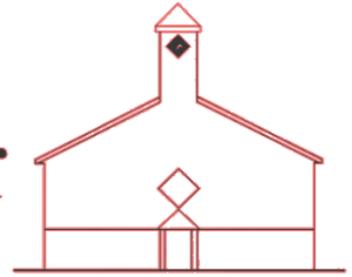


The Clock Tower



Issue Number 58: May 2020
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

Lockdown Special



Rochester Bridge, Saturday 25 April 2020

Photograph by Rob Flood

Medway In Lockdown

***Cine World Rochester lockdown
Saturday 25 April 2020***



M2 Motorway Bridge lockdown Saturday 25 April 2020

Photographs by Rob Flood

Women Power



On March 7 the Medway Archives Centre held one of its last events before Lockdown. Pictured are representatives from Medway's Women Institute. See Norma Crowe's article on page 14.

Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



Letter from Lockdown

Well, what an odd experience this is! As I write this most of us have, presumably, been socially isolating or socially distancing, two new phrases that will surely be added to the Oxford Dictionary this year. Hopefully you have survived the experience and by the time you read this things will have moved on a bit and we will be starting to get our lives back the way we would like – though I am not holding my breath. There have been the odd surprising moments though to relieve the boredom ... last week 'Darth Vader' wandered past my house, his mate walking behind playing *Star Wars* music on a portable music machine. Taking PPE just a tad too far methinks!

Normally your new membership card would accompany this issue but the FOMA Committee has decided to postpone printing until we know what is going on. Also, during lockdown it has been difficult for many to renew membership, and an additional challenge for our Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, to process cheques. There is a renewal form on page 6 and we urge you to renew as soon as you are able. The pandemic means that we have no idea when events will start again, but tentatively we are hoping to have a talk/delayed AGM on 12 June. Amanda Thomas has said she can do a talk at short notice, but we will let you know by email and through the website/Facebook page if that is possible. Other speakers booked for later in the year include Christoph Bull, Jeremy Clarke and Alison Cable (September, November and March 2021 respectively); the FOMA quiz night is scheduled for Saturday 24th October 2020. Please see the details below, which replace our usual *News and Events* page.

In the last issue of *The Clock Tower* you will have received the agenda and minutes for the AGM, which was due to take place on 3 April. The Treasurer's Report, which would have been handed out at the meeting follows on pages 7 and 8. If you have any queries or questions regarding it, please feel free to contact the committee – contact details are on page 37. I will just explain that the rather large amount of £1,700, (under *Exhibition Costs*) created a considerable deficit for 2019 and was paid to the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) to cover the production costs of the various FOMA exhibitions remembering World War One. When MAC moved to its present building, Medway Council said that all exhibition material had to be produced by their own in-house production department. It seemed rather mean that Norma Crowe's budget should be reduced by this considerable expense - hence the one-off contribution.

It was good to see that we can now access Ancestry Library via the online Medway library service though when I typed in the number on my library card it refused to recognise me and I had to fill in a new membership. Hopefully my temporary number will last until the libraries reopen, and I also hope your own attempts were more successful!

I look forward to when both FOMA and MAC can once more stage events and we can meet up. In the meantime it's back to the gardening, reading, Zoom get-togethers and other things we have found to occupy our enforced stay at home.

FOMA Talks and Events

Friday 12 June, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

A talk by FOMA's Amanda Thomas (to be confirmed), followed by AGM.

Members to be informed.

Friday 11 September, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

The Griffin, Horse and Harp; The Earls of Darnley and their Irish connections.

A talk by Christoff Bull - Christoff is always an entertaining speaker.

Saturday 24 October, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

Quiz Night.

£8 for members and non-members. **BOOKING REQUIRED** (see below).

Please do your best to get a table of friends together!

Friday 13 November, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

Dickens in Medway - title to be confirmed

A talk by Jeremy Clarke.

Friday 12 March 2021, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

The Rochester Bridge Trust Archive – title to be confirmed.

A talk by Alison Cable.

Friday 9 April 2021, 7.00 for 7.30 pm,

FOMA AGM.

Booking for FOMA events is not necessary and **are now held at St Nicholas Church Lower Hall, Strood, Rochester, Kent. ME2 4TR**; car park entrance is off Gun Lane, almost opposite the Health Centre. Please check our website (www.foma-lsc.org) for further information and for other forthcoming events. Talks are £3 for members, £5 non-members. Booking for Quiz Nights and enquiries through the FOMA Chairman: Elaine Gardner, 102 Valley View Road, Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent; emgardner@virginmedia.com; 01634 408595.

Under the new data protection laws we are advised to tell you that photographs may be taken during our events. If you do not wish to be included in a photograph, please advise a FOMA committee member on your arrival.

See our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/fomalsc) and our website (www.foma-lsc.org) for all the very latest information on FOMA and Medway heritage.

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members Elspeth Millar, Elizabeth Stewart, and Vanessa Sanderson.

Membership Reminder

You can renew your membership on the FOMA website
<http://foma-lsc.org/membership.html>,
by Standing Order and by post; cheques made payable to Friends of the Medway Archives

Payment may also be made using the BAC system:
SORT CODE 60-21-02, ACCOUNT No. 48040304 and please use your name for REFERENCE; or by PayPal
via our website: <http://www.foma-lsc.org/membership.html>

The membership renewal form follows on page 6.

Please contact: FOMA Membership Secretary,
Mrs. B. Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent.
Queries can also be sent by email to Betty Cole at: becole40@gmail.com
PLEASE NOTE Betty's new email address!

N.B. Betty saves stamps from all correspondence to raise funds for the
Molly Wisdom Hospice.

Membership Renewal 2020

Please renew my (our) membership of the Friends of the Medway Archives, I (we) enclose cash / cheque for £.....

Individual	£10	Family	£12
Society membership	£15	Individual life membership	£100

Cheques should be made payable to **Friends of the Medway Archives**.

Payment may also be made using the BAC system:

SORT CODE 60-21-02, ACCOUNT No. 48040304 and please use your name for REFERENCE; or by PayPal via our website: <http://www.foma-lsc.org/membership.html>

If you wish to pay by standing order please complete the form overleaf and forward to your bank.

Please enter the information below in block capitals

Title and Name(s):.....

Position (organisation):.....

Address:.....

.....

.....Post Code:.....

Tel. No.....Email:.....

<p>GIFT AID DECLARATION I wish the Friends of the Medway Archives treat all donations and subscriptions I have made for the six years prior to this year and will make from the date of this Declaration, as Gift Aid, until I notify F.O.M.A. otherwise. I pay income or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount of tax reclaimed.</p>

Signed:	Date:
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The completed form and payment should be sent to the FOMA Membership Secretary,
Mrs. B. Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent.

Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

PLEASE PRINT OFF THIS PAGE TO USE

The FOMA AGM Treasurer's Report

Josie Iles

The Friends of Medway Archives Centre INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2019 (£s)

	2019	2018
<u>Income</u>		
Subscriptions	£ 1,151.00	£ 1,456.00
Bank Interest	£ 13.33	£ 5.82
Donations	£ 5.00	£ 60.00
Gift Aid Tax Reclaim	£ 142.75	£ 135.73
Talks and Other Events	£ 925.00	£ 1,011.96
Other Income	£ 2.58	£ 11.00
Total Income	<u>£ 2,239.66</u>	<u>£ 2,680.51</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>		
Document Purchase	£ 30.83	£ 39.85
Exhibitions and Events	£ 1,700.00	£ 00.00
Purchases for MAC	£ 654.00	£ 00.00
Fund Raising Costs	£ 251.58	£ 293.44
<i>The Clock Tower</i> – Printing and Postage	£ 1,022.15	£ 1,171.71
AGM Costs	£ 00.00	£ 00.00
Website	£ 00.00	£ 300.67
Postage, Stationery etc.	£ 105.79	£ 114.42
Affiliation Fees – KHF	£ 00.00	£ 15.00
Insurance	£ 75.00	£ 75.00
Gifts	£ 125.00	£ 30.00
Donations to MAC	£ 00.00	£ 00.00
Other Costs	£ 209.36	£ 358.08
Depreciation	£ 861.00	£ 861.00
Total Expenditure	<u>£ 5,034.71</u>	<u>£ 3,259.17</u>
Surplus/Deficit of Income over Expenditure	£ -2,795.05	£ -408.63
	<u>£ 2,239.66</u>	<u>£ 3,426.70</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2019

	2019	2018
Fixed Assets		
Scanner	£ 861.00	£ 1,722.00
	£ 861.00	£ 1,722.00
Current Assets		
Debtors – Gift Aid	£ 142.50	£ 135.50
Debtors – Subscriptions	£ 00.00	£ 00.00
Business Reserve Account	£ 6,672.97	£ 6,659.64
Current Account	£ 666.86	£ 2,627.37
Pay Pal Account	£ 61.51	£ 113.72
Cash in Hand	1 £ 00.00	£ 00.00
Stamps	1 £ 13.42	£ 15.08
	£ 7,557.26	£ 9,551.31
Less		
Advance Receipts	£ 180.00	£ 240.00
Net Current Assets	£ 7,377.26	£ 9,311.31
Total Assets	£ 8,238.26	£11,033.31
Accumulated Fund b/fwd	£11,033.31	£11,611.97
Deficit/Surplus	£ -2,795.05	£ -578.66
Net Current Liabilities	£ 8,238.26	£11,033.31

The Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet were approved by the Trustees

on _____ and signed on their behalf by

Chairman

Treasurer

Secretary's Report

Chris de Coulon Berthoud



I am writing this in the middle of the terrible maelstrom of tragedy and social disruption caused by Covid-19. Lockdown and social isolation means that the Archive Centre has to remain closed to the public. Plans are being assessed, but at the time of writing it is still too early to know how and when we will be able to open our doors again. The changes to all our lives have been profound, but some of the smaller local changes have become apparent. We will all have noticed that the cloudless sky has been at times a spectacular clear blue, as the vapour trails of passing aircraft have been absent. Another environmental difference has been noted in Strood as the sound of the wind passing through the motorway bridge creates an eerie whistling sound, usually only noticeable in the dead of the night. The extraordinary photographs taken by FOMA's Rob Flood for this issue of *The Clock Tower*, and in particular those of the motorway bridge, illustrate the transformation. Since the road has been significantly quieter, residents who are not used to hearing the sound have become aware of its *eldritch keening!* In the absence of intrusive sonic architecture, my local community in Rochester has thrown itself into getting to know each other through a Facebook group for the surrounding streets. This has led to a great upsurge in sourdough bread making, and has seen neighbours sharing jars of fermented starter as the disruption of normal busy lives gives people more time for baking.



Some of their amazing creations! Chris' sourdough pizza (left) and Rob's wild garlic salt crust sourdough loaf – with thanks to Facebook.

If you have any other stories like this, the Archive is creating a community archive to document Medway's experiences of the coronavirus pandemic, and as explained by Elspeth Millar on page 11. This could be in the form of a diary, describing your experiences, or even a more poetic rendering of life under lockdown – see Odette Buchanan's contribution on page 12. It would be wonderful to gather experiences from as many people as possible. We are also keen to collect ephemera related to the situation, in the form of flyers, posters, neighbourhood notices and leaflets. Other items of interest are photographs, and artwork reflecting the pandemic influence on daily life in the towns. If you're thinking of contributing, or have any questions, please email malsc@medway.gov.uk. More information about this project can be found by searching for Medway Coronavirus (COVID-19) Community Archive. Anything that tells the story of Medway's experience of these unprecedented times will be most welcome.

And finally, we are very grateful to receive a generous donation made out to the Friends of Medway Archive from the estate of the late Mr J. Morrison of Strood. We are always immensely grateful for the support we receive from you, and look forward to normal service being restored at FOMA and the Archive in the coming weeks and months.

Obituary

Ray Maisey



Ray Maisey, pictured here with his wife, Buffy, on the occasion in May 2011 when he became Deputy Mayor of Medway.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Ray Maisey on 6 February 2020. Ray was the printer of *The Clock Tower* until his retirement in the summer of 2017; he was a member of Cuxton Parish Council and Cuxton and Halling Ward Councillor for 12 years.

Born in 1939, Ray grew up in Horley, Surrey and began his career in printing with the Thanet Press. He moved to Cuxton in 1997 and set up the Rabbit Hutch printing business in a garden outbuilding. It was named after the large wooden shed he had set up as a music studio at his former home in Kidbrooke, Greenwich. A keen musician and trombone player, Ray also wrote music, as his obituary on the Cuxton Parish Council website explains:

‘...one of his songs *No More The Blues* orchestrated by his great friend Derek Nash of ‘Sax appeal’ and Jools Holland fame. He submitted it to the Gibraltar song contest and was flown to the contest and given a hotel room, as his song had reached the final stages of selection. His singer was also flown out. Sadly, his song didn’t win, but he much enjoyed the excitement of the competition.’

Our sincere condolences to Buffy and the Maisey family.

The full obituary can be read on the Cuxton Parish council website at <https://www.cuxtonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk/obituary-ray-maisey-1939-2020/>

Medway Archives Centre News

Elsbeth Millar,
Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist



The Lockdown Project

I hope that everyone is keeping well and healthy at this time.

Staff at Medway Archives Centre (MAC) have been mostly working at home since the lockdown commenced at the end of March. We have been working on a variety of tasks, including writing and updating our policy and procedural documents, typing up paper catalogues into electronic format for eventual transfer to the catalogue, writing collection and research guides for our webpages, as well as answering enquiries where possible.

We had a number of events planned for this spring and summer including five reminiscence sessions, exhibitions for the Dickens 150 festival, and an 'arts in the archives' drop-in event (focusing on art, printmaking and performance in the collections) which was to be part of the Medway Print Festival 2020. We will look to reschedule these whenever that might be possible.

Our role at Medway Archives Centre is to help people discover the stories of Medway's people and places through the records, published materials, ephemera, and photographs that we collect, look after, and make accessible. A lot of our collections are historic but we also need to collect records about today so that future generations have access to sources which help them understand how we live now. We want to create a new collection comprising diaries and other material about, or created because of, the current Covid-19 pandemic, to document the experiences of those that live or work in Medway during this time. But for this to happen we need your help. There are a few ways that we are asking people to consider contributing to the collection:

By keeping a daily or weekly diary or scrapbook recording your experiences of this period. There's no specific information that you need to record, or right or wrong way of approaching this. Diaries do not need to be long or detailed. They are about your experiences of the pandemic written in any way you choose. Diaries also do not need to be completely or wholly prose. They could be, or could include, collages, drawings, photographs, poetry and other forms of creative writing – we are really keen to encourage creative approaches to diaries and scrapbooks. Your diary or scrapbook could be on paper, in a notebook, or in an electronic format like MS Word.

By collecting any ephemera about, or related to, the pandemic - leaflets, flyers, notices, newsletters, advice/guidance notes – perhaps about social distancing or social isolation, about closures (or revised opening times), about community efforts to help the vulnerable, perhaps even local resources on homeschooling.

Through photographs or artwork - you may be taking photographs of the pandemic's impact (like empty shelves and roads, signs and notices in windows about closures or shortages) or creating artwork, such as rainbow pictures for windows.

We think it is really important to capture a variety of viewpoints and experiences to create as full a record of the crisis as possible and how it is affecting the Medway community. So please spread the word to anyone you know in Medway – friends, family, children, grandchildren, grandparents, teachers, local community groups – in case they are interested in contributing.

Many archives in the UK (and around the world) are collecting records about the pandemic in this way. I'm aware that *The Clock Tower* has readers around the UK (and international readers) so if you do not live or work in Medway please look at whether your local archive has a similar collecting initiative.

As we are currently closed we cannot accept any material into MAC yet but please keep anything you'd like to contribute safe until we reopen. At the moment we are finalising some guidance notes for those interested in contributing, with further information about what depositing with an archive means. If you're thinking of contributing, or have any questions, please email us at malsc@medway.gov.uk

Coronaverses

Odette Buchanan



I'm self-isolating
How about you?
I've made a little list
Of things to do:

Answer all emails,
Follow family tree trails,
Read Dickens from Pickwick to Drood,
Take up painting again - Be it ever so crude, And sit in the sun to enhance my mood.

By not going out
I've saved big amounts
I'll soon have enough
For sun loungers and stuff.

So don't despair
Breathe clean air
Forget trouble and strife
"Always look on the bright side of life."

Events before Lockdown

Norma Crowe,
Local Studies Librarian, Medway Archives Centre.



The Picture Medway Project

On 19 February, MAC hosted a talk by Kate Clifford entitled, *Picture Medway*. This photographic project for young teenagers was the brainchild of Medway Libraries' Kate. It is managed by her and is being delivered by two students from the University of Kent, with input from Medway Libraries and Medway Archives Centre.

The aim was to introduce young people from participating schools to new ways of seeing through the art of photography and photographic techniques. The desired outcomes were:

- Changing perceptions about the library and archive service by encouraging young people to use library and archive resources and facilities
- Improving mental wellbeing
- Encouraging young people to read
- Equipping participants with a new skill and possible hobby.

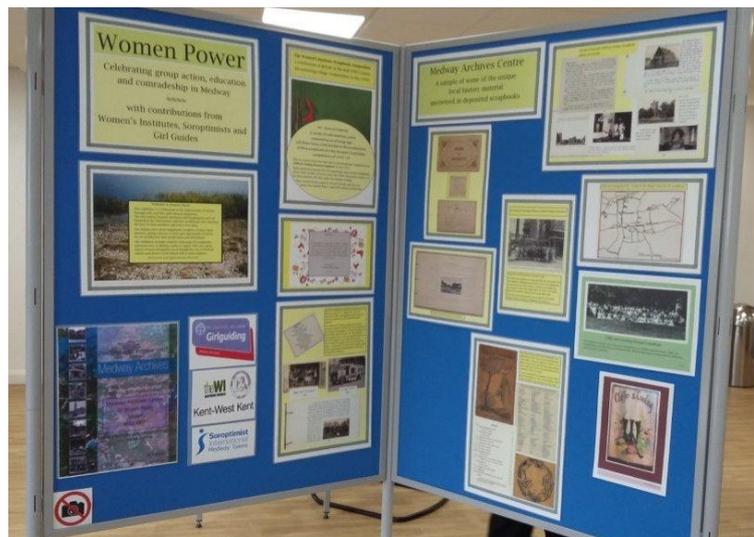
Picture Medway is financed by the Arts Council, Medway Council and the University of Kent, and participating students in phase one of the project came from local schools including Brompton Academy and Chatham Grammar School.



Norma Crowe (left) with Kate Clifford. Photograph by Rob Flood.

Women Power

Our Women Power event on 7 March attracted more than 120 visitors and participants. With engaging visual and verbal contributions from Girl Guiding, Soroptimists and Women's Institutes (see the inside front cover) in the Medway area, the day went with a swing. We all found out more about the societies involved through their displays, short talks and by chatting with each other. We are delighted that we were able to mark International Women's Day in this way before the lockdown prevented us being together.



The display board in the MAC foyer.



Above and right: Medway Girl Guiding.



Left: Soroptimists.

The Medway Archives Centre

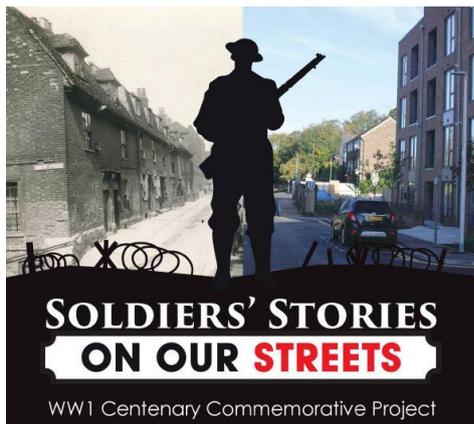
Volunteers' Day

Amanda Thomas



Long before the Lockdown and social distancing measures became a part of our lives, on 12 February 2020 MAC volunteers gathered to discuss projects past, present and future. In other words, how we can best represent the Archive and make the most of its resources. The morning session was opened by Norma Crowe, MAC's Local Studies Librarian with a synopsis of work undertaken by volunteers in the past year or so.

In April 2018 Norma had asked for help with the transcription of letters written in the 1970s by former Chatham Dockyard workers. These had been published in the *Evening Post* in January and February 1973 and some of the information in the letters harked back to Dockyard life in the early twentieth century. Transcribers included Betty Cole, Hilary Blandford, Steve Cross, and Pauline Weeds. These fascinating insights in to Dockyard history have received further dissemination through their publication in *The Clock Tower* and the latest set can be read on page 28.



In the summer of 2018 Medway Council's Heritage Team was awarded a grant of £8,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War *Then And Now* programme to help mark the WWI centenary. Working in partnership with FOMA, the project, *Soldiers' Stories on our Streets*, was a community research and learning project which gave Medway residents the opportunity to discover who had fought in the Great War from their own streets. Inspired by the FOMA De Caville Index (foma-lsc.org/wwi/index.html), it was a project which achieved a broad outreach throughout its duration. Norma explained how the large maps produced at the end of the project had been particularly inspirational, enabling local people to visualise the true impact of the Great War on the Medway Towns. *Soldiers' Stories on our Streets* was a most

important project and the additional information it gleaned for the FOMA De Caville Index was extraordinary and continues to this day.

Some time ago Norma and the late Doris Herlihy began working on a compilation of the advertisements included in the many old directories of the Medway area. This resulted in an exhibition entitled, *Pills, Potions and Promises*. Pauline Weeds has extended this work by meticulously cataloguing the names of all commercial companies listed and advertised in the directories held at the Archive; her work has been typed up by MAC's Nikki Pratt. Pauline has also been sorting out many of the miscellaneous records currently held on the mezzanine floor, with a view to compiling a full index.

Vanessa Sanderson has been transcribing a diary and around 40 letters written by Freddie Harrison who was involved in the establishment of the Shorts' Brothers seaplane works on Lake Windermere during World War Two. According to the website, *Wings on Windermere* (www.pondskaters.f9.co.uk), between 1942 and 1944 35 aircraft were built in the Lake District, far away from the bombing raids of London and North Kent. Harrison wrote many letters to his family and his brother Harold in Chatham, and Vanessa has been uncovering some fascinating information.

The Reminiscence Sessions which began last June and July were originally intended as a fortnightly series of six. However, such was the success and enthusiasm for the meetings, more took place in October, November and December (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 56, November 2019). Helpers

included Sandra Fowler, Chris de Coulon Berthoud, Kevin Russell and Pauline Weeds. Over 40 people attended, including some who had never visited MAC, and many new friendships were forged. Norma singled out the experience of Eddie Lane who shared memories of his late father, Herbert George Lane and the Royal Navy. Eddie's reminiscences, and his visit to HMS *Medway*, were published in the November 2019 issue of *The Clock Tower*. The memories of those who attended still need to be transcribed from recordings on equipment owned by Chris. This prompted the suggestion by FOMA Chairman, Elaine Gardner to use FOMA funds to purchase special recording equipment. I am delighted to say that by the time of going to press this has been purchased and we await the reopening of MAC to present it to the staff.

The Reminiscence Sessions have also generated a considerable amount of additional information which has been compiled and submitted by attendees in the period following each meeting. The sessions have helped widen MAC's audience, but have also played an important role in enhancing the health and wellbeing of those who have shared their memories. Needless to say, the sessions will continue and future themes will be based on suggestions made by those who have previously attended.

The special Saturday events held at MAC have also been tremendously successful. These have focussed on the histories of Strood, Rochester and Chatham, and World War Two. The latest event, *Women Power*, was yet to be held on 7 March (see page 14). Norma thanked all the volunteers and staff who had helped and highlighted how these special events have increased footfall and enhanced the appeal of the Archive to many more local people.

Following Norma's synopsis, Elaine Gardner gave an update of FOMA activity. This included an overview of our latest events at the nicer (and more cost effective) St Nicholas Church Lower Hall in Strood, the purchase of the new exhibition boards for MAC, and the exciting *FOMA EBay Project* set up by Rob Flood and Chris de Coulon Berthoud. Further details on this will be circulated at a later date.

Brenda Paternoster then explained how the Kent Family History Society courses had been extremely successful. The decision to charge for these had been a wise one as it meant people made a point of turning up for the sessions. These had included instruction on birth, marriage and death records (led by Brenda) and how to organise research material (led by Hilary Blandford). It is anticipated that the courses will be run again but on different days for those who had previously been unable to attend. Steve Cross added that for those interested in family history there is a series of extremely interesting – and useful – podcasts, entitled *Amateur Family History Podcast (UK)*, available at <https://open.spotify.com/show/2ppi5do22jAa1s7fA3hXBz>

Norma has spent a lot of time recently outreaching to various local organisations, including, for example, the Lordswood Girl Guides. The girls were interested in exploring the role of women in the past and how this has impacted on the present day. The group and Girl Guiding Medway also contributed to the special *Women Power* Saturday event (see page 14).

More help with MAC events and future projects is undoubtedly needed. Future projects include the creation of an index for Medway Images, the drawing up of historical chronologies for Chatham and Gillingham, indices for glass plate negatives, and a project on the Balfour School boards. Dating from the early twentieth century, these large painted wooden boards were discovered under the stage of the current school. They contain the names of girls and the senior schools they had successfully gained entry to, and it will be a fascinating task to collate these and discover more about each individual listed.

If you would like to help with any of the projects or special events held at MAC, please contact Norma Crowe at norma.crowe@medway.gov.uk or telephone 01634 332714.



Left: Norma Crowe (left) and Cindy O'Halloran begin the session.



Left: from left to right: Rob Flood, Chris de Coulon Berthould, Steve Cross and Sandra Fowler.

Below: from left to right: Brenda Paternoster, Len Feist, Pauline Weeds and Kevin Russell.

Below: from left to right: Elspeth Millar, Vanessa Sanderson and Hilary Blandford.



The Lloyd Family of Rochester

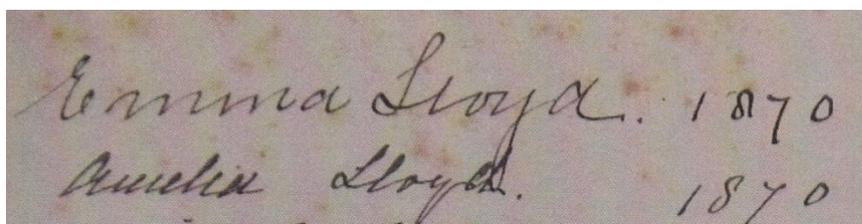
Pauline Weeds



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 the Medway Archives Centre, and a member of the committee of The Friends of Eastgate House. She has recently written a book on the history of the house and its most famous occupants entitled, The Buck Family and Eastgate House.

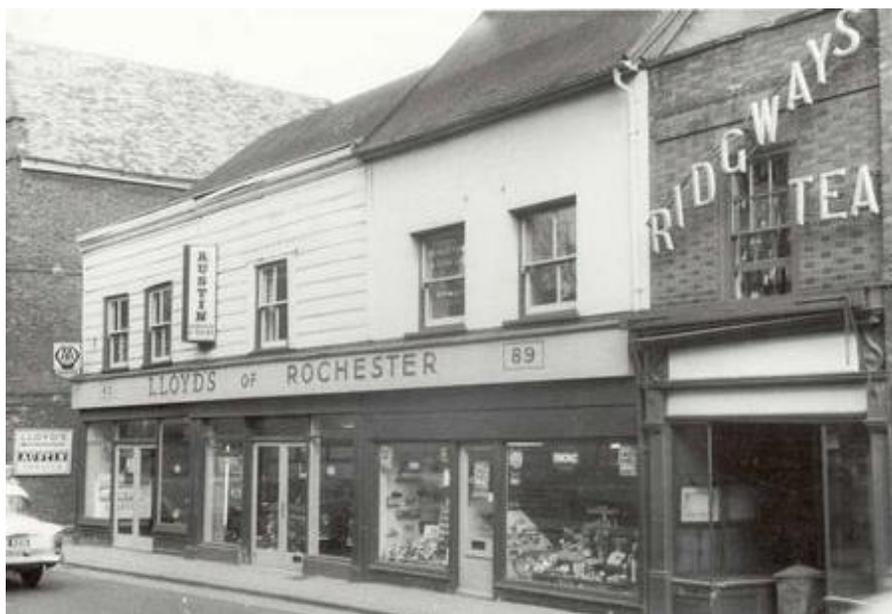
Part 1

A book entitled *Names of Former Scholars at Eastgate House School Rochester* has recently been found at Medway Archives. Knowing of my interest in the house, Cindy O'Halloran has given me a copy of the list of names with the suggestion that I might like to do some research on them which could be used in the house. The names are the girls' signatures in some cases followed by a year, which may be the year they started at the school or the year that they left. I do not think it is the year they signed the book as the list is not in date order. Those I have looked at so far were local girls so it is possible that these girls were all day pupils. The first two names on the list are Emma and Amelia Lloyd, both followed by the year 1870. Their story is an interesting one but there are parts of it that would clearly not be suitable for use in the house and as I should like to write their story in full, as far as it is known, I am hoping that members of FOMA will find their story as fascinating as I do.



Taken from a document held at the Medway Archives Centre.

Amelia and Emma were the two youngest children of Richard and Ann Lloyd. Richard had moved to 54 High Street Rochester (pictured below) in 1840 shortly after his marriage to Ann Thorp on 30 October 1839 at SS Peter & Paul, Milton next Gravesend on 30 October 1839. He appears to have started out in Rochester as a pork butcher but it was not long before he was adding the occupation *jobmaster* to his job description. A jobmaster was a person who let out horses and carriages and it is clear that it was with transport and travel that Richard Lloyd's main interest lay. Richard and Ann had at least three other children before Amelia and Emma were born. Charles was born in 1844, Ann in 1845 and Ellen in 1850. It is quite possible, of course, that Ann and Ellen also attended the Eastgate House school but as they are not included on the list there is no evidence of this. Following the births of Amelia in 1852 and Emma in 1857, Richard and Anne's family was complete. Richard's business was clearly doing well as by 1861 he was able to employ a general servant for the house and a nursemaid for the children, both of whom lived in. His brother-in-law, Charles Thorpe, a grocer, lived with the family and would certainly have been paying rent which would have boosted the family's finances but maybe by now the house at 54 High Street was beginning to feel cramped as Richard's son, Charles, had moved into lodgings. Now aged 17 and employed as a general clerk, he was lodging at 2 Pump Lane in Rochester, with George Pound, a coachman, and his family. Perhaps George Pound worked for Richard Lloyd.¹



Medway Images, ref. C051007191 – 85-89 High Street, Rochester 1967, previously numbered 53-55; Medway Archives Centre.

So in 1861 everything seemed set fair for the Lloyd family in Rochester High Street. Richard's son was working, his three oldest daughters, Ann age 15, Ellen age 10 and Amelia age 8, were all attending school, probably the school at Eastgate House, and his business was growing. We know that, because ten years later he would be described as a "coach builder and car wash proprietor employing 20 men and 2 boys."² However, tragedy lay ahead for the family. First it was 14-year-old Ellen who died and was buried at St Nicholas in Rochester on 12 June 1865. Then, three years later, it was Richard and Ann's only son, Charles now 24, who died. He too was buried at St Nicholas on 6 October 1868. There were many diseases rife in mid-Victorian England and very little medical help available. Measles, whooping cough, polio, influenza, scarlet fever and diphtheria were all prevalent but the main killer during this period was tuberculosis (consumption) for which there was no cure. As many as one in six people in Victorian society died from this disease.³

Richard Lloyd's business continued to prosper throughout the 1870s and for the family the year 1877 promised happier times ahead. Both Amelia and Ann were making marriage plans, which also included the design of their wedding dresses. Although Queen Victoria had made white fashionable, many girls rather opted for a really nice dress which they would be able to wear on subsequent occasions. The crinoline had quite gone out by this date but the bustle, in which the fabric was bunched up and swept to the back of the dress, was *de rigueur* throughout the 1870s. The girls would have visited the drapers in the city and selected their materials, which they may have made up themselves. Many Victorian girls were fine needlewomen, or if not, they would have taken their materials to one of the dressmakers in the city and had them made up to their requirements. Amelia, aged 24, was the younger of the two girls and the first to tie the knot at St Nicholas' Church in Rochester, when she married Alfred Thorpe (aged 26) on Tuesday, 20 March 1877. Amelia's father and her two sisters, Annie and Emma, signed the register as witnesses. Although Thorpe was the maiden name of Amelia's mother, I have found no evidence that Alfred was a relation. He was born at Horsham in Sussex and by 1871 his father had moved his drapery business to Hastings. Alfred moved to Rochester where he was employed as an assistant at Homan's Drapery on St Margaret's Banks. However the marriage certificate in 1877 records that he was now a 'carriage cab proprietor' as do the baptism records of his two children in 1879 and 1881, so it seems he had probably been taken on by his father-in-law. Alfred and Amelia were in fact living in the same row of houses as Richard Lloyd, separated only by a grocer's and a gunmaker's. However, on the census taken just three weeks after the second baptism, Alfred claimed to be a 'general insurance agent'.⁴ While it is quite possible that he had simply taken on some extra work to help maintain his new family, perhaps this is the point at which alarm bells should be starting to ring for the family historian. Alfred and Amelia's two children were both daughters, Mildred May born 29 November 1878 and Gertrude Ann born 18 December 1880. Sadly Mildred May died on 4 August 1884 aged just five years old.

Ann, Richard Lloyd's oldest daughter, was married to Stephen Sunnocks on Thursday, 27 December 1877, also at St Nicholas' Church in Rochester. Her father and her youngest sister, Emma, signed the register as witnesses. Stephen was 40 and a widower living in Northfleet. He described himself as a 'gentleman' although subsequent censuses tell us that he was a rent and rate collector.⁵ His wife had died in 1874 and, at the time of his marriage to Ann, he had three children aged between nine and twelve. Following their marriage Stephen and Ann and the children lived at 19 Burch Road, Northfleet, where he was able to employ two live-in servants. They had a son, Stanley Lloyd Sunnocks, born in 1879, a second grandchild for Richard and Ann Lloyd. Unfortunately Ann was not able to enjoy her grandchildren for long as she died the following year, aged 63. She was buried at St Nicholas, Rochester, on 11 February 1880.

Notes

1. RG9/476.
2. RG10/962.
3. *How Our Ancestors Died*, Simon Wills.
4. RG11/885
5. RG11.876, RG12/649.

I should like to thank Cindy O'Halloran for suggesting this project and for her help and enthusiasm, and also Elspeth Millar for allowing me to use the documents which are held at the Medway Archives Centre.

Editor's Note

FOMA Chairman, Elaine Gardner has compiled a list of premises in Rochester High Street as part of the trade directory work undertaken at MAC. This has revealed the following:

Williams 1849 : No. 54, Lloyd & Thorpe, Grocers & Pork Butcher.

Simpsons 1865 : ditto.

Percy & Co 1871-73 : No 54; C Thorp; No. 55, R Lloyd Coach Builder.

Still available ...

The Buck Family & Eastgate House

by FOMA member Pauline Weeds

Produced by the Friends of Eastgate House
£3.50, available from Eastgate House, Rochester.

Further information from Terri Zbyszewska,
The Membership Secretary,
Friends of Eastgate House,
31 The Esplanade, Rochester, ME1 1QW
or at tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk



The Newcombs and the Nelson Connection

John Sykes



History has always been an interest for John Sykes. This was his chosen subject for a degree at St Andrews University before he went on to qualify in town planning. A career in local government followed, finishing up as Chief Planning Officer for West Oxfordshire District Council. He is now enjoying a long retirement with opportunities for extensive travel both at home and abroad. Our thanks to Stephen Dixon for introducing John Sykes.

Part 2

Frederick Simon Newcomb at Sea

We will now retrace our steps to expand on Frederick Newcomb's naval career. Extensive research in the National Archives has failed to disclose any record of his early service. Most likely he started off as a rating, possibly as a clerk or as a secretary to a flag officer. This was the usual training for a purser.

Happily, more has come to light about his travels as a purser on the *Harpy* and the *Jamaica*. The captain's log for the *Harpy* has survived and the muster lists for both ships. Frederick as purser was responsible for signing the muster list, together with the captain, the master, and the boatswain.

Although appointed in November 1804 Frederick did not join the *Harpy* until early January 1805. The routine survey of the stores was carried out when he took over. Frederick had to augment his meagre salary by the traditional commission allowed to him of one eighth of the value of everything he issued. He also had to put up a bond to keep him on the path of business righteousness - about £400- for a ship of this size, so he would have had to be a man of some capital.

The *Harpy* was an 18 gun sloop with a crew of 125 men and a complement of Royal Marines. It took part in the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801 and in Nelson's bombardment of Calais in 1803. When Frederick joined, it was still patrolling the Channel, observing and occasionally firing on enemy vessels. Every so often it would stop and search other ships - American vessels were particularly suspect even though they were officially neutral.

In April 1805 it took part in a fierce sea battle with the French off the coast of Boulogne. Enemy ships were captured and prisoners later exchanged. Frederick's wounds, from which the Chatham newspaper extract says he died many years later, may have originated with this engagement. After mooring at Spithead the *Harpy* then joined a convoy off the Lizard, and after a month crossing the Atlantic they finally reached St John's in Newfoundland. En route the *Harpy* had boarded a couple of American vessels and had also managed to lose the convoy in fog, firing its guns to identify itself.

The crossing to Newfoundland was a routine operation for British ships during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Their presence here successfully deterred any prospect of the French invading Canada, aided and abetted by the troublesome newly independent Americans. They also reassured the West Country merchants who depended on the valuable fishing on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland and kept quiet a largely Irish population who might otherwise be out to make trouble.

Several tons of ballast from Portsmouth were unloaded and the purser took on fresh supplies of beef. In later life Frederick used to relate that the fleet was once absent for 18 months and had to live on salted meat. When the crew arrived at port they slew some cattle and were so ravenous that they attacked the carcasses with their cutlasses.

After provisioning and some repair work the *Harpy* left harbour to go on patrol. But it didn't get very far; almost immediately it struck a rock and foundered. So the next month was spent pumping out water and trying to raise it with a cable under the bottom. When that was done the carpenters and caulkers were busy making it seaworthy again and replacing the main topmast. Its time on patrol was therefore reduced to a couple of weeks and after landing some soldiers at Placentia Bay it was back in St John's at the beginning of September.



A large iceberg with a ship sailing past it. Coloured engraving by or after E. Weedon. (Weedon, Edwin, 1819-1873; date 1800-1899). Wellcome Collection. CC BY

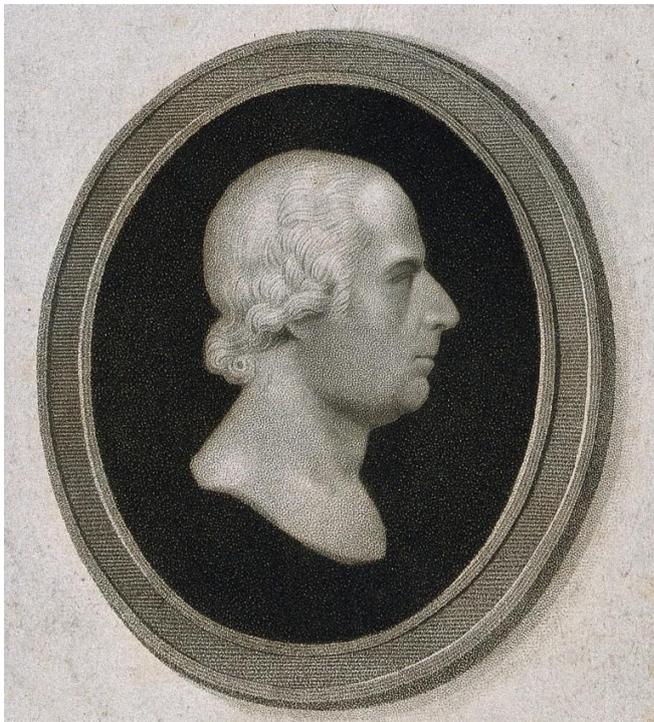
Frederick didn't join the *Harpy* on the return trip home but transferred as purser to the *Jamaica*. After some patrol work the *Jamaica* left Newfoundland in November 1805 and sailed across the Atlantic to Gibraltar and the river Tagus in Portugal before returning to Spithead. On their return Frederick and his shipmates would have been met with the news of Nelson's death at Trafalgar. The *Victory* on its final journey to Spithead from the Tagus with its flag at half-mast and Nelson's body below would have preceded them by only a matter of days.

January 1806 saw the *Jamaica* again at sea but for the next couple of months it was inactive in Portsmouth harbour and Frederick had some well-earned leave. The sloop, similar in size and crew to the *Harpy*, then followed a similar pattern of activity to its sister ship, patrolling the Channel and subsequently going off again to Newfoundland. In November it returned again to the Tagus and then to Spithead. It was at Spithead on 16 January 1807 that Frederick was discharged as purser.

Frederick spent the rest of the year trying to find another ship but without success. In the end he appealed to Lady Hamilton and she in turn asked her friend George Rose, Treasurer of the Navy, to try and find him a position. Rose's job was a highly paid sinecure (someone else did the actual work) but Emma and her mother felt he wielded considerable influence in government, having already held numerous important posts, including joint Paymaster-general to the forces and Vice-President of the Board of Trade. Emma's mother had already sought his support for a state pension :

'Lady Hamilton's most wretched state of mind prevents her imploring dear good Mr Rose to solicit Mr Pitt to consider the family of the great and glorious Nelson, who so gallantly died for his country, leaving behind his favourite sister, with a large family unprovided for. Her ladyship is confident you will exert every nerve for these good people as a mark of your true

and real attachment to our late lamented hero. ... They at this moment surround her ladyship's bed, bewailing their sad loss and miserable state. Lady Hamilton, whose situation is beyond description, only prays that you, good sir, will do [what] you can for this worthy family...



George Rose, in profile, in a roundel. Stipple engraving by T. Blood after A. Wivell, 1818. Wellcome Collection. CC BY

George Rose, ever the smooth politician and civil servant, said all the right things but got nowhere. Likewise with Frederick Newcomb:

‘I saw Mr Newcomb and learned from him that he should like to be a purser of an Indiaman as well as any situation that could be procured. My success this year is uncertain but not desperate If I fail now, I think I can be sure of succeeding next season. I will certainly do all I can to prevent a disappointment to a man who suffered by the death of Lord Nelson I never exerted myself on any occasion in my life with my whole heart, and I deeply lament my want of success.’

Frederick never returned to sea but in 1808, almost certainly with Rose's help, he did secure a position in Chatham Dockyard. More of that anon.

Mr and Mrs Newcomb

Although I do not have an exact date it seems likely that Frederick married Sarah Reynolds some time in 1807.* Obviously they could see more of each other now he was not at sea and the prospect of a job in Chatham Dockyard would have made it possible for him to take on the financial responsibilities of marriage.

This is when Sarah would have left Lady Hamilton's establishment at Merton Place. They then moved to the house Frederick rented at Queenborough. Emma's financial affairs had become desperate and she was on the point of putting Merton Place on the market. So the contents had to be dispersed and Emma showed her appreciation for Sarah's loyal service by giving her a pretty old-fashioned breakfast set. This may have been the one Nelson writes to Emma about when he bought the property in 1801:

‘I send by the coach a little parcel containing the keys of the plate chest and the case of the tea-urn, and there is a case of a Coalbrookdale breakfast set, and some other things.’

The breakfast service was still in the possession of the Newcomb family when Hilda Gamlin wrote a biography of Lady Hamilton in 1891. In bequeathing them to one of his sons Frederick had said, 'Never part with these, not even if you want bread.'

When he said this Frederick was probably mindful of what he had done with a watch belonging to Lady Hamilton. The Gamlin biography relates how Emma had given a watch to her uncle, Richard Reynolds, and he intended it for his daughter Sarah when she should be old enough to value it. When Miss Thomas from the Hawarden doctor's family offered sixteen guineas for it, the watch and a pile of gold were placed on the table and Sarah was asked to make a choice. She laid her hand upon the watch. Later she married Frederick Newcomb and when on one occasion he was pushed for cash he sold it to a jeweller in Chester. Richard Reynolds was greatly upset by this but when he tried to retrieve the watch the jeweller told him he was only interested in the case and had already melted it down!

In October 1808 Frederick and Sarah had a little girl. She was christened Emma Horatia in honour of Lady Hamilton and the daughter she had by Nelson. The christening took place at Richmond parish church in February the following year. Emma was staying in nearby Heron Court at the time, a large house owned by a raddled old rake known as the Duke of Queensbury and one of Emma's many admirers. She had fled there to get away from her creditors and the christening was obviously arranged there so she could be present and doubtless officiate as godmother. Sadly, the baby died when it was a few months old.

Emma left Richmond in the summer and was on her restless travels again. She had been ill with jaundice, a condition not helped by the fact that she and her hangers-on had 'drunk the cellar dry' at Heron Court. She was greatly overdrawn, and therefore welcomed the chance to stay a short while down at Frederick's place at Queenborough. Her letter beforehand conveys the feeling that any visit by Lady Hamilton was a memorable if confused occasion:

'My dear Sir,
My mother, Horatia, Cecilia and self will be with you Sunday afternoon, and Sarah (i.e. Sarah Connor) and my maid will come on Wednesday. I wish you could meet us at Key Street, we shall be there by two o'clock. We have sent many things down. I hope they are arrived. As to us, make no fuss with us, we can jumble together very well - we can eat a bit of something at any place, so have oysters with you at supper - or perhaps you will meet us at the ferry in preference. You can go with us to Queenbro', but at any rate I hope to find you at one place or the other. I shall be at the Bull at Rochester in case you should come on as far as there. I have got a bad cold, a change of air will do me good. God bless you and Sarah, Ever your affectionate relation.
Emma Hamilton.'

*Editor's Note

Frederick Simon Newcomb and Sarah Reynolds married 24 October 1807 at St. Gregory by St. Paul's, City of London (Ancestry.co.uk).

Travels of a Tin Trunk

Michael Baker

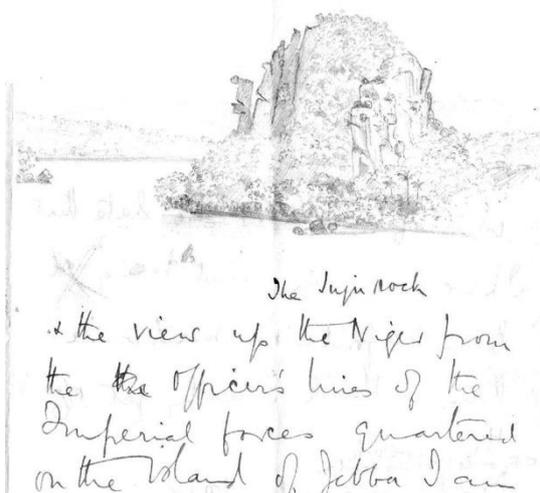


Michael Baker's interest in family history was started by a great-uncle who once unrolled a family tree on the dining-room table. It was seven feet long. After a career in Electrical Engineering, including 20 years overseas, he opened some boxes in the Owletts' attic ...

In this issue of The Clock Tower, the fascinating story continues of what Michael found in the tin trunk belonging to Alfred, the brother of Michael's grandfather, Herbert Baker.

Part 15: Jebba

Recalled to Jebba, Alfred started back on August 13th with 20 carriers. He could obtain no horse so took a hammock: *lucky to get one. Don't care for the idea of being carried much. Found it no use as road much too bad.* It was a very different journey: *when we went up there was only one running stream to cross, on journey back forty. Had to make bridges, wade and swim but got through up to time in five days.* En route he bagged and recorded in his diary and game book: two oribi and a roan antelope, adding to his tally over 56 days at Kishi of 48 partridge, 21 green pigeon, 3 lesser bustard, two guineafowl, one each of plover, quail and hare. Alfred often sketched the Juju rock on its island at Jebba (illustrated above).



There were also some lovely birds in the bush: *multicoloured parrots, little things like sparrows bright scarlet, also light blue ones. I have taken over company today: 100 Hausas.*¹



Ostrich from August 6th letter

So whilst Alfred at last had his company of Hausa men and could do his real job of training them, there was a sequel to his days in The Sudan being played out. Alfred and others stuck in the tropics were well aware that there was more public esteem to be had up the Nile than up the Niger: *that Atbara campaign up the Nile is a pleasanter sort of show – 20 minutes – British heroes*

*– back to lunch and champagne off the ice – Illustrated London News. I had a growl from a friend of mine a Captain in the Seaforth Highlanders, who instead of being there is alone up the Benue River buying cattle and ponies.*²

Back in Jebba, four days after taking over his company he was: *hard at work now drilling my Hausa company, the only one so far. I believe they are brave and faithful which is something, and can march all day when well.*³ He soon acknowledged how quickly they learnt since there was no instruction in their own tongue.



Right: "The stalker stalked"

It was a bold move on his part as the wisdom of the time said that only Yorubas would make a fighting force and he was given the choice. However: *I commanded a guard of honour at the departure of Lugard and they were as smart as Guardsmen. A later letter: I believe there is a lot in them, especially the gentlemen among them who are the handsomest black men I have ever seen ... We may very possibly have to fight their own brothers, but I believe they obey their own white man.*

His new role brought him confidence: *if I keep as fit as I have up to now, I almost think I shall take on for another year if I get a majority. I should bargain for six months at home next summer though ...*

After recounting that he found 60 mosquitoes on himself one night in a tent, he wrote that *Koch was wrong about mosquitoes bringing fever, they do just the opposite, they take it out of you and certainly by that means spread it but not by stinging.*⁴ He was still regularly out shooting. On September 3rd: *I stalked 8 teal in overflow from river, water to waist and long grass, and got right up to them, 25 yards ... when an enormous crocodile put up his head ten yards from me. Had the sense to put up the teal and bag a right and left before returning to shore. Then had a shot at the crocodile and sent him off in a hurry, biggest I ever saw.⁵ I shall not wade in there again.*

At the end of August Colonel Lugard left for England to confer with Chamberlain.⁶ Lugard's deputy Col Fitzgerald went to Lagos, which meant that Alfred was temporarily in command of the battalion in Jebba and *had to send off a strong escort with Ultimatum to the Emir of Ilorin who has been playing the fool lately.*⁷ Alfred chose Lt Dick Somerset to lead 50 men and by good fortune Somerset also left a diary (Ref 10)⁸. Somerset described a slow journey of about 60 miles as the rivers were high and they often needed to swim. Once there the Emir offered a cold shoulder so he camped outside Ilorin and constructed elaborate defences as much for his troops' morale as for any military purpose. Somerset deduced that the Emir wanted to fight but could not without agreement from other Emirs, some of whom were loyal to the British. In September Alfred wrote: *news from Ilorin promises war; don't believe it.* He was right, the Emir climbed down and Somerset returned.

October was the time to start exercises: *the first field day in Nigeria. Crossed over to North bank in canoes and joined Artillery. I was in command and did an attack on Armitage's irregulars, often in water up to one's waist.* There is more than just training in this as he had wind of something that would require them all to fight in earnest, though he could not say what or where, neither in his letters nor to his men. Would he at last see some action? He was keeping an eye on Ilorin, sending another detachment up river to prepare a new camp and settling companies of Nupés and Hausas on the opposite bank of the river. He was also running the camp with many of his staff sick. Major Morland (sketch right), senior to Alfred, *came down from Boussa, had been upset in rapids, lost all kit and nearly drowned.*⁹ Though Alfred grumbled at being left all the work while more senior men were away or sick, *it is a great piece of luck as our first active operations are just coming off and I shall go in command. A DSO or Westminster Abbey. There are a lot of things in the wind, but I am sworn to secrecy.*¹⁰ An officer, an NCO and 14 men had been killed in a skirmish *by an insignificant tribe.* He despatched an officer with 80 men and a maxim gun to restore order.¹¹



The new huts were almost finished when at least one was demolished by a tornado. Whether he had dry accommodation is not clear, as in early October he was not as well as he usually claimed: *I have been suffering the tortures of the damned with neuralgia lately, following an ordinary little touch of the fever and it is far more unpleasant.* On October 27th however he organised a shooting match, Officers v NCOs, the officers winning easily. Alfred *shot last myself in dark. Made no miss.*¹²

He relayed in his next letter *a creditable story of 4 black soldiers of the WAFF in charge of an officer's baggage who were cut off in a march on the wrong side of a river and attacked by a large force. They refused to give it up and when fired on returned the fire, killed 15 men and 20 horses and got the baggage away. On another occasion 4 men swam the river to save another. One was taken by a crocodile but the others did what they went for. So I don't think they are bad chaps after all.*¹³

What action Alfred expected is a mystery. When war with the French was again in the rumour machine in early November, he dismissed it: *don't believe in slightest chance of war myself, but great anxiety in official circles.* On the 7th he wrote in his diary of a bad go of fever, followed by a bad night. He was up next morning however as there was musketry practice on the range, *but an awful worm. Still got fever.* Despite the fever: *we had to say whether we wanted to go home at the end of 12 months and whether we were willing to come out again. I said Yes to both. I met an old school fellow the other day and commanded the firing party at his funeral the day before yesterday. He was a civilian doctor named Rock, junior to me at school, whom I did not recognise in the bearded veteran I met here; a good fellow and the most uncomplaining patient.*¹⁴

A Brief Guide to the Life of Alfred William Baker

When?	Rank	Where Was He?	Doing What?	Other Events
June - August 1898	Captain	Kishi	Watching the French recruiting soldiers	
September 1898	Captain	Jebba	Training soldiers	Kitchener at battle of Omdurman, the Sudan.

Notes

1. Diary D11 for 22, 23 July and AWB 1898 08 12 from Kishi. The green pigeon *has a bright yellow breast, very good chop*, from AWB 1898 07 19. 1898 06 04 included this sketch of "Juju rock" at Jebba.

2. AWB 1898 07 15 from Kishi, but I imagine Nigeria was more exciting to Alfred than Poona where the 2nd Battalion of the DLI was at the time.

3. AWB 1898 08 23 from Jebba.

4. AWB 1898 09 01 and 10 19, both from Jebba. "A majority" was promotion to Major, in charge of three companies.

5. Diary D11 entry for 3 Sept and AWB 1898 09 14 from Jebba.

6. Ref 9, page 706.

7. Diary D11 for 24 Sept and Oct 27. AWB 1898 11 08 from Jebba said that the Emir climbed down.

8. Ref 10, entry for December 26th. Somerset himself caught a chill on board ship to England and reached Liverpool but died four days later, on March 2nd, 1899.

9. Diary D11 for October 9th with sketch of Morland, who fought in WW1 and retired a General.

10. AWB 1898 10 03 from Jebba.

11. Diary D11 for October 16 and AWB 1898 10 19.

12. AWB 1898 10 08 and Diary D11 for October 27.

13. AWB 1898 10 25 from Jebba.

14. Diary D11 for November 2 and AWB 1898 11 08.

Voices from the Dockyard
Betty Cole and Norma Crowe



At the Volunteers' Meeting in April 2018, MAC's Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe asked for people to transcribe some letters written in the 1970s by former Chatham Dockyard workers and published in the *Evening Post* in January and February 1973. The letters contained memories of life in the Yard earlier in the 1900s and some of the more amusing and interesting will be reproduced in *The Clock Tower* in this series. Please note that the names of the authors of the letters have been omitted to protect their privacy, and the letters are unedited transcriptions. Our thanks to Betty Cole, Norma Crowe and the volunteers - Steve Cross, Pauline Weeds, and Hilary Blandford.



Chatham Dockyard taken on 18 March 1970 from nearby flats and published in the Evening Post; Medway Archives Centre, ref: CHA/AN/DYD/AV/7.

To follow are a couple of the more amusing stories transcribed by the volunteers.

Undated.

Dear Sir,

Can any Dockyard Matie state whether there was any truth in the yarn that went about the Yard just before or at the beginning of World War II.

A certain ginger head detective who made life a misery for both the Maties & the Navy caught several Matelots smoking in the lavatories, they promptly grabbed him and tied him up to the cistern by his feet and left him with his head down the pan. When he was freed he had the entire ships company of the boat that was berthed nearby paraded on the dockside, needless to say he couldn't find the 'Jolly Jacks' that had offended his dignity.

30 January 1973

Dear Sir,

During the year 1940 whilst working aboard HMS HARTLAND POINT, in the Yard, there was one particular labourer who would always appear at breakfast time asking for spare sandwiches. At first, I willingly gave him one but this slowly developed into a habit and being of kindly nature I did not have the heart to refuse him some eats. The straw that finally broke the camel's back, to quote a saying was when I discovered the he [*sic*] went home for lunch thus I decided to teach him a lesson.

The very next day I packed in my lunch my own marmite sandwiches plus two buttered sandwiches with a bar of ex-lax spread between them to give the appearance of chocolate spread.

True to form my friend came scrounging at breakfast time so I gave him the two chocolate sandwiches which he devoured with relish.

The next I heard of him was when he was last seen rushing across the brow [*sic*] in need of a clean pair of trousers, a journey which he had to make four more times that day.

Strangely, from that day on he has fetched in his own sandwiches.

What and Why?

Jackson's Recreation Ground, Rochester.

Kevin Russell



Kevin Russell is a member of the FOMA committee and The City of Rochester Society. In the summer months Kevin is a volunteer guide in Restoration House, Rochester. He is interested in local history and trams and trolleybus systems of the UK, both old and new.

Part Three

A Footnote

Since concluding the last part of Cllr. Jackson's story (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 57, February 2020), further information has come to light which I feel will be of interest.

He was only 23 years of age in 1871 when he became a grocer's assistant in Maidstone and must have prospered because by 1881 he had his own grocer's business in Rochester employing four men and three boys, and a domestic servant.

Mr Jackson was one of five sons of the family who became mayors of various towns. His eldest brother, Alderman Henry Jackson, who carried on the trade as a draper, was Mayor of Reading in 1901. The second son, Thomas, was Mayor of Marlborough, whilst the third son, Alfred, was Mayor of Newbury in Berkshire in 1891 and 1892. The fourth son was Cllr John Howard Jackson who, as previously stated, was twice Mayor of Rochester and the fifth son, Edward, was Mayor of Reading. Quite a remarkable achievement for one family.*

As for the recreation ground, in 1910, whilst it was still being rented from the War Department, it hosted the Bath and West and Southern Counties Societies annual agricultural show, using the adjoining Victoria Gardens in the Borough of Chatham. No mean feat in view of the undulating topography of the land which still contained some of the defensive earthworks surrounding Fort Pitt.

The only house on the south side of New Road was Fort Pitt House, built circa 1800 by the War Department as the Clerk of Works house during the construction of Fort Pitt and which lay within the northern boundary of the recreation ground. It had, and still does to this day, have its own entrance onto New Road. A brick and corrugated boundary wall and fence separates it from Jackson's Recreation Ground, whilst outbuildings have been constructed over the years, which together with the main house, were used by various local authority departments. The main building now houses a medical practice. In 2007/8 a skate/BMX park was built along the eastern boundary near to the southern end of the grounds.

*Editor's Note

The website of the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery (<http://www.fnrnewbury.org.uk/biography.asp?BiogID=140>) provides further information on the Jackson family, as published on 21 May 1925 in the *Newbury Weekly News*, following the death of Alfred Jackson:

'Alfred Jackson was a member of a family which achieved a remarkable – even unique- record in the civic history of the country. There were ten children of the late Mr Henry Jackson of Sherfield-on-Loddon, the proprietor of a thriving village business: six sons and four daughters. The sons went into the world to seek their fortunes, and by diligence and great public spirit attained to the highest positions in the towns of their adoption. Henry, the eldest, was two years Mayor of Basingstoke;

Thomas was two years Mayor of Marlborough; Alfred was twice Mayor of Newbury; Edward filled the office for a similar period in the country town of Reading; Howard served in a similar capacity at Rochester; Frank was vice-chairman of Sherfield parish council. The youngest daughter, Lucy, was among the first women to be appointed magistrate; she also acted two years as Mayoress to her brother Howard, and performed the duties so efficiently that she was requested to assist the succeeding Mayor, and did so for five years. Another daughter was married to a well known Newbury tradesman, the late Mr T.M. Nias. Of this large family, but two now remain; Alderman Edward Jackson, J.P. Of Reading, and Miss Lucy Jackson, J.P. of Reading.'

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. The FOMA Secretary, Chris de Coulon Berthoud often receives queries from members or visitors to the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.html. If you have any additional information for the following correspondents, please contact the Editor.

Sincere thanks to all members who have sent their kind wishes during this difficult time.

George Hanson

In October 2019, new member Murray Wright from Auckland, New Zealand, contacted us about his ancestor, George Hanson:

It seems our Sunderland ancestors may have originated from Strood. George Hanson married Strood girl Anne Husk in 1746. They had children in Strood so he may have been a Medway freeman before his death in 1765. I believe his son George apprenticed at the Dockyard then moved to Monkwearmouth where he was a shipwright.

He may have returned to Chatham with his son George circa 1808 in response for shipwrights to help defend England against Napoleon. After the latter's defeat George from Strood died in Rochester 1816. Any assistance would be appreciated.

Readers will recall this enquiry generated some considerable interest. Recently Murray sent a follow-up to his investigations which was circulated to members by email for interest (as below). This also caused a response from Jean Skilling, which follows Murray's letter.

31 March 2020

Hello Amanda,

I wanted to give you a little update on my query to MAC some months ago. Hazel Thorn has been in touch a number of times and we have sorted out how we are related. It's via her husband's ancestors who remained in Chatham when the rest of the family returned to Sunderland after Napoleon was defeated in the early 1800s. Some additional BDM records have indicated that the family originated in Auckland St Helen, Co. Durham, not Strood as I had thought. Two births on exactly the same year for the same name. To cap it off, our family member died in Rochester. So, my enquirers in Strood have come to an end. In the process I have learnt a bit about the Medway towns and met you wonderful people.

On a different note, clearly there are a treasure trove of records at MAC. If any of your members have some spare time could I suggest two projects that may benefit wider members.

1/ Transcription of the BMDs in Strood 1720 - 1880 that relate to the Workhouse. Post 1880 have been done. Most of the entries would be deaths unfortunately, but I have seen a few births and marriages also.

2/ Transcription of the names of past guild members of the Rochester Oyster Fishery, and some write up about the history.

Last suggestion is if anyone is wanting something useful while in isolation, <https://www.freereg.org.uk/> is a free website for transcriptions of BMDs. The ones in Strood were done by a woman here in Auckland, NZ!

Kind regards,
Murray Wright.

31 March 2020

Dear Amanda,

I was interested in Murray's suggestion about transcribing the records of the Oyster Fishery. In order to avoid duplication of work FOMA members may like to know that Kent Family History Society has a handwritten index to the masters and apprentices of the Oyster Fishery which I have started to digitise. The books, and a copy of the index, will be donated to MAC in due course. There are of course lots more records of the Oyster Fishery that could be transcribed if members wish to do so.

Best wishes,
Jean.

A Note from FOMA Membership Secretary, Betty Cole:

Murray Wright suggests people look at FreeReg for BMD records. I am a volunteer for FreeReg and it is a free-to-view site but it is transcribed from Parish Records. It therefore goes back a long way before the civil registration entries covered by sister site FreeBmd. However, FreeReg is also not yet complete, volunteers are adding records all the time so people may be disappointed not to find their ancestors.

Do you know Dan Willis – Medway Theatre Group?

14 February 2020

Dear Christopher,

I urgently need your advice. Dan Willis and I studied at the University of Kent at Canterbury from 1973 to 1975 and became best friends. He stayed in England while I taught at universities and institutions in Iran, India, and Sri Lanka, before I moved to the U.S. to do my Ph.D. After that, I taught at several universities in the U.S. and retired seven years ago.

The last email that I received from Dan came in 2010. Unfortunately, that address no longer works. Dan very kindly sent me postcards and letters here and there, but never his email address or his mailing address ... he does not seem to have a Facebook or a LinkedIn address.

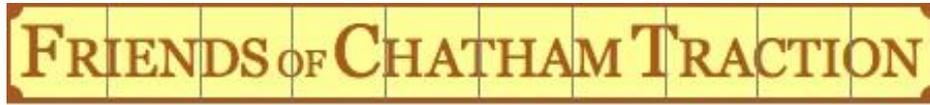
Because he gets featured as the founder of the youth group of your theater in Medway, I discovered the *Clock Tower* and your name as the contact person. I would be delighted if you could send me his email address, his postal address, and, if possible, his telephone number. If you wish, you may pass on my information to him.

Many thanks and kind regards, Christopher,
Dr Henrik Eger.

More personal information has been removed.

News and Events

The *News and Events* section will resume in the next issue of *The Clock Tower*. See page 4 for an update on FOMA events.



FOMA is always delighted to receive news from other organisations and we enjoy working with others to promote Medway's heritage - including the work of the Medway Archives Centre. One such body is Chatham Traction, which was formed in 2007, its aim to restore the sole surviving Chatham Traction bus, GKE 68 of 1939. Readers will be familiar with Chatham Traction's work and progress, including the fact that FOMA's Bob Ratcliffe was a keen member and supporter.

During the lockdown Chatham Traction has remained active, even though they have had to postpone work on GKE. Recently we heard from Chatham Traction's Chairman, Richard Bourne who sent a link to their latest newsletters, which many readers will enjoy as it includes a series of articles on members' fascination with buses:

'The first of how ever many such communications we need to produce, dependent on whether you find it useful or interesting, and a general keenness to contribute! All contributions welcome, even if it's only one anecdote!'

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/Connecting_Service_1.pdf

The second followed shortly afterwards:

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/Connecting_Service_2.pdf

Editor's Footnotes

Amanda Thomas



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, 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 is a member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists and has recently been admitted to The Society of Authors.

The Invisible Enemy

A comparison between World War II and the Covid-19 pandemic has been made many times in the past few weeks. Lockdown has been compared to the Blitz, shortages to rationing and the Good Old British Spirit ('Keep Calm and Carry On'), well, to the Good Old British Spirit.

The fight against Nazi Germany is remembered first-hand by fewer and fewer people each year. However the big difference between now and then is that today we are fighting an invisible enemy. We don't know where or when it will strike or whom it will affect, and only as mortality rates have risen have we begun to understand the indiscriminate nature of the virus. A full understanding of the disease is still out of reach and - unlike the Germans - the virus is here, it has already invaded our shores.

I write this on VE Day when parallels to our current situation have been made throughout the day. Yet there is one clear comparison which has faded over time and airbrushed by clichéd journo-speak. As VE Day was celebrated in Europe, and particularly in Britain, war continued in the Far East. The families of those incarcerated by the Japanese or fighting in places such as Burma had little appetite for celebration. Perhaps today that is the greatest similarity of all. We are fearful to leave lockdown, fearful of that second wave, still fearful of the enemy. Perhaps we should have a proper celebration on 2 September – the 75th anniversary of Victory over Japan.

On 8 May 1945, Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke to the nation:

... Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight tonight, Tuesday, the 8th of May ... almost the whole world was combined against the evil-doers who are now prostrate before us. Gratitude to our splendid Allies goes forth from all our hearts. We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing, but let us not forget for a moment the toils and efforts that lie ahead. Japan, with all her treachery and greed, remains unsubdued. ... We must now devote all our strength and resources to the completion of our tasks both at home and abroad. Advance, Britannia! Long live the cause of freedom! God save the King!



A photograph from my family's personal collection – VE Day street party, Weston Road, Strood.

We'll meet again,
Don't know where, don't know when,
But I know we'll meet again
Some sunny day.
Keep smiling through,
Just like you always do,
Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away.

So will you please say hello
To the folks that I know,
Tell them I won't be long.
They'll be happy to know
That as you saw me go,
I was singing this song

We'll meet again,
Don't know where, don't know when,
But I know we'll meet again
Some sunny day.

Hope to see you all again very soon!

About The Clock Tower

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

Editorial deadlines

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

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Publication date

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

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

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

The Clock Tower Index (<http://foma-lsc.org/journal.html>) is updated by Nic Nicholas.

Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives Centre can be obtained on the MAC website <https://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> or by writing to Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3EP. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.uk

General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the FOMA Chairman: Elaine Gardner, 102 Valley View Road, Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent; emgardner@virginmedia.com; 01634 408595. All correspondence should be directed to the FOMA Secretary: Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, 4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent; berthoud@blueyonder.co.uk

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Medway In Lockdown



Rochester High Street, Saturday 25 April 2020



A closer view of Rochester M2 motorway bridge, Saturday 25 April 2020

Medway In Lockdown



Rochester High Street, Saturday 25 April 2020

Photographs here and on previous page by Rob Flood