

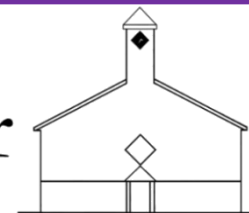
British Empire Medal Awarded to FOMA Honorary Life Member, Henk van der Linden



On Friday 17 March 2017 in The Hague, our friend and FOMA Honorary Life Member, Henk van der Linden was awarded the British Empire Medal by Sir Geoffrey Adams, British Ambassador to the Netherlands. The Medal was awarded 'for meritorious civil or military service worthy of recognition by the Crown.' See page 8; photograph by Amanda Thomas.

***If undelivered, please return to:
Medway Archives Office, c/o Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road,
Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR.***

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 46: May 2017
£2.00; free to members

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

Ten Years Supporting the Medway Archives



FOMA marked our tenth anniversary on Saturday 25 March 2017 with a celebration at the Copper Rivet Distillery, Chatham Dockside. The highlight of the event was a presentation by the City of Rochester Society of a cheque for £2,600, a grant to FOMA to purchase a new Uscan fiche/film reader for the Archives to use in their new facility in Bryant Road, Strood. Pictured: Tessa Towner, FOMA Chairman, Bob Ratcliffe, President of the City of Rochester Society, Russell Race, FOMA President. Photograph by David Thomas.

**ALSO INSIDE – FOMA HONORARY LIFE MEMBER HENK VAN DER LINDEN
RECEIVES THE BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL!**

The FOMA Celebration



One of the highlights of the FOMA Celebration was the Grand Raffle. This was won by FOMA member, and City of Rochester Chairman, Alan Moss. Alan is pictured here holding his prize, a woodcut print by Medway artist Billy Childish, estimated to be worth over £500.

Former Medway Borough Archivist and now Essex County Archivist, Stephen Dixon addresses guests. Stephen founded FOMA just over ten years ago.

See page 5 for more details.



Photographs by David Thomas.

Henk van der Linden receives the British Empire Medal



BEM recipients, front row left to right: and Jeanne Melchers, Henk van der Linden, Toos van der Linden (Henk's wife), Hiltje van Eck.



The British Empire medals were presented in red boxes. Henk allowed FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner to pin his medal on!

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Chairman's Letter

Tessa Towner



So much has happened since I wrote my last Chairman's Letter. Unfortunately, I must start with some sad news. Having served FOMA as Chairman for about seven years I now think it's time to stand down and let somebody else take over. At the AGM on 11 April a new committee will be elected and by the time you read this, a new Chairman will have been elected at the next committee meeting .

On to more uplifting matters. In March Amanda Thomas and I travelled to Holland on the Eurostar to see Henk van der Linden receive his British Empire Medal from the British Ambassador. You can read all about the ceremony on page 5. We were absolutely thrilled to have been invited and the day proved to be a wonderful opportunity to meet up with old friends from the 2014 Live Bait Squadron commemorations.

On Saturday 25 March we held the FOMA Celebration at the Copper Rivet Distillery, Chatham Dockside. Over 50 people attended and we were entertained by the wonderful 'Tongue in Cheek' - Derek Moore and Norman Brooks, recommended to us by Cindy O'Halloran. They sang sea shanties and folk songs and at the end of the Celebration we had a sing-along! The buffet was supplied by members of the committee, and we are indebted to Elaine Gardner, Amanda Thomas and Betty Cole for the amount of time they spent baking and cooking. At the Celebration I introduced our President Russell Race to say a few words and then Stephen Dixon, our former Archivist at MALSC, also spoke. Stephen had made a special journey from Essex to be with us. Following the speeches we were presented by the City of Rochester Society with a cheque for £2,600, a grant to FOMA to purchase a new Uscan fiche/film reader for the Archives. Odette Buchanan set the wheels in motion for this some time ago.

Those that attended the Celebration were also given a tour of the distillery but one of the main highlights was undoubtedly the raffle. Betty Cole – with a bit of help from Irina Fridman - did a fantastic job acquiring our star raffle prize, a woodcut print by Medway artist Billy Childish. We were delighted when Alan Moss won it!

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members John and Carmelita Elliott, and Val Barrand.

Secretary's Report

Odette Buchanan



Phew – what a manic time this last quarter has been! To quote Peter Sellars: ‘so much to do, so little time.’ The FOMA tenth anniversary celebration, the Annual General Meeting, plus all the usual admin. Emails were pinging round the committee, filling up in boxes with copies of copies of answers to questions that questioned the previous answer. Occasionally someone would be left off the loop with a question but would receive several copies of the answer. So another round of emails started, a bit like musical chairs or that dance the Paul Jones. (Who was Paul Jones and why did he have a dance named after him?) And then, in the midst of the ever faster-spinning mayhem, Tessa Towner and Amanda Thomas cleared off to Holland for the presentation of the British Empire Medal to our Dutch friend Henk van der Linden (see page 8). On their return things shifted up a gear! With just a week to go to the Celebration - had we sold enough tickets, was there going to be enough food – and where were the annual reports for the AGM?

But there was no time to rest on our laurels. Rob Flood suddenly realised he had a work commitment on the day he was to give his talk, ‘A Rat’s Tale’ but more frenetic emails sorted the problem out and Jeremy Clarke saved the day by agreeing to give his talk on the history of the Guildhall (see page 13). Rob then decided to turn his talk into a walk on Saturday June 10 (see page 37) - after all, where better to appreciate the information than by being at the actual spot Rob would be talking about? All that’s now needed is a nice fine day.

Of course everything turned out fine in the end because as always the committee worked together and pulled out the stops. On Saturday 25 March we all had a jolly good time at the Copper Rivet Gin Distillery, even those who didn’t like gin, (see page 5) and Elaine’s cakes at the AGM were to die for. As always Jeremy’s talk was excellent and you can read my review on page 13.

At the FOMA Celebration we were especially pleased to welcome Vice President Russell Race who accepted the presentation cheque from City of Rochester Society’s President, Robert Ratcliffe. This, you will remember, is for FOMA to purchase a special digital reader for MALSC’s new centre in Strood. We were also pleased to extend a warm welcome to other members of the City of Rochester Society, especially Chairman Alan Moss and Vice Chairman Pam Gibbon. It was a shame our President, Sir Robert Worcester could not attend (due to a previous

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.

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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 website www.medway.gov.uk/malsc or by writing to Medway Archives Office, c/o Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR. 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, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent. Telephone: 01634 892976; email: betty-cole@outlook.com

12 May, AGM and Quiz Night;
9 June, Members' Evening, including screening of *The North Kent Marshes* DVD.

New members and visitors are always welcome; annual membership £20, visitors £3 per meeting. For further information, please visit the website www.grlhs.org; contact Val Barrand on 07947 583327 or email lupusrufus@sky.com



Blue Town Heritage Centre, The Criterion Music Hall and Cinema

www.thecriterionbluetown.co.uk/#!criterion-music-hall/cb3i

The present Heritage Centre and café are on the site of two earlier establishments. Originally the New Inn in 1868, the site became The Royal Oxford Music Hall. The following year the building, situated a few doors down from the court house, became The Criterion public house, which included to the rear a music hall called The Palace of Varieties. This offered "rational amusement for all classes" including, in April 1876, a one armed juggler! In 1879 the earlier building was replaced with a brick built one. The Heritage Centre is packed with items, memorabilia and artefacts, including an upstairs area dedicated to HMS *Victory*.

Open Tuesdays to Saturdays 10am - 3pm and for events. Entrance £2.00 and includes entrance to the Aviation annexe at Eastchurch. Entrance is free to Friends. To become a Friend costs just £5.00 a year, for this you receive information before it goes onto the website and invites to special Friends-only events, plus a regular newsletter.

Today the main space at the centre is occupied by the Criterion Music Hall, one of just a few remaining authentic Music Hall buildings, lovingly restored by Jenny and Ian Hurkett and their unbeatable team of volunteers. The Criterion stages professional Victorian style music hall shows (three seasons a year), cinema every Friday and theatre and live music shows; it is also available for private hire. Booking on 01795 662981 or by visiting the website: <http://www.thecriterionbluetown.co.uk/#!criterion-music-hall/cb3i>



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

Information from Paul Tritton, Hon. Press Officer, KAS; paul.tritton@btinternet.com

engagement) but fortunately he was able to attend the AGM where he gave us a short but interesting talk about his world-wide tour during which he reminded other countries of the birth of democracy in England - the oldest democracy in the world.

But don't take a breath yet! At the AGM Tessa Towner announced she would be resigning as Chairman! I ask you! What had we done to upset her? Nothing apparently, she just thought it was time for someone else to have a turn. Sighs of relief all round and the prospect at the next FOMA Committee meeting of having something extra-interesting to discuss and vote on. Tessa has performed her duties diligently over the years and all those who attended the AGM gave her a hearty round of applause when she was presented with a bouquet.

As we stagger off into the summer I am hoping for a bit of a sit down. Hang on! There's something else to look forward to – the grand opening of MALSC at their splendid new premises in Bryant Road, Strood. Do check the MALSC and FOMA Facebook pages (www.facebook.com/medwayarchives/ and www.facebook.com/fomalsc) for further information and the FOMA website (<http://foma-lsc.org/>)

The FOMA Celebration

Amanda Thomas



The FOMA Celebration marked ten years of supporting the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and took place on Saturday 25 March 2017 at the Copper Rivet Distillery, Chatham Dockside. We were delighted so many members were able to attend.

Entertainment was provided by 'Tongue in Cheek', Derek Moore and Norman Brooks who signalled the start of the celebration at 2pm with a fantastic selection of folk songs and sea shanties. Many of you will have recognised Derek as he used to work at the Medway Archives some years ago, and we are very grateful to Cindy O'Halloran for recommending we contact Derek. Whilst the music played, a slide show of photographs from past issues of *The Clock Tower* was shown and later in the day this was replaced by a selection of old Pathé news reel films, kindly supplied by FOMA Committee member, Rob Flood.

The Copper River Distillery was a splendid setting and members were given guided tours and samples of Dockyard gin and vodka to try. Special cocktails and full size bottles were also available and proved to be popular purchases! This all

also helped to wash down the buffet which had been prepared by FOMA's Elaine Gardner, Betty Cole and me, with a little help from Marks and Spencer.

We were very fortunate to have been given some wonderful raffle prizes, including a signed woodcut print from Medway artist, Billy Childish. FOMA Membership Secretary Betty Cole had contacted Billy and she was overwhelmed when he and the L-13 Light Industrial Workshop agreed to donate the work which had an estimated value of over £530. We were also thrilled when FOMA member and City of Rochester Society Chairman Alan Moss discovered he had bought the winning ticket!

The highlight of the afternoon – apart from the raffle – was a special presentation by The City of Rochester Society of a cheque for £2,600. Engineered by FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan, the money is a grant to FOMA to purchase a new Usan fiche/film reader for the Archives to use in their new facility in Bryant Road, Strood. The presentation followed speeches by FOMA President; Russell Race, former Medway Borough Archivist Stephen Dixon, and FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner.

We were delighted that Russell Race was able to attend and that Stephen, who is now Essex County Archivist, had travelled such a long way to attend our special celebration. It was Stephen who had first thought of starting a Friends group and in his speech he commented on how over the years the Friends has grown and remained committed to its original cause, going from strength to strength.

The one person who was unable to attend, because of a family wedding, was FOMA Honorary Life Member, our friend Henk van der Linden. The FOMA Committee had worked with Henk many times over the past few years raising the profile of his work on the Live Bait Squadron and those who perished in WWI. Only the week before Tessa Towner and I had travelled to The Hague to see Henk presented with the British Empire Medal, in recognition of the tremendous work he has done (see page 8). However, Henk was with us in spirit and sent the following message:

“Dear Tessa and Amanda
Dear FOMA-members,

From The Netherlands I wish you all a marvellous 10-Year Celebration,
Saturday 25 March.

I wish I could attend. I am very honoured to be your Life Long Member, and was really emotionally moved meeting Tessa and Amanda again at the British Embassy, last 17 March. On occasion of my BEM.

I cannot be with you, because of the wedding of my daughter next week, and her departure with husband and son to Mauritius a few weeks later. I know this is a shame, but I cannot help it.

The Bridge Study Centre:

Bridging has been an essential part of warfare for thousands of years. In this gallery the full history of military bridging is explored. Hands on activities from our Sapper Workshop and dressing up are also available for kids.

Parking:

The main Museum car park is closed until 27 May. There is limited parking available at the King Charles Hotel car park (included a disabled parking bay) which is opposite the temporary Museum entrance. Please note a pass will be needed and should be collected from staff in the Bridge Study Centre and displayed in your vehicle. An overflow carpark is sign-posted and is a 5 minute walk from the temporary Museum.

Library:

Access to the Library is closed until June, to allow the Curators time to get the Museum back in shape. Please contact us in June for more information.

Annual Ticket Holders:

Visitor with an Annual Ticket should contact the Museum on 01634 822839 for information on extending its validity.

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.

SEE THE WEBSITE FOR FURTHER DETAILS: <http://www.re-museum.co.uk/>

The Rochester Bridge Trust

Further information from <http://www.rbt.org.uk/>

The Bridge Wardens' lectures are held in the medieval Bridge Chapel, 5 Esplanade, Rochester ME1 1QE, unless otherwise indicated. Refreshments available from 6.30 p.m. Lectures begin promptly at 7.00 p.m. Tickets are free but places are limited so MUST be booked in advance from Sue Reilly by email to sue@maxim-pr.co.uk or by telephone on 01892 513033.

ICE Kent & East Sussex Historical Engineering Group (KESHEG) lectures are held at various venues around Kent and East Sussex. To register for information about events, please email kesheg@gmail.com

Brompton History Research Group

www.bromptonhistory.org.uk/

Brompton village is a complex civilian area in the heart of a military world. To the south and east lie the Chatham Lines, a series of fortifications built to defend the Chatham Dockyard. To the west lies the Dockyard itself and to the north Brompton Barracks, home of the Royal Engineers.

For more information email bromptonhistoryresearchgroup@gmail.com

Gillingham and Rainham Local History Society

The Society meets on the second Friday of each month from September to June at Byron Road School, Gillingham, ME7 5XX (car parking at the rear, accessed from Milton Road) on the second Friday of each month (September to July) 7.00pm with meeting starting at 7.15 pm.

Sorry - dogs not allowed in the library. Contact: 01634 333720.

Task Days

First Sunday of September, October, November, December. Meet at King Arthur's Drive Car Park 11.00 am. Bring your own tools or tools provided. Two hours of free, healthy fun!

For further details see park notice boards, www.friendsofbrommhill.org.uk, find us on Facebook or contact David Park, Secretary on 01634 718972, email: davidpark1999@yahoo.co.uk website www.friendsofbroomhill.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.

8 June, *Department Stores of the Medway Towns*, a talk by Jean Lear.

13 July, *Public Houses of Chatham*, a talk by Len Feist

14 September, *Young Nelson*, a talk by Brian Davis.

12 October, *Union and Workhouse Records*, a talk by Deborah Collins.

9 November, *A Schoolgirls' War*, a talk by Mary Smith.

14 December, Society Christmas evening.

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

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive

Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME4 4UG
www.re-museum.co.uk for more details

THE MUSEUM WILL BE RE-OPENING ON 27 MAY 2017!



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

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

FOMA and me, Tessa, Amanda and me, we are good friends. I met Tessa for the first time at Chatham after she reacted upon my appeal in Medway Messenger. I was looking for descendants of the men of the Live Bait Squadron. This must have been 2011 or so. Since FOMA did a marvellous job on behalf of the families of all these men. The Live Bait Squadron Society owes FOMA a lot. We together succeeded in a great one and only remembrance Service at the Dockyard and in Holland too, 22 and 24 September 2014.

FOMA, thank you, and keep up the good work. Within my possibilities I will always be available to assist. And certainly will be present at a future meeting.

My kindest regards,

Henk van der Linden"



'Tongue in Cheek', Derek Moore (right) and Norman Brooks entertain us; photograph, David Thomas.

Many members drifted away once the buffet had been eaten and the distillery tours had come to an end. However, a hardy core remained to join in with Tongue in Cheek's fantastic sing-along - a happy ending to a very happy day.

Henk van der Linden Receives the British Empire Medal

Amanda Thomas



On Thursday 16 March 2017 Tessa Towner and I set off from London's St Pancras International railway station for The Hague. We were going to attend a special ceremony at the British Embassy to honour the work of our friend and FOMA Honorary Life Member, Henk van der Linden who had been awarded the British Empire Medal by Her Majesty The Queen. The Medal is awarded 'for meritorious civil or military service worthy of recognition by the Crown.'¹

Several months ago, Henk received the following letter from Colonel James I. R. Phillips, the British Defence Attaché for The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg:

'Dear Mr van der Linden,

I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to inform you in strict confidence that he proposes to submit your name to HM The Queen to receive an honorary British Empire Medal (BEM). This honour would be in recognition of your services to the County of Kent and the Royal Navy. In the meantime. I should be grateful if you could keep the details of this proposal award in strict confidence – it can't be made public until The Queen has given her formal approval for your award.'

Then in November, Henk was notified that HM The Queen had indeed approved the award, and naturally we were thrilled to receive an invitation to the event, scheduled for Friday 17 March 2017.

Many of you are familiar with the name Henk van der Linden, a Dutch economist who one day in 2004 strayed into the war graves cemetery in The Hague. He was on his way to a meeting but could not find a space for his car and so parked near to the cemetery, a decision which led him to uncover the almost forgotten story of Chatham's three cruisers: HMS *Aboukir*, *Hogue* and *Cressy*. Since that day Henk has worked ceaselessly to raise the profile of the story of the cruisers, the so-called Live Bait Squadron (LBS). He calls this *Our Road to Chatham*, a journey which he had thought was at an end on 21 September 2014. It was then that we all gathered to commemorate the lives of the 1,459 men and boys – many from the Medway Towns - who perished in the space of a few hours in the North Sea on the morning of 22 September 1914. Little did Henk know then that so much more was to come!

Family Events

June 1, 10.30 am – 3.30 pm.

Pasta Jewellery.

Join us this half term to make your own pasta jewellery and to take part in our special Museum gallery trail. Sessions at 10:30am, 12:30pm, and 2:30pm £3.00 per child.

The Saturday Club.

10.00am – 12.00 noon; £4 per child or £35 per year.

Do you like getting messy and having fun? Come along to the Saturday Club to take part in different arts and crafts on the first Saturday of each month; 8+ years. In March we are getting crafty making finger puppets and in April we are getting messy with tie dye! Booking is essential - see below.

June 3, 10.00 am – 12.00 pm.

Masks

This month we are getting messy making creative masks!

Children's Cinema: French Film Club

Join us for morning screenings (10.00am – 12.00pm) of classic children's films with a French twist. Bring your own food and drink and don't worry about the noise! £3 per person. To book visit www.rochesterfilmsociety.co.uk

Huguenot Museum: Story Time

Bring your under 5s along every Thursday morning to have fun with props and games as we bring a different story to life each week. From Room on the Broom to Owl Babies and the Very Hungry Caterpillar. Baby change facilities, toys and play mats available- and even tea for the grown-ups. **Pick up a loyalty card and get the 5th and 10th sessions free.** See our website (www.huguenotmuseum.org) for a full story list. £2.00 per child, 50p per additional child, adults free. No need to book, just turn up!

The Huguenot Museum is open Wednesday – Saturday 10am – 5pm on the top two floors of 95 High Street, Rochester, Kent. Entrance is £4 for adults and £3 concessions and can be validated for 12 months with gift-aid. For more information or to get in touch visit www.huguenotmuseum.org, call 01634 789347 or email learning@huguenotmuseum.org Unless otherwise indicated, for all booking call 01634 789347.

Friends of Broomhill

Broomhill Park has been awarded a sixth consecutive Green Flag; the Award recognises the best green spaces in the country. The Park has again been awarded 'Outstanding' in the RHS S.E in Bloom competition.

Friends of Broomhill annual Funday - Sunday, 2 July from noon to 4.00 pm. All the usual side-shows, arena events, including dog training; children's favourite entertainer; Park's Café; Indian tasty snacks; ice cream etc. etc. Bring the whole family and find out about our future plans for the park.

Don't forget first Task Day of the season is Sunday, 2nd September. Further details as above.

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.

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.

HUGUENOT MUSEUM

discover your story

Huguenot Museum Main Events

May 20, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm.
Museums at Night.

Join us for an evening recital of French Baroque music by Jean-Phillipe Rameau, Balbastre and Louis Couperin played by Lorraine Liyanage. Refreshments and museum entry included. Lorraine Liyanage is a harpsichordist based in South London. In addition to performing in the UK and abroad, she runs harpsichord events for young musicians at the Horniman Museum and Gardens in Forest Hill and Handel & Hendrix Museum in Bond Street. £10.

May 27, 2.30 pm – 4.00 pm
Spitalfields Silk

A talk by Mary Schoeser, on the history of Spitalfields silk and the Huguenot weavers fight for survival in the 19th century. £10.

June 10, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm.

Dickens' Household Words: Traits and Stories of the Huguenots

Find out about Dickens' connections to the Huguenots. Hear about the stories of 19th century Huguenots in the words of Dickens' fellow author, Elizabeth Gaskell. £5.

June 17, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm.

Dutch Huguenots in Britain

Join us to mark the Dutch Raid of Medway with this talk on Dutch Protestants. £10.

June 30, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

French Hospital, Museum Tour and Talk

Take a tour of the Huguenot Museum and French Hospital with the Museum's trustee Leslie Du Cane and hear about his family's story. £12.

Adult Workshops

July 29, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

Stitch: Small Objects of Desire

Take inspiration from everyday items to create your own stitched and stencilled 'nature story' on canvas with Cas Holmes. Paper, fabric scraps, and found materials will be combined with stencils, mark making and stitching to develop new ideas will be constructed onto canvas. **Please bring to the workshop:** a waterproof pen scissors, regular sewing thread, pins and needle, a few hand threads in your preferred colour range, a small portable kit of painting media you may like to use (e.g. watercolour). Also useful would be a camera for documentation, notebook, drawing media; you may also bring a sewing machine (optional). £50. Please visit the website for more information: <http://huguenotmuseum.org>.

Henk's 2008 book *Live Bait Squadron* (ISBN 978-9461532602), his society and website (<http://www.livebaitsqn-soc.info/>) have continued to touch the lives of many people in Britain and the Netherlands. Most important of all, he has provided an explanation for what happened in September 1914 and given 'closure' to many descendants, a process which has continued since September 2014.



Tessa Towner and Amanda Thomas at the ceremony; photograph by Alice Barrigan.

When Tessa and I arrived at the British Embassy in The Hague on the morning of Friday 17 March, security was tight. Awards were also to be presented to Hiltje van Eck and Jeanne Melchers. Their stories are also extraordinary. According to the official citation, 'For over 30 years Hiltje van Eck has tirelessly devoted herself to remembering the sacrifices made by British soldiers and airmen in their attempt to liberate the region during the Battle of Arnhem in 1944; to supporting the veterans and their families who continue to make the annual pilgrimage; and, through her involvement with local community and veterans' organisations ... In 1999, on the occasion of the 55th Anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem, she was again the driving force behind the Pegasus reunion. ... These reunions, would simply not have happened had it not been for the energy, initiative and dedication of Hiltje van Eck.'² At the time of the Battle of Arnhem Hiltje was only three years old - her family were members of the Resistance. According to an article about her in *The Daily Mail* (27 September 2014) the family 'housed a little Jewish girl for the entire war and helped 50 British troops evade capture after the Battle of Arnhem.'³

Jeanne Melchers' father was also a member of the Resistance and the official citation at the ceremony in The Hague explains what she has been doing for over 20 years to help and support World War Two veterans and their relatives: 'Mrs Jeanne Melchers began to provide support and assistance in 1995 to groups of war widows, sons, daughters and veterans travelling to the Netherlands with the Royal British Legion to visit the graves of their relatives at the various war cemeteries. Since that date she has arranged for local Dutch friends and families at Nijmegen to take those relatives to the appropriate War cemetery or churchyard in their private cars, and host them for the day.'⁴



Henk, his wife Toos (pictured previous page) and their family were there to greet us all and Tessa and I were delighted to see so many familiar faces from the LBS commemorations of 2014, including the Tice family. John Tice is the grandson of survivor William (Billy) Tice, a Petty Officer Stoker on HMS *Hogue*.

John was an early member of the LBS Society and it was he who wrote to the *Daily Mail* many years ago about Henk's quest. The publicity from this coverage uncovered even more descendants. Alice and Robert Barrington were also in the crowd. In 2011 Alice had emailed Henk about her ancestor, 15 year old midshipman Duncan Stubbs, who had perished on board HMS *Aboukir*. It was the story of Duncan Stubbs and his friend W.H. Wykeham-Musgrave, or Kit, which had taken centre stage in the television documentary on the LBS made by Klaudie Bartelink – who was also at the presentation. The 15 year old cadets from Dartmouth Naval College survived all three sinkings but were drowned attempting to save the life of another, older man. Klaudie's documentary also featured Stubbs' great nephew and Alice's son, Duncan Barrigan, a keen diver who was filmed diving down to the wrecks with the rest of the team. Sadly Duncan was unable to attend the ceremony in The Hague. However, Alice's cousin Michael Banks and his wife Wendy were able to attend, as was (second cousin once removed) Richard Channon, R.N. retd.. Richard had read about Henk's quest in the *Navy News* back in 2011 and it was he who had sent Alice Barrigan a clipping and urged her to contact Henk. It was also Richard who had recommended Henk for the British Empire Medal.



John Tice pictured with his wife and daughter and FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner.

The presentations were made by Sir Geoffrey Adams, British Ambassador to the Netherlands, and the citations were read by Colonel James Phillips, British Defence Attaché for The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Whilst the whole process did not take longer than about 15 minutes, it was extremely moving. Afterwards we toasted the recipients with champagne and were allowed to wander through the Embassy rooms and admire the most extraordinary art collection – altogether a rare privilege indeed.

The Friends of the Guildhall Museums

www.friendsoftheguildhall.com

The Friends of the Guildhall Museums is a group which supports the work of two important but very different elements of Medway's heritage - the Guildhall Museum in Rochester and the Old Brook Pumping Station in Chatham. Supporting the Guildhall Museums will help conserve our local history for generations to come through specialist events and opportunities designed to educate and inspire, telling the stories of the Medway Towns. **For all events see www.friendsoftheguildhall.com/events/**



The Friends were constituted in 2007, with aims centred on the restoration of the sole surviving Chatham Traction bus, GKE 68 of 1939. The Chatham & District Traction Company had operated bus services over Medway's former tram routes from 1930 to 1955, when it was absorbed into Maidstone & District. The bus, a once-familiar piece of Medway's fabric, is to come alive again as a resource for the study of local and social history.

Buses were central to life in the Towns for many decades, taking people to school, shops, work or play. Studies might look inward to the company's people and facilities, or outward to its services and locations served, and how lifestyle changes influenced its development.

To support the educational aim we are collecting relevant material to form an archive of local transport history, including an oral history collection. We would be happy to receive any items – photographs, artefacts, ephemera – relating to Chatham Traction, its predecessor trams or local bus operations up to 1970 (the year of withdrawal of the last Chatham Traction vehicle).

Grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Rochester Bridge Trust have allowed completion of two fundamental stages – the reconstruction of the body structure and overhaul of the engine. We are now seeking further funding to complete the restoration and to prepare our organisation for its educational role.

We offer talks to interested bodies, and organise occasional events to which the public are invited. For more information contact Richard Bourne (Chairman); 31 Usher Park Road, Haxby, York YO32 3RX; 01904 766375, or 07771 831653. Email Richard@thebournes.me.uk. Or see our website at www.chathamtraction.org.uk.

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.

All talks are at The Moat House, 8 Crow Lane, Rochester, ME1 1RF. See the website for further information and including how to join: <http://www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/>.

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. Work to restore one of Rochester's most treasured landmarks resumed in spring, 2016 and is nearing completion. The £2 million Heritage Lottery Funded project to conserve Eastgate House was paused in July 2015 due to the voluntary administration of the main contractor, Fairhurst Ward Abbots. Medway Council awarded completion of the project to construction company Buxton Building Contractors Limited. Founded in 1924, Buxton has vast experience working with historic and listed buildings, and has also worked on the Heritage Lottery Funded *Hidden Treasures, Fresh Expressions* project at Rochester Cathedral.

Further information can be obtained at: www.friendsofeastgatehouse.org on Facebook on 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 tzyszewska@yahoo.co.uk; a copy of the membership form is also available on the website.



FOMA has been granted permission by Ed Woollard, Medway Council's new Tourism and Heritage Manager to reproduce the following photographs taken by Elaine Gardner in April 2017 of the interior of Eastgate House.



From left to right: Klaudie Bartelink, Wendy Banks, Richard Channon, R.N. retd., Alice Barrigan, Michael Banks, FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner.

Flying Officer Mark Jones, Colonel James Phillips, British Defence Attaché for The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, Lieutenant Nick Jackson-Spence.



Notes

- 1,2. From the official citation, courtesy of James Phillips, Colonel (Army), British Defence Attaché for The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.
3. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2771728/Seventy-years-Arnhem-never-forgotten-debt-thousands-British-Polish-soldiers-gave-lives-ill-fated-Allied-plan-deliver-final-blow-Hitler.html>
4. From the official citation, courtesy of James Phillips, Colonel (Army), British Defence Attaché for The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Henk was unable to make a speech he had prepared at the ceremony. We are delighted to have the opportunity to print it in full here.

‘Mr Ambassador, Sir Geoffrey, Colonel James Phillips, Cpt Richard Channon, the Representative of Medway Cllr Adrian Gulvin, The Mayor of The Hague, Mr Tom de Bruijn, the Deputy Mayor of my hometown ’s-Hertogenbosch Mr Eric Logister, my Family and friends, and my two colleagues Hiltje, Jeanne and their company.

Thank you, Mr Ambassador for your kind words and your great hospitality.

The moment I learned about this great honour I decided to dedicate it to the men on the cruisers and their families. This honour is because of my efforts to do them justice, after 100 years. These efforts have been made possible by many people, several are here now. I owe you all a lot. My invitation to be my guest here is my way to express my gratitude. I do not need mention your names, for you all know I personally have something in common with each of you. Each of you played a part in this history, and consequently played a part in my life. You were very welcome.

I wish to thank one person in particular: my wife Toos. This adventure of mine lasts now for 13 years, and took me and her a lot of time, worries and effort. Without her support and tolerance I never would have been in Chatham 22 September 2014.

You all are on my guest list because you all did play a significant role in achieving the first one and only remembrance service in 100 years for these men.

My list counts about sixty persons who actively participated in my adventure. A few days ago I gave the list a final check. This final check brought me an unexpected surprise.

You all know that I accidentally met with the story of the cruisers. Most people think I myself found the story. That is not true: it is the story that found me, and walked away with me. Of this list of sixty guests just five did support me because I requested them to do so. Those five are present here now, and they know that I am talking about them.

Of the 55 others, a lot of them are present here too. How come I met you? It is almost unbelievable, but very true: I did not find you, you found me. All of you, I never met before, never heard about, YOU FOUND ME, you phoned, mailed, wrote me letters and just offered: ‘Dear Henk, can I help you?’. And each of you came out of the blue.

Just like the story that found me at the cemetery, a lot of you did find me. Strange, isn’t it? Wonderful, isn’t it?

To conclude: we all have something in common. We all share a wonderful experience; a once in a lifetime experience.

The disaster on 22 September 1914 caused a lot of grief and distress to over 1400 British families. It caused disrupted families. It caused severe psychological family wounds, wounds that after 100 years still are not mended. But: with achieving the Remembrance Service 22 September 2014 we, you and me, seem to have done a fine job helping these families to reconcile with history.

Thank you, thank you all.

Henk H.M. van der Linden.’

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Talks and Events

Saturday June 10, 11 am.

A Rats Tale

Theatreland and the great fires of Chatham - **a 90 minute walk** with Rob Flood (price as talks, see below). Meet at Anchorage House, 47-67 High St, Chatham ME4 4DW.

For further details see the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org) and Facebook page www.facebook.com/fomalsc/

Tuesday September 12, 7.30 pm.

Relocating the Archive.

The trials and tribulations of moving MALSC.

A talk by MALSC Archivist, Alison Cable.

Saturday October 28, 7.30 pm.

Quiz Night.

£8 for members and non-members. **BOOKING REQUIRED** (see below).

Please do your best to get a table of friends together!

Tuesday November 14, 7.30 pm.

Establishing the Commonwealth War Graves Commission 1917.

A hundred years on from its establishment in 1917, discover why it was set up and what it does today.

A talk; speaker from The Commonwealth War Graves Commission to be confirmed.

Tuesday March 13 2018, 7.30 pm

Untold Stories and Hidden Treasures

Is Rochester Cathedral revealing its secrets?

A talk by Simon Lace, Rochester Cathedral Chapter Clerk, Executive Director.

Tuesday 13 April 2018, 7.00 for 7.30 pm,

FOMA AGM

Booking for FOMA events is not necessary and until further notice they are held at Frindsbury Parish Hall, ME2 4HE. 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.

Joining FOMA is easy and can be done on the website (www.foma-lsc.org); membership enquiries can also be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent. Telephone: 01634 892976; email: betty-cole@outlook.com

Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre will be closed from 5 pm, Friday 3 March until further notice. For further details see the MALC Facebook page www.facebook.com/malsc/, the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org) and Facebook page www.facebook.com/fomalsc/

Until further notice, the MALSC postal address is Medway Archives Office, c/o Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR

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.

Interested in Palaeography?

FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan has been contacted by Ruth Chapman, a Rochester resident, who 'missed the [palaeography] course [organised by MALSC] last year but would very much like to get in touch with people locally who have a similar interest.'

If you would like Ruth's contact details, please get in touch with the Editor, as above.

St Margaret's Parish Poor-House, Rochester

13 March 2017.

Dear Mrs Cole,

Thank you very much for your letter and enclosed copy of *The Clock Tower*. It is one of the many fascinating aspects of our school that we live, work and study in some amazing historic buildings within the rich context of Rochester and Medway. I found your article most interesting and thank you for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J.M.P Walker,
Principal, King's Rochester.

Betty Cole's series of articles on St Margaret's Parish Poor-House, Rochester concludes on page 17.

From the FOMA Facebook Page:

15 February 2017.

Just wanted to thank you all for the on-line registers. They have been a great help in tying down my ancestors. A very valuable resource, much appreciated.

Peter Merchant.

Jeremy Clark's Talk on the History of Rochester's Guildhall

Odette Buchanan



We were most grateful to Jeremy Clark (the Guildhall Museum's Education Officer) for stepping in to the FOMA talk slot on 14 March when Rob Flood had to cancel. At very short notice Jeremy produced an excellent talk guiding us through his detection work on the fabric of the Guildhall building to illustrate the changes it had undergone since its inception in 1687, as well as explaining the whole concept of a *guildhall*.

He firstly explained the origin of the word guildhall. *Gild* is from the Anglo-Saxon meaning *payment*, so a gild hall was where one went to pay one's taxes. As time went by various other local government uses were added to tax collection and by the Middle Ages cities had ever more elaborate guildhalls to display their wealth city. Jeremy referred to the City of London Guildhall and its magnificent 1411 building built on the site of the original Saxon Great Hall. This is believed to have been built on the ruins of a Roman amphitheatre. Other cities around the country sought to emulate its beauty and splendour and by the seventeenth century most had an all-purpose building at its centre that was a meeting place for the town council, an assembly room for public events, a law court, jail, and tax office, usually with a colonnade or under-space for a market. Royal Wootton Bassett has a very good example of such a building – half-timbered and supported on 15 pillars, thus allowing space in the under-croft for a market. It is now the town museum.

In 1695 Sir Cloudesley Shovell was elected Member of Parliament for Rochester (see *The Clock Tower* Issues 10, 11 and 12, May, August and November 2008). Apart from being remembered historically as the Admiral who sank the British fleet as the result of a tiny navigational error off the coast of Cornwall, he was immensely rich. Sir Cloudesley presented the city not only with the lovely façade and 'moon-faced' clock over the then corn exchange but also the splendid ceilings in the Guildhall.

Architect's drawings of the original building show it to be very similar then to how it looks now. It functioned as all guildhalls did as a council chamber, law court, assembly room and tax collection office, although by the eighteenth century parish wardens collected rates for services such as poor relief, street lighting, licensing, etc.. Drawings included the colonnaded under-croft for a market, and also a bell

tower. A little later the jail was built to the rear of the building – where the ladies toilet is now situated! The court room and other chambers on the upper floor were accessed by an outside rear stair turret. The front façade, unlike most guildhalls around the country, was of very rich rubbed brick work to further impress visitors and remind them of Rochester's wealth and importance.

Jeremy described the various additions and amendments to the building. Sir Cloudesley's ceilings were plastered in 1695 – the year of his election to parliament – and in 1780 the beautiful gilded weather vane in the form of an eighteenth century warship was added. This was refurbished and re-gilded by the City of Rochester Society in 2015 (see *The Clock Tower* Issue 42, May 2016). There were then various other alterations in 1838, 1864, 1866, 1907 and 1911, and major repairs and alterations in 1979-80. In 1897 a museum was added as one of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

Jeremy then took us on a virtual tour of his detective work to try and match the afore-mentioned alterations and additions to what is visible now - it was fascinating. In the basement he identified the tiny cell windows of the jail, the signs of where the door had been and access to it from the road and the court room. He showed us pictures he had taken of various internal views which confirmed amendments and additions mentioned in old records. By the end of the talk we had an excellent knowledge of all the strange little staircases, half-hidden doors, doors no longer in use and some puzzling room divisions. A thoroughly interesting and informative talk – thanks Jeremy!

Archives Update

Alison Cable, Archivist



At the time of going to press, Alison Cable and MALSC staff are working on the move to the new site at Bryant Road, Strood. Further information about the re-opening of the Archives can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/medwayarchives/>

Alison Cable did, however, find time to compile a list of recent acquisitions, as follows:

DE1200	Photo album New Brompton New Baptist Sunday School	1898-99
DE1202	Staff: photo of Armament Dept, Upnor	1943
DE120	BRA: Carden and Godfrey Architects: correspondence etc	1957-1987
DE1204	Misc re Robson family	1938-1961
PC108/1/17-18 (addl)	Cuxton PCC minutes	2002-2008
PS/NA/400-401	N Aylesford PS division: licensing registers	1959-1972
RCA/J2/L1-3	Rochester City PS licencing registers	1962-1974
C/ES/150T	Records of Temple School, Strood	1937-2009
CH2/AD/1/1	Minutes of St Bartholomew's Hospital trustees	1859-1873
P109/1F/2	Confirmation register: Darenth parish	1960-2008
P150b/28/16	Plan of Strood parish boundary	1935
DE1206	Reeby Family Papers	1881-1977
DE1207	Deeds various: Medway towns	1750-1919
P153K (addl)	Records of Holy Trinity Church Twydall: parish magazines parish registers	1980s-2006; 1983-1992

Huguenot Museum Update

Amy Dimmock



Amy Dimmock is the new Learning and Community Engagement Officer at the Huguenot Museum, Rochester. Amy studied Classics and Archaeology at the University of Kent before completing her Museum Studies MA at Leicester University. She returned to Kent to begin her museum career as Assistant Curator at The Royal Engineers Museum in Brompton. Amy is passionate about history and crafting and is excited to be a part of the Huguenot Museum team!

There are lots of events and activities happening at the Huguenot Museum over the next few months and we are currently working on our programme for the second half of the year, so keep your eyes out for that! The Museum shop also now stocks delicious marshmallow treats from Huguenot run company Mallow and Marsh. There are lots of lovely new stock items in the shop, including honey and beeswax from a local Huguenot producer as well as jewellery and textile items.

Children's activities for the May/June half term holiday include pasta jewellery, and our under 5s weekly Story Time sessions continue every Thursday morning and include refreshments for children and adults. These will run throughout the summer holidays too! On Saturday 3 June, our Saturday Club craft session will be having fun making masks.

The Museum will be hosting a harpsichord music recital by Lorraine Liyanage of French Baroque music for *Museums at Night* on 20 May; tickets cost £10. There will be refreshments and a chance to look around the gallery. Lorraine is a harpsichordist based in South London and in addition to performing in the UK and abroad, she runs harpsichord events for young musicians at the Horniman Museum and Gardens in Forest Hill and the Handel and Hendrix Museum in Bond Street.

Cas Holmes is returning for a stitching workshop on 29 July. Participants will create their own stitched and stencilled *nature story* or still life on canvas using everyday objects and papers. Lunch, refreshments and Museum entry are included; tickets are £50. If you are interested in this workshop, please telephone the Museum on 01634 789347 to find out more or book your place.

Talks coming up at the Museum include *Dickens: Household Words: Traits and Stories of the Huguenots* which tells the story of Elizabeth Gaskell's connections to Dickens and the Victorian world. This talk is by Dr Dinah Winch, the Museum Director, on 10 June (2.00 to 4.00pm); £5 a ticket. The Museum will also be marking the Dutch Raid of Medway with a talk on Dutch Huguenots in Britain on 17 June (2.00 to 4.00pm); £10 a ticket.

More information can be found on page 34, on the museum's website, www.huguenotmuseum.org, on 01634 789347, or in person.

Major Thomas Scott

Peter Lyons



FOMA member Peter Lyons is retired after a career spent mostly in banking. He has participated in several local history and archaeology projects and is currently a volunteer at the Royal Engineers Museum, Chatham where he reviews, summarises and enters documentary records so that they are available to the general public on the museum's computer.

As Pat Salter's series Roll out the Red Carpet comes to an end (see page 28), we will be starting a new series in the next issue of The Clock Tower. FOMA member Peter Lyons has written a fascinating collection of articles containing extracts from the diaries of Major Thomas Scott. The series will be in three parts: Army Discipline, Coach Travel and Grand Tour.

Here is a taste of what is to come:

Major Thomas Scott (1788 to 1834) was an officer in the Royal Artillery and during the Napoleonic Wars was in Sicily and Spain, at Waterloo and in the Army of Occupation in France. He was born in Rochester, was a frequent visitor in later life as his mother maintained a house there, and was related to an old Kent family the Scotts of Scot's Hall, Smeeth.

Twenty three volumes of his diaries are held by the Royal Engineers Museum, Chatham, running from 1811 to 1834, with a gap from June 1814 to July 1815. Passages in these diaries relate to discipline in the army which was harsh, particularly in time of war as evidenced by these experiences beginning in Sicily and later elsewhere.

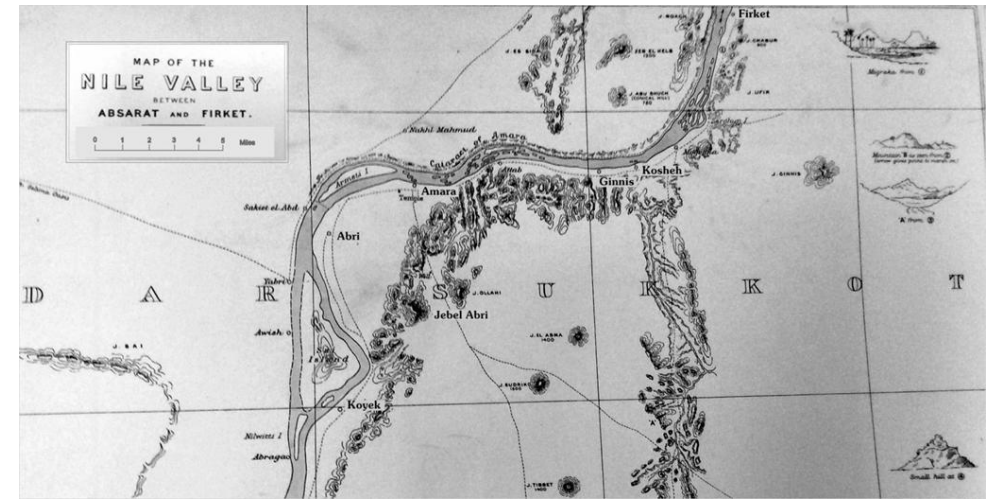
The FOMA Celebration



A view of the Copper Rivet Distillery at Chatham Dockside, the venue for the FOMA Celebration. See page 5. Photograph by David Thomas.



The cheque presentation from the City of Rochester Society to FOMA. From left to right: Amanda Thomas, Tessa Towner, Bob Ratcliff and Russell Race. Photograph by Doris Herlihy.

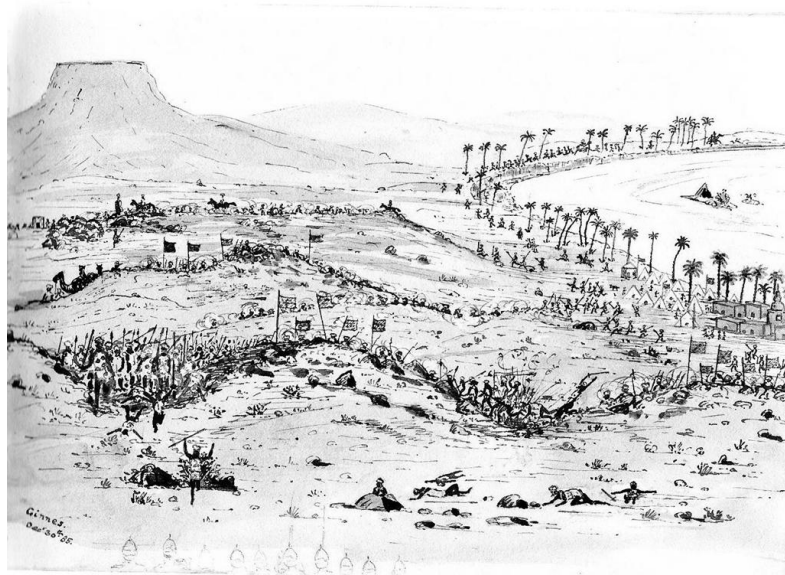


Part of a contemporary map made by the British. PRO MPH 1 431 29 Abu Sari

Notes

1. AWB 1886 01 02 from Koyek, Sudan.
2. WO 110/10, page 26, items 62, 63, Kosheh 30, 31 December 1885, by Lt. Gen Stephenson.
3. AWB 1886 02 08 from Kosheh.
4. From DLI Archive's Digest of Services, 1885-1886, (D/DLI 2/2/14, pp.101-102). General Stephenson received the thanks of Parliament and the GCB for this action (ODNB 36277).

Travels of a Tin Trunk will be serialised in full in *The Clock Tower*. If you would like a copy of the whole book, it is available from the author, Michael Baker, at a cost of £10. Please contact *Clock Tower* Editor, Amanda Thomas, for details.



Alfred's sketch of the battle of Ginnis

Alfred's account and the official report differ a little on the timing, the latter stating tersely: 'Attacked enemy at 6 am, occupied Ginnis 9.15 am. Enemy now in full retreat. Enemy taken by surprise, all our troops in position before aware our presence. Butler had the brunt of the fight.'² It recorded that one British officer was killed, 21 men wounded, 6 Egyptian troops killed, 13 wounded and that the enemy's losses were heavy (later estimated at 500 dead and 300 wounded of a force of 6,000).

Alfred agreed: 'the reason we licked them so easily was that we got to their proper position before they did (though only by about 5 minutes).'³ The three days' march over the New Year following the Dervishes up river took Alfred past Abri where the Nile turns abruptly and on to Koyek. They held that from January 2 to 6 and then the tactical withdrawal began. They were back to Kosheh, a little downstream of the battle, by January 9.

A message came up from headquarters in Aswan:

'The Brigadier General (Stephenson) desires to congratulate the Force under his Command upon the fact that yesterday's action was fought in the old English Formation of Line, and that the Brigade inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Enemy, captured his Guns, Camp and Standards, and routed the entire Arab Army from its strong position.'⁴

St Margaret's Parish Poor-House, Rochester

Betty Cole



Betty Cole is FOMA's Membership Secretary. She is interested 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.

Part 2

Although not bringing in any money to the House, the female inmates seem to have been kept busy making and mending household items and clothing. Various entries in the *Clothing Book*¹ show materials being sent into the House, often from Mr Chilley, to be made into sheets, gowns and bonnets: '1804 Sep.16 57 yards for sheeting. 5 prs. sheets made. Expended for repairs 2 yards' and '1805 Jan. 9 97 yards for sheeting. 8 prs. Sheets made.' Many entries describe the various fabrics which were in use at this time: 'Aug 24 Cotton for kowlars (sic),' 'brown camblet, brown cotton, brown Holland,' 'May 15 1804 brown Holland used for body lining, children's stays and lining for two frocks.' With so much brown coloured material being used one can imagine the excitement when on May 10 amongst the materials sent in from Mr Chilley is '1 yard print spot.'

Several entries in the *Clothing Book* relate to material for the making of bonnets and pippets. Although the image of paupers in cotton bonnets is a familiar one, it is hard to imagine them being allowed to wear bonnets made from the May 1804 package of '2 yards Scotch Gause 6 yards ribbon, 1 yard dyed cambric, 5 yards ribbon.' Perhaps Scotch gauze is not the plaid material which comes to mind but some kind of stiffening material.

Apart from material being received into the House for the making of household items and clothing there are also entries in the *Clothing Book* showing that a regular supply of 'gounds', 'flannell petecoats', 'shalls', 'coullered aprons', 'caps for women', and stockings were supplied to the poor-house. There are few items of men's clothing mentioned in the entries and this together with the lack of men's names in the bedding inventory would suggest that there were many more women than men in the institution.

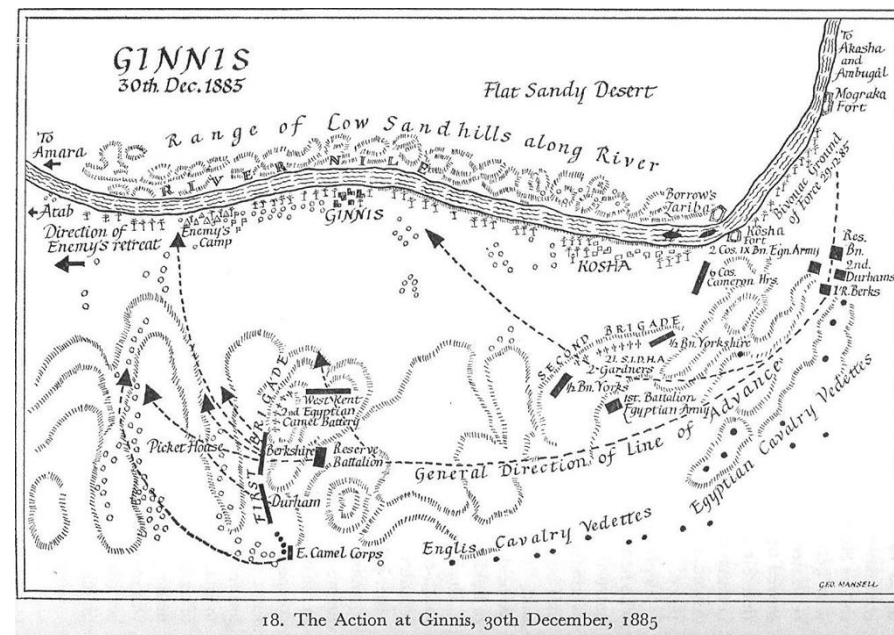
Another tenet of the old Poor Law was the training of children. There are few archives at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre which would show how St Margaret's parish undertook the education of their children. There is a reference to a document entitled *Overseers of the Poor: Apprenticeships 1819*. This relates to the indenture of a Richard Fenner. I have not been able to examine this document. Female inmates were trained in domestic skills so that they could be sent to work as servants. An entry in the *Clothing Book* on May 11 says, 'Paid for wearing apparel for Dawson on her going into service.' There is also an archived document dated 1764 concerning £100 left for teaching poor children to read.³ One item which shows some kindness on the part of the parish is to be found in the Summary Accounts in the following entry, 'Dec 26 1819 Money given to 28 children going to Strood Fair at 2d each – 4s.8d.'⁴

It would appear that the inhabitants of St Margaret's poor-house were looked after in sickness. Although there is little to find in the archives to help us find out how the treatment of the sick was handled, a brief note in the Vestry Order Book on 25 March 1817 tells us that, 'Mr. Edward Seaton has been appointed Surgeon of the Parish with the usual salary.' We are not told how much 'the usual salary' is but later from the same source: '2nd day of April 1818. The vestry met for the purpose of making some addition to the salary of the surgeon for attending the poor of this Parish in consequence of the great increase of the poor. Ordered that the sum of ten pounds a year be added to the former salary of thirty pounds a year to the surgeon making the whole forty pounds a year.'

According to *Wright's 1838 Topography* 'The Rochester, Chatham and Strood Dispensary, St Margaret's Bank was established in 1831 by the exertions of a number of public spirited gentlemen for affording medical relief to individuals of indigent circumstances.' Whether this facility was used by the inmates of St Margaret's poor-house cannot be known, but it would have been there for those on outdoor relief.

Among the parish records are two small documents which are each a *Return of the Invalid Out Poor*. They list the names of people treated, their address and their profession. At the end of each entry is a space for *remarks*. In most cases this has not been filled in but on the return for the week ending 13 April 1832 against an entry for Geo. Mann it states, 'Half Pint Ale Daily' and in the same column requests 'A Nurse' for Mrs Flory of Rochester. The surgeon's name at the bottom of these documents is William Stephenson.⁵

Not only must the body be looked after but also the souls of the inmates. Given time for further study, there is probably a great deal of information about the various parish priests of St Margaret's during the one hundred years of the old poor-house. Names which appear frequently are Rev. Henry Drage and the Rev. Wheatley.



18. The Action at Ginnis, 30th December, 1885

Alfred wrote and sketched his own account of the battle three days later when he was further upstream at Koyek.

'We halted the night before about 2 miles from the Arabs' position. Up soon after 2 am and did a moonlight march round Kosheh over low rocky hills and about daybreak, 6 am, got near them. I was in command of the leading company and had to skirmish over a range of low hills but we did not find them the other side of it. As soon as we got up the next ridge they opened fire and we extended the line, the Berks on the right, Durham in the centre and the W. Kent on the left, Egyptian camel corps on the extreme left and Egyptian guns on the right. The fire lasted for 4 or 5 hours before we drove them back, advanced after them and took their village of Ginnis. They are plucky chaps and came right at us although we kept up a continuous fire. They don't seem to be much of shots though, as they only hit two officers who were standing up exposed all the time. They had six foot of me to aim at but never hit it. I don't think they had many riflemen among them and the fire was too hot to let their spearmen and swordsmen get near us. We followed them up three days' march, but they seem to have bolted altogether. They may attack us on the way back though.'

'This is a very healthy life, lots of exercise, little to eat and open air all day and night. Nothing but Nile water to drink. The river is a blessing as sleeping in the sand with all your clothes on is apt to make you rather beastly dirty, but I generally manage to get a dip in the river. I have not heard from England. I hope you get my letters as I can never put a stamp on.'¹

Travels of a Tin Trunk

Michael Baker



Michael Baker's interest in family history was started by a great-uncle who once unrolled a family tree on the dining-room table. It was seven feet long. After a career in Electrical Engineering, including 20 years overseas, he opened some boxes in the Owletts' attic.

In his issue of The Clock Tower, the fascinating story continues of what Michael found in the tin trunk belonging to Alfred, the brother of Michael's grandfather, Herbert Baker.

Part 4

The Battle of Ginnis, December 1885

The battle was fought on the east bank of the Nile, about 90 miles upstream of Wady Halfa and over 600 miles from the Mediterranean, at the village of Ginnis. It was the northernmost stronghold of the Sudanese who had been harrying the British and Egyptians at Firket. Lord Grenfell, in command of the division which included Butler's brigade, told the story:

'Before dawn on the 30th (December), the Force moved out into the desert under a waning moon, the Great Bear and Southern Cross both conspicuous, and silently took up position. No sound but the barking of dogs was heard from the village below and the Arabs seemed wholly unaware of the coming attack. The General and staff took up their positions on rising ground opposite the village to watch the whole panorama. As the sun rose (behind them but in the Arabs' eyes) the scene unfolded: the endless Libyan desert, the Nile at Kosheh and its sharp bend to the north, rocky islands studding the Amara cataract, fringed with palms.'

'Butler's brigade had to pass obliquely along the flank of the Arabs' in order to occupy a razor-backed ridge before the Arabs could reach it, making a detour to avoid alarming the Dervish outposts. The Brigade succeeded in gaining the position just in time. The Arabs who had been caught napping, found their camp and Kosheh commanded on all sides. A battery opened fire. The Brigade atop its ridge repulsed an attack. Scots and local troops who had been the garrison in Kosheh and under frequent harassment were straining to go and on the order raced for the village and routed them. By 10 am the battle was won.'

One item in the Vestry Order Book showed that the holder of the post of Parish priest was not above investigation. On 12 June 1817 is the following:

'The Parish Priest the Rev. J. Griffith has been accused anonymously of misapplying the sacrament money'. The Vestry found however, that 'We are convinced the report ... must have arisen from a malicious motive and to be entirely without foundation. That we are convinced the Rev. J. Griffiths is incapable of doing any act which is incompatible with the sacred character of a clergyman of the Church of England. That we consider his conduct has at all times been most exemplary, his charity almost boundless and that sooner than deprive the poor of a farthing which is their Rights would and doth distribute pounds from his private purse.'

The well-being of the inhabitants of any institution depends less upon the rules laid down than upon the implementation of them. The atmosphere in the poor-house depended largely on the character of the Master and Mistress who were the appointed heads of the *family*. An agreement dated 13 November 1811, between the Overseers of St Margaret's and Stephen Ankhorn and his wife Frances, for executing the offices of Master and Mistress of the poor-house can be found in the archives.⁶ The conditions of their employment in these offices are clearly and laboriously spelt out. Most important of all, they are to take their orders from the churchwardens and overseers. They must at all times, dwell and sleep in the House. They must not take on any other employment themselves but must superintend any work taken in for the employment of the paupers. They must keep the house and garden in good order. He is to keep household accounts and a register of all those admitted and discharged. The wife, Frances, must see to all the domestic arrangements, the preparation of food, the provision of utensils and linen. Together they must see to the religious observances required of the paupers. Not at the top of the list but of great importance to the inmates, 'They shall keep the poor entrusted to their care in cleanliness, treat them with humanity and pay particular attention to the sick.'

For their services in these offices the Master and Mistress were to receive jointly, over and above their board, firing and accommodation, a yearly stipend of twenty five pounds payable quarterly. At the time of taking the job on, this couple had three children and there is a condition attached to the Agreement that if they should have more children whilst in office, they have to give up ten pound a year for each child so born.

Such a comprehensive contract of employment covered most aspects of the running of the poor-house. How well, how humanely, they carried out their role would have made all the difference to those living there. It is hard to imagine complaints against them being made, even if justified, due to fear of reprisals. However, complaints were made and on a least one occasion were investigated.

At a Vestry meeting on 19 November 1818 charges against the Master and

Mistress were investigated by a committee. Amongst the charges were: failing to ensure that the paupers went to church on Sundays, neglecting the reading of prayers in the house, not keeping the House and clothing of the inmates clean, not attending to the sick and misappropriating provisions. On top of this they were charged with intimidating those who were to give evidence to the Parish officers about such negligent behaviour. There was no whitewash – some of the charges were found to be substantiated and others not. The Committee decided the result did not warrant the dismissal of the Master and Mistress. They were told of their shortcomings and the committee recommended that, ‘Past animosities be mutually forgiven and forgotten, that the Mistress be required to be more vigilant and active in the daily superintendence of every part of the family; that a few plain and obviously useful regulations for the government of the House be introduced.’ The report is signed by the Chairman, John Griffiths, the same Rev. Griffiths who two years before had himself been accused of misappropriating the sacrament money.

A set of rules was drawn up and printed after the above investigation and can be seen in the archived documents of the parish.⁷

From all the above it could be deduced that St Margaret’s Parish Poor-house was a well run institution. The building itself must have been well maintained or it would not have lasted, as it has, to the present day. The rules laid down covered most aspects of domestic management to allow the inmates to live a plain and decent life. There was encouragement for them to learn skills which would help them in the outside world should they ever be able to return to homes of their own. Although it is easy to paint a glowing picture of St Margaret’s from archived material, the only people who could tell us the truth about the conditions there, have left no written testimony for us to examine.

It would be interesting to see if there were any interviews with inmates of St Margaret’s poor-house in the reports of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law in 1832.

Notes

1. Medway Local Studies Centre Archives, ref. P305/12/11 Clothing Book.
2. Ditto; archive ref. P305/14/2 Indenture of Richard Fenner.
3. Ditto; archive ref. P305/25/A/1
4. Ditto; archive ref. P305/12/5 Summary Accounts.
5. Medway Local Studies Centre Archives, ref. P305/18/6, Parish Surgeon’s weekly return of the Invalid Poor.
6. Ditto; ref. P305/18/19/1, Agreement between the Overseers and Stephen Ankhorn and wife.
7. Medway Local Studies Centre Archives; ref. P305/18/9, Printed Rules and Regs. for the Poor-House.

The Prince of Wales has visited the area on several occasions. On 10 November 2004 he was at Rochester Cathedral where he attended the evening service of thanksgiving for Justus, Pilgrim, Missionary and Bishop.² He returned to the cathedral on 20 March 2007 for the performance of the Jools Holland Mass in aid of the Music Forever Campaign.³ On 9 June 2009 the Prince of Wales, as patron of the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust, visited Pembroke House, Gillingham where he met members of staff, trustees and residents. Pembroke House provides residential and nursing care to former Royal Marines, sailors, their wives and widows.⁴

On 14 November 2007 Prince Philip unveiled his second naval monument in the area. The monument stands in Chatham Dockyard next to the restored *HMS Cavalier* and together they form a memorial to the 142 Royal Navy destroyers sunk during World War II and the over 11,000 men who died. The monument, a bronze bas-relief depicting a destroyer rescuing men from a sinking ship, was created by sculptor Kenneth Potts.⁵

On 23 March 2006 the Princess Royal was at Summit House, Woodlands Road Gillingham to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.⁶ After being greeted by Alison Tapley, a seventeen-year-old working towards her Gold Award, the Princess toured the centre where she watched displays of cookery, fencing, photography and belly dancing. After a slight hiccup the blue velvet curtain opened to reveal a gold plaque commemorating the occasion. Before leaving the Princess watched a Knockout contest between pupils from local secondary schools.

Four years later the Princess returned to Gillingham. On 25 March 2010 she opened the new Mid Kent College in Prince Arthur Road that replaced the buildings at Horsted and City Way, Rochester. During her tour of the campus the Princess saw photographs of her father opening the new Mid Kent College at Fort Horsted in 1955.⁷

On 28 October the same year the Duchess of Cornwall visited the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society’s base at Rochester Airport to see member’s work in the reconstruction of vintage aircraft. She subsequently became Patron of this organisation.

The Princess Royal was the latest royal visitor to the Medway area when in July 2011 she opened Medway Park and unveiled a commemorative plaque to mark the £11 million transformation of the Black Lion Sports Centre. The dust having settled for 2012, the Diamond Jubilee year, we will roll up the red carpet and stow it away until the next royal visitor appears.

Notes

1. *The Rochester, Chatham & Gillingham News*, 14 May, 2004.
2. Rochester Cathedral Library; Visitors Book.
3. Ibid.
4. *Rochester, Chatham & Gillingham News*.
5. *Navy News*, December 2007.
6. *Medway Messenger*, 17 March 2006.
7. *Medway Messenger*, March 2010.

Roll out the Red Carpet

P.J. Salter



Pat Salter worked at the Guildhall Museum Rochester and at MALSC for over 20 years. She is a well known author and works include A Man of Many Parts - Edwin Harris 1859 – 1938; Pat is also a FOMA Vice President.

We are delighted that Pat Salter has given us permission to serialise her book, Roll out the Red Carpet, which will later be published in its entirety on the FOMA website. The book is a compilation of work originally undertaken by Pat for an exhibition at MALSC and gives a fascinating insight into royal visits to the Medway Towns over the centuries, from Anglo Saxon times right up to the present day. Thanks to Rob Flood and Philip Dodd for helping to make publication possible.

This is the final part of the series; please note the work was written in 2012.

Introduction

The red carpet has been rolled out, literally or metaphorically, for royal visitors to the Medway area for centuries. However, the red carpet has not always been a celebratory one. Wars, sieges, rebellions and invasions have been occasioned by, or resulted in, carpets of blood. The Medway area has been inhabited since ancient times but the first royal visitor that we know of, with any certainty, was Aethelbert, King of Kent, in 604 and the latest, at the time of writing, that of the Princess Royal in March 2011.

Twenty-First Century

The Earl and Countess of Wessex visited the Molly Wisdom Hospice in Rochester in May 2004¹ where they toured the new Day Care Centre. At a cost of £1.3 million pounds the centre includes a hairdressing salon where patients are offered free sessions. The royal visitors met patients and volunteers including Judith Bradbury, who was accompanied by her West Highland terrier, Daisy. Daisy, who is part of the National Dogs scheme that takes the therapeutic benefits of making a fuss of a dog to patients, was more interested in the freesias in the Countess' bouquet. Before the royal couple left they were presented with a framed photograph decorated by day care patients.

Two years later the Countess unveiled a plaque at the Cerebral Palsy Care Unit at Cliffe Woods. On 21 March 2006 the Duke of Kent was welcomed to the cathedral on the occasion of the Lord Lieutenant's Civic Service for the County of Kent.

Charles Larkin 1775 - 1833

P.J. Salter



Pat Salter worked at the Guildhall Museum Rochester and at MALSC for over 20 years. She is a well known author and works include A Man of Many Parts - Edwin Harris 1859 – 1938; Pat is also a FOMA Vice President.

Part 3

The City Repository also housed Larkin's agency for the Royal Exchange Assurance. Established in 1720 by Royal Charter at the Royal Exchange, Threadneedle Street, London it assured house, buildings, goods, corn, hay, livestock etc. from loss or damage by fire; and also for the assurance of, and granting annuities on lives. An advertisement in 1831 declared that Larkin was appointed as agent to the Corporation for Rochester and Chatham and parts adjacent and lays out a *Reduction in Premiums* in the three ordinary classes of insurance, and to inform his friends and the public that he was ready to receive orders for new assurances, and also premiums on such assurances as have already been made:

Farming Stock may be insured at 1s. 6d. per cent. per Annum.

Fire Policies are insured free of Expence to the Assured, where the Annual Premium amounts to 6s. or upwards.

Losses by fire occasioned by Lightning will be made good¹

He also held a corn market on the premises in opposition to that run by the Corporation. A City Rental² for 1815 notes that *the corn market is unlet ... Mr Larkin has assumed a right to hold a corn market in the city Repository without any authority.* The Rental for 1834 goes further with *thereby rendering the City Market under the Hall useless.* He would appear to have been cutting prices. The corn market continued to be held in this building until 1960 firstly in what is now known as the Princes Hall (part of the Corn Exchange) until 1871, when the Queen's Hall was added.

Larkin's takeover of the corn market could have been due to his involvement in the movement to reform them the Corn Laws. Corn Laws had been debated as early as 1791, but it was the Corn Law of 1804, brought about by landowners who dominated Parliament, seeking to protect their profits by imposing a duty on corn imported from Europe. The bad harvests of 1793-1801 and the inability to import from Europe because of the Napoleonic Wars led to high prices for bread which the poor could not afford. The passing of this legislation caused many public disturbances. The Houses of Parliament had to be defended against angry crowds

and elsewhere in England there were riots, because of the high price of bread and the export of grain. There were further disturbances in the Midlands where workers were demanding higher wages to pay for the bread.

Rochester was not immune from these disturbances. In 1732 an article appeared in the *Star* newspaper referring to the *Patriotic Society of Rochester*. This caused the Council who considered *not only their bounden duty in the present situation of Public Affairs but feel it their strong inclination to co-operate with the neighbouring Magistrates in suppressing all seditious meetings and report any knowledge of such.*

On 11 November 1811 the City Council appointed a committee to enquire into the cause of the *late outrageous proceedings in the City and proceed against the offenders*. Larkin did not approve of violent protest. A newspaper report in 1832 quoted Larkin saying that he *was convinced that such assemblies of rioters...ought to have been put down. Mob law was of the most shameful, fearful and arbitrary laws.*

By 1814 Larkin was very much concerned about the of the price of corn. He was present at a 'Common Hall' held in Rochester on June 1st, at which it was agreed that a petition be presented to the House of Commons, against the passing of the Corn Bill. The petition lay at the Town Hall for signatures from eight o'clock in the morning until Saturday 4 June at eight o'clock in the evening. Such meetings were being held all over the country.

On 16 August 1819 Henry Hunt MP addressed the subjects of the Repeal of the Corn Laws and Parliamentary Reform. The meeting was held at St Peter's Field, Manchester and attended by 50,000-60,000 people. Nine men and two women were killed and four hundred injured during the dispersal of the crowd by the local militia³. It became known as the *Peterloo Massacre*.

In 1819 the city leased Hospital Farm, St. Margaret's to Larkin.⁴ This was possibly inspired by the fluctuating price of corn. If he could grow his own it would enable him to keep down the cost in his corn market. This was added to in June 1825 when Larkin was granted a lease of a piece of land

abutting to the North and East on St Margaret's and to the South on a passage way from St Margaret's Street to the fields on the West side of the street and on the West side to certain premises belonging to the Government of St Thomas' Hospital, Rochester at a rent of one shilling to be used for tool house, hot house, garden or pasture for sheep and cows.
Signed and sealed by Larkin.⁵

Notes

1. *Rochester Gazette*, June 1830.
2. MALSC: Ro/FR/119.
3. Llewellyn Woodward: *The Age of Reform, The Oxford History of England*.
4. MALSC, CCA/U92/B/10/5.
5. MALSC, DRc/Elc/165B.



Prefabs at Warren Wood.

DOES ANY OF THIS JOG YOUR MEMORY? If you have any memories you'd like to share, please contact Odette (see page 46). If you are interested in the individual tenants and which house they lived in, also contact Odette who has these details.

Bibliography and Acknowledgements

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Ordnance Survey maps 1930 – 1962.
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Illustrations

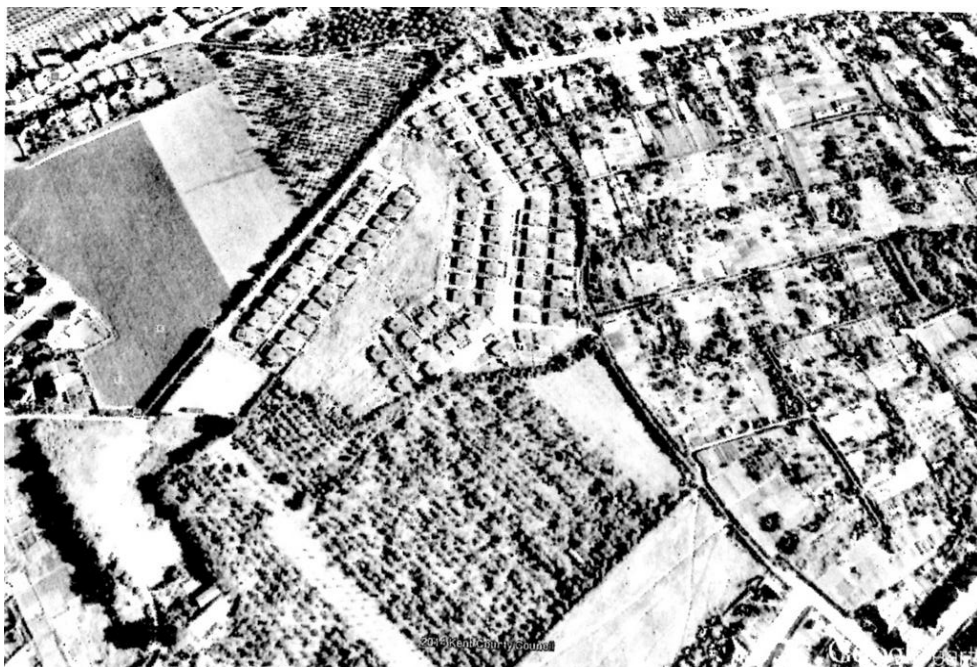
The writer wishes to thank the owners credited for their permission to reproduce the illustrations used. Any infringement of copyright is entirely accidental; every care has been taken to contact or trace all copyright owners. She would be pleased to correct in future editions any errors or omissions brought to her attention.

The writer extends grateful thanks to the patient and helpful staff of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. She also wishes to thank the many Friends of Broomhill and residents of Strood for all their interesting and informative memories.

the now deserted prefab gardens, especially lupins. When they were eventually overrun with brambles there was, of course, a bountiful harvest of blackberries to be had. Another member of the Friends remembers playing in the gardens and ruins of the windmill which once stood there and picking wild strawberries.

Another development that he and the other residents were able to quash was a plan to build some more houses where the trees run along the side of the Park behind King Arthur's Drive. It was at this time and because of this that the top of the hill was designated a Park.

The footpath from Brompton Lane to Pepys Way, now called Friends' Walk, apparently used to be called Ash Alley because residents used to spread the ash from their coal fires along it to soak up the slippery mud.



Broomhill circa 1960

Memories Of Prefabs

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 was 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/). Her book, Two Gentlemen of Strood, (short biographies of Henry Smetham and Rev. Caleb Parfett) 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. and the HLF funded Valley of Visions Strood Community Trail.

This year it is 70 years since the first post-war prefabs were built. In this series of articles although mention is made of other prefab sites around Medway, Odette has concentrated her research on those erected on what is now Broomhill Park in Strood.

Part 3

So, we now have the various types of prefabs built, fitted out and furnished with an assortment of utility furniture where money and coupons allowed, second-hand furniture and gifts from friends and family. What did the first inhabitants think of these strange new little houses? Remember at that time over fifty per cent of the population lived in accommodation with no bathrooms or indoor toilets. Many others were paying exorbitant rent for *furnished* flats/bedsits where the *furniture* was often just a bed, table and a couple of chairs – enough to get round the law which decreed that unfurnished accommodation must be rented at pre-war prices.

Many Friends of Broomhill remember living in the prefabs and all those I interviewed had only praise for these 'Peoples' Palaces'. Some quotes include:

"My cousin, just demobbed from the navy, his wife and tiny newborn son were crowded into our front room and were extremely glad to move into the spaciousness of a neat little bungalow with modern plumbing, etc."

"We had a pull-down ironing board."

"There was so much space and an inside toilet."

"They were light and airy with lovely views."

“We had loads of cupboards.”
 “I’d never been in a house with a fridge before.”
 “They were a bit hot in the summer.”
 “It felt like being in the country; there were blackberries at the bottom of the garden.”
 “There were so many storage units not much furniture was needed.”
 “My window cleaner remembers living in Merlin Road. His mother vividly recalls having to pull the pram up 15 steps to get to the house.”

A member of the Friends of Broomhill started her married life in one and she tells me that when the weather was inclement, she used to put the baby in the pram and leave the front door open. (That generation considered it essential that babies had plenty of fresh air every day). She tells me that the bedrooms were so large that in the second bedroom not only was there a ‘bedroom suite’ (i.e. dressing table, stool, tallboy, wardrobe, two bedside tables and a double bed) but they were able to curtain off half the room to make a study for her school-teacher husband. She remembers the beautiful view she had from the kitchen window of the Medway Towns, down the Medway to Sheerness in the east and as far as Bluebell Hill in the west. She used to push the baby to the top of the hill for the ‘two-rivers view’. (Thames to the north, Medway to the south). Another thing she clearly remembers is the cacophony of dawn chorus bird song – especially in the early summer: no chance of oversleeping then. A present resident of King Arthur’s Drive says this is still the case. He says that the trees are now also full of squirrels. Perhaps a sad reflection of our times, is the memory she has of walking from choir practice in Frindsbury up Cliffe Road, along King Arthur’s Drive and down the footpath to her house alone, with just a torch at about 9 pm with no fear of molestation.

Another member of the Friends was re-housed when she was four years old and remembers very little. But, when on a scrub clearing activity a few years ago, she came upon the exact spot where she is convinced her prefab. used to be.

Mrs. Littlemore also remembers living in Merlin Avenue. She writes:

“The prefabricated bungalows were very compact. The front door opened into a small hallway (handy for parking the pram). This led into the lounge, a good-sized room with a built-in cupboard from floor to ceiling in one corner. Leading off the lounge was another small hallway containing the hot water boiler, airing cupboard and doors to two fair sized bedrooms and a bathroom.

The open fire in the lounge heated the water in winter and in summer an immersion heater was used. Another door led from the lounge to the large kitchen, with windows on two sides. Apart from the usual gas cooker, sink and work surfaces, it contained a gas boiler for wash days, a broom cupboard and in the alcove leading out to the garden was a walk-in larder. All the rooms had low windowsills and the windows extended almost up to the ceilings, making the rooms appear spacious and light. This offset the low ceilings. In the summer the sun beat down on the flat roofs and together with the low ceilings made the inside rather hot and stuffy. In contrast, the prefabs could be chilly and a little damp in winter because of the thin outside walls.

Because the estate was built on just about the highest point, our lounge over looked the towns and we could see down river almost as far as the Dockyard. I never tired of the view. The prefabs were built in double rows but behind ours the ground climbed too steeply to put in another row, so our garden backed onto the sloping field. It felt like living in the country.

The estate was built on what previously had been an orchard and we often found small damson trees sprouting. One of the damson trees escaped our notice and grew into a full-size tree just outside the back door. In those days of austerity and shortages I, like many other girls, used to dip my petticoats in sugar-water to stiffen them to keep up with the *New Look* fashion of the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. There was no fooling those wasps! Many a time, the resident swarm of wasps deserted the damson tree, met me at the back door en-masse and pursued me all the way to the clothes-line clinging on to the garment dripping with their favourite food!

Food rationing ended in 1955 with meat being the last food to come off ration. Housing was difficult to find after the war and the people housed on the prefab estate came from all walks of life and occupations. Many were young families but there were also middle-aged and elderly couples too.

The winter of 1962/3 was particularly severe. Snow came down on Boxing Day, it froze over, then another fall came down and settled on the frozen layer underneath. It was treacherous to walk on and did not thaw completely until March. For the entire three months the temperatures remained below freezing.

Our cul-de-sac was virtually cut off for weeks and a *war-time* spirit took over the community. Eventually the milkmen were forced to leave crates of milk at the end of the road and we had to help ourselves every day. I was stuck indoors with a young baby for weeks on end – of course, no telephone in those days – so felt very isolated indeed. But somehow we managed to keep warm and cosy indoors and the children loved tramping to school through the snow, it was a big adventure to them.

Many happy memories from eight years living in ‘our’ prefab.’

King Arthur’s Drive is part of the 1960s Brompton Farm Estate development. Another member of the Friends of Broomhill remembers being one of the first residents to move into King Arthur’s Drive. He vividly remembers the Two Rivers’ View.

At that time the prefabs were still there but gradually becoming empty, prior to demolition. This left an area of waste-land and a number of travellers’ trailers moved in against the boundary of his house! He said it was a very worrying time and eventually they had to get the police involved to remove them. However, the up side of this waste-land was the profusion of cultivated flowers and fruit from