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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOY TO MARGATE'S EARLY GROWTH AS A SEASIDE RESORT

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It is a well known fact that the size and character of English seaside resorts have been strongly shaped by patterns of communication, particularly as regards their availability and cost to the passenger. Immediately one thinks of railways and especially their popular excursions at 3rd class fares, which were well below the statutory one penny per mile on parliamentary trains from 1844 onwards. Indeed, the birth and popularization of seaside resorts have been attributed to railways. This thesis, however, is totally inapplicable to Margate, which as a mature seaside resort was already more than a century old by the time the South-Eastern Railway, having been extended from Ashford to Thanet, was opened on 1st December, 1846. The town had been launched as a sea-bathing resort as far back as 1736, just twelve years after Daniel Defoe had observed how 'the town of Margate is eminent for nothing that I know of, but for King William's frequently landing here in his returns from Holland, and for shipping a vast quantity of corn for London Market, most, if not all of it, the product of the Isle of Thanet, in which it stands'.¹ The founder of modern Margate was a local carpenter, Thomas Barber, who first advertised a sea-water bath with 'convenient Lodgings to be Lett', in *The Kentish Post, or Canterbury News Letter* of 17th July, 1736.²

When the first official census was taken in 1801, Margate returned a population of 4,766 which, by 1831, had comfortably more than doubled to 10,339.³ At the latter date Margate was flourishing as a seaside resort, having expanded and matured thanks to steamboats

¹ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through England and Wales Divided into Circuits or Journies*, i, (1927), 119.

² John Whyman, *Kentish Sources VIII. The Early Kentish Seaside (1736-1840), Selected Documents*, (Gloucester, 1985), 160-1.

³ G.S. Minchin, 'Table of Population, 1801 to 1921', (Ed.) W. Page, *The Victoria History of the County of Kent*, iii (1932), 359.

which had been introduced from London on a regular basis from 1815 onwards. In 1839, it sufficed merely to comment that its 'baths, hotels, libraries, reading rooms, assembly rooms, theatre, bazaars, promenades, etc. surpassed those of most other places on the coast',⁴ not forgetting the seaside boarding-house and lodgings. That steamboats brought immense prosperity to Margate between the 1820s and the 1840s is an undisputable fact which has been addressed elsewhere⁵ and was widely recognized at the time. An early steward of steam vessels unreservedly asserted in 1828 that 'the inhabitants of Margate ought to eulogize the name of *Watt*, as the founder of their good fortune; and *Steam Vessels*, as the harbingers of their prosperity'.⁶ Four years previously *The Times* had concluded that 'the introduction of steamboats has given the whole coast of Kent, [and] the Isle of Thanet in particular, a prodigious lift'.⁷

Margate's pre-railway popularity rested on water communications: before 1815, on hoys, sailing packets and yachts and, thereafter, on steamboats. Indeed, as will be shown, the greater carrying capacity and the lower fares of sailing vessels, compared to stage-coaches, introduced quite early on a wider cross-section of visitors to Margate, causing it to become an exception to the general rule that Hanoverian watering-places were almost exclusively resorted to by the upper classes. Furthermore, Margate derived no benefits from royal patronage which contributed so enormously to the expansion of its great rival, Brighton.⁸ The rise and prosperity of Margate and Brighton, which resulted from contrasting causes, respectively hoys and royalty, were observed by *The Times* on 1st September, 1804.

'Margate, August 30 . . . has not been so full of visitors for eight years past. . . . Every hoy or, according to the modern term, every packet is literally loaded. The smallest of these vessels brought down 120 persons yesterday morning. . . . [But] there are not here, at present, many persons of high rank and fashion.

Brighton, Thursday, August 30 . . . is at present unusually full of company; and the presence of his ROYAL HIGHNESS has its obvious influence on the vivacities of the place'.

⁴ *Pigot and Co.'s Royal National and Commercial Directory and Topography*, (November 1839), 339.

⁵ John Whyman, *Aspects of Holidaymaking and Resort Development Within the Isle of Thanet, with Particular Reference to Margate, circa 1736 to circa 1840*, ii, (New York, 1981), 536-65; John Whyman, 'Water communications to Margate and Gravesend as coastal resorts before 1840', *Southern History*, iii, (1981), 111-2, 120-38; John Whyman, 'The Glorious Days of the Thames Steamers to Thanet', in *The Maritime Heritage of Thanet*, (East Kent Maritime Trust, Ramsgate, 1993).

⁶ R.B. Watts, *A Topographical Description of the Coast between London, Margate and Dover . . . With an Account of the First Application of Steam . . . in Propelling Vessels*, (1828), 9.

⁷ *The Times*, 28th September, 1824, 2c.

⁸ E.W. Gilbert, *Brighton: Old Ocean's Bauble*, (1954), 11-17.

By 1815, Margate had passed well beyond any bounds of initial growth, and could lay claim to being the first resort to become 'popular' in the widest interpretation of that word, especially as to its amenities and recreations, a fact long acknowledged by historians and historical geographers, including Professor Gilbert.⁹ In explaining Margate's eighteenth-century rise as a seaside resort, several influences were at work, including a developing craze for sea-bathing and seaside holidays, emerging out of an extensive publicity bestowed on the medicinal virtues of sea water, sea air, ozone, instances of longevity, climate and salubrity; developments in communications; an expanding demand for holidays, whether for medical reasons or pleasure, and finally responding to the needs of consumers on the supply side of holidaymaking. This meant having somewhere to stay and things to do, hence an expansion of inns, hotels, boarding-houses, lodging-houses and out-of-town villas, as well as bathing machines, baths, assembly rooms, circulating libraries, playhouses or theatres, indoor and outdoor amusements and opportunities for local excursions, all of which were soon provided from the 1750s onwards.¹⁰ Of the long-term causes contributing to Margate's success as an early seaside resort, consumer demand was clearly crucial, more so than the alleged medicinal qualities of sea water and sea air, or developments in transport. Dr John Walton has argued, consistently, powerfully and correctly, that consumer demand was the principal force shaping the overall growth and character of resort development in this country,¹¹ but equally this demand was susceptible to accessible low-cost transport facilities and this is where the 'hoy' enters the picture.

Edward Hasted in 1800 was well aware of what was happening, and he was not alone, when he wrote of Margate rising

'unexpectedly, and that no long time since, to wealth and consequence, owing principally to the universal recommendation of sea air and bathing; . . . the rage of . . . Londoners . . . spending their summer months . . . on the sea coast; and when it came to be known that the shore here was so well adapted to bathing, being an entire level and covered with the finest sand, . . . and the easy distance from the metropolis, with the conveniency of so frequent a passage by water, it gave Margate a preference before all others, to which the beauty and healthiness of it, and of the adjoining country, contributed still more'.¹²

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18–20.

¹⁰ Whyman (1981), *op. cit.*, i, 108–389, or Whyman (1985), *op. cit.*, 87–92, 94–8, 100–4, 110–3, 132–4, 143–7, 152–5, 158–66, 176–84, 191–2, 198–206, 211–21, 224–7, 237–58, 265–80, 293–305, 307–17, 377–8.

¹¹ John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750–1914*, (Leicester, 1983), Chapter 2 being devoted to 'The demand for seaside holidays', 5–44.

¹² Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, X, 2nd Edn., (Canterbury, 1800), 321.

This explanation followed a reference to 'several passage-boats, or yachts, as they are now called, . . . fitted up with cabins and other accommodations', sailing 'every day to and from London, constantly freighted with passengers [and] baggage'.¹³ Indeed, to his amazement, 'the number of persons, which the inhabitants boast are carried to and from this place in the vessels yearly, is almost beyond a moderate credibility, even to 18,000 on an average'.¹⁴ In 1812, Mrs. Pilkington had no hesitation in believing that 'the cheapness and convenience of the packet-boats have . . . greatly contributed to the popularity of the place'.¹⁵

Guidebooks, too, attributed Margate's success to hoys and sailing packets. Two references suffice to illustrate this point. Intending visitors were informed in 1797 that

'during the season, eight Packets sail to and from *London* alternately, and frequently make the passage in ten or twelve hours. They not only bring a great part of the company, but [also] such necessities, for their accommodation, as cannot be supplied by *Margate*. . . . These vessels are fitted up with a degree of elegance and convenience, that at once shows the emulative spirit of their owners, who are men of respectability; and to whose persevering exertions *Margate* must be thought not a little indebted for its present prosperity'.¹⁶

Five years later it was suggested that 'it is perhaps owing . . . to the very superior accommodation which they afford, as well as to the civility and attention of the masters and seamen who navigate them, that Margate stands so highly distinguished in the list of watering places'.¹⁷

From an early date a journey to Margate presented no great obstacles, thanks to hoys operating regular, frequent and cheap services from and to London. It was easier to journey to Margate than to the Sussex resorts. The early pre-eminence of Margate was founded on communications by hoy or sailing packet, exploiting the almost exclusive advantage of a direct and low-cost water-communication link with an expanding London, using the Thames as a natural highway. The potential offered by hoys was already apparent to John Lyons when he compiled Margate's first guidebook in 1763.

'As *Margate* is only a large village, you cannot expect that it should be so regularly supplied with shops, as a market-town; not but that there are several good ones, and many very reputable Tradesmen. This deficiency is, in a great measure, supplied by the numerous articles to be found in most of them, and by their ready and quick

¹³ *Ibid.*, 320.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 320.

¹⁵ Mrs. Pilkington, *Margate!!! or Sketches amply Descriptive of that Celebrated Place of Resort*, (1813), 93.

¹⁶ 'By an Inhabitant', *The Margate Guide, A Descriptive Poem with Elucidatory Notes*, (Margate, 1797), 75.

¹⁷ *The New Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs Guide*, 2nd Edn., (Margate, 1802), 50.

communication with *London* by the Hoys. Was it not for the assistance of these vessels, it would be almost impossible for *Margate*, and the country round it, to furnish entertainment for the vast numbers of people who resort to it. They are sloops of eighty or a hundred tons burden. There are four of them, two of which sail in alternate weeks. . . . They usually leave *Margate* on *Friday* or *Saturday*, and *London* on *Wednesday* or *Thursday*. Passengers, of whom there are often sixty or seventy, pay only 2s. 6d. and the freight of baggage is inconsiderable. They sometimes make the passage in eight hours, and at others in two or three days, just as winds and tides happen to be for, or against, them. . . . The passage is cheap, and in fine weather extremely pleasant and agreeable. . . . The Masters are very careful, decent men. . . . They transact incredible business'.¹⁸

Hoys have been described as 'among the most interesting of all coastal craft', needing to be 'sturdy enough' to overcome adverse weather conditions and 'fast enough to make regular passages'.¹⁹ Their history can be traced back to the sixteenth century, with Faversham possessing sixteen hoys by the 1580s, six of which sailed regularly to London with corn.²⁰ Having origins firmly in the corn trade, they were frequently noted during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. John Taylor, the Water Poet, referred in 1637 to hoys operating from Maidstone, Rochester, Faversham and Margate.²¹ They were observed by Celia Fiennes in 1697,²² by the Rev. John Harris²³ and Daniel Defoe²⁴ before the 1720s, and by the Rev. William Newton, the early historian of Maidstone, in 1741.²⁵ As between the early seventeenth century and the 1720s and 1730s the Faversham corn hoys increased their tonnage from between 20 and 30 tons to 60 tons, being advertised as such in *The Kentish Post, or Canterbury News Letter*.²⁶ Defoe noted 'large hoys, of fifty to sixty tuns burthen', navigating the Medway to and from Maidstone.²⁷ Already by the early eighteenth century corn hoys while sticking to a 'cutter-rigged design' were 'decked-in', and this represented 'an obvious improvement on the earlier open hold'.²⁸

¹⁸ John Lyons, *A Description of the Isle of Thanet, and Particularly of the Town of Margate*, (1763), 14–15.

¹⁹ Dennis A. Baker, *Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing, with Special Reference to the Hop Industry: North-East Kent, 1680–1760*, (New York, 1985), 303, quoting Richard Hugh-Perks, 'The Hoys and After', *The Faversham Magazine*, i, no. 4, (1968), 9–10.

²⁰ Baker, *op. cit.*, 303.

²¹ W. Jerrold, *Highways and Byways in Kent*, (1907), 110.

²² (Ed.) Christopher Morris, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, (1947), 122.

²³ John Harris, *The History of Kent in Five Parts*, (1719), 123.

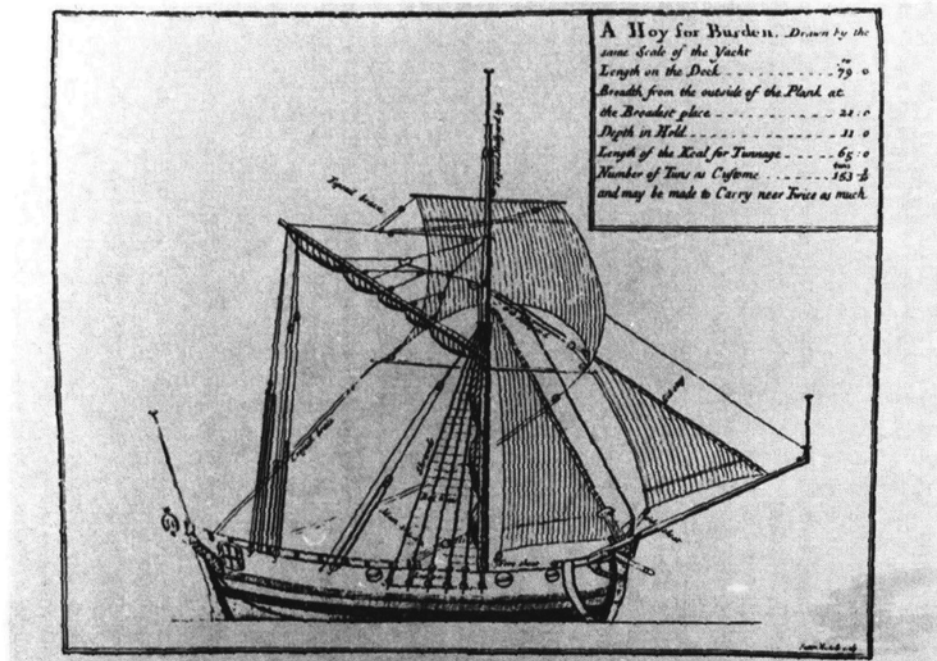
²⁴ Defoe, *op. cit.*, 99, 111, 113.

²⁵ William Newton, *The History and Antiquities of Maidstone, The County-Town of Kent*, (1741), 103–4.

²⁶ Baker, *op. cit.*, 303–4.

²⁷ Defoe, *op. cit.*, 113.

²⁸ Baker, *op. cit.*, 304.

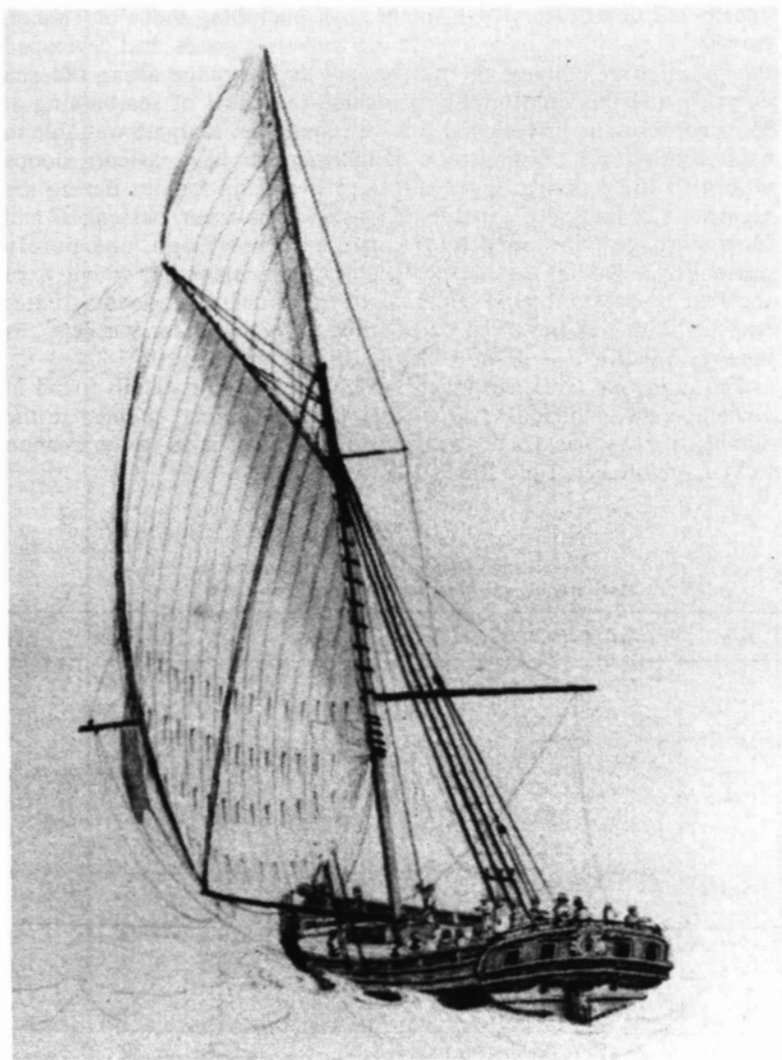


Early eighteenth-century English hoy.

[Dennis A. Baker, *Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing, with Special Reference to the Hop Industry: North-East Kent, 1680–1760*, (New York, 1985), Plate 4, facing 304.]

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PLATE II



The old Margate hoy, c. 1780.

[An illustration of the old Margate hoy published by R. Lambe in 1820. The Original is in Margate Public Library, Local Collection.]

Blessed with 'an excellent safety record' such that 'insurance was considered unnecessary',²⁹ Kentish hoys, including those of Thanet, carrying corn to London and returning with shop goods, had developed the practice of conveying 'passengers and luggage along the sea coast',³⁰ and this comfortably pre-dated the onset of sea-bathing at Margate. From its inception as a resort, therefore, Margate was able to exploit an already existing form of transport, its hoys, as corn sloops with a tradition of passenger carrying, becoming famous during the eighteenth century. Over succeeding decades, however, passengers and their luggage triumphed over corn and other cargo, and purely passenger-conveying sailing packets or yachts emerged, which were thought to be somewhat superior to the old hoy. Indeed, greater respectability was bestowed on them by renaming them 'packets', as the ever watchful eye of *The Times* noted on 1st September, 1804.

The following table and graph, which are based on details found in contemporary guidebooks, directories and newspapers, summarize the number of hoys, packets or yachts and the trend of fares on the London to Margate run between 1763 and 1815.

TABLE 1

*Vessels employed and the fares charged on the
London to Margate sea route, 1763-1815*

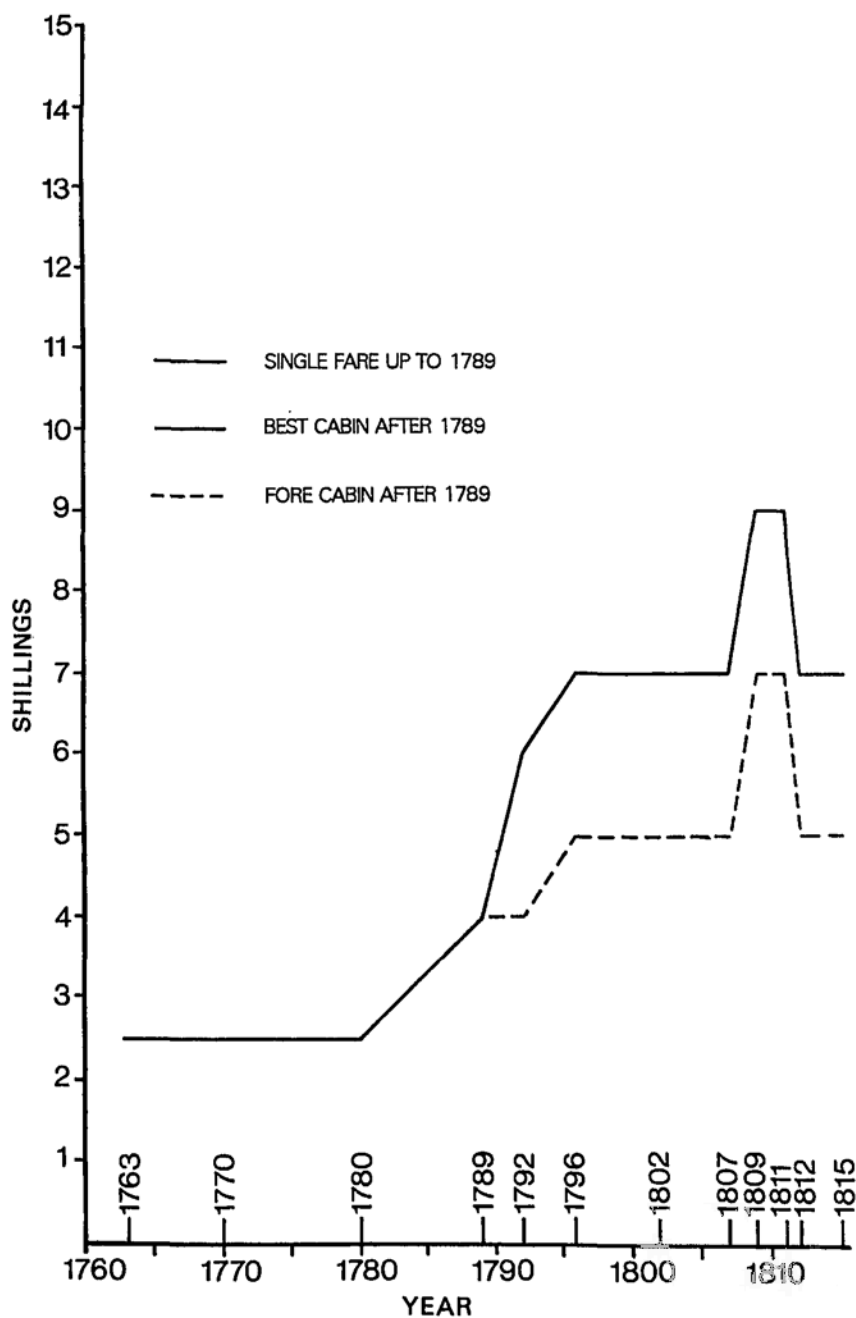
Year	Hoys	Packets or Yachts	Fares	
1763	4	1		2s. 6d.
1770	5			2s. 6d.
1780	5			2s. 6d.
1789	6			4s.
1792	6			10s. 6d., 6s., 4s.
1796	3	8	Best Cabin	10s. 6d., 7s., 5s.
				Fore Cabin
1802		9	7s.	5s.
1807	3	9	7s.	5s.
1809	2	9	9s.	7s.
1811	3	11	9s.	7s.
1812		7	7s.	5s.
1815		7-13	7s.	5s.

There was an impressive increase in the number of vessels operating between 1763 and 1811. During the Napoleonic Wars between 1811 and 1815 some of the packets were switched from passenger carrying

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 304.

³⁰ R. de Kerchove, *International Maritime Dictionary*, 2nd Edn., (1961), 382.

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to troop carrying, but, from advertisements placed in *The Times*, it is clear that at least seven packets continued to ply regularly with passengers between London and Thanet during the summer months of 1812 to 1815.³¹ The minimum single fare ranged from 2s. 6d. to 7s. falling back to 5s. in 1812 and 1815 – double that of 1763. A single fare obtained between 1763 and 1789, with complete stability until after 1780. The 1790s produced differential fares which were associated with greater comfort. Guidebooks of that decade emphasized how the packets were ‘fitted up in an elegant and commodious manner, and furnished with good beds’,³² which were a real amenity whenever the hoys were becalmed or delayed by contrary winds or storms and as a result extended the sea voyage to and from London beyond a single day. By the 1800s, some of the packets boasted ‘a state-room or after-cabin, which [could] be engaged by a select party for five or six guineas’.³³ On 12th July, 1815, *The Times* advertised three packets offering private state cabins, which could be hired separately. Children in arms were conveyed at half fare in 1812.³⁴ In 1780 baggage was carried at under 6d. per cwt.,³⁵ and at later dates ‘proportionably cheap’.³⁶

Compared with the twice-weekly sailings noted by John Lyons in 1763, a 1796 directory published a much improved pattern of sailings (see Table 2) which were daily during the season, with the added observation that ‘the expense for each passenger is very moderate’.³⁷

Competition was keen among the different hoy proprietors as is all too clear from advertisements which were placed in *The Times* from July, 1811 onwards. Passengers intending to sail on the Princess of Wales yacht, leaving Ralph’s Quay, near Billingsgate, at midday on Fridays during July, 1811, were advised that ‘carriages and persons passing down St. Dunstan’s hill not only avoid Thames-street, and the unpleasantness of Billingsgate, but will face a clean paved passage to the vessel; and Ladies and Gentlemen can step on board without having other vessels to pass over, or any other annoyance’. On 4th July, 1811, James Laming, who

³¹ For instance, seven Margate packets in a front-page advertisement in *The Times*, of 14th June, 1815, followed on 12th July, 1815, by an advertisement relating to six Ramsgate packets at fares of 7s. and 5s. respectively in the best and fore cabins, the latter offering ‘a passage . . . preferable to that by the packets of a contiguous watering place’, meaning Margate.

³² *The Kentish Traveller’s Companion*, 5th Edn., (Canterbury, 1799), 265.

³³ *The New Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs Guide*, 5th Edn., (Margate, 1809), 53.

³⁴ *The Times*, 16th July, 1812 and 22nd July, 1812.

³⁵ *The Margate Guide*, (1780), 19.

³⁶ *The New Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs Guide*, (1809), *op. cit.*, 53.

³⁷ *A Short Description of the Isle of Thanet; being chiefly Intended as a Directory for the Company Resorting to Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs*, (Margate, 1796), 23, 97–8.

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TABLE 2

A list of the yachts or packets sailing between Margate and London during the season, 1796.

<i>Name of Vessel</i>	<i>Sails</i>	<i>Returns</i>	<i>Fares</i>	<i>Master</i>
Robert and Jane	Sunday	Thursday	5s., 7s., After Cabin 10s. 6d.	Capt. Kidd
Royal Charlotte	Monday	Friday	5s., 7s.	Capt. James Laming
Britannia	Friday	Wednesday	5s., 7s.	Capt. Finch
Diligence	Saturday	Wednesday	5s., 7s.	Capt. Sandwell
Duke of York	Tuesday	Saturday	5s., 7s.	Capt. Kennard
New Rose in June	Wednesday	Sunday	5s., 7s., After Cabin, 10s. 6d.	Capt. Palmer
Princess of Wales	Wednesday	Sunday	5s., 7s., After Cabin, 10s. 6d.	Capt. Hillier
British Queen	Thursday	Monday	5s., 7s.	Capt. R. Laming

'The above vessels sail to Dice Quay, Billingsgate Dock, Lower Thames Street, London, where answers are given respecting the hours of sailing'.

sailed from Dice Quay, Billingsgate, every Friday at 12.30 advertised the Royal Charlotte packet as being 'a very fast sailing one, . . . being allowed in size and convenience to be one of the first in the Margate employ', while a few days later the Duke of Gloucester, captained by John Chapman, was being promoted on 9th July, 1811, as 'a new vessel', with 'excellent accommodations', which 'sails equally fast with any vessel in the employ'. During July, 1813, Mrs. S. Laming, who owned the British Queen packet, returned 'sincere thanks to her Friends and the Public, for the favours conferred on her late husband [Richard Laming] for many years', begging 'to inform them, that she continues the same business, and trusts, that a steady adherence to the comfort, convenience and safety of passengers, will induce them to patronize her endeavours to support herself and a large family in it'.³⁸

'The Old Margate Hoy' was immortalized in 1823 by Charles Lamb:

'Margate . . . was our first sea-side experiment, and many circumstances combined to make it the most agreeable holyday of my life. We had neither of us seen the sea . . . [but] can I forget thee, thou old Margate Hoy, with thy weather-beaten, sun-burnt captain, and his rough accommodations?'³⁹

³⁸ *The Times*, 17th July, 1813.

³⁹ Charles Lamb, *The Last Essays of Elia*, [1833], (Ed.) E. Blunden, (O.U.P., 1929), 34.

MARGATE PACKET..



The Royal Charlotte,

BURTHEN 90 TONS,

(An entire new Vessel, with many very extensive additional
Conveniences)

JAMES LAMING, Owner,

ROBERT PALMER, Master,

SAILS FROM

DICE QUAY, Billingsgate, London, every FRIDAY,
and from Margate to London every MONDAY,

During the Season.

After Cabin, 7s.—Fore Cabin, 5s. each Passenger.
Children in Arms, Half-Price.This Vessel takes in Goods at the usual Freight—All and
every the Dangers and Accidents of the Seas, and of Naviga-
tion of whatsoever Nature or Kind, or howsoever occasioned,
excepted.J. Laming may be spoken with on Board; at the Gun Tavern,
Billingsgate; at No. 8, Finch Lane, Cornhill; or at his House,
Duke Street, Margate.* * * No Money, Plate, Watches, or Jewels will be accounted
for, unless delivered to the Master, and paid for accordingly.To prevent Mistakes, the Friends of J. LAMING are
requested to insert the Words ROYAL CHARLOTTE on their
Directions.

Warren, Printer, Margate.

A hand-out advertising the facilities of the Royal Charlotte Packet, owned by James Laming, which conveyed passengers between London and Margate, in 1803.
[Margate Public Library, Local Collection, Arthur Rowe Bequest.]



'The Old Margate Hoy'.

[Charles Lamb, *The Last Essays of Elia*, With . . . Illustrations by Charles E. Brock, (1906), 53.]

The hoy became a popular target for caricature and literary and poetic licence. George Saville Carey offered the following advice to travellers in 1799: 'should you be disposed to go by water to Margate, you will often be under the necessity of arming yourself with a great deal of patience, and a good store of victuals; you must shut your eyes from seeing indecent scenes, your ears from indecent conversation, and your nose from indelicate smells'.⁴⁰ On 17th August, 1795, *The Morning Post and Fashionable World* reported that

'several caricaturists are now at Margate. . . . The exhibitions of the *City Ladies* ascending from the Hoys . . . present daily the most *whimsical* exhibitions'.

One very famous caricaturist who visited Margate during 1807 was James Gillray. Residing some 150 yards from the beach gave him ample opportunity to observe the arrival and departure of the hoys.

'Packet just arrived. People just landed from y^e packet. Fatigued and faded – some Sick and Invalid wrapd up in Great Coats with their Bags and Baskets of Provisions. High wind. Ladies Petticoats blowing over their heads. . . . Returning the cheapest way all sick. Mama Sucking y^e Brandy Bottle. Captain Rowe at helm – Miss Puking up her inside – some eating, some smoking, some playing at Cards – some singing, some drunk'.⁴¹

Both the arrival and departure of a hoy attracted great crowds which, as a social phenomenon, became well known as 'hoy fair'.

'Of the many delightful walks in and about Margate, this [the Pier] is the most frequented, [being] uncommonly crowded at the coming in or going out of the packets, which is generally termed *hoy fair*, and on it are frequently to be seen upwards of a thousand persons of all distinctions, indiscriminately blended together; and it can therefore be no wonder, if the humours of such a motley group, welcoming their new-comers, should not now and then occasion such diverting scenes as to baffle all possibility of description'.⁴²

Much quoted in this and other guidebooks of the time were the following lines attributed to John Wolcot, writing under the pseudonym Peter Pindar, describing the welcoming scene at Margate on the arrival of a hoy.

'Soon as thou gett'st within the Pier,
All Margate will be out I trow,
And people rush from far and near,
As if thou had'st wild beasts to show'.⁴³

⁴⁰ G.S. Carey, *The Balnea: or, An Impartial Description of All the Popular Watering Places in England*, (1799), 34–5.

⁴¹ D. Hill, *Mr. Gillray The Caricaturist*, (1965), 136–7, 143.

⁴² *The New Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs Guide*, (1809), *op. cit.*, 51.

⁴³ Quoted, for instance, in *ibid.*, 51; also in E.W. Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales or Delineations Topographical, Historical and Descriptive*, viii: Kent, (1808), 961.



A cartoon showing exhausted visitors landing at Margate after a Journey by Hoy in 1790.
[Margate Public Library, Local Collection, Parker Bequest.]

Already in 1792 John Wolcot had published *Odes of Importance, etc. . . To a Margate Hoy*, followed in 1798 by *Tales of the Hoy: Interspersed with Song, Odes and Dialogues*.

Passengers frequently had to contend with long delays or were buffeted by storms. In 1832, Captain Kennett Beacham Martin who, prior to being an employee of the General Steam Navigation Company, had commanded a sailing packet for six years, recollected how

'the passage from London to the Isle of Thanet, by fast sailing packets, . . . as far as good pilotage and nautical skill could command success, was brought to very great perfection. The vessels were handsomely modelled, . . . and possessed excellent accommodations for one hundred passengers, on a short voyage; and, with a fair wind, numbers would crowd on board for a passage to Margate, or Ramsgate; but the elements are fickle, and the voyage begun in pleasurable anticipations too often terminated in delay and disappointment: on those occasions the passengers' provisions became exhausted, and ill humour seated itself beside the empty hamper'.⁴⁴

A hoy arriving at Margate at 1 o'clock on 19th August, 1781, had accomplished the journey 'with very great difficulty', due to high winds and rough seas, so that 100 passengers, predominantly females, had found themselves 'in a very dangerous and pitiable situation'.⁴⁵ Five years later a Margate hoy bound for London 'with near 100 persons on board' collided with a collier 'and very narrowly escaped going to the bottom'.⁴⁶ The London-bound coal trade was at its busiest during the summer months and shortly after this incident it was noted that over 1,000 colliers were crowding into the Pool of London.⁴⁷ A year later another hoy bound for Margate had to ride out a violent storm prior to entering the harbour, whereupon several passengers reported that 'their situation was not to be described'.⁴⁸ During 1797, one hoy bound for Margate took twenty-seven hours to complete its voyage, the passengers being driven below deck by rain which 'made them as comfortable as the people in the black hole [of] Calcutta'.⁴⁹ On 29th August, 1804, a Margate hoy arrived up to four hours late on account of 'a very thick fog'.⁵⁰ When the Margate packet, *The Grand Falconer*, was 'dismasted off the Reculvers' early on Sunday morning,

⁴⁴ Captain K.B. Martin, *Oral Traditions of the Cinque Ports and Their Localities*, (1832), 28.

⁴⁵ *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 22nd August, 1781, 3d; also *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 23rd August, 1781, 2c.

⁴⁶ *The General Advertiser*, 22nd August, 1786, 2c.

⁴⁷ *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 9th September, 1786, 4a.

⁴⁸ *The Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser*, 21st August, 1787, 4.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 16th September, 1797.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1st September, 1804, 2d.



Voyage to Margate, (?) 1. Cruikshank.

[M. Dorothy George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire*, (1967), 154.]

16th September, 1810, its passengers were landed at Herne Bay and proceeded to Margate 'some on foot, and others in carts and other carriages'.⁵¹ Although wealthy families despised the vulgarity of the hoys, preferring to travel by public coach or in their own private carriages, coaches being favoured by ladies of fashion, coaches, too, met with accidents, it being reported from Margate on 4th September, 1795, that 'the Mail Coach this morning was overturned between Canterbury and this place'.⁵²

In 1763, John Lyons had declined to recommend the hoy 'too strongly to Ladies of great delicacy',⁵³ yet, some years later, on her first visit ever to the seaside Catherine Hutton travelled down to Margate 'in nine hours and forty minutes [but] went back in thirty-six hours'. She recalled in a letter to her father written on 19th May, 1780, that 'for four hours after we got upon the sea I was miserably ill and in strong hysterics'.⁵⁴ Her travelling companion, Mrs. André, 'was so disgusted with the hoy that she returned to town in the diligence'.⁵⁵ For one correspondent of 1800 the return passage was 'too fine to be expeditious', yet 'my female friends, . . . mild and fine as it was, were very sick indeed'.⁵⁶

Despite all the sarcasm against 'The Old Margate Hoy' and its clientèle, it was always compared to travelling by road both cheaper and more popular, as *A Guide to all the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places* noted in 1803.

'MARGATE, conveniently situated in respect to the metropolis, . . . is always enlivened by a more numerous Company than any other sea-bathing place. The Hoys, which sail every tide from Billingsgate, are cheap, and sometimes agreeable and rapid conveyances, but as the distance by land is only 73 miles, the roads good, and the vehicles numerous and certain, . . . ladies especially prefer the passage by land. . . .

TO MARGATE there are plenty of conveyances, both by sea and land. Post-chaises and stage-coaches present nothing particular, being the same in most parts of the kingdom, except that on this road the drivers of such vehicles, as well as their masters, are said to be characteristically impertinent and imposing. . . . A passage in the Margate hoy [on the other hand], which like the grave levels all distinctions, is frequently so replete with whim, incident and character, that it may be considered as a dramatic entertainment on the stage of the ocean. The fare being only five shillings for the common cabin, and half-a-guinea for the best, is a strong inducement for

⁵¹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 19th September, 1810, 3c.

⁵² *The Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 7th September, 1795, 2d.

⁵³ Lyons, *op. cit.*, 15.

⁵⁴ (Ed.) Mrs. C. Hutton Beale, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the Last Century: Letters of Catherine Hutton*, (Birmingham, 1891), 24–5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁶ Centre for Kentish Studies, Cobb MSS.

numbers to prefer this mode of travelling, though it cannot be recommended to persons of nice delicacy.

Here the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the sick and the sound, the gentlemen and the blackguard, are all jumbled together; and though there is much for the humourist to laugh at, there is more to offend the decent and well-bred, [and yet] not less than 20,000 persons annually sail to and from this port. Hence with great truth live-stock may be regarded as the principal and most lucrative branch of commerce in which the people of *Margate* are engaged. In consequence of this profitable trade, *Margate* has risen from insignificance to wealth and consequence'.⁵⁷

In reality, a hoy journey to Margate did not necessarily occupy more time and was certainly much cheaper than travelling by road. In 1771, the landward journey of 72 miles from London to Margate was accomplished in thirteen or fourteen hours at total fares of 16s. to 19s.⁵⁸ It was always possible to adopt a more leisurely approach to the landward journey, so that six years later when John Baker, a barrister of the Middle Temple and sometime Solicitor General of the Leeward Islands, travelled to Margate for a five-week vacation, he set out from London at 9 a.m. on 9th September, 1777, spent the night at Rochester and the following night at Canterbury before finally reaching Margate at 1.30 p.m. on 11th September. On the return journey he departed from Margate at 1.45 p.m. on 14th October, spent that night in Canterbury and the following night in Rochester before arriving home just after 6 p.m. on 16th October.⁵⁹

During the 1790s the single coach journey cost between 21s. and 26s.,⁶⁰ or four or five times the minimum hoy fare of 5s. When Joseph Farington, R.A., the topographical artist and diarist, returned from Broadstairs to London he left Margate by coach at 5 a.m. on 27th August, 1804, and arrived fourteen hours later in London at 7 p.m. prior to which he spent the night of the 26th in a Margate hotel.⁶¹ Although coaches ran more reliably to scheduled timetables, which was one advantage they had over the erratic times of the hoys, the latter did offer passengers opportunities to stretch their legs and it still took eleven hours to accomplish the coach journey as late as 1815.⁶²

It is not easy to calculate the total traffic which was handled by the Margate hoys and yet they seemed to have carried more passengers than the coaches. Individual coaches accommodated up to six

⁵⁷ *A Guide to all the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*, (1803), 251, 254, 256.

⁵⁸ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, xli, (1771), 167.

⁵⁹ (Ed.) P.C. Yorke, *The Diary of John Baker*, (1931), 417, 421-2.

⁶⁰ *The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufacture*, (1796), and *A Short Description of the Isle of Thanet*, *op. cit.*, 95-8.

⁶¹ (Ed.) J. Greig, *The Farington Diary*, ii, (1923), 278-9.

⁶² *The Times*, 11th July, 1815.

passengers inside,⁶³ with others riding on the outside. Even allowing for the 'great complaints' which were levied during August, 1802, at the Brighton coaches for being 'loaded with passengers, not less than eight or ten persons being frequently stowed on the outside',⁶⁴ each individual coach carried relatively few passengers. The position could be very different on the individual hoy. A guidebook of 1797 proudly announced that the hoys 'sometimes bring above a *hundred* passengers at a time',⁶⁵ and this figure is supported by newspaper reports,⁶⁶ it being noted by *The Times* on 16th September, 1797, that 'so great is the rage for watering places, that the Margate packet had, the week before last, 152 passengers on board'. The maximum number of passengers who could be carried at any one time had risen considerably from the 60-70 mentioned by John Lyons in 1763.⁶⁷ On 24th August, 1800, *The Observer* revealed that 'seven hoys last week conveyed to Margate 1,342 persons'.

In 1792, it was calculated that 'vessels bring and carry during the Bathing Season to and from London 18,000 passengers'.⁶⁸ This estimate is supported by figures which were presented in 1850 to *The Select Committee on Ramsgate and Margate Harbours*, showing the following numbers of passengers travelling to and from Margate on sailing packets.⁶⁹

<i>April to April</i>	<i>No. of Passengers</i>
1812-13	17,000
1813-14	20,506
1814-15	21,577

The volume of traffic handled by the hoys, coupled with their lower fares compared to coaches, had important social consequences for Margate. Hoys were instrumental in bringing to Margate, perhaps more than to any other resort, a widening cross-section of society during a century that was so noted for elegance and high living. Cheap water communications facilitated the development of Margate as a middle

⁶³ As per fn. 60 above.

⁶⁴ *The Times*, 18th August, 1802, 3d.

⁶⁵ *The Margate and Ramsgate Guide in Letters to a Friend*, (1797), 15.

⁶⁶ For instance, *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 22nd August, 1781, 3d; *The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 23rd August, 1781, 2c; *The General Advertiser*, 22nd August, 1786, 2c; *The Morning Post and Gazetteer*, 28th August, 1799, 2d; *The Times*, 1st September, 1804, 2d.

⁶⁷ Lyons, *op. cit.*, 15.

⁶⁸ *The Kentish Companion for the Year of Our Lord, 1792*, (Canterbury, 1792), 160.

⁶⁹ *Report from the Select Committee on Ramsgate and Margate Harbours: Together with the Proceedings of the Committee [and] Minutes of Evidence*, [660], (1850), 169.

and lower-class resort. In 1778, it was specifically stated of Margate that 'the middle and inferior classes may have recourse to the benefits of this place by the cheapness of a sea voyage; as hoys and yachts are continually passing between this place and *London* for the conveyance of goods and passengers at a very cheap rate'.⁷⁰ In 1789, it was further noted that 'the chief of the company which come by the hoys are . . . of the inferior cast; very few persons in genteel life come by water, without they are recommended by their physicians so to do, to experience the sea-sickness, which is thought to be very beneficial in some complaints'.⁷¹ It became distinctly unfashionable to be seen travelling to Margate in a hoy, *The Times* being no less explicit on 10th September, 1803, when it observed that 'at Margate the distinctive title of Fashionables is given without reserve to all the visitors of that agreeable watering place, who do not arrive there by the Hoy'.

Newspaper reports show that hoys lowered the social tone of Margate. The 'great number of people' comprising the company at Margate at the end of August, 1786, were assessed as being 'mixt as usual with *Baronets* and *Haberdashers*, *Butchers' wives* and *Honourables*'.⁷² *The Times* of 5th August, 1799, noted how 'Margate is already beginning to be crowded, as usual, with all sorts, and for all purposes', added to which 'some tradesmen have gone down to get, and others to get rid of their money'.⁷³ The legacy of hoys lowering the social tone of Margate lingered on in the minds of fashionable and discerning visitors long after they had given way to steamboats from 1815 onwards. This point is well illustrated in the following extracts from an 1828 diary describing a holiday in Ramsgate with visits to Broadstairs and Margate.

'16 August. This morning we went over to Margate. . . . At Margate we saw plenty of "hoy" people dressed in buff slippers or shoes, nankeen unspeakables and duffy coats or dressing gowns. They afforded us much amusement.

18 August. This morning . . . we hired a little boat to go to Pegwell. . . . It is celebrated for shrimps and all the Margate "hoy" people go there in abundance. We saw 8 or 10 flocks of them'.⁷⁴

Wealthy families who avoided the hoy, nevertheless, took advantage of the cheaper water communications to transport their domestic

⁷⁰ *A Tour Through the Island of Great Britain*, 8th Edn. (1778), 139.

⁷¹ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide in Letters to a Friend*, (1789), 12.

⁷² *The Daily Universal Register* (subsequently *The Times*), 1st September, 1786, 2c.

⁷³ Quoted also in J. Ashton, *Old Times: A Picture of Social Life at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, (1885), 65.

⁷⁴ Centre for Kentish Studies, U 2446 F1, *MS Journal of a Holiday in Ramsgate in 1828 including Visits to Broadstairs and Margate*.

servants. John Baker's diary records how on 12th September, 1777, 'the Hoy came in about 12 and in it the maid (Sally Matthews) Mrs. Woodington hired in London'.⁷⁵ Domestic servants certainly accounted for a proportion of the summer passengers by hoy, as George Keate observed during the 1770s. A very real risk of sea sickness is also hinted at in the following account.

'I HAVE been these three days balancing in my mind, whether I should return to town by land, or by water. The great road, however rich in beautiful prospects, hath no novelty to me, who have so frequently travelled it; – and the course of the THAMES, being perfectly new, made me rather inclined to trust the sea. . . . But then there is no conveyance on this element, but the HOYS! – And what does that signify? – there are always merry folks aboard. . . . I have seen them so many times go off in such high spirits, that I shall not dislike to make one among them. – A crowd affords variety, and is never unpleasant to me, if I have the liberty of sitting still in it. . . . Half MARGATE from the Pier-Head, and the deck of the HOY seemed already covered with passengers. – The morning was delicious. . . .

No sooner had we begun to push off, when a *good voyage* was echoed from a hundred voices at once; while, *Do not forget that parcel – My love to Harry – Tell BETTY I shall soon be in town. . . . Have you got your basket of cold meat? Take care your bonnet does not blow off – Be sure give PEGGY that letter* and a thousand such other mementos were resounded from various quarters.

I began now . . . to survey the cargo we ourselves had on board. – It consisted of a few gentlemen, who, like myself, enjoyed a passage by sea; – some decent shopkeepers, and their wives, who had been washing off the summer dust of LONDON, – and the remainder chiefly composed of the servants of families, that had left MARGATE, who were all extremely communicative, and appeared to have spent their time in that happy idleness, which such an excursion from home usually gives them.

The rolling of the ship gave a new turn to matters. Some put on a very serious countenance, – some turned pale, – others complained of a swimming in their head, – others, that everything moved *under* them, – and it was not long after, before it became very apparent, that everything moved *within* them, so I sat very quietly, and gathered up the flaps of my coat, for I hate to carry away the property of anyone. . . . In about eleven hours from the time we left MARGATE [we] were safely landed at WOOL QUAY'.⁷⁶

Margate was fairly unique in attracting shopkeeping holidaymakers from the 1770s onwards. Some London shopkeepers set themselves up in business during the summer months, but George Keate observed others who travelled to Margate purely for recreation and pleasure: 'the decent tradesman slips from town for his half-crown, and strolls up and down the Parade as much at his ease as he treads his own shop, [while] his wife, who perhaps never eloped so far from the metropolis before,

⁷⁵ Yorke, *op. cit.*, 417–8.

⁷⁶ George Keate, *Sketches from Nature, Taken, and Coloured, in A Journey to Margate*, 5th Edn., (1802), 245–8, 251.



'The o'er-washing billows.'
[Lamb, *op. cit.*, 55.]

stares with wonder at the many new objects which surround her'.⁷⁷ On 30th August, 1774, *The Morning Chronicle* noted how

'there has not been so universal a dullness in town as there now is, since the eve of the last election. The streets are almost without passengers. The quality have left St. James's for the sake of visiting their seats and their boroughs; and the tradesmen seem in general to have deserted their shop boards and counters for Margate'.⁷⁸

Subsequently from the mid-1790s onwards domestic servants and

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁷⁸ Quoted also in J. Hampden, *An Eighteenth-Century Journal: Being a Record of the Years 1774-1776*, (1940), 95.

shopkeepers were joined by patients travelling to and from the Margate or General Sea Bathing Infirmary which, being intended for poor people suffering from scrofula or tuberculosis, opened its doors at Westbrook on the outskirts of Margate during 1796 as not only 'the country's first hospital for tuberculosis',⁷⁹ but also as 'the oldest Orthopaedic Hospital in the world'.⁸⁰ Its foundation five years previously in 1791 owed much to the famous eighteenth-century Quaker physician, Dr John Coakley Lettsom (1744–1815), who firmly believed that fresh air, sea-water, sunlight and regular habits were essential to the treatment of many diseases, especially those of the chest, and all tubercular troubles.⁸¹ In promoting the institution he argued on 2nd July, 1791, that 'among the numerous places of resort on the Sea-coast none appeared to him, as well as to several others, to whom he had intimated his design, so proper as Margate or its vicinity, the extreme salubrity of that part of the coast, and the ready and cheap conveyance thither giving that Place a decided preference to all others'.⁸² Hoys fixed the location of a 'General Sea Bathing Infirmary' at Margate, as was made clear in 1801 in 'Hints for Establishing a Sea-Bathing Infirmary at Margate for the Poor of London', for 'by the Thames, a cheap conveyance to sea water is commanded and hence Margate, or its vicinity, seems peculiarly adapted for this salutary purpose'.⁸³ By January, 1816, within twenty years of its opening, it had treated 3,756 patients.⁸⁴

Hoys, by allowing a widening cross-section of society to travel to Margate for pleasure, inevitably stimulated the holiday trades of the resort, as *The Times* was quick to report on 13th September, 1804.

'We are now gathering in a most plenteous harvest. Ship and coach loads of cocknies are arriving every day, so that we are fuller than we have been all this season, which is one of the fullest we have ever known. Our lodging houses can with difficulty muster an extra bed for a new visitor; and all the provisions in our market are bought up early in the morning. . . . Our bathing machines are all in a state of constant requisition, and . . . our Doctors find the number of their patients considerably on the increase'.

⁷⁹ C. Dainton, *The Story of England's Hospitals*, (1961), 93.

⁸⁰ F.G. St. Clair Strange, *The History of the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital Margate 1791–1991*, (Rainham, 1991), 13.

⁸¹ Dainton, *op. cit.*, 93; also A. Raistrick, *Quakers in Science and Industry*, (1950), 311.

⁸² Centre for Kentish Studies, *The Original Minutes of the Margate Infirmary, 1791–3*, 2nd July, 1791.

⁸³ J.C. Lettsom, *Hints Designed to Promote Beneficence, Temperance and Medical Science*, iii, (1801), 236–7.

⁸⁴ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, lxxxvi, (1816), 17.

Popular entertainments of the 1800s included pier promenading, a camera obscura and donkeys,⁸⁵ it being 'the fashion . . . especially at *Margate* for the Company to amuse themselves by riding on Asses'.⁸⁶

The humble 'hoy', subsequently restyled a 'packet' or 'yacht', played a major role in promoting the growth and popularity of Hanoverian Margate. It was a major sustaining factor in its early rise. On the basis that *The Morning Chronicle*, of 8th September, 1810, having noted that it was 'crowded with company', could consider it 'as London in miniature, being in many circumstances an epitome of that vast metropolis', it seems logical, therefore, to apply the label 'London-by-the-Sea' to Margate at an earlier date than it is applied to Brighton.

⁸⁵ John Whyman, 'The Uniqueness of Margate as a Seaside Resort (Part IV)', *The East Kent Critic*, No. 170, (June, 1977), 3.

⁸⁶ *The Thanet Itinerary or Steam Yacht Companion*, (1819), 42.