

The Bob Ratcliffe Memorial Bench



On Sunday 15 December 2019, many of Bob Ratcliffe's family and friends attended the dedication of the Bob Ratcliffe memorial bench in the Rochester Cathedral Cloister. More on page 8.

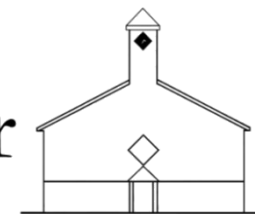


On the bottom right of the back of the bench is a small engraved steam train.

Photographs by Rob Flood.

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

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 57: February 2020
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

Henk's Medway Visit



On 14 November 2019, FOMA's dear friend, Henk van der Linden visited us from the Netherlands. See page 11.

Also inside:
The Newcombs and the Nelson Connection, a new series by John Sykes.
Plus:
The MAC Christmas Event!

The MAC Christmas Event

The Christmas Event at the Medway Archives Centre took place on 4 December 2019. The morning's society fair and book sale was a tremendous success with many local organisations represented. In the afternoon we were

In the afternoon, former Headteacher of Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Mary Smith gave a talk entitled, *A Schoolgirl's War: the story of a Kent School during World War Two*. The full story of the day's event is on page 15; more photographs on the inside back cover. *Photographs by Amanda Thomas.*



Left: The City of Rochester Society – Alan Moss (left) and Philip Dodd with Medway Council Heritage Services' Sarah Belsom.



Right: MAC Archivist, Elspeth Millar at the Friends of Chatham Traction stand

Below left : The Kent Family History Society – Ian Smith and Brenda Paternoster



Above: FOMA's Len Feist (here representing Strood Fellowship) chats to Andrew Ashbee of the Snodland Historical Society; in the background is Friends of Broomhill Secretary, David Park.

The MAC Christmas Event

See page 15.



MAC's Alison Thomas and Nikki Pratt man the main desk.



Above: Geoff Lee, Chairman (left) and Philip Badman, Secretary, Halling Historical Society.



Left: FOMA member Peter Chissell and the Friends of Broomhill, Secretary David Park, and Andrew Ford.

Below: MAC's Helen Worthy (left) and Cindy O'Halloran.



MAC volunteer Hilary Blandford (left) with Matt Thomas (Operations and Commercial Manager) and Hannah Waller-Davies (Marketing Assistant) from the Royal Engineers Museum.



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Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



As this is the first magazine of 2020 may I first wish you all a very Happy New Year! A new year and plenty of new events at the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) in the coming months. I hope you save the information on the MAC newsletters that Amanda Thomas forwards to members by email as some events do come and go between editions of *The Clock Tower*. The latest information is always available on our website (foma-lsc.org) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/fomalsc) which we know many of you also follow.

The most recent exhibition, *Picture Medway* ran from 16 January until 18 February and featured a series of photograph images of the Medway Towns as seen by young people; it was a small but most interesting exhibition. You may be just in time to catch *Pembroke: from Naval Barracks to University Campus* which will run for just one week from 20 to 25 February in the lobby at MAC. By the time this reaches you MAC will be setting up their new exhibition entitled, *Women Power: celebrating group action, education and comradeship*. This will be in the lobby for about ten weeks starting on 2 March and the highlight of the exhibition will be the *Women Power* event on 7 March at MAC to celebrate International Women's Day.

These free Saturday events, which are always about the Medway area, add considerable additional detail to the main exhibition and are really worth a visit (see page 38 for further details). *Women Power* will feature representatives from various local Women's Institute groups, Girl Guides, and Soroptimists*. I have to confess to not knowing much about the latter so will be going along to find out - as well as to help MAC staff.

The arrangements for our March talk – *Dean Samuel Hole and The Rose Society* - will be a little different from normal. We are aware that both FOMA and the City of Rochester Society share a considerable membership and some time ago we realised that both societies had booked the Very Reverend Dr Philip Hesketh, Dean of Rochester Cathedral to do a talk on the same topic within a week of each other! As a result we have decided to hold a joint meeting of the two societies on the date arranged for the FOMA talk, 13 March, and at St Nicholas Church Hall, as indicated in your membership programme. As it is a meeting of both groups we are charging a £1 admission charge and £1 for raffle tickets. Refreshments will be provided as usual and further details can be found on page 37. We hope to see you there!

Our AGM is coming up on Friday 3 April at St Nicholas Church Lower Hall in Strood (see page 37 for further details). We are always looking for new ways to raise funds for MAC so your input would be very welcome ... do get thinking and come along with your ideas! This edition of *The Clock Tower* includes the special AGM supplement which you will need to bring to the meeting; this helps save paper and cuts down on printing costs. We look forward to seeing you there!

*From the Soroptimist International website:

'Founded in 1921, Soroptimist International is a global volunteer movement with a network of around 72,000 club members in 121 countries. Advocating for human rights and gender equality, at the heart of Soroptimist International's advocacy is its work across eight UN Centres, where our UN representatives ensure that the voices of women and girls are heard. Our membership work on grassroots projects that help women and girls achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in communities worldwide.'

<https://www.soroptimistinternational.org>:

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members Kevin Grimmett and family, and returning member Peter Lomas.

The FOMA AGM

Friday 3 April, 7.00 for 7.30 pm,

St Nicholas Church Lower Hall, Strood.

TO SAVE PAPER, PLEASE BRING THE ENCLOSED AGM LEAFLET WITH YOU!

Membership Reminder

In this issue the AGM booklet includes your FOMA Membership Reminder.

Please pay this as soon as possible;

you can also bring this with you to the AGM to renew your membership.

You can also pay on the FOMA website <http://foma-lsc.org/membership.html>, by Standing Order and by post; cheques made payable to Friends of the Medway Archives
Please contact: FOMA Membership Secretary, Mrs. B. Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent.

Queries can also be sent by email to Betty Cole at: betty-cole@outlook.com

N.B. Betty saves stamps from all correspondence which are sent to raise funds for the Molly Wisdom Hospice.

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 58 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 27 April January 2020, with publication on Wednesday 20 May 2020.

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 Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3EP. 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

April 7 to April 17: Easter Family Fun: VE Day

VE Day stands for Victory in Europe Day and was created as a public holiday to mark the defeat of Germany by the Allied forces in the Second World War. First celebrated on May 8th 1945 more than 1 million people celebrated in the streets of cities, towns and villages in the UK! Join in with us and create wooden bunting ready for your own celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

April 7 to June 28: Traces

This exhibition of photography from local artist Laura Fisher focuses on Brompton Barracks

May 8: VE Day Street Party

Get involved this May bank holiday as we swing back in time and celebrate VE Day 75! Join our street party and enjoy edible goodies, 1940s games and swing music in the Museum's grounds. More details TBC.

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. For admission prices please see the website at <https://re-museum.digitickets.co.uk/tickets>

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



2020 is looking like another exciting year. It is the 150-year anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens, and now's as good a time as any to remind you about the extensive collection of books on the great man available to look at in the Archive, and as pictured.

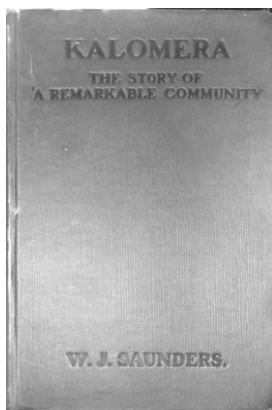


This year Norma Crowe, MAC's Local Studies Librarian, will be continuing more of the (always) popular reminiscence sessions throughout the spring and summer. All sessions are free to attend and there is no need to book. They will take place on Tuesdays from 2.00 – 3.30pm in the MAC foyer, as follows:

5 May: Child's play: toys, toy shops, play and games
19 May: Travel and trips especially outings
2 June: Cinema, theatre, TV and radio
16 June: Wholesale, retail, shops and shopping
30 June: Medway Music scene: bands and venues

Please do come along with your memories, photographs and memorabilia to share. I am particularly interested in the last one on the list given my own hazy memories of The Milkshakes at the now-demolished MIC Club in Chatham in the 1980s. So, I look forward to hearing what other people remember about Medway's music scene and seeing what people bring along ... maybe someone remembers seeing Gong at Chatham Central Hall in September 1974? As a reminder, my ticket is pictured here!





One of the joys of spending time at the Medway Archive Centre is the discovery of fascinating lives whose details are preserved in the archive files. I recently came across a remarkable man of Medway known as The Silent Postman, W. J. Saunders. Born in Rochester, Saunders left school and joined the Post Office at the age of 14. When not working as a postman Saunders was a big fan of Rochester Library, where he continued to study, apparently mastering a number of languages, including Ancient Greek, Latin and Hebrew. However, what struck me most reading about Saunders was that he was also a novelist. He has been, erroneously, described as Britain's 'first working-class novelist', a title perhaps more accurately claimed by one of the Chartist novelists of the nineteenth century, Robert Tressell. Saunders' first novel *Kalomera: The Story of a Remarkable Community* was published in 1911, three years before Tressell's more famous *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*.

Kalomera is a work of speculative fiction in which Saunders sets out his utopian vision of an ordered proto-communist society. His vision of the postal service for instance relied on 'voluntary co-operation among the people themselves, the government undertaking only that part of the service which could not be thus provided for'. I had to search high and low for a copy of *Kalomera*, eventually finding one in the library of the London School of Economics, bearing the bookplate of Harold Laski, a professor at the LSE and chairman of the Labour Party from 1945-46. Saunders died in 1928 and I haven't been able to locate his grave in St Margaret's Cemetery. I can't help but think that Medway's answer to Robert Tressell deserves more recognition in his home town. If you have a spare copy of *Kalomera* or Saunderson's second novel, *The Nazarene*, do let me know! I can be emailed at berthoud@blueyonder.co.uk

On the subject of books, FOMA will soon be commencing some digital fundraising for MAC as we will begin to sell on eBay some donated books and some duplicate copies that didn't make it into our recent MAC book sale. This will hitherto be known as the *FOMA EBay Project* and we hope it will prove to be a valuable addition to our fundraising efforts. We would happily accept appropriate donations of material in order to help our work supporting MAC and all the great work that they undertake. More details will be published in *The Clock Tower* once this project is fully under way.

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.

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

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

February 4 to March 29: No Man's Land

An installation of artwork by students from the University for the Creative Arts, in response to the Museum's Collection & Archives. Included in standard admission prices.

February 18 to February 21: Half Term Family Fun - Rat Race

The Royal Engineers Museum collections link to rats in many unexpected ways. Our Chinese collections demonstrate Chinese zodiac animal signs and Chinese New Year 2020 marks the Year of the Rat, the first in the order of all the signs. In the First World War soldiers were living in trenches among the rats, some of which were size of cats!

March 7: EOD 80

Get involved this spring as the Museum remembers 80 years of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)! Join in and see if you can find the buried mines using real kit provided by Bomb Disposal units and the Royal Engineers Association. You'll have opportunities to speak to past and present Sappers who have carried out this dangerous but vital work, plus watch search dog demonstrations!

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 March - *Railways of the Hoo Peninsula* - Ken Reynolds;
Wednesday 8 April - *Medway's Remarkable Women* - Elaine Gardner;
Wednesday 13 May - Annual General Meeting.

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



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

St Mary's Island History Group

11 May - Annual General Meeting
7.30pm start at St Mary's Island Community Centre, Island Way West, ME3 3EP Parking is off the roundabout by the school. Visitors welcome at £2 and we are asking for £1 donations from all towards refreshments.



We are always looking out for speakers and those who can enlighten us more about the Island and the Medway Towns. We continue to archive as part of our overall role of putting together a history of St Mary's Island complete with timeline. So if you have photographs or papers that we can copy about the Island's history both during and post Dockyard please do make contact. www.stmarysislandhistorygroup.co.uk

A Note from the Editor

Amanda Thomas.



You will recall that Chris' wonderful predecessor, Odette Buchanan (pictured), retired from the role of FOMA Secretary last year (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 54, May 2019). As is usual in these circumstances, the committee had a 'whip around', and we are delighted to announce that Odette bought herself a rather lovely pair of silver earrings – which she modelled for us at the last FOMA Committee Meeting in January!

Still available ...

The Buck Family & Eastgate House

by FOMA member Pauline Weeds

Produced by the Friends of Eastgate House
£3.50, available from Eastgate House, Rochester.

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

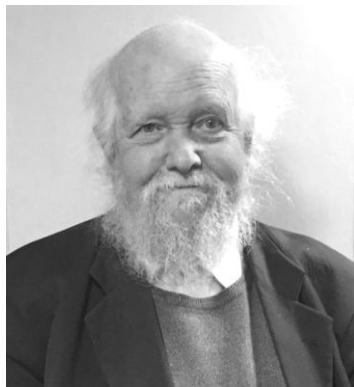


The Bob Ratcliffe Memorial Bench

Rob Flood



On Sunday 15 December 2019, many of Bob Ratcliffe's family and friends attended the dedication of the Bob Ratcliffe memorial bench in the Rochester Cathedral Cloister. The bench was dedicated by Dean Philip Hesketh in the presence of Bob's wife Margaret, son Andrew and his wife Audrey and grand-daughter Elyse. Also in attendance were Alan Moss, Robert Flood, Ian and Helen Colvin from the City of Rochester Society. The dedication on the back of the bench reads:

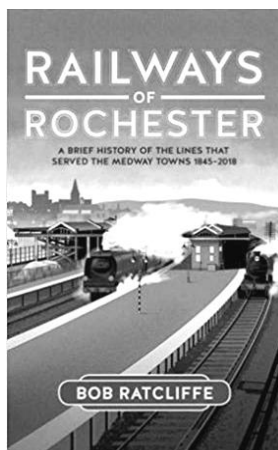


'Bob Ratcliffe: President of the City of Rochester Society; Chairman of the Friends of Rochester Cathedral. Historian and Enthusiast: Resting with family and friends: at peace in this place of history.'

Bob Ratcliffe, 1936-2018

On the bottom right of the back of the bench is a small engraved steam train acknowledging Bob's interest, and extraordinary knowledge, in the history of the railways. Photographs of the event can be found on the back page.

Bob Ratcliffe's wonderful book, *Railways of Rochester – a brief history of the lines that served the Medway Towns 1845-2018*. Priced £20 and also available from the City of Rochester Society's website,¹ the work is a must-have for anyone interested in the railways and the Medway Towns: www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/shop/railways-of-rochester-a-brief-history-of-the-lines-that-served-the-medway-towns-1845-2018/



Annual General Meeting

Saturday 7 March.

Huguenot Museum, 95 High Street, Rochester, ME1 1LX.

1.30 pm start with a summary of the year.

2.00 pm a talk by Richard Holdsworth, Chatham Historic Dockyard.

Richard Holdsworth is Director of Heritage, Public Engagement and Learning at Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. The Dockyard was a major source of traffic for Chatham Traction, and its predecessor trams.

3.00 break.

3.15 pm, Annual General Meeting.

Closes at 4.30 pm; further details on our website at www.chathamtraction.org.uk.

The 2020 South East Bus Festival

Saturday 4 April

Inevitably hopes have been high for a long-awaited reappearance of GKE at this event. However given the logistics of extracting the bus from SEC's workshop and the ongoing detail work we've decided not to do so. We will, of course, be present in the Emson building.

Bring back the "Brahn" Bus: An Appeal for Funds

The Friends of Chatham Traction are working hard to complete the restoration of GKE68, the last remaining 1930s bus, that served the Medway towns until the mid 1950s. The bus will be 80 years old this year and is nearly ready to make its reappearance in the autumn and start its journey as the 'Medway Heritage Bus', a community and heritage asset for the people of Medway.

Are you interested in vintage road transport, a bus enthusiast or do you or your friends or relatives have fond memories of the Chatham & District Traction buses, perhaps through travelling to school or to work on them? Perhaps you are excited to see an authentic 1930s vehicle with art deco design upholstery and interior.

We need to raise a sum of £20,000 to finish the work on the bus, save it for the future and start developing its use by local people.

You can make donations on line by visiting www.cafonline.org and following the instructions for donations, searching for Friends of Chatham Traction.

For other ways of making a donation, contact either:

Paul Kemsley on 01954 719694 or pgke68@btinternet.com
Wendy Mesher on 07717 318110 or wendymesher@blueyonder.co.uk

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.

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 to 4.00 pm.

13 March - *Upnor and The Dutch Raid* - John Guy.

3 April - *Toll Roads, Tunnels and Bridges* - Geoff Beer.

8 May - AGM and reminiscence afternoon.

12 June - Kent Blossom Tour (Talk/Presentation) - John Guy.

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

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

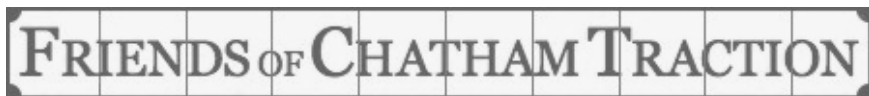
Friends of Broomhill

Broomhill Park has been awarded an eighth consecutive Green Flag; the Award recognises the best green spaces in the country.

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. For more information, see below.

Medway Archives Centre News

Elsbeth Millar



I've enjoyed getting to know the staff, our customers, and of course the collections over the last couple of months. Thanks especially to the team at MAC and to FOMA who have been very welcoming (and patient when answering all of my questions) as well as to some of our regular readers who have shared with me their interesting and varied areas of research.

Further to the report in the November issue of *The Clock Tower* ('Introducing ...'), the team and I, using guidance provided by the National Archives, have started planning in the areas of accessioning and cataloguing, engagement work, and collections care.

Collections Care

Norma Crowe, Cindy O'Halloran and I have undertaken the 'Benchmarks in Collection Care' exercise. This is a self-assessment exercise which sets out realistic standards for collections care (covering things like environmental management, creating surrogate copies, active conservation, housekeeping, disaster planning). This has provided a practical framework for forward planning around collections care for 2020.

Nikki Pratt and I have also started work on a Digital Asset Register which records information about all of the digital records that are a part of MAC collections. This will help us to plan required digital storage and understand any preservation risks we might face with digital collection material.

Accessions and Cataloguing

Cindy and I have recently accessioned the following archive material, covering parish records and private deposits, including:

- Additional records into the Coulson Family Estate Records (DE1215 add)
- Additional records to the Parish of Halling, St John the Baptist, via the Snodland Historical Society (P165/8/2A)
- Additional records of the Parish of St Mark, Rosherville, Northfleet (P270B add)
- Plan of land behind the Clarendon Public House, Gillingham, 1933 (transfer from Essex Record Office) (DE1284)
- Records relating to the Gerrard Land and Investment Company Limited and Maidstone No.2 Estate, 1933-1977, donated by FOMA via N.J. Lynch (DE1285)
- Additional records of the Parish of Stoke (P350 add)
- Records of Ernest George Payne whilst in the Royal Naval Volunteer Service (DE1286)
- Deeds relating to the Old Post Office, (17 & 17a) Gads Hill, Gillingham, Kent (DE1288)
- Additional records of the Parish of Sutton, via the Kent History and Library Centre (P358/5/2)
- Additional records of the Parish of Hartley (P174 add)
- Account ledger, Chatham Brewery, June 1851-June 1884 (DE1289)
- Additional material deposited by the Parish of Cuxton and Halling (P108 add)

- Counterpart leases issued from the Patrons, Governor and Brethren of St Bartholomew's Hospital for various properties in Chatham, 1851-1865 (DE1290)
- Transfers from the Guildhall Museum, including commonplace books, minute book of the Rochester and Chatham Ethical Society (later Rochester Philosophical Society), 1897-1914, and Borough of Chatham Visitors Book (including Royal Visits), 1900-1974 (DE1291)

Norma has recently accessioned the following into the Local Studies collection:

- Ephemera donations from FOMA
- Papers, ephemera and reports donated by Tina Glover, former Arts Development Officer, Gillingham Borough Council
- Folders of past exhibitions created by MAC including Hempstead: snippets of history; Images of Rochester Bridge; Women's Suffrage; Know your streets: Chatham Town Centre; Foreigners, immigrants, citizens- Medway and its Jewish community.
- Archaeological reports donated by Alan Ward
- Local and general history books donated by the late Pat Salter

Please note that as most of this material is not yet catalogued requests for access will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

We are also currently completing the National Archives' Accessions to Repositories Survey. This records the archive collections accessioned into repositories in the UK over the last year, providing insights into national collecting activity.

Engagement

Over the next few months we are hoping to undertake a user survey, to find out more about our current onsite users and how they access and use our services. We have also started drafting some changes to our webpages, to ensure that they provide clear information on why we exist, what we do, what we collect, and how people can use the material in our care.

Norma has also already planned, with the help of Alison Thomas, Nikki, Cat Clement and Helen Worthy, the following engagement events for spring and summer 2020, and more events and exhibitions are being planned for later in 2020:

- An exhibition *Pembroke: From Naval Barracks to University Campus* (20-25 February)
- An exhibition (2 March-18 May) and special event (7 March) entitled 'Women Power', celebrating group action, education and comradeship with the support of the Soroptimists, Women's Institute and Girl Guides
- Reminiscence sessions (following on from the excellent sessions held in 2019) which are planned for May and June, with topics including toys, play and games, and the Medway Music scene.
- A talk by Deborah Collins, 'Please Sir, I Want some More': *Dickens and the Medway Towns Workhouse*, 3 June, which will take place as part of the Medway 'Dickens 150' series of events, commemorating the 150th anniversary of Charles Dickens' death in 1870.
- 'Aspects of Dickens', three small exhibitions looking at Percy Fitzgerald, Dickensland, and Dickens as portrayed by artists and photographers (21 May-31 July)

Further information can be found in *News and Events* on page 37; summer events will be advertised in the May issue of *The Clock Tower*.

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: £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 zbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk; a copy of the membership form is also available on the website.

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.

Special Event
Women Power

Saturday 7 March
11 am to 3.00pm

In conjunction with the *Women Power* exhibition and International Women's Day. Additional materials will be available which provide a fascinating insight into the role of women and women's organisations in Medway.

With the West Kent Women's Institutes, Soroptimists and Girl Guiding in Medway.

Medway Archives Centre – no booking required.

Reminiscence Sessions

Norma Crowe, MAC Local Studies Librarian, continues this popular event throughout the spring and summer. All sessions are free to attend and there is no need to book. Tuesdays from 2.00 – 3.30pm in the MAC foyer, as follows:

5 May:	Child's play: toys, toy shops, play and games
19 May	Travel and trips especially outings
2 June	Cinema, theatre, TV and radio
16 June	Wholesale, retail, shops and shopping
30 June	Medway Music scene: bands and venues

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).

Henk's Medway Visit

Amanda Thomas



On 14 November 2019, FOMA Chairman, Elaine Gardner and I welcomed our dear friend and FOMA Honorary Life Member, Henk van der Linden, to Rochester. During earlier visits in his role as Chairman of the Live Bait Squadron Society (<https://www.livebaitsqn-soc.info>), Henk had not been able to look around Rochester. He was keen not just to take in all its wonderful sights but also to update Elaine and me on the latest news from the Society. We were also delighted that later in the afternoon, former FOMA Chairman – and one of Henk's dearest friends – Tessa Towner, was able to join us for afternoon tea, and as pictured on the front cover.

FOMA members will be familiar with Henk, who was awarded the British Empire Medal in 2017 in recognition of his extraordinary work (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 46, May 2017). In the Netherlands Henk has already received some significant recognition during his career as an economist. However, his life took an unexpected turn when in 2004, whilst killing time prior to a meeting, he strayed into the war graves cemetery in The Hague. Here he embarked on a journey which led him to uncover the story of Chatham's three cruisers: HMS *Aboukir*, *Hogue* and *Cressy*. Since then Henk has worked tirelessly to raise the profile of these, the so-called Live Bait Squadron, and to help the descendants of those who perished. He has always called this *Our Road to Chatham*, a journey which he had thought had ended on 21 September 2014 when we all gathered to commemorate the lives of the 1,459 men and boys – many from the Medway Towns - who died in the space of a few hours in the North Sea on the morning of 22 September 1914 (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 36, November 2014).

Over the years many of us on the FOMA Committee, and particularly Tessa and I, have become involved in Henk's on-going mission to ensure the Squadron and the events of 1914 are never forgotten. Some time ago Henk talked to the FOMA Committee about his fears concerning the Live Bait Squadron website and how we could work together to ensure the survival of the extraordinary amount of information contained there, which also includes a link to the television documentary by Klaudie Bartelink.

It transpired that FOMA was not the only organisation concerned about the future of the Society and how the information on its website could be preserved. When we met up with Henk in November we discovered that our fears were unfounded, as in the previous days he had been involved in meetings at Chatham's Historic Dockyard. In his Bulletin 16 on the Society website, published on 27 December, Henk explains all.

The Good News

For some time now I have been thinking about the future of our Live Bait Squadron Society, my archives and the website. Next year February I hope to celebrate my 76th birthday, and though, as far as I know, I am quite fit and healthy, at some moment in future the question will be raised: 'What now?'. The sad news about my friend Barry* made me realise that I could not sit and wait for that moment. So I travelled to Chatham last November to have a serious talk about our Society and what comes with it with the CEO of The Historic Dockyard Chatham, Mr Bill Ferris.

Bill and I are good friends since our adventure regarding the Centennial ceremonies 22nd September 2014. I have been back in Chatham several times since, and we always meet. But this question I did not raise until last November: is The Dockyard willing to host the LBS-site and archives?

My opinion: all about the Society should be in Chatham, here is its home.

So I offered Bill this: to take care of all I have about the three cruisers and host it: the website, my personal archive, the mailing list etc.

And yes, the Dockyard is willing to, with pleasure. And really a coincidence: the Dockyard is constructing now as a part of a renovation project a Guests Reading Room annex to, also new, fine professional Archives. The Dockyard archivist Mrs Amy Welsh and Bill showed me around and told me all about it.

The result of the meeting was that we agreed upon this:

- An official handover next year, probably in September 2020 (22nd?)
- Before that: a discussion about the terms of the handover and mutual expectations, to have a full professional agreement to avoid any misunderstanding in the future.
- Confirmation of the diary commitments for 2020.

In the meantime I keep on with this very worthwhile project, as will my daughter Froukje, our webmaster. With great pleasure too. I promise to keep you informed about the progress of the handover job.



*Barry Mack died on 24 March 2019. He was one of Henk's first collaborators in the project and the grandson of Gunner William James Shrubsall, who went down on the *Aboukir*.

Reproduced with the kind permission of Henk van der Linden and the Live Bait Squadron Society (<https://www.livebaitsqn-soc.info>).

Right: in Rochester's Guildhall Museum, Henk van der Linden and Elaine Gardner pause to admire the painting Live Bait, the 7th Cruiser Squadron, Chatham 1914. The painting by Kevin Clarkson was commissioned by the museum and unveiled on 6 September 2014 by then Mayor, Cllr. Barry Kemp as part of Medway's World War One commemorations.

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

Friends of Medway Archives

Talks and Events

Friday 13 March, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

Dean Samuel Hole and The Rose Society

A talk by the Very Reverend Dr Philip Hesketh, Dean of Rochester Cathedral.

A joint meeting with the City of Rochester Society

£1 admission charge and £1 for raffle tickets. Refreshments will be provided.

Friday 3 April, 7.00 for 7.30 pm,

FOMA AGM.

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. 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.

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

Pembroke: from Naval Barracks to University Campus

A visual history of Pembroke using photographs from the Local Studies Collections.

20 to 25 February.

Free exhibition (no booking required) in the MAC Foyer.

Women Power: celebrating group action, education and comradeship

How local organisations have shaped and enhanced the lives of local women and how they have helped to record life in Medway's towns and villages in the last 100 years.

2 March to 19 May

Free exhibition (no booking required) in the MAC Foyer.

quite basic with wooden cubicles for changing around the sides. I read that the derelict building has now been redeveloped into a student bar with a glass floor over the pool cavity. I would like to see that. I also learned to sail dinghies in the dockyard but these activities were discontinued when the IRA started bombing in England and security was tightened up.

My next foray into the now decommissioned site was as a student at the University of Greenwich which was one of the reasons I chose it. Most of the old red brick sailors' accommodation buildings were converted to labs, classrooms, offices etc but the building actually called Pembroke had been the officers' quarters and little changed with wood panelling, a sweeping staircase, huge chandeliers and the magnificent wardroom. The Drill Hall, nearly a quarter of a mile long, was very cleverly converted to a library without losing the essence of the building. The St George's Centre (originally the Barracks church) was magnificent and used for lectures but its size made it very cold and poor acoustically and we often couldn't hear what the lecturers were saying!

I have marked the calendar and will definitely visit the exhibition.

M. Smith.

The FOMA AGM

Friday 3 April, 7.00 for 7.30 pm,

St Nicholas Church Lower Hall, Strood.

TO SAVE PAPER, PLEASE BRING THE ENCLOSED AGM LEAFLET WITH YOU!

Membership Reminder

In this issue the AGM booklet includes your FOMA Membership Reminder.

Please pay this as soon as possible;

you can also bring this with you to the AGM to renew your membership.

You can also pay on the FOMA website <http://foma-lsc.org/membership.html>, by Standing Order and by post; cheques made payable to Friends of the Medway Archives
Please contact: FOMA Membership Secretary, Mrs. B. Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent.

Queries can also be sent by email to Betty Cole at: betty-cole@outlook.com

N.B. Betty saves stamps from all correspondence which are sent to raise funds for the Molly Wisdom Hospice.

The Astonishing Discovery at St. John's Church, Chatham – an Appeal for Further Information!

Elaine Gardner



Readers will recall (*The Clock Tower*, Issue 55, August 2019) the discovery of the memorial at St John's Church, Railway Street, Chatham (pictured) and the work to add its names to our online FOMA De Caville Index (<http://foma-lsc.org/www/index.html>). The FOMA Index now includes well over 4,000 entries, many cross-referenced, of Medway men who died in World War One.

Having gained access to St John's Church, FOMA member, Steve Cross - who is also a family history volunteer at MAC - and I began on the momentous task of finding out more. Of the 128 names listed both on the memorial and in the original pamphlet about it discovered at MAC, it transpired that 60 were already on the Index, as they had been included on other war memorials. Since work started, and with the help of additional FOMA and Kent Family History Society (KHFS) members volunteering at MAC, another 47 names have been identified. These

have now been added to the FOMA De Caville Index. However, there are still several whose identities have yet to be established. Some of those listed have common names, for which there are multiple entries on the *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (CWGC) register. Others have been narrowed down but a Medway connection has not been determined; some do not even appear on the CWGC lists for World War One. In addition, we have found some spelling errors. For example, *Keminoe* should have been *Kemmenoe*, *Grinstead* was *Grinsted* and *Harfleet* was *Harflett*; others had the wrong first name or initials, in some cases, their father's or a brother's. Most of the families we have identified lived in Chatham between the Maidstone Road and Fort Pitt in an area once known as Ordnance Place, close to St John's Church in Railway Street.

Can you help? Do any of the names below appear in your family tree? This would enable us to find a Medway connection and specifically tie individuals to a CWGC entry, and it would be wonderful to be able to give these men the recognition they deserve for the sacrifice they made. If you can help please contact me at Elaine Gardner, at emgardner@virginmedia.com

The unidentified men on the St John's Church memorial are:

Percy A Amos – a number of Kent refs for P or A Amos but no connection to Medway has been found;
George Barham – we have found a George Barham but no connection to Medway has been found;
John Binyon – ditto above;
Fred Blundell – no connection to Medway has been found;
William Bowyer – no connection to Medway has been found;
Thomas E Brooks - too many CWGC entries to narrow down;
Harold Brown - ditto above;
Edward Burley – found in Suffolk, but no connection to Medway found;
Henry Chapman – too many CWGC entries;
George D Collins – five possible G Collins CWGC entries but no connection to Medway has been found;
Joseph Davis – too many CWGC entries;
Harry V Faulkner – 20 plus entries on CWGC for H Faulkner;
Alfred Grigson – no connection to Medway has been found for the two entries on CWGC;
Frederick Jennings – 25 possible CWGC entries;
Herbert Martell – no CWGC entries for Herbert or H;
William Osgood – only two CWGC entries neither of which have Medway connections;
Ernest Albert Roberts and **Ernest Harold Roberts** – both from Medway who seem to have survived the war;
Ernest Samuel Roberts - from Tonbridge for whom no Medway connection has been found;
Ernest Saunders – found one New Zealand reference - living in Rochester;
Ramsay Shaw - too many CWGC entries;
Arthur Whittle – only one air force reference - from Maidstone.

An adapted version of this article will appear in the March issue of the Kent Family History Society journal.



FOMA webmaster, Alex Thomas (left) and Kevin Russell man the FOMA stand at the Medway Archives Centre Christmas Event. Also on display were the giant maps produced from our 2018 WWI project with Medway Council, Soldiers' Stories on our Streets.

Readers will recall that his generated some considerable interest, including from member Hazel Thorn, as follows:

25 November 2019.

Hello Amanda,

I would be grateful if this could be passed on to the relevant people please.

Reference George Hanson Sunderland/Chatham Kent.

My husband has a George Hanson born 1760 Sunderland, a shipwright, who had children born in Chatham, also a brother William, who could fit the bill. My husband has a DNA profile on both Ancestry and GEDmatch, if Murray is interested in following that path.

Many thanks,

Hazel Thorn.

We were delighted to be able to put Hazel and Murray in touch.

Exhibition: Pembroke

The Medway Archives Centre newsletter which was forwarded to members during the first week of December contained details of the exhibition at MAC from 20 to 25 February (see page 37). Entitled, Pembroke: from Naval Barracks to University Campus, the details were further circulated by Odette Buchanan and produced a fascinating response:

8 January 2020

Hi Odette,

I would be very interested in the HMS Pembroke exhibition. When dad was not away at sea, he always managed to get a draft to the dockyard. I don't think he was ever resident in the barracks before he got married and was able to buy a house locally thanks to a special low interest mortgage scheme for service personnel who had signed up for a long career (22 years after a 2yr artificer apprenticeship in dad's case).

However, I have had some experience of Pembroke myself. I have a vague recollection of a children's Christmas party sometime between 1962 and 65 and being very miserable because I was very shy and did not know anyone else there (story of my life!) I had a ghastly lilac flouncy party dress!!! I also have a vague memory of going with mum to see a big parade called "divisions" on the parade ground in front of the Drill Hall with RM band and being disappointed at not being able to spot my daddy! It must have been before we went to Singapore in 1960. I have a clearer memory of the swimming pool which was made available to families on Saturday afternoons and dad would take me and my brother. It was

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.

The Editor would like to thank readers for their kind Christmas wishes!

Rochester & Chatham Volunteers - Napoleonic Wars

14 November 2019

Dear Ms Thomas,

I am hoping you may be able to help me by pointing me in the right direction.

I am a historian currently researching the Irish in the British army in the Napoleonic wars. One such soldier was Captain Henry Bloss Lynch. In 1809 (and perhaps earlier he was involved in training the Rochester & Chatham Volunteers.

I have been unable to find any account of this volunteer regiment (I am aware of the Muster books in the National Archives) and wonder whether you are able to assist me? As editor of 'The Clock Tower' I thought you might be in a position to give me some advice.

My apologies for troubling you. I look forward to your reply.

Kind regards,

Marcus de la Poer Beresford

Please contact The Editor, Amanda Thomas (as above) if you have any information.

George Hanson

In October 2019, new member Murray Wright from Auckland, New Zealand, contacted us about his ancestor, George Hanson:

It seems our Sunderland ancestors may have originated from Strood. George Hanson married Strood girl Anne Husk in 1746. They had children in Strood so he may have been a Medway freeman before his death in 1765. I believe his son George apprenticed at the Dockyard then moved to Monkwearmouth where he was a shipwright. He may have returned to Chatham with his son George circa 1808 in response for shipwrights to help defend England against Napoleon. After the latter's defeat George from Strood died in Rochester 1816. Any assistance would be appreciated.

The Medway Archives Centre Christmas Event

Amanda Thomas



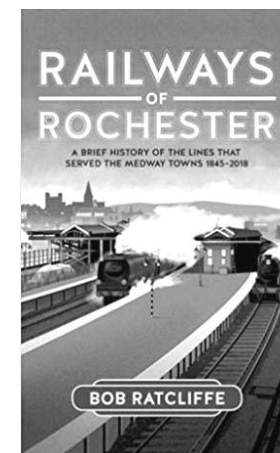
MAC's annual Christmas event on December 4 was particularly well attended this year with many new faces attending the morning's society fair and book sale, and then the afternoon talk. Medway heritage was well represented in the main hall with groups including Chatham Historical Society, the City of Rochester Society, the Kent Family History Society, the Friends of Broomhill, the Friends of Chatham Traction, Halling Historical Society, Medway Council Heritage Services, Medway Libraries, the Royal Engineers Museum, Snodland Historical Society, Strood Fellowship, and – of course – FOMA!

In the foyer the MAC exhibition, *Watts Charity in Medway: its Properties and Estates*, was still on display and here, as in the adjacent reading room, the second hand book sale was an enticing distraction. The book sale is always a great place to pick up bargains and out of print books and this year was no exception with many surplus titles from the late Pat Salter's collection. I was thrilled to be able to purchase some of these myself - I will use and take care of them just as Pat wanted.

The morning event is also a great opportunity for everyone in the local heritage community to exchange information, to boost membership of societies, and to sell recently published books and pamphlets. The City of Rochester Society (CoRS) was doing a roaring trade in the late Bob Ratcliffe's wonderful book, *Railways of Rochester – a brief history of the lines that served the Medway Towns 1845-2018*.

Priced £20 and also available from the City of Rochester Society's website,¹ the work is a must-have for anyone interested in the railways and the Medway Towns:

'This is a tale of intrigue and confrontation between powerful entrepreneurs and weak-willed committees. Of noble visions and engineering innovation. Of missed opportunities, extraordinary achievements and government interference. It is the story of the railways of Rochester, told by Bob Ratcliffe, who knew more about them than almost anyone else. As Bob said: "If all this had taken place in America, crossing the Rockies and the Rio Grande rather than Strood Hill and the Medway, it would have made an epic movie. But we take it for granted – unless our train is late..."²





MAC's Helen Worthy serves refreshments.

In the main hall coffee, tea, mince pies and biscuits were served by volunteers and MAC staff, and in the break between the morning and afternoon sessions, several members of the FOMA Committee strolled down the hill to The Jerk Café in Strood High Street. This appears to have become an annual event and it is certainly a tradition which we have all started looking forward to!

The afternoon session began with an introduction by Norma Crowe. The main hall was absolutely packed with people who had travelled far and wide to hear Mary Smith's talk, *A Schoolgirl's War: the story of a Kent School during World War Two*. One of those who had journeyed some considerable distance to attend the Christmas event was Frances Dinn (pictured) who was visiting England from America to research her Couchman family ancestors. It was really quite an extraordinary thought to realise that so many of the other people at the talk that afternoon – including myself – were related to Frances in some way or other!

Mary Smith's illustrated talk was a fascinating account of life at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls (MGGS) during World War Two. Mary was Headteacher at Maidstone from 2006 to 2014, and it was the discovery of a forgotten wartime scrapbook illustrated by then art teacher Helen Keen which revealed the extraordinary story of the school from 1939 to 1946. The paintings and drawings by Keen record with great charm everyday details so easily forgotten, 'from the gas masks, lamps and stirrup pumps of wartime school life to the scribbled lines of vapour trails across the sky above ... the artwork captures moments in time – a teacher bending to pick something up while rushing to take cover, a child holding on to her hat as she races downhill on her bike in an air-raid, an older girl lifting her book up to read in the dim light of the underground shelter.'⁵



Frances Dinn: everyone's American cousin!

Nellie Arthrell (born 1892): Nellie was married to Henry James Howard, who was brother to Fred, and lived in Strood all of their married life. They owned their own house firstly at 39 Brompton Lane, Strood, then at Weston Road, Strood. Henry, or Harry as he was known, could not join up to serve his country as he was in a reserved occupation. Both Nellie and Harry were very heavily involved with the Gospel mission church in Strood and then the Methodist church also in Strood. Nellie and Harry had three children.

William James Arthrell (born 1894): William was a director of his father's haulage business in Strood. A member and secretary of the local Conservative Association. He was married to Dorothy Dorrell from the Sittingbourne area. Like his elder sister Nellie, William and Dolly were both involved with the Gospel Mission church. William and Dolly had twin boy and girl and another girl.

Harry Arthrell (born 1896): Harry was born in Strood in 1895 and died at Gore Green Farm, Higham aged 19 years old.

Albert Edward Arthrell (born 1897): Like his brother William, Albert was a director of his father's company. He designed and had built his bungalow in Cliffe Road Strood where he and his wife Florence (or Flo) lived all their lives. They were married at the Methodist church, Cliffe Road, Strood. Albert served with the Home Guard during World War Two; the couple had one son.

May Arthrell (born 1899): At the time of her birth, May lived in Strood High Street, where her father was a restaurant proprietor; she died in 1917 aged 18 years old.

Florence Arthrell (born 1900): Florence, or Flo, as she was known, married into the Wicker family who were local to Strood. She was married to Ewart at the Methodist Church in Strood and they had had two children; she died in 1997.

Elsie Arthrell (born 1901): Elsie was married to Wilfred Wicker, the brother of Ewart. Wilfred ran his own Haulage company called W. W. Wicker Ltd. in Strood. For many years Elsie and Wilf ran the Cliffe Mission Church. Elsie was very strict and would not watch television on a Sunday and even had it covered over. Elsie and Wilf had two children.

Charles Sydney Arthrell (born 1904): Charles was married twice his first wife Florence died after eight years of marriage. Three years later Charlie married for a second time to Ethel Monger from Maidstone. Ethel died in 2001 aged 103 years old. Charlie and Ethel had three children. Charlie was a character. Once retired, he serviced and repaired cars from his garage at home in Cuxton. If there was someone he knew was getting married he would turn up in his oldest, dirtiest, oiliest clothes to wish the happy couple good luck. He also sold groceries from one of his garages and was a director of his father's haulage company until it was nationalised in 1948.

George Arthrell (born 1906): George was the youngest of the ten children. He, like all his brothers, served with the Home Guard during the Second World War. George was also a director of the family haulage business and when this was nationalised George worked for British Road Services, a national haulage company, and then for Chatham Council. He was married to Grace from East London and they had one daughter.

What a phone call can lead to

Ian Smith

Ian was born in Chatham in the early 1950s and has lived all his life in the Medway Towns. He fell into family history accidentally when a relative died and he was asked to sort the estate out; he now researches other people's family trees. Ian is a member of the Kent Family History Society and Chairman of the local Medway branch.



Ian has previously written about his Arthrell ancestors in The Clock Tower, Issue 44, November 2016, but has never revealed how the quest first started. Part 1 of this article was published in Issue 52 of The Clock Tower, November 2018.

To refresh readers' memories, these were the key points of the earlier part:

About ten days before Christmas one year towards the start of this century the phone rang at about 6.30 pm one evening asking to speak to me. I was asked if my name was Ian Smith, was my mother Enid Smith née Howard. Was her mother Nellie Howard née Arthrell and was my great grandfather Henry James Arthrell, known as Jim? My answer to all these questions - except the last one about the name Jim - was yes. The next comment made me at a loss for words: "We believe that someone in your family has died and you could be in line for an inheritance."

As the administrator for the estate of his deceased Arthrell relative (his great uncle's son), Ian became more and more interested in the background of the Arthrell Family and tried to find out more about these well-known Strood residents.

Part 2: The Arthrell family

My great grandfather, Henry James Arthrell started life with his parents in Temple Street, Strood after being born in the Wrotham area on 19 July 1867. In about 1875 he was working as a chemist's messenger, but by the time of his death in 1948, Henry was chairman of his own Haulage Company. Henry and his wife Emma Kent, who was born in the Wouldham area of Kent on 6 June 1869 and died in 1940 in Halling, had ten children, five boys and five girls; one of each died before their 21st birthday. Two of the sisters married two brothers (Howard) and the other two sisters married two other brothers (Wickers).

The children of Emma and Henry Arthrell are as follows:

Emma Arthrell (born 1891): Emma was known in the family as Emmie and was married to Arthur Frederick Howard who in 1911 was a Moulder in HM Dockyard, Chatham. In the early 1920s he was a founder member of the St Andrews Lodge of Freemasonry. Fred, as he was known in the family, purchased his father in law's greengrocery business in Rochester High Street. He later became a minister in the free church spending the bulk of his ministry in the Deal area. Although they did not have any children of their own, they did adopt a brother and sister.



Mary Smith relates the story of MGGS during WWII.

In 1938 MGGS celebrated its Golden Jubilee and there was 'eager anticipation'⁴ amongst staff and girls about the relocation to a new purpose-built school in Buckland Road. The move took place at the end of the summer term of that same year and the school still occupies the same site today. Just a year later on 3 September 1939, world events brought all hopes for a bright future to an abrupt end. A further 240 girls and their teachers from King's Warren School in Plumstead were evacuated to Maidstone and were expected to share the new facilities. In addition, the much anticipated space and comfort of the new school building was further compromised by the realisation it had become too dangerous to remain above ground during air raids. The first underground shelter was built at the front of the school but this was soon supplemented by a series of concrete bunkers to the rear, 'tunnels ... set at right-angles in a zigzag pattern. They were arranged like this to prevent a blast from travelling through the complex. ... The shelter at the back of the school had six zigzagged tunnels and three doors for entrance and exit, each down a set of concrete steps. There were also two escape hatches.'⁵

The tunnels were to be the classrooms for the two wartime schools. All six had benches along the walls to accommodate a class of 30, and at intervals were three smaller rooms, one for a very basic toilet and the other two for storage, including places for shovels and pickaxes. Were a bomb to drop nearby, these were the essential tools required to dig out the occupants of any caved-in or collapsed tunnel. The tunnels had been forgotten until quite recently and Mary Smith delighted us with images of present and returning schoolgirls returning to them in 2016 during a 75-year reunion. The discovery of the tunnels was like the opening of a time capsule: many of the original benches still remained and chalk marks were still visible on some of the walls which had been used as blackboards.

This was a most fascinating talk, made even better by Mary Smith's wonderful book, *A Schoolgirl's War* (pictured below) which gives the full story, including Helen Keen's illustrations and photographs from WWII right up to the present day. It costs £10 (plus postage and packing), with profits going towards various school projects. It is available from the MGGS website:

<https://www.mggs.org/latest-news/its-here-a-schoolgirls-war-by-mary-smith-the-story-of-a-kent-school-during-world-war-two>



Mary Smith signs a book for Alex Thomas. Also in the queue – which stretched beyond the edge of the photograph – is (second left) Brenda Paternoster.

Notes

1. Bob Ratcliffe's book, *Railways of Rochester – a brief history of the lines that served the Medway Towns 1845-2018*, costs £20 and is available from the City of Rochester Society's website,

www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/shop/railways-of-rochester-a-brief-history-of-the-lines-that-served-the-medway-towns-1845-2018/

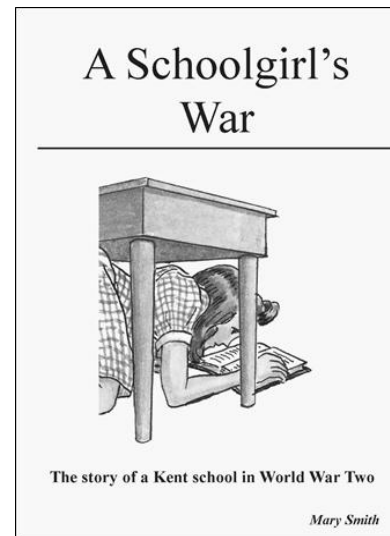
See page 8 for Rob Flood's account of the dedication bench to Bob Ratcliffe.

2. From the City of Rochester Society's website, www.city-of-rochester.org.uk

3. *A Schoolgirl's War*, p. 1.

4. Idem, p. 2.

5. Idem, p. 9.



Development of the recreation ground started in the 1920s with some of the site being remodelled to include four public tennis courts and two bowling greens on the New Road frontage. Leased by Cranbourne Bowling Club, a single storey clubhouse is thought to have been constructed in about 1925. At the southern end, now with a vehicular access from City Way, was a large sports field, where football matches were played in the past. This area is now used for fun fairs, circuses and other events. Just above the tennis courts, where there is now a children's play area, a shelter once stood. It is thought a reservoir may have been constructed on the terrace where the children's playground is now situated. During World War Two, air raid shelters were dug into the chalk for the use of St. Bartholomew's Hospital on the opposite side of New Road. The recreation ground was restored in 1948 after its war-time use and today well maintained flower beds front New Road, with others near the entrance with City Way and Star Hill; the steep slope on the Fort Pitt boundary is also a popular venue for sledging.

In a letter from Miss Lucy Jackson to the Estates and General Purposes Committee, dated 14 January 1924, John's surviving sister approved their suggestion for the New Road Recreation Ground to be renamed Jackson's Recreation Ground in memory of her late brother's generous gift to the city. On the 24 October 1928 a granite tablet was erected inside the entrance at the bottom of City Way (then Pattens Lane) and the top of Star Hill with the following inscription:

CITY OF ROCHESTER: THIS RECREATION GROUND WAS PRESENTED TO THE CITY OF ROCHESTER 1914 BY COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWARD JACKSON JP MAYOR OF THIS CITY 1912-1914.

It is a much liked and used facility given to the citizens of Rochester by a generous and greatly respected man. Councillor John Howard Jackson gave a lot for the wellbeing of Rochester and Jackson's Recreation Ground is a fitting and lasting tribute to him.

Sources and Acknowledgements

The Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham News, March 1914 and November 1923.

The Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Medway.

Medway Council, Bereavement Services.

The staff of Medway Archives Centre for their invaluable help.

What and Why?

Jackson's Recreation Ground, Rochester.

Kevin Russell

Kevin Russell is a member of the FOMA committee and The City of Rochester Society. In the summer months Kevin is a volunteer guide in Restoration House, Rochester. He is interested in local history and trams and trolleybus systems of the UK, both old and new.



Part Two

At the conclusion of his speech at the opening ceremony of the recreation ground, the Mayor Cllr. Jackson let it be known that he wished the ground to be called Kennette Park. Was this a veiled reference to the then Town Clerk, Apsley Kennette, to whom the Mayor had paid money for the purchase of the fields, and whom he had also sworn to secrecy as to his identity?

John Howard Jackson was born in Sherfield Upon Lodden, near Basingstoke, Hampshire in 1847. He was the fourth son of Henry and Emma, née Pottinger, from Reading; together they had ten children: six boys and four girls.

John later married Elizabeth Kate who also came from Reading. By 1871 he had become a grocer's assistant in Week Street, Maidstone, where he obviously prospered, as by 1881 both he and his wife had set up their own grocer's business. This was at 42 (the old number), High Street, Rochester where they lived over the shop and employed two assistants. Tragedy struck on August 20. 1892 when Elizabeth died, and although he kept the High Street business on, John subsequently moved to 9, King Edward Road, Rochester. The couple had no children.

The renumbering of Rochester High Street, the widening of Pump Lane, and the renaming of the latter to Northgate meant John's grocer's business became numbers 59 to 61 and on the corner of High Street and Northgate. At the time of writing the site is occupied by Costa Coffee.

Cllr. Jackson was first elected to Rochester Council Troy Town ward in 1907 as a Liberal and was Mayor from 1912 to 1913 and 1913 to 1914. He was a staunch Free Churchman, attending The Vines Congregational Church in Maidstone Road, now Crow Lane, and taught at the Branch Sunday School at Wainscott. He had a number of other local business interests and was also a Justice of the Peace.

He died aged 76 on November 9 1923 following a very short illness and didn't live to see the improvements to the recreation ground he had so magnanimously gifted to the city. He is buried in St. Nicholas Churchyard, now part of St. Margaret's Churchyard, Maidstone Road, Rochester, along with his wife and his sister Emma, who died on 23 March 1923. Probate was granted to his surviving sister Lucy Hannah who died in 1934 and is buried close by.

The Newcombs and the Nelson Connection

John Sykes

History has always been an interest for John Sykes. This was his chosen subject for a degree at St Andrews University before he went on to qualify in town planning. A career in local government followed, finishing up as Chief Planning Officer for West Oxfordshire District Council. He is now enjoying a long retirement with opportunities for extensive travel both at home and abroad. Our thanks to Stephen Dixon for introducing John Sykes.



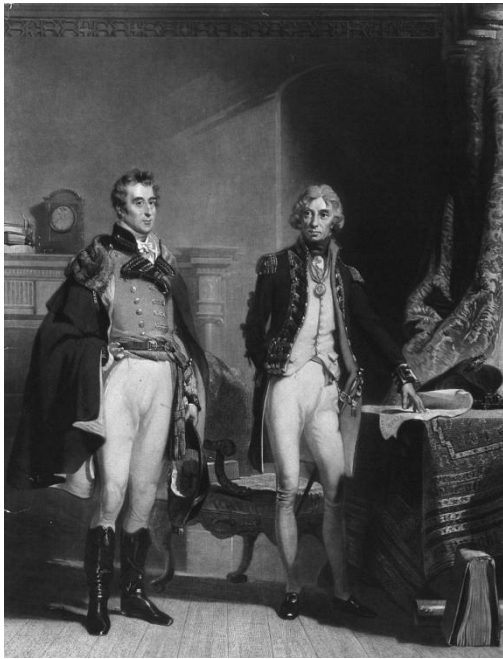
Part 1

Introduction

A chance remark can sometimes have surprising results. And so it proved when my brother-in-law remarried and his wife - Diana Newcomb by birth - told me her family might have had some connection with Nelson and Lady Hamilton. Growing up, as we both had, in a residential North London suburb, it did not seem very credible. But after much research I discovered that my new relative was a direct descendant of one Sarah Reynolds, a first cousin of Lady Hamilton. Not only that, but Sarah's early life proved to be closely intertwined with Emma Hamilton's celebrated liaison with Horatio Nelson. Later on, Sarah married Frederick Simon Newcomb, who was a purser in the Royal Navy and then an official at Chatham Dockyard. Two of their sons founded a firm of outfitters in Chatham which produced shirts and uniforms for the great and good, including Edward VII and Charles Dickens, and still trades today as a dress hire business in Chatham High Street.

We begin the story with Emma Hamilton herself. Her origins were humble. She began life as Emy Lyon, the daughter of a blacksmith, at Denhall on the windy Wirral peninsular. Her father died when she was two months old and her mother then took her to live with her grandparents, the Kidds, at Hawarden just over the border in Wales. The Kidds had numerous children besides Emma's mother and these relatives and their offspring figure frequently in Emma's later life. Ann Kidd, one of the daughters, married a Richard Reynolds and it is their daughter Sarah who married Frederick Simon Newcomb.

The evidence suggests that the Newcombs may also have originated from Hawarden and that they were known to Emma Hamilton's family before they all moved south. A letter written to Lady Hamilton from Hawarden in 1807 refers to a Mrs Newcomb sending for a bed to accommodate one of her ladyship's hard-up relatives. In 1809 Ann Bolton, sister-in-law to Nelson's sister Susannah, writes to Lady Hamilton and hopes that her mother found Mrs Newcomb well on a recent visit to Hawarden. Although Frederick Simon's parents were living in London in 1788 when he was baptised at St Martin-in-the-Fields it could well be they moved there from Hawarden and the other members of the family known to Lady Hamilton remained behind.



The Duke of Wellington and Lord Nelson standing in a room by a table; Nelson pointing at a map of Southern Europe. Mezzotint by S.W. Reynolds after J.P. Knight, ca. 1820. Wellcome Collection. CC BY.

Upstairs with Lady Hamilton

Lady Hamilton's meteoric rise from nothing to a place in society is well-recorded. She came to London at an early age, with a name change to Emma Hart, and soon acquired numerous admirers. She received the 'protection' first of Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh of Uppark in Sussex and then Charles Greville, son of the Earl of Warwick. When Greville had money problems he resolved them by doing a deal with his uncle Sir William Hamilton who was ambassador to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in Naples. Sir William made Greville his heir and stood surety for any loan, and in return Emma was invited to

stay with the ambassador in Naples. She soon became one of the court circle and a confidante of the queen, and in 1791 she married the widowed Sir William. Not long after she first met Nelson while he was serving with the Mediterranean fleet but it was not until after his victory at the Battle of the Nile in 1798 that their liaison began.

Emma Hamilton in an attitude towards a mimosa plant, causing it to demonstrate sensibility. Stipple engraving by R. Earlom, 1789, after G. Romney. Wellcome Collection. CC BY



In 1800 Nelson returned home with the Hamiltons in a journey across Europe where he was feted as the hero of the hour. The only disconcerting incident was to leave the hotel in Salzburg illuminated in his honour and to find that he had been presented with a bill for the lights. In the following year he won the Battle of Copenhagen against the Danes, forcing them out of a somewhat hostile armed neutrality. After a month's leave he was back again in charge of the Channel Fleet, deterring Bonaparte from carrying out his plans for an invasion.

New Baker Book!



Herbert Baker and his Family

Herbert Baker and his Family is a compilation of family photos and mini-biographies of 21 people: Herbert's nine brothers, one sister, his wife Florence Edmeades and four children, his parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. There are many glimpses of life in North Kent from the 17th to the 20th century. Price £21 (incl. p&p) to any UK address. Please contact Michael Baker, 26, Wellington Park, Bristol, BS8 2UT; thebakers@waitrose.com

Jackson's Recreation Ground, Rochester

Read the second part of Kevin Russell's story overleaf.



Postcard photograph entitled "Fort Pitt Gardens, Rochester"; Medway Archives Centre, ref. DE402/10/15(U); c.1920. The photograph has been identified as an entrance to Jackson's Recreation Ground.

In one of his notebooks Alfred recorded the African recruits, each named with his trade, where he came from, the date and period signed on, usually 5 years, and whether he had passed a medical. Each received an advance of £1 and the “bringer”, i.e. chief or trader who brought the man to Alfred, was recorded and paid a 5/- fee. There were 39 recruited between July 7 and August 4, of whom 10 were rejected on medical grounds. There was also an interpreter on his books paid 15/- on July 27.³ But recruiting was a *delicate business as one is not allowed to kidnap slaves, yet we do not recognise slavery. All Hausas here are slaves, kept in chains now they tell us, as it has leaked out that I am enlisting Hausas as soldiers. Don't tell anyone about this for goodness sake.*

Then he got down to business: *Just had my weekly visit from the King. He was accompanied by a staff of 50 retainers, including his chiefs of warboys and the thunder-and-lightning maker. My retinue was all under my hat and seated on an inverted box. I dashed him a sovereign and a bottle of whiskey – rather excessive as I have tipped a king nine-pence – but I want to keep in with him as I am afraid I have been bagging some of his slaves. Not that £1 and a bottle represent the value of a slave as even a young girl the cheapest is worth a fiver. They are beginning to find out something about money, at times a three-penny piece is worth 5 shillings and a half-crown nothing.*⁴

He was also buying sheep as provisions for the troops still at Jebba, but: *three were killed during the night. Local hunters said 3 lions. I thought one leopard but tracks obliterated by carriers. Had a board on them of which I was president – meaning he chaired an investigation – and weight of evidence made it necessary to find it was the work of lions. Built a machan⁵ and sat up from 9 to 5 am over the sheep, nothing came. The next night: sat up till 12, relieved by Swabey who left at 4.30, between then and 5 am sheep killed. After that he did have some fever and had to neglect the problem. Worse: had to shoot my mare, never really recovered from the attack of bees on the march, but died with symptoms of tsetse, a wasting sickness and hind legs much swollen. Up to the last fed well. Cost £10 originally.*

There is a note of realism in a letter apparently to Herbert at this time: *everyone takes enormous quantities of quinine. I think I take less than anybody. A lot of people start without taking it, but they very soon come to it after a couple of doses of fever.*

*I am fitter than when I left England, but I have just had a couple of touches that make me believe in it. They come on for no apparent reason; that is the worst of it.*⁶

Notes

1. AWB 1898 06 21 to Bee and 06 23, both from Kishi. The outpost sketch from D11 diary, June 21st.
2. AWB 1898 07 08 to his mother from Kishi.
3. Notebook D2, where he also laid out an order of march, copied from a document in PRO CO/445/2, in single file for 300 men plus their officers, guns, carriers, medical staff.
4. AWB 1898 07 19. This letter adds I am earning £500 a year very cheaply.
5. Machan – a hunting blind. This from his diary for July 22nd.
6. 2L12 980716 AWB, probably written to Herbert who passed it to Ned. Date not given, but estimated by comparing other letters with similar notepaper.

Nelson took command of the fleet at Sheerness and it's reputed he found time to use Frederick Newcomb's house at nearby Queenborough as a rendezvous with Lady Hamilton. She was on her way to do some sea-bathing at Margate but as the fear of invasion meant Nelson had to move to sea with the utmost speed it's unlikely there was time for much more than an overnight stay. The house associated with this liaison is an attractive Queen Anne residence next to the church.

Upstairs and Downstairs with Lady Hamilton's Family

Although Emma Hamilton rose in society she did not spurn her family because of its humble origins. Many of them in fact did equally well in gaining an education and acquiring a respected position in her circle. Her mother also went through a name change to a grandly sounding Mrs Cadogan and remained with her until she died, looking after many of her business affairs and playing a discreet part in her many liaisons. Mrs Cadogan's sister Sarah married a Michael Connor and their five daughters formed at one time or another part of the Nelson / Hamilton entourage set up at the new home Nelson acquired at Merton Place in 1801. Sir William wasn't too keen on the way they ingratiated themselves but Nelson, who came of simple country stock himself, had no such qualms.

‘Sir William,’ Nelson wrote, ‘can have no objection to your taking your relation to the farm (i.e. Merton Place); the pride of the Hamiltons surely cannot be hurt by settling down any of your relations. You have surely as much right for your relations to come into your house as his could have.’

Three of the Connor daughters became governesses to little Horatia, Nelson's daughter by Lady Hamilton, and Sarah Connor in particular took an active part in managing Lady Hamilton's affairs. She was a lively and acute observer and joined in the social round at Merton Place. Sarah was at table with Lady Hamilton, Mrs Cadogan and some of Nelson's relatives when Nelson returned for his last stay at Merton before the Battle of Trafalgar. One delightful cameo shows her playing cards with her companions there.

Sarah Reynolds, on the other hand, seems a quieter and altogether more serious young lady. She was taken on as housekeeper at Merton Place and according to one biography was Lady Hamilton's favourite amongst her relatives. There are few references to her role in the household. Mrs Cadogan writes to Emma about the bills being run up while Nelson was at sea (July 1805) and ends her letter, ‘Sarah Reynolds thanks you for your goodness to invite her to Sadler's Wells.’ This evening out doubtless added to the expense.

The financial burden of running Merton Place grew worse after Nelson's death at Trafalgar in October 1805. Lady Hamilton never got the government pension that Nelson considered due to her in the event of his death and Mrs Cadogan continued to press her to settle the unpaid bills. On Emma's birthday in 1806 her mother writes from Merton:

‘I pray God send you many happy returns of the day. I have sent you a gown of Sarah Reynolds making. If I had ten thousand pounds to send you this day I should have been very happy. ... I am all over with bricks and dust and stinking paint, being nobody but our own family. On Saturday you shall have a ‘menestra verde’ (one of Emma's favourite dishes) and one thing roast. My dear Emma, I owe Mariann 4 months' wages which is two guineas. I had it not to give her, and she wants shoes and stockings. If you can give Sarah Connor thirty shillings to pay her washer-woman, as she is indebted to her for three months washing. I have got her washing down here. God bless you, my ever dear Emma.’



The death of Lord Nelson on the quarter deck aboard HMS Victory at the battle of Trafalgar. Coloured engraving by J. Heath, 1811, after B. West. Wellcome Collection. CC BY.

Sarah Reynolds added a postscript:

'I wish you many happy returns of the day. I should have been happy had it been in my power to have made you a small present on this day, but not having anything but what my dear aunt and you have been so good as to give me. ... With gratitude and thanks for what you have done for me and my dear father and family. God bless you, dear Lady Hamilton.'

Sarah Reynolds - the future Mrs Newcomb - was right to be grateful. Emma Hamilton was generous and open-hearted and in earlier years when her husband was alive she made frequent hand-outs to her hard-up relatives. She sent £20 to Sarah's father, Richard Reynolds, because his lazy uncle didn't pay for his board and lodging and spent all his time sunbathing. The £20 'must be the last,' said Emma 'for if she supplied the wants of all her needy relatives, it would absorb all Sir William's income. A cousin was told to send the bill for replacing his carpenter's tools which amounted to £70. Another relative was ashamed to turn up in her presence because his hat and coat were frayed and Emma immediately gave him money for new clothes, just as she did also for Sarah Reynold's father.

Many of the family took advantage of Emma's generosity and in the end she turned against those who had battered on her. In a will made in 1808 she said that all the Connors had 'turned out bad', except for Sarah and Cecilia, and she had nothing to leave any of them. A letter sent to Emma the previous year from the doctor's wife at Hawarden (the one that mentions a Mrs Newcomb as living there) sums it all up:

'I am truly sorry you have so much trouble with your relations, and the ungrateful return your care and generosity meets with is, indeed, enough to turn your heart against them. However, ungrateful as they are, your own generous heart cannot see them in want and it is a pity that your great generosity towards them should be so ill-used.'

Tragically, things went from bad to worse for poor Lady Hamilton. The relatives disappeared from the scene and even though she sold Merton Place she could still not make ends meet and was eventually arrested for debt. After being forced to lodge close to the confines of the debtors' prison she fled to France with the teenage Horatia and died a lonely and sick woman in a garret in Calais in 1815.

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 14: Kishi

Reaching Kishi on June 19th he found it charming. There was a West Indian regiment and some Lagos constabulary. Later when some of them left, Alfred found himself in command of the station.

The French have a post 200 yards away from us and we sit watching one another. We are much the strongest and hold the town though they came here first.

He had time now to sit and write, describing to his sister Bee, a dog lover, the adventures of his dog Lucifer who despite being gun-shy: *has done great swimming feats, three times swum the Niger and escaped the crocodiles. Once we started at daybreak up a river in canoes leaving Lucifer in camp. After half a mile we saw him following in mid stream, so we had to take him in. After crossing two rivers and miles of forest, at the first shot he bolts. I thought I was rid of him for good then, but on nearing camp, canoeing down the big river, who should we see but Lucifer swimming in mid stream to meet us.*¹



The French outpost seen across a stream at Kishi.

Lucifer did not survive for long. Suffering from fever and a swollen head he died on June 30th. Alfred himself stayed fit, welcoming the cooler weather with regular storms and everything green and apparently as healthy as Cobham but somehow horses, dogs and people get sick. *I am getting a few recruits. We are teaching them to use a silver currency. They like silver 3^d pieces for ornaments, but won't take half-crowns at all. However it is simpler than the barter system on the river. There was a tour up the Benue River in prospect. "Hope you are well as this leaves me", as Tommy says.*²

Remarkably a programme exists via the Internet for a return visit there he made on 22 Apr 1917 commemorating the 50th anniversary of the choir's foundation: his anthem *Teach me O Lord* and hymn tune *Protection* were sung. James died on 24 July 1918 at his home, 42 Purses Place, Yonkers, New York, and he was interred at the Mount Hope cemetery.

James's elder brother was Stephen Austen Pearce, deriving the Austen part of his name from his mother Elizabeth Smallfield Austen. He was born in Brompton on 7 November 1836, being admitted as a chorister at the cathedral in November 1848 and serving until the summer of 1851. This appointment may have been prompted by the fact that his younger brother James, had already been admitted as a probationer chorister six months earlier. Masters 'Pearce' (probably Stephen) and (Philip) 'Armes' acquitted themselves extremely well, and were encored in [Stephen] Glover's pleasing duet *What are the wild waves saying* at the Bull Hotel, Rochester, in June 1850. In those days it was customary for the Dean and Chapter to award departing choristers a sum aimed at setting them up with apprenticeships and Stephen duly received £5 'for good conduct' and 'being bound apprentice'. Very often it is difficult to ascertain what kind of work was planned, but Stephen must have been articulated to the Cathedral organist John Larkin Hopkins, for on 17 May 1854 the *Kentish Independent* reported that he had been appointed organist of Trinity Church, Maidstone. Advertisements show him as a music teacher in Church Street, Maidstone, between 1857 and 1859. On 16 June 1859 he was awarded a B. Mus. degree at Oxford – residence was not then compulsory – for a setting of *Exaltabo te Deus* for eight-part chorus and orchestra.

For the next few years he divided his time between teaching and playing in London and Essex, serving successively as organist of St. John's, Oxford Square, St. Saviour's, Paddington and St. Paul's, Onslow Square, London. On 8 July 1864 he was awarded a D.Mus. degree at Oxford for 'A dramatic oratorio on the 'Celestial Visions' for eight-part chorus, orchestra and organ obbligato, divided into three parts or visions'. *The Times* described it as having 'an unusually elaborate character' and a lengthy description was published in the *Essex Herald* of 19 July 1864. Interestingly, his choirboy companion Philip Armes had received his own D.Mus at Oxford a week earlier. Stephen gave up his Essex teaching in 1867 to teach at schools in West London; his concert overture in E minor was performed at a Crystal Palace concert in April 1868.

Like his brother before him, he evidently decided to make his home in America and in 1872 he succeeded James as organist at St Mark's, Philadelphia. Reference books show that a remarkable succession of others posts followed: St. Andrew's, New York; St. George's, New York; St. Patrick's (R.C.) Cathedral, New York City; St. Stephen's (R.C.), New York; the Fifth Avenue Collegiate Church, New York, 1879-85; the First Presbyterian Church, Jersey City, New Jersey. He taught vocal music at Columbia College, New York, and was a lecturer at the Peabody Institute and the John Hopkins University, both in Baltimore, professor at the General Theological Seminary, New York, and of harmony and composition at the New York College of Music. He died on 8 April 1900 at 41 West Thirty-Fourth Street, New York.

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 - Hilary Blandford, Steve Cross, and Pauline Weeds.



Chatham Dockyard taken on 18 March 1970 from nearby flats and published in the Evening Post; Medway Archives Centre, ref: CHA/AN/DYD/AV/7.

Women's Work

This article in the series has been compiled to coincide with International Women's Day on 8 March 2020, and the exhibition and special event day at MAC – Women Power. See page 38 for further details.

Letter No.33

I was one of many first wowman [sic] workers. I was in the submarine [sic] shop, we had a machine tool fitter who lookd after our machines, also a forewoman, to see we did not gossip too much, now we knew when a raid was coming, our lights dimd, but not our sprits [sic], no shelters, we just went to our dining room & carried on working after raids. I remember boys & girls taking their fathers hot dinner after school, running most of the way. Sometimes we would dash up to Brompton to shops for a pot of jam or sugar, mostly unlucky, but mingled with the guns [page 2] we sung like the song of to day "Those were the days my friend we thought they'd never end."

Letter No. 34

Docky Maties Hard Labour

It is with happy & amusing memories that I think of 1942, when I & many local women worked for Chatham Dockyard. We were employed as bricklayer's labourers, chippy's mates, & general labourers. We were employed to erect Nissen huts at a naval camp at Priestfields, Borstal. During this time I married & the necessary details were needed for the marriage certificate. You can imagine the amusement [page 2] it gives to many who've needed to examine the certificate since then, for it states, WOMAN LABOURER, BORSTAL.

I must admit the naval site adjoined the Borstal Prison, & the prisoners did assist in removing the huge tree roots to clear the site, but I was definitely not an inmate.

*Colour loft 1971.
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Chatham Dockyard
Historical Society
Collection.*



Do you know who the Dockyard women in the photograph are? Please contact the Editor, Amanda Thomas (amanda@ajthomas.com) if you do!

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.



Rochester Cathedral Choristers III The Pearce Brothers

This is the tale of two brothers, the sons of Stephen and Elizabeth Pearce. Stephen was a hairdresser at 21 High Street, Gillingham, later becoming a postmaster. Both boys were appointed as choristers at Rochester Cathedral.

James Pearce was born in 1841, becoming a probationer chorister at the cathedral in 1848 and replacing Thomas Whiffen [III] in 1850 (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 55, August 2019). He retired in November 1854, receiving a £5 gratuity from the Dean and Chapter. Although younger than his brother Stephen he seems to have made several moves ahead of him in the course of his life. Both boys seem to have been articled to John Larkin Hopkins and James replaced his brother as organist at Trinity Church, Maidstone, in 1859. But he was not there long, because on 9 June 1860 the *Kentish Mercury* reported that he had resigned 'having been appointed organist to the Duke of Northumberland. He has received a high testimonial of character from the incumbent and churchwardens on leaving.' A month later he was in Alnwick: 'Mr James Pearce, of New College, Oxford, and Organist of St. Michael's church, Alnwick, has recently had the degree of Bachelor of Music conferred on him, having previously written a grand sacred cantata in eight part chorus, with full orchestral accompaniment and organ obbligato, as an exercise for the same, which received the Professor's high approval.'

He soon moved on again: *Alnwick Mercury*, 1 Jan 1862: 'Mr. James Pearce, Mus. Bac., late organist of St. Michael's Church, Alnwick, has been appointed organist and choir master to the English cathedral, Quebec, Canada. We understand the organ is a very fine one.' This was the first Anglican cathedral to be built outside the UK (1800-04), for which George III provided many accoutrements, including the organ. Both church and organ were destroyed in a fire of 1856, so the firm of William Hill, London, built an 'exact replica' of the King's organ which served until 1980.

James soon moved on again and from 1866 to 1872 he became organist-choirmaster at St Mark's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, and while there seems to have married. His wife is only noted as 'E', (possibly 'Ella', when a daughter 'Ella Gilmore' was baptised on 20 Feb 1871). James then moved to New York to take up a similar post at Christ Church, 5th Avenue, 32 Street in 1872 and married again on 17 November 1874. His new wife was Annie Thompson and they had eleven more children. When at Philadelphia he had formed a choir of men and boys (Easter, April 21, 1867) which was dedicated on October 23, 1867.