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EDWARD HASTED, A KENTISH JP

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My interest was first aroused in Edward Hasted as a person – as distinct from Hasted the historian – when I discovered that while living at St. John's at Sutton-at-Hone he was also, for a short time, renting a house in Farningham. Over a period of some two years, from 1763 to early 1765, he appears in the Farningham churchwardens' and overseers' account books hiring what is described as 'Mrs Pratt's house' at £11.15s. p.a.¹ Why he took the house, whether he lived there himself, or was hiring it for a friend or relative, it would seem impossible to know. Farningham is only 'down the road' from Sutton-at-Hone, and the railway station, Farningham Road, serves both places. In spite of some excellent work on Hasted, by both Alan Everitt and John Boyle,² there are clearly a number of blanks and mysteries in Hasted's life which still remain to be filled in or elucidated. Local rates books and registers, taken together with quarter sessions records, have made it possible to fill out the picture a little more, particularly with regard to his years in Sutton-at-Hone and to his service as a county magistrate, which began when he was living there.

Hasted was married, as he relates in his 'Anecdotes', in Sutton-at-Hone in 1755.³ For two or three years he had been paying his respects to the daughter of a neighbour, Ann Dorman, a girl some three or four months older than he was. Ann had been baptised on 20 September, 1732, and Hasted, as he himself states, was born on 31 December of that year.⁴ The marriage, which was by licence as

¹ KAO: P145/5/1; P145/12/1.

² A. Everitt, 'Introduction', in E. Hasted, *A History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (Canterbury, 1797–1801; facsimile reprint, Wakefield, 1972), v–xlix. A. Everitt, 'Kentish Family Portrait', in *Landscape and Community* (1985), 247–77.

J. Boyle, *In Quest of Hasted* (Chichester, 1984).

³ KAO: P358/1/2.

⁴ KAO: P358/1/1; E. Hasted, 'Anecdotes of the Hasted Family', *Arch. Cant.*, xxvi (1904), 267–94.

was common among the well-to-do, took place on 21 July, and was performed by the curate, Richard Bathurst, who may have been related to the Dormans. In the entry in the marriage register, where Ann signed her name without the final 'e' which it is usually given, both Edward and Ann are described as 'of this parish'. Their witness, along with the parish clerk, Robert Northall, who habitually signed the register, was Thomas Faunce, Esq., one of Hasted's neighbours, who was to be one of the sponsors of his eldest son, Edward, when he was christened in November 1760.⁵

Ann Dorman came of an old-established family in the area. Her father had been the third wealthiest parishioner in Sutton-at-Hone, assessed on land and property to a total of £79 (rental) in 1747. He had died in 1750, and Mrs. Dorothy Dorman then held the property, which was almost certainly a farm, until 1754 or 1755.⁶ In spite of later jibes about Edward Hasted's wife, there seems to be no indication that John Dorman had been a miller. Both he and his son acted as churchwarden for Sutton, the father in 1749, the son, Thomas, in 1757. Hasted himself was to take some interest in parish affairs: we find his signature in the churchwardens' book among those subscribing a church rate of 3d. in the £ in 1759 – but only in 1759.⁷

According to Hasted, the newly-married pair lived for a short while in Canterbury, but the church rates for 1756 show Hasted as an occupier in Sutton-at-Hone of a smallish house, assessed on a rental of £4.10s. By 1757, he had clearly moved to a larger house, which was probably St. John's. In this year he was assessed on a rental of £16, while by the time of the next assessment, in 1759, this had risen to £24, an increase that probably reflects the improvements he had had carried out there. He also took on property, probably some more land, assessed at £8, which was marked in the rates book as 'late Cannam'. In 1764, his rental had increased by a further £4 for another piece of property or land, and the next assessment, which did not take place until 1767, shows him assessed on the same total, i.e. £36.⁸ This was to be his last year at St. John's. Either he had had a 10-year lease on it, and did not renew it, or he sub-let. At all events, by the time of the next church rate, in October 1768, the occupant of St. John's was Robert St. Paul, Esq., to be followed in 1776 by Mr James Hunter.⁹ The ownership remained with the Hill family until 1780, when it was sold to Mr John Mumford.¹⁰

⁵ Hasted, 'Anecdotes', 293.

⁶ KAO: P358/1/1; P358/5/1.

⁷ KAO: P358/5/1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Hasted, *History*, ii, 348.

1759, when Hasted was one of the signatories of the church rate at Sutton, was in fact the year when he first sat on the West Kent quarter sessions bench at Maidstone. Hasted himself says that he was put into the Commission of the Peace in 1757,¹¹ and we know that, as Edward Hasted of Sutton, he took out his *Dedimus potestatem*, which enabled him to proceed to take his oaths as a magistrate, in 1758.¹² It is likely that he took the oaths at the January, or Epiphany, sessions in 1759, which is the first occasion when we encounter him on the quarter sessions bench.¹³ He was, it should be remembered, a very young magistrate – only 26 – but given his legal training at Lincoln's Inn, where he had been admitted in 1750 and seems to have spent at least two years, a recognised member of the quorum of the Kent bench.¹⁴ Hasted was to make two more appearances on the quarter sessions bench at Maidstone that year: in July and October. In 1760, he appeared at each of the four sessions, and in 1761 he was present at the first three, that is, January, Easter and July. Thereafter, as far as we can tell, he sat only once more on the west Kent quarter sessions bench, and this was at Easter in 1764, although he did not leave Sutton-at-Hone until 1768.¹⁵

Over the same years that Hasted was appearing at the quarter sessions at Maidstone he was also active at his local petty sessions, which were held at Dartford. The records of petty sessions have not survived in the quantities of those of quarter sessions, but there are ways of deducing petty sessions activity. Poor rates books were taken there by parish overseers for signature, for example, and duplicates of certain papers issued there were deposited at the following quarter sessions. In fact, Farningham poor rates book is useful here in showing us that in 1759, 1760 and 1761 Edward Hasted was sitting at the local petty sessions, usually in company with Richard Hornsby, or with James Harwood, the vicar of Dartford. Then, there is a gap, before his signature is found again in 1766.¹⁶ Similarly, among the petty sessions papers deposited at quarter sessions, there are removal orders signed by Hasted in 1760 and 1761, but his signature is not found again until January 1767 when, sitting with Hornsby, he committed to quarter sessions a certain Thomas Jones who was refusing to indemnify the parish of Crayford in respect of no less than

¹¹ Hasted, 'Anecdotes', 292.

¹² PRO: C193/45.

¹³ KAO: Q/SMaW 8.

¹⁴ *Records of the Honorable Society of Lincoln's Inn*, i, *Admissions from AD 1420 to AD 1799* (1896), 438.

¹⁵ KAO: Q/SMaW 8, 9.

¹⁶ KAO: P145/12/1.

six bastard children. There is also a committal of 1768 by Hasted of three women who were charged with stealing rags from the rag-house of a Dartford paper-maker.¹⁷ This last item, together with the fact that Hasted's signature is to be found in Farningham poor rates book a month later, is useful in showing us that he was still in the area at that time. As his fifth son and seventh child, aptly named John Septimus, was born in Canterbury in August of that year, it would appear that the Hasted family moved there some time in the spring or early summer of 1768.

Hasted's activity on the east Kent bench, after moving to Canterbury, is very well attested. He seems to have taken up his justiciary duties on the new bench at the last session in 1770, at Michaelmas, and thereafter, more often than not, he was a regular member of the bench until 1789, that is to say, for nineteen years, when he made a total of sixty-five appearances out of a possible seventy-six.¹⁸ It should be noted that his name was soon being written second or third on the list of those attending, which denotes a certain standing, and that on two occasions, in the absence of William Deedes, it is clear that he acted as chairman: at Michaelmas 1779 and at St. Thomas (the July sessions) in 1782. From the quarter sessions papers remaining for those years we find Edward Hasted regularly carrying out the duties of a justice of the peace – it would appear, at all levels: as a single justice, at petty sessions, and at quarter sessions. Such duties could make considerable demands on one's time: those gentlemen of the county who were put into the Commission of the Peace and then did not act (contrary to what is sometimes supposed, a minority and not a majority of them)¹⁹ usually failed to do so because they were unable to spare the time. The quarter sessions papers only show us something of those cases which went as far as that, matters, that is to say, which had not been resolved at a lower level, by a justice acting alone, or by two justices – which usually meant, by petty sessions. Nevertheless, we can see from those committed for trial by Edward Hasted that he was fully involved – and also that the seamier side of life was constantly passing before his eyes: the rogues and vagabonds like Mary Emptage, convicted and punished over and over again for begging and gathering alms 'in places and passages' in the parish of Christ Church, Canterbury; the unfortunate unmarried mothers; the violent and threatening husbands or neighbours; those accused of theft, and even of murder and rape. There are committals by Edward Hasted in many cases of this

¹⁷ KAO: Q/SB 1759–1768.

¹⁸ KAO: Q/SMaE 8.

¹⁹ (Ed.), S.B. Black, *The Kentish Justice* (Otford, 1988), 2, 3.

kind over the nineteen years of his activity as a justice in east Kent, which must have represented something like three days a month, at least, given over to public affairs. The last committal by him seems to have been one of 31 August, 1789, when Edward Stone was committed until he could find sufficient sureties to keep the peace towards his wife, Hannah.²⁰

By 1789, however, Hasted's finances were in total confusion, and the historian was desperately trying to find some solution to a virtually insoluble problem. As is well known, he ended up selling all his estates below value to his former attorney, Thomas Williams, of Dartford, and in 1790 he fled to France.²¹

Hasted was by no means the only Englishman to escape from his creditors by crossing the Channel. John Byng, the diarist, happened to be in Dover in that very year, and commented on the 'Exiles, voluntary, and involuntary', whom he saw taking ship for France – and except that this was in September, and that Hasted went in April, Byng could very well have been observing the undignified exit of the historian of Kent.²² Nor was Hasted, regrettably, the only Kentish justice to take this route. Edward Homewood was another local man, at various times of Farningham, Horton Kirby and Maidstone, a somewhat unstable character, who was put in the Commission of the Peace in 1816 and who died bankrupt in Boulogne – I suspect he committed suicide – in 1827 after a period of lavish spending.²³

The Kentish bench seems to have been given no time to react in the case of Edward Homewood. But it should be noted that Hasted was not a justice of the peace when he died. Although by the second half of the eighteenth century it was usually a case of 'once a justice, always a justice', and peccadilloes, such as illegitimate offspring, were overlooked, financial entanglements or disasters were regarded with the utmost severity, and dealt with accordingly. Such was the case of George Children, of Ferox Hall, Tonbridge, for many years a respected magistrate, whose Tonbridge Bank failed in 1816 – and which, indeed, had already been investigated, at the request of the lord lieutenant, some years earlier by the magistrates of his own division.²⁴ In cases like this, the magistrate who had fallen under a

²⁰ KAO: Q/SB 1770–1789.

²¹ Guildhall Museum, Rochester: Hasted MSS, 'A Statement of Mr Hasted's Transaction with the late Mr Thos. Williams concerning the Conveyance of his Estates to him and the Bond Mr Williams gave him to reconvey the same'.

²² (Ed.) C.B. Andrews, *The Torrington Diaries* (1938), iv, 161.

²³ Cf. *The Maidstone Journal & Kentish Advertiser*, 11 September, and 2 October, 1827.

²⁴ KAO: Q/SB W16 (Epiphany, 1804); *Memoir of J.G. Children, Esq.* (1853), 166–8.

cloud was usually graceful enough to resign, although very occasionally a name on the Commission is marked 'Struck out'. This did not happen to Hasted, who may well have tendered his resignation – quite possibly, from France. What is clear, however, is that his name was quietly dropped from the Commission of the Peace: it does not appear in the Commission which was issued for Kent in 1799 – which, ironically, was the first one to include the name of his son Edward, by now (and since 1790) vicar of Hollingbourne.²⁵

Nevertheless, it should be underlined that Hasted, Homewood and George Children were but three out of a numerous body of very hard-working men: some 127 names are found in the west Kent quarter sessions attendance lists over the period 1790–1817, for example.²⁶ Apart from the three days a month calculated above as the time which a justice could have spent dealing directly with petty sessions or quarter sessions business, there were also numerous additional duties which fell to them, such as inspecting county bridges, prisons, and houses for the insane.²⁷

All of which throws very little light on why Hasted should have rented a house in Farningham in 1763. It seems possible that he may have taken it for his mother, of whom he was clearly very fond, so that she could be near him, her only surviving child, after the sad death of her daughter Anne at the early age of thirty-four the previous year.

What one can say for certain, however, is that the years 1763 and 1764 fall right in the middle of a period when Hasted appears to have withdrawn almost completely from active participation in the magistracy. Some letters of late 1763 and early 1764, reprinted in *Archaeologia Cantiana* in 1905, show him spending several months away from home, at Throwley, near Faversham, and in one of these letters he speaks of working 'from morning to night', and also says, 'One thing I enjoy very much here, which induces me to stay at Throwley, I enjoy my time and leisure without the interruption of too many visitors, with which I was pestered at Sutton'.²⁸ As well as the visitors, at Sutton, there were also by 1763 two little boys, Edward and Francis, to whom a third, George, added no doubt lusty lungs in August of that year.

It seems fairly safe to argue from the gap in Hasted's magisterial activity over the period 1762–1766 that he was during these years totally absorbed by his great project. This is the impression conveyed

²⁵ KAO: Q/JC 61.

²⁶ KAO: Q/SMaW 11, 12, 13.

²⁷ Black, *op. cit.*, 7.

²⁸ *Arch. Cant.*, xxvii (1905), 136–66.

by some more of his letters from that period, printed by that Boswell of the late eighteenth-century archaeological world, John Nichols, in his *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*.²⁹ They are extraordinarily happy letters, bubbling over with details of Roman roads, of excavations of tumuli (in which he seems to have participated personally) and of visits to and from brother antiquarians. 'I am so continually employed in the MS. I have received . . . that I have hardly time for my meals', he was telling Dr Ducarel, the librarian of Lambeth Palace, in 1764, while by 1767 the project had developed far enough to be seen as 'my darling child, whom I have nursed up with so much pains and expence'.³⁰

1763 was the year in which Hasted was made a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, something which must have provided him with additional openings, allowing him to enter the freemasonry of the many historian-enthusiasts of his age, a number of them Kentish.³¹ As a historian of the locality, I find it pleasant to think that the house Hasted rented in that year in Farningham, perhaps for the comfort of his bereaved mother, may also on occasion have provided the peace and quiet he needed for some small portion of the labours preparatory to 'perfecting my darling child'.

²⁹ J. Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, iv, 642-51.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 643, 647.

³¹ 'A List of the Members of the Society of Antiquaries of London, from their Revival in 1717 to June 19, 1796', in (Ed.) J. Nichols, *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, x, (?1798).