

Thorpe 1788 John Thorpe, *Custumale Roffense*,
... to which are added, ... some account of the
remains of churches, chapels, chantries, etc. ...
in the said diocese (London, 1788), 147--52.

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ROCHESTER.

THIS city, in the time of the Romans, was one of their stipendiary and principal stations. In the Itinerary of Antoninus, it is called Durobrivis; and the termination of the present name implies they had here a Castrum, and pass over the river Medway. This is confirmed by the great number of their coins frequently digged up in the Castle-Gardens, &c. One Cradock, who formerly kept the King's-Head-Inn, had a small bag-full, which the gardeners, at times, carried to him for a little drink; and which I would have purchased, but he would not part with them. John Sparks, Esq. senior alderman of the city, has a large collection, and some are in my possession. They consist chiefly of the emperors, Vespasian, Trajan, Adrianus,

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Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, many of Constantius, and Constantine the Great, &c. There have likewise been found at different times, in the gardens near the castle, and in St. Margaret's, a fibula vestiaria in silver, and many other valuable relics.

The ebbing and flowing of the tide, and its rapidity near the bridge, have in great length of time washed away and gained much on the Castle-Bank; and, within my memory, large portions of the wall and out-works of the castle have

thereby fallen down. I have formerly seen, at tide of ebb, in walking on the shore from the Bridge-stairs towards Scagg's-Key, fragments of urns, burnt bones, pieces of charcoal, and other Roman exuvia, sticking in the said bank.

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And many years ago, in sinking or enlarging a cellar at one of the houses (I think) on Bully-Hill, several Roman earthen vessels were discovered, which were presented to my father, and are now in my possession (see plate XXXII. and are as follow.

Nº 1. is the largest urn, of a dark or lead-colour, in height one foot one inch; and in girt or circumference, taken in the most gibbous part, two feet seven inches. It contained ashes and bones, as part of a tibia, and os humeri, &c. It was customary with the Romans to deposite, with the principal urn, other different vessels of a smaller size.

Nº 2. is in height eight inches, and one foot five inches round.

Nº. 3. is in height seven inches, and one foot three inches and a quarter in circumference. This and the foregoing are of coarse red earth; and, by the form of their handles, seem to have been libatory vessels.

Nº 4. is of red earth, close at top, with a handle in shape of a basket. The height is four inches and a quarter, and in girt one foot. The aperture is very small and round, and rises about an inch on one side of the handle.

Nº 5. is in height seven inches, and one foot seven inches and a quarter round. It is of a bluish, or rather lead-colour, with a spout at the side in form of a syrup-pot.

Nº 6. was somewhat shaped like a flask,

but round with a long neck, and glazed of an olive-colour curiously ornamented with small yellow circles. I could not take the measurement, as it is now, by accident, broke in pieces.

Nº 7. is a small urn of a lead-colour, in height seven inches, and one foot three inches in girt.

Nº 8. is of a singular form, and fine shining black, with a sharp circumference; and tapering downward with a very narrow foot. The upper part is with an easy bend, ornamented as far as the neck with four slight indented circles. It has a wide mouth, and seems by the appearance within side to have been of the urn kind, and to have contained ashes. It is in height six inches and a half, and one foot four inches in girt.

Nº 9. is of an olive-colour, ornamented with small yellow circles like number 6.

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In height four inches and a half, and eleven in girt.

Nº 10. is of a dark lead-colour, in height five inches, and in circumference one foot one inch and a quarter.

The two last resemble small pickle-jars.

Nº 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. are pateræ of different shapes and sizes, of the fine coral-coloured ware.

There were some other vessels, which were broke and destroyed by the labourers in digging.

It is plain, that the Romans had the art of glazing vessels in their potteries; and it is most likely they used the powder of lead for that purpose, as we do at present.

There are many reasons which make it probable, that the first bridge over the river Medway, between Rochester and

Stroud, was erected there in the reign of king Edgar, about a hundred years before the Conquest, by the king, Dunstan then archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of Rochester, and other great owners of lands in the neighbouring parts of the county; who settled and subjected large tracts of land and manors, then in demesne, to keep in repair the several piers and portions of it which they had built; and which lands, commonly called the Contributory Lands, were afterwards constantly assessed to maintain and support the parts or portions of the bridge, to which they were limited and assigned as often as there was occasion.

But this old bridge being grown ruinous, and the duty of supporting it very burdensome to the owners of these lands, Sir Robert Knolles and John lord Cobham, in the reign of king Richard II. having compassion on this their insupportable charge, did at their own great expence build the present new bridge. Whereupon an act of parliament was procured 21st of Richard II. to make the same lands, which were bound to repair the old bridge, to be in like manner bound to repair the new bridge; and a patent was obtained 22 Richard II. which was afterwards confirmed by Parliament 9th of Henry V. for incorporating the wardens and commonalty of the said contributory lands, with licence to receive and hold in mortmain lands and tenements to the value of two hundred pounds per annum

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in aid of supporting the said bridge: and in a few years after, such considerable estates, commonly called "the lands proper," were given, by way of charity, by the said lord Cobham and other benefactors, for the maintenance of it, that there

was little or no occasion to make assessments on the contributory lands.

But in succeeding times the wardens, continuing in office several years together, and their accounts not regularly audited, and having more regard to private interest than the good of the bridge, let leases of those estates to their friends and servants for long terms of years, and at such low rents, that the revenues of the bridge (the charge of all materials and workmanship being then very much increased to what it had been formerly) were not sufficient to support it; but it was in great danger of falling and being intirely ruined.

Whereupon, in the reign of queen Elizabeth, a commission was issued out of chancery, appointing and empowering commissioners to inquire into the causes of the decay of the bridge and the state of the revenues of it. And Sir Roger Manwood (then one of the judges of the Common Pleas, and afterwards chief baron of the Exchequer) finding that the estates were given to the wardens and commonalty of the contributory lands, but that the wardens alone had let those lands, without the name or consent of the commonalty, acquainted Sir Christopher Wray (then chief justice of the King's Bench) therewith, who on Tuesday November 29, 1575, giving it as his opinion, that the leases were insufficient in law, the lessees consented to quit possession, or to take new leases at advanced rents. And a session of parliament then coming on, held by adjournment at Westminster February 8th following, Sir Roger Manwood, by his application and interest, and at his own expence, procured the act to be passed, of 18 Elizabeth, for the perpetual maintenance of the bridge in order to settle and secure the revenues of it, in a better manner, for the use and benefit of

it, for the time to come.

By this act the two wardens are to be chosen annually, on a day prefixt, and not to continue in office above one year. Twelve assistants are added to the wardens, as a restraint on them in letting

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leases, &c. The wardens shall give bond, to account for all fines, rents, revenues, &c. They shall deliver up an account in writing, and on oath, of all their receipts, payments, &c. No lease shall be a sufficient lease in law, unless made under the several restrictions and provisoes therein specified. And in regard to the then present farmers or tenants, whose leases were at that time declared to be invalid, they shall have the preference in taking new leases, provided they will give, for the profit of the bridge, as much as any other, bona fide, will. At that time most of the estates were raised to double, and many of them to more than treble, the rents they were let at before. I shall only instance, among several, the manor of Rose-Court in the Isle of Greane, from seven pounds per annum to twenty-four pounds eleven shillings and four pence. This estate was at that time in lease to Sir Roger Manwood, who, notwithstanding he was a tenant to the bridge, procured the leases to be dissolved, and the act of parliament, as above mentioned, to be passed, in order to prevent the like abuses for the future.

Thus, in this reign, by the help of large voluntary contributions made by the principal owners of contributory lands residing within the county, and by raising the rents of the lands proper, by virtue of this act, to their true and full value, the bridge was retrieved out of the ruinous and dangerous condition it was in at that

time. But this, though a public act, not being continued in the printed body of statutes after the reign of queen Elizabeth, and the wardens and assistants being generally persons of eminent families and large estates, living at a distance from the bridge, taking themselves to be more in places of reputation than places of trust, and meeting not oftener at most than twice in the year, and then not having time sufficient for the due performance of the business of the bridge, but leaving in great measure the whole management as well of the estates as of the works of it to their clerks and workmen, it gradually and insensibly came to pass, in a number of years, that many of the abuses, which this act was intended to prevent, had again crept in and prevailed: so that the rents were very unequal; some of the lands and tenements of the bridge

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being let at near their full, some at two thirds, some at half, and others at one third, or less, of their improved value. Which inequality and under-value seemed to have been occasioned by renewing leases some years before the expiration of their respective terms (to prevent, as may be presumed, competitors), and at an increase of rent not equal to the increase of the true yearly value of the lands. All which abuses and irregularities, my father, as is well known, was indefatigable in redressing; and by his industry and labour the affairs of that corporation were brought into a much more regular and laudable way of acting than formerly, by his strenuously opposing the corrupt practice of making a private advantage of a public charity. He was many years, and to the time of his death, one of the assistants; and in the year 1733 he was

elected one of the wardens, with Thomas Dalyson, junior, of Plaxstool, Esq. which trust he executed with justice equal to his judgement. He made a compleat collection of materials for illustrating and ascertaining the history and antiquities of the present bridge, not only from antient historians, but from patents, statutes, original grants, confirmations, licences of mortmain, inquisitions, surveys, decrees, and other authentic evidences relating to it, and the chantry there founded by the lord Cobham, as I have elsewhere observed /*. He likewise drew up a series of the wardens to the year 1575, and of the wardens and assistants from that to his time. In short, he had the chief management of the affairs concerning this bridge; and may almost be said to have been the restorer of it, as his MSS. now in my possession, sufficient for a large volume, would fully evince. But to give a further account of it, and this well-constituted incorporated body, would be here too prolix; and indeed foreign to my purpose. I shall therefore only give a brief description of the chapel at the east end of it; which was founded and endowed by the said great baron John de Cobham. In a late History of Rochester, it is asserted, that Sir Robert Knolles, was the sole founder of the bridge; which surely is a mistake. He and lord Cobham built it jointly, at their own expence; and therefore, I think, may both justly be

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called founders of it. But Sir Robert, though one of the founders, giving no estate to the support and endowment of it, cannot (as I apprehend) be so properly called, in the now and common received sense of the word, to have been a benefactor to it: whereas the lord Cobham,

though likewise a founder, not only gave the first but the largest estate of any person to the support and maintenance of it; and therefore I believe may properly be said to be also benefactor primarius. The same History, p. 208, seems to infer that there are no remains of the antient chapel, in these words -- "On the ground where the chapel stood, a very neat stone building was erected by the wardens of the bridge in 1735. The upper part of this building is termed the bridge chamber, and it is here the wardens hold their meetings. On the front of the building are the arms of several benefactors to the bridge." The new building, mentioned in this superficial account, is the record-room, in which the archives of the bridge are kept; and over the gate-way adjoining is the audit-room, where the wardens and assistants have their meetings, and is commonly called the bridge-chamber, in which is a door leading to the record-room.

The chapel ceased to be a place of divine worship, not by legal dissolution, but by disuse. For I find, by a plea in the Exchequer (a copy of which is in my possession), that, anno 19 Elizabeth, the queen's attorney general sued the wardens of the bridge for the sum of 513*l.* being 18*l.* per ann. (which used to be paid to the three chaplains) for twenty-eight years and half then last past, but at that time presumed to be forfeited and due to the queen by virtue of the act 1 Edward VI. for dissolving chantries &c. But it not appearing to the jury that any service had been performed there, or stipend paid to any chaplain or chantry priest for officiating there, for five years next before the passing that act (according to the limitation therein specified), a verdict was given for the wardens.

In the year 1776 I took the measure-

ment of this chapel, and found the contents to be as follow:

Length on the south side, under the gate-way, sixty feet.

/* Regist. Roff. p. III.

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Breadth at the east end, next the Crown-Inn yard, twenty-five feet, and the same in front at the west end, under the record-room.

It is built with rough stones; and the large antient window at the east end is now stopped up, and two modern inserted in its room; but a portion of the moulding is still visible. The same may be observed of the old window on the south side next the gate-way, now likewise filled up, and two others put in. See plate II. fig. 3.

The chapel is now made use of as a dwelling-house, and has been so for many years past. The house adjoining on the north side, was the residence of the chaplains, and is still called the chapel-house in the leases, copies of which I have by me. The houses on the opposite side were taken down some years since, in order to widen Chapel-Lane, and give a better entrance into the city. In the room of which, is a handsome parapet with iron rails, which give a fine opening to the river.

In the Antiquarian Repertory, vol. IV. p. 141, is a good view of the lane, and north side of the tower with part of the chapel, in which is seen the Gothic arch of the antient window on that side, now in part filled up with bricks, and a modern sash one put in the centre of it. In this view are likewise introduced the entrance into the front-court, and part of the chapel-house, with the blacksmith's

shop adjoining.

The antient porch at the west end of the chapel becoming ruinous and decayed, the stone work, lead, timber, and other materials thereunto belonging, were taken down by order of the wardens and commonalty, and the present handsome building of Portland stone erected in its stead, under my father's direction; who caused the following inscription to be cut on a tablet beneath the middle window:

Custodes et
Communitas pro sustentatione et
Gubernatione Novi Pontis Roffensis
Legum autoritate constituti
Instaurari fecerunt.
Anno 1734.

On the front of the old porch were seven antique shields with arms, which I well remember. But being much decayed and corroded by time, he had new ones neatly carved on stone, of the same size and form, which are placed in a pa-

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parallel line above the key-stones of the arches of the portico; and are as follows,

1st, a saltier.

2d, a cross patonce, between four martlets.

3d, three crowns.

4th, France (semée) and England quarterly.

5th, the same, with a label of three points, charged (I think) with nine ermine spots.

6th, the same, the label charged with nine roundles.

7th, the same, within a border, and no label.

The fourth, are the arms of Richard II. in whose reign the chapel was founded;

and 5. 6. 7. those of his uncles John of Gaunt, Edmund of Langley, and Thomas of Woodstock.

The iron rails between the piers of the portico are omitted in the drawing, as they would have obstructed a view of the old Gothic door-way of the chapel. See plate XXXIII. fig. 2.

Beneath the coping, and over the middle window, are the arms impaled of Sir Robert Knolles, and John lord Cobham, joint founders of the bridge; which are,

1st, Azure, Crusily, a cross moline, Or, voided throughout.

2d, Gules, on a cheveron Or, 3 lions rampant sable.

On a chief gules, a lion passant guardant Or, part of the city arms. Above, is an embattelled crown; and at bottom this motto *Publica privatis*. See plate XXXIII. fig. 3.

He had likewise the seals of the wardens, and commonalty, properly engraved on silver with the same arms; which I shall here omit, as Mr. Hasted has given a plate of them in vol. II. p. 21, of his history of this county.

The room is neatly furnished with wainscot presses, which contain the monuments of the bridge; and, being deposited in this handsome stone edifice, are well secured from casualties by fire. It was customary in former times to erect chapels or chantries at or near the end of eminent bridges; and this chapel, which was called *Allesolven*, that is *All-Souls*, seems to have been designed chiefly for the use of travellers; and by the foundation charter, the three chaplains, who were to be appointed by the wardens of the bridge to officiate in it, were to pray

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for the soul of the pious and munificent

founder (whose portraiture I have given in this work /*;) and for the souls of the benefactors of the bridge, and of Sir Robert Knolles, Knt. William Wangford, and Eleanor his wife. John Frenyngham, and Alice his wife. William Makenade. Sir William Rykhull, Knt. (whose portraiture and his wife's I have likewise before given /†). And for the souls of those deceased, viz. Sir John atte Pole, and Joane his wife. Nicholas Potyn. Constance, wife of Sir Robert Knolles. The lady Margaret, wife of John lord Cobham, the founder. John Bukyngham, formerly bishop of Lincoln. Sir William Waleworth, Knt. and all faithful people deceased. See the instruments of its foundation and endowment, &c. in Regist. Roff. p. 555. 557. 573.

The view, from this antient and famous bridge, of that beautiful river the Medway winding between the hills, with the ruins of the venerable castle on the left, is justly esteemed one of the finest landskips in England; and has attracted the pencil of some of our best painters.

In former times, there were hospitals for leprous people near almost all the cities and large towns in this kingdom, when that dreadful distemper prevailed; which were generally situated at some distance from the communities, to avoid the contagion. Here were two, one to the eastward near Chatham, called St. Bartholomew's, of which I have given some description; the other, to the westward, by the name of White-Ditch. Of the last, I do not find that any of our historians have taken the least notice, or of its situation. It stood in a field on the left side of the road which leads to Cobham, at the top of the hill above Stroud, called to this day Spittal-Hill; and the field still retains the name of White-Ditch. Thomas de Woldham bishop of Rochester,

who appears by his will to have been of a very charitable disposition, among his other bequests, has the following -- Item, lego leprosis de Alba Fossa, vi s. viii d./†.

This hospital had the same patron Saint with that near Chatham, but was composed of sisters as well as brethren, if the following entry in the consistorial acts of the bishop of Rochester has any relation to it.

"A. 1487, Jan. 5.

"Jasp. Godfrey legit' cit' in causâ deten-

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tionis cujusdam sigilli D'ni Ep'i Roffen' ad instantiam fratu' et sor' loci St. Bartholomæi in Strode."

And in the will of Robert Shamele 1465, March 12, the church of St. Bartholomew in Strode is mentioned, by which may have been meant the church or chapel of this hospital. The parish church was dedicated to St. Nicholas.

The Editor of the late History of Rochester, p. 6, says, "he was informed, a cross was erected in the city, in honour of St. William, but he could not discover its situation."

It stood opposite to St. William's Gate, from which there was a passage (now styled Black-Boy-Alley), by the east end of St. Nicholas church, to the north door of the cathedral. In the composition made between the monks of St. Andrew and the inhabitants of the city on the ordination of that parochial church, one condition was, that the prior and the chapter should preserve their customary right of keeping open or shut, at their pleasure, the gate commonly called St. William's Gate, (Regist. Roff. p. 565.) considering to whose honour the cross

was erected, and how notorious had been the superstitious devotion paid to an in-offensive North Briton, it may be presumed, that it was demolished soon after the commencement of the Reformation.

The Gate, however, under the same denomination, is mentioned as one of the boundaries of a tenement demised by lease from the dean and chapter in 1637.

The said History, p. 207, mentions the arms of John Cobham, Esq. and alderman of this city, in the north window in the chancel of St. Nicholas; who set it up at his own charge in 1624, the year in which the church was finished.

The arms of the Vintners Company, I remember in the middle window of the north-east aisle, in the said church, which window was the gift of ----- Philpot, who kept the Crown-Inn, in this city; and beneath the arms, viz. Sable, a cheveron between three tuns Argent, was a pane of glass with his name; which pane was broke, by some accident or other, in the year 1742, and a new plain one placed in its stead.

For the following accurate account of the cathedral, I am obliged to my friend the Rev. Mr. Samuel Denne.

/ * Plate IX. p. 88. / † Plate XXX. p. 136. / ‡ Regist. Roff. p. 113.