

The Kentish traveller's companion: some bibliographical notes

This book began its existence, in embryonic form, under another name, as an appendix to Thomas Fisher's *History and antiquities of Rochester*, published in 1772 (Fisher 1772). It seems to have been understood at the time that this portion of the text (unlike the rest) was written by Fisher himself. Even if that is right, I would be reluctant to cite him as the author of the book which evolved out of this appendix. (He would, I suppose, have been content to be thought of as an "editor", not an "author".) As the text developed later, it incorporated anonymous contributions from other people, as well as passages from printed books, and three editions of the book were published after Fisher's death, each with some further additions. The only sensible course, it seems to me, is to cite the book by the publisher's name, without trying to determine the authorship.* But that is not the whole answer, because four of the editions of this book had two publishers each -- one in Rochester and one in Canterbury. On the whole, unless there is some particular reason for doing things differently, I would recommend citing the first two editions by the Rochester publisher's name, the last three by the Canterbury publisher's.

* Who was it, for example, who wrote the account of the fortifications along the coast near Deal (Fisher 1776:172--3)? I should quite like to know that -- but am sure that I never shall.

First edition (Fisher 1776). The *Kentish traveller's companion* first appeared as a separate book in 1776. It was published jointly by Fisher at Rochester and James Simmons at Canterbury.* Correspondingly there are two versions of the title page, one with Fisher's and the other with Simmons's name first. The agreement seems to have been that they would each print half of the book: Fisher would print pages 1--96 (sheets B--N), and Simmons would print pages 97--192 (sheets O--Cc). In the event, Fisher's half overflowed, filling three extra sheets (pages *65--*88, sheets *K--*M), while Simmons's half came out exactly right. The text follows the same plan as Fisher's "Description" (except for some slight rearrangements), and retains much of the same wording. Most of it, however, is altogether new: the book is more than three times as long as the text on which it is based (216 pages versus 63).

* This was not their first collaborative venture. Since 1772 they had shared in the printing of an annual called *The Kentish companion: or, useful memorandum and accompt book, for the pocket or desk*.

Second edition (Fisher 1779). The second edition, dated 1779, seems also to have been printed half and half: pages 1--136 (sheets B--S) at Rochester, pages 137--248 (sheets T--Ii) at Canterbury. Again there are two versions of the title page. This edition includes some references to the first volume of Hasted's *History of Kent*, published by Simmons the year before. Some of the uncredited additions in the first half of the book are fairly sure to be by Samuel Denne. Another new feature is an index.

So-called "third edition" (Gillman 1787--8). Fisher died in Sep 1786,

and the business was sold by his widow to Webster Gillman (who had served his apprenticeship with Simmons). Some unsold copies of the second edition came into Gillman's possession by that means. They were reissued by him, ostensibly as a "third edition", but the title page alone is new. The date varies: "1787" in some copies, "1788" in others.

Third edition (Simmons 1790). The genuine third edition was published in 1790. Again it seems to have been printed half and half, by Gillman at Rochester and by Simmons at Canterbury; again there are two versions of the title page. Gillman's compositor (who insisted on capitals for "King", "Queen", "Esq.", "North", "South", and so on) set pages 1--184 (sheets B--Aa); Simon's compositor (who left things as they were) set pages 193--320 (sheets Cc--Ss); but they appear both to have worked on sheet Bb (pages 185--92), and I can only guess how that could have been contrived. There are numerous additions, passages from recent publications and reports of recent changes. The description of Rochester (pp 132--78) has been very largely rewritten, presumably by Samuel Denne, though his name is never mentioned.

Fourth edition (Simmons 1794). The fourth edition (the first to be set in twelves) was quite clearly published half and half. At Rochester, Gillman went bankrupt in May 1793; but two brothers, Thomas and Ambrose Etherington, who had gone into partnership with him, somehow survived the wreck and stayed in business. (They had a shop in Chatham too.) At Canterbury, James Simmons continued to prosper. As before, there are two title pages: the Etheringtons' version, which does not mention Simmons, and Simmons's version, which does not mention the Etheringtons. From slight differences in their treatment of the text, I am satisfied that two compositors were at work. One of them set pages 1--204 (sheets B--S), presumably in Rochester; the other set pages 205--344 (sheets T--Gg, including the index), presumably in Canterbury. Additions occur throughout, but they are not nearly as large or as numerous as those in the third edition.

Fifth edition (Simmons 1799). This edition seems to have been produced entirely in Canterbury. Though the Etheringtons still had their shop in Rochester,* the printing side of the business had apparently been turned over to a third brother, Christopher Etherington, who set up a new printing-office further along the High Street, but died soon afterwards, in 1796. I take it that Simmons bought the Etheringtons' share of the copyright. There are only a few additions in the first half of the book, but many in the second. Some passages come from the fourth and final volume of Hasted's *History*, published that same year.

* Their shop was at 42 High Street (as it is numbered now), on the corner of Three Post Alley. The building is still there. Christopher Etherington's shop (later Samuel Caddel's) was at 70A High Street, on the corner of Black Boy Alley. That building disappeared in 1894.

Illustrations. The book is illustrated with a map of the road divided between three plates.

Plate 1. / Kent Road from London to three Miles beyond Rochester. / J. Ellis sculp.

Plate 2. / Continued through Canterbury to St. Nicholas in the Isle of Thanet. / J. Ellis sculp.

Plate 3. / From St. Nicholas through Margate along the Coast to Dover from thence to Canterbury. / J. Ellis sculp.

Each plate was altered slightly in 1790 and altered slightly again in 1799. These features are diagnostic:

Plate 1 -- house on Blackheath -- 1776 Sr. Gregy. Turner. -- 1790 Late Sr. Gregy. Turner. -- 1799 Ruins late Sr. Gregy. Turner.

Plate 2 -- house in Harbledown -- 1776 Genl. Belford. -- 1790 Sir R. Wilmot. -- 1799 Geo. Gipps, Esqr.

Plate 3 -- Walmer Castle -- 1776 Earl of Holderness. -- 1790 [blank] -- 1799 Rt. Hon. Wm. Pitt.

A table of distances (which I have not transcribed) appears as a frontispiece in the third edition and is repeated in the fourth and fifth.

References

Etherington and Etherington 1794 see Simmons 1794

Fisher 1772 Thomas Fisher, 'A description of the towns and villages situated on and near the road from London to Margate, &c.', in Thomas Fisher (publ.), *The history and antiquities of Rochester and its environs* (Rochester, 1772), 291--353.

Fisher 1776 Thomas Fisher (publ.), *The Kentish traveller's companion* (Rochester, 1776). -- Published jointly by Simmons and Kirkby at Canterbury.

Fisher 1779 Thomas Fisher (publ.), *The Kentish traveller's companion*, 2nd ed., "considerably enlarged" (Rochester, 1779). -- Published jointly by Simmons and Kirkby at Canterbury. -- For a bogus "third edition" see Gillman 1787; for the genuine third and subsequent editions see Simmons 1790, 1794, 1799.

Gillman 1787 Webster Gillman (publ.), *The Kentish traveller's companion*, "3rd ed." (Rochester, 1787). -- A reissue of the second edition with a new title page dated either 1787 or 1788.

Gillman 1788 see Gillman 1787

Gillman 1790 see Simmons 1790

Simmons 1776 see Fisher 1776

Simmons 1779 see Fisher 1779

Simmons 1790 James Simmons (publ.), *The Kentish traveller's companion*, 3rd ed., "with considerable additions" (Canterbury, 1790). -- Published jointly by Webster Gillman at Rochester.

Simmons 1794 James Simmons (publ.), *The Kentish traveller's companion*, 4th ed., "with considerable additions" (Canterbury, 1794). -- Published jointly by Thomas and Ambrose Etherington at Rochester.

Simmons 1799 James Simmons (publ.), *The Kentish traveller's companion*, 5th ed., "revised, corrected, and considerably enlarged" (Canterbury, 1799).

Online resources

British Book Trade Index <http://bbti.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>

English Short Title Catalogue <http://estc.bl.uk/>

Postscript

Meticulously accurate information about all the printers mentioned here can be found in R. J. Goulden, *A biographical dictionary of those engaged in the book trade in Kent 1750-1900* (Croydon, 2014), available through

<http://www.bibsoc.org.uk/content/book-trade-kent-1750-1900>

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