

"Poor Boy of Birchington" & the Crispe Charity



The memorial to Anna Gertruy Crispe on the north wall of the Quex Chapel in All Saint's Church, Birchington records the legacy bequeathed by her in 1708 to found the Crispe Charity. The Charity would, among other things, provide a school and also give grants to apprentice boys and girls to various trades.

In December 1764, through the hands of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor for Birchington, the Charity paid the sum of £10 to "put out, place and bind Philip Griggs, a poor boy of the said parish of Birchington, Apprentice to Isaac Anchor, a silk weaver of Canterbury".

Young Philip, aged just 7 years, was the illegitimate son of Sarah Griggs by a soldier, Thomas Harby, of Lord Albemarle's Dragoon Regiment. Abandoned by the father, Sarah, with the help of her parents and the parish, had brought up the boy in Birchington.

Philip arrived at his new abode in Canterbury in December 1764. However, an interesting twist to the story records that his mother had preceded him there. In June of that year she and the silk weaver, a young widower with two small sons, were married. So Philip acquired not only the training as an apprentice in the silk weaving business, but also a new family.

Whether he completed his 17 years apprenticeship is not known at present, but it is a fact that this little boy born 250 years ago and Margo Griggs, a local resident, share the same ancestry.

n.b.

In 2008 we shall celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Crispe Charity, which still supports the young people of Birchington, as well as 10 widows. (Ann stipulated only five widows in her will, but with a rising population the number of widows has been doubled.

