



# Newington History Group

Compiled by Sue Flipping

*Investigate, record and promote the history of Newington and its environs, through study, education and publication*

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## IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- Hidden Histories
- [NHG 2017 Diary](#)
- Events in Kent

## Hidden Histories

We all like to see youngsters showing an interest in history – the pupils at Newington School, for example, are very engaged with the History Group's work on the WWI Fallen.

So it was brilliant to hear Richard Emmett, from HRGS, telling us how they involved pupils from Grove Green School as they uncovered the secrets of Rose Hill in Sittingbourne.

### Background

There's been a residence at Rose Hill at least since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It stood at the rear of land that is now Gore Court Cricket Club but was bulldozed in the mid-70s at the request of local people after it became a focal point for vandals and arsonists. Richard and a team from HRGS have spent the last three years painstakingly creating a fascinating record of its development and eventual ruin through maps, written documents, oral history and archaeology.

### Maps and censuses

Maps from 1797, 1840 and 1865 were consulted to discover how the residence developed. The two former show a structure, thought to be a shooting lodge built in 1755, surrounded by a

wooded area; by the time the latter was produced, there are additional outbuildings and a formal garden. An aerial map from 1946 shows this clearly. Meanwhile, an engraving from 1836 shows a very imposing building with striking similarities to Belmont House near Faversham. Researchers eventually discovered ownership links between the two. Written records include censuses from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that helped identify the people who lived at Rose Hill from former military men to local tradesmen.

### Oral history

By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, oral history came into play as older local people reported their memories of the house during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One remembers her mother's stories of being in service at 'the big house', another described her own scary experience delivering newspapers to what was by then known as 'the witches house'.

### Archaeology

Finally, archaeology is the latest research method. Several digs have helped researchers understand more about the layout of the building and the

materials used. One of the most exciting finds was a pile of mathematical tiles, an unusual facing used to mimic the look of brickwork. They were probably added during the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century and provide one of the links to Belmont House, which also uses them. A corridor of Victorian tiles was testament to the quality of the decorations inside and there were reminders of the human occupants - domestic items such as a pipe with an unusual fish figure decoration and a pitchfork left behind by its last user.

### Involving local children

Hundreds of youngsters from Grove Park school have visited to see the gradual uncovering of the building's remains. Several dozen of the older ones, those in Year 6, were hands on, actively helping with the dig and parents have reported a huge amount of interest. The children were also involved in a project called *The Chronicles of Rose Hill* to present the story of the house through narration, song and dance. However, it's sobering to realise that one of the most exciting discoveries for the youngsters were empty *glass* bottles of fizzy drink – they've only ever known cans or plastic bottles!

## Doddington Place Gardens

The [Victorian manor](#) (which isn't open) is surrounded by 10 acres of garden and this weekend, on **Sunday 19 Feb** 11am-4pm, they'll be open for the NGS Snowdrop Festival. Entry costs £7 for adults, £6 concessions and £2 children. Parking is free. The manor is in Doddington – tell your satnav ME9 0BB.

## Graham Clarke – Now and Then

The illustrator, humourist, artist and 'Man of Kent', Graham Clarke, has an exhibition at Maidstone Museum which covers 50 years of his unique work, capturing a Kent rural life that has all but disappeared. The free exhibition is on at the Museum in St Faith's Street, Maidstone, until **March 18**.

## Pocahontas 400

What's the real story behind Pocahontas making her enterprising and ultimately fatal journey to England? At a [talk in Gravesend](#) to mark Pocahontas 400, Hazel Forsyth, Senior Curator of Post-Medieval History at the Museum of London, looks at the history of the Virginia Company, who brought Pocahontas to London, and makes some surprising discoveries. **St George's Church, DA11 0DJ Thursday February 23.**

## Next NHG Meeting

Our next meeting is on Thursday March 9 when Pauline Stevens will talk about Roman finds in Upchurch and Lower Halstow. As you know, NHG members are currently recording Roman finds from the Boyces Hill site; Pauline's knowledge will be interesting both for the similarities of the finds and the differences.

The meeting is at the Methodist Church Hall in Church Lane, starting 7.30pm. Guests (£3) and new members always welcome.



## HRGS Needs You!

Researchers in Sittingbourne are trying to trace information about men from the area who died in WW1 but about whom very little is known. It's hoped all of them will eventually be remembered on the digital role of honour at the Heritage Hub. The names are listed on the HRGS website [www.hrgs.co.uk](http://www.hrgs.co.uk) If you would like more details, or have photographs or information about any others who died in The Great War, please contact [Theresa@hrgs.co.uk](mailto:Theresa@hrgs.co.uk) or call 07970073950



**Newington**  
History Group

## 2017 Diary Dates

**All group meetings start at 7.30pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday in the month. Venues listed. Non members welcome - £3 per person.**

### March 9th (MCH)

Pauline Stevens ~ Roman finds at Lower Halstow & Upchurch.

### April 13th (MCH)

Jeremy Thornton ~ Ship Building at Sheerness.

### May 11th (MCH)

#### AGM & Social Evening

Members' interests. Eric Layer and bee-keeping.

### June 8th (MCH)

Show & Tell ~ Photographs with a story. Plus, members' research updates

### July 13th The Old Forge War Time House, East Street

**Car share.** Member attendance £2.50 a head - includes refreshments.

### July 15<sup>th</sup>

Newington Festival

### August

**No meeting**

### September 9th & 10<sup>th</sup> St Mary's Church

Heritage Open Days

### September 14th (MCH)

Helen Allinson ~ Farewell to Kent. Plus members' research updates.

### October 12th **Sheppey Little Theatre**

Tour & Talk

Car share. No member charge, includes refreshments.

### November 9th (MCH)

Tom Ledger ~ 100 years of farming at Wormdale

### December 14th (MCH)

Friends, Food and Fizz – Christmas social evening