

The Covid-19 Community Archive

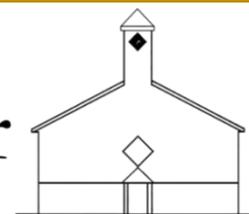
The New Norm, a watercolour on paper by Noreen Englefield and a digital image submitted to the Medway Archives Centre new Covid-19 Community Archive (DE1297/02). See page 6.



© Noreen Englefield

If undelivered, please return to:
Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP.

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 60: November 2020
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894



Asquith Xavier



Read Catharina Clement's fascinating account of how Chatham resident Asquith Xavier fought racial discrimination at British Rail in the 1960s. See page 8.

PLUS

Present tips from 1963 for a Lockdown Christmas. See page 36.



CHRISTMAS SHOPPING AT MAC!

Medway Archives Centre offers you the opportunity to purchase some of your Christmas gifts!

We have local and general history books for sale, which would make ideal presents.

Please email malsc@medway.gov.uk for a list of books and prices.

Order by email, pay online or by phone. No visit required.

We prefer to post any orders, but arrangements can be made to collect by appointment.

Contact details on page 39.



Lockdown Christmas

On page 36, *Clock Tower* Editor, Amanda Thomas, discovers some sweet recipes from the 1960s to give a homemade flavour to this year's Lockdown Christmas. With more time and less money, we should perhaps embrace the scaled-down gift-giving of the past.



Homemade fudge.

Travels of a Tin Trunk

In this issue of *The Clock Tower*, we conclude Michael Baker's extraordinary tale about what he found in the tin trunk (pictured below) belonging to Alfred, the brother of his grandfather, Herbert Baker. The series began in August 2016 and has been a regular in *The Clock Tower* since then. See page 24 for the final fascinating part which concludes with the death of Alfred at Jebba; below is a picture of his grave.



**'When you go home, tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'**

From the memorial to the April 1944 Battle of Kohima; John Maxwell Edmonds (1875 –1958).

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Elaine Gardner:

102 Valley View Road, Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent.
emgardner@virginmedia.com

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16 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent.
rob@feetontheground.co.uk

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141 Watling St, Strood, ME2 3JJ, Kent.
josie_iles@live .co.uk

Secretary

Christopher de Coulon Berthoud:

4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent.
berthoud@blueyonder.co.uk

Membership Secretary

Betty Cole:

98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham, ME4 4ZS, Kent.
becole40@gmail.com

Webmaster

Alexander Thomas

FOMA Archivist

Kevin Russell:

7 Donald Troup House, Watt's Almshouses, Maidstone Road, Rochester, ME1 1SE, Kent.

Members

Odette Buchanan:

72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE, Kent.
odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Len Feist:

29 Hawthorn Rd., Rochester ME2 2HW, Kent.
lfstrood@gmail.com

The Clock Tower Editor and Publicist

Amanda Thomas:

amanda@ajthomas.com

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Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



Alas my positivity in the last *Clock Tower* in August seems somewhat diluted as I write this.

The Medway Archives Centre (MAC) is sadly now closed again due to current government restrictions. Before the second lockdown started I was able to visit and liaise with Norma Crowe on World War One information for All Faiths School, and we were chatting about the system in place for researchers. Having to isolate any material used for three days before anyone else can access it has sometimes created booking problems when the quarantined material covers topics that are frequently requested. Such is life!

Government regulations over limited numbers meeting indoors have resulted in the committee having to cancel both the remaining talks in September and November as well as our popular fund-raising quiz night. This, in particular, was disappointing as the quiz night usually raises several hundred pounds to support MAC. In addition, there are sadly over a dozen members who have not renewed yet this year – see overleaf if you have simply forgotten! Thankfully the new FOMA eBay Project set up by Rob Flood and Chris de Coulon Berthoud is bringing in some vital funds.

If you haven't already done so, do click on the links in Elspeth's report (see page 6) on progress at MAC during the present restrictions. The exhibitions at <http://www.medway.gov.uk/archives> are well worth a look and contain plenty of information within any particular exhibition. There is bound to be something new there for you to discover.

I have been spending a lot of my time recently, particularly during the miserable weather through September and October, taking part in Zoom sessions on the Women's Institute Denman Online programme. You don't have to be a WI member to tune in and they are not just about cooking and knitting! I have been on virtual walks around several areas of London with Simon Gregor, listened to talks from John Vigar – many of his articles can be found in the early editions of *Bygone Kent* – on various aspects of social history, and explored underground London (not the London Underground but the rivers and tunnels under central London) as well as the early history of Whitehall and Westminster. Of course there have been some great cookery sessions too, particularly from Peter Lien on a Wednesday early evening. Thai, Malaysian, Japanese, Moorish and Middle Eastern, French and Spanish as well as the odd traditional English. You get sent an ingredients list and recipe with the Zoom login details and you can cook along at the same time if you want, ready to eat when the session ends!

By the time you read this Christmas will be just a month away. Hopefully another lockdown won't mean you are alone but will be able to be with at least one family member or friend for your Christmas dinner. But whatever the outcome I send you my very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year and roll on FOMA activities in 2021!

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members Mrs Rosemary Morrison and Mr Steven Tomlin.

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>

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!

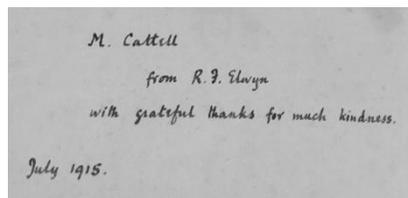
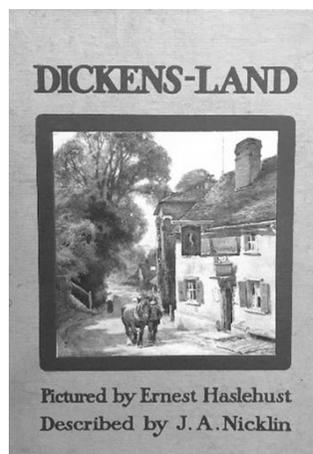
N.B. Betty saves stamps from all correspondence to raise funds for the
Molly Wisdom Hospice.

Donation

Readers will recall that we serialised John Sykes' article, *The Newcombs and the Nelson Connection* in the last three issues of *The Clock Tower*. John (pictured) is not a FOMA member, however, as a token of his gratitude, we were delighted to recently receive a donation to FOMA from him. Thank you, John!



Dickens-Land (*Blackie and Son, 1911*) and the
inscription inside – see Chris de Coulon Berthoud's
report opposite.



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, amanda@ajthomas.com.

The copy deadline for Issue 61 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 25 January 2021, with publication on Wednesday 17 February 2021.

Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Barkers Litho, Unit 18 Castle View Business Centre, Gas House Road, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1PB; telephone: 01634 829048, email: info@barkerslitho.co.uk

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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

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent. Telephone: 01634 892976; email: becole40@gmail.com

Donations of any amount towards this final push to complete GKE 68's restoration would be most welcome. Please Pay To: "The Friends of Chatham Traction" or "FoCT" On-line Bank sort code 40-52-40 Account number 00032126 (Please also email michaelrhodges011@gmail.com with "GKE 68 Final Appeal" as the subject to so we can acknowledge your participation.) By Cheque Send to: Mike Hodges, 8 Pier Avenue, Whitstable, Kent CT5 2HQ Gift Aid increases the value of your donation by 25%. If you are not already registered with us for Gift Aid please consider doing so. A form of declaration is available from our Secretary Mike Hodges by email or post.

The latest information about Chatham Traction can be found at:
http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/200910_Update_54.pdf
http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/Connecting_Service_8.pdf

For more information contact Richard Bourne (Chairman); 31 Usher Park Road, Haxby, York YO32 3RX; 01904 766375, or 07771 831653. Email Richard@thebournes.me.uk. Or see the website at www.chathamtraction.org.uk.

Friends of Broomhill

The Friends of Broomhill has resumed activities at Broomhill Park.

Friends of Broomhill (Strood) Task Days: Sunday Tasks Days are the first Sunday of every month except January, from September 2020 to April 2021 inclusive, from 10 am to noon. Meet in the car park at end of King Arthur's Drive (ME2 3NB). Thursday Task Days are every Thursday morning (all year) concentrating on the Old Orchard renovation, from 10 am to noon. Meet in the car park at the end of King Arthur's Drive (ME2 3NB). All welcome, no experience necessary! Tools provided or bring your own. It's fun, free and healthy!

For further details see our car park notice boards, or visit our website: www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk You can also find us on social media (Facebook, Instagram & Twitter) or contact David Park, Secretary on 01634 718972 email: secretary@friendsofbroomhill.org.uk



Secretary's Report

Chris de Coulon Berthoud



The clocks have gone back, the evenings darken and we still haven't had the all clear to meet as a group in person again. Here's hoping that you have all been keeping well during these difficult times. I've been using the enforced social isolation to work on my PhD and also to start working on various local research projects, which should see the light of day some time. My interest in The Medway Poets, a group of performance poets who performed between the late 1970s and early 1980s, has led me to look more closely on the cultural life of the Medway Towns before they hit the stage. I would love to hear of anyone who can remember an event that took place at the Medway Little Theatre in the late 1960s that involved the destruction of canvases under a psychedelic light-show! This was a time of jazz, poetry, 'moldy figs' and jazz modernists, action painting and happenings, all taking place in The Medway Towns rather than the avant-garde venues of London. Please get in touch if you have any memories that will help with this research. Another project I have started working on, alongside our Vice Chairman Rob Flood, is to start researching the LGBT+ history of the Medway Towns. These are both fascinating areas of research uncovering stories which richly deserve telling, so I look forward to hearing from anyone who has any reminiscences or information on either topic.

In other news my brother in Shropshire recently sent me a book he had found called *Dickens-Land* (Blackie and Son, 1911). It's a nice, if gently battered, Edwardian volume illustrated by Ernest Haslehurst with text by J. A. Nicklin. As I always do, I checked the gift inscription that appeared on the inside cover (see opposite): 'M. Cattell from R. F. Elwyn with grateful thanks for much kindness July 1915.' My interest piqued, I looked up R. F. Elwyn to see what I could find. First I found references to him playing cricket with the Canterbury Pilgrims in May of 1890, and a later reference to his membership of the MCC, so clearly a keen sportsman.

Then I found his obituary in *The Times* dated Tuesday, June 8 1926. Richard Frederick Elwyn was born in 1869, the only son of Canon Richard Elwyn former headmaster of Charterhouse, the elite Surrey public school, from 1858 to 1863. Richard junior was ordained as a priest in 1895 after studying Classics at Trinity, Cambridge. He began working as master at Felsted School in Essex, where a school house is named after him, and also as curate at Little Dunmow. The latter is a place famous for the Dunmow Flich, a custom first referred to by Chaucer and still taking place now, in which a couple who can honestly say that they have no regrets after a year and a day of marriage are awarded a side (or flich) of bacon.

In 1909 the Revd. Elwyn was appointed headmaster of The Kings School, Rochester. He ran the school for three years, but as his obituary reads, '... his energies were too much for his strength, and a breakdown necessitated his premature resignation.' One wonders then if the kindness referred to in the book's dedication refers to M. Cattell's help during this difficult period.

It is always worth remembering that the past speaks to us as much from the marginalia and inscriptions we can find as it does from the pages of a book itself. This gentle reminder of kindness in difficult times seemed particularly moving to rediscover in 2020. Be kind to each other everyone.

Medway Archives Centre News

Elspeth Millar



We reopened Medway Archives Centre at the end of July as planned and have been enjoying seeing some familiar and new faces. We will keep our current opening arrangements under review whilst the pandemic is ongoing and for full and up-to-date details on the service please visit www.medway.gov.uk/archives

We have also had a refresh of our webpages, which you can view at www.medway.gov.uk/archives. We hope that they provide more information about the collections that we have, and the type of collecting that we do, and provide helpful links to further resources. In addition we have three new online exhibitions which we hope you will enjoy: *William Cuffay and his connection to Chatham**; *Dickensland* (about some of the places in Medway that provided inspiration for Charles Dickens), and an exhibition about Percy Fitzgerald, his collection, and his friendship with Charles Dickens.

Unfortunately we had to cancel the reminiscence sessions that were planned for earlier this year, but we are planning on running a trial 'remote' reminiscence session using Microsoft Teams, and if this is successful then will plan to reschedule the sessions as online sessions. Our other onsite engagement activities such as school visits are also of course on hold, but we are sending an increasing number of study packs to schools, some of which have not used Medway Archives before, which is really encouraging. Some of the current study packs we have available include *Chatham Waterfront Development*, *Dickens*, *Victorian England*, and *the lives of the poor*, *Victorian and Edwardian Strood*, *World War 1: Medway 1914-1919*, and *Workhouses*. Please do email us for more information about these.

As previously reported, the circumstances of the past six months have meant that we have been able to focus on some more collection management tasks, including cataloguing. Norma Crowe has catalogued over 300 local studies items on to the Medway Libraries catalogue (<https://medway.spydus.co.uk/>) and some of the recent accessions into the archive collections include:

- Additional records of the Parish of St Nicholas Strood (P150B add)
- Scrapbooks kept by Beryl Mason relating to her career in theatre, television and film (DE1293)
- Additional records of the Parish of Luddesdowne St Peter and St Paul (P235 add)
- Robert Earl poetry papers (Rob was one of the members of The Medway Poets, a collective of poets who performed together in the late 1970s and early 1980s) (DE1294)**
- Covid-19 Community Archive (DE1297)
- Talking Telescopes, audio from the heritage project about The Strand (DE1298)

Current interior restoration



Recognition

- Chatham Historic Dockyard, Medway Council, Arriva and Nu-Venture support the project.
- The Friends received a Transport Trust Restoration Award in 2018.
- The Rochester Bridge Trust and the City of Rochester Society have made grants.
- The National Association of Road Transport Museums rank the bus in the top 10% nationally of those "which should be saved, restored and made available for the public benefit".

Income and Expenditure 2009 to Date

Where the money's come from ...

Donations from supporters (includes £80,000 from the late Len Randall)	£150,125
National Lottery Funds	£109,800
Local Historical Societies and Trusts	£ 10,000
Gift Aid tax repayments	£ 20,356
Bank interest, sundry sales & other items	£ 14,037
TOTAL	£304,318

... and where it's been spent:

GKE 68 restoration work and materials	£270,272
Running costs (admin, insurance, publicity, etc.)	£ 34,046

We estimate that up to £40,000 is still required to complete the restoration. "Big ticket" items still to pay for are chroming (drop window frames and various other items), leather hides for seat trimming and a new clutch cover casting. There are several mechanical items where the repair or renewal cost is in £100s. The target sum provides for remaining Coachworks charges.

- We have aimed for an accurate, high-quality restoration to the bus's post-war condition c1950.
- Original pattern seat moquette will be finished with real leather trim, the cost being included in our earlier £250 per seat place invite.
- Some items are available for nominated sponsorship, e.g. headlights (2@£250 ea), dropwindow frames (14@£500 ea). Please ask.

bequests provided the funds. We were confident that the bus would be finished this year, and were aiming to present it with a fanfare to the community of the Medway Towns where it spent all its working life. Then we could begin to establish the framework for its educational role as the Medway Heritage Bus.

Covid-19 held up physical work at SE Coachworks for many weeks, visits to suppliers were curtailed and we lost much exposure and income through being unable to attend events. We took early action by re-launching the seat fund and this has been moderately successful. An application to a top-up funding body was unsuccessful (although a decision from another is awaited). So to avoid a further timescale extension we now need more money urgently.

We can now clearly see an end to the work and a more accurate prediction of the likely remaining cost has been possible. Contributions would be very welcome from any source, individual or corporate, to help us reach the £40,000 needed to achieve the major milestone of an operational vehicle. We appreciate we are in unusual times, which are proving very difficult for some, but perhaps helping our project along will provide a different outlet and so bring some optimism. Please make a donation if you can, as we reach a crucial stage in the creation of a unique Medway asset. Any amount will be welcomed. Details of payment methods are given below.



Recovery

This very tired old bus (pictured above) came into our possession in 2009. It was then 70 years old. We brought it back home to Medway with a plan for it to come alive again and help tell the story of both the area and life generally over its lifetime. A Business Plan to support future operation and provide financial sustainability has been produced. It proposes a gradual increase in use for educational and social activities over a 5-year period to run from whenever the bus becomes operationally available. The project has provided a learning experience for apprentices, and has helped to maintain craft skills.

Reconstruction

The bus has since been completely rebuilt “from the tarmac upwards”. The original chassis and most of the main body members are retained. Coachwork, trim and flooring replacement are now almost complete. What remains – glazing, electrics, upholstery and finishing – are amongst the most expensive areas.



Right: current exterior restoration.

Please note that as most of this archive material is not yet catalogued, requests for access will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

We want to continue to encourage people to contribute to the Covid-19 Community Archive. Contributions can be photographs, artwork, ephemera (such as flyers, leaflets) and diaries. If you are interested in contributing please email us at malsc@medway.gov.uk and we can send you the contribution guidelines and answer any questions you might have. Finally, on the back page you will see *The New Norm*, a wonderful watercolour on paper by Noreen Englefield and a digital image submitted to the Covid-19 Community Archive.

Editor's Note

*See also Chris de Coulon Berthoud's Secretary's Report in the last issue of *The Clock Tower* (Issue 59, August 2020), in which he gives some background to the life of William Cuffay, the mixed-race political activist and a leader of London Chartism.

** See Chris de Coulon Berthoud's Secretary's Report on page 5.

Please note that Elspeth's article was written before current government restrictions caused the Archives to close until further notice. See page 39 for further details.

Asquith Camile Xavier: *His struggle for Racial Equality*

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 in 2016 at the Friends Library in London. Since 2014 Catharina has worked on a project for the Trustees of Plume Library. The new book contains a chapter by her on Plume's Kent legacies and is due out next month (December) – see below. Currently Catharina works for MAC.



With the Windrush Scandal and recent Black Lives Matter protests, we have to wonder how much this country had advanced in terms of racial equality over the past 50 years. On Friday 17 July this year, I was unusually watching the BBC *South East News* at 6.30pm, and for the first time heard the name of Asquith Xavier. It was a surprise to me working at Medway Archives that I had never heard of him despite the centre having held Black History exhibitions in the past. The story also appeared on Kent Online, but not in the local *Medway Messenger*. So who was Asquith Xavier?

Asquith Xavier; kindly provided by the Xavier family.

- We will stagger arrival times so that staff can greet each visitor, introduce the new visiting procedures, and issue the collection material requested.
- We ask that you wash your hands prior to handling any collection material or use any of the equipment.
- Please bring your own pencil and notebook for taking notes (or laptop/tablet).
- You will be assigned a desk/computer when you book; **please do not use other spaces, even if they are not in use by other visitors.**
- **Contactless payment is preferred.** If you need to pay by cash please provide exact change as far as possible.

Information about other services

- Our charged research and reprographics service will continue to operate. More information and fees can be found on our fees and charges webpage.
- As we are limiting the number of people on site we will not be able to have volunteers, this means there will not be any Family History Helpdesk sessions available until further notice.

Thank you...

A big 'thank you' to everyone who has kindly offered to donate material to Medway Archives Centre. We will be able to accept donations of ephemera again, but if you're having a clear-out and have something of potential interest to us, please ensure you drop our Local Studies Librarian an email FIRST at malsc@medway.gov.uk



Final Funding Appeal



During lockdown Chatham Traction has remained active, though work on the GKE bus has been postponed. Chairman, Richard Bourne (pictured) regularly sends us updates and links including this important appeal for fundraising:

'2020 was to have been a landmark year for the Friends of Chatham Traction. Restoration work on GKE 68 has been continuing steadily since it began in 2009, thanks to our many supporters and volunteers. Regular donations, awards from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding bodies plus some generous

To book an appointment

- **If you'd like to visit us, you will need to book an appointment in advance.** We cannot accommodate visits without an appointment.
- Visits must be booked **at least three working days' in advance.**
- Our opening hours will be 9:30am-1pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
- All material must be pre-booked.
- You will be able to order up to 6 archive documents and up to 10 local studies resources per appointment.
- The centre will only be able to accommodate four visitors at any one time as we have had to reduce the number of tables and PCs available in order to ensure social distancing.
- Please contact us via malsc@medway.gov.uk to make an appointment and to discuss which items you wish to consult.
- Please note that at the point of booking we will ask for your name and contact details - these details are recorded for NHS Test and Trace purposes and held for 21 days only.

Facilities available

- **Unfortunately our resources will not be available for browsing.** This includes indexes, paper catalogues, microfilms, local studies books and maps.
- Please let us know when you book your appointment which resources you would like to use. You can search or browse for original archive material on the Medway Council Heritage Services catalogue and you can find books and periodicals by searching the Medway Libraries online catalogue. If you can't find what you are looking for, please contact us.
- We will not be able to provide access to the microfilm readers.
- We won't be able to provide any copying or printing facilities on the day of a visit, (including photocopying, or digital image requests). However, copy requests will be processed after the documents you have seen have been quarantined for 72 hours.
- We aim to fulfil all copy requests within 5-10 working days.
- We will need to quarantine all material used for 72 hours so this may mean that some material may initially be unavailable for your appointment.
- You can buy a photography permit and use your own device to take photographs of collection items, subject to normal agreements about your use of any images.
- Toilets **will** be available but only for visitors to Medway Archives Centre.
- There are **no** refreshment facilities currently available in the foyer.
- Lockers **will** be available.
- Unfortunately until safety guidance changes our staff will not be able to provide close one-to-one assistance, for example with help operating computers.

When you arrive for your appointment

- **Please do not visit the archives if you are displaying any Covid-19 symptoms.**
- The foyer to Medway Archives Centre will be kept closed whilst Strood Community
- Hall is not in use and whilst we are operating an appointment only system.
- Please arrive promptly at your appointment time and call 01634 332714 to let staff know you have arrived.

Asquith Camile Xavier (pictured) was born on the island of Dominica on 18 July 1920 to Hubert and Rosalyn Xavier.¹ Dominica was originally a French colony and then ceded to Britain during the late eighteenth century, following several skirmishes between the two naval powers. Under the West Indies Act of 1967 Dominica became self-governing, but did not gain full independence until 1978. Dominica still has a strong French cultural influence in its religion, patois, place and family names. The main industry was agriculture with banana plantations predominant but economically the country was poor and often ravaged by hurricanes.² It was here that Asquith grew up; poor, but reasonably well-educated. From family members it is known that as a young man Asquith Xavier served as a civilian police officer on the island. However, in 1940 the police became part of the military defence force set up by Britain on the island during wartime³ and Asquith had to undergo a military induction course. At this stage it appears he was part of the war effort and in later years he sometimes wore a medal, which probably (though not yet confirmed) related to his island war service in the military police.⁴

After World War Two Britain was trying to rebuild economically following the devastating impact of war. A shortage of manpower meant the country turned to its colonies to fill the void and in the West Indies advertisements were placed by shipping companies in local island newspapers painting a picture of the great job opportunities to be found in Britain. Prior to coming to Britain, Asquith worked as a planter and it was during this time that he met his future bride. Asquith married Agnes Disney St John in 1958 and between them they had a family of four children. Then wages would have been low and with a large family to support life would have been a continuous struggle. It is therefore unsurprising that Asquith was tempted by the newspaper adverts that the mother country was a land of 'milk and honey' and good jobs awaited. As was the case with many *Windrush* migrants, as they later became known, Asquith went ahead to Britain to secure work and find a home for his family. In early 1958 he embarked on the TN *Ascania* headed for Southampton and no doubt arrived on the south coast on a cold, wet and windy day.

Life in Britain was as welcoming as the weather in Southampton. Yet despite these adversities Asquith found a job as a porter at Marylebone station and settled close to other extended family members in the Paddington area of London. By 1960 he had found a flat and was settled enough in his employment to bring over the rest of his family. This would have been quite an outlay and necessitated him working long hours in his job to save up for the cost of the fares. His son told me that Asquith came to Britain with the intention of working here for a few years, earning good money and then returning to Dominica. This never happened, as like other *Windrush* migrants, Asquith quickly realised that the jobs on offer were mainly low paid, unskilled work.

Asquith was an educated man, who aspired to better himself and rapidly worked his way up from porter to guard at Marylebone station. With the Beeching cuts on the railways in the early 1960s and the gradual move of freight away from rail, Asquith Xavier realised his future did not lie at Marylebone station. He saw a job opportunity for a guard at Euston station, a much larger railway hub in London, at a salary of £10 more a week than he was earning at Marylebone. With his existing experience as a guard he would have anticipated being a strong contender for the post. However, whilst Marylebone offered equal opportunities to black workers, this was not the case at Euston where the local management had come to an arrangement with the unions to have a whites-only policy for customer-facing roles. Asquith was turned down for the job.

But he was not prepared to allow British Rail to get away with blatant discrimination. Whilst some race relations legislation had already been passed in the early 1960s, it did not apply to the workplace. Nevertheless, British Railway tried to disassociate itself from the actions of local management as exemplified by this the report from Asquith's local newspaper the *Marylebone Mercury*:

'Euston Colour Bar Row: Guard Speaks

The man at the centre of the colour bar row at Euston Station, 46-year-old Mr Asquith Xavier, told our reporter at his flat in Ledbury Road, Paddington, on Monday night: "Unless I get promotion I will have to leave the railways."

He added: "I can't possibly afford to keep my wife and family on my present income. The services at Marylebone are being cut down and I am getting short of money. I don't know if I will have enough to keep my family."

Mr Xavier said he wanted to go to Euston, which was a bigger station, because he could earn more money there. He applied for the job in March and he said that later Euston asked Marylebone whether the person applying was white or coloured.

Mr Xavier joined British Railway on April 17, 1958 - the day after he arrived at London from Dominica. In April 1959 he was promoted as a passenger guard after working as a cleaner and porter.

A few weeks ago he spoke with the station manager at Marylebone, Mr F.H. Sykes. "He told me he was doing his best to get me the job, but this was his answer," said Mr Xavier passing our reporter a memo from the station manager.

The memo stated: "I have to inform you that the local department committee staff representatives for sectional council No. 3 at Euston are not prepared to accept on promotion the transfer of coloured staff at Euston."

Union Protest

Marylebone railwaymen have protested to Mr Sidney Greene, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, over the operation of a colour bar at Euston Station. And, this week, Mr James Prendergast, representing 500 members of the Marylebone Staff Committee of the N.U.R. was still awaiting a reply from his union chief. At the union's Euston Road headquarters, there was an official silence. "We cannot comment. The matter has not been raised officially here," said a spokesman.

Mr Prendergast told a *Mercury* reporter: "This is not the first time this has happened, but it is the first time we have concrete proof. Our suspicion was aroused about six weeks ago when 80 men became redundant at Marylebone as a result of the introduction of a productivity bonus scheme. Three white porters went to Euston, and 11 coloured men went to the parcels depot at Marylebone."

Mr Prendergast, who said 40 per cent of the men at Marylebone were coloured, said he had written to Mr Greene asking why the colour bar was being operated. He added: "No one on the railways will support a colour bar."⁵

Following the publicity in the press, union pressure and involvement of the Minister of Transport, Barbara Castle MP, British Rail did a U-turn in July 1966 and said discrimination on the railways was over. Asquith was offered the post of guard at Euston, but due to health reasons was unable to take up the job till August 1966. On 16 August the *Daily Mirror* reported this new appointment:

'Clocking on---A Rail Pioneer

West Indian train guard Asquith Xavier started work at Euston Station yesterday- and ended a twelve-year colour ban ... he revealed that he had asked for police protection because of the number of threatening letters he has received. Mr Xavier,

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Talks and Events

All events are subject to change and to government guidance for public gatherings. Further information will be available on the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org), our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/fomalsc) and sent to members via email, where appropriate.

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.

Medway Archives Centre

32 Bryant Rd, Rochester ME2 3EP; 01634 332714.

From Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December, the Medway Archives Centre is closed in accordance with government guidelines. Please consult the Medway Council website for further information on re-opening: https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200182/arts_and_heritage/317/medway_archives_centre/3

Be aware that following lockdown and when visiting the Archives, in order to protect visitors and our staff and in line with government guidance, we have had to put some new safety measures in place, including a booking system and a change to opening times and services offered. We have put additional social distancing, hygiene and cleaning measures in place and ask that all visitors observe distancing rules and follow the advised hygiene measures. We will continue to monitor and update the service in line with local conditions and changes to government guidance, and when it is safe to do so, will hopefully to able to offer our usual service.

Everton Toffee

cooking time 15 – 20 minutes

4 oz butter
8 oz sugar
8ozs golden syrup or treacle

1. Dissolve the butter in a strong saucepan.
2. Stir in the sugar and syrup.
3. Boil steadily without stirring until the mixture reaches 290° F. or forms a hard ball when tested in a cup of cold water.
4. Pour into a tin greased with margarine or oil.
5. When set cut into neat pieces.

This type of toffee is better wrapped in small pieces of waxed or greaseproof paper.

Fudge

cooking time 15 – 20 minutes

1lb sugar (granulated or loaf)
1 can [170g] sweetened condensed milk (full cream)
2 oz margarine or butter
3/8 pint water

1 good teaspoon vanilla essence or 2 tablespoons cocoa or 3 tablespoons chocolate powder or 2 tablespoons coffee essence

1. Put the ingredients in a strong saucepan and heat.
2. Stir until the sugar has dissolved.
3. Boil steadily, stirring only occasionally*, until the mixture reaches 238° F. or forms a soft ball when a little is dropped into a cup of cold water.
4. Remove from the heat and beat until the mixture starts to thicken.
5. Pour into a tin greased with margarine or oil.
6. When nearly set, cut into neat pieces with a sharp knife.
7. Note: if liked, chopped nuts or sultanas may be added when the fudge is nearly set.

Note

*Better to stir all the time or the mixture will catch and burn

Right: the fudge sets in a square cake tin; a sprinkling of Malden sea salt adds a more modern – and delicious – touch.



Merry Christmas!

a father of seven, can earn up to £50 a week in his new job, depending on the length of journeys he makes. Station manager, Mr Ernest Drinman said: “We expect Mr Xavier to fit in very well here. His record at Marylebone was exceptionally good and we know everyone here will take to him.”⁶

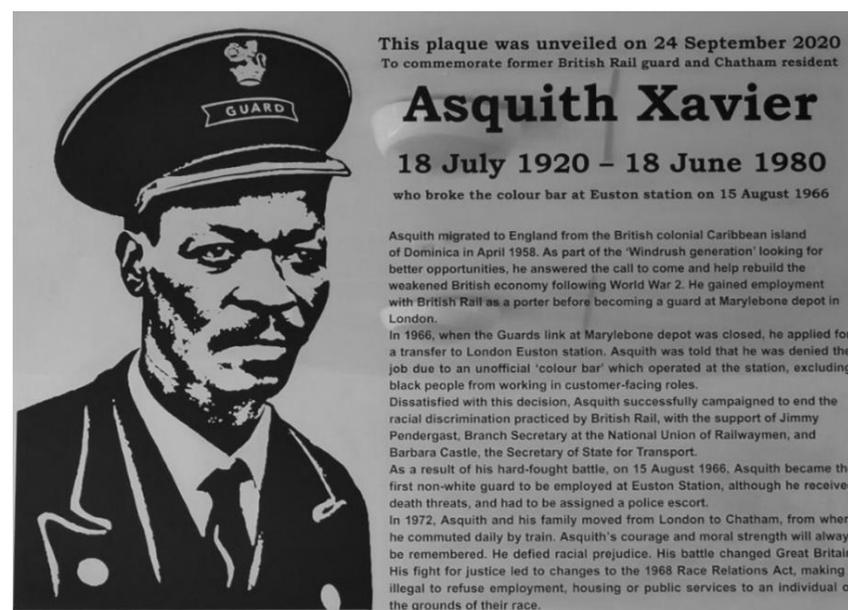
Asquith’s local paper the *Marylebone Mercury* reported:

‘Abusive Letters Sent to Guard

Two threatening letters have been received by railwayman Asquith Xavier. ... One of the letters bore a NW1 postmark, and purported to be signed by a peer. Mr Xavier has handed the letter and others he has received to the police. “I am not worried about those letters. But I am not accustomed to getting threatening letters.”⁷

Although Asquith stated he was not scared by the letters, he hid their existence from his family and the level of abuse he received. They only found out decades later from the newspapers what Asquith had endured. It is because of the continued harassment he received that Asquith eventually moved his family to the safer environment of Chatham, but where the family felt rather isolated. The Medway Towns had a growing Asian community by the 1970s, but only a tiny Black presence. His family paint a picture of Asquith as a family man, strict, but fair and meticulous about properly spoken English. He worked long hours and had few interests outside work beyond his family. However, he enjoyed a game of cricket and would spend his leisure time watching it on television.

Asquith was the pillar of the community and drafted letters for those from Dominica who spoke mainly the native patois. He was not the uneducated man, the stereotypical image the railway tried to portray of black people. In 1961 a Western region staff officer had even stated to the press: “All things being equal ... we prefer taking on white people ... they are preferred to coloured people for reasons of intelligence and education.”⁸



Asquith Camile Xavier stood up for racial equality and was eventually rewarded with the job he knew he was capable of doing as well as any white person. In 2016, on the 50th anniversary of his protest, a plaque was put up at Euston Station to remember his achievement. Then in 2020, on the 100th anniversary of his birth, a campaign was started in Chatham to honour Asquith Xavier in the town where he sought safety and spent the final years of his life. Just a few weeks ago a plaque was unveiled at Chatham station (pictured), attended by several members of his family, to commemorate the stand he made against racial inequality.

Notes

1. Family tree in www.ancestry.co.uk
2. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Dominica#ref54607>.
3. Dion E Phillips, 'The Defunct Dominica Defense Force', *Caribbean Studies*, Vol 30:1 (2002); Police Act 1940.
4. Conversations with Camealia Xavier-Chihota (granddaughter) and Robertson Xavier (son).
5. *Marylebone Mercury*, 15 July 1966.
6. *Daily Mirror*, 16 August 1966.
7. *Marylebone Mercury*, 2 September 1966.
8. Eddie Dempsey, *The Tribune*, 16 July 2020.



Dr Thomas Plume, 1630-1704: His life and legacies in Essex, Kent and Cambridge



Out 1 December 2020 – featuring a chapter by Catharina Clement! Essex Publications (Imprint of University of Hertfordshire Press); ISBN-13: 978-1912260164. Available from all good bookshops AND at a discount at <http://www.herts.ac.uk/uhp/press/books-content/dr-thomas-plume,-1630-1704>

'Dr Thomas Plume, born in Maldon in Essex in 1630, is remembered today for the many bequests he left which established important scientific, religious and cultural charities. Still operational today are the Plumian Professorship of Astronomy at Cambridge University, the

Plume Library at Maldon and the Plume Trust for poor clergy in the Diocese of Rochester.

This volume provides the first comprehensive account of the life, work and philanthropy of Plume. Educated at Chelmsford Grammar School and Christ's College, Cambridge, Plume

favourites at bring-and-buy sales (see page 2). Chutneys and pickles were another popular present, and these I still enjoy making.

Perhaps this is the year we should make a return to presents which don't cost much money but take a bit more time and effort to make. In anticipation I have scoured my mother's old cookery books to try and find some authentic recipes which I expect will bring back some memories. Not only that but pre-cut coloured cellophane is widely available to buy online – and sheet per sheet is probably as inexpensive as in 1963! Here are some original recipes from that same year, as discovered in a book (pictured) by Marguerite Patten entitled *Children's Parties* (Paul Hamlyn, London, 1963) which cost my mother 2/6 – or 12½ p.



Coconut Ice

no cooking

- ½ pint fresh cream
- 6 oz icing sugar
- 3 ozs desiccated coconut
- Few drops cochineal

1. Sieve the icing sugar into a basin.
2. Add the cream and desiccated coconut.
3. Knead well with your finger tips
4. Press half into a small tin.
5. Add two or three drops of cochineal to the remainder with the tip of a skewer.
6. Knead the colour into the mixture.
7. Press the pink mixture over the white in the tin.
8. Allow to set.
9. Cut into fingers.

Fondant Sweets

no cooking

- 8 oz icing sugar
- 1 egg white
- Few drops colouring
- Few drops flavouring – peppermint, vanilla, almond, pineapple etc.)

1. Sieve the icing sugar and make sure there are no lumps.
2. Add the slightly beaten egg white.
3. Work together until a firm mixture.
4. Separate into small pieces.
5. Add various flavourings and colourings and form into pretty shapes.

[My mother used to make peppermint flavoured discs and coat them either fully or halfway with melted plain or milk chocolate.]

Editor's Footnotes

Amanda Thomas



Amanda Thomas is an author and historian. Born in Chatham, but now based in Hertfordshire, she has written and contributed to several books and belongs to various historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society. She has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association. Amanda is also a member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists and The Society of Authors.

Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat. Or perhaps not this year if family gatherings are restricted in accordance with the latest guidelines. Of course, by the time you read this, it may be that the situation has once again changed, and we will be allowed to have more than six around the table for Christmas lunch.

In the early days of the spring lockdown, some delighted in the simplicity restrictions brought, the opportunity to spend more time at home and in the garden. It was just like the war! Except it wasn't at all, of course, and as I discussed in the May Issue of *The Clock Tower*. Now the nights are drawing in, the temperature dips and second lockdowns become a reality, the prospect is less rosy than earlier in the year. We can't even look forward to Christmas. The economic downturn and the emotional deprivation caused by shielding, quarantine and lockdown – and to which there often seems to be no end – are sadly becoming reminiscent of darker times.

Yet – and as many of us are well aware – the festive season was not always the consumer fest it has become in recent years. A while ago I unearthed my parents' old Christmas decorations. Contained in a 1970s' Sunbeam electric frying pan box, this was probably the biggest container they possessed at the time. Inside a large proportion was filled with a snowman constructed by me at St Nicholas' School, Strood. It was made Blue-Peter-style from a toilet roll covered in cotton wool and glued precariously to a large cardboard disc also covered in cotton wool and a copious amount of silver glitter. In addition the box contained tinsel, threadbare and faded, and a sparse collection of baubles. Most were glass, a couple passed down from my grandparents, others bought at Woolworth's in Strood High Street. There were also still some of the green plastic balls my mother had acquired in about 1968 following months of saving coupons from Fairy soap powder. What struck me, however, was the paucity of this festive collection and particularly in comparison to the copious quantity of decorations our family has since accumulated.

In the post-war period resourcefulness was as important at Christmas as the rest of the year, and particularly where present-giving was concerned. I recall my mother purchasing a job lot of screw-topped plastic jars. These she filled with different spices and dried herbs to make sets for the female members of the family. Another favourite gift was coloured cellophane bags tied with ribbon and filled with various homemade sweets; these were also

was vicar of Greenwich from 1658 and archdeacon of Rochester from 1679, holding both posts until his death in 1704. At Greenwich he was noted favourably for his preaching by Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn on more than one occasion. He died a wealthy man and his will contained 79 bequests.

Plume's famous library at Maldon still houses some 8000 books and pamphlets as well as his pictures and manuscripts. The book collection, forming one of the largest private libraries of the period, is an important resource for understanding the Enlightenment, whilst the manuscript collection reveals Plume's intellectual roots in the religious, philosophical and political debates of the mid-seventeenth century. The landmark building itself, a partly converted and rebuilt medieval church, is an important example of a late-seventeenth-century purpose-built library.

As vicar of Greenwich, archdeacon of Rochester and prebendary of Rochester cathedral, Plume had equally strong links with Kent, owning an estate at Stone Castle, Dartford. In Cambridge the chair he endowed for 'a learned and studious Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy' has been held by many notable scientists including Fred Hoyle and Martin Rees.

In contextualising Plume's bequests within the intellectual world of the late seventeenth century, the book reveals the connections between his philanthropy and his family background and education, his wealth, career and patrons, his churchmanship and his character.

Having lived through significant political, religious and intellectual tumult and debate, Plume's life and bequests provide valuable insights into the concerns and actions of an Anglican clergyman during a period of rapid change. His enduring legacies have continued to support the church, the poor and education for over three centuries.' (Amazon.co.uk)

Dr Christopher Thornton is the County Editor of the Victoria County History of Essex, an Associate Fellow of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, and the Chairman of the Friends of Historic Essex.

Tony Doe is a Trustee of the Plume Library with a particular interest in the churchmanship of Thomas Plume. An article entitled *Thomas Plume* and written by Tony Doe can be found in Issue 11 of *The Clock Tower*, August 2008.



Dr Thomas Plume, 1630-1704

His life and legacies
in Essex, Kent and Cambridge

edited by R.A. Doe and C.C. Thornton

The Fate of a Girl's Father

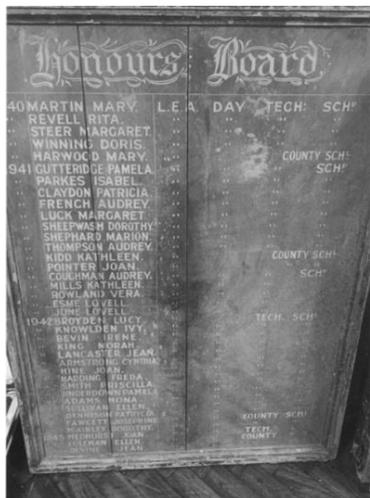
Steve Cross



Steve moved from Yorkshire to Chatham with the Royal Navy in 1977, after 12 years service, and has lived there ever since. He was an engineer at BAe. Systems at Rochester Airport Works for 29 years, retiring in December 2008. He is now a volunteer at the Medway Archives Centre and for the Kent Family History Society. Steve has been researching his own family history since the birth of his son in 1985 and now enjoys, amongst other things, helping others research their own families with the aid of Ancestry. He also dabbles in the repair and improvement of digital or scanned photographs.

In the previous issue of The Clock Tower (59, August 2020), Norma wrote:

'In September 2019 Gary Kirk, Deputy Head of Balfour Junior Academy, contacted the Studies Centre at MAC to ask if we would be interested in five large wooden boards which had been found underneath the stage in the school hall. ... Thus began the Balfour Honours Boards Research Project (2020).'



Some short while ago I was tasked by Norma Crowe at the Medway Archives Centre to do some research into the lives of some of the girls whose names were found on the Honours Boards (one of which is pictured) found at Balfour Road School, and related to girls aged around fourteen years old.

There are five boards which all record names of girls' names, their future senior school and how they achieved a place there from the years 1916 to 1946. I was allocated Board 4 (1940 – 1943) which listed the names of girls all born in the mid-1920s. My research revealed that the father of one of them was lost at sea on board H.M. Submarine *Truculent*, whilst on trials and with several civilian dockyard personnel on board. His name was George Gutteridge, an engineer, and the father of Pamela Winifred Gutteridge, the sixth name down on the board illustrated. Discovering this fact got

me wondering if anyone had ever written anything about this in *The Clock Tower*, so I thought I would do some further research into the fate of the submarine and write a little article for the magazine myself. So here goes!

Pamela Winifred Gutteridge (1927-2018), the girl on my Honours Board, was born in Chatham. She was the youngest of two children born to George Gutteridge (1893-1950) and Winifred Lottie King (1893-2018), the other child being her elder brother, Roy (1922-1998), who was also born in Chatham.

As a consequence, Stephen Rayner, FOMA Member and Publisher of *Bygone Kent* contributed the following:

02 September 2020

Dear Amanda,

This does not solve the mystery, but adds some colour to it ...

My father Ewart Rayner, now 96, was an apprentice at Pobjoys at Rochester Airport during the early part of the war and served in the Home Guard – officially with the HM Borstal Officers Platoon, No 8, although usually with the Borstal village platoon. He lived with his parents and sister at 20 Mount Road, Borstal.

On one occasion, as a Home Guard messenger, he had to take a message to Fort Bridgewoods. "It all seemed very secret – we had no idea what was going on there. There were wireless masts all over the place."

He has no memory of it being bombed, although on one occasion, cycling back from Borstal after his dinner, he and his friend Norman Mudge looked up and saw a German bomber, its bomb doors just opening.

They ran for cover in to the woods along the left-hand side of the Rochester-Maidstone Road (as you go towards the airport) – an area then used as a car park. Norman, a tall chap, hid under a car and my father recalls with some amusement, how his feet stuck out of the end.

"But the plane was well past the fort and we would have heard the bombs. In fact, if it had been bombed, we would have heard it from Mount Road, or heard about it."

With best wishes

Stephen Rayner

Strood Extension

4 November 2020

In an email to FOMA Vice Chairman, Rob Flood, Chatham Traction's Richard Bourne wrote:

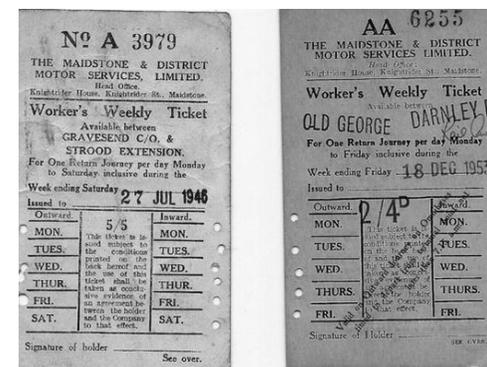
We've a bus-related query, although not directly linked to Chatham Traction.

Trustee Paul Baker came up with a couple of Worker's Weekly Tickets [illustrated] issued by M&D [Maidstone and District], one of which is for journeys between Gravesend (Company's Office) and Strood Extension.

Any idea what the latter destination refers to? Given the date, some post-war development project perhaps ... ?

All the best,

Richard.



Readers' Letters

We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please email the Editor, Amanda Thomas, Editor, at amanda@ajthomas.com, the FOMA Secretary, Chris de Coulon Berthoud at berthoud@blueyonder.co.uk, or visit the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.htm or our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/fomalsc>

Do you Know Dan Willis – Medway Theatre Group?

29 July 2020

In the May issue of *The Clock Tower* (number 58), we printed an email message from Dr Henrik Eger to FOMA Secretary, Chris de Coulon Berthoud asking if we knew the whereabouts of his friend, Dan Willis, founder of the Medway Theatre youth group. We are delighted to report that following the publication of the letter, Irina Fridman (ex-MAC and now Community Librarian, Local History & Online Resources, Gillingham Library) emailed the Editor, Amanda Thomas to say that she knows Dan very well and would be able to put the two men back in contact.

World War Two Mystery

6 August 2010

Odette Buchanan received the following plea from Canada which we subsequently emailed to FOMA members. However, as this enquiry was not exclusively to the Medway Archives Centre, other archives, museums and libraries have since provided the enquirer, Sylvia Swan, with additional information; the documents requested below are held at the National Archives.

Dear WW2 Historian,

I hope you can help. My father was born in Chatham and began his WW2 military service there, including volunteering for Chatham Home Guard in 1940, at age 17.

I am trying to assist my family to learn who our secret father was, since due to his secret wireless work at Fort Bridgewoods and other Y Stations and his signing of the Official Secrets Act, we never knew him. We must learn about the bombings Dad endured during his Home Guard service, especially the bombing of Fort Bridgewoods and which hospital the survivors attended. My father was one of the survivors. Would you kindly provide me with a link or contact information for the archive department which stores:

Fort Bridgewoods – Chatham Home Guard records (or Army Forms W3066) of Chatham, 1940, and/or Luftwaffe bombing dates and locations during the Battle of Britain?

I look forward to hearing from you soon. On behalf of the family, we thank you.

Kind regards.

Sylvia Swan, Canada

Proud daughter of Roy E. Hardy, Esq.

In 1950, Pamela's father, George, was a civilian electrician with the sea trials team at H.M. Dockyard, Chatham. On 12th January of that year, he was one of eighteen dockyard workers, along with her normal complement of crew, to go to sea on the submarine H.M.S. *Truculent*, which had been in refit at Chatham, and was now undergoing sea acceptance trials in the Thames Estuary. George was on board making sure all the electrics following the refit were working properly. On the evening of 12 January - the superstitious captain wouldn't sail on the 13th - the submarine made its way to Sheerness from where she was due to sail to Scotland the next day.



HMS Truculent under way at Barrow.

Reproduced under the terms of the non-commercial licence, Imperial War Museum Collections/Ministry of Defence Foxhill Collection of Ship Photographs. Taken by a Royal Navy official photographer, ref. FL8671.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205120710>

As the submarine made her way up the Estuary to the Medway Approaches, the Officer of the Watch conned the submarine on the surface. Traffic in the river was heavy and the steaming lights of many ships on their way into and out of the Port of London were initially clearly visible on all sides. By about 7 pm they were quite close on their starboard side to a sandbank. Ahead were the three lights of another ship in the same channel in which she was travelling and for some time each vessel had the lights of the other in sight. On board the *Truculent* the crew thought the other ship – a Swedish oil tanker called the *MV Divina* - was not moving and, as the submarine did not have the room to pass the ship on the starboard side for fear of running aground, the order was given, presumably by the Captain, 28-year-old Lieutenant Charles Bowers, to turn to pass the lights on the port side.

A survivor later said that it was just after this that a crew member was asked to go up on the bridge with a copy of the Admiralty Manual of Seamanship, which contains all the relevant combinations of lights that ships carry at night. He said, 'Asking your staff to bring the instruction manual to the bridge! This is where my hackles rise because they should have known. Because the captain got it wrong, he decided not to wait until the ship went past but to turn and cross in front of it, thinking it would stop.'

It was immediately realised that a very serious mistake of judgement had been made by the Captain, as the *Divina*, on passage from the Port of London at Purfleet, began to emerge out of the darkness. The extra light was, in fact, indicating that she was carrying explosives and *not* that she was at anchor. She had specially strengthened bows for arctic navigation conditions and had a Trinity House Pilot on board. A collision was unavoidable – and the explosives turned out to be a cargo of paraffin. At nine-and-a-half knots the *Truculent's* speed was increased by the tide beneath her. The two vessels collided, the *Divina's* bow striking *Truculent* by the starboard bow hydroplane. Some on board the submarine were swept off the bridge, while many were trapped or killed instantly. The ships remained locked together for a few seconds before the submarine sank, going right over on her beams, then righting and plunging to the bottom of the Estuary eighty feet below.

The *Truculent* had suffered a massive gash forward on the starboard side and her demise was rapid. Fifteen survivors were picked up by the *Divina* and five by the Dutch freighter, *Almdijk*. Some of those on board survived the initial collision and managed to escape, but fifty-seven of them were swept away in the current and perished in the freezing cold mid-winter conditions on the mud islands that litter the Thames Estuary. Sixty-four men died as a result of the accident and only fifteen survived. Not all the bodies were found, but some drifted out on the very cold ebb tide, dying of hypothermia; some bodies were found as far away as Belgium, others at Margate and Ramsgate. There was an horrendous loss of life made worse by the fate of those who escaped the sinking vessel only to be washed away by the ebb tide and drowned or died of exposure. There was an outpouring of public grief and telegrams of condolence were sent from all over the world, including one from King George VI which read:

'I have heard with great regret of the disaster that has occurred to HMS *Truculent*. Please convey to the next of kin of all those who have lost their lives the deep sympathy of the Queen and myself.'

Another surviving crew member later described how the crew of the *Divina* threw down a lifebelt but never stopped, the ship carried straight on. He was left swimming in the water with four officers hanging onto the lifebelt as they drifted out to sea. As luck would have it, the crew on board the *Almdijk* Dutch freighter heard them shouting, stopped and dropped a lifeboat to pick them up. They landed them at Gravesend. To add to the tragedy, five more men, RAF crew members of a Lancaster from RAF Coastal Command, also died when their aircraft crashed on take-off from RAF Kinloss, Scotland. They were on their way to rescue the submariners.

With her stem twisted and a shapeless mass of metal on the waterline, *Divina* was tied up alongside the destroyer H.M.S. *Undine* at moorings on the Medway off Port Victoria, Cliffe. Her bow compartment was flooded, her anchor damaged and a length of steel plating, apparently from the *Truculent*, remained attached to her starboard bow.

From 1928, the workhouse buildings were used as a hospital, at first called Medway and then All Saints. Following closure in 2000, the site was bought by one of the country's leading housebuilders. The demolition teams moved in and the site was cleared, all but one of the buildings gone forever, their history now only to be found in the Medway Archives Centre.

Before demolition began the site was investigated by a Field Archaeology Unit employed by the developers. The unit found no evidence of previous activity in the immediate vicinity prior to its use as a workhouse site, although a small building is shown on the the Tithes Award Map of 1843. English Heritage decided that none of the buildings merited listed building status. However, the developer and Medway Council agreed that the Boardroom building would be retained in the place where it had stood for 142 years.



The entrance to the Boardroom building today.
Photograph by Elaine Gardner.

What the archived material shows is that workhouses were planned and administered with good intentions. The inmates probably fared better than in their own homes considering they were clothed, fed, sheltered and given medical attention. It was far from perfect, discipline harsh, privacy non-existent and amusements few. In some cases the entire administration of a workhouse was 'privatised' and in these cases the requirement to make money might outweigh the welfare of the inmates. The quality of their lives in the workhouse was largely dependent on their treatment by the men and women hired to run the institution.

Even with the best motives at the outset, as Crowther says in his book, *The Workhouse System*, 'they almost invariably developed an all embracing indifference to suffering which they could not alleviate, to ignorance which they could not enlighten, to virtue which they could not encourage, to indolence which they could not cure, to vice which they could not punish.'¹⁰

Notes

1. Crowther, M.A., *The Workhouse System 1834-1929. The History of an English Social System*, (1981).
2. *The Chatham News, Rochester, Brompton & Gillingham Advertiser*, Sept., 10 1859 (microfilm).
3. Ibid.
4. Medway Union In-letters. Archive ref. G/ME/Aa/1.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Medway Union General Letter Book. Archive ref. G/ME/ACb/2.
10. Crowther, M.A., *The Workhouse System 1834-1929, The History of an English Social System*, (1981).

Also amongst these central buildings were the workshops. Female inmates did the routine work of sewing and washing and also acted as nurses in the infirmary. The men might do some stone breaking or hand grinding of corn to make low-grade workhouse bread. Work to bring in money was carried out for local firms, such as making fruit punnets. Men, women and children picked old ropes for oakum which was sold to the Navy for caulking ships. The inmates were sometimes rewarded with small sums of money or a tobacco allowance, a practice frowned on by the Poor Law Commissioners who ordered the Guardians to send paupers who refused to work before the Magistrates.

There were schoolrooms in the central building, although in February 1857 the workhouse clerk wrote letters to local schools requesting their 'seal of prices for instruction for boys and girls in your school so that I will be able to lay the same before the board of Governors tomorrow.'⁴ The British School Master, New Road, Chatham, returned prices of 'Boys 3d and 4d weekly, Girls 3d weekly, Infants 2d weekly.'⁵ Luton School replied, 'Each child in this school pays two pence per week from the eldest to the youngest'⁶ whilst St. Margaret's offered a discount of '2d for one boy in a family, if more than one, 1 1/2d each.'⁷ The Guardians must have decided it was cheaper to teach them within the workhouse as only a month later a letter from the Poor Law Board acknowledges receipt of an order for books 'for the use of the workhouse school.'⁸ This was still in use in 1881 as the Census for that year lists a schoolmaster and two schoolmistresses amongst the Workhouse officials. Nationwide, by 1908 only 42% of workhouse children were educated within the institution. In 1870 it had been 82%.

On the next terrace, the Infirmary, a long, two-storey building ran parallel to the Entrance Block. Here were the idiots' ward and the itch, fever and smallpox wards. Most of the care of the patients was carried out by inmates but nurses were also employed from outside. A surgeon and deputy were appointed to attend when required. A Workhouse Medical Officer's Report Book noted any incidences of injury to patients, outbreaks of disease, overcrowded conditions and other matters relating to the Infirmary. In 1884 a new administration and infirmary block was built on the highest terrace. This two-storey block had a central tower with a louvred, pyramidal roof, with a bay set back to either side. Despite this, overcrowding in the Infirmary was often still reported.

Some time before 1897 when it appears on the Ordnance Survey Map, a detached chapel was built to the right of the Entrance Block. It is shown as a rectangular structure with a rounded apse and transepts to the north and south. The shape of the apse was still visible in one of the parking areas long after its demolition. Prior to this, services must have been held in one of the other buildings as religious devotion was very much part of the workhouse life.

In 1856, the clerk to the Guardians had written to Lord Courtney at the Poor Law Board, 'I am desired by the Guardians of this union to request that your Lordship will be good enough to inform them the probable cost of building a house suitable for this Union to accommodate 650 persons.'⁹ This estimation of future requirements was fairly accurate. In the 1881 Census inmates number 587, plus 18 tramps. Of this number 224 were adult females, 162 were adult males and 201 were children. Only approximately 30% of the inmates were of working age, counting those between 15 and 60. By the 1920s however, those remaining in the workhouse were mainly those unable, or unwilling, to help themselves; the unmarried mothers turned out by their families, the aged poor and vagrants. Asylums for the mentally ill, separate hospitals, old age pensions and health and unemployment insurance had successively decreased the number of people requiring workhouse accommodation.

Truculent was salvaged on 14 March 1950 and beached at Cheney Spit. The wreck was moved inshore the following day, where ten bodies were recovered. She was re-floated on 23 March and towed into Sheerness Dockyard where she was subsequently sold on 8 May 1950 to be broken up for scrap.

A survivor later said that it was because of the captain's mistake that the whole thing had happened. Lieutenant Bowers served in World War Two and was appointed to submarines in 1942; he was even mentioned in despatches. Such an error is even more surprising given that Bowers had been in command of submarines since 1946, having passed the Commanding Officers Qualifying Course or *The Perisher* – the nickname given to the highly demanding training. The survivor also revealed that during the war *Truculent* had attacked the biggest cargo ship in a Japanese convoy, the *Van Waerwijck*, also known as the *Harugiku Maru*. What nobody knew was that the ship was actually carrying some 720 Allied prisoners of war and 55 Japanese troops; its sinking killed 180 of the POWs and 27 Japanese. *Truculent* spent much of her wartime service in the Pacific Far East, except for a period in early 1943 operating in home waters. In the Pacific, she also sank the Japanese army cargo ship *Yasushima Maru*, the small Japanese vessel *Mantai*, and five Japanese sailing vessels. In addition she laid mines, one of which damaged the Japanese minelayer *Hatsutaka*. *Truculent* returned to the UK in the autumn of 1949 and Bowers was appointed in October of that year.

An inquiry attributed 75% of the blame to *Truculent* and 25% to *Divina*. At a subsequent court-martial, Lieutenant Bowers (who had survived) was found not guilty of negligently losing his ship, but was severely reprimanded on the lesser charge of negligently hazarding her. The subsequent Board of Enquiry report stated:

'[The submarine] entered the Thames Estuary through Princes Channel, thence passing between Red Sand Sheal and Shivering Sand Fort on course 280°. Her speed was about 9 knots through the water. In Oaze Deep, course was altered to 261°. The collision occurred with SS *Divina* in position 1 mile bearing 287° from Red Sand Tower.'

A report in *The Daily Mail* on Friday 13 January 1950, the day following the incident, also listed the following information regarding HMS *Truculent*:

History

Name:	HMS <i>Truculent</i>
Pennant No:	P315
Former No:	P95
Builder:	Vickers Armstrong, Barrow
Laid Down:	4th December 1941
Launched:	12th December 1942
Commissioned:	31st December 1942
Fate:	Accidentally sunk 12th January 1950

General Characteristics

Class and type:	T-class submarine
Displacement:	1,290 long tons (1,310 t) (surfaced) 1,560 long tons (1,590 t) (submerged)

Length: 276 ft 6 in (84.28 m)
 Beam: 25 ft 6 in (7.77 m)
 Draught: 12 ft 9 in (3.89 m) forward
 14 ft 7 in (4.45 m) aft
 Installed power: 5,000 hp (3,700 kW) (diesel engines)
 2,900 hp (2,200 kW) (electric motors)
 Propulsion: 2 × diesel engines; 2 × electric motors; 2 × shafts
 Speed: 15.5 kn (17.8 mph; 28.7 km/h) (surfaced)
 9 km (10 mph; 17 km/h) (submerged)
 Range: 4,500 nmi (5,200 mi; 8,300 km) at 11 kn (13 mph; 20 km/h) (surfaced)
 Test depth: 300 ft (91 m) max
 Complement: 61
 Armament: Six internal, forward-facing 21-inch (533 mm) torpedo tubes
 Two external, forward-facing torpedo tubes
 Two external, amidships, rear-facing torpedo tubes
 One external, rear-facing torpedo tube (six reload torpedoes)
 One 4-inch (102 mm) deck gun
 Three anti-aircraft machine guns

The loss of HMS *Truculent* led to improvements in the Port of London Authority's port control system. In addition, illumination at night was improved with the introduction of an additional special light on the bows of all submarines, hitherto known as a *Truculent* light. The sinking resulted in the deaths of 15 men from Chatham Royal Dockyard, including 'Mr G. Gutteridge, Electrician' and 48 service personnel from the Royal Navy. The total number who perished in the cold waters of the Thames Estuary was 64. In 2015 the 65th anniversary of the sinking of HMS *Truculent* was commemorated with a memorial service at St. George's Centre, Chatham. Nearly 230 people attended the service which was conducted by Rev Alan Boxall and Rev Gordon Warren RN.

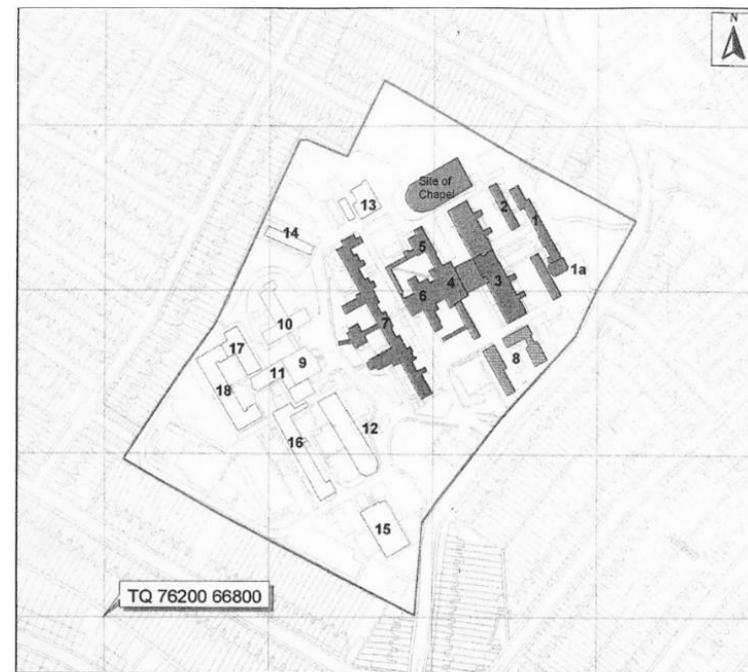
In conclusion, and with regard to the poor Miss Pamela Gutteridge, she had already left school at the time of the sinking, and in the summer of 1951 she married Frederick Hambrook.

May those who perished on HMS *Truculent* rest in peace.

as no personal possessions were allowed although paupers often hid small precious belongings in their bedding.

Behind this block, connected by corridors were the various buildings where the daily life of the workhouse 'family' went on. Until the new administration block was built in 1884, this central part of the workhouse contained the accommodation of the Master, Matron and other officials. There was a laundry and drying room, a dining hall and kitchen, where meagre fare was prepared by inmate cooks. Bread and cheese or gruel were standard workhouse food which was often adulterated. Milk was watered down and a mixture of animal and horse fat known as 'bosh butter' was served with the bread. The regulations laid down that meals were eaten in silence. At Christmas inmates were given a feast of boiled beef, plum pudding and porter.

In December 1895, the local newspaper reported that at the *Guardians'* meeting that week a Mr Budden asked, 'why could it not be roast beef. He was told that there were no means of roasting or baking, only of steaming or boiling.'² This same newspaper printed the successful tenders for supplying provisions to the workhouse: 'that for flour was given to Mr. Willis, whose terms were 1L 9s 6d against 1L 11s 6d those of Mr Belsey ... Mr Moore of Rochester got the contract for meat at 3s 4d all round; ... Mr Baldwin's offer to supply milk at 7d per gallon was accepted.'³



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- 1 Entrance Block
- 1a Boardroom
- 2 Receiving Ward
- 3 Accomodation Block
- 4 Dining Hall
- 5 Kitchens, Workshops etc.
- 6 Accomodation Block?
- 7 Workhouse Infirmary
- 8 Vagrant and Casual Wards
- 9 Administration Block
- 10 Ward Block
- 11 Ward Block
- 12 Ward Block
- 13 Boiler House etc.
- 14 Ward Block
- 15 Ward Block
- 16 Ward Block
- 17 Ward Block
- 18 Nurses Home

- Os.dwg
- Buildings dating to the 1850s
- 1857-9 buildings
- 1884 buildings
- 1908 buildings
- 1928 buildings
- 1930s buildings
- Buildings shown on 1932 OS
- Buildings shown on 1939 OS
- Demolished buildings
- Buildings constructed before 1896

Section of 1868 Ordnance Survey showing layout of workhouse buildings

What and Why?

The Workhouse,
Magpie Hall Road, Chatham
Betty Cole



Betty Cole continues our series on familiar places in the Medway Towns the origins of which may be unknown to passers by. The series was Betty's idea but we welcome other contributors!

Betty Cole is FOMA's Membership Secretary. She is interested in local and family history and holds a Certificate in Theory and Practice of Local History with the University of Kent at Canterbury. Betty is a volunteer transcriber and checker for free-to-access internet sites for the researching of census and parish records.

Part 2

Whatever the variations in the design of workhouses at this time, in many aspects they were alike, as the day to day running of such institutions was laid down by the Poor Law Commissioners. The buildings had to be arranged to facilitate the procedures being followed in accordance with those regulations. One can picture a family toiling up Magpie Hall Road and up the pathway to the Entrance Block. Here the applicant presented himself and his family and was met by the Porter who had authority to search the applicant for prohibited items such as alcohol, cards and dice. The Master would set out the rules of the house and if the applicant refused to accept them, the Guardians were no longer responsible for him. If he accepted, he became a pauper and lost his status as a citizen, being denied the right to vote. Any property he might have, such as furniture or the tools of his trade, would be taken away.

At Magpie Hall two single-storey buildings were set back from and parallel to the entrance block. These were the receiving wards. Here the family would be medically examined and classified as able-bodied or infirm. They were bathed and disinfected and their clothes taken away and fumigated, to be returned to them on leaving. They then had to wear workhouse clothing so as to be identifiable if they strayed into the street of the town. The inmates could leave the workhouse at any time if they gave three hours' notice. Leaving and returning twenty-four hours later was a common practice to the annoyance of the Master who had to release them knowing the entrance procedure would have to be carried out again every time they returned.

Behind the receiving wards, on a second terrace of land, was a three-storey accommodation block. Here the family would be split up, men and women separated, and children sometimes sent to other workhouses. The distress of separation and the father's feeling of failure can be imagined but he had little choice. M A Crowther states in *The Workhouse System 1834-1929*: 'If the committee's regulations were obeyed, the pauper would live in semi penal conditions, separated from his family, but his children would be educated, his diet sufficient and his body reasonably clean and warm.'¹ Dormitories were furnished with the bare necessity of beds with a straw filled mattress and a blanket. No lockers were provided

Adams' Garage (Hold that Tiger)

Janet King



I was born in the workhouse! (All Saints Hospital) on Elizabeth Ward, and spent the first twenty years of my life living and working in Chatham. I became familiar with the high street as I worked at the west end and lived at the east end. I still live in Medway and am interested in its history, an interest kindled by one particular teacher at school.

The garage was called Adams', in The Brook, in deepest Chatham. I worked there in the mid-sixties. Mrs Adams ran the garage office and Billy, her son, repaired the then temperamental cars with the help of an assistant. I worked in the office most of the time, taking care of the stock, matching invoices and typing accounts. I was not let loose on the daily accounts as my maths was so bad! The most fun I had was working on the garage forecourt itself. I loved meeting the mostly male customers and joking about. When the 'Put a tiger in your tank' campaign was on I could be seen wearing a tiger issue hat. It was like a balaclava with ears on. Being only 4ft 6ins tall and skinny I looked rather cute, and a lot of the customers would fill their own tanks rather than let me do it. I think there were five grades of petrol at the time, the dearest being Esso Golden at 5/- a gallon. A lot of the drivers also liked a shot or two of Redex in with their petrol. I don't know whether it made the petrol go further or the car go faster, I just obeyed requests.

While I was working at the garage there was a very cold winter. It was then that Jenny – the pump attendant - sprained her ankle and had to work in the office, while I took her place and manned the pumps. I even scraped the snow off the Esso Blue paraffin pump, which obviously saw a lot of action during the winter. To keep warm in the shop, which was more like a hut, there was a one bar fire! On the top of this we warmed up cooked Telfers' pies, which were made with delicious steak and kidney. They filled us up and kept us warm. The pies came from Torenzo's, just up Union Street in Chatham High Street. Their main trade, mostly in the summer, was ice cream and they also sold chickens which turned on an electric spit-type machine in the shop window. Dad called them 'giddy chickens.' Sometimes, on my way back into the garage, I would be called by Billy. I always knew when he called in a certain way exactly what he wanted. He wanted me to go up on the ramp and help bleed a car's brakes.

Another fun thing was when Jenny thought she would take to driving. The garage owned an old A35 van which she practised in; as it was on private ground this was OK. I was a willing passenger as she drove to and fro, bumping up and down as she went, narrowly missing the main repair garage. How we laughed! What was so funny about repeatedly nearly hitting the wall I don't know, but it was.

Not so funny was keeping an eye on stock being booked in and out, or out and then back in, or not booked out at all and then back in. There must be a computer program for it now, but

back then there was only me. I did my best and developed what would now be called ‘a system’. Given that no one was actually cheating, and that goods weren’t just disappearing, and that the right amount of goods had been delivered in the first place, I thought it worked quite well. I have, however, had sleepless nights since! Apparently my ‘book keeping’ produced the best stock take ever. What I did was work it all out backwards. I assumed that everything there was in correct numbers, and just made the books agree, with the help of four different coloured pens. It seemed to work if you kept counting and adjusting - that was until ‘the light bulb incident’. There was one stubborn light bulb too many, so I did what any other accountant would have done to make the books agree, I stood on it and swept up the evidence. There, I've owned up at last. I won't need the sleeping pills tonight after 50 years of keeping that secret.

I left the garage after about a year, much to the relief and pleasure of my mother. What would people think seeing me there, manning the pumps? And much to the disdain of my father, who continued to work there part time after his main day job as a clerk, to pay for the family car.

The Lloyd Family of Rochester

The final part of Pauline Weed’s series follows opposite, and below is the row of shops where Lloyd’s was situated.



Photograph by the author, Pauline Weeds, December 2019. Number 85 is now the Boot Camp Store, number 87 is Sweet Expectations, and number 89 is The Rochester Coffee Co.

A Brief Guide to the Life of Alfred William Baker

When?	Rank	Where Was He?	Doing What?	Other Events
November 1898	Captain	Lokoja and back	Mentioned in Despatches	
26 December 1898		Jebba	Died, buried the same day	
1901		Cobham	Bronze plaque Installed in church	1899-1902: Boer War in S Africa

Notes

1. Diary D11, also for November 17th.
2. AWB 1898 12 10a to Herbert from Jebba.
3. Diary D11 for December 7 and 12.
4. 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.
5. Consistory Court of Rochester, 28 August 1901.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge with thanks the many archives at national and local level which store and make available their treasures, especially that in Durham and its collection from the Durham Light Infantry. I must thank my wife Caroline for her patience and help in editing, Mike Spurgin for his photographs of Owletts and Cobham church and Hugh Andrew for his careful preparation of the maps.



From Alfred’s Army Book 119 C
Army Signalling Scribbling Book (Instructional Purposes Only)

He was a keen sportsman and an excellent draughtsman, as the Officers' Game Book will testify.

Our news from Jebba and Ibadan came from Major Fitzgerald and himself and only a few weeks ago a very cheery letter was received from him saying how well he was standing the climate. A favourite with everyone, his untimely death comes as a great shock to his numerous friends and the sincere sympathy of all of us is with his relations.'

Finally in May 1899, Thomas Henry and Frances will have been comforted by the esteem surrounding their son when he was Mentioned in Despatches.

The following despatch has been received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

May 2, 1899

Sir, Mr Secretary Chamberlain has already brought to the notice of the Marquess of Lansdowne on the 22nd of February last the names of those officers and NCOs employed in the protected territories adjacent to the Gold Coast and Lagos and on the Niger, whose services in 1897 and the first 6 months of 1898 appeared to him to be deserving of special recognition. Further reports have now been received with regard to the organisation and work of the West African Frontier Force on the Niger during the first year of its existence and I am to ask that, the names of the following officers may be added to the list of those who have previously been mentioned for services in connection with this Force:

Captain (temp Major) W A Robinson, Royal Artillery,
Captain (temp Major) T L N Morland, King's Royal Rifle Corps,
Captain C G Blackader, Leicestershire Regt,
Captain F C Marsh, Royal West Kent Regt,
Capt P S Wilkinson, Northumberland Fusiliers,
Captain C F Goldie-Taubman, the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regt (since deceased),
Captain A W Baker, Durham Light Infantry (since deceased),
Lieutenant M H Toplin, Princess of Wales' Own (Yorkshire Regt),
Lieutenant B R M Glossop, 5th Dragoon Guards,
Lieutenant H Bryan, Lincolnshire Regt,

Alfred's well travelled tin trunk has once more come to rest. The letters, diaries, drawings and artefacts are now joined by this publication to create a picture of a soldier's life at the close of the Victorian era. The trunk lies in waiting for future generations to explore.



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 3

Amelia Lloyd's divorce case finally came to the High Court in London on 14 February 1893. Mr Gibson was the barrister acting for Amelia and after she had given her evidence she was followed into the witness box by John William Hodges who described his visit to the house at 10 Frederick Street. The final witness was a James Robert Willcoxon who had let the rooms at 10 Frederick Street to 'Mr and Mrs Grant.'. He confirmed that a photo of Alfred was indeed 'Mr Grant' and that letters and parcels had been delivered to the house in the name of 'Thorpe', which Mrs Grant had asked him to give to Mr Grant. He was in no doubt that Mr and Mrs Grant were living together as man and wife. The judge granted a *decree nisi* with costs to Amelia on the grounds of adultery coupled with desertion. Amelia was also given custody of Gertrude, and the *decree absolute* followed on 11 December 1893.¹

A divorce was still extremely difficult to obtain at this time, particularly for a woman. Until 1858 divorce could only be obtained by a private Act of Parliament and between 1800 and 1857 only four women had succeeded in obtaining a divorce in this way, while 193 had been granted to men. In 1857 the necessary legislation was finally passed and the new Court for Divorce and Matrimonial Causes was established at Westminster Hall at the start of 1858; the first case was not heard until 10 May that year and obtaining a divorce had certainly not become much easier. Until 1937 adultery was the only grounds on which a husband could divorce his wife and until 1923 a wife could only divorce her husband for adultery combined with an aggravating factor, including incest, bigamy, cruelty, and two years' desertion, or on the specific grounds of sodomy, rape or bestiality. There were, of course, still many reasons why the court might refuse to grant a divorce and obtaining one remained a daunting and difficult prospect well into the twentieth century. The cost of obtaining a divorce started at about £40 (approximately £5,049 in 2018) if it was undefended, but might eventually cost several hundred pounds if the case was contested. In addition, as in Amelia's case, there may

have been travel costs incurred in obtaining evidence and in attending the court in London. The book *Divorce, Bigamist, Bereaved?* by Rebecca Probert is an excellent readable account of the subject.

When she finally obtained the *decree absolute* in December 1893, Amelia would have felt an almighty weight had been lifted. She had no plans to re-marry, and in fact she never did re-marry, but that was not the reason she obtained the divorce. Alfred was on the other side of the world and she could have just let things be, but her life had been devastated by Alfred's actions and the only way she could carry on was if she closed down that part of her life completely. The *decree absolute* would have done that for her and she was finally able to move on. However, life in the High Street would not have been easy. From the time her friends, neighbours and acquaintances first became aware of her marriage problems, and certainly of Alfred's desertion, most, if not all, would likely have ostracised her completely. Divorce was considered scandalous and the coverage in the local newspapers would probably have made her situation worse - if that were possible. Nevertheless Amelia had the support of her sister, Emma, and these two feisty Victorian ladies were not to be driven out of their homes; they continued living in the High Street at least until 1911.

Amelia's daughter, Gertrude, should also not be forgotten. She would have been a week short of her thirteenth birthday and still at school when Amelia's *decree absolute* was granted. By 1901 she had left home and was employed as a governess by William Brown of Ham Farm in Croydon who had five young daughters.² She subsequently took up secretarial work and in 1911 had living accommodation at Hopkinson House, a ladies' residential club in Vauxhall Bridge Road, Westminster. Nothing further is known of her until 1939 when she was living in Hammersmith and employed as a private secretary to an excavating contractor. She died at Wandsworth aged 77 in 1958. Perhaps it is not surprising that she never married but we can only hope that her life was not as lonely as it sounds.

The houses in the High Street had been renumbered in the mid 1890s so in 1901, and although still living in the same houses, Amelia could then be found at No.83 and Emma at No.89. By 1911 Amelia had moved in with her sister at number 89 which had eight living rooms, including the kitchen. At this time Emma was still running her father's business and described herself as a 'carriage proprietress'.

At some stage after 1911 Amelia moved to 5 Medway Terrace, Bill Street, Frindsbury where she died aged 80 years. She was buried at St Nicholas Cemetery on 24 January 1933, perhaps with her daughter, Mildred. Emma never married and she finally became a resident in the Foord Almshouses where she died aged 83 years. She was buried on 28 December 1940 at St Nicholas Cemetery with her parents, Richard and Ann Lloyd.³

Frustratingly I have not been able to discover when Emma gave up the business but, having moved on to deal in motor transport in the 1920s, it continued to bear the Lloyd name right up to the early 1970s, long after her death.

The black and white photo above of 85, 87 and 89 High Street was taken in 1967 and intriguingly is still named Lloyds of Rochester. In the early 1950s it was just a showroom and the large windows displayed shiny black limousines used for weddings and funerals and driven by chauffeurs dressed in smart suits and peaked caps. The garage at that time was at the bottom of Boley Hill where it joins Epaul Lane.⁴ It continued hiring out limousines until the early 1970s when the property was split up into separate units. It became very

The text of the memorial reads:

SANS PEUR ET SANS REPROCHE
In memory of ALFRED WILLIAM BAKER
Captain in the DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY
son of Thomas Henry and Frances Georgiana Baker
of Owletts in this parish and great grandson of
Henry Edmeades also of Owletts
who died at JEBBA on the NIGER, West Africa
on the 26th December 1898 while serving with the FRONTIER
FORCE in his 35th year.
A good son A good comrade A good soldier
Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God

Within six weeks of Alfred's death, *The Bugle*, the DLI 2nd Battalion's weekly chronicle, published an obituary:

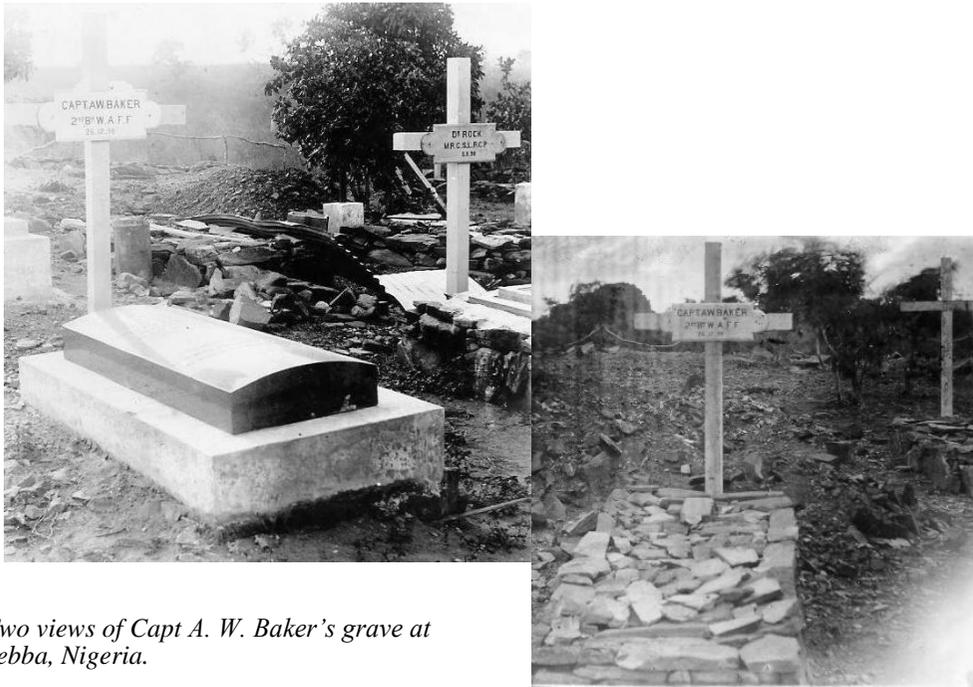
'Poona, February 2nd, 1899:

The mail last Saturday brought the sad news of the death at Jebba on the 26th December last of Captain A W Baker, Durham Light Infantry, who was serving in the West Africa Frontier Field Force. The deceased who was 35 years of age was the son of T. H. Baker Esq of Cobham, Kent.

He joined the 2nd Battalion on 6th February 1884 at Gibraltar, was promoted Captain on the 19th April 1893 and transferred to the 1st Battalion, was re-transferred to the 2nd Battalion in September 1896, seconded from the Depot, Newcastle for special and active service under the Colonial Office on the 16th February 1898 and sailed for Lagos the same month. He served in The Sudan 1885-86 campaign under Sir F Stephenson, KCB with the regiment, Egyptian medal and Khedive Star.

Captain Baker was most universally popular and an exceedingly good all-round sportsman. He was educated at Tonbridge School succeeding in the Captaincy of both the cricket and the Rugby XV. At Sandhurst he was in the cricket XI and football XV and won many prizes at Athletic Sports, his most notable performance being a jump of 5 ft 8 inches which was a record at that time. For some years he was the mainstay of our Regimental cricket.

Glancing through the Regimental cricket book (which he started and of which the first part is all in his handwriting), we see that his first appearance for the Regiment was at Gibraltar on the 1st July 1884, when he made 17 in the first innings and 38 in the second. 1890 and 1892 were perhaps his most successful years in regimental cricket when he headed the averages with 56 and 31.3 runs respectively. Later he was a prominent player with the Northumberland County and Newcastle Garrison cricket clubs for whom he did great things in 1897.



Two views of Capt A. W. Baker's grave at Jebba, Nigeria.

It is good to know that memories of Alfred lived on for his parents, not just from his tin trunk, but also in letters from Jebba with photographs of his grave, recognition in his Battalion's newspaper, a Mention in Despatches and finally in a bronze memorial.

From early days I had been shown the bronze memorial high on the south side of the chancel of Cobham Church with an enamel regimental badge of the DLI, which is a bugle. From the trunk came both the petition with the signatures of many Cobham villagers for the memorial and the faculty⁵ granted by the church to Alfred's father to install it. Herbert chose the panel alongside for his own memorial and it is fitting that the two brothers, who were inseparable in early life, should be remembered together.



The memorial

dilapidated and underwent major refurbishment, probably in the 1980s.⁵ Unfortunately I have not been able to find out who owned it or who managed it but I do not believe there were any descendants of Richard and Ann Lloyd then living who would have still borne the Lloyd name.

Notes

1. Divorce Court File No. 4484 (*Ancestry*); *Chatham Observer*, 18 February 1893; *Chatham News* 18 February 1893.
2. RG13/641.
3. Their grave can still be seen.
4. Julie Gay, *Rochester High Street Through the Eyes of a Child in the Early 1950s*, *The Clock Tower* (Issue 52), November 2018.
5. Personal memories of Alan Moss.

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

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, Michael opened some boxes in the Owletts' attic.

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

Part 17: Conclusion

The force was becoming seriously stretched: *Ordered by Commandant to find two officers and eight NCOs for 1st battalion and an OC (officer to command) for French frontier in Borgu. Don't see how I am to do it.*¹

On December 7th his humour still shone: *Went up river to shoot with Booth and McClintock on Magi Island, opposite mouth of the Awon river. I knew the King of Magi having been there before when, in return for a dash of rice, I made him a handsome present of a sardine, which he shared with his Prime Minister (the latter got the tail). They found nothing to shoot, but the lions roared round one camp at night. I nearly trod on a small snake and shot the biggest cobra I ever saw (5 feet) and also got stung eight times by a scorpion that was in the knee of my breeches when I put them on. I had fever the first night, McClintock was seedy most of the time.*

Alfred wrote from Jebba on December 10th to his mother in England and to his brother Herbert in Cape Town. To Herbert he gave a longer view of *this stupid game of French bluff. I am off again this week as commandant of the French frontier in Southern and Eastern Borgu. Saki or Okuta will be my headquarters. We have made*



regular disciplined regiments who drill like the Guards. They have been through musketry. I like mine very much. They are just like dogs and would go to hell with one I believe. Alfred saw no chance of trying them in a real battle, though more serious skirmishes were going on down river between the Niger Company and local tribes. He had orders to march on the 19th

to Kyama, this being part of Chamberlain's continuing chessboard policy. *Carriers are the only means of transport on narrow bush tracks, thick forest on each side, ill adapted to a fighting formation in a hostile country with an enormous string of carriers. The Baribas of the country have always lived on highway robbery, never plant crops, but I don't think they would attack a white man. I have decided to come out here again and chance it, probably command a battalion for £1,000 a year or be second in command unless I make an ass of myself, which is always possible. A poor devil of a pauper must risk the climate for such good pay. The only thing I funk is going home a confirmed invalid.*²

A Merry Christmas

Alfred's story was almost at a close, those being his last two letters and his last drawing (opposite), sent as a Christmas card. His final diary entry was for December 12th: *Cole came back from S Borgu and took command.*³ On the 16th he fell ill and died shortly after midnight on December 26th 1898 and was buried at Jebba later the same day. He was 34.

His parents would have heard first from Col Fitzgerald who was then in England. The Colonial Office had received the news by telegram. It was blackwater fever, a complication of malaria in which a parasite *Plasmodium falciparum* destroys red blood-cells, leading to black urine, fever and kidney failure. Blackwater fever, named by a doctor in Sierra Leone only 14 years earlier, killed many thousands in Africa at the time.

Dr Tichborne was with Alfred when he died and also Capt McClintock who had left Liverpool with him in February and had that month been shooting with him. There were many letters of condolence to his parents, all expressing his popularity and generosity. One comment that I was pleased to find was written not to his parents but in a diary, that of his colleague Dick Somerset: "Baker was one of the nicest chaps I had ever known, always cheery and jolly, good nature itself."⁴

Major Cole wrote from Jebba to say that he had sold Alfred's effects bar the trunk and its contents, his sword and gun. His mother was quick to write to Jebba to ask for details from those who were at his end, acknowledged by Dr Mayley and replied to by others. That must have been an agonising wait because mail was then taking at least a month each way. One letter of interest which was passed to the family was written by Alfred's colleague Lt Glossop to his brother Walter, another officer, recalling that only eight days before he died, Alfred had enjoyed a game of cricket, and "made all the runs and bowled everyone out." Perhaps not very strong opposition but at least Alfred could enjoy himself at such a late stage.

So ended a life of energy, fun and promise.

Right: Alfred, 18 at Tonbridge School.

