

Farewell, Bob

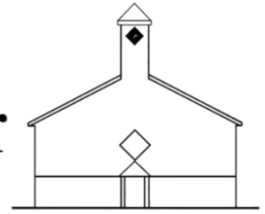


The flag on Rochester Castle was flown at half-mast on 20 December 2018 in Bob's honour. This wonderful gesture was arranged by Ed Woollard, Medway Council's Tourism and Heritage Manager.

Photograph by Bob's son, Andrew Ratcliffe.

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

The Clock Tower



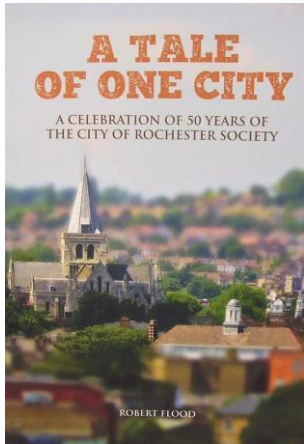
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Bob Ratcliffe 1936-2018



Obituary, page 7



The photograph of Bob Ratcliffe on the front cover was taken by Rob Flood for his 2018 book, *A Tale of One City – A Celebration of 50 Years of the City of Rochester Society* £10 from the City of Rochester Society website: <http://www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/shop/a-tale-of-one-city-a-celebration-of-50-years-of-the-city-of-rochester-society/> Bob Ratcliffe was the President of the City of Rochester Society.



Bob Ratcliffe (left) was a keen supporter of many groups in the Medway area, including the Friends of Chatham Traction. (FoCT). Pictured in November 2017 are FoCT Trustees with the Maidstone & District bus they are restoring, GKE 68. On page 10 Chairman Richard Bourne (second left) recalls Bob's involvement and on page 27 gives an update of the progress of the Friends of Chatham Traction. For news of their events, including the 2019 AGM, see page 40. Photograph, R. J. Bourne.

Also in this issue: Part One of Janet King's memories of Chatham's West End (see page 25), plus on page 12 an update on our project with Medway Council, *Soldiers Stories on our Streets*.

Gaining Traction

See Richard Bourne's update on the Friends of Chatham Traction's restoration of the GKE 68 bus on page 27.



Above: the low point for GKE 68 - at Halsham, East Yorkshire after rescue by the British Bus Preservation Group, 1990s. Photograph courtesy BBPG/Brian Chaplin.

Below: GKE 68's restored radiator, funded by the City of Rochester Society. Photograph, R. J. Bourne.



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Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



In my last letter I ended by saying I was off to the Australian sunshine to visit my brother and I had barely landed when the very sad news that Bob Ratcliffe had suffered a stroke reached my email. He sadly passed away three weeks later at the Wisdom Hospice, Rochester. FOMA is by no means the only society who will miss his valuable contributions. His funeral at the Cathedral before Christmas was both moving and enlightening when his son Andrew revealed just how many societies had had the benefit of Bob's membership. We offer Margaret, his wife, and his wider family our thanks for all that Bob contributed to FOMA since its inception in April 2006 and FOMA has made a donation to the Wisdom Hospice in his memory.

The desirability of having an Archives Friends group was realised by the then archivist Stephen Dixon when a letter written by a Rochester lad, Robert Sands, serving on the HMS *Temeraire* at the Battle of Trafalgar came up for auction. The need for rapid fundraising in order to purchase this document in a global market place made Stephen realise that a Friends group could enable funds to be available when items of interest arose in the future and that a Friends Society could also access grants not always available to local authorities.

Bob announced at a meeting of the City of Rochester Society that a talk to inaugurate such a group was to be held in April of 2006 to which I went along, and he was one of those elected to the first FOMA committee at that meeting. I joined FOMA, along with a number of our current members, also at that event, but did not become a committee member until a year or so later when I was co-opted as Stephen Dixon wanted a teacher to be part of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the so-called *Archives of Great Expectations*.

The importance of FOMA in supporting MAC is still as vital today, possibly even more so as local authority funding is cut back. In addition to losing Bob from the committee, Tessa Towner has also decided to stand down. She was finding that her many volunteering activities were becoming too tiring and as we had come to the end of the four-year World War One project, in which we had both been very involved, she felt it was a good time to step down from the committee. Another member on the committee from the start, through her Kent Family History connections, her support will be missed, and I would like to thank her for all the



Tessa Towner

time she has given, including her many years as Chairman. I am happy to say she is remaining a FOMA member.

One of our new members has already expressed an interest in joining the committee at the AGM in April, but there are still vacancies and we are very keen for new people to join us on the committee and bring fresh ideas to enable FOMA to continue. Please be one of those!

The FOMA AGM

Tuesday 2 April 2019, 7.00 for 7.30 pm,

Frindsbury Parish Hall, ME2 4HE.

**TO SAVE PAPER, PLEASE BRING THE ENCLOSED AGM
LEAFLET WITH YOU!**

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members Anthony and Matthew Gray, Peter Lomas, and Sue Poyser.

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 54 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 29 April 2019, with publication on Wednesday 22 May 2019.

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

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.

Blue Town Heritage Centre, The Criterion Music Hall and Cinema

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



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

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

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

Secretary's Report

Odette Buchanan



Welcome to 2019 – I hope you all have a healthy and comfortable year.

Firstly, a few words on the sad death of Bob Ratcliffe: I've read and heard the many eulogies to him and they seem to have covered all the amazing things he did for the Medway towns in general and Rochester in particular. (His many admirers were very touched that the flag over the castle was flown at half-mast for the day of his funeral in the Cathedral.) One thing I didn't see mentioned was his dry sense of humour. We served together on several committees and if I was sat next to him he would often whisper funny comments on the matter under discussion that would reduce me to barely suppressed giggles. He will be sadly missed.

Since it is the beginning of the year, I thought I might bore you with a few happenings in Januarys/Februarys in years past. 30 January, 1649 saw the end of the reign of the only king of England to finish his tenure shorter (in height) than when he started – Charles I was executed. It was a very cold winter and Charles asked if he might have an extra thick shirt to stop him shivering in case the attending crowds thought he was trembling with fright rather than shivering with cold. Then the cortege had to weave in and out of the ice floes on the Thames on the way from Whitehall to Windsor Castle Chapel for the interment and on arrival it had snowed so hard that the black pall over the coffin was totally covered in sparkling white snow. Since white is the colour of innocence many Royalists thought this confirmed their opinion that he was guiltless.

Fast forward to 1819 and there was the slaughter of assembled crowds protesting against the price of bread at Petersfield just outside Manchester – The Peterloo Massacre. More prosaically, February, 1882 saw the first import to England of frozen meat from New Zealand on the SS *Dunedin*; 1879 and Frank Woolworth opened his first store in New York; 1907 the first taxi cabs with meters were introduced into London, and in February 1972 we were introduced to decimal currency. (We never did get round to going totally decimal and have clung doggedly to our miles, pints and stones with horse races being measured in furlongs and horses sold in guineas!) And last but by no means least, we were introduced to *Eastenders*' Albert Square in February 1985.

Don't forget the talk on Tuesday, 12 March – Elaine Gardner reminding us of some of the famous women of Medway (for details see page 35); and please note the change of date for the Annual General Meeting. This will now be on TUESDAY, 2 APRIL NOT, as shown on your membership card, 9 April.

Also don't forget I shall be retiring at the AGM – we need a replacement – it doesn't involve much work but it is essential. If we are unable to find a secretary, FOMA will be unable to operate properly. **YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!**. Please contact me (odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk) if you would like further details of what's involved or think you could do it. PLEASE.

Membership Reminder

In this issue the AGM booklet includes your FOMA Membership Reminder. Please pay this as soon as possible; you can also bring this with you to the AGM to renew your membership.

You can also pay on the FOMA website <http://foma-lsc.org/membership.html>, by Standing Order and by post; cheques made payable to Friends of the Medway Archives

Please contact: FOMA Membership Secretary, Mrs. B. Cole, 98 The Wharf, Dock Head Road, Chatham ME4 4ZS, Kent.

Queries can also be sent by email to Betty Cole at: betty-cole@outlook.com

N.B. Betty saves stamps from all correspondence which are sent to raise funds for the Molly Wisdom Hospice.

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.



The latest information can be found at:
www.kentarchaeology.org.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. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5 pm, last entry 4pm.

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

10 January – 21 April 2019 *Primed* brings four unique graduating photographers from the University for the Creative Arts Rochester, in collaboration with the Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive for an exhibition that celebrates Royal Engineers soldiers in both the past and present.

February 5 – June 23 2019 *The Sapper as Artist* will showcase some of the thousands of rarely-seen paintings, drawings and sketches in the Museum's archive.

Wednesday 13 March - *Sensational Murders* - Candy Horton.
Wednesday 10 April - *Luton Village Memories II* - John Thorpe

PLEASE NOTE: 7:20 pm start

A presentation of the original 2002 Luton Village Memories video followed with an update by John Thorpe since this production.

Wednesday 8 May - Annual General Meeting

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 – 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 all events can be booked at the Huguenot Museum reception, over the phone on 01634 789347 or via our website: www.huguenotmuseum.org

For an update, see page 34.

Brompton History Research Group

www.bromptonhistory.org.uk/

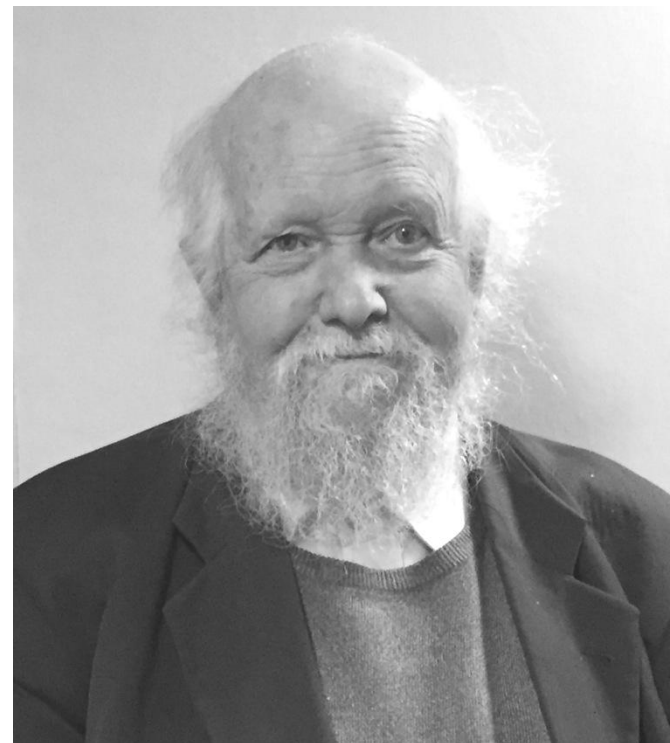
Brompton village is a complex civilian area in the heart of a military world. To the south and east lie the Chatham Lines, a series of fortifications built to defend the Chatham Dockyard. To the west lies the Dockyard itself and to the north Brompton Barracks, home of the Royal Engineers.

For more information email bromptonhistoryresearchgroup@gmail.com

Obituary

Bob Ratcliffe

1936-2018



Rob Flood writes:

It is with great sadness I report that our dear friend and colleague Bob Ratcliffe passed away at the Wisdom Hospice, Rochester on 5 December. His funeral took place at Rochester Cathedral on 20 December followed by the family committal at the Bluebell Hill Crematorium. The Cathedral service was beautiful and a fitting tribute to a wonderful man.

As many of you know, Bob was a founder member of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (as it was then) and served on the FOMA Executive Committee from day one. His keen eye at the auction houses meant that many a valuable document made its way into the archive including the account of the Battle of Trafalgar by Robert Sands.

Bob was born in Godalming, Surrey in June 1936 and came to Rochester in 1944. He attended Kings School Rochester before studying architecture at the Canterbury College of Art and spent most of his career at Kent County Council in Maidstone. He was responsible for many local projects, in particular as the architect that planned and designed the Kent Museum of Rural Life at Cobtree that features the last remaining traditional fully functioning oast house in Kent. Further afield, he designed the building to house the restored *gate guardian* Spitfire at the former RAF Manston.

In addition to FOMA, Bob was probably best known for his tireless championing of Rochester through the City of Rochester Society. He joined CoRS in 1975 and served two terms as Chairman (1978-81 and 1984-93) before being made President in 1993. He represented CoRS on many groups including the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies, the Medway Towns Tourism Committee and as Chairman of the Rochester Conservation Area Consultative Group. He was a dedicated Rochester guide and was instrumental in the setting up of the first Rochester Tourism Information Centre. As part of the CoRS planning Committee, he used his professional expertise to cast a critical eye over the development of Rochester and even in the last weeks of his life was commenting on the appalling plans for a hotel on Corporation Street.

Bob was a steward and guide at Rochester Cathedral and was actively involved with many other groups including the Dickens Fellowship, the Friends of Chatham Traction (see page 10), the Old Roffensian Society, the Medway Queen Preservation Society and the Association of the Men of Kent and Kentish Men.

Bob's lifelong fascination with transport in all its forms, but particularly the railways, led to his membership of the Locomotive Club of Great Britain and closer to home, the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway. An absolute authority on the railways, Bob built and exhibited a 40-foot model railway layout at the National Model Railway Exhibition in London and would regularly get involved with shows in Chatham and Gravesend. The last visits I made to Bob were to caption photographs for his upcoming book on the Railways of Rochester, a project that I will complete on his behalf this spring.

Bob was a one in a million and achieved more in his lifetime than many would in ten. I know I speak on behalf of all at FOMA when I say he will be sorely missed.

Norma Crowe, Medway Archives Local Studies Librarian writes:

Amidst the preparations for Christmas came the news of the death of a friend. Bob Ratcliffe had suffered a series of small strokes, but was laid very low by a massive one in late November. He passed away in the Wisdom Hospice, Rochester on 5 December. His fitting funeral service was held in the Cathedral on 20th, in the crossing between the high altar and the quire.

The Accounts for the period January - December 2018 are at:
http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/Summary_Accounts_2018.pdf

The Chairman's Report for 2018 is here:
http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/2019_Chair_Report.pdf

Hope to see you on the day!

Gillingham and Rainham Local History Society

Twydall Evangelical Church, Goudhurst Road, Twydall, Kent. ME8 6LQ.

The society meets on the second Friday of the month, from September to June (no meeting in January), from 2.30 - 4.30 pm.

Friday 8 March – *Hadrian's Wall*, a talk by Chris Wade.

Friday 12 April - *Medway's Remarkable Women*, a talk by Elaine Gardner.

Friday 10 May - AGM.

Friday 14 June - Quiz Afternoon.

We have monthly talks and visits are arranged throughout the year. Tea and coffee is available before the meeting for a small charge.

New members and visitors are always welcome; annual membership £20, visitors £3 per meeting.

For further information, please visit the website www.grlhs.org

Or contact Val Barrand on 07947 583327 or email lupusrufus@sky.com

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.

FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

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.

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 2nd March, at Avenue Tennis in Gillingham.

The formal notice and agenda are here:

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/2019_AGM_Notice.pdf

The Minutes of the 2018 AGM can be found at:

http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/2018_AGM_Minutes.pdf

Bob was described by Dean Philip Hesketh as a polymath, and that he truly was. Living for most of his life in Rochester he loved the city, its history, the Cathedral, the river and all things appertaining to railways, roads and flight. He was an architect, working for Kent County Council, designing schools and other amenity buildings. He was a keen member of the Rochester Pickwick Club, a town guide, tour guide, Cathedral steward, member of countless societies and to me, above all, a good friend.

I first encountered him some time after I heard of him. He was giving a talk – probably about Aveling & Porter and traction engineering – during the annual steam fayre at the Civic Centre. This would have been in September 1995. I recall visitors in the Studies Centre leaving – to go to “Bob’s talk” over in Bridge House or in the visitors suite. When I was able to hear him speak I realised why this buzz of anticipation surrounded him. He knew his stuff – dates, locations, people’s names, connections - significance and importance. And he knew how to, and wanted to, share his immense knowledge.

I had the privilege of working with him on many exhibitions – he providing the knowledge, the text, the illustrations and the layout, and me just doing his bidding. He would come with suggestions for exhibitions and talks for the following year, and there was hardly a year went by without a Bob-conceived-and-devised-display from 1996 to 2016. I was in awe of him; I was ever inspired by his tenacity and his desire to share his passion for Rochester and its environs.

He was a talented artist: this was demonstrated by his excellent talk about Donald Maxwell, when he not only told the story of his life, but also demonstrated his techniques by use of a flip chart, blue paper and charcoal crayon.

He knew everyone, knew what was going on, and made it his business to ask difficult, challenging questions when required. He kept us on our toes.

In the year before the Studies Centre move to Bryant Road, Bob gave me help with identifying locations and events which had been photographed by Leonard Hill. Without his input, many of these negatives would have remained unidentified and therefore quite useless.

Bob was clever and knowledgeable, but he was never condescending to those of us who knew less. He was one of life’s givers, and I for one, was someone who received so much from him. I will miss him more than I can say,.

Goodbye, my friend, and thank you for sharing your knowledge with me.

Edwin Harris for the late 20th century

Richard Bourne, Chairman, Chatham Traction writes:

Bob first contacted us in 2005 after Norma Crowe had drawn his attention to one of our early fliers at MALSC. I'd encountered Bob in an earlier life when my Dad took me along to the Chatham model railway club around 1959, and when he phoned in response to the flier I was able to say "Hello Bob, I remember you!" He readily joined our fledgling committee and was soon pointing us in various directions to further the cause, initially around organising our Anniversary Event at Chatham Historic Dockyard on 1 October 2005. (This event was in recognition of Chatham Traction's change from trams to buses in 1930, and its absorption into Maidstone & District in 1955, both occurring on 1 October of those years.)

Bob's persuasive powers were evident in issues ranging from approaches to the Dockyard and local Councillors about recognition to gaining agreement from the Cathedral Tea Room management to our holding committee meetings there provided we ate something. Indeed, it was his knowledge of other organisations and possible sources of funds that led to awards from the Rochester Bridge Trust to part-fund the engine overhaul, and the City of Rochester society whose donation paid for the reconstruction of the bus's stairs. Otherwise I think he just wanted to be involved with something in which he'd always had an interest. He told me he was on the last Chatham Traction service back from Borstal in 1955 and he had a miniature destination blind made in 1944 by his father. Bob would turn out to help man our stall at local events with a transport slant, although this became less common in later years as it became more of a challenge for him. Involvement in many other committees made him familiar with the workings of such, and we were pleased to have Bob as a Trustee of the Friends from our achieving charitable status in 2009 until he decided to retire in 2015.

See the inside from cover for a photograph of Bob and the Friends of Chatham Traction.

For an update on the Friends of Chatham Traction, see pages 27 and 40.

The Rochester Bridge Trust

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

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

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 thank 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.friendsofbrommhill.org.uk, find us on Facebook or contact David Park, Secretary on 01634 718972, email: davidpark1999@yahoo.co.uk

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.

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 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.

Remembrance Sunday

Sue Haydock

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



We all know (or should do) the origins of Remembrance Sunday, and the annual services held in places of worship throughout the UK, and elsewhere, on the Sunday closest to 11 November to mark the anniversary of the WWI Armistice.

The service in Rochester Cathedral on Sunday 11 November 2018 brought to a close the four years of commemorations of the Great War (in particular). The cathedral was exceptionally full with many people representing a great number of local organisations, from Deputy Lieutenants and the Mayor, to Army cadets, to veterans, and even a re-enactment group representing an 1815 regiment. The younger generation was represented by scouts, guides, boys' and girls' brigades, and cadet units. The armed forces representation included 1 RSME Regiment, and C Company, 3rd Battalion, Princess of Wales' Regiment. The veterans were represented by a number of military associations including WRACs and ATS. Civilians were represented by a number of clubs and societies. This year the cathedral was beautifully decorated with many panels and drapes covered in 1,000s of knitted, crocheted, lace and fabric poppies, all made by local people.

Following a beautiful service, the civic and military dignitaries laid wreaths along with many of the groups present at the cathedral. The salute was taken by Brigadier Peter Gilbert, TD QHP DL. Lead by the City of Rochester Pipe Band, all the uniformed organisations, and veteran organisations, marched past in grand style in a parade which stretched along the High Street.



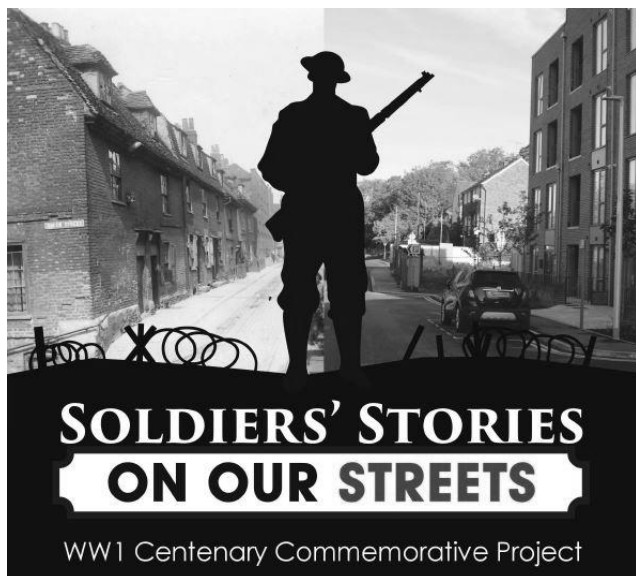
The Mayor of Medway, the MP for Rochester and Strood, and a former Chairman of KCC laying their wreaths at the War Memorial in Rochester High Street.

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.



In the summer Medway Council's Heritage Team was 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. Working in partnership with FOMA, our project, *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 was inspired by the FOMA De Caville Index (fomalsc.org/wwi/index.html) and more can be found out about the project at : <http://www.visitmedway.org/soldiers-stories-on-our-streets/>

The Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3EP (previously the old Strood library). 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/

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 Archive 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).

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

Unless otherwise stated, all events take place at the Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP.

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/

Medway Archives Centre

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.

Saturday 9 March, 11.00 – 3.00pm

SPECIAL EVENT

Medway's Women: the famous, the feted and the forgotten.

March 18 – June 11,

Medway's Women: feted, infamous and forgotten.

Exhibition in the foyer.

Saturday 8 June, TIME TBC,

Beer, murder, trains and more beer: the part of Rochester that's called Chatham.

A talk by Rob Flood.

June 17 – September 17,

Short Brothers in Kent - the Rochester years.

Exhibition in the foyer.

Wednesday 3 July, 2.30pm,

Short Brothers: the Rochester Years.

A talk by Philip MacDougall.

The Short Mayo Composite in the MAC Foyer

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.



Since the last update at the end of October, work has continued on this Heritage Lottery Fund project with further open days, research and school sessions.

Project Progress – Schools

Classes from St. Helen's at Cliffe Primary School, Warren Wood Primary School and The Robert Napier Secondary School booked our project reenactor team for a follow-up reenactor-led session in November and December. Balfour Primary School is in the process of confirming four sessions for its Year 6 classes, who are currently studying WWI.

Members from the Rochester and Chatham Dickens Fellowship (pictured) arrived at the school in full costume representing different aspects of the services in action during the Great War. Letters sent from the trenches were read out to the pupils to set the scene, and then each reenactor described their role. A particular highlight was dressing up the pupils as airmen – lots of aspiring Captain Flashhearts! Working with the reenactors on this project really helped to bring the soldiers' stories to life, and it was nice to hear that the students had gone away after our introductory sessions and conducted their own research, such as looking around their local cemeteries, and talking to family members.

Project Progress – Open Days

A further three open days were held at the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) on 3, 21 and 24 November. Nearly 80 people attended, most were first time visitors to MAC. FOMA and Kent Family History Society (KFHS) members supported the event with over 40 hours volunteering time, assisting members of the public with their enquiries about WWI (see the photograph below).

Three more names were added to the FOMA De Caville Index as a result of public engagement at the open days. This is exactly what we had hoped would come from the project – community involvement which enhances the FOMA De Caville Index as a whole, whilst showcasing all that the Medway Archives Centre has to offer.



Project Progress – Maps

Work has continued apace on finalising the maps. A number of streets needed checking and re-checking (or finding in some cases!). The maps are now complete and comprise Strood, Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham, and a second panel for Rainham. Four sets of the two panels will be printed for display at MAC, local libraries, shopping centres, and are now in stock for Remembrance Day events in years to come.

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 12 March 2019, 7.30 pm,
Medway's Remarkable Women,
A talk by Elaine Gardner.

Wednesday 20 March, 2.00pm,
Soldiers' Stories on Our Streets – a project update.
A talk by Abby Found, Medway Council's Heritage Development Officer.
Abby will be supported by some of the volunteers who have taken part in the project, and made it possible to fulfil all the aims. Refreshments provided.
Please note this event will be taking place at the Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP.

Tuesday 2 April 2019, 7.00 for 7.30 pm,
FOMA AGM.

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

Huguenot Museum Update

Dinah Winch

Dinah Winch has been Director of the Huguenot Museum since the end of 2016. She moved to Rochester from Greater Manchester where she was for many years Head of Exhibitions and Collections at Gallery Oldham, and then Director of Elizabeth Gaskell's House. She has a PhD in seventeenth century history and started her Museum career at London's V&A.



We have a busy programme over the next few months, from exhibitions and special displays, guided walks of Rochester, to family activities creating clay pots inspired by our ceramic exhibition. Claudia Clare, who uses ceramics to tell contemporary social stories is displaying her work *Travelling West* until 6 April which shares the experiences of a Kurdish refugee travelling from Iran to the United Kingdom.

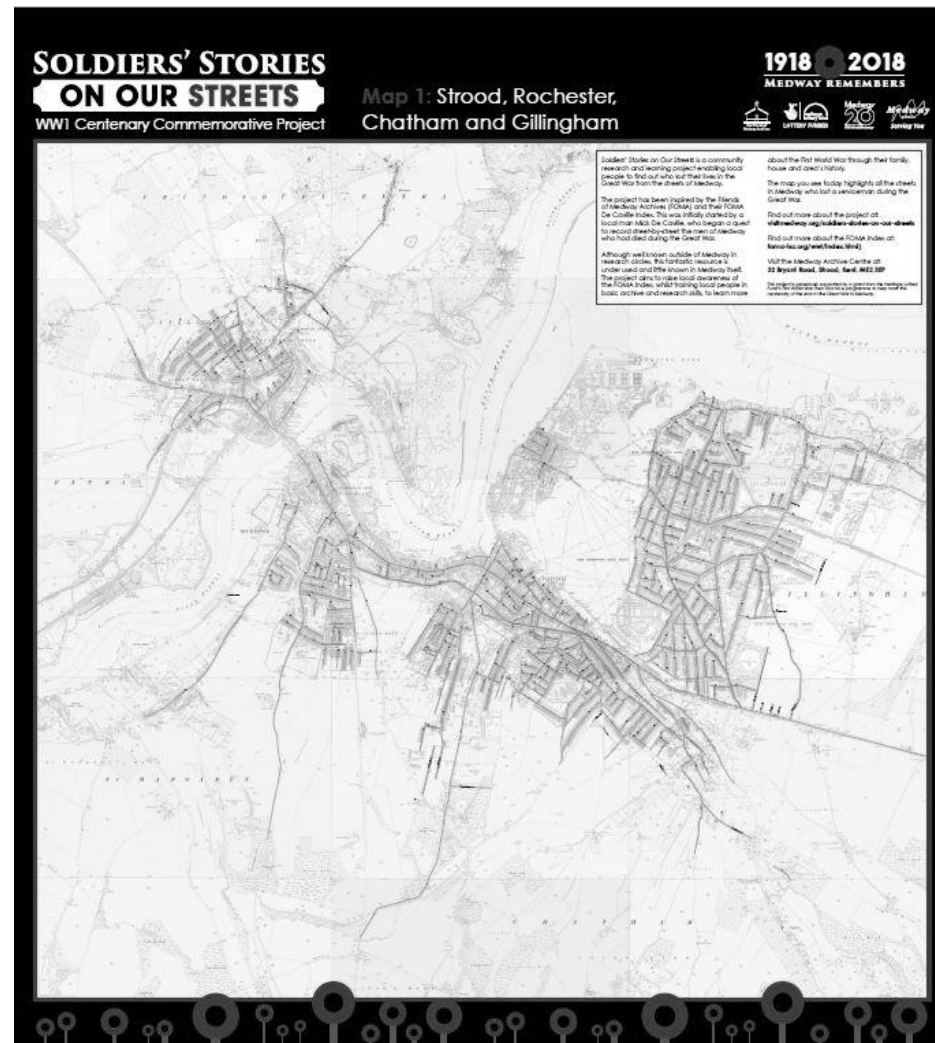
In March we are running a guided walk of Rochester High Street with the theme, 'What have the French done for us? Rochester's French connection.' For over a thousand years our cultures and history have been connected - and probably nowhere more than Rochester which partly owes its endurance to its Norman castle and cathedral! On this 90-minute walk, Geoff Rambler will explore how our relationship with the French - collaborative and competitive, friendly and hostile - shaped Rochester. Friday 8 March, 2:00pm-4:00pm.

On 16 March artist Fiona Spirals will be running a collage workshop inspired by the natural world. Fiona will guide you through a morning of creativity using magazines to create unique collages inspired by the themes of journeys, memories and nature. Saturday 16 March 10:00am-1.00pm. To add to a creative March, we have a fantastic special display by Altered Textiles, a dynamic group of creatives, who are demonstrating a range of techniques from embroidery to printing. Meet the artists and explore their *Travelling Journals* which will be on display alongside their work. Wednesday 27 to Saturday 30 March.

In April not only do we have our Kids Film Club but we also have Easter Activities! Join us for *The Big Bad Fox and Other Tales* with Rochester Film Society on Saturday 6 April, 10:00am – 12:00pm. The countryside isn't always as calm and peaceful as it's made out to be!

Did you know the famous Fabergé family were Huguenot descendants? Design and create a fabulous egg in our Easter drop-in family activities on Thursday 11 and Thursday 18 April, 11.45am-3:00pm.

All events can be booked at the Huguenot Museum reception, over the phone on 01634 789347 or via our website: www.huguenotmuseum.org



Project Progress – Education Pack

Work has been focussing on producing the content for the education pack. Several sessions at MAC were completed going through the original De Caville files, and selecting servicemen who represented a cross-section of the Medway Towns, ages, and ranks, but who importantly also had a good photo image, newspaper clippings and background details. Following this, the names were checked against *Ancestry* and the parish records to find census details, birth and marriage records, and any military service record history in existence.

Examples include:

Thomas Taylor, aged 47, a Sick Berth Steward, Royal Navy, 33 Franklin Road, Gillingham, died 22 September 1914.

Walter Richard Fuller, aged 16, a Bugler with the RMLI, 76 Dale Street Chatham, died 3 February 1915.

Frederick Allen Eve, aged 28, Guardsman with the Army, 92 High Street, Borstal, Rochester, died 17 Dec 1916.

Howell Thomas Ball, aged 25, 2nd Lieutenant with the Army, Red House, Frindsbury, died 26 April 1917.

Ernest Franks, aged 22, Sapper with the Army, 16 Grange Road, Strood, died 22 July 1918 (read more about Ernest Franks in *The Clock Tower*, Issue 52, November 2018).

Charles Henry England, aged 19, Light Aircraftman with the RAF, 91 Station Road, Rainham, died 22 July 1919.

The idea is to produce an education pack which will have concise background information to all the main events of the Great War, whilst providing copies of primary source material connected to men listed on the FOMA De Caville Index which pupils can use in the classroom to uncover more about the soldiers' stories themselves.

The Lost Helmet

Although this is not part of the HLF project, The Lost Helmet project is linked to it through its use of the FOMA De Caville Index. There was a final day of photograph taking on 9 November 2018 with pupils at St. Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School in Rainham. 30 images were ready for display for the MAC Open Day on 21 November, and we have continued to add to this tally since. It is an on-going process which will be completed soon.

Examples of the slides are shown opposite.

Abby Found will be giving a talk at the Medway Archives Centre describing the project in full on Wednesday 20 March 2.00pm. She will be supported by some of the volunteers who have taken part in the project, and made it possible to fulfil all the aims. We do hope you can join us – refreshments will be provided! For details see page 35.

The European companies pursued trade and if others seemed to push the boundaries they called foul to their government, which would react by sending in the military.

A journalist, who journeyed up the Niger two months before Alfred, commented: 'Slavery with its accompanying cruelties is a long way from being ended; indeed slaves form the only currency that is understood. Coins are of no value here, barter is the rule: cloth, cowries etc for small sums, slaves for large.'² Although the Caliphate was not about to give up its lucrative slaves, it was keen to trade. Enterprising European traders met that need, but had to ask for help on occasion to keep other Europeans at bay. This was where the British and French brought in soldiery, who in turn saw the value of the ex-slaves either to form a local army or to be carriers and workers. The local emirs accused the British of stealing slaves; they could pursue a slave through an Islamic court, but not a colonial one since Britain did not recognise slavery. The emirs found they had to make agreements sooner or later. Into this steamy world came Alfred.



From Alfred's diary, Lokoja, April 1898.

Notes

1. Written 14 January 1898 for *The Globe* newspaper, from PRO CO/445/1.
2. Margery Perham, *Lugard, the years of adventure 1858-1898*, 1956.



Nigeria in the 1890s.

He ruled an empire stretching 1,000 miles from Ghana east to Lake Chad, with at least 30 emirates and more slaves than North and South America together. Sixty years earlier in 1834 Britain had declared an end to slavery and in 1841 a “model farm” was started on the Niger at Lokoja, to help former slaves to become self-sufficient. It was short-lived because the white men who set it up suffered all too quickly from disease. An exception was George Goldie, who lived to the ripe old age of 80. Goldie traded with the tribes of the rivers Niger and Benue, sufficient for Britain to give his enterprise a charter, the Royal Niger Company, and to declare that its sphere of influence covered the central belt.

By the same agreement France took the western (now Benin and Upper Volta) and Germany the eastern districts (now Cameroun), but the boundaries ran only a certain distance inland. Beyond that, a treaty with a tribe was fair game to the Europeans who got there first. The French spread eastward and the British westward, the overlapping known by Chamberlain as the “chessboard policy”.¹

Ernest Franks

Sapper

**16 Grange
Road
Strood**

**d. 22 July
1918**



**Thomas Finch
Sapper**

**53 Windmill St
Frindsbury**

d. 21 Mar 1918

22 years old



**Walter Finch
Private**

**53 Windmill St
Frindsbury**

d. 28 Sept 1915

25 years old

Christmas at The Medway Archives

Amanda Thomas



Christmas arrived early at the Medway Archives on Wednesday 12 December with a morning book sale of old and new titles and a talk in the afternoon by Christoph Bull. Refreshments – including mince pies - were also on sale and served by Archives staff and FOMA members.



In 2017 the book sale had taken place in the foyer, but this time second hand volumes were available in the hall (see photograph above) and new books in the study area. This was because on 6 December a new exhibition had opened in the foyer: *Bridge Works. Crossing the River Medway – A story of the Rochester Bridge Trust*. The exhibition transferred from the Crypt of Rochester Cathedral and will be on permanent display in the MAC foyer until 5 March.

The afternoon session was packed. Those who were fortunate to have purchased tickets for local historian Christoph Bull's informative – and hilarious - talk, *Who's Who in Hoo* soon realised they were in for a real treat. Describing himself as an 'ex Liberian', Christoph (see photographs opposite) was ably assisted by

Travels of a Tin Trunk

Michael Baker



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

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

Part 10: Nigeria, 1898 (i)

The tin trunk next produced a notice that appeared in a Newcastle paper in late 1897:

... the command of a regiment now being raised for service in West Africa, in the Lagos Hinterland, has been offered to and accepted by Major H S Fitzgerald, 1st Batt the Durham Light Infantry. He will be accompanied by Capt. Baker of the same regiment now quartered at Newcastle-upon-Tyne and some 27 officers collected from various battalions of the regular army. The regiment will form part of the expeditionary force under Major Lugard CB, DSO. Their objective is not yet known. It is expected the officers will be absent at least a year.

Southern Nigeria was not declared a British protectorate until 1900, nor was there such a thing as a postage stamp. So why was the military there? Europeans thought they could divide Africa by sphere of influence, but the real chief of the northern three quarters of what would become Nigeria was the Caliph of Sokoto.

Work has started on the running gear, whilst the radiator has been superbly restored by a specialist firm in Grantham. We are building a list of bits we don't have, but the support network for old buses, which for our Bristol K-type stretches from Aycliffe to the Isle of Wight via Lincoln, Fifield and Canvey, is being very supportive.

We are always pleased to hear from anyone with an interest in Medway and its transport from whatever era. Our organisation's nominal span of interest is from the trams (which began running in 1902) to 1970, when the last Chatham Traction vehicle was finally withdrawn (GKE 65, which had been converted to a lorry/breakdown vehicle in 1954). In June 2019 it will be 80 years since GKE 68 was delivered new. Now there's a target for a finished restoration!



*The body structure reconstruction under way, early 2014.
Photograph, R. J. Bourne.*

More photographs on the inside back cover, and for more on the Friends of Chatham Traction, see News and Events, pages 40 to 41.

See page 10 for Richard Bourne's memories of our friend and colleague Bob Ratcliffe.

MAC Local Studies *Librarian*, Norma Crowe. Norma oversaw the projection of a fascinating set of slides for this 'journey through the parishes of the Hoo Peninsula' whilst Christoph leapt across the hall enthusing about the history and beauty of the area's villages and parishes.

Christoph explained how the peninsula is divided into two hundreds: Hoo and Shamwell (or Shamel), in which are situated Cooling and Cliffe. It was the history of the latter he addressed first, emphasising the importance of the settlement in the Anglo Saxon and Medieval periods, particularly in the eighth and ninth centuries when Cliffe – or *Cloveshoh/Cloueshou* – was an important ecclesiastical centre with links to Anglo Saxon Mercia and its royal family.¹ St Helen, after whom the parish church is named,² and St Werburgh are important saints in Mercian culture. The longevity of these names and the Mercian architecture of the churches, including that at High Halstow, reveals a close and intriguing link between Anglo Saxon Kent and the West Midlands and highlights the importance of the peninsula's ancient heritage.



Christoph also discussed Cliffe Fort and the World War One munitions works on the marshes (for further information, see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 30, May 2013), and then turned his attention to neighbouring Cooling. He looked at St James Church and the famous lozenges marking the graves of the Comport and Baker children, immortalised by Charles Dickens in *Great Expectations*. Dickens was fascinated by the Hoo Peninsula, a love which is perhaps also shared by the current incumbent of Cooling Castle, the entertainer and musician, Jules Holland. The castle was built in the late 1300s by the de Cobhams as part of the defence against the French. Christoph was swift to point out that many of the atrocities committed by foreign raiders such as the French and Dutch over the centuries were in retaliation of those done by the English.

After Cooling Christoph talked about High Halstow, and then his favourite village, St Mary Hoo. Here resided the industrial and agricultural visionary Henry Pye (who lived at St Mary's Hall from 1845 to 1909), and the Rector of St Mary's church the Rev. Robert Burt who had married – illegally – in 1785 the Prince of Wales, the future king George IV and the Catholic widow Maria Fitzherbert. In return, the Prince paid Burt's debts, releasing him from Fleet Prison in London, and promised him the living at St Mary's. Christoph made much of the outrageous story of the trip to the peninsula in 1732 by the artist William Hogarth (1697 – 1764)³, before turning his attention to Chattenden, Stoke and the Isle of Grain.



Refreshments! From left to right: Alison Cable (Archives and Records Manager, Rochester Bridge Trust; former Archivist at MAC), Elaine Gardner (FOMA Chairman), and Cindy O'Halloran (Senior Archive & Local Studies Assistant, MAC)

Who knew that Kaiser Wilhelm II, the grandson of Queen Victoria donated money for the rebuilding of the tower of St James church on the Isle of Grain? During visits to his grandmother, the Kaiser would often disembark at Port Victoria; from here he could see the church and became aware of the need for funds. Christoph went on to discuss how during the First World War – the conflict with which the Kaiser is most immediately associated – the local population on the Peninsula were deeply affected by the explosions of HMS *Bulwark* in November 1914 (see Bob Ratcliffe's article in *The Clock Tower*, Issue 36, November 2014) and HMS *Princess Irene* in May 1915 (see Bob Ratcliffe's article in *The Clock Tower*, Issue 38, May 2015)

funders have got you do as they require. The benefits have to extend from the delivery end to schools and, for nostalgia therapy, back along the chain of support to volunteer maintainers and crew administrators. Even now during the restoration and planning phase, it is important to acknowledge both enthusiast and community obligations.

We should admit that things have generally gone well for us. An HLF award funded a complete rebuild of the body framework. The slight gamble of sending the bus into South East Coachworks (SEC) at Faversham with only relatively modest sums to hand to keep fitting-out work flowing has paid off, with SEC's use of the project for the training of an apprentice a spin-off. More recently very generous double donations from a terminally ill member have assured funding to complete the task. Patience and use of contact networks have often been key. Norman Kemp's Nu-Venture have been very good to us, providing free accommodation for both bus and meetings. Great for demonstrating contributions in kind. We have on board two very experienced bus restorers in Chris Gibbons and Ian Marsh who both supervise, advise on and sometimes undertake work on the bus and its bits. Our Trustees and Officers have stuck with the job and applied their widely varied experiences to the cause.

Many will wince at the term *consultant*, but earlier this year we employed a small consultancy to draw up a business plan for the Friends of Chatham Traction. This exercise was to show what would need to be done to make the MHB financially sustainable. Our use of Oxfordshire-based development partners, led by Judy Niner, emerged from an approach to the London Transport Museum in search of a mentor to guide a further funding application. We now have the plan, which looks ahead five years, the first year being detailed in order to meet a notional target for the bus to be ready for next summer. GKE 68 will be 80 years old in June, comfortably ahead of events no doubt already planned around the WWII anniversary. Recruitment of volunteers with appropriate experience in particular areas to implement the plan is our next task.

We should mention our new friends at Arriva Kent & Surrey. Area MD Oliver Monahan is very keen to demonstrate the company's wish to acknowledge its heritage. Chatham Traction, as a subsidiary of Maidstone & District (which after its re-designation in 1930 as a bus company it always was in practice), is an antecedent of the present-day Arriva and it is very gratifying to have been offered the facility to garage GKE 68 at Arriva's Gillingham depot once the bus is fully operational. Meanwhile the project will be publicised internally through Arriva's own channels, inviting staff past and present to become involved.

And GKE 68 itself? SEC's young coachbuilders, guided by one or two older hands, are doing a superb job to fit out the bus. Nearly all the panelling, inside and out, is in place and detailing is well advanced. The interior is wired, destination mechanisms are going in and attention is turning to drop window mechanisms.

Early thoughts around public benefits coalesced into the idea of a Medway Heritage Bus (MHB), using GKE 68 as a focus. This title, which embraces the bus, our slowly-increasing collection of artefacts and ephemera, and supporting descriptive material will represent our offer to various sectors of the Medway community. Medway Council's Education and Heritage officers have given solid support, endorsed by holders of the heritage portfolio. More support has come from the Dockyard and the University of Kent. We spoke to some teachers and watched their thoughts turn into expressions of realisation at what lesson plans could be woven about an old bus with an open rear platform and a conductor dispensing tickets in exchange for £/s/d. The fact that the bus could come to them turned out to be a major plus, as organising trips from school under today's conditions is not simple.



A similar bus in service circa 1950.
Photograph John H. Meredith.

As anyone who's gone for HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) funding will know, demonstrating the intent to provide community benefits is key to success. Our subsequent approaches for funds have used the MHB package as providing the benefits. Meanwhile it was vital to retain the interest of the bus fraternity, explaining that however far detached it sounds from the nuts and bolts of restoration, if you want what the

Far too soon Christoph's extraordinary odyssey around the Hoo Peninsula concluded and brought to an end a most wonderful day at the Medway Archives Centre.

Notes

1. Cliffe may be the *Cloueshou* described in the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* as the place where 'a great synod gathered' (perhaps in 742), attended by Æthelbald (716-757), King of the Mercians and other notable figures, including Cuthbert.
2. St Helen's at Cliffe was founded in around 774 by King Offa of Mercia (757-796), grandson of Æthelbald.

Notes 1. and 2. gleaned from: Kerslake, Thomas, *Vestiges of the supremacy of Mercia in the South of England, during the eighth century*, (Reprinted from *The Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Bristol, 1879)

3. An article by Martin Gayford in *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2007, describes the trip which Hogarth undertook with his friends the painters John Thornhill, and Samuel Scott, the draper William Tothall and Ebenezer Forrest, the lawyer who was to later record the trip. The incident at Hoo St Mary is described thus:

'Hogarth went in for sheer outrageousness. In the churchyard at Hoo, the painter, needing a bowel motion, with characteristic lack of respect for social niceties, "untruss'd upon a Grave Rail in an unseemly Manner". Evidently this was bad manners even in those less uptight days, as Tothall, "administered penance to ye part offending with a Bunch of Nettles". This painful lashing of Hogarth's buttocks led to a fight, "which Ended happily without Bloodshed and Hogarth Finish'd his Business against the Church Door". And on their way they went, having fun in a very British fashion – persecuted by gnats, suffering damp sheets and infuriated by finding no meat on the isle of Sheppey (they had to make do with lobster). The whole trip was in part a private joke – two fingers held up to the pretensions of more noble travellers.'

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3662760/Hogarth-and-the-lads-go-out-on-the-town.html>)

What and Why?

The Charnel House, Gun Lane, Strood
Odette Buchanan



This is an expanded version of the piece originally written by Odette for the City of Rochester Society's leaflet, Strood Explored.

It is thought that the quaint little building that stands on the south side of Gun Lane, Strood used to be the Charnel House.



Charnel House Gun Lane Strood, 1992, built in 1856. About twelve years ago (see below) it was renovated and converted into a house. DOCID:3106 UNKNOWN; ref. C050958716. Medway Images, Medway Archives Centre.

Previous to the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act (PLA) every parish was responsible for looking after its poor. They would raise a rate that would pay for the destitute to either be supported at home (what was then called *outdoor relief*) or sent to the poor house for shelter and food. The parish was also responsible for

Gaining Traction

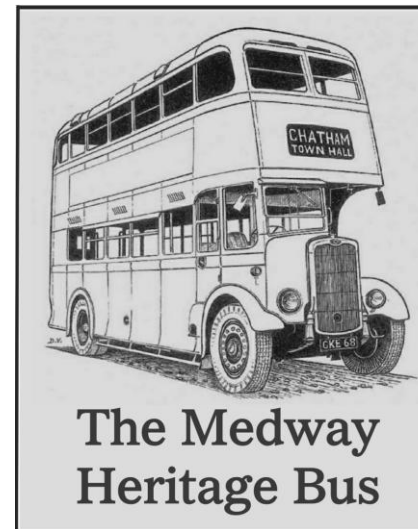
Richard Bourne



Richard Bourne was born in 1948 in Chatham's East End, very close to the course of the Old Bourne. A 40-year career as a Chartered Engineer in the railway industry took him away from Medway from the early 70s. Now retired, he lives in York.

An opportunity to re-connect with the Medway of his early life emerged with the discovery in 2002 that there still existed a Chatham Traction bus, much neglected but intact. The idea formed of using the bus as a vehicle for studying the Towns' local and social history, and for giving something back to Chatham.

Richard is Chairman of the Friends of Chatham Traction, formed in 2007 and now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.



A brief description of the aims and activities of the Friends of Chatham Traction has appeared in *The Clock Tower* for some time now. Our project – to create an educational and community resource around a former Chatham Traction bus – has moved on considerably since our first entry, and Amanda Thomas' invitation to describe the latest position was welcome. From our earliest meetings in the mid-noughties it was clear that to restore the bus in a reasonable timescale would require substantial funding. The body of dedicated bus restorers in the area were already fully occupied doing wonderful stuff to restore their own vehicles, so a commercial job was the most likely route. There was some scepticism about the availability of cash to restore a bus, but the universal requirement

from funding bodies to demonstrate a community benefit was recognised in our original aims.

The assistant seemed to know just when to rip the cloth. Another fascination was the automatic change railway. The money went into a cylindrical container and back down the railway came the change, which seemed like magic to me. I think my hats and gloves came from there, but it could have been Leonards of Rochester. Hats and gloves were about the only thing mother couldn't make. She was a wizz with patterns, and would buy less material than recommended as she could fit the pattern pieces into a smaller space than specified. She had worked in Madame Stuart's on leaving school, as a seamstress. Working for the local gentry had taught her all she needed to know about sewing. She even learnt how to work with fur. She reacted with disdain one day when I thought I would buy a fur coat which was in Swears and Wells' window. She said with disgust, 'That's only rabbit.' I passed both Swears and Wells and Madame Stuart's on my way along the high street to work each day.

Madame Stuart's, costumier of not only this borough, but of Canterbury as well, was a great contrast to Snobs, the boutique down near the traffic lights. Talk about ancient and modern. The clothes of the 1930s vying for trade with the ultra modern fashions of the late sixties and early seventies. Guess who won! Mind you, Madame Stuart's was in the high street much longer than Snobs.

Burton's, the tailors, stood on the corner of Military Road and the High Street. It sold ready-to-wear men's suits as well as made-to-measure. Later, Frank – my husband - bought his dancing suit, his work suit and his going out suit there. This *one* suit did for everything including our wedding. I even used up the trousers as maternity wear when I was expecting what turned out to be our son Antony. I bought Frank a very nice dark green, double breasted three quarter length coat from Burton's. It cost me £16! How I afforded it out of my meagre wages of around £5 a week I'm not sure. My wages were kept just below £5 to 'help me to avoid paying tax'!!! My mum even had a tailored winter coat made by them for herself. I remember her going through numerous swatch books until she found something very smart but reasonably feminine. The coat was almost 'Madame Stuart's' but made by someone else other than mother, who by the late sixties had had enough of making coats for the family.

David Grieg's was a large, quite high class provisions store. The main attraction as far as I was concerned was the butcher's boy. I would go to his counter as much as I could. Mother and Mrs Cooper would *need* shopping from Grieg's, which often meant something from the butchery counter. I'm sure they were in cahoots. I hadn't a clue about flirting so must have looked rather daft staring up at the young lad.

I enjoyed working at The Young Man's Shop, selling mainly school uniforms, and having a laugh with my friend Rose and the manager. It became more serious when the senior sales lady turned up, when we had to curb our enthusiasm and humour, as she was rather serious and a bit daunting. She did let her hair down once, when she sat in an empty stock box, crying, 'It's only Mrs Cooper in her box,' and laughing fit to bust.

a myriad of other public amenities including the maintenance of the roads, street lighting, and the burying of the dead. Overseen by a committee of church wardens they would, of course, meet in the vestry of the parish church. However, post-1834 and with the establishment of the Union Workhouse, business was run by a board of Guardians and the church wardens now had no committee room.

Strood was one of the first parishes to adopt the idea of a workhouse as distinct from a poor house – at the workhouse you had to work to be fed and cared for.¹ The Poor Law Amendment Act brought parishes into a single union which then built a large workhouse; outdoor relief was mostly abolished. Parishioners who died were kept in the charnel house but when the parish workhouses were abolished there was nowhere for the dead bodies to be deposited if the next of kin could not afford to pay for the funeral.

The North Aylesford Union Workhouse was along the north side of Gun Lane in Strood. But where to keep the pauper bodies? Where were the church wardens to meet? In 1856 a building was erected for use as a meeting room for the Parish Trustees and for the accommodation (downstairs) of dead paupers prior to burial.

The charnel house ceased to be relevant by the 1870s/80s when various Education Acts and Local Government Acts were introduced and town halls, rural district and borough council offices were built to accommodate the ever increasing staff of local councils, plus a public hall for local official occasions. (Strood Rural District Council's offices were along the Frindsbury Road and are now an old people's home.)

Notes

1. See Odette Buchanan's book, *Two Gentlemen of Strood*, published by the City of Rochester Society (£5.00) and available from their website shop, <http://www.city-of-rochester.org.uk/shop/two-gentlemen-of-strood/>

Editor's Note

In May 2007, in Issue 6 of *The Clock Tower*, we published the following article, a fascinating footnote to Odette Buchanan's piece:

Gun Lane Mortuary

On 28 February 2007, builders working on the old mortuary in Gun Lane, Strood, discovered documents (c.1858, and 1870-1921) which had been locked in a safe for over one hundred years. During building works to convert the building to residential premises, workmen needed to remove the ancient safe still sitting in the old office. With no keys, it was broken open and the documents were discovered inside. Despite the length of time the documents had been stored in the safe they had survived in remarkable condition. The building has been the object of

vandalism, fires and structural damage to the roof allowing rain water to penetrate, but the quality of the safe was such that the documents have survived intact.

The documents, comprising financial records, paying in books, and list of jurors and letters dating from 1871, and referring to the overseeing of the Poor Law, have been handed to the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC) by Cllr Sue Haydock. Sue said, "Whilst visiting the site as part of my day job working for the Diocese of Rochester, one of the workmen mentioned the papers and showed them to me. Wearing my hat as the Council's Champion for Heritage Matters, and as a Vice-President of the Friends of Medway Archives, I recognised their significance and offered to take them to MALSC."



The contents of the Gun Lane Mortuary safe are examined at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

This is a very important deposit as much of the Strood Parish papers have been scattered about. These will add a few more pieces to the jigsaw – although if anyone knows the whereabouts of any others, we shall be pleased to see them.

The overseeing is still carried on today by the Strood in Need Charity, the Trustee of which is Cllr. Jane Etheridge.

My West End

Janet King

I was born in the workhouse (!) - All Saints Hospital) - on Elizabeth Ward, and spent the first twenty years of my life living and working in Chatham. I became familiar with the high street as I worked at the west end and lived at the east end. I still live in Medway and am interested in its history, an interest kindled by one particular teacher at school.



Part 1

Going *up west* in Chatham meant a trip to the Royal or Empire theatres. The Royal as I remember was somewhat larger and more splendid than the Empire. I remember exiting the Royal with my dad because a particular act had frightened me. What it was I can't quite remember, but it involved a gentleman from foreign parts, a magician I think. The Empire was where we went for the Christmas pantomimes. We had a box as it was a special treat. One year the pantomime was on ice, and a girl from my school was in it. I couldn't figure out how it was possible to have ice in a theatre, and if truth be told I still don't know. After a performance, and sometimes for a treat, we went to Holbrook's, somewhere near the Empire, for a crab tea. My granddad was in the habit of drinking his tea from the saucer, and even did this when we were out, much to mother's chagrin. I later found out that tea cools down quicker in the saucer, which was ideal if you were hurrying to get to work of a morning, and the habit had stuck with granddad. From our house in Institute Road to the theatres we passed many shops now long gone. I can't even remember many of them now. The west end had a better class of shop than our east end and we could only afford to use them now and then.

I became familiar with the west end of Chatham because of walking to my work as *junior sales* at The Young Man's Shop, number 44 in the high street. I hadn't been there long when I was featured in the local paper as *the counter attraction*. The shop was very near to the newspaper offices and the journalist came looking in each shop nearby for someone under the age of fifty, as he was missing an *attraction* for that week.

The shops I particularly remember passing, apart from David Grieg's and their butcher's boy (!), were Harwood's and Bates. We went to Harwood's for our furnishing needs, and mum and dad had some reproduction Elizabethan furniture from there. It seemed as though it had always been in the house. Going to Bates was quite an adventure. Mother bought dress material for me and her there, as well as patterns. There were lots of pattern books and it was fun going through them looking for the latest styles. Watching the material being cut was interesting.