

A KENTISH HOLIDAY, 1823

Edited by F. HULL, B.A., Ph.D.

IN 1955 I published in *Arch. Cant.*, vol. lxxix, 'A Tour into Kent, 1759', being the journal kept during a holiday spent touring this county by members of the Mount family of London. This brief diary had been found among the Mount MSS. deposited by Sir William Mount, Bt., in the Berkshire Record Office. Recently a somewhat similar document has been brought to my notice among the papers of the Powell family of Speldhurst, deposited in the Kent Archives Office by S. K. M. Powell, Esq., J.P., of Shadwell in that parish. In offering this journal for publication I am well aware of its imperfections, but as a comparison with the Mount diary, although later in date, and on account of the occasional glimpses of Kent in the reign of George IV, it may prove of some interest.

The author was Charles Powell, second son of Baden Powell of Speldhurst and Hester, daughter of James Powell of Clapton. He was born in 1807 and so was sixteen years of age when this holiday was taken. In later life he was a J.P. for Kent and was uncle to Robert Stephenson Smyth Powell who became 1st Baron Baden-Powell and was founder of the Scout movement.

The text itself requires little comment. There are a few difficult readings and on three occasions very rough plans of churches visited are inserted in the original. The punctuation is chaotic and it has been necessary to modify this in order to provide a more readable account. Charles Powell's unusual method of recording half and quarter hours has been retained as have his occasional mis-spellings. Its merit lies mainly in the unexpected: the gaol as a showpiece; the first impressions of the sea; the number of steam vessels already afloat in 1823; the glimpse of the future Queen at the age of four riding on a donkey, but suitably attended; and the visit to a naval vessel at Chatham. Occasional inaccuracies, Charles Powell was not over critical of guides and their tales, can be forgiven in this record of a youth's first visit to much of his home county.

DIARY OF CHARLES POWELL OF SPELDHURST, 1823<sup>1</sup>

Friday 19 [September]. Sisters set off to Newick about 12—at the same time Uncle and Aunt Sikes and I to Maidstone—stopt at Tunbridge at Miss St. Croix—then we turned up by the Church

<sup>1</sup> Kent Archives Office: U934 F8.

thro' a flat country to Hadlow, by Goose Green to Mereworth. Saw the House (belonging to Lord Le de Spencer)<sup>2</sup> thro' the trees it is divided into three parts Stables, Kitchen and Dwelling [*inserted: a handsome London church at Mereworth*]. Stopt at the Inn where Papa, Mama and H. in our carriage came up to water the horses—we set off before them from there through Teston and Wateringbury, Barming Cross and the Bower to Maidstone. At Teston a pretty bridge on the road to Goudhurst. Large hopgrounds with very few hops almost all the way from Tonbridge. Arrived at Maidstone at 4 o'clock to Bell Inn, Papa came in soon after us, then we all walked to the New Jail<sup>3</sup> a fine stone building—went into the wards and chapel—saw the prisoners spinning, weaving, making mats, string, ropes, etc., then we came in to dinner. After dinner H.<sup>4</sup> and I walked with Papa by moon light down Gabriel Hill up Stone Street then turned down Knightrider Street to the Church which is very large [*rough plan inserted in text*] and some old buildings called the College. Came in and had our tea. In the Prison we saw the solitary cells and [in] one of them quite dark was a boy confined there 6 days for disobedience.

[2]

Maidstone seems a large town and the Jail a large, strong, melancholy and clean place of punishment.

Saturday 20th. Had breakfast at 7½ and then set off for Hithe thro Harrietsham and Lenham to Charing where we changed horses—then thro' Ashford to Marsham where we turned up to Mr. Longdale's, stayed there a while and returned to the high road again. Sir E. Knatchbull lives at Marsham Court where there is a fine park. Watered the horses at Stone Hill, Smeeth and then thro' Sellinge to Hithe, Swan Inn. On the hill above Hithe a fine view of the Sea—almost calm with a great many small brigs on it.

A little beyond Maidstone the Moat, Lord Romney's on the right—then Leeds Castle, Mr. Martin's on the right before we came to Harrietsham, an old castle standing in a lake, lately repaired and modernized.<sup>5</sup> It formerly belonged to General Fairfax in Cromwell's time.<sup>6</sup>

[3]

<sup>2</sup> Thos. Stapleton, Lord Le Despencer, 1766-1831, by this time resident abroad. See *Arch. Cant.*, vol. lxxvi (1961), 169-179.

<sup>3</sup> The new gaol was begun in 1812 and the prisoners were transferred on 8th March 1819.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Powell, M.D., 1809-67, brother of Charles.

<sup>5</sup> The castle was altered and modernized in 1822.

<sup>6</sup> This is an error. The Fairfax connection resulted from the marriage of Catherine Culpeper and Thomas 5th Lord Fairfax who succeeded to the estate in 1688 on the death of the second Lord Culpeper.

On the left near Newin Green some old Barrows.<sup>7</sup> As soon as we got to Hithe we went and walked on the shingles—the tide had just begun to ebb—saw a small fishing boat launched—we went into a Martello Tower of which there are a great many all round the coast, wherever there is a weak place that an enemy might attack. These are generally inhabited by the preventive service which is called the coast blockade, but the one we went into was held by a pensioner. There are no guns up all round the coast, the wall is 7 feet thick, there are 3 different floors in it, the lowest a coal hole, the next above it a magazine and the third a dwelling. The gun is fixed on a pivot on the top landing and is turned round to any point. Dinner at 3—then we all walked up hill by the church to go to Saltwood castle. Uncle and Aunt stopt and we went in to the Castle which is a fine ruin belonging to Mr. Croft and inhabited by a farmer. Came back and had our tea—a moonlight night. Hithe is 67 miles from London.

[4]

This was the first time I had seen the Sea and I thought it looked beautiful and much *higher* than I expected. From the Hill going up to Saltwood I saw the French cliffs and coast very clearly with the telescope—Dungeness—lighthouse—Romney and Lidd—and Sandgate—Rode a bit to [?].<sup>8</sup>

Sunday 21—Went down to the Sea with Mama before breakfast, Papa joined us, the sea was ebbing—saw a machine let into the sea, picked a few common shells and seaweed, came back to breakfast, read the Gospel to Mama and went to church, which is an old building, the chancel was part of an old abbey<sup>9</sup> with small Bethersden marble pillars round the large stone ones, very handsome, the roof has been groined but is now plain, no pews in the chancel. Under it is a small crypt with a handsome groined ceiling, full of skulls and bones piled up supposed to be<sup>10</sup> [*rough plan of church inserted*]. Mr. Croft the rector, Mr. Crawford, curate, who did the duty. After service the clerk shewed us the crypt. Went to dinner: began to rain. After dinner to church and then down to the sea in the rain and a brisk gale and had a fine blow. (Just

[5]

<sup>7</sup> This reference is mysterious. The nearest known sites are near Belle Vue Farm, Lympe and at Stowting; neither would appear to be applicable.

<sup>8</sup> The word written looks like 'Sistors', 'Tiston', or 'Iston'. It would appear that this phrase was added later and remains obscure.

<sup>9</sup> This was Leland's interpretation copied by Hasted, but see Canon Livett, 'The Church of St. Leonard, Hythe', *Arch. Cant.*, xxx, 273.

<sup>10</sup> This sentence is unfinished. Legend has it that they are the remains of the 'combatants slain in a sanguinary battle between the ancient Britons under King Vortimer, and the Saxons, about the year 456'. [Ireland, *History of Kent*, Vol. II, p. 229.]

before church went down to the sea to find Uncle and H. but could not see them, the sea was then up to the bank, after I came in Uncle came. Lost the top of my umbrella.) Came home to tea, read part of Walton's life of G. Gilbert, wrote, etc. There is a small organ in the church and the children sing. In the side aisle there is a curious old circular table inlaid like a mariner's compass. [*Rough sketch inserted*].

[6] Monday 22. Breakfasted at 7½, set off 8½ to Dover thro' Sandgate and Folkestone—arrived at Payn's York Hotel about 11. At Sandgate there is a fort or castle built in Henry 8th. times. It looks modern. Sandgate consists of a long row of houses built on each side of the road close on the beach and seems a pleasant place. From the top of Folkestone hills is a very fine view of the town and sea and coast. All the way till within 2 miles of Dover a magnificent view of the sea. As soon as we got to Dover we went on the beach and the two piers and round the basons saw steam packets<sup>11</sup> lying there. H. and I walked with Papa, up the Shakespeare Cliff to the top by Hearts hill fort and the citadel where we sat and took views—then came down to dinner about 2½. A little rain, walked with William on the pier.

[7] Tuesday 23. Walked with Papa and Mama on the old pier before breakfast, then went to the Harbour and saw two steam vessels set off, the first the Brittainia, 2nd the government packet. Walked with Mama and Aunt (Papa and Uncle went to call on Mr. Stride) through the streets home, then had a donkey chaise and went up to the castle, which consists of a grand keep which is a square tower with a square tower at each corner. It is surrounded with a yard, barracks among which is the governor's house, and a walk, then a deep foss over which is a draw bridge and an outer wall. An old warder shewed us over the castle—there were no guns mounted—all the magazines were full—only 7 soldiers there now. We saw the old keys of the castle and an old Roman sword of state and 2 Elizabeth pocket Pistol 8 ins. long, and part of the old towers and walls of Hubert de Berg. From the cliff a fine view of the town and the coast of France—there are there piles of canon balls and shells.

When we came down I walked with Papa to look at the shaft which is a winding staircase, round a *well* with windows looking into it, reaching from the top to the bottom of the cliff. Then to the Eagle Steam packet, went all over it—in it

<sup>11</sup> Steam vessels were first used on the Channel crossing in 1821.

we found Uncle, Aunt, Mama and H. Looked at the Steam Engine, which is two connected, each equal to 20 horse power—waited to see it set off for Ramsgate. Dinner about 4. After dinner went down to the beach the Sovereign, 'no faith', the Monarch packet come in. It anchored some distance from the beach and the Dover boats went off to fetch the passengers. Then there was a fine bit of fun, all the Inn Keepers crowding round the passengers as they landed to ask them to their hotels and the custom house officers inspecting etc. Afterwards Uncle, Papa, H. and I walked round the bason thro' the town home. Tea at 7. The keep of the Castle was built in William 1st's time and the barracks round to George 2nd—the older part by the Saxons. The magazines are excavated in the Chalk, the shaft up the cliff was built by government and leads up to the Barracks on the top.

[8]

Wednesday 24. Got up in the morning H. and I went up and down the Shaft then with Uncle Sikes to the old pier—then breakfast—set off about 10 to Ramsgate through Walmer, Deal and Sandwich. Stopt at Walmer and walked to see the Castle which belongs to the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, at this time Lord Liverpool.<sup>12</sup> The Castle is near the sea and is built in the form of a circle with some smaller ones bulging from it. The Top is planted as a garden. We then had lunch at Mr. Brich's. Mr. Pitt<sup>13</sup> used to live at Warmer [*sic*] castle, he had the modern part of the dwelling built and the shrubberies planted. At Deal a castle like Walmer. The town is large and the streets narrow—changed horses there. Sandwich seems a clean town, it used to be fortified, there is an old gateway on the Canterbury road.<sup>14</sup>

[9]

Got to King's Head Hotel, Ramsgate 3½, walked on the Piers, saw 2 packets come in, one from France the other from London. Walked on the sands, saw Prince Leopold, the Duchess of Kent and her son and daughter—Prince Feodore.<sup>15</sup> Dinner 5½. The Piers are fine structures begun by Smeaton and continued by Rennie and not quite finished yet. At the end of the western pier is the light house. Capt. Cotton is one of the principal trustees.

[10]

A little beyond Sandwich, Richborough castle an old Roman ruin.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool, 1770-1828, Prime Minister.

<sup>13</sup> William Pitt, 1759-1806, Prime Minister.

<sup>14</sup> See *Arch. Journal*, vol. 86 (1929), 289-90 and also plate XV.

<sup>15</sup> The Duchess had two children by her first husband, Charles Frederick, b. 1804, Prince of Leiningen and Anne Feodorowna, b. 1807. Her brother Leopold became King of the Belgians.

Thursday 25. Went down to the Sands then Papa took H. and I to see the Lighthouse which has oil lights [argond lamps, *inserted*] each having a polished reflector behind it—lighted when there is 10 ft. of water at the entrance. Then we went up the Western cliff, then home. Then H. and I went down to the Sands to Mama, Uncle and Aunt. Saw the Prince and little princess Alexandrina Victoria<sup>16</sup> riding on a donkey, attended by 2 grooms and ladies. Set off at 12 for Margate through Broadstairs where we saw Mr. Mrs. and Miss Twining who were staying there. Got to York Hotel, Margate, looking into the Harbour 1½. Walked on the pier which is smaller than that of Ramsgate, but handsome, with a small lighthouse at the end. Walked up the cliff, bought shells, dinner at 3. Saw the Eclipse by steam come in. I walked with Papa up the town and down the town, the toll for walking on the pier is 1d. a day for each person.

- [11] Friday 26. Set off about 8½ to Kings Head, Canterbury where we arrived 11½. Walked to the Cathedral which is a fine building but some of its towers are much spoiled by having their tops [ . . . ].<sup>17</sup> The inside is being handsomely repaired by the Dean and Chapter. On the right hand side of the high tower is St. Michael's chapel w[h]ere several warriors are buried; on the left the dean's chapel from which is a door to the cloisters on the left of the nave. Behind the altar is the chapel of the Holy Trinity or Becket's, in it was Becket's tomb which Henry 8th burned, and the Steps worn by the feet of pilgrims and the stones hollowed out by their knees, the tombs of Edward the Black Prince and Henry 4th and a very rich East Window. The Quire is made of Oak, the screen behind the altar was given by Q. Mary, but the face of it is now reversed being thought too popish. The oak-carving is by Gibbon, the small pillars about the niches etc. of the Cathedral are of Petworth marble. Under the quire is St. Mary's chapel [*written above the crypt struck through*] and the French protestant church given by Q. Elizabeth.

[12]

The service on week days is performed in the chapter houses without music. The roof of this place is of Irish oak, the Dean's set is of stone with a curiously worked cushion. In Becket's chapel is an old stone throne on which the Saxon Kings were crowned and where the archbishops are enthroned. On the side of the chapel is H[enry] 4's private chapel. In the high tower is the great Bell Harry. The architecture is very

<sup>16</sup> The future Queen Victoria, b. 1819.

<sup>17</sup> There is a gap at this point but the letters 'dec.' have been added in pencil.

mixed, but much of it Saxon, the cathedral was founded by Ethelbert.

On each side of the entrance to the quire are 3 statues of Kings, on the right 3 Edwards, on the left Ethelbert with a model of the cathedral, King John and another. In the nave is a staple to which [?] Odo tied his horses. The roof all over the cathedral is very beautiful. Canterbury is a county and town of itself.

13] Walked on the Dane John's walk on the old wall and up the mount. On the wall are several old towers, then by the castle home. Dined at 3.

There are 16 parishes at Canterbury.<sup>18</sup> Set off at 4 for Sittingbourn through the Westgate of Canterbury by Broughton hill where is a fine view of Isle of Sheppy, by Faversham, thro' Greenstreet and Bapchild. Got to the George, Sittingbourne at 6½, had tea.

In the Cathedral are monuments of Dean Wooton who was minister to E[dward] 6, H[enry] 8, Q[ueen] M[ary] and Q[ueen] E[lizabeth].<sup>19</sup> It was executed by an Italian and is reckoned a very fine piece of sculpture. Dean Fetherby whose tomb is covered with all the human bones carved out in marble.<sup>20</sup>

14] Saturday 27. Breakfasted at 7½, set off about 8½ for Rochester through Newington and Key Street. Arrived at the Bull about 11. Papa and Uncle went to call on Capt. Parry of the Prince Regent, who came and took us, Papa, Uncle, H. and I in the Admiralty barge down to the Prince Regent one of the five largest men of war in the navy, of three tiers of guns of which there were 120, the length of the ship was 230 and that of the mizzen mast from the deck 192. There were 3 tiers of store rooms and four of cabins in the stern: 1st. the captain, 2nd. Admiral, 3 officers, 4, the lowest, the midshipmen. The stores were all placed in exact order. The guns were 32 and 24 pounders, one of the links of the great chain cables weighed about 34 lbs., the full complement of men 900. The captain's and admiral's cabins are very handsomely fitted up with mahogany. On our way we passed by the dockyards and the sheds under which they build ships, and the ships of war that were not wanted laid up in ordinary with covers. Got home just before 5, Captain Parry dined with us.

<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to see how this figure was arrived at. Hasted records twelve parish churches and formerly five others plus the suburbs. The 1881 census indicates the whole or part of 34 parishes as within Canterbury.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Wotton, 1497?-1567, secretary of state.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Fotherby, d. 1619.

In the chain cable is a clever joint to free the Ship from its moorings in case of fire etc. invented by Sir Robert Seppings<sup>21</sup> commissioner of Portsmouth harbour.

- [15] Sunday 28. Went to the Cathedral both morning and afternoon. A minor Canon did the duty alone. Service in the morning at 10½, afternoon at 3. There is a good organ and chanting. The Cathedral is a very old building and was very much spoiled by Cromwell, but has been patched up since. All the brass off the tombs has been taken away. There are tombs of Walter de Merton, Bp. of Rochester founder of Merton Col. Oxford and of Bp. Warner who founded Bishop's College, Bromley.<sup>22</sup> The roof of the nave is of wood and lead, quite modern. Some of the walls are out of the upright and supported by buttresses. Went into the chapter house which is modern, the old one having been burnt down—the cloisters are all destroyed—the altar piece is the angels appearing to the shepherds, by B. West.<sup>23</sup>

After morning service Capt. Parry shewed us his house and the Dean's.

Walked with Papa etc. by the river and thro' the town by the old walls after Evening Service.

Rochester Cathedral looks very poor and dirty after Canterbury and seems as if no one cared about it, there are several old tombs of Bishops and Abbots about the Cathedral, all of which have been opened by O[liver] C[romwell] for rings etc.

- [16] Monday 29. After breakfast at 8½, Capt. Parry came and took us all in the barge to the docks about 2 miles by the river. He first took us to see the saw mills which are moved by steam, some are circular the rest like common ones but cutting 5 or 6 planks from a log at a time. Next we saw logs lifted from the mast pool by an iron machine and carried to the yard by a carriage down an inclined plane—all by steam. The smithery, a large building containing a great many forges where they were making anchors, knees,<sup>24</sup> bolts etc. The slips or sheds under which they were building ships, saw one whose ribs were being put on and another with all its timbers on. The met with Capt. McCleod, then we walked up to Mr. Parkins, the Head Ship Wright who shewed us the model of a ship being launched, and several other models of masts. Left

<sup>21</sup> Sir Robert Seppings, 1767-1840, naval architect, knighted, 1819.

<sup>22</sup> Walter de Merton, d. 1277 and John Warner, 1581-1666.

<sup>23</sup> (?) Benjamin West, 1738-1820, artist.

<sup>24</sup> A piece of metal having an angular bend, used in shipbuilding.—*O.E.D.*



[17] Mama, Aunt and H. at the Surgeons to be recruited, and we went on to the block machines which are not in use, then to the lead mill where we saw lead pressed out and pipes extended and the bore pulled out. Saw the steam engine which moves the saws and timber carriage, it is an 80 horse power. The saw machinery, the timber carriage, the block machines were invented by Mr. Bruell, Capt. Raine's son in law. Among the docks was a new one just made, of granite about 35 ft. deep and 4 below the bed of the river. The Royal George and the Tremendous [84 guns *inserted*] were being built chiefly of English oak, soaked in salt water as an experiment against the dry rot. In digging a new dock they had found two old vessels sunk in the mud. The keel a vessel is built on is always taken off and a new one put on before it is used. The keelson is a piece of timber which is placed on top of the keel through its whole length into which the ribs are fastened. Capt. Parry and McCleod dined with us.

[18] Tuesday 30. Set off at 8½. Uncle and Aunt to Clapton and we home through Maidstone and Tunbridge at each of which we changed horses. A few miles from Rochester went down Blue Bell hills by the side of which in a field on the right stands Kit's coity house consisting of a hut built of four large stones [*rough sketch inserted*] supposed to be a druidical tomb. From these hills is a fine view. The country between Rochester and Maidstone is much finer than any we had seen before after we left Tunbridge first, except Folkestone hills. Went up to Bidborough, got home by a little after 1. Dined at 3, rain.

Wednesday October 1. Rain.

|                             |               |    |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----|
| [ <i>Added in pencil</i> ]: | Maidstone     | 22 |
|                             | Charing       | 12 |
|                             | Hythe         | 18 |
|                             | Dover         | 12 |
|                             | Deal          | 8  |
|                             | Ramsgate      | 12 |
|                             | Margate       | 8  |
|                             | Canterbury    | 15 |
|                             | Sittingbourne | 18 |
|                             | Rochester     | 14 |
|                             | Maidstone     | 9  |
|                             | Home          | 22 |

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