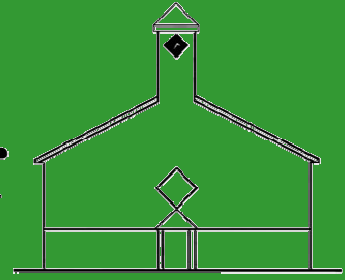


The Clock Tower



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

Issue Number 19: August 2010
£2.00; free to members



Luton's Big Game Hunter Revealed

Inside this issue is a fascinating account by FOMA member Brian Joyce on the life and times of the Reverend Wathen Henry Waller, Rector of Luton, near Chatham from 1913 to 1915. Pictured is Luton parish church as Waller would have known it, before the tower and spire were added.

World War Two and Battle of Britain Special!

Also in this issue, FOMA members share some more stories and memories of Medway in World War Two and during the Battle of Britain, the 70th anniversary of which is this summer.

STOP PRESS!

A New Addition to the FOMA Collection

The FOMA AGM in April saw the launch of the new FOMA Collection with the presentation to MALSC of some 52 historic documents relating to the Medway area. The documents, which were bought at auction by FOMA, include historic deeds and indentures from the last 300 years and are being catalogued at MALSC with the other documents previously acquired. Known as The FOMA Collection, all the documents will be available to view and for study at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. A full list of the documents can be found on the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.html



Part of the FOMA Collection ready for cataloguing

As *The Clock Tower* was going to press, another document for the Collection was purchased, as follows:

New Brompton, Gillingham, Kent Conveyance 1896

A handwritten Indenture by way of Conveyance dated 9 May 1896. The price paid was £195.

The property in question is described as 26 May Road, New Brompton, Gillingham, Kent. There is a good plan endorsed on the Conveyance.

Parties: James Brazier of New Brompton, Shipwright, William Lane of New Brompton, Writer, and Thomas Hibbard of Canterbury, Veterinary Surgeon (1) The Sheerness Permanent Benefit Building Society (2) and Sarah Brazier of New Brompton, Widow (3).

Signed and sealed by: all parties.

FOMA Donations to MALSC

19.11.2007 1804 Rochester Castle Yard rents document
19.11.2007 1844 Chatham indenture
22.07.2009 Print of Delce Mill
13.02.2010 1848 vellum deed of Gillingham
25.02.2010 Collection of deeds (mainly Strood)
05.08.2010 1896 indenture for 26 May Road, New
Brompton (as above)

A full and detailed list can be found on the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.html

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



Once again it is time for my quarterly message to all members. How quickly the year is going!

In this summer issue of *The Clock Tower* we have a further report from MALSC Archivist Alison Cable regarding the progress of the Archives of Great Expectation project and as you will see some projects will need volunteers to make a start on them. We already have a list of prospective volunteers which has been in place since the project began. However, although we will initially have enough to carry out these first tasks, as time goes on more volunteers will be needed. If you are interested in taking part then please contact our secretary Odette and she will put your name on the list; Odette's contact details are on The Committee page.

The meetings and talks we have arranged need your support. The response to our last event held in May was very disappointing and we made a loss, and we urge members to please support FOMA and our activities.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 28 September at Frindsbury Parish Hall and the speaker will be Amanda Thomas (our *Clock Tower* Editor) talking about her research into the cholera epidemic of the late 1840s in Lambeth and how the Medway Towns was also affected. It is certain to be a fascinating talk, not least because Amanda's book on the epidemic contains a full list of the victims – brickwalls for many family researchers in the Medway area, many of whom had ancestors who migrated to Lambeth for work. Please do come along and support us, there is no need any more to book for these talks as numbers are not restricted as they were at MALSC.

Odette, our Secretary, has put together an exhibition called Medway in the Battle of Britain a local slant on Britain's Finest Hour which will be on at MALSC between 5 August and 5 October. Do come along and have a look at this, and also read our special on World War Two and the Battle of Britain in this issue of the *Clock Tower*. Do let us know if you have any memories you wish to share, as we can always publish more stories in the next issue.

News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary



The last edition of *The Clock Tower* came out just after our AGM and the launch of the FOMA Collection. Naturally, we hope the collection will grow, and with members' help as we are alerted of documents on sale at such places as auctions and on Ebay. With regard to the current documents in the Collection, I keep a record of these for FOMA and the MALSC Archivist, Alison Cable, catalogues them. At MALSC they will be shown as donations on permanent loan to the Archives. More information is available on the FOMA website, <http://www.foma-lsc.org/collection.html>

Another issue raised at the AGM was the paucity of documents, records and information about the Rainham end of Medway. This could be because before the Unitary Authority was established, Rainham came under a different area of Kent County Council and so it is likely more information and records are held at Kent Archives in Maidstone. However, if you have or know of any organization or body with records or documents of historical interest pertaining to Rainham, perhaps you could let us know.*

The temporary exhibitions at Eastgate House are now a lot better manned thanks to all the extra volunteers that have come forward, and we hope that the advertisements we have continued to run in *The Clock Tower* have helped achieve this. If you feel you could give up a morning or an afternoon please let Elaine Gardner know (see below). It will always be important to keep the house open and aired.

At the moment Screen Archive South East have Lottery funding to record oral history of the Medway Towns. If you have memories you would be willing to share with the world and/or would like to be involved in interviewing people with memories, pick up a leaflet at the Archives and contact them – or visit www.brighton.ac.uk/screenarchive/medway. Members can always contact me for further information at odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk. It is a very exciting and worthwhile exercise. After all, if our memories are not recorded, they will die with us and the generations to come will be the poorer for this lack of information.

That reminds me that the Archives of Great Expectations are progressing slowly but surely and the first tranche of volunteers will soon be being trained. The related education programme has been agreed and will commence in September. We all owe Elaine a great vote of thanks for all the hard work she has put into getting the timetable produced.

Roger Smoothy gave us a very interesting talk on 25th May on all the glass negatives he has digitalized. We were all so interested in the views and images he brought, we forgot the time and the talk ran on much longer than anticipated. Fortunately nobody missed any buses! If you have a camera and a few hours to spare, Roger and his colleagues are anxious to get present day views of the places recorded. Elaine has volunteered to co-ordinate this, so do please contact her (see below).

We always list forthcoming FOMA and MALSC events, however, many of you will be interested in a talk I will be giving for the Friends of Broomhill, entitled *Broomhill and the*

Battle of Britain. This will be on Thursday, 30th September at 7.00 for 7.30 pm at Strood Library, Bryant Road; tickets £4, (£3 to Friends of Broomhill). The date coincides exactly with the crash of a Messerschmitt 109 on the hill in 1940, and which is featured in our special section in this issue. I can be contacted via the Friends of Broomhill website at www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk/index.html.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

*FOMA Treasurer, Jean Skilling, provides further information on the Rainham records:

‘Rainham became part of Gillingham in 1928 and had been formerly part of Milton District.

Rochester, Chatham and Strood became Rochester upon Medway in 1974; Gillingham remained separate until the Unitary Authority, Medway District Council, was formed in 1998.

I quote from page 236 of *The Gillingham Chronicles* by Ronald A Baldwin, “When Rainham was joined with Gillingham in 1928, concern was expressed by Gillingham officials that no parish council documents for Rainham were handed over. Despite enquires, however, no records of any kind were forthcoming, nor have been since found” – could this be another explanation for the shortage of records?’

MALSC OPENING HOURS

Please note the following revised opening hours at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

As of 1 April 2010, MALSC will no longer be open until 6pm on a Tuesday, and will close at 5pm. The following opening hours therefore now apply:

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm
Saturday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm
Wednesday and Sunday closed**

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Events

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.
BOOKING REQUIRED.

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

Please note, booking for FOMA talks is no longer necessary!
All events in 2010 and until further notice are at Frindsbury Parish Hall
Talks are £2 for members £4 non-members.
Booking for Quiz Nights and enquiries through the FOMA Secretary:
Odette Buchanan , 72 Jersey Rd, Strood, ME2 3BY; odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk;
01634 718231.

Calling all Photographers!

At the end of May, Roger Smoothy and Roy Moore gave a talk to FOMA on the collection of glass plate negatives which have been digitalised and placed on line. They can be viewed at www.kentphotoarchive.org.uk and selecting the 'Medway Images'. They are hoping that enthusiastic photographers will go out and take digital images of the same views today. The idea is to try and take the image from the same place as previously, by printing a copy of the original and taking it with you. FOMA Vice Chairman, Elaine Gardner, has agreed to co-ordinate this for Roger and Roy in order to avoid duplication of effort with everyone taking the same photos!

If you are interested, take a look at the website then e-mail me at emgardner@fsmail.net (or phone 01634 408595) telling me what you plan to photograph and I will give you precise details of what is required.

MALSC Events

Exhibitions

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
Winget's: At Work and Play

Talks and Events

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. Time to be confirmed.
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 has been 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

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.

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

News from Snodland Millennium Museum

FOMA member and curator of the Snodland Millennium Museum, Dr Andrew Ashbee, has advised us of an addition to their collection. Dr. Andrew Hann has deposited 19 box-files of material from the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone project collected for his book *The Medway Valley: A Kent Landscape Transformed*. A sample is also held at MASLC. The catalogue can be found at www.snodlandhistory.org.uk under *catalogues*. The museum is open on Wednesdays and Sundays from 2.00 to 5.00 p.m. further information is available from Andrew Ashbee at aa0060962@blueyonder.co.uk .

Dr Andrew Hann's book is also now available on Amazon, or at Phillimore and Co, publishers, at www.phillimore.co.uk .

Medway on Screen

Your memories of Medway and West Kent

Get involved!

Visit

www.brighton.ac.uk/screenarchive/medway

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, often receives queries from members or visitors to the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.html. If you have any additional information for the following correspondents, please contact the Editor.

The following edited email sent to FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan. Comments to the Editor, please.

From: Dave Dee_
To: Odette Buchanan
Sent: Wed, 14 July, 2010
Subject: Saint Mary the Virgin, Chatham + Transcription volunteers needed?
Hi there Odette,

Don't know if you remember me, but you were most helpful a few months ago with information on non-conformist records.

I'd be grateful if you could please assist me with a couple of further questions.

Firstly (and this is a really silly question), exactly where is Saint Mary the Virgin Church, Chatham? (i.e., the one that kept Parish records now displayed on the Medway City Ark website). One of my relatives asked me this question, and I had to confess, I haven't a clue. Even finding its whereabouts via Google is not as easy as it seems. Thanks.

Secondly, I've discovered today that some of the Medway Parish record scans have been computerised, in order to make digital searching possible (very handy indeed!). I believe one set of such records had a gentleman's name in brackets after its heading, so I'm surmising he might be the person who has kindly done the necessary work on that set. In connection with this, I've been wondering if you can ever make use of volunteers to go through this oft-painstaking work. It's possible I could be interested in taking part in this venture, if required. Trawling manually through many pages of scans during the last many months, searching for my own ancestors, I realise how invaluable computerised transcriptions are. With many thousands of records to go through, I'm sure any extra pairs of hands and eyes would be of great benefit, but of course, legal constraints may preclude the employment of volunteers. Again, thanks.

Hope you can help me.

Best wishes and kindest regards.

Dave Deeming.

The Editor has been contacted by a non-member seeking information on VIOLET ETHEL THOMAS, born circa 1896. In 1913 Violet gave birth in Faversham and then immediately afterwards returned to her work in service at 32 North Street, Strood. Any information to the Editor, as above, please.

KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1857

Registered Charity No. 223382

Website www.kentarchaeology.org.uk

KENT HISTORIC BUILDINGS CONFERENCE

Kent Archaeological Society's annual Historic Buildings Conference at Harrietsham Village Hall on Saturday, October 9 will include a presentation on the KAS's new project, 'Peopling Past Landscapes.'

Co-ordinated by Roger Cockett, the project covers 30 parishes in an area extending from the Weald to the Thames coastal marshes and aims to encourage local people to research their own parishes.

Other speakers at the conference will include David Martin of Archaeology South-East, whose subject will be 'Historical Buildings: Linking Documentary and Physical Evidence' and David Carder, KAS, on 'Kent's Agricultural Heritage in Buildings'.

The conference will begin at 10 and end at about 3, and will be followed by a guided tour of St Margaret's Church, Wichling.



St Margaret's Church, Wichling. Wichling is one of the parishes covered in the 'Peopling Past Landscapes' project.

The conference is open to the public. Tickets £10 from David Carder, 53 The Ridgeway, Chatham, Kent ME4 6PB. Email david_carder@talk21.com Some tickets will be available on the day at the door. Optional buffet lunch £6 (pre-booking essential). Cheques payable to Kent Archaeological Society. More information on www.kentarchaeology.org.uk .

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, 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 20 of *The Clock Tower* is **Monday 25th October 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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FOMA Members

The Highs and Lows of Family Research

Elaine Gardner



In the last issue of The Clock Tower, FOMA member Ken Walter wrote on the highs and lows of family research. Here Elaine Gardner, FOMA Vice Chairman, responds with her own experience

Reading Ken Walter's article on Family History Research (*The Clock Tower*, Issue 18) recalled similar problems researching one branch of my family. This was not through investigating the wrong person, but rather through rejecting an individual as the recorded data did not correlate with what I had believed to be correct.

I began with a beautiful apprenticeship document from 1824. This was in the name of Charles Gideon Kidder and found with my grandmother's papers. Armed with her sister's birthday book – which helpfully listed the year of their parents' births - I set out to establish that Charles had been my great great grandfather. Acquiring birth certificates for my grandmother and her mother fairly conclusively showed that he was indeed her grandfather – and my great great grandfather. Wanting to know more I sent for Charles' marriage certificate, shown on BMD as 1847.

It was when this arrived that I was surprised to discover that Charles was a widower! Who was his earlier wife? Were there children from the earlier marriage? What had happened to them?

The 1841 census showed Charles married to Ann with three living daughters, the eldest Ann Elizabeth aged 9, living off Fleet Street – Charles being a compositor in the printing trade. By the time of the 1851 census Charles was married to his second wife, but I could not find an entry for the family anywhere. I am told this is not surprising giving that they were living in a poor and crowded area of Southwark at this stage. Curious to know what had happened to the three girls from the first marriage I searched until I finally found a listing in the 1851 census for an Ann Kidder, age 19, listed as a ladies maid at Ashburnham Place near Battle in Sussex. The name and age were correct but it recorded place of birth as Staffordshire - my Ann was born in Middlesex. Still, I did note that the housekeeper listed above Ann on the page also came from Staffordshire so was this just an error by the enumerator?

Following up with the 1861 census showed Ann, now with correct place of birth, still with the Earl of Ashburnham, but now elevated to Housekeeper, aged 30; then in 1871 no trace anywhere. Had she married? Had she died? The BMDs listed no marriages for an Ann Kidder during this period and just one death, in Sussex, but aged 56, so not my Ann then!

Googling the Earl of Ashburnham revealed that the family had died out but that the family archive was kept at the Archive Centre at Lewes. So off I went and delved into the wages book for the 1800s. What a fascinating document. The male staff on one page and female on the other, all listed on order of importance, with ladies maid coming second after housekeeper and before cook which surprised me. The wages were paid six monthly at the

end of June and December and each employee signed by their name to acknowledge receipt of the money.

From this I found that Ann had started during March 1846 on £16 a year (she received three months 21 days' wages at end of June 1846); she was 14 or 15. I cannot find a precise date for her birth, only her parents' marriage in April 1831 and her baptism in October 1833, about six months before her sister was born. By 1851 Ann's wages had risen to £18 and remained at that rate throughout the 1850s. No annual increase for inflation in those days then! Sometimes she signed for her wages as Ann Elizabeth, at other times Elizabeth Ann. The records also showed the travelling around the country undertaken by the family: Grosvenor Street in London, Aldeburgh in Suffolk and Eastbourne, to name just three. In 1859 she became housekeeper on £35 a year. Then in December 1866, instead of her signature beside her payment, the words *wages paid to Mrs Kidder*; after that no mention of her. She disappears. Ploughing through the parish records for Ashburnham revealed her burial in Ashburnham Church on January 31 1867. She was 35 or 36. The death certificate established that she was the Ann Kidder whose death I had rejected because her age was stated as 56. So why age 56? The death had been registered by a Susan Smith, another servant, who had been present at her death. Did Susan not know her age and take a guess? Had Ann added years to her age to give her greater standing as Housekeeper? She had never lied about her age on the census forms, but she was only 27 or 28 when promoted to Housekeeper...we will never know.

The lesson I learnt was not to be too hasty in rejecting something just because all the data did not match. I expect that if I had asked any of the Family History Society members helping at MALSC they would have told me this, but then I would not have gone to Lewes and browsed through those fascinating wage books.

Now I just have to find what happened to Ann's two sisters.

The Reverend W.H. Waller: Rector of Luton and Big Game Hunter

Brian Joyce



Brian Joyce is a semi-retired teacher who lives and works in the Medway Towns. He was born in Chatham and has always been fascinated by the history of the area. Brian is the President of the Chatham Historical Society and the author of several books, including The Chatham Scandal, Dumb Show and Noise and Chatham and the Medway Towns, a History and Celebration. With Bruce Aubry, Brian co-wrote In the Thick of It- Medway Men and Women in the Boer War, which was published by their own Pocock Press. Brian is currently working on a similar volume which will examine the experiences of men and women from the Medway Towns during the First World War.

Of all the people who have been Rector of Luton, to the north east of Chatham, one of the most interesting is surely the Reverend Wathen Henry Waller, the incumbent between 1913 and 1915.

Waller, the son of the longstanding Vicar of Hunstanton in Norfolk, entered the Royal Navy at Dartmouth as a fourteen-year-old midshipman on *HMS Dapper* in 1881. After being invalided out in 1886, the nineteen-year-old needed a change of direction, and went up to Trinity Hall, Cambridge and then the Cuddesdon Theological College in Oxfordshire. He followed in his father's footsteps and was ordained in 1892. A varied career as a priest followed. He was curate at Southwick on Tyne and the Vicar of Thornham in Norfolk, but he also renewed his naval connections by serving as a chaplain on the battleship *HMS Royal Sovereign* between 1900 and 1902.

Between 1907 and 1912, Waller was a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Mandalay in Burma. On his return to England in 1912, Waller married Mabel Stopford, a niece of Admiral Stopford who had commanded the Royal Naval Barracks at Chatham. He was then appointed to the living at Luton, a rapidly expanding suburb of Chatham, and moved into the Rectory opposite the recreation ground.

One gets the impression that the life of a suburban rector did not suit or satisfy the forty-five-year-old former naval man, who appears to have become increasingly restless and frustrated during his short time at Luton. Waller was frank about where his heart lay in a high profile lecture at Chatham Town Hall in February 1914.

The Rector's talk, accompanied by vivid photographic slides, was on his hunting experiences in Burma and Africa. Waller had acquired a love for this activity while a missionary in Burma, and on his voyage back to Britain, he had broken his journey at Mombasa, purchased a £50 hunting licence and set off on a thousand mile round trip into the interior of Kenya to shoot big game.



The Reverend Wathen Henry Waller, Rector of Luton

Waller and a professional white hunter were accompanied by more than forty Africans; four gun bearers, a cook, two personal servants, two policemen, a mule driver, a skinner, a head porter and thirty porters. He told his Town Hall audience that: “You pay the porters ten rupees a month, and as most natives live easily on five rupees, it is a great deal more generous than it sounds”. It is clear that for Waller, the life of a suburban rector compared unfavourably with that of a big game hunter:

It is the finest life in the world. You are living near to nature, taking your life in your hands every day. You go to bed early and get up early, and when you have no mental troubles to worry you, it is a most delightful life indeed.

The Rector spoke of the dangers he encountered, for example, when he was nearly killed by a charging bison. On that occasion he fell as he was running away and his rifle discharged,

frightening the animal off. Another time, Waller and the professional hunter built a platform in a tree, and then left a dead antelope as bait for lions. The men, perched above the scene, became worried when a leopard rather than a lion appeared – leopards can climb trees! Fortunately for them, the animal lost interest and wandered away. No lions appeared that night.

On another occasion, Waller was tracking a lion when a lioness came by, so he shot her instead. She escaped, but the two white men followed a trail of blood to a narrow ravine. The clergyman had to crawl into it on his stomach with a loaded rifle, but again, the prey escaped.

Waller explained to his audience the rules imposed on hunters with their £50 licence:

That allows you to shoot any animals you come across. Lions and leopards are on the free list, and you shoot as many as you like. You are limited with regard to other animals. You are allowed to shoot 20 zebras and one rhinoceros. I only shot two zebras and I have their skins at Luton Rectory.

Other animals dispatched by the Rector included hyenas, hippopotami, buffaloes and antelopes (the latter for food rather than pleasure), and he showed his audience photographic slides of himself proudly posing beside their carcasses. During Waller's incumbency, the walls inside the Luton Rectory were adorned with the heads and horns of many of his kills, which he enthusiastically showed to visitors.

Some in his parish found the ebullient rector difficult to work with. In particular, he clashed with one of the longstanding People's Churchwardens, John Scrace. I have not yet been able to ascertain the issues between them, but matters came to a head at the Easter Vestry in April 1914. Scrace claimed that some of the parishioners had asked him to propose a resolution protesting at some of Waller's policies, but because the Rector was facing a surgical operation in a few days time, he declined to do so. Waller answered that he was not afraid of criticism. Waller's curate was on the point of moving to another parish, and Scrace proposed a resolution of thanks for his work at Luton. Clearly there were hidden factors at work here – Waller protested that the item was not on the agenda: "I must ask you to sit down. You are out of order." Scrace sat down, muttering, "You would like to be a law unto yourself".

When the Great War broke out a few months later, Waller, ever anxious for action, was keen to get back into naval uniform, but was persuaded that the war would not last for long, so he should stay where he was. However, once it became clear that the war would last longer than expected, he resigned the living and rejoined the Royal Navy as a chaplain. He never returned to Luton, and was replaced in 1916 by the Reverend CD La Touche.

After the war, Waller became the Vicar of St George's at Tombland in Norwich. St George's was then, and still is, a High Church parish, and it is possible that Waller's quarrels with John Scrace at Luton concerned matters of ritual and practice.

It is here that I have lost track of the Reverend Wathen Waller's career. In August 1944, the notice of his death appeared in the *Times* newspaper.

Quaker Education and Schooling 1775-1840

Catharina Clement



In 2005, Catharina completed a BA in history at Canterbury Christchurch University, and then began a part-time PhD in local history entitled Reactions in the Medway Towns 1640-1660. She has been involved in various local history groups and projects such as FOMA, CDHS, and the Victoria County History EPE projects. She won the 2009 Friends Historical Society Award resulting in a paper on Medway Quakerism 1655-1918 delivered at the Institute for Historical Research and later this year at the Friends Library in London. Currently Catharina works for MALSC.

The Joint Committee of Morning Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings issued a statement in 1697 concerning the education of Quaker children. There was the desire that schools should be set up in the counties ‘wherein your children may not only be instructed in languages and science, in the way of Truth, but likewise in some profitable and commendable labour or industrious exercises, which may prevent many temptations attending idleness...’. In 1690 their Epistle called for more Quaker schools so that the children would be educated by ‘schoolmasters and mistresses who are faithful Friends’, and might be shielded from ‘the corrupt ways, manners, fashions, and languages of the world’¹ The purpose of the schools were threefold; firstly literacy to enable them to study the scriptures, secondly a sense of purpose to instil a work ethic and avoid idleness, and thirdly a wish to separate their children from ‘corruption’ by the wider world.

Most early Friends’ schools were private and were not affordable to the poorer sort. Children were prepared for a life in business or trade as inaccessibility to a university education meant they could not enter the professions. This private type of Quaker school, which the one situated on Boley Hill, Rochester was, catered for the children (mainly sons) of the middling or trade class. However, as much importance was attached to the education of girls in their community as boys. Laurence Stone contends that by the latter part of the eighteenth century Quakers had achieved total literacy. From my experience of documents requiring signatures, such as witnesses to birth and marriage records for the Medway Quakers, there were few illiterate Friends. For the children of poorer families Ackworth School was set up in Yorkshire and opened in 1779 with a family of Strood children being amongst the first intake. These children were then either apprenticed, in the case of boys, to Quaker families throughout the country or, in the instance of girls, generally placed in a Friends’ family as a servant or in Karl Showler’s opinion more in the manner of a modern au pair.²

What do we know of the location of the Quaker School in Rochester? A tremendous amount of description is available and even some documentary evidence, but tantalisingly which current building it was, on what is now Boley Hill/Bakers Walk, is unclear. A conundrum, perhaps, which *Clock Tower* readers might be able to solve! The school was placed by several of its students and teachers in Boley Hill, which Pigot’s trade directory for 1840 confirms.³ Charles Tylor, a pupil at the school in the 1820s, wrote his memoirs of life as a schoolboy in 1895 for his grandchildren. His recollections give us the best physical description of the school. ‘The school stood on a hill in the outskirts of the city, and commanded a view of the river Medway...’ He goes on, ‘The schoolhouse, which was connected with the dwelling-house by a corridor, consisted of a playroom and junior classroom below, and a large, well-lighted upper classroom above. The playroom was open in front to the playground, the room above being supported on that side by three pillars.’

From the playground ‘a wicket [gate] led with steps and so by a path to a large cricket-field, which sloped down to the marshes and the river....’⁴ An 1860s map of Rochester clearly marks the cricket pitch, which was later the location of the open air swimming baths, on the Esplanade. We know from an advert by the Rickman sisters in 1843 offering the property for sale in the *Irish Friend* that ‘the back part of the premises [are] bounded by the fine old Castle Walls’. The premises were also within a few minutes’ walk of the ‘excellent Salt Water Baths’. This advert could put modern sales particulars to shame (see illustration).⁵

PIC

Title deeds drawn up in 1846 for a messuage in Boley Hill, which was at one time a schoolroom, brewery and carpenters shop, recite the occupiers from 1784 onwards. This title deed was required to settle the will of Edward Alexander (deceased 1827) on the death of his widow, Elizabeth, in 1846. The property came down from the Head family, through Elizabeth, widow of Sir Richard Head, and his grandson Richard. After that a line of clerics lived in the property suggesting it may have been leased to the Cathedral Chapter in the mid eighteenth century. It came down to William Alexander at some point between 1761 and 1765, but most likely 1763.⁶ At this point it was just a house and not used as a school till around 1775. A description from the title deed is as follows:-

‘ All the (that) Messuages or Tenements or Dwelling house with the appurtenures standing and being on Boley Hill in Rochester aforesaid upon or near part of the ancient Ditch of Rochester commonly called the Castle Ditch together with the stables and Brewhouse Outhouses Edifices....’⁷

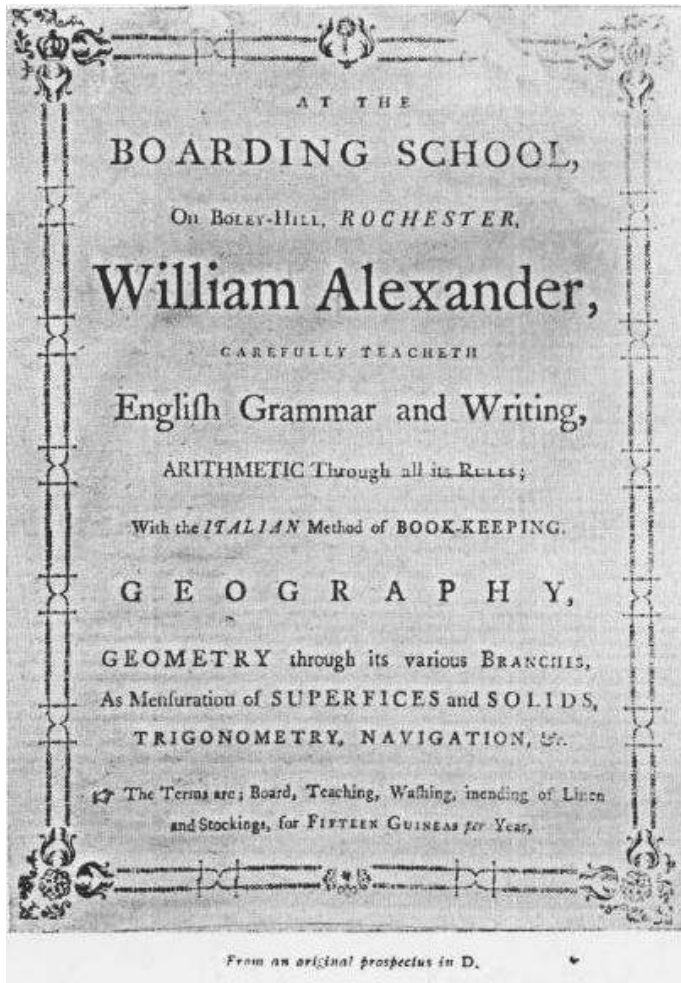
According to various sources William Rickman added the schoolrooms towards the end of the 1790s. His memoirs, put together by Thomas Chalk, and published in the *British Friend* in 1849 indicate that ‘the accommodations of the house were found insufficient, and I [Rickman] was advised, to build a new schoolroom, with chambers over it.’ Apparently the costs, which nearly doubled, were much greater than anticipated ‘to connect the new building to the dwelling house.’⁸ Edward Pease, who visited the school and Rickman in 1824, stated that ‘the cost of this house and garden was £2,500 and I think the £800 more in the erection of an excellent schoolroom etc had been expended.’ Originally, however, Rickman by his own account had rented the property.⁹ An indenture to finally settle William Alexander’s estate in 1802 paid William Rickman £200 ‘in consideration of his having erected and made additional Buildings and improvements upon the said premises....’ At this point he probably purchased the leasehold of the property. We know from the 1808 reversion that ‘the School House or School Room ‘ was ‘then lately erected at the south westernmost end of the said messuage.’ Additionally a ‘messuage...sometime since erected’ was ‘built on the easternmost or north easternmost side of and adjoining to the messuage...’¹⁰ Thus the original pre eighteenth century house was extended at either end in the Georgian period to provide more space for boarders and additional family members. This was a considerable sized property accommodating several families and at one point two schools in the 1820s. In 1820 John Grubb visited William Rickman at his home in Rochester describing the family and girls school as well as ‘the School that William once kept in the next door, kept by a friend in the Ministry, Richard Weston...’¹¹

From the 1841 St Nicholas tithe apportionments it can be ascertained that the Alexander family occupied plot 116, which corresponds to *The Old Hall*, which was then not attached to *The Old Priory*. Modern sales prospectuses indicate that the building still has old outbuildings that were once stables and a brewery. It is the latter point, which is interesting as the title deeds do demonstrate that at one point prior to the 1760s this was a brewery. The

title apportionments and description by Tylor would clearly indicate that the current *Old Hall* was the building concerned. However the 1841 census and St Nicholas parish records do not indicate, which property the Rickman or Alexanders occupied in Boley Hill.¹² The other suggestion for the property is Whitefriars. This is based on the description of a property in Richard Head's will in 1689 of 'a messuage late called the white house scituate and being within the Parish of St Nicholas within the City of Rochester aforesaid and Tenements adjoining thereunto and the Stable adjoining to the said Tenements scituate and being in the lane there called Paynters Lane...'¹³ Modern sales particulars seem to suggest that this building dates at its earliest to the 1820s.

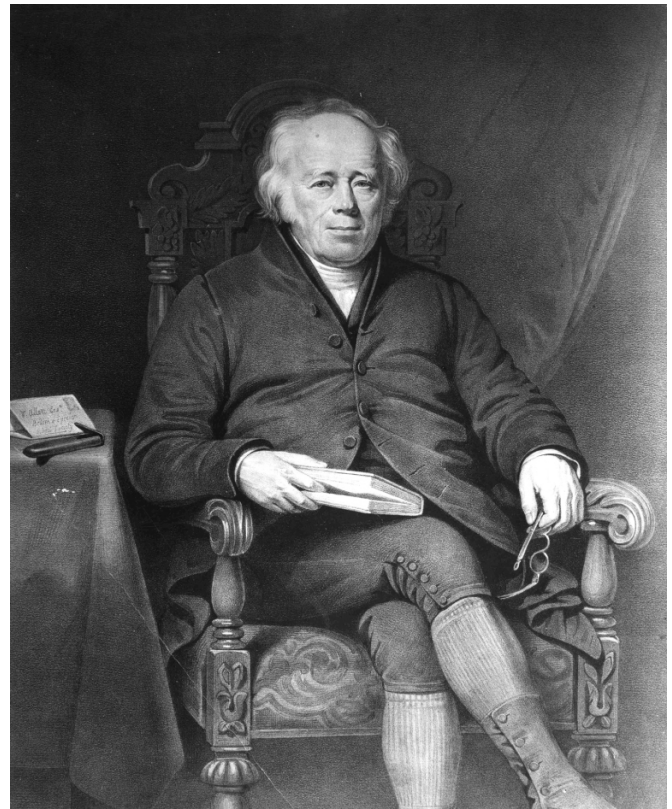
The Quaker School in Boley Hill was first established in Rochester circa 1775 by William Alexander, who had until then been a foreman in Chatham Dockyard. He was apprenticed to Roger Mead as a shipwright in 1748 and in 1755 became a freeman of the city. Born in Strood in 1733 to William Alexander, a fisherman and Elizabeth née Hodges he was to marry Elizabeth Day at St Mary's Chatham in 1755. They had six children who all survived into adulthood. Apparently William became a convinced Quaker by 1759 when his eldest child is entered on the birth records, but when he 'applied for membership...it was then found that he had a membership of right...' I believe William is linked to the earlier Alexander family of Strood mentioned in the last article, but this requires some further research. Rochester Friends' records do not survive for this period and it may well be that he was entered on the birth records by his father. Due to his strong religious beliefs and Quaker principle of pacifism William resigned from his post at the dockyard to start up his own school.¹⁴

According to Thomas Marsh's letter of 1785 the school was 'in a very thriving way' and had 'Twenty-six Boarders (mostly Friends children) besides a large Day-school of about fifty boys, and some Girls which attend at Noon...' According to John Allen's diary one of these non-Quaker boarders was Hollis Clayton and in the summer of 1777 Alexander accompanied him to this cousin's house in London to begin the summer vacation. He later became a Quaker and a grocer by trade. A further (possible day) scholar was Samuel Cleverly of Gravesend. Samuel was apprenticed to William Cowper, a Rochester surgeon and fellow Quaker, in 1786 and later trained as a doctor. Another pupil in this period was William Allen, who grew up to become a pharmaceutical chemist. This would demonstrate the wide range of trades and careers open to these young Quakers on completion of their education. William Alexander had produced a prospectus for his school stating the subjects taught, services available and fees. A copy of this survives in the Society of Friends Library and is reproduced here with their kind permission. The curriculum covered English, arithmetic as well as science and book-keeping, but no history. Teaching seemed to focus on the requisite skills needed for trade and business. It would appear that Alexander's only assistance in the classroom was an usher (an assistant or unqualified teacher).¹⁵



*William Alexander's Prospectus, Scrapbook Vol N f175v
Reproduced with permission of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain.*

William Allen, reproduced with permission of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain.



Ackworth School took the poorer local Quaker children that could not afford Alexander's fee of fifteen guineas a year or day rates. Amongst these in the early days were the Handvill family of Strood. John Handvill (a shopkeeper) had married Mabel Oliver at Chatham St Mary's church in 1759 and together with his brother William became Quakers around 1760. He settled in Strood and the family had eight children of whom seven survived to adulthood. Three sons all attended Ackworth School as boarders. William the eldest (born 1767) was admitted to the school roll in 1779 for two years. He and his brother John (born 1770) were admission numbers 11 and 12 respectively when the school first opened in 1779. John remained at the school till 1784. In 1781 the Quarterly Meeting reported that 'The circumstances of John Handvill being laid before this Meeting it appears, he is not of Ability to pay for the continuance of the youngest of his Children now at Ackworth School. This meeting directs Richard Baker to pay for his continuance there for the year ensuing...' The son concerned was young John and his fees were paid for by Friends in 1781. It is not clear if they paid for him to complete his entire education. At fourteen the boys would have left the school to follow an apprenticeship. The youngest lad, Thomas (born 1773), was educated at Ackworth from 1782 to 1784. It would appear that the normal age for boarders at the school was eight or nine. Presumably Thomas left early due to financial difficulties. Where the daughters were educated is not clear, but the parents presumably could not afford to send them to Ackworth School. Whatever education the children received it did not prompt them



Silhouette of William Rickman, reproduced with permission of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. acknowledged as follows-Reproduced with permission of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain.

to remain Quakers. Both the eldest two daughters were baptised in St Nicholas Strood while their father was still alive in 1784. His wife had her youngest son baptised in 1788 at Rochester St Nicholas and there is no trace of her in the Quaker records after her husband's death in 1787. All the children appear to have married outside the Quaker meeting to non-Quakers.¹⁶ Whilst many local Quakers were from the trade and middle class there were those like the above family who were relatively poor.

Boys' School

c1775-1785 William Alexander

1786-1813 William Rickman

1813-1820 Robert Styles

1820-1829 Rickard Weston

Girls' School

c1775-1785 William Alexander (day pupils only)

1786-c1788/9 William Rickman (day pupils only)

1811-c1819 William Rickman supported by his 2 daughters

c1819-1843 Elizabeth & Anne Rickman

BOLEY HILL, ROCHESTER,
County of Kent.

TO BE DISPOSED OF, BY PRIVATE CONTRACT,

AN ELIGIBLE and COMMODIOUS HOUSE, for many years the Property and Residence of the late WILLIAM RICKMAN, possessing superior advantages for a BOARDING SCHOOL, comprising a good School Room, Dining Room, airy Chambers, and dry Play Ground. The Premises are substantial and in good repair—the back part bounded by the fine old Castle Walls. Boley Hill is quiet, and free from the inconveniences to which a residence in a town is frequently liable; the situation is very pleasant and remarkably healthy, being sheltered, dry, and airy. There are excellent Salt Water Baths of every description, within a few minutes' walk. The house might easily be converted to suit a private family.

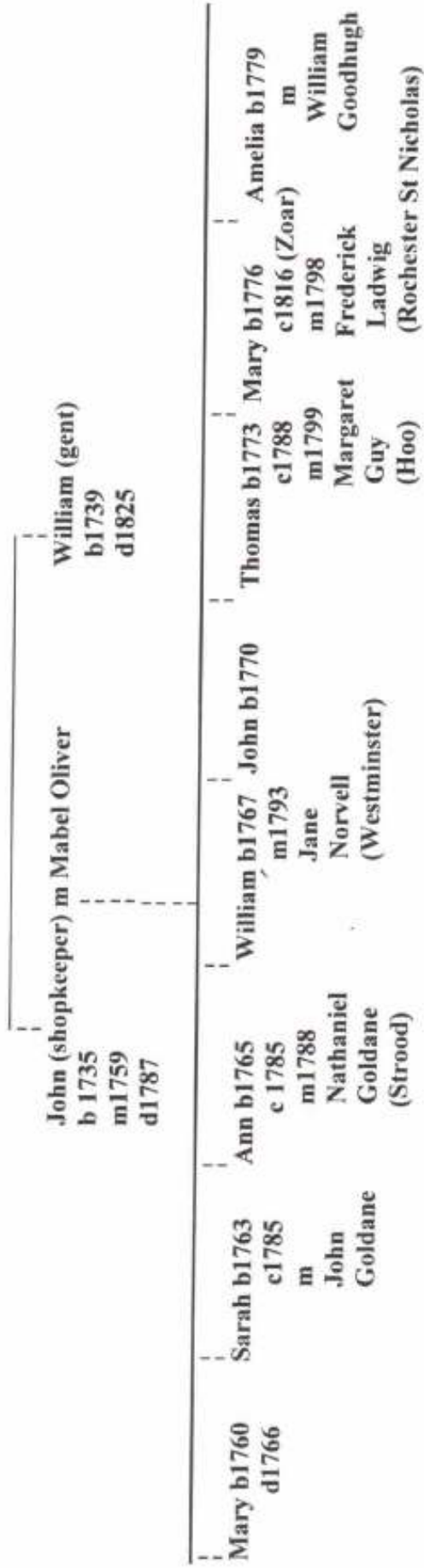
For further particulars, apply to A. & E. RICKMAN, Boley Hill, Rochester, personally, or by letter.

Advert from British Friend vol 12 (1843) p144

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To follow are the family trees of the Handvill and Alexander families.

HANDVILL FAMILY



ALEXANDER FAMILY

William (fisherman) m Elizabeth Hodges
1729



William (shipwright) m Elizabeth Day
b 1733
m 1755
d 1785

b 1731
d 1809

Ann
b 1730
m 1. Moneyman 2. John Poynton
d 1806

Elizabeth b 1759
m 1788
d 1832

Edward b 1761
(carpenter)
m?

Sarah b 1762
m 1792
d 1834

1. George Blaxland
(d 1801)
2. John Richardson
(m 1808)

Ann b 1765
m 1793
William Dollin
d 1808

Mary b 1767
m 1796
Joseph Wheeler
d 1819

William b 1769
(bill broker)
m 1801
Ann Barber
d 1819

William Rickman
d 1827
Elizabeth

Notes

1. Stroud L J, John Ford (1801-1875): The life, work and influence of a Quaker schoolmaster (Phd thesis 1947) p9 & Appendix III.
2. Stone L, 'Literacy and education in England 1640-1900', *Past & Present* (1969) No 42 p 80, 132; Showler K, *The Society of Friends in Kent 1656-1966*, (Canterbury, 1970) p 19; Olver A G, *Alphabetical List of Ackworth Scholars 1779-1979*, 5 vols.
3. Pigot's (1840)-Anne & Elizabeth Rickman, Boley Hill were listed under academies and schools. The overseer's accounts and highways rates of St Nicholas for the early C19 and 1841 census returns confirm this information.
4. Tylor C, 'Schooldays in the Twenties: A Reminiscence for my Grandchildren', *JFHS* (1920) Vol 17 No 21 p3
5. *Irish Friend*, (1843)
6. The previous tenant Richard Fletcher, cleric, died in 1763. On the birth records for William Alexander's children he was living in Strood in 1761, but Rochester by 1765.
7. MALSC, DE0996, Title Deeds of Messuage in Boley Hill, Rochester 1784-1846
8. Rickman W, 'Memoir of William Rickman', *The British Friend* (1849) p 243
9. Pease E, 'Diary of Edward Pease' (1824) electronic version on Bermac Books website; Rickman W, *The Memoirs of William Rickman*, p243
10. DE0996 ff 2-4, 6, 11-12
11. Carroll J P & Goodbody O C (ed), *Extracts from the letters of John Grubb (1766-1841) to Joseph Grubb (1768-1844)*, (Dublin, 1966) p28
12. MALSC, St Nicholas tithe map & apportionments 1841.
13. TNA, PROB11/396, Will of Richard Head 1689 f 272-not sure if this is the same property that descended to William Alexander, but the only one apart from Abdication House in his will situated in Rochester itself.
14. Alexander S J, 'Rochester School', *JFHS* (1921) Vol 22 p90-Letter Thomas Marsh of Chatham to Robert Fowler in 1785 on Alexander's death describes the school as about ten years old. However Rochester Poll Books for 1776 still describe Alexander as a shipwright, but by 1781 a schoolmaster; Alexander H G, *Joseph Gurney Alexander*, (London, 1920) p20; Lloyd Pritchard M F, 'The Alexander Family's Discount Company', *JFHS* (1959-1961) Vol 49 p 157-dating of Alexander's marriage is incorrect in this article; MALSC, RCA//02/18, Rochester apprentice records 1743-1786; P306/1/13, Strood St Nicholas Marriages 1727-1754 -his parents were married in 1729; P85/1/45, Chatham St Mary's Marriages 1754-1762;CKS, N/FMc1/1 Canterbury Monthly Meeting Book 1668-1777
15. Letter Marsh to Fowler 1785-see n14; Sturge C Y(ed), *Leaves from the Past*, (1905)-Allen diary; Milligan E H , *British Quakers in Commerce and Industry 1775-1920*, (York, 2007) pp 8-9,111; DNB for Samuel Cleverly; LSF, Scrapbook N, Prospectus of William Alexander's School, f175
16. MALSC, P85/1/45, Chatham St Mary's Marriages 1754-1762; CKS, N/FMc1/1 Canterbury Monthly Meeting Book 1668-1777; Olver A G, *Alphabetical List of Ackworth Scholars 1779-1979*, 5 vols

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..."

The following is what Edwin had to say about Rochester Bridge.

The Bridge - And Some Odd Pieces of Information

At Rochester there have been four bridges over the Medway, not counting railway bridges. The first was a wooden bridge erected by the Romans; the second was of stone and built in the reign of Richard II; the third was of iron and opened to the public on Wednesday August 13th 1856, while the present one is of steel and was opened on May 14th 1914.

As will be seen the bridges went from strength – wood, stone, iron and steel. And even the present is not strong enough to admit of indiscriminate taxation by the continually increasing weight of traffic, and it has been found necessary to place on the bridge notices regulating the times at which extra-heavy weight may be hauled over the bridge; also the weights and speeds of other vehicles are stated.

[Please remember Edwin wrote this in the 1930s – what would he think now?]

A Curious Anomaly

When the stone bridge was built, which by the way was only fifteen feet wide, a site was chosen about thirty yards higher up-stream, and when the iron bridge was built in 1856 it was placed on the site of the Roman Bridge, thus reducing by about sixty yards the measured mile from the milestone at the top of Strood Hill to the mileplate on the Co-operative stores. This has in recent years caused a curious anomaly – the black oval plate on the wall of the stores states "XXIX miles to London", whereas at the Foord Annexe of the museum one of the new motor standards states "London 28½ miles." Rochester therefore has the curious distinction of providing that "the further you walk away from London the nearer you are to it."

There is an old saying that all roads lead to London. This is true as regards Rochester, but in the case of the four great highways which can be seen from the bridge – the two railways running side by side, the main road, and the river Medway – they all from this compass point go in opposite directions and nearly to the different points of the compass.

To these four highways must now be added the airway.

Candid Opinions

The following are extracts relating to the Bridge from papers read at the congress of the Archaeological Institute at Rochester in 1863, by the late William Brenchley Rye, assistant keeper of the department of printed books at the British Museum. They are usually called for briefness, Brenchley Rye's Royal Visits.

"1300 On this day likewise (Feb 19) King Edward I, when passing through Rochester, gave 12s to Richard Lamberd, of the city of Rochester, in recompense for the loss sustained by him of a certain

horse (haken) hired by him for the king's service, which, whilst crossing the Bridge, was blown over by the wind into the Medway, and there drowned. A further illustration of the dangerous state of the ancient wooden bridge at Rochester, is the story of what happened about this time to a poor minstrel or harper, who was crossing the bridge – described as very dangerous and over which many a one had fallen. He had reached the 'midway' when a violent gust of wind blew him into the Medway. In his distress he calls to the Virgin for help. Our Lady graciously deigns to save him, he all the while harping her praises as he floated down the stream. At length he lands about a league from the city, and followed by a crowd who had witnessed the minstrel's mishap, makes his way to a church, 'situated in the said place' to offer up his thanks to the Virgin for this miraculous act of preservation."

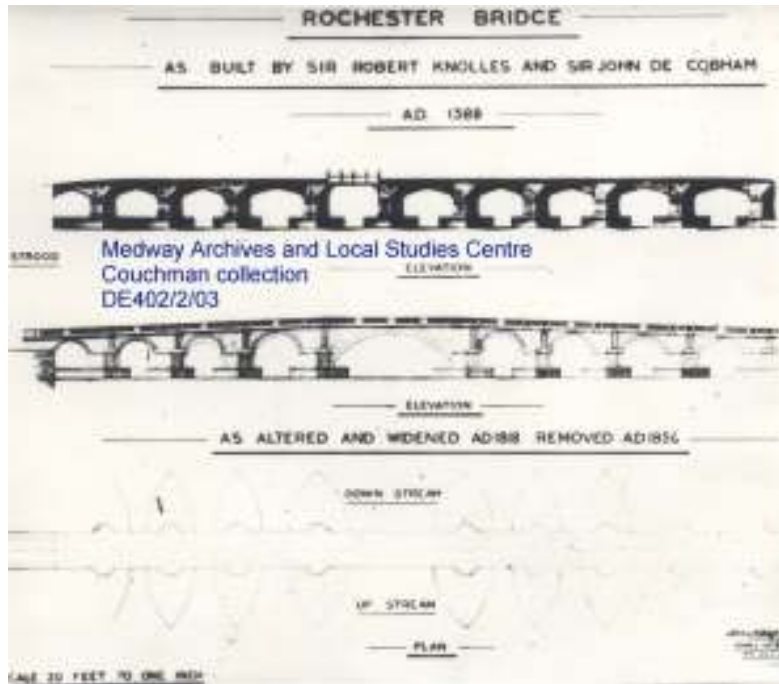
"1641 French ambassador, Jacques d'Estampes, Marquis de la Ferté-Imbaut, marshal of France: ' The country is beautiful, especially near the large village of Rochester, which is chiefly observable on account of its Bridge, furnished with high iron railings that drunkards not uncommon here, may not mix water with their wine.'

"About 1697: Monsieur Francois Maximilien Mission, a French Littérateur: Rochester a bishoprick in the county of Kent, is along straggling City dirty and ill built, but its bridge is finer than that of London, although it has not been so difficult to build, on account of its being somewhat shorter. You see at Rochester very great ruins of a Castle built by the Conqueror."

If you are interested in reading further candid opinions of Rochester and the bridge, and as recorded by Edwin, please ask staff at MALSC if you can read Recollections no. 33.

Images of Rochester Bridge from the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman Collection

Pictures provided by Alison Thomas, Archives and Local Studies Assistant, MALSC.



Facsimile of elevations and plan of the third Rochester Bridge as built by Sir Robert Knolles and Sir John de Cobham in 1388, as altered and widened 1818 and removed 1856, from a drawing by John L. Robson, MICE with notes on chronology, construction and printed sources, c.1960 p.3; ref. DE402/2/03



Print entitled view of the castle and bridge of Rochester in Kent, looking from Frindsbury Intra, unattributed, showing the River Medway, St. Margaret's Church Rochester, windmills near St. Margaret's church, river traffic and moored vessels in foreground. c.1790 p.; ref. DE402/2/07



Print entitled Rochester Bridge, Kent looking from Strood Esplanade across Bridge Reach (U) towards Rochester Bridge and Wright's Hotel, also showing steam engine and train on railway bridge and horse-drawn vehicle on road bridge, river traffic including barge in process of lowering mast and man and woman, latter in crinoline, standing on quayside. Published by Rock and Company, London 10 February 1859. p.17 (L); ref. DE402/2/17(L).



Postcard photograph entitled Rochester new bridge opened by Lady Darnley May 14 [19]14 looking from Rochester Castle curtain wall across Rochester Esplanade and Bridge Reach diagonally towards Rochester Bridge, showing motor vehicle, cyclists and foot passengers. Sold by W. and E. Town, Strood. 1914 p.39 (U); ref. DE402/2/39(U).

Archives Update

Alison Cable, Borough Archivist



Quarterly Report for the Archives of Great Expectations

This is the second of the quarterly reports, as per the project timetable to catalogue, conserve and make available for research the contents of the 500 boxes of Rochester City Archives, the Archives of Great Expectations

Our project archivist, Valerie Rouland, has been concentrating on sorting and assessing the Twentieth Century records which form part of the Rochester City Archives. The types of records encountered include files relating to town planning, drainage, road works etc. There is a huge quantity of material and sorting them into a coherent arrangement is taking a great deal of time.

The majority of the uncatalogued records are those created by the Town Clerk's and Surveyor's Departments. There are at least fifty boxes of files that require some sort of repackaging.

Valerie is currently working on the cataloguing of the charters and customals. Surprisingly, although the charters have been in our custody for some years, none of them have been allocated reference numbers. They will now be catalogued under the reference *RCA/C*.

Alison and Valerie will shortly be identifying items that require extensive conservation work and will be making arrangements to obtain advice and estimates. Medway Council is committed to the allocation of £12,000 in total to cover conservation costs. This includes repacking materials; document repair, microfilming (e.g. minute books) and the digitisation of selected items for display online.

Valerie has identified projects for which we need volunteers:

- *Town Clerks/Surveyors files (large quantity): Repackaging.
Team of 2 to 3 people required*
- *17th/18th Century coroners' files (a couple of bundles): Repackage and list salient details
1 person required*
- *Drawings of private connections to sewers: approx 15 rolls.
1 (or possibly 2) volunteers required to identify contents of each roll and to ensure documents are packaged and labelled appropriately*

We hope to start this first phase of volunteer work at the beginning of September 2010. Volunteering sessions will take place on Wednesday mornings (the exact times are to be agreed, but it is envisaged that we will finish at 1.00 pm at the latest to enable staff to deal with group visits etc in the afternoons).

In conclusion, Elaine Gardner has submitted the Education and Outreach Plan to our HLF advisor and this has now been approved. A synopsis is as follows.

The Learning and Outreach Programme for The Archives of Great Expectations

Elaine Gardner



The aims of the education and outreach programme are:

- To extend awareness, knowledge and understanding of Rochester's heritage
- To extend awareness of the archive content and how it can be accessed to enable research
- To enable volunteers to develop skills relating to cataloguing, and preserving archival material and communication and presentational skills

The project aims to target all age groups:

- Key stages 1 – 4 through school contacts; encouraging archive visits; using online Breeze system being developed by archive staff; hopefully engaging some school students in the cataloguing of the Sir Joseph Williamson Archive.
- Key stage 5/6 links initially with Greenwich University History students
- The wider public, both as volunteers and in using the archive for research.

The methods for achieving these aims are:

- The finished catalogue will be available on line via links on MALSC website
- To encourage schools to have a MALSC web link on their school site
- Exhibitions of material from the archive at MALSC, Medway libraries and other venues including schools with a Humanities specialism
- Articles in *The Clock Tower*, the FOMA magazine
- A link on the FOMA website to MALSC and regular reports of interesting finds
- Talks by FOMA members to local interest groups such as U3A, Kent FHS, Rochester Society and local History Societies
- Publicity in the local press, Medway Council's website and the *Medway Matters* newsletter.
- On line Breeze sessions with schools on topics relating to relevant Key Stage followed by visits to MALSC/talks from volunteers.
- Producing learning materials such as follow up topic packs and/or leaflets to use on walks around Rochester linked to a particular period in history.
- HE student visit to Archives with possible student placement.

Those involved with delivery of these aims are:

- Enabling the development of archive skills: Project and MALSC Archivists and MALSC staff
- Education outreach to schools through Breeze and other talks: MALSC staff along with FOMA members Elaine Gardner, Odette Buchanan and Brian Joyce
- Online catalogue: Project and MALSC archivists
- FOMA website: Alex and Amanda Thomas
- The Clock Tower*: Contributors and the Editor, Amanda Thomas
- HE students: Dr Sandra Dunster
- Exhibitions : FOMA volunteers and HE students on placement
- Talks to local groups: FOMA volunteers

The production of information leaflets etc: FOMA volunteers along with MALSC staff

Timetable of activities planned so far.

July – September 2010

First small volunteer project helping with identification of plans

Establishing school contacts to ascertain topic material most appropriate for History curriculum

Talk to U3A Local History group in September on the Archives and how they can be used – Elaine

Plan Greenwich University student visit to fit with study programme between Oct – May each year.

September – December 2010

Volunteers to begin work repackaging/numbering documents with on the job training.

Liaise with City of Rochester Society, Wigmore Library Group and others to book talks for their 2011/12 programmes.

January – March 2011

Talks booked with both U3A and FOMA on topics relating to the Archive/Rochester FOMA volunteers work with MALSC staff on identifying material that could be used for Breeze sessions and resource packs.

April - May 2011

Pilot Breeze session, most likely with Sir Joseph Williamson Mathematical School, with follow-up workshop.

Start Breeze sessions and workshops with other participating schools.

FOMA members to start work on an exhibition to publicise the collection towards the end of the year.

October – December 2011

Online catalogue completed

Exhibition mounted, at MALSC in first instance.

Jan – December 2012

Ongoing programmes disseminating information

In addition there will be regular quarterly articles in *The Clock Tower* and notable finds will be reported in the press and on the Medway Council website. Also to be added is timing of student placement to run from September to May

The success of the outreach programme will be measured using

Feedback forms at talks, exhibitions and other events

Count of numbers attending exhibitions, talks and other events

Count of website hits on Archive catalogue

Recording how people contacting MALSC heard of the service

Using registers of those coming into MALSC to determine if numbers have increased

Take up from schools for Breeze sessions/ talks/materials requests

‘Student- friendly’ feedback from school sessions

Statistics on use of archive collection.

The Victoria County History will return in the next issue of The Clock Tower.

A Clock Tower Special Feature

Medway Memories of World War Two and the Battle of Britain

1939 to 1945, A Little Lad Remembers...

Bob Ratcliffe



Bob Ratcliffe is a retired architect. He is President of The City of Rochester Society and a local historian; Bob is also a FOMA committee member.

Though both father and mother were of Medway origin, 1939 found the writer in Burpham, a small village two miles to the north of Guildford. Even in that rural setting there were signs of war. I have memories of a fighter – Hurricane or Spitfire – crashing about half a mile away, with the resulting rush across the field towards it, of a Heinkel 111¹ going so low over the garden you could see the crew, and of a Wellington fuselage on a Queen Mary lorry outside the local pub, and my surprise that it was made of canvas!

By 1842, with father in the army, mother decided to answer the call for additional teaching staff at the Mathematical School, Rochester, a position that she had held in pre-war days. For the next two years she commuted on a weekly basis between Guildford and Rochester. In the summer of 1943 she decided to *introduce me to Rochester* and brought me for a fortnight's holiday to the old city, and we stayed at 262 Wilson Avenue. As present residents of Wilson Avenue will know, this was on the flight path to Rochester Airport, and my earliest memory is of Short's Stirling bombers coming over the rooftop on their final approach.



'Birth of the Heavies'; Short Stirling Mk III over Rochester. © David Ellwood.²

They were big aircraft and by big I mean BIG, especially to a little lad who had thought of Wellingtons as large. Short's Airport Works had been visited by the Luftwaffe in 1941, when considerable damage had been caused and the production line disrupted, but work was still being undertaken on the type until the end of the war. Short's Rochester Esplanade works was still in full production with Sunderlands and their derivatives. There were always several sitting at buoys on the river awaiting departure.

Three other memories of that holiday remain with me. First there were the joints in the carriageway of City Way, across which the utility bodied Bristols crashed on their journeys from Elaine Avenue to City Way on service 66. Second, there was a line of smoke generators parked along the New Road. Resembling a series of George Stephenson's Rocket locomotives, their purpose was to generate a smokescreen in the event of an air raid and so hide the area from the German bombers. Whether this rather optimistic plan was ever put to the test, I know not, but if it had have been, I am sure the housewives of the Towns would have had something to say about the resulting smuts.

The third memory of 1943 is of a visit to Strood Pier on Canal Road. There we sat amid the concrete 'dragon's teeth' (anti-tank devices) watching the shipping on the river. The river was a revelation to one who had hitherto only known the River Wey at Guildford. Here at Strood, among the tugs and barges was a vast ship with the word *SVERIGE* and two blue and gold flags painted on her side. As we watched, marvel turned to terror as she uttered a great bellow of sound from her steam whistle. Forgive me, reader, but I was only seven.

In the following year, and my father still away in the army, mother decided to move the family back to Rochester. As well as myself, the family consisted of my maternal grandmother (Emily Fanny Lee née Palmer) and her companion Auntie Twissie (Miss Twisden Mary Bovington, born in Strood in 1864). Mother bought a large Victorian detached residence at 215 Maidstone Road, Rochester, for the princely sum of £1,200, and in August, Mr Ring's Bedford pantehnicon, complete with a painting of Rochester Castle on the side, moved us east just as Mr Hitler's V1s were coming the other way.

The story of the Doodlebug and V2 attacks are well recorded in other places,³ and I will limit references here to personal memories. One is of a cricket match in progress at the Frindsbury ground in Parsonage Lane, when a V1 was seen approaching from over the dockyard. All present assumed a horizontal position as the thing clattered its way over us before rattling away to the west, allowing the match to continue. I also remember watching, with interested detachment, as one crossed my path homeward up the Maidstone Road. Yes, Doodlebugs were lethal, and they caused much damage, as did the one that came down on Grafton Avenue on 8th November, resulting in eight fatalities and 17 injured, but as long as their engines kept going, you did not seem to worry.

With the V2s it was different. The first thing you knew of them was a mighty explosion, which, even if you were not directly involved, was enough to scare the proverbial pants off you. It was just before lunch on Sunday 18th February 1945 that Rochester's only V2 arrived at the junction of Rede Court Road and London Road. I was on a pre-lunch walk with my father, home on leave, and we were on our way down the Borstal Road when it went off. We were over a mile away, but that explosion left quite an impression! After five years of war you had become prepared for air raids and V1s, with sirens signifying *Alert* and *All Clear*, but

there was no preparation or defence against the V2. Thankfully by the end of March their launching sites had been overrun by the Allies and the reign of Hitler's *Vergeltungswaffe* ended.

What other memories have I of Rochester and the war and what remains today? No doubt there are plenty of other memories, and I ask those of you whose memories have been re-awakened by this article to send them to the Editor for possible inclusion in a future edition of *The Clock Tower*. As to the fixtures and fittings, there were static water tanks, large tanks of steel section built at strategic points around the city and filled with water to assist in the fire fighting. One such was on the corner of the Grove at the bottom of Maidstone Road, and another was created by the flooding of the old Mathematical School cricket ground on the Esplanade. Such tanks have long gone, but the fading yellow notice in Vines Lane near Bishopscourt still directs us to the nearest such tanks sixty five years after their removal. Surface and underground air raid shelters were often to be found around the city, built both for public and private use. There was a surface one of yellow stock brick with a concrete roof in the rear garden of 217 Maidstone Road, at that time the offices of the income tax people. A similar one remains at old St Margaret's, now a part of the King's School, but in 1940 a part of the local primary school of St Margaret's: perhaps this relic is worthy of listing. In Canal road concrete dragon's teeth can still be found at the end of the pier, while at the south end of Two Post Alley, in Rochester High Street, the low level slit in the wall (now filled with ivy) was cut to enable the machine gun section of our own Dad's Army to shoot at the feet of the *Wehrmacht* as they came down Boley Hill!

Notes

1. Yes, even at six my aircraft recognition was pretty good! [Please note, this is a separate incident and aircraft to the one mentioned earlier and as in *Editor's Footnotes*.]
2. David Ellwood's work was featured in Issue 03 of *The Clock Tower*, Summer 2006. (Back issues can be viewed on the FOMA website at www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html and by clicking on *Other issues*). David is a well known artist in the Medway area and a former Vice Chairman of the Guild of Aviation Artists.
3. *Doodlebugs and Rockets* , Bob Ogle, ISBN 1 872337 22 8

Cindy's Little Gems

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.

In a new series for The Clock Tower, Cindy begins with a commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of The Battle of Britain with some Little Gems from the archives.

Strood at War

In the year that we remember the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, our Little Gem for this edition is to be found in the records of Strood Rural District Council. The council has probably the best surviving records for the war years among all of the local council records held at MALSC.

The Register of Volunteers for example (SRDC /557), lists all those in the various parishes who had enrolled to assist with the A.R.P. The book is divided into parish sections detailing the chief wardens for the parishes and the various volunteers. A reflection of the time is that many of those listed are women acting as first aiders, ambulance drivers, telephonists and typists. Some of the male volunteers are registered only for a short period before they are enlisted in the forces.

Mrs Winifred K. Bigg, aged 37 years of Chattenden Farm House, was a housewife who enrolled as a part time ambulance driver in February 1939. Sydney Wheeler of 98 Bush Road Cuxton was a carpenter by trade. He enrolled as a First Aider and registered for military service in 1941. His date of birth shows him to be 37 years old on enrolment; his card shows that H.M. Forces called him up.

Ida Mary Baker of Shorne, a housewife, joined up in 1938. She became a section leader and the register shows she had trained for home nursing in 1916, working with V.A.D. (1914 –1918) and she held a St John's First Aid Certificate. Whilst enrolled as a volunteer she completed a course with the British Red Cross Society in first aid and chemical warfare, taking her examination in July 1938. Mr William Dare of The Walk, Wainscott, signed on as a full time A.R.P. Warden aged 64 years. His occupation was given as a chimney sweep. He took his A.R.P. exam in January 1939 achieving a 70% pass rate. He was issued with a respirator and size 7 boots!

The fact that many of the volunteers had already enrolled some time before the actual declaration of war in 1939 indicates how far ahead the local Councils had been planning for such an event. A trawl through the Council Minute books from the mid 1930s show that air raid posts, wardens and shelters were already discussed and were in the process of being implemented. Air raid shelters were already under construction. The huge civilian casualties of the Spanish Civil War had shown the future of warfare was to be in the air, meaning civilians would no longer be remote from the battle front.

Another small volume, SRDC/536, lists all vehicles within the area, giving the owner's name, registration number and type and also whether the driver was willing to use his vehicle for volunteer purposes. Many of the owners or drivers are already shown as being in the A.R.P., Observer Corps or Special Constabulary. Some owners state categorically that they are not willing to use their vehicles for such purposes. No doubt the whole reason for collating such material was so that vehicles could be requisitioned if necessary, willingly or not!

These little gems can provide surprising evidence if you are looking for details of a family members' war service.

"What did you do in the war, Grandad?"

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.

Seventy years ago this summer, between July and October, German bombers flooded the skies of Britain in massed air raids. The conflict in the skies between the Allied defence and German bombers brought the war to our doorstep and is known as The Battle of Britain. The Medway Towns and the south east were particularly badly affected and many of us watched the dogfights in the sky (or have been told what it was like) as German bombers targeted local airfields and Chatham Dockyard, though most significant of all, Kent was a route to London. More information is available on the Battle of Britain History website, <http://www.raf.mod.uk/bob1940/bobhome.html> which also contains a series of daily reports. This issue of *The Clock Tower* is published online on 18 August 2010. Seventy years ago, the Battle of Britain website reveals this was a cloudy day and ‘massed German formations’ attacked airfields in the south and south east. That night there were air raids in Bristol, East Anglia and South Wales. The two main attacks over the South East occurred at around 12.30 pm and 5.00 pm, so in broad daylight, and London was on high alert – on a Red warning. The earlier raid comprised some 300 planes and focussed on the North Foreland and Dungeness, Kenley, Croydon, Biggin Hill, Manston and West Malling. At 5.00 pm a wave of eight raids began, and comprised 200 planes, some en route for Rochester. This later raid was intercepted and forced out to sea in just over an hour.

The Friends of Broomhill, of which our own Odette Buchanan is Secretary, is collating local stories, prompted in part by memories of the day when a German Messerschmitt plane crashed on Broomhill. The Friends’ website <http://www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk/> notes: ‘The wounded pilot was helped by a young woman before being taken to Chatham Police Station by the Home Guard with fixed bayonets, followed by an angry crowd of housewives wielding brooms and spades. In 1955, the pilot returned to thank the doctor who treated him and the girl who had helped him.’

Bob Ratcliffe began his article (see above) with a mention of a plane crash near the village of Burpham where he lived before coming to the Medway Towns as a young boy. A trawl of the internet uncovered a story related by Frank Phillipson which is most likely the incident to which Bob refers and is an example of how the war and the Battle of Britain changed lives forever.

‘Just before midday on Sunday 19th October 1941, an RAF Mk.Ia Spitfire, piloted by Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Sergeant Donald Newsham Law, was practising aerial manoeuvres north of Guildford. He had taken off from RAF Heston (west of London) where he was receiving instruction with No.61 Operational Training Unit (OTU) Fighter Command. Without warning his aircraft went into a power dive and crashed into the sewage filter beds east of Slyfield Green...Sgt. Law would have been killed instantly when the aircraft hit the ground...’

According to records, Law ‘was flying at 2000 to 2500 feet altitude and...practising FL (Forced Landing) approaches and slow rolls.’ There were many eye witnesses to the crash, who told of the terrible noise and the vertical dive the aircraft took. Many of these witnesses ran to the scene of the crash, but the police would not allow them to get too close because of the danger from ammunition on board.

Donald Law was born in New Zealand in 1918. He joined the RNZAF in 1939 and following a period of intensive training, received his wings in April 1941; By the end of May he was on his way to Canada; he landed in Bournemouth in July. He was posted to Hullavington, Wiltshire and then to Heston. By the time of the crash he had 196 hours of flying experience, nine of these on Spitfires. The website explains,

‘Don’s Spitfire was a Mk.Ia Serial No.X4544. It was first allocated on September 27, 1940, to No.72 Squadron...at Biggin Hill during the Battle of Britain. During a “scramble” on October 5, it was involved in an airborne collision with another Spitfire (K9989) which crashed killing the pilot. The pilot of X4544, Sgt Staples, managed to land safely and the aircraft was then sent for repair. On May 15, 1941, it was allocated to No.123 Squadron at Turnhouse, Midlothian, and on October 14 it was assigned to No.61 OTU.’

Don was buried on October 23, at Hounslow and Isleworth Cemetery, Hounslow. His brother, Ken, a pilot also stationed in Britain, was the only member of the New Zealand family able to attend. Later, Don’s fiancée, 19 year old Natalie, related how she felt: “All the myriad plans we had for our lives together after the war, went asunder.”

The full story and more information on the sources can be found at <http://www.rcgroups.com/forums/showthread.php?t=704580>

Information originated from *Guildford: The War Years* by Graham Collyer and David Rose, Dave Homewood’s *Wings Over Cambridge* New Zealand website set up in tribute to airmen from the town, Pam O’Connor and Natalie Bayer née Buckrell.

Short Brothers were pioneers in the building of aircraft at The Esplanade, Rochester in the first half of the twentieth century. Articles and information on the company can be found in the following past editions of *The Clock Tower*:

Issue 02, June 2006

Issue 03, August 2006

Issue 12, November 2008

Issue 14, May 2009.

Back issues can be viewed on the FOMA website at www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html and by clicking on *Other issues*.

The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund is a welfare charity supporting RAF families. Their website gives more information (www.rafbf.org/) and currently has a section entitled *Experience the Battle of Britain Live* which includes a daily chronicle of 1940 (www.1940chronicle.com)

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 showcases her postcard of Rochester's Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School.

There were many illustrators of Charles Dickens' works and I have examples of most of them in my collection of literary themed postcards. All the well known postcard publishers such as Hildesheimer, Faulkner and Cassell published illustrations of characters and scenes from the stories. In my research I have discovered that the firm J.M. Goldwyn of Rochester published a series in 1901 but I have not yet found any of these.

The postcard in this issue is an illustration by *Kyd* whose real name was Joseph Clayton Clark. Other illustrators include George Cattermole, George Cruickshank, Hablot Knight Browne (Phiz) and Harold Copping. The original series was produced by Raphael Tuck around the end of the 19th century. The very small print at the side of the card states that the cards were designed in England but chromographed in Bavaria. In my very limited knowledge of this printing process I understand that the colouring was done by a method of laying down only about three colours on top of each other which produced a bold colourful print as can be seen here.

I chose this postcard of Mr Micawber as he is surely a favourite of Dickens' readers and for those of us who at some time in our lives has not shared his hope of "something turning up,"...usually to be disappointed! The postcard is postmarked December 1902 from London to a Miss Rochard, The Old House, Alderton, Woodbridge Suffolk. The sender only adds the date and their initials. The reason for there not being a message is that originally a message on the back of postcards was not allowed. Only the address could be written there. I have several cards with a written message all around the edge of the front. The divided back was introduced in 1902 but the old design must have taken a while to disappear from the shops.

CHARACTERS from CHARLES DICKENS.

"MR. MICAWBER."

(David Copperfield)

I am, however delighted
to add that I have now
an immediate prospect of
something turning up.



Raphael Tuck & Sons' Dickens' Postcard Series 540 II.
Designed in England. Chromo-lithographed in Germany.