

THE WAY WE WERE

Bells were rung

South Eastern Railway's inaugural train heralded a new era for Canterbury

FRIDAY, February 6, 1846 was a general holiday in the City of Canterbury.

The special occasion being celebrated was the arrival of the South Eastern Railway's inaugural train from the Bricklayers' Arms terminus on the Old Kent Road in London, on to the Ashford and Canterbury section of the branch line that would subsequently extend to Ramsgate and Margate.

The train, carrying the railway company's directors and their friends, travelled via Croydon and then on to the company's own line from Redhill to Ashford, before branching on to the new double track line being opened between Ashford and Canterbury.

As the special train approached the City of Canterbury, every vantage point was filled with cheering crowds eager to catch a glimpse of the inaugural steam-hauled train.

In the city, shops were closed and business had been temporarily suspended.

Bells were rung and flags were hoisted to announce the train's arrival. Public amusement venues were opened free for the day.

Immediately after arrival of the special train at the Canterbury station, the railway company's directors, together with their friends and invited guests proceeded to the Corn and Hop Exchange in St George's Street, where a public dinner was to be held, commencing at 4pm for 270 people.

Dining

The dinner venue was open to the public until 1pm, to view the dining facilities laid out and the decoration of the room.

Over the dais at the upper end of The Corn and Hop Exchange venue, the royal coat of arms were displayed. At the other end of the dining room, there was an emblazoned scroll showing the wording "Success to the South Eastern Railway". The White Horse of Kent was also prominently displayed.

Catering for the dinner was provided by Mrs Clements of the Rose Hotel, situated across the road directly opposite the dinner venue, on the corner of Rose Lane and The Parade, from where the food for the dinner was to be carried across by a chain of waiters.

The dinner was chaired by the Mayor of Canterbury, Henry Cooper, vice chairman was Alderman Brent.

Guests included the Dean of

Way We Were

Richard West
Founder of the
Chaucer Education
Project
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Canterbury, the members of parliament for Maidstone and for Oldham and the Mayors of Faversham, Fordwich, Hythe, Maidstone, and Queenborough.

A band played during the dinner.

After the dinner toasts were given, where each of the proposers gave a short speech celebrating the opening of the new railway line to Canterbury.

James Macgregor, the 37-year-old chairman and managing director of the South Eastern Railway company, proposed the toast of the day and addressed guests with his speech describing the progress the company was making in building lines of railway in Kent, particularly to Canterbury.

Competing petitions had been presented to parliament by both the South Eastern Railway and a rival company to build a North Kent Railway.

The railway company chairman stated: "Gentlemen, it is true that to arrive here, we have travelled round three sides of a parallelogram, which has increased the length of the journey to at least 20 miles more than the direct line would make it, the present distance being somewhat more than 80 miles, whilst the extension of our Greenwich line to Chatham would lessen the distance to about 60 miles."

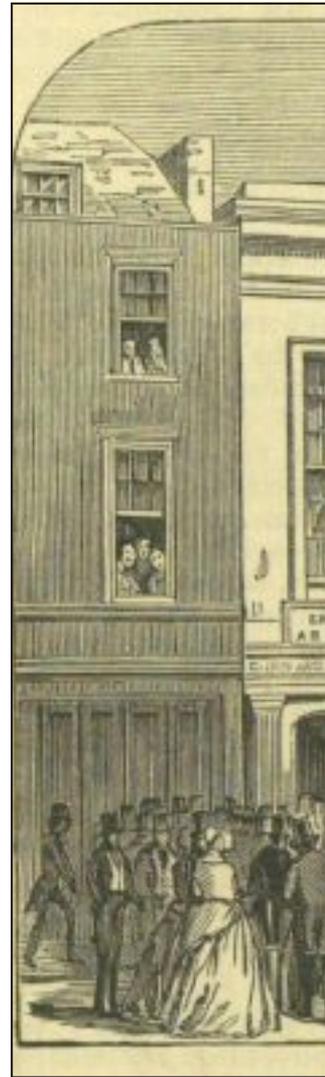
He was confident that the South Eastern Railway company would receive its Act of Parliament for this line.

James Macgregor mentioned that the law governed the calculation of fares, by direct route, not allowing for the circuitous route the company took.

At the beginning of the previous September, the company had reduced fares 40 percent by introducing uniform day tickets. Considerably increased numbers of people travelling by train subsequently occurred, maintaining total income.

Mention was also made by the chairman that the Canterbury and Whitstable Railway was being converted into a locomotive one, with greater comfort for passengers and a journey time one-third of that previously.

The dinner ended at 9pm and the special train departed from



CELEBRATION: Exterior of the

Canterbury station at 9.30pm, on the return journey to London, arriving at 1.30am.

The City of Canterbury Museum had been open from early until late that day and the wax work exhibition had also been full of visitors. In the evening, the theatre was crowded. The influence of the railway had arrived in Canterbury.

James Macgregor was a Liverpoolian who, in 1852, was elected to serve as member of Parliament for Sandwich.

He resigned his railway company posts in 1854 and lost his parliamentary seat in the 1857 election.



TOLL: The bell at Canterbury Cathedral is rung for those who have died in conflict and for world peace

100 years since war's fierce sea battle

IT IS a while since I appeared on these pages – and it is very good to be back!

This is an appropriate time to consider again the years of the First World War.

Next month will see the anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Somme. It started on July 1, 1916 and was one of the bloodiest battles in human history; many men from East Kent lost their lives.

While most of the war was fought on land, there was also conflict at sea. This week sees the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Jutland, which took place on May 31 and June 1, 1916.

This was the fiercest sea battle of the war, in which some 8,000 people lost their lives.

This battle between the British and German fleets was fought in the North Sea near Denmark. Various events and activities are taking place across the country to commemorate Jutland.

It is appropriate to mark this anniversary in Canterbury, as a ship named after our city played an important role in the battle.

HMS Canterbury was a type of ship known as a C-class light cruiser. She had been launched just before Christmas 1915 with a crew of 323 officers and men, commanded by Captain Percy M R Royds.

At Jutland, the ship was the first to report the presence of part of the German fleet, and this was very significant for the outcome of the battle.

Overall, 25 ships were sunk,

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Cressida Williams
Canterbury
Cathedral
archivist



ON DISPLAY: A model of HMS Canterbury was presented to the cathedral in 1935



MEMORIAL: A plaque in the nave in Canterbury Cathedral remembers the men who lost their lives in the battle of Jutland

was struck by the then Admiral Roysds.

The bell is still rung at 11am every weekday, for prayers for those who have died in conflict and for world peace.

Canterbury Museum holds one of her ship's badges (pictured); the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich holds other examples.

That the ship was named after our city does not imply any local links; no local men are known to have served on her in the First World War.

Naming ships after cities, or after members of the royal family, was the custom in the early 18th century.

As the century progressed, ships were also named after characters from classical history, or with words implying strength or patriotism, such as Valiant and Thunderer.

This explains the name of Nelson's ship at the Battle of Trafalgar of 1805: HMS Victory.

The HMS Canterbury which served in the First World War was not the first ship of that name. A model of an 18th-century HMS Canterbury was presented to the cathedral in 1935.

Shown in this photograph, it is a beautifully crafted reproduction of the ship, elegant in full sail.

The model is usually displayed alongside the bell in the southwest transept, but both have been temporarily relocated because of restoration works.

Also remembered in the cathedral is HMS Kent, which served in the Battle of the Falklands in December 1914.

There is a plaque in the nave to the men who lost their lives in the battle, during which the ship was badly damaged.

but HMS Canterbury survived the battle undamaged, with no casualties. After Jutland, the ship spent most of the rest of the war operating out of Harwich.

HMS Canterbury was scrapped in 1934 at Chatham and her bell was given to Canterbury Cathedral during a Service for Seafarers, during which it

Look out for our next supplement...

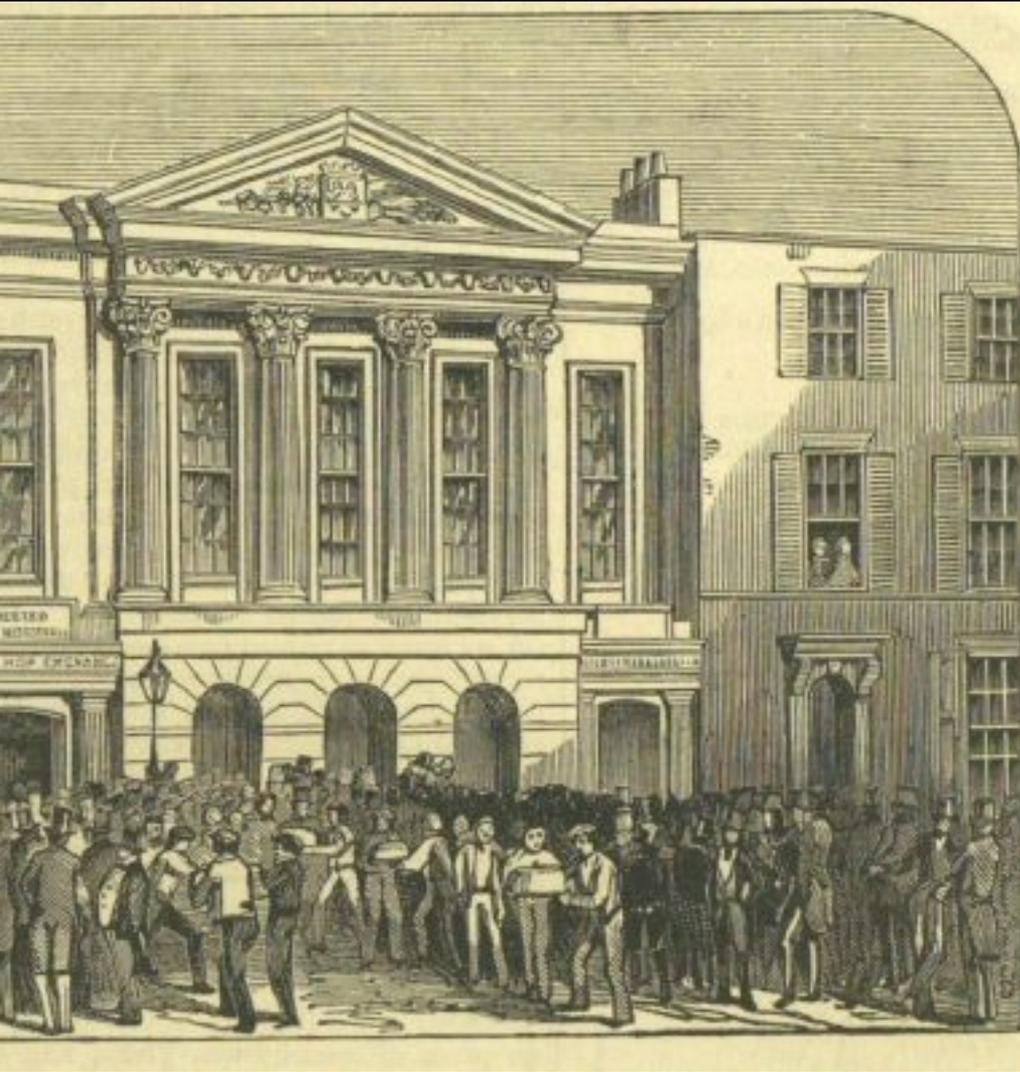
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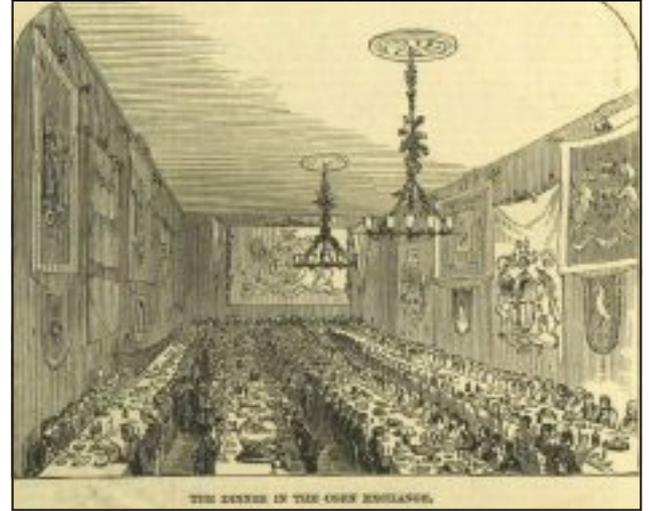
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and flags hoisted for new arrival



Corn and Hop Exchange in St George's Street, Canterbury

Illustrated London News, February 14, 1846 edition



FEAST: Dinner in The Corn and Hop Exchange

Illustrated London News, February 14, 1846 edition



CATERERS: Food was carried across from The Rose Hotel

Photo: www.historiccantebury.com



VIP: Lewis Cubitt, architect of the Bricklayers' Arms Terminus, portrait by Sir William Boxall, 1845



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