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A PETTY CONSTABLE'S ACCOUNTS BOOK

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The work of churchwardens and overseers of the poor is well documented in the numerous books of accounts which have survived in Kent. This is not so for constables. When incumbents of parishes in the Diocese of Rochester were asked in 1910 to make a return of parish records in their care, it was reported 'As to Constables' Accounts there is no return of any separate books. The expenses appear to have been charged to the Church Rate'.¹ Within the Diocese of Canterbury, C.E. Woodruff listed in 1922 only three parishes with constables' documents. The records of one, Boughton Malherbe, are held in the Kent Archives Office and those of another, Lower Hardres, are at the Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library; neither include constables' accounts. The records of the third parish, Birchington, remain in parochial custody.² The recent discovery of the accounts book of the petty constable of Offham from 1814 to 1822, therefore, happens to be a unique and fortuitous occurrence.

The role of constable was the most ancient of those concerned with

¹ *Parish Registers and Records in the Diocese of Rochester*, K.A.S., 1912, 31. It is indicative of the long period since the duties of unpaid constables had been taken over by the Kent County Constabulary, formed in 1857, that the Report mistakenly stated that constables' expenses had been charged to the church rate. From 1778 at least constables' expenses had been met out of the poor rate; in Offham the last year in which they were charged to the church rate was 1703 (K.A.O. P274/4/1).

The Guide to the Kent Archives Office, 1st Suppt., 1937-68, and 2nd Suppt., 1969-80, lists 16 parishes with some constables' accounts but, apart from Westwell, where a full year 1821-22 is covered (K.A.O. P390/9/1), the periods are very short and the expenses are usually the cost of attending before Justices and preparing lists of freeholders.

² (Ed.) C. Eveleigh Woodruff, *Canterbury Diocesan Records*, 1922. I am grateful to Mr P.A. Brooks of the Cathedral Archives and Library for information regarding Lower Hadres and Birchington. For Boughton Malherbe, see *Guide to the Kent Archives Office*, *op. cit.*

local administration and of much greater antiquity than that of either overseer of the poor or surveyor of the highways. It had its origin in the duty of every adult male to bear arms for the defence of the realm and the preservation of the peace. The command of the men sworn to arms in each hundred was vested in a Chief or High Constable, who was supported in the townships by petty constables, or 'borshoulders' as they were commonly called in Kent.³ Petty constables were originally appointed in the manorial courts and later by the parishes. Whether the constable was appointed by the court leet or by the vestry, he had to be sworn in by Justices of the Peace sitting in Quarter Sessions or by a neighbouring Justice.

The role of the petty constable was more varied than those of any of his parochial colleagues. In addition to his common law responsibility for the preservation of the peace and the preparation of militia lists, the remaining vestige of his military functions as an officer of the Crown, an increasing burden of police and civil administration was imposed on him by statute. As a conservator of the peace, he had to arrest anyone who had committed a felony or whose conduct was likely to cause a breach of the peace. If a robber or one suspected of robbery fled from his parish, the constable had to raise a hue and cry of the inhabitants in pursuit of the malefactor. He was responsible for enforcing such laws as those against vagrancy, swearing, playing of certain games, defamation of the Sabbath, etc. His duties were discharged under the supervision of the Justices of the Peace upon whom he was required to attend to be sworn in and at their quarter or petty sessions to make reports, present offenders and receive instructions. He might be required to administer punishment and the 'cage', or local lock-up, the stocks, whipping post and other penal instruments were under his care.⁴

³ The title 'titheman, or 'tithingman', was occasionally used in Kent, e.g., Thos. Blake, titheman, was buried at Offham on 1 January, 1792.

⁴ For a description of the origin and duties of constables, see G.H. Tupling, 'Constables' Accounts', *Amateur Historian*, i, 1952-54, 335, *et seq.*, and S. and B. Webb, *The Parish and County*, 1906-29, 1963 edn., 26 *et passim*. The source material for both works appears to consist mainly of the records of large or metropolitan parishes.

The Webbs do not record legislation abolishing the office of constable. Offham may be typical of its demise in England and Wales. The vestry at a meeting held on 20 February, 1873, for the purpose of nominating persons qualified to fill the office of parish constable resolved 'that the appointment was no longer necessary and consequently no list was proposed' (P274/8/2). Unpaid parish constables still survive, however, in the Channel Islands (Mr W.N. Yates, pers. comm.).

A number of these duties and responsibilities are illustrated by Cornelius Kettle's accounts book, which is reproduced below, adopting his own, at times, idiosyncratic spelling.

The High Constable of the hundred was responsible for collecting both national taxes, such as Land Tax, and county rates; this work was usually delegated to petty constables.⁵ In Offham, however, the responsibility lay with the overseers, but the petty constables prepared lists of freeholders (persons eligible to serve on grand juries and to vote in parliamentary elections). The military responsibilities of constables had shrunk by the eighteenth century to compiling militia lists. With the cessation of hostilities against France in 1815 the need for these passed and no militia lists were prepared in Offham in the period 1814-22.

Before 1778 constables were entitled to be reimbursed only certain expenses, such as those incurred in attending a Justice of the Peace, conveying persons committed to gaol and enforcing the vagrancy laws. From 1778 a constable could be reimbursed all expenses incurred on purposes recognised by law and he was required to present accounts to the overseers; if the expenses were approved, he was reimbursed out of the poor rate.⁶

Cornelius Kettle was appointed constable for the parish of Offham at the advanced age of 54 in October 1814. Offham was then a small rural parish of c. 700 acres situated in the hundred of Upper Larkfield in west Kent with a population of 243 in 1811 and 274 in 1821. His appointment followed the death of Nicholas Wray, a farmer, who had been constable since 1794. Nicholas Wray was a son of George Wray of Snodland and Mary Addison of Offham, and his maternal uncle, Friend Addison senior (1740-1821), was constable from 1790 to 1794. Friend Addison senior was by far the largest farmer in Offham and he was also a considerable land owner. His son, Friend Addison junior (1766-1826), had become lord of the manor of Godwell in Offham through his marriage in 1790 to an heiress, Ann Smith, of Court Lodge, Offham. Other constables in the eighteenth century had been farmers, and it appears that the office, like that of churchwarden and overseer, had been passed round the leading inhabitants of the parish.⁷

⁵ G.H. Tupling, *op. cit.*, 338.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ An observation by S. and B. Webb, *op. cit.*, 18, that the office of constable was unpopular and abandoned, where possible, to humble folk or filled by a substitute, may not be generally applicable to small rural parishes; it is certainly not true of Offham in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The known facts about the life of Cornelius Kettle are few. He was baptised at Offham on 13 January, 1760, the base-born son of Elizabeth Kettle (1720–1812), who had been housekeeper to Francis Hodges, a maltster of Offham, until his death in 1754. She received a bequest of £50 under the will of Francis Hodges, which was proved at the Archdeacon's Court at Rochester on 27 November, 1754.⁸ She is the first Kettle to have been recorded in the parish registers of Offham. It is not known where she was born, but she must have acquired a place of settlement in Offham as she was allowed to bear her child there. Furthermore, no bastardy order was taken out against the child's anonymous father so it seems likely that he was a man of substance who was willing and able to support both mother and child. Young Cornelius was even provided with quite a good education; his standard of literacy was above average and in fact superior to that of most of the churchwardens and overseers in the parish in the eighteenth century.

Cornelius Kettle married twice. His first wife was Martha Rosam of Offham whom he married in 1781. There were four children by this marriage including a son, John, who became a sergeant in the Coldstream Guards and was buried at Offham in 1809, aged 25. Cornelius had eight children by his second wife, Mary West of Offham, whom he married in 1797. The fourth child was a son, George, who, as will be seen later, was responsible for the preservation of his father's accounts book.

Two of his residences in Offham are known. In 1783, he occupied a cottage and a half acre of land next to the western end of the Green.⁹ He probably left to reside in a cottage at Tower Hill, about half a mile from the village (this cottage is now known as 'Highbank'). He occupied this cottage in 1841 and 1851 when he was described in the Census Returns as an agricultural labourer and he was in receipt of 'parish pay' (outdoor poor relief) in the latter year.

He was buried at Offham on 3 December, 1854, aged 94, his wife Mary having preceded him on 13 February, 1853, aged 76.

The Webbs, *op. cit.*, 69, also claim that the office became purely nominal in this period. The evidence of Cornelius Kettle's accounts does not support this statement. Later in the nineteenth century constables' duties became less exacting and were confined largely to moving on vagrants, as the professional constabulary assumed responsibility for law and order, and the holders tended to be humbler men than farmers, such as tradesmen.

⁸ K.A.O. DRa/PW 12.

⁹ K.A.O. U55 M89–103. This land was an encroachment on the 'Waste' (village green) in the late seventeenth century. The site is now occupied by Hayes Cottages in which the cottage occupied by Cornelius Kettle is incorporated.

It is not known precisely how Cornelius Kettle earned his living. Although described in the Census Returns of 1841 and 1851, when he was respectively 81 and 91 years of age, as an agricultural labourer, it seems unlikely that an ordinary farm worker would have been made constable, so one can only speculate about the nature of his occupation. Two clues exist that he was not a common farm labourer. In January 1821, when he was ill for two weeks, he was paid £2 by the overseer.¹⁰ This was considerably more than a farm worker's wage of 2s. a day. In 1851, as has been seen, he was in receipt of parish pay or outdoor relief. The accounts book contains a copy in his own hand of the following remarkable notice. 'Those who receive parish pay are paid at my house every Thirsday (*sic*) by the reliveing (*sic*) officer June 19, 1851. C. Kettle.' His house was a long way for the other recipients to attend, whether or not Cornelius himself acted as relieving officer; he clearly remained an influential and privileged member of the community until the end of his life.

Census enumerators may have not enquired closely about persons' occupations. Offham lay in a heavily wooded area but, apart from a hurdle and sheep-gate maker, no-one is identified before 1881 as deriving his livelihood from the woods.¹¹ It would appear that all who worked on the land and were not farmers were classed under the general description of agricultural labourer. George Kettle, son of Cornelius, is a case in point. Numerous entries in the accounts book of field measurements in Offham and the surrounding area, which were made by George in 1852-55, demonstrate that he was a skilled surveyor. When he emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1856 he took his surveyor's chain with him.¹² His occupation in the 1851 Census, however, is shown as that of agricultural labourer.

It is possible that Cornelius Kettle was a woodman for most of his working life. His cottage at Tower Hill was adjacent to Blaise Wood (245 acres) and Roundling Wood (95 acres) which were part of the great tract of woodland, the Hurst Woods, now called Mereworth Woods.¹³ If he was a woodman, he would have enjoyed more

¹⁰ K.A.O. P274/11/4.

¹¹ Two sawyers were included in the 1881 Census.

¹² Personal communication by Mrs. A.M. Sievert, a descendant. She also states that according to a family tradition George Kettle was a skilled carpenter; a walnut table, which he made, is still a much prized heirloom.

¹³ Blaise Wood was then a detached part of Aylesford parish; it was grubbed up c. 1953. See n. 27 below regarding its association with an important tithe case. Roundling, or Rounden, Wood was also known as Abbey Wood as it was in the possession of Malling Abbey until its dissolution.

security and greater prosperity than a farm worker, which could explain why he was considered a fit and proper person to serve as constable.¹⁴

The accounts book is bound in reddish leather and is 4 in. by 7 in. in size. Part of the front cover is missing but the book is otherwise well preserved and a cherished possession of Cornelius Kettle's American descendants.¹⁵ The constable's expenses occupy the first 14 pages covering the period October 1814 to April 1822. The entries were probably written up from rough notes as those for 1817 are not all in chronological order.

The accounts are followed by three religious tracts or homilies, 'The Contemplation of Heaven', 'Earth is not the Christian's Home' and a meditation on the nature of Christianity, and there is also a short poem 'The Rose without a Thorn', all apparently in the handwriting of Cornelius. These anonymous works provide an insight into his religious beliefs; he was clearly a devout Christian with sympathies which were strongly evangelical.

The next entries are some hop-picking tables and the field measurements, already referred to, apparently in the handwriting of George Kettle. He was born in 1806 and emigrated to the U.S.A. in the vessel 'Wm Tapscott', landing at New York on 18 February, 1856, according to a note in the book. He was accompanied by his wife Mary, six of his seven surviving children and his future son-in-law, Henry Wells. Included in his luggage was his father's accounts book, thereby preserving it for posterity.

A circular pit, diameter 7-8 ft., has been found in the garden close to the house (pers.comm. by Mr J. Hayes, the present owner). This pit does not conform with the traditional size and shape of a saw-pit, which resembled a churchyard grave (O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, London 1986, 355); it is, therefore, doubtful whether it can be cited as evidence for the occupation of the cottage by woodmen in the nineteenth century.

¹⁴ Most woodland in Kent consisted, then as now, of coppiced plantations. Coppices were harvested every 12-15 years and the underwood used as hop poles, fencing and fuel. The demand was great; e.g., thousands of poles were needed every 3-4 years for quite a small hop garden. Coppicing is carried out today by independent contractors who make tenders for plantations (or parts of plantations) at auction. It is probable that in the early nineteenth century landowners undertook the work of coppicing themselves, employing hired labour. The craft of woodman has always been a skilled one and those practising it would have enjoyed a higher rate of pay and more regular employment than ordinary farm labourers.

¹⁵ I am grateful to Mrs. Marion Sievert and Mrs. Dorothy Laird, great-great-granddaughters of Cornelius Kettle, for bringing the accounts book to my attention, describing its appearance, providing a photostat copy of its contents and permitting its publication. The photostat copy is at the K.A.O., Maidstone.

George Kettle's wife Mary may have been responsible for some notes at the end of the book, made in 1860–62, recording the births of calves and a colt, evidence that her husband had already become a farmer in his adopted country,¹⁶ and a recipe for cough syrup.

The accounts provide a nearly complete record of Cornelius Kettle's activities as constable – a few names and other details are missing. At first a meticulous record of his expenses is included but, from 1817 onwards, the expense column is left blank for an increasing number of entries. The omissions may have arisen from an awareness that his claims were open to criticism by the overseers. An exact comparison between his figures and the sums allowed by the overseers is not possible, but it is evident that some of his claims were disallowed wholly or in part. The total expenditure recorded by Cornelius Kettle is £18 5s. 9d., including £1 8s. on 10 June, 1818, and 23 March 1819; only £16 14s. 11½d. was reimbursed by the overseers.¹⁷ Evidence of some friction between him and the overseers is suggested by an entry in their accounts on 1 September, 1816, when 'the overseer and his two assistants attended a sitting (of the Justice) against Kettle'.¹⁸ The trouble blew over and he continued in office for six more years.

It is a feature of the manner in which he carried out his duties that he presented only one offender at the West Kent Quarter Sessions at Maidstone. This was William Woodger who was committed in March 1819 for trial at the assize for an assault on his wife.¹⁹ The case appears to have caused a considerable stir in the village for Cornelius took one of his daughters when he attended the assize at Maidstone in June. All other indictable offences, including another where the offender, Thomas Blake, was committed to the assize, were taken either to Petty Sessions or before an individual Justice. Even when Cornelius was himself the victim of an assault at the village inn, the 'Red Lion', in September 1820, a very serious offence as he was the local representative of the Crown, he did not present his assailants at Quarter Sessions and gave them the alternatives 'to defray the Expences attending (*sic*) the same or at my option to be Imprisoned'.

¹⁶ George Kettle became a farmer in Wisconsin, U.S.A., eventually acquiring a farm at Footville. He died in 1898, aged 92, a much respected and honoured member of his community. His son-in-law, Henry Wells, farmed at Plymouth, Wisconsin. He died in 1909 leaving numerous descendants; 125 of them attended the centenary of his wedding in 1956 (Mrs. Marion Sievert, pers. comm.).

¹⁷ K.A.O. P274/11/4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ K.A.O. Q/SBW 77.

They appear to have paid whatever was required of them. Otherwise he seems to have carried out his duties conscientiously and efficiently.

The overseers presented three cases at Quarter Sessions in the period 1814–22.²⁰ One was an order for the legal settlement of a pauper and two were bastardy cases. One can be confident that Cornelius attended one of the bastardy cases, if only in a private capacity, as it concerned his own daughter Frances Kettle. At the midsummer sessions on 12 July, 1821, Alexander Scott of Plumstead was summoned to answer a complaint of the churchwardens and overseers of the poor for Offham 'for begetting her with child'. Frances Kettle's bastard son, James, was baptised at Offham on 2 September, 1821, and she was married to the child's father on 11 January, 1822, in the presence of her parents.

No legal right existed for someone nominated as constable to refuse office or to receive any financial inducement. Nonetheless, it would appear that Cornelius Kettle did in fact receive a few, if trifling, 'perks'. We have seen that when he was ill, he was allowed sick pay by the overseers in excess of the farm worker's average wage. In January 1818, the overseers 'gave Kettle's wife lying in £1' and in January 1820 they paid 'Cornelius Kettle his son being ill £1'. In January 1821, 'when Cornelius Kettle was gone away on parish business' his family was allowed 1s. 2½d. for 'bread bacon and taters (*sic*)', an early example of a subsistence allowance!²¹ Perhaps the greatest benefit conferred on him by the overseers was the determination with which they secured the shot-gun wedding of his daughter Frances and the financial assistance provided in defraying her expenses at Quarter Sessions and in making her a weekly allowance from the birth of her child until her marriage.²²

From the local historian's point of view, it is unfortunate that Cornelius Kettle made such little use of Quarter Sessions. Full records of proceedings at Quarter Sessions have survived whereas those at Petty Sessions either went unrecorded or have have been lost. It would have been interesting to have had more information about some of the incidents mentioned in the accounts book and to have been able to have filled in the blanks where the record is incomplete. Five of these involved the service of summons on the overseers and others, and one was on unspecified parish business. In another three cases, including that in which there was a hue and cry,

²⁰ K.A.O. Q/SBW 72, Epiphany 1818, and K.A.O. Q/SBW 86, Midsummer 1821.

²¹ K.A.O. P274/11/4.

²² *Ibid.*

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the names of the transgressors have been omitted. Subject to these reservations, the accounts book does provide a detailed picture of a constable's duties in a small rural village in the early part of the nineteenth century before the professional constabulary assumed responsibility for law and order.

CORNELIUS KETTLE'S ACCOUNTS BOOK

		£	s.	d.
1814				
Oct 7	Attending the Siting Twice & Paid for Constables appointment ²³	7	0	
	Serving a Sumons on the Overseers on a Case of Sarah Martin	2	0	
Decr 27	Making a Privy Search Self & 3 Men ²⁴	1	7	0
1815				
Jan'y 15	Going with a Man to the Royal Oak on a Pass & Expences on the same ²⁵	4	11	
March 31	Atending & Woman to Wrotham on Pass	0	2	7
May 24	Going to Ightham with a Woman on Pass	0	0	9
	Serving a Warrant on Thos Bowen of Offham & taking him to a Magistrate ²⁶	0	7	6
June 29	Going to Wrotham with Mary Grant on a Vagrant Pass on her Way from Maidstone to Dartford, Expences One Night Lodging	0	0	6
	Victualing	0	1	6
	Conveyance by Horse & Cart & Turnpike	0	3	2
July	Serving a Summons on Jno Sparks on a Case of Wm Paris & Wm Wood & taking them to the Sittings at Malling	0	4	0

²³ A petty constable was selected by the Vestry but had to be sworn in by a Justice of the Peace.

²⁴ Justices in Petty Sessions formulated Standing Orders for the government of overseers including the duty of searching privies in case they concealed vagrants at night time (S. and B. Webb, *op. cit.*, 405). In Offham the work was performed by the constable and may have been regarded as part of his ancient responsibility for 'watch and ward' during the hours of darkness (G.H. Tupling, *op. cit.*, 337). This duty was discontinued in the parish after 1817.

²⁵ Before 1814 an overseer of a parish requiring the removal of a pauper to his place of settlement had personally to escort him to his destination. The pauper had now to be escorted only as far as the next parish on his route (S. and B. Webb, *English Poor Law History*, Pt. I, *The Old Poor Law*, 1927, 314-22). He was provided with a certificate or pass, which entitled him to assistance from overseers, churchwardens and constables.

The 'Royal Oak' inn at Wrotham Heath stands close to an important road junction where the Wrotham Heath - Godstone turnpike (the modern A25) joins the Footscray - Maidstone turnpike (the modern A20). The present building is a replacement of one destroyed by enemy action in the 1939-45 War.

²⁶ Thomas Bowen was the occupier in 1807 of the cottage which Cornelius Kettle had occupied in 1783 (K.A.O. U55 M89-103).

Octr 11	Taking Thos Broad by Warrant to Mr Colb on a Charge of Stealing Heath in Sir Wm Geary's Wood ²⁷	0 7 6
	Fin'd £3 " 1s. " 6d.	
12	Making Freeholders List	0 5 0

²⁷ Thomas Broad (1760–1833) served as overseer in 1802–4, 1815 and 1822 (K.A.O. P274/11/3 and 4). He was one of three manorial tenants of a narrow strip of land, which had been encroached, presumably by the lord of the manor, the Earl of Thanet, on the north side of the village green at the end of the eighteenth century. By 1819, this land had been sub-divided and Thomas Broad was the tenant of a house built on one part (K.A.O. U55 M89–103). His theft of 'heath' in October 1815 may accurately date its construction.

It is probable that 'heath' denoted underwood taken for building purposes rather than heather, which could have been used as fuel only if available in sufficient quantity (O. Rackham, *op. cit.*, 295). Heather occurs in the woodland adjacent to Offham only in minute areas, and it is clear from the size of the fine that the produce stolen was of considerable value.

The cottage became a beerhouse in 1880 with the sign of 'The Woodman' and retains this name, although the beer-house closed c. 1907 when the stabling was converted into a butcher's shop which is still there. (I am indebted to Mr W. Orme for the loan of the deeds of the property.)

Sir William Geary, Bt., was the son of Sir Francis Geary, Bt., Admiral of the Fleet, who through his marriage to Mary Bartholomew had come into the possession of Oxenhoath, West Peckham, and its estate which included 900 acres of woodland. The Great and Little Leybourne Woods (242 acres) are situated in Comp hamlet, then a detached part of Leybourne parish, and are about 1½ miles from Offham (K.A.O. U1823 P13). There can be little doubt that the theft occurred in these woods.

It is ironic that, four years after being charged by Cornelius Kettle for theft, Thomas Broad should have been appointed High Constable of the hundred of Upper Larkfield and thereby became Cornelius Kettle's superior officer (K.A.O. Q/SBW 78).

John Know of Ford Place, Wrotham Heath, a previous owner of Leybourne Woods, was a defendant in the tithe case of *Spateman v. Know* (1710) when he contended successfully that the woods were in the Weald which was common land and therefore tithe-free (*Wood's Tithe Cases*, 525). The appellant, the Rev. Samuel Spateman, rector of Leybourne, thereupon allowed the chapel at Comp to fall into disuse and it soon became a ruin.

A different verdict was reached in a later tithe case in 1815 which concerned Blaise Wood. The appellant was Thomas Stapleton, Lord Despencer, of Mereworth Castle and the defendant was the Reverend Mr Eveleigh, vicar of Aylesford. This case, which began in 1803, aroused considerable interest as the income of no less than twenty Kentish clergymen would be affected by the decision. The case was therefore heard before a special jury at Croydon, Surrey. The judge, Lord Ellenborough, in finding for the defendant, remarked that 'it so happens that not only in Aylesford, but all the circumambient parishes, with the exception of Leybourne, tithe was taken from woodland' (R. Furley, *The Weald of Kent*, London 1874, ii, 639–46). Although the 1815 case established that the Weald extends only as far as the foot of the escarpment of the Chart Hills, on which the Hurst, or Mereworth, Woods stand, the decision of 1710 was not reversed and the woodland in Leybourne, including Comp hamlet, continued to be tithe-free and was still exempt when the Tithe Apportionment Award was made in 1842 (K.A.O. CTR 226 A and B).

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18th	Going to Rochester & Serving a Warrant on James Wells & taking Him to a Magistrate for Arrears of Bastardy, Three Days ²⁸	0 12 0
Decr 13	Passing Mary Harris to Kingsdown 7 miles in Her Way from Hithe to Oxfordshire	0 4 2
1816		
Feby 6	Passing John Walmer from Offham to Kingsdown 7 miles	0 5 0
Feby 28	Passing Mary Grant from Offham to Farningham Eleven miles	0 5 5
March 6	Making a privy search Self & 3 men Atending Sitting	0 7 0
April 1st	Taking John Hugget by Warrant & to the Sitting & detaining him 3 Days	0 10 6
6	Sumoning Wm Goldsmith to a Magistrate on a Charge of Drunkenness Fin'd 5 shillings ²⁹	0 2 6
May 15th	Admistering an Oath to Mr Jno Williams in a Case of Appraisement on the Old Black horse Farm ³⁰	0 2 6
June 8	Taking Two Prisoners for Assaulting George Nurley ³¹	0 10 0
Augt 28	Making Freeholders List	0 5 0
Novr 2	Passing Elizabeth Munday from Offham to Wrotham 4 miles	0 3 9
22	Taking John Fentiman by Warrant on a Case of Bastardy	0 7 6

²⁸ James Wells, b. 1786, was the youngest son of John Wells (1753–90) and his wife Sarah (*née* Smith and the widow of Thomas Hards) whom he married in 1780. Both Thomas Hards and John Wells were tenants of the 'Red Lion' inn, Offham (F.D. Johns, unpub., *The Hodges and Wells Families of Offham, Kent*, 1987, Local Studies Section, Kent County Library, 7). Cornelius Kettle was accompanied by the overseer, Friend Addison junior (K.A.O. P274/11/4).

²⁹ William Goldsmith was charged at the Lent Assize 1820 at Maidstone with stealing hops valued at £17 4s. from Richard Baker, at £20 7s. from Mary Lewis widow and at £17 4s. from Friend Addison, who was the only one of the three with a farm in Offham. Goldsmith would have been charged by the constable for a parish in which one of the others had a hop garden. Goldsmith was found guilty on all three indictments and was sentenced to transportation for seven years (P.R.O. ASSI 35 260/2).

³⁰ The 'Black Horse' inn stood close to Cornelius Kettle's cottage in Tower Hill. The road (now a cul-de-sac) was formerly known as the Old Black Horse Lane and was part of an important highway from Wrotham to the Weald (see K.A.O. CCRC P14, Map of Blaise Wood, 1766, and Robert Morden's Map of Kent, 1695). The inn closed down at the beginning of the nineteenth century by which time the ancient pack-horse way, which it had served, had fallen into disuse. The causes were the construction of (i) c. 1740, the seventh Earl of Westmoreland's carriage road, now known as 'Lords Walk', from his seat at Mereworth Castle to the London turnpike at Wrotham Heath, and (ii) c. 1795, the turnpike, now 'Seven Mile Lane' (B2106), from Wrotham Heath to the Maidstone-Tonbridge turnpike (35 Geo IIIc165 and 237). Both routes by-passed Offham. The inn was demolished soon afterwards.

³¹ George Nurley, a builder, married in 1805 Sarah Stickings, daughter of John Stickings who was the last tenant of the 'Black Horse' inn. The overseers' accounts contain an entry for 6 July, 1816, 'paid Kettle expenses of detaining two men charged with robbery by James (*sic*) Nurley £1 6s. 10d.' (K.A.O. P274/11/4).

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Decr 4	Serving Two Summons's on the Two Overseers the One in a Case of Thos Blake & the Other of Wm Wood & attending them to Mr Polhill	0 6 0 0 1 6
1817		
May 27	Summoning James Wells Overseer on a Case of William Wells ³²	0 3 0
May 5	Taking Thos Bowen by Warrant to a Magistrate for an Assault on Thos Blake, acquitted	0 4 6
April 4	Taking Two Women as Wagrants Lying on the Road to Mr Polhill, Aquited	0 2 6
July 7	Taking James Wells by Warrant to the Sitting for an Assault on Thos Broad fin'd 6 shillings ³³	
	Taking Jno Hodg by Warrant to Magistrate for Stealing Potatoes from Messrs Crampton & Bookham fin'd s. 12 ³⁴	0 4 6
19	Taking Jno Ruts to Bridewell for Stealing ³⁵	0 10 6
Augt 11	Taking Charles Browning a Vagrant to the Sitting	
	Committed for 7 Days	
	Lodging 1 night	- - 9
	Subsistence at 9d. per Day & 9d night	- 1 6
	self 1 Day	- 1 -
	In Custody 1 Day & Night	- 5 -
	Conveying to Prison	- 6 -
	Taking	- 10 -
	Examination etc.	- 4 -
		<hr/> 1 8 3
20	To Passing Bryant Metten to Wrotham	0 1 0
20	To making out Freeholders List	0 5 0
	To making a Privy search Self & 3 men in the Night	
Decr 29	To taking John Fentiman by order of Warrant for Erears in Bastardy	
29	To Passing Ann Frager to Wrotham a Vagrant 4 miles	0 5 0
1818		
Feb'y 27	To Passing Jane Willar and Margaret Brown from Offham to Wrotham as Vagrants 4 miles at 1s. 9d. per Mile	0 7 0

³² William Wells (1750-1827) and James Wells (1759-1845) were brothers. When their father, Edward Wells, died in 1807, James, the younger son, inherited the ancestral home, 'Hodges Place', perhaps following the custom of gavelkind. It is possible that this was the cause of the apparent strife between the brothers. James Wells was a carpenter and was described in the 1841 Census as 'independent'; he probably built Wells Cottages in Offham (F.D. Johns, *op. cit.*, 9).

³³ For Thomas Broad, see n. 27. James Wells was doubtless the man referred to in n. 28 and not James Wells of 'Hodges Place' (n. 32).

³⁴ Messrs. Crampton and Bookham were tenants of the land attached to the old 'Black Horse' inn, Tower Hill (see n. 30). 'John Hodg' must be John Hodges (1792-1871), a farm labourer in 1841 and a small holder in 1851. In 1855, he acquired 'Hodges Place', Offham, from Dr William Henry Addison, a grandson of Friend Addison junior and then resident in South Africa. He became a prosperous hop farmer and served the village as overseer and churchwarden (F.D. Johns, *op. cit.*, 8).

³⁵ 'Ruts' should no doubt be 'Roots'.

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May 30th	To Passing Magaret McGunery & Henry her Child as Vagrants on Pass from Offham to Kingsdown 7 miles at 1s. 6d. p mile	0 10 6
June 4	Conveying John Carr to Dartford Bridewell in not fulfilling his Contract in Mr Addison's Service Expences paid by Mr Addison ³⁶	0 12 0
Sepr 28	Serving a Warrant on the Wife of Wm Wood for detaining a Bank Note	0 1 0
Octr 20	Making a List of Freeholders	0 .5 0
Decr 3d	Taking Wm Golding by Warrant to Bridewell on a Charge of pulling up Ashplants belonging to Col ¹ Stratford 3 months Imprison ³⁷	
1819		
Jany 22	Taking James Jacobs by Sumons to Mr Polhills for non payment of Wages to Thos Golding	
Feby 13	Distrained from the house of James Jacobs for Payment of the above Wages, One Feather Bed, One Blanket, One Table	
March 23	Taking Wm Woodger by Warrant to Maidstone Gaol for Abuse to his Wife. Comitted by J.B. Polhill. Eight Miles at 1s per Mile ³⁸	

³⁶ Bridewells existed in west Kent at Maidstone and Dartford, and for a short time in the eighteenth century at Deptford. There was a plan in 1792-93 to close Dartford but, as a result of a petition against its 'unnecessary closure', it remained open. It was resolved at Quarter Sessions on 18 March, 1819, that 'the question of removal of prisoners at Dartford to the new gaol [under construction at Maidstone] be determined at next Annual General Sessions' (C.W. Chalklin, *New Maidstone Gaol Order Book 1805-23*, 1984; 9, 10, 15, 21 and 172).

'Mr Addison' was either Friend Addison senior or Friend Addison junior (see p. 11).

³⁷ William Golding occupied one of a pair of cottages (the present 'Walnut Tree Cottage') by the green (K.A.O. U55 M89-103). The ash plants may have been used as a hedge. (O. Rackham, *op. cit.*, 197, refers to the use of ash as a hedgerow plant.)

Colonel Stratford was the Hon. John Wingfield Stratford, of Addington Place, a Justice of the Peace. He was a son of Viscount Powerscourt and born the Hon. John Wingfield. In 1803, he assumed the additional name of Stratford under the will of his uncle, the Earl of Aldborough. He married Frances Bartholomew, daughter of Leonard Bartholomew, who was a brother of Philip Bartholomew of Oxenhoath, the father of Mary Bartholomew who married Sir Francis Geary, Bt. (see n. 27). By his marriage to Elizabeth Watton, Leonard Bartholomew had come into the possession of Addington Place and the manor of Addington (James G. Maddan, unpub., *Material for a History of Addington*, 1954, Local Studies Section, Kent County Library, 45).

In 1818, the Hon. John Wingfield Stratford acquired from the Earl of Thanet, lord of the manor of Offham, 19 acres of land (including a piece of woodland) adjacent to Plowenders Bridge, which crosses the Addington Brook, the parish boundary between Offham and Addington at the time of writing. This land was later incorporated into Addington Park.

³⁸ William Woodger (baptised at Offham on 10 July, 1796) was a grandson of Thomas Woodger (1716-87) and his wife Elizabeth, of Little Comp farm; they are ancestors of farmers still living and working in the parish of Offham and one still farms

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June 10	Passing as Vagrants from Offham to Farningham John O'Donnell & Mary his Wife & Andrew Smith Eleven Miles at 2s. per Mile & 3s. Returning & sitting up with them one Night & Assistant			
June	Taking by Warrant To the Sitting on a Charge of pulling a Hedge belonging to Mr Addison ³⁹			
Augt 3	Atending the Asise at Maidstone 3 Days Self & Daughter, on a Case of Wm Woodger for an Assault on his Wife			
Sepr 13	Passing Wm Trilby a Vagrant from Offham to Wrotham			
Octr 11	Making a List of Freeholders	0	4	6
Novr 19	Attending Parish business on a Case of Wm Bailey			
20	Half a Day Do	0	3	9
Novr 20	Asisting in Taking Wm Crosswell on a Charge of Stealing Hops			
Decr 29	Assisting taking Nicholas Wells to a Magistrate for Abuse to Mr Aisher of Ryarsh			
1820				
Febry 14	Taking Thomas Blake to a Magistrate on a Charge of stealing Coals, Comitted to Gaol for the Asize ⁴⁰ Same Day John Stickings, John Beven & James Wood, to Magistrates on a Charge of Stealing Apples ⁴¹			
March 15	Passing Thos Miller from Offham to Wrotham as a Vagrant on Pass			

at Little Comp. William Woodger 'abused' his wife, Elizabeth, by 'assaulting and stabbing her with a case knife'. He was committed by the Rev. J.B. Polhill at Quarter Sessions, Maidstone, on 23 March, 1819. His case came up at the Spring Assize at Maidstone on 20 April, 1819, when the Court ordered that he should 'remain in Gaol to take his trial at the next assizes' (K.A.O.Q/SBW 77 and P.R.O. ASSI 35 259/2). The summer assizes were held at Maidstone on 11 August, 1819, but William Woodger's case was not heard nor was it at subsequent assizes. His fate is unknown. He may have died in prison but no record of his death has come to light.

³⁹ It is not known which one of the two Mr Addisons is referred to.

⁴⁰ Thomas Blake was tried at the Lent Assize at Maidstone on 20 March, 1820, on two indictments, one of stealing two pecks of coal from the parishioners of Offham (doubtless fuel for the poor houses) and the other of stealing two pecks of coal from James Harnes; both thefts occurred on 13 February, 1820, and the value of the coal in each case was ninepence. He was found guilty and sentenced 'to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour in the House of Correction, Maidstone, one calendar month' (P.R.O. ASSI 35 260/2).

He was born in 1777, son of Thomas Blake, the former 'titheman' who died in 1792 (see n. 3). He was a pauper in 1835 when the vestry ordered a shirt and flannel waistcoat for his use (K.A.O. P274/8/1).

⁴¹ John Stickings the younger (1803-75) was a son of John Stickings the elder who was the last tenant of the 'Black Horse' inn (see n. 31). He became tenant of the 'Red Lion' inn, Offham, and is commemorated in Esme Wingfield Stratford's biography of the Hon. Rev. Edward Bligh as 'a village sportsman of the old sort who was an adept at any branch in the profession from Kennel Huntsman to knocking down a woodcock in the twilight' (E. Wingfield Stratford, *This was a Man*, 1949, 242).

John Beven (or Bevan) was paid four guineas on 30 May, 1803, 'his being drawn in the West Kent Militia for the Parish of Offham' (K.A.O. P274/11/3).

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May 4	Serv'd a Warrant of Destress on Edwd Hodges for Poor rates & taking His 'Goods' ⁴²	- 2 6
July 6	2 Days search of John Fentiman by Warrant	- 9 0
Aug 7	Taking Robert Bell by Warrant to the Sitting for Bastardy	- 5 0
25	Making a List of Freeholders	- 5 -
Aug 30	Persueing & taking by Hue and cry a Man & Woman for a Roberry of Robert Driver, Lodger at the Red Lion Offham and detaining them the ensuing Night ⁴³	
Sepr 24	In the Execution of my Duty to stop an Afray at the Red Lion Offham was assaulted by William Golding and Edward Hodg in which cost them the Expences attending the same or at my option to be Imprisoned ⁴⁴	
Decr 7	Taking as a Vagrant Decr 5th Joseph Fuller Comitted for 7 Days and to be Pass's home to Hunton	
Dec 19	Taking Robert Bell by Warrant and detaining him 2 days and 1 night for erears of a Bastard child Serving 2 Warrants Expences	0 5 0 0 13 6
1821		
Jany 16	Do.2 Days & 1 Night at Do. 3 Days with the same at Lord Torringtons & 1 at the Sitting ⁴⁵	0 13 6 0 10 0
July 6th	Searching after Robin Bell by Order of a Magistrates Warrant for Arears of Bastardy	

⁴² Edward Hodges (*b.* 1789) was the elder brother of John Hodges (see n. 34). He was a farm labourer who had a small holding attached to his cottage, now the garden of 'Limerlost', Comp Lane. He appears to have been a non-conformist as a Meeting House Certificate, dated 26 January, 1822, authorised Henry Freeman, Minister of New Brompton, Kent, 'to use the pottery . . . in the occupation of Edward Hodges, labourer, as a place of religious worship by an Assembly or Congregation of Protestants' (K.A.O. DRb/Rm 38). He was not assessed to church rate; perhaps his refusal to pay poor rate was intended as a conscientious objection to a rate authorised by a vestry chaired by the rector.

⁴³ Robert Driver junior (*b.* 1758), the victim of the robbery, was a son of Robert Driver senior (1734-1801) who was village blacksmith until 1783. Both father and son acted as parish clerk.

The robbers may have been detained for the night at the scene of their crime, the 'Red Lion' inn. It was certainly used previously (in 1807) as a place of detention of a man arrested for arrears of bastardy (K.A.O. P274/11/3). The village lock-up, or cage, was built in March 1821 when it cost £33 to erect on the green (K.A.O. P274/11/4). It is not unlikely that the trauma of this robbery and its hue and cry in August 1820 prompted the vestry to provide a proper lock-up.

⁴⁴ Both of Cornelius Kettle's assailants had reason to feel enmity towards him. William Golding had been taken to Bridewell on 3 December, 1818 (see n. 37), and the goods of Edward Hodges were distrained on in May 1820 for non-payment of poor rate (see n. 42).

⁴⁵ George Bing, Lord Viscount Torrington, had been lord of the manor of Swanton, Mereworth, since 1792 (E. Hasted, *History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 1798, 2nd facsimile edn, V, 84). He is commemorated today by the inn sign of a public house in the village.

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July 23	Taking Robin Bell & Serving a Warrant	
Octr	Making a List of Freeholders	0 5 0
1822		
March 7	Taking to Maidstone House of Correction Jeremiah Terry & Elizabeth his Wife as Vagrants	
April	Taking James Billinghamurst & Edward Smith for Rioting on Sunday fin'd -14s. - to be paid in a week	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer thanks Mr W.N. Yates, who has read a draft of this paper, for his helpful suggestions. The responsibility for its contents and the views expressed, however, are entirely that of the writer.