

# **The Lambeth Cholera Outbreak of 1848-1849: The Setting, Causes, Course and Aftermath of an Epidemic in London**

by

**Amanda J. Thomas**

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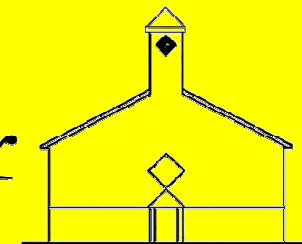
**Price £38.50**

**Out on 15 October 2009 and available NOW to pre-order at Amazon,  
Waterstones, Blackwell, Foyles and all good booksellers**

This first major work by *Clock Tower* Editor Amanda Thomas brings together a unique range of sources to reveal a forgotten episode in London's history. Situated opposite Westminster on the south bank of the River Thames, by 1848 Lambeth's waterfront had become London's industrial centre and a magnet to migrant workers. The book exposes the suffering of the working population in the face of apathy and ineptitude, and convincingly challenges the long-standing belief that London's numerous cholera outbreaks beginning in 1832 were unrelated. The work combines recent scientific research with first-hand accounts to show for the first time that in the nineteenth century cholera was very probably endemic in the River Thames. *The Lambeth Cholera Outbreak of 1848-1849* includes a day- by-day account of the epidemic, citing individual cases which could help solve many family historians' brick walls. The work also explores the close relationship between Lambeth and Rochester and how this influenced migration in the early years of the industrial revolution.

**If undelivered, please return to:  
Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood,  
Rochester, Kent, ME2 4AU.**

# The Clock Tower



*The Newsletter of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre*

Issue Number 15: August 2009

**£2.00**; free to members



On the evening of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009, FOMA members visited Restoration House in Rochester for a guided tour by owner Robert Tucker. Our thanks to Elaine Gardner (pictured centre in a white t-shirt) for arranging the event, and, of course, to Robert Tucker whose tour and talk were interesting, informative and inspirational! Read more inside about this wonderful trip and the surprises Restoration House held for us all; pictured is a small group of those who attended.

From left to right: Alison Cable (Medway Borough Archivist), Betty Cole (hidden, FOMA Membership Secretary), Restoration House owner Robert Tucker, Chris Nickless, Elaine Gardner (FOMA's new Vice Chairman and trip organiser), Jim O'Halloran, John Skilling, Cindy O'Halloran (MALSC Senior Archive and Local Studies Assistant).

## The FOMA Visit to Restoration House, Rochester

See page 7 for a full report on the visit.



*FOMA members gather in the porch at Restoration House on the evening of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009.*



*Right: In the Great Chamber at Restoration House*



*A view from the Great Chamber looking across the landing of the King's Stair (to the right) into the King's bedroom at Restoration House.*

## The FOMA Visit to Restoration House, Rochester

More images from the FOMA visit to Restoration house on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009.



*The garden with Restoration House in the background*



*Right: The rear of Restoration House*

*The site of the demolished Listed Grade II Tudor wall. The remains of the knapped flint and diapered brick work can just be seen beneath the bush to the right of the photograph.*





*In Dickens Land. "The Restoration House," Rochester. The residence of Miss Havesham in "Great Expectations." Postcard from the collection of Betty Cole.*

FOMA Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, has collected postcards with a literary theme for about 25 years, and to date she has hundreds in her collection, including at least 50 on a Dickens theme. Betty took the postcard illustrated with her on the FOMA trip to Restoration House to show the house's owner, Robert Tucker. Robert pointed out that the artist of the illustration was *Aveling* (see the bottom left hand corner) and can probably be attributed to the brother of an earlier owner of the house, Stephen Aveling. It was posted from Park Place, Gravesend to an address in Hull in 15th July, 1905 with a halfpenny stamp. The card would have probably cost one old penny and was published by Raphael Tuck as part of the *In Dickens Land* series. There is a message on the back, quite a long one, and difficult to read but does not contain anything of significance. It is from an aunt to her niece and is somewhat sentimental in character.

In the next issue of *The Clock Tower*, Betty will be sharing some more cards from her collection in a new regular series entitled, *Betty's Postcards*.

## *From the Chairman*

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



It is with regret that I have to announce that we have yet again failed to find a suitable applicant for the post of Project Archivist, to lead our project to make available for research for the first time the contents the Rochester City Archives – the so-called *Archives of Great Expectations*, and financed by our grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We thought we had a suitable candidate, but unfortunately the references did not stand up to the high standard needed for the post. With agreement from the Heritage Lottery Grant advisor we have regretfully decided to postpone the project until next year, in the hope that we will be more successful when we advertise again in the late autumn. Needless to say we all feel very frustrated by this setback.

On a more positive note, we have recently purchased a pen sketch of Delce Mill from Ebay for MALSC, which hopefully will be on display for all to see shortly. FOMA continues to flourish as you will see in the article and photographs from our fantastic evening at Restoration House. Our thanks must go to Elaine Gardner for arranging the trip and to owner Robert Tucker for his very interesting and informative tour. I confess I had never visited Restoration House before: it is amazing that we have such wonderful heritage on our doorstep and fail to appreciate it. I wonder how many more local people have not visited the house or the many other wonderful buildings in the Medway area. My next ambition is to go up Rochester Castle. I have lived here all my life and have never been up it ... and yes I can hear you all saying "shame on you"!

At the last FOMA committee meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2009, I am delighted to say that we unanimously elected Elaine Gardner as our new Vice Chairman (proposed by Odette Buchanan and seconded by myself) and Richard Stoneham as our publicist (proposed by Elaine Gardner and seconded by Bob Ratcliffe). Congratulations to Elaine and Richard and I am sure they will do a wonderful job.

Finally, I am sure you will all be interested to hear that between *Clock Tower* issues, our Editor, Amanda Thomas, has been writing a major history work. Entitled *The Lambeth Cholera Outbreak of 1848-1849: the Setting, Causes, Course and Aftermath of an Epidemic in London*, the book will be out on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009, but is already available to order at all good booksellers and online (ISBN-10: 0786439890; ISBN-13: 978-0786439898). We are thrilled that this book all started with an article in *The Clock Tower*, and urge you to buy a copy, not least because it contains a lot of information about Medway and Medway families– all researched at MALSC and on CityArk, of course! More information is available on the back page.

## News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary



Here we are at the end of July and I'm looking over my PC and out of the window at a dull, overcast day whilst wearing a woollen cardigan. What happened to the scorching summer we were promised by the Met. ? Why not cheer yourselves up by joining the FOMA Dickensland coach tour on Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> September. Further details follow in the Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions, however, to reserve places you need to contact me, and tickets are going fast. The tour will include the Hoo Peninsula, visiting places Dickens used in his stories and will conclude with a cream tea in Cobham. Another not-to-be-missed event is the annual Wine and Wisdom quiz night, on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> October. Again, please contact me to reserve either a table of six or individuals that we can match up to make a full table. The venue will be the same as last year – The Moat House in Crow Lane - and will start at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm.

As we go to press, Medway Council is meeting to consider the fate of the Aveling and Porter building in Strood. A petition is being presented to them to try and save this unique piece of architecture in its prime position.

Over the past few months we, along with the City of Rochester Society, have been pleased to help the Council with their exhibitions at Eastgate House. As mentioned before, when MALSC finish an exhibition at the Archives, it is moved to Eastgate House for a while. This is only possible if enough people volunteer to man it. Contact Elaine Gardner (email: lanagardner@fsmail.net) or myself and you will be contacted nearer the time to plan which couple of hours would best suit you. Further details follow below.

I am saddened and worried about the lack of progress with the Heritage Lottery Fund. We are all poised for the off, including organization of the education element, but frustrated. Where have all the country's archivists gone? Why are they not queuing at the door to help us?

By 1851, two of the surviving Osmotherly children had been returned to the Medway area. George, aged 10, is living with his grandfather, James, a shepherd in High Halstow. His sister, Hannah, aged 12, is with her uncle and aunt, George Phillips Osmotherly and Hannah, in Allhallows. Of Mary, aged 14, there is no trace until 1861 when she is working as a servant in St Pancras. James, aged 16, is working as a potter and is lodging at number 20 Frances Street, Lambeth, one of the filthiest streets in the district. Amazingly, James survived further outbreaks of cholera and went on to fight in the Crimean War; he died in Edmonton in 1902.

In 1852, an Act of Parliament was passed forcing all the water companies to take their water from further upstream, below Teddington Lock. In 1866 demolition began in the Princes Street area to make way for the Albert Embankment and a new sewer system for London, designed by the chief engineer to London's Metropolitan Board of Works, Joseph Bazalgette (1819 – 1891).

*Information reproduced with the kind permission of:*

*Lambeth Archives, Minet Library, 52 Knatchbull Road, London SE5 9QY.*

*Telephone: 020 7926 6073; Fax: 020 7926 6080*

*<http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/LeisureCulture/Libraries/Archives.htm>*

*Transcriptions from:*

*Lambeth Parish and Vestry Committee Minutes (Ref.: P3)*

*Lambeth District Sanitary Reports (Ref: P3, 73-75, 1848-1878)*



In the 1841 census, James Osmotherly and his family are listed as living in Great Lemon Court, an alley linking the aforementioned Fore Street and Princes Street. In his *Mode on the Communication of Cholera*, (available in full on [www.deltaomega.org](http://www.deltaomega.org)) the scientist Dr John Snow reported:

“Now the people in Lower Fore Street, Lambeth, obtained their water by dipping a pail into the Thames, there being no other supply in the street...when the epidemic revived again in the summer of 1849, the first case ...was in Lower Fore Street...”

Dr John Snow records that in 1849 1,618 people died of cholera in Lambeth, out of a total population of 134,768; around 15,000 died in the whole of London. In Lambeth, outbreaks were worst in areas where the population was only able to obtain water directly from the river or from The Lambeth Waterworks Company adjacent to today's Hungerford Bridge and where Lambeth's waste was discharged. Whilst the company professed to filtering their water, this was not the case. As late as 1850 when a Dr Hassall examined water taken from their supply, he discovered animal hairs and substances which had passed through the alimentary canal.

There probably could not have been a worse part of the River Thames from which to draw drinking water. Apart from the fact that the river was, in effect, London's open sewer, Lambeth is situated on what is possibly one of the shallowest stretches and a natural crossing point in the Bronze Age. Situated slightly upstream from Thorney Island (and the present Houses of Parliament), sandbanks now hidden under water conceal the position of what was possibly London's earliest bridge, and a predecessor of the ancient crossing point for horses, or horse ferry – hence the present day Horseferry Road. In 2001, Channel Four's Time Team undertook an excavation of the river bank close to St Thomas' Hospital. Their conclusions were broadcast on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2002 and can be viewed at [www.channel4.com/history](http://www.channel4.com/history).

Investigations into the fate of the Osmotherlys in Lambeth are still incomplete. At first, we had thought the youngest child, Lucy, had also died of cholera, and may have even been one of its first victims. Her 1848 death certificate shows that she escaped the outbreak, having died of smallpox. The entry, which also gives the address 11 Princes Street, laments that she had not been vaccinated.

## *Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions*

### MALSC Events

9<sup>th</sup> July to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009

Gundulph: The Builder Bishop.

An exhibition by the City of Rochester Society.

Exhibitions are free to view.

10<sup>th</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009

The Muslim Community of Medway.

An exhibition by MALSC, FOMA and the Muslim community.

Exhibitions are free to view.

13<sup>th</sup> October 2009, 7.30 pm

A talk by MALSC:

Medway's Muslim Communities: Looking Forward, Looking Back.

Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

16<sup>th</sup> November to 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009

Not Forgotten: Men from Medway in the Great War.

An exhibition by MALSC.

Exhibitions are free to view.

17<sup>th</sup> November 2009, 7.30 pm

A talk by Mick de Caville:

Men from Medway in the Great War.

Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

10<sup>th</sup> December 2009 to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010

Kent and Pas de Calais: Our Shared History.

An exhibition by the Cross Channel Community Network.

Exhibitions are free to view.

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009, 10.00 am to 12.00 noon

Mince Pie Day

Come along and meet the staff, enjoy seasonal refreshments, view the exhibitions and book sale!

at 2.30pm

A talk by Lee Ault:

The Victorian Lady: An Illustrated Presentation.

Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL.**

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, (MALSC) Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Further information is available from MALSC; please telephone 01634 332714 to book.

**Please note: You may be aware that Medway Council is being relocated to Gun Wharf. This move does not include the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and until further notice, we are still to be found in the Clock Tower building.**

## FOMA Events

5<sup>th</sup> September, 2.00 pm (departs promptly from the Visitors' Centre, Rochester)  
*Dickensland* tour followed by cream tea at the Leather Bottle in Cobham.

£15

A coach tour round the places associated with Charles Dickens in the Medway area, led by Bob Ratcliffe.

Please contact Odette Buchanan to reserve a place (see below for details).

16<sup>th</sup> October, 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm

Wine and Wisdom Quiz Night

£5

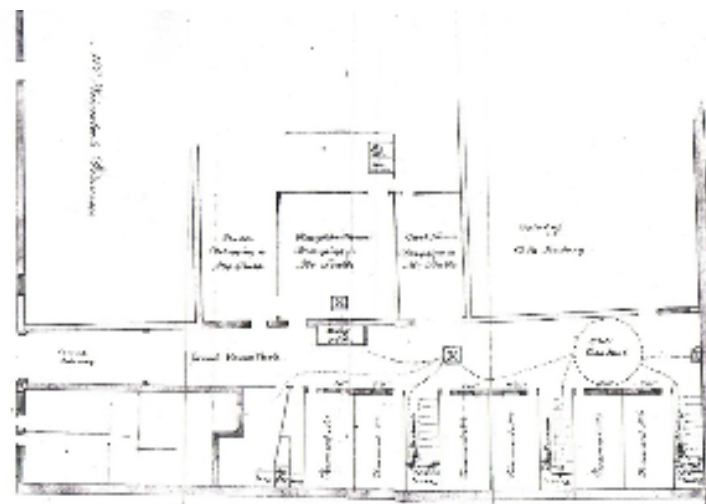
The Moat House, Crow Lane.

**Please book for ALL events through the FOMA Secretary:  
Odette Buchanan , 72 Jersey Rd, Strood, ME2 3BY;  
odette\_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk; 01634 718231.**

many dung-hills in the centre of the street – no drains – and cesspools in a bad state and all this within a few yards of the Lower Marsh. [In] Gloster [sic] Street...we found one man had ten pigs in the cellar, on opening the front door the stench was dreadful...In Short Street we found a cow yard and ...without any drain whatever...in heavy rain, the place is regularly flooded."

In another work by Guthrie, Musselwhite and Milton, they report:

"Into one of these plague spots, we entered and no sooner was the outer door opened than the stench immediately met our nostrils warning us to retreat from a place so nauseous so unfit for human existence or human sight."



*A plan of six tenements on the corner of Westminster Bridge Road and Felix Street from the 1848 Lambeth District Sanitary Reports. From top left and in a clockwise direction, the annotation reads: Mr Kingston's premises, stable belonging to Mrs Stubbs, slaughterhouse belonging to Mrs Stubbs, cart house belonging to Mrs Stubbs, Yard of Cork Factory, Old Cess Pool, open passageway and privy under stairs, Tenements 6 and 5, open passageway and privy under stairs, Tenements 4 and 3, open passageway and privy under stairs, Tenements 2 and 1, privy, pig sty, privy; above the slaughter house is a pig sty and hen house. An annotation accompanying the plan reads: The six tenements were occupied by poor people numbering in all about 80 individuals. The lines dotted...denote the course of the drains into the Cess Pool. There is no drainage to any of these houses beyond what is shown in the plan. Reproduced with the kind permission of Lambeth Archives.*

Asiatic Cholera had already struck London in 1832, claiming over 6 and a half thousand victims, and it was the common belief that such diseases were transmitted through the air. An article by Stephen Halliday in the British Medical Journal in 2001 ([www.bmj.com](http://www.bmj.com)) entitled, *Death and Miasma in Victorian London: an obstinate belief* explains: "...a belief that prevailed in the medical profession for much of the 19th century [was]...that most, if not all, disease was caused by inhaling air... the 'miasmatic' explanation..." Dr John Snow's discovery that cholera was in fact water-borne was not accepted until 1858. Moreover, whilst the existence of the cholera bacillus (*vibrio cholerae*) had been established in Italy in 1854 by Filippo Pacini (1812-1883), its existence was not fully accepted until 1884 with the work of Robert Koch (1843-1910).

Lambeth Archives in London holds the Lambeth Vestry Committee Minutes and District Sanitary Reports from 1848 to 1878. These reports show that in the first months of 1848, the authorities already realised that the living conditions of workers in Lambeth were severe enough to fear a second cholera outbreak. In January 1848, JW Weeks of the Sanitary Subcommittee reported, "...we fear there is every reason to apprehend, should it please God to visit us with that awful scourge the cholera..."

However, because it was thought cholera would spread through the air, the reports focus on the smells the Subcommittee encountered, and these descriptions give us a vivid picture of what life must have been like in Lambeth for James Osmotherly and other Kentish workers. In the main part of his work, JW Weeks reports:

"We first visited Jurston Street which we found to be in a wretched condition, a large portion was covered with stagnant water, quantities of mud composed of ashes and decomposed vegetables and all kinds of refuse thrown into the street by the inhabitants – within a few yards of the street is a large open drain...open nearly the whole distance from Christ Church work-house to the Westminster Road. In this part the sight is most revolting – dead cats and dogs and filth of every description, and although it was a cold morning, such was the offensive effluvia [sic] emitted as to render a speedy retreat most desirable...in a small yard we found a number of pigs, the stench was so great that we could scarcely remain near the spot for the inquiries...[in] Hooper Street...several cesspools overflowing and as a matter of course most offensive smells...one family generally occupies only one room...We next visited Harriet Street...the very worse street in the whole district, the dirt of all kinds have been left to accumulate for years...thrown up into great heaps so as to convey the idea of so

## The Medway Museums and Library Service

Medway Museums and Library Service is planning to stage some exhibitions previously shown at MALSC in Eastgate House during, and either side of, various festivals in the area.

**If you can volunteer a couple of hours to help supervise these, please e-mail Elaine Gardner at [lanagardner@fsmail.net](mailto:lanagardner@fsmail.net) for further details.**

Those planned are  
Dickensland Then and Now - for the Dickens Festival  
Shorts Brothers - for the Fuse Festival  
1000 years of Medway History - for Heritage Open days in early September  
Victorian Way of Life/Victorian Christmas - for Dickens Christmas festival.

We are all keen to see Eastgate House open to the public as much as possible so we hope that you can help by giving us a little of your time.



The Friends of Broomhill in Strood are holding a task day on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> October from 11.00am to 1.00pm. Meet in the car park at King Arthur's Drive for H & S talk. We will be planting bulbs, etc.. For further details please contact the Friends of Broomhill Secretary, Odette Buchanan, 72 Jersey Rd, Strood, ME2 3BY; [odette\\_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk); 01634 718231.

## The FOMA Visit to Restoration House, Rochester

Amanda Thomas, Editor.

*Photographs of the trip can be found on the inside front and back covers.*

On the evening of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2009, very many FOMA members and guests gathered in the porch and Great Hall of Rochester's Restoration House. We were presented with complimentary guide books and greeted by the house's proud owner, Robert Tucker. The tour began in the Great Hall with an explanation of

the various building phases of the house and a description of how Robert has lovingly restored and conserved the house. Restoration House is so called to commemorate the visit to Rochester of King Charles II at his restoration to the throne in 1660. The king stayed for one night at the house, breaking his journey to London.

The house was built in four phases which Robert explained has only been discovered thanks to the meticulous archaeological research undertaken whilst conservation has been going on. Ring dating of structural timbers show that the house probably started as two separate dwellings, the South Building dating from around 1454, and the North Building from between 1502 and 1522. By the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the two sites had been linked together (Phase Two), and from 1600 to 1640 their amalgamation was complete with the creation of the Great Hall and Great Chamber above (Phase Three).

Following the Civil War, work began again on the house in 1660 when the King's Stair was built to link the Great Hall and Great Chamber (Phase Four). Successive owners have put their stamp on this magnificent building, including Stephen Aveling and the comedian Rod Hull, and it has taken Robert Tucker many years to reveal the secrets of the house's construction and to restore it to its former glory. The house contains many fine pieces of furniture and a magnificent art collection, and whilst Robert is happy that the public can share these treasures, this is no museum, as Robert lives in the house; and many rooms remain private.

Our tour, which lasted considerably longer than anticipated, ended in the garden, the greatest surprise of all. Set in just over an acre of land (though it would at one time have been much larger), little evidence survives to enable anyone to recreate how it would have appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The guide book explains, 'What has evolved is a pair of interlinked walled gardens on several levels, with different rooms, vistas and features.' Indeed the garden very much mirrors the house, even to the extent that the clipped box hedge in one section has been set out in the same pattern as that of the carving on one of the rear doors. We walked transfixed, literally from room to room, admiring fig trees and strawberry plants, greenhouses and pot stores, all evidence of a lived in (and much loved) space. At the very end, the ground rose up to give a clear view of the housing development and partly demolished Tudor wall next door. We gathered with dismay to contemplate the destruction of one of Rochester's finest features, though Robert assured us that the fight continues to restore the wall to its former glory.



*Palace Yard, Lambeth, with the kind permission of Lee Jackson, from his website The Dictionary of Victorian London, [www.victorianlondon.org](http://www.victorianlondon.org)*

By 1841, James – now married to Ann and with seven children - had already been living in Lambeth eleven years, his eldest child having been born there in 1830. Between 1801 and 1901, Lambeth's population grew from 28,000 to 302,000: what had once been a rural village swiftly became one of the industrial hubs of the capital. The south bank of the River

Thames was lined with wharfs and factories fuelled by coal-fired furnaces producing such items as glass, pottery, soap and lead shot. A list of occupations in the 1841 Census gives a clear picture of this bustling, industrial community: malt roasters, distillers, potters, fishmongers, saddlers, coal merchants, lime burners, coopers, pork butchers, barge builders, tailors, blacksmiths, brick layers, engineers, excise officers, seamen, milk dealers, dressmakers, hairdressers, and, of course, labourers. James Osmotherly was a coal labourer, and at first glance, it would appear that James had made the right choice in leaving Cliffe. Yet by 1849, James, his wife, and three of his children, would be dead.

The rise of Lambeth as an industrial centre meant that housing was hastily erected with little thought for the welfare of the growing population of workers. The Pictorial Map of London of 1854 (reproduced here with the kind permission of Lee Jackson, from his website The Dictionary of Victorian London, [www.victorianlondon.org](http://www.victorianlondon.org)) shows the riverside thoroughfares Fore Street and Princes Street intersected with alleyways. The dwellings built on this low-lying marsh land butted onto factories engaged in dangerous industrial processes. In its History of Lambeth, The Museum of Garden History ([www.museumgardenhistory.org](http://www.museumgardenhistory.org)) notes, "At...Fore Street there were bone crushing factories, 'the smell complained of as a great nuisance; the bone bugs creep through the wall into the next house.'"



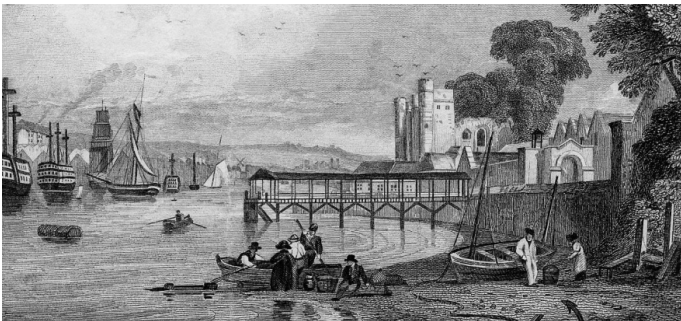




*Strood and Rochester looking east along London Road from top of Strood Hill towards the North Downs, showing clockwise outbuildings of Coach and Horses Inn, [cf. p.19] c.1840, p.20 (L)*

James Osmotherly was born in Cliffe in 1807 (a contemporary of Anne Pratt – see Barbara Marchant’s article above [Issue 05]), the son of James and Charlotte and a descendant of the second marriage of the first Osmotherly in Cliffe: John, born 1691, parish clerk and bellringer at Rochester Cathedral.

In the days before the railways, it is likely that James Osmotherly made his way to Lambeth in London on one of the boats or ferries that made their way back and forth between the capital and the Medway Towns (see picture). One can only imagine his expectation at the prospect of a secure job and a regular wage in the early years of the Industrial Revolution.



*Drawn by T.M. Baynes, engraved by T. Garner and published by George Virtue, 26 Ivy Lane, London DE402/25/p.10 (U)*

*The Medway Towns in 1840. From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Couchman Collection: Watling Street, Strood Hill or London Road (A2 Trunk Road), Strood. Print from engraving entitled Rochester comprising view of*

## Readers' Letters

*We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please write to: Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at [amanda@ajthomas.com](mailto:amanda@ajthomas.com)*

June 2009

Dear Mrs. Thomas,

Re: R.N. Orphanage, Hextable, 1932-1939.

I have recently gone 'on-line' and decided to have an interest in the history of my 'old school'. I hope the following will be of use to you as it contains some info of the time spent there. The enclosed photos show the school uniform of the period.



My brothers and I entered the school in 1932, the elder of us a few years earlier. The workings of the orphanage were on the lines of the Victorian era and the staff were very strict on behaviour. Nail biting was punishable, as was left-handedness. I am now ambidextrous?

At the age of ten I tried to escape at night but got as far as Dartford before the police caught me. The following morning in the school hall I was given six of the best by the headmaster (Mr. Lowe). This did not deter me, but the next escape bid ended at the school gates. Punishment this time was [being] locked up in the clock tower all night. Never tried again.

Not very much excitement while I was there, just the staff billiard [sic] burnt down one night. It was situated behind the laundry. The names of the teaching staff were Mr. Lowe (Superintendent) Mr. Phaisey (Head Teacher), Mr. Scott (Sports Master), and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. In all I have a few happy memories of the old school and no regrets of the time spent there.

I have been trying to obtain photographs of the orphanage houses and grounds but have had no luck so far. Have you any idea where I could try for these?

Hope this epistle is of help to you. If I can be of any further use on the school, please let me know.

H.R. Beckingham,  
Fareham, Hampshire/

See *The Clock Tower* Issue 11, August 2008 for Greg Daxter's article, *The Homes for Little Boys in Hextable, Swanley, Kent*. A copy of the article has been sent to Mr Beckingham as this contained many photographs of the orphanage.

7th August 2009

Hi Amanda,

#### REQUEST FOR MATERIAL

The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre would like to expand its biography base to include more variety and diversity. Any information or material on local 'celebrities', past or present, with connections to the Medway area by birth, residence or close links would be much appreciated. This can include families as well as business partnerships. Particularly welcome would be material on Medway's 'ethnic' families or persons and Rainham individuals, which are at present under represented in our collection.

**Please contact Catharina Clement or Janet Knight at MALSC on 01634 332714**

Catharina Clement,  
The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

## *Editor's Footnotes*



### The Lambeth Cholera Outbreak of 1848-1849: The Setting, Causes, Course and Aftermath of an Epidemic in London

*Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. Born in Chatham but now based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society, the North West Kent Family History Society, and The Council for British Archaeology; she has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association. Amanda was made a full member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists in 2008.*

*In Issue 05 of The Clock Tower, in February 2007, Amanda published the following article on the Osmotherly family of Cliffe, their migration to Lambeth and their subsequent demise in the cholera outbreak of 1848 and 1849. Following discussions with the American publisher, McFarland and Co., this original article has been expanded and developed into a major work (title as above) due to be published worldwide on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009. Amanda has spent the last two years researching the book and made some startling discoveries which convincingly challenge many of the established theories concerning the many cholera epidemics in London in the nineteenth century. Naturally the work includes a bias towards Kent and Medway and Amanda is indebted to the team at MALSC for their help. A special thanks also to the FOMA committee past and present for their support, to fellow researcher Susan Algar, whose outstanding work on the Osmotherly family made the original article possible, and to FOMA webmaster Alex Thomas (Amanda's son), whose knowledge of political history was absolutely invaluable.*

I have mentioned the Osmotherly family of Cliffe before, an intriguing group and at first relatively easy to track, until fellow researcher, Susan Algar, realised they were also calling themselves Osmer (easier to write and certainly easier to pronounce with a Kentish accent) and even O'Smotherly. However a trait all these Osmotherlys do appear to share is an enterprising spirit, and like others in the Nineteenth Century, many of them left the agrarian communities of the Medway Towns to seek opportunities elsewhere: in America, Australia and in London - as discussed by Dr Andrew Hann in this issue [05] and Issue 04 of *The Clock Tower*.

confirm the often quoted fact that men in the Medway area frequently combined farming and dockyard work and that pay for the latter was sometimes in arrears. When Edmund Dennit, husbandman, died in 1705 his inventory recorded that in addition to long list of household effects, he owned two hogs, seven pigs and two cows and fruit on the trees in his orchard. The final item listed was the £27 owing to him 'for his service done in her Majesty's Dockyard in Chatham'. This was more than one third of his total wealth of £69 18s (£69.80).

Sometimes the events of the day intrude into the documents. For example, the 1668 inventory of the meagre possessions of Henry Frewin ends with the statement that 'as for the beading an linen itt was plundered by the duich att the fight' (as for the bedding and linen it was plundered by the Dutch at the fight), casting a new perspective on the Dutch raid up the Medway in 1667.

To view any of this material please go to:  
<http://www.englishpastforeveryone.org.uk/Counties/Kent/Explore>

Over the next few months we have plans to continue to add more material to the website. EPE volunteers have done a tremendous amount of work – far more than could ever be squeezed into the slim paperback that will be the Medway Towns volume. The website will provide a home for much of this material, allowing us to share all of our findings with the widest possible audience. So I urge you to go and explore and enjoy what is there now and then go back again in a few weeks to see what's new.

#### Editor's Note

1. Andrew Ashbee's article, *A Waghorn Discovery*, can be read on page 27 of this issue of *The Clock Tower*.

## FOMA Members

### How the Benefits System has Changed!

JL Keys



*Following on from his previous articles in Issues 12 and 13 of The Clock Tower (November 2008 and February 2009 respectively), FOMA member John Keys shares some more of his Medway memories.*

When in 1941 I started work as a junior clerk in the County Treasurer's Department in County Hall, little did I realise what an eye-opening experience it would be. I was lucky enough to be placed in the Internal Audit section where my work consisted mainly of accompanying audit teams around the county checking the Boards of Guardians records, the accounts of the Poor Law Relieving Officers, the county institutions and hospitals. The institutions and hospitals were still very like the Victorian workhouses, which is how they had been called before 1929.

We also undertook invitation audits at the two hospitals for the mentally ill at Chartham and Barming; Leybourne Grange Colony (for the mentally sub-normal) also came within our remit. One amusing incident comes to mind. A colleague and I were carrying out a wages audit at Barming and after lunch we decided to take a stroll. Of course, the front door was kept locked and we had to ask a member of staff to let us out. There was a queue of visitors outside and as we walked past, one uttered, "Um, they look quite normal, don't they."

Our work with relieving officers involved checking the Board of Guardians order sheets with the R.O.'s payment records to confirm the receipts were being paid with the approved amount. Those sheets sometimes had a potted history of the case and might reveal details of a husband or wife with drink problems, meaning there was a risk that the cash relief might be spent on drink rather than food for the family. In this case a *kind ticket* would be issued instead of cash which could be used at an approved grocery store. At the end of the month, grocers would send all such tickets to the County Treasurer's Department to be reimbursed. One of the traders always had a religious text in the heading of his summary account, usually to the effect: 'The Lord helps those who settle within 30 days.'

Nobody received any benefits until they had been means tested, and this was a very searching examination of one's personal affairs and finances. Many people would rather starve than submit to it and *going on the parish* was a common phrase for seeking such relief. Another term I used to hear was *going on the chat* and when I asked the meaning of this, I was told, "Well, you go down to the R.O. and have a chat, don't you!"

Vagrancy was, strangely enough, still considered a crime, and anyone picked up by the police without means of support (particularly late at night) stood a chance of being arrested or sent to the local vagrancy ward at a local institution (the old workhouse). Many of the county institutions were little more than geriatric units, but some had vagrancy facilities and even lunacy wards. Although I visited institutions which had the latter, I was never allowed to see one, unlike the early Victorians who used to visit them on a Sunday as a form of entertainment.

## Archives Update

Alison Cable, Borough Archivist



## Recent Acquisitions

I am delighted to report the following recent additions to Cityark:

PC108/1/17-18: Parish council minutes 2002-2008

DE1202/1: Photo: staff of Armament supply department (Upnor section) 1943

DE1200/1: Photo album relating to New Brompton Baptist Sunday School 1898/1899

C/ES 306/4: additional records of Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical school c1910-1997

The items listed below were missing when transferred from Maidstone, however they have now been reunited with their collections (i.e. P174 Harley Parish Records, P96 Cobham Parish records, U480 Best Collection, G/Me Medway Board of Guardians). **Please see the paper catalogues in the searchroom.**

P174/25/3: Hartley Parish: school plan 1907-1908

P96/27/3: Cobham Parish: tithe apportionment c1839

U480/P7/2,4,6: Best collection: plans (copies) re Boxley c 1853

G/Me/Wz 9-11: plans of workhouse by 1915 (G Bond) and 1924 (C WW Thompson)

[UFP except for Wz10]

## The Victoria County History

Dr Sandra Dunster



*Dr Sandra Dunster was appointed by the University of Greenwich as Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone (EPE) in October 2007. With the help of volunteers, she is researching and writing a history of the Medway Towns. She previously taught local and regional history at the University of Kent. Sandra was born and raised in Whitstable and, after 25 years absence, returned to live there in 1999.*

## Latest News on The England's Past for Everyone Website

It is no secret amongst the EPE volunteers that one of the most difficult things to get to grips with in this project has been the website. It offers us fantastic opportunities to show the world the materials we uncover but getting to grips with how to do this has caused considerable headaches.

However, I am pleased to report that a corner has been turned! Back in February a group of volunteers got together with Dr. Andrew Hann to load photographs relating to the Medway Valley project onto the site. The afternoon was very successful and this and subsequent work by Andrew Ashbee<sup>1</sup> have resulted in there now being 58 items relating to *Life and Work in the Medway Towns 1750-1900*. These items cover a wide range of topics. There are many old photographs of the villages in the Medway Valley, also watercolour paintings of rural scenes and a considerable numbers of transcribed wills. Brief biographies of significant people in the study area, such as Charles Townsend Hook, are also available online.

The *Medway Towns* project is beginning to establish itself on the website, also thanks to the efforts of Andrew Ashbee. There are 11 items relating to the latest project. These items contain full transcriptions of over 100 probate inventories, grouped by date. Each document details the possessions of an inhabitant of Gillingham between 1665 and 1729, and offer us a glimpse of the material circumstances in which these people lived. Some mention no more than a few cooking pans and small change, others take us room by room listing furniture, linen, utensils, brewing and farming equipment, crops and livestock. They also



The pub was very popular with the military stationed in the Medway Towns, the Royal Marine Light Infantry, matelots of the Royal Navy and all the army units. As could be expected, differences of opinion between the military were sorted out in no uncertain terms. In 1897 the then landlady Laura Knott was charged with selling intoxicating liquor to a drunken person, who leaving the house fell in a trench and died. The Bench decided there was no case.



*Another image of the Long Bar during drinking hours. Roy Murrant.*

During 1901 the Police opposed the licence of this house as the premises stood within 50 yards of another licensed building, but the argument was not accepted. The 1901 Buildings Census valued the property at £3,300 with a rateable value of £75; at this time the pub was owned by Messrs. Style and Winch Ltd. of Maidstone.

My father frequented the pub during the First World War, but in 1936 a licence renewal was not applied for. This Public House closed on the evening of 31<sup>st</sup> January 1936 – and thereafter I always found it strange shopping in Woolworths!



*Woolworths, January 2009, as the shop closed its doors for good. Roy Murrant.*

#### Editor's Note

1. Further information on James Best and Chatham pubs was included in John Witheridge's two part article, *The Great Fires of Chatham*, published in Issues 9 and 10 of *The Clock Tower*, February and May 2008 respectively.

## About The Clock Tower

*The Clock Tower* is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA), <http://www.foma-lsc.org/index.html>.

#### Editorial deadlines

Please note that as of August 2009, the editorial deadline has been changed. The deadline is the **last** Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of January, April, July and October. Articles, letters, photos and any information to be considered for inclusion in the journal must be received before this date by the Editor, Mrs Amanda Thomas, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire; [amanda@ajthomas.com](mailto:amanda@ajthomas.com)

**The copy deadline for Issue 16 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.**

#### Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

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#### Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

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

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

*The Clock Tower* is also available on: <http://www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html>

#### Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website <http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: [malsc@medway.gov.uk](mailto:malsc@medway.gov.uk)

General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Odette Buchanan: 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE. Telephone: 01634 718231; email: [odette\\_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk)

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER. Telephone: 01634 316509; email: [bettycole@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:bettycole@blueyonder.co.uk)



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## *The Crown & Thistle Public House, 188, High Street, Chatham*



*Roy Murrant was FOMA's first Chairman, retiring in 2007. Roy is a well known local and family historian with a particular interest in the history of Medway's public houses.*

The Crown and Thistle in Chatham was an internationally famous pub, situated on the site of Woolworths in the High Street. The earliest recorded licensee I have found was a John Lewis who lived in the house in 1754. In its time, and as was the case for many of the early public houses in the town, carriers, carters and passengers would be picked up at such establishments on the first stage of their journey to London, Canterbury and to destinations all across the county. In 1808 the pub was owned by the Chatham Brewer James Best<sup>1</sup>, and other owners included Edward Winch in 1872 and Thomas Winch in 1885.

In 1851 The Crown and Thistle was a licensed house, the licensee being Richard Gold who paid an annual rent of £36. Then in 1872 the pub was licensed to allow the sale by retail of excisable liquors to be consumed on or off the premises. By 1891 the licence included sales of all intoxicating liquors to be consumed on or off the premises.

By 1891 the name had changed to the United Services. The building had changed somewhat and the licensee was one of Chatham's most well known landladies, Mrs. Laura Ansell (who died in 1925 aged 69). It was during this period that a single bar of approximately 68 yards in length from the front to the rear of the building was built and gave the premises the name that stuck for years, The Long Bar. The bar also had stuffed settees, a three feet tiled stove and a 33 feet long spittoon rail with a zinc tray.



*The Long Bar. Roy Murrant*

described him. He stood only 5 feet, 5 inches tall, and was a slightly stout, ruddy faced man, with side whiskers and curly, dark hair. He was usually to be seen adorned with jewellery, wearing a chequer board waistcoat and smoking a cigar, his bulldog at his side.



*Shadrach Jones, circa 1862.  
The Alexander Turnbull Collection, National Library of  
New Zealand, Ref 1/ 2-046362-F.*

Jones' downfall came, however, when he persuaded George Parr's professional English cricket eleven, which was touring Australia in 1863 to 1864 to visit the country. The tour was a failure thanks to storms and a fire and Jones suffered financially and had to give up his hotel business and go back to auctioneering. Jones left New Zealand in the mid 1860s and travelled the world for the next sixteen years, returning to Dunedin in 1882. Until 1887 he went back to his original profession as a doctor in Tapanui, and then moved to Australia. Jones died at Raymond Terrace, New South Wales, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1895, far from his family who were still living in England.

Who of those in Gisborne now who landed in Dunedin in its younger days does not remember Shadrach Jones of the Provincial Hotel. Eight bars; eight pretty barmaids (six of them married to fortunes); takings, £800 a day; expenses, £150 per diem for its management. Shakedown everywhere—in the billiard rooms; in the kitchen; in the stables (the stables by night a theatre); in the landings; in the passages;—wherever a pair of blankets could be stretched there was an occupant at four shillings a night for the use of the flooring boards. Breakfast, four shillings; dinner five, having to wait half an hour to get a plate of meat, even if it then could be got without one waiter snatching the plate from another. Shadrach went to England, stayed there twenty years, and is once more in Dunedin. Mr. Jones was, perhaps, the most widely known man in Otago in the days of the gold-digging excitement. He brought over the All-England Eleven to play cricket in Dunedin; he took a leading part in organising the great champion race meeting, when the "big event" of 1000 sovs. attracted horses from Australia and all parts of New Zealand; he had a great deal to do with the opening and carrying on of the celebrated Vauxhall Gardens; and in numberless ways the name of Mr. Shadrach Jones was constantly before the public in connection with all kinds of movements, speculations, and organisations.

*From Papers Past,  
Poverty Bay Herald, Volume X,  
Issue 2012, 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 1883, Page 2,*

My thanks to The National Library of New Zealand, and especially to Beth Vincent for her help and research information.

## Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

Janet Knight,  
Local Studies, The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

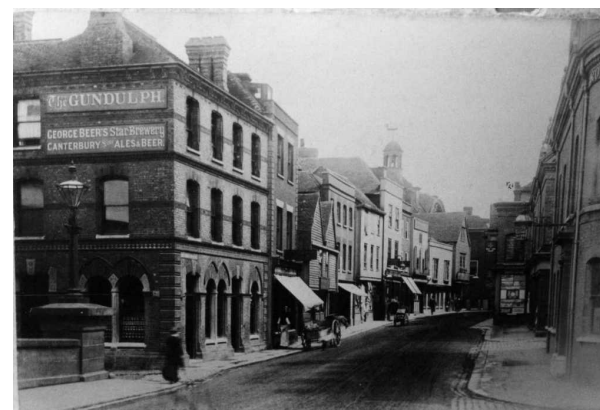


*Janet Knight has worked at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre for over 16 years. She started work as assistant to Pat Salter and later transferred to Local Studies, working with Norma Crowe. Pat Salter's interest in Edwin Harris fired Janet's own enthusiasm and she has become another eager member of the Edwin fan club. Janet is often heard to say, "I wonder what Edwin has to say on the matter..."*

*In this issue, Janet reproduces Edwin Harris' thoughts on The Gundulph and the Ancient Church of St. Clements from Series 7 of his 1930 work, Recollections of Rochester.*

### The Gundulph and the Ancient Church of St. Clements

'[Number] 1 High Street, Rochester is first recorded in the directory of 1872 as no.8. High Street- proprietor, Boulden, James, a Public House called The Gundulph. I remember the piece of waste ground at the top of Horsecwash Lane on which The Gundulph was built. In the directory for 1877 the entry reads Boulden, James, The Gundulph and Barge Owner, No.8.High Street close to the bridge.



*The Gundulph Inn.  
Photograph from the Local  
Studies Collection, Medway  
Archives and Local Studies  
Centre.*

(On the inside page of my pamphlet entitled *Old Rochester*- No.8.) is a dedication written by Chas. F. Ashton, Proprietor of the Gundulph around the time of the 1881 Census - It reads as follows:-

**THE "GUNDULPH" INN  
1, HIGH STREET, ROCHESTER.**

**IS THE ONLY house in the district that is named after the celebrated bishop of Rochester [sic], an account of whom is to be found in the following pages, the house is of modern erection, built on the site of the old church of st. Clements [sic], the living of which was amalgamated with st. nicholas [sic] in the reign of henry viii [sic], john harrope [sic] being the last rector in 1588.**

*Here once a church in splendour stood,  
where pilgrim stopped to pray,  
with sandal'd feet and palmer's hood,  
gainst the dangers of the way.*

*but times have changed, a hostel stands,  
where once was holy ground,  
no pilgrims now from other lands,  
to sacred shrine are bound.*

It will be noted that in 1877 Mr. Boulden had become a barge owner as well as a publican; and thereby hangs a tale:-

After one of the Medway Barge-Sailing matches several people who had witnessed the match on board one of the Medway Steam Packet Co.'s boats, were gathered in the snug little parlour of the Gundulph. The conversation was on the subject of barges and barge racing, and a challenge was made by Mr. Sam Burford of the Gibraltar Inn, New Road, Chatham, that he would race his barge against any other on the Medway for £100 a side. Mr. Boulden accepted the challenge and the bet was made.

Now the peculiar fact was that neither Mr. Burford nor Mr. Boulden had a barge. Each therefore had a barge built and the crafts were replete with all the newest inventions and designed with a regard to speed, being more like yachts than the barges in general use on the river.

*Tower* got me thinking about other Pocock stories. I can remember my mother saying *off hand* one day that she had a cousin who used to travel between England, Australia and New Zealand buying and selling. Quite by chance I came across a distant cousin who seemed to fit the bill and his story made me even more intrigued, particularly as he had arranged the first international cricket match between New Zealand and England.

Shadrach's name is explained in the book:

In a book held at MALSC, entitled *Robert Pocock*, written in 1833, by George Mathew Arnold, Robert relates on page 138 how on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> he had gone to Gravesend Church and 'stood Godfather to my daughter Elizabeth's (Mrs Jones') child, by naming it Shadrach Edward Robert. The curate's name I understood was Owen, but I had never seen him before. The child's name was to please all parties: first Shadrach, because my grandfather Pocock's name was such, and also my eldest son, now settled at Coal Pit Bank, Ketley, Salop. The second name was to please the family of Jones, and the third name is my own.'

George Griffiths wrote a biography in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Government Volume One (1769-1869)*, which was entitled, 'Jones, Shadrach Edward Robert 1822 - 1895 Doctor, auctioneer, hotel-owner, impresario;' the following is adapted from Griffiths' account.

Jones was baptised at Gravesend, Kent, on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1822, the son of John Jones and Elizabeth Hind Pocock. He qualified as a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1843, and in 1844 as a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, and Doctor of Medicine from St Andrews University, Scotland. The following year he married Louisa Onions in Shropshire with whom he had eight children. Jones practised medicine for many years in Shropshire, working in the coalfields, and in the late 1840s emigrated to Australia, at the time of the Victorian gold rush.

By 1854 he was working as an auctioneer and stabler in Sandhurst near Bendigo, Victoria, and was elected to the first municipal council of Bendigo in 1856. At some point in this period he returned to England, but then went back to Australia to work with Charles E. Bird. In 1861, both men left for Otago's gold rush, on New Zealand's South Island. Jones subsequently moved to Dunedin where he took over the Provincial Hotel. This move proved to be most successful and Jones even built a theatre, the Princess, onto the hotel. He made similar improvements to the Commercial Hotel by adding the Theatre Royal; entertainers came from America and Australia to perform in Jones' theatres. Jones was quite a character in Dunedin, 'gregarious, generous and resilient,' so Griffiths

## *To Oz and Back: Shadrach Edward Robert Jones*

Brian Butler

*Brian Butler was born on The Brook, Chatham, in 1956, and attended Glencoe and Fort Luton schools. Brian worked for many years in the retail and finance sectors in Medway but now works for Comet Delivery at Aylesford. During the sixteen years he worked in finance, for fourteen of these he was involved with the Trades Union movement : the NUIW, then MSF, and now Unison; in 1999 he was elected president of the Royal London and United Friendly sections. Brian's hobbies are employment law, reading, sport (now mainly watching), history, and – of course - genealogy.*

### Part One

I started tracing my family tree quite by accident. I did not know who my grandparents were or anything about my family history at all, my parents did not speak about them and no one asked. I did not even know that I had an elder sister till I was 16 and that my mum visited her quite regularly.

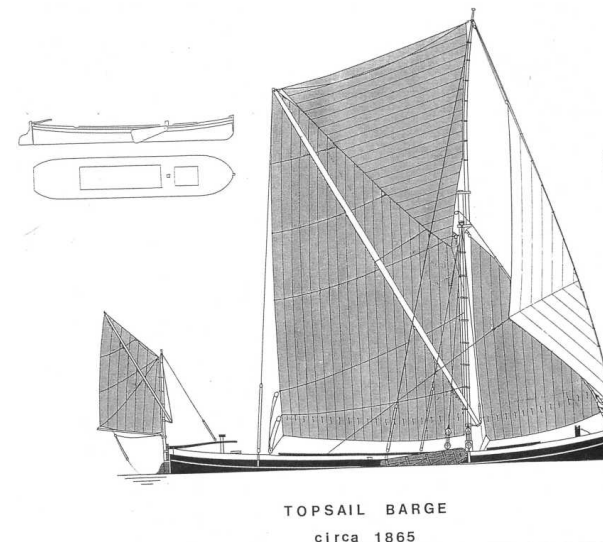
I was not interested in researching until my wife decided she was going to trace her tree. She was getting nowhere on hers and one day she decided to start on mine. Ten years on the bug has firmly bitten and we are still wondering where it is going to lead. I must also add that my wife is upset that my tree has come on leaps and bounds while hers goes around in circles.

On my father's side, the family all resided in Kent and his lines lead back to the Lenham and Stockbury area from 1450 to 1600. Other than that nothing much of interest has turned up, except a very distant link to Mick Jagger, which is still to be proven, and George Bush (the least said the better). My mother's side is similar and connects with the Pocock line, but I have been unable to trace many of her lines back more than two, three or four generations, before they disappear somewhere into the mists of Medway and Gravesend: many were fisherman and mariners. I was the last Butler born on the Brook, Chatham whose line came from Lenham in 1824 and who ran a couple of the public houses on the Brook, including the notorious King's Head, till the 1890s.

I found out about the Pococks, Stanley Morton and the North West Passage story (see *The Clock Tower*, issue 7) when I visited MALSC and saw the exhibition and articles all about my ancestors. It made me wonder where they had got their adventure bug from! However, this and the article about the family in *The Clock*

By the terms of the bet the barges had to be named; Mr. Burford called his *Challenger* and Mr Boulden named his after his house *Gundulph*.

In due course there was a special barge sailing match between *Gundulph* and *Challenger*, and my brother-in-law, Mr William H. Austen, of Wimbledon, who is a native of Strood, and in his younger days was better acquainted with the River than I was, tells me that *Challenger* won the match, and incidentally, the wager. He also believes that it was the first barge to have a steering wheel, he asks if any of my readers can say if this statement is correct. The skipper of the *Challenger* was Harry Munns.'



*A fuller report of the contest is included in Rochester Sailing Barges of the Victorian era by Bob Childs, Dewey Number ROC.387.224, and from which the illustration of a topsail barge is taken. Sadly Bob Childs is now deceased and his work is almost unobtainable except at a high price, however we do hold a reference copy at MALSC.*

## *This is Mutiny Mr Couchman!* *The Story of Lt. Samuel Couchman of* *Rochester*

Cindy O'Halloran

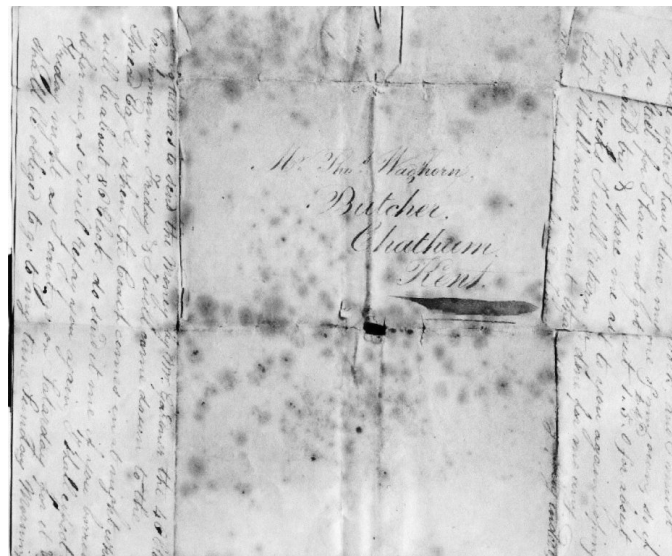


Cindy is Senior Archive and Local Studies Assistant at MALSC, responsible for the daily management of the searchroom and non professional staff. She has worked at MALSC for six years following 12 years in branch libraries and as a teaching assistant at a local primary school. Cindy's interests include reading, gardening and anything to do with history, her main passion being the 17th century and the English Civil Wars, her main reason for tracing her family history - to see if her ancestors were on the right side!

### *Part Two*

Samuel Couchman was not a native of the City of Rochester. The family first appear in the registers of St Margaret, Rochester around 1719. Samuel's parents, Samuel and Margaret Couchman, are possibly the couple who appear in the records of St Leonard, Deal. Here, between 1713 and 1721 five children were baptised to Mr Samuel Couchman and his wife Margaret. John, Samuel and James survived; an earlier Margaret and James died. Presumably their residence in Deal indicated some involvement with the navy, as all of the sons later took up naval careers. To date I have not been able to find the marriage of Samuel and Margaret.

Once resident in Eastgate, Rochester, more children followed: Mary, Margaret, Elizabeth, Martha and twin sons, Charles and Thomas. The baptism of the latter relates that Samuel Couchman was a purser. Samuel Couchman Senior died in 1740 and was buried at St Mary, Chatham. His will states that he was a 'Gentleman of Chatham.' He made bequests only to the younger boys and his daughters. Possibly his elder sons had already been provided for with the purchase of naval commissions. It is rather strange that he died and is buried in Chatham whilst his wife and daughters were living in Eastgate, Rochester. All the above children are named in his will and he is undoubtedly the husband of Margaret. No house or land is mentioned in the will, as the family would have lived in rented property. The bequests include plate, money, linen and household goods. Lieutenant Samuel Couchman wrote his will on board the *Chesterfield* in 1747/8. As Captain O'Brien Dudley witnessed this will, it probably had been written before the outset of the *Chesterfield's* voyage. Couchman left various bequests, mainly to his siblings and friends. The bequests were to be funded from his assumed share of prize money.<sup>1</sup> He also left a portion of his funds to Mary Slade of Deptford who was co executor with his sister Martha. His now widowed mother was provided for indirectly. Samuel 'desired that the within mentioned names allow a maintenance to my mother Margaret Couchman, whilst she lives in a genteel way.' Many of his friends were to receive mourning gifts: Lt. John Barnes of the *Alborough* a gold ring, Elizabeth Wharam [sic] a diamond gold mourning ring and David Wharham [sic] Esquire a gold beaded cane.



An image of the second letter and the envelope

### Editor's Note

The full article, *Who was Waghorn's Father?*, was published in the August 2007 issue of *The Clock Tower* before the above evidence had come to light. Amanda Thomas, *Clock Tower* Editor, has for some time been trying to establish a link between the Waghorns who lived at Cliffe and TFW's family. As discussed above, Thomas Waghorn was a butcher in Chatham and William Waghorn of Cliffe (baptized 14 Sep 1851 in Gravesend) married Sarah Elford in Cliffe on 18 Nov 1879. Sarah Elford's father, James, was the butcher at Cliffe and his sons James (b. 1847), William (b. 1848) and Thomas (b. 1855) continued in the trade in Cliffe and Frindsbury. Jonathan Arthur Waghorn (baptized 14 Sep 1851 in Gravesend), brother of William (q.v., b. 1851) married Mary Stanley (b. 19 June 1848 in Cliffe). The Stanley family had a long association with the Hoo Peninsula and furthers the possibility of a close link between the Waghorns of Cliffe and Chatham. If you have any information which might help solve this mystery, please let the Editor know. Contact details are on page 14.



may go home if first four lines?]  
shall not leave any  
comes up which I ]

[with the blessing of the ...] [from page one (plus address)]

once I get settled [...?] that I am so, I should wish for her to come immediately, and for us (God forbid) never to part more untill death shall seperate us, a Fortnight or so will prove it more for I would not for the universe once we are together again be seperated. She poor thing is truly to be pitied, for very little comfort as she had since we have been married, so think about a Fortnights or so for her to come will be best as then I shall begin to get myself round so that we may live in comfort. The Money Dear Mother you gave me when I was down I expended as thus 11 shillings for a pair of half Boots for Sunday and the rest for the necessaries of life so that I owe my Landlady 3s 6d because I could not live without borrowing it of her, so with my Lodging next Monday 2s 6d more will make 6s 0d. I want to get my other Frock Coat to appear a little more comfortable after I have done my work and I must buy a steel for I have not got one of my own so if you would try & spare me about £1 5s 0d for about Three Weeks I will return it to you again hoping that I shall never want that done for me any [?more ...] so kind as to send the Money by Mr Gardner the 4 0'Clo[ck] Coachman on Friday & I will come down to the Spread Eagle when the Coach comes in at night whi[ch] will be about 8 O Clock, do send it me if you [?borrow] it for me, as I will repay you again. I shall expect [it?] Friday night as I cant go on Saturday for it [...] shall be obliged to go to my time Sunday Morning to work at 6 O Clock I have no more at present to say but that I will [?write] directly I have an opportunity which will be next Sunday Evening. I have sent a letter for Harriet which be kind enough to let Edward run up with. I hope Father and you are all in good health as it the present leaves me and more happy than I ever felt in my whole life before.

I remain Dear Mother Your ever dutiful Son from this time to come and that you shall have the pleasure of witnessing of Jno Waghorn  
[Envelope addressed to Mr Thos. Waghorn Butcher Chatham Kent]

Hitherto the only record of John has been his baptism at St Mary the Virgin, Chatham, on 9 September 1795. The letter shows he survived to adulthood, was married, and worked in the butchery trade. Ann Clarke suggested the marriage of John Waghorn to Harriet Buck at Hoo St Werburgh on 15 September 1818 might be him, and a look at the register entry indeed confirms that this is so: the signature of 'Jno Waghorn' there matches the one in the letter. No more has been discovered about the couple, but here is a possibility that another line of descent from Thomas Waghorn, butcher of Chatham, can be added to those of Ann and Sarah.

The will was proved in August 1749 directly after Couchman's execution. Whether any of those named in the will received any of their bequests is uncertain. Did Samuel Couchman ever receive any prize money as he was executed for Mutiny?

Of Samuel Couchman's brothers, John became 1st Lieutenant onboard the *Augusta*. He died at sea around 1742 leaving bequests to his family. To his bothers he left his wearing apparel and to elder sister Mary an emerald ring. He bequeathed a negro servant boy named Josiah West to a lady of his acquaintance in Jamaica. His cutlass, bureau and gold buttons were to be given to several of the Lieutenants aboard *Augusta*. Lieutenant Francis Brett appears to have been a common acquaintance of both brothers and appears as a beneficiary of both John and Samuel's wills. James Couchman may have become Purser of HMS Royal Oak (his will was proven in 1767). Of the twins, Charles joined the Navy in 1753. He became Master's Mate on HMS *Lynx* and was discharged due to wounds received. His will was proven in 1760 and in it he left all his effects to his spinster sister Margaret. Thomas, Charles' twin, joined the navy in 1757, became Midshipman in 1758 and then Lieutenant. He died in Chipping Sodbury in 1776. Thomas brought back a large china jar from his overseas journeys that was passed to Henry Couchman of Temple Balsall. This Temple Balsall branch of the Couchman family originally came from the Ightham and Sevenoaks area. The jar was given by Elizabeth, the giving of which would indicate a relationship to the Sevenoaks branch<sup>2</sup>, but there is no further proof to date of this connection.

Margaret Couchman the elder died in Rochester in 1750 and was buried in the church of St Nicholas. Whether she lived in a 'genteel manner' we will never know. Margaret may possibly be the Mrs. Couchman who falsely accused Mr Daniel, Purser of the Kent of embezzlement in 1744<sup>3</sup>. Her daughter Mary died shortly before her in 1748 and is also buried in St Nicholas'.

I have been unable to locate any grave for Samuel Couchman in Portsmouth and certainly he was not returned to Rochester. His body may have been hung in chains in the Dockyard as was common practice at that time.

Hereby ends the tale of Samuel Couchman the Rochester Mutineer.

#### Notes

1. Jane's dictionary of naval terms reports thus: 'Prize - in war a ship or any other enemy property captured at sea. The Captain, crew and company were paid out and prize money was distributed according to rank or rate.'
2. Information from the research of Jeremy Archer.
3. National Archive ADM 106/989/9

## Henry Smetham – A Busy Life

Odette Buchanan



*Odette is a retired teacher. She is fascinated by local history and is actively involved in many aspects of the subject. She is a City of Rochester Society visitors guide, a Steward at Restoration House, and a volunteer on the England's Past for Everyone Victoria County History Project. In addition, she is, of course, FOMA Secretary.*

*When researching some facets of Strood History, Odette became intrigued by Henry Smetham; not only did he have a strange name, but he seemed to have written the definitive history of Strood back in the 1890s. Everything published since seemed to rely on his book. Who was this font of knowledge on Strood's past? The following is the second part of a series of three of what she discovered.*

Henry's increased responsibilities and commensurate increase in income meant they could move from over the shop to a house. They lived at 11 Alexander Terrace, off Knole Road in Strood. Unfortunately, this little bit of Strood, to the north of Gun Lane, has been rebuilt and Knole Road has disappeared. It was also around this time, that, as mentioned above, the Post Office rationalized street names and their numbering. With the re-numbering, it looks as if Alexander Terrace had morphed into the bottom end of Bryant Road; Henry is listed as living at number 22. In January 1890 residents of this small area were invited to a meeting to discuss demands made by the Corporation regarding the making of roads, paths, etc. He and the family appear to have lived here until the end of the 1920's when they moved to more commodious accommodation in Goddington Road. Family legend has it that Henry only told his wife, Grace that they were moving the day before they actually did.



*Henry Smetham circa 1898 from Henry Smetham's History of Strood.*

Dr. R. R. Brown, the workhouse doctor, who ordered her removal to the workhouse. Witness believed the bruise on her forehead was caused by her falling against the table.

Mr. H Tronah [Henry Tranah] was clearly a friend of Mary Jane and no doubt the letters came into his hands when her possessions were sorted after her death.

The second letter from John Waghorn (brother of TFW) is as follows, and has been transcribed precisely:

Aldgate, Wednesday  
Evening  
March 28<sup>th</sup>  
1821

Dear Mother

It is with the blessing of the Almighty that I have the pleasure of informing you that I have got a situation a trifling way from Fleet Market in my own trade. The person's name is a Mr Tagwood. Mr Peters & several others have been very kind in giving me recommendations to several of the Trade but it was of no use untill last Monday Evening when I went again to one of Mr Peters' recommendation, who instantly told me of Mr Tagwood's situation who desired me to come as yesterday, for he said he wished to prove me before he agreed with me. When I went he sett me to Kill a beast which I did to his liking, and we agreed for wages which is One Guinea p[e]r week besides 2 shillings for every Satarday night making 23 shillings, he tells me he wants me to act with Honesty & Sobriety and as long as I do that, its all he requires which for my own sake & Wifes relations & Friends I never will swerve from. He moreover gives one to understand that there is a few shillings a week more for me to Earn and the more I strive the more he shall like it and allways be the more forwardar in promoting for my welfare anything that is compatible to it. The person who as done is work before leaves him on Satarday Afternoon, and is going into Bussiness for himself. I am going to commence Satarday night when my wages begins and the man informed me I cannot but like my Master as he is one of the best of Masters. I have nothing to do with Market only on Satarday Evening when I receive my 2 shillings extra for that as I have before stated to you. The Kill is about 10 Beast & from 40 to 60 other Head of Stock per week, there is 2 apprentices and a Shop Boy besides, the Apprentices take turns in the Slaughterhouse one One day & one the next. My time to go every Morning is

6 O Clock & at so] [paper covering over first sheet; right hand portion missing for

Jane must be Mary Jane, sister of TFW. She was one of those whose status fell between working class and true gentry. Newspapers of the time are full of advertisements of genteel ladies seeking some means of subsistence beyond the servile tasks of washerwoman and housemaid, but who had insufficient income to make them truly 'independent'. Brazen appeals to the wealthy were perhaps quite rare, but in Mary Jane's case the fame of her brother meant that her name would be known nationally and might elicit a sympathetic response (as here). Her 'distress' was perhaps compounded by the fact that her sister Ann was sailing for Australia on 17 March 1853 (and her sister Sarah was to follow on 17 May 1855). Mary Jane lived on until May 1883, when she had a sad end: a fall at home, followed by admission to the workhouse at Strood, where she died. The *Daily Telegraph* reported the inquest, from which the following is extracted:

Yesterday morning, Mr. W. H. Bell, Deputy Coroner for the City of Rochester, held an inquest in the infirmary of the North Aylesford Union Workhouse, upon the body of Miss Mary Ann Waghorn, sister to the late Lieutenant Waghorn, R.N., the originator of the Overland Route to India.

Kate Jones deposed that the deceased was a distant cousin of hers, and was seventy-six years of age.

Arthur Meadows, a youth, said that on the evening of Monday, the 14<sup>th</sup> instant, he saw the deceased sitting on the doorstep outside her house. She was too weak to get inside, and she asked him to assist her. He did so, and sat her upon her bed, and afterwards lighted a candle for her. He afterwards got a jug of water, which she asked for, and stood it upon the table, and, after closing the shutters, he left the house. The deceased did not appear to be ill, but very infirm.

Mr. H. Tronah, an hotel keeper, stated that he had known the deceased all his life. She had no occupation, but had a pension of £25 a year from the Government, and received a little help from a few friends in India. Witness had known the deceased to have suffered several falls. She was very eccentric, and had delusions. On Sunday week she had three falls, and afterwards sent for witness. He went to her, when she handed him the key of her sitting-room, saying there was some one in the room. He unlocked the door, but could see no one, when she said they were hiding behind a screen which was in the room. As he had seen nothing of the deceased from last Monday until Wednesday evening, he got his son to force the door, and then found the deceased lying upon the floor. She had a large bruise on the forehead, the table was overturned, and a water jug was lying on the floor broken. She was in a helpless state, and her mind was wandering. She shouted out, "Thieves!" and "Murder!" Witness sent for

Grace died a few years later (in 1932) but Henry continued to live at Goddington Road until his death in 1945. Both daughters became teachers. Helen, an accomplished artist, became an art teacher, and was teaching in Durham when she died aged only 46 in 1925. Lilian lived with her father all her life and taught at various schools in Gillingham and Strood until her death in August, 1942, aged 59.

Always the canny business man, Henry let the accommodation over the shops to his nephew, Hubert Henry and his son, Percy Farmiloe. They had 'joint use of three rooms on the first and third floors at 99 High Street, furnished.' Hubert moved out when he married his wife, Daisy Beatrice Hill (the daughter of Hill the fishmonger who had his shop at 91 Strood High Street) and in 1921 they were living in Grove Road, just around the corner.

There is very little else recorded about Henry or his family's private life except that his great nephew Arthur, the son of Hubert, was decorated in 1943. The whole family must have been very proud of 'Leading Seaman A. H. Smetham, RN of 115 Jersey Road, Strood, who, as announced in last week's News, has been awarded the DSM for gallantry and devotion to duty in successful attacks on U Boats.' This information is accompanied by a now faded and indistinct 'photo of Arthur in the Chatham, Gillingham & Rochester News of the 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1943. The previous week [22<sup>nd</sup> October] the paper listed all the ships on which he had served. The ships were on convoy escort duties across the Atlantic as 'U-Boat Hunters.' This was one of the most dangerous and important naval duties at that time of the Second World War.

Perhaps lack of information about his private life is hardly surprising; he could not have spent much time being a family man. When not running the business with Mr. Tutt, he was involved in so many public boards, committees and clubs and so busy researching all the works he wrote and published that there could not have been much time left for spending quietly at home. It is known that he owned 'a black and oak carved book case with bureau cupboard and also a roll top table and chair which he used in connection with it.' 78 Goddington Road is a fair sized family home of the period and I can imagine his using one room as his office, duly furnished with said book case and roll top desk. He may also well have had some of his daughter Helen's water colours adorning the walls.

Up to the 1950s, pawnbroking was a steady and fairly profitable trade. Before bank loans, hire purchase or credit cards, if one needed cash one would take something to the pawnbrokers (the slang was *Uncle*) and *hock* it. That is, the pawnbroker would take possession of the item, give you some money resembling

the item's worth (the amount was usually about half the value) and a receipt ticket in exchange. There would be a redemption date on the ticket and interest would be charged. One would return on or before the date with the money when interest and the item would be returned. However, sometimes the owner could not afford to redeem the item and so the pawnbroker would put it up for sale. This is where it was useful to have an outfitter's establishment as well as the pawnbroking business. Many working-class people would own *Sunday Best* clothes that they would pawn on the Monday and redeem the following Saturday, however if some disaster befell them during the week they would be unable to redeem the clothes and thus they would be transferred to the second hand section of the outfitter's shop.

Apart from clothes, pawnbrokers would collect a vast and eclectic variety of wares. Every week Smetham and Tutt's had an advertisement in the local paper: On the week of the 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1900 it read thus:

'Gold Alberts @ 27/6, (an *Albert* was a type of pocket watch) silver ditto's @ 4/-, lady's 18ct. diamond and ruby ring 21/-, lady's silver keyless watches 8/6 warranted. Suitable presents: electro-plated cake basket 14/6, oak liqueur frame 18/6. Treadle sewing machine, 30/-, magnificent family Bible 17/6, pretty salad bowl 12/6, double breech loader 42/-, ditto muzzle loader 17/6, [types of gun] brass cornet in case 17/6, marble clock 42/- (Benson) theodolite in case 3gns.'

The shop at Brompton appears to have specialized in mathematical instruments but on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1900 they were also offering a large Gladstone bag for 1 guinea, a Parisian ware bust of Gordon for 2/6 and a bassinette perambulator with rubber tyres for 17/6. In addition, it is interesting to note that Mr. Tutt was also the local agent for the Phoenix Fire Office and Henry was agent for the Yorkshire Fire and Life Insurance Company.

Some idea of what a good trade pawnbroking was is shown by the licensing fees. In 1890 a dog licence cost 7/6, it cost £2. 2. 6d to get married, if you wanted to manufacture playing cards and dice it would cost you £1, to sell medicines 5/- or to be an house agent £2 but to register as a pawnbroker, one would need the astronomical sum of £7.10s. The only licences more expensive were Attorneys' at £9 and auctioneers' at £10. At that time, in the Medway area the average working man's wage would have been around £1.10.0d to £2 per week.

How much time and effort did he put into the pawnbroking business? By the time he and Mr. Tutt became partners on Mr. Stevens' retirement in 1889, Henry

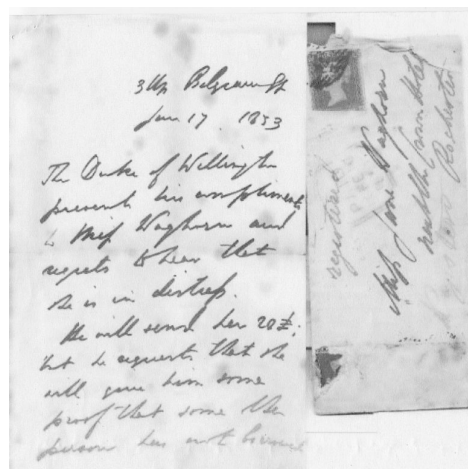
## A Waghorn Discovery

Dr Andrew Ashbee



*Dr Andrew Ashbee was born and bred in Snodland. The former Head of Music at Rochester Grammar School for Girls, he currently teaches music appreciation for the WEA. Dr Ashbee is internationally known for his work on Tudor and Stuart music and musicians, especially the Maidstone composer John Jenkins. He is the Honorary Curator of Snodland Millennium Museum and the Chairman of Snodland Historical Society.*

Family historians are very grateful when information is found which goes beyond the bare bones of entries in parish registers, censuses, and the like. The hitherto meagre findings relating to the Chatham family to which Thomas Fletcher Waghorn (TFW) belonged has been recently transformed by the discovery of two letters. Ann Clarke, member of the Guild of One-Name Studies, researching the Tranah family of Medway, kindly sent me copies of these. They formerly came from Henry Tranah, who kept the Bull's Head Inn (Mid-Kent Hotel) in Strood at the end of the nineteenth century and are now owned by his descendants, who have kindly allowed me to publish them here. We could not work out why these two letters were in the Tranah domain, but in researching this commentary a solution has emerged.



*An image of the letter from the Duke of Wellington, addressed to Jane Waghorn*

The first brief note from the Duke of Wellington to Jane Waghorn is as follows:

Addressed to Miss Jane Waghorn/  
[illegible: ? .. at the] Crown Hotel,  
Rochester

3 Up[per] Belgravia St / Jan [possibly  
June] 17 1853

The Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to Miss Waghorn and regrets to hear that she is in distress. He will send her £20, but he requests that she will give him some proof that some other person has not honoured.

day, despite its not being as profitable as billiards would have been. At the subsequent meeting the vote was in favour of the status quo.

Henry's membership of the Elocution Class was one of the four main interests that occupied most of his non-working time. Another was his obsession with Dickens. He and Edwin Harris<sup>2</sup> started the Rochester Dickens Fellowship and Henry read his paper *Dickens, the Man, Novelist and Neighbour* at the first meeting and *A Possible Solution to the Mystery of Edwin Drood* at the second meeting. He later became President with Mrs. Amy Cobham Prall after the death of her husband, Evans Prall.

As mentioned above, Henry was co-opted onto the Libraries and Museum Committee of Rochester Corporation and in 1924 he donated some Dickens' letters he owned to the Library. In the covering letter to 'Miss Pynn, Librarian (?)' Henry gave instructions 'to put them in the Newspaper Cuttings Book (red) that he had recently given to the Reference Library.' He went on to ask if the (unspecified) enclosed should go into Mr. Rhodes' book and concluded that he still had a lot of other papers. A post-script concluded: 'I enclose a number. Go over them at your leisure, if you ever get any.'

#### Editor's Note

1. The Reading Room at the British Museum was designed by the architect Sydney Smirke and built by George Baker and Sons of Strood. In Issue 12 of *The Clock Tower*, November 2008, FOMA member Michael Baker wrote an article entitled *Strood's New Church in 1812: Which Mr Baker? or By Nine Votes to Eight* in which he discussed the re-building of Strood Church. Michael Baker has since written a short history of the Baker family: *The Samuel Bakers, Tradesmen of Kent in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, and further details can be obtained from the Editor, Amanda Thomas. For contact details see page 14.
2. Regular readers of *The Clock Tower* will be familiar with the 1930 writings of Edwin Harris thanks to Janet Knight's articles. On page 15 of this issue, Janet's extract from Series 7 of *Recollections of Rochester* is entitled, *The Gundulph and The Ancient Church of St. Clements*.

was already heavily involved in local research. Henry came to write his 'History of Strood' at the suggestion of the then editor of the *Chatham News*. In 1895 he commissioned Henry to write an article for the News about the lost monuments from the crypt of St. Nicholas' Church, Strood. This took so much research that he decided to continue and expand it into the *History*. This 420-page tome was published in 1899 and the preface lists Mr. Tutt as one of those to whom he was indebted and the book is 'Affectionately and Gratefully Dedicated' to the previous owner, Mr. George Stevens.

All through the 1890s there are letters from friends offering help and advice on his research. In 1895, his friend Alfred Rhodes wrote to advise on acquiring a daily pass for the reading room at the British Museum<sup>1</sup>. In another of the same year, Rhodes listed collections and their reference numbers at the British Museum to assist Henry with his research. Considering the project started because of a commission from the *Chatham News*, it was no surprise to read the glowing book review it received in that same paper on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1899. The review was two columns long and eulogized with such language as 'indomitable energy', 'enthusiasm', 'perseverance', 'monument to the writer'. 'It will immortalize this neighbourhood by becoming a classic.' The article summarized each chapter and concluded with: 'Altogether this book is a work which should be in the possession of every public library and of every private collector of books which are, to the studiously inclined and the searcher after knowledge, mines of wealth as well as charming companions for the leisure hour. Highly recommended as a Christmas present. (cloth 7/6, leather 10/-)'.

By the turn of the century and approaching 50, Henry was heavily involved not merely in local history but also many other public clubs and societies and local government organizations. The Kent Pawnbrokers Association was started in 1891 and Henry was Secretary for 37 years, and at one time Chairman. For many years he was also a member of the Council of the National Pawnbrokers' Association. His interest in local history and antiquities got him co-opted onto the Library and Museum Committees of the City of Rochester Corporation, and he was also a member of the Kent Archaeological Society for over 50 years. In addition, Henry was on the Strood Board of Trustees for nearly 50 years and previously a member of the old Burial Board. Their meetings are reported regularly in the local paper and always Henry is among those members present.

One of the reasons for Henry Smetham's longevity might well have been his sporting activities. He was a member of the Athletic Club, President of the Strood Bowling Club and a supporter of the Cranborne Club. For many years he



also did not neglect the artistic side of his character. Apart from his writing prose and poetry (see below) he was also a tenor in his local parish church, St. Nicholas, Strood. He was a committed member of the Church of England and well into old age he continued to be a regular communicant at Rochester Cathedral.

When in the High Street, the Working Men's Institute and Club was next door to Smetham and Tutt's shops and Henry was Number One Member when it was inaugurated in the 1860s. At that time, the majority of the population lacked much formal education. Samuel Smile's book *Self Help* was a major influence and what is now called the Working Men's Club was then called the Working Men's Institute and Club. Its aims were both educational and recreational. Henry was member number 49 and one of his great friends, Charles Roach-Smith, was number 50 of the Institute's Elocution Class. Their motto was a misquote from Tennyson's poem *The Brook*: 'For men may come and men may go/ but we will try to go on forever.' The Elocution Class used to meet weekly in the Lecture Hall. The minutes of each meeting list the readings of various members and these public performances would be criticized by the audience (usually between 20 and 30 paying 1/- for a reserved seat or 6d unreserved) and reviewed by the local newspaper. One of the entertainments was given to the inmates of the Strood Union, 'which need hardly be stated here, because all are aware of it, gave them great pleasure.' There is no mention in this report of the audience criticizing the performances.

Henry was a regular performer of poems and prose written by popular writers of the time as well as many compositions of his own. Sadly these compositions no longer seem to exist. One piece he wrote was called *Dare Devil Jack*. The programmes list not only recitals of prose and poetry but also singing, piano recitals and play readings, usually written by members. At one performance he sang a song entitled *Bandy Legged Ben*. Sometimes he was Master of Ceremonies and he was usually involved in the organizing of the annual picnic. He often received glowing reviews in the newspaper reports: 'Mr. H. Smetham's singing of Tom Bowling secured to him high praise.' He appears to have been in great demand and very popular at all performances; he was known as The Poet Laureate of Strood.

The 1886 Annual Report of the class mentions an increase in female reciters. It was noted that the ladies recited better than they read. The President, Henry's friend William Roach Smith, was praised and this was followed by praise for

Henry's recitals of his own pieces: 'As has been before stated, the Poet Laureate of the class has given you several fine pieces during the season of his own composition, and your Committee trust that he will continue to do so, for his pieces do him great credit.' In an analysis of authors of pieces recited, Henry's compositions totalled 11, only exceeded by Shakespeare's at 18. Henry was Chairman of the weekly Entertainments meetings 13 times, while other members only managed three or four. He wrote the lyrics of a song entitled *When on thy Brow* with music by Mrs. Henry Bond, the resident pianist.

The Annual Report of the time stated that 'Henry Smetham, our Poet Laureate was prevented from doing his utmost by great misfortune. For, by the will of God, his helpmate was called away to a better land where sorrow is unknown.' This refers to the death of his first wife in December 1885, however, Henry was back on the scene the following March. Then he was asked to get a carpet for the stage and he requested payment of 4/6 for a gun he had procured for the Class, though no mention is made of the use to which it would be put. By May he was again performing, and in that month he inappropriately recited *Christmas Eve in the Workhouse!* One wonders if he had perhaps practised this for a pre-Christmas performance and was precluded from doing so by his wife's death?

Henry also managed to attend the Institute meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> March when it was resolved to draw up a circular to be sent round to every member of the Institute, stating what was really intended to be done about turning the Lecture Hall into a Billiard Room. This caused great consternation from the Elocution Class and on 17<sup>th</sup> April, the newspaper reported, 'A very noisy meeting of the Strood Working Men's Institute ... to consider the proposal to turn the lecture hall of the Institute into a more profitable account; in other words a billiard room. There were long, noisy exchanges on the state of the accounts, future prospects and the impending competition from a new Liberal Club shortly to be opened.' Opinion for the status quo was that billiards only led young men to become gamblers: 'Even if the elocution class only turned out six elocutionists a year, it was preferable to an hundred billiard players.' 'Mr. Smetham spoke strongly in favour of the elocution class and said no Institute could exist which merely provided amusement and no study for the mind. Who made the world what it was? The thinkers and workers; not those who idled their time away playing billiards.' It is fascinating to note the prevailing self help and improvement philosophy of the age. The noisy questioning over the veracity of the accounts could not be resolved so it was decided to form a sub-committee of seven members to inspect the books and report back to the Committee on the second Wednesday in May. Henry was one of the seven chosen. Self-improvement and elocution won the