

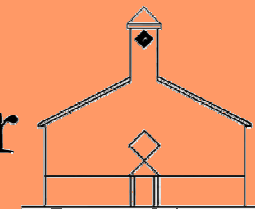


On 16th December 2009 at 10.45 am, The Mayor of Medway, Councillor. David Royle, cut the red ribbon to mark the official launch of the Medway Images Online Database.

Picture: April Lambourne

**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 17: February 2010

£2.00; free to members



Bienvenue Valerie!

FOMA is delighted to announce the appointment of Valerie Rouland (pictured above left with FOMA volunteer, Pauline Weeds) as Project Archivist to begin work to catalogue, conserve and make available for research the contents of the 500 boxes of Rochester City Archives, the Archives of Great Expectations. Only FOMA members are eligible to apply as volunteers on this exciting project which has been funded with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Details of how to join FOMA can be found inside and on our website, www.foma-lsc.org.

Other exciting news in this issue is the official launch of the Medway Images Database, the completion of two years' work to digitise a representative selection of historical images of the Medway area from the Local Studies' print collection. *More inside.*

Medway World War II Evacuation Special

Seventy years ago, around 48,000 children were evacuated from the Medway Towns area. Pictures and articles from those involved in the *Great Evacuation* of the autumn of 1939 can be found inside this issue of *The Clock Tower*.

The annual Open Day (formerly Mince Pie Day) was held at MALSC on 16th December 2009. At 10.45 am, the Mayor of Medway, Councillor. David Royle, cut the red ribbon to mark the official launch of the Medway Images Online Database. The launch of the database was followed in the afternoon by a talk by Chris Bull of Kent Libraries - *Chalk Parish Folklore - What goes Bump in one Kentish Community*.



*The Mayor of Medway, Councillor David Royle, was the first at the MALSC Open Day to go online and view the Medway Images online database
Picture: April Lambourne*



*MALSC was packed on the annual Open Day
Pictures: Tessa Towner*



Further information on the launch of the Medway Images online database can be read in April Lambourne's article in *News and Events* and on the back page.



The postcard pictured has no written message on the back and bears no publisher's name. It does say in print *Real Photo*. One of the publishers who specialised in this postcard theme was Beagles & Co.. Although postcards picturing the young princesses were avidly collected in their day they are inexpensive items for collectors now. I paid about £2 for this very charming photograph to add to my *Royalty* collection. I have photograph type postcards featuring members of the Royal Family from Queen Victoria to the present princes, William and Harry.

Betty's Postcards



FOMA Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, has collected postcards for about 25 years, and to date she has hundreds in her collection, including at least 50 on a Dickens theme. In this issue, Betty concludes our special feature on the evacuation of children in World War Two.

Princess Elizabeth was 13 when war was declared in September 1939 and Princess Margaret was 9. Unlike many other London and Medway children the princesses were not evacuated, whilst King George VI and Queen Elizabeth stayed at Buckingham Palace the princesses were sent to live in the comparative safety of Windsor Castle. In October 1940 Princess Elizabeth made her first broadcast. It was addressed to the children of Britain and the Empire and especially to those who had been evacuated:

“Thousands of you in this country have had to leave your homes and be separated from your fathers and mothers. My sister, Margaret Rose, and I feel so much for you, as we know from experience what it means to be away from those we love most of all. To you, living in new surroundings, we send a message of true sympathy; and at the same time we would like to thank the kind people who have welcomed you to their homes in the country.”

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, FOMA Chairman.



At last! After three attempts we have now recruited a project archivist, who started on 4th January 2010 to carry out the cataloguing of the City of Rochester Archives. You will see from our front cover that she is Valerie Rouland, a French lady, who has worked in the UK for several years. We welcome Valerie and are looking forward to working with her.

I was delighted before Christmas to attend the launch of the Medway Images Online Database, and you can read about the official launch event in April Lambourne's account in *News and Events*. The database can be viewed online on the CityArk website (<http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/>) and it now contains around 1,500 images. For those of you who are unable to visit the Medway area or have moved away, it will certainly bring back some memories, and it is a wonderful - and unique - source of archival material.

Hot off the Presses!

Members will be pleased to hear that in January at an auction in Lewes, Sussex, FOMA made a significant purchase. We bought a box containing deeds of property in Strood and Frindsbury, including Strood Mill. The documents date from circa 1600, and go through to the early 20th century, but the majority of them are from the 17th and 18th centuries. Naturally, the documents will be donated to MALSC, and we hope they will prove to be an important source of information. I am certainly looking forward to having a good look at the deeds - all very exciting.

News and Events

Odette Buchanan, FOMA Secretary



The year has started well with our appointment of Valerie Rouland, as our Project Archivist on the Heritage Lottery Fund Project. The next step will be to appoint volunteers for the project, and naturally we will be making an announcement in due course. **Please do remember that only FOMA members will be eligible to apply for volunteer posts, so whatever you do, don't forget to renew your membership before the FOMA AGM in April.** And tell your friends to join!

By the way, happy New Year, albeit belatedly. The snow makes everything very quiet, doesn't it? As much as we have all moaned about the recent weather, just imagine what it must have been like in Rochester in January 1830. On Sunday 3rd and Monday 4th, temperatures of 15 degrees Fahrenheit were recorded - that's 17 degrees below freezing! Here are some more 'did you knows?' from past Januarys:

1265 – Sir Simon de Montfort held the first Parliament. It was attended by elected burgesses and knights.

1569 – First official lottery held in England – 10/- lots sold at old St. Paul's Cathedral.

1710 – Wren's St. Paul's Cathedral finished.

1806 – Nelson's funeral.

1842 – William Brydon reaches Jalalabad – the only survivor of 16,500 British troops sent into Afghanistan.

1879 – outbreak of Anglo-Zulu War, the Isandhlwana massacre and the brave 140 R.Es who held out against 4,000 Zulus at Rourke's Drift shortly afterwards.

1895 – National Trust founded.

1901 – Queen Victoria died.

1905 – Bloody Sunday at St. Petersburg starts the 1905 Russian Revolution.

1950 – Submarine Truculent sunk in the Thames estuary, after colliding with a ship through the misreading of the navigation lights. It had been built at Chatham and 64 local men and sailors were drowned by being either swept out to sea or frozen; the Captains of the sub and the ship both committed suicide. The disaster resulted in a change of safety lighting.

1973 - First Open University degrees awarded

FRIENDS OF MEDWAY ARCHIVES EVENTS 2010

QUIZ NIGHTS

SATURDAY 20TH MARCH

SATURDAY 16TH OCTOBER

A.G.M.

TUESDAY 13TH APRIL

TALKS

TUESDAY 25TH MAY

ROGER SMOOTHY - GLASS NEGATIVES

TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER

AMANDA THOMAS -

TUESDAY 23RD NOVEMBER

CHRISTOPHER BARKER - WORLD WAR ONE

ALL F.O.M.A. EVENTS WILL BE HELD AT

FRINDSBURY PARISH HALL

CHURCH GREEN FRINDSBURY

START AT 7:30 PM

www.foma-lsc.org

Secretary 01634 718231

The Medway Evacuees Reunion Group (MERG)

has around 150 members who meet regularly at the
Millennium Centre, Gatekeeper's Chase, Rainham.
The group also has a newsletter.

If you would like further details, please contact
Jill Richards on 01634 361024

In the August 2009 issue of *The Clock Tower* (number 15) we featured
Part One of Brian Butler's article, *To Oz and Back:
Shadrach Edward Robert Jones*. Due to lack of space, Part Two will be
featured in the next issue, number 18, which will be out in May.
Apologies for those of you waiting to read the next instalment.

From the Membership Secretary

Betty Cole



**Subscriptions are now due from all FOMA members who
joined before 1st October 2009.**

Please complete the renewal form enclosed with this journal and send it
with a cheque for £10 (£12 for Family Membership) made payable to
Friends of Medway Archives to me: Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue,
Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER

Or, if you are planning to attend the **Annual General Meeting on
Tuesday 13th April 2010 at 7.30pm** the form and cheque/cash can be
handed to me at the meeting.

Alternatively, you may prefer to pay via PayPal on the website at
<http://www.foma-lsc.org/membership.html> .

Don't forget, for just £100, you can become a Life Member!

Valerie Rouland joins the team!



On 7th January 2009 FOMA was awarded a grant of up to £154,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to make available for research for the first time the contents of 500 boxes of the Rochester City Archives – the so-called *Archives of Great Expectations*. The Rochester City Archives form the biggest archival collection in the Medway area, covering the period 1227 to 1974 and includes maps, photographs, building plans, heraldic and manorial records, records of land use, title deeds, rate books, records of trade and industry, public health, and transport.

The next stage of the project is now under way with the appointment of Valerie Rouland as Project Archivist. Valerie is from the northwest of France, having spent most of her childhood in Normandy on her parents' farm. She read History at the University of Tours and in 1995, thanks to an Erasmus grant, went to study at the University of Leeds, undertaking research for a dissertation on 18th century religious life in Yorkshire. Valerie then worked for several organisations in the UK, from the Wordsworth Trust in Cumbria to the National Archives at Kew. In 2004, after attending the archive course at the University of Liverpool, she took up her first professional post for the Cumbria Archive Service at Barrow-in-Furness, followed by a contract with Durham University, cataloguing probate records of the Diocese of Durham. Valerie is looking forward to learning the history of Rochester and ploughing through its archives!

invasion. Sadly many stories also emerged of abuse and cruelty and when the anticipated bombing raids failed to happen - the so-called Phoney War of the autumn of 1939 - many children returned home.



Parents waiting at the top of Edinburgh Road for their children to walk from school to the station on route to Wales (evacuation)
Picture from Margaret Scott.

Another image of some of the children evacuated to Abercarn in Wales from Luton Council School in Chatham. The caption reads, 'Parents waiting at the top of Edinburgh Road for their children to walk from school to the station on route to Wales (evacuation). Picture from Margaret Scott'.

These photographs were kindly supplied by FOMA member Roy Murrant and originate from the collection of Mrs. Win Rolfe who died in 2009.

Editor's Footnotes



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.

When Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced to Parliament on September 3rd 1939 that we were at war with Germany, plans for Medway's *Great Evacuation* were already afoot. A week later on 9th September, the *Kent Messenger* reported:

'Tens of thousands of child evacuees are enjoying themselves *somewhere in Kent* comparatively safe from the threat of air raids...Nothing can exceed the sympathy and kindness which the children have received from the people with whom they are staying. Kent people have taken the evacuees to their heart and are lavishing real affection on them, treating them as though they were at home and making them feel truly at home...'

More than 5,000 children went to South Wales (*Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham News*, 1940; *Medway News*, May 1999), and in all 48,000 were evacuated from the vulnerable areas of the east and south east coasts to parts of Wales, the Midlands, Essex, Suffolk and the West Country. A group of boys from the King's School in Rochester went to Scotney Castle in Lamberhurst, and MALSC has records (on CD) of the names of all the children from Gillingham's Richmond Road School, Forge Lane School, Napier Road School and the Old National School who went to Crynant in Wales.

John Key's article (see above) shows that some of the plans to evacuate may not have been as well thought through as others. Whoever thought Sandwich would be a safe place to evacuate children clearly did not know their English history, as the Kentish coastal towns would have been in the front line of

Medway Images Online Database: Official Launch

April Lambourne, Archive and Local Studies Officer, Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre



The Mayor of Medway, Cllr. David Royle, cut the red ribbon in front of a packed audience at MALSC's annual open morning on 16th December 2009, to mark the official launch of the Medway Images Online Database. Cllr. Howard Doe, Portfolio Holder Community Services, Simon Curtis, Medway's Manager of Tourism and Heritage, were also our special guests at the event attended by around 100 people.

The launch marked the completion of two years' work to digitise a representative selection of historical images of Medway from the Local Studies' print collection and make them easily and quickly accessible online. The target to have 1000 historical images from the 19th century to the present day available by the launch date, was in fact exceeded by approximately 500. Of the 1500 images now online, 350 of them are from a collection of glass negatives that were formerly held by the Guildhall Museum, many of them being made available to the public for the first time.

The database includes images of Rochester, Strood, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham together with a selection from the surrounding urban areas and villages. It can be searched by names of places, street, individual buildings and landmarks, and personal names. In addition keywords, synonyms and plural forms have been added to assist searching, hence it is possible to search for cinemas, churches, post offices, buses, cars, windmills, mills, horse-drawn vehicles, and even snow. Search results are presented as thumbnail images in date order (or approximate date order) and these can be enlarged to display in many cases a caption giving contextual information, together with the name of the originator/photographer and copyright holder (if known).

The web site and Swordfish database behind it were designed and developed by Medway ICT together with MALSC staff. After some initial set-backs we were able to make real progress during 2009 in developing the database. It has very much been a community project to which a lot of people have contributed and we are greatly indebted to the following volunteers who have worked on the project and without whom we could not have achieved our target:

Roger Smoothy for his ongoing work digitising the glass plate negative collection; Steve Cross for scanning and digitising prints; Sue Poyser, Gill Payne and Pauline Weeds for their work on processing and adding images and researching and providing captions; Doris Herlihy, Jean Lear, Richard Lindsell and Ron Gutsell and many other Medway residents for donating images.

Much work remains to be done. We will continue to add more images as they become available – history does not stand still. Medway is rapidly changing and we are now getting better at recording recent changes. By putting the images into the public domain and providing a taste of our total collections, we hope to reach a wide ranging audience, from local and family historians, students and local residents to those living further afield and who cannot travel to MALSC to conduct research. We hope also that it will encourage people to continue donating images of historical importance to our Local Studies department.

Some samples from the Medway Images online database:



Canterbury Street Gillingham after snow 1909

I recall one lady who lived at La Providence, Rochester's French Huguenot Hospital which now provides 60 flats for elderly and retired people of Protestant descent (see <http://www.frenchhospital.org.uk/>). She came in with a letter sent to her mother from the Ministry of Defence during the war stating that her brother was reported missing. She never knew where his body was and as far as she knew her mother had never had that information either. We found him listed on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. His name is on a memorial in Tunisia and the lady in question later went out there to visit the war memorial. There were other cases where researchers working for BBC People's War found out information for people on their relatives who had been shot down or had gone missing after seeing their postings to the site.

In all, around 47,000 stories and 15,000 images were collected by the BBC, and they can be found on bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar. You can even search the archive by typing in a keyword – there are 39 results for 'Strood' alone!



Boys and Girls Luton Council School at Abercarn Wales (evacuees)
Picture Don@Phillips Luton

Another image of some of the children evacuated to Abercarn in Wales from Luton Council School in Chatham. These photographs were kindly supplied by FOMA member Roy Murrant and originate from the collection of Mrs. Win Rolfe who died in 2009.

The BBC's WW2 People's War Project

April Lambourne,
Archive and Local Studies Officer, Medway Archives and Local
Studies Centre



The BBC People's War Project (bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar) launched on Remembrance Day 2003. It was a major project at the time and there was an excellent link between the BBC's educational department and UK libraries such as MALSC.

The aim of the BBC was to create a permanent archive in the form of a web site into which individuals could enter their wartime memories. The BBC asked local authority library services to publicise the site and also to assist people to add their memories, and they even ran training workshop sessions for library staff. Many library authorities ran displays and events to tie in with the project and one such event in Medway was held at Wigmore Library. Some staff were in costume, and Michael Gandy – a well known speaker to members of the Kent Family History Society - gave a talk about the wartime era. There were also practical sessions. For example, staff sat with local people who had brought in their stories and entered them directly onto the website for them or they transcribed and typed the stories prior to adding them. Some of the community librarians also did some visits to housebound people to record memories that were then added. Such activity was happening all over the country. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport set up *Culture Online* which commissioned the BBC and Age Concern England to reach out to older people who did not have computer skills or access to a computer, particularly in Yorkshire, the West Midlands, the South West and East of England. All the postings went through a vetting procedure and people adding stories had to sign up to an ethical code; they also signed over the rights to the stories to the BBC.



Port Victoria Hotel and Pier Isle of Grain - Royal Yacht Victoria and Albert visible



Brickmaking team Gillingham c1905



Ferry across River Medway at New Hythe (from Eccles). Ferry Inn now used as offices by papermill. c 1910.

My parents arrived and were shocked at how I had changed and how unhappy I was. Although I didn't know it they decided there and then to take me away, but they were still concerned about the risk of bombing in the Medway Towns. They arranged for me to be taken to my mother's sister, my Aunt Mabel, who lived in St Mary's Platt, near Sevenoaks. When I heard about this I was completely overjoyed because I loved Aunt Mabel and I adored her husband, Uncle Arthur Lidlow. Two of my cousins were there as well, twins, Edna and Edwin. Needless to say, my time in Platt was blissful. Aunt Mabel was a great cook and a very loving person and with all of the affection and care I received I soon became a happy child again. However, in Strood, the expected heavy bombing hadn't happened and my parents were missing me, wondering why they had sent me away in the first place. They decided it would be better if I came back home, and I believe this happened to quite a few children who had been evacuated privately.

Back in Strood, I was able to watch the dog fights in the summer of 1940 from my own back garden and I was able to go to Broom Hill when a German plane was shot down and the pilot was captured. When the bombing finally did finally start later in 1940 we all just slept in the Anderson shelter but there was no further talk about sending me away. There was excitement and fear when a huge time bomb landed in Cross Street directly outside my Aunt Alice's house; I remember seeing the wonderfully brave men who came to defuse it. Then the tragedy of seeing my Aunt Dot, who lived in Cliffe Road, standing in the ruins of her bombed house, trying to rescue some of her belongings. She and her children had been in a Morrison shelter in the living room and had thankfully not been hurt. Later on in the war we all watched as doodle bugs flew overhead on the way to London and at the end of the war I was also able to enjoy the VE Day street party. However, the scars of my first evacuation to Dorking lasted for a long time and for many years (in fact even today) I suffered desperate homesickness whenever I was away.

Mrs Spratley came up with us to the bedroom and told me that the bathroom and lavatory were at the end of the upstairs landing; she left and turned the lights out. Sheila then told me that there was a ghost in the house and it was waiting for me at the end of the landing, in front of the bathroom. I was absolutely petrified and although I needed to go to the lavatory before I went to sleep I was too frightened; I decided that I would wait until it was light. In the night I wet the bed, and I was so ashamed, but I didn't know what to do. From that moment on my life became full of unhappiness and misery, and I don't remember anything nice happening, except on the few occasions when I saw Mr Spratley on his own and he was nice to me.

Having been evacuated there to protect me from the bombing it was ironic that we then started to get air raids in Dorking. Unlike us in Strood they didn't appear to have Anderson shelters in the gardens, or at least the Spratleys didn't. When the sirens started we all had to cram into the cupboard under the stairs and because I was the least important person in the house I was put in the most cramped position. However, the most terrifying incident was the day when we were playing in the field opposite the house. Suddenly a German plane swooped down from the sky and machine gunned all of us children playing there.

We always used to listen to Children's Hour on the wireless. I loved the programme and the effect it had on me was to lead to my finally leaving Dorking. At the end of the broadcast they would sing, "Goodnight children everywhere, your Mummy thinks of you tonight." I became so overwhelmed with sadness at this that I would rush out of the room and sit in the lavatory sobbing my heart out, and this became so unbearable that in the end no-one could stop me crying. Finally Mr Spratley had to contact my parents to tell them how upset I was. Even now I can't hear that song without crying.

FOMA Events for 2010

Elaine Gardner, Vice Chairman:



The events sub-committee meeting before Christmas decided to organise some evening meetings for members in addition to the talks arranged by MALSC. The news that the caretaking and security services at the Study Centre would no longer operate after 5:30 pm, thus restricting events there to the afternoon, only added impetus to our planning.

We have decided that **all FOMA events this year (2010) will be held at Frindsbury Parish Hall**, situated next to All Saints Church at the end of Church Green. We are planning to hold two quiz nights, the AGM and a series of four talks over the coming year, the talks starting after the AGM in April. The cost of the talks to members will be £1, and to guests £4, the same as the cost of talks at MALSC to non-FOMA members. We are still happy to receive suggestions from members for other events they would like to see organised.

We will also be joining with Rochester Society members to be on duty at Eastgate House to support the MALSC exhibitions being held there this year. I was disappointed not to hear from members following the appeal for volunteers in the last issue of *The Clock Tower*, but hopefully, if you are also a member of the Rochester Society, you have responded to Alan Moss' appeal for the same thing. In case you think we are rivals, Alan and I work together to round up volunteers for these exhibitions, and we don't mind which of us you give your details to! The exhibitions at Eastgate do bring the scope of MALSC to a larger audience, many of whom have no idea the study centre exists, and since FOMA's main objective is to support MALSC it would be good to think that FOMA members do their best to offer the odd couple of hours at least once or twice in the year. My contact details are as follows:
Elaine Gardner, 102 Valley View Rd, Rochester ME1 3NX, Kent.
Email: emgardner@fsmail.net

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Events

All events in 2010 and until further notice are at Frindsbury Parish Hall

Talks are £1 for members £4 non-members.

Please book for ALL events through the FOMA Secretary:

Odette Buchanan , 72 Jersey Rd, Strood, ME2 3BY;

odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk; 01634 718231.

Saturday 20th March, 7.30 pm (doors open at 7.00 pm)

Quiz Night

£5 for members and non-members.

Tuesday 13th April, 7.30pm

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 25th May, 7.30pm

A talk by Roger Smoothy:

Glass Negative Presentation.

Tuesday 28th September, 7.30pm

A talk by Amanda Thomas:

Medway, Lambeth and Cholera.

Saturday 16th October, 7.30 pm (doors open at 7.00 pm)

Quiz Night

£5 for members and non-members.

My Memories of Evacuation

Dulcie Jones



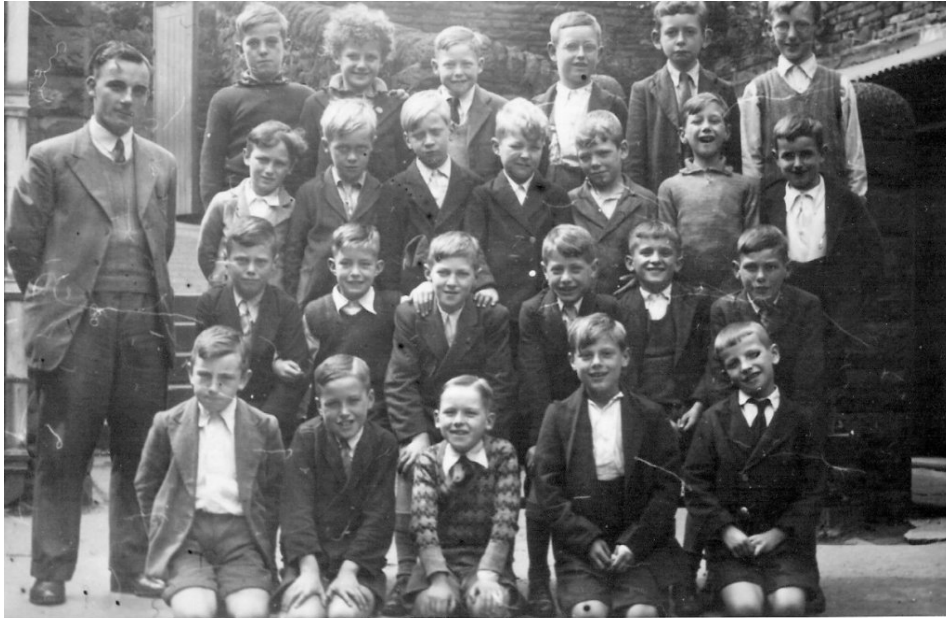
FOMA member Dulcie Jones is the mother of Clock Tower Editor, Amanda Thomas.

The Second World War broke out on my seventh birthday, September 3rd 1939. I had realised for a while that there were troubles ahead and I had watched with interest whilst the Anderson shelter was installed in our back garden in Strood earlier in the year and had also accepted my gas mask with keen interest. What I hadn't expected was that on my birthday I was going to be taken away from my home and my school to be evacuated to a friend, or rather, business associate, of my father, Mr Spratley, who lived in Dorking, Surrey.

The decision had been made because of the risk of bombing in the Medway Towns area. I sat in my father's car, looking at my feet. I had desperately wanted some black patent shoes with ankle straps for my birthday and to my delight, they were one of my presents. I decided that as they were so beautiful that I would concentrate my mind on them and wouldn't think at all about what was actually happening.

When we arrived at the Spratleys', pleasantries were exchanged and then I was left alone with my new guardians. Mr Spratley seemed very nice, but I wasn't sure about Mrs Spratley. There were two children, Sheila, who was 12 years old and Michael who was four. The rest of the day was rather strained and I started to realise that as far as Mrs Spratley was concerned I was not a welcome guest. I felt completely wretched and I wanted to see my Mummy and Daddy. When bedtime arrived I was told that I was to share Sheila's bedroom. Sheila was obviously not very happy with this arrangement and she had made up her mind that she didn't like me at all.

I wonder how many other young boys in the Medway Towns enjoyed this spectacle?



Luton Council School at Abercarn Wales. (evacuees)
Picture Don Phillips Luton.

An image of some of the children evacuated to Abercarn in Wales from Luton Council School in Chatham. These photographs were kindly supplied by FOMA member Roy Murrant and originate from the collection of Mrs. Win Rolfe who died in 2009.

Tuesday 23rd November, 7.30 pm
A talk by Christopher Barker:
The First World War

Tues 22nd February 2011, 7.30 pm
A proposed talk on the 'Archive of Great Expectation' Project

Calling all Photographers!

On Tuesday 25th May at 7.30pm Roger Smoothy will be giving his talk, Glass Negative Presentation. Roger and colleague Roy Moore have converted thousands of glass negatives of the Medway Towns into digital format and Roger is looking for volunteer photographers to photograph the same views as they are today.

Please contact Roger Smoothy at roger@hgv1.wanadoo.co.uk, or 01622 769954 for further details.

MALSC Events

Exhibitions

4th February to 30th March

Temple School, Strood: Snapshots of School Life 1936-1960

1st April to 1st June

Bricks, Mortar and Breeze Blocks: How to Research the History of your House

3rd June to 3rd August

History of Frindsbury Cricket Club: 125th Anniversary

5th August to 5th October

The Battle of Britain: 70th Anniversary

7th October to 30th November

Roll out the Red Carpet: Royal Visits to Medway

2nd December 2010 to 11 January 2011

Dickensian Medway

13th January 2011 to 22nd February 2011

Sir Joseph Williamson – The Man behind the Name

24th February 2011 to 12th April 2011

Wingets: At Work and Play

Evacuation Story

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.

There is limited news from EPE this quarter as I am entering the final stages of writing up all the research that the volunteers and I have been working on for the last couple of years. The timetable for editing and production of the Medway Towns book has been agreed, with publication planned for the end of 2010.

However, as this edition of *The Clock Tower* is an Evacuation Special, I thought I might share the story of my father's brief experience of evacuation from and his subsequent return to the Medway Towns.

My father Peter was the younger son of Ada and Sidney Dunster. His father was a captain in the Merchant Navy frequently sailing either in or out of Chatham Dockyards and the family home was in Eastcourt Lane in Gillingham. Captain Dunster was away at sea for most of the war and Peter, who was 15 and still at school when war broke out, was the only member of the family at home with his mother, once his elder brother Ron had joined up. When the order came for evacuation my father was assigned to a Welsh village and young Peter was packed up and sent off to Wales.

This separation from home did not last long. Within a few weeks, pathetic letters home prompted Ada to set off for Wales and bring home her youngest boy. He spent the rest of the war in Gillingham and I remember him telling me how exciting he found it to lie in the back garden and watch English and German aircraft fly overhead during the blitz. He also recalled how, at the time, he never gave a thought to the danger.

close so we returned home to experience the V1 and V2 bombs. That main period of the war in Wales was not a happy time.

Betty Farrow also comes from the Medway Towns. She was born and lived in Gillingham, the youngest, and only girl, of a large family of brothers. She was three at the start of the war and her eldest brothers were in the forces fighting. Because of the closeness to the dockyard, Gillingham was not at all safe. Betty's mother had been used to going hopping and the farmer offered her mother a cottage if she came to work on the farm to replace the men who had been called up, so Betty spent most of the war in the country near Selling. She says she was not really that aware of much of the war as she was very young and out in the country. Her mother brought the family back to Gillingham in 1944 after she lost a second son. They came back for his funeral, and did not return.

Talks and Events

3rd March, 2 pm – 4 pm

17th March, 2 pm – 4 pm

21st April, 2 pm – 4 pm

28th April, 2 pm – 4 pm

Family History Course for Beginners

Prepared by the Kent Family History Society

£7.50

20th April, 7.30 pm

Family History and the Media

Dr. Nick Barratt

Please note: this event will be taking place at Chatham Library

7th July, 2.30 pm

Presenting and Representing Lower Medway Valley

Dr. Andrew Hann

13th October, 2.30 pm.

Passage to India: Going and Coming

Derek Moore and Bruce Aubry

17th November, 2.30 pm.

Royal Visits to Medway

Bob Ratcliffe

8th December

Dickens: 150th Anniversary of Great Expectations

The Launch of Percy Fitzgerald's Collection.

Please note: this event will be taking place at Eastgate House, Rochester.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, (MALSC) Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Unless otherwise indicated, talks and events are £5, or £4 for FOMA members 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.

Exhibitions at Eastgate House

14th April to 27th April, 10 am – 3 pm
Gardens and Gardening.

19th May to 1st June, 10 am – 3 pm
Edwin Harris.

7th July to 20th July, 10 am – 3 pm
A Stroll through Rochester.

11th August to 17th August, 10 am – 3 pm
History of Frindsbury Cricket Club.

8th September to 12th September, 10 am – 3 pm
Hopping.

9th September to 12th September
Heritage Open Days.

13th October to 22nd October, 10 am – 3 pm
Nelson.

3rd November to 14th November, 10 am – 2 pm
Battle of Britain.

John and Betty Farrow's Evacuation Memories

Elaine Gardner



FOMA Vice Chairman, Elaine Gardner asked John and Betty Farrow about their recollections of evacuation. John and his wife Betty live in Borstal and Elaine knows them through the Borstal Active Retirement Association.

I was born in 1933 and lived in Shaws Way in Rochester. At the age of four I attended the University School, New Road, Rochester. The column fronted building is still there at the top of Nags Head Lane but is currently not occupied. At the outbreak of World War II, in September 1939, it was decided that children would be a lot safer if they were moved away from the Medway Towns, so together with my elder brother we were sent to Canterbury to be billeted with a pleasant middle-aged couple.

It was soon realised that Canterbury was not the safest place to be and the University School headmaster managed to lease a large building from Llandovery College in Carmarthenshire, Wales. Some thirty pupils, both boys and girls were moved to this location in December 1939. The school was run as a boarding school and, as the building was located in its own large grounds, was quite insular from the townspeople, so we never got to know any of the locals. On odd occasions our parents would come to visit during school holidays, sometimes driving across country in an Austin 7.

We only experienced one air raid when a lone German bomber, supposed to be attacking Swansea, dropped his bombs in the surrounding fields. In early 1944 we experienced having hundreds of American troops camping in the fields nearby prior to D-Day. They gave us sweets and chocolate, which was a rare treat in those days. In the summer of that year the building lease ran out and the school had to

nature rambles. It was great being out of the classroom when it was our turn because sometimes we would go down to the bay, a distance of about two miles, where there was always plenty to see over towards the Goodwin Sands. The Germans mined the Channel and ships which hit mines were often beached on the Sands. Beachcombing was a profitable pastime, but it was sad to see some fine ships sinking slowly down.

Adjacent to the town, north along the Ramsgate Road was Richborough Army Camp. This had been constructed as a supply depot for BEF in France during World War One and was now partly occupied by German and Austrian Jewish refugees who had escaped Nazi persecution. They had freedom of movement and we used to engage them in conversation as they walked around the town to practise our language skills, though not too successfully, I hasten to say. Most of them spoke English far more fluently than we could speak German, but they were gentle and patient with us, sorting out our attempts to speak their language. They had a fine orchestra and came to the school to give a recital of mainly Viennese waltzes – it was superb.

Mr. Knowler had permission to shoot rabbits over the neighbouring golf links, The Prince's and Royal St. George's golf courses, so we were never short of meat – but you had to like rabbit! We had it in pies, roasted, stewed and minced, but it was always delicious and helped with our normal meat ration to provide a very nutritious and varied diet. Not everyone was so lucky.

Looking back now with the benefit of hindsight, it does appear that we were not as unprepared for war as some scaremongers suggested. The whole operation thus far had gone remarkably smoothly. Gillingham County School for Boys (about 300 boys) had been relocated some 50 miles away with scarcely a hitch in little over 24 hours. A lot of behind the scenes planning had been going on since the 1938 crisis, bearing in mind the number of schools going through the same experience to many different destinations. Whoever chose ours did not seem to have recalled the events of World War One, for we were closer to the Front Line than anyone else in the country when the Germans broke through in France. So it was that the school had to re-evacuate in the summer of 1940 to the relative safety of the Rhondda Valley in South Wales.

Medway Museums and Library Service

Medway Museums and Library service has held a series of successful exhibitions, usually lasting about ten days, at Eastgate House, Rochester (see above), with the aim of both getting visitors into the house and highlighting the exhibitions put together by MALSC. However, success depends on volunteers manning Eastgate House when exhibitions are on display, and we are keen to find more volunteers to avoid the stalwart few having to cover two or even three half days.

If you think could offer a two and a half hour morning or afternoon slot at future events please contact Elaine Gardner on 01634 408595 or e-mail emgardner@fsmail.net so that we can add you to the list and contact you before the next exhibition. Thank you!

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 at MALSC on 01634 332714

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

FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan, has received by email some lovely comments from users of MALSC's CityArk website (<http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/>). The latest exciting developments on the website can be read in *News and Events*, in April Lambourne's article on the official launch of the Medway Images Online Database.

Dear Amanda,

2010 sees the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway's *London Extension*, the first trains running through to Victoria on 3rd December, 1860. More will be written on this anniversary in due course, but in the meantime I wonder if any reader has knowledge of the *private* station between Swanley and Farningham Road that served a local orphanage. According to Gray's definitive book on the LCDR this station comprised a platform on the *down* side only to cater for orphans arriving from London, and was opened on 11th October 1870. There is no reference to a closure date. Extensive search has not produced any photographic evidence, and it is not mentioned in other works on the line, and there is no trace of anything today, though I seem to remember the sign Home for Little Boys at Farningham Road station itself in the late Forties. If anyone has further information, please contact me, and it will help to fill another part of the tale of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway.

Yours sincerely,
Bob Ratcliffe

Replies to the Editor, as above, please.

Mrs. Knowler brought up a large jug of hot water for washing purposes, as she was to do every morning.

We were lucky. The billeting officers or welfare people came around that morning to see if we were happy and some of our friends were moved to different billets, either because they were not comfortable or perhaps the billet was considered unsuitable. I think all concerned parties were well pleased with our situation. Our history master who was billeted just along the road from us called in to tell us to report to the Sir Roger Manwood's School at 9 am on Monday. We had the rest of the day to ourselves, to get to know our hosts and to familiarise ourselves with the neighbourhood, one of our first tasks being to find the quickest way to school. It was only a ten minute walk up the road. Naturally Mr. and Mrs. Knowler were only too willing to tell us where things were and places of interest to look out for.

On the Sunday morning, 3rd September, we were awakened by the bells of St. Clement's Church which was just up the road. They were playing a hymn tune, I think Onward Christian Soldiers, most apt in the circumstances. That was the last occasion we were to hear church bells for a very long time as soon afterwards, the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, made an announcement. We all knew what he was going to say, that Britain was at war with Germany. In the event of an invasion, church bells would be rung and for no other reason. We would not be going home in the foreseeable future!

Attachment to the Sir Roger Manwood School did not mean there was room for us in their classrooms, but we did assemble in their hall on the Monday morning. The headmaster informed us that there would be a lot of walking about from one classroom to another, and so it proved. Our classrooms were widely dispersed around the town, in fact anything with room for 25 desks was pressed into service: the Methodist Hall and the Wesleyan Hall, for example. The teachers for their various subjects had their set venues, and we walked from one to the other according to our timetables. I recall having geography lessons in the billiard room of Lord Slazenger's holiday home. We did a lot of walking and kept pretty fit. There were always one or two classes which could not be accommodated, so we were taken on conducted walks and

A Clock Tower Special Feature

The Great Evacuation

Just over 70 years ago on 3rd September 1939, World War Two was declared. The announcement that Britain was at war with Germany came as no surprise, but the residents of Kent and the Medway Towns knew that (as always) we were in the front line for invasion and attack from the air. In response to this threat some 48,000 children were evacuated, and here are some of their stories.

Medway Memories

JL Keys



FOMA member John Keys shares some more of his Medway memories with the second part of his own story of his evacuation to Sandwich.

My Evacuation Story Part Two

Electricity had only been installed on the ground floor of the Knowlers' house so when it was time for bed at 9 p.m., we were handed a lighted candle in an old fashioned candlestick to light our way upstairs. Many houses retained gas lighting in the upper floors long after electricity had been installed downstairs, because people mistrusted this new-fangled source of light and heat. And so we settled down to our first night away from our families and in a completely new environment. The bed was comfortable and I had no difficulty getting to sleep after a very busy and eventful day. The house had no bathroom, as was the case with most small properties built in Victorian times, and the next day

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
The copy deadline for Issue 18 of *The Clock Tower* is **Monday 26th April 2010**.

Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Ray Maisey, Rabbit Hutch Printers, 106 Charles Drive, Cuxton, Kent, ME2 1DU; telephone: 01634 294655; fax: 01634 723510; email: Ray@Rabbithutchprinters.com

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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

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

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

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Boiled Beef	10.0
Leg Pork	6.6
Cheese	4.0
Tobacco	6.0

Total	£12.14.4
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Note from Fra Burrell to Mawdistly Best 25/6/1741

I have enclosed sent you the Acct of the Monies disbursed by Mr Brooke & Myself on the London Freeman. I wish the expense had been less.

Holloways bill for suppers etc	11.1.0
Pd Chadbourne	2.2.0
Pd Matthews	1.1.0
Pd Wise	1.1.0
Pd Wells	1.1.0
Pd Barker	10.6
Pd Adams	10.6
Pd Clarke	1.1.0
Pd Hunter	1.1.0
Pd Geere	1.1.0

Total	£20.10.0
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We can only speculate as to whether the payments to individuals here and elsewhere were for services rendered or were voting bribes. What does seem certain is that inducements of some kind were expected and the voters were not slow in taking them up.

Notes

1. English Society in the Eighteenth Century – Roy Porter p.123
2. English Society in the Eighteenth Century – Roy Porter p.126

To 4 Horse Keeping Corn & Hay	4.6
To Devonport Ward by order of Mayor	
Spent at his house	1.1.0
To Rob Cozens	5.0
To Jos Wells	5.0
To Fran Gibbons	5.0
To Wm Wise	5.0
To Tho Butler	5.0
To Polycart Kent A Black	5.0
To William Goodwin his travelling charges	10.0
To 4 Sergeants Fees	6.6.0

Total £41.4.6

And again:

Bill from J Hall 27/5/1741

Punch Beer etc	9.12.0
A barrel of beer	1.16.0

Total £11.8.0

And again:

Bill from Richard Ward 29/5/1741

Wine Punch Beer Victuals £7.9.6

Bill from F M Harris on the day of election in May:

Bread	10.0
2 Barrells Beer	3.12.0
14 gallons Punch	4.13.4
11 Bottles Wine	1.2.0
Rump Beef	10.6
2 Wast ?	10.0

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Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

Janet Knight,
Archive and Local Studies Assistant,
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 of The Clock Tower, Janet concludes Edwin Harris' story about Eastgate's stone pump.

The Old Stone Pump in Eastgate Part Two

Over 1,200 Years Ago

About a dozen yards down the street was an open spring of water, where the blessed Saint Augustine stopped and drank, so that for many years after it was known as Saint Augustine's spring. As centuries rolled on I was built over this spring to enable wayfarers more easily to get the cool and healing fluid that runs through my veins.

I continued a useful member of the community till within the last few years.

I originally stood in the middle of the pathway lower down the street, but in the year 1822 was moved to my present position.

Several times I have seen the Eastgate flooded, before the present system of storm water drainage was made. A sudden storm and the



The pump in situ at Eastgate House Museum, c. 1920s. From a glass negative, Medway Images database, ref. C050966505; Guildhall Museum glass negative collection, ref. RGHM CE 0754. The image can be found on Medway Images, along with other images of it in its original site in the High Street, by searching for pump or Eastgate House. The pump was later moved to the Guildhall Museum, Rochester, and is now apparently near the side door there (April Lambourne).

approximately £30,000 in today's money. Whether this was the total expenditure we don't know, but by comparison in 1689 Pepys spent £8.5s.6d on an election at Harwich: by 1727 Viscount Percival needed £900 for the same constituency.¹ Included in this expense was a bill from William Cooper for Diet, Lodgin, Waterage and Maintenance of Ten Freemen from Sheerness:

Tuesday night 5/5/1741	To Diet	5.0
	To Drink	6.0
6/5/1741	To Diet	8.0
	To Drink	6.0
	To Drink	1.5.0
	Lodgein	5.0
	Ten Gilt Laurels	5.0
	To Waterage	10.0
Total		£3.4.0

A modest amount perhaps but it does show that the candidate's backers were prepared to pay for food drink and lodging for his supporters. The following, more detailed bill, emphasises this and judging by the amount of alcohol consumed, quite a few freemen were present. Might this have been one of those occasions recorded in the diary of Bubb Doddington a candidate in the April 1754 Bridgewater election of three days 'spent in the infamous and disreputable compliance with the low habits of venal wretches'?"²

From Rob Dawson to Mawdistly Best, May 1741

Spent on Several Freemen at my house	1.15.0
To eating	4.0.0
To 3 barrels & half of beer	6.6.0
To 108 Bottels of Wine	10.16.0
To 15 Gallons Punch	6.0.0
To 10 Tobacco	15.0
To 4 Gross pipes	7.0
To Punch Negus & Wine in Court Hall	15.0
To Drink for the Musick & Drums	13.0
To Mr Hawkins & Mr Norman Hodgshier	6.0

The Rochester Parliamentary Election of 1741

Peter Lyons



Peter Lyons is a volunteer at MALSC and has worked on local history research for the Victoria County History with Dr. Andrew Hann and Dr. Sandra Dunster. Peter is retired after a career 'spent mostly in banking.'

In this issue of The Clock Tower, and in anticipation of a General Election, Peter looks at how our Medway ancestors viewed democracy.

An enquiry into the Rochester election of 1806 showed that there was extensive *treating* on both sides and the opinion at that time was that a seat for Rochester would soon be considered one of the most expensive in the kingdom. The exact nature of this treating has not been specified but, no doubt, alcohol and food played its full part.

In the Best family papers held in the Strood Archives we do have some scraps of information regarding an earlier election of 1741 when Admiral Vernon was a candidate. He had married Sarah Best, the sister of Mawdistly Best, of the Best Brewery, Chatham, to whom the invoices etc. for entertainment are addressed. We do not know if he actually paid the bills as agent for Admiral Vernon, who was fighting the Spanish in the West Indies at the time, or if he was subsidising him. The latter seems quite likely, though at his death Vernon left a fortune to his son who was later ennobled.

At the time it was possible to stand for more than one seat and Vernon was also standing for Ipswich. He was elected for both and preferred to sit for Ipswich as he had an estate in Suffolk. There are some letters in the collection between others than Admiral Vernon discussing, without resolution, where his intentions lay.

Certainly there was considerable outlay (that was presumably wasted) in London and Rochester on the Freeman of Rochester persuading them to vote for Vernon. There is, in fact, a short note in the papers stating that £347 had been *paid away* on the Admiral Vernon election, this would amount to

water would rush down Star-hill and Crow-lane, meeting just in front of me, bringing leaves, also tubs, boxes and brushes that had been standing outside the oil and colourman's depot on Star Hill, and you would see his shop assistants, headed by Fred Johnson, with their trousers tucked up, fishing in the muddy waters for their goods. As the water gathered it would spread over the payments and run down the adjacent cellar gratings. The old Queen Charlotte, opposite, had its cellars full, floating the barrels, breaking the unions and doing a lot of damage. The landlord, James Eason Goble, could only draw dirty water through his beer engines.

But as drawing the water out of his cellar by this means into a quart pot would have taken too long a time, Jimmy, as he was familiarly called, got one of his barge's pumps, took up the cellar-flap and put down the pump. After a couple of days' work he was able to find his barrels, although their contents were spoilt. In Queen Charlotte-lane I have seen the old manual fire engine used to pump the water from the cellars.

Do I get into many squabbles? No, I usually lead...

A Very Quiet Life

I never had but one fight, and that was one night when someone had raised my right arm which was rather stiff with rheumatics, so that it remained poised in the air, giving me, doubtless, a rather pugilistic appearance. A man came along, very valiant on the strength of two half pints or so of cold fourpenny, and noticing my raised arm and thinking that I was spoiling for a fight he threatened to punch me in the eye, but bless you I never answered him until he squared up to me and landed me one of my rheumaticy arm. That was more than even a pump could stand, so I quietly brought down my clenched fist at the end of my iron arm and stretched him senseless on the ground. Then an intelligent member of the police force ran him in for being drunk and incapable.

One night a gentleman of the Cockney persuasion hailing from Lambeth was reeling up the Eastgate with a drunken expression of wisdom upon his intellectual face, carrying his portmanteau, which was of the hop sack variety. He was evidently re-turning from his annual vacation in the Kentish hopgardens. He pulled up short on beholding me, and gave vent to this classical observation. "Blime! if this ain't Cleopatric's Needle, but I didn't know the County Council had put a light on it before. Howsomdever, I'm nearer home than I thought for; didn't know I'd reached the Embankment; must be careful, old fellow, and not fall into the river." Then he reeled on his way, trying to find Westminster Bridge, but no doubt he would discover his mistake in the course of years.

Long before the days of the Waterworks Company I have rendered valuable assistance in providing water to extinguish fires that have broken out in my neighbourhood. Relays of men took turns at pumping, and others formed a chain, passing the full buckets to the conflagration and another chain returning the empty ones.



A drawing of the pump by Mick De Caville.