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NOTES FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS  
OF MAIDSTONE.

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THERE are few better ways of studying the history of a town or village than through the medium of the parish registers. The adversity or prosperity of the community are in these unpretentious pages faithfully depicted, and a careful examination of them will shew how and when the quiet progress of contented life was from time to time interrupted by the scourge of war, fire, pestilence or famine.

The Maidstone Registers, which commence in the year 1542 (only four years after the Injunction issued by Thomas Crumwell called these records into existence), illustrate in a somewhat remarkable way the inner life of the inhabitants of the county town during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Marriage Registers from 1542—1753 were transcribed by the late Rev. J. Cave-Browne, and were printed in 1901, after that gentleman's death, by Messrs. Mitchell and Hughes, our Society's publishers. I shall therefore confine myself to a few specimens of some of the more interesting entries in the Register of Burials. Amongst these may be enumerated: The ravages of the plague, which carried off about 500 of the inhabitants of a town of barely 4,000 people, between 1626 and 1668; the influx of a large Dutch population, who took up their residence in the borough when banished from the Netherlands at the beginning of the seventeenth century; the scourge of small-pox, which was especially virulent in 1714, when in a few months no less than thirty-five children died; the advent of Hanoverian and French soldiers in 1756, thirty of whom died and were buried in the town; and the riot in the

gaol in 1765, ending in the murder of the Governor and others by Italian prisoners.

But perhaps the most remarkable entries of burials are those of children designated by no name whatever, but simply called "chrisome," "chrysom," or "crizome," *e.g.*, "a crizome, d. of M<sup>r</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Bell," "a crizome, s. of M<sup>r</sup> John Smaley." A very large number of these entries appear in the registers. It has been suggested the expression meant a child who had been privately baptized, and who had died before being brought to church; but some people interpret the term "chrysom" as an unchristened baby, but I am disposed to think this definition can hardly be maintained, since effigies of chrisomers are occasionally found in churches, which would hardly have been placed there in the case of an unbaptized child.

The following extracts from the registers may perhaps be of some interest, as shewing the quaint mode of entry. It may also be mentioned that at the close of each year the registers were signed not only by the curate or minister, but by four wardens, and sometimes by four or two sidesmen also:—

- |      |         |  |
|------|---------|--|
| 1579 | June 21 | Magdalen, wyfe of Jacobe van den Busche.   |
| 1583 |         | Kateryn d. of fforlke Peys.  |
| 1589 | Mch. 18 | Tryphena d. of Agnes Loder, wedow, base borne.   |
| 1593 | Nov. 22 | Henrie Collier, a prisoner.  |
| 1594 | Feby. 3 | M <sup>r</sup> Thomas beale one of the Jurats.   |
|      | Mch. 12 | Richard S. of black Johane.  |
|      | May 15  | Joyce wif of giles van de vern.  |
|      | Sep. 9  | gertrod, wife of peeter yong dockman.  |
|      |         |  |
| 1595 | Dec. 23 | Margret d. of cristopher Mason.  |
|      | 26      | Elzabeth d. of Rogger hall.  |
|      | 26      | Margret d. of John Buds.   |
|      | 27      | John s. of John cristian.  |
|      | 25      | ffrancis spratt, gent <sup>n</sup> & prisoner in the Gaol.                                     |
| 1596 | Ap. 22  | Weddow Bowder, a flemming.   |
|      | Aug. 5  | M <sup>r</sup> John Asheley Esquyer M <sup>r</sup> of her M <sup>a</sup> iesties Jewell howse, |

- 1612 May 3 Roger darbe, his yeares was 4 skore & ten yeares.  
 Aug. 30 Maister Thomas Lannes gentilman from the Mote.
- 1616 Ap. 6 Jakamine van Brugen, wife of John Van brugen.  
 June 15 John Patchinge, laborer of Speldherst, executed  
 for murther.  
 June 15 William Welfad, executed for stealinge of a horse  
 and buried in our churchyard.  
 Aug. 10 Avis Comslech, widdowe ætatis 102.
- 1617 May 30 John Snatt common cryer of Maidstone.  
 July 20 Sara Huggines, an old maid.  
 Sep. 22 John Dukket, soldier of St Margetts in West-  
 minster neere London & came for his pension  
 & fell sicke & heere died.
- 1618 Nov. 23 Mr James ffranklin the ouldest Jurate & oulde  
 man aboute the age of 4 skore & 12 yeares.
- 1619 Sep. 19 Peter dillorn Mr of Artes in Corpus Christy  
 Colledge in Chambridg a minister & preacher  
 licenced died in coming to Maidstone.
- 1620 Oct. 15 Robert Carr Mr of Artes a reverend preacher,  
 minister of All Saints Maydstone.
- 1625 June 25 Anne Nash of the age of a hundred & six yeares.
- 1626 Ap. 15 James s. of Samuell Goff.  
 Thomas s. of Thomas Ottaway of the plague.
- 1631 Mch. 30 Mary d. of Mas Robert Barrell Curate of Mayd-  
 ston.  
 Nov. 12 the mayd servant of Lady Brocke.
- 1633 Sep. 25 Gyles Clarke a Dutchman.
- 1638 Nov. 16 A Stranger whose name we know not who dyed  
 upon the way being very poore.
- 1639 Feby. 12 Margaret d. of George Curteisse, gent., a Virgine.
- 1664 Dec. 24 Katherine d. of Boden Whiden a dutchman.
- 1677 July 5 John Davis, Rector of Otham & Minister of  
 Maidstone.
- 1681 May 20 Jacob s. of Jacob L<sup>d</sup> Astley Baron of Reading.
- 1686 Jan. 31 John Keyzer, dutch, in English Emperor [*sic*].
- 1688 Nov. 20 An unknowne straing man out of Bridwell.
- 1690 Sep. 21 Humfrey Lynde, minister of Maidstone.
- 1691 Sep. 29 Thomas Gilbert, prisoner who hanged himself.
- 1692 Mch. 3 Robert Marsh, Master of Bridwell.

[Four Wardens and four Sidesmen here sign the Register.]

- 1692 July 21 The Lady Astley.
- 1693 Ap. 22 John Robinson, Lancelott Robinson & Paul  
Timsland Malefactors.
- 1694 Feby.16 Thomas Haléy, shott to death for deserting the  
colours.
- 1701 W<sup>m</sup> Monckton.
- 1711 May 9 M<sup>r</sup> Gilbert Innes Minister of Maidstone.
- 1712 Aug. 9 Josias Woodward D.D. Minister of Maidstone.  
[NOTE.—The founder of the Blue Coat Schools  
in Maidstone.]
- 1756 May 12 Francis Dordelin one of the french prisoners.
- 1757 Feby.15 Mary Maidstone a Foundling.
- 1765 Aug. 10 John Stevens keeper of the Gaol murdered by  
Simon Pingano.  
John Fletcher murdered by Andrew Benevenuto  
on Wednesday Aug. 7.
- 1766 Feby.15 The Hon. Shovell Marsham s. of the R<sup>t</sup> Honble.  
Lord Romney & Priscilla his wife.
- 1768 Oct. 27 George Richards a black from Affrica.