

**HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE
PARISH OF DAVINGTON; IN THE
COUNTY OF KENT AND OF THE
PRIORY THERE DEDICATED TO S.
MARY MAGDALENE**

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Historical Sketch of the Parish of Davington; In the County of Kent and of the Priory There
Dedicated to S. Mary Magdalene by Thomas Willement

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THOMAS WILLEMENT

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KENT

AND OF THE PRIORY THERE

DEDICATED TO S. MARY MAGDALENE.

With Appendices and Plates.

BY

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History of Davington,

Co. KENT.



THE parish of Davington is situate in the lath of Scray,¹ and county of Kent, at about forty-seven miles from London, towards the East. It is separated from the borough town of Faversham by the rivulet which flows from White-hill through Ospringe on its way to the sea. The Watling-street of the Romans, from Durobrivis (Rochester) to Durovernum (Canterbury), runs at a short distance from Davington on the south; on which line, near the forty-fifth mile-stone, on Judde hill, near to Beacon hill, was the Roman station Durolevum, mentioned in the second Iter of Antoninus, and where some ancient earth-works are still visible.

The name of Davington² is most probably derived from

¹ This lath in ancient records is called Sherwinhope; in the book of Domesday, the lath of Wiwarlet. The lath in Kent is an intermediate division between the shire and the hundred. BLACKSTONE.

² Called Danitune or Danitun in a Saxon charter, dated 962.

Daefa-tun. The word *tun* in Anglo-Saxon was often used as nearly synonymous with *ham*; *ham* describing the place as the chief's home or residence, and *tun* describing it as surrounded by a defensive enclosure, such as a mound, wall, or hedge. Hence *tun* in process of time acquired a much larger application, and was commonly applied to the enclosed part of the agricultural estate, within which the farmer dwelt, which we call the farm-stead.

With reference to the first part of the name we may observe that Kemble, in his list of families identified with the names of places, mentions the Daefingas; and it does not appear an over-strained conjecture to suppose that this family may have had for its head or founder an individual named Daef or Daefa, or by some similar appellation. The Anglo-Saxon Daefinga-tun would then denote the residence or farm-stead of the Daefingas.

Davington hill, on which the church stands, is especially calculated for a military position, being on a small table of land, of considerable elevation, with a sharp descent from it on all sides. When the low lands near Graveney, alias Cliff-marsh, and about Sea-salter were covered by the sea, this elevated point, and the abrupt height at Tankerton,³ east of Whit-staple, must have been very important defences to the bay.

³ In the time of Edward III. called Tangreton, alias Beacons-field. The Britons, it is well known, generally raised their works and fixed their camps, as did their successors, on the brow of some eminence commanding views of large tracts of land.

Numerous cinerary urns of the Romans, and coins of the Emperors from Veapasian to Gratian, have been discovered on the eastern slope of Davington hill, showing that in their time the position was not only well known but occupied.* We know that the Danes generally used the Swale as their place of disembarkation, and that they frequently established themselves on its banks as their first point of occupation. The shelter of the Isle of Sheppey formed an advantageous cover for their slightly constructed cuilts or yawls; and the Swale was then, on that account, the general line of navigation to London.

DAVINGTON, as it exists at the present time, possesses two features; the one of a spiritual, the other of a temporal character, but each of itself proving at once that it is a place of great antiquity. It includes both a Parish and a Manor, and neither a parish nor a manor can (except by the operation of an act of Parliament) have been created for many centuries.

Much learning has been expended in attempts to discover

* An elevated spot in the adjoining parish of Oare, corruptly called Norman Point, but properly North-men Point, was especially adapted for observation on the approach of invaders. Within the parish of Faversham, towards the Davington side, on some high ground still called "The King's field," several very beautiful relics of the Anglo-Saxon period have been recently discovered. It was evidently the site of a large cemetery, and the intrinsic value of the articles found indicates its vicinity to some royal residence of importance. See *Archæolog. Cantiana*, vol. I. p. 42, II. p. 222. In a charter of King Kenulf, A. D. 812, Faversham is called "The King's Little Town."

the origin of parishes. It is a popular but very questionable conclusion to assert that the kingdom is indebted to Alfred for its present parochial distribution. It seems to be much more probable that the parochial distribution of dioceses was far from simultaneous. As Christianity spread itself among our forefathers, the Thanes, or great lords, gradually built churches upon their own demesnes, or wastes, for the accommodation of their tenants. They felt it to be both a duty and a privilege. In order to have divine service regularly performed in the churches founded by their munificence, they obliged all their tenants to appropriate their tithes to the maintenance of one officiating minister, instead of leaving them, as heretofore, to contribute to whatever priest or church they pleased. Hence sprang a parish, with its secular or parish priest. In a precisely similar manner the early religious houses founded churches on their estates, reserving to themselves the great tithes, and serving the church either by a member of the monastic body, or by a *vicarius* (a substitute) endowed with the less important tithes and spiritual fees of the parish. In the former case we have the origin of the rectories, in the latter, of the vicarages and perpetual curacies of modern times.

It is believed that not more than half-a-dozen instances can be discovered in ancient records of the formation of a new church and parish: the parishes of New Sarum, founded on the removal of the old city to the new site, appear to be the only exceptions. We may reasonably infer, then, that churches in general were founded before the date of the existing public

records, which may be said to begin—with few exceptions, including the celebrated Domesday survey—with the reign of King John.

That the greater portion of our parochial churches were, in all probability, established in the Saxon times may be sufficiently inferred from parts of the Domesday survey. It is to be remembered, however, that the object of William the First, in commanding this survey to be made, was purely of a fiscal character. The several commissioners, therefore, in making it, were mainly concerned in finding out what revenues the Crown was entitled to as Lord Paramount according to the existing feudal system; and, as the Crown had no pecuniary interest in parochial property, they were very indifferent in regard to the parish churches. In some counties the churches are returned either completely or partially, but in an incidental or accidental manner; in others they are passed over in silence altogether. The non-mention, therefore, of a church in this ancient record is no evidence of its non-existence at the time, though mention of it there is of course conclusive proof that it was then in being. Davington does not appear, from the reasons assigned above, to have been noticed in Domesday Book.

But, before speaking of Davington as a parish, it may be as well to advert again to its civil peculiarity as a manor.

The opinion that the Conqueror introduced the feudal system amongst us seems to be contradicted by his celebrated survey, which may be said almost to confine itself to the subject of pre-existing manors, and to go far to prove that no