

Spas and Seaside Resorts in Kent, 1660-1820

Rachael May Johnson

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds, School of History

Submitted September 2013

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Acknowledgements

My thanks, first and foremost, must go to my supervisor John Chartres for unfailing enthusiasm, encouragement and support. Without his guidance, patience and insightful criticism, this thesis would not have been possible. Financial support has been generously provided by the Beresford PhD Scholarship and research trips have been supplemented by the Economic History Society.

I am very grateful to all of those at the University of Leeds who have provided practical and intellectual support, especially those involved in the Eighteenth Century Group and Early Modern Seminar Series. Kevin Linch and Iona McCleery in particular have offered useful advice and academic opportunities. Thanks also to all those at the Brotherton Library for their help and interest. Outside of Leeds, I am indebted to the staff of the British Library, Centre for Kentish Studies, East Kent Archives, East Sussex Record Office, Sheffield Archives, and West Yorkshire Archives Service for guiding me in the right direction and providing practical support.

I would like to thank all those whose friendship has helped to make my studies at Leeds so enjoyable, including Alexandra Anderson, Dragan Bakic, Moira Bonnington, Becky Bowd, Cathy Coombs, Danielle Coombs, Thomas Davies, Júlio Decker, Josie Freear, Oliver Godsmark, Nicholas Grant, Vincent Hiribarren, Henry Irving, Alexander Lock, Simone Pelizza, Juliette Reboul, Louise Seaward, Danielle Sprecher, Priscilla Truss, Mark Walmsley, and Peter Whitewood.

I would especially like to thank Gina Denton for sharing my love of snickerdoodles, providing endless cups of tea and for introducing me to *Mad Men*, which has been a wonderful distraction from thesis writing. I would also like to thank Ceara Weston for adventures in Saltaire and Hay-on-Wye, as well as for many evenings spent watching costume dramas. Outside of academia, Nikki Gaiger, Kirsty Horsfield, Jenny Mathieson, Francesca Lee, Simon Smith, and Claire Whetton have offered unstinting encouragement.

Thanks also to my family, who for four years have listened patiently to endless accounts of my studies, especially Phillip Johnson, Geraldine Johnson, Simon Pearson, and Philip Pearson. Most of all I would like to thank Mum and Dad: your encouragement and support have been invaluable and this thesis is dedicated to you both.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the tough and mighty Jack Millard: I could not have done this without you.

Abstract

This thesis offers a new approach to the study of long eighteenth-century watering places that combines the precise study of locality with a careful consideration of motivation. Looking at spas and seaside resorts in Kent between 1660 and 1820, the county hierarchy of watering places will be used to argue for the complexity and diversity of the visitor experience. The aim, therefore, will not be to offer a traditional narrative of resort development. Instead, it will explore the use of spas and seaside resorts across a wide range of intersecting axes, focusing on the social, cultural and medical aspects of resort life and considering in particular Margate and Tunbridge Wells as urban and leisure centres. Comparing resorts with national, regional and local catchment areas and exploring the development of watering places across time and between resort typologies, this thesis will look at Kent's spas and seaside resorts as marriage markets, feminine arenas, centres for polite society, and places in which to be seen indulging in fashionable leisure and pleasure, showing how they reacted to and actively influenced a changing social order. Challenging portrayals of the water cure as an excuse used to justify the pursuit of pleasure and drawing on emerging discourses on fashionable illness, this thesis will argue for the importance of mineral and sea waters as a medical treatment during a period when few effective medicines existed that could treat the vast majority of afflictions. Thus by combining the study of locality with a recognition of the diversity of the visitor experience, this thesis will show how Kent's watering places not only played an important role as social, cultural and medical arenas but also how they helped visitors navigate some of the most important areas of their lives.

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Introduction

On 23 July 1629 Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, visited the newly discovered mineral waters at Tunbridge Wells. Recovering after the birth and death of a premature son, Henrietta Maria hoped the chalybeate waters would aid conception and promote a successful pregnancy. Setting up camp on Bishop's Down, the Queen and her court spent about six weeks at the fledgling spa indulging in 'masks and dancing' and they 'diffused a splendor [sic] and magnificence over this wild country.'¹ The visit proved a success: in the following November, Henrietta Maria was reported to be pregnant and she gave birth to a healthy baby, the Prince of Wales, in May 1630.

Nearly fifty years later John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester, ridiculed the Tunbridge Wells water's reputation for encouraging fecundity. Visiting as a prominent member of Charles II's libertine court, he revelled in the spa's licentious atmosphere. In a 1675 poem Rochester described the characters he met on the Walks, including women who were drinking the waters in the hope of conceiving. The Earl, however,

¹ Thomas Bengue Burr, *The History of Tunbridge-Wells* (London: Printed and Sold by M. Hingeston, J. Dodsley, T. Caslon and E. Baker at Tunbridge Wells, 1766), pp. 24-25.

attacked the notion that it was the waters that caused pregnancy: 'For here walk Cuff and Kick / With brawny back and legs and potent prick, / Who more substantially will cure thy wife, / And on her half-dead womb bestow new life.'²

Amabel, Countess de Grey, visiting the spa as a newly married young woman a century later in the 1770s, was received into a strong feminine community which fostered intellectual debate. Keen to participate in fashionable leisure pursuits in the company of polite society, Amabel spent much of her time engaging in the public routine of resort life: dancing in the assembly rooms; shopping for luxury goods along the Pantiles and drinking tea with friends. Alongside this overt motivation, Amabel was also drinking the waters twice a day in the hope of conceiving. Unlike Henrietta Maria, however, the waters did not have the desired effect: despite returning to Tunbridge Wells the following two summers, she remained childless.

For Frances Sayer, a young woman from London's respectable middling sort who visited Sandgate in the early nineteenth century, the curative properties of seawater were seen as little more than a novelty. The focus for her four-week holiday at this emerging seaside resort was instead the enjoyment of the resort's amenities, particularly the circulating library and exploring the surrounding area through walks and excursions. Instead of socialising within a regulated visiting company Sayer, who was staying with her grandmother, spent her time within a family party made up of her mother and several spinster aunts.

Anna Maria Hussey, a noted botanist, likewise spent much of her time within her family circle during a holiday in Dover in 1836. Seeking a degree of seclusion and only occasionally making trips into the town to change her library books, Hussey spent most of her time with her children, searching the shoreline for botanical finds and teaching them to appreciate nature. Family oriented, Hussey shunned resort society and saw the sea and shore as a place of discovery, whilst her children benefited from breathing the healthy sea air.

As these snapshots show, watering places could hold many different meanings for visitors. Combining medical cure with fashionable leisure and pleasure, spas and seaside resorts during the long eighteenth century were multi-dimensional arenas that

² John Wilmot, *John Rochester, Earl of Rochester: The Complete Works*, ed by Frank H. Ellis, (London: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 47-48.

supported a wide variety of intersecting functions. These five examples, taken from across the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reflect the complexity and diversity of the visitor experience and can thus be interpreted in a number of different ways: several of which seem contradictory. The belief in the curative properties of healing waters, the pursuit of fashionable leisure and pleasure, the importance of lifecycles, social class, different masculinities and femininities, gender relations, and the changing nature of resort society all emerge strongly as key areas for investigation.

This thesis will look at spas and seaside resorts in Kent between 1660 and 1820. Its aim is not, however, to offer a traditional narrative of resort development, nor is its primary focus a conventional comparison of physical environment and built facilities. Instead, it will use the county hierarchy of watering places as the foundation for an analysis that will combine the precise study of locality with a careful consideration of motivation. Starting from a recognition of the diversity of the visitor experience, this thesis will examine who went to Kent's watering places, why and what they did when there, showing that there remains much to be learnt about resorts as health and leisure centres during this pivotal period in their history.

Through an examination of the social, cultural and medical facets of Kentish watering places, this thesis will explore the degree of continuity and change between the spa and the seaside and across the long eighteenth century. It will show how resorts not only reacted to a changing society but actively influenced it. Based on an analysis of promotional, historical and medical treatises, newspaper articles, contemporary literature and print, and diaries and letters, augmented by modern scholarly theories and studies, this thesis will assess Kentish spas and seaside resorts as centres for health and leisure, evaluating the relative importance of the different roles assumed by these multi-functional arenas. It will argue that existing studies of Kentish watering places fail to reflect the complexity of the visitor experience and underestimate their importance as social and medical centres.

The history of leisure has been increasingly recognised by scholars as an important area of study: no longer is its pursuit 'left almost exclusively to amateur historians as a colourful, even amusing, branch of history on which no serious historian

would waste much time.’³ Emerging from the 1970s as an area of growing interest, an expanding number of scholars have shown the history of leisure to be not only a valuable topic of research in its own right but as having important implications for the meaning and experiences of leisure in modern-day society. Whilst previously held as a validation for the lack of interest, Peter Borsay’s recent study has shown how the conception of leisure as superfluous, frivolous and non-essential ‘allows emotions to be aroused and played with . . . that would be inappropriate and simply too dangerous for the real world’ and he has argued that ‘it remains central to the paradox that gives leisure its meaning and function that while being *of* the real world it should be *outside* it. It should appear irrelevant.’⁴

Echoing this new understanding of leisure which emphasises its interconnectedness with social, cultural, economic, political, and gender history, this thesis will offer a study of Kentish watering places that begins with the twin recognition of the importance of long eighteenth-century spas and seaside resorts to wider trends and to the lives of individual visitors. As demonstrated by the opening examples, though there existed strong continuities and overlap, visiting a resort was by no means a homogeneous event: no two visitors’ experiences were exactly the same. Whilst this observation might initially appear trivial, approaching the study of watering places from this perspective, particularly when combined with the diversity highlighted by the study of a locality, allows for the circumvention of over-generalised narratives and provides scope for a new, more nuanced insight.

i

‘Among the counties Kent has always had a special place in English history.’⁵ Proximity to London and the long Thames shore that allowed easy access to the capital,

³ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-c. 1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 11.

⁴ Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure: The British Experience since 1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 217.

⁵ C.W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent: A Social and Economic History* (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 1.

combined with a society characterised by the presence of a rural middle class, the county was able to support a large number of watering places with national, regional and local catchment areas.⁶ In total, this thesis will involve the study of five spas – Tunbridge Wells, Canterbury, Sissinghurst, Sydenham, and Shooter’s Hill – and eleven seaside resorts – Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs, Dover, Deal, Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe, Herne Bay, Gravesend, and Whitstable.

Watering places ‘have a long history and a very wide diffusion’: popular in the Ancient World, they continue to thrive as part of the twenty-first-century leisure industry.⁷ The definition of terms is thus essential. Within a recent review essay of the history of spas, John K. Walton has addressed problems of terminology at length, considering issues of place identity, specialism and differentiation between different types of leisure town. Following Walton, this thesis will use the historical understanding of the word ‘spa,’ derived from the eponymous town in modern-day Belgium, ‘denoting a mineral spring at which seekers after health gather to “take the waters,” internally or externally, while enjoying leisure, entertainment and sociability.’⁸ Phyllis Hembry has offered a similar definition: ‘A real spa,’ she argued, ‘served more than immediately local clientele, and there was some development around the site. Another criterion of a spa was that it received the imprimatur of mention or approval by a medical practitioner.’⁹

An important distinction must be made between a ‘spa’ and a ‘healing spring.’ Throughout the long eighteenth century, there existed hundreds of ‘healing’ springs which ‘although called spas, were nothing more than wells, or watercourses channelled into a basin, where only the locals came to dip and sip.’¹⁰ This distinction was not necessarily fixed and several of Kent’s spas crossed this dividing line, often repeatedly. The focus of this study, however, will be on spas rather than healing springs and will consider the latter only when directly related to the former.

⁶ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 1.

⁷ John K. Walton, ‘Health, Sociability, Politics and Culture. Spas in History, Spas and History: An Overview’, *Journal of Tourism History*, 4.1 (2012), 1-14 (p. 3).

⁸ Walton, ‘Health, Sociability, Politics and Culture’, p.2.

⁹ Phyllis Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1815: A Social History* (London: Athlone, 1990), p. 69.

¹⁰ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 69.

Seaside resorts emerged in England from the 1720s. An evolutionary progression of the water cure, long eighteenth-century seaside resorts shared many defining characteristics with spas. Indeed, as demonstrated by the first resort to offer sea-bathing facilities, Scarborough, the two typologies of watering places were not mutually exclusive and many seaside resorts offered mineral springs as part of their medical repertoire. The definition of a 'seaside resort' shares several parallels with that of 'spa' and the presence of health and leisure functions are likewise central. There were subtle differences in the medical endorsement of waters which Hembry stated is necessary for the identification of a spa: unlike mineral waters, seawater was believed to have widely consistent curative properties and thus there was not the same requirement for seaside resorts to obtain specific approbation. Whilst the provision of sea-bathing facilities can be used to indicate the first steps taken by a location to draw in visitors, this is only a blunt tool which does not necessarily signify the presence of a 'resort.' The achievement of a critical mass of visitors was thus key to the creation of a seaside 'resort' as with a spa, though it is often difficult to identify this tipping point with any precision.

No study has yet emerged that offers a comparative exploration of spas and seaside resorts within a county-based case study. This thesis will use the county hierarchy of watering places conventionally to compare the cultural and social activities of Kent's major resorts, to explore the motivations, tastes and experiences of visitors and to reassess the importance of medicine and the water cure. But though it will rely heavily on an understanding of the development and character of Kent's watering places, this thesis will not be a local history in the traditional sense. Instead it will use a geographical case study as a method for the wider analysis of watering places as health and leisure centres.

The dates framing this study are significant. The Restoration of Charles II in 1660 has been widely recognised as instigating a new phase of English leisure. Rejecting the restrictive tenets of Puritanism and embracing a hedonistic lifestyle, the libertine court led society's increased appetite for leisure and pleasure. Within the wider commercialisation of leisure, spas thrived as centres for fashionable culture and society, drawing on increasing demand from the middling classes. In Kent, Tunbridge Wells, from 1660 a leading courtiers' spa, rivalled Bath for elite patronage whilst the

conducive conditions of the new reign led to the promotion of smaller spas across the county.

The end point of this study, 1820, was selected from a number of possible options. If, as Borsay has argued, 1660 marked the beginning of the third phase of English leisure, the fourth phase, characterised by the impacts of industrialisation and urbanisation and traditionally seen as beginning in the late eighteenth century, might mark a significant change in many leisure activities, but it is less relevant for Kent's watering places.¹¹ The arrival of the railways, which had a transformative effect on the fortunes of watering places across the country, marks a logical choice for the conclusion of this study, however by extending the scope of this thesis to cover almost two-hundred years this would significantly diminish the level of detailed analysis possible. 1820 offers a mid-point and was significant in its own right. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars exerted a significant influence over the development of Kent's resorts. Not only did it prevent the elites from visiting continental spas and thus temporarily increase demand but, more importantly, the central role played by the Kentish coast in the defence of the nation had a significant impact on the fortune of many of the county's seaside towns as urban, military and leisure centres. The analysis within this thesis, however, will not be strictly confined to within these dates and long eighteenth-century developments will frequently be examined through a discussion of events occurring outside this timeframe.

ii

Watering place historiography shows signs of becoming increasingly international in scope. Led by Walton, recent edited collections and the *Journal of Tourism History* have concentrated on combining local and regional developments with an awareness of wider international trends. A growing body of articles offer accounts of Western European spas and seaside resorts, including Bertram M. Gordon on Vichy in France,¹²

¹¹ Borsay, *A History of Leisure*, pp. 14-15.

¹² Bertram M. Gordon, 'Reinventions of a Spa Town: The Unique Case of Vichy', *Journal of Tourism History*, 4.1 (2012), 35-55.

Berit Eide Johnsen on Southern Norway¹³ and Walton's own work on San Sebastián in Spain.¹⁴ Taken together, such studies highlight the strong international element of the history of watering places and emphasise the need to look beyond a narrow focus on individual resorts. But, as Walton questioned in his 2012 review article, how can historians 'draw attention to the international, indeed transnational, nature of much spa history' while 'encouraging both the fine-grained local studies and the interpretative bird's eye global surveys which we need?'¹⁵

The majority of studies of Kentish watering places fall into this category of local history. 'Local case studies have proliferated since Pimlott's time' and many of these have been 'contributions to the descriptive school of historical geography.'¹⁶ The historiography of Kent's spas and seaside resorts is no exception. Tunbridge Wells, as one of the eighteenth century's leading spas, has attracted the most scholarly attention. C.W. Chalklin's 2008 *Royal Tunbridge Wells: A History* and Alan Savidge's *Royal Tunbridge Wells: A History of a Spa Town*, first published in 1975 and reissued in a revised edition in 1995, offer detailed and comprehensive accounts of the physical development of the town. But it was Margaret Barton's 1937 *Tunbridge Wells* that considered in the greatest detail many of the themes that emerge most strongly within this thesis, most notably the importance of women's health within the culture of the spa.¹⁷ None of these studies, however, provides a complete account of the social, cultural and medical history of the spa and all are limited by their predominantly narrative structure.

The history of the Kentish seaside is dominated by the work of John Whyman. Extensively and minutely researched, Whyman's 1985 thesis 'Aspects of Holidaymaking and Resort Development within the Isle of Thanet, with particular reference to

¹³ Berit Eide Johnsen, 'Recycled Maritime Culture and Landscape: Various Aspects of the Adaptation of Nineteenth-Century Shipping and Fishing Industries to Twentieth-Century Tourism in Southern Norway', in *Resorts and Ports: European Seaside Towns since 1700*, edited by Peter Borsay and John K. Walton (Bristol: Channel View, 2011), 147-66.

¹⁴ Publications include: John K. Walton, 'Leisure Towns in Wartime: The Impact of the First World War in Blackpool and San Sebastian', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31.4 (1996), 603-18.

¹⁵ Walton, 'Health, Sociability, Politics and Culture', p. 14.

¹⁶ John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p. 2.

¹⁷ Margaret Barton, *Tunbridge Wells* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937).

Margate, c. 1736-1840¹⁸ together with his sourcebook *The Early Kentish Seaside*, published in the same year, provides a strong foundation for the study of Kent's three most successful eighteenth-century seaside resorts.¹⁹ These are complemented by a number of articles which address the history of the Kentish seaside.²⁰ Whyman's comprehensive research into the development of Margate in particular is likely to remain unrivalled as a local history. Offering detailed information on all areas of resort life, including physical development, transportation, social and medical facilities, the number and social rank of visitors, and the promotion of the Isle of Thanet resorts, Whyman's work is extensive. As an analytical study, however, his thesis has been subject to heavy criticism. Reviewer Wray Vamplew, noting the exceptional length of the thesis, observed that Whyman 'lacks either the ability or the desire to synthesise, with the result that description swamps analysis. Much of the "evidence" provided serves no apparent purpose.'²¹ Whyman's tendency towards 'excessive quotation' and his mass of accumulated evidence was utilised within his subsequently published sourcebook²² but, as Vamplew concluded, his work 'supplies the information with which others can do the analysis.'²³

The study of Margate as a seaside resort has most recently been pursued by Allan Brodie. Publishing on the heritage and early history of the English seaside and concentrating in particular on Margate and Scarborough, Brodie has discussed issues of social behaviour and class, looking at the 'change of tone' that occurred as towns made the transformation from ports to resorts.²⁴ Moving away from the Isle of Thanet

¹⁸ John Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking and Resort Development within the Isles of Thanet, with particular reference to Margate, circa 1736 to circa 1840' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1980).

¹⁹ John Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside (1736-1840): Selected Documents*, with a Commentary by John Whyman (Gloucester: Alan Sutton for Kent Archives Office, 1985).

²⁰ For example, 'Communications to Margate and Gravesend as Coastal Resorts before 1840', *Southern History*, 3 (1981), 111-38 and, 'Rise and Decline: Dover and Deal in the Nineteenth-Century', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 85 (1970), 35-54.

²¹ Wray Vamplew, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking and Resort Development within the Isle of Thanet, with Particular Reference to Margate, circa 1736 to circa 1840, 2 vols, by John Whyman', *The Journal of Economic History*, 45.2 (1985), 486-88, (p. 486.)

²² Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*.

²³ Vamplew, p. 488.

²⁴ Allan Brodie, 'Towns of "Health and Mirth": The First Seaside Resorts, 1730-1769', in *Resorts and Ports: European Seaside Towns since 1700*, edited by Peter Borsay and John K. Walton (Bristol: Channel View, 2011), 18-32 (p. 18).

resorts, Folkestone and Sandgate have formed the focus of Marc Arnold's 2012 medical history of the treatment of tuberculosis during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁵ Though Arnold's work lies outside of the chronological scope of this thesis, both his study and those by Brodie demonstrate the possibilities the history of Kent's watering places hold for a wide range of disciplines and the potential held by a wealth of underutilised source material.

In addition to the above academic works, there exists for all of Kent's resorts a vast and growing body of popular books 'of mainly nostalgic reminiscence' and of widely varying quality.²⁶ Though the majority of these works are only of peripheral relevance to this study, they nevertheless attest to a strong public interest in the history of England's spas and seaside resorts. The works of several amateur historians have proven useful in establishing a factual basis for this study, particularly for Kent's smaller watering places. John Coulter's *Sydenham and Forest Hill Past* and Adam Nicolson's *Sissinghurst: An Unfinished History*, for example, have been valuable for understanding the wider development of two of Kent's smaller spas.

The key studies for the history of English watering places remain those nationwide surveys published during the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s which, following the mid-century example of J.A.R. Pimlott's *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History*, aimed to explore the neglected field of leisure history.²⁷ Hembry's *The English Spa, 1560-1815: A Social History* remains unrivalled as a thorough and comprehensive account of the rise of England's spas, combining the precise description of individual resorts within the wider narrative of the development of watering places across this crucial period of their history.²⁸ For the English seaside there emerged a number of surveys, most significantly from Walton and James Walvin. Walvin's aim was to offer 'not so much a study of resorts themselves but an investigation into the wider, shifting economic patterns of an advanced industrial

²⁵ Marc Arnold, *Disease, Class and Social Change: Tuberculosis in Folkestone and Sandgate, 1880-1930* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

²⁶ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. vii.

²⁷ J.A.R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* (London: Faber, 1947).

²⁸ Phyllis Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1815: A Social History* (London: Athlone, 1990).

society.²⁹ Class similarly formed an integral focus of Walton's study, which elucidated the impact of changing demand and supply and, like Walvin, his aim was to shed light on the 'relationship between seaside holiday and urban development' by analysing 'the whole range of forces at work.'³⁰

These nationwide studies have been complemented by a continuously growing body of works dedicated to individual watering places. Bath, as England's premier resort, has attracted the most attention from scholars. Most notably, R.S. Neale's Marxist inspired history of the city³¹ has been recently followed by two studies that interrogate Bath's image: Peter Borsay's *The Image of Georgian Bath, 1700-2000: Towns, Heritage and History*³² and Graham Davis and Penny Bonsall's *A History of Bath: Image and Reality*.³³ An increasing interest in the history of medicine at the spa has led to a more nuanced understanding of the water cure itself. Perhaps most significantly, Audrey Heywood has proven the effectiveness of Bath's thermal waters in the treatment of lead poisoning, thus demonstrating the presence of actual curative properties beyond that of placebo.³⁴ Anne Borsay's study of Bath's General Infirmary adopted a different approach to the analysis of mineral waters, exploring their use by the medical faculty and the interaction between the Infirmary and resort society.³⁵ Counteracting what at times threatened to become a Bath-centric literature, are an increasing number of works that look at its rivals, such as Jack Binns on Scarborough,³⁶ Walton on Blackpool³⁷ and Malcolm G. Neesam on Harrogate.³⁸ Taken together, the

²⁹ James Walvin, *Beside the Seaside: A Social History of the Popular Seaside Holiday* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 11.

³⁰ Walton, *The English Seaside Resort*, p. 3.

³¹ R.S. Neale, *Bath 1680-1850: A Social History, Or, A Valley of Pleasure, Yet a Sink of Iniquity* (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

³² Peter Borsay, *The Image of Georgian Bath, 1700-2000: Towns, Heritage and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³³ Graham Davis and Penny Bonsall, *A History of Bath: Image and Reality* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2006)

³⁴ Audrey Heywood, 'A Trial of the Bath Waters: The Treatment of Lead Poisoning' in *The Medical History of Waters and Spas*, ed. by Roy Porter (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1990), pp. 82-101.

³⁵ Anne Borsay, *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath: A Social History of the General Infirmary, c. 1739-1830* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

³⁶ Jack Binns, *The History of Scarborough: From Earliest Times to the Year 2000* (Pickering: Blackthorn Press, 2001).

³⁷ John K. Walton, *Blackpool* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 1998).

availability of such in-depth histories of individual watering places are surely a step towards Walton's aim of a 'bird-eye global' understanding.

Adopting a different approach and seeking to 'revisit the orthodox view of resort development,' a recent collection of papers has focused on the resort-port relationship.³⁹ Rooted in urban history, Walton and Peter Borsay argue for the need to reorient a historiography which typically separates the study of resorts and seaports. Suggesting the extent to which it 'was possible for the recreational/health and commercial maritime functions to coexist,'⁴⁰ Borsay and Walton show the need to integrate the study of seaside resorts into the industrialisation process 'rather than constituting a subsequent consequence of this long and complex sequence of developments.'⁴¹

Gender, one of the dominant themes of this thesis, is under-examined by this traditional historiography, though it emerges strongly within the discipline of English Literature. Alison E. Hurley's study of the watering-place correspondence of the Bluestockings from Tunbridge Wells moves the debate on women's experiences of spas away from the marriage market and demonstrates how a powerful female community was created within these exclusive leisure arenas.⁴² Much of this literature, however, centres on Bath, inspired in particular by the novels of Jane Austen.⁴³ The closest to a gender-orientated study of Kentish resorts is Amanda E. Herbert's 2009 article, which similar to Hurley, though concentrating primarily on the seventeenth century, argues for the importance of the spas as 'crucial geographic sites for female identity creation.'⁴⁴ The understanding of gender at eighteenth-century watering places, however, remains fairly limited and exists largely outside of the traditional historiography.

³⁸ Malcolm G. Neesam, *Harrogate Great Chronicle, 1332-1841* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2005).

³⁹ Peter Borsay and John K. Walton, 'Introduction: The Resort-Port Relationship', in *Resorts and Ports: European Seaside Towns since 1700*, edited by Peter Borsay and John K. Walton (Bristol: Channel View, 2011), pp. 1-17 (p. 12).

⁴⁰ Borsay and Walton, *Resorts and Ports*, p. 13.

⁴¹ Borsay and Walton, *Resorts and Ports*, p. 1.

⁴² Alison E. Hurley, 'A Conversation of Their Own: Watering-Place Correspondence among the Bluestockings,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40.1 (2006), 1-21.

⁴³ Importantly for this study, John Mullan's recent publication looks at Austen's portrayal of the seaside: John Mullan, *What Matters in Austen* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013).

⁴⁴ Amanda E. Herbert, 'Gender and the Spa: Space, Sociability and the Self at British Health Spas, 1640-1714', *Journal of Social History*, 43.2 (2009), 361-83, (p. 362)

Precedent for a county-based and a comparative study between watering places has already been established. John F. Travis's 1993 *The Rise of the Devon Seaside Resorts 1750-1900* explored the development of the cluster of seaside resorts in Devon— Exmouth, Teignmouth, Ilfracombe, Sidmouth, Dawlish, and Torquay – which emerged as exclusive leisure centres.⁴⁵ Emphasising the distinguishing features that made them successful despite their distance from London, Travis charted the development of Devon's resorts which by the end of the nineteenth century boasted only one major centre but no less than eight middle-ranking watering places.⁴⁶ Sylvia McIntrye's 1974 thesis 'Towns as Health and Pleasure Resorts: Bath, Scarborough, and Weymouth, 1700-1815' demonstrated the potential value of a comparative study of a selection of the country's leading spas and seaside resorts.⁴⁷

This thesis will draw on all of these different strands of watering place historiography but will belong exclusively to none of them. Neither the local study of an individual resort nor an attempt at a national or transnational survey that Walton suggests is necessary for the progression of this field, its aim will be to combine the precise study of locality with an interaction with wider national trends. Seeking to draw together the different strands of the historiography, this thesis will follow the example of Peter Borsay, Walton and Walvin by situating the growth of Kent's resorts within the wider history of urbanisation and changing patterns of supply and demand. But through a focus on visitor experience of individual spas and seaside resorts, it will also be able to offer an interdisciplinary approach that draws together social, cultural, medical, gender, political, and economic themes. Thus through a county-based study that is situated between the local and the national, this thesis will work towards a more integrated, outward-looking history of watering places.

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⁴⁵ John F. Travis, *The Rise of the Devon Seaside Resorts 1750-1900* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993).

⁴⁶ Travis, p. 187.

⁴⁷ Sylvia McIntrye, 'Towns as Health and Pleasure Resorts: Bath, Scarborough, and Weymouth, 1700-1815' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1974).

Chapter one will provide the foundation for this thesis by offering a chronological outline of the development of Kent's watering places. After considering existing approaches to and understandings of the hierarchy of spas and seaside resorts, this chapter will combine a precise study of individual resorts within the wider narrative of the development of the water cure, starting with St. Thomas's shrine in medieval Canterbury and concluding with the impact of the railways in the mid-nineteenth century. Due to its proximity to London, Kent during the long eighteenth century was able to support a relatively high number of resorts with national, regional and local catchment areas. This chapter will show how Kent's watering places fared within a fluid and flexible hierarchy, concentrating on the factors that made some resorts successful whilst others achieved no more than transitory fame. By focusing on a county hierarchy rather than a countrywide survey or account of an individual resort, this chapter will be able to combine a detailed study of locality with an awareness of the impact of wider social, cultural, political, economic, religious, and medical changes on resort development. Its aim, however, will not be to provide an exhaustive descriptive narrative of the physical growth of each of Kent's watering places. Instead, this chapter will explore the combination of factors, ranging from the individual initiative of medical promoters and local businessmen to the impact of international conflict, which influenced the fortunes of Kentish spas and seaside resorts and thus provide a framework for the analysis conducted by subsequent chapters.

Chapter two will offer a detailed comparative analysis of Margate and Tunbridge Wells as urban and leisure centres. It will first consider the status of Kent's watering places as urban centres, combining wider discourses of urbanity during the long eighteenth century with the aim of watering places to offer all the social and cultural amenities of urban life within an appealing rural environment. It will then examine the development of Tunbridge Wells: unique as a 'new town' dedicated to the leisure industry, it will be argued that this seventeenth-century courtiers' spa played an integral role in the establishment of the core set of facilities that formed the basis of social and cultural life at eighteenth-century watering places. The spa's development will then be compared to Margate's. As a small port that established its success as a resort on the strength of its water communications with London, Margate's development exhibited several significant differences from that of

Tunbridge Wells. This chapter will examine the influence of location on the resort's architecture, demonstrating the importance of the confrontation between civilised society and untamed nature. Assembly rooms, the position of Master of Ceremonies and booksellers / circulating libraries at the two resorts will be compared directly to demonstrate both the continuities between spas and seaside resorts and also to highlight their differences, distinguishing between those that resulted from resort typology and those of individual circumstance and location. Thus this chapter will offer comparison across the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, between the different types of watering places and between individual leisure centres.

Chapter three will focus on society at Kent's watering places. Beginning with an analysis of the changing eighteenth-century social structure, this chapter will consider how far the vertical hierarchy of class can be mapped onto the similarly vertical hierarchy of watering places. This chapter will show how Kent's spas and seaside resorts adapted to and actively influenced the social order, demonstrating the continuities and changes that occurred between 1660 and 1820 in response to expanding middling-sort demand. Looking at Kent's watering places as marriage markets, feminine arenas, centres for polite society, and places for the conspicuous consumption of fashionable leisure and pleasure, this chapter will examine the social and cultural facilities provided by resorts and how they were used by visitors. Starting from the stereotypical characters with which literature populated watering places, the importance of gender within resorts and the different masculinities and femininities supported by spas and seaside resorts as social arenas will be discussed. Image will be a central theme: this chapter will not only explore how Kent's resorts created and maintained their reputations but it will also investigate the ways in which they were undermined. It will be shown how whilst many resorts suffered irreparable damage as a consequence of a tarnished image, others thrived despite less salubrious associations. To compare the visitor experience across Kent's resorts in detail, this chapter will conclude with an analysis of four women's accounts of visits to Tunbridge Wells, Margate, Sandgate, and Dover during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These accounts will not only allow the visitor experience to be examined along a number of intersecting axes, including social status, age, health, family circumstances, and personality but it will also demonstrate the centrality of lifecycles

and the transformative impact that expanding middling sort demand had on resort society.

Chapter four will look at the healing waters that lay at the heart of Kent's spas and seaside resorts. By placing the water cure within wider understandings of health and medicine in the long eighteenth century and interacting with emerging discourses on fashionable illnesses, this chapter will argue that the importance of mineral and sea waters as a medical cure has been underestimated. Through an analysis of the medical theories and texts that underpinned the taking of the waters at Kent's resorts the genuinely held belief in the curative properties of waters will be explored. Using medical treatises and the records of the Margate General Sea Bathing Infirmary, it will be shown how individual resorts and watering places as a whole created strong links with the cure of specific diseases and adapted to meet demands in the medical marketplace. It will be argued that Tunbridge Wells built its reputation as a resort during the seventeenth century on the promotion of its waters as a cure for melancholy and infertility whilst Margate in particular fostered a reputation for the treatment of scrofula. Recognising that the reputation of Kent's resorts was based on waters with only slender claims to any healing properties, this chapter will consider the importance of ritual, performance and the placebo effect within arenas that placed significant cultural capital on sufferers and which revolved around the conspicuous consumption of health. Above all, however, it will emphasise the importance of the water cure at a time when few effective medicines existed that could treat the vast majority of afflictions.

1. Constructing a Hierarchy of Watering Places

'You can hardly travel through a country that has more attractive scenes, or more variety of prospect than the county of Kent,' proclaimed George Saville Carey in

1799.⁴⁸ Carey's aim in his *The Balnea: Or an Impartial Description of all the Popular Watering Places in England* was 'to give the Public . . . little more than a kind of Chart, in which the Reader, looking over it by his fire-side in the winter, may bethink himself what place would be most convenient for him to visit in the summer.'⁴⁹ He thus offered a description of the country's most fashionable resorts, focusing on topography, social and medical facilities and composition of the visiting company, whilst highlighting the 'beauties and defects' of each place.⁵⁰ Like Carey, this chapter will offer a 'kind of Chart': through an outline of the history of Kent's spas and seaside resorts a hierarchy of watering places will be constructed that will form the foundation for this thesis. Combining a precise study of the development of individual resorts with an awareness of the wider evolution of the water cure and historical trends and events, this chapter will detail the changing fortunes of Kent's watering places, focusing on the factors that caused them to succeed or fail as resorts.

Kent's proximity to London allowed it to support a number of competing watering places with national, regional and local catchment areas. This chapter will look primarily at five spas – Canterbury, Shooter's Hill, Sissinghurst, Sydenham, and Tunbridge Wells – and eleven seaside resorts – Broadstairs, Deal, Dover, Folkestone, Gravesend, Herne Bay, Hythe, Margate, Ramsgate, Sandgate, and Whitstable [Fig. 1.1]. Guided by promotional and medical treatises, newspaper articles and advertisements, local knowledge, personal recommendations and an innate understanding of the subtle divisions of social rank, potential visitors in the long eighteenth century would have been well-aware of the reputations of and distinctions between watering places and would

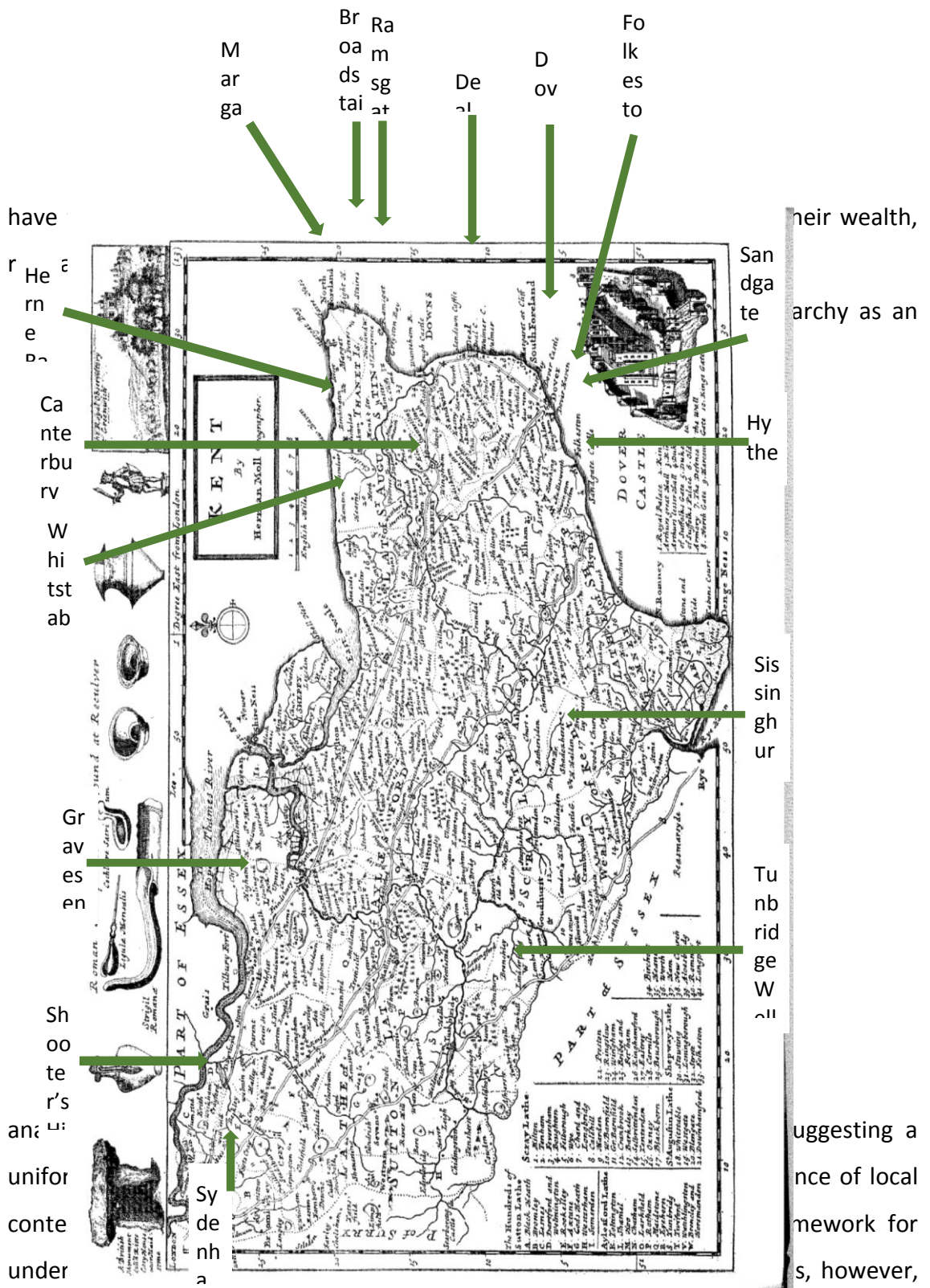
Figure 1.1 Map Showing the Location of Kent's Watering Places⁵¹

⁴⁸ George Saville Carey, *The Balnea: Or, an Impartial Description of all the Popular Watering Places in England, ...* (London: printed by J.W. Myers, for W. West . . ., 1799), p. 4.

⁴⁹ Carey, p. vi.

⁵⁰ Carey, p. vi.

⁵¹ Moll, Herman, *A Set of Fifty New and Correct Maps of England and Wales, with the Great Roads and Principal Cross-Roads, &c*, facsimile reproduction, originally published 1720 (Old Hall Press, Burton Salmon, n.d.).



are limited in scope and do not provide a comprehensive explanation for the development of Kent's resorts. Beginning with the holy waters of medieval Canterbury

⁵² John Stobart, 'In Search of a Leisure Hierarchy: English Spa Towns in the Urban System,' in Peter Borsay, Gunther Hirschfelder and Ruth E. Mohrmann (eds.), *New Directions in Urban History: Aspects of European Art, Health, Tourism and Leisure since the Enlightenment* (Munster: Waxmann, 2000), p. 23.

and concluding with the impact of the railways on the nineteenth-century Kentish coast, this chapter will provide a chronological narrative of development spanning eight centuries and including both spas and seaside resorts. Emphasising both continuity and change across time and between resort typologies, it will examine in detail how Kent's resorts were influenced by wider medical, political, social, economic, and religious changes.

This chapter will consider the combination of factors that combined to make potential watering places either thrive or fail as resorts, as well as shedding light on all those areas between these two extremes. Several factors have been commonly recognised by historians as being necessary for sustained success. First, location and communications links were essential and resorts needed to achieve a balance between accessibility and exclusivity. Proximity to London and the water communications via the Thames made this a particularly acute issue for Kentish watering places, albeit one over which a resort had only limited control. Second was the existence of a reliable supply of healing waters whose curative properties had been confirmed, and ideally promoted by, a medical authority. Third was the provision of social and cultural facilities and an urban infrastructure capable of supporting the needs of visitors, including accommodation, the provision of food and drink and postal services. Though a lack of facilities might be tolerated initially within an emergent, newly fashionable watering place, they were essential for any resort aiming for more than transitory fame. Fourth was the need to attract elite, preferably royal, patronage. Where the elites went, the middling orders followed, whilst royal favour, though not strictly necessary for success, hardly ever failed to provide an impetus to growth. The presence or absence of these four factors determined the success and failure of all of Kent's watering places, though as this and subsequent chapters will show, their importance changed subtly over the course of the long eighteenth century and differed between spa and seaside.

This chapter will aim to provide a balanced consideration of all of Kent's watering places; however their differing levels of success and varying prominence within the timeframe of this study combined with the availability of source material, means that this will not always be possible. In addition, Margate and Tunbridge Wells, despite being the county's leading watering places, will receive less attention within

this survey than their status might suggest: instead, the history of these two resorts will be discussed and compared in detail within chapter two.

i.

The long eighteenth century was a pivotal period in the history of the water cure. Between 1660 and 1820 spas, joined from the 1720s by seaside resorts, grew from small centres with predominantly elite patronage to become leisure centres that catered for an increasingly wide portion of the middling and lower orders and which formed the basis of a holiday industry. Building on E. W. Gilbert's 1939 article, a growing body of work has been produced that aims to understand the rise of watering places during this critical point in their development.⁵³ This section will examine the main arguments and approaches that have emerged within such surveys in order to provide a wider analytical context for the development of the Kentish hierarchy of watering places.

The history of watering places has been frequently approached from the perspective of increasing demand and supply. The 'changing structure of demand for seaside holidays was an essential influence not only on the growth-rate of resorts but also on their social characteristics.'⁵⁴ As will be explored in chapter three, the increasing number and prosperity of the middling orders from 1660 fuelled long eighteenth-century demand for watering places and significant changes can be observed in the culture of resorts as the social background of the visiting company grew more diverse. Walton's *The English Seaside* looked in detail at the changing structure of demand. Beginning with post-Restoration Bath, he described how spas 'came to attract an occupationally heterogeneous visiting public' as demand gradually extended beyond the aristocracy and gentry to include first 'those groups within the middle ranks whose members were closely connected to landed society by birth, upbringing and lifestyle' and followed later in the eighteenth century by 'an influx of

⁵³ E. W. Gilbert, 'The Growth of Inland and Seaside Health Resorts in England', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 55.1 (1939), 16-35.

⁵⁴ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 5.

less-polished middle-class visitors, all too obviously drawn from the *nouveaux riches*.⁵⁵ This pattern, Walton argued, 'anticipated developments at the seaside'⁵⁶ wherein the rural and urban middle ranks 'provided the main stimulus to the steadily-growing demand' that 'encouraged the emergence of new resorts as well as the expansion of existing ones.'⁵⁷

But, as Borsay has noted, this model of demand for leisure which is distinguished by 'expanding wealth, percolating through society, from the top downwards, in a series of chronological phases, each characterized by the absorption of a class or social group/s into the market place' hides a 'messier reality' despite its 'schematic elegance.'⁵⁸ Most significantly, the nature of demand for spas and seaside resorts was not uniform across the country and the social status of the visiting company varied significantly between resorts.

Across England, there existed resorts with national, regional and local catchment areas and studies have emphasised the extent to which provinces developed their own hierarchy of watering places. Firmly placed at the top of the hierarchy was Bath as England's premier watering place. Directly beneath the 'Queen of the spas' were a small group of resorts with elite and genteel patronage - Scarborough, Harrogate, Tunbridge Wells and Buxton - which were joined in the later eighteenth century by Cheltenham and in the early nineteenth century by Leamington Spa. Below this level were 'a large number of provincial spas', which had an 'essentially local catchment area and a clientele of lesser gentry, farmers, and attorneys, shopkeepers and tradesmen from the nearby towns.'⁵⁹ Many of these, Walton suggested, 'displayed a modest prosperity in the seventeenth century' before 'declining in the eighteenth' and 'many never developed beyond the basic provision of a pump-room, baths and a single hotel, perhaps supplemented by the odd lodging-house.'⁶⁰ As previously discussed, below this level were a large number of healing springs which catered for the local population.

⁵⁵ Walton, *The English Seaside*, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁶ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 9.

⁵⁷ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 19.

⁵⁸ Borsay, *A History of Leisure*, pp. 25-26.

⁵⁹ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 8.

⁶⁰ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 8

The emergence of seaside resorts dramatically extended but did not significantly disrupt this hierarchy. A parallel yet integrated hierarchy emerged as the seaside resorts grew in prominence. Brighton quickly established itself as England's leading seaside resort, though it did not in the eighteenth century seriously challenge Bath's supremacy. Drawing on its proximity to London, early seaside resorts were concentrated on the Kent and Sussex coast: Brighton 'long dominated the Sussex holiday industry,' whilst in Kent Margate and later Ramsgate emerged at the top of the county hierarchy.⁶¹ Weymouth, which like Brighton benefited significantly from royal patronage and Scarborough as a hybrid resort, joined this small group of seaside resorts which attracted significant elite patronage. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, demand from urban middling orders fuelled resort growth away from London's influence. Blackpool in particular emerged as a leading resort as a result of custom from Manchester and the textile district, whilst several provincial resorts, such as those along the Devon coast, used their remoteness to their advantage, enticing a more exclusive clientele. Below this level were a larger group of small resorts that attracted essentially local patronage and, like the smaller spas, had only minimal facilities.

Complementing this focus on changing demand, watering places have also been categorised according to their status as urban centres.⁶² Gilbert argued that England's watering places can be divided into three groups: first, 'the inland spas such as Bath, Cheltenham, Leamington, Tunbridge Wells, Buxton, Malvern, and Harrogate'; second, 'the ancient port or fishing harbour which has been converted into a seaside resort,' such as 'Brighton, Scarborough, Whitby, Weymouth, Hastings, and Margate'; and third, 'new towns,' 'places ... founded on land that had been previously unoccupied other than by a few isolated houses,' within which he included Bournemouth, Blackpool and Southend.⁶³

Focusing specifically on Kent's seaside resorts, Whyman has offered a different approach to classification. Combining the date of the first provision of bathing facilities at a resort with the broader developments in transportation, Whyman argued,

⁶¹ Walton, *The English Seaside*, pp. 48-49.

⁶² The status of watering places as urban centres will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

⁶³ Gilbert, *Brighton*, pp. 17-21.

provides a relatively accurate chronology of embryonic resort development. The rise of the Kentish seaside resorts can be divided into three periods of growth. First was the 'coaching and hoy/sailing packet era up to 1815,' during which 'Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate developed substantially as seaside resorts, along with Deal, Dover, Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe.'⁶⁴ The second was the 'steamboat era from 1815 to the 1840s,' which provided the impetus for the emergence of Gravesend, Sheerness and Herne Bay' as resorts whilst the Thanet resorts and Dover 'underwent further substantial growth.'⁶⁵ The beginning of the third period began with the arrival of the railways. 'Effectively while all Kentish resorts underwent some expansion following the arrival of the railways, with the longer-term exception of Gravesend, there were only three notable railway connections in Kent dating from the 1860s onwards': Tankerton-on-Sea, Birchington-on-Sea and Westgate-on-Sea.⁶⁶

This chronology, Whyman noted, corresponds closely to the onset of sea bathing:

1736 – Margate

1754 – Broadstairs, Ramsgate, Deal

1768 – Dover, Whitstable

1776 – Herne Bay, Sandgate

1792 – Folkestone, Hythe

1796 – Gravesend⁶⁷

As Whyman acknowledged and as the following discussion will illustrate, however, there was often a significant difference between the first introduction of bathing facilities and the emergence of a 'resort': 'It must not be imagined that all the seaside resorts of Kent enjoyed continuous or uninterrupted growth.'⁶⁸

None of the above models offer an entirely satisfactory account of the development of Kent's watering places. By focusing on a county hierarchy, this chapter will show the importance of locality to the manifestation of wider developments. In

⁶⁴ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 9.

⁶⁵ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 9.

⁶⁷ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁸ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 10.

contrast to existing models, it will place significant emphasis on the evolution of the water cure as a medical treatment and will discuss in detail the impact of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars on the Kentish coast. But it will also utilise existing analyses by showing the importance of advances in transportation, increasing supply and competing industries.

ii.

Medieval holy wells drew their curative powers from a strong and widespread belief in the miraculous. The middle ages were 'a period of active, growing interest in the therapeutic use of waters' when pagan rituals, local lore and the Roman practice of thermal bathing were combined with Christian beliefs to create powerful centres for healing.⁶⁹ Typically associated with saints, waters emerged as popular sites for pilgrimage. Foreshadowing eighteenth-century spas, medieval waters were popular both for their health-giving properties and for the opportunities they provided for leisure travel. Canterbury, a city 'well supplied with springs', was a typical example.⁷⁰

Canterbury was one of Western Christianity's main pilgrimage sites, one of 'a handful of shrines of the highest rank which the serious pilgrim would aspire to visit in his or her lifetime.'⁷¹ Rome, Santiago and the Holy Land occupied the top rung of the hierarchy, whilst Canterbury occupied the level below, being on a par with the Three Magi at Cologne, Our Lady at Aachen and the Holy Blood at Wilsnack.⁷² The cult of St. Thomas consolidated Canterbury's status as a fashionable destination. Thomas Becket (1120?-1170), a London merchant's son who rose to be royal chancellor and in 1162 was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in the Cathedral in 1170 under the orders of Henry II. Canonised soon after his death by Pope Alexander III, Becket's shrine, which contained a chalybeate well, quickly became an 'extraordinary

⁶⁹ Richard Palmer, "'In this our Lightye and Learned Tyme": Italian Baths in the Era of the Renaissance,' *The Medical History of Waters and Spas*, ed. by Roy Porter, pp. 14-22 (p. 13).

⁷⁰ R.B. Parish, 'The Ancient Water Supplies of Canterbury,' *Bygone Kent*, 23.1 (2002), 13-16 (p. 13).

⁷¹ Diana Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage, c.700-c.1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 126.

⁷² Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p. 126.

success.⁷³ At the height of its popularity, Canterbury's St. Thomas's Wells 'would have been the most famous well in the county, if not the country. Every pilgrim would take its water, believed to be of a highly curative nature, and it became an important part of the pilgrimage.'⁷⁴

Becket was reputed to have drunk from the well daily prior to his death and the waters became associated with miraculous cures, the first of which being of a woman suffering from paralysis who was cured by being given a shirt that was first dipped in the saint's blood and then rinsed into the water.⁷⁵ Diana Webb has detailed the importance the chalybeate waters to the success of the cult, which was 'supposedly a tincture of the martyr's blood':

Becket's blood, diluted to homeopathic levels of efficacy in vials of water, became an important agent of miraculous cures and of the dissemination of his cult to distant parts of Europe. Ampullae containing Becket 'water' were made at Canterbury and distributed to pilgrims from the early days of the cult . . . Such ampullae functioned as much more than souvenirs. If Becket performed a large number of miracles at long range, it was sometimes by means of visions, but it was certainly often by means of his 'water.'⁷⁶

Though the use of healing waters at Canterbury was very different from that at eighteenth-century spas, several common themes emerge. First, as demonstrated above, was the centrality of ritual and during the late middle ages in particular there was 'a tremendous elaboration of sacred buildings, ornaments and rites' that served to strengthen the connection between performance and healing.⁷⁷ Second was the importance of location: situated on the ancient high road from London to Dover,

⁷³ Diana Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon, 2000), p. 45.

⁷⁴ Parish, 'The Ancient Water Supplies of Canterbury', p 13.

A second important site in Medieval Canterbury that was revived in the eighteenth century was St Radegund's Bath. Of Roman origins, this bath became closely linked with the six-century saint who formed the centre for a local cult. It is likely that several of Canterbury's springs had similar curative associations and several still carry religious names: few now exist, however and their history is largely undocumented.⁷⁴

⁷⁵ Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Europe*, p. 13.

⁷⁶ Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 47.

⁷⁷ Hutton, p. 261.

Canterbury was easily accessible and although a statistical majority of known pilgrims to Becket's shrine came from the most southerly parts of England, it 'attracted more visitors from overseas, than any other saint in England, even if the absolute numbers were not great.'⁷⁸ Visitors to the city could move relatively quickly from the capital and important visitors could be easily monitored by the authorities.⁷⁹ Third was the benefit of royal patronage. Beginning with Henry II there was 'a long tradition in which Canterbury featured prominently in the itineraries of English monarchs and also of their distinguished foreign visitors.'⁸⁰

The strong religious connotations of Canterbury's mineral waters led to their decline in the fifteenth century. The Reformation instigated a conscious move away from Catholic associations of mineral waters towards a 'more secular and scientific approach shorn of its religious context.'⁸¹ Seeking to end the Romish and suspicious practice of well-worship and suspecting that pilgrimages to healing waters were used as a convenient cover by dissidents, Henry VIII's government forced the closure of many of England's holy wells.⁸² The Elizabethans, however, fearing that Catholic dissidents were using a real or assumed need to take the waters at Continental spas as an excuse to leave the country and prompted by a widespread reluctance to abandon a traditional practice, lifted the Henrician ban and the sixteenth century witnessed a transformation in how mineral waters were perceived and used in England. The origins of the long eighteenth-century resort trade lay in this Elizabethan renaissance.⁸³

The thermal springs at Bath and Buxton provided a focus for Elizabethan society's increasing interest in hot mineral water bathing. Both resorts received governmental approval and propagandists were recruited to encourage people to take the waters in England rather than travel abroad. A growing body of medical literature emerged that promoted the health benefits of mineral water bathing and which underpinned the success of its two most successful resorts. The first British work on spas was published in 1557. William Turner's *A Book of the Natures and Properties as*

⁷⁸ Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 61.

⁷⁹ Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 50.

⁸⁰ Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, p. 50.

⁸¹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 2.

⁸² Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 4.

⁸³ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 37.

Well of the Baths in England as of Other Baths in Germany and Italy aimed to 'popularise knowledge of Bath's healing waters and to stir the consciences of the wealthy men and physicians who had all neglected them.'⁸⁴

Queen Elizabeth's visit to Bath in 1574 provided momentum and crucial support to this growing fashion and, following her example, it soon became customary for the aristocracy to spend part of the summer at a watering place.⁸⁵ Similarly endorsed by the medical authorities and the Protestant Church, sixteenth-century Bath became 'the national health resort.'⁸⁶ Buxton shared in this success and like Bath received royal patronage. Most famously, Mary Queen of Scots made and was granted several requests to visit the baths to cure tertian fever and a pain in her side.⁸⁷ But as Bath grew increasingly successful, by the 1590s Buxton had entered into decline: despite its social and political significance it suffered from criticisms of its mineral waters and from its Catholic connections.

The Elizabethan practice of taking the waters drew heavily on European customs. Many of the elite had travelled to continental spas and their experiences greatly influenced expectations of and behaviour at England's resorts.⁸⁸ Spas during this period 'were not yet holiday resorts,' instead they were places 'visited for reasons of health by the sick of all classes.'⁸⁹ Though provisions were made for the entertainment of visitors, such as bowling greens and walks, as Pimlott has noted, these developments were 'significant only in retrospect': Elizabethan visitors could not have predicted the pleasure-centred resorts that lay in the future.⁹⁰ The spas also only catered for very small numbers of the elite: sufficient market demand did not yet exist to support fully-fledged leisure centres.

The fashion for mineral waters was made possible by changes in disease patterns, most significantly the decline of the plague as an infectious disease which

⁸⁴ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 7.

⁸⁵ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 29.

⁸⁶ Graham Davis and Penny Bonsall, *Bath: A New History* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. 15.

⁸⁷ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 22.

⁸⁸ The practice also drew on published accounts such as the travel journal of Michel Eyquem de Montaigne.

⁸⁹ Pimlott, p. 26.

⁹⁰ Pimlott, p. 26.

had for much of the early modern period deterred sustained gatherings of large numbers of people for leisure activities. As will be discussed in chapter four, as the plague lessened its grip on the English population other diseases, such as the pox and gout assumed greater importance to the elites, who looked to mineral waters to provide a cure.

The seventeenth-century vogue for drinking cold mineral waters led to the development of rural springs across the country. Drinking required far fewer facilities than bathing, which allowed local waters to be promoted with relatively little investment in the built environment. Of the nine spas that were founded during the early Stuart and Commonwealth period, two were located in Kent: Sydenham and Tunbridge Wells.⁹¹

The chalybeate springs at Tunbridge Wells were discovered in 1606 by Dudley third Baron North whilst he was staying at the estate of Lord Bergavenny at Eridge in Frant.⁹² A combination of medical endorsement, royal and elite patronage and accessibility from London meant that the waters attracted significant attention during the first half of the century, despite physical development of the site being slow. The visit of Queen Henrietta Maria to drink the waters in July 1629 to recover after the birth and death of a premature son and encourage fertility drew the court's attention to the embryonic spa and its popularity was consolidated by the publication by Lodowick Rowzee, an Ashford physician, in 1632 of a medical treatise that served to promote the waters. At thirty-six miles from London, Tunbridge Wells was close enough to be reached from the capital within a day's travel but far enough way to ensure exclusivity.

Sydenham, by contrast, did not have the same advantages. Sydenham was 'almost entirely a farming community until the early eighteenth century, and predominantly so until the middle of the nineteenth.'⁹³ Records exist of a 'manor' in the village from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century but this 'probably signified little more than a large estate' and there is no evidence that the lords held courts or

⁹¹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 355.

⁹² North's discovery and the physical development of Tunbridge Wells as a spa will be discussed in detail within subsequent chapters.

⁹³ Coulter, p. 13.

exercised other manorial prerogatives.⁹⁴ Lacking its own local authority, Sydenham was immediately subject to that of the neighbouring parish of Lewisham. Mineral springs were discovered on Sydenham Common in the 1640s and ‘quickly became celebrated’ under the various names of Sydenham, Lewisham or Dulwich Wells.⁹⁵ As a pre-existing settlement, Sydenham had an apparent advantage over Tunbridge Wells, however at only eight miles from London the village was within walking distance for the capital’s lower orders and it soon gained a reputation for being ‘low.’ ‘By 1651 the flood of summer visitors to Sydenham was so great that the government issued a proclamation ordering them to behave with decorum. When this did no good cavalry was sent to maintain order.’⁹⁶ Unlike its Kentish rival, Sydenham did not attract a medical authority exclusively to promote its waters until later in the seventeenth century and neither did its waters receive royal patronage.

A courtiers’ spa sixteen miles from London, Epsom proved Tunbridge Wells’s greatest rival. The generally accepted story of the water’s discovery in 1618 was that after the cattle of a local farmer, Henry Wicker, had refused to drink from an enlarged waterhole connected to a pond on Epsom common the waters were tested and found to have medicinal properties. More probably and as it was claimed in the mid-eighteenth century, there was a long established tradition of healing at the waters, which had been used for washing sores by the local poor.⁹⁷ ‘Doubtless encouraged by the example of Tunbridge Wells,’ the well at Epsom was enclosed and rudimentary facilities provided for visitors by the owners of the estate.⁹⁸

Bath remained the nation’s premier resort. Whilst none of the newly emerged drinking spas could rival the city’s built environment or facilities, they nonetheless competed for the patronage of the nation’s elite. There was also contest from international resorts, most notably from Spa in the Spanish Netherlands. This popular European watering place had become part of the itinerary of the Grand Tour during the latter sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. A survey of licenses

⁹⁴ Coulter, p. 7.

⁹⁵ Coulter, p. 74.

⁹⁶ Coulter, p. 74.

⁹⁷ F.L. Clark, ‘The History of Epsom Spa (Based on the Court Rolls of the Manor of Epsom),’ *Surrey Archaeological Collection*, 57 (1960), 1-41 (p. 2).

⁹⁸ Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 48-49.

issued by the English government for visiting Spa between 1613 and 1624 shows an average of about twenty-eight a year, reaching a highpoint of sixty in 1624 but the number of travellers would have been greater than this: Peers were normally free to travel without a permit and some exiles would have escaped illegally.⁹⁹

Thus by the mid-seventeenth century there had emerged the foundations for the leisure centres of the eighteenth century. 'It is fortunate for the spas that on the eve of Civil War they were still primarily health resorts. Had they been identified with pleasure, they might have fared more hardly at the hands of the various Puritan Governments.'¹⁰⁰ The waters at Tunbridge Wells continued to be visited throughout the Civil War and Interregnum, although in some years from 1648 the Council of State feared the district was the centre of royalist and dissident plots.¹⁰¹ The Civil War divided the local nobility and gentry: The Bergavennys, at that time papists, the Clanricardes of Somerhill and the Streatfields of Chiddingstone were royalists, whilst the Sidneys at Penshurst, Sir John Rivers at Chafford by Fordcombe and Thomas Weller in Tunbridge Castle supported Parliament.¹⁰² Local traditions suggest that the area hosted both armies: Parliamentary troops in the Rusthall area and Royalists at Southborough.¹⁰³ Tunbridge Wells however, which during this period contained only a small handful of buildings and never being of significant interest to either side, 'suffered no direct interference.'¹⁰⁴ Having thus survived the Civil War and Interregnum unscathed, Kent's leading resort found itself 'in a position to take full advantage of the changed circumstances of the new reign.'¹⁰⁵

iii

Post-Restoration, Kent's spas flourished as leisure centres in the more relaxed cultural environment of the new reign. A 'network of spas' emerged across England: between

⁹⁹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ Pimlott, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰¹ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 2.

¹⁰² Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 33.

¹⁰³ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁴ Pimlott, p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ Pimlott, p. 29.

1660 and 1749 seventy-three spas were founded, whilst improvements were made to existing resorts.¹⁰⁶ Exiled Royalists returned from mainland Europe with a ‘widened acquaintance with the Continental spas’ and keen to seek out novelty and diversion.¹⁰⁷ As will be explored in detail within subsequent chapters, the Restoration instigated a new phase in English leisure, whilst the Glorious Revolution encouraged and consolidated these developments by providing increased security of property rights as well as financial, political and religious stability. Fuelled by expanding middling-sort demand, it was from this point that spas can be truly seen as ‘resorts.’ Providing a social arena between the London season and country house, visiting spas quickly became established as a social fashion, filling the elite’s need for a centre of public life in the summer.¹⁰⁸ ‘Here was a potential new leisure market, and spa foundation became a new industry – a holiday industry.’¹⁰⁹

Tunbridge Wells thrived as a leading courtiers’ spa. Continuing to receive royal patronage, most notably from Queen Katharine of Braganza and Princess, later Queen Anne, the spa flourished as a popular destination for Charles II’s libertine court. Physical development of the site, however, remained limited and it maintained its rural character. A building boom during the 1680s and 1690s, fuelled by investment from local landowners, farmers and tradespeople, combined with that of London speculators and shopkeepers, established the footprint of the Wells area which would act as the centre for the congregation of the visiting company throughout the spa’s history. As will be discussed in detail in chapter two, Tunbridge Wells developed as a handful of small settlements which provided visitor accommodations and entertainment facilities. By the turn of the century the spa boasted assembly rooms, shops, covered walks, public gardens and rooms for coffee and tea whilst society was managed by Bell Causey, a predecessor of the Master of the Ceremonies. Its development was, however, hampered by the lack of a central authority or single landowner keen on investment.

Though it could not rival Bath’s physical environment or number of facilities, Tunbridge Wells did compete successfully as a centre for fashionable leisure and

¹⁰⁶ Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 355-57.

¹⁰⁷ Pimlott, p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 67.

pleasure. Indeed Barton argued that ‘the very superiority of the buildings at Bath indirectly benefitted Tunbridge Wells’ and developments at the nation’s leading watering places removed the two spas from direct competition with each other.¹¹⁰ The ability of Bath to offer extensive indoor entertainments, in contrast to the predominantly outdoor Stuart drinking spas, encouraged it to move its visiting season to the autumn and spring (later extending to the winter) rather than the summer months. This enabled the two spas to complement each other, as was ultimately demonstrated by Richard Nash’s holding the position of Master of the Ceremonies simultaneously at both from 1735.

Tunbridge Wells was one of several spas that accommodated the nation’s elite. ‘Catering for mainly northern gentry and a sprinkling of aristocrats’ Harrogate, Scarborough and Buxton all joined Tunbridge Wells on the second rung of the resort hierarchy.¹¹¹ None of these resorts was close enough to pose a direct threat to the Kentish spa and all were able to draw on the patronage of their respective regional elites. But proximity to London conferred on Tunbridge Wells an advantage that its northern counterparts could not match.

The late seventeenth-century was an important period for Kentish spas. Two new spas were founded, Shooter’s Hill and Sissinghurst, Sydenham was promoted as a watering place by the medical faculty and there was a revival of interest in the waters at Canterbury. Though both received a degree of elite patronage, neither Shooter’s Hill or Sydenham was able to achieve more than limited fame and attempts to establish a spa at Sissinghurst met with negligible success. With their foundation, however, a graduated hierarchy of resorts emerged in Kent which catered for a significantly different visiting companies.

Sydenham’s early identification as a ‘low’, disreputable resort continued to haunt the spa throughout the eighteenth century. It did, however experience a brief upturn of fortune after the Restoration. The waters were first mentioned by John Evelyn in 1675 who recorded in his diary: ‘I came back by certain medicinal spa waters at a place

¹¹⁰ Barton, p. 199.

¹¹¹ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 8.

called Sydenham Wells in Lewisham parish; much frequented in summer time.¹¹² Attempts were made by medical practitioners to publicise the waters. The first was John Peter's *Dr. Peter's Judgment, or Dullidge or Lewisham Water*, published in 1680,¹¹³ which was followed by Benjamin Allen who included Sydenham in his 1699 nationwide survey of mineral waters.¹¹⁴ Despite his aim of promoting its waters, Peter felt obliged to acknowledge Sydenham's reputation and his condemnation of the London day-visitors is revealing:

I cannot omit the taking notice of a very great abuse occasioned by a rabble of *Londoners* and others, weekly frequenting these Wells on *Sundays*, where under the pretence of drinking the Waters, they spend that *Holy Day* in great Prophaneness; who after they have (for the most part of them) gorged themselves with the Water, do drink upon it an excessive quantity of Brandy . . . or other strong Liquors, thereby many of them becoming greatly prejudiced in their Health (to add to their Folly and Crime) have not been ashamed to impute their indisposition to this Water.¹¹⁵

Setting up practice in Lewisham and using his treatise to advertise his services to water drinkers, Peter provided Sydenham with the necessary medical authority required if the village was to thrive as a spa but it was unable to escape the stigma of its London clientele to attract significant or sustained elite patronage. As demonstrated by Defoe's account at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Sydenham remained firmly at the bottom of the county hierarchy:

. . . in the way we saw Dullidge or Sydenham Wells, where great crowds of people throng every summer from London to drink the waters, as at Epsome and Tunbridge, they do more for the diversion of the season, for the mirth and the

¹¹² John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. by William Bray, vol. 2 (London: Dent, 1907), pp. 105-06.

¹¹³ John Peter, *Dr. Peter's Judgment of Dullidge or Lewisham Water* (1680).

¹¹⁴ Benjamin Allen, *The Natural History of the Chalybeat and Purging Waters of England: With their Particular Essays and Uses*. . . (London: Printed and sold by S. Smith and B. Walford ..., 1699).

¹¹⁵ John Peter, *A Treatise of Lewisham (But Vulgarly Miscalled Dulwich) Wells in Kent* (London: Printed by Tho. James for Sam. Tidmarsh ..., 1680), p. 11.

company; for gaming, or intriguing, and the like, here they do for mere physic, and this causes another difference; namely, that as the nobility and gentry go to Tunbridge, the merchants and rich citizens go chiefly to Epsome; so the common people go chiefly to Dullwich or Streatham; and the rather also, because it lies so near to London, that they can walk to it in the morning, and return at night; which abundance do; that is to say, especially of a Sunday, or on holidays, which makes the better sort also decline the place; the crowd on those days being both unruly and unmannerly.¹¹⁶

Shooter's Hill struggled to gain recognition as a watering place and remained close to the divide between 'spa' and 'healing spring.' Approximately four miles from Greenwich, like Sydenham, Shooter's Hill was within walking distance from London and furthermore lay alongside a fairly busy road leading from the capital which was noted by Fiennes as 'a noted Robbing place.'¹¹⁷ The tenant, John Guy, dug three wells over these purging waters by 1673 and they achieved some limited fame and elite patronage: the waters were reputedly used by Queen Anne, whilst Evelyn and Fiennes both sampled them.¹¹⁸ A modest Wells House was constructed but no further investment was made into the built environment. After this modest glimpse of success, the wells swiftly returned to anonymity and Defoe's description of the area made no mention of any mineral springs. Shooter's Hill, like Sydenham, was too close to London to achieve long-term success as a spa: its proximity would have created too large an obstacle to the creation of an exclusive leisure arena.

Sissinghurst was always closer to a failed business venture than a spa. Located approximately fifty miles from London, the Sissinghurst estate sits in the heart of the Weald. The estate, owned during this period by the Baker family, 'reached its apogee in the sixteenth century when an ambitious young man had built a giant multi-courtyarded palace in which he could entertain Queen Elizabeth.'¹¹⁹ During the fifteenth century, the Bakers were 'men on the make' and by the 1550s the estate was

¹¹⁶ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, abridged and edited with an introduction and notes by Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1979), p. 166.

¹¹⁷ Fiennes, p. 132.

¹¹⁸ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 101.

¹¹⁹ Nicolson, pp. 215-16.

one of the largest in Kent and Sussex.¹²⁰ During the seventeenth century, however, their fortunes declined and after the Restoration it acted as a grand but only occasionally visited hunting lodge, 'an increasingly out-of-date palace in a park' which was increasingly encumbered with debt.¹²¹

The mineral waters provided a potential source of funds. Nicolson, the current owner-occupier of Sissinghurst who has conducted extensive research into the estate's history, suggests that the well was well-known to locals at the end of the seventeenth century when 'Multitudes came' to take the chalybeate waters.¹²² Lady Baker, however, disliked this intrusion onto the estate and closed access to the well. A couple of years after her death in 1693, the Baker family attempted to revive their failing fortunes and bolster the family's finances by promoting the well as a spa. Sissinghurst's main strength as a fledgling spa was its environmental attractions and particularly its park, to which improvements were made in the anticipation of the visiting company.¹²³ The Bakers rented out rooms in the manor house to suitably genteel guests and further accommodation was available in the neighbouring town of Cranbrook, a post town with good communications links via road from London and nearby towns.¹²⁴ There was also the possibility of investment in the spa from a London speculator: a Mr Basden, a merchant who owned property near the well provided pasture for visitors' horses and Hembry described him as having a 'vested interest in the spa's prosperity.'¹²⁵ The spa however, despite the best efforts of the Baker family, failed to establish itself as a resort and, crucially, its water did not receive the approbation of and promotion from a medical authority. The abortive spa soon faded into obscurity: by the end of the eighteenth century the house was uninhabited and neglected, used only for the confinement of French prisoners of war.¹²⁶ As Nicolson has summarised, 'The eighteenth century gave nothing to Sissinghurst. It only took away.'¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Nicolson, pp. 175-77.

¹²¹ Nicolson, pp. 209-10.

¹²² Nicolson, p. 216.

¹²³ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 73.

¹²⁴ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 73.

¹²⁵ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 73.

¹²⁶ Nicolson, p. 219.

¹²⁷ Nicolson, p. 217.

At Canterbury there was a revival of interest in the city's mineral waters. Within a secularised environment which shunned any religious or superstitious associations in favour of medical science, Canterbury's waters were unable fully to escape from the shadow of their Catholic history. The springs connected to the shrine of Thomas Beckett were not reopened: after pilgrimages to the shrine were stopped in 1538 the spring had been lost. Instead, attention focused on the chalybeate and sulphur springs near the West Gate and St Rhadegund's Bath. Their revival is indicated by the publication, circa 1690, of an anonymous medical treatise, *A Short Account of the Mineral Waters Lately Found Out in the City of Canterbury*, which was reissued in 1706. The reasons behind the anonymity of the author are uncertain, however the lack of a named medical authority most likely contributed to the lack of interest in the waters.

Fiennes, who visited Canterbury in 1698, provides the best description of the waters during this period:

Here is a Spring in the town that is drank by many persons as Tunbridge and approv'd by them, but others find it an ill water; . . . the well is walled in, and a raile round it steps down and paved aboute for the Company to stand just at the head to drink, but I like no spring that rises not quick and runs apace; . . . There is fine walks and seates and places for the musick to make it acceptable and commodious to the Company.¹²⁸

Fiennes thus described a thriving, if small, spa whose waters, she claimed, were drunk by as many people as those at Tunbridge Wells. This account, however, should not be taken as evidence that the two were direct rivals and there existed several significant differences between these two waters at this period. Canterbury's visiting company was predominantly drawn from the city and the local area. Though it benefited from having a pre-existing built environment containing social and cultural activities, there was very little segregation between the 'city' and the 'spa' which meant that could never achieve that aura of exclusivity so prized by the elite. Finally, though the springs were located just outside of the city itself, unlike Tunbridge Wells it could not present

¹²⁸ Fiennes, p. 125.

itself as a rural idyll, an escape from city life, an element which had emerged as crucial to a spa's image.

Hembry has identified Sissinghurst and Canterbury as victims of Tunbridge Wells, arguing that 'as so often the proximity of an established spa . . . to a new spa venture was a disadvantage.'¹²⁹ But as the above shows, the success of a near neighbour was only one in a combination of contributing factors and arguably not the most damaging. There was not at the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century space in Kent for two spas with national catchment areas. However Shooter's Hill, Sissinghurst, Canterbury, and Sydenham might all have achieved more lasting success as regional or local spas had the other factors, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, all been in place.

iv

For an island nation, the extension of the water cure to the seaside was logical progression. Seaside resorts emerged in England from the 1720s. Encouraged by changing attitudes towards the sea and shore and evolving in part out of a tradition of bathing in the sea amongst the lower orders, the practice of sea-bathing drew heavily on the established social and medical practices of the spas. Sea-bathing as a hydropathic treatment was introduced to the fashionable world by Dr Richard Russell in the 1750s but following Scarborough's lead, facilities were offered to visitors at Kentish resorts as early as 1736. As with the spas, the county's proximity to London allowed it to support a high number of seaside resorts, whilst its water communications with the capital via the River Thames provided the county with an unrivalled advantage. Expanding demand for watering places, generated by the increasing wealth and number of the middling orders, supported the creation and development of a growing number of spas and seaside resorts across the country, with national, regional and local catchment areas which competed fiercely for visitors.

¹²⁹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 73.

Margate was the first Kentish resort to offer sea-bathing facilities. A small port in the Isle of Thanet, Margate was a limb of the Cinque Port of Dover, thus falling under the jurisdiction of that town. Though smaller than that of neighbouring Ramsgate, the port quietly prospered as the base of a fishing fleet and was involved in the coastwise export of corn to London. There has also been found evidence of smuggling in the area. During the early eighteenth century, however, the fishing industry experienced a decline and the town suffered accordingly. Away from the port, Margate's inhabitants were primarily engaged in farming.

In July 1736 local carpenter and entrepreneur Thomas Barber advertised his newly constructed seawater baths in the *Kentish Post, or Canterbury News Letter*. Though catering for a local clientele, these baths proved moderately successful and improvements were made for the following summer. Whilst these facilities remained on a small scale and certainly Margate could not be identified as a 'resort' during this period, the early introduction of sea-bathing meant that it was well-placed to take advantage of the mid-century vogue.

Margate's initial development as a watering place was slow but from the 1760s the town experienced a prolonged period of development and expansion. Aiming to replicate the grand Palladian architecture of Bath and striving to create an aspirational environment that contained all the fashionable social, cultural and medical facilities deemed necessary by polite society, Margate gained assembly rooms, circulating libraries, shops and visitor accommodations. As will be explored in detail within the following chapter, Margate benefited significantly from its water communications with London. Initially utilising the hoys, ships that had been used to transport corn to the capital, visitors could be transported quickly and cheaply from the city. This opened up the possibility of visiting the resort to a far wider portion of the population and soon Margate gained a reputation as the favoured destination of the 'city nobility'; London's middling orders. This did not mean, however, that the aristocracy and gentry ceased to visit and their patronage remained important to the continued popularity of the resort.

Brighton was Margate's main rival. Promoted by Russell who set up a practice in the town and conveniently located only sixty miles from London, Brighton 'easily dominated the Sussex holiday industry' and quickly established itself as the nation's

premier seaside resort.¹³⁰ Though many histories claim Brighton to have been an 'obscure fishing town'¹³¹ prior to Russell's arrival, it was in fact a small port town with some urban amenities, sufficiently important to warrant its own customs house.¹³² Though the fishing industry had been in decline from the seventeenth century, it remained the occupation of a large proportion of the town's inhabitants. After the introduction of sea-bathing, the town's growth would be spectacular: its population, which numbered less than 2,000 in 1750 had grown to more than 65,000 by 1850.¹³³

'Brighton's reputation was launched by royal patronage.'¹³⁴ Though the town had many advantages which meant that Brighton was already outpacing its Sussex neighbours, the visit of the Prince of Wales and his circle 'set the seal on its fashionable success.'¹³⁵ The Prince's first visit in September 1783 had been preceded by those of the Duke of Gloucester in 1765, the Duke of York in 1766 and the Duke of Cumberland in 1771. Gilbert argued that the Prince of Wales's subsequent summer residence in the town allowed Brighton to rival Bath as a social capital between 1787 and 1830, even if it did not overtake it in size.¹³⁶ But, like Tunbridge Wells, Brighton during the eighteenth century was primarily a summer resort and thus not in direct competition with Bath. Its success in attracting royal and elite patronage was of far greater consequence to Margate and as the century progressed the social gulf between the two resorts widened.

Within Kent, Ramsgate posed the greatest threat to Margate's primacy and by the end of the eighteenth century it challenged its neighbour for the top position in the county hierarchy. Both Ramsgate and Broadstairs owed to some extent their development as resorts to the overflowing of Margate.¹³⁷ The three Isle of Thanet resorts shared a mutually beneficial relationship that included shared guidebooks and which encouraged visitors to move between the resorts. The links between Margate

¹³⁰ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 48.

¹³¹ For example, this claim was made in Paul Dunvan, *An Ancient and Modern History of Lewes and Brighthelmston . . .* (Lewes, 1795), p. 492.

¹³² E.W. Gilbert, *Brighton: Old Ocean's Bauble* (London: Methuen, 1954), p. 93.

¹³³ Gilbert, *Brighton*, p. 56.

¹³⁴ Walvin, *Beside the Seaside*, p. 19.

¹³⁵ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 48.

¹³⁶ Gilbert, *Brighton*, pp. 91-92.

¹³⁷ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 205.

and Ramsgate were consolidated in 1788 when the position of Master of the Ceremonies was held jointly at both resorts by Charles Le Bas. This was a successful strategy, which was replicated by watering places elsewhere on the Kentish coast. But the creation of a distinct image for each resort was also important: Ramsgate in particular benefited from fostering a more select, genteel reputation than Margate.

Of the three Isle of Thanet resorts, Ramsgate boasted the most extensive harbour facilities. Situated on the busiest shipping route in the world, references to a harbour at Ramsgate date back to the Tudor times when a wooden pier that curved out to sea for sixty-seven metres provided a sheltered basin for some forty ships of light draught.¹³⁸ Ramsgate, despite its proximity to Margate, fell under the jurisdiction of the Cinque Port of Sandwich rather than Dover, though the reasons behind this division have been debated and it is difficult to say with accuracy when it first became associated with the Confederation. By the turn of the eighteenth century, the port was flourishing and 'in 1700 Ramsgate sent more ships through the Sound than any English port except London.'¹³⁹

Ramsgate was particularly important because of its proximity to the Goodwin Sands. This ten mile long sand bank that lies six miles east of Deal was a notoriously dangerous stretch for vessels to navigate and ships would only pass through the channel (the Downs) when weather conditions were favourable. Prompted by a violent storm in December 1748, when a large number of ships were wrecked on the Goodwins and Thanet coast, a petition was made to Parliament for the construction of a harbour of refuge at Ramsgate. Subsequently, in 1749 an Act of Parliament established Ramsgate Harbour. 'The purpose of this harbour was twofold – to provide a place of shelter and to be a base for rendering assistance to vessels in distress.'¹⁴⁰ Despite facing problems during construction resulting from the difficult terrain and the management of the new science of building large scale marine work out of stone that meant work on the harbour continued throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, the project was a success. From 1792 '552 vessels took shelter each year and

¹³⁸ Janet Munslow, 'Ramsgate – A Harbour of Refuge', *Thanet Panorama*, 16 (1983), 35-37 (p. 35).

¹³⁹ John H. Andrews, 'The Thanet Seaports, 1650-1750', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 66 (1953), 37-44 (p. 40).

¹⁴⁰ Munslow, p. 36.

from then on the number increased, although the number was inevitably concentrated into periods of heavy gales.¹⁴¹ The construction of the harbour also proved beneficial for Ramsgate's economy, generating work for shipwrights, rope-makers and marine store dealers, whose wives often worked as lodging house keepers, 'presumably to supplement the family income during the less stormy summer months.'¹⁴² Due to the importance of Ramsgate's harbour, 'exceptional arrangements' were made for its management: 'The Trustees of Ramsgate Harbour were by the Act of 1749 obliged to submit their accounts to the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London.'¹⁴³

Bathing machines were introduced at Ramsgate in 1754, closely following the publication of the English translation of Russell's treatise. Development of the resort was initially slow, however. The first guidebook dedicated to the Isle of Thanet resorts, *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, published in 1763, extolled at length Margate's virtues but offered only a lacklustre account of Ramsgate, describing it as 'a very neat sea-port town, with many good houses, but no great trade.'¹⁴⁴ In a thinly disguised advertisement published by the *Kentish Gazette* in August 1768, the author (purportedly a 'gentleman') expounded on the reason why he preferred Ramsgate to Margate.¹⁴⁵ As well as noting the 'many pleasant walks, and a full and not too distant view of a great and fine part of East Kent, of the Downs, and the coast of France,' the author praised 'the neatness of the houses and streets, the decent and obliging behaviour of the inhabitants and their moderate charge for lodging and bathing.'¹⁴⁶ He concluded by stating that recent improvements 'will certainly render the bathing place there, equal, if not superior in every desirable respect, to that of Margate' and claimed that Ramsgate would appeal to 'every mind that ... [is] not given up to dissipation, and has any notion of the true and rational design of rural retirement.'¹⁴⁷ Thus within this advertisement can be seen a clear attempt to distinguish Ramsgate from its neighbour

¹⁴¹ Munslow, p. 36.

¹⁴² Munslow, p. 36.

¹⁴³ Dennis Swann, 'English Docks and Harbours 1660-1830', (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Leeds, 1959), p. 80.

¹⁴⁴ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet and Particularly of the Town of Margate; With an Account of the Accommodations Provided there for Strangers ...* (London: printed for J. Newbery and W. Bristow, 1763), p. 25.

¹⁴⁵ 'To the Printers of the Kentish Gazette', *Kentish Gazette*, 6 August 1768, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶ 'To the Printers of the Kentish Gazette', *Kentish Gazette*, 6 August 1768, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ 'To the Printers of the Kentish Gazette', *Kentish Gazette*, 6 August 1768, p. 2.

by presenting it as a genteel alternative in contrast to the popular, less refined character of Margate.

Whyman has dated Ramsgate's emergence as a fashionable resort to 1780, with its inclusion in *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*.¹⁴⁸ In response to the growing number of visitors, Ramsgate had acquired many of the trappings of a fashionable watering place. As the guidebook described:

This town is paved and lighted, has a market-place, lately built, adjoining the High-street, near which is a good circulating library and toy-shop, with a convenient room for reading the news-papers, kept by Mr. Burgess . . . The assembly and card rooms, which were built last year, front the harbour; under them are a coffee room and agreeable accommodations for parties to dine or drink tea: the rope walk is at the back of the High-street.¹⁴⁹

But despite this favourable portrayal, the guide, like its predecessor, favoured Margate. Claiming it to be 'more agreeable to those who come more for health than pleasure, being more retired and much less gay and fashionable',¹⁵⁰ it was stated that Ramsgate owed its success to its more popular neighbour: 'When Margate overflows with company, as it generally does at the height of the season . . . then *Ramsgate* and *Broadstairs*, fill with the overplus.'¹⁵¹ However it was admitted (though even then as a backhanded compliment) that 'some persons give preference to these places for quietness and retirement, and therefore take lodgings in them out of choice.'¹⁵²

Prior to the construction of assembly rooms, social life at Ramsgate centred round its circulating libraries, of which there were two during the second half of the eighteenth century. The most prominent of these was run by Peter Burgess, who was responsible for the publication of many of the resort's guidebooks. Indeed, as will be

¹⁴⁸ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 209.

¹⁴⁹ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide in Letters to a Friend Describing the Accommodations & Amusements of those Delightful Watering Places in Prose & Verse* (London: Printed for H. Turpin No 18 near Grays Inn Gate Holborn, & T. Wilkins Aldermanbury, 1780), p. 29.

¹⁵⁰ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, p. 30.

¹⁵¹ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, p. 26.

¹⁵² *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, p. 26.

argued in chapter two, the social Isle of Thanet resorts revolved to an unusual extent around its libraries and bookshops instead of its assembly rooms, as was typical.

Broadstairs similarly benefitted from Margate's proximity and likewise provided bathing facilities relatively early in 1754. Broadstairs during the long eighteenth century was, however, by far the least successful of the Isle of Thanet resorts and it struggled to forge its own identity, remaining a poor relation of its more illustrious rivals. Broadstairs was primarily a port and fishing village. The present-day pier, which protects the harbour from the north and east, remains similar to the original late fifteenth-century design.¹⁵³ Throughout the eighteenth century, the harbour was Broadstairs's primary asset. Storms, however, frequently threatened its destruction, most especially those of 1763, 1767 and 1774 and the town's resources were found to be inadequate to meet the cost of repairs.¹⁵⁴ An article in the *Kentish Gazette* highlighted the extent to which the population of the town depended on the harbour for their livelihoods:

BROADSTAIRS is a village consisting of about ninety families of industrious people, chiefly employed in the Iceland cod-fishery, whose residence there hath been on account of a small harbour, formed by a wall composed of Timber and earth, and carried into the sea, which hath been very convenient for the receiving and shelter of their vessels; and hath stood so many years.¹⁵⁵

This description was followed by an appeal for funds:

The charge of rebuilding the said harbour, according to a moderate estimate, will amount to two thousand pounds, which the inhabitants are themselves altogether

¹⁵³ James E. Bird, *The Story of Broadstairs and St. Peter's* (Broadstairs, Lanes (East Kent) Ltd, 1974), p. 37.

¹⁵⁴ Bird, p. 37.

¹⁵⁵ 'The Case of the Inhabitants of Broadstairs in the Isle of Thanet, in the County of Kent, Humbly Submitted to the Consideration of the Humane and Charitable', *Kentish Gazette*, 8 March 1769, p. 2.

unable to raise, and without some powerful assistance, they must of necessity disperse, to the ruin of the place, and of many honest, useful families.¹⁵⁶

For much of the eighteenth century, visitor demand was not sufficient enough to warrant significant investment into the resort. A guidebook reported that the village in 1780 still only possessed two bathing machines and described Broadstairs primarily as a small port with an embryonic resort industry:

. . . a small sea-port called BROADSTAIRS, where there is a pier, resembling that at Margate, and one or two machines for bathing, upon a similar plan to those at the town: this place is famous for fine lobsters. Several good houses, and an elegant tavern have been lately built here, for the accommodation of the company who come to this place in the season either for health or pleasure.¹⁵⁷

Like Ramsgate, Broadstairs presented itself as a genteel and retired alternative to Margate. Its lack of facilities was partially countered for by proximity to Ramsgate and Margate, at two miles and just under four, respectively and visitors were encouraged to travel between the three resorts. But despite these advantages, Broadstairs remained a small, fledgling resort during the eighteenth century and continued primarily to function as a small port and fishing community.

Outside of the Isle of Thanet, Deal emerged early as a potential resort. A port, dockyard and naval station, Deal was ‘the only new town of any size in seventeenth-century Kent.’¹⁵⁸ Many of its inhabitants were engaged in related trades, such as pilots, seamen and cordage and sail making.¹⁵⁹ The town expanded rapidly during the seventeenth century and by 1699, when Deal was granted corporate status, it probably had over 1,000 inhabitants.¹⁶⁰ Defoe at the beginning of the eighteenth century described Deal as being on ‘the road for shipping’ where:

¹⁵⁶ ‘The Case of the Inhabitants’, *Kentish Gazette*, 8 March 1769, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, p. 49.

¹⁵⁸ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 140.

¹⁵⁹ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 30.

. . . almost all the ships which arrive from foreign parts, and who pass the Channel general stop; the homeward-bound to dispatch letters, send their merchants and owners the good news of their arrival, and set their passengers on shore, and the like; and the outward-bound to receive their last orders, letters, and farewells from owners, and friends, take in fresh provisions, &c.¹⁶¹

As a naval base, Deal was important not only because it allowed ships to protect approaches to the capital 'but also because it was near enough to reinforce the vessels in the Downs or to take offensive action against the navy of a Continental power.'¹⁶²

A bathing machine was introduced in Deal in 1754, the same year as at Ramsgate and Broadstairs and was similarly inspired by Russell's popularisation of sea-bathing as a medical treatment. The venture, however, did not prove a success and Deal would not emerge as a centre for sea-bathing until later in this period. This was most likely a result of the prosperity of Deal as a port: those involved in the existing successful industries would have little incentive to invest in this new, uncertain fashion. Impetus for the creation for a resort would not exist until later in the eighteenth century, at which point Deal would be playing a far more important role as a centre for the defence of the nation against invasion.

There is no indication that bathing facilities were introduced anywhere else on the Kentish coast until 1768 when Cornelius Jones publicised his new bathing machines at Dover. An innkeeper, Jones stood to benefit directly from an influx of visitors. Dover was the chief port for Continental crossing and the only port used by the royal packet boats.¹⁶³ As well as transporting people, Dover also acted as a hub for continental trade, with goods travelling onwards to London either on water via the Thames or overland. In the seventeenth century, Dover stood apart from other Kentish ports: first because of its status, from at least 1630, as a virtual free port;¹⁶⁴ and second, as it acted in many ways as an out-port for London, which limited the effects the influx of

¹⁶¹ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 137.

¹⁶² Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 3.

¹⁶³ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 164.

¹⁶⁴ Meaning that goods passing one from continental country to another could be stored temporarily in Dover for half the customary duties and then reshipped in English vessels.

goods had on the local area.¹⁶⁵ Throughout the eighteenth century it continued to receive an influx of people, goods, vessels and coaches from across Britain and the Continent.

Along with Hastings, Romney, Hythe, and Sandwich, Dover was one of the original Cinque Ports which were founded in the twelfth century to maintain ships for the Crown. Membership came with benefits and responsibilities. 'Under the system of *ship service*, the Ports were required to supply 57 ships, each with a crew of 21 men and a boy, for 15 days every year' which were used to transport the monarch to and from the Continent.¹⁶⁶ In return, the ports were granted rights, including freedom from certain taxes and duties and the right to levy local taxes.¹⁶⁷ Despite its importance, Defoe's description was dismissive of the town's virtues:

Neither Dover nor its castle has any thing of note to be said of them, but what is in common with the neighbours; the castle is old, useless, decayed, and serves for little; but to give the title and honour of government to men of quality, with a salary, and sometimes to those who want one. The town is one of the Cinque Ports, sends members to Parliament, who are called barons, and has it self an ill repaired, dangerous, and good for little harbour and pier.¹⁶⁸

As at Deal, Dover would not emerge as a watering place until later in the century. The pattern repeated itself at Whitstable and Herne Bay, where bathing machines were introduced in 1768 and 1776 respectively. It is likely that this lack of development was due in part to a saturation of the market: until demand increased later in the century Kent was only able to support a certain number of resorts.

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¹⁶⁵ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 168.

¹⁶⁶ *The Cinque Ports*, <<http://www.cinqueports.org>> [accessed 5 January 2013].

¹⁶⁷ *The Cinque Ports*, <<http://www.cinqueports.org>> [accessed 5 January 2013].

¹⁶⁸ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 138.

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars had a transformative effect on the Kentish seaside. 'The Kentish coast was the part of England most exposed to Continental invasion' and many of the county's seaside resorts lay on the front line of the nation's land-based defence.¹⁶⁹ The impact of the conflict was multi-faceted. First, the French declaration of war on Britain in February 1793 effectively prevented the elites from visiting Continental watering places, thus temporarily inflating demand for those in England. Second was the attraction of the coastal defences and military personnel which, rather than acting as a deterrent, became points of interest, novelty and excitement. Third was the changes in the urban fabric of individual towns as a result of their position along a major line of defence: Dover, Deal and Gravesend in particular experienced high levels of investment. Fourth was the influx of people to the Kentish coast in response to the conflict. Despite its clear importance, however, the influence of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars on the development of Kent's watering places has yet to be explored in any detail.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a period of growth for Kent's coastal resorts. Bathing facilities were introduced at Folkestone and Hythe in 1792 and Gravesend in 1796, and all three subsequently emerged as fledging resorts. Growth at established resorts continued: Margate and Ramsgate jostled for the top position in the county hierarchy, whilst outside of the Isle of Thanet the pace of resort development accelerated, to varying degrees, at Dover, Deal, Herne Bay, and Sandgate. Kent's resorts faced increased competition from spas and seaside resorts across the county but though the fight for royal and elite patronage was fierce, the increasing middling class demand proved capable of supporting this increasing number of watering places.

Between 1798 and 1805, the conquest of Britain was Napoleon's primary strategic objective.¹⁷⁰ Even before the formal declaration of war, Britain had started to prepare against the threat of French invasion. 'In no part of the realm was the French threat felt more strongly, nor the urge to act to meet the danger of invasion more

¹⁶⁹ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁷⁰ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd edn (London: Yale Nota Bene, 2005), p. 292.

immediate, than in the county of Kent.¹⁷¹ The threat came in waves, periods when the danger of invasion was considered to be more acute. The first began in late 1796, peaked in 1797 and continued throughout 1798, relaxing only after Napoleon's appointment to the Army of the Orient and his decision to postpone the invasion until his forces were stronger.¹⁷² The second wave was between 1803 and 1805 when, as Richard Glover has argued, there should 'be no doubts about the reality of danger England faced.'¹⁷³ Though the Battle of Trafalgar dealt a serious blow to French naval power, the threat continued: Napoleon continued to win victories across continental Europe and after 1807 his naval power began again to increase.

Peter Bloomfield has surveyed Kent's coastal defences during the Napoleonic wars and his study highlights the importance of many of the county's seaside resorts as military bases. This, of course, was not the first time that invasion had been threatened and old fortifications were combined with new across the coast. Fortifications fall into two categories: those existing in 1793, which were strengthened and new constructions.¹⁷⁴

'The defences at Gravesend, together with those of Tilbury on the Essex shore provided a formidable barrier against enemy penetration further up the Thames.'¹⁷⁵ Gravesend fort, built during the reign of Henry VIII, was extended and improved so that by 1805 it boasted nineteen 32 pounder guns.¹⁷⁶ According to Robert Pocock, the town's librarian and first historian, writing in the midst of the conflict in 1797: 'In 1708, the hostile intentions of the Courts of France and Spain, induced the British Government to prepare for the better security of the passage of the River Thames at Gravesend.'¹⁷⁷ Pocock described how these defences played an essential role in the mutiny of 1797, during which disturbance 'the Town of Gravesend was much

¹⁷¹ Peter Bloomfield, *Kent and the Napoleonic wars: Selected Documents*, ed. with a commentary by Peter Bloomfield (Gloucester: Alan Sutton for Kent Archives Office, 1987), p. 1.

¹⁷² Bloomfield, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷³ Richard Glover, *Britain at Bay: Defence Against Bonaparte, 1803-14* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 15.

¹⁷⁴ Bloomfield, p. 23.

¹⁷⁵ Bloomfield, p. 23.

¹⁷⁶ Bloomfield, pp. 23-24.

¹⁷⁷ Robert Pocock, *The History of the Incorporated Town and Parishes of Gravesend and Milton, in the County of Kent ...* (Gravesend: Printed by R. Pocock, 1797), p. 166.

alarmed.¹⁷⁸ The date of Pocock's history is significant as it was published in the same year as the first introduction of bathing facilities at Gravesend. This juxtaposition between health resort and place of strategic military importance lies at the heart of the history and success of Kent's watering places during this period.

The Isle of Thanet by comparison, was only lightly protected. Barracks were built at Ramsgate, which included a training ground for cavalry and the port was protected by the East Cliff Battery which in 1815 mounted two guns.¹⁷⁹ Broadstairs was safeguarded by two batteries located on either side of its bay. Margate's defences were minimal.

The defences in east Kent were centred on Deal. Its sixteenth-century castle was strengthened and garrisoned, the town hosted a barracks and naval hospital, two batteries were constructed and its role as naval dockyard and victualler to the fleet in the Downs was continued. 'Deal was important too because, in 1795-6, a telegraph was set up to carry news and orders by semaphore between the town and London.'¹⁸⁰ At Walmer, a town to the south of Deal and between which its late eighteenth-century bathing facilities would be located, was also heavily defended by a Tudor castle, barracks and naval hospital. The treacherous Goodwin Sands and Dover's White Cliffs provided additional, natural protection to this stretch of coast.

The concentration of fortifications at Dover was intensive: 'Its possession by an enemy would have been a major disaster, providing a fine harbour for his ships and a base close to the continent.'¹⁸¹ Bloomfield has described Dover as the pivot and key to Britain, suggesting that the importance of holding it in the event of an invasion cannot be underestimated.¹⁸² Its defences can be divided into three main areas: the castle, the Western Heights and the shoreline.¹⁸³ The Castle, the fortifications and military presence of which were considered in detail by the town's first guidebook, was heavily armed and improved to meet modern improvements in artillery. The Western Heights, on the opposite side of the bay, were from 1793 made 'into one of the strongest

¹⁷⁸ Pocock, *The History*, p. 168.

¹⁷⁹ Bloomfield, p. 25.

¹⁸⁰ Bloomfield, p. 25.

¹⁸¹ Bloomfield, p. 26.

¹⁸² Bloomfield, pp. 36-37.

¹⁸³ Bloomfield, p. 37.

fortifications in England,' and the original plans included accommodation for five thousand troops.¹⁸⁴ The shoreline, which as well as being important for the town's defence acted as the focal point for the emerging seaside resort, was likewise heavily fortified: defences included the North's, Townshend and Guildford Batteries as well of the Tudor Archcliffe Fort and Moats Bulwark.¹⁸⁵

Continuing westwards along the coast, fortifications were erected at Sandgate and Hythe. Sandgate, 'and the low lying coast running south-west to St. Mary's Bay, was recognised as the most likely place for an invader to land - and fortified accordingly.'¹⁸⁶ The Tudor castle was completely remodelled between 1803 and 1805 and above Sandgate, on the Shorncliffe Heights, and Act of Parliament established the Shorncliffe Battery, with the additional protection of a fortified camp, redoubt and four Martellos.¹⁸⁷

'Hythe was a military centre of some importance during the Wars': 'there were barracks there and it became, in 1808, the headquarters of the Royal Staff Corps, for which body "a handsome range of substantial brick buildings" was erected.'¹⁸⁸ Though its castle, over the town on the Saltwood Heights, was not fortified during this period, a battery mounting two 24 pound guns was raised there in 1798.

The Martello Towers were an important feature of the defence of Britain's shoreline and they would have been a familiar feature to any visitor to Kent's coast during this period. Stretching along the Kent and Sussex coast, from Folkestone to Seaford, a scheme for erecting these bomb-proof gun towers was initially proposed in 1803 and construction began in 1805. Almost all of Kent's seaside resorts could boast their own Martello Tower and they became established as part of the fabric of the town and thus of the resort. Twenty-seven towers were constructed in Kent and forty-seven in Sussex. Bloomfield has provided a detailed account of the position and physical characteristics of Kent's Martello Towers, demonstrating how, despite never being tested, they were 'a most formidable line of defence.'¹⁸⁹ For visitors to Kent's

¹⁸⁴ Bloomfield, p. 38.

¹⁸⁵ Bloomfield, p. 39.

¹⁸⁶ Bloomfield, p. 27.

¹⁸⁷ Bloomfield, p. 28.

¹⁸⁸ Bloomfield, p. 29.

¹⁸⁹ Bloomfield, p. 36.

seaside resorts, the Martello Towers provided an object of curiosity and acted as a destination for an afternoon's excursion: many visitors sketched the towers and their presence was commented on within both private journals and public guidebooks.

Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss Kent's defences in any greater detail, the outline provided above serves to illustrate the extent of the military preparations made at Kent's seaside resorts and suggests the impact these developments would have had on the character and function of these towns. That health resorts could thrive in such a militaristic environment where the threat of invasion was a constant and highly visible concern seems, at first, counterintuitive. The military presence, however, proved to be an attraction rather than a deterrent and the influence this exerted on the social life of Kent's seaside resorts will be explored in detail in chapter three.

The military presence provided a direct stimulus to the growth of many of Kent's coastal towns as watering places. At Herne Bay the history of the town in the defence the nation was quickly incorporated into the narrative of its rise as a bathing place. Herne Bay was part of the parish of Herne and, though located in a relatively disadvantageous position away from Kent's main roads, used its retired position to attract visitors. The principal industries of the town were farming and fishing and it also engaged in shipping with London. Hasted offered the following description at the end of the eighteenth century:

. . . Herne Bay, which is very spacious and commodious for shipping. Several colliers frequent this bay from Newcastle and Sunderland, on which account there are two sworn meters here, and the city of Canterbury and the neighbouring country are partly supplied with coals from hence. There are two hoys, of about sixty tones burthen each, which sail alternately each week to and from London, with corn, hops, flour and shop goods.¹⁹⁰

Bathing facilities were first introduced at Herne Bay in 1776 but it was slow to develop as a resort. In 1771, John Devon advertised the availability of his machines:

¹⁹⁰ Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent. Containing the Ancient and Present State of it, Civil and Ecclesiastical ...*, vol 9 (Canterbury: Printed by W. Bristow, on the Parade, 1797), p. 85.

For BATHING in the SEA at HEARN-BAY.

THIS is to acquaint all Gentlemen, Ladies, and Others, That we have now begun to bathe in the Water for this Season with the Machine. Any Person that requires the Benefit of the Waters, by coming to HEARN aforesaid, will be well attended, and proper Care taken of them, as we have provided a very sober careful Man for a Waiter.

N.B. HEARN is a very pleasant Country situated about six Miles from Canterbury, and twelve from Margate.

JOHN DEVON, and Co.

Hearn,

June 12, 1771.¹⁹¹

As this advertisement shows, Devon's target market was local, centring on the nearby city of Canterbury. The venture, however, does not appear to have been a success for Devon and in 1792 bathing machines were introduced as being available under the proprietorship of Gabriel and Elizabeth Izzard: 'This was to be a profitable business, surviving many years.'¹⁹² Soon successful enough to warrant expansion, the Izzard's in the early nineteenth century announced the availability of warm baths. As the advertisement detailed, however, the business had suffered a setback when in January 1808 its facilities were badly damaged in a storm:

HEARNE BAY.

GABRIEL AND ELIZABETH IZZARD.

MOST gratefully return their thanks to those Gentlemen and Ladies by whose humane and benevolent support they have been enabled to repair their Loss in the late Gale in the month of January last, and respectfully beg to announce that their

WARM BATHS AND MACHINES

¹⁹¹ John Devon, 'For Bathing in the Sea at Hearn-Bay', *Kentish Gazette*, 11 June 1771, p. 1.

¹⁹² R.L.H. Coulson, *A Chronology of Herne Bay to 1913* (Kent: Kent County Library; Kent County Council, 1984), p. 5.

are now ready for the reception of those who may be pleased to make use of them; and they hope, by attention, to merit their favours.¹⁹³

The resort at this place still remained on a small scale. As described within Herne Bay's first guidebook, the 1835 *A Picture of the New Town of Herne Bay*, authored by an anonymous 'A Lady,' the arrival of the military caused an upturn in the town's fortunes:

About the year 1810, military encampments threaded the coasts of Kent, for the protection against the long expected attempt at invasion. Some of them appeared along the high grounds at the eastern extremity of the bay. The officers attached to these, remarked of the beauties of the surrounding scenery. By degrees, they became familiar with the land, and grew partial to the inartificial manners of its few, but homely, householders; who, in return, conceived a spirit of traffic for their accommodation. A room, of rather large dimensions, was put in order for their reception at one of the inns, and was frequented by the officers with no small relish, in the dearth of accustomed resources. Some of them had wives and children; and one bold man in the bay ventured on the erection of a bathing machine for their use, and this succeeding, in due time launched a second. Each summer increased the number of visitors: families from Canterbury began to perceive the singular recommendations of this hitherto neglected spot; and it assumed, permanently, the name of Herne Bay.¹⁹⁴

Through the influx of people, therefore, the military presence provided a direct catalyst of Herne Bay's development as a watering place. The guide described the gradual emergence of resort facilities, including lodging houses which were gradually constructed and 'In the course of years, the progress towards the appearance of a town, fit for the accommodation of invalids, or of parties seeking a change of scene from crowded cities, had been considerable.'¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Gabriel Izzard and Elizabeth Izzard, 'Hearne Bay', *Kentish Gazette*, 12 July 1808, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ *A Picture of the New Town of Herne Bay, Its Beauties, History, and the Curiosities in its Vicinity; Including some Particulars of the Roman Town, Called Reculver. By a Lady.* (London: John Macrone, St James's Square, 1835), p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ *A Picture of the New Town of Herne Bay*, p. 2.

The first guidebook for Dover and Deal was published in 1792, the same year that Britain began its extensive preparations against invasion. The guide's focus was Dover. It was claimed that the 'celebrated sea-port town' was an ideal location for sea-bathing and had lately emerged as a fashionable leisure destination:

The delightful situation of Dover, the purity of the sea, and the advantages of a fine beach for bathing, has caused this place to be much frequented in the bathing season; and it now promises to become one of the most fashionable watering places in the kingdom . . . the romantic and beautiful views, which, in every situation in its environs, are displayed to the eye, the salubrity of the air, the strength and purity of the water, and ease and safety of the mode of bathing, make the situation equally desirable to those who visit the coast for amusement, or the valetudinarian who is in search after health.¹⁹⁶

The guide was keen to emphasize to potential visitors the attractions of Dover as a thriving commercial centre, which included: 'The variety of scenes which this place exhibits, from its intercourse with the Continent' and 'the numbers of the first families in both kingdoms being daily passing and repassing.'¹⁹⁷ The guide boasted that, as a result of 'The influx of a number of the most respectable families, as summer visitors', a new assembly room had been built which hosted 'regular public breakfastings, card-assemblies, and balls' and which possessed a 'fine view of the sea, [and] the coast of France.'¹⁹⁸ The town also had two circulating libraries. The Apollo Library in King's Street, under the proprietorship of Mr. John Horn, was located 'a short distance from the bathing-machine,' 'stocked daily with newspapers' and furnished with musical instruments, including a 'particularly fine-toned harpsichord.'¹⁹⁹ Its rival was the Albion Library on Snaregate Street, run by Mr. G. Ledger. It lacked some of the grandeur of the Apollo but was still 'fitted up in a very handsome modern stile' and contained 'a good collection of books, and the London

¹⁹⁶ *The Dover and Deal Directory and Guide, Containing a Concise Account of the Town, Harbor, Castle, and Neighbourhood, of Dover, ...* (Dover: printed and sold by J. Horn; and by R. Long, Deal, 1792), p.1.

¹⁹⁷ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 21.

¹⁹⁹ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 21.

and country newspapers.²⁰⁰ Dover also had its own theatre, which was ‘occupied by a company of comedians of very considerable merit under the management of Mr. Bernard, late of the theatre royal Covent-garden.’²⁰¹ The status of Dover as a thriving port and military centre was both a benefit and a disadvantage to its fledgling resort industry. Similar to Canterbury earlier in the century, visitors could make use of the town’s social and cultural facilities but there was a lack of segregation and exclusivity.

Visitor numbers were high enough to support competing bathing machine businesses. The ‘original bathing machines’ were kept by Mr. Benjamin Gardiner and were ‘conveniently stationed in the bay near Lord North’s battery,’ and had ‘every accommodation necessary for bathing.’²⁰² Gardiner’s machines were rivalled by those kept by ‘Messrs. Kennett, Hawker, Iggleden, and Austin’ whose ‘new bathing machines are stationed highly up the bay’ and also provided ‘every convenience for bathing.’²⁰³ Offering more extensive facilities, including hot and cold baths, this later company appear to have been winning in the battle for visitors

Deal likewise became fashionable as a small resort towards the end of the eighteenth century, though the resort industry was of relatively little importance to the town’s economy. Even the town’s first guidebook placed only slight emphasis on its role as a bathing place, highlighting instead its importance as the place where ‘almost all of the ships bound from foreign parts by way of the Channel generally stop,’ noting that it was ‘from the continual influx of sea-faring people, who frequent the place, that the inhabitants chiefly derive their support.’²⁰⁴ According to the guide, Deal’s social life revolved around the recently opened public room attached to the circulating library of Mr. Richard Long.²⁰⁵ As at Dover, however, these facilities were not a response to the demands of a visiting company but of the town’s permanent inhabitants.

The bathing machines introduced in 1754 had not survived and when facilities were reintroduced, they were not located in Deal itself but half a mile outside the

²⁰⁰ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 21.

²⁰¹ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 21.

²⁰² *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 2.

²⁰³ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 42.

²⁰⁵ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 43.

town, towards Walmer. In July 1807 Messer. Smith and Co. advertised the opening of their facilities:

SEA BATHING AT WALMER, IN KENT.

MESSRS. SMITH and CO. most respectfully in form the Nobility and the Public in general, that they have erected, at a suitable distance between Deal and Walmer, for the mutual accommodation of both places, Hot and Cold Sea Water, and Shower Baths on the most approved principles, with convenient and pleasant dressing and waiting rooms.

Carefu
N.B. A

These baths, however, were not a success and in February 1811 another notice was placed in the paper advertising the sale of four-fifths of the shares.²⁰⁷

But although the facilities at Deal were minimal during the eighteenth century, the resort was nonetheless able to attract royal patronage. In 1782 the one-year-old Prince Alfred was sent to Deal to recover after being inoculated against smallpox. 'But he did not profit from his bathing. His face and especially his eyelids were still troublesome, with eruptions from his inoculation, and his chest continued weak.'²⁰⁸ Alfred's condition continued to worsen after he left Deal and he died later in the year.

Gravesend was an unlikely spot to establish a watering place. On the south bank of the River Thames less than thirty miles from London, Gravesend was a thriving port and centre for customs. Vessels leaving London for overseas would typically complete their loading at the town and many of its inhabitants were employed in running the barges that carried the passenger traffic arriving from Rochester, Canterbury and the Continent.²⁰⁹ During the seventeenth century, the population had almost doubled from about 1,200 to 2,000 and, continuing to act as the gateway to London, Gravesend continued to expand throughout the eighteenth

²⁰⁶ 'Sea Bathing at Walmer in Kent', *Kentish Gazette*, 23 June 1807, p. 4.

²⁰⁷ 'Walmer. To be Sold by Private Contract', *Kentish Gazette*, 19 February 1811, p. 4.

²⁰⁸ Flora Fraser, *Princesses: The Six Daughters of George III* (London: John Murray, 2004), p. 71.

²⁰⁹ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 31.

century.²¹⁰ Hasted described the town as 'large and populous, but the houses, about seven hundred in number, are most of them unsightly, and the streets narrow' although an act for improving lighting and paving had done something to improve the town.²¹¹

Gravesend was most enthusiastically promoted by the town's first historian, Robert Pocock who was proprietor of the town's circulating library. The implications of Gravesend's riverside location for its viability as a centre for health will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four but this was only one of many stumbling blocks it faced as a potential watering place. Its main drawback was its proximity to London: easy access via the Thames into the centre of the capital meant that would never be able to achieve the exclusivity essential for an elite resort.

Guidebooks to watering places with a national scope provided an indication of how Kent's resorts were perceived by the wider population. Carey's *The Balnea*, with which this chapter began, included twenty resorts in his guide to 'All the Popular Watering Places in England,' four of which were in Kent: Broadstairs, Margate, Ramsgate, and Tunbridge Wells. The inclusion of the Isle of Thanet resorts and the omission of Kent's smaller coastal resorts reflects their status as national rather than regional or local watering places. Carey's evaluation of these resorts is revealing. Margate emerged as Carey's clear favourite and he stated, 'I do not know a watering-place that is more calculated to gratify a party on a summer's excursion than Margate and its environs.'²¹² Ramsgate, though it was by the end of the eighteenth century rivalling its neighbour, did not secure such a favourable evaluation: though it was 'much frequented in the summer season, by some of the first families,' Carey provided a mixed description of the town itself.²¹³ For example, the 'principal street is very narrow but well paved' and the houses, though old, were 'kept remarkable clean and neat by the inhabitants.'²¹⁴ Broadstairs fared worse, being described as 'another watering place, of little extent, and not much more, lately shot up between Margate

²¹⁰ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 31.

²¹¹ Hasted, vol. 3 (1797), p. 320.

²¹² Carey, p. 5.

²¹³ Carey, p. 38.

²¹⁴ Carey, p. 38.

and Ramsgate.’²¹⁵ Carey continued: ‘There is a good view of the sea, it is true, but it possesses no other attraction: it lies low, in a husky situation, with no diversity of object; and being newly built, pictures to the traveller the idea of a brick-kiln, surrounded by unpleasant and stubble fields.’²¹⁶

Whilst the Kentish seaside was rising in prominence, Tunbridge Wells was sliding slowly into a decline as a fashionable watering place. From the 1770s, the spa began the transition into a centre for genteel, leisure residence. The changing character of the resort, which will be explored further in subsequent chapters, was reflected by *The Tunbridge Wells Guide* of 1780 which described the town as:

. . . now in a very flourishing state, with a great number of good houses for lodgings, and all necessary accommodations for company; its customs are settled, its pleasures regulated, its markets and all other conveniences fixed, and the whole very properly adapted to the nature of the place, which is at once designed to give health and pleasure to all its visitors.²¹⁷

As at the seaside, however, the war acted as an impetus for growth: whilst stagnation had begun to set in during the late eighteenth century ‘the wartime inflation of its population prompted a building boom.’²¹⁸

Kent’s resorts faced intense competition for visitors as the number of watering places continued to increase across the country, similarly drawing on an increasing demand from the middling classes and bolstered by the conflict with France. The emergence of Cheltenham and Weymouth as leading resorts towards the end of the eighteenth century demonstrated how royal patronage continued to have a transformative influence on the fortunes of resorts. Suffering from abdominal spasms, George III was advised to drink the waters at Cheltenham by physician Sir George Baker. ‘To the chagrin of Bath, the Cheltenham visit was the only occasion

²¹⁵ Carey, p. 36.

²¹⁶ Carey, p. 36.

²¹⁷ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide; Or an Account of the Ancient and Present State of that Place, to which is Added a Particular Description of the Towns and Villages, Gentlemen’s Seats, Romains of Antiquity, Foundaries, &c. &c. Within the Circumference of Sixteen Miles* (Tunbridge Wells: Printed and Sold by J. Sprange, at his Circulating Library. Sold also in London, by T. Beecroft Bookseller Pater Noster Row, 1780), p. 44.

²¹⁸ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 240.

when a Hanoverian sovereign stayed at an English watering-place.²¹⁹ The waters at Cheltenham were long known to locals, although the foundation legend of the spa attributed their discovery to the pigeons being observed pecking at salt deposits in 1718.²²⁰ Captain Skillicorne, proprietor of the Old Wells, was primarily responsible for the spa's early promotion and physical development; improvements included the building of a small assembly room and the creation of a landscaped walk. 'What finally set the seal on the value of the Cheltenham waters' was their recommendation by Dr. Short in a 1740 treatise.²²¹ Development was slow, however, for much of the eighteenth century as a result of outbreaks of smallpox, poor communications with London, shortage of comfortable lodgings and a lack of enthusiasm from inhabitants.²²² The visit of George III drew the attention of the fashionable world to Cheltenham and provided the key impetus to growth. During a period when Bath was suffering from a recession and Tunbridge Wells was transforming into a centre for genteel residence, Cheltenham's future as a spa was assured and by 1796 it was attracting 1,700 visitors.²²³

Weymouth was similarly transformed as a watering place as a result of the patronage of George III. A local important port town, Weymouth emerged as a watering place from the 1750s, though it was hampered by its relatively long distance from London. First visiting Weymouth in 1789 with his family, George III drew the attention of the fashionable world to the town and by the end of the eighteenth century 'it was clearly one of the two or three most important seaside resorts outside Kent and Sussex.'²²⁴ The visit of a reigning monarch set the seal of fashionable approval on a resort and guaranteed its popularity in the immediate aftermath. That the Isle of Thanet resorts were able to flourish without this advantage attests to powerful combination of factors, particularly communications links, which underpinned their success. But as the rise of Cheltenham and Weymouth

²¹⁹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 191.

²²⁰ Gwen Hart, *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1965), p. 124.

²²¹ Hart, p. 125.

²²² Hart, pp. 128-29.

²²³ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 193.

²²⁴ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 50.

demonstrate, if George III had instead chosen to visit one of Kent's minor seaside resorts, the county hierarchy could have been transformed.

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Watering places continued to evolve throughout the nineteenth century. Kent's resorts, like those across the country, were transformed by the continued expansion of demand and the arrival of the railways. New seaside resorts were created, most notably Folkestone, which rose swiftly during the 1840s to become Kent's premier watering place, whilst Margate, Ramsgate and Tunbridge Wells slipped from the top of the hierarchy. Kent's resorts had thrived during the long eighteenth century by balancing accessibility with exclusivity and the Isle of Thanet resorts in particular had built their success on their quick and cheap communications links with London. The railways, however, largely negated this previously unique advantage and ensured that their impact on the Kentish seaside was subtly different from elsewhere on the English coast. The water cure also continued to change. Hydropathy emerged in England from the 1840s as a new adaptation of the water cure and led to the creation of several centres across the country. Like seawater bathing almost a century earlier, the drinking of pure, cold water as a medical treatment within a strict regimen of fresh air, exercise and avoidance of stimulants, can be seen as both a continuation of and departure from previous incarnations of the water cure, as mid-nineteenth century society reacted against or drew upon what had come before.

The end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, which had temporarily inflated demand for English resorts amongst the elite and had drawn people and resources to the Kentish coast, coincided roughly with the introduction of steamboats. Replacing the hoys, steamboats ushered in a new era of expansion for Kent's coastal resorts. Although they originally received a mixed reception, steamboats, which ran between London and Margate, were a reliable, fast and novel form of transportation which significantly increased visitor numbers to resorts along its path. Whyman has argued strongly for their importance, suggesting that the introduction of steamboats in Kent

‘was at least as far reaching socially as was the subsequent construction of railways.’²²⁵ ‘Compared with road, river and harbour improvements, and canal and railway developments,’ he has noted, ‘the effects of steamboats were predominantly social rather than economic, being confined almost wholly to passenger transport, involving a substantial and expanding excursion element.’²²⁶

Whyman identified Gravesend, Sheerness and Herne Bay as being ‘steamboat creations’²²⁷ but he placed particular emphasis on their importance to Margate where, he argued, ‘reductions in journey time were such as to permit excursions to Margate before the end of the 1820s’ and thus foreshadowed the more well-known daytrips of the railway era.²²⁸ Passenger traffic between London and Margate grew quickly: ‘the total number of passengers carried between 1820-21 and 1829-30 exceeded half a million, followed by a further 854,462 passengers between 1830-31 and 1839-40.’²²⁹

The impact on Gravesend as a resort was likewise significant. ‘The annual traffic to and from Gravesend more than tripled in a decade, so that by the early 1830s the number of passengers landing and embarking at the Town Pier had reached almost 300,000 annually.’²³⁰ ‘In 1843 Gravesend accounted for over 60 per cent of all steamer passenger traffic out of London,’ however not all of these would have been visitors to the resort.²³¹ Showing similarities to seventeenth-century Sydenham, Gravesend’s accessibility to London’s lower orders – as the closest seaside resort to the capital, steamboats made the town ideally placed for a day’s excursion - meant that it quickly acquired a ‘low’ reputation that precluded its development as a fashionable resort.

The arrival of the railways ensured that from the 1830s the fortunes of Kent’s resorts continued to be determined by their communications links. The railway’s first appearance at a Kentish watering place was, however, fairly undramatic. The Canterbury and Whitstable line opened in 1830 and an extension to the line was added to Whitstable Harbour. Though the railway fuelled Whitstable’s growth as a centre for shipbuilding and coastal shipping, it had only a minimal impact on this fledgling resort.

²²⁵ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 23.

²²⁶ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 23.

²²⁷ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 9.

²²⁸ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 25.

²²⁹ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 23.

²³⁰ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 23.

²³¹ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 18.

It was only after the arrival of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway in 1860, which made possible day trips to Whitstable from across the county, that it would emerge properly as a resort. It remained a minor watering place throughout the nineteenth century, however, with its amusements centring on the beach, bathing and boating.²³² There were two main railways in Kent during the nineteenth century: the London Canterbury and Dover Railway and the South Eastern Railway (SER). The first went to Folkestone in 1843; Dover in 1844; Ramsgate and Margate in 1846; Deal in 1847; and Hythe and Sandgate in 1874. The SER opened lines to Herne Bay and Dover in 1861; Broadstairs, Margate and Ramsgate in 1863; and Westgate in 1871.

Folkestone was Kent's most successful railway creation. 'The South Eastern Railway Company shaped the future of Folkestone from the 1840s, both as a cross-channel packet station and as a seaside resort.'²³³ Though bathing facilities had been introduced in 1787, they did not attract significant custom and the town showed little sign of significant expansion until William, third Earl of Radnor from 1825 actively funded its development as a resort. It was the purchase of Folkestone Harbour in 1842 by the directors of the SER, however, that had the greatest impact. After first initiating a cross-channel steamship from Folkestone to Boulogne, the company began construction in 1843 of the Pavilion Hotel for the reception of visitors. The town grew rapidly: by 1851 the population had nearly doubled from twenty years previous to 6,726 people and by 1881 had increased dramatically, reaching 18,896.²³⁴

Folkestone's rise had a significant impact on Kent's urban hierarchy: as a cross-channel port it 'seriously challenged and destroyed Dover's long established monopoly in this field' and as a resort it surpassed Margate and Ramsgate as a fashionable destination.²³⁵ 'The position of Folkestone, possessing a direct travel link to both London and Europe, its titled landowner and the proximity of the Shorncliffe military camp all contributed to its status as a socially exclusive health resort.'²³⁶ Control over the physical development of the town by Radnor and the town's governing authorities

²³² Felicity Stafford and Nigel Yates, *The Later Kentish Seaside, 1840-1974: Selected Documents* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton for Kent Archives Office, 1985), p. 3.

²³³ Whyman, 'The South Eastern Railway Raised Folkestone to Fashionable Heights', *Cantium: Kent Local History* (1974), 64 (p. 64).

²³⁴ Alan F. Taylor, *Folkestone Past and Present* (Derby: Breedon, 2002), p. 8.

²³⁵ Whyman, 'The South Eastern Railway', p. 64.

²³⁶ Arnold, p. 55.

'effectively separated the homes of the working classes from the terraces, parades, apartments and hotels designed for the affluent visitor and resident.'²³⁷

Central to their policy was Radnor's efforts, made with the support of the Borough Council, to ensure that the fares journey to Folkestone from London remained more expensive than for the roughly equidistant journey between London and Margate.²³⁸ 'Whereas a fare of £1 was established between London and Margate, a resort increasingly visited by London artisans and shopworkers in the 1890s, a more expensive fare of £1/4 shillings [sic] was charged to reach Folkestone.'²³⁹ Furthermore, for the majority of the nineteenth century, no cheap day tickets were made available.²⁴⁰ These measures were effective and Folkestone maintained its exclusive reputation and elite patronage throughout the nineteenth century. This applied equally to its leisured residents: as Arnold has noted, in 1901 'Folkestone residents employed a higher percentage of servants than any other town on the south-east coast.'²⁴¹ This level of control over Folkestone's development distinguishes the resort from its eighteenth-century Kentish forerunners which lacked this degree of control.

Building on its elite reputation and salubrious image and aided by the promotion of a winter season, Folkestone became important as a centre for the treatment of tuberculosis. Though parallels can be drawn between the medical practice at Folkestone and that of the Margate General Sea Bathing Infirmary of the eighteenth century (as will be explored in chapter four), treatment at the former 'developed initially as a socially exclusive enterprise.'²⁴² 'In many respects,' Arnold has argued, Folkestone and its much smaller neighbour Sandgate . . . are typical of Victorian health resorts,' not least in their cultivation of 'an image of refinement and salubrity' and 'for possessing an invigorating climate in a sheltered location where people of a similar social background could meet and interact in an atmosphere of exclusivity.'²⁴³

²³⁷ Arnold, p. 55.

²³⁸ Arnold, p. 61.

²³⁹ Arnold, p. 61.

²⁴⁰ Arnold, p. 61.

²⁴¹ Arnold, p. 63.

²⁴² Arnold, p. 1.

²⁴³ Arnold, pp. 57-58.

Sandgate and Hythe acted as satellites to Folkestone and the three watering places shared a mutually beneficial relationship similar that which had existed between the Isle of Thanet resorts. A small town at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Sandgate emerged gradually as a watering place. Described in *The Hythe, Sandgate and Folkestone Guide*, first published in 1816, as possessing ‘a cheerfulness without noise, tranquillity without dulness, and facility of communication without the disturbance of a public road,’ it was promoted as being ideal for invalids and those seeking a situation ‘free from the annoyance of a crowd, and the fatigue of bustle and incident to larger and more populous towns.’²⁴⁴ Though bathing facilities had been introduced in the eighteenth century, Hythe remained only peripheral as a resort until the railway provided an impetus to growth in the 1870s.

Herne Bay had the potential to become Kent’s second nineteenth-century success story but the delay in its connection to the railway stalled the resort’s development. Herne Bay ‘was a planned resort – a speculation – that was only partially successful.’²⁴⁵ As at Folkestone, bathing facilities had been introduced in the town during the eighteenth century but despite the influx of people and resources during the wars with France, development was slow. The initial impetus to significant expansion as a resort came from private investment. George Burge and James Clift were particular prominent and from the 1830s guided the construction of houses, a hotel, a pier and a gasworks. But despite experiencing a period of prosperity following the opening of the pier in 1832, the railway links emerging elsewhere in the county that boosted the appeal of its competitors, combined with the cutback of steamboat services, meant that growth from the 1840s onwards was slow and even the arrival of the railway in 1861 failed to stimulate expansion. By 1870 Herne Bay ‘had lost its chance of becoming a first rank holiday resort’: not only was its growth delayed by the late arrival of the railway but this, when combined with its reputation as a genteel resort, deterred working-class visitors.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ *The Hythe, Sandgate and Folkestone Guide: Containing an Account of their Ancient and Present State, and a Description of the Principal Objects Worthy of Attention in the Neighbourhood. To Which is Subjoined, A Brief History of the Cinque-Ports* (Hythe: Printed, Published, and Sold by W. Tiffin, at the Library ..., 1816), p. 28.

²⁴⁵ Stafford and Yates, p. 4.

²⁴⁶ Stafford and Yates, p. 5.

The arrival of the railways at the seaside meant that the Isle of Thanet resorts lost their unique eighteenth-century advantage of quick and cheap communications links with London. The steamboats continued to run despite being slower than the trains but their marketing strategy changed: 'Following a dual policy of cutting fares . . . and improving the quality of service' they attracted as clientele 'those to whom price was a greater consideration than speed or convenience.'²⁴⁷ Maintaining its reputation for being more exclusive than Margate, Ramsgate in the nineteenth century was the most successful of the three Isle of Thanet resorts, though its visitors were increasingly drawn from the working classes. In 1901 Ramsgate was Kent's second largest seaside resort, behind Folkestone, with Margate following in third.

Margate's development stagnated during the mid-nineteenth century as the railways lured visitors elsewhere. Recovery began during the last quarter of the century but it was not until the 1890s that its success again seemed assured. 'If Brighton was the West End of London by the sea, it was at Gravesend, Margate and Ramsgate that the Cockney spirit found expression.'²⁴⁸ Birchington and Westgate emerged in the 1860s after the arrival of a direct rail link as satellites to Margate, promoting themselves in contrast to their famous neighbour. Attracting royalty and the aristocracy, 'quietness, respectability and lack of inducement to the excursionist were the[ir] most desirable aspects.'²⁴⁹

Broadstairs remained the smallest of the three Isle of Thanet resorts and retained its genteel, retired character. Lacking direct communications links with the capital, by either water or rail, helped it to maintain an image of exclusivity. 'It was essentially a middle class resort which prided itself on the quality of visitor it attracted.'²⁵⁰

Dover and Deal achieved only limited success as resorts during the nineteenth century. Dover continued to be important as a cross-channel port and by 1911 was the largest town with a resort element in Kent.²⁵¹ Development of the town was fuelled by the arrival of the railway whilst the 'dual function of catering for both continental

²⁴⁷ Andrews, 'The Thanet Seaports', p. 281.

²⁴⁸ Stafford and Yates, p. 8.

²⁴⁹ Stafford and Yates, p. 5.

²⁵⁰ Stafford and Yates, p. 8.

²⁵¹ Stafford and Yates, p. 11.

travellers and resident holidaymakers meant that Dover was not totally reliant on either.²⁵² Deal similarly failed to thrive as a watering place and 'remained a pleasant but minor Kentish seaside resort throughout the nineteenth century.'²⁵³

All of Kent's coastal resorts benefitted from the increasing popularity of the seaside holiday. The spas, however, as Granville noted in his 1841 survey, were 'on the eve of a slow and relative, but unmistakable decline.'²⁵⁴ Whilst they were able during the long eighteenth century to compete successfully with the rise in seawater treatment, they found in the emergence of hydropathy in the mid-nineteenth century a different type of challenge. Originating in the 1820s at Gräfenberg in Austrian Silesia, hydropathy involved 'the use of pure cold water internally and externally to regulate the temperature and perspiration in order to induce stimulation and tranquilization of the nervous system.'²⁵⁵ Practised initially by Vincent Priessnitz, hydropathy was brought to Britain by Captain R.T. Claridge. Fighting to get hydropathy accepted as an orthodox medical treatment, Claridge was an active promoter and in 1842 he published an account of his experiences as Priessnitz's patient.²⁵⁶ Malvern became Britain's most prestigious hydropathic centre and the spa's two leading practitioners, J.M. Gilly and J. Wilson, successfully modified Priessnitz's practice to suit the tastes and temperaments of English patients.²⁵⁷

Rejecting the use of drugs and the perceived hedonism of the eighteenth-century spas, hydropathy advocated drinking vast quantities of pure cold water, fresh air, exercise, a simple nourishing diet and a regular pattern of life. All stimulants, such as alcohol and medicines were to be avoided and treatments included the use of sitz baths, the douche bath and sweating the body in wet sheets and bandages. Hydropathy can be viewed both as an evolution of and a departure from the traditional water cure and practitioners both drew upon and rejected different

²⁵² Stafford and Yates, p. 11.

²⁵³ Stafford and Yates, p. 10.

²⁵⁴ A.B. Granville, *Spas of England and Principal Sea-Bathing Places*, vol. 1: The North (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1971), p. v.

²⁵⁵ Robin Price, 'Hydropathy in England 1840-70', *Medical History*, 25.3 (1981), 269-280, p. 279.

²⁵⁶ Bradley, James and Marguerite Dupree, 'A Shadow of Orthodoxy? An Epistemology of British Hydropathy, 1840-1859', *Medical History*, 47.2 (2003), 173-94, (p. 173).

²⁵⁷ Price, p. 276.

elements of historical practice in accordance to contemporary medical knowledge and culture.

Malvern's nineteenth-century success demonstrates how traditional inland spas could thrive through the adoption of this latest incarnation of the water cure. Tunbridge Wells, however, continued to decline as a fashionable resort throughout the nineteenth century, becoming firmly established as an urban centre. The impact of the railway on Tunbridge Wells is less easy to determine than at the seaside resorts. 'Tunbridge Wells, on its own account and by its position on the way to the coast, became a strategic point and achieved five lines of communication' and was the battle ground for two rival companies, the South Eastern Railway and the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway.²⁵⁸ But Tunbridge Wells's expanding population (reaching 24,309 in 1881) owed little to the railway: instead, the town's 'natural advantages and already impressive growth attracted the railway to it, and this in turn encouraged more people to the prosperity, and so to the growth, of leisure and holiday towns.'²⁵⁹

vii

By providing a chronological narrative from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, this chapter has situated the development of Kent's watering places within their wider historical and historiographical context. Although the county hierarchy has here been partly used conventionally to compare the physical development of resorts, the aim has not been to offer an exhaustive description of growth. Instead, by situating this study between the nationwide survey and the individual resort history, it has shown the importance of combining the precise study of locality with an awareness of wider social, political, economic, religious, and medical changes on resort development.

The history of Kent's watering places is characterised by continuity and change, both across time and between resort typologies. By looking at the factors that made Kent's watering places thrive or fail, this chapter has presented a hierarchy of spas and seaside resorts which was highly flexible and adaptive to wider trends and events. The

²⁵⁸ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 132.

²⁵⁹ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 36.

study of the development of individual resorts has shown the importance of local circumstances but across the long eighteenth century the balance of factors which determined the success of a resort remained relatively constant: elite (preferably royal) patronage; endorsement and promotion by a medical authority; accessibility; social, cultural and medical facilities; and an urban infrastructure that could support the needs of visitors, continued to be essential for lasting success. In a departure from existing models, this chapter has argued for the importance of the wars with France on the development of Kentish coastal resorts and, as will be later explored in greater depth, the military presence exerted a strong appeal, especially to young women.

Proximity to and communications links with London allowed Kent to support a high number of watering places with national, regional and local catchment areas and thus support a relatively complex resort hierarchy. Tunbridge Wells, Margate and Ramsgate led the field, drawing significant patronage from the nation's elite. But whilst the existing historiography has focused primarily on these national resorts, this chapter has offered an implicit argument for the importance of looking at spas and seaside resorts with regional and local catchment areas, which, numerically, made up the majority of watering places during the long eighteenth century: a theme that will be continued throughout this thesis.

Building on this chronological narrative of development, subsequent chapters will explore the visitor experience of Kent's watering places in greater depth. Using the county hierarchy of watering places as a foundation for analysis, the use of Kent's spas and seaside resorts will be explored along a wide range of intersecting axes, combining the precise study of locality with a careful consideration of motivation.

2. Margate and Tunbridge Wells

Celebrating their newfound prosperity, the Tuggs family decided to go on a seaside holiday. Evaluating their options, these London grocers ‘unanimously scouted’ Gravesend for being ‘low,’ dismissed Margate as there ‘was nobody there but tradespeople’ and rejected Brighton with the ‘unsurmountable objection’ that ‘All the coaches had been upset in their turn within the last three weeks and each coach had averaged two passengers killed and six wounded.’ Ramsgate was finally settled on as ‘just the place of all others that they ought to go.’²⁶⁰ Watering places have always been compared to their rivals. Charles Dickens, satirising the social pretensions of the newly wealthy Tuggses, focused on social reputation but this was just one of many factors, including accessibility and social, cultural and medical facilities, considered by visitors when deciding which resort to go to. Details of a resort’s facilities could be found in promotional guides and histories, medical treatises and trade directories, whilst nationwide guidebooks facilitated direct comparison.

Based primarily on these sources, this chapter will offer a comparative study of Tunbridge Wells and Margate as watering places and urban centres. The close connection between spas and seaside resorts during the eighteenth century has been widely recognised, yet few studies have directly compared the two different types of watering place. Through an examination of Kent’s two most successful resorts, this chapter will offer a unique insight into the development of watering places across the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, demonstrating how not only the differences between spa and seaside influenced their development but also how individual personalities, businesses and investments could have a significant impact on the form and structure of leisure centres during this period.

All watering places claimed to offer superior leisure facilities. Within promotional guides resorts were presented as containing all the trappings of an elite urban centre: assembly rooms were unfailingly described as elegant and spacious, circulating libraries were well stocked with the latest fashionable novels and classical texts and promenades were all salubrious and eligibly situated. The provision of a core set of social and cultural facilities was a key component of a resort’s success. Though

²⁶⁰ Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz, Illustrative of Every-Day Life and Every-Day People* (London, 1836; repr. London: Odhams Press Limited, c. 1938), p. 288.

an emerging resort could flourish initially without, for continued success in the eighteenth century it was necessary to offer a coffee house and tearooms, an assembly room in which to host balls and card assemblies, space to promenade, whether this was a walk, parade or pier, a booksellers and circulating library, and shops that offered the latest fashions and luxury goods. It was also desirable, though not essential, for a resort to possess a theatre. As their primary *raison d'être* was medical cure through the taking of the waters, resorts also needed to provide medical facilities, such as bath houses and pump rooms, and medical practitioners to support them. As will be explored further in chapter three, the visiting company were guided round these facilities by a daily routine that encouraged cohesion among the different ranks of society.

Seventeenth-century Tunbridge Wells played a seminal role in determining what this core group of amenities would be. Though discussions of urban development recognise the importance of watering places, their focus has primarily been on Bath as England's premier spa. Tunbridge Wells, though it could not compete with Bath on size, punched well above its weight: responding to the demands of its elite visitors, the spa was among the first to offer many of the facilities that would become integral to the resort experience. Though few would categorise seventeenth-century Tunbridge Wells as a town, its concentration of social and cultural facilities meant that it was a highly urbanised arena. It will be argued that Tunbridge Wells was a testing ground that, as an extension of elite society, helped forge the urban identity of the long eighteenth century.

Tunbridge Wells is particularly interesting as it was a new town. On the discovery of its mineral springs in 1606 there was no preexisting settlement and Tonbridge, the closest town, was five miles distant. Thus at Tunbridge Wells, in direct contrast to Bath, we can see clearly the stages of development of a venue exclusively dedicated to the leisure industry. This factor sets Tunbridge Wells apart from both its rival watering places and other urban centres as 'very few expanding towns in the

eighteenth century were completely “new” settlements, springing up from less-than-village origins.²⁶¹

A comparative study of the physical development of Tunbridge Wells and Margate provides a unique insight into the role and importance of spas and seaside resorts as urban centres. The seaside resorts replicated the social and cultural model of the inland spas that had proven so successful, an aspect of their development that has been widely recognised by historians. But although Margate was working from the same model of facilities that Tunbridge Wells had helped to establish, its character and physical development were very different. Like Tunbridge Wells, Margate was reliant on market demand for its expansion and though it already existed as a village before its emergence as a watering place, its physical environment contained very few of the facilities required. Its speed and pattern of development, however, highlights the differences between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century watering places.

In contrast to Tunbridge Wells and following the more typical route, Margate aspired to replicate the fashionable classical architecture and uniformity for which Bath was the primary model. Drawing on its ever-increasing visitor numbers, Margate’s leisure facilities were more numerous, on a grander scale and more ostentatious than those of Tunbridge Wells. Despite its social pretensions and deliberate grandeur of its facilities, however, Margate’s influence on the physical structures of urban life more widely was negligible. Margate may have aimed to outdo the facilities of its rivals, consciously attempting to project an image of urbanity but it was nonetheless following a pre-established template.

Through a study of Tunbridge Wells and Margate this section will consider watering places as integral components of what Borsay has termed the ‘urban renaissance.’ From the Restoration onwards many of England’s towns developed ‘as centres of fashionable society, places where the more affluent could engage in conspicuous consumption, and recuperate, recreate, and reside in some elegance.’²⁶² Increasingly ‘perceived and treated as an integral body rather than a collection of

²⁶¹ P. J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 91.

²⁶² Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 28.

independent parts,²⁶³ a unified townscape emerged that focused in part on the 'explosion in the demand for, and provision of publicly available, high-status leisure.'²⁶⁴ Eighteenth-century resorts developed as leading social centres, providing an arena for the conspicuous consumption of the new luxury consumer goods and fashionable leisure: venues in which to see and be seen. If 'a town's physical form was its most overt sign of its prosperity and status' and 'expressed the aspirations of those who resided there,' this was even more important for watering places, which relied upon the construction of an aspirational image to attract the fashionable elite.²⁶⁵

Three case studies of the central institutions of resort society will be used to compare the two resorts directly: assembly rooms, Masters of the Ceremonies and booksellers / circulating libraries. These sections will show that though Tunbridge Wells and Margate shared a core set of social and cultural facilities, their development, role and impact on the life of their respective resorts was very different. Through this examination it will be argued that many of the differences between the two resorts did not result from an overarching division between spa and seaside but rather that local initiative, investment and personalities were often more influential than resort typology.

The history of both Margate and Tunbridge Wells can also be written from the perspective of their proximity to and communications links with London. This approach likewise highlights the differences between the two watering places: whereas Tunbridge Wells was fairly typical, Margate was unique. At thirty-six miles from the capital Tunbridge Wells was close enough to be reached in a day's travel but far enough away not to be inundated by large numbers of the middling and lower orders: a perfect balance between accessibility and exclusivity. Margate, by contrast, was the nation's first popular resort. Its success as a watering place was built on its water communications as first hoys, followed by steamboats, carried Londoners quickly and cheaply to the coast. Demonstrating the potential for mass transportation, Margate's water communications foreshadowed the railways and the journey to the resort became an important part of the leisure experience.

²⁶³ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 80.

²⁶⁴ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 117.

²⁶⁵ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 41.

It is not the intention of this chapter to offer a full, exhaustive account of the physical development of the two resorts. First, this has already been done. Whyman's work on Margate and particularly his 1980 thesis provide a comprehensive survey of the growth of the town that will likely remain unrivaled as a local history. Second, as noted in the introduction, many local studies of watering places already exist and even if much of it is, as Cunningham observed, 'a mass of repetitious and unverifiable writing,' a significant proportion of the works produced by these amateur historians have been of 'very high quality.'²⁶⁶ A new full-scale urban biography of these two resorts, therefore, could offer relatively little to current understanding of eighteenth-century watering places. Instead, by offering an examination that lies between local histories with a narrow focus on the physical development of a single resort and wider surveys of watering places (such as Hembry has provided for spas and Walton for the seaside) this chapter aims to provide a new perspective and fresh insight.

i

Before considering how Tunbridge Wells and Margate contributed to and reflected a new ideal of urban life, it is important to address the status of watering places as urban centres in the long eighteenth century. Scholars of urban history have provided a number of definitions of what constituted a town during this period. 'Ideally, it would be desirable to use multiple indices to measure size, density, social composition and occupation structure,' however due to the absence of detailed information and the need to make comparisons, most have used a simple numerical index.²⁶⁷ Corfield has defined a town as a settlement of 2,500 residents which though small by modern standards, 'in the populated countryside of pre-industrial England . . . was a distinctive unit.'²⁶⁸ However, as Rosemary Sweet has noted, this figure 'automatically excludes a

²⁶⁶ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 9.

²⁶⁷ P. J. Corfield, 'Urban Development in England and Wales in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in Jonathan Barry, ed, *The Tudor and Stuart Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1530-1688* (London; New York: Longman, 1990), pp. 35-62 (p. 48).

²⁶⁸ P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 15.

large number of settlements which had much smaller populations, but which also had distinctive urban features.²⁶⁹ Borsay's definition is wider, including settlements of five hundred upwards, and he has stressed the importance of 'defining towns qualitatively rather than quantitatively, and by the standards of their own time.'²⁷⁰ 'More recent assessments of urban growth have generally followed Borsay, including towns under 1,000 in discussions of urbanisation, given that most of these settlements did not cease to be urban in a later period.'²⁷¹ Sweet suggests that were could be grounds for dropping the qualifying figure further than Borsay's lower limit of five-hundred, noting 'a settlement with a population of only 200 or 300 might still be termed a town by some observers.'²⁷² However she also emphasised the importance of readjusting definitions to account for demographic changes, highlighting that the level of population required to 'sustain a viable urban community' changed significantly during this period: 'A population of 5,000, for example, would constitute a "small" town by nineteenth-century standards, whereas in the seventeenth century this would have indicated a fairly major urban centre.'²⁷³ Peter Clark has looked at the development of these small towns in detail, showing how they became 'integrated into the urban system during the long eighteenth century, incorporated in the more clearly defined networks of towns' whilst their economies became increasingly complex.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ Rosemary Sweet, *The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 4-5.

²⁷⁰ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 4.

²⁷¹ Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p. 9.

²⁷² Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840*, p. 7.

²⁷³ Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840*, p. 9.

²⁷⁴ Peter Clark, 'Small Towns 1700-1840' in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. by Peter Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 733-74 (p. 772).

Table 2.1. Population of Kent's Major Watering Places²⁷⁵

Resort	1801	1851
Tunbridge Wells	1,200	10,587
Margate	4,766	10,099
Ramsgate and St. Lawrence	4,178	14,853
Broadstairs and St. Peter's	1,568	2,975
Dover	7,709	19,000+
Deal	5,420	7,067
Gravesend and Milton	4,539	16,633
Herne and Herne Bay	1,232	3,094
Folkestone	3,704	7,549

Few of Kent's watering places during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would qualify automatically and undisputedly as towns. Until 1800 the permanent population of Tunbridge Wells did not rise above 1,200, however this figure does not include the visiting company.²⁷⁶ During the nineteenth century the population grew rapidly: in 1821 there were 3,934, rising to 5,929 in 1831 and further to 8,302 in 1841.²⁷⁷ The population of Kent's seaside resorts was much bigger, in most cases due to the town hosting another industry as well as being a resort. Margate almost doubled in size during the first half of the eighteenth century. Having a population of 4,766 in 1801 it was already a far more substantial town than Tunbridge Wells despite its more recent emergence as a watering place. By 1851 Tunbridge Wells, which had become a place of genteel residence, had surpassed its former rival which had also

²⁷⁵ Figures taken primarily from Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells* and Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*.

²⁷⁶ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 31.

²⁷⁷ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 39.

declined as a fashionable resort. The visiting season would have significantly boosted the population of both resorts, a factor not fully reflected by census figures and would have changed yearly.

Borsay has questioned the urban status of watering places, noting that by 'orthodox defining characteristics - such as size, political structure and appearance - a high proportion (perhaps the majority) of Georgian resorts would find it difficult to pass muster as a town.'²⁷⁸ However considering the influx of visitors that temporarily boosted population figures and that, even though they were small, 'their social life and culture was that of a town and not of a village,' Borsay concluded that watering places were towns 'in spirit, if not in hard demographic fact.'²⁷⁹

Due to its small size and cultivation of a rural character, this question is particularly pertinent for understanding the development of Tunbridge Wells. Many historians of urban history have noted that contemporaries were able to make judgements on what constituted a town fairly easily, however Tunbridge Wells often failed to meet the criteria. Burr in 1766 encapsulated and helped to construct this image of a rural idyll when he described one of the spa's primary residential districts: 'At a little distance it bears the appearance of a town in the midst of woods, and conveys to the imagination the soothing idea of a rural romantic retirement, while it actually affords all the conveniencies of a city life.'²⁸⁰ This sentiment was echoed by visitors; however not all of them considered the spa's lack of classical order and architecture a positive quality. Frances Burney, visiting the spa with Hester Thrale in 1779, criticised the spa's lack of architectural unity, commenting that the houses were 'scattered about in a strange wild manner, and look as if they had been dropt where they stand by accident, for they form neither streets or squares, but seem strewed promiscuously.'²⁸¹ Several modern commentators have agreed: Corfield, for example, has argued that Tunbridge Wells 'remained small, lacking in a marked urban focus.'²⁸²

²⁷⁸ Peter Borsay, 'Health and Leisure Resorts 1700-1840', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. by Peter Clark, pp. 775-804 (p. 765).

²⁷⁹ Borsay, 'Health and Leisure Resorts', p. 766.

²⁸⁰ Burr, p. 102.

²⁸¹ Frances Burney, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. by Lars E. Troide, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988-2003), p. 370.

²⁸² Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns*, p. 59.

Nevertheless, the cultivation of a distinctive rural character, albeit one with the social and cultural facilities of a much larger urban centre, was a key factor in Tunbridge Wells's success. Not only did it establish the spa as an escape from city life (during Tunbridge Wells's summer season London was considered particularly unhealthy) but it also removed it from direct competition from its main rival, Bath. The initial formation of this rural image was not part of a coherent strategy: in the absence of a local governing body such as Bath's Corporation or the sustained active involvement of a landlord, Tunbridge Wells in the seventeenth century relied on market forces and local investment, combined later in the century by London entrepreneurship to provide its built environment. Thus the finances and administrative control as well as, perhaps more importantly, the precedent for such behavior, did not yet exist. By the time the classical became the architectural ideal for watering places, Tunbridge Wells's rural image was firmly established.

Classifying a settlement as a town, however, is not the same as identifying urbanity. The criteria of urbanity has been widely debated: 'Among the specifications often mentioned are population size, density of inhabitation, proportion of residents engaged in non-agrarian employment, social diversity, and distinctive "way of life."' ²⁸³ It is this last category that Tunbridge Wells and Margate most readily qualify as 'urban': the concentration of social and cultural activities, the predominance of elite and middling class visitors and the cultivated focus on the forms and rituals of polite society combined to create a unique atmosphere within the distinctive arena of a resort.

ii

Commercial exploitation of Tunbridge Wells's chalybeate springs was initially slow and made in direct response to visitor demand. The springs were located on land belonging to the estate of Lord Bergavenny and what improvements were made during the

²⁸³ Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns*, p. 15.

opening decades of the seventeenth century were on his initiative.²⁸⁴ Following professional medical advice, Bergavenny chose two of the 'best' springs out of the seven and Burr reports that in 1608 he cleared the site, 'ordered wells to be sunk, a stone pavement to be laid round, and the whole to be inclosed with wooden rails in a triangular form.'²⁸⁵ The only road leading to the springs was also improved.²⁸⁶

The visit of Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, in 1629 failed to stimulate investment. Though the queen's visit was a key factor that drew the fashionable elite to the waters, it had only a minimal impact on the development of its social activities and facilities. Pitching tents at Bishop's Down Common, Burr indicated that the queen provided her own entertainments, which included masques and dancing. The spa's first historian acknowledged that 'except the honour of her presence, and the clearing of the common to make room for her tents, the place received no benefit from her majesty's successful residence in it.'²⁸⁷

Thus for the first half of the seventeenth century facilities remained basic and it was not until 1639 that visitor accommodation was built; even then it was not at the site of the springs but in the neighbouring hamlets of Rusthall and Southborough, one and two and a half miles distant respectively. Until this point, visitors had lodged at Tonbridge, with local gentry families or in lodgings in neighbouring hamlets, traveling each day to the waters.

The first buildings in the vicinity of the springs were 'two little houses, or rather cottages, one for the accommodation of the ladies, and the other for the gentlemen,' which were erected in 1636.²⁸⁸ The gentleman's cottage, named the Pipe Office was set up as a primitive coffee house, Burr indicating that visitors would pay a subscription of half-a-crown in order to read newspapers, smoke pipes and drink coffee.²⁸⁹ In 1638 a green bank that what was to become the Upper Walk was raised and paved and a double rows of trees planted, under which tradesmen (most likely drawn from Tonbridge and surrounding hamlets) would display their goods during the

²⁸⁴ Permission for these improvements was first gained from the Lord of Manor, Mr. Weller.

²⁸⁵ Burr, p. 19.

²⁸⁶ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 31.

²⁸⁷ Burr, p. 25.

²⁸⁸ Burr, p. 31.

²⁸⁹ Burr, pp. 31-32.

hours of drinking the waters.²⁹⁰ This was an early example of public walks being provided, a key element of the eighteenth century urban scene and particularly of the social life of watering places.

Increasing visitor numbers prompted the construction of the spa's first dedicated accommodations in Rusthall and Southborough in 1639. This accommodation was the result of local investment, was 'small and few at first' and insufficient to meet increasing demand.²⁹¹ Entering the Civil War, therefore, leisure facilities at Tunbridge Wells were minimal and failed to meet all but the basic demands of its elite visitors.

Borsay has argued that in the century after the Restoration 'the whole tenor of urban life subtly but indubitably altered': evidence of this can be clearly seen in the development of Tunbridge Wells post-1660.²⁹² Experiencing a building boom during the 1680s and 1690s, Tunbridge Wells expanded at a much faster rate than during the first half of the seventeenth century. The combined efforts and investment of local landowners, farmers and tradespeople joined by London speculators and shopkeepers created a 'large village' during the final decades of the seventeenth century of perhaps one hundred houses, 'purely to serve the summer visitors.'²⁹³ The involvement of local landowners remained limited (the Wells area existed across the boundary between the estates of Rusthall and Somerhill). On Mount Sion, Lady Purbeck of Somerhill, aided by her steward Thomas Weller, in 1684 divided the land as sites for lodging houses.²⁹⁴ About 1676 Thomas Neale, Master of the Royal Mint, Groom-Porter to Charles II and 'a man of some distinction' purchased the Rusthall estate.²⁹⁵ Chalklin has indicated that the manor was bought as a speculation, Neale anticipating the future success of the spa, and, if so, it initially paid off: a fifty-year lease was negotiated from the freeholders of a small part of the common adjoining the Walks and plots for building shops were sub-leased almost immediately.²⁹⁶ Some conditions were made to protect the image of the spa: the buildings erected could be shops, booths, coffee and tea

²⁹⁰ Burr, p. 32.

²⁹¹ Burr, p. 33.

²⁹² Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 16.

²⁹³ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 157.

²⁹⁴ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 157.

²⁹⁵ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 45.

²⁹⁶ Chalklin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent*, p. 157.

rooms or gaming rooms but not lodging houses or locations for the dressing of meat, which would be offensive to visitors.²⁹⁷ Problems were encountered on the expiration of the lease in 1732 when ownership was disputed between freeholders and the lord of the manor. As a result the buildings of the Walks were divided into three plots: two allocated to the land of the manor and one to the freeholders. This was confirmed by an Act of Parliament in 1739. 'Further building was carefully restricted' and one significant advantage was that these rules 'ensured that that original plan of the buildings, consisting of two rows of houses, was not disturbed.'²⁹⁸

A significant development during this period was the construction of the chapel of King Charles the Martyr. 'The Purbeck family may well have generated the original interest,' and it was Lady Margaret Purbeck, on behalf of her young son John that donated the land and ownership of the property to a self-perpetuating body of Trustees.²⁹⁹ To raise money, a subscription fund was opened in 1676 and was so successful that the chapel was first opened just two years later in 1678. The visiting company soon outgrew the chapel and, through further subscription begun in 1688, provided funds for its expansion. As Burr informed, 'In this chapel divine service is performed every day during the summer season, and three times a week in winter; and the clergyman is maintained by the voluntary subscription of the company.'³⁰⁰

Development was set back by a fire on the Walks in 1687 when, as Burr reported, 'all the shops, and other buildings, so lately erected on the green bank, were intirely consumed.'³⁰¹ The fire provided the opportunity to rebuild in a more uniform manner: 'as assembly-room, coffee-houses, shops, and dwelling-houses have been erected in one continued line, and a convenient portico placed in front.'³⁰² It was thus at this point that the Walks gained their instantly recognisable form.

Celia Fiennes, who visited Tunbridge Wells in 1697, described the spa as having many of the trappings of urban life but whose facilities remained widely dispersed. For the latter aspect, Fiennes described how many visitors had the waters 'brought to their

²⁹⁷ Savidge, *Royal Tunbride Wells*, p. 45.

²⁹⁸ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 10.

²⁹⁹ John Fuller, *The Church of King Charles the Martyr, Tunbridge Wells: A New History* (Tunbridge Wells: Friends of the Church of King Charles, 2000), p. 9.

³⁰⁰ Burr, p. 53.

³⁰¹ Burr, p. 55.

³⁰² Burr, p. 56.

lodgings a mile or two off and drink them in their beds’ and how ‘they have made the Wells very commodious by the many good buildings all about it and 2 or 3 mile round’, indicating that visitors were still lodging at Rusthall and Southborough at the end of the seventeenth century.³⁰³ The entertainments of the company likewise continued to resist centralisation and continued to be spread between the spa’s surrounding residential districts. Fiennes noted that there were ‘severall bowling-greens about the Wells one just at it on Mount Sion, and another up the hill called Mount Ephraim’ as well as ‘severall other bowling greens at a distance off a mile or two fitted for the Company’s Lodging, there, as Rust Hall and Southborough.’³⁰⁴ Each of these areas appears to have established its own character and formed its own social company. As Fiennes described, ‘they all have houses to the greens so the Gentlemen bowle the Ladies dance or walke in the green in the afternoones, and if wet dance in the houses.’³⁰⁵

Despite this evident dispersal the area immediately around the wells was the clear centre of the spa’s social life, where the whole company would gather together. This was where the daily market was located, which ran the whole length of the walk, that stood alongside: ‘shopps full of all sorts of toys, silver, china, milliners, and all sorts of curious wooden ware . . . besides which there are two large Coffee houses for Tea Chocolate etc., and two rooms for the Lottery and Hazard board.’³⁰⁶ Fiennes, rather puzzlingly, did not mention either of the assembly rooms on the walks, however these may have been the same as the lottery and hazard rooms. Fiennes also described the chapel (King Charles the Martyr), ‘severall good taverns at the Walks . . . and Brew houses for beer and Bakers for bread,’ ‘several apothecary’s shops,’ and the daily coach and post service than ran during the season.³⁰⁷

John Macky in 1714 offered a similar account of the spa during the opening decades of the eighteenth century. Like Fiennes, he described Tunbridge Wells as being located ‘in a Bottom between Two Hills; the one called *Mount-Sion*; the other *Mount-Ephraim*; both abounding in Houses and Gardens’, with the majority of its

³⁰³ Fiennes, p. 133.

³⁰⁴ Fiennes, pp. 134-35.

³⁰⁵ Fiennes, p. 135.

³⁰⁶ Fiennes, pp. 133-34.

³⁰⁷ Fiennes, pp. 134-35.

entertainments clustered around the Wells area.³⁰⁸ Macky however, noted one of the spa's major failings as a resort at which visitors were expected to spend a lengthy period of time, stating: 'THE Manner of living at *Tunbridge* is very Diverting for one Week; but as there is no other Variety but in new Faces, it soon proves Tiresome to a Stranger.'³⁰⁹ Similar sentiments would be expressed by visitors throughout the long eighteenth-century. Despite its continued success as a fashionable watering place during the eighteenth century, the spa maintained its semi-rural character and its physical development, especially when compared to the growth of Bath, remained limited. Tunbridge Wells may have boasted all the trappings of an urban environment, however to visitors, who stayed for periods ranging from days to months, it offered little variety. Chapter three will consider how the spa acted to prevent visitor boredom and why, if Tunbridge Wells was 'tiresome,' visitors kept going back.

The continued success of Tunbridge Wells during the eighteenth century can be partly explained by its position relative to London. Thirty-six miles from the capital, the spa was both accessible and exclusive. The importance of its location is best illustrated through comparison. Epsom, which rivalled Tunbridge Wells as a fashionable courtier's spa in the seventeenth century, was sixteen miles from London. This made it popular amongst the capital's professional orders, who would take their families to the resort and travel down from the capital each weekend. As middling sort patronage increased, that of the aristocracy and gentry declined. A similar pattern was true for Kent's minor spas of Sydenham and Shooter's Hill. As discussed in chapter one, both spas were within easy distance of London and it was possible for many of the capital's working classes to walk there and back on a Sunday. As at Epsom, as the number of lower class visitors increased, the fashionable elites went elsewhere. Tunbridge Wells, over twice as far from London than Epsom - avoided being caught in this pattern and thus maintained its genteel reputation.

³⁰⁸ John Macky, *A Journey Through England. In Familiar Letters from a Gentleman Here, to his Friend Abroad* (London, 1714), pp. 56-57.

³⁰⁹ Macky, p. 57.

Visitors to Tunbridge Wells relied on the road network and the spa benefitted significantly from its proximity to London, the 'great hub of passenger carriage.'³¹⁰ A wide spectrum of transportation options was available. The richest visitors would have travelled in their own coaches. Those of the elite without the resources to maintain their own equipage would have used public stage coaches, still a young industry in 1700, or, at the beginning of our period, travelled on horseback.³¹¹ For those from the lower sections of society who may have been going to the spa for work and thus travelling shorter distances, 'unofficial local carriers, horseback or foot represented the most likely choices.'³¹² Fulfilling demand between these two ends of the spectrum were 'a variety of coaches or diligences, fast or slow, by post-chaise or similar private-hire vehicle, or, more cheaply, in the great waggon of the road hauler.'³¹³

As the century progressed visitors benefitted from faster journey times, a result of improvements to road infrastructure and to the vehicles themselves, cheaper fares and a growing number of coaches. The increasing affordability of fares opened up the spas to the middling orders who, experiencing a substantial rise in real income during the second half of the eighteenth century, were increasing their expenditure on the luxury of travel.³¹⁴ Of particular importance was the turnpiking of the Sevenoaks-Tunbridge road in 1709, the Sevenoaks-Farnborough stretch in 1749³¹⁵ and the improvement of twenty Kentish roads in the 1760s which opened up communications in all directions.³¹⁶

The impact of the spa on the Kentish road system as a whole, however, was minimal. John Chartres and Gerald L. Turnbull, analysing road transport in the provinces, identified 'an apparent anomaly in the South-east.'³¹⁷ Though the number of coach departures had 'grown early to satisfy the Canterbury and Dover trades, and

³¹⁰ John A. Chartres and Gerald L. Turnbull, 'Road Transport', in *Transport in the Industrial Revolution*, ed. by Derek H. Aldcroft and Michael J. Freeman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 66-99 (p. 66).

³¹¹ T.C. Barker and Dorian Gerhold, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport, 1700-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 35.

³¹² Chartres and Turnbull, p. 66.

³¹³ Chartres and Turnbull, p. 66.

³¹⁴ Chartres and Turnbull, p. 65.

³¹⁵ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 237.

³¹⁶ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 237.

³¹⁷ Chartres and Turnbull, p. 72.

the south-western route into Surrey, towards Guildford,' there was little expansion 'until the resort trade of Brighton and Margate started to exert an influence towards the end of the century.'³¹⁸

Guidebooks provided visitors with information on the spa's communications links. After informing readers that 'a daily post is established, a stage coach regularly arrives every afternoon,' Burr presented proximity to London as a principal advantage that allowed 'men of business, on any emergency, may get to town in four or five hours without difficulty, and, with the same ease, return again to their families.'³¹⁹ Hembry has indicated that a daily stage coach service was available 'at least by 1780 [when] Parman and Hargreaves ran a daily stagecoach to London, leaving Tunbridge at 6 a.m. and reaching Charing Cross at 2 p.m,' however Burr's comment suggests this service was available fifteen years earlier.³²⁰

By 1780 Tunbridge Wells hosted three rival companies in addition to the Cross-Post and the Mail: Parman and Hargrave's, Cheesman's London Waggon and Camfield's London Waggon.³²¹ Parman and Hargrave's was the spa's premier company: it ran throughout the year and provided a daily service (Sundays excepted) that set out at six in the Morning, 'though Tunbridge, Sevenoaks, Farnborough, Bromley, and Lewisham; and arrives at the Golden-cross Inn, Charing-cross, London about two in the afternoon; and sets out from thence at six every morning.'³²² This was the quickest and shortest route, covering thirty-six miles and for the eight hour journey passengers were charged eight shillings with 'Out-sides and children in lap half price.'³²³ Cheesman's and Camfields only ran during the summer season when demand was at its height. Departing from Tunbridge Wells at eight in the morning Mondays and Thursdays, their journey time was significantly longer than the Parman and Hargrave's

³¹⁸ Chartres and Turnbull, p. 72.

³¹⁹ Burr, p. 111.

³²⁰ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 237.

³²¹ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells, in its Present State; and the Amusements of the Company, in the Time of the Season; And of the Ancient and Present State of the Most Remarkable Places, in the Environs: Comprehending a Circuit of About Sixteen Miles Round the Place* (Tunbridge Wells: Printed and Sold by J. Sprange, 1780), appendix, p. 7.

³²² *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, appendix, p. 7.

³²³ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, appendix, p. 7.

service, arriving in Southwark a full twenty-four hours later. The return journey set out the same evening and arrived back at the spa on Thursdays and Saturdays.³²⁴

London was not the only advertised destination: visitors could also travel from Tunbridge Wells to Bath, Canterbury and Margate. The Post Road to Margate covered sixty-four miles, the Summer Bridle Road sixty-one; both went via Canterbury.³²⁵ The publication of this route suggests that visitors did travel between the two resorts during the second half of the eighteenth century during the summer season. The guidebook also detailed a route to Bath via Brighton, again suggesting that it was common for visitors to travel between fashionable resorts as part of one extended 'holiday.'

Chalklin and Savidge have produced detailed accounts of the Tunbridge Wells's expansion during the later eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century and have both argued that it was during this period that the spa truly became an urban centre rather than a watering place based around a loose collection of hamlets. This resulted from three main factors: an increasing population; the introduction of public services and a local authority; and the physical expansion of the town.

The origins of this change can be seen from the 1770s when Tunbridge Wells began the transition into a centre of residential leisure. From this date there was a growing influx of retired professional and businessmen and their families and single women who would buy one or two houses in the resort and come as residents during the summer every year.³²⁶ Attracted by the congenial surroundings, concentration of social and cultural facilities, genteel reputation and a lower cost of living than the capital, these genteel and professional visitors were integral to Tunbridge Wells's continued success, allowing the spa to cling on to its aura of exclusivity, even if it had ceased to be fashionable among the younger generations of the elite.

Contemporaries recognised that the spa had reached maturity as a resort. As a guide claimed in 1780, 'its customs are settled, its pleasures regulated, its markets and all other conveniences fixed, and the whole very properly adapted to the nature of the

³²⁴ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, appendix, p. 8.

³²⁵ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, appendix, pp. 14-15.

³²⁶ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, pp. 35-36.

place.³²⁷ Stagnation had, however, set in and profits from the shops on the Parade and the assembly rooms declined. A wartime boom reversed this trend and from 1800 the town grew rapidly. As Tunbridge Wells lay across the boundaries of three parishes (Tonbridge, Speldhurst and Frant in Sussex) the use of census material is problematic. Savidge, however has estimated that in 1800 the combined population of the spa's hamlets was 'about 1,000,'³²⁸ where Chalklin suggests a larger figure of 'around 1,200.'³²⁹ During the first half of the nineteenth century the town's population grew rapidly: 'In 1831 it had 5,929 inhabitants and in 1841 8,302. By then it had far surpassed in size nearly all the inland Kentish market towns, including Tonbridge.'³³⁰

The leisured accounted for a significant proportion of the population, demonstrating the continued importance of the spa. Chalklin's study of the 1841 census highlighted the differences between Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge:

Whilst in Tonbridge there were 60 [who did not work], in the Wells there were 539, mostly belonging to the prosperous leisured class. They were spinster or widowed gentlewomen, retired soldiers, sailors, professional and business men and one or two noblemen and peeresses. It was they who, with the seasonal visitors, provided the town with much of its livelihood.³³¹

Many of the occupational groups of Tunbridge Wells existed to support these leisured residents and seasonal visitors. For example, there was a large servant population, 887 female servants and 245 male, out of a total population of 3,134.³³²

As the population, both permanent and visitor, continued to grow, the town expanded to meet their needs. As a watering place, the most significant developments were the building of a Bath House by Mrs. Shorey, completed in 1805, and the arrival of hotels. Clifford's guidebook in 1818 referred to four: The Sussex Hotel on the Upper Walks opposite the assembly rooms; The Royal Kentish Hotel 'by the road side . . . but a short distance from the chalybeate spring'; the Castle Tavern on Mount Sion; and the

³²⁷ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 44.

³²⁸ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 118.

³²⁹ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 39.

³³⁰ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 39.

³³¹ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 66.

³³² Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, pp. 64-65.

Swan Inn 'at the back of the parade and post-office.'³³³ The town also witnessed significant physical expansion as it grew to meet the needs of its leisured and other urban residents. Much of this expansion occurred away from the Wells area and 'nearly all of the new housing' to be constructed in the opening decades of the nineteenth century 'was erected up to half a mile north of Mount Sion and about the same distance east of the Common.'³³⁴

The most prominent of these new developments was the Calverley Estate, which included the Calverley Park villas and Calverley Terraces which were leased in 1829. The Calverley Park Promenade (now Calverley Terrace) was the most impressive feature of this development. The plans for the Promenade had included provision for seventeen shops and lodgings with a commercial centre including a market place, inn, row of shops and houses for the poor. The estate, largely completed by 1836 and finished, except for the market place in 1840, although 'too far from the town centre to be fully successful,' was popular amongst retired men and women of independent means who lived in the houses with up to eight or ten servants each.³³⁵

As the town grew the need for a local authority became increasingly apparent. The need to make formal provision for lighting, paving and watching was particularly important in a town reliant on the salubrity of its physical environment. As Hembry has noted, however, 'Its urbanisation came late and it sought no Improvement Act until 1835, compared with Bath in 1766 and 1789, Cheltenham in 1786 and even the new spa Leamington in 1825.'³³⁶ Though the relatively small and geographically diverse character of the spa meant that the need for such provisions would not have been as great as some of its larger rivals, by the end of the eighteenth century the spa was certainly 'suffering from the growing pains of a rising town without a local authority to regulate and control its development, and provide amenities and services.'³³⁷

Steps were taken towards greater public control over the physical environment prior to the 1835 Act. An association for the prosecution of felons was formed in 1816,

³³³ *A Descriptive Guide of Tunbridge Wells and its Environs; ...* (Tunbridge Wells: Printed and Published by J. Clifford, 1818), pp. 17-18.

³³⁴ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 46.

³³⁵ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 51.

³³⁶ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 241.

³³⁷ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 58.

and in 1826 the Tunbridge Wells Water Company had taken over the provision of water to the Parade and Mount Sion.³³⁸ These secular authorities were joined by an increasing number of religious organisations as the town had long outgrown the facilities offered at the original seventeenth-century chapel, King Charles the Martyr. Most significantly, in 1833, following the construction of Holy Trinity on Mount Pleasant between 1827 and 1829, the first parish of Tunbridge Wells was created.

The pace of population growth at Tunbridge Wells continued throughout the nineteenth century, reaching 29,296 in 1891. This rapid growth of the population led to a huge extension of the town's boundaries and it was during this time that much of the modern town was built.³³⁹ In recognition of its long-standing connection with the royal family, its civic pride and Edwardian social tone, Tunbridge Wells was awarded the prefix 'Royal' in 1909.³⁴⁰

iii

The distinctive natural environment of the seaside resorts led to their unique development as watering places and urban centres. Though emerging seaside resorts initially aimed to replicate the successful model of the inland spa, they soon developed their own distinctive architecture: to the core group of social and cultural facilities established by the spas, the seaside added a new set of focal points that allowed resorts to directly profit from and provided a framework for the consumption of the resort landscape. Margate, as one of England's first seaside resorts, demonstrates the evolution of these architectural forms and provides an insight into the emergence of seaside resorts as enduringly fashionable centres for health and leisure.

Prior to its development as a watering place Margate was a small port that prospered as the base of a fishing fleet and specialised in the export of Thanet-grown corn to London. The first signs of permanent settlement at Margate were in the middle ages, coinciding with the emergence of the corn trade outwards from Margate to

³³⁸ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 57.

³³⁹ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 69.

³⁴⁰ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 172.

London.³⁴¹ The hoys, small estuarial vessels, ‘supplied London with most of its grain and much of its other agricultural produce’ and were concentrated on the Kentish ports.³⁴² Between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries two distinct settlements evolved: the first centred around a chapel of ease to the Abbey of Minster, later known as St. John’s Parish Church, founded circa 1050 around which a small village grew that was dependent on farming the surrounding fields. The second grew around the creek three quarters of a mile distant and was primarily made up of fishermen’s cottages. The distinction between these two settlements continued until at least the 1720s. As Whyman has noted, ‘Thanet farmers lived well,’ benefitting from their proximity and water communications with the London food market and livelihoods were boosted further by ‘fishing, smuggling and rendering assistance to vessels in distress at sea.’³⁴³

Margate’s port, however, remained a small-scale enterprise somewhat overshadowed by neighbouring Ramsgate, though ‘neither Margate, Broadstairs nor Ramsgate was recognised as a fully-fledged port by the Customers Commissioners’ until after the mid-eighteenth century.³⁴⁴ By the early eighteenth century Margate’s fishing industry was in decline and the town suffered accordingly. Macky in 1714 commented: ‘it is a poor pitiful Place, though the Isle of *Thanet*, in which it is situated, is a fine Country, yet there’s hardly a Gentleman’s House in it.’³⁴⁵ As Brodie has noted, a handful of buildings survive from before its transformation into a resort, including sixteenth century Tudor House in King Street, which demonstrated the use of locally available building materials including flint.³⁴⁶

Walton credits the promotion of sea-bathing with rescuing ‘this little town from decay.’³⁴⁷ The early provision of sea-bathing facilities at Margate was most likely a result of the decline in fishing industry and a recognition of the town’s need for a new industry. Thomas Barber first advertised his newly constructed seawater bath in July 1736, thus making Margate one of the first places to offer commercial sea-bathing

³⁴¹ Whyman, ‘Aspects of Holidaymaking’, p. 2.

³⁴² John Chartres, ‘Trade and Shipping in the Port of London: Wiggins Key in the Later Seventeenth Century’, *Journal of Transport History*, 1.1 (1980), 29-47 (p. 38).

³⁴³ Whyman, ‘Aspects of Holidaymaking’, p. 12.

³⁴⁴ Andrews, ‘The Thanet Seaports’, p. 37.

³⁴⁵ Macky, p. 50.

³⁴⁶ Brodie, ‘Towns of Health and Mirth’, p. 25.

³⁴⁷ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 49.

facilities to visitors. Despite their significance, Barber's facilities were on a small scale: the bath itself was fifteen feet long and was most likely used by one person at a time and there was a 'private Room adjoining it'³⁴⁸ for visitors to wait and change that in 1737 was expanded to including lodging, dressing and dining rooms.³⁴⁹

Though modestly successful, as shown by this expansion, Barber's facilities were introduced before their time: it was not until the publication of Russell's treatise in the 1750s which drew the attention of the fashionable world to sea-bathing as a medical treatment that Margate began to grow as a resort. Developments were initially slow: 'the early years of sea-bathing encouraged conversion, demolition and rebuilding in the town rather than ambitious expansion on the outskirts.'³⁵⁰ Whyman suggests that these changes involved 'the removal of the inconveniences of a small port and fishing town,'³⁵¹ however Walton has suggested that for some 'the cramped lodgings of an unpretentious seaside town' could appeal to those seeking escape from urban life and the pressures of social competition whilst witnessing local trades, such as fishing, was a novel attraction.³⁵² Certainly, as with spas in their initial phases of development, visitors were for a limited period of time willing to put up with a lack of facilities if a location was in vogue. When assessing Margate's development during this period it is important to note that there could have been no certainty that the individual resort would thrive, that sea-bathing as a medical cure would be a long-term phenomenon or that the seaside as a typology of watering place would become a permanent feature of English leisure.

'From the 1760s onwards Margate witnessed a marked and prolonged physical and residential expansion' as the town strove to provide the built environment that would allow it to compete with the nation's leading watering places.³⁵³ One of the first unique pieces of seaside architecture to be introduced was one over which Margate had a particularly strong influence: the bathing machine. As an integral, if temporary,

³⁴⁸ *The Kentish Post, or Canterbury News Letter*, 17 July 1736, in Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 160.

³⁴⁹ *The Kentish Post, or Canterbury News Letter*, 27 April 1737, in Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 161.

³⁵⁰ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 111.

³⁵¹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 186.

³⁵² Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 17.

³⁵³ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 192.

set piece of seaside resort architecture, the bathing machine provided a method for the consumption of seawater and existed on the boundary between nature and urban polite society. The exact date of the invention of the hooded bathing machine is uncertain, though Whyman suggests it was probably during the 1740s.³⁵⁴ Their introduction was an important signal of Margate's renewed aspirations, indeed bathing machines were frequently the first facilities provided by an embryonic resort.

Fred Gray has argued that the bathing machines marked an important transition from the cultivated resort to untamed nature – the sea – existing on and providing a means to navigate the point where seaside resorts and the society they represented 'confronted nature directly at a sharp, precise edge or front.'³⁵⁵ The bathing machine was also integral to polite society's consumption of nature and allowed a direct monetary gain to be derived from the practice of seawater bathing. Bathing machines thus 'became an essential instrument for regulating and controlling the use of the sea - when, where and how people bathed.'³⁵⁶

Bathing machines were not the only piece of resort architecture that bridged the divide between society and nature and in many ways the seaside resort was structured by its open spaces.³⁵⁷ Promenading along the coastline, piers and jetties provided important focal points for resort life. Originally constructed in the sixteenth century, the history of Margate's pier during this period was one of damage, destruction, rebuilding and gradual enlargement. 'Apart from trading and offering shelter to shipping, Thanet's piers were a protection against marine erosion, and prevented to some extent north-easterly waves from sweeping-in.'³⁵⁸ Despite these efforts, Margate's harbour and shore line faced the frequent problem of destruction by storm ways and like 'many harbours protected by piers, Margate lacked sufficient financial resources of its own to maintain its harbour facilities in good repair.'³⁵⁹ In the early eighteenth century, Margate's pier was still a single curved wooded structure, similar to those at Broadstairs and Ramsgate. Several Acts of Parliament concerned the

³⁵⁴ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', pp. 153-54.

³⁵⁵ Fred Gray, *Designing the Seaside: Architecture, Society and Nature* (London: Reaktion, 2006), p. 115.

³⁵⁶ Gray, p. 148.

³⁵⁷ Gray, p. 115.

³⁵⁸ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', pp. 91-92.

³⁵⁹ Andrews, p. 38.

upkeep of the pier and under the 1812 Act the Pier and Harbour Company was created.

During the season the pier provided ‘a pleasant and spacious walk, where the summer visitants may inhale the salubrious and invigorating breezes of the sea.’³⁶⁰ Carey in 1799 described it as ‘a lounging place for many people every evening,’ extolling the pier as a place where the whole of Margate society would eventually congregate: ‘you will see a greater diversity of object, a more heterogeneous group than any place in England; which often enables the ingenious artist, when he is disposed to make use of his pencil, to treat the world with a whimsical character or two.’³⁶¹ The pier not only provided a pleasant way to take the sea air and a space to promenade among the company: as a centre for the arrival of visitors it allowed for arrivals and departures to be viewed and scrutinised, an attraction that truly marked it as a centre of resort life.

The beach itself occupied a unique position, becoming increasingly important as a leisure space in its own right during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Walking along the shore was used as a way to take the sea air and the recommended exercise after bathing as well as for general diversion. A 1775 guide described how ‘When the Tide is ebbd, many Persons go on the Sands to collect Pebbles, Sea-weed, Shells, &c. which, although of no great Value, are esteemed as Matters of Curiosity, by those to whom such Objects have not been familiar.’³⁶² As novelties, these collected items were made into souvenirs: seaweed, for example, ‘when spread on Writing Paper, extended with a Needle, and pressed between Boards, form an infinite Variety of Landscapes, in beautiful Colours.’³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Robert Edward Hunter, *A Short Description of the Isle of Thanet, Being Chiefly Intended as a Directory for the Company Resorting to Margate, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs. With a Map of the Island* (Margate: printed by W. Epps, for J. Hall and at the Post Office, Epps’s printing office, and by W. Garner, Margate; P. Burgess, Ramsgate; Mr. Nuckell, and Mr. Barfield, Broadstairs, 1796), p. 12.

³⁶¹ Carey, pp. 8-9.

³⁶² *The Margate Guide. Containing Particular Account of Margate, With Respect to its New Buildings, Assemblies, Accommodations, Manner of Bathing and Remarkable Places in its Neighbourhood. ...* (London: printed for T. Carnan and F. Newbery, jun. at Number 65, in St. Paul’s Church-Yard; and for J. Hall, in High-Street, Margate, 1775), p. 19.

³⁶³ *The Margate Guide*, p. 19.

The practice of bathing in seawater led to the emergence of another piece of seaside resort architecture: the bathing rooms. A cousin to the pump rooms of the inland spas, bathing rooms provided a place for people to congregate and wait for a machine to become available and often also housed indoor bathing facilities. At Margate, as shown in figures 2.1 and 2.2, the bathing rooms were one-storey buildings that lined the shorefront and provided direct access to the bathing machines. Looking at the shore from the sea they would have been a prominent feature of the town. Cozens in 1797 offered the following description:

Along the borders of the western strand,
 In High Street Bathing Houses stand:
 Though thus they're nam'd, they are not strictly so
 They're only places where the Bathers go
 To wait their turns, of plunging in the sea³⁶⁴

Constructed during the 1760s, there were seven bathing rooms in total, situated 'on the margin on the sea.'³⁶⁵ They were 'contrived on a plan the most consistent with convenience; and in a morning form an agreeable lounge, even for those who do not take the fashionable plunge.'³⁶⁶ George Keate in 1784 provided an extensive, if satirical, portrayal of his visit to Margate's bathing rooms, describing in detail the characters he found there. Amongst the 'invalids' (that included the 'bilious gentleman,' 'a poor crippled figure' and 'a nervous old gentlewoman') the main topic of conversation was, unsurprisingly, to 'talk over their own case' and to give 'their judgment on the sea.'³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Zechariah Cozens, *The Margate Guide, A Descriptive Poem, With Elucidatory Notes. Also a General Account of Ramsgate, Broadstairs, &c. By an inhabitant* (Margate: Printed at the Thanet press, and sold by J. Warren, Duke Street, sold also at the libraries Margate, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs; and by the booksellers in Canterbury, 1797), p. 60.

³⁶⁵ Cozens, *The Margate Guide*, p. 61.

³⁶⁶ Cozens, *The Margate Guide*, p. 61.

³⁶⁷ George Keate, *Sketches from Nature; Taken and Coloured, in a Journey to Margate. Published from the Original Designs*, vol. 1 (Dublin: printed for S. Price, J. Sheppard, R. Cross, J. Potts, J. Williams, L. Fin, J. Porter, L. White, J. Eshaw, J. Beatty, C. Jenkin, R. Moncrieffe, W. Wilson, T. Walker, W. Spotswood, and P. Byrne, 1779), pp. 58-60.

Figure 2.1. Margate Bathing Houses, Front (1820)³⁶⁸



Figure 2.2. Margate Bathing Houses, Back (1820)³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Walley Chamberlain Oulton, *Picture of Margate, and its Vicinity. Illustrated with a Map and Twenty Views* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1820).

³⁶⁹ Oulton.



In his analysis of the urban growth of the seaside, Walton has shown how topography, structure of demand and the policies of landowners and developments were the major factors influencing development.³⁷⁰ His survey highlighted how few seaside resorts during the period were the result of planned development by a single aristocratic estate owner: instead most pre-railway resorts 'had fragmented landownership and experienced piecemeal development, without seeming to suffer by it.'³⁷¹ Any homogeneity of design, Walton argued, resulted from 'a community of taste and expectation among the developer,' an awareness of 'the needs and desires of the fashionable clientele' and the 'extensive reemployment of a limited number of successful local architects.'³⁷² This was certainly the case at Margate, where development resulted from a combination of local initiative and investment (particularly important during the 1750s and 1760s) and speculation from London.

Margate, however, quickly outgrew Walton's 'cautious, small-scale beginnings' of the 'pioneer seaside resorts,' where 'Until the 1790s an existing urban fabric was adapted to meet the basic requirements of a visiting season, but no new major departures were undertaken'³⁷³ Whilst certainly there was an initial 'hesitancy to invest in large-scale schemes,' visitor demand by the 1760s had outgrown the improvements that could be made to Margate's existing urban footprint. As Whyman noted, 'In the early years of sea bathing once the local inns were occupied, there were only the fishermen's or small traders' cottages to fall back on' and of these there was a restricted supply.³⁷⁴

In the resort's first guidebook of 1763, John Lyons described Margate as a town that, though still relatively small, was acquiring all the trappings of a fashionable watering place. Centred around a 'principal street' that was 'near a mile in length,' the main feature of the town remained the harbour and pier.³⁷⁵ The guide indicated that, though purpose-built accommodation was beginning to be provided, primarily visitor accommodation centred on the traditional pre-existing cottages:

³⁷⁰ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 103.

³⁷¹ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 113.

³⁷² Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 111.

³⁷³ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 111.

³⁷⁴ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 210.

³⁷⁵ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 11.

The Lodgings, tho' small, are neat and tolerably commodious, considering that they are now applied to the reception of Strangers, for which purpose they were never originally intended. Some good houses have been built within a few years, and others are building: The old ones daily receive all the improvements they are capable of.³⁷⁶

As will be discussed later in this section in greater detail, amusements for the visiting company were provided by local entrepreneurs who had utilised and added to existing businesses and premises to cater for the influx of seasonal demand. The main deficiency that the guide admitted to was of the lack of shops selling fashionable goods. Lyons explained that 'As *Margate* is only a large village, you cannot expect that it should be so regularly supplied with shops as a market-town.'³⁷⁷ To counteract a lack of a number of shops, traders appear to have offered a diverse range of goods: 'This deficiency is,' Lyons claimed, 'in a great measure, supplied by the numerous articles found in most of them, and by their ready and quick communication with *London* by the Hoys.'³⁷⁸

Whyman has stated that 'Margate was quite clearly a resort of some standing by 1763,'³⁷⁹ claiming that 'Margate in 1763 compares very favourably with a contemporary account of Tunbridge Wells in 1762,' suggesting that 'Sea-bathing apart, the social facilities and amusements of the two places were similar, but whereas Margate had barely thirty years to its credit as a coastal resort, the discovery of the mineral waters at Tunbridge Wells dated from 1606.'³⁸⁰ It is, however, important not to overstate Margate's development as watering place at this stage. Though Whyman is correct in highlighting the rapid development of Margate as a watering place compared to Tunbridge Wells's slower more gradual beginnings, Margate at this period was heavily reliant on the existing facilities of the traditional town and had few purpose-built facilities for visitors. Whilst this was deemed acceptable in a newly

³⁷⁶ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 12.

³⁷⁷ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 14.

³⁷⁸ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, pp. 14-15.

³⁷⁹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 206.

³⁸⁰ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', pp. 204-05.

emergent and newly fashionable resort, Margate could not have attained sustained success as a watering place without providing the set of purpose-built social and cultural facilities that were required by visitors. Furthermore, expectations of the built-environment had also changed significantly between Tunbridge Wells's development in the early seventeenth century and Margate's in the mid-eighteenth century. Whilst Tunbridge Wells consciously continued and cultivated its character as a rural idyll, albeit with all the facilities of an urban centre it was somewhat unique in its continued success. Visitors to watering places in the second half of the eighteenth century had far greater aspirations of their emerging fashionable resorts and looked to the classical architecture of Bath for their model rather than to the haphazard and now outdated seventeenth-century design of Tunbridge Wells.

'Between 1763 and 1815 Margate expanded phenomenally and rapidly as a seaside resort.'³⁸¹ A comparison of *The Margate Guide* of 1775 with Lyon's guide, written twelve years earlier shows the scale of the resort's development. The 1775 guide was a new and updated version of that published in 1763 and, as much of the contents were carried over, changes are easily identifiable. Facilities remained a mixture between new, purpose-built additions and adaptations to the existing urban framework. This can most clearly be seen in the provision of visitor accommodation. The 1775 guide repeated its predecessor's statement about converted lodging houses that were rented out by Margate's inhabitants but these were now joined by 'some very handsome Houses' in the Cecil Square, 'which have been lately erected by Persons of Fortune for their own Use, with several others, intended for the Reception of the Nobility and Gentry.'³⁸² For those visitors newly arrived at the resort who had yet to secure accommodation, there were rooms available for short-term occupation above the assembly room, described as 'a Flight of Bed chambers neatly furnished, for the Accommodation of such Persons as are not provided with other Lodgings at their first accommodation.'³⁸³ There were also a number of boarding houses, 'kept in a very decent, reputable Manner, for the Convenience of small Families, or single Persons,' which would have appealed to those further down the social scale 'who rather wish to

³⁸¹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 191.

³⁸² *The Margate Guide*, p. 14.

³⁸³ *The Margate Guide*, p. 14-15.

have a Table provided for them at a certain and easy Expençe, than to be at the Trouble of keeping one of their own.³⁸⁴

Demand for lodgings during the summer season was high and as the above shows, a variety of different options were available to visitors. Whilst families and those from higher up the social scale, many of whom would have brought domestic servants from home, preferred to rent entire lodgings which offered prestige, privacy and a higher quality of accommodation, 'The lodging house became, and remained, the most predominant and popular form of residential seaside accommodation' whilst inns and hotels were generally used only for short periods whilst alternative lodgings were sought.³⁸⁵ There were twelve inns and taverns in Margate by 1765, many which continued to trade throughout the century. The first, The Duke's Head, was founded in 1683, however nearly 'three quarters of the inns and taverns dated from the 1740s; four appeared during the 1750s, and three over the four years 1761-5.'³⁸⁶ Though much of their custom would have come from travelers (over sea and land) and, as Whyman has noted, some of their names, such as 'The Hoy' and 'The Jolly Sailor' imply a maritime patronage, much of the early impetus for the development of Margate as a watering place came from the proprietors of these inns. As shall subsequently be shown, not only did they provide visitors with lodgings, they also provided social and medical facilities.

'Continuous building during the 1770s' allowed Margate to acquire 'the status of a well-developed and flourishing Hanoverian watering place.'³⁸⁷ The construction of Cecil Square in particular signalled Margate's aspirations of becoming one of England's leading resorts. This development 'marked a turning point in the story of the seaside since it was a major speculative venture based on London money' and, furthermore, it 'symbolically breached the form of the historic area of the old town much as Queen Square marked, qualitatively, a new phase of development at Bath in the 1720s.'³⁸⁸ Completed in 1769, Cecil Square consisted of a combination of houses and social facilities, including assembly rooms and fashionable shops. Two years later the

³⁸⁴ *The Margate Guide*, p. 16.

³⁸⁵ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 211.

³⁸⁶ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 213.

³⁸⁷ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 226.

³⁸⁸ Brodie, 'Towns of Health and Mirth', p. 26.

neighbouring Hawley Square was erected where, in 1787, a permanent Theatre Royal was opened.

Built in the classical style, these developments remained at the heart of resort life. Carey, though claiming, 'I do not know a watering-place that is more calculated to gratify a party on a summer's excursion,' tempered his praise of Margate with several criticisms of its design, thus offering an alternative picture to the town's own promotional guides. The old town was particularly condemned as being 'a close contracted thoroughfare; many parts of it filthy, with scarcely a decent habitation.'³⁸⁹ The traditional layout proved inadequate to the demands placed on it as a thriving resort, as Carey exclaimed of the High Street, 'The street is too narrow for one carriage to pass another in the day, but in the night it is dangerous indeed!'³⁹⁰ He also indicated that little attention had been paid to the removal of sewage during the course of the town's expansion as the 'old Parade . . . in rainy weather it is a mere swamp; the greatest part of it lies between a noisy stable-yard, well furnished with manure, and the common sewer of the contiguous market-place, as well as all the lower part of the old town.'³⁹¹ For a town that had built its reputation on claims for the salubrity of its air, the 'most ungrateful exhalations and unsavoury smells' that resulted were potentially a serious problem.³⁹² Though Margate's popularity did not suffer as a result of a lack of an overall plan in its architectural design as a watering place, Carey's criticism suggests that piecemeal development did have a negative impact. To remedy many of the issues Carey highlighted would have required the old town to be knocked down and rebuilt, a project that was not attempted during this period.

Margate's water communications with London made it unique among eighteenth-century seaside resorts and contributed significantly to its success and character. First the hoys from the early 1760s, followed by the steamboats from 1815 brought increasingly vast numbers of visitors to Margate. The hoys were single-masted cargo sailing vessels, which from the 1630s had been used to transport corn to London and return to the Isle of Thanet with consumer goods. As they became increasingly used to transport passengers and luggage, improvements were made to their design

³⁸⁹ Carey, p. 10.

³⁹⁰ Carey, p. 11.

³⁹¹ Carey, p. 11.

³⁹² Carey, p. 12.

and at the beginning of the nineteenth century the new designation of 'packets' reflected their greater respectability and superiority to the old hoys.³⁹³ Using a variety of contemporary sources Whyman has compiled a table of information detailing the trend of fares on the London-Margate run between 1763 and 1815 and the total number of vessels employed. He identified 'an impressive increase in the number of vessels operating between 1763 and 1811' (the number of vessels is obscured during the Napoleonic Wars due to their use for troop transportation).³⁹⁴ In 1763 there were four hoys, with a minimum single fare of 2s. 6d. By 1815 there were between seven and thirteen vessels, which charged 7s. for the best cabin and 5s. for the fore cabin.³⁹⁵

Journey times could vary fairly significantly, making hoys less reliable than the roads. 'Compared with coastal vessels, which might be delayed weeks or even months by adverse winds, and inland waterways, which could be obstructed for weeks at a time by ice, water shortages or maintenance work, road transport was fast and reliable.'³⁹⁶ A 1763 guidebook informed visitors: 'They sometimes make the passage in eight hours, and at others in two or three days, just as winds and tides happen to be for, or against them.'³⁹⁷ Despite this variation and unpredictability, 'Travelling to Margate by hoy did not necessarily occupy more time and was much cheaper than travelling by road': 'In 1771 the landward journey of 72 miles from London was accomplished in 13-14 hours at fares of 16s. to 19s. During the 1790s the single coach journey cost between 21s. and 26s., which was four or five times the minimum hoy fare of 5s.'³⁹⁸ The hoys also allowed a greater number of visitors to be transported than coaches. Whereas a coach would accommodate up to six passengers inside with others riding outside, a hoy could transport over one hundred people at a time.³⁹⁹ The total number transported is difficult to calculate but estimates 'range from 18,000 passengers in 1792 to 21,577 in 1814-15.'⁴⁰⁰

³⁹³ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 139.

³⁹⁴ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 140.

³⁹⁵ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 140.

³⁹⁶ Barker and Gerhold, p. 1.

³⁹⁷ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 15.

³⁹⁸ Whyman, 'Water Communications', pp. 140-41.

³⁹⁹ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 141.

⁴⁰⁰ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 141.

According to a 1792 guidebook, six yachts travelled between Margate and London: *Robert and Jane*, *Dispatch*, *Prince of Wales*, *Francis*, *Endeavour*, and *The Rose*.⁴⁰¹ Standard passenger fare was 4s. however the *Robert and Jane* offered more select options and advertised 'three distinct cabins' at different prices; 10s. 6d., 6s. and the standard 4s.⁴⁰² In addition to the yachts which had been designed with resort passenger traffic in mind, there were also three corn hoys 'which sail alternately from Margate to Galley Quay, near the Custom House, on Saturday; and carry goods and passengers.'⁴⁰³

The hoy's price, convenience and speed attracted vast numbers of London's middling orders to Margate's shores and so directly facilitated its development as a popular resort. 'But at first at least persons of wealth were not deterred.'⁴⁰⁴ A mixture of social ranks was a prominent feature of the hoys: as a 1763 guidebook stated, 'The Hoy, like the Grave, confounds all distinctions: High and Low, Rich and Poor, Sick and Sound, are here indiscriminately blended together.'⁴⁰⁵ The hoys, in a way unachievable for the coaches, became an extension of the resort and guidebooks, poems and prints portrayed the hoys as part of the visitor experience. The print *A Sketch on Board a Margate Hoy!!* portrayed typical images of the hoy experience: proving correct the guidebooks claim, 'It can therefore be no wonder, if the humours of such a motley crew, of all ages, tempers, and dispositions, should, now and then, strike out such scenes, as must beggar every description but the pencil of *Hogarth*.'⁴⁰⁶ The print depicted a crude scene, with some passengers vomiting and defecating whilst their neighbours drank ale or brandy.

⁴⁰¹ Hall, Joseph, *Hall's New Margate and Ramsgate Guide. Containing a Description of the Libraries, Theatre, Assemblies, New Buildings, Accommodations, Mode of Bathing, Lists of the Coaches, Diligence, Hoys, &c. ...* (Ramsgate: Printed for, and sold by J. Hall, Margate; sold also by P. Burgess, Ramsgate; Flackston & Co, Simmons & Kirkby, and W. brostow, Canterbury; W. Gillman, Rochester; G. Ledger, Dover, and Rivington & Sons, St. Paul's Church Yard, London, 1792), pp. 76-77.

⁴⁰² Hall, pp. 76-77.

⁴⁰³ Hall, p. 77.

⁴⁰⁴ Pimlott, p. 64.

⁴⁰⁵ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 15.

⁴⁰⁶ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 15.

Figure 2.3. A Sketch on Board a Margate Hoy!! (1810)⁴⁰⁷

Hardwicke Lewis offered an account of a hoy journey in his *An Excursion to Margate, in the Month of June, 1786*. Lewis likened the passengers to 'a Mecca caravan, of all nations, but with this difference, there were more women than men.'⁴⁰⁸ He also described the excitement of all onboard on leaving the capital, suggesting that to do so,



⁴⁰⁷ *A Sketch on Board a Margate Hoy!!* (London: Published by P. Roberts 28 Middle-row, Holborn, 1810)

⁴⁰⁸ Hardwicke Lewis, *An Excursion to Margate, in the Month of June, 1786: Interspersed with a Variety of Anecdotes of Well-Known Characters* (London: Printed by Ritchie & Sammells, Bartholomew-Close, for J. French, Bookseller, No. 164, Fenchurch-Street, 1787), p. 3.

especially for a holiday, was a rarity for many: 'You can scarce conceive the joy that lighted up every countenance upon leaving that stink of corruption called LONDON; where the poor wallow in wretchedness, and the rich sink in state.'⁴⁰⁹

Though Margate itself continued to attract the fashionable elite, there was little to recommend the hoys to the upper classes. Whilst they could offer novelty and the dubious medical cure of seasickness, they held little appeal to those who had access to private transportation, although 'Wealthy families who avoided the hoy themselves took advantage nevertheless of cheaper water communications to transport their domestic servants.'⁴¹⁰ Like Margate itself the hoys thus quickly gained a middling and lower class reputation and character. The hoys, due to their cost, were used to transport patients to the Margate General Sea Bathing Infirmary, many of whom were suffering from communicable diseases.

Due to the social reputation and lack of reliability of the hoys, road transportation to Margate remained important to its visitors. *Hall's New Margate and Ramsgate Guide* of 1792 detailed transportations links for visitors. Several coaches and diligences ran between Margate and London during the summer season. Fares ranged from 1s. to £1. 3s. 6d. The most expensive option were the diligences: these departed from either Mitchener's Hotel or the Fountain every morning at four. The diligence from Mitchener's Hotel carried 'three insides to the White Bear, Piccadilly, and Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane.'⁴¹¹ No information on arrival times were provided. Two post-coaches were advertised as travelling daily between Margate and London. That leaving from Benson's Hotel left at five in the morning, carried four inside passengers and arrived at the George and Blue Boar Inn, Holborn 'the same evening.'⁴¹² A daily night coach was also advertised.

A greater number of services were provided between Margate and London than at Tunbridge Wells, reflecting the higher number of visitors to the seaside than to the spa. Passenger traffic to Margate, however, included visitors to other resort destinations on the Kent coast which inflates the figures. Hall's guide informed visitors that stage coaches travelled frequently between Margate and Ramsgate during the

⁴⁰⁹ Lewis, *An Excursion to Margate*, p. 3.

⁴¹⁰ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 141.

⁴¹¹ Hall, pp. 73-74.

⁴¹² Hall, pp. 73-74.

summer season, leaving and arriving at three locations in both resorts.⁴¹³ Also advertised were 'Several Caravans' that 'during the season go between Margate and the following Places, with goods and passengers, viz. Canterbury, Deal, and Dover.'⁴¹⁴

The introduction of steamboats in 1815 'augmented the traffic to Thanet and increased the popularity of Margate in particular.'⁴¹⁵ A combination of steam and sail, the steamboats were a reliable, fast and novel form of transportation which supplanted the hoys as a popular form of transportation for Margate's visitors. The steamboats provided the same function as had the hoys but they were able to carry significantly more passengers. The steamboats thus performed a similar transformation as is often claimed for the railways, however, as Whyman has argued, 'Compared with road, river and harbour improvements, and canal and railway developments, the effects of steamboats were predominantly social rather than economic' as they were predominantly used for the transportation of passengers rather than goods.⁴¹⁶ The steamboats were able to transport significantly greater numbers of people than had the hoys. Between 1815 and 1816 (April to April) 21,931 passengers were transported. Between 1820 and 1821 this almost doubled to 41,952.⁴¹⁷

'The public was attracted to steamboats as their technical performance, safety and comfort improved at the same time as their fares were reduced.'⁴¹⁸ Their character and reputation was comparable to that of their predecessors, the hoys. Efforts were made to provide passengers with a variety of amusements during their journey. *Going to Margate!! Or, A Water Itinerary from London to Margate* outlined the scene when 'two or three hundred persons assemble on the full stretch for the goal of pleasure, with hearts in unison.'⁴¹⁹ A 'band of music was provided' which often 'strikes up the cheerful dance, while youth and beauty glide o'er the spacious deck in

⁴¹³ Hall, p. 75.

⁴¹⁴ Hall, p. 75.

⁴¹⁵ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 143.

⁴¹⁶ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 23.

⁴¹⁷ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 143.

⁴¹⁸ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 144.

⁴¹⁹ *Going to Margate!! Or, Water Itinerary from London to Margate: Containing an Account of the Principal Towns, Villages, Buildings, Seats, &c. &c. Observed Between those Places; Together with Extracts from the Margate Bye-Laws, of General Utility to Visitors* (Margate: Printed for George Witherden, Parade, 1828), p. 7.

graceful mazes.⁴²⁰ For the 'more sedate' passengers there were games of chess, draughts and backgammon, 'while others again are seen immersed in the perusal of the recent and more interesting publications on the day.'⁴²¹ A wide range of refreshments was provided as well as 'liberal libations of the most choice wines, spirits, and liqueurs.'⁴²² As with the hoys, the steamboats embraced and promoted their role as an extension of the resort experience, the guide going so far as to claim, 'Not unfrequently it happens that the voyage is too short for the full enjoyment of these pleasures, and the passengers here regret the arrival of the packet at its destination.'⁴²³ The existence of these water itineraries, which described the scenes to be viewed *en route* further attest to steamboat being part of the holiday experience.

Margate's water communications provided the resort with a unique link with London and were responsible for creating and maintaining its status as the country's first popular resort. The hoys and steamboats allowed Margate unparalleled access to the expanding middling and lower class demand for health resorts. As will be discussed in chapter three, Margate's middling class visiting company combined with the number of visitors had a significant influence on the character and pattern of resort life. The hoys were the driving force behind Margate's reputation and success, whilst 'steamboats brought added prosperity.'⁴²⁴

From the end of the eighteenth century directories provide a means for the direct comparison of urban centres. Unfortunately, for the period covered by this thesis, these records for Margate and Tunbridge Wells are incomplete and often of dubious reliability and thus an extensive and detailed study cannot be made. What information does exist, however, emphasises the differences between the two watering places as urban centres: Margate as a port town had a far greater diversity of industries whereas Tunbridge Wells's continued specialisation as a leisure centre meant it contained a far narrower range of businesses and occupations.

⁴²⁰ *Going to Margate*, p. 7.

⁴²¹ *Going to Margate*, p. 7.

⁴²² *Going to Margate*, p. 8.

⁴²³ *Going to Margate*, p. 8.

⁴²⁴ Whyman, 'Water Communications', p. 146.

‘Trade directories emerged in the eighteenth century as an important reference for a rapidly evolving commercial world.’⁴²⁵ ‘Advocates and celebrators, as well as chroniclers, of urban society’ they acted as immediate handbooks and research tools through which a town ‘could be rendered intelligible, decipherable and finite, however mysterious, inchoate and vast it might outwardly appear.’⁴²⁶ Directories provided names, addresses and occupations of residents, supplement by information on services, such as post and transport. Using directories for the study of urban centres is, however, highly problematic and as a source they are widely considered unreliable by historians. Indeed, the directories themselves rarely claimed that their information was exhaustive: *The Universal British Directory*, for example, recognised that it ‘may be subject to some Inaccuracies’ and would require ‘future Improvements’ to ‘approach nearer the Standard of Perfection.’⁴²⁷ Even when the information provided appears relatively comprehensive, the process of categorising occupations is itself fraught with difficulty and, as E.A. Wrigley has noted, though ‘groupings of occupations is essential,’ ‘any scheme will inevitably reflect the assumptions made by its author about what constitutes the most appropriate criteria for this purpose.’⁴²⁸ With full awareness of the inherent limitations of directories as a historical source, they will here be used as a broad guide to supplement this chapter’s comparison of Margate and Tunbridge Wells.

Nation-wide surveys, published from the 1780s, are of little use for the study of either watering place during the eighteenth century. William Bailey’s *General Directory of England and Wales*, published in five volumes between 1781 and 1787 contained no information on Margate and an incomplete account for Tunbridge Wells (with only thirty-three entries).⁴²⁹ P. Barfoot and J. Wilkes’s *Universal British Directory of Trade,*

⁴²⁵ Sophie McGeevor, ‘Trade Directories as Historical Sources: A Case Study of the Five Principal Towns of West Yorkshire Riding, 1784-1822’, (Unpublished Bachelors Dissertation, University of Leeds, 2010), p. 1.

⁴²⁶ Penelope J. Corfield with Serena Kelly, ‘Giving Directions to the Town’: The Early Town Directories’, *Urban History Yearbook* (1984), 22-35 (p. 23.)

⁴²⁷ *The Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce; Comprehending Lists of the Inhabitants of London, Westminster, and Borough of Southwark; ...* (London: Printed for the Patentees, and Sold by C. Stalker, Bookseller, Stationer’s Court, Ludgate-street, and Messrs. Brideoake and Fell, Agents, 1790), preface.

⁴²⁸ E.A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress and Population* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 132.

⁴²⁹ Bailey, William, *Bailey’s British Directory; Or, Merchant’s and Trader’s Useful Companion, for the Year 1784, in Four Volumes. Comprising Accurate Lists of the Bankers, Merchants,*

Commerce, and Manufacture, published in five volumes with three supplements between 1790 and 1798 likewise offered no information on Margate and only a cursory entry for Tunbridge Wells, which was included under that for neighbouring Tonbridge. Describing the spa as offering ‘a good market of butchers, poulterers, &c. besides shops for toys, milliners, wooden-ware, &c. coffee-rooms, where is card-playing &c. and a hall for dancing,’ the account offered only sparse information on the occupations of residents.⁴³⁰ Neither resort during this period boasted its own directory. The promisingly named *The Tunbridge Wells Directory*, published by Jasper Sprange in 1792 is a red herring. This work was an abridged version of his earlier guidebook *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, the first edition of which had appeared in 1780.

Pigot’s Directory of Kent, published in 1824 offers the most comprehensive directory coverage for Margate and Tunbridge Wells for this period. The directory provided a brief account of the town’s history, industries and population before listing traders and postal information. Tunbridge Wells was described as ‘A watering place of considerable importance’ and the manufacture of Tunbridge ware was described as the ‘staple trade.’⁴³¹ Margate was introduced as ‘Some few years ago it was an insignificant fishing town, since when it has risen to its present height of fashionable celebrity as a sea bathing place.’⁴³² Figure 2.5 summarises the trades of both towns, using the trade categories employed by the directory compilers.

Table 2.2. Pigot’s Directory of Kent ⁴³³

Trade Sector	Resort	
	Margate	Tunbridge Wells
Agricultural and Maritime Trades	7	-

Manufacturers, ... in the Metropolis, and Different Towns of Great Britain. ... (London: Printed by J. Andrews; And to be had of the Author; And of Every Bookseller in the Town and Country, 1784), pp. 903-04.

⁴³⁰ *The Universal British Directory, 1793-1798*, Forward and Index Clive Wilkins-Jones, vol. 5 appendix (Castle Rising: Winton, 1993), pp. 220-21.

⁴³¹ *Pigot’s Directory of Kent* (London; Manchester: Pigot, 1824), p. 148.

⁴³² *Pigot’s Directory of Kent*, p. 402.

⁴³³ The table has been compiled with reference to the work of W.A. Armstrong and McGeevor.

	Resort	
Trade Sector	Margate	Tunbridge Wells
Alcohol Trades	4	5
Auctioneers	5	5
Banking and Insurance	10	6
Books and Print	6	2
Building and Decorating Trades	29	15
Chemists and Druggists	4	-
Cloth, Clothing, Dress and Shoes	37	20
Coal	2	-
Education	13	5
Fancy Goods	4	9
Food Trades	36	12
Hotels, Inns, Taverns and Boarding Houses	28	13
Law	3	2
Medical	6	4
Metal Trades	4	-
Miscellaneous	27	13
Stone Trades	2	-
Wood Trades	2	3
Total	229	141

The information provided by *Pigot's Directory* reflects observations made so far on the similarities and differences between Tunbridge Wells and Margate as urban centres and watering places. Despite the number of businesses and professions included, however, this above table can only be used as a blunt tool for comparison.

First and foremost, directories ‘were intended to appeal to those in commerce who needed to send goods and circulars out to persons of particular occupation and standing.’⁴³⁴ Thus many of the ordinary working people, and even fewer women, did not appear in directories: whilst ‘it can be said that most of those who were economically “significant” appear,’ these would not have constituted the majority of householders.⁴³⁵

The clearest difference between Margate and Tunbridge Wells is between the number and variety of tradespersons listed. Whilst 229 were listed for Margate, there featured only 141 for Tunbridge Wells. This is reflective of both the relative size of the two towns but also resulted from the presence in Margate of a greater diversity of trades and industries, whereas Tunbridge Wells remained exclusively dedicated to leisure. Of the trades listed for Margate only five have an obvious connection with the shipping industry but, reflecting the town’s status as a port, the number of people engaged in related activities would have been far greater. For many of Kent’s coastal resorts, which hosted a larger port than Margate, this proportion would have been increased. This diversity of trades would have made providing for visitors easier and cheaper, as less would have to be transported in from outside the town.

iv

‘Of all the new leisure facilities that developed in the post-Restoration town, perhaps those which most reflected the elegance of Georgian urban culture were the public assemblies and walks.’⁴³⁶ Tunbridge Wells, despite its rural character, was among the first places in the country to offer several of the central components of emerging urban life: most notably purpose-built assembly rooms, public walks and bowling greens but there was also an early appearance of coffee houses and shops selling fashionable, luxury goods. Margate’s facilities, by contrast were constructed in a grander style and aspired to the classical architectural forms of Bath rather than the

⁴³⁴ Dennis R. Mills, *Rural Community History from Trade Directories* (Aldenham: Local Population Studies, 2001), p. 13.

⁴³⁵ Mills, p 13.

⁴³⁶ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 150.

rural idyll of Tunbridge Wells. Margate's facilities were more numerous and concentrated than those Tunbridge Wells and, furthermore, visitors were able to draw on the facilities of the neighbouring Isle of Thanet resorts of Broadstairs and Ramsgate.

Burr reported that a 'short time' after the Restoration, 'an assembly-room, a bowling-green, and other places appropriated to public diversion at Rusthall; and at Southborough, too, they had a bowling-green, a coffee-house, and a great number of good houses for lodgings.'⁴³⁷ Thus the spa's embryonic social life was based not around the springs but at Rusthall and Southborough, conveniently located next to the spa's visitor accommodations. As the fashionable districts for lodging changed, these facilities were moved. Burr described how between 1665 and 1670 'the assembly room was brought home from Rusthall to Mount Ephraim.'⁴³⁸ Similarly, when Mount Sion became fashionable, 'many houses were brought . . . to be rebuilt . . . some, whole and entire as they were, were wheeled on sledges to be fixed in this new seat of favour.'⁴³⁹

Though Burr's dating of construction of the Rusthall assembly rooms is unclear (the above description appeared under the heading 1655 to 1664), they still predated by a significant period the rise of assembly rooms as a country-wide phenomenon, at the turn of the century.⁴⁴⁰ Even before this time and following Henrietta Maria's example, dances would be held outside, typically on bowling-greens. Borsay's study of assembly rooms nationwide indicates that not only was Tunbridge Wells the first watering place to provide dedicated facilities but it was also among the first in the country. Buckingham may have had the first purpose-built facilities in 1670 whilst York held assemblies in a theatre during the 1630s and at the Old Boar Inn from 1653.⁴⁴¹ Rival courtiers' spa Epsom opened a ballroom in the New Wells in 1708 and was the next watering place to provide purpose-built facilities, followed by Bath, which held dancing on bowling-greens from the 1670s and balls in the town hall from 1696 until the opening of Harrison's Assembly Rooms on Terrace Walk in 1708.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁷ Burr, p. 38.

⁴³⁸ Burr, p. 44.

⁴³⁹ Burr, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁴⁰ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p.150.

⁴⁴¹ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 336-49.

⁴⁴² Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 336-49.

Assembly rooms were first provided on the walks by the end of the seventeenth century and were most likely erected during the building boom of the 1680s and 1690s. There were two purpose-built rooms, both located on the Upper Walk and contiguous to each other: the Great Room of eighty-two feet frontage and the Long Room of fifty-four feet frontage (the depth of these two rooms is unknown). The limited extant descriptions of these rooms suggest that they were far less ostentatious than those of many of their rivals. A 1780 guidebook described the Lower Room, then connected to the Sussex Tavern and run by the same proprietor, as recently 'beautified and ornamented in an elegant neatness, agreeable to the present taste.'⁴⁴³ Similarly Richard Onely's 1771 guide said only: 'There are two very elegant and spacious public rooms for balls and assemblies.'⁴⁴⁴ Public entertainments alternated between the two rooms, as advertised in the second half of the eighteenth century, 'public balls in the great assembly-rooms' were held 'on *Tuesdays* at the room on the walk, and *Fridays* at the lower rooms; every other night in the week, (Sundays excepted, when the company generally meet to drink tea at the coffee-house) are card-assemblies at each of the public rooms alternately.'⁴⁴⁵ The proximity of these two rooms and the long-standing division of entertainments between them suggests that these may not have been two competing rooms, to the extent that existed at Bath between rival enterprises. Though they appear to have been owned by different proprietors, there was long-term cooperation and certainly neither of these rooms made a serious attempt to overshadow its competition through extensive remodeling or rebuilding.

The assembly rooms on the Walks gradually drew custom away from the assembly rooms and bowling greens in the surrounding residential districts. Already we have seen how centres for lodging and entertainment were established initially at Tonbridge, then closer but still at some distance from the wells at Southborough and Rusthall and gradually moved closer, first to Mount Ephraim, followed by Mount Sion. Burr encapsulated this trend, noting:

⁴⁴³ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴⁴ Richard Onely, *A General Account of Tunbridge Wells, and its Environs: Historical and Descriptive* (London: printed for G. Pearch, No. 12, Cheapside, 1771), p. 6.

⁴⁴⁵ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, p. 19.

Thus in the course of a few years we find Tunbridge forsaken; Southborough and Rusthall raised and ruined; Mount-Ephraim drooping; and Mount-Sion in the full bloom of prosperity; this last indeed not only rivalled, but despoiled her predecessors, and triumphantly transferred their ornaments to herself⁴⁴⁶

The concentration of facilities at the wells themselves and at Mount Sion, the closest of the districts, completed this process. By the mid-eighteenth century the facilities at Mount Ephraim had fallen into decay, 'its assembly-room is lost, its bowling-green become a common field, and its taverns are turned into private houses.'⁴⁴⁷ Those at Mount Sion remained, but had lost much of their former glamour. In 1780 they only received brief consideration: 'At the top of this hill stands the old Assembly Rooms, and a bowling-green adjoining, enclosed on three sides with rows of fine trees, the house forming the other side.'⁴⁴⁸

Though Tunbridge Wells gained its assembly rooms early, the vast majority of activity in this area occurred during the seventeenth century: no new assembly rooms were constructed during the eighteenth century and only minimal improvements were made to those on the Walks; though they were updated and the interior renewed they retained the same dimensions and were not remodeled into a more fashionable classical design. Considering the emphasis on the urban landscape during the long eighteenth century, this lack of renovation is surprising and unusual. A number of factors contributed to this lack of development. First was the continued cultivation of its rural image which had firmly established itself as a unique selling point of the spa. Second was the lack of sustained contribution by neighbouring landowners and of control by a local governing body. Third was the piecemeal nature of speculation and investment from outside parties: though a number of London businesses opened shops at the spa and smaller projects were financed, this was not during this period to a great enough extent to transform the spa's image in its entirety. It was not until the construction of the new estates from the 1820s that large parts Tunbridge Wells gained a uniform classical facade.

⁴⁴⁶ Burr, p. 45.

⁴⁴⁷ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, pp. 7-9.

⁴⁴⁸ *A Description of Tunbridge-Wells*, p. 7.

The history of Bath's assembly rooms provide a useful comparison: though development was slower to begin, once it did it was at a more rapid pace, on a grander scale and resulted in fierce competition between rival proprietors. Furthermore, development continued throughout the long eighteenth century. Like Tunbridge Wells, Bath during the seventeenth century initially used bowling greens and other open spaces for dancing. In 1696 assemblies were moved into rooms in the town hall, where a visitor noted there were balls every night, however these, unlike those at Tunbridge Wells, were not purpose-built facilities.⁴⁴⁹

Bath opened its first assembly rooms, the Lower Rooms, in 1708. The project of Thomas Harrison, it was initially a modest building. A ballroom was added in 1720 and was enlarged in 1749 to ninety feet long, thirty-six broad and thirty-four high.⁴⁵⁰ A second assembly room, Lindsey's, opened opposite Harrison's in 1730: these were on a smaller scale, eighty-six feet long and thirty feet high.⁴⁵¹ As the axis of Bath's social life moved away from the old city to the upper town, work on the Upper Assembly Rooms began to provide a social centre for this newly fashionable district.⁴⁵² Opening in 1771, the Upper Rooms comprised a large ballroom, measuring 105 feet eight inches long and forty-two feet eight inches wide. Attached to the ballroom was a large tea room with a musician's gallery and a card room. The assembly rooms were modelled on those at York, which remained the largest in England, however no other English spa had a long-room to compare with that of the Upper Rooms.⁴⁵³ Failing to cope with this increased competition, Lindsey's rooms were converted into a warehouse and Harrison's went into decline, though they continued to operate until a fire in 1820.⁴⁵⁴ As at Tunbridge Wells, the company's entertainments alternated between the assembly rooms.

Assembly rooms were first advertised at Margate in June 1753 when the widow of Thomas Barber, the original proprietor of Margate's seawater baths, placed the following advertisement in the *Kentish Post or Canterbury News Letter*: 'The Widow

⁴⁴⁹ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 152.

⁴⁵⁰ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 117.

⁴⁵¹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 117.

⁴⁵² Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 125.

⁴⁵³ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 125.

⁴⁵⁴ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 153.

Barber, at the 'Black Horse' in Margate acquaints the public that she has erected a very commodious Assembly Room and a very commodious Sea Water Bath.⁴⁵⁵ As at Bath, these initial rooms were not purpose-built but showed the visiting company taking advantage of preexisting facilities.

The Black Horse was taken over by Mitchener and renamed the New Inn in 1761. Mitchener expanded the assembly rooms significantly, ensuring that they remained 'The principal House of Entertainment.'⁴⁵⁶ Seventy feet long by twenty wide, the New Inn's assembly room was a similar size to the Long Room at Tunbridge Wells. The 1763 *A Description of the Isle of Thanet* described it as 'perfectly neat and commodious' but 'without any pretensions to magnificence.'⁴⁵⁷ These rooms hosted the majority of Margate's entertainments. As well as dancing assemblies, where 'Eighteen or twenty couple dance very conveniently' there were also card assemblies where there were 'generally eight or ten tables; and at other times, seldom less than four or five.'⁴⁵⁸ During the day, 'Those who have no particular engagements often drink tea here, in the afternoon, and either spend the remainder of the evening at cards, or ride, walk, or go to the Play as their inclinations lead them.'⁴⁵⁹ In addition to the main room, there were also two adjoining card rooms ('but they are seldom used as such, except on the nights of Dancing assemblies') and a gallery for musicians.

Mitchener's assembly rooms were multi-functional and though they lacked 'pretensions to magnificence' nonetheless provided the central hub of the resort's social life. This concentration of entertainments, though in part a reflection of Mitchener's ability to provide for the social needs of the visiting company, was more a result of there being very few alternative places to congregate. As the Subscriptions and Rules for Mitchener's Assembly-Room (Figure 2.4) illustrates, the rooms were used for dance and card assemblies, public breakfasts and for tea and coffee drinking.

Figure 2.4. Subscriptions and Rules for Mitchener's Assembly Room (1763)⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 194.

⁴⁵⁶ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁷ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 16.

⁴⁵⁸ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 16.

⁴⁵⁹ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 16.

⁴⁶⁰ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 68.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS *and* RULES
for MITCHENER'S ASSEMBLY-
ROOM. *Margate* 1763.

	<i>s. d.</i>
Subscriptions to the Room for the season to each Gentleman or Lady,	5 0
Dancing Assembly on <i>Monday</i> night, (Tea inclusive,) each Subscriber, Gentleman or Lady,	2 6
Each Non-subscriber	5 0

CARD-ASSEMBLY, on
Thursday night.

Whift, &c. each table	6 0
Lottery-table	12 0
Each Non-subscriber for admission, (Tea in- clusive,)	1 0

BREAKFASTING.

To Subscribers	0 8
To Non-subscribers	1 0

TEA *in the* AFTERNOON.

To Subscribers	0 6
To Non-subscribers	1 0

COFFEE-ROOM.

Subscriptions for the Coffee-Room, to each Gentleman for news-papers, extra post, pens, and paper.	2 6 <i>At</i>
--	------------------

Subscriptions to the rooms were 5s. a season with extra charges for individual entertainments. The guide indicated that in 1762 there were 429 subscribers to the

rooms.⁴⁶¹ Whilst one multifunctional set of rooms would have sufficed in the short term, when Margate was still emerging as a fashionable resort, far greater variety was necessary for long term success: for those staying at Margate for an extended period, this concentration of leisure facilities in one space would surely quickly become monotonous.

Construction began on Margate's purpose-built assembly rooms in the late 1760s in Cecil Square and represented the resort's first major building venture.⁴⁶² Intended as a symbol of the town's status as a place of fashionable resort, the assembly rooms were built to impress. To accommodate the constantly increasing number of visitors, the rooms were relatively large: eighty-seven feet long and forty-three feet wide, leading *Hall's New Margate and Ramsgate Guide* to declare it 'one of the largest in the kingdom.'⁴⁶³ Not only was it 'richly ornamented' and commanded 'an extensive prospect of the sea' but adjoining the main ballroom were apartments for tea and cards, a billiard and coffee room and 'a large piazza extending the whole length of the building.'⁴⁶⁴ Hall's 1790 guide claimed that the rooms attracted 'above a thousand' subscribers every season.⁴⁶⁵

The construction of these rooms may have been in part a response to a similar development at Brighton, where assemblies were held alternately in rooms at the Old Ship and Castle Taverns, which in 1755 had both opened new premises. Margate's assembly rooms were built on a grander scale than those at Brighton (the Castle's ballroom measured eighty by forty feet) and rivaled their ornate decorations.

Unlike at Tunbridge Wells, Margate was unable to support more than one set of assembly rooms. It did, however, benefit from the sharing of facilities between the three Isle of Thanet resorts. Ramsgate advertised the construction of assembly rooms in 1787, claiming that they would be 'equal, if not superior to Margate.'⁴⁶⁶ These assembly and card rooms 'front the harbour' and under them 'are a coffee room and

⁴⁶¹ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 16.

⁴⁶² Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 237.

⁴⁶³ Hall, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶⁴ Hall, p. 10.

⁴⁶⁵ Hall, p. 10.

⁴⁶⁶ Whyman, *Aspects of Holidaymaking*, p. 227.

agreeable accommodations for parties to dine or drink tea.⁴⁶⁷ Contemporary descriptions in guidebooks of the Ramsgate assembly rooms are limited. The 1800 *A Companion to All the Watering and Bathing Places of England* mentioned only: 'it has also a neat and well fitted up Assembly Room, which is *handsomely* attended, and commands a good view of the pier and the water.'⁴⁶⁸ *The Balnea* in 1799 offered a slightly more extensive account: 'At the commencement of the Pier is the Assembly-room, built by the late Mr. Herritage, which, though small, is well proportioned; not splendid, but elegantly neat.'⁴⁶⁹ In many descriptions of the resort, the assembly rooms appear to be of less consequence than Ramsgate's libraries, reflecting the relatively importance of these two facilities.

Assembly rooms were integral components that facilitated social life and provided a focus for entertainment. However, as subsequent sections will argue, Margate's assembly rooms were less important than its circulating libraries in determining the character of the resort. The social role the assembly rooms at both resorts was inextricably linked to the Masters of the Ceremonies that ran them and, as the following discussion will show, their influence was perhaps more due to the personalities of those that filled the position than the role itself.

v

A study of the Masters of the Ceremonies (MC) at Tunbridge Wells and Margate provides insight into the evolution of the role across the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as well as into the respective statuses of the resorts themselves. During the long eighteenth century the role of MC as a leader and organiser of resort society became increasingly professionalised and defined. Richard 'Beau' Nash was Tunbridge Wells's first MC, appointed in 1735. However before this time the spa was governed by

⁴⁶⁷ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, p. 29.

⁴⁶⁸ *A Companion to the Watering and Bathing Places of England. Containing their Amusements, Curiosities, Antiquities, Seats in their Vicinities, Chief Inns, and Distances from London. ...* (London: printed by D. Brewman, Old Bailey; for H. D. Symonds, Paternoster Row, 1800), p. 119.

⁴⁶⁹ Carey, pp. 39-40.

Bell Causey, a woman of dubious character who functioned in a role similar but very different from that of the MC. Starting with Nash, Tunbridge Wells shared its MC with rival Bath. Margate too shared its MC with near rival Ramsgate and, to a lesser extent, Broadstairs. The appointment of an MC to this up and coming resort demonstrated its status and popularity. However the role at Margate faced many challenges: the expansion of the visiting company, increasing numbers of the middling orders and decreased length of stay required an adaptation of the role (and its importance) from that forged earlier in the century at the spas. The role of the MC at Tunbridge Wells and Margate thus highlights some of the key differences between these two watering places and between the spas and the seaside resorts.

Originating at Bath or Epsom the office of MC evolved to lead the emerging communal life of the spas.⁴⁷⁰ 'The notion of a MC, an officer who determined and supervised acceptable forms of social behavior on public occasions, was not new: in royal courts he was an official of high rank.'⁴⁷¹ The primary duties were to preside over the entertainments of the company, which included directing functions at the assembly rooms, greeting new visitors and integrating them into resort society and organising subscriptions. The MC received no salary: instead he was paid through the proceeds of two benefit balls a year and from donations from the subscribers to these balls.⁴⁷² The position at Bath was first held by Captain Webster who was introduced as the conductor of amusements in 1703.⁴⁷³ The city's most famous and influential MC was Nash (1674-1761), appointed in 1705, whose significance in shaping the social life of watering places will be discussed in chapter three. From Bath and Epsom the position of MC was adopted at spas across the county as smaller spas emulated their most successful rival. Amongst the leading resorts, Buxton and Harrogate were notable exceptions: due to their less organised public life based around inns, the MC was chosen from the visiting company for the duration of his stay only.⁴⁷⁴

Tunbridge Wells, despite its success as a leading spa, was slow to appoint an official MC. Until Nash's appointment in 1735 the practical management of the visiting

⁴⁷⁰ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 135.

⁴⁷¹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 135.

⁴⁷² Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 309.

⁴⁷³ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 115.

⁴⁷⁴ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 309.

company was undertaken by Causey. The importance of Causey to Tunbridge Wells is difficult to determine due to the scarcity of contemporary evidence and her unusual portrayal within later eighteenth century accounts. *The Tunbridge Wells Guide* of 1784 provides the most information. It described Causey as ‘a fine but very large woman’ who ‘resided as absolute governess at Tunbridge-Wells’ between 1725 and 1734.⁴⁷⁵ It described her role as unofficial and largely opportunistic:

. . . [Causey] directed the company in all their pleasures and amusements, - raised subscriptions for any persons in distress, was by a set of geniusses and gamblers allowed two guineas a day to conduct their rooms . . . [and] she constantly used to bring the company for raffles or other amusing purposes.⁴⁷⁶

Acknowledging that the information was drawn from anecdotal evidence, the guide continued:

. . . it was Bell’s constant custom to place herself at the top of the steps leading to the Walks, and as the company came from the chapel, with her apron spread in both hands hustle them as they do chickens, to any place, and for any purpose she wanted them for, and if she espy’d any new-comer of rank, she immediately wished them much joy of arriving so seasonably, when there was an opportunity of their entertaining the company with a public breakfast, tea-drinking, &c.⁴⁷⁷

Causey’s role, according to this evidence, was to manage rather than to lead society. Unlike the MCs, who were taken from the lower gentry and upper middling orders, Causey had no authority or standing in polite society and so could not mould the visiting company in the way Nash was attempting at Bath. Instead her role, apparently self-appointed, was organisational and opportunistic, drawing on the increasing need to manage the company’s entertainments but also exploiting the lack of a governing authority (such as the Bath Corporation) that held the power to make an official appointment.

⁴⁷⁵ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 286.

⁴⁷⁶ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, pp. 286-87.

⁴⁷⁷ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 288.

Perhaps most interesting for our understanding of the social character of the spa are the comments made on Causey's background:

[Causey] . . . was extremely well known in those days, for attending with her nymphs at the Ring in Hyde-Park, with oranges, nosegays, &c. as likewise for an expert conveyance of billet doux, &c. and promoting friendship between persons of the highest rank.⁴⁷⁸

According to *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, Causey was well-known amongst visitors as a leader of a gang of prostitutes. This, if true, provides an insight into how Causey was able to assert control over the visiting company. It also suggests why she was absent from many near-contemporary histories of the spa, Burr for example, made no mention of her, preferring instead to focus on the civilising influence of Nash. The notoriety of Tunbridge Wells's social scene will be explored in greater detail in chapter three.

Whatever her origins, Causey's power over the visiting company remained strong and 'so great was her influence at the Wells, that she would not suffer the great *Beau Nash* to have any power there while she lived, and absolutely kept him from the place till she died.'⁴⁷⁹ Causey died in 1735 and Nash immediately appointed himself to the position of MC, beginning in the season of 1736.

Nash's appointment was a reflection of the status of Tunbridge Wells as a spa and acted as a clear statement of the character and social composition that it shared with Bath. Nash's impact on the social life of watering places will be examined in subsequent chapters where Burr's claim that he 'first taught the people of fashion how to buy their pleasures' and 'arose to plan and improve the amusements of the great, public places' will be tested.⁴⁸⁰ For current purposes, Nash's joint position as MC at Bath and Tunbridge Wells is significant. Though Bath and Tunbridge Wells were both aiming to attract visitors from the nation's fashionable elite, Bath's adoption of a winter season had removed these two top spas from direct competition. Nash's appointment consolidated Tunbridge Wells's reputation as a leading resort and created a direct link between the nation's two leading watering places. In contrast to

⁴⁷⁸ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 286.

⁴⁷⁹ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 288.

⁴⁸⁰ Burr, p. 112.

Causey's informal, managerial role, Nash actively led polite society at Tunbridge Wells and his organisation provided an authority that the spa had hitherto lacked. If Tunbridge Wells had boasted a governing body it is highly unlikely that Causey's reign would have lasted so long.

'A succession of Masters of Ceremonies followed Nash, but none ruled as he did, nor lasted as long.'⁴⁸¹ Subsequent MCs continued the link between Tunbridge Wells and Bath. After Nash's death in 1761 he was succeeded by Collett, a French dancer and fencer, who held the post between 1761 and 1763, followed by Samuel Derrick until 1769. Derrick (1724-1769) was born in Dublin and apprenticed to a linen draper before running away to London to seek fame as an actor. Derrick achieved modest success as a writer: among his published works was a collection of letters, *Letters Written from Leverpoole, Chester, Corke . . .* (1767) which included an account of Bath and Tunbridge Wells during his time as MC.⁴⁸² Derrick had only limited connections in society before his appointment: 'Johnson attributed [his appointment] less to his social skills than to his being a "literary man"' and 'some have suggested that his appointment was originally intended as a joke.'⁴⁸³ Though Derrick certainly suffered by comparison with Nash, there are indications that he 'did enjoy popularity among the company, if never that of Nash in his prime.'⁴⁸⁴

After Derrick's death he was briefly succeeded by his assistant William Brereton but after he was deposed by Bath, the two spas made separate arrangements for the post of MC. 'Who made them at Tunbridge Wells is not clear: there may have been some form of election or selection by the Company at the start of the season.'⁴⁸⁵ The winning candidate, Blake, held post until 1779 during which time he was best known for his dispute with Pinchbeck, master of one of the spa's two assembly rooms. The connection with Bath was renewed with the appointment of Richard Tyson in 1780. 'Tyson, one of the most competent MCs, issued his own code of social behaviour in

⁴⁸¹ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 83.

⁴⁸² R.D.E. Eagles, 'Derrick, Samuel (1724-1769)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 15 (2004), 889 (p. 889).

⁴⁸³ Eagles, p. 889.

⁴⁸⁴ Eagles, p. 889.

⁴⁸⁵ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, pp. 83-84.

both Bath and Tunbridge,’ but ‘Doubtless worn out by his double assignment’ he retired from Tunbridge Wells in 1801.⁴⁸⁶

Tunbridge Wells and Bath were finally divided in 1801 when James King, MC of Bath’s Lower Rooms, elected to take up the more prestigious post at Cheltenham.⁴⁸⁷ This was a reflection of the diminishing reputation of Tunbridge Wells as a spa: as the company became increasingly residential and fashion moved elsewhere the post of MC lost its social cachet. The rising star of Cheltenham, which had taken Tunbridge Wells’s position as rival to Bath, was a far more attractive option. Little is known about the subsequent appointments, which came in fairly quick succession: Fotheringham (c. 1801-05); Paul Amsinck, author and illustrator of the guidebook *Tunbridge Wells and its Neighbourhood...*, (1805-17); Richard Tyson, who returned briefly to the post in 1817; G. T. Roberts, (1817-22); Captain Merryweather, (1822-5); and H. Maddan, Royal Marines officer ‘last of the line, who resigned in 1836, by which time this office had become redundant.’⁴⁸⁸ As the initial appointment of a MC was a signal of a resort’s status, so was the decision to retire the post. Though Tunbridge Wells was still a functioning spa in 1836, it had lost all claims to fashionability and though its population remained significantly leisured, the town’s character was more that of a thriving urban centre than health resort.

The position of MC at Margate shared several characteristics with that at Tunbridge Wells. Margate’s first MC was James Walker who was appointed in 1769. The appointment was a result of the increasing status of Margate as a fashionable seaside resort and a direct response to the opening of the town’s first permanent assembly rooms. The role of MC at the seaside resorts followed the same pattern as established at the spas during the first half of the eighteenth century and Nash’s period of rule in particular.

Though ostensibly the role of MC at Margate was the same as that at Tunbridge Wells, in practice they were very different. This was mainly due to the size of the visiting company. At Tunbridge Wells it had been possible for Nash to greet each arriving visitor individually: there were fewer visitors and their average stay was

⁴⁸⁶ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 236.

⁴⁸⁷ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 237.

⁴⁸⁸ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, pp. 83-84.

longer. At Margate, however, the size of the visiting company was much larger and their average length of stay shorter. The challenges this presented is evident in the organisation of assemblies and subscriptions. Coping with the number of visitors was a problem faced by Walker. In an advertisement for his annual ball in September 1780, the following notice was given:

Should he have omitted presenting any Ladies or Gentlemen with Tickets, who have honoured his Subscription Book with their Names, he hopes they will have the Candour and Goodness to signify their Demand to him, and not attribute it either to Design or Neglect, as his most sanguine Desire is to please⁴⁸⁹

Such statements were made yearly by Walker. As Margate's popularity increased so would the difficulty of the position of MC. The implications of the expansion of the visiting company on the social life of the seaside resorts will be discussed further in chapter four. As the hoys and steamboats brought increasing numbers of visitors to Margate, this problem would have become greater.

Walker's successor, Charles Le Bas in 1788, was the first officially to hold the joint position of MC at Margate and Ramsgate. Due to the close connections and proximity between the three Isle of Thanet resorts, it is likely that Walker was already performing in this role for Ramsgate and Broadstairs. As at Margate, the opening of permanent assembly rooms at Ramsgate in 1787 was the impetus to the formal appointment. Le Bas appears to have been successful in his position from the outset and his longevity in the role attests to his popularity amongst visitors. Cozens, for example, referring to Le Bas's collection subscriptions, in 1797 stated, 'Mr. Le Bas has filled that honourable situation with such credit to himself, and such attention to the company, as to deserve this and every other mark of public approbation.'⁴⁹⁰ Towards the end of his reign, the editor of *The New Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs Guide* of 1809 noted:

It is now upwards of twenty years since Mr. LE BAS succeeded Mr. WALKER as M.C. and from that period to the present, the testimonies of approbation from the Subscribers to

⁴⁸⁹ Walker, 'Margate, Sept. 8', *Kentish Gazette*, 16 September 1780, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁰ Cozens, *The Margate Guide*, p. 59.

the Margate and Ramsgate Assembly-Rooms, have been constantly increasing. That he may long enjoy the fruits of his indefatigable exertions, is the sincere wish of his and the Public's faithful and obedient humble servant⁴⁹¹

Le Bas held the position for a significant period of time; twenty-six years until September 1814 when he was succeeded by Captain Clough. 'What had long been the custom whereby Margate and Ramsgate shared the services of one MC had been abandoned by the 1830s.'⁴⁹²

As this discussion has revealed, there is much work still to be done on the Masters of Ceremony, both the individuals themselves and the performance of their role. An overview of the role of MC at Tunbridge Wells and Margate highlights how the role of the MC evolved over the course of the long eighteenth century. Society at Tunbridge Wells, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, thrived without a formal MC and though Causey's authority may have stemmed from dubious sources, she appears to have effectively managed the visiting company. The appointment of Nash, introduced a new level of professionalism and organisation: sharing a MC with Bath was a clear indication of the spa's status. Margate, and seaside resorts as a whole, replicated the role of MC as it had developed at the inland spa, however the high number of visitors made the role increasingly challenging to fulfill. Similar to Bath and Tunbridge Wells, the sharing of a MC between Margate and Ramsgate resulted from the strong connection between these Isle of Thanet resorts, where the sharing of visitors and facilities was more immediate than at the spas. Both resorts retired the role of MC in the 1830s. Though this occurred at a similar time at the two resorts it happened for very different reasons. At Tunbridge Wells the decline of the spas as a place of fashionable resort and its rise as an urban centre made the post redundant. At Margate, the increasing number of middling and lower class visitors render the job eventually impossible to fulfill in its traditional sense, by which point many visitors would have seen the MC as old-fashioned and unnecessary to their enjoyment and participation in the social life of the resort.

⁴⁹¹ *The New Margate, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs Guide; Or, An Historical Epitome of the Ancient and Present State of the Isle of Thanet, With an Account of the Public Assemblies, Libraries, Theatre ...* 6th edn (Margate: Warren & Witherden, 1809), p. vi.

⁴⁹² Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 259.

vi

'Reading may safely be described as one of the great collective obsessions of eighteenth- and early nineteenth century English society.'⁴⁹³ First booksellers and, from the mid-eighteenth century, circulating libraries were a central component of any watering place and held a particular importance at Tunbridge Wells and Margate. In 1712 the 'unspeakable' Curll, whose name was 'synonymous with the smutty and salacious pamphlet' and who was notorious among contemporaries for publishing author's texts without their permission, opened a bookshop on the Walks.⁴⁹⁴ When considered alongside the governorship of Causey and the wider reputation of Tunbridge Wells at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Curll's presence provides an interesting insight to the spa's social life.⁴⁹⁵ The history of circulating libraries at Margate demonstrates how influential they could be to the social and cultural life of a watering place. Not only did the resort boast the highest concentration of circulating libraries nationwide but their role extended to much more than the lending and selling of books. Though the premises of Curll and his successor's acted as a social focus of the spa, it was just one of several facilities: Margate's circulating libraries extended this role considerably so it was arguably they, rather than the assembly rooms, promenades or pump and bathing rooms, that acted as the primary focus of the resort's social life.

The date of the first appearance of a bookseller in Tunbridge Wells is uncertain. Burr's otherwise detailed history did not mention their existence until his description of the present state of the spa (1766) and they were likewise absent within the accounts of Fiennes, Macky and Defoe. It is possible that there was a booksellers opened during the building boom of 1680 to 1700, however the nonappearance in a

⁴⁹³ David Allen, *A Nation of Readers: The Lending Library in Georgian England* (London: British Library, 2008), p. 1.

⁴⁹⁴ Peter Murray Hill, *Two Augustan Booksellers: John Dunton and Edmund Curll* (Kansas: University of Kansas Libraries, 1958), p. 20.

⁴⁹⁵ Curll, however, is conspicuously absent from Burr's, Barton's, Savidge's, and Chalklin's histories of the spa.

rental survey of 1700 that indicated between twenty and twenty-five shops along the Pantiles and a further twenty on the Lower Walk suggests this was not the case. There is evidence in the early eighteenth century of a Richard Smith who owned a shop at the upper end of the walks, whose shop Curll may have taken over.⁴⁹⁶

As will be explored further in chapter three, post-Restoration Tunbridge Wells had ‘acquired a disordered and licentious reputation,’ that resulted from the informality of a society composed of a mixture of social ranks and fuelled by publications such as *Tunbridge Wells, or, the Courtship of a Day* (1663) and *A Rod for Tunbridge Beaus* (1701).⁴⁹⁷ Curll, the most notorious and significant of the spa’s booksellers, was drawn to Tunbridge Wells by this reputation and its status as a favoured destination of the fashionable elite.

Edmund Curll (1683-1747) has been described by Peter Murray Hill as one ‘of the most remarkable men in the publishing and bookselling world of the final years of the seventeenth and early years of the eighteenth centuries.’⁴⁹⁸ His first biographer, Ralph Strauss offered a more colourful picture: ‘very cunning, very impudent, money-grabbing . . . though he was . . . I see him more as . . . an adventurous, picturesque, comical scamp with an agreeable habit of getting his own way.’⁴⁹⁹ Born in the west of England in 1683, Curll was apprenticed to Richard Smith, a bookseller and auctioneer with a shop near Temple Bar, before opening his first shop at the Peacock near St. Clement’s Church where in 1706 he launched himself as a publisher. In 1709 he moved to the Dial and Bible, next to St. Dunstan’s Church inside Temple Bar. Two of the earliest publications with his imprint were John Dunton’s *Athenian Spy* and the suggestively titled *The Way of a Man with a Maid*. Though Curll has been best known for the publication of pornographic texts, over the course of his forty-one year career, he printed, published or was involved in the publication of over 1,000 books on a wide range of subjects; his authors included Pope, Prior, Swift, Defoe, and Addison as well as a number of lesser known poets.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ Ralph Strauss, *The Unspeakable Curll: Being Some Account of Edmund Curll, Booksellers, to which is added a Full List of his Books* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1927), p. 39.

⁴⁹⁷ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 82.

⁴⁹⁸ Hill, p. 2.

⁴⁹⁹ Strauss, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁰ Hill, p. 20.

By 1712 when he opened a second shop in Tunbridge Wells, taking advantage of the spa's summer season coinciding with the elite's desertion of the capital, Curll's business 'was thriving despite - or because of - controversies.'⁵⁰¹ In addition to his erotic and pornographic texts, Curll become infamous for publishing without the author's consent and falsely attributing some of his less respectable publications to respectable authors. His most well-known dispute was with Alexander Pope, who in the *Dunciad* referred to him as 'shameless,' though, as Hill has noted, 'with the characteristic artistry of a worthy opponent, Pope also referred to him as 'dauntless,' however this was the more damning of the two epithets that stuck.⁵⁰² Curll's presence at Tunbridge Wells suggests a far more lively society at the spa than the rather staid and proper history of Burr suggests (which might account for Burr's lack of mention of Curll's presence at the spa), a theme that will be explored in greater detail later in this study.

After Curll's death in 1747 the history of booksellers at Tunbridge Wells followed a more regular pattern. Burr indicated that there was at least one bookseller with premises on the walks in 1766. Master of the Ceremonies Samuel Derrick who published his *Letters* the following year described 'a bookseller's shop, where you never fail of finding good company, and the choice of books calculated for light summer-reading.'⁵⁰³ As there has been no reference to Curll's lending books, either in London or Tunbridge Wells, the spa's first circulating library was most likely run by the proprietor, Edmund Baker who in 1760 also opened up a bookshop at Brighton that operated on a similar model.⁵⁰⁴

After his death Baker's business at Tunbridge Wells was taken over in 1774 by Joseph Sprange, his former apprentice who also had family connections, who expanded by adding a printing shop.⁵⁰⁵ Goulden has speculated that the printing side of the bookselling business was a result of a property deal: on 17 March 1776 Jane

⁵⁰¹ Raymond N. MacKenzie, 'Curll, Edmund (d. 1747)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 14 (2004), 714-20 (p. 715).

⁵⁰² Hill, p. 19.

⁵⁰³ Samuel Derrick, *Letters written from Leverpoole, Chester, Corke, the lake of Killarney, Dublin, Tunbridge-Wells, and Bath. ...*, vol 2 (Dublin: printed for G. Faulkner, J. Hoey, sen. P. Wilson, W. Sleater, J. Hoey, jun. J. Mitchell, J. Williams, and W. Colles, 1767), p. 31.

⁵⁰⁴ Barton, p. 309.

⁵⁰⁵ R.J. Goulden, *Kent Town Guides 1693-1900* (London: British Library, 1995), p. 91.

Sprange conveyed her property in trust to her husband and Sprange was able to borrow money against this estate. Sprange published a series of guidebooks to the spa. The first, *The Tunbridge Wells Guide* appeared in 1780: a substantial guide, containing over two-hundred and seventy pages and with a frontespiece it was ‘easily the most ambitious’ of Sprange concerns and Goulden suggests that it ‘would need careful funding before a profit from sales was seen.’⁵⁰⁶ Sprange, however, was either unlucky or imprudent as a businessman and in 1790 he was officially bankrupt.

Sprange, in his account of the company’s entertainments, made the following comments of his business:

. . . at the bookseller’s the subscription is the same, [‘a crown or more a person’] for which you have the use of whatever book you please to read at your lodgings; and here also, is a book open for the ladies. The Library consists of several thousand volumes, of the most entertaining Kind; and every new publication is added immediately as published, for the use of subscribers: the newspapers are also taken in daily.⁵⁰⁷

Thus, Sprange informs us that he offered visitors access to an extensive lending library that offered the latest publications and access to newspapers. In the 1792 edition of his guidebook, Sprange advertised the work of the ‘water poets’: composing verses had become a favoured occupation of the spa’s visitors and Sprange, as he explained, provided the opportunity for the company to record and judge each other’s efforts:

A few minutes are spent by some in making verses, as the waters, or the genius of the place, or as love and leisure inspire. These verses, *jeux de esprits*, are various and occasional: but chiefly complimentary to the ladies in general, or to some particular far one. A copy of them is usually left at SPRANGE’S shop, and entered into a book there for the inspection of the company.⁵⁰⁸

Though Sprange insisted that these poems were ‘always supposed to be exempt from the severity of criticism’ by modern, and most likely contemporary standards, many of these works were of dubious merit. Their novelty, however, and the opportunity they

⁵⁰⁶ Goulden, p. 91.

⁵⁰⁷ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, pp. 94-95.

⁵⁰⁸ *The Tunbridge Wells Directory*, p. 14.

presented for interaction between the visiting company made the writing and reading of these verses a popular pastime.⁵⁰⁹

Sprange dominated the book industry at Tunbridge Wells, including the publication of guidebooks for the spa, until his death in 1823. It is from his *The Tunbridge Wells Guide* of 1809 that we gain the first indication of his nephew, John Clifford, working for him.⁵¹⁰ Clifford inherited the bookselling and printing business on his uncle's death from which time the spa's guidebooks were issued under this name.

Circulating libraries were far more than their strict definition of 'private businesses that rented books.'⁵¹¹ During the eighteenth century they 'emerged as an integral part of the . . . leisure industry, supply division and instruction,' becoming an established part of urban life and polite society.⁵¹² Circulating libraries were central to Margate as a resort: not only was there a high concentration of establishments under competing proprietors - four in total during this period - but the three Isle of Thanet resorts as a group were particularly well stocked; by the end of the eighteenth century it boasted eight circulating libraries, 'which were sufficiently close to each other to promote competition and to attract any of the Island's inhabitants and visitors.'⁵¹³ There were also libraries at Deal, Dover and Folkestone, just a few miles away.⁵¹⁴ As Paul Kaufman has suggested, 'such a concentration of establishments at one center of fashion at one time is unique in surviving testimony and may well be actually unparalleled.'⁵¹⁵

Though it is generally agreed amongst historians that circulating libraries appeared in significant numbers from the 1740s, 'the first modern examples of commercial book lending . . . appear to have emerged in London in the years of increased cultural creativity immediately following the Restoration.'⁵¹⁶ The practice of lending books in return for payment of an agreed cash sum was, however, at this stage

⁵⁰⁹ *The Tunbridge Wells Directory*, p. 15.

⁵¹⁰ Goulden, p. 92.

⁵¹¹ Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 126.

⁵¹² Allen, *A Nation of Readers*, p. 131.

⁵¹³ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 280.

⁵¹⁴ Paul Kaufman, *The Community Library: A Chapter in English Social History* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1967), p. 20.

⁵¹⁵ Kaufman, p. 20.

⁵¹⁶ Allen, *A Nation of Readers*, p. 122.

largely experimental and soon attracted ‘first the suspicion and later the ire’ of London’s publishing booksellers who feared this practice would undermine their business.⁵¹⁷ Though David Allen has stated that after the 1710 Copyright Act ‘the renting of books to readers virtually ceased in London and stuttered elsewhere’ and it was only in the 1740s that, finally, circulating libraries at least began to re-emerge in any numbers,’ Kaufman has disputed this, arguing that ‘the rental practice was widespread in the provinces long before 1740,’ noting that this date ‘has a kind of hypnotic influence of certain library historians.’⁵¹⁸ In support he cited several instances of the continued existence of circulating libraries during this period, including George Barton in Huntington, whose advertisement in 1718 detailed his service’s expansion to St. Ives, St. Neots and Peterborough, and references to facilities in Bristol in 1718 and Birmingham in 1729.⁵¹⁹ What changed in the 1740s, according to Kaufman, was that ‘evidence of several large-scale establishments multiplies’: there was ‘a rapid increase in the number of circulating establishments both in London and throughout England; and from then on through the century the number steadily mounted.’⁵²⁰

Margate’s first circulating library was opened by Joseph Hall in 1766, whose advertisement in the *Kentish Post, or Canterbury News Letter* informed readers that had ‘fitted up a commodious Shop near the Parade for a Circulating Library consisting of a large Collection of new and entertaining Books.’⁵²¹ Subscription cost 10s. 6d. per year or 3s. per quarter.⁵²² Success allowed Hall to move to new premises in Hawley Square in 1786. Hall, in his 1790 guide, offered an extensive advertisement of the libraries facilities:

This magnificent room . . . consists of a square of forty-two feet, is seventeen feet high, and divided near the middle by a screen of columns, of the Corinthian order, which forms a kind of separation of the Library from the Toy Shop. In the centre of the latter, a dome of eighteen feet diameter arises to the height of sixteen feet, on the top of which is placed

⁵¹⁷ Allen, *A Nation of Readers*, p. 125.

⁵¹⁸ Kaufman, p. 9.

⁵¹⁹ Kaufman, p. 9.

⁵²⁰ Kaufman, p. 10.

⁵²¹ Whyman, ‘Aspects of Holidaymaking’, p. 304.

⁵²² Whyman, ‘Aspects of Holidaymaking’, p. 304.

an octagon lantern, eight feet high, from which depends a most superb and beautiful chandelier of glass . . . ⁵²³

The account continued in this manner, emphasizing at every stage its grandeur, elegance, size, and lastly its ‘very extensive Wine Vaults.’⁵²⁴ In stark contrast, the books contained by the library did not warrant significant comment. However the library did not meet with universal acclaim. Zechariah Cozens, an architect and leading inhabitant of Margate who may have designed the library,⁵²⁵ criticised the completed building for not strictly observing contemporary architectural rules, seeing it as ‘proof of the declining taste of this extolled age.’⁵²⁶ After declaring himself bankrupt in 1795, Hall’s business was taken over by Thomas Ware and was henceforth generally referred to as ‘Ware’s Library.’

Reading Hall’s guidebook it would be easy to come to the conclusion that his library faced little serious competition as his rivals’ businesses received only a brief mention. With an ill-disguised attempt at self-promotion through the negation of his competitors, the guide stated: ‘Besides the grand Library, there are two others in the Church Field, kept by Mr. Silver, and Mr. Champion; and a fourth near the water, in a very pleasant situation, kept by Mr. Garner, each of which has a good collection of books.’⁵²⁷ But, though following this lead, Hall’s was often portrayed as Margate’s leading circulating library, it faced strong competition from three rival business, all located in prominent positions in the town.

Samuel Silver in 1769 was the second proprietor to open a circulating library. With a family background in the business, Silver was drawn to Margate from Sandwich by the increasing number of visitors to the resort.⁵²⁸ Located on the High Street, in close proximity to Hall, it was this competition that prompted Hall’s move to Cecil Square. Hall and Silver ‘became great rivals’ and in May 1771 Silver followed Hall’s lead

⁵²³ Hall, pp. 9-10.

⁵²⁴ Hall, p. 11.

⁵²⁵ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 267.

⁵²⁶ Zechariah Cozens, *A Tour Through the Isle of Thanet, and some other parts of East Kent; including a Particular Description of the Churches in the Extensive District; and Copies of the Monumental Inscriptions, &c.* (London: Printed by and for J. Nichols, Printer to the Society of Antiquities, 1793), p. 25.

⁵²⁷ Hall, p. 12.

⁵²⁸ Whyman, ‘Aspects of Holidaymaking’, p. 309.

by moving his library into Cecil Square, under the assembly rooms. In 1782 he began construction on a new premises on the east side of the square which opened in March 1783.⁵²⁹ With a catalogue in 1787 listing over five thousand volumes and occupying a premier location in Cecil Square, Silver 'was the first of the Margate libraries to expand on a really large scale.'⁵³⁰ The catalogue informed prospective patrons that subscription cost five shillings, which gave them 'the Privilege of reading any Book in the catalogue, at the Library, where also the Morning and Evening papers may be read every day' and advertised that an extensive array of goods were available for sale, including bathing caps, French hair powder and Tunbridge Ware.⁵³¹ A guidebook of 1800 suggested that Silver's Library had a relatively literary focus, 'The Library being quite detached from the shop, is more the resort of the studious, and those who make use of their sight to improve their understanding.'⁵³² Silver continued in business until 1808 when he sold the business to a partnership of Bousfield and Mr. Thomas Pallister. This continued until 1812 when the partnership was disintegrated and Pallister continued as sole proprietor until 1815.⁵³³

'The fame of Joseph Hall and Samuel Silver was surpassed by that of William Garner and Samuel Bettison who enjoyed extremely long reigns as Margate librarians, being men of tremendous initiative and personality.'⁵³⁴ Garner had taken over Hall's first premises and, in contrast to Silver's library, which appears to have had a more studious clientele, the 1800 guidebook described Garner's or the Marine Library, opened in 1789, as having a more social character: 'Garner's Library, at the lower end of the High-street, although the smallest, is much frequented by the company, on account of the extensive sea prospect it enjoys in the balcony projecting from the back of the house.'⁵³⁵ This more social bent may also have resulted from the character of Garner himself: a semi-professional actor, Garner made regular appearances at Margate's Theatre Royal and so was somewhat of a resort celebrity. Situated at the bottom end of the High Street Cozen in 1793 reported that it had 'the peculiar

⁵²⁹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 310.

⁵³⁰ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 310.

⁵³¹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 313.

⁵³² *A Companion to the Watering and Bathing Places of England*, p. 86.

⁵³³ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 310.

⁵³⁴ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 315.

⁵³⁵ *A Companion to the Watering and Bathing Places of England*, p. 86.

advantage of a most delightful sea prospect and is furnished with upwards of three thousand volumes, chiefly in the English language, comprizing an excellent selection of History and Antiquities.⁵³⁶

Tragedy struck Garner's library when in 1808 it was largely destroyed during the winter storms. As newspaper article reported: 'Garner's library was so much injured that it must come down; it looks at present like a wreck of a ship, when nothing but the ribs are left standing.'⁵³⁷ Receiving widespread sympathy due to his popularity amongst the visiting company, Garner moved into temporary premises in the High Street whilst he rebuilt his ruined library. This episode of triumph after adversity became part of the lore of the resort: as the 1819 *The Thanet Itinerary or Steam Yacht Companion* observed:

His whole life has presented nothing but a continued series of unforeseen and unmerited misfortunes. The terrific storm, 1808, entirely washed down his *Library*, and spread a large proportion of his property adrift on the waves. Still as he possessed good friends and unshaken cried, he was enabled to rebuild his *Library* upon the plan which has constituted it a handsome ornament to the town.⁵³⁸

Unfortunately, Garner continued to experience 'unmerited misfortunes' and the expense of building the new library exceeded his funds. Facing bankruptcy, Garner was succeeded at the Marine Library in 1824 by W.G. Bettison junior, son of the Samuel Bettison, the 'fourth great name' in the history of Margate's circulating libraries.⁵³⁹

Bettison first opened a circulating library in the High Street in 1785. In 1800, he moved to the Hawley Square Library, taking over from Ware, where he would stay until 1838. Throughout this period this library continued to impress guidebook writers and visitors alike. Bettison's Library contributed even further to the social life of the resort than his competitors by hosting masquerades. A notice in the *Kentish Gazette* in

⁵³⁶ Cozens, *A Tour*, p. 28.

⁵³⁷ 'Canterbury, June 3', *Kentish Gazette*, 3 June 1808, p. 4.

⁵³⁸ *The Thanet Itinerary or Steam Yacht Companion, Containing a Sketch of the Island, Collected from the Best Authorities with a Complete Description of Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs and their Environs* (Ramsgate: Nuckel & Barfield, 1819), p. 36.

⁵³⁹ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 273.

August 1804, for example, advertised that 'A Grand Masquerade' would be held at on Tuesday 7 August.⁵⁴⁰ The advert continued:

The proprietor begs leave to inform his subscribers and friends, that, to add to the amusement of the evening, he has engaged a good Band of Music to attend for Country Dances, and that the library will be elegantly illuminated with glass chandeliers, and festoons of variegated lamps, interspersed with a profusion of artificial flowers.⁵⁴¹

Admittance was 3s. 6d. and doors would open at half past nine, festivities continuing until half past two, far later than Nash's recommended time of eleven that had been imposed at Tunbridge Wells. To further entice visitors to attend, they were informed that 'Mr. Dixon, pastry-cook, will attend with ice-creams, d'orgeat, lemonade, &c.' and for those in need of a costume, Mrs. Lloyd had 'arrived from London with a great variety of character dresses, masks, and dominos, of every description, on the most reasonable terms.'⁵⁴² Thus Bettison's Library assumed the unusual role of assembly room.

As Bettison's library demonstrated, circulating libraries did far more than rent and sell books and 'most of those who were content to describe themselves formally as booksellers in practice kept up a great profusion of parallel commercial interests.'⁵⁴³ *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered*, recognising that 'not one Circulating Library in twenty is, by its profits, enabled to give support to a family, or even pay for the trouble and expence attending it' suggested that a 'bookselling and stationary business should always be annexed' by alternative trades, such as haberdashery, hosiery, hats, tea, tobacco and snuffs, perfumery or the sale of patent medicines.⁵⁴⁴ Allens's modern study has suggested that the two most common accompaniments were the sale of insurance and the supply of medicines, the latter of

⁵⁴⁰ 'Masquerade', *Kentish Gazette*, 3 August 1804, p. 1.

⁵⁴¹ 'Masquerade', *Kentish Gazette*, 3 August 1804, p. 1.

⁵⁴² 'Masquerade', *Kentish Gazette*, 3 August 1804, p. 1.

⁵⁴³ Allen, *A Nation of Readers*, p. 127.

⁵⁴⁴ *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered; With Instructions for Opening and Conducting Library, Either Upon a Large or Small Plan* (London: Printed for J. Hamilton, Paternoster-Row, and T. Wilson, Bromley, 1797), pp. 34-35.

which may have been particularly profitable in a watering place.⁵⁴⁵ Certainly there was a thriving trade in medicines at Margate and the *Kentish Gazette* contained numerous advertisements for the sale of medicines that could be obtained at the circulating libraries. On 28 August 1807, for example, the paper included advertisements for Barclay's Original Ointment, a 'Never failing Cure for the Itch. In one hour's application,' Dr. Walker's Jesuit Drops by Joseph Wessells and Russia Oil 'for the growth of hair', all of which could be purchased at the county's circulating libraries.⁵⁴⁶

As integral elements of Margate's leisure culture, booksellers and circulating libraries featured prominently in promotional guides of the resort. The 1797 *The Margate Guide, A Descriptive Poem*, for example, offered a comparison of the resort's literary facilities in rhyming couplets and provides insight into the different products sold by the booksellers. The description of Ware's Library in Cecil Street was lavish and demonstrates how books were only one of many items sold:

And then, the well-constructed shop displays
The works of art, in thousand diff'rent ways;
All that is curious, useful, we can prize
In books, or jewel'ry, here meet our eyes;
Arrang'd in cases fitting for the show,
And there in all their vivid colours glow.⁵⁴⁷

The explanatory notes elaborated further, saying that Ware also offered 'an excellent assortment of the stationery, jewelry, cutlery, hardware, silver and plated goods, &c.'⁵⁴⁸ Likewise Silver's Library was 'well stor'd / With trinkets, such as Tunbridge Wells afford; / Here jewel'ry, and thousand other things, / Forth to our view, the owner

⁵⁴⁵ Allen, *A Nation of Readers*, p. 127.

⁵⁴⁶ *Kentish Gazette*, 28 August 1807, p. 3.

⁵⁴⁷ Cozens, *The Margate Guide*, p. 44.

⁵⁴⁸ Cozens, *The Margate Guide*, p. 44.

yearly brings.⁵⁴⁹ At Garner's the books merited greater praise than its other wares, of which were said 'Here toys and trinkets are in store combined.'⁵⁵⁰

As this account suggests, though the lending of books was the main commercial enterprise, as focal points for resort society Margate's circulating libraries offered visitors a wide-array of opportunities for the consumption of fashionable goods. Thomas Malton's well-known 1789 print *Hall's Library at Margate* (Figure 2.5) illustrates how the resort's circulating libraries functioned as a social centre, demonstrating how they became important places to see and be seen and to participate in the consumption of a wide array of fashionable leisure pursuits. Malton presented the circulating library as an aspirational centre of polite society where patrons could engage in a number of different activities. Books can be seen lining the left hand wall being perused by a solitary customer and at least one gentleman and a lady are looking at what could be newspapers, pamphlets or catalogues but they were by no means the focus of activity. Many customers are gathered around display cases, viewing the goods and conversing with fellow patrons. Children are pictured playing with toys and, remarkably, two dogs can be seen. Conversation is by far the most common activity shown, reflecting circulating libraries' importance as a focus for social interaction, similar to the pump rooms of the inland spas or promenades more generally. Whereas at Tunbridge Wells the bookshop was one component of social life in the Wells area that, outside of Curl's notoriety, gained much of its social cachet from being the location of a subscription list, at Margate they were fundamental to the resort's character and success.

⁵⁴⁹ Cozens, *The Margate Guide*, p. 46.

⁵⁵⁰ Cozens, *The Margate Guide*, p. 50.

Figure 2.5. Hall's Library at Margate (1789)⁵⁵¹



When patrons did chose to borrow books from Margate's libraries what did they read? The contents of circulating libraries and the popularity of different genres

⁵⁵¹ *Hall's Library at Margate* (Margate: J. Hall, 1789).

has been a focus of study amongst historians. *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered* suggested that within a library consisting of fifteen hundred volumes the following guide for its composition should be followed: one thousand and fifty novels; one hundred and thirty romances; sixty each of history and divinity; forty tales; thirty each of lives, poetry, arts, and sciences; twenty each of voyages, travels and plays; and ten anecdotes.⁵⁵² Kaufman's survey of extant catalogues confirmed that circulating libraries did contain 'a strikingly wide variety of stock' and the 'relative quantitative distribution of titles' varied between businesses.⁵⁵³ He emphasised, however, the difficulty in determining the actual circulation of works as, though catalogues would only list a title once, they may have had numerous copies in stock.⁵⁵⁴ Despite this uncertainty, Kaufman's conclusion conformed with the advice given within *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered* as he argued that 'we must entertain the probability that many establishments must have circulating many times the number of novels as of any other genre.'⁵⁵⁵ As Allen has noted, however, 'whilst the novel-dominated collection did exist, it was by no means the only model available to entrepreneurial owners whose natural business instincts . . . were . . . to differentiate themselves from their competitors.'⁵⁵⁶ In Margate, where the rivalry between circulating libraries was unusually fierce and where bankruptcy threatened most of proprietors during some stage of their careers, it is likely that each library was known for specialising in different genres.

Booksellers and circulating libraries were integral components of the social and cultural life of all long eighteenth century watering places however, as the above has shown, they assumed different roles and exerted different levels of influence over resort society at Margate and Tunbridge Wells. The influence of the book trade at Tunbridge Wells revolved principally around the character of Curll. Responding to and augmenting the spa's licentious reputation, Curll's reign continued despite Nash's apparent imposition of the strictures of polite society, the significance of which will be explored further in chapter three. But Curll and his successors' businesses were just

⁵⁵² *The Use of Circulating Libraries Considered*, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁵³ Kaufman, p. 14.

⁵⁵⁴ Kaufman, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁵ Kaufman, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁶ Allen, *A Nation of Readers*, p. 135.

one element of a core group of social and cultural facilities that provided entertainment for the visiting company: the bookshop and later the circulating library provided one of several available spaces for people to congregate but it had only a minimal influence on the urban development of the resort itself or (aside from Curll's personality) on how the spa functioned as a centre for leisure and pleasure.

By contrast, circulating libraries played a central role in the development of Margate as a resort and, far more than its assembly rooms, provided a focus for its social and cultural life. The circulating library's potential multiplicity of function was successfully exploited: not only was this achieved in the normal way through the provision of a wide array of goods on sale, but they were also a thriving and dynamic social arena where the visiting company could gather for polite conversation and to be seen to participate in the consumption of fashionable goods, culture and leisure. Bettison's library took this role a step further in the early nineteenth century when it assumed the role of assembly room by hosting masquerade balls. Thus it could be convincingly argued that it is in the bookshops and circulating libraries that can be seen the greatest difference between Kent's two leading watering places.

vii

This chapter has argued strongly for both similarities and differences between Margate and Tunbridge Wells as urban and leisure centres. Whilst confirming the broad cultural homogeneity that underpinned the development of both the types of resort, demonstrating how emerging seaside towns adopted successful model of the inland spas, it has also shown the importance of local factors. Lacking an immediate governing authority and the influence of a single, controlling landowner, the development of both Margate and Tunbridge Wells largely depended on the actions of individual entrepreneurs and businessmen. It was this unpredictable element of individual contribution that exerted one of the most significant influences over a resort's character: the notoriety of Curll and the presence of Causey and Derrick at Tunbridge Wells added an appealing subversive element to this otherwise polite,

refined spa; at Margate the contributions of the owners of the town's circulating libraries had a decisive impact on the town's social life. As demonstrated in particular by Nash, the character of a resort's MC could have a profound influence over its society but this was not always the case: many holders this this post, particularly at smaller resorts, exerted only minimal influence.

Both Tunbridge Wells and Margate provide significant insight into the wider development of watering places. As a new town that came into existence as a result of the discovery of its mineral springs and an urban centre dedicated exclusively the leisure industry, Tunbridge Wells provides a unique insight into the development of watering places during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Acting in response to visitor demand, the spa was among the first to offer many of the social and cultural facilities that would later form the core of entertainments at all the nation's watering places. Its rise to challenge Bath as one of the nation's leading spas demonstrates the combination of factors necessary for sustained success and though it remained a relatively small, rural resort, it punched well above its weight. Whilst Tunbridge Wells built its reputation on its royal and elite patronage, Margate became notorious as the favoured destination of London's middling orders. Foreshadowing the nineteenth-century railways, Margate's water communications with the capital showed the potential held by cheap, fast transportation. Using first the hoys and later steamboats to carry visitors via the Thames from the centre of the capital, Margate was able to access the relatively untapped London middling-sort market.

Both spa and seaside resort shared a core set of social and culture facilities but Margate developed as distinctly different set of focal points than Tunbridge Wells. Whereas a spa's facilities tended to cluster around its mineral springs, the seaside was structured by its open spaces. Focused on the sea and shore, a new set of resort architecture developed that allowed visitors to interact with and consume nature. Piers and bathing machines bridged the divided between the civilised society of the resort and wild, untamed nature, adding excitement and novelty to the resort routine and the water cure itself.

Through an analysis of assembly rooms, the position of Master of the Ceremonies and booksellers / circulating libraries, this chapter has been able to directly compare these central aspects of resort life at Margate and Tunbridge Wells.

Due to the discovery of the extent of the influence of locality, however, the conclusions drawn from this comparison can only be used as broad guide for these institutions at other eighteenth-century watering places. Further study which combines a precise study of locality with a wider comprehension of the evolution of the development of watering places as urban and leisure centres is needed if we are to gain a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between eighteenth-century spas and seaside resorts.

3. Society at Kent's Watering Places

Literature has populated Kent's watering places with a set of stereotypical characters. John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester in 1675 identified the visitors to Tunbridge Wells as 'squires, ladies, and some say countesses, / Chandlers, egg-wives, bacon-wives, seamstresses.'⁵⁵⁷ Over a hundred years later, Carey found the spa filled with 'peevish old maids or bloated old dowagers, who will now and then bring a frisky young tit or two along with them, in order to keep them out of harm's way.'⁵⁵⁸ The social diversity of spas and seaside resorts was an easy target for attack for contemporary commentators and their satiric characters – ranging from the libertine rake to the matchmaking mama – offer a tantalising insight into resort society. Such literary sources can be combined with promotional guides, diaries and letters to provide a detailed understanding of society at Kent's resorts.

This chapter will look at who went to Kent's watering places between 1660 and 1820, their motivations for visiting and what entertainments they pursued during their stay. Certainly a more detailed investigation into resort life is needed as there is often a tendency to consider visiting watering places a somewhat uniform experience. This chapter will not only continue to highlight the similarities and differences between spas and seaside resorts but it will also consider how the visitor experience changed between watering places with local, regional and national catchment areas and across the long eighteenth century. It will argue that a more nuanced understanding is needed of the wide variety of social and cultural experiences offered: for example, a day visitor to Shooter's Hill from the local area at the end of the seventeenth century would have had a very different experience from a member of the fashionable elite living within the highly regulated society at Tunbridge Wells for the season, who in turn would have had a different set of expectations of their leisure time to a family party from the middling classes travelling for a two-week holiday at the small seaside town of Sandgate at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

⁵⁵⁷ Wilmot, p. 46.

⁵⁵⁸ Carey, p. 44.

The history of England's watering places is inseparable from that of class. 'Leisure was . . . an important arena in which to play out the social order'⁵⁵⁹ and, as Borsay has observed, 'the writing of leisure history has been so inextricably bound up with the history of the concept of class that no such process of disentanglement is possible.'⁵⁶⁰ The problems and possibilities of a changing social order found a particularly acute form of expression within the societal melting pot of spas and seaside resorts. Not only were social interactions and tensions played out on the individual level through the resorts' roles as marriage markets but they also found expression within the reputation of watering places: thus Sydenham could be identified as 'low' and Margate as the destination of what were often disparagingly referred to as the 'city nobility.'

Understanding the social order during the eighteenth century is thus essential to identifying who went to Kent's watering places and why; but even if a functioning vertical model of the social hierarchy could be constructed this could not simply be transplanted onto the similarly vertical model of watering places, as outlined in chapter one. Instead both the subtle gradations of rank and the broader divisions between 'patrician and 'plebeian' or 'polite' and 'vulgar' will need to be examined through how they were manifested within Kent's resorts. However a broad identification of watering places with polite society is also problematic as it assumes that a homogeneity of culture led to a shared experience, when instead it will be shown that even the division within the higher ranks of aristocracy and gentry could be significant, creating a gulf between their expectations and experiences.

'That the aristocracy were the "leisured classes" was axiomatic' but the success of watering places cannot be explained solely by the emulation of the aristocracy by the middling ranks.⁵⁶¹ Many watering places owed their names to the great but their fortunes to the mass of the middling and it was the growth in the number and wealth of the middling ranks that, by creating a genuine mass market for leisure, fuelled the rise of spas and seaside resorts during the eighteenth century.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁹ Borsay, *A History of Leisure*, p. 79.

⁵⁶⁰ Borsay, *A History of Leisure*, p. 75.

⁵⁶¹ John Rule, *Albion's People: English Society, 1714-1815* (London: Longman, 1992), p. 44.

⁵⁶² Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 107.

Watering places did not just respond to a changing social order: they actively influenced it. By encouraging the deliberate putting aside of political and religious difficulties that were particularly acute in the later seventeenth century and, under the leadership of Nash, actively working to create a cohesive visiting company through the creation of a highly regimented, ritualised social and medical routine, spas and later seaside resorts were able to help forge the cultural homogeneity of polite society. Not only did they perform 'a useful function in easing the entry of successful members of the middle classes into good society'⁵⁶³ but they also, in the words of Tunbridge Wells's first historian, taught 'the people of fashion how to buy their pleasures.'⁵⁶⁴

The pursuit of politeness, however, 'submerged rather than exposed distinctions' and the role of watering places as national and regional marriage markets made the identification of social rank a particularly acute problem.⁵⁶⁵ If we accept the rise of 'companionate marriage,' as argued by Lawrence Stone, where 'Mate selection was determined more by free choice than by parental decision and was based as much on expectations of lasting mutual affection as on calculations of an increase in money, status or power' then an increased importance must be placed on the process of courtship.⁵⁶⁶ But Amanda Vickery's revision of this theory emphasises the fact that the choice of marriage market in this process was crucial. For though certainly amongst the lesser gentry and propertied middling classes children were allowed 'more initiative and privacy in courtship,' 'Noble endogamy was still emphatically the norm, only now parents sought to achieve by education and an exclusive marriage market that which had previously been enforced by fiat': the propertied 'did all they could to ensure that their children planted their affections in prudent soil' and the correct choice of resort could help ensure their success.⁵⁶⁷

The typical portrayal of watering places as bastions of polite society will, however, be undermined by a focus on the more licentious aspects of their reputation. Beginning with the popularity of Tunbridge Wells amongst the libertine court of

⁵⁶³ Pimlott, p. 45.

⁵⁶⁴ Burr, p. 112.

⁵⁶⁵ Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, p. 116.

⁵⁶⁶ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1977), p. 412.

⁵⁶⁷ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 40-44.

Charles II and continuing into the eighteenth century with the presence of Bell Causey, Edmund Curll and Samuel Derrick, it will be shown how the less salubrious facets of resort life continued, despite the wider impact of Nash's reforms. This theme continued within Kent's emerging seaside resorts where the relaxation of the social regimen, the sexualisation of the water cure and the often more dominant role of Kent's resort-ports as militarised spaces made them particularly 'dangerous' places for women, an aspect that became increasingly apparent in satiric portrayals of resort life. This image sat alongside the more acceptable representations of the resorts in contemporary literature, which provides countless examples of matches being made and pursued in these socially diverse arenas. Not all women would have been primarily interested in the resorts as marriage markets, however. This chapter will also look at the intellectual life of resorts and show how the traditional narrative of the social life of watering places can be disrupted by a focus on complaints of boredom at Tunbridge Wells, a common but thus far unexamined concern, particularly amongst the spa's elite female visitors.

Continuing this theme, the final section of this chapter will argue for both the diversity of the visitor experience and the broader cultural homogeneity of Kent's watering places through an examination of four manuscript accounts written by women in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By analysing the visitor experience across several intersecting axes – the vertical hierarchies of class and watering place as well as personality and lifecycle – the similarities and differences between the social life of spa and seaside, encapsulating both the reputations and physical development of individual resorts and wider changes in the leisure experience, will be examined and a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of resort life provided.

Differentiation was the key to society and the history of Kent's watering places cannot be told without an understanding of the changing social order.⁵⁶⁸ The study of long eighteenth century society, however, has proven highly problematic and continues to be an area of debate amongst modern scholars as it was by contemporaries. Two broad themes have emerged, around which discussion can be hinged. First, the English social structure was a 'precisely graded' hierarchy where 'gross inequalities were landscaped in gentle gradients rather than in giant steps.'⁵⁶⁹ Second, there can be identified a binary division between the 'polite' and the 'vulgar,' which was seen to separate polite society from the mass of the people. Within a complex and fluid social system, the most significant development for this study was the growth in the numbers and wealth of the middling ranks that generated a demand for high-status leisure activities and which fuelled the rise and expansion of watering places by creating a sustained and increasing demand. Eighteenth-century developments can also be placed within a wider framework of the move away from the medieval conceptualisation of society as being composed of three estates: those that pray, those that fight and those that work, to the tripartite system of the upper, middle and working classes of the industrialised nineteenth century.

Historians have disagreed over the timing of these changes and the temptation to identify the key developmental movements within one's own period of study has often proved irresistible. Keith Wrightson, for example, has argued for the importance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and has shown how, though Tudor and Stuart commentators widely accepted the hierarchy of degrees, they struggled to establish hard and fast criteria of status, the definition of gentility and the 'placing of other occupational and social groups' in particular highlighting internal inconsistencies.⁵⁷⁰ The debate is often concluded with a discussion of the Marxist tripartite division of

⁵⁶⁸ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, rev edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 16.

⁵⁶⁹ Porter, *English Society*, p. 49.

⁵⁷⁰ Keith Wrightson, 'Estates, Degrees, and Sorts: Changing Perceptions of Society in Tudor and Stuart England', in *Language, History and Class*, ed. by Penelope Corfield (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 30-52 (p.43).

class which came to replace the eighteenth-century language of rank, order and degree.

Contemporary analysts have proven an invaluable source for the study of the social order and the hierarchies provided by Gregory King, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Massie and Patrick Colquhoun have been frequently used to provide a framework for discussion. All four demonstrate the diversity of debate, fluidity of language and competing interpretations that reflected 'a belief in change and social mutability, rather than . . . a strictly graded or strictly denoted social hierarchy.'⁵⁷¹ King's 'Scheme of the Income and Expense of Several Families' was an attempt to estimate the population and wealth of England in 1688. Though King's work can be criticised on many grounds, particularly his underestimation of the numbers of the middling ranks, it is nevertheless useful as a broad guide, especially when the categories are combined into larger groups.⁵⁷² Frank O'Gorman has grouped King's twenty-six classifications into six: landowners (the aristocracy and gentry) which constituted 2.8 percent of the population; freeholders and farmers, 30.7 percent; professions and merchants, 6.7 percent; shopkeepers, tradesmen, artisans and handicraftsmen, 8.5 percent; labouring people and out-servants, 23.2 percent; and cottagers and paupers, 23.6 percent.⁵⁷³

Defoe in 1709 proposed a simpler sevenfold classification which, less detailed than King's hierarchy, was able to sidestep strict definitions of status. 'Clearly not concerned with pre-ordained social rank, this was an attempt at establishing actual differentials based on types of occupation and income levels, as well as consumption patterns.'⁵⁷⁴

1. The Great, who live profusely
2. The Rich, who live plentifully
3. The middle Sort, who live well
4. The working Trades, who labour hard and feel no want
5. The Country People, Farmers, etc. who fare indifferently

⁵⁷¹ Penelope J. Corfield, 'Class in Eighteenth-Century Britain,' in *Language, History and Class*, ed. by Penelope Corfield, pp. 101-130 (p. 128).

⁵⁷² Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 13.

⁵⁷³ O'Gorman, pp. 13-8.

⁵⁷⁴ Corfield, 'Class in Eighteenth-Century Britain', p. 115.

6. The Poor that fare hard
7. The Miserable, that really pinch and want⁵⁷⁵

Similarly, Massie in 1756 showed that ‘old “ranking” was no guide to actual wealth’⁵⁷⁶ and instead of distinguishing the top ranks by status did so by financial turnover per family per annum.⁵⁷⁷

1. Noblemen or Gentlemen: landed income between £4,000 and 20,000 p.a.
2. Gentlemen: landed income between £200 and £2,000 p.a.
3. Freeholders: landed income between £50 and £100 p.a.
4. Farmers: expending between £40 and £150 p.a.
5. Tradesmen in London and Country: expending between £40 and £300 p.a.
6. Manufacturers in London and Country: earning between 7/6d and 12/- p.wk.
7. Labourers and Husbandmen in London and country: earning between 5/- and 9/- p.wk.⁵⁷⁸

Colquhoun’s estimates, which drew partly on the 1801 Census, likewise concentrated on average annual family income.

Table 3.1. Patrick Colquhoun, 1803⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁵ Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the State of the British Nation*, vol. 6 (London, 1709), p.142

⁵⁷⁶ Corfield, ‘Class in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, p. 116.

⁵⁷⁷ O’Gorman, p. 103.

⁵⁷⁸ Corfield, ‘Class in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, p. 116.

⁵⁷⁹ Peter Mathias, ‘The Social Structure in the Eighteenth Century: A Calculation by Joseph Massie’, *The Economic History Review*, 10.1 (1957), 30-45 (p. 45).

Group	No. of Families '000	Income £'000	% Total: Families %	% Total: Income %
Nobility, Gentry, Rentiers	27.2	32,800	1.4	15.1
Professions, Govt. Service, Forces, Service Pensioners	172.5	31,300	8.9	14.4
Agriculture	660.	48,540	34.2	22.3
General Labour	290.7	2,190	15.0	1.3
Manufactures	541.	51,080	28.0	23.5
Trade, Distribution	242.9	48,725	12.5	22.4
Vagrants, etc.	234.5 (persons)	2,385	-	1.1
Totals	1,934.3	217,740	100	100

These four hierarchies have been widely used by historians of eighteenth-century society and interpretations have varied. Taken together, the continued attempts to construct a vertical hierarchy have been shown as evidence that 'the old

model of a hierarchical society or orders, resting upon foundations of deference and reciprocal obligation, was remarkably resilient⁵⁸⁰ and that the continued belief in a 'graduated ladder of dominance and subordination' provided a 'reassuring sense of stability and continuity.'⁵⁸¹ However they also attest to the ongoing problems of definition in an evolving social system: whilst it was widely accepted that the distribution of wealth was changing with people becoming more affluent and the gulf between the rich and poor being filled by the 'increasingly numerous and socially visible "middling" interests,' the exact extent of these changes was difficult to quantify.⁵⁸² Corfield has emphasised three developments: first, 'the growing diversity in sources of wealth and status' where there were 'alternative avenues to advancement' outside of land and landed titles. Second, 'Trade, commercial services (especially banking), some professions, government, and, increasingly, industry, were all admired . . . for their potential power and riches' with this increased diversity encouraging a 'notable social competitiveness.' Third, it was not just landowners who laid claim to gentility or social eminence.⁵⁸³

Concurrent with these views of a finely graded vertical hierarchy was a belief in a fundamental division between 'polite' and 'vulgar' and a good deal of scholarship has centred on the existence and extent of such a bifold distinction. Though J.C.D. Clark's thesis of a 'fundamental social distance' between 'patricians and plebeians' has been challenged, there has emerged a broad consensus of the cultural hegemony provided by 'politeness' or the identification of 'gentility.'⁵⁸⁴ Polite society was a phenomenon driven by the middling classes. Resulting from the 'pursuit of harmony within a propertied and increasingly urban society' and, in a sense, 'a logical consequence of commerce,' politeness was more than a moral code: it provided a framework within which society could interact and 'permitted and controlled a relatively open competition for power, influence, jobs, wives and markets.'⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁰ O'Gorman, p. 382.

⁵⁸¹ Wrightson, 'Estates, Degrees and Sorts', pp. 51-52.

⁵⁸² Corfield, 'Class in Eighteenth-Century Britain', p. 107.

⁵⁸³ Corfield, 'Class in Eighteenth-Century Britain', pp. 106-07.

⁵⁸⁴ J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics During the Ancien Regime*, 2nd edn, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 36.

⁵⁸⁵ Langford, *A Polite and Commerical People*, pp. 4-5.

The commercialisation of leisure from 1660 allowed for the creation of a genuine public market for watering places, based predominantly on demand from the middling ranks. The model of the commercialisation of leisure as ‘a function of expanding wealth, percolating through society, from the top downwards, in a series of chronological phases, each characterized by the absorption of a class or social group/s into the market place for leisure’⁵⁸⁶ has been often used as the foundational principle for the study of spas and seaside resorts, and Walton in particular has focused on expanding supply and demand.⁵⁸⁷ This view of leisure presents it as ‘commonly purposeful’ and requiring ‘the expenditure of money as well as time’ and rests on increasing affluence and social emulation.⁵⁸⁸

Watering places provided access to polite society and high-status leisure activities to anyone who could spare the time and money and anyone who looked and acted the part of a gentleman was accepted as such. With the tenets of polite society providing ‘consensus of expectation about the proper modes of public behaviour, whether they came from the aristocracy, the gentry or those groups within the middle ranks’, resorts played an important role in creating a sense of cohesion within a changing society.⁵⁸⁹ But inclusivity also led to a sense of social unease. With the lapse of sumptuary legislation and the erosion of the traditional model of gentility, based on birth and the ownership of a rural estate, in favour of a cultural definition, correctly gauging a person’s rank became increasingly difficult. Accurately identifying a resort’s reputation and the composition of its social company was crucial, particularly for its role as a marriage market and class tensions, as will be shown, were widely reflected in literature and print.

‘England was a society in which the fences dividing social ranks were, in theory and practice, jumpable.’⁵⁹⁰ The top rank of society, comprised at the end of the eighteenth century of ‘some 400 families who could be described as great landlords’ who were distinguished from the inferior ranks of landed society by their wealth,

⁵⁸⁶ Borsay, *A History of Leisure*, p. 25.

⁵⁸⁷ Most prominently in *The English Seaside*.

⁵⁸⁸ J.H. Plumb, *The Commercialization of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century England* (Reading: University of Reading, 1973), p. 3.

⁵⁸⁹ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁰ Porter, *English Society*, p. 5.

influence and style of living, were the most difficult to penetrate.⁵⁹¹ Emphasising the inability to buy titles and the largely prohibitive costs of purchasing an estate, G.E. Mingay has argued that entering the aristocracy ‘was in fact a narrow gate, and difficult to pass, and only the most able, ambitious, and fortunate could progress very far beyond it up the social scale.’⁵⁹² ‘The main path to advancement necessarily lay through marriage’ and it was the possibility of making an advantageous match within the national and regional marriage markets that was a cornerstone of the success of watering places.⁵⁹³ It was, of course, easier for people to fall down the social ladder than to climb it and ‘it was hard to buy your way into high society’: as Porter has noted, ‘It was easier to marry a peer than acquire a peerage.’⁵⁹⁴

The gentry varied relatively widely in wealth and lifestyle: at the end of the eighteenth century the wealthiest of this group had incomes of up to £4,000 a year whilst at the bottom of the scale, ‘modest gentlemen, only barely gentry, [were] living a genteel but restricted life on incomes of some hundreds of pounds.’⁵⁹⁵ The interconnectedness of the gentry with both the aristocracy and the middling ranks has been widely recognised. Primogeniture ensured that it was common for all but the firstborn sons to enter trade or the professions and Vickery has argued in her study of the lesser gentry that ‘many families were so “hybrid” in status, that it seems artificial to assign them a single occupational label’ and she has emphasised that ‘local polite society incorporated minor gentry, professional and mercantile families.’⁵⁹⁶

Despite a high level of shared culture, the division between the time spent at resorts by the aristocracy and gentry was significant. ‘While the country gentleman could afford to take their families to Bath or Tunbridge perhaps only once or twice in a lifetime, the nobility and wealthy gentry spent much of their time at resorts and visiting their relations.’⁵⁹⁷ This pattern bears many similarities with the time the upper classes spent in London. ‘In general the “quality” seems by the mid-eighteenth century

⁵⁹¹ G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1963), p. 19.

⁵⁹² Mingay, *English Landed Society*, p. 26.

⁵⁹³ Mingay, *English Landed Society*, p. 28.

⁵⁹⁴ Porter, *English Society*, p. 51.

⁵⁹⁵ Mingay, *English Landed Society*, p. 21.

⁵⁹⁶ Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 17.

⁵⁹⁷ Mingay, p. 154.

to have spent from six to nine months in “town,” whereas for the most part ‘the gentry did not so much stay in London as visit it. Perhaps combining business with pleasure, they might take lodgings for brief residences perhaps once a year, and in most cases not that often.’⁵⁹⁸ Thus whilst emulation of the nobility by the gentry was important, there was a clear difference in time and money spent and these divisions were exacerbated as attendance at watering places percolated down through society.

The middling sort, on whose patronage watering places thrived, are the most difficult to define. ‘Not a “middle class” in any proto-Marxist sense of the term’ the middling sort ‘were seldom defined as a group whose collective interests and identities pitted them against the landed aristocracy.’⁵⁹⁹ As the above models demonstrate, contemporaries were well aware of the growth in numbers, wealth and self-confidence⁶⁰⁰ of the middling sort, whose main characteristics have been defined as ‘accumulation, self-improvement and the employment of labour and capital’ but they struggled to define or accurately assess such a diverse and loosely connected group.⁶⁰¹ Watering places were part of society’s response to the growing prominence of the middling sort with their consciously constructed emphasis on inclusion and the temporary leveling of rank that was intended to help integrate the middling into polite society. Walton, however, has highlighted the limits of social inclusion, noting that the cost of visiting a resort remained prohibitive for many, the ‘high charges for travel, accommodation and entertainment’ acting as an ‘efficient social filter well into the eighteenth century.’⁶⁰² As the final section of this chapter will show, not only did the extent of middling sort demand change across the eighteenth century but their presence significantly reshaped resort society.

The lower orders only enter this chapter briefly. First this is due to a lack of documentary evidence: no personal accounts have yet been found written by the lower orders for Kent’s resorts during this period. Secondly, their use of Kent’s watering places as leisure resorts was minimal and whilst many did take the waters for

⁵⁹⁸ Rule, p. 44.

⁵⁹⁹ Hay and Rogers, p. 30.

⁶⁰⁰ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 13.

⁶⁰¹ Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*, p. 17.

⁶⁰² Walton, *English Society*, p. 7.

health, most notably at the Margate General Sea-bathing Infirmary, they were detached from the social life of the resort itself. Thirdly, when the lower orders were mentioned as patronising watering places it was usually in a derogatory fashion and their presence was an indication that a resort had acquired a 'low' reputation and that it was shunned by polite society. Part of this chapter will explore how far Shooter's Hill and Sydenham were related to London's spas and pleasure gardens after their initial period of fame and elite patronage had passed but for the most part, the lower orders' use of mineral waters was at 'healing springs' rather than 'resorts' and thus falls outside the scope of this thesis.

ii

The Restoration of monarchy in 1660 ushered in a new phase of English leisure. The elites rejected what they believed to be 'the kill-joy hypocrisy' of Puritanism, instigating 'a new era whose hedonism far exceeded anything that had been seen before the outbreak of the Civil War.'⁶⁰³ In this new environment, spas were able to emerge confidently as centres for leisure and pleasure, becoming, as Defoe claimed for Bath, 'resort[s] of the sound, rather than the sick.'⁶⁰⁴

Tunbridge Wells in the period between the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution in 1688 is best seen as an extension of court society. Having survived the Civil War and Interregnum largely unscathed Tunbridge Wells, alongside Epsom, became a leading courtier's spa; a favoured destination of Charles II's libertine court. The court, described by N.H. Keeble as a 'frenetic sexual circus,'⁶⁰⁵ formed a society that 'defined and reassured itself through conspicuous leisure' but there was more to resort life than the pursuit of pleasure.⁶⁰⁶ 'Restoration England was a society that

⁶⁰³ Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his Kingdoms, 1660-1685* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 46.

⁶⁰⁴ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 360.

⁶⁰⁵ N.H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 173.

⁶⁰⁶ Keeble, p. 182.

desperately wanted to forget its past, but which forever remained haunted by it.⁶⁰⁷ Spas provided an important arena within which the religious and political tensions of the previous decades could be soothed through the formation of a cohesive society from the disparate visiting company.

The decades following the Restoration were ones of transition. Social historians have identified a broad movement from ‘courtesy,’ dominant as a code of manners in the sixteenth century, to ‘civility’ in the seventeenth, that would be replaced by ‘politeness’ in the eighteenth. There was, of course, significant overlap and attempting to draw a line between the end of one concept and the beginning of another would be artificial and inaccurate. Two facets connected to the emergence of civility are particularly important for this study. First was the increasingly urban focus of elite social life. Civility was not just a code of manners but an ‘ideologically loaded’ concept that formed ‘an integral part of larger visions of social and political orders,’ developing in part as a response to the problems created by urban and particularly London society.⁶⁰⁸ In the fluid society of the capital where precise markers of rank were not always available, it became increasingly important to be able to identify people through manners and behaviours.⁶⁰⁹ Civility ‘represented a standard of conduct, particularly self-control, which distinguished the civil man from the beast, the savage, or, in practice within society, the non-gentleman’ but it was also flexible enough to allow for the redefinition of relationships.⁶¹⁰ It was thus able to function as ‘a static model of well-ordered humanity and a technique of self-orientation in a complex social world.’⁶¹¹ Second, civility can be seen as ‘leading the reform of society’ as it ‘served to dampen the flames of controversy’ that remained in the aftermath of the upheavals of the seventeenth century.⁶¹² As a concept it changed to meet the demands of the new age: ‘Atavistic cravings were to be sublimated, as was conspicuous consumption and

⁶⁰⁷ Harris, *Restoration*, p. 46.

⁶⁰⁸ Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 49.

⁶⁰⁹ Bryson, p. 136.

⁶¹⁰ Bryson, p. 96.

⁶¹¹ Bryson, p. 96.

⁶¹² M.B. Becker, *The Emergence of Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century: A Privileged Moment in the History of England, Scotland and France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 68.

the reckless gallantry of . . . nobility.⁶¹³ Instead, the focus was increasingly on ‘a more generalised conception of culture as well as of society’ where ‘Taste in the arts and an appreciation of nature were now benchmarks.’⁶¹⁴ Thus towards the end of the seventeenth century civility was losing its focus on the ‘domestication and taming of a recalcitrant order’ and was instead becoming ‘synonymous with politeness’ and concentrated on creating wider social cohesion.⁶¹⁵

Emerging as ‘a novel and unique social space in which distinctions of rank were temporarily ignored and uninhibited debate on matters of political and philosophical interest flourished’, the coffeehouse can be seen as representative of the wider aims and roles of late seventeenth-century watering places. First appearing in Oxford in 1650 the coffeehouse, like inns and taverns, was one of many establishments that purveyed food, drink and sociability but from the outset ‘it had a particularly complex identity because sociability was seen as its paramount characteristic and because it was associated not only with private exchange but also with conversation in topics of general interest and public import.’⁶¹⁶ During the seventeenth century the coffeehouse ‘evolved from a novelty into an essential institution of urban life.’⁶¹⁷

At Tunbridge Wells the first coffeehouse appeared after the Restoration, however according to Burr a forerunner was one of the first buildings to appear next to the springs. This was the Pipe-office, ‘which in the present age might perhaps be called a coffee-house’ that was constructed in the 1630s to provide refreshments for those drinking the waters.⁶¹⁸ Gentlemen would meet to ‘converse over a pipe, and a dish of coffee’ whilst reading the newspapers, for which privilege ‘It was customary for them to pay half-a-crown subscription.’⁶¹⁹ Later in the seventeenth century, negotiations in 1682 between Thomas Neale of the Rusthall estate, London investor Thomas Janson and local inhabitants provided for ‘rooms for coffee’ and by 1697 Tunbridge Wells

⁶¹³ Becker, p. 66.

⁶¹⁴ Becker, p. 66.

⁶¹⁵ Becker, p. 66.

⁶¹⁶ Lawrence E. Klein, ‘Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England.’ *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 59.1 (1997), 30-51, (p. 31)

⁶¹⁷ Klein, ‘Coffeehouse Civility’, p. 41.

⁶¹⁸ Burr, p. 31.

⁶¹⁹ Burr, p. 31.

boasted two large coffeehouses.⁶²⁰ Coffee was in one way uniquely suited to the resort environment that combined leisure and health: 'both a pleasant drink and efficacious drug, coffee occupied a sort of middle ground between diet and medicine.'⁶²¹

Burr portrayed the spa's coffeehouses and booksellers as places where 'the social virtues reign triumphant over prejudice and predisposition,' where:

The easy freedom, and chearful gaiety, arising from the nature of a public place, extends its influence over them, and every species of party spirit is intirely stripped of those malignant qualities which render it so destructive of the peace of mankind. Here divines and philosophers deists and Christians, whigs and tories, scotch [sic] and English, debate without anger, dispute with politeness, and judge with candour: while every one has an opportunity to display the excellency of his taste, the depth of his erudition, and the greatness of his capacity, in all kinds of polite literature, and in every branch of human knowledge.⁶²²

Burr's picture of the social harmony and conversational conviviality achieved within Tunbridge Wells's coffeehouses is far too idyllic to be accepted uncritically and whilst the rural environment so starkly different from the capital city may have taken some of the heat out of political and religious divisions, to suggest that they were entirely subsumed would be unrealistic. Yet a shared willingness to put aside differences within the resort environment would have encouraged cohesion and the party alliances that assembled at and were identified with London coffeehouses did not transfer to the spa. There was one division, however, that was largely maintained: that of gender. Though it was reputedly more acceptable for women to go to Tunbridge Wells's coffeehouses than those elsewhere, there was still a significant stigma attached to their presence. Within an environment which has been frequently identified as 'feminine,' it is significant that one of its first and most enduring institutions was a bastion for male society.

⁶²⁰ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 83.

⁶²¹ Brain Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 52.

⁶²² Burr, pp. 126-27.

Contemporary plays, poems, diaries and memoirs provide insight into the spa's social life during this period and, though the number of extant sources is relatively low, reoccurring themes can be identified. First, there were prominent allusions to how the waters had gained their medical reputation for curing infertility, with greater emphasis being placed on the promiscuous sexual activities of visitors than at any other point in the spa's history. Second, there was a more general assertion that visitors came to the spa with fabricated medical ailments which they used to justify the pursuit of pleasure. Third, within all accounts can be seen evidence of the freedom from the restraints of ceremony and 'generally relaxed holiday mood' which 'allowed the court nobility to fraternise informally with backwards local aristocrats and gentry' that Hembry has argued characterised Stuart spas.

In his poem *Tunbridge Wells* dated 30 June 1675, John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester (1647-1680), poet, courtier and libertine offered a characteristically frank account of the spa's social life. Rochester has been more often associated with Epsom where he was involved in the murder of the quartermaster, Mr. Downs in June 1676 and little is known of his visit to Tunbridge Wells outside of this poem. The poem consists of a series of small studies of the stereotypical characters that populated the spa. A group of 'two wives with a girl' were the focus for Rochester's attack on the water's reputation for encouraging fecundity.⁶²³ One of the women explained the reason behind their visit: 'We have a good estate, but have no child, / And I'm informed these wells will make a barren / Woman as fruitful as a cony warren.'⁶²⁴ Rochester continued:

'Poor foolish fribbles, who by subtlety
Of midwife, truest friend to lechery,
Persuaded are to be at pains and charge
To give their wives occasion to enlarge
Their silly heads. For here walk Cuff and Kick
With brawny back and legs and potent prick,
Who more substantially will cure thy wife,

⁶²³ Wilmot, p. 47.

⁶²⁴ Wilmot, p. 47.

And on her half-dead womb bestow new life.
 From these the waters got the reputation
 Of good assistants unto generation.⁶²⁵

The same theme appeared in Thomas Rawlin's play *Tunbridge Wells, or A Day's Courtship, by a Person of Quality* which was performed only once in London's Duke of York's Theatre in 1678.⁶²⁶ The play was not a success: Barton's dismissal of the plot as being 'contemptible,' and the dialogue 'obscene without being witty' must have been shared by contemporary audiences to result in such a brief performance run.⁶²⁷ In a scene towards the opening of the play between Owmuch, 'A Gamester, that Lives by his Wits and borrowing of Money' and Parret, 'Parcel Midwife, parcel Bawd,'⁶²⁸ Owmuch makes the following statement:

Owm. 'Ladies come down here for the common cause, and can you (who are the very modle of experience) imagine that desires can be satisf'd without their common remedy: Waters are but waters Mrs. *Parret*, there does more to the composition of an Heir, than minerals.⁶²⁹

The play continued with this theme and a dialogue between Parret and Dr. Outside, 'A Man made up of Physical terms and little Art'⁶³⁰ was used to suggest that it was the doctor's themselves who assumed the necessary role in 'treating' barrenness:

Par. You are a worshipful dispatcher indeed, t'have had a Lady under your hands these five weeks for the common cause, when *I* have known more good done in five minutes.

Out. The Waters must have time for operation.

⁶²⁵ Wilmot, pp. 47-48.

⁶²⁶ It is likely, however, that the play was written several years before it was performed. As Barton has noted, if the attribution to Rawlins is correct, it must have been written before his death in 1670. Barton, p. 112.

⁶²⁷ Barton, p. 112.

⁶²⁸ Thomas Rawlins, *Tunbridge-Wells, Or, A Days Courtship: A Comedy, as it is Acted at the Duke's-Theatre. Written by a Person of Quality. Licensed, Roger L'Estrange* (London: Printed and are to be Sold by Henry Rogers at the Crown in Westminster-Hall, 1678), p. iii.

⁶²⁹ Rawlins, p. 5.

⁶³⁰ Rawlins, p. 5.

Par. It is not a shame for you, and your waters not to render a Lady fruitful in five weeks.

Out. The Husbands old and defective.

Par. Were you not employed to supply those defects? Do we not call the Phisician to help th' infirmities of Nature? and were not you called (as they say) by my advice, I thought you an able Man, but you approve your self a Man of weak practice, and feeble parts.⁶³¹

These extracts from Rochester and Rawlins strongly suggest that the water's power to cure barrenness was entirely a social construct that drew on opportunities the spa provided for extramarital affairs. Echoes of this literary portrayal of the waters powers can even be found reflected by Patrick Madan in his 1687 medical treatise, with his claim that the water 'naturally inspires men and women to *Amorous Emotions* and *Titillations*, being previous Dispositions, enabling them to *Procreation*.'⁶³² Though subsequent medical treatises also promoted the waters as a cure for barrenness, Madan's phrasing – 'Amorous Emotions and Titillations' – is unusual.

It is somewhat surprising that Tunbridge Wells's association with illicit relationships and low morals did not lead to its decline as a resort. Indeed, as early as the 1670s the spa's close connection with the court threatened its success as its dissipated, promiscuous way of life came under increasing attack. 'Suspicion about the sexual mores of Charles II and his court deepened and took on a darker tone' due in part to the court's growing association with Catholicism but also because this type of sexuality was seen as a challenge to patriarchal society.⁶³³ Indeed there are signs that the spa recognised and responded to this danger to its reputation. In his discussion of the history of Tunbridge Wells between 1665 and 1670 Burr referred to the opening of the Fish-ponds, a pleasure garden laid out in a rural style, during this period which was 'esteemed one of the principal scenes of diversion' whilst its managers 'continued carefully to maintain decency and strict decorum in its precincts.'⁶³⁴ However, 'when

⁶³¹ Rawlins, pp. 15-16.

⁶³² Patrick Madan, *A Phylosophical and Medicinal Essay of the Waters of Tunbridge* (London: s.n., 1687), pp. 6-7.

⁶³³ John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: 'This Masquerading Age'* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 180.

⁶³⁴ Burr, p. 46.

the vigilance of the managers was dropped, low company admitted, and indecencies encouraged, it soon became disreputable for any of the fair sex to be seen there' and, as a result, the Fish-ponds were closed and fell quickly into a 'ruinous condition.'⁶³⁵ This suggests that whilst only certain areas of the spa became known for having low company and loose morals, this could be managed and the reputation of the spa as a whole could be protected.

The elite status of the visiting company was also an important factor. The behaviour of visitors to Sydenham in the 1680s and its identification as being 'low' precipitated its decline but unlike Tunbridge Wells its visiting company was drawn from the lower sections of society, including large numbers of day-visitors from London. Once this reputation was acquired, the spa was shunned by the elite. Tunbridge Wells's reputation, however, resulted from the behaviour of the elites themselves and what was acceptable for the upper echelons of society very different to what they would condone in their social inferiors. As will be discussed later in this chapter, as the social culture of the elite itself changed and as they continued to patronise Tunbridge Wells, the spa was able to change with them.

In addition, this social construction of the waters for promoting fecundity as a well-known 'cover' for the licentious behaviour of visitors was not the entire story. As will be explored in chapter four, widespread belief in the curative powers of the chalybeate springs continued. Less than ten years before Rochester and Rawlins were writing about the spa, Charles II's queen, Katharine of Braganza had visited Tunbridge Wells for this purpose and the Stuart royal family would continue to do so. This continued medical use of the waters would have worked to counteract the harmful associations.

That many visitors went to enjoy the social life of the spas under the pretence of taking the waters for their health was noted by contemporary commentators and modern historians alike as a key facet of resort life from the Restoration onwards. Rochester referred to the 'feigned or sickly praters' that congregated at the waters.⁶³⁶ Anthony Hamilton in his *Memoirs of the Comte de Gramont* similarly wrote of Tunbridge Wells in the 1660s:

⁶³⁵ Burr, pp. 46-47.

⁶³⁶ Wilmot, p. 43.

The company there is always numerous but always select, and, since those whose motive in visiting it is the quest of amusement always considerably outnumber those who have been brought there by motives of necessity, the whole atmosphere is redolent of distraction and delight.⁶³⁷

Commentators continued this theme into the eighteenth century as Defoe demonstrated with his description of the spa in the 1720s: 'the coming to the Wells to drink the water is a mere matter of custom; some drink, more do not, and few drink physically. But company and diversion is in short the main business of the place.'⁶³⁸ Of course this idea of simulated illness was not unique to Tunbridge Wells but was a common assertion made of health resorts across this period. Discussion amongst commentators of this juxtaposition of healing versus pleasure within one contained arena would become increasingly sophisticated as the eighteenth century progressed.

Who made up the spa's visiting company at the end of the seventeenth century? Rochester would have us believe that Tunbridge Wells during the season was inhabited by a mixture of all ranks of society, as the opening quotation of this chapter shows, as well as a wide variety of fops.⁶³⁹ Rawlins similarly populated his play with a wide range of characters, which he thought would be easily recognisable to all those familiar with the spa. At the top of the resort's society were Tom Fairlove, 'A Gentleman of the Town, that Loves handsome Women,' and Alinda, 'A witty discreet Lady, beloved by Fairlove.'⁶⁴⁰ Below them were representatives of the 'city nobility,' which included Alderman Paywel, 'An indulgent City Husband' and his 'pampered' wife 'that imployes more of her Husbands Estate in Lewdness than Charity.'⁶⁴¹ The aspirational middling sort were portrayed as ridiculous through the character of Farendine, described as 'A *Quondam* Mercer disgusted with his Profession, and from a sedentary Fool being turned a Riotous Coxcomb pretends to all the worst Qualities of a

⁶³⁷ Anthony Hamilton, *Memoirs of the Comte de Gramont*, trans. Peter Quennel with an Introduction and Commentary by Cyril Hughes Hartman (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1930), p. 270.

⁶³⁸ Defoe, *A Tour*, pp. 141-42.

⁶³⁹ Wilmot, p. 46.

⁶⁴⁰ Rawlins, p. iii.

⁶⁴¹ Rawlins, p. iii.

Gentleman.⁶⁴² The popularity of gambling and poetry at Tunbridge Wells was reflected in Owmuch, a 'Gamester' and Poet Witless, a 'conceited Rhimer' and the spa's licentious reputation was evidenced by the presence of two 'whores,' Brag and Crack.⁶⁴³

Despite presenting stock characters rather than sociological description, Rochester and Rawlins nonetheless show the different social orders mixing in the pursuit of leisure and pleasure. This was still at an early stage: Rochester and Rawlins refer to the court, country gentry and the city nobility: the middling orders that would dominate at Margate were not yet present in significant numbers. Likewise, though both accounts suggest the presence of a cohesive company, it was of a different nature to that which Nash would strive to create at Bath. Visitor numbers were at this time still relatively small and many came from a London society that would be already acquainted.

Furthermore, in the absence of a Master of the Ceremonies or governing body to organise entertainments the company, society was self-regulating and any social leadership would have been self-appointed, most likely on the basis of rank. Relative freedom from social constraints was an important aspect of the attraction of watering places in the 1660s and 1670s just as it was in the eighteenth century but the lack of social leadership was important. The experience of freedom at Tunbridge Wells was drawn from the culture of the libertine court whereas it was the constraints imposed by Nash's model of a regulated freedom that would allow the relaxation of social interactions in the following century.

Hamilton's account of the Comte de Gramont's visits to the spa offers an alternative description of the visiting company that allows us to move beyond these stereotypical characters. Philibert, Count de Gramont (1621-1707) had been banished from France in 1662 and on his arrival in England became 'a leading spirit in all the diversions of the court.'⁶⁴⁴ He and his brother-in-law Antony Hamilton (1664/5?-1719) made the decision to write his memoirs in 1704 two years before the Count's death,

⁶⁴² Rawlins, p. iii.

⁶⁴³ Rawlins, p. iii.

⁶⁴⁴ Edward Corp, 'Hamilton, Elizabeth, Countess de Gramont (1641-1708)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk>> [accessed 29 June 2013].

when the pair were at Séméac in Gascogne.⁶⁴⁵ The second of the two volumes published dealt with Gramont's life at the court of Charles II between 1662 and 1664 and 'is based on Hamilton's own experiences as well as the recollections of his friend,' and provides 'a detailed and invaluable description both of the Restoration court and of its leading courtiers.'⁶⁴⁶ Cyril Hughes Hartmann has made strong claims of the *Memoirs*, describing Hamilton's 'vivid comments on the manners, customs, and fashions of his age' as providing 'an authentic picture of these courtiers at Whitehall . . . in a manner equalled by no one save perhaps Pepys' though whilst Pepys described the Court as an outside observer, Hamilton 'was one of the flock chronicling the history of the fold from the inside.'⁶⁴⁷

Hamilton's reliability as a chronicler, however, is undermined by his account of Tunbridge Wells. The Court visited Tunbridge Wells in July 1663 and July 1666 but Hamilton's account 'has inextricably entangled the two visits.'⁶⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Hamilton's account is valuable as it demonstrates the importance of royal patronage to the spa and the extent to which social life revolved around the court. Hamilton presented the court as relocating to Tunbridge Wells *en masse* ('the Court left London, to spend almost two months'),⁶⁴⁹ describing the spa as being 'the same distance from London as Fontainebleau from Paris, and the rallying-point, when the time comes to take the waters'⁶⁵⁰

The royal retinue, following the tradition established by Henrietta Maria earlier in the century, camped on Bishop's Down and the King and Queen are recorded as staying in Mount Ephraim House.⁶⁵¹ As described in chapter two, Tunbridge Wells was in the 1660s a loose collection of settlements rather than a significant urban centre and it is likely due to the lack of entertainment space that the court spent much of its time at Lord Muskerry's country estate at nearby Somerhill. Again like Henrietta Maria, Katharine brought many of her entertainments with her, including a troupe of actors,

⁶⁴⁵ Corp.

⁶⁴⁶ Corp.

⁶⁴⁷ Hamilton, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁴⁸ Hamilton, p. 367.

⁶⁴⁹ Hamilton, p. 270.

⁶⁵⁰ Hamilton, p. 272.

⁶⁵¹ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 36.

‘that nothing might be wanting to their amusement.’⁶⁵² Dancing was a popular pastime; as Hamilton reported, ‘There was dancing every day at the Queen’s apartments, since the doctors advised it and nobody else demurred. Even those, who were least enthusiastic, found that the kind of exercise more supportable, as an aid to digesting the waters, than the necessity of going for a walk.’⁶⁵³ After the Glorious Revolution, though members of the royal family continued to visit the spa, their influence over its social life diminished; a reflection of the wider move away from the court as the centre of society. The aristocracy would still patronise Tunbridge Wells, however their influence would be diluted as the eighteenth century progressed: the balance of power was moving slowly but inexorably to the middling ranks.

iii

TUNBRIDGE-WELLS, in common with Bath, owes the present agreeable and judicious regularity of its amusements, to the skilful assiduity of the celebrated Mr. Nash; who first taught the people of fashion how to buy their pleasures, and to procure that ease and felicity they sought for, without diminishing the happiness of others.⁶⁵⁴

Burr’s claims for the *arbiter elegantiarum*’s influence at Bath and Tunbridge Wells formed part of a consciously constructed image. Tunbridge Wells’s success in the eighteenth century stemmed from its reputation as a polite, exclusive, fashionable, and health-giving arena: ‘The product was the place.’⁶⁵⁵ This image allowed the spa to maintain its position as a leading centre for leisure and pleasure for the aristocracy, gentry and middling classes, acting as an optimal location for the acquisition and expression of status. But ‘beneath the veneer of elegant refinement and strict codes of public behaviour lay a sordid world of gambling, pornography and vice’ which

⁶⁵² Hamilton, p. 273.

⁶⁵³ Hamilton, p. 273.

⁶⁵⁴ Burr, p. 112.

⁶⁵⁵ Borsay, *The Image of Georgian Bath*, p. 19.

threatened to undermine the spa's salubrious reputation and drive away its respectable visitors.⁶⁵⁶

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 played an important role in setting the 'great divisions of the seventeenth century at rest in a general atmosphere of conditioned tolerance'⁶⁵⁷ and the eighteenth century has been characterised as a period of 'relative tranquillity in the social order.'⁶⁵⁸ 'Even if we accept that few landed families were utterly ruined by the Civil Wars, it remains indisputable that many were hit very hard.'⁶⁵⁹ Not only did the Glorious Revolution provide religious and political stability but it offered 'better security of property rights': factors which significantly aided the recovery and prosperity of the aristocracy and gentry and increased their ability to spend time and money on leisure activities.⁶⁶⁰ The better management of landed estates through the employment of professional stewards ensured the land could be used more effectively and allowed landowners to spend more time away from their estates whilst a 'national trend towards the concentration of property into fewer hands' emerged as a result of demographic and socio-economic change.⁶⁶¹ But though falling rates of interest from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century made borrowing easier, land offered only a relatively low rate of return and was not a particularly attractive investment, causing the wealthy to look elsewhere for opportunities. In Kent, not only did this led to increased investment in the urban fabric of Tunbridge Wells, manifesting in the building boom of the 1680s and 1690s but, by encouraging landowners to engage in minor capitalist ventures, it also resulted in developments at Kent's minor spas of Sissinghurst and Sydenham.⁶⁶²

The rise of 'polite society' was integral to the development of watering places during this period. 'Eighteenth-century concepts of "polite society" defy simple

⁶⁵⁶ Graham Davis and Penny Bonsall, *A History of Bath: Image and Reality* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2006), pp. 117-19.

⁶⁵⁷ Rule, p. 35.

⁶⁵⁸ Rule, p. 29.

⁶⁵⁹ Christopher Clay, 'Landlords and Estate Management in England', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 5 Agrarian Change, ed by Joan Thirsk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 119-251 (p. 153).

⁶⁶⁰ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 303.

⁶⁶¹ Clay, p. 163.

⁶⁶² Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 302.

categorization,⁶⁶³ however and the term has been used by historians ‘in a variety of ways to characterise different themes and distinct social groups.’⁶⁶⁴ This thesis will follow Philip Carter’s definition of polite society as consisting broadly ‘of those who sought a reputation for refinement . . . and of those activities and locations within which individuals, conduct writers or social analysts claimed to detect or pursue refined behaviour.’⁶⁶⁵ Carter’s definition allows polite society to be understood as ‘both a statement of national progress and as a symbol of competition facilitating personal advancement,’ thus at watering places ‘polite society could exist as a venue conducive to egalitarian mixing of social ranks while excluding those lacking the financial status of a ‘private gentleman.’⁶⁶⁶

Spas were critical for the ‘inculcation of newly refined values’: as highly public arenas they allowed visitors to ‘gather in numbers, learn about the latest fashions, mix and converse freely, exhibit their minds, manners and accoutrements, and engage in intensive socializing.’⁶⁶⁷ Bath, as England’s premier resort, wielded the greatest power over the form and practice of politeness and Nash’s role as Master of Ceremonies at Bath from 1705 and Tunbridge Wells from 1735 was central. Through the imposition of a strict code of behaviour Nash aimed to create a cohesive company from the diverse social mix of visitors. Published in guidebooks and posted in prominent public places, Nash’s rules (fig. 3.1) included the banning of swords in public places, the wearing of boots and aprons in the assembly rooms and condemned spreaders of gossip. Imposed on the visiting company by ‘the sheer force of personality’⁶⁶⁸ and with the ‘common consent’ of visitors receptive to the ‘stability, continuity and high fashion’ Nash’s leadership offered, the rules proved a success and were implemented at spas across the country.⁶⁶⁹ Thus through ‘soft power’ Nash influenced society at Kent’s watering places long before his appointment at Tunbridge Wells.

⁶⁶³ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2001) p. 18.

⁶⁶⁴ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 16.

⁶⁶⁵ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 19.

⁶⁶⁶ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 19.

⁶⁶⁷ Borsay, ‘Town or Country’, p. 157.

⁶⁶⁸ Davis and Bonsall, p. 117.

⁶⁶⁹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, pp. 143-44.

Figure 3.1. Nash's Rules as reproduced in *The New Bath Guide*.⁶⁷⁰

RULES, by general Consent determined.

I.

That a Visit of Ceremony at coming to Bath, and another at going away, is all that is expected, or desired by Ladies of Quality and Fashion;—except Impertinents.

II.

That Ladies coming to the Ball appoint a Time for their Footmen's coming to wait on them Home; to prevent Disturbances and Inconveniencies to themselves and others.

III.

That Gentlemen of Fashion never appearing in a Morning before the Ladies in Gowns and Caps, shew Breeding and Respect.

IV.

That no Person take it ill that any one goes to another's Play, or Breakfast, and not to theirs;—except captious by Nature.

V.

That no Gentleman give his Ticket for the Balls to any but Gentlewomen;—*N. B.* Unless he has none of his Acquaintance.

VI.

That Gentlemen crowding before Ladies at the Ball shew ill Manners; and that none do so for the Future,—except such as respect No-body but themselves.

E

That

VII.

That no Gentleman or Lady take it ill that another dances before them;—except such as have no Pretence to dance at all.

VIII.

That the Elder Ladies and Children be content with a second Bench at the Ball, as being past, or not come to Perfection.

IX.

That the younger Ladies take Notice how many Eyes observe them.—*N. B.* This does not extend to the *Have-at-Alls*.

X.

That all Wisperers of Lies and Scandal be taken for their Authors.

XI.

That all Repeaters of such Lies and Scandal be shunn'd by all Company; except such as have been guilty of the same Crime.

☞ *Several Men of no Character, Old Women and Young Ones, of question'd Reputation, are great Authors of Lies in this Place, being of the Self of Levellers.*

The following Lines were also wrote by the said RICHARD NASH, Esq. three or four Years before his Death, and hung up in moit of the public Places in the said City,

B A T H, 1756.

Whereas POLITENESS, DECENCY, and GOOD-MANNERS, three ancient Residents at BATH, have, of late, left the Place; whoever shall restore them, shall be rewarded with *Hammer and Respect*.

GENTLEMEN coming into the Rooms in Boots, where LADIES are, shew their little Regard to them or the Company.

•• *Except they have no Shoes.*

Ladies dressing and behaving like Handmaids, must not be surprized if they are treated as Handmaids.

WHISPERERS of Lies and Scandal, knowing them to be such, are rather worse than the Inventors.

⁶⁷⁰ *The New Bath Guide, Or, Useful Pocket-Companion; Necessary for All Persons Residing at, or Resorting to, this Ancient and Opulent City. ...* (Bath: Printed by C. Pope: and Sold by him, and the Booksellers of Bath and Bristol, 1762), pp. 5-6.

Burr, who combined a desire to promote the spa with a degree of narrative flourish, drew a sharp distinction between pre- and post-Nash Tunbridge Wells. Claiming that prior to his arrival watering places were ‘but little esteemed’ and ‘only resorted to by invalids,’⁶⁷¹ Burr painted a bleak picture of society at Tunbridge Wells at the beginning of the eighteenth century:

The company, thus assembled, formed no general society. The amusements of the gentry were few, confined, and selfish. The great brought with them all the haughtiness of nobility, and knew not how to let themselves down with grace. In short, delicacy, politeness, and elegant pleasures, were then but just budding forth from amidst the rubbish of Gothic barbarism, and, till these were grown to such a height as to be discernible amongst us, Tunbridge-Wells was not esteemed a place of pleasure, in which the people of fashion might depend upon being agreeably amused.⁶⁷²

Nash’s reforms, however, lifted watering places ‘to a great degree of eminence in the fashionable world’ and transformed Tunbridge Wells into ‘the general rendezvous of gaiety and politeness during the summer.’⁶⁷³

Modern scholars have been far more critical of Nash’s importance and have argued that his role has been ‘greatly exaggerated.’⁶⁷⁴ Whilst Neale’s dismissal of Nash as being ‘as much a symptom as a cause of his times’ with the ‘part he played . . . merely one of many’⁶⁷⁵ shows that his role can be underestimated, it has been widely agreed that Nash was ‘never so great a man at Tunbridge Wells as at Bath.’⁶⁷⁶ This was due to two factors. First, Nash was over sixty years old on his appointment and ‘his energies had already begun to ebb.’⁶⁷⁷ Savidge has argued that Nash saw Tunbridge Wells as ‘a celebrated province to his empire . . . and treated it rather as a summer

⁶⁷¹ Burr, p. 113.

⁶⁷² Burr, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁷³ Burr, p. 113.

⁶⁷⁴ Davis and Bonsall, pp. 117-19.

⁶⁷⁵ Neale, *Bath*, p. 27.

⁶⁷⁶ Barton, p. 205.

⁶⁷⁷ Barton, p. 205.

retreat, a place for royal visitation.'⁶⁷⁸ Similarly, Hembry concluded that Nash 'played his midsummer role of governor firmly but more quietly, and more as a relaxation.'⁶⁷⁹ Secondly, because of his soft power and (to a certain extent) a shared visiting company Nash could afford to assume a more relaxed stance: many of the changes he implemented at Bath had already been adopted at Tunbridge Wells. Thus at the Kentish spa Nash's role was largely one of consolidation: by replacing Causey, Nash's arrival was a public statement of Tunbridge Wells's fashionable and polite credentials and signalled the end of the licentious reputation for which the resort had been famous in the seventeenth century.

Bath, Borsay has argued, 'was a city dependent upon image-making . . . its success and its very identity depended upon not what it was, but what it was imagined to be.'⁶⁸⁰ This image was constructed from six basic elements: 'health, environment, society, consumption, morality and order.'⁶⁸¹ For Tunbridge Wells, whose economy rested almost entirely on the leisure industry and like Bath aimed to attract the fashionable elite, image was no less important. The spa's promotional guides show the different elements of Tunbridge Wells's image as a fashionable watering place. Burr, after outlining the resort's facilities, detailed a typical day at Tunbridge Wells, emphasising the workings of the subscription system and the existence of a daily regimen that encouraged visitors to participate in the same activities at the same time as a cohesive company. The 'first business' on arrival at the spa was to pay for the amusements, visitors were advised to go directly to 'taste the water' and 'pay the customary fee, called a welcome penny to the dippers,' after which 'you then proceed to other public places, and there subscribe according to your rank': subscriptions of 'a crown or more each person' were expected at the assembly rooms, booksellers and for gentlemen at the coffeehouse in addition to 'half-a-guinea, or as much more as you like' for the musicians on the parade and an unspecified amount for the 'clergymen's book.'⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁸ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 77.

⁶⁷⁹ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 234-35.

⁶⁸⁰ Borsay, *Image of Georgian Bath*, p. 19.

⁶⁸¹ Borsay, *Image of Georgian Bath*, p. 20.

⁶⁸² Burr, p. 115.

The daily routine began with the drinking of the waters between seven and eight o'clock in morning, followed by 'the necessary exercise of walking,' thought to aid the digestion of the waters, 'which is very sufficient amusement for an hour or two.'⁶⁸³ Visitors would then either return to their lodgings for breakfast, or else come together for a public breakfast in the tearooms or on the walks, Burr informing readers that 'it is customary for the gentlemen to treat the ladies, and their male-acquaintance, every one in their turn, and frequently to give a public breakfast to the whole company without exception.'⁶⁸⁴ After breakfast visitors were encouraged to attend a church service before spending the rest of the day shopping or walking on the parade, changing out of morning dress and into 'full and splendid attire' after dinner.⁶⁸⁵ The evening's entertainment consisted of a round of card and dance assemblies, punctuated by music concerts and theatre performances, all of which finished strictly at eleven.

Burr emphasised the spa's egalitarianism, particularly at the assemblies 'where all ranks are mingled together without distinction':

The nobility, and the merchants; the gentry and the traders; are all upon an equal footing, without any body's having a right to be informed who you are, or whence you came, so long as you behave with that decorum which is ever necessary in genteel company.⁶⁸⁶

This inclusive policy was supported by an entrance fee of half-a-crown for gentlemen and one shilling for ladies.⁶⁸⁷

But society at Tunbridge Wells was not as inclusive as Burr would have us believe. First, the cost, in time and money, was prohibitive for many and, as Defoe observed, 'without money a man is no-body at Tunbridge.'⁶⁸⁸ Second was the continued presence of class distinctions within the resort, particularly as the number and social profile of visitors widened. These grew more visible within the company as

⁶⁸³ Burr, p. 116.

⁶⁸⁴ Burr, p. 116.

⁶⁸⁵ Burr, pp. 116-19.

⁶⁸⁶ Burr, p. 121.

⁶⁸⁷ Burr, p. 121.

⁶⁸⁸ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 142.

the eighteenth century progressed, with the private entertainments forbidden by Nash becoming increasingly acceptable. Ensuring that they moved within the right circles of resort society thus became an increasing concern. In Austen's *Persuasion*, for example, Mr Eliot tells Anne that it would be wise to cultivate the acquaintance of their aristocratic cousins the Dalrymples whilst in Bath as 'they will move in the first set at Bath this winter, and as rank is rank, your being known to be related to them will have its use in fixing your family . . . in that degree of consideration.'⁶⁸⁹ Similar concerns would have preoccupied visitors to Tunbridge Wells. But these changes should not necessarily be seen as inherently damaging nor as anathema to the vision of a cohesive visiting company: the inclusivity promoted by Nash could only ever work within an exclusive environment and as a high-status leisure activity spas depended on their elite visitors to attract the middling classes.

Promoters continued to cultivate Tunbridge Wells's image as a rural idyll. Guidebooks dedicated significant space to detailing local walks and rides as well as excursions to places of natural, historical and cultural interest. *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, for example, dedicated 197 of its 367 pages within the 1780 edition to 'The ancient and present state of the most remarkable places, in the environs of Tunbridge Wells; Comprehending a circuit of about sixteen miles round the place.'⁶⁹⁰ Suggested destinations included the nearby parishes of Speldhurst and Groombridge (where visitors were encouraged to pay particular attention to the gravestones in the churchyards), Penshurst Place and Hever Castle. Such excursions added significantly to the variety of activities Tunbridge Wells could provide and helped to relieve the monotony of the relatively small spa. The importance of green spaces within spas as well as their role 'as a base to explore the natural world on their periphery' grew as 'the recreational appeal of the countryside and the natural world itself increased.'⁶⁹¹ But, as shall be argued later in this chapter, outside space assumed even greater importance within the seaside resorts as the natural environment and the relaxation of the daily regimen encouraged visitors to spend a higher proportion of their time outside the confines of the resort.

⁶⁸⁹ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (First pub. 1817/18), in *The Penguin Complete Novels of Jane Austen* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1983), pp. 1143-2290, (p. 1229).

⁶⁹⁰ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 107.

⁶⁹¹ Borsay, 'Town or Country', p. 164.

The conspicuous consumption of luxury goods was central within an arena that promoted shopping as a leisure activity. Burr highlighted the presence of ‘shops for silver-smiths, jewellers, milliners, booksellers, [and] Tunbridge-ware.’⁶⁹² *The Tunbridge Wells Guide* described how in the afternoon, whilst some visitors spent time on the walks, ‘others are no less agreeably employed at the milliners, the jewellers, toy-shops, &c. where little rafflings were carried on.’⁶⁹³ The eighteenth century witnessed an expansion in the market for consumer goods: within an expanding society and buoyant economy the consumption of an increasingly wide range of luxury products conveyed status and allowed all but the most deprived to emulate their ‘betters.’⁶⁹⁴ Watering places heightened this effect, indeed visiting a resort was a display of consumption in its own right. Tunbridge Wells, of course, could not compete with Bath in the number or variety of shops but with the production of Tunbridge Ware the Kentish spa was able to offer a unique product to visitors that could be bought as a souvenir of their visit.

As a national marriage market Tunbridge Wells attracted ‘a picaresque social mix of the aristocratic, the wealthy, the aspiring and the fraudulent.’⁶⁹⁵ Literature was populated with characters pursuing matches in watering places, with the fortune-hunter and matchmaking mama making prominent appearances. The eighteenth century witnessed ‘a sustained, secular celebration of romantic marriage and loving domesticity, alongside the institutionalization of a national marriage-market for increasing numbers of the elite through the London season and at the resorts.’⁶⁹⁶ Watering places allowed the possibility of romantic attachment but the correct choice of resort also permitted parents to maintain control over the type of people their children were meeting. The heightened sociability within the social code imposed by Nash allowed for increased freedom of interaction whilst the public nature of resort life helped to protect women’s reputations. Vickery has emphasised the ‘distinction between vulgar promiscuity and polite selection’ as a ‘powerful key for the

⁶⁹² Burr, p. 101.

⁶⁹³ *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 96.

⁶⁹⁴ Hoh-Chueng Mui and Lorna H. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 288.

⁶⁹⁵ Walton, ‘Health, Sociability, Politics and Culture’, p. 10.

⁶⁹⁶ Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 285.

understanding of . . . commercial entertainment in urban resorts': maintaining its image as an exclusive, polite arena was thus essential for Tunbridge Wells's continued importance as a national, elite marriage market.⁶⁹⁷

But not all female visitors to Tunbridge Wells would have been interested in the spa as a marriage market and, as Alison E. Hurley has argued, 'by focusing on alliances among women rather than the marriage plot, the history of the eighteenth-century watering place can itself be reenergized.'⁶⁹⁸ The connection of the Bluestockings with Tunbridge Wells during the mid-eighteenth century demonstrates how far the culture of the spa had changed since the Restoration: the spa as experienced by Rochester and Rawlins could never have functioned as safe or a respectable arena for women. Drawing on the letters of prominent Bluestockings, most notably Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Carter, Hurley has argued that not only did the social opportunities of the spa facilitate friendships between women but, more significantly, by encouraging a 'self-consciously communal sense of female identity' they 'provided these women with a locus, at once imagined and real, upon which to elaborate a distinctive style of correspondence' though which they were enabled to 'address themselves more directly to the world in which they lived.'⁶⁹⁹

Letters written from spas were uniquely valued. 'Virtually guaranteed an unusually large audience' and 'recognized for their high quality as well as their abundance',⁷⁰⁰ spa letters were 'the closest many women came to public authorship.'⁷⁰¹ Drawing on the novel situation and exposure to new society and experiences, spa letters provided the opportunity for social commentary and, containing a higher level of public information than 'typical female missives, they were deemed of greater real interest to a larger sphere of readers than were most women's letters.'⁷⁰² Furthermore, by bringing together a socially diverse group of women in a contained arena for extended periods, Tunbridge Wells acted as 'an expansive marketplace for the acquisition of conversable women' and the Bluestockings, Hurley

⁶⁹⁷ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 290.

⁶⁹⁸ Alison E. Hurley, 'A Conversation of their Own: Watering-Place Correspondence among the Bluestockings,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40.1 (2006), 1-21 (p. 1).

⁶⁹⁹ Hurley, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁰⁰ Hurley, p. 9.

⁷⁰¹ Hurley, p. 11.

⁷⁰² Hurley, p. 14.

suggested, 'took pride as well as pleasure in discovering friends, not in the most sought after or safest, but in the most unique or pleasing members of the resort company.'⁷⁰³ Tunbridge Wells, therefore, as a national resort, not only widened visitors' marriage prospects, it also provided the opportunity for women to expand their social circle, forge new friendships and assume a greater, albeit limited, role in public life and this development was surely one of the most significant consequences of the spa's polite reputation.

But Tunbridge Wells's image as a polite arena faced many challenges. Through a discussion of three of these, the less salubrious aspects of the spa's social life will be explored: the spa's moral image, Samuel Derrick and visitor complaints of boredom. Borsay has observed that 'Specific strictures about Bath's moral image focused on three types of consumption . . . eating, gaming, and sex' and critiques of Tunbridge Wells shared these preoccupations.⁷⁰⁴ During Nash's reign the spa became notorious for gaming. Attempts were made to control and limit gambling, which had become an elite obsession, throughout the eighteenth century. At Tunbridge Wells its curtailment fell under the aegis of the Master of the Ceremonies but this responsibility was used first by Causey and more prominently by Nash to turn a profit. Nash has been particularly associated with the game of 'Evens and Odds' or EO, a form of roulette which had been invented at Tunbridge Wells to bypass newly imposed regulation on numbered games. Nash, believing EO to be legal and hoping to profit from its popularity amongst the visiting company, invested heavily, took a share of the profits and exported the game to Bath. Nash discovered, however, that he was being cheated by his business partners and the case was contested, publicly and scandalously, in court. The courts non-suited him and in 1748 all games were declared illegal except cards and no houses were permitted to be kept for gaming.⁷⁰⁵ This episode, which had resulted in public disgrace and the loss of a lucrative income stream, marked the beginning of Nash's decline and his health deteriorated. Tunbridge Wells and Bath,

⁷⁰³ Hurley, p. 9.

⁷⁰⁴ Borsay, *Image of Georgian Bath*, p. 32.

⁷⁰⁵ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 76.

however, survived.⁷⁰⁶ Whilst gaming and gamblers continued to be attacked in satire, this scandal marked the height of its damage to the spa's reputation.

It is within the portrayal of female visitors that we can see the greatest continuity between Restoration and eighteenth-century Tunbridge Wells. Whilst the social mix of the spa and the increased freedom of interaction between the sexes it provided facilitated its role as a marriage market, the same freedoms could also prove dangerous, especially to its female visitors: as Macky stated, 'there is no Place in the World better to begin an intrigue than this.'⁷⁰⁷ This aspect of the spa's reputation can be seen within Defoe's commentary and an article which discussed the antics of a new social menace: the 'swingers.' Defoe claimed that 'The ladies that appear here, are indeed the glory of the place' and described the walks as being 'covered with ladies completely dressed and gay to profusion.'⁷⁰⁸ But these women, he advised, had to carefully guard their reputations:

Tunbridge . . . is a place in which a lady however virtuous, yet for want of good conduct may as soon shipwreck her character as in any part of England; and where, when she has once injured her reputation, 'tis as hard to restore it; nay, some say no lady ever recovered her character at Tunbridge, if she first wounded it there.⁷⁰⁹

But, Defoe suggested, the fault often lay with the individual rather than being an inevitable consequence of the spa environment:

But this is to be added to, that a lady very seldom suffers that way at Tunbridge, without some apparent folly of her own; for that they do not seem so apt here to make havoc of one another's reputation here, by tattle and slander, as I think they do in some other places in the world.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁶ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 76.

⁷⁰⁷ Macky, p. 59.

⁷⁰⁸ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 141-42.

⁷⁰⁹ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 143.

⁷¹⁰ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 143.

A letter first published in *The Spectator* in 1713 and *The Tunbridge-Miscellany* of 1712 and reprinted in other publications across the eighteenth century addressed women's behaviour at the spa.⁷¹¹ The author, reputedly Matilda Mohair, 'a young Women of eighteen Years of Age, and . . . a Maid of unspotted Reputation' wrote to complain of the 'great deal of Anxiety' she suffered because 'the young Women who run into greater Freedoms with the Men are more taken notice of than I am.'⁷¹² The men at Tunbridge Wells, she claimed:

. . . are such unthinking Sots, that they do not prefer her who restrains all her Passions and Affections, and keeps within the Bounds of what is lawful, to her who goes to the utmost Verge of Innocence, and parlies at the very Brink of Vice, whether shall be a Wife or a Mistress.⁷¹³

The indignant writer continued on to describe the *modus operandi* of the different types of women, for example:

Here's a little Country girl that's very cunning, that makes her use of being young and unbred, and outdoes the Insnarers, who are almost twice her Age. The Air that she takes is to come into Company after a Walk, and is very successfully out of Breath upon occasion. Her Mother is in on the Secret, and calls her Romp, and then looks round to see what young Men stare at her.⁷¹⁴

The worst offenders, however, were 'the Swingers,' 'careless pretty Creatures' who 'get on Ropes, as you must have seen the Children, and are swung by their Men Visitants':

⁷¹¹ *The Spectator*. ... (London: Printed for S. Buckley, at the Dolphin in Little-Britain; and J. Tonson at Shakespear's Head, over-against Catherine-Street in the Strand, 1713), pp. 100-04. The letter was reprinted in several subsequent editions, including *The Spectator, Complete in Two Volumes; With Notes Critical and Explanatory*. ... (London: Printed for Andrew Miller, Strand, 1800).

⁷¹² *The Tunbridge-Miscellany: Consisting of Poems, &c. Written at Tunbridge-Wells this Summer. By Several Hands*. (London: Printed for E. Curll at the Dial and Bible, against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet, 1712), p. 21.

⁷¹³ *The Tunbridge-Miscellany*, p. 21.

⁷¹⁴ *The Tunbridge-Miscellany*, p. 22.

The Jest is, that Mr. Such-a-one, can name the Colour of Mrs. Such-a-one's Stockings; and she tells him, he is a lying Thief, so he is, and full of Roguery; and she'll lay a Wager, and her Sister shall tell the Truth if he says right, and he can't tell what Colour her Garters are off. In this Diversion there are very many pretty Shrieks, no so much for fear of falling, as that their Petticoats should untie: For there is a great care had to avoid Improperities.⁷¹⁵

This article, which concluded with the advice 'There is no other way but to make war upon them, or we must go over to them' (in other words, if you cannot beat them join them), was clearly satiric and worked to encourage and advertise the behaviours it claimed to condone.⁷¹⁶ Both 'Mohair' and Defoe thus addressed the possible consequences of the increased freedom of interaction between the sexes permitted within the resort environment and highlighted its dangers. But, as the tale of the 'Swingers' shows, these freedoms, whilst dangerous were also enticing: for women, however, a careful balance had to be maintained between making use of the freedoms and 'catching' a husband without irrevocably damaging their reputations.

The history of Samuel Derrick, MC at Bath and Tunbridge Wells from 1763, demonstrates how the juxtaposition of the 'polite' with the 'immoral' could occur within one person and thus pose a unique threat to the reputations of both spas. Derrick has received little attention within the most recent histories of Tunbridge Wells, especially when compared to his more illustrious predecessor, however alongside Causey and Curll, his presence and background provides a unique insight into resort society that disrupts the traditional narrative of the spa as a bastion of respectability.

Derrick has been identified as the editor of the notorious *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies*, first published in 1757 and updated throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. Entering into a successful partnership with Jack Harris, 'the undisputed "Pimp General of all England,"'⁷¹⁷ Derrick combined his literary talents with his close acquaintance with London's prostitutes to produce 'an exact description of

⁷¹⁵ *The Tunbridge-Miscellany*, p. 23.

⁷¹⁶ *The Tunbridge-Miscellany*, p. 23.

⁷¹⁷ Hallie Rubenhold, *The Covent Garden Ladies: Pimp General Jack & the Extraordinary Story of Harris's List* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), p. 124.

the most celebrated ladies of pleasure to frequent Covent-Garden, and other parts of this metropolis.⁷¹⁸ The work was a success, in part as it allowed readers to cut out the middle man and go ‘straight to the supplier,’ ‘rather than relying solely on a pimp to secure wares.’⁷¹⁹ But the ‘true genius’ of the scheme for Derrick was that ‘for his version of the *Harris’s List* to prove useful to anyone, it had to remain current,’ and the need for constant revisions provided him with ‘a reliable scheme of work.’⁷²⁰

With this publication Derrick was ‘skirting the boundaries of complete social disgrace’ and in 1762 he relinquished his position as editor. On his appointment as MC Derrick proceeded to lead a ‘double life’ and seemed ‘determined to establish himself once and for all in the eyes of society as a man of importance and gentility,’ aiming to ‘reset his character and invent a public persona flawless in his knowledge of propriety.’⁷²¹ Whilst new acquaintances may have been convinced, however, those who knew him ‘saw through the transparency of his charade and found it hilarious.’⁷²²

Historians have seen Derrick’s time as MC at Tunbridge Wells as being of relatively little importance, indeed he is entirely absent from Chalklin’s study. Savidge judged him to have been ‘a little man, lacking in social presence or dignity, too eager to please’ and the ‘butt of wits’ at Bath, suggesting that ‘Nash must have turned in his grave.’⁷²³ Hembry likewise summarised him as “‘an insignificant puppy” of literary pretensions who was better received at Bath than at Tunbridge Wells, which took umbrage when he attempted to become MC at Brighton.’⁷²⁴ Even Derrick might have seen his position as MC as less important than that of editor. As Rubenhold has argued:

Harris’s List had been for Derrick not merely a money-spinning opportunity that had broken him out of a sponging house but, remarkably, it also became a

⁷¹⁸ Harris, *Harris’s List of Covent-Garden Ladies: Or Man of Pleasure’s Kalendar, for the Year 1773. Containing an Exact Description of the Most Celebrated Ladies of Pleasure who Frequent Covent-Garden, and Other Parts of this Metropolis* (London: Printed for H. Ranger, Temple-Exchange Passage, Fleet-Street, 1773), title page.

⁷¹⁹ Rubenhold, p. 124.

⁷²⁰ Rubenhold, p. 125.

⁷²¹ Rubenhold, pp. 127-29.

⁷²² Rubenhold, p. 257.

⁷²³ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 83.

⁷²⁴ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 138.

responsibility that he owed to a community of women. His role in the *List's* creation was one he took seriously and regarded as a contribution to the betterment of the lives of women who over the years had become some of the truest friends he was ever to know. For all that Bath offered, Derrick felt that he owed something more significant to those in the Garden.⁷²⁵

But whilst Derrick's time as MC was unremarkable, his presence at Tunbridge Wells was nonetheless important as it shows how the spa's polite reputation was undermined even by the person charged with its protection. Though many of Derrick's contemporaries knew of his involvement with *Harris's List*, public acknowledgement would have inflicted serious damage on the reputations of Bath and Tunbridge Wells as well as ruining Derrick himself. Tunbridge Wells may have been able to support, even benefit from its association with Curll but widespread recognition of Derrick's scandalous past might have proved disastrous at a time when the spa was fighting emergent spas and seaside resorts for elite custom. Furthermore, Derrick's sympathies suggest that he would have made no efforts to curb prostitution within the spa and indeed may have actively promoted its practice. If this was the case Derrick should no longer be portrayed as an 'insignificant puppy' and insignificant in comparison with his more illustrious predecessor but as the successor of Causey and Curll who combined the veneer of polite society with an underlying and active support for vice.

Boredom was one way in which visitors expressed their dissatisfaction with the spa's social and cultural facilities and thus was a means through which individuals challenged, perhaps unknowingly, the fashionable image of Tunbridge Wells. Visitors often complained they were bored. Macky stated in 1714, 'THE Manner of living at *Tunbridge* is very Diverting for one Week; but as there is no other Variety but in new Faces, it soon proves Tiresome to a Stranger.'⁷²⁶ Mid-century, Montagu offered similar sentiments, noting wryly in a letter, 'Since I last wrote to you we have had a change of persons but not of amusements.'⁷²⁷ Amabel, Countess de Grey in 1791 faced a similar predicament, complaining, 'I have nothing at all, at all to say. This place has hitherto

⁷²⁵ Rubenhold, p. 259.

⁷²⁶ Macky, p. 57.

⁷²⁷ Elizabeth Montagu, *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some letters of her correspondents*, vol. 3 (London: T. Cadell and W Davis, 1809-13), p. 89.

been most exemplarily sober & dull.⁷²⁸ Despite the frequency and prominence of such remarks and though boredom has been accepted as a 'central motif of spa literature and memoirs' from the nineteenth century, no studies of eighteenth-century Tunbridge Wells have recognised its significance as an important facet of resort life.⁷²⁹

As a cultural construct first emerging in the early modern period, 'boredom' is an extremely malleable concept.⁷³⁰ Patricia Meyer Spacks's working definition, of boredom 'that appears to be caused by not having enough to do, or not liking the things one has to do, or existing with other people or a setting one finds distasteful,' as used in her 1995 study is most applicable here, with her caveat that 'the definition of "not having enough to do" . . . depends on perception.'⁷³¹

The concept of boredom acquired a new importance in the eighteenth century due to the decline of orthodox Christianity which believed boredom and idleness to be a sin, the growing notion that people had a right to the pursuit of happiness and in increasing interest in inner life wherein boredom suggested dissatisfaction.⁷³² The most important factor for the current discussion was the development of leisure as distinct or 'differentiated psychic space' from work, fuelled in particular by industrialisation, which created a new space for the discussion of boredom.⁷³³ When this was combined with an appetite for novel experiences and new forms of entertainment the result was heightened expectations of leisure time and the belief that boredom could be relieved by external stimulation.

⁷²⁸ Bedford, Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service (BLA), Wrest Park (Lucas) Manuscripts, 'Amabel Hume-Campbell, Countess de Grey to Jemima Mary Gregory', 24 Jul. 1791. L30/23/98.

⁷²⁹ David Blackbourn, 'Fashionable Spa Towns in Nineteenth-century Europe' in *Water, Leisure & Culture: European Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Susan C. Anderson and Bruce H. Tabb (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2002), pp. 9-22 (p. 20).

⁷³⁰ The word 'boredom' itself, however, was only used infrequently until at least the mid-eighteenth century, before which it was most commonly used as upper class slang. As can be seen with the above quotations it was more typical to use words like 'dull' and 'tiresome' and my use of this term within the following section is more due to convenience than precision.

⁷³¹ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Boredom: The Literary History of a State of Mind* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 27.

⁷³² Spacks, pp. 21-23.

⁷³³ Spacks, pp. 23-24.

'Commentators of the period tacitly or explicitly assume the high probability of repetitiveness, triviality, and tedium in female experience.'⁷³⁴ This was a particularly acute problem for the unmarried for whom there was only a narrow range of socially acceptable ways in which to pass time. Leisured women, including those from the middling classes who in an attempt to emulate the aristocracy and distinguish themselves from the lower orders removed themselves from public and domestic work, might fill the time with polite accomplishments such as needlework and drawing but these activities 'had no genuine utility.'⁷³⁵ 'Men, like women, wished to escape boredom' but men had a 'far larger number of legitimate resources for doing so.'⁷³⁶

Why did visitors find Tunbridge Wells boring? Not only was boredom an inevitable result of the new expectations of leisure but the possibility of boredom was deeply ingrained within the structure of resort life. This resulted from three factors: the relatively small size of the spa, the highly structured daily and weekly regimen and the long average duration of stay. Looking back to the quotations that opened this discussion, the repetitiveness of resort life formed the focus of complaint and it is easy to imagine that following the same daily and weekly routine in such a small arena could become tiresome. It was not just of Tunbridge Wells that these complaints were made: Montagu wrote of Bath in 1740: 'The waters are employing the morning, visits the afternoon, and we saunter away the evening in great stupidity. I think no place can be less agreeable; How dy'e do? is all one hears in the morning, and What is trumps? in the afternoon.'⁷³⁷ In this instance, boredom likewise derived from the repetitiveness of the entertainments but the people participating in them were also to blame for their acceptance of the routine and endless parroting of the same conversations. There can also be detected the desire of this prominent Bluestocking to separate herself from the homogeneous mass of the visiting company with their predictable conversations and the routine social round.⁷³⁸ The affectation of boredom by the

⁷³⁴ Spacks, p. 62.

⁷³⁵ Spacks, p. 62.

⁷³⁶ Spacks, p. 66.

⁷³⁷ Montagu, vol. 1, p. 73.

⁷³⁸ Though it was also likely that many elite women, who would have typically be occupied running large estates, would have welcomed the relaxed pace of resort life.

fashionable elite was thus one response to the growing middling class participation in high status leisure activities.

How women expressed boredom, Spacks argues, was almost as important as the emotion itself. 'Trained to please others, [and] display constant anxiety about "entertaining" the readers of their letters,' and believing that 'to be bored or boring registers moral failure' women tried to make otherwise dull letters entertaining by 'insist[ing] on the interest of their routine experience' and, consciously injecting interest into their everyday lives even if 'they had to make something out of nothing.'

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This literary device can be clearly identified in a letter written by Amabel, Countess de Grey from Tunbridge Wells in 1791 at what was supposedly the opening of the spa's summer season:

Though many People are dispers'd about in the different Lodgings yet they hardly meet upon the Walks, & not at all at the Rooms. My Tyson who still hobbles on through the very little Business this Place affords, made an Attempt last Night to collect us all together & open the Season with a Public Tea-drinking, but it was very empty & very dull; one little Incident only made us laugh, a Kitten got into the Music-Gallery (where there was no Music) & set up a most piteous Mewing, & some of the Company clapp'd it as a very fine Italian Singer.⁷⁴⁰

But there is more to expressions of boredom than a desire to entertain. Amabel's letter commented on the lack of cohesion and expressed dissatisfaction with the conduct of society: she frequently complained that Tunbridge Wells was no longer the exciting, entertaining place she had visited in her youth.

Both Amabel and Elizabeth Montagu expressed dissatisfaction with their surroundings and it is clear that they held high expectations of the resort that were not being met. But why, if Tunbridge Wells was tiresome and dull, did visitors keep going back? The answer must be that most people's expectations were being met or at least that the negative aspects of resort life were outweighed by the positive. It is also

⁷³⁹ Spacks, pp. 103-06.

⁷⁴⁰ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Amabel Hume-Campbell, Countess de Grey to Jemima Mary Gregory', 29 Jun. 1791. L30/23/97.

important to note that the examples cited are primarily those of elite, intellectual women. It is a reasonable assumption that boredom was most commonly expressed by the elite: they were the most frequent visitors to watering places and could afford a lengthy stay. Their experience of boredom not only provides insight into how the elite, female experience of the spa subtly undermined its image as an exciting centre for leisure and pleasure: it also highlights the complexity of the individual leisure experience and the need to move away from seeing visiting a resort as a homogeneous event.

Despite challenges, Tunbridge Wells successfully maintained its image as a genteel and fashionable arena throughout the eighteenth century. Its fall from the top of the hierarchy of watering places came not from the ascendancy of the less respectable elements of resort society but from its success as a polite arena. From the 1770s Tunbridge Wells began the transition into a residential spa, experiencing an 'influx of retired professional and business men and their families, and single gentlewomen' who would typically 'buy one or two houses in the resort and come as residents during the summer every year.'⁷⁴¹ Guidebooks responded to this change by presenting the spa as having reached a level of maturity as a resort. As *The Tunbridge Wells Guide* stated in 1780:

The place itself is now in a very flourishing state, with a great number of good houses for lodgings, and all necessary accommodations for company; its customs are settled, its pleasures regulated, its markets and all other conveniences fixed, and the whole very properly adapted to the nature of the place, which is at once designed to give health and pleasure to all its visitants.⁷⁴²

The continued success of Tunbridge Wells resulted in part from the ability of its promoters to adapt to this changing demand and present the spa society in the best possible light.

How far can these observations of Tunbridge Wells, a national spa with elite visitors, be applied to Kent's smaller, less successful spas? Sissinghurst, Sydenham and

⁷⁴¹ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, pp. 35-36.

⁷⁴² *The Tunbridge Wells Guide*, p. 44.

Shooter's Hill occupied a different market niche to Tunbridge Wells and their social life was closer to that of London's spas and pleasure gardens than to the nation's leading watering places. Attracting a local clientele for short, typically daily visits, the social life of these short-lived spas was very different to the highly-regularised routine of leading watering places and none provided the core set of facilities that this chapter has considered 'representative' of resort life.

Sydenham, though the proprietors of the wells, 'unusually made no efforts to provide amusements, and the place remained a simple rural Spa,' became popular amongst Londoners.⁷⁴³ Defoe described its visitors as 'unruly and unmannerly' and this was not an exaggeration.⁷⁴⁴ Only eight miles from London, it was customary for 'the common people' to 'walk to it in the morning, and return at night; which abundance do; that is to say, especially of a Sunday, and on holidays, which makes the better sort also decline the place; the crowd on those days being both unruly and unmannerly.'⁷⁴⁵ 'By 1651 the flood of summer visitors to Sydenham was so great that the government issued a proclamation ordering them to behave with decorum. When this did no good cavalry was sent to maintain order.'⁷⁴⁶ Thus Sydenham, whilst popular, could make no claims of exclusivity or fashion. The spa's 'low,' disorderly reputation continued into the eighteenth century and could not be rescued even by royal patronage: George III, who spent a day drinking the waters, was protected by a picket of soldiers.⁷⁴⁷

As the example of Sydenham shows, balancing accessibility with exclusivity was crucial to the success of such smaller spas that lay on the outskirts of London. Also essential to success was the provision of entertainments and refreshments for the visitors. Sissinghurst, promoted by the cash-strapped Baker family failed to meet this demand. Similarly, though Shooter's Hill during the last quarter of the seventeenth

⁷⁴³ James Stevens Curl, *Spas, Wells, & Pleasure Gardens of London* (London: Historical Publications, 2010), p. 210.

⁷⁴⁴ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 166.

⁷⁴⁵ Defoe, *A Tour*, p. 166.

⁷⁴⁶ Coulter, p. 74.

⁷⁴⁷ Coulter, p. 79.

century gained a Wells House, it does not appear to have acquired any buildings for entertainment.⁷⁴⁸

Canterbury, as an established urban centre, had almost the opposite problem. The amenities of the spa were never clearly distinguishable from those of the wider city. Thus, like Sydenham, Canterbury as a spa lacked the important element of exclusivity and ‘otherness.’ Borsay has argued for the importance of the rural character of eighteenth-century spas.⁷⁴⁹ But even though the springs were located outside of the city’s limits, they could hardly be presented as a rural retreat.

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‘Seaside resorts are places for flirtations and engagements, attachments and elopements, love and sex’ argued John Mullan in his study of the novels of Jane Austen.⁷⁵⁰ Though Kent’s resorts aimed to replicate the social and cultural life of the spas there emerged significant differences. The sexualisation of the water cure, the relaxation of the daily regimen and the role of several seaside resorts as militarised spaces made them particularly ‘dangerous’ arenas for women, an aspect that became increasingly apparent in satiric portrayals of resort life. The resorts themselves, structured around their open spaces with their architecture bridging the divide between society and nature, encouraged a move away from a cohesive company centred around daily interactions at the pump room or baths and the sea coast, ‘unbounded’ and ‘large enough to absorb all comers’, meant ‘social homogeneity mattered less.’⁷⁵¹ As the eighteenth century progressed, the presence of the middling ranks at the seaside continued to grow and reputation of Margate in particular reflected the tensions created by their dominance of this previously high-status leisure arena. At the seaside the middling ranks fashioned a new type of watering place but it was an arena that nonetheless played the same social and cultural roles as had the spas.

⁷⁴⁸ Curl, p. 220.

⁷⁴⁹ Peter Borsay, ‘Town or Country? British Spas and the Urban–Rural Interface’, *Journal of Tourism History*, 4.2 (2012), 155-69.

⁷⁵⁰ John Mullan, *What Matters in Austen* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p. 87.

⁷⁵¹ Pimlott, p. 55.

The relaxation of the Nash's daily routine at the seaside can be seen within promotional guides. Whereas Burr for Tunbridge Wells delineated the company's movements *The Margate Guide*, published nine years later, offered no such account: whilst facilities were carefully detailed, no account of a typical day was provided, instead visitors were to participate in the different social and cultural facilities 'as their several Inclinations lead them.'⁷⁵² This trend was even more pronounced at Kent's smaller resorts, partly because of their relative lack of facilities. This is not to suggest, however, that there was not a standard pattern to a visitor's day and as at Tunbridge Wells there was a weekly pattern to events.

The taking of the waters continued to be done first thing in the morning and provided a basic structure to the day. *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide in Letters to a Friend* described how the bathing rooms were 'generally full of persons of all ages' 'from seven till nine' in the morning and it was customary to bathe before breakfast.⁷⁵³ Walking and shopping occupied the rest of the day and a greater emphasis was placed on being outdoors, interacting with nature than at Tunbridge Wells, as demonstrated by the following extract taken from a description of a walk along the shore:

Here I often ramble, with a book in one pocket and a telescope in the other . . . The lofty caves wore in the cliffs, with the echoes they make, when spoken to, and the variegated seaweeds found among the rocks, with the restless sea and numerous vessels on its waving surface, all afford ample matter for pleasing meditations: these two walks, I must acknowledge, I prefer before all the gaiety and splendour of a ball-room, or the polite amusements of the beau monde⁷⁵⁴

It is difficult to imagine Nash endorsing such a dismissal of the virtues of the ballroom in favour of the outdoors and this preference is representative of wider changes in the appreciation of nature as led by the Romantic poets and section five will show how this new perspective manifested in the individual visitor experience.

Class tensions and the role of the seaside as a marriage market were epitomised in the figure of the 'matchmaking mama,' determined to marry off her

⁷⁵² *The Margate Guide*, p. 24.

⁷⁵³ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, p. 5.

⁷⁵⁴ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, pp. 17-18.

daughters at any cost. In the 1808 novel *City Nobility; Or, A Summer at Margate*, for example, Mrs. Emley:

In the solitude of her chamber she turned over every scheme her fertile brain could devise, and mustered up all the arguments that could most probably induce her husband to consent her the wish of visiting Margate with her three lovely daughters, whom she thought it was high time to introduce to the fashionable world, that they might marry a title, as Miss Bridgetina, Clara Firken and Miss Conserve had lately done.⁷⁵⁵

Representing thousands of women who would have visited resorts either hoping to find a husband themselves or to promote a match, Mrs. Emley was just one of the countless examples contemporary literature offered for matches being made or pursued in watering places. Mrs. Emley clearly fostered designs for making a highly advantageous matches; hoping to capture ‘a title’ for her ‘city nobility’ daughters. But though such designs were presented as a subject for amusement and derision, the stereotype gained its power from the fact that the seaside, by attracting visitors from across the social ranks, increased the possibility of such matches being made.

Though the continued expansion of seaside resorts must be understood in the context of a growing market for public leisure, fuelled by the expansion of the middling ranks, the aristocratic and genteel presence should not be underestimated. ‘Evidence abounds to show that a substantial proportion of the visitors to all Kentish seaside resorts . . . were drawn from polite society . . . people of good birth, of high social status . . . either wealth or of independent means as to income.’⁷⁵⁶ But whilst newspapers advertised the high status of visitors to the Kentish seaside throughout the eighteenth century it must be noted that it did so in more general terms than the spas: if articles for Tunbridge Wells are compared to those for Margate, those for the former frequently named its elite titled visitors whereas those at the latter were more commonly referred to nonspecifically as ‘genteel.’

⁷⁵⁵ Anon., *City Nobility; Or, A Summer at Margate* (London: Printed for J.F. Hughes, 1808), pp. 2-3.

⁷⁵⁶ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 317.

Guidebooks offer some indication of the social reputation of resorts but as they are usually self-interested (and certainly they were not as objective as the claimed to be) they can only provide a broad guide. The 1778 *Letters of Momus, from Margate . . .*, which described the 1777 season at Margate and Hardwicke Lewis's 1786 *An Excursion to Margate in the Month of June . . .* demonstrate the prevalence of Margate's 'middling' reputation. Momus was particularly scathing of Margate's visiting company, of which the following description is a typical example:

Margate is furnished with dispositions of a humbler cast; such as might enter into the composition of a country squire, or rather a city alderman. Pride of riches united with sufficient ignorance; expence and dissipation without taste of pleasure; reserve and distance without importance and dignity; and a very little debauchery, gallantry, or love.⁷⁵⁷

The lack of social distinction, Momus suggested, was even more apparent at the assembly rooms, where the master of ceremonies had

. . . a strange predilection for haberdashers, mantua-makers, and milliners, and takes every opportunity of setting them above the wife of a daughter of a merchant who hath left off trade; of a quack-doctor; of a dentist; of a Lincoln's-Inn lawyer; of a doctor in divinity, or a member of parliament.⁷⁵⁸

Hardwicke presented a similarly disparaging picture:

At this season Margate is by no means full, but what company there is, is highly respectable. The *citizens* have not yet commenced gentlemen, haughtily bending the head backwards, through the dread of being thought to have contracted a sneaking stoop behind the counter. - So freely do *they* throw about their money, it

⁷⁵⁷ Momus, *Letters of Momus, from Margate; Describing the Most Distinguished Characters There; and the Virtues, Vices and Follies to Which they Gave Occasion, in What was Called the Season of the Year 1777* (London: Printed for John Bell, Near Exeter-Exchange, in the Strand, 1778), p. 2.

⁷⁵⁸ Momus, p. 2.

surprizes me to see the inhabitants crowd about *nobility*, who come hither rather to retrench.⁷⁵⁹

Whyman has studied in detail the social composition of visitors to the three Isle of Thanet resorts, drawing on a wide range of literary works, diaries, promotional guides and newspaper articles. As his detailed analysis demonstrates, whilst broad conclusions of a resort's reputation and patronage can be drawn, simply combining the vertical hierarchy of rank with the similarly vertical hierarchy of watering places does not reflect the extent of the social mix found at Kent's seaside resorts. Noting in particular the accessibility of the Isle of Thanet from London, the lack of royal patronage and the impact of the wars with France, Whyman emphasised the diversity of the visiting company and drew the following conclusions. 'Margate was a fashionable and a developing middle class resort,' whose 'middle class character' became 'increasingly pronounced' in the years leading up to 1840.⁷⁶⁰ He argued that there was a class division within the season itself, stating: 'A Thanet holidaymaker of the 1800s, who sought the selective company of visiting people, stood the best chance of fulfilling that wish in Margate towards the end of the season.'⁷⁶¹ Broadstairs was 'very select' compared to Margate and 'enjoyed predominantly a fashionable patronage.'⁷⁶² A smaller resort, 'its amusements were less plentiful and varied,' leading guidebooks to note its 'tranquility and respectability.'⁷⁶³ 'Ramsgate remained equally fashionable' and maintained a more exclusive reputation than neighbouring Margate.⁷⁶⁴ Whyman noted how Broadstairs and Ramsgate 'were skirted by country seats and marine villas, whose occupants as men of wealth and standing attracted public attention.'⁷⁶⁵ But how far did the reputation of a watering place and the social class of an individual visitor influence the resort experience? Section five will add to Whyman's study by examining in detail contemporary accounts of the visitor

⁷⁵⁹ Hardwicke Lewis, *An Excursion to Margate, in the Month of June, 1786: Interspersed With a Variety of Anecdotes of Well-Known Characters* (London: Printed by Ritchie & Sammells, Bartholomew-Close, for J. French, Bookseller, No. 164, Fenchurch-Street, 1787), pp. 25-26.

⁷⁶⁰ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 610.

⁷⁶¹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 620.

⁷⁶² Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 618.

⁷⁶³ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 614.

⁷⁶⁴ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 618.

⁷⁶⁵ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 618.

experience across Kent's resorts and will argue that a broad homogeneity of experience overlaid an increasing diversity that not only resulted from the social rank of a visitor but also drew on a range of intersecting factors.

The possibility of 'marrying a title' was not the only appeal held by the socially mixed visiting company of Kent's seaside resorts. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars the Kentish coastal resorts gained new importance as ports and militarised spaces. The presence of military officers proved 'a focus of female admiration'⁷⁶⁶ and 'The idea that women were peculiarly attracted to military men and were apt to act rashly as a consequence of desires aroused by the sight of a scarlet coat was well established from at least the 1780s onwards.'⁷⁶⁷ Chapter one discussed the role played by the Kentish coast in the defence of the nation against the French threat, arguing that the resultant influx of people acted as an impetus to resort growth, particularly in the case of Dover, Herne Bay and Sandgate. 'Scarlet fever' provides a complementary explanation for why the Kentish coast remained popular with visitors despite the ongoing threat of invasion and helps explain why the military presence acted as an attraction, rather than a deterrent.

Not only, Louise Carter has argued, did scarlet fever provide an outlet for the expression of patriotism and the opportunity to participate in the war effort but it was actively encouraged, with female attention being seen 'as a tangible and alluring reward' for those active in the defence of the nation.⁷⁶⁸ Furthermore the military setup (including camps which offered a focus for a day's excursion) injected excitement and a sense of purpose into resort life. As Carter argues:

Having large numbers of men quartered throughout the nation who hosted and attended balls in their glittering ball-uniforms, engaged in mock battles, strode about the parade ground or marched through the streets with the boom of the military drum literally reverberating through the bodies of spectators, all brought

⁷⁶⁶ Louise Carter, 'Scarlet Fever: Female Enthusiasm for Men in Uniform,' in *Britain's Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715-1815*, ed. by Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), pp. 202-230 (p. 203).

⁷⁶⁷ Carter, 'Scarlet Fever', p. 204.

⁷⁶⁸ Carter, 'Scarlet Fever', p. 207.

novelty, diversion, gossip, spectacle and the possibility of a romantic adventure of flirtatious fantasy into the lives of women.⁷⁶⁹

The experiences of Austen's Lydia Bennet at Brighton demonstrates how 'scarlet fever' was thought to manifest in susceptible young women:

In Lydia's imagination, a visit to Brighton comprised every possibility of earthly happiness. She saw with the creative eye of fancy, the streets of that gay bathing place covered with officers. She saw herself the object of attention, to tens and to scores of them at present unknown. She saw all the glories of the camp; its tents stretched forth in beautiful uniformity of lines, crowded with the young and the gay, and dazzling with scarlet; and to compete the view, she saw herself seated beneath a tent, tenderly flirting with at least six officers at once.⁷⁷⁰

As Lydia's story shows, scarlet fever could lead to ruin and scandalous elopements from watering places were widely reported by newspapers.⁷⁷¹ Within Austen's fiction the seaside was often portrayed as a 'risky place to be.'⁷⁷² Austen had 'something particular against Ramsgate.'⁷⁷³ It is there that *Pride and Prejudice's* Georgiana Darcy narrowly avoided being seduced by Wickham and in *Mansfield Park* the irresponsible and dissipated Tom Bertram visits Ramsgate for a week with his friends the Sneyds. Not all of her characters' visits to the seaside, however, ended in disaster and resorts were not 'inherently disreputable destinations in Austen's fiction'⁷⁷⁴ but she did consistently encourage the reader to 'imagine the seaside town as a place of sexual licence.'⁷⁷⁵

The sexualisation of the water cure through the practice of bathing in the sea contributed significantly to this view of the seaside as a place of relative freedom from constraint. Already encouraged by the expansive location of the coast and the resort

⁷⁶⁹ Carter, 'Scarlet Fever', p. 208.

⁷⁷⁰ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Vivien Jones (first pub. 1813; London: Penguin Books, 1996), pp. 190-91.

⁷⁷¹ Carter, 'Scarlet Fever', p. 209.

⁷⁷² Mullan, *What Matters in Austen*, p. 86.

⁷⁷³ Mullan, *What Matters in Austen*, p. 95.

⁷⁷⁴ Mullan, *What Matters in Austen*, p. 88.

⁷⁷⁵ Mullan, *What Matters in Austen*, p. 91.

architecture that bridged the divide between the civilised resort society and wild, untamed nature, sea-bathing created a very different set of responses to the water cure than did the pump rooms of the inland spas. But there was, of course, nothing inherently new in the sexualisation of bathing; indeed it is a fairly consistent theme throughout the history of healing waters and can be traced back at least as far as the Roman baths. What was changing was that it was becoming acceptable as part of the respectable, polite experience of taking the waters. The sexualisation of the water cure resulted mainly from the physical actions and consequences of sea-bathing. In the eighteenth century men often bathed naked, believing clothing would reduce the efficacy of the cure through loss of direct contact by the skin with the water and considering bathing drawers as a sign of effeminacy.⁷⁷⁶ Women usually wore flannel gowns and though illustrations often show them bathing naked, 'if this was not simply artistic licence then it was an unusual practice.'⁷⁷⁷

Literature enthusiastically addressed this aspect of the water cure. *Adam and Eve; A Margate Story* told the story of a young couple who had gone to 'a sequestered, solitary spot / Where they might bathe secure from all intrusion,' leaving their horse with their belongings on the shore, only to find one coming out of the sea to find 'oh! - ye goddesses of witches! / The horse is off with petticoats and breeches!'⁷⁷⁸ William Robinson in his *A Trip to Margate* of 1805 adopted a similar theme. At the beginning of the episode 'A youth of two and twenty one came down, / Who ne'er had seen the sea coast, nor beheld / Bathing machines of course.'⁷⁷⁹ It was after he had found a machine and was returning from his swim that he encountered difficulties:

In his return he swam beside the throng
Of those machines, which then more num'rous stood
In all directions, thick as any wood;

⁷⁷⁶ Brodie, 'Towns of "Health and Mirth"', p. 13.

⁷⁷⁷ Brodie, 'Towns of "Health and Mirth"', p. 13.

⁷⁷⁸ *Adam and Eve; A Margate Story*, (London: Printed for John and Henry L. Hunt, Tavistock-Street, Covent Garden, 1824), pp. 53-54.

⁷⁷⁹ Robinson, William, *A Trip to Margate: With a Description of its Environs, Written in the Year 1805* (London: Printed for the Author, and Sold by H.D. Symonds, Paternoster-Row; and Jordan and Maxwell, Opposite Somerset-House, Strand; By Darton and Harvey, Gracechurch-street, n.d.), p. 11.

He felt perplex'd to know which was his own;
 He look'd at many, more bewilder'd grown
 At ev'ry view; then swimming to the side
 Of one he fondly hop'd to find the guide
 Who brought him there, he ask'd, "Are you the man
 "With whom I came." – "Nay, answer that who can,"
 The rustic arch reply'd, "till you are dress'd;
 "Put on your clothes, Sir, then I'll tell the rest."⁷⁸⁰

Believing he had found his bathing machine and chancing his luck, the youth swam under the water to enter the machine's cover (the distinguishing feature of Margate's hooded bathing machine) where he found 'The lady, fond of bathing as the youth, / And fond of taking it in naked truth.'⁷⁸¹ The story concluded with the youth being challenged to a duel by the lady's brother and an eventual marriage. These themes were continued in print: Thomas Rowlandson's 1790 print *Venus's Bathing (Margate)* (Fig.3.2), for example, shows a woman swimming naked in the sea from a bathing machine whilst being ogled from the shore.

Brodie has argued that the dominance of this literature 'suggests that something of the more licentious manners of the spas was beginning to be witnessed in the hard-working, often quite religious coastal communities' but this licentiousness was of a different character to that displayed by the court at seventeenth-century Tunbridge Wells.⁷⁸² This was due to the size of the visiting company. No longer was this licentiousness confined to a small, interconnected group of courtiers who transferred their way of life into the resort environment: instead as demand expanded to include greater numbers of the middling ranks it increasingly became a feature of the seaside, celebrated and accepted as part of the 'other' environment of the resort.

⁷⁸⁰ Robinson, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁸¹ Robinson, p. 12.

⁷⁸² Brodie, "'Towns of Health and Mirth'", p. 22.

Figure 3.



⁷⁸³ Thomas Rowlandson, *Venus's Bathing (Margate)* (London, s.n., 1790).

v

This chapter has argued for the diversity of the visitor experience and nowhere is this more apparent than within contemporary diaries and letters. This section will examine in detail four manuscript accounts written by women in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century from Kent's watering places: Amabel, Countess de Grey at Margate and Tunbridge Wells between 1775 and 1826; Mary Figgins at Margate in 1828; Frances Sayer at Sandgate in 1819 and Ramsgate in 1821; and Anna Maria Hussey at Dover 1836. The examination of personal accounts is, of course, a widely employed tool however its application to the comparative study of the Kent's spas and seaside resorts is unique. Allowing for the circumvention of the typical reiteration of the social, cultural and medical facilities of watering places, a focus on the accounts of the individual visitor experience provides a more nuanced and complex understanding of the differences between spa and seaside. It also provides scope for comparison across several intersecting axes: the hierarchy of watering places as detailed in chapter one, class and the personality, health and family circumstances of the individual.

Identifying the motivation and inner thoughts of an individual through their extant written records, in this case diaries, letters and travel journals is, of course, problematic and the possibilities and limitations of the study of personal narratives and 'life histories' is perhaps a particularly acute issue for the study of women's writing. As Harriet Blodgett has noted, 'freely speaking diarists are the exception, not

the rule'⁷⁸⁴ and 'few women's private diaries actually contain candid accounts of the diarists' inner lives.'⁷⁸⁵ Several of the key elements addressed by this thesis, particularly sexual and emotional relationships, are largely absent from women's writing and 'Inevitably the most intimate thoughts and feelings go unrecorded.'⁷⁸⁶ The texts themselves as letters, travel journals and daily entry diaries have their own conventions and restraints, which need to be recognised and none of the texts examined are 'in any simple sense an unmediated expression of the self' but, as Vickery has emphasised, 'our public performances are no less significant than our secrets.'⁷⁸⁷

The manuscript diaries and letters of Amabel, Countess de Grey offer a unique insight into the experiences of the elite at a number of the eighteenth century's leading watering places. Born in 1751, Amabel Hume-Campbell [née Lady Amabel Yorke], *suo jure* Countess de Grey (1751–1833) entered into an aristocratic, scholarly and politically active High-Whig family.⁷⁸⁸ She was the daughter of Philip Yorke, second Earl of Hardwicke, eldest son of the Lord Chancellor (1722-1770) and Jemima Yorke, née Campbell, *suo jure* Marchioness Grey and Baroness Lucas of Crudwell. Amabel grew up and was privately educated between the family's estate of Wrest Park in Bedfordshire and their London residence 4 St James's Square, along with her younger sister Mary (Mary Jemima Robinson, Lady Grantham, 1757-1830). On 16 July 1772 Amabel married Alexander Hume-Campbell, Lord Polwarth and though the match was arranged by Amabel's parents, the couple developed a genuine affection. They had no children and Alexander died in 1781, aged only thirty-one, of consumption. Amabel never remarried. On her mother's death in 1797 Amabel inherited her titles and considerable estates.

Passionately interested in politics and a published author, Amabel had close connections with the Bluestockings and can be seen as an intellectual figure in her own

⁷⁸⁴ Harriet Blodgett, *Centuries of Female Days: English Women's Private Diaries* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1989), p. 41.

⁷⁸⁵ Blodgett, p. 16.

⁷⁸⁶ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 60.

⁷⁸⁷ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 60.

⁷⁸⁸ Philip Yorke, Amabel's father, produced several scholarly works, most notably he contributed to the academic, joint exercise *Athenian Letters, Or, The Epistolary Correspondence of an Agent of the King of Persia, Residing at Athens During the Peloponnesian War*, first published, privately and in a limited edition, in 1741.

right.⁷⁸⁹ Amabel was, however, increasingly plagued by ill-health, suffering from rheumatism, bilious complaints and painful teeth. Most distressing was the gradual loss of eye-sight due to the formation of cataracts which eventually prevented reading or writing. There is, however, little to suggest that she suffered from hypochondria. Amabel died on the 4 March 1833 at her home in St. James's at the age of eighty-two.

'My Design in this Book, is to write down some memorandums, of what I hear or see, most remarkable.'⁷⁹⁰ It is with this statement of intent that Amabel opened the first volume of what were to become a series of thirty-seven diaries which spanned the majority of her adult life. The diaries are an extremely valuable source as they provide a record of events for the greater part of sixty-three years, yet they have remained unexplored and neglected by historians. Intended as a private record, the diaries include accounts of Amabel's visits to spa and seaside resorts from 1775 to 1826. Providing an almost daily record of an astute and objective observer, Amabel's diaries, particularly when combined with the correspondence of her and her family, offer scope for the unusual longitudinal study of an individual's experiences. There is not scope here to discuss this wealth of evidence in its entirety: instead this section will focus on a chronological analysis of the visits made to Tunbridge Wells in the 1770s and 1790s and Margate in 1782.

Tunbridge Wells would have been a fairly obvious destination for a young, wealthy and recently married couple in the 1770s. Amabel and her husband visited Tunbridge Wells three times during this decade and, as part of a wider tour around England, also made a brief visit to Bath. Their first visit to Tunbridge Wells, of seventy-two days from 10 July to 20 September 1775 took place across the resort's summer season and they were accompanied by Amabel's cousin, Miss Gregory. Their visits in 1776, sixty-four days from 13 June to 15 August, followed on similar lines and the party was joined by Amabel's sister Mary for a fortnight. Their visit in 1777 was somewhat

⁷⁸⁹ Amabel anonymously published two books, *An Historical Sketch of the French Revolution from its Commencement to the Year 1792*, and *An Historical Essay on the Ambition and Conquests of France, with some Remarks on the French Revolution*, published in 1792 and 1797 respectively. Both publications appear to have been well received, though neither was a best-seller. There are also indications that she published at least two pamphlets, concerning current political affairs, including *An Appeal to the People of Britain* in 1797.

⁷⁹⁰ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Leeds (WYL), Vyner of Studley Royal, Family and Estate Records, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 1, p. 1.

different: the couple stayed in Tunbridge Wells from 7 July to 14 August, when they then relocated to Brighton for just under a month. During this period Lord Polwarth grew increasingly unwell: the beginning of a decline in health that would eventually lead to his death four years later. Before the beginning of Lord Polwarth's decline, which prioritised the pursuit of a cure, Amabel's motivations for visiting resorts can be divided into two main facets: the desire for fashionable leisure and pleasure, which was openly acknowledged; and the publicly unacknowledged and unrecorded search for a cure for the couple's infertility.

Though by the 1770s the spa had begun the transition into a place of genteel residence, it was still able to attract the fashionable elite in significant numbers and there is little indication that it had yet been eclipsed by the growing popularity of the seaside. On 31 July 1775 the London based *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* was able to report that the 'Undressed Ball at Mr. Pinchbeck's Great Room on Friday last' was 'more nobly attended than any ball these season.' Participants included:

The Countesses of Effingham, Pembroke and Lincoln, Lady Holland, Lady Elliott Murray, Lady Heathcote, Lady Hales, Lady Buchan, Lady Polwarth, Lady George Germaine, Lady Roos, Count Maltzan, the Prussian Minister, the Earl of Lincoln, Lord Beauchamp, Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Sir Robert Harries, Sir Charles Asgill, Sir O Pail, Sir John Rous, the Hon, Mr. James Brudenell and Lady, the Hon. Mr. James Stuart and Lady, &c. &c. &c.⁷⁹¹

Amabel eagerly participated in the social and cultural activities that characterised resort life and the daily record of activities within the diaries allows a detailed picture to be constructed of how time at the resort was spent. If the week of Monday 31 July to Sunday 6 August 1775 can be taken as typical, Amabel's pastimes were as follows:

Monday, July th 31st

Miss G. & I went to the Rooms.

Tuesday, Aug th 1st

⁷⁹¹ 'Extract of a Letter from Plymouth', *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 31 July 31 1775, p.2.

Visited Mrs Carter in the Morning.

In the Evening Miss E Elliot walk'd with us round by some Woods to the Windmill.

Wednesday, Aug th 2d

Sr G. & Ldy H. Ldy M, Ldy B & Mr Douglas, & Miss E.E. drank Tea with s, & walk'd down to the Wells.

Thursday, Aug th 3d

Mov'd into a House lower down on Mount Ephraim in which the Bp of London lately lodg'd.

Friday, Aug the 4

We went to the undrest Ball at Fry's Rooms, after drinking Tea at Mrs Crop's with Ldy Hales & her Daughters. Ld P had given in the Morning a public Breakfast at Mrs Vaughans Rooms.

Saturday, Aug th 5th

We all walk'd to the Rocks, (through a pleasant Valley) with Sr G. & Ldy Heathcote, Ldy B & Mr Douglas & Miss E. Elliot – Went afterwards to Pinchbeck's Rooms.

Sunday, Aug th 6th

I visited Ldy Chesterfield, & then went to Ldy Elliots; Mrs Stuart Mr Andrew Stuart, &c were there.⁷⁹²

Still influenced by Nash's reforms, much of this week was spent in public, socialising with the visiting company: during this week Amabel went to one ball, visited the rooms twice, walked to the wells once and attended a public breakfast. In a letter written a couple of weeks later she wrote 'I was Five Evenings out of seven at the Rooms.'⁷⁹³ Amabel also, however, spent much of her time engaging in what appear to be more private gatherings with friends and acquaintances of a similar rank and these more freely determined activities seem to have been balanced fairly evenly with the public

⁷⁹² WYL, Vyner of Studley Royal, Family and Estate Records, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 4, pp. 126-127.

⁷⁹³ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Amabel Hume-Campbell, Countess de Grey to Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham', 24 Aug. 1775. L30/13/12/30.

activities that formed part of the weekly routine of the spa. This balance conforms to the general trend in Britain's leisure during this period of a shift from public to private leisure.

Even though she was visiting Tunbridge Wells with her husband, there was seen to be a need for Amabel to have a female companion at the spa: Miss Gregory, a cousin, usually fulfilled this role during the 1770s and later it was undertaken by her sister, Mary. Miss Gregory's importance in this regard was acknowledged by Lady Hardwicke, who wrote to her daughter in 1777 that she was 'very sorry you have no Companion there, as I also think it is really wanted in those Places, & wish you may meet with any Person to make one'.⁷⁹⁴ This desire for female companionship was a widespread phenomenon. Stone has noted how chaperones were a common presence within wealthy circles, even during a couple's honeymoon, arguing 'The need for supportive female assistance in this time of psychological and physiological crisis shows how strong was the social attraction of each sex for its own company.'⁷⁹⁵

That the couple were visiting Tunbridge Wells in part because of a hope of improving their chances of conceiving a child is something that has to be inferred from their circumstances rather than a motivation explicitly divulged by Amabel within her diaries or correspondence. This absence of records is not unusual. As Rosemary Baird has noted, 'Women who could not have children were usually stoical, and barely, if ever, referred to it in their letters'.⁷⁹⁶ This trait has been corroborated by Blodgett, who has suggested that reluctance openly to refer to infertility extended further than not talking about it, stating; 'Women of the past wrote alone and kept taboo subjects hidden even from themselves'.⁷⁹⁷ Given the importance placed on children, especially amongst the elites who were concerned with the inheritance of titles and property, it is a safe assumption that after three years of marriage the couple had become anxious. The claims for the mineral and seawater's powers to cure barrenness will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

⁷⁹⁴ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey to Amabel Hume Campbell, Countess de Grey', 4 Jun 1777, L30/11/122/121.

⁷⁹⁵ Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 224.

⁷⁹⁶ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses, 1670-1830* (London: Phoenix, 2004), p. 14.

⁷⁹⁷ Blodgett, p. 40.

Amabel regularly drank the waters whilst at Tunbridge Wells and a letter written to her sister in 1775 is revealing of her habits and the perceived effects of the waters:

I began today to drink two Glasses (one at 9, & the second at 1,) & find myself extremely well . . . a little Headach now & then. I am persuaded they are very good for me, since those hot Days, though the Sun was more scorching, oppress'd me much less, than the Heat at Wrest & Wimble. Don't think I contradict myself, for Oppression & a Head-ach, are so very different, that (luckily,) I never had a Heach-ach that oppress'd me, in my Life.⁷⁹⁸

Medical advice dictated that the waters were most effective when taken first thing in the morning on an empty stomach. Thus the routine promoted by guidebooks suggested taking the waters once a day before breakfast. However Amabel in 1775 drank the waters twice a day, which corroborates the theory that taking the waters was particularly important for her during this period. Unfortunately, there is no indication of whether she received medical advice (though it is likely that she did) which would have allowed a greater understanding of the regime being followed and the outcome hoped for.

Amabel's visits to Tunbridge Wells between 1790 and 1826, during which she was usually accompanied by her sister Mary, demonstrate how an individual's use and experience of a watering place could change over a lifetime. In revisiting Tunbridge Wells, a resort both sisters enjoyed in their youth, memory and comfort were significant: both were now widows (Mary's husband, Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham, had died in 1786) and were increasingly seeking secure leisure at a gentler pace in comfortable and familiar surroundings whilst the water cure promised to maintain their health as they progressed through middle to old age. Though fashion may have moved away from this increasingly residential spa, the generation who had attended during its heyday continued to visit their old haunts.

Amabel visited Tunbridge Wells twice in the early 1790s, each time for approximately a month: from 23 August to 23 September 1790 and 18 June to 2

⁷⁹⁸ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Amabel Hume-Campbell, Countess de Grey to Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham', n.d. c.1775. L30/13/12/29.

August 1792. Between 1807 and 1826 Amabel visited Tunbridge Wells six times, each time for approximately a month starting late June / early July and ending late July / early August.

Amabel, as a widow of thirty-nine found Tunbridge Wells of 1790 a much different place from that she had first visited in 1775 as a newly married young woman of twenty-four. Reminiscing about visits to the spa in her youth and judging the present unfavourably by comparison, was a common theme within Amabel's surviving letters from this period and the early 1790s in particular. The following quotation is a typical example and illustrates the focuses of Amabel's dissatisfaction:

I remember when I first came here – no less than 15 Years ago, I was agreeably surprised at finding the Place so much surpass my Expectation. There was a Vivacity & an Ease in it that pleas'd. I convers'd with new Acquaintance, and was amus'd with the Convenience of a Circulating Library, & the exploring the Beauties of the neighbouring Country seem'd to afford a constant Fund of Entertainment. Now the Scene appears chang'd, there are very few People whom I know or care for, the Library appears empty and dull, the Country indeed is always beautiful, but the Weather is uncertain.⁷⁹⁹

It was not so much that the physical environment of the spa had changed, but rather Amabel's expectations, perceptions and motivations for visiting the resort had. Not only had the novelty of resort life worn off but the society found at the resort was judged inferior to that of the past and it is unsurprising that it was during these years, rather than the 1770s that Amabel complained of boredom. Age and nostalgia were likely contributing factors. Writing to Amabel in 1825, Mary observed: 'I fear as a residence Tunbridge cannot now be what it was to us, in earlier days.'⁸⁰⁰ However, despite such complaints it is important to remember that Amabel and her sister continued to visit Tunbridge Wells: the spa had certainly not lost all of its appeal.

⁷⁹⁹ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Amabel Hume-Campbell, Countess de Grey to Jemima Mary Gregory', 29 Aug. 1790. L30/23/93.

⁸⁰⁰ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham to Amabel Hume-Campbell, Countess de Grey', 2 Jul. 1825. L30/11/240/328.

Comparing Amabel's visit to Margate with those to Tunbridge Wells highlights some of the key differences between the pattern of daily life at the seaside as opposed to the inland spa. The visit, which lasted only one week between 27 July and 2 August 1782, was prompted by the declining health of her father Lord Hardwicke who in the following year would be seized by a paralytic disorder that seriously affected his arm and leg and would come to suffer from a variety of ailments including scorbutic eruptions and costive bowels.

When Amabel's diaries entries from Margate are compared to those written at Tunbridge Wells a number of differences can be seen. First, there was less emphasis at Margate on the assembly rooms as a focus for the resort's social life and there is no indication that either a daily or weekly routine was being followed by visitors. In contrast to Tunbridge Wells where the assembly rooms were visited on almost a daily basis, at Margate Amabel mentioned them only once when she went on 1 August 'with Miss Yorke to pay some visits, see the Rooms, go to some Shops &c.'⁸⁰¹ Lady Hardwicke likewise wrote in a letter written a couple of weeks earlier that 'There is a fine Assembly-Room but I don't hear of Company at it' but this was apparently due to their visit being slightly out of season, 'The High tide at this place being the Months of Augt & Septr & then I believe it is chiefly filled from the good City of London, & Miss J.Y. did not I believe last year go to any Balls.'⁸⁰² This comment is the only mention within the letters of either Lady Hardwicke or Amabel of the lower social reputation of Margate and though it may have prevented some of their acquaintance from patronising some of the resort's social activities (Miss J.Y. appears to have avoided balls for this reason) it had certainly not prohibited their visiting the town.

Of the resort architecture, the most frequently visited was the pier, with walking and visiting locations within the Isle of Thanet being Amabel's most common pastime. Destinations included Ramsgate where 'the View of Sandwich, the Downs, the very distant shore of Calais, is beautiful and the Pier a very handsome one, & well

⁸⁰¹ WYL, Vyner of Studley Royal, Family and Estate Records, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol.7, p. 134.

⁸⁰² BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey to Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham', 17 Jul. 1782. L30/13/9/54.

built' and the small pleasure garden of Dandelion 'where there is a pretty Wood, & a little Plantation of shrubs.'⁸⁰³

Margate was compared directly to Tunbridge Wells and Brighton by Lady Hardwicke in 1782. In general she was impressed with the resort, which was 'upon the whole less unpleasant in its situation than I expected, being more Country . . . the Views of the Sea are always fine & amusing. In short I think it might be less tiresome upon the Whole for the Eyes than Brightne. [sic]'⁸⁰⁴ Amabel, too, debated the relative charms of each resort:

As I think you was not very fond of Brighthelmstone so I imagine you would not be fond of Margate. Which is the most tolerable is hard to decide. The Sea Views at Margate are much finer, as many more Vessels pass in Sight, & the Drive to Kingsgate and Ramsgate may be call'd beautiful. The Country at Brighthelmstone is Downs for Pasture here it is open Cornfields which are remarkably fertile. The chief Inconvenience which struck me at Margate, was the want of such a clean open airy Walk near the Bathing Houses as the Steim [sic] and Cliff may be reckoned.⁸⁰⁵

It is interesting to note that it was not the social, cultural or medical facilities such as assembly rooms and circulating libraries that Amabel used as her basis for comparison, instead she focused on the physical environment: the sea view, walks and surrounding countryside took prominence.

The family did, however, experience a series of problems acquiring satisfactory accommodation. Lady Hardwicke complained 'We are not near so Well Lodged as at that Place' [Brighton] and 'The House first taken for us was Intolerable, & we moved the next day into another.'⁸⁰⁶ Amabel faced similar problems when she arrived in Margate to join them: 'The Houses at Margate are better furnish'd than those at

⁸⁰³ WYL, Vyner of Studley Royal, Family and Estate Records, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 7, pp. 133-34.

⁸⁰⁴ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey to Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham', 17 Jul. 1782. L30/13/9/54.

⁸⁰⁵ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Amabel Hume-Campbell, Countess de Grey to Jemima Mary Gregory', 1 Sept. 1782. L30/23/50.

⁸⁰⁶ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey to Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham', 17 Jul. 1782. L30/13/9/54.

Tunbridge, but certainly smaller, as you know it was not difficult to lodge you there, & it was quite impossible for Ld Hardwicke to lodge me.⁸⁰⁷ This was most likely a result of Margate being still a fairly new resort where accommodation was a mixture of purpose-built facilities and converted pre-existing cottages.

The travel journal of Mary Figgins supports the argument for society at Margate being less regulated than that at Tunbridge Wells and has a similar focus on outdoor activities, despite the two women being from different social classes. Mary's journal, written circa 1828, offers a daily account of three weeks at the seaside resort between 31 August and 21 September, when the journal stops abruptly.⁸⁰⁸ Nothing is known of Mary Figgins outside what can be deduced from her diary where her family situation, description of entertainments participated in and particularly the collection of French exercises at the rear of the volume suggest Mary was a fairly young women. On the other hand, Mary appears to have acted relatively independently in regards to her entertainments.

The party consisted of Mary, Rose and Vincent, who met them at the resort (the three were possibly siblings). The party travelled, seemingly from London, via the steamboats which suggests they were members of the capital's middling orders. No parents were mentioned. They stayed at lodgings in Union Crescent, at the rear of the fashionable Hawley Square. Rose was unwell throughout the three weeks, suffering from fever and fatigue for which she was given medicine, which suggests a motive for their visit to the sea.

Mary's account of her stay offers a very different perspective on the social and cultural life of watering places to the structured routine and cohesive visiting company of Tunbridge Wells. The entry for 2 September provides an example of how a typical day was spent. Mary's intended pre-breakfast walk at half past seven was rained off but later in the morning she and Vincent went first to the market and then for a walk along the coast to Kingsgate until they were stopped by a hailstorm. After dinner the pair 'went for a saunter,' ending up at 'the Boulevards' and then going on to 'the fancy fair' where 'I and Vincent took two chances in a raffle and Vincent played at loo at

⁸⁰⁷ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey to Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham', 17 Jul. 1782. L30/13/9/54.

⁸⁰⁸ Dover, East Kent Archives Service (EK) Diary of Mary Figgins while at Margate, c. 1828. U/U127.

Jolly's and won 2 shillings.' After returning to their lodgings for supper the pair went to enquire when the raffle would take place.⁸⁰⁹

Like Amabel nearly forty years earlier, Mary spent much of her time within a close circle of family and friends or walking outdoors, often to the shops. Again the pier emerges as focus for resort life: it appears often in the journals as the focus for a walk where observing society and the in- and outgoing packets providing amusement. What is absent from Mary's daily account is also revealing: there is no reference to the Master of the Ceremonies or of participation in dance assemblies. Brodie has detected a 'monotony' in Mary's routine and observes that although she initially attended church every Sunday 'by the third Sunday at Margate she seems to have become so relaxed that she could not get up in time for the morning service.'⁸¹⁰ But unlike Amabel and Elizabeth Montagu, Mary did not explicitly express at the monotony of resort life, most likely a result of their different social and intellectual backgrounds.

The small collection of manuscript travel journals written by Frances Sayer at the beginning of the nineteenth century offer a unique insight into the experiences of a middling class family of several of Kent's seaside resorts and include a rare description of a visit to Sandgate at an early stage of its development. Like Amabel, Frances travelled with her family to visit a number of fashionable resorts and her description of social, cultural and medical facilities, more extensive than those of Mary Figgins if still relatively short, allow for comparative analysis. But whilst there can be identified within Frances's travel journals a broad cultural homogeneity between watering places and the resort experience when compared to Amabel's diaries, what stands out are the differences that resulted from class and resort typology.

Frances Sayer, young woman from London's respectable middle classes, lived in Charterhouse Square, Smithfield, just north of the City. Between 1818 and 1826 she wrote five separate journal accounts of a series of visits made by her and her family to watering places in the south of England. The first journal written was of a visit to Sandgate between 14 August and 9 September 1819 which was produced for the entertainment of close friends and family, written 'quite in a domestic style' and

⁸⁰⁹ EKS, Diary of Mary Figgins while at Margate, c. 1828. U/U127.

⁸¹⁰ Allan Brodie, 'The Brown Family Adventure – Seaside Holidays in Kent in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Tourism History*, 5. 1 (2013) 1-24, (p. 14).

'humbly submit[ted] . . . to whoever will condescend to read them hoping that they may not be found wholly unentertaining.'⁸¹¹ The journal must have been well received as it prompted the retrospective composition of two earlier excursions; 'Journey to Brighton' in 1818 and 'Description of Hastings' in 1819 within which Frances promised her 'public,' 'As some travellers weary their readers with a description of every thing however uninteresting, the author of these few pages, has endeavoured to remedy that evil, by explaining only those things which appeared to her to be worthy of notice.'⁸¹² These were followed by a fourth account, describing a stay in Ramsgate in October 1821 and lastly a 'Journal of a two months Excursion to the Isle of Wight' in 1826.

Frances, accompanied by her mother and sister Mary travelled to Sandgate to visit her grandmother who lived in the resort. Met there by her two aunts, Fanny and Jane the family, all-female party spent just under a month at the resort, punctuated with a short stay at Dover and visits to Folkestone, neighbouring estates, villages and farms. Sandgate at the beginning of the nineteenth century was still a small resort. Having first introduced bathing facilities in 1776, Sandgate had remained a small town, despite the influx of visitors during the wars with France and acted as a satellite to its larger neighbour, Folkestone. Frances described the resort as possessing 'two good Inns, Warm & Cold baths, a Library and reading room,' the librarian Mr. Purday being 'a cross man . . . with remarkable long teeth.'⁸¹³

In contrast to Amabel's account of Tunbridge Wells where the composition of the visiting company was paramount to enjoyment and where a strict, repetitive routine was followed, Frances spent the vast majority of her time within her family circle and though time was spent visiting the bathing rooms and library, walks and excursions were the main activity: favoured outings were to places of local interest, such as farms or houses, where a pencil-sketches could be taken and inserted into the journal, of which Figure 3.3. is an example.

As a result, the formal 'core' elements of the watering places only placed a small role, especially when compared to their prominence at Tunbridge Wells. But how

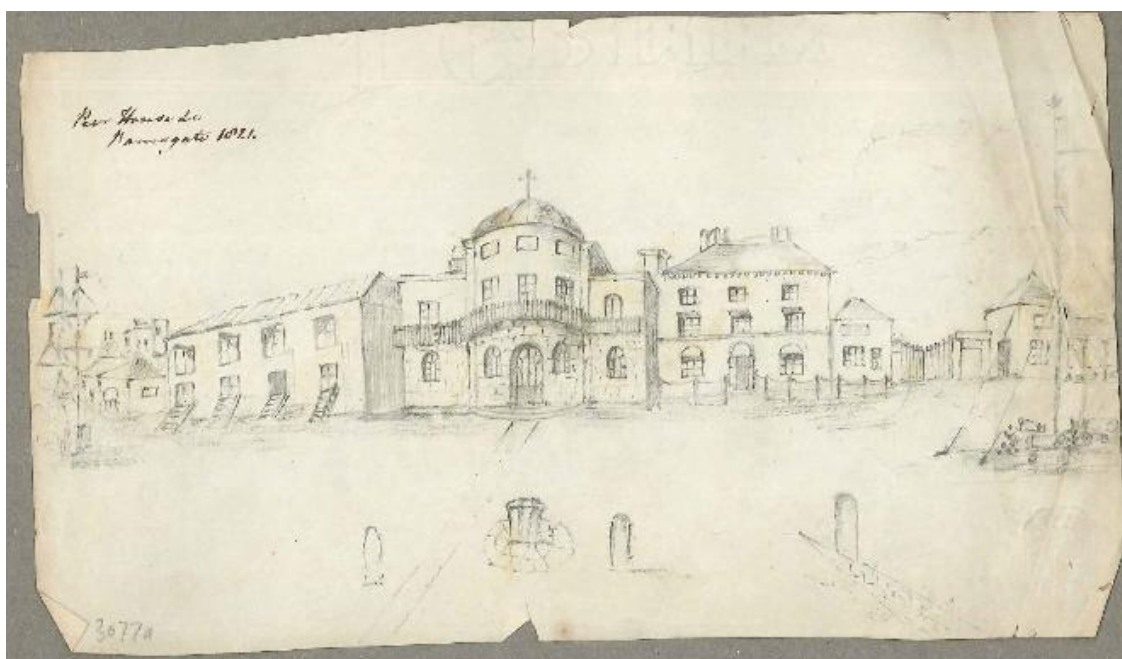
⁸¹¹ Lewes, East Sussex Record Office (ES), Travel Journal of Frances Sayer, 1818-1820. SAY/3394, preface.

⁸¹² ES, Travel Journal of Frances Sayer, 1818-1820. SAY/3394, preface.

⁸¹³ ES, Travel Journal of Frances Sayer, 1818-1820. SAY/3394, p. 1.

far was this lack of interaction a reflection of the family's interests and how much a result of Sandgate's emergent status as a resort? Frances's account of Ramsgate in 1821 shows a greater interaction with the social life of the resort. The election of a new Master of the Ceremonies, for example, provided an entertaining spectacle, the arrival of the Princess Esterhazy to the resort provoked comment and what only can be seen as gossip about the suspected (and later confirmed) suicide of a genteel woman by drowning seems to have been widely discussed. As with Sandgate, the visit to Ramsgate was undertaken by the female members of the family: Frances travelled down from London with her mother and was met at the resorts by her aunts; her father and brother stayed at home.

Figure 3.3. The Pier House at Ramsgate (1821) ⁸¹⁴



Ramsgate, of course, was far more developed than Sandgate as a watering place and urban centre which can account for many of the differences between the pattern of leisure within the two journal accounts. The shops, library, reading rooms at the bathhouse and pier offered entertainment but visiting the 'rooms' was not a daily event and Frances did not record going to any dance or card assemblies. The

⁸¹⁴ ES, Diary of Frances Sayer, 1821. SAY/3396.

differences between Frances's and Amabel's experience were also the result of class or, more precisely, different social networks. As a prominent member of the fashionable elite, Amabel would have played a key social role in the relatively small visiting company at Tunbridge Wells and the 'quality' of the visiting company was a major concern. The Sayer family, being drawn from a lower social rank and attending resorts with a higher turnover amongst the visiting company, were a far more anonymous presence. Class distinctions also played a role in how resorts were viewed and it was primarily on this basis that Margate, in Frances's eyes, did not compare well with Ramsgate. Cecil Square was described as 'a very dull place' and the warm baths 'very vulgar affairs' where 'the People seem devoid of decency as the baths are close to a low window looking into the High Street & there is not a separate room for dressing.'⁸¹⁵

Anna Maria Hussey's diary of a holiday in Dover in 1836, though lying outside the scope of the wider thesis, corroborates the argument that society at Kent's seaside resorts did not conform to the established routine of the spas and suggests that this was a long-term divergence of culture. A mycologist and botanical illustrator, Hussey was born on 5 June 1805, the eldest of seven children of John Theodore Archibald Reed (1758/9 - 1830), curate and later rector of Leckhamstead in Buckinghamshire and his second wife Anna Maria, *née* Dayrell (1777-1848). Her diary of the holiday at Dover, written for her sister Henrietta (1807-1860), also a keen botanist, 'suggests that her first love was geology, but on this holiday she developed an interest in botany, in order to answer the questions of her youngest sister Catherine who accompanied her.'⁸¹⁶ Anna Maria married Thomas John Hussey (b. 1797), rector of Hayes on 18 August 1831. A theologian and astronomer, Thomas corresponded with many leading scientific figures, including Charles Darwin, Charles Babbage and Sir John Herschel. The couple had six children between 1832 and 1842 but only two survived to adulthood.⁸¹⁷

Hussey is best known for her *Illustrations of British Mycology: Containing Figures and Descriptions of the Funguses of Interest and Novelty Indiginous to Britain*,

⁸¹⁵ ES, Diary of Frances Sayer, 1821. SAY/3396, p. 15.

⁸¹⁶ Elizabeth A. Finn, 'Hussey, [*née* Read], Anna Maria (1805-1853)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk>> [accessed 12 June 2013].

⁸¹⁷ Finn.

which was published in two series between 1847 and 1855. Anna Maria ‘felt strongly that children should be taught to appreciate the natural world at an early age, and that the study of natural history was a particularly appropriate pursuit for young women’ and she intended this work to be used by mothers to teach their children about fungi.⁸¹⁸ She also contributed to *The Surplice*, a Church of England periodical edited by her husband. Anna Maria died in Paris on 26 August 1853 where, according to the anonymous biographical notes at the beginning of her Dover diary, she had been ‘left alone by her husband . . . who was last heard of in Algiers.’⁸¹⁹ Thomas Hussey’s actions remain mysterious but it is known that he resigned the living of Hayes in 1854.

The party of ‘2 Ladies and 2 children and their . . . nurses’ travelled to Dover by Steam Boat.⁸²⁰ It was a novel, exciting trip being, as Anna Maria remarked, ‘the first time in my life on the deck of a Steamer – Nothing could be more exquisite than the morning – I had always felt an ungratified passion for voyaging.’⁸²¹ The health benefits of the sea voyage also appealed: ‘when I felt the fresh breeze from the water, and looked back at my little ones I trusted every mile of their journey would invigorate, and bring back the roses to my pale boy’s cheeks.’⁸²² The steam boat, as had the Margate hoys, offered a mixture of society and Anna Maria’s commentary demonstrates how far this image had become a well-known feature of a resort visit:

Some, a very few, muffled in cloaks, Cottage bonnets, and comforts looked like Ladies, some looked not at all so, tho’ they evidently hoped that finery, if not exactly “gilding refined gold” would make a baser match – current. None looked like gentlemen – that metamorphosis is not yet beyond art, luckily, at least, none of the company on board the Dover Castle looked like members of the ‘Swell Mob’ who recently have inflated the crowded boats conveying Cockney’s to Margate &c. Some things in the world are a matter of course, among these, always is, in travelling parties one fine Lady (in this case accompanied by a dandy

⁸¹⁸ Finn.

⁸¹⁹ Maidstone, Centre for Kentish Studies (CKS), Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, p. 2.

⁸²⁰ CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, p. 7.

⁸²¹ CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, pp. 7-8.

⁸²² CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, pp. 7-8.

husband, two over dressed children and an over-familiar) – who never condescended so much as to take a voyage of the kind before.⁸²³

Anna Maria, in contrast to Amabel, was seeking a certain element of seclusion from resort society in her choice of lodgings, chosen for being ‘so retired from the Town’ and having space for the children to play.⁸²⁴ Indeed, the children and the collection of botanical finds from the shore acted as dual focuses for the visit. The party, though, did not keep themselves entirely segregated from the town: the library provided a favourite destination, Anna Maria proclaiming herself ‘charmed with the collection of books,’ and though ‘many a Lounger enquiring for the last new novel is doubtless disposed to grumble - but as we get new works at home from Cawthron too fast to allow us time for the old, it is pleasant to have leisure and opportunity to look over such as are here.’⁸²⁵ The social tone of the resort was a key consideration, Anna Maria noting ‘Dover is not yet spoiled by the influx of Cockneys.’⁸²⁶

Overall, however, Anna Maria’s journal demonstrates the great distance that had emerged between the regimented social round of Tunbridge Wells, still clinging onto Nash’s regime that Amabel had experienced in the 1770s and the more family-orientated, seaside resorts of the early nineteenth century, where interaction with nature was paramount and the grip of the core group of watering place facilities – assembly rooms, pump rooms and coffeehouses – had lessened; a change Anna Maria encapsulated with her comment, ‘So determined were we to do nothing at Dover than enjoy the sea.’⁸²⁷ The broad cultural homogeneity between spa and seaside and throughout the hierarchy of watering places continued and the resort environment continued to be heavily guided by class as well as individual personality, however visitors’ experiences of leisure resorts had subtly but fundamentally changed.

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⁸²³ CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, pp. 9-10.

⁸²⁴ CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, p. 17.

⁸²⁵ CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, p. 31.

⁸²⁶ CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, p. 44.

⁸²⁷ CKS, Anna Maria Hussey’s Diary of a Holiday in Dover. U3754/F1, p. 39.

This chapter has argued, seemingly paradoxically, that whilst characterised by a broad cultural homogeneity, the individual visitor experience of Kent's watering places was diverse, complex and responded to a number of intersecting factors. Alongside the more frequently considered vertical hierarchies of social rank and of spas and seaside resorts, gender, health, personality, lifecycles and family circumstances all exerted a significant influence. To write a history of the social life of Kent's watering places without considering these factors, or focusing too heavily on promotional guides and the physical facilities of a resort can only ever provide a flat, pedestrian understanding which cannot reflect the complexity of arenas that did not just respond to a changing society but actively influenced it.

None of these factors, of course, was static and the social order in particular was evolving during this period. Class was integral to the leisure experience and both the tensions and interconnectedness of a changing social order were expressed and played out within the melting pot of resort society. It has been shown that applying the vertical hierarchy of class to the similarly vertical hierarchy of watering places can only be a blunt tool that fails to reflect the subtle gradations of rank as well as the broad division between the 'polite' and the 'vulgar.'

Polite society, the taking of the waters and shared participation in the cultural life of the resorts worked to unite the visiting company. But whilst Nash's rules and strict daily regimen had proven essential during the first half of the eighteenth century, they gradually became anachronistic: as demand from the middling ranks expanded, they brought with them a subtly different set of expectations, habits and priorities. Thus whilst Restoration Tunbridge Wells had social, cultural and medical facilities in common with early nineteenth-century Sandgate, the visitor experience was very different.

There has not been space in this chapter to study the social life of Kent's watering places in its entirety and there is certainly scope for a more sustained analysis of individual resorts. However by offering a comparative analysis that focuses on the differences between spa and seaside and by situating Kent's watering places within wider social, cultural and leisure trends, a greater insight into the complexities of resort life has been gained. In particular it has shown the need to consider the resort

experience across the totality of the resort hierarchy and that our understanding of the larger, more successful resorts cannot be transposed uncritically to those further down the scale. Kent's watering places may not have been populated by the frisky young tits, matchmaking mamas or peevish old maids of contemporary satire but the people behind these stereotypes still have a lot to teach us.

4. Taking the Waters

Healing waters lay at the heart of Kent's spas and seaside resorts. Medical guides claimed mineral and sea waters could cure a staggeringly wide range of afflictions, from barrenness to pimples: watering places were the 'great hospital[s] of the nation' where the sick flocked to the waters in search of health and wellbeing.⁸²⁸ Resorts were judged on the number and quality of their medical facilities and taking the waters provided an organisational structure to daily life. But contemporaries and modern scholars alike have questioned the importance of the water cure to visitors. Defoe, for example, noted at Tunbridge Wells: 'the coming to the Wells to drink the water is a mere matter of custom; some drink, more do not, and few drink physically' and satirists frequently derided visitors who used the waters as an excuse for the pursuit of pleasure.⁸²⁹

This chapter will present 'taking the waters' as multi-dimensional practice that occurred within arenas capable of supporting a complexity of intersecting functions. The water cure, it will be shown, was founded on a genuine belief in the curative power of mineral and sea waters. Its practice was supported by a vast body of medical literature that, whilst based in Galenic theory, was adaptive to new developments in medical knowledge. Spas and seaside resorts were the 'main public healing places[s] in Georgian England': arenas that provided the sick with an 'opportunity to care for their

⁸²⁸ Tobias Smollet, *An Essay on the External Use of Water* (London: M. Cooper, 1752), p. 29.

⁸²⁹ Defoe, *A Tour*, pp. 141-42.

health in public.⁸³⁰ At a time when suffering from illness (real or imagined) could provide cultural capital, visitors took the waters for a wide range of afflictions: genuine, feigned and fashionable sickness each had their place within the culture of the resorts and could overlap significantly. Providing venues for the conspicuous consumption of a fashionable, high-status medical therapy, watering places were ‘settings for theatrical display and the performance of health,’ that relied on the successful promotion of waters which often held no intrinsic medicinal properties.⁸³¹ Yet cures were made and many visitors left resorts with improved health, not least due to changes in environment, diet and the placebo effect.

Through a chronological study of medicine at Kent’s resorts, this chapter will explore how these different facets combined within highly fashionable leisure arenas. Discussion will be founded in an examination of the theory, practice, promotion and facilities that combined to provide the water cure and in accounting for the medical reputation and success of Kent’s waters but the aim here is not to provide an exhaustive description of how these manifested within each individual resort. Instead the focus will be on combining the vast amount of evidence for the medicinal use of mineral and sea waters with discourses on fashionable illness.

This chapter will thus dispute Roy Porter’s dismissal of the water cure as a ‘charade’ and spas as ‘but a vast marketplace of quackery . . . with the collusion of hypochondriacs and valetudinarians desperate for attention and anxious to ail fashionably.’⁸³² It will also seek to provide an alternative to what frequently emerges within the historiography as a binary opposition between watering places as centres for medical cure and as fashionable arenas for leisure and pleasure. This tendency is evident within Hembry’s and Walton’s surveys, a format which encourages the identification of broad changes. Hembry argues that after the Restoration the ‘emphasis of spa life became more a search for pleasure and entertainment . . . under

⁸³⁰ Roy Porter and Dorothy Porter, *In Sickness and in Health: the British Experience 1650-1850* (London: Fourth Estate, 1988), p. 197.

⁸³¹ Jill R. Steward, ‘Moral Economies and Commercial Imperatives: Food, Diets and Spas in Central Europe: 1800-1914,’ *Journal of Tourism History*, 4.2 (2012), 181-203 (p. 183).

⁸³² Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death, and Doctors in Britain, 1650-1900* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 167-169.

the pretence of taking the waters for health reasons⁸³³ and that by the eighteenth century, visitors were primarily seeking 'pleasure, fortune and fashion.'⁸³⁴ Walton argues that the nineteenth century witnessed a reaction against the perceived hedonism of the past: at the increasingly residential spas 'the pursuit of health reasserted itself at the expense of pleasure and diversion.'⁸³⁵ There is nothing inherently incorrect within these statements but they do oversimplify what was a complex balance: this chapter will show the need for a more nuanced interpretation of the role and experience of watering places.

Before starting a discussion of the water cure itself, it will be important to situate Kent's watering places within the wider medical culture of the long eighteenth century. This was a period when sickness, disease and death were a constant threat and even apparently trivial afflictions could be fatal.⁸³⁶ 'Alongside killer diseases, people were also plagued with innumerable endemic medical conditions which often crippled, typically discomforted and sometimes proved chronic.'⁸³⁷ Within an increasingly commercialised medical culture, watering places offered hope of a cure, palliative care and the means for the maintenance of health within a high-status arena. It will be argued that the existing discourse understates the importance of mineral and sea waters as a medical treatment and will show that for women's health in particular taking the waters could assume heightened importance at different stages of the lifecycle. This is not to suggest that Kent's spas and seaside resorts should be seen primarily places for the sick. Rather, that as an important segment of the visiting company, their presence and importance needs greater recognition.

The patient experience was highly influenced by cultural beliefs and stereotypes and the two cannot be fully separated.⁸³⁸ 'Popular understanding of how the body worked affected the treatments that patients received as well as the

⁸³³ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 303.

⁸³⁴ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 303.

⁸³⁵ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 7.

⁸³⁶ Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter, *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-century England* (Oxford: Polity, 1989), p. 6.

⁸³⁷ Porter and Porter, *Patient's Progress*, p. 7.

⁸³⁸ Heather R. Beatty, *Nervous Disease in Later Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Reality of a Fashionable Disorder* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), p. 96.

patient's perceptions of successful treatment.'⁸³⁹ Drawing on new understandings of fashionable illness the experiences of sickness and health within watering places will be examined. Crucially, throughout this chapter will be the recognition that no two visitors had the same experience of the water cure and that a patient's interaction with culturally-influenced disorders did not necessarily come at the expense of their sincerity: 'it would be unfair to dismiss all patients who revelled in the fashionable implications of their sensibility-induced disorders as mere actors'.⁸⁴⁰

i

Sickness and death stalked long eighteenth-century England. It was a period in which endemic and epidemic diseases were rife, resistance to infection was low and medicine had 'few effective weapons.'⁸⁴¹ 'After the bubonic plague had disappeared by the later seventeenth century, smallpox was the most feared, widespread and fatal infection in England.'⁸⁴² Spread by droplet infection, countrywide and local outbreaks occurred across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries despite the introduction of inoculation and vaccination⁸⁴³ and, uniquely, 'it was a disease which permanently scarred the survivor's face ("pockmarked"), as well as a cause of blindness and male infertility.'⁸⁴⁴ Influenza, which thrived during the winter months and was commonly referred to as 'new fever' or 'new ague', was also prevalent across this period and was particularly devastating during the second half of the seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth.⁸⁴⁵

⁸³⁹ Beatty, p. 97.

⁸⁴⁰ Beatty, p. 77.

⁸⁴¹ Porter and Porter, *In Sickness and in Health*, p. 4.

⁸⁴² Joan Lane, *A Social History of Medicine: Health, Healing and Disease in England, 1750-1950* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 135.

⁸⁴³ As Lane has noted, however, smallpox was the first disease where a declining mortality rate resulted from medical intervention.

⁸⁴⁴ Lane, pp. 135-36.

⁸⁴⁵ Lane, p. 149.

Tuberculosis is a particularly significant disease for this study. One of its commonest forms in the eighteenth century was scrofula, a term that was used to refer to a variety of skin diseases but relates in particular to tubercular glands in the lymph nodes. Popularly known as the 'Kings Evil,' many European royal families were believed to have the power to restore the health of a sufferer through touch. The lapsing of this tradition under the Hanoverians, it will be argued, was a significant cause of its association in the later eighteenth century with sea air and sea bathing.

Alongside such respiratory infections, gastro-enteric infections such as dysentery, typhoid and the 'flux' accounted for many deaths.⁸⁴⁶ Venereal diseases, syphilis and gonorrhoea in particular, were also widespread. Bacterial and highly contagious through direct sexual contact as well as having a congenital aspect, syphilis is thought to have arrived in Europe in the late fifteenth century and was commonly known as the 'pox' or the 'clap.'⁸⁴⁷ Although by the beginning of the eighteenth century 'syphilis had lost its virulent, epidemic character,' it was still a 'public health problem' and 'sufferers remained a fairly common sight.'⁸⁴⁸ Due to the social stigma of syphilis, sufferers often went to quacks for relief and advertisements for cures were a prominent feature in newspapers. The primary cure was mercury: highly dangerous with painful side-effects, this treatment helped to clear up sufferers' skin lesions but had no effect on the underlying disease. Gonorrhoea, which was originally mistaken for the first stage of syphilis, was often non-symptomatic in women and thus 'hard to diagnose . . . and, although rarely fatal, difficult to treat.'⁸⁴⁹

Within a sickness culture, fashionable illnesses were a prominent feature. Recent studies have highlighted the extent to which illness, 'an often painful phenomenon and negatively construed experience' could 'paradoxically give pleasure to the beholder and even to the sufferer.'⁸⁵⁰ Fashionable illnesses centred round

⁸⁴⁶ Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 14.

⁸⁴⁷ Lane, p. 151.

⁸⁴⁸ Stephen V. Beck, 'Syphilis: The Great Pox' in *Plague, Pox & Pestilence* ed. by Kenneth F. Kiple (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), pp. 110-15 (p. 113).

⁸⁴⁹ Lane, p. 151.

⁸⁵⁰ Clark Lawlor, "'It is a Path I have Prayed to Follow": The Paradoxical Pleasures of Romantic Disease,' in *Romanticism and Pleasure*, ed. by Thomas H. Schmid and Michelle Faubert (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 109-32 (p. 109).

nervous diseases, particularly melancholy, hysteria and hypochondria and, later in the eighteenth century, 'consumption' (pulmonary tuberculosis). When studying fashionable illness it is important to recognise, as Clark Lawlor has argued within his study of melancholy, that 'we are biologically grounded in bodies with certain inescapable material processes and that we express such biology through language and narrative.'⁸⁵¹ Furthermore:

We need to acknowledge, not merely that consumption has been constructed or fabricated in some kind of mythical language, but that consumption has certain biological patterns that impose themselves on, and give rise to, cultural meanings of the disease. As it happens, consumption has symptoms – we might say genres or given plots of physical events – which came to be constructed through various discourses as beneficial to the recipient of the illness.⁸⁵²

Fashionable illnesses, therefore, have to be understood from the perspective of the medical 'narrative' of their symptoms as well as through the cultural beliefs within which they were interpreted.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century, stimulated in particular by the work of Thomas Willis and Albrecht von Haller, 'the body and mind were reconceptualised as a symbiotic entity bound by the physical structure of the nervous system.'⁸⁵³ Awareness of the nervous system had existed since Antiquity but in the eighteenth century 'it acquired a dominant role in medical theorizing through the fascination with the reflexes, sensation, and irritability.'⁸⁵⁴ The nerves offered an explanation for the connection between the body and the mind and, as William Cullen argued, all diseases could be seen as 'nervous,' or rather typified through pain mediated through nervous stimuli.⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵¹ Clark Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy,' in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century: Before Depression, 1660-1800* ed. by Allan Ingram . . . [et al.] (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 25-54 (p. 33).

⁸⁵² Lawlor, 'Fashionable Melancholy,' p. 33.

⁸⁵³ Lawlor, "'It is a Path I have Prayed to Follow,'" p. 110.

⁸⁵⁴ Porter and Porter, *In Sickness and in Health*, p. 69.

⁸⁵⁵ Porter and Porter, *In Sickness and in Health*, p. 69.

George Cheyne, the eminent Bath physician, ‘flattered nervous sufferers by insisting that their ailments were the result of refinement and over-civilization.’⁸⁵⁶ Cheyne’s 1733 *The English Malady Or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds* has been widely studied by historians who have identified it as sketching ‘a stereotypically defining image of nervous disease and its sufferers, which persisted for much of the century.’⁸⁵⁷ Cheyne’s theories were class-oriented: by linking nervous diseases to the vices of an opulent lifestyle – luxury, laziness, gluttony and elite urban living – he made it an affliction to aspire to, ‘an economic and social success story of which the English could justly be proud.’⁸⁵⁸

An important distinction must be made between ‘fashionable,’ status-accruing symptoms as opposed to those found within contemporary medical definitions. Both nervous diseases and consumption had symptoms that could be construed as positive: ‘arguably the less severe the symptoms, the more positively a disease can be regarded, constructed and represented’⁸⁵⁹ Lawlor has noted that a number of consumption’s symptomological features could be interpreted positively: the wasting of the body could be seen as a sign of refined nerves and female beauty, it did not usually kill quickly or result in mental illness, it was not highly disfiguring and was relatively painless.⁸⁶⁰ These observations can also be made of nervous diseases.

The rise of nervous diseases is inseparable from the cult of sensibility. ‘Sensibility,’ from the 1740s ‘came to denote the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and a quickness to display compassion for suffering.’⁸⁶¹ Expressed primarily through sentimental fiction, sensibility was at its height between the 1740s and 1770s, drawing strength from a close interaction with philosophy and medicine. Defined by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1797 as ‘a nice and delicate perception of pleasure or pain, beauty or deformity,’ which ‘seems to depend upon

⁸⁵⁶ Beatty, p. 19.

⁸⁵⁷ Beatty, p. 19.

⁸⁵⁸ Beatty, p. 19.

⁸⁵⁹ Lawlor, ‘Melancholy Experience,’ p. 36.

⁸⁶⁰ Lawlor, ‘Melancholy Experience,’ pp. 36-37.

⁸⁶¹ Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 7.

the organization of the nervous system,' sensibility was 'physically based, a quality of nerves turning easily to illness.'⁸⁶²

But a sufferer of sensibility was not necessarily the same as the nervous patient. The picture of the nervous sufferer presented within novels of sensibility was highly sanitised. Nervous symptoms were used by novelists to 'diagnose their character's temperament, not their disease' and heroines only suffered from 'attractive' symptoms: as Beatty notes, whilst swooning, lethargy, a pale complexion and weakness from emotional distress were common in sentimental literature, 'other nervous symptoms regularly listed in health manuals such as excessive flatulence, moodiness and belching remained conspicuously absent in fictional accounts.'⁸⁶³ It was this contradiction between the fashionable sufferer and the genuine patient that made nervous illnesses such an attractive focus for satire.

From the 1770s onwards 'sentimentality' 'came in as a pejorative term' and was increasingly seen as 'an affected feeling, an indulgence, in display of emotion for its own sake beyond stimulus and beyond propriety.'⁸⁶⁴ Correspondingly, nervous diseases ceased to provide status and instead sufferers were 'increasingly portrayed as peevish, self-absorbed, immoral and artificial creatures.'⁸⁶⁵ However despite the social stigma, physicians continued to diagnose patients with nervous diseases and elements of the positive attributions of the affliction continued, albeit in a mutated form, within the Romantic period.

Long eighteenth-century medicine remained highly influenced by humoralism. Galenic theory stated that the human body was composed of the same properties that made up the world - fire, air, water and earth – each of which had their own inherent qualities: fire was hot and dry; air was hot and moist; water was cold and moist; and earth was cold and dry. These corresponded to the four 'humours' that were thought to make up the body: blood, choler (or yellow bile), phlegm and melancholy (or black bile). It was believed that when the humours were in balance the body was healthy: imbalance led to sickness. As well as being determined by age and gender, the balance of the humours could be influenced by the six 'non-naturals': air, food and drink,

⁸⁶² Todd, p. 9.

⁸⁶³ Beatty, p. 23.

⁸⁶⁴ Todd, p. 8.

⁸⁶⁵ Beatty, p. 171.

exercise and rest, sleep and waking, evacuation and repletion, and passions of the soul. The water cure, as this chapter will explore, relied as much on the manipulation of the non-naturals as it did on drinking or bathing in waters. Balneology was able to incorporate new medical discoveries and theories into this traditional conception of the body, as can be seen by its enthusiastic association with nervous disease, however throughout this period it was highly conservative and, as this chapter will show, the practice of medicine within Kent's spas and seaside resorts remained closely aligned with humoral theory.

Despite new theories and discoveries, eighteenth-century medicine could do very little to cure the vast majority of afflictions suffered and 'Medicine has always relied on the placebo effect.'⁸⁶⁶ Porter's interpretation of medicine as a 'quasi-religious morality play' wherein the 'performance' of cure was widely criticised 'for being a hollow sham' and widely recognised as being 'a mode of theatre,' places a negative construction on the importance of ritual.⁸⁶⁷ Studies of the placebo effect, however, show that it must not be underestimated. The placebo effect can be defined as the 'healing power of expectations', a term that 'generally refers to beneficial effects of a treatment that cannot be ascribed to the physical action of the treatment itself.'⁸⁶⁸ The 'power of expectation' has been used and exploited throughout history,⁸⁶⁹ indeed studies have shown that the placebo effect will 'improve on average thirty three percent of patients in the absence of an active pharmaceutical.'⁸⁷⁰ Furthermore recent evidence has shown that 'active placebo effects exist for at least some diseases,' including pain and depression, where its influence has been 'demonstrated both in behaviour outcomes and in disease-specific brain activity.'⁸⁷¹

It was not just belief in the curative properties of mineral and sea waters that produced this effect: the ritual of taking the waters was an important factor. John S. Welch has argued for the importance of medical rituals that are 'generally performed

⁸⁶⁶ Porter, *Bodies Politic*, p. 24.

⁸⁶⁷ Porter, *Bodies Politic*, p. 25.

⁸⁶⁸ Beatty, p. 175.

⁸⁶⁹ Tor D. Wager, 'Neural Bases of Placebo Effects in Pain', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14.4 (2005), 175-79 (p. 175).

⁸⁷⁰ John S. Welch, 'Ritual in Western Medicine and its Role in Placebo Healing', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 42.1 (2003), 21-33 (p. 26).

⁸⁷¹ Wager, p. 175.

in a unique space, set aside as a place of healing'.⁸⁷² Though eighteenth-century watering places consciously moved away from religious associations of the waters, Welch's identification of spaces set aside for ritual function which initiate a transformation both within the space itself and individuals, is highly suggestive of the power of watering places to effect a cure, even if the waters themselves held no intrinsic curative properties.⁸⁷³

Within a growing secular and consumer society 'health was increasingly seen as a commodity to be purchased like any other,' a dynamic which was able to 'sustain and encourage a vigorous commercialism' in which 'many different kinds of practitioners were able to compete.'⁸⁷⁴ The eighteenth-century medical marketplace provided a wide-variety of options to sufferers and the preference was for client- (rather than doctor) led treatments. As Anne Digby has argued, a 'strong lay culture of healing with popular faith in a spectrum of remedies gave confidence in the ability of the sufferer to discriminate appropriately amongst them.'⁸⁷⁵ Visiting a watering place was towards the top end of this spectrum, resorts providing a highly visible, status-accruing treatment option. How far physicians were merely catering to the inclinations of their elite patients in prescribing a visit to a spa or seaside resort has emerged as a subject of modern debate that reflects a widespread cynicism of motive by eighteenth-century commentators.

Medicine was a highly hierarchical profession, traditionally seen as being composed of a tripartite stricture of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, although there was often only a thin line dividing the 'respectable' members of the profession from the quacks.⁸⁷⁶ Despite growing professionalisation, the image of the unscrupulous, profit-driven and morally lax spa doctor was common in satire. Certainly such characters existed within Kent's resorts, however much of the evidence for this chapter is taken from the writings of physicians who held a firm belief in the healing properties of the waters they promoted.

⁸⁷² Welch, p. 21.

⁸⁷³ Welch, p. 22.

⁸⁷⁴ Anne Digby, *Making a Medical Living: Doctors and Patients in the English Market for Medicine, 1720-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.26.

⁸⁷⁵ Digby, pp. 304-05.

⁸⁷⁶ Digby, p. 28.

ii

'No Spa ever had a more slender claim than this insignificant chalybeate to a high-sounding fame' wrote A.B. Granville in 1841 of Tunbridge Wells.⁸⁷⁷ Modern analysis of the spring's chemical composition has shown that, unlike the waters at Bath which have been proved to be effective against lead poisoning,⁸⁷⁸ the waters at Tunbridge Wells held only a slender claim to any health-giving properties.⁸⁷⁹ The most significant compounds in the waters are calcium sulphate, a white calcium salt now used as a diluent in tablets,⁸⁸⁰ sodium chloride (common salt) and iron carbonate, which is used in modern medicine for treating iron-deficiency anaemia.⁸⁸¹ Whilst this second property could be significant, especially considering the reputation of the waters with women's health, it is likely that vast quantities would need to be drunk for any benefit to be gained. Drinking the Tunbridge Wells waters, therefore, would have had the same benefits as ordinary drinking water and they certainly could not have performed the wide-range of cures with which they were credited.

The foundations for the success of Tunbridge Wells as a centre for health were laid during the first half of the seventeenth century through an association with the cure of melancholy and infertility. Although discovered and initially promoted by Lord North, the spa's foundational text was Lodowick Rowzee's 1632 publication *The Queenes Welles, That is a Treatise on the Nature and Vertues of Tunbridge Water*, which established the curative properties and method of taking the Tunbridge Wells waters that would persist throughout long eighteenth century. By associating the waters with some of the most widespread diseases suffered by the elite, Rowzee

⁸⁷⁷ A.B. Granville, *Spas of England and Principal Sea-Bathing Places*, vol. 2: the Midlands and the South (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1971), p. 619.

⁸⁷⁸ Audrey Heywood, 'A Trial of the Bath Waters: The Treatment of Lead Poisoning', *Medical History*, ed. by Roy Porter, pp. 82-101.

⁸⁷⁹ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 216.

⁸⁸⁰ 'Calcium Sulphate', *Merriam-Webster*, <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical>> [accessed 12 September 2013].

⁸⁸¹ 'Ferrous Carbonate', *Merriam-Webster*, <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/medical>> [accessed 12 September 2013].

ensured the waters at Tunbridge Wells appealed to a wide section of society, an important factor in the spa's sustained popularity.

The waters were discovered in 1606 by Dudley third Baron North (c.1583-1666). Though 'active participant at the court of James I' and 'an accomplished musician as well as a poet' North's 'career as a courtier was never very successful.'⁸⁸² An extravagant spender who had nearly ruined himself by the mid-1620s through overspending at court and on improvements to his Cambridgeshire estate, North was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1620, suspected of encouraging his brother to make an unauthorised voyage to the Amazon.⁸⁸³ North suffered from extended bouts of ill-health throughout his life and believed himself to be suffering from melancholy, an affliction on which he blamed his excessive spending.⁸⁸⁴ It was through his search for a cure that the Tunbridge Wells waters were first discovered.

Burr described how North, aged twenty-four, had fallen 'into a lingering, consumptive disorder, that baffled the utmost efforts of medicine.'⁸⁸⁵ Following his physician's advice to try 'a change of air, for the re-establishment of his constitution', North retired to the country estate of Lord Bergavenny at Eridge in Frant; a hunting-seat about two miles distant from the future Tunbridge Wells.⁸⁸⁶ But disliking the retired situation and lack of entertainment, North found that 'his spirits were greatly lowered' and 'his disorder rather increased than diminished' and thus resolved to leave.⁸⁸⁷

It was on North's ride home that the springs were discovered. His attention drawn by 'the shining mineral scum that everywhere swam on its surface, as well as on account of the ochreous substance which subsided at the bottom', North tasted the water and its 'peculiar ferruginous taste' convinced him that it 'was imbued [sic] with some medicinal properties, which might be highly beneficial to the human race.'⁸⁸⁸ The water was bottled and sent to London, where physicians confirmed the healing

⁸⁸² Victor Slater, 'North, Dudley, third Baron North (*bap.* 1582, *d.* 1666), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 41 (2004), 75-77 (p. 76).

⁸⁸³ Slater, p. 76.

⁸⁸⁴ Slater, p. 76.

⁸⁸⁵ Burr, p. 5.

⁸⁸⁶ Burr, p. 6.

⁸⁸⁷ Burr, p. 9.

⁸⁸⁸ Burr, pp. 11-12.

properties of the waters and advised North to return to drink a course of them the following summer. The waters proved a success: Burr reported that after three months of drinking North 'returned to town so perfectly freed from all his complaints that we cannot find he ever afterwards experienced the least return of his disorder.'⁸⁸⁹

The first cure, therefore, performed by the Tunbridge Wells waters was of melancholy. Even if, as Savidge claims, North was a 'lifelong hypochondriac,' the spa would benefit significantly from its early association with this 'fashionable' disease⁸⁹⁰ and though neither North himself or the landowner Lord Bergavenny did little to promote them, the 'popularity of the waters was almost immediate.'⁸⁹¹

The second cure popularly associated with the waters was of infertility. On 23 July 1629 Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, went to Tunbridge Wells to recuperate after the birth and death of a premature son. Henrietta Maria had previously taken the waters at Wellingborough, whose chalybeate waters had gained a reputation for being particularly efficacious for those hoping to become pregnant.⁸⁹² The apparent failure of these waters to promote a successful pregnancy led her to Tunbridge Wells waters, which had similar properties. This time the cure was effective: Henrietta Maria recovered quickly and the following November she was reported to pregnant again, giving birth to a healthy baby, the Prince of Wales, on 20 May 1630. As will be discussed later in this section, subsequent Stuart queens also took the waters to combat infertility but it was the success of the waters for Henrietta Maria that first created this powerful and lucrative connection.

As the spa's first recorded physician and author of its foundational medical treatise, Rowzee played a crucial role in the promotion of the Tunbridge Wells waters. Practising in Ashford, Rowzee published his medical treatise in response to Henrietta Maria's visit. As Barton has argued, this work 'became a far more valuable asset to the Wells than any claim to royal patronage' and 'Tunbridge might soon have been eclipsed in favour . . . had it not been for the publicity given it by Dr. Rowzee.'⁸⁹³

⁸⁸⁹ Burr, p. 15.

⁸⁹⁰ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 30.

⁸⁹¹ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 2.

⁸⁹² Alison Plowden, *Henrietta Maria: Charles I's Indomitable Queen* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), p. 64.

⁸⁹³ Barton, pp. 68-69.

Building on the existing reputation of the waters, the treatise offered a scientific and medical explanation for the waters efficacy, outlining how they should be taken and the cures achievable. Rowzee's advice was firmly rooted in the humoral understanding of the early seventeenth century but, though he may have 'contributed nothing new to medical science,' the treatise was written in a 'simple, straightforward English capable of being understood by everybody' rather than in Latin, which made it accessible to a wider audience and strengthened its appeal.⁸⁹⁴ The treatise formed part of an increased output of scientific writing that resulted from an 'awakening interest in mineral waters within medical circles and an increasing popular demand for information.'⁸⁹⁵ It also drew on the vogue for cold water drinking spas.

Whilst not claiming the waters to be a panacea, Rowzee did credit them with being able to cure a wide range of afflictions. The active agent being the 'powder of steel,' the waters powers derived from their ability to affect a purge 'by stoole, and some by vomit, as well as by urine.'⁸⁹⁶ They were thus most effective in removing 'obstructions,' which Rowzee stated were the 'causes of infinite diseases.'⁸⁹⁷ The waters, Rowzee stated, were most effective at treating the following afflictions:

Obstructions of the *mesaraical* veines of the spleen, and of the liver . . . all long and tedious agues, quartanes and the like; for a dropsie, the black and tallow jaundice, the *Schirrus Lienis*, or hard swelling of the spleen, which the common people call an ague cake, the scurvy, green sickness, the whites in women, and defect and excess of their courses.⁸⁹⁸

As this extract shows, women's health was prominent within Rowzee's list of cures and he stated confidently of the water's powers: 'there is nothing better against barrenness and to make them fruitful.'⁸⁹⁹ Infertility would have been a concern for

⁸⁹⁴ Barton, pp. 67-68.

⁸⁹⁵ Hembry, *The English Spa*, p. 49.

⁸⁹⁶ Rowzee, Lodowick, *The Queenes Welles: That is, a Treatise of the Nature and Vertues of Tunbridge Water. Together, with an Enumeration of the Chiefest Diseases, which it is Good for, and Against which it May be Used, and the Manner and Order of Taking it ...* (London: Imprinted by John Dawson, 1632), pp. 35-36.

⁸⁹⁷ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, p. 40.

⁸⁹⁸ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, pp. 40-41.

⁸⁹⁹ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, p. 48.

many of the women visiting spas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A quarter of all marriages were childless, with infertility accounting for twelve percent of marriages not producing children (the majority of other cases were the result of high infant mortality.)⁹⁰⁰ Evidence on fertility in the early modern period suggests ‘that most wives . . . bore a child within the first two years of marriage.’⁹⁰¹ Those women who struggled to conform to this trend faced a wide-range of pressures, including from their families who expected an heir and religion, which saw children as a sign of God’s blessing.⁹⁰² The marketing of mineral waters as a cure for barrenness, therefore, had the potential to result in a lucrative and consistent flow of hopeful patients.⁹⁰³ For those who did succeed in falling pregnant, the water cure offered safe delivery and speedy recovery after birth: ‘None at this time doubted that childbirth itself. . . was a painful and dangerous ordeal.’⁹⁰⁴ However the focus lay on achieving conception and strengthening women to achieve successful pregnancy (i.e. not to miscarry) and recovery after birth rather than advising women to drink the waters whilst pregnant.

The waters ability to ‘scoureth and cleanseth all the passages or urine’ made them efficacious for diseases of the kidneys and bladder, such as ‘the gravel & the stone,’ whilst by ‘extinguish[ing] all inward inflammations and hot distempers’ they could also cure ‘all inveterate *Dysenteries* or bloody Fluxes: as also to all other Fluxes of the belly.’⁹⁰⁵ ‘Disease of the head’ also featured prominently, as Rowzee claimed:

The nerves or sinews, and the original of them, the brain, are strengthened by the use of this water, and consequently it is good against the palsie, inclination to an apoplexy, lethargy, and such like diseases of the head . . . Convulsions, also, Head—ach, Migrain, & Vertigo, are driven away by the use of the same. Against

⁹⁰⁰ Anne Laurence, *Women in England, 1500-1760: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994), p. 42.

⁹⁰¹ Angus McLaren, *Reproductive Rituals: The Perception of Fertility in England from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 32.

⁹⁰² McLaren, p. 32.

⁹⁰³ The claims for mineral waters effectiveness of encouraging fecundity drew also on the reputation of resorts, especially in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for encouraging impropriety. Satiric and literary portrayals of resort life frequently suggested that whilst many women left a watering place pregnant, this was not a result of the waters.

⁹⁰⁴ Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman’s Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), p. 69.

⁹⁰⁵ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, pp. 42-44.

vomiting and the hickot, it is used with good success. Those that are troubled by *hyochondriacal* melancholy find a great deal of ease by this Water.⁹⁰⁶

Venereal diseases were also emphasised:

It helpeth also the running of the reines, whether it be *Gonorhea simplex* or *Venerea*, and the distemper of the *Pavastatae* arising from thence, as likewise a certain carnosity, which growth sometimes in the conduit of the urine, nay and the Pox also, the water having an notable potentiall drying faculty.⁹⁰⁷

Later editions of the treatise would claim the waters were ‘very useful in all Venereal Cases.’⁹⁰⁸

‘Venereal disease existed in epidemical proportions, yet it was the great secret malady of the time’: ‘Men and women who acquired venereal diseases often wished to keep knowledge of their infection secret from their own sexual partners and families or from society at large.’⁹⁰⁹ Though by the beginning of the eighteenth century ‘syphilis had lost its virulent, epidemic character,’ it continued to be a ‘public health problem’ and ‘sufferers remained a fairly common sight.’⁹¹⁰ Like infertility, the cure of venereal disease promised to attract a large and lucrative flow of patients. The wide variety of cures offered, combined with the social attractions of the spa meant that sufferers could conceal their disease and, furthermore, drinking chalybeate waters was a far more pleasant alternative to mercury.

Rowzee offered extensive advice on how the waters should be taken. The ‘chiefest months’ for drinking he explained, were June, July and August when the weather was dry, as ‘rainy or misty’ conditions caused the water to loose ‘much of its

⁹⁰⁶ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, pp. 45-46.

⁹⁰⁷ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, pp. 46-47.

⁹⁰⁸ Lodowick Rowzee, *Tunbridge Wells: Or, A Directory for the Drinking of those Waters. ...* (London: Printed for J. Roberts at the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane, 1725), p. 9.

⁹⁰⁹ Linda E. Merians, ‘Introduction,’ *The Secret Malady: Venereal Disease in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*, ed. by Linda E. Merians (Lexington, K.Y.: University Press of Kentucky, 1996) pp. 1-12 (p.1).

⁹¹⁰ Beck, p. 113.

virtue.’⁹¹¹ The amount to be drunk depended on the individual patient but as a general rule for ‘a body of competent years and strength’ Rowzee suggested:

. . . to begin at thirty, forty, or fifty ounces, and to arise by degrees, increasing their quantity every day, to an hundredth, an hundredth and fifty, or two hundredth ounces, more or less, as they shall be able, and so to decline and decrease by degrees, ending where they began, when they are to leave the water.⁹¹²

This was a significant, even heroic, quantity of water to drink in one go, equating to between (approximately) one and a half to ten pints and in the eighteenth century the amount would be reduced. That the water might fail to work was not countenanced by Rowzee, who encouraged patients to persist with the treatment, stating, ‘for in some diseases some weeks suffice, in others divers moneths are not enough, nay in some they have been to come thither the next year, and the next to that too.’⁹¹³ To better advise patients, Rowzee indicated that he would be setting up a practice at Tunbridge Wells during the summer months, promising visitors that he would ‘be ready at all times to afford . . . my best help and counsell.’⁹¹⁴ His presence provided the spa with a medical authority and, no doubt, Rowzee himself benefited from a substantial flow of patients.

Manipulation of the non-naturals was a significant element of Rowzee’s water cure. ‘Moderate exercise’ was encouraged after drinking the waters but he warned against ‘violent’ exertions such as running, leaping and jumping.⁹¹⁵ Riding was considered far more beneficial than walking:

because sitting upon your horse, the inward parts, as the *muscles* of the belly, the guts, and the stomach it self are thereby born up and contracted, and by the

⁹¹¹ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, pp. 51-52.

⁹¹² Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, p. 59.

⁹¹³ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, pp. 59-60.

⁹¹⁴ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, p. 77.

⁹¹⁵ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, p. 55.

jogging of the horse moderately stirred, and so consequently your water will be better digested.⁹¹⁶

State of mind was key and Rowzee suggested patients whilst walking to ‘compose you self to mirth with the rest of the companie; For those that look to reap benefit by *Tunbridge*, must turn away all cares and melancholly.’⁹¹⁷ Diet warranted its own chapter. Simple foods, taken in moderation formed the basis of Rowzee’s advice. Thus he advised patients, for example, to ‘be you contented with one dish at a meal, for . . . many dishes bring in many diseases’ and ‘Sawces, which have much Butter and Spices in them’ were to be shunned.⁹¹⁸ There was nothing unusual in Rowzee’s advice and his recommendations conformed to the early seventeenth-century’s (humoral) understanding of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

Rowzee provided the spa with a medical authority and his advice established a template for taking the waters that would be used throughout the period. His publication, combined with the high-profile cures of Lord North and Henrietta Maria, ensured that by the mid-seventeenth century the medical reputation of Tunbridge Wells was firmly established. By forging connections with the ‘fashionable’ melancholy, infertility and venereal disease, the spa was in a strong position to appeal to elite sufferers.

iii

Throughout the long eighteenth century Tunbridge Wells had to work hard to maintain the medical reputation of its waters. Not only did this require continued promotion of their curative properties and the expansion of the spa’s medical facilities but it also meant defending the waters against direct attack from chemical and medical analysts and from insinuations of social scandal. This was a particularly acute problem within

⁹¹⁶ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, p. 56.

⁹¹⁷ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, p. 56.

⁹¹⁸ Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles*, pp. 77-78.

the area of women's health where, as seen in the previous chapter, a genuine desire for a medical remedy for infertility was subsumed beneath a satiric portrayal of spas as places of loose morals within which it was suggested that pregnancies were being achieved through extra-marital affairs rather than by taking the waters. But there was far more to women's health at Tunbridge Wells than this conflict. It will be argued that spas as centres for health assumed greater significance at different stages of a woman's lifecycle: focusing in particular on the treatment of chlorisis and 'defect and excess of the menses' the importance of the water cure to individual women, as well as to the medical life of the spa overall, will be demonstrated.

Rowzee's advice continued to be followed throughout the eighteenth century. His treatise was reprinted in 1671 and again in 1725 under the new title *Tunbridge Wells: Or, a Directory for the Drinking of Those Waters*. Although there were no significant alterations, this new edition did contain several revisions and it was implied that the treatise was written by a living author. Two tracts were annexed to the original treatise. The first, 'Mr. Boyle's Observations upon Tunbridge and other Mineral-Waters' offered a relatively brief scientific analysis of the waters. The second, 'A Physico-Mechanical Dissertation concerning Water' considered the effects of the water on the body more generally, discussing why the water was thought to be 'universally Medicinal.'⁹¹⁹

These tracts were aimed primarily at the scientific and medical community rather than the general public and they reflected a growing scientific interest in the chemical composition of mineral waters. 'Already by the beginning of the eighteenth-century it had become clear that if mineral waters were to be used most effectively a better understanding of their chemical composition was essential.'⁹²⁰ Though, due to the small quantities involved, identifying the chemical identity of dissolved substances was difficult⁹²¹ and even 'where there seemed to be no obvious connection between the chemical constituents of the water and the medical virtues claimed for it,' the results

⁹¹⁹ Lodowick Rowzee, *Tunbridge Wells: Or, A Directory for the Drinking of those Waters*. ... (London: Printed for J. Roberts at the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane, 1725), p. 3.

⁹²⁰ N. G. Coley, 'Physicians and the Chemical Analysis of Mineral Waters', *Medical History* 26.2 (1982), 123-44 (p. 123).

⁹²¹ N.G. Coley, 'Physicians, Chemists and the Analysis of Mineral Waters: "The Most Difficult Part of Chemistry,' in *The Medical History of Waters and Spas*, ed. by Roy Porter, pp. 56-66 (p. 56).

provided supposedly objective proof of a mineral water's curative properties.⁹²² It also provided the basis for the artificial replication of waters.

Rowzee was not the only medical authority to promote the Tunbridge Wells waters. Patrick Madan's *A Philosophical and Medicinal Essay of the Waters of Tunbridge*, published in 1687 made grand claims of the waters curative powers, naming them '*Aquæ Vitæe, or Waters of Life*, because they restore men to Life, and make them live twice' and stating: 'As for their Virtues and Properties in *Physick*, I believe if there is any such Remedy in Being as a *Panpharmacon, or Universal Remedy*, tis here.'⁹²³ Though he set up the waters as a panacea, Madan offered only a relatively short list of cures achievable:

. . . being very prevalent against frequent *Giddiness* and *Scotomaia, Passions of the Heart*, and *Fainting of Spirits* . . . In *Hypochondriacal* and *Hysterick Fits* . . . In *Scurvy* . . . *Hemorrhagies* . . . In both *Obstructions* and overflowing of the *Terms* also, an excellent Remedy: Its good against all *Obstructions of Liver, Spleen, and Mesentery; Leucophlegmatia, Febris Alba, Seu Amatoria, or Greensickness, Stone, Gravel*: Nay, it Cures *Hydrophobia* . . . Moreover these *Waters* are endowed with an admirable and Powerful Faculty in rendring those who Drink of them *Fruitful* and *Prolifick* ...⁹²⁴

Madan's list of cures was thus very similar, if shorter, than that offered by Rowzee. However, although the removal of obstructions featured prominently, Madan attributed the water's powers to a different source, claiming that they worked 'by depressing the Exaltations of *Sulphur* and fixt *Salts*, and by *Volatizing* the Blood.'⁹²⁵

Benjamin Allen's 1711 *The Natural History of the Mineral-Waters of Great Britain* provides insight into wider reputation of the Tunbridge Wells waters. Allen identified five 'sorts or Species' of mineral waters:

1. The Saline, from a peculiar Salt and Juice, which are our Purging Waters.

⁹²² Coley, 'Physicians', p. 66.

⁹²³ Madan, pp. 2-3.

⁹²⁴ Madan, p. 6.

⁹²⁵ Madan, p. 4.

2. The Chalybeat, Tinctured by Steel or Iron.
3. A Compound of both, such are the Chalybeat Purging.
4. Sulphurous . . .
5. The Steamy, or more purely Spirituous, from a firmer Limestone, or Marble, join'd with some vitrioline or ferreous Parts . . .⁹²⁶

The Tunbridge Wells waters were classified as 'light chalybeate' and judged 'the strongest of these Species.'⁹²⁷ Like Rowzee, Allen believed they derived their curative powers from their ability to open obstructions and were particularly effective against afflictions of the head, liver and glands.⁹²⁸ Their reputation as a cure for infertility was not mentioned.

Few changes were made to the water cure at Tunbridge Wells during the eighteenth century: the practice of medicine at the spa remained conservative in nature and continued to draw extensively from Rowzee's original advice. Burr in 1766, for example, relied heavily on his predecessor and quoted Rowzee extensively as the spa's medical authority. There were some changes, however and it appears that as the eighteenth-century progressed the amount of water drunk decreased and Burr openly expressed his amazement of the water drunk by visitors in the preceding century. Evidence from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shows a broad consensus had been achieved, with patients being advised to drink between two and a half pints, spread across the day. Clifford in 1818 outlined the 'present method of drinking':

. . . the whole of the quantity daily used, is taken at two or three intervals, beginning at about eight o'clock in the morning, and finishing at noon: the dose at each times varies from about one to three quarters of a pint . . . The requisite duration of a course of these waters may be from about one to two months.⁹²⁹

⁹²⁶ Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters*, (1711), p. 2.

⁹²⁷ Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters*, (1711), p. 30.

⁹²⁸ Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters*, (1711), p. 99.

⁹²⁹ *A Descriptive Guide of Tunbridge Wells*, p. 13.

Visitors were advised to begin and end their course of treatment with a small dose and gradually build up to the maximum amount they had been recommended to drink. Whilst following this plan of staggered drinking throughout the day may have taken up a lot of a visitor's time, the amounts involved would have been easily manageable.

William Nisbet's 1804 *A Medical Guide for the Invalid to the Principal Watering Places of Great Britain* . . . provides insight into the spa's medical reputation at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nisbet (1759-1822), a physician and writer was 'an early populariser of medical guidebooks aimed at a professional and lay audience.'⁹³⁰ His aim within *A Medical Guide* was to allow patients to 'judge of their [mineral water's] nature, as to prevent himself from injuring himself by their improper application' and thus he provided easily accessible information on disease, cures and treatments.⁹³¹ Nisbet described the Tunbridge Wells waters as 'one of the first and most celebrated'⁹³² chalybeates and identified it as being particularly efficacious against following afflictions: nervous complaints, 'organic affections from irritability', convalescence, gravel, irregular courses or amenorrhoea; 'flooding at the passive stage,' whites, gleet, rickets, 'constitutional weakness as a result of venereal disease' and to complete a cure for liver disease.⁹³³ Nisbet's recommendations demonstrate the continuity of promotion of the Tunbridge Wells's water between the early seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. This consistency of reputation was a significant factor in the spa's continued success.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there developed an increasing need to defend the medical reputation of the Tunbridge Wells waters. The 1792 treatise *The Analysis of the Medicinal Waters of Tunbridge Wells* was written to reassure the medical community that recent changes to the springs had not diminished the water's potency. Through a series of chemical analyses, the author aimed to resolve a local dispute that had arisen over the effects of a cover being placed over one of the springs in order to 'defend it from any foreign matter, which either wantonness or accident

⁹³⁰ Marten Hutt, 'Nesbit, William (1759-1822)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk>> [accessed 12 June 2013].

⁹³¹ William Nisbet, *A Medical Guide for the Invalid to the Principal Watering Places of Great Britain: Containing a View of the Medicinal Effects of Water ...* (London: Highley; Edinburgh: Constable, 1804), p. vii.

⁹³² Nisbet, p. 63.

⁹³³ Nisbet, pp. 245-55.

might introduce.⁹³⁴ A recent change from open stone basins to marble was also a subject for debate, critics claiming that ‘by being deprived of the custom of dipping their vessels into the spring (as *formerly*) they have not the water so near the fountain-head, and consequently not so fresh and efficacious.’⁹³⁵ Whilst these disputes may appear trivial, it was important that the spa could repudiate any claims that the waters had lost their potency and chemical experimentation provided an ‘objective’ basis for analysis. Unsurprisingly, however, treatises published by the spa concerning the chemical composition never failed to prove the validity of claims made for the water’s curative properties.

Throughout the eighteenth century attempts were made to expand the spa’s medical facilities beyond the two original springs. Adam’s Well, an unsuccessful second spring site in Rusthall, was mentioned at several different points in the spa’s history. Adam’s Well was of fresh water, however and so could not claim the same healing capabilities as the chalybeate springs. Though Savidge has suggested that the well ‘enjoyed local repute’ long before the arrival of the spa, near contemporary accounts provide different dates for its ‘discovery.’⁹³⁶ Burr gave the date of 1670 and says that was used only during his time ‘for the cure of mangy dogs.’⁹³⁷ Onely’s 1771 guidebook, however, offered a different story, stating:

. . . very lately a medicinal water, called *Adam’s Wells* has been inclosed and made convenient for the remedy of scorbutic cases, and cutaneous eruptions; and which, from its well known and tried quantities, it is thought may answer in many cases, as well as sea water.⁹³⁸

Onely’s attempt appears to have been one in a series of unsuccessful promotions of Adam’s Wells and was prompted by the increasing competition from seaside resorts. Adam’s Wells went into decline: unlike the chalybeate springs its fresh water had no unique selling-point and thus no substantial claim to any curative properties.

⁹³⁴ *An Analysis of the Medicinal Waters of Tunbridge Wells* (London: printed for J. Murray, No. 32, Fleet Street, 1792), p. v.

⁹³⁵ *An Analysis of the Medicinal Waters of Tunbridge Wells*, p. 3.

⁹³⁶ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 14.

⁹³⁷ Burr, p. 50.

⁹³⁸ Onely, p. 7.

Attempts were made throughout the period to introduce cold water bathing and thus diversify the range of medical facilities on offer. The first venture began in 1708 when a cold bath was erected at Rusthall by Mr James Long. As Burr described:

This bath is esteemed equal to any in the kingdom, being most plentifully supplied with the finest rock water from the neighbouring hills. The bath was at first adorned with amusing waterworks, and had a handsome and convenient house over it, in every room of which was something curious, calculated to divert and surprise the company.⁹³⁹

Supplied with fresh water, these baths appear to have been geared more towards entertainment than health and were most likely an attempt to establish facilities closer to the accommodation at Rusthall. The baths did not prove a success and Burr related how this seemingly splendid bath fell into disrepair due to the 'want of management' and the 'neglect of the late proprietors, who have suffered the house to fall.'⁹⁴⁰ An attempt was made to revive the establishment mid-century and Burr reported that the bath had been 'lately' brought back into use with a 'plain unornamented building being raised over it.'⁹⁴¹ It was, however, most likely used primarily for cleanliness rather than health.

Burr described a second, similarly unsuccessful bathing venture which had begun within 'these very few years.'⁹⁴² Built 'about a furlong from the walks,' Burr predicted that it would 'probably continue in use' 'on account of its nearness to the Wells, and is being neatly fitted up in a pretty retired situation,' though he admitted that 'it certainly cannot in any respect be compared to the ancient bath.'⁹⁴³ But despite Burr's hopes the bath soon faded into obscurity.

The third venture was the most successful. Under the management of Elizabeth Shorey, Lady of the Manor of Rusthall, a bath house was erected on the Parade between 1801 and 1805 that offered a range of bathing options to visitors. It was a

⁹³⁹ Burr, pp. 59-60.

⁹⁴⁰ Burr, p. 60.

⁹⁴¹ Burr, p. 60.

⁹⁴² Burr, p. 60.

⁹⁴³ Burr, p. 61.

modest two-storey building, with two rooms for bathing on the ground floor and eight rooms on the first floor dedicated to providing accommodation to invalids of modest means. Unlike its predecessors, the baths utilised the spa's chalybeate waters, which were diverted from a nearby spring through a connecting channel. An 1818 guidebook described their construction and facilities:

It was suggested that some benefit might be derived from baths composed of the mineral water, upon which Mrs. Shorey, the lady of the manor, erected the present handsome edifice, on the site of the ancient enclosure, with a liberality and seal for the public good, which, it is apprehended, can scarcely, in point of profit, have answered to herself. The building contains cold and warm, vapour, and shower baths; all excellent in their kind and well appointed.⁹⁴⁴

The baths were thus presented as a charitable exercise, motivated by altruism rather than profit, though the reality was more likely a combination of the two.

Ladies and Gentlemen's Bath Books survive from between 1803 and 1826. Recording who used the baths and when, what treatments they undertook and how much they paid, the Bath Books provide valuable evidence of the use of the waters in early nineteenth-century Tunbridge Wells. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the number and type of treatment performed for men, women and children between 1803 and 1805.

Table 4.1. Ladies Book 1803-05⁹⁴⁵

Year	Hot Bath	Cold Bath	Shower Bath	Unknown	Total Treatments	Total Patients
1803	33	58	33	5	129	34
1804	74	188	97	1	360	65
1805	14	19	15	-	48	10
Total	121	265	145	6	537	109

⁹⁴⁴ *A Descriptive Guide of Tunbridge Wells*, p 15.

⁹⁴⁵ CKS, Rusthall Estate Manuscripts, Ladies Book, 1803-05. U749 E2.

Table 4.2. Gentlemen's Book 1803-05 ⁹⁴⁶

Year	Hot Bath	Cold Bath	Shower Bath	Dry/Cold Pump	Total Treatments	Total Patients
1803	23	72	12	-	107	35
1804	51	70	41	9	171	65
1805	56	81	15	26	178	73
Total	130	223	68	35	456	173

A full range of treatments was available. Hot baths were the most expensive treatment, priced at 7s. 6d., cold baths were significantly cheaper at 2s. 6d. and shower baths and dry and cold pumps cost the least at 1s. 6d. The number of treatments was gradually expanded. The first reference to a dripping bath was made in August 1819 (1s. 6d.) and hip baths appeared in the records in 1822 (1s.). A fire cost 6d. Whilst an 1818 guidebook stated that the bath house offered vapour baths this was not reflected in the establishment's records.

The baths were open all year in order to cater to an increasingly residential leisured population but there was an increase in custom between April and October. The bath house proved as popular to men as women, however a difference can be seen in the types of treatment undertaken. The most popular treatment for both sexes was the cold bath. For women, the shower bath ranked second, closely followed by the warm bath. For men, the hot bath was preferred over the shower bath. The Gentlemen's Bath Book shows that men opted for a wider range of treatments, many opting for the dry or cold pump, a treatment absent from the Ladies Bath Book, though the reason for this is unclear. William Falconer, writing of the water cure in Bath in 1798, described this treatment:

. . . the application of the water by a pump to any particular limb or part of the body, independent of the rest. This has some advantages, as the water may be applied in a more powerful form than that of a simple warm bath; and the fatigue

⁹⁴⁶ CKS, Rusthall Estate MS, Gentlemen's Book, 1803-05. U479 E1.

is the same time diminished, and the patient is less subject to faintness than when the whole body is immersed. No time for stay in the bath can be specified; from five minutes to half an hour is the usual allotment. When the pump is used, it is mostly directed from twenty to two hundred stokes at a time . . . the dry pump may be used daily.⁹⁴⁷

The number of treatments taken by individual patients varied significantly. Several patients between 1803 and 1805 opted for an extensive course of treatment. Miss Lilburne, for example, paid for twenty-four cold baths on 23 August 1804, a total cost of £2 10s. 6d. In 1805 Lady Montgomery paid for a mixture of cold and shower baths between 13 and 26 of August, taking five cold and five shower baths over this two week period. Men could be equally dedicated. In November 1805, Mr. Shannon paid for seventeenth cold baths whilst Mr. Foster opted for twelve dry pumps in July followed by seven cold pumps across the following fortnight. Others bathed only once. The Portuguese ambassador, for example, had one hot bath on 24 September 1805 and never repeated his visit. Children also used the baths: Master Glyn was subjected to eleven shower baths between August and September 1803, attending up to four times a week.

However despite some dedicated customers, the bath house only attracted a relative small number of patients and Tunbridge Wells never established a reputation for bathing. This was reflected in the declining value of the bath house as a business: when the baths were let in 1813 they achieved a rent of only £120 a year – three per cent of the original building costs.⁹⁴⁸ Diversifying the range of medical facilities was a sound strategy but the bathing facilities at Tunbridge Wells were not on a grand enough scale to seriously challenge the growing competition from the coastal resorts. The lack of custom was also a reflection of the declining importance of Tunbridge Wells as a spa as it became a centre for genteel residence.

In addition to medical facilities, the spa also tried to profit from the strong connection between diet and the water cure. The Tunbridge Water Cakes were the

⁹⁴⁷ William Falconer, *A Practical Dissertation on the Medicinal Effects of the Bath Waters* (Bath: Printed by R. Cruttwell; for G.G. J. and J. Robinson, London; and W. Meyler, Bath, 1790), p. 115.

⁹⁴⁸ Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 43.

Kentish resort's equivalent of Bath Olivers. The date and source of their invention is unknown. The first reference found to date is in a letter written in 1776 by Lady Hardwicke to her daughter Mary who was staying at the spa: 'I desire you will bring me some genuine Tunbridge Water Cakes, a few dozen, if they will keep a few days, & can be brought without breaking.'⁹⁴⁹ A recipe for the cakes was included in a 1790 cookery book, *The Housekeeper's Valuable Present: Or Lady's Closet Companion*:

TAKE one pound of flour, one pound of butter, three quarters of a pound of sugar, half a pint of cream, and four eggs: mix the eggs, sugar and cream together, put in the butter melted, and beat it up well; then mix in the flour, and a few caraway seeds, roll the part out quite thin; cut it into round cakes, and bake them in a slow oven.⁹⁵⁰

Unlike Bath Olivers, which were hard dry biscuits or crackers invented circa 1750 by Dr William Oliver, the Tunbridge Water Cakes were softer biscuits that contained large amounts of sugar and cream. The addition of caraway seeds, believed to aid digestion and prevent flatulence, hint at a medical use and it is likely that visitors were encouraged to eat the biscuits whilst drinking the waters.

The bottled mineral water market was one avenue that the spa failed to exploit. By the 1720s the sale of mineral water had become a lucrative business, 'significantly rewarding to cause London merchants to specialise in selling all popular waters, domestic and foreign.'⁹⁵¹ Although, as McIntyre has detailed, the first English spas to established a trade in bottled waters were those in or close to London, such as Acton, Hampstead, Epsom and Northall, 'whose waters could easily be sent to that important market, often several times a week,' Tunbridge Wells did not take advantage to its proximity to the capital.⁹⁵² The explanation may simply be that no entrepreneur

⁹⁴⁹ BLA, Wrest Park (Lucas) MS, 'Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey to Mary Jemima Robinson, Baroness Grantham', 29 Jun. 1776. L30/13/9/5.

⁹⁵⁰ Abbot, Robert, *The Housekeeper's Valuable Present: Or, Lady's Closet Companion. Being a New and Complete Art of Preparing Confects, According to Modern Practice.* ... (London: Printed for the Author; and Sold by C. Cooke, no. 17, Pater-Noster Row; and all other Booksellers in Town and Country, 1790), p. 69.

⁹⁵¹ Sylvia McIntyre, 'The Mineral Water Trade in the Eighteenth Century', *The Journal of Transport History*, 2.1, (1973), 1-19 (p. 2).

⁹⁵² McIntyre, 'The Mineral Water Trade', p. 4.

emerged to invest in the trade, however the spa's lack of manufacturing may also have played a part: containers for the water were a significant cost, especially if they could not be obtained locally.⁹⁵³

Tunbridge Wells's success in establishing and maintaining a medical reputation for its waters was not replicated by Kent's smaller spas. The failure of Canterbury, Shooter's Hill and Sissinghurst to establish a lasting medical reputation emphasises the crucial role played by a medical authority in promoting a spa and endorsing the curative properties of its waters. The chalybeate and sulphur springs at Canterbury were first promoted in this period by the anonymous *A Short Account of the Mineral Waters Lately Found out City of Canterbury*, first published in 1690 and reprinted in 1706. Claimed to be 'three to the one stronger of the *Mineral* than that of *Tunbridge*,'⁹⁵⁴ the waters were hailed as an 'infallible Remedy' for the following afflictions: 'Infirmities attending Old Age and Consumptions,' 'The Stone and Gravel,' 'Gout and Rheumatick Pains,' scurvy, melancholy, 'Maladies depending upon the Mind,' 'Vapours, and most Disease of Women,' 'Cholicks of all sorts,' 'All inward and outward Ulcers,' 'All Scabs, Itch, periodical Inflammations, and other Breakings out of the Skin.'⁹⁵⁵ But the waters, even at this early period, had already become the focus for attack and the treatise was written in part to defend the waters from 'those Persons that find so much fault.' It was not an auspicious beginning and though the popularity of the waters may have been enough to warrant a reprint of the treatise, they achieved only local fame.⁹⁵⁶ An attempt to promote bathing in the city likewise proved unsuccessful. St. Radegund's Bath was bought by the Corporation in 1793 and leased to Mr Simons and Mr Royal who modernised the facilities and provided dressing and waiting rooms for visitors. No serious attempts were made to promote the baths as a medical establishment and by 1825 they had fallen into disrepair.⁹⁵⁷

The waters of Shooter's Hill gained a slightly wider repute. Discovered and initially promoted by John Guy in 1673, the waters were classified by Allen as 'Purging

⁹⁵³ McIntyre, 'The Mineral Water Trade', p. 9.

⁹⁵⁴ *A Short Account of the Mineral Waters Lately Found Out in the City of Canterbury* (Canterbury: s.n., 1690), p. 5.

⁹⁵⁵ *A Short Account*, p. 8.

⁹⁵⁶ *A Short Account*, p. 1.

⁹⁵⁷ Parish, 'The Ancient Water Supplies of Canterbury', p. 15.

Waters' of the fourth class.⁹⁵⁸ Containing 'a Salt Alkalial, resembling Salt of Tartar, and the Sulphurous Salt of Vegetables,' Allen described the waters as tasting 'very bitter, and full of the nauseous Sweet.'⁹⁵⁹ The waters were able to attract elite visitors, including, according to some reports, Queen Anne. Fiennes, visiting in 1697, emphasised their purgative qualities: 'on this hill are severall springs of water which comes from allum which are a very quick purger, much like Epsome and Dullage, but I thinke farre exceeds in strength and operation.'⁹⁶⁰ Shooter's Hill, however, was not able to attract a medical authority and no medical treatise was published to promote the curative properties of the waters.

Sydenham provided unable to sustain its seventeenth-century promise. The Wells, numbering around a dozen, like the springs at Tunbridge Wells were initially publicised during the first half of the seventeenth century. John Peter in 1680 published the first extant medical thesis dedicated to Sydenham's waters. The more extensive *A Treatise of Lewisham (But Vulgarly Miscalled Dulwich) Wells in Kent* was accompanied by the shorter version, *Dr. Peter's Judgement, Or Dullige or Lewisham Water*, which spanned two pages. Peter provided information on the curative properties of the waters, the cures achievable and the correct method of drinking. Peter stated that the waters were effective against a wide range of afflictions. The waters opened 'all Obstructions within' especially those of the Liver, Spleen, Mesetaick Veins, Pancreas, the *Billiary, Uterine* and *Urinary Passages*.⁹⁶¹ The waters were thus effective against:

...such long and lingering and almost Incurable Distempers are bred as he *Schirrhus, Tapatick, Lienis*, the hard Tumours of the Liver and Spleen, the *Flatus Hypocondriaks*, the black and yellow Jaundice, the Chloick, the Stone, the Gravel in the Kidneys and Bladder, all Obstructions, Difficulties and Sharpness of Urine, the *Hiemarrhuises*, Cholick Passion, *Tenasus Cachexia*, Survey, Dropsie, Green-sickness, Stopness of the Terms, Fits of the Mother...⁹⁶²

⁹⁵⁸ Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters* (1711), p. 18.

⁹⁵⁹ Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters* (1711), p. 19.

⁹⁶⁰ Fiennes, p. 132.

⁹⁶¹ John Peter, *Dr. Peter's Judgment of Dullidge or Lewisham Water* (London: s.n., 1680), p. 1.

⁹⁶² Peter, *Dr. Peter's Judgment*, p. 1.

Like the Tunbridge Wells, the waters at Sydenham were hailed as ‘an Universal Remedy against Barranness’ due to the ‘attenuating Quality of the Nitrous Salt, from the Astringent and Cooling Faculty of the Allom, and from the healing Property of the Sulphur.’⁹⁶³ Gout, pimples and worms also joined Peter’s extensive list.

The waters could be drunk all year round but were considered most effective in clean, dry weather and were strongest during a frost.⁹⁶⁴ Unusually for a non-thermal water, Peter argued that the water was ‘much better drank warm than cold’ as cold water, according to Hippocrates, ‘is hurtful to the Bones, Teeth, Sinews, brain, and Marrow of the Back.’⁹⁶⁵ It could also be drunk mixed with hot or cold milk: a quarter of a pint of milk too three pints of water.⁹⁶⁶ Like Rowzee, Peter recommended patients drink the water in large quantities, up to eight or nine pints a day but allowed that the allotted amount should be taken over a fairly lengthy period, punctuated by exercise.⁹⁶⁷ A ‘temperate’ diet was advised during the course of the waters, followed by a ‘Spare Diet for a Month or two’ afterwards to ‘keep out all Crudities.’⁹⁶⁸ ‘Caraway-Comfits, Coriander Seeds, Elicanpane, or Anglica preserved’ were believed to aid the digestion of the waters.⁹⁶⁹

Allen classed the waters ‘A Water medicated with a Salt of the Nature of common Salt, but of a mixt Nature, with a Nitrous Quality, and a little of Marcasitical.’⁹⁷⁰ The wells themselves were described as being:

at the Foot of a heavy Claiy Hill, about 12 in Number standing together, discover’d about 1640 they are about Nine Feet deep, as I gess’d at View, in which the Water stood about half a Yard. The Petrify’d Incrusted Stones, when broke, glitter with fereous Parts, as Sulphurous Marcasites produce; which I prov’d, and found to be only Parts of Iron.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶³ Peter, *Dr. Peter’s Judgment*, p. 1.

⁹⁶⁴ Peter, *Dr. Peter’s Judgment*, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁶⁵ Peter, *Dr. Peter’s Judgment*, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁶ Peter, *Dr. Peter’s Judgment*, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁷ Peter, *Dr. Peter’s Judgment*, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁸ Peter, *Dr. Peter’s Judgment*, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁹ Peter, *Dr. Peter’s Judgment*, p. 2.

⁹⁷⁰ Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters* (1711), p. 24.

⁹⁷¹ Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters* (1711), pp. 24-25.

These were purgative waters and their sulphurous content made them ‘apt to make the Blood flow.’⁹⁷²

Taking advantage of its proximity to London, Sydenham entered the market in bottled mineral water. In 1729, however, the Parish of Lewisham ordered in Vestry that ‘no water shall be carried from the Wells on Sidenham-Common, in the said Parish, for Sale’ and gave ‘the Publick Notice thereof, that for the future no Persons may be imposed upon, by any that pretend to sell the said Water.’⁹⁷³ The public could though continue to ‘send as usual for any Quantity not exceeding Two Gallons for private Use.’⁹⁷⁴ Why the parish was reluctant to enter this potentially lucrative market is uncertain, especially as neighbouring spas such as Streatham and Hampstead were amongst the first to embrace the trade.

Sydenham waters only attracted minimal medical attention during the eighteenth century: analyses of its waters appeared in countrywide surveys but no dedicated treatises were produced. John Rutty in 1757 described the waters as ‘Nitroso-saline’ and subjected them to an extensive chemical analysis.⁹⁷⁵ He concluded: ‘It is a water impregnated with calcarious nitre and marine salt, joined to a little natron and calcarious earth, of a moderate degree of strength, being but about half as strong as Epsom.’⁹⁷⁶ Similarly, military physician Donald Monro described them briefly in his two-volume 1770 publication *A Treatise on Mineral Waters* as a ‘mild purgative water’ that was ‘composed of a calcareous Glauber and sea salt.’⁹⁷⁷ Sydenham’s inability to capitalise on the medical reputation of its waters stemmed from the spa’s social reputation: classified as ‘low’ discouraged medical authorities from associating themselves with the spa during the eighteenth century and prevented it from attracting elite visitors.

⁹⁷² Allen, *The Natural History of Mineral Waters* (1711), p. 56.

⁹⁷³ Curl, p. 210.

⁹⁷⁴ Curl, p. 210.

⁹⁷⁵ John Rutty, *A Methodical Synopsis of Mineral Waters, Comprehending the Most Celebrated Medicinal Waters, Both Cold and Hot, of Great-Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, and Italy, and Several Other Parts of the World. ...* (London: Printed for William Johnston, 1757), p. 134.

⁹⁷⁶ Rutty, p. 135.

⁹⁷⁷ Donald Monro, *A Treatise on Mineral Waters. In Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: Sold by D. Wilson and G. Nicol, and T. Durham, 1770), pp. 138-39.

The waters at Sissinghurst made the least medical impact of all Kent's spas. The Bakers, in their promotion of a chalybeate well on their land in Sissinghurst in the closing years of the seventeenth century, failed to recognise the importance of endorsement of the waters by a medical authority and so the waters never gained more than local repute. This oversight, possibly caused by the financial hardships of the family, was a major factor in this embryonic spa's failure to thrive.

Women's health or, as Savidge has termed it, 'the gynaecology of the place,' has been long recognised as an important aspect of taking the waters at Tunbridge Wells. Savidge was referring to Barton's observation that many women went to the spa hoping to find a cure for their infertility:

. . . the majority of married ladies at the Wells . . . had come there for some intimate purpose. The childless were quite frankly taking the waters in order to conceive, the pregnant to ensure safe delivery, and others after disappointments have returned undaunted to get well and start all over again.⁹⁷⁸

There was more to experience of women's health at Tunbridge Wells than the search for a medical cure, however. As Barton astutely noted, 'The treatment of gynaecological disorders presented no difficulties to the . . . physician; whatever the trouble might be, the prescription – a visit to Bath or Tunbridge Wells – never varied or failed to earn him the gratitude of his patient.'⁹⁷⁹ As discussed in chapter three, there was a sharp divide within literature's portrayal of taking the waters as a cure for infertility between the spa as a centre for healing and as a place of licentiousness and scandal, where the waters were used as a poorly constructed cover for extra-marital affairs. The following discussion will focus on the water cure as a medical treatment and will show that the importance of this aspect of resort life for many women should not be underestimated.

The treatment of women's health at Tunbridge Wells focused on a core group of afflictions that were thought to be particularly responsive to the iron-impregnated waters: barrenness, menstrual problems, chlorosis and the whites. Furthermore,

⁹⁷⁸ Barton, p. 149.

⁹⁷⁹ Barton, p. 149.

though it was not mentioned explicitly in medical or promotional texts, it will be argued that many women drank the waters hoping to induce an abortion.

The royal family's use of the water's to promote fecundity and safe delivery continued after the Restoration. Katharine of Braganza, wife of Charles II was the second Stuart queen to take the waters at Tunbridge Wells. Katharine went to the spa in 1663 in the hope of conceiving. Unlike Henrietta Maria, this time the waters did not prove a success and Katharine would later try a course of the waters at Bath with no better result. As Savidge has noted, 'had Katharine borne a son and heir to Charles, the waters of Tunbridge could surely have claimed a part in changing the course of history; but it was not to be.'⁹⁸⁰ Indeed, in 1688, James II's second wife, Mary of Modena gave birth to the Prince of Wales, apparently a result of her visit to Bath: thus the water cure helped to precipitate the Glorious Revolution.⁹⁸¹ Queen Anne also frequently took the waters at Bath and Tunbridge Wells but met with little success.

Rowzee's claims for the water's powers against barrenness were a continued theme within the spa's medical and promotional guides throughout the long eighteenth century. Madan not only stated that the waters rendered 'those who Drink of them *Fruitful and Prolifick*' but also that drinking 'inspires men and Women to *Amorous Emotions and Titillations*.'⁹⁸² Thus the waters could also cure frigidity and should be drunk by both men and women.

Curing the 'defect and excess of the menses' was a common problem targeted by medical authorities at Tunbridge Wells and claims were made for the water's effectiveness in this area by both Rowzee and Madan. This is an ambiguous term that could be interpreted in a number of different ways, one of which is abortion. Many women may have taken the waters openly in order to 'restore' menstruation, using this social and medically acceptable reason as a cover to induce a miscarriage. Angus McLaren in his work on fertility in England between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries discussed methods used to control fertility in detail and has analysed the use of this and similar phrases, though not in the context of spas or mineral waters. McLaren argued that 'perhaps the major form of family limitation in past times was

⁹⁸⁰ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 37.

⁹⁸¹ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, p. 37.

⁹⁸² Madan, pp. 6-7.

abortion,' suggesting that despite the condemnation of moralists and the church, there existed several arguments for limited conception.⁹⁸³

Abortion was not just an option considered by the unmarried (single or widowed) women who wished to avoid the stigma and potential ruin that resulted from given birth to an illegitimate child: 'the desire to control their own fertility', 'to avoid the misery brought on by too large a family' and 'to end the childbearing career of the woman once she neared menopause' could encourage married women to seek an abortion, often with the approval and help of their husband, family and friends.⁹⁸⁴ McLaren has suggested that women made a distinction during a pregnancy between before and after the 'quickening'. 'For women quickening meant that the embryo now had a life and its destruction would be a sin': therefore an abortion before this time would not have been considered either a crime or immoral.⁹⁸⁵ As many pregnancies would have naturally miscarried during this period, a deliberate abortion could be readily explained away.

Drinking or bathing in mineral waters was a far safer option than herbal potions or, a result of the commercialization of medicine, pills, the most popular methods of procuring abortions, which were often toxic.⁹⁸⁶ Most significantly for this study, McLaren has noted that 'Iron enjoyed a reputation as an abortifacient and Hooper's "female pills", containing iron, were the first in a long line to be employed for the purpose of inducing miscarriage.'⁹⁸⁷ This provides one direct association of iron as an abortifacient. To speculate, it is possible that this use of iron pills as an abortifacient was influenced by the use of the iron-impregnated waters of many of the nation's spas and certainly the theory that chalybeate waters were used to procure abortions is strengthened by this use of iron.

Miscarriage was considered a potential side-effect of the waters by some medical authorities during the eighteenth century and women were advised to avoid taking the waters whilst pregnant. *The Tunbridge Wells Directory* of 1792, for example, explicitly warned that the waters: 'are judged not proper for women with child;

⁹⁸³ McLaren, p. 89.

⁹⁸⁴ McLaren, pp. 94-96.

⁹⁸⁵ McLaren, p. 109.

⁹⁸⁶ McLaren, p. 102.

⁹⁸⁷ McLaren, p. 106.

because whatever provokes urine, as the waters do, provokes also the terms; and whatever provokes them in women, causes miscarriage.⁹⁸⁸ That warnings were being made suggests that were waters were being used in this manner.

The strong female community created and fostered by the spa environment should also be considered. In addition to the high concentration of medical facilities and practitioners, the time spent socialising, daily medical routine and supportive environment would have provided abundant opportunities for the discussion of health and the exchange of knowledge as visitors discussed their afflictions and suggested remedies. This female community could have been particularly important for women hoping to obtain an abortion.

Chlorosis or greensickness was another affliction commonly associated with the Tunbridge Wells waters. John Allen in 1730 provided the following description to aid diagnosis:

Chlorosis is a Distemper proper to Virgins and Widows, especially those that live without the Company of Man, or whom their Husbands do not give Satisfaction to. Those that are troubled with this Distemper grow Pale, and have a blewish or reddish Circle under their Eyes, are sad, and have often a slow Fever, and as if wandering, their Pulse is unequal and varies, and they are sometimes troubled with Vomitings, and uneasiness or anxiety about their Heart, &c.⁹⁸⁹

As Allen suggested, the only certain cure for chlorosis was marriage and motherhood but a course of mineral waters was also a frequent recommendation. A wide number of symptoms were linked with the disease, which has led to debate amongst scholars about what lay behind the affliction. The disease had its 'heyday' in the late nineteenth century when the number of cases rose dramatically, reaching the point when 'all adolescent girls seen by European and American physicians seemed to have at least a "touch" of it.'⁹⁹⁰ In the early twentieth century, however, the disease mysteriously

⁹⁸⁸ *The Tunbridge Wells Directory*, p. 29.

⁹⁸⁹ John Allen, *Dr. Allen's Synopsis Medicinæ: Or, a Brief and General Collection of the Whole Practice of Physick. ...*, vol 2 (London: Printed for J. Pemberton; and W. Meadows, 1730), p. 154.

⁹⁹⁰ Margaret Humphreys, 'Chlorosis: "The Virgin's Disease"', in *Plague, Pox and Pestilence*, ed. by Kenneth F. Kiple, 160-65 (p. 160).

disappeared. Typically diagnosed in young women and girls who were 'pale, weak, tired and nervous, who suffered from palpitations, breathlessness, indigestion, constipation, irregular menstrual periods and odd appetites,' from the nineteenth century onwards chlorosis has most commonly been identified as a form of anemia (other explanations include anorexia nervosa, tuberculosis and the effects of tight corsets compressing the organs).⁹⁹¹ The connections between the two afflictions have been emphasised by Margaret Humphries, who explained:

Anemic patients are weak, tired and short of breath, since without enough iron the blood does a poor job of carrying oxygen throughout the body. The heart beats more rapidly in an attempt to make up for this deficit by pushing the iron-poor blood through more often. A pale complexion results, since it is iron that gives the red blood cell its color. Those who argued that chlorosis was merely an early term for iron-deficiency anemia pointed to the universal success of iron tonics in treating the disease.⁹⁹²

The identification of chlorosis with anemia suggests the intriguing possibility that a course of the iron-impregnated waters at Tunbridge Wells may have actually resulted in an improvement in health (though it is likely that a significant amount of water could have to be drunk to experience any benefit).

Fluor albus, leucorrhoea or 'the whites' was another affliction commonly associated with the Tunbridge Wells waters. This was a potentially serious affliction which could lead to infertility, pregnancy outside the womb, be a symptom of cervical cancer and was in some cases fatal. Some physicians also associated it with gonorrhoea. As one of its causes is a lack of hygiene, it is possible that the regular bathing promoted at many watering places would have been beneficial.

This understanding of the use of mineral waters by women as an aid to conception, to induce miscarriage and as a treatment for chlorosis and fluor albus has important implications for our understanding of the importance of the water cure. Not all women, of course, would have used the waters in this way, however the evidence

⁹⁹¹ Humphreys, p. 162.

⁹⁹² Humphries, p. 162.

suggests that those that did formed a significant portion of visitors. The afflictions treated also suggest that the water cure assumed an increased significance during different stages in a woman's lifecycle, particularly during their childbearing years. This theory corresponds with the resort experiences of Amabel, Countess de Grey as discussed in the previous chapter, when it was shown how her use of watering places changed across her lifetime.

iv

Seawater was a novel and exciting addition to the water cure. Capitalising on changing attitudes towards the sea and shore, the sea offered an abundance of easily accessible resources to an island nation. Health and medicine has traditionally been seen as less important at the seaside than at the inland spas, yet a resort could not thrive without the provision and promotion of its medical facilities. The provision of medical facilities, the curative properties ascribed to seawater and the ritual of the water cure at the seaside demonstrate broad continuity with the spas. But there were also a number of key differences, not least the increasing importance of sea air.

The extant source material for medicine at the Kentish seaside is Margate-centric. Margate was one of the first resorts in England to offer sea-bathing facilities and thus was in a strong position to capitalise on the 'rush into the sea' after Dr Richard Russell made seawater therapy fashionable in the mid-eighteenth century. But despite its early success, Margate did not benefit from promotion by a 'big name' medical authority until the arrival of Dr John Anderson in the 1790s. As argued in chapter three, sea bathing led to a sexualisation of the water cure. However, the practices of the Margate General Sea Bathing Infirmary allow us look beyond the fashionable therapy and gain insight into the cures performed and preferred treatment methods of the medical establishment. As the properties of seawater throughout the country were considered to be largely consistent, the medical promotion of the seaside rested on a different set of factors from that of mineral springs: a focus on the chemical analysis of water was replaced by an emphasis on resort topography, the number of bathing machines and the quality of indoor bathing facilities. The majority

of the smaller Kentish seaside resorts attracted no medical authority and relied on relatively brief descriptions within medical guides and newspapers advertisements of new facilities.

Visiting the coast to bathe in the sea was a long-established tradition for England's lower orders. A custom that 'was prophylactic as well as therapeutic in intent with quasi-magical overtones,' sea bathing was practiced at several places on the English coast by the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁹⁹³ Originating in Lancashire, during the eighteenth century the custom refined into 'Bathing Sunday,' an annual pilgrimage to drink and bathe in seawater, driven by the belief that the August spring tide 'would wash away the impurities of the year and protect against illness in the months to come.'⁹⁹⁴

Sea-bathing as an elite hydropathic treatment in England has been traced back to the Tudor era, with references to patients being sent to the coast for their health being found in the sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries.⁹⁹⁵ John Leland's *Itineraries*, for example, written circa 1540, offers early evidence for the Kentish coast being considered beneficial to health. Leland described one 'Olde Finiox' who had purchased land in 'Heron' (Herne) who 'buildid his fiare house on puchasid groud, for the commodite of preserving his helth. So that afore the phisicians concluded that it was an exceeding helthfulle quarter.'⁹⁹⁶

Sir John Floyer (1649-1734) was an early advocate of cold water bathing. Recognising the sea as a valuable asset ('since we live in an Island, and have the Sea about us'), Floyer claimed that the sea could 'both preserve our Healths, and cure many Diseases, as our Fountains do.'⁹⁹⁷ Partly as a result of Floyer's work, by the early eighteenth century cold bathing was seen as an effective treatment by the medical community.

⁹⁹³ Walton, *The English Seaside*, p. 10.

⁹⁹⁴ John K. Walton, *Wonderlands by the Waves: A History of the Seaside Resorts of Lancashire* (Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1992), p. 11.

⁹⁹⁵ Brodie, "'Towns of Health and Mirth'", p. 19.

⁹⁹⁶ John Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland In or About the Years 1535-1543 Parts VII and VIII With Appendices Including Extracts from Leland's Collectanea*, vol. 4., ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: George Bell and Sons, 1909), pp. 43-44.

⁹⁹⁷ John Floyer, Sir, *Psychrolousia: Or, the History of Cold Bathing: Both Ancient and Modern. In Two Parts. ...* (London: Printed for Sam. Smith, and Benj. Walford, Printers to the Royal Society, at the Princes Arms in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1706), p. 167.

Scarborough played a central role in establishing sea-bathing as part of the water cure and in 'the process of transferring the manners and routines of the spa town to the seaside resorts.'⁹⁹⁸ Sea-bathing was first promoted at Scarborough by Robert Wittie who in his 1660 treatise recommended it as a treatment to sufferers from gout.⁹⁹⁹ It was not until the 1720s, however, that the practice first became popular with visitors and the first bathing machines were provided in the early 1730s.¹⁰⁰⁰ Scarborough was thus England's first dual resort, offering both mineral waters and sea-bathing facilities and its new role would later eclipse the declining spa.¹⁰⁰¹

Russell's treatise, *A Dissertation Concerning the Use of Seawater in Diseases of the Glands*, first published in Latin in 1750 and in an official English translation in 1753, brought seawater treatments to the wider attention of the fashionable world. Russell was the first 'to have discovered in sea water the medicinal values traditionally associated with spa waters' and by couching the benefits of sea-bathing within the familiar language of the water cure, Russell was instrumental in bringing seawater therapy into the mainstream of medical orthodoxy.¹⁰⁰²

Russell (1687-1759), a graduate from the University of Leiden, took over a practice in Lewes, Sussex in 1725 where he 'quickly established himself as the leading physician in East Sussex.'¹⁰⁰³ Russell's professional standing was recognised in February 1752 when he was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society and in 1754 he was awarded an MD degree from the University of Cambridge.¹⁰⁰⁴ Following the successful reception of his treatise Russell in 1753-54 bought tenements on the low cliff at the eastern edge of Brighton, where he built a substantial house for the reception of patients.¹⁰⁰⁵

⁹⁹⁸ Brodie, 'Scarborough in the 1730s – Spa, Sea and Sex', *Journal of Tourism History*, 4.2 (2012), 125-53 (p. 126).

⁹⁹⁹ Binns, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Walvin, *Beside the Seaside*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁰¹ Brodie, 'Scarborough', p. 135.

¹⁰⁰² Walvin, *Beside the Seaside*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁰³ John H. Farrant, 'Richard Russell (1687-1759)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 48 (2004), 334-35 (p. 334).

¹⁰⁰⁴ Farrant, 'Richard Russell', p. 335.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Farrant, 'Richard Russell', p. 335.

Russell's basic hypothesis was that seawater treatment could prevent and cure diseases of the glands. At the beginning of his treatise, Russell established two 'general rules':

One is, that by directing such Medicines as prevent the Production of Slime and Acidities in the alimentary Tube, we may prepare a more sweet, and healthy Chyle; save the *Viscera* from being compress'd by Flatulencies; and thereby render the Liver Spleen, Pancreas and Mensenteric Glands less liable to any Obstructions. The other is, that by the Use of Sea Water, and other Helps, the Glands may be scour'd and cleans'd of their Obstructions; after which, the whole Habit of the Body ought to be strenghten'd, and render'd firm by cold Bathing in the Sea, that it may be enabled to resist any new Fluxations.¹⁰⁰⁶

Russell listed nine afflictions he believed to be particularly responsive to seawater treatment:

1. All recent Obstructions of the Glands of the Intestines, and Mesentery ...
2. All recent Obstructions of the pulmonary Glands, and those of the other *Viscera*, which frequently produce Consumptions. ...
3. All recent glandular Swellings of the Neck, or other Parts.
4. Recent Tumours of the Joints, if they are not suppurated, nor become *Scirrhi*, or Cancers; and have not carious Bones for their Cause.
5. Recent Fluxions upon the Glands of the Eye Lids . . .
6. All Defædations of the Skin, from an *Erysipelas* to the *Lepra*.
7. Diseases of the Glands of the Nose, with their usual Companion a Thickness of the upper Lip . . .
8. Obstructions of the Kidnies; when there is no Inflammations, and the Stone not large.
9. In recent Obstructions of the Liver, this Method will be proper; where it prevents Constipation of the Belly, and assists other Medicines directed in Icteric Cases.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰⁶ Russell, *A Dissertion*, pp. 14-15

¹⁰⁰⁷ Russell, *A Dissertion*, pp. 35-37.

Showing several similarities with the afflictions treated at Tunbridge Wells, Russell's list emphasised seawater's ability to remove obstructions, particularly within the kidneys and liver, as well as diseases of the glands. Scrofula, third on Russell's list, would become particularly associated with Margate through the General Sea Bathing Infirmary, as will be discussed later in the chapter. The case histories provided expanded this list of cures further to include scorbutic eruptions, jaundice and shingles. In keeping with medical authorities for watering places across this period, Russell's list of possible cures was extensive and wide-ranging, though stopped short of claims for seawater being a panacea.

Russell also advocated drinking seawater. This method of treatment was particularly effective in cases of colic where 'if there be no Fever, Sea Water drank daily, at least a Pint every Morning, will, with great Safety, preserve the Patient at the Beginning from this most dangerous Illness.'¹⁰⁰⁸ Like many mineral waters, seawater could have fast-acting purgative effects and thus provided visible 'evidence' for its efficacy. Drinking seawater, however, did not become popular as a treatment and remained on the periphery of medical recommendations for the use of seawater.

Margate was one of the first locations in England to offer sea-bathing facilities. As outlined in chapter two, a seawater bath under the proprietorship of Thomas Barber was advertised in the *Kentish Gazette* in July 1736. The business was successful enough to warrant expansion before the summer of 1737 and continued to be advertised until 1740. However, though Barber provided visitors with fairly extensive facilities, including rooms for lodging, dressing rooms, a dining room and a summer house, he took no steps to promote the medical benefits of a stay at Margate or of the water cure itself; a factor that likely contributed to the bath's decline and eventual disappearance.

The invention of the hooded bathing machine was perhaps Margate's most important contribution to the physical practice of sea-bathing. According to eighteenth-century guidebooks, the hooded bathing machine was the invention of Benjamin Beale, a Quaker, in 1753. Though little is known about Beale himself, he has been traditionally (and mistakenly) credited with first introducing sea-bathing to

¹⁰⁰⁸ Russell, *A Dissertation*, p. 44

Margate. Whyman, however, has argued that Beale may have invented the machine as early as the mid-1730s 'and no later than 1750, probably during the 1740s he established for Margate the credit of having invented and perfected the umbrella attachment at the rear of the bathing machine.'¹⁰⁰⁹

The 1765 guidebook *A Description of the Isle of Thanet* provided a detailed explanation of the design and operation of the bathing machine, which was accompanied by an illustration (Fig. 4.1):

- A. The Bathing Room, to the steps of which the Machine B. is driving, with its umbrella drawn up.
- C. A back view of the Machine, shewing its steps, and the folding doors which open into a Bath of eight feet by thirteen feet, formed by the fall of the umbrella.
- D. The Machine, as used in Bathing, with its umbrella down.¹⁰¹⁰

The machine's umbrella provided privacy to the bather, a feature particularly attractive to female bathers:

By the aid of this contrivance, Ladies, who have been excluded from the benefit of Bathing in most parts of *England*, except in winter, whose degree of cold is too intense to be agreeable, (I mean the Cold Bath,) may now enjoy all the pleasures of Bathing, whenever they pleasure, in so private a manner, as to be consistent with the most strict delicacy.¹⁰¹¹

Segregation of the sexes was a point of moral concern for resort authorities and visitors alike and the provision of privacy whilst bathing ensured the machine's success.

Figure 4.1. The Hooded Bathing Machine Explained (1765)¹⁰¹²

¹⁰⁰⁹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 153-54.

¹⁰¹⁰ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 70.

¹⁰¹¹ T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. 13.

¹⁰¹² T.G., *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, p. i.



But their umbrellas were not the only distinguishing feature of Margate's bathing machines. One late eighteenth-century guidebook reflected on their colour and physical presence, noting that they 'much resemble an *aquatic encampment*, the chief of the being all white.'¹⁰¹³ A letter written to the *Kentish Gazette* in 1768 suggests that the machines were individually named, presumably to help bathers find their machines whilst swimming. The letter, written by 'An Antigallican' complained that the naming of the machines was carried out by a '*Frenchified machine master*' who, pandering to fashion, called his machines '*George le Troisieme . . . Charlotte Reine de Gradne-Bretange . . . [and] le Marquis du Granby.*'¹⁰¹⁴

'Frenchied' bathing machines were only one of the medical facilities on offer at Margate. Part of Margate's success as a resort stemmed from its ability to offer the latest fashions and technologies in seawater bathing. John Mitchener's warm saltwater baths, opened to the public in 1769, were a significant addition to the resort's

¹⁰¹³ *The New Margate and Ramsgate Guide*, p. 5.

¹⁰¹⁴ 'To the Printers of the *Kentish Gazette*', *Kentish Gazette*, 23 July 1768, p. 4.

facilities. The Margate hotelier advertised the baths in the *Kentish Gazette*, emphasising their incorporation of the latest balneological developments:

JOHN MITCHENER begs Leave to acquaint the Publick, that he has carried every Accommodation for bathing in the Sea to the highest Degree of Perfection; he has lately opened a Warm Salt-water Bath, for the Use of those to whom it might be inconvenient to venture into a Cold one; - it may be brought in a few Minutes to any Degree of Heat which may be required, according to the Regulation of Farenheit's Thermometer, which has been provided for that Purpose; the same may occasionally be made use of as a Cold one, whenever the Sea may be so rough as to render bathing in the Machines unpleasant.¹⁰¹⁵

Promising to accommodate all the needs of genteel visitors, Mitchener claimed that he 'never did or ever will spare any Expences to procure the best Provisions, Wines, Teas, &c. which can by any Means be had' and, furthermore, all food was prepared by 'a Man Cook from London.'¹⁰¹⁶

The provision of the modern and convenient bathing facilities was one of three medically related factors that Whyman has identified as leading to Margate's initial fame and continued success as a leading watering place.¹⁰¹⁷ Presenting the resort's topography as offering the ideal location for bathing was essential. An analysis of an article published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in April 1771, which played an instrumental role in constructing the image of Margate as a resort, demonstrates the key elements that combined to form its reputation. The article, which made no effort to disguise its promotional aim, outlined the reasons why 'Margate has the superiority over every place in England, for the conveniency and propriety of bathing in the salt water.'¹⁰¹⁸ Chief amongst its virtues was the topography of the bay itself which, the article claimed, made it uniquely suited to bathing:

¹⁰¹⁵ John Mitchener, 'New-Inn and Assembly. At Margate', *Kentish Gazette*, 22 July 1769, p. 2.

¹⁰¹⁶ John Mitchener, 'New-Inn and Assembly. At Margate', *Kentish Gazette*, 22 July 1769, p. 2.

¹⁰¹⁷ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 142.

¹⁰¹⁸ 'Some Peculiar Advantages which Margate Pre-Eminently Enjoys, for the Benefit of Bathing in the Sea', *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1771, p. 167.

The Bay wherein the Company bathe at Margate, is about half a mile in breadth, and has not its equal in this kingdom, or perhaps in any other, for the purpose of bathing. The surface is a fine clean sand, perfectly free from rocks, stones, seaweed, and all manner of soil and sullage; and lies on so gentle and regular descent that the sea, at low water, ebbs away about half a mile from the shore. The west side of this bay is defended by a long ridge of rocks, which projects a very considerable distance into the sea . . . The east side of the bay is covered and defended by another rock . . . so that, Margate-Bay being thus happily fenced off by these two walls of nature . . .¹⁰¹⁹

A clean, sandy and protected bay that provided easy access to clean, calm water was thus considered a major selling point for the resort. The convenience, safety, privacy and easy running of the bathing machines were also a point for promotion.¹⁰²⁰ By extolling the virtues of Margate to the educated, genteel readers of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, this article provided 'an immense publicity boost in its early days as a seaside resort' and demonstrates how a focus on the natural environment of the resort took the place of a discussion of the curative properties of mineral waters in the promotion of the seaside.¹⁰²¹

Despite Margate's early success and in contrast to Brighton, the resort did not attract a well-known medical authority until the arrival of Dr John Anderson in the 1790s. Anderson (c. 1730-1804), having begun his medical career practicing in Kingston, Surrey, was appointed as physician and later director of Margate's General Sea-Bathing Infirmary.¹⁰²² Anderson's endorsement of seawater as a medical cure and the promotion of Margate in particular, consolidated the medical reputation of the resort and drew public attention to cures achieved by the regimens implemented by himself and his colleagues.

Anderson published two influential treatises on seawater in 1795, *A Preliminary Introduction to the Act of Sea Bathing* and *A Practical Essay on the Good and Bad Effects of Sea-Water and Sea-Bathing*. Drawing upon his own observations, the

¹⁰¹⁹ 'Some Peculiar Advantages,' p. 167.

¹⁰²⁰ 'Some Peculiar Advantages,' p. 167.

¹⁰²¹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 142.

¹⁰²² G.V. Benson, rev. Claire L. Nutt, 'Anderson, John (c.1730-1804)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2 (2004), 46 (p. 46).

experience of Margate's sea-bathing guides and the knowledge of colleagues practising in the Isle of Thanet, Anderson offered advice on treatment methods and cures achievable.

Like his predecessors, Anderson made grand claims for the curative powers of seawater:

There are but few distempers incident too human nature in which either the cold, the warm, or vapour sea-water bath, the air of a salubrious spot on the margin of the main, such as *Thanet*, are not equal to meet and prove more or less beneficial in.¹⁰²³

He stopped short, however of declaring seawater a panacea and criticised those who claimed seawater to be a 'universal sovereign specific remedy for all complaints, whatever their nature of cause.'¹⁰²⁴ Nonetheless, Anderson claimed an extensive number of afflictions responsive to seawater, including nervous and hypochondrical disorders, diabetes or 'flux of the urine,' diarrhoea, fluor albus, gonorrhoea, jaundice and 'other bilious complaints,' *fridigity, venus landuidis, languor* or indolence, *depression of spirits . . . maniac melancholia,* '*spasmodic complaints, such as hysteric, epileptic, . . . St.Vitus's dance, 'Cynic Spasm* or wry mouth,' tetanus 'or locked jaw,' chronic rheumatism, leprosy, and 'humoral sore eyes and dimness.'¹⁰²⁵ Particular emphasis was placed on scurvy, scrofula and serpigenuous ulcers (scurvy had been the focus of Anderson's dissertation).

Bathing in and drinking seawater was also useful during convalescence, particularly for cases that affected the skin and bones. Anderson stated:

¹⁰²³ John Anderson, *A Preliminary Introduction to the Act of Sea-Bathing: Wherein is Shewn its Nature, Power, and Importance; With some Necessary Hints for the Attention of Visitors at the Watering Places, Previous to, and During a Course of Bathing.* ... (Margate: Printed for C. Dilly, in the Poultry, and E. Murray, Fleet-Street, London to be had at the Libraries Margate, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs, 1795), p. 15-16.

¹⁰²⁴ Anderson, *A Preliminary Introduction*, p. 20.

¹⁰²⁵ John Anderson, *A Practical Essay on the Good and Bad Effects of Sea-Water and Sea-Bathing.* ... (London: Printed for C Dilly, in the Poultry; E. Murray, Fleet-Street, S. Silver, Margate; And All Other Booksellers in Town and Country, 1795), pp. 41-48.

Sea-bathing after the small pox, chicken pox, measles, or other febrile eruptive complaints, and drinking the water, is efficacious, in purifying and strengthening a debilitated habit. It is specific in rickets, and in strengthening the spine and loins of infants, and preventing crookedness.¹⁰²⁶

Anderson's claims were corroborated by the testimonies of his medical colleagues practicing at the Isle of Thanet resorts, including Edward Daniel, apothecary at Ramsgate and George Slater, surgeon-apothecary at Margate. By offering similar advice to Anderson about the curative powers of seawater, a uniformity and cohesion was displayed amongst the resorts' medical authorities.

Women's health featured prominently at Kent's seaside resorts, as it had at Tunbridge Wells. Promotional guides to the Isle of Thanet emphasised the high levels of fecundity amongst the local population, citing as evidence 'the number of children which meet the eye of the traveller.'¹⁰²⁷ Anderson claimed that sea-bathing 'promotes the morbidly suppressed monthly terms, in habits especially unaccustomed to bathing' and that it would restore the 'cold, pale, languid, feeble chlorotic virgin' to 'warm comfortable health, strength and colour.'¹⁰²⁸ Furthermore, seawater had 'the power and property of removing suppressed menses, and of restraining too abundant a flow.'¹⁰²⁹

The detailed case notes provided by Anderson provide insight into how these afflictions were treated at Margate. One example related the case of a 'Miss P.' aged eighteen with a 'pale chlorotic complexion' who was suffering from:

bilious bowel-complaints . . . irregularity in her monthly terms . . . frequently constipated, attended with racking pain and distention of her stomach and bowels. Her complexion was livid; her lips pale, eyes dull and languid, and her temper exceedingly fretful and impatient.¹⁰³⁰

¹⁰²⁶ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 48.

¹⁰²⁷ Hall, p. 3. Hall's guide claimed that it was the diet of 'plenty of fish' which rendered inhabitants 'wonderfully prolific.'

¹⁰²⁸ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p.7.

¹⁰²⁹ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 7.

¹⁰³⁰ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 4.

Anderson prescribed a sea bath to expel 'morbid matter' from the body and 'exterminate noxious humours and the causes of them' and complementary medicines.¹⁰³¹ The treatment was a success and Miss P. 'left Margate in perfect health and good temper.'¹⁰³²

Unlike physicians at Tunbridge Wells, Anderson believed sea-bathing to be beneficial for pregnant women and posed no danger to either mother or child. The testimony of female bathing guides provided confirmation and they stated 'that many ladies have bathed during pregnancy, and no miscarriage has happened in consequence of sea-bathing.'¹⁰³³ Nonetheless, Anderson believed it necessary to address the connection between sea-bathing and miscarriage in detail, acknowledging that 'I have seen and heard of but a few instances of miscarriages having happened in consequence of sea-bathing.'¹⁰³⁴ This statement was followed by an account of one such case:

A Mrs. B -, ten weeks gone in pregnancy, and who happened to have one or two miscarriages, came from London a few seasons ago, to Broad Stairs, to bathe in the sea to prevent this circumstance. After the second bath a flooding came on: *two eminent accoucheurs (Slater and Mayhew)* were called to her, and I to their assistance [sic] next morning. When I found her flooding, and had flooded a great deal, and was exceedingly low, though no deadly symptoms had come on. We supported her. Her uterine system was too weak and irritable to bear the stimulus of the bath.¹⁰³⁵

By presenting Mrs B's miscarriage as a beneficial outcome that saved the life of the patient, Anderson attempted to avoid any negative associations with the water cure. The attention paid to the possibility of miscarriage within Anderson's treatise, however, does suggest that the link between miscarriage and abortion established at the spas was continued at the seaside and it is possible that female bathing guides

¹⁰³¹ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰³² Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 5.

¹⁰³³ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰³⁴ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 21.

¹⁰³⁵ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 62.

provided aid and information to women seeking either to become pregnant or induce a miscarriage.

Anderson stated unequivocally those afflictions that would not benefit from seawater. Seawater was a particularly dangerous treatment for gout. In cases of ‘acute inflammatory gout,’ for example, he argued that ‘cold sea-bathing increases the force of the symptoms, and hastens on an approaching fit.’¹⁰³⁶ The behaviour of patients, Anderson stated, often inhibited the effectiveness of the water cure and he criticised ‘the continual hurry of the dissipated life too many live in at the *sea-watering places*; their balls, plays, dancing, gaming, drinking, hot rooms, anxiety and flutter of spirits, and other irregularities’ that ‘must undo any good effects the sea-bath might have.’¹⁰³⁷ Anderson also condemned physicians who sent their seriously ill and dying patients to the seaside when there was no hope of recovery:

It was not uncommon for the faculty, when their patients’ stomachs recoil at food and medicine, and their constitutions much worn out, to recommend a change of air, as the *derniere resort* . . . it only hurries them a day sooner to the grave – the *domus omnium* – and make the sea-watering places a general receptacle for the dead, instead of a preservatory from the shades.¹⁰³⁸

This type of behaviour, by casting doubt on the effectiveness of the water cure, could have seriously implications for the medical reputation of a resort.

Nevertheless, full participation in the social and cultural life of the resort was considered as important to health at the Kentish seaside as it was at Tunbridge Wells. Anderson recognised that it was important for patients ‘to be amused’ during their time at Margate,¹⁰³⁹ and he stated that ‘innocent, rational, and well-timed amusements are absolutely necessary to our health and happiness.’¹⁰⁴⁰

The records of the General Sea Bathing Infirmary allow us to look beyond the fashionable treatment and gain insight into the medical authority’s preferred practice

¹⁰³⁶ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 42.

¹⁰³⁷ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 66.

¹⁰³⁸ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 63.

¹⁰³⁹ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Anderson, *A Practical Essay*, p. 65.

of the water cure. The General Sea Bathing Infirmary (later the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital, Margate) is 'believed to be the oldest Orthopaedic Hospital in the world'¹⁰⁴¹ and the country's first hospital for tuberculosis.¹⁰⁴² Its fame was 'national, early and unique.'¹⁰⁴³ Founded 2 July 1791 by Dr John Coakley Lettsom, the Margate Infirmary provided 'a Receptacle for the Relief of the Poor whose Diseases required Sea-Bathing.'¹⁰⁴⁴ Lettsom (1744-1815), a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, originally set up practice in London where he made his fortune as a successful physician and gained a reputation as a philanthropist by taking part in the foundation of several valuable institutions.¹⁰⁴⁵ Most notably during this period, Lettsom was one of the founders of the General Dispensary in Aldersgate Street which from 1770 'gave free out-patient treatment to the poor through its resident apothecary, and inaugurated a tradition of domiciliary visiting by the medical staff.'¹⁰⁴⁶ Lettsom was also well-known for his connection with the Medical Society of London, of which he was a founding member.

The Margate Infirmary emerged from the same spirit of medical philanthropy and Lettsom's experience in setting up charitable institutions. Lettsom was also influenced by the theories of fellow Quaker and physician Jonathan Fix Russell, who believed 'fishermen never developed scrofula and that scrofulous children sent to the seaside returned to their families after a season of sea-bathing "the tumours of their necks cured and their countenances healthy."¹⁰⁴⁷ The Founding Committee, which met at a coffee-house in Ludgate Hill, set up the Infirmary on the basic principle that 'the great and increasing use of Sea-bathing is a strong Proof of the Advantages derived from that Remedy whose Circumstances admit of their resorting to the Coast' and that 'many valuable poor Sufferers, who might be relieved by the same Remedy,

¹⁰⁴¹ F.G. St Clair Strange, *The History of the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital Margate 1791-1991* (Kent: Meresborough Books, 1991), p. 13.

¹⁰⁴² Courtney Dainton, *The Story of England's Hospitals*, With a Forward by Lord Amulree (London: Museum Press, 1961), p. 93.

¹⁰⁴³ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 732.

¹⁰⁴⁴ EK, Royal Sea Bathing Hospital Margate Founding Committee Minutes 1791-1865. MH/T1/AM1/1.

¹⁰⁴⁵ J.F. Payne rev. Roy Porter, 'Lettsom, John Coakley (1744-1815)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 33 (2004), 513-15 (p. 514).

¹⁰⁴⁶ Payne, p. 514.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Thomas Dormandy, *The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis* (London: Hambledon Press, 1999), p. 148.

are deprived of it by the Expence attending a Residence at a Distance from their Families and Occupations.¹⁰⁴⁸ Margate was chosen to host the Infirmary because of 'the well-known Salubrity of that Part of the Coast, the ready and cheap Conveyance thither' and the presence of a body of potential subscribers during the summer months.¹⁰⁴⁹

The Margate Infirmary first opened its doors to patients in May 1796. During this first summer, sixteen patients were admitted. Patient numbers steadily increased until in 1800 admissions reached eighty-six (a total of thirty beds were available at any one time) and by 1820 had risen again to 335 patients.¹⁰⁵⁰ After being recommended by a subscribing governor (governorship was to awarded to any subscribed who donated ten pounds), patients were examined by a Medical Board operating in London from one of two locations: the Court Room of the London Workhouse in Bishopsgate Street or St. George's Hospital in Hyde Park Corner. Successful applicants would be provided with a 'Form of Admission' which was to be presented to the Steward of the Infirmary on arrival.¹⁰⁵¹ Patients were admitted for a period of six weeks, at which time their case was reviewed. The admissions period followed that of Margate's visiting season and the Infirmary operated typically from the beginning of May until the end of August each year.

Though sea-bathing was not compulsory for patients at the Margate Infirmary, records reveal that it performed a central role in the treatment of the vast majority.¹⁰⁵² The Admissions and Discharge Registers frequently recorded the amount of times a patients had been bathed during their stay. Sarah Smith, for example, who was admitted 6 May 1801 for scrofula and discharged 31 October having received 'great benefit' was bathed a total of seventy-two times; an average between two and three baths a week. This intensity of treatment was fairly typical for patients and, considering the control exerted by the medical authorities at the Infirmary the treatment might have been far more demanding.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Payne, p. 514.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Payne, p. 514.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Strange, p. 37.

¹⁰⁵¹ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', p. 710.

¹⁰⁵² Dormandy, p. 148.

The main focus of treatment at the Margate Infirmary was scrofula. Though applied to a variety of afflictions, scrofula in particular referred to a form of tuberculosis that affected the lymph nodes, a disease that was believed to be particularly responsive to bathing in seawater. By focusing on the treatment of scrofula, the Margate Infirmary was responding to a gap in the medical marketplace caused by the decline early in the eighteenth century of the royal touch. As outlined earlier in this chapter, several European monarchies from the middle ages used to ‘touch for scrofula,’ popularly known as the King’s Evil, believing that this would restore the sufferer to health. Despite members of royal families themselves succumbing to the disease, ‘the touch formed the basis of treatment – and indeed, if contemporary chronicles are to be believed, of numerous cures – in most of Europe.’¹⁰⁵³ In England the continuation of this practice fell victim to political events. Whilst James II as a fervent Catholic administered the royal touch frequently, William III, educated in the Calvinist faith, ‘saw nothing but superstition’ in the practice and ‘refused to touch.’¹⁰⁵⁴ Whilst experiencing a brief revival under Queen Anne, the royal touch was shunned by the House of Hanover in part because of ‘the horror felt by the Whigs . . . for anything reminiscent of the ancient monarchy and its divine right’ and also from a ‘desire to avoid shocking a certain kind of Protestant feeling.’¹⁰⁵⁵ Equally important was the fact that the Hanoverians ‘were not the legitimate heirs of the sacred line, and they did not consider themselves suitable to the hereditary miracle.’¹⁰⁵⁶ Accordingly, Jacobite circles encouraged the belief that the Stuart Pretender retained the power to cure.

The cessation of the royal touch may have signalled a move away from superstition towards medical treatment based on scientific principles, however the medical establishment could offer little hope of a cure. The widespread and medically endorsed belief that seawater could cure scrofula filled this gap and the association of the seaside with tuberculosis strengthened as the disease became increasingly prevalent during the nineteenth century.

¹⁰⁵³ Dormandy, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1973), p. 219.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Bloch, p. 220.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Bloch, p. 221.

An analysis of the Discharge and Admissions Registers for in- and out-patients provides evidence for the afflictions treated at the Margate Infirmary. Table 4.3 details the afflictions suffered by in-patients for the selected representative years 1805, 1810, 1815 and 1820.¹⁰⁵⁷

Table 4.3. Afflictions Suffered by Patients at the Margate Infirmary¹⁰⁵⁸

Disease	Number of Patients by Year				Total No. Patients
	1805	1810	1815	1820	
Abscess	-	2	2	4	8
Deafness	1	-	1	-	2
Debility (of body, limbs or joints)	2	7	2	6	17
Debility from Rickets	-	2	-	-	2
Diseased Limbs	-	1	6	11	18
Diseased Joints	8	9	39	45	101

¹⁰⁵⁷ The table includes afflictions with more than one occurrence across the sample years and similar afflictions have been grouped under one heading, for example 'scrofulous swellings' and 'scrofulous neck' have been amalgamated under the category of 'scrofula.'

¹⁰⁵⁸ EK, Royal Sea Bathing Hospital Margate, Admission and Discharge Register, 1801-1820. MH/T1/AM1/1.

Disease	Number of Patients by Year				Total No. Patients
	1805	1810	1815	1820	
Diseased Hands and / or Feet	-	-	5	6	11
Diseased or Deformed Spine	5	1	11	10	27
Epileptic Fits	-	2	-	-	2
Herpes Farinosus	5	-	-	-	5
Leprosy	-	2	-	-	2
Ophthalmia	-	1	2	-	3
Palsy	1	-	1	-	2
Palalytic	1	-	3	1	5
Rheumatism	7	11	2	2	22
Scorbutism	-	2	2	4	8
Scrofula	115	127	92	79	413
St. Victus's Dance	1	-	-	2	3
Strumous Complaints	-	-	-	2	2

The Margate Infirmary's reputation for treating scrofula is reflected in the Admissions and Discharge Registers. The vast majority of patients were suffering from this disease: in 1805, for example, 115 out of 155 patients were admitted for scrofula, a total of seventy-four percent. But, as the table highlights, a wide range of afflictions were treated at the Infirmary, and the variety reflects the strength of scientific and popular belief in the curative properties of seawater. Prominent were diseases affecting the limbs and joints, particularly rheumatism, most likely a result of these parts of the body coming into direct contact with the water during bathing and in which a positive effect could have been felt patients, particularly if warm water was used.

The cure rate of the Margate Infirmary, as recorded in the Admissions and Discharge Registers, was suspiciously high. Table 4.4 shows the cure rate for the

representative sample years 1801, 1805, 1815, and 1820. As can be seen, the system for recording the medical status of a patient did not follow strict or distinct categories. Instead a wide range of overlapping terms were used: for example, patients could be classified as having received ‘much benefit,’ ‘considerable benefit,’ or ‘great benefit’ from the water cure. For ease of analysis, similar designations have been combined.

Table 4.4. Cure Rate of the Margate Infirmary¹⁰⁵⁹

Level of Cure Achieved	1801	1805	1810	1815	1820	Total Number of Patients
Perfect cure	6	24	4	1	2	37
A cure / well in health		1	15	7	23	46
Very great benefit / very considerable benefit	3	23	1	3	8	38

¹⁰⁵⁹ EK, Royal Sea Bathing Hospital Margate, Admission and Discharge Register, 1801-1820. MH/T1/AM1/1.

Level of Cure Achieved	1801	1805	1810	1815	1820	Total Number of Patients
Great / much/ considerable/ material benefit	63	61	88	89	99	400
Benefit / some benefit	18	33	31	-	5	87
Little / some little / small/ Very little/ not much benefit	10	-	15	53	33	111
No benefit	1	4	6	6	5	22
Died	3	-	-	-	-	3
No certificate	7	1	-	-	-	8
No entry recorded	1	-	-	-	-	1
Entered into list of outpatients	-	8	2	8	3	21
Dismissed / misconduct	-	-	-	5	2	7

The Admission and Discharge Registers indicate that the vast majority of patients benefited from sea-bathing. Across the five sample years, 719 patients received some level of benefit, whereas only twenty-five received no benefit or died during treatment. Thirty-seven patients were recorded as 'perfectly cured' and forty-six were described as 'cured' or 'well in health.' These figures, of course, cannot be accurate. Though the high cure-rate can be partly explained by the Infirmary only accepting patients likely to receive benefit from treatment, improvements from consistent diet, fresh air and rest and the symptomatic narrative of scrofula (which saw progression through a series of gradually worsening stages punctuated by periods of

apparent recovery), a significant amount of exaggeration and falsification must have been involved.

Whilst genteel visitors to watering places were free to either adopt or ignore medical advice, patients at the Margate Infirmary provided physicians with ‘a laboratory in which to practice.’¹⁰⁶⁰ The medical routine implemented thus provides insight into the medical establishment’s preferred method of treatment. Furthermore, as Anne Borsay has argued, ‘Voluntary infirmaries . . . refined medical expertise by providing a context in which physicians and surgeons could exercise clinical autonomy.’¹⁰⁶¹

The water cure at the Margate Infirmary was based on Lettsom’s theories as outlined within his 1797 treatise *Hints Designed to Promote Beneficence, Temperance, and Medical Science*, which contained a section titled ‘Hints for establishing an infirmary, for sea-bathing the poor of London.’ Lettsom argued that many of the diseases suffered by the capital’s poor would be relieved by a change of location, improved diet, clean air and exercise. He noted that ‘With hard labour, and scant food, sickness will supervene; and this, aggravated by the want of air and exercise, presents a picture too often realized in this great city.’¹⁰⁶² The *Gentleman’s Magazine*, in an 1816 letter praising the work of the Infirmary, echoed this sentiment:

Whoever has in any degree attended to the afflictions of their indignant fellow-creatures in the Metropolis of its crowded environs, must have observed, with feelings of regret, how many have been dragging on a miserable existence from the dread effects of a most loathsome disease, the debilitating nature of which is heightened by the want of proper food, cloathing, and cleanliness. To the destructive powers of this disorder, many, very many, annually fall victims, notwithstanding all the aids refinement can suggest and wealth can procure.¹⁰⁶³

As these quotations suggest, diet, air and exercise were integral to the treatment provided by the Margate Infirmary: as at Tunbridge Wells, significant emphasis was

¹⁰⁶⁰ Anne Borsay, p. 354.

¹⁰⁶¹ Anne Borsay, p. 125.

¹⁰⁶² John Coakley Lettsom, *Hints Designed to Promote Beneficence, Temperance, and Medical Science* (London: Printed by H. Fry, for C. Dilly, 1797), p. 244.

¹⁰⁶³ ‘General Sea-Bathing Infirmary at Margate’, *Gentleman’s Magazine* (January, 1816), p. 17.

placed on the manipulation of the non-naturals in order to achieve a cure. The architectural design of the Infirmary reflected Lettsom's conception of a venue where 'patients could be housed in "solaria" open air shelters which offered the benefits of sea breezes and sunshine' and the original architect, Rev. John Pridden, incorporated verandas that allowed patients to sleep in the open air.¹⁰⁶⁴ As Strange has argued, Lettsom 'may truly be said to be the originator of open-air hospitals.'¹⁰⁶⁵

As the eighteenth century progressed, sea-air became an increasingly important element of the water cure and by the mid-nineteenth century medical opinion considered sea air the main benefit offered by seaside resorts.¹⁰⁶⁶ Air pollution had long been a cause of concern to city-dwellers. The replacement of wood with coal as the major domestic fuel during the seventeenth century and growing consumption of domestic fuel within the increasingly dense city had led to the 'great stinking fogs' of London that were widely recognised as a direct cause of the capital's heightened mortality rates. Conditions in the northern industrial towns were far worse: some blamed the harmful effects of the smoke on the high sulphur content, others on the presence of lead, antimony or mercury.¹⁰⁶⁷

The elite had become accustomed to taking steps to avoid the worst air pollution: escaping the capital for the countryside was an established social tradition amongst those who could afford to leave and perhaps most noticeably, a stark divide emerged within the capital between the rich, fashionable areas of West London and the poor East. The fresh, clean air of the seaside 'offered an escape and, hopefully a respite,' if only temporary, to sufferers from pulmonary complaints¹⁰⁶⁸ and acted as a positive activity that disguised the fact that eighteenth-century physicians, though increasingly aware of the dangers of polluted air, had 'little fundamentally new to offer. After all, doctors in Imperial Rome had given the same advice to those with weak

¹⁰⁶⁴ Whyman, 'Aspects of Holidaymaking', pp. 703-05.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Strange, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Walvin, *Beside the Seaside*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Peter Brimblecombe, *The Big Smoke: A History of Air Pollution in London since Medieval Times* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 75.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Walvin, *Beside the Seaside*, p. 68.

lungs and money in ancient times.¹⁰⁶⁹ Instead of focusing efforts on ways to directly tackle air pollution, fashionable society adapted the pattern of their lives to avoid it.

The air of the Kentish seaside was unfailingly promoted as 'pure and salubrious.'¹⁰⁷⁰ Within the Isle of Thanet it was noted that the air ensured that inhabitants were 'healthy and long lived,' with the 'vegetativeness and salubrity of the Air' leading to increased fecundity.¹⁰⁷¹ Even the thriving ports were presented as healthy. Visitors to Deal who were 'fond of quitting the smoaky town and noisy street' were promised 'pure sullied air' whilst Pocock claimed of Gravesend that 'The Air in this Parish, upon the whole, may be reckoned healthy as agues are not frequent here' and was considered safe being 'one mile distant' from the 'effluvia of the Marshes.'¹⁰⁷²

Diet had long been considered 'probably the most important factor in procuring recovery from sickness.'¹⁰⁷³ As discussed previously in this chapter, simple food eaten in moderation formed the mainstay of advice but resort physicians often provided extensive dietary plans for visitors to follow. Recommendations were rooted in humoral medicine, though many physicians also incorporated contemporary dietary theories and fashions. It is difficult to determine how many visitors followed dietary advice, however as Jane Huggett argues, 'just as today most people only radically change their diet or lifestyle when forced to through a life-threatening illness, so sixteenth and seventeenth century people probably paid little attention to their diet until they fell ill.'¹⁰⁷⁴

The diet of patients at the Margate Infirmary was intended to be wholesome and nourishing. The Provisions Ledger from 8 May to 4 June 1820 shows that patients were provided with a fairly wide range of foodstuffs, including bread, flour, beef, mutton, butter, cheese, rice, oatmeal, salt, pepper, vinegar, sugar, tea, currants, milk, beer, porter, mustard and bacon.¹⁰⁷⁵ Patients were thus fed well during their stay and this likely led to many experiencing improvements in health.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Brimblecombe, p. 75.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Hall, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷¹ *The Margate Guide*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷² Pocock, *The History* p. 24.

¹⁰⁷³ Jane Huggett, *The Mirror of Health: Food, Diet and Medical Theory, 1450-1660* (Bristol: Stuart Press, 1995), p. 44.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Huggett, p. 54.

¹⁰⁷⁵ EK, Royal Sea Bathing Hospital Margate, Provisions Ledger, 1820-1828. MH/T1/FL2/1.

Building on the vogue for sea-bathing created by Russell's treatise, Margate's medical reputation was initially constructed from the early provision of sea-bathing facilities and promotion in guidebooks, newspaper advertisements and *The Gentleman's Magazine* of the ideal topography, salubrious air, clean water and modern, luxurious and private treatment facilities. Later in the eighteenth century this reputation was consolidated by the work of Anderson and the medical endorsement and publicity generated by the Margate Infirmary. Kent's smaller seaside resorts were unable to achieve such a high-profile yet they used many of the same tactics.

The provision of bathing machines was usually the first step made by embryonic resorts and thus were the first to be advertised. Hoping to attract visitors from the local area, advertisements were placed in the local newspapers. Deal in 1753 was the second Kentish seaside town to provide bathing facilities to visitors. The initiative of John Dixon, a local innkeeper, one machine based on the Margate model was initially provided, followed by a second in 1754 when an advertisement was placed in the *Kentish Post* signalling that: 'At DEAL in Kent is the Original NEW-INVENTED MACHINE for Bathing in the Sea. The Machine moves on 4 Wheels, on which is erected a commodious Dressing-Room, furnished in a genteel Manner.'¹⁰⁷⁶ Guidebooks commonly emphasised the number of bathing machines available to visitors.

As at Margate, indoor bathing facilities were considered a significant asset. In 1790 Joseph Dyson advertised the opening of his 'Marble Sea Water Baths' in Ramsgate, which consisted of 'two HOT and one COLD SEA WATER BATHS, constructed on such principles as to have a Supply of Water in the most pure State, at any Hour of the Day.'¹⁰⁷⁷ The baths were a success and by 1812 Dyson could boast a wide range of treatments and royal patronage:

Royal Warm and Shower Baths, Ramsgate,

Patronised by his Royal Highness the DUKE OF CLARENCE.

JOS. DYSON begs leave to inform the Nobility, Gentry, and Medical Gentlemen, &c.

that his Warm Sea Water and Shower Baths, are refitted, and now kept prepared

¹⁰⁷⁶ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, pp. 186-87.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Whyman, *The Early Kentish Seaside*, p. 167.

for their reception during the season, at any hour of the day, from seven o'clock in the morning till half-past nine at night.¹⁰⁷⁸

The New Margate, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs Guide of 1816 spared no effort in presenting the baths as the epitome of luxurious, technologically advanced medical treatment:

The front is placed towards the sea, the space between it and the cliff being laid out as a promenade; an elegant saloon forms the centre compartment, having the baths and dressing rooms in each wing. All the baths are formed of white marble, and of the dimensions of the celebrated warm baths of Naples; to allow of invalids using the friction brush so conveniently as not to expose any part of their bodies above the surface of the water, they are placed in a room lighted and ventilated from the ceiling; the dressing rooms which communicate with them are of an ample size and fitted up with everything that can administer to the comfort and pleasure of the bathers . . . The shower-baths are also placed in rooms lighted from the ceiling . . . Vapour baths are also included in this establishment, and constructed to produce *medicated vapour* if required . . . great attention has been paid to . . . the mode of heating these buildings in general; this has been accomplished by adopting steam as the heating power, and the heat is so equally diffused over the whole building, that in the coldest days it has all the delightful warmth of a day in summer.¹⁰⁷⁹

Figure 4.2. New Baths, Ramsgate (1821) ¹⁰⁸⁰

¹⁰⁷⁸ Joseph Dyson, 'Royal Warm and Shower Baths, Ramsgate', *Kentish Gazette*, 13 March 1812, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *The New Margate, Ramsgate, and Broadstairs Guide; Or, An Historical Epitome of the Ancient and Present State of the Isle of Thanet, With an Account of the Public Assemblies, Libraries, Theatre ...* 6th edn (Margate: Warren & Witherden, 1816), pp. 94-96.

¹⁰⁸⁰ ES, Diary of Frances Sayer, 1821. SAY/3396.



Alongside bathing facilities, Kent's resorts focused on promoting the local topography and salubrity of their water and air. These descriptions follow a fairly predictable pattern: the air was unfailingly described as salubrious, the water calm and the bay sheltered and possessing the ideal incline for the smooth running of bathing machines.

The Dover and Deal Directory and Guide, for example, stated:

The delightful situation of Dover, the purity of the sea, and the advantages of a fine beach for bathing, has caused this place to be much frequented in the bathing season . . . the salubrity of the air, and the strength and purity of the water, the ease and safety of the mode of bathing, make the situation equally desirable to those who visit the coast for amusement, or the valetudinarian who in the search after health.¹⁰⁸¹

Similarly, the 1805 *Hythe and Sandgate Guide* described the two fledgling resorts as occupying:

¹⁰⁸¹ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 2.

. . . a slinglet of lowlands that are wholly sheltered from the east, north, and thus the state of the atmosphere at this shore, may be preserved to serve earlier in spring and later in the autumn than at others, for the habits of sea bathing; and is more promising to the health of such as have weak and debilitated habits.¹⁰⁸²

Gravesend, a thriving port on the banks of the River Thames had a more difficult task than most. Pocock at the end of the eighteenth century offered a convincing defence of the quality of the town's waters and bathing facilities. Due to its location, indoor bathing facilities took precedence over bathing machines. Erected in 1796 as a result of local subscription, the bath house was 'furnished with Daily Papers, Monthly Review and other Publications' and boasted 'a most beautiful and extensive View of the River Thames and the county of Essex.'¹⁰⁸³ Concerns about water pollution and its position on the river rather than the sea made Gravesend an unlikely location for sea-bathing: indeed, most resort literature emphasised the distance of the bathing shore from the mouth of nearby rivers.¹⁰⁸⁴ Pocock explicitly countered potential criticisms of the medical efficacy of the waters by stating, 'there is no doubt, but in a few years, it will rival Margate and Ramsgate; the water, in calm weather, being clear and salt.'¹⁰⁸⁵ He also emphasised the tidal nature of the river at Gravesend. Notably absent from Pocock's account, however, was a description of the shore, presumably as this would draw attention to the town's commercial activities.

Just as Tunbridge Wells tried to increase its medical appeal through the provision of bathing facilities, many seaside resorts 'discovered' mineral springs in their vicinity. Half a mile from Dover, in the village of Charlton there was discovered 'a very fine chalybeate spring' that in 1792 was described as having been 'found of most essential service in a variety of cases, and forms a most desirable and beneficial

¹⁰⁸² *The Hythe and Sandgate Guide: Embellished with a New Panorama Picturesque Plan, Containing Engraved Likenesses, of those Places, with the Towns and Antiquities which are Contiguous* (Romford: Printed for the Author, at the Essex Press, by Richard Marshall, and Sold by William Lee, at the Library, Hythe, 1805), p. 12.

¹⁰⁸³ Pocock, *The History*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *The Gravesend Guide* of 1839, however, described the town as a river rather than a sea bathing resort.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Pocock, *The History*, p. 19.

appendage to Dover as a watering place.¹⁰⁸⁶ The spring, however, never achieved any medical repute and at best served as a point of interest for visitors.

Lacking a medical authority and the means to invest significantly in bathing facilities, Kent's emergent seaside resorts had to work hard to promote their part of the coast as the ideal location for taking the waters. Many only experienced limited success during this period. Though several of Kent's resorts introduced bathing machines relatively early, most notably Deal in 1753, resort development was slow only the Isle of Thanet resorts of Ramsgate and building on Broadstairs, which benefited from their proximity to Margate, achieved success.

v

By focusing on the theories and facilities on which the practice of medicine at Kent's resorts was founded, this chapter has argued for the importance of the water cure. At a time when sickness and disease posed a constant threat and the medical establishment could do little to effectively treat the vast majority of afflictions, watering places offered hope of a cure and palliative care to sufferers. Though Kent's waters held only slender claims to curative properties, many patients would have left a resort with improved health as a result of changes in diet, air, mental outlook and the placebo effect.

Watering place medicine was highly conservative and throughout the long eighteenth century it remained rooted in humoral theory. Russell's success in popularising the use of seawater stemmed in part from his couching his theories in the traditional language of spa medicine. Yet the water cure derived its longevity and continued appeal from its ability to adapt to new medical discoveries and fashions. This is evidenced by its strong connection with nervous diseases and, more importantly, with the rise of sea-bathing. It also gained strength from its exploitation of gaps in the medical marketplace: sea-bathing acted as a substitute cure for scrofula after the

¹⁰⁸⁶ *The Dover and Deal Directory*, p. 2.

lapsing of the royal touch and watering places were important venues, culturally and medically, for the treatment of melancholy and nervous diseases.

This argument for the importance of the water cure is not incompatible with the prevalence of fashionable illnesses at watering places. Illness may have conferred cultural capital, particularly within arenas centred round the conspicuous consumption of health but the status-accruing symptoms of the fashionable sufferer should not be focused on at the expense of the genuine patient. Furthermore, a patient's interaction with culturally-influenced disorders did not necessarily come at the expense of their sincerity: not only would sufferers themselves have used cultural constructions of diseases to interpret their afflictions but the biological narrative of afflictions could have remained constant however they were expressed.

Watering places, therefore, supported a wide range of intersecting beliefs, constructions and practices. This can be seen most clearly within attitudes towards the treatment of infertility, where the genuine belief in the curative properties of mineral and sea waters was countered by dismissals of their reputation for encouraging fecundity as a thinly veiled cover for adultery. But though historiography to date has focused primarily on the use of the waters as an excuse to justify the pursuit of pleasure, this chapter has argued not only did the water cure form an important part of the nation's response to some of the period's most prominent diseases but also that it could assume vital importance to the lives of individual visitors.

Conclusion

The fundamental aim of this thesis has been to offer a new approach to the study of long eighteenth-century watering places that emphasises the complexity and diversity of the visitor experience. Whereas methodologies to date have failed to combine the precise study of locality with a careful consideration of motivation, this thesis has used the county hierarchy of Kentish spas and seaside resorts to explore their use along a wide range of intersecting axes. Focusing on the social, cultural and medical aspects of resort life and considering in particular Margate and Tunbridge Wells as urban and leisure centres, this thesis has looked at who went to Kent's watering places, why and what they did when there. Echoing Olwen Hufton's warning to historians of women's history to avoid 'the erection of the theoretical or "generic" woman and man . . . at the expense of, as far as one can discern, the experience of real people,' this thesis began with the recognition that no two visitors' motivations or experiences were the same.¹⁰⁸⁷ As a starting point for analysis, this perspective has led to new insights into how the different roles and functions of watering places manifested within individual leisure arenas.

Chapter one provided the foundation for this thesis by offering a chronological narrative of the development of Kent's watering places, ranging from medieval Canterbury to the mid-nineteenth century railways. Combining a precise study of the development of individual resorts with the evolution of watering places and recognising the impact of wider historical trends and events, this chapter showed how Kent's spas and seaside resorts fared within a fluid hierarchy. Concentrating on a county hierarchy allowed for a more precise comparative analysis of resorts than possible within a nationwide survey, whilst the high number and range of spas and seaside resorts with national, regional and local catchment areas offered insight into the wider development of watering places. The resort hierarchy was fluid and flexible, responsive to a wide range of social, cultural, political, religious, and economic factors and no watering place was secure in its position. Whilst Tunbridge Wells, Margate and possibly Ramsgate during the long eighteenth century achieved success as national

¹⁰⁸⁷ Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500 - 1800* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 5.

resorts and competed for the patronage of the fashionable elite, under this top level of the hierarchy were a far greater number of spas and seaside resorts that did not during this period achieve the precise balance of factors necessary to achieve lasting, high-status success. This thesis has argued for the importance of concentrating on the visitor experience of these smaller local and regional resorts as much as on their more successful competitors.

Chapter two offered a detailed comparative study of Margate and Tunbridge Wells as urban and leisure centres. After addressing the status of Kent's watering places as urban centres and identifying urbanity most strongly in the distinctive way of life created by the concentration of social and cultural activities and focus on the forms and rituals of polite society, this chapter offered a direct comparison of the development of Kent's most successful spa and seaside resort. Seventeenth-century Tunbridge Wells, it was argued, was a small resort that punched well above its weight. A new town, it was among the first to offer many of the facilities, most notably assembly rooms, which became integral to the eighteenth-century resort experience. Margate, by contrast, a small port at the mid-eighteenth century, followed an established pattern of development, aiming to project an aspirational, classical urbanity. Though they shared a core set of social and cultural facilities, Margate developed a distinctly different set of focal points to Tunbridge Wells. Whereas spas developed around their mineral waters, seaside resorts were structured by their open spaces: their architecture, such as piers and bathing machines, bridging the divide between the civilised resort and untamed nature.

The chapter concluded with a detailed comparative analysis of the assembly rooms, the position of Master of the Ceremonies and booksellers / circulating libraries. It is within this last category that the greatest difference between the social facilities of Margate and Tunbridge Wells can be seen. Curll's business, though notorious, was one of many facilities offered by the spa. At Margate, however, the high concentration of circulating libraries that provided a multiplicity of function acted as thriving and dynamic social arenas which exerted significant control over the social and cultural life of the resort. This difference, of course, cannot be used to formulate a general rule about variations between spas and seaside resorts but it does illustrate the importance

of combining a precise study of individual resorts with a wider understanding of the urban development of watering places.

Chapter three considered society at Kent's watering places, focusing on who went to resorts, why and what activities they pursued during their stay. Looking in particular at the evolution of society across the long eighteenth century, it has been argued that a diversity of individual experience was encompassed by a broad cultural homogeneity. Leading from a discussion of how far the vertical hierarchy of rank can be mapped onto the similarly vertical hierarchy of watering places, this chapter showed how Kent's resorts both adapted to and actively influenced the changing social order. Restoration Tunbridge Wells, a favoured destination for Charles II's libertine court, acted to consolidate the elite after the religious and political divisions of the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth, Nash's leadership at the spa publicly confirmed its image as a bastion of polite society. But beneath this carefully constructed image, Tunbridge Wells's earlier reputation as a centre for vice continued, most notably represented by Causey, Curll and Derrick.

All resorts aspired to attract the patronage of the fashionable elite but their fortunes were based on the expanding middling orders. Their presence gradually changed resort culture: at the seaside, the strict social routine that governed visitors' activities and behaviour was relaxed and less importance was placed on the creation of a cohesive visiting company. Within arenas that encouraged heightened sociability, self-orientation within an increasingly complex social order proved a consistent concern, particularly within their role as marriage markets. The study of four women's accounts of visits to Kentish watering places at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century demonstrated not only the diversity of the visitor experience in response to factors such as social rank, personality, family circumstances, age, and health but also highlighted the fundamental changes occurring between the social life of the spa and of the seaside.

Chapter four examined the medical practice of 'taking the waters' and argued that professional and popular belief in the curative powers of mineral and sea waters has been underestimated. Based on waters that had only slender claims to any curative properties, the water cure relied on ritual, performance and placebo but this did not negate its importance during a period in which few effective treatments

existed for the vast majority of afflictions. Cultural constructions of disease significantly influenced the patient experience, particularly within high-status leisure arenas that centred round the conspicuous consumption of health. The prominence of fashionable illnesses within watering places, however, should not be focused on at the expense of the genuine sufferer and, as this chapter argued, though many of the symptoms of these afflictions were status-accruing, they could also be real: diseases followed their own 'narrative' independent of cultural beliefs.

The practice of hydropathy was highly conservative, rooted throughout this period in humoral theory but its sustained success derived from being highly adaptive to developments in medical knowledge and fashion, most importantly its ability to fill 'gaps' in the medical marketplace: Tunbridge Wells built its reputation on its early association with the fashionable disease of melancholy and infertility and Margate thrived as a centre for the cure of scrofula. Not all visitors, of course, were suffering from either real or imagined afflictions but the search for a cure nonetheless underpinned the success of Kent's watering places throughout the long eighteenth century.

Gender has been one of the most prominent themes to emerge throughout this thesis. Watering places have long been recognised as feminine environments but the reasons for and implications of this have yet to be fully explored. As self-contained and socially regulated arenas, watering places were comparatively safe spaces for women: the rules that governed resorts and the expectation that visitors' lives be conducted in public allowed for increased freedom and the social opportunities provided by spas encouraged friendships between women and the creation of a female community. These social factors were strongly associated with the practice of medicine. The water cure at Kent's spas and seaside resorts forged strong connections with women's health and the use of mineral and sea waters to promote fertility and induce miscarriage in particular demonstrates the potential importance watering places could assume in women's lives.

If the significance of watering place society and medicine has been under-examined for women's lives, this is even truer for men's. The masculinities that have emerged within this thesis have included those of the libertine and the rake and men have also been discussed as participants in the marriage-market and seekers after

health. The coffeehouse emerged as a bastion of male society within a predominantly feminine arena, places in which the political and religious divisions of the seventeenth century could be reconciled. Watering places also promoted a certain equality: anyone who looked and acted the part of a gentleman was accepted as such by resort society. Though this thesis has shed some insight into the manifestation of gender roles within Kent's watering places, there still remains much work to be done and the presence of homosexuality at spas and seaside resorts in particular could provide a new avenue for study.

Lifecycles, of individuals and resorts, have likewise been an integral theme. First as a newly married young women, then as a daughter to ailing parents and lastly as a wealthy independent widow, the diaries and correspondence of Amabel, Countess de Grey illustrate how the use of watering places could change across a person's lifetime. As the stereotypical characters that populated Kent's resorts illustrate, the relative importance of the different aspects of resort life changed with age: most notably the marriage market provided a focus for young women and their 'matchmaking mamas' whilst the secure environment which provided visitors with all the fashionable facilities of urban life, the matriarchal society and the provision of medical care appealed to older women. This cycle was reflected by the medical treatments provided, most notably the promotion of mineral and sea waters as cures for chlorosis and infertility.

Resorts themselves also had their own lifecycles. For many of the smaller Kentish spas, this lifecycle was brief: Shooter's Hill, Sydenham, Sissinghurst, and Canterbury attained only short-lived, limited fame as watering places. By contrast, many of the county's embryonic seaside resorts experienced a significant gap between the first provision of bathing facilities and their emergence as fashionable destinations. The changes in a resort's lifecycle, however, are best demonstrated by late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Tunbridge Wells as it made the transition from a fashionable resort to a centre for genteel residence: those, such as Amabel, who had gone to the spa during its heyday, continued to visit their old haunts as they grew older and fashion moved elsewhere.

The cultivation of a fashionable, polite image was crucial to a resort's success. Watering places aimed to provide all the social and cultural facilities of an urban centre within an attractive rural location. Visitors hoped to find arenas where they could

engage in the conspicuous consumption of high-status leisure, culture and goods whilst interacting with and showing their membership of polite society. Intertwined with these was the consumption of health and, particularly at the seaside, nature. Those resorts that could achieve and maintain this image were the most successful. However this thesis has also addressed many of the ways in which this aspirational image could be undermined, typically but not always, to the detriment of a resort. The visiting company was central: the history of Sydenham shows the potential damage of accessibility. Yet Margate thrived in the eighteenth century despite its reputation as the destination of the 'city nobility,' building on the expanding middling sort market for leisure. A resort's image was constructed from a wide variety of factors and it has been argued that at Tunbridge Wells the spa's reputation was carefully balanced: Nash's appointment as Master of Ceremonies acted as the pivotal event that publicly signalled the spa's polite character and, conversely, allowed for the continuation of the less virtuous aspects of resort life.

As a geographically determined case study, location has resided at the heart of this thesis. Kent's proximity to London made it fertile ground for watering places that were able to take advantage of the growing middling sort population of the capital. But Kent's spas and seaside resorts walked a fine line between accessibility and exclusivity. Thirty-six miles from London, Tunbridge Wells, in contrast to rival courtier's spa Epsom, was the ideal distance whilst Sydenham and Shooter's Hill, within walking distance for the capital's lower orders, were too close. The Isle of Thanet resorts and Margate in particular thrived on the strength of their water communications links with the capital and demonstrated the advantages of quick, cheap mass transportation that foreshadowed the impact of the mid-nineteenth-century railways. These resorts also demonstrated the potential for cooperation, with Broadstairs, Margate and Ramsgate sharing facilities. Location assumed an increased importance during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars when the Kentish coast played a prominent role in the country's defence. Instead of acting as a deterrent, the military presence proved an attraction: the presence of military officers and the opportunity to observe defence preparations appealed to visitors keen to demonstrate their patriotism. More generally, at many of Kent's seaside resorts, the resort element frequently had to contend with a more dominant industry, which often inhibited development. But the importance of location

has to be considered together with a recognition of the centrality of individual initiative: this thesis has highlighted the extent to which a resort's success was dependent on the promotion by a medical authority, a local businessman, or landowner, particularly in the early stages of development.

The rise of the Kentish resorts was underpinned by expanding demand, generated by the increasing number and wealth of the middling classes. However this thesis has shown that the use of the vertical hierarchy of social status can only be used as a blunt tool for the ranking of watering places. Resorts were undoubtedly important arenas in which to play out the social order and the findings of this thesis certainly attest to the transformative influence of increasingly middling sort demand: Rochester's court-centric Tunbridge Wells offered a very different community to that experienced by Frances Sayer at Sandgate. But the continuing success of watering places was founded in their ability to appeal across class divides and adapt to changing social, cultural, medical, economic and religious environments. Contemporaries of both Rochester and Sayer would have placed their hopes in the curative properties of Kent's waters, looked to secure an advantageous match in the marriage market and attempted to establish themselves as members of fashionable society. Therefore, whilst each individual's motivations for visiting a spa or seaside resort would have been different, throughout the long eighteenth century there was an underlying continuity of visitors' expectations and experiences.

This thesis has thus argued strongly for both continuity and change. By focusing on a county hierarchy across a period of one-hundred and sixty years, this study has been able to examine in detail the evolution of Kent's watering places across time, as well as exploring the relationship between the two resort typologies. But though the relationship between spa and the seaside was characterised by a marked continuity and shared culture, there have emerged within this thesis two main differences. First was in their development as urban spaces. Whereas the facilities of the inland spas focused on the mineral springs, those of the seaside were structured by the open spaces of the sea and shore, with resort architecture allowing visitors to directly 'consume' nature. Though this difference may appear subtle, it nevertheless exerted a significant influence on the character of a resort and the behaviour of visitors. Second was the structure and nature of the visiting company. As the eighteenth century

progressed, less focus was placed on the creation of a cohesive visiting company that participated in the same amusements at the same time under the guidance of a Master of the Ceremonies. In part, this was a response to increasing visitor numbers: by the end of the century the level of interaction that had previously been sustained between visitors was not achievable and, as watering places were visited by ever greater numbers of the middling orders, this became less desirable. But it was also because the important social role the spas had played at the end of the seventeenth century in creating cohesion amongst an elite grew gradually less acute: priorities had changed.

The concept of the 'other' lies at the heart of the leisure experience. Watering places functioned as distinct arenas within which visitors could engage in behaviours and activities not normally part of their everyday lives. Most obviously, this manifested in the intensive social interaction provided by resorts. The conscious promotion of spas as arenas where the political, religious and economic divisions were to be left behind was particularly important after the turbulent decades of the mid-seventeenth century and, likewise, the common agreement that within resort society anyone who looked and acted the part of a gentleman would be accepted as such, helped create cohesion amongst polite society. The increased freedom of interaction between the sexes permitted by the regulated resort environment where lives were expected to be lived predominantly in public, contributed to their success as marriage markets whilst the sexualisation of the water cure through the practice of sea-bathing in particular led to a heightened sexuality. But this thesis has also argued that the 'other' had important implications for effectiveness of the water cure as a medical treatment. Within an environment where suffering could accrue status and where the structure of daily life was dictated by the ritual performance of health and treatment, the placebo effect was powerful.

This thesis began with five snapshots which highlighted the different meanings watering places could hold for visitors. Building on an increasing recognition of the centrality of leisure to the study of history and its inseparability from social, cultural, economic, political, and gender trends, this thesis has explored in the ways in which Kent's watering places helped visitors navigate some of the most important areas of their lives. The water cure offered hope of a cure and palliative care for a wide range

of afflictions and, it has been argued, the belief in mineral and sea waters' powers to cure infertility and induce miscarriage were particularly important for women. As marriage markets and feminine arenas, watering places provided an important space for courtship and friendship. As aspirational centres for polite society, a visit to a spa or seaside resort could convey social status and allowed an increasing proportion of society to experience fashionable society and culture. But, returning to the central paradox of leisure wherein it gains its power from appearing irrelevant, Kent's spas and seaside resorts must also be recognised as places of frivolity and triviality that existed just outside of the real world.

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