

# ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

DECEMBER 2006

NUMBER 417

*We Wish you a Happy Christmas*



We believe this photograph, showing the Sittingbourne end of Rainham High Street, was taken in 1906 when the new Rainham Fire Engine arrived. Durland House, built in about 1820, and now a retirement home, is the first building on the right. Freddie Cooper mentions the Rainham Fire Brigade in his article 'Rainham a Century Ago' on page 9.

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Next Issue: January 20th 2007  
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## Editorial

Our splendid photograph on the front cover shows the horse drawn Rainham fire pump travelling up the High Street just opposite where the footpath from Scott Avenue joins the main road today. The picture was found in the Maidstone Fire Museum; it had been donated by his family after the death of Mr Holloway a long time Rainham fireman. It illustrates very aptly Freddie Cooper's article, part of which we print this month, entitled 'Rainham A Century Ago'. Luckily Mrs Holloway had the foresight to find a safe place for this and other artefacts that they may be enjoyed by future generations. Today we are much more aware of the interest in bygone times and I hope no one nowadays would just throw out old pictures, newspaper cuttings and treasured memorabilia when clearing a home. Tragically this did happen forty or fifty years ago and so much of our heritage was lost. Rainham was a very different place in which to live at the date of this photograph. Few families had much money for luxuries but as everyone was in the same situation it did not matter so much. Rainham was a village with a real community spirit; the police knew everyone and were quite capable of a quick clip round the ear for any misguided youth that crossed their path. Instant justice or injustice, it kept crime to a minimum and few families would have thought it necessary to lock their door. Childhood ended very early. Unless they were fortunate enough to continue, education finished as soon as a certain standard was attained which could be as young as 11 years old and the youngsters then entered the world of work, boys to an apprenticeship in retail, agriculture or a trade and girls very often into service or shop work. It was expected that older children would help bring up their siblings and the school holidays were arranged around the farming year so that whole families could help with the fruit and hop harvest. Would we want to go back and live as these firemen did a hundred years ago? I think the answer is a resounding NO. Life may have been much simpler but it was hard and only the strong survived.

Back in our cosy twenty-first century we have much to offer you this month. All the usual Christmas events, church services, school fairs, carol concerts and pantomimes, plus, to get your New Year off to a good start a selection of organised walks. A good

brisk outing in the countryside is an excellent way to rid yourself of the festive excesses and winter blues. Do have a very happy Christmas and we will see you again in 2007.

As usual the next editions of Action Forum will be a combined January / February issue published on January 20th, followed by the second one of 2007 on March 3rd.

## Correspondence

MRS FITTALL

Dear Editor,

Having just read the November issue of Action Forum I was very interested in the picture on the front cover of Rainham Townswomen's Guild taken in the late 1940s/early 1950s. I am particularly interested in knowing if anyone has any information about Mrs Fittall. My father, who is now 83 and lives in Portsmouth, was a Fittall from Sheppy. We recently started to look into his family tree and found that most Fittalls lived down in the Dover area and apart from his family we know of no others in this area at the time of the photo. If anyone has any further information I would love to hear from them.

Many thanks,  
Lyn Nolan  
01634 235647

LINE DANCING

Dear Editor,

On 4th January 2007 'Revival 2000' line dance club will be starting an improvers class, on Thursday evenings from 7.00pm to 8.00pm, at United Services Club in Rainham. Entry £2.00. For more details contact Lorna White on 01634 388760.

Yours sincerely,  
Lorna White (Treasurer)

DEANWOOD PRIMARY EDUCATION  
TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Deanwood School, Long Catlis Road, Parkwood, will be holding their ever popular Christmas Fayre on Saturday 9th December, from 12 noon until 3pm. We have Father Christmas in his Grotto with his band of helpers! There will be many festive stalls and games. There will also be the opportunity to buy raffle tickets to our Grand Draw. Hot and cold refreshments available, plus homemade cakes.

Open to all, look forward to seeing you.

ST MARGARET'S CHRISTMAS SERVICES

On Christmas Eve Sunday 24th December there will be one Family Communion service in the morning at 9.30am plus Crib Services at 1.30pm and 4.00pm and Midnight Eucharist beginning at 11.00pm.

On Christmas Day we will have two services, Holy Communion at 8.00am and our All Age Worship at 10.30am.

We look forward to seeing you.

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

St Peter's Bredhurst are presenting a Christmas Play, 'In the Bleak Midwinter', under the Applause Rural Touring Scheme, in the Village Hall on Friday 15th December, at 7.30pm. This show is a musical telling of the Second Shepherds travelling with their troublesome flock across the South Downs, and is suitable for everyone over 7. Tickets at £6 for adults and £2 for children are available from Ann Keeble, telephone 361263.

MEDWAY ARCHIVES WINE 'N WISDOM

Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies will be holding their first fund raising event on 13th December at 7pm.

We are hosting a Wine 'n Wisdom at the Civic Suite, Civic Centre, Strood, and tickets will be £4.00 members and £5.00 non-members available from Cindy Med 332714.

People are requested to bring their own bottle of wine and glass and we will provide the snacks.

BARN DANCE

A Barn Dance in aid of VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) will be held on Saturday January 27th 2007 at Fort Pitt Grammar School, Chatham. The group leading the dance are 'The Pilgrims' Way'. Tickets at £9 per head - to include a hot meal (but please bring your own drinks and glasses) may be obtained from Rosemary Moss on 01634 813643.

INDOOR BOOT FAIR

Bredhurst Village Hall Committee are holding an Indoor Boot Fair from 10.00am to 2.00pm on Saturday 27th January in the hall. Refreshments will be available plus a raffle and music. Tables at £10 each should be booked in advance. All enquiries please to Mrs June Cox 01634 268544. All proceeds will be donated to the ongoing upkeep of the hall.

WINE & WISDOM

A Wine & Wisdom Competition will be held on Saturday 20th January at 7.30pm in St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore, starting at 7.30pm. Entrance will be £6 per person. A supper will be provided but we ask that everyone bring their own drink and glass. All proceeds will be donated to the Parish of South Gillingham Dortmund Exchange Group. More information may be obtained from the Chairman David Lewis on 01634 234027.

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CAROL CONCERT

Rainham Ladies Choir with The Chatham Citadel Band of the Salvation Army invite you to a Carol Concert at The Royal Dockyard Church, Historic Dockyard, Chatham, on Saturday 9th December at 7.30pm. Please ring 01634 672265 for tickets.

RAINHAM TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD

We have a few more names to add to those mentioned under the picture on the front cover last month. In the front row third from the right is Mrs Braley (wife of the local policeman) and ninth from the right Mrs Phoebe Scott of West Moor Farm. Fifth from the left in the middle row is Mrs Nutt (a piano teacher). In the back row we have names for Mrs Dorrie Nicholls (H.H. Nicholls Haulage Contractors) second from the left, Mrs Dean, third from the left, Mrs Lena Cross eighth from the left and Joyce Carleton tenth from the left. We would welcome more information.

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# Diary 2006

Keeper: Mrs Christine Smith  
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Wigmore  
Tel: 233098

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Diary Copy Date: 2nd January 2007

- December 2nd – Instep Dancing Social Dance.  
Rainham School for Girls, Derwent Way.  
Ballroom, Latin, Sequence. 8.00 to 11.00pm.
- December 2nd – Medway Folk Dance. 7.30 to 10.00pm, United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham. Contact no. 01634 366189.
- December 2nd – St Peter's Church, Bredhurst, CHRISTMAS FAYRE. 2.00pm, Village Hall, Hurstwood Road. Contact no. 01634 361263. Charity Shop next door also open from 1.30pm.
- December 2nd – A Carol Concert featuring the Medway Singers to be held in St Thomas Church, London Road, Rainham, 7.45pm. Organised by the Union of Catholic Mothers in aid of The Oliver Fisher Baby Unit. Admission £4 including light refreshments. For further details phone 233293 or 377447.
- December 2nd – GHS Floral Art Xmas Show at United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham. 2.30 to 4.30pm, admission free. Ring 234734 for details.
- December 3rd – Countryside Event. Beginners Glass Painting, Riverside Country Park. 11.00am to 12.30pm, £2.50 per person, to book in advance 378987.
- December 3rd – Medway Towns Footpath Group – Walk. 10.00am, River Valley Golf Course, Upchurch. 5.5 miles flat.
- December 4th – Rainham Wives Christmas Meal. Ring 230639 for details.
- December 4th – Christmas Fayre, St Margaret's Infant School, Orchard Street, Rainham. 2.30 to 5.00pm. Refreshments, Xmas Grotto, tombola, games, crafts, Grand Draw 1st prize £100 cash. Further details 01634 264299.

- December 5th – GHS Floral Art Group. Christmas Do. 7.30 to 9.00am, United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham.
- December 6th – Medway Camcorder Club. Ten minute maximum, Holiday film competition. 7.30pm, Chattenden Community Centre. Contact no. 01634 360401.
- December 6th – Rochester & West Kent Art Society. Workshop, Landscapes, 7.30 to 9.00pm, Old Town Hall, The Brook, Chatham. Details 01634 233053.
- December 6th – Rainham Horticultural Club. 7.30pm, Cricket Club Hall, Berengrave Lane. AGM and Christmas Social, new members welcome. Ring 231972 for details.
- December 7th – Gillingham Flower Arrangers. Social Evening. 7.30pm, St Barbara's (Garrison) Church Hall, Mansion Row, Brompton.
- December 7th – Wigmore Thursday Club. Life of Roland Hill by Avice Harms, the creator of the Postage Stamp. 2.00pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore. For people over the age of 50. Ring 235507 for details.
- December 8th – Mid-Kent Astronomical Society. Christmas Meeting, 7.30pm, Bredhurst Hall.
- December 8th – Gillingham & Rainham Local History Society. 'Theatres of the Medway Towns'. Mr B. Bryce. 7.15pm, United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham. Visitors and new members welcome. Ring 233429.
- December 8th – Rochester Cathedral 'Lights for Love Ceremony' 5.25pm. Ring 831163 for details.
- December 9th – Deanwood Primary Education Technology School, Long Catlis Road, Parkwood, will be holding their Xmas Fayre. 12 noon until 3.00pm. Admission Adults 50p Children 20p, pre-school free.

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- December 9th – Rainham Ladies Choir and The Chatham Citadel Band of the Salvation Army at The Royal Dockyard Church, The Historic Dockyard, Chatham, 7.30pm. Ring 01634 672265 for tickets.
- December 9th & 10th – Riverside Charity Christmas Fair, Riverside Country Park, 11.00am to 3.00pm, entry free (children under 12 must be accompanied). Ring 378987 for details.
- December 10th – Medway Towns Footpath Group – Walk. 2.00pm, Lenham Village car park, 5 miles, not hilly, dogs on leads.
- December 11th – Rainham Wives. Christmas Music. 8.00pm, Methodist Church Hall, Wakeley Road, Rainham. Contact no. 01634 230639.
- December 11th – Medway Spinners, Dyers and Weavers Association, party, Urchins Kindergarten (opp Black Lion, Gillingham), 7.30 to 9.30pm. Jennie Christmas Tree present box. Ring 578294 for details.
- December 12th – Rainham Evening Machine Knitting Club. 8.00 to 10.00pm, Abbeyfield (Rogers House), Drewery Drive, Wigmore. Contact no. 01634 862673.
- December 12th – Gillingham & District Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society. Our Christmas Social Evening. 7.30pm, Rainham School for Girls. Contact 01634 853864 for details.
- December 12th – Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00 to 8.15pm, Lower Beechings.
- December 12th – Rotary Christmas Float, 6.00 to 8.15pm, Rainham Station.
- December 13th – Bredhurst WI. Members Evening – A Christmas Miscellany, Christmas readings, Music and memories. 7.30pm, Village Hall.
- December 13th – Rainham Flower Club. Festive Workshop. 7.30pm, Upchurch Village Hall.
- December 13th – Friends of Local Archives and Local Studies. Wine and Wisdom. 7.00pm, Civic Suite, Civic Centre, Strood. Bring Drinks and Glass, Food provided. Tickets £4.00 members, £5.00 non members. Telephone Cindy 332714.
- December 13th – Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Hempstead.
- December 13th – Rotary Christmas Float, 6.00pm, Station Road/Ellison Way.

- December 14th – Rainham and Wigmore Retired Civil Servants. 2.00pm, Methodist Church Hall, Rainham.
- December 14th – Wigmore Thursday Club. Christmas Scenes by Mrs Baldwin. (see 8th Dec)
- December 14th – Wigmore MADs 'Christmas Fayre', an evening of Christmas music, St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, Wigmore, 7.30pm. Tickets £5 (£4 concessions) from 370639.
- December 14th – Countryside Event Birdwatching Cruise. Tickets £20, book on 378987.
- December 14th – Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Hempstead.
- December 15th – Gillingham Recorded Music Society. The Twelve Days of Christmas. 7.15 to 9.15pm, St Augustine's Church Room (top of Rock Avenue), Gillingham. Ring 852905.
- December 15th – Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, 9.30am to 12 noon, Millennium Centre, Rainham. Ring 364309 or 07980 409 120 for details.
- December 15th – St Peter's Bredhurst, Christmas Play 'In the Bleak Mid Winter', Bredhurst Village Hall, 7.30pm. Tickets £6 adults £2 children from 361263.
- December 15th – Rotary Christmas Float, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Bettlescombe/Maidstone Road.
- December 15th – Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Fairview Avenue.
- December 15th – Christmas Continental Market, Rainham Shopping Centre.
- December 16th – Wigmore Fellowship Christmas Carve-Up, 7.30pm, Bredhurst Village Hall. Live music by Jeff, tickets £10 each, proceeds to charity. Ring 387055 for details.
- December 16th – Instep Dancing Christmas Dance – ticket only, 363738.
- December 16th – Medway Folk Dance Club. (see 2nd Dec)
- December 16th – Rotary Christmas Float, Rainham Precinct, 9.00am to 1.00pm.
- December 17th – Medway Towns Footpath Group – Walk, 2.00pm, Egerton car park. 5-6 miles undulating, dogs on leads.

Continued on page 11

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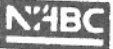
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**MEDWAY CARERS CENTRE**

I write as Chairman of the Medway Carers Centre to ask whether any of your readers can assist us. The Centre provides help and support to a large number of carers throughout Medway and we currently have over 850 family carers on our register, of which 120 are aged 5 to 18 years of age. This is achieved with a very small staff based in an office at 3 Canterbury Street, Gillingham (next to St Mark's Church).

We have recently had several Trustees and our Treasurer retire and are therefore looking for local people who are prepared to join the Committee of Trustees, which meets about every six weeks on a Monday morning. In particular we are seeking a Treasurer to assist by giving us about two hours per week of their time to keep our finances running smoothly.

If you are interested in helping us sustain this extremely valuable work to support some of those who work hardest for others in our local community, please contact me on 01634 366419 or email me on howard.doe@blueyonder.co.uk with some background info about yourself. If you have no time to assist then all donations, large or small, are put to very good use.

**YESTERDAY'S MEDWAY**

Local artist John Austin was born in Rainham, and after leaving Solomon Road School he went to the Boys' Secondary in Orchard Street - some of his memories of school have appeared in AF. In 1950 his artistic talents won him a scholarship to Medway College of Art at Rochester, only yards away from the river. Here as a student he explored the maze of alleys and yards close by, and sketched the passing river traffic and the work going on along the shores of the Medway. Since there were no grants for students then, he earned money during vacations working as Mate for Skipper Tom Dennis (of Station Road) on the motor barges *Greta* and *Ironsides*.

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National Service in the RASC found John Austin in the Canal Zone, Jordan, Cyprus and Suez, but later he was to find fulfilment teaching art, at first at Southfields School in Gravesend and later at specialist art colleges including Medway College of Art and Design. His talents include calligraphy and model-making, but he is never happier than when out with pen and sketchbook.

The artist's love of boats of all kinds can be traced in the drawings in his book, 'Yesterday's Medway: from Rochester Bridge to Chatham Intra' just published by Rainmore Books, and on sale at Rainham Bookshop, price £5.99. His sketches were made in the early 1980s and the accompanying text tells the story of those businesses and buildings which formerly occupied the banks of the River Medway. Since it was written some twenty-five years ago, there have been further sweeping changes, and readers will be able to see just how much has disappeared in such a short time.

**LIONS AND ROTARY CLUBS**  
**CHRISTMAS CHARITY COLLECTIONS**

Once again the local Lions and Rotary Clubs will be touring roads in our area during the weeks before Christmas with their Father Christmas sleighs collecting for local charities. Thanks to your generosity last year the Rotary Club of Gillingham collected £7,688.23. This year the money will be shared between The Kent Air Ambulance, The Kent Association for the Blind, The Salvation Army, The Oliver Fisher Special Care Baby Unit and The Molly Wisdom Hospice.

Starting from **December 11th the floats** will be in the Rainham, Wigmore and Hempstead areas. Each tour will start at 6.00pm and finish by 8.15pm. Full details of when to expect them in your road are in the Diary, please do watch out for them, I am sure you will hear when they arrive.

**ADULT LEARNING IN MEDWAY**

Look out for the next edition of Medway Matters to be delivered through your door at the end of November/beginning of December. The publication will have an 8-page supplement listing the courses being offered by the Adult Learning Service from December 2006 to July 2007.

Don't miss out - enrol early to guarantee a place.  
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# Nature Notes

## NATURE NOTES FOR NOVEMBER

In May 1732 William Hogarth and four friends had a five day holiday in North Kent, part of which they spent on the Hoo Peninsular. In November I retraced the steps that they took on that part of their journey.

After breakfast at the Crown Inn at Rochester (now demolished) the five men crossed the medieval bridge at Rochester into Strood and then climbed up the hill to Frindsbury Church. They walked down Parsonage Lane and headed for Upnor and Upnor Castle. At the time of my own visit the hedgerows of the lane were covered in travellers' joy or old man's beard. The verges were awash with the green leaves of wild angelica. In summer the pink and white flowers of the angelica blossom into the shape of umbrellas on the top of tall, purplish coloured stalks.

Towards the bottom of Parsonage Lane is Manor Farm which is surrounded by horse chestnut trees. In the grounds of the farm is a barn which is included in Pevsner's 'Buildings of England'. It is described as over 210 feet long, the longest timber aisled barn in England and built no later than the early 14th century. Throughout its life the barn had doubtless afforded shelter and nesting places for barn owls, wrens, robins, house sparrows, blackbirds and swallows. A year or two ago, after the barn had been standing for at least 700 years, an arsonist set fire to it. Today only about two thirds of the original barn remains intact. Hogarth and his chums probably never gave the barn a second thought. But the damage it has recently suffered makes for an absolute tragedy.

From Upnor Castle the five men ascended the escarpment overlooking the Medway and headed for Hoo St Werburg. The woods they went through consist today, as they also presumably did in the 18th century, of oak, sycamore and ash trees with an understorey of hawthorn and privet. From Hoo the party proceeded along the Stoke Road towards the village of Stoke. At the time of my own visit the crops in the fields between Hoo and Stoke were winter wheat, cabbage, broccoli, forage beet and onion. The crops in the area in the first half of the 18th century would most likely to have been wheat, barley, oats, peas, beans and other vegetables and

fruit. Much of this produce would have gone to London via The Thames, the oats and beans for the benefit of horses as well as humans.

Just beyond Stoke the arable landscape comes to an abrupt end. I stopped and climbed to the top of the sea wall. Inland of the wall was a landscape of sheep pasture, reed filled ditches, fresh water fleets and old counter walls. A flock of rooks was feeding among the sheep. Their old nests could be seen in a row of ancient willow trees. Lapwing and wigeon were feeding on the marsh and a flock of brent geese was resting on a stretch of fresh water.

To the seaward side of the wall were the Stoke Saltings. In Hogarth's day the saltings would have been very extensive and would have been grazed by sheep and even cattle. However, a combination of rising sea levels and the digging of mud in the manufacture of cement has reduced the saltings to hundreds of small and isolated islands which the sea is gradually eroding away. Below me, on the seaward side of the wall, I saw a stonechat and a small flock of meadow pipits. On the mud flats were some solitary redshanks and shelducks.

On the move once more, I passed the site of the now partly silted up Yantlet Creek, which once completely separated the Isle of Grain from the rest of the Hoo Peninsular. I drove through the site of the one-time oil refinery and into Grain High Street. Here Hogarth and his friends had a meal at the Chequers Inn. Goody Hubbard, the inn keeper, provided salt pork, black bread, butter, buns and good malt liquor.

I continued along the High Street, past the Victorian building of St James' C of E Primary School and the medieval St James' parish church. 'To the Sea Front' proclaimed a sign at the point where the High Street, by now reduced to a country lane, comes to an abrupt end at a grass covered slope. The sea front at Grain consists of nothing more than a concrete sea wall and walkway below which are banks of shingle, which undoubtedly suits those who simply want somewhere peaceful to walk their dog. There was nobody about but a couple of men digging for lugworms and a lone fisherman setting up his tackle in anticipation of catching, so he told me, some codling, bass or whiting.

From my view point on Grain sea front I could see, feeding on the waterline, flocks of knot, dunlin and

sanderling. Every now and again the flocks would rise together and circle around before settling down again. Presumably a raptor, perhaps a peregrine falcon, was disturbing them but I failed to discover the cause of their nervousness.

Hogarth's party sailed across to Sheerness from what is now called Cockleshell Beach. These days it is within the area of the MOD's Yantlet firing range and is out of bounds to the public. Perhaps Hogarth and his friends would have disturbed oyster catchers, ringed plovers and common terns nesting on Cockleshell Beach. Today, birds presumably nest in peace there.

It was time for a meal at the one-time Chequers Inn, now called the Hogarth Inn. Feeling extremely hungry I felt that I needed more than a ploughman's lunch and plumped for the 'Hogarth Platter'. This consisted of bacon, egg, sausages, tomatoes, mushrooms, chips and baked beans. Once Mrs Ennis has finished reading this article she will doubtless give me a good ticking off.

Joe Ennis

## RAINHAM A CENTURY AGO - Part 1

I was recently studying the information upon Rainham in my extract from the 1908 issue of Kelly's Directory and I realised how very useful these books had been to me over the years and yet I know that many residents do not understand that copies for most years between 1890 and 1974 are available for inspection at the Gillingham or Chatham reference library. Bagshaws containing similar information go back to 1870 and ceased around 1900. Kelly's were issued annually for neighbouring areas such as Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham. It's worth remembering that information about Rainham will be in the Sittingbourne and Milton District issue before 1929. They show an alphabetical index of all residents and their addresses at the time and also a list of roads showing addresses and the location of residents so it's quite easy to find information about anyone living in the towns at the time. Data about institutions and activities make the issue a fund of local knowledge.

Rainham's population increased after the railway came in 1858, seven years before it had been 1,115 but by 1871 it had become 2,082 living in 425 houses. 50 years later it was only 4,335. In 1908 Berengrave Lane had five houses, Century Road only one (Walter Kimmins in Ethel Villa), Roberts Road (then Robert Street) had two residents - Frederick Charlesworth and John Puxtey. Even Maidstone Road

(then Bredhurst Lane) had no properties south of the area now marked by Herbert Road. None of the roads were numbered in sequence as there were so many empty plots so each block as built was called Terrace, Villas or Cottages and each house was numbered within that block.

Employment was largely agricultural, bricks and cement and the principal crops were fruit (mainly cherries), hops and wheat, there were a large number of market gardens. Lord Hothfield was Lord of the Manor. The Parish, previously known as Renham, has been inhabited from ancient times which has become evident from remains found near to the river and in Otterham Quay Lane. A recorded entry of property transferred in 841 AD was one of the earliest.

The Parish Council was the largest in this part of Kent, being entitled to 13 members who met on the first Wednesday of each month. The Chairman was Dr F.W.H. Penfold and committees comprised Lighting and Watching (including Fire Brigade), Footpaths, Recreation Ground, Library and Reading Room and Finance. Street Lighting was by gas and I remember Mr Holloway cycling round every evening and morning to turn on each light; he carried a stick with hook and was most expert in pulling down or pushing up the short arm just under the light almost without stopping. The Recreation Ground was presented by Lord Hothfield in 1887 to record the Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. In 1908 it had a prepared cycle track and cricket pitch with water laid on. It is of interest to note that it was open from 6am every day of the year. Rainham was very proud of its Fire Brigade formed in 1901, a motor engine was purchased in 1921 mainly from public subscription and the 22 volunteers were called out by maroon. The Parish Free Library and reading room was established at the turn of the century in the ground floor of the Temperance Hotel, Station Road. The lending Library was only open from 7 to 9pm on Mondays. Freddie Cooper To be continued.

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## Diary 2006

December 17th - Countryside Event. Wine and Wisdom afternoon, Capstone Farm Country Park, 2.00pm. £10 per team of 3-6 players. Ring 812196 to book.  
December 18th - Rainham Evening WI. Entertainment. Competition: Gold. 7.30pm, Platters Farm Lodge, Highfield Road, Rainham.  
December 18th - Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Kennilworth.  
December 19th - Countryside Event. Christmas Card Workshop, Capstone Country Park, 10.00am to 2.00pm. £2.50 per child (under 8 must be accompanied). Ring 812196 to book.  
December 19th - Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Twydall.  
December 20th - Rochester & West Kent Art Society. Christmas Party. (see 6th Dec)  
December 20th - Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Twydall.  
December 21st - Rainham Afternoon WI. Christmas Party. 1.45pm, Methodist Church Hall, Wakeley Road, Rainham.  
December 21st - Wigmore Thursday Club, Carol Service. (see 7th Dec)  
December 21st - Rotary Christmas Float, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Marshall Road/Charlotte Drive.  
December 21st - Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Parkwood.  
December 22nd - Countryside Event. Christmas Crafts, Riverside Country Park, 11.00am to 12.30pm. £2.50 per child (under 8 must be accompanied). Ring 378987 to book.  
December 22nd - Lions Sleigh Run, 6.00pm to 8.15pm, Parkwood.  
December 23rd - Rotary Christmas Float, 8.30am to 7.30pm, Savacentre.  
December 29th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group. (see 15th Dec)



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December 31st - Instep Dancing (N.Y.E. dance - ticket only) 363738.

December 31st - Medway Towns Footpath Group - Walk. 10.00am, Perrywood car park, 4.5 miles.  
December 31st - St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, Wigmore. 'Celebration on a Shoestring', a Bring and Share buffet supper. BYOD and glasses. Tickets £3 (family ticket £7.50). Ring 233478 for details.

2007

January 1st - Medway Towns Footpath Group - Walk. 10.30am, Shorne Wood Country Park. 4 miles undulating.  
January 1st - Countryside Event, New Years Day Walk, Capstone Country Park, 10.00am to 12 noon, £3.50 per person, book in advance on 812196.  
January 4th - Wigmore Thursday Club. Tony and Betty - Slides of New Zealand Part 2. (see 7th Dec)  
January 4th - Gillingham Flower Arrangers. Fire and Ice. 7.30pm at St Barbara's (Garrison) Church Hall, Mansion Row, Brompton.  
January 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 26, 27th - RaTS present 'Jack & The Beanstalk', 8.00pm, Saturday Matinees 2.00pm & 5.00pm. Box Office opens 4th December 233660  
January 6th - Medway Folk Dance Club. (see 2nd Dec)  
January 7th - Medway Towns Footpath Group - Walk. 10.00am, Bluebell Hill, 5.5 miles, hilly, dogs on leads.  
January 8th - Medway Spinners, Dyers and Weavers Association, Urchins Kindergarten (opp Black Lion, Gillingham), 7.30 to 9.30pm. Ring 578294 for details.  
January 9th - Medway Antique & Collector's Club, 'Glass Paperweights'. Mr J. Simmonds, 7.30 for 8.00pm, St George Hotel, New Road, Chatham. Visitors welcome £2.50 per visit. Ring John Orr 365861 for details. Continued on page 13

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## Diary 2007

January 10th - Bredhurst WI. Lynn Collier -  
 Demelza House. (see 13th Dec)

January 10th - Medway Evacuees Reunion Group.

Meet at The Millennium Centre, Rainham. 1.30 to  
 4.30pm. Further information contact 361024.

January 11th - Wigmore Thursday Club. Quiz.  
 (see 7th Dec)

January 11th - Rainham and Wigmore Retired Civil  
 Servants. (see 14th Dec)

January 12th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History  
 Society, 7.15pm, United Reformed Church Hall,  
 Balmoral Road, Gillingham. 'Old Rainham',  
 Mr C.C. Coe. Visitors and new members welcome,  
 ring 233429.

January 20th - Parish of South Gillingham Dortmund  
 Exchange Group. Wine and Wisdom Competition.  
 7.30pm, St Matthew's Community Centre,  
 Drewery Drive, Wigmore. Entrance £6 per person.  
 A supper will be provided. Please bring your own  
 drinks and glasses.

January 20th - St Margaret's Heritage Fund  
 'Knowledge & Nibbles Evening', 7.00 for  
 7.30pm, Millennium Centre, Rainham. Prior  
 booking essential on 372680, tables of 8 at £6 per  
 person. BYOB, nibbles provided.

January 27th - Indoor Boot Fair, Bredhurst Village  
 Hall, 10.00am. Enquiries regarding Tables,

telephone 268544. (Only bookable in advance of  
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January 27th - Barn Dance in aid of VSO, Fort Pitt  
 Grammar School, Chatham. Dancing to  
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