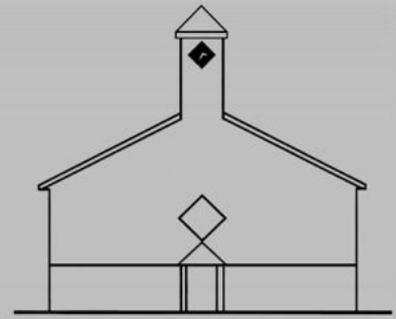


The Clock Tower



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

Issue Number 02: Summer 2006



On 6th April 2006, the Friends held the very first AGM at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. The meeting was a great success with a considerable number of new and existing members attending, many of whom had travelled some distance. The meeting concluded with a talk by Vice President Brian Kingsley Smith on Kent and Medway aviation history, a synopsis of which can be read in this issue of *The Clock Tower*.

The painting in the photograph is by David Ellwood of a Short Sunderland making its approach to land over Rochester Bridge. The work was commissioned by Brian Kingsley Smith who has lent it indefinitely to the Castle Club along with a painting by the same artist of a Short Stirling over Rochester.

Pictured at the Inaugural AGM are:

Back row from the left, Russell Race (President), Tony Farnham, Dr Andrew Hann (Committee Member and Kent Team Leader for the *Victoria County History's England's Past For Everyone*), Brian Kingsley Smith (Vice-President).

Middle row, John Witheridge (Committee Member), Yolanda Dunn (Committee Member and Press Officer), Bob Ratcliffe (Committee Member), Norma Crowe, (Local Studies Librarian).

To the other side of the painting, David Carder (Committee Member), Stephen Dixon (Borough Archivist), Amanda Thomas (*The Clock Tower* Editor), Jean Skilling (Treasurer).

Front row; Councillor Sue Haydock (Vice President and Medway Council Representative), Roy Murrant (Chairman), Tessa Towner (Vice Chairman).

An Introduction to the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Our Objectives

The membership of the Friends of Medway Archives (FOMA) is world-wide and has the following aims: to preserve our Medway heritage, to support and promote the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, and to advance the education of the public in the history of the Medway area and its people. The Friends can achieve this by assisting the Studies Centre, the flagship archives and local studies service for the Medway Council area and north-west Kent, with fund raising for document purchases and document repairs, in obtaining sponsorship, mounting of exhibitions and manning stalls at open days throughout the area and beyond. Some members may be able to assist with IT skills and resources, expertise in sponsorship or knowledge of public relations. In the case of the latter, the Friends can call upon the assistance of the Medway Council communications (public relations and press) section. Members are invited to instigate and participate in activities according to their skills and interests, under the direction of the Chairman and Projects Officer and in close liaison with the Studies Centre staff. Projects in addition to those listed below might include compiling indexes, mounting exhibitions, publishing CD-ROMs and basic first aid repairs, such as cleaning, to documents.

The Inaugural Annual General Meeting of The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre took place on 6th April 2006 when the organisation became an Excepted Charity, approved by the Inland Revenue under our Constitution.

Membership

Membership of the Friends costs £10 for individual membership (18 years and over), £100 for Individual Life Membership (18 years and over), £12 for Family Membership (1 or 2 adults and any children under 18 at the same address), £ 15 for Society Membership (not-for profit organisations), and £50 for Corporate Membership (companies and businesses). Annual subscriptions are due on 1st January. Members joining after 30th September do not have to pay a subscription for the following year.

Special Projects

The formation of the Friends has happened at an exciting stage in the development of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC). Our innovative approach to digital technology means we are ahead of our counterparts elsewhere in Kent and around the UK. MALSC is the first office to publish parish registers online with our imagebase, *Medway Ancestors*, and our local studies staff are now in the final stages of applying for a grant to publish their illustrations collection online. In addition, Medway is fortunate in

being the centre of the revived *Victoria County History of Kent*, (VCH), and we are pleased our collections are the focus of the VCH team's activities. 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 a Member of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. Regular updates on the project appear in the Friends' newsletter, *The Clock Tower*.

The Newsletter

The Clock Tower is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Editorial deadlines

The first Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of February, May, August and November. Articles, letters, photos and any information to be considered for inclusion in the autumn journal must be received before this date by the Editor, Mrs Amanda Thomas, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire; amanda@ajthomas.com

The copy deadline for Issue 03 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 7th August 2006.

Publication dates

The third Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

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>

Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website <http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone 01634 332714; fax 01634 297060; email: archives@medway.gov.uk.

General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Cindy O'Halloran, at the above address, or by telephoning 01634 332238/332714.

The Committee

Patron

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

President

Russell (John) Race, JP, DL

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From the President

I was delighted to meet so many new and existing members at our Inaugural Annual General Meeting in April, which was a great success thanks to the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of everyone involved.

The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre is now an Excepted Charity, approved by the Inland Revenue under our Constitution; my thanks go to David Carder, John Witheridge and Bob Ratcliffe for their work in this regard. Following the meeting, Vice-President, Councillor Mrs. Sue Haydock, was confirmed as Medway Council's Representative for the forthcoming municipal year, which is tremendous news, not least because the Friends will benefit greatly from Councillor Haydock's considerable expertise and enthusiasm. I would like to extend my thanks to Ellen Johns, the Council's Committee Co-ordinator who helped make the appointment possible.

To conclude, I very much hope you enjoy this, the second, issue of our newsletter and I look forward to getting to know many more of you at our forthcoming meetings.

Russell Race, President.

From the Chairman

Many thanks to all who attended the inaugural meeting on the 6th April, at which I was delighted to be re-elected as your Chairman. The meeting began with introductory speeches by our President, Russell Race, and a few words from each of the Vice Presidents. In addition to those who were elected from the Steering Committee I would like to extend a warm welcome to Tony Farnham who was also elected to the Committee. The Rules and Constitution ably put together by the Sub-Committee were also presented and accepted. Our inaugural meeting ended with a talk by Brian Kingsley Smith on The Aviation of Kent, and I am sure that everyone who was unable to attend the meeting will enjoy reading a transcript of Brian's talk in this issue of *The Clock Tower*.



Some of the events arranged at the time of the inaugural meeting will have already taken place, including my own talk on pubs, and it is wonderful to see so many other events already in the pipeline.

Finally, as I write, we have had over one thousand visitors to our new *The Clock Tower* website (ajthomas.com/theclocktower) – I would like to say thank you and well done to our Editor, Amanda.

Roy Murrant, Chairman.

News and Events

Talks and Exhibitions

To follow is a calendar of MALSC events until December 2006.

Visit to Eastgate House Rochester, 27th May 2006

The Friends first members' visit was led by Bob Ratcliffe, member of FOMA and President of the City of Rochester Society. Fifteen people attended the tour which included the attics and behind the scenes areas, the ancient wooden fireplace surrounds, wall decorations, and Edwin Harris' model of medieval Rochester. Members even came across some Rochester City Council town clerk's department records, which everyone



agreed were suitable for deposit in the archives. All in all, this was a highly successful first outing for the Friends and established an archival theme for future events.

The photograph above shows a plaque on Eastgate House which contains the image of a prancing buck. This is believed to be in honour of a former resident of the house, Sir Peter Buck, Clerk of the Cheque in the Royal Dockyard Chatham, for whom Eastgate House was built in 1590.

The History of Chatham Pubs in Medway MALSC, 6th June 2006, 7.30 pm

Roy Murrant, FOMA's Chairman and member of the Kent Family History Society Medway Branch, spoke to a packed house of both members and non members on the pubs of the Medway Towns. The illustrated talk was humorous, recounting many of the anecdotes associated with the Towns' naval past and some from his own experience. Roy's talk was up to his usual entertaining standard and confirms his standing as the Towns' foremost authority on our pubs past and present, many sadly having closed. Roy has made a television appearance and given many talks on this popular subject and we look forward to a repeat performance in the not too distant future.

The Victoria County History Project MALSC, 25th July 2006, 7.30 pm

Dr Andrew Hann Kent Team Leader for the *Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone (EPE)* programme will talk on the Industrialisation of the Medway Valley, including an update on the project as a whole and news of current findings. Employed by the University of Greenwich, Andrew is based in the Medway area and is a FOMA Member.

Donald Maxwell, Artist and Author

Exhibition

MALSC, 6th July - 5th September 2006

By Bob Ratcliffe; admission free

Darnley Event,

Cobham Hall, 12th July 2006, 6.30pm.

Devised by Medway Archives and Local Studies, from the Darnley Collection.

A dramatised Reading of the Darnley letters at Cobham Hall. Script by Julie Garton.

Readings by Norma Crowe, Jean Lear and Chris Bull of Kent County Council. There will be a guided garden stroll at 6.30pm followed by a finger buffet.

The readings, *Little Lord Clifton* and *Bowled Over* will be held in the atmospheric setting of the Gilt Hall.

Tickets cost £8.50 and can be obtained from Mrs D Cutler, 7 Squire's Field, Hextable, Kent BR8 7QY.

Earls of Darnley of Cobham Hall exhibition online

Prepared by April Lambourne.

As an undertaking to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which funded the listing of the unlisted portion of the Cobham Hall collection several years ago, we have published an exhibition of some of the most interesting documents associated with Cobham Hall (collection U565).

The intended audience is educational users but all *CityArk* users and especially those with ancestors in the Cobham area will find the pages interesting.

www.medway.gov.uk/index/leisure/archives/6834.html/43354.htm

A Pilgrim in Kent and Beyond

MALSC, 18th July 2006, 7.30pm

Bob Ratcliffe celebrates the life and work of Donald Maxwell. Places are limited and must be booked (see below for contact details).

The Jewish Presence in Medway

Exhibition

MALSC, 7th September – 3rd November 2006

Admission free.

Jews in Britain - Should Immigrants Integrate within the Community?

MALSC, 12th September 2006, 7.30 pm

Talk by Gabriel Lancaster of Chatham Memorial Synagogue.

Booking necessary.

Short Brothers Commemoration Meeting MALSC, Search Room, 13th September 2006, 10.30 am

To include group reminiscence, the identification of aircraft photographs, and discussions on the future of the Society. FOMA members with an interest in helping are welcome to attend. Please let Norma Crowe know in advance on 01634 332400.

Edwin Harris - A Man of Many Parts

MALSC, 20th November 2006 – 30th January 2007

Exhibition by Patricia Salter, former Senior Archives Assistant, member of the City of Rochester Society.

Admission free.

Mince Pie Day

MALSC, 6th December 2006, 10.00 am -12.00 noon

Admission free

Edwin Harris - A Man of Many Parts

MALSC, 6th December 2006 2.30 pm

Talk by Patricia Salter

Tickets £3; booking necessary

Mince Pie Day

MALSC, 13th December 2006, 10.00 am -12.00 noon

Admission free

All events are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Strood, Kent unless otherwise indicated. To book, where applicable, please ring 01634 332714.

For directions, please see www.cityark.medway.gov.uk/about/contact/

Further information can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website www.cityark.medway.gov.uk/ and by following the CityArk News link.

Recent Accessions

Compiled by Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist.

For full details see www.cityark.medway.gov.uk

Photograph comprising interior view of traction engine assembly shop, Aveling and Porter Ltd., High Street, Strood, c.1910.

Photograph of street frontage of butcher's shop adjacent to Castle Inn [?] public house, Rochester, showing butchers, butchers' assistants and bystanders and carcasses of mutton, poultry and joints of meat on display c.1900.

Printed matter associated with Holocaust Memorial Day 27th January 2006 comprising order of service, Chatham Memorial Synagogue, joint statement signed by Councillor Ken Webber, Mayor of Medway, John Weiner, Chairman of Chatham Memorial Synagogue, Adrian Newman, Dean of Rochester and Gabriel Lancaster, Chairman of Medway Inter-faith Action Forum with explanatory notes.

St. James at Grain Parish Council, comprising; annual parish meetings minute book 1952-2002. Minute books 1987-1990 and 1991-1993.

Longfield Parish Church parish magazines 1999-2005.

Additional parish records of the United Benefice and Parish of Snodland with Lower Birling.

Title deeds to 12 Railway Street, Chatham and premises in Rome Lane, Chatham.

Anonymous MS poem satirising the military, political and ecclesiastical establishment of the Medway Towns, 1819.

Title deeds to 5 Mansion Row, Brompton, 1765-1955.

Additional records of the United Benefice of Cobham with Luddesdown and Dode.

Additional deposits of the Parish Church of Hoo St. Werburgh.

Additional records of Methodist Church Medway Towns Circuit, Hoo St. Werburgh Society or Chapel.

Marriage registers of Kingdom Hall, Jehovah's Witnesses, 176a Chatham Hill, Chatham 1961-1981 and 1981-1993.

Title deeds to 1 Lester Road, Chatham, parties 1896-1932

Title deeds, including site plan pertaining to two pieces of land, wharf and corn stores astride Canal Road, Frindsbury Intra, parties John Howard Ball of Strood, contractor and George Youngman of Maidstone, corn merchant, with three photographs of George Youngman and Co.'s North Kent Wharf viewed from the River Medway, from inside the yard and from Canal Road, exposed September 1921.

Title deeds, probate records and personal estate papers of Peat family of Kensington, London and Tovil, Maidstone and Forrester family of Malmesbury, Wiltshire, deeds pertaining to properties under jurisdiction of manors of Barking, Essex and Kennington, Surrey; also deeds pertaining to advowson of Thorley, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Slicketts Hill and Chalk Pit Lane, Chatham and Gillingham, parties and subjects, 1739-1913.

Additional records of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council comprising minutes, 1988-1991, 1991-1996.

Additional records of the Parish Church of St. Augustine Gillingham comprising: Parish magazines 1930 – 2005 (5 boxes).

Glass plate negatives. Probably early 20th century

Photocopies of letters to or from William Adams or mentioning Adams or his wife and between his collaborators in the East India Company in Japan and London (1611-1620).

Title deeds to 12 Railway Street, Chatham and premises in Rome Lane, Chatham, parties Elvy, Butts, Gurr, Randall, Dean and Chapter of Rochester, Dunstall, George, Bryant,

Catt, Foord, Knight, Black, Whitby, Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Ballard, Roberts, Wade, Williams, Swain, Messrs. P.J. Miles and K. Winney, David Livingstone Consultants Ltd., D. Livingstone, Mrs. J. Livingstone, D. Horne and L. Price, Norwich Union Life Assurance Society, Crusader Insurance Co. Ltd., Clarence Laundry Ltd., Chatham Borough Council, William J. Wilkinson (Maidstone) Ltd., Specta-Call Ltd., Mossbrook Properties Ltd., PSB Property Ltd., Kentoptic Ltd. and Kent Colour Labs Ltd. 1809-1992 (DE1056).

Anonymous MS poem satirising the military, political and ecclesiastical establishment of the Medway Towns, of which copies were received by several persons in September 1819 (DE1057).

Title deeds to 5 Mansion Row, Brompton, parties Porter, Hargood, Vinall, Strover, Searle, Edgcumbe, Smith, Tapley, Bell, Didham [cf. Didhem], Desborough, Moss, Swan, Knight, Oliver, Ginman, Le Mesurier Sinkinson, Paice and Chatham Reliance Building Society 1765-1955 (DE1058).

Marriage registers of Kingdom Hall, Jehovah's Witnesses, 176a Chatham Hill, Chatham 1961-1981 and 1981-1993 (N/JW/85; DE1063).

Title deeds including site plan pertaining to two pieces of land, wharf [cf. North Kent Wharf] and corn stores astride Canal Road, Frindsbury Intra [cf. Strood], parties John Howard Ball of Strood, contractor and George Youngman of Maidstone, corn merchant, with three photographs of George Youngman and Co.'s North Kent Wharf viewed from the River Medway, from inside the yard and from Canal Road, exposed September 1921, with labelled envelope. [1805] 1859-1867, 1921 (DE1067).

Title deeds, probate records and personal estate papers of Peat family of Kensington, London and Tovil, Maidstone and Forrester family of Malmesbury, Wiltshire, deeds pertaining to properties under jurisdiction of manors of Barking, Essex and Kennington, Surrey; also deeds pertaining to advowson of Thorley, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Slicketts Hill and Chalk Pit Lane, Chatham and Gillingham, parties and subjects Hooper, Earle, Dewe, Bryant, Budgen, Mannerings, Charlton, Rainger, Ward, Pillfold, Robinson, John Russell, Duke of Bedford, Townson and Storey 1739-1913 (DE1068).

Photocopies of letters to or from William Adams or mentioning Adams or his wife and between his collaborators in the East India Company in Japan and London (1611-1620). With photocopy of Adams' baptism entry in Gillingham parish register (1564) (P153/1/1), entry in East India Company minute book (1619) and photocopy of entry in *The Dictionary of National Biography* (1885) from originals mainly in the India Office Records, British Library. Facsimiles made c.1980, originals dated 1564, 1611-1620 and 1885 (DE1071).

Electronic imaging

We have begun a programme of retrospectively digitising our existing microfilm stock to complement the process whereby we routinely scan original records onto the *CityArk* imagebase, as we did for *Medway Ancestors* and the general imagebase. By this means we can economically add images to *CityArk* without having to re-film the original records or subject them to unnecessary wear and tear. All that remains is for our contractors to add footers and target pages where necessary.

The first microfilms to be treated in this way are for Chatham Garrison Church in Maxwell Road, Brompton. This church was founded in 1854 although baptisms begin in 1847 and marriages in 1933. Permission for the microfilming of these records was given several years ago before the availability of the *CityArk* imagebase. Permission has subsequently been obtained from the National Archives and Senior Chaplain to the Forces for their publication on *CityArk* and we hope they will prove a helpful addition to *Medway Ancestors*. The original records which remained at the Garrison Church after microfilming as not being eligible for deposit at this office, have in many cases since been transferred to a Ministry of Defence holding facility.

To follow eventually are the records of Fort Pitt Military Cemetery, City Way, Rochester, Hawkins' Hospital, the workhouses, council minutes, voters' lists and nonconformist records.

Medway MovieBase

The pilot moviebase has been added to with two cine films entitled *Kentish Villages in Autumn* and *Spring*, produced by the Waslin family of Chatham and Medway Movie Makers. Soon to follow and possibly available by the time you read this are cine films of the Medway Towns in 1967, the Parade of Sail and Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race of 1985 and holiday scenes of a Pontin's holiday in south Devon in 1973.

The moviebase will provide us with a useful means of showing our small but significant audio-visual stock and improve our capacity to provide multi-media source material on social aspects of Medway history for educational use and the ever more demanding *CityArk* virtual community of users world-wide. In our acceleration of work to enlarge the moviebase, several more cine films are being converted and compressed onto CD-ROM by our contractors.

To view the pilot moviebase please visit the *CityArk* News page and follow the link. You will benefit from broadband Internet access. An Audio Base is also being planned.

STOP PRESS: Pilot Medway Moviebase

As we went to press, the pilot *Medway MovieBase* had been extended to include five short films. These are a day with the Waslin family of Chatham at the Shuttleworth Collection air display in Bedfordshire in 1985, showing First World War and Second World War aircraft flying and on the ground, made by Frank Waslin; *April* in Kent c.1973 made by Frank Waslin, *Kentish Villages in the Autumn* c.1970 made by Frank Waslin; a Chatham family on holiday at Pontin's in south Devon c.1973, made by Frank Waslin; scenes of the Medway Towns made by Medway Cine Club 1967; Parade of Sail and Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race (Chatham, 1985), made by Frank and Mark Waslin of Chatham and Medway Movie Makers. Further films of local origin of events and activities locally or internationally will be published in due course. To view the pilot footage, click the following link or via the News Page:

http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/query/results/?Mode=Search&SearchMode=explorer&SearchWords=&DateList=&.submit=Submit+Query&Boolean=AND&Results=25&PathList=%2FZ4c_Medway_MovieBase%2F&.cgifields=Verbose&.cgifields=Exact

CityArk

The most recently available statistics at the time of writing (9th June 2006) are for 21st April – 20th May 2006. The figures are produced monthly from Medway Council's corporate web analysis software *WebTrends*.

Total hits 928,265

Page views 322,458

Total kbs transferred 291,239,587

kbs of JPGs transferred 241,392,669

Kbs of HTM transferred 16,204,274

UK 18.01%

USA 29.02%

Highest Commonwealth Australia 3.36%

Highest EU Netherlands 43.36% (probably mainly UK relayed users)

Highest other country 0.13% Israel

Average visit length 00:24:05

Visits 34,055

Top 14 organisations by number of visits (excluding ISPs and search engines):

43 Kent County Council

53 La Trobe University

58 Universitaet Leipzig

67 British Broadcasting Corporation

109 North West Kent College of Technology

113 JANET NOSC
121 London Borough of Lewisham
122 Internet for Learning
126 Cambridge University local area network
134 Hills Road Sixth Form College
140 University of London Federal Library Coordinating Services
143 New College Durham
135 Oxford University
151 Greenwich University

Conservation work

A large accumulation of work has been consigned to our contractors to the value of £6000. The records include Horton Kirby civil parish records, Rainham churchwardens' church rate book 1702-1728, Longfield baptism register 1813-1901, Snodland parish register 1559-1739, a Cobham Hall estate map of 1759, Longfield tithe map, Swanscombe tithe map, Hoo St. Mary tithe map, Rainham tithe map, Sutton at Hone tithe map, a Watts' Charity map and a Wilmington tithe map.

Conservation work is themed in order to make effective inroads into our backlogs of documents and record series requiring conservation work, rather than pick away at collections.

When using original documents ordered up from the strongroom, keep an eye open for our colour coded buckram bindings. Original bindings are retained if possible and even if not re-used, are kept inside a compartment in a slipcase. Where new bindings are made, they conform to our management group and archive group colour codes, e.g. blue/silver for parish records (blue for Church of England, silver for parish records).

Special Feature

Contained in a deposit of records (DE580) relating to First World War veteran David Rumsey BEM, formerly of Palmerston Road, Chatham, is a very strange object indeed. It is a piece of German First World War prisoner of war camp bread. In civilian life Mr. Rumsey retired as an inspector of postmen but formerly served as a private soldier in the 10th. Battalion Sherwood Forresters and as a prisoner of war in the Great War and later as a Lieutenant in the 25th. (36th. General Post Office) Battalion, Kent Home Guard at Rochester. The bread retains its dark brown colour, is about the size of cricket ball and is as hard as rock, having ossified over the years and of course is quite inedible. The bread featured in a press article several years ago, when our photogenic casual assistant Catherine Durkan posed for the camera with knife and fork. I am glad to report Catherine's teeth are still in good order as she didn't attempt to take the realism too far.

Staff

We are pleased to report the appointment of Mandy Thwaites to the new post of Arts and Libraries Manager. Mandy was previously managing director of the BBC subsidiary Galleon and is an old girl of the Invicta Grammar School, Maidstone. We wish her well in her new post.

And finally...



Medway Borough Archivist, Stephen Dixon, married Karen Belinda Best on 29th April 2006 at St. Barnabas' Church, Nelson Road, Gillingham. Also pictured is bridesmaid Zoe Cheng, Karen's goddaughter.

Our very best wishes to Stephen and Karen.

Archives Update

Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist

The Friends continue to take great strides forward. I am particularly pleased that with effect from 6th April 2006 the organisation has become an Excepted Charity, approved by the Inland Revenue under our constitution. I must again express our gratitude to David Carder, John Witheridge and Bob Ratcliffe for their work in this regard.

I am also glad to report that at the Annual Meeting of Medway Council on 10th May 2006 when consideration was given to the representation of the council on outside bodies, Cllr. Mrs. Sue Haydock was confirmed as the Council's representative on the Friends of Medway Archives for the forthcoming municipal year. As Friends will already be aware, Cllr. Haydock is also one of our Vice-Presidents. We congratulate Cllr. Haydock on her appointment and look forward to working with her. We should also be conscious of the fact we are now officially recognised by Medway Council as an outside body with official council representation. I am grateful to Ellen Johns, the Council's Committee Co-ordinator for facilitating this.

I should take the opportunity of reporting the appointment of Mandy Thwaites to the new post of Arts and Libraries Manager. Mandy comes to Medway Council from the BBC subsidiary *Galleon* and is an old girl of the Invicta Grammar School in Maidstone. We wish Mandy the best in her new role, which includes responsibility for the archives and local studies.

It is in the nature of archives that what happens outside the public searchroom achieves little notice among our occasional or frequent visitors. This is entirely understandable but much that happens behind the scenes has a significant impact on the ultimate quality of the service. In this regard I am glad to report the successful recent installation of a new strongroom air conditioning plant. Without such a plant, which runs 24 hours a day and requires regular servicing and maintenance, our archives would not be adequately preserved in the long term. The old air conditioning system was nearly 17 years old. Archives air conditioning, specified by BS5454 and the National Archives' *Standard for Record Repositories*, ensures the keeping constant of temperature and relative humidity between certain upper and lower limits, thus ensuring hydraulic action and variations in atmospheric temperature do not degrade our important and unique paper and parchment media. Particle extraction is also an important consideration. I am grateful to Steve Gilberthorpe, Design and Surveying Manager, and *PalaceTec* for their attention to detail and support, especially given their many other pressing demands.

April Lambourne, Archives and Local Studies Officer, continues to make progress in the listing of the records of the Rochester and District Natural History Society. April is also rapidly nearing the completion of an addition to the *Learning from Archives* pages on the main Medway Council web site, using sources from the archives of the Earls of Darnley of Cobham Hall. This collection was recently listed thanks to a grant from the Heritage

Lottery Fund to our partners in the project, Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme. A particular condition of the HLF grant was that the educational potential of the collection should be developed online. The present *Learning From Archives* pages can be viewed at <http://www.medway.gov.uk/index/leisure/archives/6834.html> Please look out for the addition of the Cobham Hall content.

Deposits of interest include the title deeds to 5 Mansion Row, Brompton 1765-1955 (DE1058); title deeds to 12 Railway Street, Chatham 1809-1992 (DE1056) and our first deposit of Jehovah's Witnesses' records, duplicate marriage registers for Kingdom Hall, Chatham Hill, Chatham 1961-1993 (DE1063; N/JW/85)

We have received CD-ROMs of the records of St. Barbara's Garrison Church, Maxwell Road, Brompton 1847-1998. These will be uploaded to the *CityArk* imagebase shortly as an adjunct to *Medway Ancestors*. Also on the subject of *CityArk*, we have received CD-ROMs of cine film taken by a local family and we also hope to upload these to our pilot MovieBase very soon.

Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre
Couchman collection
DE402/2/04(L)

May 16. 1734.

Rochester Bridge,

THE WARDENS of *Rochester* Bridge do hereby give Notice, That there will be no Passage over that Bridge, from *Saturday* Night at ten o'Clock, the 8th of *June* next, until *Thursday* Morning following; there being a Necessity for laying a new Draw-Bridge on the same.

DE402/2/4/2

From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman Collection

The Inaugural Annual General Meeting

Amanda Thomas, Editor

On 6th April 2006, the Friends held the very first AGM at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. Councillor Sue Haydock had kindly reserved the Council Chamber for the meeting where the front page of the new *The Clock Tower* website (ajthomas.com/theclocktower) was projected on a large screen for all to see – quite a contrast to the view of Rochester Castle and Cathedral from the windows.

Many new FOMA members had travelled some distance to attend the meeting, though sadly our patron, Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Nazir-Ali, the Bishop of Rochester, was unable to attend and offered his apologies. The inaugural meeting started with an introduction from our President, Russell Race DL, followed by Vice-Presidents Cllr. Mrs. Sue Haydock, Patricia Salter, Brian Kingsley Smith and R. Bruce Aubry. A lengthy and interesting meeting ensued during which The Constitution and Rules were formally adopted. As a result of this we have subsequently obtained Excepted Charity status from the Inland Revenue; thanks are due to David Carder, John Witheridge and Bob Ratcliffe for their work in this regard.



*At the Inaugural Annual General Meeting, from left to right:
Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist, Amanda Thomas, The Clock Tower Editor,
Cllr Sue Haydock, Vice-President and Medway Council Representative to FOMA,
Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian, Cindy O'Halloran, Secretary of FOMA.*

On the conclusion of the formal part of the meeting, Mr. Brian Kingsley-Smith gave a fascinating talk on Kent and Medway aviation history, a synopsis of which follows. The evening ended with refreshments.

Following the Friends' Inaugural Annual Meeting, at the Annual Meeting of Medway Council on 10th May 2006, consideration was given to the representation of the Council on outside bodies. Our Vice-President, Cllr. Mrs. Sue Haydock, was confirmed as the Council's representative to the Friends of Medway Archives (FOMA) for the forthcoming municipal year. This appointment means that FOMA is now officially recognised by Medway Council as an outside body with official Council representation. We are grateful to Ellen Johns, the Council's Committee Co-ordinator for facilitating this and very much look forward to working with Cllr. Mrs Sue Haydock in the future.

Aviation in Kent

Brian Kingsley Smith, Vice-President

Brian Kingsley Smith is a Vice-President of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. A specialist planning solicitor, Brian was born in Medway where he has practised since 1960. Brian's pro bono work includes a directorship of Rochester Airport plc; he is a past president of the Kent Law Society and of the Rochester Castle Club. Brian's other membership interests include the Kent Committee of the Country Land and Business Association, a CLA national planning committee and the River Medway Business Users' Association. He is a private pilot, an amateur arboriculturalist, photographer and pianist.

The following is a transcription of the talk given by Brian Kingsley Smith at the Inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Friends on 6th April 2006.

Although Medway advertises its historic, architectural and literary associations, it is disappointing that its internationally important contribution to aviation is ignored. North Kent is the worldwide cradle of commercial aviation which in less than 100 years has become such a fundamental feature of modern life, and its profound effects can be seen over a whole range of activities from the economy to recreation.

It is ironic that although the historic achievements of the Wright brothers are renowned, the achievements of the Short Brothers go unrecognised. In 1910 the Wright Brothers were interviewed by Kate Carew (the Kate Adie of her day). Their vision of the future of aviation contrasted starkly with that of the Short Brothers. Amongst other surprising comments made by the Wright brothers during their interview, they rejected outright the possibility that aircraft would ever transport large numbers of people or freight. They also rejected the concept of military aviation except for reconnaissance.

On the other hand the Short brothers not only envisaged the true evolution of aviation, they were at the heart of it. The Wright brothers gave them the first ever order for the

construction of aircraft for sale and the Short Brothers went on to take a direct interest in the Royal Aero Club and what subsequently became the Fleet Air Arm.

North Kent saw the first operation of aircraft on and from ships, the first in-flight refuelling and the first heavy bomber of the Second World War, namely the Stirling. Unfortunately its specification was produced by a camel in the form of an Air Ministry Committee. It required, for example, that the wing span of the Stirling should be less than 100 feet – simply because that was the width of existing RAF hangars. The Committee's subsequent amendments and additions to the specifications sadly eroded the Stirling's performance and although more than 400 Stirling were produced at Rochester they never achieved the success of the Lancaster which was not subject to the same design problems. The first flight of the Stirling from Rochester Airport ended in the collapse of the undercarriage (see the photograph below) for which there are differing explanations. The most plausible is that the requirement to increase the height of the under-carriage in order to achieve short takeoffs resulted in an initially weak design. The Shorts' design team went on to develop unique expertise but when, at the end of the Second World War, the company was removed to Belfast, it lost the opportunity to expand into civil aviation. As a result one of its designers set up a local company and patented the air stair door which became an almost universal feature of airliners until adoption of the current system of an articulated airport access.



*Left:
The prototype
Stirling L7600
at Rochester on
14th May 1939
showing the
collapsed
undercarriage*

Oswald Short was proposed for membership of the Castle Club, Rochester by Mr Aveling of Aveling & Porter fame. Other members included the Company Secretary, Jimmy Wood, who became Club President in 1938; Lancaster Parker (the company's test pilot from 1915 to 1945); Eustace Short (who was found dead at the controls of a Shorts' sea plane immediately after having landed safely at Rochester) and Sir Arthur Gouge, Shorts' chief designer after serving an apprenticeship as a *chippy* in Chatham Dockyard.

The Empire flying boat was Short Brothers most extraordinary achievement in civil aviation. In one of its moments of inspiration, the Air Ministry were so impressed with Short Brothers design that they issued an immediate order for both a prototype and 20 production versions.

The sad decline of British aviation industry during the last 50 years contrasts with its achievements during the first 50 years of aviation, but nowhere more importantly than in Sheppey and on the banks of the River Medway.



Left:

The 'Founding Fathers' of aviation, photographed on 4th May 1909 outside the Mussel Manor Aero Clubhouse, Shellbeach, Isle of Sheppey. This marked the visit of Orville and Wilbur Wright to the flying ground and adjacent Short Brothers' factory. Standing (from left to right): TDE Andrews, owner of Mussel Manor, Oswald Short, Horace Short, Eustace Short,

Francis McClean (later Sir Francis McClean, AFC), Griffith Brewer (later President of the Royal Aeronautical Society), Frank Butler (founder of the Aero Club with Charles Rolls), WJS Lockyer (astronomer), Warwick Wright (early motor enthusiast). Seated (from left to right): JTC Moore-Brabazon (later Lord Brabazon of Tara) Wilbur Wright, Orville Wright, Charles Wright. [Thanks to Frank Cheesman]

Right:

The Canopus, one of the long range luxury Empire flying boats. This Canopus made a forced landing and was taxied to Mirabella where the offending engine was removed and the aircraft then flown back to the UK on three engines



Commemorating the Short Brothers

Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian.

Norma joined the Studies Centre staff in 1995. As a Local Studies Librarian she has responsibility for the printed collections at MALSC, which includes the purchase, care and promotion of printed resources about Medway and its environs, such as books, pamphlets, dissertations, journals, newspapers, maps, photographs and paper ephemera. Working with Archive colleagues, Local Studies staff promote the MALSC holdings with a programme of exhibitions and events, and encourage further interest by holding short courses and by working with schools. The Local Studies team also works closely with local and family historians in Medway, who offer valuable support to MALSC services, by volunteering and sharing their expertise. Offers of assistance in collecting and preserving all aspects of Medway's rich history are always welcome.

When I came to work at the Local Studies Centre in May 1995 I knew very little about the Medway Towns. I did know that there had been a Naval Dockyard at Chatham, which had closed a short while before. I knew that Rochester had a Cathedral and a Norman castle, and I knew that Rochester featured in the works and psyche of Charles Dickens. But I had no idea that Rochester had been central to the development of fixed wing flight. For those of you who remember Shorts this admission may be rather shocking. But what was there in 1995 to show that aircraft had ever been constructed by the Medway in Rochester? At that time Blaw Knox was still operating in what had been the Short aircraft factory buildings, but there was nothing to indicate the site's original use. It is a fact that every vestige of the presence of this industrial activity had been removed from the waterside, apart from the dilapidated slip. It seemed that that the Medway Towns were either unaware or apathetic about their industrial history.

As Local Studies Librarian it was, and is, my brief to collect and promote all aspects of the history of Medway, including local industries. In any locality the topography is fundamental to the industries which are carried out, and the type of industry affects how an area develops. This can be seen very clearly here in Medway. The type of work people have done has contributed to the development, and to the character of the place. These elements are all inter-dependent.

At MALSC we run a programme of exhibitions and talks throughout the year to highlight different aspects of local history. In 1996 it was decided to focus on Short Brothers and their connection with Rochester, Strood, the Esplanade and the Airport from 1914 to 1968. I was a new member of staff, and it was my responsibility to get this exhibition together and to organise a speaker.

As you will have gathered, this was no easy task for me, because I had such a low level of knowledge on the subject. My first goal was to learn something about the Short Brothers and their involvement in aviation technology. How did I do this? Well, I read books and papers which were in stock at the Studies Centre; I looked at photographs, maps, newspapers and building applications, and slowly began to acquaint myself with the

history of a family firm and the development of flying boats and other aircraft. I was greatly helped by local industrial historian Jim Preston, who lent me visual material mainly relating to the early years on Sheppey, and informed me with his two books *The Short Story* and *The History of Rochester Airport*.

In November 1996 our exhibition opened with a talk by Jim Preston, which over 85 people attended. I was amazed at the interest generated, and surprised by the number of those present who had been Shorts' employees. Discussions at the end of the evening led to the arrangement of a meeting at the Studies Centre for any interested in sharing their Shorts' memories. A date was fixed and I sent out invitations for a gathering at MALSC early in 1997. It was after that initial meeting the Short Brothers Commemoration Society was formed. A small committee ran the organisation, which, in its early days, focused on collecting memories by group reminiscence sessions and by individual recording. We also had occasional speakers, who shared their technical expertise or individual experiences with a growing number of ex-employees and a few other interested folk. I was keen to encourage both the preservation of documents and memories. Members of the Society decided to pool their personal collections, and so the SBCS archive was formed.

Many of the founder members began working at Shorts in the difficult interwar years, whilst one chap could claim a link back to 1911, when his parents had worked for the Short Brothers on the Isle of Sheppey. I was deeply impressed by the wealth of experience and the humility of these men and women. The clarity of their memories, the appalling working conditions and yet their pride in having worked for this family firm at such a seminal time shone through.

Ten years on, the organisation has much to show for its endeavours, including a valuable collection of papers and photographs, a yearly journal and more frequent newsletters. But the intervening years have seen the passing of many of the original members, and numbers have dwindled. Certainly most of the ex-employees are now too old to take on the responsibility of organising anything, although they are supportive and appreciative of events organised for them. In the last two years the Chairman, Darrell Penhale, was effectively running the Society single-handed, so it was with great sadness that we learned of his sudden, untimely death on 13th May.

Earlier in the year the committee had agreed to draw the Society to a close with a flourish in June 2009. Until then the Society would concentrate on the following:

- commemorative plaques on the graves of Horace and Eustace Short in Hampstead Cemetery
- a permanent memorial to Short Brothers on the Esplanade or waterfront in Rochester
- a fitting centenary tribute to Shorts and all pioneers of aviation history who met with the Wright Brothers at Mussel Manor in May 1909. [Please see the photograph included in Brian Kingsley Smith's article].

Members need help to achieve these aims, and the loss of Darrell was a blow of monumental proportions. But we owe it to him to try and carry on; we do not want to fade out without having achieved these goals.

At a meeting on 5th June I offered to lead further reminiscence meetings at MALSC. The next one will be on Wednesday 13th September, and details can be seen in *News and Events* above. Material for another journal is being collated, and negotiations with Medway Council over the memorial continue.

But more help is urgently needed. Why not come along to the reminiscence session? Why not offer to interview someone? Why not help us by transcribing a tape, or transporting an elderly person to a meeting? And *please* add your voice to the demand for a permanent memorial to Shorts here in Rochester. It is high time this was done, for time is not on our side.

If you would like to assist in this valuable work, please contact Norma Crowe at archives@medway.gov.uk or on 01634 332714.



The River Medway at Rochester, February 1928. Anchored were (left) the Mussel I G-EBMJ and (right) a Sturgeon N200, which was undergoing weathering tests while the Calcutta G-EBVG was under tow.

This image comes from Shorts Aircraft by Mike Hook and shows the Strood side of the river (though not Shorts itself), looking down towards Cuxton and where the Medway M2 bridge now stands.

All the aircraft photographs included in this issue of The Clock Tower were kindly supplied by Brian Kingsley Smith.

The Pocock Press – or Adventures in Local History Publishing

Bruce Aubry, Vice-President

Bruce Aubry, Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Vice-President, was born in Oakland, California, into an immigrant French Canadian family. He studied at the University of California, Berkeley, and Ruskin College Oxford before teaching in secondary schools and technical colleges in the UK, including almost twenty years at the Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education. His interest in the history of the Labour Party led to the publication of various works, including the first volume of a history of the Medway Labour movement, Red Flows the Medway, in 2005. Since his retirement, he has concentrated on Medway local social history and on the Pocock Press. In addition, after twenty-five years of regular visits to India, Bruce has spent the past six winters in Assam, where he and local residents are developing a library and educational centre.

In the last century, publishing was considered a profession for gentlemen and was, at times, almost a licence to print money. Today it rather seems to be a profession for optimists! Luckily the two of us who are the Pocock Press can afford to hold a portion of our combined wealth in a diminishing stock of unsold books, and at least books keep their market value.

My own adventures began when I discovered a copy of John Gale Jones' *A Political Tour through Rochester, Chatham, Maidstone, Gravesend et al.* I was able to convince Godfrey George of Baggins Book Bazaar in Rochester High Street to publish the little book, and so 'Baggins Book Bazaar In Association With Bruce Aubry' was born. Whilst in India, an engine driver on the Bombay Suburban Railway recommended a commercial printer there, and so Godfrey and I agreed terms. The first books arrived by sea, but they were far too many and are now being sold as 'remainders', however this was only the beginning. Publishing is an addictive drug! Baggins and I went on to launch two more original books - the *Gillingham Chronicles* by Ronald A Baldwin and *The Chatham Scandal* by Brian Joyce - which both sailed away successfully. It was just after these two titles arrived that our English printer went into receivership. We soon discovered that other printers would be too expensive for short runs, and we would not be able to sell our non-academic, popular books at a reasonable price to the reader. Serious Medway history publication therefore remained in suspended animation for the next five years.

Brian Joyce and I were forced to take unilateral action and The Pocock Press was born, named after the finest family in the Towns: the Pococks of Upnor, the Arctic and Africa. Brian and I wanted to share our enthusiasm and our knowledge of the Victorian history of the Medway Towns, and our desire to re-tell the stories we had discovered (or re-discovered) of ordinary Medway people. As regards printing, we followed the route taken by most of the major publishing houses - we went back to Asia! I had bought two well-produced Indian books and convinced Brian that we should find their printer. When we

were next in Kolkata (Calcutta), we were able to trace him to the printing district. The poor printer was terrified by our enthusiastic request, which should have been a clear warning, and we went on to pay far too much for the printing of *Dumb Show with Noise. Theatre, Music Hall and Cinema in the Medway Towns*. Our man had never printed a whole book before and had only *lent* his name to a foreign printer. But we were quick learners. *Dumb Show with Noise* arrived by sea, and the Pocock Press had entered the less than genteel world of publishing. During the book's long period of gestation, there had been a sizeable Medway movement to preserve the old music hall, the Theatre Royal. We had hoped that because of this the book would have started us off with a bang, and although it had a surprisingly slow start, our instinct was eventually proved correct as it turned into a steady seller.

After Brian's book, it was my turn with *Red Flows The Medway. A Labour History of the Medway Towns, 1786 – 1918*. In the autumn of 2004, I took a zip-disk of it with me to Assam, but the local printer we had discovered there could not find a zip-drive. Nevertheless, they were able to retrieve the text and Medway M.P. Bob Marshall-Andrew's most generous Foreword, but my own Introduction, the illustrations and the cover were lost. I learned a great deal whilst salvaging my little book and brought back a bag-full from May 2005 - just in time to present Bob with a copy on the occasion of his re-election.

The Pocock Press's third book, *In the Thick of It. Medway Men and Women in the Boer War* by Bruce Aubry and Brian Joyce goes to press as I write. It will reach the Medway Towns (by air this time) during the summer. Godfrey George had prepared this book for the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the Boer War, but sadly the printer failed us.

It may be partly our fault that we have not yet found a larger readership, but we continue to believe that there is a potentially large body of intelligent readers for our type of book; indeed, The Pocock Press has plans to publish two new books in 2007. Two things would help us make contact with our target readership. The first is the help of the local press (only *The Peninsular Times* reviewed either of our first books), and although local radio interviewed Brian when he published his book on Medway prostitution, they showed no interest in *Dumb Show with Noise*, which would have provided considerable interview material. Our second problem is the lack of commercial outlets, which is the same for all small publishers in England. The national chains of bookshops and the internet sellers have driven hundreds of bookshops into bankruptcy and now the major bookshops are in the process of destroying small and local publishers – with the exception of Ottaker's in Chatham High Street who do try to encourage local authors and publishers.

In conclusion to the tales of my publishing adventures, I must thank our old friends under the Clock Tower, for without the friendly and informed assistance of the staff of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, our books would never have been written, much less published!

The Victoria County History at MALSC

Dr Andrew Hann, Committee 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 a Member of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Now, over six months into the project, Dr Hann gives a progress report.

Survey work forms an important part of the *England's Past for Everyone (EPE)* project both nationally and in Kent. Architectural studies have always featured heavily in the traditional red *Victoria County History (VCH)* volumes, and this emphasis on the built environment is something that the Editorial Board is keen to continue in the new accessible *EPE* paperback series. Not only do studies of old buildings help bring the past to life through architectural drawings and building photography, they also provide a direct link between archives and the real world. Surveyors use both archival materials such as maps, title deeds and architects drawings, and practical fieldwork when drafting their reports.

In Kent there are two distinct survey projects. The first of these is a study of three contrasting villages – Snodland, Aylesford and Eccles. Snodland was a large village even in the nineteenth century due to the employment offered by the local paper mill, and had acquired the status of a town by 1900. Its development was significantly influenced by the expansion of the paper mill, and by the Hook family that owned this business from the mid-nineteenth century. Both Eccles and Aylesford lay in the same parish, but had very different origins and social makeup. Eccles was erected by speculative builders from the 1850s to house the employees of the nearby brick and cement works established by Thomas Cubitt. The housing consists mainly of terraces of workers' cottages, arranged according to a grid pattern. Local resident Thomas Buss described the place as 'a backwood village in a little commonwealth, with no aristocrats to interfere with them'. Aylesford, in contrast, can trace its origins back to the Dark Ages, as an important crossing point over the Medway. From medieval times it had the first bridge south of Rochester, and was home to an important Carmelite priory, later the Friary, seat of the Earl of Aylesford. The streets here are narrow and irregular, built on the side of a steep slope leading down to the river. Buildings come in a variety of styles – many are timber-framed, some of them refaced with brick. There are, however, also rows of nineteenth-century cottages as in Snodland and Eccles, reflecting the expansion of the village in response to industrialisation.

In each village a team of *VCH* volunteers, led by an architectural consultant, will record details of all properties built before 1900 using a standard survey form. Recording will focus on the exterior of the properties, noting the type of structure, the building materials used, stylistic features and any evidence of modification or change of function. For instance, in some cases a former shop may have been converted into a house. Photographs

will also be taken of selected buildings to provide a visual record. Some of these may later be mounted on the website with the permission of the householders. In some cases where a house has been refronted it may be necessary to conduct an internal survey to determine its true origin and form of construction – this is particularly likely in Aylesford where many medieval timber-framed buildings are concealed behind later Georgian or Victorian façades. Survey work of this nature is a labour-intensive process, but should reveal lots of interesting information about the form and development of these settlements. We will, for instance, gain a clearer picture of the chronology of building, and possibly be able to identify houses erected by the same firm of builders based on stylistic features. One of the main outputs of the survey work will be a series of plans of the three villages, colour-coded to identify different phases of development. These plans will be mounted on the website, using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software, so that they are fully interactive. It should be possible to click on individual properties on the plan and link to photographs or information about who lived there in the past taken from the census or trade directories. We hope that these village plans will prove a valuable resource for local people and for historians studying these places in the future.



Left: Dr Andrew Hann at the site of the Burham brick, lime and cement works.

Complementing the three village studies will be a detailed survey of a cement works. The manufacture of lime and cement was the dominant industry in the valley from the mid-nineteenth century, and has left an indelible mark on the landscape of the area to this day. In the heyday of the industry there were around twenty works strung out along the banks of the Medway between Aylesford and Frindsbury. Today only one remains, the Rugby plant at Halling, but reminders of the industry are everywhere: in the chalk pits, tramway tracks and vestiges of the works themselves. We shall be concentrating our efforts on the site of the Burham Brick, Lime and Cement works on the border of Burham and Aylesford, as this has some of the most extensive surviving remains and is closely associated with two of the survey villages. The main aim of the survey is to reconstruct a detailed three-dimensional plan of the works at various points in their history. This will help illustrate what the site looked like in the past, as there are few surviving photographs, and will also help us to understand how the plant operated. Most of this work will be

conducted by an architectural consultant, although there will be opportunities for volunteers to participate in the fieldwork too. Again the plans will be mounted on the website as an interactive three-dimensional model of the works, with different layers representing different periods in the plant's development. There will, for instance, be links to both archival photographs, and more modern images showing the site as it appears today. This again will provide a useful source of information on an aspect of life in the valley which is fast disappearing from living memory, and a feature of the historic landscape soon to disappear under the bricks and mortar of redevelopment.



Left: Remains of the Burham Brick, Lime and Cement works.

Help is needed to identify exactly what all the remains are.

New Approaches to Community History: Anglo-French Experiences - A symposium by the University of Greenwich (Kings Hill campus), May 2006

Dr Andrew Hann, Committee Member

The Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past For Everyone (EPE) programme reports on the recent symposium he attended on community history, including the role of archives and local history societies.

Seeking to build on the widespread interest generated by the Kent *EPE* project, the University of Greenwich organised this day-symposium, with the support of European LINKS funding, to discuss the future of local and community history in south-east England and northern France. The idea was to provide an open forum for discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of collaboration between academics, archivists and local historians, drawing on the experiences of the *EPE* project and the work of other researchers from both sides of the channel. The event was held at the University of Greenwich's Kings Hill conference centre near West Malling, a convenient location for the French participants arriving that morning by Eurostar. Special efforts were made by myself, and the other

organizers, Emma Mahoney and Nicolas Jestin, to reach out to local history groups, museums and archives. As a result around fifty people registered as delegates, including a number of *EPE* volunteers.

Papers were organised into three sessions, each with an English and French speaker. In the first session Prof. Sarah Palmer and Christian Borde gave contrasting accounts of their experiences of working with volunteers and the wider community – Sarah highlighted the role of community history in informing wider historical debates, whilst Christian focused on some of the problems associated with collaboration. The second session provided an opportunity for two local historians to outline their activities. Andrew Ashbee spoke about his role as Chairman of the Snodland Historical Society and curator of the Snodland Millennium Museum. Christian Pfiester gave a brief history of the Dunkerque Historical Society and their widely respected journal. Both agreed that it was important for local groups to forge wider ties, both with other historical societies, and with universities, archives and museums. Dr Ashbee spoke of his own involvement in the *EPE* project, and the fresh insights this had brought to his own research in Snodland. After an excellent lunch, the afternoon began with a session focused on the role of archives in local history. Stuart Bligh of the Centre for Kentish Studies talked about a number of projects they had been involved in recently, including work with the Sikh community in Gravesend for Black History month. Jean Eric Iung described the rather different structure of archives in France. Here the extent of outside collaboration depended to a large extent upon the nature of the town in which the archives were based. In larger cities archives often had close ties with local history groups and universities, running joint seminars, often on university campuses. Elsewhere collaboration was more limited.

The day ended with a lively workshop session on *The Future of History for Everyone*. This provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on the day and bring their own experiences and interests to bear on the discussion. Several speakers noted that it was divisive to speak of amateur and professional historians, far better to distinguish simply between good and bad history. The need for academics to reach out to local history groups more effectively was also a frequent comment. More academics should give papers to local history societies. Local historians should be given better access to the historical resources in university libraries. Indeed, all were agreed that the symposium should become a yearly event, providing a platform for an ongoing dialogue between academics, archivists and local historians. The insularity of many local history groups was also seen as a potential problem. In Kent, the Kent History Federation nominally acts as an umbrella body, but could fulfil this role more effectively. There is, for instance, no online directory of societies, or list of academics willing to present papers. Furthermore, it was agreed that all parties should aim for more cross-Channel collaboration, particularly when researching topics such as smuggling, trade and shipping where experiences in the UK and France were closely intertwined. Barriers to collaboration were seen largely as a result of suspicion or a lack of respect between amateurs and professionals, something which gatherings such as this will hopefully help to dispel.

Special thanks are owed to my fellow organisers Emma Mahoney and Nicolas Jestin who ensured the symposium ran smoothly, and the staff at Kings Hill for hosting the event.

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, the North West Kent Family History Society, and The Council for British Archaeology; she has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association.



I was thrilled at the Inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Friends to discover that the first 'official' trip would be to Eastgate House in Rochester. In the last issue of *The Clock Tower* I wrote of childhood trips with my father, and Eastgate House was one of our favourite places to visit. It was Rochester Museum then, and although I found all the exhibits fascinating, most intriguing was the attic full of stuffed animals and birds. I also remember the wooden panelling and the wonderful staircases: I recall a narrow one to go up and a wide one to come down, at the base of which by the entrance to the garden, the curator once allowed me to strike one of the bells that used to stand there. Then there was the goldfish pond and Dickens' chalet in the garden – each time I visited there was always something familiar to re-acquaint myself with.



Left: Interior view of Eastgate House (room 16, late 17th century). The Dutch tiles were a later addition by George Payne FSA. Some of the panelling in this room came from the Red Lion in Frindsbury.

Right: An attic room at Eastgate House – is this where the stuffed birds were on display?



My excitement at the prospect of Bob Ratcliffe's trip was short-lived, however, when I realised that it coincided with the YAC – Young Archaeologists' Club - annual day out. I did try to persuade my son (and YAC member) that Eastgate House would be more interesting, but even I had to concede that the Young Archaeologists' annual trip is always one of the highlights of our year. There is something incredibly stimulating and - these days - reassuring about spending time with a group of young people who have a passion for anything to do with history. So I always volunteer to help. The Group Leader of the St Albans Young Archaeologists, historian Brian Adams, also has a fabulous knack for organising days out with a difference. Last year we visited the re-constructed Bronze Age village of Butser, stopping off first at a Napoleonic semaphore tower. Here we practised semaphore signalling in the pouring rain to mark the then forthcoming commemoration of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar. This year thirty young archaeologists, including several local historians, three dads and me, set off for Orford on the Suffolk coast.

A National Trust site, Orford Ness is the largest vegetated shingle spit in Europe and only accessible by boat. Today it is a well known nature reserve and an important breeding habitat for birds. However, from 1913 until about twenty years ago, the shingle spit which stretches for around ten miles, was a secret military test site. This certainly captured my son's interest and that of all the other teenage boys on the trip, particularly when they were warned not to stray too far from the path as there were a number of unexploded bombs on the site.

As we carefully kept to the red markers spray-painted onto the windswept shingle, I was reminded of the Cliffe marshes and wondered if it was this similarity which had attracted so many migrants, including members of my own family, to that part of Kent from East Anglia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

After a picnic lunch in the rain, we headed back towards the ferry and Orford village beyond to visit Henry II's castle. Our cagoule hoods up, Brian and I strolled together and began to share our thoughts. We commented on the tall teasles growing alongside the path and Brian corrected someone who called them 'thistles'. He went on to explain how teasles used to be gathered for the combing out of wool for spinning, and possibly even for use as hair brushes. At that moment I realised another family history mystery may have been solved.



Last year whilst researching some of the Cliffe ancestors from my mother's side of the family, I began corresponding with a distant cousin. We knew very little about my great great grandmother, Sarah Laws (1834-1917), but my cousin's family seemed to know a lot and even had a photograph of her (see left). We were told how Sarah ate rhubarb sandwiches for breakfast to save money and how she would 'gather thistles on the moors'. The cousin's family had emigrated to Canada so she had no idea

that Cliffe was surrounded by marshes and not moors. And now I wondered if my great great grandmother in Cliffe had in fact managed to help feed her eight children not by gathering thistles but *teasles*. It made so much more sense.

So, in the end, I was rather glad that I hadn't been able to go to Eastgate House (though I am still hoping Bob will organise another trip), and I would definitely recommend a visit to Orford.

The Young Archaeologist Clubs are part of the Council for British Archaeology (www.britarch.ac.uk or St Mary's House, 66 Bootham, York YO30 7BZ, UK, telephone 01904 671417, fax 01904 671384; CBA email address: info@britarch.ac.uk)

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