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STEPHEN MALES

The Males family are one of the oldest families of East Kent and are remembered now in a large housing estate near St Stephen's Church Canterbury as Males Place. One branch of the family lived at Bekesbourne of which the most famous is Stephen Males (1677 - 1761). He was educated at Corpus Christi Cambridge (the same college as Christopher Redgrave) and then moved to Oxford where he obtained a doctorate and took up various livings at Teddington & Huddleson, Postlock in Somerset and Ferrington. So it is recorded that as a person he had 'female prolixities do public penance for their irregular behaviour'. But it is as a physiologist and inventor that he is best remembered. He became a F.R.S in 1718 and in 1750 was one of the only 8 foreign members of the French Academy. In his botanical studies he wrote a long paper on the loss of water which plants suffer by evaporation and the means by which roots make good their loss; he also was responsible for papers on hearing, the amount of blood pressure, the nature of secretion and carried out experiments on the removal of stones in the bladder. A contemporary medical historian has described him as second only in importance to William Harvey who ^{discovered} ~~invented~~ the circulation of the blood and 'he had a sound conception of the living organism as a self regulating machine'. He was also responsible for inventing artificial ventilators and his method of injecting air into bellows he applied to prison ships and granaries. He wrote during the Seven Years War that he hoped that some would inform against him for corresponding with the enemy. He also invented a method for distilling sea water and an apparatus for leaving the fatness in the water. He was a Teetotaler and wrote a treatise called 'a friendly Admonition to the Drinkers of Brandy' which as late as 1807 was being published by the S.P.C.K. in a 6th edition. He is buried at Teddington and there is a monument to him in Westminster Abbey put up by the Princess of Wales as he had for a short time been tutor to George III. To the modern generation he is almost forgotten but there is a fine shrub named after him called MALESIA.