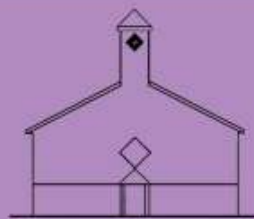


The Clock Tower



The Newsletter of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Issue Number 13: February 2009

£2.00; free to members



The Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA) had plenty to celebrate on 7th January 2009 with the news that we had been awarded a grant of up to £154,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, making available for research for the first time the contents of 500 boxes of the Rochester City Archives – the so-called *Archives of Great Expectations*. The Rochester City Archives form the biggest archival collection in the Medway area, covering the period 1227 to 1974 and includes maps, photographs, building plans, heraldic and manorial records, records of land use, title deeds, rate books, records of trade and industry, public health, and transport. In short, a goldmine for historians.

More inside...

From left to right.

Back row: John Witheridge (FOMA Vice Chairman), Alexander Thomas (FOMA Webmaster), Alison Cable (MALSC Archivist), Stephen M. Dixon (former MALSC Archivist and now Archive Service Manager, Essex Record Office), Amanda Thomas (Editor of the FOMA journal, The Clock Tower), Betty Cole (FOMA Membership Secretary), Brian Joyce (FOMA Member), Odette Buchanan (FOMA Secretary), Bob Ratcliffe (FOMA Committee), Sandra Dunster (FOMA Committee and the University of Greenwich VCH Kent Research Fellow), Richard Stoneham (FOMA Committee), Elaine Gardner (FOMA Committee).

Front Row: Jennie Fordham (Heritage Lottery Fund Committee Member), Pat Salter (FOMA Vice President), Tessa Towner (FOMA Chairman), Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL (FOMA Vice President and Chancellor of the University of Kent at Canterbury), Cllr Sue Haydock (FOMA Vice President and Medway Council Representative).

The Heritage Lottery Fund Grant Launch

The launch to announce – and to celebrate - the award of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant of up to £154,500 to FOMA took place at MALSC on Wednesday 7th January 2009. Here are some of the images from the day; more are to be found on the inside back and back covers...



Elaine Gardner's fabulous cake was the centrepiece of the buffet lunch.



Tessa Towner (above) and Alison Cable (left) being interviewed by journalist Peter Cook of the Medway Messenger.



The speeches.

From left to right: Cllr Sue Haydock (Medway Council Representative), Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL, Jennie Fordham, the Heritage Lottery Fund Committee Member, Tessa Towner, FOMA Chairman, Cllr Howard Doe, Medway Council's Portfolio Holder for Community Services ; Stephen Dixon, former Medway Borough Archivist and now Archive Service Manager at Essex Record Office, Chelmsford.

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



I wish all our members a belated Happy New Year!

As you will have seen, FOMA has been granted an award from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We are absolutely thrilled that in just two years we have achieved so much for the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, and this award is a fantastic bonus in these tough financial times. The project to conserve, catalogue and publish the Rochester City Archives will enhance everyone's understanding of our history and the heritage of north Kent and the Medway area.

The project is expected to last around three years and will be led by a professional archivist, appointed by Medway Council, and two volunteer teams of 16. I am pleased to say that the process of appointing this archivist has started and we hope that they will be in place sometime in April.

On behalf of FOMA, I must express the committee's thanks to Stephen Dixon, our former Medway Archivist, for putting together the bid application and to our treasurer Jean Skilling, who provided the figures which helped us to win this award. Without all their hard work none of this would have happened. We are grateful too to Alison Cable, Medway's new archivist, for all her help in putting together the wonderful display of old documents and for allowing the viewing of some of the items from the collection; further thanks to the committee who put together such a wonderful buffet on the occasion of the HLF launch reception.

A final thank you must go to Alexander Thomas for all his hard work in setting up and maintaining our new website, <http://www.foma-lsc.org>. I think you will all agree that it is a great achievement.

The Launch to Announce The Heritage Lottery Fund Grant

Amanda Thomas, Editor.



It was some months ago, in September 2008, that the Friends heard we had won the bid for the Heritage Lottery Fund grant. It was an exciting moment, after months of hard work, particularly by Stephen Dixon, our former archivist at MALSC, and Jean Skilling, the FOMA Treasurer. The Heritage Lottery Fund was set up in the UK in 1994 to support projects which would benefit our heritage. The money for grants is raised by the National Lottery and for every pound spent on lottery tickets, 28p is split between arts, charities, health education and environment, heritage, and sports.



Stephen Dixon, former Medway Borough Archivist, with FOMA Vice President, Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL. Sadly Jean Skilling was unable to attend the event as she was ill.

The grant awarded to the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA), is for up to £154,500, and is to catalogue and make available for research for the first time the contents of 500 boxes of the Rochester City Archives (1227 to 1974). These are

fondly known as the *Archives of Great Expectations* and they form the biggest archival collection in the Medway area. The archive includes maps, photographs, building plans, heraldic and manorial records, records of land use, title deeds, rate books, records of trade and industry, public health, and transport. The project will last three years and will be led by a professional archivist, appointed by Medway Council, and this process has already started. There will be two volunteer teams of 16, selected from local enthusiasts, FOMA, and those currently working on the *Victoria County History of Kent, England's Past for Everyone* project, also supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and coordinated by the University of Greenwich.

4

Back in November, it was decided to hold a launch at the Archives to announce our great news. It is extraordinary that the Friends started as an organisation just two years ago, and yet we had already achieved one of our greatest ambitions for MALSC. It was decided to hold the launch just after Christmas, on 7th January, and throughout December, invitations went out and a publicity campaign began.

Having worked in the press and PR for many years, the latter was my responsibility. Anna Hinde, the Senior Media Officer at Medway Council, helped me with the local press and I got on with sending information to the national newspapers and magazines. The response was wonderful. In the week leading up to the launch, Tessa Towner's phone hardly stopped ringing, and Alison Cable gave interview after interview. It soon became very clear that the local press coverage would be extensive, but then BBC TV South East started taking an interest and look set to be regular visitors to the Archives, providing viewers with regular insights into the project. *Practical Family History Magazine* requested more information and pictures, and then, before I knew it I was asked to report on the event for the news pages of *Family History Monthly* – the launch is to be featured in the March issue, so please do go out and buy it! Even as the great day dawned in January, for Tessa it started with a phone call from a local newspaper, and when she arrived at the Archives, one eager reporter was camped out, ready and waiting.

One of our greatest worries, as with any major event, was the weather. Many guests were travelling long distances, including Jennie Fordham, the Heritage Lottery Fund Committee Member, and Sir

Robert Worcester, a FOMA Vice President and Chancellor of Kent University. Norma Crowe, our Local Studies Librarian, was on car park duty, ensuring that Sir Robert would have a place to park - everyone had a job to do. Alison Cable, Catherina Clement, Cindy O'Halloran, Janet Knight and April Lambourne all helped to set up – and clear away again afterwards. Odette Buchanan, Elaine Gardner and Tessa Towner (between press interviews) were setting up the buffet lunch. This had been planned days in advance, and the centre piece was to be a magnificent cake, which Elaine had organised, though getting the logos and correct wording printed on the icing turned into a far longer - and more frustrating - job than she had anticipated.

Once the guests started arriving, it was wonderful to see so many people gathered together who had made FOMA such a success. Stephen Dixon and his wife arrived from Essex, where Stephen has taken up his new post as Archive Service Manager at Essex Record Office in Chelmsford. Dr Sandra Dunster Kent Team Leader for the *Victoria County History's* (VCH) England's Past for Everyone project, took time out from her tight writing schedule, accompanied by her colleague, Dr June Balshaw, Programme Leader for History at the University of Greenwich and Chair of the Kent VCH Management Committee. FOMA members, MALSC staff, Medway Council staff and the press all rubbed shoulders – and Sir Robert Worcester arrived safely, delighted that Norma had kept a parking space for him.

Speeches followed the buffet lunch. Tessa Towner, Stephen Dixon and Councillor Howard Doe, Medway Council's Portfolio Holder for Community Services, all lauded FOMA's success. However, the greatest praise came from the HLF's Jennie Fordham who congratulated us on our outstanding achievement. She particularly commended the planning and costings and commented, "This important project will fulfil our key requirements: conservation, access and education." The speeches were followed by the formal cutting of the cake by Stephen Dixon and Tessa Towner, the culmination of a wonderful day – but just the start of a very exciting new project.

Amanda Thomas' regular feature, Editor's Footnotes, will return in the next issue of The Clock Tower.

News and Events

Odette Buchanan, Friends' Secretary



Well, so here we are in a new year again, and I have been thinking about anniversaries which are relevant to FOMA members. 170 years ago in the *Rochester Gazette* of 26th February, 1839 there was an application to build a railway from Gravesend to Strood, along the then canal tunnel; this was eventually completed and opened in 1845 as single track along the side of the canal. It was twenty-five years ago that HM Dockyard closed in Chatham. Not a particularly cheery thought as it was a traumatic event and to all of us in the Medway Towns the closure was devastating. I was teaching back then at a local school and over half the students in my registration group suddenly had unemployed parents. Some had left – transferred by the Admiralty to other dockyards in Portsmouth, Dartmouth or Plymouth - but the rest were left wondering who would want their skills. An exhibition marking this sad anniversary is being mounted at MALSC from 26th March to 26th May – do try to go and see it, as it will also include exhibits about the Dockyard's 200 year history.

The year has started well for FOMA with the exciting announcement of our award from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Archives of Great Expectations on 7th January. Those who attended all agreed it was a splendid reception and our thanks are especially due to Tessa Towner, Jean Skilling and Elaine Gardner for their impeccable organization.

Before Christmas, on Friday 21st November, we held our annual Wine 'n' Wisdom quiz evening. This year we made a staggering £141 for FOMA funds. Our Treasurer, Jean Skilling, has forwarded this note to me, "Our thanks to all who worked so hard to make the evening a success in particular Elaine, Tessa, Odette and Cindy."

A reminder to everyone that the FOMA AGM will be taking place on **Wednesday, 15th April at 2.00 pm in the MALSC research room.** This will be your chance to hear about the latest FOMA developments and to renew your subscription if you haven't yet done so.

With regards to the research room, your Secretary finds the new arrangement of tables and other furniture in there much more sensible than before – thanks to Alison, Cindy and the rest of the staff.

Have a happy, healthy and prosperous 2009!

P.S. If you haven't already done so, please do visit our re-vamped FOMA website <http://www.foma-lsc.org>. Hasn't Alex Thomas, our webmaster, done an excellent job? Well done, Alex.

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

17th March 2009, 7.30 pm

A talk by Sandra Dunster, Kent Co-ordinator EPA/VCH:
England's Past for Everyone: The Medway Towns Project.
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

6th February to 24th March 2009

Life in the Workhouse.
An exhibition by Tessa Towner.
Exhibitions are free to view.

28th April 2009, 7.30 pm

A talk by Andrew Mayfield, Historic Environment Record Officer:
Archaeology and Conservation in Kent and the Historic Environment Record.
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

26th March to 26th May 2009

Chatham Dockyard in the News. Marking the 25th Anniversary of the Dockyard Closure and
Events of the Past 200 Years.
An exhibition by MALSC.
Exhibitions are free to view.

28th May to 7th July 2009

A Pictorial History of Shorts and Associates: 100 Years of Innovation.
An exhibition by MALSC and volunteers.
Exhibitions are free to view.

9th June 2009, 7.30 pm

A talk by Shorts Brothers' Commemoration Society and MALSC:
High Flyers: Short Brothers on Film. Historic Footage of Short Brothers' Aviation History.
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

24th June 2009, 10.00 am – 12.30 pm

and

1st July 2009, 10.00 am – 12.30 pm

A two-part course by Vince Rogers (KFHS):
Family History: Digging Deeper into Resources on the Internet.
£5 per session.

9th July to 8th September 2009

Gundulph: The Builder Bishop.
An exhibition by the City of Rochester Society.
Exhibitions are free to view.

10th September to 31st October 2009

The Muslim Community of Medway.
An exhibition by MALSC, FOMA and the Muslim community.
Exhibitions are free to view.

13th October 2009, 7.30 pm

A talk by MALSC:
Medway's Muslim Communities: Looking Forward, Looking Back.

Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

16th November to 8th December 2009

Not Forgotten: Men from Medway in the Great War.

An exhibition by MALSC.

Exhibitions are free to view.

17th November 2009, 7.30 pm

A talk by Mick de Caville:

Men from Medway in the Great War.

Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

10th December 2009 to 2nd February 2010

Kent and Pas de Calais: Our Shared History.

An exhibition by the Cross Channel Community Network.

Exhibitions are free to view.

Wednesday 16th December 2009, 10.00 am to 12.00 noon

Mince Pie Day

Come along and meet the staff, enjoy seasonal refreshments, view the exhibitions and book sale!
at 2.30pm

A talk by Lee Ault:

The Victorian Lady: An Illustrated Presentation.

Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL.**

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, (MALSC) Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Further information is available from MALSC; please telephone 01634 332714 to book.

Please note: You may be aware that Medway Council is being relocated to Gun Wharf. This move does not include the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre and until further notice, we are still to be found in the Clock Tower building.

From the Membership Secretary

Betty Cole



Subscriptions are now due from all FOMA members who joined before 1st October 2008.

Please complete the renewal form enclosed with this journal and send it with a cheque for £10 (£12 for Family Membership) made payable to Friends of Medway Archives to me:

Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER

or,

if you are planning to attend the **AGM on Wednesday, 15th April 2009** the form and cheque/cash can be handed to me at the meeting.

Alternatively, you may prefer to pay via PayPal on the website at <http://www.foma-lsc.org/membership.html> .

Don't forget, for just £100, you can become a Life Member!

About The Clock Tower

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

Editorial deadlines

The first Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of February, May, August and November. 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 14 of *The Clock Tower* is Tuesday 5th May 2009.

Publication date

The third Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

The Clock Tower is printed by Ray Maisey, Rabbit Hutch Printers, 106 Charles Drive, Cuxton, Kent, ME2 1DU; telephone: 01634 294655; fax: 01634 723510; email: Ray@Rabbithutchprinters.com

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information

The logo for *The Clock Tower* was designed by Bob Ratcliffe.

The banner design (incorporating the logo) and the title *The Clock Tower* were designed by Alexander Thomas.

The Clock Tower is also available on: <http://www.foma-lsc.org/newsletter.html>

Further Information

Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website <http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/> or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.uk

General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Odette Buchanan: 72 Jersey Road, Rochester, ME2 3PE. Telephone: 01634 718231; email: odette_buchanan@yahoo.co.uk

Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Betty Cole, 25 Elm Avenue, Chatham, Kent ME4 6ER. Telephone: 01634 316509; email: bettycole@blueyonder.co.uk

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FOMA Members

Obituary

Mr Freddie Cooper



Mr Freddie Cooper, pictured in 1998.

We are sad to report the death of FOMA Honorary Life Member Mr Freddie Cooper, aged 91. Mr Cooper was made an Honorary Life Member in recognition of his interest and commitment to the promotion of local history. The Medway Messenger printed many tributes to Mr Cooper, including this from Ken Webber, former Gillingham Mayor:

“He was the quintessential authority on all things to do with Rainham and even in his last years could stand up and give long lectures on its history. He was never afraid to give his opinion on events and decisions affecting the borough.”

We re-print here the tribute to his life, as published in the February 2008 issue of *The Clock Tower*.

Born in 1917 at 22 Napier Road, Gillingham, Mr Cooper was brought up within a farming community which still herded cattle along the main roads. In 1998, at the St George's Centre, Chatham Maritime, Mr Cooper was made the 20th and last Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Gillingham before the creation that year of the new Medway Towns authority. Dated 25th February 1998, the commendation on the Freedom Scroll reads:

‘We the Mayor and members of the Council of the Borough of Gillingham in recognition of the long, distinguished and meritorious service rendered by you to the Borough over a period of many years as Councillor, Alderman, Deputy mayor and Mayor and for your commitment to education in Rainham and Gillingham; your work and support for the Rochester Bridge Trust; local charities and societies; and civic society; we express and record our gratitude.

Further we record our appreciation for your work to promote Gillingham as a place for economic and industrial regeneration; and the consequent creation of employment opportunities.

Also, we record our gratitude for your tireless efforts in promoting the well being of Rainham; its people and their interests.

And acting by resolution of the whole Council do by these present admit you as Honorary freeman of the Borough and confer upon you the rights, privileges, honours and distinctions appurtenant thereto.’

Freddie Cooper's working life began in 1933 as a junior insurance clerk in Rochester, earning 15/- (75p) a week, but two years later he moved to the Kent Electric Power Company (Seeboard), from which he retired in 1974 as a Management Accountant. During the Second World War he served in

the RAF, and in that pre and post war period, he worked as a Rainham local reporter for the Kent Messenger and Observer, writing articles right up until the late 1960s.

Life in local government began in 1951 when Mr Cooper was elected Councillor to Gillingham Borough Council. He was Alderman from 1960 to 1967, Deputy Mayor for 1957/8 and 1961/2 and Mayor in 1962/3, and held posts on various different committees, including Chairmanship of Health, Housing Finance and Industrial Development. In education he served as a Governor and Chairman of Governors in many different Gillingham schools over a period of 43 years. Mr Cooper was also a member of the Rochester Bridge Trust, acting as Junior and Senior Warden from 1972 to 1974 and Bridge Clerk from 1974 to 1980. His contribution to the Gillingham and Rainham community was extraordinary, and yet he still found time to play cricket and tennis and devote his time to many local charities, including the Friends of Wisdom Hospice and Cobham College almshouses.

The Municipal Buildings, Gillingham

JL Keys

Part Two



In the last edition of The Clock Tower, it was shown how the Municipal Buildings were completed in just 14 months from the time that the foundation stone was laid until the opening date in September 1937. It is an imposing building both inside and out and in the Georgian style. No less than 28 sub-contractors were employed in providing the various materials and specialist work required.

For example, although the strong rooms were built by the Liverpool Artificial Stone Co., Rotherhithe, the strong rooms doors came from the Ratner Safe Co. of Bromley. Other firms provided the polished ancaster pavings and wall linings, iron monger, sanitary fittings and electrical fittings, to name but a few of the thousand and one items required in the fitting out process.



The Municipal Buildings, Gillingham; postcard original from the Medway Archives and Local Studies centre Couchman Collection; DE402/21/40

The building itself is planned around two quadrangles with the Civic Suite in the centre, dividing the quadrangles, and the departmental offices occupying the two wings. A rather grand staircase leads one up to the main entrance to the oak panelled Council Chamber, Committee Rooms and the Mayor's Parlour. The three committee rooms are pleasantly situated overlooking the park and are separated by two partitions which can be folded back into recesses to form a room 80 feet long to accommodate larger functions. There is also an adjoining kitchen from which refreshments may be served.

All the offices had oak block floors, the general decorating was kept as light as possible with parchment tints for the walls and ivory tints for the ceilings; the furnishings were in oak and dark blue hide. Living accommodation for a caretaker was provided on the second floor of the central section and the building was heated by a low-pressure accelerated hot water system in conjunction with an electrical thermal storage plant. I do not know if the system has survived the march of time.

I do not think that the original budget estimate of £51,000 was exceeded, though one would have to add an additional two noughts, at least, for an idea of what it would have cost today.

In a recent article in a local newspaper, it was mentioned that the Municipal Buildings may be earmarked for use as a residential home. We can only hope that this is true, rather than an earlier report that a building contractor wished to demolish it to make way for a housing development. That would be a crime.

Readers' Letters

We welcome letters and emails from readers with their comments. If you have anything you would like to say please write to: Mrs Amanda Thomas, Editor, The Clock Tower, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5NS or email at amanda@ajthomas.com

15th January 2009

Dear Amanda,

CHESTNUTS SCHOOL, WATTS AVENUE, ROCHESTER

I would very much appreciate your help through the pages of *The Clock Tower* in obtaining information about the former primary school in Watts Avenue from which over a period of some 50 years so many went on to local junior schools. Memories from those who attended would be most welcome but also any facts and figures : when did the school open, what happened to it during WW2 and when did it close, what were the class sizes and the names of the staff (apart from the Headmistress, Miss Snowden-Smith) and was there any documentation such as a prospectus ?

Yours sincerely,

Simon Shreeve,
Honorary Editor, The Old Roffensian;
shreeve.orm@ntlworld.com

The following was sent by email to FOMA Secretary, Odette Buchanan.

21st November, 2008

Good morning Odette,

I have just looked at the new web site and would like to congratulate you on its excellence. I now have my no 12 copy and am devouring it with relish. Thank you and have a great Christmas.

Barry Cox.

9th February 2009

HELP TO SAVE STROOD'S HERITAGE!

Dear Clock Tower Readers,

Many of you will be aware of Medway Council's plans to redevelop the old Civic Centre site in Strood. The eventual plan is to demolish all the buildings on the site and to redevelop it with a mixture of uses. The demolition originally included the Aveling and Porter building designed by local architect George Bond [see *The Clock Tower*, Issue 10, May 2008], built in 1903, and also the older gabled building, used for some time as the Mayor's Parlour, but originally occupied by Charles Dickens' doctor. Strood does not have many buildings of note, and none so strategically placed along the river front as this building. Its loss would be a sad demise of a fine building, although not grand enough, apparently, for English Heritage to grant it listed status. Nevertheless, it is an important building locally, serving as the offices of a firm whose name and reputation was world-wide in the field of steam traction and later engineering. There are many who think the buildings will make a superb Industrial Museum for the Medway Valley. Some Councillors are calling for more museum space, and following representations, the buildings have a reprieve for the time being. Medway has aspirations of being a City of Culture, and culture and heritage is one of its core values. But there are a number of Councillors who are not aware of the significance of these buildings nor of the opportunity that is now presented to make a first class presentation of a world class industrial past.

Make your opposition to the demolition known and support for an alternative use known by emailing the leader of the council, Rodney Chambers at Rodney.chambers@medway.gov.uk. In addition contact local industrial archaeologist Jim Preston at james.m.preston@btinternet.com or on 07712 618004 so that objectors can form themselves into a body of likeminded people with a will to save the buildings.

Cllr Sue Haydock,
FOMA Vice President and Medway Council Representative.

Archives Update

Alison Cable, Borough Archivist



Alison Cable is the new Borough Archivist for Medway, and started at MALSC in mid November. In her first article for The Clock Tower, Alison Cable writes of her background and how she became an archivist.

I was born and bred in the West Riding of Yorkshire, near the city of Wakefield and attended university in Sheffield. After graduating with a degree in Art History, I worked as an archive assistant at the West Yorkshire Archive Service HQ in Wakefield. While working there, it was suggested that I should consider a career as an archivist.

I qualified as an archivist in the early 1990s, and my first professional post was with the Tyne and Wear Archives Service, working on local authority collections, trade guilds, engineering companies, film and video holdings, and the Port of Tyne Authority in particular. From Newcastle on Tyne, I moved to the Lancashire Record Office at Preston, where I helped run the Records Management Service and developed a certain expertise in coroners' records! Then, after a brief stint as an archivist at Bethlem Royal Hospital Museum and Archives at West Wickham, I took up a new post with Kent County Council in March 2000.

As Manager and Senior Archivist of the East Kent Archives Centre (EKAC) near Dover, I managed a small team who provided an archive service for the Thanet, Dover and Shepway areas of Kent. I listed the records for the East Kent Coalfield and catalogued a number of smaller collections. Other projects included overseeing the parish survey programme, working with Screen Archive South East to produce Kent on Film DVDs, and supervising an Heritage Lottery Fund project to catalogue the records of Lydd Borough.

Whilst working at EKAC, I developed an interest and knowledge in social history, with particular emphasis on hospital and Board of Guardians records.

I very much look forward to working with everyone here at MALSC and supporting FOMA!

Recent Acquisitions

<i>Brief details on creator of the records</i>	<i>Summary description</i>	<i>Collection reference</i>	<i>Covering dates</i>
Brennan Family	Family portraits	DE1170 (addl)	ND
Various	Title deeds: Snodland	DE1172	1861-1863
Chatham Memorial Synagogue	Management committee minutes	N/J/305	200-2006
New and Latter House of Jezreel	minutes, texts, diaries,accounts	N/JZ/153	1860-1891
Rochester CathedralDean and Chapter	Letters patent: Charles 11	DRc (addl)	1663
Various	Title deeds: Medway Towns,Boxley	DE1175	C20th
Phillips Family of Gillingham	Family papers various	DE1176	1910-68
United Benefice of Cobham with Luddesdowne	PCC mins and parish magazines	P235	1998-2007
Gillingham	Additional building plans	GBC	ND C20th
Rochester, Chatham & Gillingham Gas Co	social club records	DE1179	1920-77
United Benefice & parish of Chatham St Paul	Photos and ephemera of church and clergy	P85c; P85H	c1851-1975
Blaw Knox Ltd	marketing corresp; economic reports etc	U2824	c1968-1987
Local Studies (Medway)	printed items which include letters, cuttings etc: various	DE1182	1828-1920
Personal and RAF records of E F Lowman	Photos, diaries etc	DE1183	c1940-86
Medway Rotary Club	Operation Frankton/Cockleshell 85 operations: scrapbooks etc	DE1184	1985-2002
Pavement Commissioners: parish of St Nicholas, Rochester	minute books 1769-1783 and 1853-1875	DE1185	1769-1875
David Day of Westhill	Common place book	DE1186	c1802-1834
St Marks parish church, Gillingham	Additonal parish records: especially PCC minutes	P153E	1945-1972
St Justus Parish church, Rochester	Additonal parish records: newsletters	P305C	1997-2005
Various	includes notebook of P F Hogg of Chatham Antiquarian	DE1189	1914-1949
United Benefice and Parish of Fawkham and Hartley	includes corresp, service sheets, Quinquennial report	P174	c1984-2006
Chatham Borough Council	Board of Health maps	CBA	1852
Medway Navigation company	Includes map of upper Medway; minutes; accounts; printed items	S/MN	1739-1975
Chatham and District Light Railways Co	Tramways plans	DE1194	1902
Christ Church, Dartford, Kent	Marriage Banns	P110b	1979-1992
Parish of Burham and Wouldham	additional records mostly PCC minutes and correspondence	P405 and P52	1955-2002

A Short History of the Muslim Community in Medway

Irina Shub, Local Studies Librarian, Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre



Irina joined the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre team in 2005. Originally from St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) in Russia, she has always been fascinated by the English language and history. Throughout her career as a librarian, she has worked in various libraries, and when she and her family moved from London to Medway she applied for the position of a Local Studies Librarian at MALSC.

This article, the first of two, is based on three sources: a handful of records found in the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, items from the local press, and interviews with various representatives from the Muslim community.

Part One

Muslims from various countries are known to have passed through the Medway ports for many centuries, yet there does not seem to have been a settled community until Victorian times. The earliest mention of Muslims in the area dates from 25th February 1882, when, according to the press, crowds of locals flooded Barnard's Palace of Varieties to see the noted trapeze artist, Ishamel Mahomed, known as *The Real Indian Wonder*. It is unclear if he was just a visiting performer or lived locally but from that time on Muslims started to appear in the local press.

Press Reports

A number of court cases, usual stuff for newspaper reports, refer to hearings involving Muslim witnesses. Before we examine these, the reader should remember that the reporters for the local press were unfamiliar with the exotic names of their subjects. Inaccuracies are their responsibility rather than ours!

Mahomet Sarvar, an Afghani youth, was apprenticed to a Chatham carpenter in the early 1880s. He had originally been brought to the area by an army officer and his reception in the area appears to have been mixed. He was falsely accused of assault by another worker in 1883, but on the other hand Henry Coward, a High Street confectioner, described Sarvar as quiet and trustworthy and stood surety for twenty pounds. In 1907 a local magistrate's court was placed in a peculiar situation when a certain Djabah Tahar Benali, a prosecution witness, and being a Muslim, required a copy of the Qur'an to take the oath. As the court possessed none a constable was dispatched to the then Free Library, which similarly held no copy. In the end the bench was forced to adjourn for one week to allow Benali to bring his own Qur'an to the court. In 1925 a similar incident happened when once again the court needed a Qur'an but this time resolved the problem in a different way: "an Indian belonging to the Mohammedan religion . . . made a solemn affirmation to speak the truth." How the Medway court used to solve such problems on a regular basis is unclear; though not numerous, these two cases were by no means the only ones involving Muslims.

Immigrant Work

Most Muslim newcomers to Medway engaged in the normal occupations typical to immigrants from around the globe and were hawkers, pedlars and various middlemen, just as the Jewish immigrants to Medway had been before them. However, not all immigrants were thus employed. Dr Ishmael Tewfik, played a significant role in the community of Medway as a doctor and generous benefactor of local schools. An Egyptian subject, he arrived in Britain in 1914 aged 21, having been accepted for studies at the Royal College of Physicians at Guy's Hospital, London. When he completed the course he worked at the Royal South Hampshire Hospital in Southampton and then the Royal Chester Infirmary. Around 1917 he obtained the position of house surgeon in St

Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester. Dr Tewfik moved to Medway, renting a place in Boley Hill and supplemented his surgeon's income by opening a private practice. He was married in 1918 to Louise Field and later, after their first son was born, relocated to 16 Kingswood Villas, Station Road, Gillingham, where two more boys were born. The family was successful and the sons followed their father into the medical profession.

In July 1941, Raymond, the Tewfiks' second son, who was then studying medicine at Guy's Hospital, London, interrupted his studies to join the R.A.F. and was subsequently attached to the Coastal Command. On 17th May 1943 Raymond failed to return from a mission and was listed as *missing*. In memory of his son, Dr Tewfik established an annual prize of £1000 for the Medway Technical College in Gillingham (today's Mid Kent College). Later, after the war, Dr. Tewfik adopted as his ward the young Hugh Roderick Stoakes, a pupil of Barnsole Road Primary School where in 1957 in appreciation of the quality of the education there, he founded another annual prize worth £300. In 1960, having lived in Medway for over 40 years, Dr Tewfik retired to Cowden, East Sussex.



DR I. TEWFIK, of Gillingham, who has presented £1,000 to Medway Technical College to found an annual prize in memory of his second son, Sergeant-Pilot Raymond Tewfik, is seen presenting the prize to the first winner, Aircraftman C. Eastwood, of Gillingham.

Dr Tewfik established an annual prize of £1000 for the Medway Technical College in Gillingham in memory of his second son, Sergeant-Pilot Raymond Tewfik. A newspaper cutting shows Dr Tewfik presenting a prize to the first winner, Aircraftman C Eastwood. Chatham Observer 19 May 1944

Cultural and Educational Activities

From the 1920s onwards Medway became a regular location for lectures and talks given by visiting or local Muslims. These included Abdul Qayum Malik from London (1921), who was the editor of the *Muslim Standard*, local photographer, M.M. Salam, an Associate Member of the Royal Photographic Society and a Vice-President of the Medway Amateur Photographic Association (1929; 1930), and Dr. S.M. Abdullah, Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking (1954). The subjects included: the Islamic Way of Life, Women's Role in Islam, Egyptian Customs throughout the Ages, Art in Egypt, and others. Talks were given at several different venues such as Oddfellows' Hall, Vicarage Road, Gillingham (1921), the Unitarian Church in New Road, Chatham – used by the Chatham Lodge of the Theosophical Society - (1925), the Young Women's Christian Association hut in New Road, Chatham (1927), the Technical Institute in Rochester, Eastgate - today's Adult Education Centre - (1930), the Psychic Centre, 103 Watling Street, Chatham - a regular meeting place of the Medway Lodge of the Theosophical Society - (1954), and others. These talks were extremely popular and newspapers report that the venues were always crowded.

Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

Janet Knight, Local Studies, The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre



Janet Knight has worked at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre for over 16 years. She started work as assistant to Pat Salter and later transferred to Local Studies, working with Norma Crowe. Pat Salter's interest in Edwin Harris fired Janet's own enthusiasm and she has become another eager member of the Edwin fan club. Janet is often heard to say, "I wonder what Edwin has to say on the matter..."

In this next episode of her series, Janet reproduces a section about railway stations from Edwin Harris' 1930 work, Recollections of Rochester.

Railway Stations

When the South-Eastern Railway were in opposition to the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, the South Eastern were making a line into Rochester with a passenger station on the Common and another on the King's Arms wharf, called the Chatham Central Station. The London, Chatham and Dover Railway then thought it high time that they also should have one in Rochester.

The absence of a railway station in Rochester is thus alluded to by Charles Dickens in *Edwin Drood*, 'In those days there was no railway to Cloisterham (Rochester) and Mr Sapsea said there never would be. Mr Sapsea said more: he said there never should be. And yet, marvellous to consider, it has come to pass, in these days that express trains don't think Cloisterham worth stopping at, but yell and whirl through it on their larger errands, casting the dust off their wheels as a testimony against its insignificance. Some remote fragment of main line to somewhere else, there was, which was going to ruin the money market if it failed, and Church and State if it succeeded, and (of course) the Constitution, whether or no; but even that had already so unsettled Cloisterham traffic that the traffic, deserting the high road, came sneaking in from an unprecedented part of the country by a back stable-way, for many years labelled at the corner "Beware of the dog".'

I fancy I hear the reader exclaim, "What on earth has this to do with Randall's yard?" The answer is "A good deal". Speculation was rife as to where this new Rochester station would be situated, and by common prognostication rumour answered "In the Eastgate". Property owners in its neighbourhood had visions of vast compensation for business premises that would be required to make the approach.

Alderman Randall built at the bottom of the yard a large two-storeyed building; the ground section was open to serve as a shelter for his carts, vans and handtrucks and the upper part for stores, but they were never finished and never used.

The other property in the Eastgate that would have been involved comprised Mr. R.C. Pope's, Eastgate House and grounds.

Mr John Prall's offices, and our shop and premises. He, with this possibility in view, purchased the eight cottages in the rear known as Butcher's-court, thus making a good block of property; Ekyn's estate comprising the whole of Queen Charlotte lane, and the three houses in the High street numbered 153, 155 and 157. The last suitable approach was Mr Smith's garden.

The Railway Company, to the surprise of all, bought Winfield's garden and made their station there. Eastgate House and grounds are now city property. Ekyn's estate was sold by auction, Randall's estate by private contract, and Mr Smith's garden became the site of the new Rochester Post Office.



Rochester Station, Rochester High Street; Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.



SECR number 738 entering Rochester Station; Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

More follows on the history of Strood, Rochester and Chatham's railways with the second part in Bob Ratcliffe's series, Strood to Canterbury 150.

Strood to Canterbury 150

Bob Ratcliffe



Bob Ratcliffe is a retired architect. He is President of The City of Rochester Society and a local historian; Bob is also a FOMA committee member.

This article, the second of a series of three, is based on the commemorative exhibition held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC) in August to September 2008.

Part Two

The Feud

With the completion of its own link to London, the London, Chatham and Dover Railway (LCDR) ceased to offer its traffic to the South Eastern Railway (SER) at Strood, and for the next forty years there developed a feud between the two companies, and particularly between James Staats Forbes of the Chatham and Sir Edward Watkin of the South Eastern: a feud that resulted in the railway map of Kent as we know it today. Insofar as the line between Strood and Canterbury was concerned, there were, inter alia, plans for a commercial dock at Rochester (LCDR), a branch line from Strood to Chatham (SER) and a court case between the two companies relating to through traffic at Strood. Finally there was a proposal by the LCDR to by-pass the Medway Towns altogether.

The Rochester Docks Act of 1866 failed for lack of money - a situation that plagued the LCDR throughout its existence. Indeed it was in 1866 that its bank failed, a situation from which it never really recovered. In the 1880s the LCDR used the land to the east of the line at Rochester to build a goods yard and warehouse. Known as Chatham Goods Sidings, it was to become the main distribution point for merchandise until its closure in July 1988. It also provided a rail link to Cory's Wharf, opened in 1910, enabling coal to be distributed by rail to the surrounding towns and villages.

The refusal by the two companies to provide a connecting service at Strood was of growing concern to the inhabitants of the towns who had to walk along Canal Road from the LCDR's Rochester Bridge Station in the High Street to the SER's Strood Junction Station. In 1876 it resulted in the Mayor of Rochester, one Alderman Toomer, invoking the help of the Railway Commissioners who ruled that the companies would be liable to penalties if such a service were not re-introduced. Needless to say it was, and it became known as The Toomer Service, a phrase that still survives today.

The South Eastern's eagerness to obtain some of the Chatham traffic for itself was the reason for the Chatham Central Branch. Of all the competing lines built as a result of the feud, this must have been the most ridiculous. Running parallel to the LCDR line from Strood, it involved a second bridge across the Medway and a viaduct thence, crossing the LCDR goods yard, to a terminus in Rochester High Street close to the present railway bridge. It boasted an intermediate station in Gas House Road, known as Rochester Common (later Rochester Central!) and opened on 1st March 1892. By coincidence the LCDR, who had not had a station in Rochester until then, opened Rochester (Main Line) on the very same day!

The LCDR's last fling was the proposal for a loop line avoiding the Medway Towns. This was put to Parliament in 1896, but was subsequently withdrawn. It would have been of benefit to the LCDR boat trains in avoiding the torturous bends through Rochester and Strood, but would have been of

no use to the other trains that stopped at Chatham. Drawings for this proposal are held at Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Amalgamation

Sir Edward Watkin retired from the South Eastern Railway in 1894, and thus the stage was set for an end to the feud and for amalgamation. In the event the two companies were to remain separate, but were to appoint a joint managing committee to run the trains and provide the rolling stock. The South Eastern and Chatham Railways' Joint Managing Committee - the S.E & C.R for short - began operation on 1st January 1899, and at once

began to rationalize services and layouts. High on the list was the matter of the Chatham Central Branch. This was eventually closed on 30th September 1911, though not before the citizens of Rochester had negotiated some local improvements, including the rebuilding of Rochester Station with two additional platforms, and the provision of a footbridge across the goods yard in Blue Boar Lane to improve access to Blue Boar Pier. With the closure of the branch came a rearrangement of the track layout across the two bridges over the Medway, the Victoria/North Kent line junction being moved to the east bank. From then on, trains bound for Victoria used the LCDR bridge while those for the North Kent Line used the old SER bridge. The track and signalling layout for this work is held at Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.



Rochester Bridge Station; Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Couchman Collection, ref., DE402/12/33

The LCDR station in Strood, sited where Messrs Passmore's are today, had been opened in 1860. Known variously as Rochester, Rochester and Strood, and Rochester Bridge, it had suffered a fire in 1901 and was rebuilt in red brick with stone quoins in 1908, bearing the letters SE&CR and the date over the main entrance. A mere nine years later it was to be closed as a war economy measure, and was never to reopen, though it was not demolished until 1968. Another war loss was the development of an electrification plan which the SE&CR had put before Parliament in 1903. It was to be a further thirty six years before the *juice* reached the Medway.

The multiple lines in Kent were of great benefit during the First World War which resulted in a heavy increase in traffic between London and the Channel ports. This was particularly the case after the landslip at Folkestone Warren in 1915 which meant that all Dover traffic had to be routed over the LCDR road. 1918 found the railways in a dire state, and a further five years were to pass before the government of the day decided on their grouping into four main companies. Prior to this, a final blow to the SE&CR was a fire on the old SER bridge in 1919, resulting in its closure until 1922. Here again the benefit of earlier duplication was to pay handsomely, for all traffic could be transferred to the LCDR bridge alongside, and the Toomer Loop reopened until repairs could be affected. This work took three years. The SE&CR's official track and signalling layout for this

temporary work, carrying the Toomer Loop heading, is also held at Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Southern Days

From 1st January 1923 our railway became a part of the Southern Railway, the smallest of the big four companies that were to manage the railways of Britain until nationalisation in 1948. The progressive management of the Southern under its General Manager, Sir Herbert Walker, was soon improving matters in Kent, including the strengthening of bridges on the old LCDR routes from London to Dover and Thanet. In the Medway area this involved the construction of a chord in Strood, with new bridges over Station Road and the Medway Valley line, to bring the line from Victoria onto the SER bridge. This rendered obsolete the sharp curves through the closed Rochester Bridge Station and allowed the speed limit here to be raised from 20 to 30mph. This work was completed in 1927, from which time larger locomotives were to be seen on the Ramsgate and Dover express routes. The Southern management were also enthusiastic about electrification, and by 1933 were operating the largest suburban electric railway in the world. Electric trains had reached Gravesend in 1930 and Swanley in 1935, and the third rail was extended to Gillingham and Maidstone in July 1939. There were plans to electrify to Ramsgate and Dover by 1941, though World War Two put a stop to these.

Electrification brought a regular interval service throughout the day on both routes to London. An hourly service to Victoria served all stations to Swanley, where it joined a portion from Maidstone East. The North Kent line had a half hourly service, one train serving all stations to Charing Cross, and the other, with portions from Maidstone West and Gillingham combining at Strood, Gravesend, Dartford and Woolwich Arsenal. An hourly fast service to Victoria, calling only at Bromley South, was maintained from Chatham by the steam powered expresses from Thanet. Only two months after the first electric train reached the Medway Towns, the Second World War plunged the railways into very difficult times. Our line was heavily used at the time of the Dunkirk evacuation, and concern over the vulnerability of the bridges at Rochester resulted in the old LCDR one, redundant since 1927, being overhauled to carry either road or rail traffic. In the event this was never needed, but the old bridge was to survive a further twenty three years before its replacement by the present road bridge. There were a number of incidents during the war years, including heavy bombing in the area of Strood Station, but the most serious involved a Ramsgate express near Rainham, when a V1 or Doodlebug was shot down and demolished the bridge at Oak Lane as the train approached. There were five fatalities in the resulting derailment.

For Edwin Harris' view of Rochester Station, see the previous article, Janet Knight's Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

The Role of the Cathedral 1640-1660

Catharina Clement



In 2005, Catharina completed a BA in history at Canterbury Christchurch University, and then began a part-time PhD in local history entitled Reactions in the Medway Towns 1640-1660. She is involved in various local history groups and projects such as FOMA, CDHS, and the Victoria County History EPE project, and has recently embarked on a series of talks to local historical societies. Currently Catharina works for Gravesham libraries and acts as a casual assistant at MALSC. During 2009 she hopes to give a paper at either the Institute for Historical Research or the Friends Historical Society on Rochester Quakerism 1655-1918, submitting the same for publication in the Quaker Journal.

Part Two

The dean and chapter had lost overall control of the cathedral by 1643. By then central government had started to become involved in controlling cathedral worship and the likes of Elizeus Burgess and John Lorkin were no longer considered suitable preachers. In 1642 the Kent County Committee (KCC) had reported from Rochester that some local ministers were discouraging citizens from paying their parliamentary assessments. The Deputy Lieutenants ordered the Mayor and corporation of Rochester to draw up a list of preachers for the cathedral acceptable to the House of Commons. Thus to a degree responsibility for the cathedral was passed to the local corporation.



Rochester Cathedral in the 1780s; Thorpe, Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

The Act of Parliament to abolish cathedral chapters was passed in April 1649. Yates, however, believes this cathedral chapter was already removed by 1647. This seems largely true, as John Walker claims from a correspondent, that by 1646 the cathedral had no remaining prebendaries, only five petty canons. The Philip Ward accounts also confirm payments for just a sub-dean and five petty canons. It would thus appear that Lorkin lost his post prior to this date, possibly as early as 1644 and archdeacon Burgess was sequestered from Southfleet in 1645. Several of the other prebendaries conveniently died around 1646-7 and the remainder were sequestered. Thus the KCC had already instigated the final removal of the cathedral hierarchy well before being instructed by central government. The petty canons probably conducted services in the interim and John Codd was also paid in 1644 for preaching 3 sermons. However prime responsibility for conducting cathedral services fell upon the curate of St Nicholas between 1645-1648 with John Gibbon and Samuel Dillingham both fulfilling that role. Hence the cathedral's role appeared more akin to a parish church after 1644.



Grace, Mercy and Peace; Early English Books Online

The cathedral also had a record of attracting more radical preachers. In 1645 Henry Denne, a General Baptist minister, delivered a sermon at Rochester cathedral entitled, *Grace, Mercy and Peace*, which was published the same year 'for the Benefit of the City of Rochester'. We know from Thomas Edwards *Gangraena* that Denne and Thomas Lambe visited Rochester regularly; meeting at churches and later Robert Cossens' house. Apparently as many as 160 attended some of these meetings, they were held regularly, were common knowledge amongst local people and many were baptised.

Yates concludes that 'No Puritan ministry was established in place of the former chapter and the cathedral was simply allowed to decay...' after 1647. However there is overwhelming evidence that a preaching ministry existed until at least 1656. In 1648 Allen Ackworth was paid a stipend of £98 14s 0d for 9 months as minister for the cathedral church and served in this capacity for a number of years. Walter Rosewell's treatise of 1656 refers to a Presbyterian preaching ministry operating in the Medway Towns in the early 1650s, which was involved in lectures and debates in the cathedral with radical preachers. His tract emphasised that the Ranter Joseph Salmon had preached in the cathedral for five years, and twice on a Sunday. When Salmon left for Barbados in 1655 he left his followers to replace him with his fellow Ranter Richard Coppin. These two preachers managed to attract quite large gatherings. Thus the cathedral was to have in excess of five years of radical preaching.



A pamphlet published at the time of the dispute; Early English Books Online

What prompted Rosewell and the civic authorities to react to Coppin, but allow Salmon the freedom to preach for five years? It would seem that Coppin was the more articulate and educated of the Ranter preachers. Hence in a sense he was more of a threat religiously and politically. It was for this reason that Rosewell challenged Coppin in October 1655 to a series of lectures within the cathedral together with Daniel French of Strood and William Sandbrooke of St Margarets. Rosewell contended that certain of Coppin's beliefs were blasphemous and set out to entrap him. Matters came to a head in December when Rosewell invited several of the local councillors and army along to witness the debates for themselves. Also present were the Baptist minister Thomas Gammon and Independent sea chaplain Laurence Wise. Thus all sects and denominations had come together to try to remove the Ranter Coppin from preaching in the cathedral. The Presbyterian ministers and councillors were successful in their aim and Kelsey arrested Coppin. The court records show he was imprisoned at Maidstone and whilst a prisoner there wrote a treatise,

A blow at the serpent, in his defence in 1656, which was published and responded to in turn by Rosewell.

There are hints that not only the Ranters operated within the cathedral. The 1662 visitation asked 'whether is care taken to reduce all sectaries separatists & refractory persons resydeing within the precynct of your Church to the obedience of the doctrine & government of this Church...'. This would suggest that there was some nonconformist activity there in the civil war period. Thomas Gammon, the Baptist minister, lived within the cathedral precincts and it would not be surprising if he had used his house there for Baptist meetings. We know from a 1655 Quaker source that a congregation existed in Rochester.

In 1651 the Committee of the Long Parliament suggested the demolition of cathedrals and called for the proceeds to be used for poor relief. What further use apart from preaching was the cathedral subjected to? The Calendar of State Papers made reference to the theft of lead from the roof in 1651. It would also appear that the ironwork was stripped out in the 1650s by John Wild and sold on for scrap. Therefore some considered the cathedral as having nothing more than scrap value. Another historian heard a rumour that the crypt had been used as a sawpit and thus taken on an industrial usage. Thorpe related in *Customale Roffense* that an ancient alderman William Head remembered that Fairfax used the cathedral crypt for stabling horses and garrisoning soldiers. However the Calendar of State Papers makes reference in 1673 of 'complaints that certain soldiers ...abused and defiled the said cathedral, even to the profaning of some sacred parts thereof.' This was more likely Head's recollection, as he was but a few months in 1648. Furthermore if eighteenth century historians are to be believed Rochester cathedral also served as an alehouse. Peter Pett tried to sell cathedral property to raise funds for the Chatham Chest charity between 1656-8, which was about £3000 short. However Parliament did not accede to his wish. Thus the cathedral was considered for various roles from 1650 onwards as diverse as preaching to billeting of troops.

John Warner was restored to his bishopric in 1660 and immediately set about removing all Puritan ministers from Rochester and Strood. One of his other actions was to ensure that the corporation created 15 of the cathedral clergy as freemen in 1660 to ensure firstly that the Royalist Francis Clerke was returned to Parliament and secondly that the 1661 election would return a Royalist mayor. The Royalist return to local political power in 1662 meant that the corporation effectively resumed its former relationship with the cathedral. In 1664 the civic records show that the corporation was again paying the sextons to maintain their seats in the cathedral.

The cathedral chapter met in 1662 and immediately ordered the repair of the Bishop's Chair. Warner instigated a visitation in September 1662 to assess the state of and damage inflicted to the cathedral during the past 20 years. The dean and chapter reported back that the damage 'cost us neere eight thousand pounds & that the remayning defects of the sayd Church will not be repayed with a less summ then sixe thousand pounds which we are not able of ourselves to raise'. It would appear that despite the £8,000 which had already been spent, in 1663 part of the building collapsed. According to the State Papers many of the gentry of Kent had not been forthcoming financially towards the cost of these repairs and so Charles II suggested in a letter that they should raise subscriptions for the further repair of the cathedral amounting to around £6,000. However in 1664 the dean and chapter were still arranging to settle the arrears owed to cathedral workmen.

Warner's concern went beyond the mere fabric. He expressed an interest in knowing whether the ledgers and books had been lost or damaged. The replies were 'we have lost many leiger bookes & other evidences by the wickednes of the late tymes...' and 'That their was formerly a Lybrarie in the Church but many of the books have beene taken from us in the tyme of late warr...'. Hence Warner was attempting to renovate the cathedral to the glory and splendour he felt it deserved, but

was unable to recover certain valuable records and books, which had been totally lost over a twenty-year period. It is because of this that there are large gaps in the cathedrals records especially for the early part of the seventeenth century.

Hence by 1662 Warner and the cathedral chapter were to ensure considerable efforts had been made to rebuild the fabric of the cathedral and replace the clergy of the Medway Towns with those of an Anglican persuasion. The cathedral had thus by 1662 come full circle and was on its way back to its former glory and religious stance. In conclusion, Rochester cathedral had a more chequered history between 1640-1660 than is often credited. Certainly in light of the above, Yates perhaps underestimated the ability of the cathedral to adapt to circumstances and fulfil a new role.

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Some Old Roffensians



Part III Arts and Science

Simon Shreeve, Honorary Editor, *The Old Roffensian*

The Old Roffensian Society (the Society), which represents the interests of all former pupils of King's School, Rochester, has among its publications The History of King's School, Rochester (Edited by Richard L H Coulson, 1989), Eminent Roffensians (Compiled by Brian Nolan, 4th Edition, 1998) and Roll of Honour of Old Roffensians and Old Choristers (OC) of Rochester Cathedral who gave their lives in the Great and Second World Wars (2006) to which reference should be made.

This third and final part of Simon Shreeve's series describes some of the contributions of Old Roffensians, former pupils of King's School, Rochester, to arts and science. Further information is contained in Eminent Roffensians (compiled by Brian Nolan, 4th Edition, 1998) published by the Old Roffensian Society. It is the Society's convention that the letters "OR" followed by year or years in brackets means Old Roffensians with the qualifying years, that is those spent at the School as pupils.

King's School has a long history of musical scholarship, not least through its association with Rochester Cathedral. The Cathedral Choir School ceased to exist in the summer of 1937 after which choristers were admitted to King's. Sir John Frederick Bridge, chorister (OC) from 1852 to 1859 and OR to 1861, composer and conductor, was organist at Rochester and Windsor, retiring with the title of Emeritus Organist of Westminster Abbey. George Blackmore OC(1930-33), OR(1933-39) became an acclaimed theatre organist and composer and was an adviser to the Hammond Organ Company. He was organist at the Majestic Theatre in Rochester which later became the Gaumont and then the Odeon. Guy Hindell OC(1918-21), OR(1921-26) was also a popular organist, playing at cinemas in Oxford, Kidderminster and finally Southend where he was resident organist at the Astoria Cinema. He sadly died in 1939 aged just 32. Percy William Whitlock OC(1913-18), OR(1918-19) was a celebrated organist and composer, writing choral music and music for orchestra and organ. Dr Roger Pond OR(1962-70) was the winner of the London International Organ Festival in 1977 and gave organ recitals worldwide.



George Blackmore; picture John D Sharp



Percy Whitlock; ORS Archives

Among painters and artists, the first notable name was that of Richard Dadd who was at King's from 1827 to 1831. Many exhibitions of his work have been held. He was one of three watercolourists to be featured at the Tate Gallery in the Summer of 2008. His painting of *Puck* (1841) was auctioned at Sotheby's in November 2008, part of the collection of the late Major Sir David John Mortimer Douglas Scott and was expected to fetch up to £500,000. Frank Algernon Stewart OR(1893-94) became war artist for the *Illustrated London News*, serving in South Africa during the Boer War. His drawings feature in *The Relief of Ladysmith* (1900) by John Black Atkins.

Of the stars of stage and screen who attended King's, Arthur Russell Thorndike OR(1901-04) was the brother of Dame Sybil Thorndike and, like her, an acclaimed actor. He was also a novelist, writing the popular *Dr Syn* series of books. Another prolific author was Rene Raymond OR(1915-16) whose most commonly-used *nom de plume* was James Hadley Chase. Claude Noel Hulbert OR(1915-16), the stage and screen actor, was the brother of the better-known Jack Hulbert who married Cicely Cortneidge. Peter Edward Rogers OR(1922-32) has won an international reputation as a film producer, mainly for the *Carry On* series. He is currently working on the latest film, *Carry on London*. David King OR(1937-40, 1945-48) had a distinguished career on the stage including appearances with the New Shakespeare Company. He played Badger in *Toad of Toad Hall* on the London stage and starred in *The Colditz Story* and the *Father Brown* stories on television. Another familiar stage and screen star was Dinsdale Landen OR(1943-46) who appeared with the Old Vic Company and at the Chichester Festival. Gerald Arthur English OR(1938-43) has appeared as tenor at the Prom concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and at Glyndebourne. Ian Harold Trevor Scoones OR(1949-57) designed television visual effects including those for the *Dr Who* series, *Arena* and *Tomorrow's World*.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries several large families made significant contributions to business and public life in Rochester. Six descendants of John Foord, Mayor of Rochester in 1859, were at King's. Among these was Thomas Hellyar Foord OR(1832-42) who extended his father's Rochester building firm to London and carried out work on the Houses of Parliament and the British Museum. He generously paid for major restoration work on Rochester Cathedral and built and endowed the almshouses at Priestfields. An exhibition on his life and work was mounted at the Medway Archives in early 2008 to mark the 90th anniversary of his death.



*Foord Family Memorial, St Nicholas Cemetery, Rochester;
picture, Simon Shreeve*

Nine descendants of Richard Prall (born 1803), at one time Town Clerk of Rochester, were Old Roffensians, five becoming local solicitors. And over the turn of the century there were eight members of the Homan family who attended King's. Hubert Franklin Homan OR(1879-82) became Chairman of Messrs Franklin Homan, furnishes, whose large shop in the High Street was later occupied by SEEBOARD.

Among those Old Roffensians who excelled in the medical profession, Wilfred Newcombe (1899-1903) was a surgical specialist and Professor of Morbid Anatomy at London University. Sir Cecil Wakeley OR(1903-05) was a consulting surgeon and university lecturer, later becoming President of the Lord's Day Observance Society. Edward Bacon OR(1916-20) was an eye specialist and later devoted his life to Southampton Eye Hospital. John Christopher Rutland Lincoln OR(1942-50) is a leading specialist in congenital heart disease surgery. John Hilary Sears OR(1945-55) who was also an Assistant Master at King's Junior School for 20 years from 1964, founded the Medway Dyslexia Centre in 1986. Nigel John Bickerton OR(1962-72) is a consultant obstetrician and lecturer in obstetrics.

Of OR engineers, architects, surveyors and scientists, Phineas Pett, who was at the School from 1580 to 1583, became master shipwright at Deptford in 1605 and then Woolwich in 1607. He built *Sovereign of the Seas* at Woolwich in 1637, then the largest ship in the English navy, and was responsible for almost all ships added to the fleet during the reigns of James I and Charles I. Pett retained his connections with Rochester: his second marriage in 1627 took place at St Margaret's Church. John Vaughan Brenchley (1877-80) was an engineer with the Great Western Railway from 1883 to 1889 and then the Inter-Oceanic Railway of Mexico to 1894. Edmund Farley Cobb OR(1880-85) was surveyor to the Dean and Chapter of Rochester Cathedral, architect of school buildings and designer of the School's Great War Memorial. Leonard Ollivier Short OR(1915-16) and Francisco Samuel Short OR(1917-20) were the sons of Horace Short who with his two brothers founded Short Brothers, the aircraft manufacturer of Rochester. Both sons were aeronautical engineers and directors of the company, Francisco serving as the company's representative at its short-lived seaplane works by Lake Windermere during the Second World War. Sir Derek Harold

Richard Barton OR(1929-32), winner of a Nobel Prize for Chemistry, became a world-renowned academic chemist and was latterly Professor of Chemistry at Texas University. Peter Charles Bell OR(1953-64) is a professor at Western Ontario University and World President of the International Federation of Operational Research Societies.

And finally, whether an art or a science, James Spencer Clubb OR(1967-71) married into the Chipperfield Circus family and became a leading trainer of circus animals, later concentrating on trained animal displays for circuses in the United States, Japan and Switzerland.

The Victoria County History

Dr Sandra Dunster



Dr Sandra Dunster was appointed by the University of Greenwich as Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone (EPE) in October 2007. With the help of volunteers, she is researching and writing a history of the Medway Towns, to be completed by February 2010. She previously taught local and regional history at the University of Kent. Sandra was born and raised in Whitstable and, after 25 years absence, returned to live there in 1999.

Part 1

Volunteers work their magic

It can be a very lonely job, researching and writing a book, but one of the wonderful things about working on the England's Past for Everyone (EPE) project is the backing and support that I get from the volunteers. They are constantly enthusiastic about the project and their contribution to it and full of good ideas about where to look and what to look for. In addition to this they get through a vast amount of work and a constant stream of research material appears on my desk, often accompanied by the question 'What would you like me to do next?'

The material that the volunteers deliver is of an excellent standard and deserves to be seen by a wider audience. Not all of their work will make it into the *Medway Towns* book or onto the EPE website but I will do my best to ensure that all this effort is not wasted. As a first step, I'll take the opportunity offered by this column to provide a brief run-down of the projects that groups and individuals have been working on and give an indication of what we hope to get from this work. In this issue I will tell you about three group projects that are providing a wealth of fascinating insights into life in the Medway towns.

Census Data

Over the past year two volunteers, Andrew Ashbee and Pam Doolin have transcribed all the entries for the 1841, 1861 and 1881 census, for Strood, Troy Town, Old and New Brompton and Luton and placed them on Excel spreadsheets, ready for analysis. This data will allow an exploration of life in various areas of nineteenth century Medway.

By the 1840s, Troy Town and Old Brompton were established suburbs, providing housing for a specific sector of Medway society. Did this change over the course of the century? By contrast Luton and New Brompton sprang up in response to the need for additional housing for the ever-growing work force in the dockyards. Where did all these people come from and what kind of households did they live in?

These are just some of the questions that this painstaking research will help us to answer about the growth of the Medway Towns in the nineteenth century.

Probate Inventories

Pauline Weeds, Margaret Crowhurst and Rebecca Meade have been working their way steadily through the probate inventories for Gillingham in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and are soon to be joined by Andrew and Pam now they have finished their census work!). These documents, which list all an individual's possessions at death, are revealing much new detail about occupations, housing, household goods and wealth in the town. A similar exercise was completed for Rochester, Chatham and Strood in the 1960s by Dulley and his findings are published in

Archaeologica Cantiana.¹ This new research will allow us to compare and contrast Gillingham with these other local communities. Was life in Gillingham in any way different to that in the other Medway Towns?

The Old Bailey Website

Astrid Salmon and Christine Marchant have undertaken a search of the Old Bailey website (www.oldbaileyonline.org) to uncover the seamier side of life in the Medway Towns. The frequency with which the Medway Towns appear in these records is an indication of the amount of traffic between London and the Medway area. Many criminals were apprehended in the Medway Towns and taken back to London to face trial.

In the next edition I will bring you details of individual projects undertaken by volunteers. In the meantime if you have any questions or suggestions about how we might make the best of the material mentioned above please don't hesitate to get in touch via my email address, s.a.dunster@gre.ac.uk.

¹A J E Dulley , 'People and Homes in the Medway towns: 1687-1785', *Archaeologica Cantiana*, LXXVII (1962).

Witheridge's Witterings...

FOMA Vice Chairman, John Witheridge, has the last word...

"One of the variants of the name Witheridge is Whitheridge or even Whitteridge. Its Saxon name Wiriga. i.e. Domesday Book 1068 and also the Exeter Book 1086. Its British name is as in Old Briton, Widdyrydg, the dd being the early form of th, and as noted in the Welsh language. In fact, and to great interest the world over, we Witheridges rival Heinz for 57 varieties!! This could account for the reason why I am always in the soup, though being originally from Devon I presume this to be swede and turnip."

A Sheepish Tale



About two years ago, I lost a great friend, a friend who had travelled the length and breadth of the country with me, spreading the genealogical message. I was asked to write some words about him in remembrance, mostly very respectful with just a little humour. I thought the following would be irreverent at the time, though it does epitomise the man and was extremely funny. My friend, and some of you will know the name, was Ernest Basil Hambly. Yes, *that* family.

Ernest was given The Freedom of the City of London, this naturally for services rendered. He was over the moon! "My one regret," he stated, "is that I will not be able to drive my flock of sheep over London Bridge. " This, you understand, is one of the perks of the honour. "Never mind, Ernest," we said, "we will see what can be done." We made the arrangements and the day arrived.

Ernest alighted at London Bridge station, dressed in his hired shepherd garb, to be confronted by a farm livestock transporter. With the contents uttering their "bahs" and "bers", some in higher octaves and some lower, we suggested he go and talk with the police officer - whilst we off-loaded the transporter's contents. We then drove the flock to meet him at the predetermined time.

His face was a picture (and I shall never forget it) as he drove his flock of sheep and lambs over London Bridge. The flock, I hasten to add, were really all members of the Guild of One Name Studies with their spouses and children all dressed up as lambs and sheep, not to mention a few frisky rams. The last of the line bore a plaque, stating to all, 'We are pure little lambs who have lost their way. Bah! Bah! Bah!' and signed, 'The Goons'. Pinned to Ernest's back was another plaque entitled, 'Neddy Seagoon'.

Afterwards (naturally) we retired to a little known local pub, and, yes, you've guessed it, called The Lamb, where the barrrrrr was crowded for the dinner time session. You should have seen the sheepish and questioning looks we got from the locals, who asked, "What are *ewe* all doing in here?"

The Heritage Lottery Fund Grant Launch

The launch to announce – and to celebrate - the award of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant of up to £154,500 to FOMA took place at MALSC on Wednesday 7th January 2009. Here are some more of the images from the day...



Guests start arriving.



FOMA Committee Member, Richard Stoneham, (left) catches up on website news with Alex Thomas, FOMA webmaster.



Cindy O'Halloran, Senior Archives and Local Studies Assistant, greeted everyone on arrival.

Guests view the exhibits on display. On the extreme right (from left to right) are Dr Sandra Dunster Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone project and Dr June Balshaw, Programme Leader for History at the University of Greenwich and Chair of the Kent VCH Management Committee.



Cutting the cake. Stephen Dixon, former Medway Borough Archivist and now Archive Service Manager at Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, with Tessa Towner, FOMA Chairman.