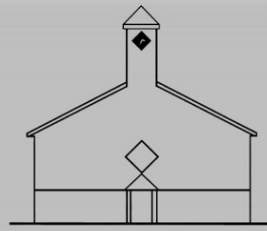


# The Clock Tower



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

Issue Number 05: Spring 2007



*High Street and church, Snodland, Kent, from one of Hambrook's Kent Series (c.1905).*

*Veles, the home of the Hook family, owners of the Snodland paper mill, is on the right and the gardens of Delamere, home of Eustace Hook, are on the left. Now the by-pass crosses here.*

*Ref: RHI082, courtesy of Dr Andrew Ashbee, Honorary Curator of Snodland Millennium Museum and the Chairman of Snodland Historical Society.*

This issue of *The Clock Tower* looks at the history of Snodland, with Dr Andrew Ashbee's article, *Snodland Viewed by its Historians*. The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre have organised a special outing to the Snodland Millennium Museum with Dr Ashbee on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2007; details can be found in *News and Events* below. In addition, in his regular update on the *Victoria County History*, Dr Andrew Hann explains how Snodland, Aylesford and Eccles are the subject of a special study in the *England's Past for Everyone* project (*EPE*). From now until 27<sup>th</sup> March 2007, a major new exhibition at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre highlights different aspects of the *EPE* project and showcases some of the work undertaken by its volunteers.

An exciting new project is about to begin for the Friends to help make accessible some of the most interesting collections at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. A presentation will be made at the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007 when members will have the chance to see how they can get involved – more details inside.

## *From the Chairman*

It is with regret and sadness that for personal reasons I have decided to resign my Chairmanship of the Friends at the AGM on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007. I have very much enjoyed my time as Chairman and to have been fortunate enough to see the Friends get up and running and flourish. I wish everybody involved good fortune and I will continue to follow FOMA's progress with interest! My thanks also go to our Editor, Amanda Thomas, for all the work she has put into *The Clock Tower*.



My very best wishes to everyone.

*Roy Murrant, Chairman.*

## *News and Events*

Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Secretary

### **FOMA Annual General Meeting**

The AGM will be held on Wednesday 18th April 2007 at 7.00 pm, at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent. For further information please telephone the Friends' Secretary, Cindy O'Halloran on 01634 332714, or by email, [cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk](mailto:cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk). A map is available on the CityArk website, [cityark.medway.gov.uk](http://cityark.medway.gov.uk). Following the meeting there will be a short presentation detailing the Volunteer Projects that we hope to undertake, and as follows. Refreshments will be provided.

### **FOMA Volunteer Projects**

An exciting new project is about to begin to help make accessible some of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre's most interesting collections. A presentation will be made at the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007 when members will have the chance to examine examples of projects and to decide how they would like to get involved; Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist, explains the project in further detail in his *Archives Update* below. One project has already been snapped up by the North West Kent Family History Society (NWK FHS). We would like to thank Bob Woodward and his team once again for their work on the scanning of the Longfield parish register index.

### **Launch of Medway MovieBase**

The Medway MovieBase will be launched on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007, 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm, at the Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent. A film show by Tony Blake Films (including the Medway Towns and Short Brothers aircraft) will be followed by a keynote speech by Frank Gray, Director of Screen Archive South East. Refreshments will be available; tickets for FOMA members are £3.00. For tickets and further information please telephone the Friends' Secretary, Cindy O'Halloran on 01634 332714, or by email, [cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk](mailto:cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk).

## Summer 2007 - FOMA Visit to Snodland – book now!

A special FOMA outing to Snodland Historical Society and the Snodland Millennium Museum will take place at 2.00 pm on Saturday 2nd June 2007. The tour will be guided by Dr Andrew Ashbee, Honorary Curator of the museum and Chairman of Snodland Historical Society. The tour will begin at the museum which is situated in Waghorn Road, Snodland, ME6 5BQ, Kent.

Tickets for FOMA members are £3.00; non members £5.00. For further information please telephone the Friends' Secretary, Cindy O'Halloran, on 01634 332714, or by email, cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk before 31st May 2007, as availability is limited.

## Wine 'n' Wisdom

Around 30 guests joined us at the Civic Centre, Strood, for the Wine 'n' Wisdom quiz evening before Christmas. There were around seven teams who answered a variety of question rounds, including one on Kent local history. Every table had a good sized platter of food and at half time we tucked in with gusto! Some of us had plenty of wine too....



*The Wine 'n' Wisdom winners pictured with (far right) Cllr Sue Haydock.*

*Photograph kindly supplied by Cllr Sue Haydock.*

The winning team received a case of wine and the lowest scoring team got the booby prize of Smarties (which made me wish my team had come last). This was followed by a raffle, with some generously donated gifts. We had a very enjoyable and sociable evening and there have been many requests to repeat the event. Our thanks for organising the evening go to Tessa Towner, Yolande Dunn and Carol Harris – who also who drew up the questions. We look forward to the next one.

## *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).

### Editorial deadlines

The first Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of February, May, August and November. Articles, letters, photos and any information to be considered for inclusion in the 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 06 of *The Clock Tower* is Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2007.**

### Publication date

The third Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

### Copyright

The copyright of the contents of *The Clock Tower* belongs to the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and the authors and owners of any articles and photographs printed. The contents of *The Clock Tower* may not be reproduced without permission of the Editor and/or the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

### Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

The banner design (incorporating the logo) and the title *The Clock Tower* were designed by Alexander Thomas.

*The Clock Tower* is also available on: <http://ajthomas.com/theclocktower>

### **Further Information**

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

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

## *The Committee*

### Patron

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



### President

Russell (John) Race, JP, DL



### Vice Presidents

Cllr Sue Haydock (Medway Council Representative), Pat Salter, Brian Kingsley Smith, Bruce Aubry

### Chairman

Roy Murrant: 63 Crestway, Luton, Chatham, ME5 0BD, Kent.  
roy.murrant@blueyonder.co.uk

### Vice Chairman

Tessa Towner: 37 Ravenswood Avenue, ME2 3BY, Kent.  
picketwitch@blueyonder.co.uk

### Treasurer

Jean Skilling: 15 Port Close, Lordswood, Chatham, ME5 8DU, Kent.  
jean.skilling@blueyonder.co.uk

### Archivist

Stephen Dixon: stephen.dixon@medway.gov.uk

### Secretary

Cindy O'Halloran: cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk

### Members

David Carder: 53 The Ridgeway, Chatham, ME4 6PB, Kent.  
david.carder@baesystems.com

Dr Andrew Hann: 32 Darwin Court, Rochester, ME1 1NP, Kent.  
ha81@gre.ac.uk

Bob Ratcliffe: 12 King Edward Road, Rochester, ME1 1UB, Kent.

John Witheridge: 28 Greendale Gardens, Gillingham, Kent.

### The Clock Tower Editor

Amanda Thomas: 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire.  
amanda@ajthomas.com

## *Archives Update*

Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist



How time flies. This is my fifth quarterly archives update for the Friends' newsletter so I guess this marks the passing of our first anniversary and an exciting landmark. In that case, it is apt to look back on what we have achieved since the purchase of Robert Sands' letter in 2005, a turning point in local archival history which has led to the formation of the Friends, our newsletter, greater networking with partners old and new, the prospect of obtaining funding for projects large and small and last but not least, opportunities for voluntary work.

Members have enjoyed several entertaining and informative talks, represented the Friends on Mince Pie Day, made a visit to Eastgate House Museum, obtained excellent press coverage and put in place a sound constitution recognised by the Inland Revenue. All of this in just the first year while we are still finding our feet. On behalf of Medway Council and the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre I must thank and congratulate the Friends for their continued support and for accomplishing so much, so soon.

I am delighted to report the addition to our staff of Lisa Birch, our new Archives Assistant, who started on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2007. Lisa is Rainham born and bred. She previously worked for Kent County Council in country parks and for the Countryside Agency. She brings to the Studies Centre a keen interest in and knowledge of family and local history. Lisa's post is officially temporary and she is with us until June.

The Rochester City Archives project has received several valuable letters of support and more are expected, serving as crucial evidence of the community's need for this largely untapped resource to be fully descriptively listed, conserved and made available for research. A meeting with a key government consultant was held just before Christmas and the working party consisting of Bob Ratcliffe, Jean Skilling and David Carder is enthusiastic about our chances of obtaining funding for the project from a major grant-making body.

The project, which we anticipate will last for three years, is to feature strong lifelong learning, educational, community and volunteering tasks, with each of which members of the Friends are invited to become directly involved. We also envisage much material from the collection will be scanned and published online.

The *CityArk* MovieBase has remained static for several months but I am glad to report Terry Nunn of Village Videos ([www.villagevideos.co.uk](http://www.villagevideos.co.uk)) has agreed to the publication of each of his hour-long village documentaries on *CityArk*. This development will balance and complement the mainly urban focus of the MovieBase thus far.

I am also delighted to report that discussions are in hand with an east Kent local history society for the publication in the MovieBase of some recently discovered footage of the Medway area. Both these additions to the MovieBase should appear in the spring. In addition, discussions are in hand with Stelling Minnis and Upper Hardres Historical Society for the publication in the MovieBase of some recently discovered footage of former cameraman Donald Dougal of the Medway area. Both these additions to the MovieBase should appear in the spring. We wish the society the best of luck in obtaining their own grant funding to further exploit their important film collection.

Whilst on the subject of *CityArk*, our web analysis software has reported record results, which I think, are worth reporting. In the period October to November 2006, our hits exceeded one million per month for the

first time, and generally showed a record increase in downloads of files of all types. We should not be surprised in view of the effectiveness of *CityArk* that we scored very highly in respect of both documenting our collections online and publishing images online in a recent government audit.

## Recent Deposits of Interest

A Lower Medway Navigation Company register of assignment or transfer of shares 1802-1952 (1 volume) (S/MN additional) (DE1093 [part]).

Records of Borstal Windmill 1877-1880 (DE DE1093 [part]).

Additional records of King's School, Rochester, and the old Roffensian Society, comprising group photographs of cricket, hockey and athletics teams, members of castes of school dramatic productions and members of the combined cadet force (CCF), studio portraits of individual old Roffensians, photographs of junior and preparatory school activities, headmaster's correspondence, correspondence about wartime evacuation with Taunton, Somerset, air raid shelter list, programmes of dramatic productions, prize lists, papers pertaining to the founding of the pre-preparatory school 1988, video tapes of the farewell service for Dr. Michael Turnbull, the Bishop of Rochester 1994, and the enthronement of his successor Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Nazir-Ali 1995, handbooks, annual reports, printed booklets and pamphlets, rules, Old Roffensian biographies and obituaries, sermons, service sheets, visitors' book, drawings and examples of art work, school prospectuses, posters, press releases, dismantled exhibition items and artefacts including handbells, hockey sticks, mortar board tassels [cf. trenchers], striped sports blazers, school badges, Old Roffensian bow tie, collars, freemasons' gloves, caps, boaters, girl's velour hat, master's mortarboard, boater bands, clerical collar and stock, Victorian chorister's collar, blazer pocket badges, VIth form suits, Art Society striped shirt, school play dress, boarder's dressing gown, CCF uniforms, swagger canes, and officer's George boots, prefect's cane, School House rugby [cf. rugger] jersey, Zetountes waistcoat, physical education vests, Friends of Rochester Cathedral reports and newsletters, school calendars, school Christmas cards, Old Roffensians' war service record, Marconi Avionics calendar featuring historic buildings of Rochester 1979, Sunday national newspaper colour supplements and local Medway Towns newspapers containing articles or advertisements pertaining to the school or Old Roffensians, school application register 1961-1974, visitors' book 1950-1971, correspondence about staff appointments c.1937-c.1975, General Certificate of Education results 1951-1960. Box listed. Hand list available on application (40 boxes and 14 packages) covering dates 1848-2006.

Additional records of All Saints' Church of England Primary School, Magpie Hall Road, Chatham 1893-1981 (C/ES 85/1 additional (DE1093)).

Indented deed of certification of receipt of brass weights and measures from the Commissioners of HM Treasury, the Chamberlains of the Exchequer and their Deputies at Court of the Receipt [cf. Tally Court] of HM Exchequer, Westminster, Middlesex, parties HM Exchequer and John and Robert Warner of the Crescent, Irwin Street, London, citizens and brass founders, for the use of and delivery of the same to Thomas Saunders, mayor of Rochester, witnessed by G. Frederick, Tally Office 24<sup>th</sup> December 1825 (RCA additional (DE1097)).

Additional records of Rogers, Stevens and Chance, (formerly C.E.T. Rogers, Son and Stevens, previously Messrs. Rogers, Stevens and Co.), 10 New Road, Chatham, chartered surveyors, brewery agents and valuers of licensed property, comprising statements of change of tenancy of the Ship Inn beerhouse, Lower Upnor, Frindsbury Extra (file 1886) 1930; Royal Engineer public house, Wood Street, Old Brompton (file 1801) 1929; Queen's Head Hotel, 1 High Street, Old Brompton (file 1246) 1925; Vineyard

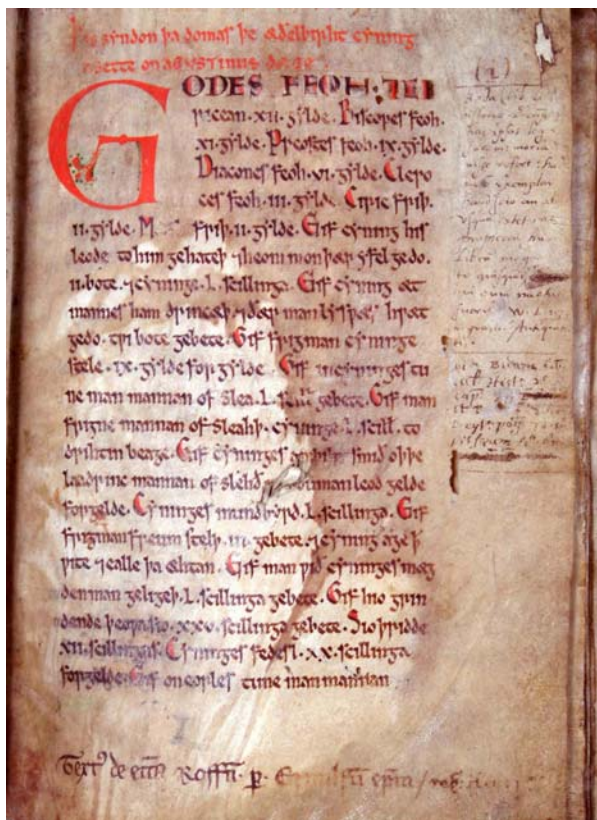
Inn, 35 Maidstone Road, Rochester (file 1674) 1928-1929 (Returned to series DE852) (DE1102) ((additional)).

Additional records of Chatham Memorial Synagogue, 346 High Street, Rochester 1835, 1933-2003 (N/J/305 (additional) (DE1103)).

Additional records of St. Peter and St. Paul's Parish Church, East Milton Road, Milton next Gravesend, comprising registers of baptisms 1844-1902 and 1902-1938 (2 volumes) and registers of marriages 1889-1896 and 1896-1903 (2 volumes) (P252 (additional) (DE1107)).

Finally, preparations are in hand to mount an exhibition celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Virginia and American colonies this year. The exhibition will centre on the first Gravesend parish register containing the burial record of Pocahontas, dating from 1617 (see back page). The exhibition, in the Guildhall Museum, Rochester is expected to run from May to September and admission will be free of charge. We expect to receive many American visitors during that period.

It is hoped to publish a complementary web page on Pocahontas at the same time, for the benefit of those who cannot attend in person. The web version may include further references to connections between north Kent and the United States of America in the form of images from and accompanying interpretation of the *Textus Roffensis*, our single most important document, part of the Rochester Cathedral archives (DRc/R1). The *Textus Roffensis* was compiled from earlier, lost originals in Rochester c.1123 and contains the Coronation Oath of King Henry I (1100) which served as a model for *Magna Carta* in limiting royal power and binding the king to rule according to the law of the land, together with the Laws of King Ethelbert of Kent (dating from 604), which constitute the earliest recorded English laws and the earliest record of the English language, surely also of great interest to our American cousins.



Left: the *Textus Roffensis* (compiled c.1123 x c.1124) is a compilation of the Anglo-Saxon law codes from King Ethelbert of Kent to King Edward the Confessor and of charters and documents important to the early 12th. century Benedictine Priory. The book is famous as it contains the first record of the English language, the first English laws and the first laws recorded in the vernacular i.e. a language other than post-Roman Empire Latin. Also contained in the book is a nearly contemporary and crucially important copy of King Henry I's Coronation Charter of 1100, used as a model for *Magna Carta*, an early use of Arabic numerals (c.1400) and an early example of a style of Caroline minuscule bookhand developed at Rochester and Canterbury that spread nationally.



## *Projects for FOMA Volunteers*

Readers may recall that it has always been planned to engage the Friends' membership in various tasks in order to provide practical help in developing the public service as well as gaining satisfaction from working on our collections. We envisage Friends' members may be able to join together in small groups of at least two or three to take forward several projects, each project based on an archives or local studies collection. The length of time required for each project will vary according to the scope of the work and according to the amount of time each volunteer can spare. Staff at Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre welcome volunteers to help make accessible some of our most interesting collections. We will be making a presentation on available collections at our Annual General Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April (see *News and Events* above) when members will have the chance to examine examples of the current projects and make a choice. You may also be able to choose which project team to join. We look forward to seeing several teams step forward. Appropriate training and materials will be supplied and as you know our staff are always on hand to advise with queries. To follow is a summary of what we will be proposing.

### **The Archives of Great Expectations Project**

This project is being organised by the Friends and aims to open up access to the Rochester City Archives to community use and provide a learning resource. This is our flagship project and we are anxious to recruit a small team of dedicated volunteers. The project aims to assess the Rochester City Archives, a collection of 600 boxes of currently inaccessible records for conservation needs, carry out conservation with acid free materials and produce of a detailed catalogue to be published online to accompany *Medway Ancestors* and include scanned images. On completion of the project, a permanent web presence comprising catalogue and scanned images will ensure the collection is promoted as a learning resource, with the catalogued collection accessible both in hard copy to researchers and online. A project archivist, employed by Medway Council, will lead the team of volunteers in sorting, identifying, appraising and listing the collection seeing it from start to online presentation.

The collection represents the main body of documentary heritage for Rochester and Strood, focal points of the Thames Gateway and Medway regeneration areas. As such the collection is a necessary part of the area's heritage. The Rochester City Archives constitute the biggest and most important community archive in Medway, the Thames Gateway area and north Kent. Currently, the collection is unavailable as it is uncatalogued. The collection is central to the researchers working for *England's Past for Everyone* (see Dr Andrew Hann's regular feature, *The Victoria County History at MALSC*), who will soon begin work on Rochester. This team aims to publish its research online and in hard copy. The collection contains valuable source material on architecture, society, poor relief and industry. Access to the records including plans, photographs and correspondence, is also essential for students, planning officers, conservation officers and contractors in understanding, conserving, restoring and regenerating this vitally important area and improving the accuracy of historical research. You will much enjoy having hands on access to this untapped resource.

### **Listing local school records**

School records are varied and interesting and include log books, admission registers, punishment books, and photographs, etc. You will be invited to label them, identify documents needing repair and list them. Word processing skills will be an advantage and your finished work will be uploaded onto CityArk. We can supply a lap top computer if necessary. School records are very popular among family and local historians so you can make a real contribution to opening up access to these collections, of which many are available. We will let you know which school collections need listing and you may then be able to choose your area and school. This would suit individual volunteers working on one school each and comparing notes with volunteers working on different schools. You will be encouraged to write

introductory passages and so will have to do a little research, perhaps for the first time putting a school on the map.

### Specialised boxing, packaging and labelling

Many of our collections would benefit from being packaged, boxed and labelled in BS5454 standard materials, including acid free card and paper. There are many candidate collections and by helping us you can make a real contribution to the safekeeping of unique and fragile documents. This work would probably suit a team of two or three.

### Assisting local studies staff sort and identify the contents of the illustrations collection

Local Studies staff have thousands of photographs previously held by Strood, Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham Libraries and the Guildhall Museum. Many are unidentified. A team of volunteers is required to work through them to identify streets, buildings and people. You will need an eye for detail. We invite you to bring your local knowledge to bear on this interesting challenge, made more important by plans to apply for grant funding to publish our illustrations collection online as part of the Medway Images project. Your descriptions will provide essential information for the accompanying database.

### Identifying and listing the contents of the Ian Fraser slide collection

Ian Fraser served as the Technical Director first of Chatham Borough Council then its successor, Medway Borough Council. In the course of his work he took many photographs and gave illustrated talks on the history of the Medway Towns and council road schemes. Many of the slides are of historical views copied from older photographs or prints. With the help of the index he compiled, we will ask you to compile a database of his slides for publication on CityArk. You will be able to write an introductory passage and will therefore have to do some research. This would suit a small team of two or three enthusiasts and word processing skills are essential. Friends with an interest in architecture and transport may find this project suited to their skills and knowledge. We can supply a lap top computer if requested.

### Listing the Photo Production Ltd., Featherby Road, Gillingham, greetings card collection 1932-1992

This is a modest sized collection of sample illustrated greetings cards, suitable for at least one volunteer. Word processing skills are essential and you will identify cards, date them, describe them and complete an online catalogue and finally package the collection. A most interesting task!

*For further information, please contact the FOMA Secretary, Cindy O'Halloran by telephone on 01634 332714; fax 01634 297060 or by email, [cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk](mailto:cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk) or Borough Archivist Stephen Dixon on the same numbers or by email at [stephen.dixon@medway.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.dixon@medway.gov.uk). Alternatively, further information can be obtained by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU.*

## *Strood's Famous Botanist - Anne Pratt*

Barbara Marchant



*Local historian Barbara Marchant was the founding member of the Strood Heritage Society, set up to promote the history and interests of the people of Strood. Barbara was born in Kent, and although she and her husband have now retired to Somerset, Strood, the Medway Towns and Kent are still close to her heart.*

In February 1993, having recently acquired a copy of a 1948 *Guide to Rochester* by John Gausden, I read, "...it is pleasant to recall that this Town now given over to foundries and cement works was the birthplace in 1806 of Anne Pratt who did so much in her day to popularise the study of wild flowers." I had never before heard of Anne Pratt, but as a life-long lover of wild flowers, it sparked my interest and I determined to find out about her. Visits to Rochester Museum turned up some prints from her books which together with some of her works in Rochester Library and a check on her in the *National Dictionary of Biography*, set me firmly on the trail. Anne had died in July 1893 and as the South East Garden Festival was coming to Rochester in 1993, that spurred me on to ask Rochester Library if they would like a small exhibition about her. The exhibition in just one display case provoked quite a lot of interest and through one of the visitors I was able to acquire two of her books.

I was able to put together a more wide ranging celebration of Anne's life and works using some loose prints from her books together with my photographs of wild flowers captioned with her quotes. A new exhibition was mounted at the various libraries throughout Kent using some of her books from my own collection, more volumes lent by Medway Archives, and paintings of wild flowers by the then locally based botanical artist Valerie Baines. When the exhibition was hosted by Medway Archives in September 1993, the Rochester Natural History Society provided vases of wild flowers, and as well as an accompanying illustrated lecture, there was a small booklet containing a wealth of information about Anne Pratt and her books. All this time research continued and with the help of Medway Archives I was able to borrow copies of many of her books which were not held locally. They came from collections all over Britain, including the British Library, and enabled me to sample more of her writings, though not all of them about natural history.

An article written in November 1889 by Anne's niece in the *Women's Penny Magazine* explained how Anne had sent copies of her first two little books to Queen Victoria: a letter to the Royal Archives at Windsor was duly written. Unfortunately, Windsor only had *Native Songsters*, but they did send me a copy of Anne's letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 1852. It read, "Our dearly beloved Queen...Your Majesty had been pleased previously to accept a few months since my little volume of *Wild Flowers...*" and "...requesting your Majesty's acceptance of the companion volume, one written on a kindred subject – *Our Wild Singing Birds.*" The records showed that Queen Victoria not only accepted this book, but on October 8<sup>th</sup> ordered two more copies in plain binding. A copy of the letter was included in the exhibition, "by kind permission of HM the Queen."

At the Natural History Museum in London I was able to talk to the Curator of Botany about Anne Pratt, and whilst he knew of her and was interested in her comments on the uses of plants, the museum sadly did not have her herbarium. A visit to their library, however, gave me more information from an obituary in the *Journal of Botany*, including the news of a portrait in the Hunt Library in America. Valerie Baines had exhibited at the Hunt Institute, Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and knew the curator. He gave me information and a copy of a photograph of Anne (below).

Back to Anne Pratt's early life. She was born in Strood, but where? There was no census at that time to refer to. Her father, Robert Pratt, was a grocer, sometimes referred to as a *wholesale* grocer. In 1804 he married Sarah Bundock who was said to be a Huguenot. An enquiry to the Huguenot Society, of which I am a fellow, revealed a Sarah Bundock born in Deptford at about the right date, though later information

led to a different and maybe alternative direction. It is possible that Robert and Sarah were drawn together by their shared affinity to dissenting religions, as Strood Church Book of 1764 records a John Pratt, who is described as, “one of the people called Quakers.” A relative maybe?

The Pratts had three daughters. First came Catherine in 1805, then Anne in 1806 and finally Eliza in 1808. It was in 1808 that Robert Pratt paid £20 to become Freeman of the City of Rochester. Only Freeman could have a shop or exercise any trade or business within the City Liberty, which at that date included a part of Strood, mainly around the bridge. It also entitled him to vote in parliamentary elections and for members of the civic authority: his name as a voter was recorded in the Poll Books, though unfortunately there is a gap between 1806 and 1816. In June 1816 he is listed as, “R Pratt, Grocer, Chatham,” appearing again on the list for June 1818. He died aged 41 in 1819 and is buried at St Mary’s, the parish church of Chatham.



Anne was educated at Eastgate House under Mrs Roffey. There is very little information available for Eastgate House School (see illustration), so we do not know how old Anne was or how long she attended the school. She is described variously as “rather delicate and lame,” “a delicate girl with a stiff knee,” and “of delicate health.” What her illness and disability were we do not know, but because of it she was encouraged to study botany by a family friend, a Dr Dodd or Dods, who is described in one account as Scottish. Who was this man – was he a medical doctor or a Doctor of Divinity? In Robert Pratt’s will of 1819 he mentions, “the children of my sister Mary

Dodd,” so perhaps he was Mary’s husband. Botany was considered an activity safe for young women to pursue which promoted self-improvement and accomplishment, appropriate to a feminine ideal and thus acceptable for young women, wives and mothers.

*The Field, the Garden and the Woodland* by *A Lady* was Anne’s first book, published in 1838 by Charles Knight. There is a family connection with Knight’s publishing house via Anne’s sister Catherine’s husband’s family. Maybe this is what helped her to get established as an author, after all there were many other ladies illustrating wild flowers who were not able to have their works published in their lifetime – for example, the *Frampton Flora* which has only recently been published. Many other books followed, always illustrated by her own paintings, although not all of them were on botany. Anne’s sister Catherine assisted her in collecting specimens, although she comments in one of her books that she “was once promised by a botanist near Tonbridge Wells, the sight of a rare plant and was somewhat amused after a long walk to find that this botanical curiosity was only Bladder Campion!” Anne read widely and quotes from many learned authors, giving various examples of the uses of plants as well as some from her own observations. Her comments on the location of plants is particularly interesting for Kentish readers. For instance, she tells of gathering Pheasant’s Eye Adonis “from cornfields near Maidstone. Likewise Dianthus Armeria, Deptford Pink.” In July 2003, *Plantlife* organised a survey of the Deptford Pink in Farningham Wood SSSI as part of their *Back from the Brink* programme; earlier in July they organised a study trip around Cuxton Fields and Cobham woods. I wonder if they found any Deptford Pinks?

In the 1841 Census, a Mrs Sarah Pratt, aged 60, and described as “independent” and “head” of the household is listed as living at Clover Street, Chatham, with Mary Clarke, a female servant. In 1810 the Best Estate, formerly orchards, were laid out for building and included Clover Street, Richard Street, James Street, Best Street and Rhode Street. Did Robert Pratt, a new Freeman with trading rights, move his young family into a brand new house to be near to his grocer’s shop? Sarah died in 1845 and, like her husband, was buried at St Mary’s.

Anne is described in several sources as “having lived for some time at Luton Road, Chatham” or, “she made her home with her sister, Mrs Young.” Mrs Young was her elder sister who married Joseph Young, also a grocer. Joseph is listed in several local directories as being in business at 272 High Street Chatham, and resident in Luton Road. In his obituary in the Chatham Observer and Kent Spectator it states how he came to be a partner to Robert Pratt and introduced a large sum of money into the business.

Anne is said to have left Chatham in 1846 and lived with friends at Dover, although one source says she previously lived for three years in Brixton. Certainly in 1849, Anne was living at 39 Castle Street, Dover, and it is from this address that she sent Queen Victoria copies of *Wild Flowers* and *Wild Singing Birds*. Anne is also said to have written her opus magna, *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain* in Dover. In 1830, Castle Street is described as having “become a resort for visitors and that it was quite a new feature.” The road was opened up to connect with Market Square in 1837 when the Antwerp Inn stables were compulsorily purchased and knocked down. Today the architecture of Castle Street is protected and looked after by an amenity group. Many of the houses from Anne’s time are still standing and they have never been re-numbered. Number 39, The Tea Caddy Café, as it was in 1993 when I looked at it, became a café in the 1880s. In *Williams’ Directory of Dover 1849* the owner was a Mrs Sarah Bailey who was using the property as a lodging house. The 1851 census shows Sarah Bailey as a Lodging House keeper with her daughter and just one visitor; in 1863 Mrs Bailey put the house up for auction.

In 1866 Anne married John Pearlless of East Grinstead, Sussex, and is said to have lived there for two or three years, later living at Redhill. I visited East Grinstead and ran a search for Anne’s marriage at the West Sussex register office. Sadly I drew a blank. When I re-read the reference to her marriage more carefully, I then realised she had only been living in East Grinstead. She was, in fact, married in Kent. Anne’s niece, Emily Wells, in her article in the *Women’s Penny Paper* says of Anne, she married “on the eve of her sixtieth birthday,” December 1866. It was actually 15<sup>th</sup> November of that year. John, a bachelor is described as a “gentleman,” living at Lingfield, Surrey, and Anne, “spinster,” at Luton. They married at Christ Church, Luton, but not the present church nor even the one before that. The first Christ Church stood at the bottom of what was the original road into the village, diagonally down the hillside from the old Tam-O-Shanter public house on Chatham Hill. The church when built in the 1840s stood alone amongst the fields but by the time of Anne’s marriage, the new Luton Road had already been built. As Anne’s married sister lived in Luton Road, it seems logical that she should marry there. The article in the *Women’s Penny Paper* tells us that “there had been many sweet and tender passages between them in early years” and that “their happy married life is one more instance in disproof of the frequent assertion that literary wives do not make happy homes.”

Anne and John do not seem to have ever owned their own house, but moved around the country lodging in Lewisham in the 1860s, Brighton in the 1880s and finally in Shepherds Bush in London. This time they were staying with some John’s relatives. In the 1880 obituary to Anne in the *Journal of Botany* by James Britten FLS, she is mentioned as living in Brighton. At Brighton’s Reference Library I discovered a reference to Pratt and Son, Naturalists. At the local Booth Museum of Natural History, the Curator of Botany had not heard of Anne, and neither did he have any of her herbarium specimens; it seems that signed sheets tend to get passed around. The Curator of Mammals, however, had a good laugh when I

asked about the Pratt Naturalists: it appears it was deeply unfashionable to be described as a 'stuffer' in the taxidermy trade, so instead they called themselves 'naturalists'.

On 27<sup>th</sup> July 1893 Anne Pratt died at 17 Rylett Road, Shepherds Bush, followed shortly after by her husband. Rylett Road is a very pleasant, tree lined road which today looks much the same as an earlier postcard view. Then the houses were set back from the road behind low brick walls with railings on top. Of course the railings went during the Second World War and the walls are now of higher modern brick, but still with substantial gate pillars. Number 17 is a detached house built of pale Kent stock bricks, double fronted with bay windows on both sides. The wall over the ground floor bays is taken up to form a little balcony and is embellished with red brick patterns. The front door has a balcony over supported by white painted pillars and the house still has a slate roof.

In Anne's obituary in the *Journal of Botany*, she is described as "not in the strict sense a botanist... she was however a true plant lover, and by her pleasant style succeeded in interesting her readers in the objects she described." James Britten FLS goes on to describe her books as "the best popular account of wild plants we have." Anne was well enough known for her death to be recorded in *The Times*. That obituary was copied out and posted up in the window of Richard Brain's shop at 194 Chatham High Street (originally number 269). He was one of the oldest members of the Rochester Natural History Society, obviously a fan, and maybe a friend, as his business premises was close to the Youngs' grocery shop.

Anne Pratt's knowledge of plants and their many uses, domestic and medicinal, were recalled both during her lifetime and after her death. They range from the *Athenaeum* in 1841, *The Times* 1840, *Country Life* 1945 and *The Spectator* 9<sup>th</sup> February 1945, which stated, "Anne Pratt, that charming and learned old botanist who I am afraid is being forgotten. No other is so good at local names." *The Listener* 14<sup>th</sup> April 1949, with regard to Rosebay Willowherb growing on bomb sites, "I wondered what that excellent Victorian botanist Anne Pratt had said about it. (In *Wild Flowers Volume II*, "The Rose Bay is frequent in Scotland, but is not very common as a wild flower in England.)" *The Spectator* 1946, "Wild Mustard or Hedge Mustard. Anne Pratt a most thorough collector of local names does not record it." As well as writing about wild flowers, Anne also wrote about garden plants and the language of flowers; in all she wrote in excess of sixteen books. She contributed to a variety of publications such as *The Kentish Coroneil* (which was made up of original contributions in prose and poetry by people connected with the County of Kent), *The Language of Flowers*, and *The Illustrated Girls' Own Treasury*, to mention but a few. Over the years, my research on Anne has continued in dribs and drabs, and I am just beginning again at her after a long break. If anyone has any information about Anne or her books, I would be very pleased to hear from them, via the Editor.

## *Snodland Viewed by its Historians*

Dr Andrew Ashbee

*Dr Andrew Ashbee was born and bred in Snodland. The former Head of Music at Rochester Grammar School for Girls, he currently teaches music appreciation for the WEA. Andrew is internationally known for his work on Tudor and Stuart music and musicians, especially the Maidstone composer John Jenkins. He is the Honorary Curator of Snodland Millennium Museum and the Chairman of Snodland Historical Society.*

Within the last two hundred years or so it is likely that in each parish a succession of men or women will have kept alive the flame of local history and will have attempted to leave something of their experiences or knowledge on which their successors could build. So it is with Snodland. The archives of every parish differ. Sometimes one looks with envy on the survival of ancient books of churchwardens' accounts or the like elsewhere, but neighbouring parishes in turn will wish they had equivalent documents to some in one's own collections. Snodland is particularly fortunate to have some unique historical accounts made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



*Above: Alfred Hambrook's shop in the High Street, Snodland, at the time of the 1911 coronation. (Ref.: RHI013)*

Inevitably, the man with the clearest picture of his community was the Vicar or Rector. Not only was he expected to take a leading part in the affairs of the parish or district, but the parish records were in his care (and until recently often in his house). At the beginning of the nineteenth century Snodland had a remarkable rector, the Rev. Henry Dampier Phelps. He was a nephew of the Bishop of Rochester (who gave him the living) and he served in Snodland for 61 years from 1804 until his death in 1865. Phelps did much to restore the parish church, spending more than £1600 of his own money. He wrote: 'In fact, when I came to the Living the Church was dark, damp, & neglected: & in a worse state than many a Barn. I lived to make it neat & comfortable: & hope it will be more esteemed when I am no more.' However, he had a low opinion of his parishioners:

'A Paper Mill has contributed a good deal, to injure the morals of the Poor: & the large establishments of Scamps, employed in burning chalk, will speedily root out the little good that remains.'

The burial register records deaths of two of them as 'the effects of debauchery throughout life' and he can hardly have endeared himself to those whose occupation he marked as 'smuggler'! Not surprisingly an attempt was made on his life, but the assailants killed the wrong man.

Phelps compiled three notebooks. The largest includes a detailed tithe of the parish in 1804, forty years before the Tithe Commutation survey and written proof of what is due to him as he took up his post. He also gives fascinating accounts of Roman remains, of natural history, of parish boundaries and rights of way, of seating in the church and of alterations to the fabric, together with a short history of the parish mostly compiled from Hasted, but including some personal notes. Unfortunately these books and other parish documents were removed by a naughty rector in the mid-twentieth century (I shall forbear to name him). Some were returned via the Bishop in 1988 and are now at MALSC, but it was only about three years ago that the Phelps books and other material suddenly appeared for sale in a Tonbridge bookshop.

Fortunately Snodland Historical Society was able to buy them (at considerable cost) and has published their contents as SHS pamphlets 24-26.

*Parochialia* [MALSC: P342/28/20] was one of the documents returned in 1988 and comprises a kind of diary made by two Rectors, Rev. Carey (1865-1874) and Rev. Bingley (1874-1881). Carey reports on events such as the re-building of the Rectory and the National Schools, repairs to the church, some international events ('War declared between France and Prussia...'), and some local ('a man named Wm McCoy whose constitution had been much inflamed by drink died suddenly in a quarter of an house in a Beershop'). Bingley's contribution mostly comprised newspaper cuttings. All present a fascinating view of Snodland life at the time.

In 1894 a local printer, John Woolmer, published *Historical Jottings of the Parish of Snodland*. This extremely rare booklet (I have seen only one copy – which we have at Snodland Museum) leaps in one bound from William the Conqueror to 'the present century' but it is invaluable in its comprehensive survey of Snodland in the 1890s and an interesting appendix. *Snodland in the Old Days* prints the memories of a parishioner reaching back to the 1840s. Sadly Woolmer died aged only 36 the same year, or he might have contributed more of the same.

Eventually his place was taken by Charles de Rocfort Wall, Rector between 1909 and 1930. He carefully preserved and bound the parish magazines of his time and among the contents of these were regular pieces about Snodland's history, mostly written-up from the records in his care. In due course he gathered them together within his book *Snodland and its History 55 B.C. to A.D. 1928*. One other Rector should be mentioned as a student of Snodland's past: Charles Evan Darlington (Rector, 1954-1962), who in his own parish magazines wrote some of the best historical snippets, delightfully illustrated by his own cartoon pictures (not easy on a Gestetner!).

These men are known through their writings, but no doubt there were others keeping an oral history alive. So far as I am aware, none of them endeavoured to look for records further afield apart from reading the printed histories of Kent. Many of today's parishioners are indebted to schoolteachers for what they know of Snodland's history. In the days before local history became part of the National Curriculum, my mother Mildred Ashbee at the Church of England school and Mr. Warnett at St Katherine's School were assiduous in imparting what they knew. Their efforts are fondly remembered by many members of today's Snodland Historical Society. Another fount of information was Gerald Edgeler (1910-1997), who in a long life-time collected pictures of Snodland which were made into 15"x 12" photographs. He had a remarkable memory for detail and has given us many unique insights into the parish and its parishioners. Before his death he bequeathed his collection to me and it is now at Snodland Museum. He also gave a duplicate set to the Centre for Kentish Studies (CKS) in Maidstone.

As to my own involvement with local history? To some extent I grew up with it. My mother contributed short histories to pamphlets like the programmes for the 1953 Coronation and 1977 Jubilee and I frequently visited Gerald to exchange information and memories. But neither of them had time or inclination to look for information outside the parish. I was (and am) heavily involved in researching and publishing material on Tudor and Stuart music, which meant frequent trips to repositories such as the British Museum and Library and especially the Public Record Office. Time waiting for documents allowed the opportunity to browse the open shelves and Snodland took its turn with music as a subject for research. I became a frequent visitor to the CKS and ploughed my way through the parish records which by then had been deposited. In those pre-computer days I undertook such tasks as transcribing the parish registers (from 1558 as far as 1873) and much other material (which I still have) and I began compiling a card index of parishioners from earliest times. Events proved catalysts for my own ventures into print. The threat of closure, fortunately averted, prompted my *History of the Parish Church of All Saints Snodland* (1980) in which I expanded on Wall's account and was able to add new material from the British Library



and elsewhere. The centenary of Parish Councils in 1994 led to my *Little History of Snodland* incorporating much that I had gleaned from the Kent Archives Office beyond the material which had been available to the Snodland Rectors.

As part of the Parish Council centenary celebrations I was asked by the Council to mount an exhibition about Snodland and its history. This ran for more than a week and was extremely successful. In due course it gave them the idea of creating a local museum and this became their Millennium project. The Old Fire Station in Waghorn Road was purchased and the necessary repairs were put in hand. In 1997 the idea of forming a Snodland Historical Society had been mooted and this was inaugurated in the autumn of that year. Agreement was reached between Snodland Town Council and the Historical Society that the Council would be responsible for the building—heat, light, maintenance—and Historical Society volunteers would manage the displays and provide stewards. The museum was opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1999 by Jonathan Shaw MP and can be visited by the public on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons from 2 pm to 5 pm; special arrangements are often made for groups.

The mere presence of a museum now brings offers of items which might previously have been thrown away. Not all prove desirable, but no offer is refused! The Maidstone Area Archaeological Group has kindly loaned its material excavated from Snodland's Roman Villa and Lafarge has donated a small group of Prehistoric, Iron Age and Roman finds from the new roundabout on the Halling boundary. Our aim, however, has always been to provide more than just a venue for displaying artefacts.

We were fortunate to acquire a Lottery Grant enabling us to buy three computers, a scanner, a digital camera and a photography stand, and have purchased a microfiche reader. We try to operate as a miniature MALSC for those researching Snodland and its environs and particularly its parishioners. Family historians can access our computerized database of post-1800 parishioners—also available on CD-ROM—which began as my card index, but is continually expanding, and we have censuses, directories and similar material. A key element in this is the Society's website at [www.snodlandhistory.org.uk](http://www.snodlandhistory.org.uk).

What we know of pre-1800 parishioners is listed on the website together with much other material. *A Little History of Snodland* went out-of-print within four years, but the bulk of the text is now on the website. Detailed catalogues of most of the documents and maps at the museum are also available online. The Edgeler collection of pictures has multiplied enormously in the last few years. Snodland was fortunate to have a stationer, AN Hambrook, who photographed the village continually between about 1904 and 1940. It is only recently that we have discovered he also covered much of the rest of Kent and we are making an effort to collect and catalogue all his work. Sadly all his plates were destroyed after his death, so there is no clear idea of his complete output - certainly more than 1300 images. Among Snodland Historical Society's aims is one 'to research, record, document and publish'. The Society's ever expanding range of pamphlets makes much material about Snodland available to all, including transcriptions of all the early accounts mentioned above. We have also found that we are well placed to assist in the research towards the *Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone* project (see Dr Andrew Hann's article below) and that in turn is supplying new information to us.

*Further details and membership application forms for the Snodland Historical Society can be obtained from Andrew Ashbee at 214, Malling Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5EQ. Telephone: 01634-243001; e-mail: [aa0060962@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:aa0060962@blueyonder.co.uk). Please visit the website for news of events: [www.snodlandhistory.org.uk](http://www.snodlandhistory.org.uk).*

## Summer 2007 - FOMA Visit to Snodland – book now!

A special FOMA outing to Snodland Historical Society and the Snodland Millennium Museum will take place at 2.00 pm on Saturday 2nd June 2007. The tour will be guided by Dr Andrew Ashbee, Honorary Curator of the museum and Chairman of Snodland Historical Society. The tour will begin at the museum which is situated in Waghorn Road, Snodland, ME6 5BQ, Kent.

Tickets for FOMA members are £3.00; non members £5.00. For further information please telephone the Friends' Secretary, Cindy O'Halloran, on 01634 332714, or by email, [cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk](mailto:cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk) before 31st May 2007, as availability is limited.



*The Snodland Millennium Museum (Ref.:RWA008)*

## *The Victoria County History at MALSC*

Dr Andrew Hann, Committee Member

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

The Kent *England's Past for Everyone (EPE)* project has made good progress on a number of fronts over the last quarter. The second major chapter, *The Medway valley and the wider world* has now been completed. This discusses the relationship between the study parishes, their immediate surroundings and wider hinterland. Amongst the more interesting conclusions is the fact that agricultural labourers and industrial workers appear to have had different social spheres. Farm workers retained strong linkages with their local 'neighbourhood', a block of rural parishes often facing away from the river. In contrast, cement labourers forged closest ties along and across the river, reflecting the concentration of industrial activity in riverside parishes. Industrialisation also appears to have significantly strengthened and widened linkages between the Medway valley and the wider world, particularly links with London. The capital provided a market for bricks, cement, timber, grain and hops produced in the area, and was also an important source of finance for new manufacturing ventures.



*Left: April Lambourne, Archives and Local Studies Officer and (right) Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian.*

The story of the lower Medway valley's links with its hinterland features prominently in a major new exhibition now displayed at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (see photograph). The exhibition, which runs until 27<sup>th</sup> March 2007, highlights different aspects of the *EPE* project, discusses some of the project findings, and gives an opportunity to showcase work done by volunteers. To launch the exhibition there was a presentation at the Archives on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2007 focusing on 'The lower Medway valley and the wider world'. The evening was well attended and proved an enjoyable occasion.

The *Victoria County History* volunteer team has also been making good progress with the village survey. All fieldwork has now been completed and information from the recording forms entered into a database. The next stage will be to identify the builders, owners and occupiers of the numerous properties that have been surveyed. Teams of volunteers will focus on each of the three villages (Aylesford, Eccles and Snodland), and will seek to gather as such information as possible about each of the surveyed buildings, using a range of sources: census, trade directories, tithe maps, estate records and old photographs. Once this material has been assembled it will be added to the database giving us a comprehensive record of each village and its inhabitants. It is hoped that we will be able to map the data and mount the three maps onto the project website. Interactive mapping may make it possible for us to produce clickable maps, whereby members of the public can click on a building to reveal an image of the property and text box providing details of former residents. This will provide a valuable community resource, and will be of great interest to residents of the three study villages past and present.

## Editor's Footnotes



*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.*

*In this issue of The Clock Tower, Amanda presents the initial findings of her research on the 1848-1849 Asiatic Cholera outbreak in Lambeth, London, and the effect on migrant workers from Kent. A special mention must go to fellow researcher Susan Algar, whose outstanding work on the Osmotherly family has made this possible.*

I have mentioned the Osmotherly family of Cliffe before, an intriguing group and at first relatively easy to track, until fellow researcher, Susan Algar, realised they were also calling themselves Osmer (easier to write and certainly easier to pronounce with a Kentish accent) and even O'Smotherly. However a trait all these Osmotherlys do appear to share is an enterprising spirit, and like others in the Nineteenth Century, many of them left the agrarian communities of the Medway Towns to seek opportunities elsewhere: in America, Australia and in London - as discussed by Dr Andrew Hann in this issue and Issue 04 of *The Clock Tower*.



*The Medway Towns in 1840.  
From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Couchman Collection:  
Watling Street, Stood Hill or London Road (A2 Trunk Road), Stood.  
Print from engraving entitled Rochester comprising view of Stood and Rochester looking east along London Road from top of Stood Hill towards the North Downs, showing clockwise outbuildings of Coach and Horses Inn, [cf. p.19] c.1840, p.20 (L)*

James Osmotherly was born in Cliffe in 1807 (a contemporary of Anne Pratt – see Barbara Marchant's article above), the son of James and Charlotte and a descendant of the second marriage of the first Osmotherly in Cliffe: John, born 1691, parish clerk and bellringer at Rochester Cathedral.

In the days before the railways, it is likely that James Osmotherly made his way to Lambeth in London on one of the boats or ferries that made their way back and forth between the capital and the Medway Towns (see picture). One can only imagine his expectation at the prospect of a secure job and a regular wage in the early years of the Industrial Revolution.



*The River Medway 1830  
From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Couchman Collection: Upnor, Frindsbury Extra.  
Print from engraving entitled Upnor Castle, near Chatham, Kent Drawn by T.M. Baynes, engraved by T. Garner and published by George Virtue, 26 Ivy Lane, London DE402/25/p.10 (U)*



*Palace Yard, Lambeth, with the kind permission of Lee Jackson, from his website [The Dictionary of Victorian London](http://www.victorianlondon.org), [www.victorianlondon.org](http://www.victorianlondon.org)*

By 1841, James – now married to Ann and with seven children - had already been living in Lambeth eleven years, his eldest child having been born there in 1830. Between 1801 and 1901, Lambeth's population grew from 28,000 to 302,000: what had once been a rural village swiftly became one of the industrial hubs of the capital. The south bank of the River Thames was lined with wharfs and factories fuelled by coal-fired furnaces producing such items as glass, pottery, soap and lead shot. A list of occupations in the 1841 Census gives a clear picture of this bustling, industrial community: malt roasters, distillers, potters, fishmongers, saddlers, coal merchants, lime burners, coopers, pork butchers, barge

builders, tailors, blacksmiths, brick layers, engineers, excise officers, seamen, milk dealers, dressmakers, hairdressers, and, of course, labourers. James Osmotherly was a coal labourer, and at first glance, it would appear that James had made the right choice in leaving Cliffe. Yet by 1849, James, his wife, and three of his children, would be dead.

The rise of Lambeth as an industrial centre meant that housing was hastily erected with little thought for the welfare of the growing population of workers. The Pictorial Map of London of 1854 (reproduced here with the kind permission of Lee Jackson, from his website [The Dictionary of Victorian London](http://www.victorianlondon.org), [www.victorianlondon.org](http://www.victorianlondon.org)) shows the riverside thoroughfares Fore Street and Princes Street intersected with alleyways. The dwellings built on this low-lying marsh land butted onto factories engaged in dangerous industrial processes. In its *History of Lambeth*, The Museum of Garden History ([www.museumgardenhistory.org](http://www.museumgardenhistory.org)) notes, "At...Fore Street there were bone crushing factories, 'the smell complained of as a great nuisance; the bone bugs creep through the wall into the next house.'"



Asiatic Cholera had already struck London in 1832, claiming over 6 and a half thousand victims, and it was the common belief that such diseases were transmitted through the air. An article by Stephen Halliday in the *British Medical Journal* in 2001 ([www.bmj.com](http://www.bmj.com)) entitled, *Death and Miasma in Victorian London: an obstinate belief* explains: "...a belief that prevailed in the medical profession for much of the 19th century [was]...that most, if not all, disease was caused by inhaling air... the 'miasmatic' explanation..." Dr John Snow's discovery that cholera was in fact water-borne was not accepted until 1858. Moreover, whilst the existence of the cholera bacillus (*vibrio cholerae*) had been established in Italy in 1854 by Filippo Pacini (1812-1883), its existence was not fully accepted until 1884 with the work of Robert Koch (1843-1910).

Lambeth Archives in London holds the Lambeth Vestry Committee Minutes and District Sanitary Reports from 1848 to 1878. These reports show that in the first months of 1848, the authorities already realised that the living conditions of workers in Lambeth were severe enough to fear a second cholera outbreak. In

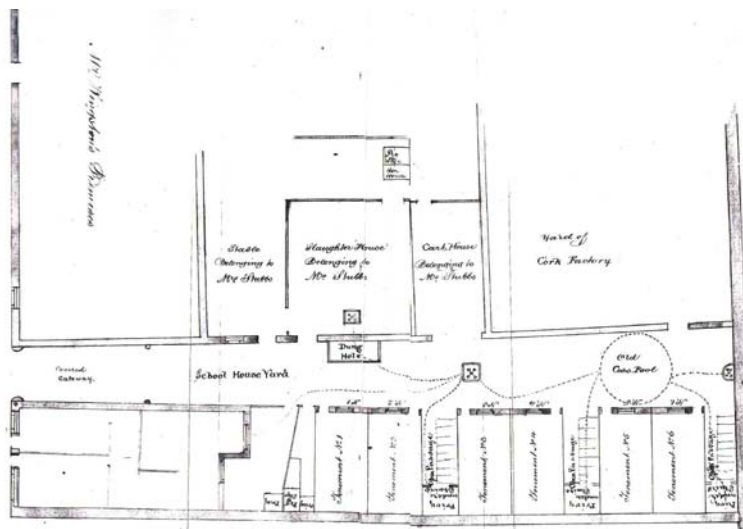
January 1848, JW Weeks of the Sanitary Subcommittee reported, "...we fear there is every reason to apprehend, should it please God to visit us with that awful scourge the cholera..."

However, because it was thought cholera would spread through the air, the reports focus on the smells the Subcommittee encountered, and these descriptions give us a vivid picture of what life must have been like in Lambeth for James Osmotherly and other Kentish workers. In the main part of his work, JW Weeks reports:

"We first visited Jurston Street which we found to be in a wretched condition, a large portion was covered with stagnant water, quantities of mud composed of ashes and decomposed vegetables and all kinds of refuse thrown into the street by the inhabitants – within a few yards of the street is a large open drain...open nearly the whole distance from Christ Church work-house to the Westminster Road. In this part the sight is most revolting – dead cats and dogs and filth of every description, and although it was a cold morning, such was the offensive effluvia [sic] emitted as to render a speedy retreat most desirable...in a small yard we found a number of pigs, the stench was so great that we could scarcely remain near the spot for the inquiries...[in] Hooper Street...several cesspools overflowing and as a matter of course most offensive smells...one family generally occupies only one room...We next visited Harriet Street...the very worse street in the whole district, the dirt of all kinds have been left to accumulate for years...thrown up into great heaps so as to convey the idea of so many dung-hills in the centre of the street – no drains – and cesspools in a bad state and all this within a few yards of the Lower Marsh. [In] Gloster [sic] Street...we found one man had ten pigs in the cellar, on opening the front door the stench was dreadful...In Short Street we found a cow yard and ...without any drain whatever...in heavy rain, the place is regularly flooded."

In another work by Guthrie, Musselwhite and Milton, they report:

"Into one of these plague spots, we entered and no sooner was the outer door opened than the stench immediately met our nostrils warning us to retreat from a place so nauseous so unfit for human existence or human sight."



*A plan of six tenements on the corner of Westminster Bridge Road and Felix Street from the 1848 Lambeth District Sanitary Reports. From top left and in a clockwise direction, the annotation reads: Mr Kingston's premises, stable belonging to Mrs Stubbs, slaughterhouse belonging to Mrs Stubbs, cart house belonging to Mrs Stubbs, Yard of Cork Factory, Old Cess Pool, open passageway and privy under stairs, Tenements 6 and 5, open passageway and privy under stairs, Tenements 4 and 3, open passageway and privy under stairs, Tenements 2 and 1, privy, pig sty, privy; above the slaughter house is a pig sty and hen house. An annotation*

*accompanying the plan reads: The six tenements were occupied by poor people numbering in all about 80 individuals. The lines dotted...denote the course of the drains into the Cess Pool. There is no drainage to any of these houses beyond what is shown in the plan. Reproduced with the kind permission of Lambeth Archives.*

In the 1841 census, James Osmotherly and his family are listed as living in Great Lemon Court, an alley linking the aforementioned Fore Street and Princes Street. In his *Mode on the Communication of Cholera*, (available in full on [www.deltaomega.org](http://www.deltaomega.org)) the scientist Dr John Snow reported:

“Now the people in Lower Fore Street, Lambeth, obtained their water by dipping a pail into the Thames, there being no other supply in the street...when the epidemic revived again in the summer of 1849, the first case ...was in Lower Fore Street...”

Dr John Snow records that in 1849 1,618 people died of cholera in Lambeth, out of a total population of 134,768; around 15,000 died in the whole of London. In Lambeth, outbreaks were worst in areas where the population was only able to obtain water directly from the river or from The Lambeth Waterworks Company adjacent to today's Hungerford Bridge and where Lambeth's waste was discharged. Whilst the company professed to filtering their water, this was not the case. As late as 1850 when a Dr Hassall examined water taken from their supply, he discovered animal hairs and substances which had passed through the alimentary canal.

There probably could not have been a worse part of the River Thames from which to draw drinking water. Apart from the fact that the river was, in effect, London's open sewer, Lambeth is situated on what is possibly one of the shallowest stretches and a natural crossing point in the Bronze Age. Situated slightly upstream from Thorney Island (and the present Houses of Parliament), sandbanks now hidden under water conceal the position of what was possibly London's earliest bridge, and a predecessor of the ancient crossing point for horses, or horse ferry – hence the present day Horseferry Road. In 2001, Channel Four's Time Team undertook an excavation of the river bank close to St Thomas' Hospital. Their conclusions were broadcast on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2002 and can be viewed at [www.channel4.com/history](http://www.channel4.com/history).

Investigations into the fate of the Osmotherlys in Lambeth are still incomplete. At first, we had thought the youngest child, Lucy, had also died of cholera, and may have even been one of its first victims. Her 1848 death certificate shows that she escaped the outbreak, having died of smallpox. The entry, which also gives the address 11 Princes Street, laments that she had not been vaccinated.

By 1851, two of the surviving Osmotherly children had been returned to the Medway area. George, aged 10, is living with his grandfather, James, a shepherd in High Halstow. His sister, Hannah, aged 12, is with her uncle and aunt, George Phillips Osmotherly and Hannah, in Allhallows. Of Mary, aged 14, there is no trace until 1861 when she is working as a servant in St Pancras. James, aged 16, is working as a potter and is lodging at number 20 Frances Street, Lambeth, one of the filthiest streets in the district. Amazingly, James survived further outbreaks of cholera and went on to fight in the Crimean War; he died in Edmonton in 1902.

In 1852, an Act of Parliament was passed forcing all the water companies to take their water from further upstream, below Teddington Lock. In 1866 demolition began in the Princes Street area to make way for the Albert Embankment and a new sewer system for London, designed by the chief engineer to London's Metropolitan Board of Works, Joseph Bazalgette (1819 – 1891).

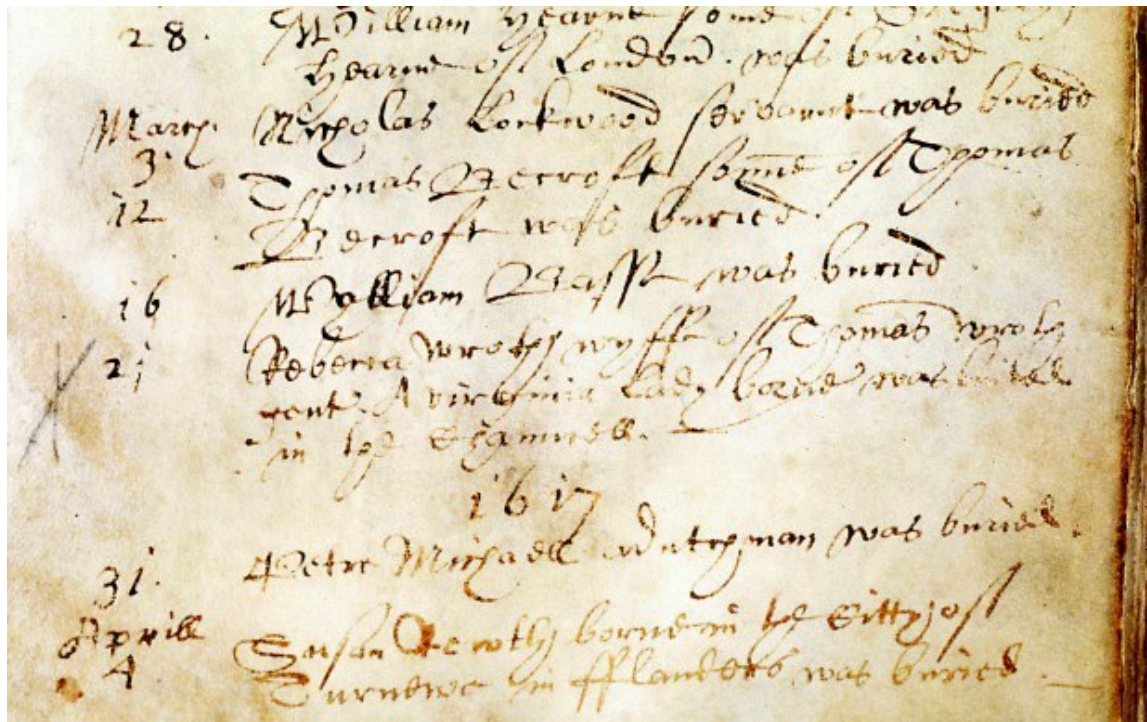
*Information reproduced with the kind permission of:  
Lambeth Archives, Minet Library, 52 Knatchbull Road, London SE5 9QY.  
Telephone: 020 7926 6073; Fax: 020 7926 6080  
<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/LeisureCulture/Libraries/Archives.htm>*

*Transcriptions from:  
Lambeth Parish and Vestry Committee Minutes (Ref.: P3)  
Lambeth District Sanitary Reports (Ref: P3, 73-75, 1848-1878)*

*From the Archives...*

An exhibition celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Virginia and American colonies will be held later this year at the Guildhall Museum, Rochester, Kent. The exhibition will centre on the first Gravesend parish register containing the burial record of Pocahontas, dating from 1617 (see below).

The exhibition is expected to run from May to September and admission will be free of charge.



Pocahontas was born in Virginia, America in about 1595, daughter of Chief Powhatan of the Algonquin Nation. She was the first native American in Virginia to convert to Christianity and in 1614, she married Englishman John Rolfe. Rolfe brought Pocahontas (or Rebecca, as she was then known) and their son Thomas to England, where she was presented at Court to King James I. On their return to America in 1617, and whilst their ship was still in the River Thames, Pocahontas fell ill. She died in Gravesend, where she was buried.