

KANT -

THE HULL CONNECTION

Kant, who never married, had a large and varied circle of friends some of whom he met regularly for an extended lunch. He was convinced that it was not good for a philosopher to eat alone, and he enjoyed discussing a wide range of topics. His friends described him as very entertaining and witty.



Kant and his Dining Companions, by Emil Doerstling (1859-1940). The Hull-born merchant Robert Motherby is sitting to Kant's right ©2024 FRIENDS OF KANT AND KÖNIGSBERG



The Kant Glass (East Prussian State Museum, Lüneburg) Photo © Ralph Kranert

The Kant Glass On the 30 August 1763 a gathering of Kant and friends in Königsberg, was commemorated by the signatures of those attending being engraved on a drinking glass. In addition to Kant there are six names, four of which are of Hull men: Joseph Green and Robert Motherby, merchants, and Charles Staniforth and John Chappell, ship's captains. One of the names is unclear and the other is Anthony Schorn, the son of an extremely wealthy wine merchant who lived at the nearby town of Braunsberg (now Braniewo, Poland).

The glass is also inscribed: *Secrecy in love and sincerity in Friendship ... All Happy together notwithstanding what happened in the world.* This might refer to the end of occupation of Königsberg by Russian troops (1758-62) during the Seven Years War or the recent financial crisis.

Kant's first meeting with Green and Motherby in the mid 1750s. R.B. Jachman, Kant's student and biographer, recorded that one afternoon, Kant met an acquaintance who was with a group of men he did not know. Soon they were discussing the French and Indian War in North America. 'Kant took the side of the (Native) Americans ... and bitterly criticised the behaviour of the English. Suddenly, one of the group jumped up angrily, informing Kant that he was English, and declared that Kant had insulted both his whole nation and him personally. ... Kant did not let the man's rage unsettle him, ... [instead] explained his political principles, opinions, and views – which he claimed any cosmopolitan citizen could safely apply to judge world events without his patriotism coming to harm – with such eloquence that Green – the above mentioned Englishman – being utterly amazed, offered him his hand in friendship, ... and requested Kant's forgiveness.' Robert Motherby who was present later confirmed the incident.

*Kant out walking, possibly on his regular Sunday walk to Robert Motherby. The Lithograph by Heinrich Wolf, 1924)

