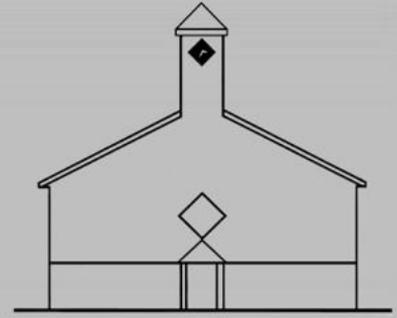


The Clock Tower



The Newsletter of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Issue Number 01: Spring 2006



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

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

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

The Committee

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Rt Rev. Dr Michael Nazir-Ali,
Bishop of Rochester

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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 on: <http://ajthomas.com/theclocktower>

From the President

I am delighted to welcome you and to thank all those who have shown such enthusiasm for this new and exciting project. There is increasing interest in researching family and social history, and we are indeed fortunate in Medway that our dedicated resource allows so many to share in this rich seam of historical material. Our Borough Archivist, Stephen Dixon, and his team provide the professional expertise which is vital, and I am sure that the active involvement and support of the Friends, many with their own areas of specialization, will over time prove invaluable to the preservation and better understanding of our Archives. I look forward to enjoying successive issues of our newsletter and to getting to know many of you at our meetings.

Russell Race,
President.

From the Chairman

Welcome to the first issue of *The Clock Tower*, the newsletter for the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. Back in October 2005 a meeting was held to discuss the formation of a Friends of Medway Archives group, and after a lively discussion I was elected Chairman of the Steering Committee (see left) to look into its formation. A lot of hard work by members of this committee has taken place over the past few months to put together a constitution and rules (see the centre pages), which will be presented for your consideration at the inaugural General Meeting on 6th April 2006 (venue and time to be arranged).



Our aim is to form a group of like-minded individuals dedicated to the preservation of our local heritage and promotion of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. We hope to be able to take this further in due course, with staging events such as talks, tours of archival interest, fund raising, and possible visits to schools to involve our children and grandchildren in the heritage of the Medway Towns.

I very much look forward to seeing you all at the meeting on 6th April.

Roy Murrant,
Chairman.

To join the Friends please contact: Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist, on archives@medway.gov.uk or 01634 332714

Archives Update

Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist

The formation of the Friends has happened at an exciting stage in the development of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. We feel we have taken full advantage of digital technology and are ahead of our counterparts elsewhere in Kent and around the country. Work on *Medway Ancestors*, our parish registers' imagebase has just been completed, making us the first office to publish parish registers online. Similarly, our local studies staff are in the final stages of applying for a Heritage Lottery Grant to publish their illustrations collection online. Medway is fortunate also in being the centre of the revived Victoria County History of Kent, and we are pleased our collections are the focus of the VCH team's activities.

We continue to routinely expand the *CityArk* database, our electronic finding aid to archival collections such as *Medway Ancestors*, with recent additions to the schools', cathedral's and societies' folders. Our virtual community now outnumber our annual visitors to the public searchroom and I feel the Friends can help close the gap that separates this virtual community from our personal visitors. This can partly be achieved by organising project work that centres on our online services but which involves human contact between Friends' volunteers. I am particularly keen to recommend to members the priority of compiling an online index to *Medway Ancestors*, a job that will require skill and expertise as well as resources. While I am confident *Medway Ancestors* was conceived correctly as an imagebase of parish registers by virtue of enabling people to view actual records, there is undoubtedly a need for metadata in the form of a searchable index.

In the meantime behind the scenes routine work goes on. Medway Archives holds Medway Council's largest manual database running to two shelf miles or 8,000 boxes of archival collections. We now operate a modern records store at Riverside in Chatham and we receive frequent transfers of records from colleagues in other departments as well as deposits from outside organisations and individuals, ensuring staff are busy carrying out the accessioning process or initial stage of documenting when new collections come in. Exhibitions are mounted, enquiries are answered and the searchroom is staffed all against a background of increasing workload, demands and pressures. One such new challenge is handling Freedom of Information enquiries and balancing these against Data Protection considerations. We have received no additional resources to cope with these.

By balancing the insistent nature of public service with the modern records demands of council colleagues, legislation and government initiatives, we hope we continue to provide a good service. However, the recommendations of the National Archives inspection team remain to be implemented in certain regards.

In particular, the appointment of a second archivist to help with our listing backlog and to meet the demands of our modern records service, and a second archives assistant to underpin our searchroom, enquiries and collections administration.

Finally, on the not so distant horizon, is the prospect of a new civic centre and archive repository which we expect will be situated in Chatham. Plans are already in hand and we should steer our thoughts in this direction as it is not too late to respond to the Council's consultation on the provision of future services, including archives, from a new Chatham site.

Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre
Couchman collection
DE402/2/05(L)



From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman Collection:

Colour postcard entitled, An Exact Prospect of the City of Rochester taken from Finsbery [i.e. Frindsbury] Windmill by Ja[mes] Collins AD 1690, showing the River Medway, masted naval vessels and hulks, [see the Editor's Footnotes on the inside back cover] Rochester and Chatham Intra. Reproduced and published by Thornton Brothers, New Brompton c.1920.

The Friends of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Constitution - Draft 2 (21st November 2005)

The Name

The Association's name shall be: **The Friends of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.**

The Objects

The Association's objects ("the Objects") shall be: To advance the education of the public in the history of the Medway area and its people by:

- a) promoting, supporting and assisting in the collection, preservation and conservation of records and other material of historical interest held in the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and elsewhere, and promoting public access to such records and material;
- b) publishing material and holding meetings, lectures, exhibitions and visits relating to local history; and
- c) promoting the use of archives and local studies collections and their value as a resource for historical research.

Membership

- (1) Subject to approval by the Executive Committee, membership of the Association is open to individuals and organisations who pay a subscription in accordance with the Rules.
- (2) Membership shall be terminated:
 - a) if the member dies or, if it is an organisation, ceases to exist; or
 - b) if the member resigns; or
 - c) otherwise in accordance with the Rules.

The President, Vice-Presidents, and Patrons

- (1) The Executive Committee may from time to time appoint:
 - a) a President;
 - b) up to four Vice-Presidents;
 - c) any number of Patrons.
 - d) The President, Vice-Presidents, and Patrons need not be members of the Association, and may be appointed *ex officio* rather than as individuals.
 - e) The President, Vice-Presidents, and Patrons may attend and speak at General Meetings and by invitation at Executive Committee meetings but (except as a member) shall have no voting rights.

The Executive Committee

- (1) The Association and its funds shall be managed and administered by an Executive Committee comprising the Officers and Ordinary Committee Members who shall be the trustees of the Association ("Trustees").
- (2) The Association shall have the following Officers: the Chairman; the Vice-Chairman; the Secretary; and the Treasurer.
- (3) Each Trustee shall be a member of the Association who is at least eighteen years of age.

- (4) The number of Trustees shall not be fewer than six nor more than ten.
- (5) The Trustees may fill any vacancies by electing Officers from amongst their number and co-opting additional Trustees.
- (6) The manager or most senior officer of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre or his or her delegate shall be, *ex officio*, entitled to attend meetings of the Executive Committee but shall not be a Trustee and shall not be entitled to vote.
- (7) Each of the Officers and Ordinary Committee Members (including co-opted Trustees) shall retire with effect from the conclusion of the AGM next after his or her appointment but shall be eligible for re-election at that AGM.
- (8) No Trustee may be paid or receive any other benefit by virtue of being a Trustee.

The Executive Committee's Powers and Obligations

- (1) The Executive Committee shall manage the business of the Association and shall have the power to do all such lawful things within the Constitution and the Rules as are necessary or desirable for the achievement of the Objects (but not for any other purpose).
- (2) The Executive Committee shall comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification thereof) and the rules and requirements of the Charity Commission.

Executive Committee Meetings

The Secretary shall call an Executive Committee meeting:

- a) at least twice per year; and additionally
- b) within twenty-one days of receiving a signed request to do so from any Trustee stating the nature of the business that is to be discussed.

General Meetings

- (1) General Meetings shall be Annual General Meetings (AGMs) or Special General Meetings (SGMs).
- (2) The Association shall hold an AGM within sixteen months from the date of the adoption of this Constitution and thereafter within four months from the end of the Accounting Year (as specified in the Rules).
- (3) The Secretary shall call an SGM within twenty-one days of receiving a request to do so:
 - a) from the Executive Committee; or
 - b) signed by at least ten members; stating the nature of the business that is to be discussed.

Conduct of Meetings

- (1) The period of notice required to hold any meeting shall be:
 - a) twenty-one days for a General Meeting; and
 - b) fourteen days for an Executive Committee meeting.
- (2) No business upon which a vote is required shall be transacted at any General Meeting or Executive Committee meeting unless a quorum is present.
- (3) A quorum shall comprise at least the following number of members entitled to vote upon the business to be conducted at the meeting:
 - a) for a General Meeting, ten members or ten per cent of the total number of members (whichever is lower); or
 - b) for an Executive Committee meeting, three Trustees or one third of the total number of Trustees (whichever is greater).

- (4) If a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting, or during the meeting a quorum ceases to be present, then the meeting shall be adjourned to such time and place as the Executive Committee shall determine.
- (5) General Meetings and Executive Committee meetings shall be chaired by: the Chairman; or, if absent, the Vice-Chairman; or, if absent, a Trustee nominated by the members present and entitled to vote.
- (6) Voting rights shall be specified in the Rules.
- (7) Unless provided otherwise, resolutions and other matters arising at any General Meeting or Executive Committee meeting shall be decided by a majority of votes, the person who chairs the meeting having the casting vote.

Rules

- (1) The Executive Committee may from time to time make rules (“the Rules”) for the conduct of the business of the Association and shall notify the Rules to the members of the Association.
- (2) The Association in a General Meeting may alter, add to or repeal the Rules.
- (3) The Rules shall be binding on all members of the Association.

Dissolution

- (1) The Association may be dissolved by resolution passed by at least two thirds of members voting at a General Meeting.
- (2) If the members resolve to dissolve the Association, the Trustees shall remain in office as charity trustees and be responsible for winding up the affairs of the Association in accordance with this clause.
- (3) The Trustees shall collect in all the assets of the charity and, having paid or made provision for all the liabilities of the charity, shall apply any remaining funds:
 - a) directly for the Objects; and/or
 - b) to any charity or charities for purposes the same as or similar to the Objects.
- (4) In no circumstances shall the net assets of the Association be paid to or distributed among the members of the Association (except to a member that is itself a charity).

Amendments

- (1) This Constitution may be amended by resolution passed by at least two thirds of members voting at a General Meeting.
- (2) No amendment may be made to this Constitution which would have the effect of making the Association cease to be a charity at law.

THIS CONSTITUTION was adopted at the meeting of members of the Association held on 6th April 2006.

SIGNED by those Trustees present and elected at the said meeting:

Name of Trustee

Signature

1.

2.

The Victoria County History at MALSC

Dr Andrew Hann, Associate Member

Dr Andrew Hann was appointed Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past For Everyone (EPE) programme in September 2005. Employed by the University of Greenwich, Andrew is based in the Medway area and is an Associate Member of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

England's Past for Everyone is an exciting new venture for the Victoria County History (VCH), intended to help widen access to the VCH's existing red volumes of parish-by-parish local histories, and involve the wider community in researching and writing new local history materials. The aim is to produce publications that are both engaging and authoritative, drawing on local knowledge and expertise as well as the work of professional historians. The research will be made available both online, via the VCH website, and in paperback as part of a new VCH Studies series of accessible local histories. EPE is a national programme, with projects under way in ten counties spread across the country from Durham to Cornwall, and is supported by a £3.4 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This is matched by contributions from local sponsors, who in Kent include Kent County Council, the University of Greenwich, Kent Archaeological Society, Kent History Federation and the City of Rochester Society. By encouraging closer collaboration between academics and local historians, the programme seems certain to make an important contribution to community history both locally and in a national context, and it is hoped that it will provide a blueprint for future research projects.

Initially, research will focus on a group of eight parishes in the lower Medway valley (Aylesford, Burham, Snodland, Wouldham, Halling, Cuxton, Strood and Frindsbury), looking specifically at the processes of industrialisation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their impact on the local environment, economy and culture. This means looking at the emergence of new industries such as cement, brick making, paper making and engineering, and their relationship with older activities such as ship and barge building, lime burning and, of course, agriculture. Links between these communities and the Medway towns, other parts of Kent, and London are, however, also an important focus. Once analysis of the data is complete, the material will be published as a paperback volume entitled *People and Work in the Lower Medway Valley, 1750-1900*. In the longer term it is hoped to broaden the chronological and geographical scope of the research, one possibility being a study of early-modern Rochester and its hinterland.

A large team of volunteers has been recruited to assist with the research and has now started work in the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. Over the coming months they will be collecting much of the raw data needed for the book. Many of them will, however, also be involved in writing short pieces for the paperback volume or the website, and some will be out in the field taking photographs or carrying out survey work. Further volunteers are certain to be needed as the project progresses, so there will be plenty of opportunities for members of the Friends to become involved in the research at a later stage. The formal launch of the volunteer programme will be held in the Ward Room at

the University of Greenwich's Chatham campus in June, and you are all most welcome to attend. This event is intended to raise awareness of the project amongst the local community, and to give the volunteers an opportunity to showcase their efforts.

The date and time for the launch is yet to be confirmed; further details can be obtained from Dr Andrew Hann by contacting him closer to the time using the contact details below.

Did your ancestors live in the lower Medway valley? Were they cement workers, agricultural labourers, tradesmen or factory owners? If so, Dr Andrew Hann would be interested to hear from you, and particularly if you have any old photographs, letters, diaries or other family records dating from the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Subject, of course, to your approval, some of this material could be used in the forthcoming paperback volume or on the project website. Certainly it will help with the understanding of the everyday lives of working people in the valley during the nineteenth century. If you think you have any documents that might be of interest, and would be willing to share them with the 'People and Work' project, then contact Dr Andrew Hann at School of Humanities, University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, Greenwich, SE10 9LS, telephone 01634 202724, or email ha81@gre.ac.uk.



Cllr Sue Haydock of Medway Council speaks at the official launch of Medway Ancestors at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Strood, on 14th December 2005. To the right is John Leigh Pemberton of the Heritage Lottery Fund Committee South East.

Editor's Footnotes

Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. Based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society and The Council for British Archaeology; Amanda read Italian at the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association.



A very warm welcome to the first issue of *The Clock Tower*.

I am delighted to be associated with the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and to have the opportunity to edit such a vibrant and informative publication – a reflection of the Friends and the team we support.

My involvement with the Friends brings together much of what makes me tick. Born in Chatham, I spent my childhood in the Medway Towns, returning to Kent later to study at Canterbury. A passion for history came from my father, an Australian, who arrived in Chatham in the 1950s. The first member of his family to return to Britain in over a century, his love for all things British has kept him here ever since. When I was a child, my father and I spent Saturdays exploring together. We walked everywhere, and wherever we went (Rochester Cathedral, The Vines, Eastgate House, the Castle Gardens), it seemed to me that my father knew *everything* about these places, patiently repeating the same stories over and over again. My father rarely romanticised history, as he understood that most children aren't easily fooled, so the walk back home to Strood invariably included a visit to the graveyard at St Nicholas Church.

I must have been very young when I first saw David Lean's 1946 adaptation of *Great Expectations*, an early experience of *my* history brought to life. Then the inaccuracies passed me by, but it remains one of my favourite films because the darkest of its scenes capture much of the essence of Dickens' world. Bringing the past to life is essential, I believe, in the understanding of history – especially for children - and as Roy Murrant so rightly says in his opening letter, this is much of what the Friends is about. Thanks to *Medway Ancestors*, anyone in the world can now view online the many burial entries for infants in the parish registers of the 1800s. They too can experience the same feelings as Dickens' Pip on seeing at Cooling, "five little stone lozenges each about a foot and a half long...sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine..."

For me, aged 6 years old, the association with Cliffe and Cooling was all the more significant as this was the home of my mother's family. Years later my father admitted that the marshland had probably been home for some of his family too, on board the prison hulks awaiting transportation to New South Wales.

From the Archives...



Some photographs and illustrations held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre remain unidentified. If you know where this photograph was taken and if you have a story to tell about the location, please contact the Editor, Amanda Thomas. Contact details are on the inside front cover.