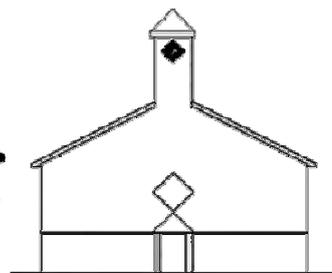


The Clock Tower



Issue Number 25: February 2012
£2.00; free to members

Special Celebratory 25th Issue
A new look for *The Clock Tower* as FOMA enters its seventh year



Au revoir Valerie!

We say goodbye to Project Archivist Valerie Rouland at a special reception to launch The Archives of Great Expectations Exhibition. Medway Mayor, Cllr Ted Baker (pictured with Valerie), was there with a host of Medway VIPs to mark the occasion.

THE FOMA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, TUESDAY, 17TH APRIL 2012
AGENDA AND 2012 SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL REMINDER INSIDE

The MALSC Volunteer Open Day

On 7 December 2011, MALSC held a reception to thank the many volunteers who have given their time to help in the Archives. A full report can be read on page 17.



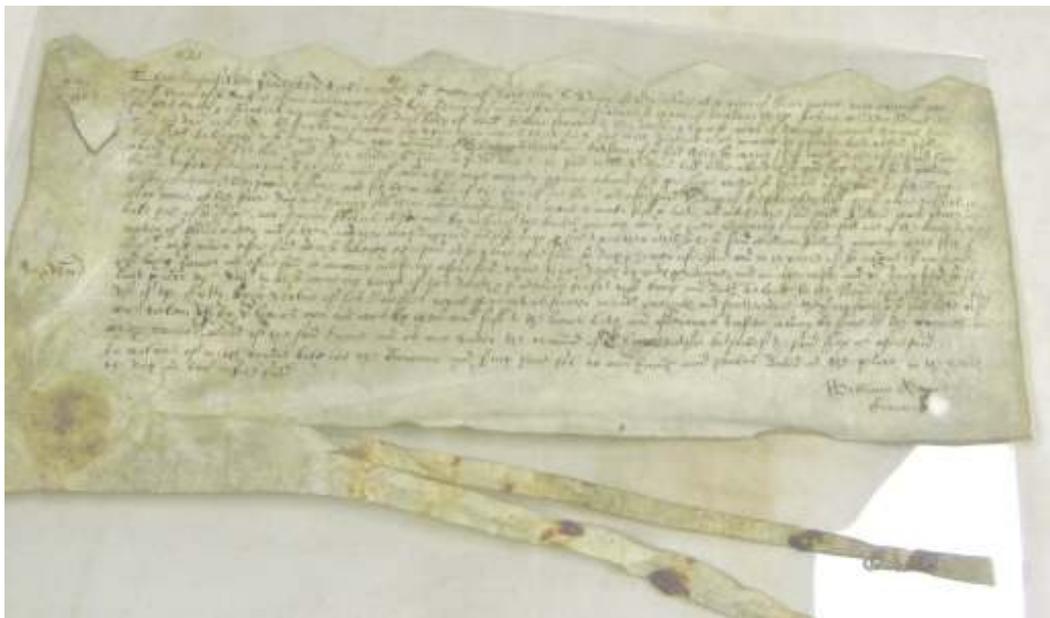
Lyn Rainbow, Strategic Librarian for Medway Council addresses the audience of volunteers



Odette Buchanan (left) and Elaine Gardner gave a fabulous presentation on the interesting documents found in the Rochester Archives.



Volunteers and guests were keen to get a look at some of the more valuable documents kept at MALSC.



One of the documents discovered by FOMA volunteers was this one dated 1624, an indenture concerning the inquest into the death of Jasper May "who fell into the dock basin when a plank he was crossing broke."

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



A belated Happy and Prosperous New Year to you all!

It is great to be able to start the year with the news that *Your Family History* magazine has included CityArk in its list of 100 best free websites (pictured). You will recall that just last year the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC) was voted Archive of the Year by the readers of *Your Family History* magazine. The award was presented at the 2011 *Who Do You Think You Are? Live* exhibition at London's Olympia.

City of London Burial Registers
www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/burialregisters
REGISTERS HAVE BEEN scanned for the years 1856 to 1962, with a partial name index at <http://haywain.net/familyburials.php>. Thanks to YFH member Daniel Filkins for posting these free links with many others at www.your-familyhistory.com/forum.

East London History Society Map Gallery
www.mernick.org.uk/elhs/mapgallery.htm
SEE HOW THE area where your ancestors come from developed over time by comparing maps of Bethnal Green, Stepney, Bow, Bromley and Poplar from the 1840s, 1900s, 20th and 21st centuries.

South of England
New Landscapes: Enclosure in Berkshire
www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk
SEARCH BERKSHIRE ENCLOSURE awards and view corresponding maps from 1738-1801 with Berkshire Record Office's New Landscapes.

The Weald of Kent, Surrey and Sussex
www.sussexweald.org
FIND INFORMATION ON 35,527 people and 8,500 places with 613 maps, 3,676 images and 214 old books about the region.

Medway City Ark
<http://cityark.medway.gov.uk>
BROWSE SCANNED COPIES of baptism, marriage and burial registers by parish for the area of Kent.

The Gloucestershire Archives Genealogical Search
www3.gloucestershire.gov.uk/genealogy/Search.aspx
A DATABASE of nonconformist, gail registers, overseers' records, rental lists, probations, inventories and wills from 1541 to 1896.

East Devon AONB
www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk/dro
BROWSE THE 1840 Tithe Maps of the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, covering all 29 parishes from Exmouth to Honiton and Uplyme, with accompanying appointments showing the names of owners and occupants of each plot (available from this quick link: <http://gon.gltffp41>).

Cambridgeshire Community Archives Network
www.ccan.co.uk
GROUPS PARTICIPATING IN the Network have uploaded over 15,000 records for Cambridgeshire inhabitants.

North of England
Old Mersey Times
www.old-merseytimes.co.uk
BIRTH, MARRIAGE, DIVORCE and death announcements, bankruptcies, crimes, missing persons and much more have been taken from old newspapers. A curious case of bigamy is among the transcribed reports. John Miller, a sailor, married Catherine Healey in Liverpool in 1867. When she came into some property she gave her husband in as a bigamist. He had been married previously, but as it was to his aunt (his mother's brother's widow), the previous marriage was invalid, so he was released and the second marriage upheld. His mother and former wife gave evidence for him.

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies
http://archives.cheshire.gov.uk/search_and_shop.aspx
CHESHIRE TITHE MAPS Online with searchable appointments, free searchable transcriptions of Cheshire wills 1492-1940, Freeman of Chester 1747-1925, railway staff registers, Chester city gail registers 1808-1842, military records and trade directories will be found here.

Each plot number on the East Devon Tithe Maps corresponds to the accompanying appointments, revealing the names of owners and occupants of buildings and land.

100 BEST FREE WEBSITES
COVER STORY 100

YOUR FAMILY HISTORY 31

As this is our 25th issue I have been looking over the chairman's missives I have written over the last few years trying to pick out highs and lows of events. In May 2008 we reported that Stephen Dixon who had been MALSC's archivist for 18 years was moving on to pastures new, but then at the end of 2008 we achieved what I think is probably the biggest highlight, the news that we were granted an Heritage Lottery Fund grant. I remember getting up at the crack of dawn in the USA (I was on holiday) to see if there was any news, and there sitting in my inbox was the email from Jean Skilling, the FOMA Treasurer, with the subject line, "We did it!!" That said it all.

FOMA committee members have always looked out for documents for sale at auction and on eBay and in 2010 we began The FOMA Collection with all the pieces we had purchased and continue to buy for MALSC; the list is on our website (www.foma-lsc.org).

After the initial euphoria of winning the HLF grant, we then had a long search for an archivist to catalogue the Rochester City Archives. However, our choice proved to be a great success; Valerie Rouland has done us proud, she was worth waiting for! Over the last few months FOMA volunteers working on the project with Valerie have been removing rusty paper clips and repackaging documents, and have found several interesting items along the way. We also had a day's seminar on palaeography, which was an eye-opener to say the least, but what we learnt enabled us to transcribe some early 17th century coroner's inquisitions. Sadly, as the cataloguing of the Rochester City Council archives is now complete we had to say goodbye to Valerie in January. On page 23 you can read about the opening at MALSC of the exhibition for the Archives of Great Expectations which culminated in a presentation to Valerie who has worked so hard over the last two years and has done a fantastic job. The exhibition contains some fascinating documents, including those 17th century coroner's inquisitions, and will be on display at MALSC until 28th February. The catalogue contains 900 pages of references and is now available in the search room as well as online on CityArk.

We still have a year to go with the HLF project and we now have to take it out into the public domain with talks and the exhibition to schools, libraries and local groups to encourage the public to use this wonderful resource. On behalf of FOMA I would like to say a big thank you to Valerie for all the hard work she has done on this project and wish her well for the future.

I think also I should take this opportunity to thank our Editor, Amanda, for all the hard work she has put into the Clock Tower on our behalf in these past 25 issues.

Eastgate House

Eastgate House is one of Rochester's landmarks. Built in the 1590s by Sir Peter Buck, the most senior member of staff at Chatham Dockyard, its structure has been adapted considerably over the years, but research has indicated that the original building may be Medieval or earlier. A Heritage Lottery Grant awarded in January 2011 has enabled Medway Council to begin planning conservation work on the house and to start opening its doors once more to visitors. In the autumn, the Friends of Eastgate House was set up and on 28 January 2012 a very successful open day was held to raise awareness of the work at Eastgate House.

If you are interested in the project and would like information or to be put on the mailing list, please email Tracy Stringfellow, Eastgate House Project Manager, at eastgate.house@medway.gov.uk



Eastgate House volunteers Tessa Towner (left) and Elaine Gardner (right) talk to visitors at the popular open day on 28 January 2012.

Medway Museums and Library Service

Medway Museums and Library Service has held a series of successful exhibitions, usually lasting about ten days, at Eastgate House, Rochester with the aim of both getting visitors into the house and highlighting the exhibitions put together by MALSC.

However, success depends on volunteers manning Eastgate House when exhibitions are on display, and we are keen to find more volunteers to avoid the stalwart few having to cover two or even three half days.

If you think could offer a two and a half hour morning or afternoon slot at future events please contact Elaine Gardner on 01634 408595 or e-mail emgardner@fsmail.net so that we can add you to the list and contact you before the next exhibition. Thank you!

The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Tel: 01634 718231
E-mail odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk
Website: <http://www.foma-lsc.org>

72 Jersey Road,
Rochester,
Kent, ME2 3PE.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 17th April, 2012, 7.30 pm
Frindsbury Parish Hall, Church Green, Frindsbury

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Welcome address from the Chair
3. Minutes of last Annual General Meeting [3.5.11]
4. Matters arising
5. Treasurer's report
6. Secretary's report
7. Editorial report [Amanda Thomas]
8. Archivist's report [Alison Cable]
9. Local Studies report [Norma Crowe, L.S Librarian]
10. Election of Committee members
11. Any other business

After the Annual General Meeting there will be light refreshments

* * * *

There are some vacancies on the Committee. Please complete the nomination form below and hand to Secretary at the beginning of the meeting.

I nominate the member below to join the FOMA committee:

Name: _____ **Telephone:** _____

Address: _____ **Postcode:** _____

E mail: _____

Signed: _____

News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary



A bit late but nonetheless a heartfelt wish for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2012 to you all. First up – *did you notice the cover?* – yes, all right, I know we seem to have moved up-market with a real cardboard one but I was talking about what's printed on it – look back and notice – you need to put this issue in a safe place ready for **Tuesday, 17th April – The Annual General Meeting**. Please bring it with you to the AGM, not only for the agenda but also to prove you are a member. Of course, you'll also need to bring some money – next year's subscription is now due – still only £10. Verified accounts for this year will be available at the meeting, and the minutes of last year's AGM will be inserted into this issue of *The Clock Tower*.

Looking back since the last issue, the first part of the project for the Archives of Great Expectations is now complete. In January there was the very successful launch of the exhibition for the project at MALSC showing some of the things the volunteers discovered when trawling through all those documents from hundreds of years of City of Rochester and Math School archives. Her job now successfully completed, the Project Archivist, Valerie Rouland, is sadly leaving us and we will be very sorry to see her go. FOMA presented Valerie with a thank-you present in recognition of all her hard work (see page 23). Everyone was amazed at the variety of information discovered in the documents and the catalogue is now on the CityArk website for everyone to access. The next part of the HLF project is to make the public aware of all this extra material MALSC now has. FOMA will be concentrating on outreach to schools and teaching staff as well as societies and groups around the Towns, such as U3A. Watch the press (and the FOMA website) for details of talks and other events related to this.

Of course, this is the year of the Dickens and the Olympics and the Royal Engineers and the sinking of the Titanic and the Diamond Jubilee ... oh, the list goes on and on. Isn't it also 200 years since the relief of Moscow in the Napoleonic Wars? Well, whatever your particular interest, do enjoy it.

From the Membership Secretary

Betty Cole



SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE FROM ALL FOMA MEMBERS WHO JOINED BEFORE 1ST OCTOBER 2011.

Please complete the renewal form enclosed with this journal and send it with a cheque for £10 (£12 for Family Membership) made payable to FOMA and sent to:

Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER

Or, if you are planning to attend the **Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, 17th April 2012, 7.30pm at Frindsbury Parish Hall** the form and cheque/cash can be handed to me at the meeting.

Alternatively, you may prefer to pay via PayPal on the website at <http://www.foma-lsc.org/membership.html>. Arrangements have also now been made for annual payments to be made by Standing Order. The form for this is on the reverse of the renewal form.

Don't forget, for just £100, you can become a Life Member!

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members:

Mrs Barbara J Harrison, Trowbridge, Wiltshire
Mr and Mrs D and A Bowdler, Strood, Kent
Rev. Stephen Gwilt, High Halstow, Kent

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Events

13th March 2012, 7.30 pm
Donald Maxwell – Medway's Unknown Artist
A talk by Bob Ratcliff
(See also the exhibition at MALSC)

17th April, 7.30 pm **FOMA AGM**

Sat 28th April, 7.30 pm start
Quiz Night
£5 for members and non-members.
BOOKING REQUIRED.

12th June, 7.30 pm
In celebration of Dickens' 200th birthday
Dickens, Man of Kent/Man of Medway
A talk by Thelma Grove

11th September, 7.30 pm
Heritage of The Vines
A talk by Odette Buchanan

Sat 20th October, 7.30 pm start
Quiz Night
£5 for members and non-members
BOOKING REQUIRED

13th November, 7.30 pm
Some Mother's Son
A talk by Peter Ewart

Please note, booking for FOMA talks is no longer necessary!

All events - and until further notice - are at Frindsbury Parish Hall

Talks are £2 for members £4 non-members.

Booking for Quiz Nights and enquiries through the FOMA Secretary:

Odette Buchanan, 72 Jersey Rd, Strood, ME2 3PE; odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk; 01634 718231.

MALSC Events

Exhibitions

12th January 2012 – 28th February

Archives of Great Expectations: documents and discoveries from the Rochester City records

1st March – 24th April

Medway Artists – the achievements of Dadd, Spencelayh, Wyllie, Maxwell and Dunbar.

26th April – 3rd July

Ship Repairs at Sheerness by Martin Verrier

5th July – 4th September

Sporting Life (popular clubs and hobbies) - to be confirmed

6th September – 3rd November

Defence of Kent Project by Keith Gulvin and Mick Smith

19th November – 29th January 2013

These we have Loved (shops, stores and emporia of Medway)

MALSC OPENING HOURS

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm; Saturday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm.
Wednesday and Sunday closed.**

Talks and Events

15th March 7.30pm

Allotments in Medway, Rochester and Strood

An illustrated talk by Dr Chris Cornish-Lawrence

Rochester Community Hub, Rochester Library, Eastgate, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1EW

FREE

Wed 21st March 10 - 4 pm

Palaeography Course

An interactive introduction to reading old handwriting with Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh

£25 per person (for booking see below)

16th May, 7.30 pm

Dickens at Eastgate House

Speaker to be confirmed

13th June, 2.30 pm

Sheerness

Martin Verrier

July

Creative Writing Workshop
Sam Hall
To be confirmed

August/September
Defence of Kent
Victor Smith
To be confirmed

2nd December, 2.30 pm
Window Shopping in Kent
Jean Lear

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, (MALSC) Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Unless otherwise indicated, talks and events are £5 or £4 for FOMA members. Further information is available from MALSC; please telephone 01634 332714 to book. TICKETS MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE.

Please note: You may be aware that Medway Council has been relocated to Gun Wharf. This move does not include the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and until further notice, we are still to be found in the Clock Tower building, address as above.

Exhibitions at Eastgate House

14th – 28th March
Post War Housing; whole house open weekend of 17th – 18th March

16th – 30th May
Winget's – at Work and Play

18th July – 1st August
Metal Men of Medway

6th – 9th August
Heritage Weekend

17th – 30th October
Archives of Great Expectations

Some MALSC talks and events also take place at Eastgate House – see above under *MALSC Talks and Events*.

The City of Rochester Society

“The City of Rochester Society was founded in 1967 to help conserve the historic City as a pleasant place to visit. The Society is still active today, helping to improve the environment and quality of life in Rochester for residents and visitors alike.” From the City of Rochester Society website, www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/, where further information on the society and how to join is available.

Talks are on Wednesdays at the Auditorium of the Visitor Centre, 95 High Street, Rochester and start at 8.00 pm. There is a small charge for events to defray expenses; please contact the CoRS Secretary, Christine Furminger on 01634 320598 or at cafurminger@blueyonder.co.uk for further information and how to join.

8th February 2012

An Evening with our President, Mr. R. Ratcliffe

14th March

A Kentish Soldier's Story of the Battle of Barnet, 1471, Keith Ford

11th April

Broomhill and the Battle of Britain, Odette Buchanan

9th May

To Australia with Captain Cook - then the Convicts!', Lt. Col. Mike Martin

Readers' Letters

We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please write to: Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at amanda@ajthomas.com. FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan, often receives queries from members or visitors to the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.html. If you have any additional information for the following correspondents, please contact the Editor.

Edwin Greig Burton

From: Brian Burton

To: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Sent: Saturday, 7 January 2012

Hi,

I am trying to trace some relatives of mine. The information I have so far is a bit scarce, but the Father was Edwin Greig Burton (my uncle) who died on the 4th January 1965 as the result of an accident (at work?). An inquest was held by the Gravesend Coroner on the 3rd February 1965. (I have a copy of the death certificate). He was married to May Gladys (nee Hills), but it is believed that the marriage broke up. There were 2 or 3 boys, children of the couple. I am interested in contacting the boys if possible, or anyone else

who knew the family. Edwin had 7 brothers and sisters, many who now live in Australia. We had a Burton reunion last year, in Australia, where 5 of the 8 families were represented, so for the next reunion in 2013, I hope to be able to include members of Edwin's family. There are people still alive, in Australia, who remember the family.

I would be grateful for any information you could supply, or even sources where I can go for news.

Thank you for your kind attention,

Brian Greig Burton.

An Appeal by Pat Sandford

On 16 January 2012, Odette Buchanan, FOMA Secretary, wrote:

“...I gave a talk to the PROBUS Society for Rochester...They asked me what talks I gave...when I got to the 18thc and 19thc I mentioned many names of people involved in this that and the other like solicitors who did the conveyancing for such and such, etc. When I finished I said I made a point of mentioning all names concerned because many people like to research their ancestors - if they heard a name they recognized let me know and I'll tell you my exact source. Afterwards...Pat Sandford came up and told me about his great, great, great, not sure how many grandparents - man had fallen off Sun Pier [and drowned]. He had sourced the inquest but couldn't find where he was buried. His wife died the same year - 1840 - again, no burial details...”

On 20 January 2012, Jean Skilling, FOMA Treasurer, provided the following update:

“Pat sent me copies of the death certificates and with that information it was easy to find the burials, the wife in St Margaret's Rochester and the man in St Mary's Chatham. Unfortunately there was no additional information and no reference to the man being drowned.

William Evenden and the Resolute Desk

From: june drake

To: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Sent: Thursday, 12 January 2012

Hi Odette,

Last year I contacted Chatham Dockyard Historical Society regarding my Great, Great Grandfather WILLIAM EVENDEN the skilled cabinet maker and joiner who in 1879 was commissioned by Queen Victoria to make 'The Resolute Desk' and 3 others from the timbers of the Resolute ship.

Unfortunately they were unable to help and the librarian Brian Jenkins suggested I contact Navy Records to help with my research, but alas after several letters I've yet to receive a reply.

At present I am collecting information about William Evenden Born -1828- St. Nicholas, Rochester who became a Freeman of Rochester at H M Dockyard, as was his father also William Evenden born 1793 St Margaret's Rochester, until his death 1858.

There is a lot of information about The Resolute desk, but not about William and why he was selected from many other skilled carpenters and shipwrights to make the desks. Many desks have

been made in America and they quote using the original William Evenden plans. I have searched *The London Gazette*, etc and found some entries regarding the desk being commission and then sent to America

I believe William and his two brothers were fortunate to have been well educated because their mother Maria Beer was a School Mistress. This obviously helped the younger brother Frederick James become a Master Shipwright and Naval Architect in Devonport and his other brother George Jonathon a Mining Pioneer and Magistrate in Thornborough, Queensland, Australia.

I have visited Catharina Clements at Medway Archives and left her with some of my research. She suggested that may be your Society could help me. I have been able to verify William is my relative since obtaining marriage and 1896 death certificate (which unfortunately showed he committed suicide after being distraught at the thought of being unemployed and maybe entering the Workhouse!)

Would this have been the reason why there isn't much information about him? Although he was buried in consecrated ground at Chatham Cemetery, but his grave can no longer be found. Also my brother who lives in Canada remembers being told by our Grandmother Clara Hilbert that his Great, Great Grandfather created The Resolute Desk. He still has the original 1960s Newspaper cutting, which helped them relate the story after Jackie Kennedy found the desk in the basement and then had it installed in the Oval Office.

I have a photograph copy of William taken 1882 By Royal Appointment by J Hawke, Plymouth. (Possibly taken while visiting his brother who may have suggested William for this commission.)

Once I have more information I hope to write an article about William's creative ability to help raise the profile of Rochester to gain City Status and Chatham Dockyard's bid to become a World Heritage site.

Hopefully you can help with my research and look forward to some expert advice.

Kind Regards,
June Drake.

Tilghman Genealogy Information

From: Ppjent
To: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk
Sent: Thursday, 2 February 2012

Dear Ms. Buchanan:

I am in Texas in the U.S. and need some assistance. I have been looking for information about my Tilghman family connection. I recently found the Medway Archives on line and have been looking at the baptisms, marriages, and death records. I found several that I am very interested in having a copy of but my computer would not let me copy it to my own email address as the website suggested.

I am descended from Christopher Tilghman who came to America in about 1630 and married Ruth Devonshire in Virginia. I have info from here that gives me what I need but the info from England is a little harder for me to find from here. Christopher Sr. was the son of Nicholas Tilghman who married Jane Beeson. This apparently all happened in Selling, Faversham Hundred, Kent County, England in the 1515 to 1630 time frame. Children are listed as Margery who married Thomas Bromelye in 1591; Thomas; Mildred b 1565; Christopher Sr.; John born about

1572, all in Kent County. Thomas Tilghman was born in Snodland Parish of Kent County and he married Joan Newman -- their children are William; John; and Ralph

Christopher was born 1570 in Parish of Selling and died before 1619 also in Kent. He married Anna Sanders about 1585 (she was the daughter of Edward Sanders and Anna Pendreth) and was born 1572 in Kent. She died in Selling after 1619. In "Memories of Malling and Its Valley", there is a reference that Armigall, John, and Christopher, were baptised 23 April, 1592 and that John Died 3 June, 1592. They were triplets. Children of Christopher and Anna Sanders are: Isaac born 1585 in Selling; Armigill; Christopher Jr.; John; Mary.

In the Parish Registers I found:

- 1) On p.342 26 of 78, 3 June 1592 John son of Christopher was buried.
- 2) On 35 of 78 I found Isaac 21 Dec 1644 "Is buried under the great chancell window in Snodlay Churchyard. Near as can be told to his father."
- 3) On 52 of 78 for 1592 it lists Armigill, John and ?? were bapt. sons of Christopher Tilghman.

I did not find a marriage for Christopher or his or Anna's death.

I would love to have copies of those pages plus something that tells where the documents come from. I tried writing to the email listed as malsc@medway.gov.uk but it came back as not available. I do not know what else to do. Can you help me in any way with this. I am trying to get my application for the Colonial Dames and the Magna Carta Organizations done and submitted. I have worked very hard on this family and know there must be documents somewhere that prove exactly what I need. I just do not know where to look.

Thank you so much for any time and effort spent on my behalf.

I remain, sincerely yours,

Peggy Jentgens.

Barbara Marchant and Anne Pratt

07 February 2012

Dear Amanda,

I write at the suggestion of Andrew Ashbee, with respect to excellent the article in *The Clock Tower* by Barbara Marchant on Anne Pratt (of which I have a copy [The Clock Tower, issue 5, February 2007]). Do you know the present whereabouts of Barbara Marchant? I should like to contact her, as Anne Pratt is my Great Great Great Aunt. If you have the email address but correct practice is not to communicate it, perhaps you could forward this message?

With thanks and good wishes,

Tony.

Professor Anthony Young (UEA, retired).

We are delighted to say we were able to put Tony and Barbara in touch with each other.

About The Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA), www.foma-lsc.org/index.html.

Editorial deadlines

Please note, the deadline is the **last** Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of January, April, July and October. Articles, letters, photos and any information to be considered for inclusion in the journal must be received before this date by the Editor, Mrs Amanda Thomas, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire; amanda@ajthomas.com.

The copy deadline for Issue 25 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 30 April 2012, with publication on Wednesday 23 May 2012.

Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Ray Maisey, Rabbit Hutch Printers, 106 Charles Drive, Cuxton, Kent, ME2 1DU; telephone: 01634 294655; fax: 01634 723510; email: Ray@Rabbithutchprinters.com

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

The logo for *The Clock Tower* was designed by Bob Ratcliffe.

The banner design (incorporating the logo) and the title *The Clock Tower* were designed by Alexander Thomas.

The Clock Tower is also available at www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html

Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website <http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.uk

General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Odette Buchanan: 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE. Telephone: 01634 718231; email: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER. Telephone: 01634 316509; email: bettycole@blueyonder.co.uk

The MALSC Volunteer Open Day

Amanda Thomas



MALSC was packed again on 7 December with a reception to thank the many volunteers who have given their time to help in the Archives.



The morning was introduced by Norma Crowe (pictured), MALSC Local Studies Librarian who talked about the extraordinary number of projects undertaken in the past 18 months, a real team effort, none of which could have taken place had it not been for the help of the volunteers.

The projects and volunteers included the following:

Ephemera listing and sorting – Doris Herlihy.

Dickens and Percy Fitzgerald collections: catalogue checking – Paul Young.

Re-classification and re-ordering of Naval Collection – April Lambourne, Pauline Weeds and Jill Payne.

Re-filing and labelling journals collection – Pauline Weeds and Jill Payne.

Photographic collections: Medway Images and rationalising the print collection – April Lambourne, Steve Cross and Pauline Weeds.

Posters and large ephemera listing – Jill Payne.

Project folders for World Wars One and Two – Harriet Hopkins.

Exhibitions: Roll out the Red Carpet, Sir Joseph Williamson, 150 years of the LCD Railway, Rainham, Luton, and Metal Men – Pat Salter, Jean Skilling, Bob Ratcliffe, Kevin Russell, Brian Joyce, Jean Lear, Tessa Towner, Doris Herlihy, Brenda Paternoster.

Kent Family History Help Desk – Tessa Towner, Tony Clarke, Colin Allen, Brenda Burchell, Brenda Paternoster, Eric Flood, Hazel Harvey, Jean Skilling.



Archives of Great Expectations – Tessa Towner, Jean Skilling, Betty Cole, Peter Lyons, Odette Buchanan, Brian Joyce, Amanda Thomas, Elaine Gardner, Brian Butler.

Tessa Towner, FOMA Chairman and Secretary of the Kent Family History Society (KFHS), then spoke about the KFHS Volunteers. It was about seven to eight years ago that the Medway branch of the KFHS was approached by MALSC staff to put in place a team of volunteers to assist the public in their family history research and local history enquiries. The branch agreed to provide two volunteers for Tuesday and Thursday mornings, though Tessa mentioned that most of these people had already been working in an unofficial capacity at MALSC for some time. Today there are eight dedicated volunteers who turn up every week and their combined knowledge has helped many people from all over the globe who have come to MALSC.

One of the unofficial volunteers is ex FOMA Chairman Roy Murrant. His many years of research on the local pubs of the Medway Towns is second to none. Roy has just published a book on Medway pubs, *A Glossary of Past And Present Pubs; Chatham from 1746 – 2000 (A to M)*. Roy hopes to complete the second part in the not too distant future, and the first is currently available at www.bluewaspmedia.com

Sadly the volunteers lost one member of the team, Vince Rogers, two years ago and also two unofficial volunteers, Jack Hooper and Reuben Childs. All three were great sources of Medway information. Jack knew Gillingham well and Reuben was born and bred in Strood. Reuben was known affectionately as the ‘ferret,’ a name given to him by Vince, for when asked a question he would ferret his way through films and books looking for the answer. He was a mine of information on apprenticeships, fishermen and dregermen as well as the military. All three men are greatly missed.

The volunteers, both official and unofficial, hope to continue at MALSC, and as Tessa concluded her presentation, she also mentioned the continuing success of the courses they have been running for beginners.



Next to talk were Buffy Maisey and Sheila Field (pictured), Chairman and Vice Chairman

respectively of the Friends of Medway Libraries. The Friends currently has 22 members. It was formed five years ago to promote the local libraries and began by selling discounted books and CDs, raising to date £700 to purchase software for disabled library users. The Friends do much for mothers and their young children with Baby Bounce and Rhyme. In addition to this there is a knitting group which knits items for early-born babies for overseas charities and the Medway hospitals. The Friends also do various house-to-house visits.

Lyn Rainbow, Strategic Librarian for Medway Council, then talked about local government services and the importance of the quality provided by its employees. Lyn expressed her delight that today libraries are able to support other council departments, such as that for education. She went on to explain how every single local government survey has shown how important libraries are for the local quality of life, and these surveys can also be viewed on the Medway Council website (www.medway.gov.uk) However, it can easily be forgotten how important the social experience in a library can be, especially for parents and carers of young children. A library visit is not just an opportunity to borrow a book, but it is also a chance to interact with other people in the local community. Sadly, the surveys undertaken by local councils indicate that ethnic minorities do not tend to use the libraries, and this is an issue which may need to be addressed.

Medway Archivist Alison Cable spoke after Lyn Rainbow. Alison focussed on the Heritage Lottery Fund bid and the appointment of Valerie Rouland, the Project Archivist, who sadly was not able to attend the Volunteer Day. Alison thanked Valerie and her group of FOMA volunteers who had worked so hard to catalogue the Rochester Archives, however, the project had now reached its most exciting stage with MALSC being able to stage exhibitions on the discoveries made during the cataloguing (see page 23).

Last, but by no means least, Elaine Gardner and Odette Buchanan gave a presentation on some of the finds volunteers have made in their work at the archives. Odette's talk was published in Issue 22 of *The Clock Tower* in May 2001, and entitled, Common Sense or Just Plain Lune-y? The subject was the 1945 proposed amalgamation of the Medway Towns and the names some of the local residents came up with for their new local area. A segment from Odette's talk gives an idea of some of the more hilarious – and ridiculous - ideas:

“The youngest was a lad of 12 from Gillingham called Eric Watts (I wonder if he is still alive and living locally?) He presented 12 very neatly written suggestions: Medborough, Meddock Triburg, Tripleston, Charoham, Chestingham, Gilchester, Gilham, Giloham, Rivaham, Riverham, Roichester or Dockingham.”

Elaine's piece included a discussion on the documents discovered at the archives relating to Queen Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees which was most appropriate with our own Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee approaching.

Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee took place on Tuesday 21st June 1887. Planning began in January 1887 when the council met to discuss what they would do. Ideas included the following:

- Library and museum (the working men's library in Eastgate had been closed)
- A statue or portrait of Queen Victoria
- Medals and a celebration tea for the school children.

It was decided to raise funds by public subscription and so the Town Clerk wrote to Canterbury to find out how successful their new lending library was. Apparently it was very successful; he also obtained quotes for statues and portraits. Estimates for a library and a museum revealed the cost would be £3,000 so it was decided to go with just a library.

A public meeting was called for 28th March which approved plans. Targets were to be raised by subscription:

- Entertainment etc £315
- Statue £400
- Library £1000

A fund raiser was appointed for each electoral district to encourage and collect donations.

It was agreed that:

- a medal was to be given to every school child and head teachers were to submit numbers
- there would be a procession of school children on the Esplanade in Rochester where they would sing the National Anthem and the hymn, *The Old Hundred* (but not children from the infants' schools), with tea afterward at each school. Tickets were issued for this event and by June some 80 odd had been requested by letters to the Town Clerk
- there would not be fireworks, as the usual grant from Woolwich Arsenal was not available, but Rochester Castle would be illuminated with beam lights and arc lamps on the keep tower and a crown with 'VR' on the outer walls by electric light
- it was proposed that the Jubilee would be observed as a public holiday and the mayor asked that shops and businesses close on July 21st
- the Corn Exchange Market would be cancelled that day
- the Royal Engineers Band would play in the Castle Gardens, as they were not going to be needed for ceremonial duties
- there was also to be a service in the Cathedral on 20th June and a Jubilee dinner on 7th July

A poster was distributed urging members of the public to decorate and illuminate their property. The schools could obtain posters of Queen Vic: 40 x 30, 15 colours; 2/6d each or 12 for 24/-.

School numbers were quite interesting:

Troy Town, 680; St Nicholas Rochester, 478; St Peter's (inc. Delce Infants'), 546; St Margaret's, 429; Borstal School, 264; Strood Board School, 770; St Mary's Strood, 430; Frindsbury Board school, just 42, qualified as being in the Rochester boundary.

On 2nd June there was a letter stating that the board of the workhouse in Strood had decided that the children there could participate – 68 of them.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------|------------------------|
| • Entertainment etc | £315 | Raised £336 – 1s - 4d |
| • Cross | £400 | Raised £182 – 6s – 11d |
| • Library | £1000 | Raised £538 - 8s – 7d |

In October a Library committee was formed. The library was to be housed in a room at the Corn Exchange and £500 bookshelves were ordered. It was suggested a small collection of museum artifacts could also be displayed there. The Jubilee Cross committee had to rethink plans...an Eleanor Cross was proposed for the Castle Gardens and it was hoped that the town council would pay for the foundations!

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee took place on Tuesday 22nd June 1897. Despite all the organisation ten years earlier, planning for the Diamond Jubilee did not begin until a committee meeting was held on 23rd March for the corporation and prominent citizens.

Various proposals suggested, however the main idea was to purchase Eastgate House be purchased for the museum and library, as by that time the current facility at the Corn Exchange was overflowing. It was decided to purchase Eastgate House for £2,000 with a further £1,000 needed for renovations and for setting up the museum; the mayor said he would contribute £50. The mayor was reluctant to organise anything for the children as he believed they were so badly behaved in the street. Dr Bell thought that as Queen Victoria supported the establishment of district nurses this might be a better plan and it was felt that Watts charity could provide these.

A public meeting on 1st April agreed to the proposal for Eastgate House but it was decided the local people should be able to contribute to the nurses' fund if they wished. The meeting also agreed to have entertainment and medals etc for the children.

The arrangements were similar to those of Diamond Jubilee:

Children

All were to have a well executed medal. These were to be presented by the mayor at each school a few days before, with special medals for the head and teachers (above the rank of pupil teacher). 5,768 pupil medals and 102 special medals were minted, however only ten minutes was available for each school's presentation. The routine was to be, the mayor was to present to the head and possibly also the staff, then the head was to give the medals for the pupils who could then sing one verse of God Save the Queen – if there was time!

On the Day

There were to be three assemblies in front of the mayor to include the singing of the national anthem and a doxology; the assemblies were to take place at New Rd Rec., Strood Rec., Northcote Rd. and Borstal Rec.. Afterwards there would be tea and everything was to be organised by the school managers. £144 and four shillings was sent out for the 5,768 pupils – exactly 6^d per pupil.

Fireworks and Bonfires

The government had sent out circulars to co-ordinate the lighting of bonfires across the country and the Brocks Firework Company agreed it would give 33% off with further a 10% if fireworks were ordered by 22 May. Rockets cost 3/6, as did coloured stars for the heights; a display for lower grounds would cost two guineas.

The corporation decided to have a bonfire on Broomhill next to the high service reservoir and it was agreed to spend £50 on fireworks for Rochester Castle. Wells Fireworks was employed to arrange the display and the company offered to include daylight rockets so the display could to start at 9pm, or to do a daylight bombardment of the castle and fire a Royal Salute of aerial maroons in the afternoon. They advised that much greater satisfaction would be derived if the sum were increased to £75 or even £80 in a place the size of the castle! The corporation stuck to the £50 budget and agreed the display would begin at 9:15pm There would also be a bombardment of the walls from a raft in the river and the finale would be a set piece portrait of the letters 'VR' above the castle entrance. To conclude, a letter sent on 18th suggested that whilst Wells would be sending their most reliable operatives (and the manager would be in attendance) it would be advised to keep their employees under close scrutiny in case they were too free with beer!

The mayor again hoped that the public would decorate and illuminate their houses as before and lots of posters and circulars were issued.

The arrangements for the day were as follows:

The Castle grounds to close at 7pm

The best place to watch the fireworks would be the bridge, Strood Esplanade, the Backfields and a generally good view of the fireworks and the bonfire would be from Broomhill and the hill near Strood Cemetery.

The subscription outcome was not as successful as they had hoped because lots of people gave but they gave very small amounts: 10/-, 5/-, 2/6, and there were quite a lot of sixpences and even a few thruppences. The mayor donated £50, Viscount Cranborne MP £31-10s (30 guineas), the aldermen 10 guineas and the councilors two to five guineas. Thomas Aveling gave ten guineas for the children's events, the Co-op five guineas, Steven Aveling one guinea, but George Bond only managed ten shillings!

As so little was raised they did not contribute to the district nurses and the Watts Charity had to provide that donation. The corporation also had to subsidise the cost of the museum. It transpired that they had intended this all along and so some demanded their subscriptions back - including the Dean who had given £20. A museum was set up and they are still going strong, however the statue is long gone.

Volunteer Day concluded with some more words from Norma Crowe about the many projects coming up, for example, with the Icon Theatre Company based at the Central and the Brook Theatre which has just been given a Lottery grant to help schools in Cuxton, High Halstow and Upnor. Help is always needed and Norma urged everyone to keep volunteering and to encourage others to help out!

**Help is always needed with events, for example with the forthcoming Sporting Life exhibition
If you think you could help, please contact Elaine Gardner on 01634 408595 or e-mail
emgardner@fsmail.net**

The Archives of Great Expectations Exhibition

Amanda Thomas



Wednesday 11 Jan 2012 was a day of mixed emotions at MALSC. The afternoon began with an introduction by FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner, delighted by the fact that the exhibition was now ready to view, but saddened that as now this phase of the project was over, it meant saying goodbye to Project Archivist Valerie Rouland. Valerie began her work at MALSC in January 2010 as Project Archivist to begin work to catalogue, conserve and make available for research the contents of the 500 boxes of Rochester City Archives, the Archives of Great Expectations. This had been made possible a year earlier by the award of a grant of up to £154,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Additional help has also come from the Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester, and Medway Council.

In February 2010, *The Clock Tower* reported Valerie's appointment:

'Valerie is from the northwest of France, having spent most of her childhood in Normandy on her parents' farm. She read History at the University of Tours and in 1995, thanks to an Erasmus grant, went to study at the University of Leeds, undertaking research for a dissertation on 18th century religious life in Yorkshire. Valerie then worked for several organisations in the UK, from the Wordsworth Trust in Cumbria to the National Archives at Kew. In 2004, after attending the archive course at the University of Liverpool, she took up her first professional post for the Cumbria Archive Service at Barrow-in-Furness, followed by a contract with Durham University, cataloguing probate records of the Diocese of Durham. Valerie is looking forward to learning the history of Rochester and ploughing through its archives!'

In her introduction, Tessa went on to explain how over the past six months Valerie and FOMA volunteers had re-packaged and re-sorted an extraordinary amount of documentation in preparation for the exhibition: "Without all of their hard work, none of this today would have been possible," she concluded.

The Mayor of Medway, Cllr Ted Baker (pictured) was next on his feet to thank everyone involved in the project and declared the exhibition open with the words, "If we haven't got a history, we haven't got a future."





Pat Salter and Sue Haydock



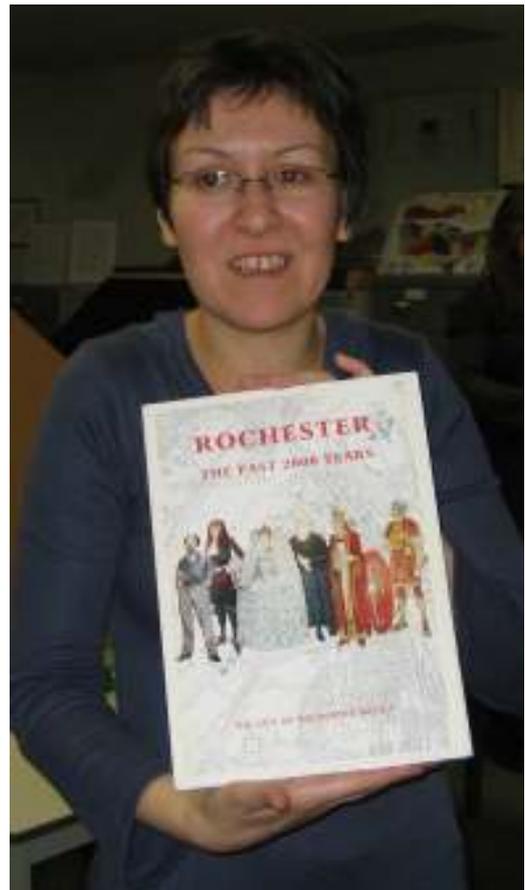
Kevin Russell, Betty Cole, Bob Ratcliffe and Brian Joyce tuck into the wonderful buffet prepared by Elaine Gardner



Cindy O'Halloran and Stephen Dixon



Alison Thomas and Helen Worthy



Right: Valerie and one of her leaving gifts, a book about the history of Rochester; another gift was an old engraving of the view from Strood of Rochester Bridge and Castle

Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

Alison Thomas

Archive and Local Studies Assistant, The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

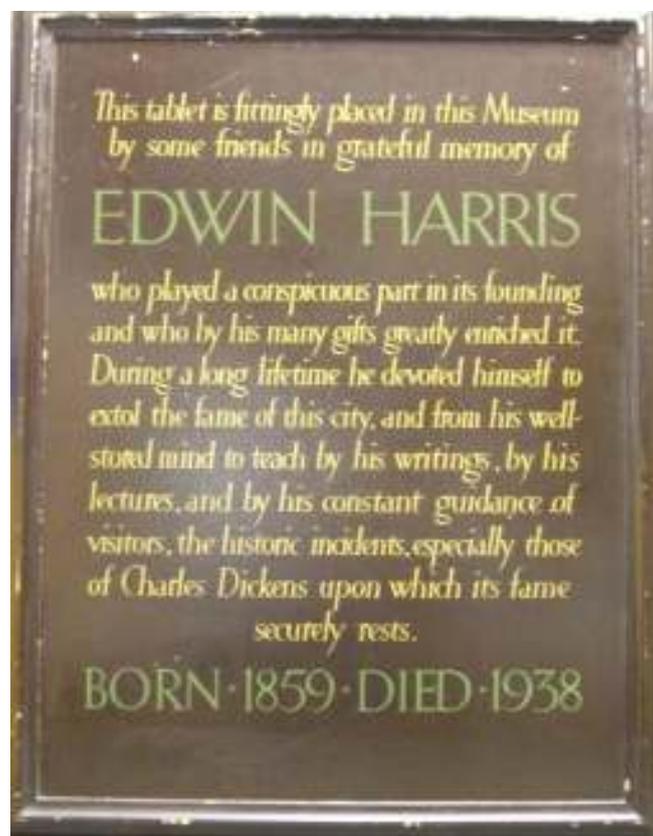


After completing a degree in medieval and modern history at the University of Birmingham, Alison Thomas trained as a teacher and worked in primary education for several years. Whilst bringing up her family she had various part time jobs within education ranging from playgroup assistant to special needs teacher. Alison left work to become a full time carer for four years, and joined MALSC as Archive and Local Studies Assistant at the end of February 2010.

In this twenty-fifth issue of The Clock Tower, Alison Thomas reflects on the series and brings it to a conclusion.

Edwin Harris wrote a series of articles for the Rochester Chatham and Gillingham Observer from 1932 to 1933, entitled *Recollections of Rochester*. Some of these articles have been reproduced over the last four years as a column for *The Clock Tower*. My predecessor, Janet Knight, started the column in November 2007, and the task passed to me when I started working for MALSC in February 2010.

Pat Salter, in her book, *A Man of Many Parts – Edwin Harris of Rochester 1859 -1958* has written a fascinating biography of a man who lived all his years bar one in Rochester. His father was a printer and Edwin followed in his father's footsteps, being apprenticed into the business at 89 High Street at the age of 13. He eventually retired in 1927 when the business was bought by W and J Mackay and Co. To quote Pat Salter, 'Edwin was a writer of both fact and fiction and unfortunately he sometimes combined the two!' (p.44). He was also a city guide, special constable, Dickensian and druid! His lasting influence on the City of Rochester is recorded on a tablet presented by his friends after his death and now in the keeping of The Guildhall Museum (see photograph).



In *The Clock Tower* we have reproduced some of Edwin's recollections of various Rochester scenes and landmarks, together with a variety of quirky local stories. Remember Mr Boulden's boast that he would race his barge against any other on the Medway for a wager of £100 – despite the fact he didn't have a barge! (Recollections No. 38, *The Clock Tower*, issue 15, August 2009). Or the ghostly sounds from number 157 High Street, which were discovered to be caused by a man with a wooden leg, visiting the empty property next door! (Recollections No.19, *The Clock Tower*, issue 12, November 2008). Do you also recollect how compensation had to be paid for the loss of the horse in 1300 when it was blown from Rochester Bridge into the Medway by a strong wind? (Recollections No. 33, *The Clock Tower*, issue 19, August 2010).

As this is the last article in this series I felt it would be appropriate to choose a recollection that shows the extent of Edwin's influence during his own time. In 1911 Edwin Harris was instrumental in the placing of the 25 plaques produced by the City of Rochester Society. These plaques commemorate some of the City's more famous residents and buildings. In 1930, Edwin was influential in obtaining yet another historical plaque.

Recollection No 60: Pilgrim's passage

'Black Boy Alley was the passage way from High Street to the north door of the cathedral. Sixty years ago it took its name from the public house on the western side of the alley, known by the sign of The Black Boy. Later when the Post Office was built on either side of the alley it was commonly alluded to as Post Office Alley, but never officially recorded by that name.

In the thirteenth century a gateway was made in the monastic wall to give an entrance to the pilgrim's worshipping at the shrine of Saint William in the cathedral and it is recorded in the histories of Rochester as St William's Gate or Pilgrim's Passage. In the directories of 1890-1931 the passageway is described 'to the precinct'. At the latter end of 1930 I wrote to the Dean and Chapter suggesting that this description was very inadequate and might, with great advantage, especially to visitors, be renamed either St William's Gate or Pilgrim's passage, thus conveying to the modern mind its ancient and historical importance. The following year, I was taking a party round the city when, to my surprise I caught sight [sic] of a board next the Midland bank with the wording: 'Pilgrim's Passage – this passage led to a gate called St William's Gate in the Priory Wall, and through it pilgrims passed to the north transept door of the cathedral and thence by the north choir aisle to the shrine of St William of Perth. Pilgrimages were made to this shrine from the middle of the thirteenth century until the destruction of the shrine in 1538.'

A plaque with the same inscription can still be seen in Black Boy Alley today (see photograph).

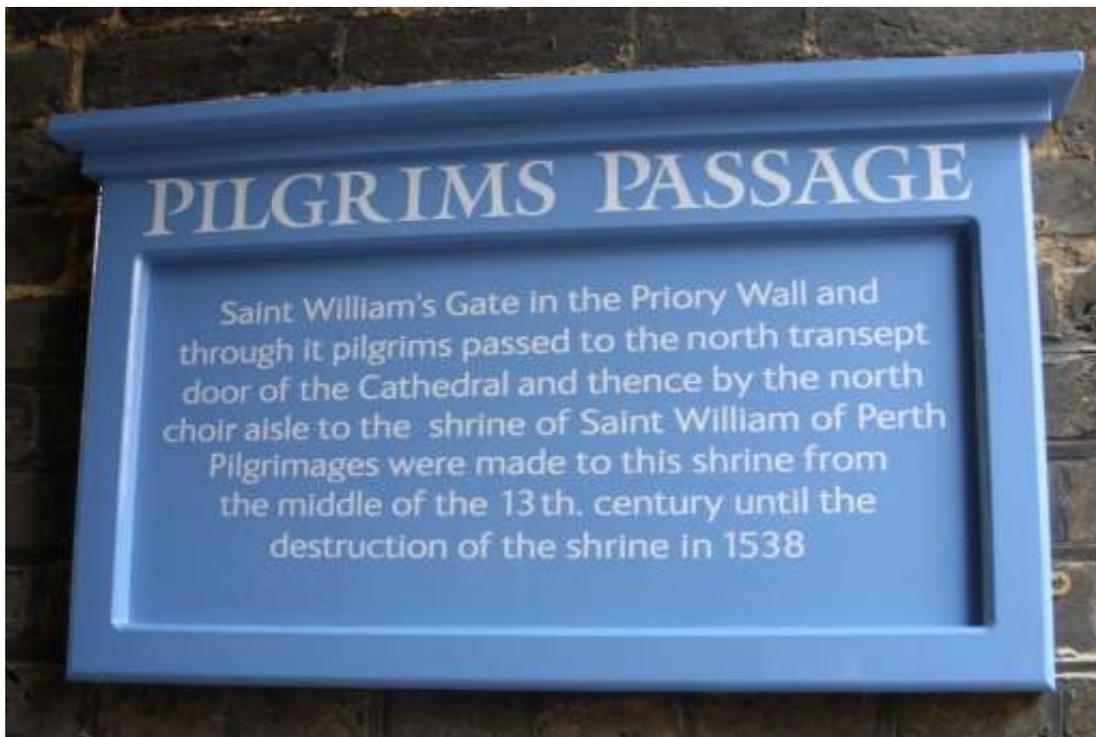
Finally, to turn from the historical to the modern. This final unusual story from Edwin's Recollections shows that concerns over the loss of our heritage are nothing new!

Recollections of Rochester No. 106:

Why Restoration House was Preserved. American effort to effect wholesale removal.

'When Mr Stephen Aveling passed away, the property was put up for sale by auction. It was bought by the tenants, Canon and Mrs Robins. They came straight away from the sale to my shop, knowing how interested I was in the house, to tell me that they had purchased Restoration House.

They further remarked that it would be preserved for a few years more intact, as one of the historic buildings of the city. They had been very anxious about the property for they had heard that a syndicate was willing to buy the property - at a price - not with the idea of preserving it, but of dismantling it: all the panelling, chimney pieces, staircases etc, would have been removed by them, and even possibly all the rest of the bricks and other material, which would have been sold to Americans.'



If you would like to continue reading Edwin's unique tales of Rochester then visit MALSC and ask to see *Recollections of Rochester*. Pat Salter's *A Man of Many Parts - Edwin Harris of Rochester 1859 -1938*, is also available at MALSC, and for sale at booksellers.

A Token in Time

Catharina Clement



In 2005, Catharina completed a BA in history at Canterbury Christchurch University, and then began a part-time PhD in local history entitled *Reactions in the Medway Towns 1640-1660*. She has been involved in various local history groups and projects such as FOMA, CDHS, and the Victoria County History EPE projects. She won the 2009 Friends Historical Society Award resulting in a paper on *Medway Quakerism 1655-1918* delivered at the Institute for Historical Research and later this year at the Friends Library in London. Currently Catharina works for MALSC.

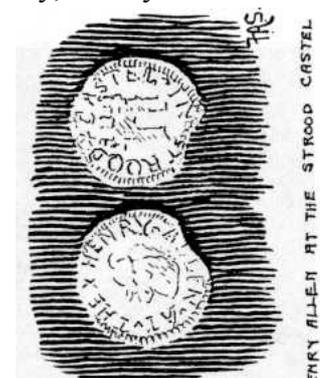
Part One - Strood Tradesmen's Tokens of the Seventeenth Century

Henry Smetham included in his *History of Strood* a background to several trade tokens that had been unearthed in the past and at the time were mainly held in the collection at the British Museum. Most of the images reproduced here are from his work and copies he had drawn. It would appear that Humphrey Wickham was the original collector of all these tokens, except for Edward Berblocke's. Wickham was a Strood antiquarian, who also drew sketches of local scenes; a book of which is held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

In the mid-seventeenth century there was a severe shortage of coinage. Amid the turmoil of the English Civil War, legislation to prevent the issuing of private tokens was rescinded, which permitted local tradesmen to issue their own tokens. The window of circulation was small and by 1674 this practice had again been outlawed under Charles II. Boyne calculates that the largest number of those found, outside London, were from Kent and over sixty of these survive for the Medway Towns. Comparing recent images of these tokens in the British Museum online database with Smetham's drawings taken from plaster cast copies in the late nineteenth century, it is evident how badly they have deteriorated over the past century or so. Tokens in private collections, such as Berblocke's, appear to have been maintained in a much better condition.

Henry Allen

There are two Henry Allen's in Strood in the mid-seventeenth century. As this token is undated it is difficult to ascribe it. However it most likely belonged to Henry junior, as his father was a grocer by trade. This token was issued at the Bull's Head in Strood, with an inscription, *Castel in Strood* on the reverse. It would appear that Henry had two taverns and Smetham places the Bull's Head at the junction with Gun Lane. Young Henry was married to Margaret and at the birth of his first child in 1654 described as a gentleman. Both father and son were active in Strood parish church, acting as churchwardens. In 1648 Henry senior was still part of the vestry, but by 1652 he had succumbed to poverty and was given three pounds for his relief. The 1658 churchwardens' accounts contain an entry for 2s from Henry Allen in rates, but given the father's dire circumstances in 1652 this was probably the son and tavern keeper.



Pictured: The Allen token (H. Smetham, The History of Strood)

Edward Berblocke

Not much of Berblocke's background in Strood is known. This is an unusual surname and a Henry Berblocke (or Bearblocke), a contentious local minister, was vicar of Frindsbury before the outbreak of Civil War; he could have been Edward's father. Edward's name appears on the 1658 Strood assessment for 1s, but no later entries have been found. According to Boyne, the token is inscribed on the obverse with the words *The Grocer's Arms*. This was not an inn, but the coat of arms of the Grocers' guild (as illustrated).



*Reproduced with the kind permission of The Worshipful Company of Grocers.**

Berblocke seems to have been a grocer by trade, a sharp contrast to his father's profession. No marriage has been found in either Rochester or Strood for the young man, although his token does indicate he was married at some point to a lady with the initial M. His token was adorned with the letters *EMB* on the reverse side. The first and second were generally the issuers initials, but the final one was usually that of the spouse. Frindsbury parish records have not survived before 1669, so his earlier life may have been recorded there. By 1664 he owned a substantial property in Rochester, suggesting the token was issued in the 1650s when he owned a business in Strood.

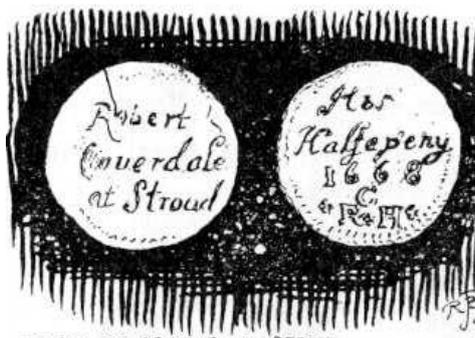


The Berblocke tokens; photographs taken from eBay

Robert Coverdale

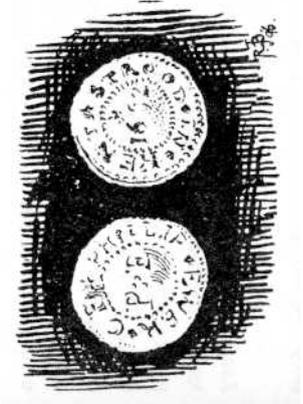
Smetham could find little about this man and I have been no more successful. The token is clearly inscribed 'of Strood.' Smetham has included this as from Strood, as did Boyne. However several other tokens originally attributed to Strood in Kent have since proven to be from Strood in Gloucestershire. There is a widow of this name in the 1658 church rates, who could be Robert's mother. In 1666 Coverdale and his wife Hester gave birth to a child, who was baptised in Strood St Nicholas. This information fits with the initials *RCH* on the reverse of the token, which was issued in 1668. This is the only surviving halfpenny token for the Medway Towns, as the others found so far have all be farthings.

The Coverdale token (H. Smetham, The History of Strood)



Philemon Ewer

Although the token is inscribed 'Phillip Ewer' this was probably Philemon Ewer. There is a long line of Ewers in Strood. The parish registers for the sixteenth and seventeenth century list several generations but some members of the family emigrated to America as part of the Puritan exodus in the 1630s. Philemon was a fairly wealthy man, who played an active role in the parish and was literate. His wife Joan died in 1660 and he followed fairly soon after. He left a will, which was contested in chancery and from this we know he was a tailor by trade. The first token is dated 1652, but bears no mark as to his occupation or marital status. A second token was issued in 1666 in almost identical format. However I am reasonably certain this is not the same man, because he had died by then and no Ewer appears among the Hearth Tax returns for Strood in 1664. Philemon was a traditional family name and so this may have been a son. Another son, Thomas, became a local Quaker, who was pursued by the authorities for his beliefs.



The Ewer token (H. Smetham, The History of Strood)

Henry Figgett

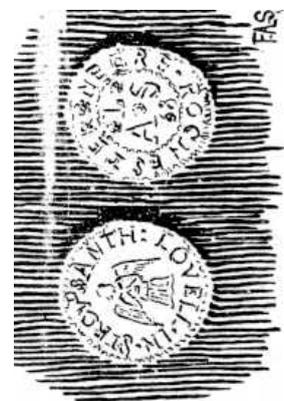
The Figgetts had a hundred year history in Strood before this token was issued. Henry Figgett was a draper by trade and a frequent churchwarden of the parish. His token is an early example from the Interregnum period and is dated 1654. During Cromwell's rule there was a great shortage of coinage and many traders seized the opportunity to circulate tokens once the legislation on their restriction was lifted in 1648. Figgett was an active member of the parish vestry and literate. He married his first wife, Mary, before 1654, but she died in 1659; her initial is stamped on the token inscribed *HFM*. His name appeared on an early parliamentarian assessment of 1642 and by 1660 he had been made a freeman of the city of Rochester. Following his marriage to his second wife, Elizabeth Brett, he demonstrated his loyalty to the Restoration of Charles II by taking the oath of allegiance and supremacy in August 1662 with his name duly recorded in the city minute book. He appears to have been a reasonably wealthy man as in the 1664 Hearth Tax returns he owned three properties in Temple Borough in Strood.



The Figgett token (H. Smetham, The History of Strood)

Anthony Lovell

There are Anthony Lovells in both Strood and Rochester at about the same time running hostelries. It would seem that they are related with the son owning the Angel in Strood, which was located at the junction of what is now North Street and the High Street. He was born and baptised in St Nicholas Rochester in 1625 and at some point prior to 1664 married his wife Susan. Her initial is engraved on the reverse of the token, *ALS*, issued in 1668. Whether it was he or his father, who owned property in Middle Borough in 1664 is unclear.



The Lovell token (H. Smetham, The History of Strood)

Constant or Constance Walsall

The issuer of this token had been married and widowed twice by 1667, when it was issued. Constance's first husband Richard Coaleman, a stiller and draper, died in 1654. She was quick to lose her widow status and remarry Francis Walsall, son of a former Rochester alderman Barnabas, in 1655. He was described as a gentleman on his marriage entry in the parish register, but the family were also well known brewers. There is a burial record in the Strood registers for a Constance Walsall in 1679, but this may well be her daughter, as her will was not proven till 1692. The token in question has a bird inscribed on the obverse and a still on the reverse side.



The Walsall token (H. Smetham, The History of Strood)

Part Two will look at some of the twenty or so Chatham tokens which survive.

Sources

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W. Boyne, *Tokens issued in the seventeenth century* (1858).

Williamson(ed), *Tokens issued in the seventeenth century* (1891).

H. Plomer(ed), *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Nicholas Strood 1555-1662*.

Harrington(ed), *The Hearth Tax Returns 1664*.

C. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester Diocese*.

Rochester Freeman Records

Rochester St Nicholas Parish Register

Strood St Nicholas Parish Registers

TNA: wills, 1642 tax assessment, chancery records

Photos of tokens as advertised for sale on eBay.co.uk

*The Worshipful Company of Grocers

The Livery Company plays an integral part in London life and is still involved in the election of the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs of the City of London. The first record of the body is in 1100 and today the Grocers' Charity still supports a considerable number of charitable causes, with an emphasis on scholarships and bursaries for young people. The Grocers' Company has been at the splendid Grocers' Hall since 1426 and its rooms are available for hire. More information is available on the Grocers' fascinating website, www.grocershall.co.uk.

Go Techno!

Brian Butler



Born on the Brook in Chatham, Brian Butler has had a varied career in hydraulic and pneumatic tubing and supplies, finance and insurance (when he was Union President), and retail distribution. He has always had an interest in history and genealogy and was a FOMA volunteer for the project to catalogue the Archives of Great Expectations.

Members may be interested to hear that I have been doing some work looking at some of the new technology and great websites out there to help us genealogists and local historians. Here are some of my top tips for 2012!

The Google Genealogist, Parts 1 and 2

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUsaxTM7yrw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HOARtRHv74>

A great Youtube video site with lots of hints and tricks - also a way of becoming a paperless genealogist.

mocavo.com

If you fancy being part of an internet archive group, this site has a massive collection of digitised books and a great number of records on line, such as Canterbury marriage licences.

Family Tree Apps

If you have a Smartphone or Iphone, you can now download family tree apps, such as Ancestry.com app. It saves carrying around tons of paper or a laptop, but beware – a tree can take up a lot of memory space.

Readers may recall the articles entitled *To Oz and Back* about Shadrach Edward Jones written by FOMA member Brian Butler (*The Clock Tower* Issue 15, August 2009 and Issue 18, May 2010). We are delighted to report that these have now been published in a book called *A Viking in the Family and other Family Tree Tales* by Keith Gregson. The book is published by the History Press, ISBN 978-0-7524-5772-7, at £9.99.

The Tales of Two Gordons

Just Another Visitor

Bob Ratcliffe

Bob Ratcliffe is a retired architect. He is President of The City of Rochester Society and a local historian; Bob is also a FOMA committee member.



April 5 1912 dawned as just another day in those halcyon years at the beginning of the twentieth century. Down at Southampton, the White Star's new liner, Titanic, was being made ready for her maiden voyage, just another liner of the multitude that were increasingly plying the North Atlantic route to the New World. In Bermondsey in south east London, young Percy Gordon had a day off and he and his friend had decided to spend it down in Rochester. Travelling by the South Eastern and Chatham's North Kent line, they alighted at Strood and made their way over Sir William Cubitt's fine iron bridge to Rochester High Street. No doubt they admired the castle and the cathedral as well as the multitude of hostelrys. In the late afternoon they realised they had missed their intended train back to London and so repaired to the Esplanade to watch activities on the river before going back over the bridge to Strood station.

Suddenly they became aware of a commotion on the pier. A small girl had fallen into the river and was being carried away on the tide. Rushing to the pier and without hesitation, Percy dived into the muddy waters and succeeded in bringing the little girl back to the waiting arms of those on the pontoon where she was given their undivided attention. But where was her rescuer? The river, robbed of one life, had claimed another, and the joy of those at the scene turned to despair at the tragic loss of a brave young man.

In due course sufficient money was raised by public subscription to pay for a tablet in memory of Percy Henry Gordon (pictured). It was affixed to the castle wall opposite the end of the pier and was unveiled by Lady Darnley in the presence of thousands of sympathetic onlookers. There it remains today, to remind us of the sacrifice of a brave young man one hundred years ago.



Major-General Charles George Gordon – His Local Connections

Odette Buchanan



Odette is a retired teacher and, of course, FOMA Secretary. She is fascinated by local history and is actively involved in many aspects of this. She is a City of Rochester Society visitors' guide, a steward and guide at Restoration House, she has researched and presented as talks many aspects of local history, especially Broom Hill. She is presently working on the book version of Broomhill – Strood's Hidden Gem and Wartime Memories of Strood. (If you have any please let her have them) Her book, Two Gentlemen of Strood, (short biographies of Henry Smetham and Rev. Caleb Parfect) is published by the City of Rochester Society. She has produced sundry interpretation boards around Strood and was involved in the now completed England's Past for Everyone Victoria County History Project.

I know there is interest in General Gordon this year because of its being a centenary year for the Royal Engineers (RE). It is one hundred and fifty years since the officer engineers of the former East India Company were absorbed into the Corps of Royal Engineers which resulted in the establishment of the school at Brompton for the technical education of RE Officers. It is also two hundred years since their name was changed to the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners, apart from the fact that their origins go back to Bishop Gundolf, William the Conqueror's *builder bishop*.

Gordon was born at Woolwich in 1833 and after school at Taunton, in Somerset, attended the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. He was only 5' 5" tall (just tall enough to be eligible for the Royal Engineers – their height requirement was 5'4"). He never married and was quite eccentric. He believed among other things that the Garden of Eden was on one of the islands of the Seychelles and that the world was enclosed in a hollow sphere with God's throne directly above Jerusalem. He also believed in reincarnation and became an Evangelical Christian in 1854. Nonetheless he became much more than just an able Engineer. When he returned from service in the Crimea in 1858, he was appointed instructor at the RE school at Brompton and promoted to Captain in '59, at only 26 years of age. He led the army that subdued risings in the Second Opium War and was given honours by both the British and Chinese governments. He became known as China Gordon. He served under the Khedive of Egypt and added the nickname Gordon Pasha. Then, after his death in the siege of Khartoum in 1885 he earned the title Gordon of Khartoum.

Gordon was lauded almost as much as the Duke of Wellington half a century previously. There are memorials of one form or another to him all over the world from Woking (a statue previously in the Sudan at Khartoum until independence), Aberdeen and the Isle of Wight in Great Britain to Armindale, Geelong, Brisbane and Melbourne in Australia and Vancouver in Canada. Both St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey honour him, as well. He is remembered in the Medway Towns by a house named after him at the Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, a primary school, various roads, and memorabilia in both the Cathedral and the Royal Engineers Museum at Brompton. Here there is also the statue of him on a camel. This was erected in 1890 after first being exhibited at the Royal Academy. After his death, his sisters saved most of his papers which were presented to the British Library in 1937. Many of Gordon's memorials are connected with education because of his strong belief in this as a way out of poverty. He was a very caring philanthropist and this is nowhere more evident than at our neighbouring borough of Gravesham. In 1865, then only 32, he arrived in Gravesend after quelling the Civil War in China. He was appointed Commandant of the Thames Forts with especial responsibility for reconstructing and updating the Thames defences: the Government still feared a French invasion. The War Department gave him Fort House to live in. This was a 17th century house that had formerly been Milton Church Rectory. The War Department had bought it as well as the Old St. Mary's Milton Chantry with grounds in 1797.

He became deeply involved with charity work. His friends William and Octavia Freese introduced him to the plight of the needy and poor and he helped out with soup kitchens at the Poor House, especially in winter when there was little employment. He was particularly concerned with the needs of the children; not only their abject poverty but also their want of education. He converted two rooms in his house into a night school for boys and later he rented a house in East Terrace for older children to gain a chance of higher education. He founded the Gravesend Ragged School and as well as these enterprises he later taught at the St. Andrew's Mission on the water front. He would visit the workhouse frequently with gifts of food and tobacco and often visited the homes of the poor and sick.

Gordon had to leave Gravesend in 1871 and it was not until after his murder at Khartoum in 1885 that it was realized many people in the town were still receiving payments and pensions from him, and some of these continued to be paid for over twenty years. There are many memorials and places of significance commemorating him around the town. Among other memorials, the secondary school that my children attended was called The Gordon School and the girls' uniform was a Gordon tartan kilt.

“Never Before in the History of Chatham...”

Brian Joyce



Brian Joyce is a semi-retired teacher who lives and works in the Medway Towns. He was born in Chatham and has always been fascinated by the history of the area. Brian is the President of the Chatham Historical Society and the author of several books, including The Chatham Scandal, Dumb Show and Noise and Chatham and the Medway Towns, a History and Celebration. With Bruce Aubry, Brian co-wrote In the Thick of It- Medway Men and Women in the Boer War, which was published by their own Pocock Press. Brian is currently working on a similar volume which will examine the experiences of men and women from the Medway Towns during the First World War.

In February 1911, the Methodist Central Hall in Chatham was the venue for a wedding of a very elderly local couple. Looking at this wedding for its own sake is interesting enough, but reading about it also reveals how people sought sensation and excitement outside of their homes in an age before radio and television. As was the case with so many widowers in Victorian England, William Hennen assumed he would end his days in the workhouse. Having outlived three wives, he entered the Medway Union workhouse around 1890 rather than being a burden on his daughters. During the winter, he did odd jobs around the workhouse buildings in Magpie Hall Road. When summer came, he undertook casual work for local farmers. Hennen had lived this life for nearly twenty years when, at the age of 94, he met 80 year old Fanny Wadhams, who was to become his fourth wife. The couple became acquainted in the workhouse, defying the strict segregation of the sexes there. Hennen's role as odd-job man meant that he often worked in the gardens, and it was there that the elderly couple snatched brief moments of courtship and where romance blossomed.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Herbert Asquith, acted as an unlikely cupid to the pair. They had started receiving the newly-introduced old age pension in early 1909, and this welcome source of income enabled them to contemplate setting up home together. The new pension arrangements helped in another way. The couple collected their money weekly at the sub-post office in Bow and Son grocer's shop in Mills Terrace. The manager, Douglas Lees, and his wife took an interest in William Hennen and Fanny Wadhams and started a subscription list for wedding gifts and donations. Helped by publicity in the local press, this initiative soon sparked the public imagination. Promises of furniture, crockery and cutlery flooded in. Gerald Hohler, Chatham's Member of Parliament donated £1 and George Fish, a Luton Road barber, promised Hennen free haircuts and shaves for the rest of his life. For the wedding itself, Messrs. Hinds the jewellers donated a 22 carat gold wedding ring for Fanny Wadhams, and her flowers were provided free of charge by Lawrence the florist.

So on Valentine's Day 1911, the Methodist Central Hall witnessed unprecedented scenes. The *Chatham Observer* believed, "Never was such a wedding seen or heard of in this district before." As much as an hour before William Hennen's arrival, huge crowds had gathered excitedly outside the Central Hall. The *Chatham News* reported:

"When at length the main entrance was open, the crowd rushed in and took the place by storm. Every square inch of room was occupied, and so great was the pressure that the windows around had to be raised, this bringing into the general assemblage the people who were standing in what is known as 'the crush hall'. When the officiating minister (the Reverend Richard Hall) arrived, it was to see crowds of people standing upon the tip-up seats, and the edge of the platform lined with cameras."

The hysteria intensified outside the Central Hall when William Hennen, resplendent in a frock coat and buttonhole, arrived in a motor car lent for the day by Robins and Day of Rochester. As Hennen, flanked by police officers and his best man Douglas Lees, pushed his way through the jostling throng and into the Central Hall, the car returned to Mills Terrace to collect the old man's fourth bride.



*The interior of the Methodist Central Hall;
from a postcard, Brian Joyce*

The crowd went wild when Fanny Wadhams arrived, in a dress of dark grey serge with a bodice trimmed in grey and white frilling and a black and silver bonnet trimmed with pink roses. The Reverend Hall was clearly unsettled by all this. As the *Chatham News* put it, “To most people it was as though they were watching a pantomime rather than a religious ceremony.” The crowd inside had turned into a mob, standing on their seats and refusing the minister’s heated requests for them to sit down. At one point, the panic-stricken clergyman threatened to call in the army. As the over-stretched police battled to clear the gangways so that the bride could walk down the aisle, the Reverend Hall called on them to telephone for reinforcements, which they did. Meanwhile, the Methodist minister himself cleared away press photographers who were swarming around the front of the platform. Even a miffed representative of the *Daily Mirror* received short shrift from the Reverend Hall, and apart from a few pressmen who had received prior permission, most were forced outside. “When we next saw them,” said the smugly favoured *Chatham News*, “they were poking the noses of their cameras from the windows of shops opposite.”

The wedding ceremony was conducted in a febrile atmosphere with the Reverend Hall frequently having to raise his voice above the hubbub. Once the formalities were over, the crowd inside the Central Hall rushed for the exits, spilling out into the High Street and jamming it from Military Road to Clover Street. Confetti, some of it still in its box, was hurled at the happy couple as they emerged from the Central Hall. People in the crowd lunged at the bride and her bridesmaid Mrs Lees, trying to grab their bouquets as souvenirs. Several women fainted in the swaying crush, and pickpockets reaped substantial takings. The bride and groom, hidden inside a protective scrum of police officers, finally made it safely to the motor car.

The *Chatham Observer* noted, “So great was the press, that it was with the utmost difficulty that the chauffeur threaded his way through the excited though good-humoured throng, and it is not surprising that the old couple felt somewhat bewildered.” The crowd hurled shoes at the car as it transported the exhausted old couple to their wedding breakfast at Mills Terrace. Crowds cheered in the street outside and then followed Mr and Mrs Hennen to their new two-roomed home above a shop in Sturla Road. As William Hennen observed, “Well, we brought the people out.”



*The bridal party;
from a postcard, Brian Joyce*

Jean Skilling, FOMA Treasurer, has a postscript to the story:

William and Fanny are buried in Chatham Cemetery. William died at the Medway Union and was buried in the unconsecrated section of Chatham Cemetery on 11th June 1913 aged, according to the burial register, 93. Fanny lived for a further 5 years and also died in the Workhouse aged 87. She was buried elsewhere at Chatham Cemetery on 22nd January 1918.

William Bartholomew - A Man of Probity

Pauline Weeds



In 2005 FOMA member Pauline Weeds was awarded the Higher Certificate in Genealogy by The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies. She was a researcher for the England's Past for Everyone projects and has also transcribed for a Kent Archaeological Society project. Pauline is a volunteer at MALSC, and a volunteer custodian at Eastgate House. Recently she has started training to be a City of Rochester Society guide; she is also a member of the Users' Forum at the Centre for Kentish Studies at Maidstone.

Part One

At about half past four on Monday, 6 May 1878, a funeral cortege left the house on the corner of Delce Lane and Foord Street in Rochester, bound for St Margaret's Cemetery in Maidstone Road, Rochester. The coffin, containing the remains of the deceased, was a large one made of teak, polished and mounted with massive brass plates, surrounded by hundreds of brass headed nails. It had, purportedly, been made by the deceased gentleman himself and kept in his living room for some thirty years, awaiting this melancholy occasion.¹ The deceased was one William Bartholomew who had come to Rochester in his youth and settled in Delce Lane. He had formerly been one of the leading men of the United Free Methodists in the district and in politics had been a strong supporter of Liberal principles in the city. For much of his life he had worked as a carpenter and builder, although by the time of his death he was considered a *gentleman*.

Early Life

William Bartholomew was born at Shipbourne in Kent on 20 October 1792.² He was baptised at the parish church of St Giles in Shipbourne just three weeks later on 11 November, the son of William and Mary Bartholomew. This is almost certainly the William Bartholomew and Mary Cripps who married at neighbouring West Peckham on 1 June 1787. William, a house carpenter of West Peckham, was a minor aged just 19 and his father, Henry Bartholomew, a house carpenter, of Northfleet, gave his consent to the marriage. Mary, also of West Peckham, was aged 23.³ William and Mary appear to have had at least one other child, a daughter, Sarah, baptised at West Peckham on 26 June 1795. It is tempting to say that William must have been connected to the not insignificant Bartholomew family of Oxenhoath Manor in West Peckham, a family that in the late 17th century, had also been settled in Rochester, but so far no connection has been found.

It has not been possible to ascertain when William's family moved to Rochester. A William and Mary Bartholomew had two children baptised at St Nicholas' Rochester, John on 28 January 1798 and Margaret Elizabeth on 8 February 1801. However, there were other Bartholomew families in the area at the time and no evidence has yet been found that these two children were in fact William's brother and sister. The family, however, do appear to have been in Rochester by 1812, when a William Bartholomew was assessed in St Margaret's parish for 6d (2½p) Land Tax on an annual rental value of 10s (50p). Later entries suggest that this was probably William Bartholomew senior. Although nothing is known of young William's schooling, his later life and the good strong signatures on his marriage certificates suggest that he had quite a good education. Canon Wheatley in his *Historical Notes* tells us that William was a young lad who "by his uprightness and industry, won the patronage of an old man who had a considerable number of leasehold houses in

Delce and Troy Town. He was a jobbing builder, and he did the repairs of these properties, and collected the rents, and made himself generally useful to his patron, upon whose death the property became his.” Unfortunately Canon Wheatley does not give William’s *patron* a name and I have been unable to find out who this might have been.

By 1820 William junior can also be found in the Land Tax Assessments for St Margaret’s. He is almost certainly the William Bartholomew junior who was the proprietor of a property occupied by one Melina Barlow at an annual rental of 10s (50p). He may also have been the occupier of a property owned by Mr James Best, the Chatham brewer, which had an annual rental value of £1 10s (£1.50). By this time William was undoubtedly ready to get himself established in the city. Now 27 years old he was walking out with a young lady, Harriot Watkins, whom he was hoping to make his wife in the not too distant future. The marriage did in fact take place at St Margaret’s Church on 8 October 1820, just two weeks before William’s 28th birthday. Harriot was a little older than William having been born on 19 September 1791, the daughter of Thomas Watkins, a tallow chandler and grocer in the parish, and his wife Sarah. William and Harriot were prominent members of the Rochester Wesleyan Bethel Chapel, which had been built on St Margaret’s Banks adjoining the High Street in 1810.⁴ They frequently appear in lists of contributors to the Chapel and in the 1830s and 1840s they were class leaders and referred to as Brother Bartholomew and Sister Bartholomew. In 1846 William became one of the Chapel’s Stewards for the Poor, a role in which he continued for several years. Throughout his life William was concerned with the plight of the poor.

By the time of the 1841 Census, William’s father was living with William and Harriot at their home in Delce Lane where William junior is shown as a builder.⁵ Although recorded as aged 79 on this census (he was probably about 74) his father was still working as a carpenter. William’s mother was probably the Mary Bartholomew, aged 72, of John Street, who was buried at St Margaret’s on 5 January 1832. His father died in 1848 and was buried at St Margaret’s on 30 July in that year. William suffered a further sad loss the following year when his wife, Harriot, died. In accordance with their Wesleyan beliefs, Harriot was buried at the Bethel Chapel Cemetery on 10 August 1849. No evidence has been found that William and Harriot had had any children and when the next census was taken in 1851, William is shown as living alone at his home in Delce Lane, where he was a builder, aged 58.⁶

Notes

1. *Chatham News* 4 and 11 May 1878; *Chatham Observer* 4 and 11 May 1878.
2. Memorial, St Margaret’s Cemetery.
3. Marriage Licence, 30 May 1787.
4. Wright’s *Topography of Rochester* 1838.
5. Ref HO107/491/5.
6. Ref HO107/1610/23.

Bibliography

Giles Falconer: *Popular Politics and Party Politics in Nineteenth Century Rochester, Bygone Kent*; Vol 8 No.3 Mar 1987.
F F Smith: *A History of Rochester*, 1928.

The Outings and Excursions of the People of the Medway Towns in the Nineteenth Century

Peter Lyons



Peter Lyons is a volunteer at MALSC and has worked on local history research for the Victoria County History with Dr. Andrew Hann and Dr. Sandra Dunster. Peter is retired after a career 'spent mostly in banking.'

Part One

Records are rather sparse for such activities in the earlier part of the century, newspaper reports not starting until the 1850s, so apart from local venues that were reached by road or river the situation was as follows. Before 1830 travel was a pastime for the wealthy who, if they did not possess a coach, hired one, for others there was the public coach which was unreliable and unpunctual. Steamers enabled the masses to travel cheaply and the Thames steamer chugged to Gravesend or (and?) Margate in six or nine hours depending on the tide.

The coming of the railways increased people's mobility, but the steamer remained the cheaper form of transport. It was Sir Rowland Hill, chairman of the Brighton Railway Company in the 1840s, who was said to have introduced the *excursion* train. The *excursion* enabled people to travel cheaply, and it was financially advantageous to take a return ticket, or to travel at certain times during the week, and in parties. Firm's outings, school treats and similar occasions enabled considerable fare reductions to be made.¹

Travel by hoys, sailing packets and yachts to the Kent resorts was possible and popular because of the cost but not to be relied on for a day excursion of any distance:

'They sometimes make the passage (from London) in eight hours and sometimes in two or three days, just as the winds and tides happen to be for, or against them.'²

And, as is common with sea travel, it was not always comfortable. An observer commented:

'Packet just arrived. People just landed from ye packet. Fatigued and faded – some Sick some Invalid wrapped up in Great Coats with their bags and baskets of provisions. High Wind. Ladies Petticoats blowing over their heads...Returning the cheapest way all sick. Mama sucking ye Brandy Bottle. Captain Rowe at the helm – Miss puking up her inside- some eating, some smoking, some playing at Cards- some singing, some drunk.'³

So prior to the advent of rail and steam, group activity was restricted but not just by reason of lack of train or steamboat. Working hours were long, six days in the week, and holidays few. The state of the roads would also have had to be taken into consideration.

However by the end of the century, with shorter hours, bank holidays and a more relaxed attitude by employers, these outings were very popular. The newspaper reports will only reflect a fraction of those trips undertaken and many would have gone unreported. In Wapping every pub had an outing and such a practice would surely have had its counterpart in the Medway Towns. Each year in the summer every public house in our community would have its annual outing known as the Beano and all year men would pay into the Beano Club. Then, when the day came, there would be enough money for the treat. This was for men only and it was always held on a Sunday.

‘About 8 o’clock we would all gather to watch for the brake. All the men came dressed in their best clothes. Each would have his packet of sandwiches tied with a bright red or green handkerchief. Crates of beer would be loaded into the brake as soon as it arrived and the men would climb in. The driver would get into his dickey seat and with him came the man who sat next to the driver and who always carried a cornet. When all was ready he would sound a loud fanfare...About eleven at night we would hear the sound of the cornet player as the men returned. Most of them were drunk, but they sang and laughed as they let off coloured lights. All declared next day that they had had a wonderful time.’⁴

However, Sunday outings did not meet with the approval of all:

‘The rivalry of these cheap Sunday excursions with public worship and with Sunday schools, the increased labour imposed on the servants of the company and their enforced absence from public worship; the increase of toil in the case of omnibus servants, leading to the great evil of almost unrelieved toil; the multiplication of open refreshment hours; the creation of an evil habit, in the case of many young persons, of taking their meals and refreshments at public houses on a Sunday; the opportunity afforded to anti-religious groups of impressing their contempt for religion on the seaside and other communities. These are some of the “great evils” against which the Committee on Excursions seek to enter a serious protest.’⁵

Notes

1. *Victorian Entertainment* – Alan Delgado pp 84, 85.
2. *Archaeologia Cantiana*; Vol. CX1, The Significance of the Hoy to Margate’s Early Growth as a Seaside Resort – John Whyman – John Lyons p21.
3. *Archaeologia Cantiana*; Vol. CX1, The Significance of the Hoy to Margate’s Early Growth as a Seaside Resort – John Whyman – James Gilray p30.
4. *Between High Walls* – Grace Foakes pp. 47-48.
5. Letter to the Times 20.7.1878 from The Lord’s Day Observance Society.

Request for Material

The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre would like to expand its biography base to include more variety and diversity. Any information or material on local *celebrities*, past or present, with connections to the Medway area by birth, residence or close links would be much appreciated. This can include families as well as business partnerships. Particularly welcome would be material on Medway’s *ethnic* families or persons and Rainham individuals, which are at present under represented in our collection.

Please contact Catharina Clement at MALSC on 01634 332714

A FOMA Retrospective

In celebration of 25 issues of *The Clock Tower*!

Alison Cable,
Borough Archivist

Having arrived to take up the post of archivist in November 2008, FOMA was already up and running -and with a major project to get started. Within a week or so of my arrival, we began working on the Archives of Great Expectations HLF project. The aim of the project was to catalogue all the surviving records of Rochester City Council and to devise an outreach programme to ensure that the collection would reach a broad audience. So at the start of 2009, not only did we have to plan a launch event, but we needed to recruit a project archivist to get the project started! It was a bit of an uphill struggle to recruit the right person, however, assisted by Lyn Rainbow at Medway Council and the Friends' Tessa Towner, after three rounds of interviews, we eventually appointed Valerie Rouland.



The project has been magnificently steered by the FOMA Committee and we are on target with everything we told the Heritage Lottery Fund that we would do! Valerie tackled the cataloguing with gusto and seemed pretty much unfazed by the hundreds of boxes of goodness-knows-what (a less experienced archivist would, I think, have struggled to get around the complexities of city council structures). The cataloguing has been completed to a very high standard and is now available in hard copy and on CityArk, our online archive catalogue. In addition, Valerie and the team of volunteers have created a superb exhibition of highlights from the collection, and the recent launch of this was a great success. This year will see (sadly) the end of Valerie's contract, but we will still be working on the final stage of our project. This final strand will concentrate on outreach-making the collection relevant to students and local researchers. There will be a huge emphasis on working with teachers and finding documents that help them to deliver their history curriculum.

In addition to overseeing the HLF project, I have had several other projects of my own including the mini- exhibition of the *Textus Roffensis* at Rochester Cathedral in July 2010. A seemingly simple request to display this rare and significant volume became an all-consuming task – and a very steep learning curve- particularly as no budget had been allocated and the insurance company (quite rightly) had very exacting demands! The exhibition went ahead with some 2,000 people viewing the *Textus* over a three-day period and so began a really rewarding working relationship with the team at the Cathedral.

Other projects I have been involved with include the Screen Archive South East project, *Medway on Screen*, which collected memories about people's experiences of living and working near the River Medway, and the rolling programme of parish surveys, church visits and advice on how to store records and what to retain. In addition, Irina Fridman and I arranged the loan of selected items from the Percy Fitzgerald Collection to a major Dickens Exhibition in at the Château D'Hardelot, near Boulogne, in 2011.

Highlights of the last three years have included meeting Miriam Margolyes (when we were

presented with our Archive of the Year award by *Your Family History* magazine in 2011); attending Michael Wood's key note speech on the *Textus Roffensis* ; and speaking with a lovely old gentleman in the searchroom who told me stories about his recollections of being in the workhouse in Eastry and Medway in the 1930s. It doesn't get more varied than that.

Stephen Dixon,

Archive Service Manager
Essex Record Office

The year 1990 saw the City Council's accumulation of records brought together under one roof as negotiations had envisaged, meeting one of the main practical requirements of the local authority, which had inherited collections and unweeded filing kept for too long in *ad hoc* conditions from three predecessor authorities, Rochester, Chatham and Strood Rural District. Some relocation of records had already taken place in the 1980s, for instance from Frindsbury Hill (Strood RDC) and Maidstone Road, Rochester (Rochester City Council) and Chatham Town Hall, to the Guildhall Museum and the now long demolished (and no doubt forgotten) museum annexe in Corporation Street. This left mainly the contents of Gun Wharf to weed and relocate to Strood. I had a predecessor as City Archivist, Helen Ford, who served from 1987 to 1989 and who ably equipped the new facilities and made some headway with collection management.



There were many highlights during my 18 and a half years at Strood, *The Land of Used-to-Be*, in the words of one of my favourite *Clock Tower* columnists, Odette Buchanan. These included the arrival of local studies colleagues and their collections from Rochester and Chatham in March 1993, heralding the opening of the Rochester-upon-Medway Studies Centre in April that year with much enlarged searchroom and offices on the first floor of the building. There was the provision of CityArk Phase I in the public searchroom in about 1995 to 1997 by which customers had access to a primitive Uniplex database to the collections, then its replacement by the Intranet version of CityArk also in the searchroom in 1997 to 1999 and the launch on the night of 13/14 October 1999 of CityArk Phase II, the Internet version of the database. I believe this was the first online local government archives database, preceding the Public Record Office Procat system (of early 2000) and Essex Record Office's Seax system. The registers of St. Matthew's Church Borstal were published on CityArk in 2001, constituting the first parish registers published online by a Diocesan Record Office, I think, and I was able to expand this into Medway Ancestors with a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. The images had to be uploaded manually rather than automatically, a task in which I shared. Images of other record series were fast added but the publication of a moviebase was the next digital step forward.

At this point I must pay tribute to the staff of the City Council secretariat who undertook to word process all the existing manual descriptive lists in the mid 1990s. The manual lists had been compiled by Jenny Sivyer (formerly Brown), Archives Assistant 1989 to 1998 or by Kent County Council, the previous custodian of some of the collections. Without this labour intensive work, there could have been no Uniplex database or even an online Internet database: the Uniplex database was converted into Word 6, enabling next a conversion from Word 6 into HTML, thereby leading to the Intranet or Internet databases.

A second HLF grant, obtained by Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme, enabled the completion of the arrangement and listing of the family, estate and business records of the Earls of Darnley of Cobham Hall as part of the channel tunnel rail link mitigation project, carried out over 14 and a half months by Nicola Waddington. The Rochester Cathedral archives were transferred from Maidstone to Strood in 1992 and this culminated in greater awareness of the importance of the Textus Roffensis, the winner of joint first place in the British Library's Turning the Pages competition and online digital exhibition in 2007.



Contrasting memories include visiting the underground factory tunnels and deep air raid shelters beneath Rochester Airport where we salvaged the photographs of Blaw Knox; removing the entirety of the parish records from the tower of Holy Trinity Church, Dartford, by hand and down the spiral staircase; salvaging business records from a coal bunker beneath New Road Avenue; relocating the archives of Gillingham Borough Council to Strood in 1998; receiving several deposits of the records of the Jezreelites which had long been thought to have been lost; retrieving the Rochester map of 1822 from the attic of a local private school and driving past and waving to those three hapless individuals tasked with carrying it all the way from Maidstone Road, Rochester to Strood; calendaring the Latin deeds known as the Gillingham Manuscripts; and securing the withdrawal from auction and purchasing the title deeds of Restoration House.

My biggest and most difficult challenge was during the period 1997 to 1998 when in addition to preparing for the transition to unitary authority and planning the acquisition of the records of Gillingham Borough Council, I had to specify and monitor a capital scheme for the installation of a sprinkler system and mobile shelving system. A more prosaic achievement was the introduction of a paying records management service to Medway Council from 1998.

Stalwarts of the service were Patricia Salter, Senior Archives Assistant (1987 to 1997) and Derek Moore (1997 to 2007). Derek bore the major part of the burden of uploading the Medway Ancestors images and introduced a skilled hands-on approach to packaging our most fragile documents including glass plate negatives and the medieval cathedral charters.

Perhaps the high note was drawing together the local research community and other interested parties to buy at auction Robert Sands' account of HMS Temeraire's part in the Battle of Trafalgar in the bicentenary year 2005, not only to secure this for the Medway Towns but of course because it resulted in the forming of the Friends of Medway Archives, which should be the envy of all other record offices for the enthusiasm and commitment of its members and the quality of its newsletter, *The Clock Tower*.

As time passed in my role at Medway, I became more conscious of the lack of attention given to the biggest collection and the most important local government collection in my custody, the Rochester City archives. The Rochester City archives formed the symbolic heart of the local government collections and by right should have had first call on my services. They confronted me each time I walked into the strongroom but by the late 1990s I was able only to keep up with the accessioning of new additions to the repository and arrangement and descriptive listing of collections had become a thing of the past. The collections housed on the premises had increased twenty-fold during my time at Medway. This meant the processing of the Rochester City archives would have to be undertaken as a special project, by a project archivist supported by grant funding, as previously with the Darnley collection, and my last duty was to set this in motion. I congratulate all

those involved in Archives of Great Expectations for bringing the project to culmination so successfully.

In my present position I am responsible for the team of 37 that makes up Essex Record Office and the Business Support Team of the wider Heritage Service. Our facilities include a conservation studio, digitisation studio, the Essex Sound and Video Archive which has two specialist repositories, a public playback room and sound studio, six large repository rooms and a large searchroom. In November 2011 we launched Essex Ancestors, a project whose name was influenced by Medway Ancestors, thus creating something of a trans-Thames approach to making parish registers accessible online. The Essex version is pay-to-browse and at the time of writing (13 January 2012) has achieved a net income of £29,000, almost enough to have recouped the development cost.

Dare I say I am an honorary life member of FOMA and I continue to observe developments at Medway with affection and interest through *The Clock Tower*. Staff of MALSC and Friends are always welcome at ERO.



Cindy O'Halloran

MALSC Senior Archive and Local Studies Assistant

As we look back over the past 25 issues of *The Clock Tower* we can also reflect on the changes that have taken place at MALSC during that same period. Following the rush some seven years ago now to raise money to buy the Robert Sands document, Stephen Dixon first mooted the idea of having a Friends' Association. We started with a small group of enthusiasts under the Chairmanship of Roy Murrant, registered as a charity, and began to recruit new members. Thanks to the prowess and enthusiasm of Amanda Thomas, *The Clock Tower* was born shortly afterwards (Issue One, pictured) and has flourished ever since. Stephen moved on several years later to his current position as Manager at Essex Archive Office, and was replaced by Alison Cable, who joined us from the East Kent Record Office. Roy stepped down as Chairman and Tessa Towner took over the reins of office.



Since the formation of FOMA, MALSC has had many staff changes. We have said goodbye to some long term members of staff, Derek Moore who was senior member of staff, left just after FOMA was set up. He has been enjoying his retirement for some five years now, caravanning and playing music at his folk club. He has also taken part in Medway Library events in the branches, singing and entertaining us with his stories of his childhood in India. In 2009 we said au revoir to Janet Knight who had been the longest serving member of staff after Stephen. Janet's enthusiasm for her work at MALSC was legendary. "Ask Janet," was the watchword, such was her knowledge of the resources at the Study Centre. She arranged events galore, helped hundreds of researchers with their problems, and assisted new staff to find their way around. We managed to retain Janet as a casual member of staff and she still comes in to help when required. Last year April Lambourne left us to enjoy retirement and travel in her new caravanette. She spent six weeks in the south of France to shake the dust of MALSC out of her hair but we are very grateful that she has returned as

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 1: Spring 2006



The official launch of *Medway Ancestors* took place at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Strood, on 14th December 2005.

Cutting the ribbon (from left to right) is John Leigh Pemberton of the Heritage Lottery Fund Committee South East, Tessa Towner, Friends' Vice Chairman, Patricia Salter, Friends' Vice President, Roy Murrant, Friends' Chairman, Cllr Sue Haydock, Medway Council, Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist, and Brian Kingsley-Smith, Friends' Vice President.

Medway Ancestors is Medway Council's project to publish images of the original parish registers in its custody on the Medway Archives website, *CityArk* (cityark.medway.gov.uk), made possible by a grant of £49,500 by the Heritage Lottery Fund under the *Your Heritage* scheme. The registers are held on deposit from the local parish churches and cover the Rochester Archdeaconry area, extending from Dartford and Gravesend in the west to Rainham in the east, and focusing on the Medway Towns. *Medway Ancestors* is already proving to be a huge success with almost 33,000 researchers worldwide visiting the site between 14th December 2005 and 28th February 2006.

a volunteer to assist with projects. We have also lost some of our stalwart volunteers over this period including Jack Hooper, Vince Rogers and Reuben Child who, whilst not being FOMA members, contributed enormously to the Study Centre and we are very sorry to have lost their individual expertise. New staff have also joined us. Nikki Pratt who had trained as a conservator and spent some time working at the Natural History Museum, and Catharina Clement who joined us from Gravesham Libraries and is a regular contributor to *The Clock Tower*. Alison Thomas joined us when Janet left; she originally taught infant and special needs children and studied 17th Century Kentish history for her degree. Our newest member of staff is Helen Worthy who joined us this summer. Helen also has a museum background, having worked at the British Museum and latterly had been working as a teaching assistant. Since the formation of FOMA there have also been many changes in the way that we work at MALSC. The advent of computerisation including the introduction of CityArk and our Ancestry subscription has changed what we can offer our users and the way in which we do so. Many more of our service users are remote visitors who never actually set foot in the Study Centre but access the online records. CityArk, for example, has around 12,000 users every month and the service is accessed from every part of the globe. This gives us the opportunity to serve customers who may never otherwise visit us; *The Clock Tower* is also available to remote users with the online version. Much more of the work that we do at MALSC is now based on outreach work with groups such as schools and colleges.

We have also expanded our exhibitions displaying them in the community, using the local libraries and Eastgate House as venues. We will also be undertaking more of our talks in community hubs and libraries and which will enable access by many more people.

The completion of the HLF project, relisting the City of Rochester records, is also a new venture for us, being entirely volunteer led. It has led to a wonderful exhibition and more work that the volunteers will shortly undertake with outside groups. The future will see much more in the way of partnership working, leading to some very exciting community based projects that anybody can be involved in. We currently have around 70 volunteers who all contribute to researching or helping at the Study Centre in various forms. Many of the things that they have achieved we could not do using staff alone. We look forward to the next 25 issues of *The Clock Tower* and all the wonderful contributions our readers send in. If you have some research you would like to share - don't be shy!

Odette Buchanan,
FOMA Secretary



Well, here we are, the twenty-fifth edition of *The Clock Tower*. I'm not going to say 'how time flies' or 'it seems like only yesterday that...' they are such banal clichés. However, I well remember the Inaugural Meeting in the Mayor's Parlour concerning the dear departed Aveling and Porter building, and then the FOMA AGM in 2008. I didn't come to join FOMA, I went because I was involved in the research for Andrew Hann's book about the Lower Medway Valley. Only when I was asked for £10 did I realize what was going on! (I'm very naïve – it felt like those meetings one gets lured to with promises of a free holiday, only to be told after at least two hours of jaw that to get the free holiday you have to sign up for a time share place.) Luckily, I happened to have a £10

note about my person and had listened to an impassioned plea from someone telling us all how MALSC desperately needed all the friends they could get. I've always felt sorry for people with no friends so I joined. But I am not sorry I joined.

Since 2008 I have contributed to *The Clock Tower* on a regular basis, and I make sure all the readers' letters get sent on to Amanda. I find our newsletter an interesting and stimulating read once a quarter, with a well-balanced variety of pieces full of information about little-known aspects of the Medway Towns. So – here's to the next twenty-five issues. Keep up the good work, Amanda, and thank you.

Dr Sandra Dunster

Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone and FOMA Committee Member

Looking back over the last twenty four editions of *The Clock Tower*, it is wonderful to see the variety of topics covered. Every edition I have received since I became a member of FOMA has shed light on at least one topic that is new to me and has given me food for thought. It is also good to have a regular update on the activities of FOMA and the latest news from the archives, particularly during the past few years with the excitement of applying



for and then being successful in obtaining the Heritage Lottery funding for the Archives of Great Expectations.

Another strength of this newsletter is the number of people who are involved in contributing articles. It is so encouraging to see the continuing interest in local history demonstrated by local people who are prepared not only to find out more about their particular area of interest, but also to make the additional effort required to communicate that to others.

Of course, all of this effort would be wasted if it weren't for the members of the FOMA committee who give so much of their time to edit, package and distribute *The Clock Tower*. All of this is done voluntarily and is testament to their commitment to the archives and to the history of Medway.

Both Andrew Hann, my predecessor on the Victoria County History project in Medway, and I have been very grateful to have been given a regular column here. This has enabled us to reach a far wider audience with news of the progress of the project and also to share some of the material that has been collected by the project volunteers. On the topic of the VCH project, I am pleased to say that I will shortly be receiving the proofs for *The Medway Towns* book. As long as there are no further delays at the printers, this should mean that the book will be published in 2012.

If you would like a preview of some of the material that is covered in the book, I will be giving an illustrated talk entitled *The Sights and Sounds of the Medway Towns* at MALSC at 2pm on Wednesday 22 February. Using contemporary images and maps, the talk will explore how the physical appearance of the towns changed between the sixteenth and the early twentieth centuries. At the same time extracts from written accounts from this period will provide impressions of the changing soundscape of the area. In short, what did the inhabitants of the Medway Towns see and hear as they went about their daily lives? For those of you unable to come along, I will share some of the material in a future issue of *The Clock Tower*.

Which brings me neatly back to this celebratory twenty-fifth edition. FOMA has good reason to celebrate its achievements – just look at the website to see how much has been covered by this quarterly publication over the past few years. I predict that *The Clock Tower* will continue to go from strength to strength in its next twenty-five editions and will be of continuing value to the local history community in Medway.



Amanda Thomas

Clock Tower Editor

A very big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the last twenty-five issues. To Stephen Dixon, for asking me to be Editor in the first place, and to everyone on the committee for putting up with my endless requests and for proof reading each issue. Thanks to Tessa Towner for her support and knowledge and to everyone for their friendship, and for not yawning when I mention Cliffe - or Lambeth - again. Thank you too to our wonderful FOMA members and all our readers far and wide who send me fascinating emails and letters.

Thank you everyone!

Magnum Opus

Catharina Clement

A review of the latest Medway titles.



The Chatham Scandal by Brian Joyce

Due to popular demand this book had now been reproduced in paperback. Brian Joyce provides an insight into the seamier side of Victorian Chatham and the *ladies of the night*. This account is set in the context of the battle by Parliament and the police to control prostitution, particularly in the naval and dockyard towns where the trade was prevalent. With its dockyard and army garrison, Chatham was a unique example of this problem. In an attempt to remedy this social issue Parliament introduced the Contagious Diseases Act in the 1860s and any women suspected of prostitution could be forced to undergo a medical examination to determine whether they had contracted any sexually transmitted diseases.

Part of Brian's case study examines the efforts of the anti-CD campaigner, Josephine Butler, local female activist, Annie Young, and local Quaker, Frederic Wheeler, to get this act repealed, as they did not consider this the best way to approach the problem. They also felt that many *innocent* young girls were subjected to this examination against their will. Brian Joyce highlights the case of seventeen year old Caroline Whybrow in his book and the treatment she was subjected to. This is a story of life in Chatham that is not dissimilar to today. The *red light* district may have moved a little away from the town centre, but is still an active trade. Chatham's Victorian social scene is also well portrayed in this account: the overcrowded and slum housing, the pubs full of drunken seamen and soldiers as well as the murky alleyways and lanes.

This book is based on part of Brian Joyce's work as a MA student. Brian has made good use of the local newspaper accounts and the Fawcett Library's facilities to give us a detailed description of one of the oldest trades. Since the re-launch of the book it has come to light that the Fawcett Library has images of both Wheeler and Young, but too late to benefit this work. The latest edition is well presented with a new jazzy cover and reasonably illustrated. At £9.99 it does not break the bank and makes a handy present; ISBN 0 9545785 6 2.

The Clock Tower is now fully indexed!

There is now a pdf on the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html) which lists the contents of all the issues since Number 1 in April 2006. In addition, each of the past issues now includes a list of contents; these are highlighted with an asterisk (*).

If you have missed any of the previous issues and some of the articles published, they are all available to read on the website. Read them again - *A Stroll through Strood* by Barbara Marchant (issue 4); *In Search of Thomas Fletcher Waghorn (1800-1850)* by Dr Andrew Ashbee (issue 6); *The Other Rochester and the Other Pocahontas* by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck (issue 6); *Jottings in the Churchyard of All Saints Frindsbury* by Tessa Towner (issue 8), *The Skills of the Historian* by Dr Kate Bradley (issue 9); *The Rosher Family: From Gravesend to Hollywood* by Amanda Thomas (issue 9); *George Bond, Architect and Surveyor, 1853 to 1914* by Pat Salter and Bob Ratcliffe (issue 10) plus all the regular features on the Victoria County History by Dr. Sandra Dunster and Dr. Andrew Hann, Edwin Harris by Janet Knight and Alison Thomas, not to mention regular contributors such as Betty Cole, Brian Joyce, JL Keys, Peter Burstow, Odette Buchanan and Catharina Clement.

Cindy's Little Gems

Cindy O'Halloran



Cindy is Senior Archive and Local Studies Assistant at MALSC, responsible for the daily management of the searchroom and non professional staff. She has worked at MALSC for six years following 12 years in branch libraries and as a teaching assistant at a local primary school. Cindy's interests include reading, gardening and anything to do with history, her main passion being the 17th century and the English Civil Wars.

Gillingham Freemans' Roll*

Among the records that are held at MALSC, many have quite beautiful examples of calligraphy and the first Gillingham Freeman's book has some exceptional examples. The last few pages of the book (pictured) were executed and painted by Ernest G. Richards and the miniature pictures at the foot of the pages are most beautifully executed. The page showing the entry for Alderman Giles Burton in 1950 has a wonderful painting showing firemen during the blitz. This relates to Alderman Burton's connection with providing a fire service for the town and his work with the Gillingham Voluntary Fire Brigade and their heroic efforts during World War II. Giles Burton served on the Town Council for twenty four years.

Also honoured on the same day was Alderman Mrs Bessie Jane Parr, J.P. She too had served twenty four years and was also the first woman to receive such an accolade from Gillingham Town Council. Bessie Parr had served on many public bodies within the Towns and the illustration of a mother and baby on her citation refers to her work as Chairman of the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee.



Mrs Parr recounted her first days as a Council Member when she was not made welcome, "The men folk were up in arms because a woman had dared to enter their sacred precincts." Despite the opposition that she encountered, she was encouraged by the Town Clerk who said, "Stick it, they need a woman here." Due to the length of time that both Aldermen had served they were affectionately known as Mother and Father of the Town. Of Ernest G. Richards I have been unable to find any information: perhaps a FOMA member may have some information? It is a shame that his artistry is little known.



*Bk 1; GBC/Fr/1
PICs x 2

Editor's Footnotes



Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. Born in Chatham, but now based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society, the North West Kent Family History Society, and The Council for British Archaeology; she has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association. Amanda was made a full member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists in 2008.

Family History: from Kent to Australia – and back!

Readers will recall how last autumn I travelled to Australia with my daughter, Georgie, where we visited the wonderful War Memorial museum in Canberra (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 24, November 2011). Our trip was a welcome break from everyday life, but it was also a poignant reminder of the importance of family ties across thousands of miles of land and sea, a tie which many share in the UK today.

Many Kentish folk have emigrated over the years, some of their own accord, others not. Transportation was set up not just to ease overcrowding in British prisons but also as a means of populating Australia, and for this reason, transportation was often the punishment for the most trivial of offences. Convicted criminals began their journey on one of the prison hulks moored on the Thames and Medway where they suffered the most appalling conditions. A good number did not survive their time on board, as the insanitary state of the hulks was the perfect breeding ground for disease, in particular for cholera which ravaged the hulks throughout the mid nineteenth century. Many convict records are now online and they are a fascinating resource and insight into how transportation was not merely a life changing event for the individual concerned but for their entire family. Some of my Australian cousins are descended from the Coulter brothers Samuel and Edwin from Aylesford who were transported to Australia for stealing in 1829 and 1836 respectively. Others in the Coulter family emigrated to join their siblings and cousins in Victoria (Edwin) and New South Wales (Samuel). Only very recently did I discover that Edwin and Samuel were also the uncles of my mother's great grandmother, Eliza Coulter, and as such are also related to many FOMA members, including Tessa Towner (See *The Clock Tower*, Issue 21, February 2011).

As far as I know, my own paternal ancestors arrived in Australia under their own steam in the Gold Rush of the 1850s, but another group journeyed to New South Wales a good decade earlier. I hoped this trip to Australia would uncover more about these two groups of people. In Victoria Georgie and I visited the Castlemaine Historical Society, where we met with third cousin, Noel Howard. Within minutes we were sitting at a desk, laptops out, assaulted on all sides with documents and information from the wonderful group of volunteers. For a minute I thought I was back at MALSC and I would see Alison Cable or Cindy O'Halloran saunter past. Our presence (and accents) caused some interest and the old phrase, "I'm sure I must be related to you!" was soon heard. Unlikely with the surname Jones, but as all family historians know, every hunch must always be investigated.

Our next port of call was close to the New South Wales border and the Alexandra Historical Society. Family History is in its infancy in Australia, as can be seen by the paucity of information on the Australian Ancestry website. However, they are catching on fast and the town of Alexandra is most certainly flying the flag with gusto. My ancestors had been early occupants of this place in



Noel Howard and Amanda Thomas at work at the Castlemaine Historical Society, at the former Court House, Castlemaine, Victoria.

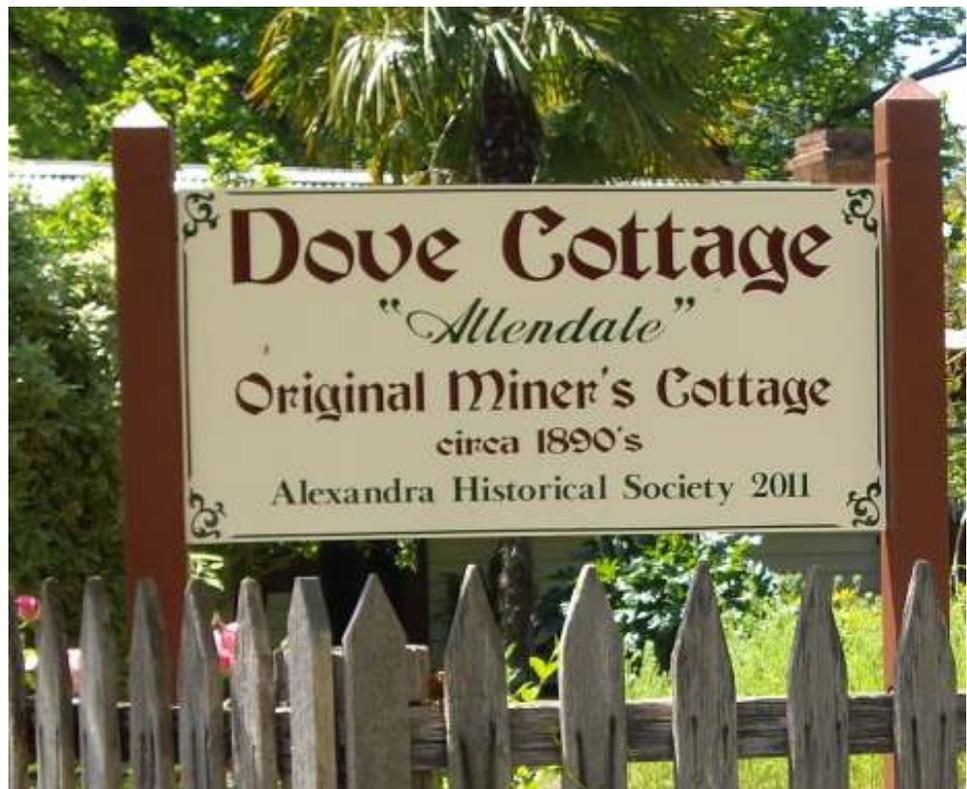
the 1840s, but I am sure they did not receive the welcome we had at their newly opened historical hub, Dove Cottage. The entire committee had turned out to show us the restored miner's cottage lovingly put back to its original state by them, the volunteers, and jam-packed full of artefacts, including a pair of bloomers on the outside washing line – very 1890s. Sadly no historical documents were available, however, the ladies of the committee made teas and coffees and presented us with homemade cakes. We even had our photographs taken for the local paper in the hope of hearing from someone with information on my Clifford and Roberts families.



*Members of the Alexandra Historical Society at Dove Cottage, Alexandra, Victoria.
From left to right: Brenda Lopez (President), Amanda Thomas, Joy Burchell, Heather Hunter.*

One of the most frustrating elements of tracing family tree members in Australia is the lack of census information. In Melbourne I visited the Immigration Museum where this is not seen as a barrier. There I was reminded of the extraordinary amount of information included on Australian death certificates. One of the most useful elements of the certificate is that which states the number of years the deceased had been resident in Australia, and also where they had been born. Spurred on by this, I returned swiftly to our apartment and logged back on to the Melbourne Wi-Fi to order my great grandfather's certificate up from the Victorian online archive. My frustration was acute when I realised this was a familiar trail and his certificate was not in their records. At lunch a few days earlier with my uncle, he had related how his grandfather had been a 'shady character.' Thoughts returned of the Medway prison hulks moored in waters as muddy and murky as those of the Yarra and I resolved to re-visit the transportation records. But where to begin with the name John Jones?

It was not until I arrived back home in England did I think to ask the Castlemaine Historical Society if they had any information and after just a few days, Hilary Griffith came back to me with a most welcome discovery, that she had found John on their own CD indexes for births, marriages and deaths and I was finally able to confirm exactly when John had arrived in Australia. Hilary also happened to mention a connection of her own - the Dawes family of Faversham.



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Betty's Postcards



FOMA Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, has collected postcards for about 25 years, and to date she has hundreds in her collection, including at least 50 on a Dickens theme.

Happy Birthday Charles Dickens!

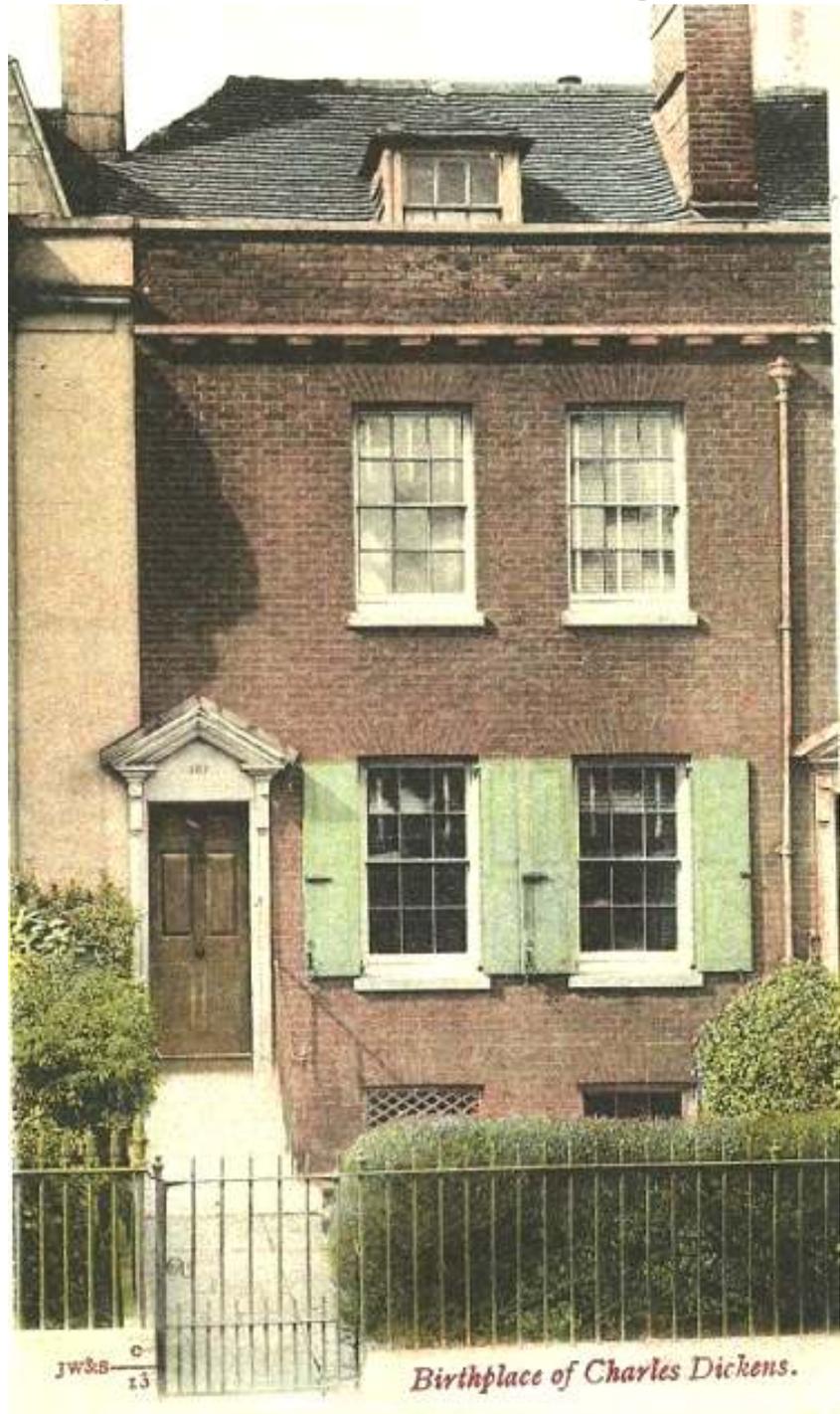
The next issue of *The Clock Tower* will celebrate the bicentenary of Charles Dickens' birth on 7 February 1812. As a prelude to this, Betty concludes her wonderful series with a postcard of the house in which Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth.

This postcard is over one hundred years old and was posted from Portsmouth on 24 Aug 1903. It reads:

“To Miss Ibbotson, Elderslie, Ryle Road, Nether Edge, Sheffield.

Many thanks for your letter. I am astonished to find you received my PC [postcard] on Sunday. N.G.B.”

The address of the house at the time of Dickens' birth was 1 Mile End Terrace, but is now 393 Commercial Road.



More images from the launch of the Archives of Great Expectations Exhibition (see page 23).



Deputy Mayor of Medway and Clock Tower printer, Ray Maisey, with his wife, Buffy, Deputy Mayoress and FOMA member.

The launch featured in the Medway Messenger



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