

BOOK REVIEW

Journeys in Industrious England
Baskerville, T. edited by Jones, A.
Gloucester, The Hobnob Press
2023, Pp.316, £20
ISBN: 978-1-91-4407-51-2

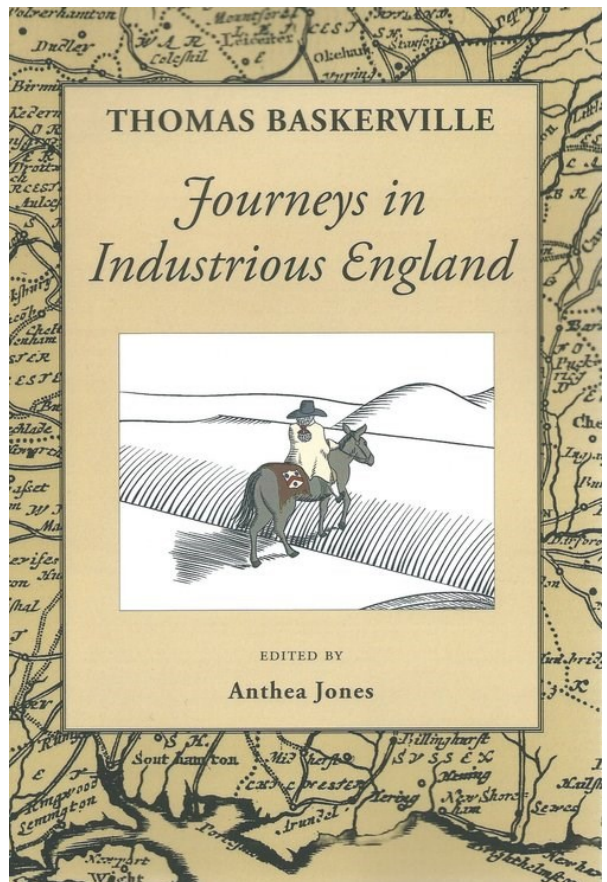
Not to be confused with either the ‘Hounds’ novel of Arthur Conan Doyle or the typographer John Baskerville (1708-1775), this new publication features the work of Thomas Baskerville as first compiled in about 1682. He was a country gentleman and landowner born in 1630 and he lived exactly three score years and ten. The writings by hand using pen and ink were probably intended for publication but have not appeared in print in a form useful to modern readers until the patient and thorough work of transcription by Anthea Jones, an expert on the Gloucestershire and Cotswold area, as summarised below. The original manuscripts reside in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and in the British Library, London.

Ales, beers and their production and consumption are by no means the only topics featured here as there is much else included in the ten main English journeys that Thomas wrote about. He was also curious about such topics as forestry, agriculture, buildings, manufacturing and the fishing and consumption of fish, a passion that he shared with his contemporary author, Isaak Walton (1593-1683). Water runs through the whole volume: streams, rivers, bridges, and floods. Water was the absolute essential for life in rural places that lacked the piped supplies already beginning to exist in towns and cities such as London and its two main rivals at the time, Bristol and Norwich. Thomas also crossed the oceans once: an adventurous journey to Barbados. As an ingredient in brewing, water features often in these pages due to the purity required to make an acceptable product.

Thomas Baskerville lived and wrote at a time when the printing presses, following a couple of generations of early activity, already began to specialise and to produce travel writings, recipe books and guides to fruit growing, hop production or other topics that can relate to beer and cider.

Surrounded by published travel authors such as Celia Fiennes and Daniel Defoe he lived at a time when immense curiosity about the world, the oceans and the heavens led to entirely new forms of factual and speculative authorship. Like his illustrious contemporary, Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) Thomas Baskerville did not live to see his accounts and recollections in print; the first edition of the *Diary* of Pepys did not appear until 1825 and Baskerville has had to wait until 2023!

The core of the book are accounts of ten journeys on horseback in England extending between the Norfolk coast to the East, to Dover through Kent, to Hull, to Bristol and to



Southampton. All start from the Oxford area which is near where the family home, Bayworth House (since demolished), stood and the City and University of Oxford nearby remained a major focus for the Baskervilles just as Cambridge did for Pepys and his family. Thomas's father, Hannibal, was a graduate from Oxford and communicated his interests in history to his son together with the contents of Bayworth House. Each journey was made in the company of friends who shared the curiosity of Thomas about all he saw and the people along the way with whom he spoke and enjoyed meals and drinks. Hop gardens are noted with additional comments on their cultivation, picking, drying and preservation in sacks.

Around Worcester and Hereford 'red streak' apples were grown along with hops and therefore cider rivalled ale. In Gloucester he notes the city's role as a port, as a centre for glassmaking including bottles, as a centre of cider making and as the site of many inns.

Like the *Diary of Pepys*, *Industrious England* will also undergo a reading for those who wish to find out about the social habits of the second half of the 17th Century including, of course, everything to do with drinking from the supply of beer, wines, meals of fish, meat etc. to where and how these were consumed. On each journey frequent stops are made so that man and horse may 'bait' (i.e. refresh) and there are longer accounts of numerous inns to 'lay' overnight and pass the evening joyfully even with music from the town band. One band did not arrive until the morning after, with unpleasant results.

Ales and beers of varying sorts are tasted due to such variations as the skill of the male and female (and very local) brewers and, importantly, the quality of the water. At one point an ingenious metalworker devises a screwing mechanism for the gradual elevation of barrels so as not to disturb their contents. Cellars are included but the volume does not go so far as to make a proper brewery visit even though Pepys mentions some examples of specialist premises in and around London. Readers will enjoy matching up the names of the inns and 'masters' (i.e. landlords) with other local records or even rare cases of survival. One typical quote from Stroud reads:

For inns they are small concern save the George where we lay Mr Parre a very civill man the present master of it who hath lately built a faire Cellar in which I told 29 vessels Hogsheads and Barrles with 3 or 4 kinderkins more, here you may likewise have wine and Coffe.

Wines are mainly Claret plus some fortified products from Spain and the Canaries but specialist beers are mentioned, e.g. 'Hull', and these tended, as in Pepys, to be supplied in bottles as they might travel widely. These stronger brews included 'Mumm' from Germany, and 'China' (with added root herbs). Other additives that enjoyed a fashion at the time included Horse-radish or the mid-winter favourite, 'Lamb's-Wool', a hot ale with apples, sugar and spice or even toast. The daily reliance on ale is clear, as it is in Pepys, so the choice of special brews for Oxford college feasts is noted as well as a landlord in Hereford offering 'beer for our mornings draught of 2, 3, 4 and 5 years age, for which purpose he has lusty great vessels to keep it.' This was Mr Jones at the Black Swan whose 'wife is a distiller of incomparable strong waters.'

Anthea Jones has provided readers of this beautifully edited book with all the necessities as an introduction to Baskerville, his family, his work and the period in which he lived. A book list and index are supplied and a guide to spellings and word use in pre-dictionary times (Chelnam as pronounced rather than the full modern spelling of Cheltenham or Chansford for Chelmsford) and newcomers to the era should not be deterred.

The stars of the show, however, are 26 pages on London taverns. An estimate is made of about 386 in total (my own research agrees) and, in the centre, are included street names as well as additional taverns in outlying districts as far as Barnet, Hampton Court, Hounslow etc. Specialists will possibly wish to compare this new material with their own findings that perhaps cover smaller alehouses and/or the larger inns where accommodation was on offer as well as freight terminals for road or water connections with towns and cities elsewhere.

The publishers, Hobnob, have conveniently also produced J. Chandler's edition (2020) of *Travels and Travelling 1616-1653* by John Taylor. A proto-journalist, Taylor produced factual guides that open even more doors to London as it was in Stuart times. Entry into this period of English history will provide those interested in the origins of modern brewing (and the social customs associated with eating and drinking as it was practised 400 years ago) with a great scope of discovery in which Hobnob have hugely assisted.

GRAHAM TITE