Introduction

The Later Medieval Kent Conference was a suitable ornament for the eponymous book, edited by Sheila Sweetinburgh, for its audience numbered over a hundred, a telling indication of the subject’s (and organiser’s) popularity. The Conference was divided into four panels covering: Aristocracy; Economy; Church and; Town. It was in Mary Berg’s introduction of the first session’s speakers, David Grummitt and Richard Eales, that the theme of chess was first mentioned, it being Richard’s particular interest. So it was as a looking-glass or speculum, a medieval mirror for self-improvement, that the game stayed Alice-like in my mind during this stimulating conference.

Panel 1: Aristocracy – chaired by Mary Berg

The Kentish Aristocracy in the Later Middle Ages: a County Community?

Dr David Grummitt
We began not with kings and queens but instead with knights and castles. David Grummitt discussed whether there was a sense of ‘county community’ among knights, esquires and ‘parish gentry’ of Kent during this late medieval period. Could a county community be said to exist when there are three distinctly negative factors present: the wide disparity in the circumstances of Kent gentry; the sheer size of the county and thirdly; its varied topography?

Firstly Dr Grummitt noted that few nobles held substantial lands in Kent. Perhaps this lack of aristocratic landholding in such a strategic area was partly due to the unfortunate example of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent who had rebelled against both William the Conqueror and William Rufus. In the fifteenth century, as David Grummitt demonstrated, Crown lands and noble holdings both added up to only 10.2% of the total, compared to 30% held by the Church. This meant that some 60% of Kent was held by some 272 gentry families, ranging from Thomas Brown, whose annual income exceeded £200, to the vast and poor majority (85% or around 230 families) with around £20 each year. This paucity of noble and Crown lands meant Kent gentry were not acting as clients or servants to the dominant local aristocracy. Therefore, did the forty or so wealthy Kent gentry families hold political influence through parliamentary peerage, as has been shown to have occurred in Nottinghamshire? And what strains did political turmoil then place upon the mostly impoverished majority, who seem to have formed a relatively stable group despite the deprivations of gavelkind and exclusion from major political decision-making in the county? Furthermore, might the idea of a ‘county community’ have economic and cultural significance to Kent gentry in the fifteenth century despite such disparities in income and landholding?

David Grummitt then outlined four reasons for supporting the premise of county community; profits from bridge tolls; military service by Kent knights and the strategic importance of Kent ports during French wars; the relative stability of Kent office-holding and finally; royal service. First, a new stone bridge was built over the River Medway at Rochester between 1383-1391, through the efforts of Sir Robert Knolles and Sir John de Cobham. They then were granted royal patents for the Corporation of the Wardens and Commonalty of Rochester Bridge. This corporation was ‘hugely influential’ in helping to foster a sense of community among the gentry, as knights were paid to be members of parliament through the profits made by the bridge.

Secondly, there was a ‘genuine commitment to the Lancastrian cause in France by Kentish gentry’, for twelve out of twenty-seven knights served in the French wars for Henry VI, often garrisoned in Gascon castles. Military service therefore an important factor in uniting Kent knights to defend king, country and county and in forging personal and public links, cemented by marrying into other armigerous families in the shire. The knights’ military service in France also might explain their relative absence from political affairs in Kent. Furthermore, the strategically important ports of Sandwich and Dover made the French wars of particular relevance to the careers of knights of the shire. The Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports was a vital appointment and key to linking Kent gentry to the cause of the king. For example, this royal post was held by Humphry, Duke of Gloucester (died 1440) and later by the Earl of Warwick and under Henry VII by Lord Abergavenny.

Thirdly, the stability of office-holding is emphasised by the small number of families, such as the Pympes and Cheneys, whose members held the top positions in the county. From 1422 to 1509 this numbered no more than fifteen families, with fewer elite as the century progressed. At the beginning of the fifteenth century new families had come from outside Kent due to Lancastrian preference. However, from 1440s the influence of the Duke of Gloucester waned (his wife Eleanor was arrested for witchcraft in 1441 and the Duke died in 1447). Furthermore, a number of scions (or rather ‘old warhorses’) of Kentish families also died in the 1440s. This resulted in posts being held by new people, with legal rather than military backgrounds. Sir James Fiennes was made Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1447 and his acquisitive nature and corruption was a factor in Cade’s rebellion of 1450, for it seems as if the Kent gentry had disengaged from politics in the 1440s.

Finally, royal service, as defined by membership of the king’s household and the king’s affinity, also played a role in fostering the sense of county community. For example, Richard III’s usurpation sent ‘shockwaves’ through the county and following the failed rebellion, some Kent knights joined Henry Tudor on the continent. Richard then gave Kent offices to northerners which led to Kent gentry playing no part at Bosworth for Richard. Therefore early sixteenth century Kent gentry were very tied to the Tudor royal affinity.

In conclusion, Dr Grummitt maintained that, although less hierarchical and elite by the beginning of the sixteenth century, ties of kinship were still important in engendering a sense of county community. When those ties were broken in 1440s, culminating in Cade’s rebellion, they were rebuilt by royal service which drew upon an ethos of...
loyalty to the king.

**Castles and Politics in Late Medieval Kent**

Richard Eales

From knights we moved across to rooks or rather to castles and castle historiography. Debate has raged in the new discipline of castle studies (now with its own journal) over the meaning and purpose of castles. For, as Richard Eales pointed out, the real interest in castles lies in how much they embody medieval life and how much they are, as he phrased it, ‘intimately bound up with change’; that is, not only social and military changes over time but also alterations in political status and the king’s power.

New advances in dendro-chronology have allowed architectural historians to trace different phases of building, for example, we now know that the top two floors of the White Tower of London were not completed until the 1490s and also that a great deal of work was also done on some of the older buildings at Dover Castle in this period; such advances allow us to trace changes to castle households. Historians concerned with castle studies, such as Matthew Johnson, R. Higham and M. Salter now tend to explore the contextualisation of these buildings and investigate their usage as multi-functional places, moving away from the assumed priority of defence. Their work argues against the classic studies of R. A. Brown and D. C. King, who saw castles as primarily military in purpose and principally for defence with the gradual changes to wealthier and more elaborate, but less impressive defensive structures, of the later medieval fortified residences forming a narrative of ‘decline’, from moat to fishpond to ornamental lake. From this general introduction, Richard Eales then discussed Kent castles and politics in particular, focussing first on royal and then private castles, the interpretation problems with licences to crenellate and, finally a brief mention of the large ecclesiastic residences of Kent.

Certain themes run through the history of Kent and its castles and it is this rich mixture which makes Kent so fascinating to study. For example, there were the rebellions of 1381 and 1450; the geographical engagement with Europe which was sometimes martial as in 1295 attack on Dover and 1457 attack on Sandwich; the great power and landholdings of the Church; the relatively few great nobles; the privileges of the Cinque Ports; and the influence of nearby London. D.C. King called Kent ‘the invasion coast’ perhaps a back projection to the 1940s, but castles cannot block invasion routes and A. Emery has played down the French threat as a reason for Kent castle-building.

In 1399 some thirty Lancastrian castles were brought back to the Crown, while later Edward IV received Yorkist castles. However, royal castles were high maintenance structures and their numbers in general fell during the later medieval period, with many reports of decline and dereliction which could not be prevented by the maximum permitted expenditure by the local sheriff of £5 per annum. Although as Richard Eales pointed out, these castles’ impending doom might have been exaggerated by sheriffs keen to ensure any subsequent structural problems were not blamed on their poor guardianship, nevertheless there was indubitably some cutting back on minor castles. However, in Kent all the royal castles standing in 1300 were still there in 1500 plus one brand new addition – Queenborough on the Thames estuary at a cost then of some £20,000. So Kent enjoyed royal expenditure on its castles at a higher level than sustained elsewhere. Dover as the most important castle in the area and the headquarters of the Warden of the Cinque Ports was well maintained; Rochester had dereliction reports in 1340 and 1360 but repairs were made; while Leeds Castle was kept as a residence for Queens and so its upkeep was also sustained. Canterbury Castle however was merely in receipt of £5 per annum and eventually this money was spent on the town walls instead. Even from this swift appraisal it is clear that royal castles had a wide range of functions.

It used to be thought that private castles required the granting of a licence to crenellate in order to be built from
1200 onwards. However, C. Coulson demolished this idea as very many castles were built without, it seems, a shred of evidence of such licences being granted – Scotney being an example. Thus these licences might have been a ‘non-enactial icing on the cake’ for upwardly mobile gentry keen to display their wealth and landholding but each castle must be contextualised and not every case may reflect the undoubted changes in social mobility as evidenced at Penshurst Place. The peak of grants of licence (not all of which may have been acted upon) fell in the second quarter of fourteenth century which do not correlate exactly with war although requests may well have been influenced by the disorder of Henry II’s reign. Thus these documents have little to do with actual warfare but some requests do mention needs of defence. This was possibly merely rhetoric, although Shoford was granted a licence in 1382 after it had been burnt down by insurgents. Even lightly, or badly-defended castles or fortified residences (such as Bodiam, built in a dip with poorly sited and outdated arrow slits) nevertheless had value in unsettled times, as an example, Richard Eales read out one of the Paston letters discussing Caister Castle in Norfolk which four well-trained soldiers could hold secure, hardly an army.

Finally Richard Eales mentioned the huge ecclesiastical residences at Knole, Ford and Otford, the sheer size of these sites (as well as the large monasteries), indicate the scale of resources of the county not in the hands of the gentry. This was, as Richard pointed out, a swift tour of the castles of Kent and some of the problems faced by historians studying them, but it was accompanied by a thoughtful bibliography and a list of twenty-two ‘Licences to Crenellate in the Historic County of Kent from 1127 to 1487’ taken from C. Coulson ‘On Crenellating, in Kent and Beyond’ in The Castle Studies Group Journal, 21 (2007-8).

Panel 2: Economy – chaired by Diane Heath
Following coffee and a browse of the excellent and far too tempting bookstall, we returned to the Grimond Lecture Theatre, looking forward to papers by Gillian Draper and Sheila Sweetinburgh on later medieval Kent tradesmen and peasants, respectively, and collectively perhaps the pawns of my chess conceit.

**Tinker, Tailor, Merchant, Sailor: Trades and Occupations in a Maritime County**

Dr Gillian Draper

Dr Draper’s paper was more far-reaching than her chapter in *Later Medieval Kent* which focused on just two trades. This was an examination of the evidence for the geographical spread of trades based on local records. For example, carpenters in the New Romney area could be land-based or ship-based. The wide variety of sources also reveals the use of by-names which, before thirteenth century, generally accurately related to occupations, for example Mason or Shipper, mainly because the necessary property, skills and equipment were handed down. Where by-names no longer reflected the person’s occupation, the Lay Subsidy records reveal this. Beyond the thirteenth century by-names are not so reliable but Henry Glazier was still working as his name suggests in the post-Reformation period in Rye. Other useful information may be gleaned from tax records such as the local import taxes levied at Fordwich, called Maletotes and paid to St Augustine’s Abbey, on goods (including cat skins) traded between French ports and Battle in Sussex, which also list the double charge for Jewish passengers (4d instead of tuppence) levied until their expulsion in 1290.

The Cinque Ports, new research has shown, depended largely on fishing, but fishermen were also seafarers, shipping both trade goods and passengers. However, here too some by-names were very specific such as John le Cod, who took three days to take his by then not-so-fresh fish by road across Kent to Lewisham.

In a paper littered with plentiful examples, I happily noted that Drapier was a French occupational name referring to large-scale linen drapers such as the merchant family who lived next door to the goldsmiths in Canterbury.
sometime before 1240. Of the 821 Canterbury freemen noted in the Rolls from 1298-1328, 240 had by-names of trades, and we have records of market traders such as Margaret Garlick. Tonbridge has sparser records in late fourteenth century but we have archaeological evidence of metalworking and smithies near the castle, this is useful evidence as, Dr Draper informed us, metalworking is poorly recorded in Kent but was probably important.

To sum up, sources for evidence of trades and by-names are plentiful in Kent where towns were incorporated early and a large number of records survive but we also need to look beyond Kent for comparative analyses. Dr Draper’s expertise is examining local medieval records is clearly immense but her lightness of touch ensured her paper was a delight to hear.

Agricultural Practices in the Medieval Kentish Marshlands

Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh

We began with an examination of Kent’s geography – essential background for a paper on medieval agriculture. Thus we need to be aware of both natural and man-made factors; e.g. topographical features like the Weald of Kent; geographical and agricultural systems such as the network of rivers; the fact that Kent is bounded on three sides by water; and the climate which during this period meant Kent enjoyed colder winters and drier summers. Other vital factors were the position of the market towns and the county’s proximity to London.

Patterns of seigneurial ownership were also different from other counties, i.e. there were both large and small ecclesiastical landowners and the minor noble landowners usually holding only a single manor, for there were no great magnates with patrimonies in Kent. Another important point is the fact that Kent manorial boundaries are not contiguous with parish boundaries, and lands were often parcelled in different parishes (unlike the East Midlands where manors share the same boundaries as parishes); denes might be held on the Weald and there were differences between demesne lands and parish lands. The peasantry might be gavelkinders, that is free but owing labour, service and rent for their land, or cotters who had to perform more labour and services. There were very few common rights, so little common pasture existed and the basic land unit was the farmstead, in the southern marshlands they were called ‘tenementum’ and held from ecclesiastical landowners, and land parcels were called ‘sulings’ around Thanet. Landowners would make deals with the peasantry to clear or reclaim land, but there were no great open field systems, just a scattering of unenclosed plots and neighbours were not obliged to do the same as each other although it made sense to co-operate. By 1300 the division of land due to gavelkind, participle inheritance and sub-letting, led to small plots, and both servile and free peasantry paid money rents which were fixed by custom not by market value. This led to a relatively high population density, plentiful labour for working demesne lands and to a richer peasantry and more intensive farming regimes. These forms of landholding made Kent ahead of the game in terms of agricultural practices as this paper ably demonstrated.

Sources for agricultural practices in later medieval Kent are garnered from landscape and aerial photography; from archaeological excavations of farmsteads, boundaries and industrial sites such as Lydd quarries; and thirdly, from charters and manorial records, including Beadle Rolls, surveys, rentals and court records. They highlight that by 1300 and especially in the east of the county, a horticultural system was in place, which used manuring, marling and liming and both wheeled and swing ploughs. These advanced practices led to continuous cropping due to the use of legumes for fodder crops and production of hay, which allowed stall and sty-fed livestock (i.e. there was no need to kill all your animals in the autumn because you could feed them over the winter). So not only could sheep, goats and pigs be kept over winter but horses too as they largely replaced oxen for ploughing using a lighter plough which was easier to turn so that fields could be smaller. An integrated mixed farming system developed, with 60% grain production and 40% legumes (peas, beans and vetch) which did not leave fields fallow except when too full of weeds. Wheat was usually winter sown and barley (for brewing) spring sown, while oats were grown on the Marshlands in spring too,
with the limited meadowland used for hay. There were higher stock levels than average for England, especially cows which enjoyed careful husbandry and stock selection from other manors. Sheep were less intensively farmed, usually being on permanent grassland. Finally, it should be noted that there were specialist seasonal workers, such as dairymaids but also poultry-keepers usually associated with demesne lands.

Dr Sweetinburgh then turned to two case studies, firstly the Marshlands from 1250 and secondly, fifteenth century Monkton. Systematic enclosure of the marshlands occurred from 1200 onwards with ditching and wall-building for land drainage, which led to a rapid expansion of the population and the need for intensive farming on peasant-held as well as demesne lands, and included salt-making and wild-fowling. There were dispersed farmsteads and churches rather than villages and an analysis of their tax records reveals their agricultural surpluses. Three-quarters kept sheep but 80% of the population held less than 21 animals, all kept pigs but just 58% owned cows and usually in very small herds, this is backed up by the archaeological evidence of animal bones in the Lydd area. It seems that livestock were raised principally for milk and wool, rather than meat. Cropping patterns are difficult to analyse from records of surpluses but it seems that more oats than wheat was grown, and most grew legumes, which were important for green manure. Some flax was also grown, evidenced by excavated loom weights, and fishing, cockling and salt-making were also undertaken.

Court Rolls from fifteenth century Monkton, near Thanet, show peasants were still growing wheat, barley and oats, with local mills. Livestock was grown principally for meat, an indication of a more prosperous peasantry. They supplied nearby towns, as well as important overseas livestock markets, with both carcases and live beasts, which required grazing lands near the ports, so this later period sees an acceleration towards a more pastoral economy. Substantial peasant farmers, such as Andrew Bates of Lydd, started to work with gentry who had farming interests, for example to build up estates for Oxbridge colleges, enclosing and consolidating areas of farmland. Acreages in the marshlands were small, generally between one and five acres (no inherited holdings larger than 70 acres) and were often bought by groups (presumably for sub-letting). In contrast, Monkton still had small plots but up to 200 acres might be subject to a single sale, although those holding from more than one landlord are only known through wills.

In conclusion, Sheila Sweetinburgh pointed out that much work has been done on Kent gentry but there is a lot more to be gleaned from documentary and archaeological evidence to form a clearer picture of Kent peasants and their agricultural practices.

Thanks to vicious time-keeping practices employed by the chair person, there was time for questions, so we learnt from Gill that catskins were used as trimmings on collars, and from Sheila that orchards do feature, but not prominently, in Kent records of this period; and there was a great deal of interest in the use of horses for carting and ploughing. This excellent session was then drawn to a close for well-earned brunch at Rutherford College dining hall.

Panel 3: Church – chaired by Rebecca Warren
Back refreshed, the audience was disappointed to learn that Dr Edwards had had to leave the conference early and so was not able to read her paper but happy that the task had fallen to Mary Berg. As it would have been unfair to question Mary on Elizabeth’s work, this left Rob Lutton with time to squeeze in extra case studies. The church theme naturally brought to my mind that powerful piece, the bishop of the chessboard, and we had already learnt that some 30% of Kent lands were held by the Church, signifying power and authority indeed. But both these papers concentrated on very different aspects of the Church and faith in Kent.
The religious houses of Kent in the period 1220 to 1540 were varied not only in terms of a dozen different orders but in terms of the size of their establishments. Thus they ranged from the grandest Benedictine monastic foundations of Christ Church and St Augustine’s Abbey (both founded in 598 and often numbering well over one hundred monks) and St Andrews of Rochester founded just a couple of years later.

There followed a gap of over five hundred years, until the foundation of Benedictine nunneries such as St Mary’s Abbey Malling, plus monasteries of the Cistercian and Cluniac orders, the Augustinian and Praemonstratensian Canons in the twelfth century and the explosion of mendicant orders from 1224 onwards, when Franciscans first arrived in Canterbury. Nearly all these religious houses survived until the Reformation. That is out of 31 religious houses founded by these orders in Kent, only three dissolved or decayed before the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The five alien houses fared less well, not thriving on foreign soil, thus for example, the Ghent house of Saints Peter and Paul in Lewisham began in 1081 but was dissolved in 1415 and only one (St Mary and St Easwith Priory of Folkestone) lasted until 1535.

These religious establishments were spread fairly evenly throughout Kent. However, there was some natural concentration in and around Canterbury, and it must be noted that elsewhere too, the foundations of smaller houses were possibly due to the influence of larger ones nearby, as for example, cells were granted independence, such as the Cluniac establishment at Monks Horton. This paper served as an excellent foil and background to its partner, for Rob Lutton concentrated not on the monastic but on parish faith.

**The Dissemination of the Jesus Mass in Kent, c.1460-c.1540** - Dr Rob Lutton

Devotion to the Holy Name of Christ became an important cult from the fifteenth century onwards in England. Proselytised by prelates, and Richard Rolle, its intense focus on Christ is clearly something that commented upon Lollardy. It involved contemplation and repetition of Jesus’s name and votive masses, and grew via the foundation of fraternities for lights, altars and masses in parish churches and the provisioning of these items in parishioners’ wills. Thus the growth of the cult may be ascertained by church records and testamentary evidence. Was it the result of more popular access to humanist ideas and Reformist intensification or, as Eamon Duffy would suggest, a development of traditional religious piety? Rob Lutton provided a brief overview of the geographical spread of the cult in England before moving on to analyze several in-depth case studies in Kent and some tentative conclusions.

In England this votive mass was recorded as early as 1403 in Yorkshire and had probably first been celebrated up to a decade earlier. The cult (and this word was used) spread slowly southwards via the Midlands so that by 1450 there was fairly widespread national coverage (but with only weak support in the West Country), with weekly masses for the Holy Name and the beginning of fraternities. Margaret Beaufort endowed a feast in 1489 at Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury. So Kent was in the forefront of the development of fraternities from around the late fifteenth century, mostly around Canterbury which also enjoyed a less regularly supported mass for the Five Wounds of Christ. However, there was no mention of this cult or the cult of the Holy Name in the diocese of Rochester or much evidence for it in West Kent. Through his detailed research and examination of local wills, Dr Lutton has discovered that 31 Kent parishes had celebrated this mass before 1480; it was mentioned in a will from Sandwich in 1466 and one from Ashford in 1479. From 1480 to 1500 its use spread to other parishes in Canterbury, (such as St. Andrews in 1485) other Kent parishes including Herne, Whitstable and Birchington, so the cult’s urban nature was still a feature
but it was spreading to the villages of the urban hinterland and to the weald. Finally in the period up to 1532 the cult was well-established in the Canterbury area and still increasing during the early 1500s but had waned in popularity by 1520.

The patchy nature of the cult was revealed in the case studies Rob Lutton then presented, for their evidence exhibits marked fluctuations in popularity in different periods over time. For this reason alone it would have been interesting to have compared these case studies with other popular cults had there been time to do so. Dr Lutton looked at how and by whom the cult was introduced, for example there was a first bequest at St. Mary in Sandwich by R. Bolton in 1466 which seems to indicate that it was not regular before then but the parish priest seems to have been very keen on this devotion so there were several more bequests before the turn of the century when the cult waned. At the Holy Cross in Canterbury (the only church built in Canterbury in the fourteenth century) it was recorded that J. Clark gave six shillings to the ‘fraternitie masse de Jh’u’. In Cranbrook in 1499 a ‘light of Jesus’ and a ‘light before the Cross’ are mentioned and in the following year 20d was left for lights with five shillings to have someone say the mass.

Was the cult an expression of popular piety or a top-down phenomenon? Dr Lutton concluded that it began as a popular cult, due partly to its traditional but revivalist nature as a private intercessionary. However, it became institutionalised at the parish level which is when its devotees among the laity began to fall away.

Panel 4: Town – chaired by Ian Coulson

The diagonal trajectories of popular piety in late medieval Kent took us to tea and an appropriately eager band of questioners quickly gathered around Dr Lutton as there had been no time for a formal Q&A session. It seemed impossible that we had come to the final part of the conference as tempus always fugits when one is enjoying such events. While chess-like one might compare walled medieval towns and cities to castles, here I had the whole checkerboard of place, position and procession laid out in my mind, formed upon the higgledy-piggledy (note that fine architectural term) medieval tiled roofs of Sandwich.

Ian Coulson introduced our two final speakers with aplomb, while not forgetting to mention that everyone would benefit from joining the Kent Archaeological Society. It must be said that these papers worked together very well, the first being Sheila Sweetinburgh’s micro-history of an event in Sandwich in 1532, focussing on the use of urban space and the second being Sarah Pearson’s masterly examination of late medieval townhouse layout and usage, including standing architecture in Sandwich.

The Use and Abuse of Urban Spaces in Late Medieval Kent

Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh

On 24th August, 1532 the curate of a chantry and three churchwardens were arrested, according to the Old Red Book of Sandwich. Not a ‘hold the front-page’ event perhaps, but in Sheila’s excellent paper this ‘small nugget’ of a report allowed; an examination of the use and abuse of urban space; a reflection on the repercussions of transgression and; a broadening out of the analysis to discuss the negotiation of the political in late medieval northern European society.

Why were the arrests made? The town mayor and jurats were very concerned that the annual procession to St. Bartholomew’s Hospital would be disrupted by the argument between the chantry priests and the clergy of St. Peter’s over who should take the High Mass at the hospital. So the leading town officers sought to regain control of the chantry and the procession by replacing the clergy of St Peter’s with more amenable people. Was it the views of Sir
John Young, the curate, that were so unacceptable? He had not been long in Sandwich and had acted in only a couple of wills, but enough perhaps to give an indication that some humanist ideas may have been circulating, for he witnessed Alexander Aldays’ will in May 1532 who was from a substantial urban and farming family of East Kent and a young and prosperous jurat. However, the town officers were much more concerned about the transgressive disruption of an important civic and religious ritual and part of their ‘ever-ancient duties’. So this ritual formed an oral testimony, part of the town’s collective memory and its records of antiquity provide the necessary authenticity and authority. As Dr Sweetinburgh summed up, ‘what was written down was what you did’. Here civic sense and the responsibilities of the civic authorities focused on St Bartholomew’s Hospital for this was where the town’s saint resided, that is, St. Bartholomew’s relics were housed at his eponymous hospital. The lack of a procession to honour the Town saint did not merely affect civic pride it could clearly affect the goodwill bestowed on the town by its saint. Moreover, a highly-charged political event was about to occur, in that Henry VIII was due to visit the town in September. The mayor and jurats would have been keen to ensure that not a single breath of a suspicion of insurrection should blemish the town on their watch, for one of their citizens, Manwood, had already been involved in a case against the Crown.

However, the town authorities blamed individuals, rather clerics in general. 1534 saw the appointment of a new priest, Green, generally regarded in the town as a good man, although with the jurat Butler and with a second priest Croft, he formed a ‘small but vocal’ reform movement in the town; it was Croft who in 1545 was to pull down the images in the Church. So the actions of the town’s authorities should not be seen as ‘anti-clericalism’ as Peter Clark has mentioned, but rather as actions against particular persons. This opens up areas of discussion as to why, how and who valued civic ritual; the negotiations of their roles; and how conflicts were resolved. This abuse of space in an urban setting and its repercussions tells us much about the mentalités of this late medieval period.

This paper discussed the physical ambience of life in Kent towns, where there are sufficient medieval survivals, which meant Sarah Pearson focused on Canterbury, Sandwich and Faversham. In the late medieval period there was not an especially Kentish form of housing, so the buildings are fairly standard. However, they differed according to size, the status of the town and the necessities of the work undertaken by townspeople.

In Canterbury there was a fair sprinkling of gentry, professionals and pilgrims – hence the huge inns, such as the Chequer of Hope built in 1392-5. Sandwich reflects its status as a major port, so its buildings are varied. Smaller houses still exist in Rochester, Faversham and Charing. In this period people lived above shops but we have very little information about them. For example, some shops may have been sub-let, but the evidence for this has gone. However, Canterbury’s multi-storey tenements of tradespeople are unique in Kent.

In Sandwich the population in the late medieval period was around 2,000 (it is now roughly 4,500). In the town centre several large houses had open halls to the roof but some had inserted floors. There is evidence of non-domestic activity such as wool and grain storage (goods being hauled up by hoist) in what was probably also the merchant’s own home. Shops at the front had no access to the rest of the house, perhaps for security or because they were rented out. Smaller dwellings away from the centre of town enjoyed a fairly wide frontage for the hall, rather than having the hall at the back of the house as in the town centre. In Faversham, halls in residential areas were pushed to the back and there is evidence of this design also by the end of fifteenth century in New Romney, Charing, Hythe and Tenterden.
At Whitefriars, Canterbury in 1497, four small houses were built with a shop and buttery (basically a large larder) and a hall behind open to the roof, with a first floor chamber above the shop and buttery. To gain an income, the parish churches allowed small houses to be built on slivers of land from the sides of graveyards.

From the thirteenth century people in London and Canterbury were used to dwelling upstairs, without open halls, and generally by 1530s open halls had ceased to be built. However, there is evidence from Sandwich that prominent citizens kept their halls open to the roof as a display of space, wealth and status, with a narrow hall on the first floor. It is here that probate records reveal suits of armour and other valuable items were displayed. So we have evidence of a change in living conditions over time and place, with increasing use of multiple chambers, tying into probate records which record increasing and more varied amounts of personal goods.

Questions focused on heating open halls and shops, for there is very little evidence for how (and even if) this was done, such as timber and plaster chimneys, or portable braziers. We cannot assume places were heated where no corroborative evidence exists.

Conclusion

Location, location, location; politically, Kent was clearly one of the places to be in later middle ages due its strategic proximity to both continent and capital. But there was so much more; the learning and sanctity of Canterbury; the ancient Cinque Ports; agricultural advances and abundance, profitable trade routes and the spread of new religious ideas all made Kent connected, vigorous, vibrant and its history engrossing.

So the final happy part of this report, its endgame, is to offer many thanks to all the contributors, speakers, audience and especially to Dr Sweetinburgh, to whom Ian Coulson presented a small token of our collective esteem. It is also my pleasant task to urge everyone to buy the book, for as Caxton said of his work, *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*, ‘thys sayd book is ful of holsom wysedom and requysyte unto every astate and degree’.

*Diane E. Heath, December, 2011*


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