

## SMUGGLING IN WIRRAL.

By E. Cuthbert Woods.

Read Feb. 24th, 1927.

SOME time ago Mr. Shepherd, the Birkenhead Librarian, told me he had in the library some MS. notes about an old house in Wallasey which might be of interest to me. On examining them I found they referred to what is now known as Mother Redcap's Café, which stands on the Promenade about half-way between Egremont and New Brighton ferries. I am indebted to Mr. Robert Myles, the owner of the property, for permission to use these notes, which were among the title deeds when he purchased the property after Mr. Kitchingman's death.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Kitchingman was born at a house in Withens Lane; whether it was a private house or not at that time I cannot say, but later it was the "Horse and Saddle." His father was always much interested in the old house on the shore, for many years used as a tavern, which has been known as The Red House,<sup>2</sup> Halfway House,<sup>3</sup> Mother Redcap's, Seabank Cottage,<sup>4</sup> Seabank Nook, and is now Mother Redcap's Café. Mr. Kitchingman senior stayed there as long ago as 1820, and he and his son together collected these notes relating not only to the house, but also to Mother Redcap herself, and some of the episodes which occurred in the vicinity.

Joseph Kitchingman was a solicitor and practised for many years in Warrington. He was a good amateur

<sup>1</sup> He allowed Mr. Parry, of the Picton Library, to make a copy for use there, and it was through Mr. Parry that Mr. Shepherd obtained a copy for Birkenhead. There is also, I believe, a copy at Wallasey.

<sup>2</sup> Eman Bowen's *Map of Cheshire*, 1805.

<sup>3</sup> Kay's *Map of L'pool's Environs*, 1844.

<sup>4</sup> *L'pool Directory*, 1853 (Gore); John Lewtas, Beerhouse, Seabank Cottage, Liscard.

artist, and some of his paintings are in the Wallasey Library. In 1888 he purchased the property, then used as a fisherman's cottage. It was in a rather dilapidated condition, but he made considerable alterations and additions and carefully took a note of any thing of interest which then came to his notice. In his will he left it for a Convalescent Home for Warrington people, but the house was so unsuitable that the town declined it, and it was purchased by Mr. Myles and put to its present use.

The north-east corner of Wirral, till the end of the eighteenth century, was a wild and desolate waste of wind-swept sand-hills. Stonehouse says that in his young days (about 1750) "the only trees that existed grew close to the mouth of the river, near the shore."<sup>1</sup> North of a line drawn from Magazine Lane to the north end of Wallasey village, there was not a single house, and sand-hills stretched, from the site of the Liverpool Yacht Club, originally Liscard Battery, right round the coast to the mouth of the Dee.

It was on this account that when the Powder House which Saml. Underhill and Robert Norman, of London, had built at considerable cost in 1737,<sup>2</sup> on Brownlow Hill, was decided to be too close to the town for safety or comfort, the Liverpool Council, in October 1751, appointed a committee to purchase a piece of land in Cheshire near the Black Rock, to erect Powder Magazines.<sup>3</sup> A factor in the choice of this site for the Magazines would be, that this is about the nearest point to the mouth of the river at which the shipping of those days could find shelter from the force of the tide and the north-west gales.

The *Report* of Telford, Stevenson and Nimmo in May 1828,<sup>4</sup> says that:—

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections of Old Liverpool* (1836), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Touzeau, *Rise and Progress of L'pool*, i, 447.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 482.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Sulley, *Hist. of B'head*, 59.

“ Within the harbour of L'pool or in the River Mersey the Principal places of Anchorage are

1. Abreast the town ;
2. Off the Magazines which is used by Outward Bound Vessels ;
3. Up the river in Sloyne Roads or Bromboro' Pool, which is almost confined to vessels under Quarantines.’

The exact position of “ The Black Rock ” it is difficult to decide. Mr. Rideout and I, after consulting many old documents and maps, are agreed that from 1751, when the powder was stored at the site now known as “ The Magazines,” this site was known as the Black Rock, and later as “ The Rock.” In Speed's map (1610) the Black Rock is marked near Leasowe Castle ; and Mr. Rideout suggests that The Black Earth, or Dove Point, was what was originally called by Sailors the Black Rock. In Blome's Map 1670, the name is given to the rocks at the mouth of the Mersey, which were marked with a wooden Perch, and are in some maps called the Perch or Black Rock. In the parish registers at Wallasey references are made to various persons who lived or died at the Black Rock, but these only commence in 1754 (just after the Magazines were removed here), and the last is in 1764, after which it is called The Magazines.

On a plan of an estate in Liscard belonging to John Davies in 1818, the Rock is clearly marked as a plot of land to riverward of Magazine Brow. In Lacy's *Guide*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1844, the charges for towing vessels by steam tugs are given in a tabulated form. One column is headed “ From the dock to the Rock or Magazines,” the charges being the same, although in the same book the distance from the George's Stage to the Magazines is given as 2 miles 1050 yards, and to the Perch Rock, 3 miles 150 yards,<sup>2</sup> a difference of 890 yards ; from which one would infer that “ the Rock ” and “ the Magazines ” were synonymous at that time.

<sup>1</sup> *Pictorial Liverpool*, by Henry Lacy, 1844, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Before the advent of the steam ferry boat this district was very sparsely populated, and (again to quote Stonehouse) :—<sup>1</sup>

“ Wirral up to the middle of the 18th century was a desperate region. The inhabitants were nearly all wreckers or smugglers.—They ostensibly carried on the trade or calling of fishermen, farm labourers, and small farmers.—Many a fierce fire has been lighted on the Wirral shore on stormy nights to lure the good ship on the Burbo or Hoyle Banks, there to beat and strain and throb, until her timbers parted, and her planks were floating in confusion on the stormy waves.<sup>2</sup>—On stormy days and nights, crowds might have been seen with carts, barrows, horses, asses and oxen even, which were made to draw timber, bales, boxes, or anything that the raging waters might have cast up. Many a half-drowned sailor has had a knock on the scone, whilst trying to obtain a footing, that has sent him reeling back into the seething water ; and many a house has suddenly been replenished with eatables, drinkables and furniture—where previously bare walls and wretched accommodation were visible. Then for smuggling : fine times the runners used to have in my young days. Scarcely a house in North Wirral that could not provide a guest with a good stiff glass of brandy or Hollands.—Formby was a great place for smugglers.—I don't think they wrecked as the Cheshire people did : these latter were perfect fiends.”

This is borne out by the *Report* of the Royal Commission on the need of a Police Force in 1837, in which the following passage occurs :—“ Chester and Cornwall are the worst. On the Cheshire coast not far from Liverpool, they will rob those who have escaped the perils of the sea and come safe on shore, and mutilate dead bodies for the sake of rings and personal ornaments.”<sup>3</sup>

A grave or pit, discovered during the building of New

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections of Old Liverpool*, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> In *A History of the Police in England* by Capt. W. L. Melville Lee, 1910, on p. 283, it is said : “ Mr. Dowling, Commissioner of the Liverpool police, stated that in Cheshire parish constables never interfered with wreckers. The Borough police on salvage duty had to go armed against the hostility of neighbouring villagers.”

Brighton Palace, yielded a presumption that it had been used by smugglers and wreckers for the purpose of concealing their goods, and that it was not improbably the scene of even graver crimes, for the workmen on reaching the pit were completely overcome by the stench from it, and only by the aid of great quantities of disinfectants could the removal of the contents be carried on. Old residents in the neighbourhood were firm in the belief that those contents were human remains.<sup>1</sup>

Having shown what sort of people inhabited this district up to about 1840, I will add a few words about its isolation. Separated from Liverpool and the rest of Lancashire by the Mersey, one can see the difficulty of transport when the only ferry boats were small sailing craft. Nor was the parish of Wallasey much more easy of access from the rest of Wirral. Before the Birkenhead Docks were made, the tidal waters of Wallasey Pool flowed as far as Leasowe Castle, and the only land exit from the parish roughly followed the line of the present Green Lane, which now terminates at the Castle, but in old maps is shown running to seaward of it.<sup>2</sup> In addition to that from the landing-place at Seacombe, dignified by the name of ferry, there plied another ferry boat from the site of the present Duke St. Bridge, known as the Ferry at the Hooks.<sup>3</sup> There was also a ford at low water on the site of the present Wallasey Bridge.

The houses in the parish were not numerous, and until the inclosure of the commons in 1814, large areas of waste land existed. On the edge of one of these, called Liscard Moor, and close to the river, was built about 1595,<sup>4</sup> a small two-storied house of red sandstone, with walls in some places nearly three feet thick. This house is still

<sup>1</sup> A pamphlet by Vance Speer, c. 1904, *The Hundred of Wirral*.

<sup>2</sup> Burdett's Map, c. 1797.

<sup>3</sup> The Hooks were pieces of land that projected out into the Pool.

<sup>4</sup> This date was supplied to J. Kitchingman by Albert Wright, solicitor, from documents in his keeping.

standing, and is known as "Mother Redcap's." Until the Promenade was made and the Drives cut, there was no road to it. When Mr. Kitchingman bought it in 1888, it was used as a fisherman's cottage, but for many years it was a tavern, though at what precise date this use began cannot be stated with certainty. Kitchingman says "about 1778," but gives no reasons. In the Tithe schedule of 1841 <sup>1</sup> it appears as a tavern, with John Lutas as mine host.

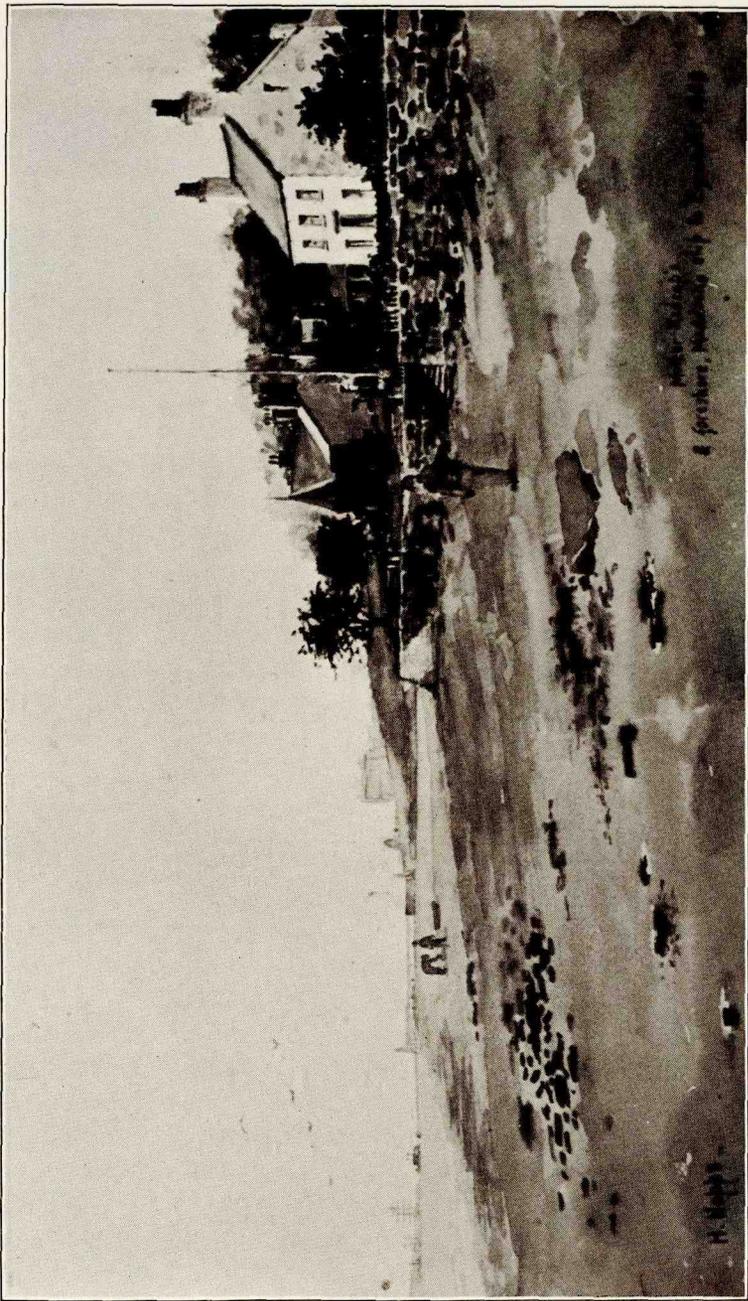
There were two stone-mullioned windows in front of the house on the ground floor, with a door between them. In the cellar under the north room were found the remains of the oak door 5 ins. thick, and studded with large square-headed iron bolts. It was very rotten, but there were remains of the stout sliding cross-bars of oak, which fitted into recesses on the walls at each side of the door. There were also slots for cross-bars at the sides of the windows, which had been furnished with stout inside shutters. All the beams were of oak, but some were so rotten that they had to be replaced.

Just inside the front door the flooring boards were arranged on a swivel principle, securely held in place by a locking device. This could be arranged so that if the door was forced open, the bolt of this trap was automatically withdrawn and the intruder precipitated into a cellar, about nine feet deep, under the north room. Of course this trap door may have been used for goods! Previous to 1888 a large square flagstone had been placed over the opening. This Mr. Kitchingman removed, and filled up the cavity and built brick round it to get a foundation for the tiling in the vestibule.

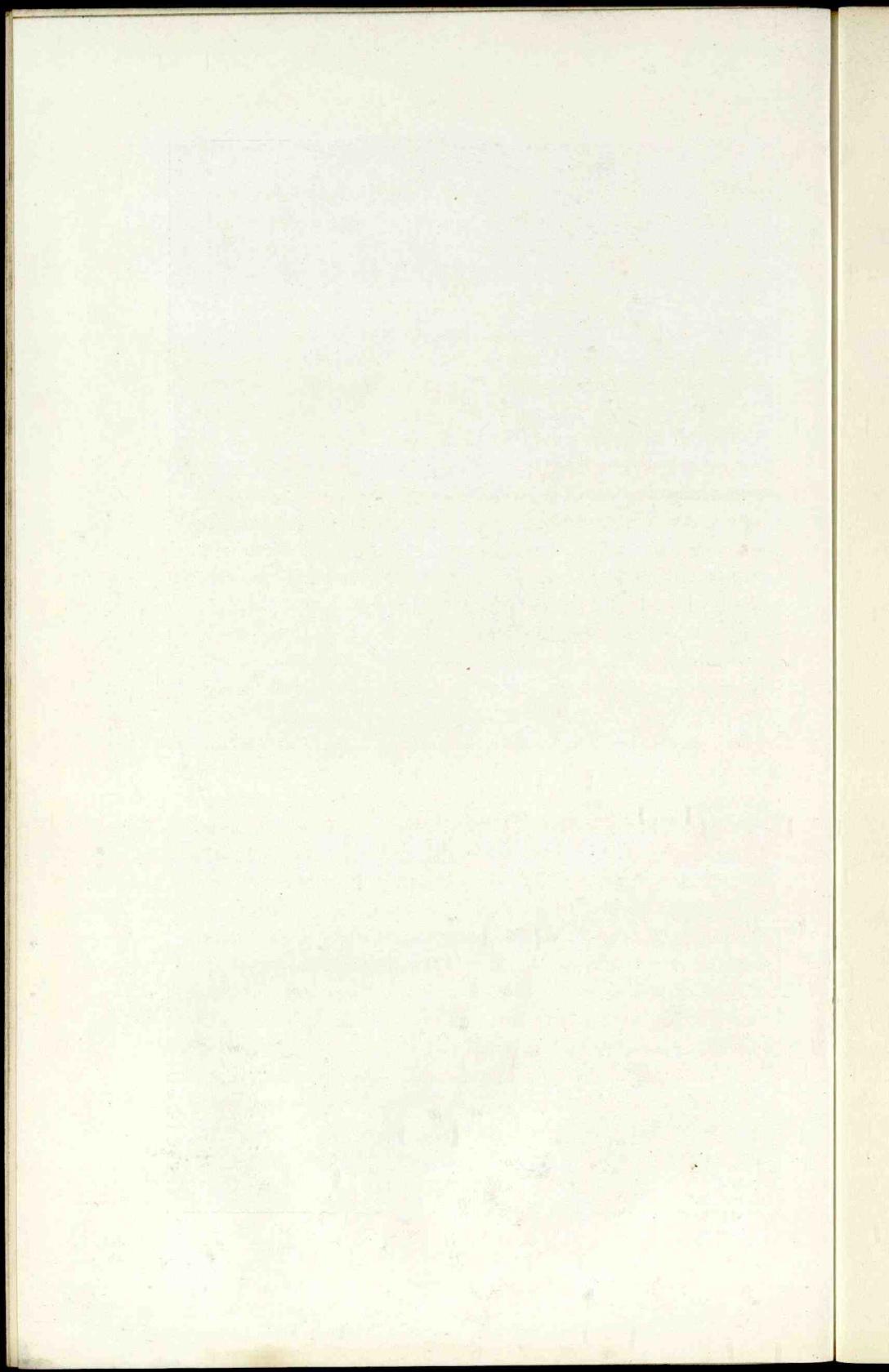
When the front door was open the entrance to the

<sup>1</sup> In the Schedule to the Map for Commutation of Tithes, 1841, appears—  
 344 Mary Davies, Owner, Wharton's Croft.  
 345 " " " " Public House. John Lutas, tenant.  
 Lutas appears first in Gore's *L'pool Directory* for 1837 as "Victualler Magazines."

FIG. 19.



MOTHER REDCAP'S, 1887.  
(Original drawing by Mr. H. Hopps.)



south room was closed by it, and if the trap was shut, the visitor, unless he turned to the right into the north room or closed the front door and went into the south room, would proceed straight upstairs, as there was no lobby. Stonehouse says that when he visited the place

“ There were no inner walls to divide the upper floor, but only a few screens put up about 7 or 8 feet in height to form apartments.—The roof was neither latted nor plastered. When I last saw it about twenty five years ago (1838) the joists and timbers were all open to view.”

The chimney breasts were of large capacity, so that no smoke escaped into the room, and in the two ground-floor rooms there were cavities near the ceiling over the oak beams. The entrance was from the top of the chimney breasts, inside the flues and closed by movable panels. When the wall of the south room was pierced to make a staircase, a cavity hardly large enough to accommodate a man of small stature was discovered, at the side of the chimney breast. Entrance was gained from another cavity above it. Nothing was found in it as it was black with smoke. There were also a few small cavities in the walls which had been papered over and were doubtless places of concealment for small articles. There was a passage from the north to the south room behind the staircase, and from this, under the house stairs, seven or eight steps led down into the cellar. A narrow door at the top of these steps opened into the yard. If anyone were in the cellar when the front door were forced he could make his exit up these stairs and right out of the house. Behind the stairs was also another door, opening into the kitchen situated at the back of the house and also provided with a door into the yard.

In this yard was a dry well covered with a flagstone. A workman who descended said it was about 12 feet deep but had been partly filled up. There were indications that there had been an exit on the west side, probably

leading to the deep ditch mentioned later. There was another large cavity in the ground at the south end of the house, covered with a rude roof of flagstones supported on beams. Entrance to this chamber was gained by a square hole in the ground, with steps at one side, as if it were a dried-up pit well. On the flags covering this cavern stood two rain-barrels, the first filled with water by a long sloping spout from the roof of the house, with an overflow to the other barrel standing alongside, which however had no bottom and was no doubt used as a ventilator. One part of this flagged space was occupied by a manure heap, and coal was stored on another part. There was also a large pair of scales for weighing coal, which was brought here on flats and retailed in the vicinity.<sup>1</sup> When any smuggled goods were deposited in this cellar the coal was arranged to conceal any appearance that the ground had been disturbed.

With a very high tide and a gale blowing the cellar was flooded, and there are stories of boats running contraband at night right up to the front door, the goods being dropped straight into the cellar.

At the end of the chamber mentioned was a passage said to lead to a cave in the Red Noses, but really leading into the deep ditch which formed part of a field boundary and was much overhung by a hedge. It was thought that the passage from the dry well in the yard joined with this tunnel and had a common opening into this ditch, which was a deep cutting as far up as a large pit situated about half-way up what is now Lincoln Drive. At the edge of this pit a large willow tree grew, the pollard trunk of which was of great girth, with a number of shoots close enough to conceal the presence of any one amongst them. From its position half-way up the hill, it commanded an extensive view of both river and shore.

<sup>1</sup> John Lutas, coal dealer and beershop, Liscard, Cheshire : *Gore's L'pool Directory*, 1841.

The shore in front of the house was composed of a bank of pebbles and star grass, bounded on the north and south by strong stone walls running down to high-water mark. The wall at the north side was particularly strong, to resist the large waves and the force of the flood tide. It was *in situ* when the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board built the present sea wall, and still lies under the Promenade. It formed a shelter for boats laid up during the winter to the south side of it, and if desired its height could be increased by means of sliding boards between thick posts.

In front of the house, across the strand, was a wooden seat made from old ships' timbers, the end of which was adorned with a short pole surmounted by a weather vane, supposed to indicate the direction of the wind; but it was only a dummy, as it was securely fastened to the flagstaff. This flagstaff fitted into a wooden socket in the shingle and could be rotated in accordance with pre-arranged signals. When the vane pointed to the house, it indicated to all concerned that the way was clear and those in the boats on the river knew it was safe to land; but when pointing away from the house it meant—"Keep off." Possibly the saying "See which way the wind blows" may have arisen from such arrangements.

Suspended from a post at the other end of this seat was the signboard, which bore a portrait of Old Mother Red-cap, in her red cap or hood, busily engaged with a frying pan over a fire. Beneath were the words—

All ye that are weary come in and take rest  
Our eggs and our ham they are of the best  
Our ale and our porter are likewise the same  
Step in if you please and give 'em a name.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Kitchingman obtained this information from Pilot W. Coventry. J. K.'s father saw the signboard when, at the age of 20, he stayed at the house for a short time in 1820.

During the alterations in 1888 a small cannon, with a broad arrow punched on it, and the remains of two flint-lock muskets were found buried at the back of the house. The cannon was a swivel gun or bow chaser, for it still retained the iron spike on which was fixed the wooden handle to turn it round when taking aim ; such was the type used on privateers about 1790. Near the muskets was unearthed a pedestal of bricks, with a " Nine hole " stone on top. It was a square stone with nine holes cut on its surface. Halfpence were thrown at the holes, the game being called " Pitch penny." A Capt. Griffiths, who lived in the adjacent Homes for Aged Mariners, and was born in 1803, told Mr. Kitchingman, in 1888, that he remembered this stone when he was quite young and had played a game which he called " Bumble Puppy " on it. It seems to have been an early form of Bagatelle. He had been told that this particular stone was made by the French prisoners of war, who were on parole in Liverpool and district, and who played the game by propelling a ball along a movable piece of wood like a trough without ends.

The anchorage where the privateers used to lie was nearly opposite the house and known to the pilots as Red Bett's Pool. It was formed by a stream which flowed down from a pit to the westward of the house and used to supply vessels with water and also doubtless an excuse for a call at Mother Redcap's. It was from this water (in the brew house which formed part of the property) that the dark strong home-brewed ale was made for which the house was noted till about 1840. The following privateers are said to have made this house a port of call : *Red Cap* (16 guns), *Namesis* (18), *Alligator* (16), *Racehorse* (14), and *Ariel* (12).<sup>1</sup> Pilot W. Coventry said he

<sup>1</sup> *Namesis* and *Alligator* launched at Liverpool yards in 1780 and *Racehorse* and *Ariel* in 1781. Lacy, *Pictorial Liverpool*, 81.

thought the revenue boat also anchored in the deep off here.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest stories are that when William III sailed for Ireland from Hoylake, Jacobite dispatches were conveyed from Ireland to this house by a small privateer called the *Red Cap*. On one occasion three distinguished persons landed hurriedly from a ship. Horses were in readiness at Mother Redcap's, and the travellers rode off without delay for the ferry at the Hooks. Very shortly after their departure, a party of armed men landed from a boat and made a hurried search of the house. It appeared they had been lying in wait beyond Seacombe Point,<sup>2</sup> at the mouth of Wallasey Pool, for these Jacobites who they expected would proceed up the river to Poole. Fearing they might land at Mother Redcap's, they had hurried down the river, but only to find the birds had flown. Another story relates how a Jacobite dispatch was concealed in a small bale of tobacco, which the Preventive Officer unfortunately discovered. As it was not large he agreed to say no more if they would divide it, and give him half. One can imagine what care and skill was exercised in the operation of bisecting it so that he should not get the dispatch or any part of it in his share.

For small articles of contraband the rushes and bushes surrounding the pit already referred to afforded temporary hiding-places; but the more bulky ones were removed from the larger excavations and taken by pack-

<sup>1</sup> Pilot W. Coventry had this statement from his father. The family is frequently mentioned in the parish register and also in John Hough's *Journal, Trans.*, 72, 41. One of them, William, was parish clerk at Wallasey and buried there in 1773 (parish registers).

<sup>2</sup> Seacombe Point is north of the Bowling Green of the present Seacombe Ferry Hotel where Ferry View Road runs down to the river. When the Wallasey Pool was converted into docks and the 1878 Seacombe Ferry improvements carried out the sea wall was built from this point across the mouth of the Pool to the present Woodside Landing Stage. Before this the high-water mark was along the line of Birkenhead Road, Seacombe, and Shore Road, Birkenhead.

horse over the moor through or round the scattered village of Liscard, and over the dreary moor, which lay between the Boot Inn, and the Breck, by the old track which came past Wallasey Townfields, down Folly Lane, and along Breck Road, below Wallasey Mill; then, turning to the right, along what is now the public foot-path to Bidston and so on to the Moss. Wallasey mill (built in 1780) like Cæsar's wife was above suspicion, and was never connected with any tales of these practices.

The passage over the marsh to Bidston, before the Docks were made and the land drained, was both difficult and dangerous. People who endeavoured to cross without a guide, even as late as 1830, got into difficulties and had to be rescued. The ground was full of pools and branching tributaries of the main stream, forming a veritable labyrinth, where at night Will o' the Wisp was an added danger. There was only one safe path, and this was very tortuous. A pair of whale's jaw-bones were laid across the stream at one dangerous point, with cross beams of wood to form a rude bridge. This had no posts or rails, and to find it required a very thorough knowledge of the locality; to add further terrors the spot was said to be haunted by the ghosts of two men drowned here at different times.<sup>1</sup>

The jaw-bones were still to be seen in 1840, but gradually decayed and were engulfed in the bog. Here the path forked, one arm leading off to the left along the banks of the Pool, to a farm house, probably at one time part of the Bidston Mills, afterwards known as Hanna Mutches'. The other path led in a more southerly direction towards Bidston, over the old pack-horse bridge, which still remains, up Uric Lane to Bidston and on by the pack-horse track through Prenton. At Bidston was

<sup>1</sup> "Journal of John Hough" (*Trans. H.S.*, lxxii, 41): 1773, May 20th at night, Thomas Coventry drowned in Wallasey Pool.

John, son of Thos. Tassy, drowned off a horse i' the Pool March 24, 1665; Wallasey Registers.

another hostel, the Ring o' Bells, kept by Simon and Phoebe Crofts,<sup>1</sup> with its signboard bearing these lines:—

Walk in, my friends, and taste my beer and liquor,  
If your pockets be well filled you will find it come the quicker,  
But as the want of that has caused both grief and sorrow,  
You pay to-day and I will trust to-morrow.

If it was reported at the Jaw-bones, or at the Bidston side of the marsh, that it was not safe to proceed to the Ring o' Bells, the contraband was deflected westward along the edge of the Moss, to old Saughall windmill. Built of wood, standing on a rough base of stone, with gaunt sails, strong oak beams, and a large wheel to turn it round, it stood in an isolated position only a short distance from the edge of the Moss, but a full mile from the village of Saughall Massie. It also enjoyed the reputation of being haunted, and its eeriness was increased by the presence of several ravens who made it their home.

A few stories of local smuggling may not be out of place here. It is difficult to realise now how isolated this part was and how far it was from Liverpool. Information being received by the Preventive Officer at Liscard, that two kegs of Jamaica rum were about to be taken to Bidston over the Moss, he prepared an ambush near Liscard. They came along and were pounced upon by the Officer, but on examination the kegs were found to contain ale, which was stated to be required to supply a shortage at the Ring o' Bells, at Bidston, the rum having been removed from the kegs and sent by another route.

Mother Redcap's seems to have received frequent and protracted visits from the Preventive Officers, who no doubt found its warmth and good cheer preferable to the windswept moors, mosses, and sand-hills of the surrounding country. They were thus installed on one occasion

<sup>1</sup> Gamlin, *'Twixt Mersey and Dee*, 99.

when the smugglers were desirous of getting a cask of rum or some other merchandise away from one of the hiding-places, but were prevented by the unwelcome presence of the officer. So it was arranged that one of the smugglers was to creep down to the shore from the Moor, and lie down in his clothes in the water, at the edge of the receding tide. The attention of the solitary Officer at Mother Redcap's was called to the supposed body which had been washed ashore, and he made his way to it as quickly as possible. He had removed the watch, and was going through the pockets when the corpse came to life, sprang up and laid out the surprised officer. By the time he had come to, the rum had been removed from Redcap's and started on its journey to the Moss. No blame could be attached to the "drowned man," who said he was walking along the shore, when he must have had a fit, for the next thing he became aware of was that he was lying in the sand and his pockets were being rifled.

Another time a ship laden with tobacco and other good things became stranded near the mouth of the river. The Preventive Officer watching the wreck from a distance, saw two men leave the stranded ship, each with a small bale, and run along the shore, in a northerly direction, as though they were making for Wallasey Village. It took some time to overtake them on the soft sand, and when they were caught, their packages being opened, were found, to the annoyance of the officers, to be composed of cabbage leaves and ferns. In the meantime some others of Mother Redcap's *clientèle* had made free with the tobacco at the wreck.

After the wreck of a vessel whose cargo contained silk stuffs, several of the bales found their way into the cellars here, and were later retailed to the villagers in the vicinity. The next summer the inhabitants of Seacombe, Liscard, Wallasey, and even Bidston, all appeared in new

dresses of very superior quality, but all similar in texture and design !

Salt smuggling has not yet been mentioned, but from the Parish registers we see that Robert Jacob and Geo. Cliff in 1729 and Chris. Bibby in 1733-53 were salt officers here,<sup>1</sup> and Stonehouse says that in his youth a man on his father's privateer used to tell how, on stormy and dark nights, they used to land salt on the Cheshire shore, or into boats alongside, substituting the same weight of water as the salt taken out, so that the cargo would pass muster at the Liverpool Custom House.

Exactly when Mother Redcap flourished I have not yet been able to fix, but it was about the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In 1844 the place is called the Half-Way House. Both local tradition and Stonehouse agree that she got her pseudonym from wearing a red cap or hood.<sup>3</sup> Tradition says she was a comely, fresh-coloured Cheshire-spoken woman, and at one time had her niece to assist her. The latter was very active, but off-hand in manner, and afterwards married a Custom House Officer.

The house was a great rendezvous of sailors, who, when the Press gang were active in Liverpool, would desert their ships after a voyage at the other side of the Black Rock, that they might conceal themselves in Cheshire, and many a vessel had to be brought into port by riggers and carpenters sent round by the owner for that purpose.<sup>4</sup> Mother Redcap was a great favourite with the sailor men and had their entire confidence ; on returning from their

<sup>1</sup> See Note at end.

<sup>2</sup> Probably immediately previous to John Lutas, who became tenant about 1837.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Bertram Furness, *Wallasey and Wirral Chronicle*, 6 May, 1927, says her name was Poll Jones.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Martin, *alias* Joseph Lowther, was hanged at Chester on Oct. 4, 1798, for firing at a boat's crew of the *Actaeon* in the Mersey when employed on the impress service : Hanshall's *Hist. of Chester*, 650.

In 1762 on March 29th, Wm. Evans, who met his death in endeavouring to escape from a cutter lying at the Black Rock, was buried at Wallasey (Parish Registers).

voyages they used to deposit with her their pay and prize money till they wanted it.

Stonehouse says she had hiding-places for any number of men. This always puzzled me till I came across these Kitchingman notes, for they state that the farm on the Marsh was also a noted hiding-place where sailors could lie in safety from the unwelcome attention of the Press gang, retreating to Mother Redcap's, and *vice versa*, when the scent became too hot. Also a cave in the Yellow Noses may have been another hiding-place, for the walls are profusely decorated with incised dates and initials, the earliest one I saw being 1619.<sup>1</sup> This cave has a narrow opening, now obscured by a landslide which occurred some time ago, but is accessible also from the garden above. In the cavern proper is a well, now used for the house above; and even at the farthest end the air is quite wholesome and fresh showing that there must be an outlet.

When one considers what facilities this part of the coast offered for smuggling and wrecking there can be very little doubt these natural advantages were utilised to the greatest extent by the inhabitants who regarded them as specially ordained by Providence for such a purpose.

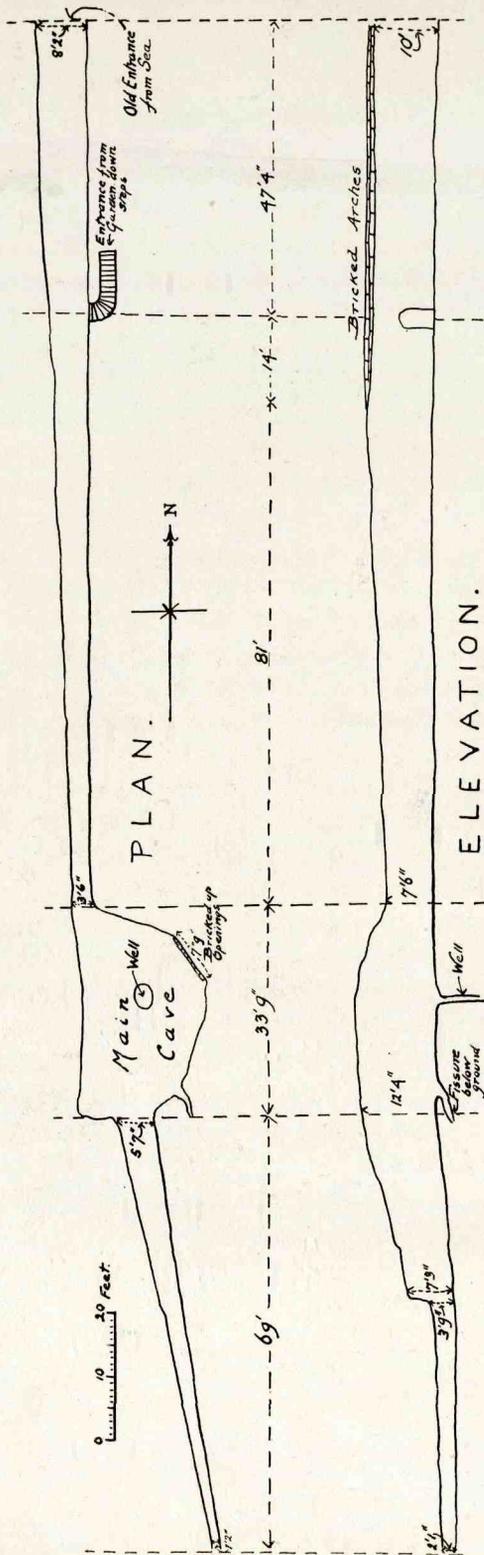
From these notes it seems clear how little inconvenience the *clientèle* of Mother Redcap's suffered from the gentle attentions of the few Officers stationed at the Rock.

An old saying (which could be varied to suit whichever of the three townships of the old parish one happened to be born in) runs:—

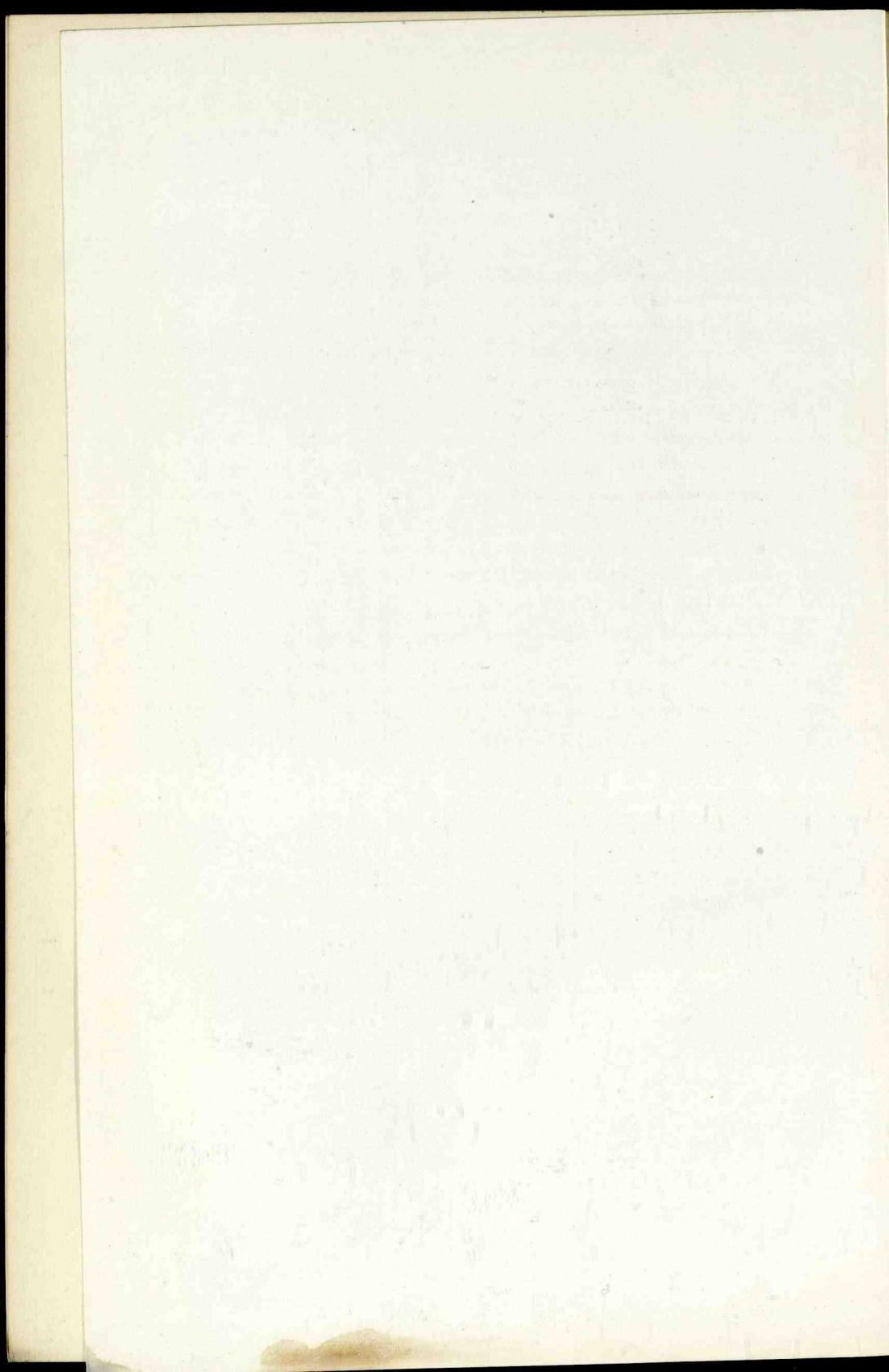
WALLASEY for wreckers,  
POULTON for trees,  
LISCARD for honest men,  
And SEACOMBE for thieves!

<sup>1</sup> Ashby Pritt refers to this cave as The Wormhole (*Trans. Hist. Soc.*, 43, 7). Also "John Hough" (*ibid.*, 72, 43)—Castor Bibby . . . a Sunday at the Wormhole with the two Mattys.

FIG. 20.



THE "WORMHOLE" CAVE IN THE YELLOW NOSES.  
(By H. Hopps, Esq.)



The following details of the Customs Officers and their families are taken from the parish registers at Wallasey.

*Christenings.*

1729. Jacob, Emma dau. of Robert J., Salt Officer, and Mary.  
 1730. Newton, William s. of Mr. and Dorothea, Preventive Officer of P.c.S.  
 1733. Bibby, Richard s. of Chris., Salt Officer, & Sarah, of P.c.S.  
 1735. „ William do. do. do.  
 1738. „ Ann do. do. do.  
 1741. „ Hesther do. do. do.  
 1745. „ Edward do. do. do.  
 1749. „ Sarah do. do. do.  
 1750. „ Mary do. do. do.  
 1747. Standley, Mary dau. of Peter, Officer, and Mary, of Wallasey.

*Burials.*

1719. Gardiner, Mr. Willm., a Customs Officer of Wallasey.  
 1726. Deverill, Mr. Willm., a Customs Officer of Wallasey.  
 1729. Mary dau. of George Cliff, Salt Officer P.c.S. and Mary his wife.  
 1746. Robinson, Mr. William of Wallasey, Custom Ho. Officer.  
 1749. Smith, Mary, wife of Thos., Prevent. Officer.  
 1753. Robinson, Mr. Thos., Custom House Officer.  
 1753. Bibby, Chris., Salt Officer of Seacombe.  
 1768. Howarth, Mr. Edmund, Officer of Liscard.  
 1796. Allan, Ross, Preventing Officer.  
 1801. Hyde, Joshua, Officer from Liverpool.  
 1803. Mollineux, Geo., Officer.

In the Journal of John Hough (in the author's possession) he refers to Mr. Howarth, Officer, in 1753. He also mentions in 1755: Nov. 11, Sold one Cheese to Mr. Geamon, Officer; and 1756, Apl. 29: Mr. Thomas Dudley, Officer of Excise, was present at Mrs. Tyrer's at the same time (*Trans.*, 72, 45).