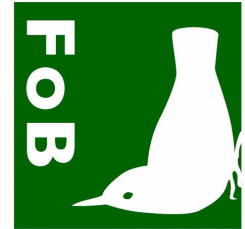


Newsletter



**FRIENDS OF
BERENGRAVE**

Berengrave LNR, where history & nature come together



Issue 31 Aug 2014

Chairman's Letter

Hello and welcome to this latest newsletter. My name is Eddy Newport and I have been your treasure since FoB was first inaugurated. However, having avoided the top job for the past eight years, it was felt that I ought to take on the big one. So here I am, a little unsure of what is expected of me, but I will do my best to carry on the good work of my predecessors.

In the early days of FoB Fraser Miller joined us and, with his passion for digging into the past, realised there was a mystery to be solved regarding the washmills. So with a little help from me he excavated the site and collated the information, which to his credit is now fully documented and resides with the Medway Archive Centre!

I had the idea to follow up this with my own investigation and check out the local press for any information regarding the cement works and chalk extraction. At that time Rainham was under the control of Sittingbourne and Milton District Council. Rainham, as it was then, being run by a parish council. So I went off to Sittingbourne library to check out the back editions of the East Kent Gazette, which at the time was a weekly paper.

Starting at 1800 I worked my way through to 1939. I collected a vast amount of information about Rainham and its people from the articles printed in the various editions. I found quite a bit of information regarding the cement works which Fraser found very useful in his investigations. Doing all this took me two years. Fraser also collated this information and it is now resides with the M.A.C. too.

We went as far as we could go with the dig and research until it was decided to stop the work due to health and safety considerations by the powers that be. However Fraser continued to put together a plan to build a scale model of the site as it was when it was fully operational. This model was exhibited at the Medway Archive Centre for a short time, and they were very impressed with it as they had no idea of what was happening in Rainham at

that time. They were unable to exhibit the model full time as they had no room to show it. The model went back to Fraser's loft where he had made it. I suggested that it ought to be seen, so I have it now in my conservatory and if any member wants to see it just give me a call and make an appointment and I will happily show them the model.

The photo below does not do the model justice.

Eddy Newport, Chairman, FoB



Next Member's Meeting

The next meeting will be at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 2nd September, 2014 (doors open 6.45 pm) at the Methodist Church Hall, in Wakeley Road, Rainham.

Emma Ventham, Kent Wildlife Trust's Greenspaces Infrastructure Officer, will give a talk entitled **'The Medway Living Land'**

Refreshments will be available after the talk, giving an opportunity to meet and chat with your fellow members. Guests are very welcome but, will be charged an entry fee of £2.

Future Member's meetings

Friday 5th December (Possibly a Christmas Party)

Your new committee

At the AGM (6th June) the following committee was elected:

- Chairman - Eddy Newport
- Vice Chairman - (No volunteers - Post lapsed)
- Secretary - Pat Clare
- Treasurer - Richard Lusted
- Rep for Berengrave Estate - Simon Marshall
- Rep for Berengrave Lane - Liz Arnold
- Rep for Lower Rainham Road & Motney Hill Road - Phyllis Platt
- Rep for Macklands Estate - Nicholas Kerr
- Website Manager & Newsletter Editor (Non-exec member) - Brian Baker
- Historian (Non-exec member) - Fraser Miller
- Co-opted Member (Non-exec member) - Eddie Johnson

Notes of Committee Meeting 10th July 2014.

The new Chairman welcomed the new Committee Members to his home and expressed a wish that the model which Fraser Miller had made of the site should be put on display. It was agreed that he would keep it in his conservatory so that members can see it if they so wish. Contact the Chairman (01634 389430) to arrange viewing.

The leaf blower, strimmer and display boards are still in the garages of various Committee Members. This, in some instances, is proving inconvenient. If anyone can provide alternative storage please contact me. (01634 233748)

After the AGM Cllr, Carr had raised queries with Nigel Holman. Nigel's responses were discussed and the Committee's comments will be sent to Cllr. Carr.

The Secretary and Treasurer gave their reports and the meeting ended with a discussion on the next newsletter

Pat Clare, Secretary, FoB

Flooding of the Reserve

The flood level has dropped considerably from its maximum in March, but it is still impossible to circumnavigate the reserve without wearing wellies. The main problem is the area between the lake and the washmills. Surprisingly, once the level of water in the lake reaches a certain depth, it overflows and drains towards the washmills. At first sight it seems as if the water is running up hill. The flow of water is quite considerable and there is no evidence to say where it goes once it has reached the washmills. My only suggestion is that

it soaks through the ground under the Lower Rainham Road and surfaces again in the paddock (which is on the river's flood-plain) to the north of the reserve. This is probably why all the horses in this paddock are wearing waders!



*This was the washmills on 23 August
The water level has risen slightly since then*

With the recent rain and more to come in the winter, there seems little chance of the reserve drying out before late spring or early summer next year. If we have a wet winter it could be much longer.

Brian Baker, Website Manager, FoB

From Wooldeys Road to Motney Hill and back again.

I feel very lucky that within half an hour of leaving home on a lovely spring/early summer morning I can be sitting on a grassy bank at the end Motney Hill watching flocks of Dunlin and Knot flashing white in the sunlight, groups of late leaving (probably non breeding) Brent Geese, and numerous Curlew, Avocet and rust coloured Black Tailed Godwit feeding on the mud.

I'm often rewarded by the sight of a Marsh Harrier quartering the ground over Nore Marsh or a fly past by a hunting Peregrine. All this together with the song of a Skylark overhead has made the flask of coffee and sausage roll taste much better.

Coming back along the sea wall you can hear numerous Reed and Sedge Warblers in the reeds, the whinnying call of Little Grebes in the dykes and a very loud and extremely difficult to see Cetti's Warbler. This bird is becoming increasingly common and appears to overwinter in the South of England. A Cuckoo is nearly always around probably looking for some hapless Reed Warblers nest to lay its egg in.

On the seaward side amongst the rocks there are Turnstones, Ringed Plovers, Redshank, Oystercatchers and Lapwing. Many of these are not nationally widespread and we should count ourselves lucky that they are a common sight locally.

The Lower Berengrave has also been good this year with singing Whitethroat and a Nightingale. Butterflies such as Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma, Common Blue are always prevalent amongst the wild flowers but I was a bit disappointed not to see any Adders basking in the sun this year (anyone else seen them ?) The big plus however was the three Bee Orchids that appeared in the Summer.

So what of the Chalk Pit: despite the flood, and perhaps because of it there were good numbers of Wrens, Song Thrushes and Chiffchaff around the margins. I love this tiny little bird with its cheerful song, it's amazing to think that it has migrated all the way from Sub Saharan Africa and for me it's always the first sign that Spring has arrived. I have also heard Green and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers and the lovely song of a Blackcap (known as the Nightingale of the North). Butterflies have been good too with early Brimstone and Comma plus numerous Speckled Wood along the sunny rides. I spotted a Clouded Yellow (really a bright mustard colour) the other day and this migratory Butterfly now seems to be more common.

Let's try and work with the Rangers to open out the picnic area (Lower Rainham Road end), who knows what wild flowers are lying dormant. Birds and Butterflies will love the sunny open glade and we might even attract the rare "family" onto the Reserve. It would also be good to open out the area around the Cement workings and put on a bit of a show with an interpretation board. It's a bit of a jungle and we wouldn't really be losing any habitat.

Could I also pitch for a bat detector, there were plenty flying around this year, probably Pipistrelle but who knows what could be hunting over the lake.

Hope this has fired your enthusiasm

Richard Lusted, Treasurer FoB

Reserve Visit

I visited the reserve and was pleased to see that although still flooded the water was not covering virtually the whole of the Reserve.

I went into the Reserve in the middle of Berengrave Lane and walked towards the top entrance and then along the backs of the houses in Chalky Bank Road. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the path was wide and clear of nettles and that there were some wild flowers on the verges of the path. I saw common toadflax, woody nightshade and deadly nightshade, flowering nettle, wild clematis (old man's beard), wood

avens, common fleabane, cuckoopint and hemlock.

I went down the long flight of steps and along the boardwalk by the side of the chalk face. There was a tree which looked precariously perched on the top of the chalk face and the chalk face further along was covered in a smooth fern which looked like green water flowing down the face.

I followed the path, up and down more steps and eventually came to the archaeological dig but could not go further as it was too wet. I tried another path but found it was blocked with large fallen silver birches and other trees so retraced my steps and decided to take a path which had obviously been used by dog walkers. This path grew very narrow and I came out of the Reserve by the unofficial entrance on the Macklands Estate. It was quite an adventure and I will try again to see whether I can get around the Reserve.

Pat Clare, Secretary, FoB

100th Anniversary of Armistice Day

At 11:00am on Tuesday 11th November, FoB will be holding a short ceremony at Riverside Country Park visitor centre to remember the men of the Motney Hill Cement Works who died in WW1. This year will also commemorate the 100th anniversary of the armistice. All FoB members are welcome to attend, as are members of the public.



History of Berengrave LNR PART 3 Industrial (1901-1931)

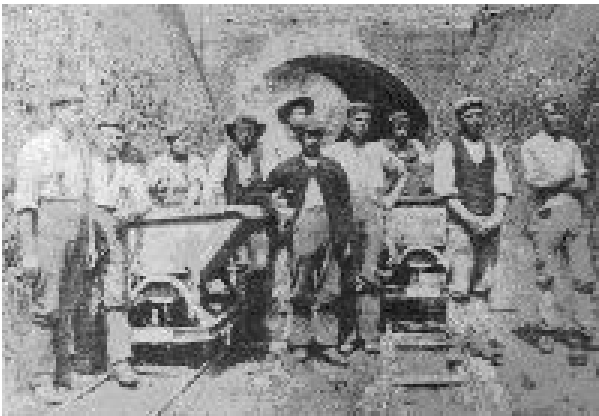


By the end of the 19th century, E J & W Goldsmith, a barge company from Grays in Essex, owned a quay in Rainham Creek. From here they were shipping, among other things, bricks from the brick fields at the bottom of Station Road, and returning with timber for local industry and fish fertilizer for local agriculture. In 1901, seeing an opportunity for further trade, they leased the land to the south east of the junction of the Lower Rainham Road and Berengrave Lane for the purpose of chalk quarrying. The chalk was shipped

by barge to other cement works on the river Medway

It is known that some of the chalk from Rainham chalk quarry was used for building the rapidly expanding London suburbs of the early 1900's, whilst some went to help with the reconstruction of San Francisco following the great earthquake of 1906, the subsequent 3-day fire and the devastation caused by the US Army demolition teams in their efforts to blast fire-breaks

The picture below was taken in the early 1900's and shows workmen in Rainham chalk quarry. It was these men who had the job of digging the chalk from the working face of the quarry



Note the tipper wagons on the narrow gauge railway lines and the tunnel in the background. The tunnel took the railway under the Lower Rainham Road to the quay in Rainham Creek

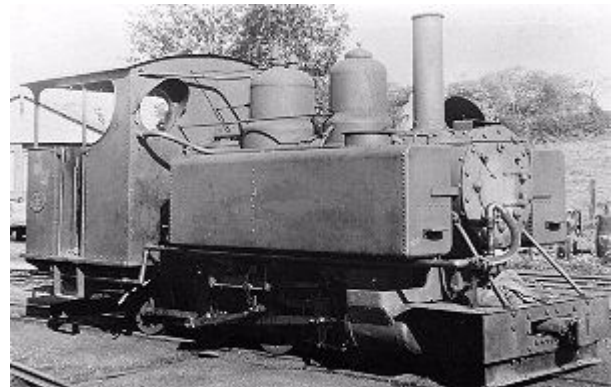
The tunnel can still be seen today although, due to partial infill, the internal height is much reduced from what can be seen here. The reason for this infill is unknown

In the early 1900's, the increasing demand for cement meant that smaller cement manufacturing and chalk quarrying companies could no longer compete with the larger ones and started forming into combines. E J & W Goldsmith's became part of the British Standard Cement Company which was part of a combine called the Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Limited. In 1912 this company opened a new cement works adjacent to the quay in Rainham Creek. This was a comparatively large works for Victorian industry. It included concrete buildings, several large chimneys and two large rotating kilns. The original quay had now been supplemented with a large dock. At its peak, the works employed 200 men and boys and, during the First World War, women. They produced a good quality product called 'Capstone Brand' cement

The Great War of 1914-1918 saw the slaughter of a phenomenal number of men on both sides. The British Standard Cement Company's works at

Motney Hill lost a number of their workforce. After the war, a list of those who died was placed on a memorial plaque which was affixed to the front of a bungalow on the approach road to the works. When the cement works was closed in 1931, this plaque was removed by the British Portland Cement Company, who had taken over the British Standard Cement Company in 1930. Over the years the plaque passed through various owners and ended up in the archives of Gravesham Council, where it was discovered by the Friends of Berengrave. It can now be seen in the visitor centre at Riverside Country Park in Gillingham. The site of the old cement works falls within the boundary of Riverside Country Park and the visitor centre is the closest point to the original site where the plaque can safely be displayed.

As the quarry was enlarged, a narrow gauge (24 inch) railway system was installed. We do not know how the railway wagons were moved in the early days, but pictures of similar chalk quarries of the era indicate that this would have been by horsepower. By the end of World War I, an ex-American Army 'Baldwin' 4-6-OT had been acquired. These locomotives were originally built for the US Army to use in the battlefields of Europe, running troops and supplies to-and-from the trenches. They suffered from one major design defect. The two water tanks, which are the rectangular boxes on either side of the boiler, were interconnected. If the engine was left standing on a banked curve, the water drained from the higher tank to the lower. This change in centre-of-gravity could tip the engine off the track



In 1925 a second locomotive, called 'Capstan' was supplied by the company of W.G. Bagnell and in 1927 they supplied a third locomotive 'Capstan II'. When the works was closed in 1931 these two locomotives were removed to Beeding in Sussex. The original Baldwin plus a few side-tipping wagons were left rusting on site until they were eventually removed for scrap

Brian Baker, Website Manager, FoB
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