



I have asked on past occasions for your comments on the newsletters produced to date, but none have been forthcoming. On the basis of "no news is good news", we are pressing on with the next issue, a report by Jack Gillett on the changeover in 1974 when Tenterden lost its Borough status and became a satellite of Ashford. Old Tenterdonians will doubtless wince at the memory of this event and Jack's article will put newcomers in the picture. Either way you will, I am sure, find it a very interesting read.

Alec Laurence

THE LAST DAYS OF TENTERDEN BOROUGH COUNCIL IN 1974

Tenterden ceased to be a Borough after 525 years at midnight on 31 March 1974. The Borough comprised 5890 people in the 8946 acres from Reading Street and Smallhythe to the Town Centre and St Michaels. During March 1974, both the Tenterden Borough and Tenterden Rural District (which had been in existence since 1895) Councils had their last meetings before the new Ashford Borough Council took over administration for both areas together with Ashford Urban Council and the Rural District Councils of East Ashford and West Ashford.

The members and officers of Tenterden Borough Council who attended its last meeting on Thursday 14 March 1974 were Alderman R Collison (Mayor), Alderman Miss D Crisfield, Alderman R Morgan, Alderman H V Roberts, Cr Miss S Jeffery, Cr R Beadle, Cr S G Brown, Cr R Carey, Cr W H Creek, Cr J Drummond, Cr P Edmond, Cr F Elleston, Cr W Ovens, Canon J Hough (Vicar of Tenterden), Mr H Millen (Town Clerk), Mr R Decent (Surveyor), Mr E W Croft (Chief Financial Officer), Miss P Ralph (Minute Clerk), Mr N Rich (First Serjeant at Mace) and Mr E Cheeter (Second Serjeant at Mace). At this meeting, Ald Reuben Collison thanked members for their help, patience and guidance during his term of office. He was also glad that nearly all the councillors were going to continue to serve on the successor Town Council. There was also a special word for the senior officers – especially Town Clerk Mr Harold Millen – all of whom had served the town well. Alderman Miss Dorothy Crisfield thanked the Mayor, saying that his continuance as Mayor had prompted the councillors to agree to serve.

The townspeople were determined to see that the passing of an era was not an occasion for sadness. With Mr Ken Jessop as coordinator, the town organized a Commemoration Week to entertain the local residents and sightseers with a varied programme of events. Details of some of these events are given below.

- Saturday
March 23 The Mayor in honour of past and present members and staff of the Borough Council gave a Mayoral Banquet at which he and the Mayoress, his daughter Olga, welcomed almost 90 guests. The event was held in the Town Hall, which had been decorated by the Flower Club of Tenterden and District Horticultural Society. During the evening Mr Stanley J Day, a Baron of the Cinque Ports, proposed a toast to past and present members of the council. In his speech he referred, amongst other things, to the fact that local government re-organisation would start on All Fools Day and ended by saying: "Let us ever be reminded of our glorious history and proud to say, Long Live Tenterden." Speeches were also made by the Mayor, Ald Miss D Crisfield, Town Clerk Mr Harold Millen, who was presented with an inscribed tankard and a cheque from members of the council, and Mr Noel Winter.
- Sunday
March 24 In the morning the mayor started youngsters from Tenterden Youth Club on a sponsored 10-mile ramble round the borough boundaries. In the afternoon, Assistant Scout Leader Fred (Dusty) Miller was in charge of nearly 200 local Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies who paraded down the High Street before a youth service at St Mildreds. For sporting enthusiasts there was a hockey match at Homewood School between Folkestone Optimists and Tenterden Cricket Club that the former won 2-1.
- Monday
March 25 During the afternoon a tea party for the elderly and disabled was held in the Hall at St Michaels. In the evening Lord Astor of Hever, the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, attended a special Commemoration Week reception in the Town Hall to present a commemorative document to the Mayor. Lord Astor said "*It is a very great honour for my wife and myself to share this historic occasion with the people of Tenterden. I am sure we all recognize this as an important milestone in the history of Tenterden. In 1449, King Henry VI gave Tenterden a charter separating the town from county of Kent and uniting it with Rye as a member of the Cinque Ports. This document, which is going to be signed by the Mayor of Rye and the Mayor of Tenterden and myself, brings to an end 525 years of Tenterden as a borough. This borough will be replaced on 1 April by a successor parish council known as the town and hundred of Tenterden, with the same duties and ancient rights. The town council will have the same duties and powers that will be enjoyed by parish councils in the surrounding countryside, but with membership of*

the Cinque Ports. This reunites Tenterden with the county of Kent for the first time in 525 years. I would like to be one of the first to welcome Tenterden back to the county of Kent."

Ald Collison accepted the document and called upon Dr Alec Vidler, the Mayor of Rye, who said he was very pleased to see the Tenterden townspeople put on such a cheerful face considering the 'lamentable occasion'. Lord Astor, Ald Collison and Dr Vidler then signed the document. The evening was concluded with the lighting of a beacon on the top of St Mildreds Church tower by 15 year-old Derek Miller of the 2nd Tenterden Scout Troop. Biggest laugh of the week came a few minutes later when the local fire brigade arrived because it had been reported that the building was ablaze.

- Tuesday
March 26 A plaque headed by the borough coat of arms and given by Tenterden Trust was unveiled in the Town Hall to commemorate the 525 years as a Borough. Dr T H E Taylor-Jones, President of the Trust, said it had been designed by "our excellent committee member Mr William Ironside", and made by the Ashford firm of Hurst, Franklin and Company. During the evening Tenterden Operatic and Dramatic Society performed *Time and the Conways*.
- Wednesday
March 27 There was a tree planting ceremony in St Mildreds churchyard, organised by Tenterden Trust, when a sweet gum was planted by Miss Lucienne Gow, the first chairman of the Trust. In the evening a Sportsmen's Dinner was held in the Town Hall and St Michaels Hall was the venue for a dance organised by the Guides. There was also an all-day exhibition, entitled 'A Study of St Michaels' at St Michaels Primary School and an illustrated History Society talk on 'The River Stour' by Mr B Gipson at Tenterden Primary School.
- Thursday
March 28 Children at Homewood Secondary School put on a programme of dancing, drama and music from medieval times to the present day. During the evening 145 elderly or disabled were guests of Tenterden Club at an old time Music Hall at St Michaels Hall, organised by Club President Mr George Johnstone.
- Friday
March 29 There was an exhibition at the infant's school of "Tenterden and the People In It", a Youth Club disco at Highbury Hall and Tenterden Lions Club organised a Mayor's Ball at Homewood School.
- Saturday
March 30 In the morning the Mayor and some of the council travelled by steam train on the recently re-opened Kent and East Sussex Railway as guests of the Tenterden Railway Company. In the afternoon, the Mayor and Mayoress went to the Town Hall for a pantomime performance of "Aladdin of Tenterden" by the Cubs. Later, the Brownie packs of Tenterden and St Michaels combined to present an hour-long revue and the Guides gave a pageant of Guiding.
- Sunday
March 31 In the afternoon, Tenterden footballers put up a good display against a strong Ashford Town XI losing 4-1. Andy Cribben got the consolation goal and Mr Ron Challis (a Football League referee who later refereed the 1979 F A Cup Final) was referee. A united churches civic service was held at St Mildreds Church in the evening.

To mark their links as bankers to the corporation of Tenterden since 1845, the town's branch of the National Westminster Bank arranged for its four women cashiers to be dressed in Victorian costumes for the week. There was also a display of old photographs and cheques together with a list of the bank's managers, dating from Mr A Havers in 1851 to the then present manager, Mr W George. Undertaker Mr Alec Fuggle staged a display of old photographs in the window of their offices in Ashford Road. Entitled 'From My Scrapbook', the exhibition included photographs of Ellen Terry's funeral in 1928, photographs, a picture of the local Ashford Valley Hunt in the High Street outside the Town Hall on 21 February 1921 and photographs of the funeral of Mr Leslie Chalk, a former Mayor of the town, which was arranged by Mr Fuggle's firm. Another photograph showed Sir Winston Churchill at Hastings, when he was presented with a portrait of himself. Mr Fuggle was present at the event when, as Serjeant at Mace, he escorted the Mayor of Tenterden. One casualty of the local government reorganization was the last meeting of Magistrates on the Cranbrook and Tenterden bench that had been an amalgamation of the Tenterden and Cranbrook courts, 25 years previously.

Two exhibitions portrayed Tenterden from the middle of the fifteenth century. In the Drill Hall (now St Mildreds Church Hall), the Local History Society organised an exhibition of maps, documents and items of interest from collections of their own, and those belonging to the Corporation, the County Archives and St Mildreds Church. Children of the Church of England School were responsible for an embroidery collage (now in Tenterden Museum) that was on show depicting facets of life in the borough from the time of the Romans. The Tenterden Rotary Club organised the Exhibition of Local Enterprise to be seen in the Old Infants School (now Day Centre), Church Road.

Today, nearly 30 years on, there are still people who long for the old days!

References

Kent Messenger, Kent and Sussex Courier and The Tenterden Resident.

Jack Gillett