

# Herne Bay 1830 – 1880 a failed seaside resort?

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### Abbreviations Used

CCA = Canterbury Cathedral Archives

HBHRS = Herne Bay Historical Records Society

KG = *Kentish Gazette*

MLA = Metropolitan London Archives

## 1: Introduction

Herne Bay is a seaside resort of moderate size located on the north Kent coast. Activity that could be classified as that associated with seaside resorts at Herne Bay dates back to 1770, but a more realistic date for such recognition arguably lies between the dates of 1816 when planned building started, and 1833 when an Improvement Act was obtained by a group of speculators. Whyman states that Herne Bay is a “daughter of the steam ship”, and while this is partially true, clear evidence of resort activity predates this invention by some forty-five years.<sup>1</sup> This is suggestive of an interplay of other factors, including desire and drive from local land owners and opportunities for speculators arising from both local and incoming investment in order to meet a growing demand.

This thesis sets out to examine Herne Bay’s success or otherwise as a seaside resort in the period during the nineteenth century, with a specific focus on the period from 1830 until around 1880. The significance of these dates centres upon the involvement of speculators and the building of the first deep sea pier that opened in 1832 closely followed by the passing of an Improvement Act in 1833. The effect of the 1833 Act was to provide a form of governance over the town’s affairs with varying effectiveness until this was reformed in the early 1880s as a result of provisions contained within the Public Health Act 1875. This time period also includes important transport developments that had a significant effect upon the town.

It can be reasoned that all seaside resorts have their own unique set of circumstances that dictate the patterns of their growth and development over time, but Herne Bay would appear to have claim to a combination of several unique aspects. Both of the works of Walton and later Brodie and Winter, assert that resorts develop in particular ways. Walton states that in general terms the fortunes of resorts were not shaped by accidents of geography and transport, but by their response to a widening range of opportunities.<sup>2</sup> He goes on to assert that in the pre railway era, the rate of growth was strongly influenced by landowners, builders and local authorities. Meanwhile, Brodie and Winter suggest that there are four main groups of nineteenth century resort development; a) lateral extensions to existing towns, b) new developments on untouched stretches of coastline, c) the engulfing of existing towns and d) the coastal development of an inland village.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort – A social history 1750-1914*, (Leicester, Leicester University Press 1983). Allan Brodie and Gary Winter, *England’s Seaside Resorts*, (Swindon, English Heritage, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Brodie and Winter, pp. 19-20.

Referring to these classifications, none of the respective categories are particularly satisfying when considering Herne Bay as a seaside resort. There are combinations of factors that distinguish Herne Bay's evolution and development and right from the start, they have created a distinct character to the resort – one that continues to shape the town that we see today. Referring back to the categories of resort development put forward by both Walton and by Brodie and Winter, the following are seen as the two main indicators of the uniqueness of Herne Bay as a seaside resort: 1) The town was, until 1880, in fact two towns: (a) the “old” town under the control of the mother parish of Herne, a village some two miles inland, and (b) the “new” town, formed by Act of Parliament in 1833, consisting of approximately 100 acres of farmland lying within the ecclesiastical parish boundaries. and 2) the rationale for the “new” town's formation appears to be the seizing of an opportunity by investors to exploit a transport short-cut as much as the intention to create a new resort of some standing. When construction of the pier at Herne Bay was completed and opened in June 1832, this provided a quicker route for transporting people from London to Dover, using sea to Herne Bay and then horse coach via Canterbury for onward travel to the continent. The pier was in fact offering travellers a short-cut and a time saving.

Expanding upon the first point, following the passing of an Improvement Act in 1833, governance of the “new” town was within the control of twenty four Commissioners, each qualified by means of a land ownership or occupation of property over a certain value. However, it is worth noting that based upon the legal rules then in place neither the Commissioners' land nor their main residence was required to be located within the new (or even the old) town boundaries. Although there were perhaps two or three of this group of gentlemen that predominated, none seem to have asserted dominance or control to the extent seen with resort development elsewhere. It will be shown that at times it would appear that the Commissioners were largely apathetic and indifferent to the fortunes of the town, suggestive of the fact that their real interests were perhaps directed elsewhere or maybe they lacked the financial means or belief to pursue their ambitions.

Continuing with this first point, it can be shown that the town experienced several cycles of success and failure, each linked either directly or indirectly to transport improvements. One of these transport developments, connected with the arrival of the railway, took place elsewhere in the county, but the consequences were felt in the town. It is arguable as to the foreseeability of these transport developments and the consequent impact upon the town, perhaps again pointing to a lack of financial means or an element of short-termism on the part of the speculators.

Limited previous work has been undertaken on Herne Bay and this does not appear to have addressed these two factors in any detail. This thesis will look to examine the background and reasons for these assertions and seek to understand if the aims and ambitions of the town were ever fully achieved. This work will be structured in four sections: (a) the emergence of the town as a seaside resort including reference to the resort's visitors (b) an examination of the transport links in particular the distinct stages that came about due to provision and availability (c) governance of the town throughout the period under review with consideration given to the structure, affect and influence, both positive and negative and (d) consideration of the built environment and how this developed and shaped what the resort had to offer.

Regional comparisons will be drawn, in particular with other North Kent resorts with similar geographic attributes and located a similar distance from London. These will include the important early seaside resort of Margate and its near neighbour, Ramsgate together with the later Thanet developments of Birchington, Westgate and Broadstairs. The south coast resorts will be referred to, particularly Brighton due to its importance to the subject, along with St. Leonards, Eastbourne, Bognor Regis and Bournemouth that will be included as comparisons where appropriate.

### **Historiography**

Seaside resorts have received a considerable amount of attention in recent years, with a number of texts having been published by respected researchers over the last half a century or so. Within these titles, a number of approaches have been adopted, ranging from those choosing to cover the subject at national level through to some authors seeking to explain local and regional impacts. Under the general heading of seaside resorts, various more focused topics that have emerged as popular areas for research and debate including the broad headings of social, economic, political, geographic and architectural.

Pimlott's work dating from 1947 on the development of holidays is widely credited with paving the way, followed by more focused works from authors such as Walton and Brodie and Winter.<sup>4</sup> The works of Walton and Brodie and Winter are written in differing styles, with the latter producing a work that is lavishly illustrated to support the text contrasting with Walton's more traditional monograph each reflecting the respective authors' interests and specialist knowledge. A good number of other titles have been published and while these are aimed at the more general reader, they include a useful introduction to the subject, notably those by Manning-Sanders, Hern, Howell,

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<sup>4</sup> John A.R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday*, (London, Faber and Faber 1947). Walton, Brodie and Winter.

and Walvin.<sup>5</sup> These titles with a national focus on the subject have been supplemented by more specialized titles covering particular aspects of the topic, notably those by Cannadine covering class, landownership and the aristocracy, and the work of Ward who provides a valuable overview of the evolution of promotion through the process of proactive selling and marketing, usefully including a specific chapter concerning Health Resorts and Watering Places.<sup>6</sup> The importance of the seaside in English history is recognized by the inclusion of the subject within many of the more general books covering the history of our coastal counties. Regional works have not been ignored and works such as those by Whyman, Stafford and Yates on the Kent resorts and Travis on those in Devon have highlighted the importance of distinct geographical regions in the evolution of resorts and the differences that have become apparent.<sup>7</sup> Whyman has contributed a chapter to an edited volume where he provides a commentary on an anonymous tour dating from 1809 that includes valuable contemporary references to the development and nature of the beach at Folkestone.<sup>8</sup>

Seaside towns have provided a rich source for books with a local focus and as a result individual seaside resorts have received wide coverage, with towns such as Blackpool covered by Walton, Brighton by Gilbert, followed later by Musgrave, Bognor by Young, Bournemouth, also by Young and St. Leonards by Manwaring Baines to name but a few. Naturally the approach of each researcher varies but each emphasizes the importance of the individual locations and how they dovetail into the broader subject heading. Collectively these works have added significantly to our understanding of the how and the why of resort development and the factors contributing to their respective successes and/or failures. Texts covering the economy in Kent in wider terms contain useful references and here the work of Armstrong is noted, particularly the contributed chapter on Kent and the sea by Craig and Whyman where the content discusses the growth of the Kentish seaside and in particular the provision of accommodation for seasonal visitors.<sup>9</sup>

University theses provide a wide source of material covering seaside resorts. Barrett's work "The Seaside towns of England and Wales" compiled with the school of Geography of University of London, 1958, is an early example. More recent university theses look to have moved towards

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<sup>5</sup> Ruth Manning-Sanders, *Seaside England*, (London, Batsford, 1951). Anthony Hern, *The Seaside Holiday*. (London, Cressett, 1967). Sarah Howell, *The Seaside*, (London, Studio Vista, 1974). James Walvin, *Beside the Seaside*, (London, Allen Lane, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> David Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: The aristocracy and the Town 1774-1967*, (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1980). Stephen V. Ward, *Selling Places*, (London, E. and F.N. Spon, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Whyman, *ibid.* Felicity Stafford and Nigel Yates, *The Later Kentish Seaside*, Gloucester, (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1985). John F. Travis, *The Rise of the Devon Seaside Resorts 1750-1900*. (Exeter, Exeter University Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> John Whyman, 'An anonymous tour of 1809', in *Studies in Modern Kentish history*, ed. by Alec Detsicas and Nigel Yates (Maidstone, Kent Archaeological Society, 1983), pp. 139-186 (pp. 178-180).

<sup>9</sup> Robin Craig and John Whyman, 'Kent and the Sea' *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914*, ed. by Alan Armstrong (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1996), pp. 161-204 (pp. 196-204).

examining more of the social aspects of seaside resorts, including some of the difficult issues concerning the attraction of seaside resorts as home for the elderly population and the economically excluded. “Westgate on Sea 1865-1940” by Crouch, provides an excellent detailed insight into the development of a late nineteenth century Kent resort that was facilitated by the provision of a railway service, but strictly controlled by the developer to create a certain air of exclusivity.<sup>10</sup> Local politics has always played an important role in the development of resorts and the work of Morgan and Pritchard is helpful and while this work centres on the resorts of Devon, the similarities with other locations, specifically Kent, can be readily seen.<sup>11</sup> Work by Demetriadi and Agarwal on the tourism aspects of resorts has provided a good overview of the response of resorts and changing fashions in the twentieth century, while a number of more specific articles in journals such as *Urban History* or *Local Historian*, have added to the body of work available on the broad subject of seaside resorts.<sup>12</sup> Work by David Churchill, in his paper on the reaction of residents to the seasonal influx of visitors to Southend, provides an excellent insight into some of the social difficulties experienced within seaside communities.<sup>13</sup> “The Promotion and Pursuit of Health, 1780 – 1880” by Davies, completed in 2008 covers in some detail the importance of public health to both residents and urban authorities.<sup>14</sup> Davies covers the growth in self consciousness, especially concerning appearances and how this was exploited by those manufacturing various pots, potions and pills for all ills.

Although the resort of Herne Bay offers a potentially rich source for study, it seems thus far to have escaped a detailed serious study to consider its development and progress of the small fishing community into the coastal leisure town that it purports to be today. Whitehead’s dissertation on the town’s development in the mid nineteenth century is a notable exception, and provides a solid starting point for expansion of some of the points that he makes, while some certificate level essays completed at Kent on particular aspects of the town are useful for their use of selected sources.<sup>15</sup> This paper seeks to redress this balance and consider if Herne Bay can be considered a success or a failure as a seaside resort in the period up to 1900. This is considered important as the unique factors that have shaped and influenced the development of the resort can aid our wider

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<sup>10</sup> Dawn Crouch, *Westgate on Sea 1865-1940*, Ph.D thesis, University of Kent, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Nigel J. Morgan and Annette Pritchard, *Power and Politics at the Seaside: The Development of Devon's Resorts in the Twentieth Century*, (Exeter, Exeter University Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Julian Demetriadi, *English and Welsh Seaside Resorts 1950-1974, with special reference to Blackpool and Margate*, Ph.D thesis, University of Lancaster, 1994. Shelia Agarwal, *The resort cycle and restructuring: the case of Coastal Tourism in the South of England*, Ph.D thesis, University of Exeter, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> David Churchill, “Living in a seaside town: residential reactions to the growth of popular tourism in Southend: 1870-1890”. *Urban History*, 41 (2014) pp. 42-61.

<sup>14</sup> Tim Davies, ‘The Promotion and Pursuit of Health, 1780-1880’, Ph.D thesis. University of Leicester, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher J. Whitehead, *Herne Bay 1830-1870: a study of the development of an English seaside resort in the mid-19th century*, BA Dissertation, University of Kent, 1971.

understanding and provide a background to the platform for the twentieth century growth of the Herne Bay, in a period the when arguably many seaside resorts experienced their heyday.

The popularity of the subject is evident in the range of journal articles that appear, along with television programs focusing on the nostalgia aspects of the seaside. A conference was held at Margate in May 2014, led by the business school of a major regional university focusing on culture led-regeneration in coastal towns, perhaps suggesting the direction for future research.

### **Background to seaside resort development**

The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the evolution of the English seaside from the preserve of the wealthy seeking a health cure, through its evolution into a resort of the middle classes seeking an escape from crowded city centres and ultimately into a playground for the masses. Starting with the continental spas and their English counterparts, the influences of various medical practitioners will be covered as well as the effects that royalty could have upon their chosen destinations.

Pimlott in his pioneering publication on how the English spent their leisure time, states that “*holidays are as old as human society*” and goes on to explain the connection with and the development from religious feast days.<sup>16</sup> Early on in his book, Pimlott recognised two important aspects of the subject of holidays, those of class and environment. In respect of class, it was a harsh reality that only the upper sections of society were in a position to choose how they spent much of their time, with the majority of the population having minimal spare time or income for anything but essentials. The question of class is relevant to the topic throughout the period covered in this paper and will be treated appropriately in the various chapters. With regard to where people lived and their surroundings, climate, scenery, and similar geographic factors, Pimlott makes the important observation that neither London nor the provincial cities could provide their population with a change in environment.<sup>17</sup> The inference being that a change of scenery was not only seen as being beneficial in the modern sense as a means of relaxation, but importantly to an individual from a health perspective. Although developing slowly, medical science began to recognise the problems caused by overcrowding, poor sanitation, dirty water and the other negative effects of people living so close together in the urban areas. These somewhat unpleasant surroundings led those who could afford to do so, to exercise their ability to move away and resort to somewhere more pleasant, particularly in the warmer summer months.

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<sup>16</sup> Pimlott, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

Coastal locations offer certain attractions where fresh air and open space were readily appreciated then as now and even if the medical science was slow to develop, there must have been an instinctive draw away from the more densely populated areas. Health affects everyone and developments in medical science were of interest to all, even if individuals did not have access to a medical practitioner. This situation would have been no different when professional medical attention started to focus on the potential benefits of mineral waters and a number of spas started to develop in England, particularly after a number of European spas, such as Spa in Belgium or Carlsbad in Germany, had become popular in the seventeenth century.<sup>18</sup> News of the asserted curative properties of the mineral waters from the spas would have spread rapidly and become well known, particularly in fashionable circles where a fortunate few were able to indulge. Printed words would have helped to spread the word within these well to do groups, particularly those places where newspapers were freely available. Even though they would have been excluded on economic grounds, the masses would have been aware of these developments, by observation or particularly where they resided close to a resort and employment opportunities presented them. For many, before the coming of the railway network in the 1840s and the resultant increased opportunity for mass travel, the distance between home and the resort location presented additional barriers both in terms of cost and the time taken that needed to be overcome.

Britain's premier inland spa situated at Bath, had been famed for its waters since Roman times, and it remained popular over an extended period of time, but the monopoly did not last as rival spas started to emerge as landowners discovered and recognised natural springs on their land and looked to exploit their commercial possibilities. The sixteenth century saw the awakening of this interest and by the early nineteenth century over 100 spas had developed throughout the British Isles, although some were of dubious standing, and consequently short lived.<sup>19</sup> Celia Fiennes makes several mentions of spas in her travel writings, including some of the more famous such as Buxton and Harrogate, as well as some lesser known and almost forgotten and virtually unrecorded such as the spring at Canterbury.<sup>20</sup> Under professional medical guidance and encouragement the British aristocracy began to view the waters available at the spas as a means of obtaining relief from a variety of complaints such as the effects of dissipation. Somewhat predictably the commercial opportunities presented by those suffering and desperate for a cure, attracted the attention of the entrepreneurs of the day.<sup>21</sup> Any treatment received was usually under the advice and control of a

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<sup>18</sup> Edmund W. Gilbert, *Brighton Old Ocean's Bauble*, (London, Methuen, 1954).

<sup>19</sup> Kathleen Denbigh, *A Hundred British Spas*, (Oxford, Spa Publications, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> Celia Fiennes, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, (London, MacDonald and Co., 1982).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. xv.



doctor, although not always qualified or regulated, and treatments were often administered at particular times of the day, leaving plenty of time for visitors to seek and engage in idle pursuits. This aspect of spare time, meant that as the spas developed, apart from any health benefits that might accrue, they were increasingly recognised as centres for amusement and an opportunity to mix with fashionable people of the appropriate social class.<sup>22</sup>

The most important spa in the South East was situated at Tunbridge Wells, where a chalybeate spring was discovered in 1606 on waste land belonging to Lord Bergavenny. This prompted the rapid spread of the news and the subsequent development of the area that grew into the town that thrives as a commercial centre and commuter town to this day.<sup>23</sup> The proximity of London at a distance of around 35 miles meant that this new spa was relatively easy to reach and as a result it grew rapidly in popularity with both those seeking health cures and those seeking fashionable company. As the acknowledged premier spa in England at this time, the Bath authorities appointed a Master of Ceremonies, Richard “Beau” Nash to manage proceedings. Nash’s duties were wide ranging and gave a considerable amount of structure to the visitors’ day and such was the social structure and standing, it is said that visitors to Bath were greeted and announced by name. Tunbridge Wells had its own “Governess”, Bell Causey, but after her death in 1734, Nash was appointed Master of Ceremonies of the town even though he was still in post at Bath. There was apparently no clash due to the differing “season” employed at each location. While working at Tunbridge Wells, Nash presided over all of the entertainments and enforced a strict set of rules ensuring correct behaviour among the visitors.

By the end of the eighteenth century, medical opinion had started to shift in emphasis, and members of the largely unregulated medical profession started to write about and advocate the use of cold water for bathing and here early references can be drawn from a number of medical men. Sir John Floyer (1649-1734) an Oxford educated physician is significant for it was he who is credited with promoting the virtue of bathing in cold water with the publication of his book *History of Cold Bathing* in 1702.<sup>24</sup> In time, this development paved the way for the creation of seaside resorts, particularly when the leading medical men of the day started to advocate the drinking of seawater and cold bathing in the sea. As Pimlott points out, sea bathing resorts start to be referenced in the 1730s, when men and women are described as bathing in the sea at Scarborough, which itself was already recognised as a spa.<sup>25</sup> Various doctors were interested in the subject of sea bathing, but Dr.

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<sup>22</sup> Pimlott, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Augustus B. Granville, *Spas of England*, II, 1841 (Bath, Adams and Dart 1971 reprint), p. 618 et seq.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

Richard Russell from Sussex is one of the best known names, noted for his “sea water cures” and particularly for his publication in of *A Dissertation of the Use of Sea-water* published in 1750, initially in Latin and then in English, running to a 6<sup>th</sup> edition by 1769. This book’s popularity with those who were interested in medical progress, gave a fresh impetus to the embryonic seaside resorts and gave rise to an industry that grew and flourished until well into the late twentieth century. The personal importance of these practitioners has been recognised by Myerscough, who in writing a new introduction to the 1977 printing of Pimlott’s 1947 book, feels that Pimlott underplays the role that these medical men played in the development of certain resorts, particularly Russell’s influence on Brighton.<sup>26</sup>

Although the majority of the population were not able to enjoy the freedoms and privileges of their fortunate social betters, this does not mean that they were precluded from or deprived access to the sea. The geography of the United Kingdom is such that nowhere is more than 70 miles from the coast.<sup>27</sup> This fact however does not mean that the nearest piece of coastline is necessarily practical for resort purposes due to geographical features such as steep cliffs, rocks or deep water, and even if it was suitable, the freedom to be able to enjoy the coast would be restricted by the amount of available leisure time and a means of getting there. Not everyone visiting the spas was doing so for reasons of health, as Myerscough points out, medical considerations were less important to the rise of the English Spas than the “*social awakening of the English landed classes, newly affluent in the eighteenth century, and in search of ‘company and diversion’*”.<sup>28</sup> Being seen in the right places and mixing with the right people were socially important, or at least it was in some circles.

It is tempting to dismiss the broad subject of seaside development as straightforward, presenting few difficulties for the serious researcher. But further consideration however, reveals that the reality is somewhat different and the subject is complex, combining a delicate mix of cultural, social and economic factors operating at many different levels. When critically examined, the effect of regional differences become evident, particularly in respect of location and proximity to centres of population, that were essential to provide a large enough customer base to provide economic viability. The costs of establishing, running and maintaining a spa were considerable, so in the absence of a large private financial means, those operating the ventures would be looking for an income stream that covered the costs and provided a return on their investment. Looking at the main themes of resorts, it is arguable that the economic aspect has not really received the full attention it warrants, although surviving financial records are often difficult to find. Given that

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<sup>26</sup> J. Myerscough, new introduction to 1975 reprint of Pimlott.

<sup>27</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), quoting Ordnance Survey data. (Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Myerscough, *ibid*.

seaside economies are an integral and significant part of the success or failure of resorts, this is an aspect that presents opportunity for further work to be undertaken.

### Early seaside resorts

Claims as to the date and location of the first seaside resort are said by Walton to rest between Scarborough, Margate and Brighton, all of which could demonstrate recognizable summer seasons by the 1730s.<sup>29</sup> Of these, both Brighton and Margate were to play a part in Herne Bay's development, but being closest, it is Margate that has had the most influence. It is Margate that can claim to be the earliest of the Kent seaside resorts and development started to emerge in the 1730s when an advertisement appeared in the *Kentish Post*, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1736, from Thomas Barber advertising his sea water bath. Barber's advertisement is well known and has been used and commented upon in various works, notably by Whyman, Stafford and Lee.<sup>30</sup> From this advertisement we learn that sea water had been in use by great numbers of people for several years. Barber was advising of his convenient bath that was filled by sea water by means of a 15 feet canal. An early history of the Isle of Thanet was written and published by John Lewis in 1723, this first edition was written in Latin, but a second edition, written in English was published in 1736.<sup>31</sup> Both Stafford and Lee quote Lewis's work, particularly his explanations of the transformation of Margate from a small run down fishing town with a harbour that was in a state of decay. Using Lee's extracts of Barbers' adverts we learn that his bath was evidently a success and the following year he was advertising that his bath was not large enough to cope with the demand.<sup>32</sup> Within this advertisement, Barber mentions "*Lodging Rooms, Dressing Rooms, and a handsome large sash'd Dining Room and a Summer House on the Top of the House, which affords a pleasant prospect out to sea*". Barber's improvements continued and as Lee comments, Barber placed his advertisements in the London papers as well as in the local Kent papers, thus confirming his target audience as the large London population and the Kentish landed gentry and people of a similar class.<sup>33</sup> Margate's reputation as a resort was becoming established and it was around 1750 that local Quaker, Benjamin Beale lays claim to the invention of the canvas modesty hood that could be attached to the front of bathing machines. The built environment in the town was also changing and as Stafford states, "*The growth of the holiday industry changed the face of Margate, for potential visitors were not*

<sup>29</sup> Walton, *English Seaside Resorts*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> John Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1985). Stafford, p17, Anthony Lee, *Margate in the Georgian era*, (Raleigh, North Carolina, Lulu, 2012) p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> John Lewis, *The history and antiquities ecclesiastical and civil of the Isle of Tenet, in Kent*. (London, J March, 1723). John Lewis, *The history and antiquities, ecclesiastical and civil of the Isle of Tenet, in Kent*, (London, J Osborn, 1736).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 19-22. *Kentish Post*, 16 April 1737.

<sup>33</sup> Lee, p. 21.

*long content to stay in small, smelly cottages.*<sup>34</sup> *By 1770 there were lodging and boarding houses and Margate had acquired its fashionable squares, Cecil Square soon followed by Hawley Square”.*

Margate was not alone in its desire to attract the visitors with both Ramsgate and Deal able to boast bathing machines in 1754.<sup>35</sup> These early examples were soon emulated by other places looking to get in on the act and by the 1790s, bathing machines had been in evidence at the Kent locations of Whitstable, Herne Bay, Gravesend, Folkestone and Dover. The reception and success of these individual ventures was mixed, but they were indicative of the growth of the interest in sea bathing during the latter part of the eighteenth century. As Pimlott observes “*the capacity of the sea coast we unbounded*” and “*the sea coast was large enough to absorb all comers*”, and it was these valid points that helped to move the focus away from the inland spas and towards the sea.<sup>36</sup>

By the nineteenth century the market matured and new resorts came into being. Demand expanded through the growth in the middle classes and increased prosperity seeping down into wider society following the industrial revolution, population increases and a wider awareness. Cities outside of London, such as Bristol, created their own demand, resulting in the expansion in resorts in the south west. Improving working condition, resulting from various Factory Acts gave workers more freedom as the nineteenth century wore on, and this again gave a boost to resort prosperity. Walton lists a table of percentage population growth at various seaside resorts over the 1801-1851 period, and for many locations the rate of growth was well above the national average.<sup>37</sup> Walton’s numbers as quoted require caution, as those used for Herne Bay are slightly misleading, and relate to the whole of the ecclesiastical parish of Herne. While it is difficult to be precise, estimates show that if adjustments are made in respect of the population of the village and numbers included just for the resort, the percentage growth would be significantly higher.

This chapter has provided an overview of the development of British seaside resorts from their origins, evolution and eventual widespread popularity as they took over from spas as the resort of choice for the wealthy. It has been noted, that while originally the preserve of the wealthy, seaside resorts eventually came into the compass of more of the population and this expansion of the market led to more resorts being established to meet the demand. It was this growing demand that gave rise to the first attempt at creating a resort at Herne Bay and this will be covered in the next chapter.

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<sup>34</sup> Stafford, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Whyman, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Pimlott, p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> Walton, p. 54.

## 2: Herne Bay's emergence as a seaside resort

This chapter sets out to explain the origins of Herne Bay and how it started to emerge from the parish of Herne during the eighteenth century. It will show the resort's geographic location and its relative proximity to London as both a centre of population and potential customer base, as well as its position on the North Kent coast and its relationship with Margate, Kent's pioneering and leading seaside destination from the 1730s.

Modern Herne Bay is a coastal town situated on the north Kent coast, fronting the Thames Estuary, situated fifty five miles east of London (Charing Cross). Whitstable lies four and one half miles to the west, Margate eleven miles to the east and Canterbury seven miles to the south.<sup>38</sup> These distances are based on a direct linear route "as the crow flies" and in each case the mileage is by necessity increased if consideration is taken of transport routes, such as road or rail. A map is included in figure 1 to show the location of Herne Bay in the context of East Kent.



Figure 1. East Kent (<http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Travel/Pix/pictures/2011/8/5/1312540551657/Kent-coast-001.jpg>)

<sup>38</sup> Mileages taken from [www.freemaptools.com](http://www.freemaptools.com). (Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2013).

The proximity of Herne Bay to Margate is an important consideration, as this latter mentioned town developed as a resort in the early eighteenth century, when the established fishing port capitalised on the developing popularity of sea bathing in the 1730s. Lee describes in detail the options for travel to Margate in the Georgian era, which fell to a basic choice between either a long road journey via Canterbury or by sea via a hoy at a time when Herne Bay was just a coastal region on the coast of Herne.<sup>39</sup>

As a town, Herne Bay has grown steadily and its boundaries have pushed out further from its historic centre in response to the demands of an expanding population, particularly in the post World War Two period. The population of this increased area is recorded as 35,500 in 2008.<sup>40</sup> A summary table of Herne Bay's population is included in appendix 3 and allows comparisons between the different decadal census returns for the parish of Herne as a whole, as well as a limited extract of Herne Bay. In terms of age, Herne Bay is relatively modern with a recorded history stretching back less than two hundred and fifty years, emerging from the parish of Herne with a distinct identity and referred to by name during the mid-eighteenth century. Herne Bay is a geographic description and according to Gough, the settlement is first mentioned by the name of Herne Bay – i.e. the bay of the parish and village of Herne - early in the eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup> A definitive mention is made in 1744, when the location is named in the *Daily Advertiser* in connection with a lost ship when *The Endeavour* en-route from Jamaica was reported as lost in Hearne (sic) Bay.<sup>42</sup> The spelling of Herne, appears variously as Hearne, Hearn and Herne until the start of the nineteenth century when Herne seems to have become the accepted standard that was used in most instances. Appendix 1 contains some of the historical background to the parish of Herne. This is an extract taken from the work of the well-known Kent historian and antiquary, Edward Hasted, along with some pieces from the Reverend John Duncombe and a more recent book by Dorothy Gardiner.

In relation to Herne Bay as a seaside resort, much is said of the impact of the deep sea pier that opened in the summer of 1832, providing a means for steamers to land passengers in safety, and allowing day trippers to visit in number from London for the first time. Less has been said about the fact that the town's origins are arguably associated with the arrival of a bathing machine in 1770 or the expansion in the already established trade route that existed between the coast at Herne and the city of Canterbury that resulted in the formation of a turnpike trust in 1814. The consequence of

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<sup>39</sup> Lee, p. 25.

<sup>40</sup> John Harrison, David Kincaid, Simon Hopkins, *Herne Bay Conservation Area Appraisal*, (Canterbury, Canterbury City Council, 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Harold E. Gough, *A Picture Book of Old Herne Bay*, (Rainham, Meresborough Books, 1983).

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Advertiser*, London, Sat. 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1744, p. 1.

this road improvement was to make it easier for travellers from Canterbury, and further afield, to make the trip to the coast for a variety of purposes including health and leisure, rather than just trade, although we have an insight into the fact that Herne Bay was not deserted. It is not known with certainty quite how many visitors were descending upon the town for the purpose of bathing or who they were but Walton's quote about the number and class of visitors frequenting Blackpool as early as the 1760s is interesting as it states that Hutton considered that those then visiting Blackpool were chiefly lower class.<sup>43</sup> Can the same be said for the coast of Herne parish? The distance from Canterbury was approximately eight miles, so the distance was not an impossibility. From early images, particularly early to mid-nineteenth century sketches and engravings we know that the conditions on the shore where the sea met the land were reasonably flat and conducive to bathing. The shallow waters would have provided a relatively safe environment and it was these conditions that would have led to the installation of Herne Bay's first bathing machine.

A bathing machine is first mentioned at Herne Bay in 1770 with the following advertisement in the *KG* that first appeared on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1770 and again on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1770.

*“Hearne, April 17, 1770*

*BATHING in the SEA, at HEARN BAY*

*A NEW MACHINE, on the newest and most approved Principle, equal to any at MARGATE, in now Building by DEVON and Co. will be ready for use by the Middle of next Month. --- Neat and genteel Lodgings, with Board, good Stables, and all other Accommodations on reasonable Terms.*

*→HEARN is situated on a Healthy dry Soil, within Ten miles of Margate, and Six of Canterbury. – The HOY, for Hearn, sails every Thursday Morning, from Wool-key, near the Custom house LONDON.”*

The following year, Devon and Co., again advertised their bathing machine, in the *Kentish Gazette* on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1771 and the following week. The text of the advertisement, reads as follows:

*“This is to acquaint all Gentlemen, Ladies, and Others, that we have now begun to bathe in the water for this season with the Machine”.*

As can be seen in their first advertisement, specific mention was made of the machines at Margate, a town already established as a seaside resort since the 1730s, is interesting and open to

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<sup>43</sup> Walton, *English Seaside Resorts*, pp. 10-11.

interpretation. The fact that Margate is situated relatively close by at around 12 miles to the east as the crow flies of what became Herne Bay, suggests that potential customers that could perhaps be diverted to the new venture and this was probably part of the target audience of the owners.

Devon and Co's, advertisement offers "*neat and genteel lodgings with board, good stables and all other Accommodations on reasonable terms*". The exact location of this accommodation is not given, but from licensing records we learn that two inns are known to have existed at Herne Bay at this time, the Ship, possibly dating from 1655 and the Three Horseshoes, later known as the Dolphin, dating from 1727. The Ship still exists as the oldest licensed premises in the town, but the Dolphin which was originally situated on the beach, was demolished to make way for the new pier sometime around 1831, being replaced by the New Dolphin in William Street.<sup>44</sup> It is probable that Devon and Co. were using one or both of these premises for any customers who wished to stay. Clues as to how customers would travel to the new machines are provided by details of the Hoys sailing from London, but also by reference to the availability of stables in the neat and genteel lodgings that are mentioned.

In order to trade, inns needed customers so with the main centre of population at Herne village around one and one half miles inland, itself well served by at least three public houses but the intervening land was extensively farmed and the foreshore used by fishermen. Although Herne Bay was somewhat isolated, it was far from deserted and the farmers and fishermen together with the frequent coming and going of the trading hoys would also have provided a steady customer base. The trade route between the coast and Canterbury was probably well established before 1770, as according to Edward Hasted writing in 1790, hoys were visiting the coast on a regular basis.<sup>45</sup> Hasted mentions shipping and the fact that coal was bought down from Newcastle and Sunderland for Canterbury, his second edition published some eleven years later does not add much to our understanding, commenting mainly on the agricultural aspects of the rural part of the parish, rather than the coastal stretch, but pointing out that apart from receiving coal and goods for the Canterbury market, agricultural goods were being pulled in from the surrounding countryside to feed the London demand for foodstuffs.

After the bathing machine, it was not for another forty plus years, taking us into the post 1814 period that any notable building development can be ascertained with any certainty. It was around 1816 that houses did start to be built close to the point where the turnpike road met the shore, although there are references to buildings being damaged in storms before this date. The

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<sup>44</sup> John A. Fishpool, *Herne Bay's Hotels and Public Houses*, (Herne Bay, HBHRS, 2009). p. 16 and p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, (Canterbury, 1778-1798).



advertisement for the bathing machine appears on the front page of the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1770 issue of the leading regional newspaper for the Canterbury area, the *Kentish Gazette* and makes specific reference to Margate, boasting that the new bathing machine at Herne Bay was “*equal to any at Margate*”. This was strong claim, as Margate had been established as a resort from the 1720s and ranked as one of the country’s principal seaside resorts, well out in the forefront of development and on a par with Brighton.<sup>46</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that those involved in this early venture at Herne Bay would have been aware of Margate’s success and hopeful of attracting some of the custom away from that resort to their new venture. There do not seem to be any surviving records of the prices charged at Herne Bay or indeed the number of visitors who enjoyed this establishment and it is not clear if the service continued uninterrupted, but installation of a machine on a relatively quiet stretch of shoreline is an indication of the aspirations of the operators and the potential that was foreseen.

Walton states that in general terms the fortunes of resorts were not shaped by accidents of geography and transport, but by their response to a widening range of opportunities.<sup>47</sup> He goes on to assert that in the pre railway era, the rate of growth was strongly influenced by landowners, builders and local authorities. These two statements are potentially problematic at Herne Bay, where it is probable that both geography and transport are significant with the long established trade route between Canterbury and Herne Bay thus providing the initial reason for the area becoming noticed. Sir Henry Oxenden, a major local landowner certainly took the opportunity of starting a small development once the turnpike road opened, but his ultimate aspirations and intentions seem limited based on his subsequent actions and eventual sale of his land.

### **Resort Activity elsewhere**

Herne Bay was not alone in having a new bathing machine in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, for two years earlier in 1768, one Cornelius Jones.<sup>48</sup>

*“begs Leave to inform the public that he had lately provided a MACHINE upon the same plan as those at Margate, for the Convenience of such Ladies and Gentlemen as may be desirous of Bathing during the summer season, and that nothing shall be wanting to make the same agreeable in every particular to those who will be kind enough to favor him with their Encouragement”.*

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<sup>46</sup> John Whyman, *Kentish Seaside Resorts before 1900*, (Canterbury, University of Kent, 1970).

<sup>47</sup> Walton, *English Seaside Resorts*, p. 63.

<sup>48</sup> *KG*, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1768, 1d.

Jones' machine was at Dover, near the Rope Walk and boasted that "*the Bathing is upon a fine beach, where the water is quite pure and transparent*". The advertisement appeared in the next three issues of the *Kentish Gazette*, and the following season a similar advertisement appeared, only this time the machine was promoted by Gillbart Finness. The competition for the attention of visitors seems to have been growing, as in 1769, E. Hocccless was promoting a bathing machine at Whitstable.<sup>49</sup>

*"Hocccless's Bathing-Machines, now in full Perfection, are ready for the Reception of Ladies and Gentlemen, at her House at the BEAR and KEY, - Good Accommodation, with the best wines, &c. and the Favors of those, who will ne gratefully acknowledged by E. HOCCELESS.*

*N.B. Private Lodgings to be had very genteel and ready-furnished. A good Turnpike-road from Whitstable to Canterbury. The company may depend on the greatest Care being taken in conducting the Machine. And during the whole season, a regular Account will be given in this Paper of the exact Time of High-water every Day of the Week, after this Publication.*

*The Time of Bathing is between Two and Three Hours before and after high Water.*

This activity with the installation of bathing machines at a small number of locations, coincided with the advertisement in the same newspaper for the little known Canterbury Wells, advertised as opening on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1769.<sup>50</sup> The text is short and gives no location other than;

*"On Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> Instant, The Canterbury Wells Will be opened, where the Attendance will be given from Seven to Nine every Morning during the Summer Season".*

These wells at Canterbury are probably the two springs that were located close to the Canterbury Botanical Gardens, near the Dane John and mentioned in Thomas Fisher's *Kentish Traveller's Companion* where he states:

*"Beyond St. Peter's church is the passage to two springs of mineral water, of different quality, though rising within seven feet of each other. The waters have been prescribed and*

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<sup>49</sup> *KG*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1769, 1b.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1769, 1b.

*taken with success, from the first discovery of them in 1693, but were never so much in fashion as to crowd the town with company”.*<sup>51</sup>

They may also be the same spring that was included in the journeys of Celia Fiennes in 1697, where she mentions:-

*“ Here is a spring in the town that is drunk by many persons as Tunbridge and approv’d by them, but others find it an ill water; one Gentleman in the same house I was in complained of a numbness in his limbs after drinking it sometime, which is quite contrary to Tunbridge waters whose property is to retrieve lost limbs that are benumbed, and it coming from steele should have that effect, it raising the blood and gives it a new circulation; the taste of the spring in this town seems to be from a mixt soyle and bears a likeness to the Sulphur Spaw Epsome and the iron springs too which are at Tunbridge: what its operation is I cannot tell only tasteing half a glass of it which I did not like: the well is walled in, and a raile round with stepps down and paved aboute for the Company to stand just at the head to drink, but I like no spring that rises not quick and runs off apace; that must have most spirit and good off the mineral it comes from.”*<sup>52</sup>

Fiennes’ words were hardly a ringing endorsement for the spring, newly discovered when she was writing and had hardly fared any better almost a century later when Fisher made comment. This is despite the proximity of an established ready-made customer base, with numerous visitors to the nearby cathedral, it seems that there were various natural impediments that prevented the spring from flourishing in the same way those at Tunbridge Wells, Epsom or even Bath.

In the 1769 advertisement, the early morning opening hours would seem to suggest that the well was purporting to supply some spa water, but whatever the true nature of the venture, it must have been a short lived attempt to revive the fortunes of the well, perhaps on the back of the new wave of interest in sea bathing? Two short advertisements appeared, both in 1769 and very little more seems to be recorded of the well afterwards.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the English translation of Dr Richard Russell’s book “*A DISSERTATION on the Use of SEA WATER in the DISEASES of the GLANDS*” was advertised as

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Fisher, *The Kentish Traveller’s Companion*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. (Canterbury, 1794), p. 231.

<sup>52</sup> Fiennes, p. 144.

being published on 1<sup>st</sup> May next in the 12<sup>th</sup> April issue of the *Kentish Gazette*, 1769. It is pure conjecture, but to what extent did this influence the citizens of Canterbury to visit the new machines that were available within a one hour coach ride?

We know from various contemporary descriptions that there was growing activity at Herne Bay on the back of the 1770 bathing machine, but quite how much is difficult to judge. Charles Seymour writing in 1776 quotes of Hearn Bay “*here is a public house, with good decent accommodation for private families, who come here in the summer season for the benefit of bathing in the sea*”.<sup>53</sup>

The question is who were these families and why did they choose Herne Bay, when Margate was much more developed at this time? The answer may well be that they came from Canterbury due to its close proximity but the question remains, why did they come to Herne Bay and does this fit with the generally recognised pattern of resort development activity or is it different? It is stated in Whyman that visitors arrived at Margate via the London hoys, so there was no reason why they could not call at Herne Bay as well.<sup>54</sup> The journey would have been long and uncomfortable, so the travellers must have been sufficiently motivated to wish to do this, either by foot, or whatever transport they could find and afford.

Gaining an understanding of what was occurring on the coastal stretch of the parish of Herne is a case of piecing together fragments of evidence. For early maps, we are reliant upon those drawn by Andrews, Drury and Herbert dated 1769, and those from Hasted’s history of Kent from 1790. The map by Andrews et al, is drawn at a scale of two inches to the mile, and while it is short of reliable detail, it does show a reasonably flat coastline here, with evidence of two shallow bays centred upon the present day location of the Herne Bay Clock Tower, the outfall of *Plenty Brook*. The bay to the east is named as Upper Hern Bay (sic) and the farms mentioned are known from various contemporary documents and furthermore, most of the names are still recognisable and in use today. Hasted’s map is very similar, and appears to be based on the map by Andrews et al with little additional information. The tithe map of 1840 provides a detailed plan of the Herne Bay part of the parish and the accompanying apportionment is of great value in understanding the land ownership, occupation and use at the time of compilation.

The early seaside resort activity continues at Herne Bay, with a mention in 1792 of baths and bathing machines operated by Gabriel and Elizabeth Izzard, baths they retained and operated for a

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<sup>53</sup> Charles Seymour, *A new topographical, Historical and Commercial Survey of the Cities, Towns and Villages of the County of Kent*, (Canterbury 1776).

<sup>54</sup> Whyman, *Kentish Seaside Resorts before 1900*, p. 22.

number of years.<sup>55</sup> In 1808 it was reported that the baths had suffered damage from a storm. Details of the flooding and damage that occurred in the town due to an exceptionally high spring tide in combination with north easterly winds were reported in the *Kentish Gazette* in January 1808, and this is followed by the appearance of a paid advertisement that July, when the Izzards stated that they wished to thank those Gentlemen and Ladies whose had provided humane and benevolent support that had enabled them to repair their loss from the gale in the month of January.<sup>56</sup> In the same advertisement, the Izzards announced that their warm baths and machines were ready for the reception of those who wished to make use of them. The following year, 1809, once again an advertisement was placed by the Izzards thanking the Ladies and Gentlemen who had patronised them last season and wished to respectfully announce that the warm baths and machines were now ready for the reception of those who wished to make use of them. Two important pieces of information emerge from these advertisements, 1) that there was a season for the sea bathing activity and 2) based upon the fact that the *Kentish Gazette* was published at Canterbury, that the customer base was probably derived principally from that city and its environs. It is possible that the advertisements were placed elsewhere, but no evidence has yet been found. The advertisement for the 1811 season specifically adds Officers of the Army to the mention of Ladies and Gentlemen as customers who were being thanked for their patronage the previous season and readers are now informed that warm baths are available from “Ten ‘till Four” with Mrs. Izzard acting as the guide to ladies using the machine.

Apart from the few inhabitants living at Herne Bay, the local population would have been boosted periodically by early visitors to the settlement arriving on the various trading vessels delivering coal and other produce for the village of Herne, the rural hinterland and city of Canterbury. According to Hasted when he writes about Herne and includes his description of the trading vessels, the frequency of the collier hoys to Herne Bay was given as weekly, while Seymour states that “*two hoys go to and from London every week*”.<sup>57</sup>

While we have no way of ascertaining the success of Devon’s venture, he did advertise his bathing machine for a second season, in 1771.<sup>58</sup> After this nothing further is heard of Devon, but he is believed to have died around 1780 when he was buried in the parish churchyard at Herne. It is unclear as to whether Devon’s bathing machine establishment enjoyed continuous use or was

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<sup>55</sup> Eugene L. Hasluck, *Beyond the forest of Blean*, (Herne Bay, Herne Bay Press, 1966). p. 14

<sup>56</sup> *KG*, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1808, 4c.

<sup>57</sup> Edward Hasted, *History and topographical survey of the county of Kent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. VIII (Canterbury 1797-1801) p. 84. Seymour, p. 459.

<sup>58</sup> *KG*, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1771, 1b.

discontinued and restarted later on, but Gabrielle Izzard was operating a bathing machine in the same location in the 1790s.<sup>59</sup>

Depending upon the distances involved, early visitors from the larger towns and cities wishing to go to the spa towns or early seaside resorts often had to endure relatively long and arduous journeys to reach their destinations. These journeys were both time consuming and expensive and this rather shaped the class of person able to undertake such excursions. Freedom of choice in being able to spare the time from earning a living was another barrier to the masses visiting the early resorts, but this does not mean that they were completely out of reach. As Walton points out, not all spa visitors were affluent and some of the holy wells proved popular with the common people.<sup>60</sup> If a resort was within walking distance, a labourer with a few hours of spare time, could make the journey, but paying for accommodation and food may have been difficult for him. In general terms the circumstances meant that visitors tended to be drawn from the aristocratic classes and those of sufficient financial means to afford the fares, accommodation and entertainment costs. Royalty were particular patrons of the seaside resorts as they travelled in pursuit of hoped for medical cures for various ailments.

Kent resorts have always been dependent upon London for the majority of their visitors, and the earliest of these at Margate, certainly drew most of her visitors from the capital city.<sup>61</sup> Unlike some of the northern industrial towns that have had a significant influence on the development of the Lancashire and Yorkshire resorts, there are no large industrial towns in this part of Kent, where the city of Canterbury was (and remains) the closest centre of concentrated population. Options for travel to the Kent coast were limited to either the use of horses on the county's roads or via the sea using the various trading vessels in use at the time. Apart from the wealthy whom may have been able to own their own horse and carriage, the choice really came down to using one of the public coaches. Watling Street, the Roman road running the heart of Kent between London and Dover was described by Ogilby in *Britannia*, 1675 as “*in general a very good and well beaten way*” quoted in Lee.<sup>62</sup> This road has become the A2/M2 and together with the M20, remains the main route between London and the Channel ports for travellers wishing to cross over to the continent.

The popularity of individual resorts varied widely, with the most successful working hard to gain and keep favourable reputations. Walvin states that “*both the tide and the shingle made bathing at*

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<sup>59</sup> Hasluck, p. 13-16.

<sup>60</sup> Walton, p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> Lee, p. 25.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

*Brighton uncomfortable, but it was the social pressure rather than the town's geography which helped to establish Brighton as a classic late eighteenth century seaside resort, for, like Bath earlier in the century, Brighton's reputation was launched by royal patronage".*<sup>63</sup>

Both Weymouth and Brighton received a boost in their aspirations to become popular resorts following royal visits. Without the constraints or concerns over the cost of travel, King George III was able to travel wherever he pleased and it was in 1787, upon the advice of doctors that he visited Weymouth, away from Brighton where his son had set up home.<sup>64</sup> Like Brighton, Herne Bay could boast of a shingle beach, but no royal patronage.

### **Awareness of Herne Bay**

How did potential visitors become aware of Herne Bay? This question is best addressed by consideration of the sources of information that were available to the general public at the time. These sources provide us with contemporary accounts of the town and most of our knowledge of visitors to Herne Bay is derived from these official records, contemporary guidebooks or newspaper reports.<sup>65</sup> Of these sources, the official records can be quite dry and tend to focus on the more legislative and administrative aspects of day to day life, and in the case of area of Herne Bay this centred on parish life in Herne. Arguably a more rounded view of the human aspects of life with personal views and opinions can be found in the contemporary guide books and newspapers that were published. We must bear in mind the reason why the particular guide book or newspaper was written and be ever mindful of the danger of bias, omission or misrepresentation either deliberate or otherwise that can creep into these various works. After all, they were usually published as commercial propositions. As Vaughan points out in his introduction, "*the purchase of a guide book points to a mind that sufficiently alert to demand information and to a person with the leisure and economic power to satisfy this curiosity*".<sup>66</sup> If we accept this as being a fair summary of the target audience, it is reasonable to assume that there are a rich seam of comments and observations to be made.

In 1951, the Kent County Library service produced a booklet listing all of the known books relating to the Herne Bay area.<sup>67</sup> Detailed within are the majority of the guide books containing reference to Herne Bay, particularly in its formative years, continuing to the latter part of the nineteenth century. Many of the earlier volumes mentioned, are now scarce and difficult to track down and the result is

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<sup>63</sup> Walvin, p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> Harold E. Gough, Typewritten manuscript, "Visitors" file, HBHRS collection.

<sup>66</sup> John Vaughan, *The English Guide Book c.1780-1870*, (Newton Abbott, David and Charles, 1974) p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> Kent County Library, *A list of books and references concerning Herne Bay, Herne and Reculver*, (Maidstone, 1951).

that this material is not readily available in any one location. The following comments are drawn from the available titles, but only as far as they are seen as relevant to this paper.

Charles Seymour writing in 1776, described Herne Bay as being “*about two miles from the Street (Herne); here is a public house, with good decent accommodations for private families, who come here in the summer season for the benefit of bathing in the sea*”.<sup>68</sup> This is a short but informative paragraph that illustrates that John Devon’s 1770 bathing machine had stimulated some resort activity at Herne Bay. Seymour specifically mentions the accommodation and the families, and while no numbers are mentioned, we at least have confirmation that Herne Bay was becoming known as a seaside resort.

A further recognition of Herne Bay’s early pretensions as, or perhaps more accurately, its ambition to become a seaside resort of some renown, is illustrated by an article that appeared in the *Kentish Herald* in July 1806.<sup>69</sup> The text reads...

*“Fashionable as the resort to the coast is now become, this charming retreat is not without its share of visitors, eager to benefit by the fine sea breezes and the truly fascinating rural landscape which this charming place luxuriantly lavishes.*

*In a word, every house and lodging is taken, and part of the company, for want of more general accommodation, have actually encamped on the cliff above the lower bay, and are residing under canvas.*

*Two machines, with a warm bath, act in aid of invalids, and the fine walks, and the enchanting prospect of hill and dale, bounded by the coast, invite the valetudinarian to embrace the pleasant wholesome exercise of riding or walking. Last week the company were agreeably entertained at the annual fair of the Dolphin Tavern, at the Upper Bay, with a donkey race which afforded four well contested heats from three of these animals: diving for oranges, and jumping in sacks next followed, in each of which great prowess was shown by the rustics, to no small amusements of the spectators, who departed so highly gratified with the mirth and good humour dispensed of the occasion as to open a liberal subscription for a repetition of the sports, with many additions, at the Lower Bay.”*

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<sup>68</sup> Seymour, p. 459

<sup>69</sup> *Kentish Herald*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1806.



This wonderful piece provides a graphic snapshot of events at Herne Bay that summer. It is not known for certain how many dwellings were extant at the time, but from this article we learn that those that there were, were fully occupied, with some visitors camping out on the cliffs above the Lower Bay. This would be the general area to the east of the town that we call *The Downs*, close to where the military were encamped at the time.

This positive message continues when Edward Brayley writing in 1808, mentions Herne Bay as “*a small Bathing-place, resorted to by the inhabitants of Canterbury*”, so we know that this part of the coast was recognised as a destination for those from the city.<sup>70</sup> The reasons for the resort to the coast may relate to convenience or fashion, but the escape from a grimy city can hardly be cited as a reason for visitors, as the city has never been a base for heavy industry. Within its city wall however, Canterbury did have a tannery, an iron works and a gas works, so these may have been an influence.

After the formation of the turnpike trust in 1814 and the subsequent road improvements, Oxenden commenced with his plan to build a small number of houses on his land adjoining the coast. A useful contemporary description of the town at this date is provided by Fussell in 1818 where he describes the places he had visited after a tour around the coastal locations in the county.<sup>71</sup> Of Herne Bay, he writes that this place “*consists only of a few cottages irregularly built around a green, situated upon a point of land which juts out abruptly from the line of the coast, are beginning to rise into some sort of celebrity, by having lately become the resort of company for the purpose of bathing. Only a few years have passed since the erection of one of those temporary stations of the military, by which it was thought necessary to secure the coast, became a sort of signal to inform the visitors of Margate and Ramsgate that the spot was habitable. They soon afterwards flocked hither in such numbers, that a considerable increase in buildings and improvements speedily ensued. ... A degree of tranquillity, unknown to Margate in the bathing season, may undoubtedly be found at Herne Bay. The water is unquestionably more pure ,,,*” Fussell’s words provide us with another valuable insight into the status of Herne Bay at this time and its progress as a seaside resort. It suggests that the presence of the military was a significant factor in the growth of the town’s popularity, but perhaps more importantly, it also starts to set the tone of Herne Bay being a “quiet” resort in comparison to Margate. A sense of the quiet nature of Herne Bay in the pre pier era, is again evident from a series of articles on “The Watering Places”, published in *The Mirror*,

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<sup>70</sup> Edward W. Brayley, *Beauties of England*, VIII, (London, Vernor and Hood, 1808) pp. 330-331.

<sup>71</sup> L. Fussell, *A journey around the coast of Kent*, (London, Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, 1818) p. 72.

where the text commences “*It is a little remarkable, that this delightful place should so long have escaped the notice of persons who annually deem it necessary to visit a se bathing place, either for pleasure or health; it would be better, perhaps to say general notice, for there are a few who have found it out, and properly appreciate its beauties*”.<sup>72</sup> This provides another indication that the town was quiet and not as busy as other resorts.

## Visitors

With so many seaside resorts developing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it can be seen that there is realistically only a finite capacity for expansion and success. Survival and progress was dependent upon developing an offering that could be made to the public at large, one that evolved to suit needs and requirements. In this regard a distinctive offering, one with a degree of uniqueness, should be a clear advantage. Did Herne Bay achieve a distinctive offering and did it ever evolve in a satisfactory manner?

Visitor numbers to Herne Bay in the years immediately after the pier opened in 1832 are available to us from the Pier Master’s Toll book, but if they are used as published without further consideration, they are potentially misleading. The reasoning for this statement is that according to Whyman in the years between 1832 and 1842, as many as 50% of these disembarking at the end of Herne Bay pier were in fact not stopping at the town.<sup>73</sup> They were instead making use of the town as a short-cut to the continent, by disembarking at the pier and then taking horse drawn coaches to the city of Canterbury and there changing to another coach en-route for the channel port of Dover. Stapleton’s details no less than four regular coaches between Canterbury and Herne Bay - by far the most popular route.<sup>74</sup> Indeed such a journey was undertaken by H.R.H. Duke of Cambridge in 1837 where it is recorded that he chose to walk the length of the pier rather than take the pier car laid on for him.<sup>75</sup> The Duke paid brief visits to the St. George’s Baths and then the Pier Hotel before continuing his journey to Dover via Canterbury and then overseas, returning by the same route a month later. This is the only recorded visit by a member of the royal family to Herne Bay during the nineteenth century, so unlike Brighton, Weymouth, Bognor and a select number of other resorts, the town was unable to boast of any regular patronage. The only lasting effect of the visit appears to be the hasty addition of the word *Royal* to the name of the *Pier Hotel*.

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<sup>72</sup> *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, V1, 1825, p. 167.

<sup>73</sup> Whyman, *Kentish Seaside Resorts before 1900*, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> Stapleton and Co’s *Topographical History and Directory of Canterbury*, (London 1838) p. 99.

<sup>75</sup> *KG*, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1837, 3d.

Apart from convenience, quite why visitors chose Herne Bay has not really been answered. Herne Bay was certainly closer to London than the Thanet resorts, or indeed, Southend, but did this make it worthwhile? With a five hour journey each way, it is known that the day trippers would have had a limited time on shore, so the question remains, did they feel that the attractions of the town were sufficient to interest them? This is where the promotion of the town becomes important, but little research has been undertaken in this area so far, raising the question as to how influential were the contemporary guide books and published commentaries? Looking at the topographical features of Herne Bay, the relatively long front, the lack of steep hill or dangerous cliffs, at least in the generous central section, made the resort attractive to families. Differing classes were able to fulfil Walton's thought that they could spread out along the beach, without antagonism or conflict and it seems likely that there were no byelaws governing bathing in place at Herne Bay, although the town was unable to offer a sandy beach, except at low tide.<sup>76</sup>

As stated above, unlike several of the south coast resorts, Herne Bay was unable to lay claim to any lasting or sustained royal patronage. Resorts with a royalty patronage usually saw this as a major boost and locations such as Weymouth and Brighton in particular used this to their significant advantage, where "*Royal visits proved influential.*"<sup>77</sup> On the Kent coast, Ramsgate was a holiday home to Queen Victoria for a while from 1823 when she was still a princess, when she visited with her mother, thus helping to confirm and reinforce the resorts standing and reputation.<sup>78</sup>

Genteel is a word that has often been associated with Herne Bay. Extracting from various dictionary definitions, the word is taken to mean a combination of the following: striving to convey a manner or appearance of refinement and respectability, high social status, refined, polite and elegant. Is this label warranted and where how did it originate? It was in use from a time before both Oxenden's development of 1816 and the 1833 Improvement Act. An early example of its use can be seen in an advertisement of 1809 in the *Kentish Gazette*, where a property was being advertised to let at Canterbury with another property available at Herne Bay "*likewise a House pleasantly situated at Herne Bay, and suited for the use of a Genteel Family*".<sup>79</sup>

Why did visitors choose Herne Bay over the rival resorts? An article was published in the then infant weekly magazine; *The Spectator* on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1832 provides some useful insights. With the title of *Herne Bay*, an editorial speaks of the attempt being made to add to the number of

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<sup>76</sup> Walton, p. 106.

<sup>77</sup> Walvin, p. 26.

<sup>78</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/kent/content/articles/2009/03/04/queen\\_victoria\\_history\\_feature](http://www.bbc.co.uk/kent/content/articles/2009/03/04/queen_victoria_history_feature). (Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014).

<sup>79</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, 13 January 1809, 1d.

watering places. Herne Bay's new pier was partially constructed at the time of publication and much is made of the fact that a return trip could be made from London to Herne Bay within one day including time for sightseeing and dinner. The departure time from London was said to be seven o'clock in the morning, arrival at Herne Bay at eleven thirty with departure at four in the afternoon. This allowed a total of four and a half hours ashore, said to "*thus allowing ample time to the passengers for a walk, a drive, and a dinner.*" Quite a fuss is made about the trip to Herne Bay being one and a half hours shorter than a trip to Margate and two and a half closer than Ramsgate. The article seems quite favourable towards Herne Bay and describes Margate as "*a pleasant enough place in its way, but it is too much a London in miniature, and the bathing ground is very bad*". Ramsgate fared slightly better, but Broadstairs was spoken of in much more favourable terms, but described as "*lonely*". An attribute of loneliness was something that they then attached to Herne Bay, in recognition or expectation that the resort would take a while to reach maturity, "*In loneliness Herne will, for some time to come, more resemble Broadstairs than Margate*".

In terms of distance from town [London], the article states that they have noticed that "*the last ten or twelve miles of a jaunt to Margate are very wearisome. The expedients of the passengers are nearly exhausted by the time that they reach Reculvers ... Herne lies very nearly at the point where enjoyment ends and ennui begins.*" Thus we can see another example of the importance of distance to the nineteenth century traveller.

One visitor who did leave a lasting impression was the eccentric Mrs. Ann Thwaytes. A wealthy widow from Islington, Mrs. Thwaytes visited the town for the summer season in 1834 and returned for a few more summers until she took umbrage at the comments of George Burge, one of the town commissioners. The story of Mrs. Thwaytes is well known locally (these notes are extracted from Gough) and her most visible legacy to the town is the fine freestanding clock tower placed on the seafront.<sup>80</sup> Mrs. Thwaytes' fortune, estimated to have been in excess of half of one million pounds, was inherited on the death of her husband, William Thwaytes. Thwaytes had been a tea dealer and wholesale merchant based in Fenchurch Street, London who had become acquainted with Ann when her sister was taken on by him as his housekeeper when their mother had died. Ann visited Herne Bay using one of the steamers calling at the town's new pier. Evidently she took a liking to the town and expressed her wish to pay for the building of the clock tower at a cost of some £4,000 as well as endowing the local church school. She left the town around 1842, destined for Worthing never to return, apparently offended by Burge's comments that the bricks used in the clock tower would have been better used towards the completing the unfinished church.

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<sup>80</sup> Harold E. Gough, "The eccentric Ann Thwaytes" in *Herne Bay Press*, 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1966.

So who was visiting Herne Bay? One helpful, if flawed source to help with this question, are the visitor lists that were sometimes published in local newspapers. They are by no means universal and do not appear every week for all locations, but where they are available, they provide us with an excellent snapshot of who was visiting a certain location at a certain time. Visitor lists for Herne Bay have been found for the 1835 to 1837 period and these provide a valuable insight into the visitors to the town in this period.

The London newspaper, the *Morning Post* published a list of persons visiting Herne Bay in the summer of 1835.<sup>81</sup> This starts with a brief description of the town, “*This new watering place is becoming very attractive, and is every year adding to its comforts and convenience. The public have the very neat steam conveyance. The town is now progressing fast according to the plan laid down. Since last year a new Episcopal Chapel has been opened, and the Assembly Rooms and Library are made attractive by a soiree once a week. Promenade and loo nightly.*” The article continues with a list of visitors as follows: “*General and Mrs. Walsh, Sir Charles and Lady Rowley, James Briscoe Esq., Lord and Lady Sheffield, Colonel and Lady Louisa Merrick, Thomas Bish, Esq.M.P., Lord Harewood, Dr. James Johnson and family, George Knight, Esq., C.D.O. Jephson, Esq., M.P., and family, Rev. Edward Hannom, Mr. Sergeant Adams, Dr. Warren and family, Captain Gower and family, Captain and Mrs. Graham, Captain and Mrs. Thompson, Revell Phillips, Esq., Captain and Mrs. Duval, and Mrs. Dancvers and family*”. The same editorial and identical listing appeared in the local newspaper, the *Kentish Gazette*, three days later.<sup>82</sup> This impressive listing gives a flavour of the class of visitor attracted to Herne Bay and it should be borne in mind that the pier had opened in 1832, so this was just a few years afterwards when the town was still expanding and had a buzz of excitement about it. The following year, 1836, a visitor list was printed in the *Kentish Gazette*.<sup>83</sup> This includes people of similar rank to those mentioned the previous year, but included in the list are the names of four of the town Commissioners: James Clift Esq., and family, David Halkett, Esq., and family, Thomas Camplin, Esq., John Randell esq. Also included in the name of Thomas Bish esq. M.P., a visitor noted from the previous season, indicating that at least one visitor was satisfied enough to return. Another listing appeared in the same newspaper the following year, and starts with the editorial “*The arrivals at this watering place have been unusually numerous this season.*”<sup>84</sup> *The number, rank and respectability of the visitors,*

<sup>81</sup> *Morning Post*, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1835, 5d.

<sup>82</sup> *KG*, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1835, 3c.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 31<sup>st</sup> May 1836, 3d.

<sup>84</sup> *KG*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1837, 3b.

*afford the best testimony to the attractions of the place*". A long list follows, including the names of many titled people including Lords, Knights, Captains, a Dowager Countess and a Bishop.

These visitor lists show that a reasonable number of the better classes had been drawn to the town for stays of varying length. Travis observes that it was probably cheaper to live at the coast, than stay in London, so this may have been an additional part of the attraction.<sup>85</sup> Travis also states that the Kent coast would have been more expensive than the Devon resorts, although of course the greater distance to travel to Devon meant that this was not the only consideration. It is not immediately obvious to what extent the town set out to attract one class over another, but there are some indications that can be drawn from various sources. For visitors travelling from London, by far the most likely origin of the majority of visitors at this time, the easiest way of reaching the town was via the frequent steamer service. Various press adverts published in the 1830s and 1840s give an indication of the strong competition for trade with what appear to be very competitive fares. As examples, the fare from London to Herne Bay for an adult in 1832 was advertised as 5s 6d by 1842, the fare had fallen to 5s.<sup>86</sup> However, apart from the steamer fare, passengers would often be expected to pay the pier dues at Herne Bay as an extra. The adverts were not always specific as to whether the pier dues were included or not, but an article in the *Illustrated London News* published in 1850<sup>87</sup> makes specific reference to the high cost of pier dues in the town when it was quoted "The favourite mode of reaching Herne Bay is by steam-boat; but the pier-dues, 1s 6d. each person, being added to the steam fare, renders it excessive, and, doubtless, injures the interests of the inhabitants, and others connected with this delightful watering-place". The article suggests that the high cost would be a deterrent to some, presumably those on tight budgets leaving those who felt a little better off where finance was not so much of an issue to make the choice of visiting the town.

Insights into the range of entertainments made available to visitors can again be garnered from contemporary press advertisements and coverage in the various guides. Middle class pursuits such as walking and promenading feature heavily and these often appear in detail within the various guides, such as in Smith and later Cradock and Co.<sup>88</sup> Herne Bay was also on the circuit as far as travelling entertainments were concerned and a useful example can be seen as having taken place in August 1850, when William Cooke's Royal Colossal Equestrian Establishment visited the north Kent resorts over a weeklong tour.<sup>89</sup> Although Ramsgate and Margate were scheduled to host two

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<sup>85</sup> Travis, p. 30.

<sup>86</sup> *KG*, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1832, 1a, and 5<sup>th</sup> July 1842, 1b.

<sup>87</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1850, p. 47.

<sup>88</sup> William Smith, *A new Steam-boat companion*, (London 1834) p.35. Cradock and Co., *A practical guide to the watering and sea-bathing places on the coasts of Kent, Sussex and Hampshire*, (London, 1846) p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> *The Era*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1850, 1b.

days of shows, Herne Bay had just the one day, presumably a case of providing the number of seats that the organisers thought they could sell. Despite the promoters belief that the town could grow to the size of Brighton there is nothing to indicate that Herne Bay was ever seriously chasing the mass market, instead offering a more genteel experience. Indeed, Smith's *Steam-boat Companion*<sup>90</sup> considered that "Herne Bay has for several years been rising in public estimation, as a select retreat and a degree of tranquillity unknown to Margate, in the bathing season, is undoubtedly to be found here." Margate was usually considered somewhat "low", so while it undoubtedly had its following, Herne Bay could be said to be positioning itself as a more genteel resort, looking to attract a better class of visitor. This said, there is no real evidence to suggest that this was organised, but rather an accidental outcome from a variety of factors. Genteel should not be taken to mean that there was little for visitors to find to amuse themselves with, as is indicated in a brief piece of editorial in the *Kentish Gazette*, published in July 1857.<sup>91</sup> Within these pages, in reference to Herne Bay the newspaper celebrates the fact that this "pretty watering place shows all the symptoms of a prosperous season" and continues with a list of the "great variety of amusements – boats, phaetons, horses, donkeys, perambulators, bath chairs, bathing machines" that were available for visitors. Although not listed with the *Kentish Gazette* article, Melville's directory published one year later does list various Assembly Halls and Circulating Libraries that would have served for indoor amusements.<sup>92</sup>

Referring to Brighton, Walvin states that both the tide and the shingle made bathing at Brighton uncomfortable, but social pressure rather than geography encouraged people to visit.<sup>93</sup> Herne Bay shared the shingle beach evident at Brighton, but a lack of royal patronage, arguably deprived the town of any social pressure, instead relying perhaps upon a loose informal network of friends, military or business acquaintances. No visitor lists for Herne Bay have been found for the thirty three years between 1837 and 1870, but at this later date it was not unusual for local newspapers to include visitor lists within their pages. A flavour of the visitors staying at Herne Bay in the summer of 1870 can be extracted from the *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*. The lists are of course subjective, but the inclusion of a few titled individuals and those of military rank serve to give an indication of the type of visitor attracted to the town at this time.

Further insights into the class of person visiting Herne Bay can be found in official parliamentary documents. During some exchanges between the legal teams and witnesses chaired by the Select

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<sup>90</sup> Smith, p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> *KG*, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1857, 6e.

<sup>92</sup> Melville and Co., *Directory and Gazetteer of Kent*, (London, Melville and Co., 1858), pp. 145-147.

<sup>93</sup> Walvin, p. 20.

Committee on the Herne Bay and Faversham Railway Bill in 1859, vol.20, p.115-7, lawyer William Evans was asked about the type of person who frequented the Bay. (Quoted from Whitehead):<sup>94</sup>

- Q. *Do you think the Herne Bay visitors are a superior class (Than those who go to Margate)?*
- A. *We do not at Herne Bay afford the same amusements for many persons that there are at Margate, and therefore it is somewhat a different class of persons. We are an extremely quiet place, and we have a beautiful country at the back, and therefore we get the class of visitor who enjoy these things at Herne Bay.*
- Q. *... it is a fact that some people at Herne Bay view with apprehension the influx of visitors of the same class that now go to Margate?*
- A. *They are only very, very few if I know anything about Herne Bay, and I think I do.*

After the railway arrived at Herne Bay in July 1861, the railway company very soon arranged special excursion trains, and as early as August that year, a return trip to Herne Bay was offered from Victoria Station for 2s.6d. The speed advantage over the earlier steamers was the length of time available in the town, stated as being between eight and nine hours, representing almost double the time.<sup>95</sup> Further evidence of the benefits accruing in the town are covered in the *Kentish Chronicle* where the opening of the Herne Bay Season is announced.<sup>96</sup> The text continues “*Until very recently it did not derive much advantage from its close proximity to London, for there was no ready or direct communication with the metropolis, and the towns further off were more sought by Londoners, because of their being easy to access.*” Examples of groups enjoying excursions to Herne Bay appear periodically in the press and it is interesting to speculate if the outing arranged by the Rev. James Cohen for the Whitechapel Church Young Men’s Association, was arranged to Herne Bay because of the town’s reputation for being quieter than Margate.<sup>97</sup>

## Health

The salubrity of the air is mentioned as a chief attraction of the town in Stapleton’s directory, and this is a theme often mentioned in the guide books and various *Steam Ship Companions* published at the time that make play of the benefits of the bracing air and a shore that enabled safe bathing.<sup>98</sup> Situated on the north Kent coast, Herne Bay is subject to a bracing north easterly wind, a point made in part of the text by Fussell (quoted above), where he states “*unfortunately the cold north-*

<sup>94</sup> Whitehead, p. 52.

<sup>95</sup> *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1861, 8b.

<sup>96</sup> *Kentish Chronicle*, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1864, 4c.

<sup>97</sup> *London City Press*, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1866, 6a.

<sup>98</sup> Stapleton, p. 102.



east wind, that inveterate enemy of tender delicate nerves.<sup>99</sup> To which, like its fashionable neighbour Margate, this spot is completely exposed, considerably abridges its comforts and enjoyments”. This is not an isolated reference and the air is mentioned on several occasions, for example in the *Morning Post*, where an article mentions “*The salubrity of the air*” and “*The Hull Packet and Humber Mercury* refers to “*boatmen putting off in the teeth of a nor-easter*”. The exposed area was not completely problematic, as nearby Margate was the chosen location by Dr Lettsom for the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital when it opened in 1791, as it was believed that sea bathing and sea air were the best cures for tuberculosis.<sup>100</sup> Looking to capitalize on this natural resource, perhaps in the absence of much else, Herne Bay was promoted as a healthy resort towards the latter part of the nineteenth century. Aspects of health continue in the *Morning Post* where Herne Bay is mentioned as “*possessing every convenience and attraction for families seeking health and rural pleasures*” and in the *Kentish Gazette* where house guests were advertised for by “*A married lady, obliged to reside at the seaside on account of health...*”.<sup>101</sup>

Climate had a dramatic impact upon seaside resorts, particularly where favourable weather conditions could establish a resorts reputation and provide a significant boost to visitor numbers. North or east facing resorts were at a distinct disadvantage to those with a more sheltered aspect, and the Holy Grail for resort promoters was to be able to extend the summer season or even create a winter season.<sup>102</sup> If a resort was able to attract free-spending visitors all year round, it made a significant difference to the local economy. Margate attracted the sea bathing hospital on the basis of fresh air, but this was not to everyone’s taste and most, the healthy or those convalescing preferred a more favourable climate and in this context Folkestone, with its south facing aspect established a reputation for the treatment of tuberculosis.<sup>103</sup> Although Herne Bay did not achieve any lasting success as an all year round resort, at the end of the nineteenth century, the suburb of Beltinge, half a mile inland, was chosen as site for not one, but two convalescent homes funded by the Cornish philanthropist, John Passmore-Edwards.<sup>104</sup>

From the late 1830s, an annual report was published by the Registrar General, concerning many aspects of health and well being. The comprehensive report issued quarterly contained a summary paragraph headed “*Health of English Watering Places.*”<sup>105</sup> The 36<sup>th</sup> annual report referring to

<sup>99</sup> Fussell, p. 73.

<sup>100</sup> *Morning Post*, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1825, 3c. *Hull Packet and Humber Mercury*, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1827, 1e.

<sup>101</sup> *Morning Post*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1829, 1a. *KG*, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1833, 2a.

<sup>102</sup> Walton, *English Seaside Resorts*, p. 109.

<sup>103</sup> Marc Arnold, *Disease, Class and Social Change: Tuberculosis in Folkestone and Sandgate, 1880-1930*, (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

<sup>104</sup> Dean Evans, *Funding the Ladder: The Passmore Edwards Legacy*, ((London, Francis Boutle, 2011). p. 172.

<sup>105</sup> 36<sup>th</sup> Annual report of the Registrar General, (re 1873), 1874, p. xxxix.

1873, reported summary data on the health of 47 watering places, and usually focused on the death rate. In this particular year, the lowest rates were reported to be in Hove, Bognor, Exmouth, Lyme Regis and Ramsgate. Using a rather obscure measure, the average death rate from the seven principal zymotic (infectious) diseases was quoted as 1.2 per 1,000, but exceeded 3 per 1,000 in Herne Bay, Bangor and Fleetwood. Needless to say positive news would be picked up by local newspapers and used to the advantage of the town, whereas negative news often went unreported. Herne Bay fared a little better five years later in 1878 when it was listed as being the “*most healthy*” and it topped the charts again in 1883, when the registrar’s report of 30<sup>th</sup> June noted that the town had the lowest death rate at 10.1 per 1,000, followed by Deal at 14.6 and Ramsgate at 16.8.<sup>106</sup> This was reported in the *Kentish Gazette* and from that point forward Herne Bay was often billed as the “*the healthiest watering place in England*” with town guides using this quote for many years afterwards.<sup>107</sup> These were not isolated instances of promoting the health aspect of the town, as an advertisement placed by The Land Company on the front page of the *Manchester Evening News*, Herne Bay was unashamedly stated as “*The Healthiest Seaside Town in England*”.<sup>108</sup> When these comments are taken in the context of the time along with the fact that no cholera was ever reported in the town, it can be seen that a broader health advantage to Herne Bay could be claimed. The foundation of the town from nothing, starting with effectively a blank canvas, certainly assisted with the provision of water, adequate drains and other utilities. Other resorts have sought to tap into the “healthy” label, usually those with an easterly aspect. One of the better known is the early twentieth example of the Lincolnshire resort of Skegness where they have adopted the slogan of “*Bracing*”, which together with the twentieth century image of the *Jolly Fisherman*, by John Hassall, has become an iconic promotional image.<sup>109</sup>

With regard to Herne Bay’s promotion it is worth reflecting upon the views of those who wrote about Herne Bay during the period under review. With a degree of predictability, locally published guides tended to focus on the positives and concentrate upon what the town had to offer to the visitor, but those guides produced further afield were not always as complimentary. H.S. Vaughan, writing in 1893, makes this very point and states that “It is interesting to notice the difference between the opinions of the county guide books with those of the place itself. The latter, in picturesque and glowing language, dilate upon the health laden breeze, the ocean which ebbs and flows between the shore on which we are standing and the polar regions, the parade and Town Hall, and Local Board Offices, the Board Schools and – most important of all – the clock tower. What is

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<sup>106</sup> *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1878, 3b.

<sup>107</sup> *KG*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1883, 6c.

<sup>108</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1899, 1a.

<sup>109</sup> Ward, p. 36.

Herne Bay without the clock tower?” The county guide books on the other hand, being disinterested, take a sadder and wiser view of things. One of the best for instance remarks *a somewhat melancholy watering place, which has never been a success*. On the whole Herne Bay is tolerable upon a hot, sunny day in June, if you want to loaf a few hours away with a fascinating book upon the sea shore. Its streets are dull and ugly and its public buildings are worse.” These comments by Vaughan seem a little overstated, but provide a good late example of a number of less than helpful commentaries on the town.

### Entertainments and Attractions

Stafford reminds us that “*Entertainments were vital to an expanding resort*” so with this in mind, what was Herne Bay able to offer visitors?<sup>110</sup> To the east of the spot in Herne Bay where the hoys landed, the ground rises quite steeply forming what today is known as the Downs. Several fields in this general vicinity were used by the military, as part of the coastal defences put in place against the perceived threat from General Napoleon Bonaparte.<sup>111</sup> Hasted informs that barracks were built by the Government in 1798, and a defensive military presence of up to 500 men was in evidence at Herne Bay.<sup>112</sup> This military base drew comment on several occasions in the *Kentish Gazette* and the reports seem to suggest that the military camp attracted visitors to the area, further raising awareness of the sea bathing facilities that existed. From an unfortunate incident that was reported in 1798, we learn that Ensign James Warren, of the Royal Glamorgan Militia, was drowned after stopping to bath in the sea at two o’clock in the morning when returning from an evening out in the neighbourhood.<sup>113</sup> Later in 1798, the Huntingdon Militia were reviewed by the Prince of Wales at Canterbury, “*wither, for that purpose they marched from Whitstable and Herne Bay.*”<sup>114</sup> In 1808, the Royal Artillery were in post and were noted for undertaking practice of firing an 8-inch mortar some 500 yards at a flag staff, placed on the beach, with a precision that marks the perfection which this branch of the service has acquired.<sup>115</sup> A separate article in the same issue of the newspaper, more than hinted at the attraction of watching the daily practice with shot and shells on the sand at low water and the *KG* records that visitors could often be seen viewing the soldiers, but we are not told specifically where the visitors travelled from.<sup>116</sup> It would perhaps be reasonable to conclude that nearby Canterbury would be a source of some of these visitors and some substance for this is provided by some editorial included within the *KG* that read “*A large party of*

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<sup>110</sup> Stafford, p. 18.

<sup>111</sup> Hasluck. p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> Hasted, *The history and topographical survey of the county of Kent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. IX, (Canterbury, 1800).

<sup>113</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, London, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1798.

<sup>114</sup> *The Times*, London, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1798, 2a.

<sup>115</sup> *KG*, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1808, 4c.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* 5<sup>th</sup> August 1808, 4b.

*fashionables from Canterbury among which were Lord and Lady Aylmer, Colonel and the Hon. Mrs. Mundy, Captain Trench, and several other military officers with their ladies, enjoyed its scenery in full perfection on Thursday last*".<sup>117</sup> Barrett states that the military camps were often a two edged sword.<sup>118</sup> While some saw them as an attraction and a spectacle to visit, other saw them as attracting attention from the enemy and therefore driving visitors away. This was particularly evident on the south east coast, but it doubtful that Herne Bay suffered and more likely that it gained visitors and stimulated interest.

As Chalklin points out, military establishments provided a temporary or permanent boost to urban economies, and a similar argument can be put forward for the some of the more rural settlements such as that at Herne Bay.<sup>119</sup> One such example of this is evidenced at Herne Bay where the presence of the military encouraged the owner of the Ship inn to build an extension by way of an Assembly room. This weather boarded addition to the 17<sup>th</sup> century building provided a room that was used for various functions; a ticket for one such event survives granting admission for the sum of 6d. to an Assembly on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1808.

Examples of the entertainments enjoyed during the 1830s can be found via their coverage in the *KG*, where details are included of a *Subscription Concert* held at the Pier Hotel, a *Promenade Concert*, performed by Madame and Mr. Panormo, also at the Pier Hotel, both being typical of the offering available.<sup>120</sup> Regattas were another regular feature that seemed to prove popular with visitors. An early mention of a regatta at Herne Bay dates from 1824, where the *Morning Post*,<sup>121</sup> reports on an event where the band "... enlivened the scene by playing select airs and pieces of music, afforded a rich treat to a large concourse of well-dressed and highly respectable people assembled on the occasion". For a regatta held in 1834, Jonathan Acres, the landlord of the Dolphin Inn, offered a "cold collation" for visitors, while he also "begs leave to return his grateful thanks to the Citizens of Canterbury and its vicinity, and the visitors of that delightful Watering Place, for the very liberal support he has received".<sup>122</sup> Some idea of the size of these regatta can be gained from the publicity notice placed in the *KG* where it was mentioned that there would be a sailing match for a silver cup and a rowing match for a purse of fifty guineas, followed by a "grand display of fireworks from the pier head" and "a concert and ball at the St. George's Royal Baths

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. 16<sup>th</sup> August 1808, 4c.

<sup>118</sup> Barrett, p. 12.

<sup>119</sup> Christopher Chalklin, *The rise of the English town 1650-1850*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 14.

<sup>120</sup> *KG*, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1833, 1a and 18<sup>th</sup> February 1834, 2b.

<sup>121</sup> *Morning Post*, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1924, 3e.

<sup>122</sup> *KG*, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1834, 1a.

and Assembly room,” described as “*the largest and most splendid room in Kent*”.<sup>123</sup> The use of the word royal presents a mystery, as there is not known to have been any royal patronage or visits to these baths prior to 1837.

With a throwback to the days of the spas, for a short period of time, it seems that Herne Bay had its own Master of Ceremonies.<sup>124</sup> In 1836, Captain William Chadwick was appointed to this post and his duties included organising concerts and balls which were mainly held at the Pier Hotel. Chadwick’s name appears in the Stapleton’s directory for 1838 when he is listed with an address of Marine Terrace, but unlike Richard ‘Beau’ Nash of Bath and Tunbridge Wells fame, little else seems to have been recorded about him. In fact apart from the occasional promotional advertisement, Chadwick’s main mention in the newspaper is in relation to some controversy surrounding certain unspecified allegations made against him in a letter to the Morning Chronicle. The allegations were denied and a report to this effect was published in the *KG*.<sup>125</sup> It seems however that Chadwick’s reign at Herne Bay was short lived and probably unsuccessful, as an advertisement in the *KG* in December 1838 publicises an auction of his furniture and effects, being sold as he was leaving Herne Bay.<sup>126</sup> While it looks as if this post was not ultimately successful, it does look like a positive move by the authorities of Herne Bay to try to offer a service to visitors during the summer season that would improve their experience and emphasise the genteel nature of the town’s offering.

Quite how the visitors to Herne Bay saw themselves is unclear, but it is reasonable to assume that they were choosing the town, over perhaps Margate. Looking at the visitor lists it is possible that the well to do families saw themselves as “*sophisticated metropolitan-oriented community*” the choice of entertainment was certainly limited, but by no means non-existent.<sup>127</sup> Within the town the circulating libraries, reading rooms, assembly rooms and shops, while no different to other towns, would have offered variety and a change from those at home. Beyond the immediate confines of the town, the surrounding countryside presented many opportunities for walks for drives in carriages, and the presence of Reculver Towers, visible around three miles to the east, would have presented a pleasant walk to some “romantic ruins” so loved by the Victorians. By 1874, there was a proposed scheme to convert the St. Georges Baths into an aquarium, perhaps to imitate a similar building available at Brighton, but despite the backing of Mr. Frank Buckland, a well known naturalist who had led the ill fated oyster company in the town, the scheme came to nothing.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid. 1<sup>st</sup> July 1834, 2a.

<sup>124</sup> Hasluck, p. 18.

<sup>125</sup> *KG*, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1836, 3e.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 27<sup>th</sup> November 1838, 2b.

<sup>127</sup> Robin Bush, *The book of Exmouth*, (Buckingham, Barracuda, 1987), p. 44. (quoted in Crouch).

<sup>128</sup> *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1874, 4b.

This chapter has explained how Herne Bay emerged from being an isolated coastal region of the large rural parish of Herne, into a seaside resort of growing popularity. The first resort activity is recorded on the coast in 1770, but it took another forty five years for any sustained development to take place. Once the improvements commenced, investment in the form of a deep sea pier started a more focused plan and the formation of the Improvement Act of 1833. Initial ideas were to try to compete with nearby Margate, with thoughts that the so called “new town” could in time grow to the size of Brighton, at that time the largest seaside resort in the country. These ambitions, or what turned out to be rather fanciful aspirations, were never realised and Herne Bay suffered a number of ebbs and flows in its popularity. Transport was to play a big part, and this will be covered in a later chapter.

How potential visitors became aware of the town has been covered, especially relating to how it was promoted in the press and popular steam-boat companions and guides of the day. The town’s ability to attract often boiled down to economics and almost by default the town attracted a more genteel class of visitor to those travelling to nearby Margate. Herne Bay was in some respects a deliberate choice for those seeking a quieter experience than could be enjoyed at either Margate or Ramsgate, especially among those who wished for safe a clean bathing waters together with respectable entertainments.

### 3: Transport Links

This chapter will explain the transport links that have influenced the development of Herne Bay, initially as a trading point and in time, as a seaside resort. The town's transport falls into broad chronological categories, each linked with technological and entrepreneurial developments. For a short while during the 1830s the town flourished, mainly as it was a convenient short cut for travellers aiming for Dover for onward travel to continental Europe. This influx of economic activity fuelled a degree of short lived inbound investment and rapid expansion, the effects of which will be described together with their legacy on the town and its residents.

Transport links have proved to be a rich source for historians seeking to explain individual and regional resort developments, but Walton asserts that a balanced view needs to be taken, along with patterns of demand, entertainments and governance.<sup>129</sup> In respect of Herne Bay's development as a seaside resort, it can be counter argued that while governance indeed played a vital role in forming and shaping the town's evolution together with the demand and provision of entertainments, transport remains the key factor. As Gough has stated, the formation of Herne Bay can be likened to the question of which came first – the chicken or the egg?<sup>130</sup> With the similar question, of which came first, Herne Bay's Pier or Herne Bay as a town? This is based upon the two chronologically close events of the formation of the Herne Bay Pier Company in 1831 and the Herne Improvement Act of 1833 that effectively established Herne Bay as a town.

It is convenient to consider that travel to Herne Bay falls into three broad phases:

1. Hoys and horses
2. Steamer, via the pier
3. Direct rail link

These categories are not perfect, nor are they absolutely defined as there are overlaps, but they do provide a useful starting point related to the ability of the town to accommodate and take advantage of transport improvements. References to Margate are included here as this resort has a relevance to Herne Bay, due to its early development as a resort, its close geographic proximity and the suggestion that the promoters of the new town were anxious to try to tempt visitors away from Margate.

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<sup>129</sup> Walton, *English Seaside Resorts*, p. 3.

<sup>130</sup> Harold Gough, *Herne Bay's Piers*, (Herne Bay, HBHRS, 2008), p. 7.

Simmons states that “*even that up until the middle of the last century (19<sup>th</sup>) travelling in England required considerable physical and mental fortitude*”.<sup>131</sup> This is an interesting observation, as often those travelling to the spas and later to the seaside resorts, were doing so for the benefit of their health. Until the widespread development of the British railway network in the 1840s, travellers were faced with the choice of going by foot or by horse. Those able to get to the coast had the additional option of using the sea, inland rivers or via the expanding canal network. Each method had its advantages and disadvantages, but cost and the time taken were two significant factors to be considered. While the upper classes and aristocracy would have had ready access to their own horses, most of the population would have been too poor to have had any choice other than walking, a situation that remained until well into the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, for the increasing numbers of the artisan and merchant classes resulting from the industrial revolution, the use of horse drawn coaches was a distinct possibility. Eighteenth and nineteenth century press advertisements and trade directories reveal that significant numbers of scheduled coach services were available and the balance of supply and demand dictated that costs were decreasing as the eighteenth century drew to a close. Walton points out that well into the eighteenth century the high charges for travel and accommodation acted as an efficient social filter.<sup>132</sup>

### **Phase one**

For those looking to travel to a resort, proximity was important, as quite apart from the time saving, the costs were theoretically lower if the destination was achieved by travelling a shorter distance. London was home to a large number of the class of people able to choose to frequent the up and coming resorts and in the south east, and Margate was a popular early destination for resort visitors. Margate was accessible by two main methods, the sailing hoy and the horse drawn coach. The hoyes were one masted trading vessels of about sixty tons that plied the coast between Sunderland and other coastal ports in the north east and Kent with coal and returned via London with various agricultural goods. Apart from produce, there was some limited space available for passengers, on what was a cheap, but uncomfortable and unreliable means of travel, improving slightly as the eighteenth century wore on, as the craft were adapted to include proper cabins and beds.<sup>133</sup> The journey time from London to Margate could vary from anything between ten and seventy two hours depending upon the wind, tide and weather for a charge of 2s.6d. per passenger and 6d. per hundred

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<sup>131</sup> *Journeys in England*, ed. Jack Simmons, (London, David and Charles, 1969). ifc.

<sup>132</sup> Walton, *English Seaside Resorts*, p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> Lee, p. 32.



weight for baggage.<sup>134</sup> Somewhat reassuringly, Seymour remarks that “*a hoy from this place has not been lost for over 150 years.*”<sup>135</sup>

From the experience of Margate, we can see that the use of hoys was both commonplace and accepted as a means of travelling to the coast. Turning from Margate to Herne Bay, we learn from Andrews, that the Customs port of Faversham included responsibility for a considerable portion of the Kent coast stretching from Milton in the west to North Foreland in the east.<sup>136</sup> From 1676 four places were included within the jurisdiction of Faversham for trade purposes – Reculver, Herne, Whitstable and Faversham itself. Andrews quotes Hasted’s description of Herne in 1772 “*as a centre of flourishing coastwise trade*” and draws reference to earlier times when ships belonging to Herne were frequently recorded in the Faversham port books and in 1702 its farmers, hoymen and fishermen considered their bay important enough to need guns for protection from the French.<sup>137</sup> Andrews states that the individual contributions of the port cannot be attributed with certainty, but in 1701, 33 ships totalling 701 tons belonged to Whitstable and Herne.<sup>138</sup> The records are fragmentary so only the odd reference to Herne can be obtained, but in 1741, Andrews found that of a total of 237 ships, 44 were recorded as being from Herne. So with this background, travel to Herne or Herne Bay could be accomplished, so when the bathing machine appeared in 1770, access via the sea was possible and a potential source of visitors.

## Roads

For those who did not have their own private coach, there was a long established network of coach operators covering much of the country. Insights into the frequency and duration of coach journeys can be gained from the various Itineraries and Guides available from the start of the eighteenth century. One of the better known examples was produced by Carey and from Carey’s 1815 edition, as referred to by Scurrrell, we learn that post coaches started at Blossoms Inn, Cheapside, London, leaving at 8am and arrived at Margate at 9pm, a thirteen hour journey.<sup>139</sup>

Before resorts came into being, many roads had been established for the purpose of moving people or produce, forming the basis of trade. Looking at the geography of East Kent, the closest route to the sea for the city of Canterbury, was due north at either Whitstable or on the coast one and one

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<sup>134</sup> Lee, p. 33.

<sup>135</sup> Seymour, *A new topographical, Historical and Commercial Survey of the Cities, Towns and Villages of the County of Kent*, (Canterbury, 1776). Quoted in Lee, p. 32.

<sup>136</sup> J.H. Andrews, ‘The trade of the port of Faversham’ in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXIX, pp. 125-131.

<sup>137</sup> Domestic State Papers, Anne, 1/35, quoted in Andrews.

<sup>138</sup> Letters from Customs Commissioners, Admiralty, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1702.

<sup>139</sup> David Scurrrell, *The Book of Margate*, (Buckingham, Barracuda, 1982), p. 59.

half miles beyond Herne Village. The importance of this trade route is suggested by the establishment of a turnpike trust between Canterbury and Whitstable in 1736, a relatively early example in the county.<sup>140</sup> Four and one half miles to the east of Whitstable, it is recorded by Hasted that there was a road from Canterbury through Herne in the late eighteenth century and the likelihood is that this road was established a long time before this date.<sup>141</sup> Canterbury had been served by a network of Roman roads, and one of these led north through Sturry to the fort at Reculver, the route passing the Archbishop's palace at Ford. Supplies landing on the coast in the place that was to become Herne Bay, would have been transported onwards to Canterbury by hauliers using the long established road. The traffic would have been two-way and apart from the inbound goods, Hasted records that some goods were sent to the London market.<sup>142</sup> The importance of this trade route can be further illustrated by the scheme announced in 1783 to create a fully navigable waterway from the sea to Canterbury, continuing onwards to Ashford. One of the variations considered was the construction of a canal from the River Stour near the village of Sarre situated east of Canterbury on the road to Thanet, northwards to St. Nicholas' Bay where a harbour would be formed with a water depth of 10 feet. In terms of cost, it was estimated that nearly £62,000 would need to be raised for completion, but this significant capital sum meant that it never went any further than the planning stage.<sup>143</sup> A later plan for an inland waterway scheme was proposed, this time resulting in a Bill that received Royal Assent in June 1825, but this coincided with the promotion of the Canterbury and Whitstable railway and the limitations of the canal idea were soon realised and the ideas were shelved.<sup>144</sup> It is interesting to speculate how either of these schemes would have altered the course of history in the East Kent area if they had succeeded and in particular if there would have helped or hindered resort development at Herne Bay.

As with most roads of the period, the care and maintenance of the road between Canterbury and the coast via Herne was the responsibility of the individual parish with the usual problems that this entailed. Looking at the geography and the route followed by this road, it would be reasonable to assume that conditions were less than ideal, especially during the winter months when it can be imagined that the road would have been difficult to use and at certain times all but impassable, even though the total route was just five miles long. The Sarre Penn stream flows just north of Broad Oak village and this has created a valley with two reasonably steep hills either side of the stream's course, these undoubtedly adding to the difficulty of the route.

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<sup>140</sup> James Carley, *The Turnpike Roads of Kent*. (Maidstone, Kent County Library, c.1980), p. 1.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>143</sup> Brian Hart, *The Canterbury and Whitstable Railway*, (Oxford, Wild Swan Publishing, 1991), p. 4

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

Looking at Kent roads as a whole, Panton and Lawson, have pointed out that the chronological and geographical pattern of turnpiking in Kent, has been influenced by the important routes between London and the coast, particularly Dover and the route to the continent.<sup>145</sup> The first turnpike trust to be established in the county dates from 1709, to care for the road between Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. Although late in date compared to others in the area, the road between Herne and Sturry came under the control of a Turnpike Trust in 1814 under powers granted by an Act of parliament.<sup>146</sup> As was the normal pattern of events, this enabled loan arrangements to be entered into and the road was suitably improved, with repayments being made from the tolls charged. The improved road surface would have added a degree of certainty for all road users, with shorter journey times providing impetus to the volume of traffic using the road, despite the fact that payment would have been required to use this route. This Act lists no less than seventy-five trustees whose land adjoined the route of the road and one of these, Sir Henry Oxenden of Broome Park, Barham, owned land to the west of where the turnpike road met the beach at Herne Bay, forming part of Underdown Farm. Shortly after the Turnpike road came into being, Oxenden commenced with his plan to create a new town on the shore where the turnpike terminated. These actions arguably gave rise to the start and formation of the embryo town at this location, and a case could be put forward that Herne Bay was the result of this improved road and an offshoot from the boost in trade, rather than anything else.

By 1830 Herne Bay seems to have built a reputation as a resort location for London travellers and appeared by name in newspaper reports and advertisements. Evidence of the progress as a seaside resort is provided by means of a brief advertisement published in identical format on four separate occasions in the early summer of 1830 in the London newspaper, the *Morning Post*, once in May twice in June and once in July, each reading as follows:<sup>147</sup>

*“Herne Bay, eight miles from Canterbury, fourteen from Margate, and sixty-four from London, possesses every convenience for warm and sea bathing. It is delightfully situated in a highly cultivated and well wooded country with a fine open sea. Stages direct to Herne Bay leave London every morning at ten o’clock from Chaplin’s Spread Eagle Office, Gracechurch Street and the corner of Regent Street, Piccadilly; Hoys from Pickle Herring and Goulding’s Wharfs, Tooley Street every Friday”*

<sup>145</sup> Frank Panton, ‘Turnpikes, Roads and Waterways’ in *An Historical Atlas of Kent*, ed. by Terrence Lawson and David Killingray, (Chichester, Phillimore and Co., 2004). p. 122.

<sup>146</sup> George III, Cap.li, *An Act for amending, widening, and keeping in Repair the Road leading from Sturry Street to Herne Bay, in the county of Kent*. 18<sup>th</sup> May 1814.

<sup>147</sup> *Morning Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1830, 2d. 9<sup>th</sup> June 1830, 1b, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1830, 2b.and 9<sup>th</sup> July 1830, 1b.

This small advertisement provides us with an insight into the reasons being promoted at the time for visiting Herne Bay and the means of getting there by road via the direct stage coaches or by sea travelling on the Hoys. With a number of established means of getting to Herne Bay, a growing community and increasing interest in the area as a seaside resort the area presented opportunity for expansion and investment, but the visitor numbers were still modest and an alternative means of getting to Herne Bay was required.

### **Phase Two - The Pier**

Herne Bay became well known for its pier and when it opened to steamer traffic in 1832, it provided a significant boost to the town and created the environment to attract a greater number of visitors and gave a boost to building work.

Although the hoy had been successful in transporting passengers to their destinations, notably Margate in the context of Kent, the limitations created by operational uncertainty were obvious. A major breakthrough arrived in 1815, when developments in marine engineering led to the launch of the first steamship *The Marjory*, a vessel that was used on the Thames after trials on the river Clyde.<sup>148</sup> By July of that year, a steamer or steam packet named *Thames* was operating a route between London and Margate and these steamers became an overnight success, with dramatically improved reliability and the reduction in the time taken in sea travel.<sup>149</sup> As would be expected, the Hoy owners opposed the introduction of the steam packet, but the journey from London could now be completed in under eight hours and the case for using the new means of travel was compelling.

Some of the attractions of the steam packet over the hoy can be seen from the following extracts from a passenger's impression of travelling on the *Venus* in August 1823:<sup>150</sup> “*Embarked at Tower Stairs ... on board the Venus Steam Boat for Margate when Boiling and Smoking away at the rate of 12 or 14 miles an hour in the most agreeable style to the great delight of nearly 200 cockneys of all ages, sizes & sexes. She arrived in seven hours and a half at her destination. The accommodation of this vessel is superior to any sailing vessel I ever saw, splendid cabins, Mahogany fittings, Horsehair sofas, Carpeted floors ... with bars and bar maids, kitchen & cooks, stewards & waiters.*” The comparison with the alternative choice of the hoy, shows why the arrival of the steamer was such a breakthrough.

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<sup>148</sup> Frank Burt, *Steamers of the Thames and Medway*, (London, Richard Tilling, 1949), p. 8.

<sup>149</sup> Tim Sherwood, *The Steamboat Revolution*, (Stroud, Tempus Publications Ltd., 2007). p. 22

<sup>150</sup> *Notes and Queries*, 8<sup>th</sup> series, 7. February 1895, quoted in Lee, p. 40.

Those wishing to visit Herne Bay could use the steamers before the pier was built, but this was dependent upon the traveller transferring from the steamer into a rowing boat some way off the shore. A description of this somewhat hazardous means of getting ashore was reported in a newspaper article in 1827.<sup>151</sup> The article under the heading “*Gleanings Along Shore*” starts with a nineteenth century axiom, “*One of the numerous advantages of voyaging by steam, is the certainty of reaching the place of your destination within or very near the time specified*” It is not clear if the article is a report or a story, but the text describes how a traveller returning to Hearne (sic) Bay from London was about three and one half miles off Hearne Bay at four o’clock, but due to a north easterly wind and a heavy swell, the Hearne Bay boatman would not put off from the shore. The tale continues with the journey of the unfortunate traveller who gets further delayed as he is unable to disembark at Margate or Ramsgate to continue his journey by coach. The practise of transferring passengers from steamers into rowing boats was a relatively common one, and while the inconvenience and hazards can be readily seen, the saving in time made this an attractive proposition.

While it is difficult to gauge the number of visitors actually making the trip, the numbers must have been significant, or at least significant enough to offer sufficient promise to make it worthwhile for a group of investors to get together to promote a company for the erection of a deep sea pier. The life story of one of the engineers subsequently involved with the building of the pier, George Abernethy, was published by his son John in 1897.<sup>152</sup> Within the text, John asserts that a company for the purpose of raising capital for the Herne Bay pier venture, was formed in London to raise the necessary capital. This is supported by the publications of an advertisement that was placed in the *London Standard* in November 1830.<sup>153</sup>

*“HERNE BAY PIER, KENT*

*This Company is formed for the Erection of a pier at this desirable watering place. Thomas Telford Esq., the Company’s Engineer, has so designed it as to afford a delightful promenade, extending half a mile over the sands and sea, and to allow steam packets and other vessels to embark and land passengers and goods at all times of the tide. The capital is raised in shares of 50l each, by act of parliament: deposit, 2l each, on subscribing. Persons wishing to have an appropriation of the shares are requested to make early application in writing to the Directors, addressed to Messrs. Clift and Fisher, the clerks and*

<sup>151</sup> *The Hull Packet and Humber Mercury*, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1827, 1e.

<sup>152</sup> John Abernethy, *The life and work of James Abernethy, C.E., F.R.S.E.*, (London, Brettell and Co., 1897), p. 30.

<sup>153</sup> *London Standard*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1830, 1b.

*solicitors, 23 Red Lion Square, London; or to Mr. Peirce, solicitor, Burgate street, Canterbury.”*

No prospectus has been found, but Gough notes that a subscription list was opened in February 1831 to raise the £50,000 required share capital.<sup>154</sup>

The events leading up to the decision to build a pier are noted in *A Picture of the New Town of Herne Bay*, by ‘A Lady’ where the author quotes the tale of two entrepreneurs visiting Canterbury who travelled over for a ride to the coast.<sup>155</sup> These are suggested in the text as being Thomas Campiom (sic), actually Thomas Camplin, named as one of the twenty-four men who become the first Commissioners as a result of the 1833 Improvement Act, whose name seems to have been misspelled in a promotional advertisement for the London, Herne Bay, Canterbury, and Dovor (sic) Steam Packet Company that appeared in the *London Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1834 1a, and George Burge (in time, another of Herne Bay’s first Commissioners). Both wished to tap into the potential for the development of a new town for passengers to visit on the land where they were then standing. Burge was a Civil Engineer, who had recent experience of working on St. Katherine’s Dock, London as well as knowledge of the pier recently built at Prittlewell, [now Southend] Essex.

As Gough pints out, the paddle steamers then operating and taking passengers to both Margate and Ramsgate further along the coast, were able to drop off passengers at Herne Bay, but only by means of deploying a passing fishermen’s beach boat and “*there was little pleasure and some embarrassment in such a venture, not lightly to be undertaken*”.<sup>156</sup> Burge and Camplin were able to observe the distant paddle steamer making its way to Margate and Ramsgate and wondered if it might be possible to do something to improve the arrangements for disembarking at Herne Bay, and soon came up with the idea of a pier. As at Prittlewell, the waters at Herne Bay were shallow, so it was calculated that the pier would need to extend some three quarters of a mile out into the sea, to ensure sufficient depth of water at all states of the tide.

The capital was raised and “*An Act for making and maintaining a Pier or Jetty, and other works at Herne Bay in the Parish of Herne in the County of Kent*” received the Royal assent on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1831.<sup>157</sup> The text of the Act, lists the first thirty three shareholders and the names are worthy of some analysis. At least nine of the names can be proven to have London connections and it is

<sup>154</sup> Gough, *Herne Bay’s Piers*, p .8.

<sup>155</sup> A Lady, *A Picture of the New Town of Herne Bay*, (London, John Macrone, 1835). p. 4.

<sup>156</sup> Gough, *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> 2 William IV, Cap. xxv. *An Act for making and maintaining a Pier or Jetty, and other works at Herne Bay in the Parish of Herne in the County of Kent.* 30<sup>th</sup> March 1831.

suspected that the majority of the shareholders are London businessmen. In fact, only one of those listed as a shareholder, George Randell, is known to be local to Herne Bay as he appears in the 1832 Poll book for the parish of Herne as a Herne Bay resident. An additional three of the names can be identified in the same poll book, and noted as having property in the parish of Herne, but with London addresses. The company solicitors were Clift and Fisher, whose offices were at 23 Red Lion Square, London, an address that was noted in 1839 as being the office address of the Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers, one of the city livery companies who do not have their own livery hall or premises. This is significant as two of the pier shareholders were liverymen of the Worshipful Company of Glass Sellers in 1834, and at least two of the other shareholders were liverymen of the Worshipful Company of Masons and the Worshipful Company of Armourers and Braziers. Although this does not cover all of the shareholders, it does illustrate a network of friends and business acquaintances who seem to have willing and able to invest in the new venture at Herne Bay.

Although Thomas Telford gets the credit for the design of Herne Bay pier, by 1831 he was an elderly man of 72 years of age, and it was actually Telford's assistant, Thomas Rhodes who undertook the design work, using timber as his preferred construction material.<sup>158</sup> George Abernethy, one of Burge's colleagues at St. Katherine's Docks became engineer in charge of the work, as well as a shareholder of the pier company.

We know that the town was eleven miles closer to Margate than London and this meant that time spent travelling could be reduced by at least one hour each way. This was important to visitors in this period and it can be seen from Jane Austen's *Sanditon* that being one measured mile closer to London than Eastbourne was a virtue.<sup>159</sup> Once completed, the pier did indeed boost visitor numbers to the town and provided a significant boost to the local economy, however as covered in chapter four, not all of the visitors stayed as many were using the town as a short cut and a means of getting to the continent via Dover.

## **Railway**

Railways are generally recognized as being one of the great inventions of the nineteenth century, providing the potential for mass movement of the population over larger distances, faster than had been previously possible. Crump makes the point that in the early days railways were planned, financed and constructed to satisfy specific economic demands, and tied to this it can be seen that

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<sup>158</sup> Gough, *Herne Bay's Piers*, p. 8.

<sup>159</sup> Jane Austen, *Sanditon*, Penguin Classics edition, (London, Penguin, 1974), p. 160.

the rail network was built up piecemeal from the late 1820s, with lines tending, although not exclusively, to focus and radiate out from the larger cities and centres of population.<sup>160</sup> Kent provided a rich seam of opportunity for the railways as it was conveniently located with close proximity to both London and continental Europe. The location of the Kentish Channel ports, linked to the desire of passengers to travel to the continent, provided scope for a route that proved to be economically viable. Almost as a by-product of building this route to reach overseas, travel to seaside resorts became much easier, a reality mentioned by Walton who states that “*in the 1830s and 1840s, the railways provided a direct stimulus to the seaside in three ways.*<sup>161</sup> *They made the journey to the coast easier, faster, cheaper and more comfortable for the existing visiting public...*” Looking at these three headings, it can be readily seen how the already established Kent resorts could potentially benefit from the provision of a railway, with significant time savings to be gained when compared to the alternatives of road or sea travel. Railways also provided opportunity for the emergence of new resorts, as well as the development of areas that previously would only have been of marginal interest.

Kent was home to a pioneering railway built between Canterbury and Whitstable that opened in 1830, one of the first in the country. This railway’s origins dated back to 1825 and ran from the cathedral city to Whitstable on the north Kent coast through Blean Woods, a geographically difficult route hampered by steep inclines.<sup>162</sup> Although this railway stimulated a lot of interest, the technical difficulties meant that it was not the financial success intended. Following this start, the first substantial line in Kent beyond the London suburbs, was built by the South Eastern Railway (SER), after obtaining a Parliamentary Act in 1836.<sup>163</sup> The line ran from the London Termini to Redhill, Tonbridge and on towards Ashford and Dover. Margate, was at this time the most popular seaside destination in Kent, with Ramsgate, its near neighbour and competitor, and both were deprived of direct rail contact until 1846. When it did arrive it was via a branch from Ashford, through Canterbury and onto Thanet, by no means the shortest route, but one that nonetheless gave both resorts a boost.

As Gray points out, most early railway proposals through Kent were concerned with access from London to Dover.<sup>164</sup> Thus enabling passengers to reach the Channel port and travel to the continent. This suggests that carrying passengers to the seaside resorts was not ranked as the top

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<sup>160</sup> Thomas Crump, *The Age of Steam*, (London, Constable and Robinson, 2007), p. 121.

<sup>161</sup> Walton, p. 22.

<sup>162</sup> Hart. p. 11.

<sup>163</sup> Frank W.G. Andrews, ‘Development of Railways and Roads, since 1830’ in *An Historical Atlas of Kent*, (see Lawson above), pp. 124-126.

<sup>164</sup> Adrian Gray, *The London, Chatham and Dover Railway*, (Rainham, Meresborough Books, 1984), p. 125.



priority by the railway promoters, as the Channel ports offered the promise of better returns on their investments. However, it did not take long for the next best investment return to be pursued and the coast was seen as a viable objective. Once beyond the London suburbs and into Kent, two rival companies dominated the scene – the SER and the London, Chatham and Dover (LCDR), both operated out of London and were fierce rivals for several decades. This rivalry led to many examples of poor decision making and route planning, but eventually common sense prevailed and the two companies merged in 1899. The respective histories of the two companies are complex, but they have been well covered by Gray, Course and others so will not be repeated here save as is pertinent to the point being made.<sup>165</sup> The SER reached the Kent market town of Ashford and opened a station there in December 1842. Ashford is conveniently situated to form a base from which lines could branch out in several directions and this was the main reason why the shareholders of the South Eastern Railway (SER) used Ashford for their railway building works. Turner points out that the SER needed land, labour, water and ease of access to the growing rail network.<sup>166</sup> Consideration was given to Tonbridge, Maidstone and Ashford, but the availability of land and the central location of Ashford led to the decision to use this market town for their works. From Ashford, the railway line was extended onwards towards Dover, via Folkestone, where the station opened in 1843, thus providing a direct rail link between London and the Kent seaside for the first time. This new route would have cut the journey time considerably while opening up possibilities for greater visitor numbers. The opportunities that were opened by the provision of a railway can be seen when promoters decided to build a branch line from Ashford towards Canterbury, the city being reached in February 1846, and then onwards to the Thanet resort of Ramsgate in December of that year. The station at Canterbury was built adjacent to the terminus of the pioneering Canterbury to Whitstable line that had opened in 1830, thus providing another direct link to the Kent Coast, albeit at a town where the early resort ambitions were never really defined or pursued.

Predating the SER's push onwards to Thanet in the 1840s, interested parties at Herne Bay appreciated the importance of a railway and there had been calls for a railway for the town for some time. Whitstable, just five miles to the east of Herne Bay, was linked to Canterbury by the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway (C&W) as early as May 1830, some four months earlier than the famous Liverpool to Manchester railway. Thanks to this railway, passengers from Canterbury were now able to transport themselves to the beach at Whitstable for the summer season, quicker than previously, but considering that the horse drawn coach journey between the city and the coast

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<sup>165</sup> Gray, *Ibid.* Edwin Course, *The Railways of Southern England, Main Lines*, (London, Batsford, 1973).

<sup>166</sup> Gordon Turner, *Ashford, The Coming of the Railway*, (Maidstone, Christine Swift, 1984), p. 74.

was only one hour, the time savings were modest and the railway's main use seems to have been for freight rather than people. Whitstable had been established as a centre for fishing and the oyster industry for several centuries when the railway arrived but despite having a bathing machine recorded in 1768, it never established itself as a serious seaside resort. Given the right conditions, this early railway could have given Whitstable a significant advantage over Herne Bay, but the construction of a harbour by the railway company in 1832 reinforced the goods carrying potential of the line and killed off any lingering hope of establishing a seaside resort here.<sup>167</sup> Things could however have been somewhat different, as the initial ideas for the C&W are mentioned in a notice published in the *KG* on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1824. The notice mentions that application was intended to be made to parliament for the purpose of making and maintaining a train way or rail road. This included three potential routes, one of which, the longest, took in the parish of Hearn (sic), but this was not to be and the shortest route was selected. Fellows explains that the commencement of the scheme for a new pier at Herne Bay in the winter of 1830, had given rise to a report by the C&W company, that they had abandoned their intention of building a harbour at Whitstable and were instead, going to construct a branch line from the foot of the Clowes Wood incline, to take advantage of the pier.<sup>168</sup> This was however later officially contradicted in a letter signed by the clerks to the company and never happened.<sup>169</sup>

Another railway scheme incorporating Herne Bay is mentioned in an editorial piece that appeared in the *KG*, on 24 November 1835, where it was reported that Mr. Davey of Canterbury and Mr. Huntley of Dover, had undertaken a survey for the purpose of constructing a railway between Herne Bay and Dover, via Canterbury.<sup>170</sup> The line was boasted as one that “*will run very nearly straight from end to end*”. Although the intention was not stated as such, this was clearly an attempt to imitate the horse drawn coach route that had sprung up in order to satisfy the demand for travellers disembarking at Herne Bay's pier that had opened in June 1832 and travelling via coach to Dover. A formal notice published in the *KG*, on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1835, described the above mentioned plans in greater detail and expressed the intention to make application to Parliament for seeking leave to bring forth a bill.<sup>171</sup> Evidently, there was a fiscal link of some form between this scheme and the pier company as the solicitors, Clift and Fisher, were working for both parties leading to the consideration that there would be overlap in the promoters of the two entities. Mr. J.M. Davey of Canterbury and Mr. Huntley of Dover were credited with undertaking the survey of the proposed route. William Huntley is described as an Architect and Surveyor, at Dover, in Pigot's 1839

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<sup>167</sup> *KG*, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1768, 3a. Robin Craig and John Whyman, p. 195.

<sup>168</sup> Reginald B. Fellows, *History of the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway*, (Canterbury, J.A. Jennings, 1930), p. 42.

<sup>169</sup> *Kentish Chronicle*, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1830. (as quoted in Fellows, p. 42).

<sup>170</sup> *KG*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1835, 3c.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* 1<sup>st</sup> December 1835, 2a.

Directory of Kent, but apart from this, little is known of these two gentlemen.<sup>172</sup> This railway scheme progressed no further and was never built.

Despite the amount of railway building work undertaken in the so called “railway Mania” of the 1840s, the majority of the Kent coast was left without its own railway station and this led to a flurry of promotional activity with many stalled attempts to add extra lines in East Kent and Thanet. The numbers of schemes are many and varied, often complex and sometimes difficult to understand fully without the maps that would have accompanied the original applications, but Herne Bay features in at least three such schemes. None of these schemes made any real progress, but they show intent. One scheme under consideration in 1845 was given the name “*Herne Bay, Canterbury and Faversham Atmospheric*”, and a meeting concerning this enterprise was reported in the *KG*.<sup>173</sup> The report states that the plans for a rail link from Herne Bay through to Canterbury, Deal, Margate and Ramsgate were described with much cheering from those assembled, especially as it was explained that Herne Bay was to be the main focus. The reason for this focus was emphasized because not only would it have the advantage of communications with the metropolis by the line of Faversham, but it would by means of its line to Canterbury have communication with Dover, thus linking the port with the boats that ran between Herne Bay and London. The main points to be noted here are the importance that was placed on links with London, thus highlighting the city as the main source of potential resort customers and the desire to get passengers to Dover for onward transport to the continent.

Course, states that the LCDR line started as a local project and was blown up into a main line by speculative interests.<sup>174</sup> George Burge, an investor with extensive land interests at Herne Bay, had a commercial interest in the building of the railway line along with two other engineers/contractors, Thomas Crampton and Morris. Crampton was born at Broadstairs and enjoyed a successful career in railway engineering. Course suggests that Burge may have been inspired by the successful speculative venture of Mr. [James] Burton at St. Leonards.<sup>175</sup> There are certainly some similarities between the development of St. Leonards and Herne Bay, where building commenced in 1828 following the purchase of land fronting onto the sea from the trustees of the Eversfield Estate.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Pigot and Co.'s Commercial Directory for Kent, Surrey and Sussex 1839, (London, Pigot and Co. 1839). p. 282.

<sup>173</sup> *KG*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1845, 4d.

<sup>174</sup> Course, p. 100.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

<sup>176</sup> James Dorman, *Dorman's Guide to St Leonards-on-Sea and Hastings*, (St. Leonards-on-Sea, 1856), p. 23.

It would seem that even established resorts such as Brighton, a town reached by the railway in 1841, benefited once the railway arrived.<sup>177</sup> Gilbert states that whereas 50,000 visitors are estimated to have visited Brighton during the 1837 season, by 1850 the railway had carried 73,000 in just one week and by 1860, over 250,000 for the season.<sup>178</sup> This was however as Gilbert reminds us, a two edged sword, as resorts that did not get their railway early enough were at the mercy of competitors. In 1815, both Margate and Ramsgate were crowded in the season by fashionable people; thirty years later these two Thanet resorts were said to have been utterly discarded by upper class visitors who now went to Brighton.<sup>179</sup> Musgrave may have overstated the effect of the railway, as not everyone wished to travel to a crowded resort that would potentially be struggling to provide sufficient infrastructure or accommodation for visitors, but the message is clear, the time taken travelling was important to visitors.

As can be seen by the correspondence and reports of Select Committee meetings of 1847 and 1857, Herne Bay was desperate to get its own railway station. Whitehead reminds us of Perkin's assertion that by 1840, the demand for seaside holidays was expanding where the means of transport could meet it.<sup>180</sup> The natural contrary of this is the decline of a particular location if the transport demand is unable to be met. Whitehead mentions the Devon resorts and their comparative isolation, a point more recently made by Travis where after the arrival of a rail service at Exeter, the service was expanded to south Devon coastal resorts of Dawlish and Teignmouth. Exmouth meanwhile was only served by means of a time consuming ferry service from Starcross, although it was just a short rail journey from Dawlish.<sup>181</sup> Exmouth was only able to look on as other nearby competitor resorts flourished, and Whitehead poses the question, was this the fate of Herne Bay?<sup>182</sup>

Although it is a fact that the railway did not reach Herne Bay until July 1861, the reality was that there was a viable service available just five miles to the south at Sturry, a village on the turnpike road between Herne Bay and Canterbury, which was well served by coaches. Sturry's railway station had opened in 1848 as an extension of the branch line built by the South Eastern Railway company, between Ashford and Canterbury, when it was decided to continue onwards to Ramsgate.<sup>183</sup> The five mile distance from Sturry to Herne Bay could be completed by means of the frequent horse drawn coach services, or by walking if means did not allow this luxury. Similarly,

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<sup>177</sup> Clifford Musgrave, *Life in Brighton*, (Gloucester, The History Press, 1970), p.249. Walton, p. 22.

<sup>178</sup> Gilbert, p. 152.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p. 151.

<sup>180</sup> Whitehead, p. 46 et seq. Harold Perkin, *The Age of the Railway*, (London, Panther, 1970), quoted in Whitehead.

<sup>181</sup> Travis, p. 98.

<sup>182</sup> Whitehead, p. 46.

<sup>183</sup> Course, p. 96.

passengers could follow the rail route from Canterbury to Whitstable and then either use the services of a coach or walk the four to five mile distance to Herne Bay.

Eventually, an Act was passed for “*making a Railway from Herne Bay to Faversham, and for other Purposes connected therewith*” on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1857. The line opened on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1861 and allowed passengers from London, direct access by rail to Herne Bay for the first time. A couple of years later the line continued on towards the Thanet villages of Birchington and Westgate, at the same time effectively creating two competitor resorts, before passing through Margate en-route to Ramsgate. Herne Bay’s station was set back from the shore by just over half a mile, probably for engineering purposes, which allowed the track to run in a straight line from Whitstable, rather than any other reason. This has however had a lasting impact upon the building development in the town, which until the post World War Two period, was almost all limited to the shoreward (northern) side of the line.

Once the railway had arrived, it was clearly a more convenient way of arriving at the town and visitor numbers increased. This raises the question, did this help the town? Whitehead suggests not, but this statement needs to be re-examined.<sup>184</sup>

As Crouch has ably demonstrated within her thesis on Westgate, a town can spring out of virtually nothing and meet with a degree of success. Westgate is on the north Kent coast, some ten miles to the east of Herne Bay, and two miles west of Margate. The stimulus for the development of Westgate was the arrival of the railway line from London and the Medway towns in 1863, although it should be noted that it did not get its own station until 1871. Although the railway had reached Margate in 1846 via the South Eastern Railway service from London, Ashford and Canterbury, it was the dedicated station at Westgate that encouraged building to take place.

This chapter has explained the sequence of transport development at Herne Bay and the impact each phase had upon the town’s development. Herne Bay’s location presented various advantages at different times, either related to the reduced travelling time required for those wishing to visit a seaside resort, particularly from London, or for those wishing to travel onwards to the continent via Dover. For a ten year period from 1832 until 1842, the town provided the shortest route from London to Dover for onward travel to Dover. The provision of the deep sea pier allowed steamers to call at all stages of the tide and thus presented a viable short cut over the alternative of travel via a horse drawn coach along Watling Street. This short cut saved travellers several hours and

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<sup>184</sup> Whitehead. pp. 53-54.

potentially cost as well as providing a better degree of comfort - all important considerations for those making such journeys. Transport links elsewhere removed the exclusive nature of this short cut and thus one of the town's slim advantages was removed. This serves as a reminder of the fickle nature and status of some resorts and is in some ways reminiscent of the experience of Gravesend, where its popularity as a place of resort with Londoners, diminished once they had an alternative in the shape of Southend when this became connected to the city by rail.<sup>185</sup> By the end of the period of review, potential visitors had choices, not just in where they visited, but also in how they visited and this led to the journey becoming part of the holiday experience rather than a chore.

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<sup>185</sup> James A. Barrett, 'The Seaside Resort Towns of England and Wales', Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1958, p. 9.

## 4: Governance

This chapter examines the local governance of Herne Bay, starting with the parish system that was in place until the formation of a separate administrative area, formed as a result of an Improvement Act that became law in 1833. After an initial overview of the parish system, this will focus on the post 1833 Act period, when the town was governed by twenty four suitably qualified Commissioners. The influences and effectiveness, or in some instances the ineffectiveness, of these representatives of the town will be considered along with the impact that they had upon the town's economic wellbeing.

As explained in chapter three, the ecclesiastical parish of Herne was carved out from the parish of Reculver in 1310. The acreage under the control of this new parish varied as boundary changes came into effect, but the figure used in the Tithe survey of 1840, quotes some 4,364 acres. The land was of mainly arable and pasture and split between a number of owners with landholdings ranging less than an acre to some with several hundred. Until around 1830, some of the land within Herne Parish had been in the long term ownership of the family, when Sir Henry, the seventh baronet sold two of his farms to developers. The land that was sold was situated on the coastal fringe of Herne parish and the principle developers are believed to be George Burge and John Brough.<sup>186</sup> These two gentlemen are said to have ridden over to Herne Bay from Canterbury one day and while standing on the shore, they had observed the steamer boats travelling between London and Margate. The idea apparently occurred to them that the land under their feet would make an ideal seaside resort.<sup>187</sup> It is difficult to corroborate this story, but it is easy to see how these two commercially astute individuals would have seen the potential of the location, particularly as Oxenden had made a start with his building development in the “old” town after the arrival of the turnpike road in 1814. It was from these transferred farms that approximately 100 acres of land was delineated to form the new town of Herne Bay and subjected to an Improvement Act in 1833.<sup>188</sup>

The timing of this act is coincidental, but it does correspond with implementation of the Local Government Reform Act of 1832, legislation that set out to make sweeping changes to the way that English local government was organised. English local government in the period prior to the

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<sup>186</sup> Based on unpublished papers by H.E. Gough, in the collection of HBHRS.

<sup>187</sup> A Lady. p. 4.

<sup>188</sup> 3 and 4 William IV, Cap.cv. *An Act for paving, cleansing, lighting, watching, repairing and improving a certain Portion of the Parish of Herne in the County of Kent*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1833.

Reform act of 1832, is recognised by many commentators as being inadequate with frequent instances of incompetence and corruption.<sup>189</sup>

By 1833, Improvement Acts were nothing new and several were enacted in Kent from the mid eighteenth century including the following towns where sea bathing resort activity was in evidence, Dover 1778, Ramsgate 1785 and Margate 1787.<sup>190</sup> The usual reason for introducing the legislation was to compensate for some shortfall in the existing powers of the borough or parish, particularly as the local population increased. In each of the aforementioned instances, the towns were already established by the time that the Act came into force, but it was different at Herne Bay, as save for a minimal number of properties, the town did not exist. Herne was not particularly different to any other local parish at this time and functioned with a vicar, two churchwardens and other parish officers including overseers of the poor and a surveyor of the highways. There is no ready evidence to suggest that there was widespread incompetence or corruption at Herne at this time, but the promoters of the new town of Herne Bay felt the need for a Local Act of Parliament to provide them with powers to manage and govern the delineated area separate from the parish. The result was that administratively, Herne Bay gained formal recognition as a town when a local Act of Parliament was passed in 1833. This act extended to 142 numbered paragraphs, included a range of powers that included many of the expected generic legal clauses regarding elections, voting, accounting and the like. This local Act separated part of the parish of Herne away from ecclesiastical control and instead, placed it under the control of twenty four Commissioners. Several of these Commissioners were landowners representing a mix of approximately 50 percent local and 50 percent London or Bristol based investors.

For a short while it was conceived that this new town would be called St. Augustine, with the name appearing on one of the early promotional maps, but this does not seem to have caught on, with the name of Herne Bay being used instead. This Act was accompanied by a map, drawn by Canterbury Builder and Surveyor, Samuel Hacker, showing the boundaries and once this Act became effective it formed the “New Town” and this sat alongside the community from some fifteen years previous that became known as the “Old Town”. Visitors to the town would probably not have realised or cared about the difference, but there was a clear distinction in legal terms between the two areas for the purposes of governance, rating and other matters affecting everyday life of the residents. The

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<sup>189</sup> Bryan Keith-Lucas, *The unreformed local government system*, (London, Croom Helm, 1980) p. 108.

<sup>190</sup> Bryan Keith-Lucas, *Parish Affairs*, (London, Kent County Library, 1986), p. 134.



two areas became joined for administrative purposes in 1880 after the formation of a governing Local Board following the passing of the Public Health Act of 1875.<sup>191</sup>

Local Acts of parliament were distinct from general acts as they are laws that apply to a particular individual or group of individuals, rather than the population as a whole. As Keith-Lucas points out, local acts were not unique, and hundreds were passed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for matters concerning turnpikes, bridges, paving and improvements and many more. As indication of the volume of legislation passing through the parliament offices, some 1,874 local acts were passed in the fifteen years between 1785 and 1801.<sup>192</sup> All of these local acts were distinctive in as much as they are preceded with a preamble setting out why the Act is required. The preamble to the 1833 Herne Bay Improvement Act, sets out the framework for governing the “new” town. In terms of area, the new town extended to just 100 acres of land with an extensive frontage to the sea. Samuel Hacker, a surveyor who was based in Canterbury at the time, although he later moved into the town, was engaged to draw up a map of a “new” town, complete with a town layout marked in and it is upon this map that formed the basis of the one that accompanied the Act. The boundaries of the new town for the most part coincide with existing roads and/or field boundaries and it clearly shows the layout of the town and its abutment with the “old” town. The map reproduced below is a copy of Samuel Hacker’s proposed plan for the layout of Herne Bay, believed to be a close copy of the one that accompanied the text of the 1833 Act.

A list of twenty four named individuals, who were to be appointed as Commissioners, is included in appendix 2 shows that of these names, as far as can be ascertained just twelve were living locally, with the remainder listing London or Bristol as their main residence. After the initial appointments, subsequent appointees were subject to a land ownership qualification, whereby they needed to be able to demonstrate that they were possessed of real estate to the value of fifty pounds (VIII).

It has been commented that Herne Bay was a town formed by a group of London speculators and investors and while this has not thus far been fully substantiated, there is some evidence to support this.<sup>193</sup> Several of the Commissioner’s names crop up in twos or threes in different business ventures and from these commercial associations, from these it is plausible to conclude that a form of business networking was taking place. It is known that two of the Commissioners were business associates elsewhere as Thomas Campion and James Clift were fellow directors of the Argus Life

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<sup>191</sup> Letter from the Local Government Board, Whitehall, dated 17<sup>th</sup> August 1880 – ref 70380K.<sup>(1)</sup> In the collection of HBHRS.

<sup>192</sup> Keith-Lucas, *The unreformed local government system*, p. 108.

<sup>193</sup> Gough, *The Picture Book of Herne Bay*, p. 7.

Assurance Company based in London.<sup>194</sup> Given the business opportunity presented by the new town with its prospects for population growth and the consequential demand for accommodation from both incoming settlers and visitors to the area, these opportunities would offer the promise of making healthy returns for those investing, thus provided the motivation.

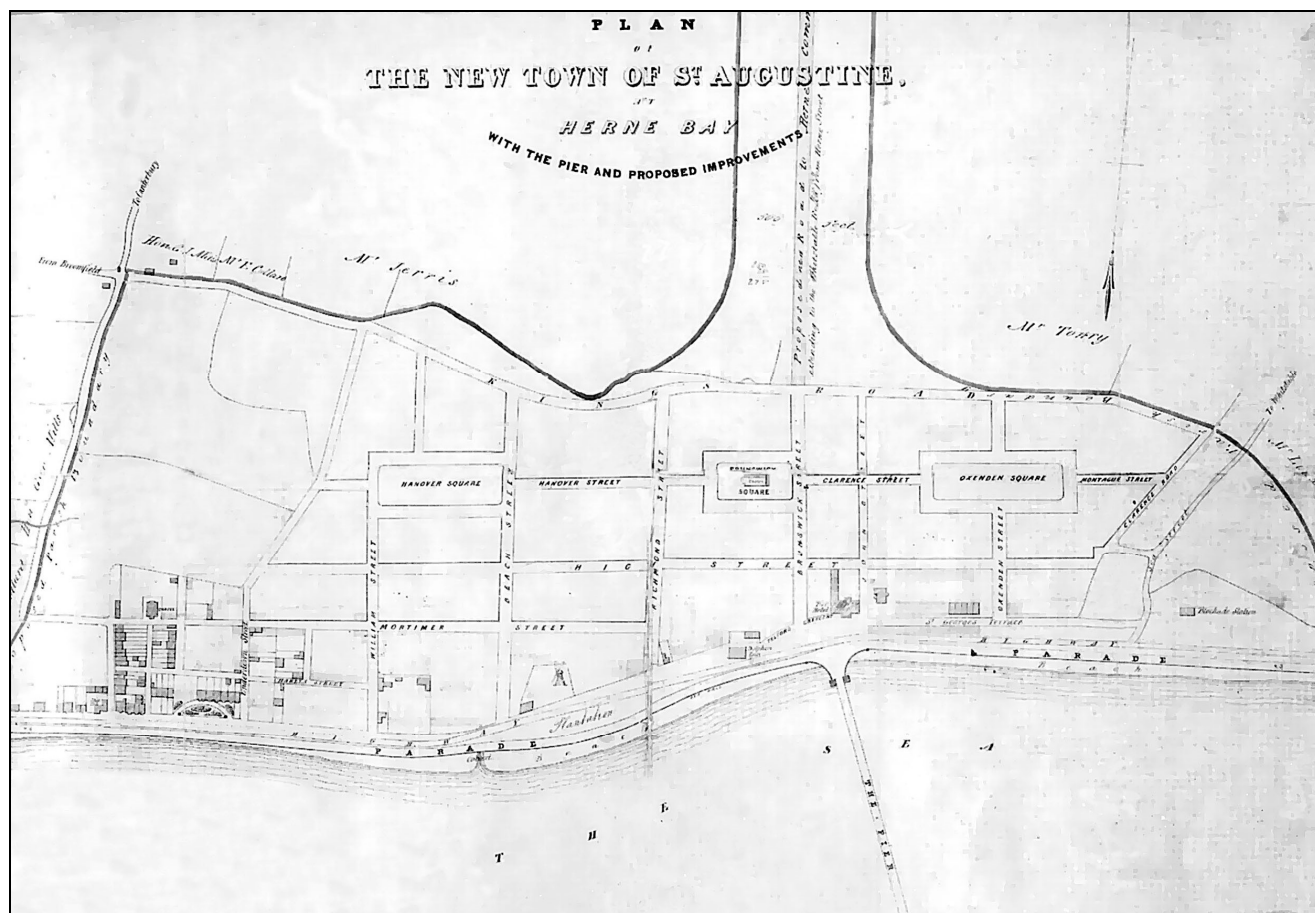


Figure 2. Samuel Hacker's plan drawn c.1833, showing roads that were either built or proposed.

As part of the local government collection within the Canterbury Cathedral archives, the minute books for the Herne Bay Pavement Commissioners survive.<sup>195</sup> These show a fascinating insight into the workings of the Commissioners and some of the transactions that they undertook. The minutes include a number of interesting details concerning the more mundane everyday business of the town, such as the purchase and installation of gas lamps, purchase of gravel for the roads and complaints about sewers and cesspools. There are also a number of important matters included that help to illustrate how the town was run in these early days and the effect that the various decisions of the Commissioners had upon the residents and visitors to the resort.

<sup>194</sup> KG, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1837, 2b.

<sup>195</sup> CCA catalogue reference CCA-UD-HB/C/2/24.

Right from the start, it can be seen that attendance at the meetings was poor. Meetings were held at The Pier Hotel with the first such meeting called for 16<sup>th</sup> December 1833, some seventeen of the twenty four commissioners attended. John Brough acted as chairman and the first resolution was to call for a committee of eleven. The eleven chosen were selected from those present and while it is not stated, it can be assumed that the intention was for these gentlemen to form the core group of decision makers. Two pieces of business were transacted, firstly that Mr. William Day was to be appointed as Surveyor and secondly that Mr. De La Saux was to be appointed as Clerk. This second resolution was challenged and Mr. Fisher was appointed instead after a vote where he gained the position by eight votes to seven, but only after the use of a casting vote by the chairman. Mr. Fisher was a business partner of Mr. Clift, forming the legal firm of Clift and Fisher who operated from offices in Red Lion Square, London. Clift and Fisher were already active in the town, and their names appear in several paid notices in the *KG* in connection with the Herne Bay Pier Company.<sup>196</sup>

The second meeting was not held until 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1834, some twenty weeks later, this time attended by just twelve Commissioners, including only eight of the core group of eleven. The chair on this occasion was James Clift, solicitor. The first piece of business transacted that day concerned the rates, which were set at one shilling in the pound for tenants and occupiers of all houses, warehouses and similar buildings and four pence in the pound upon all arable, pasture and woodland. The rates were to commence on 24<sup>th</sup> June next [1834]. Another important decision was taken to instruct the Clerk to advertise for a loan of £3,000 in sums of not less than £100 each to be advanced upon security of the rates made under the Act at 4%. The only other piece of business conducted at this meeting was to resolve that the Surveyor be required to prepare a specification for making and improving several pavements and roads of the streets and ways laid down and marked upon the plan (except the squares), specifying the number of square yards of each pavement, road and street.

The third meeting was held just five weeks later on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1834, but was attended by just seven commissioners. Six of these gentlemen were from the core group, but it is noteworthy that the meeting was chaired by the one attendee who was not part of that number. The first piece of business centred upon the fact that no money had been offered to the Commissioners in response to their advertisement for a loan. This resulted in the resolution that it was considered desirable that the Clerk should place an advertisement for the £3,000 loan, but this time at 5%. Seemingly an offer had been made by a Mr. Hughes, who had offered the Commissioners £500 at 5%. This was

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<sup>196</sup> *KG*, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1831, 2c.

accepted and the Clerk was requested to prepare the necessary security. It was further resolved that it was unnecessary for the Clerk to summon the Commissioners named in the Act who have not attended any meeting and qualified themselves to act as such Commissioners. This seems to be a strange decision, but perhaps starts to illustrate the close relationship between the gentlemen concerned. Apart from the decision to purchase a seal, Mr. David Halket, one of the Commissioners was granted permission to build vaults in the High Street and Brunswick Street in accordance with the Act and Messrs Halford and Co. of Canterbury were appointed as bankers for the said Commissioners. The final piece of business that day was the resolution to issue debentures to Mr. Burge and Mr. Jones for securing £100 each at 5%. This marks the start to a number of debentures being issued, mostly to Commissioners to secure funds.

The fourth meeting was held on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1834, this time attended by just five commissioners, with the main item of business centred upon the condition of the Culvert, [a drain running south to north through the centre of the town and discharging into the sea] where it was described as a nuisance from being “*noxious and dangerous*” and “*some remedy be forthwith adopted to remove the evil arising there from*”. The Surveyor was to be instructed to take the necessary steps to resolve this problem. A further matter raised concerned the complaints that had been made to one of the commissioners, Mr. Pemberton, about the overflowing of the cesspools of eight named individuals in the town – an indication of the more mundane matters that needed to be addressed at these meetings.

On the edge of the town, outside of the town’s western boundary, but still within the parish of Herne, there was a brickfield operating in fields close to Hampton. Details of the operation of these brick making facilities are sparse, but they are still in evidence on the first large scale Ordnance Survey map of the district published in 1874.<sup>197</sup> Bricks receive a number of mentions within the Commissioners’ minutes, where considerable quantities are noted as being both bought and sold. As an example, at the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1834 it was resolved that two hundred thousand bricks be sold at the clamp (a form of kiln) at £1.7s.0d per thousand.<sup>198</sup> At the same meeting, the Commissioners resolved to sell to Mr. George Burge, himself a Commissioner and chair of this particular meeting, the quantity of one hundred and fifty thousand bricks at £1.7s.0d per thousand, with Mr. Burge paying the charges for delivery, and the Clerk giving the order to Mr. Reid (believed to be Mr. Thomas Reid, another Commissioner, but not present at that meeting) to deliver these. Similar transactions are recorded in the minutes during the following months and on

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<sup>197</sup> Ordnance Survey 6” map, 1874.

<sup>198</sup> [http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD\\_40/GATE\\_DL/BUILDING/BC/EN/BC.HTM](http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD_40/GATE_DL/BUILDING/BC/EN/BC.HTM) (accessed 4th June 2014).

19<sup>th</sup> January 1835; the Commissioners received an offer to sell them one hundred and twenty nine thousand bricks at £1, 11s, 0d per thousand. The offer was accepted and this sounds fine until it is understood that the offer was made by Alderman Camplin – a Commissioner and the chair of that particular meeting. The significance of these transactions is not fully understood at present, but when it is considered that this was a time when building activity in the town was booming the ready demand for bricks can be imagined. Quite why the town was getting involved in these transactions is unknown and while there is no suggestion of impropriety, it does seem convenient that the Commissioners were buying and selling via the “town” rather than on their own account, perhaps suggesting that in some way the land was in the ownership of the “town”. No evidence has been found to lend support or otherwise to this idea, but the land may have formed part of Oxenden’s Sea Street farm. It has been concluded by Hasluck that these transactions concerning bricks were undertaken for the purpose of raising finance at times when cash flow dictated and based upon this it can be seen that the Commissioners were in fact assisting the town, rather than themselves.<sup>199</sup>

One aspect of local government that does command attention at both resorts and non resort locations is the provision of essential utilities and services. Nationally there was a growing realisation that the provision of adequate means of providing clean water as well as handling sewage efficiently was important to the health of the population. This aspect was of interest to both residents and visitors, but by the very nature of the property rates, the costs fell on the residents, and these were not always to their liking. Visitors to the new watering places would have had a strong interest in the facilities of their chosen destination, particularly those relating to and having an effect upon public health. Walton mentions this aspect of resorts at length in this book and emphasises many of the shortcomings, specifically mentioning that those resorts that evolved out of fishing and agricultural settlements often posed the worst sanitary problems (p.134).<sup>200</sup> In this regard Herne Bay could boast of mixed blessings, generally doing quite well with few reported incidents. The two episodes that do get reported are the two outbreaks of cholera in the housing in the King’s Road area of town. As with many other resorts the better housing was situated on the seafront with evidence of a graduation of the class of residence, ending with this district of housing for the working class and poor section of the community that was set back some distance from the seafront, almost out of view. The authorities had in fact provided a pump for the supply of drinking water, but the residents refused to use it, no doubt suspicious of the new means of supply, resulting in cholera being reported in both 1834 and 1849.<sup>201</sup> Another pump was provided in 1853, this time on

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<sup>199</sup> Hasluck, p. 25.

<sup>200</sup> Walton, pp. 133-137.

<sup>201</sup> Gough, *A Picture book of Old Herne Bay*, p. 36.

the seafront, but it was not for the provision of drinking water, but instead a “brown brackish” water used for watering the roads to lay down the dust in dry weather.<sup>202</sup>

Another concern within towns highlighted by Walton, was the provision of paving and lighting.<sup>203</sup> Walton considers that in general terms Improvement Commissioners did a good job in the provision of these services. The experience at Herne Bay goes some way to support this and we know from the commissioner’s minute books that some twelve oil lamps were installed in 1834 and a further twelve the following year. The responsibility for the lighting of the lamps fell to William Day, who was initially appointed as Watchman, but soon acquired additional roles within the town. Very soon, Day end up with responsibilities for watching, lamp lighting, rate collecting and once he had been sworn in, as constable. There is no doubt that Day was fulfilling a vital role in the day to day duties of the town often single handed, but the commissioners must have appreciated him as when he died on duty in 1850, the commissioners paid for his funeral and granted his widow a gratuity.<sup>204</sup> Once the town had its own gas works, predictably situated at the back of the town in the King’s Road area, the oil lamps were converted to gas, but this was reversed when the gas works became bankrupt, only to be reversed again in 1853 when a new Herne Bay Gas and Coke company became responsible for the lamps. The contract determined that the company would be responsible for the provision of thirty lamps each night, except the five nights around the full moon, but within two years this new company had also become insolvent. The outcome was that he commissioners took over responsibility themselves until yet another company could be established. These arrangements, whilst forced upon the commissioners at least seem to have satisfied most of the residents and visitors and presented a town that was acceptable. Despite the poor attendance at the meetings, it is evident that there was a strong sense of duty within the new core of commissioners that were emerging, as the original commissioners passed away, stood down or were replaced.

A number of observations can be made from the minutes of the early meetings of the Improvement Commissioners. Firstly, apart from perhaps the first meeting, the level of attendance at the meetings was poor and the minute books record that during 1835, no fewer than fifteen meetings were cancelled due to poor attendance, with several instances of zero attendees. Considering the fact that the Commissioners had put themselves forward for the office, it would be reasonable that they would have had sufficient incentive and interest to attend the meetings and have a say in the running of the town that was in effect their investment. Another observation was the choice of chair for these meetings, where the role looks to have rotated around. The Act did not call for the

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<sup>202</sup> Gough. *A Picture book of Old Herne Bay*, p. 18.

<sup>203</sup> Walton, p. 135.

<sup>204</sup> Hasluck, p. 31.

election of a chair, but this general rotation is suggestive of a lack of a dominant individual and no leader of the group, at least at this early stage. This could be significant to the success or otherwise of the town, as many other successful seaside resorts were driven by an individual or their families. Successful early resorts such as those at Margate and Brighton did not really have dominant landowners, so this was not a pre-requisite for success. In these instances the towns grew to a size where the local administration developed hand in hand with the resort, often with leading citizens, usually businessmen, artisans or traders with a vested interest in the success of the town, taking on the leading roles.

There are several examples of seaside resorts that were created or dominated by either an individual or a family. One of the better known was Sir Richard Hotham's attempts to create Hothampton on the Sussex Coast, now known as Bognor Regis. Hotham was a successful Yorkshire born businessman who made his money as a Hatter and in dealings with the East India Company.<sup>205</sup> He was an MP for a brief period, but he was known for his property investing and this is how he became acquainted with the Sussex coast. Encouraged by the popularity of nearby Brighton and Weymouth, Hotham was able to buy up some 1,600 acres at Bognor and then started building a new resort.<sup>206</sup> With some grand terraces Hotham's objective was to try to attract the royal visitors away from Brighton or Weymouth, but he was unsuccessful. Although Hotham died in 1799 before he was able to achieve his ultimate aims, it can be seen that a single mind, with adequate resources went a long way towards positive results. Another example, this time contemporary with Herne Bay, can be seen at St. Leonards, where James Burton created a new resort from scratch on land to the west of Hastings, an already established resort. Burton "*set out to found a a high-class watering place by the sea on the best lines for the best people*" Burton's wealth had been created by various building schemes in London, where he had built over 2,300 houses and it was afterwards that he was attracted to purchase land on the outskirts of Hastings with a view to developing his own watering place.<sup>207</sup> Rather like Herne Bay, an Improvement Act was obtained to allow the development to take place, this one just a year earlier than that at Herne Bay.

A further example can be seen at the Kent resort of Folkestone where Lord Radnor sought an act of Parliament in 1825 to enable the granting of building leases. This action was to form the catalyst for local builders to stimulate building demand, but the progress was slow so Lord Radnor appointed London architect, Sydney Smirke, to develop the estate.<sup>208</sup> This was in 1845, after the

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<sup>205</sup> Gerard Young, *A History of Bognor Regis*, (Chichester, Phillimore and Co., 1983), p. 2.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>207</sup> Manwaring Baines, p. 9.

<sup>208</sup> Cecil. H. Bishop, *Folkestone, the story of a town*, (Ashford, Headley Bothers, 1982), p. 98.

railway had reached Folkestone and Smirke issued his prospectus promoting the virtues of the town, while denigrating Brighton as “an overgrown suburb of London.”<sup>209</sup>

The second matter of concern at Herne Bay was the inability of the Commissioners to raise any worthwhile amount of external finance. Walton points out the need for large investments in the early days of a resort’s development, while running a high risk and receiving relatively low returns.<sup>210</sup> While we are still uncertain as the intentions of the early commissioners, that fact that they had gone to the trouble and expense of obtaining the 1833 Act, suggests that they had ideas for tapping into the growing national demand for sea bathing resorts. The town’s need for capital did not go away, and surviving papers show that a number of debentures were issued, each in the value of £100. Once these debentures were issued, the new town was able to function but the source of the money is noteworthy as it came from the Commissioners. Attempts to raise external finance seem to have come to very little and the Commissioners were forced to look within for their loans. The meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1835 lists some twenty six debentures that were issued in the sum of £100 each to eleven of the Commissioners. Individual quantities varied, but both Thomas Reid and James Clift each subscribed to six debentures each, with others taking variously either one or two each. Further monies were raised when four debentures of the same value were issued in September with additional issues in 1838, 1839 and 1840. A register dated 1846 shows that a total of forty four debentures were in issue, giving a total loan debt of £4,400. This of course created a significant interest quarterly liability that needed to be paid for by means of revenue raised from property rates.

Concerns over money are evidenced at various times within the minute books. At the 29<sup>th</sup> November 1834 meeting, it was resolved that Messrs Clift and Fisher be requested by the Clerk to furnish their bills of cost for the Act of Parliament. This bill must have been furnished as it is recorded in the minutes of the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> December 1834 it was resolved “*that the clerk do write to Messrs Clift and Fisher stating that their bill has been laid before the Commissioners who consider that the account is higher than was expected and that they be requested to state by what instalments they will consent to take the same, the first not earlier than six months from this time*”. A response was received from Clift and Fisher, but there is no record of what it actually said, but the response of the Commissioners was to resolve at their next meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1835, that they were willing to give five hundred pounds to be paid by debentures and fifty pounds in cash in full discharge of their account. Evidently some form of negotiation took place as the next we hear

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid. p. 100.

<sup>210</sup> Walton, p. 104.



is in the minutes of the Commissioners held on 6<sup>th</sup> June that year when Mr.Clift agreed to accept six bonds of £100 each at 5% in full settlement of the balance of the bill that amounted to £651.19s.3d. This is an unusual situation, and surely only possible as James Clift was a Commissioner, working with a number of men that he considered as either friends, business associates or perhaps both.

Detailed finances of the Town's formative years are difficult to unravel as the records are incomplete but snippets can be gleaned from the minute books. Mr. Day, the original Surveyor was replaced by one of the Commissioners, Samuel Hacker. Hacker resigned his post as a Commissioner to take up the post of Surveyor on a salary of £50 per year. After the first year instead of receiving cash Hacker was offered a £100 bond, provided he paid the difference in cash – a sure sign of desperation on the part of the town. Hacker's salary was reduced to £25 pounds and after two further years without payment, he resigned his position. Eventually Hacker was paid by means of a £100 bond, £2 cash and remission of the rates that he owed. The post of Surveyor was left vacant for three years, only filled by Mr. Dangerfield in 1842 on a salary of £12 only to be terminated three years later for reasons of economy.<sup>211</sup>

Given the close proximity of the old and new towns that were separated by just one road, the potential for friction between the differing administrations can be easily imagined and from the 1870s there were calls for the two areas to be joined together, but on each occasion concerns were raised over the differential in rates payable by each party, and the liabilities that existed for each. This situation was not helped by the Commissioners becoming embroiled in a chancery suit over some disputed boundaries. Due in part to the lack of a Surveyor, there were disputes over fences and field boundaries dating from the 1840s and continuing for at least two decades afterwards. At one stage, the Commissioners had lost all copies of the map that had set out the boundaries at the time of the 1833 Act and had to purchase a copy from Commissioner Burge. Matters came to a head following the death of John Brough, one of the Commissioners who made large purchases all over the town in the early 1830s. His property passed to two boys by the name of Mackett and their guardians sued the Commissioners over the sale of some crops that had been removed from the disputed land and sold. The Chancery suit was not heard until June 1876, some five years after the dispute first arose. The Commissioners lost the case, in process incurring significant legal fees, a poor situation that was compounded by the decision to appeal the result. This appeal was to no avail and yet further legal costs were incurred, resulting in a debt of nearly £5,000 in total. The rateable value of the town at this time was just £6,500 with a penny rate raising £28. This situation presented significant difficulties for the Commissioners and delicate negotiations took place

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<sup>211</sup> Drawn from Commissioners minute books, and Hasluck.

between creditors, banks and finance houses, even the Town Hall was handed over to the opposing solicitors as security for the money owed to them. To add insult to the situation, in 1878 some of the Town Hall furniture was sold along with surplus equipment to raise an instalment payment towards the debts.<sup>212</sup>

Eventually the old town and the new town joined together in 1880, under the auspices of arrangements set in train by the Public Health Act 1875. At this time a Local Board was established and the two towns became one. To quote Hasluck, this heralded a more stabilised climate for development and remained in place until the Local Government reorganisation of 1894 that created Herne Bay Urban District Council.<sup>213</sup>

This chapter has explained the nature of local government in Herne Bay, particularly in the post 1833 period, when the town experienced its economic and social ebbs and flows. The difficulties of the Commissioners in raising funds right from the start are considered to be critically important, as it indicates that outside investors were wary of the town's prospects. The poor attendance at meetings is interpreted as a sign that some of the Commissioners, although qualified by means of their property holdings were perhaps distracted and pursuing business interests elsewhere. One interpretation is that these gentlemen were a group of businessmen associated through external dealings elsewhere who saw the opportunity of making some easy money. Once reality hit home and these commissioners started to lose interest, this left a small minority those to run and finance the town. On their own, these gentlemen were perhaps not quite wealthy enough to have the influence necessary to secure the infrastructure or rail link that the town required to move it forward at the time it was required in order to take advantage of the growing interest of the public in the seaside.

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<sup>212</sup> Hasluck, pp. 33-35.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36.

## 5: Herne Bay – The built environment

This chapter will examine the development and growth of the resort during the various time periods that equate broadly with the stages of transport development. Using a mixture of primary and secondary sources, the number of properties available for both visitors and residents will be considered to see how these have influenced the town's growth.

Modern Herne Bay is formed of a mixture of period and more recent buildings, centred upon an urban core that owes its origins to the early nineteenth century planned seaside resort.<sup>214</sup> The start of planned development in Herne Bay dated from two distinct periods (1) from 1816 and (2) from around 1833, both transforming the settlement from a few random houses along the seafront, into the basis of today's town. Development in the town before 1816 evolved in a random fashion to suit the domestic and business needs of the few inhabitants and while later progress was slow and drawn out, the intended planned street pattern has largely held. The population numbers for Herne Bay are incorporated within those for the parish of Herne as a whole. Appendix 3 includes a summary of the population numbers and Herne Bay has been extracted from the whole. In broad terms these numbers correlate with the ebbs and flows of the resort as expanded upon within this paper.

Walton notes that the pace and timing of seaside resort growth varied sharply in different parts of England, and goes on to assert that the quality of layout, architecture and building were important in moulding the perceptions of visitors and residents and the resultant demand.<sup>215</sup> Cannadine (quoted from Walton) argues that the physical appearance of a town – the quality and location of its housing, and the overall pattern of its spatial evolution – was largely determined by forces other than land ownership.<sup>216</sup> These combined comments are interesting, but difficult to reconcile completely with the time line and pattern of development at Herne Bay. In summary, the coastal region of the parish of Herne had existed for several centuries, developing in Herne Bay's pre resort era in a somewhat random manner, before Oxenden developed his small planned settlement in the years following the formation of the Turnpike Trust in 1814. During the years that followed this transport development, building work continued on a small scale until a new planned town was initiated by the Improvement Act of 1833, after which a new planned layout was adopted. For ease of presentation, the paragraphs that follow give a summary of the key developments occurring

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<sup>214</sup> John Harrison, et.al., *Herne Bay Conservation Area Appraisal*, (Canterbury, Canterbury City Council, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>215</sup> Walton, p. 103.

<sup>216</sup> David Cannadine, *The Economic History Review*, Urban Development in England and America in the Nineteenth Century: Some Comparisons and Contrasts New Series, 33, No. 3 (Aug., 1980), pp. 309-325. Walton, p. 103.

during each of several periods that relate broadly to transport developments. Each paragraph will attempt to address the three main influences identified by Walton, topography, the structure of demand and the policies of the landowners and/or developers.<sup>217</sup>

### **Pre resort activity period**

Two public houses are recorded at Herne Bay in the eighteenth century, the *Ship* situated at the Lower (east) Bay and the *Dolphin* at the Upper (west) Bay. The recorded history of the *Ship* goes back to the mid seventeenth century, with a suggested date of 1655.<sup>218</sup> This early date predates both the formation of the town and the earliest mention of sea bathing, but highlights that the coastal stretches of the parish were both known and in use by farmers, fishermen and possibly a few inhabitants. The *Dolphin* stood on a site very close to the modern day entrance to the pier and while this dates from a later period than the *Ship*, licensees are listed from 1727, and thus suggests that this stretch of coast was able to support two licensed premises from this relatively early date.

### **Post resort activity period**

When Devon and Co. announced their bathing machine at Hearn (sic) Bay in April 1770, they indicated that “*Neat and genteel lodgings, with Board, good Stables, and all other Accommodations*” were available. It is not known with certainty, but both the *Ship* and the *Dolphin* present themselves as likely candidates for these facilities. Location wise, Devon’s machine was known to be at the foot of the Downs, so the *Ship* would have been the closer of the two inns. Hasted does not mention much about the properties at Herne Bay, but Seymour describes Herne Bay as being “*about two miles from the street; here is a public house, with decent accommodations for private families, who come here for the summer season for the benefit of bathing in the sea*”.<sup>219</sup>

Various advertisements appear in newspapers from the late eighteenth century advertising properties for sale or to be let in the vicinity of Herne Bay. One such advertisement from 1796 offers the freehold of a property consisting of a cottage, with outhouses, yard, gardens, orchard and a piece of pasture land in the whole forming three acres at Belting-Green (Beltinge, less than 1 mile east of Herne Bay).<sup>220</sup> The property is described as “*being worthy of notice of those desirous of a situation to build upon. Although it is not more than quarter of a mile from the sea, it is entirely removed from its bleakness; it is also well situated for bathing, being within half a mile of the machine at Herne Bay*”.

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<sup>217</sup> Walton, p. 103.

<sup>218</sup> Fishpool, p. 49.

<sup>219</sup> Seymour, p. 459.

<sup>220</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, London, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1796, 4c.

A genteel residence was advertised as being available for let in the vicinity of Canterbury in 1809 when particulars were available from Messrs. White's, upholsters, Canterbury.<sup>221</sup> At the foot of the advert are added the words "*Likewise a House pleasantly situated at Herne Bay, and suited for the use of a Genteel Family*". Again, we do not know the exact location of this property, but it provides useful evidence of what was probably a lodging house. Later in 1809 an advertisement appears offering Freehold Lands for sale.<sup>222</sup> The land was offered "*in suitable lots for building in a most desirable and healthy situation, and in particular, convenient for bathing, being fronting the sea at Hearn Bay. The land will be sold in any quantity at per foot run in line of front and in depth 130 feet, with the accommodation of a way in the back front for horses and carriages. For further particulars apply to Wm Moss, builder, St, Georges Place, Canterbury.*"

### **Post 1814 period**

In 1817, Fussell published details of his journey around the coast of Kent.<sup>223</sup> In respect of Herne Bay, he provides useful comments about his observations of the location that he mentions "*a few cottages build irregularly around a green that are beginning to rise into some degree of celebrity, by having lately become the resort of company for the purpose of bathing*". Fussell speaks of a recently built hotel and houses of various sizes and descriptions being built, along with hot and cold baths. It would seem that Fussell was including details of the then very recent building activity started by Oxenden in the years immediately following the passing of the Act granting permission for the formation of the Turnpike and the ensuing road improvements. Included with this Act was a specific clause, LV, that states that the "*Surveyor to Surveyors, or other person or persons acting by his or their appointment, shall not for the purposes aforesaid take away or remove any beach or stones from the sea shore at Herne Bay aforesaid, in front of any of the messuages, storehouses, or other buildings now standing or hereafter to be erected here.*" This suggests that there were buildings adjacent to the coast, but we are short of meaningful detail save for what we have been able to glean from elsewhere. Once the momentum had started, it seems that the trend of building continued as a little later in 1826, the Pigot trade directory states of Herne Bay, "*the buildings are good and increasing in number*".<sup>224</sup> Taking all the available evidence into account, it is reasonable to conclude that Herne Bay's seafront was far from deserted, with a mixture of premises being used for sea bathing, accommodation and storage purposes. This development was however, piecemeal and until Oxenden started his small development along the road adjoining the *Ship* inn, there was no

<sup>221</sup> *KG*, Canterbury, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1809, 1d.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1809, 4a. and 14<sup>th</sup> April 1809, 1c.

<sup>223</sup> Fussell, pp. 72-74.

<sup>224</sup> Pigot and Co.'s London and Provincial New Commercial Directory for 1826-7, (London, Pigot and Co, 1826). p. 625.

particular structure or plan and apart from the licensed premises, the buildings seem to be residential. By contrast, Margate's buildings were very much centred upon the harbour, being the focus for the fishing and maritime industries.

Work undertaken in the 1960s by Harold Gough, Curator the Herne Bay Records Society (Later Herne Bay Historical Records Society) has produced a table showing the number of buildings erected at Herne Bay on an annual basis for the period 1820-1900. Gough undertook this work from sources including, rating books, census returns and title deeds and the results are considered to be reliable. This work has been summarised by Whitehead and is included as appendix 5 of this paper.<sup>225</sup> The data clearly shows a number of cycles, the first of which demonstrates concentrated building activity during the 1830s, a period when the town was booming and full of excitement and promise following the arrival and opening of the deep sea pier. During this decade, the strong demand for property, both for residential and visitor needs drove the local economy, leading to a buoyant property market. As explained in the transport chapter, the arrival of the railway at Ashford at the end of 1842, removed the function of Herne Bay as a short-cut route to the continent. This had an immediate impact upon Herne Bay, not only with the drop in visitor numbers as evidenced by the drop in pier dues, but by a dramatic effect upon the number of buildings being constructed. Gough's numbers show that during the fifteen year period 1845-1859, just ten houses were built. Although it is was never intended as a serious source, *Punch* magazine refers to Herne Bay and some other Kent and Sussex resorts with a sharp satirical tone in "*Punch's Guide to the Watering Places*" published in 1843.<sup>226</sup> Herne Bay is described as "*a juvenile town on the coast of Kent; indeed so infantile is it, that many of the houses are not yet out of their scaffold poles, while others have not yet cut their windows...*" The text is accompanied by a schematic drawing of the High Street with roads leading off, against which are written various comments describing the half built state of the town. This was not an isolated attack on the town and it thought that Herne Bay had incurred the wrath of Mr. Punch after an unfortunate incident where a hat box belonging to Mrs. Punch had been damaged after landing at the pier. Even allowing for prejudice and the deliberate lampoon, a flavour of the place is easy to picture.

Walton points out the need for large investments in the early days of a resort's development, while running a high risk and receiving relatively low returns.<sup>227</sup> At first sight, his sounds very similar to Herne Bay where Sir Henry Oxenden used some of his personal resources to start the house building to the west of the turnpike road in 1816. Standing back and looking at the situation,

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<sup>225</sup> Whitehead, p. 75.

<sup>226</sup> *Punch or the London Charivari*, 3, (London, 1843), p. 47.

<sup>227</sup> Walton, p. 104.

developing the land at Herne Bay before the arrival of the turnpike road would have presented the need for a reliable means of accessing the development. The turnpike road provided just that, a reasonably reliable route to enable safe passage for visitors and residents alike. From Oxenden's point of view, this was a major advantage as he did not need to provide or pay for the road, just part of it. It is not clear if Oxenden had been waiting for this to happen or if he took advantage when the opportunity presented itself, but either way, it shows a degree of business acumen. It is helpful here to consider a little more about the Oxenden family to help our understanding of the potential for influence at Herne Bay. The Oxenden family of Broome, Barham, Kent were a long established family with various estates spreading over several parishes, including Underdown and Sea Street Farms, both bordering the sea shore in the parish of Herne. In 1804, the estates were inherited by Sir Henry Oxenden, 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet (1756-1838) upon the death of his father, also Sir Henry, 6<sup>th</sup> Baronet (1721-1804). Sir Henry (7<sup>th</sup>) was an only child, educated at Eton and then St. John's, Cambridge and spent most of his life as a gentleman farmer having married Mary Graham in 1793, a marriage that was blessed with seven sons and five daughters.<sup>228</sup> The eldest child who would in time inherit the Oxenden title and become the 8<sup>th</sup> Baronet was the Hon. Henry Chudleigh Oxenden, born 1795.

As part of the landed gentry, Oxenden would appear, on the surface at least, to be wealthy, but was he wealthy enough to support the financial strain of trying to create a new town? This is a question that has not been researched in any depth before. Regarding development, Walton goes on to add that aristocratic landowners initiated the process, attracted the people and created the market. The success or otherwise of Oxenden's new settlement has not been explored in detail and the period between 1816 and 1830, the date that prospectus for the new deep sea pier was issued, is potentially important to put this phase of Herne Bay's evolution into context. Oxenden's country seat was at Broome Park, on the road from Canterbury to Dover and from land tax records (possibly an incomplete series), it is evident that he possessed a landed estate covering at least six parishes drawing rental income, but quite how much income he derived from the estate is unclear.<sup>229</sup> It is purely conjecture, but it has been said by tradition that one of Oxenden's sons had incurred gambling debts thus presenting his father with the need to raise some capital to preserve the family's good name.<sup>230</sup> As far as is known, no name has been attributed to this rumour, but taking into account the date, it seems probable that Oxenden's eldest son would be the likely subject of such financial issues. The story gains some credibility, when it is recognized that Hon. Henry

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<sup>228</sup> *Recollections of the late Sir Henry Oxenden, Bart.*, (Canterbury, *Kentish Gazette*, 1862). p. 12.

<sup>229</sup> Based upon 1798 Land Tax records available on [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), accessed May 2014.

<sup>230</sup> Based upon conversations with the late Harold Gough, a long time Curator of HBHRS and a recognised authority on Herne Bay.

Chudleigh matriculated from Eton in 1814 and was then admitted to St. John's, Cambridge. There is nothing to prove that this young man got into debt, but we are able to glean an insight into his character from a piece in the *Coventry Herald*, that reports that Oxenden was found guilty of a brutal assault on a labourer named Stokes. The case concerned an alleged attack by Oxenden and two others of similar rank, all of whom were on horseback, on a small group of men who were with two dogs at a celebrated fox-earth. One dog belonging to the plaintiff, was beaten around the head by Oxenden, who then proceeded to ride over the plaintiff, causing him severe head injuries.<sup>231</sup> Despite inheriting from his father in 1838, Oxenden, now the 8<sup>th</sup> baronet, is reported in the *London Gazette* as being insolvent on at least five separate occasions in 1847, 1857, 1860, 1864 and 1867.<sup>232</sup> His financial difficulties were reported in the *Dublin Evening Mail*, where it was said that his creditors were owed £720. Oxenden alleged that his debts were the result of "insufficient income".<sup>233</sup>

Oxenden was shrewd with his choice of location for his development, as not only was it adjacent to the improved turnpike road and opposite a long established public house, it was also built on land that was above the waterline and hence safe from flooding. This saved Oxenden the expense of expensive sea defences, a deterrent to so many speculators that also made the dwellings attractive to the better classes.<sup>234</sup> It can be shown that Oxenden and others were relying upon the natural defences offered by the shingle on the beach and when this was threatened with removal, Oxenden was forced to obtain an injunction to prevent material being removed by a third party from the foreshore for building purposes.<sup>235</sup>

### **Post 1830 period**

It will be seen from above, that Sir Henry Oxenden is often credited with the foundation of early Herne Bay, but Oxenden's main influence was as a landowner and his part in the formation of the Turnpike Trust in 1814. True to say that Oxenden did build some houses close to the *Ship Inn* in the 1816 period, but by 1830, Oxenden was in his mid 70s and with an heir who seemed disconnected, it is reasonable to suggest that Oxenden was not someone to provide the energy and drive needed for the creation of a new town. It is conjecture, but perhaps Oxenden's development had not expanded in the way he had hoped and upon realising this leading him to the decision to sell lands to George Burge and others. Burge was a Civil Engineer born at Clerkenwell, London in

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<sup>231</sup> *Coventry Herald*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1826, 1c.

<sup>232</sup> *London Gazette*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1847.

<sup>233</sup> *Dublin Evening Mail*, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1867, 3b.

<sup>234</sup> Walton, p. 108.

<sup>235</sup> *London Standard*, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1829, 4b.



1795, who rose to prominence as the main contractor for St. Katherine's Docks in the late 1820s.<sup>236</sup> The value of this contract was £190,000 and assuming Burge made some cash out of this transaction, he would have been looking to invest some of this. A copy of a conveyance dated 10/11 March 1831 reveals that George Burge, of Tulse Hill, Surrey purchased 12 ½ acres of land situate between William Street and the Windmill (Sea View Square area), forming part of Underdown Farm in the ownership of Sir Henry Oxenden. The price paid was £2,853.<sup>237</sup> This land was right in the heart of the new town area of Herne Bay.

Several of the first twenty four Commissioners of the town appointed under the terms of the 1833 act were landowners.<sup>238</sup> Not all were local, and a first review would suggest that as many as 50% were from outside of the district, including Bristol and London. One of these, George Burge gave land for church building and another, Samuel Hacker, a builder from Canterbury is credited as being the author of the map laying out what became the new town, in 1833. This map accompanied the Act of Parliament and shows the intended layout of the town, complete with the intended roads laid out around three squares. The squares are named Hanover, Brunswick and Oxenden, the last named no doubt an acknowledgement to Sir Henry, the other two adopting a very patriotic flavour and joining the names of Montague and Richmond perhaps revealing the ambitions and intentions as to target audience of its authors? The reigning monarch was not ignored and William Street was and still is, one of the main commercial streets in the town. Walton gives credit to Sir George Tapps-Gervis for pioneering the layout of Bournemouth as a watering place in 1838 through his architect, Benjamin Ferry, but Herne Bay was several years ahead of them, arguably on two separate occasions if you count both Oxenden in 1816 and Hacker in 1833.<sup>239</sup> As with many places, plots of land changed hands as land owners either died or moved elsewhere, but it was not until later in the century that concerted efforts become evident. From 1880 onwards, regular land auctions took place selling off parts of the town of Herne Bay in what look to be consolidated groups of lots. It would be helpful to attempt to gain a better understanding of how land ownership changed from the Tithe map through to this late nineteenth century period.

After the opening of the pier in 1832 and the passing of the 1833 Act, land at Herne Bay was in demand. Editorial from the Morning Post reported "*So strong is the rage for building at Herne Bay that, last week, sixteen acres of land in the rear of the Ship Inn, for which, about three years ago,*

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<sup>236</sup> *Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain and Ireland: 1500-1830* 1. ed. by Michael M. Chrimes. (London, Institute of Civil Engineers, 2002).

<sup>237</sup> Manuscript copy in collection of HBHRS.

<sup>238</sup> 3 and 4 William IV, Cap.cv. *An Act for paving, cleansing, lighting, watching, repairing and improving a certain Portion of the Parish of Herne in the County of Kent*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1833.

<sup>239</sup> Walton, p. 116.

1,500l. Could not be obtained, were sold for 5,500l., subject also to a condition that the building should be erected on a plan which is to leave a prospect of the river to other houses that may be built farther from it.<sup>240</sup> After its formation in 1831, the Pier Company had undertaken some improvements to a stretch of the promenade, so this has already set matters in motion and set the tone.<sup>241</sup> A tangible example of such improvements were reported in the *KG* in May 1834, when readers were advised that “Great and rapid improvements, we understand, are making at Herne Bay.<sup>242</sup> Among the most recent, is the removal of that unsightly cluster of hovels which stood in the rear of the Dolphin public-house, and nearly facing the entrance to the pier”.

Brighton’s seafront was heavily influenced by the Prince of Wales in the years after his purchase of the property and land that was to house the Brighton Pavilion, when the prince’s architects, Nash and Holland “transformed the town’s physical face”.<sup>243</sup> After this date, using the paraphrased words of Musgrave as quoted in Walvin, “*the combined features of curved bays, long windows and iron railings became charmingly characteristic of the architecture of the seaside*”. The architecture evident along Herne Bay’s seafront did not present a uniform terrace of buildings, but instead had short runs of similar houses interspersed with open spaces, some of which were only filled in at a much later date.

Barrett makes some interesting observations concerning seaside resorts from the viewpoint of the geographer. In particular he states that a resort is characterized by its front, and in this context Herne Bay is no different, and the seafront we see today has evolved over an extended period with architecture that includes a number of attractive terraces although there is no coherent or dominant style.<sup>244</sup> Using Barrett’s descriptions, Herne Bay would be described as Elongate, with the resort spread along the coast, aided by the existence of steep slopes a short distance inland, a fairly accurate portrayal of the town except for the slopes are gentle rather than steep.<sup>245</sup> Today a number of different building dates are apparent, indicating an infill of gaps as time and finance allowed. It is typical to expect a seafront to include some of the best buildings in a district, but Herne Bay’s seafront presented a mixture of residential, hotels, boarding and lodging houses and the rather unlikely addition of a working windmill. The mill stood close to the centre of the seafront and was built in 1825 by Edward Charles, who later became one the town’s Commissioners. This building survived until 1878, when after several changes of ownership, it was demolished and the site used

<sup>240</sup> *Morning Post*, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1833, 3c.

<sup>241</sup> Gough, *Herne Bay’s Piers*, p. 9.

<sup>242</sup> *KG*, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1834, 3b.

<sup>243</sup> Walvin, p. 21.

<sup>244</sup> Barrett, p. iii.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

for housing. Herne Bay's seafront now extends for over one mile, but during the 1840s, it was shorter, a fact that was referred to by Mr. Punch who stated that "*The approach to the town is by a wooden jetty, nearly twice the extent of the town*".<sup>246</sup> A rather dry comment, that was closer to the truth than many would have wished.<sup>247</sup>

Some work has been done of the number of buildings constructed and these are listed in Whyman, although only in summary format.<sup>248</sup> Hotels, Public Houses and other commercial businesses are covered to a greater or lesser extent in the periodic trade directories that were published. The earliest available directory including Herne Bay, is Pigot's of 1826 which lists the traders operating at the time.<sup>249</sup> No addresses are given, but the trades of Surgeon, Butcher, Builder, Grocer and Baker are included, indicating that the buildings they used were suitable for commercial activity. An extract of all of the names of traders from Pigot's 1826 directory is included in appendix 4.

Seaside resorts developed something of a specialism for schools and educational establishments, and Crouch has covered this well with regard to Westgate. From an early date, Herne Bay was also offering educational establishments of various types.<sup>250</sup> The earliest specific reference appears in the *Times*, in 1824 when a youth from The Caledonian School was mentioned in the context of trying to save two children who had been bathing in the water.<sup>251</sup> Two day schools that are listed in Pigot's 1826 directory, although sadly we do not know anything about these, we can see that in 1833, the Misses Crundall were advertising their education establishment at 5 St. George's Terrace, where they were offering to board and educate young ladies.<sup>252</sup> Herne Bay College opened in 1866 and became one of several educational establishments that formed in the town.<sup>253</sup> It would seem that some schools saw such advantages that they were even removing to the town, as evidenced by Mrs. Wallis, who in 1867 desired to increase numbers at her Ladies school.<sup>254</sup> Surviving advertising material, suggests that the proximity of the sea as well as the quality of the teaching was attractive to the school's founders and the target clientele alike.

The 1833 act included a map of the town including an intended layout of the street. Today's town largely follows this original layout and forms an early form of town planning. Dyos writes

<sup>246</sup> Gough, H.E., *Mills and milling in the Herne Bay area*, Herne Bay, (Herne Bay, HBHRS, 2010), p. 19.

<sup>247</sup> *Punch*, Ibid. p. 47.

<sup>248</sup> Whyman, p. 14.

<sup>249</sup> Pigot and Co, p. 625.

<sup>250</sup> Crouch. pp. 130-156.

<sup>251</sup> *The Times*, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1824, 3e.

<sup>252</sup> *KG*, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1833, 1a.

<sup>253</sup> John A. Fishpool and Pauline Turner, *Herne Bay's Schools & Colleges*, (Herne Bay, HBHRS, 2010), p. 32.

<sup>254</sup> *KG*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1867, 1b.

extensively of the conditions that shaped the development of estates and the factors that influenced them.<sup>255</sup> Although Dyos's study is centred on Camberwell, it is considered that an adequate number of parallels exist and comparisons can be made to Herne Bay particularly with regard to capital for house building, piecemeal development and the provision of amenities.

An important guide book to Herne Bay was published in 1835 by "A Lady", the pseudonym of Mrs. Mary Jane Godwin, stepmother of the author Mary Shelly. Mrs. Godwin was the second wife of William Godwin and they were part of an important literary circle and had run a bookshop. This guide, written when Mrs. Godwin was 70 years of age, together with the illustrations by Bavarian artist George Scharf, contained therein, provide some interesting snippets about the resort of Herne Bay as it appeared at the time of publication.<sup>256</sup> The details contained with the book are difficult to verify completely, but they provide tantalising leads for further investigation including on page 13, "*the Western Cliff is now sold, forming into detached plots, in the centre of each, fronting the sea, is to be built a row of first rate houses, each having a piece of ground around it.*" Reference to the Western Cliff, is suggestive of the stretch of land between the pier and Hampton, but this part of Herne Bay was not developed until the late Victorian period, but it is perhaps indicative of ideas held by the land owners at that time.

Referring to the summary of the number of buildings erected as listed in appendix 5, we can get some feel for the patterns of development that had occurred in the town. The summary census enumerator's return for 1821 does not separate Herne Bay from the parish of Herne, but it specifically notes that the population increase in the parish of Herne is attributed to the building of lodging houses.<sup>257</sup> The same source reveals that there were a total of 257 houses in the whole parish in 1821. Using Gough's cards we can see that during the 1820s, the number of buildings grew by 25, a number that in percentage terms represents an increase of 10% of the whole parish building stock, but concentrated in the very small coastal area. Using further summary data available from the census returns and published on Histpop website, the total number of houses in the parish of Herne is shown for the parish as a whole and from 1841, separated for Herne and Herne Bay. From these numbers and working backwards, it is possible to infer that the number of buildings at Herne Bay at the start of the 1820s decade was less than twenty.

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<sup>255</sup> Harold J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb*, (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1966), pp. 51-84.

<sup>256</sup> Pamela Clemit, *Mary Shelley and William Godwin: a literary-political partnership, 1823-36*, *Women's Writing*, 6, issue 3, 1999, pp.285-295. A Lady. p. 13.

<sup>257</sup> [www.histpop.org/resources/pngs/0007/00300/00137L\\_30.png](http://www.histpop.org/resources/pngs/0007/00300/00137L_30.png), (Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013).

It should be remembered that some of these buildings were used as second homes, particularly by the Commissioners who we know had London homes.

Walton asserts that aristocrats became the most frequent initiators of seaside town development in Victorian times, but this is not the case at Herne Bay.<sup>258</sup> True, Oxenden did start a small development in 1816, but this was modest in size and the real growth came from a small number of speculators, to use Walton's words "*not out of nothing in the middle of nowhere*", but out of a small development that was initiated from almost the humblest of beginnings. Before the railway arrived at Herne Bay, it could be argued that the town actually went into reverse. The population had stagnated and while no houses are known to have been demolished, there are sufficient references to partially built houses at Herne Bay, that were not completed because their builders were either out of business, or down to a lack of any demand for the property. This was unlikely to do with artificially high standards of construction, more to do with the prevailing market conditions in the town where it was proving impossible to achieve a take up.

### **Post 1860 period**

At last the long wished for railway arrived at Herne Bay in July 1861, just twelve months before the closure of the wooden pier due to safety concerns at the end of the 1862 season. For the first time, the town possessed a direct rail link with the capital allowing visitors to make the journey in less than two hours. When it opened the town celebrated with a typical Victorian celebration, but did the arrival of the railway provide the anticipated boost to the local economy? It is true to say that slowly the number of buildings starts to increase, this becoming particular evident after the 1880, after land sales became frequent events. Most of the newly available land was on the fringe of the established built up area and acted as an extension to the core development, a typical pattern that was not unique to Herne Bay.<sup>259</sup> The driver for these land sales in Herne has not been critically examined to establish why, but Bundock asserts that "*the most important critical factor determining the release of estates on to the market, was the death of the owner,*" and there is no reason to consider that here would be any different.<sup>260</sup> It is evident that the main growth of the newer developments were extensions to the core built up area.

Arriving from the direction of Whitstable, the railway track was some way from the town centre and certainly not within sight of the sea. Although the distance from the railway to the seafront was

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<sup>258</sup> Walton, p. 104.

<sup>259</sup> John D. Bundock, *Speculative housebuilding and some aspects of the speculative house builder in the Greater London area 1919-1939*, Kent, M.Phil thesis, 1974, p. 533.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.* p. 524.

only half of one mile, this was the minimum distance and if a visitor was using accommodation towards one end of the town, the journey could be demanding, particularly with cases and luggage. When the station opened, most of the buildings were close to the seafront and the road built to convey passengers passed through open fields and it was not until the second quarter of the nineteenth century that these were laid out and fully developed. Walton states that local topography had an impact upon the range of visiting publics and this in turn caused a change in the social structure of visitors and potential visitors, as well as the actual and potential residents.<sup>261</sup> While this may be partially true, it is certainly not the whole story at Herne Bay, where the process of changes to the social structure was more likely to have been combined efforts of local residents, the railway company and government legislation, ensuring that the prices charged for rail tickets were realistic.

Where topography has had an influence at Herne Bay is due to the floodplain in the centre of town, where apart from a limited amount of development in the roads immediately behind the front, it was the land further to the east and west that was preferred for development. The large scale Ordnance Survey map of 1872 shows the extent of development at the time of the survey, but it was not really until the regular auction sales start in the 1880s and continued into the 1930s. Expansion to the west, the Hampton end of town was initiated by the formation of the Hampton on Sea Estate Association, by Mr. Thomas Kyffin Freeman, a local newspaper proprietor, who had purchased a quantity of land off the mortgagees of the failed oyster fishery in the late 1870s.<sup>262</sup> Freeman's plans included the ambitious creation of a suburb to the town, possibly creating a new watering place in its own right, and a series of advertisements appeared in the local press inviting subscribers to shares in the scheme, with a special mention of the virtues of the fast rail service to London.<sup>263</sup> By the late 1880s, regular land auction sales were being conducted on the Hampton estate with advertisements published in the local press offering subsidised rail fares and refreshments for intending purchasers.<sup>264</sup> While the Hampton estate land became available after the failure of the Oyster Fishery, other farms were becoming available as farming entered a period of depression that commenced in the 1870s, when better returns could be made from selling the land for development, rather than for farming purposes.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Walton, p. 106.

<sup>262</sup> Michael J. Bundock, *Herne Bay, Hampton and Reculver Oyster Fishery Company*, B.A. Dissertation. University of Kent, 2006. p. 10.

<sup>263</sup> *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1880, 4b. and 8<sup>th</sup> May 1880, 1a.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.* 25<sup>th</sup> August 1888, 8d.

<sup>265</sup> Gordon Mingay, 'Agriculture' in *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914*, (see Craig above), pp. 51-84 (p. 76).

Meanwhile new estates were springing up in Herne Bay and another developer had appeared in Herne Bay, when Thomas Dence purchased a large portion of the East Cliff from the Collard Trustees in 1886 and then proceeded to develop this for sale over an extended period. Dence was a London business man who had inherited monies from an aunt and invested this into Brands, a meat processing company.<sup>266</sup> This company was a success and Dence invested in numerous land development schemes, including that at Herne Bay. Although Dence was a resident of London, he did have a property on the East Cliff, *Kingsbury*, although it is uncertain how much time he spent there.<sup>267</sup>

Correspondence [in the collection of the HBHRS] between the late Harold Gough and members of the Dence family give an interesting insight into Thomas Dence's land dealings in the Herne Bay area. In a ten year period, Dence was able to acquire land that stretched from the boundary with Oxenden's old town, all the way to Beltinge, a considerable area that is now almost fully developed for housing. The earliest recorded transaction occurs when Dence expended £6,000 on the purchase of Beltinge Farm, consisting of about 205 acres from George Bucknell Shakespeare in March 1885. Dence had clearly identified this part of Herne Bay as the focus of his land investments, as surviving legal documents record that Dence acquired a further quantity of land at Herne Bay from the Collard family in 1886. This land was on Beltinge Hill and extended from the parish boundary on Canterbury Road right up to the boundary of his earlier purchase. A copy Deed of Covenant, dated 10<sup>th</sup> September 1886, details references concerning the provision of roads and sewers, but of greater interest, are the details of some of the field names now owned by Dence. At least two fields are mentioned by name, *Horse Race Field* and *Cliff Field*, and both can be identified on the 1840 Herne Tithe map. Further purchases were made in 1896, when 53 acres were purchased from the trustees of Lord Sondes, including *Reeds Field*, where the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, now stands and the adjacent St. Bartholomew's Church. Dence then acquired part of Parsonage Farm for £8,450 and 13 acres of Burtons Down from Thomas Brown for £800.

In 1898 Dence made his initial offer to give land to Herne Bay Urban District Council for the building of the East Cliff Pavilion, a transaction that was completed in 1902, but this was preceded by an earlier offer by another developer, Herbert Edward Ramsey. Ramsey was at one time a town councillor who had purchased a farm east of Dence's land and laid out a street plan that was complimentary to that planned by Dence. As part of these arrangements, Ramsey had offered the council 14 acres or land for a Recreational Park and it is understood that Dence offered two acres of

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<sup>266</sup> Documents in collection of HBHRS. Bundock, M.J., *The Kings Hall Herne Bay, Celebrating 100 years*, Herne Bay, 2013. p. 12.

<sup>267</sup> Bundock, M.J., *Oyster Fishery*, p. 13.

his own land to make a neat area. This plot was located close to the water tower at the top of Mickleburgh Hill, with the boundary running close to the modern day road named Dence Park. Negotiations stalled however, when unacceptable terms and conditions attached to the offer led to the Council's rejection. Ramsey had become bankrupt by 1911.<sup>268</sup>

Fortunately some of Dence's business records survive at the Metropolitan London Archive and these show that Thomas Dence was an investor in various UK and foreign companies and the owner of several properties, including premises in Bromley, Clapham, Croydon, Ferme Park, Highgate, Norbury, Stamford Hill, Southwark, Sutton, Wandsworth in addition to those at Herne Bay.<sup>269</sup> The records are incomplete, but they shown that Dence was buying up land and then developing it to either let the properties on three, seven or twenty one year leases, or to sell freehold. Dence was fulfilling the typical role of a speculative builder, not just at Herne Bay, but further afield in London, a subject covered in detail by Dyos, particularly in relation to the London suburb of Camberwell.<sup>270</sup>

It is clear that the combination of land availability and the improved rail links afforded by the railway after 1861, made Herne Bay an attractive location, not just for visitors, but also for residential purposes. As Bundock points out, "house building was clearly a highly land consumptive production process" but land was available in the area surrounding Herne Bay and for those with capital to invest, the raw ingredients were present.<sup>271</sup> The importance of the railway in this late period is evidenced by a typical piece of editorial in the local press, with a short piece in 1887, headed "*The New Estates*" continuing, "*Herne Bay is likely to be extending its borders both east and west. The Beacon Hill estate and Beltinge Estate has already been laid out by its owner Mr. Dence and building operations are not likely to be long delayed. A large plot of land between Sea Street Farm and the Railway Station, belonging to Mr. James Amos, is also to be added to the urban area. Both estates have special advantages, for while the first commands an unusually fine sea view, the other is in close proximity to the Railway Station, a great consideration these days.*"<sup>272</sup>

It is probable that the investment activity of Dence and others was more to do with general population increases and the demand for housing, rather than resort development. London would have presented a reasonable commute from Herne Bay for those who worked in the city and desired

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<sup>268</sup> *The Edinburgh Gazette*, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1911, p. 39.

<sup>269</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, cat. ref. MLA/ACC/2832.

<sup>270</sup> Dyos, pp. 122-137.

<sup>271</sup> Bundock, J.D., p. 518.

<sup>272</sup> *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1887, 8c.



to live by the sea. Similarly, for those living in the greater London area, the coast would have offered a potentially attractive place to which they retire with their families.

Walton's casts some doubts about the comment of Cannadine's assertion that speculative investors created suburban appendages to London.<sup>273</sup> This is presumed to apply to mid nineteenth century development and if this is so, it was not thought to be the case at Herne Bay, as the relatively poor transport links acted as an impediment. Later on, after Dence and others had commenced there developments, it would be worth examining the evidence to see if this is applicable at Herne Bay, but thus far, this theory has not been proven or tested. Instinct, local knowledge and superficial preliminary evidence, would suggest that there is some merit in Cannadine's comments, but for a later period than that to which he was perhaps referring.

In contrast to Dence's estate, the land from Amos's estate was sold off in lots ranging from single plots of land suitable for one house, to blocks suitable for a terrace. Numerous sale catalogues survive, each with various covenants and restrictions as to the type of building that could be constructed, but these were fairly relaxed compared to areas where a dominant landowner was attempting to set standards. A local example of restrictive covenants being used to good effect by dominant landowners can be found at nearly Westgate, where Coutts the bankers acquired quite a portfolio of land as a result of Davies insolvency. Coutts were dogmatic in their refusal to relax the covenants and chose instead to have undeveloped land.<sup>274</sup> From the available evidence, it seems likely that at Herne Bay, a more collaborative approach was adopted as suggested by Walton, whereby land companies, speculators and developers worked together as promoters of a resort, even where a high class clientele was not envisaged.<sup>275</sup> Herne Bay's road layout in this later nineteenth century period has the look and feel of being planned with the roads fitting into the available space in a manner that makes best use of the space, particularly in the instance of the roads radiating out from the railway station. Despite the regular auction sales and regular building development, many of the roads exhibited empty stretches well into the twentieth century.

Herne Bay's population statistics are included in appendix 3. These are typically shown for the whole of the parish of Herne, but using the detail included within the digests published on the Official Historical Population Reports website ([www.histpop.org](http://www.histpop.org)), the numbers for Herne Bay can be disaggregated. No attempt has been made to verify these numbers by cross checking with the census for example, but the source is considered reliable for this purpose. Numbers are available

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<sup>273</sup> Walton, p. 104.

<sup>274</sup> Crouch. pp. 37-44.

<sup>275</sup> Walton, p. 121.

for 1841 through to 1911 and these show a reduction in the population of Herne Bay between 1841 and 1861, the period when building work all but stopped and the town was in a lull. Later in the century, after the estate sales and house building, the population numbers show a dramatic increase, particularly between 1891 and 1901, when the Herne Bay portion of Herne exhibits an increase in population from 3,829 to 6,726 or 75%. This compares to an increase from 21,367 to 26,734 or 25% at Margate for the same period or just 18% for the county as a whole.

This chapter has set out to explain how the town expanded in various phases after the arrival of the first bathing machine in 1770 into the latter part of the nineteenth century. The geographical and topographical aspects of the town have been considered, and the adaptation to the low lying aspect of the town has been explained along with its adaptation to become a watering place. Transport has had a significant influence of the town's evolution and its response to these various developments has been covered. Population changes are also examined and it has been shown how these have changed in an almost predictable way that reflects the changing fortunes of the town, rather than the more usual patterns in evidence in many other Kent locations. The buildings that existed in the town at various times can be seen to cover the residential needs, but it is questionable if sufficient investment was made in the provision of suitable attractions to truly entice visitors to select Herne Bay over one of the competitor resorts. The population statistics have been analysed and these can be seen to reflect the transport developments and the changing fortunes of the town. A comparison with growth elsewhere in the county reflect the ebbs and flows of the town and how these differ with the trends experienced elsewhere.

## 6: Conclusions

This thesis set out to critically examine Herne Bay's success as a seaside resort during the nineteenth century. Using a variety of previously underexploited resources, it has been possible to consider a number of aspects and characteristics that have affected the town and attempt to connect these together to reach a conclusion as to the resort's progress, successes and failures. With the exception of Whitehead's dissertation, previous writings concerning the town have tended to concentrate on specific buildings, such as the town's pier and various other thematic or subject driven aspects of the town's history, including the town's public houses, the town's schools and the town during war time.

Success or failure is a subjective measure, with conclusions very much driven by opinion. Attempting complete objectivity is challenging, but if care is taken, a reasonable conclusion can be reached, one that is able to stand scrutiny and promote further discussion. John Walton's second major book on the history of the seaside, *The British Seaside, Holidays and resorts in the twentieth century*, published in 2000, focuses on the period following that covered in this paper, but the summary review of this title printed on the back cover of the book, reminds us that in the period immediately before the Great War, one of Britain's largest most popular seaside resorts, Blackpool, received around four million visitors each year. Compared to a population number of 32.5 million for England and Wales in 1901, this represents a high percentage and shows the importance of the seaside holiday industry.<sup>276</sup> Visitor numbers are just one measure of success, but it is an important one, as footfall is one of the foundation measures of economic activity that is so important to the wellbeing of a region or specific area. We are reminded that the promoters of the first deep sea pier at Herne Bay considered that the town had the scope to expand to the size of Brighton, and this was seen at that time as an important selling point to encourage the required incoming investment.

A valuable contemporary insight of the public's perception of the town can be read in the *Illustrated London News* where this weekly news magazine published an article on Herne Bay as part of a series covering the watering places of England.<sup>277</sup> We need to bear in mind that this piece was published in 1850, a time when arguably the town was at a low point, with the town's own railway station still ten years away and the town's main asset, its pier, in a poor state of repair. With an air of authority, the article commences with the statement that "*this is a watering place as yet still in its infancy, and giving more signs of precocity and forcing than of steady and natural growth*". To

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<sup>276</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-history/200-years-of-the-census/1801-1901/index.html> (accessed 3rd August 2014).

<sup>277</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1850. p. 47.

what extent was this an accurate or even a fair statement? It was true that the foundations of the town originated initially when Oxenden started his small development in the years after the arrival of the turnpike road and afterwards with the passing of the Improvement Act in 1833. It was also true that the speculators behind the second of these events had attempted a kick start to the town's development with the somewhat risky venture of building the deep sea pier. The fact that the required £50,000 was raised from a group of shareholders predominantly London based, but with a few local people, is testament to the confidence felt at the time.<sup>278</sup>

Herne Bay's location is a mixed blessing with the advantage of the large and economically active population of London just sixty miles away. However this advantage was countered by the close proximity of the pioneering, established and popular resort of Margate situated just fourteen miles to the east. The fact that Herne Bay was approximately one hour closer to London than Margate, was a slim benefit but this was mitigated, initially at least, by the somewhat limited transport options. Although transport links to this part of the coast existed for trade purposes, these were infrequent and both difficult and uncomfortable for those in pursuit of health or leisure and the location was not obviously on the way to anywhere, therefore depriving the town of casual passing trade.

Transport has been a key factor throughout Herne Bay's history. There can be no doubt that the building of the deep sea pier that opened on 1832 was a great leap forward, as for the first time this permitted visitors to reach the town in numbers and with a degree of comfort offered by the paddle steamers. Prior to this time, the trading hoys visited and fare paying passengers were not unknown, but this was not the established way of travel that it had become at nearby Margate. Lee recounts that there no less than five hoys sailing to Margate on alternate weeks, illustrating the popularity of this established location – Herne Bay had just the one vessel calling either weekly or every other week depending upon the season.<sup>279</sup> Travel by road to Herne Bay was possible and the 1814 Turnpike road had improved the journey between Canterbury and the emerging coastal town, but it was still a lengthy trek from anywhere beyond the immediate vicinity. Most of east Kent's roads converged on Canterbury, so this became the hub for onward travel. While there was a primitive railway from Canterbury to Whitstable as early as 1830 and a proposed branch line to Herne Bay was suggested, this would not really have helped the town, as at that time the line terminated in the cathedral city and it was visitors from London that were the target. The national rail network was starting to expand in the 1830s, but its progress into Kent was slow and unsurprisingly neither

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<sup>278</sup> Gough, *Herne Bay's Piers*, p. 8.

<sup>279</sup> Lee, p. 32.

Herne Bay nor North Kent were priorities for railway promoters and investors, due to the risks and risks associated with potential investment returns. The channel port of Dover was the real target destination and this is where the main efforts of the railway builders centred. This said, after the South Eastern Railway reached Ashford in 1842, a branch line to Canterbury soon followed and this then continued east towards Thanet, with the station at Sturry just five miles distant from Herne Bay opening around 1848. For those wishing to reach the coast, this provided another option other than the steamers, but it did involve the transfer to a regular horse bus service that sprang up for the last leg of the journey.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Herne Bay's transport links was the basic fact that it provided a short cut means of travelling to Dover. We know from the Pier Master's records the approximate number of visitors paying their dues at the pier and that an estimated half of these were travelling onwards to the continent via Dover. We also know that this cross channel traffic was part of the target audience that the promoters of the first pier were aiming for. Looking critically, the economic wisdom of this investment was not particularly sound, as even when the share capital was being raised during 1830 and 1831, it should have been evident that the railway was the future and it would only be a matter of time before an improved alternative mode of transport presented itself. In the event, this route via Herne Bay pier lasted for ten years before the Ashford alternative arrived in December 1842, in the mean time creating arguably the most active and exciting period in Herne Bay's history. During this decade, the town gained a pier, it established its own local government and both its population and built environment expanded considerably. The problems came in the aftermath of the drop off of visitors in the period after 1842 when the reduction in demand led to a restricted steamer service and a consequent decline in pier revenues, this reduction in income, in time led to a lack of maintenance on the structure of the pier. This reduction in income came at a time when it had already been discovered that the timber of the pier, had deteriorated to such an extent that some of the fifteen inch square piles, had been reduced to less than three inches square. It was determined that domestic grade timber had been used and that this had been attacked by marine woodworm (*Teredo Navalis*).<sup>280</sup> The effect of less visitors to the town led to a general fall in the value of investments, an increase in bankruptcies among some of the building speculators and the unattractive aspect of the town presented by half-finished buildings. If the 1830s were seen as a boom for the town, then the 1840s must have been a low of equal magnitude, and it is from this low that the Town Commissioners and residents of Herne Bay needed to recover from.

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<sup>280</sup> Whitehead. p. 23.

Developments in resorts elsewhere were providing potential visitors with a choice as new watering places were starting to appear in other parts of the country. The railway undoubtedly provided the impetus and means for this to happen and the controlling minds at Herne Bay were not blind to this, leading to them being anxious to obtain their own railway. Records from two parliamentary Select Committee meetings held in 1847 and 1857, provide a wealth of information as to the identity of the leading citizens of the town at this time behind this push and their line of argument in favour of the new railway line. When the railway did arrive in 1861, it was in some ways too late, the fate of the town as a smallish resort was sealed and the hopes of expansion to the size of Brighton had passed by. There was a certain irony in as much that the railway that was desired so much by the town, in fact made it easier for visitors to reach the competitor Thanet resorts of Margate and Ramsgate, as the previous time saving made on the steamer of over one hour, was removed and replaced instead with a train journey of less than half of this time. In the instance of Margate, the railway station was situated close to the sands that could be seen from the train, whereas at Herne Bay, the sea could not be seen and the station was a good half a mile from the seafront. As an additional twist, the railway provided opportunity for the creation of what in time became the competitor resorts at both Birchington and Westgate.

When Sir Henry Oxenden's attempt at the creation of a new watering place in 1816, started to attract attention and publicity, a bright future seemed reasonably assured. However Oxenden's ambitions seem to have been constrained by a lack of capital or possibly ambition, so when fresh inspiration for the creation of a new seaside resort came from a small number of speculators, Oxenden was prepared to sell part of his land holding. Despite not residing at Herne Bay, instead living at his country house, *Broome Park*, Barham, near Canterbury, Oxenden was not completely uninterested in the town, as he is known to have invested in shares in the first pier, so it is difficult to tell quite what was in his mind, but one possibility is that Oxenden may have been content to have used his estate as a form of "land bank", selling off land to developers as opportunities arose to raise some capital, a point made by Barrett.<sup>281</sup>

Governance of the town proved to be problematic. The provisions of the Improvement Act of 1833 set out that the town's affairs would be controlled by twenty four suitably qualified commissioners. Right from the start it is evident that while twenty four men were willing to stand, this did not equate to attendance at the meetings or indeed action towards furthering the town's aims. As can be seen from the comments in the chapter on governance, the town seemed unable to attract sufficient external finance and was forced to rely upon loans in the form of bonds from the Commissioners.

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<sup>281</sup> Gough, *Herne Bay's Piers*, p. 8. Barrett, p. 53.

While there is no evidence or suggestion of impropriety, the issue of raising finance does seem to have dominated proceedings at many of the meetings that were held. The fact that many of the Commissioners' meetings needed to be cancelled due to poor attendance, no less than fifteen were cancelled during 1835, is an indication of the detached attitude of those in office. It is difficult to be certain, but it is possible that this held the town back in its development, with some Commissioners having business interest elsewhere, the burden of leading would have been left to just a few who may not have been willing or able to finance what might have been advantages for the town as a whole.<sup>282</sup> Towns such as St. Leonards, Eastbourne, Torquay and Bournemouth to name a few as well as Folkestone and Westgate locally, each benefited to a greater or lesser extent by having a figurehead or leader to control or oversee proceedings. Walton points out that not all of the special needs of the seaside could be met by private enterprise and this is where those in positions of power and influence, usually with wealth came into their own.<sup>283</sup> The lack of a wealthy figure head at Herne Bay, even if it did not damage it directly, did nothing to promote it either. In fact it is arguable, but this lack of a leader or insufficient involvement by commissioners over a number of years was what led to the lack of judgment exercised by the Commissioners in 1877, when they lost a Chancery suit fighting local landowners who had enclosed land set aside for the town's development incurred a significant financial penalty.<sup>284</sup> Lack of inspections and control over many years had led to this situation and the legal costs of the case amounted to over £3,000 an amount that had a dramatic impact upon a town with a rateable value of only £6,500 at the time.

This thesis has not set out to undertake a detailed analysis of the population numbers as extracted from the decadal census returns, but the numbers included in appendix 3 do reveal that the town's population has followed a predictable pattern when other factors are taken into account. Although the split numbers of the town are not available for 1831, the jump between 1831 and 1841, has to be attributable to the growth of the town and this backs up all of the evidence that the town boomed in this period. Similarly that stagnation and decline after the transport short cut was no longer required correlates with the decline in population recorded between 1841 and 1851, climbing again in the build up towards the arrival of the railway. The growth of the town at the end of the century is a reflection of the growing residential aspect of the town, rather than any particular resort activity.

The first visitors to Herne Bay in any number probably made to journey to see the military who were encamped to the east of the town during the Napoleonic period. Parties of visitors would gather to view the spectacle, particularly the shell practice on the beach, at a time when overseas

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<sup>282</sup> Pavement Commissioners' Minute books. CCA-UD-HB/C/2/24.

<sup>283</sup> Walton, p. 129.

<sup>284</sup> Hasluck, pp. 32-36.

travel was much reduced due to the war with France. Unlike some other resorts, such as Brighton and Weymouth, Herne Bay was never to enjoy any royal patronage. Queen Victoria spent some of her childhood summer holidays in nearby Ramsgate, but she is not thought to have visited Herne Bay. The effect of a royal visitor can be best seen at Brighton, where a good many people followed in the hope of catching a glimpse as well as feeling that they were following the fashion. Travis makes the point that often royal patronage was longed for by town, as it was seen as a way of boosting visitor numbers.<sup>285</sup> Morgan and Pritchard assert that British coastal watering places were divided along class lines from the outset, and while Herne Bay attracted the reputation for being genteel, there does not seem to a conscious effort to make this the case.<sup>286</sup> One of the few instances of the town's commissioners making a specific gesture in acknowledgment of visitors came in 1849 when it was decided that all pigs and styes (sic) should be removed from the town during the visitors' season.<sup>287</sup> In terms of class, Margate certainly gained a reputation for being somewhat "low", but this seems to stem from its ability to attract vast numbers of visitors from its early days in the eighteenth century.

Taking everything into account, while Herne Bay was not the success that was intended, it was not really a true failure either, on the basis that each of the various downturns in the town's fortunes were ultimately overcome. As has been demonstrated, Herne Bay has passed through a number of cycles of ups and downs, but the downs were never terminal and those responsible in the town managed to turn it around. Few seaside resorts can demonstrate sustained and continuous success throughout their history, and while it is outside the scope of this paper, the latter part of the twentieth century has presented a fresh set of challenges with decreased popularity with the increased availability of cheap package holidays. The decline in retail occupation in many British high streets has affected some seaside towns more than others and driven the need for imaginative approaches and attempts at niche offerings to once again draw in visitors in what remains a competitive market.

In closing, it is suggested that during the nineteenth century, Herne Bay had various opportunities and periodic successes, but has ultimately suffered from a gap between its potential and its achievement.

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<sup>285</sup> Travis, p. 51.

<sup>286</sup> Morgan and Pritchard, p. 24.

<sup>287</sup> Hasluck, p. 28.



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## Appendix 1

Edward Hasted, the Kent Antiquary writing in the late eighteenth century, includes a detailed description of the parish of Herne in his twelve-volume work “*History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*,” published as a second edition in 1800. The following is extracted from volume IX, and is included to provide a background to the parish of Herne, provide an overview of the agricultural development and show how the Oxenden landholdings originated.

### *HERNE,*

*OR Hearne, as it is frequently spelt, lies almost adjoining to Sturry northward, and takes its name from the Saxon word hyrne, or hurne, signifying a nook or corner. (fn. 1) There are five boroughs in it, viz. Stroud, Hawe, Hampton, Beltinge, and Thornden. The borsholders of these boroughs are subordinate to the constable of the upper half hundred of Blengate, who is chosen at the court-leet of Reculver, for two years, from this parish; and the three next succeeding years, one each in turn, from Reculver, Hothe, and Stourmouth.*

*THIS PARISH is situated about six miles north eastward from Canterbury, in a wild and dreary country; there is a great deal of poor land in it, covered with broom, and several wastes or little commons, with cottages interspersed among them. The soil of it is in general a stiff clay, and in some parts mixed with gravel, the water throughout it is very brackish. The southern part of it is mostly coppice woods, a considerable quantity of which belong to the archbishop, and are in his own occupation. There are thirty-seven teams kept in this parish. There are about seventeen acres of hops in it, and not long ago double that number, and these are continually displanting. It also produces much canary-seed, of which it has sometimes had one hundred acres. The rents, according to the land-tax assessment, amount to 1705l. according to the poor-rates, to 3179l. 10s. Herne-street is situated about the middle of the parish, and contains about sixty houses, among which are Stroud-house and the vicarage; also an elegant new house, built on the common, belonging to Mr. Lyddell. The church stands at the south end of it. Northward from it is Underwood farm, and opposite to it the parsonage house, formerly the residence of the Milles's. These are within the hamlet of Eddinton, in which, further on upon the road, is a new-built house, belonging to Mr. Edward Reynolds. Hence the road leads through Sea-street to Herne bay, which is very spacious and commodious for shipping. Several colliers frequent this bay from Newcastle and Sunderland, on which*

*account there are two sworn meters here, and the city of Canterbury and the neighbouring country are partly supplied with coals from hence. There are two hoys, of about sixty tons burthen each, which sail alternately each week to and from London, with corn, hops, flour, and shop goods. A handsome mansion, with doors and windows in the gothic taste, has lately been built, and belongs to Mr. Winter. In 1798 barracks were built by government for the reception of troops, who were thought necessary to guard this part of the coast.*

*Leland, in his Itinerary, (fn. 2) says, Heron ys iii good myles frothens (viz. Whitstaple) wher men take good muscles cawled stake muscles. Yt stondeth dim. 2 mylefro the mayne shore & ther ys good pitching of nettesfor mullettes." The coast of the channel bounds this parish on the north side. South-westward from Hernebay is the farm of Norwood, formerly belonging to a collateral branch of the Knowlers, of Stroud house; and Sir William Segar, garter, in 1629, granted to George Knowler, of Norwood, in Hearne, kinsman and son-in-law to Robert Knowler, of Stroud, in that parish, descended collaterally from that family, these arms, Ermine, on a bend, between two cotizes, sable, a lion passant-guardant of the first, crowned, or, langued and armed, gules. From them it came by marriage to Tucker, and is now the property of the Rev. John Tucker, rector of Gravesend and Luddenham. Hence towards Swaycliffe, the country is very poor, wet and swampy, and much covered with rushes. On the opposite side of the parish, at a little distance between the street and Herne common, is the manor of Ridgway, formerly belonging to the Monins's and the Norton's, of Fordwich, from the latter it was sold to lady Mabella Finch, baroness of Fordwich, who gave it by will to her nephew Charles Fotherby, from whom it has come to Charles Dering, esq. late of Barham. On the hill, eastward of Herne Street, is a wind-mill, built on the spot where once stood a beacon.*

*Archbishop Islip, in the 25th year of Edward III. obtained the grant of a market, to be held weekly on a Monday, and a fair yearly on the feast of St. Martin and the day afterwards, in this parish of Herne. (fn. 3)*

*The fair is now held on the Monday in Easter-week, at Herne-street; and there is another at Bromfield init, on Whit-Monday.*



This extract provides a valuable overview of the parish at the time and provides an insight into landownership and some worthwhile information concerning the farming activity taking place, and the extent of the maritime activity on the seashore. Five boroughs are described, each mentioning land ownership and how this had passed into the hands of the then present owners. The boundaries of the individual boroughs are difficult to pin down with any real certainty, but based on work undertaken by Gough, the borough of Hampton covered much of the area of modern Herne Bay, with the exception of the part to the furthest east that was covered by Beltinge.<sup>288</sup> One of the manors that formed part of Hampton borough, Makinbrooke, is described by Hasted thus;

*THE MANOR OF MAKINBROOKE, the very name of which is almost obliterated, was situated in the northwest part of this parish, and was part of the antient (sic) possessions of the see of Canterbury, of which it was held by knight's service, by a family who took their name from it, in which it continued till Edward IIIId.'s reign, but in the 30th year of it this manor had passed by purchase into the hands of Adam le Eyre, citizen of London, who that year gave it to Thomas Wolton, master or keeper of Eastbridge hospital, and his successors, towards their support. In the year 1528, Robert Atte Sea, of Herne, held this estate in fee, by the payment of a yearly rent (fn. 7) to the hospital. After his death it descended, partly in the male line and partly by two coheirs, to the family of Crayford. After which it came into that of Oxenden, in which it continued down, with the farm called Underdowne farm, situated in the hamlet of Eddington, to Sir George Oxenden, bart. who rebuilt the house, and his son Sir H. Oxenden, bart. now of Brome, is the present owner of this manor, and the farm of Underdowne before-mentioned (in the description of the borough of Underdowne).*

The name of Oxenden is relevant here, as it is their name that features in the start of organised building at Herne Bay in the early 1800s. Dorothy Gardiner quotes Hasted and reprints a letter held in the British Library [MS. 28,000 f.4] from James Oxinden, (sic) dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 1640, addressed to his nephew.<sup>289</sup> The letter is reproduced below,

*Good Nephew,*

*I have not at any time suffered more vexation in myselfe then at this time that I have not to returne you such an answeare as my wishes do desire: so it is that lately,*

<sup>288</sup> Gough, H.E., included within Bundock, M.J., (ed.) *Historic Herne & Broomfield*, Herne Bay, 2007, pp.18-22.

<sup>289</sup> Gardiner, Dorothy, *The Oxinden Letters 1607-1642*, 1933, p.171.

*according to my old want, I went among my few tenants in Hearne for my rent, where I found so much want of mony as I never did all dayes of my life; tho they confessed they were not without that was worth money, yet they protested to me that unless they should be very great Loasers they could not get any money for their commodities. Prithee Cosin do not think but if I had in my keepinge any considerable summe I would not have sent you so little, tho I am within few dayes to goe for London, but if mony comes in after I am gone I will have my wife send you part of it; for the interest I will be willinge to be accomptable to you, for my former occasions have brought me into very great scarcity of mony. So I rest.*

*Your very affectionate uncle*

*James Oxinden*

Although it is only an isolated letter, it does serve to confirm Hasted's assertion concerning the long standing Oxenden association with land in this parish. Duncombe states that the mansion of Underdown was owned by John Sea esq., but that it was rebuilt by Sir George Oxenden, bart., who purchased the estate and in the hands of Sir Henry (this would be the 6<sup>th</sup> Baronet).<sup>290</sup> Although most would consider the origins of the name of the modern day Sea Street is its proximity to the sea, it is in fact thought that the road name owes its origin to Sea family, as it runs over part of the lands they formerly owned.

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<sup>290</sup> Duncombe, John., *The History and Antiquities of the two parishes of Reculver and Herne in the County of Kent*, (London, Society of Antiquaries, 1784), p. 93.

## Appendix 2

This is a list of the names of the first twenty four Commissioners of the New Town of Herne Bay, together with their town of residence and trade where known. The data is provided to show the diverse locations and trades that these gentlemen were involved in. Not all have been traced and these gentlemen are marked as unknown. These names were listed in the 1833 Improvement Act, and their trades and place of residence have been sourced from a combination of sources including files within the HBHRS collection, the *Kentish Gazette* and the 1841 census returns.

Robert Adams	Unknown
Abraham Alexander	Owner of the <i>Pier Hotel</i> , Herne Bay
George Ash	House Visitor, Canterbury
John Brough	Attorney, Herne Bay
George Augustus Brown	<u>Bankrupt</u> Baker, London
George Burge	Civil Engineer/Contractor, Surrey
Thomas Camplin	Alderman and Insurance Broker, Bristol
Edward Charles	Miller, Herne Bay
James Clift	Solicitor, London
Edward Collard	Farmer, Herne
Samuel Hacker	Builder/Surveyor, Canterbury
David Halket	Gentleman, London
James Jenkins	Businessman, London
James Law Jones	Wholesale Merchant, London
James Mortimer	Land owner, Herne Bay
Thomas Mortin	Unknown
John Palmer	Farmer, Herne
George Pemberton	Landowner, Local
George Randell	Landowner, Local
John Randell	Landowner, Local
Thomas Reid	Unknown
Edmund Saxby	Iron Founder, Canterbury
Abraham Slowman	Assignee, London
William Wiggins	Horse Dealer, Greenwich

## Appendix 3

### Population Numbers for Herne

Most of the historic population numbers for Herne Bay are included with the figures provided for the parish of Herne as a whole. Splitting out the numbers for the coastal portion of Herne Bay is not always straightforward but by using a combination of sources, the following numbers are presented as being a reasonably accurate representation. The numbers show a more realistic view of the true population of the town when compared to the parish of Herne as a whole.

The figures used here are extracted from the decadal census returns collected from two sources:

- 1) Victoria County History of Kent 3, as reproduced on the web site of the Kent Archaeological Society.<sup>291</sup>
- 2) Official census statistical digests provided on the website of Online Historical Population Reports (histpop) compiled by the University of Essex.<sup>292</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total for Parish</u>	<u>Herne</u>	<u>Herne Bay</u>
1801	1,232	1,232	-
1811	1,442	1,442	-
1821	1,675	1,675	-
1831	1,876	1,876	-
1841	3,041	1,469	1,572
1851	3,094	1,733	1,361
1861	3,147	1,644	1,503
1871	3,988	1,891	2,097
1881	4,410	1,594	2,816
1891	5,482	1,653	3,829
1901	8,442	1,716	6,726
1911	9,680	1,900	7,780

<sup>291</sup> <http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/03/03/05/356-370.htm> (accessed 28th December 2013).

<sup>292</sup> <http://www.histpop.org> (accessed December 2013 and January 2014).

## Appendix 4

### Contemporary descriptions of the parish of Herne and Herne Bay

#### Extract from the Kent section of Pigot's Directory for 1826.<sup>293</sup>

Pigot's directory of Kent for 1826 includes combined entries for Herne Bay and Herne Street and while the exact date of compilation of the content is uncertain, it is reasonable to assume that it was based upon things that were extant in late 1825 or early 1826. As with many directories, each location is introduced by a few descriptive words. In the case of Herne Bay, these provide a good contemporary view of the coastal stretch of the parish.

*Herne Bay is situated on a point on the coast nearly equal in distance between Whitstable and Reculver, six miles from Canterbury, and sixteen from Margate. It has latterly obtained some notice as a place of resort for bathing; the water is clear, and the sea view extremely pleasing; the buildings are good and increasing in number, while the air of tranquillity that pervades this spot, make it preferred by many, to more gay and more tumultuous watering places.*

The entry lists 39 names and of these just eleven can be attributed to Herne Bay.

Rev Loveless	Clergyman
Ann White	Publican at the Dolphin
Thomas Norris	Publican at the Ship
Jonathan Connell	Day School proprietor
William Cooper	Surgeon
Henry Iggulden	Butcher
Miss Taylor	Day School proprietor
Thomas Taylor	Builder and Grocer
Charles and Thorpe	Millers
John Thorpe	Baker
Samuel Watkins	Baker

Although it is only a snap shot, this directory provides a valuable insight into the commercial provision for both visitors and residents. Of those listed, perhaps the two day schools are worthy of further comment. It is unknown where these two schools were or how many pupils they each provided for, but the availability of two schools in such a small community is suggestive of a resident or visiting population of some standing.

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<sup>293</sup> Pigot and Co.'s London and Provincial New Commercial Directory for 1826-7, (London, Pigot and Co. 1826).

## Appendix 5

### Number of Buildings Erected at Herne Bay

These numbers are quoted from Whitehead and are derived from Gough's File Cards compiled c.1950 that now form part of the Herne Bay Historical Records Society's archive collection.<sup>294</sup> The index is useful as it shows the building activity that was occurring at certain points in time and allows a comparison and correlation with the economic and other activity in the town for the same period.

<b><u>5 Year period</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>1820-24</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1825-29</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1830-34</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>1835-39</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>1840-44</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>1845-49</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1850-54</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1855-59</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1860-64</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1865-69</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>1870-74</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>1875-79</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>1880-84</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>1885-89</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>1890-94</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>1895-99</b>	<b>139</b>

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<sup>294</sup> Whitehead, p. 75.