

Farningham & Eynsford Local History Society

(Original Society founded 1985 Registered Charity no 1047562)

A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee

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Bulletin No. 127

Summer 2021

2021 - PROGRAMME

Adjustments have had to be made for the 2021 programme & others might have to be made according to restrictions in place at the time

Members with e-mail will receive a reminder of the meeting a week or so beforehand. The Zoom link will be sent in the week of the meeting. Guests who wish to join a Zoom meeting are asked to book via archives@felhs.org.uk - a suggested contribution of £3 would be appreciated (payment by BACS available).

17 September (Friday) On Zoom - 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm

Lady Zoe Hart Dyke and the Lullingstone Silk Farm

Claire Weiss has written a fascinating book about how Lady Zoe became interested in rearing silk worms and how she was eventually able to set up her own Silk Farm.

15 October Friday On Zoom - 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm

Local brickfields and brick making

David Cufley will cover brickfield sites in Eynsford, Stevens' brickfield in Crockenhill and other local sites. Bricks are a common building material made locally in the past. e.g. Lullingstone Castle, Eynsford viaduct.

19 November Friday On Zoom - 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm

Kent History from the Air

Rod LeGear has spent 25 years flying from Biggin Hill, and will be illustrating the history and uses of aerial photography, with an opportunity for the audience to identify some Kent sites from the air.

FELHS FACEBOOK @felhs.1985

From Vikki and Helen:

We have set up a Facebook Page @felhs.1985 because we wanted to share with everyone items that are in our archive and other matters that relate to the local history of the area. We hope to post photos and articles that will be of interest to our followers. Do search us out and give us a Like. If you have any suggestions of items that you would like to see on the page please email us at info@felhs.org.uk

2022 - OUTLINE PROGRAMME

Speakers have agreed to give talks, whether live or Zoom to be finalised according to the prevailing conditions

- 11 February** **Martin Stoneham** **The Bailey bridge**
Martin is former Chairman of the Friends of The Royal Engineers Museum, Chatham, and has researched the story behind the erection of the Bailey bridge at Lullingstone.
- 11 March** **Dr Anne Sassin** **Recent digs at Lullingstone**
Anne is working for the Darent Valley Landscape Project as its resident archaeologist, and will report on community digs near Lullingstone Roman Villa.
- 8 April** **Sophie Leathart** **Finding Constance Spry**
Sophie is a professional florist and has been influenced by the innovative ideas of Constance Spry, the celebrity florist of the 1930s to 1950s, who lived at Park Gate House, Lullingstone, for part of this period.
- 13 May** **AGM**
After the business of the meeting, it is hoped to show images of Farningham past.
- 9 September** **Dr Anne Sassin** **LiDAR images of the Darent Valley**
Anne will return to explain another aspect of her work for the Darent Valley Landscape Project, and reveal what has been learnt from the aerial imaging.
- 14 October** **Rod Shelton** **From Cardboard to Castle**
Rod, author of *Darent: The History and Stories of a River and its Communities* is also an expert model maker, whose scale model of Eynsford Castle is currently on display at Lullingstone Castle. He will explain the skills of model making and the research into Eynsford Castle undertaken to achieve accuracy.
- November** **to be arranged**

COMMITTEE NEWS

We congratulate our President, Dr Wilfrid Duncombe, on reaching his centenary on 29 May. We made a small presentation of a framed picture by Caroline Gould of Eynsford river side and church, and a fruit cake.

Wilf moved to Eynsford in the 1950s, but was able to pursue his interest in local history after taking early retirement in 1982. In 1986 he gained a diploma in local history from the University of Kent at Canterbury, and an expanded version of his dissertation on the yeomen of the Darent Valley was later published by the Kent Archaeological Society. Disappointed that neither Eynsford nor neighbouring Farningham had a local history society, Wilf with co-founder, Paul Parmenter, decided to found one and from their efforts the Farningham and Eynsford Local History Society was born in 1985. Both wanted the Society to be active in research and to build up a collection related to the parishes in a permanent centre, which was achieved in 2005. A meticulous researcher he has to-date written many of the Society's publications.

We have had two meetings since the last Bulletin and are now having our Summer pause, and perhaps can enjoy the greater freedom relaxation of Covid-19 regulations has given us. The talk on 'Fire Fighting in Kent' was wide ranging, and current church wardens were relieved that their duties

no longer covered control of local fires! The virtual AGM worked well with thirty-nine members voting to retain the Committee and its Directors. On the evening of the AGM, E.D. Till's slides of Eynsford provided a glimpse of the village over a century ago, and were well received. We now look forward to the Autumn series of talks, but there remains uncertainty about whether we will be meeting in the Village Halls again or continuing on Zoom. Do contact Facebook (@felhs.1985) or website (archives@felhs.org.uk), or phone me (details further on) if you have an opinion or ideas on the subject.

We still need a new Meetings Secretary. We have contacted speakers to slot into a 2022 programme, so the task will not be onerous, and we would welcome a new Committee member (or more than one come to that!)

FARNINGHAM & EYNSFORD LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE

WITH LIMITED ACCESS

(Depending on Government restrictions at the time)

On application individual researchers can now be given access, following whatever regulations are relevant at the time.... Otherwise ...

ENQUIRIES CAN STILL BE MADE & ANSWERED

Enquiries via archives@felhs.org.uk website: www.felhs.org.uk Facebook: @felhs.1985

RESEARCH REPORT

Susan Pittman, 01322 669923, archives@felhs.org.uk

New Exhibition - Constance Spry and the Fashion for Flowers

The Garden Museum, 5 Lambeth Palace Road, London, 17 May - 26 September, pre-booked tickets £12 contact gardenmuseum.org.uk

Constance Spry held celebrity status from the 1930s into the 1950s. From 1934-1946 she lived at Park Gate House, at the top end of Lullingstone Park. She provided inspirational flower arrangements for society weddings, fashion shows and other prestigious events. She was a friend of the Duke of Windsor and drove to Paris on her own initiative to arrange flowers for his wedding to Mrs Simpson. In 1953 she was in charge of the floral decorations for the Coronation of Elizabeth II. The exhibition traces her career and fascinating life.

Kent Life (April/May 2021) contains an article about Constance Spry's influence on Sophie Leathart and her own flower arranging business. Sophie has agreed to give FELHS a talk in April 2022.

Constance Spry was not only known for flower arrangements, but was also a very fine chef. With cordon bleu chef, Rosemary Hume, she catered for a luncheon at the Coronation of Elizabeth II, which included the now famous Coronation Chicken.

Current statistics 2012-2022 (With thanks to Philip McGarvey)

	Properties on Council Tax valuation list	Electorate
Crockenhill	741	1,337
Eynsford	850	1,486
Farningham	636	1,171
(Swanley	7,530	13,009)

Romans remains under Oliver Crescent, Farningham

Jennie was required to provide an archaeological survey before she could extend her house. I put her in touch with Dr Gerald Cramp, past President of Kent Archaeological Society, who has provided a wealth of information about the site. One early source of the discovery of the Roman remains is *Transactions of The Dartford District Antiquarian Society* no. 1, December 1931.

1921 Construction of the Darenth Valley Sewer. Sidney Lee of Crockenhill observed Roman foundations cut at two points by the trench. He and two local archaeologists found abundant pottery fragments, dressed chalk blocks, thick brick slab and the key-stone of a furnace arch.

1925 Preparation for Dartford Rural District Council housing. Remains of a Roman bath were found on sites of nos. 36, 37 and 38 (over the hypocaust).

The article by S. Priest contained site plans and details the findings of the dig, which was funded by Arthur Mee. In 1948 further discoveries were made by Col. Meates and his team.

Footnote, April 1928:

A Roman Gateway from the site was re-erected in the Rock Garden in Dartford Central Park. The gate is 10 feet 9 inches wide and has 6-7 feet of walling of Roman material on either side. There is an engraved inscription 'South entrance Roman building at Farningham. Reconstructed MCMXXVIII.'

Gerald tells me that as far as he knows the gateway is still there but obscured by ivy. Perhaps someone can check next time they are wandering round Dartford Central Park!

History and Records of Farningham Village, compiled in the 1930s by K. Goldsworthy

This ring-file of papers is handwritten and contains abstracts from various documents dating back to the sixteenth century. There are several notes taken from the research of Major Hesketh. In 1450 Cade's rebellion was one of the most important popular uprisings to take place in England during the Middle Ages. It began in south-eastern England against the corruption, mismanagement, and oppression of Henry VI's government. It is noted that the rioters passed through Farningham on their way to North Cray.

Below is an item from the ring-file:-

The Environs of London by James Thorne, 1876

Farningham was formerly a place of some importance, had a weekly market, and an annual fair which lasted four days. It has still a considerable trade, but the market, chiefly for cattle, is only held on the third Wednesday in each month, and the fair of one day (15 October) is mostly for colts. The town little more than a village of one long street straggles down to the river; the shops are few; the private houses numerous but not crowded.

Stormy Eynsford Village Society meeting, late 1950s (pre-1962) - The Riverside Gardens

According to the newspaper report the AGM went smoothly until the last item - the proposed Riverside Gardens - which led to heated exchanges. Dartford Rural District Council and Kent County Council had proposed the creation of a public open space alongside the river. The Chairman of Eynsford Village Society, Ted Worsdell, received long applause when he said that the village did not want any open space. When District Councillor, Mr Greves Mellor pointed out that the scheme would preserve the area as open space for all time, hecklers shouted. 'So the crowds from London can bring their germs and diseases down here,' 'And their rubbish, tin cans and bottles.' Other items on the agenda were widening the A225 in front of the Church, creating a footpath through the Churchyard, and the proposed adoption of St.Martin's Drive and Eynsford Rise by KCC highways, which residents were opposing.

New Book: John Drew 'Getting 'em in Singles' by Twelfth Man

The sub-title of the book is 'A Cricket Miscellany'. John begins with his boyhood and youthful memories of playing cricket for Farningham Cricket Club, and goes on to discuss the origin of the game and explores fascinating offshoots of the subject. Because, by serendipity, this Bulletin seems to be weighted towards Farningham I will cover more of this in the next Bulletin

Till's Acrostic Trees along Station Road, 1904

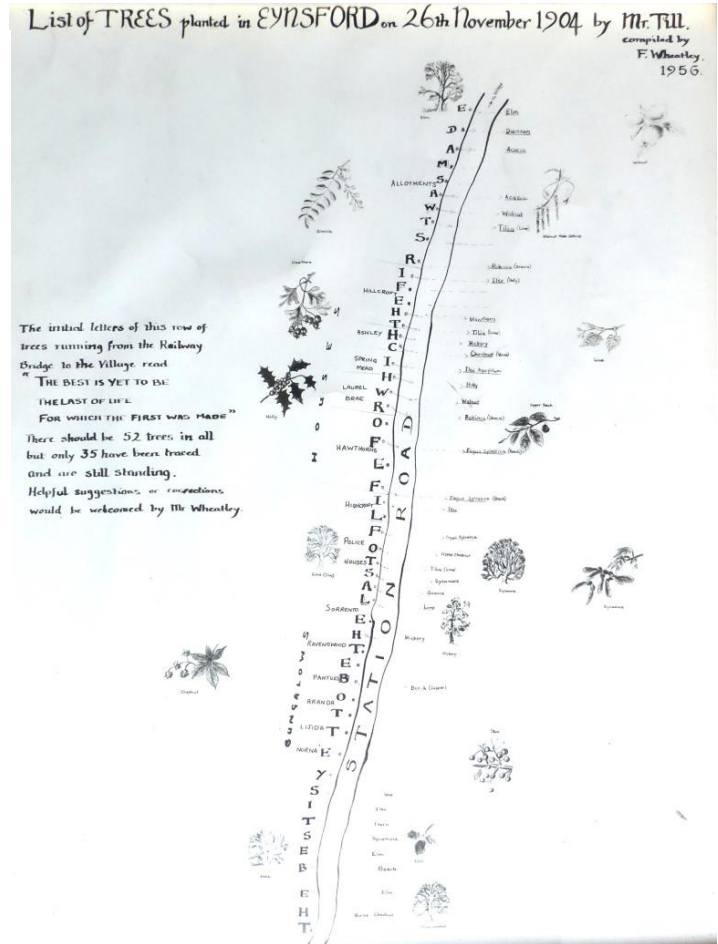
Trees with initials either from English name or scientific name were planted from the Station end to form the following quotation:-

'The best is yet to be
The last of life
For which the first was made'

52 trees of which 35 had been traced in 1980.

A plan showing the tree scheme was drawn up by James Alexander and presented to Eynsford Village Society.

(See Acquisition list under Archive Report)



More about the Farningham tank

The Great War Exhibition FELHS held in 2014 had a section detailing how the Farningham tank was transported to Farningham and the details of its installation. To look at this section, and indeed, to see the rest of the Exhibition go to the website, www.felhs.org.uk, and click WW1 on the left hand column of the Home Page. Recently,

Allan drew my attention to a photo of the tank in the yard at The Bull which was on sale on e-bay.

Unfortunately, his bid for FELHS failed, but he was able to send this image. The tank was delivered in early November 1919 and spent several days at The Bull until being installed on the grass verge in front of The Manor on Remembrance Day.



Bailey bridge at Lullingstone Roman Villa

I am pleased to announce that Martin Stoneha has agreed to give FELHS a talk on this subject next year. His article published in the Annual Magazine 2021 of Friends of the Royal Engineers Museum followed a visit last Summer to look at the documents being catalogued at Lullingstone Castle. The old bridge over the Darent was swept away in the storm of 15 September 1968, and the struggle to find a replacement was described by Lady Mildred Hart Dyke in later life when she was living in South Africa without access to the correspondence. Martin's challenge has been to verify or clarify her account compared with the documents dating from the time. The Royal Engineers managed to acquire a re-usable bridge taken down from elsewhere; the Alexanders dug the holes and put in shuttering ready for 12 August 1972 when a team training for the Royal Engineers Young Officers course installed the bridge. The cost was £825, £800 of which was a grant from KCC.



The Bailey bridge near Lullingstone Roman Villa - the upstream side with trees of A225 on the sky-line, 14/5/2021. The bridge will be 50 years old in 2022. Major Skeil, at the time of the installation, commented, 'I see no reason why it should not stand for 50 years!' Let's hope it will last even longer!

Percy Grainger, Australian composer, and his connection with Farningham

Robert Hamilton Russell (1860-1933) was born in Farningham into the long-established Russell family of farmers. His older sister married his friend, Dr Thomas Frederick Hugh Smith (1856-1930). Both trained at King's College Medical School. Russell was an able surgeon, but also a keen musician and talented player of the piano. He emigrated to Australia in 1890 and became a general practitioner in the Melbourne area, and later an eminent surgeon. The musical Grainger family were patients, but soon also became friends. (George) Percy Grainger (1882-1961) lost his father at a comparatively early age, and Russell became his mentor. He encouraged his musicianship by taking him to recitals, concerts and introducing him to Classical music, and people with musical connections. Percy Grainger and his mother met other members of the Russell family and in 1900, while in England, they visited Dr Smith's family at Braeside, Farningham.

(I am grateful to David for drawing my attention to - Robert Hamilton Russell, surgeon, and Percy Grainger, musician: an intimate relationship by Edward R. Howard in *The Journal of Surgery* 2 issues 1, 2004)



Braeside, built for Dr Hugh Smith in the early 1900s, but demolished in the early 1990s to make way for Centenary Court.

General Enquiries

Chelsfield Methodist Church - Rodney had a list of subscribers who pledged money in 1871 to build the Church (opened in 1874) and wanted to know how to trace information about these people. I was able to find a few families on the Eynsford and St. Mary Cray censuses, but advised him to look through Chelsfield and adjacent Censuses.

Little Mote - Elizabeth, a member of Gravesend U3A local history group, was researching local manors and requested a photograph of Little Mote, which I was able to provide. I also pointed out that there was no single Eynsford manor, but that the manor had been subdivided in the Middle Ages.

Braeside, Gorse Hill, Farningham - David used to live in the house and asked if FELHS had a photo. One was found which has been put on FELHS Facebook page. When looking up Dr Thomas Hugh Smith, who built Braeside in the early 1900s, he came across an interesting connection with Percy Grainger, the Australian composer (read above). Braeside was converted into flats after the Second World War, but demolished in the 1990s to make way for Centenary Court, next to the current Surgery. David provided FELHS with a copy letter of 1994 confirming that no significant archaeological remains had been found prior to redevelopment. Stephan Sheppard, Veronica's husband, once rented the stables as a studio.

Folly, Calfstock Wood - Louise walks in Folly Wood and asked about the location of the folly there. There is no folly as such, but there are the remains of a Roman hill station, part of a line which includes sites at Hulberry, near Lullingstone, and Speedgate above Horton Kirby. Roman tiles and pottery are scattered around in the wood.

Roman Remains, Oliver Crescent, Farningham - Jennie wanted help in arranging an archaeological survey required when she was planning an extension to her high-numbered property. (More above)

Images of Park Gate House - Sophie wanted photos of Park Gate House for an article about the florist, Constance Spry, 'Constantly surprising', which appeared in *Kent Life*, April/May 2021.

Public toilets at Eynsford Station - Sarah wanted to know where these had originally been located and I was able to provide a plan of the station when built. Sarah also requested images from inside the station showing the toilets. I was unable to provide these but did find one showing the 'Gentlemen' sign and entrance on the platform

Yew Tree Cottage - The owner wanted to know the earliest date for the name. I found it named on the 1881 Census, but earlier and later Censuses did not name properties. *How to Research the History of Your House* (A Kent Archives Guide, 2019) is a useful publication available through KCC Library Service.

Family History

Henry Benjamin Allchorn - An Eynsford resident was provided with a photo of him as he appeared in the composite photo of 1st World War servicemen in Eynsford Village Hall. I was able to track his family through 'Ancestry' website. His mother lived in Eynsford briefly.

Caleb Best/ Turner/ Forrester - Mike asked for information about the family and I was able to connect him with other researchers interested in the same family.

Joseph Holdstock - Sheila is related by marriage to Steve who had also enquired after this name. Joseph's name is on the Eynsford War Memorial - he died in 1921 aged 24 - never having recovered from being gassed in the First World War.

William Wallis (1756-1834) - Rick from New Zealand wanted more information about this London surgeon. He had found a Wallis family in Farningham and wondered whether there was a link. The only Wallis I was able to find was Susannah (Tiesdell) daughter of Samuel, yeoman of Chatham, and wife of George Wallis, tailor of Farningham, c.1800.

ARCHIVE REPORT

Susan Pittman - 01322 669923, www.felhs.org.uk

We have had electrical and fire precaution checks, with resulting satisfactory reports. A new foam and a new CO2 fire extinguisher have been installed. We do hope that we can have work parties back in the near future.

Acquisitions

James Alexander - Framed presentation showing Till's acrostic trees in Station Road, 1980.

Sally Coston - Several years of more recent volumes of Trident.

Helen Goldsworthy - 'Jubilation' supplement from The Evening Standard 5 June 2002; Letter from Prime Minister Boris Johnson re coronavirus & leaflet re Covid-19 injections.

Gerald Cramp - List of Colonel Meates archive held at Dartford Museum - includes Eynsford Roman building, Lullingstone Roman Villa, Manor House (Farningham), Farningham Roman Villa II, excavations at Oliver Crescent, Plans of Roman Villa at Franks Hall.

Ann Cornwell - Guidebook for Darent Valley Footpath; 1977 Jubilee programme for Eynsford.

Diana Beamish - Calendar 2020 Eynsford Public Art Trail.

Roger Lee - Collection of newspaper cuttings related to Jim Kimber (1881-1961) who was brought up in Eynsford and married Mary Ann Spice from Crockenhill; photograph of Arthur Henry Bowers (1904-1925) from Whitewood Cottages, Eynsford, killed in a motor cycling accident on Death Hill (Gorse Hill), Farningham.

John Drew - a signed copy 'Getting 'em in Singles' by Twelfth Man (John Drew).

JOHN WOOD & FAMILY -

FARMERS OF THE MOUNT, CROCKENHILL, KENT by Susan Pittman Ph.D.

Third in a series of five, richly illustrated with old and new photographs. The wider history of Crockenhill and its surround is told through these families.

Available from Crockenhill Parish Council Office (Stones Cross Road, Crockenhill BR8 8LT - 01322 614674) or via archives@felhs.org.uk:

- The Miller Family - Farmers at Wested Farm (once U.K.'s largest peppermint grower) (60 pages, £8 + postage)
- The Lee Family - Farmers at Crockenhill (early advocates of cold storage of fruit) (132 pages, £12 + postage)
- **John Wood & Family: Farmers of The Mount, Crockenhill (248 pages, £15 + £4 postage)**

To save on postage books can be collected from the author (01322 669923)