

# The Farningham & Eynsford Local History Society

Founded 1985

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

## Bulletin No 83

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### Forthcoming Talks and Events

<b>2009</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Where</b>
25th Sept	<b>100 Years of Dartford Museum - Chris Baker</b>	Eynsford
16th Oct	<b>Quiz Night (Alan Cremer)</b>	Eynsford
20th Nov	<b>Welcome to the Manorial Hall - Jean Stirk</b>	Farningham
<b>2010</b>		
19th Feb	<b>The Seal Chart Murder – Monty Parkin</b>	Eynsford
14th May	<b>AGM including buffet</b>	Farningham
24th Sept	<b>Metal Detecting – Des Cook</b>	Farningham
26th Nov	<b>The R101 Airship – Brian Hussey</b>	Eynsford

Unless otherwise stated all Meetings are held on a Friday evening from 730pm, 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 864253)

On Friday 5th June members of the Fawkhams history society visited Farningham for an evening walk. Stella and I each took a group along the High Street pointing out buildings of interest and talking about the history of the village. The walk ended with everyone going into the church for a welcome sit down before looking at the architecture of the church.

The following day was the Farningham Church Summer Fete and I had arranged a display of photographs and publications relating to Farningham. Although the day was dry with a little sunshine there was quite a strong wind and Jan and I spent most of the day trying to stop the display boards from falling down and the publications from blowing away. As in previous years visitors were eager to learn about the history of the village and to tell us

their connections to the area. My thanks to Barrie Payne for the use of his gazebo.

The wind was still a problem at the scouts fun day at Eynsford on the 4th July. Although 4th July is 'Independence Day' the theme for the day was 'the wild west'. Jan and I decided to highlight special events for our display, featuring festivals and historic events and occasions from Farningham, Eynsford and Lullingstone's past. It was very rewarding to listen to visitors comments remembering some of the events and putting names to some of the faces on the photographs. Apart from battling with the wind a good day was had by all.

At our latest committee meeting we decided to move our committee meetings to the evening, thus hoping to attract people to the committee who are not available during the day. This change will take effect from January 2010 so if anyone is interested in joining our committee please give me or another other committee member a call, we would welcome you with open arms.

### **PUBLICATION REPORT (Barbara Cannell)**

I am pleased to report that there has been a response to my request for help in revamping the Eynsford Walkabout Guide. We may soon be in a position to offer visitors to the village an up to date history to some of our houses and buildings.

One of the nice things about looking after the society publications is that from time to time a simple request for a certain publication leads on to other things. A recent request revealed that the purchaser and I both live in a road with the same name and several of my husband's family lived in the same town and were buried in the grounds of his parish church. As this town is not too far away perhaps I should do as the family members living in Horton Kirby often did and 'hop on a train' and spend some time looking for where they lived and visiting the church. Oh for some spare time!!

### **RESEARCH REPORT (Susan Pittman 669923) website [www.felhs.org](http://www.felhs.org)**

**The Castle Hotel Visitors' Book** (see Acquisitions below)

Although the empty pages in this book later succumbed to a child's scribbling, this large bound volume contains many signatures from 1905 onwards. Among the first signatories on Arbor Day 1905 were James and John Love who had cycled from Essex with an overnight stop in London, 'Two honest sons of toil, Not shirkers but workers.' Before the First World War, several cycling clubs used the hotel including the Askean, Athenlay, Anerley (who enjoyed Boxing Day visits), Lee, Rodney, Rutland, and Croydon clubs. The Catford Cycling Club drew the back views of their 6-man group, and the Emerald Wheelers and Royal Primrose Club drew their club shields. The hotel attracted other groups such as The Hector Rowing Club and The Bohemian Tennis Club of Plumstead, founded in 1813, both of which drew their elaborate club shields. A sprinkling of foreign visitors were also charmed by Eynsford. During the First World War the Glamorgan R.G.A. were stationed at Eynsford on anti-aircraft duties and on 9 July 1915, one member wrote a poem bemoaning the lack of action the unit had seen – one wonders whether he had realised the hell others were facing in the trenches. After the war, rambling groups became more prominent in the book, but there are fewer and fewer entries until the last recorded entry was on 7 April 1981 by the Lockyer family

### **mid 1950s Farningham v. Crockenhill Cricket**

In this match (perhaps the 2nd XI) the game was played against time. Crockenhill batted well beyond their need before declaring their innings at 209 for 4. In reply Farningham scored 19 for 9 when John Drew went in to bat. It began to rain and the fielders, laughing and joking, crowded in to finish the last batsmen off. Steve Mills swung at everything, and John poked short-sightedly at everything as the rain came down harder and harder. In the 55 minutes they were at the crease, Steve scored four boundaries, 2 sixes and 2 fours and the Crockenhill fielders grew increasingly wet and thoroughly annoyed. Sadly, five minutes before the stumps were due to be drawn Steve was clean bowled and Farningham was all out for 39.

(From John Drew's background notes to his book of poems)

### **1939 Stanley Baldwin's testimonial** (see Acquisitions below)

This namesake of the 1930s' Prime Minister hit the headlines in the local papers when, aged 10, he was invited to visit Stanley Baldwin at 10 Downing Street. The testimonial, which is now in our collection, was written just after Stanley had left school at the age of 14 by Mr Hillier, headmaster of Eynsford Senior School. At the time of leaving Stanley was 'section leader' of the top class, having been put in the position because the headmaster found him well disciplined and thoroughly trustworthy. He was as good at sport as he was at work, and as a scout for several years had the right attitude towards discipline and authority. Lastly, he had a pleasant manner and a happy willing disposition. Let us hope this testimonial helped Stanley to be appointed to the job he wanted.

### **1939 New flying club near London**

The Horton Kirby Flying Club on the A225 north of Farningham had nine training aircraft, including six Gipsy I moths, one B.A Swallow with a Cirrus Minor engine, and two Cirrus-engined Avians. Mr G. W. Alexander who was chief pilot of Air Dispatch Ltd. was the chief instructor, and there were three other instructors. Solo flights cost thirty shillings an hour (£1 50p). The Club secretary was D. S. Alexander. Were these Alexanders related to the farming family I wonder?

(sent by John King, from Flight magazine, 30 March 1939)

### **1911 Census on line**

The 1911 census has been released early (usually it is not made available to researchers until 100 years after it was taken). Vouchers to view can be obtained from The National Archives bookshop and can be redeemed on [findmypast.com](http://findmypast.com). By logging onto [www.1911census.co.uk](http://www.1911census.co.uk) you can search for a name or address without charge, so you can identify people, households, institutions or other places of interest before paying to view the original record.

### **1895 Beating the Orpington Boundaries**

This was the custom of walking the boundaries of the parish to ensure that they were clearly marked. On this occasion a musician treated the beaters to lively tunes and bugle calls at short intervals. A number of schoolboys had been selected to follow the line and 'have the vicinity of the boundary marks impressed upon their seat of memory.' (I can't work out whether they were to be beaten at each point or whether only the points were beaten!!) The willows for the beating were handed round and photographs taken. The

Orpington boundary runs alongside Crockenhill at Shelmore where the party balked at wading through the pond. The group then proceeded to Daltons Road and turned south towards Well Hill, where three parishes, Orpington, Eynsford and Lullingstone meet, with Shoreham parish being only a short distance away. The whole parish boundary of Orpington of about seventeen miles was walked round in just under 12 hours, the party beginning at 8.30 a.m. and finishing at 8.00 p.m.  
(The Kentish Times, 1895, sent by Geoffrey Copus)

### **1769 Will of Thomas Hassell, park keeper at Lullingstone**

Thomas was park keeper to Sir John Dixon Dyke. He had a brother, John, in Eynsford and nephew, William, in Knockholt, and a cousin in Surrey to whom he bequeathed one shilling each. But cousin Thomas Hassell, collar maker of Dartford, received ten pounds at the end of his apprenticeship. Brother John was to be executor and inherit all household effects.

### **Polhills of Farningham and Horton Kirby**

This is a complicated tale and can be found on the Polhill family website – [polhill.info/book](http://polhill.info/book). Thomas Polhill, probably the son of William Polhill of Farningham, purchased Kirby Court and Horton Kirby in 1730 and his daughter married Rev. Richard Collins, rector of St. Paulinus, and, from 1724 to his death in 1737, rector of Burham. Rev. Richard Collin's daughter, Elizabeth, married an apothecary, Gill Smith, who turned out to be a thoroughly bad lot. He lived like a country gentleman, but to do so was in constant need of money. When he heard his wife was to be left a legacy by Thomas Polhill, Smith was so determined to secure the money that six or seven members of the Polhill family died within one week, including Thomas Polhill. Gill Smith having secured his wife's legacy ran off with her sister, who died of small pox not long afterwards. Smith then forged her will to acquire more of the Polhill funds. He was goaled for fraud, but later discharged. He wandered around still defrauding gullible women, until by chance he met his wife, Elizabeth, acting as a servant in a friend's house. He took out two insurance policies on her life before brutally murdering her in 1737. Inevitably, he was arrested, found guilty and condemned to be hung in chains because 'the whole country was fully persuaded that he had swam in blood to attain his ends.'

### **Transcripts of the Fleet Marriage registers**

These have been acquired thanks to Geoffrey Copus who has picked out local marriages for FELHS. The Fleet Gaol chapel was the venue for a number of clandestine marriages in the eighteenth century. The wives are spinsters from the same parish unless otherwise noted:-

1716	William Donmall, labourer of Eynsford	Elizabeth Donmall
1717	John Edward, husbandman of Lullingstone	Dorothy Rivers of Eynsford
1737	Thomas Ashton, husbandman of Eynsford	Hester Whiffen
1742	Edward Simmons, husbandman of Lullingstone	Mary Turner
1744	Thomas Dunmoule, farmer of Eynsford	Mary French, widow of Stansted
1745	John Barton, husbandman of Lullingstone	Frances Austen of Shoreham
1746	John Reynolds, husbandman of Farningham	Elizabeth Fielder of Shoreham
1749	Walter Card... of Lullingstone	Catherine Humphreys of St Clement Danes
1753	Peter Allen, blacksmith of Eynsford	Ann Saker

### **1707 Rabbits stolen from Home Wood, Lullingstone**

John Sinyard, husbandman of Shoreham, was convicted of stealing three rabbits from Home Wood so the borsholder (parish officer) of Shoreham was ordered to seize and sell John's goods and chattels to the value of eleven shillings, of which five shillings was to go to William Haswell, the owner of the rabbits, and five shillings to the use of the parish.

### **Eynsford mill and fishery mentioned in the Domesday Book, 1086**

I had always assumed that the mill and fishery were on the river Darent at Eynsford itself, but on reading Witney's 'The Jutish Forest' doubt is cast on this. Witney traced all the dens in the Wealden forest attached to other parishes – the custom being that those parishes exploited the wood resources of the forest and drove pigs there in the autumn to feed off acorns and beech mast. The dens attached to Eynsford lay at Barden on the Medway and Witney was in no doubt that the Domesday mill belonging to Eynsford was located there, and also speculated that the fishery was there as well. (see p.226 Witney, The Jutish Forest)

### **Family history enquiries**

- **Boomer of Crockenhill** – Hilary wanted information about the family in the 1650s, and I was able to take her back further to the Boomers in 1612 in Crockenhill at Tilehost, the centre of Crockenhill's tile making industry.
- **Wood/Boxall** - William Wood married Elizabeth Boxall (1859), Crockenhill
- **Cheesman/Ottaway** – Information sought about George Ottaway m. Susan Mary Cheesman, died 1918. The family lived in Maplescombe Cottage, Sparepenny Lane. George Ottaway committed suicide in 1922 – it is thought due to the death of his wife and daughter, Susan.

### **Other enquiries**

- **Calfstock Lane car park** – Kim wanted to know about a building which he spotted on the 1910s and 1930s OS maps and which once stood in the car park. He would like to learn anything he could about the house/building/occupants/purpose.

### **ARCHIVE REPORT (Susan Pittman 669923)(archives@felhs.org.uk)**

#### **FELHS Centre**

In the last Bulletin I mentioned the need to sort out documents prior to cataloging and also to aid in making material more accessible prior to full cataloging. At the AGM I appealed for volunteers to set up a working party for this task and am very pleased to say that Anne Cremer and Jackie Clark came forward and with the help of Anne's friend, Linda, and committee member, Veronica Sheppard, sorting is already well underway. The task involves deciding in which subject folder to place the item, and the group has found sifting through the material both interesting and enjoyable. Sessions last for about two hours and are being coordinated by Anne Cremer, who would soon give the little training required. If you would like to join in, even for one session as a trial, please do make contact - Anne Cremer 01322 863732 or myself (details above)

I continue to respond to all enquiries and, if necessary, the Centre can be opened to individuals by appointment.

### **Acquisitions**

**From Shaun Nolan** – The Castle Hotel Visitors' Book (see Research above)

**From Diana Beamish** – a large package of paperwork related to Anthony Roper School, including a mail order catalogue for school uniform, 1993-94, a school prospectus of 1995-96, early draft, notes and correspondence related to FELHS publication no.26, A History of Eynsford's Elementary and Primary Schools, by Diana; a collection of modern cuttings and flyers; presentation brochure with details, plans and diagrams about Eynsford Pumping Station prepared for FELHS visit, 18 July 1998.

**From Barbara Cannell** – 2005 cuttings from The Sevenoaks Chronicle featuring the FELHS area; coloured illustrated brochure by Wards of the Eynsford Mill development, including interior plans.

**From Wilf Duncombe** – Folder of notes and background information for his FELHS publication no.33, Bridges of Eynsford and Farningham.

**From Sylvia Baldwin** – A matchbox cover by The Kentish Match Company of Sidcup, showing the ford at Eynsford (series of 10 – no.1) – unknown date. Along one edge 'Average 35 Damp Proof Aspen Sticks' and across the top 'Keep Kent Tidy – Don't Throw me Away.' (More information about the Company or likely date of the cover wanted). Also a headmaster's testimonial for Stanley Baldwin, 30 November, 1939, when he left school at 14 (see Research above).

**CD from Kent Archaeological Society with index and volumes I to CXXV of Archaeologia Cantiana, 1857-2007.**

### **Family History Lookups**

Registers for Eynsford, Farningham and Lullingstone searched, births, marriages and death certificated applied for, cost £7.00. Census searched for named individuals with copies and PCC indexes searched and wills obtained. Prices are dependent on the number of pages.

Donations please to the Society . Contact: **Stella Baggeley 01322 862812**

### **and finally.....**

Hope to see you all at our next evening meeting '100 years of Dartford Museum' on Friday 25th September. After that on the 16th October there is a quiz night compiled by Alan Cremer, the usual tables of 6 at £3.00 per person, and of course bring your own refreshments. Unfortunately I will not be there that night, Linda Gwyther is taking charge of this event and selling the tickets, her telephone no is 01322 866407.

It is the 25th Anniversary of the Society in 2010 and we are in the process of planning a History Month in August with varying events going on throughout the month, some in the afternoon, some in the evening but all with our members in mind. The full programme has yet to be finalised and we are open to any suggestions you may have as to how we can celebrate this momentous event. Please call me on 01322 865122 or e-mail me at [Janw@fsmail.net](mailto:Janw@fsmail.net).

Well now my lunch hour is over and it is back to work at the roman villa. See you all very soon

**Jan Wilkes - Editor (865122)**

**PS We still need a Secretary if anyone is interested.**

## **WHAT'S ON 2009/2010**

### **Horton Kirby & South Darenth Local History Society**

#### **2009**

- 14th Sept Kent, an unusual 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**

#### **2009**

- 11th Sept Trip to Winchelsea  
25th Sept Farm Buildings in Kent - William Alexander  
16th Oct Memories of the 1950s led by Ken Fowler  
13th Nov History of the Victoria Cross - Col. Mike Martin  
11th Dec Members Christmas Social

#### **2010**

- 8th Jan British Broadcasting - Dan Dray  
12th Feb Intrigue, Ambition and Respectability at Ightham Mote - Pat Mortlock  
6th March AGM - Darent Delights - Jonathan Fenner

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 Lynda Alleeson (01959 522836) to check that no changes have been made to their programmes (Remember your membership card)

### **Hextable Heritage Society**

#### **2009**

- 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)

