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## HASTED IN PERSPECTIVE

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One hundred years after the foundation of our Society, Dr. Felix Hull contributed to this journal an article on *Kent Historiography*, which included these words (*Arch. Cant.*, lxx (1956) 221): 'As the days of Hasted and his predecessors become more and more remote, the works remain as monuments of scholarship but the authors become less vivid both as men and as historians.' It is the aim of this brief contribution to the hundredth issue to arrest or even perhaps reverse this process so far as concerns Edward Hasted.

When Dr. Hull observes (*ibid.*, 227) that the footnotes to Hasted's work testify to the quality of his researches, he must be referring to the first (folio) edition of the *History*; there are relatively few such notes in the second edition, the one with which the public is now familiar through the reprint of 1974. In this writer's opinion, the second edition cannot be regarded as Hasted's unaided work; style and vocabulary and subject matter reveal new hands rectifying what were seen as the faults of the folio.

Hasted was, even by the standards of his own day, an old-fashioned writer, and already in the first edition, his antique spellings and over-use of capital letters had often been corrected by Simmons, the printer. He made an excessive use of footnotes which, besides revealing (or sometimes concealing) his sources were used as devices for incorporating in the book after-acquired information without his having to rewrite the text. There are even footnotes to footnotes, as at Smeeth and Hothfield, and footnotes which give an alternative version parallel to the main text, as at Benenden and St. Stephen's.

Whoever re-edited the book for the second edition did a useful service by incorporating most of the factual footnotes into the main text, but a disservice by leaving out the great majority of those which named Hasted's authorities. On the credit side, the book was made more readable, partly by supplying Kent liberally with spreading oaks, cludgy earth, and meandering silver streams, many conspicuous

objects and a few good stories. On the debit side, the editor dwelt exaggeratedly on the dreary and unpleasant aspects of many parts of the county, and trimmed most of the lists of incumbents, sheriffs, M.P.s *et al.* of all the entries prior to about 1660. Approximately one-third of Hasted's historical and family matter was (rightly or wrongly) eliminated. Since we cannot see Hasted in perspective without knowing all there is to know about his methods and sources we must go to the first edition, which is indubitably his own work, and which has the footnotes that give his authorities.

What were the background, education, character and abilities of the would-be historian, and how did he come to undertake his huge task? He was from a family described by one writer as pseudo-gentry – his grandfather had been a tradesman – though he was ambitious and pushful. He had no professional connection with historical records, nor had any of his forebears; he went to Eton, but not to a university. To overcome this latter deficiency he sought the company of 'distinguished characters in the antiquarian line,' to quote his own words; his university was the Society of Antiquaries. He considered himself a 'man of fortune,' but his 'little patrimony' as he termed it, of freeholds and leaseholds in the Rochester and Sittingbourne area was inadequate for his pretensions, and he began to mortgage it before he was forty. Later, under pressure of events, he seems to have resorted to transactions of questionable honesty. Even in his dealings with his friends he was capable of prevarication, and they complained that he neglected them once he had got what he wanted from them. Yet, on all matters concerning the *History* he displayed a phenomenal industry, a stoical obstinacy, and a noble persistence of effort.

He himself describes the genesis of his plan in the preface to the first volume of the folio. He became acquainted with Dr. Littleton, Bishop of Carlisle, Dr. Ducarel and Thomas Astle, and 'Assisted and encouraged by their kind friendship, the first thoughts of carrying on (my) collections on a more extensive plan, and of digesting them afterwards, with a view of publication, were first imbibed by me.'

His collections, then, are the starting point of his undertaking. In addition to a library of printed books (they included a copy of *Weever's Sepulchral Monuments* which this writer has seen), he had his manuscripts – a modest 100 or so at their highest number – and a good half of them of little or no relevance to the history of Kent. Whilst they contained a mass of information, they afforded but a flimsy foundation for the new project; indeed Hasted tells us that had he appreciated its magnitude he would not have undertaken it. In another passage of his Preface he confesses that 'these volumes are the greatest part of them, a compilation from the labours of learned

men, which have been already published.' The claim, in the substituted preface to the second edition, that the *History* was founded on original research proves only that Hasted did not write that preface.

The model for a county history had been provided by Sir William Dugdale with his *Warwickshire* (1656), and followed by Sir Henry Chauncey's *Hertfordshire* (1700) and others. Hasted had no hesitation in taking these two as his guides. For the matter, he used Thomas Philipot's *Villare Cantianum* as a framework, and also to supply some of the infilling; we note that the manors he selects for his account are largely those mentioned by Philipot, arranged usually in the same order. Hasted's manuscripts contained, predominantly, pedigrees and heraldic matter, including more than one copy of the 1619 *Visitation of Kent* by John Philipot, Somerset Herald, and the same antiquary's *Church Notes taken in Kent*. Other of Hasted's manuscripts were, significantly, a three-volume index in his hand of Harris's *History of Kent* and a continuation down to 1768 of Philipot's *Vilare* in two volumes which latter are tantalisingly missing from the collection in the British Library. Significant indeed is the part played in Kentish historiography by the elder Philipot; the record of his heraldic visitation of 1619 is far and away the most frequently quoted of such reports; his industry supplied the materials for his son's *Villare Cantianum*; his *Church Notes in Kent* are perhaps less well known, but of great interest and value, and when one searches the Lansdowne manuscripts for material used by Hasted one finds a substantial batch of manuscripts likewise collected by John Philipot.

To return to Hasted, no doubt his methods would evolve as the work progressed, but in 1770, coinciding with his move of residence to Canterbury, there came not mere evolution but a new start. Two years after he had told a correspondent that the *History* was virtually complete, he must have suffered a profound change of mind, for he embarked on a colossal programme of new reading which was to put the appearance of his first volume back for another eight years. By this time the information gleaned from his 'collections' was vastly exceeded by the mass of facts noted from printed books, newspapers, other men's manuscripts, visits, interviews, correspondence and innumerable other sources. Amongst the books far the most important were the historical works in the Cathedral Library at Canterbury. Many antiquaries lent their own manuscripts; they included the Brett family at Wye, and Dr. Jacobs at Faversham.

The central records of the Chancery, Exchequer and other national archives were available in theory, but difficult and expensive of access in practice; to counterbalance this disadvantage, many and various manuscript extracts were in circulation to supplement the limited

amount of published material. These manuscripts Hasted used freely; he acknowledges specifically his debt to the work of Cyriak Pettit (*d.* 1591), feodary of the county of Kent, who lived at Colkins, near Brenley Corner at Faversham. The famous antiquary Dr. Thorpe of Rochester possessed many manuscript extracts from central archives relating to Kent. His papers found their way eventually to the Society of Antiquaries, but his son of the same name first used them, and in correspondence mentions having lent his manuscripts to Hasted. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that the historian had the use of Thorpe Senior's collection; it is noteworthy that one part of it, a Book of Aids of the time of Edward III has many items which coincide exactly with passages in Hasted's text. Incidentally, Thorpe's manuscripts included one entitled 'Out of a Booke of Mr. Hadds which he had out of Mr. Pettit's Booke Feodary of Kent.' Another source of anonymous authorship survives as Add. 5483; a further example is the compilation listed by Hasted as E XIII now, alas, missing.

It has been asserted that Hasted personally visited every parish. Certainly he left seventeen field notebooks recording the results of such visits, but they cover less than half of the parishes, and in the area described in volume four of the first edition, the extreme eastern part of the county, much of the on-the-spot inspection must, surely, have been deputed to William Boteler, William Boys, and John Lyon, or to Hasted's other informants, because of the historian's exile in France.

Hasted's methods of processing his raw materials were similar for his manuscripts and for the gleanings from printed books and other items inscribed in his commonplace books; he broke the information down and assigned it to the respective parishes or places. Attached to the list of his manuscripts is an index sectionalised parish by parish; his commonplace books are similarly arranged. Philipot's *Villare* does not figure in these indexes; his work, already arranged alphabetically, was being used as the basis, and Harris had his own separate index.

As the work progressed, word spread of Hasted's activities and the worthies of Kent bombarded the would-be historian with voluminous intelligence concerning themselves, their families and their possessions; the impression one receives is of a large section of the county engaged in a co-operative exercise with Hasted as *rapporteur*. The question arose as to whether the antecedents of newcomers to the county were part of its history. Brooke, Somerset Herald, demurred at the inclusion of the pedigree of Sir Joseph Banks. The Herons, newly transferred from Newark to Chilham, dictated aggressively to Hasted the matter that they wished to be inserted, amounting to some eight columns of print and a special genealogical plate. By the

time the second edition was printed the Herons had gone from Chilham Castle, and most of the eight columns of print, and the special plate went with them. The scope of the history of Kent thus depended on the chance sale of an important property.

In his *History* Hasted refers to himself as 'the Editor,' and the word reveals his approach to his task. His function was to seek out the passages in his sources which gave the facts, and string them together, a piece from here, a piece from there. He never attempted (as far as the writer has been able to discover) to synthesise what he found and restate the result in his own words. On the contrary, he often reproduced the sources verbatim.

The effect of these efforts by Hasted and his informants, extending over many years, was to produce a book of immense bulk containing such an exhaustive mass of detail as to benumb the critical faculties, both from sheer difficulty of absorption and from reluctance to judge adversely the product of such a prodigious expenditure of time and effort. Nevertheless, some of the shortcomings are notorious. Hasted's warmest admirers admit that he had no style; this could scarcely be expected in a work of compilation and *verbatim* quotations. It would be as well to expect a uniform style from a book of quotations! We have, however, four pieces of prose written by Hasted without benefit of authorities to copy, namely the prefaces to the respective volumes of his first edition. Of these that preceding Volume I is far the longest and most interesting. The style is sound and unpretentious, the tone modest, and the matter useful.

Generally recognised is the book's limited outlook, with its concentration on the descents of the manors and the genealogy of their owners. It has been well said that Hasted's work is a history of Kent's squires rather than of Kent. Moreover, even within its limited sphere it is highly and arbitrarily selective. Manors were doubtless the basic unit of land *tenure* in the eleventh century; they had minimal importance in the eighteenth by which time *ownership* of land was the paramount conception, and the rights of the lord of the manor were often limited to the receipt of a small quit-rent payable by the freehold owners of land within the manor. By concentrating so narrowly on the manors, Hasted turned his back on numbers of other estates and families. William Boteler complained that Hasted had not mentioned a substantial property in Eastry, or its owner, who had subscribed to the *History*. At the end of his account of Ash, near Sandwich, Hasted gives in a footnote the names of a number of properties in the parish not otherwise mentioned. Boteler told Hasted of seven more, which the historian dismissed as 'some few others.' When Mr. H.B. Thomas wrote of Birchley and the Randalphs of Biddenden (*Arch. Cant.*, lxxviii (1954), 62) he found that

there was no mention of this important sixteenth-century property in Hasted's *History*.

It was perhaps only natural that Hasted should pick out for description or discussion those features about which material was not too difficult to find. Thus he was rather proud of his delineation of the boundaries of the Hundreds, but made no similar attempt on the parishes. The Hundreds gave him difficulty enough, and the result may not be totally accurate, but to tackle the parishes would have been a monumental task, so he did not attempt it.

Sometimes Hasted's selectivity is misleading; for example, he relates that a court is held for this or that manor, but fails to add 'every seven' or perhaps even 'every ten' years, though in possession of that information. In fact, some of these august tribunals were conducted in a field, before adjourning to the nearest inn.

Hasted has little to say that would interest the student of social history, politics, or economics, or about the development of agricultural methods and communications. His book has practically nothing in common with a modern county history, such as Mr. F.W. Jessup's *Kent*, even less with the *Victoria County History*; it has no resemblance to Furley's able *History of the Weald*. But all this is understandable; in the 1760s when Hasted was planning his book, the conception of a county history was as stated above, largely influenced by the century-old precedent of Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, and also in Hasted's case by the work of Dugdale's follower Chauncey. It would never occur to an unimaginative writer to do other than follow those accepted guides.

Faith in Hasted's accuracy usually varies in inverse proportion to the time spent in studying his work. Most regular students find him prone to careless slips which may cause them inconvenience and additional research. Many of these errors have occurred in copying. It would be unrealistic to expect perfection from a man who seems to have worked on his own at breakneck speed, and who did not have his copies 'examined,' i.e., checked by two persons. In the Thorpe manuscripts at the Society of Antiquaries, it is noticeable that many copies of manuscripts are marked as having been examined 'word by word' and signed by those responsible. Nothing like this is to be found amongst Hasted's papers. To many readers the accuracy of the *History* will be of only secondary importance. Once they find that Hasted claimed no originality for his work, they will see it as a vast compilation of historical material rather than a history as we should understand the term to-day; it serves as an excellent finger-post for those approaching for the first time some aspect of the Kentish story, and for this purpose correctness of detail is not the first essential. There are, not unexpectedly in such a vast work, mistakes which are

greater than mere casual inaccuracy. One wholesale series of errors arose from his use of transcripts (without admitting the fact) for his references to the public records. The results of his reliance on a batch of transcripts of which he made copies (now Add. 5483 in the British Library) are quite shattering. There were scores of entries which Hasted wrongly assumed rose from the escheat rolls, but which in fact were from the Patent and Originalia Rolls. He dutifully reproduced the matter of these entries with the incomplete references he found in the transcript, citing them as being from the escheat rolls: As escheat roll references they made no sense, as Henry Drake discovered a century or more ago when he tried to use them for his history of Blackheath Hundred. There are scores of instances of this error.

One has some sympathy with the historian, though why he should try to give the impression that he had consulted the original records and not a transcript one can only guess. In his Preface, Hasted speaks of searching the escheat rolls 'made up from the Escheator's returns to the Exchequer,' and no doubt thought that his transcript was made from these rolls. This is a good example of the danger of 'a little learning.' Hasted's description of the rolls was technically correct, but unfortunately for him, the usage of antiquaries (technically incorrect) was to apply the term 'escheat rolls' to the Inquisitions Post Mortem held on the decease of a tenant-in-chief. It seems that the historian never discovered this elementary fact.

Whether he has style or not, Hasted writes with considerable aplomb in a manner that somehow conveys the image of a writer mysteriously endowed with superior knowledge based on vast original research. To say this is not to disparage him but merely to describe the impressions created by his method of presentation, impressions which tend to distance the reader from the mind of the historian. But if one can penetrate Hasted's actual sources the image and the mystery vanish. We may take a couple of experimental examples. First, the account of the descent of the manor of Tonbridge. Hasted rehearses in a most learned manner the vicissitudes of the manor and its holders from soon after the Conquest down to Tudor times. It is something of a let-down to find that the account is copied, with little variation (except for the omission of the parts that do not directly affect Tonbridge) from the articles on Clare, de Monthemer, Gloucester, Furnival, Audley and Stafford in Dugdale's *Baronage*. There are only minor additions from other sources, and they serve mainly to camouflage the basic reliance on Dugdale. It is all very simple.

To proceed to the second example, an impressive feature of the *History* is the large number of detailed references to the records of the Augmentation Office, an agency concerning itself with the affairs



of lands taken by the Crown from the dissolved monasteries. Again the mystique surrounding Hasted is dissipated when we discover that these were obtained without the least effort on his part except for the labour of copying. In 1764, Thomas Astle wrote to him: 'I am glad to hear that you make such great progress in your *History of Kent*. Sir Joseph and I have been no less assiduous at the Augmentation Office – Our Calendars (which I hope you will take the benefit of) will amaze you.'

Astle's calendars are still in use at the Public Record Office, and Hasted certainly 'had the benefit of them' as his footnotes show. That the information came from Astle's calendars is never acknowledged.

The use of transcripts to provide escheat roll-references (correct or otherwise) has been mentioned. Another common source of these references were the books from which Hasted copied his accounts; if they had escheat roll references he took them over. Take for instance the first three paragraphs concerning the manor of Beckenham (Vol. I (1st Edn.), 80); they are all borrowed from Philipot. For the first paragraph Hasted duly quotes Philipot as his authority. For the second and third he quotes the respective escheat rolls for the year in question, without mention of Philipot. Yet the escheat roll references are merely those given by Philipot.

Hasted had his good points. His indexes to the first edition are of outstanding completeness and excellence. Indeed, to a serious student the whole work is in a sense a gigantic index to the various possible sources for historical facts affecting Kent in Hasted's day. Again, he was sufficiently honest to preserve letters which showed him in an unfavourable light; this is particularly true of William Boteler's highly critical correspondence. Without these two advantages to the researcher it would not have been possible to uncover many interesting facts including some that are a little detrimental to Hasted's reputation. But at least they have helped us to compose a portrait which shows him 'warts and all.'

Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges' well-known uncomplimentary remarks about Hasted's character and appearance need not be repeated here. One can usually receive some sort of an impression of a man from his correspondence with his friends and we have a number of letters written by Hasted to Thomas Astle and William Boteler, and by them and other acquaintances (notably John Thorpe, junior) to him. Hasted's letters give little away, since they are concerned chiefly with the business of his *History*. Once or twice he chaffs his correspondents about their common attachment 'to the Ladies.' He tries to detach Sir Joseph Ayloff from 'the charms of the British Museum to those of the beautiful lasses of Kent,' but usually he sticks strictly to business. For their part his friends assume him to be

interested in the gossip of the town, and invite him to take part in relaxations such as fly-fishing.

During the late 1770s and the 1780s Hasted was busy making provision for his large family, seven of whom survived infancy; he seems to have done reasonably well for them. The financial debacle of 1790 removed all the gaiety from his life; after that the light personal touches disappear from his correspondence; his preoccupation with the writing and publication of the last volume of the folio, and the issue of the second edition, is varied only by occasional distressful misunderstandings and recriminations.

A question that has never been answered is why the historian of Kent was allowed to languish in a debtors' prison for years when, as events proved, a determined effort to sort out his affairs could have secured his release. No such move was made until seven years had elapsed; still less was there any attempt (so far as we have heard) by well-wishers to raise the fairly modest sum required to discharge the debts. When John Speight Harvey applied his mind to the Hasted financial imbroglio he was advising Hasted's frustrated creditors, the Davies' and the Ruggs, but the upshot was Hasted's speedy release. Why was there this delay before anyone took the initiative to grapple with the disorder of Hasted's finances? One can only suppose that, in spite of the way the bigwigs of Kent had fawned upon Hasted when they were anxious to be mentioned in his book, nevertheless when the crisis came the historian found himself friendless outside a small circle of intimates. Was he thought to be blameworthy for the misfortunes in which he had involved other unsuspecting victims as well as himself? Was his affair with Mary Jane Town held against him? In the eighteenth century this latter would be surprising – the public rallied round enthusiastically to raise the money to pay the debts of the profligate Wilkes who, like Hasted, tasted the hospitality of the King's Bench prison.

Yet, Hasted must have been held in some esteem. Boteler and Boys in particular continued to correspond with him after his misfortunes had descended upon him, just as if nothing had happened. Astle and Lord Radnor did not abandon him, and the latter eventually found for him his 'most desirable asylum' at Corsham.

His amour with Mary Jane Town, and his tender regard for his little servant Harriet Brewster, as expressed in his will, show a new side of a complex character. His anxiety for Harriet Brewster is pathetic, and it gave this writer some satisfaction to discover – in the course of the investigation into the lawsuits concerning Hasted's former estates – that she married and became Mrs. Samuel Taylor.

It is at Corsham that we have our last glimpse of Edward Hasted, happy in his modest position, glowing with nostalgic pride in the

success of his book, and living in a world of illusion in which he imagined that he had recovered his lost estates. He was still recording in his commonplace book the day-to-day events of the county from which he came, and to which he was never to return.