

A TOUR INTO KENT, 1759

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THE examination of accumulations of family papers not infrequently discloses journals and diaries of tours or visits to distant parts. Though these accounts may have little literary or historical merit, they serve often enough to introduce the personality of the writer or to bring once more into perspective the outlook of a particular age.

Of such a character is the little journal printed below: it adds little to our historical or topographical knowledge; its author was no Pepys or Boswell; nevertheless, through its pages we glimpse again the Kent of the expansive eighteenth century. Although it was written during the Seven Years War the writer and his friends could freely visit the dockyards at Chatham or the gun emplacements at Margate, and indeed, but for a passing reference to the French prisoners of war at Sissinghurst, nothing would give us cause to know that this is the year of Minden, Quiberon Bay, and the capture of Quebec.

The family of Mount, prosperous stationers of London, like many of their mid-eighteenth century business contemporaries, sought a suitable country residence and purchased Wasing Place near Aldermaston in Berkshire in the year 1760. It is from the archives formerly stored there that this diary comes. The collection was deposited in the Berkshire Record Office at Reading by the owner, Sir William Mount, Bt., in 1949, and it is through his courtesy and the co-operation of the County Archivist that the diary can now be reproduced for Kentish readers.¹

While the journey which Mr. and Mrs. Mount and their party undertook was mainly one of pleasure, the fact that Mr. Mount owned copperas works at Whitstable was clearly an incentive for a visit to Kent. Their itinerary was simple: from London they followed the Dover road to Gravesend, Rochester, Faversham and Canterbury. A detour to Whitstable was followed by the journey from Canterbury to Margate and so to Ramsgate. There the party divided, one group going by sea and the other by land to Deal, and thence, united again, to Dover. On the return Canterbury was again visited and Ospringe also, but then the party headed for Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells, returning to London by Sevenoaks. The whole journey occupied nine days.

There is little need for editorial comment, but where it seemed

¹ Berks. R.O., D/EMt F5.

necessary notes have been added to the text. The occasionally odd or archaic wording, the vision of the "undeveloped" Margate and Ramsgate, with the figure of Beau Nash in the background, the suggestion of being "humbug'd" by Thomas à Becket's tomb, the roguery of landlords, the importance of the gentry and the largess of the nobility, all display the character of the age from which this whimsical account survives. Of the actual keeper of the diary nothing is known. He maintains a strict anonymity and the original is merely endorsed "For Mr. Mount." The most likely member of the party appears to be Mr. Hunt, for it is improbable that Goodwin would refer to his indispositions in quite the manner recorded, nor from a remark about feminine ingenuity is it likely that any of the ladies was responsible.

In preparing the text capitals, spelling, punctuation and the use of abbreviations with apostrophes have been retained as in the original, on the grounds that by 1759 these things were largely a matter of personal idiosyncrasy and may therefore reflect in some measure the character of the author. Standard abbreviations and abbreviations by superscript letter have been extended or transmuted to their modern form.

1759 May 14

This morning Mr. and Mrs. Mount, Mrs. and Miss Hunt, and Messrs. Hunt and Goodwin set out for a Tour into Kent from Warrington's in the Borough at 7 o'clock, Mrs. Hunt claiming the Arrival there first; Breakfasted at the Red Lyon on Shooters hill being 7 miles. Enjoyed the prospect for about an hour and then proceeded to Gravesend. A fine prospect to the Left almost All the way of the Thames and Medway.¹ Din'd at the Falcon at Gravesend by the water side being about 13 Miles. No Conveniency for horses there. Procured a Turbot from a Dutch Vessell lying at Anchor with other Ships. Had a fine View opposit to the [———] of Tilbury Fort.² Before Dinner All the party but Mr. Mount walkt up to the Windmill on a high hill near the Town, where wee had a glorious View. Merry there, and procured tolerable Appetites for Dinner. Proceeded to the Bull at Rochester, 18 Miles, and before Supper walkt in the City, and had a Sight of Mr. Gordon's house.³ More struck with the outside than with the Appartments. One might here make a moral Reflection. Fine gold, Silver and other fish there, good Tulips, at a non plus about the Aeolian Harp. Lay at Rochester. In this City is the following remarkable Inscription on the front of a very neat and handsome Inn.

¹ This surely is a mistake, no view of the Medway would be possible in this part of the journey and in any case not on the left-hand side.

² A word, possibly "walls," is missing in the original.

³ The Gordon family resided at Boley House, see *Arch. Cant.* XVIII, p. 200.

A TOUR INTO KENT, 1759

Rochester

Richard Watts Esq. first devised 1569

This Releif for Travellers

Six poor travelling Men not contagiously
diseased, Rogues nor proctors, May have
Lodging here one night freely, and every
one fourpence in the morning

The Mayor and Citizens of this City, Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church and Wardens and Commonalty of the Bridge are to see this executed for ever.

Tuesday 15

After Breakfast went to Chatham about two Miles, Saw the Dock and yards. A Review there of a Number of Soldiers made a good Appearance as wee past. Was on Board the Valliant a Man of warr then building, Had many things explained to Us in the Yards by Mr. Hughes, known to Mr. Mount, and wee had the pleasure of being present in the Smith's Shop at the Instant the severall workmen were turning an Anchor of a Man of warr of 4 ton weight then in the fire; All our Attentions were engrossed, as it was a Surprizing thing, and wee were fill'd with horror at the glowing heat of the severall furnaces, and at the Appearances of the Workmen, who with great Dexterity managed the affair; Anchors are made by hammering piece upon piece. Refreshed ourselves at the Rose at Sittingborn. The Assembly is kept here, a good Room and Conveniency for the Musick.¹ Din'd at the Red Lyon at Ospring which is 18 miles. One Mr. March of Faversham joined Us, being an Acquaintance of Mr. Mounts. Made Us Laugh with his Ya-Haws etc. Politely invited Us to Tea at his house, and showed us the way to the Decoy ponds near Faversham. Were much pleased with the walk, and tho' Mr. Mount and Mrs. Hunt chose to ride, yet the party occasionally met; Were Instructed in the manner Wild Ducks are taken, and had Tea at Mr. March's at Faversham—which is a pretty clean Village. Then sat out for Canterbury which is 9 Miles. This Evening Mr. Goodwin had the Blue Devils strong upon Him, a Disorder occasion'd by Various Causes.² He went to bed early, had the honor of a Visit from the Ladies, and to his great mortification, put them to the Rout, by Instantly jumping out of bed to receive Them.

¹ The Assembly referred to was presumably the social gathering common in the eighteenth century.

² Blue-devils: according to *O.E.D.* can be a depression of the spirits or delirium tremens.

Wednesday 16

Took post Chaises to Whitstable about 7 Miles, to View some copperas works belonging to Mr. Mount, greatly entertained at the process. A fine View of the Medway, and of the Island of Sheppey.¹ Bought Shrimps here, and were much pleased with the wife of the Tennant, who is a perfect pattern for Industry and economy. The works were lately repaired and in good order. Returned to Canterbury to Dinner. This day we saw the Cathedral. Were humbug'd at St. Thomas a Becket's tomb. Some fine Monuments in this Church. Walkt in the Deans Yard and about the City. Read an Inscription near our Inn recording the Benevolence of Sir Edward Hales in Conveying water from his park at St. Austin's, for the use of the City.² After Dinner went for Margate, and had the most pleasant ride imaginable, in the Isle of Thanet, having Corn fields perfectly clean, all most All the way which is 16 Miles. Hunt and Goodwin who had staid behind on account of the heat, found the party in the utmost Confusion at Margate, occasioned by a Scarcity of beds, and at the Aspect of the Landlord where they had applied, Goodwin proposed to leave their Quarters and try elsewhere. Happily they were better, tho' indifferently off at one Jewell's, who by the much Intreating of Mrs. Jewell, took Them in, upon the resignation of a bed by a Young Clergyman. Jewell was much how Came You So? tho' tolerably diverting by his humor. One Beale a Quaker the first Inventor of the bathing Machines, and who keeps a Lodging house, was very Civil in walking with Us about the Town. The only persons of Note arrived were Lord Vane and a Mr. Stewart, Son of Admiral Stewart.

Thursday 17

After Breakfast walkt on the Gun Fort, where are 3 Cannon mounted, Could see the North Foreland, and a fine View of the Sea. A Man of War fired a Gun to bring a Vessell too, Had a few Turns on the pier Head, and were much Entertained. Proceeded to Ramsgate, walkt with the greatest pleasure on that part of the pier which is finished. It makes a very long and beautiful walk extending out to Sea. The part done has taken up ten years performance. Saw here only one bathing Machine belonging to Beau Nash.³ The shore not so Convenient for bathing as Margate. Regaled ourselves at a very handsome publick house commanding the Sea, and hir'd an open Vessell of about 3 ton Burthen, to sail with Mrs. Mount, and Miss Hunt and Mr. Goodwin to Deal, which is about 9 or 10 Miles. Persuaded by

¹ Again this view was more probably of the Swale than of the real Medway.

² Bagshaw's *Directory* (1847) refers to the spring in St. Augustine's as one of the sources of the City's water supply.

³ Beau Nash, 1674-1762, by this time a mere pensioner of the City of Bath.

the rest of the party to desist from their Voyage thro' apprehension of Danger. But laying in provisions, after a most solemn and tender parting, They were Launcht to Sea. Expected to be Sea Sick, as they were told by the Ramsgate people, they could not escape, the wind blowing so fresh, and against a strong tide, and therefore the Vessel lyable to be much tossed. Had a most agreeable and safe Voyage to the 3 Kings at Deal, no accident hap'ning to marr their pleasures. Were so delighted that they petitioned for more Such, but could not prevail on the Boatswain who thought it would be dangerous. They experienced in this Voyage Gunnell too.¹ Past Ash, and Sand down Castles and had a fine View of Waldershare Tower, a seat of the Furneses'.² The Rest of the party made Sandwich in their way to Deal, which is 14 Miles by Land arriving an hour or two later than the Sea folks, heartily tired and weary by the sandy way they had travelled through. After Dinner walkt on the Beach. Saw in the Downs opposite to where they Din'd, the Chesterfield, on board whereof Commodore Boys was expected to hoist his flag, A Dutch Indiamen, the Argo Man of War, and Woolfe Sloop and other Vessells riding at Anchor. Hunt and Goodwin ran a Race on the beach which was almost knee deep in Stones. Gathered Sea Weed and past an hour or two in such Amusements. In the Evening went for Dover being 9 Miles. In their Journey they left Deal and Warmer Castles on the left hand, and had a pleasant Ride. More Merry, than Satisfyed about their Supper, the Caterers having too much buoy'd the Company, with a Surprize of Elegancy. Strong debates after Supper, about the Ladies riding Habits—Setled by the Ladies, whose Sex are remarkable for Ingenuity.

Friday 18

When they had breakfasted, took post Chaises for Dover Castle, to ease their own Voitures. Viewed everything remarkable, and from the Tower saw a Review of about 400 of the Soldiers in Garrison, which had a surprizing Effect from that height. Discovered the Spires of Calais, and the hills on the Coast of France. Shakespeares Cliff and the Devils Drop, put them in mind of his beautiful description thereof.³ Were showed the place on the side of one of the Cliffs, where the Lord Warden of the Cinque ports, and the Constable of Dover Castle, (which at present is the Duke of Dorset) is sworn in⁴; A well here of near

¹ Gunnell: *O.E.D.*, a small ell-shaped fish (1686).

² Sir Henry Furnese bought Waldershare in the late seventeenth century and it remained in the family until 1735, when coming to coheirs it ultimately fell to the North family, Earls of Guilford.

³ *King Lear*, Act IV, where Edgar describes the scene to the sightless Gloucester.

⁴ Lionel Cranfield Sackville, first Duke of Dorset (1681-1765), was appointed Lord Warden for life in 1757.

A TOUR INTO KENT, 1759

400 feet Deep. Returned to Dover, and then set out for the old Quarters the Red Lyon at Canterbury which is 16 miles, Refreshing by the way, and going over Barham Downs, whereon are severale fine Seats, belonging to Mr. Oxendon son of Sir George, Sir Thomas Hales, a Mrs. Rooke (mightily fond of law) Mrs. Taylor, Mr. Beckingham and Mrs. Corbet.¹ After Dinner Messrs. Mount and Goodwin paid Visits to some of their friends, and the Ladies and Mr. Hunt entertained themselves in seeing the Silk Looms. Goodwin was again at this place somewhat troubled with his former disorder. Mem: The air of Canterbury does not agree with him.

Saturday 19

After taking Dr. Ward's prescription of Milk and water, Rum Sugar and Nutmeg, they reacht Ospring to breakfast, being 9 Miles, There they were joined by Mr. and Mrs. March, the former whereof, went with the Gentlemen to Faversham, to look at some horses on sale, Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. March, in the Interim walking to one Mr. Pearse's, to see his house and Gardens, Mrs. Mount chose to stay at the Inn. Instead of purchasing, Mr. Mount sold his horse to Mr. March. Proceeded to Maidstone for Dinner, which is 18 Miles, baiting by the way at Hollingbury Hill.² At Maidstone were joined by Mr. Mason, who having bespoke a Regale at the Bull, made them Leave their Quarters at the Star, to partake of a much better Entertainment than the former Caterers had provided. The Roguery of the Landlord of the Star discovered by Mr. Hunt. A Large party of the Black Cuffs were quartered at this place, and are frequently attached to Sissinghurst Castle (where the French prisoners are kept) to relieve those in Garrison there.³ After Dinner were much Surprized and pleased with the severall works and buildings, and the Art of paper making at Mr. Watman's about two Miles walk from Maidstone.⁴

Sunday 20

Mr. Mount and the Ladies while the other gentlemen were dressing; gave them the Slip, and went to the Right Place, the Gentlemen to the Wrong tho' much pleased with the Clergyman's Discourse;⁵ After Dinner All were disposed for coming into the pale of the Church, and

¹ Andrews, Durey and Herbert (1769) indicates Dean, the house of the Oxendon family; Howlet Place, Sir Thomas Hales' residence, and the houses of Beckingham, Taylor and of Mrs. Rook.

² Hollingbury Hill, probably Hollingbourne.

³ Sissinghurst Castle was used for prisoners of war during the Seven Years War who, according to a document in the Kent Archives Office, did more than £360 worth of damage.

⁴ This refers to the Turkey Mill just south of the Ashford road.

⁵ Presumably "the right place" was All Saints Church and "the wrong place" the Congregational Church in Week Street.

were politely seated in the best pews. After their Tea, they rode to the Hon. Mr. Fairfax's at Leeds Castle, being about 6 Miles distance passing in their way Lord Rumney's Seat, and the house of General Belfour, and Mr. Cage.¹ Were an hour or two in the park and walks, and were greatly pleased as both abounded with fine turf and plenty of water and flowering shrubs. The Gardens are free for the neighbouring Gentry. Returned to Maidstone to Supper. Mr. Mason purchased a horse of the Landlord.

Monday 21

Breakfast at an Inn near Merriworth house, a Seat of Lord Westmorland's being about 8 miles. No Conveniency for Lodging at this Inn. Were greatly Entertained for 3 hours and more, with the magnificence of the house and gardens; Saw the Shell Room, and Birds, and the Egyptian piramid. And were entertained at his Lordship's with a Cold Collatian. One of his Grooms attended Them, for a shorter Cut, thro' Esq. Masters grounds, (which were extreamly pleasant) in their way to Tunbridge Town,² No way in regard to the Roads, could be worse, than from Mr. Master's. In Hadley Lane,³ providential Escapes from Bone breaking. Refreshed themselves at Tunbridge Town, and reached the Sussex Tavern at the Wells, which is 13 miles from Merriworth house to Dinner. Mr. Lindo's family, the only persons at the Wells. In the Evening were upon the walks, and amused themselves in the Tunbridge Ware Shops. Visited the Mounts Ephraim, and Zion and Mount Pleasant and the Grove. About two Miles from this place thro' a most wretched Road for Carriages, you come to a place called the Rocks, which are of a stupendious heighth, and romantick appearance.

Tuesday 22

Breakfast at Seven Oak which is 13 Miles, and saw the Duke of Dorset's house and park called Knolle. In the house are above 700 Rooms, the furniture allmost as ancient as the house, but very Superb and grand. Infinite Numbers of pictures. A very fine one of the Ceremony of swearing in the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, the back View whereof is Dover Castle and the Country round; He has been Lord Warden upwards of 40 years. His Grace is so good natured and polite as to give an Assembly once a Week to the Gentry residing near this place. One of the Grooms attended them on Horseback, to show

¹ General Belfort resided at Grove Green, Weaving Street, and Mr. Cage at Milgate.

² "Esq. Masters grounds," the Yokes estate between Meroworth and West Peckham.

³ For Hadley *sc.* Hadlow.

A TOUR INTO KENT, 1759

the principal Views of the park. At this place is a good house belonging to one Esq. Lambert.¹ Din'd at Bromley, and about 7 o'clock set out for London, Mr. Goodwin taking his Leave of the party, at the new Cross Turnpike, to go for Mortlake in Surrey.

On this Expedition the Ladies and Mr. Mount occasionally rode their led Horses, and the Ladies to the great pleasure of the Gentlemen, Expressed the Satisfaction they had received throughout this Tour.

¹ "Esq. Lambert" probably Thomas Lambard, whose residence was just south of Sevenoaks.