

**MAJOR M. TEICHMAN DERVILLE**  
**O.B.B., D.L., J.P., M.A., F.S.A.**  
**1876-1963 OBITUARY**

Major Teichman Derville's death on 11th May, 1963, at his home, The Red House, Littlestone, brought to a close a long, full and happy life devoted to the service of his beloved county of Kent.

He was elected a member of the Society in 1932, and its President in 1939, an office he held for 20 years, a longer period than that of any other President in the history of the Society. His distinguished services were recognized in 1959 when he was presented with an address, illuminated by Mr. Elliston-Erwood, recording the members' gratitude for his devotion to the Society's well-being, and the furtherance of archaeology in Kent, and for his scholarship, his courtesy, his hospitality and his constant helpfulness in all the Society's affairs, and placing on permanent record the members' admiration and affection.

Max Teichman Derville was born at Eltham in 1876. One of his early recollections was the familiar sound of the clip-clop of horse's hooves as a hansom cab drew up at the house opposite, and his nursemaid hurrying to the window, exclaiming, 'There's Mr. Parnell come to see Mrs. O'Shea again!' His family moved to Sitka, Chislehurst, their new house built by Ernest Newton, set in picturesque grounds with well-wooded slopes, and a lake for boating in summer and skating in winter. He was blessed with remarkable parents, outstanding personalities, who lived to bring happiness into other people's lives.

He was educated at Repton and on the train taking him to his first term at school, he was placed in the care of C. B. Fry, whose fag he became. He was at The Cross, Mr. A. B. Forman's house, and in later life, he frequently said how much he owed to the wise guidance and unexampled influence of Mr. and Mrs. Forman in their family circle. One of the young daughters, affectionately known to him as 'little Rosamund' is now Lady Fisher. At Trinity, Oxford, he rowed and played football for the first XI, and was a member of Vincents and the Gridiron. He took a second class in Mods and Greats and his M.A. in 1903. Meanwhile in 1900, he had been offered a scholarship at the British School of Archaeology at Athens, but he chose instead to spend a year with an Oxford friend doing 'The Grand Tour.'

In the First World War, he served from 1914 to 1919, was mentioned in despatches, and awarded the O.B.E. (Military Division). He was given the rank of Major in the Royal Army Reserve of Officers. From 1911 he had a house near the Embankment, where he moored his boat on the Thames, and he had a holiday home at Littlestone. The sea was a great attraction and in 1919 he came to live at Littlestone permanently, and kept one boat there, and another on the Rother. He had always enjoyed his father's punts and dinghies at his home, the summer terms on the river at Oxford, holidays on the Thames, and often recalled his memorable journey down the Danube, from Ulm to the Iron Gates, when all sorts of hazards were encountered. He was a member of the Royal Cinque Port Yacht Club and the Royal Corinthian.

In 1926, after serving as a Councillor for the Cinque Port Borough of New Romney, he was elected Mayor and held that office for 12 years consecutively. During this time, he exercised a great influence on the development of the town, and New Romney was the first Borough in Kent to adopt a Town Planning Scheme. He was equally tireless in safeguarding its ancient rights and privileges, in scheduling its ancient buildings, and in taking steps to get its remarkable series of records catalogued and repaired, and the catalogue printed all at his own expense. In 1938 New Romney honoured him by conferring on him the Freedom of the Borough.

In 1936 he was elected a County Councillor for the Hythe and Romney Marsh Division, and 13 years later an Alderman, a position he held until his retirement in 1957 at the age of 81, when glowing tribute was paid to his invaluable service, his balanced counsel, and his wide judgement in County affairs. To his public duties, and to his wide interests, he brought a breadth of scholarship, a zeal for justice and a refreshing sense of humour which endeared him to all with whom he worked. He sat on many educational bodies and was able to contribute much to the cause of education in the County.

For over 30 years he was the indefatigable Chairman of the Governors of Southlands Grammar School, where the new Derville Hall will long be a memorial to his untiring interest, his inspiring leadership and his generosity to the school. His Chairmanship of the Kent County Library Sub-Committee from 1944 to 1957 was to a lover of books, one of his most congenial duties, for 'books had always been his stay, comfort and support' and his wide reading and scholarship enabled him to give conspicuous service to the public.

From 1950 onwards he pressed importunately for the re-establishment of the County Records Committee and the appointment of an experienced and enterprising archivist to ensure the proper care and preservation of Kent's magnificent archives. In 1952, this goal was achieved, and he was appointed the first Chairman. His work will long be remembered for he laid the solid foundation on which subsequent success has been built.

Major Teichman Derville was an acknowledged authority on the history of the Cinque Ports and was Speaker of the Ports in 1931 and again in 1937, when he became a Coronation Baron of the Ports for New Romney. His valuable collection of Cinque Port books and documents are to be deposited with the Cinque Port records. He was equally devoted to the affairs of the 'Fifth Quarter', Romney Marsh, and was its familiar and much-loved Bailiff for over 20 years until his death. He was Lord of the Manors of Snave and Eastbridge and did much to uphold the ancient traditions of the Corporation, and not least by his painstaking labour in publishing *The Level and Liberty of Romney Marsh* and putting on record the laws and customs upon which the Corporation's survival relies. At New Hall, Dymchurch, the many maps, historic documents, and museum exhibits are a reminder of his countless generous gifts.

When the Land Drainage Act came into force in 1930, he was invited to be the first Chairman of the newly constituted Romney Marsh Catchment Board, and later, with the establishment of the centralized Kent Rivers Board, he was appointed Vice-Chairman. With his love of Romney Marsh, and his knowledge of the medieval problems of Land Drainage and Sea Defence, he was singularly equipped to deal with early Catchment Board schemes and the subsequent development of the River Boards.

As an enthusiastic fisherman, he was appointed to the Pollution and Fisheries Committee. From 1938-1939 he was High Sheriff of Kent, a year that was to be the last of his lavish, carefree pre-war Shrievalties of prodigal hospitality. He was later appointed a Deputy Lieutenant for Kent. But above all and through all his various offices, there shone the simplicity and warmth of his character, a kindness and thoughtfulness for others, for he was never happier than in making other people happy. There were many other facets to the happy and useful career of this 'puckish octogenarian' as he was once called. In the field of sport, a fine shot, even at the age of 85, walking up a covey of partridges, he got a right and a left, a keen angler, and one of the oldest coarse fishermen in Kent, he enjoyed winter days trolling for hungry pike, or in summer fishing the lochs of Sutherlandshire. He was equally well-known as a pillar of English Figure Skating for half a century, and won the Holland Bowl at St. Moritz in 1911, and took second place in the Championship on several occasions between 1912 and 1924. He was long recognized as one of the best Figure Skating judges.

He played a good game of golf and was a lifelong member of St. Georges, Sandwich, Eye and Littlestone. With his distinguished looks, his white hair, his gentle courteous manners, and his gaiety of heart, he was an unforgettable figure, and he was unrivalled as a host, with his storehouse of knowledge and his fund of stories. His attitude to life was one of serenity and courage, and to the last morning of his life, he read a chapter of the Greek Testament and a few pages of Seneca. He was and did so much else besides and his example of loyalty and service will long be an inspiration and stimulus to all who knew and loved him.

Perhaps he was happiest of all in the evening of his life when he had 'discarded the tinsel trappings of a busy life' and was able to enjoy quietly his books and his garden and his favourite pastime, writing verses to the delight of his many friends. Poems to Archbishops were often in Greek, to his classical friends in Latin, to those in authority, a slight prod in whimsical verse produced the desired effect far better than an angry letter.

To many, his death seems the end of an era in Romney Marsh, but he died, convinced, as he wrote at the age of 81 in a poem, *'Ave atque Vale'*,  
*'The last—the best of life lies further on,  
Hid from our eyes beyond the hills of time.'*