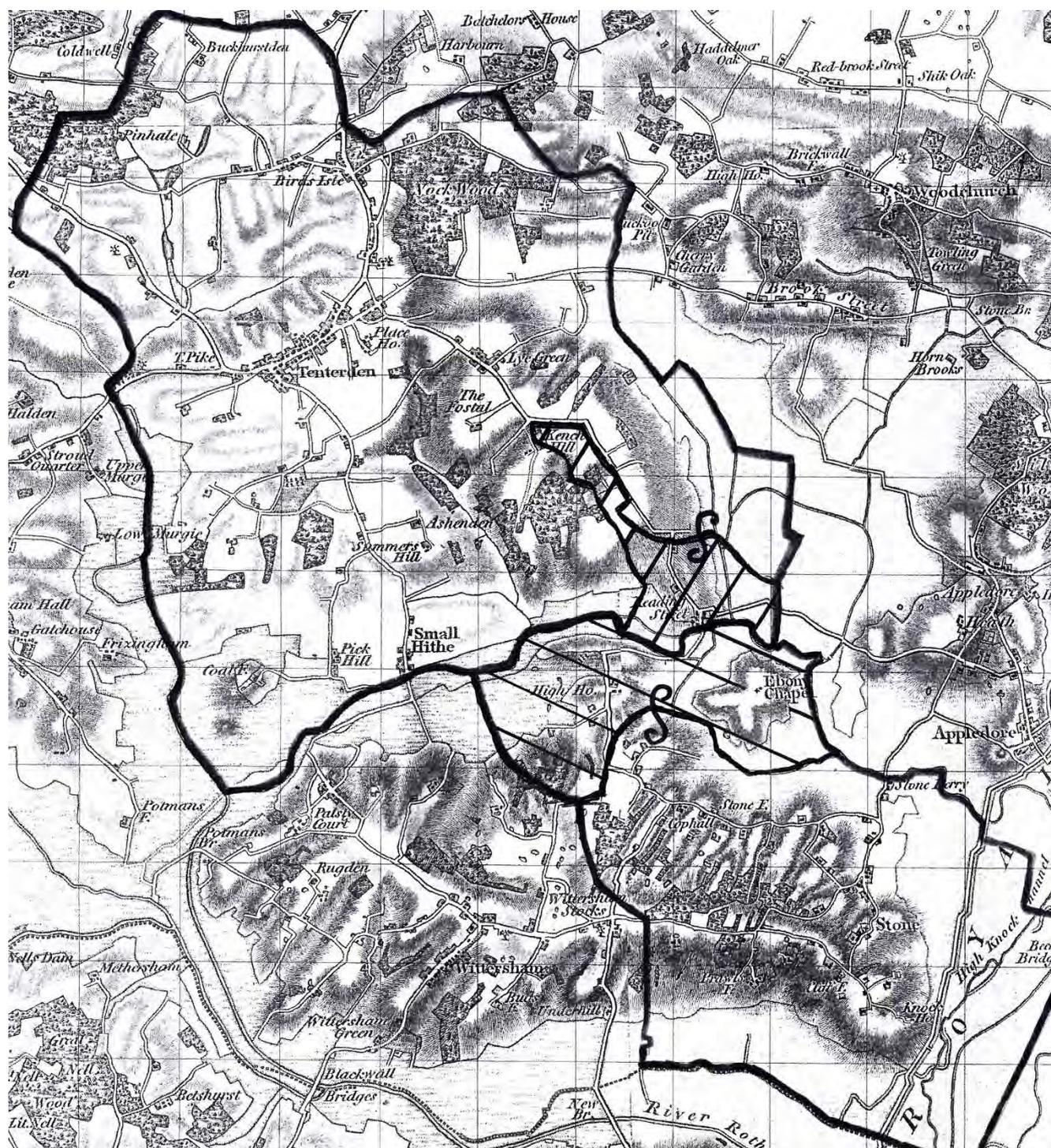




TENTERDEN AND EBONY

Did you know that part of Ebony Ecclesiastical Parish is within the boundary of the Civil Parish which today is known as Tenterden Town? [The part of Ebony Parish in question is the northern part which initially extends on both sides of the present B2080 road from the Reading Sewer just south of the settlement of Reading Street and then on the west side of the B2080 to the property named Tassells at Leigh Green before skirting Kench Hill and returning to the Reading Sewer]. How has this occurred?



Surveyed c1815

- The extent of the Civil Parish of Ebony merged with the Civil Parish of Tenterden
- The extent of the Civil Parish of Ebony now forming part of the Civil Parish of Stone-cum-Ebony
- The Civil Parish of Ebony coincides with the current Ecclesiastical Parish of Ebony

By the 12th century, in England, many of the administrative functions of the Crown were devolved to local representatives. The country had been divided up into Shires (Counties) and so some of these functions were undertaken by them whilst others were taken on by administrative areas which in most areas, including Kent, were called Hundreds. The extent of a Hundred was in many cases related to the land controlled by the local Lord. The origin of the name is disputable. Within the Kingdom of Wessex the Hundred Ordinance of King Edgar (957 – 975) set out the terms of business and public duties for which the Hundred was responsible [2].

Also, following the arrival of clergy in settlements, the Ecclesiastical Parishes were established. The origin of the division of the country into such Parishes is also disputable but it appears to have been general by about the 9th or 10th Century. A parish was administered by a body which became known as a vestry, named from the place where it met. The areas covered by Hundreds and Parishes were quite different even when centred on the same community. Some Hundreds contained a number of Parishes whilst a Parish could consist of parts of several different Hundreds.

Over the centuries Charters were granted to some communities and they were called Towns. This gave rise to the term Town and Hundred. Charters set out the responsibilities of the community and the benefits accruing to them. The content of early and late Charters varied considerably. Their functions were mainly dealing with local disputes and to administer justice. The Charters of the Cinque Ports had their own specific variations. There is no reference to Town or Hundred of Tenterden in the Domesday Book of 1086. Indeed the first recorded reference of the Hundred of Tenterden is as one of the Seven Hundreds of the Weald in 1241.

In August 1449 King Henry VI granted to the inhabitants, tenants and residents in the Town and Hundred of Tenterden“that the said Town and Hundred shall be incorporated in the Town of Rye and separate from the County of Kent.” The reason for this charter being that Rye was unable to fully provide ship service to the Crown. Tenterden became a corporate member of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports. The charter included powers dealing with many non-ecclesiastical matters. Taxation, the levy and receipt of tolls, the handling of lost, stolen and unclaimed goods, together with breaches of the Peace, the detention and punishment of felons and blood letters could all be dealt with by the Town. Two specific privileges were Honours at Court (attendance at Coronations) and the admittance of Freemen.

In his Perambulation of Kent published in 1596 Lambarde indicated the Hundred of Tenterden comprised two parts with Tenterden and Ebony providing £12 7s 10p and £1 17s 10d, respectively in Tithes. Two hundred years later Hasted’s History and Topographical Survey of Kent described The Hundred of Tenterden as having within its bounds “THE TOWN and Parish of TENTERDEN and part of the parish of EBENEY (sic), containing the borough of Reading, the church of which is in another Hundred” [1]. The Population Act of 1800 resulted in the first national census of 1801 being undertaken. This confirmed the Hundred of Tenterden comprised Tenterden parish and part of Ebony Parish with the remainder of the latter being in Oxney Hundred.

After passing the Reform Act of 1832 which dramatically changed the distribution of seats in the House of Commons, Parliament focused its attention on the responsibilities and duties of local government and the manner in which these were carried out. The review embraced the varying provisions of the Charters of some 285 towns of which Tenterden was one. Matters concerning the poor, highways, bridges, workhouses, sewers, vagrancy and appointment of magistrates were amongst those particularly considered.

Under the Municipal Corporations Act 1835 Tenterden became a Municipal Borough governed by a mayor, aldermen and councillors elected by the burgesses. Boundary Commissioners reviewed the area of the Borough and concluded they should remain unaltered. The Public Health Act 1875 required all parts of England to be within either an urban or a rural sanitary authority. This resulted in the northern part of Ebony Parish falling within an urban sanitary authority while the remainder of Ebony Parish in Oxney Hundred fell within a rural sanitary authority. At parish level the Local Government Act 1894 separated ecclesiastical and civil responsibilities. Ecclesiastical matters now fell to be dealt with by a Parochial Church Council. As an entire civil parish had to fall within (a) an urban sanitary authority or (b) a rural sanitary authority, the Kent County Council made an order dividing Ebony Parish for civil purposes. That part not in Tenterden joined Stone to form Stone-cum-Ebony Parish. Another change to local Government took place in 1974 when both the old Tenterden Municipal Borough and Stone-cum-Ebony Parish were placed under the umbrella of Ashford Borough Council.

The successor Tenterden Town Council retained only Honours at Court but thanks to support by the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral the Lord Boyce, the right to admit Honorary Freemen was regained in 2010.

Note

- [1] The structure of the St Mary the Virgin Church Ebony was physically moved by horse and cart from Chapel Bank to the present site at Reading Street (opposite Tenterden Garden Centre) in 1858.
- [2] “Late Anglo-Saxon England – Life and Landscape” Andrew Reynolds, 2002 Edition.

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