

Thomas Badeslade
Illustrations for Harris's 'History of Kent'
London
1719

Thomas Badeslade was a draughtsman, surveyor and engineer, active between 1712 and 1744. His career is much better known now than it ever was before, thanks to some fine research by Bob Silvester. He died on the job in 1744, in the parish of Llandinam in Montgomeryshire (now Powys), and was buried there on 2 July (Silvester 2014:227–8).

His early life is still obscure; but it seems that he came from Godalming in Surrey, where a family of the name of Badslade (usually spelt like that) shows up in the parish registers from the 1650s onwards. (The early registers, till 1688, were edited by Malden (1904) for the Surrey Parish Register Society; the later registers, till 1840, have been edited on microfiche by the West Surrey Family History Society. I have not seen the latter publication. From information floating around on the web, I gather that a Thomas Badslade, son of Thomas and Susannah Badslade, was baptized in 1693. Probably that is the man; but I would need to get much closer to the source before I could speak with any confidence.)

By 1712, Thomas Badslade (or Badeslade, as he preferred to spell it) had entered into service, presumably as a draughtsman, with John Harris, DD, FRS. Harris was a minor but not a peripheral figure in scientific circles in London. (He was secretary of the Royal Society for a time; his 'Lexicon technicum' (2 vols. 1704 and 1710) has earned him a modest niche in the history of science.) He was also a clergyman. Since 1708, he had been one of the prebendaries of Rochester cathedral. In 1712–13, while he was doing a stint as the chapter's treasurer, he put Badslade to work making copies of old maps in the archive – especially the maps made for the parliamentary commissioners who had sold off the church's estates during the Interregnum. (Treasurer's books, DRc_FTb_047; treasurer's vouchers, DRc_FTv_045.)

Harris was already at work on an ambitious 'History of Kent'. By 1713 he was ready to issue a prospectus, but the book took much longer to write than he or his subscribers expected. There were intended to be two volumes. Volume 1 appeared in 1719, shortly after Harris's death; volume 2 never saw the light.

The illustrations for Harris's book were drawn by Thomas Badeslade. There is a view of <24> Rochester and Chatham, seen from the top of Strood hill; there is a bird's-eye view of <30> Tunbridge Wells from the south; Harris paid for those two himself. But most of the plates are aerial prospects of country houses, drawn in the style made popular by a Dutch artist working in England, Leonard Knyff (1650–1722). A collection of Knyff's drawings, engraved by John Kip (d. 1721), had been published by the London bookseller David Mortier (occ. 1701–22), first as 'Britannia illustrata' (1707), then (for a different clientele, I suppose) as 'Nouveau theatre de la Grande Bretagne' (1708). (Two of these plates show houses in Kent, Knole (near Sevenoaks) and Fairlawn (near Shipbourne).) Inspired by that example, Harris proposed to have drawings made of country houses in Kent. The understanding was that the owner of the house (if he chose to participate) would pay for the making of the plate, and Harris would pay for the printing. He got a good response. Badeslade produced more than thirty

drawings of this type (including two of Knoles, one from almost exactly the same angle as Knyff's). Most of the plates were engraved by (the same) John Kip, a smaller number by (a namesake of the author's) John Harris (? occ. 1701–36). None of them are dated. They were published with Harris's book in 1719; but the plates had probably been ready for several years before they were sent to be printed.

This is the complete list, as nearly as I can discover. The images available to me are not of high quality, and the credits – written in very small script – are often not distinctly legible. Sooner or later I hope to see some better images, or a copy of the book itself. In the meantime, I discover that Upcott (1818, pp. 354–7) gives a bibliographical description of Harris's 'History' which includes a detailed list of the illustrations; so I quote the credits as they were quoted by him. It may be worth adding that nine of the plates were reproduced by Macartney (1908).

<1> 'Preston Hall in Aylsford, the Seat of Sr Thomas Colepeper Bart.' – Thomas Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<2> 'Broome the Seat of Sr. Basill Dixwell Bart.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<3> 'Chilson Mannor the Seat of the Honble. William Hamilton Esqr.' – T. Badeslade del. – John Harris sc.

<4> 'Boughton Court the Seat of Sr Barnham Rider Kt.' – Thos. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<5> 'Wierton the Seat of Sr. Christopher Powell Bart.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<6> 'Chart Sutton the Seat of Sr Christopher Des Bouverie Knt.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<7> 'The SE Prospect of Frognal als. Frogpool the Seat of Rowland Tryon Esqr.' – T. B. del. – J. H. sc.

<8> 'Chevening, the Seat of the Rt. Honble. James Stanhope Earl Stanhope, Visct Stanhope of Mahone & Baron of Elvaston, Principal Secretary of State, and one of his Majesties most Honble. Privy Councel' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<9> 'High Street House the Seat of Henry Streatfeild, Esq;' – T. Badeslade del.

<10> 'Chepsted Place one of the Seats of David Polhill Esqr.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<11> 'Aldington West Court the Seat of Richard Sheldon Esq.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<12> 'Smiths Hall one of the Seats of John Brewer Esq.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<13> 'Tutsham Hall the Seat of Edward Goulston Esqr.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<14> 'Goodneston, the Seat of the Honble. Sr Brook Bridges Bart.'

<15> 'Mount Morris the Seat of Morris Drake Morris Esqr.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<16> 'Ightham Court the Seat of William James Esq. Son of Sr Demetrius James Knt.' – J. Kip sc.

<17> 'Knowlton Court the Seat of Sr Thomas D'Aeth Bart. & Dame Elizabeth his Wife.' – T. B. del. – J. Kip sc.

<18> 'The Grange and Laybourn Castle the Seats of William

Saxby Esqr.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<19> 'Leeds Abby humbly inscribed to Roger Meredyth Esqr.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<20> 'The Mote, one of the Seats of the Right Honourable the Lord Romney.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<21> 'Beachborough the Seat of William Brockman Esq.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<22> 'Oxen Hoath the Seat of Leonard Batholmew Esq.' – J. Kip sc.

<23> 'Pensherst the Seat of the Right Honorable John Earl of Leicester, Viscount Lisle, Baron Sidney of Pensherst, and one of the Lds. of his Majesties Bedchamber.' – J. Kip sc.

<24> 'Rochester Inscrib'd to Sr. Thomas Palmer Bart & Sr. Ion. Iennings Knt. Memrs of Parlmt for the City' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

(The city council were pleased with this view of Rochester – pleased enough to express their gratitude in a tangible form. '17th May 1719. Ordered that a gratuity of five Pounds be given to Thomas Badeslade for drawing and engraving the remarkable plates of this City with the History of the City under it, as the same is to be related in Dr Harris's Survey of Kent' (Smith 1928:71). Whether Badeslade felt obliged to let the engraver have a share of the money is not recorded.)

<25> 'The West Prospect of Knole &c.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<26> 'The South Prospect of Knole &c.' – J. Kip sc.

<27> 'Kippington, the Seat of Sr Charles Farnaby Knt.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<28> 'The House and Garden of Tho. Fuller M.D. at Sevenoake.'

<29> 'Lees Court the Seat of the Rt. Honble. the Lord Sondes.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<30> 'Tunbridge Wells humbly Dedicated to Thomas Pellet M.D.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<31> 'Sundridge Place, Bore Place & Sharps Place, the Seats of John Hyde Esq.' – J. Kip sc.

<32> 'Ingries at Greenhith the Seat of Jonathan Smith Esq.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<33> 'Waldershare the Seat of Sr. Robert Furnese Baronett.' – with the words 'in Kent' in smaller script below 'Sr.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Kip sc.

<34> 'Squerries at Westram in Kent.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<35> 'The Seat of Pendock Price Esqr. at Westram.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

<36> 'Deane the Seat of Sr Henry Oxenden Bart.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

One of these plates, <5> Wierton, is missing from the copy of the book available through ECCO, but that is accidental – certainly so, because this plate happens to be referred to in the 'Additions and Emendations' at the back of the book (p. xxxiii). (It is notable, by the way, that the owner of the house, though willing to pay for a plate, was not willing to supply Harris with any information. Harris knew, from Philipott, who had owned the

house in 1659; he knew who owned it at present; but he had no idea what had happened in between.)

As was commonly the case, the plates made for Harris's 'History' had an afterlife, being handed on from one publisher to another until they were worn out. Within a few years they were acquired by the bookseller Joseph Smith (occ. 1709–31); possibly he got them with the rest of Mortier's stock. They were certainly in his hands by 1724, when he included a few of them in his enlarged edition of the 'Nouveau theatre de la Grande Bretagne' (4 vols. 1724). From Smith they passed to J. Groenewegen and N. Prevost (occ. 1727–37), who used a large number of them in their 'Supplement du nouveau theatre' (1728). (The plates used in this book had small numbers added to them, at the top right corner.)

Two plates which went unpublished at first (because they were intended for volume 2) can be found in one or other of these albums:

<37> 'The West Prospect of the Cathedral Church of Rochester' – T. Badeslade delin. – J. Harris sculp. – in Smith 1724, vol. 3

<38> 'Howland Great Dock near Deptford' – T. Badslade Delint. – J. Kip Sculp. – in Groenewegen and Prevost 1728

Lastly, Richard Gough reports having seen 'A view of Bromley college, by Badeslade and Harris' (1780, p. 496*), and I find it reproduced by White (1981, pl. 22b). The title reads:

<39> 'Bromley College in Kent Founded and Endowed by Iohn Warner late Bp. of Rochester for Twenty Clergymens Widdows and a Chaplaine A.D. 1672. This Plate is Humbly inscrib'd to Lee Warner Esq. of Walsingham in the County of Norfolk 1720.' – T. Badeslade del. – J. Harris sc.

This appears to be a plate commissioned and paid for by Harris, to be included in volume 2. (The dedicatee occurs in the list of subscribers printed in volume 1.)

Since the plates would also have been sold singly, stray copies can turn up anywhere. (At the time of writing, at least six are being advertised for sale on the web, at prices of roughly £100–200 each.) I notice, for example, that four of these plates were inserted into a copy of Philipott's 'Villare Cantianum' (1776) which is now in the British Library (shelfmark 190.d.2, page images available through ECCO): <14> Goodnestone (cropped at the top), <19> Leeds Abbey, <26> Knole from the south, <31> Sundridge Place (with a spelling mistake, 'Sundridgh', in the title). This copy of the Leeds Abbey plate is a proof, differing in two large respects from the version which appears in Harris's book. First, it carries the title 'Leeds Abbey the Seat of Sr. Richd. Meredith . . .' with a space at the end (which means, I suppose, that the engraver did not know whether Sir Richard was a 'Knt.' or a 'Bart.'). Second, the gardens behind the house are very differently represented. (Instead of the long rectangular pool at the back, for instance, here there is a smaller semi-octagonal pool.) The changes made to this plate have a story behind them which we can only guess at: my guess would go like this. As Harris admits in the preface, publication of his book was long delayed. During that time, the gardens at Leeds Abbey underwent some extensive alterations; when the bill for this plate was presented to him, Sir Richard declined to pay it, because the view was already out of date. Badeslade (or somebody) was sent to Leeds to survey the new gardens, and a portion of the plate was effaced and reengraved accordingly; but Sir Richard was no more willing to pay for the alterations than for

the original plate. In the end, Harris had to pay the bills out of his own pocket, and he took his revenge by having the title changed too, dedicating the plate to Sir Richard's younger brother. (Roger Meredith is listed among the book's subscribers; Sir Richard Meredith is not. Roger succeeded to the baronetcy on his brother's death in 1723. He died in 1738, and the title went extinct. Nothing is left of Leeds Abbey except for the pigeon house – the long building with a stepped gable shown on the right in this view. That survives (Caiger 1975), but is reported to be in a very sorry state.)

(The title of the <34> Squerryes plate would, very probably, have had to be altered as well. The Earl of Jersey was the owner of this house; but in September 1718 it was leased for 21 years to Abel Alleyne. (Alleyne is in the list of Harris's subscribers; the Earl of Jersey is not.) A schedule of all the trees, shrubs and hedges for which the tenant was to be responsible was compiled on this occasion: Badeslade's drawing tallies almost perfectly with it (Woudstra 2003).)

The last chapter in the story, previously something of a mystery, can now be understood more clearly, thanks to some of the new evidence discovered by Silvester (2014). Not long before he died, Badeslade wrote a letter to his brother John in which (among other things) he provided a list of the assets he owned which might be converted into cash 'if any accident happen to me'. (The letter is dated from Ffynnant near Llandinam, 3 June 1744, and addressed to Mr John Badeslade at Hurtmore near Godalming.) Surprisingly, it turns out that Badeslade owned 500 sets of impressions of the plates made for Harris's 'History', which were being looked after by a friend of his in London: 'five hundred sets of Prints of the Gentlemens seats of the County of Kent they have not been made into Books to be sold but are worth about three half Crowns a set' (Silvester 2014:227). It was eventually decided that this letter of Badeslade's was tantamount to a will, and administration was granted to his brother on 7 Dec. 1745. After that, so it seems, John Badeslade came to some agreement with the bookseller Henry Chapelle (occ. 1736–62), who issued these sets of plates with a titlepage engraved for the purpose: 'Thirty-six different views of noblemen and gentlemen's seats in the county of Kent, all designed upon the spot by the late T. Badeslade, esq., surveyor, and engraved by the best hands' (Chapelle n.d.). Not having seen a copy of this book, I cannot say anything definite; but I begin to feel fairly sure that it was published in or soon after 1746.

References

- J. E. L. Caiger, 'Two Kent pigeon houses', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 89 (1975), 33–41.
- H. Chapelle (publ.), *Thirty-six different views of noblemen and gentlemen's seats in the county of Kent, all designed upon the spot by the late T. Badeslade, esq., surveyor, and engraved by the best hands* (London, n.d.).
- J. Groenewegen and N. Prevost (publ.), *Supplement du nouveau theatre de la Grande Bretagne* (London, 1728).
- M. Macartney, *English houses & gardens in the 17th and 18th centuries* (London, 1908).
- H. C. Malden (ed.), *The parish registers of Godalming, Surrey* (Surrey Parish Register Society 2, 1904).
- D. Mortier (publ.), *Britannia illustrata or views of several of the Queens palaces as also of the principal seats of the nobility and*

gentry of Great Britain curiously engraven on 80 copper plates (London, 1707).

D. Mortier (publ.), *Nouveau theatre de la Grande Bretagne: ou description exacte des palais de la reine, et des maisons les plus considerables des seigneurs & des gentilshommes de la Grande Bretagne* (London, 1708).

R. J. Silvester, 'Thomas Badeslade: his life and career from eastern England to north Wales', in S. Ashley and A. Marsden (eds.), *Landscapes and artefacts: studies in East Anglian archaeology presented to Andrew Rogerson* (Oxford, 2014), 217–29.

F. F. Smith, *A history of Rochester* (London, 1928).

J. Smith (publ.), *Nouveau theatre de la Grande Bretagne*, 4 vols. (London, 1724).

W. Upcott, *A bibliographical account of the principal works relating to English topography* (London, 1818).

R. White, 'The architects of Bromley College, Kent', *Architectural History*, 24 (1981), 32–3.

J. Woudstra, 'The planting of the pleasure garden of Squerryes Court, Westerham, Kent, in 1718', *Garden History*, 31 (2003), 34–47.

C.F. March 2011, last revised April 2020