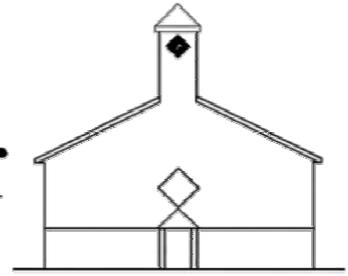


The Clock Tower



Issue Number 35: August 2014
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

The Day the Lamps Went Out



Troops queue at Rochester Station on 6 August 1914 following the declaration of war on Germany two days' earlier. Inside we start to look back at the events of a hundred years ago as the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and the Friends embark on a programme of events remembering World War One in the Medway Towns. Photograph from the private collection of Bob Ratcliffe.

Also inside, playwright and novelist Bettine Walters gives an exclusive insight into the background behind her latest novel, *The Gossamer Thread*.

The De Caville Index



From left to right: Jean Skilling, Brian Joyce, Odette Buchanan, Betty Cole, Alex Thomas, Bob Ratcliffe, Tessa Towner, Elaine Gardner. Photograph, Amanda Thomas.

After many years of preparation, the De Caville Index was finally ready to launch on 4 August 2014 to coincide with the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Prior to the launch FOMA Webmaster, Alex Thomas, attended a FOMA Committee Meeting to give the first demonstration. In her *Chairman's Letter* (see page 3) Tessa Towner explains what an extraordinary research resource the De Caville Index is set to become for historians and how FOMA went about completing Mick de Caville's work.

DO YOU HAVE A WORLD WAR ONE ANCESTOR?



Major NEW Historical Index Launched of Medway Men in World War One

The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA) announces the launch of

The De Caville Index

at

www.foma-lsc.org

OVER 4,000 NAMES OF MEDWAY MEN KILLED IN WORLD WAR ONE

 NAME	 DATE OF BIRTH	 DATE OF DEATH	 BURIAL PLACE	
 RECORD NUMBER		 ADDRESS	 RANK	
 PHOTOGRAPHS		 CROSS-REFERENCED BY FAMILY		
 FACILITY FOR RELATIVES AND RESEARCHERS TO ADD INFORMATION				

Right: the poster advertising the launch which was sent to museums and heritage centres; a press release was also issued to national and specialist publications.

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



World War One and the De Caville Index

As I am sure you are all aware there are many events being held to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of World War One and FOMA is no exception. We began on 10 June with a wonderful talk by celebrated author Richard van Emden. We were thrilled when Richard agreed to come and talk about his book, *The Quick and the Dead*, and we were certainly not disappointed with his account of what life was like for those at home with dead or missing relatives. You can read more about the evening on page 32. Our next talk on 9 September is also one not to be missed: *Chatham's Naval Losses in 1914* by Alex Patterson; see the News and Events pages for further details. This issue is full of articles about the effect of World War One on the Medway Towns, but did you know how it all started? Turn to page 18 where Alex Thomas explains the background.

For the past four years I have been working on the research of the late Michael de Caville (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 20, November 2010, and Issue 24, November 2011). Mick began compiling the index some twenty-five years ago and before his premature death in 2010, I promised him we would finish his work and publish it. Since then many of us in FOMA have been adding to Mick's work, visiting schools and churches, banks and clubs, and documenting names from all the memorials we could find in the Medway Towns. The Index now contains over 4,000 entries and in the past few months, work started to get it ready for publication. Once I had finished compiling all the information it was transferred on to a massive spreadsheet by Jean Skilling and then sent to FOMA Webmaster, Alex Thomas, for the dedicated section of our new website that he was in the process of setting up. At the last committee meeting Alex came to show us what he had put together (see the photograph on page 2) and we were amazed at the final result. After the meeting MALSC's Norma Crowe and Alison Thomas logged on to the website to have a look for themselves and they were just as enthralled; it was then that we began to realise what a valuable resource we had all helped to create. The Index will be launched on the FOMA website on 4 August and can be found at www.foma-lsc.org

You can search the Index in so many ways: by surname, street address, village, to name just a few, and this specially dedicated part of the website will also include photographs (compiled by Elaine Gardner) and the facility for researchers to contribute additional information. The names are not just those of the men who were born or lived here, but who were stationed in the Medway Towns, in the barracks of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and the Royal Engineers; the Index even includes men who were working at Chatham Dockyard. If you would like to find out more about the Index, I will be giving a talk at The Guildhall Museum, Rochester, on 17 September at 2.30 pm.

The FOMA Committee would like to thank Alex Thomas (our Editor Amanda's son) for his work on revamping the FOMA website and the amazing job he has done on the De Caville index. He has done a fantastic job and Michael De Caville would have been so proud to see his life's work recognised in this way.

I should also mention what else has been happening for the WWI commemorations. FOMA was asked by MALSC to put on an exhibition about the war, however, in the end we elected to produce an exhibition each year until 2018, to do justice to the Medway men who died. The 1914 Exhibition entitled *Lest We Forget* will start on 1 September when MALSC reopens after the building repairs are finished, and will end on 18 November 2014.

You will recall my many requests for information about the Live Bait Squadron. 1,459 men (176 of whom were from the Medway area) drowned on the morning of 22 September 1914 when their ships, the *HMS Cressy*, *Hogue* and *Aboukir*, were torpedoed and sank off the Dutch coast. For some years Dutchman, Henk van der Linden, has been on a quest to find out more about the men and we have been helping him to trace the descendents and discover the impact of their tragic deaths on their families. The work is now complete and on the one hundredth anniversary of the sinkings there will be a special series of events at Chatham Dockyard

followed by a day of commemoration in The Hague. Many relatives will be attending, and Elaine Gardner, Amanda Thomas and I will also be there; Amanda and I will then be travelling on to Holland. You will be able to read about these special few days in the next issue of *The Clock Tower* which comes out in November.

Finally, I am delighted to report that FOMA has purchased a set of display boards for MALSC which can be used for future roving exhibitions. The boards were bought following a meeting at MALSC (see Odette Buchanan's report on page 5) and will match the existing set. The boards are an eight panel folding unit, blue in colour, and come in a handy carrying bag. We hope they will be useful and will last many years.

FOMA Treasurer

You will be aware that Jean Skilling will not be continuing as FOMA treasurer and it is very important for the future of FOMA that we find someone who can replace her. This genuinely is not a time consuming job and only basic book keeping skills are needed. Paperwork is minimal and the Treasurer is only expected to attend six meetings a year plus the AGM.

For more information contact Jean Skilling 01634 867519 or e-mail jean.skilling@blueyonder.co.uk

Apology

Our sincere apologies to contributor Brian Joyce whose article, *The Telephone Arrives in Victorian Medway*, was incorrectly printed in the last issue (*The Clock Tower*, Issue 34, May 2014). Pages 23 and 24 in printed copies were transposed, however, online copies have been altered so that the article now reads correctly.

FOMA MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that all FOMA subscriptions are due on 1st January. The final opportunity to renew will be at the AGM and NO LATER.

If you do not renew by the AGM, website passwords and email addresses will be deleted from the database. Please ensure that you renew on time!

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER. Telephone: 01634 316509; email: bettycole@blueyonder.co.uk

**You can also renew on the FOMA website at
<http://www.foma-lsc.org/foma/new/membership.html>**

News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary



Well, the 1st World War commemorative events continue. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the remedial work on the Archives finishes on time. Medway Council's Duncan Mead attended our last committee meeting and we were reassured that all will go well. Hopefully work will not impede the opening of the FOMA exhibition, *Lest We Forget, Part One, 1914*, on 1st September. Apart from that, there is also the September talk to look forward to by Alex Patterson - *Chatham's Naval Losses in 1914*. Those of you who missed the first World War One talk in June, *The Quick and the Dead*, by Richard van Emden missed an interesting and heart-rendingly emotional experience. Thanks very much to our membership Secretary, Betty Cole, for sourcing Mr. van Emden and for starting the ball rolling for what we hope will be the first of many celebrity speakers in the future.

A few weeks' ago, I mentioned at a committee meeting that I was worried we were not doing enough to help MALSC. So Tessa Towner, Elaine Gardner and I set up a meeting with Alison Cable and Norma Crowe and they came up with several ways in which we can help them:

1. On Saturday, 13 September, MALSC and the Guildhall Museum will be manning a joint stall at the Will Adams Festival in Gillingham Park. We need just four volunteers to help man the stall. Would you be willing to give a couple of hours?
2. MALSC has several illustrations mounted on board from old exhibitions which need scanning for their records. MALSC needs just one person to help for an hour or two on Monday and/or Friday afternoons.
3. They also needed some new exhibition boards, and I am delighted to say that these have already been purchased, and as explained by Tessa Towner in her Chairman's Letter on page 3.

In either case, please let me know (odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk or 01634 718231) and I will pass your details on to the appropriate people.

Finally, whilst we are immersed in all things World War One, other projects still continue. Do you have any memories of World War Two Strood? If so, I would like to hear them.

Thanks and I look forward to hearing from you all!

WANTED!

**4 volunteers needed to help with the Will Adams Festival in September.
1 volunteer needed to scan MALSC illustrations!**

**Further details above.
Contact Odette Buchanan at
odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk / 01634 718231**

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Events

9th September, 7.30 pm.

Chatham's Naval Losses in 1914

Alex Patterson

Saturday 11th October, 7.30 pm start

Quiz Night

£5 for members and non-members. **BOOKING REQUIRED** (see below).

11th November, 7.30 pm

Film Screening

An opportunity to watch a film from the First World War era - title to be confirmed.

Booking for FOMA talks is no longer necessary! Until further notice all events are at Frindsbury Parish Hall. Talks are £3 for members, £5 non-members. Booking for Quiz Nights and enquiries through the FOMA Secretary: Odette Buchanan , 72 Jersey Rd, Strood, ME2 3PE; odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk; 01634 718231.

MALSC Events

Exhibitions

1st September - 18th November.

World War One Exhibition.

Lest We Forget, Part One, 1914.

Organised by The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

20th November 2014 - 13th January 2015.

'A little of what you fancy...'

A century of entertainment in Medway.

Talks and Events

17th September, 2.30 pm.

Remembering the Men of the Medway Towns in WW1.

The Michael de Caville Index.

A talk by Tessa Towner.

PLEASE NOTE: This talk will take place at The Guildhall Museum, High Street, Rochester, ME1 1PY.

17th December, 2.30 pm.

'Your Own, Your Very Own...'

Theatres and music halls in Victorian Medway.

A talk by Brian Joyce.

PLEASE NOTE: This talk will take place at The Guildhall Museum, High Street, Rochester, ME1 1PY.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, (MALSC) Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU, and all talks and events are now free of charge. Further information is available from MALSC; please telephone 01634 332714 to book. **TICKETS MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE.** Please note: You may be aware that Medway Council has been relocated to Gun Wharf. This move does not include MALSC and until further notice, we are still to be found in the Clock Tower building, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU.

MALSC OPENING HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm; Saturday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm. Wednesday and Sunday closed. For Satnav please use ME2 2AD.

PLEASE NOTE THAT AS MALSC IS CLOSED FOR REMEDIAL BUILDING WORKS DURING AUGUST, THE ANNUAL STOCK TAKING CLOSURE IN NOVEMBER WILL NOT TAKE PLACE.

Eastgate House

Eastgate House is one of Rochester's landmarks. Built in the 1590s by Sir Peter Buck, the most senior member of staff at Chatham Dockyard, its structure has been adapted considerably over the years, but research has indicated that the original building may be Medieval or earlier. A Heritage Lottery Grant awarded in January 2011 has enabled Medway Council to begin planning conservation work on the house and to start opening its doors once more to visitors. Eastgate House is now closed and work was due to start in June 2014. Further information can be obtained at: www.friendsof-eastgatehouse.org on Facebook on www.facebook.com/eastgatehouse and on Twitter <https://twitter.com/EastgateHouse>. To join the Friends of Eastgate House, please contact Terri Zbyszewska, The Membership Secretary, FoEH, 31 The Esplanade, Rochester, ME1 1QW or at tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk; a copy of the membership form is also available on the website.

The City of Rochester Society

"The City of Rochester Society was founded in 1967 to help conserve the historic City as a pleasant place to visit. The Society is still active today, helping to improve the environment and quality of life in Rochester for residents and visitors alike." Taken from the City of Rochester Society website, www.city-of-rochester.org.uk, where further information on the society and how to join is available.

Talks

All talks are at The Moat House, 8 Crow Lane, Rochester, ME1 1RF.

Thurs 11th September, 2pm for 2.30
Pictures in the Guildhall Collection
Jeremy Clarke.

Tues 7th October 2pm for 2.30
The Royal Engineers
James Scott, Deputy Curator of Royal Engineers Museum.

Monday 10th November.
A Life in Print
Christine Rayner, journalist writer and editor.

There is a small charge for events to defray expenses; please contact the CoRS Secretary, Christine Furminger on 01634 320598 or at cafurminger@blueyonder.co.uk for further information and how to join.

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

Friends of Broomhill

Broomhill Park has been awarded a third Green Flag; the Award recognises the best green spaces in the country. Help us get a Green Flag for the fourth year running and improve our quite high score in the RHS South East in Bloom competition.



Saturday, 13th September: Forage Day. 2.00pm - 5.00 pm. Meet at King Arthur's Drive Car Park entrance for workshop + info on where to search for all the plants that can be used for food, medicine, etc.

Thursday, 25th September 7.30pm for 8.00 pm, Strood Library:
Friends of Broomhill Annual Talk - *Strood's Industrial Heritage* by Odette Buchanan.

Healthy Walks

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

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive
Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME4 4UG; www.re-museum.co.uk



The Royal Engineers Museum is Kent's largest military museum, with a designated collection of historical and international importance. The many galleries tell the story of Britain's military engineers from the Roman period to the modern Corps of Royal Engineers. The millions of items in its collection tell a sweeping epic of courage, creativity and innovation and the stories of individuals of great renown (General Gordon, Lord Kitchener, John Chard VC) and the average Sapper who has helped the British Army move, fight and survive for over 200 years.

The Royal Engineers Museum now has an e-newsletter. To subscribe for free, email 'Yes Please!' to deputycurator@re-museum.co.uk

Events (Please see the website (www.re-museum.co.uk) for more details.).

First World War Battlefield Tour Groups: January 2014 - November 2018
For more information or to book please call: 01634 822312.

Time Bleeds; First World War Family Activities: 1st May - 12th September, 10.30am – 3.30pm.



Outbreak 1914: Royal Engineers Go To War: 3rd July 2014 - 22nd December 2014.

Heritage Open Day 2014, 14th September

FREE talk on the Royal Engineers involvement in the First World War as part of the National Heritage Open Day weekend. Talk Times: 12.00-13.00 and 14.30-15.30

Booking is essential as places are limited, please book early to avoid disappointment. To reserve a place call: 01634 822312

Berlin Wall Art Family Activities: 28th - 31st October 2014; 10.30am – 3.30pm

During October half term we will be focusing on the street art which covered the largest canvas in the world, the Berlin Wall. Discover why the wall was popular with artists from all over the world and what styles and techniques they were using to create street art. Even the youngest of visitors will have plenty of inspiration to contribute to the Museum's expressive mural.

The Unseen Project: 30th October 2014 - 27th March 2015

The Unseen Project is an experimental photo-series which uses some of the last infrared colour film ever produced. The work explores the boundaries of our perception, allowing us to see things outside our normal visual spectrum.

War Time Christmas Weekend: 13th - 14th December 2014; 10.30am – 5.00pm.

Join us this Christmas at the Royal Engineers Museum to find out how Christmas time was celebrated during the Second World War.

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

found at: www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/

Preparing for invasion at Allhallows and Grain

Paul Tritton



Reconstruction drawing by Chris Forsey of a gun battery at Slough Fort.

An opportunity to enjoy guided tours of invasion defences on Kent's Hoo Peninsula and the Isle of Grain - an area rich in military history - has been arranged by the Kent Archaeological Society, the Friends of Grain Coastal Park and Bourne Leisure. As seen recently on BBC Four's *The Flying Archaeologist*, (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 30, May 2013) the area bristles with mysterious remains of forts and other installations erected over a period of 150 years. The event, on Saturday October 25 2014, will begin at 10.45 am at Slough Fort, Allhallows-on-Sea, built in 1867 to stop French (and later German) invaders from storming ashore and racing across the Peninsula to capture Chatham Dockyard.

Victor Smith, chairman of the KAS's Historic Defences Committee, will describe work-in-progress on the restoration of the fort's massive gun emplacements and explain how the guns could be aimed at warships approaching up the Thames. Victor will also describe the workings of the earlier 'pop up' guns which rose up to

fire and recoiled back down for concealment. One of the emplacements for these can still be seen. Abandoned for many years, and recently used as a caravan park, the fort is being cleared of debris and undergrowth by community archaeologists and contractors for its owners, Bourne Leisure.

In the afternoon there will be a walk through Grain Coastal Park, with verdant trails and fine river views. Michael Dale will describe the rich history and many curiosities of this former military landscape, and the guns that could 'cross-fire' with those at Sheerness to defend the River Medway.

Details of the event can be found at <http://kenthistoricdefences.wordpress.com/diary>

To book a place, telephone Craig Austin at Bourne Leisure on 01634 270385 or email craig.austin@bourne-leisure.co.uk. Tickets cost £5, payable on arrival.

The KAS Historic Defences Committee is a new group that will work with like-minded individuals and organizations to search for relics and records of Kent's fortifications dating from the Bronze Age to the Cold War. Contact Victor Smith at victor.defcon1@gmail.com for more details, including opportunities for volunteers.



Right: One of the gun emplacements that visitors to Slough Fort will visit.

Below: Victor Smith, chairman of the KAS's Historic Defences Committee, pictured at New Tavern Fort, Gravesend.



The Chatham Historical Society

Meetings are held at The Lampard Centre, Sally Port, Brompton, ME7 5BU, **excepting January and August**. The Lampard Centre has easy disabled/wheelchair access and a small car park. There is plenty of unrestricted roadside parking space in Maxwell Road, about 50 metres away. Sally Port has some unrestricted roadside parking space, but please avoid the sections with the double yellow lines or the *No Parking* notices.

11th September

Walter de Brisac, A Street Pedlar

A talk by Catharina Clement.

9th October

Working in Medway 100 Years Ago

A talk by Jim Preston

13th November

Women and the Home Front in World War One

A talk by Ian Porter

Doors open at 7:15 pm, meetings finish at 9:00 pm. Refreshments are available and visitors are very welcome. Admission: £1 for members, £3 for visitors. Further information is available at www.chathamhistoricalsoc.btck.co.uk

Heritage Open Days

This year's Heritage Open Days will be taking place from 11th to 14th September. To find out more about what is going on and how you can take part, go to www.heritageopendays.org.uk/

The Death of Innocence: The War Poets Association

FOMA member Michael Baker writes:

Spaces are still available (at the time of going to press) on a tour to Flanders and Northern France to view the battlefields on which the war poets fought (1914-1915) and their war memorials, including the aims of the architecture. The trip lasts four days from Saturday 25 October 2014 with journey by coach and staying in good hotels. The cost is under £500 per person, sharing. There will be later tours in 2016 and 2018 with reference to the poets and the battles in which they fought. Contact Andy Thompson for full details at info@eyewitnesstours.com.

About The Clock Tower

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

Editorial deadlines

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

The copy deadline for Issue 36 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 27 October 2014, with publication on Wednesday 19 November 2014.

Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Ray Maisey, Rabbit Hutch Printers, 106 Charles Drive, Cuxton, Kent, ME2 1DU; telephone: 01634 294655; fax: 01634 723510; email: Ray@Rabbithutchprinters.com

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

The banner design (incorporating the logo) and the title *The Clock Tower* were designed by Alexander Thomas. *The Clock Tower* is also available at www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html

Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website <http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.uk

General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Odette Buchanan: 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE. Telephone: 01634 718231; email: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER. Telephone: 01634 316509; email: bettycole@blueyonder.co.uk

The Theatre Royal, Chatham – My Memories

Bettine Walters



Bettine Walters (née Stratton) was born in the Medway Towns and spent the early part of her life there. Though she followed many different occupations, including acting on the professional stage, she had always wanted to be a writer and when living in Thanet began to write plays for amateurs, many of which have since been published. The name under which she writes is Bettine Manktelow. She has also written two novels, No Time for Tears and The Gossamer Thread both of which are set in the Medway Towns. She has two sons, three grandsons and six step-grandchildren.

In this Clock Tower exclusive, Bettine writes about her experiences working at the Theatre Royal In Chatham - the background to The Gossamer Thread.

I had no idea when I saw a pantomime at the Theatre Royal Chatham as a child that I would ever set foot on that vast stage myself, but such was the case in 1948 when I was 16.

I longed to be an actress and after leaving school, and aware that I would have to find work, I decided to investigate the possibility of going on the stage. There was a repertory company at the Theatre Royal called The Richmond Players and after watching a performance at a matinee I plucked up my courage and, in the guise of an autograph hunter, made my way to the stage door. No sooner was I inside than I saw Laurence Naismith coming towards me down the stairs. He was wearing heavy greasepaint and a white dinner jacket. He gave me a brilliant smile and before I could proffer my autograph book he asked me what I wanted. I was struck dumb and stuttered to reply as he added intuitively: 'A job?' Oh yes, I breathed, a job. Could it be that easy? He then proceeded to tell me that his company was leaving at the end of the week but why didn't I come along next week and see the new visiting company, who were also known as The Richmond Players, but were under different management.

This is what I did and I was amazed to be offered a job! A somewhat fictionalised account of this first venture can be found in my novel *The Gossamer Thread* although I have transposed it into war-time to suit the rest of the story:

'The interior of the theatre seen in daylight was shabby. The stair carpet was worn and grimy, the pattern indistinguishable, likewise the flocked wallpaper was faded and the paint a nicotine brown. It made a great contrast to the local cinemas, which were plush and opulent conveying a glamorous image to the patrons the minute they entered the foyer. Not so this theatre. What grandeur there had been departed long ago. Millicent passed through the lounge bar, which smelled stale and damp, to where a door was marked 'Private'. It was slightly ajar and a bout of liquid coughing suggested it was occupied.'

I became a student actress and Assistant Stage Manager. There was no pay, of course, but think of the experience! Until then I had never heard of this entry into the glamorous world of the theatre but I learned that students were often taken on by repertory companies in those days. These students worked for little or nothing but after a year of consecutive work were entitled to apply for an Equity card and begin their acting career in earnest.

The Theatre Royal! What a place in which to start one's acting career, an old theatre with years of tradition. At one time this theatre seated 3,000 people though at the time I worked there this was reduced to 2,000 as the gallery was considered unsafe and was closed. The auditorium was still very large compared with theatres today and there were no microphones. The actors had only their voices to depend on and their expertise.

The theatre was, of course, thought to be haunted. There were several stories, one of which claimed a boy had fallen from the gallery to his death. There was certainly an atmosphere about the auditorium when it was

empty, but I later discovered that most old theatres when empty have the same rather creepy atmosphere. In a way they are all haunted by the many artistes who have gone before and of the audience members who sit enthralled and entranced by the events unfolding before them in a play or a variety act taking place on the stage. The Theatre Royal had been host to them all from music hall onwards.

I discovered that working in weekly repertory was very hard work. Every Monday was taken up with presenting a new play, the set had to be built and the dress rehearsal carried out before the very often exhausted cast put on the play that evening. On Tuesday we went into rehearsal for the play the following week, with the first read through and blocking. Wednesday we rehearsed the first act – without the books, Thursday was a day off for studying (learning the rest of the play) and on Friday we rehearsed acts 2 and 3. Most plays in those days had three acts, rather than two as they have now. On Saturday morning we rehearsed the whole play without the books. All these rehearsals were taking place when at the same time the company were performing a different play in the evening and often a matinee on Saturday as well. Incredible as it seems now most of the players by the dress rehearsal on Monday were word perfect. I know because I had to prompt them and I was rarely called to do so. I also had the opportunity of playing small parts, usually that of a maid. Most of the plays in those days seemed to have a maid but I didn't mind how small and insignificant the part was. It was all experience.

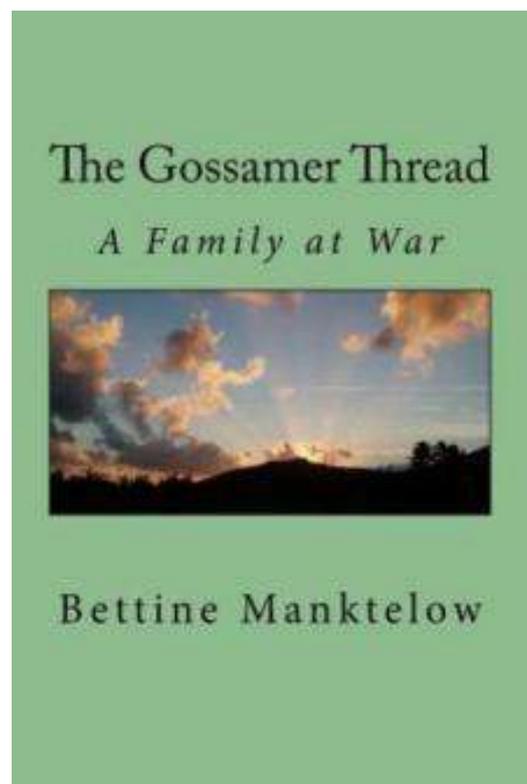
I soon found that the local shopkeepers were very accommodating and helpful for it was part of my job to troop around the shops begging and borrowing furniture and props for our productions. For this kindness the shopkeepers were rewarded with a complimentary ticket for two people and of course an advertisement in the programme. The productions were always on a shoestring. The actors had to provide their own costumes, unless we were doing a period play, when they were hired from Angell's or Nathan's in London. Period plays had to be kept to a minimum because of the extra cost but I remember we did some classical plays, *Jane Eyre*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* and *Candida* all spring to mind.

I am reminded of some amusing anecdotes. In *Jane Eyre*, Mr Rochester played by an actor called Geoffrey Gomer, had to light the candles on the left of the stage and the lights came up on the right! He carried it off as if nothing had happened. Another time I was dressed in a sarong for my part as an Amah in *The Chinese Bungalow* and doing the sound effects back stage I was shaking a section of corrugated iron, no doubt from an old Anderson shelter, to suggest distant thunder, when my top fell off, much to my horror and the amusement of the stage hands. In my confusion I missed the cue and the thunder preceded the next burst of lightning instead of the other way round. Oh, the joys of a live performance! You don't get that sort of thrill at the cinema, do you?

I wonder how many reading this will remember seeing plays at the Theatre Royal. I wonder if any of you have saved old programmes. Something I never did and have always regretted. If you do have any old programmes look for the name Bettine Stratton. That was me.

Bettine's plays and novels are published under the name of Bettine Manktelow, to be found on Amazon.co.uk or on her website: www.bettines-plays.co.uk.*

**No Time for Tears is set in the Medway Towns in the First World War and the sequel, The Gossamer Thread, is set in the Medway Towns in the Second World War.*



Cemetery Epitaphs

Brian Butler



FOMA member, Brian, shares some more interesting (and hilarious) genealogical finds...

‘Harry Edsel Smith of Albany , New York:
Born 1903 - Died 1942.
Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the
car was on the way down. It was.’

*

In a Maryland cemetery:
‘Here lies an Atheist, all dressed up
and no place to go.’

*

In a London cemetery:
‘Here lies Ann Mann, who lived an old maid
but died an old Mann. Dec. 8, 1767.’

*

In a Ribbesford cemetery:
‘Anna Wallace.
The children of Israel wanted bread,
And the Lord sent them manna.
Clark Wallace wanted a wife,
And the Devil sent him Anna.’

*

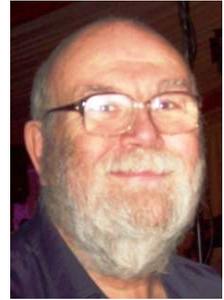
In a Ruidoso, New Mexico, cemetery:
‘Here lies Johnny Yeast.
Pardon him for not rising.’

*

A lawyer's epitaph in England:
‘Sir John Strange.
Here lies an honest lawyer,
and that is Strange.’

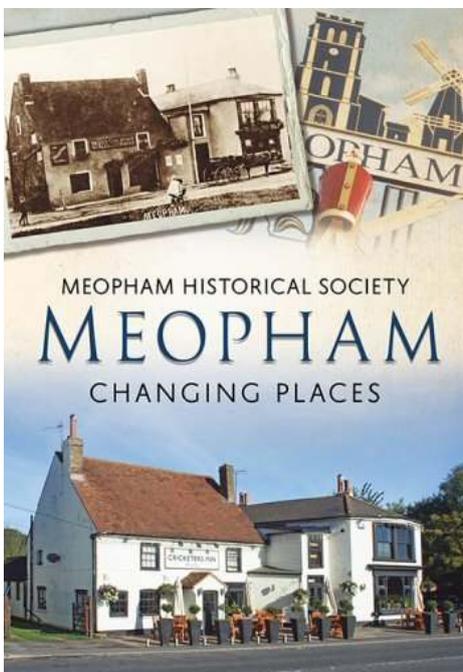
Magnum Opus

Steve Cross



Steve moved from Yorkshire to Chatham with the Royal Navy in 1977, and has lived there ever since. He was an engineer at BAe. Systems at Rochester Airport Works for 29 years, retiring in December 2008. He is now a volunteer at MALSC, also a member of FOMA and the KFHS. He has been researching his own family history since the birth of his son in 1985 and now enjoys helping others research their own families with the aid of Ancestry. He also dabbles in the repair and improvement of digital or scanned photographs.

Meopham Changing Places



The reader of most previous books of this *now and then* genre usually had to make do with looking at two photographs taken at different times, and even then they were only taken from a very roughly similar vantage point. The producers of this book have obtained a series of old postcard photographs of Meopham and then, specifically, gone out with a camera to as near as possible to the position from which the old photograph was taken, and then produced a new full colour photograph to show how the same location appears today. This creates a far more interesting impression than usual.

They have really put in some effort to find these vantage points and then to choose a fine day, weather-wise, to re-visit the sites to capture the repeat images. It could not have been an easy task to work out the exact position from where each of the original images were taken, but they have done a good job. In almost every case the remaining highlights of each of the subject areas are quite obvious, even though many buildings have been removed and new ones constructed. Some scenes have also radically changed over the intervening years due to vegetation growth as well as in other ways, such as the production of new road schemes. Each of the *now*

photographs has been produced in full colour and the majority of the *then* images are produced in monochromatic sepia tones. Each pair of photographs is accompanied by some very interesting and informative historical notes included by the Society to enhance the reader's understanding.

The original images were first produced in 1986 in a book called *Old Picture Postcards* by Jim Carley, a local historian and past President of the Meopham Historical Society. Then the present day photographs were added to produce a striking contrast. The book is presented as a part of the Changing Places series, showing the changing face of many English villages over the years. To sum up, this is a beautifully produced book which will be a vital reference for anyone with an interest in Meopham, either from a historical or personal viewpoint.

The book was produced by the Meopham Historical Society, St John's Centre, Wrotham Road, Meopham, DA13 0AA. Meetings of the society are held every second Wednesday of the month (except August) at 8 pm. Contact Evelyn Ford on 01474 814025 for further information.

Meopham Changing Places, published by Fonthill Media Ltd. 2014; ISBN Number: 978-1-78155-125-7, also available from the Fonthill Media website, www.fonthillmedia.com. Price £13.49.

In the next issue of The Clock Tower, out in November, Steve Cross and Amanda Thomas will be reviewing some of the wonderful titles available in bookshops for Christmas.

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World War One



Why Did the War Start?

Alex Thomas



Alex read Archaeology at the University of Bristol during which he studied the material culture of World War I. Since graduating in 2012, he has completed a Masters in Archaeology, also at Bristol. He is currently applying for a PhD examining an aspect of the Anglo-Saxon landscape of Hertfordshire.

In his article Alex Thomas briefly looks at the reasons that led to the outbreak of the First World War.

The outbreak of the First World War is complex and even today historians continue to argue over the causes. The political map was very different to the one we see today with Europe dominated by Empires: Britain, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia and the Ottoman. At the turn of the Twentieth Century the two prominent alliances were the Triple Alliance (established in 1882 between Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary) and the Triple Entente (established in 1907 between Britain, France and Russia). In 1914 Europe's Empires and its Alliances were also bound together by a series of Treaties:

Treaty	Year	Description
The Treaty of London	1839	Guarantees the neutrality of Belgium
The Treaty of London	1867	Luxembourg establishes neutrality
The Austro-German Alliance	1879	Austria-Hungary and Germany agree pact that in the event of Russian hostility the two countries would support each other.
Austro-Serbian Alliance	1881	An agreement to limit Russian influence in the Balkans in the event of Russian hostility.
Triple Alliance	1882	Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy agree they would give each other military support in the event of war.

The Austro-German-Romanian Alliance	1883	A further agreement to limit Russian influence in the Balkans in the event of Russian hostility.
The Franco-Russian Alliance	1894	A lasting alliance between France and Russia following the actions of Germany. The Germans had dropped a Russian Reassurance Treaty, renewed the Triple Alliance and had become friendly with the Mediterranean Entente (Britain, Italy and Spain).
Russo-Bulgarian Military Convention	1902	The newly created state of Bulgaria allies itself to Russia in the event of Austro-Hungarian aggression.
The Entente Cordiale	1904	An agreement to settle relations between Britain and France. No agreement for alliance.
The Anglo-Russian Entente	1907	An agreement to settle relations between Britain and Russia.
The Triple Entente	1907	Alliance agreed between Britain, France and Russia following the previous Entente treaties. The Triple Entente was agreed as a reaction to the deteriorating relations between Britain and Germany following the naval arms race and the attempt by Germany to exploit the loss suffered by Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. It confirmed Germany would fight a two front war.

Less than ten years after Kaiser Wilhelm ascended the throne, in 1897, Germany was already planning for war, identifying France as its most dangerous enemy. Devised by General Count Alfred von Schlieffen, the Schlieffen Plan was some years in conception but was fully in place by 1905. The Plan presumed that if Germany went to war they would have to be prepared to fight on two fronts: against Russia and France, with Russia the stronger of the two nations but less able to mobilise an army swiftly. The General also believed that were Russia to mobilise, a surprise attack on the French would deter Britain from declaring war and would give Germany time to prepare for war with Russia.

Following the assassination of Austria-Hungary's Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, the Austrians declared War on the Serbs on 28 July. Austria blamed Serbia for the assassination and felt threatened by the country. It was an opportunistic move on the part of Austria-Hungary's generals who had long wanted to conquer and destroy Serbia; Austria-Hungary also had the backing of Germany. The Serbians did not want war and were weak and tired after the 1912 and 1913 Balkan Wars, but they were supported by Russia who then mobilised its army.

Germany implemented the Schlieffen Plan, declaring war on Russia on August 1st and France on August 3rd, mobilising its own army into Belgium. The Treaty of London of 1839 guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, and Britain supported this. In addition, as Britain was part of the Triple Entente and an ally of France and Russia, war was declared on Germany on 4th August 1914.

There has also been some discussion as to how far the royal houses of Europe contributed to the outbreak of war. Recent research has also pointed to the relationships between the grandchildren of Queen Victoria as a contributory factor. Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II was the son of Frederick III of Prussia and Victoria, the Princess Royal, eldest daughter of Queen Victoria. Wilhelm became Emperor of the German Empire in 1888 following the death of his father and proved to be an unstable and unpredictable leader. His mother had had a difficult birth which had left the boy with a withered left arm. It is argued that his unstable mental state was a result of the way his mother subsequently treated him, unable to come to terms with his disability. For the most part Wilhelm also had a difficult relationship with his cousins in Europe's other royal families and he became isolated and resentful. Relations deteriorated further with the ongoing hostility between Prussia and Denmark over the ownership of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. In a recently released letter (dated 8 October

1933), George V of Britain was seemingly in favour of war just two days before conflict broke out:

'He [George V] then told me [Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary] of the interview he had with Uncle Edward two days before the outbreak of War. It lasted for one and a half hours and he said that Uncle Edward sat in the same chair that I was then sitting in. He told me that Uncle Edward had said that he could not possibly see what justifiable reason we could find for going to war. H.M. said in reply, "You have got to find a reason, Grey."'



From the private collection of Bob Ratcliffe.

Britain's army was mobilised within 48 hours of the declaration of war. The photograph from the front cover (and above) shows Medway men ready for the battlefield just two days later. There was much enthusiasm and many believed the war would be short, over by Christmas. Yet by the end of the year it was evident that this was not to be the case. At the Battle of Mons on 14 August, the British Expeditionary Force delayed the advance of German troops but suffered over 1,500 casualties. From 5 to 12 September half a million men had been killed or wounded at the First Battle of Marne, then at Ypres between October 19 and November 22 it is estimated some 1,700,000 were killed or wounded, including many civilians. The world had changed forever, and as Sir Edward Grey is believed to have said:

'The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time...'

In Ruhleben Camp

Brian Joyce



Brian Joyce is a retired teacher who lives and works in the Medway Towns. He was born in Chatham and has always been fascinated by the history of the area. Brian is the President of the Chatham Historical Society and the author of several books, including The Chatham Scandal, Dumb Show and Noise and Chatham and the Medway Towns, a History and Celebration. With Bruce Aubry, Brian co-wrote In the Thick of It-Medway Men and Women in the Boer War, which was published by their own Pocock Press. Brian is currently working on a similar volume which will examine the experiences of men and women from the Medway Towns during the First World War.

In August 1914, there were well over 5,000 British men in Germany. At first, they were simply required to register with the authorities and report to the police periodically. However, reports from Britain indicated that German civilians were being interned. In November, the Kaiser's government issued an ultimatum to Britain – these internees should be released, otherwise all British men in Germany aged between 17 and 55 would be arrested. When the British Government ignored this threat, the arrests duly took place. British women and children who had not already left Germany were allowed to leave via neutral countries, although some married women chose to remain in Germany to be near their husbands. Initially British internees were taken to local gaols, and then concentrated at the former racecourse at Ruhleben, on the outskirts of Berlin.

About 5,500 men were probably interned at Ruhleben at any one time. While merchant seamen made up the largest group, there was a huge diversity among the men. Some were resident or visiting British businessmen, others university academics, schoolteachers or students. Industrial workers, music hall performers and sportsmen (including several former professional footballers who had been coaching at German clubs), also found themselves behind the wire. Other Ruhleben internees were hapless British tourists whose holidays had come to an abrupt end in early August 1914. Unbelievably, British holidaymakers were still arriving in Germany as late as 31 July 1914.

Before examining the fate of some of these unfortunate British citizens, it is worth remembering that there were ten times as many Germans in Britain in 1914; these men were to spend the war in internment camps scattered around the United Kingdom.



Ruhleben 1918, men line up at the cook-house; from the private collection of Brian Joyce.

Medway Men in Ruhleben

Several men from the Medway Towns were unfortunate enough to be incarcerated at Ruhleben.

Richard Austin Burtenshaw

Burtenshaw was one of the five sons of Major John Burtenshaw, a retired Royal Marines Quartermaster who lived in Boundary Road, Chatham. Richard was the proprietor of a school in Germany when the Great War broke out. His wife was allowed to leave for Britain, but Burtenshaw himself was 25 years old and a potential soldier, so was arrested and sent to Ruhleben. An educated man, he appears to have become the spokesman for less educated Medway internees.

In November 1915, twelve months after his incarceration, he wrote to the Mayor of Chatham, thanking him for a recently-received food parcel. Burtenshaw went on:

'I should also like to say a few words on behalf of F. Hinkley, who up to the present has not received any parcels. He certainly needs them quite as much as I do, and up to the present I have been sharing with him. He is a born Chatham man and his parents are still residing in the district.

We greatly appreciate your kind offer of winter clothing. The things we stand most in need of are: thick underwear, strong boots, good stout clothes, puttees, gloves, mufflers and socks. English tobacco and cigarettes are gifts from the gods. The parcels of foodstuffs are excellently selected, especially the last, which contained bread and cake, both of which arrived in splendid condition. Indeed, it was quite like home eating one of Bourne's cakes.'

Two months later, Burtenshaw wrote again, describing conditions at Ruhleben:

'As no clothes have been served out to prisoners in this camp, I made enquiries re their distribution and was informed that the captains [*i.e. the elected leaders of the internees*], with the approval of the American Ambassador, had decided to sell the same at very low prices. As many of us require complete outfits, this would entail an expenditure of from 15s up to 20s which must be saved out of the weekly allowance of 5s made to us by the Home Government. This sum is given to us to buy such necessities as sugar, milk, butter and margarine and to supplement the camp food as well as for incidental expenses.

Mr F. Hinkley will verify my statement that it is very difficult to save even a few pence on the week's allowance. If we receive money from home, our weekly allowance is stopped for as many weeks, as there are five shillings in the amount received. Following the request made by you, I give you this statement of affairs and leave the matter in your hands...'

Frederick Hinkley

The *F. Hinkley* referred to by Burtenshaw in the letters quoted above, was Frederick Hinkley, the son of a builder living in Castle Road, Chatham. Frederick's brother, Louis Hinkley, was the licensee of the Horn of Plenty public house in New Road, Chatham.

Frederick Hinkley was on holiday in Germany when the war broke out. His attempts to leave the country failed, and he was interned at Ruhleben in November 1914. Hinkley was released and allowed to return home after twelve months, presumably because he was unfit for military service and therefore did not represent a threat to Germany. He had lost a hand in a sawmill accident during a nine year period spent in the United States.

On his return to the Medway Towns in November 1915, Hinkley gave an interview to the *Chatham News*. As a footballer himself, a former captain of the Luton (Chatham) team, he had been impressed by the football league set up at Ruhleben by Jack Cameron (ex Tottenham Hotspur) and Fred Pentland (ex Middlesbrough and England). His incarceration at Ruhleben had also allowed Hinkley to mix with the likes of Steve Bloomer (ex Derby County and England) and Sam Wolstenholme (ex Everton and England). He described the entertainment and classes provided by the diverse population of Ruhleben, and then went on to complain about the food situation during the first desperate winter in the camp:

'We had nothing else but stew. Stew every day; rice, prunes and everything was mixed up together. We did not know what it was for a knife and fork until March and then the camp was kind of taken over by the prisoners themselves and run on their own lines. There were about 1,300 or 1,500 seamen, and we had the cooks and stewards and let them run the kitchen and things were much better after that.'

Breakfast had been tea or coffee and bread. Sometimes there was the luxury of a piece of brawn or dried fish for tea. Hinkley made the point that the food parcels from home were greatly appreciated, 'To my mind, it is one of the finest things ever done, because it has stopped a lot of sickness out there.' Even at this relatively early stage in the war, Hinkley believed that the British blockade of Germany's Baltic ports was affecting that country's food supplies. The week before he was released, the internees' meat ration had been withdrawn on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Edward Fehrenbach

Another British holidaymaker in Germany trapped after the outbreak of war was Edward Fehrenbach, the 18-year-old son of a Chatham jeweller. As his name suggests, he was partly of German origin. His father, also Edward, was a German national who had settled in Britain.

Edward junior was half British, though; his mother hailed from Doncaster, and Edward himself was born in Chatham. Fehrenbach became friendly with Burtenshaw and Hinkley while in Ruhleben, and letters of thanks to the Mayor of Chatham were sometimes joint efforts signed by all three. Fehrenbach's health deteriorated while in Ruhleben, and so, despite being only in his early twenties and therefore of military age, he was repatriated via Holland in the Spring of 1918.

As a postscript, it is worth noting that due to the anti-*alien* hysteria that gripped Britain during the Great War, the Fehrenbach family anglicised its name to Fernbank.

William Buckingham

Buckingham was a submarine cable joiner and he and his family were long-term residents in Germany. He moved there shortly after his marriage to Kate Hollands in 1900 and all of his four children were born there. A watch was kept on the family after the war broke out, and in November 1914 William was interned in Ruhleben. Kate and the children were allowed to leave via neutral Holland. On her return to Britain, Mrs Buckingham rented a house in First Avenue, Luton, Chatham, so that she could be near her mother, who lived at 357 Luton Road. This was something of a decline in Kate's standard of living. She told the *Chatham News* three years later: 'We had a fine home and I wonder whether we shall ever see it again.'

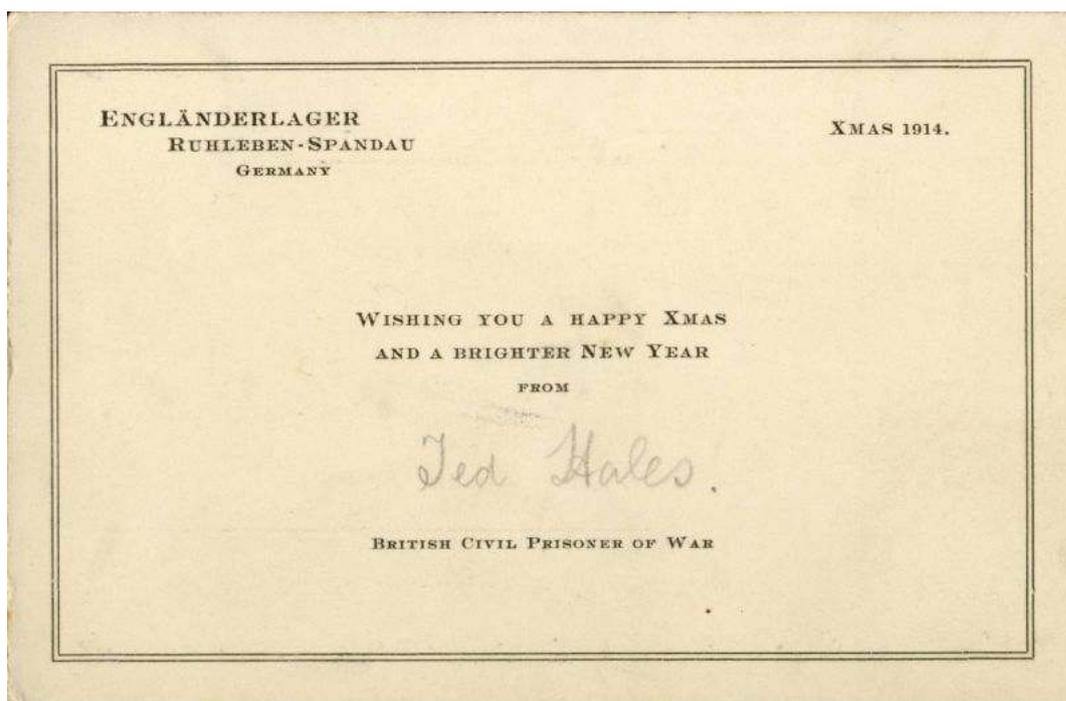
After he was repatriated in January 1918, William Buckingham gave the newspaper a first-hand account of living conditions in the camp. Five men slept in a double-deck stall meant for a single horse. Those in the former hay-loft were so close to the roof that they had to bend their backs when sitting in bed. If they could not afford to purchase a bedstead, they slept on straw.

By the end of his time at Ruhleben, the British naval blockade was causing serious food shortages in Germany. Feeding British prisoners was not a priority for the authorities. The main meal of the day consisted of potato soup and turnips if they were available. The others consisted of acorn coffee and a slice of black bread. Buckingham felt that only the food parcels from home, organised by the mayors of the three towns, saved him from starvation. The first loaf he received had the words *Jasper Chatham* embossed on it. He had thought to himself, 'Dear me, Jaspers made my wedding cake and here they are now, making my bread as a prisoner of war.'

Robert James Ives

Thus far, I have not been able to discover much detail about Ives, who the *Chatham News* mentioned in passing in January 1918. Perhaps a reader may be able to enlighten me; the newspaper does not even give an address for him. At the time of the 1901 census, he was living with his family at New Cross, London. Presumably his job took him to the Medway Towns some time after that date. The *Chatham News* described Ives as a timber inspector for the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company who was on business in Germany when war broke out.

There may well have been other Medway internees at Ruhleben. If readers know of any examples, I would be grateful to hear from them.



By December 1914 everyone knew the war would not be over by Christmas; from the private collection of Brian Joyce.

World War One and my Grandfather - I Wish I had Met Him.

Doris Herlihy



Doris was born in Sidcup and moved to the Medway Towns in 1968. She has been married for 54 years and has three children and six grandchildren. Educated at Chislehurst and Sidcup County Grammar School for Girls, Doris began work at the Bank of England and then Shell International before moving back into banking again after her children started school. She ran a Venture Scout Unit for 25 years and hobbies include travel (she has been round the world), photography, family history, local history, needlework and computing - to keep her brain going! Doris has been a volunteer at MALSC since 1999 and is currently working at the Archives researching the history of Parkwood.

I have asked friends and acquaintances for the first thought that comes into mind when you mention World War One. Reactions are: Ypres, The Menin Gate and the Trenches, and always the army, never the navy or the numerous other services involved. My own first thought is a large studio photo of my grandfather, James Henry Jones, in his splendid naval uniform which has been in my family for as long as I can remember (pictured circa 1915). I used to think that he was very old in the photo, but was surprised to find that it was taken during the First World War, only two years before he died at the age of 49 - just the same age as my son is now.

In recent years I have learnt about his war service and more about his life in general with some very welcome help from FOMA¹ along the way. James Henry Jones entered the navy at the age of 17 in 1883 and served on *HMS Boscawen*, *HMS Hercules*, *HMS Repulse*, *HMS Rupert*, *HMS Excellent*, *HMS Vernon* and *HMS Collingwood* until he bought himself out of the navy in 1893 with a 'very good character' for the sum of £12. For the next few years he served as a Third Class Fireman in the London Fire Brigade before joining the Royal Fleet Reserve at Chatham in 1901. He re-enlisted into the navy in 1911 as a leading seaman and served initially at Pembroke I in Chatham, then Pembroke II in Eastchurch. The main role of the latter is described as 'fleet reconnaissance, patrolling coasts for enemy ships and submarines.' James' next ship for six months was *HMS Brilliant* which was part of the 4th Cruiser Squadron attached to the Mediterranean Fleet. *HMS Titania* became his next home. This was a submarine depot ship acting as a parent ship for a group of many submarines patrolling the coast of the British Isles, supplying everything from food and rest to torpedoes.



During the course of some recent research, I came across an article by a wireless operator on one of the submarines (a J3) attached to the *Titania* written at about the same time as my grandfather was serving aboard the *Titania* herself. When written its author lived in South Africa and he described his life and detailed events occurring during his service on a J3 submarine. It produced quite a weird sensation whilst reading it.²

Leading Seaman, James Henry Jones was awarded several medals during his naval service but sadly he died before the war was over. He died in Newcastle from Spanish Flu. A telegram was sent to my grandmother in London to say he was ill but he died before she could reach him. She was a widow for 51 years and (as so many people have said before me) I wish I had asked more about their early lives!

Notes

1. In particular from Reuben Childs who looked up all the ships that James served on and gave me pictures and details of each one and patiently explained the role of depot ships.
2. The South African Military History Society. *Military History Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 1; June 1980. *HMS Titania 1917-1918* by G. Hawthorne. A weird addition to the whole story is that the actual studio photo mentioned of my grandfather has its home in South Africa. It lives in my sister's flat as a reminder to her of home in England.

Memories of Flanders

Alison Thomas

Archive and Local Studies Assistant, The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.



After completing a degree in medieval and modern history at the University of Birmingham, Alison Thomas trained as a teacher and worked in primary education for several years. Whilst bringing up her family she had various part time jobs within education ranging from playgroup assistant to special needs teacher. Alison left work to become a full time carer for four years, and joined MALSC as Archive and Local Studies Assistant at the end of February 2010.

The Local Studies collection at MALSC contains a slim volume entitled *Memories of Flanders 1914-1919*. Four short articles written by Captain BSH Grant in January 1920 record his testimony to the results of four years of war on Flanders' fields and towns. The book also contains a set of interesting photographs from Captain Grant's collection. The volume is dedicated to 'the British 'Tommy,' whose cheerfulness under extremely adverse conditions was remarkable, and whose dogged tenacity helped to save the Country in the greatest crisis in history.' This book will be of interest to family historians whose ancestors fought in the conflict, and to those researching the history of The Great War. It will also be of particular interest to those whose ancestors were in the Labour Corps.

The author, Bernhard Shirley Henniker Grant, was born in Maidstone in 1887,¹ the son of wine merchant, William and his wife, Edith.² Although some of Bernhard's army service records survive, the information given in them is neither clear nor comprehensive.³ From his medal roll index card it would appear that he joined the Army Service Corps, and subsequently the Labour Corps. Perhaps his need for glasses prevented him being given the fitness rating required for other units? As Grant himself says, 'the Labour Corps was largely composed of medical category men, and a large proportion consisted of ex-infantry and artillery men, wounded or reduced to a lower medical category through sickness.'⁴ In October 1918 he was promoted to the rank of acting captain whilst commanding a company⁵ and was allowed to retain this rank when he relinquished his commission on the completion of his service.⁶ At the end of the war he was awarded the British War Medal and The Victory Medal.

It would seem probable then that *Memories of Flanders* draws on Captain Grant's personal experience. The book contains a schedule and accompanying map detailing the pre-war population of the towns in contrast to their condition in 1918 - a salutary reminder of the devastation caused in the area. The town of Bailleul, with a pre war population of 13,500, was destroyed during the conflict. Grant says, 'In March 1918 Bailleul was a thriving town of some importance in Northern France; in the following August it was dead, a mass of ruins, its population gone, its industries destroyed.'⁷ In 1920 temporary wooden dwellings were being built. Other towns like Gheluvelt had ceased to exist altogether, its former site being difficult to identify. In contrast, although Poperinghe was evacuated, little damage was actually done to the town, and Grant remarks that in 1920 the 'condition was now normal.'⁸

Grant describes the devastation caused by four years of war in West Flanders - 'the land one mass of craters... caused by millions of explosive shells, not a living thing to be seen for miles, all vegetation destroyed, roads and railways gone, trenches and barbed wire entanglements everywhere and even the birds of the air departed.'⁹ He also describes the role of the Labour Corps in attending to the British Military Cemeteries, estimating that around Ypres alone a quarter of a million British soldiers are buried.¹⁰

The final article in the book, entitled *With the Labour Corps*, gives a fascinating insight into the essential work of this body. Its purpose was to carry out all the tasks necessary to facilitate the waging of a war - roads and railways were repaired, water pipes and cables were laid and ammunition was often delivered to guns during the night. Much of the work took place under the direction of the Royal Engineers. Grant describes working wearing shrapnel helmets with box respirators at the alert position, and seeking shelter in disused trenches partly filled with water. Although primarily a non-combatant force, from the spring of 1918 members of the Labour Corps were called upon to fight. Some units were formed into battalions and were given rifles, being fully trained and drilled to hold certain trenches in case of a general break through. According to Grant, the new Labour Corps badge of October 1918, showing a rifle, pick and spade with the motto 'Labor omnia vincit' was probably approved at least partly in recognition of the service the corps had rendered.¹¹

If you are looking for a book that gives a real insight into the effects of the War in Flanders and have a few minutes to spare ask MALSC staff for *Memories of Flanders*, (ref 940.4144 GRA).

Notes

1. Free BMD birth index.
2. 1891 Census.
3. British Army WWI service records. British Army Medal Rolls Index Cards. Accessed via www.ancestrylibrary.com, March 2014.
4. *Memories of Flanders*, p. 28, Capt. BSH Grant. *South Eastern Gazette*, Maidstone 1920.
5. *The London Gazette*, 26 November 1918.
6. Supplement to *The London Gazette*, 3 September 1919.
7. *Memories of Flanders*, p.11.
8. *Memories of Flanders*, p. 20-21.
9. *Memories of Flanders*, p. 18.
10. *Memories of Flanders*, p. 23-24.
11. *Memories of Flanders*, p. 28-30.

The Home Front

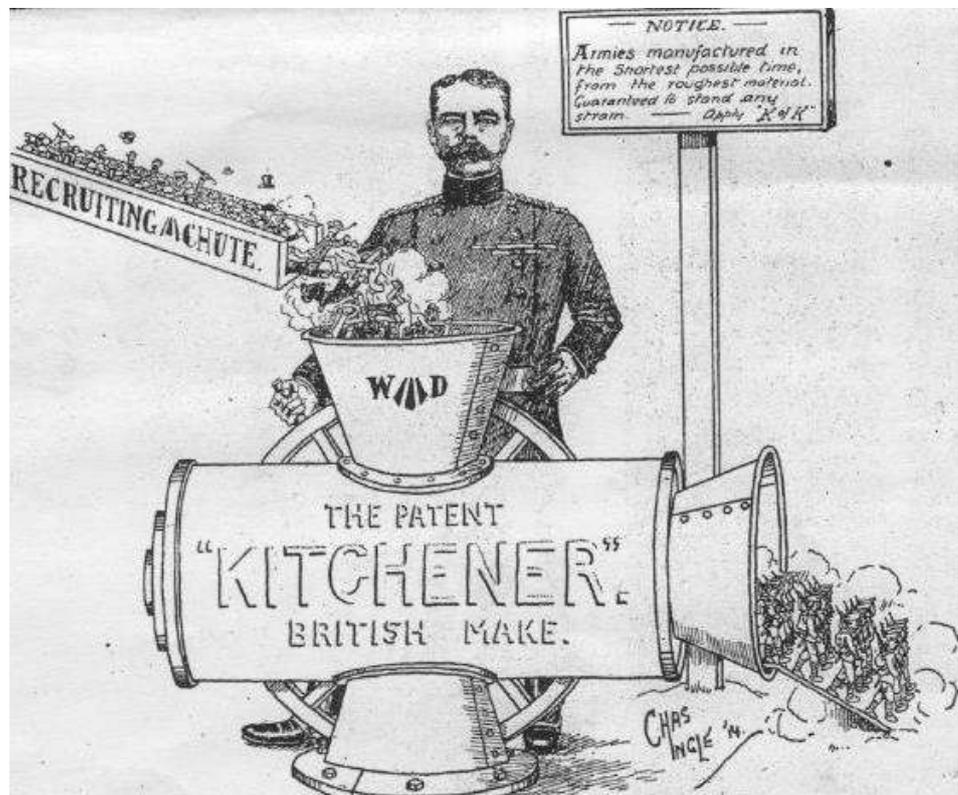
Catharina Clement



In 2005, Catharina completed a BA in history at Canterbury Christchurch University, and in 2013 a PhD in local history entitled *Political and Religious Reactions in the Medway Towns of Rochester and Chatham during the English Revolution, 1640-1660*. She has been involved in various local history groups and projects such as FOMA, CDHS, and the Victoria County History EPE projects. She won the 2009 Friends Historical Society Award resulting in a paper on *Medway Quakerism 1655-1918* delivered at the Institute for Historical Research and later this year at the Friends Library in London. Currently Catharina works for MALSC.

The first in a new series to coincide with the commemorations of the outbreak of World War One.

Opposite: *The Man at the Wheel*.



Caption (not illustrated) reads: 'This cartoon drawn by musician Charles W. Ingle, R.M.B. who is serving in HMS King Edward VII, and represents his interpretation of the naval men's admiration of Lord Kitchener's marvellously organised army.' Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

The above cartoon caught my eye in the *Chatham Observer* of 26 December 1914, just a few months after war commenced. It portrays General Kitchener churning out recruits from a specially patented machine to fight in France. This cartoon is rather ironically, or one could say somewhat cynically, placed under a row of portraits of a widow patriotically sending five of her sons to fight for King and country.

My curiosity was aroused about this family, who sent five sons to fight within a few months of the outbreak of war. The father, Thomas William Swift, had been a musician in the RMLI and on his retirement from the

service was employed as a musician at Chatham's Theatre Royal. Sadly he died in the local workhouse infirmary the year before war erupted, leaving his wife, Florence née Crutchley, a widow with eleven surviving children. This family had lived at 162 Thorold Road in Luton, Chatham since 1892, but the father's death forced the family to move to 48 Castle Road in 1914.



The Swift men; Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

The eldest two sons, Thomas and George, had enlisted in the 7th Dragoons (Princess Royals) during 1905, serving a spell in India. Both their parents were born in India and so the boys would have been familiar with tales of life out in the colony. It appears Thomas joined up as Thomas Crutchley and it was stated he was born in Hastings, Sussex. His birth actually took place in Portsmouth, Hampshire, in 1888.

It seems probable that his brother, George, similarly applied to the army under an alias, being known in later life as Wells rather than Swift. Neither boy's army papers can be traced, suggesting they were trying to hide something or could have been under age in 1905.

The 7th Dragoons was a cavalier regiment, who were at the spearhead that took on the Germans in August 1914. On return from India the two soldiers had a week's leave to see their family for the first time in nine years before being in the midst of fighting in France. Corporal Thomas Swift was seriously wounded by a bullet in a cavalier charge during the opening days of the Great Push. He died in Newcastle Infirmary on 28 July 1916 and was interred in Chatham cemetery with his father. Thomas Swift (Crutchley) is recorded on two memorials in Chatham and Rainham; nobody knows why the latter.

He was the only one of Florence's six sons who served during World War I not to return home safely. Sergeant George Swift was wounded during the course of the war and invalided out. In 1920 he emigrated to Argentina, being a popular member of the ex-pat community (rather like Agatha Christie's Captain Hastings) and member of the British Legion.

Corporal William Swift served with the Mechanical Transport ASC as a despatch rider. Sergeant Ambrose Charles, but better known as Charles, joined the 11th South Wales Borderers. After the war he married a Welsh lass and settled in Monmouthshire. Sapper Frederick enlisted in the Royal Engineers. Wounded in France during 1915, aged just 17, he was on the point of re-joining his regiment when his brother died. The youngest boy, Albert or Teddy, as he was affectionately known, had recently joined the Royal Marines aged just 14 as a bugler, following in his father's footsteps.

I wonder what Florence, as a proud mother, really thought of the newspaper and its crass depiction of her boys as cannon fodder for Kitchener's army?



The gravestone of Thomas Swift (Crutchley) in Chatham; photograph, Catharina Clement.

5520 RECORD OFFICE, Army Form B. 5112.

7 AUG 1921 19...

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of the VICTORY MEDAL

I am directed to forward the accompanying British War Medal, which has been awarded to you in respect of your services with the...

Please complete receipt and return this card. No stamp is required.

Regtl. No. 54348
 Rank Ser
 Signature T R Swift
 Unit R 8
 Date 24.8.1921

W2395/PP4071 2000m 11/20v 3451 G & S 603
 916

Frederick's medal card; Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

The Quick and the Dead, *a talk by Richard van Emden*

Amanda Thomas



Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. She is currently working on a new book for the publishers Pen and Sword entitled, Cholera - The Victorian Plague, due for publication in 2015. Born in Chatham, but now based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society, the North West Kent Family History Society, and The Council for British Archaeology; she has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association. Amanda was made a full member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists in 2008.

On a balmy evening in June, Richard van Emden enthralled a packed Frindsbury Hall with stories from his book, *The Quick and the Dead: fallen soldiers and their families*, describing how the families of servicemen were affected in World War One.

Richard is a popular speaker and we were thrilled to be able to begin our commemorations of the outbreak of World War One with his talk. With a background in journalism, Richard has written some twelve books on the war (many of which were on sale at the talk - see page 34) and has contributed to a considerable number of television documentaries on the subject. In the course of his research, and since he began writing books in 1994, he has interviewed 270 Great War veterans. The last veteran of the trenches was Harry Patch and Richard co-authored his best-selling biography, *The Last Fighting Tommy*. As time has passed, Richard's focus has turned to the children of the veterans and it is they who are the focus of *The Quick and the Dead*.

Richard began with the story of Fanny Dorrington whose agony began in September 1915 when she received a letter informing her that her husband George had been wounded on the eve of the Battle of Loos. She was told that he had been taken to hospital but received no further news, despite her letters of inquiry. Her patience was extraordinary, particularly when 9d was deducted from her Separation Allowance of 14/-. Finally in February 1916, George Dorrington was reported as missing and then the following month, Fanny was informed that he had, in fact, died of his wounds the previous September. She wrote again in May 1916 asking if she might have his personal effects, and was subsequently sent his purse, letters, photographs and pipe, which was extraordinary considering the confusion surrounding her husband's whereabouts. Finally in October 1916, Fanny also heard that she would receive £52 gratuity and 5/- pension per week for her and her 18 month old son.

At the time the public perception of the War Office was understandably hostile, but Richard was quick to remind the audience that World War One was an international conflict. In the first four months of the war in 1914, the army grew from a force of 250,000 men to 1,100,000 and once hostilities had begun, around 2,000 men were killed or wounded each day. It is no wonder that the War Office struggled to deal with individual cases. The government had a system in place to receive information from the front line, but in reality reports which were passed from person to person often became vague and unreliable. False reports provoked expectation in the families and placed them in a vacuum devoid of information.

It was, perhaps, of no surprise that some people took advantage of this situation. Edward Page Gaston was one such person who decided he could profit from the misery of others. He was in Berlin at the outbreak of war and soon realised there was a need for a service to trace the missing. He contacted the British government and managed to receive tacit support from them; he even spoke to Lord Kitchener on the subject. Gaston pretended he had a comprehensive searching service, even though this was not the case, and a photograph in Richard's book shows a photograph of him posed by a war grave in an attempt to 'convince families of his integrity.' Richard commented, "This was absolute bunkum!"

In fact, despite Fanny Dorrington's experience, very few slipped through the net and Gaston's service was not necessary. Despite this, he preyed on people's emotions and many sent him money. Then parcels and money

sent to loved ones through the service arrived with items or money missing - it is presumed stolen by Gaston - and this caused the government significant embarrassment. They withdrew support and asked the press to print a warning. Gaston promptly sued the press, but the case was held over until the war ended. Gaston returned to America after 1918, and whilst he made a brief appearance in Britain for his daughter's wedding in the 1930s, he continued to live in the States until his death in 1955, aged 87.

In many respects it may have been easier knowing a loved one had died than to receive conflicting reports of their whereabouts. However, throughout the war, the trauma of knowing a husband, son or brother was never to return was extreme. In the early years of the war it had not yet been decided whether bodies would be repatriated from the battlefields and with no rules in place some families, usually only those who could afford it, went looking for their dead. Some 40 officers bodies were brought back to the UK. One such case was Prime Minister Gladstone's grandson, Lieutenant William Gladstone, who was removed to the family's vault in Wales, though a cross with his name on was erected near the battlefield where the rest of his men still lay buried. It was not until May 1915 that the government ordered that no one else should be repatriated. Wounded soldiers were allowed visitors only if it was thought they had about a week to live. Some families knowing this was the case, asked if soldiers could be repatriated whilst they were still alive, but this was denied; the government's view was, 'Your son's body is not your property.'

Richard went on to dispel yet another myth about the First World War. It is common belief that families were informed of the deaths of their loved ones by telegram, but this was not what happened. Only officers' families received telegrams, everyone else received a letter in the morning post.

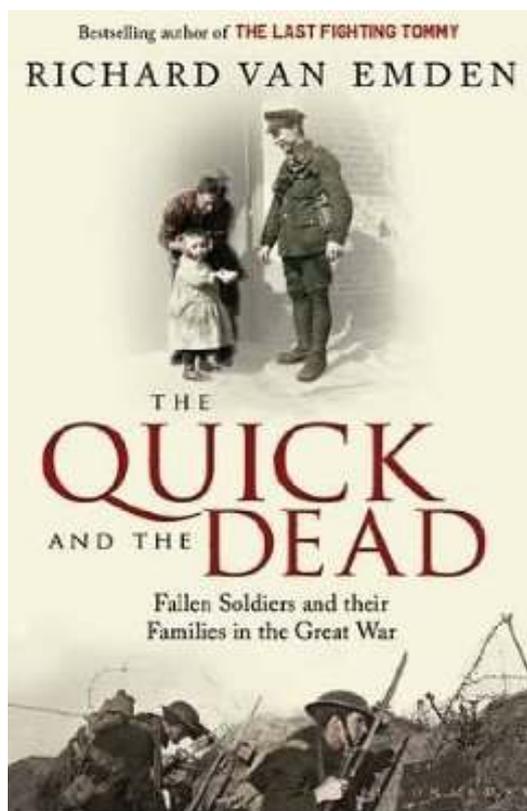
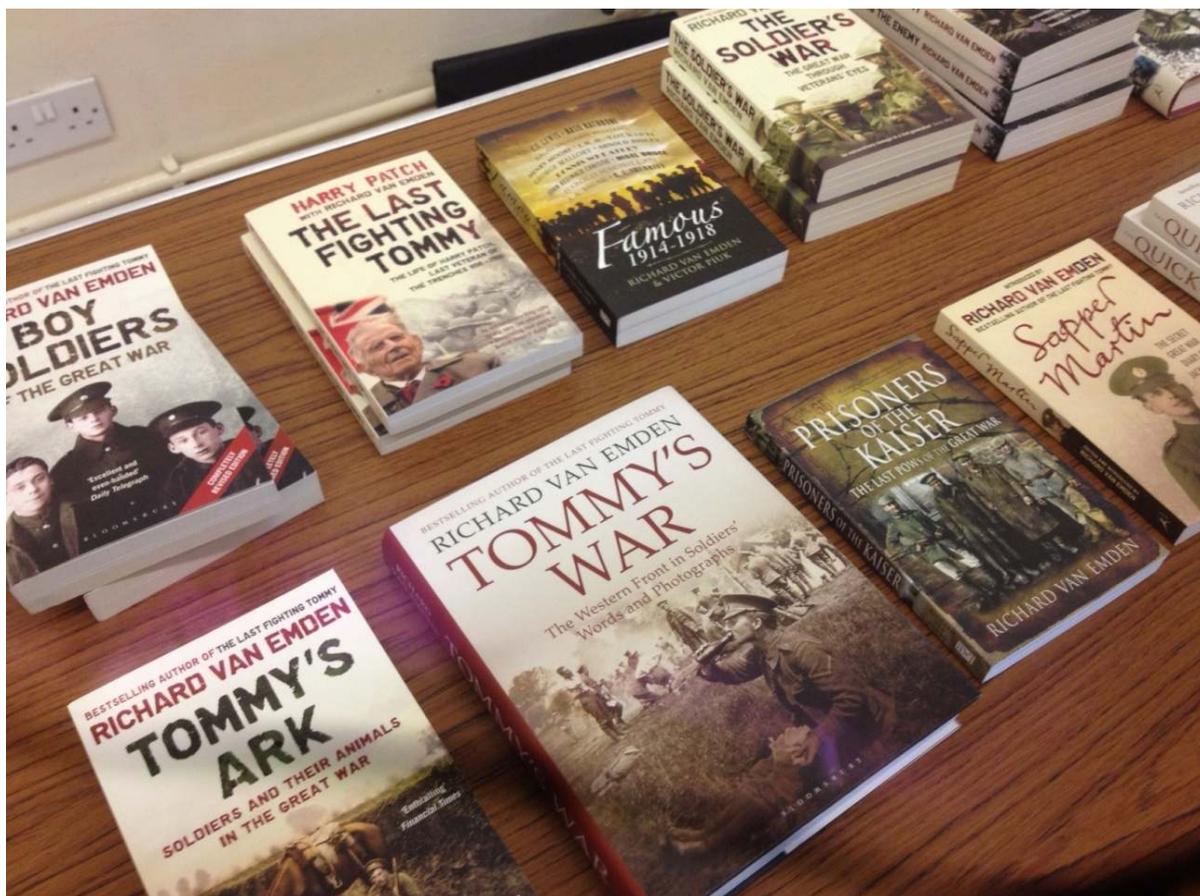
There were many widows left behind with small children, of course, and to lose the main bread winner of the family caused tremendous hardship. Richard had interviewed many people for whom this was the case. They had sacrificed their education, and indeed, their own childhoods, to bring up siblings younger than themselves. Many young girls took on menial jobs like cleaning or mill work, but much of it was poorly paid. Young boys were expected to grow up fast to fill the gap created by their fathers, and many of these same boys were to serve in the Second World War, fearing they would leave their own children as they had been left.

It was hoped the prohibition to repatriate the dead would be lifted after the war had ended, and the decision that they would be left overseas caused outrage. The Treaty of Versailles requested that all countries should consider the repatriation of bodies, but nothing was done, and for good reason. Of course there were very many dead bodies to bring home. Many were not identifiable, many graves only contained body parts, and many were in far-flung places such as Gallipoli. An additional problem was who owned the bodies: it was a grey area in legal terms. But for many families, and understandably, this was not good enough. The British War Graves Association was formed and the government estimated it had some 15,000 members, though it was likely there were far more.

The leading lights in the association had all lost men in 1918 and the loss was more poignant and raw for them: they were determined to bring their men back. Some people did try to dig up remains, but they were arrested and sent home again. Some were successful and there were financial disputes with the government, but Richard noted that it is rather strange that both the first and last bodies to have been repatriated both lie within a short distance of each other in the Glasgow Necropolis cemetery.

Eventually families realised when they visited the war graves that it was better their men should remain there. Grief was helped by the building of war memorials at home, and in particular Lutyen's Cenotaph in Whitehall. The grave of the Unknown Warrior also offered tremendous consolation for families, and around one and a quarter million people visited the grave at Westminster Abbey before it was sealed. It was the steel helmet, web belt and bayonet which had been positioned on the top of the coffin which touched everyone's heart: this was an ordinary man, everyone's son, brother and husband.

The Quick and the Dead: Fallen Soldiers and Their Families in the Great War, Richard van Emden; ISBN 978-1408822456.



A selection of the many books written by Richard van Emden, including The Quick and The Dead (paperback version).

World War One Commemorations Begin!



FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner, and celebrity speaker, Richard Van Emden, pictured on the evening of 10 June 2014, at the start of a series of FOMA and MALSC events to commemorate the start of World War One. For the full story see page 32.

