

ACTION FORUM

OCTOBER 2014

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ■

NUMBER 503



Solomon Road Council School (insert top left corner) in the 1930s. This is Class 2 of the Infants at the school in 1931 with Miss Cheeseman, their newly qualified teacher, in the back corner. At this time, just before the new secondary schools were opened in Orchard Street, the Infants department had two classrooms and three teachers for 130 children. 70 children were accommodated in this room with two of the staff. Alan Major and Richard Church recall several of the names of Miss Cheeseman's 1935 class in a letter on page 3. If you can name any of the children pictured we would be delighted to hear from you, please email af@thenet.uk.net

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Editorial

There is a definite autumn feel in the air at the moment. Sadly summer is almost over although we may still squeeze a few more warm sunny days when we can tidy the garden for winter and complete the fruit harvest. It is amazing how quickly the newly planted apple orchards all around Meresborough have flourished and produced bumper crops. Modern farming methods may not have the picturesque appeal of bygone times but they are certainly efficient and it is good to see the land continue in full production and not go the way of so much which was sold off in relatively small plots to various owners. Much of this is now horse paddocks. Unfortunately as the economy faltered this hobby became too expensive and many stables now stand empty and very quickly begin to look neglected. The massive injection of money into a commercial farming venture, supplying Kentish apples to Sainsburys, is very welcome. Hopefully this will help ensure that Medway keeps a rural border within a short distance from their home that can be enjoyed by all the population.

For some time it has been appreciated that walking is beneficial to us all in several ways. Such a normal everyday activity we neglect it at our peril. Only fifty or sixty years ago everyone walked – to work, to school, to the shops and just for the pleasure of enjoying the evening air after a long day at work. Now we have to plan time to walk, jog or run into our busy lives and as our days become more sedentary so our waistlines expand and our mental health deteriorates. It really is good to get out in the fresh air and exercise – it need not be vigorous but the benefits are real, so much so that local walking groups are much in demand and shorter starter walks are offered all over the borough to begin the transformation. Our grandparents would find it incredible that we needed to make time to walk but as today's children spend more and more of their time tapping away at a keypad and staring at a screen it will be vital that they also make time to get outside. One very good way to establish the habit is the 'walking bus' scheme now encouraged by local primary schools. I am sure it takes much planning and organisation but has great potential, increasing fitness, reducing the number of overweight children and reducing the pollutants in the air by fewer car journeys – win, win all round! We include some interesting projects for you to

consider this month. The parish of South Gillingham are staging an ambitious Passion Play at Parkwood next Easter and want local people to take part. It sounds as though it will be a Gillingham version of the famous Oberammergau ten yearly event. If you would like to take part in any capacity email passionplay15@outlook.com or ring 01634 230423. Auditions will be at the beginning of November but many more behind the scenes helpers will be required so do contact Paul Warren to find out more. Please read on to discover all the many different events we include in our pages this month and until we see you again in November enjoy the autumn days. Have a good month.

Correspondence

MEMORIES OF SOLOMON ROAD SCHOOL

Dear Editor,
I am sure Richard Church and myself are not the only two former pupils of Miss Cheeseman who will have been very sad to learn of her passing away. I began in the Spring 1935 term at the Council School and she was also my first teacher. Those early days in our development, though different and simple compared to education today, were very important to 'fix' in our young minds the subject of school, and attending. I remember on our first day how Miss Cheeseman sorted us out so that if possible we sat with someone we knew or who lived near us. I lived at 38 Tufton Road and was sat next to a friend Audrey Wall who lived at 32. Next day I went willingly to school. In the routine of things unless they became famous locally or nationally and came back to visit 'their' school as 'old boys' or 'old girls', the infant teachers in particular after their pupils had 'moved on' would not know how these had fared in the world. In Miss Cheeseman's case, however, she did know about some of them. When it was announced the Council School was to be closed former pupils were invited for a last look and to see a special exhibition of the school history. A large number of us took this chance but the 'bonus' of the event when we got there was Miss Cheeseman, too.

A local newspaper attended and took photographs. In one is the late Brian Cumberworth talking to Miss Cheeseman. She said to me she remembered me as I was 'a quiet boy who just sat there, taking in what she was teaching'. Perhaps I was overawed by this lady telling us how to read and write. In another is Vi Nutting close to Miss Cheeseman as she, quite unnecessarily, is waving her stick at us to keep order. I also remember Miss Hyde with great affection, plus all the other teachers Richard Church lists - Mr Hopkins, Miss Mudge with her hair 'buns' over her ears, Miss Springate (classroom by the clock) and the Eleanor Roosevelt lookalike Miss Babbage (Miss Cabbage) who taught me after Miss Hyde. I still have two of her school reports quite favourable to my attempts to absorb her teaching.

Names come to mind of fellow pupils in those classes Eric Stringer, Peter Baldock, George Cumberworth Elsie Moore, Douglas Kitney, Ron Packer, Peter Bates, Mary Gilman, Peter True, Frank Bartlett. If my memory serves me right Richard Church was also in either Mr Sergeant's or Mr Gleadles class with me at the Senior School. I went on to a sort of literary career (24 - non fiction books published), which included later writing for Bygone Kent in which Miss Cheeseman also wrote vividly of Rainham, its life and the shops she knew. The Council School also produced a much more illustrious world known author, of scientific books and novels, one of which was a best seller. When he was told by his sister of the Council School reunion he phoned from Tokyo University where he was lecturing to say how much he wanted to be with us because he owed so much to the school and its early teaching but it was rather a long way to come but he would be with us in his thoughts that day.

I duplicate Richard Church's comments I am grateful for what Miss Cheeseman did, too. It is said the deceased are not so if they live on in our memories and indeed Miss Cheeseman does so in the memories of her pupils.

Referring to my Memories of Rainham letter in Action Forum July 2014 I received a call from Judy the widow of my school pal Ron Sims to say he had passed away from emphysema in 1995 aged 66. In the first paragraph of the same letter it should have been Pam Mepste:d and her sister Lydia, not Wanstall.

Your s sincerely
Alan Major
41 Heaton Road
Canterbury, CT1 3PY

Editor: Richard Church added these names to those listed above: Peter True, Bennie Stringer, George Clay, Billy Howland, Baldock, Harry Durell, Olive Cross, Randal Waddel, Harold Elison, Barbara Dennis, Dorothy Howes, Betty Norris, Dennis Nichols, Ivor Harrison and Lucy Black.

TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, JESUS

A Passion Play
Dear Editor

An Event Sponsored by the Parish of South Gillingham Written, Directed and Performed by Local People at Parkwood Green, Deanwood Drive on Good Friday, 3rd April 2015 at 2.00pm.

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The Play will last no more than 75 minutes. The Play recalls the last hours of the life of Jesus culminating in the Crucifixion, and features a number of well known and fictional characters who recount the story. You are invited to be part of this unique Easter experience. An open air performance, the audience will be an integral part of the staging of the event which will make full use of the natural facilities available at Parkwood Green. There will be a cast of 50 characters and extras and a team of adult and child actors are sought. A range of additional support personnel: dressmakers, scenery builders and painters, security personnel, ushers, stewards and admin staff will also be needed. We also need to engage a donkey and handler!

A general briefing session for all participants will be held during the afternoon of Sunday 9th November and auditions will be held on the afternoons both Sundays 9th and 16th November, 2.00pm on both Sundays.

The production will be funded by the churches, grants and individual donations. Other financial support will be most welcome. If you wish to take part in any way, or are able to offer financial assistance please contact us by e-mail passionplay15@outlook.com or telephone 01634 230423. We will be pleased to know how you would like to help.

We do hope that you can support this ambitious community event.

Yours sincerely
Paul Warren

DISTRIBUTION

Volunteer distributors are needed for:

Rainham
Hawthorne Avenue, Caldew Avenue
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Wigmore Road (Woodside to Fairview)
The Hazels, Fellows Close, Chamberlain Court

Hempstead
Wildwood, Black Roock, Stalham, Coppice Court
Barncroft and Old Carriageway

Upchurch

The Poles, Church Farm Road, Forge Lane, part of The Street

If you live near any of these roads or are able to travel to them and could help for about an hour or so during the first week of each month we would be very pleased to hear from you on 01634 310011 (please mention that you are calling about Action Forum) or email af@thenet.uk.net

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Diary 2014

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Copy should be in writing either by email to
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Meresborough, Gillingham, Kent ME8 8PP

Diary Copy Date: 21st October

- October 4th - Chatham Grammar School for Girls,
Annual Reunion Lunch 1.00pm.
- October 4th - Lower Halstow, Quiz Night, 7.30pm, £5 pp
teams of six, includes Ploughman's Supper, bring own
beverage, call Kay 01795 844408 to book.
- October 4th - Medway Folk Dance Club, United
Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham,
7.30 - 10.00pm, new & experienced dancers welcome,
with or without a partner, 01634 366189 or 388546
- October 5th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am
meet Mo Fleisig 07976 600393 Bearsted (park around
the Green) GR 803558 ME14 4DL 6.5 mile moderate
mainly flat walk, some hills & Woodland, No dogs
- October 5th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Ade 01634 306405, Hadlow The Square by bus stop.
TQ634498 TN11 0DA 6.5 mile walk. Bring picnic
lunch. Pub at end with lunches available.
- October 6th - Rainham Wives, Methodist Church Hall,
Wakeley Road, Rainham 8.00pm, 'Pioneering
Debutantes To Present Day WI Presidents' talk by
Barbara Stevens, New members welcome, £2 per visit
includes refreshments, details ring Sue 01634 230639.
- October 7th - 11th - Hairspray, GODS in association
with NODA, Hazlitt Arts Centre Maidstone, 7.30pm
Saturday matinee 2.30pm, Tickets £11.50 and £13.50,
www.parkwoodtheatres.co.uk 01622 758611
- October 7th - Floral Art Group United Reformed Church
(rear hall) Balmoral Road, Gillingham, 7.30 - 9.00pm,
Little Things, information contact Kaye 01634 232998.
- October 7th - Rainham Horticultural Society, 7.30pm
Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, Hardy
Geraniums - Jacqueline Aviolet, New members
welcome, ring 366276 for details.
- October 8th - Rainham Flower Club, 7.30pm Upchurch
Village Hall, Workshop, For further information ring
01622 884657, 01795 472973 or 01634 863034
- October 8th - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, Food, my career as a
Food Economist - Patricia Davy, for details contact
Rhonda Peck 07951 629444

- October 8th - Bredhurst WI, 7.30pm Village Hall, John
Mills - The History of Capital Punishment, visitors
welcome, For details ring 01634 389966
- October 9th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Indian Sari
Fabrics, Julia Davies, St Matthew's Community Centre,
2.00pm, for over 50s, ring 01634 235507 for details.
- October 9th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Dads Army/Home
Guard - Tony Whiting Village Hall 2.00pm details ring
01634 366907. New members always welcome
- October 9th - Medway Inter Faith Action, Medway
Council Meeting Room, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chat,
7.30pm all welcome, ring Hugh Hawkins 01634
843307 or email julihugh@tiscali.co.uk for details
- October 9th - Donn Barcott Band, 44Two Sports & Social
Club, Featherby Road, Gillingham, 8.30 - 11.00pm,
Admission £6, Details ring Jazz Line 01634 405037
- October 10th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, every Friday 9.45am -
12noon to help people who have lost a loved one, join
us for a cuppa and chat ring Julie 01634 364309
- October 10th - UpARA Monthly Meeting, Upchurch
Village Hall, 2.00pm, Members Free, Guests £2, New
Members Welcome, details email Chairman David
Powell davidrpowell5@hotmail.co.uk
- October 10th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History
Society, Byron Road Primary School, Gillingham,
7.15pm, 'Policing in Kent' - Roy Ingleton, Visitors
welcome for a small charge, details Ron Baker 01634
854982 email r.baker1234@btinternet.com
- October 11th - Hospital Radio Medway Quiz, Social
Club, Medway Maritime Hospital, 7.30pm. Bring own
nibbles, licensed bar. £5 pp contact 01634 406865 and
leave a message for Eunice. Booking essential.
- October 11th - Lower Halstow Memorial Hall, Barn
Dance, 7.30pm, £5 pp bring your own Refreshments
Numbers limited call Kay 01795 844408 to book.
- October 11th - Knowledge & Nibbles Evening, St
Margaret's Millennium Centre, Rainham, 7.30pm

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- October 11th - Instep Dancing, Rainham School for Girls,
Derwent Way, 8.00 - 11.00pm, for Ballroom - Latin -
Sequence 01634 363738 s.collins02@btinternet.com
- October 12th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Frank/Mim, Matfield Village Green. TQ 657418 TN12
7JU 8.75 mile walk towards the outskirts of Pembury
and Brenchley. Bring picnic lunch Pubs at end.
- October 12th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet Andy Boorman 07881 933358 White
Horse Inn Boughton Street GR 057594 ME13 9AL, 5.5
mile moderate walk 'Last Peasants Revolt' including
Mount Ephraim gardens, Hernhill and Dargate
- October 12th - Lions Club of Gillingham, Harvest Teas
for Senior Citizens of Rainham, 3.30 - 6.00pm,
Millennium Centre, 01634 379062 or 373840 to book
- October 13th - Monday Hub, St Paul's Church,
Parkwood, 10.00am - 12.30pm, light refreshments,
conversation, games etc, All welcome, 01634 230780
- October 13th - Medway Scrabble Club, St Stephens
Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham, alternate Mon
2.00 - 4.30pm, new members welcome, 01634 230500
- October 13th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, meets 2nd Monday
evening each month to help people still in employment
who have lost a loved one, join us for a cuppa and chat
ring Julie 01634 364309 for details
- October 13th - Medway Organ Club Concert, Parkwood
Community Centre, 7.30pm, Organist - Janet Dowsett,
ring Brian Leonard 01634 234694 for details.
- October 13th - Rainham Wives, Harvest Supper & AGM,
(see 6th Oct).
- October 14th - Gillingham & District Fuchsia &
Pelargonium Society, 7.30pm Rainham School for
Girls, Autumn Competition, ring 01634 852519.
- October 14th - Medway Antique and Collectors' Club,
AGM, St George Hotel, New Road, Chatham, 8.00pm
all visitors are made most welcome. Enquiries
medwayantiquespublicity1@virginmedia.com
- October 15th - Hempstead Active Retirement Association
(HempstARA), Scout Hall, Duke's Meadow Drive, 2pm
- October 15th - Bredhurst Garden Club 7.30pm, Village
Hall, illustrated talk Jean & Brian Waterman 'Colour in
the Winter Garden', new members welcome ring 01634
233554 for details.

- October 16th - Rainham Women's Institute, Methodist
Church Hall, Wakeley Road, Rainham, 1.45 - 4.00pm,
Speaker on "British Legion", Visitors welcome for
small entry charge per visit. Ring 01634 366276
- October 16th - Wigmore Thursday Club, The Sun, Moon
& Earth, Peter Parish, (see 9th Oct).
- October 16th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Games, tea and
chat, (see 9th Oct).
- October 17th - Quiz Night MASH Parkwood Community
Centre, 7.30pm start, Tickets £5 each, teams up to
eight, drinks from the bar, bring snacks Book 01634
855844 medwayasthmahelp@btconnect.com.
- October 17th - Jazz Gig, Anchorians Club, Darland Ave,
Gillingham, 8.30pm, Digby Fairweather/ Mick Foster
Quintet, Admission £10, Enquiries 01634 365352
- October 18th - 'Pumpkin Day' School Fete, 12noon -
2.00pm, BBQ, Cake Stall, Face Painting, Craft
Activities, Teddy Tombola, Welly Chucking, Raffle &
lots more! Bredhurst C E P School, ME7 3JY
- October 18th - Rainham Ladies Choir Concert, in aid of
Peter's Place including local young pianist Robert Hunt,
Gillingham Methodist Church, Third Avenue ME7 2LU
7.30pm, Raffle/programmes, tickets £8 Adults, £4 12
and under, contact 01634 370797 or 613715.
- October 18th - Songs & Anthems for Autumn, Kent
Chamber Choir, St. Mary the Virgin, Upchurch,
7.30pm, Tickets £10 (£5 children and students) on the
door or 01634 361508, or 01795 481694
- October 18th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 4th Oct).
- October 18th - 'Eight Misbehavin', Wigmore Residents
& Community Association, Evening of Songs from the
Shows, in Aid of Alzheimers Society, St Matthews
Community Centre, Wigmore, 8.00pm. For Tickets,
Adults £9, 18 or under £6, contact Mark & Tina 01634
232526, Jackie 01634 233708 or Val 01634 364063
- October 19th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Geoff 07525 161766, Pluckley railway Station.
TQ922433 TN27 0RT for a 6.75 mile walk to Pluckley
and Little Chart Pubs at end may be busy.
- October 19th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am
meet Brian Gevaux 01634 235883, Parkwood Shops car
park 6 mile moderate circular walk via Queendown
Warren, 1 steep slope down, may be muddy. No dogs
- October 19th - Quiz Evening, 7.30pm, Rainham
Oasthouse, admission £2.50 (£2 members), for details
ring Maggi 01634 710553.

Continued on Page 11

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DIVALI
Our friends, workmates and neighbours in the Sikh and Hindu faiths celebrate Diwali. This year the festival falls on Thursday October 23rd. Many activities and events are held in the United Kingdom to celebrate Diwali, which is known as the "Festival of Lights". It is a time for spring cleaning in homes and offices. Homes have assorted sweets, savouries and Diwali herbs. Various lights, candles and sparklers are lit inside and outside homes. People wear their finest clothes to celebrate, women wear jewellery and silk outfits and some have mehendi, which is a temporary henna decoration, on their palms. Many Indian businesses see Diwali as a day to start the new financial year because of the ties with Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Cities throughout the UK celebrate the festival with firework displays, dances, plays, street lighting, Diwali lanterns, traditional Indian food, and music. Hindu council representatives, spokespeople from Indian associations, and political leaders publicly announce their greetings to those involved in organizing and participating in the celebrations.

SONGS & ANTHEMS FOR AUTUMN
Kent Chamber Choir
Nicola Roberts (soprano), Geoffrey Lester (organ),
Roger Harris (keyboard), Trevor Sandford (bass
guitar) Alan Vincent (conductor)
Saturday 18th October, 7.30pm.
St. Mary the Virgin, Upchurch
This concert contains a broad selection with anthems
in the first half and after interval refreshments,
songs from England, Hungary and Ireland.
Tickets £10 (£5 for children and full-time students)
on the door or in advance from Rebecca Moate
07834 600563 rebeccamoate@hotmail.co.uk
and locally Helen Osborne 01634 361508
or Jill Rothery 01795 481694

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"EIGHT MISBEHAVIN"
In aid of Alzheimers Society
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Presents an Evening of Songs from the
Shows & more... 'Les Miserables' 'West Side Story'
'White Christmas' 'Mamma Mia' 'Spamalot'
'Kiss Me Kate' 'My Fair Lady' 'Chicago'
'High Society' '42nd Street'
St Matthews Community Centre, Wigmore
Saturday 18th October, commences 8.00pm.
For Tickets - Adults £9, 18 or under £6
contact Mark & Tina 01634 232526,
Jackie 01634 233708 or Val 01634 364063
(50% of proceeds go to charity after costs)

CENTENARY CELEBRATORY CONCERT
Kentish Players, The Central Theatre, Chatham
Saturday 1st November, Curtain Up 7.30pm
Medway's oldest amateur theatre company celebrate
their centenary year with a special one off concert.
A delightful evening of music, song and dance
awaits you as the Kentish Players celebrate their
100th Birthday with a little help from their friends!
Sit back, relax and enjoy as they take you on a
musical journey down memory lane with songs from
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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

September is the peak month to seek out those terns which have finished breeding around our country's coasts and which are migrating to the Southern hemisphere for the duration of our winter. Many can be seen, from view points on the Isle of Thanet, flying down the English Channel. Four species of tern are summer visitors to this country, namely, little, Sandwich, common and Arctic tern. The first three terns fly south to the Atlantic or Indian Ocean coasts of Africa. However, the Arctic tern flies all the way to the seas off the Antarctic pack ice, in time for the Antarctic summer. Arctic terns are so named because many nest in the Arctic, although readers may have seen natural history programmes on television showing colonies of Arctic terns nesting on the Farne Islands, where they attack people who stray too near their nests. On a sunny Sunday in September of last year I went to Broadstairs on the train, in the hope of spotting migrating terns. The mile upon mile of urban development along the line held no great interest for me but I did keep my eyes open, in particular, for the Seasalter Levels, upon which sheep and cattle were grazing; Whitstable Bay and Shellness on the Isle of Sheppey; and the twin towers of the former church on the coast at Reculver. The towers overlook the broad, shallow river valley which the line runs through and which is the site of the sea channel that once separated the Isle of Thanet from the rest of Kent. There was, however, one urban site that I did not want to miss, namely, Dreamland. It was sad to see the remains of the wooden roller coaster. I have every faith that Wayne Hemingway will turn Dreamland into a major attraction. The people of Margate are behind him and he and they deserve to succeed. The sight of red roofs on neat looking bungalows and houses, in well tended gardens, served as an announcement that the next stop was Broadstairs. The walk from the station, down the High Street, brought me to Viking Bay and its golden sands. The bay is embraced by a horseshoe of low chalk cliffs and within it is a small harbour. As I stood on The Parade, overlooking the bay, the loud, trumpeting calls of

herring gulls were very evident. They are reminiscent of the seaside and are often used in the sound track of programmes on radio or television to emphasise a coastal setting. Herring gulls are large, robust, raucous and aggressive and many nest on roofs in seaside towns. They are notorious for stealing food from unsuspecting picnickers. Their natural food consists of marine invertebrates such as crabs and molluscs such as common whelks which they drop onto hard road surfaces in order to break the shells open. I was pleased also to hear the calls of jackdaws that were flying between the red clay chimney pots of the Georgian houses on The Parade. I am very fond of the jackdaw. He is cocky and has a strutting gait when on the ground. He is a real "Jack-the-Lad".

I headed for the harbour where three fishing boats were moored. I met a fisherman who told me that he and his colleagues bring home whelks, lobsters, crabs, bass and herrings. Children were trying to catch shore crabs in the harbour with bait tied to hand held lines. I then walked to the opposite end of the bay where there is a paddling pool which is filled by the incoming tide. Children on the pool wall were fishing with nets. Around the man made pool were naturally occurring rock pools formed by rocks of chalk, among which were stones of flint. The rocks were covered in limpets and at least three species of sea weed. There was a green slimy, grass-like one, bladder wrack and furbelows. The bladder wrack is coloured brown and has fronds with gas filled bladders which enable the plant to float upright once it is covered in water. Furbelows have many long, brown fronds growing from a stem which anchors the plant to a rock. In the pools were shrimps and shoals of tiny, darting fish. The latter were probably either young blemies or young gobbies. I also came across numerous empty common whelk shells, which have a spiral shape. In due course I climbed up to the Jubilee Clock Tower, set on top of the cliffs, where I had a picnic lunch. I noticed that the predominant plants on the chalk cliffs were everlasting pea and red valerian. The latter plant also grows on the outer walls of Rochester Castle and on the chalk face of Chatham Hill. During my lunch I kept an eye open, through my binoculars, for any terns passing down the English

Channel, but I failed to see any. The sea was mostly a light grey colour but silvery where it reflected the sun's rays. Terns, being grey above and white below, could have slipped by without me spotting them. I decided to have a cup of tea and a cake at the cafe on the harbour wall where I could continue to look out for terns from sea level. I descended down to the sands and was picking my way gingerly between picnic blankets and sand castles when I came across Mr De Witt's Punch and Judy Show, which was in full flow. I could not resist stopping to watch it. At the end of the show it was clear that the children had thoroughly enjoyed it. And so had I. If it transpired that I was not to see any terns during my visit to Broadstairs there was some compensation that I had seen Mr Punch, his wife Judy and their baby, a clown, an officious policeman and a very hungry crocodile.

Joe Ennis

The First Rainham Soldier Killed in World War 1
When war was declared in July 1914 most people believed that it would be a short and glorious affair. In Rainham young men joined up while others who were already in the forces soon became involved. Originally born in Chatham, Thomas Henry Anderson lived in Chatham, Rainham and Upchurch during the period leading up to 1914, working as a butcher's assistant before joining the 1st Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers. His first military experience took place in India which formed part of the British Empire and while serving there he was awarded the Delhi Durbar Medal in 1911 to commemorate King George's coronation celebrations in India.

After completing his posting in India he returned to England where he was stationed at Portsmouth but with the outbreak of war in July 1914 it wasn't long before he found himself sailing to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force made up entirely of professional soldiers under the command of General Sir John French. As a member of the 1st Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers he disembarked at Le Havre in France before being transported inland by train to Landrecies.

According to the regimental history of the Northumberland Fusiliers, on 21st August Thomas Anderson's regiment marched towards Mons where the 1st Battalion took a position on the Mons Condé Canal while the French were fighting the Germans at

the battle of Charleroi on the right of the British Expeditionary Force. The British aim was to hold a line along the Mons-Condé Canal for 24 hours to prevent the advancing Germans from threatening the French left flank. When the battle began the British inflicted heavy casualties on the German side but with the retreat of the French Fifth Army which exposed the British right flank to numerically superior German forces a retreat was ordered.

After their first conflict the battalion crossed the River Marne on September 9th and soon confronted German infantry in a wooded area at Veully. During the course of this they crossed a stream and marched on to the village of Dammard. They then crossed the River Aisne and billeted at Vailly. On September 14th they moved forward in support of the 4th battalion of the Royal Fusiliers near Rouge Maison and waited. At dawn the Germans attacked and the fusiliers were driven back after engaging their enemy in a wood on the left side. They lost more than 30 soldiers which probably included Thomas Anderson and 84 officers and men wounded or missing.

It isn't clear exactly how he was killed but Thomas, who held the rank of Lance-Corporal, was later awarded the 'Mons Star,' a medal awarded to those who had fought the Germans in France and Belgium between 5th August and 23rd November 1914. He is remembered on the Upchurch and Rainham war memorials and on La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre memorial east of Paris. The Northumberland Fusiliers lost a total of 16,000 men during the war, they raised 52 battalions, they won 67 battle honours and 5 Victoria Crosses.

Thomas Anderson was the first Rainham serviceman to be killed in the conflict and 98 others from the village suffered the same fate in the Great War of 1914-1918.

David Wood

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Diary 2014

October 20th - Rainham Evening WI, 7.30pm,
Millennium Centre, Mr Neil Arnold 'Blue Bell Hill',
Competition - Wild Flower, ring 01634 262577
October 20th - Wigmore RVS Darby & Joan Club,
Autumn Fair, Howard Hall, Woodside, 2.15pm, entry
25p, gifts, refreshments, raffle etc. 01634 362662
October 20th - Rainham Wives, Silent Auction for our
charity & Board Games, (see 6th Oct).
October 21st - Barnardo Coffee Morning, Mackland
House, Station Road, 10.00am - 12 noon, Entrance £1
includes tea, coffee and cake. Book Stall, Bring & Buy
and Raffle, All welcome details 01634 233405
October 21st - Floral Art Group, AGM and Programme
Planning, (see 7th Oct).
October 21st - The RSPB Medway Local Group Talk,
Parkwood Community Centre, Gillingham, 7.30 - 9.45
pm £3.00. Asia's Teardrop David Cromack, for Walks
see: www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway.
October 22nd - Gillingham Horticultural Society, 7.30pm,
Halloween Evening, United Reformed Church Hall,
Balmoral Road, Gillingham, Grow Your Own Pumpkin
and Carve a Pumpkin. £2 members £3 visitors, includes
refreshments, information 01634 852519.
October 22nd - All Saints Women's Fellowship, How I
became an Author - David Tappenden, (see 8th Oct).
October 23rd - Hempstead Leisure Club, Down Dames
Calendar - Barbara Stevens (see 9th Oct).
October 23rd - Wigmore Thursday Club, Heraldry, Paul
Warren, (see 9th Oct).
October 24th - Medway Geographical Society, Byron
Road School, Gillingham, 7.30 - 9.00pm 'Gravesend -
Gateway to the Thames' Christopher Bull, All
welcome, contact 01634 632683.
October 25th - RAMASES, 2.30pm, Newington Village
Hall, Study Day, South Asasif Conservation Trust - Dr
Elana Pischikova and John Billman Members £6,
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October 25th - Upchurch Horticultural Society Autumn
Show, Village Hall, doors open 2.00pm, free entry, for
further information ring Secretary Steve 07703 339290
October 25th - Wine and Wisdom Evening, Macklands
PACT, 7.30pm start Millennium Centre, Rainham,
Teams up to 8, £5 pp, Bring own drinks and nibbles, In
aid of Oliver Fisher Baby Unit, book 01634 366183
October 26th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet Lindsay Floyd and Margaret Norman
07743 702049 07780 517785 Appledore Church facing
Court Lodge Road GR 957293 TN26 2DB 5 mile easy
walk 7 stiles, some gentle slopes, Dogs allowed
October 26th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Bob/Kath, Loose Hill near Chequers Pub TQ758521
ME15 OBL 6 mile Circular walk Pub at end.
October 26th - Lions Club Harvest Teas (see 12th Oct).
October 27th - Monday Hub, (see 13th Oct).
October 27th - Medway Scramble Club, (see 13th Oct).
October 28th - UpARA, Coffee Morning, Upchurch
Village Hall, 9.30am, Members £1.50, Guests £2, New
Members Welcome, davidpowell5@hotmail.co.uk
October 29th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Mike, Barham village green TR208500 CT4 6NZ for a
7.5 mile Four Churches walk visiting, One short hill,
Muddy in places Bring picnic lunch, Pubs at end.
October 30th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Service &
Audio/Visual presentation, Colin Coe, (see 9th Oct).
October 30th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Games tea and
chat, (see 9th Oct).
October 30th - Rainham & District Dolls' House and
Miniaturist Group, Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside,
7.30pm, ring Sylvia Wildridge 01634 312038
October 31st - Nov 1st - The Addams Family Musical,
Brook Theatre, Chatham, Three Towns Theatre Comp,
7.30pm, Sat mat 2.30pm Tickets 01634 338338, £13
and £10 cons £40 for an Addams Family special ticket
(2 adults and 2 children or 1 adult and 3 children).
November 1st - Hempstead Village Hall Committee,
Table-Top Boot Fair, Village Hall, 11.00am - 3.00pm.
Tables £7.50, contact David 01634 377177 or email -
davidwilliamfuller@gmail.com
November 1st - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 4th Oct).

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Diary 2014

November 1st - St Margaret's Bazaar, 10.00am - 2.30pm,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, Entrance 50p, more
details Margaret Meinertzhagen 01795 475907

November 1st - Centenary Celebratory Concert, Kentish
Players, Curtain Up 7.30pm, Central Theatre, Chatham,
Tickets £15 (£12 Concessions) from Box office 01634
338338 www.medway.gov.uk/theatrebooking or email
Kentish Players secretary.kentishplayers@gmail.com

November 2nd - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Jim, Otford village car park. TQ 525595 TN14 5TL 5
miles, 1 small hill. Bring a snack Pubs/cafe's at the end.

November 2nd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10am,
meet Roger Norman 01634 232404 07941 965272,
Shipbourne, The Common, Upper Green Road GR
592522 TN11 9PE, 5 mile moderate walk, No dogs

November 3rd - Rainham Wives, 'Wild & West', talk by
Chris Wade, (see 6th Oct).

November 4th - Rainham Horticultural Society, Adam
was a gardener, the Church and gardens - William
Butcher, (see 7th Oct).

November 4th - Floral Art Group 'Guy Fawkes', (see 7th
November 5th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Mike, public car park at Wingham High Street.

TR243577 CT3 1BN for a 7 mile Four Watermills walk
Bring picnic lunch for midway break. Pubs at end.

November 6th - Hempstead Leisure Club - Bon Marche
Fashion Show & Christmas sale for Barnardos, (see 9th)

November 6th - Wigmore Thursday Club, The Trouble
with Trevor, Ley Liberson, (see 9th Oct).

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November 7th - Lower Halstow Games Afternoon,
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visit, play games or have a chat.

November 8th - Winter Wonderland, St Matthew's
Church, Wigmore, 11.00am - 3.00pm Vintage
handicrafts Entrance 50p - Children free

November 8th - Annual Craft Fair, Rainham Evening WI,
2.30pm, Millennium Centre, Rainham. Good selection
of tables, Refreshments, Admission 30p

November 8th - Barnardo's Charity Quiz Night, 7.30pm
Twydall Church Hall, Teams up to 8 - £5 pp Bring your
own drinks and nibbles, Free Tea, Coffee and Biscuits,
Festive Raffle, ring 01634 233405 or 01634 375486

November 8th - Instep Dancing, (see 11th Oct).

November 9th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet
Graham 07989 753278, Waterbury public car park
off Bow Road near the traffic lights to catch the 10.05
bus to Tonbridge TQ691534 ME18 5DD for a 10 mile
perfect walk for those who hate hills. Bring picnic
lunch for midway break. Pub at end.

November 9th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10am,
meet Patricia Daniels 07960 295164, Wye High Street
car park opp Church TN25 5ES, 7 mile moderate walk,
undulating to hilly may be muddy, dogs allowed

November 10th - Monday Hub, (see 13th Oct).

November 10th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 13th Oct).

November 10th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship

Group, (see 13th Oct).

November 10th - Medway Organ Club Concert, (see 13th

November 10th - Rainham Wives, 'History of Royal
Variety Performance', talk by Dean Caston, (see 6th).

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