

Kent Maps Online

Kent Maps Online <https://www.kent-maps.online/> is a digital project drawing on a range of perspectives to explore the county's heritage.

The project uses images, maps and archives to make unexpected connections: writers, artists, scientists, newspaper magnates and criminals. Many of these figures visited Kent, while being primarily associated with other places. So as the project continues to grow, we are getting some surprises of our own.

Like Nottingham, Kent had a strong mining community in the twentieth century. But what first drew D. H. Lawrence to visit in 1911 was an invitation from the literary editor Edward Garnett. Lawrence duly fell in love with the local countryside, writing in 'At the Cearne':

The Weald, the enormous bed
Between the Downs, grows hazy with sunshine.
Slow cattle stir on the steep meadow nearby.

Margate, on the East coast of the county, had been a fashionable resort in the eighteenth century. But by the time Lawrence visited in 1913, it had long been the butt of snobbish humour, which helps to explain his mock horror, 'We're going away to Margate tomorrow. Oh dear, oh Lord, Margate!'

The well-to-do were more likely to stay in nearby Kingsgate, where Lawrence met Herbert Asquith (son of the Prime Minister) and where he invited Katherine Mansfield to spend a weekend.

Of course it can be just as interesting when writers and artists turn out to have known the same places, but either come and gone at different times or chosen not 'to know' each other while they were there. Searching for the phrase 'The Weald' on the KMO site is a fun way to try this out.

Like other users of the site, we often find answers to questions we're pretty sure we weren't asking. And that's just the way we like it.

Notes

KMO is directed by Professor Carolyn Oulton and Michelle Crowther, at Canterbury Christ Church University. Entry on D. H. Lawrence by Michelle Crowther at <https://www.kent-maps.online/20c/20c-lawrence-biography/>