



2025 Events Programme



Bridge Chapel Lectures

- 10 July – Conserving portraits
- 11 September – The location of the Medieval Bridge
- 25 September – The history of watercolour painting
- 7 October – Medieval roads in England and Wales: A map

All lectures take place in the fully-accessible Bridge Chapel, and start at 6.30pm. Tickets are free but must be booked.

For detail see: <https://rbt.org.uk/events-resources/forthcoming-events/>



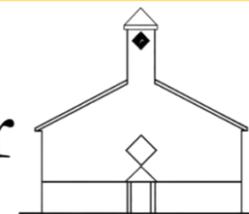
Open days in the Bridge Chapel and Chamber

- John Thorpe Exhibition and Open Days, 4 June to 30 August 11am until 4pm, Every Saturday, plus Wednesday 4 June, 2 July and 6 August
Explore two historic buildings while learning more about John Thorpe, an 18th century physician, antiquarian, Senior Warden of the Rochester Bridge Trust, and Fellow of the Royal Society.
- Heritage Open Days: 13, 14, 20, 21 September 11am until 4pm
View the Bridge Chapel and Chamber in all their glory, where you will be able to take a closer look at the paintings and furniture as they are used for formal meetings of the Court of Wardens and Assistants.
All entry is free of charge.

If undelivered, please return to:

Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP.

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 79: August 2025
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

Remembering Pauline



Representatives from the Medway Archives Centre and FOMA, together with Pauline Weeds' daughters, attach Pauline's name to the Workers Memorial Tree in Rochester.

More on page 3.

From left to right: Dr. Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, Sarah Trim-West (with Poppy), Elaine Gardner, Alison Archer and Julie Weeds. Photograph, Rob Flood.

Also inside: Tony Gray and Elaine Gardner continue the story of Dale's in Rochester High Street. See page 14.

Medway Archives Lecture Series



Emma Ovenden and Amanda Thomas before Amanda's talk on 4 June. Photograph by Alexander Thomas.

Read more on page 8.

My Story of a Medway Greengrocer

On page 14 Tony Gray explores his memories of one of the members of staff at the famous Dale's grocer's shop in Rochester High Street. Ernest Pound, or 'Arfur' as he was sometimes known, lived in Strood all his life, latterly at 152 Gordon Road (pictured).

Ernest's family is buried at Strood Cemetery, as pictured below.



The Pobjoy-Short S.16 Scion II Aircraft G-AEZF

Medway's aviation history is being celebrated this summer at Rochester Cathedral. A newly restored Short Scion Floatplane (pictured) will be on display in the nave from 1 to 31 August together with free family activities and a Short Brothers exhibition. The Short Scion Floatplane G-AEZF has been rebuilt by Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Limited and is exhibited with support from the Rochester Bridge Trust.



FOMA Vice President, Elaine Gardner was amongst those lucky enough to be invited to the launch of the exhibition – see page 10.

Photograph by Elaine Gardner.



Photographs by Tony Gray.

The Committee

Patron

Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL



President

Russell John Race, JP, DL



Vice Presidents

Elaine Gardner, Sue Haydock

Chairman

Dr Christopher de Coulon Berthoud

4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent.
panthropology@gmail.com

Vice Chairman

Rob Flood

rob@feetontheground.co.uk

Treasurer

Sally Ironmonger

treasurer@foma-lsc.org

Secretary

Vacant

Membership Secretary

Natasha Boardman-Steer

natasha@creatabot.co.uk

Webmaster

Dr Alexander Thomas

info@foma-lsc.org

Members

Len Feist:

lfstrood@gmail.co.uk

Steven Keevil

stevenkeevil@icloud.com

Cindy O'Halloran

cindy_ohalloran@hotmail.com

The Clock Tower Editor and Publicist

Amanda Thomas

editor@foma-lsc.org

Chairman's Letter

Dr. Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, PhD



On the 30th June I had the honour of meeting the daughters of Pauline Weeds (pictured below), a long-serving and much-valued MAC volunteer, along with Elaine Gardner (FOMA Vice President), Rob Flood (FOMA Vice Chairman), and Sarah Trim West (Medway Archives Centre Archivist). Pauline's dedication and warmth left a lasting impact on all who worked with her, and it was a great shock to us all when she died suddenly in March.



We met in the sunshine of Rochester Castle Gardens to attach Pauline's name to the fence protecting the Workers' Memorial Tree. This was erected by the Medway Towns Local Government Branch of the trade union Unison on 28 April 1998, to remember those who have sadly lost their lives in service. It was decided to honour Pauline's work at MAC in this way as a fitting recognition of her many years of voluntary work in preserving local history as part of the MAC community.

After a brief ceremony, the assembled company retired to the nearby Wolfe and Castle to raise a glass in Pauline's memory. Here her daughters, Alison Archer and Julie Weeds also shared stories with us of their mother's abiding interest in the history of the Medway Towns. Pauline – you will be missed.

In other news, see page 7 for the launch of the new Medway Archives volunteer project, which has been set up by MAC to research Medway's war dead during World War Two. It is hoped that his project will eventually build a database of names and information similar to the FOMA De Caville WWI Index which can be found on the FOMA website (<https://foma-lsc.org/>).

Medway Archives Centre Report

Sarah Trim-West, Archivist.



Hello y'all!* We're switching things up in this issue of *The Clock Tower* and I will be giving an update instead of our Manager, Helen Worthy. I will be taking a slightly different approach to Helen in that I will be letting you know what we have been up to behind the scenes. I hope you enjoy it and don't miss Helen too much!

Changes to the Strong Room

We have started probably the biggest project of my career. Those of you who have been on a tour of Medway Archives Centre will know that our shelves in the strong room are very tall and require a Hugo Lift to retrieve items from the higher shelves. (If you haven't had a tour, you are missing out! Please contact us to make an appointment to have a one). As a result, it can be very difficult to retrieve items that are higher up.

As part of the audit that was done for the recent accreditation review, collections that are closed (due to data protection) or are rarely accessed were identified. We are now in the process of moving those identified collections to the higher shelves while moving more frequently accessed collections to lower shelves. This will not eliminate the need for the Hugo Lift, but the goal is that we will need the lift less frequently and retrievals and reshelving will be much more efficient. This will also allow us to better serve our researchers. We are also taking the opportunity to appraise the collections as we reorganise them. We have already moved a couple of collections to more appropriate repositories, which makes more room for Local Studies collections and future Archive collections.

Conservation News!

It turns out there are some benefits to not having an archivist for as long as we did! During the period when we were without an archivist and subsequently whilst I was getting settled in, we were still paying our National Conservation Service (NCS) membership. As a result, we have quite a lot of credit built up with NCS. This allows us to do two very exciting things.

One: we can send more expensive conservation items in, therefore eliminating a good chunk of our items that are Unfit for Production (UFP - items that are in a state that we cannot allow them to be handled).

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, editor@foma-lsc.org.

The copy deadline for Issue 80 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 27 October 2025, with publication on Wednesday 19 November 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

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 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

Medway Geographical and Local History Society

We now have a new venue!

As from 26 September we will be meeting at The United Reformed Church,
Balmoral Road Gillingham ME7 4PU.

Meeting time 2.00/3.30pm.

Annual subscription £20. Visitors £4 per meeting.

As we're a Geography/History Society, two subjects for the price of one!

2025

Friday September 26: *The Brunel Family*.

Friday October 24: *By Train around Europe*.

Friday November 28: *The Yalding Floods*.

2026

Friday January 23: *Mexico*.

Friday February 27: *Theatre Royal Chatham*.

Friday March 27: *Wildlife of Costa Rica*.

Friday April 24: *Defending the Swale*.

Friday May 22: AGM.

ALL are Welcome.

Please contact Vanda Woollett 01634 389916. 0794 8277 131.

Lorna Bailey 01634 572139. 0795 7933 619.

Follow us on Facebook.

Two: with all our recent staff changes we can now bring someone in from NCS to give everyone training on preservation and how to spot problems before items get to the UFP stage. This will be happening on Wednesday, 13 August and will include all our staff, including casual members. While all staff receive on-the-job training regarding preservation and conservation, it is always a good idea to bring in a conservationist to make sure we are all up to date with the latest knowledge and best practices.

Search Room Changes

Our old microfiche/film reader/printer has come to the end of its life span and is now going to be officially replaced by new microfiche/film scanners. We thank it for its service, and it will be missed by all of us (except for our budget as the ink was very expensive). The space that was occupied by the reader/printer will be replaced by some new lockable shelves. These will be used in a similar way to the current lockable shelves in the search room, which means there will be volumes stored there that will be available to researchers but will require a member of staff to access. This will allow Emma Ovenden to display more of the Local Studies Collection.

Events

Details of forthcoming events can be found on page 40.

Our MAC lecture series for 2025 was completely sold out! We want to give a very heartfelt thank you to all our speakers and attendees.

Donations

All donations to our collections undergo a period of quarantine. This enables me, MAC Archivist, and Emma Ovenden, our Librarian, to identify items requiring future conservation work, as well as ensuring donations showing signs of mould, dirt or insect infestation are treated before being added to the main collections.

Donations we have received since the last report include one from the Medway Little Theatre. The Medway Little Theatre was established in 1958, and their collection is a wonderful example of a regional theatre and its innerworkings. Medway Little Theatre is most well known for their One-Act Play Festival, and the collection holds many scripts, programmes, and photos from those festivals. For more information visit their website at <https://www.mlt.org.uk/>

Another collection we received was the Kent Ex Boxers Association (aka Kent EBA). This might seem like it would be better suited at Kent County Council Archives, but this organisation was based in Chatham and most of its activities were carried out in the area now covered by Medway Council.

The Kent EBA was part of the larger Ex-Boxers Association, with a mission focused on bringing together former boxers to reminisce about something that can only truly be understood by a select few. The EBA also pools resources to help fellow ex-boxers who may have fallen on hard times and raise money for local charities.

Finally, we recently received a small but very exciting donation, A Rochester Pageant Book from 1931. This contains annotations believed to have been made by Canon Wheatley. It is always wonderful to receive something so visual and specific to our local culture and heritage. Additionally, the annotations will offer insight into the Pageant itself.

General Overview and Behind the Scenes

This report is just a brief overview, so please do get in touch if you'd like to know more about the collections at Medway Archives Centre, our events and exhibitions, or about the services we offer.

As well as providing our public in-person service at the centre, this last three months we have also replied to almost 300 emailed enquiries and completed paid research for customers who cannot visit. Our Archive Assistants have also been involved in other work behind the scenes, including retrievals from the strongroom, preparing for events, creating social media posts, designing posters, repackaging and listing documents, and much more.

Partnerships and collaborative working are a fundamental part of our work at MAC.

- In January, Helen Worthy and Nikki Pratt took some historic maps of the area to an event at Gordon Road School, where the Medway Mayor unveiled a mosaic commemorating the school's 125th anniversary.
- In April, Sarah Trim-West and Nikki represented MAC at *Medway Live* at the Hundred of Hoo Academy.
- In May, Emma Ovenden and Helen represented MAC at Barnsole Road Primary School's 125th anniversary.
- In June, Helen and Nikki represented MAC at the Kent and Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference at the Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment in Chatham.
- Finally, Emma and Sarah ran a workshop at the Library and Archives Staff Development Day, teaching others in Medway's Libraries about what resources MAC and what we can offer people in the community.

Each year we have enquiries from students hoping to pursue a career in archives management, and I always give students the opportunity to shadow me and give advice and guidance on routes into the profession. The experience offers budding archivists an insight into my role here at Medway Archives Centre and helps to develop the archivists of the future.

FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

The latest update is available here:

https://files.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/250525_Update_67.pdf

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

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.

Rochester Bridge Trust



*The Bridge Chapel, Esplanade, Rochester.
Photograph, David Kemp, Wikimedia Commons.*

See the back page for the latest events programme!

Volunteers

We have recently launched our next big volunteer project, researching Medway's war dead during World War Two. The project will run through 2025/2026 with the aim of building a searchable database of civilians and service personnel from Medway who lost their lives in World War Two. This research will preserve their stories for future generations.

All volunteer slots have now been taken, but please keep an eye on our social media (Medway Archives Centre on Facebook) and newsletters for future calls for volunteers for this project.

Finally, a big thank you to the FOMA committee and members for all their support at our events. Not only do they work hard promoting our services and collections, but did you know they also purchase items for us via local and online auctions, as well as contributing to or purchasing specialist equipment for us?

We appreciate all FOMA's support in helping to preserve Medway's history for future generations.

*Editor's Note

For readers who might not be aware, Sarah Trim-West is American!



*The hall at the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) ready for the next sell-out lecture!
See a review of the 2025 MAC Lecture Series overleaf.*

MAC Lecture Series 2025

Emma Ovenden, Medway Archives Centre Librarian



From February to July 2025 Medway Archives Centre held its third lecture series, with a lecture taking place each month – and like last year we were delighted at its success!

Given the growing popularity of the lecture series, we returned to the hall this year as it can accommodate more people, although the lectures were still sold out! Toward the end of last year, the Library and Archives Service was able to purchase a portable sound system, and this was used at each lecture as we are aware the acoustics in the hall can be challenging.

The first lecture in the series was delivered by Rebecca Clarke, who gave an entertaining talk entitled *Philandering Pearces* about the life and times of Sir William Pearce and his family. Born at Brompton in 1833, he trained as a shipwright and naval architect at Chatham Dockyard, supervising the construction of HMS *Achilles*, the first ironclad warship built at Chatham. He later moved to Scotland, and Rebecca covered aspects of William's private life in her talk, including affairs and the mystery of illegitimate sons.

Robert Hall gave the second lecture entitled, *Theatre Royal, Chatham: Medway's most Prestigious Theatre*, telling the ups and downs of the South East's biggest theatre. He also showcased items from the Theatre Royal Chatham Archive.

Keith Gulvin delivered the third lecture, *The Medway Forts*. His engaging talk explored the reasons for fortifying the Thames and Medway estuaries. It looked at the various phases of construction and scientific advances, and considered what remains of the forts today.

Borstal: From Building Forts to Building up Young Men was the subject of our fourth lecture, given by Ralph Allison. There has been a prison at Borstal for over 150 years. Ralph looked at the history of a prison that has had many different roles, from housing labourers who built defensive fortifications, to starting a self-titled system of youth justice which spread across the country, and around the world.

We were delighted Amanda Thomas kindly agreed to give the fifth lecture in the series. Entitled *The Explosive Works at Cliffe: Cordite, Nitroglycerine and the Flying Archaeologist*, Amanda presented a fascinating and moving talk about the history of the Cliffe explosives works during the early twentieth century.

Summer Display (Foyer)

Our Summer display is a MAC produced exhibition on *Medway's Land and River*. This is an environmental themed display covering Medway's greenspaces, footpaths and once well-known tress, including the so-called Justice tree on Boley Hill in Rochester and the Old Elm tree which stood for many years in Gillingham Churchyard. This display will be in the foyer July 28 to October 25. Available to view during our normal opening hours.

Christmas/Collections Care Closure

Please note Medway Archives Centre will be closed from Saturday, 24 December 2025 to Saturday, 10 January 2026, re-opening on Monday, 12 January 2026.

This temporary closure enables us to work on tasks that cannot take place whilst we are open to the public, and we look forward to telling you what we've been up to in the next Clock Tower!

Lecture Series 2026

We are just finalising our speakers and dates for the MAC Spring Lecture Series 2026. Keep an eye out for our publicity about these popular talks and remember to book your tickets early to avoid disappointment. Medway Archives Centre on Facebook or sign up for our newsletter.

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.

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

The first Saturday of the month. Please join us for our upcoming sessions: These sessions are free and there's no need to book, just drop in.

Saturday, 6 September 10am to 12-noon
Medway's Trees and Orchards

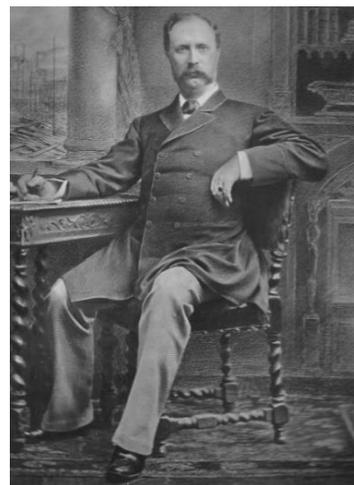
No drop-in for October due to Medway History Showcase.

Saturday, 1 November 10am to 12-noon
Medway's Department Stores

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.

Geoff Ettridge, aka Geoff Rambler, gave the sixth and final lecture in the series. Last year Geoff kindly gave the talk *A Meander along Rochester High Street*, and we received requests asking if he could return to give the final part of his talk. *A Meander Along Rochester High Street, Part 2* saw Geoff drawing on the knowledge of his various tours to make connections between places along the High Street and our local and national past. His interesting talk explored some intriguing stories!

All the lectures were very popular, and we were pleased to receive positive feedback. We are very grateful to all the speakers who took part in the lecture series, and for their support of MAC. We very much hope to host a lecture series again next year – watch this space for details!



Left: Sir William Pearce featured in the first lecture in the series Philandering Peaces, delivered by Rebecca Clarke.



Right: The Theatre Royal, Chatham the subject of the second lecture entitled Theatre Royal, Chatham: Medway's most Prestigious Theatre, given by Robert Hall.

The Pobjoy-Short S.16 Scion II Aircraft G-AEZF

Elaine Gardner, FOMA Vice President



Elaine has been a member of FOMA since its launch in 2006 and on the committee since the end of 2007. Before retiring she taught maths in the area for nearly 40 years. She has always been interested in local history, volunteering at Restoration House since it opened in 2000 and a Rochester guide for nearly 20 years. She has been involved with many projects at MAC following the Heritage Lottery Fund Archives of Great Expectations which began in 2010. She recently retired from the chairmanship and is now happily representing FOMA as a Vice President.



A wonderful sight in Rochester Cathedral this month is the rebuilt and restored Short Scion II float plane G-AEZF, the work having been carried out by volunteers of Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Limited (MAPSL) and supported by the Rochester Bridge Trust. There are accompanying activities in the nave of the cathedral and an excellent exhibition about Short Brothers in Rochester in the crypt, along with artwork by the Kent Institute of the Blind.

Left: in the nave.

It was a simple pleasure and an experience I wouldn't have missed, but I console myself with snippets on YouTube that show some of the clocks in action in other seaside towns. I imagine that television couldn't have helped the demise of the Guinness clocks. That and the advent of more sophisticated entertainment, as well as more adventure based activities. The technology involved in creating the clocks bordered on wizardry. An engineer had to accompany them on their travels around the country. They were temperamental from the start, so as time went on they must have caused a few headaches. Finding or making spare parts to keep them going could have been the final straw!



Taken from a postcard; with thanks to batterseapark.org

One of the Guinness clocks can be seen in action at <https://alondoninheritance.com/london-history/the-guinness-festival-clock-london-clock-makers-and-the-corn-laws/>

The Guinness Clock In Herne Bay

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.

A favourite family destination for us when I was a child was Herne Bay. No trip or holiday there was complete without going to see the Guinness Clock. It stood near the pier in the early fifties and seemed humungous to us. Children and adults alike were fascinated by the clock and its moving parts. It was a feat of modern engineering, with lots of moving parts. I think the clock might be described as a very large automaton, a bit like a larger version of the action scenes in the penny arcade. The clock seemed huge at the time, but I suppose it was about the size of a large pantechinon. It featured the Guinness toucan, among other Guinness creatures famous at the time. These apparently included an ostrich, a mad hatter, a fish, and a whole menagerie, but a don't really remember those. It leapt into action every fifteen minutes, which we couldn't wait to come round. It duly obliged, entertaining us for what seemed like ages. The action took place around the clock itself, with things popping in and out of other things, going up and down and in and out all over the place. We were spellbound and at the end of our holiday we couldn't wait to come back and see it in action again the following year.

Originally designed for the Festival of Britain in 1951, to show off British innovation, it was the brainchild of the Guinness advertising department, particularly the manager Martin Pick, an engineer in a previous career. It was made by Baume, clockmakers of Hatton Garden, and took them five months. This was the most complex clock to have been made in England for three hundred years. The clock was an instant success at the festival. Many local authorities, department stores and exhibitions quickly realised that the clock would be a great attraction, so much so that smaller, more transportable versions, were made, which toured various seaside towns for seven years. I don't know if the Herne Bay clock was one of these. One even went to America. These much-loved clocks were finally withdrawn in 1966 as they could no longer be maintained. One smaller version, still five feet tall, survives, and lives in the Guinness Museum in Dublin.

The Short Scion was designed to be both a land and a float plane. The first version, Scion I, was built at the Short Seaplane works in Rochester, between 1933 and 1934; four were land versions and the fifth a float plane. It was designed to carry four to six passengers

An improved version, the Scion II, was built between 1935 and 1937. 11 planes were built at Rochester Airport, constructed by Short Brothers, and the last seven of these under licence with Pobjoy Airmotors. G-AEZF was the last, and only float plane, built in 1937. Its test flight over the River Medway was flown on 22 September 1937 by Captain Lancaster Parker, the chief test pilot for Shorts.

The Scion was of a very lightweight construction, with the fuselage constructed of fine tubing, steel bracing wires and wooden strips all covered in Irish linen and painted. Plywood was used in the cabin construction and the wings were also made in the same way as the fuselage. The Scion II was powered by two Pobjoy Niagara III engines. Pobjoy were building engines at Rochester Airport between the two world wars.*

According to the data in its logbook, G-AEZF was originally built for Elders Colonial Airways of Freetown, Sierra Leone but never made it there. It was in store at Rochester Airport when it was damaged by bombing in September 1940. It was repaired at the Pobjoy factory in Northfleet and in November 1941 requisitioned by the RAF, taken to Bedfordshire and restored as a land plane. It clocked up 18 hours of flying time in the last few months of 1942 before being damaged in a gale. Once it had been repaired again, it managed a further 50 hours flying time before it was returned to Short Brothers in Rochester in 1945; it then entered service with a commercial company. Finally withdrawn in 1953, the plane had manged only a total of 178 hours flying time, as most of its life it had been either unserviceable or in store. It then lay derelict at Southend Airport where it deteriorated badly.

The aircraft was acquired by MAPSL in June 2013 when it was found in a very poor condition at Redhill Airport. It was subsequently transported to Rochester Airport by road, and by this time all that remained of the aircraft was the fuselage frame, the port wing and part of the starboard wing. The plane was reconstructed by a team of volunteers working at Rochester Airport. One of the floats attached to G-AEZF at the current exhibition is an original loaned from Ulster Museum. This has been used to generate replicas for other reconstructions, and it is interesting to compare it to the new one of the pair.

The restoration is not yet fully complete and while it is on display the lower part of the wing structure has been left uncovered to enable its composition to be seen. The fabric covering the top surface of the wings has also been left unpainted for the same reason. A Pobjoy Niagara II engine was found in the Netherlands and has been rebuilt and is on display next to G-AEZF in the Cathedral.

The plan once the restoration is finished to have the aircraft on static display, although a location is yet to be determined. Whether or not you have an interest in aircraft, I recommend you going to take a look. The G-AEZF looks beautiful in its nave setting, its wings positioned between in the arches and with the cathedral organ pipes behind. Make sure you take a look at the front of the engine cowl where the propellor gently rotates in front of the most elegant Pobjoy lettering – very 1930s, and as illustrated in the photograph opposite. There is also so much to learn about Short Brothers in the crypt exhibition. All in all, well worth a visit!

*Editor's Note

Pobjoy Airmotors and Aircraft Limited was based in Hooton, Cheshire, and Rochester Airport. Established in 1930 by Bristol-born Douglas Rudolf Pobjoy (1894-1948), the company manufactured aero engines. Following the joint venture, Pobjoy's was taken over by Shorts in 1938.

More information at <https://www.rochestercathedral.org/floatplane>

The Short Scion Floatplane will open to the public on 1 August and will remain open until 31 August. Admission during the day is free; charges may apply for groups, additional activities and evening events.

Closures and restrictions during August: 7th, 15th and 28th August: opening 11:00am.

16 August: limited access (11:00-14:30); *no family activities will run at this time including Adventure Golf*

18 August: closed to visitors at 12:00. *Includes nave, floatplane activities and Adventure Golf.*



Left: Joan waving goodbye at 153 Shakespeare Road, Gillingham, in July 2005. This was the only house she ever lived in apart from when she was evacuated during the early part of the war. Parked in the road is her last car, a 1997 Ford Fiesta.

Notes

1. Hansard, HC Deb 13 July 1966 Vol 731 cc 1462-3.
2. Hansard, HC Deb 13 July 1966 vol 731 cc1462-3.
3. Hansard, HC Deb 15 July 1966 vol 731 cc278-9W.
4. Hansard, HC Deb 21 July 1966 vol 732 cc129-30W129W.
5. Hansard, HC Deb 20 January 1967 vol 739 cc159-60W159W.

All photographs are from the author's collection.



Joan with Ronny Molyneaux's children; Elizabeth (left), Christine and Malcolm, c. 1958. Joan was Christine's Godmother.

Joan was a positive person and, to me, always seemed to be very 'busy' and had many friends mainly from the dockyard. She loved family parties and could certainly be dramatic at times. She loved her mother and was very protective of her, probably because her father was away in the navy for most of Joan's childhood. From my perspective she was a great source of information on the family in the interwar years which included her own memories of conversations with the generation before her.



The 1930s lettering on the engine cowl.



Another view of the plane.

Photographs by Elaine Gardner.

My Story of a Medway Greengrocer

Tony Gray



Tony was brought up in Rochester. His late parents were both from Strood; consequently, he is very familiar with the area. He was educated in Rochester before starting an apprenticeship in electrical engineering in 1977 with the CEGB. After a career in the power generation industry, Tony retired in 2021 which has given him the opportunity to spend more time with his grandchildren whilst pursuing a range of interests, one of which is FOMA, which he joined in 2018.

Readers will recall in the last Clock Tower (Issue 78, May 2025), Sally and Phil Whiffing's The Story of a Medway Grocer which charted the life of Phil's ancestor, Charles Albert Ernest Whiffing (born 1895) who worked as a grocer's assistant at R Dale & Son, of 30 High Street, Rochester. Following its publication, the story caused much reminiscing amongst FOMA members about Dale's, one of Rochester's much-loved shops. On page 20 you can read Elaine Gardner's early chronology of that stretch of shops in the High Street, but first, Tony Gray remembers another of Dale's employees who (in later life) made quite an impression on him.

In the article about Dale's in the last edition of *The Clock Tower* the young gentleman in the middle of the back row of the photograph caught my eye. I think that he might be someone I knew as a boy: his name was Ernest Pound.

When I was a boy, my parents worshipped at the Gospel Mission Church in Brompton Lane, Strood. A regular member of the congregation was an elderly gentleman who was always immaculately dressed and wore a pocket watch. He was a little man with a bushy white moustache and a shiny bald head. My father would sometimes visit him at his home in Gordon Road (maybe Weston Road?). This would have been in the 1970s and Ernie still had gas lamps in his home and no electricity. As a boy we gave him the nickname *Arfur Pound* because he was so small. It turned out that my parents' generation had done likewise. In their younger days he was a Sunday school teacher. My brother recalls he also had the nickname of *Bunny Pound*. I then remembered that in their younger days my parents and their friends had also called him Ernie *Butt Butts* because during Sunday school picnics he would offer sandwiches to the children saying, "Any more butt butts?" In the summer he would wear a straw boater hat. Apparently, it was common practice for him to squash it as he sat down due to the swift hand of one of the boys.

Joan was fond of her Morris Minor and had several of them over the years. She loved driving and would take her parents and grandparents out for a drive on a Sunday afternoon - despite grandfather's pipe smoke! By the 1960s, all our family had cars which enabled us to go out for day trips, in convoy, to the coast (Tankerton and Joss Bay near Broadstairs), to parks (Dunorlan at Tunbridge Wells or Moat Park at Maidstone) or the occasional castle. I even remember a day out at Lullingstone Roman Villa (pictured below).



Lullingstone Roman Villa remains and reconstruction. Photographs by Carole Raddato, Wikimedia Commons.



The official photo given to Joan by the Dockyard of the remains of her car, presumably for insurance purposes.

It was on 20 January 1967 that the fire was again discussed in the House of Commons when Maurice Foley, the new Secretary of Defence for the Royal Navy, said ‘The Board of Inquiry concluded that the fire started as a result of the action of an employee who has since been discharged. It spread very rapidly, partly because of the explosion of wood and other dust which has accumulated in the wood members over centuries, and partly because the open-ended structure of the building formed a natural wind tunnel which drove the fire its whole length.

As a result of the fire, the building and its contents were completely destroyed. As previously stated, 41 people received minor injuries. The total loss is estimated at about £80,000. ... The fire was the result of careless action by an apprentice.’⁵

I was surprised to come across the photo of the burnt-out car when going through Joan’s papers after her death in 2015 and I assume she was reimbursed for the loss of the car. If I had been able to discuss it with her, I’m sure she would have provided some ‘insider’ perspective of the event and what followed, and it would have been an interesting account as she was the sort of person to notice the unusual or the detail that others might miss.

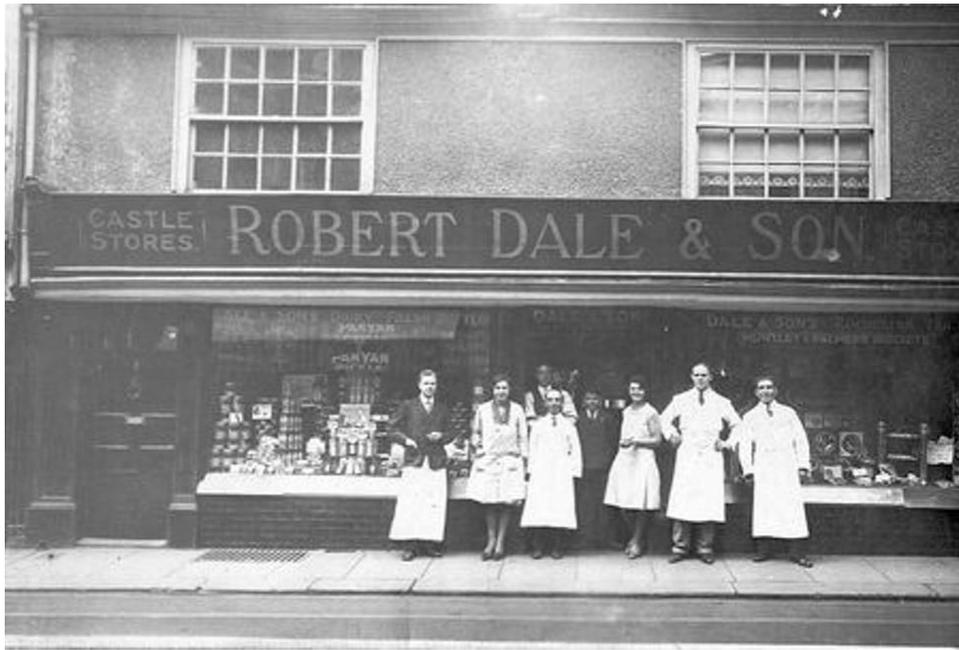


Mr and Mrs Dale and staff, including Ernest Pound (centre back row with a moustache between two women), taken 11 October 1918; photographer unknown.

At first glance the young man in the Dale’s photo above appears to be tall, but things are out of proportion for a tall man. It appears as if he is probably standing on something, or, on closer inspection, sitting on the window sill, but when you look closer, all the ladies have broader shoulders than him, and he is actually a similar size to the boys who are sitting on the ground.

In the book *Rochester History in Photos* by Brenda Purle there is a picture of Dale’s staff taken in 1929 (see overleaf). Little Ernest is standing front middle with a similar build and stance to the gent in the photo from 1918. Also, Mr R Martin Dale is named in the photo, although there is no mention of him in the article in the previous issue of *The Clock Tower*.

Nothing is conclusive, but in all probability, I think the young gentleman in question is *Little Ernest*, and I decided to set about trying to find out some more about him. I discovered (General Records Office) that Ernest Henry Pound was born on 10 August 1893 in Strood, the son of Albert Pound and Mary Ann Blackman. As Ernest lived in Gordon Road - or Weston Road - and still had gas lighting in his home in the 1970s, it’s a reasonable assumption that he had lived there for a very long time and that it may have been his childhood home. Consequently, I started my search with the names of these roads in the 1939 Register.



203 (now no. 30 – see Elaine Gardner’s analysis on page 20) Rochester High Street, 1929; Medway Archives Centre.

ROBERT DALE AND SON in 1929. This high class grocer, Nos. 30 and 32 (old Nos. 203 and 202), was established in 1885 at No. 30. The business remained in the Dale family until 1954. Mr R. Martin Dale is on the left of the picture with one of his assistants, Mrs Elizabeth Neale, on his left, ‘Little Ernest’, a very well-known character about the High Street for many years. (Guildhall Museum.)

The annotation for the same photograph from Rochester History in Photos by Brenda Purle.

This was drama of the highest order for Joan and the family. As the Dockyard employed so many people, I imagine that most of the Medway Towns were also discussing this historic event. Also on the 13 July, Mrs Anne Kerr, Labour MP for Rochester and Chatham, asked if the Secretary of State ‘could give an assurance that the people who have lost their cars will be fully compensated.’ In response she was told ‘the question of compensation will have to await the findings of the court of inquiry.’²



Joan Clark with her mother, Rene Clark née Bursey (1901-1990) around 1965.

The fire was again brought up in parliament two days later on 15 July when Mallalieu, in responding to a question from Burden on compensation, said ‘Private property is brought into a dockyard at the owners’ risk, but we are always prepared to consider exceptional claims without prejudice.’³ And later, on the 21 July: ‘Sufficient guidance on handling claims is given in existing staff regulations. Exceptional cases are reported to the Ministry of Defence for consideration on their merits.’⁴



Joan Clark in her back garden, August 1954.

The blaze was reported in the national newspapers and was so serious that it prompted a question in parliament the next day by the Conservative MP for Gillingham, Frederick Burden, who asked the Secretary of State for Defence for a statement. The question was answered by the Secretary for the Navy, Joseph Mallalieu. He told the Commons that 'there were no deaths or serious injuries but 41 people received minor injuries in trying to put out the fire. A machine shop and sixteen private cars were damaged and a Board of Inquiry is being convened.'¹

In 1901 the family were living at 12 Glanville Road, Strood, just a few doors away from where the Medway Archives Centre now stands. Ernest was the youngest of five children. *

12 Ditto [Glanville Road]; 1 [house]

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------|---|----|-----------------|--------|------------------|
| Albert Pound | Head | M | 47 | Cement Burner | Worker | Ditto [Kent] |
| | | | | | | Northfleet |
| Mary Ann Pound | Wife | M | 43 | | | Ditto Frindsbury |
| William George Pound | Son | S | 23 | Cement Labourer | Worker | Ditto Frindsbury |
| Mary Ann Pound | Daur | S | 21 | Cashier CC | Worker | Ditto Ditto |
| Flory Ada Pound | Daur | S | 17 | | | Ditto Ditto |
| Albert Pound | Son | S | 15 | | | Ditto Strood |
| Ernest Pound | Son | S | 7 | | | Ditto Ditto |

[M = married/S = single]

From 1901 Census, Ancestry .co.uk

The 1911 Census (below) shows the family living at 149 Gordon Road, Strood. Young Ernest is shown as working in a draper's shop. Has the enumerator made an error or was this his first job? The photo in *The Clock Tower* which started this investigation was taken in 1918.

[Columns denote:

name / relationship / age / married status / years married / children born alive / children still living / children who have died / profession or occupation / birthplace]

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|----|---------|--------|---|---|---|----------------------------|--------|---------------------|
| Albert Pound | Head | 57 | Married | 35 yrs | 7 | 5 | 2 | Labourer on Cement Kiln | Worker | Northfleet, Kent |
| Mary Ann Pound | Wife | 54 | Married | 35 yrs | | | | | | Frindsbury, Kent |
| Florence Ada Pound | Daur | 27 | Single | | | | | | | Frindsbury, Kent |
| Ernest Henry | Son | 17 | | | | | | Draper Shop | Worker | Strood, Kent |

From 1911 Census, Ancestry .co.uk

At the outbreak of war in 1914 Ernest would have been twenty-one years of age. I have not found any service records for him. He was a very short man and perhaps his (lack of) height prevented him from volunteering or later being conscripted. The minimum height to serve at the outbreak of war was 5'3" which was reduced as the war progressed. He was a devout Christian and perhaps he was a conscientious objector. Also, as Ernest was employed in a grocer's shop, his work was important to the home front and therefore perhaps it was a reserved occupation.

In the 1921 Census the family is still residing at 149 Gordon Road and Ernest is shown as a shop assistant working at Dale's grocer's:

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-------|---|---------|------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Albert Pound | Head | 66 8 | M | Married | Northfleet, Kent | Labourer | Wickham Cement Works |
| Mary Ann Pound | Wife | 63 7 | F | Married | Strood, Kent | | |
| Florence Ada Pound | Dautr | 37 4 | F | Single | Strood, Kent | Home Duties | |
| Ernest Henry Pound | Son | 27 10 | M | Single | Strood, Kent | Shop Assistant | Mr Dale, Grocer, High St., Rochester |

[Ages shown in years and months.]

From 1921 Census, Ancestry .co.uk

In the 1939 Register, three of the family were living at 152 Gordon Road, a property directly opposite 149 Gordon Road. Why would they move to a house directly across the road? Is it possible that they moved there following the death of Mary Ann Pound in 1928? Perhaps they previously rented their home (no. 149), but were able to purchase number 152 when it became available? I would think it highly unlikely that the road has been re-numbered. However, this did confirm my recollection that Ernest had lived in Gordon Road, rather than Weston Road.

152 Gordon Road

| | | Date of birth | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------|---|---|
| Pound, Ernest H | M | 10 Aug 1893 | M | Grocery assistant |
| Pound, Florence A | F | 7 Feb 1884 | M | Unpaid domestic duties |
| Pound, Albert | M | 25 Oct 1854 | W | Old age pensioner – Retired Cement Labourer |

[second column: M = male; F = female; fourth column: M = married; W = widowed]

From 1939 Register, Findmypast.co.uk

The 1966 Chatham Dockyard Fire – One Employee's Experience

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

My first cousin, Joan Clark (1927-2015), lived all her life in Gillingham. She was also one of those rare people who never actually left home at all (apart from when, as a schoolgirl, she was evacuated to Resolven in South Wales at the start of the War). She never married (despite at least three proposals) and remained living in the same house all her life. She also spent all her working life in Chatham Dockyard.

Joan began her dockyard life in 1944 working in an office whose function was to insure rented houses around the Medway Towns that were used to house dockyard officers and other assorted navy personnel. It doesn't sound like a very riveting job for a teenage girl but, as they say, there is a silver lining in every cloud. For Joan, this was where she met her great life-long friend Ronny [Veronica] Molyneaux née Mitchell. After the war Joan was moved to naval stores, to the clock tower building, where she was in the 'gases and cylinders' section. She remained in the same department doing clerical work until 1984.

On 12 July 1966 Joan, having recently passed her driving test and driving her new Morris Minor to work, parked in her usual space in the yard and went in to work. That morning though was going to be different. Just a short while later a dramatic and dangerous fire broke in an old covered slipway containing naval stores. The fire was virtually opposite her office and was so severe that it eventually destroyed the whole wooden structure of the slipway.

Acknowledgements

Some of the research for this article involved using various internet sites; however, the vast majority of information has been gleaned from the many documents held at the Medway Archives. I would like to thank the staff for their assistance in accessing these documents and for permission to use photographs of some of these documents for this article.

Notes

1. Strood Union Master's Report and Journal G/ST/WRm/3 1916 – 1918.
2. Strood Union House Committee Minutes G/ST/AM/38 April 1914 - February 1922.
3. Strood Union Workhouse Admission & Discharge Book G/ST/WIa7 May 1916 - November 1920.
4. Strood Union Lymphstone Scattered Home Admission & Discharge Book G/ST/CIa/2 1907 – 1931.
5. Strood Union House Committee Minutes G/ST/AM/38 April 1914 - February 1922.
6. Strood Union Lorne Villa Scattered Home Admission and Discharge Book G/ST/CIa/3 1909 – 1923.
7. Strood Union Highamette Scattered Home Admission and Discharge Book G/ST/CIa/1 1907 – 1928.
8. Strood Union House Committee Papers G/ST/AMP/3 January 1918 - July 1919.
9. Strood Union House Committee Papers G/ST/AMP/3 January 1918 - July 1919.
10. Strood Union Minutes of the Board of Guardians G/ST/AM/35 August 1918 - September 1922.
11. Strood Union House Committee Papers G/ST/AMP/4 August 1919 - December 1920.
12. Strood Union House Committee Minutes G/ST/AM/38 April 1914 - February 1922.
13. Strood Union House Committee Papers G/ST/AMP/4 August 1919-December 1920.
14. Strood Union Lorne Villa Scattered Home Admission and Discharge Book G/ST/CIa/3 1909 – 1923.
15. Strood Union House Committee Minutes G/ST/AM/38 April 1914 - February 1922.
16. National Archives BT 350 and BT 364.
17. National Archives BT 395/1/8077.
18. National Archives BT 348 and BT 349.
19. Deutsche Dienststelle (WASSt); Berlin, Germany; Graberkarteikarten gefallener Deutscher Soldaten 1939-1948 Ancestry.

Surprisingly, Ernest and his sister are (erroneously) shown as being married, though their father is correctly shown as being a widower.

The family appear to be long lived, and Florence Ada was buried with her parents in Strood Cemetery (as pictured on the back cover). The grave reveals further details:

Mary Ann Pound died 25 Nov 1928, aged 71
Albert Pound died 25 Jan 1940, aged 85
Florence Ada Pound died 14 Dec 1959, aged 75



*152 Gordon Road, Strood. Photograph by Tony Gray.
A larger, colour photograph of the house can be seen
on the inside back cover.*

I was amazed when I saw the Google Street View of 152 Gordon Road and decided to head over to Strood to take a look for myself. Although the front door has been changed, the brickwork hasn't been painted, and it appears to still have all the original windows. My father often said that entering Ernest's home was like stepping back in time.

Ernest remained a bachelor and Florence a spinster. It's a reasonable assumption that they lived together in their family home until Florence passed away in 1959. Ernest certainly lived alone from my memories of him, which is one of the reasons why my father would often visit him. He had no family, as far as I can tell, so it makes sense that he might have sold his home to spend his twilight years in a nursing home. Ernest passed away on 9 August 1985, the day before what would have been his 92nd birthday, at Greyfriars Nursing Home, 18 Beacon Hill, The Downs, Herne Bay. The building is now private apartments. Probate proved in September of that same year showed his estate was valued at some £40,000.

*Editor's Note

Family trees on the Ancestry website show that Albert Pound (1854-1940) and Mary Ann Blackman (1857-1928) were married on 2 October 1875 at Strood and had seven children in total: Albert (1876-1876), William George (1877-1964), Mary Ann (1880-1958), Elizabeth Sarah (1881-1883), Florence Ada (1884-1959), Albert John (1885-1920), and Ernest Henry (1893-1985). William George, Mary Ann and Albert John all appear to have married and had children. Perhaps one of these lived in Herne Bay, which might explain why Ernest lived there before he died.

R. Dale and Son

Elaine Gardner



The information below is from the Rochester High Street numbering I did for the Medway Archives Centre using the old directories. It covers the area which was later occupied by Dale's.

As far as I can tell, number 203 was always a grocery store, and by 1890 it had been taken over by Robert Dale.

| Directory | | | | House Number | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|------|------|
| 1832 | 1849 | 1885 | 1871-3 | Old | 1881 | 1894 |
| Wright's | William's | Simpson's | Percy & Co. | | | |
| W. Woodhams butcher | J. Balcomb butcher | F. Woollett butcher | F. Woollett butcher | 202 | 32 | 32 |
| J. Marden grocer | J. Marden grocer | I. Delo grocer | T.H. Delo grocer | 201 | 30 | 30 |
| Barrett & Co. furnishing & ironmonger | Ed. Finch postmaster | Ed. Finch postmaster | J. Sharp postmaster | 204 | 28 | 28 |

'... that I have now arranged for the German Government to pay the Fares of these Children to join their Father in Germany - also I am arranging for them to leave next Monday April 19th.

Could you very kindly have them brought up to Charing Cross by a train reaching that Station about 2 pm (or earlier) have their luggage deposited in the Cloak Room there & have them taken to the German Embassy, 9 Carlton House Terrace which is within 5 minutes' walk of Charing Cross Station - you go through the arch of the admiralty & apply at the Door at the bottom of the steps by the Duke of York's Column on the left hand side & say "To see Mr KEUTGEN" he will expect them ... Could you also kindly let them bring a fair amount of food to eat on the journey ... I presume that you are kindly seeing that the Children are properly clad for the journey.'¹³

On 19 April, William, Frieda and Arthur were discharged from the Scattered Homes and at the meeting of the Guardians on 4 May 1920 it was recorded,

'Blesch Children - It was reported that the Children of Blesch had left the Homes of the Guardians on the 19th ult for the purpose of joining their Father in Germany and that the German Government had agreed to pay the expenses of their journey from London. The Children had been handed over in London on the date named to a Representative of the Committee appointed for assisting Germans in Distress, through whose Agency the Children had been sent to Germany.'^{14 15}

After Percy left the workhouse on 4 January 1917 to live with his aunt he disappears from the records. However, more is known about his brothers Horace and William. Horace joined the Merchant Sea Service in about 1918¹⁶ and was awarded the Atlantic Star, Africa Star and Italy Star medals for his service during the Second World War.¹⁷ He died in 1974. William at some point returned from Germany and like his brother Horace, joined the Merchant Sea Service.¹⁸ He died in Gravesend in 1933 and was buried in Gravesend Cemetery. Frieda also returned from Germany and married in London in 1938; she died in Essex in 1999/2000. Arthur appears to have been the only child out of the three sent to Germany to have stayed there. He was killed on 17 February 1944 at Lysianka, Cherkas'ka, Ukraine.¹⁹ I have not been able to find out when or where Johannes died.

I hope the three parts of this article have shown how the Blesch family were assisted by the Strood Union and other organisations to a significant extent to help them deal with their difficult circumstances. The Strood Union in particular was able to help them through their problems and to have done so sympathetically.

On receiving this letter Mrs Bridgewater wrote to Miss Campbell, the Superintending Foster Mother of the Strood Scattered Homes, to request:

‘It would be kind if you could get Mr Blesch’s little Girl to write to him or either of his other children?’

You need not trouble to return his letter or even to reply – I expect you know the Home office have refused to allow his children now to leave England during the War’⁹

There is no record of whether Johannes ever received either a reply to his letter or any letters from his children and it was not until early 1920 that action regarding the future of the children was taken.

At the Guardians Board Meeting in early March 1920, it was recorded that in late February a letter had been received from the Emergency Committee for the Assistance of Germans Austrians and Hungarians in Distress:

‘... enquiring in the event of a permit being issued by the Home Office for the three children Blesch to join their Father in Germany whether the Guardians would pay their fares to the German Frontier, about £10.

The Clerk stated he had written the Ministry of Health enquiring if any expenses incurred by the Guardians in the matter would be repaid by the Ministry, and now read a letter from the Ministry in reply, dated the 9th inst, stating the Ministry had no authority to repay expenses incurred in sending children to Germany.

It was added the Ministry were doubtful whether the transfer to Germany would be in the best interests of the children and in any case they would not consider that any of the Children would be sent except at their own desire.

After some discussion on the matter It was resolved that the Guardians approve of the transfer of the children to the care of their Father in Germany who, it was stated from letters received was most anxious to have them. Further that the necessary expenditure in connection with the transfer be borne by the Guardians.’¹⁰

On 19 March 1920, Mrs Bridgewater wrote to advise that a Permit had been issued for William, Frieda and Arthur to join their father in Germany and hoped to ‘... arrange for them to go on April 1st, but should postpone the party if matters remain as at present.’. She later wrote on 25 March, ‘Owing to the troubles in Germany I have been compelled to postpone the party arranged for April 1st. As soon as more definite arrangements can be made I will write & let you know.’^{11 12} It was not until 12 April that Mrs Bridgewater wrote to the Guardians to say,

Isaac Newell: the Busting of Myths

Amanda Thomas



Amanda is an author, historian and linguist with a particular interest in social and medical history. With a background in journalism and public relations, Amanda is perhaps best known for her work on the history of cholera and her book, Cholera: The Victorian Plague, which is now in its second edition. She is the go-to expert on the disease for the BBC and Channel 5 and has contributed to numerous documentaries and podcasts. Amanda’s work on Isaac Newell follows in the wake of earlier biographies, including the agricultural botanist Dr. Winifred Brenchley OBE. Amanda is a member of the Society of Authors and the Society of Women Writers and Journalists, and she has been Editor of The Clock Tower since 2006.

The Isaac Newell Heritage Group (INHG) was established in late 2023. An off shoot of FOMA and formed on the suggestion of member Sandra Fowler, the group met for its inaugural meeting on 6 December 2023 at the Medway Archives Centre (MAC). Our aim is to perpetuate the memory of one of Strood’s greatest sons (pictured), Isaac Newell (1853-1907), and primarily to erect a statue of him on the Strood waterfront. Isaac Newell emigrated to Argentina in the nineteenth century where he and his wife, Anna Margretha, established a school and, with his son, Claudio started a football club (Newell’s Old Boys Athletic Club) which would become famous for its role in shaping modern football around the world. Since the INHG’s formation, the project has gone from strength to strength and, thanks to Medway Council and Medway Development, plans for the statue are moving forward.



Isaac Newell

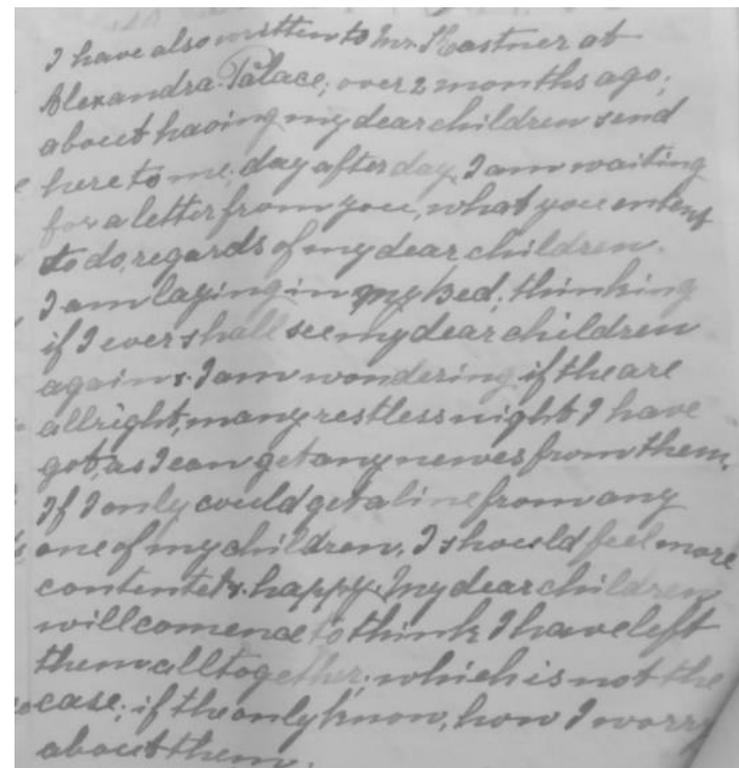
It was in June 2023 that Sandra suggested we should form the group, following my talk (pictured opposite) at the MAC Lecture Series entitled, *The Story of Isaac Newell: From Strood to Argentina and the Seeds of Modern Football*. Also at the talk were Isaac's great great granddaughter, Margaritta Bitetti and Adrian Pope, who has been campaigning for a statue of Isaac Newell for the last 20 years. I had met Adrian and Margarita a year earlier at Rochester's Guildhall for the opening evening of the exhibition, *Isaac Newell: More than a Name*. Curated by Jon Rye, External Sports Consultant to Medway Sport, the idea had been Adrian's dream for quite some time, and Jon has since joined the INHG, leading operations for the main thrust of the project, the erection of the statue.



The inaugural meeting of the INHG, from left to right: Elaine Gardner, Len Feist, Sandra Fowler, Helen Worthy, Cindy O'Halloran (holding a bust of Isaac Newell), Amanda Thomas, Dr Alexander Thomas, Adrian Pope.

However, my initial curiosity in Isaac and his extraordinary life was sparked by Cindy O'Halloran (pictured above, seated) – also now a member of the INHG! Whilst Cindy was working at MAC she had met with many visitors from Argentina wanting to find out more about Isaac, and she first wrote about the connection between Medway and South America in *The Clock Tower* in May 2012 (Issue 26, 'Anyone for Football? Lionel Messi and the Higham Connection', re-published in Issue 65, February 2022).

'I hope you send my dear children as soon you receive this letter, I am anxious to see them again. I have also written to Mr Hastner at Alexandra Palace; over 2 months ago; about having my dear children send [sic] here to me; day after day, I am waiting for a letter from, what your entend [sic] to do, regards [sic] of my dear children. I am laying in my Bed; thinking if I ever shall see my dear children again & I am wondering if the [sic] are allright [sic], many restless night I have got, as I can get any newes [sic] from any one of my children, I should feel more contentet [sic] & happy. my dear children will comence [sic] to think I have left them altogether; which is not the case; if the [sic] only know, how I worry about them.'



The original letter, transcribed above; Strood Union Hue Committee Papers, G-ST-AMP-3

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 Three

Horace Blesch was sent to the Working Boys' Home, Pelham House, Spital Square, Bishopsgate, London E1, on 19 October and the day after, on 20th, William was removed from the workhouse and sent back to the Lymptone Scattered Home.^{1 2 3 4}

Horace seems to have settled down in his new surrounds as there is no more mention of him until a year later (being now 14) when at the meeting of the Guardians on 24 September 1918 it was recorded, 'Horace L Blesch - It was reported that the lad Horace L Blesch had taken his discharge from the Working Boys Home in London, in order to reside with his Aunt, Mrs Owen of Northfleet.'⁵ This left William, Frieda and Arthur remaining in the various Scattered Homes.^{6 7}

Meanwhile their father, Johannes, had not forgotten about them. In May 1918 he had written from Heidelberg in Germany to Mrs Bridgewater to ask why she had not replied to the four previous letters he had sent to her concerning his children. His letter states that he had not heard anything from her since July 1917 when she advised that she would send the children to him once a suitable chaperon could be found. He was worried that the children would think that he had left them for good and he did not even know if they were all right.



*The MAC Lecture Series 2023.
Photograph by David Thomas.*



Right: Margarita Bitetti with Adrian Pope at the opening evening of the exhibition, Isaac Newell: More than a Name, curated by Jon Rye.

Isaac's story is curious and fascinating. Born in 1853 in Taylor's Lane, one of the poorest parts of Strood, Isaac's emigration to Argentina gave him opportunities he would probably never have been able to realise had he remained in the Medway Towns. Like so many other migrants who travelled to the Americas and Australasia, he was able to fulfil his dream and establish a school, and later a football club. In this way he not only changed the fortunes of the Newells, but also that of countless other poor families in Argentina whose children were educated at his *colegio*.

There is much in Isaac's life which resonates with me. Apart from the fact that we are both from Strood, and also vaguely related to each other (through the Higham Goodyers), his life prior to emigration followed a familiar path, and one which I have documented in my books on eighteenth and nineteenth century social history. It was for this reason that Margarita insisted I should be the one to write Isaac's authorised biography, and I have now been working on this for well over a year. I have discovered quite a lot about Isaac which has previously not been uncovered and have been extremely fortunate to have been given access to information by the Newell family. It has to be said that in the past few years, there has been a lot written or broadcast about Isaac which is complete rubbish! Such is his fame in Argentina and around the world, commentators have been quick to grasp onto threads of stories which have little basis in fact.

Like many working people during the years of the Industrial Revolution, Isaac's early life was shaped by unfairness, injustice and inequality. However, Isaac possessed a unique vision, and his overwhelming passion for sport convinced him of the transformative effect physical activity can have on young people, especially when combined with education. Isaac's passions were football and cricket, and one of the things I have been investigating for the biography is whether he was the first to bring the game of football to South America. This may be impossible to prove, but he certainly was *one* of the first and also one of many young men to take football (and cricket) to countries around the globe. Isaac may well have been the first to introduce the 1863 English Football Association rules and also standardised footballs. He certainly had the opportunity to do so, as following his migration in 1869, he would later travel back to England in the wintertime, returning with all sorts of ideas about the emerging new game of football. Another of these was the innovation called *combination play*. A pioneer of this new type of tactic was the Royal Engineers AFC based in Chatham. Since its inception in 1863, the team is well documented in its early days as having cast away the old type of play which displayed individual talent. In its place they adopted a new more exciting method of passing the ball between each other in a more thought-through tactical fashion and with a view to scoring goals. Today this seems completely obvious, but in the 1860s it was a revelation, and it was this idea which Isaac may have observed on one of his many trips and took back to the school in Rosario. In my talk at the Medway Archives in 2023 I went into this theory in some detail, and it already seems to have gained some traction amongst other commentators and historians.

Another great myth about Newells Old Boys is that the team colours of red and black were inspired by the flags of Great Britain and Germany. My research has shown this to be completely untrue. This myth has arisen thanks to the confusion over the nationality of Isaac's wife, Anna Margretha. It was thought that her family came from Germany, but they did not. Anna was, in fact, born in London, the daughter of *Danish* immigrants. A key reason for their coming to England was because they no longer wished to remain in Denmark, in an area constantly faced with hostility from neighbouring Germany. For years the border territory of Schleswig-Holstein had been involved in a fierce, often bloody, struggle over sovereignty, but all efforts came to a fruitless head in 1864 when it was ceded to Prussia and Austria with the Treaty of Vienna. The question now, of course, is why did Newells Old Boys adopt the colours of red and black? Again, it is a question I have been working on for some time, and I have some interesting (and yet to be revealed) theories.

The book still has a long way to go, and there is a lot more research to be done. In July, I travelled around Germany and Denmark following up some important leads and with the help of some fantastic German archivists. Some of the stories I have been unravelling are completely extraordinary, but one thing is for sure, there will certainly be more myths to bust!



Photograph by David Thomas.

On the hunt in Germany with Alexander Thomas.