

## The New Shorts Brothers Statue Unveiled

See Barry Cox's article on page ?

The commemorative plaque at Muswell Manor Leysdown-on-Sea, Isle of Sheppey

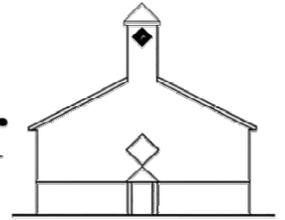


The new statue of the Shorts Brothers, unveiled in May 2013. A direct descendant of the Short Brothers, Elizabeth Walker, unveiled the statue by local artist Barbara Street. An air display followed and also present were representatives of The Medway Aircraft Preservation Society: Chairman Malcolm Moulton and Managing Director Lewis Deal MBE.



If undelivered, please return to:  
Medway Archives office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4AU.

# The Clock Tower



Issue Number 31: August 2013  
£2.00; free to members

## We Celebrate Twenty Years of MALSC!



Stephen Dixon (pictured), the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre's first archivist, looks back at how it was in 1993. See page 16

Also in this issue, FOMA members share their memories of the 1953 Coronation and we take a look behind the scenes of the television series *Secrets of the Workhouse* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*

## Twenty Years of MALSC

On page 16 Stephen Dixon, Archive Service Manager for Essex County Council, looks back at his days as our City Archivist and how MALSC has today become one of the UK's most prestigious centres for historical research. Below is an image of MALSC from those early years.



On the evening of 11 June 2013, FOMA Committee Member Dr Sandra Dunster (pictured) gave the first of what is sure to be many talks about her latest book, *The Medway Towns: river, docks and urban life*.

There was some considerable anticipation for the publication of Sandra's book, not least because many of the researchers and contributors are FOMA members and much of the work was conducted at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. Read more on page 43.



Photograph by Ed miller, <http://www.edmiller.co.uk/>

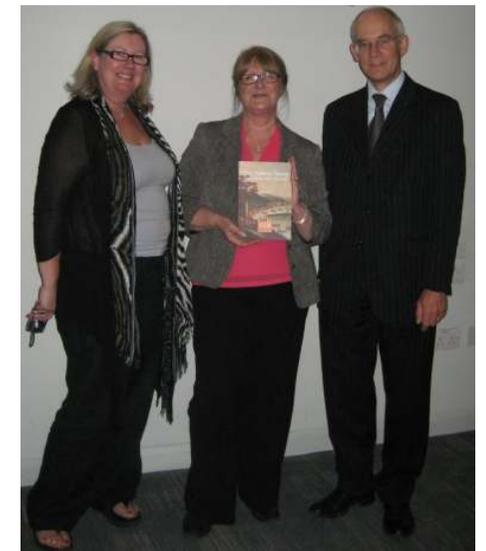
From left to right: Tom McCarthy (Director), Sam Elvin (Researcher) Gary Lineker, Amanda Thomas, Adam Scourfield (sound recordist).

*The Launch of The Medway Towns: river, docks and urban life by Dr Sandra Dunster.*

See page 43.

From left to right: Dr June Balshaw, Principal Lecturer in History, University of Greenwich, Dr Sandra Dunster, Professor Tom Barnes Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), University of Greenwich.

Magnum Opus will be back in the next issue of *The Clock Tower* with a review of Dr Sandra Dunster's book..



## 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.

## Who Do You Think You Are?

My involvement with the BBC television series *Who Do You Think You Are?* (*WDYTYA?*) began back in June 2012 when Sam Elvin, a production team researcher, contacted me to try and set up a meeting. He wanted to find out more about cholera and wondered if we might meet. This was to be the first of a few meetings but many, many emails to piece together the story for the next series of the popular television programme. By the time you read this, *WDYTYA?* will have already broadcast the stories of Una Stubbs (24 July), Nigel Havers (31 July), Minnie Driver (7 August), Lesley Sharp (14 August) and on 21 August, Gary Lineker. This was the programme I worked on.

When I first began looking at the life of Gary Lineker's ancestor, Thomas Billingham, the teams at Wall to Wall Media who do the research for the programme were working on many different stories. It was not until October that it was confirmed our episode was going to go ahead. Naturally I was delighted and research went up a gear. We began talking about possible filming locations and also narrowing down the story, ensuring that every detail was as accurate as possible; indeed the attention to detail was incredible.

Our team filmed in London on a chilly day at the end of January. Filming began in the morning and we worked right the way through till mid afternoon when we all stopped for a very welcome lunch. This was my second time in front of the camera, but it was very different to my work on BBC4's *The Flying Archaeologist* (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 30, May 2013). First of all, on *WDYTYA?* we filmed inside and also the style of the programme is very particular in order that all of the episodes appear the same. I was also not allowed to ask Gary very much or look as if I were prompting him, which was hard, as he was clearly shocked by the news about his ancestor. I only worked on the latter part of the story of Gary's family and was not allowed to know what had taken place in the early stages of filming. The programme has a huge veil of secrecy surrounding it to ensure the impact is greater when it is finally broadcast. It is only in recent weeks that I discovered that the early part of the programme was as traumatic a story as the last and as a result, it was decided to cut out the entire section we had spent around eight months researching. Fortunately I had also worked on part of the story which will form the new ending and by the time you read this you will see what a fascinating tale it is. I was disappointed that none of our filming will have been aired, but I have been assured that when cholera raises its ugly head again, I will be the first person the researchers will contact. That's show business!

This episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* was broadcast on Wednesday 21 August 2013.

## From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



I hope you are all enjoying the sunshine. It took its time arriving and let's hope it stays a while (I won't hold my breath!) This issue of *The Clock Tower* is filled with interesting news, and particularly about our FOMA members. Amanda Thomas and I were delighted to attend the launch of Sandra Dunster's book, *The Medway Towns: river, docks and urban life* at the University of Greenwich in Chatham. Many of the volunteers who had worked with Sandra on the book were there, we had some super nibbles and drinks and it was nice to meet up with people we hadn't seen for a while. The full story of the evening can be read on page 43.

By the time you read this, the new series of *Who Do You Think You Are?* will be well under way on BBC1. We were delighted to hear that Amanda was following in Sandra's footsteps (*WDYTYA?*, Series 8, Alan Carr) and helped on the research of one of the programmes. You will see on page 46 which celebrity she worked with - we were kept in suspense for weeks as she was sworn to secrecy!

MALSC has also been on the television recently in the first episode of the series *Secrets from the Workhouse*. Our archivist, Alison Cable, helped Fern Britton understand - and come to terms with - what life in Strood Workhouse was like for her ancestor Friend Carter. You can read more about Alison's experience working on the programme on pages 41 to 42.

Were you all waiting with baited breath for the arrival of The Baby? Yet another happy event for the Royal Family. They seem to have had a good three years, with The Wedding, The Jubilee and now The New Arrival. In this issue we too are celebrating royal events and look back at how the Medway Towns celebrated the Coronation with some wonderful recollections from FOMA members.

Finally, MALSC is celebrating its twentieth birthday. You can read Stephen Dixon's reminiscences on page 16. It really doesn't seem possible that so much time has gone by!

**ERRATUM: in the last issue of *The Clock Tower* (Issue 30, May 2013), the article *Magnum Opus, The Live Bait Squadron* by Henk van der Linden, was incorrectly attributed to Cindy O'Halloran. The article was prepared and written by Dr. Catharina Clement. The Editor sincerely apologises for this mistake.**

Help is always needed with events.

If you think you could help, please contact Elaine Gardner on 01634 408595 or email [emgardner@virginmedia.com](mailto:emgardner@virginmedia.com)

## News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary



Hullo again! August already and at last some hot weather.

Last year it was all Dickens this and Dickens that. This year it's the Coronation and floods which set me wondering what other anniversaries deserve to be remembered for 2013. I expect many of you are already aware that 1813 saw the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* and the first performance of Beethoven's 7<sup>th</sup> but did you know that it was also the year when the first pineapples were planted in Hawaii? No, I thought not. There's a useless piece of knowledge you can show off with. 1813 also saw the birth of Wagner, Verdi and Dr. Livingstone (I presume?).

150 years ago, 1863, saw an equally eclectic collection of firsts. Both the Yorkshire Cricket Club and the Football Association were founded, Broadmoor opened its doors to the criminally insane and the Eton Boating song was first sung. (Is there a connection between these last two?!) A scarlet fever epidemic killed over 30,000 people and the first part of the London Underground was opened from Paddington to Farringdon Street. Go back 400 years and in 1613 Pocahontas was captured (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 6, May 2007) and there was the first shipment of tobacco from Virginia to England. I have a feeling that 1613 also saw the enlargement of the Royal Dockyard at Chatham – perhaps someone could confirm that?

FOMA continues to receive queries from all over the world and we are in process of finalising projects in anticipation of next year's mega anniversary – the commemoration of the outbreak of the First World War.

Please don't forget to check the events coming up this autumn (see below) and we hope to see you at Bob Ratcliffe's talk, *A Tram Ride through the Medway Towns*, on 10 September, and the next FOMA quiz on 12 October.

## Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

### FOMA Events

10<sup>th</sup> September, 7.30 pm  
A Tram Ride through the Medway Towns  
A talk by Bob Ratcliffe

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October, 7.30 pm start  
Quiz Night  
£5 for members and non-members. **BOOKING REQUIRED.**

## The Committee

### Patron

The Very Reverend Dr. Mark Beach  
Dean of Rochester



### President

Russell John Race, JP, DL (pictured)

### Vice Presidents

Sue Haydock (Medway Council Representative), Pat Salter, Brian Kingsley Smith, Bruce Aubry, Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL

### Chairman

Tessa Towner: 37 Ravenswood Avenue, Frindsbury, ME2 3BY, Kent.  
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brianjoyce64@hotmail.co.uk  
Bob Ratcliffe: 12 King Edward Road, Rochester, ME1 1UB, Kent.  
Kevin Russell: 11 St Catherine's Almshouses, Star Hill,  
Rochester, ME1 2AA, Kent.  
k.russell47@sky.com

### The Clock Tower Editor and Publicist

Amanda Thomas: 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire.  
amanda@ajthomas.com

only he with his love for the Medway Towns could make industrialisation almost romantic and certainly interesting:

"The consumption of tobacco in these towns,' continues Mr. Pickwick, 'must be very great, and the smell which pervades the streets must be exceedingly delicious to those who are extremely fond of smoking. A superficial traveller might object to the dirt, which is their leading characteristic; but to those who view it as an indication of traffic and commercial prosperity, it is truly gratifying."

The next big event in Sandra's diary was 20 June at the Pilkington Building at the University of Greenwich at Chatham, and the formal launch of *The Medway Towns river, docks and urban life*. The launch was an evening reception and attended by many of the research volunteers who each received a complimentary copy of the book.



*Sandra (bottom right), guests, volunteers and contributors listen to one of the speeches at the launch. A further image from the evening can be found on the inside back cover.*

The Institute of Historical Research has managed the Victoria County History project since 1933, and Sandra's work is the sixteenth volume in the *England's Past For Everyone* series. Professor Miles Taylor, Director of the Institute, thanked everyone who had been involved with the work, including the volunteers and the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. Professor Tom Barnes Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) at the University of Greenwich expressed his delight at how the project had created important links between the university and the local community:

"The quality of the research and the writing is certain to appeal to a wider audience and the book will generate a sense of community, belonging and space, just as Dr Andrew Hann's earlier book in the series had done."

In conclusion, Sandra thanked everyone who had contributed, and her regret that the project was now at end.

*Medway Towns: river docks and urban life* is available at all good books shops and online; ISBN: 9781860777288, price £18.99. Copies can also be ordered direct from the publisher at The History Press website:

<http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/index.php/the-medway-towns-rover-docks-and-urban-life.html>

12<sup>th</sup> November, 7.30 pm  
The Thames and Medway Canal  
A talk by Odette Buchanan

Please note, the 2014 FOMA AGM has been changed to **8th April 2014**; please amend your membership cards and diaries.

**Booking for FOMA talks is no longer necessary! Until further notice all events are at Frindsbury Parish Hall. Talks are £3 for members, £5 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](mailto:odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk); 01634 718231.**

## MALSC Events

### Exhibitions

8<sup>th</sup> August - 1<sup>st</sup> October  
The Cliffe History Project  
Cliffe in the 20th century; a village history

18<sup>th</sup> November - 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014  
Beyond the Green Baize Door  
Life at Cobham Hall above and below stairs

### 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



20<sup>th</sup> September, 7.30 pm  
Kentish Family Names  
A talk by Dr. Paul Cullen

**Please note, this event will be held at the Rochester Community Hub, Eastgate, Rochester, ME1 1EW; telephone: 01634 337411. Free, but booking is ESSENTIAL on 01634 337799.**

Further information at:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/leisureandculture/libraries/findalibrary/rochestercommunityhub.aspx>

October (date to be confirmed)  
Cliffe and the Marshes  
A guided walk during Kent Coastal week  
Bill Simmonds

20<sup>th</sup> November, 10.30 am - 12 noon  
Local Politics, Rochester Guildhall and Medway in the 19th Century  
An illustrated talk to mark Parliament Week 2013, using contemporary political posters  
Jeremy Clarke

**Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, (MALSC) Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU, and all talks and events are now free of charge. 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.**

## 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. Eastgate House is now closed. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.friendsof-eastgatehouse.org> on Facebook on <http://www.facebook.com/eastgatehouse> and on Twitter <https://twitter.com/EastgateHouse>. To join the Friends of Eastgate House, please contact Terri Zbyszewska, The Membership Secretary, FoEH, 31 The Esplanade, Rochester, ME1 1QW or at [tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk); a copy of the membership form is also available on the website. **Eastgate House will be open over the National Heritage Weekend in September; please contact the Friends, as above for confirmation of opening times, or visit the website.**

Saturday 28th September - a unique concert of early music by Musica Cantiana. 7.30pm, St Margaret's Church, St Margaret's Street, Rochester. Tickets £8.00 for non-members and £5.00 for members including light refreshments. Booking and information from Terri Zbyszewska on 07982 457340 or at [tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk)

## 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." Taken from the City of Rochester Society website, [www.city-of-rochester.org.uk](http://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](mailto:cafurminger@blueyonder.co.uk) for further information and how to join. Members meetings take place on the second Wednesday of the month in the Auditorium at the Visitor Information Centre, Rochester. For further information please contact Christine Furminger, as above.

## *The Victoria County History* *The Launch of The Medway Towns: river, docks and urban life by Dr Sandra Dunster*

Amanda Thomas



There was some considerable anticipation for the publication of Dr. Sandra Dunster's book, *The Medway Towns: river, docks and urban life*, not least because many of the researchers and contributors are FOMA members and much of the work was conducted at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

On the evening of 11 June, Sandra gave the first of what is sure to be many talks, this entitled *Sights and Sounds of the Medway Towns 1550-1900*. The talk focussed on an "exploration of the pictures and words" included in the book and, as Sandra happily pointed out, "...the smells!" She was true to her word and launched into a description Wyatt's Rebellion of 1554 when the Duke of Norfolk's troops were based in Strood. What with the loud bangs and the sound of the bells of St Nicholas' church ringing out for any VIP passing through, this was a time not noted for rural tranquillity.

As early as the Seventeenth Century, the Towns were busy, loud, noisy and smoky, and the places which evoked the most excitement from visiting luminaries, such as Daniel Defoe, were the Dockyard, the river and the bridge. Both Defoe and Celia Fiennes (who spent much of her adult life travelling around England) were more impressed with these than either the cathedral or the castle, which Fiennes described as "a pretty little thing."

However, Sandra's favourite observations are those of Gertrude Savil who in 1756 travelled from London to Maidstone to see the troops stationed in the Towns. She was not at all impressed with Rochester and described Chatham as "a seafaring tar-like town."

The annual fair at Strood was possibly the smelliest event. The town was always known for its fishermen and oyster dredgers and it is not surprising therefore that the three day event in August was remembered for its pervading stench of fish.

By the 1790s, Hasted recorded the Medway Towns as a more civilised place and when the political activist John Gale Jones visited he commented favourably on the view and the landscape of the area. Common sounds at the time would have been those associated with the military, particularly that of the military bands, though William Cobbett commented on the rowdiness of the soldiers stationed there. He did, however, look well on the hospitality he was offered and the local beer. In the nineteenth century race meetings on the Chatham Lines attracted huge crowds, as did the military spectacles which were hugely popular in the middle part of the century and which attracted up to 70,000 visitors.

The Victorian era was dominated by the sights and smells of the dockyard. The sound of wood being worked and the knocking in of nails was soon replaced by the noise of iron working for ships such as *HMS Achilles*. Industrial pollution increased with new cement works covering the landscape in a thin film of white powder. The air and river became thick with the discharge from kilns and breweries and the Medway Towns became an industrial centre, where the sound of church bells was replaced by the throb of machinery. In the *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens noted how the streets were filled with the perfume of tobacco -

## Archives Update

Alison Cable, Borough Archivist



## Back to the Workhouse

Last August we received an email enquiry from a TV production company. They wanted us to check out some facts relating to a gentleman named *Friend Carter* who had apparently been admitted to Strood Union Workhouse in about 1898. My colleague spent a reasonable amount of time piecing together information about Friend's admission to the workhouse and found that he also died there at a ripe old age. Over the next few months we had further follow-up enquiries and requests for copy documents from the TV researchers, and they came to visit in the autumn of 2012 in order to view the original records and to discuss the possibility of filming here at MALSC. The programme was about famous people whose ancestors had been in the workhouse and we were not allowed to know who our *celebrity* was until much nearer the time and even then we had to agree to keep it secret...

And so Fern Britton came along to MALSC in mid December 2012 to film the latter part of her ancestral story. Before the team arrived, several hours of preparation went into creating enough space in the strong room to accommodate the *on screen scenario* as well as the director, cameraman, sound man and two production assistants. I strove to make it look atmospheric (it's not) and I even had to make buffers for the air conditioning units above where we were to be filmed, in order for it not to be too noisy!

The crew arrived late, having already filmed sequences in two other locations earlier on in the day. It was chaotic as everyone was running round setting up the lighting and sound equipment, and Ms Britton was touching up her makeup (close to the precious documents!). I even spotted one of the researchers with a bar of chocolate on the table at one point, but I remained calm (outwardly).

Suffice to say that by the time the camera rolled, it almost felt like the least stressful part of the day.

Some two and a half hours of filming, ensued. Fern Britton was very friendly and easy to work with and the reactions we saw on the eventual TV programme were very genuine. The researchers had ensured that some facts were kept back for a final *reveal* on camera.

I was more worried about getting them all out of the building on time and unsurprisingly, the filming over ran and finished well past the time that our caretaker locks up our part of the premises. As a result some staff had to stay behind and help me usher the crew and Fern through a side door with all their equipment.

Not all the information that we had unearthed found its way on to the screen but it was marvellous to see all our research and preparations being put to such interesting use.

*Episode One of Secrets of the Workhouse, featuring Fern Britton and Alison Cable was transmitted on ITV1 at 9pm on Tuesday 25 June 2013.*

See Rochester's wealth of historic buildings and hear about the City's long and fascinating history from an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide of the City of Rochester Society.! Every Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday and Public Holiday from Good Friday until the end of October. Starting at 2.15 p.m. from The Visitors Centre, High Street, Rochester. The tours are free of charge, but donations to Society funds are always gratefully received.

## Friends of Broomhill

Broomhill Park has been awarded a second Green Flag for 2012/13. The Green Flag Award recognises the best green spaces in the country.



First Task Day of the season - Sunday, 1st September, 11 am - 1 pm. Meet at King Arthur's Drive Car park and join in the litter pick and scrub clear - it's fun, it's free and it's healthy. Clothing - suitable for rough and dirty outside work - a must is gloves. Tools - you can bring your own, however there will be supply of suitable tools. Please bring a drink. Contact the FOB Secretary, Odette Buchanan, for further details on 01634 718231 or email [odette\\_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk).

Friends of Broomhill annual talk - The Thames and Medway Canal - Thursday 26th September, Strood Library, Bryant Road, 7.30 for 8.00 pm. Tickets £5 or £3 to members. Lucky ticket draw, light refreshments - also raffle! Reserve tickets and further information as above.

Friends of Broomhill Sunday - 6th October Task Day - scrub clear. 11 am - 1pm. Help keep our Green Flag award and earn it for a third year!

## Healthy Walks

Every Tuesday, meet at Strood Library at 9.45 am. A guided and pleasant walk with wonderful views overlooking the Medway and Thames, and woodland paths. Duration about 60 minutes. Complimentary tea and coffee served in the library after the walk. Sorry - dogs not allowed in the library. Contact: 01634 333720

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive  
Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME4 4UG; [www.re-museum.co.uk](http://www.re-museum.co.uk)



The Royal Engineers Museum is Kent's largest military museum, with a designated collection of historical and international importance. The many galleries tell the story of Britain's military engineers from the Roman period to the modern Corps of Royal Engineers. The millions of items in its collection tell a sweeping epic of courage, creativity and innovation and the stories of individuals of great renown (General Gordon, Lord Kitchener, John Chard VC) and the average Sapper who has helped the British Army move, fight and survive for over 200 years. The Royal Engineers Museum now has an e-newsletter. To subscribe for free, email 'Yes Please!' to [deputycurator@re-museum.co.uk](mailto:deputycurator@re-museum.co.uk)

## Events

The Siege of San Sebastian 1813, 31st August, 2pm

A talk by Martin Stoneham

By the summer of 1813 the British and their allies had pushed the French back across Spain and were besieging them in Pamplona and San Sebastian. Lt Col Sir Richard Fletcher RE who had been the commanding Royal Engineer since 1808 was killed in action as the troops took the town on 31 August. Martin Stoneham a former Sapper and Chairman of the Friends of the Royal Engineers Museum will give a talk on Sir Richard's life, his contribution to the Peninsular War and the Siege of San Sebastian on Saturday 31 August at the Museum at 2pm. Normal admission prices to the Museum will apply, there will be no additional charge for the talk. To ensure that you are seated please book a place by calling the Museum on 01634 Martin Stoneham can be contacted at [forem@stoneham.org](mailto:forem@stoneham.org).

Heritage Open Day, Sunday 15th September 11:30 am - 5:00 pm

**FREE ADMISSION!**

Join the Royal Engineers Museum for our Heritage Open Day on Sunday 15th September 2013. There will also be a free talk in the galleries on Engineers in the 19th Century. Talks at 12:00 and 14:30 and last approximately one hour. Availability for talks will be on a first come, first serve basis.

Chinese Gordon; **24th October, 7pm**

Gary Dickinson of the Royal Asiatic Society will be giving a talk on the 24th October on some General Gordon Collection items held by the Royal Engineers Museum. Focusing particularly on the Chinese silks gifted to Gordon after the TaiPing Rebellion, Mr Dickinson will elaborate on the period of Gordon's life that led to his nickname 'Chinese Gordon'. Tickets £6. **For bookings call 01634 822839.**

Opening hours: Tuesday – Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm; Saturday – Sunday and Bank Holidays: 11.30am to 5.00pm; CLOSED MONDAYS. Admission: pay once and get in for 12 months! Adult: £7.80; Family: £20.80; Concession: £5.20; Children under 5: Free.

## Chatham World Heritage News

To receive the latest information about Chatham Dockyard, its defences and the project to make Chatham a World Heritage site, you can receive their newsletter directly as well as invitations to meetings. Joining the Chatham World Heritage Partnership is free of charge and by telephoning 01634 331176 or by contacting the group at [chathamworldheritage@medway.gov.uk](mailto:chathamworldheritage@medway.gov.uk) or at [www.chathamworldheritage.co.uk](http://www.chathamworldheritage.co.uk)

**NATIONAL HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2013**  
**Saturday 14 September to Sunday 15 September**  
**Look out for information about which heritage sites are open in your area!**

the doctor, the four boys gave a prompt and decided denial to his assumption that they "wished to be soldiers." The old pauper had to take them back again'. It is quite likely that this incident occurred in the early 1840s around the time Wheeler wrote his article. Benjamin Bishop, a blind Quaker, was running a coffee house in Strood at that time.

### Sources

Strood workhouse minutes 1844; Strood workhouse letter-book 1844; *British Friend* 1844; British Library C19 Newspaper Archive; *The Bury and Norwich Post* 1844; *Herald of Peace* 1870; Frindsbury Wesleyan Baptisms; Frindsbury All Saints burials; Strood St Nicholas Baptisms and Burials; Chatham St Mary's Marriages; Census 1841-1871; [www.freeBMD](http://www.freeBMD); [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com); *Hansard* 1844.

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### \*Editor's Note (from *Rhubarb! Rhubarb*, p. 38)

Cholera can indeed be contracted from the surface of fruit and vegetables and from food which has been washed with tainted water. One of the most famous examples of this is the case of Gustav von Aschenbach, Thomas Mann's protagonist, in *Der Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*) who dies after eating strawberries during the cholera outbreak in Venice. In England, cholera was easily spread by the wares of costermongers who would store their baskets of fruit and vegetables under their beds. Should anyone in that household be suffering from cholera, then goods might easily be infected with the disease by excreted bodily fluids such as vomit and faeces. For further information see *The Lambeth Cholera Outbreak of 1848-1849: The Setting, Causes, Course and Aftermath of an Epidemic in London*, by Amanda J. Thomas.

## Back to the Workhouse

An image from the Strood Union records (Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre) showing the entry for Carter Friend (see the bottom line), the ancestor of Fern Britton. the following article by Borough Archivist, Alison Cable, tells the story.

STROOD UNION.					THE
Date of the Entry.	NAME. CHRISTIAN AND SURNAME.	From whence Admitted.	Religious Creed.	Name of Informant.	
1845	Gomber Esparax	Strood	Church	Self	
1845	Chapman Elizabeth	Strood	"	"	Self
1846	Carr James	Strood	"	"	Self
1846	Cripps Francis	Strood	"	"	
1846	Carr James	"	"	"	
1846	Browley Ellen	Frindsbury Extra	"	"	
1846	Cripps Emily	Strood	"	"	
1846	Cripps Francis	"	"	"	
1846	Cripps Catherine	"	Church	"	
1846	Carr James	Strood	Methodian	"	
1846	Kapel James	Strood	Church	"	
1846	Roberts Sarah	Northfleet	"	"	Her husband
1846	Loggier James	Strood	"	"	
1847	Cobbola Harriet	"	"	"	By Police City
1847	Carr James	Eltham	"	"	Self

## Enlistment of Pauper Children for the Army

Dr. Catharina Clement



In 2005, Catharina completed a BA in history at Canterbury Christchurch University, and in 2013 a PhD in local history entitled Political and Religious Reactions in the Medway Towns of Rochester and Chatham during the English Revolution, 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

Frederic Wheeler (1807-1893), a Quaker from Strood, spent a lifetime campaigning against social injustices. In 1844 he published an article in the *British Friend* (a Quaker publication) attacking those who abused the poor law and army regulations by getting young boys under fourteen, the minimum age for joining the army at that time, to sign up, which relieved the workhouse of the responsibility and charge for those young lads. He submitted his report with a letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> March 1844, commenting that:

‘The public may not perhaps be generally aware that a practice has grown up, of late years, of supplying the army with little boys for drummers, selected from the healthiest inmates of the Union workhouses round about the great military garrison of Chatham.’

Extensive research was carried out and collated by Wheeler into this practice. He found evidence that at least eight unions in Kent and Essex had been solicited by Chatham Barracks as well as some in London, inviting applications from pauper children. Frederic Wheeler amassed details of around 60 boys and concluded that at least twenty were under age. Whilst it was not illegal to advertise for enlistment or encourage boys over fourteen, Wheeler was a peace advocate and very anti-military, and considered the enlistment of children a form of abuse.

He had seen first hand the treatment of these young drummers and their desire to escape from the military once they realised it was not glamorous, but rather a brutal life. What these youngsters did not realise was that they had enlisted for life! Lecturing in 1870 Wheeler stated that from ‘his earliest childhood’ he had ‘witnessed a succession of scenes which fixed in him a horror of the military system. When a boy he saw regiments being drafted off for foreign service, and used to hear bystanders enquire, ‘To which slaughterhouse are these poor fellows going?’ Wheeler also remembered ‘that when soldiers were marching by, there were men in attendance with bags containing handcuffs to bind any of the company who might show a disposition to lag behind or shirk aside.’

In this lecture Wheeler described an incident, which took place in Chatham about pauper enlistment. ‘He one day found four of these boys being taken by an old pauper from the workhouse [presumably Strood Union] to the barrack surgeon. Guessing the object, he got into conversation with them, and inviting the old man into a coffee-house, took the opportunity of giving the youths such a lesson of the true nature of military *glory*, as effectively to disgust them with the prospect before them. Accordingly, when brought before



### Kent's Stonehenge

Kent Archaeological Society volunteers have scanned images from 17 glass plate negatives recording the dig which took place at Coldrum Longbarrow, Trottiscliffe, over 100 years ago. The images have been scanned in digital format and were originally taken in 1910. The barrow was built in the 40th century BC and is one of the best preserved Early Neolithic structures in the Medway area and one of the earliest prehistoric monuments in Britain. It was originally described as a miniature Stonehenge (which was built more than 1,000 years later) as the early archaeologists presumed it had been built in a circular pattern. Their belief was disproved when it was observed that the stones were in fact set into a rectangular mound and on the top of a communal grave. Coldrum Longbarrow was first studied in the 1890s by

two of the Kent Archaeological Society's most eminent members - Benjamin Harrison and Flinders Petrie. Their work was continued in the Twentieth Century by Francis James Bennett of West Malling. It was he who found skulls and bones from around 22 adults and children; more were found in 1922. Further information can be found on the Kent Archaeological Society website: [www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/kent-archaeology-press-releases/coldrum-longbarrow/](http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/kent-archaeology-press-releases/coldrum-longbarrow/)



Human bones found at Coldrum Longbarrow in 1910  
Coldrum Longbarrow in 2013



Francis James Bennett (left) excavating at Coldrum Longbarrow in 1910

Information and images courtesy of Paul Tritton, Hon Press Officer, Kent Archaeological Society.

## 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](http://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](mailto:amanda@ajthomas.com).

**The copy deadline for Issue 32 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 28 October 2013, with publication on Wednesday 20 November 2013.**

### Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

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### Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

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*The Clock Tower* is also available at [www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:bettycole@blueyonder.co.uk)

claimed the first ever rhubarb tart was eaten, rhubarb was not widely used as a cooking ingredient. Its flavour was unusual, and it needed sugar to become palatable. The English were used to sour fruits, such as cherries, cooking apples and damsons, but recipes for rhubarb tarts indicated the need for a generous amount of sugar. It was only when sugar became cheaper, and when rhubarb was more widely available, that rhubarb became more popular. By 1861 a recipe for rhubarb pie appeared in *A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes* – rhubarb had clearly become a familiar part of people's diets.

By 1841, both William Easdown and his son William Easdown Jnr. were working as market gardeners in Higham, and this was the most common occupation in the village. Nearly 30 men described themselves as gardeners, and nearly 200 were labourers who almost certainly worked on the land, some sleeping in outbuildings (including a child of three and a baby of eight months). William Easdown Jnr. lived in Higham Hall<sup>8</sup> and held the position of Overseer for the parish in the late 1840s and early 1850s,<sup>9</sup> but despite this evidence of his social standing, it appears the Easdowns may have been going through difficult times. In 1850 the *London Gazette* reported that a William Easdown, market gardener, fruiterer and farmer, of Upper Higham, had appeared in court regarding bankruptcy. The same newspaper reported that William Easdown was in Maidstone Gaol.<sup>10</sup> Although the article does not specify whether this was the father or son, contributors to [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) link this newspaper article to William Easdown Jnr.. I wonder however if it was the father who became bankrupt; in the 1851 census, his son was still working as a market farmer, farming 24 acres and employing four men, one woman and a boy. William Easdown Jnr. was also eligible to have an entry in the Poll Book of 1852. In contrast, his father died in 1850 almost certainly without leaving a will.

William Easdown Jnr.'s business would almost certainly have been adversely affected by the new railways. Despite two goods trains running from Strood to London on the North Kent line each night,<sup>11</sup> the first at 7pm taking fruit and other goods, it was the railway which effectively put an end to many of the small-scale market traders' businesses in the gardens and farms surrounding London. For the first time, crops could be transported to the London markets overnight from farms all over England. Before long, rhubarb began to be grown in the area known even today as the *Rhubarb Triangle*, the area between Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford. Vast sheds were built to grow forced rhubarb (discovered by accident in 1815 at the Chelsea Physic Garden, when workers found some rhubarb shoots under some soil). Special trains called the *Rhubarb Express* ran each night, carrying rhubarb to London. Conditions in the area were perfect for this sweeter forced rhubarb: cheap coal from the local mines heated the sheds, and a by-product from the wool industry (*shoddy*) was used to improve the soil. William Easdown Jnr. continued to trade as a market gardener in Higham until at least 1859, when he appears in *Bagshaw's Directory*. He does not appear in the 1861 Census and we do know that, perhaps finding life in England too much of a struggle, he emigrated with his wife and children to Australia, where he died, a widower, in 1874.

### Notes

1. Kentish Sources: The Poor (MALSC C050940147 School Loan)
2. *West Kent Guardian* 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 1842
3. *West Kent Guardian* 20<sup>th</sup> August 1842
4. *SE Gazette* 15<sup>th</sup> January 1856
5. *Gravesend Chronicles*, MALSC C051007970
6. *London Labour and the London Poor* by Henry Mayhew
7. *A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes* by Charles Elme Francatelli
8. Will of Robert Sutton Barnes, Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1855
9. Higham parish records, Vestry/PCC minutes MALSC P185/8/1
10. *London Gazette* 1<sup>st</sup> January 1850/11. *SE Gazette* 19<sup>th</sup> December 1854 p.5

January 1842, William Short was sentenced to one month's hard labour for stealing six onions and a pint and a half of peas from William Easdown Jnr.<sup>2</sup> Just a few months later, in August, William Thomson received the same sentence for stealing pears from one of William Easdown's orchards in Shorne<sup>3</sup> and in 1856, Margaret Armstrong and Mary Bryant, 'wretchedly clad females', were committed for being in possession of some potatoes stolen from a Mr Eastdown (sic) at Higham.<sup>4</sup>

Cholera too was an ever-present threat. Four major epidemics swept through Kent during the nineteenth century, and Gravesend was particularly affected in 1831 and 1833.<sup>5</sup> Whilst rural populations could hope to escape the worst, the fear of cholera had a direct affect on the trade of market farmers such as William Easdown and his descendants. It was thought by many that cholera could be transmitted via fruit and vegetables. Henry Mayhew records in London that 'The sufferings of the costermongers during the prevalence of the cholera in 1849, were intense. Their customers generally relinquished the consumption of potatoes, greens, fruit, and fish; indeed, of almost every article on the consumption of which the costermongers depend for his daily bread.'<sup>6</sup> These concerns about eating fruit and vegetables confirmed what many people in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century thought anyway, namely that vegetables had little nutritional value and could even be dangerous. Given that market farmers would often deliver their goods to the London markets by carts, travelling overnight and returning in the early morning with their carts full of night-soil, perhaps it is entirely conceivable that during a cholera outbreak there could be a potential risk from eating fruit and vegetables manured with human waste? (\*See page 41). It was against this backdrop, then, that William Easdown worked as a market gardener and began growing rhubarb. It seems likely that he grew it from seed, and as a crop, it had much to commend it. Strictly speaking a vegetable, it produced stems which could be harvested from late spring, when little other fruit was available. It was also able to survive the long cold winters of the period, and was to become increasingly popular as the nineteenth century progressed. Rhubarb roots had been valued by apothecaries for centuries in England, and the imported roots were used for a variety of ailments. Primarily favoured for its laxative properties, the stems and leaves were seen as valueless. We do know however that rhubarb stems had been eaten (if only rarely) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century from a recipe published c.1760 in *The Compleat Confectioner* by Hannah Glasse:

*To make Rhubarb Tarts.*

*Take stalks of English rhubarb, that grow in the gardens, peel and cut it the size of gooseberries; sweeten it and make them as you do gooseberry tarts. These tarts may be thought singular, but they are very fine ones and have a pretty flavour; the leaves of rhubarb are a fine thing to eat for a pain in the stomach, the roots for tincture, and the stalks for tarts.*

The leaves, by the way, are toxic to humans and animals as they contain oxalic acid and other poisonous substances, so Hannah Glasse's remedy for stomach ache is more likely to cause stomach ache than to cure it! In 1797 Hasted notes that the produce of market gardens around Gravesend was not only sold locally but also sent to the London markets. Asparagus (known as Gravesend grass) was 'esteemed the finest in England'. But what of rhubarb? William Easdown certainly wasn't the first farmer in England to grow rhubarb as a vegetable and sell the stems to the London markets; if Henry Mayhew is correct, that honour goes to Joseph Myatt, who was farming in Deptford. In 1809 Joseph Myatt sent his sons to Borough market with five bunches of rhubarb, but they returned with three. Initially laughed at for his 'physic pies', Joseph Myatt's rhubarb soon became more popular. Perhaps William Easdown passed by the rhubarb beds in Deptford as he travelled to London, and realised the crop's potential. Joseph Myatt farmed the land at Manor Farm in Deptford, close to the London-Dover Road. William Easdown, however, may have been the first farmer to grow rhubarb locally, and he may well have been the first to sell rhubarb at Covent Garden. In 1817, when his daughter Mary was baptized at Higham, and at whose christening it is

## FOMA Members

### Congratulations Catharina!

Congratulations to FOMA's and MALSC's Catharina Clement who is now to be addressed as 'Dr.' having completed her PhD, the title of which was, *Political and Religious Reactions in the Medway Towns of Rochester and Chatham during the English Revolution, 1640-1660*. The first part of Catharina's latest series for *The Clock Tower*, entitled, *Enlistment of Pauper Children for the Army*, can be read on page 40.

### News from the University of Kent

FOMA Vice President Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL recently completed his seven year term as Chancellor at the University of Kent at Canterbury. The university reported in its alumni newsletter, "He hosted his final honorary graduates dinner, at which a specially commissioned portrait was unveiled. The portrait of Sir Robert will hang in the University's Senate building alongside those of previous Chancellors. Appointed in 2006, Sir Robert has been a very active Chancellor who has generously supported the University's philanthropic activities. All students, staff and alumni wish him well for the future."

*FOMA Vice President Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL as published in the University of Kent at Canterbury's alumni newsletter.*



### The Three Sisters

Caroline Baker, potter and wife of FOMA member Michael Baker (pictured), held an exhibition in London from 30 July to 3 August at the Gallery, Shepherd Market. Entitled, *The Three Sisters*, Caroline's fabulous pottery (pictured) was displayed alongside furniture by Katie Abbott and paintings (also pictured) by Rachel Munn. Caroline can be contacted at the [bakers@waitrose.com](mailto:bakers@waitrose.com)



*Photograph by Alexander Thomas.*

## The Pubs of Old Brompton; a talk by the Brompton History Research Group

FOMA members Rosie and Michael Jennings attended the talk *The Pubs of Old Brompton* given by Ben Levick of the Brompton History Research Group on 23 May 2013. This was held at the Royal Engineers Museum whose events are always publicised in *The Clock Tower*.

Rosie and Michael have kindly written a review of the talk - in the hope of encouraging others to attend future events!

'It was a very interesting talk, centred around an extensive slide show of the many inns, hotels, public houses and beer shops of Brompton. Many of these are now sadly closed but we learned that some have survived in new premises incorporating licence changes as far afield as Wigmore and Twydall. The subsequent changes in some pub names were explained and it was particularly fascinating to learn that two pub licences were re-invented as the Spyglass and Kettle, originally the Lord Nelson and the Steam Engine! Note the modern interpretation. Comparing old and new photographs provoked interesting memories for some! The research project is unfinished and we look forward to part two. We did a quick tour of Brompton following the talk; looking at specific locations, including the memorial on the site of the White Swan.

More information can be found on The Chatham World Heritage website: [www.chathamworldheritage.org.uk/the-pubs-of-old-brompton-a-talk-by-the-brompton-history-research-group](http://www.chathamworldheritage.org.uk/the-pubs-of-old-brompton-a-talk-by-the-brompton-history-research-group)

## 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](mailto:amanda@ajthomas.com). FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan, often receives queries from members or visitors to the FOMA website, [www.foma-lsc.org/index.html](http://www.foma-lsc.org/index.html). If you have any additional information for the following correspondents, please contact the Editor.*

### Living Descendants

From: Lindsay Davis  
Sent: 16 May 2013  
To: Amanda Thomas

I am making contact with yourself from Brisbane Australia, and am in the process of tracing my ancestral past. I have been conducting research at my local Municipal Library, and can see that the family line on my Grandmother's side hail from Kent U.K., and I have a record of her grandfather being Joseph Goldsmith b. 26/05/1844 in Chalk, Kent, who married Isabella Whelan in 1865. His father was Frederick Goldsmith b. 28/03/1813, who married Mary Newman in 1836, and his father, in turn, was another Joseph Goldsmith who married Sarah Cook in 1798 in Chatham, Kent. So as you can see, there seems to be quite a Kent connection!

## Rhubarb, Rhubarb!

Helen Worthy



*Helen is an Archives and Local Studies Assistant at MALSC, working mainly on the desk. After completing her degree in Classical Civilisation, she worked at the British Museum for eleven years. She then studied for her Postgraduate Certificate in Education and taught at North-West Kent College and Medway Adult and Community Learning Service, before leaving to teach school groups at Chatham's Historic Dockyard and work as a teaching assistant.*

Love it or loathe it, rhubarb could be considered the quintessential English fruit, so it might be assumed that the English have been making rhubarb pies, tarts, jams and fools for hundreds of years. Its history, however, is far more recent, and more interesting than that!

Even as the first cherries in England are said to have been grown in the Sittingbourne neighbourhood, so it is now claimed that Higham has the honour for introducing rhubarb. Mrs. A. V. Ellins, of Hampton Wick, Middlesex, writes to the "Daily Express" as follows:—"My great-grandfather, Mr. Easdown, a market gardener, of Higham, near Rochester, Kent, first introduced rhubarb as a fruit into Covent Garden Market in the year 1817, and the first rhubarb tart eaten in England was at my grandmother's christening. Before that time the leaves only were used to line fruit and vegetable baskets, the stems being thrown away."

Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham News, Friday 7 July 1922

William Easdown worked in the early 1800s as a market gardener in Higham. Despite the fertile soil, improving seed quality and the introduction of new farming methods and equipment, the trade was a precarious one, and farmers and market gardeners alike were faced with difficulties which threatened their livelihoods.

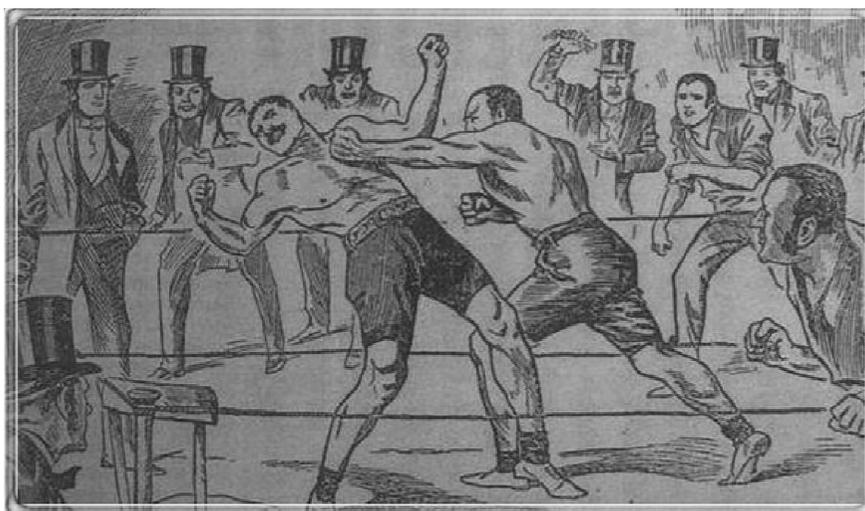
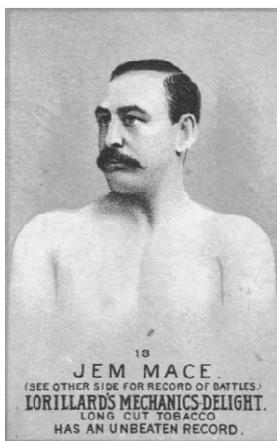
The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the final years of the *Little Ice Age*. There had been a spell of quite remarkable weather, with the tidal stretch of the Thames freezing over in 1811 and again in the winter of 1813/1814. Deep snow, abnormal weather patterns and record-breaking temperatures in Kent took their toll on the crops. During the winter of 1819/1820 a temperature of -23°C was recorded in Tunbridge Wells. In late May 1821 snow fell in London and in 1816 England suffered 'the year without a summer', which was almost certainly due to an increase in volcanic activity in Indonesia. The dust in the atmosphere blocked out the sun which in turn led to a significant cooling of temperatures and increased rainfall. Crops failed and famine ensued. These bewildering events beleaguered rural communities. Despite the agricultural revolution, which led to an increase in food production, food prices remained high. The war with France further increased prices, and the poor of Higham, despite living amongst the many markets gardens which lined the London-Dover Road, struggled to survive. The Poor House, itself in a state of disrepair at this time, was overcrowded with families. James Roper Head, Justice of the Peace, reported to the Michaelmas Sessions at Maidstone in 1795 that the Poor House at Higham 'is in a very dangerous ruinous and decayed state and ... there had been and still continue in one room of thirteen feet by fourteen, two women and three children and in another room of fifteen feet by thirteen, a man, woman and five children (one of which now lies ill of a fever), and in the next room of only twelve by fourteen, a man and a woman, now ill, and five children.'

By the 1830s and 1840s, low wages and the scarcity of work coupled with the high price of bread further compounded the misery of the poor. Theft of food from William Easdown's market gardens was clearly a problem, and he employed a young boy to watch his fields. In

The Superintendent commandeered a coastguard boat, and with the injured Inspector Checkland and two able-bodied constables, rowed across the Thames to Leigh on Sea. There they arrested the fighters Bob Brettle and Daniel Crutchley. They apprehended the pugilist Richard Longmore on the Leigh to Southend road. This time, with no crowd to help them, the men went quietly and were ferried to Gravesend.

At their subsequent appearance at Rochester County Court, the defendants' solicitor argued that the clumsy attempts to arrest the prize-fighters at Yantlet Creek had actually caused the riot. For the offence of fighting, Crutchley and Longmore should be bound over on condition that they should not return to Kent. However the Yantlet Creek affair had not been the first such prize-fight in the North Kent marshes and islands. Attempting to anticipate and prevent such gatherings was expensive and time-consuming for the police. Captain Ruxton, the Chief Constable of Kent, no less, was in court and urged the magistrates to commit the prisoners to the next Quarter Sessions, which they did. If Ruxton hoped that a deterrent sentence would be imposed, he was to be disappointed. Longmore and Crutchley had not taken part in the riot itself, and were cleared of assaulting the police. They were bound over for participating in an illegal prize-fight.

Undeterred, fighters, accompanied by the *Fancy* continued to materialise in the remoter parts of North Kent until a modified form of the sport, complete with rules, regulations, gloves and referees was put on a legal basis later in the century.



Images, Brian Joyce.

I am interested in making contact with any living descendents of the above family line who may (hopefully) still reside in Kent, and wondered if you may be able to, in some way, assist me in my quest.

Thanking you in anticipation,  
My Regards,  
Lindsay Davis.

From: Amanda Thomas  
Sent: 22 May 2013

Dear Lindsay,  
Thank you for your email.  
First of all, you will be able to find out more information about your ancestors' lives from the parish records which are online at on the Medway Ancestors section of the Medway Archives' website, CityArk :  
[http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/query/results/?Mode=Search&PathList=%2FZ4a\\_Medway\\_Ancestors%2F%0A&SearchWords=&DateList=](http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/query/results/?Mode=Search&PathList=%2FZ4a_Medway_Ancestors%2F%0A&SearchWords=&DateList=)  
Do you subscribe to any of the genealogy websites? Both *Ancestry* and *Find My Past* are very good for finding additional information and at hooking people up, so it might be worth you having a look there. I can publish your request in *The Clock Tower*, the Friends of Medway Archives journal, but our next issue is now not out till August. I hope that is agreeable to you.  
I also suggest you talk to the Kent Family History Society, and I have copied in Tessa Townner, who is our Chairman, and also the KFHS Secretary. She may even have some information herself on the people you are talking about.  
Do let us know how you get on.

With best wishes,  
Amanda Thomas,  
Editor, *The Clock Tower*.

### Winterflood

Dear Amanda,  
Another request for memories or connections of any sort, please.  
There were two spinster sisters employed by my grandmother Lady Baker of Owletts, Cobham, from the 20s through the war. They were known to the family only as *Nurse* and *Bunny*, but the surname was Winterflood. They lived on as companion and cook and both died there in 1955.  
*Nurse*, the elder, was Ann Florence Margaret Winterflood, born in January 1879 in Chelmsford, *Bunny*, the younger, Maud Beatrice, born 1891 also in Chelmsford.  
I have their dates of death and probate, the names of their parents and some siblings from census returns, but nothing personal nor any connection to their family. The elder played a part in the Cobham W.I. and organised their spring flower show through the war, but that's about all I can find. Does anyone remember them, please?

Michael Baker.

## Mystery Photos



Hello Mrs Thomas,

This is a bit of a long shot but I was given your name by Brian Joyce of the Chatham Historical Society.

I'm a Genealogy Nerd and have come across a Christening photo, about 50 + years old. The address on the back is Marina Photos, 70 Chatham Hill Road and Mr Joyce has found reference to that in 1953, 1959 and 1961. There are nine adults in the photo including my grandparents (second and third from the left: David George Henry WOOD b. 1897 and Louise (née DAWSON) b. 1901. They lived in Kennington, London. As far as I know, we had no family connection to Chatham but would love to identify all the other people in the photo.

Any help or advice would be much appreciated.

Thank you.  
Pauline Wood.

*If you know who any of these people are and can help Pauline Wood, please contact Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at [amanda@ajthomas.com](mailto:amanda@ajthomas.com).*

### Old Photographs

Do you have any photographs which need identifying and you would like to be published in future issues of *The Clock Tower*? If so, please send them to the Editor, Amanda Thomas, [amanda@ajthomas.com](mailto:amanda@ajthomas.com) or to 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire.

Sergeant Hilder and Constables Mercer and Ashby to investigate, while he and other colleagues attempted a shortcut across the marshes.

Meanwhile slightly earlier at noon, Alfred Hall, who commanded the coastguard station at Yantlet Creek, had spotted the steamers arriving, and saw a party of men landing on the beach. They had immediately hammered stakes into the ground and fixed ropes around them to form a makeshift ring. A short fight then took place, which lasted between five and ten minutes. Hall was not to know, but this contest was between two of the best-known fighters in the country – Bob Brettle and Jem Mace (pictured below).

A second fight followed between Daniel Crutchley and Richard Longmore. This battle had been in progress for about an hour when Alfred Hall and other witnesses saw Inspector Checkland and his men arrive. Another fight now ensued, this time an unequal struggle between the small group of police and the five hundred-strong crowd enraged that their entertainment had been interrupted.

In court in October 1860, the coastguard officer blamed the police themselves for what followed. The crowd's "violent and turbulent conduct" had only begun when Checkland's men attempted to arrest the fighters. There was laughter in court when the coastguard asserted that: "There was no particular noise; a little more than usual perhaps, being accustomed to hear sheep only." Another witness, John Dunn, the son of a farmer at Avery Farm, Allhallows, corroborated Alfred Hall's testimony: "All went on quietly until the police came." Even one of the injured policemen, PC Ashby, admitted in court that there had been no riotous conduct until he and his colleagues moved in on the fighters.

We will now take up the story as described in court by Inspector Checkland. When he, Sergeant Hilder and PCs Mercer and Ashby arrived at the sea wall adjacent to the Coastguard Station at Yantlet Creek, they observed Daniel Crutchley and Richard Longmore fighting inside the square ring. They were spotted by spectators who shouted that the "bluebottles" were upon them. At this, the crowd scattered, rushing towards small boats that had been

beached and which were waiting to row them out to the waiting steamers. Inspector Checkland saw Daniel Crutchley scramble into a boat. The officer rushed it, climbing, then falling into it. He pinned Crutchley by the arms and arrested him. It was now that the crowd turned ugly. When the inspector refused their demands to release his prisoner, there were cries of "Pitch him out!" and "Smash him!" Bricks and stones rained down on Checkland and his colleagues; the officer yelled to his men to draw their truncheons and use them. However, as they did so, both constables were hit. PC Mercer received a blow to the back of the head and fell. As he lay helpless and bleeding on the ground, one of the crowd grabbed his truncheon and beat him around the legs with it. Meanwhile, PC Ashby was hit on the head by a brick, and then in the back by another. Mercer managed to get to his feet and joined PC Ashby. The dazed officers staggered towards Inspector Checkland to help in hauling Daniel Crutchley up the beach away from the mob.

By now Checkland had himself been struck in the eye by a brick, and the crowd managed to seize Crutchley away from the policemen. Sergeant Hilder, who was also lying wounded on the beach was approached by the fighter's brother, who warned him that the crowd would murder all the officers if they made any further attempts at arrest. The bloodstained policemen looked on helplessly as the fighters and spectators were rowed out into Yantlet Creek, scrambled onto the steamers and then headed towards Essex. But all was not lost. At this point Superintendent Everest, whose shortcut across the marshes had proved to be a longer route than anticipated, arrived with reinforcements.

where corn should grow. Wilful as children can be, she snatched a handful of scarlet poppies, staining her white frock.

At Barton they met Mary's father, Master Woolley, who lifted them gently into his cart and Violet the horse pulled them steadily towards their destination. Mary recounted how Violet was a common name for horses but in country places, the name was always pronounced, *Voilet*. They soon came in sight of Jessamine Cottage.

*The story concludes in the next issue of The Clock Tower.*

## *The Battle Of Yantlet Creek, 1860*

Brian Joyce



*Brian Joyce is a 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.*

Although the generally-accepted London Prize Ring rules of 1838 had imposed some order on bare knuckle prize-fighting – the introduction of a roped-off ring of 24 feet square and the banning of head-butting and below-the-belt punches, for example – the sport existed in a legal twilight. The authorities were concerned about injuries and deaths among fighters and threats to law and order from bloodthirsty crowds. Organised fights were therefore often broken up by police, although this was inconsistent. The sport was popular with both the working class and the aristocracy and the political influence of the latter meant that police policy varied greatly from area to area. Nevertheless, caution prevailed among the organisers, and fights were usually staged in fairly remote locations to reduce the risk of police intervention. Marshy areas of North Kent were among such locations, attracting fighters and their flashy London followers, the *Fancy*.

News that an important prize-fight had been arranged somewhere on the Kentish bank of the River Thames reached Superintendent Thomas Everest of the Kent Constabulary by telegraph on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1860. He hastily put together a squad of police, which he then divided into smaller groups to scout the Kent side of the river.

Everest had been born in Northfleet and knew this coast well. He took a group of officers to Gravesend, then across the Thames to Southend and back again to Stoke on the Hoo Peninsula. It was then that he spotted the funnels of two steamers at Yantlet Ceek, near Allhallows. This was the usual mode of transport hired by the London *Fancy* when travelling to watch prize-fights at remote riverside locations, and Everest drew the obvious conclusion that the predicted bout was imminent. He sent Inspector Checkland, with

## *The New Shorts Brothers Statue Unveiled*

Barry Cox



*FOMA member and our latest roving reporter Barry Cox is a retired sales executive who enjoys local history.*

On the 4th of May I was standing in the garden with some friends and we heard and then saw a Spitfire beating up the eastern end of the Island; it was then I realised I had missed the unveiling of the statue of the Short Brothers.

The next day - and on assignment for *The Clock Tower* - I went to photograph The Statue at Leysdown-on-Sea on the Isle of Sheppey. Muswell Manor was the first headquarters of the UK Aero Club and it was nearby that the famous Short Brothers built their first factory. In 1909 it was also here that Britain's first recorded flight or circular mile was achieved by JTC Brabazon. Further information is available on the manor's website: [www.muswellmanor.co.uk/aviation\\_history.htm](http://www.muswellmanor.co.uk/aviation_history.htm)

I first came to the Island on the light railway in 1948 aged three, my father and his brother-in-law had purchased an old chalet and two bell tents. That became our holidays for a few years, not bad considering rationing was still on. Leysdown at that time had very little in the way of entertainment or food outlets. I continued to come on and off for the next few years, sometimes cycling from Strood with mates and camping for the weekend. We always went home early because we had spent our money and were hungry. My father and my Uncle Wally used to take me to Mussel Manor (as it was then called) and explain the history and importance of it. Down the main promenade of Leysdown is The Coffee Pot Cafe. It seems this was once a bungalow, and the woman who owned it saw all the ladies wandering about weekends whilst their husbands were learning to fly and had nowhere to go or shelter. So she built a cafe on the front of her bungalow and purchased a dozen bell tents and opened the first holiday camp here. She then went on to build The Seahorse Pub next door and ran that as well; years later she sold it to Shepherd Neame. The light railway stopped in about 1950, so we had to come by bus and that, like today, takes forever.

I never intended to live here but one day I saw a bungalow for sale and my wife and I liked the look of it and have never regretted moving here. There is so much history on the Island to explore and people willing to explain it. I last went in The Seahorse Pub when Procol Harem were live playing *A Whiter Shade of Pale* and the Michael Crawford was a barman. I bet he doesn't come here for his holidays now.

*Barry Cox's photographs of the new statue can be found on the back cover.*

## Twenty Years of MALSC

Stephen Dixon,  
Archive Service Manager, Essex Record Office



*Stephen left MALSC in 2008, following his appointment as Archive Service Manager for Essex County Council, responsible for the county's archive service centred on Essex Record Office based in Chelmsford. ERO has two repository rooms in Colchester, a part-time staffed archives access point at Saffron Walden Library, a volunteer run archives access point at Harlow Library and proxy archives access points at Colchester and Southend Libraries. He has recently taken on the role of corporate custodian of art and responsibility for the ERO conference centre, which is Essex County Council's premier conference venue.*

*Following the popular development of Medway Ancestors Stephen introduced a similar service to Essex, Essex Ancestors, which means I have now straddled the Thames Estuary for parish registers provision online. There is a big difference however in that Essex Ancestors is pay-to-browse, securing valuable income and helping to mitigate savings. We were able to produce the images internally in our digitisation studio. The project covers all of historic Essex including the five London boroughs which separated in 1965 and the two unitary authorities of Thurrock and Southend which supports the Essex brand. Remarkably, the absence of an index has proven no deterrent to subscribers and it is planned to extend the paywall to cover more collections in due course.*

Rochester upon Medway Studies Centre (RUMSC) was formed in April 1993 out the former Medway Area Archives Office, which had also variously been known during the period 1990-1993 as Rochester upon Medway City Archives or Medway Archives Centre, and the local studies collections in the Medway Towns. In a cumbersome arrangement that only ended with the creation of Medway Council in 1998, the local studies service and first floor area were subject to a rental agreement between Kent Council and Rochester upon Medway City Council while the archives service was subject to a separate legal agreement, which defined the funding of the archives service and its staff.

The new combined archives and local studies service was modelled on the Centre for Kentish Studies, established in December 1990 when the County Local Studies Library at Springfield Road in Maidstone relocated to County Hall. In the case of the Medway Towns, which represented the only instance of the same process at a more local level, the local studies collections from Chatham and Rochester Libraries were relocated to the Civic Centre on 18 March 1993, with collections from Strood and Gillingham Libraries following thereafter. In wine and cheese parties and suchlike events, we affectionately termed ourselves the *Rumscullions*.

Preparations were guided from Maidstone by Nigel Yates, former County Archivist and by that time Head of Heritage, while much of the detailed arrangements were overseen by the City Council as landlord, Kent County Council property staff and the archives and local studies staff locally who were going to operate the new service.

The new service comprised the former archives premises, opened in April 1990, including the strongroom on the ground floor and a much enlarged public searchroom on the first floor. The old searchroom, which could accommodate only five researchers and one member of staff, became semi-redundant. While the senior archives assistant and archives assistant

Chapter One commences, "It is a great many years since I was a little girl, but there are somethings [sic] which happen in childhood that one never forgets, and I think that I shall always remember my little dormouse, and the things which happened to him. I used to live in those times in a town with a great many houses, in a long street." Anne Pratt's father owned a grocery business, originally in Strood but eventually this moved to Chatham. Was the long street Anne describes Chatham High Street and did they perhaps live over the shop? She tells us that you had to walk a long way to get beyond the street and into green meadows. In the early Nineteenth Century when she was living in Chatham, there would certainly have been houses running up to and along New Road. An 1828 view of Chatham shows the land above the New Road having some fenced, and some open fields. She continues, "...even so there were a few places where I could go to gather daisies although I could not walk as far as the cornfields or the woods."

In the midsummer holidays her mother took Anne and her two sisters out in to the *real country*, as she called it, to stay at a farmhouse. Anne's two sisters were at school, and so the mother's nice young servant, Mary, was often her companion both in and out of doors. She is described as a good girl, well deserving of the trust the mother placed in her and young enough to enjoy playing. She slept in a bed near to her charge and after going down stairs in the morning to do some housework would come back into the bedroom to give her a bath and see that she dressed properly.

One morning the character in the book named Mary woke her charge much earlier than usual and *Nellie* complained that it was not time for her to dress: she could hear the milkman and knew he always came before seven. Milk was delivered in those days by a horse and cart carrying a milk churn and the liquid would be dipped out of the churn and poured into a jug brought out from the house. A picture in *My Pet Dormouse* shows the servant just about to pick the jug up. Mary just smiled at *Nellie* and then began to laugh. "Well, Miss *Nellie*," she said, you know that Mistress has promised that I should go home for a few days, and your mother is going to let you come home with me to stay at Jessamine Cottage." Mary's mother knew Miss *Nellie* had been ill and thought country air and new milk and running about would do her good; she had even bought her a little rake so that she could help with the haymaking. Anne Pratt as a child was not very strong. She was slightly lame and did not attend the school in Eastgate House in Rochester as regularly as her two sisters did. the book continues, "'Oh Mary,' I said, 'there is no place in the whole world that I should so much like to go to as Jessamine Cottage...'" The cottage was four miles away and quite a distance to walk, but Mary's father was delivering a sack of corn to a house at Barton, two miles away. If they walked the two miles to Barton, they could go the rest of the way in his cart. It is interesting to note that there is a street in Strood named Barton Street, which perhaps was the inspiration. *Nellie* would have to get up early so as not to keep Mary's father waiting and on a bright, early morning in June, having had a quick breakfast of bread and milk, she ran into her mother's room to give her a parting kiss. There is no mention of a father, but later on (on page 46 of the book) we are told she is nine years old. In 1815 Anne Pratt would have been the same age, and her own father did not die until 1819, so if this story is autobiographical, parts are perhaps not entirely accurate.

When the girls departed, people were opening up the shops on the streets and as they took down their shutters many a friendly "Good Morning!" was given. They walked steadily on beyond the long rows of houses and onto a dusty road lined with hedges full of pretty pale pink roses. Then through cornfields filled with poppies and yellow corn marigolds which *Nellie* wanted to pick. Mary urged her on and told her they would find plenty of lovely flowers at her mother's cottage: beds full of pinks, sweet-william and columbines. She also reminded her that country people did not like poppies and marigolds taking up the ground

of Religious Instruction at the school following his "Scripture Examination." On the whole the Diocesan Inspector seemed pleased with the religious education at the school, however HMI was more critical particularly about the buildings. In 1905 he reported that the Boys School was using a cloak room which was "ill ventilated and without provision for warming" as a classroom and the infants at the Lower Rainham School were "left to a young monoitress" and "sit in uncomfortable and unhealthy positions on the steps of a gallery." When he visited Lower Rainham School on 26 January 1911 the coal had run out and there was no fire.

#### Notes

1. CES296/1/2 Rainham School log book 1870-1917
2. CES/296/3/08 Rainham School log book 1917-1967
3. *Bygone Kent* Volume 23 number 3 published by Meresborough Books
4. University of Roehampton website
5. P296/25/10 School Managers Minutes for Rainham School 1903-1922
6. P296/25/11 School Managers Minutes for Rainham School 1922-1949
7. *More Pictures of Rainham*, Barbara Mackay Miller. Pub. Meresborough Books 1987
8. Meredale School website

## My Little Dormouse

Barbara Marchant



*FOMA member and local historian Barbara Marchant was the founding member of the Strood Heritage Society, set up to promote the history and interests of the people of Strood. Barbara was born in Kent, and although she and her husband have now retired to Somerset, Strood, the Medway Towns and Kent are still close to her heart.*

Barbara's previous articles in *The Clock Tower* include *A Stroll through Strood*, Issue 4, November 2006, and *Strood's Famous Botanist - Anne Pratt*, Issue 5, February 2007.

## Part One

Anne Pratt is well known for her many books on wild flowers, all of them illustrated by her own flower paintings. She also wrote a book about birds, entitled *Our Native Songsters*. One other book written by her, which omits the author's name, was a tiny book. This was very likely about Anne's own childhood and has the title, *My Pet Dormouse*.

I first came across this book in 1995 at RHS Lindley Library, London, and inside the cover was the written inscription, "Catherine Young from her Aunty the author." Catherine was Anne's older sister and Young was her married name. It is a charming little book produced by Frederick Warne & Co. and printed by Billing & Sons, Guildford. The front cover, as well as displaying the title in a decorative cartouche, has sprays of flowers and leaves all done in black, with some decorative panels in blue. It is illustrated throughout by many line drawings, perhaps done by Anne Pratt herself. The first one shows a farmyard with many chickens and ducks and to one side a seated figure, two adult females, a child, and another girl; the initials W.H.B. are concealed amongst the straw. Was this drawing provided by the printers, Billing & Sons, for none of the other illustrations is initialled?

continued to be based downstairs to operate the document production system, I relocated to one of two offices on the first floor, sharing it with the two job share heritage officers (local studies librarians in all but name). These were Greta Paterson and Avril Myers, formerly Bloomfield, the latter the author of a well-known illustrated book on the history of Strood. The local studies manager, Kate Woollacott, occupied the second office and for the first time staff on the premises had the benefit of a tea room, which became a useful base for the buffet lunches for which the centre became noted when hosting events.



*Pat Salter surveying the newly acquired searchroom.*

The public were the main beneficiaries of the new combined service, with easy access to both archival and bibliographical sources under one roof. Nevertheless, old library users didn't necessarily adapt to the new arrangements straight away and there was something of a downturn in document productions as the more easily available printed sources competed. However, over time we built up a loyal and new following for both resources.

The new searchroom was really the jewel of the new service, offering about ten microfilm and fiche reader spaces, two microfilm and fiche reader printers, six document tables later reduced to four, map tables, local studies reading tables, public computers and of course newspapers, the naval collection, *vertical files* of pamphlets and ephemera, photographs and the Dickens Collection. The new searchroom also lent itself to meetings, events and exhibitions. During the mid to late 1990s visitor figures peaked at about 13,000, I recall, a very impressive figure considering the area served and in comparison with figures achieved by bigger offices nowadays. School and student groups also benefited from the new space and the local studies staff took an excellent and effective lead in educational outreach.

The staff always made their mark. Patricia Salter, Senior Archives Assistant, who had made an important contribution to the planning of the new service, retired in 1997 and Jenny Sivyer, formerly Brown, left us in 1998. The former was to be replaced by the inimitable Derek Moore and the latter by Sarah Harris, who emigrated to Washington State USA. She was replaced by a certain Cindy O'Halloran who, on Derek's retirement, became Senior Archives Assistant. Local Studies Librarians who followed Greta and Avril included Liz Dixon (no relation) and the now long-serving Norma Crowe. Aply assisting the whole service as Local Studies Assistant was the cheery and indefatigable Janet Knight (who retired in 2009: see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 16, November 2009); Lisa Birch followed Cindy as Archives Assistant; Lisa left in 2008 and moved to the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies in Canterbury (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 10, May 2008)..

In 1998 there occurred the last change of name from Rochester upon Medway Studies Centre to Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC) to reflect the creation of the new Medway Council unitary authority, the result of the amalgamation of Rochester upon Medway City Council, Gillingham Borough Council and local departments of Kent County Council. The first major impact of this process was the practical one of quickly safeguarding and retrieving the records of Gillingham Borough Council, undertaken by Derek and me.



*Centre Manager Kate Woollacott on the telephone and Stephen Dixon at the desk.*

My own job title changed from Medway Area Archivist (my KCC job title) or Archivist to Rochester upon Medway City Council (if I was signing letters or transacting business for the City

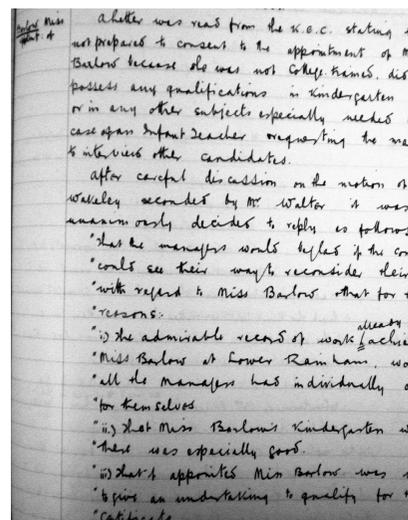
Council) to City Archivist, although still employed by KCC, thus continuing an arrangement which I think was unique in the country, a self-sufficient district council archives service. This oddity had been noted by a consultant working for the Local Government Association, who judged the service could be transferred from the City Council to a successor unitary authority and remain viable. This of course had been hotly disputed by KCC during the local government review prior to 1997 when KCC had referred to a prospective unitary authority as "Rochester upon Gillingham" in an expensive and hard fought campaign taken to appeal to the Secretary of State. I am glad to say the LGA verdict was borne out and MALSC became a bit of a trend setter in Kent and nationally, achieving three star status under the National Archives assessment procedure, as against Kent's two stars.

The year 1997-1998 was a difficult one, seeing the implementation of a capital scheme for the installation of a sprinkler system in the strongroom and the conversion of the existing static racking to mobile, unusually for me entailing 12 hour days without lunch or tea breaks. During this period, the archives were relocated to a commercial records storage company in Milton Regis except for the *Textus Roffensis* which went instead to the Guildhall Museum armoury.

The period around the formation of the Studies Centre in 1993 was a fertile one for the archives service. Computerisation began with the acquisition of dumb terminals connected to the City Council's mainframe computer in about 1994. This facility led to the development of CityArk Phase I, by which separate staff and public read-only access to the Uniplex word processed archives catalogues (typed up by the council's secretariat from my hand-written listing docket) was enabled in office areas and the searchroom circa 1995-1997. CityArk Phase II followed in 1998 to 1999, thanks to a group of University of Kent at Canterbury graduates, Network Advantage, who created an Intranet version of CityArk. This had necessitated the migrating of the original Uniplex data through Word 6 into HTML. (An original programmer of Uniplex working for the council on a freelance basis had achieved the near miracle of converting the Uniplex data into Word 6). The lead programmer for CityArk was Andrew Newberry.

A breakthrough however came on the night of 13/14 October when CityArk was published to the Internet, constituting I believe the first local government archives online catalogue, possibly even the first public sector online archives catalogue, preceding the Essex Record Office Seax and Public Record Office PROCAT systems, which were launched in 2000. CityArk thereafter became the host for the first digitised parish registers published online,

School which closed in 1932. They fixed the dates of the summer holiday and approved requisitions for books etc. There are many references to the appointment and resignation of teaching staff in the minutes together with requests for salary increases. There are also a few mentions of disciplinary matters. In 1910 Mr Maggs, Assistant HMI, expressed dissatisfaction with the work of Mrs Richards (Assistant Mistress, Girls School) and Mrs Woollett. Mrs Richards resigned on 30 October 1911 following a series of complaints by Mrs Charlesworth, Head of Girls. Although most staffing appointments appear to have been rubber stamped by KEC this was not always the case. On 22 February 1916 the managers appointed Miss Adela Barlow Head of Lower Rainham School, but this did not meet with the approval of KEC. On 10 March the managers were told that KEC did not consent to her appointment because she was not college trained and did not possess any qualifications in kindergarten work. A compromise was reached and she was allowed to obtain the necessary qualifications whilst working at the school. Later that year she took charge of the Infants School following the retirement of Emma Brice.



*Extract from minutes 10<sup>th</sup> March 1916 regarding the appointment of Miss Barlow*

In 1913 the managers discussed the care of "children who stayed for dinner every day." The Head Master reported that he had punished some boys for bad behaviour during that time. KEC had advised the school that supervision of the children was not the responsibility of either the teachers or caretakers. The managers resolved to follow the lead of the Council School and find "homes of friends or relatives to which the children could go during their dinner hour."

Overcrowding was again a problem in the early years of the Twentieth Century as the population of Rainham grew. In April 1904 KEC instructed the managers to take steps to ensure that attendance at the Infants School did not exceed 209. KEC was informed that there were 270 on the roll with an

average attendance of 232. The unhelpful response was that numbers must not exceed 210! The managers decided not to admit under fives noting that the new Council School would open in two years. Rainham Council School, later known as Solomon Road School, and then Meredale CP was officially opened on 1 May 1907, although the school had been in temporary accommodation for at least two years prior to that. The school became Meredale Independent School in 2005.<sup>8</sup> MALSC holds log books from 1905-1971 and some admission registers [CES/296/3/01-07].

Much of the time at meetings was spent on matters relating to the buildings. In 1904 the managers received a letter from KEC reporting on a visit to the school. They were told that the staircase leading to the principal rooms in the Girls Department "would be dangerous in case of fire or panic," the classrooms which were below ground level were badly ventilated and it would be difficult to "extricate the children in a case of emergency." The solution was to build an emergency staircase to the rear and to put additional fresh air inlets into each of the rooms below ground level. Copies of the annual report from Her/His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) were tabled at meetings together with the annual report by the Diocesan Inspector

Despite the lack of traffic the roads were not as safe as might have been expected. On 26 May 1911 "William Tassell run over by a bicycle, fractured his collar bone" and 20<sup>th</sup> October 1911 "Dorothy Finn was run over by a horse and cart on Monday when going home to dinner." She survived, but Francis Wade was not so fortunate as the log book for 3 April 1916 records that he was "run over by a motor bus on the High Road (deceased)."

From time to time the log book gives details of lessons. In one of the early entries in 1870 we are told that the children were taught a piece of poetry called *The Clock* and then a song of the same name and the morning hymn *Awake my Soul* etc. An *Object Lesson* given in 1887 is recorded in detail, among other things the children learnt of Natural Phenomena including Motions of the Earth, the seasons, sun, rain, hoar frost etc. They were taught about common employment such as glass blower, weaver, printer and, more appropriately for country children, baker, butcher and blacksmith.

The Head would have overseen the work of the Pupil Teachers. In October 1880 she notes, "Edith gave a lesson on Trees." The following month Edith received a paper from Whitland College "passed 2<sup>nd</sup> class no vacancy." Whitlands College is a teacher training college founded in 1841, now part of the University of Roehampton,<sup>4</sup> so it appears that Edith had applied to attend college to qualify as a teacher.

Visits by Her Majesty's Inspector for Schools took place from the beginning of the school. A copy of the report for January 1871 has been transcribed in the log book and reads, "Miss Rowlatt takes great pains with the infants and the general state of the school is fairly good." Unfortunately the annual report for 1885 was not so good, "The elementary work is at present in a backward state."

As a church school religious education was an important part of their studies. In the early years frequent visits by the vicar are noted, "Rev. Pearman came and questioned the children on scripture." There are many references to the Scripture examination, the annual inspection by the Diocesan Inspector of Religious Instruction, which was followed by a half day holiday. From the report of January 1871 we learn that "the first class seem to know the commandments very well." The 1885 report on Religious Education commented, "In the repetition of the Catechism some of the little words seem to need attention." I find it difficult to imagine a modern five to seven year old child learning the Catechism!

### Managers' Minutes

MALSC also holds the minutes of the meetings of the school managers from 1903-1922<sup>5</sup> and 1922-1949<sup>6</sup>. The first meeting of the managers of Rainham National School "under the new Education Act" was held at the Vicarage on Thursday 2 July 1903. The Foundation Managers appointed at that meeting were the Rev C Cobb, Vicar (Chairman), Rev D J Davies, Curate and the Church Wardens Messrs S J Brice, a farmer and brother-in-law of Emma, the Head of the Infants School, and E Jelly. Edwin Jelly had an outfitter's shop in Rainham High Street. Mr John Amhurst Walter of Berengrave was appointed by Kent Education Committee (KEC) as their representative on the committee and Mr John Henry Harrop, a baker who lived in Tufton Road, was appointed by the "Minor Local Authority." Is that Milton RDC?

In 1904 Mr J A Walter and Mr E Jelly were chosen to represent the Rainham School Managers on the new governing body of the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education and Church Schools Association. The minutes show that the managers were responsible for staffing and matters relating to the buildings in Station Road and also the Lower Rainham

beginning with Borstal in 2001 and culminating in the Medway Ancestors project funded by a grant of £49,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund by which all the parish registers of north-west Kent were added. I pay tribute to Derek who did at least half of the image uploads, which were all done manually. Additionally, I edited Ann Oakley's list and calendar of the Rochester Cathedral (and Cathedral Priory) archives for publication on CityArk and in so doing upgraded the entry for the *Textus Roffensis*, a timely thing, as the book subsequently gained much attention and was included in the British Library *Turning the Pages Project*. We were able to exhibit the Textus at the Guildhall Museum as part of the cathedral and diocesan 1400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2004.



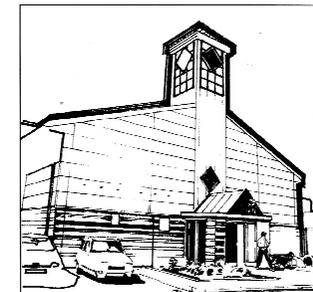
*Stephen Dixon*

In a collaboration with the Cobham Ashenbank Management Project we contributed the arrangement and listing of the remaining unlisted portion of the Cobham Hall archives to the wider Channel Tunnel Rail Link mitigation project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The work was ably undertaken by Nicola Waddington whose disability led to the work being hosted by Canterbury Cathedral Archives over a 14 and a half month period. My final project was to draft and prepare an application to the HLF for the arrangement of and listing

of the Rochester City Archives with the help of the Friends.

My fondest recollections are of the public, some of whom were like friends, and I am saddened several of them are no longer with us, though I hope their work lives on.

*The cover photograph shows the staff in 1993 and from left to right: Kate Woollacott, Manager, Rochester upon Medway Studies Centre, Jenny Sivyer (formerly Brown), Public Service Assistant, Stephen Dixon, City Archivist, Greta Paterson, Heritage Officer, Patricia Salter, Public Service Supervisor*



*The Rochester Upon Medway Studies Centre provides comprehensive facilities for local, family and history research in the Medway area. It is jointly funded by Rochester Upon Medway City Council and Kent County Council.*

*An invitation to the opening of Rochester Upon Medway Studies centre on 30 June 1993.*

*You are cordially invited to the opening of the new Rochester Upon Medway Studies Centre on 30 June 1993 from 6.00pm - 8.00pm.*

*The Centre will be officially opened at 6.30pm by*

*Graham Clarke*

*wine & light refreshments will be served*

*R.S.V.P. to The Manager, Rochester Upon Medway Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Kent. Telephone: Medway (0634) 732714*



*City of ROCHESTER UPON MEDWAY*

# A Clock Tower Special Feature

## Memories of The Coronation

A couple of months ago, *Clock Tower* Editor, Amanda Thomas, emailed FOMA members to see what they remembered about HM The Queen's coronation in 1953. As you will see below, there was quite a response.

Steve Cross, also a MALSC volunteer, writes:



"In 1953 I was aged five and this is one of the earliest memories I have...A group of young children, including myself, was gathered at my great aunt's house in Dewsbury, West Riding of Yorkshire (as it was in those days) to watch the coronation. We were all grouped around her television set, which was something of a rarity in 1953. It was a wooden cabinet about four feet tall with a minute monochrome screen about nine inches across the diagonal, protected by a sheet of convex glass as C.R.T.s were extremely fragile in those days. In the excitement and with all the hustle and bustle, I happened to bump into the television set and, to my horror (although I don't remember being too concerned at the time),

the sheet of convex glass dropped out of the television set and onto the floor. Luckily it did not break so, I am sure, someone must have put it back together again. The memory of this little minor incident has always stuck with me through the following sixty years and, although I don't recall being scolded, it always makes me feel somewhat guilty in retrospect." *Pictured, Steve Cross' great aunt in the 1960s.*

Barry Cox writes:

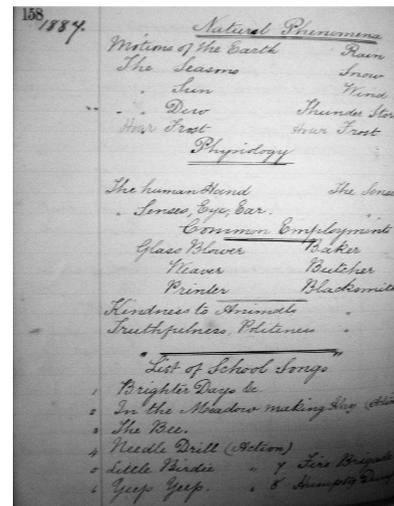
"[I] Attended a Coronation Party in Darnley Road Strood where we all received a Coronation Cup. My cousin Christopher Hunt and Stephanie Thomas dressed up as Mr and Mrs Coronation and won first prize. My cousin Christopher now owns his own spectacle making factory as he is an ophthalmic optician and Stephanie married an old school friend of mine and he owns and runs JJ's Gun Club, clay pigeon shoots... after moving mountains I have pleasure in sending you these [photographs].



were present it being very wet" and "a great many children absent this afternoon as we had a great fall of snow." Despite the weather the school usually remained open. In 1901, "Closed school this morning, the children who came were wet thro' especially those coming from a distance. Sent them home to dry their clothes. School as usual this afternoon." I assume the rain had stopped by the afternoon session. The entry for 5 March 1886 reads, "A great many sick, some absent on account of their fathers being out of employment." Was there no money to spend on schooling? Infectious diseases were often cited as the cause of absence and sometimes the school was closed to prevent the illness spreading further. On 18 June 1886, "Death of Ernest Kitchingham reported. Several children absent with mumps, two sent home with ringworm," and later that year, "Several away recovering from typhoid fever."

My mother-in-law probably started school after her fifth birthday in January 1910 and the log book for the following month records "more cases of measles." In July of that year whooping cough was rife and 1911 was even worse for sickness. The log book for March states, "56 cases of sickness, 41 chicken pox and measles." On 30 March, "School closed at 12.30 until after Easter by Doctor's orders, epidemic of chicken pox and measles." The children had an extended holiday that year as on 24 April, "30 fresh cases of measles, closed by Medical Inspector for two weeks more." When the school reopened on 8 May only 91 out of 127 children were present and "at least one death Doris Moore." In December 1915 the school was closed for three weeks owing to an epidemic of diphtheria and measles, it reopened for the last three days of term but attendance was poor with only 57 of 117 pupils.

From time to time the writer makes other comments about the children. In October 1870 she said that Charlie Hawks and Harry Breary "seem to understand addition a great deal better than the rest of the first class," however the following January poor Harry was said to be "very dull over his reading." "John Nicholls cannot remember any words for two minutes together. It's impossible to teach him to read..." (1911) "...the two Simpsons left in a caravan, only at school 4 days" (1912). "Admitted Jessie Howland," a cousin of my mother-in-law, "who was 7 years last May NOT been to school before (untaught) also Florence Kitchingham who was 5 years old last Feb. Not been to school before. Both refused entry into Council School." (1911).



Mentions of misbehaviour are comparatively rare, an entry for 6 August 1915 reads, "Following complaints from some girls and one parent that the elastic had been pulled off their hats, the Head found that Harry Wickenden and Willie Swan had a "cat a poul" and some pieces of elastic in their possession. They were punished."

The Attendance Officer was a frequent visitor to the school and was probably kept very busy. In June 1913 he made enquires about the absence of Jessie and Edward Howland and reported to the school that there was "no reason why the Howlands should be absent thro' ill health." It is recorded that both children were away again on 4 July.

An object lesson from 1887 from the Rainham School log book 1870-1917 CES/296/3/08

## Rainham Church of England Primary School

Jean Skilling



Jean moved to Gillingham at the age of four and has lived in Medway ever since. On leaving school she went to work for Kent County Council at Maidstone where she qualified as an accountant. After time as a full time mother she worked at Mid Kent College before returning to Kent County Council. Since taking early retirement in 2004 she has pursued her interest in family history and has begun to take an interest in the history of Rainham where she spent her childhood. She is Treasurer of FOMA, Kent Family History Society and the Medway Heritage Centre Trust.

## Part Two

### Rainham School Log Books

MALSC holds the log books for the Infants School for 1870 to 1917<sup>1</sup> and 1917-1967.<sup>2</sup> The volume commencing in 1917 is closed, but I was allowed to view the entries up to 1920. The early entries were probably made by Lucy Rowlatt, the Head of the Infants School. The first entry dated 3 October 1870 reads, "Recommended school after midsummer holiday had an average of 45." The following week she noted that attendance had increased to an average of 60 children. In October 1917 there were 95 children at the school.

Holidays were short with no half terms, just a long weekend for Whitsun. For their summer holiday the children were given five weeks beginning in late August to coincide with hop picking. The holiday was extended if the picking had not finished when school was due to recommence. The children had occasional half and full day holidays; the school treat and Old People's Tea was an annual event in July. Many children were absent for the annual Chapel Sunday School treat and in 1915 both the Bible Christian Sunday School and the Salvation Army Sunday School organised week day treats for the children. There are mentions of other closures including a Garden Fete, Flower Show and Sports (1913), a rummage sale in 1914 and an exhibition and sale of work done by the children in 1917 to raise "money for new pictures etc for the school."

On or around 24 May the children celebrated Empire Day and had their annual prize giving followed by a half day holiday. Celebrations began in the early years of the Twentieth Century and the log book for 1915 notes that "medals were handed to the children by the Vicar and Mrs Tamplin [his wife] pinned them on." Mrs Thomas in her memories in *Bygone Kent* (see later) recalls receiving a medal for good attendance and a prize of a sewing basket for diligence on Empire Day 1914.<sup>3</sup>

My husband's aunt Gladys Plum received a Barr [sic] for perfect attendance in 1915, she would already have received a medal for good attendance and the following year my mother-in-law was presented with a book called *Aunt Sally* by Constance Milman. The inscription says "Prize given to Mehanna [sic] Plum by E M Charlesworth (Head teacher)." Even the head teacher had problems with her unusual Christian name.

There are many comments in the log book about poor attendance, mainly due to the weather and illness. Bad weather often caused problems, for example in 1870 "very few children



Doris Herlihy writes:

"Although I didn't live in the Medway area at the time of the Coronation, I was there in London for the event. I was fourteen years old and a St John Ambulance Brigade Cadet in Sidcup. I was lucky enough to be part of a First Aid Team stationed at Horse Guards Parade. The post was set up in the arches just to the left of the area behind the mounted guards at the gates facing on to Whitehall. The day was wet and bitterly cold, but this didn't stop thousands of people lining the road to watch the Royal Procession go by. We had a succession of people coming to our post for mostly minor reasons - but one memorable one was someone with suspected appendicitis. With hindsight I guess that some of these *minor* reasons were actually mild hypothermia. The people I felt especially sorry for on the day were the troops lining the route. We had some Marines opposite us that were so cold they couldn't stop their guns shaking in their hands. They were not able to move or jump around to keep warm like anyone else - they just had to stand and freeze. Actually the weather on the day of the River Pageant last year was very similar to Coronation Day; not weather you would expect in June at all.

Unsurprisingly when the procession arrived all our *patients* departed. We had a grandstand view of the proceedings as no members of the public were allowed to stand in front of the gates, there were just a few troops spaced out in a line there - and us! It was a wonderful occasion and I have this memory of the procession coming to a halt at one point and us looking into the carriage opposite at Princess Margaret - who in turn was looking at us! How I wish I had owned a camera on that day. Once I got home I couldn't wait to see it all again on our new, first ever, television set that had arrived the day before the big event."

Doris Herlihy, née Kingman, (left) and her sister Brenda.



Odette Buchanan writes:

"I remember as if it were yesterday. At least I think I do. I was 17 at the time. It was a miserable, grey day with drizzly rain on and off. In the Hit Parade was Frankie Lane singing *I Believe*. The pubs were open all day instead of the usual 10.00 am – 2.30 pm and then 6.30 or 7.00 pm – 10.30 pm. It was a weekday and a public holiday. I had a day off school (I was in the Sixth Form) because they were closed too – unlike the traumatic death of the King, Queen Elizabeth's father in the previous February. At school that day lessons were cancelled and the whole school assembled in the hall for prayers and eulogies. We had no television neither did we know anyone who did. My aunt and uncle lived about five miles away from us in Hillingdon in Middlesex. My father took the car to collect them so the four of them could go to our local pub the Rayners Hotel. It was a short walk from our house and near Rayners Lane tube station which is on the Piccadilly Line. The pub was a large, 1930s building with Public, Saloon and Lounge Bars furnished according to the price you paid. The Public Bar was the cheapest. It had a bare wood floor with wooden chairs, stools and tables with tin ashtrays and a wide selection of games such as shove halfpenny, dominos, darts, whist cards, bagatelle, a pin ball machine and skittles. This is the bar my friends and I patronized, not only for the cheapest beer but also to play shove-halfpenny and darts. (I wasn't very good at darts. When it was my turn, the rest used to hide under the tables. I felt pleased if I actually managed to hit the board.)

My parents, aunt and uncle went in the Saloon Bar. "No point in paying more in the lounge on weekdays," my mum always said. You paid a bit more and got chairs still with wooden arms but upholstered seats and upholstered benches around the walls, a carpet on the floor and china ashtrays advertising various breweries and drinks but no games. The Lounge Bar was the most expensive. It had arm chairs and sofas, cut glass ashtrays and wall lights. There was a small stage one end with a patch of parquet flooring. At weekends there would be entertainment of some sort – a singer, a small band, a comedian or conjurer. People could dance when the band played but, the landlord had to apply for a special licence for singing and dancing which was only valid for the date given. The landlord had not applied for these licences for Coronation Day as I think she thought that the concession of all day opening was quite enough excitement for one day. All the bars were patriotically decorated with red, white and blue bunting. In the Saloon Bar there were also huge balls covered in cotton wool hanging from the ceiling with a mass of tiny union jacks fixed into them with pins. As the day progressed the atmosphere became more and more animated. Unheard of usually, the connecting door between the Saloon and Public Bars had been opened and the ever-increasing throng roamed between both bars. The landlady and her bar staff were frantically pouring pints of mild and bitter, bitter, light ale from bottles, Mackeson and Guinness stouts, and the more exotic drinks most of the female customers preferred. These ranged from whiskey and soda or ginger, through gin and tonic, port and lemon to Babycham, Moussec (a sparkling wine) or sweet sherry. In those days nobody drank either lager or wine. My mother favoured whiskey and ginger. She would rinse out the first glass with a little ginger tipped into the second. A few weird people drank fruit juice or tomato juice dispensed from small bottles and they were continually harangued by their company "to have a proper drink."

My uncle Bob was a tall, imposing man with an air of authority (he was an ex-army officer). He was tall enough to reach the aforementioned balls of union jacks. He delicately removed them, one by one and moved around the drinkers fixing them into their hats, lapels or shoulders. By the time he had emptied two of them, the landlady suddenly noticed what was happening and started shouting at him from behind the bar to stop it and get out. He turned majestically to her and over the heads of the customers he said, "Madam, do you not wish to honour our new young queen and herald in the dawn of the new Elizabethan Age?" The

Walter Glover was to continue running the mill until his death in 1945. He also ran a shop at 74 Burritt Street which sold mill produce; they also kept their own free-range chickens. He was to be described after his death as "a gentleman of genial disposition, Mr Glover was a veritable 'jolly miller' and was truly a master of his trade. He was an expert at cutting millstones, a delicate operation, and his advice was sought from every corner of the county." It has not possible to find all the people who must have worked at the mill over the years. Besides Mr Bertram Humphrey, already mentioned, who was manager, there was his assistant for some part of the Twentieth Century, a Mr Lower. Mr Bill Skilling also worked at the mill during part of the Twentieth Century, and who is pictured in the photograph here.

In 1911 65-year-old Frances Harmer lodged with William and Mabel Acton and worked as a shop assistant in the mill shop. Probably Mabel herself worked in the shop and also Walter's wife, Isabella, until her death in May 1927. During the later years, the mill ground corn for cattle feed rather than fine flour. In the 1930s Walter had two new sweeps fitted to the mill whilst other windmills in the Medway Towns and in Kent generally fell into disuse. When Walter died on 1 August 1945, aged 91, there was only one other working windmill in Kent, that at Cranbrook. Walter was buried at St Margaret's Cemetery on 4 August with his wife, Isabella, and his daughter, Eva. Following his death the mill was sold to Mr Alfred Charles Ambrose, a greengrocer on the Delce. He used part of it as a store but most was demolished to make way for garages.



*Bill Skilling showing the mill outbuildings; photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Jean Skilling.*

In his will, Walter's only surviving child, Mabel Acton, was his sole beneficiary. He left estate valued at £2,207 17s 3d. Mabel's husband, William Acton, died on 19 April 1960 and Mabel herself died two years later on 7 March 1962. They had no children so sadly this marked the end of a family that had been not insignificant members of the Delce community for over a hundred years. It was also around this time that the remains of the mill were finally demolished as the Council embarked on a programme of slum clearance to make way for new council housing.

#### Notes

1. *Chatham News*, 26 October 1901
2. *Chatham News*, 1 February 1908
3. *Chatham News*, 4 September 1909
4. *Chatham News*, 2 November 1945

brought by train for burial at St Margaret's Cemetery on 29 January and according to the *Chatham News* there were "many manifestations of sympathy in the neighbourhood of Delce, where the deceased was known from his infancy."<sup>2</sup> The funeral was very well attended and there were many floral tributes to the young man.



*The grave of John and Sarah Ann Glover in St Margaret's Cemetery (No.47); photograph by Pauline Weeds.*

### The Jolly Miller

After his father's death, Walter had continued running his various businesses and the early years could not have been easy as he also dealt with the tragedies that occurred in his family. In 1909 a strange accident occurred which fortunately caused little harm but which could have had

disastrous consequences in the locality. At about 8.30 on the morning of Wednesday, 1 September, Walter was having his breakfast when he thought he heard an unusual creak. He made up his mind to stop the mill when he had finished breakfast but, before he could do so, one of the sweeps had fallen to the ground with a terrible crash. It fell first on to the roof of the adjoining stables and then into the road. Fortunately, neither the horses in the stable, nor anyone in the road were hurt. Each of the

sweeps, which weighed nearly half a ton, were about 40 feet long and 7 feet wide and it took six men to move the fallen sweep. Subsequently an inspection was made of the mill and on the Friday the corresponding sweep was, with some difficulty, brought to the ground. It was then discovered that the end which fitted into the cannister had become rotten, something which could not have been detected in an ordinary inspection. Windmills could not be insured against such accidents and therefore Walter would have had to bear the expense of the repairs himself, about £400. However, because the mill also had a steam engine, milling could proceed as usual with little or no effect on his trade.<sup>3</sup>



*Bill Skilling at the mill. Walter Glover is in the background; photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Jean Skilling.*

crowd shouted, "Hear! Hear!" and someone started to sing *Rule Britannia*. The rest of us soon joined in. "No singing. No singing," she ineffectually squeaked through the noise, but her protests were drowned out. Enraged, she left the bar and came round to try and eject him forcibly. She was a small lady. Someone cried, "One out, all out!" More cheers and they started to move towards the door in a crocodile. That started us all off singing and dancing the conga and the whole bar joined in. As we wove our way out the saloon bar door, the landlady could be heard shouting "...and positively no dancing!" Of course she was ignored as we conga-ed round the front of the pub and into the public bar door, picking up passers by on the way. The crowd in the public bar joined in and this lasted for quite some time. The landlady admitted defeat and went back to serving and nagging her staff. By this time the few *superior* customers in the Lounge Bar had not only joined in but someone had opened the grand piano on the stage and started playing patriotic songs like *Sons of the Sea*, *Rule Britannia*, *Land of Hope and Glory*, *There'll Always Be an England*, and the National Anthem. He was a good pianist and patriotism morphed into war songs like *The White Cliffs of Dover*, *Tipperary*, *Pack up your Troubles* and *Dolly Grey*.

It got towards eleven o'clock and various popular drinks began to be sold out. The crowd thinned as people started staggering homewards, still singing. My friends and I linked arms and formed a chorus line across the pavement as we wove our crooked way home. Mum and dad took aunt and uncle home. They took a lot longer than they should. I was already home, undressed and in bed before I heard the car draw up and the front door open. I heard Dad speaking as they tottered up the stairs: "I don't know what's wrong with that car, Barb," he said, "I couldn't get it to go more than about 15 or 20 miles an hour. Have to take it in the garage."

Daylight next morning exposed the cause of the problem – a large branch of a tree was stuck under the wheel arch of the near-side front wheel. He must have collided with a tree and been so drunk he hadn't noticed. Those are my memories of Coronation Day.

### 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.*



### An Alternative Coronation, Gillingham 1953

An important Coronation took place in 1953, however it did not take place in Westminster Abbey but in Gillingham at the Park Fête. The year of 1953 was the jubilee year of Gillingham Borough Council, this august body being incorporated in 1903. As this was a major event in the borough, the celebrations outshone even those of Queen Elizabeth, a two day Jubilee Year Fête was held over the 12 and 13 August 1953. The bonanza of entertainment arranged to celebrate the event was billed as, 'The greatest outdoor entertainment ever offered in Kent.' There were opening ceremonies on both days with the attraction of two Hollywood film stars to draw in the crowds. Peter Finch (*A Town Like*

*Alice, Battle of the River Plate*) opened the festivities on Wednesday 12 August and John Fraser (*El Cid, Trials of Oscar Wilde*) performed the same deed on Thursday 13 August.

Visitors to the fête were regaled by performances from The Dagenham Girl Pipers, the Kent ACF Regiment RE and the Peter Pan Starlets. There was dancing by the bandstand, a fun fair, tug of war competitions, a beautiful baby snapshot competition, and a horticultural display. The RAF had an exhibition with anti aircraft guns and searchlights, and there was the usual range of stalls. The Ramsgate Beauty Queen with her Maids of Honour headed up a grand fancy dress parade but the real Queen at the event was Miss Gillingham! The competition to choose this paragon of pulchritude was held on Wednesday evening at 6.30 pm. The winner of the event was a Mrs Johanna Stek, whom the local newspaper refers to as 'a Dutch girl of Cleave Road, Gillingham.' Her Maids of Honour were Mrs Jillian Richman of Canterbury Street and Mrs Evelyn Smith of Rainham Road. Obviously, being a married lady did not rule you out of the competition. The lucky winner was paraded around on a decorated float sponsored by Lefevre of Gillingham. The design of the float resembled a huge birthday cake with the Queen perched upon the top tier; her handmaidens balanced on two small podiums reminiscent of mannequins in a shop window, the whole being topped off with a large 50 for good measure.

The Mayor, Alderman Cuthbert, had pontificated in the local press that the jubilee was a great moment in the history of the Borough and that our (British) system of public service was the envy of the civilised world. Whether the crowds at Gillingham Fête saw it in the same vein is perhaps debatable. In the months following, Gillingham Round Table planned a carnival to coincide with the exact date of the founding of the Borough and the photograph showing the Lefevre float was probably from this later Carnival. Over three thousand fliers were distributed to local businesses asking for support, but of those sent out only 12 replies were received. Apathy, it appeared, was alive and well in Gillingham circa 1953!

If you remember this particular Miss Gillingham on her birthday cake float we would love to hear your memories.



#### Notes

1. Chatham News, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1953
2. Gillingham Borough Council official photograph album, Medway Archives (Inset Picture)

## Delce Mill and the Glover Family

Pauline Weeds



*In 2005 Pauline Weeds was awarded the Higher Certificate in Genealogy by The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies. She has been involved in research for the England's Past for Everyone projects as well as transcribing for a Kent Archaeological Society project. She is a volunteer at MALSC, helping out with some fairly routine tasks, and a volunteer custodian at Eastgate House. She has recently become a City of Rochester Society guide.*

### Part Two Into The Twentieth Century

John Glover died on 18 October 1901 aged 75 years. Although a chronic asthmatic, he died quite suddenly and unexpectedly from a heart condition. His obituary described him as a "well-known and highly-respected citizen of Rochester" who led "a quiet and unassuming life." He was associated with the local Baptist community. For many years he had regularly attended services at the Zion Baptist Church in Clover Street, Chatham, and had been superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School at Borstal for 36 years, a position he had relinquished in 1886 due to his age. During the last years of his life he had attended services at Bartholomew's Free Church in Cross Street on the Delce.

The funeral, which was arranged by W Naylar & Sons, took place on the afternoon of Wednesday, 23 October at St Margaret's Cemetery. Family mourners did include his eldest son, John, from whom he appears to have been estranged, and there were also many friends and members of the local community present at the cemetery. The funeral was conducted by the Reverend F E Blackaby, pastor of the Zion Baptist Church in Clover Street, and he also delivered a special address in the cemetery chapel. In his will, as already mentioned, John's wife, Sarah, and his son, Walter, were appointed executors and were the only legatees. The mill and its associated businesses were left jointly to Sarah and Walter. Everything else was left to Sarah including John's other properties. The gross value of the estate was £4,003 11s 4d and his personal estate was valued at £411 5s 2d.

Sarah outlived her husband by just over three years. She died on 11 March 1905 aged 77 and was buried with her husband six days later. As has already been said, her son Walter was the sole beneficiary under her will subject to him paying his brother, John, an allowance of 12s per week. The gross value of her estate was £2,549 12s and her personal effects were valued at £459 3s 3d. Just over two months after the death of his mother, Walter's youngest daughter, Eva, died aged only 15. She was buried at St Margaret's Cemetery on 1 June 1905.

The following two years saw some respite from grief for the Glover family as they celebrated the marriages of their two surviving children. Walter, who by this time was working as a clerk in H M Customs at Gravesend, was married early in the summer of 1906 to Ethel Hoadley. Mabel was married just over a year later to William Acton. While Walter lived in Gravesend with his young wife, Mabel and William lived at 108 Burritt Street, not far from her parents who were then living at No. 74. However, a further tragedy was in store for the family when the young Walter died on 24 January 1908, aged just 23. His coffin was