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UNIMPRESSIVE: Canterbury West Station in 1846 failed to impress philosopher Karl Marx, who walked to the city from Margate in a bid to cure his chronic problem with boils

Boil-plagued Marx less than impressed by city

FREE

Way we were



David Lewis
Canterbury
Historical and
Archaeological
Society

KARL Marx, the socialist revolutionary, was born in Trier,



open of their wrongdoing. In knowing Jesus, we find eternal life – life to the full now, and life forever beyond the grave.

If all of that comes from knowing Jesus, and if the Bible is the gateway to a relationship with Jesus, then the Bible really is 'the most valuable thing this world affords' because it gives us the most precious thing that there could ever be – Jesus!

And if that is the case, why not pick up a Bible and, like our kids, do some treasure-hunting of your own! Find the book of Mark first of all, and ask Jesus to meet you as you read.

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Way we were



David Lewis
Canterbury
Historical and
Archaeological
Society

KARL Marx, the socialist revolutionary, was born in Trier, Germany, in 1818, but lived the final 34 years of his life based in London.

He woke on Sunday, March 18, 1866, in a boarding house in Margate at 5 Lansell's Place (now converted to flats forming part of Albert Terrace).

Had there been a Victorian Trip Advisor the entry for this establishment could well have mentioned the impressive sea views, and the 'deaf as a post' landlady (Karl's words not mine).

We have a good idea of what was on the great philosopher's mind that morning – not the class struggle or plans for the workers' revolution, but the recurring boils on his body that over many years stubbornly refused to heal.

Whether through his sedentary life (study during the day and writing up at night), or poor diet, or lack of exercise, the affliction was making it difficult to get on with his research and writing.

The opening sentences of volume one of his major publication, *Das Kapital*, published the following year, refer to delays in completing the work arising from these health problems. It was also threatening his financial affairs. Forever short of money, he found that his loan application relied on medical examinations.

But it was boils that brought him to Margate, in the hope that sea bathing, treatment in the sea baths of the Royal Sea Bathing Hospital, and 'use of rough towels' would do the trick.

They had resisted his earlier treatments – applications of arsenic



COAST: The view from Marx's guesthouse, now part of Albert Terrace



CRUSTY VISITOR: Karl Marx

and creosote, and removal with a razor blade. This Sunday, Karl was bent on physical activity as part of his anti-boil regime. After a two-hour walk on Margate pier and front, he set off for the 17-mile walk to Canterbury.

Karl entered the city through the seedy suburbs of the barracks area and Northgate, and went next to Canterbury West station, no doubt to check the train times for his return on Monday morning. He wrote later that 'Happily, I was too tired, and it was too late, to look out for the celebrated cathedral.

Canterbury is an old, ugly, medieval sort of town, not mended by large modern English barracks at one

end, and a dismal dry railway station at the other end ... there is no trace of poetry about it ...'

We can only guess the reasons for such jaundiced views: it had been a long walk started rather late in the day; he was still suffering from boils; and he had little time for the English church.

We do not know where he stayed – only that gossip in the city that day centred on the recent court case against a Captain William Merchant of the 7th Hussars. The *Kentish Gazette* of March 20 provides the details of what seems an extraordinarily boring case – Merchant was fined £1 for knocking on doors in Havelock Street as a prank. Marx seems to have visited the city on a very slow news day.

So did the walk help with the boils? Karl wrote that he was concerned they were healing too quickly, leaving a residue that would flare up later. He was right, they did.

For details see the CHAS website at www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk



Find more tales from Canterbury's past online at

canterburytimes.co.uk/nostalgia

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