**Sir Hugh Seymour Walpole (1884 - 1941)**

Attended Kings School, Canterbury 1896 to 1898.

Text, letter

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[Manuscript of Hugh Walpole, The Hugh Walpole collection at the King’s School Canterbury, 1929](<http://www.kings-archives.co.uk/books-about-kings/memories-of-kings/hugh-walpole/>).

‘Adam Brandon was born at Little Empton in Kent in 1839. He was educated at the King’s School, Canterbury, and at Pembroke College, Cambridge. Ordained in 1863, he was first curate at St Martin’s, Portsmouth, then Chaplain to the Bishop of Worcester; in the year 1875 he accepted the living of Pomfret in Wiltshire and was there for twelve years. It was in 1887 that he came to our town; he was first Canon and afterwards Archdeacon.

\_The Cathedral\_

Hugh Walpole’s initial connection to Kent was through The

[King’s School]( https://www.kings-school.co.uk) in Canterbury, where he seems to have had a happier time than [Somerset Maugham]( /20c/20c-maugham-biography) around 15 years earlier, although the school was an influence on the work of both authors. Walpole ‘has no difficulty in presenting quite adequately a varied host of characters,’ writing people from ‘bishops to schoolboys’ in his work. Possibly using his time at The King’s School as inspiration, ‘he confidently takes us into school-masters’ common rooms’[[1]](#footnote-1). Boarding school locations are clearly influential, and in his diaries Walpole depicts on the 9th of September his real-life experience of when he ‘went down to Canterbury’ and to the Cathedral where he ‘saw the old school again’[[2]](#footnote-2) . Recollecting ‘how small it seemed- the old Courtyard, the Big Hall […] Very touching,’[[3]](#footnote-3) it is clear the school held vivid memories. Writing about ‘schoolmasters bickering’ and ‘little jealousies in a cathedral town’[[4]](#footnote-4), Walpole moves ‘with startling and enthralling rapidity’[[5]](#footnote-5) to engrain possible Kentish influence. Mentioning the back story of the character Adam Brandon, ‘born at Little Empton in Kent in 1839,’[[6]](#footnote-6) in the opening of *\_The Cathedral\_*, his Kentish past is quickly alluded to before the action commences. Alongside schooling, Walpole’s time in Kent draws reference to reading. It is depicted in his diaries, as when he caught [the] train for Ashford, and on the ‘way down read first vol: of “Pelle” which” he describes as ‘charming’.[[7]](#footnote-7) Travelling through Kent brought him time to read, where, in an additional trip ‘frozen in the train down to Canterbury reading “Our Mutual Friend”’ (Diaries, 178), Walpole discusses [Dicken’s]( /dickens/dickens-biography) ‘determined turn towards modernism’ - clearly his time in Kent brought him not just writing inspiration, but ample time to read.

**Article by Alexa Barrett**

For The King’s School as a possible ‘original’ of Dr Strong’s Academy in \_David Copperfield\_ see [\_David Copperfield: a Curated Walk](<https://kent-maps.online/dickens/david-copperfield-curated-walk/>). Walpole wrote the film adaptation for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1935 and played a minor part himself.

Later diary entries reference Walpole’s friendship with another Kent author, [Joseph Conrad]( /19c/19c-conrad-biography). Other literary friends and acquaintances with a Kent connection include [Elizabeth von Arnim]( /20c/20c-vonarnim-biography) and [H. G. Wells]( /20c/20c-wellshg-biography). [Somerset Maugham]( /20c/20c-maugham-biography) would notoriously pillory Walpole as Alroy Kear in \_Cakes and Ale\_.

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1. \_The English Journal\_ 530. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Diaries. Stape 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. \_The English Journal\_ 533. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. \_The Cathedral\_ 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Diaries, 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)