***\_Kentish Gazette\_***

Bi-weekly (then weekly) provincial newspaper, circulating in Kent and the surrounding counties. Founded in 1768, merged with the *Kentish Post* (founded in 1717), remains in print.

**Place:** Canterbury

‘The Intelligence inserted in this Paper will be of the latest date, and selected from the most approved News Papers of London and other Parts of the Kingdom… I have the pleasing Prospect of some valuable Correspondents by whom, with some approved Extracts from the best Authors, Accounts of New Books, Pamphlets, Poetry, &c. I hope to render it not only valuable but entertaining ; that, biased to no Party, and under no Influence whatever, it shall be open to the favours of every corresponding Friend’.

James Simmons, Inaugural Editorial, May 1768.

*The* ***Kentish Gazette*** was established by **James Simmons** in 1768 as a bi-weekly newspaper. The first issues cost 2d. Simmons quickly merged the ***Gazette*** with the ***Kentish Post***, and began a partnership with the *Post*’s owner, **George Kirkby**. In its inaugural issue, **Simmons** stakes a claim to political neutrality, although Hannah Barker has suggested that, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the paper supported colonisation, as well as the Pitt administration from 1784. Simmons himself was also closely involved with local and national politics, serving as an MP for **Canterbury** in 1806, a year before his death. **Simmons** printed the ***Gazette*** in his offices in **Canterbury**, and addressed his inaugural issue to ‘The Inhabitants of the County of Kent and City of **Canterbury**’. On the final page of this issue, Simmons also lists booksellers to whom the publication will be distributed, including contacts in [**Margate](** **19c-margate)**, **Deal**, **Sandwich**, **Rochester**, and one vendor in London, staking an early claim to a county-wide, and perhaps even a metropolitan circulation.

By the 1830s, **Robert Smithson** had succeeded **Simmons** as both printer and publisher. Prior to this and until 1831, Smithson had published and printed the \_***Northampton Mercury\_*** alongside **Thomas Edward Dicey**. Which explains why the list of London agents selling the \_*Mercury\_* in 1831 and the ***Gazette*** in 1833 are identical. At the same time, the bi-weekly publication schedule became too difficult to maintain, possibly because of limitations on circulation rates, which meant that in May 1833, the \_***Gazette\_*** began publishing one issue each week. By 1833, Stamp Tax meant the paper cost 7d, but the change in publication schedule did not prove more cost effective for readers, as they simply received one four page, 7d issue per week instead of two.

At about this time, the \_***Gazette\_*** can be described as Conservative and anti-Reform. This stance continued into the 1840s and beyond, with the 1846 \_*Newspaper Press Directory\_* stating that the publication ‘[a]dvocates the agricultural interest chiefly. Is attached to the Church of England, and the friend of religious toleration’. By this time the \_***Gazette\_*** was also circulating through Surrey and Sussex.

On 1st July 1851, the \_***Gazette\_*** came under the proprietorship of **Henry** **Ward**, who reiterated the paper’s Conservative allegiance in an address in his inaugural issue. The paper remained in the **Ward** family for much of the nineteenth century: passed to Henry’s wife **Jane Ward** upon his death in December 1857, and subsequently to their daughter **Mary** **Ann** **Ward** in 1881.

In 1944, the Luftwaffe bombed **Canterbury** and destroyed the offices of the \_***Kentish******Gazette\_***, although publication continued, and the next issue even contained a report on the bombing. In 1980, the \_***Gazette\_*** joined the **Kent Media Group** and still publishes today, winning ‘Newspaper of the Year’ in the 2019 **Kent Press and Broadcast Awards**.

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