

Chatham Intra's Pop Up Museum

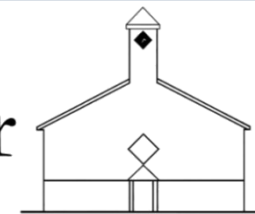
FOMA's Vice Chairman, Rob Flood has been working with Kevin Younger and Xtina Lamb from IntraArts to create a pop up museum in the windows of IntraArts at 337-341 Rochester High Street, the old Featherstone's menswear shop. The museum ran from 2 to 30 April 2021 and below is an image of one of the windows. Further details on page 10.



Photograph, Rob Flood.

If undelivered, please return to:
Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, ME2 3EP.

The Clock Tower



Issue Number 62: May 2021
£2.00; free to members

The Friends of Medway Archives
Excepted Charity registration number XR92894

Thank you, Josie!



FOMA Chairman, Elaine Gardner presents retiring FOMA Treasurer, Josie Iles with a beautiful bouquet of flowers and a John Lewis voucher. More on page 3
Photograph by Jean Skilling.

ALSO INSIDE – FOMA's first Zoom talk

AND

A Clock Tower Special Feature – 1971 Decimalisation Memories

FOMA's First Zoom Event

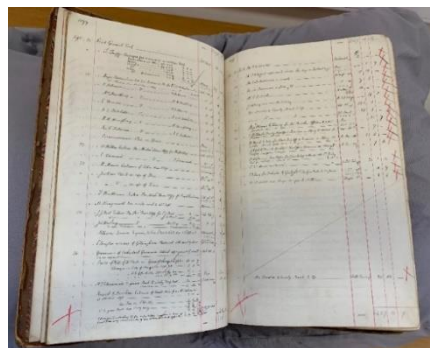


Rob Flood (left) introduced FOMA's first Zoom talk which took place on Thursday 8 April 2021. Entitled, *Work and Working in Medway*, the talk was given by Dr Jeremy Clarke, Medway Council's Education Officer (also pictured). Find out more on page 14.



Photographs by Amanda Thomas.

Auction Purchase



Earlier this year FOMA helped with the acquisition at auction of ten bill books from Rochester solicitors Arnold, Tuff and Grimwade. Dating from 1859 to 1977, Rob Flood tells the story on page 9 of how these important items have now been deposited at the Medway Archives Centre.

Left: one of the bill books; photograph, Rob Flood.

Right: the new decimal coinage in 1971; photograph, Michael Jennings.

Decimalisation Memories

15 February 1971 was Decimal Day and we said goodbye to 20 shillings to the pound and said hello to a to a whole new system – and inflation. FOMA readers recall these interesting times on page 33.



Chatham Intra's Pop Up Museum

On page 10 Rob Flood relates how the old Featherstone's menswear shop in Chatham Intra has been transformed into a new pop up museum telling the story of the area's fascinating past.

Below and overleaf are some more of the displays which could be seen in the shop's windows.



Left: the display on barges.

Below: the Chatham Empire display.



Left: the display on brewing.



Photographs, Rob Flood.

The Committee

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Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL

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Russell John Race, JP, DL

Vice President

Sue Haydock.

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Jean Skilling to be adopted at the FOMA AGM

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The Clock Tower Editor and Publicist

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Chairman's Letter

Elaine Gardner



After four letters from lockdown, it is a delight to write this with the end in sight! The Medway Archives Centre (MAC) is open once more and by the time this edition of *The Clock Tower* reaches you we will be able to meet indoors in family groups, or as a group of six people not in your bubble - and people can even stay overnight. After just the odd visitation from the cat next door I'm not sure how I shall manage to cope with all this company!

Since the committee members have become more familiar with Zoom we have managed to hold committee meetings online and we have also made the decision to hold the FOMA AGM on 11 June via Zoom (see page 5). I hope that as many as possible of you will be able to attend, and a link to the meeting will be sent via email which you can just click on to join. Alas Zoom meetings don't come with tea and homemade cakes.

We held our first talk via zoom on 8 April following an email consultation with members which was met with a resounding, "Yes, please!" The talk was attended by over 30 members and non-members, including some who do not live locally and would normally be unable to make it to our events. Jeremy Clarke the Guildhall Museum's Education Officer gave a very enjoyable talk, and you can read more about it on page 14. We are hoping to arrange more talks via Zoom in the near future so watch out for emails from Amanda Thomas. However we do also hope to resume face-to-face meetings with our regular September talk – fingers crossed.

Our Treasurer, Josie Iles has regretfully had to resign due to family commitments and we are sorry to see her go. She has been our Treasurer since May 2015 and the FOMA committee would like to thank her very much for her contribution. On Monday 26 April – and as depicted on our front cover - I was able to present her with a thank-you gift and flowers on behalf of the FOMA committee.

We are most fortunate that Jean Skilling has agreed to stand for election as Treasurer and at the last committee meeting was co-opted pending formal acceptance at June's AGM. We are delighted she has agreed to return to the committee, particularly as she brings a wealth of experience.

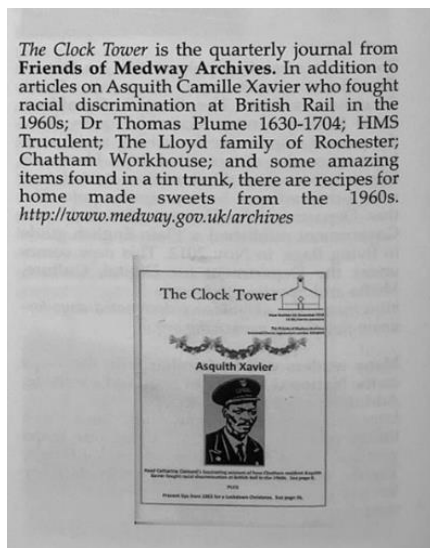
We have continued to support MAC and were delighted to receive a grant from The Friends of National Libraries to enable the purchase at auction of a considerable collection of documents relating to Arnold Tuff & Grimwade, Medway solicitors since the mid-1700s. Rob Flood relates the full story on page 9.

Finally, I am delighted to report that although FOMA has been a member of the British Association for Local History (BALH) for some time, we have not done a huge amount to strengthen our ties with them – until now! We were pleased recently to see a review of *The Clock Tower* (Issue 60, November 2020) in the *Local History News* which comes with their journal, *The Local Historian*, Issue 138 Winter 2021, as pictured.

I look forward to being able to meet members again soon and resuming FOMA's activities in 2021. Thank you for your continued support throughout the past 14 months.

New Members

A warm welcome to new FOMA members Mr John De Rose, Ms Claire Hayes, and Mr David Winter.



Membership Reminder

Page 7 of the AGM insert included in this issue contains your FOMA Membership Renewal form.

If you have not already done so, please pay this as soon as possible.

Membership can be renewed in several ways:

By standing order using the form on page 8 of the AGM insert and forwarding it to your bank.

You can pay on the FOMA website <http://foma-lsc.org/membership.html>

Payment may also be made using the BAC system:

SORT CODE 60-21-02, ACCOUNT No. 48040304 and please use YOUR NAME (in capitals) for REFERENCE; please email Betty Cole to confirm you have paid in this way at becole40@gmail.com

If you wish to renew by post, cheques must be made payable to

Friends of the Medway Archives and sent to:

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: becole40@gmail.com

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

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 63 of *The Clock Tower* is Monday 26 July 2021, with publication on Wednesday 18 August 2021.

Publication date

The fourth Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Bakers Litho, Unit 18 Castle View Business Centre, Gas House Road, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1PB; telephone: 01634 829048, email: info@bakerslitho.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 Dr 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 Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3EP. 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 FOMA Chairman: Elaine Gardner, 102 Valley View Road, Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent; emgardner@virginmedia.com; 01634 408595. All correspondence should be directed to the FOMA Secretary: Christopher de Coulon Berthoud, 4 Albert Road, Rochester, ME1 3DG, Kent; berthoud@blueyonder.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: becole40@gmail.com

FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

During lockdown Chatham Traction has remained active, though work on the GKE bus has been postponed. The Chairman, Richard Bourne regularly sends us updates and links to Chatham Traction's newsletters.

Whilst the group was not able to meet people at a normal AGM this year, a video walk-round of the GKE bus at the Coachworks was organised. Trustee Paul Baker was in the initiative and the result has been made available on Youtube:
<https://youtu.be/7YVaQrbECXU>

A report on the AGM, which was held on Zoom, and other items can be found here:
http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/210315_Update_55.pdf

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.

Friends of Broomhill

We are pleased to confirm that we have now resumed our volunteer sessions at Broomhill Park and old orchard woodland area.

Thursday Old Orchard Workgroup - every Thursday 10am - 12pm:

Our Thursday morning workgroup concentrates on the maintenance of the Old Orchard woodland area. Every Thursday morning throughout the year, 10am to 12 Noon, meet in the car park at the end of King Arthur's Drive (ME2 3NB) at 10am - all welcome.

Sunday Task Days 2021/2022 - 10am to 12pm:

5 September 2021 - Litter Pick
 3 October 2021 - Scrub clear
 7 November 2021 - Bulb planting
 5 December 2021 - Shrub/tree planting
 6 February 2022 - Bob Wade Day
 6 March 2022 - Wild flower planting
 3 April 2022 - Litter pick

The task days are open to volunteers of all ages and abilities (children accompanied by responsible adult please). Tools are provided or bring your own. It's fun, healthy and free so get involved! If you would like to know more about volunteering with us, please contact us by telephone: David Park 07968-380588 or email us at: secretary@friendsofbroomhill.org.uk

For further details see our car park notice boards, or visit our website: www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk You can also find us on social media (Facebook, Instagram & Twitter) or contact David Park, Secretary on 01634 718972 email: secretary@friendsofbroomhill.org.uk



Secretary's Report

Chris de Coulon Berthoud



We have passed a year in this strange, sad, limbo of lockdown, restriction of movement, and worrying glances at local statistics here in Medway. As the vaccination process rolls out, it does seem that we can have some quiet optimism that things will slowly get back to some new normality. I was incredibly impressed at the speed and efficiency with which my first vaccination took place at The Pentagon in Chatham, I didn't even have a chance to take the book I'd taken with me out of my pocket before I was processed, injected, and walking home.

Now that committee meetings have moved to Zoom calls, I have had to up my game when it comes to arranging the background of my new temporary office. Although the rest of the room is stacked with untidy piles of the books and papers to which I constantly refer as I continue to write and research my seemingly never-ending PhD, at least I have been able to bring a modicum of order to that one part of the room which is seen by my colleagues on the committee.

Since discovering the embossed mark of *Arthur Lacey, Bookseller* in my copy of Keble Howard's *Letters to Dolly* – see page 18 – I have started reading about the history of bookshops in the Medway Towns and there is one story by which I have become fascinated. It involves a wartime bookshop in Chatham High Street called the Anglo-American Bookshop, run by a hairdresser who went on to become a newsagent in the same premises at 316 Chatham High Street until at least 1974. If anyone can remember Cecil Reede's newsagent, or possesses a photograph, it would be fantastic to hear from you. You can find my contact details on page 46.

The FOMA AGM

Friday 11 June 2021, 2.30 pm,

by Zoom – details to be sent to members by email

**THE AGM LEAFLET IS INCLUDED WITH THIS ISSUE OF
 THE CLOCK TOWER**

Obituary

Lady Margaret Worcester (1933 - 2021)



It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Lady Margaret Worcester, wife of FOMA Patron, Professor Sir Robert Worcester KBE, who died peacefully on 20 December 2020, aged 87.

Born Margaret Noel Smallbone in Devon in 1933, she married Sir Robert in 1982, a second marriage for both. Lady Worcester is survived by sons Dr Angus Turner and Mr James Möser, and is pictured here at the time of Sir Robert's appointment as Chancellor of the University of Kent in 2007.

We send our sincere condolences to the Worcester family and Sir Robert and thank him for kindly providing us with the information and photograph above.

Exhibitions

There are two new free exhibitions on display in the foyer to MAC for which no appointment is needed. Please note, you will not be able to enter MAC itself without a prior booking.

Pestilence and contagion: from Plague to COVID-19

How past pandemics have affected the Medway area. Entries in the 1666 burial registers show the virulence of the plague outbreak that year. Vaccination programmes had their critics in 19th Century, just as they do today. Attempts to contain and treat successive outbreaks of several epidemics - smallpox, cholera, typhoid and the Spanish flu - are included. It is sobering to realise that the regulations which are currently in place to counter COVID-19 were known and used in centuries past.

Health Matters: Corridors of care

A brief look at hospitals and health care regimes in Medway. From the establishment of Hawkins Hospital administering to mariners and shipbuilders in the 16th Century, and provision for the poor and infirm in the Workhouses in the 18th and 19th Century to hospitals for the military and for the ordinary folk of Medway. This exhibition offers a whistle-stop tour of hospitals which have come and gone. Melville and Fort Pitt disappeared a lifetime ago. But All Saints and St. Bartholomew's closed within living memory. They will be remembered with affection (or possibly dread) by many in Medway.

For further details please visit the website at

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200391/medway_archives_centre/1179/medway_archives_centre_and_coronavirus_covid-19

CITY OF ROCHESTER SOCIETY WALKING TOURS

The Society's circular walking tours of Rochester centre recommence on Wednesday 19 May and continue until 31 October 2021. They take place each Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoon, **starting at 2.15 pm from the Visitor Information Centre in Rochester High Street** and last about 90 minutes.

Why not go along and discover fresh information about Rochester's history and buildings from one of the Society's well informed volunteer guides? The talks are free but donations towards the various Rochester projects supported by the Society are very welcome.

All the walks are fully compliant with current Covid requirements.

News and Events

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

FOMA Talks and Events

All events are subject to change and to government guidance for public gatherings. Further information will be available on the FOMA website (www.foma-lsc.org), our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/fomalsec) and sent to members via email, where appropriate.

Friday 11 June 2021, 2.30 pm,
By Zoom – details to be sent to members by email

FOMA AGM.

The AGM leaflet is included with this issue of *The Clock Tower*

Enquiries through the FOMA Chairman: Elaine Gardner, 102 Valley View Road, Rochester, ME1 3NX, Kent; emgardner@virginmedia.com; 01634 408595.

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

Medway Archives Centre

32 Bryant Rd, Rochester ME2 3EP; 01634 332714.

Medway Archives Centre is open for pre-booked appointments only

Our reopening is planned in a cautious way to ensure that we can review all of the practical issues involved in running the service safely. We will keep these opening arrangements under review.

About appointments

We are operating an appointment-only system and all material must be pre-booked. We can not accommodate visits without an appointment.

Opening hours are 9.30am to 1pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Four visitors can be accommodated at one time to ensure social distancing. You can order up to six archive documents, up to 10 local studies, and up to four microfilm resources per appointment.

How to make an appointment

When you book we will ask for your name and contact details so that we can keep in touch with you about your appointment. We will also ask that these details are recorded for NHS Test and Trace purposes for 21 days.

Email us at malsc@medway.gov.uk to make an appointment and to discuss which items you wish to consult.

At least 3 working days' notice prior to your visit are required.

- Toilets are available but only for visitors to Medway Archives Centre
- Lockers are available
- There are no refreshment facilities currently available in the foyer

Brian Kingsley Smith

(8 March 1936 - 29 September 2020)



We were saddened to hear of the death of Brian Kingsley Smith, a Vice-President of FOMA who was most active in the early days of the Friends' foundation. At the inaugural AGM on 6 April 2006, he gave a talk entitled, *Aviation in Kent*, which he subsequently wrote about in Issue 2 of *The Clock Tower*.

Brian is pictured third from the right at the first AGM together with the painting he had had commissioned of a Short Sunderland. The picture is by David Ellwood and shows the aircraft making its approach to land over Rochester Bridge. The work was lent by Brian indefinitely to Rochester's Castle Club together with another painting by Ellwood of a Short Stirling over Rochester.

Pictured at the FOMA Inaugural AGM (and their titles at the time).



Everyone), Stephen Dixon (Borough Archivist), Brian Kingsley Smith (Vice-President), Amanda Thomas (The Clock Tower Editor), Jean Skilling (Treasurer). Front row and seated: Councillor Sue Haydock (Vice President and Medway Council Representative), Roy Murrant (Chairman), Tessa Towner (Vice Chairman).

Back row from left to right: John Witheridge (Committee Member), Yolanda Dunn (Committee Member and Press Officer), Bob Ratcliffe (Committee Member), Norma Crowe, (Local Studies Librarian), Russell Race (President), Tony Farnham, David Carder (Committee Member), Dr Andrew Hann (Committee Member and Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past For

To follow is the official obituary of Brian Kingsley Smith taken from www.funeralguide.co.uk/obituaries/81613

‘One of Medway’s top solicitors, planning consultant and champion of Rochester Airport has died. Brian Kingsley Smith, who had an office in Gillingham before moving to Chatham, was the man behind saving the airfield when it looked as if it would be lost to aviation.

The airport had been run by BAE who terminated their lease. So, Brian set-up Rochester Airport Limited – a consortium of local businessmen and aviators – to save it for future use and as a memory to the Wright Brothers who were recognised as the founders of aviation and had their factory at the Esplanade in Rochester. He worked tirelessly during the past 20 years to gain planning and funding for improvements and development of the site which has saved it from closure.

His interest in aviation began when he was called up for national service in 1958 and joined the RAF where he worked in their legal department and became an officer. That enthusiasm lay dormant until one of his two sons bought him a gift of a trial flying lesson. In typical Brian style he got his licence in record time and then bought a Cessna. He used it for more than 20 years to fly his family and friends from Rochester to places throughout Europe.

Brian was born 1936 in Second Avenue, Gillingham, and spent the majority of his life in Medway. He went to Barnsole Road Junior school before moving to Gillingham Grammar School where he studied French, German and English A levels. It was only when he was 18 that he learned that to study law he needed Latin. So he undertook a five year crash course in Latin and completed it in one year.

He began his legal career at Boyd Whyte in Duncan Road, Gillingham, where he met his wife Anne who was a Pitman’s girl. She won awards for her shorthand skills including collecting a prize at the Royal Albert Hall for high speed and accuracy. Brian also became a self-taught touch typist. Their courtship lasted two years before they married when they were both aged 22.

He launched his own practice in Gillingham when he became one of the most in demand advocates in the north Kent courts. His expertise in planning led him to a new direction in his legal career. He represented numerous clients at contentious planning inquiries. Brian was well respected by his peers and became president of the Kent Law Society. He was subsequently elected an honorary member – a rare honour in the 200 year history of the society. In his personal life, he was a very talented pianist and had a grand piano plus an organ in his double garage where he enjoyed playing classical music. He was a keen photographer and gardener who spent many spare weekends touring garden centres to find new and unusual plants for his huge garden in Upchurch. He leaves his wife Anne, two sons and four grandchildren. One of his last delights was to congratulate one of his grandchildren, Honor, who recently qualified as a commercial pilot.’

Brian was buried at Upchurch burial ground, Upchurch, Kent.

The Pedoscope

The Medway Archives Centre Volunteers Bulletin, No.2 March 2021, featured an article about the x-ray machine used at Armitage’s shoe shop in Rochester in the 1960s to measure children’s feet. The piece prompted an interesting response from Michael Jennings.

11 March 2021

Dear Amanda,

Thank you for the MAC News.

There was a 'Pedoscope' in Lefevres (Debenhams) in Gillingham. I used to have my feet/shoes measured there, that would have been in the 1950s.

Warm regards,

Michael.

Not the Decimalisation Anniversary



In response to Amanda Thomas’ request for information on the 1971 decimalisation, Steve Cross emailed with the following (irrelevant) information, which was nonetheless extremely informative and interesting! Publication was promised:

12 April 2021

Hi Amanda,

Just a point of interest for me as an ex-Royal Navy man, 31 July 1970 was the day the Royal Navy stopped the tot – a great loss to us all!

All the best – stay safe,

Steve Cross.

squashed into the carpet under the sofa, under the armchairs, down the side of the armchair cushions. I tasted a bit of one - they were horrible! Another time mum and dad were out and I had acquired a recipe for toffee - it needed vinegar - I searched the cupboard and the only vinegar I could find was in the jar with the homemade pickled onions so I used that! Bet you've never tasted pickled onion toffee!

Odette Buchanan.

The Diaries of Marjorie Gunn

In the last issue of *The Clock Tower*, we published correspondence with Muriel Lhermé in France who was trying to find out more about Marjorie Gunn. Following this, MAC's Catharina Clement emailed Amanda Thomas with the following information which was forwarded to Muriel:

19 February 2021

'Saw the letter from Muriel Lhermé on Marjorie Gunn. If she worked at Downe House school it would be the best place for Muriel to contact to see if they have any photos of old staff.

<https://www.downehouse.net/enquiry/> '

Henry Lepper of Lydd

5 March 2021

Hello Odette,

Henry was town sergeant in Lydd for 65 years, although I have a picture of him in his uniform later in life and of his gravestone in Lydd I have been unable to find out much about either him or his family. As we now live in South Devon it would not be easy for us to visit Lydd.

Kind Regards

David Veall.

Please contact the Editor, Amanda Thomas at amanda@ajthomas.com if you have any information.

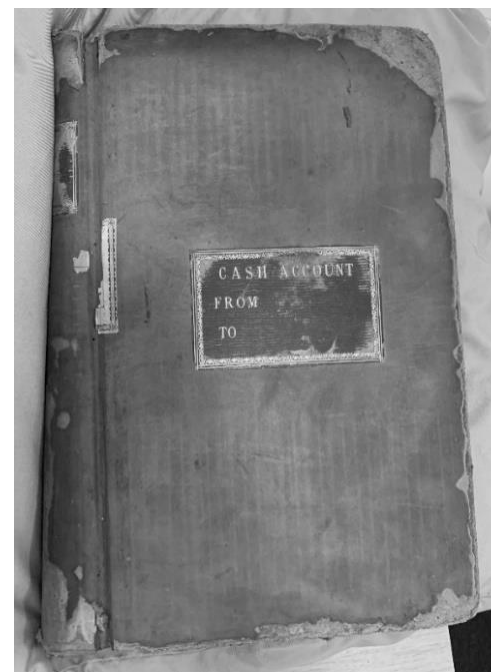
Vice-Chairman's Ramblings

Rob Flood

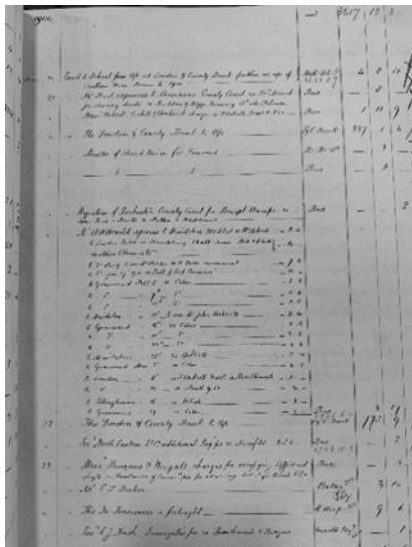


Rob Flood shares his news and views on FOMA and the Medway heritage scene.

Photographed in 2020, Rob is wearing a protective visor produced by the American new wave band from Akron, Ohio called Devo. The mask is a play on the hats worn in the video for their hit, Whip It, from 1980.



Despite lockdown restrictions, there has been a lot going on! First of all, some weeks ago, the Medway Archives Centre (MAC) was contacted by the Friends of National Libraries (FNL) about two auction lots relating to the former Rochester Cathedral Precincts Solicitors Arnold, Tuff and Grimwade. Some documents were coming up for sale at Forum Auctions in London, and the FOMA committee decided to put in a bid. I am happy to say that our purchase was successful and, with additional financial support from FNL, we acquired (as listed) *Bill Books, 9 vol., manuscript in several hands, together thousands of pp (including indexes), rules throughout, most original reversed calf, 1859-1977.*



One of the books is pictured on the previous page – an interior view can be seen here (left) - and whilst are still in the process of discovering exactly what each of them contains, we were rather pleased to discover, when the items were delivered, that there were 10 volumes rather than the advertised 9!

In the last issue of *The Clock Tower*, I mentioned the Historic England High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Programme. The Old High Street Intra area of Chatham and Rochester is the local focus of the HSHAZ project, one of 68 High Streets benefiting from £40 million from the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport's Heritage High Street Fund and £52 million from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Future High Street Fund. A further £3 million is being provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support a cultural programme.

There is a wealth of cultural activity planned for the area including a festival called Ebb&Flow which (as I write) is due to take place over the weekend of 21-23 May 2021, Covid restrictions permitting. Do keep an eye on ebbandflowfest.co.uk for the full programme and further details of some guided history walks through the Intra area.

In addition to all of this, and as part of the cultural programme, I have been working with Kevin Younger and Xtina Lamb from IntraArts to create a *pop up* museum in the windows of IntraArts at 337-341 Rochester High Street (the old Featherstone's menswear shop). The museum ran from 2 to 30 April and featured an incredible model of the JP Knight tug, *Keverne* (pictured). Knight's office was at 348 Rochester High Street and the *Keverne* was registered at Rochester; the model was on loan from JP Knight expert Brian Clarke. There was a collection of Arkcoll, Owen J Carter and Dove, Phillips and Petts bottles and flagons, Empire Theatre and Picture Palace programmes, and a wonderful display of photographs of the area. We hope the pop-up museum will have a life beyond April and will move around various shop windows throughout Intra.

I remember at primary school (when farthings were still currency) learning facts like 960 farthings to a pound (£) and that a third of a £ was 6s/8d and a sixth of a £ was 3s/4d which came to mind when we were doing a recent heritage lottery project. I was reading about early trading laws and discovered that traders got fined iij s iiij d. or vj s viij d. I thought this a very strange amount until I remembered the sixths and thirds of a pound from primary school. They always used a j for the last i in the sum so that it couldn't be added to.

Readers' Letters

We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please email the Editor, Amanda Thomas, Editor, at amanda@ajthomas.com, the FOMA Secretary, Chris de Coulon Berthoud at berthoud@blueyonder.co.uk, or visit the FOMA website, www.foma-lsc.org/index.htm or our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/fomalisc>

Home-Made Christmas Pressies

More on the November 2020 feature from Odette Buchanan

3 January 2021

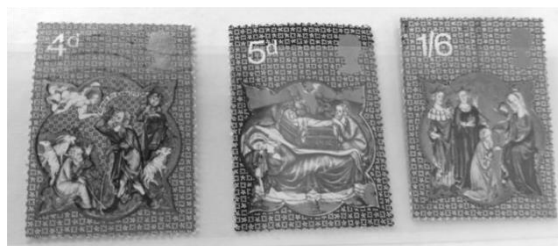


Re the sweets - I recognised the recipe for the ones made with icing sugar - It was my 9th or 10th birthday and I made some and set them out tastefully on little 19th century china sweet dishes that had been hidden in the cupboard during the war 'cos printed clearly in English on the bottom was 'Made in Japan'.

Anyway, the party duly happened with all the usual games (postman's knock, squeak piggy squeak, Nelson's eye, that one where you all hid squeezed into a small space and had to be found by the chosen one, consequences, etc. etc.); the food - fish paste sandwiches, jelly and blancmange, the cake with candles to be blown out+ the high spot of the event SWEETS! - a rare treat because they were rationed. Not boring shop-bought ones but handmade sweets and set out around the room for the guests to help themselves as the party progressed.

After they'd all gone home I was really chuffed - all the sweets had gone! They must have liked them. Then I was helping mum clear up - there were all the sweets -

was in the days of coin operated, or reversed charges. Reversed charge calls went through the operator, and the receiver had to agree to pay, which meant having enough coins for the length of the call. The cost of a local call was 4d minimum, which I think became 2p, and the 2p coins were similar in size to the old 1d coin. He was not local, so long distance call charges were higher. When the *pips* went, signalling the time paid for was up, it was a race to get some more coins in the slot before you were cut off, or when the pips went keeping talking until the time ran out! The new coins seemed so difficult to handle in that situation. I imagine it was a huge job converting all the phone boxes, there were so many then, as there were no mobile phones, and not everyone had a land line. British Telecom were the only phone suppliers then, and pre-paid phone cards didn't come in until 1981. Again the boxes needed to be converted for dual payment. The cost of postage went from 4d to 3p. The Christmas stamps for 1970 were 4d, 5d, 1/6 and by early 1971 they were 3p, 7½p and 9p respectively.



Pre and post decimalisation stamps; photographs, Hazel Thorn.



Water and Jam

Elaine Gardner

When I started teaching maths in 1968 we were given various government leaflets with jolly verses to remember the conversions but the only one I can remember these days is the *liquid* conversion:

‘A litre of water is a pint and three quarters,’ though the *s* is usually not pronounced on quarters to make it rhyme better. There was another which had jam and gram rhyming but that has long since faded from memory!



Left: the model of the JP Knight tug, Keverne.

Below: the feature on retail.

More photographs of the displays at the pop up museum can be found on the inside and back covers.





Hello *Clock Tower* readers!

We were able to reopen Medway Archives Centre on Monday 12 April, as part of 'step 2' of the roadmap out of lockdown. For now we are operating on an appointment only basis, with reduced opening hours but we will of course review these arrangements as the roadmap out of lockdown progresses. In the meantime it has been nice to see some familiar, and new, faces! If you would like to visit to look at collection material please email malsc@medway.gov.uk or phone 01634 332714.

Since the last *Clock Tower* update we have also two new exhibitions in the foyer, and a taster of each is available online. *Pestilence to contagion: plague to COVID-19* examines the diseases and viruses that have affected us in the past, whilst *Health matters: corridors of care* looks at the histories of institutions which provided comfort and care in Medway from the 16th century through to the 20th century. No appointment is necessary to view the exhibitions in the foyer and the shorter online versions of the exhibitions can be viewed via our webpages at www.medway.gov.uk/archives.

As reported in the last update Norma Crowe and Helen Worthy (with technical support provided by Rob Flood!) have been running reminiscence sessions via Zoom. The topics covered have included theatres, cinemas and entertainment, shops and shopping, and there is a forthcoming session on food. If you would like to take part, or be notified of future sessions, please email malsc@medway.gov.uk or phone 01634 332714.

We are currently taking part in a distance enquiry survey organised by the Archives and Records Association, and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), which is open from Monday 19 April until Sunday 25 July 2021. The survey will provide information on the service we provide for those seeking information, paid research, or copies of material. Many archives and record offices around the country take part, and so the data also helps to identify trends and evaluate satisfaction at a national level too.

A Child's View

Rob Flood

I was far too young in 1971 to remember the currency change over. However, in my collection of *stuff*, I have this handy ready reckoner produced by Bates department store in Chatham in conjunction with Blakes in Maidstone (as pictured on page 33). It is credit card size and has an advert for the two stores on the back (below). The front is a lenticular that shows pounds, shillings and pence if you tip it towards you and decimal pounds and pence if you tip it away from you. Hopefully I've demonstrated this in the pictures.



Left: the reverse of Rob Flood's decimal currency converter



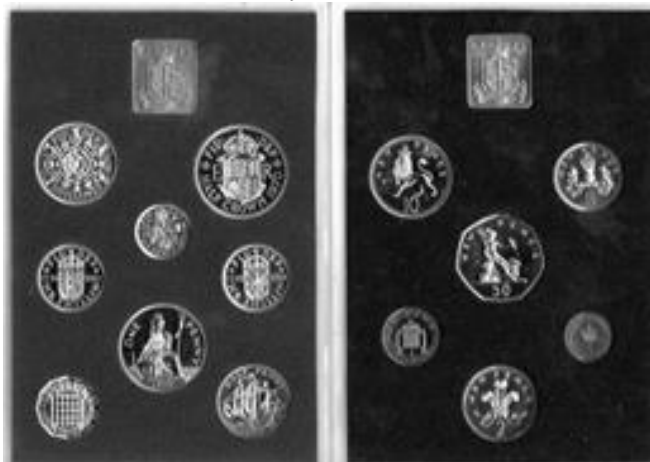
Phone Boxes and Postage

Hazel Thorn

When we changed to decimal coinage in February 1971, I had been married all of 29 days, and was just getting used to living in a small flat at the top of Chatham Hill. It cost £7.00 a week. I wasn't used to doing much in the way of shopping or paying household bills, so had no idea if costs were higher. I remember that everything had dual prices, supermarkets were much smaller then than now, and I only remember them selling food, maybe batteries, but certainly not the range there is now. The staff struggled to explain and in the end it was easier not to keep converting the costs back to *old* money.

The new coins seemed like toy money, so much smaller than we were used to. I was married to a naval rating and so he was away more than home. We mostly wrote to each other, at least a couple of times a week, if he was at sea my letters to him would be sent at the standard rate to B.F.P.O addresses, 4d, not airmail rate. Often his letter to me would say, 'be in the phone box on Friday at this time, and I will try to ring you.' Luckily there was a telephone box close to the flat, and I would wait outside for him to ring, hoping no one else would come along wanting to use it. This

The 2/- coin, or florin, was introduced in 1849 as part of an experiment in decimalisation and was the equivalent in value to 1/10th of a pound, worth 24 old pence. The experiment was abandoned until 1966 when decimalisation raised its head again with the creation of the Decimal Currency Board.



The reverses of old coins to the left and new decimal coins to the right; photograph, Michael Jennings

Decimal or Imperial?

Stuart Tranter

I was 19 at the time and was attending a City and Guilds course at the College of Technology near the airport (now replaced with housing). Seemed simple enough to me, but I still recall the massive queue at the college canteen as staff were desperately trying to figure out prices and what change to give. Of course, as teenagers we didn't help matters and tried our best to add to the confusion by questioning the change offered.

But I was very aware over the early months of much older people who really struggled and heard of many being taken advantage of. After all, in those days a pound was a lot of money, and most everyday transactions were well under that amount so easy to wrong-change anyone vulnerable, or to hide small price rises.

But what surprised me to this very day is we never really finished the job and are kind of 'bi-lingual'. We swap between pints and litres or pounds (weight) and kilograms all the time, and to this day it is not unheard of to go to a timber merchant and order 2.4m of 4x2, mixing the two systems of measurement on the same item!

Have to say I miss half-crowns; a lovely weighty coin often gifted by kind relatives, and 10 bob notes (as illustrated on page 34) in birthday cards.

I am pleased to welcome two new members to the MAC team, Ella and Chris, who are joining us temporarily for six months as Digital Archive Assistants. These jobs are funded as part of the Government's Kickstart Scheme. Ella and Chris will be digitising the Local Studies Photographic Collection (some of which is already online via the Medway Images website) as well as doing some of the first work tasks from our Digital Preservation Strategic Plan 2021-2024.

I want to thank Friends of National Libraries, The National Archives, and FOMA for their help in securing some archive material that was being auctioned a few months ago, and which you can also read about in Rob Flood's article on page 9. We were alerted by The National Archives Sales Monitoring Team that some archive records created by the solicitor firm Arnold Tuff & Grimwade were being auctioned. The firm operated in Rochester from the 18th century, and was an important local firm, for whom we already have records. We applied to the Friends of the National Libraries for a grant to purchase the material (bill books dating 1859-1977), which was approved by their committee, and the material has now been listed, cleaned and rewrapped, and will be available for research use.

The Centre has been creating a new community archive collection comprising material about, or created because of, the current Covid-19 pandemic, to ensure that the experiences of those that live or work in Medway is documented during this time. Submissions so far have included diaries, photographs and artwork. If you are interested in documenting this time, or have any material you would like to donate, please contact us at malsc@medway.gov.uk and we can send you some further information.

Quakers in Rochester – a Request!

Catharina Clement is researching the former Quaker houses that stood in Rochester Castle moat on Boley Hill until they were demolished 1950s to 1961.

Does anyone have any recollections of them or know anything about their demolition?

Please contact Catharina at catharina.clement16@outlook.com

FOMA's First Zoom Event

Amanda Thomas



On the afternoon of Thursday 8 April, FOMA hosted its first Zoom talk (as pictured on the inside front cover). Entitled, *Work and Working in Medway*, the talk was given by our friend and colleague Dr Jeremy Clarke. Based at Rochester's Guildhall Museum, Jeremy is Medway Council's Education Officer and we were delighted when he agreed to headline our first online event as his talks are always extremely popular. We were even more delighted that so many attended, including some non-members and members from further afield who have hitherto been unable to attend FOMA events. A couple of images from the talk can be found on the inside front cover.

Jeremy's talk discussed how the Medway area has changed from a predominantly agrarian community to one of the most important industrial centres in the country. From Medieval farming and fishing to the brick and cement industries of the nineteenth century, Medway mirrored Britain's shift from an agrarian to an industrial society.

Medway, and indeed the whole of North Kent surrounding the Medway and Thames Estuaries, is rich with natural resources, including salt, copperas, rushes, reeds, sheep, mud, chalk, fish and shellfish.¹ The exploitation of these riches has gone on for thousands of years and has shaped the structure of society with the development of working methods and hierarchies, such as the apprenticeship system.

Using illustrations and images of items from the Guildhall Museum's collections, Jeremy used the example of sheep farming to demonstrate how agricultural processes affected not just working life but also the local landscape. On the Hoo Peninsula at Cliffe,² there are still areas known as Sheep Wash and Sheepfold. Indeed, the Guildhall Museum is fortunate to have in its keeping a pipe and man's smock (probably used for *best* because of its embroidered collar) worn by general labourer and Cliffe shepherd, John Moore (1814-1889)³. Donated by Moore's family in the 1970s, the smock is a particularly rare item, mainly because the type of clothing most often preserved in museum collections are women's and of a more decorative design.

Thruppence for Two Ounces of Sweets

Pauline Weeds



I don't remember a lot about decimalisation except that I, and I think most of the people I knew, would have preferred to keep £sd. It seemed at the time that, in our desperation to get into the EU, we were losing our *uniqueness*, our *Britishness*.

At that time my schooldays were not too far away and I thought that children in the future would not have the *fun* of £sd arithmetic - it was much harder than decimalisation. The coins were more interesting too - the large pennies, the 12-sided thruppenny bits (dodgers), the silver sixpences (tanners), and the shillings (bobs). Then of course there were the large half crowns and the florins, the £1 notes and 10s notes. Purses were heavier in those days. If you had only a few pennies your purse was probably heavier than it is today.

When I was a child, I used to like the thruppenny bits. If I had one of those it was just enough to buy 2oz of boiled sweets at the sweetshop on the way to Brownies with my friend. The shop had large jars of different sweets all round the walls, all different colours - sherbet, mint, butterscotch and more. Choosing could be difficult but when we had made our choice the lady would weigh out our two ounces in her scales, put them in paper bags for us, and we carried on happily to Brownies. Of course, sweet rationing had only just ended in 1953 so we must have thought the sweetshop was heaven.



Pre and Post Decimal Coins

Michael Jennings

Pictured overleaf are my proof sets of the decimal coinage and of the pre-decimal coins. The latter is unique in that all the coins bear the date of 1970; as such they were never issued as legal tender. Each set comes with a Royal Mint bronze badge and both proof sets were struck by polished dies using specially prepared blanks. Both sets have been carefully preserved in their welded plastic cases for the last 50 years.

I have a few memories of the old coinage. Did you know that 300d was 25/-d? Something my father told me. Sometimes people of my generation still refer to 'two bob' (10p) although I think the 'tanner' (6d) is a distant memory, along with jokes like, 'Why did the penny stamp - because the threepenny bit.' They were pretty awful then!

In preparation, in 1968 the Royal Mint moved from Tower Hill in London to Llantrissant in South Wales and production began on the new coinage. The new 5p and 10p (the same size as the old shilling and florin, or two shillings) came into circulation in April 1968. Then in 1969 the 50p piece replaced the ten-shilling note (pictured below) and on 1 January 1970, the half-crown (worth 2/6d or 12½p) was phased out – it had been a part of our coinage since 1549. The old brass thruppence was no longer legal tender after the end of August 1971 and the sixpenny bit, or piece - worth 2½p - disappeared in 1980.



Photographs, Pauline Weeds.

Since 1971, the original decimal coins have also evolved in size and shape. In 1984 the decimal ½p was phased out, the 20p coin was introduced in 1982, and the first pound coin in 1983, replacing the pound note. In 1990 and 1992 respectively, the 5p and 10p coins were made smaller than the old shilling and florin they had replaced in 1971, and a smaller 50p piece was issued in 1997. The pound coin and, indeed all of the coins in circulation, have since been re-modelled or re-designed.

Prior to decimalisation in 1970, a fascinating broadcast was aired on the television featuring *This is Your Life* presenter Eamonn Andrews: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yE-wA24xJ8 In this 1970 programme, a year before decimalisation, the public were asked when D Day was to take place. The response highlighted the necessity for an information campaign as a great many of those interviewed believed D Day to have already taken place on 6 June 1944, the date of the World War Two Normandy landings. They were right, of course! Public information films would later include *Decimal Five*, a series of five animated short films with music by the pop group The Scaffold (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=173124076393964>), and *Granny Gets the Point* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rOzF3QpJcw>).

To follow are recollections of various FOMA members of when Britain went decimal.

With thanks to the Royal Mint website,
<https://www.royalmint.com/discover/decimalisation/>

Jeremy was quick to point out that the shift from farming was a slow decline and in the Medway area agriculture retained its importance for longer than many other places, thanks to the growing of hops and their use in beer production. Change was fuelled by the demands of London and most notably in the building of new houses for which were required vast quantities of bricks. The mass production of cheap bricks transformed the economy of North Kent, and its landscape. Millions and millions of bricks were manufactured in the Medway area. “It was quite astonishing,” Jeremy remarked, referring to the extraordinary quantity of bricks produced by gangs composed of just six men. A single gang included a temperer, flatie, moulder, off-bearer, barrow loader and pusher-out, and together they were capable of producing a staggering 38,000 bricks a week.

It was the production of Portland Cement which would, perhaps, have the greatest impact on the Medway Towns. Jeremy commented that he had struggled to find an illustration of its use until he realised that it had, of course, been used mainly for the foundations of buildings, such was its extraordinary strength. It was the mud (or silt) of the Medway and Thames Estuaries which gave Portland Cement the same magical hydraulic property as the volcanic ash used by the Romans. This ability to set under water meant Portland Cement could be employed in a wider range of important engineering projects, and whilst this process had been re-discovered in the North, it was perfected in Northfleet and Swanscombe. However the Medway valley would pay a heavy price for the manufacture of cement. Jeremy showed images of a landscape defaced by tall, industrial chimneys and a photograph of Frindsbury before its chalk foundations - which underpinned a large swathe of the riverside settlement - were excavated almost entirely away.

In addition to this, the digging of mud eradicated wide coastal stretches of the Hoo Peninsula, a process which was undertaken entirely by hand. This, Jeremy observed was “people powering the Industrial Revolution!” It was the work of the Medway Muddies who, in Lower and Middle Stoke hurled mud at low tide into waiting barges using thin wooden spades. This was filthy, hard work, and although it paid better than agricultural labouring, the life expectancy of the Medway Muddy was invariably short.

Jeremy described how the use of the iconic flat-bottomed sailing barges transformed the local economy in their carrying of all sorts of goods up and down the Medway and Thames. Boat builders proliferated along the river’s edge at Strood and Rochester and whilst these vessels were immensely versatile and easy to manoeuvre, they would eventually prove too small for the vast quantities of raw materials needed. The larger boats which later plied the Thames were too big to penetrate the narrower reaches of the Medway, and before long a new phase of development would begin.

The coming of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century and a shift in brickfield development meant that more houses were needed in the Medway Towns themselves. Chatham Dockyard also provided further work opportunities and improved rail access to the capital meant that young women could now consider working in London as domestic servants in the homes of a growing Middle Class.

This is only a synopsis of the vast amount of information included in Jeremy’s talk, however, many of the items he talked about, such as John Moore’s smock and pipe, are on display at Rochester’s Guildhall Museum. If you haven’t been for a while – or even never at all – it is well worth a visit. Following the talk, FOMA’s Rob Flood also alerted us all to the most recent heritage project in Rochester High Street, a pop-up museum celebrating the history of the working Rover Medway. Entitled *Work Hard. Play hard*, the display was available to view from 2 to 30 April and is a part of the national Ebb & Flow heritage festival taking place over the weekend of 21-23 May. You can read more about this on page 10.

Notes

- 1. The fish discussed by Jeremy were smelts, a popular type of whitebait, and the shellfish were shrimp and oysters. In the brief question and answer session which followed the talk, Rob Flood commented that an additional factor in the decline of the Medway’s oyster industry was the severe winter of 1895-6 which destroyed many of the native beds.
- 2. Amanda Thomas asked Jeremy if he was aware that recent archaeological investigations have shown that the grid system of roads at Cliffe might be evidence for Roman Centuriation. Some years ago Amanda had been to a talk hosted by Kent Archaeology which discussed how similar grid systems had been identified in other areas of the county, including Cliffe. The theory, whilst still somewhat controversial, discussed the dividing up of land for settlement and agricultural use for those who had retired from the Roman administration, or the army. Jeremy commented that this could explain the wide range of Roman religious artefacts found at Cliffe, perhaps a reflection of the diversity of people recruited from other parts of the Empire who had subsequently settled there.
- 3. John Moore was christened at St Helen’s, Cliffe on 21 March 1813, and died on 27 January 1889. John was the son of William Moore and Mary Studds, and is buried at Cliffe with his wife Mary, née Tomlin. John and Mary were married at Cliffe on 14 February 1836, though she was born at Higham some time before 31 January 1813. Mary’s mother, Sarah Osmotherly (1793-1855) was the daughter of John Osmotherly (1749-1828) and Susanna Reader (1753-1819); the farming and building Osmotherly family of Cliffe is well documented in past issues of *The Clock Tower*. Mary Tomlin’s father was James Copping Tomlin of Higham.

A CLOCK TOWER SPECIAL FEATURE

Decimalisation

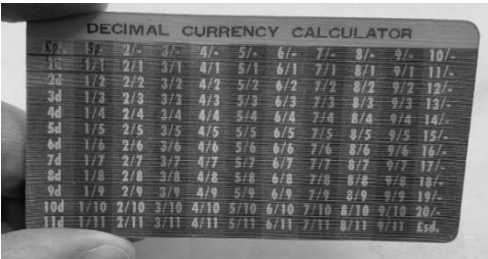
Introduction

Amanda Thomas



Just over fifty years ago, on 15 February 1971, the decimalisation of our coinage system was introduced in the United Kingdom and Ireland. For those of us who remember it (some better than others), it was a confusing time, heralding in a new modern era, but also blatant inflation in the shops. It was clear to many the day after decimalisation that the overnight price conversion had given some retailers an opportunity to round amounts *up* rather than *down*.

These *corrugated* plastic ready reckoners – the one pictured belongs to FOMA’s Rob Flood - were meant to ease the confusion and were used to calculate the conversion from old to new pence and vice versa. Most people kept them in their wallets or purses and they were very useful because, when tilted, they revealed an instant answer.



The countdown to Decimal Day had begun on 1 March 1966 when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, James Callaghan – who became Prime Minister in 1976 – announced that the new coinage would be introduced. It sounded the death knoll for a centuries-old system of twenty shillings to the pound and twelve pennies to the shilling.



The arch at Restoration House; photograph by the author.

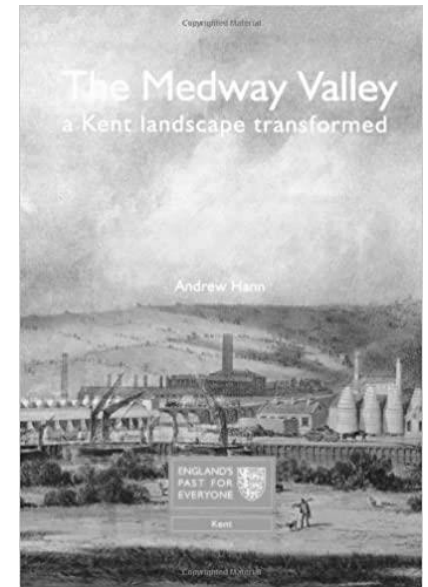
Writers differ as to the fate of the Chapel's bell. Some claim Richard Batchelor installed it in his farm at Darland and used it to summon his workers to their labour. Others believe it ended its life at Chatham Dockyard. Perhaps both claims are true. However, the *Chatham News* in 1880 and again in 1883 reported that thieves had stolen it, presumably to melt down. Certainly, the thefts went on. Naylor's workmen piled up the less valuable rubble in the graveyard overnight. Thieves brought a waggon to the site and spirited it away; its tracks were clearly visible the following morning.

By the end of 1883, Lidsing Chapel had disappeared, but the site continued to be desecrated. As late as 1919, *Hurstcot*, a *Chatham News* columnist was complaining that people had been lighting fires and picnicking on the abandoned, but still consecrated, plot. Ironically despite the heavy traffic and the nearby shopping centre, the Lidsing Chapel site, situated as it is within an isolated copse, is probably more tranquil and serene now than it has ever been.

The name Copping, or Coppin, derives from the Coppin family of Strood, the earliest known of which is James Copping Tomlin's great grandfather, Matthew Coppin (died 1758) who married Sarah Groombridge (born 1718) at Strood in 1737. Sarah's sister, Hannah Groombridge (born 1720) married William Tomlin of the Shorne branch of the family in 1741 at Cuxton.

Further information on Medway's industrial heritage can be found in Dr Andrew Hann's 2009 book, *The Medway Valley: A Kent Landscape Transformed*. This popular book explores the impact of Medway's industrial development and subsequent decline on the area and its people, including changing patterns of work and society, the creation of new settlements and the role of the river. The work includes contributions and research from volunteers who worked with Andrew at the then Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

The Medway Valley: A Kent Landscape Transformed, (England's Past for Everyone Paperback), Phillimore & Co Ltd, (2009); ISBN 978-1860776007.



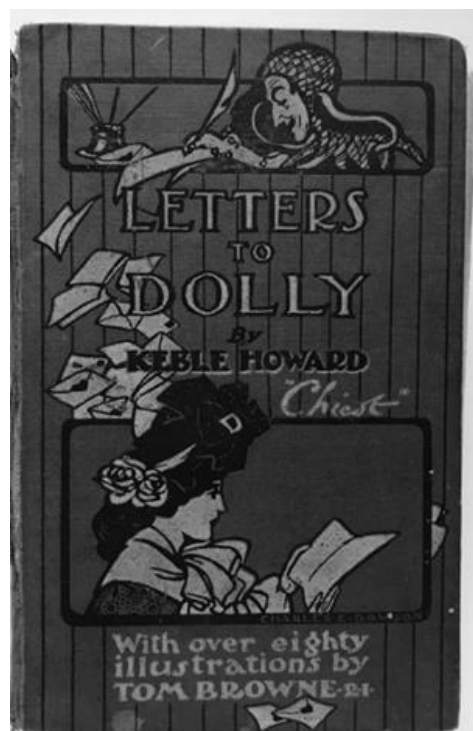
Letters to Dolly

Chris de Coulon Berthoud

Chris de Coulon Berthoud is currently writing a PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of Kent. His work focusses on our shared human relationships with the past; previously writing about traumatic memory in descendants of Belgian Holocaust survivors, and the practice of Second World War re-enactment in the UK. His current work examines the role of the amateur in shaping and producing local history and heritage narratives in the Medway Towns. He is Secretary of FOMA and works part-time at the Medway Archives Centre.



A few years ago, in that world where such things were still possible, I went to the Parish Book Sale at St Peter's on the Delce. One of the books I bought was called *Letters to Dolly* (pictured left) by Keble Howard (John Long, London, 1902). Howard was a prolific journalist and humorous novelist of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras and Ken Annakin's 1963 screen comedy *The Fast Lady*, starring Stanley Baxter and James Robertson Justice, was based on Keble Howard's eponymous book. However, it was not a love of middle-brow British film comedy that drew me to this battered edition, rather because of the drawings someone had made inside.



containing documents relating to the Chapel had been forced open and its contents scattered around the site.



The demolition of the chapel in 1883; from the author's collection.

This was a place of worship standing on consecrated ground. In the view of both local newspapers, something had to be done, and the Church of England bureaucracy eventually agreed. In May 1883, workmen from the Rochester firm of Naylor and Son arrived at Lidsing, and over the next few days demolished the vandalised and decaying Chapel, as pictured above. They found that surprisingly, some of the building's ancient features were still intact. They salvaged some carved woodwork and under the Chapel's wooden floor discovered medieval floor tiles, which they also saved. The stone arch which originally surrounded the building's door was acquired by Stephen Aveling of Restoration House in Rochester. He then re-erected it within a garden wall there, as pictured overleaf.

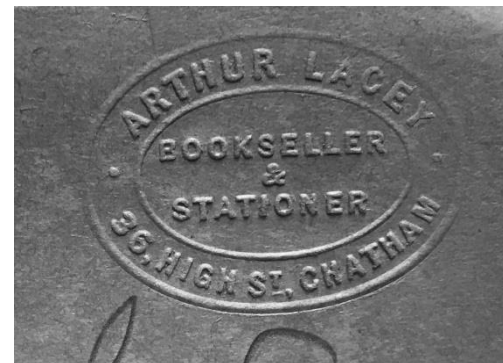
This small flint building was probably constructed by a lord of the manor in the early Norman period. It merely comprised a nave and chancel, and while it was improved and renovated over the centuries, was never extended. However, a bell tower was added in the early nineteenth century. It passed into the hands of St Sexburga's Benedictine Nunnery in Minster, Sheppey, and in the fifteenth century became the responsibility of St Andrew's Priory in Rochester. After Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century, it was absorbed into the parochial system, eventually becoming a chapel of ease for Gillingham Parish.

Although the site is now surrounded by roads, housing and the Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre, it was in a very lonely spot when built. Even as late as its demolition in 1883, Lidsing Chapel stood in isolation. Its ongoing problem was that it was not a village church as such and there was never a nearby population to make it a viable place of worship. It was merely intended to serve a small number of farmsteads scattered through the Boxley and Bredhurst areas. Its sparse congregation and distance from its mother church at Gillingham Green led to neglect. Regular services declined and the building became shabbier and in need of repair. This situation was periodically remedied by the generosity of parish clergy and diehard worshippers, but nothing could save it in the long term.

Services ceased altogether in the 1870s as the chapel's natural congregation, such as it was, drifted away to the better appointed, if more distant churches at Bredhurst and Boxley. The Vicar of Gillingham, Rev WH Robins urged the Church of England authorities to decide the fate of the empty chapel, but the decision was slow in coming. Meanwhile, the neglected building was prey to thieves and vandals, and became even more damaged. As the *Chatham News* observed in 1880, all the windows had been smashed by hooligans, letting in the elements to hasten the damage. Meanwhile, part of the roof had started to give way.

'Long since,' stated the newspaper, 'passing strangers, struck by its desolate appearance, have passed awhile beneath its shadow and have peered through its narrow windows to inspect the interior. They have seen the broken-down pulpit, the mouldering pews and forms out of shape and order, covered with dust and wood and broken tiles from the tottering roof, and have turned away with sad reflections.' More recently, the newspaper continued, 'The pews and forms are in disorder and confusion; the wind and rain drive in upon them, and under these influences they are rotting faster than ever and breaking up into fragments and commingling with the other rubbish with which the floor is covered.'

In the overgrown graveyard, most of the memorial stones had been trodden down and broken, and to make matters worse, the Chapel's door, which the *Chatham Observer* identified as 'double battened with Gothic topic' had recently been broken down. Intruders had then forced their way in and attempted to burn the building down. A passer-by noticed the fire and saved the structure, for the time being anyway, by pulling the burning pews into the graveyard. An old iron chest

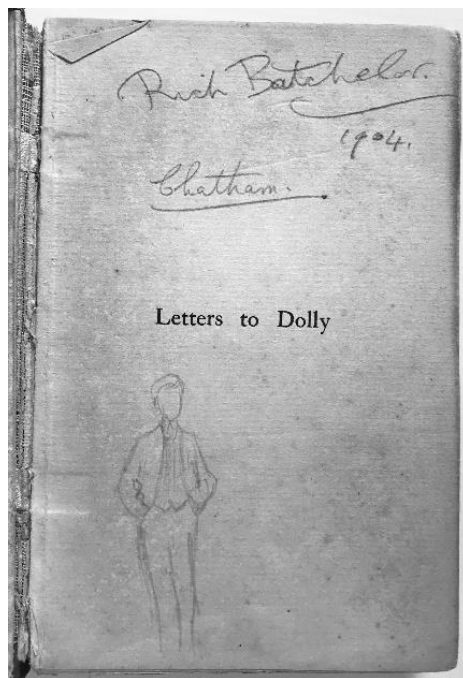


As I flicked through the book, I noticed that the endpapers had been sketched on and inscribed. The flyleaf, embossed with the mark of Arthur Lacy, Bookseller & Stationer of 36 High Street Chatham (illustrated above), bore the following gift inscription, *R.A.C. Batchelor - 1902 - (Given to him by his friend - himself)*. Opposite this were sketches of a pipe-smoking man, and a caricature of oriental man (illustrated), presumably Chinese, as he seems to have his hair in a queue, or pigtail, the style mandated by the Qing Dynasty ruling China at the time.



The title page is signed a second time (illustrated), and dated 1904. This time the owner of the book is styling himself as *Rich Batchelor*, perhaps an aspirational naming as much as anything. Below this appears a slightly more tentative, unfinished, sketch of a well-dressed young man, perhaps a self-portrait?

Finally, the rear pastedown has another sketch of a stylishly-dressed young lady (pictured, below left). This last image was perhaps not considered good enough by the artist, who scribbled over the image, or perhaps the sitter fell out of favour?



It sat on my shelves as an unconsidered, slightly forlorn, volume until recently when I took it down to look again. This time I thought I would try and see if I could find any record of this budding artist. The candidate who fits the bill most closely is one R. A. C. Batchelor, of Chatham, the son of Richard Batchelor. Batchelor senior was born in Luton, to a working-class family. As a child he worked as a farm-labourer, paying tuppence a week to take evening classes from the headmaster of Luton School. He rose to become an artesian well engineer of some standing (see opposite), supplying water to a great number of municipal customers and businesses including the local Budden & Biggs brewery. He became a well-respected member of the community, serving as High Constable of Chatham, a member of Chatham's first Town Council and was appointed Mayor of Chatham in 1906.

What and Why?

‘Devotion’s Voice has been Unheard Within Its Hallowed Precincts’.

The Fate of Lidsing Chapel

Brian Joyce



Brian Joyce is the author of several books on the history of the Medway Towns, including The Chatham Scandal and Dumb Show and Noise. He is a past President of the Chatham Historical Society and was on the FOMA Committee. Brian was born in Chatham and continues to take a great interest in the history of the Towns. However, he now lives in Tyldesley in Greater Manchester. Since moving to the North West in 2014, he has contributed articles to many journals specialising in the history of his new local area.

Understandably, motorists using the busy Hempstead Valley Drive pay little attention as they speed by a small, wooded area opposite the shopping centre. However, if they left their cars and picked their way through the trees, they might glimpse, among the undergrowth, the remains of old gravestones. These are all that survives of a medieval ecclesiastical site – Lidsing Chapel (pictured below).



Gentleman's Magazine, early nineteenth century; from the author's collection.

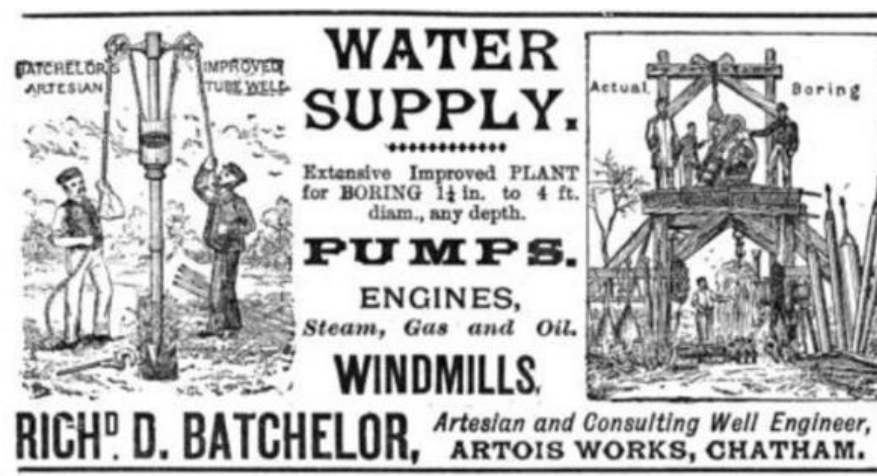
I can only remember one occasion that the car broke down. We had gone for a pre-lunch drive, I think to Penenden Heath, and on our way EVF refused to go any further. Dad and John stayed to summon the AA, whilst Mum and I headed for the nearest bus stop, just opposite the Running Horse pub. We had to go home to rescue the lunch, which was cooking in the oven awaiting our return! Dad and John's lunch was an apple each that John scumped from a nearby tree. Meanwhile, back at the breakdown site, EVF was attached to a tow rope to take it to the main dealer in Maidstone. The tow rope broke a couple of times on the journey, probably due to the way Dad drove!

The car was to free my spirits and my mind. I loved the trips to the country, and all the history that Kent has to offer. The castles, churches, windmills, watermills and houses had history in spades, especially if you dug around a bit. I had Dad driving all over the place to find all the interesting antiquities that I had found out about. The family seemed glad of the diversion, and enjoyed the trips as much as I did. We took Gran out with us sometimes and she said the experience was like flying. As she had never flown, she didn't really know, but we all knew what she meant. Gran also used to threaten to put us in the dickie if any of us were cheeky. The Wolseley only had a boot, where our picnic was stored. Gran wasn't beyond admonishing the other drivers and she once wound the window down and shouted at a driver who had come too close to the passenger side, telling him to 'Ger out of it!' We should have put *her* in the dickie !

The churches had an ancient history, each one unique to its village, the fixtures and fittings intriguing. At the time I had a couple of the popular *I-Spy* books on churches and history, from which I learnt a lot, as well as how to date the houses and churches. Brass rubbing also took us up windy roads right out into the depths of the countryside, an interest I enjoyed for some years. At that time it was relatively easy to gain access to church memorial brasses by writing to *The Vicar, The Vicarage*, for permission to rub.

Windmills and watermills seemed romantic and were often in idyllic parts of the county. We didn't stop to find out if any of them were open, they were just exciting to find. Calendar houses also fascinated me, although I never did check whether they actually did have 365 windows, 52 rooms, 12 chimneys, 7 external doors, or 4 wings! Smaller houses had as much history as the larger ones. I was fascinated by the way more ordinary people lived, and could imagine myself living the same way, using a small range and all the heavy pots and pans, for instance. I wondered how I would manage if we had to live like that.

Those journeys in our *Wonderful Wolsey* took me on personal voyages of discovery of all things historical!



From The Builder, 26 December 1891.

Richard senior married Annie Glover in Luton in 1877, and in 1886 they had a son, Richard A. C. Batchelor, who, at the age of 16 in an idle moment, drew in one of his books. The 1911 Census lists a 25-year-old Richard jnr. As *Engineer (Well Boring)* which suggests, if we rule out his expressing a sardonic disdain for his occupation, he followed in his father's footsteps in the artesian well business.

I rounded off this brief glimpse into the life behind the marginalia of this book by stretching my legs and walking over to the cemetery where he is buried in Chatham. There he lies in the family plot (pictured overleaf), overlooked by a statue of his mother Annie.

For those interested in discovering more, the following collection is deposited with Medway Archives:

The family and estate records of the Batchelor family of Darland House, Pear Tree Lane, Darland, Gillingham and in particular of Richard D. Batchelor of 73 Queen Victoria Street, London EC, 366 High Street, Chatham and Artois Works, Chatham, artesian and consulting well engineer. Original deposit number DE0914.

<https://apps.medway.gov.uk/apps/medwayimages/details.asp?pg=6&pga=146&searchtype=all&search=Chatham>

The grave of Richard Batchelor and the statue of his mother, Annie.



The Wonderful Wolsey

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.

Dad bought a car in 1963, much to Mother's chagrin, but as it turned out, she loved going out and about in it as much as we all did. She was worried about the expense, and the drain on the family income, and to appease her Dad got a second job to cover it. He bought, not just any old car, but a Wolseley 1500, in the popular shade of black. It had leather seats, walnut panelling, and picnic tables, all of which I wish we could afford today. It even had a mascot and its registration number was EVF 11. The only thing the Wolseley didn't have was a radio, but Dad found a way round

this by buying a separate radio and fitting a clip-on aerial to the quarterlight. One day, when Dad opened the quarterlight as we were driving along at some speed - at least 25 mph (!) - the aerial flew off and landed some way behind us. Luckily my brother, John spotted it in time and ran back to retrieve it.



Janet's only image of the car which transformed her understanding of history and seeded a lifelong love of Kentish heritage.



Naval Nurse and Red Cross Train at Chatham. Fleet Surgeon Jones, Medical Transport Officer, speaking to one of the cot cases; Wellcome Collection, Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

Select Sources

Richard Biddle, ‘‘As his was not a surgical case it was not my duty to attend him’’: The Surgeon’s Role in the Nineteenth-century Royal Dockyards’, *Medical History*, 57 (2013), 559–578.

Richard Biddle, ‘Doctor William Gunn: From the South Pacific Islands to Chatham Royal Dockyard’, *Journal of Medical Biography*, 27 (2019), 55–61.

Peter Mathias, ‘Swords and ploughshares: the armed forces, medicine and public health in the late eighteenth century’, in *The Transformation of England: Essays in the Economic and Social History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1979), 265–285.

David S. Wright, ‘The history and development of the medical services of H.M. Dockyard, Chatham, 1625–1966’, *Journal of the Royal Naval Medical Service*, 54 (1968), 25–68.

Dockyard Medicine: The Road less Travelled in Historical Research

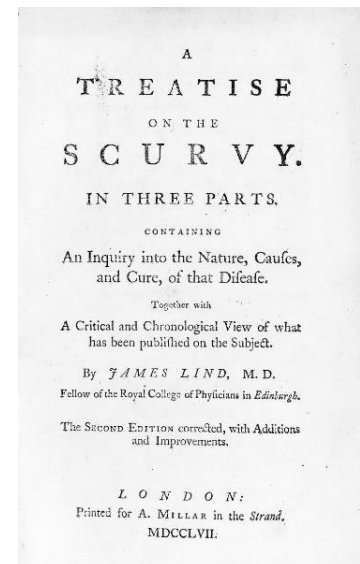
Vanessa Sanderson



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It may seem surprising that the history of dockyard medicine has rarely received detailed attention from historians. Perhaps more so given there is no shortage of histories of medicine at sea. We have long been fascinated by poxed and scurried seamen living for months at a time in wretched conditions. The fear of a lingering death from disease was far greater than fear of facing the enemy, when a man could at least hope for a demise more *heroic*. We have examined eighteenth-century pioneers of preventive medicine such as James Lind, Gilbert Blane and Thomas Trotter. These were men who pushed for improvements in diet and hygiene at sea,

contributing to our understanding of disease before the emergence of laboratory medicine in the mid-nineteenth century. We also have several studies of naval hospitals and hospital ships stationed around the world. It therefore seems strange that far less attention has been paid to the thousands of civilian men (and, from the nineteenth century, civilian women) involved in shipbuilding, and the dockyard surgeons charged with their care.



A treatise on the scurvy. Containing an inquiry into the nature, causes, and cure, of that disease. Together with a critical and chronological view of what has been published on the subject ... / [James Lind], 1757; Wellcome Collection.

Fortunately, some gaps in our knowledge have been filled. Any researcher interested in dockyard medicine owes a debt of gratitude to David S. Wright, whose award-winning dissertation on the medical services at Chatham Dockyard provided the first investigation into any dockyard's medical history and health provisions for dockyard employees. Wright conducted his research while serving as Assistant Medical Officer during the mid-1960s when the Yard was undergoing major changes for the refitting and refuelling of nuclear submarines. Just as Dr William Gunn (1804–1890) had overseen the transition from sail to steam at Chatham, Wright faced similar challenges to ensure the health of employees in an age of technological change. His work reflects a spirit of progress and suggests a state-run occupational healthcare system which can be traced back to the founding of the Chatham Chest and Sir John Hawkins Hospital in the late sixteenth century.



The elements of surgery ... Adapted to the use of the camp and navy, as well as of the domestic surgeon ... , Samuel Mihles; Wellcome Collection, Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

Following the groundwork laid down by Wright, historian Richard Biddle has undertaken several investigations into the health of workers in nineteenth-century royal dockyards. His studies show the growing involvement of naval authorities in civilian life via policies of free healthcare, sick pay and improved pension schemes. This involvement was most profoundly demonstrated by the relationship between dockworkers and dockyard surgeons. Despite the tensions this sometimes created, particularly regarding investigations by surgeons into malingering, Biddle asks the question, was it better to be ill in a dockyard town?

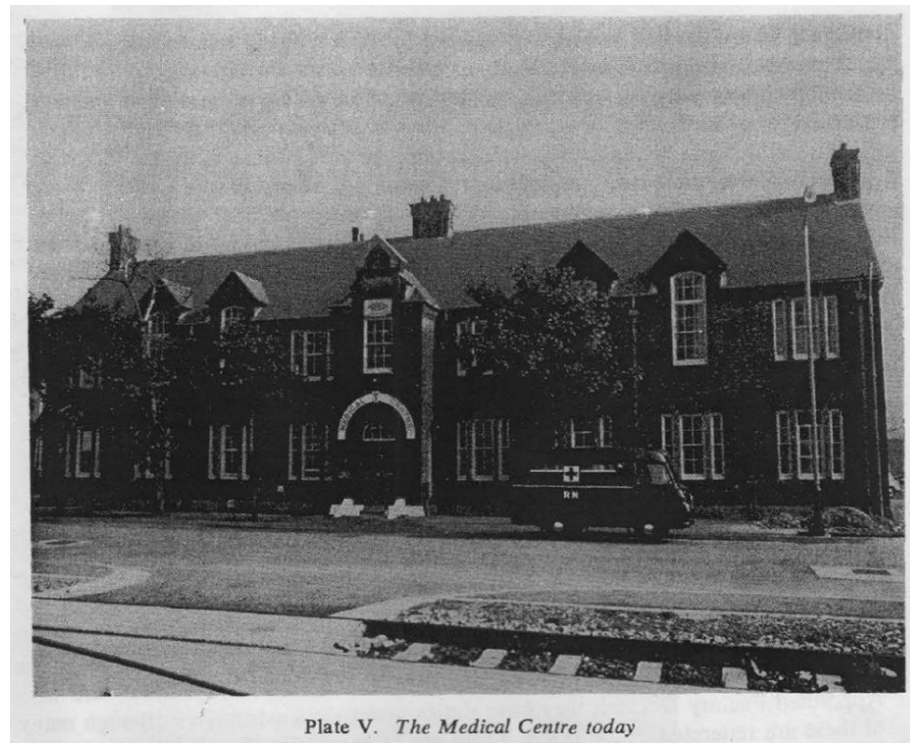


Plate V, 'The Medical Centre today', in David S. Wright, 'The history and development of the medical services of H.M. Dockyard, Chatham, 1625–1966', Journal of the Royal Naval Medical Service, 54 (1968), 57.

Wright estimated that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries employment numbers of industrial workers at Chatham Dockyard were in their thousands. During the Second World War over 12,000 employees passed through the Yard's gates. These numbers, combined with a tradition of healthcare policies offered to workers, raise interesting questions about the significance of the Yard for the health of local communities at various points in its long history. It could be yet another important legacy of Chatham Dockyard.