Farningham & Eynsford Local History Society

(Original Society founded 1985 Registered Charity no 1047562)
A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee
No. 5620267 incorporated 11th November 2005 Registered Charity 1113765

Bulletin No. 139

Summer 2025

2025-2026 PROGRAMME

The dates are all Fridays. Doors open 7.30 pm for talks at 8.00 pm. The evening includes refreshments and a display of items from FELHS collection.

2025

Friday 12 September **Farningham Village Hall (Earlier start 7.45 pm)**
James Holman **Report on the Excavations at Harrow Meadow**
James, project manager and senior consultant for Canterbury Archaeological Trust, will discuss the archaeological discoveries made during the excavations in Harrow Meadow, Eynsford, and how they fit in with other local sites.

Friday 3 October **Eynsford Village Hall**

FELHS 40TH ANNIVERSARY EVENING

Between 7.30-9.30 p.m.

AN INFORMAL EVENING WITH CAKE AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS TO CELEBRATE FELHS 40th (1985-2025) ANNIVERSARY. WE AIM TO SHOW CASE SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE SOCIETY'S COLLECTION - INCLUDING SHORT FILMS; MAPS & OTHER IMAGES FROM THE OVERSIZE BOXES; THE SOCIETY'S PUBLICATIONS; SCRAPBOOKS FROM 1930 - PRESENT; A DISPLAY OF ARTEFACTS AND DOCUMENTS FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR TO LOOK AT AND HANDLE, MOST OF WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN PUT ON SHOW BEFORE. DO JOIN US ON THE NIGHT AND BRING ALONG FRIENDS AND FAMILY. ALL WELCOME.

Friday 14 November **Farningham Village Hall**
Tom Hart Dyke **Growing up in Lullingstone Castle**
Tom has yet to finalise a title, but he says part of his brief will include The World Garden.

2026

Friday 13 February **Farningham Village Hall**
Jennifer Godfrey **Suffragettes of Kent**

Friday 27 March **Eynsford Village Hall**
Ed Thompson **Swanley to Bat & Ball railway line**

Friday 24 April **Farningham Village Hall**
Dr Janet Clayton **Scadbury moated manor, Chislehurst**

Friday 22 May **Farningham Village Hall**
FELHS AGM **details to be announced in due course**

2024-2025 Report of FELHS given at AGM 9 May 2025

2025 marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Society in 1985 and there are plans to celebrate the event at the October 2025 meeting, with cake and extra refreshments. On this occasion we plan to include a display of items from our collection related to the Second World War - 2025 being the 80th anniversary of its end.

Unfortunately, **Veronica Sheppard**, our Chairman, has had to step down from the chair for health reasons, but would like to remain on the committee. We thank her for taking on the chairmanship and hope the post will be filled soon. The Committee itself comprises 6 members, with **John Mullen, Company Secretary** as a legal requirement for a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee. Our **Vice-Chair, Ann Cornwell; Minute Secretary, Helen Smith; Treasurer, Vikki Saunders; Membership Secretary, Alison Marshall and Susan Pittman, Archivist/ Research.** All cover tasks beyond their job descriptions and are dedicated in running the Society - but six is not a sustainable number. **We urgently need more Committee members, so please consider volunteering - you do not need to take on a responsible role unless you are willing, but if you are interested to help where you can, that would be a valuable contribution in itself.**

During 2024-2025 members and guests have enjoyed a full programme, with an element of local interest. Some talks have been based on original research, such as Diana Beamish on Anthony Roper School and its predecessors; Giles Wolfe on Percy Pilcher and Rod Le Gear on chalk mining in Kent, and, to come tonight: Nick Fothergill on Lullingstone Dummy Airfield. Other talks have been broader covering Charles Dickens in Kent and London - Plague, War and Fire in 1666. In November the Society held a very successful film night raising over £700 for the New Eynsford Village Hall fund. On screen was a film from James Alexander's collection about the 1977 Jubilee in Eynsford. The programme of talks has been finalised for 2026, including another film night, but **we are in need of a Programme Secretary, to liaise with speakers and to plan for 2027.**

Another role that needs filling is Editor of the Bulletin. The Bulletin is issued 3 times a year, and, as most members receive it by e-mail, it can contain more photographs and colour. It covers Society updates as well as a random selection of snippets, which often relate to various queries sent in via the website and Facebook. Both website and Facebook help the Society to reach more people, and the e-mail system enables us to update members and circulate reminders of meetings.

One of the main aims of FELHS is to research and preserve documents, images & artefacts related to the villages of Farningham and Eynsford, with Crockenhill, Lullingstone and Maplescombe. The collections in the Centre have been built up since the mid-1980s and are an invaluable resource for our communities. Volunteers gather on Monday mornings from March to October to sort, catalogue & manage the collection, and visitors are welcome to join in or just to explore what is there. Do come along.

The collection is not only consulted by individuals, but has been drawn on by public bodies - grants from both Eynsford and Farningham Parish Councils are partly in recognition of this. The Society is grateful for this support. Items are displayed at all our meetings, and at local community events. The lists of new acquisitions and their donors appear in the Bulletins, and we thank the donors for their generosity.

The Committee members work well together, and we are indebted to all of them for their commitment. However, as has already been stressed, there is a pressing need for more members to join the Committee. We do want people to come forward to help our Society continue to flourish - succession is vital for its success and long term future.

Current membership

65 annual members (17 of which are family memberships) and 31 life members.

Financial Position

Income	£2,221
Expenditure	£4,126 (including £1665 to digitise James Alexander's films)
Net income over expenditure	**£1905 shortfall**
Closing balance	£2,360

RESOLUTION put to the AGM by the committee, which was passed unanimously:-

That from January 2026 individual annual subscriptions be raised to £12 (from £10) and family membership to £20 (from £15).
Life membership to remain at £100 for individual member & £150 for couple.

Two sharp-eyed members recognised this mystery photo, originally labelled as Eynsford, as being of Heaverham, on the road between Kemsing and Wrotham. The scene has changed very little, but the photos on line are all under copyright.

RESEARCH REPORT

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

PuzzleLine Challenge: Darent Valley Line from Swanley to Sevenoaks

This is a free and interactive adventure challenge launched by Sevenoaks District Council - perhaps an idea for a holiday activity for children in your care? Leaflets are available at the stations along the line, and there is a PuzzleLine website to which answers can be submitted. For those who get stuck answers are at www.puzzleline.org

The Great Plague of London in 1665 and its affect locally

One route for those fleeing from the plague in London would have been the predecessor of the A20 via Farningham. All parishes at the time had to keep registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, so what do they reveal about the death rate then? One would have expected it to soar in the plague years. However, there were no burials entered in either Eynsford or Farningham parishes in 1664, three in Eynsford in 1665, and none in either in 1666. This is in contrast to the years before and after when about twenty to thirty burials a year was the norm in Eynsford. The assumption is that there was so much disruption and death in the parishes during the Great Plague that the Ministers could not cope with keeping up records. One must feel sorry for Nicholas Felton, who became Vicar of Eynsford in 1666. His daughter Mary died in 1667, his wife, Maria, in 1668 and another daughter, Susanna, in 1669 - it is little wonder that he left Eynsford in 1669. These were the years when the plague had its greatest impact on Kent.

Although there is no direct evidence of the plague striking in our parishes Leonard Gale of Sevenoaks wrote an account of how his family spread it from Sevenoaks to Kemsing. His mother took ill and died, but the family did not connect her illness with the plague so went on with their lives as usual. Leonard's father, Leonard himself, three brothers and a sister fell sick and all except Leonard died a week later. By this time a watch had been set on the house, preventing anyone from entering or leaving. Leonard gradually recovered, but then was shut up with two women, a man and a child for three further months. He was writing in 1687, and commented that he had never returned to full health.

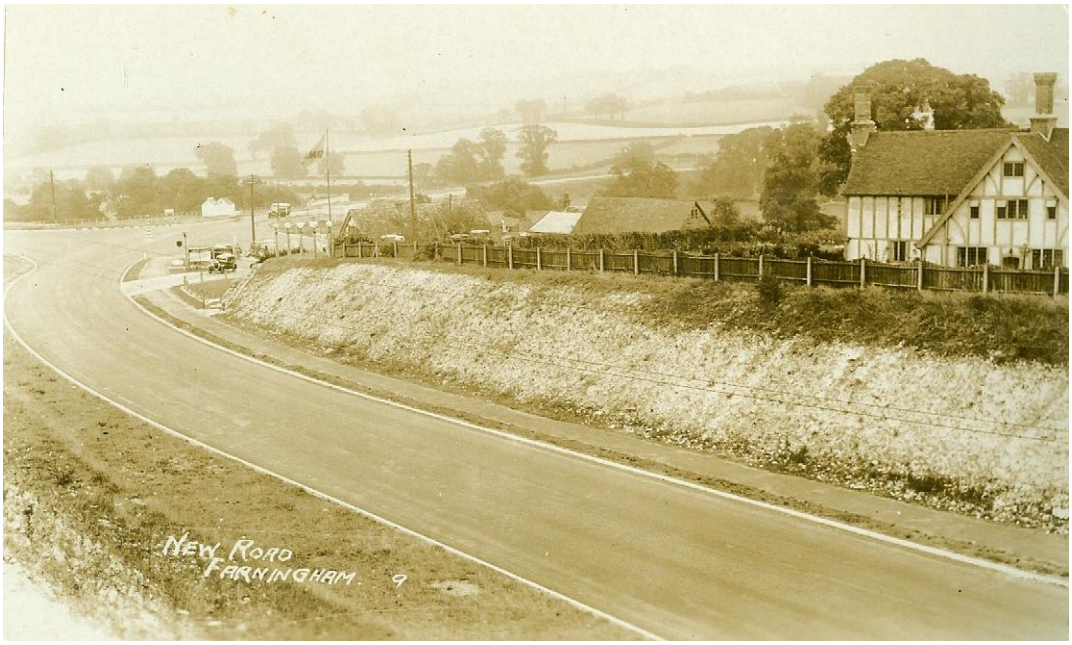
R. Blencowe, 'Extracts from Memoirs of the Gale Family', Sussex Archaeological Collections xii (1860) pp.46-47.

Death Hill renamed Gorse Hill

According to the Daily News (London issue) Gorse Hill was officially renamed Death Hill by Dartford Rural Council on Tuesday 7th June 1960.

According to the Maidstone Telegraph it reverted to its original name of Gorse Hill in July 1977.

(Mike who enquired about the name change found out the answer - thank you, Mike)



Farningham bypass was opened in 1923, and it soon became a speedway for vehicles. The accident rate was so high that in 1925 St. John's Ambulance Brigade set up a casualty post by the cross-roads (the white buildings on the bend with bus on road nearby). The Brigade also wanted a mortuary, which was refused and in the end one in Swanley was used. The photograph was taken in about 1927 when the casualty station was joined by a second building for members waiting to go on duty.

The Bradshaw Family sisters

The Bradshaw family had a general store in Eynsford. During the First World War sisters, Olive and Ida were impacted by servicemen from the British Empire. Olive Bradshaw met Joseph Vokey of Newfoundland. As Joseph was stationed at Shoreham-by-Sea, Sussex, it is unknown how they met. Joseph was a Wing Commander with the Royal Flying Corps (to become the RAF in 1918).

He is shown in this photo of an S.E.5 biplane in 1916. On one occasion Olive Bradshaw had a chance to watch him fly. He put the plane into a nose dive to show off his flying skills, but misjudged the angle and was flying too fast to recover altitude. He slid to the floor of the cockpit to pull back the joystick with all his might and the plane just recovered. The plane had almost flown into the ground in front of his horrified fiancée. Olive and Joseph went on to marry in Eynsford in June 1918, and their grandson contacted us from Canada.

By co-incidence Ida Bradshaw became engaged to an Australian in the armed services, but her story did not end happily. Correspondence from Dick in Australia throws more light on this. His grandfather had emigrated to Australia, but enlisted and after the Gallipoli landings, was sent to England. His daughter and one of the Bradshaw sisters were pen-friends so he made contact with the family. Later his brother, Bill, came over and was selected for officer training. Bill spent

weekends with the Bradshaw family, and became engaged to Olive's sister, Ida. On completing training Bill became commander of a unit, but was killed on his very first day. (He holds the unenviable Australian record for the shortest period of command of any Australian battalion.)

Bradshaw's shop, perhaps in 1920s.

Cherry Tree Cottage, Farningham

From 1840 to the 1930s this was Gregory's Bakery. Bread was baked in the bake house behind the cottage and sold from the front room. Alfred Gregory owned the confectionery shop with his brother, William, who both took over from their father, who had taken over from his. When Alfred Gregory became the village postman he delivered bread with the letters. From 1874 until 1913 Alfred's daughter, Lily Cross, was recorded as the baker. She sold the business to Mr Dolley in the 1930s and the bakery moved to different premises opposite the Church. Mrs Norah Ward remembered from her childhood c.1907 walking down to Farningham Fair with her mother, who would buy beautiful ginger nuts as a treat to eat on the way.

Cherry Tree Cottage furthest in row on right hand side. On the left the corner of The Chequers, the White House and distant view of The Lion, 1930s.

From research by Vikki Saunders for an Exhibition on Farningham Shops

Henry Sargent (c.1839-1893)

Henry Sargent was a carpenter in his twenties in 1861, but had become a millwright by 1871, and in 1891 was described as a mechanical engineer. The family lived in Bower House, Eynsford, and by 1881 Henry had become head of the household, was married and with children. Wilf Duncombe in *Eynsford Paper Mill* described two water mills which were advertised for sale in 1876 and 1882, the former requested interested parties to apply to Mr H. Sargent of Eynsford Mills, and it would seem that Henry was millwright during the transition from water power to steam power, which is

perhaps why his job description had changed by 1891. Apparently, the first machine-made paper was made at the mill in 1885.

Henry Sargent
l: Bower House, Bower Lane, Eynsford, in 1910, with Maria Sargent (Bowers) wife of Henry Sargent, and daughter, Helena. (Kevin Yeates)

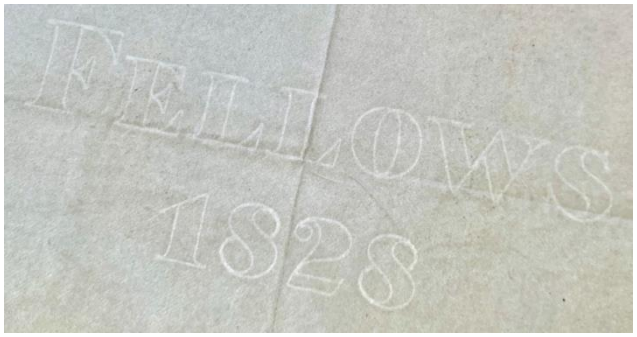
Two of Henry's brothers, James (died 1862 aged 32) and John Sargent, acted as Road Surveyors and John took over the 3-year contract awarded to James to repair the roads over the ends of several county bridges including Eynsford, Shoreham and Sutton-at-Hone. He found Eynsford bridge in need of such extensive repair that he asked for more money to cover the work.

W.G. Duncombe, Eynsford Paper Mill (FELHS publication no.31) p.8.
W.G. Duncombe, The Bridges of Eynsford and Farningham(FELHS 2010) p.3.

Eynsford British School at The Manse, front row left end - Wilfred Sargent (son of Henry and Maria Sargent, identified by his daughter*) and Mr Woolley with daughter, Elsie (born 1885) back right. The school closed on 2 November 1894. This photo probably dates from about 1889. (Kevin Yeates) (* John Laidlow thinks this is Lewis Sargent aged 8, older girl in centre is pupil-teacher Mabel Bowers, Wilf's cousin, and that Wilf (4) and brother Bruce (6) are in the Infants' photo.)

Thames Tunnel - links with Eynsford Paper Mill

The Thames tunnel connects Rotherhithe and Wapping. It was the first tunnel to have been constructed successfully beneath a navigable river. It was built by Marc Brunel (1769-1849) and his son, Isambard (1806-1859), between 1825 and 1843. It was designed for horse-drawn carriages, but in 1869 was converted into a railway tunnel. Since 2010 it has become part of the London over-ground railway network. The Brunel Museum is housed in the former engine house and there is guided access to part of the tunnel.



The Museum has recently acquired a letter with an Eynsford Mill watermark 'Fellows 1828', and the curator was curious about the mill. The letter was written by James Bandinel (1783-1849), secretary of Friends to the Thames Tunnel Enterprise. He was a British official at the Foreign Office, and superintendent of its slave trade department responsible for the abolition of the slave trade. From 1824 to his retirement in 1841, he received an annual allowance from Parliament, together with a lump sum of £1000, raised from the sale of condemned slave ships. He was a close friend of Marc Brunel and used some of the money to invest in the tunnel. His letter was to John Maxwell-Barry, 5th Baron Farnham, seeking his backing. By coincidence one backer of the tunnel was Bryan Donkin (1768-1855), who had connections with papermaking. He was manager of a factory in Bermondsey which made Fourdrinier machines. He had helped John Hall of Dartford develop this machine capable of producing continuous rolls of paper. Eynsford Mill, however, continued to make hand-made paper.

W.G. Duncombe, Eynsford Paper Mill (FELHS publication no.31) p.4.

Thomas Morgan of the Royal Navy

Peter emailed the service papers of Thomas Morgan born in Eynsford in 1854 which he had ordered in the mistaken belief Thomas Morgan was one of his ancestors. Thomas Morgan signed on in 1872 for ten years' service. He was a labourer aged 18 with dark complexion, brown eyes and brown hair. His distinguishing features were tattoos of a bracelet on this right wrist and an anchor on his left forearm. During his time he served on seven ships, although one was a moored hulk called *Excellent* which acted as a base for gunnery training. He began in the Channel fleet and then on *Blanche* and *Northampton* patrolling the North American and West Indian waters beginning just after the end of the American Civil War of 1861-1865, so he might have missed any armed conflict during his decade of service. He ended on two shore-based establishments - *Pembroke,* a harbour-based ship at Chatham used as barracks, and Victory I the accounting base at Portsmouth. He left the navy an Able Bodied seaman with excellent character, and received a pension until 1893, but was not living in Eynsford in the 1891 census.

The Deeds of Friars Garth, Sparepenny Lane

These were kindly lent by the owner and include a very clear map of the Eynsford end of the Lane, with all the properties named. The house was built in 1959 for Raymond Tattershall Wood, and extended in 1971 on a plot sold to him by William Alexander of Home Farm. An abstract of title for the property, sixteen A3 pages long, traces the ownership of a large tract of land in which it lay back to 1821, with an indenture between Henry Pawley and James Colyer. Transactions become very complicated and it transpires that the two families were inter-related, even as late as 1909 when one member was declared a lunatic and all had to be sold by Order in Lunacy. The estate comprised 186 acres of Hampton Court Farm, along with another 200 acres, including Kemp's Farm (anciently known as Bosvil's land). For a Pawley or Colyer family historian the abstract of title is a gold-mine with references to wills, marriages, children and much more.

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

The team at the Centre, comprising Ann Cornwell, Vikki Saunders, Helen Smith, and Keith Turner have been hard at work since March on Monday mornings (9.30 am - 12.00 pm). We have been checking the artefact catalogue and taking out items, of which we have over 50, related to the Second World War to display at events. We showed a selection at Farningham Annual Parish Meeting, at a meeting of The Space at the Riverside Club, Eynsford, at the VE80 celebration in St. Martin's Church, and at Farningham Fete. We plan to show most of the items at our October meeting when FELHS celebrates its 40th anniversary, so hope many of you will come along. Visitors at the Centre have come to look at Eynsford Paper Mill items, and to find out more about 2nd World War pilot, James Paterson, whose memorial stone is in Sparepenny Lane.

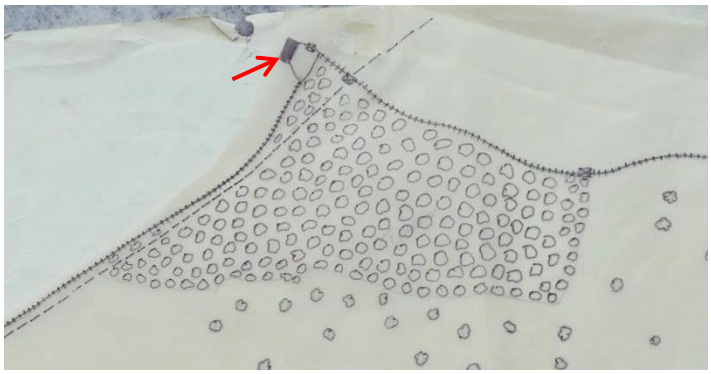
FELHS FACEBOOK @felhs.1985 From Vikki and Helen:
FELHS Facebook Page @felhs.1985 where everyone can share items from the archive and other matters that relate to the local history of the area. We have posted photos and articles that are of interest to our followers, or that have arisen from queries. Do search us out and give us a Like. If you have any suggestions on items that you would like to see on the page please email us at **info@felhs.org.uk**

FELHS WEBSITE www.felhs.org.uk - Queries to **archives@felhs.org.uk**

FELHS CENTRE is open Mondays 9.30 - noon from March to October. It can be visited at other times by arrangement - contact Facebook or Website

Family History

Thomas Bevan - died in May 1915 at Hulberry Corner. Carol originally misread the death certificate as Mulberry Corner. I sent a map which showed Hulberry Corner at the north-west corner of Lullingstone Park. Carol is writing a novel about Mary Ann Bevan (1874-1933) known for many years as "the ugliest woman in the world."



The house at Hulberry Corner just outside the NW corner of Lullingstone Park, shown on tracing of the estate map of 1802. The beech wood was felled in anticipation of the new London Airport in the 1930s.

Bradshaw - Peter from Canada is related to the Bradshaw family, shop keepers in Eynsford from the 1890s to the 1940s. He offered to share information. He was given the middle name 'Kent' to honour the family's origins. (see above)

Price - Mark wanted help with the Price family. As with Carol and her Bevan enquiry, Mark was misled by misinterpreting old handwriting. His ancestor Joseph Price was born in Speedgate (Brands Hatch area). The family moved constantly, but I found it in the 1851 Census for Eynsford, living in Goodwin's Yard, which by reference to other entries, seemed to be near the bridge. He was then able to trace the family to Crockenhill, and beyond.

Sargent - Kevin has provided information about the family and visited the Centre to learn more about Eynsford Paper Mills where his grandfather was a millwright. (see above)
Whiffen - Chris offered help to others researching the name, and Peter followed this up. Thomas Morgan married Elizabeth Whiffen in 1746 at Eynsford and had a daughter also Elizabeth in 1748. Thomas' will of 1788 did not mention the 2 x Elizabeth, only a daughter Ann, and his sons. This would suggest that both Elizabeths had died by 1788. Peter found one burial for an Elizabeth Morgan in 1760, and wondered whether this was for mother or daughter. I suggested he found out whether the couple had any other children after this burial date – which would confirm it was the daughter not the wife. I suspect the daughter died very young and no burial was recorded for her.

Peter Jones visited Eynsford and Farningham recently and said he was lucky enough to speak at length with the Verger in St. Martin's. The Verger allowed Peter to take this photo in the belfry with the clock pendulum visible, 1 May 2025. He was impressed with how well the Church was looked after - a credit to the Church team.

General Enquiries

Diversion of road to Shoreham in front of Lullingstone Castle, 1861 - Kent County Council has now gathered all the information it needed to proceed with works on the Darent Valley path between Lullingstone Castle and The Visitor Centre, with permission of the Hart Dyke family.

Cherry Tree Cottage, Farningham - Lisa wanted to know about the history of the cottage. From 1840-1930s it was Gregory's Bakery. (see above)

The Brunel Museum - The Museum had been given a letter from an original backer of the tunnel with Fellows 1828 watermark and wanted to know more about the paper mill. I suggested as first step purchase of Wilf Duncombe's publication. (see above)

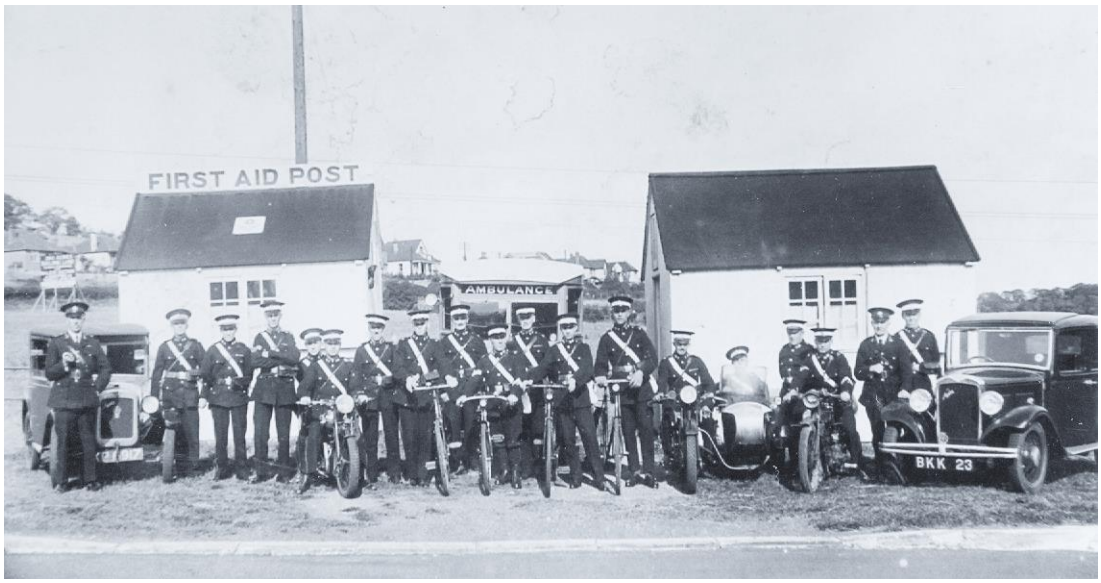
Acquisitions

James Alexander - Transcript of 1891 census for Eynsford (without Crockenhill)

Richard Frankson - Has managed to get a digitised copy of the Southern ITV film about Home Farm in 1976 and has donated a copy to FELHS. It features the Cowtel of 1972, a purpose-built suite for the dairy herd, which included a milking carousel, at Hulberry. (see William G.G. Alexander, *A Farming Century* p.122-124)

Mick Martin - Several photos - 1907 Dartford and Farningham bus outside The Bull; Flower Show featuring Doug Marden; 3 Kentish Times photos 'Miss Farningham', 2 Donkey Derby. These are copyright, which is a shame as I would have liked help with identification.

Index for Bulletins after 2018 - Volunteer needed to update the Index, which is a useful tool to access the Bulletins on the website. A few hours on the computer would get the job done, and the current Index would serve as a template. This is a task that can be done in the comfort of your home and in your own time - please consider doing it.



Farningham St. John's Ambulance Brigade volunteers, vehicles and buildings from which it operated off the roundabout at the bottom of Farningham Hill and its junction with the road to Dartford c.1930.