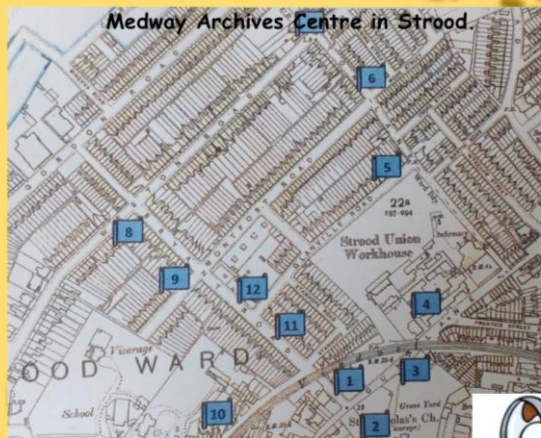


Children's History Trail

Monday 29th July-Saturday 31st August

Test your detective skills by solving the clues in our archives' history trail.

Collect your map & clues from



Suitable for children aged 6-12 years old.



Medway Archives Centre

32 Bryant Road, Strood, ME2 3EP

www.medway.gov.uk/archives

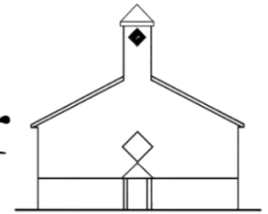


Medway Archives & Local Studies

Phone: 01634 332714

Medway
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The Clock Tower



Issue Number 55: August 2019
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

The FOMA De Caville Index – An Extraordinary Discovery!



The recent uncovering of a pamphlet at the Medway Archives Centre by MAC's Catharina Clement has led to the discovery of an unknown World War One memorial at St. John's Church, Chatham, providing 65 NEW names for our online FOMA DE Caville Index! See page 10.

If undelivered, please return to:
Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP.

FRIENDS OF MEDWAY ARCHIVES

FRIDAY 13th SEPTEMBER

"FROZEN MEDWAY"

The winters of 1895, 1947 & 1963

DAVE BURTON



7.30 pm Doors open 7.10 pm

St Nicholas Church Lower Hall,
Strood ME2 4TR, Car park ME2 4UG
For more details go to www.foma-lsc.org

FOMA's New Venue

St Nicholas Church is situated in Strood High Street, between the Gun Lane/Cuxton Road junction and North Street, facing you as you come around the one-way Commercial Road to reach that end of the High Street.

Buses coming from Cuxton Road or down Strood Hill stop outside, while those going towards those directions stop in Commercial Road. Buses to and from Frindsbury and the Hoo Peninsular stop in North Street and it is possible to walk through the Asda car park to reach the Lower Hall entrance at the back of the church.

By car you can gain access to the church car park via what is left of Edward Street, a turning off Gun Lane close to the railway bridge, on the right as you come from the traffic lights at the Gun Lane/High Street junction. Please note that you cannot, at the present time turn into Gun Lane from the Frindsbury Road as it is one-way. If you are coming from that direction you will need to turn right into Cliffe Road, then first left into Martin Road and left at the T-junction with Brompton Lane.

The post code for the High Street entrance of the Church Hall is ME2 4TR and the post code for the Edward Street entrance and the car park is ME2 4UG.

Voices from the Dockyard

The Halfpenny Trams

On page 21 Betty Cole and Norma Crow continue the series of letters written in the 1970s by former Chatham Dockyard workers and published in the *Evening Post* in January and February 1973. The letters contain memories of life in the Yard in the 1900s and in this issue of the *Clock Tower* focus on the Halfpenny Trams, an essential means of transportation to Chatham Dockyard for many of the *Maties*. The trams stops are still in situ on the Dockyard wall in Dock Road, Chatham; our thanks to Elaine Gardner for the photographs below. Some of the individual signs can be seen on page 22.



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Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



I am pleased to be able to report a number of successful changes at FOMA since the last *Clock Tower*.

In June we had our first talk at our new venue, St Nicholas Church Lower Hall. It is promising to be an excellent meeting place with easy parking for drivers and bus stop access for those who don't drive. In his talk, Christoph Bull took us on an entertaining trip down the Thames with his anecdotes and descriptions of past events and activities. Thanks to the publicity give for the event by all parties at the Archive event the weekend before, we had a number of visitors new to our talks, some of whom have now become members. A warm welcome to you all!

The chaotic Strood High Street improvements did not appear to deter many from making the effort to come along. Our next event there is a talk by Dave Burton entitled *Frozen Medway* about the winters in which the River Medway froze over in the past 100 or so years. I do remember the freeze in 1963, but was not around in 1895 and the 1947 winter was still a few months short of my birth! Do come along on September 13 – details are on pages 2 and 38 and on the FOMA website at <https://foma-lsc.org/>.



I am very happy to report that at the FOMA committee meeting in July we formally accepted our new committee member Chris de Coulon Berthoud (pictured) as the new FOMA Secretary. He has now taken over from Odette Buchanan who retired earlier this year and we look forward to working with him. It would be great to see a few more of our members also volunteer. There are still spaces on the committee and fresh ideas are always welcome – in fact it's new ideas that keep societies going.

MAC's Norma Crowe has recently been asked to provide exhibition loans from the Archive out to the various Medway libraries and hubs and so enquired whether FOMA could purchase her some new display boards. We were very happy to do so and a new set has been ordered from Greswell Library supplies at a cost of £654, inclusive of VAT and delivery. These are made to order and we will make sure there is an update on their arrival in the next *Clock Tower* in November when we hand them over! If they prove to be excellent value, we have promised Norma a second set later in the year.

On the front cover of this issue of *The Clock Tower*, you will see that we recently made a most astonishing discovery at St. John's Church, Chatham. The war memorial there contains the hitherto unknown names of many more Medway men which are being added to our online FOMA De Caville Index (<http://foma-lsc.org/wwi/index.html>). FOMA member and volunteer, Steve Cross has been doing a fantastic job investigating the stories behind the names. Since its formal launch in 2014, the FOMA De Caville Index now contains almost 4,200 entries and has become an invaluable resource for those investigating the lives of the Medway men who gave their lives in World War One. We are indebted to Steve for his work and his contribution to the Index, and you can read more about the astonishing discovery made at St John's Church on page 10.

I have left perhaps the most exciting news until last! In mid July, Duncan Mead, Head of Medway Library and Archive Services advised us that a new archivist has been appointed to MAC to fill the post left by Alison Cable last year. She is Elspeth Millar, currently an archivist at the University of Kent and will be joining MAC at the end of September. We are all delighted and are looking forward to meeting her; there will be more information about Elspeth in the November *Clock Tower*!

Finally, we were deeply saddened in July to hear of the death of FOMA member and *Clock Tower* contributor, Doris Herlihy. Doris was a loyal and enthusiastic member and continued to support FOMA after her move to Glastonbury to be nearer to her family. She will be greatly missed and we send our most sincere condolences. Doris Herlihy's obituary can be read on page 7.

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members Catherine Pettit, David Smith, Yvonne Harris, Sally Whiffing, Anne Wickenden, Mike and Hazel Smith, and Malcolm Riley.

NEW EASTGATE HOUSE BOOK!

The Buck Family & Eastgate House

by FOMA member Pauline Weeds
£3.50 available from Eastgate House, Rochester.

Further information from Terri Zbyszewska, The Membership Secretary, FoEH,
31 The Esplanade, Rochester, ME1 1QW or at tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk

About The Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives (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 56 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 28 October 2019, with publication on Wednesday 20 November 2019.

Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Barkers Litho, Unit 18 Castle View Business Centre, Gas House Road, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1PB; telephone: 01634 829048, email: info@barkerslitho.co.uk

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

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

The Clock Tower is also available at www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html

The Clock Tower Index (<http://foma-lsc.org/journal.html>) is updated by Nic Nicholas.

Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives Centre can be obtained on the MAC website <https://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> or by writing to Medway Archives Office, c/o Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.uk

General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the FOMA Chairman: Elaine Gardner, 102 Valley View Road, Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent; emgardner@virginmedia.com; 01634 408595. All correspondence should be directed to the FOMA Secretary: Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, 4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent; berthoud@blueyonder.co.uk

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent. Telephone: 01634 892976; email: betty-cole@outlook.com

October 15 - December 22: *A Lasting Peace for Medway*

This exhibition marks the culmination of a year-long programme of art workshops funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Hosted by local artist Tina Lawlor Mottram.

October 19 - October 27: Berlin Wall Art

For kids – see the website for further details.

November 9 - November 10: 30th Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The Museum is home to the largest section of Berlin Wall outside Germany. Come and see the impressive edifice, find out more about the Cold War that led to the division of the city and discover why a huge piece of Wall wound up in Gillingham!

December 7 - December 8: Wartime Christmas Weekend

Discover how Christmas was celebrated during the Second World War!

The Bridge Study Centre

Bridging has been an essential part of warfare for thousands of years. In this gallery the full history of military bridging is explored. Hands on activities from our Sapper Workshop and dressing up are also available for kids.

Opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday 10.00am to 5.00pm, last entry 4.00 pm; Bank Holidays: 10.00 am to 5.00pm, last entry 4.00 pm; CLOSED MONDAYS. Admission: adult – £8.40, child (Aged 5-16) – £5.70, concessions – £5.70, family ticket (2 adults and 2 children) – £22.50; children under 5: free.



Blue Town Heritage Centre, The Criterion Music Hall and Cinema

www.thecriterionbluetown.co.uk/#!criterion-music-hall/cb3i

The present Heritage Centre and café are on the site of two earlier establishments. Originally the New Inn in 1868, the site became The Royal Oxford Music Hall. The following year the building, situated a few doors down from the court house, became The

Criterion public house, which included to the rear a music hall called The Palace of Varieties. This offered "rational amusement for all classes" including, in April 1876, a one armed juggler! In 1879 the earlier building was replaced with a brick built one. The Heritage Centre is packed with items, memorabilia and artefacts, including an upstairs area dedicated to HMS *Victory*.

Open Tuesdays to Saturdays 10am - 3pm and for events. Entrance £2.00 and includes entrance to the Aviation annexe at Eastchurch. Entrance is free to Friends. To become a Friend costs just £5.00 a year, for this you receive information before it goes onto the website and invites to special Friends-only events, plus a regular newsletter.

Today the main space at the centre is occupied by the Criterion Music Hall, one of just a few remaining authentic Music Hall buildings, lovingly restored by Jenny and Ian Hurkett and their unbeatable team of volunteers. The Criterion stages professional Victorian style music hall shows (three seasons a year), cinema every Friday and theatre and live music shows; it is also available for private hire. Booking on 01795 662981 or by visiting the website: <http://www.thecriterionbluetown.co.uk/#!criterion-music-hall/cb3i>

Secretary's Report

Chris de Coulon Berthoud

Hello! Hopefully, by the time you are reading this, the extremes of the summer's heatwave will have dissipated, and slightly calmer weather will make life a little more bearable. This is my first report as newly minted FOMA Secretary, stepping into the shoes of our much loved and recently retired Secretary, Odette Buchanan, is rather a daunting task, so perhaps I should introduce myself first.



Although not a native of the Medway Towns, I've lived in Rochester for the past 20 years. I was born in Canterbury and grew up deep in the Kent countryside, decamping to London after leaving school, where I went to study Craft Bookbinding at the London College of Printing. I stayed in London after completing my studies and worked for the British Film Institute at the National Film Theatre, where I developed an abiding love of cinema. So much so that over the past few years I undertook to watch a film from every country in the world, a task more difficult than it first seemed, it took 11 years to complete. I was still working at the NFT when I moved to Rochester, married and had a daughter. It was around the time of my daughter being born that I left the BFI and became a rare book dealer, pushing her round in a buggy as I scoured shelves across the South East for esoteric volumes. As the tectonic shifts in the book trade caused by the Amazon algorithms made it harder than ever to earn a crust I began working for Medway Libraries before returning to full-time study.

I chose to study Social Anthropology at the University of Kent, and after being awarded a first-class BA (Hons)* I got a bit of a taste for studying, and having successfully applied for an Economic and Social Research Council studentship, I am now in the second year of a PhD at Kent. My research throughout my time at the University has centred on the themes of memory, nostalgia, and our cultural relationship with the past. My undergraduate thesis focussed on the role of memory in the children of holocaust survivors and resistance fighters in Belgium, my Master's thesis looked at nostalgia and Second World War re-enactment in the South-East. My PhD research is focussed on people involved in history and heritage in the Medway Towns. If anyone reading this is a collector of objects connected to the history of Medway, I would be really interested in talking to you about your collection for my research. Please drop me a line if this applies to you, at cwd21@kent.ac.uk - I would really appreciate that.

I have also recently started working on Saturdays at the Medway Archives Centre, a role that has once more given me the huge task of learning the dazzling array of resources available to researchers. My first day there plunged me into a search for details of Roman viticulture in the area, and one story I came across was the story of the Wrotham Pinot. This grape vine, related to the Pinot Meunier, was discovered in 1947 by the historian, and oenophile, Edwards Hyams, growing over

a cottage belonging to an elderly man in Wrotham. Hyams believed this grape variety to have been the surviving vine of a type that had been in cultivation since the 1st Century BC. I look forward to tracking down a bottle of wine made from these grapes.

Another fascinating glimpse from the archive that was new to me, was the story of the Silent Postman, W. J. 'Jack' Saunders. A working-class autodidact and Rochester postman, Saunders became Britain's first working class novelist with his (hard to find) 1911 novel, *Kalomera - the story of a remarkable community*. Another son of Rochester who perhaps deserves the sort of celebration which the town of Hastings affords to Robert Tressell, author of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*.

I have also been hugely enjoying the *Your Medway Memories* reminiscence sessions that MAC has been recently undertaking. The variety of subjects covered in these sessions has included people's memories of High Days and Holidays, WWII and Evacuation, Working Lives: Winget & Short Brothers, Railways, Trams and Omnibuses, Prefabs and Council Housing, and Pubs, Clubs, and Restaurants. The wonderful stories people have shared have been insightful, moving and often very funny. Hopefully there will be another series of these reminiscence sessions.

September will hopefully see the publication of Bob Ratcliffe's book on his great lifelong passion, *The Railways of Rochester*. Sadly, as you will know Bob passed away at the end of last year before the book was completed, so the final touches have been put to the manuscript by FOMA's own Vice Chairman, Rob Flood, and we look forward to seeing what should be a wonderful tribute to Bob's remarkable life.

I hope to see you all at our next talk, *Frozen Medway: the Winters of 1895, 1947 and 1963*, which is being given by Dave Burton on Friday 13 September at our new venue – see page 2 - and don't forget to book a table for the FOMA Quiz Night, will take place on Saturday 28 September. I look forward to seeing you all at our upcoming events, and at the Medway Archives Centre in the future.

*I also won two academic prizes, the Paul Stirling Prize, and a Social Sciences Faculty Prize, but frankly it would be immodest of me to bring that up.

Erratum and Apology

In the previous *Clock Tower* (Issue 54, May 2019), the Editor, Amanda Thomas erroneously suggested in her article, *The FOMA AGM* that Alex Thomas had amended the FOMA Rules and Constitution to include the new name of the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) and FOMA. This was, in fact, done by the then FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan and Alex *updated* the website. It is part of the Secretary's job to be responsible for the Constitution and Rules and Amanda apologises to Odette for this error in reporting.

HUGUENOT MUSEUM

discover your story

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. Unless otherwise indicated all events can be booked at the Huguenot Museum reception, over the phone on 01634 789347 or via our website: www.huguenotmuseum.org. For an update, see page 35.



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

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive

Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME4 4UG

SEE THE WEBSITE www.re-museum.co.uk

FOR FURTHER DETAILS.



The Royal Engineers Museum is Kent's largest military museum, with a designated collection of historical and international importance. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5 pm, last entry 4pm.

Library and Archives: essential building maintenance is taking place but a limited service will be available from early summer 2018 – please check the website www.re-museum.co.uk for more details.

Events

July 9 - September 1: *Shocking Electricity*. See the exhibition room transformed into a laboratory with weird and wonderful experiments to spark the imagination as the Museum plays host to a series of extraordinary and entertaining demonstrations for all ages.

July 23 - October 6: *Patterns for Peace*. The Museum hosts an installation by Tina Lawlor Mottram, created after her time as artist in residence at Argentina's Zona Imaginaria. Included in standard admission prices.

September 7 - September 8: Medway Model Show

Experience a whole miniature world at the Royal Engineers Museum! With a huge variety of models, from musical Meccano to classic cars and a war gaming area.

September 14 - September 15: *V2 Rockets – The Scientific Legacy Of The Revenge Weapon!*

75 years after the first V2 was launched against Britain, we look at how the rocket science that went into creating these deadly weapons was used to fuel the space race of the 1960s and more!

Gillingham and Rainham Local History Society

Twydall Evangelical Church, Goudhurst Road, Twydall, Kent. ME8 6LQ.

The society meets on the second Friday of the month, from September to June (no meeting in January), from 2.00 - 4.30 pm.

9 September - *The 1987 Hurricane* - Bob Ogley;

1 October - *The North Kent Marshes* - Ian Jackson & Keith Robinson;

08 November - *Railways of the Peninsular* - Ken Reynolds;

13 December - Film Afternoon.

Tea and coffee is available before the meeting for a small charge.

New members and visitors are always welcome; annual membership £20, visitors £3 per meeting. For further information, please visit the website www.grlhs.org or contact Val Barrand on 07947 583327 or email lupusrufus@sky.com

The Chatham Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, except January and August, at St Stephen's Church, Maidstone Road, Chatham, ME4 6JE. There is a small car park to the front of the church and access is via Maidstone Road. Alternative parking is available in nearby roads including Maidstone Road. Please do not park in the bus bay; there is disabled parking and step free access to the hall.

Wednesday 11 September 2019 - Society Evening: *Newcomb Diary Project Part II*;

Wednesday 9th October 2019 - *Doodlebugs & Bombs* - Bob Ogley;

Wednesday 13th November 2019 - *Beer, Murder, Trains and more Beer: Chatham Intra, the part of Rochester that's called Chatham* - Rob Flood;

Wednesday 11th December 2019 - Christmas Social Evening.

Doors open at 7:15 pm for a 7.30 pm start; meetings finish at 9:00 pm. All meetings are open to the public, and visitors are very welcome. No need to book; just turn up and pay at the door! Members £1, visitors £3; annual membership is £10 and can be paid on the night. Further information is available at www.chathamhistoricalsoc.btck.co.uk

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.

For more information email bromptonhistoryresearchgroup@gmail.com

Strood Fellowship

Strood Fellowship meet every third Monday in the month, 7.30pm, at St Nicholas Church Hall, Edward Street, Strood (first right off Gun Lane to car park). Admission £2 for members or £3 for non-members (including tea and biscuits). £5 Annual Membership. We are interested in the history of Strood and surrounding areas and have outings to local historic buildings. For more details ring J. Weller on 01634 309033 or Len Feist 01634 717135.

Obituary

Doris Herlihy



We remember FOMA member and MAC volunteer Doris, who died on Friday 28 June 2019. Our condolences and thanks to Doris' children, Debbie Rahaman, Jane L. Roy and Shaun Herlihy who have kindly given *Clock Tower* Editor, Amanda Thomas permission to reproduce and abridge their eulogy to Doris.

Doris was originally from Kent, the second of four children and a wartime evacuee for a while with her brother Ron. Following a grammar school education, she began her working life first at the Bank of England and then at Shell International in London, which is where she met John.

Doris and John were a very tight unit, an incredibly close couple who went on to raise three children together and to be married for 56 years before John died in November 2016. Doris, John and their children, Jane, Shaun, and Debbie, moved to the Medway towns in 1968; in 2017 Doris moved to Glastonbury to be closer to Shaun and his family. Doris kept in touch with everyone and had three loves in her life: John, her children and her grandchildren. She was devoted to them.

Doris also loved to travel but when at home, researching and writing about local history was of great interest. For many years, from 1999, she volunteered at the local study centre in Rochester investigating and collating information about the history of that area. She was involved with writing two books, one on the history of the estate where she lived - Parkwood Estate - and the other, *The Times of Our Lives: Women in Medway from 1900-1939*. She contributed a great deal to the Friends of Medway Archives and to their journal *The Clock Tower* over the years.*

A planner, organiser and recorder of life, Doris was treasured for her love of her husband, family and friends, and being a committed, connecting force in their lives. She loved life and loved a good laugh. Devoted to John and her family to the last, she cared for John as his health declined and asked to be laid to rest with him.

Those qualities in Doris - her enduring ability to connect and organise, to forge and maintain relationships - will no doubt form part of her legacy.

*Articles include, *Memories of The Coronation*, (Issue 31, August 2013), *World War One and my Grandfather – I Wish I had Met Him*, (Issue 35, August 2014), and *The Commemorations from the Public Perspective* (Issue 47, August 2017); Doris also appeared on the front cover of Issue 38, May 2015, when she attended the annual Volunteers' Day, which also happened to be her birthday. All articles can be read on the FOMA website at <http://foma-lsc.org/journal.html>

In memory of Doris Herlihy

Norma Crowe

When asked recently to say how long I had known Doris, I answered assuredly that I had first met her late in 1998 and that she began volunteering at the Studies Centre in 1999.

I have always been a bit of a hoarder; reluctant to part with birthday and postcards; hanging on to letters and newspaper cuttings and diaries. And those diaries showed that the memory plays tricks, for my first encounter with Doris took place in November 1995, when I was invited to her house. She wanted to talk to me about the Gillingham/Rainham area oral history project called *Women in Medway: Times of our Lives* with which she had been associated, and the records of which she hoped to deposit with Rochester upon Medway Studies Centre. The group had secured funding from Spiral Arts, which enabled the publication of two volumes of reminiscences. Doris was keen that the work of the group and their records were deposited, which, in 1999, they actually were.

It was after this that Doris began her work as a volunteer, helping us to bring some order to the filing cabinets full of ephemera which had been accumulating over decades. Doris came most weeks, worked quietly and efficiently, sorting and recording material. She liked to talk with the other regulars, making friends with Jack Hooper, Reuben Childs and Roy Murrant, with whom she shared some of her organisational and computing skills, whilst listening with enjoyment to their tales of Medway in days gone by. She also helped me to compile an exhibition about advertising styles and campaigns in newspapers and directories which we called *Pills, potions and promises: one hundred years of persuasive advertising in Medway*.

Friends of Broomhill

Broomhill Park has been awarded an eighth consecutive Green Flag; the Award recognises the best green spaces in the country. The Park is awaiting the results of the 2019 RHS South East in Bloom award, due in September, fingers crossed for another successful year!

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 no dogs allowed in the library. Contact 01634 333720.

Task Days: Sunday Task Days are the first Sunday of every month except January, from September to April inclusive, from 10 am to noon. Meet in car park at end of King Arthurs Drive (ME2 3NB). **Thursday** Task Days are every Thursday morning (all year)

concentrating on the Old Orchard renovation, from 10 am to noon. Meet in car park at end of King Arthurs Drive (ME2 3NB). All welcome! Tools provided or bring your own. It's fun, free and healthy!

For further details see our car park notice boards, or visit our website www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk you can also find us on social media (Facebook, Instagram & Twitter) or contact David Park, Secretary on 01634 718972 email: secretary@friendsofbroomhill.org.uk



The Friends were constituted in 2007, with aims centred on the restoration of the sole surviving Chatham Traction bus, GKE 68 of 1939. The Chatham & District Traction Company had operated bus services over Medway's former tram routes from 1930 to 1955, when it was absorbed into Maidstone & District. The bus, a once-familiar piece of Medway's fabric, is to come alive again as a resource for the study of local and social history.

Buses were central to life in the Towns for many decades, taking people to school, shops, work or play. Studies might look inward to the company's people and facilities, or outward to its services and locations served, and how lifestyle changes influenced its development.

To support the educational aim we are collecting relevant material to form an archive of local transport history, including an oral history collection. We would be happy to receive any items – photographs, artefacts, ephemera – relating to Chatham Traction, its predecessor trams or local bus operations up to 1970 (the year of withdrawal of the last Chatham Traction vehicle). Grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Rochester Bridge Trust have allowed completion of two fundamental stages – the reconstruction of the body structure and overhaul of the engine. We are now seeking further funding to complete the restoration and to prepare our organisation for its educational role.

We offer talks to interested bodies, and organise occasional events to which the public are invited. For more information contact Richard Bourne (Chairman); 31 Usher Park Road, Haxby, York YO32 3RX; 01904 766375, or 07771 831653. Email Richard@thebournes.me.uk.

Or see our website at www.chathamtraction.org.uk.

The latest news can be found at:

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/190401_Update_48.pdf

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/2019_Appeal_leaflet.pdf

And also on page 36.

FRIENDS OF EASTGATE HOUSE
present
an interesting talk on
THE PLASTERWORK CEILINGS AT EASTGATE HOUSE

by
Architectural Historian
Dr. Claire Gapper
at
EASTGATE HOUSE, ROCHESTER
WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2019.
7.00 for 7.30 p.m.
FoEH members £4: Others £5
Raffle: Refreshments
Book: By phone 01634 721886 (Pay on the door)
No facilities for pre-booking at the house

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.

For all events see www.friendsoftheguildhall.com/events/

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, its events and how to join is available. All talks are at The Moat House, 8 Crow Lane, Rochester, ME1 1RF; there is a small charge for events to defray expenses.

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! Tours are 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.

The Rochester Bridge Trust

Further information from <http://www.rbt.org.uk/>

ICE Kent & East Sussex Historical Engineering Group (KESHEG) lectures are held at various venues around Kent and East Sussex. To register for information about events, please email kesheg@gmail.com

From the mid-2000s much of Doris' time was taken up in caring for her husband John as his health deteriorated. But she still made the effort to come to the Studies Centre to help us. John passed away, Doris continued to volunteer with us, but gradually it became clear that her own health was suffering. Problems with her eyesight and mobility hampered and frustrated her, but she did what she could without complaint.

Our move from the Civic Centre site in 2017 was a watershed in so many ways, and not least for Doris. She was very honest and said that she did not like the relocated Medway Studies Centre, and felt it was time to withdraw from her volunteering. What is more she had made the brave decision to move to Glastonbury to be near her son Shaun and family. We said our goodbyes and thanked her for all she had done for us.



Norma and Doris at Glastonbury.

I am pleased that I was able to visit her in Glastonbury about six months after her move, to see her happily settled in her lovely flat and to spend time walking with her in the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey, as pictured.

Doris had so many interests and skills. She was a talented photographer and needlewoman. She loved travel and documented her many holidays with John with care. There was much about her life which was unknown to the staff at the Studies Centre, for she wasn't one to blow her own trumpet.

In 1995 she was a customer; in 1999 she became a volunteer, but by 2019 she was very definitely a friend. I am so glad that our paths crossed and that she had the interest and the enthusiasm to be our first and longest-serving volunteer.

An Astonishing Discovery at St. John's Church, Chatham

Elaine Gardner



At the end of last year the *Soldiers Stories on our Streets* project produced several new names to add to the FOMA De Caville Index. However, a recent find of a pamphlet by Catharina Clements, one of the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) staff, brought to light a memorial list from St John's Church, Railway Street, Chatham. St John's Church has been closed for 20 years so that memorial (pictured overleaf and on the front cover) had not been recorded when the Index was being compiled in the lead-up to its launch in 2014.

The pamphlet, entitled *St John the Divine, Chatham, Centenary Thanksgiving Week 1821-1931, A short history of the 100 years with photographs*, was part of a bound collection, 'Pamphlets of Rochester Vol. II'. The Roll of Honour listed 124 names, 59 of whom were already on the Index because they were also listed elsewhere, but that left 65 new names to try and find details for!

In the meantime, someone had mentioned to me that St John's was being restored. I enquired at the Diocesan Office in Rochester whether a memorial board was still there and if it was possible to see it? I was put in contact with the Reverend Carol Morgan, vicar for St John the Divine who was delighted to meet me at the church to see, and photograph, the board.

St John's is to reopen later this year both as a place of worship – the Rev. Carol says she can't wait to carry out her first wedding there - and also as a community space open 24 hours a day, seven days a week with the large crypt becoming a space to support the many homeless in Chatham.

Having sorted the photographs I took for this article I also realised there were 119 names on the memorial, not 124 as on the published list, and more interestingly there were two names on the memorial not included in the list.

Work has begun cross-referencing the memorial names with those on the Commonwealth War Graves website (<https://www.cwgc.org/>). On the website there are many identical names and on some the details might make a reference to 'Chatham', for example. This could be an address and such information is invaluable for identifying a candidate amongst those with the same name. 'Henry Chapman' was given for 117 World War One casualties – a name, therefore, not so easy to pin down!



The Short brothers moved their successful business to Rochester in 1913 due to their interest in developing seaplanes. The Medway was an ideal place for testing. The business relocated to Belfast in 1948. We are delighted to now have the model of the Short Mayo Composite (1937) on display in the foyer of MAC (see photograph). We also have a collection of plans, drawings, photographs and ephemera to view by appointment.

32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3EP (previously the old Strood library). Contact our expert team if you require further information on 01634 332714. For further details see the MAC Facebook page www.facebook.com/malsc/, the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org) and Facebook page www.facebook.com/fomalsc/

If you would like to make a Local Studies donation please e-mail the local studies Librarian at malsc@medway.gov.uk

Current electoral registers are now at the Medway Archives Centre and can be viewed by appointment; please telephone 01634 332714.

Please note that due to staffing levels, Medway Archive Centre will only open on Saturdays between the hours of 9.00 – 12.30pm commencing 5th May 2018 until further notice. Opening hours Monday to Friday remain as advertised 9am – 5pm (closed Wednesdays).

The postal address is Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3EP.

Unless otherwise stated, all events take place at the Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP.

Eastgate House

Opening hours are Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm (last admissions 4.30pm); Mondays and Tuesdays CLOSED. For large group visits and special events it may be possible to open the house on Mondays and Tuesdays. Please contact eastgate.house@medway.gov.uk for further information. Adults: £5.50, Concessions (inc. Friends Group): £4, Under 5s: free, Family Ticket: £15. Groups of 10 or more: 15% discount and school groups: 15% discount on concession price. Friends enter FREE.

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. Further information can be obtained at: www.friendsofeastgatehouse.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.

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

Friends of Medway Archives

Friday 13th September,
Frozen Medway (the winters of 1895, 1947 & 1963),
A talk by Dave Burton

Saturday 28th September
Quiz Night.
£8 for members and non-members. **BOOKING REQUIRED** (see below).
Please do your best to get a table of friends together!

Booking for FOMA events is not necessary and **are now held at St Nicholas Church Lower Hall, Strood, Rochester, Kent. ME2 4TR**; car park entrance is off Gun Lane, almost opposite the Health Centre; **see page 2 for further information**. Please check our website (www.foma-lsc.org) for further information and for other forthcoming events. Talks are £3 for members, £5 non-members. Booking for Quiz Nights and enquiries through the FOMA Chairman: Elaine Gardner, 102 Valley View Road, Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent; emgardner@virginmedia.com; 01634 408595/07733 154004.

Under the new data protection laws we are advised to tell you that photographs may be taken during our events. If you do not wish to be included in a photograph, please advise a FOMA committee member on your arrival.

See our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/fomalsc) and our website (www.foma-lsc.org) for all the very latest information on FOMA and Medway heritage.

Medway Archives Centre

June 17 – September 17,
Short Brothers in Kent - the Rochester years.
Exhibition in the foyer.

Saturday 14 September, 11.00am – 3.00pm,
SPECIAL EVENT
Medway's Evacuees in World War II.
MAC and foyer.

23 September – 14 January 2020
Watts Charity in Medway: its Properties and Estates.
Exhibition in the foyer.

Wednesday 23 October, 2.30pm,
Conscientious objectors in Medway,
A talk by Catharina Clement.

FOMA member, Steve Cross, who volunteers at MAC with family research, offered to take on the herculean task of finding what he could for the 65 unknown men. To date he has done a fantastic job providing the details needed for the De Caville Index, however, 20 names still remain for whom we cannot find a Medway connection or find on the CWGC website. For now they will have to remain as questions until we can discover why they were included. Perhaps they were families who worshipped at the church when their son or husband was posted in the area? With the Royal Engineers at Brompton and the many Chatham-based Royal Navy ships it is quite feasible, and such Chatham links would not show up on birth, marriage, or 1911 census records.

In addition to all of this, the spellings of surnames occasionally proved to be wrong. Grinstead, Harfleet, Harbin and Keminoe are likely misspellings of Grinstead, Harflett, Harban and Kemmenoe, all of whom have Chatham connections.

There is still plenty of work to do!



The Rochester Pedestrian

Helen Worthy



Helen is an Archives and Local Studies Assistant at MALSC, working mainly on the desk. After completing her degree in Classical Civilisation, she worked at the British Museum for eleven years. She then studied for her Postgraduate Certificate in Education and taught at North-West Kent College and Medway Adult and Community Learning Service, before leaving to teach school groups at Chatham's Historic Dockyard and work as a teaching assistant.



In 1815, in the field behind the Cossack public house in Delce Lane, Rochester, John Baker attempted to walk 1,000 miles in 21 days. This feat gripped the nation, and was reported in great detail in the national and Kentish newspapers, but what was pedestrianism and who was John Baker?

Medway Archives Centre, 'Rochester People'.

Pedestrianism was already by this time a well-established sport, usually accompanied by the placing of bets, and winners stood to make a large sum of money. There seemed to be an insatiable appetite for news stories about pedestrian races, with prizes as large as 1,000 guineas, and there are fascinating

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. The FOMA Secretary 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.

Corporal Albert Howes

11 June 2019.

Elaine,

I was delighted to read the article on Albert Howes in the latest edition of 'The Clock Tower.' Many thanks for doing some research into his family. It was interesting to see that they once lived in Cross Street as my grandparents lived there too.

I have sent the article to my auntie in Suffolk, as she was the source of the photographs. With any luck she might have some further information.

Regards,

Tony Gray.

HMS Victory

On 24 July 2019, we re-published a Facebook post from the Medway Archives Centre which read:

'On this day [23 July] in 1759, work started on the Royal Navy's 104-gun battleship HMS *Victory* at Chatham. The ship was built from the wood of 6,000 trees, most of which was oak. She was officially launched in 1765 and is best known as Lord Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar.'

Patti Wagner commented:

'James Kincaid was Master Blacksmith at Chatham Docks during this time. Would he have been involved in making cannons or just the cast iron used in the ship building. He was my 5 times Great Grandfather.'

discussions of botanical design with Zara and extremes of poverty and wealth in the late seventh century with Robin. We are focusing on historical fiction later in the programme. *A Conversation with Sonia Velton* will explore how the world of 18th century Huguenot silk weavers inspired Sonia's novel, *Blackberry and Wild Rose*.

Two more popular events over the last few months were Geoff Rambler's Guided Walk *What have the French done for us?* and our French Hospital and Museum Tour. Our Guided Walk sends you through time and through over a thousand years of connected culture, and our French Hospital and Museum Tour sends you behind the scenes of the almshouses, which are not usually open to the public! We are running another Guided Walk in September and October and another Tour in September and November.

For a full programme of dates, times and prices for all of our events please visit www.huguenotmuseum.org and for any further queries please contact Hannah on learning@huguenotmuseum.org Further details on page 42.

FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

Salute to the '40s
21st and 22nd September 2019*

Although we're still not able to show off a restored bus, thanks to a generous demonstration of support from the Dockyard we'll be much better equipped than before to spread the word at this year's 40s Weekend. We've even got a mention on the Dockyard's web page – <https://thedockyard.co.uk/whats-on/salute-to-the-40s/> Scroll down and click on *Special Appearances*.

Tickets available at:
<https://shop.myonlinebooking.co.uk/historicdockyardchatham/buy.aspx?tid=19>

An indoor space in what was the Old Police Museum is ours for the weekend. It is located next to the Wagon Stop canteen and adjacent to the helipad car park. Tables and benches are available to help create a display with our information boards. Updated displays to tell our story are being prepared. Also we are looking to bring along some artefacts and ephemera and some items from the bus to show that work is definitely progressing.

Clearly having been provided with these facilities we need to give it our best go!

We need a few volunteers for both days to engage people and explain what we're about, so if anyone within reach of Chatham has some spare time on either or both days please let Mike Hodges know -michaelrhodges011@gmail.com / 01227 772311.

For more information on Chatham Traction see page 41.

stories of men walking backwards, or hopping on one leg, or of a competition between two men with wooden legs (one man having lost a leg whilst serving under Nelson). The pedestrian Mary Frith, a 36-year old woman from Maidstone, also featured in the local papers.¹

Whilst many pedestrians attempted to walk from one town to another, the races at Rochester consisted of walking around a carefully-measured course in the field behind the Cossack, with cords and pegs marking the course. John Baker was not the first to attempt a pedestrian feat at Rochester. He followed hot on the heels of William Tuffee, a local man who lived opposite the Cossack. Tuffee had been for some time walking 16 miles to work in the morning and returning home the same day. His attempt to walk 1,000 miles in 21 days excited much interest, and 'Rochester exhibited a great scene of bustle than has been remembered for a considerable length of time, by persons, some in carriages, some on horseback, and others on foot, arriving in all directions...' Tuffee began well, keeping to his schedule and consistently walking at four miles an hour. By Saturday 28th October 1815, however, the weather had changed, and torrential rain meant that Tuffee had to wear 'a large great coat and a pair of boots, the bottoms of which were nailed with large nails that he might not slip.... He held an umbrella the whole of the time ... His feet were rather blistered ...'² Heavy rainfall led to the course being in such a bad state that Tuffee had to resign his attempt.

Undaunted by Tuffee's failure, John Baker arrived at the course on the very day Tuffee stopped walking. He 'conversed with several sporting gentlemen' and by Tuesday was 'amusing himself in walking on the ground where he was to commence his arduous undertaking.' John Baker walked one mile in nine minutes for a trifling sum. Word was clearly spreading, and the Mayor, Francis Patten, sent a message to him at the Cossack 'that if any person attempted to impede him in his progress, the aggressor would be immediately secured, and for his protection he had ordered proper officers to be in constant attendance.' All this time, bets continued to be offered.

Newspaper reports offer a fascinating description of Baker, who was an interesting

John Baker, THE PEDESTRIAN.

THE Public are hereby informed that a number of respectable persons have formed themselves into a Committee, for the purpose of superintending the arduous undertaking of John Baker, who, with the advice and assistance of Mr. Newson, a gentleman of the Faculty, will provide every necessary article of Clothing, Food, and other requisite Comforts, will protect him from intrusive strangers, have appointed a reputable Scorer, &c. who make a daily return of Baker's Performances, and pledge themselves that no collusion shall be contrived at, nor any unfair proceedings, or compromise, shall take place, and that a return of each day's performance shall be daily exhibited on the Ground, and at the Cossack. The Committee do hereby invite and solicit a public Subscription to this heroic Kentish Pedestrian, and the smallest mite be thankfully received at the following places:—

The Angel Strood;—the Parr's Head,—Duke's Head, Silver Oar, City Coffee House, Star, and The Cossack Rochester; Mitre, Dover Castle, Horn, Chest Arms, Royal Oak, and Gibraltar, Chatham; the Castle and the Mitre, Maidstone; the Amsterdam, Gravesend, and at W. Epps's Printing Office, Troy-Town, near the Cossack Field, where the Committee request all the Subscriptions to be transmitted, an account of which will be stated to the public as soon as the whole are paid in.

BAKER commenced Walking, on Tuesday Morning, October 31, 1815, at half-past five, and had accomplished 500 miles on Thursday, November 9th at half-past four o'clock,—Afternoon.

FROM THE PRESS OF W. EPPS, ROCHESTER.

character. Wearing at one time a fustian slate-coloured jacket, waistcoat and trousers, at another time he wore a waterman's flannel cap, fustian frock and trousers, and a pair of 'half-boots' weighing 3¾ lbs. A thick hazel stick completed his outfit. Despite being called the 'Rochester Pedestrian' he was from Snodland and is described as being not more than 27 years of age. He was said to have been 'in the habit of frequently walking from the neighbourhood of Rochester to Dover and back again almost without resting, and carrying with him a heavy load ...' Quite what he was carrying and why he might be walking to Dover and back is less of a mystery than might be supposed; the newspapers openly describe him as a 'smuggler',³ and indeed the Rev. Henry Dampier Phelps, Rector at Snodland, describes John Baker's profession as 'smuggler' in his son Henry's baptism entry in 1819. The Rev. Phelps' animosity towards smugglers was well-known, and he reportedly had a lucky escape when, in a case of mistaken identity, a man who looked similar to the Rector was brutally murdered by a gang of smugglers. It isn't clear whether this tale is historically accurate; no contemporaneous mention of the event has been found to date nor any newspaper report of the supposed hanging of the culprits.⁴ And whether John Baker was ever apprehended and charged with being a smuggler is not known.

The field is described in the newspapers as being in a 'declivity', or on a downward slope, and was roughly where Cecil Road is today. The pedestrian feats were organised by the proprietor of the Cossack, and he had arranged a novel method for the pedestrians to enter the public house for rest and refreshment. A wooden 'bridge' was constructed, which passed horizontally from the hill into a window which opened into a little room.

On Tuesday 31 October 1815, at 5.30am, Baker was accompanied to the starting post by Mr Chamber, Mr Epps (Snr) and members of the Cossack Cricket Club. He began to walk, and managed 12¾ miles before breakfast. By the end of the day he had walked 52 miles. Over the coming days he continued to make good progress.

Great interest was taken in his diet. Following an early rise and after several miles completed, breakfast consisted of a little tea and toast. This was followed by beef-steak at dinner with beer and a glass or two of either sherry or port. Tea during the afternoon was followed by further beef-steaks or mutton-chops for supper.⁵

On Tuesday 7 November, the weather changed for the worse. Frequent rain hindered Baker's progress, and ashes were laid over the mud. Putting a laurel leaf in his hat, he continued at his usual pace, completing 50 miles in one day.

On Wednesday, however, he was taken violently ill with nausea and vomiting. The surgeon, Mr Newson, was called. He was a local man who lived in a substantial house in the High Street at Rochester.⁶ He administered medicine and, despite a relapse at midday, John continued to walk. He was still walking after

Huguenot Museum Update

Hannah Birkett



Hannah Birkett is the Learning and Community Engagement Coordinator at the Huguenot Museum. Previously she has undertaken various roles including primary teaching, freelancing for Historic Royal Palaces, outdoor learning in environmental centres and an educator for Kent Wildlife Trust. Hannah develops the programme of events at the Huguenot Museum as well as running their learning programme, delivering school, family and life-long learning sessions.

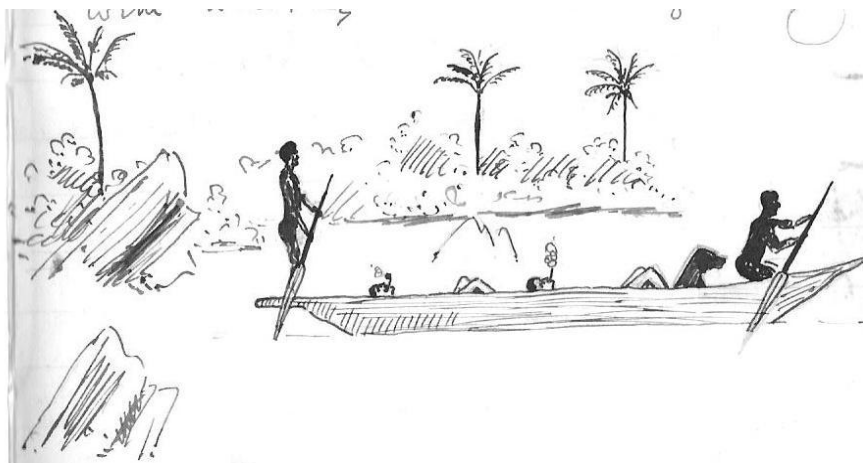
In our previous exhibition we had our newest acquisition on display, a 1727 sauceboat by Anne Tanqueray. From July, we partnered with Rochester Art Gallery for our current exhibition, *Bizarre and Curious Silks*. There is a selection of work in both the gallery and in our Museum. In the Huguenot Museum, the Bizarre silks of Huguenot master weaver James Leman are the inspiration for a new collection of work by contemporary weaver Hannah Robson. The magic doesn't stop there, Hannah often incorporates metal threads into her work, creating technically ambitious surfaces and sculptural elements to her work. Hannah ran a two day Weaving Workshop in which weavers could explore the Lampas method of weaving, an ancient method favoured by Huguenot weavers. It was fascinating to watch samples being created on a variety of different looms. If you haven't had a chance to see the exhibition yet, do visit us! You could even make a day of it on September 14 with our Lace-Making Demonstration in Rochester Art Gallery in the morning and Lace Making Workshop in our Museum in the afternoon. It's lace making with a twist!

Our family programme has been packed full of fantastic activities, we've had our *Weaving and Stitching* in May with weaver Ann Bowdler and Gelli-Printing in June with local artist Rachel Moore. At the start of the Summer Holidays we teamed up with local artist Lydia Brockless as she ran a *Collage and Weave* workshop inspired by our current exhibition. It was created specially to encourage families to explore the exhibition and create masterpieces of their own.

Every half term and holiday we run family activities. Families can explore our collection from a different angle, have a go at a Huguenot skill or even bring a story to life through craft! We have self-guided activities for families that have just been installed, exploring the life and work of botanical artist Anne Pratt created by Natasha Steer. Do come and explore for yourself!

In June, we had talks from Zara Anishanslin and Robin Gwynn. Fascinating

The letter from Alfred of May 7th was written on Owletts' stationary. Apparently his father was both sending out the materials and paying 2½d a letter postage due as Alfred had no way of paying postage.



Notes

1. Alfred Baker (AWB) 1898 04 14.
2. AWB 1898 04 18 with sketch from his diary D11 for the same date.
3. Diary D11 entry for April 20th.
4. AWB 1898 04 27, 1898 05 07 and 05 15 from Jebba. As a captain he could expect to be commanding a Company of 100 Hausas.

dark, when it was discovered that someone had maliciously placed a log across his path to obstruct him, but fortunately John Baker suffered no injury. Despite a lack of appetite, he completed 50 miles and then retired to his apartment and fell asleep on a sofa.

By Thursday, the crowds had increased considerably. 'Carriages of all sorts are to be met with, from a donkey cart to four-in-hand'.⁷ At four o'clock he reached a total of 500 miles, halfway through the race, which was 'greeted by loud acclamations by the surrounding multitudes, and to render the scene still more novel, the tremendous roar of an elephant was heard at a distance ...'. Perhaps this elephant was the animal mentioned in a poster at Medway Archives Centre (dating from circa 1815):

Medway Archives Centre
MED920/PIN

**Behold the
WONDERFUL
PRODUCTION of NATURE!!**
That stupendous Animal, the
Male Elephant,
To be seen at the STAR INN, Rochester,
The sagacity of which justly terms him the **LEARNED
or HALF-REASONING BEAST.**
His astonishing Feats of Performance are as follows:
He opens and shuts his own door, lays down at the word of command, tells the time of the day, fires off a pistol, takes any Gentleman's hat off, and puts it on again, will take the smallest piece of money from any Lady or Gentleman, put it into a box, and take it out again at the word of command, and return it to the person that gave it him; he suffers his keeper to put his head out of sight down his throat; he also kneels down and returns thanks to the company for coming to see him, with a variety of other of his performances, too numerous to detail. This Animal weighs 96 hundred, and measures nearly 9 feet high, and his amazing bulk strikes every beholder with admiration. He is allowed by every visitor to be the largest Elephant in the United Kingdom.
N. B. This is not the Elephant that was at Strood Fair, this being 3 times the size.
Admittance, Ladies and Gentlemen, 1s.—Servants and Children, Half Price.
CADELL, PRINTER, ROCHESTER.

On the eighteenth day, having completed 50 miles, John Baker danced a hornpipe, and walked a mile with his wife Fanny, side by side, completing it in 12½ minutes. On the following day, members of the growing crowd included Lord and Lady Torrington, Lord Clifton and several other members of the nobility and gentry.⁸

On Sunday, John Baker began walking at 2am, anxious to make good progress now that he was so close to finishing. Alderman Thomas Stevens presented him with a new white hat, which he wore decorated with blue ribbons and laurel leaves.⁹

On Monday 20 November, John Baker completed the race, having walked 1,000 miles in 20 days. On the final day he walked 75 miles; a dispute had arisen over the odd rods which had been allowed him in walking to and from the ground to the Cossack. He decided to walk an extra 9½ miles to obviate this.

His success was celebrated throughout the town. 'He was paraded through the streets, preceded by a band of music; he was decorated with laurel, and accompanied by his wife, followed by many hundred spectators, notwithstanding

the weather ... yet he left off as fresh as when he began ... ' He was visited by several ladies and gentlemen 'all of whom gave him presents, and poor Baker having now become a favourite of the fair sex ... was nearly cropped of all the hair on his head ...'¹⁰

What Baker's winnings were is not clear. However, this was just the beginning of John Baker's exploits. In December 1815 a friend (unnamed) from Rochester 'being a person of property' proposed that John Baker should compete with the Bristol Pedestrian, Stokes, the following year, for 1,000 guineas.¹¹ And in 1817, John Baker undertook to walk 2,000 miles in 42 days at Wormwood Scrubs, competing against Eaton, a well-known pedestrian. Baker beat his opponent by 9¾ miles and was reported to still be wearing his trusty old boots that served him so well in Rochester.¹²

Quite when the fashion for pedestrianism ended is debatable. Some felt that the sport was tainted by its association with gambling. 'What with Pugilism, Walking-matches &c. the idle and dissolute are suffered to congregate without molestation; and gaming, and every species of vice appears to be connived at ... On Sunday last a mob of upwards of 3,000 idle and dissolute beings collected at Wormwood Scrubs, to witness the Pedestrian Exhibition, when noise, riot and confusion were orders of the day, and the sanctity of the Sabbath completely lost in revelry and indecent mirth...'¹³

Notes

1. *Kentish Weekly Post*, 12 December 1815.
2. *Kentish Weekly Post*, 31 October 1815.
3. *Kentish Gazette*, 3 November 1815.
4. Wingfield-Stratford, E. (1949), 'This was a Man'.
5. *Morning Post*, 6 November 1815.
6. *Kentish Weekly Post*, 30 July 1816.
7. *Kentish Gazette*, 10 November 1815.
8. *Stamford Mercury*, 24 November 1815.
9. *Kentish Gazette*, 21 November 1815.
10. *Kentish Weekly Post*, 24 November 1815.
11. *Kentish Weekly Post*, 5 December 1815.
12. *Bury and Norwich Post*, 25 June 1817.
13. *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 13 May 1817.

With grateful thanks to Dr Andrew Ashbee. If you are interested in learning more about the Rochester Pedestrian, you might like to visit the Medway Archives Centre or contact the Snodland Historical Society.

BAKER'S WALKING, COSSACK PADDOCK, Rochester,

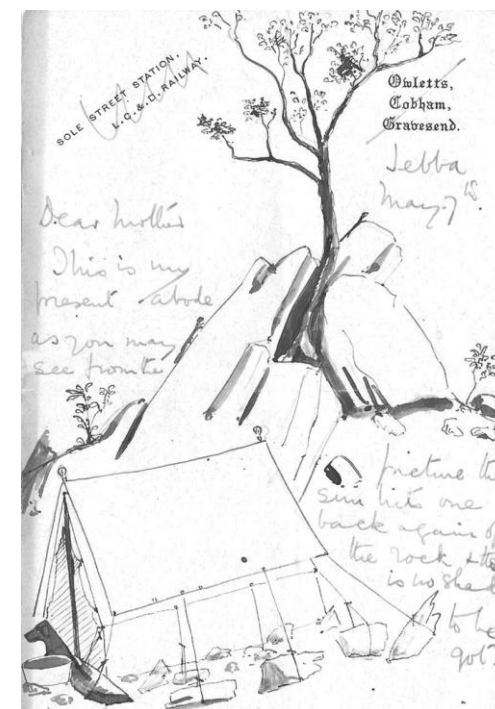
Commenced Tuesday, October 31, 1815.

	Miles	Rods.
First Day	- 52	72
2d Day	- 53	96
3d Day	- 54	192
4th Day	- 50	144
5th Day	- 50	144
6th Day	- 50	144
7th Day	- 50	144
8th Day	- 50	192
9th Day	- 50	168
10th Day	- 50	168
11th Day	- 36	216
12th Day	- 50	216
13th Day	- 50	144
14th Day	- 17	224
15th Day	- 50	192
16th Day	- 51	168
17th Day	- 51	192
18th Day	- 50	168
19th Day	- 52	144
20th Day	- 75	192
	1001	120
21st Day	- 9	168
Total	- 1010	288

Baker walked 9½ miles the 21st day to obviate any dispute about the Rods.

On the 18th pausing at spot called Lah in the heat of the day, Alfred, nothing daunted: *picking up a man who knew the bush and two of his friends I started. The bush had partly burnt for some miles by the river and the ground was covered by a foot of black dust. Where not burnt, grass 7 feet high, matted and well nigh impenetrable.*

Here and there one came on small pools of water and stinking ooze covered with water lilies and water birds of all sorts, known and unknown. I shot only duck, geese and teal. There were almost white geese, black duck, grey duck, black and white geese and pygmy geese. I never felt so tired before in my life, my face arms and shirt just as black as my niggers. However I got so keen that I would have missed the ship if it had started on time.



They reached Jebba on April 20th: *ordered to camp on island. Had about the worst time of it I ever remember for the next month, living in small tents on bare rock. Heat awful by day, no shade, had to wear hat inside tent. Tornado nearly every night, wet through often.*³ On the 27th he wrote to his mother, *in my new official capacity as Station Staff Officer to the WAFF (West Africa Frontier Force). I would rather have my company and get to business.*⁴

In contrast by May 1st his diary displays a more buoyant mood after taking two days to shoot up river with a fellow officer: *went out at daybreak, shot left bank of the Niger. They camped on an island, but found they had left their food box behind: I fortunately had a piece of chocolate, a crust of bread and 2 bottles of soda. Divided this, sent canoe back for food and went to bed. Next day: bagged a warthog, not trophy but good to feed canoe men. Had a bathe and returned to Jebba by moonlight, pleasant floating downstream with whisky and soda and cigar, accompanied by his faithful dog, Lucifer.*

I may go off any day. There is no mail service above here to speak of and I am in charge of it, so if you don't get a letter for six months or so, don't be alarmed.

Travels of a Tin Trunk

Michael Baker



Michael Baker's interest in family history was started by a great-uncle who once unrolled a family tree on the dining-room table. It was seven feet long. After a career in Electrical Engineering, including 20 years overseas, he opened some boxes in the Owletts' attic ...

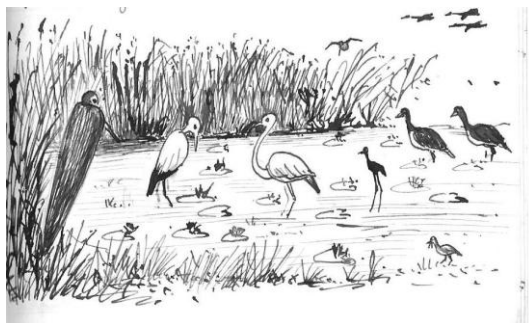
In this issue of The Clock Tower, the fascinating story continues of what Michael found in the tin trunk belonging to Alfred, the brother of Michael's grandfather, Herbert Baker.

Part 12: Nigeria, 1898 (iii)

Lugard arrived on April 13th. Alfred was to proceed at once by steamer to Jebba, while other groups were to stay at Lokoja or Ibadan, though action was not expected until after the rains. *I am glad we go to Jebba; it is healthier than this, temperatures reaching 106F. I think old age an advantage* (he was 33). He was taking his 5 to 10 grams of quinine a day and *losing weight nicely*.¹

We eight officers and 12 NCOs are on the way up river to Jebba, 250 miles above Lokoja. We go to start a camp there for the 2nd battalion of the force while the 1st stayed at Lokoja. There was trouble about: the place we are just passing was slave-raided last night. The refugees are on the opposite bank putting up shelters, their town destroyed by the Bida people, many killed and a lot of slaves taken.

In his sketch are a marabou stork, cranes, a stilt, geese, a wattled plover and snipe.²



Before The National Trust

Jean Lear



Jean Lear was born in Exeter, where she lived until qualifying as a professional librarian. She worked in Southampton University and Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic Libraries, and moved to Kent County Libraries in 1975 as Reference Librarian and then County Business and Technical Librarian. Jean completed a Diploma in Local Studies at the University of Kent at Canterbury before early retirement in 1998: she has haunted Medway Local Studies and Archives ever since! During this time, she has written local history articles and compiled several exhibitions on a wide range of topics, with a bias towards garden history.

The practice of visiting large houses and estates was popular long before the National Trust (NT) was founded – as anyone who has read or watched Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* will know! Recently, I came across a *Visitors Book, 1819 – 1839* for Cobham Hall, a record of those who were taken around the gardens and estate by Mrs Smith, Lord Darnley's housekeeper. On the inside of the book is a request for 'names [to] be written in the book before taking the tour'.

Registering does not seem to have been enforced and even when an entry has been made, it is often for a group and specific dates and addresses are not included. The Darnley family were often away from home, spending time with friends and relations across Britain, moving between their other houses in London, Sandgate and Ireland and sailing around the coast in their yacht *Elizabeth* in the summer months. Miss Elizabeth Bennett had expected Mr Darcy to 'be away from home' when she visited Pemberley and one assumes that this would have been the expectation at Cobham Hall, but it has not been possible to confirm this.

With one or two exceptions the names in the book are recorded as being from Rochester and Chatham and belong to people whose families were active in the towns in the nineteenth century. Their names are familiar to local historians and they and their families belong in the local gentry, military and professional, trade and business classes.

What did they expect to see? The head of the family at the time was the 4th Lord Darnley, known as the 'magnificent earl' and the 'little Lord Clifton' of the dramatized readings about Cobham Hall, which some of you may have seen. The Menagerie (1793 – 1835) which was introduced during his tenure would have been

a highlight for many. It was located in the Terrace Gardens to the north of the house, and over the years included a kangaroo, a leopard, an emu, and an ostrich as well as several varieties of pheasant and other smaller birds. New animal houses were built over the years and one visitor reported that the keepers wore 'gold laced hats'.

The 4th Earl employed the famous landscape gardener Mr Humphrey Repton to work on Cobham Hall from 1790 to 1816. Although many of the suggestions Repton proposed in one of his famous *red books* were not implemented, visitors would have been able to enjoy *improvements* such as the Avenue which offered a vista from Cobham village to the Hall, and they may also have been grateful that the Hall itself had not been demolished to make way for a lake!

Visitors would also have appreciated the recently commissioned mausoleum and model dairy designed by James Wyatt, a popular and famous architect employed by the somewhat extravagant 4th Earl.

The following were among the entries in the Visitors Book:

Mr Henslow and family, Rochester, visited 1819.

Frances, the daughter of Thomas Stephens, Mayor of Rochester and of Gad's Hill Place, married John Prentis Henslow a solicitor, and later Freeman of Rochester. Their son, John Stevens Henslow (born 1796) became a Professor at Cambridge University and mentor of Charles Darwin. A Revd. John Henslow visited in c.1827.

Mr E. and Mr J. Twopenny, Rochester, visited 1819.

The Twopenny family were well known and prosperous attorneys at law with offices in College Green, Rochester (Finch's *Directory of Rochester*, 1803). Their most famous son was William Twopenny (b. 1797) who was recognised as an artist during his lifetime and who bequeathed 38 volumes of sketches, covering the whole country, to the British Library. There are examples of his work and that of his sister Susanna in Rochester Museum. A Mr and Mrs Twopenny dined and stayed overnight at Cobham Hall in January 1823. (Diary of John Duncan Bligh 1824 – 28; U565/F125).

Revd Henry Morgan Say, Rochester, c.1819

Vicar of Sutton Valence and Minor Canon of Rochester cathedral 1819 -32.

Nearly 150 years later another Say became Bishop of Rochester!

Mary B Horsnail, Rochester, visited c.1819.

The Horsnail family was active in Strood and Rochester throughout the nineteenth century. They were all associated with the river Medway and worked as fishermen, corn factors, and boat-builders.

James Wheeler, visited 1820.

in action from the *Barfleur* to be seven, and those who died of wounds, four. There is a note under the list stating, 'the casualty rolls show only those officers and men who were killed or injured as a result of offensive action against the enemy. Men who died of disease, without having previously been injured, are not included.' There are 21 names on the memorial so we have to conclude that the other men listed died of disease or other causes. One case of sunstroke and one of accidental drowning were mentioned in the despatches but their ship was not named.

Only two Victoria Crosses were awarded during this campaign and one of them was to a *Barfleur* man. 18 year old Midshipman Basil J.D. Guy was awarded the VC for his gallantry and coolness in aiding a wounded man under heavy fire. The man he tried to save was Able Seaman T McCarthy who is listed on the memorial: 'During the attack on Tientsin, Guy went to the assistance of the wounded A.B. McCarthy 50 yards from cover. Whilst he bound McCarthy's wounds the entire enemy fire from the City walls was concentrated on the pair. He ran to fetch stretcher bearers but McCarthy was hit again and killed before he could be brought to safety.' He was invested with the VC by King Edward VII on 8 March 1902 at Devonport Royal Dockyard.

During research for this article I came across a report from Col. Robt. Meade, Commanding Officer of the US Forces in Tientsin, dated 16 July 1900, in which he says, 'It being impossible to bring in all the dead, they were buried in the trenches where they fell.' Was this the fate of the men from *Barfleur* listed on this monument? I cannot imagine that the bodies could have been brought back to England. Or, following the naval tradition, were they buried at sea?

In 2008 Medway Council considered widening Gibraltar Hill which would have resulted in the removal of the monument. However, the plans were strongly opposed by the Gibraltar Terrace Residents' Association, led by Brian Fowler. He stated, 'For residents living in Gibraltar Terrace this memorial has local significance with its connections between HMS *Barfleur* and *Gibraltar*, after which the Terrace was named.' A project coordinator at the Imperial War Museum at the time said, 'It is vital the obelisk is given the prominence it deserves. Memorials of this nature were significant at the time and they were put up to give families without graves to visit a focal point for remembrance. But they also provide a link from the present day to our history. To lose that would be a great national shame.'² The memorial has remained in its original setting.

Notes

1. *Naval & Military Press*, W.H. Fevyer & J.W. Wilson.

2. *Medway News and Medway Messenger*, 24.10.2008.

Lt. Valentine Phillimore went on to serve in the First World War and was promoted to Captain. However, the fate of HMS Barfleur was less illustrious. She was flagship of the Home Fleet from 1906 to 1907 and was sold for scrap in 1910. On the way to the scrapyard, she got jammed underneath the pylons of a drawbridge, forcing it to remain open and blocking all road traffic while she was freed.

The reason for the memorial lies in a document held at Medway Archives Centre which states: ‘In February 1902 Lt. Phillimore, R.N. applied to the Council for permission to erect a memorial to the officers and men of HMS *Barfleur* who had lost their lives in the Boxer Rising at Pekin [sic] in 1900. The memorial was to be subscribed by their comrades on the *Barfleur*.’ Lt. Phillimore was himself wounded during the action on 19 June 1900; he was mentioned in despatches.



*The inscription on the Barfleur Monument;
photograph by Elaine Gardner.*

Originally the Victoria Gardens was suggested as a site for the memorial. Permission for this was refused and eventually the present site on Gibraltar Hill was agreed and the obelisk was unveiled in 1903.

The Boxer Rebellion was a peasant uprising of 1900. The *Boxers*, a secret organisation called the Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, led the uprising in Northern China against the spread of Western influences. During the rebellion they killed 239 missionaries, including approximately 51 of their children, and more than 32,000 Chinese Christians. Reports by the Christian and Military Alliance (which can be read on the internet) show the horror of the killings with children having to watch their missionary parents beheaded before being killed themselves. The Boxers also destroyed churches and railway stations and other property.

A military force of sailors and marines from Britain, France, Austria, Italy, Russia, Japan, Germany and America went to China's aid. Army units from these nations could not be deployed quickly enough to help but an emergency force was assembled from the ships of eight nations at the mouth of the Pei Ho River. One of the British ships was HMS *Barfleur*.

An article in *The Navy & Army Illustrated* in January 1902 entitled ‘The Cruise of the *Barfleur*’ states, ‘On October 26th 1899 the *Barfleur* became the flag-ship of rear Admiral Bruce who brought with him as his flag-captain Sir G.J.S. Warrender, Bart. It was during his tenure of command that the *Barfleur*'s officers and men were to play such an active part during the China outbreak that darkened the last year of the 19th Century. In the hard fighting that fell to the share of all concerned the British Naval Brigades bore the brunt and none more so than the men of the *Barfleur*.’

A list of casualties in The China War Medal 1900¹ gives the number of men killed

The Wheeler family were grocers and cheesemongers in Rochester. They were Quakers and Samuel Wheeler married Sarah Horsnail in Rochester in 1806. Their third son was Frederick Wheeler (1804 – 84), who became a social reformer and campaigner in the Medway area.

Miss Gunning and Party, visited c. 1822.

Possibly the daughter of G. Gunning Esq. of Frindsbury, who was listed as ‘gentry’ in Finch's *Directory of Rochester*, 1803. In the early nineteenth century, it was common practice for groups of friends to visit famous houses and parks, and a description of a summer outing appears in Jane Austen's novel *Emma* (1816) when a much anticipated expedition to Boxhill in Surrey was not a happy one! The Misses Colyer also visited in 1822.

Mr and Mrs Manclark visit 1827.

Several of the Manclark family were Mayors of Rochester in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and E. Manclark was Mayor in 1822, 1824, and 1832.

Mr Oliff, White Hart, Chatham visited 1828.

The Poll Books and Directories list several Oliffs in Chatham and Rochester at this time, but not at the White Hart.

Inevitably several of the visitors had connections to Chatham Dockyard and the Garrison in the towns and included:

Strangford, Viscount, Government House, Chatham, visited 1819.

There is a photograph identified as Government House, Chatham in the Local Studies Collection but the house was demolished long ago.

Dr. Rowlands, Chatham Yard, visited 1819.

A surgeon called Dr Rowlands was active in the area in the 1830s.

Colonel D'Arcy, Royal Artillery, visited 1820.

Admiral Sir John Gore, visited 1820.

He was a Rear Admiral at the time of his visit and in 1825 became a Vice Admiral.

Lady Davy, visited c.1820/21.

Sir Humphrey Davy's correspondence shows he and his wife were guests of Lord Cobham in Kent and in London on several occasions from 1809 until 1825 and they met socially after that until his death in 1829. It therefore seems strange that she ‘took’ Mrs Smith's tour, as it is possible that she was staying in the house at the time. The Davys' visits are also recorded in the *Diary of John Duncan*, 4th son of the 4th Earl of Darnley, 1823-28. U565, F124-130.

There were also visitors from London and elsewhere, such as:

Mr Konig, British Museum, visited c.1820.

Charles Dietrich Eberhard Konig moved to England to arrange the collections of Queen Charlotte. He was Librarian to Sir Joseph Banks and Keeper in the Geology and Mineralogy department at the Natural History Museum. There is a portrait of him in London's National Portrait Gallery.

Mr S. Smirke, visited Aug. 1819.

Probably Sydney, the younger brother of architect Robert Smirke who designed St. Nicholas' Church, Strood (1812). Sydney's most famous commission was the Reading Room of the British Museum. He died in Frant, Kent in 1877.¹

Mr Samuel Wesley, September, 1829.

Wesley is the last recorded visitor and could be the organist, hymn writer and composer, (1766-1837), the nephew of John Wesley, co-founder of Methodism.²



Visitors at Cobham, 1843; Medway Archives Centre, Local Studies collection.

Editor's Notes

1. For more on the Smirkes, see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 12, November 2008, *Which Mr Baker? or By Nine Votes to Eight* by Michael Baker.

2. The Samuel Wesley who visited might also be Samuel *Sebastian* Wesley (1810 – 1876) the son of Samuel senior. Samuel Wesley senior (1766 – 1837) was the son of Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788), whose brother, John, is accredited with founding Methodism. Their father, the Revd. Samuel Wesley married Susanna, the daughter of Samuel Annesley, rector at Cliffe, (c. 1620 – 1696) later a prominent Puritan and Nonconformist.

What and Why?

HMS Barfleur Monument

Betty Cole



Betty Cole continues our series on familiar places in the Medway Towns the origins of which may be unknown to passers by. The series was Betty's idea but we welcome other contributors!

Betty Cole is FOMA's Membership Secretary. She is interested in local and family history and holds a Certificate in Theory and Practice of Local History with the University of Kent at Canterbury. Betty is a volunteer transcriber and checker for free-to-access internet sites for the researching of census and parish records.



Medway residents will all be familiar with the large stature of Thomas Waghorn, usually adorned with a traffic cone, in Railway Street, Chatham. Less noticeable, seen through Waghorn's outstretched right arm, is a small obelisk which has the inscription, 'In memory of the officers and men HMS *Barfleur* who lost their lives in China during the Boxer Rebellion 1900.'

The men named on the memorial are: F.S. Esdaile and A.P. Donaldson (midshipmen); W. Bath, W. Bing, T. Brown, I. Brooks, J.H. Connolly, J.J. Fleetwood, E.V. Grover, F.A. Greaves, W.J. Horne, W. Horning, J. King, T. McCarthy, J. Nicolas, J. O'Brien, C. Rodwell, J. Spencer, H. Snell, W.O. Vidler and F. Wallace.

The Barfleur Monument today; photograph by Elaine Gardner

Why is this monument in Chatham? HMS *Barfleur* was a 10,000 ton battleship built in Chatham Dockyard and launched in 1892 at a cost of £533,666. However, many ships were built in Chatham and many of the men who served on them lost their lives in various actions, but they don't have memorials there. Were they Chatham men? I have been able to find information about Midshipman Esdaile from Somerset, who was only 17 when he was killed, and Midshipman Guy, mentioned later, from County Durham. Clearly crew members were not all from Chatham.

Charles Frohman's management, in *Sowing the Wind*. One of Mr Whiffen's assumptions was the character of Tom Cobb in Mr W. S. Gilbert's comedy of that name, and it was half an hour of real enjoyment when the actor used to quote passages from the play redolent of the author's peculiar wit and humour. Mr Whiffen, who at one time possessed a good tenor voice, was an enthusiastic lover of the violin, which was his constant companion.'

Newspapers show that Thomas, and sometimes his wife too, came to England many times. But his obituary in *The Era* of 16 October 1897 records a sad end:

'The many friends of Mr. Thomas Whiffen, on this and the other side of the Atlantic, will hear with extreme regret of his death, which took place half an hour after midnight of Saturday and Sunday [10th October]. Mr. Whiffen, who had been travelling to the States with Mr. Charles Frohman's *Sowing the Wind* company, playing Mr Cyril Maude's part in that comedy, returned to his home in New York early in May, where he was soon struck down with typhoid fever. Towards the end of June he thought himself sufficiently recovered to be able to pay a visit to England, but he only arrived in time to take to his bed once more, early in July, and from that time until the fatal termination of his illness there was but little hope of his permanent recovery.'

He died at Bengoe, a suburb of Hertford. Blanche continued with her American career, performing until she was in her eighties, and specialising in the parts of 'old ladies'. In 1928 she wrote an autobiography *Keeping off the shelf*, available again as a modern reprint.

Voices from the Dockyard

Betty Cole and Norma Crowe



At the Volunteers' meeting in April 2018, MAC's Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe asked for people to transcribe some letters written in the 1970s by former Chatham Dockyard workers and published in the *Evening Post* in January and February 1973. The letters contained memories of life in the Yard earlier in the 1900s and some of the more amusing and interesting will be reproduced in *The Clock Tower* in this new series. Please note that the names of the authors of the letters have been omitted to protect their privacy, and the letters are unedited transcriptions. our thanks to Betty Cole, Norma Crowe and the volunteers.

The Halfpenny Trams

Letter No. 29

17.1.73

I was an Engine Fitter appce [apprentice] in 1910 at the princely pay of 4/- week and I well remember the ½^d Tram. It was a mad rush from the Gallery of the Main Fitting shop, which I did on one heel & then a mad dash with a Numbered Brass Ticket to the Muster Station – where we had to deposit [it] in a slot – causing endless trouble through throwing into the wrong slot. The tram was always packed & the ½^d were passed down the car to the conductor. This mad rush was the main training for football. I was Centre forward for the then famous Gillingham Prims* winners of Brompton & District & Free Church Leagues. It was also sufficient for me to Play for Gillingham in April 1914 & I am sure I must be one of the few left who did so. I was in the R East Kent Yeomanry in August 1914 & served at Gallipoli North Africa & Palistine [sic] & finished my service in the R F C at Cairo. On my return I had great success as a Tenor Vocalist – winning a gold Medal & all the [deletion] leading Kent Festivals & whilst with the Kentish Players 1920 + Vintage I played at the old Empire & Theatre Royal & I am sure a Number of your older readers will remember me. In conclusion I also remember the fatal Tram disaster at Westcourt Hill – old Brompton. I am sure many of your readers are greatly interested in the good old Days – So keep it up. I also recognised the Naval Barracks Pembroke Gate!

I think your present series of Dockyard Maties stories started with the account of the rush out of the Dockyard to get aboard the halfpenny specials, and it has just crossed my mind that perhaps it would be appropriate if the series ended (or my contribution) with a true account of the struggle sometimes for some of the Maties to get into the Dockyard. For many and many years the main means of transporting stores etc in the Dockyard was done by horse and cart. There was at least sixty of these horses stabled at the bottom of Wood Street Old Brompton at its junction with Dock Road and it was the practice for the Teamsters to lead there charges out in groups of twenty haltered together in pairs and also in column, It so happened that these groups had to head down the Dock Road Hill and enter Alexander Gate, only a few yards from Pembroke Gate and opposite the tram terminus every morning just before seven o'clock. The last two trams for the Dockyard left the Town Hall Chatham just in time to get the Maties into Pembroke Gate before starting work time. Very often these last trams used to be coming down Dock Road or Pembroke Gate Hill as it was called and find that they had to fall in behind the groups of horses being led by the Teamster. The heavy cart horses of course have the steady old slow plod. Unfortunately the three teamsters could not lead there [sic] charges across the road to let the tram pass on account of the stream of trams coming up the hill toward Chatham or Old Brompton. So there it was all the Maties sitting on the open top deck would of the trams going down waving there [sic] arms and standing up shouting abuse at both the Teamsters and the horses. All to no avail as the horses still kept their steady slow pace and the Dockyard Bell ringing away and stop when the trams were sometimes two to three hundred yards away from the Gate. Some of the young Maties who thought they had a chance to beat the clock would jump off the trams at the first encounter with the horses and run like greyhounds to get into the Yard before the Bell stopped and if successful be greeted by their friends "Hello been mixed up in The Dray-horse Stakes" this morning.



Some of the tram stops signs on the Dockyard wall, Dock Road, Chatham; photograph by Elaine Gardner.

made so much of it last season. The delicacy, the repose, the calm and beautiful conceit of this latter gentleman's First Lord of the Admiralty made his personation one of the best pieces of burlesque I ever saw. It was a distinct creation of character.'

Blanche Whiffin was equally successful as the first 'Buttercup' in the earlier show.



Thomas Whiffin as Sir Joseph Porter K.G.B.; obtained by the author from pinterest.com

The couple both continued their successful careers, sometimes performing together, but at other times independently. So, in 1875 in Washington they were announced as 'Miss Blanche Galton, the celebrated Contralto, formerly of the renowned Galton's Opera Troupe. Mr Thomas Whiffin the eminent English Tenor and Violinist, formerly of the Parepa Rosa Troupe.'

Then: 'When the Mallorys opened Madison-square Theatre, Mr Whiffin joined their company, the character of Pitticus Green being written for him in Steele Mackaye's drama of *Hazel Kirke*. It will be remembered that Mr Whiffin performed this drama here [England] at a Vaudeville matinée on June 30th, 1896. The long run enjoyed by the drama in New York [1500 performances] identified Mr Whiffin with his eccentric part. Of late years this actor has travelled much in the Western States, for some time with Miss Rose Coghlan, and later, under Mr

‘He appeared at the Royal concerts at Windsor Castle, and occasionally at those given at Buckingham Palace.’

However, after seven years he embarked on a new career. The *Windsor and Eton Express* of 23 January 1865 records that, ‘having accepted an appointment as principal tenor at St Andrew’s Church, Wells-street, London. Mr. Whiffin has for some time past most successfully taken a principal character in Mr. German Reed’s popular entertainment, entitled *Jessie Lea*, and to this latter engagement we believe may be attributed his resignation of his appointment at St George’s (at Christmas 1864). Reed’s company was ‘Opera di Camera’ and in the 1860s the company expanded from just two or three singers and piano to a rather larger group; it established a fine reputation for the quality of its work. Nevertheless, in 1866 Whiffin is recorded as a singer at Westminster Abbey and the Temple church, perhaps as a substitute, and he continued to perform in oratorios as well as in the entertainments. Between September 1867 and March 1868, the company embarked on a lengthy tour of England and Scotland, mostly single performances of the same music in the different venues, and it must have been an arduous life. Among the cast then were two sisters, Susan and Blanche Galton, nieces of Louisa Pyne, the most famous English soprano of her day; they too were from a musical family. Louisa had also co-founded the Pyne-Harrison Opera Company in the USA and then the Royal English Opera Company in England, with a lease of the Opera House at Covent Garden. Her hopes of founding a National Opera Company in England were dashed with the death of the Prince Consort, who had been a keen advocate of the project.

By this time Louisa was employing Thomas Whiffin and on 11 July 1868 he married Blanche Galton (1845-1936) at St Andrew, Marylebone. Many English singers and troupes were making the trip to the USA, where there was a burgeoning demand for their talent, and the group, now called the Galton Company, travelled there in 1868, having given a ‘Farewell Concert’ in Gravesend on 20 July. But the marriage of Susan Galton to Alfred Kelleher, a singer in the troupe, in Philadelphia on 17 February 1870 caused the company to disband.

One account records that ‘for some time Mr Whiffen had a hard struggle to overcome “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”, but the production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, in which he sustained the character of Sir Joseph Porter, created here [in England] by Mr George Grossmith, brought him to the front in New York theatricals. Mr Whiffen, who had not seen the London production of the piece, based his personation of Sir Joseph Porter upon the peculiarities of a well-known musical conductor of the past, and his rendition became immensely popular’. This, on 24 January 1879, was one of many ‘pirated’ versions of *Pinafore* in America, much to the dismay of Gilbert and Sullivan, who received no royalties, and they arranged for an official first ‘authorised’ production of their own on 1 December 1879. Of that, one reviewer said:

‘Mr Ryley would please better in this part if Mr Thomas Whiffen had not

Letter No. 44

24.1.73

A ‘Dockyard Matie’ and those Trams

My Step Father, Steve ‘Sweenny’[sic] Todd, was a ‘Matie’ for a good many years, and I remember when I was just a boy he used to arrive home as regular as clockwork around about 5 oclock [sic] and my mother would have his dinner warming on the pot ready to put in front of him as soon as he had washed. Then one day he never arrived on time, 6 oclock [sic] came then 7, still no Dad, poor Mum getting all worked up & repeating over and over again “I know something has happened to him, he’s never been as late as this”. Then about a quarter to eight in he came with the top of his head swathed in bandages, like an Indian Turban, “Mother screamed and passed out”. This is what he told us afterwards. He had come out of the Yard at the usual time and dashed up to catch the tram (We lived out at Luton then) where the usual ‘Heaving & Shoving’ to get aboard was going on and just as Dad got his hand on the rail and one foot on the platform, the Conductor shouted “thats [sic] enough,” rang his bell, well Dad and a few more ‘Maties’, still tried to get on, until apparently the Conductor grabbed one of the brass handles & belted Dad over the head, at the same time shouting “Enough I said.” Dad knew no more untill [sic] he awoke in one of the first aid stations having several stitches put in the cut on [his] head. Whether the Conductor didn’t realise the weight of that handle or hadn’t meant to hit so hard, nobody will ever know. Dad swore he would get his revenge if he saw that “So & So Conductor” again, but of course he never did. When Dad passed away a few years ago he still had a good crop of hair, apart from a bald patch, about an 1” diameter, where his hair had been shaved to allow the stitching, it never did grow there again. Anyway throughout the years we had a good many laughs over it, especially when his friends called in for a ‘drink’ at Xmas times. Now those trams. My favourite ride was on the top of a summers evening with my parents, from top of Canterbury Street, Gillingham to the White Horse at Rainham, the trams would run in the fields alongside the road and get up to a good turn of speed as well. From the White Horse, a walk down Station Road and across the fields to the ‘Three Sisters’ at Upchurch, where Mum and Dad would have a drink and me a ‘cherryaide’ and a bag of crisps, then a walk back to catch the tram back to the ‘Old Ash Tree’ and then a walk down over ‘Sugar Loaf Hill’ to Luton, home and bed. ‘Happy Days’. I could go on writing, of the things Dad and I did for we were great ‘Pals’ together, but this seems too long now, so I do hope you can condense it to fit your paper for I am sure there are some ‘Maties’ still alive somewhere who remember ‘Sweenny Todd’ and his ‘turban’. Good luck to you and your paper,

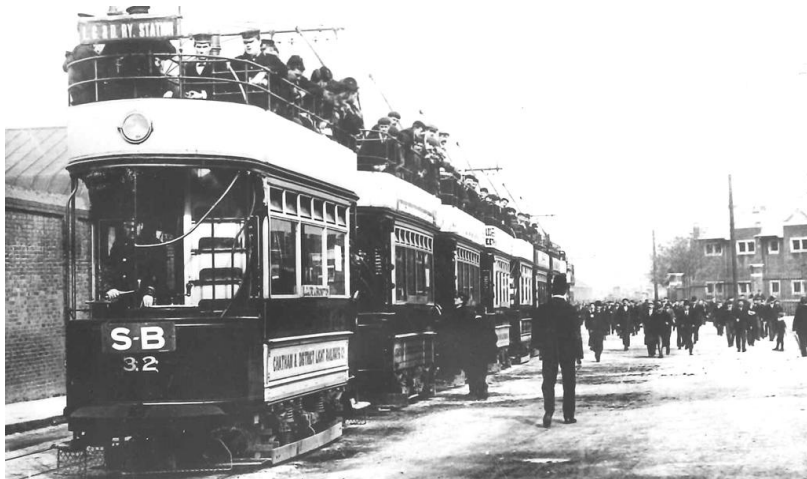
2.2.73

I have to hand a copy of the Evening post dated 17th Jan making reference to the Dockyard Maties and tram cars. My father was a Dockyard Matie and for a number of years during the 40’s [sic] was Secretary of Maties ‘Fever Club’ which

assisted any contributor if their child was stricken with fever.

However, I wonder if many people can recall the ‘Dinner boys’! It would begin at school when at 11.20 am the teacher would call out “Dinner boys” and off we would scoot to arrive home to see mother placing a very hot dinner in a basin. The basin was then wrapped in a large red handkerchief [sic] and knotted at the top. We would then get the tram – 1/2d fare – to the Dockyard and assemble at the Main Gate just before noon. At 12 o’clock the hooter would sound and we boys were then permitted to make our way to our fathers’ workshops.

My father was a Driller and would sit beside his machine to enjoy a still hot, we hoped, dinner. My reward, at times, was to be taken over a ship or submarine afterwards or watch divers descending. Happy Days!



Chatham trams; Medway Archives Centre, ref: CHA/TRA/TRAM/1.

*Editor’s Note

An article on the Chatham Historical Society website explains the origin of the name of the team, the Gillingham *Prims*:

‘The Primitive Methodist Church, Mills Terrace, Chatham

By the early nineteenth century, some Methodists believed that Wesleyan Methodism was becoming detached from ordinary people and far too respectable. They believed in reaching out to the poor and disadvantaged by evangelism and outdoor meetings. These critics were eventually expelled from mainstream Methodism and created their own movement, so-called ‘Primitive Methodism’. Their first chapel was opened in Staffordshire in 1811, and the movement soon spread around the country. The ‘Prims’ were especially strong in working class urban areas.

A preacher from Ipswich created the first Primitive Methodist group in Chatham in 1844. Rooms were rented in various back streets until a substantial chapel was built in George Street off Fair Row in 1849.’

<http://www.chathamhistoricalsoc.btck.co.uk/historysection/primitivemethodistchurch>

Lives of Rochester Cathedral Choristers

Dr. Andrew Ashbee

Dr Andrew Ashbee was born and bred in Snodland. The former Head of Music at Rochester Grammar School for Girls, Dr Ashbee 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.



Part 2: Thomas Whiffin* [III] (1834-1897)

*Also spelt Whiffen.

Thomas Whiffin was the third generation of the family to have been a cathedral chorister at Rochester. The eldest son of John David Thomas (1805-1851), he was born on 1 June 1834 and baptised at St Mary, Chatham, on 11 July following. At the time of the 1841 census Thomas and his sisters Mary Ann and Eliza were all staying at the almshouses of Old Trinity Ground, Deptford, and are listed immediately after George (aged 80) and Ann Jelfer (aged 60). Presumably they were relations of his mother Elizabeth. At Midsummer 1842 Thomas was appointed as a chorister at Rochester cathedral and served for eight years until June 1850, the last four as a senior boy. According to the *Windsor and Eton Express* of 15 November 1856, he then became a lay clerk ‘first at Ely, and subsequently at Rochester’. His move from Ely to Rochester was in June that year, when he replaced his uncle Thomas [II].

However, he was soon on the move again, having been successful on that November day to obtain a tenor lay-clerkship at St George’s Chapel, Windsor, negotiating three separate auditions as the eight candidates were whittled down. He took up his appointment at Christmas 1856. At the time of the 1861 census he was living at 24 Horseshoe Cloisters, Windsor Castle, aged 26, with his sisters Mary Ann (24) and Eliza (22), the latter described as a secretary’s wife, with a daughter born in Russia. His time at Windsor was a busy one and, as was commonplace throughout the land, the lay clerks were in great demand to sing at concerts in the district, not only the major choral works like *Messiah* and *St Paul*, but also light songs and glees. Thomas had an extra string to his bow since he was a fine violinist like his uncle and often led the orchestras instead of singing the tenor solos. Among notices of him is this:

‘Mr Whiffen was originally a choir boy in Rochester Cathedral, an edifice he always visited when he came to England. Afterwards he was one of the gentlemen of the choir of St. George’s Windsor, and had a solo in the anthem that was sung during the funeral service of the late Prince Consort.’