

I. The South - Eastern Peninsula. County and Shire. The Word *Surrey*. Its Origin and Meaning.

The three counties of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex form a peninsula in the south-east of England, having the Thames on the north, and the sea on the east and south, while the boundary on the west is formed by Berkshire and Hampshire. This south-eastern peninsula has always been of the greatest importance in our history, for the chief lines of communication between the Continent and London pass through one or other of the three counties. The Thames is the waterway to London; the old roads from Dover, Hastings, and Portsmouth are the highways through this peninsula to the metropolis; and the modern railways from the chief sea-ports of the south-east carry passengers and goods to the great city.

It will now be understood that each of these three south-eastern counties is of considerable importance on account of the proximity of London, and it is both interesting and instructive to have a definite knowledge of the past and present condition of all of them. In this book we are concerned with Surrey, one of the “home

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counties” as it is called ; and it will be well for us at the outset to find out what is meant by a county and then discover how Surrey came by its name.

Have you ever thought how the present division of England into counties was brought about ? We often look at the map and notice that some of the counties are



Wharves on the Surrey Side

large and some are small ; and we notice, too, that some of the names end in *-shire*. If we do this, we must enquire further, as to how this difference in size and name happens. Some books tell us that King Alfred divided England into counties. Now this is quite wrong, for although that great king did many things, he certainly

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did not accomplish the division of England into counties. We know that some of the counties existed before his time, and that others were not formed till after his death.

The fact is that some of our present counties are survivals of the old English kingdoms, which have kept, in many cases, their former names and extent. Kent, Surrey, and Sussex are such. Others of our counties are *shires*, or *shares* of former large kingdoms, such as Mercia, or Wessex, or Northumbria. For instance, Mercia was a large English kingdom in the middle of our land, and at various times portions of it were cut off, and we now know these divisions as *Staffordshire*, *Warwickshire*, and so on.

Thus we may say quite correctly that our English counties have grown, and it is this gradual growth that makes their history so interesting. When we trace out their boundaries, we find that they generally represent the limits of tribes or kingdoms. Some of them represent the possessions of ancient British tribes, such as Kent, which was the land of the Cantii; some of them—such as Sussex, and, perhaps, Surrey—are the representatives of early English kingdoms; and others were constituted by the Danes, or by the Conqueror at a later date.

The change is still going on, and towards the end of the nineteenth century several of our counties were divided for administrative purposes, while portions of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex were detached from the ancient counties and added to London, so as to form the modern County of London.

We shall understand our geography and history so

much better if we grasp this fact clearly, that many of our counties are the same, or nearly the same, as the first English kingdoms, which were never less than seven in number, and often far more numerous. Thus Essex was the land of the East Saxons, and Sussex of the South Saxons. Essex is a county marked off by sea and rivers from the adjoining land, and Sussex was a district naturally marked off by sea, and woods, and marshes from its neighbours. Surrey, however, differs in name and origin from these counties. It is quite easy to discover the meaning of Essex and Sussex, but the origin of the word Surrey is much more difficult to ascertain. Surrey, or Suthrege, is probably “the south kingdom.” The first part of the word means south, while *rege* comes from the Anglo-Saxon *ric*, a kingdom, the same termination that occurs in bishopric. In some early charters Surrey is called *Sudergeona*, and *Sudregona*. From this it is evident that Surrey was in early days an independent kingdom, or sub-kingdom, and its name was given with reference to the position of Middlesex or Essex.

When we first hear of Surrey, it was ruled by Essex; and after a time it passed, with the rest of the southern counties of England, under the sway of Wessex. There is thus some obscurity as to the way in which Surrey came to rank as a shire or county. So little is known about its first settlement, that we can only guess as to its early organisation. But we shall not be far wrong if we say that Surrey is a shire that had its origin in an early kingdom.

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2. General Characteristics. Its Position and Natural Conditions.

Surrey is entirely an inland county. Its only connection with the sea arises from the fact that the tide runs up the Thames as far as Teddington. Thus from a commercial point of view it has not the natural advantages of either Kent or Sussex.

The importance of Surrey is not, however, to be estimated by the same standard as that we apply to either of its neighbouring counties. It is not so large as Kent or Sussex ; indeed it is a small county. Its population is denser than that of most English counties, and it has a good number of towns of more or less importance.

Surrey undoubtedly owes its importance to its nearness to the metropolis, and to the good railway facilities, which give access to all parts of this delightful county. Thus we find that successful London merchants and men of all professions make it their home. Artists, poets, and men of science find in Surrey a beautiful resort where they can quickly escape from the noise and bustle of London.

It would be difficult to find a county in any part of England that offers so many attractions as Surrey. Its climate, on the whole, is dry, and in the higher parts distinctly bracing. The commons and heathlands are charming at all times, particularly in the spring when the gorse and may are in bloom. The south-west corner is as beautiful as any part of our island. Indeed the district

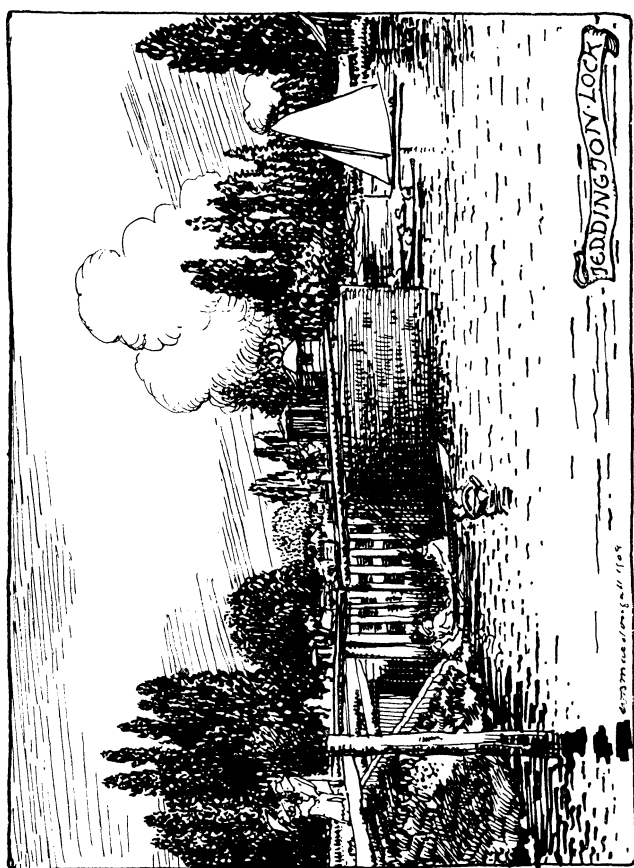
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around Hindhead has been called the miniature Highlands of England.

No better testimony to the attractions of Surrey can be given than the fact that it draws vast crowds of cyclists and pedestrians to its hills and dales, its parks and woods, and its glorious commons. In the seventeenth century the great diarist and nature-lover John Evelyn boasted that Surrey was the county of his birth and his delight ; and since his day its praises have been sung by many of our greatest poets. Tennyson was so fascinated with the beauty of the county that he built Aldworth House near Haslemere, where he spent the closing years of his life.

The north-eastern part of the county is rapidly becoming a part of London. Such towns as Wimbledon and Croydon, Surbiton and Sutton are losing their rural character, and houses are being built to accommodate the workers of London. It seems a pity that this once beautiful district should now be covered with thousands of houses of the most monotonous character. But that is part of the price that it has to pay for its proximity to London. Surrey is one of the residential counties of the metropolis, and is fast losing its character as an agricultural county. Thus it came about that Surrey, in its earliest days, owed its formation to the existence of London in the north-east ; and it now still gains its wealth and importance from the merchants and workers of our capital.

Surrey will always be famous as the county which is associated with the annual boat-race between Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Perhaps no stretch of the

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Thames is better known than the famous course between Putney and Mortlake, where, every year, this classic race is witnessed by tens of thousands of Englishmen. Surrey, too, has been distinguished as the county that has favoured the national game of cricket. Every cricketer knows the “Oval,” where Surrey cricketers have won fame for many years. Not only at the Oval, but on many a village green and Surrey field has cricket been played with advantage to all concerned. Epsom is the place in Surrey that is associated with the sport of horse-racing, which every year attracts countless throngs of spectators of the most varied type and character.

3. Size. Shape. Boundaries.

We have seen in the previous chapters how Surrey came to be a county and we have learnt something of its general characteristics. Now let us consider the size and shape of it, and we must look at a good map to trace its boundaries. Before we begin this chapter, we must remember that the ancient county of Surrey was larger than the present county, and so it will be necessary to speak of Surrey, sometimes as including the portion that is now comprised in the County of London, and sometimes as excluding this portion. Whenever we refer to the larger Surrey, we shall speak of it as the Ancient County, and when we refer to the smaller Surrey, we shall speak of it as the Administrative County.

Surrey is an inland county lying along the south of

the river Thames. From east to west its greatest extent is about forty miles, and from north to south it is about twenty-four miles.

The area of the ancient county is 485,122 acres, or about 758 square miles. The area of the administrative county is 461,829 acres, or about 722 square miles. If we take the larger area, we shall find that Surrey is about one half the area of Kent, or nearly the same size as Berkshire. There are ten counties in England smaller than Surrey, so that it is one of the smallest of the English counties. It occupies about one sixty-seventh of the entire area of England and Wales.

Except on the north side the area of Surrey is comprised within fairly regular outlines. The Thames forms a very irregular northern boundary, but, roughly speaking, the shape of Surrey is quadrilateral. This is more especially the case if we speak of the ancient county. In 1889, a large and populous portion in the north-east was taken away and added to London for administrative purposes. But even in speaking of the administrative county of Surrey, we shall not be far wrong in saying that it is somewhat the shape of an oblong.

When we come to deal with the boundaries of a county, we have always some interesting questions to answer. It is very easy to state the present boundaries, but it is not always so easy to say how these boundaries were settled. However, we will try, and with the aid of a good map and a knowledge of our early history, we may get a fairly accurate idea.

The Thames is the northern boundary of the ancient