

**Men of the Medway Towns
The Ultimate Sacrifice
1918 —1919**



James Byford McCudden V.C. Royal Flying Corps

**A free exhibition by the Friends of Medway Archives
Thursday 2 August to Saturday 1 December 2018**

Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood.

www.medway.gov.uk/archives

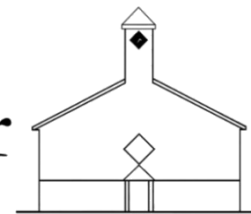
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 Medway Archives and Local Studies

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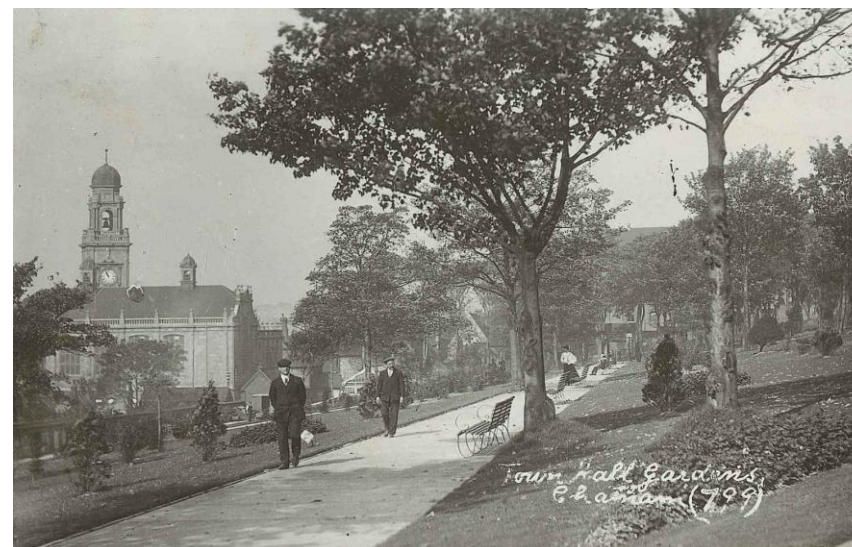
The Clock Tower



Issue Number 51: August 2018
£2.00; free to members

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Summer in Chatham ...



... circa 1910. In this issue Betty Cole starts a new series, *What and Why?* with a look at The Town Hall Gardens in Chatham and how they were transformed from an old burial ground to a green oasis. See page 14.

Photograph reference CHA/LEI/P2/4; Medway Archives Centre.

ALSO INSIDE:

A new Heritage Lottery Fund project for FOMA with Medway Council – *Soldiers' Stories on our Streets*. See page 11.

St Mary's Island History Group's Brian Portway on the nineteenth century building of the Chatham Dockyard extension. See page 16.

AND

Exciting news about the *Textus Roffensis*! See page 13.

Happy Birthday Medway Archives!



Ed Woollard, Tourism and Heritage Manager addresses attendees.

On 4 July 2018 the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) celebrated a year at its new premises in Bryant Road, Strood. A celebratory morning was held at MAC attended by representatives from Medway Council, including Medway Mayor, Councillor Steve Iles and his wife, Councillor Josie Iles, who is FOMA's Treasurer. Also in attendance were FOMA member Ed Woollard, Medway's Tourism and Heritage Manager and Abby Found, Heritage Development Officer, who was promoting *The Lost Helmet WWI Project*.



The Lost Helmet WWI Project. Councillor Steve Iles, Medway Mayor, and Abby Found, Heritage Development Officer.

The Lost Helmet WWI Project is based around a replica WWI helmet which went on tour following Armed Forces Day on 30 June 2018. Abby worked with students from the University of the Creative Arts to create the backdrop (pictured) which Medway residents have been photographed in front of whilst wearing the helmet. Later in the year, and to coincide with Armistice commemorations, photographs will be collated and projected at the Medway Archive Centre, each image captioned with one of names of lost Medway servicemen.

More photographs on the inside back cover.

Happy Birthday Medway Archives!

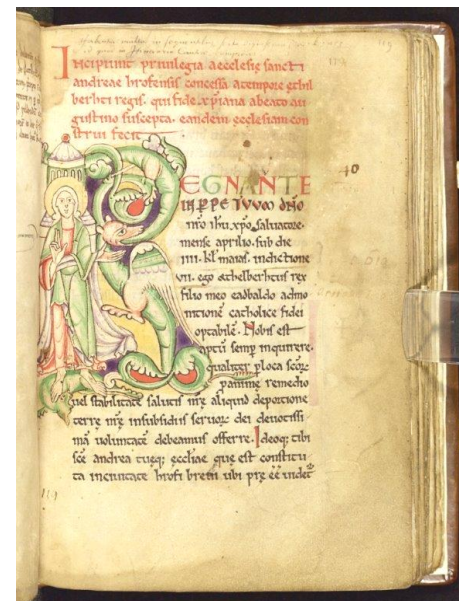
On 4 July 2018 the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) celebrated a year at Bryant Road, Strood (see page 2). The FOMA Committee were delighted to take part in Abby Found's *The Lost Helmet WWI Project*, and pictured are (from left to right) Josie Iles (FOMA Treasurer and Medway Mayoress) and Tessa Towner. A photograph of FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan taking part can be seen on page 6.



The Textus Roffensis at the British Library!

Rochester's Textus Roffensis (see right) will be displayed at the British Library's exhibition, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* from 19 October 2018 to 19 February 2019; see www.bl.uk/events/anglo-saxon-kingdoms

More on page 13.



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Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



As I write this we have finally had some rain and the lawn may return to green ... at least the weeds in it stood out, why do they never suffer?

By the time *The Clock Tower* is published FOMA's final exhibition to commemorate the Men of Medway who died in World War One will be on display at MAC - *Men of the Medway Towns: The Ultimate Sacrifice, 1918-1919* (see the back cover). This is the fifth exhibition FOMA has put together to commemorate the men who died in successive years from 1914 to 1918-19. I have certainly learnt a lot from researching the exhibitions and I hope that you have been to see some - or all - of them and found the information interesting. Images and information about the series will later be added to the *Publications* section of the FOMA website.

We are delighted to announce that Medway Council Heritage team is doing exceptionally well in their bids for Heritage Lottery funding for their *1918 – 2018 Then & Now Project* (see *The Clock Tower*, February 2018, Issue Number 49). The *Lost Helmet World War One Project* is now well under way (see opposite), and Abby Found, Medway Heritage Development Officer has also secured funding for her project, *Soldiers' Stories On Our Streets*. The FOMA Committee has been working very closely with Abby on this and we are anticipating that the FOMA De Caville Index will provide a very useful source of information for the project. The aim is for Medway residents to find out more about the men who lived in their street and who lost their lives during WW1. The FOMA De Caville Index will be a great starting point for further discovery. You can read more on page 11.

On a different note it is great to see that we have had several new members recently (see overleaf). Welcome to you all and I hope that you will get many years enjoyment from your membership! It is always lovely to see new faces at events whether just in a spectator role or coming along to contribute in some way. Sadly, every now and again we also lose members, and it is particularly difficult when those people have contributed so much to FOMA and other local heritage organisations. We were all saddened to hear of the death of FOMA Life Member Ken Walter in June and you can read his obituary on page 8.

It would also be lovely to see some new faces on the FOMA Committee. The other committee members will not mind me saying that many of us are now over 70, with some even over 80 and I know that one or two are planning to stand down

at the next AGM. New faces and fresh ideas are essential if FOMA is going to thrive for another decade or more. Why not come along to one of our committee meetings and meet us, we only have six per year and the next one is on Wednesday 5 September at MAC.

As Dr Alan Crosby, Editor of the British Association for Local History magazine, *Local History News*, wrote in his last editorial: 'Time and time again I'm dealing with the same familiar people, seeing the same familiar faces. Of course that's one of the pleasures - it's great in many ways, but I do fear for the future of some societies ... where I say 'Hello are you still doing that' and the reply comes 'Yes I am, I've been trying to hand it over for years but nobody's come forward.'

Heritage teams from other local authorities are envious that Medway Archives has a Friends Group to support it. Help us keep it that way!

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members Mr Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, Mrs Jo Hines, Mr Frank King, Dr Philip Macdougall, Mrs Maggie Middleton, and Chatham Dockyard Historical Society.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The GDPR was implemented on 25 May 2018 and the FOMA Committee is most grateful to everyone who has responded to our emails and letters. By taking out FOMA membership you have already consented to be contacted by us but we were concerned to do the right thing and also because we do sometimes send on third party information.

The new law requires us to provide members with information about the processing of personal data. These requirements are aimed at giving transparency and fairness to individuals as well as ensuring the safety of the data. As we have already informed you, we will only use your personal information for administrative purposes relating to your membership. We will continue to send you *The Clock Tower* by post as part of your membership, but we would also like to keep you informed of details of our events, and information and events from other local organisations, in accordance with our privacy policy below (see also the FOMA website http://foma-lsc.org/Privacy_Policy.pdf).

If you wish to check or change the information which we hold about you or to be removed from the list, please contact our Membership Secretary, Betty Cole (betty-cole@outlook.com) now or at any point in the future.

About The Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives (FOMA), www.foma-lsc.org/index.html.

Editorial deadlines

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

The copy deadline for Issue 52 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 29 October 2018, with publication on Wednesday 21 November 2018.

Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Barkers Litho, Unit 18 Castle View Business Centre, Gas House Road, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1PB; telephone: 01634 829048, email: info@barkerslitho.co.uk

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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

The Clock Tower Index (<http://foma-lsc.org/journal.html>) is updated by Nic Nicholas.

Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives Centre can be obtained on the MAC website <https://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> 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

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>

Friends of Martello24
Registered Charity No. 1172376



www.martello24.net

Martello Tower No. 24 in Dymchurch has recently been opened to the public, a very successful partnership arrangement with English Heritage (EH). It has now been agreed with EH to have regular weekend and BH openings again next year, from Easter 2018 through to the end of October 2018. We thought it would be nice to open up the tower by appointment during the closed period (30 October 2017 to 29 March 2018) for visits by Kent - and other - history societies. If you feel your society would like such a visit, then please either email me, Peter Faulkner, peter@martello24.net or telephone 01797 212507.

Medway Events

Below are some highlights from Medway Council's Heritage and Visitor Development Team. For more information go to <http://www.enjoymedway.org/events/heritage>.

Family crafts and trails – every school holiday period at the Guildhall Museum, Eastgate House, Rochester Castle (not February), Upnor Castle (between Easter and October half-term) and Temple Manor (weekends between Easter and October half-term).

September/October, Outdoor Cinema.

September and October, Autumn Lecture Series.

FOMA Privacy Policy

We are committed to protecting the privacy of our supporters. We take your privacy seriously and treat all the information you give us with great care.

Our Privacy Policy explains how we collect, store and use the personal information you give to us. If you have any questions concerning your personal data and how we look after it, then please contact our Membership Secretary, Mrs Betty Cole at 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent. Telephone: 01634 892976; email: betty-cole@outlook.com

Correction

In the last issue of *The Clock Tower* (Issue 50, May 2018), there were errors in Elaine Gardner's article, *Major James Thomas Byford McCudden, VC DSO* MC* MM CdeG (FR) RAF*. These errors were only in the printable version and sadly were noticed only after the issue had gone to press; the online versions of *The Clock Tower* are correct.

On page 9 of the A5 printable version the first two paragraphs should have read: "On Thursday 12 April 2018 I attended the unveiling of the memorial paving slab dedicated to Major James McCudden VC at the Royal Engineers Museum, Brompton. Across the country each Victoria Cross awarded during World War One is being remembered in this way with a paving slab laid in the town of the recipient's birth.

Major McCudden was the most decorated pilot in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) which, combined with the Royal Naval Air Service early in 1918, was to become the Royal Air Force (RAF). Major McCudden was thus awarded the first VC in the RAF."

On page 10 the illustration of McCudden was wrongly attributed and should have read:

"An image of James McCudden from the cover of *The War Illustrated*, 8 June 1918. This image was provided by Richard Benns, a descendant of the McCudden family."

Our sincere apologies.

Secretary's Report

Odette Buchanan

Well – what a superb summer we are having – can't remember one like it since 1976. FOMA has not been up to anything earth shattering but two things worth mentioning are the 1918 commemoration events in which the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) and FOMA are involved (see the inside covers and page 11) - including dressing up. My word that tin hat was heavy!



Also – don't forget to visit MAC for FOMA's WWI display, *Men of the Medway Towns: The Ultimate Sacrifice, 1918-1919*. Elaine Gardner and Tessa Towner worked hard on the research for this year's display and it really is excellent. The FOMA De Caville Index (foma-lsc.org/wwi/index) has really taken off, not only with family historians from all over the world but also other societies, Medway Council and respected historical publications. We are having to be very careful to protect our intellectual property rights and the copyright - a big thanks must go to Alex and Amanda Thomas and Elaine Gardner for their hard work on this.



Most of you will, of course be aware that 2018 celebrates 70 years of the National Health Service. It was such a momentous change for the majority of the population

– to be able to visit the doctor without worrying about how much it would cost. Nowadays we tend to take it for granted. I'd like to indulge myself, if you don't mind, by telling you about a personal experience.

When my father was conscripted into the Royal Air Force just before Christmas 1940, he was diagnosed with duodenal ulcers and had his papers stamped 'UK only'. Had we been rich, he could have had a lengthy, dangerous operation that might have cured this very painful and life-threatening condition, if the op. didn't kill him, but as it was, it meant that he could only eat very bland food and take pills for the pain. The last two summers of the war, in 1944 and 1945, my mother and I spent in Polperro, Cornwall to get away from the 'buzz bombs' (V1s) in north west London. Then penicillin was made by extracting it from a particular type of seaweed. This grew in abundance on the rocks in the area around Polperro

The Rochester Bridge Trust

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

Bridge Works

Crossing the River Medway – A story of the Rochester Bridge Trust
www.rbt.org.uk/bridgeworks

Find out more about 2,000 years of bridges and the modern day role of an ancient charity, at a free exhibition featuring historic artefacts, interactive displays and Langdon's den, the dedicated children's area.

The Crypt, Rochester Cathedral; daily, 10am until 4pm, until 31 October 2018.

PLEASE NOTE THE EXHIBITION HAS BEEN EXTENDED UNTIL 31 OCTOBER

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

Gillingham and Rainham Local History Society

The Society meets on the second Friday of each month from September to June at Twydall Evangelical Church, 56/58 Goudhurst Road, Twydall, Kent. ME8 6LQ; meeting times are 2.30-4.30pm.

Friday 14 September

WWI and the Ordinary Soldier, an entertaining talk by John Short.

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*.

Library and Archives: essential building maintenance is taking place but a limited service will be available from early summer 2018 – please check the website www.re-museum.co.uk for more details.

Events

July – December 21 2018

2018 Marks the centenary of the Armistice which brought the First World War to an end. We will be marking the anniversary with a major exhibition and community-based project focusing on the Sapper Victoria Crosses of the First World War. Supported by a grant of £10,000 from The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), VC: For Valour.

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.

Opening hours: Tuesday – Sunday 10.00am to 5.00pm, last entry 4.00 pm; Bank Holidays: 10.00 am to 5.00pm, last entry 4.00 pm; CLOSED MONDAYS. Admission: adult – £8.40, child (Aged 5-16) – £5.70, concessions – £5.70, family ticket (2 adults and 2 children) – £22.50; children under 5: free.

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



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

Strood Fellowship

Strood Fellowship meet every third Monday in the month, 7.30pm, at St Nicholas Church Hall, Edward Street, Strood (first right off Gun Lane to car park). Admission £2 for members or £3 for non-members (including tea and biscuits), £5 Annual Membership. We are interested in the history of Strood and surrounding areas and have outings to local historic buildings. For more details ring J Weller on 01634 309033 or Len Feist 01634 717135.

and during the summer holidays all the village housewives and children (including my mother and I) were bussed around the headland to Tallend Bay at low tide to pick and sack it up for shipment to a processing plant. Penicillin was a hugely more efficient antiseptic for the body and its discovery made dangerous operations much safer.

When my father was demobbed he returned to the solicitors for whom he worked before the war. One of the partners was closely related to the leading gastric surgeon of the day, Sir Lancelot Barrington-Ward. As a favour he agreed to operate on my father's ulcers free. The date was set and dad went to hospital – just two weeks after the NHS Act came into force – so dad had his op. free of charge and Sir Lancelot also got paid by the NHS.

Dad had over half his stomach removed and for several weeks could only suck on cubes of pineapple. It had been such a long, complicated op. and Sir Lancelot told dad that he had only agreed to do it because of the efficacy of penicillin in stopping infections. So you could say that:

1. Hitler saved my dad's life
 2. In escaping the doodle bugs we contributed to his survival ... and ...
 3. We all lived happily ever after.
- (You may now say Ah!).

Have you any memories of the early days of the NHS? If you do, please send them to Amanda Thomas (see contact details on page 46) and she will consider them for inclusion in *The Clock Tower*.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

What and Why?

Strange places in the Medway Towns!
On page 14 Betty Cole starts our new series on familiar places in the Medway Towns the origins of which are little known to the passer by.
The series was Betty's idea but we welcome other contributors!

If you would like to write something for the series, please contact the Editor, Amanda Thomas at amanda@ajthomas.com

Obituary Ken Walter (1951-2018)



We were deeply saddened to hear of the death on 25 May 2018 of FOMA Life Member Ken Walter. Ken was well known to many of us and was one of our most active and enthusiastic members. He was a volunteer at the Medway Archives Centre and always had an interesting comment to make whether it be on the FOMA Facebook page or in our *Readers' Letters* section. Many of you may also remember Ken's fabulous account of how he and his wife Lorna attended the Queen's Diamond Jubilee concert at Buckingham Palace in our August 2012 issue (number 27).

Amanda Thomas and Tessa Towner attended Ken's funeral on 13 June and we are delighted to be able to publish here some excerpts of the Eulogy which was read at the funeral by his artist son, John. We are also privileged to be able to publish a poem written by Lorna about Ken.

Kenneth John Michael Walter was born on Monday the 6th of August 1951 at West Hill Hospital in Dartford to parents Rita Muckle and John Francis Walter ... One of Ken's earliest memories was growing up on the Tree estate, living with his grandmother Edith until Rita and John moved into a newly built council house on the Temple Hill Estate ... In 1963 Rita and John bought a house on Oaklands Road on the Fleet Estate ... In a lot of ways Ken was a classic example of someone born after the war living in the UK who benefitted from State institutions and participated in them on a professional and personal level. A great deal of Ken's sense of identity was built around where he was from and where he lived – most of his life

Two-Day Stained Glass Workshop, £90
1 and 8 September, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Join local glass artist Shelly Kitto, over two morning sessions and learn how to trace, paint, matt, stipple and stain glass, creating contemporary designs inspired by stained glass history and Huguenot design.

Guided Walk: Life on Rochester's High Street during the Great War, £8
3 September, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

On a 90-minute tour of Rochester High Street, led by local historian Geoff Rambler, hear about life on our 'Home Front' – experiences that were probably replicated across the country. Geoff also explores little-known Huguenot connections, including the story of Huguenot descendants Noel Chavasse VC and Christopher Chavasse, Bishop of Rochester. Find out how Christopher Chavasse was responsible for bringing The French Hospital to Rochester High Street! Price includes a cup of tea and trench cake served at the French Hospital with an opportunity to ask further questions.

Friends of Broomhill

Broomhill Park has been awarded a seventh 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.

Healthy Walks

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

Task Days

Task Days are the first Sunday of every month except January, from September to April, inclusive, from 10.00 am to noon. Meet in King Arthur's Drive car park. Hot drinks afterwards. Bring your own tools or we have plenty. Help us keep our Green Flag status for the eighth consecutive year and our RHS S.E. in Bloom status of 'outstanding'. IT'S FUN IT'S FREE and IT'S HEALTHY.

The Friends Of Broomhill would like to thanks all those who contributed so generously towards the purchase of the Old Orchard. We now look forward to the hard work of realising our ambition for this to remain a green and inviting place in perpetuity for everyone without fear of development.

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

The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive

Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME4 4UG
SEE THE WEBSITE www.re-museum.co.uk
FOR FURTHER DETAILS.



The Royal Engineers Museum is Kent's largest military museum, with a designated collection of historical and international importance.

Friends of Chatham Traction at Chatham Dockyard 40s Weekend - 15th and 16th September.

We are looking to secure a better location at this event this year, possibly by joining with the Medway Queen guys who are usually situated down by the three warships on the main roadway. As ever volunteers would be welcome to do a stint on either or both days! Please contact Wendy Mesher on 01634 831635 or email to wendymesher@blueyonder.co.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, its events and how to join is available. All talks are at The Moat House, 8 Crow Lane, Rochester, ME1 1RF; there is a small charge for events to defray expenses.

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! Tours are 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.

The Chatham Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, except January and August, at St Stephen's Church, Maidstone Road, Chatham, ME4 6JE. There is a small car park to the front of the church and access is via Maidstone Road. Alternative parking is available in nearby roads including Maidstone Road. Please do not park in the bus bay; there is disabled parking and step free access to the hall.

12 September 2018
Society Evening - The Newcombe Diary Project

Doors open at 7:15 pm for a 7.30 pm start; meetings finish at 9:00 pm. All meetings are open to the public, and visitors are very welcome. No need to book; just turn up and pay at the door! Members £1, visitors £3; annual membership is £10 and can be paid on the night. Further information is available at www.chathamhistoricalsoc.btck.co.uk

HUGUENOT MUSEUM discover your story

The Huguenot Museum is open Wednesday to 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.

in Dartford and then later on in Chatham and Tenterden This underpinned his interest in genealogy. ... Ken attended Temple Hill Infant and Junior Schools where he did well and passed the eleven-plus to go to Dartford Grammar School, which he attended from 1962-67. In Ken's words he left the Grammar School having not excelled academically but having made good friends with many people with whom he stayed in touch until his death.

In 1969 Ken started work as a Clerical Officer in the London Borough of Bexley. He moved up to be a trainee accountant in 1970. Despite his self-declared lack of academic prowess he progressed to a job within the Greenwich and Bexley Health Authority as the re-organisation of the NHS took place. He said that these were some of the best years of his career.

In 2003 Ken left working in the NHS and moved to Medway Council. It was during this time that he and [Headteacher] Lorna worked together as he was involved in the budgets for local schools ...

However, Ken was not only defined by his professional career. He had several other lives outside of work, most especially a domestic and family life. It was at a Dartford Cricket Club disco that Ken met in his words “a vision of loveliness in the form of Lorna.” ... He started playing cricket for a team in 1966 but he noted that his ambition was always to play for his town club Dartford Cricket Club, which he joined in 1970. Most of the years [Ken] ... was involved with Dartford Cricket club – from 1970 until 2005 – he was involved in the management of the club as well as being a player. ... Another of Ken's pleasures was table tennis.

In his retirement Ken became a more passionate genealogist, extending the family tree further back as well as laterally. He became a member of various genealogy groups including Kent Family History Society and Ancestry.com, of which he was an active member, sharing his research with others and tracing the Walter name to connections in Canada, Australia and the USA. He also followed a number of related names including Duppa and Alchin. This all became a kind of addiction for him. The searching for data; the research, gathering, sifting, sorting, arranging – all techniques from his accountancy days applied to another subject in which he could indulge his love of spread sheets and detection! It helped him feel located in the world in both space and time, anchoring him somehow.

He was a good friend to a lot of people. Ken was a very loyal person. As a conversationalist he always asked a lot of questions and listened a lot – to a fault actually because a lot of times people didn't ask him in return – but ... this generosity of spirit was core to who Ken was. He was an excellent host and he used hospitality to gel the various groups he was part of together.

Ken

Husband/dad/grandpa/brother/team member

To the living he is gone.

To the sorrowful he will never return.

To the angry he was cheated,

So if you're standing on a shoreline contemplating a swim - remember him
As you study your OS map ready to walk a well trodden footpath - remember him

As you put on your pads or clean the rubber on that TT bat remember him

As you cut your grass and tend your garden - remember him

As you open a new excel spreadsheet remember him

Remember him in your heart, your thoughts, your memories of the times spent together

times with tears,

times with disagreements

times with laughter

Times with love

For if we always think of him, He will never be gone.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE
CHATHAM DOCKYARD BASINS
AND THE ST MARY'S ISLAND HISTORY GROUP
AT THE NEXT FOMA TALK!

See Brian Portway's article on page 16

Tuesday 11 September, 7.30 pm

Building the Basins



Brian Portway,
St Mary's Island History Group

Frindsbury Parish Hall, ME2 4HE
NO BOOKING REQUIRED
£3 for members, £5 non-members

More information on page 37

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. Further information can be obtained at: www.friendsof-eastgatehouse.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 tzbyszewska@yahoo.co.uk; a copy of the membership form is also available on the website.

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.

Thursday 6 December – Tuesday 5 March 2019.

Bridge Works

Crossing the River Medway –

A story of the Rochester Bridge Trust, www.rbt.org.uk/bridgeworks

Find out more about 2,000 years of bridges and the modern day role of an ancient charity; an exhibition by the Rochester Bridge Wardens Trust.

On Display in the Foyer - Short Mayo Composite (1937)



The Short brothers moved their successful business to Rochester in 1913 due to their interest in developing seaplanes. The Medway was an ideal place for testing. The business relocated to Belfast in 1948. We are delighted to now have the model of the Short Mayo Composite (1937) on display in the foyer of MAC (see photograph). We also have a collection of plans, drawings, photographs and ephemera to view by appointment.

If you would like to make a Local Studies donation please e-mail the local studies Librarian at malsc@medway.gov.uk

Current electoral registers can be still be viewed at Gun Wharf. Please contact the Electoral Services Team on 01634 332030 to arrange an appointment.

Please note that due to staffing levels, Medway Archives Centre will only open on Saturdays between the hours of 9.00 – 12.30pm commencing 5th May 2018 until further notice. Opening hours Monday to Friday remain as advertised 9am – 5pm (closed Wednesdays).

Unless otherwise stated, all events take place at the Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP (previously the old Strood library). FOR BOOKINGS and to contact our expert team if you require further information on 01634 332714. For further details see the MAC Facebook page www.facebook.com/malsc/, the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org) and Facebook page www.facebook.com/fomalsc/

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

Eastgate House

Opening hours are Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm (last admissions 4.30pm); Mondays and Tuesdays CLOSED. For large group visits and special events it may be possible to open the house on Mondays and Tuesdays. Please contact eastgate.house@medway.gov.uk for further information. Adults: £5.50, Concessions (inc. Friends Group): £4, Under 5s: free, Family Ticket: £15. Groups of 10 or more: 15% discount and school groups: 15% discount on concession price.

Soldiers' Stories on Our Streets

Abby Found



Abby currently works as a Heritage Development Officer for Medway Council's Heritage Team, based at the Guildhall Museum in Rochester, but covering several sites including Rochester Castle, Upnor Castle and Temple Manor. Abby is responsible for the management of heritage site development projects from funding bids through to practical completion including monitoring consultants work programmes and contract management.

I am delighted to announce that Medway Council's Heritage Team has recently been awarded a grant of £8,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund's First World War *Then And Now* programme to help mark the centenary of the end of the Great War in Medway. *Soldiers' Stories on Our Streets* is a community research and learning project enabling local people to find out who volunteered to fight in the Great War from the streets in which they live today.

Our project has been inspired by the FOMA De Caville Index (foma-lsc.org/wwi/index.html) which as you probably already know was started by FOMA member Mick De Caville, a local man, who over twenty-five years ago began a quest to record street by street the men of the Medway Towns who had died during the Great War. The FOMA De Caville Index was completed by FOMA volunteers and was launched on the FOMA website in August 2014 to coincide with WWI commemorations; to date it contains over 4,000 entries. By using the FOMA De Caville Index, our project aims to help local residents and school pupils find out who volunteered to fight in the Great War from the street that they live in today.

Although well known outside of Medway in research circles, this fantastic resource is under used and little known in Medway itself. Our project aims to raise local awareness of the FOMA De Caville Index, whilst training local people in basic archive and research skills, to learn more about the First World War through their family, house and area's history. The project will focus on the main Medway towns: Rochester with Strood, Chatham, and Gillingham with Rainham.

However, in addition the project aims to do the following for:

Schools

- Produce learning packs highlighting soldiers' stories from streets near schools

- Offer introductory sessions with Medway Council's Museum Education Officer focussing on project background, Medway in the First World War, and basic research skills

- Produce a set of researchable worksheets

- Provide an opportunity to showcase research to local audiences.

Communities

- Produce large maps with the soldiers' streets highlighted with information about the project and the FOMA De Caville Index to showcase in public places; maps will include the HLF name and logo and also the FOMA name, logo and copyright symbol

- Run public research sessions at the Medway Archives Centre with Friends of Medway Archives volunteers for people to find out about soldiers' stories from their streets, houses or family connections

- Upload newly researched material to enhance the FOMA De Caville Index for future years and users.

We hope that by taking part in our project, local residents will benefit through:

- A raised awareness of local heritage, using the FOMA De Caville Index and the Medway Archives Centre

- Learning basic archive research skills

- Learning about Medway in the First World War, and the impact it had on the Medway Towns

- Gaining an increased sense of place, by understanding more about the history of the street or area they live in, and people who lived there in the past.

Contact Abby on abby.found@medway.gov.uk and www.visitmedway.org for information on sites, events and activities.

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

Friends of Medway Archives

Talks and Events

UNDER THE NEW DATA PROTECTION LAWS WE ARE ADVISED TO TELL YOU THAT PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE TAKEN DURING OUR EVENTS. IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO BE INCLUDED IN A PHOTOGRAPH, PLEASE ADVISE A FOMA COMMITTEE MEMBER ON YOUR ARRIVAL.

Tuesday 11 September, 7.30 pm

Building the Basins.

A talk by Brian Portway, St Mary's Island History Group.

Saturday 27 October, 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!

Booking for FOMA events is not necessary and **until further notice they are held at Frindsbury Parish Hall**, ME2 4HE – please check our website (www.foma-lsc.org) for further information. 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

See our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/fomalsc) and our website (www.foma-lsc.org) for all the very latest information on FOMA and Medway heritage.

Medway Archives Centre

Thursday 2 August – Saturday 1 December 2018.

Men of the Medway Towns; The Ultimate Sacrifice 1918.

A FOMA exhibition.

Wednesday 31 October, 2.30 pm

1914-1918: The Impact of the War on Women,

An illustrated talk by Delia Taylor

Tickets £4, **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**,

(see below).

1914 - 1918: the impact of the war on women
an illustrated talk by Delia Taylor
at Medway Archives Centre

Women road sweepers in Gillingham, 1918

Wednesday, 31 October 2018 2.30pm
Tickets £4.00. Advance booking essential
To book your place please contact

Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood.
www.medway.gov.uk/archives
Phone: 01634 332714

Medway
Serving You

Medway Archives and Local Studies

honourable and reputable family for Piety, and after consent of parents, & her good-will obtained we were married at the Peel meeting in London, then I set up in business in Houndsditch & followed the same for the maintenance of my family which increased in a few years after, but did not let my outward affairs hinder the duty I owed to God and His Church, for I have often seen with regret and lamentation that too eager pursuit after wealth & to get large portions for our children is a great loss to parents Children & our Society at large, for where the mind becomes exalted there is no room for the Grace of God to work, 'tis only the humble and lowly in mind that He will teach if His ways. The Lord also inclined my heart to bear a testimony against the world's vain fashions & traditions, against the hireling Priests and Church rates, or paying towards the trained Bands & Trophy money nor had I freedom in any degree to flinch by allowing others to pay for me but found it my place to bear any sufferings in a meek & quiet spirit, which the Lord gives to those who stand faithful to his requiring, neither did I ever keep my shop shut on their Fast & Festival days, nor set up lights on their rejoicing nights, in all which I had true peace & satisfaction in my own breast. It pleased God in the course of His providence to give us six children one of which dies an infant, the other five living to maturity and I can with thankfulness say the Lord inclined my heart to bring them up in his fear and to endeavour to make them sensible of the folly & vanity of the customs & fashions of the world, advising them to plainness of speech, behaviour & apparel, being convinced in my judgement the following of these things greatly obstructs the growth of true religion and that humility and lowliness of mind in which we ought all to be found walking, which is in the sight of God of great price. And now in my declining years I find as much need as ever to keep humble & watchful & to be frequent in retirement of mind unto the Lord, lest we be drawn aside, being of ourselves poor weak creatures, and in those sweet seasons my cup hath often been made to overflow with the love of God and my heart hath yearned in love towards my offspring, that they may learn to love & fear Him, and come to know an interest & portion in Jesus Christ our Redeemer which would far transcend all the riches and glory of this world. It is with praise & humble thankfulness I write it for in my greatest troubles by inward retirement I have found peace to my weary soul.
John Sims.'

27 June 2018.

The Old Strood Library

Dear Amanda,

I have just read your article on the old Strood Library at Bryant Road and just wanted to say that the entry on the History of the Workhouse website does not have the full story of the homes operated by the Strood Union for the accommodation of children out of the workhouse.

My website (www.kentworkhouses.uk) has more details. The story of children in the workhouse is one of the topics in the book that I am currently working on and will cover much more detail than that which is on my website.

Best regards,

Deborah Collins.

Kent Workhouses and Poorhouses; Kent Ancestry Research.

The Textus Roffensis at the British Library!

The *Textus Roffensis* (see the inside back cover) was handwritten by an unknown monk at Rochester Priory in the fourteenth century. Known as a Codex, it contains one of the earliest collections of English law codes and Charters. It is an extremely important historical document written in Old English (Anglo Saxon) and Latin. Prior to the autumn of 2016, the *Textus* was held at the Medway Archives Centre, however, following the extensive renovation, it is now on permanent display in the exhibition space in the Cathedral crypt.

Simon Lace, Chapter Clerk - Executive Director, Rochester Cathedral, and FOMA Committee Member writes:

I am delighted to announce that the *Textus* will be displayed in the British Library's exhibition, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* from 19 October 2018 to 19 February 2019; see www.bl.uk/events/anglo-saxon-kingdoms



The following is from the British Library's promotional material:

'Spanning six centuries, from the eclipse of Roman Britain to the Norman Conquest, highlights from the British Library's outstanding collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts will be presented alongside a large number of exceptional loans at *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, our major exhibition opening in autumn 2018.

The *Codex Amiatinus*, one of three giant single-volume Bibles made at the monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow in the north-east of England in the early eighth century and taken to Italy as a gift for the Pope in 716, will be returning to England for the first time in more than 1300 years, on loan from Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence. It will be displayed with the St Cuthbert Gospel, also made at Wearmouth-Jarrow around the same time, and acquired by the British Library in 2012.

We will be displaying a number of major objects from the Staffordshire Hoard, found in 2009, including the pectoral cross and the inscribed gilded strip, on loan from Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils. Bringing together the four principal manuscripts of Old English poetry for the first time, the British Library's unique manuscript of *Beowulf* will be displayed alongside the Vercelli Book on loan from the Biblioteca Capitolare in Vercelli, the Exeter Book on loan from Exeter Cathedral Library, and the Junius Manuscript on loan from the Bodleian Library. The exhibition will also include Domesday Book, which records unparalleled evidence of the English landscape and the Anglo-Saxons' sophisticated tax-collection system. Domesday Book will be on loan from the National Archives.'

What and Why?

Chatham Town Hall Gardens

Betty Cole



Betty Cole starts our new series on familiar places in the Medway Towns the origins of which may be unknown to passers by. The series was Betty's idea but we welcome other contributors!

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.

Finding a peaceful and pleasant place in the heart of Chatham Town Centre in which to spend some quiet time isn't easy. This was the same situation in the early twentieth century when the then Town Council decided to turn the old burial ground at the foot of The Lines into a garden for the public. It was to be called The Town Hall Gardens.

The land had been developed as a burial ground in 1828 to accommodate the overflow from St Mary's Churchyard nearby. An earlier inscription over the entrance gate in Whiffens Avenue stated: 'This Burial Ground was the gift of the Honourable Board of Ordnance to the Parish of Chatham, May, 1828.' According to a local newspaper comment in 1905, the burial ground 'for so many years was a reproach to the parish, owing to its neglected condition.' By 1869 the new cemeteries in Maidstone Road, Chatham had been opened so burials in many of the small parish churchyards could be discontinued.

The work of laying out the grounds was commenced in October 1903. The ground was levelled and broad paths formed. Memorial stones with legible inscriptions and cover stones to vaults (with inscriptions thereon) were taken up and re-fixed against the boundary walls of the ground, the monuments and body stones being removed and arranged at the eastern end. In all 689 headstones, 72 vaults and 5 monuments were dealt with. Broken slabs 'broken through decay and the ravages of time and the wanton destruction of loafers and thoughtless boys [yes, they had them in those days too] were removed altogether.'

One local newspaper reported:

'The gardens had been laid out in the most reverent way possible. Those who had friends or relations buried there must feel the difficulty of knowing how to deal with places of that kind. They could not expect people who had relatives buried there 50 years ago to pay to keep up these places.'

I was born the 2nd of 1st month 1689 at Canterbury in the County of Kent of honest parents who educated me in the principles of Truth, my father John Sims was a sober, exemplary man becoming his profession with the Society of Friends. I do not remember scarce ever to have seen him in a passion, or to have heard an idle word come out of his mouth, being of a meek and quiet spirit & inoffensive in his conversation. He was divers times a prisoner for his testimony to the truths of Christianity, and lived to a good old age being near 80 years when he died. In my childhood I was put to school and learned to read & write, with some small matter of accounts, and in those days I remember the Lord did visit me with his love although I then hardly knew what it was.

In my young years I was much afflicted with lameness attended with great pain at times and when I was of age to go apprentice my father had great difficulty to get me a place among Friends for he could not spare much money in placing me out, at length a Friend got a place for me in London although not in a Friends family, my master being a Presbyterian by religious profession & by trade a Brass Founder in Houndsditch and by agreement I was to be allowed to go to Friends meetings, which I generally did. Yet notwithstanding I had both precept and example in my father's house all that did not do the work, nor will it for anyone. There must be a joining in with the invitation of God's love & yielding obedience thereto by taking up the cross to our own corrupt will & inclinations. For want of this my mind became wanton & vain & I thought but little of my future state, but in the forepart of my time I had leave to go into the country for a week to the marriage of my brother Henry at Cranbrook in Kent in which time all things seemed very pleasant to me as to the outward, but on my return to London to my dirty business again all was dull and unpleasant, but it arose in my mind that I would endeavour to be a better boy and seek after that which is good, in hope that I should be more comfortable in my dull situation. I well remember & with praise & thankfulness I write that in endeavouring to put these good resolutions into practise I found the Lord near to assist & enable me to go on with comfort and satisfaction by taking up the cross & denying myself of many of the vain customs of the world, some of which were hard to part with the more by not being friends; of the many sweet and comfortable seasons I had in those days of the love of God from meeting to meeting I hope never to forget, yet I had also many sore exercises in the time of my apprenticeship & afterwards that I have felt at times near overwhelmed & for want of keeping low & humble was again drawn away into the vanities of the world for some time I had little conversation with Friends there being none of our trade to work with that I felt a loss of the advice & council of honest Friends.

About this time a near Friend out of our county having observed a declension in me took an opportunity to advise and council me which had a good effect for it reached the witness for God in my heart & fresh resolutions were begot in my mind to walk with more circumspection in future although I had many low times & hard struggles to keep my place, many besetments of the enemy of any soul's happiness was I beset with; but oh! the mercy & goodness of God to my soul was often renewed more frequent than the morning. He hath been my stay and support and exceeding great reward.

About the 31st year of my age I had an inclination to marry & the Lord preserved me from many snares that beset me on that account and inclined my mind towards one that loved Him and His truth & in the year 1721 affixed my mind on Ann Ollive, daughter of Benjamin Ollive, who was a religious young woman of a very

23 May 2018

Dear Heather,

Please find attached the will of John Pennell [not printed here for copyright reasons] and also a short potted biography ... [Catharina Clement] created. Catharina also says that you might find out more about the Sims family by looking at the Canterbury Quaker records at Maidstone. They were a prominent Quaker family in the city.

I do hope that helps!

Best wishes,

Amanda.

‘John Pennell of Chatham a grocer & distiller and printer stainer. (died 1730) He firstly married Mary Workman from London in 1711 and secondly he married Grace Sims, daughter of John Sims, shopkeeper of Canterbury in 1727, but he was widowed by his death [sic]. His executors were John Burrough of London a salter & Henry Sims, his brother in law & a linen draper. In 1717 arrested for failing to pay steeple house rates at Chatham & imprisoned in 1719 & released in 1720. Witness to John Holwill’s will. A trustee in 1718. Apprenticed in 1703 to James Hales a victualler (father Thomas a labourer). In 1713 signed Rochester cert.’

Dear Amanda,

Thank you so much for your reply.

The will did indeed give me some more information. The one daughter of John Sims of whom I knew nothing was Susanna. And she was the only one mentioned in the will! Unfortunately her married name appears to be Jons (Jones?) So there might be a few of them about! But perhaps Susanna and her husband lived in the Chatham area if John and Grace remained close to them.

I think I may have to come to Maidstone to follow this up further, although I do have quite a lot of information about the family, largely from the library at Friends’ House in London and also the online records at *The Genealogist*.

I am also very lucky that a descendant wrote a book called *The History of the Sims Family*. He never got the money together to publish it, but the manuscript is at Friends House. When I first discovered it in the 1990s the library wanted a large amount of money to put it onto microfiche. But last year we were allowed to photograph it all. So I now just have to transcribe it!

The Henry Sims mentioned in the will had a grandson, Henry Sims, who was a clock maker. We are lucky enough to have one of his clocks.

My husband’s direct ancestor, John Sims (1689-1761) (brother to Henry Sims, Grace Pennell and Susanna Jons) actually wrote a short autobiography, which I attach [see below]. He doesn’t sound much fun!

Heather.

‘Some short memories of the life of John Sims, Brass Founder of London, written by himself:

At 4pm on 14 June 1905 the gardens were officially opened by the Mayor of Chatham, Councillor W.D. Driver, who was given a silver gilt key to unlock the gates to the gardens. He expressed the opinion that ‘the gardens would not only be a source of joy to the adults but also of distinctly educational benefit to the children.’ He congratulated the Surveyor, Mr Charles Day, on having rhododendrons and other flowers in bloom in the midst of Chatham. It was agreed that the Surveyor had proved equal to the task assigned to him and from chaos and confusion had evolved a distinct and orderly plan. The burial ground had been transformed into a beautiful garden, with green sward, stately trees, blooming shrubs and ornamental flower beds.

The work of transforming the burial ground cost about £3,000 and in his opening speech the Mayor thanked Mr R.D. Batchelor for five thousand turfs and the mould. The work had been completed at a cost £1,000 below the estimate.

The Mayor’s wish that every care would be taken by the people of Chatham not to suffer anyone to destroy the shrubs or flowers and that the spot should be regarded as one where the ratepayers would be able to spend a few quiet moments, seems to have been granted. There are no longer gates at the entrance porch today. It is however, still a pleasant place to sit and look over the neighbouring area.

After a *perambulation* around the gardens the guests took tea with the Mayor at the fairly newly built Town Hall.



A winter view of the Town Hall Gardens, Chatham;

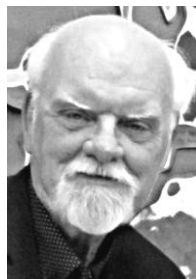
ref. CHA/LEI/P2/, circa 1910, Medway Archives Centre.

Notes

All information is from Medway newspapers which can be viewed at the Medway Archives Centre on microfilm. For this article, information was sourced from the *Chatham Rochester and Gillingham News* and the *Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham Observer*, both 17 June 1905, and the *Chatham Standard*, 14 June 1905.

Building the Basins

Brian Portway



Brian retired and moved to Chatham's St Mary's Island about five years ago after a career in journalism, local government PR and marketing plus town centre management. He is one of the founding team of the St Mary's Island History Group.

For the St Mary's Island History Group what was to become a major exhibition and research project began with a single old photograph on the web.

This was of the timbers of a ship found as one of the basins was being dug out for the nineteenth century extension of Chatham Dockyard. A mystery indeed, but while looking further we came across another photograph with the same handwriting on the caption. But this was of the dockyard. More research and we have now found some 120 original photographs taken across the 30 years of bringing a dockyard out of the marsh.

As far back as maps can go there has been an island – Finborough Marsh - with St Mary's Creek. It was in 1814 that the idea first came to double the size of Chatham Dockyard in order to build bigger Royal Navy ships and then maintain them in all tides and weathers. An Act of Parliament in 1861 gave the go ahead and the island was bought.

The work began with dams and a wall built around the island and the marsh being drained and levelled. The first phase was completed in 1871 and the three basins and four docks were finished by 1883, with the official opening in 1885. It was the biggest civil engineering project in the South East until the building of the Channel Tunnel. A water-surrounded marsh became 67 acres (270,000 square metres) of safe water with docks big enough to hold the largest ships forecast to be built.

First river walls were built and then earth dams blocked out the waters and drained the island so that the basins could be dug down. Two basins were excavated and lined with concrete and granite walls. The docks were then dug and given tiered sides so that ships could be held upright without water. Then the third basin with locks was created. Huge pump houses were built, cranes to lift armour plating installed and machine shops arrived.

The Deputy Director of Engineering and Architectural Works at the Admiralty at the time was William Scamp (1801-1872) who commented:

'In laying out these basins, each was to have a specialised role that hinted at a production line process. Once launched, or floated out of dry dock

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.

Thank You

June 2018

Dear Friends,

As a person who grew up in the Medway Towns I love your magazine. Thank you very much to all who contribute.

It is so good to read all about the 'old days' instead of 'new builds and computers.'

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely,

Gloria.

John Sims of Canterbury

04 May 2018

From: Heather Sims

To: Amanda Thomas

Dear Amanda

I have just discovered an edition of *The Clock Tower* online:

<http://foma-lsc.org/Downloads/Issue%2018.pdf> *The Clock Tower*, Issue Number 18: May 2010. [*'Deliver this poor City from the Qua(kers)': Rochester Quakerism and its Struggle for Existence 1655-1750*, by Catharina Clement.]

I was particularly interested in the line:

'From John Pennell's will we know he married into the Canterbury Quaker family of John Sims.'

My husband is descended from that line. I know that John Pennell married John Sims' daughter, Grace on 14th March 1726/7 but I have never seen John Pennell's will and don't know if it contains any further information about the Sims family.

Do you happen to know where that will is held. Is it in the MALSC collection?

Many thanks,

Heather Sims.

We are grateful to everyone who has assisted us as a supporter or as an active volunteer. We will be holding our meeting with volunteers tomorrow [see below], when we will review our recent activities and discuss some ideas for future volunteer participation.

Volunteers Day

Amanda Thomas



On 11 April 2018, Local Studies Librarian Norma Crowe hosted the annual Volunteers Day at the Medway Archives Centre (MAC).

Volunteer involvement had been interrupted with the move of the Archives to the new Bryant Road premises in Strood, however, Norma explained that before the move, volunteers had been involved with manning the Helpdesk, indexing, various aspects of the relocation, copying exhibitions, and some research projects. One of these was FOMA member Doris Herlihy's folders on her work on the history of Parkwood which she deposited at the Archives before her move to Glastonbury.

The new Centre opened on 3 July 2017 and there was an enormous amount to do in preparation. One of the first events following the opening was the staging of the first FOMA exhibition in the new building, *The Ultimate Sacrifice: The Men of the Medway Towns 1917*.

At the new Centre volunteers have helped with many of the special events (see Norma's report on page 31) with stewarding, welcoming, refreshments and catering. Much work has also been undertaken with the following:

- the tidying up and repackaging of *Bygone Kent* into new folders.
- the Chatham Dockyard Gardens research plan (digitisation/transcription).
- Ian Booth's 2018 photos of Strood and environs, the indexing of images on the discs.
- local directories with the creation of an index of illustrations and adverts for shops and businesses. It is hoped these will be linked to digital images.
- Dockyard memories, the transcription of letters.
- Strood Chronology to be updated (1900- 2000, perhaps even to 2015) and compiling references for a decade at a time using our resources at MAC.
- Chatham chronology.
- Gillingham chronology.

Since the Volunteers Day, Norma is delighted to report the following:

- the Dockyard Gardens plan has been transcribed.
- the Dockyard letters project is well underway.
- we will shortly start work on updating the Strood Chronology.

following underwater repairs to the hull, a vessel would be released into the No.1 (or Repairing) basin (now Marina) for the completion of work upon her upper deck before being taken to the No.2 (Factory) basin (Water Sports) for the installation or repair of machinery and boilers. Finally, the vessel would be moved to the No.3 (Fitting Out) (Commercial Port) basin for rigging, coaling and the mounting of her guns. As for the repairing basin, on its south side there were four graving docks, each 420ft in length, with 28ft 6in over the sill at high water neaps, and 31ft 6in at high water springs.'

Together with Director Colonel G.T. Greene, Scamp was responsible for the design of the dockyard extension. He was known for promoting economy and value for money and also for his revolutionary designs for sluices and caissons. Economic reasons were put by Scamp for using convict labour and throughout most of the scheme over 1,000 convicts were toiling on the extension works. But he also was concerned for their futures:

'What appears to be wanting are a general system of mechanical management and a method of qualifying men and applying their labour to duties for which they are practically qualified. ... a method should be adopted for raising the men from a state of worthlessness to useful labourers, from labourers to artificers, and from artificers to leading men.'

On 13 January, 1872 Scamp died aged 70 before the Chatham extension was completed.



William Scamp (1801-1872), Deputy Director of Engineering and Architectural Works.

The St Mary's Convict Prison took four years to build from 1850 and held 1,200 convicts plus 252 staff. There were six days of work with Sunday at rest and the convicts were paid an amount for their labours part of which was kept back to give them on their release. The location of the prison was by the entry arch close to where the HMS Pembroke naval barracks were later constructed.

The photographs we have discovered show how as the basins were dug down so that the walls were built up. As the convicts dug down into the soil, piled foundations were made for a sandwich of concrete and brick to grow upwards and this was moved up and over to provide support again in pre-planned combinations of soil and rock etc.. There were some stationary steam engines for drawing trucks up but mainly horse and man power was used.



Building Dock no. 8; note the caisson is already in place as part of the basin.

The four dock entrances on the repairing basin were built and the huge metal caissons fitted in situ. Then behind these soil was hand dug and moved in the same way to create the tiered sides which would eventually be granite lined. The basins and docks are 40 feet deep (12 metres) and the cranes for moving the granite were man-powered.

The locks for the entrance to the Dockyard from the River Medway at Gillingham were a major project for the structures had to hold and control millions of gallons of water. There had to be hydraulic power to lower and fill the lock levels and also for sliding the caissons in and out of the lock walls. The pump house had eight boilers and an 80 foot chimney and out of sight was a network of huge sluices and sumps directing water to the locks and caisson chambers. Tracks were created in the floor of the locks for the caissons to move along; the same locking arrangements are still in use today.

Local Studies at the Medway Archives Centre

Local Studies Report for the FOMA AGM, 10 April 2018

Norma Crowe



I note that both the archive and the local studies reports to last year's AGM [2017] are somewhat brief. You will recall that we were in the throes of the move from the old Civic Centre site to our new facility at Bryant Road, and at the time everything was behind schedule. We finally opened on 4 July, after a mammoth amount of work by all the staff. We have been pleased with the many positive comments about the new location.

An important aspect of our work in this last year has been to raise our profile in Medway. We are hoping to broaden our user base by welcoming back regular customers but also by trying to engage with different audiences. To this end we've had quite a few groups visits from local societies, Medway library staff and colleagues from Kent Archives Service.

We have made contact with some local schools and youth groups and have worked in partnership with the Guildhall Museum and Strood Academy; assisted students from Rochester Independent College with A Level Geography studies; talked with teaching staff from the nearby All Faiths Primary School about resources for history and geography lessons.

We have held three successful outreach events during the last six months:

14 October: Prefab Saturday in conjunction with Friends of Broomhill and the Prefab Museum.

13 December: Seasonal open morning with local history groups followed by a fascinating talk by Deborah Collins on Christmas in the workhouse in the afternoon.

17 February 2018: Focus on Strood streets, houses and notable residents.

With good attendances of over 100 people at each event, many of whom were first time visitors, we are going to continue holding special themed days. The next one will be on Saturday 9 June and will focus on Chatham town centre from 1945 – 1990. Please do come along.

Once again I am thankful to FOMA for its support at special events and through the outreach offered by FOMA's *Clock Tower* journal and the website. We are grateful to Elaine Gardner and Tessa Towner for researching the World War One commemorative exhibitions, the last of which will cover 1918, and will be available to view from August until December.

He arrived home on June 20th. Two days later he was playing cricket again for Cobham. Thomas Henry would have relished his son's return not only to the family but to the village cricket he had been running for so many years.* After a month at home, Alfred was transferred again to the DLI's 1st Battalion, then in Aldershot to practice manoeuvres before embarking for Ireland in September. They arrived at Queenstown, now Cork, on October 2nd 1893.**

Notes

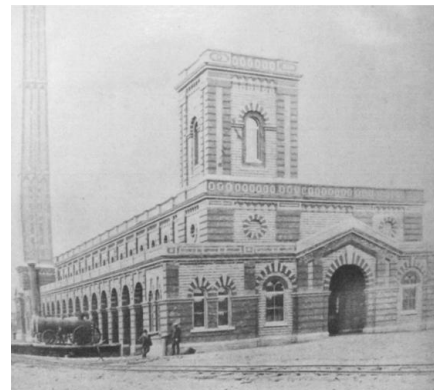
1. Ibid AWB 1891 09 26, showing that he knew of this move 5 months ahead.
2. My thanks for this photo to the DLI archive: item D/DLI 2/2/131 (88).
3. AWB 1892 06 14. Cricket records in notebook D3 for 1893.
4. Alfred's promotion: *The Gazette* 18 April 1893. He listed dates and places (D3). He boarded the *S S Sutlej* on 2 June 1893.

*T H Baker, *50 years of Cobham Cricket*, Wildish, Rochester 1899.

** W Gordon, *The Durham Light Infantry*, 1894, a tiny but informative booklet found in Alfred's trunk and given to every member of the Regiment, intended as its dedication reads "to be in reach of all ranks".

A Brief Guide to the Life of Alfred William Baker

When?	Rank	Where Was He?	Doing What?	Other Events
Feb 1892	Lt	Mhow, near Indore	Promotion!	Aug: Gladstone Prime Minister again
April 1893	Captain	Mhow		
May 1893	Captain	Ootacamund, India	Boarded <i>S S Sutlej</i> for England	
June 1893	Captain	India		
October 1893 to Sept 1895	Captain	Buttevant, Ireland	Training troops for India. Returned home in June and October 1894	1894: Dahomey declared French. Rosebery is PM



*Pumphouse 5 (now the Copper Rivet distillery) ; the 80 foot chimney was built first.**

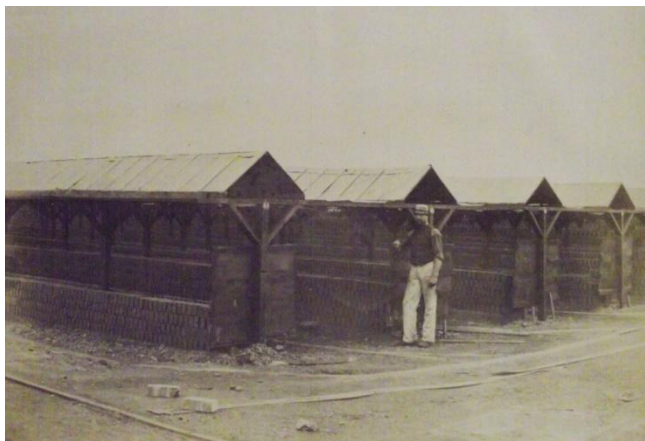
It is believed the convict labour force cleared the 21 acres at the north end of St Mary's Island, the brick earth from which was later made by them into bricks with the addition of some imported material. The bricks were then used to construct the walls of the basins, the docksides and associated buildings - not forgetting the 80 feet high chimneys. There were six brick making machines and in all 16 million bricks, plus kerbs and paving stones were made (see image on page 20).

As part of the opening ceremony in 1871 for the first phase of the extension, the ironclad *Invincible* was brought to Chatham to demonstrate how the largest ships could come from the river into the No. 1 Basin and No. 5 Dock (beside Ship and Trades). As a result the facility became known as The Invincible Dock.



HMS Invincible in No.5 Dock.

There is much more to be told about this mammoth project which is today the setting for our homes and daily life. We are also closer to solving many of the mysteries surrounding the Island.



Brick stacks; in all some 16 million bricks were made.

The St Mary's Island History Group is now four years old and has successfully completed exhibitions and booklets on the Island and its part in the life and times of the Dockyard. Meetings are held every two months at St Mary's Island Community Centre, Island Way West. For more information please visit our website at www.stmarysislandhistorygroup.co.uk

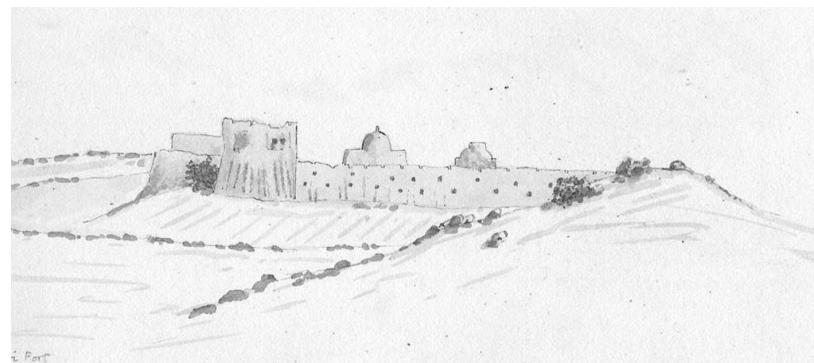
All photographs are from the St Mary's Island History Group; the location of these images is being protected by the group until their research is completed.



* Readers will recall that in March 2017 FOMA celebrated ten years of supporting the Medway Archives Centre at the Copper Rivet Distillery. Above is a photograph from 2017 which illustrates how the building has changed. Of particular note is the absence of the tall chimney.

Photograph: Amanda Thomas.

One thing will have pleased him; there is a note in the trunk signed by De Lisle: "All 20 native signallers exercised by you in Army Signalling, 21 March 1893, have been declared efficient."



Sibi fort, 1892.

And life was not so bad: *just been watching my valet cooking. He only uses two stones and a tin pot and a little wood and turns me out a capital dinner of five or six courses; can't think how he does it. Soup just coming in so goodbye for the present.*³

In April 1893 Alfred at last received promotion to Captain, bringing more pay and more status. It was time to leave India but he had seven weeks before sailing. Since I first opened the tin trunk 110 years after this promotion, I have been puzzled about who made it. It has no maker's mark, but is carefully made with brass chains, a lock and leather padding stuck to the lid to form a seal when closed. Was it hand-made for him? A second clue is the name painted outside: I can see no trace of "Capt" overwriting "Lt", his earlier rank, leading me to conjecture that he bought it in India in the seven weeks between his promotion and his sailing home to England in early June.⁴



Alfred in DLI Captain's dress uniform.

Part 8: Sport and Sketching: India, 1890 – 93, continued.

In the spring of 1892, Alfred returned from Sibi by train to Karachi, ship to Bombay and up to Mhow, near Indore in what is now Madhya Pradesh.¹ He was there a full year.

From Mhow it was not far back to Poona in June for a musketry class: *eight days to put them through the course.* There was an exercise for a visiting duke, manoeuvring in the jungle for two days and a night. *I paraded 6.30 am Tuesday to 6.30 pm Wednesday being on the tramp more or less the whole time. I had to do the picquet and repel night attacks. On Thursday began shooting 6.30 to 11 am then a cricket match till dark, bowling or batting nearly the whole time. I think that put me right as I feel extremely fit again now. Soldiering out here is no joke, not half what it is made out. It is about as hot as they make it now I think, but summer does not begin until tomorrow.*

In the DLI's records I was pleased to find this fine photograph of Alfred (see below), centre stage of a cricket team and therefore its captain.² This might be the match he recorded at Mhow on 13th September 1892 when A W Baker's XI played against Capt Wilken's XI. Perhaps the humourless faces remind us how they had to pose stock-still for the camera. His cricket records tell us that his team played against local teams as well as other units of the British Army. Two games for example were recorded in Indore in February 1893 as "Indore v Mahomedans" and "Det v Mahomedans".



Rochester High Street Through the Eyes of a Child in the Early 1950s

Julie Gay

Julie Gay has lived in Rochester all her life, except for a couple of days when she was born in Chatham! Her first twenty years were in a flat on Rochester High Street near Northgate, so she has seen many, many changes over the years.

We are indebted to Julie for allowing us to publish this work which was written in 2016.

Part 2: The High Street to Star Hill in the 1950s

So let us play the memory game! At the age of about ten years and with no TV only a radio, board games and craft work, my father and I used to challenge each other to a memory game which could go on for hours. The aim was to name the shops, their owners and the interiors down both sides of the High Street.

Let's walk down Rochester High Street from the Bridge to Star Hill and back again in the 1950s. The shops in Rochester High Street were unique and although many near the bridge were demolished to make way for the second road bridge and Corporation Street, I can still remember how they were.

Gone is the Gundulf public house and boarding house used by travellers and sailors from ships moored at Strood wharfs. City Café was next door and was a typical transport café where the workers from the wharfs used to have their meals. There was a lane that ran past this café which led to the back of the buildings and to the river. Across the lane was the White Hart public house – Rochester was famous for the number of public houses it supported but with so many sailors they were all busy. In both The City Café and The White Hart I had friends living when we all started school at the same time. One parent or another would come and collect all three of us and deliver us home.

The beautiful red brick and white stone building of the Medway Conservancy was used by the River Authority as their headquarters. This building complimented the Guildhall next door and made two really impressive if imposing buildings in size to a small child. The Mayor's Parlour and the Mace Bearer in those days was a Mr Pegg, he had the flat that was attached on the right hand side of the Guildhall. Mr Pegg lived there with his wife and daughter, again a friend to me, but she was two years older. Mr Pegg acted as caretaker as well as Mace Bearer.

Next to the Guildhall was an Aladdin's cave for cyclists. Chambers Cycles, where many hours were spent talking to the mechanics as they mended your cycle while you waited. New and old cycles, spare parts of all shapes and sizes filled this shop.

Oh, the first of Rochester's department stores occupying four large shops. The

first shop was the coal office where you ordered and paid for your coal delivery, the second and third were all joined together and housed hardware, furniture, clothing and haberdashery. In those days assistants did not handle money but sent the cash in a rocket like container on system of wires across the shop to the cash office. The third shop and separate from the others was the grocers. Shelves stacked with tins and packets and a marble slab on one side for the cheese milk and bacon. The Manager of the grocery store was a lovely man called Mr Hetterly.

In the High Street if the building was not a public house it would more than likely sell food in some shape or form. Yes there were other shops but they seemed to be in the minority in the 1950s.

We will not keep crossing the busy road but at this point it seems right that we should for across the road is Dales the very high class grocer and the fore runner of the delicatessen. A long low building in which you went down one step on entry, with open beams and scrubbed wooden floorboards you really felt you had stepped back in time. Long wooden counters behind which stood men in black trousers, white long sleeve shirts with black sleeve covers from wrist to elbow and white full length aprons and black caps. The ladies wore black skirts which were calf length, white long sleeve blouses with sleeve covers and aprons like the men but they also had to wear a white mop cap to keep their hair tucked up. Oh! But did they look smart.

Dales' shelves were stacked with out-of-the-ordinary produce for it was a bespoke grocer's shop where coffee beans were roasted daily and ground to order while you waited. Bacon hung from the beams giving the air of slightly saltiness. That was an aroma that you smelt long before you got to the shop. The Dales' assistants addressed you as 'Sir' or 'Madam', 'Miss' or 'Master' even if they knew your name. Mr Dale was a very small thin man with a curly moustache who moved everywhere at double quick time.

Let's cross back over the road – mind the car and the bus going in the opposite directions. Safely across!

We are outside the George Inn, a typical seafarers' inn. Small, fairly dark and with a *back room*: who knows what went on in there. The cellar, I was told, had a beautiful vaulted ceiling and it was reported to be the store for smugglers' bounty. In a public house what better place to store it, no one would suspect and it could be hidden amongst the stock for the bar.

Joseph Collis had a branch shop next door, a wonderful ironmongers, with what seemed to a child to be endless store rooms. It stocked everything from a washer and screw to a lawn mower, a ball of string to cooking pots of all shapes and sizes. Again there were wooden floor boards and a large wooden counter at the far end of the shop. Gentlemen in smart navy blue coats and aprons who knew immediately when you asked for something that it was to be found in this drawer, cupboard, upstairs or out the back. How did they remember all that stock?

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.

In Part 7 of Travels in a Tin Trunk in the previous issue of The Clock Tower (Issue 50, May 2018), there was an error in the notes. This only affected the final two paragraphs where note 7 was repeated. Our sincere apologies; these should have read as follows:

*In March 1891 he was back in Poona for three months, then Quetta again from June to August. It was summer, with cricket at least once a week. He seems to have been more valuable with ball than bat, averaging 3 wickets an innings. In early September he travelled again this time further north to the Kashmir border for two months. He gave no hint of any military reason but recorded yet more cricket. He was also after pheasant and chukar partridge, but found more success in official shooting: writing to his mother: *we won the Chief's simultaneous match prize this week, competed for all over India, 150 entries. The score made a record for rifle shooting I believe. He was very fit, too much so and waxing very fat.*⁸*

*Alfred's Christmas 1891 letter to his aunt Sarah was written from Sibi, then little more than a railway station in the desert at the bottom of the pass below Quetta: *I am here with a depot of convalescents from Quetta, men who could not stand the cold up there. I came down of my own choice, the idea being perfect peace and fair shooting. I am getting both: snipe, black partridge and 3 sorts of grouse.**⁹

Notes

8. AWB 1891 09 26 with sketch from Changla Gali. Cricket records in D3.

9. AWB 1891 12 22 from Sibi to Mrs Miller.



ACCESS TO COZENTON PARK: Pedestrians may enter the Park by all the three entrances. These are situated in:
 Birling Avenue (adjacent to Rainham Library)
 Holmeaks
 Bloors Lane.

CAR PARKING: Subject to suitable ground conditions, parking will be available in Cozenton Park – Price 20p per car. Access for cars is by way of Bloors Lane only and this entrance will be signposted by the A.A.

COMING BY BUS: Any bus running along the A2 will bring you to Cozenton Park. Alight at Rainham Library (opposite Maidstone Road and the Gas Show Rooms). The park entrance is approx. 200 yards from the bus stop.

LOST CHILDREN: Please take any lost children to the Red Cross Tent where they will be looked after until they are reunited with their family.



Above left: the Rainham Jubilee Spectacular Programme cover for 1977; right: contents in 1978. With the kind permission of Hamish Mackay Miller.



Left: 1981's Beauty Queen Kim Unger (centre) and her two Princesses, Sarah March (left) and Jane Kerr; reproduced with the kind permission of Kim Unger.

Less exciting for some, perhaps, was meeting the donkeys, the Wombles, watching the marching bands and majorettes, there was even a miniature railway, piano bashing, a fun fair and steam engines.

Action Forum reported that 4,000 people turned up in 1981. A former member of the committee remembers that they had to ask the council to move the park gates to get an army tank inside, and once the police had to ask them to stop collecting admission money from the motorists as the tailback gridlocked the A2. It was all part of the fundraising!

Sources
 Action Forum, with permission from Hamish Mackay Miller.
 Medway Archives Centre.
 Kim Unger.

Barclays Bank lay in a recess, another of those decorated red brick and stone buildings. The interior was dark wood on the walls and the counters seemed very high to a child. The tellers had no protection in front of them so they were talking to you face-to-face and would hand you your money across the counter. The tellers knew their customers and gave each a name or made it their business to find out if you were new to the bank. You felt safe in the bank talking to the tellers.

Ladies, need your hair curled? Ogdens, the ladies' hairdressers, where you were greeted by a receptionist and asked to take a seat. Your hairdresser emerged from behind a glass panelled wall to take you into the salon. Hair washed and set in curlers and clips and dried under that huge hot contraption they called a hair drier. At times some ladies were having perms and the smell of the lotion got down your throat and made you cough. Once your hair was dry from either set or perm the stylist had to be accomplished in pin curls and finger waves. All glamorous you came out feeling as though you had been really pampered.

Tom Hill was the man to see for radio or television, a battery or just advice on where was such and such a station on the radio. Televisions were just coming into homes with just the basic channel and were turned or changed at the set. Tom was a mine of information on all this sort of thing.

Darley, Lewis and Bell Solicitors occupied the four story house next door. A very austere building, again in red brick with railings decorating the upper windows, a building a small child did not venture into.

There are two buildings between the solicitors and the Corn Exchange (small hall) but what they were is not clear in my memory. They could have just been private houses. The Corn Exchange – small hall – under the clock which was high enough to let busses pass under, and big enough to be seen from the Mathematical School, was the old meat market years before with its bell tower on top.

Gladensborough Hall furniture gallery, all old products seemed very fragile and - to a clumsy small child - a place to look at from outside but not to touch a thing even if it was on the path. Old Dickensian Pet Shop on road level and Pearl Assurance office upstairs. What a combination! The pet shop was a child's paradise with mice, cats and kittens, puppies and birds. What should little eyes look at first? It's "Oohs" and "Aahs" all the time.

Oh, yes! Another public house: Northgate Inn. Not a place for a child! With some of the characters that frequented this inn it was not the best behaved with fights at closing time a common occurrence.

When is an Oast not an Oast

Hazel Thorn

Hazel was born and has lived in the Medway towns all her life. She spent 30 plus years working in Kent and Medway Libraries and first got into local history working with a blind local history librarian at Springfield. She was one of the AIM group who produced the two volumes of Times of Our Lives recording the lives of the women in Medway, and then Dewponds and Doodlebugs, history of Walderslade for the Kent Arts and Libraries. More recently Hazel helped Doris Herlihy with her project on Parkwood. She is on the FPOGA committee and also enjoys photography and crafts.



Part Two: When it's a Community Centre.

Following the purchase of Wakeleys (or Station) Oast in 1971, funds were needed to renovate and convert the old building. In 1972 it was reported that the old cottages (Platform Cottages and Station Row) would be demolished, followed by repairs to the roof and the Oasts of the main building. An appeal went out through the Action Forum for fundraising events. Kent County Council (KCC) had offered a grant of £8,500 which then entitled the Association to claim £17,000 in grants from the government, providing they could raise 25% of the total cost. £3,000 was raised by the Rainham Spectacular and other projects, and more grants became available as time went on.

In February 1973 the demolition of all but one the cottages would take place. Number 8 would be retained for a Warden's residence. Until recently Wakeleys grain store and hop drying oast had been in use. When it was acquired by the Community Association it still contained machinery used for preparing grain, including wheels, shafts and chutes. A team of volunteers from the Association dismantled it and sent the contents to the Open Air Museum at Chichester for display.

Work that could be carried out by volunteers was done, but more specialist work was undertaken by local Royal Engineers. They not only laid the flooring in the upper hall, but also built and installed two new staircases in their spare time, and the fire resistant walls and doors. A whole floor was taken out to provide a 75 feet hall, and a colossal RSJ to strengthen the roof.

By 1975 the plumbing work was virtually completed, the electrical system well under way. Gas, water and electricity supplies were installed as were burglar and fire alarms. A house-to-house appeal provided enough to pay for a boiler, which needed to be installed along with the rest of the heating system. Making the road access, car park, floor coverings and purchase of furniture and other equipment came through a grant from Gillingham Council.

It was to be hoped the central heating installation would be completed by August 1977. The Council had given grants of £8,500 towards the cost and £25,000 was raised by fundraising. By September the community centre had been open for two months. There were yoga classes, a nursery playgroup and a slimming club; during the 1980s it was also used as the Polling Station for Rainham North ward.

By 1978 two floors of the building were in full use and there were 12,000 new members. They were home to the Holding Street children's clinic while it was being refurbished, and many coming-of-age parties and wedding receptions were booked. It was hoped that when the main Hall was complete the Association would be able to have dances and film shows.

The community came together. Some of the fantastic fundraising came from events such as a Grand Auction from which the Association took 12.5% commission. A show house modernised by Medway Property Buyers, was opened by Jimmy Mack of Radio Medway. Hundreds of visitors went along to view and signed the visitors' book in exchange for putting a coin in a locked box. Smaller amounts of money were raised by the collection and sales of old printed paper, newspapers, and magazines.

The Rainham Spectacular was the highlight of the calendar, despite the atrocious weather some years. It took place at Cozenton Park just off the A2, one entrance in Birling Avenue by the library, another in Bloors Lane, and also in Holmoaks. This had been the site of Cozenton Farm which was sold in the 1960s for buildings and the park. In 1974, there was a bridge building display by the Royal Engineers, a gymnastics display and naval and gun display. Despite it being a cold and windy day over 10,000 people came and raised £1,000 towards the community centre at Station Oasts. There were vintage cars and traction engines on display, though sadly due to the weather conditions the hot air balloon was cancelled. A 1974 Hillman Imp was also raffled in aid of funds – tickets cost 10 new pence. In 1975 as well as the arena displays there was a raffle, the first prize of which was a Bush Radio portable television, and 18 other prizes from local shops and companies.

At the event in 1976 a Miss Rainham Spectacular and Beauty Contest was staged. The first second and third prizes were, respectively: cosmetics worth £20, £6 and £3.00. £1,000 was raised, despite the very poor weather for May. Also that year a plea for cars which had failed their MOT. Any car donated would be painted with the owner's name and colour of the sponsor; sponsorship was a minimum of £25.00. Bob Thompson and banger racing enthusiasts put on a display of skill and daring, jumping over cars and caravans and other obstacles, even jumping through flaming hoops.

The following year the sky diving team *Chuting Stars*, the British Parachute Club made a free fall display from a Cessna 172. Some remember that one sky diver missed the field and landed among the council greenhouses. In May 1978 the famous escapologist Peter Mendini performed his amazing Spiderman trapeze act and later escaped from a burning rope high above the arena.