

IT having been published in the Canterbury News of Saturday the 28th of May last, that on Wednesday the 27th of July the Tankard would be run for, which used to be run for on Easter Tuesday; and the Constitution, Articles and Conditions of that Race being at this Time very little known, it is thought proper to publish the following Account of them.

The Sum of One hundred and thirteen Pounds having been raised by the Contributions of several of the Nobility and Gentry of this County, it was in April 1678 put into the Hands of one of those Gentlemen, (one of the Contributors) who by Deed bearing Date the 10th of April 1678, made a Mortgage, by a Term of 500 Years, of Part of his Real Estate to the then Earl of Winchelsea, Sir Henry Palmer, Sir Anthony Aucher, Sir Arnold Brems, Sir Henry Oxenden, Sir Robert Faunce, Sir James Oxenden, and Edward Hales of St. Stephens, Esq; the yearly Interest of which the Deed of Mortgage mentions to be Six Pounds fifteen Shillings, (which is 6 per Cent) and was to be paid to the Mortgagees for the Maintenance of a Horse Race on Barham Down yearly in Easter Week, and for raising a Piece of Plate yearly, to be given to the Person who should win the said Race, according to an Agreement made by the said Contributors; and they agreed on Articles in Writing, which formerly used, in a Frame, to hang up in the Balcony Room at Bridge Hill; but they are now so much defaced, that 'tis with Difficulty they can be read.

The Articles are,

First, That on every Easter Tuesday there shall be provided by the Mortgagee, during the Time the Money subscribed shall remain in his Hands, one Piece of Plate of the Value of the Interest of the said Money, after the Rate of Six Pounds per Cent. to be run for by such Horses (meaning Horse, Mare, or Gelding) as shall be brought on the said Day to Bridge Hill, and the Owner or Bringer thereof declare to the Subscribers then present, before Two of the Clock in the Afternoon, that he will run for the said Plate.

2dly, That the Place so provided shall be run for as one single Course, at Three of the Clock in the Afternoon, the new Round Course at Barham Down, and to start at the new Weighing-Post near the Bowling Green.

3dly, That each Horse shall carry Ten Stone Weight, 14 Pound to the Stone, besides the Saddle and Bridle; always being allowed one Pound for Waste, and also being allowed to drink before he be again weighed.

4thly, They are to leave all the White Posts going out on the Right Hand, and the Red-headed Posts on the Left Hand; and on the contrary in coming back.

5thly, Whoever shall run on the wrong side of any Post, or ride foul or under Weight, shall have no Share in the Plate; but the next Horse that runs on the right Side of the said Posts, and carries his full Weight, shall have the said Plate.

6thly, That each Owner or Rider shall deposit Twenty Shillings to the Mortgagee, or in his Absence to any one of the Subscribers then present, at the Time that he declareth he will run as aforesaid.

7thly, That the Money so deposited by every one who runs shall be given to the Owner of the Horse that winneth the said Plate.

8thly, That every one that winneth the said Plate, and is not a Subscriber, shall give three Pounds at least for the Increase of the Stock thereof, and then always to be accounted a Subscriber.

9thly, If any Difference shall arise concerning the Breach of these Articles, it is to be decided by the major Part of the Subscribers then and there present.

The former Representative of the Mortgagee, long since defired, and the present does now desire to clear the Estate of this Incumbrance, by paying off the Mortgage Money.

Whoever for the future shall run a Horse for this Plate, must comply with the Terms of these original Articles.

The original Articles and Conditions for racing on Barham Downs, 1678.

CANTERBURY RACES The Life and Times of the Barham Downs Racecourse

By P.G. Elgar

There is little doubt that the Canterbury Racecourse at Barham Downs endured longer than racecourses in other parts of Kent. Even though its fortunes fluctuated, the meetings enjoyed considerable fame in the racing world. For much of its existence it was considered to be the major social event of the county season.

An extract from a 'Kentish Post' of June 1743 gives most valuable information as to when racing had been established sixty-five years earlier. In April 1678 several prominent gentry in the area arranged a Deed of Mortgage 'for raising a Piece of Plate yearly'. They drew up a list of Articles and Conditions concerning the organisation of races 'on the new Round Course at Barham Down'. These quaint Articles, which formerly hung in a frame at Bridge Hill House, are reproduced here and make fascinating reading.

The earliest meetings were held on the Tuesday after Easter but late summer meetings soon became regular. Their duration was normally three or four days but they sometimes lasted up to six days. In latter times there was often only a one or two-day meeting.

Farmers, landowners and cavalry officers from the large army camps on the Downs were the usual participants. Later additional personnel from the barracks in Canterbury, Shorncliffe, Dover and Woolwich gave much support.

The course was situated at the top of Bridge Hill alongside the main Canterbury to Dover road, just over half-a-mile from Bridge village. Bridge Hill House was 100 yards away and provided an excellent view of the racing. The course was lengthened and the 1873 Ordnance Survey Map shows it extending as far as some 200 yards beyond the Rose Lane turning to Bishopsbourne, with a total length of two miles.

A large grandstand, with offices underneath, was completed in 1774 for the reception of gentry and their ladies. This appears as the 'New Stand' on a map of 1776. It lay just over 200 yards from the Canterbury-Dover road and 400 yards from Higham House, at that time the residence of James Hallett. A second grandstand nearby was also in use for a period.

The importance of the races was recognised in the early eighteenth century by the granting of a King's Plate. This was usually of the value of 100 guineas according to 'Kentish Post' advertisements of the time. From 1739 to 1852 the royal grants were decided in two or more heats.

THE King's Plate of 100 Guineas will be Run for on Barham Downs in Kent, on Thursday the 28th of August 1729, according to an Advertisment lately inserted in the Gazette: And on Friday the 29th of the same Month, a Purse with 20 Guineas raised by the Vintners in the City of Canterbury, will be Run for; 3 Heats, 4 Miles upon the Course, on the same Downs, by Galloways not exceeding 14 Hands high, to carry 9 Stone Weight, and all under that Size, Weight for Inches, not less than three Horses to Run, and the Horses to be shewn, measur'd and enter'd at the House of Mr. Hartcup called the King's-Head, in Canterbury, on Monday the 25th of the same Month, every Subscriber to pay one Guinea, and if not a Subscriber, two Guineas, Entrance. And on Monday the first Day of September next, there will be Run for on the said 4 Miles Course, 3 Heats, another Purse with 50 Guineas, by a Subscription of Gentlemen in the said City, by any Horse, Mare or Gelding, that never won the Value of 50 l. at any one Time, carrying 10 Stone Weight including Bridle and Saddle: These Horses to be shewn and enter'd at Mr. Ireland's the Red Lyon Inn in Canterbury, on Friday the 22d of August aforesaid, and then the Owner of every such Horse, Mare or Gelding, is to pay two Guineas Entrance, but if any be afterwards enter'd, then such to pay four Guineas Entrance.

N. B. We hear there will be other Subscriptions for more Monies to be Run for, but the same is not yet fully settled.

'Kentish Post' notice, August 1729. By this time the races had been given a valuable boost by the granting of King's Plates.

Bridge was closely involved with the racing, especially the stabling of horses and providing jockeys and trainers. Local inns and other businesses profited considerably. The Clerk of the Course usually set up his office at the White Horse where horses for all the races had to be named between certain specified hours. The Red Lion and King's Head in Canterbury were other venues for this.

The cream of society attended Canterbury Races. Newspaper reports listing them seem like extracts from 'Who's Who'. For example, the report on the meeting of 26th to 28th August 1800:

'Excellent racing each day, particularly for the Maiden Plate on Wednesday when seven horses started. Two hard beats between Gloucester and Snuff-Box. Notwithstanding the unfavourable weather the races were hardly ever graced by the company of so many distinguished personages as the present year, besides our much esteemed Lord Lieutenant and his admirable daughter, Earl Camden, Viscount Sidney, Earl Darnley, Lord and Lady Sondes, Baron and Baroness de Montesquieu, Sir Edward Knatchbull, Lord and Lady Dering.

'The theatre has also been filled with genteel audience - Downton present. (William Downton, a famous London actor.) The company at the ball last night at the Assembly Rooms was uncommonly numerous and splendid - about 500 persons of the first respectability ... were present.'

One attempt to attract a distinguished visitor was unsuccessful. William Cobbett in his 'Rural Rides' mentioned Canterbury Races, 4th September 1823 in this comical little note:

'They have lately had races at Canterbury and the Mayor and Aldermn, in order to get the Prince Leopold to attend, presented him with the Freedom of the City, but it rained all the time and he did not come.'

In 1806 the King's Plate was actually won by a royal entrant when the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV, won by a walk-over on Barbarossa. Rockingham, a St Leger winner, won in 1834 and walked over for a second prize the following year. Red Deer, the Chester Cup winner of 1844, was successful in the Duke of Richmond's colours in 1845. In 1851 a popular local winner was Firebolt, owned by Mr Richardson and ridden by a son of C. Hornsby of Bridge.

George IV retained his interest in the sport and visited the races when a guest of Lord and Lady Conyngham at Bifrons.

In addition to the royal plates there were numerous other regular races at various times. These included the Associated Annual Prize, the Canterbury Handicap, the City Plate, the Maiden Plate, the County Subscription Plate, the Bridge Plate and the Ballroom Stakes, together with numerous Sweepstakes and the Kentish Hunter Stakes.

A whip was added to the Ballroom Stakes, subscribed for by the ladies on condition that competition for it should be confined to 'gentlemen qualified as for the Anglesey Stakes at Goodwood, with the addition of Arthur's, the Travellers and those who have been members of either of the universities of Oxford or Cambridge'. The race was about two miles in length.

With regard to the Kentish Hunter Stakes an advertisement for the 1850 meeting stated that 'horses must have been regularly hunted with an established pack of hounds in the county' and that it was only for 'all horses belonging to subscribers to the East Kent Earth-Stopping Fund'. Sometimes they were expected to have been in at the death of a certain number of brace of foxes.

Steeplechasing events were also held, providing extra excitement for the younger element. It was rough and dangerous riding with very few rules. One

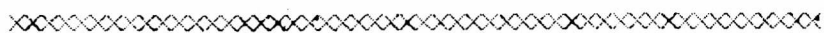
CANTERBURY RACES, 1770.

A TRUE and GENUINE

LIST of the HORSES, &c.

That are Entered to RUN on BARHAM DOWNS,

On Tuesday the 31st of July, and on Wednesday the 1st, Thursday the 2d, and Friday the 3d of AUGUST.



On Tuesday, will be Run for a Sweepstakes, for Twenty-five Guineas each, Pay or Play, by the following Colts and Fillies, 1 Four Miles Heat.

	Riders Names	Colours	HEATS			
LORD Sondes's Colt, by <i>Samson</i> , 8 ft. 10 lb.	J. Rider,	Purple				
Mr. Watfon's Filley, by <i>Whistle-jacket</i> , 8ft. 7lb.						
Capt. O'Kelly's Colt, by <i>Bell's Arabian</i> , 8ft. 10lb.	J. Whiting,	White				
Mr. Wildman's Filley, by <i>Posthumous</i> , 8ft. 7lb.						
Mr. Whitfield's Colt, by <i>Merlin</i> , 8ft. 10lb.						

On Wednesday, will be Run for The King's Plate of 100 Guineas, by the following Horses, the best of Three Four Mile Heats, carrying 12ft.

	Riders	HEATS			
LORD March's brown Horse, <i>Sky</i> ,	unknown.				
Lord Oflory's chestnut Horse, <i>Fabius</i> ,					
Capt. Stroud's bay Horse, <i>Penfoner</i> ,					

On Thursday, will be Run for, The County Subscription Plate, Value Fifty Pounds, by the following.

CAPTAIN Stroud's chestnut Horse, <i>Paragon</i> , by <i>Match'em</i> , } 5 years old, 8ft. 5lb.	J. Rider,	Purple				
Mr. Sparrow's bay Horse, <i>Minor</i> , by <i>Atlas</i> , 5 yrs. old. 8ft. 5lb.						

On Friday will be Run for, The City Subscription Plate, Value Fifty Pounds, by Four Years Old Colts or Fillies, the best of three Two-mile and Quarter Heats.

CAPT. Stroud's grey Filley, by <i>Bell's Arabian</i> , 8ft. 7lb.	J. Rider,	Purple				
Mr. Bever's chestnut Colt, <i>Driver</i> , by <i>Driver</i> , 8ft. 7lb.						

N. B. There are four others now at *Bridge Hill*, which intend to enter at the Post.

The above LIST is AUTHENTICATED by the CLERK of the COURSE.

Cocking at Mr. Moore's at Half after Ten, during the Races. Assemblies, and Public Breakfasting, at Mrs. Whitfield's, as usual.

List of Runners, 31st July to 3rd August 1770.

Captain Ross is said to have asked Lord Kennedy before a race: 'I understand we may ride over each other and kill each other if we can?'

'Just so,' was his Lordship's reply.

Apart from the grand dress balls which invariably accompanied race days, special theatricals and other events took place. In 1840 galas were held in St Peter's Gardens, Canterbury. These included fireworks presented by Mr Dorby, a celebrated pyrotechnist, gladiatorial shows, Hampton's Balloons and other amusements.

Among local trainers were such famous names as Richard Hornsby; the Tom Browns, father and son, who later became well known at Newmarket; Fred Webb, who is said to have had a dream of winning the Derby and later actually did so. A Mr Howard kept racing stables opposite the workhouse (Union Road, Bridge); Richard Sherrard and family prepared racers and steeplechasers for Lord Conyngham, including the famous Derby Day, winner of numerous races.

Lord Albert Conyngham (afterwards Lord Londesborough), of Bifrons (1805-1860), was a prominent local landowner of an eminent Irish family. He had a great interest in the Turf and was a prominent runner and breeder of horses, frequently seen at such racing centres as Doncaster, Beverley and York.

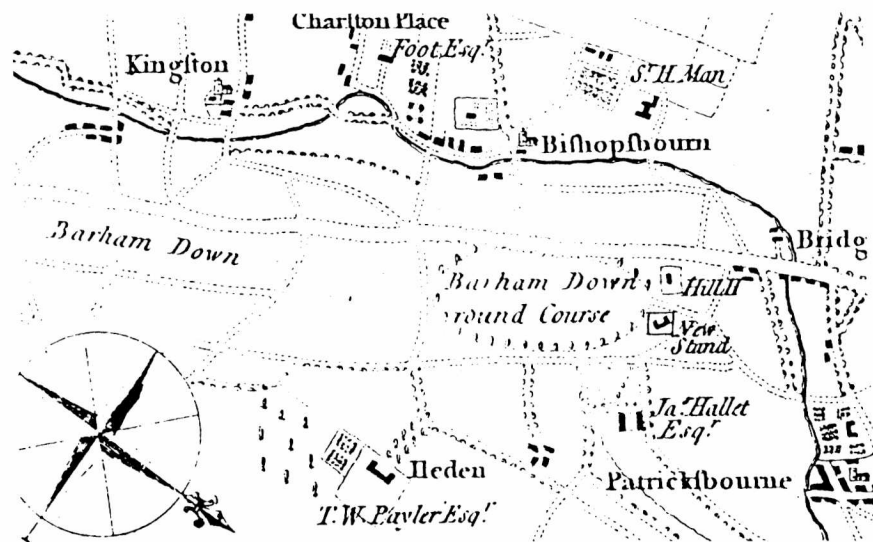
The racecourse was sometimes used for other gatherings. One famous occasion was on 17th December 1832. Several thousand people attended to hear election candidates speak. These included Sir Edward Knatchbull, Sir William Cosway and the self-proclaimed saviour of the working classes, the bogus Sir William Courtenay, who claimed to be a Knight of Malta and heir to the Hales Estates. The grandstand was adapted to accommodate the High Sheriff, officers and candidates. 500 farm labourers, armed with cudgels, were among the crowd. Courtenay (real name John Nichols Thom), made an impassioned speech but secured few votes. This eccentric, dressed in crimson velvet and gold cloak, with mantle and cap, silk stockings and Turkish slippers, plus gold chain and scimitar, was frequently seen at the races before his violent death in an affray with the militia in Bossenden Woods in 1838.

The meetings had begun to decline by the early 1840s. In 1842, according to the 'Kentish Gazette':

'The Canterbury Spring Meeting ... did not afford the usual sport. Mr Sherrard's horse walked over the course for the Easter Plate. A match or two of no great interest followed and the sports of the day were wound up by donkey racing and other minor amusements.'

The 1843 meeting was described by the 'Kentish Gazette' as 'scarcely worthy of mention, either as regards the nature of the sport or the attendance of the gentry of the county ... on neither day was the grandstand graced with more than half a dozen members of Kentish families'.

At the 1847 Spring meeting it was decided to prohibit booths, which was welcomed by the 'Kentish Gazette':



Kentish Traveller's Companion map showing the site of Canterbury Racecourse on Barham Downs, 1776.

'There can be no doubt that considerable damage is sustained by the neighbourhood residents, their plantations and hedge-rows, by the turbulent persons who have been accustomed to stay in the booths drinking till midnight. The keepers of these places have only themselves to thank for the deprivation. As a result the visitors were largely confined to gentlemen connected with the East Kent Hunt and few pedestrians were present.'

In somewhat extravagant terms the newspaper lamented the passing of those days when the grandstand had been 'the nucleus of fashion, of life, of the high-born, the rich, the elegant ... beauty in all its phases, the blonde, the brunette, the lily, the rose all shone resplendent there, a sight the boast of Kent that Kent alone should boast. This once celebrated arena of wealth and rank was partially tenanted by a few citizens of lowly degree.'

Things had improved a little by 1850 when on the opening day the weather was fine and a large crowd attended. 'Refreshment booths, various games of chance, fortune-telling, 'elastic brothers', archery, cockshies, itinerary musicians, etc. proved scarcely less attractive ... than the racing itself.'

The second day produced an even larger and more fashionable crowd but some troubles occurred. 'Some of the light-fingered profession obtained some booty and succeeded in getting clear off.' Thieves, pickpockets and dishonest bookmakers were becoming an ever-increasing problem.

In a letter published in the 'Kentish Gazette' on 29th August 1854 the writer, who signed himself as 'one who well recollects the olden times,' suggested ending



Lord Albert Conyngham (1805-1860), local landowner and great supporter of the Turf.



A silver admission ticket to the New Grandstand, probably early nineteenth century (enlarged).

'the minor affairs at Lenham, Maidstone, Folkestone and Dover and handing over the money now subscribed at those places, so as to form one good meeting at Canterbury.'

The suggestion was not taken up and the following year the meeting was reduced to a one-day event.

There is little doubt that the decline was also due to the county being off the beaten track for race-goers, and to poor means of communication to and from the principal racing centres, which by this time were well established in central England. Racing had also been affected by traditions of corrupt practices in which even famous sportsmen were involved. Large profits were at stake and immense amounts of money wagered. Doping of horses was unknown but crude methods such as the poisoning of drinking water were effective. Owners and jockeys often conspired to hold back horses or substitute them. Age limits were faked, races started unpunctually and weighing in and out were carelessly managed.

There were attempts to restore the Turf to respectability and increased professionalism and the influence of the Jockey Club did much to improve standards. But a new rule raising prize money to £300 per day was a blow to meetings such as Canterbury, at a time when subscriptions to the events were already dwindling.

In spite of these setbacks things improved again and the 1858 and 1863 meetings proved successful, the former being described as the best for twenty years. The spread of railways did much to boost attendances, and special excursion trains with reduced fares were run by the South-Eastern and the London, Chatham and Dover Railways. By 1864 these operated to Canterbury and Bekesbourne. The latter station had a specially extended platform to accommodate the extra numbers of people. Later racehorses and jockeys were also conveyed at a single fare for the double journey. The gentry were met with carriages and transported to the course while the ordinary public covered the couple of miles on foot.

There were several famous winners in the remaining years, including the mare Lillian, which won for her owner Mr Savile forty-six races, out of which twenty-nine were Queen's Plates. But Caller Ou, a great winner of forty-eight races, including thirty-four Queen's Plates, was sensationally beaten in 1863, coming in third behind Gibraltar and Zetland, the race described as the most exciting event in Kentish racing history.

A telegraph facility was provided and a handstamp despatched for use at the course in June 1876. But the days were numbered, Cricket Week having become the main social event of the season, and the final meeting took place in 1879. The course became part of the Barham Downs Golf Club in 1890, which closed during the First World War. Today it lies under fields and the Canterbury and Bridge by-pass.

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Special thanks for assistance from:
The National Horseracing Museum, Newmarket.
Canterbury Library, Local Studies Department.
Mr David Vinten.

THE GREAT FIRE OF CHATHAM

By Philip MacDougall

The year 1800 brought to Chatham a period of extraordinarily fine weather. The Summer months of May and June saw endless days of sunshine and hardly a drop of rain. That such weather could hardly have been welcomed. The effect on the central residential area would have been quite unimaginable. In the many small, poorly-built and ill-ventilated houses that made up the township of Chatham, the occupants greatly suffered. Once they closed the outside door behind them, they were immersed in a fetid and malodorous environment that such housing created. In the Summer of 1800, it was made ten times worse by the unusually high temperatures.

Nor did the streets provide any form of respite. Lacking a heavy downpour, they were but infrequently cleaned. In particular, the gutters and side walks were tainted with the foul smelling odours of human effluence and other indescribable deposits. Not surprisingly, the danger of disease was rife. In that year, the burial registers recorded 442 deaths. This represented a death rate of approximately 40 in every thousand, so making Chatham one of the unhealthiest towns in Kent.

This long bout of hot weather also brought other concerns. Many of those houses built in central Chatham were of timber construction. As each day passed, the lack of rain enhanced the combustible nature of the building material. The slightest accident, be it from an unattended candle or a mis-used tinder-box, might lead to an uncontrollable fire. Already, once in that year, the threat had become near-reality when, towards the end of May, a new iron foundry had caught fire. That the conflagration had not spread was due to the foundry being next to the victualling yard. Those employed within this particular naval establishment had reacted to the danger, rapidly bringing their fire engines to the scene. Although the foundry was entirely destroyed, the fire was prevented from spreading.

On the last day of June, however, the town was not so fortunate. Shortly before mid-day, a serious fire broke out in a small warehouse that stood behind the High Street and immediately adjacent to the river. The contents of the warehouse, a highly combustible combination of oakum, cordage and hemp, had burst into flames, with the entire building soon engulfed. Indeed, everything seemed to favour the fire. The warehouse, apart from its inflammable contents, was of timber construction and newly coated with tar while surrounding houses were of timber and bone dry as a result of the recent hot weather. The state of the river also made matters worse. With the fire having broken out just about an hour before low water it became virtually impossible for the arriving fire engines to draw water. Further