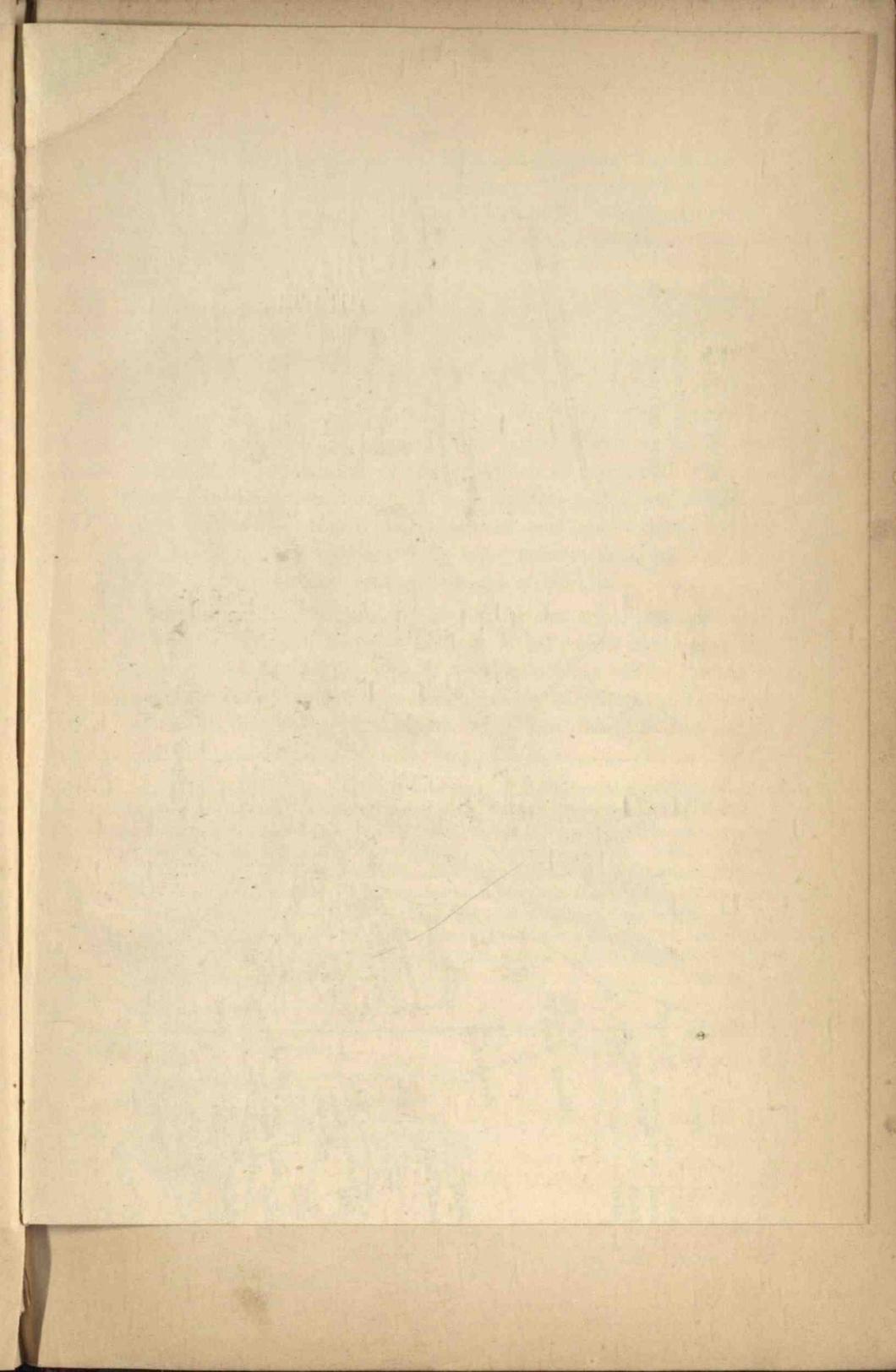
We may here notice, in passing, some facts respecting the names and character of the places. In James's "Iter Lancastrense," (1636), allusion is made to the sand hills blown up on the shore, both in Cheshire and Lancashire.

Ormeschurch and ye Meales
 Are our next jorney, we direct no weales
 Of State to hinder our delight. Ye guize
 Of those chaffe sands, which do in mountaines rise,
 On shore is pleasure to behould, which *Hoes*
 Are called in Worold: windie tempest blowes
 Them up in heaps.

Mr. Corser, who edited the volume in 1845, for the Chetham Society, is inclined to derive Hoe from *how* a mountain or hill, as in Fox-*how*, Torpen-*how*; and Meols from *moel* a large heap or pile. The parish of North Meols, and the township of Formby in continuation of it, near which was the ancient Ravinsmeols, extend along the Lancashire shore for more than twelve miles; and as they everywhere present the "Hoes" to the sea, Meoles has naturally been interpreted as meaning the district of the sand hills. This explains in like manner, the names of the two Cheshire townships; and is evidence respecting the uniform character of the coast, wherever the sea margin may have been. The North Meols, one part of which is now very populous, was then almost a desert; for it is said that a man might be as thoroughly a hermit there as in a little island off the Calf of Man. But that Meols in Cheshire could not have been in this condition, on the contrary, that it was more populous than the neighbouring places, is evident from Schenk's map* published a few years later. He gives Formbye, Eston (Sefton), Kirkbye, and Garston as *pagi*; Bijdston is also a *pagus*; but Meols, occupying the position nearly of the modern Hoylake, † is an *oppidum*. In Visscher's map 1650, (new edition 1686,)

* Published at Amsterdam, from Sanson and other authorities, and dedicated to William III.

† Two great sand banks, to seaward of the end of Wirrall, enclose "Hyle-lake *als*. "Highlake." Mersey is noticed only above Frodsham.



Meols is the only town given in the whole Hundred: Wallasea point is marked; and there is a house to seaward of the sand hills, on the road round the coast. Another road* passes direct from Frodsham to Meols; but in the Alphabeth Tafel given on the margin, neither the latter nor Wallasea is given as a market town.

Passing over several maps engraved in Holland, all of which must have been copied as accurately as possible from English originals, those of Sir William Petty and Grenville Collins are particularly deserving of notice. The former was originally Physician to the Forces in Ireland; and being dissatisfied with the mode in which the survey of the forfeited lands was conducted, projected and completed the survey known as the "Down Survey," with such accuracy and expedition as surprise all who have attended to the subject since.† Though external to his own subject, on one of his maps is given a view of part of the Cheshire coast; and vast sand banks are seen enclosing deep water between them and the land. One such bank lies right opposite the mouth of the Dee.

But the principal maps of the district, for that or any previous period, are those of Captain Grenville‡ Collins; for they show us the exact condition of the banks at the time of his survey, *i.e.* in 1687. Now, as we know their present condition, we have before us the changes of 170 years; and we can, from the known tendency, reason back with moral certainty for

* The reader must not suppose that these were like our modern turnpike roads, or that they were necessarily "made-roads" at all. They were probably "bridle paths," used at best for saddle and pack-horses. Nearly a century later, *viz.* in 1770, the important road from Preston to Wigan, is thus described by Mr. Arthur Young. "Travellers will here meet with ruts, which I actually measured, four feet deep; and floating with mud only from a wet summer; what, therefore, must it be after a winter? The only mending it in places receives, is the tumbling in some loose stones, which serve no other purpose but jolting a carriage in the most intolerable manner. These are not merely opinions, but facts, for I actually passed three carts broken down in these eighteen miles of execrable memory."

† A full account of it by his own hand, was printed in 1851, by the Irish Archaeological Society, under the editorial care of Major Larcom.

‡ Great Britain's Coasting Pilot. By Captain Grenville Collins, Hydrographer in Ordinary to the King's most excellent Majesty. London, fol. 1760. [He was appointed by Charles II. in 1682, to make maps and charts, and spent seven years in the task. Most of the previous ones were Dutch, and very incorrect. He surveyed Liverpool and its neighbourhood in 1687; and gave in his Report in 1689.]

170 years more, and with a high degree of probability for a much longer period.

It may be remarked, in general terms, that at that period, the mass of the Hoyle sand or Bank, lay right opposite the river Dee and the Welsh coast, extending for miles, and pointing in a direction parallel to that of the coast of Cheshire and Flintshire. The waters of the Dee, therefore, except a small portion which got round Hilbre Island into Hyle lake, discharged themselves along the Welsh coast; and the channel by which Chester was approached, lay almost in a straight line between Hilbre Island and Great Orme's Head. In the middle of this channel, and three miles beyond the present Point of Air, rose a sand bank; and here the Hyle sand and the Welsh coast approached each other most closely. This bank seemed a sort of natural stepping stone between them, or as the remains of their connexion at some remote period. As it was invariably passed on entering the port of Chester, it was known as "Chester Barr."

In Captain Collins's directions for sailing over it, he mentions the best line of direction, and adds that the shoalest of the Bar is "about two little miles from the shore." He adds, "then you will presently have deeper water, and may keep along by the Main in what depth you please, keeping Hail or Hyle Sand without you, *which always showeth itself*. This sand is always above water, except an hour or two at High water on a Spring tide, and then it showeth by a Rippling." Here then we arrive at an important fact. A bank whose greatest length was thirteen miles, and greatest breadth three and a quarter, showed itself at all seasons; "the Tides rising so high as 5 Fathom at a Spring, and 3 and an half at a Niep." We have what may be called a plan and a section of the Hoyle Bank from the inside; but some allusion is made to its outside also, in the "Directions to sail into Hyle or Highlake and Liverpool." It is there said that vessels can "run in, *keeping close along Hyle sand*, and so into Hyle or Highlake and anchor." Hence it appears that there was deep water just beyond this Hyle Bank; probably owing to the constant motion of the tide of the channel. At this anchorage, "the great ships that belong to Liverpool put out part of their lading, till the ships are light enough to sail over the flats to Liverpool." In other words, a ship of the time, partially laden, could sail over the Burbo Bank at high water; or in most conditions of the tide, could turn into the river, round the Black

Rock and Perch, having passed through the channel opposite Wallasea which afforded still greater depth.

The following inferences therefore, appear not only allowable but irresistible, on the most authentic information which we possess. (1) That within a period of two centuries a sand bank occupied the position of all the present docks* on both sides of the Mersey; (2) that the Burbo sand could then be reached on foot at low water; (3) that the Dove point, with a much more elevated surface, had been dissociated from some continuous† piece of land; (4) that the external configuration of the Cheshire shore and the Hoyle Bank exhibit unquestionable evidences of previous union; and (5) that the internal configuration of the Hyle lake,—the concave curve corresponding exactly to the convex one,—shows that the channel had been produced in comparatively recent times, by mechanical agency.

There is a very interesting account of an embarkation here, lately printed by the Camden Society. It is the "Diary of Deant‡ Davies," who was chaplain to one of the regiments of the Prince of Orange, and who sailed from Hoylake for Ireland, in 1690. The following are a few of the entries.

Saturday, 26th April.—"We dined at our lodging [at Chester], and after "dinner they all grew very busy in sending away their things to "Hoylake, where lay our recruits of horse, being four hundred, and "the Nassau and Brandenburg regiments."

Saturday, 3rd May.—"In the afternoon, I put my trunks, bed, saddle, "and hat case on board Mr. Thomson's boat and sent them to "Hoylake."

Tuesday, 6th.—"In the morning, we took horse for Hoylake, and passing "by Neston, we came there about one o'clock."

Wednesday, 7th.—"About nine o'clock came on board, and at eleven "shipped our horses. The Major and I walked a few "miles on the strand, and went into two islands§ in the bay, and "then came on board."

Thursday, 8th.—"In the afternoon, we shipped the Major's tumbrel, and "came down to the roads' mouth, where we lay at anchor all night."

* "The ships lie aground before the town of Liverpool; 'tis bad riding afloat before "the Town, by reason of the strong Tides that run here, therefore ships that ride afloat "ride up at the Sloyne, where is less Tide." See also, the notice of the map of Lancashire, 1565.

† The top of the Hoyle Bank was then more than half the height of the present Leasowe Light-house.

‡ Edited by Richard Caulfield, B.A., 1857.

§ These must have been Hilbre and the Middle Eye.

Friday, 9th.—"In the morning we set sail, the wind being E. N. E.,
"and steered N. W. by N.; we had but little wind, and got not out
"of sight of Wales all day."

Now it was in this very year, (1690,) that an "Index Villaris" was compiled by John Adams, of the Inner Temple, and the relative importance of the neighbouring places deserves to be noted. *Wallasey* is represented as the seat of one gentleman; but neither *Leasowe* nor *Seacombe* is given. *Kirkby West*, is merely a parish, rated in the King's book; and *Birkenhead* is the seat of a Baronet. But *Meoles* is a *sea port town*, and the seat of one gentleman! On the other side of the *Mersey*, *Formby* is the seat of two gentlemen; and *Liverpoole* is a seaport, the seat of more than three gentlemen, and sends two members to Parliament. *Hoylake*, which is now the name of a village, then applied to the water merely.

The map which is given in Gibson's *Camden*, 1695, introduces no new feature. The sand bank of which the *Dove Spit* is a mere projection, includes *Hilbre* and the two smaller islands; and *Meoles* is still a place of importance. In "Ogilby's *Britannia*," published three years later, as a large folio Road-book,—"*Chester, alias West Chester*" is represented as still "maintaining great intercourse with *Ireland*, this and *Holyhead* being "the principal places of taking shipping for *Dublin*."

Omitting several unimportant allusions to the district, it is curious to notice those places of the name *Kirkby* almost continuous along this short line of sea coast. On the *Dee* there is *West Kirkby*, which gives name to the entire parish; then *Meols*, the greater section of which was known as *Kirkby** *Meoles*, and finally *Wallasey*, known only as *Kirkby* in *Waley* till near the beginning of the 16th century. The first and third of these contain churches, and have done so, we have reason to believe, as long as the names have been given. Why may not the second have contained a church also, at a remote period? I am aware that we should act with caution in the matter of local etymologies; for even on the spot we find mere words leading to mistakes respecting facts. In *Gastrell's* "Notitia *Cestriensis*" the following entry appears under the head of *Wallezey*.

"There were formerly two Churches here, one called *Walley's Kirk*,
"situated in y^e present Church yard, y^e foundations of w^{ch}. are

* *Harl. MSS.* qu *Gastrell* I. 177. n. It is more usually called "Mykel meles," and "Meols magna."

“yet visible: and Lee’s Kirk, near a narrow Land still called Kirk-way; but wⁿ one became Ruinous and y^e other wanted a Priest, they were both taken down, and y^e present Church was built in their stead. Walley gave these Lands, called the Nar Crook hey, to y^e High Altar, and to y^e Priest for ever, for a burying-place in y^e Chancell belong^s to this Church. This deed of gift was in the Parish Chest, and read by H. Robinson, Schoolmaster, from whom I received this Information, an. 1718.—*Rect’s Account*.

The Rev. Canon Raines, under whose able editorship the *Notitia* was issued by the Chetham Society, accepts the whole of this statement as correct, though it is only for the latter part of it that Mr. Robinson produces any authority. The statement, however, receives apparent corroboration from the fact that the Rectory was formerly in two medieties, and that a Chaplain was maintained in the parish by the Priory of Birkenhead. But on the contrary, there is no such benefactor as Lee mentioned in history; there is no such “narrow land” in the Parish; and no such name as “Kirkway” either known by tradition or visible on maps of any kind. Is, then, the whole story without foundation? I think not, but that Mr. Robinson was misled by etymology.

In ancient records, we actually find a name very like Lee’s Kirk applied to the district; but on examination, it changes its form like a dissolving view, and melts into the modern Liscard. We find for example the forms *Liscark*,* *Linscarke*,† *Liscarte*,‡ *Lyse ark*,* *Lystarke*,‡ *Lystherd*,* and *Liscard*.*

The next map of importance is that of John Mackay, surveyed in 1732, and engraved on a scale of eight inches to seven miles. It is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. This is a most important map, showing the causes of the changes which have occurred in the river Dee and near its mouth during the last century.

On the margin of his map is engraved the following:—

“From Blacon p^t to Burton h^d. y^e course of y^e river has run nearly
“always y^e same, and is about 11 feet lower than y^e surface of
“Saltney Marsh.”

“The fresh water and quarter ebb do still run from Burton head thro’

* “Idem Reus tenet medietate vill de *liscark*, &c.”—*Holme, Harl. MSS.*

† In “*Nomina Villarum quæ sunt infra Baroniam de Halton*.”—*Erdeswick, Harl. MSS.*

‡ A marginal reading beside *Lystherd*.—*Holme.*

“Dinner Wharfe in before Park gate, w^h still preserves y^e Navigation there, and only from thence y^e course of y^e river and y^e reflux of y^e tyde can best scour and keep open Hyle Lake and y^e Barr.”

“[Across from Flint to Gayton] is another course w^h y^e river may take between y^e sands into y^e Main Channel and was so intended to pass, by Mr. Yarranton, the first projector of a New Cutt, in 1677.”

“Between Fearn Wharf and y^e out scar not 30 yards wide, if this be choaked up y^e Navigation in ye Hoyle Lake will be lost.”

“By y^e Bill depending in Parl^t and y^e Undertaker’s protracted survey of y^e river Dee it is evident—

1.—“That y^e almost straight and uninterrupted course of y^e river is to be turned through an unexperienced Cutt, and from thence through uncertain crooked channels over loose shifting sands.”

2.—“That y^e sand and soyl in y^e Cutt is no less than Six Millions of solid yards, y^e greatest part thereof is proposed to be scoured as fast as possible towards Hoyle Lake and y^e Barr.”

3.—“Between Chester, Flint and Park gate, 7 or 8,000 acres are proposed to be gained from y^e sea, by w^h means no less than 200 Millions of tons of Tyde will be prevented from flowing twice (twice in 24 hours,) w^h on y^e reflux acquireth the greater velocity to scour and keep open y^e Lake and Barr.”

“Whether these ill consequences w^h must certainly attend the present undertaking are not more likely to destroy the present navigation in Hoyle Lake and the river Dee, rather than to recover and preserve a better is humbly submitted to y^e R^t Hon. the House of Lords.”

[The channel was then close along the E. side of the Dee from Blacon Point to Burton head.]

This prophecy, founded on reason and argument, has been almost literally fulfilled. Hoyle Bank has been cut in two as with a saw, and the mechanical agency of the water alone, has been disengaging and removing material to new positions at the rate of about a million cubic yards annually. This is at the rate of about 1400 yards per tide.*

In 1760, a survey was made by Mackenzie, and the banks were found to have changed materially since even Mackay’s time. Mackenzie’s lines for the banks are engraved by the three engineers, Telford, Stevenson and Nimmo, who in 1828, made surveys for a great ship canal from Wallasea

* A remark of Lieut. Wm. Lord, late Marine Surveyor, at the port of Liverpool, may here be mentioned. He said that many of the smaller banks change their dimensions so rapidly, that in surveying them he could scarcely credit that they were the same places which he had noted with great care only two or three years before.

Pool to Hoylake at Hilbre Island. In 1772, a very excellent survey was published. A plan of the lands belonging to the river Dee, by Thomas Boydell of Denbighshire.* The copy which I saw was in the Bodleian Library; the original was said to be in the river Dee office.

The following memorandum may be briefly added. In 1774 and even in 1798 Parkgate was still a port, holding intimate communication with Ireland; and in 1761, the road from Chester appeared to stop at Parkgate, a narrow bye-lane leading across to the ferry on the Mersey at Birkenhead. In Burdett's map of 1794, the Bathing Place is given at Great Meols, as if it had been even then, an embryo watering place; and the shore road lies along the heath and sands to seaward of the present Leasowe Castle. Much of this road can still be traced, but the rest has disappeared in the inroads of the sea. At the position of the modern Hoylake there appears to be but one house, and that to the landward of the high road.

This brief review brings this branch of the subject down to near 1800 or the beginning of the present century. Since that time, it is better known, by observation and the report of living witnesses. There is surely not only *primâ facie* evidence, but conclusive proof that the coast line has undergone material changes.

I might show what is possible in similar cases, by alluding to the encroachments of the sea on the eastern side of Yorkshire, so that a breadth of several miles has been wholly swept away; or I might quote the example of Formby, almost at our doors, which within the last century has seen the two extremes of (1) a populous village and little seaport, and (2) a wilderness of sand, without the vestige of a human habitation.

Looking back to 1687, [170 years] we see a territory equal to a large parish, barely submerged or not quite so, in one of the undulations of surface which Geology tells us the district has undergone. We see the way open to it at low water, and the land stretching out its hand to unite the broken link.

At subsequent times, we recognise a large village, called by comparison a *town*, (*oppidum*) giving name to the Parish or district of *Kirkby Meols*, and reckoned as the seaport of the place. We find it giving name to a distinguished County family, one member of which was Mayor of Chester

* Published by his brother J. Boydell, in ten sheets.

in 1357, another of whom was living at Seacombe in 1577, and another lived on his own property at Meols in 1580 and 1591.

Where is now this seaport, or town, which was called so by way of eminence, to distinguish it from mere villages? It has decayed and passed away like a second Formby, or rather Formby is a second Meols. The position assigned to the town corresponds with the "Meols Stocks," and is as nearly as possible that of the antiquities which have been found during nearly half a century; just as the old coast lines coincide with the black earth, noticed so early as by King, in his "Vale Royal of Cheshire."

The name Meols is Ancient British, while other local words in the neighbourhood tell of the Saxons and the Danes. We can thus trace them by their respective tongues, as we can in Archaeology proper by the products of their handywork and the contributions to their necessities. Like Belzoni at the Pyramids, or our own countrymen at Perranzabuloe in Cornwall, we can here restore it to Geography and replace it on the map. It is truly a melancholy pleasure, yet it is a pleasure, to touch the dry bones of centuries, to clothe them for the moment with flesh, and to ask them to tell their interesting tale. The details of that story, however, we must reserve for a different paper.
