

The Farningham & Eynsford Local History Society

Founded 1985

*A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee
No. 5620267 incorporated the 11th November 2005*



Farningham & Eynsford Local History Society established 1985. Registered Charity No. 1047562)

Bulletin No 80 December 2008

Forthcoming Talks and Events

	Details	Where
2009		
20th Feb	My Life - The Royal Parks - Jim Buttress (Jim a familiar figure at Lullingstone Castle)	Farningham
24th April	Evening of Magic with Roy Marsh (An entertaining evening with magician Roy Marsh including buffet and wine bar tickets £10)	Farningham
9th May	AGM	Eynsford
25th Sept	100 Years of Dartford Museum - Chris Baker	Eynsford
16th Oct	Silent Auction (details to be confirmed)	Eynsford
20th Nov	Welcome to the Manorial Hall - Jean Stirk	Farningham

Unless otherwise stated all Meetings are held on a Friday evening from 7.30pm, talk commencing 8pm. (Note: front row seats can be reserved for members with hearing or eyesight difficulties and hearing loops are now available on request)

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (Barbara Cannell 864

Uppermost in all our thoughts recently has been the sudden and unexpected death of James Alexander. Our condolences have been sent to Mrs Alexander. James was a member of our Society and many other local groups, who like us, will miss his support and enthusiasm for their various activities. He was a traditionalist and a fierce campaigner for the good of Eynsford. His most recent campaign was to preserve the name of Gibson in the village. Due to his efforts and determination the new housing development being built on the site of the old foundry will be known as Gibson Place. Thank you James.

An avid photographer he took photographs to record every event and the many changing scenes within the village were all meticulously dated with names of people and places neatly written in black ink on the back. He was also a collector of old photographs and postcards and sometimes I would receive a telephone call asking me if I had seen or got a specific item that he had just found. On one occasion he presented me with a copy of one of his photographs showing a family group sitting in the garden behind Ford House and he had named all the people that were present. The family was the Crooks family and I never found the right moment to tell him that my mother in law was an only child and that the brother he had given her was in fact her Uncle!. We all have our own personal memories of James - long may he be remembered.

Once again we are almost at the end of another years, one in which I have, on behalf of the Society, met people from other organisations and learnt about their interests and their ambitions.

I would like to thank those members who have telephoned me to tell me where they have found Gibson manhole covers. The furthest found away from Eynsford at the moment are at Welling so I will soon be off with my camera to find and record exactly where they are. Please keep those eyes peeled.

Thank you for all your support during the year and I look forward to seeing you all at our meetings and events in 2009

A Happy Christmas and Healthy New Year to you all

PUBLICATION REPORT (Barbara Cannell)

Rather a quiet time at the moment, postal requests for publications being only one or two a month but there has been a good number of Eynsford Castle guides sold from Wards the estate agents in the High Street and Lullingstone Roman Villa has taken two large orders since it opened again to the public

One of the rewards for looking after the Society publications is the information that is sometimes given when a request for a publication is made. Reminiscences of a childhood spent in the area or memories of a certain event, people or building that had once been a part of the history of the villages are often included with the request. As I mentioned recently it was through a request for the publication on Elliott Downs Till that I met

David Till and his wife Christine. When I was in the archive centre on our members open day I was looking through some files containing newspaper reports and I found an article on the death of Elliott Downs Till which mentioned that 'he loved all good things, and at home he had three great friends - his sister, his dog and his gull'. I sent a copy of the article to David who replied that he had not seen this particular report and that he found it most interesting especially the mention of the gull. Did we know anything about the bird. I certainly have no information about it - does anyone in the village recall hearing about this bird if so please let me know.

SECRETARY'S REPORT (Elaine Ruby 862241)

Well done to Jan Wilkes for organising another lovely event – the Hallowe'en evening. From feedback received, it was a great success and enjoyed by all. Positive feedback also received from the Tonbridge Mummers who had a great time entertaining us and felt the Society had made them really welcome. Guests had fun joining in with the surprise finale of country dancing showing that John Sergeant has nothing on us!

We're really pleased to welcome a new member to the Committee – Linda Gwyther. She'll be known to many of you, particularly those involved with the Church or those with younger children. If you haven't come across Linda yet, she's written a few words of introduction:

My name is Linda Gwyther and I live in Mill Lane, Enysford. I have lived here for the last five years with my long time partner of 24 years, my son David 20 and daughter Emily 15. We come from Croydon and we love it here.

I am part of the Children and Young People's team with the Churches of Enysford, Farningham and Lullingstone and I am also involved with helping at a Mothers and Toddlers group.

I enjoy living here and there is always so much to do.

We are looking for people to join the Committee as we do have a few vacancies. Or alternatively, if you would like to help, but being on a committee is not for you, we do have a few specific tasks that need willing volunteers to help undertake. Just ask.....

RESEARCH REPORT (Susan Pittman 669923) website www.felhs.org.uk

The website

Our webmaster has provided the following statistics. If Google is searched for Enysford or Farningham our website comes up on the first page. Over the past year there have been 7,227 visits, making 83,392 hits. The peak month was April with an average of 33 visits a day. Usually it is about 18 visits a day.

New book – Marianne Farningham, A Plain Working Woman by Linda Wilson

This appears as volume 18 of the series Studies in Baptist History and Thought. I bought a signed copy for the Society directly off Linda at £14, including postage, but I am not

sure what book shop cost would be.

It is published by Paternoster, 2007 - (www.authenticmedia.co.uk/paternoster)

I will not have a chance to read it for some time, but it is a very detailed biography of 250 pages. Marianne Farningham was one of the most influential female members of the C19th Baptist community and this book explores her views of the role of women, her educational work, her public life and her spirituality.

Cast-iron firebacks

Jeremy Hodgkinson is compiling a catalogue of these. He would like to measure and photograph any examples. He has already collected 600 images. If you have a fireback, Jeremy's contact details are 01293 886278, JSHodgkinson@hodgers.com, 3 Saxon Road, Worth, Crawley, Sussex RH10 7SA.

Memories of Knatts Valley by Rodney Duffy

Rodney Duffy wrote that he was born in Knatts Valley in 1939. He went to school in West Kingsdown and later to Farningham when eventually a bus was laid on. His grandfather, Thomas Griffiths, bought a plot of land after the 1st World War and built The Camp bungalow on it. (It was built from old army nissen huts.) It was called The Camp because his grandparents turned the field into a camping site. This camp existed between the wars and it was the best time of his grandparents' lives because they made so many friends among the campers.

Memories of Farningham in the 1930s by Pat Annett

(This is an edited version but the full one will be in the Archives)

Pat's memories of Farningham and the Woolley family are numerous and very joyous. There were two brothers, Will and Harold Woolley, and Harold was her uncle. They first lived at the White House and then moved to South Hall, a huge house, where everyone lived together. From about 1938/9 Pat went to live there while her father was working in London, but he would visit her at weekends. She has a marvellous description of the garden at South Hall. She attended Farningham school where Mr Hetherington was headmaster. There were three classrooms – Miss Edmunds took the infants, then there was the 7-11 class and lastly the big class out in the hall for 11-14 year olds. The whole school crammed into this hall for morning service. They sat in age rows, little ones at the front right up the back where Pat sat. She sat with a lovely boy who was great fun, but she can't remember his name. They used to be a handful together.

Pat was in Farningham when the war broke out. The siren went off shortly after the declaration of war and they all went down to the cellar where the smell of stored apples and fruit still brings back memories. Soon 9 evacuees were deposited at South Hall including the Brown and Leatherhead children. They slept on straw palliasses in a very large sun-room at the back of the house and trestle tables were put up for them at meal times. Her uncle Harold was choirmaster and his wife, Barbara, organist at Farningham church.

Birling House and the Bradshaws

Dick from Australia saw the request for information about Birling House on the website and has responded. His grandfather, Harry Lee, emigrated to Australia, but found himself back in England after the Gallipoli landing in the First World War. His daughter was pen-friend to one of the Bradshaws so he made contact with them. Later his brother Bill

was selected for officer training in England and he too became friendly with the Bradshaws and spent weekends at Birling House. He even became engaged to Lily Bradshaw, but sadly he was killed on his very first day as commander of a unit. (He holds the Australian record for the shortest period of command of any Australian battalion.) Dick has a series of letters sent home by Harry and Bill and several refer to the Bradshaws and life in Eynsford. He has sent me extracts which I will use in the next Bulletin. Birling House was red-bricked with a double-fronted shop window because the Bradshaws had a grocery there. The original house burnt down in the late C20th and a smaller modern house was built on the site.

William Smith of Crockenhill

Doreen and I have been in contact for many years over the Smith family and I often pass queries to her. Recently she sent me transcripts of newspaper cuttings about William Smith who died in 1906. It is a sad tale and a reminder of how life can deal bitter blows. William and his wife, Mary Ann, ran the Fruiterers Arms in Crockenhill. In 1902 while driving his trap to St. Mary Cray he lost control of the horse and the trap overturned near Crouch Farm resulting in him being seriously injured. Four years later in June 1906 he took charge of a horse and van for the first time since his accident. Near Wested the horse appears to have stumbled and William Smith was thrown in front of the van, two of its wheels running over him. He died a few days later.

William Henry Binns of San Francisco

When I wrote the history of All Souls Church, Crockenhill, I came across William Binns who from about 1910-1914 sent money to the vicar to be divided among Crockenhill pensioners. During his early life William had been brought up in the village by Richard and Johanna Lee and Johanna had often taken him into the church where she was cleaner. In adulthood William emigrated to USA and eventually became a prosperous tool manufacturer in San Francisco – the first to resume business with an entirely new plant after the disastrous earthquake of 1906. That much I had gleaned from this side of the Atlantic. I was therefore delighted to receive an e-mail from USA from a member of the Binns family – Donna's husband, David William Binns, was William's great grandson. Sadly Donna was widowed when her daughters were very young and she wanted to fill in some details about William Binns because her husband had the letters sent by Revd. Dixon in response to the gifts. I now have copies of those letters which tell about events in Crockenhill. In 1911 Revd. Dixon wrote about the updating of the church school. 'The old prison like windows have been removed and large new windows have taken their place, making the rooms bright and cheery.' In 1914 the vicar was both ill and busy. 'We have Belgian refugees, homeless and penniless, who have fled from the cruel Germans, and for whom our people are providing home and sustenance; one gentleman has given up his handsome billiard room and fitted it up for some to sleep in. We have had wounded British soldiers here, and our ladies have been making garments for the Red Cross Society.'

William Pryer of Eynsford

Roger contacted me having seen an item on the Pryer family in an earlier Bulletin on the website. He told me about William Pryer who in 1783 was tried at the Church Court fined and banned from church for a period for brawling in Eynsford church. The case was brought by the Revd. Marmaduke Lewis, rector of Lullingstone and curate of Eynsford. Exactly what caused the brawl and with whom is not yet known because Roger

has found the court summons and not the witness depositions. William is buried in the churchyard and the headstone proclaims him to be a 'respectable inhabitant of the parish,' so perhaps he was still trying to live down his previous disgrace.

Family history enquiries

Woolley of Farningham – I was able to put Pat, a member from Sherborne, in touch with Deanna from Canada who both have Woolley links. See above for Pat's memories of Farningham c.1939. In the C19th the Woolleys were bricklayers and masons and are mentioned as bridge repairers in FELHS publication 'Bridges of Farningham and Eynsford'.

Arnold of Eynsford – Jacinta wanted details of Nils Anthony Arnold born in 1930.

Knowler of Crockenhill

Turner of Crockenhill

Blagden of Crockenhill

Other enquiries

Boulder near the ford – it is said (Frederick Gill – In the Steps of Wesley – 1962) that a boulder was erected near Eynsford bridge to commemorate where John Wesley preached. I don't know about this local tradition, but pointed out the sarsen stone near Sidonio's to the enquirer. Can anyone help?

Farningham School – photo requested.

Cockmannings House, St. Mary Cray – information on the Cannell family requested.

Maplescombe chapel – location and information requested.

Medieval Eynsford – Alessio from Italy intends to write a novel set in Eynsford from 1084 and wanted background information.

ARCHIVE REPORT (Susan Pittman 669923)(archivist@felhs.org.uk)

FELHS Centre

The centre had an open weekend for members in late September 2008 and although fewer than hoped came to look round those who did were suitably impressed. I was there the whole weekend supported by a roster of committee members which was very useful because it gave them a chance to familiarise themselves with the layout of the centre and to get to know the quirks of the catalogue. We also took the opportunity to do some further sorting out, such as putting items into conservation envelopes and mounting oversized items for the map cabinet. I would like to thank the committee for giving their time and members of the Society who came to see how things were progressing.

Acquisitions

From Diana Beamish – *The Story of the Island* by Arthur Mee, 3 plastic bags from Unwins, mug with Spring mosaic from Lullingstone Roman Villa, various flyers and leaflets, estate agents details for 24 Eynsford Rise in 1975 (Diana tells me the final price was £21,000), High Speed link protest cuttings c.1988.

From Roger Pryer – CD copy of Church Court case document concerning William Pryer, 1783, copy of will of Boethius Symmachus Pryer, 1834.

From Susan Pittman – 2007 version of the Darent Valley Path book

From James Alexander – reproduction of photo c.1900 of Eynsford bridge, ford and The Plough, copy of invoice 1890s from Eynsford Iron Works, Bruce Gibson to Sidney William Gibson, copy will of William Gibson,, copy will of William Gibson, copy

expenses of Gibson estate 1904.

From Geoffrey Copus – Extracts from Fuller family wills.

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and finally.....

As Christmas comes once again and the start of another new year, 2009, let us hope that we all have a wonderful year and remember with love and fondness the people who have left us in 2008. Until I moved here in 1998 I had always lived in a town, and never really felt the passing of people surrounding me, here in the village of Eynsford we all feel the loss of people in one way or another, whether they are our loved one, or just someone we used to speak to in the street. Let us all cherish the wonderful memories from the past, enjoy our life in the present and look forward to our future.

**A HAPPY
CHRISTMAS TO
YOU ALL AND A
VERY HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

Jan Wilkes - Editor 865122

WHAT'S ON 2008/2009

Horton Kirby & South Darenth Local History Society

2009

12th Jan	Shorne Country Park - Lynn Palmer
9th March	The Bevin Boys - Ann Kneif
11th May	Coolling Secret Radio Station - Frank Turner
13th July	A Taste of Roman Britain - Mrs Toni Mount
14th Sept	Kent, an usual view - Graham Johnson
9th Nov	History of Cobham Hall - Gerry Harris

All meetings are held in the Village Hall, South Darenth from 8pm. If you require further information contact Keith Saunderson (01322 862056) (Remember your membership card)

Shoreham & District Historical Society

2008

No information on future meetings available at this time

Meetings held in the Village Hall Shoreham from 8pm. Members who wish to attend these meetings are advised to contact the Secretary Joy Saynor (01959 522713) to check that no changes have been made to their programmes (Remember your membership card)

Hextable Heritage Society

2009

6th Jan	The Hop Shop Shoreham - Caroline Alexander
12th Feb	Bricks and Brickwork - Richard Filmer
12th March	Maunsell Forts - Frank Turner
9th April	A History of Otford - Cliff Ward
14th May	AGM and Remembrances of Hextable from newspaper cuttings
11th June	A History of Wilmington - Jean Radford
9th July	Visit (to be arranged)
13th Aug	Lift in the Workhouse - Helen Allison
10th Sept	Artists on the North Downs - Monty Parkin
8th Oct	The Royal British Legion - Christine Page
12th Nov	Pipes and Pipe Making - Chris Baker
December	Members Christmas Party (date to be confirmed)

All meetings are held at the Hextable Heritage Centre off College Road. 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. If you require further information please contact Barbara Cannell (01322 864253)

