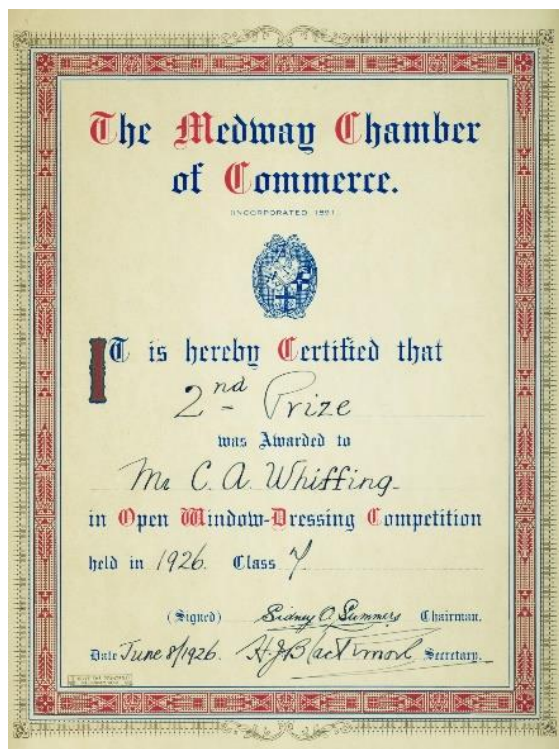


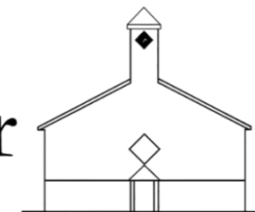
The Story of a Medway Grocer

On page 15 Sally and Phil Whiffing tell the story of Charles Albert Whiffing (known as Albert) who worked at the famous Dale's grocery shop in Rochester High Street. Albert won many prizes for his window displays there, the certificates of which can be seen on page 17. In June 1926 he was awarded second prize by the Medway Chamber of Commerce in Class 7 of the Open Window-Dressing Competition, as illustrated below.



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

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 78: May 2025
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

AGM Farewells



At the FOMA AGM, Elaine Gardner retired from the FOMA Committee and her role as FOMA Chairman. Her involvement will continue as a Vice President, and Dr Christopher de Coulon Berthoud will take over the Chairman role. Vanessa Sanderson has also retired from the committee; Natasha Boardman-Steer is our new Membership Secretary. Pictured from left to right: Amanda Thomas (*Clock Tower* Editor), Sally Ironmonger (FOMA Treasurer), Elaine Gardner (retiring Chairman), Dr Christopher de Coulon Berthoud (new Chairman), Natasha Boardman-Steer (Membership Secretary). See page 7.

Photograph by Dr Alexander Thomas.

In the weeks prior to the AGM, we were deeply saddened to hear of the sudden death of FOMA member, Pauline Weeds. Obituary on page 5.

The FOMA AGM



At the FOMA AGM Elaine Gardner was presented with some beautiful plants and a book about National Trust properties. We are delighted that Elaine's involvement with FOMA will continue as a Vice President, but stepping down as Chairman will give her more time to pursue her many interests. More about the AGM on page 7.

Left: Elaine and Chris.

Photograph: Dr Alexander Thomas.

Oral Medway – an exciting new project!

Rob Flood and Chris de Coulon Berthoud (pictured) have set up Oral History Medway (OHM) as a non-profit Community Interest Company (CIC) to share the voices of those communities in Medway whose stories often go untold. They are setting out to collect, preserve, and share the life experiences of those under-represented, marginalised, and diaspora groups across Medway. By creating an inclusive space for storytelling, Rob and Chris will be helping to fill gaps in the local record and build a richer picture of Medway's history. One of their key goals is to make sure these voices are properly represented in places like the Medway Archives Centre, because everyone's story deserves to be heard and remembered!



Pauline Weeds



The death of our friend and colleague Pauline Weeds saddened us all, and you can read her obituary on page 5. Here we also publish some photos of her at the Medway Archives Centre, volunteering and researching.

Above: Pauline manning the refreshments at the Medway Archives Centre.

Left: Pauline at work.



Photographs courtesy of the Medway Archives Centre.

The Committee

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Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL



President

Russell John Race, JP, DL



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Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



It seems we have presented Amanda, our Editor with a bit of a conundrum in this issue!

As I indicated in my February letter I was intending to retire as Chairman at the April AGM, which duly occurred, not only resigning as Chairman, but also standing down from the committee entirely. The new committee members are elected by the AGM but the roles within that committee are decided by vote at the committee meeting following the AGM which, as this goes to press, is still a few days away, so technically the position is vacant. This didn't happen in 2017 as Tessa Towner only stood down as Chairman at the May committee meeting, when I took on the role. Chris de Coulon Berthoud has been proposed and is willing to become Chairman, so by the time you read this I am sure he will be in post, and I wish him the very best.

The FOMA committee remains in good shape, though the post of Secretary is now vacant and we could do with a couple of new members. However, Natasha Boardman-Steer has now (brilliantly) taken on the role of Membership Secretary, and Steven Keevil has joined the committee. Sadly, Vanessa Sanderson has decided to retire, and we wish her all the very best for the future.

The FOMA AGM was an enjoyable event, and I would like to thank everyone for the gifts and flowers I received. It was a lovely surprise to be invited to become a FOMA Vice President, a role I was very happy to accept, and I will be continuing to support at FOMA and MAC events if needed, which includes helping proofread *The Clock Tower*! In fact, I don't think anyone has taken on packing and posting yet on the committee, so as usual, I will be printing the address labels and getting this issue of *The Clock Tower* out to you. By the way, annual subscriptions are now overdue so if you haven't yet renewed yours this sadly will be the last copy of *The Clock Tower* you receive. I hope not!

Over to you, Chris ...

New Chairman's Welcome

Dr. Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, PhD

I am delighted to accept the role as the new Chairman of The Friends of Medway Archives. It's an honour to take on this position and to build on the incredible work the group has already achieved in preserving and celebrating our local heritage. We owe a huge debt of thanks to Elaine for all her hard work in her role as Chairman, she will be greatly missed.



I am passionate about making Medway's history accessible, engaging, and meaningful for everyone in our community. Over the coming months, I look forward to working with you all, long-standing members and new faces alike, to continue supporting the Medway Archives in uncovering the stories that shape our shared community, and exploring new ways of sharing them through talks, exhibitions, and collections.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch, I'm keen to hear your ideas, priorities, and hopes for the future of FOMA.

See the inside front cover for news on Chris' and Rob Flood's exciting new project, Oral Medway.

Subscription Renewal Reminder

If you have NOT renewed, this is your last *Clock Tower*!

FOMA Membership subscriptions are due for renewal from 1 January 2025.
You can renew on the FOMA website <https://foma-lsc.org/membership.php>

As agreed at the 2023 AGM, FOMA subscriptions increased from 1 January 2024, our first increase since the formation of the society in 2006.

Rates are now as follows:

Single Membership £12 - Family Membership £14 - Life Membership £120
Society Membership £18 - Corporate Membership £60.

If you would like to set up a standing order so that your subs are paid automatically then our bank details are as follows.

NatWest Bank, Strood. Sort code 60-21-02. Account number 48040304

These details can also be used to renew by BACS payment.
PLEASE ADD YOUR NAME IN THE REFERENCE BOX. Thank you!

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; editor@foma-lsc.org.

The copy deadline for Issue 79 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 28 July 2025, with publication on Wednesday 20 August 2025.

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 Dr Alexander Thomas.

The Clock Tower is also available at www.foma-lsc.org/journal.php

The Clock Tower Index (<http://foma-lsc.org/journal.php>) 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: Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, 4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent; panthropology@gmail.com

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, _Natasha Boardman-Steer, natasha@creatobot.co.uk

FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

For more information see the website at www.chathamtraction.org.uk or contact Richard Bourne (Chairman); 31 Usher Park Road, Haxby, York YO32 3RX; 01904 766375, or 07771 831653. Email Richard@thebournes.me.uk.

Friends of Broomhill

The Friends of Broomhill, Strood, Task Days are the first **Sunday** of every month (except January), from September to April inclusive, 10 am to noon. **Thursday** Task Days are every Thursday morning (all year) concentrating on the Old Orchard woodland, 10 am to noon. Meet in car park at end of King Arthurs Drive, Strood, 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 and Twitter) or contact David Park, Secretary on 07968-380588 or email: secretary@friendsofbroomhill.org.uk

Medway Geographical and Local History Society

Friday May 23: AGM/History talk.

Meetings are held at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Twydall Lane, Gillingham Kent ME8 6TN.

Meeting time 2.00/3.30pm. Annual Subscription £20. Visitors £4. ALL are welcome.

For further information contact Ring Vanda Woollett 01634 389916 / Lorna Bailey 01634 572139. Follow us on Facebook.

Obituary Pauline Weeds (1947-2025)



We were deeply saddened and shocked to hear of the sudden death of our friend and colleague Pauline Weeds. Anyone who has worked at the Medway Archives Centre or has spent time there will have known Pauline, a regular volunteer, consummate researcher and writer.

Pauline was born on 8 May 1947, the only child of Edith and Alfred Inwood. She was born and grew up in Dartford and attended Dartford Grammar School for Girls. After leaving school, she worked at Unilever and then joined the Tax Office (Inland Revenue) where she remained until she married Martin Weeds in 1971.

Pauline and Martin moved to Rochester, setting up home with his daughter from his first marriage, Karen, who now lives in Australia. Two more daughters were soon to follow: Alison in 1973 and Julie in 1976. Sadly, Pauline and Martin separated in 1978, and Karen then went to live with her own mother. Pauline never remarried and returned to work in the early 1980s, first at an insurance company and then, from around 1986/7, in an administrative role at Kent Art Printers. Here she remained for the next 20 years until she retired in 2007.

Following retirement, Pauline worked as a freelance genealogical researcher and volunteered at the Medway Archives Centre and Eastgate House. Prior to the pandemic she also served as a City of Rochester Guide and volunteered for a short spell at the Huguenot Museum when it first opened. In 2019, her book *The Buck Family and Eastgate House* was published, which continues to be a best seller.

Pauline had two grandchildren, twins, Daniel and Evelyn (aged 14), the children of Julie and her partner, Stewart. We are indebted to Alison and Julie for supplying us with details of Pauline's life and we send our most sincere condolences. Members of the FOMA committee attended Pauline's funeral on 7 April.

More photographs on the inside back cover.

Attention Overseas Members!

At the 2024 FOMA AGM it was agreed to increase the cost for annual overseas membership as the postage for *The Clock Tower* is now £2.80 anywhere in the world for our 100g limit.

Overseas members have two options from 2025:

increase your annual membership to £18 to include a posted printed copy of *The Clock Tower*

or

remain at the £12 annual membership and download your copy from the

Please let the Membership Secretary, Natasha Boardman-Steer know your preference AS SOON AS POSSIBLE at natasha@creatabot.co.uk

*PLEASE NOTE

At the time of going to press, all the remaining lectures in this year's series were already fully booked. In order to avoid disappointment, admission is by prior booking only.

There are often cancellations and so please email or call us (see the previous page) if you would like to check availability or wish to be placed on the reserve list.

MAC Newsletter

The best way to hear about our forthcoming events and outreach is to sign up for our newsletter. Go to www.medway.gov.uk and click on 'Sign up for email notifications.' Select 'archives' and you'll receive a regular email keeping you up-to-date with our events programme and news.

Opening Hours and Visiting

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, Saturday 9am to 12.30pm, Wednesday and Sunday closed.

An appointment must be made to view original archive material and use microfilm or fiche readers.

How to Make an Appointment

Email us at malsc@medway.gov.uk to make an appointment and to discuss which items you wish to consult. For original archive material you must give at least three working days' notice of your intention to visit. For all other material (such as books, maps, photographs) we just require one working day's notice. When you book we will ask for your name and contact details so that we can keep in touch with you about your appointment.

- You can also search or browse for original archive material on the Medway Council Heritage Services catalogue.
- You can find books and periodicals by searching the Medway Libraries online catalogue.
- If you cannot find what you are looking for, please contact us.

Saturday 7 June, 10am to 12noon
 Saturday drop-in: Medway's World War Two
 Join us as we take a look at Medway's contribution to the Second World War and see how the area was affected. Chat to staff and volunteers and book a return visit to see more of the collection.

The MAC Spring Lecture Series 2025

4 June 2025

The Explosive Works at Cliffe - Cordite, nitroglycerine and the 'Flying Archaeologist'
 Amanda Thomas.

Notorious for its many fatal and grisly accidents, the factory employed a great number of local women during World War One, including Amanda's grandmother. In 2013, English Heritage published an archaeological survey and analysis of the remains of the Curtis and Harvey works, to which Amanda and her mother Dulcie contributed. Later that year, Amanda appeared on BBC 4's *Flying Archaeologist*, to talk about her family's involvement with the production of explosives at Cliffe. (FULLY BOOKED)*

2 July 2025.

A Meander along Rochester High Street (part 2)
 Geoff Ettridge.

For over 10 years, Geoff Ettridge has used tours and rambles to tell something of our past and to raise money for good causes. In this talk Geoff draws from his various tours to make connections with places along the High Street, and our local and national past. Geoff gave the first part of this popular talk in 2024. Join him for part two as he continues his meander along Rochester High Street. (FULLY BOOKED)*

£4 for a single lecture. Advance booking is essential (see contact details above).

The FOMA AGM

Amanda Thomas



The AGM was very well attended this year and introduced by out-going Chairman, Elaine Gardner.

After welcoming everyone, Elaine reminded us that FOMA was entering its 20th year, following the formation of the Friends in 2006 by then archivist Stephen Dixon at the old Medway Archives clock tower building. The Friends was first formed to facilitate the purchase of a letter by Robert Sands when it came up for auction. Written by Sands to his mother, the letter is an account of his adventures as a powder monkey on board HMS *Temeraire* at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Sands was born in St. Margaret's, Rochester, in about 1787/1788, and was one of at least 99 men from the Medway area who served at Trafalgar. Stephen realised that a Friends group could apply for funding not available to councils for the purchase of this very important document. Twenty years later, the document has been scanned and is available to view by everyone on the CityArk website, and later this year a special exhibition will be mounted at the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) to coincide with the anniversary of its purchase.



Elaine Gardner addresses the AGM.

Elaine went on to describe how FOMA continues to support the Medway Archives. This year we have purchased a number of local documents which have come up for sale, including a book on Gillingham Football Club's history. We have also facilitated the inclusion of the Medway Little Theatre archive, and have helped MAC celebrate the 25th Anniversary of CityArk, Medway's online research resource instigated by Stephen Dixon. We have also represented FOMA at the Medway History Day at the Royal Engineers Museum

During her welcome speech, Elaine confirmed her desire to step down as Chairman. She has been on the committee for 19 years and was one of FOMA's earliest members.

The FOMA Treasurer, Sally Ironmonger presented her financial report next, a copy of which was circulated and can be found on the FOMA website, within the AGM leaflet. https://foma-lsc.org/download.php?file=agm_2025.pdf

I (Amanda Thomas), as Editor of *The Clock Tower* Editor, was next to speak. First I thanked Dr Alexander Thomas, for making our journal so accessible on the FOMA website, our printer, Jon Barker of Barkers Litho Printers, Rochester, and Nic Nicholas who compiles the quarterly index. However, *The Clock Tower* would be nothing without our contributors and it is their research and wide variety of articles which help make the journal such a success. Sadly, we lost one of our most prolific contributors just a couple of weeks' before. I was most fortunate to have worked with Pauline Weeds on the last issue of *The Clock Tower* in February, for which she submitted an article on the Chatham police records. As always, it was beautifully researched and written and based on her extensive work at the Medway Archives Centre. Pauline will be greatly missed and as a member of our lovely team, she is completely irreplaceable. You can read her Obituary on page 5.

Other contributors to *The Clock Tower* this year have included: George Atzev, Peter Bursey, Norma Crowe, Deborah Collins, Chris de Coulon Berthoud, Stephen Dixon, Rob Flood, Elaine Gardner, David George, Tony Gray, Ray Harris, Janet King, Richard Lewis, Emma Ovenden, Dr Alexander Thomas, Hazel Thorn, Rien Van Driessen, Harry and Hilde Van Driessen-Meersschaert, Pauline Weeds, and Helen Worthy. My sincere apologies if anyone has been omitted.

I went on to discuss the various series published this year, the latest of which is Deborah Collins' on World War One aliens and Strood Workhouse, Part Two of which can be read on page 31. Other series included articles by Norma Crowe on the closure of Chatham Dockyard, Ray Harris's history of Rochester Bridge and conflict in the modern era, and Peter Bursey's fascinating account of the life of his ancestor John Grant; Peter's latest account of another area of his research can be read on page 35. Janet King has also been a regular contributor, delighting us with her wonderful memories of working in retail during the 1960s. For this issue Janet has written a poem, which can be found on page 40. Other series this year have included Richard Lewis's account of British concrete ships, and a story by the Van Driessen family about Alfred Van Driessen and his time in England during the First World War.

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Talks and Events

Please see the FOMA website for the latest details at <https://foma-lsc.org/>

Booking for FOMA events is not necessary and unless specified are ALL held at St Nicholas Church Lower Hall, Strood, Rochester, Kent. ME2 4TR; car park entrance is off Gun Lane, ME2 4UG, 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: Dr Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, 4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent; panthropology@gmail.com

Medway Archives Centre

32 Bryant Rd, Rochester ME2 3EP; 01634 332714; malsc@medway.gov.uk.

Drop-in Sessions

Wednesday 21 May, 2pm to 3.30pm

A free talk for Local and Community History Month.

Booking essential: 01634 332714; malsc@medway.gov.uk.

Teachers and Triangle Girls: Women in World War One - Jany's Thornton.

Join Jany's as she talks about how she used research into the work women performed during World War One on Sheppey to write her novels. Using extracts from local and national archives, together with stories from local papers and other sources, she demonstrates how varied women's lives were during the Great War.

Where did they go?

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.

Where did they all go?
The shops we used to know.
Helpful managers, eager to please.
It seems we no longer have need of these.

Different shops made a big difference
to where you could go to spend a few pence.
You knew exactly where to go for what.
You wouldn't feel obliged to just have what they'd got.

Specialist shops for your particular hobby or interest.
Advice forthcoming to help you do your best.
A font of knowledge was what they had
right down to the shop boy, very keen,
who'd show you everything there was to be seen.

Carefully wrapped and off you'd go
ten feet tall and raring to go,
off to the next shop in the row.

The series originally appeared in the magazine, *d'Euzie*, the magazine of the Stekene Historical Circle in Belgium. It was the culmination of years of research, aided in part by FOMA, following a letter in 2021 to our then Secretary, Odette Buchanan.

A discussion on Rochester High Street, begun by Leonard Dormon in February 2024, continued with further information and reminiscences by Tony Gray. At the AGM I wondered if this discussion might continue, as the location of the Rolls Royce hired out for weddings by Rochester's Castle Garage has yet to be located by Tony Gray. However, I am delighted to say that Rochester High Street continues to feature highly in members' research, as evidenced by Sally and Phil Whiffing's article on page 15.

In the May 2024 issue we published an article by David George in Australia. Many years ago, David's late father, Arthur was helped by then FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner, in his study of his Frindsbury Currel ancestors. The Currels were famous barge builders and David's article was a condensed version of his book *The Currels – Thames Sailing Barge Builders*, a copy of which he donated to the Medway Archives Centre.

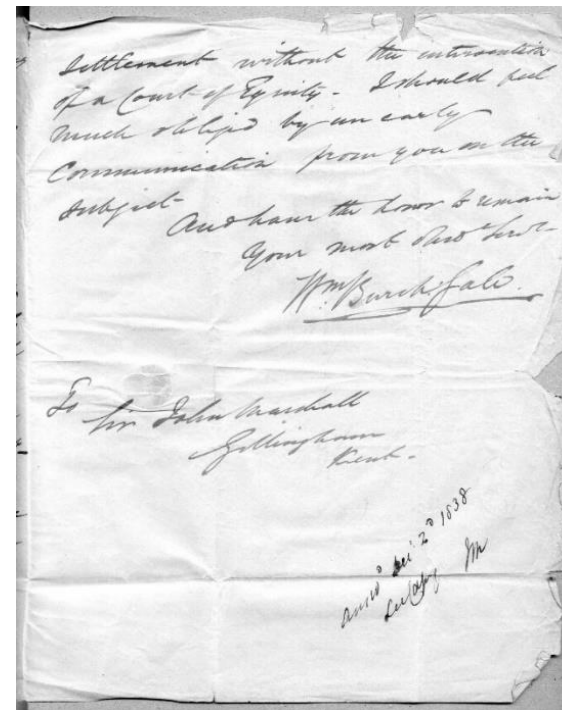
In the last year we have also covered the 25th anniversary of CityArk, with an article by MAC's former archivist, Stephen Dixon, and the unveiling of the refurbished Driver fountain at Chatham's Luton Arches written by FOMA member, George Atzev. We covered the 125th anniversary of the sinking on the Live Bait Squadron, which Elaine Gardner and I proudly attended, meeting up again with our dear friend, Honorary FOMA Life Member, Henk Van der Linden. The 1,200th anniversary of the battle of Ellendun was marked in February with an article by Dr Alexander Thomas, and we look forward to Alex's forthcoming book with Amsterdam University Press which will delve deeper into this fascinating period in history.

In conclusion, I thanked the ever-supportive MAC staff, including Helen Worthy, Emma Ovenden and Sarah Trim-West, the FOMA committee, including Elaine Gardner, Chris de Coulon Berthould, for all their updates, and also Rob Flood who posts prolifically on the FOMA Facebook page.

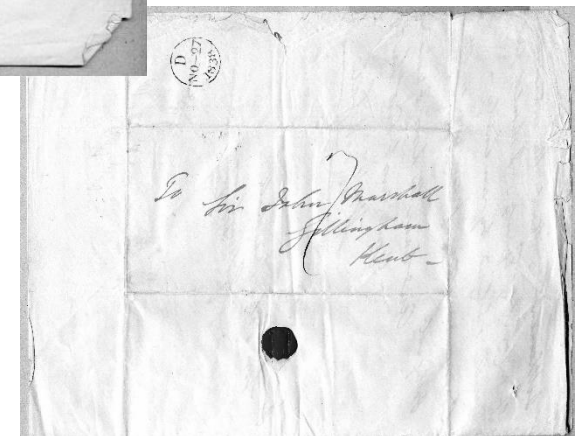
Last but not least, I was delighted to report that the Isaac Newell Heritage Group, an offshoot of FOMA, is working hard to commemorate Isaac, one of Strood's most famous sons: progress on the statue is going extremely well.

Dr Alexander Thomas, FOMA Webmaster addressed the AGM next with a breakdown of visitor numbers to the website, as follows overleaf:

	Unique visitors			Number of Visits			Hits		
	2023	2024	+/-	2023	2024	+/-	2023	2024	+/-
April	1,311	1,642	25.2%	1,719	2,109	22.7%	27,029	43,265	60.1%
May	1,381	2,535	83.6%	1,792	3,078	71.8%	28,850	96,573	234.7%
June	1,388	2,316	66.9%	1,698	2,892	70.3%	47,981	53,306	11.1%
July	1,422	2,324	63.4%	1,855	2,935	58.2%	42,267	29,255	-30.8%
August	1,240	2,336	88.4%	1,636	3,313	102.5%	81,152	96,477	18.9%
September	772	1,594	106.5%	1,037	2,070	99.6%	14,091	44,82	212.8%
October	1,121	1,546	37.9%	1,461	1,991	36.3%	53,041	42,667	-19.6%
November	1,311	1,734	32.3%	1,717	2,314	34.8%	46,724	40,181	-14.0%
December	1,426	1,768	24.0%	1,786	2,712	51.8%	72,815	30,188	-58.5%
	2024	2025	+/-	2024	2025	+/-	2024	2025	+/-
January	1,401	1,236	-11.8%	1,805	2,775	53.7%	104,474	37,726	-63.9%
February	1,397	2,561	83.3%	1,696	4,358	157.0%	57,234	74,531	30.2%
March	2,281	2,006	-12.1%	2,994	3,475	16.1%	51,682	32,969	-36.2%
Totals	16,451	23,598	43.4%	21,196	34,022	60.5%	627,340	621,220	-1.0%



Before leaving this intriguing case, it is worth noting that a list of tenants of the properties is provided in 1798 and 1839 and the former are very similar to those provided in the 1798 Land Tax list of that year, although no actual addresses are provided in the latter document. Again, the 1839 list of names can be compared with the 1841 Census which is also very similar. As occupations are given to the tenants in the legal case it could be a profitable record source. Also, both Thomas Landen 'the elder' and 'the younger' insured their properties with London insurance companies and these documents are available, apparently with a list of the tenants for 1781 and 1790.



Notes

1. National Archives C13/2300/21/1-8.
2. *A Naval Biographical Dictionary* by William R O'Byrne, 1849, pp 729-30.

A letter dated 27 November 1838 from Thomas Landen's solicitor to Sir John Marshall; from the author's collection.



As of 10 April 2025, there have been 724 unique visitors to the website, 929 visits and 8,118 hits. He went on to explain that his predictions for the next twelve months show a healthy increase in these figures, providing rates remain consistent.

The downloads for different issues of *The Clock Tower* make for fascinating reading, and from 1 January to 10 April 2025 they are as follows:

Rank			Issue	Download	Issue Description
2025	2024	+/-			
1	New	N/A	68	383	Farewell, Elspeth! / Wreck of SS Richard Montgomery
2	New	N/A	15	361	The FOMA visit to Restoration House, Rochester / How the Benefits System has Changed!, JL Keys
3	New	N/A	9	329	The Unveiling and Presentation of the City of Rochester Society's Gift to the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre
4	New	N/A	25	328	Special Celebratory 25th Issue - A new look for The Clock Tower: Au revoir Valerie!
5	4	-1	29	312	Sixty Years Ago: Brian Joyce looks back at the 1953 floods.

Total <i>Clock Tower</i> Downloads	13,443
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With regard to the FOMA De Caville Index, from 1 January to 10 April 2025 there was a total number of views (all pages) of 4,547.

Alex's analysis shows that the FOMA website has an experienced substantial growth in engagement in the last year. Unique visitors have risen by 43.4% (from 16,451 to 23,598). This rise created a 60.5% jump in the number of visits (from 21,196 to 34,022). Despite this, the total number of hits on the website remained relatively stable, with only a slight 1.0% decrease (from 627,340 in 2024 to 621,220 in 2025), a trend which might suggest that although while visitors were exploring the site more often, the average number of interactions, or hits, per visit may have slightly decreased over time.

Usage statistics highlight the website's importance:

- *The Clock Tower*: a total of 13,443 downloads since 1st January this year.
- FOMA De Caville Index pages: over 4,500 views since the beginning of the year.

The FOMA website continues to be relevant as a valuable research and reference resource.

Alex concluded that our Virtual Private Server renews in November and our Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificate, providing further encrypted protection to our users, renews in September. The website will cost FOMA just over £330 this year.

MAC Archivist Sarah Trim-West was the last to give a report. She thanked the FOMA committee and FOMA members for their support in the last year, and thanked Amanda Thomas for keeping members up to date by email with the quarterly reports which are issued by the archive. Sarah also confirmed that the team had submitted their Archive Service Accreditation review, and the results will be known in July.

New staff this year have included Natasha Beazleigh as the newest Archives and Local Studies Assistant, though sadly Eleanor Cooke has accepted a job elsewhere in the council and will soon be leaving. A programme has been instigated to train some of the library casual assistants to become MAC casual assistants. Sarah hopes this will provide an opportunity to take more experienced staff off the desk to do project work and help with retrievals in the strongroom.

With regard to outreach and engagement, there have been a huge number of different events, exhibitions, lectures and other activities. Sarah expressed how it is always great to see so many people at these events. The annual lecture series is always popular, and she thanked lecturers and attendees alike. The series is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the fascinating and varied history of Medway and beyond, and we have had a lot of positive feedback. Sarah also thanked the volunteers who greet and make refreshments.

The exhibition programme continued in April 2024 with a photographic display entitled *The Ghost of Acorn Wharf*. Sarah added, "These haunting photos of Acorn Wharf after the fire were both beautiful and informative." Following this was the Thomas Aveling and Aveling and Porter exhibition showcasing Medway's invention and manufacturing history. The current exhibition covers sporting history, and this has prompted a number of donations, including from the Kent and Sussex Ex Boxer's Association and the Cobham Golf Club Lady Golfers Club. Sarah added, "We are excited to expand this part of our collection as we are always looking to plug any gaps in our coverage of the experiences of Medway."

and the parishes of Upchurch and Halstow aforesaid for the price or sum of four hundred and fifty two pounds ten shillings.

Elizabeth was about 34 years old in 1798, so it seems there was some other reason why she was unlikely to have any children. This then is Elizabeth agreeing to have the value of the property in cash rather than the property itself – perhaps being a landlord did not appeal to her! The story continues in January 1803 when:

... by an indenture bearing date the first day of January 1803 which was duly made and executed between Anton Radigar [sic] of the first part and Thomas Landen the younger of the second part and Henry Burgess of the third part In consideration that Henry Burgess had paid and satisfied Anton Radigar the said principal sum of one hundred and fifty pounds secured by the said mortgage of the third day of September 1796 and all interest due thereon he Anton Radigar with the consent of Thomas Landen the younger bargained sold and assigned to Henry Burgess his heirs and assigns for all the residue of the term of the said mortgage of the third September 1796 To hold the same unto Henry Burgess his heirs and assigns for all the residue of the term of ninety nine years And Henry Burgess entered into possession or into the receipt of the said rents and profits of the premises.

The next step was the sale of the property to Sir John Marshall's father:

And this Defendant says that in or shortly previous to the month of March 1803 Henry Burgess contracted and agreed with William Phillips for the absolute sale and conveyance to him as well of the estates for life for the sum of six hundred and fifty three pounds subject to any interest of the issue of Frances Landen deceased or by Elizabeth Landen and were duly made between Henry Burgess and William Phillips the 15-16 March 1803 And William Phillips immediately after the execution of the indenture of 15-16 March 1803 entered into possession or into the beneficial enjoyment of the rents and profits of the premises.

William Phillips died in December 1828 leaving the Chatham property to his son, Sir John Marshall, and this legal case begins in 1838 after the death of Thomas Landen the younger 'of Whitechapel' in January of that year. Thomas spent the last three months of his life at Stepney workhouse and in his will he left his interest in the reversion of the property to his son Thomas, (born c1808) to a third wife, Lydia. Why he did this knowing that he had already sold it in 1798 is a mystery. In 1838, Thomas's son believed that he had inherited all the property on the death of his father in January 1838 but, apparently, did not have all the documents to support his case, whereas John Marshall did. The Bill and Answer held at the National Archives consists of eight A3 pages of densely worded claim and counterclaim. With no further mention of this case after 1839 it would appear that the Complainant was advised to drop the case.

Thomas Landen's family came from Chatham where his father, Thomas Landen, baker (1760-1838) and known as 'the younger' in the case, had inherited the houses in question in 1788 on the death of his own father, Thomas Landen, shipwright, (1718-1788) and known as 'the elder', in the case. The property came to the latter from his mother Mary Landen née Eastry (died c1776). Other names associated with the property are John Bulfinch (1702), James Coppin (1713), John Smith and John Pack (1751), and William Newell (1777) husband of Mary née Landen. The dates in brackets relate to other documents (such as earlier indentures and probate) in which those people are mentioned. The following notice is of interest here:

1788 Dec. 5 The Kentish Gazette: Chatham Dec. 1 : This morning died here Mr Thomas Landen, chief capstan maker, and many years one of the Quartermen to the shipwrights of this Dockyard.

A quartermen was a 17th century dockyard term referring to when the construction of a ship was split into four quarters and each quartermen was responsible for 20 shipwrights; the quartermen reported to a foreman.

In early 1795, after the death of his first wife Frances née Rugg in 1793, Thomas Landen 'the younger' needed money to fund a dowry for a second marriage. A settlement was reached as follows:

... between Thomas Landen the younger of the first part Elizabeth Sommerton spinster of the second part and John Sommerton [school teacher of Brompton, property owner, and Elizabeth's father] and Jonathan Hills of the third part being the settlement made on the marriage of Thomas Landen the younger with Elizabeth Sommerton in case she should happen to survive Thomas Landen the younger for and during her widowhood.

So, Thomas wanted to get married and decided to raise the money for the dowry by leasing his inherited property (for the remainder of his life only) to a London solicitor, Henry Burgess, for the sum of three hundred pounds. After Thomas died ownership of the property would revert to his wife Elizabeth, if she were still alive, or to any of Thomas's children by either his first wife Frances or by his second wife Elizabeth whom he married in May 1795.

So far, very straightforward but then, in 1796, in order to pay off a debt of £150 to an Anton Radiger of Brompton (possibly for the 26 acres in Halstow and Upchurch), Thomas sold the reversion of the Chatham property after his death (and presumably that of his wife) for a period of 99 years to Anton Radiger to compensate for the debt. Radiger appears to have accepted this solution.

The Defendant's case continues:

... in the month of June 1798 Thomas Landen the younger had issue by his former wife Frances one daughter only named Elizabeth Landen and no other issue by his late wife or by his wife Elizabeth who was then advanced in years and it was highly improbable that she should have any issue' ... 'Thomas Landen the younger and Elizabeth his wife contracted and agreed with Henry Burgess for the absolute sale to him of their estate for life both in Chatham

The free monthly Saturday drop-ins have continued, and with topics including Japanese Samurai and Will Adams, the Hoo Peninsula, wharves and piers, and the history of the Coastguard and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the RNLI. Another drop in focused on Chatham Dockyard and its contribution to Medway's development. In addition, MAC joined with Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust to lead two reminiscence sessions to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the closure of Chatham Dockyard.

During Local and Community History Month in May 2024, the Twydall-themed drop in at Twydall library proved to be a successful change of location and this was repeated with a similar event at Grain library. Other drop ins have included windmills and watermills, prisons and prison hulks, and Medway's sporting heritage, to tie in with the 2024 Olympics.

At Christmas MAC held the annual festive drop in and sold a lot of old stock. Sarah added, "This is not only an opportunity to raise funds for MAC, but more importantly it raises our profile and allows us to touch base with the local community." She continued that apart from events, "we have also had a busy schedule of volunteers. Aside from our regular volunteers, with ... a qualified archivist on site, we can now offer work experience to those who are considering a career in archives and/or heritage."

Behind the scenes, MAC staff have been repackaging much of the collection to improve preservation. This has been good for the long-term health of items but has also given an opportunity to put rarely used collections on higher shelving. This will hopefully mean that the lift will be used less, and retrieval times will improve. As the archive becomes busier this is important.

Sarah went on to explain how they have been in discussions with the Guildhall museum to use some of their unused storage space for MAC's closed collections. She explained, "While we still need a more permanent solution to our space issues, this is a great boon while we look at our options." In addition to this, staff have also been reorganizing the search room and customer computers, and microfiche/film readers are now by the windows. This has freed up a lot of space and has enabled more shelves, tables, and digital microfiche/film scanners to be brought in. Sarah added, "One of the new microfiche/film scanners was brought over from Gillingham library, while the other was bought with funds granted to Medway from the Library Improvement Fund." As a part of this on-going process, Sarah also explained how the archive is in the process of identifying key items in need of preservation which will then be sent to the National Conservation Service (NCS).

There have been many wonderful donations in the past year to the archive collection. These have included items from the Medway Beekeeper's Association, the political papers of Rod Help (Gillingham Labour Party), the Rotary Club of Rochester, and Kent Ex Boxer's Association. FOMA has also made some special purchases for the archive, including *Home of the Shouting Men 2*, a limited-edition book on the

history of Gillingham football club (1993-2023), a contribution towards the barrier to the car park, and the Rochester City Chamberlain's documents.

Sarah thanked everyone for their continuing support!

The election for FOMA committee members followed, which included new member, Steven Keevil. Elaine Gardner and Vanessa Sanderson stood down from the committee, and the following members were elected: Natasha Boardman-Steer, Dr Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, Len Feist, Rob Flood, Sally Ironmonger, Steven Keevil, Cindy O'Halloran, Dr Alexander Thomas, and Amanda Thomas. Elaine Gardner was elected a FOMA Vice President.

Following the meeting, Chris de Coulon Berthoud, who has agreed to become the next FOMA Chairman, presented Elaine with some gifts, which included some plants and a book about the National Trust. Chris thanked her warmly for her extraordinary service to the FOMA committee, and we are delighted that she will remain as a Vice President.

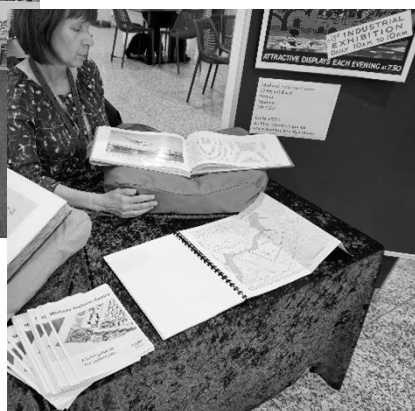
Local & Community History Month, May 2024

As explained by Sarah Trim-West in her AGM report above, in May 2024 the Medway local library drop ins during Local and Community History Month were extremely successful



Left: Emma Ovenden at Twydall Library (15 May 2024).

Photograph by Helen Worthy.



Right: Alison Thomas at Mid-Kent College (21 May 2024).

Photograph by Emma Ovenden.

A Property Dispute in Chatham

Peter Bursey



Peter grew up in Gillingham and attended Twydall Infant and Junior Schools, followed by the Grammar School when John Hicks was headmaster. Various jobs eventually led him to the Civil Service in Whitehall until he retired in 2007. In 1988 Peter spent five months at Chatham Dockyard on the Gannet project going up to the Public Record Office and the National Maritime Museum archives at Woolwich Arsenal where he discovered the original plans of the Gannet's masts and spars plus an assortment of other useful papers. He now lives in Shaftesbury, Dorset

In this issue of The Clock Tower, Peter writes about some research he undertook on a manuscript letter he purchased some time ago. Intrigued by its contents, he obtained a copy of a document at the National Archives about the case discussed in the letter. By way of further explanation, Peter adds: 'The key to understanding the legal dispute is to understand that there is the value of the property, the value of the reversion rights, and the value of the reversion rights beyond the death of the recipient of the reversion rights for 99 years!'

On 29 May 1839 a preliminary 'Bill and Answer' was brought to the Court of Chancery (Equity) in London concerning ownership of nine freehold properties in Chatham and 26 acres in Halstow and Upchurch.¹ Two of the houses were in King Street and four in Cross Street, just off the Brook; the other three were in Hog Lane behind the High Street off Whittaker Street. The legal case, the Bill, was brought by the Complainant Thomas Landen, tailor, of Greenwich (c1805-c1879), against the Defendant Captain (later Admiral) Sir John William Phillips Marshall, of Gillingham (1785-1850), who provided the Answer.

John Marshall entered the Navy in 1800 and, after a solid if unspectacular career, was eventually promoted to captain in 1814. Unusually, he gained national attention in 1812 by being a supernumerary on a naval vessel, the 46 gun frigate *Java*, enroute to the East India Station to take command of the sloop *Procris*, when the *Java* was captured by the famous (and larger) 55 gun US frigate *Constitution* in the South Atlantic.² After the Napoleonic Wars, Marshall next comes to our attention in 1826 when he was appointed to the office of Superintendent of Lazarettos at Milford and the following year as superintendent of the quarantine establishment at Stangate Creek on the River Medway where he remained until 1841. He was knighted in 1832, and his final command was of the 44 gun frigate *Isis* between 1841 and 1845.

Notes

1. Strood Union Workhouse Admission & Discharge Book G/ST/WIa7 May 1916 - November 1920.
2. Strood Union Porter's Book G/ST/WRp/4 August 1916 - January 1917.
3. Strood Union Porter's Book G/ST/WRp/4 August 1916 - January 1917.
4. Strood Union Porter's Book G/ST/WRp/4 August 1916 - January 1917.
5. Strood Union Workhouse Register of Deaths G/ST/WId/2 1914 - 1937.
6. Strood Union Porter's Book G/ST/WRp/4 August 1916 - January 1917.
7. Strood Union Master's Report and Journal G/ST/WRm/3 1916 - 1918.
8. Strood Union Porter's Book G/ST/WRp/4 August 1916 - January 1917.
9. Strood Union Workhouse Admission & Discharge Book G/ST/WIa7 May 1916 - November 1920.
10. Strood Union Porter's Book G/ST/WRp/4 August 1916 - January 1917.
11. Strood Union Workhouse Register of Deaths G/ST/WId/2 1914 - 1937.
12. Kent Messenger & Gravesend Telegraph 13 January 1917.
13. Northfleet Cemetery records.
14. Central Register of Aliens in the UK - Policy of Internment and Repatriations of Alien Enemies HO 45/11522 PART 2, Findmypast].
15. Strood Union Relieving Officer's Applications and Report Book Northfleet District G/ST/RA/15 March 1916 - September 1916.
16. Strood Union House Committee Papers G/ST/AMP/2 January 1917 - December 1917.
17. Strood Union Relieving Officer's Applications and Report Book Northfleet District G/ST/RA/15 March 1916 - September 1916.
18. Strood Union Lymptone Scattered Home Admission & Discharge Book G/ST/CIa/2 1907 - 1931.
19. Gravesend Union Minutes of the Board of Guardians G/G/AM26 September 1915 - April 1919.
20. Strood Union Porter's Book G/ST/WRp/4 August 1916 - January 1917.
21. Strood Union Workhouse Admission & Discharge Book G/ST/WIa7 May 1916 - November 1920.
22. Strood Union Master's Report and Journal G/ST/WRm/3 1916 - 1918.
23. Strood Union House Committee Papers G/ST/AMP/2 January 1917 - December 1917.
24. Strood Union Minutes of the Board of Guardians G/ST/AM/34 April 1915 - August 1918.
25. Strood Union Minutes of the Board of Guardians G/ST/AM/34 April 1915 - August 1918.
26. Strood Union Master's Report and Journal G/ST/WRm/3 1916 - 1918.
27. Strood Union Workhouse Admission & Discharge Book G/ST/WIa7 May 1916 - November 1920.
28. Strood Union Minutes of the Board of Guardians G/ST/AM/34 April 1915 - August 1918.
29. Strood Union House Committee Minutes G/ST/AM/38 April 1914 - February 1922.
30. Strood Union House Committee Papers G/ST/AMP/2 January 1917 - December 1917.

The Story of a Medway Grocer

Sally and Phil Whiffing



The Whiffings are an old Medway family. Descendant, Phil Whiffing was born in Strood and grew up in Gravesend, but after leaving school, he moved away from the area to work in education. Recently retired, he enjoys photography, sailing and fishing. Sally, Phil's wife, has always been interested in local and family history and has worked in museums and archives around the country. She has researched her own roots in Cornwall and Staffordshire. However, after marrying Phil, she began to investigate his Kentish family history which goes back six generations in the Medway Towns. Sally has registered the Trethewey and Whiffing surnames with the Guild of One-name Studies, covering all the varied spellings of those names. Phil provides IT, editorial and logistical support for her research from their home in Dorset.

Today, most of us buy our groceries from one of the big supermarket chains, but this was not always the case. In the early twentieth century, towns and villages in Medway, such as Rochester and Cliffe, were served by local family-owned grocers who sold a wide range of goods from food to clothes and fuel; some even offered a delivery service. Several of these local grocers had more than one shop and a few developed into the large chains we know today, others closed and have been forgotten. Phil Whiffing's grandfather, Charles, worked for two grocers in the Medway area for almost 60 years. This is his story and that of the stores in which he worked. It is based on family memories, photographs and public documents. If there are any mistakes, we apologise and would certainly welcome any further information linked to the story which follows.

Charles Albert Ernest Whiffing was born at 38 North Street, Strood on 13 January 1895, the second child of Charles Albert Whiffing, shown in the photograph (right), and Mary Maria, née Hassam. Charles was baptised at St Mary's parish church in Strood on 17 February 1895 and was known as Ernest to his siblings to avoid confusion with his father, and paternal grandfather, who were also named Charles. However, he only used C.A. never C.A.E in his signatures, and Phil's grandmother called him Albert.

Right: Charles Albert Whiffing, taken by W Kent of 19 Military Road, Chatham, 1890s.

In 1901 the census showed that Albert was living at 6 Hayward Avenue, Strood, with his parents and three of his siblings, Hilda, Henrietta and Violet. His father was a journeyman painter and plumber who died of pneumonia in 1902 before Albert was eight years old. In the 1911 Census Albert was shown living with his paternal grandparents at 58 Gordon Road, Strood and was working as a milk carrier.



Left: Charles Albert Ernest Whiffing (Albert) taken by an unknown photographer in Opladen. Written on the reverse: 'Opladen Germany 1.3.19. To dearest Ethel. With Affectionate Love From Yours Ever Albert.'



The next records we have are from Albert's service in the First World War. He served with the Royal Garrison Artillery and his attestation papers survive giving some useful information.¹ He volunteered on 9 December 1915 and despite poor eyesight and tachycardia (an irregular heart beat), was declared fit for service in the field. He was living with his mother at 1 South Eastern Road, Strood and his employment was given as grocer. Having signed his attestation papers, he remained in the Army Reserve and would have returned to his job until being called up almost a year later on 27 November 1916.

Meanwhile on 26 August Horace and William again absconded, with the Master of the Workhouse reporting, 'The 2 boys Blesch did not return from Sunday school on 26th inst, & have been absent since'.²⁶ They were eventually returned to the workhouse by their aunt on 31 August.²⁷

On 30 August 1917 at the Guardians Board Meeting:

'Letter read from Sir Ernest H Lamb M P dated the 3rd inst, enclosing letter he had received from the President of the Local Government Board, on the subject of the children Blesch. From this it appeared there was no Official Machinery in force by which the children could be sent to Germany. It was pointed out the children were, according to English Law, British subjects, and the proper course would seem for the Guardians to look after them and to bring them up accordingly.'²⁸

It appeared that the Guardians had no option but to follow the advice in Sir Ernest's letter but still had the problem of the constant absconding from the Scattered Homes of Horace and William. At the meeting of the House Committee on 25 September 1917 it was reported:

'Blesch Children - The Committee had before them the lads Horace & William Blesch who have recently absconded from the Workhouse, and the Committee are of opinion that it would be wise to separate one from the other, and they accordingly recommend that the older lad be sent to the Working Boys Homes in London or other Institutions willing to receive them.'²⁹

On 28 September the Homes for Working Boys agreed to accept Horace at their Pelham House, 30, Spital Square, Bishopsgate, '... where we have other German boys under similar circumstances but who are old enough to go out to work.' He would attend school whilst he was at the Home and on reaching the age of 14 they would place him in work; Horace at this time was just 13.³⁰

Day of the Week	Date	Names	Time of Entering the House	Time of Leaving the House	Purpose of Visit	Remarks
Continued	1916					
Saturday	Dec 23	Miss Rashell	7.45	10.15	Nurse	
		Miss Drew	7.45	10.15	Nurse	
		Robert Risher	8.45	10.15	Doctor	
		Queen J. Carter	8.45	10.15	Withholence Snuff	
		M. L. Gwynne	9.45	10.15	Cost	
		M. Moss	9.45	10.15	Master	
		M. Moss	9.45	10.15	Master	
		Miss Sadler	9.45	10.15	Nurse	
		M. B. Blesch	9.45	10.15	To see C. B. Blesch	(see 16.12.16)
		Capt. Finch	9.45	10.15	With B. Blesch	(see 16.12.16)
		H. F. Gwynne	9.45	10.15	Strood (via G.P.O.)	RM

In the ninth row down, Johannes' visit to his wife is recorded; Strood Union Porter's Book; G-ST-WRp-4..

Johannes had been interned since September 1914, but towards the end of 1916 the British Government had reached an agreement with the German Government for the return to Germany of interned Germans over the age 45 with British born wives. Johannes appeared on the list produced by the authorities of the Prisoners of War Camp, Alexandra Palace, dated 16 August 1916.¹⁴

Following the death of Emma he voluntarily returned to Germany and was there by early February.¹⁵ However, he seems to have come to regret this. In a letter that he wrote from Baden in Germany in August 1917 to Miss Alice Campbell, the Superintending Foster Mother of the Scattered Homes, he wrote:

‘Following the death of Emma, Horace was again in trouble for absconding from the Scattered Homes but this time he had with him his younger brother William. The first occasion was on 6 February 1917 and then again on 1 March with their absence only being for one day on each occasion.¹⁷ More serious was their absconding from Lymptone Scattered Home on 15 March. The police found the boys and took them to the Gravesend Union Workhouse from where they were returned to Strood on the 24th.^{18 19 20 21} This time when they returned to the workhouse they were kept there and not re-admitted to the Scattered Homes.’²²

Johannes had heard about the boys absconding and in his August letter (the same as above), he wrote:

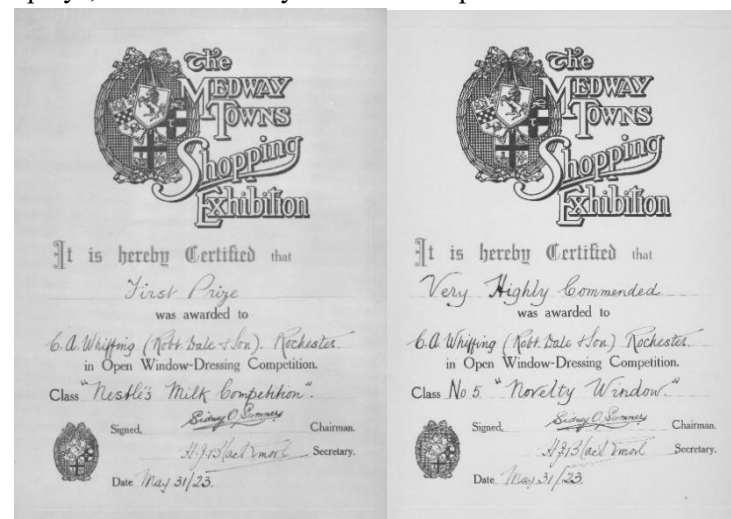
‘... Mrs Bridgewater has told me, in her last letter, that my two eldest Boys Horace & Willie, have run away from your home three times; which has given me a great shock, to hear of such sad news & it is a great Blow to me, that the [sic] are in the Workhouse. I should think the [sic] are sorry by now, what the [sic] have done, to leave such a good Home. I cant [sic] understandt [sic] what made them do it, when I think of my Boys spending there [sic] days in the Workhouse I could sit down & have a good cry...’²³

Mrs Bridgewater was a member of the Emergency Committee for the Assistance of Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians in Distress which was an organisation set up by the Quakers and with whom Johannes appears to have had a lot of contact.

At the meeting of the Strood Guardians on 5 July 1917, ‘A question arose with regard to the 4 children Blesch, [Horace, William, Frieda and Arthur] now chargeable to the Guardians and whose Father was of German Nationality and had recently been repatriated. The Guardians were reimbursed quarterly, through the Local Government Board, in respect of the actual cost of maintenance of the children but the Guardians were generally of opinion that these children should no longer be kept in the Guardians Institutions, but should be sent to Germany where their Father was now resident.’ The Guardians agreed to write to their local Member of Parliament, Sir Ernest Lamb, and ask him, ‘either by bringing the matter before Parliament or otherwise as he might think fit, in order that effect might be given to the Board's wishes in the matter.’²⁴ Sir Ernest later advised the Guardians that he had raised the matter with the President of the Local Government Board [the organisation which had authority over the Guardians] ‘... who had replied that the case would have his attention ...’²⁵

Following training at Catterick and Winchester, Albert arrived in Le Havre, France on 11 September 1917. Six days later he joined 131 Heavy Battery and from there the battery's movements can be tracked via War Diaries.² Among the places he fought were Ypres, Cambrai and Passchendaele. When the war ended, Albert was among the first troops to occupy the Rhineland before being discharged at Dover on 20 May 1919. He returned to Strood with over 50 postcards from his wartime travels; we have managed to track down and photograph the locations shown in the postcards, but that is another story. The photograph of Albert in uniform was taken at Opladen, near Cologne, in 1919.

The census of 1921 shows that after discharge Albert had returned to his mother's home at 1 South Eastern Road and was employed as a grocer's assistant at R Dale & Son, of 30 High Street, Rochester. Just a couple of months later he married Ethel Sophy Wilson, who was born in Chatham in 1897. Ethel had been working as a dormitory maid at St John's School in Leatherhead³ and had to leave this position when she married. When Albert asked Mr Dale for a day off for the wedding, he was refused but was allowed half a day and the use of the horse and cart belonging to the shop. Albert continued to be employed by Dale's and was awarded certificates in the 1920s for his shop window displays. In the Open Window-Dressing Competition, organised as part of the Medway Towns Shopping Exhibition in May 1923, he was awarded first prize in the Nestle's Milk Competition and was very highly commended in the novelty window class. In June 1926 he was awarded second prize by the Medway Chamber of Commerce in Class 7 of the Open Window-Dressing Competition (see the back page). We would love to know of any photos of these window displays, or indeed of any of Dale's shop front.



In the May 1923 Open Window-Dressing Competition, organised as part of the Medway Towns Shopping Exhibition, Albert won first prize in the Nestle's Milk Competition and was very highly commended in the novelty window class.

Albert was not the only member of his family to work for Dale's. His younger sister, Henrietta (seated centre row second from left), appears in a photograph dated 11 October 1918 showing Mr and Mrs Dale (seated centre) and 13 other members of staff. Can anyone identify the other people in the photograph?



Mr and Mrs Dale and staff, including Henrietta Whiffing (seated centre row second from left), taken 11 October 1918; photographer unknown.

Robert Dale had been apprenticed to the Strood grocer Frederick Wheeler,⁴ and in 1858 he took over the business after Frederick retired.⁵ Both were active members of the Society of Friends. The 1861 Census shows that Robert Dale employed two assistants, and advertisements show that he had two shops: 203 High Street, Rochester, and 59 High Street, Strood.⁶ In previous issues of *The Clock Tower*, Robert Dale & Sons, as it was in the 1950s, was described by Julie Gay⁷ as a high-class grocer, and Leonard Dormon⁸ recalled the smell of coffee emanating from the shop.*

In 1883 the freehold of the grocer's shop, house and premises at 203 High Street, Rochester was advertised for auction.⁹ It had been in the occupation of Robert Dale on an annual tenancy since 1872 and apart from the large double-fronted shop, included six bedrooms, three sitting rooms, two large storerooms, kitchen, scullery, outhouses, large dry cellars and a garden. The advertisement records that gas was laid on and that the property was nearly opposite the Guildhall and Corn Exchange. Presumably, it was renumbered later as the premises are numbered 30 High Street before the 1921 Census when Albert was working there. [See page 26 for further information.]

Aliens and the Strood Union Workhouse *The Blesch Family*

Deborah Collins



Deborah lives in Medway and has been studying Kent Poor Law Unions and parish workhouses for more than 10 years. Her research has uncovered many different aspects as to how the Kent Poor Law Unions affected the lives of all people and not just the poor. Her research of parishes properties has also made discoveries of how parishes used several different methods to house their poor. She has a website dedicated to the subject of Kent Workhouses and Poorhouses: <https://kentworkhouses.uk/about/>

Part Two

Emma's health was deteriorating and on 8 November she was discharged from the workhouse infirmary to St Bartholomew's Hospital. She returned to the workhouse infirmary on 18 November.¹

The following day, Sunday 19 November, Emma's sister visited her, and the next day four of her children also visited and stayed with her for an hour.² All five children visited their mother again on 25 November and on the same day their father, Johannes, was recorded as being a visitor.³ Johannes was to make four visits to see Emma, sometimes staying overnight and was accompanied by a soldier. Over the Christmas period he stayed from the evening of 23 December until the evening of 26 December.⁴

Emma's sister was with her when she passed away on 3 January 1917 at the age of 38 of '(1) Pulmonary Tuberculosis Tubercular right side perinephric [perinephric] abscess (2) Lardaceous disease of kidneys.' Although Johannes was recorded as having come to the workhouse that day, according to the times entered in the Porter's Book he arrived after her death (see page 33). There was no mention of the children having visited her after 25 November.^{5 6 7}

On the following day (4 January) both Johannes and Lucy Owen together visited the Master. This was presumably to discuss the funeral arrangements, but also what was to happen with the children. Indeed, when Lucy left the workhouse that afternoon, she took Percy (aged 14), the eldest child, with her to live.^{8 9} Johannes again came to the workhouse on 6 January, this time to accompany his wife for her burial at Northfleet Cemetery on 16 January 'by her friends.'^{10 11 12 13}

Stephen William Franks, born 16 September 1872, 4 Burritt St., Rochester. Father listed as George Reynolds Franks, Private Royal Engineers on copy of birth certificate. Father's occupation later changed to tailor.

1881 Census: Stephen Franks listed as William Franks, nephew enumerated with Weller family, Alexander, Elizabeth and son Stephen, living at Gravel Walk Rochester.

Stephen used the name William presumably because his cousin was called Stephen. He continued to use it for the rest of his life.

1891 Census: Stephen William Franks is still living with his Weller relations at 73 Princes Street St., Margaret's Parish, Rochester, employed as a football ground attendant. Listed again as *William*.

Married Annie Gibbs, 3 June 1895 at St Nicholas, Strood, both of Stonehorse Lane (lower part now Cliffe Road, Strood); Stephen's occupation recorded as blacksmith.

Ernest Franks born June quarter 1896 North Aylesford District, living at 3 Stonehorse Lane, Strood, baptised 10 May, St Nicholas, Strood.

1901 Census at 6 Newark St Strood: William Franks, aged 27; Annie Franks, aged 25; Ernest Franks, aged 4.

Daughter Phyllis born 18 November 1901 at Newark St., baptised 5 Jan 1902, St Nicholas, Strood; Stephen's (William's) occupation listed as Engineers Blacksmith.

1907 City of Rochester Education Committee medal awarded to Ernest: '4 years Gordon Road Boys'; a 5-year bar is attached to the medal ribbon.

1911 Census at 31 Temple St., Strood: Stephen William Franks, aged 39, skilled labourer at an engineering works; Annie Franks, aged 35; Ernest Franks, aged 14, boilermaker's apprentice at an engineering works.

1913: Ernest's family living at 64 Morden St Rochester, two doors away from his mother Annie.

1918 Ernest Franks killed in France.

In 1881 Robert employed two men and three boys, though by 1891 he no longer lived above the Rochester shop, and the census of that year shows his oldest son, Robert Wilfred, and daughter, Amelia, were living at 59 High Street in Strood. In 1901 Robert's younger son, Leonard, was living at 104 High Street, Strood, and was advertising a wide range of Christmas groceries and provisions available at 104 and 106 High Street, Strood.¹⁰

The 1910 Valuation Office Survey shows that the Dale's property in Rochester consisted of a low-pitched shop, office, kitchen and scullery on the ground floor with stores on the first floor on the left of the shop. The rest of the building consisted of a sitting room and back room, with a fine Jacobean mantel, on the first floor, and three rooms and a small room on the second floor. It was also recorded that, 'the tenants have built up an excellent business.'

After Robert Dale senior died in 1914, his oldest son Robert Wilfred ran the Rochester shop, while his younger son, Leonard, continued to run the Strood shop. Robert junior also had another shop in Sutton, Surrey.¹¹ Robert Wilfred Dale was elected Mayor of Rochester Town Council twice, in 1924 and 1925.¹² 30 High Street is now The Quills restaurant.

By 1927 Albert was looking for advancement. According to family memories, he was approached and asked to manage one of the growing number of Sainsbury's stores.¹³ Albert declined, choosing instead to move to Dartford to manage a branch of Messrs. Parker and Son.

Census records show that the Parker family grocery business originated in Norfolk with John Parker, born 1786, and was continued by his descendants. These records show that his oldest son William, (1808-1861), continued the business at East Tuddenham and was succeeded by his widow and later by his sons, Daniel and George. By 1891 Daniel had moved to manage a grocery business in Stowmarket, Suffolk and some time before 1906, Daniel and his family moved to Cliffe where Daniel and his son, Frederick William, took over from H J Pope and Co, Supply Stores, formerly Chesterton's grocery shop, in Church Street. Daniel and Frederick's wives assisted in the business, and all lived at the same address.

Albert's window display at Clibbon and Parker, Dartford; photograph by Albert (CAE) Whiffing.



The photograph on the previous page shows one of Albert's window displays at Clibbon and Parker, 82 Lowfield Street, Dartford.¹⁴ It was taken at around the time of the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937, which coincided with the centenary of Bird's Custard Powder.

Albert and Ethel Whiffing lived at St Albans Road in Dartford and their son, Colin Albert, was born at the Livingstone Hospital in 1930. In 1937, after shop owner Daniel Parker's death in the previous year, Albert and his family moved into the living accommodation at Parker's shop in Cliffe where Albert became the manager.

The 1910 Valuation Office Survey shows that Parker's shop in Cliffe and the two adjoining 'two up, two down' cottages were all owned by Mrs Sarah Stevens of Strood, and that the two cottages had been taken into the adjoining business premises in 1909. The shop and residence were described as very old brick, timber and tile with a store at the rear, two parlours, kitchen and a first floor with five rooms. There was also a small scullery, WC, timber and iron stable and shed, cellar and yard. The cottages had been occupied by John Mills and George Mills, with Daniel and Frederick Parker being the occupiers of the house, shop and store. By 1921 Daniel and his wife had retired and the business was continued by Frederick, following his discharge from the RAF.¹⁵

Frederick Parker, known as Old Man Parker, was the senior partner and his son, Jack Frederick Parker, was the junior partner in the business. Both were master grocers, and the 1911 and 1921 Censuses show the Parker family living at the shop. The Parker family then moved to live at Curhar House in Cliffe¹⁶ which was named after the Curtis and Harvey ammunition works once sited on the marshes.



The shop at Cliffe; photograph by Albert (CAE) Whiffing, 1960s.

There was a crowded room of footballers and their friends, who were entertained to some lively songs, recitations, clog dances &c by Messrs W M Mitchell, W Wheatley, C Shave, W Jarvis, P Borer, J Mannering, Robinson, C Willmott &c. Sgt Gallaway, RE efficiently presided at the piano.

The Charman congratulated the winners of the Senior Cup, which he then had the pleasure of handing over to the possession of the "Chatham B" team, and called the following to each receive a very handsome silver medal with a suitable inscription on it. They were enclosed in a moroccan case and had been supplied by Messrs Schultheles [?] and Son, Chatham. The recipients of the Senior Medal were H Quarrington, J Cockrell, R Duffield, F Cleaves, T South, R Holding, J Elliott, J Hall, P Cochrane, J King and H Broomfield. In addition a medal was presented to J Darling.

After the presentation of the Senior medals, Mr J A Price in a neat speech called around him Messrs C Shave, P Coyne, W Medcalf, W Levett, J Mannering, W Franks, G Riggs, F Tucker, E Broad, A Dunaghy [?] and W Jarvis who played in the "Hercules" team which vanquished Chatham Hill Reserves and presented each with a silver medal in a case bearing the same inscription as did those of the Seniors.

Mr F Nichols then proposed success to the Luton Association. He showed the progress of the Association from its start up to the present when it numbered 28 clubs. And he hoped it would soon double that number [...]. The financial state of the Association thanks to the outside help and particularly to the Chatham and New Brompton Football Clubs was in a healthy state. He coupled with the toast the name of: Councillor Burgess, Mr J A Price (Vice President), Mr G Colbert (Secretary) and A J Nash. [...]

Mr J Albert next proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman and gave an instructive address to the players present. He told them to stick to their clubs and not to be led first this way and then the other.

A most enjoyable evening came to close with "God save the Queen" and "Auld Lang Syne".

For further clarification, I have done some further work on the Franks family, as below, and which explains how William Franks was, in fact, *Stephen William Franks*, born 1872.

Franks Family

George Franks b. circa 1850 in Exeter, Devon
1871 Census. Listed as a driver with the Royal Engineers at Brompton Barracks.

Married Ann Elizabeth Weller, September quarter 1871, North Aylesford District.

A Fascinating Discovery

Elaine Gardner



When the carpet in my back bedroom was lifted prior to building work, we found an old solid silver medal. It was inscribed *Luton New Brompton & District Football Association 1893-94* on the reverse and *Hercules* on a shield on the front, as pictured below.



Natasha Beazleigh at the Medway Archives Centre managed to unearth an article from the *Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham Journal*, dated 26 May 1894 which may shed some light on the medal's presentation and recipient. The article refers to the *Hercules* football team which had 'vanquished Chatham Hill Reserves', and how the members of this team were each presented with a silver medal. One of the recipients was a W Franks, and his descendant was a neighbour of mine. I am pretty sure this is how the medal came into my possession some years ago, but how it found its way under the carpet, I have no idea. An excerpt from the newspaper article follows:

LUTON AND NEW BROMPTON FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

On Wednesday evening at a smoking concert held at the Elephant and Castle Inn, Luton Road, the medals won in the competition for the Junior and Senior cups, given by the New Brompton Co-operative Society and Alderman Brain, JP, were presented to the various winners. In the absence of the President (Alderman Brain JP) the chair was taken by Councillor W Burgess, who was supported by Councillor J Kent, Messrs Cockrell and Bell. The vice-chair was taken by Mr J A Price, supported by Mr J Albert, A J Nash, &c.

As can be seen in the photograph of the shop taken in the 1960s, Parker's was housed in a building dating from the sixteenth century in Church Street.¹⁷ The living accommodation was on the right-hand side of the building and was entered through the unglazed black door into the sitting room, from where there was a connecting door to the shop. Behind the other ground floor window was the dining room, with a kitchen at the back of the building giving access to a cellar below and a small garden sandwiched between various storage sheds; one of which included an earth closet. There were three bedrooms upstairs reached via a narrow, treacherous curved staircase hidden behind a door in the sitting room. Above the kitchen was a bathroom, which had no running hot water; a bucket, filled from the bath tap, was used to flush the toilet. Albert managed Parker's shop in Cliffe until the early 1970s when he retired. He and Ethel continued to live at the shop for a few more years until ill-health forced them into nearby sheltered accommodation with modern facilities. Albert died in 1975.

Both of Phil Whiffing's parents grew up in Cliffe and his mother included many details of the shop when she wrote down her childhood memories. There was very little that Parker's did not sell, everything from paraffin to ladies' clothes. The main part of the shop behind the bay window sold food, including tea blended by Albert on the premises, medicine and sweets. In the left-hand side of the shop was an area for drapery and haberdashery, shoes, hats and a department selling crockery. The garage to the right of the living accommodation housed an old green delivery van, and a delivery bicycle with a large basket on the front. From this part of the shop, you could buy items such as seed potatoes, chicken food, paraffin and firewood. A steelyard was used to weigh heavy items, and the van had a tap for delivering paraffin. The smell of everything from paraffin to spices was memorable.

While Albert looked after the grocery side of business, Old Man Parker's sister-in-law, Miss Clibbon, ran the drapery and shoe departments. She may also have been the cashier as the cashier's booth was next to drapery department. Assistants at the different counters took the money which was sent to the cashier's booth via a tube attached to system of overhead wires. The receipt and any change would then be returned the same way. Employees included Ruth, Queenie Osenton and Madge, also Elsie, who was remembered as marrying a Canadian and moving abroad. The rooms above the shop were used for storage and accessed from the shop. Village lads were employed to deliver goods on the bike and a Mr Bailey used to drive the vans. The shop had the telephone number 'Cliffe 2' with the village doctor being 'Cliffe 1'.

After the death of Jack Parker in 1979, the building was sold and became Wilkie's restaurant in 1983. The building was sold again in 2003 and converted into two houses.



The houses in Cliffe today; photograph by Sally Whiffing.

All photographs, including the certificates, are from originals in the possession of the authors and once belonged to CAE Whiffing.

If you have any additional information, please contact the Editor, Amanda Thomas at editor@foma-lsc.org

Notes

1. The National Archives; War Office: Soldiers' Documents, First World War WO 363.
2. Royal Artillery Museum, 131 Heavy Battery War Diary.
3. 1921 Census.
4. The Annual Monitor for 1916: Being an obituary of members of the Society of Friends 1914-1915.
5. The Annual Monitor for 1894: Being an obituary of members of the Society of Friends for 1893.
6. *Rochester Chatham & Gillingham Journal*, 25 January 1873.
7. *The Clock Tower*, Issue 51 (August 2018) 'Rochester High Street Through the Eyes of a Child in the Early 1950s, Part Two: The High Street to Star Hill in the 1950s' Julie Gay. The series ran from Issue 50 (May 2018) to Issue 52 (November 2018).
8. *The Clock Tower*, Issue 73 (February 2024), 'Rochester High Street', Leonard Dormon.
9. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 15 August 1883.
10. *Chatham News*, 30 November 1901.
11. *Kent Messenger & Gravesend Telegraph*, 14 November 1925.
12. *Kentish Express*, 26 October 1929.
13. Sainsbury's was founded by John James Sainsbury in 1869 and had almost 130 shops by the time of his death in 1928. His son, John Benjamin Sainsbury, was largely responsible for expanding the business in the 1930's, and for finding potential new locations: www.museumindocklands.org.uk "The Sainsbury Archive: Story of a Supermarket"
14. Kelly's Directories 1930, 1934 and 1938. Electoral Registers 1937-1939 show the business was run by Miss Ethel Lucy Clibbon, her brother-in-law Frederick William Parker and her sister Edith Mary Parker, who all lived at Cliffe.
15. 1921 Census and Airman's service records 1917-1920 (AIR 79/568)m.
16. 1939 Register.
17. Historic England: List Entry 1085766 (170-174 Church Street, Cliffe).

Panel 4

High Street top section: south side 2 Crown – King's Head no.58
 20 Ryder Chemist- still there in 1967
 56 Buckett's the bakers; reminiscences
 Chertsey Gate Frieze along bottom

Panel 5

High Street North 59- Math School/ Free School Lane
 95 Gas Showroom Visitors Centre
 Poor Traveller's House reminiscence
 Theobald's Square/La Providence reminiscence
 111 Newlands newsagent's reminiscence
 Maths School
 Frieze along bottom

Panel 6

High Street South 60-Crow Lane
 Chertsey Gate
 100 WH Smith
 104 -122 Leonard's reminiscence
 Frieze along bottom

Panel 7

High Street North: Blue Boar-Eastgate House- 179 (Capons)
 Famous and forgotten Inns
 Banks in High Street
 Entertainment reminiscence
 Shopping for food reminiscence
 Clothes and furnishing reminiscence; Yeomans + advert Gold Medal Furnishing Co.
 Frieze along bottom

Panel 8

High Street South: 140 –Eastgate Terrace- 196 High Street
 Frieze along bottom

Panel 9

High Street South: 140 –Eastgate Terrace- 196 High Street
 Frieze along bottom

Panel 10

High Street North: Star Hill – Rochester Station
 High Street south: Star Hill – Medway Little Theatre
 No frieze: conclusion

An Update on the Rochester High Street Project

Whilst Norma Crowe has retired from The Medway Archives Centre (MAC), she is still very much part of the heritage community and gave us an update on what has happened since this article was published in 2007.

- Rochester High Street was certainly renumbered, but I think it was some 20 years before, around the turn of the century. The street directories will confirm this.
- The four lever arch folders relating to the High Street, (available at MAC) show that volunteers (including Betty Cole and the late Doris Herlihy) carried on the High Street research. The street number changes are included.
- I created a Rochester High Street exhibition in 2011, and below is the outline plan for the different boards.
- I think there are pictures showing Dales in the Local Studies illustration collection.

Rochester High Street Exhibition

Panel 1

Heading - Memories of Rochester High Street

Introduction text and acknowledgements

Aerial shot from Bryan Gulliver

Maps 1909 1967 current Goad plan

Frieze along bottom

Panel 2

The Bridge text on its importance

1914 bridge Darnley opening 1970 (Princess Margaret); re-opened 2011 bridge

Bridge approach: Trams in 1908 1968 pictures before widening 1909 & 1967 maps?

Advert for Gundulph

Guildhall & Conservancy building- Guildhall Museum

Frieze along bottom

Panel 3

High Street top section: North side 19-53

19 Chamber motor cycles: now Baggins

31 Book shop & library

25,27 -33 Co-operative Society

37 Collis

41 Ogden's Hairdressers

43 T Hill Antique shop Margaret Petrie reminiscence

Corn Exchange: changes & reminiscence about Corn Exchange

Frieze along bottom

*Editor's Note

We have published several articles in *The Clock Tower* about Rochester High Street. These include, 'Rochester High Street Through the Eyes of a Child in the Early 1950s' by Julie Gay, from Issue 50 (May 2018) to Issue 52 (November 2018), 'Rochester High Street' by Leonard Dormon, Issue 73 (February 2024), and 'My Rochester High Street' by Tony Gray, Issue 74 (May 2024). In Issue 8 of *The Clock Tower* (November 2007), we published an article by Norma Crowe (then Local Studies Librarian at the Medway Archives Centre) detailing the reminiscences of Watts' Alms Houses' residents of Rochester High Street. These were recorded by Norma and Betty Cole (ex FOMA committee and MAC volunteer); the article is reproduced below.

Watts' Alms Houses Reminiscences

Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian.

Reproduced From The Clock Tower, Issue 8 (November 2007).



With the help of Kelly's Directories, street maps and old photographs, Rochester as it used to be is re-lived by some, and experienced for the first time by others, most notably Local Studies Librarian Norma Crowe, who came to Rochester for the first time in 1994. Verbal reminiscences have been recorded and transcribed by volunteer Betty Cole.

Visitors to Rochester High Street today could be forgiven for thinking that local residents spend much of their time having their hair re-styled and a great deal of money on dining out, buying books, antiques and bric-a-brac. The type of retail outlets on Rochester High Street in 2007 are mainly concerned with leisure activities. It was not always so. Within living memory Rochester boasted the full range of shops, from grocer to department store, from small to large. Just about anything you needed could be purchased somewhere there.

Local Studies staff from MALSC have been privileged to meet with a small group of residents of Watts' Almshouses to recall Rochester High Street when it was a vibrant shopping centre and busy with traffic.

Watts' Almshouses residents reminisce.



Most have memories of Rochester during the '50s, '60s and '70s, but some could remember Rochester during the 1939-45 War and before. Here is a short extract from one of the reminiscence sessions. The leader (Norma Crowe) is referring to Kelly's Directory for Rochester High Street:

Participant:
No. 75 was Lane's Toy Shop. It was there for many, many years.

Norma:
And next to it at 77 was Summers: Stationers, Printers and office equipment specialists. Now that's in large writing in here which usually means they think it's an important shop.

Participants:
It was.

Norma:
What sort of things would you get there?

Participants:
Office equipment. It was desks and chairs and typewriters. Also pencils, cards and fountain pens and paperclips, everything really. It moved to Chatham along where Featherstones used to be then it moved to Frindsbury and then it died out.

Norma:
Then next to Summers was Patricia's Pantry. Licensed Restaurant and Hotel.

Participants:

That was very nice.

My friend had her wedding reception there. It was still there in 1959. It still had Georgian features in it then, especially the Georgian iron balcony on the outside. It was very nice in there. The restaurant was downstairs; it was a very classic sort of place. Palm trees. It was a bit up-market for want of a better word. We used to peep in the window and think I'd love to go in there and have a meal. Couldn't afford it!

Norma: What is it today?

It's the Inside Out Shop.



From The Chatham Observer, 2 March 1962, © Kent Messenger Group. Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Barry Hollis and the Kent Messenger Group.

The Rochester High Street Project

The aim of this ambitious project is to collate information sources on Rochester High Street buildings. We are collecting photographs, plans, anecdotes, information on the buildings and their residents and any other attendant material. We hope to take a series of photographs of the buildings in 2007/8 to add to our photographic collection and bring it up to date. The material gathered at the Watts' Almshouses reminiscence sessions will form part of the High Street project.