

## **KENT FEDERATION OF AMENITY SOCIETIES, EGERTON, 19 MAY 2007**

### **Snapshots of strands of life in Kent, and England in general, which illustrate the evolution of Community Concern, Citizen Participation and Heritage Awareness**

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\* *Wherever possible exact words from original documents or publications have been used. In a very few cases expressions have been paraphrased. Nowhere has the sense been altered.*

#### **REPAYING A DEBT IN A KENT PORT 1531**

Already out of my own moneys I have rebuilt one of the town quays which had rotted away. But I mean to bestow more than this for the use and commodity of the Town. I mean to bestow such cost upon the Haven and Creek here that a ship with two masts may come up to the Crane at the Standard Quay; and I shall also build a Market House for the benefit and ease both of the Town and the Country. Here I got my goods, and here I shall leave them, for I have no children.

Henry Hatch of Faversham died two years later, before he could keep his promises. However he provided for them - and for more - in his Will. Unusually it left no money for prayers for his soul. It had been carefully drafted to provide for a phased programme of community improvements. He duly left enough for a Market House to be built. The road which led to the waterfront was in a bad way, so he left the equivalent of £15,000 a year for 5 years for its repair. The public wells were in bad shape, so to bring them up to scratch he left £3,500 a year for 5 years.

These two jobs complete, £18,500 a year was to be allocated to a 9-year programme of engineering work which would open up the Creek. Over the next 6 years the income from his trust fund was to be concentrated on the Parish Church, and in particular on replacing a life-expired organ and building a treasury for its collection of precious plate.

Once this 20-year programme was complete, the income was to be spent at the trustees' discretion on town highways, the Creek and the parish church. In other words the money already spent was not to be wasted through neglect. Nearly 475 years later, the capital sum is still there, still goes to its original objectives, and is still managed by an independent trust. There is immortality for you.

#### **URBAN REGENERATION IN ENGLAND'S 36 LEADING TOWNS AND CITIES 1540**

An Act for Re-edifying of Townes.

Forasmuch as there have been in times past divers and many beautiful houses of habitation within the walls and liberties of [36] Cities, Boroughs and Towns [including] Berwick, Canterbury, Feversham, New Castle upon Tyne, Rochester and York, and are now fallen down, decayed and at this day remain unedified and so lie as desolate and vacant grounds, many of them nigh adjoining to the High Streets, to the great ill and danger of the inhabitants, it may therefore please the King ...

Statutes of the Realm, 1540

There was a problem, even before the dissolution of the monasteries upset the economic equilibrium of most towns.

In one of Faversham's main streets in 1532, 10 out of 80 buildings were derelict or in ruins, or had been demolished. For example ...

William Norton, gentleman, holdeth a ruined messuage with a piece of land called Rotten Row.

The feoffees of Margaret Horn holdeth the site of half a messuage called Muggis

The heirs of Laurence Streynsham holdeth the other half of the same messuage

The heirs of William Rose holdeth the site of a messuage which is now two gardens

The provisions of the Act were Draconian. If the owners did not rebuild or restore buildings within 3 years of notice being served on them, the Lords of the respective Manors could. If they in turn failed to undertake the necessary work within two years, then any lessees could.

If they in turn took no action within a year, then the City or Borough Corporations could do so, and retain ownership of the properties they had rebuilt or restored. Cheaper than compulsory purchase!

In Faversham the Act seems to have worked well, perhaps because once the town was freed from the shackles of its great Abbey, it prospered as never before. However it may alternatively have been because the mere threat of property forfeiture encouraged negligent owners to take action themselves. Most of them were wealthy, so couldn't offer poverty as an excuse for inaction.

#### **MERRIE ENGLAND IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH I**

1560 Preston-next-Faversham Our Vicar preaches no sermons. He fails to obey the edict to denounce the Pope at least four times a year, and to warn against the abuse of images, and feigned miracles

1563 Ospringe: All is well, saving that the church is ready to fall down for lack of reparation.

1572 Preston-next-Faversham Our Vicar keeps cows and gives them fodder and straw in the churchyard and church porch. He is a common fighter and has been involved in five fights since taking the living. Looking more like a common rogue than a prelate, he drives his cattle through the streets of Faversham, wearing a jerkin with a bill at his neck.

1580 Ospringe: The chancel lieth more like a pigeon house.

1581 Norton: Church, churchyard and Book of Common Prayer all in some decay. The Parsonage House and ancillary buildings have gone to ruin and decay.

1583 Ospringe: William Platt is a contentious and malicious person, never quiet with his neighbours.

1594 Luddenham Church is in a bad state of repair, owing to recent storm damage and long-term neglect. Rate levied for repairs. Property owners living outside the parish allowed to pay less, but, though wealthy, refuse to pay anything at all.

Churchwarden's Presentations at Canterbury Archdeacon's Visitations

#### **PERPETUATING THE IDEALS OF A MEDIEVAL CRAFT ON THE WANE 1646 & 1682**

At 4.30 pm on 16 October 1646 I was made a Free Mason at Warrington in Lancashire, with Colonel Henry Mainwaring of Karincham in Cheshire

At about 5 pm on 10 March 1682 I received a summons to appear at a Lodge to be held the next day. Accordingly I went; and about noon Sir William Wilson and five others were admitted into the Fellowship of Free Masons. I was the Senior Fellow amongst them, it being 35 years since I was first admitted.

*Elias Ashmole*, the son of a Lichfield saddler, born in 1617, became a learned Antiquary, who

in 1677 founded Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, the first public institution in England for the reception of Rarities in Art or Nature. He was the first person in England known to have been admitted as a speculative (non-working) freemason to an operative Lodge.

Masonry all through the Middle Ages had attracted fine types of learned, knowledgeable men, and in the period of operative decline and speculative ascent it continued to attract scholars of pronounced historical and antiquarian interests, who, perhaps through mere curiosity, came into masonry to *seek*, and more than likely stayed to *give*.

Bernard E Jones, *Freemason's Guide & Companion*, 2nd edition, 1956

### THE MAN OF ROSS 1637-1724

But all your praises why should Lords engross?  
Rise, honest Muse, and sing the Man of Ross.  
Who hung with woods yon mountain's sultry brow,  
From the dry rock bade the water flow,  
Not to the sky in useless columns tost,  
Or in proud falls magnificently lost,  
But clear and artless pouring through the plain -  
Health to the sick and solace to the swain  
Whose causeway parts the vale in shady rows?  
Whose seats the weary traveller repose?  
Who taught that heav'n-directed spire to rise?  
The Man of Ross each lisp'ing babe replies.

*Alexander Pope*

John Kyrle was born near Ross-on-Wye in 1637 and lived in the town all his life. He never married and had private means (£500 a year).

A pioneer of what we now call the amenity movement, he spent most of his money on improving the town and its facilities and amenities. He ...

- built a conduit to bring clean, fresh water to the town.
- planted trees (elms) in the churchyard.
- raised the causeway over the river meadows to alleviate flooding in the town.
- raised the church tower.
- had a tenor church bell cast.
- initiated a scheme to make the Prospect Gardens open to the public.

His body lay in state for 9 days when he died.

Friend to the friendless, to the sick man health  
With generous joy he viewed his modest wealth

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1795*

### RAISING MORAL STANDARDS 1691

Thus debauchery diffused itself throughout the whole body of the Nation, till, at last, our morals were so corrupted, that Virtue and Vice had with too many changed their names; and it was reckoned breeding, to swear; gallantry, to be lewd; good humour, to be drunk; and wit, to despise sacred things.

It was enough to have rendered oneself suspected of fanaticism not to ... glory in these fashionable

vices. Nay, it was thought an unpardonable rudeness, even for a clergyman or magistrate, to reprove or punish one that was guilty of them.

Reformation was indeed talked of by some persons as an excellent thing, but vice was looked upon as too formidable an enemy to be provoked.

When things were in this dismal state, it came into the hearts of six private gentlemen in the City of London to engage in the difficult and hazardous exercise of reformation. They established a society for the reformation of manners.

In 1691 our late excellent Queen, Mary, thanked those who were concerned in it, and gave it her patronage.

Now there about nine-and-thirty such societies in and about London and Westminster, and ten in Dublin, as well as others in such other parts of the nation, as Nottingham, Gloucester, Monmouth, and Kilkenny.

For the encouragement of others, I purpose here to give an account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, with a persuasive to persons of all ranks to be diligent in effecting a National Reformation.†

Anon, *An Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners*, London, B Aylmer, 1699.

### **A MAYOR CLEANS UP A KENT TOWN 1703**

Before I was sworn as Mayor I caused the Queen's Proclamation to be nailed up in the Court Hall. Some of the Bench were very inquisitive to know what it was. I told them it was the Proclamation to suppress vice and immorality, and that it was my purpose and resolution to put it into due execution.

First, I caused a proclamation against tippling and trading on Sunday to be called by the Common Crier. The following Sunday I took a walk into the street with my staff in order to observe how far the Town had complied with my order. I found the public houses took no notice, but kept their doors open as formerly; upon which I made them shut them. I also met with several shop-keepers who had their doors half open, but I made them shut them, too.

I was resolved on a reformation in the town. I charged the servants and the seamen, when I met them, that they took care that they did not swear, get drunk, or be disorderly, as they formerly had been, for that this rod in my hand would be a severe scourge to all manner of vice, profaneness, and immorality.

On the following Saturday I likewise gave notice to the market people that I would punish all disorders, and especially any breaches of the peace committed in the market, of which I was then Clerk. On the same day I took up a common prostitute, whose conduct was very offensive, and had her punished - being about mid-market, where was present some hundreds of people.

I parleyed with her, and bid her tell all the women of like calling that I would serve them as I had served her. After which, I gave her a groat, and sent her, by a Constable, out of the Town. On the following morning, no less, as I was informed, that five-and-twenty such-like characters left the Town, uttering the most fearful oaths, and vowing vengeance on me.

When I came to Church next day I observed the clergyman about to commence the service without his surplice. Upon which I sent my Serjeant to him, desiring him to put it on.

Some took the opportunity to lampoon me in song and verse, in no measured term; while others resorted to ridicule and banter. All of which I disregarded. I did what I thought was right, and that was my recompense.†

*Thomas Powell, Mayor of Deal in 1703.*

### **A COMMON INTEREST IN HISTORY AND TRADITION 1717**

The present Society of Antiquaries came into existence in the same year as Grand Lodge - 1717 - and included in its early Fellowship William Stukeley, who joined in the same year and was master of a Lodge in 1723; Lord Coleraine, who also joined in 1717 and became Grand Master of Grand Lodge in 1727; Martin Folkes, who joined in 1720 and was Deputy Grand Master in 1724; and the Duke of Montague, who joined in 1725 and had been Grand Master in 1721.

Joan Evans, *History of the Society of Antiquaries of London*

### **KINDLING INTEREST IN HERITAGE 1780**

i42. Have you any wake, Whitsun ale, doles, or other such customs, used in your parish; or any annual or other processions or perambulations?

i55. What particular games, sports, customs, proverbs, or peculiar words or phrases, or names of places, persons, animals, vegetables, or things, are used; and what notions or traditions obtain among the common people?

i56. Are there, in any of the gentlemen's houses, any pictures which give insight into any historical facts, or any portraits which will give any light into past transactions?

Three (of 111) questions that the publisher John Nichols recommended that his authors should ask when starting to write a parish history. The first in the series was about the Kent village of Tunstall.

### **ANTIQUARIANISM RUNS RIOT 1799**

iThe greatest of the many illustrious figures connected with Draynflote in the Georgian era was undoubtedly Alexander, 2nd Earl and 11th Baron Littlehampton. In his lifetime Draynefleete Castle was twice completely rebuilt, first in the Palladian and then in the Gothic style.

He it was who was responsible for 'Lord Littlehampton's Folly'. On ground level, above a crypt in the Egyptian taste, was a square pavilion fronted by facades in the four great classical orders - Ionic, Doric, Corinthian, and Tuscan. On this rested a Gothic octagon, supporting a three-storied Chinese pagoda, surmounted by a cupola in the Hindu taste.

Completed in 1799, this curious freak remained intact till, at the very moment of His Lordship's death, a lightning-strike destroyed the two oriental tiers. The Gothic octagon survived till 1923, when the local building inspector declared it unsafe, and it had to be demolished.

After serving as living quarters for an A.T.S. detachment during World War II, the pavilion itself was found to be in such a poor state of repair that it, too, had to be demolished. Happily the Egyptian crypt survives because it was used as an air-raid shelter by inmates of the County Lunatic Asylum.

Osbert Lancaster, *Draynefleete Revealed*, 1949.

### **AN UNRESTORED CHURCH 1849**

iThe general aspect of the Chancel and Church was painfully mean. The wine was placed on the Communion Table in a black glass bottle from the wine merchant. A large high pew like an omnibus was against the South wall of the Chancel. There were also forms in the Chancel, for those who liked to use them, an opinion prevailing that such free seats were suitable for the aged poor. The seats in the body of the Church were of deal, and various in shape and aspect, and (here was a ray of hope) in decayed condition. In the worship there was a dull and spiritless tone, as if no-one was really in earnest.

William Griffin, Vicar of Ospringe 1848-1892.

### **PROTO-PEVSNERS 1851-1899**

Whitehaven Castle is a plain mansion occasionally occupied by the Earl of Lonsdale. The churches are remarkable for nothing except their extreme ugliness

Anon, Murray's *Handbook for Cumberland, Westmorland & The Lakes*, c 1865

The 60 volumes comprising Murray's series of guides to the British Isles, started in 1851 and completed in 1899, formed the standard equipment of the intelligent traveller during the reigns of Queen Victoria and her son.

Professor Jack Simmons, quoted in John Vaughan, *The English Guide Book*, 1974

### **FOREIGN HOLIDAYS FOR THE GENTRY AND ARISTOCRACY 1876**

Any, the topmost class nowadays have left off the use of wheels for the good of their constitutions, so they traipse and walk for many years up foreign hills, where you can see nothing but snow and fog, till there is no more to walk up; and, if they reach home alive, and haven't got too old and wearied out, they walk and see a little of their own parishes.

Thomas Hardy, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, 1876

### **TREASURES OF ART AND HISTORY ON OUR DOORSTEP 1883**

Many of us, in these days of foreign travel, have very little notion of the treasures of art and history which still live in the towns and villages of our own country. And many of us have not fully grasped how largely in every land national history is made up of local history.

Edward Freeman, *English Towns and Districts*, 1883

### **WHY GO ABROAD FOR BEAUTY AND CULTURE? 1897**

It is one of the aims of the Homeland Association to show that every district of these Islands possesses scenery of beauty, and often of peculiar distinction - often, moreover, hallowed by inspiring memories; and these Homeland Handbooks are written from this standpoint. They are issued at popular prices, and contain everything likely to interest the intelligent visitor concerning the History, Traditions, Worthies, Antiquities and Literary Associations of the neighbourhoods with which they deal.

Prescott Row, founder of the Homeland Association. Its first Handbook was for Tonbridge, its third for Westerham. By 1918 84 in the series had been published. By 1939 they had degenerated into dreary 'Official Guide'-type publications, full of advertisements and self-adulation by local authorities.

### **CARING FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE 1918**

WILD PLANTS should never be rooted up or gathered in great quantities. WILD BIRDS should never be disturbed in the breeding season. RARE SPECIES OF ANY KIND should in all cases be specially respected and protected. WASTE PAPER, broken glass and the rubbish from picnics should never be left about.

The Selborne Society (named after Gilbert White of Selborne).

### **REVOLTING NEUTRALITY 1932**

Tradition has broken down. Taste is utterly debased. There is no enlightened guidance or correction from the authority. The town, long since degraded, is now being annihilated by a flabby, shoddy,

romantic nature-worship - which is destroying the object of its adoration, the countryside.

The one age-long certainty, the antithesis of town and country, is breaking down. Two diametrically opposed, contrasting, inevitable types of beauty are being displaced by one drab, revolting, neutrality. Rural influences neutralise the town. Urban influences neutralise the country. In a few years, all will be neutrality. The strong, masculinity of the town; and the softer beauty, the richness, the fruitfulness of the countryside, will be debased into one sterile, hermaphroditic beastliness.†

Thomas Sharp, *Town and Countryside*, 1932

### THE VALUE OF ARCHITECTURE 1937

†The value of architecture in England, according to official and ecclesiastical standards, varies in proportion **first**, according to its antiquity, **second** its quaintness, and **third**, its holiness. By these standards a bit of an old Roman wall is worth more than Nash's Regent Street, and a ruined Gothic arch more than all Wren's churches put together.†

Robert Byron, *How We Celebrate the Coronation*, 1937.

### OUTSOURCING 2007

†Local authorities now depend for most of their income from Government funding. They are perennially strapped for cash. There are many things they would like to do, but cannot afford. Here library staffing is being cut; there museums are closing.

Where service delivery is concerned, they outsource as far as possible, because this saves money. They outsource not just to private enterprise, but to the 'third sector' - charities and voluntary organisations. For local amenity societies this presents an opportunity. In return for a fee and on the basis of a service level agreement are there any services they can provide to the local community?†

Anon

### SOME LANDMARK PUBLICATIONS

- 1570 First county history - *Perambulation of Kent*, by William Lambarde
- 1598 First town or city history - *Survey of London*, by John Stow
- 1695 First parish history - *History of Ambrosden*, by the Rev White Kennett
- 1707 First national archaeological and historical society formed - Society of Antiquaries of London
- 1719 Early etymological dictionary of British place-names - *Glossarium Antiquitatum Britannicarum*, by William Baxter
- 1851 First Murray's Handbook - *Devon & Cornwall* (series completed 1899)
- 1898 First Homeland Handbook - *Tonbridge*  
*Outrage* special issue of *Architectural Review*, by Ian Nairn
- 1969 Early town conservation study - *Faversham Conserved*, by Anthony Swaine FRIBA FSA
- 1989 *How to Rescue a Ruin*, by Hilary Weir

\* Additions to this paper will be welcome. Please send to Arthur Percival at the Faversham Society, Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, 10-13 Preston Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8NS (ticfaversham@btconnect.com).