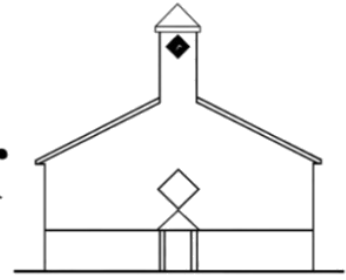


The Clock Tower



Issue Number 59: August 2020
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

Social (History) Distancing!



Photograph by Elaine Gardner

On 1 July 2020 Rob Flood and Elaine Gardner presented Norma Crowe with a copy of
The Compton Census of 1676 and other items purchased by FOMA for the
Medway Archives Centre. See page 7

Also inside -
The Bob Ratcliffe Collection - page 7
and
The FOMA eBay Project - page 10

Supporting the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) during Lockdown

On 1 July 2020 Rob Flood and Elaine Gardner also presented Norma Crowe (pictured right) with a digital recorder for MAC to use during the very popular Reminiscence Sessions. The equipment was purchased using a donation received by FOMA in memory of Mr John Morrison of Strood. For more details see page 7.



The Bob Ratcliffe Collection



FOMA's Rob Flood unpacks the first box to be included in the new *Bob Ratcliffe Collection*. See page 7 to find out more.

Photographs by Elaine Gardner

Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



Letter From Semi-Lockdown

Well who thought we would still be living very restricted lives three months on from the last edition of *The Clock Tower*! Still, let's be positive.

By the time this reaches you in August, the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) will hopefully be open and accessible, though under more limiting restrictions, as explained by Elspeth Millar on page 9. Also, I have news that St Nicholas Church Hall in Strood – where we have been hosting events for some time now - is open again for use. Obviously social distancing has to be observed with hand gel etc. and we have restrictions on the use of the kitchen. Hopefully the talk we have planned for September 11 will be able to go ahead, though we may not be allowed to have refreshments. Mind you, the way things change we might then be able to have either a wild party or be back in lockdown, though I hope not! If we are able to go ahead, we hope as many of you as possible will come and support the event. Christoff Bull is a very entertaining speaker and his talk, *The Griffin, Horse and Harp*, about the Earls of Darnley and their Irish connections, is one not to be missed. Further details can be found on page 36.

The FOMA committee has not been idle during lockdown. For some time Rob Flood and Chris de Coulon Berthoud have been trying to set up a new FOMA PayPal account which would not conflict with membership payments. Eventually the teething problems were resolved and the FOMA eBay Project was launched a few weeks ago to sell surplus local history books and raise money for MAC. More on this fantastic project can be found on page 10. In addition, and as can be seen on the inside front cover, Rob has also purchased some digital recording equipment on behalf of FOMA to help with the very successful Reminiscence Sessions that Norma Crowe has been running. Norma was also very keen to acquire a copy of *The Compton Census of 1676* for archival use though balked at asking for it as it is so expensive. You can read more about this on page 7, but suffice to say, once again Rob put his e-Bay knowledge to good use and found an almost new copy for her at a third of the price. We were delighted to pay a visit to MAC on 1 July to deliver these much needed items.

Despite the difficulties we have all experienced with lockdown, it is disappointing that a considerable number of membership subscriptions have not yet been renewed. The committee appreciate how many of you pay at the AGM or leave your payment at MAC when you visit, and both of these options have obviously not been available. As the Archives' budget continues to be limited with council cuts it is even more important to support MAC - and for that we need members! You can now pay using a BACS online payment, or you can send a cheque to our membership Secretary Betty Cole, or maybe set up a Standing Order with your bank so that you don't have to worry each year? Whichever you choose, we do hope you will continue to support us. Details can be found below and on page 40.

Finally, I do hope you have all kept well so far and that the rest of the summer holds more opportunities for you to enjoy!

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA member Andrew Brimson.

Membership Reminder

You can renew your membership 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

Payment may also be made using the BAC system:
SORT CODE 60-21-02, ACCOUNT No. 48040304 and please use your name for REFERENCE; or by PayPal
via our website: <http://www.foma-lsc.org/membership.html>

The membership renewal form can be found on page 40.

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: becole40@gmail.com
PLEASE NOTE Betty's new email address!

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

Secretary's Report

Chris de Coulon Berthoud

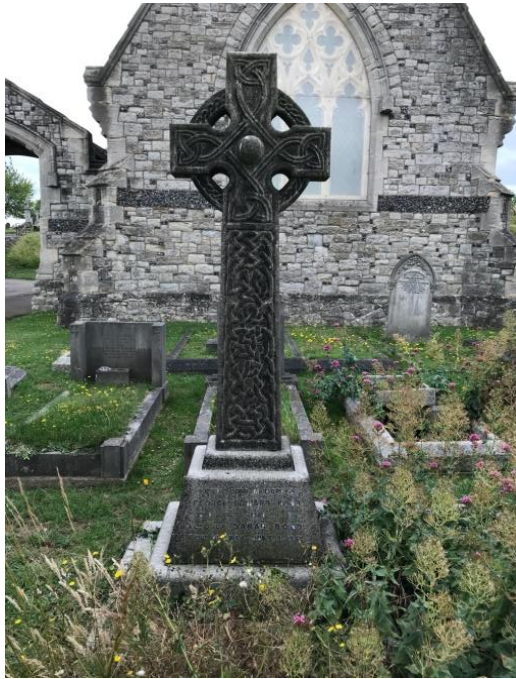


The FOMA committee has been unable to meet during the lockdown period, but as the full restrictions are easing and life begins the journey back to normality, some threads of sociability have been possible once more.

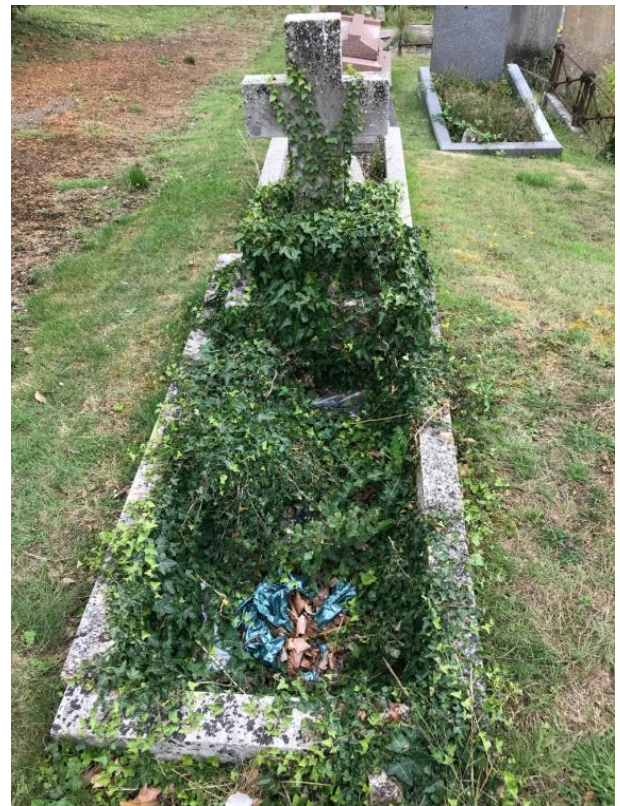
Rob Flood and I have been working on the FOMA eBay Project – details of which can be found on page 10. Rob and I also recently went on a socially distanced walk over to St Margaret's Cemetery to look for the last resting place of the architect George Bond.* Bond was responsible for several of Medway's more interesting buildings, from the now-demolished Aveling and Porter building in Strood to the Conservancy Building in Rochester, and the Brook Theatre in Chatham. A somewhat ebullient growth of wild plants surrounding his grave could do with some attention, but the memorial is in good condition. Sadly, this is not true of the historian, William Coles Finch's grave in the neighbouring St Nicholas Cemetery, which has fallen further into disrepair since I last visited it in 2014. Strangled by ivy, the inscription was all but illegible, in stark contrast to the condition I had found it in previously. We didn't locate the grave of writer Edwin Harris on this visit, but it does seem sad that the final resting place of people who made such a contribution to the history of Medway should be so neglected. Photographs of the graves can be found below.

In a similar vein, it is well known that this summer we are commemorating the 150th anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens (7 February 1812 – 9 June 1870). However, it is also 150 years since the death of William Cuffay, the mixed-race political activist and a leader of London Chartism. MAC has recently mounted an online exhibition about his life, and it is available to view at www.medway.gov.uk/cuffay. Born in Old Brompton in 1788, Cuffay's mother was English and his father, named Chatham Cuffay, was from the Caribbean island of St Kitts. It is believed that Chatham's parents were freed slaves. Following his involvement in the the chartist rally in 1848 on London's Kennington Common, William Cuffay was sentenced to 21 years' transportation to Tasmania, Australia. He was granted a pardon in 1856, but decided to remain in Tasmania where he died in July 1870. Calls for a statue to be erected in Chatham to commemorate Cuffay have been supported by musician Billy Bragg among others. Statues have been very much in the news just lately and this prompted me to write a piece about their nature and meaning – my article can be found on page 15.

Finally, we are very grateful to have received donations to the value of £165 in memory of John Morrison. This money has been used to purchase a digital recorder that will be used to record reminiscence sessions at MAC – see further details on page 7. We would like to offer our thanks and condolences to Mr Morrison's family.



Left: the grave of George Bond.



Right: the grave of William Coles Finch.

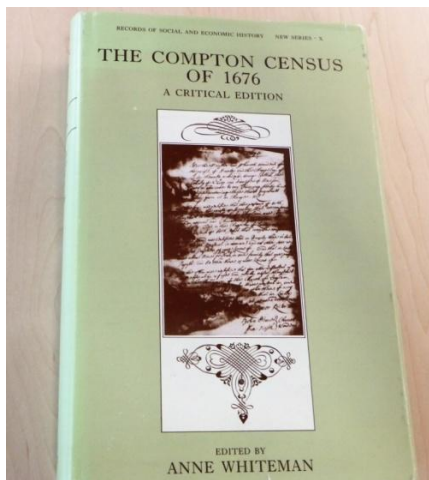
*You can read more about the life and work of George Bond in *The Clock Tower*, Issue 10, May 2008 in an article by Pat Salter and Bob Ratcliffe entitled, *George Bond, Architect and Surveyor, 1853 to 1914*. Archived copies of *The Clock Tower* can be found at <http://foma-lsc.org/journal.html>.

Supporting the Medway Archives Centre during Lockdown

Elaine Gardner



You may recall that earlier in the year, the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) held a Volunteers' Day (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 58, May 2020). It was during this gathering that our Archivist, Elspeth Millar and Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe requested a digital recorder for MAC to use during the very popular Reminiscence Sessions (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 56, November 2019). At our March meeting, prior to lockdown, the FOMA Committee was happy to approve the purchase and Rob Flood was detailed to use his technical knowledge to organise this!



During lockdown the Committee had a request from Norma for a reference book she very much wanted to have at MAC – *The Compton Census of 1676* (pictured). The book is a comprehensive, critical study of the seventeenth century census undertaken in the 1980s by Anne Whiteman and her assistant Mary Clapinson. Their work examines the background to the gathering of the census information and sheds light on its motives, including why some of the original statistics might give a false impression of the realities of daily life at the time. Norma was initially hesitant to ask for the book as new it costs £125, though she was happy to have a second hand copy. Rob's knowledge of how to find eBay bargains (see page 10) meant he was able to obtain an almost new copy in excellent condition for less than a third of the recommended retail price - much to Norma's delight.

In his last edition of *The Clock Tower* (Issue 58), FOMA Secretary, Chris de Coulon Berthoud mentioned how we recently received a donation in memory of Mr John Morrison of Strood (see also Chris' report on page 5). We were most grateful to have been recognised in this way and the FOMA Committee decided that this sum would be used specifically for the purchase of the digital recorder Elspeth and Norma had requested and I was happy to write to Mrs Morrison to explain this. Then on 1 July, Rob and I made a socially distanced visit to MAC to meet with Norma and hand over both the digital recorder and *The Compton Census of 1676*, as demonstrated on the front cover and page 2 of this issue!

The Bob Ratcliffe Collection



Bob Ratcliffe (1936 – 2018)

As you are probably aware, our late friend Bob Ratcliffe (pictured) was an avid collector of historical documents, pictures and ephemera (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 53, February 2019 for Bob's obituary). Bob's son, Andy has been sorting through this extraordinary personal archive and passing it on to MAC, via Rob Flood. This will eventually form the *Bob Ratcliffe Collection*, comprising partly archival material and partly local studies items.



When we visited MAC at the beginning of July, Rob took the first box of the new Collection with him, as pictured on page 2. The box contained mostly property deeds and maps and included some quite extraordinary documents. One related to land in the parish of St Nicholas, Rochester from the reign of William IV complete with wax seal – as pictured. The completion of this exciting new collection will be an ongoing task, and we are delighted to be able to remember Bob in this way!

Medway Archives Centre News

Elsbeth Millar



Due to the exceptional circumstances caused by Covid-19, Medway Archives Centre (MAC) has been closed to the public since 23 March and staff have been working from home for the majority of this time. Staff were still going into MAC to do building and strongroom checks, as well as to collect additional work suitable for working from home. So much of our work revolves around the collections themselves but these strange circumstances have meant that we have progressed with other tasks that don't necessarily require collection access. A small selection of the things the team have been working on include writing up various user guides for our webpage redevelopment; online engagement activities (social media, and creating online versions of previously onsite exhibitions); writing and updating our policy and procedural documents; cataloguing and listing work (mainly typing up older paper catalogues that do not yet exist digitally); undertaking online training on a variety of work related topics; answering enquiries; and creating content summaries of the audio recordings of the 2019 and 2020 Reminiscence Sessions. Since the easing of the lockdown in early July staff have been back working at MAC a lot more, albeit working onsite on a rota basis, which has meant additional work on collections and has increased our ability to undertake remote research enquiries.

During June and July we have been focused on our reopening plans and how we can make the service safe for customers and staff when we do reopen to the public. In order to follow government guidelines and keep our staff and customers safe we have reviewed our service, and there will be changes to our opening times and procedures for visiting. You will also notice some physical changes to the searchroom – we now have plexiglass screens on our reception desk and in the archive viewing room, additional signage to reinforce the need to socially distance, and reduced access to PCs and microfilm readers to ensure distancing between customers. At the time of going to press, we learnt that we would be able to reopen on Monday 27 July. Further details are on page 36.

Our reopening is planned in a cautious way to ensure that we can review all of the practical issues involved in running the service safely. We will keep these opening arrangements under review. For a full update on the service please visit www.medway.gov.uk/archives or our Facebook page www.facebook.com/medwayarchives.

The FOMA eBay Project

Rob Flood, FOMA Vice Chairman,



For some time now, FOMA Secretary, Chris De Coulon Berthould and I have been working on another new scheme - the *FOMA eBay Project*. This has been set up to sell online donated books and ephemera to raise funds for MAC. The site is now live and sales are already going extremely well!



Rob (left) and Chris view some of the sales already made on eBay as part of the FOMA eBay Project.

To find the FOMA shop on eBay, go to www.ebay.co.uk and click on the Advanced button to the right of the main Search box. This will give you the option to search by seller. Scroll down and tick the 'Only show items from specific seller' box and type in fomabooksales. Click Search and this will take you to the items we currently have for sale. You will need a PayPal account in order to buy. Do check the site regularly as we will be uploading new items on a weekly basis.

The Balfour Honours Boards and Balfour Schools – A Mystery

Norma Crowe,
Local Studies Librarian, Medway Archives Centre.



In September 2019 Gary Kirk, Deputy Head of Balfour Junior Academy in Chatham, contacted the Studies Centre at MAC to ask if we would be interested in five large wooden boards which had been found underneath the stage in the school hall. Their origin was uncertain, but they contained the names of pupils, all girls, from 1916 to 1946. That raised my interest and there was no time to lose! The boards were old, dirty and in the way at the school and they were to be thrown away if a new home was not found. So I took the decision to take them for the information they might offer up, given time to research the names on the boards. Thus began the Balfour Honours Boards Research Project (2020). An image of Board 4 can be seen on the inside back cover.

There are five boards and they all record names of girls, the senior school to which they were to go next and the method by which they achieved the place at that school. The boards recorded the following periods:

Board 1 1916 – 1930;
Board 2 1930 – 1936;
Board 3 1936 – 1940;
Board 4 1940 - 1943;
Board 5 1946.

You will note that there is a gap for the period 1943 to 1945, which is a great pity. It may be that the board for this time was destroyed or never produced as it was, of course, during World War Two.

A group of our great volunteers at MAC has begun to look into the names and to try to piece together some family history. Unfortunately the Covid-19 closure has greatly hampered their work, but so far Hilary Blanford and Brenda Paternoster are working on Board 2, Jean Skilling is working on Board 3, and Steve Cross is working on Board 4; Board 1 needs re-photographing, and Board 5 covers just 1946.

The aims of the project are as follows:

1. To discover a little of the lives of the girls recorded on the boards, perhaps locating their family and home addresses at the time.

2. To identify and find out more about the schools they transferred to. School names change (as they do so frequently now). For example, is LEA technical day school Fort Pitt, or is it Ordnance Place Girls School? Or is it somewhere else? The main schools mentioned on the boards (from 1916 onwards) include:

County School, Chatham;
Commercial School, Chatham;
Grammar School, Rochester;
Kent Education Committee Commercial School;
LEA Day technical school;
County School;
Medway School of Arts & Crafts;
Rochester Education Authority day technical school;
Chatham Education Authority day technical school;
Chatham County Grammar School.

3. To find out about scholarships and secondary education at the time the boards were produced and write a brief piece about the changes up to and including the 1944 Education Act.

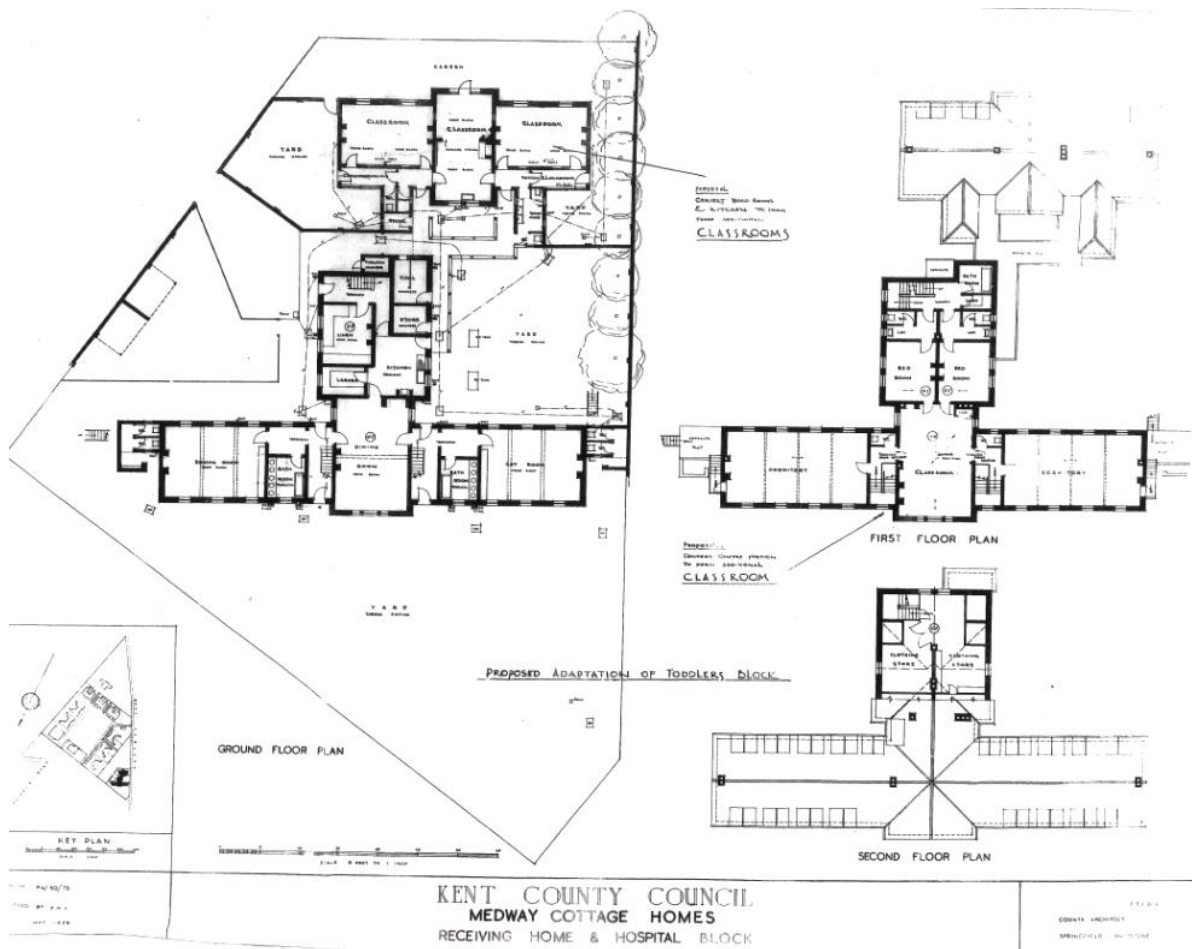
Future articles will cover some of their findings (see below), but for the moment here is some context and my guess as to how the boards ended up under the stage at Balfour Junior Academy.

First, a very brief history of three schools. The story begins with the local workhouse and Medway Union, which, to provide for the accommodation and welfare needs of unattached children, built the Cottage Homes in 1910. These were designed by local architect George Bond as can be seen in the images below. The Ordnance Survey Maps show a school facing onto Pattens Lane and the accommodation buildings. Children living in the homes were educated on site, and in early times the girls and infants were housed and educated separately from the boys. At MAC we have a logbook for girls and infants covering 1904 to 1924 (MF 456). At a later date - around 1946 - the schools on the site were amalgamated to become co-educational.

The Union's workhouse system was disbanded in the 1930s, however the Cottage Homes continued on the site as did the school, but it was now open to pupils in the local area. This increased the number of pupils in attendance and the school soon outgrew the original education block, becoming co-educational in 1947 and expanding into other buildings on the site. The infant school operated out of what had been the hospital/infirmary block, possibly dating from about 1947. Until 1991 the junior school was on the site of the original school building.



Elevation plans for the Receiving Home Cottage Homes.



Plans for the Receiving Home and Hospital Block.

As Medway's population grew, a new secondary school for boys – Highfield- was built on Balfour Road. It is first shown on 1939 OS maps (as illustrated) and was opened in 1940. The 1939 map shows two schools, and the 1955 map shows the position and footprint of the three schools.

In the 1980s intake at Highfield was reducing, so much so that a decision to close Highfield school was taken in August 1990. On our 1991 map the Highfield building has become Balfour Junior which relocated there in September 1991. The original junior school and Cottage Homes on Pattens Lane have been replaced by a modern sheltered housing development. The infant school continued to operate from the former infirmary block until 2002, after which time major improvements to the building were made and an extension was added.

So how and why were the Honours Boards under the stage at Balfour Junior Academy? It is my belief that they were originally mounted on the wall in the girls' junior school buildings of Medway Cottage Homes. The boys and girls sections were amalgamated in 1946/7, and it is interesting, therefore, that there are no more boards after 1946. The junior co-educational Balfour Junior School then stored the boards somewhere and subsequently took them to the newly-refurbished buildings up the road which had been Highfield boys secondary school until 1990. This may prove to be a false premise, but for the moment it seems to explain their start and end dates – unless you know otherwise, of course! We will keep you posted.



In the November issue of The Clock Tower, MAC volunteer Steve Cross will explore the link he discovered between one of the girls on Board 4 and H.M. Submarine Truculent.

Unquiet Monuments, The Boer Statues – Royal Engineer Barracks

Chris de Coulon Berthoud



Chris de Coulon Berthoud is currently writing a PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of Kent. His work focusses on our shared human relationships with the past; previously writing about traumatic memory in descendants of Belgian Holocaust survivors, and the practice of Second World War re-enactment in the UK. His current work examines the role of the amateur in shaping and producing local history and heritage narratives in the Medway Towns. He is Secretary of FOMA, and works part-time at the Medway Archives Centre.

The nature and meaning of the statues in our midst have been thrown into stark relief recently. Here is not the place to rehearse arguments regarding the pros and cons of toppling statues, but I thought it might be interesting to take a look at how relatively transient and portable some statues are, and how this can challenge our perceptions of permanence. I had an interesting conversation with someone who had signed a petition for the removal of Kitchener's statue in Chatham. 'Where exactly is it?' they asked me, reinforcing the observation of the Austrian philosophical writer, Robert Musil that, 'the most striking thing about monuments is that you don't see them' Anthropologist Michael Taussig writing presciently in 1999 improved on Musil's idea when he suggested that when statues are defaced, 'the statue moves from an excess of invisibility to an excess of visibility.'

Recently, as I was looking through a hugely impressive collection of local Medway postcards, I came across one that caused me to have a second look. It was a statue of a crouched and weary Boer soldier, captioned, *Boer Statue, R.E. Barracks, Chatham*. I don't know a great deal about military memorials, but this statue seemed curious in its depiction of the defeated enemy not as a fierce adversary, but rather with sympathetic intent. It seems relatively unusual to represent one's enemy in statuary form when usually these are reserved for military leaders in poses of proud martial conquest or more gentle depictions of ordinary soldiers at rest on war memorials. My interest was piqued, I performed the usual searches online and picked up postcards of two other statues depicting Boer Voortrekkers. The labels on these cards tell us that the statues were to be found at the Royal Engineers Barracks in Chatham.



*Postcards of Boer statues.
These postcards belong to Rob Flood.*

It is on this same parade square that the Boer War Memorial Arch could be found, designed by the architect Edward Ingress Bell and built of Portland stone, with the names of the fallen of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 inscribed on Istrian marble. It had been financed by raising a subscription from the officers of the Royal Engineers. The Memorial Arch was unveiled by King Edward VII on the 26 July 1905. The bronze Voortrekker statues had been given to Lord Kitchener in 1902 by a Pretoria businessman, Samuel Marks, who had originally commissioned them from the sculptor Anton van Wouw in 1899 as part of a proposed monument to President Kruger. In a letter to Sir Thomas Fraser, dated 21 May 1902, Kitchener noted that he had 'obtained four bronze statues of Boers, rather larger than life-size ... Though I have not seen the figures, I am told they are very good representations of the different types of Boers.' After the Inspector General of Fortifications sought agreement from The Duke of Cambridge, the Engineers' Colonel, the gift was accepted. The statues were described as, 'Two Voortrekker Boers in old National costume, each with an "ou sannah" (flint-lock) rifle; both in sitting position' and 'Two present-day Boers each with a Martini rifle; both sitting.'

The inclusion of the statues in the memorial caused some disquiet among the ranks. On 19 December 1902, a letter was sent to Kitchener noting that 'there is a good deal of feeling against ... the figures being associated with such a Memorial.' Kitchener's reply, dated 11 January 1903, notes his regret at the turn of events: 'I am sorry the Corps have taken the view of the Memorial you describe. Of course, any arrangement you think would be best would be entirely agreed on by me.' He did note that if they weren't used for the memorial he would 'like to consider their disposal, as my gift to the Corps was for that purpose.' A notice appeared in *The Royal Engineers Journal*, dated Friday 1 May 1903, regarding a questionnaire on the status of the monument which had been circulated to 1,620 full-pay and retired officers and received 673 replies. Of these replies, 50 agreed to the proposal but took exception to the Boer figures. 20 were indifferent and another 56 were directly adverse [sic] to the proposal. Discussions continued and a report of the Annual Meeting of the Corps in the REJ of 1 July 1903 noted, '... to make such use of what had been intended for Mr. Kruger's statue would cause the keenest feelings of resentment among our new fellow-subject.' As well as concerns for the feelings of the Boer people, there were worries that 'if you use these statues in the Memorial to our dead and put them in the most prominent portions of it ... it will always be considered that it is mainly a memorial to the Boers.'

The controversy continued into October 1903, when the committee set up to decide on the figures voted against their inclusion in the memorial noting, 'Those who are wholeheartedly in favour of the inclusion of the Boer figures can only console themselves for their exclusion by condemning the apathy of the majority of their brother officers.' The exclusion of the statues led to one T. Fraser withdrawing his subscription to the monument, noting that only one officer who had served in South Africa had been included on the Committee. The statues remained in the barracks, but not immediately connected to the completed memorial, as one author described it they were 'relegated to a far-flung corner of the parade ground to ensure the memorial should remain unsullied by any symbolic association.'

In 1913 two of the statues were relocated to Kitchener's estate at Broome Park near Canterbury, where they remained until 1921, by which time the political situation had changed sufficiently that when General Smuts asked for the return of all four, it was considered politically expedient to do so. By this time Kitchener had died, and his family acquiesced to their return as a means of 'cementing the relationship between South Africa and Great Britain,' and so the statues were placed at the disposal of the King, in his role as Colonel in Chief of the Engineers. The statues were officially returned to South Africa on 30 January 1921, and in 1925, on the centenary of Kruger's birth, they were included at the base of his statue, also sculpted by Anton van Wouw, outside Praetoria Station. On 10 October 1954, this memorial was moved to Church Square, Pretoria/Tshwane, where it remains today.

The unhappy story of these statues continues, however. In 2015 they became embroiled in the controversy that coalesced around the Rhodes Must Fall movement when they were defaced with green paint by protestors. This led to a mobilisation of various political factions, from the Marxist Economic Freedom Fighters to the neo-Nazis of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) who demonstrated and confronted each other about the meaning and value of the memorial in post-apartheid South Africa. Controversy over this memorial continues, with paint thrown over them as part of the Black Lives Matter protests last month (June 2020) as a comment on Kruger's record as a slave-owner.

The history of these weary and defeated statues offers us a fascinating record of the changing meanings attributed to the monuments in our midst, as well as their portability. One often thinks of statues as immovable objects, but these have travelled the world as war booty, war memorial, garden ornament, and finally as a monument to the founding of a nation, all leading to a discussion about what that nation represents.



An inscription on the postcard above reads: South African Memorial Arch and R.E. Institute, S.M.E. Chatham. H.J.D. Series. The postcard is the property of the author.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Danielle Sellers, Collections Manager at the Royal Engineers Museum, Library, and Archive who provided me with scans from the *Sapper Magazine* and the *Royal Engineers Journal*.

A 100-Year-Old Flea Market Find and The Wonders of Modern Technology.

Rob Flood.



Robert Flood lives in Rochester and is Medway born and bred. He is Vice Chairman of FOMA and the City of Rochester Society (CoRS) and wrote A Tale of One City, the 50th anniversary history of CoRS. He also edited Bob Ratcliffe's Railways of Rochester book.

Here's a story to gladden your heart in these trying times.



Most of you will no doubt remember the thriving flea market that took place in Rochester during the 1980s. This was pre-eBay when you could pick up all sorts of amazing ephemera and collectibles for a few pounds (often pence) - a time when one man's junk was very much another man's treasure.

A lady called Maggi Davis (pictured) bought a house in Strood in the early 1980s and she would often visit the flea market to furnish her house with 'wonderful old pieces'. Browsing at the flea market one day, Maggi's eye was caught by a photograph in an old frame. Guessing from the clothes that the picture was of a 1920s wedding, what particularly grabbed Maggi's attention was that this was a mixed-race marriage. Pictured with his bride was a man of colour and standing behind them, presumably their parents. Maggi says, "I was taken with it, and thought not only was it beautiful with the lovely fashions of the time, but a mixed marriage in the 20s must have been unusual."

Maggi had the photograph on her wall for many years, but four house moves later (finishing up in Bexhill, Sussex) found the picture consigned to a storage box. Coronavirus lockdown has presented many of us with the opportunity to go through our cupboards and Maggi decided to use the time to organise all her photographs. When she came across this old wedding picture again, she showed it to her daughter

Kate and told her the story. Wondering aloud who the people might be, Kate suggested opening the back of the frame to see if there was any information but as the picture was still as sealed by the framer from all those years ago, Maggi couldn't bring herself to do it.

Kate took a picture of the photograph on her phone and posted it to her personal Facebook page, but no one replied so she decided to post it to the Facebook Rochester (Community) Friends page. Within 24 hours, a lady called Jade Plummer replied to say that she had seen the picture and recognised the groom from a photograph at her mother's house. The groom's name was Fred Francis and his bride Sylvia. The man second from right in the back row was her Great Grandfather who had come from Jamaica to the UK in the 1920s. The groom, Fred was one of 14 children and Fred and Sylvia went on to have two children, Rosemary and Neville.

This is all fairly incredible but by all coincidences, Jade Plummer now lives in Gordon Road, Strood, the exact same road that Maggi lived on over 35 years ago with this very picture on her wall. The picture is now back in possession of the family. What a great ending to a wonderful story.



The picture purchased by Maggi Davis.

The Tobacconist's Tale

Janet King



I was born in the workhouse !(All Saints Hospital) on Elizabeth Ward, and spent the first twenty years of my life living and working in Chatham. I became familiar with the high street as I worked at the west end and lived at the east end. I still live in Medway and am interested in its history, an interest kindled by one particular teacher at school.



My first job, during school holidays and on Saturdays, was at Petts', the newsagents and tobacconists at the east end of Chatham High Street. The Petts family, from what I remember, were Mr and Mrs Petts, and his two unmarried sisters, Hetty and Olive, the Misses Petts. Mrs Petts senior, who I think must have started the shop with her husband was still alive when mother used to shop there. I was told that Mrs Petts senior used to take food to the workhouse, and I think this made her determined not to end up like the inmates there, and to ensure that the shop was a success. Mum was friendly with the family, and used to buy Mrs Petts violets on her birthday.

Janet King aged 13.

As a child I was always a little confused when someone referred to the Misses Petts. Hetty, Miss Petts as we knew her, was my mum's friend. How else would I have got a job at just 13? We had known her since we were young, when we, my younger brother and I, often called on her to help us cross the busy road near her shop on our way home from school. Sometimes I would be sent by mother to see if Miss Petts "could oblige us with a stamp," no doubt for some important communication to be sent to Up Gran in Strood.

It was Hetty who ran the shop, sometimes assisted by Olive, who was a school teacher, and sometimes by Mr or Mrs Petts. When I first started working there I found it tiring standing in the shop all day, but I enjoyed stocking up the cigarettes in their different categories, and lining them up with a ruler. Some of the names I remember are Guards, Weights, Woodbine and Camel, and some of the brands had cards in their packets to collect. I had to weigh out loose tobacco, and got used to being asked for *shag* or *ready rubbed* or other loose pipe tobaccos; some of the tobacco also came in tins or packets. A lot of people used to roll their own cigarettes and we used to sell red and green Rizzlas, the cigarette papers. I don't know what the difference was, but we sold many more green than red. I remember my grandad having a special gadget to roll his cigarettes with. Snuff was also popular in the shop, and I loved the different aromas. I quite fancied taking up sniffing snuff, but I don't think my parents would have approved! The snuff and loose tobaccos were weighed on special scales and I soon became adept at using these and charging the appropriate amounts. This was pretty good for me as my maths is hopeless. Amongst the other odds and ends that we sold were spills, pipe cleaners, and that everyday staple, the box of matches: both safety matches and Swan Vestas, the long matches with a pink head that you could strike anywhere, not just on the special box strip.

We also sold sweets. Spangles were a favourite, and came in a myriad of flavours, including Old English and Acid. There were also cards. We had some on a wooden unit, and some stored in the deep drawers below. One lady wasn't happy with the displayed items and thought there must be something below. I had to go through the lot to satisfy her and I still can't remember if she bought a card or not!

We also had newspapers and magazines for sale. I envied the speed with which Miss Petts numbered the papers and periodicals for the paper boys to deliver. My brother was one of the paper boys, joining the firm some time after I had left. He once posted a left over paper in a pillar box as he didn't know where it was supposed to go or what else to do about it! I seem to remember the person who should have had the paper made a big fuss. I used to have a regular magazine from Miss Petts. I think it was called *Petticoat*, and I used to get mum to make my clothes from the latest fashion pictures in it. Luckily she had worked as a seamstress before she married dad, and was very handy to know! Miss Petts also sold patterns, which I used to love looking through. I (mostly mum) once made a dress at school from one of these patterns. It was so good that they wanted me to model it in the end of term show, but I was too shy.

I was hoping to work for Miss Petts when I left school, and would have had responsibility for the separate stationery department, as well as serving in the main shop. Sadly Mr Petts died, and after a while the two sisters, Hetty and Olive, decided to sell up and retire.



An image from September 1988. Petts' shop is the third on the left, directly under the Whitbread sign. From the Medway Archives Centre, ref. CHA/STR/HGH1A/19.

The Lloyd Family of Rochester

Pauline Weeds

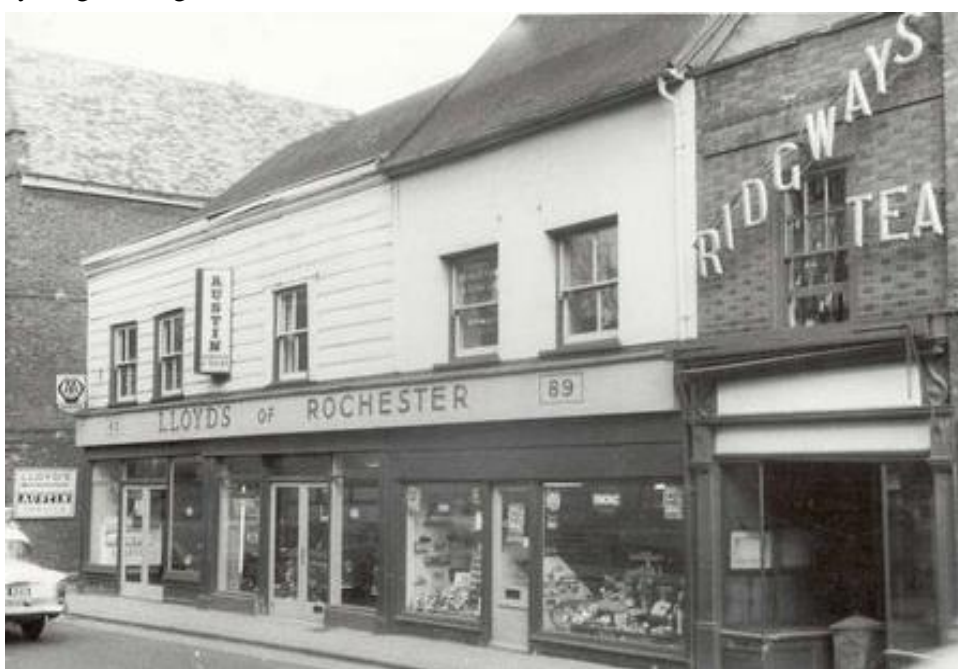


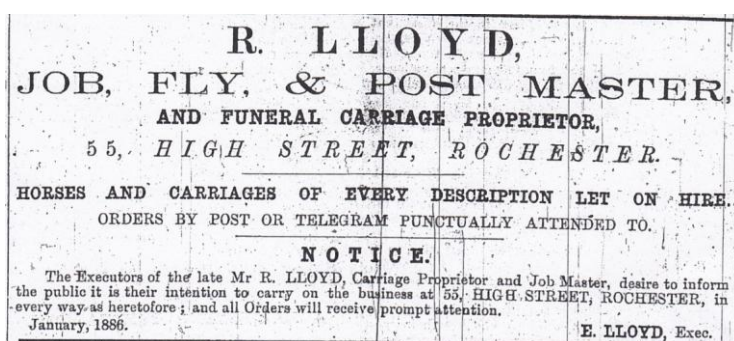
In 2005 Pauline Weeds was awarded the Higher Certificate in Genealogy by The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies. She has been involved in research for the England's Past for Everyone projects as well as transcribing for a Kent Archaeological Society project. She is a volunteer at the Medway Archives Centre, and a member of the committee of The Friends of Eastgate House. She has recently written a book on the history of the house and its most famous occupants entitled, The Buck Family and Eastgate House.

Part 2

By the time the next census was taken on 3 April 1881, 54 High Street Rochester, the house, which had formerly teemed with life, was now home to just Richard Lloyd, his youngest daughter, Emma, who was 23 and their one servant. The business continued to prosper and Richard was still employing twenty men and three boys. However, by 1883 a cloud was threatening the orderly existence of the Lloyd family in the form of marital problems between Amelia and her husband, Alfred Thorpe. How much Richard Lloyd knew and whether it in any way contributed to his death can never be known, but he died just two years later on 27 December 1885, 'after a long illness'. He was 74 years old.¹ The funeral took place at St Nicholas' on 1 January 1886 and he was buried with his wife in the old St Nicholas cemetery on Maidstone Road, Rochester. His will was proved in London on 6 February 1886 by his three daughters, who were his executrixes. His estate was valued at £1862 7s, a value of approximately £237,736.74 in 2018.² The business was immediately carried on by Richard Lloyds's executrixes and continued to use his name. The day-to-day running of the business was in the hands of Emma Lloyd, the youngest daughter who was still unmarried.

Medway Images, ref. C051007191 – 85-89 High Street, Rochester 1967, previously numbered 53-55; Medway Archives Centre.





Chatham Observer, 9 January 1886; *E Lloyd (at the bottom) would have been Emma Lloyd. Medway Archives Centre.*

By this time Amelia was undoubtedly becoming increasingly embittered and angry, evidenced by her compilation of Alfred's infidelities. On 9 July 1891 when she petitioned for a divorce she listed six such events and of course, it must be remembered, that these were just those she knew about. The first instance occurred in June 1883 when her husband committed adultery with 'some person or persons unknown to your Petitioner' and in the following January at their home he 'wilfully communicated to your Petitioner venereal disease.' In June 1887 Alfred again contracted venereal disease and the last instance of adultery recorded was in October that year with a Mrs Grant of 10 Frederick Street, Grays Inn Road in London. This last affair was investigated for Amelia by an agent, John William Hodges, of Weston Road in Strood and it was this act of adultery which would later be cited in the divorce court: the evidence provided showed Alfred had lived with this lady as 'Mr and Mrs Grant'.

It may be that Mr Hodges gathered the evidence of the other adulteries. It is difficult to imagine a Victorian lady doing this for herself but Amelia was hurt and angry, very angry, so it is possible that she might have done, only finally employing an agent to take the matter to court. The employment of Mr Hodges must have seriously alarmed Alfred for it was at this point that he decided to scarper. He deserted Amelia - his wife and mother of their daughter - without telling her where he was going. What happened next may be gleaned from a statement made in Amelia's support by her sister, Emma, on 19 November 1891. She stated that in June 1888 Amelia had gone to Hastings and in the following month to St Leonard's where she interviewed some of Alfred's relatives. They told her that he was, "Reported to be in New South Wales". She also visited an Alice Breach in Hastings whose husband was in the Merchant Navy and occasionally visited Sidney. Mrs Breach told Amelia that her husband was living in Sidney, but she did not know where. Emma then referred to Alfred's former employment as an insurance agent in London and said that Amelia and she had, "... with the hopes of tracing his then whereabouts made enquiries at the office of the Northern Insurance Company Moorgate Street in the City of London and also at the office of the Queen's Insurance Company 60 Gracechurch Street for the purpose of ascertaining where the said Alfred Thorpe was to be found," but they were unsuccessful. Emma also said that in July 1891 she had gone with Amelia on another visit to Mrs Breach in Hastings to see whether there was any further news of Alfred: there was not.

Notes

1. *Chatham News*, 2 January 1886; *Chatham Observer*, 2 January 1886.
2. Bank of England Inflation Calculator.

I should like to thank Cindy O'Halloran for suggesting this project and for her help and enthusiasm, and also Elspeth Millar for allowing me to use the documents which are held at the Medway Archives Centre.

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 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 3

Frederick Newcomb at Chatham Dockyard

The Newcombs lost touch with Emma Hamilton as her fortunes declined. With Rose's help Frederick had in 1808 secured the grandly sounding post of Chief Conductor of Money and Officer for Paying Contingencies at Chatham Dockyard. He did not work directly under the Clerk of the Cheque who headed the Pay Office but was an appointee on the payroll of the London Navy Office at Somerset House.

The Navy Board in London controlled the dockyards which had expanded considerably during the wars with France and her allies. The workforce in the six main dockyards grew from 9,000 to 15,000 during this time. Yard management, including wage payment, was overhauled considerably during the War. A closer eye was also being kept on how the money was spent, particularly after the impeachment of the First Lord of Admiralty for diverting large amounts for his own purposes and a report on the Navy Board for making payouts that vanished without trace. Frederick Simon, like his wife Sarah, comes across as principled and upright, and with his purser's training would have ensured things were done by the book and that the money sent down from London did not mysteriously disappear on the way or was being improperly diverted under the heading of contingencies.

He took up his post on a salary of £150 a year. Nothing of course like the then enormous sum of £11,000 earned by the greedy and corrupt First Lord, Lord Melville, or the £6,000 paid to George Rose with his fine landed estate, or even the £600 paid to the Clerk of the Cheque. But although the rewards were poor, and there was much tedious unremitting paperwork, Frederick had security of tenure in his job and safety from poverty, even in old age. There was little prospect of rapid promotion and he remained as Chief Conductor until 1838. For six years, from 1816 to 1822, he worked alongside John Dickens, father of Charles Dickens. John Dickens also came on detached duty at the Yard as a pay clerk from the London office and he returned there in 1822.

The Chatham Pay Office remains substantially as built, although the main pay room and the clerk's office have been subdivided and the staircase repositioned. Now the Dockyard has closed and is largely a tourist attraction the building is used as private offices.

In 1838 the Navy Pay Office was absorbed into a new Paymaster-General's office. Frederick's post became redundant and he moved to Sheerness as Assistant Clerk. Five years later he was back at Chatham in a post with the same rank and in 1848, aged 70, he retired. Everyone in Victorian society knew their place and it is amusing to see him listed in the Imperial Calendar (the precursor to the Civil Service Yearbook) as 'Mr' F.S. Newcomb together with the third class clerks, whereas the second class clerks were 'esq.' They could all take comfort that the porters were neither 'Mr' nor 'esq.' But in 1845, after working for a mere 37 years in the pay office, Frederick finally became an 'esq.'!

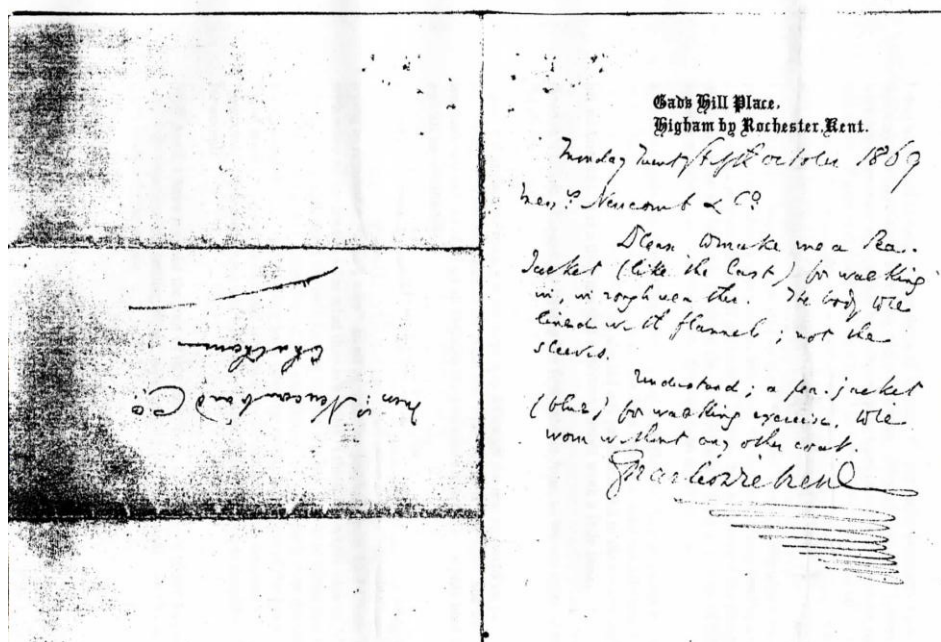
So he could retire knowing he was a well established member of society and with two of his sons having established the firm of outfitters known as F. & H. Newcomb. The 'F' stands for Frederick Augustus - a staunch Methodist like his father before him. Two of F.A. Newcomb's great great grandchildren are Diana, married to my brother-in-law, in Cheshunt, and her sister Kay Eldridge in Somerset. Another is Diana Hicks in Wahroonga, Australia (who supplied a complete Newcomb family tree) and a fourth, Gerald Newcomb, who still runs the family business in the High Street in Chatham, now called Penguins. A large book could doubtless be written about the outfitter's business, including its links with Charles Dickens.



*Charles Dickens;
Wellcome Collection; CC BY.*

Dickens is known to have ordered uniforms for his servants at Gads Hill from Newcomb's, even specifying the design. A letter in the possession of Kay Aldridge and reproduced below shows how Dickens wished to do business with the firm run by her ancestors.

Suffice it to say that Gerald Newcomb told me Nelson advised Frederick Simon to put his children in trade and not in the Navy. From what I can see, that turned out to be sound advice.



The letters from Charles Dickens – above and below. The letter above includes the addressee's name (Messrs. Newcomb & Co., Chatham) and is from the family papers of, Diana Murray (née Newcomb), the sister-in-law of John Sykes; the original has been lost. The letter reads:

Monday twenty-fifth October 1869

Mssrs. Newcomb & Co.

Please to make me a Pea Jacket (like the last) for walking in, in rough [?] The body to be lined with flannel; not the sleeves.

Understand; a pea jacket (blue) for walking exercise. When worn without any other coat.

Charles Dickens.

The second letter (right), belonging to Kay Aldridge, reads:

Thursday twenty-eighth May, 1860

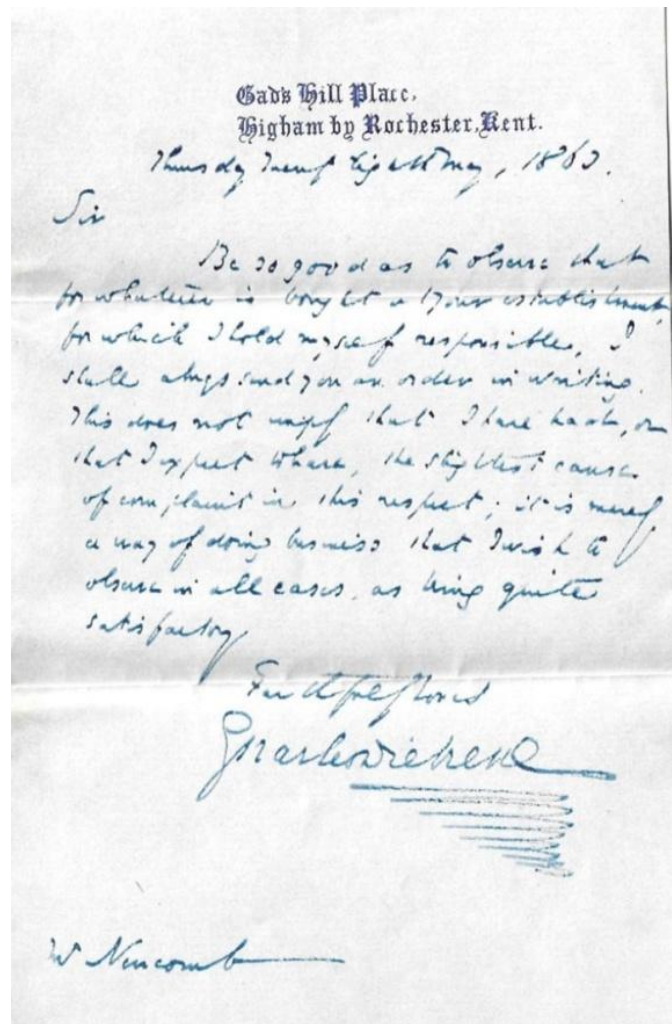
Sir,

Be so good as to observe that for whatever is bought in your establishment for which

I held myself responsible, I shall always send you an order in writing. This does not imply that I have had, or that I expect where, the slightest cause of complaint in this respect; it is merely a way of doing business that I wish to observe in all cases, as being quite satisfactory.

[?]

Charles Dickens.



Gads Hill Place,
Higham by Rochester, Kent.
Thursday twenty-eighth May, 1860.
Sir
Be so good as to observe that for whatever is bought in your establishment for which I hold myself responsible, I shall always send you an order in writing. This does not imply that I have had, or that I expect where, the slightest cause of complaint in this respect; it is merely a way of doing business that I wish to observe in all cases, as being quite satisfactory.
For the proprietor
J. W. Newcomb

Editor's Note

In June 2020 the BBC News website published some recently colourised photographs of Dickens by the Charles Dickens Museum released ahead of the 150th anniversary of his death on 9 June. The museum will be re-opening on 25 June and more details can be found at <https://dickensmuseum.com/> The pictures form part of a new exhibition entitled, *Technicolour Dickens* and in the first photograph Dickens is sporting an interesting blue jacket. This appears slightly more luxurious than the one described above, however, and as curator Frankie Kubicki acknowledges, "... his clothes paint a picture of a Savile Row shopper with a keen sense of style [and] a fondness for a natty waistcoat." <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-52894210>

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 16: Mentioned in Despatches



Egga, November 19th, 1898, sketched while passing on the river.

On November 11th, his fever gone, Alfred and two fellow officers went downstream two days to Lokoja on the *S S Empire*. No mention of who took over command at Jebba. *We were going back on the same steamer tomorrow but will have to stop a day or two as she had to go downstream to pull off another boat that has run aground.* They were away two weeks and that gave him time to sketch again.

The break brought Alfred encouragement, thanks to a communiqué: *I was mentioned in despatches last week, what for I don't know. "The Commissioner and Commandant desires to express his appreciation of the excellent work done by Major Cole, Major Morland, Capt Baker and Lieut Glossop in reconnaissance during their service in West Africa. The results of their work have been forwarded through the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Intelligence Department."* Hear! Hear! Loud cheers.

Thanking his Mother for not missing a mail, he added: *hardly hear from anybody else. Most people look upon anyone who comes out here as a sort of lunatic they give up and hardly expect to see again... The fever does not bother me and I can always get rid of it with a couple of blankets being a free perspirer.*¹

In Lokoja, to his delight: *I have been promised an excellent trip as soon as I get back, to march through the country with my company of 100 men, going to Kishi, Kyama and Boussa then back to Jebba if all is quiet. Just the sort of thing one wants.*

However, back up river at Jebba he took command of the Battalion there. On November 26th, he sent *"A" Company off by route march to Boussa under Welch with Legg, CS Barton, Cpls Matthews and Smith: 111 men, 120 carriers with 600 rounds a man.* The march was necessary because the canoes they had were slow, bad and unseaworthy. Alfred did not go himself because Col Fitzgerald his superior had returned to England and left him in command of the station. He did add to his diary for

the 27th: only three officers and six NCOs on parade this morning. Heard that two NCOs up river down with blackwater and Welchman sick en route for England. Seedy myself yesterday but all right today. Poole seedy too and Rock being dead leaves only one doctor. Bad time of year just after rain drying up. But in contrast his letter home of the same day ends: *I am as fit as a fiddle, no neuralgia.* *Clintock*

If he was disappointed at not going himself, he was soon busy: *I brought up our first lot of relief officers and NCOs. They are mostly sick already, although some are fresh from the Indian wars. They will soon find the happy medium between respecting and finking the climate. Lifting his head a little: I don't know what the future of this country is going to be, but they say there is a great opening for soldiers who can keep fit. The sooner the Government takes it over from the Niger Company the better for everybody. I wish they'd stop this uninteresting game of bluff with the French; it keeps us from getting on. He is pleased with his training: The soldiers are as disciplined as an Indian battalion. The band (fifes and drums) is getting on a great pace, can play four tunes with some skill. The buglers all learnt in 9 months. It would take me a lifetime to learn as much. I was four years over the Blue Bells of Scotland I remember.*²



Sketch from his diary for November 27th

Notes

1. AWB 1898 11 14 from Lokoja and Diary D11 for November.
2. Diary D11 for November 27th and AWB 1898 11 27 from Jebba

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 have been reproduced in *The Clock Tower* in this 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 - Steve Cross, Pauline Weeds, and Hilary Blandford.



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.

To follow are the last three letters in the series, a miscellaneous group of poignant memories.

World War Two Bombings

January 15th

Dear Sir

Re: Memories of the Dockyard

My late husband served his six years as apprentice Shipwright for Royal Navy in Chatham Dockyard – After which through 'two World Wars' and much 'Overseas Service' he did not see much of the Dockyard.

But during the first world war his ship came home for a refit. The first night home the ships company was given orders to sleep in a nearly all glass building in the Yard. For the first time ever, I think, my husband disobeyed orders. He had a 'cold feeling' NOT to sleep in the Yard that night. And so, after dark, he managed to dress in his 'No. ones' (best suit) and pass out through the Pembroke Gates to home.

Being concerned about the liberty he had taken, he was up very early the next morning and off back to the 'Glasshouse' as it was termed in the dockyard. But at the Pembroke Gate he was informed that there had been an air raid on the sleeping base and the men there, killing many, including some of his friends. We thought ever after that, but for the Grace of God go I.

Forty Years of Memories

Dear Mr Huffam,

I have a few memories to recall of "DOCKYARD MATIE" days. My father was one for 40 YRS, and in that time walked to the 'yard from Nelson Rd. Gillingham via the "Lines" every day and home again at night. I too had this walk at dinner time, for – like your correspondent of last week, I left school at 11.30am each day and collected his dinner from home, which would be ready in a basin, tied with a coloured handkerchief. My mother would put it in a basket wrapped round with newspaper to keep it warm. I had to wait for my dinner, until I had walked home again.

I remember the launchings too, if father was able to get tickets. If he was on the ship (in spruce new overalls) as she went down the slip-way while the Marine Band played, my word! that really was a great occasion.

During the 1914-1918 WAR he used to have an enamel "baby" plate inside his cap to protect his head from shrapnel falling, when walking home in the raids.

On Fridays, if we were allowed to go to the Main Gate to meet him (usually we were only able to go part way) we would see women standing at the gate waiting for their menfolk to come out with their pay. Usually these women would be in long aprons and have a mans cloth cap over the curlers in their hair.

Dockyard Life in the Early Twentieth Century

Sir,

You will notice at once the date and time in the morning Boys had to be waiting outside there place of employment. By 5.55 AM

Metropolitan Police inside each Gate which were Main Gate top end of Yard.

Women were employed in Rope making others were employed in making Flags making.

Pembrook Gate and Gillingham Gate You also had the Royal Engineer Barrack close by if trouble broke out, up on your right was the Naval Barracks up the hill lay the Detention quarters. Field punishment was delt out there.

You had some very ugly men to deal with if you were just a boy.

Right through the Great War my Farther was Head Time Keeper for the whole of the Dockyard until my brother and self were brought back from the country in the last four months of 1919.

I will not under any circumstances revile any part of my home life. Be satisfied with some very hard facts which took place every day, The beginning of 1921..*[sic]*

Each man woman and boy who entered the Dockyard were ask if had matches upon him or women.

There were plenty of men with out of work, if by chance any person were stop by the police and they found just one match after they had already ask you you were for the high jump and no mistake was made. Simple reason the ticket he or she carried.

Simple reason was each person were issued a Government metal ticket, if you where brought befor the Forman of any one Department for disobying and order giving to you you could say good by to your job. I know it happened to me but was given my job back because of circumstances which are not going to be said here or any where else.

This man Mr B Humphreys, I wonder has he ever told you about the notices outside each gate that any one caught going through the gates with a box of matches Lord help him.

The Bells inside the yard where rang by police men every morning about 5.35 a.m. until 6.00 a.m.

Some people where given Lead tickets others Copper, Zink, Brass.

Very often fights broke out between men if you happened to be in the way god help you.

Naval people returning to the Naval Barracks you also had the Royal Engineer Barracks and married quarters, up opposite the Detention place. If real trouble broke out the police would send for the Army and civil police to break it up.

All this time my Farther was still head time keep for the whole Dockyard. Each Gate had to report to him just how many people where late for work, he or she would be stopt one shilling. You had a central pay station where you received your money each week.

My next eldest brother was a Boiler makers apprentis was saving up to buy his uniform to enter the Navy.

While myself could not pass any written examination so, I had to remain an errand boy for carring messages from one office to another from chargin Forman and their like from one end of the Yard to the other end where I had to wait until such times for the full report was made out back. I had to go walking both ways, if I was late in reporting Oh! Boy did I recieve a telling off by the Forman where I was employed if my Farther got to know of this, I would receive another dressing down.

Right up to 1928, I was still in the Yard then, I was given the sack while other men were given notice boy you ought to know you just could not get a job any were like it is today. You had the councils in the three towns full of Married men, they wanted there job more than you did.

At the age between 14 and 15, I was thrown out of any comfort a home was surposed to be simply because I did not toe the line with both my next to eldest Brother as well as my Farther with *[word here looks like nobby – possibly nobody]* or any where to live or take shelter. I will not go into the reason for this.

I think I have given you enough to go on with.

What and Why?

The Workhouse,
Magpie Hall Road, Chatham
Betty Cole



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

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

Part 1

Magpie Hall Road, Chatham is a long, winding and steep hill running from Luton Arches to the Walderslade Road. Few would choose to walk it and fortunately these days there is a bus to take us there. One can only imagine how it felt for the destitute in the mid nineteenth century to toil up that hill in despair to a place they didn't want to go. For here on the right hand side opposite the terraces of Victorian houses was the Medway Union workhouse.



*The last remaining workhouse building.
Photograph by Elaine Gardner.*

There is now a small development of houses covering the site except where in the lower boundary one original building still stands (pictured). This was the Boardroom of the workhouse left here by agreement between the developers and Medway Council.

Since 1726 there had been a workhouse in the East End of Chatham High Street and other parishes in the area had their own workhouses. However, the Poor Law Acts of 1834 laid down strict rules for the segregation of various classes of inmates, i.e. able-bodied men, able-bodied women, the aged and impotent and the children. Most of the Parish workhouses were too small to accommodate these new arrangements. So the Medway Union was formed from seven parishes: Chatham, Gillingham, St Margaret's, St Nicholas, Grange, Lidsing and Precincts. A Board of Guardians was set up with representatives from each parish to oversee the establishment and administration of the workhouse. The Guardians met weekly and by 1843 were discussing extending the Chatham Workhouse by purchasing adjacent premises in the High Street.

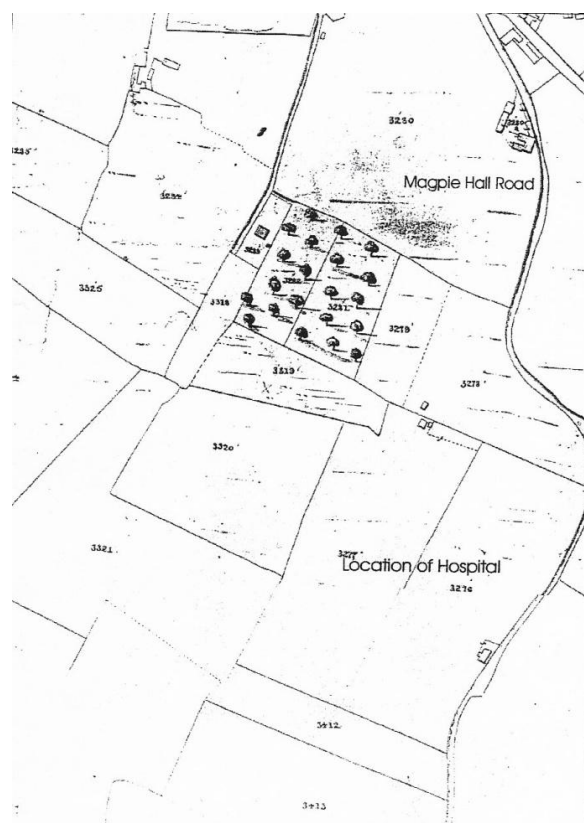
However, by 1856 the need for a new workhouse was apparent. In May of that year, Lord Courtney, Secretary of the Poor Law Board in Whitehall, wrote to the Medway Union Guardians, asking them to consider making more appropriate arrangements for the accommodation of able bodied male applicants for relief and report back to him on their findings. On 4 June, a reply was sent as follows:

In the opinion of this committee the accommodation at the Union House at Chatham and also at the Rochester workhouse is totally inadequate for the requirement of the paupers consistent with their general wants and that such buildings are incapable of the necessary improvements to provide such"¹

An explanation for the need for increased accommodation is given in a letter to Col. Savage, Royal Engineers, Brompton Barracks. Enquiring about the purchasing of some Crown land for the building of the new workhouse, the letter states:

.. the want of a suitable establishment of this kind having been long sincerely felt from the great increase of the population of the Union coupled with the increase of the Naval, Military and Civil establishments in this locality and from which contingencies are continually arising and increasing."²

The search for a suitable site for a new workhouse began. The above enquiry obviously being unfruitful, as eventually 11 acres of land and buildings on Borsters Hill, Magpie Hall Lane, Chatham were purchased in 1856 from a Mr. Mannering. On the 1843 Tithe Award Map below the land is shown as farmland with a small orchard to the north. The price for the land was £1,200 borrowed from the Exchequer Bill Loan Commissioners. Further land was later purchased for the building of a new infirmary.



The relevant section from the 1843 Tithe Award Map. By permission of Baratts (SE Counties).

Once the purchase of the land had been arranged plans for its design had to be produced. As was often the custom when new public buildings were planned, a competition was set up for architects to submit plans. Such competitions were regularly advertised in the journal *The Builder*. The competition was won by Messrs. Peck & Stephens, of Maidstone, with their plans entitled *Invicta*. Despite winning the competition they were asked to redesign the workhouse to cut costs.

Sampson Kempthorne (1809 – 1873), official architect to the Poor Law Commission, had drawn up model designs for workhouses. These were for plain and economical buildings, based on the requirements to segregate inmates and to provide them with sleeping, eating, working and other basic needs. To make supervision of inmates in all their activities possible, the plans were usually based on a central building housing the workhouse officials with other buildings radiating out from it. Peck & Stephens' design was a combination of linear buildings linked by corridors with the administrative buildings in the centre.

The plans for the workhouse having been approved, another advertisement in *The Builder* invited tenders for the building work and in February 1858 the journal published details of the contract being awarded to James Naylor, a local builder, with a tender of £13,591. The building was to have been completed by 25 March 1859 but by July the contractors were being warned that the penalty clause would be invoked if the building was not handed over within 14 days. The move to the new workhouse did not take place until November.

Naylor's Building Account Book begins with a summary of the final costs and is then divided into headings, not for each building but for the various types of work or material, e.g. Mason, Bath Stone, Yorkshire Stone, Oak, Ironmongery, Cast Iron, Gas Fittings, drains and Digging. Even after the building works began variations were still being carried out, such as the erection of a Smith's forge. The cost of this was '£2.8s.7d for materials, including 600 stocks and 27 hods of mortar, and £2.17s.5d for 6 ½ days work by the bricklayer and labourer.' This and other alterations were carefully listed under *Variations from Contract*.³

The buildings of 1857-1859 were an entrance block with boardroom, receiving ward, large accommodation block, dining hall, kitchens, workshops and infirmary. Two buildings which were already on the site and can be seen on the Tithe Map of 1843 (pictured above) may have been taken into use as vagrants' wards as they predate the 1857/58 buildings. The land on which the buildings were erected is on a steep slope so before construction was commenced, the site had to be terraced.

In the distance, beyond the trees the original boundary wall of the workhouse can still be seen. Photograph by Elaine Gardner.



Notes

1. Medway Union General Letter Book. Archive ref. G/ME/ACb/2.
2. Ibid, 22 Aug. 1856.
3. Medway Union Building Account Book. Archive Ref. G/ME/AF2 11/1.

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Talks and Events

All events are subject to change and to government guidance for public gatherings. Further information will be available on the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org), our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/fomalsc) and sent to members via email, where appropriate.

Friday 11 September, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

The Griffin, Horse and Harp; The Earls of Darnley and their Irish connections.

A talk by Christoff Bull - Christoff is always an entertaining speaker.

Saturday 24 October, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

Quiz Night.

£8 for members and non-members. **BOOKING REQUIRED** (see below).

Please do your best to get a table of friends together!

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

Dickens in Medway - title to be confirmed

A talk by Jeremy Clarke.

Friday 12 March 2021, 7.30 pm; doors open 7.10 pm.

The Rochester Bridge Trust Archive – title to be confirmed.

A talk by Alison Cable.

Friday 9 April 2021, 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

We're reopening on Monday 27 July!

Medway Archives Centre will be reopening on 27 July. However, in order to protect visitors and our staff and in line with government guidance, we have had to put some new safety measures in place, including a booking system and a change to opening times and services offered.

We have put additional social distancing, hygiene and cleaning measures in place and ask that all visitors observe distancing rules and follow the advised hygiene measures. We will continue to monitor and update the service in line with local conditions and changes to government guidance, and when it is safe to do so, will hopefully be able to offer our usual service.

To book an appointment

- If you'd like to visit us **you will need to book an appointment in advance**. We cannot accommodate visits without an appointment.
- Visits must be booked **at least three working days' in advance**.
- Our opening hours will be 9:30am-1pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
- All material must be pre-booked.
- You will be able to order up to 6 archive documents and up to 10 local studies resources per appointment.
- The centre will only be able to accommodate four visitors at any one time as we have had to reduce the number of tables and PCs available in order to ensure social distancing.
- Please contact us via malisc@medway.gov.uk to make an appointment and to discuss which items you wish to consult.
- Please note that at the point of booking we will ask for your name and contact details - these details are recorded for NHS Test and Trace purposes and held for 21 days only.

Facilities available

- Unfortunately our resources will not be available for browsing. This includes indexes, paper catalogues, microfilms, local studies books and maps.
- Please let us know when you book your appointment which resources you would like to use. You can search or browse for original archive material on the Medway Council Heritage Services catalogue and you can find books and periodicals by searching the Medway Libraries online catalogue. If you can't find what you are looking for, please contact us.
- We will not be able to provide access to the microfilm readers.
- We won't be able to provide any copying or printing facilities on the day of a visit, (including photocopying, or digital image requests). However, copy requests will be processed after the documents you have seen have been quarantined for 72 hours.
- We aim to fulfil all copy requests within 5-10 working days.
- We will need to quarantine all material used for 72 hours so this may mean that some material may initially be unavailable for your appointment.
- You can buy a photography permit and use your own device to take photographs of collection items, subject to normal agreements about your use of any images.
- Toilets **will** be available but only for visitors to Medway Archives Centre.
- There are **no** refreshment facilities currently available in the foyer.
- Lockers **will** be available.
- Unfortunately until safety guidance changes our staff will not be able to provide close one-to-one assistance, for example with help operating computers.

When you arrive for your appointment

- **Please do not visit the archives if you are displaying any Covid-19 symptoms.**
- The foyer to Medway Archives Centre will be kept closed whilst Strood Community Hall is not in use and whilst we are operating an appointment only system.
- Please arrive promptly at your appointment time and call 01634 332714 to let staff know you have arrived.
- We will stagger arrival times so that staff can greet each visitor, introduce the new visiting procedures, and issue the collection material requested.
- We ask that you wash your hands prior to handling any collection material or use any of the equipment.
- Please bring your own pencil and notebook for taking notes (or laptop/tablet).

- You will be assigned a desk/computer when you book; please do not use other spaces, even if they are not in use by other visitors.
- Contactless payment is preferred. If you need to pay by cash please provide exact change as far as possible.

Information about other services

- Our charged research and reprographics service will continue to operate. More information and fees can be found on our fees and charges webpage.
- As we are limiting the number of people on site we will not be able to have volunteers, this means there will not be any Family History Helpdesk sessions available until further notice.

Thank you...

A big 'thank you' to everyone who has kindly offered to donate material to Medway Archives Centre. We will only be able to accept donations of ephemera once we re-open, so if you're having a clear-out and have something of potential interest to us, please drop our Local Studies Librarian an email at malsc@medway.gov.uk



During lockdown Chatham Traction has remained active, though work on the GKE bus has been postponed. The Chairman, Richard Bourne regularly sends us updates and links to Chatham Traction's newsletters, as follows:

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/200610_Update_53.pdf

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/Sponsor_a_Seat_2020.pdf

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/Connecting_Service_5.pdf

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 the website at www.chathamtraction.org.uk.

Friends of Broomhill



The Friends of Broomhill have now resumed activities at Broomhill Park.

Friends of Broomhill (Strood) Task Days: Sunday Tasks Days are the first Sunday of every month except January, from September 2020 to April 2021 inclusive, from 10 am to noon. Meet in the car park at end of King Arthur's 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 the car park at the end of King Arthur's Drive (ME2 3NB). All welcome, no experience necessary! 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

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. Please contact 01634 333720 for the latest information.

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 60 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 26 October 2020, with publication on Wednesday 18 November 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

Copyright

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

Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

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

The Clock Tower is also available 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: becole40@gmail.com

Membership Renewal 2020

Please renew my (our) membership of the Friends of the Medway Archives, I (we) enclose cash / cheque for £.....

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------------|------|
| Individual | £10 | Family | £12 |
| Society membership | £15 | Individual life membership | £100 |

Cheques should be made payable to **Friends of the Medway Archives**.

Payment may also be made using the BAC system:

SORT CODE 60-21-02, ACCOUNT No. 48040304 and please use your name for REFERENCE; or by PayPal via our website: <http://www.foma-lsc.org/membership.html>

Please enter the information below in block capitals

Title and Name(s):.....

Position (organisation):.....

Address:.....

.....

.....Post Code:.....

Tel. No.....Email:.....

GIFT AID DECLARATION I wish the Friends of the Medway Archives treat all donations and subscriptions I have made for the six years prior to this year and will make from the date of this Declaration, as Gift Aid, until I notify F.O.M.A. otherwise. I pay income or capital gains tax at least equal to the amount of tax reclaimed.

Signed:Date:

The completed form and payment should be sent to the FOMA Membership Secretary,
Mrs. B. Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent.

Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

PLEASE PRINT OFF THIS PAGE TO USE

The Committee

Patron

Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL

President

Russell John Race, JP, DL

Vice Presidents

Sue Haydock, Brian Kingsley Smith



Chairman

Elaine Gardner:

102 Valley View Road,
Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent.
emgardner@virginmedia.com

Vice Chairman

Rob Flood:

16 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG,
Kent.
rob@feetontheground.co.uk

Treasurer

Josie Iles:

141 Watling St, Strood, ME2 3JJ,
Kent.
josie_iles@live .co.uk

Secretary

Christopher de Coulon Berthoud:

4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent.
berthoud@blueyonder.co.uk

Membership Secretary

Betty Cole:

98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham, ME4 4ZS, Kent.
becole40@gmail.com

Webmaster

Alexander Thomas

FOMA Archivist

Kevin Russell:

7 Donald Troup House,
Watt's Almshouses, Maidstone Road,
Rochester, ME1 1SE, Kent.

Members

Odette Buchanan:

72 Jersey Road, Rochester,
ME2 3PE, Kent.
odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Len Feist:

29 Hawthorn Rd., Rochester ME2 2HW, Kent.
lfstrood@gmail.com

The Clock Tower Editor and Publicist

Amanda Thomas:

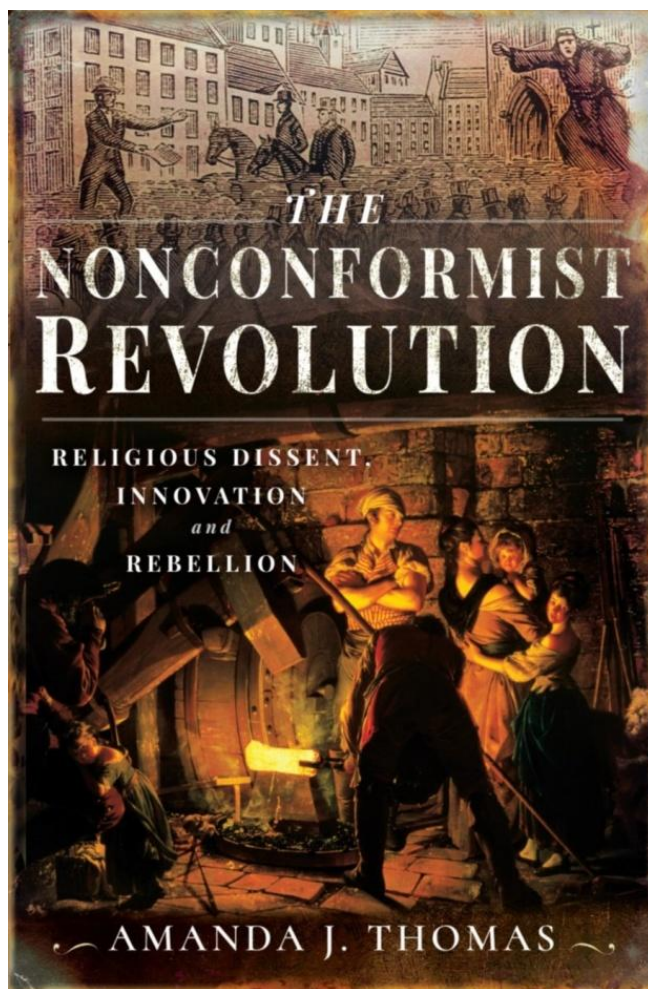
72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire.
amanda@ajthomas.com

The Nonconformist Revolution

by Amanda J Thomas

OUT NOW !

Amanda's latest book, *The Nonconformist Revolution* explores the evolution of dissenting thought and how Nonconformity shaped the transformation of England from a rural to an urban, industrialised society.



The book explains how the foundations for the Industrial Revolution were in place from the late Middle Ages when the early development of manufacturing processes and changes in the structure of rural communities began to provide opportunities for economic and social advancement.

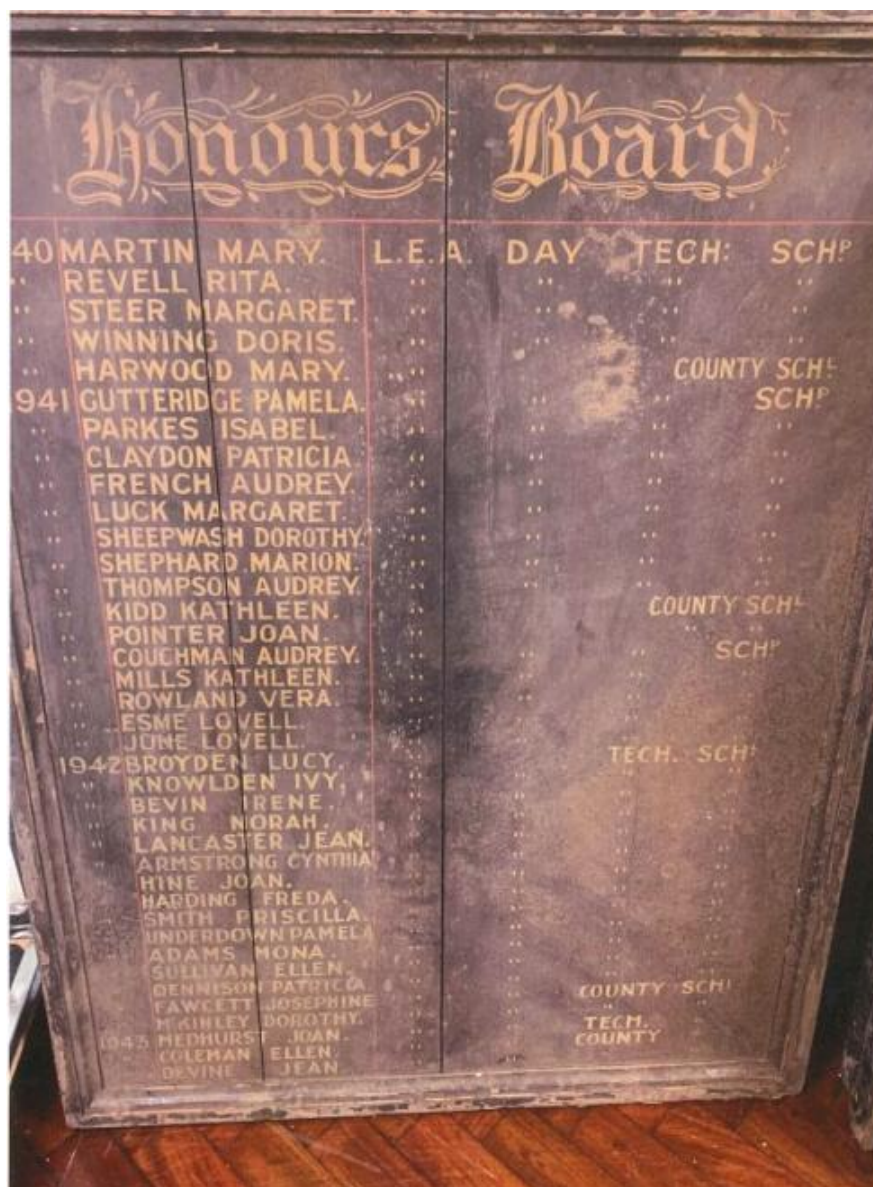
Successive waves of Huguenot migrants and the influence of Northern European religious ideology also played an important role in this process. The Civil Wars would provide a catalyst for the dissemination of new ideas and help shape the emergence of a new English Protestantism and divergent dissident sects.

The persecution which followed strengthened the Nonconformist cause, and for the early Quakers it intensified their unity and resilience, qualities which would prove to be invaluable for business.

In the years following the Restoration, Nonconformist ideas fuelled enlightened thought creating an environment for enterprise but also a desire for more radical change. Reformers seized on the plight of a working poor alienated by innovation and frustrated by false promises. The vision which was at first the spark for innovation would ignite revolution.

Pen & Sword Books, £20; ISBN 978-1473875678, available at all good booksellers!

The Balfour Honours Boards and Balfour Schools – A Mystery



In 2019 five large wooden boards were discovered underneath the hall stage at Balfour Junior Academy, Chatham. Their origin was uncertain, but on them were painted the names of female pupils from 1916 to 1946. On page 11. MAC Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe explains how the new Balfour Honours Boards Research Project (set up at the beginning of 2020) is beginning to unravel some mysteries. Pictured is Board 4, 1940 – 1943.