

The Napoleonic Wars



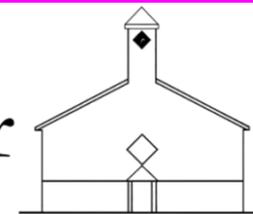
Strood celebrates an end to the Napoleonic Wars. See Odette Buchanan's article on page 30 where she looks at the effect of the wars in the Medway Towns and the eventual victory at Waterloo, the 200th anniversary of which will be celebrated on 18 June 2015. Illustration from the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Eastgate House Refurbishment



Artefacts found during refurbishment beneath the floorboards at Rochester's Eastgate House. See Sue Haydock's report on page 14.

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 38: May 2015
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The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre
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Volunteer Birthday Celebrations!



MALSC volunteers celebrated Doris Herlihy's birthday with tea and cake at the annual Volunteers' Day, organised by Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe. More inside.
Pictured: Doris Herlihy with Simon Lace, Medway Heritage Services Manager – and FOMA member! Photograph, Amanda Thomas.

Also inside – VE DAY remembered
AND
Part One of Pat Salter's Roll out the Red Carpet.

The MALSC Volunteer Morning and the FOMA AGM



Left: Alison Thomas, MALSC Archive and Local Studies Assistant, helps out with the teas and coffees at the Volunteer Morning (see page 39)
Photograph, Amanda Thomas.

Below: The FOMA AGM – business gets under way!
From left to right, FOMA Secretary Odette Buchanan, Chairman, Tessa Towner and retiring Treasurer, Jean Skilling.
Photograph, Amanda Thomas.



Rochester's New Huguenot Museum



Above: The Huguenot Museum.
Left: A view of the galleries

Photographs, Huguenot Museum.

See page 35 for the museum's Learning and Community Engagement Officer, Amy Adams' update on progress and news.

The Committee

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Russell John Race, JP, DL (pictured)



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From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



It's that time again ...and Amanda's on my case for my Chairman's bit!

Three weeks ago a group of FOMA and City of Rochester Society members were invited to have a preview of the new Huguenot Museum that opens its doors on 13 May and we are delighted that Amy Adams, the museum's Learning and Community Engagement Officer is keeping us up to date with progress (see page 35). The museum's programme is also now included in the *News and Events* section (see page 5).

The museum is the only one to feature Huguenot history in Britain, and the French Hospital Collection has been incorporated into its archive. The new website explains (<http://huguenotmuseum.org/>):

'There is an archive room where you can use their laptops and museum WIFI to search for family history information, there is a growing collection of manuscripts and books which can be studied in the you will be required to sign in and work in pencil if making notes archive room. Let the museum staff know in advance the areas you are researching and they will call up items from their store. The archive room can be used to study objects from their collection in more detail.

The objects, which include oil paintings, silver, documents, silk samples and personal items tell the important story of Britain's first refugees, the crafts, trades and skills they brought with them and the impact their contribution has had on the development of our country.'

The museum is in the centre of Rochester above the Visitors Information Centre, and although not yet finished, what we saw was an amazing collection of items showing the history of the Huguenots and the reasons they were expelled from France. There will be events for all ages throughout the year, and a lot of hands-on activities, including Summer Crafts activities during the summer holidays for children every Wednesday. I would highly recommend a visit and it is a fantastic addition to the already many historic attractions in Rochester.

You may notice on the Committee information page (page 46) that FOMA no longer has a patron. When the very Rev Dr. Mark Beach left Rochester Cathedral The Committee discussed whether we really did need a patron. We decided that we did not and so therefore the position will not be re-filled.

We are absolutely delighted that Pat Salter has given us permission to serialise her book, *Roll out the Red Carpet*, and you can read the first instalment on page 33. The book will eventually be published on the FOMA website which, with the addition of the De Caville Index in August 2014, is developing into a key research resource for the history of the Medway Towns.

Finally, it was a pleasure to see so many of you at the FOMA AGM in April. As promised, you will see that new membership cards have been included with this issue of *The Clock Tower*.

Secretary's Report

Odette Buchanan



Greetings all, as I write on this lovely sunny spring day!

In the last issue of *The Clock Tower* I listed a load of anniversaries with a serious omission. Tragically, it was not such a good day a hundred years ago on the Gallipoli Peninsula in what is now Turkey. The Dardanelles Campaign of the First World War lasted from 25 April, 1915 through to 9 January the following year. It was the brainchild of Churchill who was then First Lord of the Admiralty. The plan was to attack 'the soft underbelly of the Ottoman Empire' and capture the capital, Constantinople, thus getting the Ottoman Empire to surrender.

Unfortunately, due to poor intelligence, lack of support from those in the War Office who disagreed with the plan and bad organization, the Allies were heavily defeated and casualties were horrendous on both sides (at least 100,000). A large proportion of these were from Australia and New Zealand which is why Anzac Day is marked each year in those countries on 25 April. There is a Pogue's song called *The Band Played Waltzing Matilda* in which part of the second verse goes 'But the band played Waltzing Matilda/ As we stopped to bury our slain/ We buried ours and the Turks buried theirs/ Then we started all over again.'

Things at FOMA are all going well. David Carder's talk in March on Almshouses and Hospitals was very interesting (see Amanda Thomas' report on page 21) as well as being very well attended. The Quiz at the end of April was also a great success and we made good nett profit of £144. Many thanks for this must go, of course, to Elaine Gardner for her excellent questions – hard enough to get us all thinking but not so hard that any tables got less than half marks in any of the rounds. Tessa Towner and Betty Cole also deserve thanks for the usual lovely spread in the interval and the clearing up afterwards. Thanks also to Tessa whose numeracy skills were called upon as scorer. Make sure you have the next quiz scheduled for Saturday, 10 October in your diaries!

Outreach to all Ages

We are aware of the importance of engaging Medway's young people in their varied educational sessions in partnership with Jeremy Clarke at Guildhall Museum and other colleagues.

In the past year we have begun to work with colleagues in Medway Council who deliver services to the elderly in residential homes in our area. We are producing a series of *Medway Memories* packs with images from our collections. Residential homes will be able to borrow the packs and use them to engender reminiscences and discussion with groups and individuals. We are looking into selling them too. Themes covered to date are *Shopping, 1950 – 1980*; *World War II and Evacuation*; *At Leisure: sports and hobbies*; *Home life, 1945 – 1980*. A further pack is underway: *When we were young: childhood and growing up*.

Work with Volunteers

Exhibitions and Events

We are thankful for the support provided by our many volunteers. This year FOMA members have helped us with many projects including assessing collections, carrying out research, scanning past display material and by compiling the first of five exhibitions on Medway and World War I. The second exhibition, which will focus on 1915, will be on display at MALSC from 3rd September.

Thank you one and all for all you do.

In conclusion, FOMA Vice President Sue Haydock took the floor for the re-election of the committee. She reminded those present that with the departure of Brian Joyce there is a spare seat on the committee. Should anyone be interested in joining then please contact Chairman Tessa Towner at picketywitch@blueyonder.co.uk (further contact details are provided overleaf on page 46)

is hoped that this will draw visitors to the Cathedral in the same way as (for example) the *Mappa Mundi* does at Hereford Cathedral. Alison has been working with the Cathedral's project officer to identify other key documents for display in the Crypt.

In August, work was undertaken to 'stabilise' the floor of the search room. We took the closure as an opportunity to bring forward our stocktaking fortnight. The work was completed according to schedule and the result is that the floor (which is above the archive strong rooms!) is much less prone to movement. The work, although effective, did not increase the floor loading capacity and, for this reason, we are unable to host large events.

Residual funds from the *Archives of Great Expectations* Heritage Lottery Fund project still need to be spent and Alison has arranged for a further batch of Rochester City Sessions Rolls to be cleaned and repaired by a local registered conservator. Once conserved, these important quarter session records (dating from 1641 and 1718) will be accessible to archive researchers.

Alison is currently finishing the recataloguing of the Methodist collections.

During the last twelve months the collections most requested by people visiting MALSC to view original archive material have been the Darnley Manuscripts, Poor Law Guardians, Dean and Chapter, Parish Councils and Building Control plans.

Alison also provided a list of newly catalogued collections for 2014; this was published in her Archives Update in the last issue (37) of *The Clock Tower*.

Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe was also unable to attend the AGM and provided the following report:

2014 was another eventful year at MALSC. A major concern over many years had been the effect of excessive loading on the search room floor. Work to strengthen the supporting pillars was carried out by structural engineers during the summer. This repair works means that MALSC can remain open on the present site, but some adjustments have been made. A proportion of the book stock has been removed to an adjacent store, and there are restrictions on having large groups in, so our talks are still being held in the Guildhall Chamber or in one of the larger libraries.

It is now known that MALSC is to be relocated to the recently-vacated Strood Library in the next 18 months, so our efforts are concentrated on preparing for the move.

The Local Studies Librarians are busy cataloguing materials, and, with the help of Centre staff and volunteers, we are working hard to refine our many collections, and provide better access to our holdings. This preparatory work will ensure that we make best use of the space we are given in the refurbished building. We hope that we will be able to offer the best service possible when we transfer.

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Talks

9 June 2015, 7.30 pm,
Medway Tales from the Dividing River.
A talk by Wilf Lower.

8 September, 7.30 pm,
Aspects of the Huguenot Society.
A talk by Amy Adams.

Saturday, 10 October, 7.30 pm,
Quiz Night.
£5 for members and non-members. **BOOKING REQUIRED** (see below).

10 November 2015, 7.30 pm,
The Role of Anglican Army Chaplains in WW1.
A talk by Linda Parker.

Exhibitions

September – October 2015.
See below (MALSC)

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.

Special Autumn Talks (further details to follow)

To celebrate 800 Years Since Magna Carta and the Siege of Rochester Castle. Hosted by FOMA, the City of Rochester Society and Friends of Guildhall Museums at the Guildhall Museum, Rochester.

8 October 2015: *Magna Carta and the Siege of Rochester Castle*,
Sir Robert Worcester, FOMA Vice President and Chairman of the International Magna Carta Society.

15 October: *King John*,
Dr Marc Morris.

22 October: *Rochester Castle*,
Dr Jeremy Clarke.

12 November: *Medieval Siege Warfare*,
Richard Dunn.

Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Exhibitions

27 April to 30 June 2015
VE Day.

7 May 2015 – 30 June,
The Sporting Life.

2 July 2015 – 1 September,
Strood: a place of industry,
By Jean Lear.

3 September 2015 – 31 October,
FOMA World War One 1915.

19 November 2015 – 19 January 2016,
Railway exhibition,
By Bob Ratcliffe.

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.

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.

been added in the last 12 months. The most notable was in August, which saw the launch of the De Caville Index. The search feature utilises a type of backroom internet database allowing users to query the data from the front end. This has provided a very powerful tool which can be used by both the Friends and MALSC. FOMA's web presence has also been increased with the launch in the summer of its own Facebook page. This is currently being used to publicise events and news, and to date has around 28 likes. It is hoped the page will be used in the future as a way of engaging people in the Friends' activities.

MALSC Archivist Alison Cable could not be present at the AGM but she provided the following report which is printed here in lieu of her usual *Archives Update*.

A list of new accessions received during 2014, has been lodged with the National Archives and will be published in their *Annual Accessions to Repositories* report for last year. In addition, a list of newly catalogued collections has been submitted to the Kent Archaeological Society to be included in their annual list of new catalogues from Kent's archive offices. The lists of catalogues will be published in *Archaeologia Cantiana* (aka 'Arch Cant').

The consultation regarding the relocation of MALSC is now complete and the Council has given full backing to the proposed move to the old Strood Library premises. The National Archives are being consulted about the relocation project and have visited the site.

Findmypast's *National Schools Admission Registers* database was launched in September 2014, and includes registers from Medway Schools dating from 1870-1914. These volumes form part of the school archive collections deposited at MALSC. The launch was the culmination of about four years of preparation by numerous archive offices in England and Wales and enabled participants to acquire digital conservation copies of their registers whilst simultaneously allowing the records to become accessible to a much wider group of potential researchers.

Visitors to MALSC can access the school registers on-line (free of charge) at Findmypast's website by booking a slot on one of the public computers using a Medway or Kent Libraries Card.

Alison continues to work in partnership with Rochester Cathedral on their current Heritage Lottery Funded project which will see the re-roofing and re-design of the Cathedral Library, and fitting out of the Crypt to become a new permanent display area for Cathedral treasures. The focal point will be a new permanent display and interpretation of the *Textus Roffensis*. This key document forms part of the archives of the Dean and Chapter and its national and international importance as an Anglo Saxon document means that for many years the volume has had to be kept in highly secured storage at MALSC. With the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the document can be put on display using specialist environmentally controlled exhibition equipment and it

Jean Skilling was the next to speak. Jean has been acting as Treasurer since her resignation at the 2014 AGM, and she was pleased to announce that the post is about to be filled. More news will follow and following the appointment Jean will then become the FOMA accounts' Independent Examiner, taking over from Cindy O'Halloran's daughter Laura. Jean thanked Laura for all her help in this role.

FOMA has made many new purchases in the last year including new display boards for MALSC and two copies of the book *Art Schools of Kent*, one for MALSC and the other for the library service. One of the biggest expenses was a fee for Richard van Emden when he spoke to members in the summer. However, celebrity speakers will always incur an expense but it is important that the quality of FOMA talks is maintained and that we attract large audiences. Counteracting this cost is the fact that postage is down as Jean wisely purchased stamps ahead of the recent price hike. To conclude Jean confirmed that Alison Cable had decided that the remainder of the Heritage Lottery Fund money (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 13, February 2009) would be used in the conservation of the Rochester City Session Rolls.

Odette Buchanan, FOMA Secretary, spoke next. She thanked everyone who had helped over the past year and expressed her sadness that Brian Joyce had moved to Cheshire. The delivery network for *The Clock Tower* has increased in the Medway area and this has been a real boost in keeping postage costs down. Membership is also up again and this and high attendance numbers at events means that FOMA can help MALSC so much more. 2015 is likely to be another successful year financially with some wonderful talks planned including those organised with the help of Sir Robert Worcester on the Magna Carta and the Siege of Rochester Castle. Membership cards will be coming out shortly (and are included with this issue) and all future events will be published on these. We can also look forward to some more great exhibitions at MALSC, including the FOMA one on World War One in 1915. The move to the Strood Library site is exciting and hopefully once MALSC is there, Odette concluded, 'We won't be in fear of the floor collapsing.'

A review of *The Clock Tower* began with my thanking Ray Maisey and Rabbit Hutch Printers for their support and work over the past year. Without Ray's willingness to turn the journal around quickly we would not be able to include so many up-to-date items.

Our growing number of enthusiastic contributors also make my work very easy. Thanks go to Amy Adams, Andrew Ashbee, Odette Buchanan, Brian Butler, Alison Cable, Catharina Clement, Betty Cole, Steve Cross, Irina Fridman, Sue Haydock, Doris Herlihy, Brian Joyce, Cindy O'Halloran, Bob Ratcliffe, Alex Thomas, Alison Thomas, Tessa Towner, Bettine Walters and Helen Worthy; our roving reporters Sue Haydock and Barry Cox should also be commended. In the last year we have also included a range of special features including *Amateur Dramatics in Medway*, the *Outbreak of World War One* and most recently *The Huguenots*.

I went on to thank my son, Alex Thomas, who in the summer re-launched the FOMA website and the De Caville Index. Alex provided the following which was read out at the AGM:

The last year has been very successful where FOMA's web presence is concerned. Aside from simply posting news and events on the front page of the website, new features have

The contract was awarded to Fairhurst Ward Abbots at the end of February 2015, a company experienced in working with restoration projects such as this. Work began in March and is due for completion in spring 2016. 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.

See also Sue Haydock's report on page 14.

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.

All talks are at The Moat House, 8 Crow Lane, Rochester, ME1 1RF. See the website for further details. 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.

HUGUENOT MUSEUM

discover your story

15 May, 5.00pm – 8.00pm.

Museum at Night.

Join the Huguenot Museum for Museums at Night 2015. Meet the team and have a tour of Rochester's brand new museum! Have a glass of wine and explore our new displays. £4/£3.

27 to 29 May; one hour sessions at 10.30am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm.

Family events: Museum madness!

Join us this half term to make your own museum in a box, even create your own portraits, paintings and treasures to go inside. 6+ years. £4 per child.

13 June, 10.00am – 4.00pm.

Craft Bench Workshop: Bookbinding.

Try your hand at bookbinding! Join local craftsman Mike FitzGerald on this one day introductory course. Create a cased and bound book by the end of the day. £45.

11 July 7.00pm.

French Film Night: Marie Antoinette.

Join us at the museum for a Rochester Film Society screening of *Marie Antoinette*. This re-telling of France's iconic but ill-fated Queen was written and directed by Sofia Coppola and stars Kirsten Dunst. Have a glass of wine before the screening and get to know the newest film venue on the High Street. £7.50/£5. To book visit www.rochesterfilmsociety.co.uk

18 July 2.30pm – 4.30pm.

Huguenots of Kent, past and future.

Join Dr Gillian Draper for a fascinating and insightful talk about the history of the Huguenots in Kent. £7.

5, 12, 19 & 26 August; one hour sessions at 10.30am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm.

Family events: Sunny summer crafts.

Every Wednesday of the summer holidays we will be making crafts inspired by the seaside, garden, park and sunshine. 6+ years. £4 per child.

Unless otherwise indicated, for all booking call 01634 789347, email learning@huguenotmuseum.org or visit www.huguenotmuseum.org; Huguenot Museum, 95 High Street, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1LX.

Huguenot Museum: Children's Clubs

The Saturday Club.

10.00am – 12.00pm; £4 per child or £30 per year.

Are you super crafty? Join the Saturday Club and have a go at amazing arts and crafts on the first Saturday of each month. 8+ years. Booking as above.

6 June	Weaving
4 July	Felt making
5 September	Batik
3 October	Simple samplers
7 November	Papier-mâché crests
5 December	Decoupage decorations

Children's Cinema: French Film Club

Join us for morning screenings (10.00am – 12.00pm) of classic children's films with a French twist. Bring your own food and drink and don't worry about the noise! £3 per person.

To book visit www.rochesterfilmsociety.co.uk

19 September	Hugo
17 October	Hunchback of Notre Dame
14 November	Ratatouille
19 December	Beauty & the Beast

Huguenot Museum: Story time

Bring your under 5's along every Thursday morning (10.00am – 11.00am) to have fun with props and games as we bring a different story to life each week. From Maisy to Elmer, little

FOMA website in August 2014. The Index has attracted enormous interest and additional information has already been added.

Amanda Thomas then gave an overview on the continued success of *The Clock Tower*. This is in large part to the tremendous number of contributors, many of whom were at the volunteer meeting. Alex Thomas, the FOMA Webmaster had also written a brief report; this was repeated at the AGM and can be read below.

The meeting was wound up by Norma who spoke about the projects undertaken by volunteers in 2014. These included the cataloguing of Leonard Hill negatives by Bob Ratcliffe, the indexing of *Chatham Standard* features and scrap books by Jill Payne and Pauline Weeds, exhibition scanning by Brian Butler and Steve Cross, glass plate negatives digitisation by Roger Smoothy, reminiscence packs (including and a reminiscence pilot visit to a residential home), Parkwood local history by Doris Herlihy, and cassette tape listing by Elaine Gardner. Society projects included the FOMA World War One 1914 Centenary exhibition, the online De Caville Index and the KFHS Helpdesk. Norma also thanked Amanda Thomas for her work on *The Clock Tower* and Alex Thomas for his work on the FOMA website and the De Caville Index. There are many new projects and exhibitions coming up in the course of 2015. These include more work on the Leonard Hill negatives, exhibition scanning, the FOMA WWI 2015 exhibition, the cataloguing of the Shorts Brothers Collection and an archive on Strood pubs; Bob Ratcliffe is also organising a new railway exhibition. Norma is also looking for helpers for the Will Adams Festival on 12 September 2015. If you would like to get involved as a volunteer, please contact Norma at norma.crowe@medway.gov.uk

The FOMA AGM

This year's AGM began with an introduction by Chairman, Tessa Towner (see page 2). She began with one of the highlights of the year, the launch of the De Caville Index on the FOMA website and thanked Alex Thomas, Elaine Gardner and Amanda Thomas for their work on this.

'It doesn't matter what you put in it – it comes up!' Tessa declared, talking about the search engine which makes the Index so user-friendly. Tessa went on to discuss the World War One in 1914 exhibition at MALSC which was a great success, and then the Live Bait Squadron commemorations in September. 'It was a very moving experience.'

Tessa expressed her sadness for the resignation of committee member Brian Joyce who has moved to Cheshire, but he remains a FOMA member and still contributes to *The Clock Tower*. One of the biggest changes in the months to come will be MALSC's move to the old Strood Library site in Bryant Road, Strood; FOMA is naturally closely involved. Tessa concluded by thanking all the staff at MALSC, FOMA members and the committee.

Doris and her husband have lived there for over 40 years and the history of the place is most intriguing, though her enquiries to churches, clubs and schools have thus far not been very fruitful. More information has come from friends and acquaintances and the publication *Action Forum* which began in 1969. The estate was originally occupied by a great many people who had been in the Devonshire Regiment and articles in the *Chatham Standard* archive at MALSC have revealed that the estate was conceived to alleviate London's growing population. Only one 'For Sale' advertisement has been found, however, and that was published in 1967. The first school at Parkwood was made up of two huts almost exactly where Doris lives now. There were no shops at first either. Doris has also been looking at what the area was like before the estate was built. It was an area of woodland and farmland and was notable for its caves which were used for smuggling. Some of Doris' information came from her brother-in-law's wife, Avril Herlihy, who has since moved to New Zealand. Norma read out some of Avril's reminiscences, as follows:

'Mum and I used to come down to Kent on the Greenline bus as we were living in South Woodford at the time ... This bus used to drop us off in Gillingham ... outside the Spyglass and Kettle pub or if lucky it as the Queen's Head ... being closer to my Grandmother's house. She and Grandpa lived in number 393 Maidstone Rd. which was a small bungalow with a very long, narrow back garden. This backed on to 'The Woods' which were accessible through a little gate and afforded hours of fun for me. There were bent trees with mossy trunks, full of fairy holes which had to be batted with a stick or they wouldn't let you pass in safety. (This was a known fact!). In the spring the woods were thickly carpeted with bluebells, aconites, primroses and violets etc. and once through the woods and into 'The Glade' the scent of wild thyme was almost overpowering. You couldn't avoid crushing it underfoot, disturbing millions of bees which collectively made a very loud noise ... my grandparents were Ernest and Ethel Gostling and next door were the Pilbeams ...'

Alison Thomas, MALSC's Archive and Local Studies Assistant, was the next to address the meeting. Alison updated us on the cataloguing of glass negatives which Roger Smoothy has almost completed. A number of heavy and fragile glass plates (some as large as 12 by 8 inches) have been transferred from the Guildhall Museum in Rochester and Roger has also been through these and digitised them. The clarity of these is amazing and they depict street scenes, architectural features on Rochester Cathedral, Rochester Castle, and the rhododendrons at Cobham Hall; the plates date from 1844 to 1898 and the 1920s.

Tessa Towner thanked everyone who has been coming to MALSC every Tuesday and Thursday to man the KFHS Helpdesk, which has now been going for ten years. Colin Allen, the KFHS Chairman, commented on the digitisation of the Fort Pitt cemetery records. These date from 1869 to 1987 – he wondered if anyone knew where the earlier records were held. Tessa went on to explain that the transcription of the Chatham Cemetery records are on-going and that Alison Cable has given permission for these to be digitised. Norma Crowe noted that we are indebted to Medway Bereavement Services for their part in this work. Also on-going is the transcription of cremation records by Tony Clarke and Jean Skilling. In conclusion Tessa spoke of the Live Bait Squadron commemorations in September 2014 and also about the late Michael de Caville and the launch of the De Caville Index on the

mouse and the hungry caterpillar. Toys and play mats available – and even tea for the grown-ups. 0-5 years. See our website (www.huguenotmuseum.org) for a full story list. £3.50 per child, adults free. No need to book, just turn up!

4, 11, 18 & 25 June
2, 9 & 16 July
10, 17 & 24 September
1, 8, 15 & 22 October
5, 12, 19 & 26 November
3, 10, & 17 December

Friends of Broomhill



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

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 Friends of the Guildhall Museums

www.friendsoftheguildhall.com

The Friends of the Guildhall Museums is a group which supports the work of two important but very different elements of Medway's heritage - the Guildhall Museum in Rochester and the Old Brook Pumping Station in Chatham. Supporting the Guildhall Museums will help conserve our local history for generations to come through specialist events and opportunities designed to educate and inspire, telling the stories of the Medway Towns.

Saturday, May 30, 2015.

Launch of Janet Skinner's *Janagatha: The Australian Dog*.

1:00pm - 2:00pm, Guildhall Museum, Rochester.

This children's story is based around Rochester and Upnor Castles, Chatham Dockyard and other parts of Rochester and Chatham. Refreshments will be available.

Saturday, June 13, 2015.

Medway Queen and LV21 Visit.

11:00am - 1:00pm, Gillingham Pier.

Plenty of parking space for visitors but car shares will be appreciated. Please note the paddle steamer is in course of restoration and the descent to the interior is steep. The visit is approx. one hour and includes a short talk on the steamer's 'Finest Hour' at Dunkirk. At 12 noon visit Lightship LV21.

Donations collected on arrival, shared between the Medway Queen Preservation Society and the Lightship. For all events please contact: Events Organiser: Chris Furminger (01634 320598) or cafurminger@blueyonder.co.uk

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 June 2015.

The Heartbeat Years,

A talk by Roy Ingleton (of Policing.).

9th July.

The Real Downton Abbey,

A talk by - Ian Porter.

10th September 2015

Experiences of a Film Extra,

A talk by Vic Chidley.

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

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive

Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME4

4UG www.re-museum.co.uk for more details

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



The MALSC Volunteer Morning and the FOMA AGM

Amanda Thomas



Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. Born in Chatham, but now based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society, 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.

The MALSC Volunteer Morning

The annual Volunteer Morning was held at MALSC on 11 March 2015. Organised by Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe, the event was well attended by those who have helped the archives in the past year. The morning began with a talk by FOMA member and Medway Heritage Services Manager, Simon Lace. Naturally everyone was keen to have an update on the now confirmed move to the old Strood Library building. The recent structural problems in the existing clock tower building and the lack of space means that the move to Strood is now seen as an opportunity to revitalise the archives and the service it provides. Simon explained that the new Heritage Services department at Medway Council now combines museums, Rochester and Upnor Castles, Temple Manor, Eastgate House and MALSC. Given that so many volunteers and Friends' members have an association with all of these organisations, communication has improved and there is a genuine sense of excitement for the future.

The Strood Library building is now empty and the library has moved to the High Street. The MALSC move will take around 18 months and will certainly not be easy but thanks to the many meetings Simon has had with us all and the on-going consultative process, he is well aware that some of the biggest challenges at the new site will be parking, the creation of a new strong room, and the need for refreshments in the new building. Some new equipment will be purchased, and it is hoped that the online archive, *CityArk* will undergo an overhaul. The relocation process has been budgeted at over £970,000 and will begin in late April 2015, so will already be under way when this *Clock Tower* is published. Simon acknowledged that it is easy to take volunteers for granted, and for this reason he will be organising a visit to the new building for them to have their say on what is happening. He concluded, 'We couldn't do what we do without you helping us.'

Following Simon's update, the meeting paused for coffee and cake to celebrate Doris Herlihy's birthday (see the photograph on the front cover). Doris is a long standing volunteer and *Clock Tower* contributor and she has recently been working on the history of the Parkwood estate in Rainham which was first built in the 1960s. Parkwood was the biggest private housing estate in Europe and will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary next year.

It goes on to explain how Charlie Rolls visited the USA and met with the Wright Brothers, who were having little success in convincing the military *establishment* of many countries that aeroplanes were the way to go in the future and should be taken seriously. It tells of the fortuitous meeting with Charlie Hands of the *Daily Mail* and the momentous meeting at the future home of the Aero Club, Muswell (Mussell) Manor near Leysdown, (see Barry Cox's article in *The Clock Tower*, issue 31: August 2013) and the introduction to Mrs Amy Cunningham.

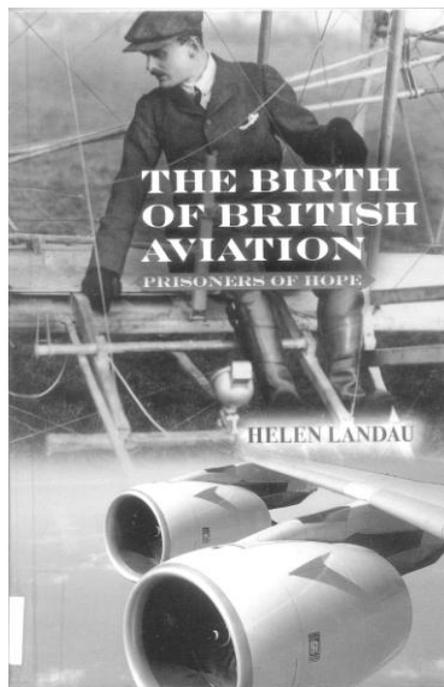
The early problems of persuading the Wright Brothers that the Short Brothers were the right people to employ to produce their aeroplanes are covered extensively, leading to an eventually successful agreement. The Short's first attempt to produce a heavier than air flying machine was unsuccessful because of an attempt to use a road vehicle engine which was far too heavy for flight. The second was much more successful, the result of a commission by John Moore-Brabazon himself. The third was an order from Frank McClean then, once the order from the Wright Brothers came, the aircraft were all sold almost immediately.

The first British flight by John Moore-Brabazon is covered by an entire chapter, which then it goes on to cover the visit of the Wright Brothers to Sheppey; this is supplemented by copies of photographs taken at the time. The narrative also includes the story of how the police caught Mr Charles Rolls speeding on Bluebell Hill.

When Louis Bleriot crossed the English Channel in 1909, this gave the Shorts the incentive to give the government an additional kick, so John Moore-Brabazon finally completed the first circular mile to win the *Daily Mail* prize of one thousand pounds.

Much additional information is provided in the book following the further fortunes of the main players and the development of aviation in general. However, I do not want to give away too much of the story, so I hope this taster will prompt you to buy the book!

ISBN: 978-0-9926506-0-5.



Events

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

28 April - 13 July: *Through Our Eyes*, and exhibition in association with the Kent Association for the Blind Medway Art Group. The KAB Medway Blind Art Group has been shortlisted in the Epic Awards for their graffiti exhibition at Rochester Cathedral last year. You can vote for the KAB in the People's Choice Award by going to <http://shortlist.epicawards.co.uk/>.

12 May – 15 November: *Front14/18 – the Great War in 3D*, a fascinating exhibition looking at Stereoscopic images of WW1. 3D glasses will be available in the exhibition.

26th-29th May: Napoleonic Family Activities. Unearth the hidden stories of Napoleonic soldiers.

20th–21st June: Battle of Waterloo. View living history displays which bring to life Napoleons last battle.

28th July-28th August: Modern Army Family Activities (Excluding Mondays and weekends) Find out about life as a Royal Engineer in the modern British Army.

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.



The latest information can be found at:
www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/

Autumn Conference Programme

Kent's Anglo-Saxon heritage, historic houses and industrial archaeology will be the themes of Kent Archaeological Society conferences in October (2015), hosted by eminent archaeologists and historians.

Saturday 24 October:

Past industries of Kent and relevant buildings.

Blue Town Heritage Centre, Sheerness.

To include talks by Dr Maureen Green on Hayle Mill, Maidstone, which thrived in the 19th century despite continuing to use traditional papermaking techniques; and by Sue Harris on the restoration of the grounds of Quex Park, Birchington. Tickets for the conference cost £20, including light lunch and refreshments. For a booking form email mike@mikeclinch.co.uk or download from www.kentarchaeology.org.uk.

Saturday 17 October:

Investigating the North Coast of Kent

The KAS is supporting this Joint Study Day organized by the University of Kent and the Council for Kentish Archaeology and led by Dr Brian Philp, one of the most experienced field archaeologists working in Kent and beyond. Dr Philp will talk about Faversham Abbey and the tomb of King Stephen. Among the other speakers will be Dr Gillian Draper of Canterbury Christ Church University, who will look at the transformation of the Hundred of Hoo, from medieval to modern times. Tickets cost £5.00. Details of the programme will be posted on the CKA's website http://cka.moon-demon.co.uk/cka_index.htm

Saturday 31 October:

Anglo-Saxon Kent: Old and New Discoveries

Rutherford College, University of Kent at Canterbury.

To include talks by KAS curator Dr Andrew Richardson on the society's collection of 'finds' of that period; Keith Parfitt on settlements in the Dover area and on the east Kent downs; Ges Moody on his research into where St Augustine and his missionaries landed in Thanet; Dr Andrew Richardson and Dana Goodburn Brown of Conservation Science Investigations (CSI) on The Meads Cemetery, Sittingbourne; Dr Gabor Thomas and Dr Alexandra Knox on discoveries at Lyminge, and Alison Taylor on St Peter's Cemetery, Thanet. Tickets for *Anglo-Saxon Kent: Old and New Discoveries* cost £20. Download a booking form from www.kentarchaeology.org.uk or email: membership@kentarchaeology.org.uk for full details.

Canterbury Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Folkestone Roman Villa Field School, Season 1: 18 July to 16 August 2015

Join an intensive four week archaeological training programme led by Canterbury Archaeological Trust. Learn from our experienced team of professional archaeologists whilst helping to excavate an internationally significant Iron Age settlement and Roman villa at East Wear Bay, Folkestone. The site occupies a spectacular cliff-top location looking across the Straits of Dover to the French coast. Further information at: www.canterburytrust.co.uk/community_archaeology/archaeology-courses/

The Rochester Bridge Trust

Bridge Wardens' Lectures 2015

Tuesday 9th June 2015,

Rochester Bridge during the Anglo-French Wars.

A talk by Professor David Ormrod, Emeritus Professor of History, University of Kent

This year is the 200th anniversary year of Wellington's victory at the Battle of Waterloo. The uncertainty surrounding the Anglo-French Wars of 1793-1815 had profound consequences for life across the country, and the Rochester Bridge Trust was not immune to its effects.

For more details please visit www.huguenotmuseum.org

The Huguenot Museum is open Wednesday – Saturday 10am – 5pm on the top two floors of 95 High Street, Rochester, Kent. Entrance is £4 for adults and £3 concessions and can be validated for 12 months with gift-aid. For more information or to get in touch visit www.huguenotmuseum.org, call 01634 789347 or email learning@huguenotmuseum.org

Huguenot Mystery

Can you help solve this mystery about the Huguenot Minet family?

Hughes Minet lived in Dover and London and went into business with Peter Fector to create the bank Minet and Fector in the late 1700s. The bank was the forerunner of the National Provincial Bank and today's RBS, (Royal Bank of Scotland)

– see: <http://heritagearchives.rbs.com/companies/list/fector-and-co.html>.

The agreement between Minet and Fector was drawn up in 1767 in Rochester. The question is – why was it drawn up there?

If you have any idea why this may be the case, please contact the Editor, Amanda Thomas, amanda@ajthomas.com; further details on *The Committee* contact page.

Magnum Opus

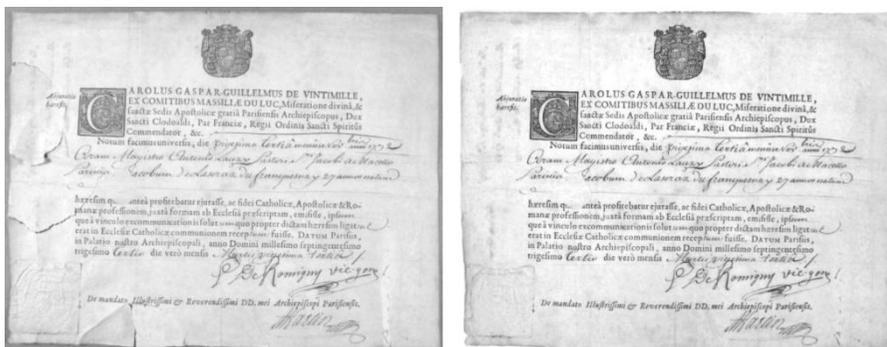
Steve Cross



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.

The Birth of British Aviation – Prisoners of Hope, by Helen Landau.

This book is fundamentally about the early life stories of several prominent figures in the early days of aviation: Rolls and Royce, the Short brothers, Frank McClean, John Moore-Brabazon etc. and how they all gradually got involved in the aviation game. It details how they formed the Aero Club in the wide open spaces near Eastchurch, building workshops and hangars where their aeroplanes could be built and stored. Almost the entire narrative takes place on the Isle of Sheppey, supplemented by much geographical and historical background, lending itself to provide interest to all readers who may be interested in that particular area of Kent.



The certificate of abjuration before (left) and after conservation.

A number of our paper archives also went away for conservation. The certificate of abjuration also pictured here was in a terrible state. The certificate was signed by Antoine Lauze in 1733 when he was forced to give up his protestant faith. The paper is handmade and the writing is made in iron gall ink and carbon black. There was general discolouration and foxing marks (brown markings) over the whole document as well a number of medium and large size tears all around. Our paper conservator gave the entire document a surface clean before removing some of the 'soluble acidity' from the paper. Next the tears were repaired using Japanese paper which is a thin, lightweight paper ideal for repairing paper documents. Finally the certificate was remounted on acid free board with polyester strips to hold it in place. The certificate is now on display in our first gallery and is used to tell the story of those Huguenots who were forced by France to give up, or abjure, their protestant faith and become a Catholic.

As some of you may have seen, our website (www.huguenotmuseum.or) is now up and running. Here you can find details of all of our events, news stories and a bit of background to the museum. The website also hosts a collections page. On this page you can find details about the collection, view featured items and very shortly you will also be able to search our catalogue online from here. At present the catalogue features all the items on display at the museum, but over the weeks and months the museum team and volunteers will be working through the rest of the collection to get it online. This will mean that prior to booking a visit to our archive room you can find out what is available: from books and manuscripts to etchings and objects! Please do note that it will be some while before our collection is fully catalogued so do bear with us in the interim if you have any specific research enquiries.

We have also been busy working away at our museum events programme which is now finalised through to the end of the year. It is packed full of exciting events and workshops for everyone: from film screenings and craft workshops to storytelling and children's activities (see *News and Events*, page 7). Of particular interest to the readers of *The Clock Tower* will be *Huguenots of Kent* a talk by Dr Gillian Draper on 18 July and perhaps our afternoon family history course on 4 November, led by professional genealogist Celia Heritage. We are also running a one day introduction course to bookbinding in June which I am certainly looking forward to.

Tuesday 20th October 2015.

The Wildlife of the North Kent Marshes.

A talk by Alan Jarrett, Junior Warden, Rochester Bridge Trust.

Alan Jarrett has been wildfowling for over 40 years. He is a well-known sports writer and his first book, *Wildfowling – One Winter's Tale*, was published in 1988 with *Shooting At Clays* published in 1991. Alan is the current Chairman of both the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and the Kent Wildfowling and Conservation Association.

Lectures will be held in the medieval Bridge Chapel, 5 Esplanade, Rochester, ME1 1QE. Refreshments available from 6:30 p.m. Lectures begin promptly at 7:00 p.m.. **Tickets are free but MUST be booked in advance** from Sue Reilly at sue@maxim-pr.co.uk or by telephone on 01892 513033.

Brompton History Research Group

www.bromptonhistory.org.uk/

Brompton village is a complex civilian area in the heart of a military world. To the south and east lie the Chatham Lines, a series of fortifications built to defend the Chatham Dockyard. To the west lies the Dockyard itself and to the north Brompton Barracks, home of the Royal Engineers.

25th June 2015, 7pm,

The History of Brompton.

Join the Brompton History Research Group for an historical walk around the village of Brompton. Meeting point outside the Lampard Centre, Brompton, (Sally Port Gardens, Brompton, Kent, ME7 5BS). Tickets £3; booking essential, please email bhrgbookings@gmail.com

27th August 2015 6.30pm,

Unrestored Amherst.

A walk around the unrestored parts of Fort Amherst. Join Martin Rogers and the Brompton History Research Group on an evening walk around the unrestored areas of Fort Amherst, which are not usually open to the public. Meeting at the Fort Amherst Café, 6.30pm, and taking around 2 hours. Tickets £3; booking essential, please email bhrgbookings@gmail.com

15th October 2015 7pm,

Military Road before the Pentagon Centre.

A talk by Brian Joyce and the Brompton History Research Group about the shops, pubs and other landmarks of Military Road, from the Victorian period to the present day. For a comparatively short stretch of road, it contained a host of interesting features, many of which listeners will remember. Royal Engineers Museum. Tickets £3, booking essential, please email bhrgbookings@gmail.com

Heritage News

Eastgate House

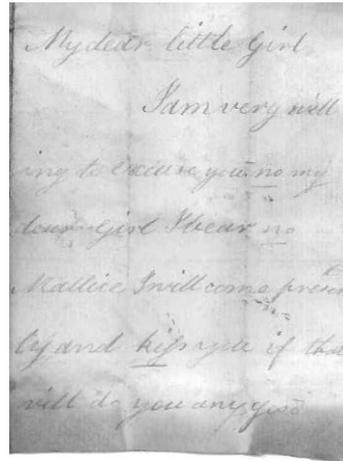
Sue Haydock

The latest from our roving reporter, Medway Heritage Champion and FOMA Vice President

At the end of last year in December, the contract for the refurbishment of Eastgate House was awarded to builders Fairhurst Ward Abbotts. I was delighted to attend the official launch of the refurbishment on 25 March, as pictured below.



Friends of Eastgate House and Dickens Fellowship members at the launch. From left to right: Alan Moss, Sue Haydock, Karen Walling, Norman Munn, Jan Bird. Photographs from Sue Haydock.



As work has progressed several interesting artefacts have been discovered. One of these was a letter (pictured) found beneath the floorboards. It is believed to be from the period when the house was a boarding school and Medway Council's Lisa Caleno has provided a rough transcription:

'Mr Dear little Girl,
I am very willing to excuse you. no my dear Girl I bear no Malice I will come presently and kiss you if that will do any good.
Allow me to remain, my dear
Your Friend that you are
N Brunenell(?)'

Also found under floorboards were keys, a thimble, and even an old farthing – as pictured on the back cover.

Huguenot Museum Update

Amy Adams

Amy Adams is the Learning and Community Engagement Officer at the Huguenot Museum, Rochester. Amy was born and grew up in Gillingham and is passionate about the history of the Medway Towns. She is a founder-member of the Brompton History Research Group and has worked on a number of local history exhibitions in the area. Amy studied Classics at the University of Reading before completing an MA in Cultural Heritage at the University of East Anglia. She then returned to Kent to take up a career in museums. Amy has previously worked as Deputy Curator at the Royal Engineers Museum and Interpretation Manager at Maidstone Museum.



Since my last update things at the Huguenot Museum have moved on a pace. Objects are in their cases, graphics installed, labels finished and we have even created our shop! Director, Hannah Kay, our team of volunteers and I are looking forward to May 13 with excitement when we open our doors to the public for the first time!

The new Huguenot Museum exhibits objects never seen by the public before. The collections have been conserved, repaired and cleaned by a team of experts using our Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant. One piece conserved was this doll (pictured on the previous page) from 1887 which belongs to the Ouvry family and is dressed in the uniform of the Westminster French School which was founded in 1747. It is an enigmatic piece and was kept at the school before it was closed.

The early photograph (right) shows the doll in her outfit being held by a group of pupils wearing the same uniform. The doll has a porcelain head, hands and feet with a fabric body. She wears a blue woollen dress, white cotton bonnet and apron in the style of the Huguenot School uniform. Before conservation the doll's blue dress was severely faded, her hair was tangled and her head had come loose. Textile conservators painstakingly removed each layer of the doll's outfit in order to clean and restore her. The paint on the doll's face and the glue fixing her hair were both water-soluble so were cleaned without liquid and her head was re-attached using cotton tape. The clothing was wet cleaned to bring back their original lustre and were pressed before the doll was re-dressed. Finally the bonnet was re-shaped by padding it with white nylon net. Around 10 hours work went into the conservation of our Huguenot School doll.



Above right: the 1887 doll pictured with girls from the Westminster French School.

their fortress, leaving behind all the horses and most of their weapons and prisoners as they fled to their ships³.

In 986 conflict again occasioned a royal visit. Godwin II, Bishop of Rochester quarrelled with King Aethelred (968 – 1016) who *had no veneration for the ecclesiastics*. Angry with the bishop's defiance, the king attacked Rochester. However, it was too well defended by the citizens who sided with the bishop, and so the king turned his anger on the diocese, or, as the Anglo Saxon Chronicles put it, *did for the bishopric*⁴.

Dunstan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, *roused from his meditations* at Canterbury, could not allow this attack on the church and interposed on her behalf. However his spiritual threats, including the vengeance of St Andrew, were not only ineffectual but caused the King to prosecute his attack more fiercely.

Dunstan then resorted to pecuniary measures and succeeded by offering 100 pounds of silver. Aethelred accepted the money, abandoned the attack and departed; we are told, *regardless of the anathemas which Dunstan poured forth against him for his avarice and impiety*.⁵

Notes

1. Mackenzie, E.C. Walcott, *Oxford Memorials of England*.
2. Friends of Rochester Cathedral, 13 Centuries of Goodwill.
3. *Asser: Alfred the Great*, translated by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge.
4. Swanton, Michael: *The Anglo Saxon Chronicles*.
5. Thomas Hodgkin, *Political History of England, Vol. 1*, 1906.

In the next issue of *The Clock Tower: The Normans*

Right: The 1887 doll in three stages of conservation (see Huguenot Museum Update which follows)



Eastchurch Museum

Barry Cox, KCT



FOMA member and roving reporter Barry Cox is a retired sales executive who enjoys local history.

On 20 March 2015 I attended the preview opening of the Eastchurch Aviation Museum at Stanford Hill Prison (off Brabazon Way) on behalf of FOMA. The project was put together by Jenny and Ian Hurkett of Bluetown Heritage Centre and The Sheppey Heritage Trust and it is great that the Island's flying history is being remembered.

The opening was attended by approximately fifty people and opened by the Mayor of Swale George Bobbin. The museum is very interesting with lots of information displayed on boards and many model aircraft on display. The Old Mill Coffee Shop is nearby and all in all makes for a very worthwhile visit to the marshes! A lot of praise should go to the unsung heroes who have helped make all this possible, particularly Centre Manager, Karen Boosey.



Left: Jenny Hurkett. Photographs by Barry Cox.

The museum is on the site occupied by the Shorts Brothers in the early twentieth century following their move from Muswell Manor in Leysdown in 1910 (and as remembered in the plaques pictured). The Manor is also well worth a visit, and as I reported in *The Clock Tower* back in August 2013. More information is available of their website, www.muswellmanor.co.uk/muswell-manor-sheppey.php

Run by volunteers Eastchurch Aviation Museum is open Monday to Saturday from 10am till 3pm. It is well worth the trouble to find and an enjoyable visit for those interested in early aviation. (See also Steve Cross' Magnum Opus on page 37).



FOMA Members

The New Clock Tower Index

We were delighted when new FOMA member Nic Nicholas contacted us to ask if we would like *The Clock Tower* professionally indexed. Needless to say we accepted her offer and the Index will shortly be launched on the FOMA website.

To introduce herself, Nic has written a few words on her background and interests:

I have always been a keen amateur historian with a particular interest in Victorian history and have been researching my Northern Irish family for over twenty years. After living in Kent since 1992 it is about time that I explored my local history. With Huguenot ancestry (née Montgomery) it is an exciting time in Rochester with the new museum opening.

After a career in business, and now bringing up a family, I decided to add indexing to proofreading and have now achieved accreditation with the UK Society of Indexers. I am writing a new index for *The Indexer* (the international journal of indexing) and run the marketing side of things, including Twitter. I am also a member of ICRIS (International Committee of Representatives of Indexing Societies) and have been the student representative.

Volunteer work has always been a part of my life so I naturally wanted to include indexing. Putting my new-found skills to good use, I hope that my index will be useful to members of the society. If time permits in the future, perhaps a more detailed subject index may evolve! Interestingly, I have recently completed a local history index which was a fascinating insight into the first settlers arriving in Cotopaxi (Denver, Colorado) in 1882. These people were Jewish refugees who had travelled to America from Russia, having been promised a new life as farmers. Sadly, the Colony had failed by 1883, despite their heroic efforts to farm on inhospitable land.



Nic at work.

New Members

A warm - and in some cases belated - welcome to new FOMA members: Mr Malcolm Scott, Mr Gary Marcham, Miss Irina Fridman, Miss Carolyn Boiston Wheeler, Mrs Sandra Bailey, the Gillingham and Rainham Local History Society, Mr Simon Rowan-Robinson, Mr and Mrs S.P. Nicholas and Ms Jillian Fordham. An Honorary Life Membership has been given to Mr Henk van der Linden to mark his work with the Live Bait Squadron Society and his support and friendship for FOMA.

Roll out the Red Carpet

P.J. Salter



Pat Salter worked at the Guildhall Museum Rochester and at MALSC for over 20 years. She is a well known author and works include A Man of Many Parts - Edwin Harris 1859 – 1938; Pat is also a FOMA Vice President.

We are delighted that Pat Salter has given us permission to serialise her book, Roll out the Red Carpet, which will later be published in its entirety on the FOMA website. The book is a compilation of work originally undertaken by Pat for an exhibition at MALSC and gives a fascinating insight into royal visits to the Medway Towns over the centuries, from Anglo Saxon times right up to the present day. Thanks to Rob Flood and Philip Dodd for helping to make publication possible.

Introduction

The red carpet has been rolled out, literally or metaphorically, for royal visitors to the Medway area for centuries. However, the red carpet has not always been a celebratory one. Wars, sieges, rebellions and invasions have been occasioned by, or resulted in, carpets of blood.

The Medway area has been inhabited since ancient times but the first royal visitor that we know of, with any certainty, was Aethelbert, King of Kent, in 604 and the latest, at the time of writing, that of the Princess Royal in March 2011.

Anglo Saxons

The admirable Bede described Aethelberht, King of Kent as *an able, powerful, and open-minded ruler who had a Christian Queen [Berta] unrestrained in her religious faith and practice* and had the cathedral church of St Andrew built at Rochester *from its foundations*. So it is reasonable to suppose that the king and queen were present at the consecration celebrations in 604. Augustine, Archbishop of Canterbury, installed Justus, one of the monks who had accompanied him from Rome, in 597, as the first Bishop of Rochester. The cathedral was named in honour of St Andrew's College, Rome from which St Augustine and his brethren came to England¹. King Aethelberht presented many gifts to Justus and the cathedral including *Prestefeld and all the land from the Medway to the East gate of the city and all the lands outside the city walls on the north*².

Conflict brought King Alfred to Rochester in 883. Asser relates that part of the Viking army entered Kent, sailed up the River Medway and besieged Rochester where they constructed a strong fortification, including two siege towers in front of its entrance. Despite this they were unable to capture the city due to the courageous defence by the citizens and the aid of King Alfred who arrived, with a large army from Wessex. As a result the Vikings abandoned

The wars were financed mostly through government loans until Prime Minister Pitt hit on a brilliant scheme that has never been bettered to this day – he invented income tax. Loans had accounted for two thirds of military funding, but after the introduction of income tax this was reduced to a third, so successful was the ease of collecting it! Another problem that emerged was forgery. Promissory notes were issued by individual banks but most people used silver and copper coins. There was widespread fear of invasion (discussed in Part Two) which caused folk to hoard their savings, i.e. piles of coins. Therefore coins were in short supply and the Royal Mint struggled to keep up with demand. Despite forgery carrying the death penalty and that of coins 14 years' transportation, as the wars progressed there was a massive increase in the crime.

Bibliography & Acknowledgements

Broomhill – Strood's Hidden Gem
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In these Times
Maritime Medway
Medway Prison Hulks
Medway Towns
Medway Towns 1790 – 1850
Two Gentlemen of Strood

Odette Buchanan
Henry Smetham
G. M Trevelyan
Jenny Unglow
Dr. Clarke & Guildhall Museum Staff
K. R. Gulvin
Dr. Sandra Dunster
Tony Denholm
Odette Buchanan

Thanks and gratitude to the Archivist Alison Cable and ever-helpful staff of Medway Archives and Local Studies.

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 39 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 27 July 2015, with publication on Wednesday 19 August 2015.

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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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

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Readers' Letters

We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please write to: Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at amanda@ajthomas.com. FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan, often receives queries from members or visitors to the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.html. If you have any additional information for the following correspondents, please contact the Editor.

Magnum Opus Update

In January Miss J. Beyer contacted us about the inclusion of prices in the book reviews. There has been much discussion about this and in the end it has been decided to continue as before. We are concerned that recommended retail prices (rrp) can be extremely misleading and also off-putting. If an rrp is high then a reader may not bother making further enquiries about a title, and yet an online bookseller maybe offering it at a greatly reduced price.

Aksel Wooremaa

The City of Rochester Society received the following email which Secretary Christine Furminger kindly forwarded to FOMA:

02 March 2015

My grandfather who was a priest in Tallin, during World War 2, is said to have a memorial place in one of your churches in Rochester. The story goes that he helped a lot of people to flee from Estonia, and some of them eventually ended up in Rochester, hence the memorial. My question is, if you know the name of the church. His name was Aksel Wooremaa.

Best Regards,
Mikael Wooremaa.

The letter was subsequently forwarded to Stephen Dixon, Archive Service manager at Essex Record Office, formerly MALSC's Borough Archivist. Stephen replied:

09 March 2015

Amanda,
There can't be too many candidates as there are so few churches. The cathedral, St. Margaret's, St. Peter's now demolished, the parish centre which is too new and St. Nicholas (Rochester). You can add Strood St. Nicholas as Strood is in Rochester!

inner shell, scattering shot as it hit. Other inventions included several different types of clockwork shells and rockets, though the Admiralty rejected some of these as too risky and 'unsporting.'

Besides the Dockyard and ancillary products, other local businesses that did very well were watermen, tailors, shoemakers and publicans. Ships were mostly repaired during the winter months and these were the hard times for agricultural workers whose average wage was around a shilling a week. Shipwrights could earn six shillings and sixpence a week and for two months out of three they often worked double tides for double wages and could earn an extra two shillings and sixpence a week as night watchmen.

At a time when it was illegal to form trades unions, in 1796 several hundred dockyard workers formed a co-operative to overcome the monopoly of millers and bakers supplying bread and ship's *basket*. They built their own mill and bakehouse and were so successful that other yards followed their lead and within five years a single combination spread across the royal dockyards at Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth.

Another source of employment was to join the army or the navy. A commission had to be bought and so only those with better off parents were able to enter the officer classes. This was often the career path for the younger sons of the landed gentry or educated folk of the *middling* class who knew someone rich enough to be a sponsor. Indeed, even Nelson started his naval career as a cabin boy on a ship out of Chatham. Ordinary soldiers and sailors were usually of the labouring class. There was, however, a shortage of sailors which led to the iniquitous press gang system of kidnapping fit men and putting them onto the ship. Several local public houses were often raided and men captured and pressed into service. These men were sometimes ex-sailors who had been dismissed during peacetime and were reluctant to go back: some were labourers and others were skilled tradesmen. The kidnapping of the latter disrupted trade and was a source of anger not only from the wives and families but also employers.

It was because of the Napoleonic wars that the building of the Thames and Medway Canal was first suggested in 1788. Whilst we were not at war with revolutionary France at that time, supplies from Deptford Dockyard and Woolwich Arsenal to Chatham Dockyard were barged down the Thames, round the Nore and up the Medway. Apart from the tricky currents, the Channel was full of French privateers which meant the barges needed armed escorts. The building of a canal from Gravesend to Strood across the North Kent marshes would avoid both these problems, and it seemed like a good idea at the time. However, the engineering costs of tunnelling through the chalk of Broomhill were very expensive and the canal was not finished until 1824 – nine years after the Victory at Waterloo. For various reasons it never was a success and was eventually converted to a railway in 1845.

Another lucrative source of local income was the housing of French prisoners of war on the hulks of de-commissioned ships in the Medway. The hulks had to be converted, the prisoners clothed, fed and guarded; to say nothing of the tourist trade they generated. Lightermen transported gawping visitors to watch the prisoners who produced and sold beautiful models and cameos from straw or bones left over from the rancid meat they were fed. Many excellent examples of their work can still be seen in Rochester's Guildhall Museum.

The Napoleonic Wars – The Home Front, Medway and Victory at Last

Odette Buchanan



Odette is a retired teacher and, of course, FOMA Secretary. She is fascinated by local history and is actively involved in many aspects of this. She was a City of Rochester Society visitors' guide, a steward and guide at Restoration House, she has researched and presented as talks many aspects of local history, especially Broom Hill. Her book, Broomhill – Strood's Hidden Gem was published in 2013 by the City of Rochester Society, (available at: www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/shop/broomhill-stroods-hidden-gem/). Her book, Two Gentlemen of Strood, (short biographies of Henry Smetham and Rev. Caleb Perfect) is also published by the City of Rochester Society. She has produced sundry interpretation boards around Strood and was involved in the now completed England's Past for Everyone Victoria County History Project. and the HLF funded Valley of Visions Strood Community Trail.

18 June sees the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. Over the next two issues Odette Buchanan looks at the effects in the Medway Towns of the Napoleonic Wars and the eventual victory over Napoleon Bonaparte.

Part One

The more mature among us remember (firsthand) the Second World War that lasted nearly six years. That seemed an eternity – what must it have been like to have lived through 22 years of the Napoleonic Wars (1793 – 1815)?

In some ways as far as the Medway Towns were concerned there were many good things about this interminable conflict: The British Navy needed ships, men, victualling and equipment. This meant full employment for the shipbuilders along the river in Strood and Frindsbury. Local firms secured contracts for building materials, timber and nails, and local farmers and land owners became rich thanks to escalating demands and the rising prices of certain goods, such as corn. At the Dockyard in Chatham so many warships were needed, they could not keep up. Instead they concentrated on repairs and contracted out the building of many ships. One of the most famous of these was the *Bellerophon*, but more of her in Part Two.

As with all wars, there was a boom in creativity and many new inventions emerged:

‘Marc Brunel invented block making machines which could produce 22 different types of metal pulley blocks that replaced the handmade wooden pulleys for working the rigging ropes. A large ship of the line used about a thousand blocks and the fast new machines could supply 130,000 a year and saved the Admiralty £24,000 in the first year alone.’ (Jenny Uglow, *In These Times*).

Another invention was Colonel Shrapnel's ‘spherical case-shot’ with its fuse exploding an

He could mean the Rochester area or even Rochester diocese. I don't think denomination is significant. The Diocesan Advisory Committee is the official body that deals with such matters overall and advises on faculties. A member of the DAC might be able to assist.

Regards,
Stephen.

Austin Budden

In the February 2014 issue of *The Clock Tower*, David Veall made the following request to FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan (25 November 2013):

‘Austin Budden was my wife's great uncle, his brother Alfred was her great grandfather. Their father James Budden was the High Constable of Rochester and was a licensed victualler and landlord of the Red Lion public house. He was the Budden of Budden and Biggs brewery. We have no pictures of Alfred or James. I did find one news record of James as High Sheriff visiting Queen Victoria at Osborn house. Any information would be of great interest to [our] family.’

In the following issue (May 2014) we published some additional information which had come to light and then in February (2015) we received the following email:

27 February 2015

Dear Amanda

Today I have been sent by a fellow family tree researcher your Clock Tower issue of May 2014. I have been researching the Budden family, since the end of last year, for my cousin, whose Gt Grandfather was Col Austin Frederic Budden bapt 22 Jan 1851 - Dec Q 1924. I have now connected 44 Budden names to this tree. 4 of them were named James Budden. The burial plots mentioned in your issue were James Budden 1821 - 1866 and his two wives: Amelia Swan 1820 - 1857 & Jane Hannah Budden 1840 - 1907 (his second wife and also his niece).

I have added Capt Alfred Edwin Budden (bapt 18 Apr 1855 - 17 Oct 1916)'s wife to the tree today. She appears to be Ellen Harlock. A possible death for her was 1899. It appears that Alfred was married in 1894 and according to the next census in 1901 was already a widower. In 1911 census it says he was a widower but married 17 years before and had one living child this was crossed through. The child was not living with him and I have not been able trace the child.

Alfred died in a nursing home in Brighton in 1916 and left a Will and effects to Sarah Ann Roberts widow - see below. I have no idea who Sarah was but she doesn't appear to be his daughter, as there is no Sarah Ann Budden born between 1894 and 1899. The will if obtained may provide a clue.

I have a lot more work to do on the BUDDEN tree, so, I would be interested in contacting David and Shelagh Veall who also mentioned in a legend that James Budden's mother was a maid at Gad's Hill Place when Dickens lived there and that James was the fat boy in Pickwick papers. (*Pickwick Papers* was the first of Dickens' novels published in 1836.) Dickens lived at Gads Hill 1857 until his death in 1870. As I mentioned before I have 4 James Buddens named on my tree and I wonder which the legend is referring too?

1. James 1797 - 1845
2. James 1821 - 1866 (son of 1) (the 'fat boy'?)
3. James 1846 - 1897 (son of 2) mother Amelia died in 1857
4. James abt 1875 b.Cork Ireland (son of 3)

Yours sincerely
Elizabeth Lewis,
Cornwall UK, family tree researcher.

Elizabeth Lewis and David Veall have been put in touch and it would appear many mysteries regarding the Budden family have been resolved, including the following about Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*:

11 April 2015

Dear Amanda
I have been sent quite a bit on the Buddens and haven't read it all as yet.
However David wrote:

"James wife Mary was the maid in Pickwick papers and their son James, Austin's father was the Fat Boy. I did have a reference for this but lost it when my computer crashed. As James provided Charles Dickens with his wines etc. there is a story that the Pickwick punch, a favourite with Charles D., was produced by James."

This clears up the story which was reported incorrectly that James Budden's wife Mary was a maid at Gads Hill Place.

Best wishes,
Elizabeth.

May rushed head long into June with a continuation of festivities. The children of Ross and Foord Streets in Rochester held their party indoors due to inclement weather; the National Fire Service (NFS) coming to the rescue. This was just one of seven parties that weekend across the Towns.



VE Day party, Star Hill, Rochester; Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Some of the villages held later celebrations still! The *Chatham Observer* of 22 June has photos of Victory celebrations at Hoo organised by the Civil Defence and a sports meeting at Borstal; one of the events was a bonny baby contest. There were certainly further celebrations throughout the summer and in the final edition in June the *Chatham Observer* published a savings advert which proclaimed over an image of Rochester Castle and the river:

'Thanksgiving.'

Despite all the celebrations war still continued in the Far East and real victory had to wait for VJ Day in August 1945.

More VE Day photographs can be found online at www.foma-lsc.org

celebrations. Photographs of street parties in both Victoria Streets in Rochester and Gillingham were front page news. Another photo was accompanied by the by-line: 'Revellers 'make whoopee' round a bonfire.'

Flags and bunting were the order of the day. Union Jacks hung from every conceivable edifice or vantage point. Street parties occurred in many of Medway's roads with tables, chairs and other equipment procured from halls, businesses and homes to accommodate the whole street. Despite rationing, the local residents worked wonders with their few ingredients and coupons in the true British spirit with everyone chipping in to festoon the tables with food and drink. 8 May was obviously, contrary to usual May weather, a glorious day.

VE Day, Tuesday 8 May 1945. Street Party at Valley View Estate, Rochester. (Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Rev. R. Dunkley), Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.



However celebrations went on long after VE Day in the Medway Towns with parties and other events still being organised in late June. The shop stewards at Shorts Bros. collected a substantial sum of money to ensure injured service personnel in hospital would not miss out on the activities. Our local poet laureate wrote another verse on 18 May entitled:

It is Accomplished!
The Nazi curse is lifted from the land,
The bestial Hun lies whipped before the feet ...

Street parties were reported from every last corner of the towns and villages by the papers. At Eastcourt Lane in Gillingham the highlight of the street celebrations was the burning of an effigy of Hitler on a bonfire. Some local councillors and officials attended as well. They didn't worry about political correctness in those days!

On the following week it was Whitsun and another public holiday. Rochester Castle Gardens was again the centre of attraction with a captured German midget submarine on display, generating a large number of visitors. Some places took a bit more time to organise their commemorations and saw the bank holiday as the ideal opportunity to have their street parties. The *Chatham Observer* reported, 'War Ends - Parties Don't.' A further eleven street parties were recorded in that edition stretching from Wainscott in the west to Upchurch in the east of the area.

Medieval Hospitals and Almshouses, *a talk by David Carder.*

Amanda Thomas.



It was with some relief when David Carder's talk finally got under way at Frindsbury on the evening of 10 March 2015. The date of the talk had been changed several times and had even been incorrectly advertised in the press, however, the advantage of this was that the talk was so well advertised, all the seats were full!

David (pictured below) is a FOMA member and a well known speaker in the Medway area. He began by explaining that medieval hospitals and almshouses were the public institutions of their day. The earliest were established pre Norman Conquest and by 1400 there were around 700 hospitals (from the Latin *hospes*, meaning *guest*) in England and Wales. They were established by the Church, following the Council of Nice in 325 and the Synod of Aix in 816, to help the poor, sick, widows and strangers and were run by monks and priests. The funding of the hospitals was supplemented by endowments and from church alms, plus fairs, legacies and donations from pilgrims. In the early days there were two types of hospital, for the poor sick and infirm and for pilgrims and travellers – this was the *hospitality* side of the institution.



In Kent many hospitals were situated along the Watling Street and surviving examples include St. Bartholomew's in Rochester which was founded in 1078 to help the sick, particularly lepers. The oldest surviving hospital which is still in use is St Nicholas' in Harbledown, Canterbury which was founded for the same purpose in 1084.

David went on to show a fascinating selection of plans and photographs of hospitals and then talked about Strood's Newark (or St. Mary's) Hospital which was established in the thirteenth century. The plan of the hospital was discovered during excavations in 1967 and readers will recall Barry Cox's article about it in Issue 32 of *The Clock Tower*, November 2013.

Hospitals outside of Kent include the huge St. Mary's in Chichester, built around 1290 which is still an almshouse and well worth a visit. In Winchester the Hospital of St. Cross and Almshouse of Noble Poverty was founded between 1133 and 1136 by Henry de Blois, the grandson of William the Conqueror, and the large church which forms part of the group of buildings is now used as the parish church.

In Kent many post-medieval almshouses were established after the Reformation. These include Jesus Hospital in Canterbury which was founded in 1596 by Sir

John Boys, and Cobham College in Cobham which was first endowed by Sir John de Cobham in 1362 as a college for priests and then re-founded in 1598 as 20 almshouses. At Aylesford there is the Hospital of the Holy Trinity which was endowed by the will of John Sedley in 1607 and was built using stone from Aylesford Priory. Bromley College in Bromley was founded in 1666 by the will of John Warner, Bishop of Rochester, for the widows of the clergy.

In Rochester there are a considerable number of almshouses including the Richard Watts Charity which was founded in 1579 for six poor travellers. The Sir John Hawkins Hospital was founded in Chatham in 1592 for mariners and shipwrights; this was re-built between 1789 and 1790.

In conclusion, David touched on an interesting mystery. Rochester's Hayward's Almshouses were established in 1823 and are described thus by Historic England (see <http://list.historicengland.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1336103>):

'ROCHESTER COLLEGE GATE Cathedral Church (see under Precinct) TQ 7468 NW ROCHESTER CORPORATION STREET 7/19 Nos. 1-8 Hayward House II Almshouses. 1823, modernised in 1961. Designed by Robert Baker, and built by the trustees of Sir John Hayward, endowed by the proceeds of a lawsuit 'carried on by this parish for 25 years' (Inscription). red brick; Welsh slate hipped roof. Single depth range, 3-storeys. Symmetrical 3:1:3 bays, with plain brick projections either side of central entrance bay, and bearing inscription panels. Brick band between upper floors returns to either side. All windows with glazing bars; 1961 glazed door. Fire escapes to either end. Modern casements to rear, mostly in original openings. Right-hand end wall rendered, 2 large rear internal stacks.'

David Carder showed a photograph (see below) of the plaques which are incorporated into the structure of the almshouses, and on the bottom right can be seen the name, Robert Baker, Architect. Little is known about this man, but one presumes that he is a relation of the Messrs. Samuel Bakers who were involved with many important building projects at around the time the work was undertaken at the almshouses. In Issue 12 of *The Clock Tower*, published in November 2008, FOMA member Michael Baker wrote a fascinating article about Strood's St Nicholas Church and the Baker family entitled, *Which Mr Baker? or By Nine Votes to Eight*. Perhaps he and other *Clock Tower* readers may soon resolve the mystery of this Mr Baker!



Photographs by Amanda Thomas.

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.

VE Day 1945

In this issue we leap to World War II to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of VE Day. Tuesday 8 May 1945 was to be Victory Europe (VE) Day and to be marked with significant celebrations as well as being a public holiday. The *Chatham Observer* for 4 May was full of plans to mark the occasion as well as looking back on some of the calamities that had befallen the Medway Towns over the previous six years. A bit of patriotic verse by Jean Mangez heralded the front page:

Inglorius Quietus
Out of disastrous twilight dimmed with blood,
Into immortal hatred self-designed
Melt, Adolf Hitler! Myth upon the flood!
Cease to exist! Be dumb, be still, be blind!

And many more lines in the same vein. The peace had come, but at what cost the poet is saying. A rather pertinent advert is splashed on page three of the same edition:

HERE'S TO VICTORY
and a return of all good things of life
that the war has taken away from us. The
delicious mineral waters and fruit squashes and the
famous ginger wine from the house of
MOORES'

(first for thirst since 1879)

Permission was granted for drinks' licences to be extended, so on VE Day last orders were not called till midnight. Plans were afoot by all the Medway councils to celebrate the day. Gillingham suggested an open air service with the military at the heart of the event, whilst Rochester wanted to hold a thanksgiving service in the Cathedral attended by all the local dignitaries followed by a victory parade the next day in the Castle Gardens. Chatham was relying on its residents and tradesmen to decorate the streets in a festive manner.

'THANK GOD FOR VICTORY'

This was the headline the following week with the front page dedicated to the VE Day

of falling metal struck her on the head. There was just a single survivor, one David Wills, a stoker from the Chatham working party. He suffered terrible burns and was taken at all speed to the Royal Naval Hospital at Chatham (now Medway Maritime Hospital), where after a long convalescence, he served for a further twelve years in the Royal Navy and became father of nine children, including a daughter named Irene.

There were the inevitable enquiries into the loss, and a memorial service was held on 1 June in the Dockyard church at Sheerness attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Local man Henry Hall wrote a poem that was published by the *Sheerness Guardian and East Kent Advertiser* and subsequently printed on thin card and sold for two pence to raise money for the victims' families. A copy of this sheet is reproduced on pages 24 and 25.

Today the men lost on *HMS Princess Irene*, together with the local dockyard-men and the men from *HMS Bulwark*, the battleship lost in similar circumstances in November 1914 (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 36, November 2014), are remembered on a stone memorial opposite Sheerness Station, where a service is to be held on 27 May, the one hundredth anniversary of the disaster.

**It would appear that the funnels may have been repainted grey*

NOTE: Much of this material is taken from Blown to Eternity – the Princess Irene Story by John Hendy. ISBN 1-871947-61-8, a copy of which is held by MALSC.

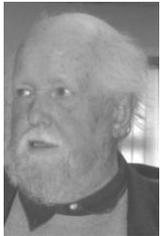


VE Day celebrations in Gillingham; Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Does anyone know the street name or location?

A Day in May

Bob Ratcliffe



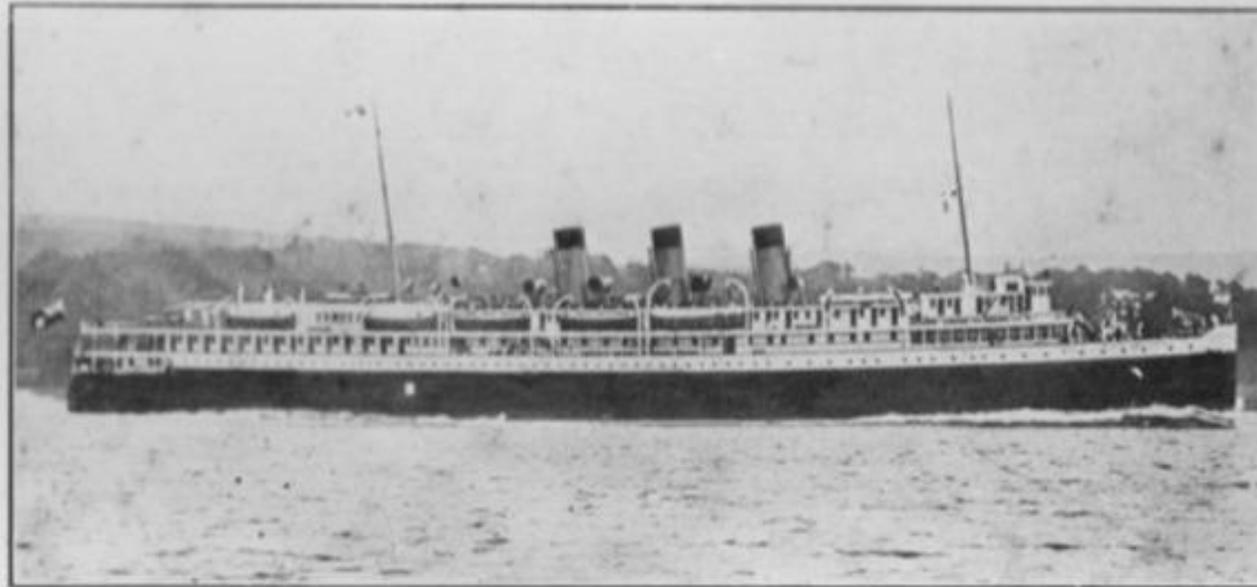
Bob Ratcliffe is a retired architect. He is President of The City of Rochester Society and a local historian; Bob is also a FOMA committee member.

May 27 1915 was a bright and sunny spring day in north Kent, with little clusters of cumulus clouds casting their shadows on marsh and river as they were swept along by the north-east wind. A traveller on the old road from Lower Halstow to Iwade paused at the top of Raspberry Hill and gazed northward toward the marshes to the lower Medway. On the far shore was Port Victoria, one-time home for the Kaiser's yacht. No longer was this vessel welcomed in the Medway for the year was 1915, we were at war with Germany, and Saltpan Reach was filled with numerous grey-hulled vessels of the King's navy. Among these ships of war one alone stood out. She appeared to be a miniature liner, her black hull, white superstructure and three yellow* funnels, showed that she belonged to a more peaceful age and for duties in far waters. Her name was *Princess Irene*.

Princess Irene was less than a year old, fresh from the slipways of Denny's, shipbuilders of Dumbarton on the Clyde. She and her sister *Princess Margaret* had been built to the order of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for their coastal service out of Vancouver. She had been launched on 20 October 1914 and had completed her trials on 25 January, by which time she had been 'taken up from trade' by the Admiralty and had returned to Denny's to be stripped of her rich interior fittings and converted for a mine-laying role. She had finally left the Clyde on 15 March 1915, not for the west coast of Canada but for Sheerness. Still wearing her peacetime colours, in April 1915 she had completed two mine laying sorties in the southern part of the North Sea and on 25 May was moored near No. 28 buoy.

She was taking aboard her next quota of mines when the traveller looked at her two days later when suddenly he saw a flash of light appearing along her side, immediately lost in a rising cloud of smoke. Fifteen seconds after this the sound waves of a tremendous explosion reached him, rattling the windows in Sheerness and audible as far away as Maidstone, Faversham and Gravesend. The cloud climbed into the spring sky, reaching a height of about 1200 feet and hanging there before starting to drift away to the south-west. Of *Princess Irene* there was no trace. Tugs and naval craft came at full speed to the scene of the disaster in the hope of finding survivors, but they were to be disappointed, the ship had disappeared.

The 273 crew and the 76 dockyard-men were not the only ones to die on that bright May morning. Farm worker George Bradley, working in a field near Grain village, was killed by the shock wave and Hilda Johnson, a nine year old, died in her uncle's garden when a piece



"PRINCESS IRENE."

[L.N.A.]

IN MEMORIAM.

THE "PRINCESS IRENE."

HONOUR our dear ones, whom we loved so well,
 Who at the call of duty nobly fell;
 They died, not on the battlefield, but they
 Died for their country, when they passed away.
 We mourn her gallant officers and crew,
 And thank God for the north-east wind which blew,
 His over-ruling Providence we bless—
 'Twas He Who from destruction saved Sheer-ess.

It was a lovely morning, and the day—
 (Do not forget)—the last but four in May,
 Our country was at war, and in her need
 Had call'd on every man to work with speed.
 And in our Royal Dockyards, day and night,
 Our loyal workmen worked with all their might
 To send our ships to sea, that they might be
 More than a match for those of Germany.
 The 'Princess' lay in Sheerness Harbour moor'd,
 And eighty men and boys were sent on board,
 Upon life's threshold many of them were,

And full of promise, joyous, free from care,
 Before them life, a happy vista seem'd;
 And of a joyous future many dream'd;
 When suddenly was heard a fearful sound,
 It shook the houses many miles around,
 And to our terror, horror, and surprise,
 An all-devouring fire rear'd to the skies;
 And in the conflagration to the mind
 The earthquake and volcano were combined.
 And where the mammoth vessel once had been,
 Now, nothing but a submerged wreck was seen.
 Honour our lov'd ones, those we lov'd so well,
 Who, at the call of duty, nobly fell;
 They died, not on the battlefield, but they
 Died for their country when they pass'd away.
 And every man who for his country gives
 His life (though men may call him dead), still lives,
 And God doth send His angel to translate
 His soul from this, into a higher state.

HENRY HALL,

28, Alexandra Road, Sheerness,
 May, 1915.