

HASTED AS HISTORIAN

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Passing judgment on Hasted as a historian is a subjective exercise, deeply influenced by the time and the viewpoint from which it is carried out. Fashions in historical investigation come and go. They are most effectively revealed when authors, seeking facts that are essential for new research, find the data they require summarized in an old work that has for long been disregarded. When this happens, it is clear that the wheel has turned again; our historical vision of the past has shifted, and attention is directed at facets of history which long neglected authors of the past also viewed perceptively. The precise viewpoint of those earlier writers will have been in some way different, but at least it set them in search of the same facts.¹

Assessing Hasted's *History of Kent*, therefore, is like holding a mirror to the prejudices and preferences of the person and the age that judges him afresh: the exercise has to be carried through with a clear view of the bias contained in that judgment. Furthermore, since no single individual has the knowledge or insight to evaluate with the same discernment every page of Hasted's massive work, every attempt at an assessment is partial. The present writer is especially diffident on that score. Hasted has been studied much more intently by Alan Everitt, who wrote the introduction to the new edition, when it was reprinted in 1972. He was studied more thoroughly still by John Boyle, who pored for countless hours over Hasted's manuscripts and final text, and brought to light a great deal that was hitherto unknown about the man and his methods. At the end of a fine detective story, he uncovered much original information about Hasted as a historian.²

¹ This essay is the revised text of a lecture originally given at a one-day symposium on Edward Hasted, arranged by the Kent Archaeological Society at Sutton-at-Hone, November 23rd, 1991.

² Alan Everitt, Introduction in Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, Reprint of the second edition, Canterbury, 1972; John Boyle, *In Quest of Hasted*, Chichester, 1984.

Nevertheless, fresh insights are always possible. One of the least offered here derives from an experience not entirely unlike that of Hasted, that of being involved for nearly forty years in a large publishing venture. Work of a prolonged kind, on a similar scale, teaches many of the same lessons learned by Hasted. While the work itself leads to fresh discoveries, it also steadily alters viewpoints; yet, the toiler in the field must of necessity adhere to the structure of the original plan. In his long march to the end of the history of every parish in Kent, Hasted must often have wished that he had arranged things differently, even perhaps wished to step aside and do other things.³

In Hasted's persistence, however, lay one of his strengths; the highest tribute has to be paid to him for completing his heroic work. Historians who have worked in detail on counties (like Lincolnshire), which lack such a county history, know the good fortune of those who study Kent.⁴ The tribute to Hasted must be even more fulsome when the unusually complex manorial history of Kent is recognised. The parish of Hadlow, for example, far from unusual in its structure, has some seven to ten small manors;⁵ it poses an entirely different historical problem from parishes in some Midland counties where one manor often spans the whole of one parish, and where, at worst, parishes generally have no more than three or four manors. The contrast illuminates the magnitude of Hasted's task in trying to identify all the owners in all Kent parishes through all the ages.

A further tribute needs to be paid to Hasted's striving for accuracy. Some of his informants expressed harsh words about his mistakes, but no matter how many errors of fact one may find, Hasted undoubtedly strove hard to supply a correct record. Corrections at the end of volume IV demonstrate an almost finicky concern. One correction tells us that at the burial of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1575, his bowels were deposited near the remains of his wife in the Howard chapel in Lambeth church. The main text shows this to be a somewhat fussy correction. In fact, Parker instructed in his will that his bowels be buried in the Duke's chapel in Lambeth church, and his body in the chapel of Lambeth Palace.⁶ The change was evidently deemed

³ The author is General Editor, volume editor, and part-author of *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 8 vols., Cambridge, 1967-.

⁴ The author's first published work surveyed the agriculture and society of Lincolnshire. See *English Peasant Farming. The Agrarian History of Lincolnshire from Tudor to Recent Times*, London, 1957.

⁵ Hasted, 2nd edn., [henceforward = O for octavo] V, 177-93.

⁶ Canterbury Cathedral Archives (= CCA) Irby Deposit, U11, 430, pages unnumbered; Hasted, 1st edn., [henceforward F for folio] IV, p. 46 of corrections at end of vol., and p. 741. Hasted's accuracy in text and maps is examined in considerable detail, and

necessary, in part to correct the name of the chapel, show the separation of bowels from body, and also, perhaps, because no one could be certain that the testator's wishes were actually carried out. Hasted's work required thousands of facts to be discovered, transcribed, and checked, calling for monumental dedication and patience. Like every other historian, he must often have wished he were a novelist.

Hasted's *History* poses a further problem, since, as John Boyle has shown, the first edition was his work, but not all of the second, which was much revised and rearranged by others. Yet, the second edition is the most readily available, and the first edition relatively rare. Close reading of the second edition produces self-revealing sentences, which have to be checked in the first edition to see if Hasted really wrote them. In the account of Waldershare church in Eastry Hundred, for example, judgment is passed on an altar tomb, with figures of a man and woman described as being 'out of all proportion and conspicuously absurd', while in the east window appear 'several female figures, which seem singularly indecent, at any rate very improper for the place'. Was this Hasted's observation, or someone else's? It proves to have been Hasted himself, though in the first edition the sentence appeared less conspicuously in the footnotes. In the second edition it was given the more prominent position in the main text, perhaps in a deliberate attempt to awaken the reader from an otherwise dull narrative.⁷ But to attribute even those words to Hasted is a bold conjecture for, as John Boyle has shown, Hasted incorporated whole passages that were contributed by others, and in this Hundred he was especially indebted to William Boys and William Boteler for their help.⁸ So while such unusually outspoken comments were inserted by Hasted, they may not have been his original ideas.

The pure and unadulterated Hasted, even in the first edition, is an elusive character. Nevertheless, to dwell overmuch on this point involves distortion, for a great deal of the first edition survives in the second. At the parish level, however, the two texts need to be read with some care, in order to collect all the factual information available. Statements in the first edition were omitted in the second, sometimes to economize in length, sometimes because they were no longer true.

favourably judged, in G.H. Burden, 'A Critical Appraisal of Edward Hasted's View of the Geography of Kent, 1797-1801, in the Light of other Material relating to eighteenth-century Kent', M.Phil. Arts thesis, London University, 1973. But the survey does not distinguish between the contents of the first and second editions. Robert Pocock, the historian of Gravesend, 1760-1830, claimed to have found 2,000 errors. - Everitt, Introduction, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

⁷ Boyle, 92-101; Hasted, O-X, 59-60; F-IV, 193.

⁸ Boyle, 18-24, 98.

Wives' names and identities were frequently omitted, the editors of the second edition brushing them aside more readily than did Hasted. At Waldershare a long list of rectors and vicars going back to the thirteenth century in the first edition was omitted in the second edition, where the list of vicars only started in the early eighteenth century. On the other hand, a noticeable addition was made in the second edition, namely, the number of poor supported constantly, or casually, in each parish. The acquisition of new information, coupled with a certain shift of interest, allowed the inclusion of these figures in the second edition, whereas Hasted's analysis of the social classes in the first edition had not acknowledged the existence of poor in Kent.⁹

Although an assessment of Hasted as a historian rests squarely on his published work, his manuscripts reveal him also as the failed historian of a History of Sequestrations in the Civil War. His notes contain a large quantity of transcribed documents on Parliament's sequestrations of the property of royalists in the 1640s, covering many counties of England, and not only Kent. The Hasted manuscripts, bought by the British Library, include the text of the work he intended, with an Introduction, and interspersed comments as Hasted set out the documents relating to different counties. If this work had been published as it exists in manuscript, it would not have enhanced Hasted's reputation as a historian of judgment. It shows him to have been a diligent transcriber, but lacking in the skill needed to weave the documents into an integrated history of the whole subject, and to make a judicious, objective assessment at the end. His introduction to the sequestrations is obsessed with the notion of plunder. 'The many actions of these men', he wrote, 'are the subject of the following sheets, which are transcribed from their own papers, wherein it will be seen how much they abused their trust, how difficult it was to bring them to account, how often they were changed, what immense estates most if not all of them acquired by this plunder, and the whole of their iniquitous proceedings will be laid open'. The text then begins with many pages of the sequestration ordinances, followed by random documents county by county. One of these, which Hasted intended to print in full, was an inventory of the goods of the Earl of Cleveland at Toddington, Bedfordshire, in 1644. It is a revealing list of a nobleman's possessions, but not relevant to a history of sequestrations.¹⁰

It would be unjust, however, to judge Hasted on the basis of a

⁹ Comparing the wives' names, see, e.g. Hasted, O-V, 179-81, with F-II, 312, 314-5; for names of rectors and vicars, see O-X, 61 with F-IV, 193-4. For poor relieved, see e.g. O-V, 194. For Hasted's silence on the existence of poor, see O-I, 301-3.

¹⁰ BL Add. MS 5491, ff. 2ff, and Add. MSS 5494, 5497, 5508.

manuscript which he may have regarded only as a preliminary draft. Moreover, it was doubtless a work planned in his younger days. But the absorption in documents for their own sake, and a one-sided view of the subject as a whole recurs in a modified form in the *History of Kent*. There, however, both characteristics are more acceptable, since the history of a county on the eighteenth-century model called for documents to be assembled in mass, and in all such cases authors were inspired with the same fierce local pride that Hasted expressed for his native county of Kent.¹¹ In describing sequestrations during the Civil War, however, no scholar who dismissed them at the outset, and without qualification, as plunder could claim to be a balanced historian of sound judgment.

The *History of Kent* was the product of Hasted's riper years, and, as he explained, resulted from the encouragement he received when meeting Dr Littleton, Bishop of Carlisle and President of the Antiquarian Society, and Dr Ducarel, librarian at Lambeth Palace. His many friends, and the many helpers who subsequently supplied him with documents and summaries, led him to arrive at more mature conclusions. The fact remains, however, that the final work was of a kind calling more for the diligent collection of documented facts than for spacious, long-considered judgments. Hasted is best judged, therefore, on the task to which most of his energies were devoted, namely, the collecting and presenting of documentary evidence. With this agenda, the following remarks are divided among three headings: first, under literary style; second, under content; and, finally, under absent content, where regard is paid to what one might reasonably expect to find in Hasted's work, but which is missing.

Style is a major attribute in the writing of history, for a narrative can make dull reading, or can bring a subject to life in a phrase. Hasted does not emerge well from this test. His style is flat and virtually colourless. Occasionally, a sardonic remark creeps in, but only furtively. Referring to Archbishop Cranmer's surrender to Henry VIII of some of the best church lands, Hasted explained that it was by way of exchange, 'if it could be called so', he added.¹² He would, doubtless, have liked to call it plunder, as did W.G. Hoskins in the title of his book on Henry VIII's reign, *The Age of Plunder*.¹³ But perhaps maturity in his later years restrained him. The remarks already quoted about Waldershare church briefly light up another narrative, but such occasions

¹¹ Pride in Kent is at its most fulsome in F-I, dedicated to William Pitt in 1798, and describing Kent as 'the county which stands foremost in the rank of all others, so deservedly proud of its preeminence in every respect'. Hasted, F-I, Dedication.

¹² O-VI, 66.

¹³ W.G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder. The England of Henry VIII, 1500-1547*, London, 1976.

are rare. In other parishes, the family descents proceed unrelentingly (in Sevenoaks, for example), and on page after page fact is piled on fact without a stirring of curiosity, or an aside expressing interest in an individual, to break the boredom. In the account of Sevenoaks Hasted referred to 'some famous silkmills' at Bradbourne of Peter Nonaille. Plainly a Frenchman, Nonaille's identity stirred no questions, not even a brief reference to the association of the French with silkmaking in Kent.¹⁴ The Earl of Dorset *circa* 1612 sold Sevenoaks manor and Knole, with its park and more besides, to Henry Smith, citizen and alderman of London. Smith was astonishingly generous in his benefactions to the poor in many Surrey parishes, as Hasted made clear. He recited all the money sums and many of the names of the parishes, taken (one assumes) from his will. Yet, no questions are asked about the origins, the career, or even the trade of this unusual man.¹⁵

Not only is Hasted's style flat; his descriptions of people are formal. Even when they are more discursive, even florid, they are in conventional language, showing no personal engagement in depicting the character of a breathing, human being. Mentioning the Sackvilles, Hasted referred to Sir Richard and his son, Thomas Sackville, first Lord Buckhurst at Knole. Thomas he described as having been 'a very fine gentleman as well in his person as in his endowments both natural and acquired. He was in his youth without measure lavish and magnificent'. The description continues in the same vein, and it does not sparkle. In fact, Hasted is paraphrasing a contemporary description of Lord Buckhurst and his family, which is found in Sir Robert Naunton's *Fragmenta Regalia*. But Naunton's language was infinitely livelier. Naunton reported Richard Sackville's nickname as Fillsack because of his great wealth and vast patrimony. Thomas, in his turn, was excellent with his pen, and, wrote Naunton, 'his secretaries did little for him . . . [for] he was so facete (*sic*) and choice in his phrases and style.' Naunton offered a yet more colourful anecdote. Thomas was unusually decorous in handling his suitors; his attendants kept a roll of their names with the date of their first approaches to him. Thus, they received a hearing in strict order 'so that a fresh man could not leap over his head that was of a more ancient edition except in the urgent affairs of the state.' Here is a lively, memorable thumbnail sketch, far superior to Hasted's lump of lead. Yet, Hasted must have known Naunton's text for one of his volumes of manuscript notes was the whole text, now preserved in the British Library.¹⁶

¹⁴ O-III, 61.

¹⁵ O-III, 71-2.

¹⁶ Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, (Ed.) J.S. Cerovski, Washington, 1985, 78-9; Hasted O-III, 77; BL Add. MS. 5499.

On content Hasted scores a far higher mark. It is plain from John Boyle's book and from Hasted's own notes that he scoured such documents and catalogues as were then available in the British Museum, in the Tower of London, at Lambeth Palace, in the cathedral archives at Canterbury, in private collections, and in printed books. He engaged in personal correspondence with landed families, as well as relying heavily on professional informants and searchers.¹⁷ The pages of information on the descents of property readily reveal the quantity of facts which he unearthed and managed to weld together into an orderly narrative. In west Kent where his knowledge and sources of information were weaker than in east Kent, he found material from a multitude of scattered sources, and, through his manuscript notes, it is possible to see how he welded disparate facts together to make a continuous narrative, refraining, frequently, from drawing attention to the gaps of many years, perhaps a century and a half between each fact. In Hadlow, for example, he followed the ownership of its many small manors by diligent search in the Exchequer and other public records, and a neat filing system in his finely-written notebooks, arranged alphabetically by parish, reminded him of the source for every fact. It may be called scissors and paste work, but that is nine-tenths of the task involved in compiling a county history.¹⁸

With regard to content, it is sometimes said that Hasted was obsessed with the genealogies of landed families and with the church.¹⁹ But it was the convention of the age, and Hasted depended on the gentry to buy his books. Since these families fed him with a mass of valuable information, he needed their co-operation, and was obliged to requite them with a certain prominence in his text. It is true that he spread himself on the well-known and influential families, and was content to throw in a name and move on when meeting the lesser known landowners. But two hundred years later, when we have access to far more documents, the problems remain of uncovering the identity of the modest families who did not spawn a great kindred, or survive over many generations. Historians still skirt around the task, even though current interest in the social structure of village communities makes it a more urgent necessity. At least, Hasted offers the family name to start a further search.

Hasted's obsession with landed families seems less of an obsession when all his manuscripts are surveyed. The British Library has only 62 out of 122 volumes, but they suggest other interests which never

¹⁷ Boyle, *passim*.

¹⁸ See e.g. Add. MS. 5537.

¹⁹ Everitt, 'Introduction', p. xviii.

emerged as publications. He collected documents on several themes, not only on the sequestrations of the Civil war, but on the seizures by the Commissioners for Prizes taken in the Dutch war, and on stores and ammunition sent to Ireland in the Commonwealth period.²⁰ One might reasonably describe him as obsessed with certain aspects of the Civil war and Commonwealth period. But they were not some of the central political issues, as seen at the time or since. Rather, they were eccentric, outside the mainstream of current interests among his contemporaries, and in the end no book emerged.

In the late twentieth century historians may welcome, rather than criticise, Hasted's minute concern with landed families. Some of his information was readily available to him then, which we do not find so readily now. But another stronger reason lies in the shifting sands of current historical concerns. A common complaint was directed in the 1950s–1970s at the format of the *Victoria County History*, that it shed the brightest light on the landowners and their genealogy, and on the church, leaving economic life and the other social classes out of sight. But a significant change of attitude is becoming discernible. When economic and social development receives attention nowadays, a deeper understanding is shown for the influence which landowners exerted, in the short and long term, over the social structure, and economic organisation of individual parishes. From the very beginning of any study of an individual parish, therefore, it is essential to know the principal landowner. The family network is the bedrock of primary information on which to build an understanding of the shape, structure, and development of the village community. If the owner was non-resident, he usually exercised a fairly slack oversight over the tenantry. Though this was not always true of ecclesiastical owners, nor of all lay landlords, an absentee could never control matters as closely as a resident. If non-residence persisted over many generations, it could leave a permanent stamp on the settlement pattern and structure of the parish. Similarly, a change from a non-resident to a resident manorial lord could produce a dramatic transformation.²¹ A new book by Lawrence Biddle on the village of *Leigh in Kent, 1550–1900*, well illustrates this turn of events. Hasted in 1778 believed that 'the village [of Leigh] hath nothing worth notice in it'. At the time of writing, he could perhaps have justified this drab description: it was a poor village,

²⁰ BL Add. MSS. 5500, 5501, 5508.

²¹ For recent work, see B.A. Holderness, 'Open and Close Parishes in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries', *Agricultural History Review*, 20, ii, 1972, 125–39; D.R. Mills, *Lord and Peasant in nineteenth-century Britain*, London, 1980; S.J. Banks, 'Nineteenth-century Scandal or twentieth-century Model? A new Look at "open" and "close" Parishes', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XLI, i, 1988, 51–73.

the centre of a number of farms occupied by tenants who paid rent to non-resident owners. But soon afterwards a gentleman moved in, the old manor house was pulled down, a new Georgian manor house was built, and the poor hamlet became a Victorian estate village. In short, a radical change was wrought in the appearance and the social structure of the place.²²

Viewed more broadly still, landowners can be seen to have influenced the sizes of farms, the farming specialities on their estates, the numbers of labourers, the numbers of poor, and the presence or absence of industries. The significance of studying the gentry when considering the development of local resources is further underlined if their fluctuating numbers are taken into account. A historian of Somerset has counted the numbers of gentry in the county at different dates, showing 150 families in 1569, and 352 in 1623. These are rough and ready figures only, but they imply profound changes in those villages which acquired a resident gentleman where none had lived before. Others even acquired a cluster of gentry at this period, either living in different hamlets in the same parish, or competing for power in one village. More counting of this kind remains to be done in the future, but already interest in this subject has produced a study of Norfolk and Suffolk showing significant change in the numbers of gentry in those two counties, rising to a peak in the middle seventeenth century, and declining after 1700.²³ Hasted, in short, laid an essential foundation for the late twentieth-century historian of economic and social development: one of the first questions to be asked in any parish concerns the identity of the landowners in shaping its development.

In another respect, Hasted offers information which falls into line with rising current interests. He gives long lists of the incumbents of the churches in Kent. These offer invaluable raw data for the study of pluralism in the church, a subject which has not hitherto attracted research, even though the computer offers a fine opportunity to measure its scale statistically. It could shed much fresh light on the religious and educational consequences in individual parishes of an incumbent's absence. Now the opportunity is being seized at Leicester University: a large investigation into pluralism is starting, and the computer can devour the information in Hasted, which has lain inert for so long.²⁴

²² Lawrence Biddle, *Leigh in Kent, 1550-1900*, Leigh, 1992.

²³ The subject is discussed in Joan Thirsk, 'The Fashioning of the Tudor-Stuart Gentry', *Bulletin John Rylands Library*, 72 (1), 1990, 73-5. For the Norfolk and Suffolk gentry, see Nigel Wright, 'East Anglian Gentry Homes', *Newsletter of The Centre for East Anglian Studies*, University of East Anglia, July 1988, 2-3.

²⁴ *Newsletter of Friends of the Department of English Local History*, no. 4, 1991, 7.

The absence of certain themes from Hasted's *History of Kent*, when set against the background of his age, yields further insights into his personality, and the breadth of his historical concerns. Certain omissions are conspicuous and regrettable. Every local historian nowadays is expected to start the history of a parish with a description of its location, soils, farming specialities, industries, and, if possible, its social structure. An account of the whole population is required, giving some guide to the size of farms, numbers of husbandmen, cottagers, and poor as well as the landowners. Hasted gave an expansive account of the whole county in volume I, written in a mood of county pride, and claiming that Kent had everything. He described the main regions in general terms, obviously basing his remarks on careful enquiry, but he offered only the briefest words to describe the agricultural or geographical situation of individual parishes. Similarly, his discussion of Kent's social structure is couched in general terms, and not parish by parish; it is thus curiously lacking in balance. Gregory King in 1695 divided the lower ranks of the population (below the gentry) into freeholders of £50 per annum, freeholders of £10 per annum, farmers, cottagers, day labourers and paupers, and (separately in the towns), tradesmen and professions. Hasted described a much leaner structure which was at odds with the real world of his day. He considered yeomen, common yeomen (we would call them husbandmen), and labourers, but the labourers were the sons of yeomen, who by gavelkind would one day inherit family land. There ended his listing of the classes in society. He emphasised furthermore the social harmony between gentry and yeomen, 'the good will and kindness from the one sort to the other', as he phrased it, and he did not take even a first look at the poor. Plainly, he was deeply interested in gavelkind, and it received ten full pages of discussion, showing that Hasted had read as fully as possible on the matter. He even listed all the private acts disgavelling the lands of individual landowners, prompting in the reader the question, though Hasted did not raise it himself, why forty-four Kent landowners were gathered together in one act in 2-3 Ed. VI to disgate their lands, when usually such acts were procured singly.²⁵ But in his view of the agricultural situation and the social composition of Kent villages Hasted was plainly out of line with some of his contemporaries, and out of line with some earlier writers whose books lay before him as he prepared his own. From the very beginning of his work he had among his models Robert Plot's *Natural History of*

²⁵ Hasted O-I, 265-71, 293-302, 311-21. Hasted evidently reminded himself to take notes on soil, situation, and husbandry. See Boyle, 107. On social structure, compare Gregory King, in *Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents*, (Eds.) Joan Thirsk and J.P. Cooper, Oxford, 1972, 768.

Oxfordshire (1677), and *A Natural History of Staffordshire* (1686). Plot, moreover, had a special claim on Hasted's attention, for he came of a Kentish family, of Sutton Barn, in Borden, and had himself planned to write a *Natural History of Kent*. Hasted had the benefit of his MSS which lie in Hasted's own collection.²⁶

Plot in his work had announced firmly: 'I intend not to meddle with the pedigrees or descents either of families or lands'. Instead Pliny's *Natural History* was his model, with the result that he had chapters on waters, earth, stones, plants, and antiquities. Plot sent out questionnaires in order to gather local information, asking about soils, grains, crop rotations, farm implements, minerals, and industries, and his approach was so much in the same tradition as that established, and accepted, by members of the Royal Society from its foundation in 1660, that Plot was elected a Fellow of the Society after his *Oxfordshire* volume appeared. Indeed, he became the Society's Secretary in 1682.²⁷

Plainly, Hasted did not move in a circle which included members of the Royal Society. If he had, it is likely that his plan for Kent would have been modified to accommodate more of what was called at the time the natural history of the county. He was not unaware of this alternative viewpoint. John Thorpe of Bexley sent him several pages on rare plants found in Kent, explaining exactly where each grew. But the information went unused.²⁸

So while Hasted must have seen many of the newly published works on agriculture and natural history as he scanned the libraries for books which he did read, like Somner or Robinson on gavelkind, they plainly did not engage his particular interest. Yet, Kent was in the forefront of improving agriculture; the very first farmers' club known to historians was the Faversham Farmers' Club, set up in 1727. And when John Banister, a gentleman farmer of Horton Kirby, Kent, published his *Synopsis of Husbandry* in 1799, he mentioned the spate of treatises on agriculture issuing from the press. It is almost as if Hasted read Plot's announcement that he was concentrating on natural history and not pedigrees, and Hasted resolved to do exactly the reverse.²⁹

²⁶ BL Additional MS. 5537; O-VI, 69-71, esp. 70 footnote; Everitt, Introduction, *op. cit.*, p. xvi; D.A. Baker, 'A Kentish Pioneer in Natural History: Robert Plot of Borden, 1640-96', *Trans. of Kent Field Club*, III, part 4, 1971, 213-24.

²⁷ R.A. Butlin, 'Plot's Natural History of Staffordshire: an Appraisal', *North Staffs. Journal of Field Studies*, vol. 2, 1962, 89.

²⁸ BL Additional MS. 5490, f.2v.

²⁹ *Agrarian History of England and Wales, V, ii, 1640-1750*, (Ed.) Joan Thirsk, 574; John Banister, *Synopsis of Husbandry*, London, 1799, p. v.

Yet, Hasted's decision did not pass without opposition. An implied criticism from his contemporaries lies in the changed content of the second edition of his *History of Kent*, over which Hasted himself had less control. John Boyle believes that Hasted may have had a hand in reducing by about a third the historical matter in the second edition. But others made additional changes in line with new policies, and those resulted in a notable lengthening of the agricultural descriptions of the parishes. John Boyle reckons that 56 out of 80 parishes in volume I of the first edition, and 67 out of 115 in volume II were virtually described afresh in the second edition. Moreover, lively descriptions and local colour crept into those new accounts, in contrast with some of the drab statements by Hasted about parishes that in his view had nothing worthy of notice. Especially lengthy were the new accounts covering Wealden parishes.³⁰

Knowing the way farming procedures were being enquired into, and written about, in the 1780s and 1790s, we should not be surprised that the revisers of Hasted for the second edition silently expressed their criticism of him by giving much fuller accounts of the agricultural situation of individual parishes. The Board of Agriculture had embarked in 1793 on a plan to publish a general view of the agriculture of every county, and every writer which it commissioned started by sending out questionnaires to local informants.

The author commissioned for Kent to write its *General View of Agriculture* was John Boys, and the first edition of this work appeared a year later, in 1794. John Boys was presumably a member of the large Boys clan, as John Boyle suggests, but the Boys had seventeen branches. John was not closely related to William who was one of Hasted's leading informants, and the writer on Sandwich: a note in the Irby deposit rather deliberately disclaims any relationship.³¹

John Boys was a farmer at Great Betshanger, the Boys family home, and had been farming there since 1771. In his *General View*, Boys leaned heavily on Hasted's *History* when he had to make generalisations about Kent as a whole, when writing, for example, on Estates, Tenures, and Population in broad terms. Indeed, he quoted Hasted verbatim in many places. On Minerals he quoted him for three and a half pages, but the quotations diminished as he plunged deeper into farming matters.³²

For his part Hasted's second edition showed full awareness of John

³⁰ Boyle, 93 ff.

³¹ John Boys, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Kent*, 1st edn. 1794, 2nd edn. 1805; Boyle, 67; CCA, Irby Deposit, U11, 430, letter dated 25 Feb., 1800.

³² Boys, 6-8, 22-5, 37, 207.

Boys's existence. Additions in volume 10 of the second edition mentioned that Boys had written the *General View of Agriculture*, and identified the manor farm at Betschanger where he was living. Volume 9 had been even more fulsome, mentioning under Northbourne that Little Betschanger manor was in the hands of the Boys family, and naming John Boys as the present occupant whose scientific knowledge in husbandry was well known, especially through the publication of the *General View* (though the writer evidently did not have the book beside him because he did not know the correct title). A letter in the cathedral archives, however, corrects some of this information about John Boys.³³

Who was the author of the changes in the second edition? John Boyle offers discerning remarks about the identity of this anonymous person, deciding that two different people were at work. One writer, in Boyle's opinion, was more cultured, and less prone to use clichés. The second editor he calls Mr Cludge because he uses the word 'cludgy' for the first time to describe the soil at Boxley. As this sounds like the usage of someone from a farming background, it is tempting to wonder if John Boys had a hand in this re-writing, thus explaining the sensitive and colourful descriptions of landscape. But although John Boys cited Hasted so much in his own book, he gave no hint of having contributed anything to Hasted's work, nor did Hasted's work thank him for any help. Boys called himself in his *General View* unlettered, though plainly he was not, or he would not have written his book. But he also added that he was 'immersed in the cares of a numerous family and an extensive business', which we may well believe. Finally, he seems to be ruled out of the role of editor, part editor, or author of passages in the second edition, because he would have known the correct title of his own *General View*; surely, he would not have allowed that blunder to pass?³⁴

Nevertheless, an indirect association between the Boys and Hasted publications cannot entirely be ruled out. Boys proceeded on his agricultural survey by way of a prior questionnaire. Many descriptions of parishes must have fallen onto his desk from informed local people. He acknowledged being better informed on east Kent than on west Kent, and on west Kent explained that he had the help of a middle Kent farmer. It may be significant here that John Boyle notices the rich descriptions of parishes in the Weald. It is not impossible, then, that some of Boys's collections of notes assisted the editors of Hasted's

³³ Hasted, O-X, 440, O-IX, 592; CCA, Irby Deposit, U11, 430, 'Corrections and Additions to 9th vol.', dated 25 Feb., 1800.

³⁴ Boyle, chapter 6, 92ff.; Boys, Preface.

second edition. This speculation cannot be pressed far, but it poses a question to alert future researchers.³⁵

Scrutiny of the Hasted volumes in the British Library, in fact, reveals some of Hasted's personal informants. A more thorough search through these notes could possibly identify more, as could a search for more of the 59 volumes of Hasted which the British Library did not buy. They might well tell more about the whole enterprise. The Irby deposit relates, as John Boyle explains, to the period after 1770 in the writing of the history, and it is strongly focussed on east Kent parishes. The history of west Kent was another world, and called for someone offering quite different information, notably, on the Honour of Clare. Seeing how much help was given to Hasted by two men in east Kent, William Boteler and William Boys, we may justly suspect the existence of other informants supplying information in west Kent. Yet, that world is closed to us, apart from the evidence of documentary references which Hasted himself collected.³⁶

The Hasted story plainly calls for more research from the point of view of its information on west Kent. Scholars writing on east Kent always command the heights of Kentish history because they have far superior ecclesiastical and other records. East Kent, moreover, had a social structure harbouring many gentry who carefully preserved their archives. Even now, John Boyle perpetuates the tradition of historians inspired to look at Kent from a bastion in the eastern half of the county. It is important to underline this emphasis on east Kent in Hasted, in order to galvanise the west Kent historians into looking at his work with this imbalance of knowledge in mind. Hasted's sources of information in west Kent are unclear. The whereabouts of half the Hasted archive is unknown. The two problems are probably interconnected, and should be pursued together.

Among summary judgments of Hasted's work, one of the most waspish was that of Egerton Brydges, one of Hasted's contemporaries and neighbours: 'he had no imagination or sentiment, nor any extraordinary quality of the mind unless memory'. In paying tribute to the work of Hasted, John Boyle, who penetrated deeply into the way Hasted worked, has given the most recent summary, but that, too, is couched in harsh language. He calls him a scissors-and-paste man,

³⁵ Boys, 11; Boyle, 95-7.

³⁶ Boyle, 66-91. John Boyle identifies many of Hasted's informants, who appear in letters to him, and some came from west Kent. But other names appear in Hasted's parish notes (see BL Add. MS. 5537), and have yet to be identified. Boyle notes that three notebooks in Maidstone seem to correspond with volumes not bought by the British Library, but altogether 59 out of 122 volumes of manuscripts (not all, of course, relating to Kent history) were passed over by the British Library.

energetic at seeking out his sources, but attempting no synthesis.³⁷ He had a second-hand wit, and a dormant imagination. Every damning phrase has truth. But the present-day editors of the *Victoria County History* would say that no compiler of a county history has much chance to show his imagination. And as for offering a synthesis, those who embark on a large work, and publish as they go, know that the most original insights are gained at the end, not at the beginning. Authors are not the main beneficiaries of their own encyclopaedic work unless they live long enough to write a sequel. The main beneficiaries are the generations that come after and stand on the shoulders of the first author.

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³⁷ Everitt, Introduction, p. xliii, citing Sir Egerton Brydges, *Autobiography*, I, 1834, 50–51; Boyle, 92.