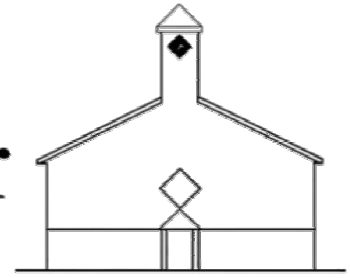


The Clock Tower



Issue Number 34: May 2014
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

Thank You, Jean!



Jean Skilling (pictured right), retiring FOMA Treasurer, is presented with flowers at the AGM in April by Membership Secretary, Betty Cole. Report inside.

Also inside, read Angela Watson's *Fifteen Seconds of Fame* with the BBC,
Part Two of the Clock Tower Special Feature: *Amateur Dramatics in Medway*
- and Sue Haydock and Tessa Towner's trip to Japan!

When East Met West Again!

In April Tessa Towner and Sue Haydock visited Ito and Yokosuka in Japan, two cities twinned with Medway (though the original relationship was with Gillingham) through the historic links with Gillingham's William Adams (1564-1620). Sue tells the full story on page 12.



Tessa Towner and Sue Haydock with the Deputy Mayor of Ito, also pictured are the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the City Council, and Mr. Ohnuma, President of the Ito Association for International Relations (far left).



Left: Tessa at the William Adams Exhibition in the Tokaikan Inn, Ito, Japan.



Right: Tessa in Ito, Japan, with sculptures dedicated to William Adams.

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



How quickly the time goes. We are now in May, nearly half the year gone, and hopefully looking forward to a nice warm summer (I won't tempt fate and say *hot* !!)

Jean Skilling has been our Treasurer for the last eight years, in fact since the very start of FOMA. She announced she would be resigning the position at our last committee meeting, and then formally at the AGM. We are sorry to see her go as she has done a great job looking after the finances for FOMA and seeing us through the HLF bid. So a big thank you to Jean for all her hard work. Of course, we now need somebody to take on the Treasurer's job so, please, if you are able to do this or know someone who might volunteer, please let the committee know (see page 30).

It is also with great sadness that we announce the resignation of Dr. Sandra Dunster from the committee. Sandra is leaving due to work commitments and will be sorely missed. We appreciate all she did, but especially how she raised the profile of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre with the research she undertook with the volunteers for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone project. Her book, *The Medway Towns: River, Docks and Urban Life* is available at all good bookshops and online, by the way! Our thanks to Sandra, though we know she will continue to support FOMA and MALSC, and also because she has agreed to be our Further Education Consultant.

My apologies for not being at the AGM last month, but I was offered the opportunity to visit Japan with Sue Haydock - it was too good an opportunity to miss! I understand from Sue she was under strict instructions from our Editor, Amanda Thomas, to take lots of photographs. You can read about our travels on page 12 and see some of the photographs opposite and on pages 47 and 48. We had a fantastic trip. It was Cherry Blossom time and everywhere we went we saw trees full of blossom - as you can see on the back page.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

One of the points raised at the AGM was the problem of the rising cost of postage and finding volunteers to hand deliver *The Clock Tower*. The discussion has made the committee consider if we should consider publishing only an online version of *The Clock Tower*. We are happy to explore this possibility but wish to make it clear that we understand the value and importance of the printed version. Please let the Editor, Amanda Thomas, know your views; contact details are on page 30.

News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary



So, hullo! That's another AGM been and gone but sadly it's also the end of Jean's innings as our Treasurer. She will be missed greatly. Not only did she do an excellent job as Treasurer but also guided us through all the bureaucratic hoops entailed in the Heritage Lottery Grant bid and joined in enthusiastically in helping in so many other ways. We owe her an enormous vote of thanks.

Other things have progressed much as usual with an excellent talk from Brian Joyce in March, *Cinemas in the Medway Towns*, and another successful and profitable quiz in April, thanks to Elaine Gardner and her excellent questions. However, DO NOT miss the Richard van Emden talk on 10 June at Frindsbury Parish Hall (see *News and Events* on page 6). The talk is one we have arranged specially to commemorate the outbreak of World War One and is entitled, *The Quick and The Dead*. It's not often one gets the opportunity to listen to such a famous speaker.

As you know, I'm always receiving questions by email from around the world, hoping FOMA can help. I have a success story to relate. Friends of friends of mine, the Vealls, are descendants of the Budden of Budden and Biggs's Body Building Beverages that was a very successful brewery in Strood in the Nineteenth Century. They had culled as much information as could be had on the internet and planned a visit from Wiltshire. You may recall in the last issue of *The Clock Tower* we published the email I received from David Veall requesting information about Austin Budden, and a follow-up can be seen on page 10. We put David in touch with MALSC and Rochester's Guildhall Museum. Nikki Pratt at MALSC sorted out all manner of interesting things and during a visit by David and Shelagh Veall to the Guildhall, Curator Stephen Nye got out all the regalia that Austin had worn as Mayor of Rochester (in 1879 and 1880)* and put it on Shelagh, who is Austin's great great niece. She was allowed to sit in the chair in which Austin had sat over a hundred years ago and was thrilled to bits. Jean Skilling was also able to offer assistance, as she tracked down the reference numbers for the burial plots, and in addition, Medway Bereavement Services kindly marked the plot for David and Shelagh when they visited St Nicholas' cemetery. Another of the things Nikki found for them was the newspaper report of James' funeral which over a thousand people attended! (See page 11)

David and Shelagh told me that Mary, James Budden's mother, was a maid at Gad's Hill Place when Dickens lived there and family legend has it that the fat boy in *Pickwick Papers* is based on James Budden! All in all a very successful short trip to Medway for the Vealls and I am so pleased we were able to live up to our name - the Friends of the Archives.

Looking forward to a nice hot summer!

*Thanks to Brian Joyce for tracking AF Budden down in FF Smith's *A History of Rochester*.

The 8th FOMA AGM

Elaine Gardner, Vice Chairman and Events Co-ordinator



The eighth FOMA AGM was held in the Parish Hall, Frindsbury on 8th April 2014. I chaired the meeting as our Chairman, Tessa Towner, was visiting Japan furthering Medway's historic connection with the country and to the navigator Will Adams (1564-1620). You can read about Tessa's travels with Sue Haydock on page 12.

My welcome address highlighted FOMA's activities of the past year and those which are coming up, in particular the World War One events. The address included thanks to the committee for all their hard work during the year, but sadly it fell to me to announce that both Sandra Dunster and Jean Skilling, our Treasurer since the start, were resigning from the committee due to time restraints. Jean had taken a huge role in the Heritage Lottery Funding project and will be greatly missed, not least because treasurers are hard to come by! After giving her Treasurer's report for the year, Jean was presented with a bouquet of flowers with our thanks. Sandra too has done some exceptional work, but we know she will continue to play an important role in the network of FOMA members.

After the Secretary's report, Editorial report (which I read in Amanda Thomas' absence, due to illness), and the Archives and Local Studies reports (read by Odette Buchanan), FOMA member Ian Smith took the chair whilst the committee was re-elected. Before doing this Ian took the opportunity to thank the committee on behalf of all the members for the work that they do. Those committee members not standing down were re-elected on block with no votes against. Meanwhile the search for a new treasurer continues!

The formal part of the meeting was then closed and the evening continued with a raffle and refreshments with homemade cakes which Membership Secretary Betty Cole and I had made. Whilst members relaxed with their refreshments, a slide show of MALSC collection pictures of Rochester High Street in the Nineteenth Century was shown.

AGM reports from Borough Archivist, Alison Cable, and Local Studies Librarian, Norma Crowe, can be read in *Archives Update* on pages 21 to 23.

Could you be the next FOMA Treasurer?

It is not an onerous job and only basic book keeping skills are needed.

Main duties are as follows:-

Record and bank any money, other than subscriptions, due to the Society (subscriptions are banked by the Membership Secretary)

Pay all invoices and reimburse any out of pocket expenses due to committee members (12 cheques were issued in 2013)

Maintain the FOMA Paypal account and notify the Membership Secretary of subscriptions paid by that method

Complete the Gift Aid claim and prepare the annual accounts

The Treasurer acts as financial advisor to the committee and is expected to attend six meetings a year plus the AGM.

For more information contact Jean Skilling 01634 867519 or e-mail jean.skilling@blueyonder.co.uk

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Events

10th June 2014, 7.30 pm.

A FOMA SPECIAL TALK TO COMMEMORATE THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR ONE

The Quick and The Dead.

A talk by celebrity speaker Richard van Emden.

Booking for FOMA talks is no longer necessary! Until further notice all events are at Frindsbury Parish Hall. Talks are £3 for members, £5 non-members. Booking for Quiz Nights and enquiries through the FOMA Secretary: Odette Buchanan , 72 Jersey Rd, Strood, ME2 3PE; odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk; 01634 718231.

MALSC Events

Exhibitions

16th April - 17th June.

Verses and extracts, 1934 -

Celebrating 80 years of design education in Rochester.

Linocuts by Students of the Medway School of Arts and Crafts.

19th June - 19th August.

Pills, Potions & Promises.

Looking at early advertising in Medway.

21st August - 1st November.

World War One Exhibition.

Lest We Forget, Part One, 1914.

Organised by The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

17th November 2014 - 13th January 2015.

'A little of what you fancy...'

A century of entertainment in Medway.

Talks and Events

17th September, 2.30 pm.

Remembering the Men of the Medway Towns in WW1.

The Michael de Caville Index.

A talk by Tessa Towner.

17th December, 2.30 pm.

'Your Own, Your Very Own...'

Theatres and music halls in Victorian Medway.

A talk by Brian Joyce.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, (MALSC) Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU, and all talks and events are now free of charge. Further information is available from MALSC; please telephone 01634 332714 to book. TICKETS MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE. Please note: You may be aware that Medway Council has been relocated to Gun Wharf. This move does not include MALSC and until further notice, we are still to be found in the Clock Tower building, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU.

MALSC OPENING HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm; Saturday 9.00 am to 4.00 pm. Wednesday and Sunday closed. For Satnav please use ME2 2AD.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ANNUAL STOCK TAKING CLOSURE WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 3 NOVEMBER TO 15 NOVEMBER 2014 INCLUSIVE.

Eastgate House

Eastgate House is one of Rochester's landmarks. Built in the 1590s by Sir Peter Buck, the most senior member of staff at Chatham Dockyard, its structure has been adapted considerably over the years, but research has indicated that the original building may be Medieval or earlier. A Heritage Lottery Grant awarded in January 2011 has enabled Medway Council to begin planning conservation work on the house and to start opening its doors once more to visitors. Eastgate House is now closed and work is due to start in June 2014.

The Friends of Eastgate House AGM will be held at Gun Wharf on 17th June 2014.

Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.friendsofeastgatehouse.org> on Facebook on <http://www.facebook.com/eastgatehouse> and on Twitter <https://twitter.com/EastgateHouse>. To join the Friends of Eastgate House, please contact Terri Zbyszewska, The Membership Secretary, FoEH, 31 The Esplanade, Rochester, ME1 1QW or at tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk; a copy of the membership form is also available on the website.

The City of Rochester Society

"The City of Rochester Society was founded in 1967 to help conserve the historic City as a pleasant place to visit. The Society is still active today, helping to improve the environment and quality of life in Rochester for residents and visitors alike." Taken from the City of Rochester Society website, www.city-of-rochester.org.uk, where further information on the society and how to join is available.

Talks are on Wednesdays at the Auditorium of the Visitor Centre, 95 High Street, Rochester and start at 8.00 pm. There is a small charge for events to defray expenses; please contact the CoRS Secretary, Christine Furminger on 01634 320598 or at cafurminger@blueyonder.co.uk for further information and how to join. Members meetings take place on the second Wednesday of the month in the Auditorium at the Visitor Information Centre, Rochester. For further information please contact Christine Furminger, as above.

See Rochester's wealth of historic buildings and hear about the City's long and fascinating history from an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide of the City of Rochester Society! Every Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday and Public Holiday from Good Friday until the end of October. Starting at 2.15 p.m. from The Visitors Centre, High Street, Rochester. The tours are free of charge, but donations to Society funds are always gratefully received.

Friends of Broomhill

Broomhill Park has been awarded a third Green Flag; the Award recognises the best green spaces in the country. Help us get a Green Flag for the fourth year running and improve our quite high score in the RHS South East in Bloom competition.

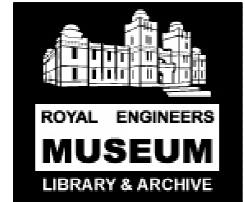
Sunday, 22nd June, Funday.



Healthy Walks

Every Tuesday, meet at Strood Library at 9.45 am. A guided and pleasant walk with wonderful views overlooking the Medway and Thames, and woodland paths. Duration about 60 minutes. Complimentary tea and coffee served in the library after the walk. Sorry - dogs not allowed in the library. Contact: 01634 333720

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive
Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME4 4UG.
www.re-museum.co.uk



The Royal Engineers Museum is Kent's largest military museum, with a designated collection of historical and international importance. The many galleries tell the story of Britain's military engineers from the Roman period to the modern Corps of Royal Engineers. The millions of items in its collection tell a sweeping epic of courage, creativity and innovation and the stories of individuals of great renown (General Gordon, Lord Kitchener, John Chard VC) and the average Sapper who has helped the British Army move, fight and survive for over 200 years.

The Royal Engineers Museum now has an e-newsletter. To subscribe for free, email 'Yes Please!' to deputycurator@re-museum.co.uk

Events

First World War Battlefield Tour Groups: January 2014 - November 2018
For more information or to book please call: 01634 822312.

Time Bleeds First World War Family Activities: 27th - 30th May 2014, 10.30am – 3.30pm

Bridge Building Father's Day Competition: 14th - 15th June 2014, 11.30am – 4pm

Kitchener's Army Weekend: 2nd - 3rd August 2014, 10.30am – 5.00pm

First World War Family Activities: 29th July - 29th August (excluding Mondays), 10.30am – 3.30pm

Please see the website (www.re-museum.co.uk) for more details.

Opening hours: Tuesday – Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm; Saturday – Sunday and Bank Holidays: 11.30am to 5.00pm; CLOSED MONDAYS. Admission: pay once and get in for 12 months! Adult: £7.80; Family: £20.80; Concession: £5.20; Children under 5: Free.



The latest information can be found at:
www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/

The Chatham Historical Society

Meetings are held at The Lampard Centre, Sally Port, Brompton, ME7 5BU, **excepting January and August**. The Lampard Centre has easy disabled/wheelchair access and a small car park. There is plenty of unrestricted roadside parking space in Maxwell Road, about 50 metres away. Sally Port has some unrestricted roadside parking space, but please avoid the sections with the double yellow lines or the *No Parking* notices.

12th June
Reminiscences of an immigrant life in Russia 1970 to 1990.
A talk by Irina Fridman.

10th July
World War 1 Commemoration Meeting.
Do you have any family memories or artefacts of the War which you can share with us? If so, please be our guest for the evening! We are anxious to ensure these memories are not lost. Please telephone 01634 865176.

Doors open at 7:15 pm, meetings finish at 9:00 pm. Refreshments are available and visitors are very welcome. Admission: £1 for members, £3 for visitors. Further information is available at www.chathamhistoricalsoc.btck.co.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), 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 34 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 28 July 2014, with publication on Wednesday 20 August 2014.

Publication date

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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 at 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

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 last issue of *The Clock Tower* contained a record number of letters, whereas in the last quarter we have only received information on the following on-going query. With the nice spring weather, perhaps members have been gardening instead!

Austin Budden

In the last issue of *The Clock Tower*, David Veall made the following request to FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan (25 November 2013):

Austin Budden was my wife's great uncle, his brother Alfred was her great grandfather. Their father James Budden was the High Constable of Rochester and was a licensed victualler and landlord of the Red Lion public house. He was the Budden of Budden and Biggs brewery. We have no pictures of Alfred or James. I did find one news record of James as High Sheriff visiting Queen Victoria at Osborn house. Any information would be of great interest to [our] family.

Since then, David Veall has discovered the following:

'...Stephen Nye from the Rochester museum kindly sent me a picture of [Austin Budden] ... in his Mayoral robes.

I have now found some information on his father, James(2), my wife's great great grandfather and his father also called James (1).

James (1) also had a son Alfred Edwin who is my wife's great grandfather. Apart from being born in 1855 and dying in 1916 the only information I can find out about him was that the 1901 Census shows him as being a retired Captain.

James (1) was the licensee of The Red Lion in Chatham. We know he was there in 1841, he was supplying the Navy in the dockyards as a licenced victualler. He was also the Budden of Budden and Biggs Brewery. He was also the subject of a debate in the House of Common's on 23 February 1863 recorded in Hansard; I have a copy of it. He died in 1844 leaving £800 in his will.

James (2) was also a licenced victualler in Chatham dockyards (1851 Census). He designed the new canteen there. He was voted in three times as the High Constable of Chatham late 1850s to early 1860s. On 27 July 1857 he went with a deputation to the Poor Law board to obtain money to build a new workhouse for that union. As High Constable he was shown to be Guardian of the River Medway and contacted the Admiralty in November 1858 about the state of the river. It needed dredging. In March 1859 he chaired a meeting to discuss the government's Reform Bill where the main speaker was Major General Sir Frederick Smith, the local MP. He also canvassed on behalf of him at the election. In June 1859 he set up the Volunteer Corps. following a communication to him from Viscount Sydney the Lord Lieutenant of the County. In January 1860 he received the following:

'The Officer in command of the rifle corps formed in this town (Chatham), Mr J. Budden the Captain has received an official notification from the Secretary of State for War, that Her Majesty has accepted the services of this corps, which has been named the 9th Company of Kent Volunteers.'

He died aged 44 in 1866.

I have also found a reference, uncertain about its reliability, that another James Budden this time one of Austin's son's was at some time the Chief Constable of Chatham.'

Information is still needed and work has been going on in the Archives to discover more. However, Jean Skilling tracked down the references of the burial plots:

22 Jan 1857 Amelia Budden of Chatham, no age given;
7 Jan 1866 James Budden of Chatham aged 44 same grave as above;
27 Jul 1907 Jane Hannah Budden aged 68 of Chiswick.

FUNERAL OF THE LATE MR. J. BUDDEN.—In accordance with the express wishes of the late Captain Budden, his remains were interred in the St. Nicholas Cemetery, on Wednesday last, in the vault in which his first wife was buried some few years since. Although it was not ordered that there should be any public demonstration, the numerous friends of the deceased gentleman availed themselves of the opportunity to pay their last and respect to the memory of one so universally known, and so widely esteemed, and the funeral was the most striking perhaps ever before witnessed in this neighbourhood, in respect of the numbers who joined in the procession, or the crowds who witnessed it. Notwithstanding the inclement state of the weather, the number of persons who joined the general procession must have numbered little short of 1,000, including the members of the various volunteer corps of Rochester and Chatham. The funeral procession left the residence of the deceased at one o'clock, the body being conveyed on a hearse and four, followed by six mourning coaches and four, containing the relations and friends of the deceased, some few private carriages being likewise in the procession. Immediately following came the representatives from the various public bodies with which the deceased was connected, including the local board of health, the board of guardians and directors of the poor, the courts leet of Chatham and Gillingham, the directors of the water-works company (of which the deceased was chairman), the directors of the Rochester Building Society (of which he was one of the trustees), &c., followed by a large number of private friends connected with Chatham and Rochester, the members of the Gillingham Artillery closing the procession. The volunteers were under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Scott, commanding the battalion, assisted by Major Lawrie. The procession marched through a line of spectators the entire way to the cemetery, the entrance to which was rendered almost impassable, from the large number of persons who crowded round it. The service was read by the Rev. D. Cooke, incumbent of Trinity church, Brompton, an intimate friend of the deceased, who had attended him during his last illness. Throughout the route taken by the procession the bells of the various churches were tolled, and most of the shops and private houses were partially closed.

The newspaper report of James Budden's funeral found at MALSC by Nikki Pratt, from the Southern Gazette, 16 Jan 1866.

When East Met West Again!

Sue Haydock



The latest from our roving reporter, Medway Heritage Champion and FOMA Vice President

All the photographs for this article were taken by Sue Haydock, with the exception of the group picture on page 2 which is courtesy of Ito International Relations.

The best time to visit Japan is in the spring, so they say, so that is what I did with our FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner in April. Keen readers of *The Clock Tower* will know that I have visited Japan several times before, but never before in the spring.

Tessa and I visited Ito and Yokosuka, two cities twinned with Medway (though the original relationship was with Gillingham) through the historic links with William Adams (1564-1620). Adams was born in Gillingham and his association with Japan is celebrated there each year at the Will Adams festival (see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 27, August 2012 and Issue 28, November 2012). Adams was shipwrecked on the shores of Japan in 1600 and is thought to have been the first Englishman to set foot in the country; he was certainly the first to become a naturalized citizen and Samurai. Adams had a unique association with Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first Shogun of all Japan, to whom he became teacher and diplomatic adviser. Rewarded with estates and workers, Adams was also honoured with the title of Samurai - the Blue Eyed Samurai. He died in Hirado in 1624

In Ito, a spa town much favoured by the Japanese themselves, Tessa and I were royally hosted by the Ito Association for International Relations. They took us on trips to see the historical sites, arranged a party with association members, and let us sleep on the floor Japanese style! We met the Deputy Mayor, and Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the City Council, and were shown their council chamber. I discovered (after ten years!) that Admiral Togo, who had trained at Chatham Dockyard, had a villa in Ito. We were taken to see it, where we were very well received. We also visited the site by the river where Adams built the first western-style ship (completed in 1604), and the new display about Adams in the historic Tokaikan Inn, now part museum. We were taken to see the parks and avenues where the cherry blossom was at its best, creating most wonderful views.

In Yokosuka we were invited to take part in the William Adams Cherry Blossom Festival, held every year on 8 April. The weather was warm and sunny, and the

narrow road to the park at the top was crowded with cars of the VIPs (including ours!). The best thing for it was to enjoy a pleasant walk to the memorial erected to commemorate William Adams (now known as Miura Anjin), and his Japanese wife. Again, the cherry blossom was everywhere. Everyone was invited to lay a flower on the table set in front of the memorial and then the representatives of the embassies of the Netherlands and Great Britain, with the Mayor of Yokosuka, each laid a wreath. There was then a short walk to the reception area where there were speeches by the main guests, including me, as I am Honorary Mayor of Yokosuka, and brought greetings on behalf of the Mayor of Medway. Light refreshments were very welcome and then the ceremonial of pulling on strings. These were attached to a giant suspended ball which, when opened, cascaded down cherry blossom petals and four flags – Japan, Great Britain, Netherlands and the USA. There is a large naval presence in Yokosuka and nearby Yokohama, so they are usually included in any special occasion.

The trip included visits to Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka. A similar trip is planned for Spring 2015 so if you are interested, please contact me on susanjhaydock@aol.com

伊東市の姉妹都市である英国メドウェイ市のスーザン・ヘイドック元市長が7日、松川町の伊東国際交流協会事務局を訪れ、同協会会員らと毎年行っている「高校生交換プログラム」について意見を交わした。

ヘイドック元市長は「高校生にとって、ホームステイしながら異なる歴史や文化に触れることは貴重な体験になると思う。メドウェイには、このプログラムに参加したことをきっかけに大学で日本文化を専攻した若者もたくさんいる。メドウェイではチャタムのドックヤードを必ず案内して



いる。メドウェイの高校生には、伊東で三浦按針の足跡を学んでほしい」

と話した。

同協会メドウェイ高校生交換プログラム部会の

伊東国際交流協会会員らと談笑するヘイドック元市長
(左から2人目)＝松川町の同協会事務局

Sue and Tessa featured in the local newspaper, Izu Shimbun, during their stay in Japan. The occasion was the reception party given for them by the Ito Association for International Relations.
Sue is used to the press attention in Japan and often appears in the newspapers, radio or television!

More photographs of Sue and Tessa's amazing trip can be seen on pages 2, 32 and 33.

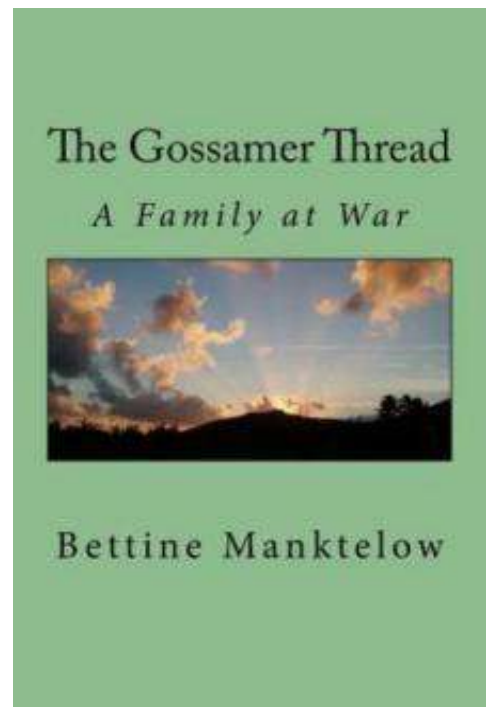
FOMA Members

The Gossamer Thread by Bettine Manktelow.

The Gossamer Thread is the invisible bond that holds a family together. This story is principally set in the Medway Towns during the Second World War. There is the elder brother Bill, who in a spirit of adventure joins the RAF to become one of the first of the few. There is the younger brother Joe, who honours his mother's wishes to stay home in a reserved occupation in Chatham Dockyard until a broken heart sends him to join the army in time for D-day, and there is the wilful sister Millicent who finds the war nothing but an annoying interruption in her quest for fame and stardom on the stage. Above all there is the mother Ellen who, with memories of the First World War still fresh in her mind, meets someone from the past who returns to change her future.

It is the story of these four people, their loves and losses, their grief and their fulfilment, but it is also the story of every man and every woman whose lives are changed irrevocably by the tumult of war.

The Gossamer Thread is the sequel to *No Time for Tears* which is set in the First World War, also in the Medway Towns, and tells Ellen's story, her life and loves. *The Gossamer Thread* is available now from Amazon and for Kindle; ISBN 978-1481935357



Bettine Walters writes under the name Manktelow and she is one of FOMA's newest members. You can read her memories of Rochester's Good Companions Club in the second part of our special feature on Medway AM Dram on page 26. In the next issue of *The Clock Tower*, Bettine will be writing about her experiences working at the Theatre Royal in Chatham - the background to *The Gossamer Thread* and a *Clock Tower* exclusive!

My Fifteen Seconds of Fame

Angela Watson



FOMA member Angela Watson has lived in Rochester all her life, as did her parents. Although she trained as a teacher and taught for a while, she later found herself working for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and then for twenty-three years with the Associated Examining Board. Since her retirement she has become associated with several organisations and is currently Chairman of The Friends of Horsted Valley. However, travel, languages and history are her main interests and she really would like to be able to find time to carry out research into her family history.

How did I come to appear in one of the five short films, made by Robin Gibson of the BBC, illustrating aspects of life in Kent during the Great War, which were shown on South East Today in February? Well, it would not have happened without FOMA but I'll start with this.

Once upon a time on 26 February 1881 an eighteen-year old Hampshire shepherd, Samuel James Kill, joined the 40th Brigade at Fort Elson, Gosport, but on 2 August 1882 he joined the 2nd Battalion of the newly-formed Royal West Kent Regiment. As well as Maidstone he saw service in Ireland, the Sudan, Burma, the North-West Frontier (does the Swat Valley ring any bells?), Aden, Malta and Egypt, where he went to the relief of General Gordon at Khartoum as a sergeant leading a troop of the Camel Corps! I had not realised that the British Army had camels. He also took part in the Battle of Abu Klea against the Dervishes, which saw the last hand-to-hand fighting of the British Army, for which he received £5. During his 28-years' service, during which he rose to the rank of Company Quartermaster Sergeant, he received the Egypt Medal with clasps 'the Nile' and 'Abu Klea', the India Medal with clasp 'Punjab Frontier' and the Khedive's Star, a combination unique in the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment (QORWKR).

On his return home was able to marry Elizabeth Day, a hop-grower's daughter from Priesthood, Meopham. Fast forward to 1914 when his five sons, Victor, William, Samuel, George and shortly afterwards Albert found themselves fighting for King and Country, with William and Samuel in the QORWKR. Samuel James also rejoined the Regiment and spent the war on the home front at Maidstone Barracks. The family only lost George, a machine-gun Sergeant in the East Yorkshire

Regiment, on 1 June 1915 at the Battle of Ypres, coincidentally the day his youngest brother Albert joined up. It was this Kent family's story which was the subject of the BBC programme. Samuel James died in 1919 and was buried with full military honours, his body being carried on a gun-carriage from his home at 11 Foord Street, Rochester, to St. Margaret's Cemetery, where a firing party was present together with the band of the Royal Irish Fusiliers.

Fast forward to 1939, when his widow Elizabeth moved to Tankerton to live with her youngest daughter and her home was put into storage, including Samuel James' and George's medals, which were put into the piano by his second daughter and his grand-daughter!

Fast forward to 1942, by which time Elizabeth had died and his youngest daughter had moved to Cumberland. The furniture in store was unpacked only to find a lot of small items had been stolen and there were no longer any medals in the piano. The theft was never reported as there was no proof as to exactly when and where the theft of the medals had taken place.

Fast forward to around 1989 when this unique combination of medals turned up for sale at Spink's in London. Chris Jupp, the Hon Regimental Historian and Archivist to the QORWK, was collecting medals associated with the Regiment, so naturally he bought them.

Fast forward to 2009, by which time I was a member of FOMA and attended Mike de Caville's talk on local men during the Great War and had a look at MALSC's accompanying exhibition. There on the penultimate screen was the Kill family. I mentioned to Mike that I was one of Samuel and Elizabeth Kill's great-grandchildren, and the grand-daughter of William, and he suggested that I got in touch with Chris Jupp who "knows all about the Kill family," and how true that was. Whilst I knew about Samuel James' family and home life through my mother, who lived with her grandparents as a child and remembers watching the gun-carriage leave the house, and knowing all the different countries in which my great-aunts and great-uncles had been born, I really knew nothing about his military career, except for the fact that he had gone to the relief of General Gordon at Khartoum - but not that he went riding a camel.

Fast forward to about three weeks later when I get round to telephoning Chris Jupp. About half-an-hour into the conversation Chris casually mentions that he has Samuel James' medals. When I had picked myself up off the floor and asked him to repeat himself, the conversation carried on for at least another half-an-hour. Apparently had the theft of the medals been reported to the police as stolen, then they would probably have been recovered at some stage as all medals for sale are checked against police records. And so a friendship grew between Chris and my family. My mother and I used to attend the annual wreath-laying ceremony for The Queens Own Buffs in Brenchley Gardens, Maidstone, and the service in All Saints' Church, when Chris kindly used to let my mother wear her grandfather's medals and I wore those of my grandfather.

And, finally, fast forward to January 2014 when Chris Jupp was asked by Robin Gibson, a senior BBC correspondent, to suggest a family which could be featured in one of the series of programmes he was making on Kent during the Great War. The Kill family immediately sprang to Chris' mind and two weeks later I found myself in the QORWK Regiment Room in Maidstone Museum being interviewed and filmed by two most charming and understanding people. Due to the time constraints of such a programme much quite relevant and interesting material ended up on the cutting-room floor but some of it was also due to the fact that I found it very difficult to speak solely to Robin and kept looking at the cameraman too. Robin Gibson could not have been kinder but I personally did find it quite stressful, although there was no reason why it should have been. From initial discussions, trial and error with my contribution and a fluent and fascinating contribution from Chris Jupp, the whole thing took just over an hour. Part of this, however, was also due to the fact that there were school parties in the museum, so as soon as their voices were heard we had to stop. What amazed me was that when they entered the gallery, they did not seem to notice us and teachers and children showed no interest. However, I now look at television interviews in quite a different light and realise that these 'relaxed little chats' are not quite as natural as they seem, but are the result of a highly skilled and experienced interviewer.

So you see, had I not been a member of FOMA, this train of events would never have taken place and it is now no longer just my Great Uncle George's name which 'Liveth for Ever More' but so does his face. The photograph of him with his machine-gun faded out the programme, a programme which is going into the BBC's permanent archive on the centenary of the First World War, to which schools and researchers will have access for posterity.

The Telephone Arrives in Victorian Medway

Brian Joyce



Brian Joyce is a 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.

Precisely who invented the telephone is still disputed, but Alexander Graham Bell took out a patent in the USA in 1876. Two years later, he demonstrated its use to Queen Victoria. By then, telephone companies had started to connect together the various branches of a few forward-thinking businesses in London and other large British cities, and the military was showing an interest. As yet, there were few, if any, private subscribers.

In Britain, the state was involved in telephone provision from the very beginning. As well as a plethora of private companies, the General Post Office (GPO) and some local authorities provided services. The telephone companies required a licence to trade from the GPO, and the state took ten per-cent of their gross income. The state also retained an option to purchase licensed telephone companies. Eventually, telephone provision was rationalised; the GPO took over all trunk lines in 1896, and in 1912 the entire network was nationalised.

The so-called *speaking telephone* probably made its Medway debut at the beginning of 1878, when it was the subject of a lecture at the Welcome Sailors' and Soldiers' Home in Military Road, Chatham.

In March 1879, a 'lecture with experiments' was held at a meeting of the Vines Mutual Improvement Society in Rochester. This meeting was held in the Congregational Church in Crow Lane. A telephone wire was run between the church's lecture room and Stephen Aveling's home at the nearby Restoration House. After the principles of the telephone had been explained, some of the participants adjourned to Aveling's drawing room, where they listened to talking and singing from the church via a receiver which was passed round the enthralled audience.

Even before this demonstration took place, a permanent telephone line had been installed between Rochester Police Station at the Guildhall and the Luton waterworks. This augmented, but did not replace, an existing telegraph link that enabled the authorities in Rochester to contact Luton if increased pressure was required to deal with a fire in the City.

This telephone link was put to the test in May 1880, when PC Dowsett spotted a fire on the railway bridge at Horsewash Lane while on night patrol. The blaze, probably caused by cinders from a passing locomotive, alarmed the constable, who ran to the Police Station. Both the telegraph and the telephone were used to contact Luton, where engineers increased the water pressure for the Rochester Fire Brigade.

The telephone's spread was gaining momentum. In 1880, eight lines were installed within the Royal Engineers' Institute at Brompton, and HMS Pembroke, the accommodation hulk moored off St Mary's Island was connected to the Dockyard and the office of the Medway Steam Reserve. In 1883, Gun Wharf, the military garrison and Upnor Castle were brought into direct contact with each other. By 1886, the Master's office, the Infirmary and the Porter's Lodge at the Medway Union Workhouse in Chatham were connected with one another, and the new device continued to spread among public and military bodies.

By now, the telephone had also expanded into the business life of the Medway Towns. What the local press claimed was the first installation of a telephone on commercial premises in Kent took place in May 1885. Two shops in Chatham High Street belonging to George Church – the Royal Emporium and Commerce House – were connected by the South of England Telephone Company. As an efficiency test, a person standing several feet from the telephone spoke in a normal tone. This was heard at the other premises, said the *Chatham News*, "and appeared as if the persons speaking were in the receiving instrument." Whispering, whistling and singing were also tried with great success. A bewildered street musician was then called into Commerce House to play *The Last Rose of Summer* on the piccolo. His telephonic audience at the Royal Emporium heard him loudly and clearly. Another milestone was reached the following week, when the home of John Taylor in Paddock Terrace was linked to his outfitter's shop in Chatham High Street. A ticking watch was used to test this line, which worked perfectly.

So far, telephone services had been provided by directly linking one building with another, but in June 1885, the South of England Telephone Company opened an exchange. The *Chatham News* observed that, “the liberal number of wires which the Company is projecting across the house tops shows that they anticipate a considerable extension of their operations.”

Members of the Chatham Board of Health gladly attended a champagne reception at the exchange in Chatham High Street, but the members of the Rochester Corporation invited to the launch declined to participate, claiming they all had to attend a meeting in London. This was not the last time that representatives of the cathedral city exhibited caution towards the new *speaking telephone*.

By 1889, a start had been made to link Chatham with London, but the Rochester District Highways Board refused the South of England Telephone Company permission to install poles within their area. The Company circumvented this obstacle by erecting their poles and wires over private land for the Chatham to Gravesend section. Chatham Board of Health had shown a more positive attitude, giving permission for poles and wires to be put up on the Chatham to Maidstone Road in 1886. The towns had been connected by telephone by March of that year.

The telephone also spread within Gillingham and New Brompton. RJ Passby’s coal merchant’s offices in New Brompton High Street were linked to their wharf at Gillingham in 1886, for example, and the various portions of the Gillingham Cement Works were also connected together. However, for some reason, the use of the new invention expanded there more slowly than in Chatham, and as late as 1896, the South of England Telephone Company was refusing to provide an exchange there until there were more subscribers.

In that year, the GPO took over all trunk lines, and company staff became civil servants. The main post office at Chatham was the local centre for these operations. Customers wishing to make a trunk call could go to the office, which was then in Chatham High Street. (It moved to Railway Street a few years later as more space was needed for the telephonic equipment). The customer told a counter-clerk the number required, paid a fee and then went into a *cabinet* (i.e. booth), where he or she was connected. Calls cost 3d for the first three minutes for places less than 25 miles away. Calling London, Dover etc. cost double. Local calls remained with the South of England Telephone Company until 1912, when the entire system was nationalised under the GPO.

The Medway Towns, with varying degrees of commitment, had adopted *the speaking telephone*, but lagged behind other places. By 1902, when the local authorities of Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham examined (and rejected) the possibility of creating a joint municipal telephone service, there was one line for every 225 people in the Towns. In Guernsey, the figure was 1 to 39, and in Stockholm, then the city with the highest concentration of telephones in the world, there was one line for every eight people.

- Telephone No. 1.
Messrs **WINCH & TRASK**,
Solicitors,
Gibraltar House,
New-road, Chatham.
- Telephone No. 2.
Messrs **NORMAN & STIGANT**,
Solicitors,
22, High-street, Chatham.
- Telephone No. 3.
Mr **T. ROBINSON**,
Accountant and House Agent,
29, High-street, Chatham.
- Telephone No. 4.
Messrs **OWEN J. CARTER & Co.** (Mr H. J. Browne)
Wine and Spirit Merchants,
39, High-street, Chatham.
- Telephone No. 5.
Mr **A. T. RANDALL**,
Auctioneer and House Agent,
20, High-street, Chatham.
- Telephone No. 7.
Messrs **BESSENT & SON**,
Timber and Slate Merchants,
73, High-street, Chatham.
- Telephone No. 10.
Mr **J. TAYLOR**,
Hatter and Outfitter,
16, High-street, Chatham.
- Telephone Nos. 12 & 13.
Mr **W. O. WEBB**,
Coal Merchant,
Chatham Goods and Passenger Stations.
- Telephone No. 15.
Messrs **HAYWARD & SMITH**,
Solicitors,
196, High-street, Rochester.
- Telephone No. 16.
Messrs **E. WINCH & SON**,
Brewers,
High-street, Chatham.
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COUNTY COURT, Rochester.
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164, and 166, High-street, Chatham.
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CORN EXCHANGE, Rochester.
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171, Queen Victoria-street, London.
(Note the new No. 171).

Above: advertisement for telephone equipment, Chatham Observer, 1891.

Left: some telephone numbers available through the Chatham exchange, October 1886.

Illustrations, Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and with thanks to Northcliffe Media.

Magnum Opus

Steve Cross



Steve moved from Yorkshire to Chatham with the Royal Navy in 1977, and has lived there ever since. He was an engineer at BAe. Systems at Rochester Airport Works for 29 years, retiring in December 2008. He is now a volunteer at MALSC also a member of FOMA and the KFHS. He has been researching his own family history since the birth of his son in 1985 and now enjoys helping others research their own families with the aid of Ancestry. He also dabbles in the repair and improvement of digital or scanned photographs.

A Glossary of Past & Present Pubs: Chatham from 1746 – 2000 (N to Z)

by Roy Murrant and Adrian Griffiths.

This is the second of two volumes by Roy Murrant, the first being *A Glossary of Past and Present Pubs: Chatham from 1746-2000 (A to M)*. Our former FOMA Chairman, Roy, gathered the information for this book but unfortunately was not to see the second volume in print before his untimely demise on 27th November 2012. Fortunately Adrian Griffiths agreed to take the information and publish the work, and by agreement with Roy's widow, Audrey, all proceeds from the sales of this second book will go to Cancer Research.

Within the pages of these two volumes Roy has made an entry for every pub within the bounds of Chatham, that he has been able to find a reference for, at any time up to the year 2000. He makes good use of census, licence and victualing records, local directories, and other local history sources. In addition he provides a photograph of as many of the pubs as he could find, either as they were in their heyday or as they stand today, in whatever guise they may now have. There is also a small section at the back of each volume containing photographs of a few of the pub signs.

He attempts to give the location of each pub, along with details of its landlords or landladies over the years it was open. He also states what the pub is used for now, if it is still standing but used for other purposes than as a pub. Lots of interesting local colour is added by means of his own long-standing memories of the various pubs as he remembers them, many from first-hand experience (thanks to his habit of conducting visits), and others from reminiscences told to him by other interested people.

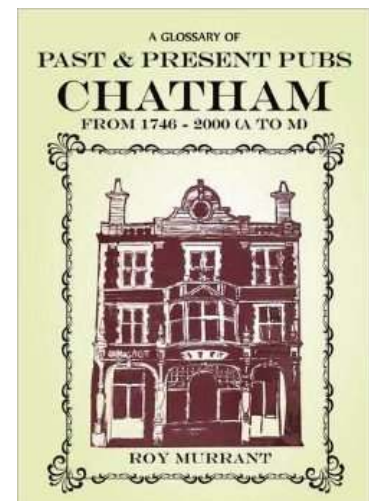
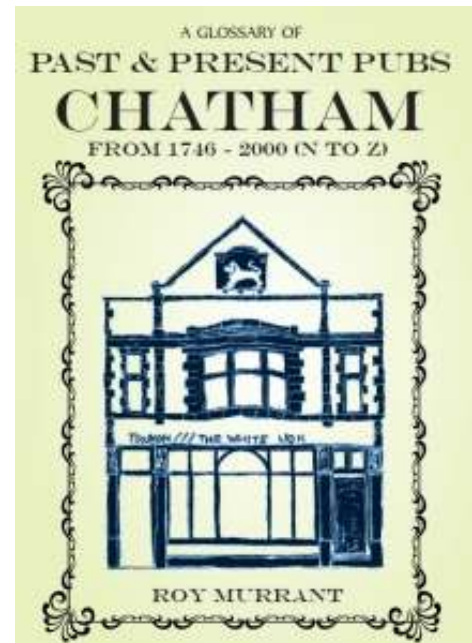
The two volumes are very similar in content, with Volume One covering pubs whose names began with the letters A to M and Volume Two, from L to Z. From the title it would appear that the oldest reference he had managed to find was from 1746, although I am not sure to which pub that refers. Anyone with an interest in Chatham's drinking habits, or just in old pubs in general, will find these two volumes absolutely absorbing, as they contain such a wealth of information impossible to find elsewhere. The books are testament to Roy's single handed and dedicated research, both into old records and the many miles he walked with his own camera.

Whilst putting the second volume together for publication, Adrian Griffiths has tried to update the information and cover any changes observed in recent months. This all adds up to a wonderful pair of reference books which cannot be surpassed.

A Glossary of Past & Present Pubs, CHATHAM, From 1746 – 2000 (N to Z), Roy Murrant and Adrian Griffiths. Bluewasp Media, 2013; ISBN 978-0-9573700-1-2. £7.00, all profits to Cancer Research.

A Glossary of Past & Present Pubs, CHATHAM, From 1746 – 2000 (A to M), Roy Murrant. Bluewasp Media, 2012; ISBN 978-0-9573700-0-5. £7.00.

(Prices from Amazon.co.uk)



Archives Update

Alison Cable, Borough Archivist



The following is the latest news from the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, as reported to the FOMA AGM on 8 April 2014

Archives Services 2013

Partnership working

We have continued to work closely with a wide range of partners, in particular, the Dean and Chapter, helping them with preparation and research relating to their Heritage Lottery Fund project. The project is concerned with updating the Cathedral Library with a view to creating an exhibition space in the crypt. We have also been working with the Old Roffensian Society, the alumni association of King's School, Rochester, and in particular, their Hon. Editor Simon Shreeve, to help facilitate the digitisation of the early school magazines. In addition we have also been spending some considerable time working with the Watts Charity archivist to arrange for material to be withdrawn (and returned) as part of the charity's own in house cataloguing project.

I have made two visits to the Maths School to collect additional material that needed to be added to the existing catalogue. The catalogue has now been brought up to date to include the two new accessions of early trustees records. The new version of the catalogue is available on *CityArk* and as hard copy in the searchroom. I have also attended a number of meetings with colleagues at the Guildhall Museum, Rochester, in order to identify and suggest archival sources for use in the museum's World War One commemorative exhibition.

Outreach

This has been particularly strong in 2013 with school groups, local history groups, talks, events, external talks to groups, in house workshops, and teacher training days. These were all made possible by the efforts of our local studies librarians, Norma Crowe and Irina Fridman. For the first time we ran a palaeography workshop with Dr David Wright who helped attendees learn more about sixteenth and seventeenth century handwriting. Norma Crowe's report, which follows, gives more detail on our outreach activities.

I have been working closely with several of our Medway parish churches, many representatives of which have requested advice about displaying their parish records during anniversary events in 2013. In order to help identify suitable material, I have been working with incumbents and parish officers.

Conservation

I have arranged for further records from St Margaret's parish, Rochester, to be conserved, as they had previously been unavailable to searchers due to their very poor condition. It was felt that these records should be prioritised particularly as they complement the (fairly) recently completed Rochester City Archives, and we have been asked by several researchers when the records relating to Rochester parish poor law could be made accessible. Additional conservation work includes the repair of eighteenth century rental rolls (collection CH2); a full list of repaired documents follows.

Repaired Documents, 2013

St Margaret's parish, Rochester

<i>Parish rates: 1749-1764</i>	<i>P305/4/2</i>
<i>Parish rates: 1843-1847</i>	<i>P305/4/7</i>
<i>Overseers rates: 1814-1819</i>	<i>P305/11/6-7</i>
<i>Poor House inventory: c 1820</i>	<i>P305/18/11</i>
<i>Appointment of master to poor house</i>	<i>P305/18/8</i>
<i>Poor House diary: 1813-1818</i>	<i>P305/12/12</i>

Charity Collections: CH2 St Bartholomew's hospital, Rochester

Rental rolls: 1714-1733 Ch2/1-2 [2 large parchment rolls]

New Archive Catalogues for 2013:

DE51	Sir Ernest Lamb: letters patent		1931
DE510	Survey of lands in North Kent		1532
DE518	Extract re Parliamentary debate on Royal Marines	circa	1822
DE529	Chatham Chest 'smart ticket': Emmanuel Jose		1800
DE530	Letter from J. Goud, London (re. charity donations)		1887
DE572	Bond relating to conveyance at Strood		1771
DE575	Apprenticeship indenture of E. Shillott: shipwright		1799
DE577	Royal Flying Corp notebook (and photo of pilot)		1918
DE579	Apprenticeship papers (J. Buckley) ironmonger		1875
DE581	W. S. Skilton (builder) work log		1938
DE586	Papers of Private C. Blackman of Hoo/ Australian Imperial Force		1916-1918
DE593	'Clandestine' marriage licence		1751
DE594	Report extract re Thames and Medway Canal	circa	1820
DE597	Apprenticeship indenture: Shorts Bros. (E. I. Allen)		1926
DE619	Deeds: Linden House, Rochester		1865-1944
DE622	Artificial collection: includes note re meeting between Sir H. Blackwood and Mayor of London at Sheerness circa 1829		1822-1866
DE624	Artificial collection: letters from Miss E. Glover; Sir J. Henniker Heaton MP; William Herbert		1821-1899
DE625	Various papers: Rochester local history		1819-1901
DE626	Henry Smetham: letters and acquired papers		1762-1936
DE629	Artificial collection: Medway Mariners' Society and notebook of William Spink		1718-1876
DE965	Lewis Bell Darley Gambrill solicitors: various deeds re. Rochester and Hoo. Also papers re. Lt. Col. D. F. Kelaart [naturalist]		1737-1900
DE 1221	Deeds: Chatham, Cliffe, Frindsbury, Rochester		1795-1936
DE 1234	Deeds for Cooling, Frindsbury, Halstow relating to marriage settlement between Stable/Kidd		1575-1888
DE1209/4	Lease: property near the Brook, Chatham		1820
DE1238	Halling & Cuxton Labour Party		1949-2000
DE1239	Rainham Rd. reservoir plan		1907
DE1241	River Medway: misc. notes [Admiralty Office?]		1910
DE1242	Deeds re.: 7 Cheriton Rd., Rainham		1937-1953
DE1243	Hon. Reverend E. V. Bligh: scrapbook		1866-1892
DE1244	Rochester Chatham & District Conciliation Board		1906-1919
DE1245	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners: membership records		1866-1966
DE1246	Chatham & District Trades & Labour Council minutes		1909-1917
HB/Ho	Hoo Highway Board		1869-1895
HRDC	Hoo Rural District Council		1897-1935
N/I/150B	Strood Zoar chapel		1714-1935
<u>P159B</u>	PCC and vestry minutes: Gravesend St. James		1897-1970
C/ES/306/4	Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester, additional (Governors minutes etc.)		1858-1909

Local Studies and Archives report for 2013-14

Norma Crowe, Local Studies Librarian



Promotion of our Centre and our collections is a major part of our remit. We continue to work with schools and local groups, through visits, talks, and the provision of resource material. We acknowledge help from FOMA members, particularly Brian Joyce, with the collation of teaching materials. In addition, Irina Fridman has been working on modules about World War One with Jeremy Clark at the Guildhall Museum.

We have started to produce a series of reminiscence packs for use in care homes in Medway. The packs will contain illustrations likely to jog the memories of the elderly and dementia sufferers. Themes will include shopping, transport, leisure activities, World War Two, childhood, school days, work and local industries, including the Dockyard.

Many Volunteers have helped us throughout the year. We are indebted to members of the Kent Family History Society, including Colin Allen, Hazel Harvey, Jean Skilling, Tessa Towner, Brenda Paternoster, Brenda Burchell, Tony Clarke, and Steve Cross who run our weekly helpdesk on Tuesdays and Thursdays, offering individual guidance to those researching their forbears. We also thank Bob Ratcliffe, Pauline Weeds, Jill Payne, Tessa Towner, Jean Lear, Brian Joyce, Richard Boorman, Elaine Gardner, Roger Smiley and Doris Herlihy for their assistance with a variety of projects including listing, labelling, digitisation, indexing, resource and exhibition preparation.

Our exhibitions and events in the last year have covered many aspects of Medway, in the hopes that those viewing and attending them will want to find out more about the area, and utilise our collections. Subjects covered in our exhibitions included:

- Time and Tides Exhibition: Cliffe, Upnor, Wainscott and High Halstow. Material produced by the Icon Theatre community project.
- Cliffe and the surrounding area. An exhibition coordinated by Janet Keates.
- Images of Gillingham from MALSC Archives. Compiled by Cindy O'Halloran.
- Cobham Hall: beyond the green baize door. Compiled by Irina Fridman and Helen Worthy.
- Chatham Dockyard in the News, 1859–2014, marking the thirtieth anniversary of the closure of the yard.

Exhibitions have also been displayed in libraries including Grain, Hoo and Chatham. Gillingham has just hosted a new exhibition by Jean Lear about the inventor and engineer Louis Brennan.

Talks were given by Cat Clement on Frederic Wheeler: social reformer extraordinaire, a celebration of 350 years of Rochester Quakers; Jeremy Clark on Local Politics, and Simon Barlow on his experiences as a prison and borstal warder, also Jean Lear on Louis Brennan.

To mark National Library Day on 8 February we held a *Find Out More About Strood* event, which was well attended. Strood Library was the venue later that day for a very entertaining talk about the history of Kent's libraries by Christoph Bull.

Our pre-Christmas event was a great success this year. We were pleased to be joined by seven local groups and our sale of surplus stock, both books, maps and illustrations, was very popular. We rounded off the day with *Little Lord Clifton* and *Bowled Over*. Christoph Bull, Jean Lear and Norma Crowe performed two short plays devised by Julie Garton using the Cobham Hall family letters. (See *The Clock Tower*, Issue 33, February 2014).



Left to right: Norma Crowe (Lord Darnley), Christoph Bull (Ivo Bligh) and Jean Lear (Florence Murphy). in Bowled Over by Julie Garton. Picture, Amanda Thomas

A Clock Tower Special Feature

Amateur Dramatics in Medway

Part Two

The Poet Laureate of Strood

Odette Buchanan



Odette is a retired teacher and, of course, FOMA Secretary. She is fascinated by local history and is actively involved in many aspects of this. She is a City of Rochester Society visitors' guide, a steward and guide at Restoration House, she has researched and presented as talks many aspects of local history, especially Broom Hill. Her book, Broomhill – Strood's Hidden Gem was published in 2013 by the City of Rochester Society, (available at: www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/shop/broomhill-stroods-hidden-gem/). She is presently working on the book version of Wartime Memories of Strood. (If you have any please let her have them). Her book, Two Gentlemen of Strood, (short biographies of Henry Smetham and Rev. Caleb Parfekt) is also published by the City of Rochester Society. She has produced sundry interpretation boards around Strood and was involved in the now completed England's Past for Everyone Victoria County History Project.

The following contains extracts from Odette's Two Gentlemen of Strood illustrating how Henry Smetham contributed to Am Dram in Strood.

Readers of *The Clock Tower* will be well aware of Henry Smetham as a local historian. But how many of you knew that in his lifetime he was also known as 'The Poet Laureate of Strood'? Henry was a pawnbroker. When the Strood Working Men's Institute & Club was in Strood High Street it was next door to Smetham & Tutt's Pawnbrokers and Henry was number one member when it was first inaugurated in the 1870s. At that time, the majority of the population lacked much formal education (Henry had left school at 13). Samuel Smiles' book *Self Help* was a major influence and what is now called the Working Men's Club was then called the Working Men's Institute & Club. Its aims were both educational and recreational. Henry was an avid reader and, besides Dickens, he greatly enjoyed Scott's works. He and one of his good friends, Charles Roach Smith, both joined the Institute's Elocution Class. He was number 49 and Charles was number 50. Their motto was a misquote from Tennyson's poem *The Brook*:

"For men may come and men may go
But we will try to go on forever."

The Elocution Class used to meet weekly in the Lecture Hall. The minutes of each meeting list the readings of various members and these public performances would be criticised by the audience (usually between 20 and 30 paying 1/- for a reserved seat or 6d unreserved) and reviewed by the local newspaper. One of the entertainments was given to the inmates of the Strood Union Workhouse "which need hardly be stated here, because all are aware of it, gave them great pleasure." There is no mention in this report of the audience criticising the performances. Henry was a regular performer of poems and prose written by popular writers of the time as well as many compositions of his own. A descendant in Australia has a book of his poems. One piece he wrote was called *Dare Devil Jack*. The programmes list not only recitals of prose and poetry but also singing, piano recitals and play readings (usually written by members). At one performance he sang a song entitled *Bandy Legged Ben*. Sometimes he was Master of Ceremonies and he was usually involved in the organising of the annual picnic. He often received glowing reviews in the newspaper reports: "Mr. Smetham's singing of Tom Bowling secured to him high praise." He appears to have been in great demand and was very popular at all performances; he was known as "the Poet Laureate of Strood."

In an analysis of authors of pieces recited, Henry's compositions totalled 11, only exceeded by Shakespeare with 18. He was Chairman of the weekly *Entertainments* meeting 13 times, while other members only managed three or four. He wrote the lyrics of a song entitled *When on thy brow* with music by Mrs. Henry Bond, the resident pianist.

The 1886 Annual Report of the class mentions an increase in lady reciters and it was noted that the ladies recited better than they read. The President, Henry's friend, Charles Roach Smith, was praised and this was followed by praise for Henry reciting his own pieces: "As has been before stated, the Poet Laureate of the class has given you several fine pieces during the season of his own composition, and your Committee trust that he will continue to do so, for his pieces do him great credit." The Annual Report then states that "Henry Smetham, our Poet Laureate, was prevented from doing his utmost by great misfortune. For, by the will of God, his helpmate was called away to a better land where sorrow is unknown." (Remember, his first wife had died in December, 1885). He was back on the scene by March. Then he was asked to get a carpet for the stage and he requested payment of 4/6 for a gun he had procured for the Class (no mention is made of the use to which it would be put!) By May he is again performing. In that month he inappropriately recited *Christmas Eve in the Workhouse!* Had he practised it for a pre-Christmas performance that he was precluded from doing by his wife's death?

He also managed to attend the Institute meeting on 22 March when it was resolved to draw up a circular to be sent round to every member of the Institute, stating what was really intended to be done as regards turning the Lecture Hall into a Billiard Room. This caused great consternation from the Elocution Class and on 17 April the newspaper reported, "A very noisy meeting of the Strood Working Men's Institute ... to consider the proposal to turn the lecture hall of the Institute into a more profitable account;" in other words a billiard room. There were long, noisy exchanges on the state of the accounts, future prospects and the impending competition from a new Liberal Club shortly to be opened.

Opinion for the status quo was that billiards only led young men to become gamblers; "even if the elocution class only turned out six elocutionists a year, it was preferable to an hundred billiard players." "Mr. Smetham spoke strongly in favour of the elocution class and said no Institute could exist which merely provided amusement and no study for the mind. Who made the world what it was? The thinkers and workers; not those who idled their time away playing billiards." (Again, notice the prevailing *self help* and improvement philosophy of the age.) The noisy questioning over the veracity of the accounts could not be resolved so it was decided to form a subcommittee of seven members to inspect the books and report back to the Committee on the second Wednesday in May. Henry was one of the seven chosen. Self-improvement and elocution won the day, despite its not being as profitable as billiards would have been. At the subsequent meeting the vote was in favour of the status quo.

His membership of the Elocution Class was one of the four main interests that occupied most of his non-working time. Another was his obsession with Dickens. When the Elocution Class finally finished, he and Edwin Harris started the Rochester Dickens Fellowship. In 1932, ever the performer, he read his paper *Dickens, the Man, Novelist and Neighbour* at the first meeting and *A Possible Solution to the Mystery of Edwin Drood* at the second meeting.

His possible solution to the Mystery of Edwin Drood proved contentious. It was circulated among other Dickens Societies around the country and culminated in the London Society calling for a debate between his idea and those of Mr. J. Cummings Walters and G. K. Chesterton. "This took place before a large audience in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Road, London, with Sir Luke Fildes, who illustrated Dickens' work, in the chair." It was an interesting discussion apparently but of course, no one was swayed from their own idea. He continued to write many articles and lecture on Dickens. Also, he and Edwin Harris gave invaluable help to Messrs. Hughes and Kitton when they were compiling their *Week's tramps in Dickens' Land* articles. Later in the 1930s he became President of the Society with Mrs. Amy Cobham Prall after the death of her husband, Evans Prall.

Sources

Two Gentlemen of Strood, Odette Buchanan.
Strood Working Men's Institute and Club records.
Chatham, Rochester & Gillingham News.
Chatham, Rochester & Strood Observer.

The Good Companions Club, Rochester

Bettine Walters



Bettine Walters (née Stratton) was born in the Medway Towns and spent the early part of her life there. Though she followed many different occupations, including acting on the professional stage, she had always wanted to be a writer and when living in Thanet began to write plays for amateurs, many of which have since been published. The name under which she writes is Bettine Manktelow. She has also written two novels, No Time for Tears and The Gossamer Thread (see page 14) both of which are set in the Medway Towns. She has two sons, three grandsons and six step-grandchildren.

Readers will recall that in Part One of this special feature, Cindy O'Halloran wrote about Rochester's Good Companions Club. It was this feature which prompted Bettine to write her memories, as she was a member of the club at the same time as Dulcie Jones, who ran the drama group there in the early 1960s; Dulcie was also the mother of Editor, Amanda Thomas, and a staunch supporter of FOMA.

My first recollection of the club house which later became The Good Companions was when it was a youth club called The Gay Venturers. Dulcie introduced me to it and we went a few times where we made some puppets with papier maché. One night when we were there later than usual we thought we heard footsteps and a door slamming when we were quite sure we were alone. After that of course we were convinced it was haunted. I don't know what happened in the interim but the next time I set foot in the building it had become The Good Companions. This must have been about a year later when I was fourteen, 1946. By then I had decided I wanted to be an actress and I was advised by a friend of my mother's to join a local drama group. In fact I should have spent my evenings on homework but that did not take priority over my burning desire to act. The group I joined was in fact the nucleus of The Good Companions and was composed of men back from the war who wanted to start a club in the Medway Towns. At that time the club hadn't a club house and met in one another's houses in Chatham and Rochester to have play readings. There was a group of founder members, but I can't remember all their names, though Kay and Frank Taylor, and Duncan Rand stand out in my memory. The group put up their own money to get the club going and I believe they had to raise a mortgage or a loan to do so. Duncan ran the drama group but as the club progressed it had many other *sections*, sport and so on. I was only ever interested in the drama group.

When the group took over the clubhouse we were in rehearsal for an entry into the one-act drama festival and I was playing a mad girl. I was too young to be a regular member but they made an exception and allowed me to be an associate member. I loved every minute of rehearsing with Duncan. He was a very good producer but always kind, unlike the ones I met in the professional theatre who delighted in humiliating their cast. We put the play on in the Globe Theatre which was in the barracks in Gillingham, I believe.* I remember that the adjudicator said I gave a strong and powerful performance. I threw myself into it and managed to make myself cry in the actual production. I don't think I ever had occasion to do that again on the stage!

After my theatrical debut my recollections of the club fade away as a year later I went on the professional stage in The Theatre Royal at Chatham and it wasn't until I came back again about two years later on a *resting* period from the stage that I met Dulcie again and struck up our old friendship, but we didn't really get together in the drama group until we were both about 20 and for one reason or another not working in the professional theatre but filling in our time with the amateurs.

I took part in a festival production called *Night* produced by Ruth Winter which was so good it went as far as the Scala Theatre in London and won the prize for best production in England. I can't take any credit for it. I was only in the crowd because there was a rule about professionals not being allowed to act in an amateur festival, and by this time I was a member of Equity. Ruth was a very good producer and as I remember Duncan acted in it. The lighting was particularly clever. I met Dulcie again when she was doing the make-up for *Twelfth Night* in Gillingham Park put on by the Theatre Guild (a conglomeration of Medway drama groups) and I was a lady in waiting, a non-speaking part. Ron Winter, Ruth's husband, directed it. He was a very amiable person. I took part in *The Man Who Came to Dinner* with the Good Companions at about that time, playing a glamorous film star (I was much too young for the part and I don't think I was very good), Luther Gorf, whom Lew, Dulcie's husband, remembers was the lead and the last time I heard was still alive in his nineties. Bill Wheeler, another popular member of the Good Companions, was recruited in his first part and he proved to be an excellent actor. Duncan was very good at recruiting non-actors and inspiring them to act. That was something that ceased when the drama group metamorphosed into the Medway Little Theatre. The other people I remember being in that production were Joan and Frank Dunkley and Barbara Brigden (see the photograph, reproduced here again).

Though the split in the drama group occurred when I was away I could see what led up to it, even as early as 1952. The rules in the club were that members had to join the club first and then pay another membership fee to join their *section*. When Ruth Winter came along with a few teachers whom I believed lodged with her at that time – they all lived on a barge on the river – they objected to paying the club fee because they were only interested in the drama group. That was the beginning of the discontent. Then I think they felt that obviously having their own theatre was more convenient all round and they could do as many plays as they wanted and sink all their resources into it instead of sharing them with the parent club. It took a long time before it developed, however, and when they bought the old warehouse or whatever it was it was nothing but a shell and they worked hard. They were led and inspired by Duncan to renovate and recreate it as a theatre – digging into the earth to make a sloping auditorium amongst other things. I thought they did very well but it was a shame when I went back after a few years to find the membership of The Medway Little Theatre at that time had none of the jolly spirit there had been in the Good Companions. At that time Dulcie was running the drama group at the GCs and I remember her putting on a pantomime.** It was about 1962 or 1963.

The GCs was known to be a matrimonial agency and indeed this was so in many cases including ours. Lew and Dulcie met there. I met a young man in about 1951 to whom I became engaged but didn't marry and I also met my second husband, Bob Manktelow there at a later date.

I always wanted to be a writer but hadn't thought about writing plays, I wanted to write The Great British Novel (still waiting) although I wrote a one-act when I was in Singapore which was put on by the Stage Club in about 1959. It was a kitchen-sink drama, influenced by the new wave of John Osborne and co., but it didn't go down very well with the sophisticated ex-pats of Singapore. I thought I had written a drama but they thought it was a comedy! Ah well! I didn't actually start writing seriously until Bob and I were living in Thanet when I wrote my first full-length play *They Call it Murder* in about 1975 which was presented in The Granville Theatre, Ramsgate and subsequently published by Samuel French.

The last time I met Duncan Rand was at the end of the seventies when a play of mine called *Couples* was put on by the Oasthouse in Rainham (see page 28), having won a prize at a South-East arts play-writing competition, and Duncan came to review it. He didn't say much about it but admired the acting so I don't think he cared for the play. Anyway, he was just the same as ever, suave and good humoured.

The Good Companions Club was a great asset to the Medway Towns and I am sure all the old members who are still alive and *able to remember it* will have fond memories!



The Good Companions Club drama group circa 1959/50, reproduced again in this edition in order to identify the people mentioned in Bettine Walter's article.

Back row from left to right, Stan Rand, Mary Matthews, Harold Scammell (or Scamrell), Esme Coole, Frederick Bassett, Joan Walter, Arthur Edwards, Joy Hayden; middle row, Jimmy Walker, Doreen Clark, Peter Hudson, Duncan Rand, Lorna Crine, Norman Angell, Barbara Brigden; front, Lilian Drayson and Ted Hansted. The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Editor's Note

*Our thanks to Brian Joyce for pointing out that the Globe Theatre was in Royal Marine Barracks, Dock Road, Chatham.

**The pantomime mentioned by Bettine was probably *Cinderella*. The panto was a huge success that year and to commemorate this, Dulcie Jones was presented with a large pewter tankard engraved with the words, 'To Dulcie, Cinderella, 1962.' The tankard was intended for personal use and for that reason was hung in pride of place above the club bar for very many years.

The Rainham Theatrical Society

Amanda Thomas



The Rainham Theatrical Society, or RaTS, was founded in 1948 but began performing at the Oasthouse Theatre in Rainham in November 1963. A band of amateur actors had restored the derelict oasthouse which was situated close to Rainham High Street, and over fifty years later, the group is still going strong: their latest production, Sam Fish's *The Wilde in Wild West*, can be seen from 15 to 24 May 2014 (see www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk).

RaTS were originally called The Toc-H Players, and founded by members of the association of the same name which had been set up in 1922 to support those affected at Ypres in World War One. By 1948, the society had changed its name to the Rainham Amateur Dramatic Society and performed at Rainham's Co-operative Hall and also at St Margaret's Hall in Orchard Street.

The exciting project to build their own theatre began in 1961 when part of the old oasthouse in Stratford Lane became available and the owner, local farmer, Jack Clark, allowed the group to rent the building at no cost, though later a weekly rental of £5 was established. The project was led by RaTS members Norman Booth, May Hopkins, Fred and Zena Haddell, Brenda Pearson, Betty Butcher and Brian Philpott. Fundraising for the renovations began in earnest, made easier by the recycling of lighting, heating, carpets - and even the proscenium arch - from Chatham's Globe theatre, and seats from the canteen of the local naval barracks. With the help of Gillingham Borough Council, regular jumble sales, and not to mention months of hard work, the theatre was soon ready. The inaugural performance on 8 November 1963 of Waterhouse and Hall's *Billy Liar*, was attended by local VIPs and the opening ceremony was performed by Medway's well known am dram celebrity, Irene Weller. In that first season, tickets cost 3/- 9d and programmes were an additional 6d.

However, as with most new ventures, those early years were not all plain sailing. In February 1964, following the successful run of the pantomime, *Little Red Riding Hood*, planning issues began to cause concern. A dispute over ownership of the land surrounding the theatre threatened to close it down before RaTS had even celebrated its first anniversary. Thankfully, the group was able to carry on performing, but negotiations over ownership of the building continued for some time, and it was only in 1966 that an agreement was finally reached with Jack Clark to pay £4,800 for the building (funded by a 16 year mortgage), securing the future of the group and its permanent home.

Over the years, RaTS has taken part in diverse drama festivals and has won many awards. Their patron since 1986 has been Roy Hudd OBE, who has become a staunch supporter and regular visitor to the theatre. The group has also diversified, with the founding of the Youth Group in 1995 and the Concert Party in 1977. The latter was originally called The RoAsTerS, incorporating the words RaTS and Oast, but disbanded after a few years. It was resurrected as the Concert Party in 1998 and still performs all over the Medway Towns and beyond - its members are fondly known as The Revellers. Today RaTS has expanded somewhat since its early days. Not only does it have a ten strong Executive Committee but it also has a Programme Sub-Committee and many additional managers overseeing its bars, wardrobe, membership, properties and fundraising; the group also organises various social events, including trips to West End theatres. Here, no doubt, careful notes are taken to ensure the continued success of the Rainham Theatrical Society!

More information on The Rainham Theatrical Society can be found at www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk. Historical information is from The First Oasthouse Theatre in the World. The History of The Rainham Theatrical Society, 2003, ISBN 0948193891, £3.00, available from the Kent Family History Society Bookshop, at www.kfhs.org.uk. Thanks to FOMA's Jean Skilling for her invaluable help with this article.

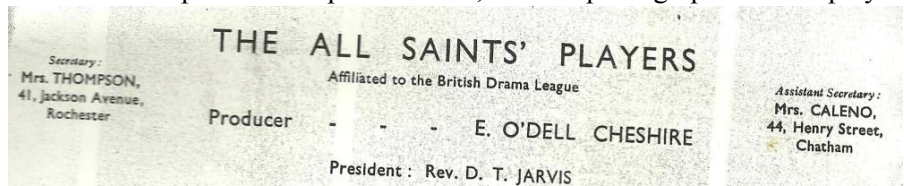
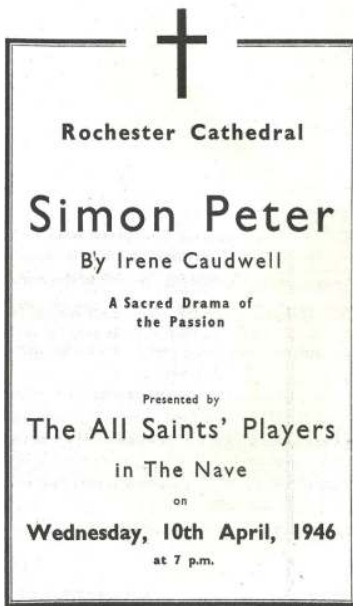
The All Saints' Players, Chatham

Betty Cole



Betty Cole is FOMA's membership Secretary. She is interested particularly in local and family history and holds a Certificate in Theory and Practice of Local History with the University of Kent at Canterbury. Betty is a volunteer transcriber and checker for free-to-access internet sites for the researching of census and parish records.

Ivy Wellard's, Betty's mother's, greatest passion was the local Amateur Dramatic Society, The All Saints' Players, which met in the church hall of All Saints' Church in Magpie Hall Road, Chatham. In 1946, the Players performed the Passion Play, *Simon Peter*, by Irene Caudwell, in Rochester Cathedral. To follow are some images of the programme which accompanied the performance, and a photograph of the players themselves.



CHARACTERS

Perpetua, Peter's Wife	<i>Grace B. Heasterby</i>
Andrew, Peter's Brother	<i>Walter Newman</i>
John	<i>Harold W. Good</i>
Simon Peter	<i>P. Kaybowen</i>
Miriam, Peter's Wife's Mother	<i>J. E. Caleno</i>
Judas Iscariot	<i>Douglas E. T. Graham</i>
Judith, a Serving Maid	<i>Arthur L. Kingford</i>
Mary Magdalene	<i>Joan M. Guekay</i>
Claudia Procla, Wife of Pontius Pilate	<i>Ada M. Thompson</i>
Marcia	<i>R. M. Carruthers</i>
Julia	<i>I. Wellard</i>
Pontius Pilate	<i>G. J. J. iblin</i>
Mamillius Attendant	<i>J. J. Savage</i>
Joseph of Arimathea	<i>D. E. Jarrett</i>
Salome	<i>Violet M. Purvis</i>
Our Lady	<i>Audrey B. Stephens</i>
The Spirit of Isaiah	<i>Jane Brian Goodchild</i>
Servants—Slaves—Soldiers	<i>B. L. Heath</i>
	<i>James W. B. Daniels</i> <i>27 Brunett</i>

NOTE

The players appreciate the privilege of being allowed to present in the Cathedral this drama of the Sacred Passion. The Church, throughout the ages, has always been allied with the Arts in using them as a means of teaching and worship to the greater glory of God; and it is with this in mind that we offer this play in all humility, as an act of worship to Christ, the King of Kings. It is our sincere hope that the Congregation will regard it as such. If this Passion Play has helped in any way to reproduce the beauty of the Gospel Story and the Passion and Glory of Easter, then our efforts are more than repaid.

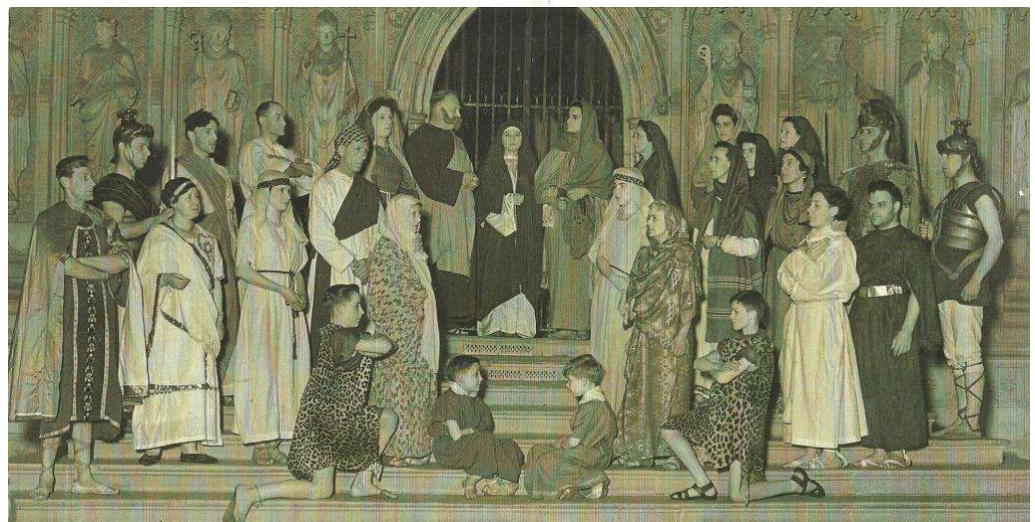
E.O.C.

O Worship the King in beauty of holiness,
Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim;
With gold of obedience and incense of holiness,
Kneel and adore Him, the Lord is His name.

J. S. B. HOUNSELL

Above and right: images from the programme of Simon Peter.

Right: the All Saint's Players perform Simon Peter in front of the choir screen in Rochester Cathedral on 10 April 1946.



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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.

This year, Who Do You Think You Are? Live (WDYTYA? Live) was held at London's Olympia from 20 to 22 February. I was there for the three days with Tessa Towner helping to man the Kent Family History Society stand. Other FOMA members were on hand to fly the flag for MALSC, including Ian Smith (pictured with Tessa and me) and my son, Alex Thomas; we were also delighted that many other FOMA members visited the stand to say hello.

One of the best parts of working at WDYTYA? Live is solving family history mysteries. I was intrigued to hear the story of three girls who were descended from the Stone family of Maidstone. They had a photograph of one of their ancestors, a chair maker, working in the family business which had operated in Kent, and later in Newcastle, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. They could not identify the gentleman: was he their great grandfather or great great grandfather? He was photographed in a large workshop, an apron round his middle, a flat cap on his head, surrounded by exquisite dining room chairs. Alex suggested they visit antiques expert Eric Knowles who had a stand tucked away in the corner of the main hall. Eric identified the chairs as circa 1910, and so the photograph had to be of the great grandfather in the workshop in Newcastle. Such was the importance of this discovery, Eric took a copy of the image for his personal archive.

Another query concerned the deaths of family members in the hop fields near Aylesford in the early 1860s. This seasonal work was popular, but the conditions such workers lived in were not always ideal, and the family in question had lodged on the first floor of a draughty barn, above the animals, their water sourced from a nearby stream, and no toilet facilities. As I know something about this subject, it was clear to me that the family had died of cholera, and the family had documentary evidence that this was the case for one of their ancestors. It also transpired that, following the cholera outbreak, the hop farm owners had engaged in some sort of cover up in order to guarantee a continuous supply of seasonal workers.

Solving such mysteries is immensely satisfying - roll on Who Do You Think You Are? Live 2015!



FOMA hard at work at Who Do You Think You Are? Live at London's Olympia. From left to right, Amanda Thomas, Tessa Towner and Ian Smith.

When East Met West Again!

Right: Tessa Towner and a model of the San Buena Ventura, one of Japan's first sailing ships built in the European style by Will Adams.



Tessa by the plaque marking the site of the building of the very first ship built in the European, or Western, style.

See page 12 for Sue Haydock's full report.





Sue Haydock and Tessa Towner (pictured) were fortunate to be in Japan while the famous cherry trees were in blossom.

Left: Sue Haydock and Tessa Towner at the Ito villa of Admiral Togo Heihachiro (1848-1934). Togo Heihachiro (depicted in the portrait) lived and studied in Britain and had a close relationship with the Royal Navy. In 1905 he was made a Member of the British Order of Merit by King Edward VII.

For the full story, see page 12.