TRINITY CHAPEL AND FAIR.*

By O. G. S. CRAWFORD, F.B.A., F.S.A.

THE site of Chapel is one of the most historic spots in Southampton. Here, in my opinion, was the haven or port of the Saxon Town. Here stood the Chapel of St. Mary de Graces, and here at the Feast of Trinity was held a fair called the Trinity Fair, from which the chapel was also often called the Trinity Chapel. The first mention of the chapel is in 1225, and it ceased to function in the Dissolution; but before discussing its later history, I propose to say a few words about Saxon Hampton, and about the early topography of this district.

Saxon Hampton.

The fact that there was a chapel here at all, and an important fair, demands some explanation. Why should this site have been chosen at all? It is now so obscure a backwater that our Honorary Secretary, with shrewd intuition, selected a better-known place for our assembly; and if we, the Friends of Old Southampton, could not be expected to find it without guidance, we may be sure that, like the seals of citizens on the old documents, "it is unknown to many." The explanation is geographical. If you will look at the old maps of the town you will see that, before the docks were made in 1840, the seashore consisted of a shingle-bank running from the Gravel at the S.W. corner of the walled town, along the foot of the south wall, by Godshouse Gate, then south of Queen's Park (formerly Godshouse Meadow or Field) and along Canute Road, past the Cross-house, to end in a spit of shingle still visible a little further east. When exposed to the full force of the prevalent south-westerly winds, the shingle was gradually washed eastwards and then north-eastwards, until its further progress was checked by the deep channel and current of the Itchen estuary. Thus a hook of shingle was formed, projecting for some distance from *terra firma* into the deep water and forming a small natural harbour, protected from the open sea. This process is a perfectly familiar one, and it may be seen in operation at many points on the south and east coasts. I would mention as examples the entrance to the harbours at Poole, Christchurch and Shoreham, and Sandwich on the open sea, and the Beaulieu River in the Solent. Such harbours are short-lived, for that very protection which creates them creates also a still lagoon in which sediment rapidly accumulates, until finally big ships cannot enter there. I do not think that this silting-up process had much or anything to do with the transference of the site of the town, for, being an estuary and not the open sea, ships

* A paper read to the Friends of Old Southampton on the occasion of a visit to Chapel, 27 Sept. 1947.

could still find a deep anchorage in the channel, and there are besides other and better reasons for the foundation of the walled town. But I do think it determined the choice of this spot for a settlement and port in Saxon times.

The town is first mentioned in a document written about 800 A.D., but referring to an event that took place about 721. The name is spelt HAMWIH (the last letter being a guttural, equivalent to hard 'c'). The form HOMWIC also occurs, and an alternative form OMTUNE (A.D. 825). The first part of the word HAMM- is the same word as 'ham' meaning the curved leg of a pig, and refers to the bend in the river; it has nothing to do with the other word HAM, pronounced differently, meaning a homestead, and the modern word 'home.' The second part, 'wic,' is a Saxon loan-word from the Latin 'vicus,' learnt by the Saxons from the Romans when they met in Europe before they invaded Britain. 'Vicus' is the word used by the Romans to describe the commercial quarter of a town, and *wic* was used in precisely the same sense by the Saxons. When therefore the author of the first mention of Southampton, or rather of Hamwih, calls it a 'mercimonium,' she was simply translating the second part of the word into Latin, for 'mercimonium' means a mart. This meaning of *vicus* is akin to that of the word in medieval times. In the deeds about land-transfers in the town, the streets, French Street, High Street and so on, are all called 'vici.'[1]

The Saxon town lay between St. Mary's Church and where the Fire Station now is, on both sides of the road. The position of the church at what must, for topographical reasons, have been near the southern limit of the town, suggests that this southern part was the oldest, and that the original Saxon settlement began here and spread northwards. That is consistent with my view that the haven was at Chapel. I also like to imagine, with no tangible evidence to support me, that there was a prehistoric or Roman camp at St. Mary's, and that the founders of the 'minster at Wic' chose it as affording protection for their community, a procedure for which there are many parallels all over the ancient world, from Scotland to Nubia. The establishment of houses south or east of St. Mary's would have been unlikely on account of flooding, before the sea-banks were made. Even in the Middle Ages the artificial causeway now known as Chapel Road was liable to damage by sea water; and as late as 1603 that enterprising clothier Michael Netley, whom we shall meet again later, was presented at the Court Leet for making a great channel of sea water to flow up under the wall of the Litten (St. Mary's churchyard) whereby a boat of good burthen cometh up thither. Those who attended this year's session of the Court Leet will recall that the damage done by water to causeways is still a matter of which it takes cognisance, if nothing else.

1. A good example occurs in 1236 when Bugle Street was described as "vicus Fraunceis qui vocatur le Bule Stret," the French quarter called Bule-street.

I picture the first St. Mary's as a small stone building. Possibly the stones of Clausentum or even the quarries of Binstead may have been used, for water transport was easy. Round it clustered the houses, or mud cottages, of the community of priests that served the minster and the whole district of Stoneham. They were probably a self-sufficient community, farming their hide of land, later called the Glebe, between Derby Road and the Itchen, whose fish they certainly consumed. The town too had its arable fields; and it is fascinating to try and reconstruct them. The problem is not capable of exact solution; but we may be pretty sure that some at any rate of the later medieval fields of the walled town were also earlier the fields of the Saxon town. There was a long strip of such between High Street and Above Bar on the west and St. Mary's Street and Road on the east. The two southernmost were Houndwell and Hoggeslond, separated by a rivulet called the ditch of Houndwell which ran into and filled the town ditches on the east, and ran out under the mill at Godshouse Gate. On its way it supplied the town pond near Polymond's Tower. North of Houndwell was the East Garston or East Magdalen field, now the East Marlands; and north of Hoggeslond, now the Hoglands recreation-ground, was the field of Kingsland which was mentioned in *Domesday* (1086) and later was given to St. Denys. Kingsland is a difficult problem; it certainly extended on both sides of St. Mary's Road, but it also covered the main part of the Saxon town. Was this town waste and derelict at the Norman Conquest, and therefore a sort of escheat of the Crown? And why does St. Mary's Road cross its northern portion (if such it be and not another field) diagonally? That fact should mean, by all the rules of topography, that the field is older than the road, which is difficult to believe. Next on the north, on the east side of the road, is a field called Buckland, belonging to Queen's College—hence the modern name of the district, Queensland. Thanks to its constancy of tenure for some seven centuries, and to an 18th century plan preserved at Queen's College, the exact boundaries of Buckland can be marked on the map. It was first mentioned in the beginning of the 13th century when Nicholas of Shirley granted all his land in Boclande to Robert, son of Simon, culcitrarius (the quilt-maker).

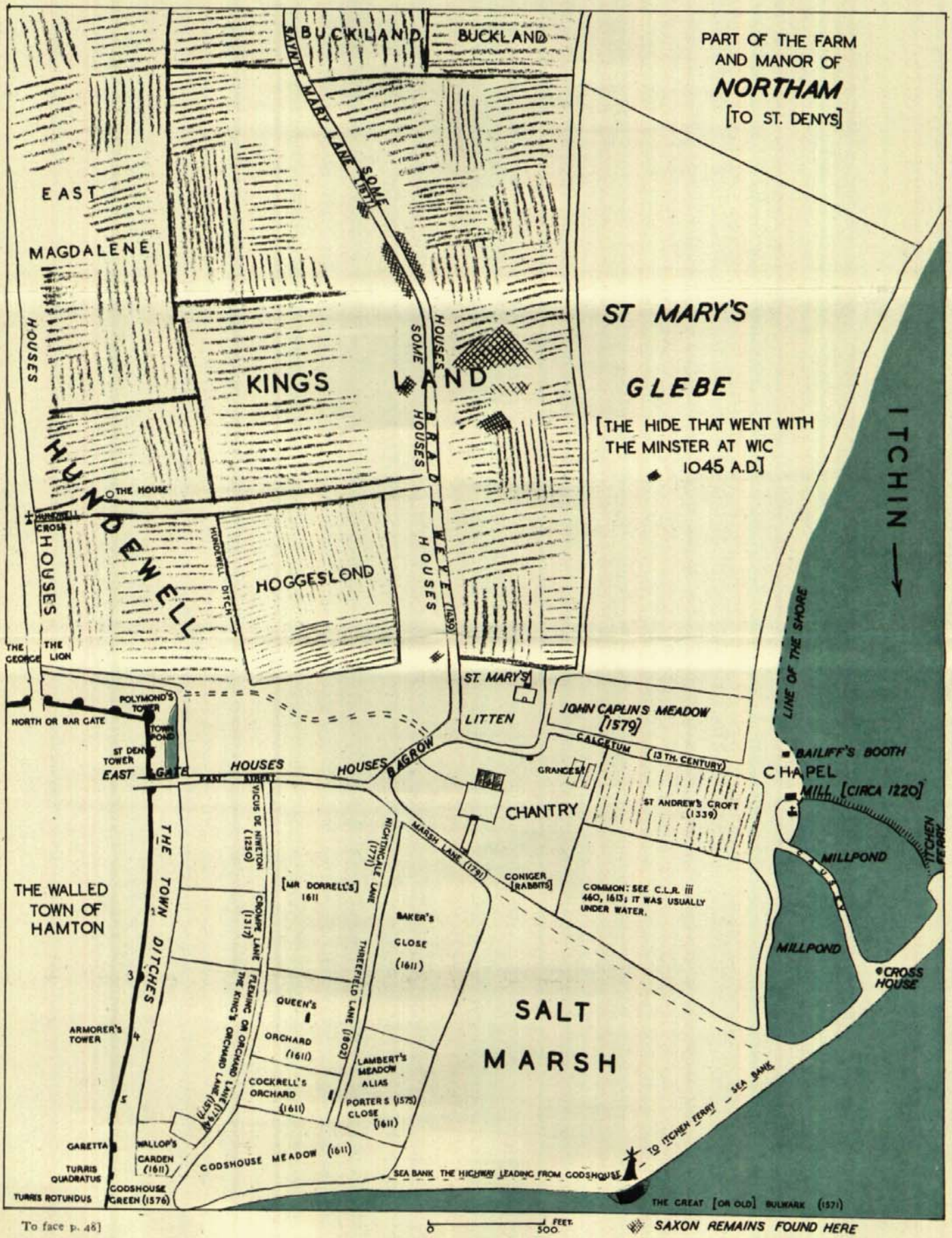
The eastern boundary of the town fields, medieval and also, I suspect, Saxon, was a long headland on which ran a road, now called Derby Road. This road divided the town fields from St. Mary's glebe, and ran from St. Mary's Church to the manor farm of Northam, held by St. Denys. The boundary between the glebe and Northam can be plotted exactly.

The western boundary of the medieval, that is (I repeat) the post-Saxon, fields was the back of the tenements on the east side of Above Bar. Now you will observe that these fields form a long ladder, quite a normal and characteristic feature, one of whose

sides is Above Bar prolonged southwards as High Street, and the other Houndwell ditch, prolonged southwards as Orchard Lane. These two sides run roughly parallel throughout their course of nearly a mile. I suggest that in Saxon times this ladder of acre-strips ran unbroken right down almost to the sea at the southern end of the later walled town, ending somewhere a little north of Godshouse, that the High Street, continued as Above Bar, was an old track skirting the edge of cultivation, and that when the new town (later walled) first grew up, or was laid out by the Normans under the shadow of the Castle, houses began to be built beside this track. East Street was another such track, which began as a field-path along one of the rungs of the ladder, that rung or headland which divided the original Houndwell from the next parcel of furlongs (whose name has not survived) on the south. When the new town grew important, East Street grew in importance too as the main line of communication between the old and new towns; and when the first earthen walls of the town were constructed it could not be ignored, and a gate was made over it, the East Gate. At the same time Houndwell ditch was used, and probably diverted, to fill the town ditch with water. Such a procedure, the diversion of a stream, was normal in medieval times, and was very often adopted to fill the moats round moated homesteads. Note in support of this that Orchard Lane is exactly midway between the High Street and the Salt Marsh; and that the land on either side of the lane has all the appearance of having been originally the southern portion of two ladders.[2] This theory would explain the anomalous position of East Gate, so far north of the mid point in the east wall where one would expect it. East Street is older than East Gate and determined its position; and its inhabitants, living between the old and new town but belonging to neither, inherited, like some hybrids, the undesirable features of both.

This theory about the Saxon fields is not wholly unsupported by evidence. That of topography is I think strong, but it is not conclusive. What was the original purpose of that long line of crosses—those of Houndwell, Padwell, Miles and Burrel stone—if not to mark the western limits of the territory of the Saxon town? And if the two northernmost be eliminated as rather doubtful evidence in this connection, what possible meaning can the cross of Houndwell have had in later medieval times, situated as it is right on the main artery of the medieval town? But if this main artery—High Street and Above Bar—were originally the western boundary of the Saxon town and its fields, everything falls nicely into place. I hope to develop this theme on a later occasion.

2. Evidence in support of this, amounting almost to proof, is the fact that the tenements of Godshouse in the land east of Orchard Lane are described in a document of 1220-30 as acres—half an acre next the Salt Marsh, the acre in which Sweyn built, the acre which I bought from Alice, daughter of Thurstin, etc.


PART OF THE FARM AND MANOR OF NORTHAM [TO ST. DENYS]
BUCKILAND
BUCKLAND
SAINT MARY LANE (1571)
SOME HOUSES
EAST MAGDALENE
HOUSES
KING'S LAND
HUNDEWELL
THE HOUSE
CROSS
HOUSES
HUNDEWELL DITCH
HOGGESLOND
BRADEWEYE (1459)
HOUSES
ST MARY'S GLEBE
[THE HIDE THAT WENT WITH THE MINSTER AT WIC 1045 A.D.]
ITCHIN
LINE OF THE SHORE
THE GEORGE
THE LION
POLYMOND'S TOWER
NORTH OR BAR GATE
TOWN POND
ST DENYS TOWER
EAST GATE
EAST STREET
HOUSES
HOUSES
BAGROW
ST MARY'S
LITTEN
JOHN CAPLIN'S MEADOW (1579)
CALCETUM (13TH. CENTURY)
BAILIFF'S BOOTH
CHAPEL
MILL [CIRCA 1220]
GRANGES
CHANTRY
ST ANDREW'S CROFT (1339)
KITCHEN FERRY
MILLPOND
MARSH LANE (1791)
CONIGER [RABBITS]
COMMON: SEE C.L.R. iii 460, 1613; IT WAS USUALLY UNDER WATER.
MILLPOND
CROSS HOUSE
THE WALLED TOWN OF HAMTON
THE TOWN DITCHES
VICUS DE NIWETON (1250)
NIGHTINGALE LANE (1771)
[MR DORRELL'S] 1611
CROMPE LANE (1317)
BAKER'S CLOSE (1611)
THREEFIELD LANE (1802)
FLEMING OR ORCHARD LANE (1571)
THE KING'S ORCHARD
QUEEN'S ORCHARD (1611)
ARMORER'S TOWER
COCKRELL'S ORCHARD (1611)
LAMBERT'S MEADOW ALIAS PORTER'S CLOSE (1611)
SALT MARSH
GARETTA
WALLOP'S GARDEN (1611)
TURRIS QUADRATUS
TURRIS ROTUNDUS
GODSHOUSE GREEN (1576)
GODSHOUSE MEADOW (1611)
TO ITCHEN FERRY — SEA BANK
SEA BANK THE HIGHWAY LEADING FROM GODSHOUSE
THE GREAT [OR OLD] BULWARK (1571)
0 FEET 500
SAXON REMAINS FOUND HERE

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The Chapel.

I have devoted all this time to the Saxon town and its fields because the Chapel was certainly connected closely with that town. Whether a chapel stood on this site in Saxon times we do not know. The chapel is first mentioned in 1225 ; but it is also mentioned in another document (of about 1220-30), which records a payment to the chapel of a ground rent of 6*d.* for Nos. 101 and 102 High Street (called ' domus Bobber '), and from this we may infer that the chapel had been in existence at least in the 12th century. Yet another document (of about 1220-25) records the grant to Godshouse of half the watermill by the Chapel of Holy Trinity ; the other half was held by John of Lillebonne who at about the same date granted his half to Godshouse, which paid him a rent of a pair of gilded shoes or 6*d.* In return for this ' gift ' the Prior of Godshouse gave him one mark (13*s.* 4*d.*). In this deed the mills are described as on the seashore south of the chapel.

The chapel is next mentioned in 1413 together with the adjacent Chapel of St. Andrew, which gave its name to the field called St. Andrew's Croft on the south side of Chapel Road between Trinity Chapel and St. Mary's. In 1433 we hear of William Jefferey, the hermit of the Chapel of Holy Trinity and Blessed Mary, who is mentioned in connection with the fair. In 1563 the chapel was out of use, and Thomas Gardiner petitioned for leave to purchase " the free Chapel of St. Mary de Graces," late one of the possessions of St. Denys Priory. In 1603 we hear of Michael Netley, then the tenant of the mill, allowing stalls of the fair to be set up *in* the chapel, a procedure which annoyed someone who presented it at the Court Leet. The annoyance was not, however, caused by the act of desecration, but by the fact that Michael Netley paid nothing to the town for so doing ; and it was suggested that he should " compound with the town " for the stalls.

About 1740 the mill was enlarged, and it was perhaps then that the building in which we stand was built, largely out of and at the expense of the chapel. When Englefield wrote his invaluable *Walk* in 1801 there survived " but little of (the chapel's) ancient ornaments, except a plank of a door, and part of an arched window," no doubt that which you see in the wall behind you. In 1841 Bullar, in his edition of the *Walk*, records an angel's head corbel visible on the outside of the building looking eastward. I have been unable to discover this, and it seems to have gone.

Attached to the chapel there seems to have been a cemetery. Englefield records that it was the site of the miller's garden and that bones were still dug up there in his time. I take it that the miller's garden was that shewn on the Corporation map of 1845-6, immediately south of the miller's house, which is the Georgian building next door to the chapel. Englefield also states that about 1770, in digging near the garden for the purpose of building the *Renown*

frigate, a skeleton and a ring were found, and that about 1750 a large and curious silver ring was found in the field opposite the miller's house, by which presumably he means St. Andrew's Croft. The ring was then in the possession of a certain Mr. Arthur T Hammond and was engraved in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November 1802, but Englefield could make nothing of the inscription there indicated.

The building seems to have consisted of a single room oriented east and west, with a doorway, later blocked up, and a window inserted at the top. There are also two walls of a building running northwards from the chapel; the original masonry survives at the bottom and seems to be medieval. In the western wall on the inside are the remains of a fireplace over whose opening is a large wooden beam. This may date from the reconstruction of about 1740. During the war the building was shattered by a bomb; and the opportunity was taken of making a plan of it which you see on the wall. This was done by the Ancient Monuments Branch of the Ministry of Works, to whose interest in Southampton we owe so much. During the war I took photographs of the outside of the building and of the house next door; and last summer I took some more of the interior and of the doorway and window. What is left of the chapel and its accretions is therefore as fully recorded as it can be; I am sure you will all join with me in expressing the hope that, if the walls, which are so extensively damaged, have to be removed, it may be possible to take down the doorway and window, stone by stone, and erect them in a place of safety. I am sure that, in that event, the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments would gladly assist with technical advice. Chapel has so many associations with the earliest history of the town that its scant remains are well worthy of preservation for posterity.

It remains to give some account of the mill and the fair.

The Mill.

The mill was a watermill and therefore tidal. The motive power was derived from the inflow and outflow of water between the mill-ponds and the estuary. There were two ponds, and they must have been in existence when the mill was first mentioned in 1220-30. They were formed by constructing a bank between the end of the shingle spit where the ferry started and the chapel. The two ponds were separated by a causeway along which ran the road from Chapel to the ferry. We do not know how many mills there were originally; there must have been two and may not have been more. They were no doubt situated at the north end of the ponds near the chapel. They are not mentioned, so far as I have discovered, during the 14th and 15th centuries, and as they do not appear in the Rentals of Godshouse, presumably they ceased to be held by

it.[3] It is not easy to disentangle references to this mill from those to the many others in the neighbourhood ; for there was a fulling-mill in Saltmarsh, a horse-mill near Godshouse and a mill over the town ditch there, and a windmill on the Great or Old Bulwark, which was on the site now occupied by the railway platform and disembarkation offices of the Havre and Channel Island boats, opposite the King Canute hotel. There may have been more. In 1605 the town, which had then acquired the chapel mill, granted a lease (not for the first time) of the salt-water pond, field, dock and land called the Mill-pond near the chapel to Michael Netley for a rent of 5*s.* ; and there was added a covenant to maintain the stoney causeway adjoining to the pond (presumably along the sea-bank on the east) and the sluice or trunk under the causeway. In 1601 Michael Netley was presented in the Court Leet for obstructing the perambulation of the town bounds with a " great store of timber." The perambulators " had no passage that way as in times past, but very dangerous for our horses " and the " example was so odious and the abuse offered unto Mr. Mayor and the Aldermen so intolerable " that he was amerced in 20*s.*, and ordered to remove his enclosure upon pain of 40*s.* One suspects that there may have been personal animus behind this—and many other—presentments. A note in the margin of the record states that " the poor man confessed his error, protesting it was not done wilfully but forgetfully, and desires moderation of his pain " (*i.e.* fine). In 1615 he was presented for not shutting down his sluice, with the result that the salt water overflowed ground near the chapel which was a common. This was what was called at the beginning of the 16th century the Little Marsh, at which date it was awarded to the town as the result of an arbitration which settled the claims of the town and Godshouse respectively. In 1617 the mill and its appurtenances were leased to a certain John Browne, whose " miller at the chapel " is mentioned in the following year. There the recorded history of the mill ends, but there are doubtless documents amongst the municipal archives which would carry its history down to the 19th century. I would only add that the place where the mill-wheel stood can still be seen in the next room.

Before leaving the mill I must mention some references to the mill-ponds, because they illustrate very nicely the continuity of our history. In 1603 the Court Leet Record mentions a saw-pit near the Cross-house by Itchen ferry, and in 1609 Alderman Cornish was presented because his " masts and spars lay in the ditches or ponds near the chapel and are dangerous to the sluices which they obstruct." On Milne's map of Southampton (1791) the inner or western pond is called " Timber Pond " ; in 1844 they are both called timber-ponds, and the mill is not named on the map. There

3. The Chapel and St. Andrew's Croft certainly belonged to St. Denys, and the mill may have gone with them and passed to the town at the Dissolution.

was also in 1844 a shipyard on the beach opposite the Cross-house. The ponds were evidently used at the beginning of the 17th century to float the timber of some boat-builder, presumably Alderman Cornish, whose business may have been established there before his time, but of this there is no evidence. At some date after the middle of the 19th century the inner pond was filled in and there is still to-day a flourishing saw-mill there, as those who go along Crosshouse Terrace with their eyes open on a windy day will discover.

Before coming to the fair, I am tempted to make a short digression. It concerns " a plot of ground surrounded by the sea in the parish of St. Mary's, containing by estimation three acres near the chapel called Our Lady Chapel," and in 1616 it was let by the town to Hugh Darvall for a rent of £3. The summary of the lease states that there was on it a house lately erected for making of salt, but the Lease-ledger adds a covenant to make within two years a building suitable for making " Bay and white salt." There can be no doubt that this island was a piece of the foreshore on the east bank of the Itchen almost opposite Chapel and just south of the yacht-building yard. Here the 25in. map marks two islands called " Saltings," whose combined area is 3·095 acres (parcels numbered 241 and 267 on the edition of 1933).

The Fair.

The earliest charter licensing the fair was one of 1400, which is mentioned in 1646 but is no longer to be found. But the fair must surely be much older. It must have begun when the place where we now are was the scene of busy people disembarking goods and chattels from ships that traded along the coast and across the Channel. Here, at the junction of land and sea routes, was the obvious place for a mart, a *mercimonium* in fact. For it must be remembered that in early times there were very many things which one could not buy in shops. The whole basis of life was then different. Many things were made in the home, or by specialist craftsmen locally. What people needed was chiefly the raw materials, and these they got at the fairs. The published accounts give no hint of what was bought and sold at Trinity Fair, but the long and detailed account of the far more famous fair on St. Giles's Hill, Winchester, published in the *Victoria County History* (Hants V, 34-41) gives some idea of the commodities there exchanged. Cloth and wool were certainly sold in large quantities, and Toulouse woad for dyeing. Amongst the other goods were French wine, Cornish tin, lead, spices and silks from the East, Spanish iron, brass-ware from the Low Countries and the Rhineland. We may suspect that the basins, ewers, coffers and such like that are mentioned in almost every medieval will were mostly bought at fairs. " Strange

beasts and birds, apes, bears and ferrets were also brought for sale on St. Giles's Down."

The Chapel fair was opened, says Englefield, who wrote when it was still functioning, by the Mayor and bailiffs with much ceremony on the Saturday before Trinity Sunday. The Mayor erects a pole with a large globe fixed to the top of it, near the miller's house ; and the bailiff then takes possession of the fair, as chief magistrate in its precinct during the fair, and invites the Mayor and his suite to a collation in his tent. He appoints a guard of halberdiers, who keep the peace by day, and watch the fair by night. On the following Wednesday at noon the Mayor dissolves the fair by taking down the pole and globe, or rather ordering it to be taken down, which till lately was done by the young men of the town, who fired at it with single balls till it was destroyed, or they were tired with the sport. Probably it formerly was a mark for the less dangerous dexterity of the young archers.

Bullar in 1840 noted that in that year the ceremony began to be disused. It marked the end of a period and an epoch—the period of Southampton's gay life as a spa, which was killed by the docks, and the epoch of pre-industrial England. Up till then traditions of craftsmanship still lingered on from the Middle Ages and even before. During the next few decades they were to be overwhelmed by a flood of machine-made goods. People then no longer needed the raw materials they used to buy at the fair, because they could buy the ready-made articles in shops. The process of decay began of course during the 18th century, but, as the fine porticos and shop-fronts of the early 19th century show, there was still plenty of scope for craftsmanship of the best kind. The lack of craftsmanship to-day needs no emphasis. It is worth recalling that this great change has taken place almost within living memory. There were amongst us here in Southampton recently quite a number of old people who might well, as children, have been present at the last Trinity Fair.*

* After the reading of this paper a member of the Society informed the lecturer that he had himself attended Trinity Fair when it was held, not at Chapel but on a neighbouring site.