

THE ESSEX AND SUFFOLK BORDER.

BY J. H. ROUND, M.A., LL.D.

(Read at Moyns Park, on 17th June, 1924).

The dominant feature of to-day's excursion is that we visit places on the border of Essex and Suffolk, from Haverhill, adjoining Sturmer, where the Stour takes its rise, to Clare, which stands upon that river, the river which here forms the boundary between the two counties. But we have to remember that it forms the boundary, not merely between two counties, but (until recently) throughout our history, between two dioceses, those of Norwich and of London; between two peoples, the Angles and the Saxons; between what were formerly the kingdoms of East Anglia and of Essex. More than this, though little known, is the fact that this historic boundary divided two regions which had essentially different social and economic systems.

Essex was a land of lords and villeins; Suffolk, as part of East Anglia, was a land of sokemen, men of small independent holdings, largely of Scandinavian origin, and therefore of freer status. Lastly, in Essex the land was reckoned and assessed "in hides"; in Suffolk, on the contrary, by a different system, that of "carucates" or ploughlands. Of all this, I need hardly say, you will find nothing in Morant's work, but it opens up a field of research—and of very important research—for the archæologists of Essex and Suffolk who possess the requisite local knowledge and who have some acquaintance with the fruits of modern research in topography and local history.

Let me turn to another aspect of the problems raised by the borders of Essex and Suffolk. Roughly speaking, the valley of the Stour and the valley of the Colne both meander to the sea in a south-easterly direction; but the river Colne is not a boundary; both its banks are in Essex throughout, and may be even in the same parish. As it is not a boundary, this is of no consequence. But when we find such a boundary as the Stour dividing a parish between Essex and Suffolk, how are we to account for it? Take the great manor of Nayland, a frequent source of confusion to writers, who, although the village is just in Suffolk, find the southern portion of the manor represented by our Essex Horkesleys. Take "Ballingdon cum Brunton"; the former is a hamlet of the Suffolk Sudbury, and ecclesiastically in the diocese of Ely, though on the Essex side of the Stour; the latter, with its long-ruined church, is in Essex.

KEDINGTON.

This parish — of which the name is, I believe, pronounced "Ketton," by the customary elision of the middle syllable in these

parts—lies in the extreme south-west of Suffolk, adjoining Haverhill. But part of it is actually in Essex, as is part of Haverhill. This has led Morant, the historian of Essex, into a strange error. Writing of the manor of Hersham Hall, under the Essex parish of Sturmer (vol. II., p. 347), he states that :

through Sturmere be now (1768) reckoned an obscure place, and small, with few inhabitants; yet it was formerly very considerable and of great extent, reaching into Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. *Haverhill* and *Kedington* were then hamlets to this parish; though both of them far exceed it now in the magnificence of their churches and number of their inhabitants. Even now Sturmere is rated and assessed to the land-tax by a warrant directed to two of the inhabitants of Sturmere, to assess Sturmere with its hamlets Haverhill and Ketton (*sic*).

It is obvious from the Ordnance map that the hamlets of Sturmer were *not* the Suffolk *parishes* of Haverhill and Kedington, but those portions of them which were within the county border of Essex. The area of these portions jointly is over 1,400 acres, while that of Sturmer singly is under 1,000. In the complicated case of Bures, lower down the Stour, part of the Suffolk parish of Bures St. Mary (otherwise Great Bures) lies on the Essex side of the river, and is known, I believe, as Bures Hamlet, in the Essex Hundred of Hinckford. This "hamlet" contains almost 1,600 acres, while the parish of Mount Bures (*alias* Little Bures), in Essex, which adjoins it, has only 1,424. Returning to the hamlets of Haverhill and "Ketton," we find that detached portions of Sturmer lie in "Ketton," while some three and-a-half acres of the *Cambridgeshire* portion of Little Wratting are found astray in the *Essex* portion of the *Suffolk* Haverhill!

The problem is to decide how this tangle arose, how it is that people who live in one county have their parish church in another. Nor is it only a matter of *parishes* lying in two or more counties; hamlets and even manors are found similarly divided, straggling over the border that divides Essex and Suffolk. Hersham and Olmsted, for instance, though now merely hamlets, have names suggestive of ancient settlements; Morant deals with them both under Helions Bumpstead, but admits that Olmsted was "long a hamlet by itself and in Castle Camps" (Cambridgeshire), to which parish it was definitely transferred from Helions Bumpstead, "for civil purposes," by an official order, so lately as 1886. The halls of both these places are just within the Essex border; but the lands appurtenant to them were largely in Castle Camps. I am confident that if this border district could be systematically examined, we might obtain important accessions to our knowledge of a subject still obscure and vindicate the value of local research.

Turn for a moment from the far north to the southern boundary of our county. What are we to say of such a problem as the division of a parish by no less a river than the mighty Thames?

Why is a strip of Essex on the northern bank of that river part of the *parish* of Woolwich in the *county* of Kent? It is a problem on which I hope to throw some light shortly.

THE BUMPSTEADS.

These two parishes, although immediately adjoining are severed by the boundary of two Hundreds, those of Freshwell and Hinckford. Here again we have a phenomenon that invites careful enquiry, for it has a direct bearing on Professor Maitland's theory as to the parish and the Hundred, which was largely based on Essex evidence.* Had the two Bumpsteads not been thus divided they would have covered, jointly, more than 6,000 acres. I wrote a paper on "Helion of Helion's Bumpstead," which appeared in our Essex Society's *Transactions* for 1901,† where I showed that the Helion family was founded, at the Conquest, by Tihel the Breton, and obtained a small barony in this district which was reckoned at ten knight's fees. I succeeded in tracing their name to Hellèan in the *canton* of Josselin near Ploermel (Morbihan). I will only add here that the name of *Steeple* Bumpstead is derived, in my opinion, not, as Morant imagined, from a tower by the wayside, but from the tower of the church itself, which has long been recognised to have a base of early date. Although the name "Steeple Bumpstead" is found at an early date, "Bumpstead at the towre" is found as well, and this was Latinised as Bumpstead *ad Turrim*.‡ Morant, indeed, contradicts his own derivation; for, under South Ockendon, in the south of Essex, he tells us (vol. i., p. 99) that this parish was distinguished as "ad turrim" on account of "the church having a Tower Steeple, as Little Easton and Bumsted were" (*sic*). The French equivalent of *ad turrim* was "al clocher" or "a la tour,"—both of which are found in Essex. Morant appears, under Bumpstead, to have failed to realise that the word "Steeple" might, at that time, mean a church tower. Even the massive Norman tower of Great Tey church must have given to the parish the strange name of "Theye a la Steple," which is found in an Essex fine of 1286'.

One word more. Clare, where this excursion ends, was the chief seat of that mighty race, who made its name famous and whose castle mound still stands. But let us not forget that it was also the home, for part, at least, of his life, of one of the greatest of modern archaeologists; Sir William St. John Hope, whose friendship was so highly valued by many, and whose loss we have cause to mourn.

*See *Archæol. Rev.* (1889), vol. iv., pp. 236-8.

†Vol. viii., pp. 187-191. I may here add that what was termed a "brief" for rebuilding the church of Helion Bumpstead, so late as 1796, is in the British Museum.

‡*E.A.T.*, vol. vi., p. 145.

Essex fines, vol. ii., p. 55.