

Hasted's Kent

Wouldham in 1798

Edward Hasted, *The history and topographical survey of the county of Kent*, second edition, volume 4 (Canterbury, 1798), pages 399–408

WOLDHAM.

NEXT to the parish of St. Margaret and liberty of Rochester, southward, lies the parish of Woldham, written in the Saxon charters, Wuldaham, in the succeeding Latin ones, Vuldeham, and in the record of Domesday, Oldeham.

This place is supposed to take its name from the Saxon words wolde, a plain open down or hill, free from trees and wood, and ham, a village or dwelling; in the like manner as those large open downs in the north are still called wolds, in opposition to weald, a low woody region./a

It is likewise described in several later grants by the name of Woldeham Monachorum, from its belonging to the monks of Rochester.

THE PARISH of Woldham lies on the eastern bank of the river Medway, something more than two miles from the city of Rochester, in a situation of a very different aspect, and far less pleasant than that of the country last described, though so few miles distant from it. The village having the church in it, lies at the foot of the hills, very low, almost close to the river Medway (which is the western boundary of this parish) and from its contiguity to the marshes is accounted far from being healthy. In it there is a handsome sashed brick house, named Woldham house, built by Captain Robert Trevor, of the navy, since the residence of George Guy, esq. About a mile northward, in a situation equally low, and about the same distance from the river, is the house of Starkey's, which, though now only a farm-house, has still a handsome appearance, being a strong building of stone, with gothic windows and door cases, of ashlar stone. Hence, as well as from the

/a Lamb. Peramb. p. 445. Camd. p. 405.

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back of the village, the hills rise to a great height eastward, as far as Nashenden, being mostly unclosed, open downs, the soil of which is chalk, much covered with flints, being poor and unfertile, a dreary country.

About forty years ago, in digging a trench from Woldham house up to the open downs, there were found several instruments of an antique form like a wedge, or axe, usually called celts, which were chiefly of brass.

This parish ought antiently to have contributed to the repair of the fourth pier of Rochester bridge./b

ETHELBERT, king of Kent, in the year 751, first gave Vuldeham to the church of St. Andrew, in Rochester; but sometime after it was taken from it, and several kings possessed it, one after the other, till the time of king Edmund, who began his reign in 941, of whom one Ælfstan Heahstanine bought it, at the price of one hundred and twelve marcs of gold, and thirty pounds in money, on whose death, Ælfege, his son, succeeded to it, who by will made in the presence of archbishop Dunstan, about the year 970, made a distribution of all his effects, and devised one part to Christ-church, in Canterbury, one part to the church of Rochester, and the remaining third part to his own wife. Notwithstanding which, one Leofsunu, who had married his nephew's widow, endeavoured to set aside

this disposition, as well as the archbishop's testimony in relation to it, and entered on them, but they were recovered from him in a solemn trial held at Erhede by the archbishop, for this purpose. After which, on the division of these estates, Vuldeham seems to have been part of that share of them allotted to the church of St. Andrew, in Rochester. King Ethelbert, in the year 995, confirmed Wuldaham, which then contained six mansæ, which the Kentish men called sulings, to St. Andrew's and bishop Godwin.

/b Lambarde's Perambulations, p. 421.

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In the book of Domesday, Woldham is thus described, under the general title of the bishop of Rochester's lands:

The same bishop (of Rochester) holds Oldeham. It was taxed for six sulings in the time of king Edward the Confessor, and now for three. The arable land is five carucates. In demesne there are two, and eighteen villeins, with sixteen borderers having six carucates. There are six servants, and one fishery, and sixty acres of meadow. Wood for the pannage of twenty hogs. There is a church. In the time of king Edward the Confessor, and afterwards, it was worth eight pounds, now twelve pounds.

Bishop Gundulph, who was elected to the see of Rochester in the time of the Conqueror, on the division of the revenues of his church, allotted this manor, with its appendages, to the monks, to the use of their refectory, in lieu of Freckenham, in Suffolk, which he took in exchange for it, chusing rather, as the latter lay at so remote a distance from Rochester, that himself and his successors should be put to the inconvenience of going there, than that the monks, or the poor of that parish, should be yearly harrassed in carrying their corn so far,^{/c} but bishop Gilbert de Glanvill, on his coming to the see of Rochester in 1185, claiming this manor with its appendages, among others, which had been allotted to them by bishop Gundulph, as belonging to the maintenance of his table, the monks were at last forced to submit. In consequence of which, though he took the church of Woldham from them, yet they continued in possession of the manor till the dissolution of the priory in the 32d year of king Henry VIII.

In the reigns of king Edward I. and II. the bishop of Rochester claimed several liberties, as belonging to all the lands and fees of his church, as did the

^{/c} See the confirmations of this manor to the monks of Rochester in Dugd. Mon. vol. i. p. 29, and vol. iii. p. 4.

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prior of Rochester in the 21st year of the former reign in this manor,^{/d} both equally the same as has been already more fully mentioned under Frindsbury.^{/e}

King Edward I. in his 23d year, granted to the prior and convent free warren in all their demesne lands of this manor; so that no one should hunt or take any thing on them which belonged to warren, without their licence, on forfeiture of ten pounds.^{/f}

The manor of Woldham, on the dissolution of the

priory of Rochester in the 32d year of Henry VIII. was surrendered, with the other possessions of it, into the king's hands, who, in his 33d year settled it on his new-founded dean and chapter of Rochester, with whom the inheritance of it continues at this time.

There is a court leet and court baron held for this manor.

The lessee of it, under the dean and chapter of Rochester, is Mr. Iden Henham.

In the Customale Roffense there is frequent mention made of a water mill in Woldham, belonging to the above manor, and the custom was, that once a year every house was obliged to send one man for a day, to clear the passage, ditch, and mill-pond, that the water might come well to turn the mill; and there were two particular acres of land, the occupiers of which were to clean the ditch, which led from the river to the mill-pond.

There were several small parcels of land granted at several times to different persons by the prior and convent of Rochester, lying in Magna and Parva Woldham, being two divisions in this parish, a more particular account of which may be seen in the Registrum Roffense.

/d See Registrum Roffense, p. 86, 110, 111, 112, 663.

/e See Frindsbury, in the 3d vol. of this history, p. 530.

/f Reg. Roff. p. 338. Rot. Cart. ejus an. N. 7.

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RINGS is a manor here, a small part of which extends itself into the adjoining parish of St. Margaret, in Rochester. It was formerly in the possession of Robert de Woldham, after which it became separated into moieties, one of which became part of the estate of the eminent family of Cosington, of Cosington, in Aylesford, and the other became the property of Carter. From the family of Cosington that moiety passed by sale in the reign of Henry VI. to William Whorne, afterwards knighted, and lord-mayor of London, who built Whorne's-place, in Cookstone, where he resided; and the other moiety passed about the same time to Laurence; they, by a mutual deed of conveyance, alienated their joint interest in this manor to William Hadde, of Meriam-court, in Frinsted, who in the 36th year of that reign, gave it to his second son, Mr. John Hadde, whose descendant sold it to Thomas Roydon, esq. of Roydon-hall, in East Peckham, who, among others, in the 31st year of king Henry VIII. procured his estates to be disgavelled by act of parliament. From Roydon this manor passed to Brockhull, of Aldington, in Thurnham, whose descendant, Henry Brockhull, alienated it to Sir John Leveson, alias Lewson, of Whorne's-place, in Cookstone; after which it passed, in like manner as that seat by sale to the family of Marsham, in which it has continued down to the right hon. Charles lord Romney, the present possessor of it.

STARKEYS is a manor here, lying in that district of this parish called Little Woldham, which was formerly known by the name of the manor of Lyttlyhall and Woldham.

In the reign of king Edward III. it seems to have

been in the possession of Richard Bysset, who held it as one quarter of a knight's fee in Parva Woldham,^{/h} and

^{/g} Philipott, p. 375. See Cookstone, vol. iii. p. 393.

^{/h} Book of Knight's Fees, in the Exchequer.

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afterwards passed it away to Henry de Bokeland, who alienated it to Henry Newman, and he held it in the 20th year of that reign of the bishop of Rochester as above-mentioned. His descendant, Henry Newman, conveyed it to Humphry Starkey, descended from the Starkeys, of Wrenbury, and Oulton, in Cheshire, and bore for his arms, Sable, a stork proper, who in the 12th year of king Edward IV. was made recorder of London, and in the 2d year of king Richard III. chief baron of the exchequer, having been knighted before.^{/i}

He built a good house here, being a large strong edifice of stone, tho' much larger formerly than it is at present, together with a handsome chapel on this manor, a fragment of the latter only being now left at the east angle of the house, which, from that and his residence here acquired the name of Starkeys.^{/k} He died possessed of this manor, and lies buried in St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, in London, leaving four daughters his coheirs; and on the division of their inheritance, this manor fell to the share of Sir John Rainsford, who had married Anne, the youngest of them. His son, of the same name, was a person much in favour with king Henry VIII. who made him a privy counsellor.^{/l} He alienated this estate to Lambe, who passed it away to Sir John Leweson, alias Lewson, from which name it was sold, together with the manor of Rings before mentioned, in the reign of king Charles I. to John Marsham, esq. whose descendant, the right hon. Charles lord Romney, is the present possessor of this manor and estate.

SELLERS is a manor, which lies partly in this parish and partly in Burham, which with the mansion of it, called the Hall, alias Woldham hall, was held in the

^{/i} Strype's Stow's Survey, book v. p. 160.

^{/k} Philipott, p. 374. There is a view of this house in Biblioth. Topog. Brit. No. vi. pt. 1.

^{/l} See Morant's Essex, vol. i. p. 461.

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teign of king John, as appears by the inquisitions returned into the treasury in the 12th and 13th years of that reign, by Robert de Woldham Magna, as one quarter of a knight's fee, of the bishop of Rochester. Soon after which the possessors of this manor were called, from it, At-Hall, and in Latin deeds, De Aula. Robert Le Neve was owner of it in the reign of king Edward I. and then held it by the above tenure. His heirs sold it to John Atte Celar, written also At Celere, in Edward III's reign, whose descendant Warine Atte Celar, or De Celario, held this manor in the 30th year of it, and continuing in his descendants, it at length acquired the name of Sellers, as they now began to spell themselves. They bore for their arms, Argent, a saltier between four mullets gules; which arms were painted in a window of this church, and remained very lately in a window of the mansion-house of this manor.

The manor of Sellers remained in this family, till a female heir, about the reign of king Henry VII. carried it in marriage to John Beuly, gent. who bore for his arms, Argent, a chevron between three griffins heads erased, sable, and continuing in his descendants it gained the name of Beuly's-court, though the mansion-house itself retained that of Hall-place, alias Woldham hall. In this name of Beuly it continued till the year 1693, when it was alienated to Manley, who bore for their arms, Argent, a sinister hand couped, sable, and were descended from Thomas Manley, of Chester, in which name it remained down to Mr. William Manley, who resided in it and died in 1779, and this manor became the property of his three sons and coheirs in gavelkind, from whom it was afterwards sold to Joseph Brooke, esq. on the death of whose widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Brooke, in 1796, it came by his will to the

Stowe's Survey, book ii. p. 159. Several of this family lie buried in Alhallows Staining church, London.

See Herald's off. D. 18, fol. 63. b.

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Rev. John Kenward Shaw, now of Town Malling, who has taken the name of Brooke, and is the present possessor of this estate. There is a court baron held for this manor.

There are no parochial charities.

WOLDHAM is within the ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION of the diocese and deanry of Rochester.

The church, which is a small building, with a low square tower, on which was formerly a spire steeple, is situated at the south-west extremity of the village, and is dedicated to All Saints. The steeple of this church, and much of the fabric, owe their original to the liberality of Stephen Slegge, of this parish, who was sheriff of Kent in the 20th year of king Henry VI. and gave by his will in the 36th year of it, one hundred marks to be expended on it. It was formerly an appendage to the manor, and as such allotted by bishop Gundulph, in the division which he made of the possessions of his church, to the share of the monks of St. Andrew's; but bishop Gilbert de Glanvill, though he suffered them to retain the manor, yet he wrested this church out of their hands, and it has ever since remained in the possession of the bishops of Rochester, his successors.

Richard, bishop of Rochester, in the 9th year of king Edward I. at the instance of the prior and convent of Rochester, made enquiry by inquisition as to the method which the monks used in taking their portions of tithes within their manors, and what part of them was allowed to the several parish churches, by which it appeared, that in their manor of Woldham, the parish church, and the abbess of Malling took the whole of the tithes of sheaves only, but of other small tithes, it did not nor ever used to take any thing; and he decreed, that the parish church should be content with the tithes of the sheaves of every kind of corn only. All which was confirmed by John, archbishop of Canterbury, by inspeximus next year, anno 1281.

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THE PORTION OF TITHES belonging to the abbey of Malling, was given to it by Ralf de Woldham, /o being the third part of his tithes of corn, and two parts of the tithes of his demesne in this parish, and Robert de Woldham gave the whole of his tithes of Parva Woldham to it. In the 15th year of king Edward I. this portion of tithes was valued at eight marcs.

An inquisition was made by Thomas de Alkham, and the tenants of Woldham, concerning these tithes in this parish, belonging to the abbess in the 26th year of king Edward III.

In the Registrum Roffense, p. 694, is a particular account of the portions of sheaves, which the abbess took on the several lands in this parish, the names of which, of the owners and occupiers, and the measurement of them are therein mentioned, in which in some, the abbess had two sheaves, and the rector one; in others she had but one, and the rector two; in some she had the tenth sheaf with the rector, and in the rest therein mentioned, she had all the tenth of sheaves.

Much dispute having arisen between the rector of this parish and the rector of Snodland, the opposite parish on the other side of the Medway, concerning the tithes of fish, caught within the bounds of this parish by the parishioners of the latter, it was submitted to the final decree of John, bishop of Rochester, who by his instrument, anno 1402, decreed that for the future the parishioners of Snodland, being inhabitants of it at any time going out from thence to fish, with their boats, nets, and other instruments necessary for that purpose, might, either by themselves or by others, draw their nets, and take fish beyond the stream of the main river to the shore of the water situated within the bounds and limits of this parish; that one moiety of the tithes of the fish so caught should belong to the rector

/o See the confirmations of this gift in Reg. Roff. p. 480, 481, 486.

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of Snodland for the time being, and the other moiety to the rector of Woldham, to be paid to them by the fishers, without any diminution whatsoever./p

The church of Woldham is a discharged living in the king's books, of the clear yearly certified value of 30l. the yearly tenths of which are 1l. 8s. 7³/₄d. This rectory, in 1716, was augmented by queen Anne's bounty, the sum of 200l. having been contributed to it by different persons. In 1708, here were sixty-five communicants. The bishop of Rochester is patron of this rectory.

CHURCH OF WOLDHAM.

PATRONS,

Or by whom presented. RECTORS.

Robert Estre, instituted anno 20

Edward I./q

Bishop of Rochester. John Brokholls, in 1402./r

Francis Cacot, A. M. 1630.

Isaac Goslin, resigned 1689./s

Thomas Stapeley, obt. Oct. 30,
1689./t

..... Alne, resigned 1690.

William Ward, obt. June 1722.
Abraham Birch, 1728.
Anthony Dennis, B. A. instituted
Feb. 14, 1728, obt. June 24,
1775.
Peter Rashleigh, A. M. 1775, re=
signed 1788./u
John Leach, A. M. 1788, obt.
June 16, 1791./w
Samuel Browne, A. M. ind. 1791.
Present rector.

/p Reg. Roff. p. 605, 609. Steven's
Monast. vol. i. p. 455. Ect. Thes. p.
386.

/q He was king's chaplain, and be=
fore rector of Henley upon Thames,
which he resigned. See Prynne's Rec.
p. 481.

/r Reg. Roff. p. 605.

/s He refused taking the oaths to
king William and queen Mary.

/t Also vicar of Burham.

/u In 1781, a dispensation passed for
his holding this rectory with Barking
vicarage, in Essex, with which he now
holds the rectory of Southfleet.

/w And vicar of Halling.