

S O U R C E S No.3 The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts

THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF ARCHIVES was set up in 1945 as part of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. It acts as a central collecting point for information, mainly unpublished, about the nature, contents and availability of manuscript material of every type and date of value for the study of history. Although limited in principle to England and Wales, the Register includes much information about records in Scotland and Northern Ireland. For these records, however, enquiry should also be made to the separate National Register of Archives (Scotland), PO Box 36, HM General Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YY, or to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, 66, Balmoral Avenue, Belfast BT9 6NY. The Register also contains a certain amount of information about records relating to Britain that are held in repositories overseas.

By the terms of the Commission's warrant, records designated as Public Records, that is to say records of the central government and courts of law are specifically excluded from its scope. All other records fall within the field of its enquiries. The records with which the Register is mainly concerned include papers of individuals of note, families and estates, local authorities, religious institutions and bodies, business and industrial undertakings, political and other organisations and associations.

The Register consists of a numbered series of reports with related indexes. Since they are all subject to continuous expansion and revision they are organised and intended for use by personal consultation on the Commission's premises. A Search Room is open to students Monday to Friday 9.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m., except on accepted public holidays. No written introduction or reader's ticket is required. An appointment is normally unnecessary. Limited and specific enquiries can be answered by post.

THE MANORIAL DOCUMENTS REGISTER has been maintained by the Commission since 1958. The conduct of the manor's business produced two groups of documents; the administrative, which includes surveys, rentals, terriers, maps and plans, and accounts, and the judicial, arising from the business of the manor court, such as court rolls, court books, formularies and lists of freemen and officials.

At present, this Register consists of 1) the original lists of manorial documents supplied by lords, stewards or record repositories, arranged alphabetically by manors within counties, and stating where they are held, and 2) an alphabetical index of parishes showing the manors within each parish. No actual manorial documents are held in the custody of the Commission. The Manorial Documents Register is open to inspection at the Commission's Offices from 9.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Separate leaflets on "The Commission's history and activities", its "Publications", and "The National Register of Archives" are available on request from:-

Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts,
Quality House, Quality Court,
Chancery Lane, London, WC2A 1HP.

Telephone enquiries 01-242-1198

Nearest Underground Station - Chancery Lane on the Central Line.

I N F O R M A T I O N S O U R C E S

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL
Archives Office,
County Hall,
Maidstone, ME14 1XH
Tel: Maidstone 67411
Ext. 3363 and 3312

KENT EDUCATION COMMITTEE
County Library,
Springfield, Maidstone
Tel: Maidstone 671411

DIVISIONAL LIBRARIES and
MAJOR BRANCH COLLECTIONS

ASHFORD	Ashford
CANTERBURY	Canterbury Herne Bay
DARTFORD	Dartford
DOVER	Dover Deal
GILLINGHAM	Gillingham
GRAVESHAM	Gravesend
MAIDSTONE	Maidstone
MEDWAY	Chatham Rochester
SEVENOAKS	Sevenoaks
SHEPWAY	Folkestone Hythe
SWALE	Sittingbourne Faversham Sheerness
THANET	Margate Ramsgate
TONBRIDGE- MALLING	Tonbridge
TUNBRIDGE WELLS	Tunbridge Wells

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON
HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS
Quality House, Quality Court,
Chancery Lane, London WC2 1HP
Tel: 01-242-1198

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL LIBRARY
AND ARCHIVES
Canterbury, CT1 2EG
Tel: Canterbury 63510

HYTHE ARCHIVES REPOSITORY
Council Offices,
Stade Street, Hythe
Tel: Hythe 66152
Visits by appointment

EASTGATE HOUSE MUSEUM
High Street, Rochester
Tel: Medway 44176

THE HOUSE OF LORDS RECORD OFFICE
House of Lords
Westminster, London, SW1A 0PW
Tel: 01-219-3074 (Direct Line)
01-219-3000 (Switchboard)

LAMBETH PALACE LIBRARY
Lambeth Palace Road
London. SE1 7JU
Tel: 01-928-6222

THE MUNIMENT ROOM AND LIBRARY
Westminster Abbey
London, SW1P 3PA
Tel: 01-222-4233

THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE
Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1LR
Tel: 01-405-0741
also at Kew, Richmond, Surrey

RECORD KEEPERS DEPT. PRINCIPAL
REGISTRY of the FAMILY DIVISION
Somerset House
Strand, London, WC2R 1LP
Tel: 01-405-7641
Ext. 3659

THE BRITISH LIBRARY
DEPARTMENT OF MANUSCRIPTS
Great Russell Street
Bloomsbury, London WC1B 3DG
Tel: 01-636-1544

TENTERDEN AND DISTRICT Local History Society - contd.

- 29 Nov. '78 Local Industries L.R.A. Grove, B.A.
 31 Jan. '79 Smugglers and Coastguards. W.Webb
 28 Feb. Tenterden Miscellany. Mrs. C.H.Sykes

TONBRIDGE Historical Society. Adult Education Centre, Avebury Avenue
 at 7.45 p.m. unless otherwise stated. Visitors welcome 4Op-under 18 2Op

- 5 Oct. '78 The North American Indian. C.Brookeman, B.A.
 4 Nov. 3 p.m. - Two-Session meeting with tea.
 Magna Carta, 1215: Kings, Barons and
 Churchmen in the Middle Ages A.McLean, M.A.
 7 Dec. After '68: confrontation and consensus
 in Italian politics. M.Caesar, B.A.
 18 Jan. '79 The History and Development of the
 Royal Parks. J.R.Hare, M.V.O.,
 N.D.H.
 22 Feb. The Stafford Dukes of Buckingham and
 Lords of Tonbridge. P.F.J.Tobin, M.A.

WYE Historical Society. New Lecture Theatre, Wye College at 8 p.m.
 Visitors welcome.

- 11 Oct. '78 The Origins and Early Development of
 the Kentish Hop Industry. Dr. D. Baker
 15 Nov. Hadrian's Wall. Rev. H.F.Wickings
 6 Dec. Archives and the Archivist. Miss A.Oakley
 10 Jan. '79 A.G.M.
 7 Feb. Members Evening.
 7 Mar. An Engineer's Thoughts on the Building
 of the Roman Shore Forts. J.D.Latham

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THE PILCHERS AT TOWNSEND FARM.

A Nineteenth century farming family of south-east Kent.

A.L.Macfie

Townsend Farm lies at the end of the high street of St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe, a small Kentish village situated on the downs mid-way between Dover and Deal, about half a mile from the sea. There in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries lived the Pilchers, yeoman farmers, farming nearly five hundred acres of arable and pasture. Their origins remain obscure; and they disappear almost as surreptitiously as they came. Yet in their time they became one of the most substantial and respected families in the neighbourhood. Their surviving records, few and inadequate though they are, enable us to catch a glimpse of their lives and to learn something of farming in south-east Kent in their time.

The Pilchers first appear in the records of St. Margaret's in the early eighteenth century. In 1722 a John Pilcher of St. Margaret's, married Elizabeth Clement at St. George's, Canterbury; and in 1727 a William Pilcher, also of St. Margaret's, married Edith Chitty, daughter of John Chitty, Blacksmith, who in 1715 purchased Palmer's Court, one of the principal manors of the parish. They came no doubt from one of the neighbouring parishes, where the name Pilcher often appears: from Swingfield, perhaps, where a John Pilcher resided in 1700, or from Eastry, where a William Pilcher, yeoman, resided in 1705.

In or about 1780, another John Pilcher leased Townsend Farm already one of the principal farms in the parish, from Elizabeth, daughter of John Icken, town clerk of Canterbury, and wife of Daniel Newman, barrister-at-law. He evidently prospered, for during the following years he bought a number of small pieces of land, and in 1818 Townsend itself, together with Old Bottom, a neighbouring Farm of about ninety acres. In 1795 he married Betsy Wood, daughter of Kingsford Wood, yeoman of St. Margaret's, and sister of Thomas Kingsford Wood, also of St. Margaret's, who later returned the compliment by marrying his sister. They had eight children, three sons, William, James and Jesse, and five daughters, Mary, Elizabeth, Sarah-Anne, Maria and Jane.

Townsend Farm was then comprised of about three hundred and sixty acres, made up for the most part of fragmented strips and parcels of land lying to the east of the village in what must have been in earlier times one of the great open fields. The farmhouse, a traditional steep-roofed Georgian cottage, considerably modernised and extended, no doubt by John Pilcher himself, stood, as it stands today, at right angles to the High Street, at the junction with Westcliffe Road. Attached to the house, at the street end, stood a well house, containing a donkey wheel, 12' 8" in diameter, used to raise water from a well. The farm buildings which were extensive, included a bailiff's house, three cottages, a Dutch Barn, one of the finest in Kent, and a granary.

On his death in 1826, John Pilcher left Townsend, together with Old Bottom and his other properties to his sons, William and James, as tenants in common, subject to payments chargeable on the estate of £90 per annum to his wife, Betsy, for life, £80 to his third son, Jesse and his children, if any, £12 to each of his five daughters, and £300 each to be shared between their children on their deaths. William and James however, finding this arrangement unsatisfactory, in 1834 divided the estate and the annuities chargeable on it equally between them, William taking Townsend and James Old Bottom.

EDITORIAL

For many years the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane has been suffering from lack of space to store the millions of documents which are deposited in its care. Indeed the first building was reputed to be full very soon after it was built in the nineteenth century on the site of the former Rolls Estate. Since then additional storage space has had to be found in a number of buildings in London and elsewhere.

The new Public Record Office at Kew was designed specifically for archives in order to provide a secure and controlled environment for the records and a rapid service for readers. More than two thirds of the records are now deposited in this new building which was opened by the Lord Chancellor in 1977. A great many of the records used for research by historians remain at Chancery Lane, for example the Exchequer records and those of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

As a guide to the records which are now at Kew, the back page of this issue has been devoted to the list published by the Public Record Office. In the next issue it is hoped to list those records which can still be seen at Chancery Lane.

Visitors to Kew can reach the new building by train to Kew Gardens Station by the District Line and also the Broad Street - Richmond Line. From Waterloo on the Southern Region the nearest station is Kew Bridge. The PRO Kew is quite near the river on the south side, between Ruskin Avenue and the river tow-path. The nearest bus stops are the No.908 at Kew Gardens Station, or Nos. 27 and 65 at the junction of the Kew Road and Mortlake Road.

Parochial Registers and Records Measures 1978. From January 1979 all parish registers and records over 100 years old come under strict regulations regarding their storage and preservation. It is recommended that all such records should be deposited in Diocesan Record Offices, which in Kent are likely to be the County Archive Office at Maidstone and the Canterbury Diocesan Office. There will be periodic inspections by the Bishop's nominee who will list the records with a description and a report on the contents. There will be four copies of the list, to be held by the Bishop, the Diocesan Record Office, the Incumbent or Priest-in-charge and the Parochial Church Council.

Should the Incumbent wish to retain the custody of the records of his church that come within these measures, he may do so with the Bishop's permission, but subject to regular inspection and strict rules. These include a stipulation that the container in which such records are kept must reach an agreed standard and be reasonably safe from theft, damp, rust and vermin. It should be kept in a well ventilated dry environment with a reasonably unvariable temperature throughout the twenty-four hour cycle. It is recommended that the container be opened at least once a week and remain open enough time to air the contents. No candles, grease, oil, wafers, wine, ink, or any article made of cloth are to be kept in the same container.

This is a very important measure, to be welcomed by all who are aware of the heritage value of these records.

SOURCES No.7 THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

In 23rd November 1977 a new building was opened at Kew in Surrey, to house many of the public records previously kept at Chancery Lane. A list of these records appears on this page, but it is suggested that for detailed information enquiries should be addressed to the P.R.O., Chancery Lane, London WC2 1LR (Tel: 01-405-0741).

Records at Kew

Admiralty (ADM)	Lord Chancellor's Office (LCO)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Ministry of (MAF)	Meteorological Office (BJ)
Air Ministry (AIR)	Met. Police Force (MEPO)
Aviation, Ministry of (AVIA)	Monuments, Anc. and Hist. in Wales and Monmouthshire, Ry. Comm. on (MONW)
British Railways Board (AN)	Monuments, Hist. (England), Ry. Commission on (AE)
Cabinet Office (CAB)	Munitions, Mins. of (MUN)
Captured Enemy Documents (GFM)	Nat. Assistance Board (AST)
Civil Service Commission (CSC)	Nat. Coal Board (COAL)
Civil Service Department (BA)	National Debt Office (NDO)
Civil Service Pay Research Unit (CSPR)	Nat. Incomes Commission (NICO)
Colonial Office (CO)	Nat. Insurance Audit Dept. (NIA)
Commonwealth Relations Office (DO)	National Savings, Dept. for (NSC)
Countryside Commission (COU)	Nat. Service, Ministry of (NATS)
Crown Agents for Oversea Govern- -ments and Administration (CAOG)	Ordnance Survey Dept. (OS)
Customs and Excise, Board of (CUST)	Overseas Development, Mins. of (OD)
Defence, Ministry of (DEFE)	Parliamentary Boundary Comms. (AF)
Development Commission (D)	Paymaster General's Office (PMG)
Education and Sciences, Dept. of (ED)	Pens. and Nat. Ins., Mins of (PIN)
Environment, Dept. of the (AT)	Pensions Appeal Tribunal (BF)
Exchequer and Audit Dept. (AO)	Power, Ministry of (POWE)
Export Crs. Guarantee Dept. (ECG)	Prime Minister's Office (PREM)
Foreign Office (FO)	Prison Commission (PCOM)
Forestry Commission (F)	Pub. Bldgs and Works, Min. of (WORK)
Forfeited Estates, Comm's of (FEC)	Public Record Office (PRO) except certain PRO 30 Classes
Friendly Socs. Registry of (FS)	Public Trustee Office (PT)
General Register Office (RG)	Pub. Works Loan Board (PWLB)
ex. Census Returns, Non-Parochial Regs. and Records	Reconstruction, Min. of (RECO)
Govnt. Actuary's Dept. (ACT)	Research Institutes (AY)
Health and Soc. Sec. Dept of (BN)	Royal Mint (MINT)
Health, Ministry of (MH)	Scien. and Indust. Research (DSIR)
Hist. Mans. Commission (HMC)	Stationery Office (STAT)
Home Office (HO) ex Census Returns (HO 107)	Supply, Mins. of (SUPP)
Housing and L. Govnt., Mins. of (HLG)	Tithe Redemption Comm. (TITH)
Information, Cent. Office of (INF)	Trade Board of (BT)
Inland Rev. Office (IR) ex. Estate Duty Registers IR 26 and 27	Transport, Mins. of (MT)
Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust (AP)	Treasury (T)
Iron and Steel Board (BE)	Un. King. Atomic Energy Auth. (AB)
Labour, Ministry of (LAB)	University Grants Committee (GC)
Land Registry (LAR)	Wallace Collection (AR)
Lands Tribunal (LT)	War Office (WO)
Law Commission (BC)	Welsh Office (BD)
Local Govnt. Boundary Commission for England (AX)	Abbr. Comm. = Commission
Location of Offices Bureau (AH)	Mins. = Ministry
	Crs. = Credits
	Anc. = Ancient
	Hist. = Historic
	Mans. = Manuscripts
	Un. King. = United Kingdom