

A CHRISTCHURCH HARBOUR SURVEY IN 1698.

“UTTERLY INCAPABLE OF IMPROVEMENT,”

(By Major Ivor M. Bellairs)

C.T. 1932

I have recently had access to a very interesting book of charts with descriptions of all harbours along the south-west coast.

It will probably interest many of your readers to know that Christchurch Harbour was surveyed in 1698. Here is a copy of the title page and a description of the harbour: —

A Survey of the Ports on the South West Coast of England from Dover to the Land's-End, by Edm. Dummer, Surveyor, and Capt. Thos. Wiltshaw, Esqrs., Commanders of His Majesty's Navy, together with Capt. James Conaway and Capt. Willm. Cruft, Masters of Trinity House at Deptford. Delineated in July and August, 1698.

CHRIST CHURCH.

The Qualifications of the Haven.

River disembogues into the sea in a bay within the shingles, and about three leagues without the Needles. Westward the town lyes about two miles from the mouth of it, and yet the flood tyde scarce washes to it, and although there falls into this Haven two considerable freshes, the one from Salisbury, the other from Blandford, yet tis no port for other vessells than of 30 tuns downwards.

Mead Tydes Incapable of Improvement.

Great banks of sand lye before it, and not more than 2ft upon the barr, nor flowes on spring tydes more than 6ft. upright, are insuperable impediments to those offices the workes of the Navy require, therefore utterly incapable of such improvements.

The chart slums the entrance to the harbour, about 500 yards east of the Head on about where Croucher's tea boat is today. The Clarendon long rocks were not laid down at the time the chart was made, and they are on the eastern side of where the channel was in 1698; so presumably they were laid down to prevent the bar moving east. The Head projected farther to sea than it does to-day. There is a note on the chart. "Quay being built"; this quay is at the S.W. end of where the Haven houses stand to-day. The remains of this quay can be seen at low water nowadays. A foot-path existed from the eastern entrance that was about where Derham's tea boat is now. Of course the present Run did not exist, and the shore extended all this way to Mundeford. A clearly defined channel is marked on the chart leading up to Stanpit, with "store" marked where Bemister's Store and the dock are to-day. There were no houses where the Haven houses stand to-day. There appears to have been a much wider sandy beach on the eastern side of the entrance, so probably the Clarendon rocks were laid down all within the river mouth. From the report it is obvious that when the entrance was under the Head the rise and fall of tide was less than it is when the entrance is farther to the east. The entrance to the harbour in 1698 was along a line drawn from the Needles to the Priory Church, the depth of water was the same as it is to-day over the bar. No depths are given within the harbour, but the main channel was much the same shape as it is now, with a considerable channel leading up to Stanpit dock. Stanpit Marshes extended much farther into the harbour, and the land was very much wider where the "Double Dikes" are. Possibly someone may have a report of a later date, giving details of the laying of the Clarendon long rocks.