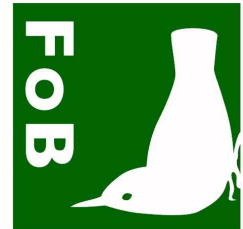




Newsletter



**FRIENDS OF
BERENGRAVE**

Issue 23 December 2011

Berengrave LNR, where history & nature come together



**THE
FoB COMMITTEE
WISH A
MERRY CHRISTMAS
TO ALL OUR MEMBERS**

AGM – Committee

At our AGM in June, the committee was re-elected with the following changes:

- Brian Baker, our Chairman for the last six years, retired. He remains as our Website Manager and newsletter producer and as a non-executive committee member
- Fraser Miller moves from Vice Chairman to Chairman
- Terry Clare, a long-term member of FoB whom most of you will know as the 'Bee Man', was elected as Vice Chairman

The committee now looks like this...

Chairman – Fraser Miller
 Vice Chairman – Terry Clare
 Secretary – Pat Clare
 Treasurer – Eddy Newport
 Rep for Berengrave Estate – Jack Hughes
 Rep for Berengrave Lane – Sheila James
 Rep for Lower Rainham Rd & Motney Hill Rd -
 Di Weedon
 Rep for Mackland's Estate – Chris Miller

Brian Baker

Also at the AGM, our outgoing Chairman was presented with an engraved glass tankard in recognition of his service to the Friends of Berengrave. Brian set up Friends of Berengrave in 2006 and nursed it through its early birth pangs to the point that it now has one of the largest memberships of any Friends group in this area. Additionally, during his term as Chairman, Brian set up and managed the FoB website and also edited the FoB newsletter.



Brian 'christens' his tankard

The committee has also voted for Brian to be made an honorary member of FoB. This honour has been extended to his wife, Rhona, who has obviously had to put up with much over the past five years.

Bid for Grant

Regrettably, our application for a grant of £10,000 from the 'Awards for All' scheme, which is part of 'The Big Lottery Fund', to enable us to carry out safety and other work around the archaeological dig site, has been rejected. The reason given was that "Friends of Berengrave neither own nor rent the site". Although our outgoing Chairman was prepared to argue about this decision on the grounds that FoB, as a voluntary organisation, still needed funds in order to carry out its voluntary work, the decision cannot be challenged as the awards committee's decision is final and they will not enter into correspondence on the matter.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY **The next Members Meeting**

will be held
Wednesday 25th January 2012

at
**The Methodist Church Hall
Wakeley Road
Rainham**

7:30pm – 9:30pm

For those of you who do not know the area, the Methodist church is on the corner of Station Road and Wakeley Road. The hall is behind the church and is accessed from Wakeley Road. If you go down Station Road, Wakeley Road is the first turning on the right past the level crossing.

The church has a very small car park (about 5-6 cars) which is behind the church and is also accessed from Wakeley Road. There is some on-street car parking in Station Road and Wakeley Road, but your best option is to park in the public car park on the right immediately below the level crossing and walk the 100m to the hall.

If you do park in the church car park please note that Wakeley Road is one-way. When you leave the car park, to return to Station Road, you must turn LEFT and go around the block.

Meeting venue

The visitor centre at Riverside Country Park is no longer available for our meetings. Initially, FoB was asked to move it's meetings to a different venue, possibly the council's offices at Gun Wharf, because it was felt there was a personal security risk having to have a lone council member on site after dark, in a remote area, to lock up the visitor centre after the meeting. Subsequently, due to lack of space at their Gun Wharf offices, the council have taken the room in which we used to have our meetings and fitted it out as a formal council meeting room. It is no longer suitable for the casual meetings of the type FoB have.

The FoB committee is still trying to find a suitable alternative meeting venue. Please bear with us as we try various possibilities.

Archaeological dig site

In the absence of a grant, and therefore no safety fencing, work remains on hold and the site remains closed. It will probably now be allowed to return to nature

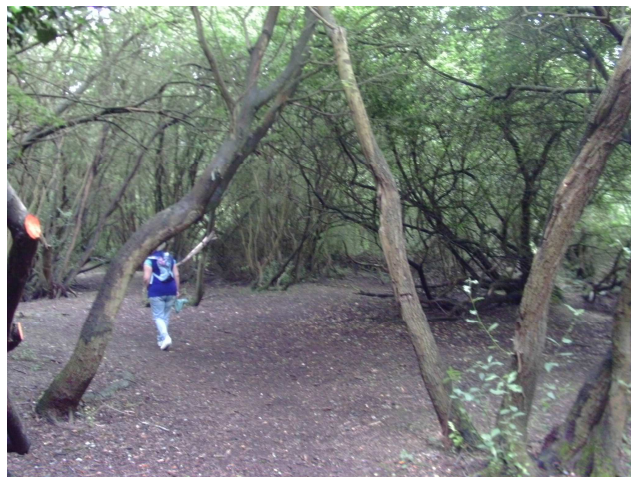
Condition of the Reserve

Over the past few months much work has been carried out in the reserve by the council's Rangers and by contractors.

The area to the east of the northern end of the lake, which used to be an open grass area, but which had become a dark, dank area, overgrown with dead and dying willows, has been cleared. We hope it will now revert to a grass area, popular with families with young children to sit and picnic.

The above picture was taken after the ground had been cleared of fallen branches and flotsam which had floated out of the lake during the winter floods. Since the picture was taken the spindly willows have all been felled and the roots grubbed out.

Trees and undergrowth which had been threatening adjacent property in Mackland's Estate were felled or pruned earlier in the year. After complaints about the amount of material,



logs, brushwood, etc., which had been left laying around, this was then cut up into smaller pieces and moved closer to the path, probably preparatory to removing it from the reserve. However, before this could be done, local youths dragged the material into the willow carr and used it for making fires.



The remaining material from the work behind Mackland's Estate, which the youths had not got around to burning, has now been completely removed by contractors.

We understand the intention is to remove most of the buddleia bushes along the path behind Chalky Bank Road. Before anyone complains about removing butterfly food, the buddleia (or butterfly bush) provides food for only a small number of butterfly species. Other shrubs are more beneficial without being as invasive as the buddleia.

Report from the council (Précis)

Recent work in Berengrave:

- Cleared sycamore from area around Macklands
- Removed fly-tipping
- Cleared boardwalk of intrusive vegetation
- Cleaned up lake area
- Removed birch from glade area
- Removed hawthorn from west path
- Cleared rubbish from Macklands area
- Chipped brash in and around the glade
- Inspected boardwalk and steps
- Fire site residue and logs removed
- Stumps lowered and rubbish removed
- Tree inspection
- South East flank tree condition assessed
- Removed path brambles, dog faeces and litter
- Hedge cut, cleared and removed rubbish
- Litter picked
- Removed cracked and falling willow
- Removed old sycamore logs
- Removed woodchip from glade area

Works Planned – 2011/12:

- Health and safety tree work on the SE flank
- Hedge cutting along Berengrave Lane.
- Buddleia reduction.
- Lake clearance will continue
- Clearing up archaeological dig site
- Replacement of the viewpoint fencing
- Replace steps on the western path

Steps & Boardwalks

The council's structural survey of the steps and boardwalks showed that 50 steps need replacing and part of the support structure needs repair. This work will entail the closure of the path along the eastern (Mackland's Estate) side of the reserve. If we are given sufficient notice of this closure, we will notify members in advance.

Management Plan

A copy of the new Management Plan, which was written by Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT), has now been received by FoB. Lack of space prevents us from publishing it in this newsletter, but once it has been approved by the council it will be published and placed on our website for all members to see.

Medway Archives

Some months ago, FoB was contacted by the council's archives in Strood to see if we would provide them with any information we had on cement production in the Berengrave/Rainham Dock area, which they could use in a forthcoming exhibition on Rainham.

The model of the works in Berengrave reserve and a copy of The History of Berengrave were lent to them and these were included in the exhibition.

Thanks are due to Brian Baker for the initial starting of this history project and to Ed Newport for all the hours he has spent in Sittingbourne library, collecting news items from back issues of East Kent Gazette.

Medway Archives have copied all the information we gave them and are going to make it available to the public, giving FoB credit for it.

Timeline

On the back of this newsletter you will find Part 1 of the historic timeline of Rainham chalk pit and Motney Hill Cement Works.

This was started by Brian Baker and continued by Fraser Miller, with considerable input from Ed Newport who researched relevant articles from the east Kent Gazette.

Contact details

Please ensure that if you change any of your contact details, address, telephone number, e-mail address, etc., you let us know, otherwise you could be missing out on information.

FoB can be contacted on 01634 378587 or friendsberengrave@btinternet.com

Chairman's message

I must apologise to members for the apparent lack of activity within FoB since our AGM on 29th June. This has been due to protracted family commitments making it necessary for me to undertake frequent trips to the other end of the country.

Fraser Miller, Chairman

History of Berengrave LNR

PART 1

The (possible) origin of 'Berengrave'

A local historian, in an article written in 2001, suggests that Berengrove may be a corruption of 'burying grove', a name found on an 1801 map of the area, which could indicate the existence of a burial ground. However, he rightly points out that if this was the case, the site was probably too remote from the village (Rainham) to be anything other than a burial place for plague or other infectious victims, but was too close to the Manor House to have been used for such

The author does admit that the map he was referring to was of small scale and the exact position of the 'burying ground' was difficult to ascertain. A map of 1769 shows a place name of 'Barring grove', slightly further west of what is now Berengrave Lane, somewhere in the area of what is now Twydall. Could 'Burying grove' be a corruption of 'Barring grove'?

The most likely explanation is that 'Berengrove' is a contraction of 'beren grove' where 'beren' is a contraction of the Old English 'bere' and 'ern'. 'Bere' meant 'barley' and 'ern' meant 'a place'. This could have meant a place (field) for growing barley, but the modern word 'barn' is derived from 'beren'. Hence 'beren grove' is Old English for 'a barn by a group of trees' and further corruption over the years has changed it to 'Berengrave'

Pre-industrial (Before 1901)

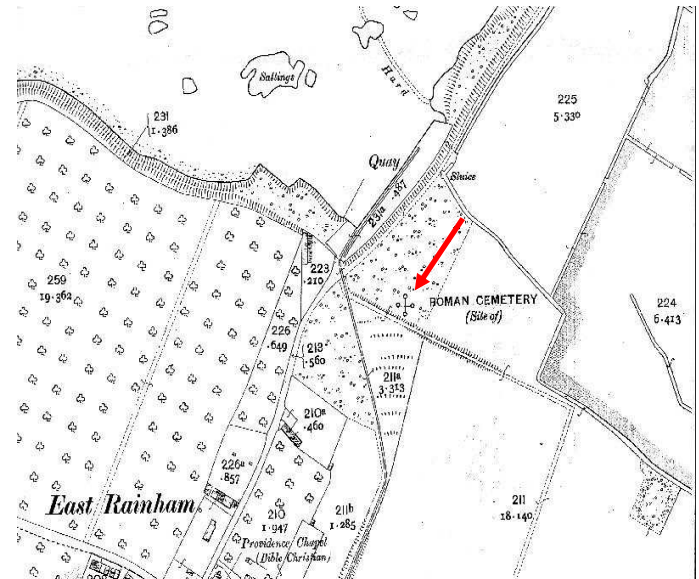


Physical evidence of early history is only to be found in the area of Rainham Dock East and not in the area to the south of the Lower Rainham Road which became Rainham chalk quarry. Obviously any historical evidence which did exist in this area was destroyed during the excavation of chalk. Some people may believe they

have found ancient flint tools and arrow heads in the chalk quarry, but it must be remembered that where these items were found is between 6 and 24 metres (20 and 80 feet) below the level of the ground as it was in Stone Age times. What has been found invariably turns out to be pieces of flint shattered during the process of chalk extraction and processing

However, evidence of Stone Age activity, in the form of flint tools, has been found in Rainham Dock East, which is also known to contain a Roman burial ground. Archaeological finds of pottery fragments and other remains indicate that the area was probably used by the Romans for both cement and pottery production

A map of the area, based upon a survey dated 1863, shows the Roman cemetery approximately in the middle of what is now Rainham Dock East



When the Romans left Britain the Ancient Britons, after so many years of relying upon the Romans for defence, lacked the martial skills to defend themselves and the country was left open to invasion. They therefore invited Teutonic mercenaries to help defend the country against attacks by the Picts from Scotland, the Scots from across the Irish Sea and the Norse from across the North Sea. These mercenaries were the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, all tribes originating from north-west Europe between the lower Rhine and Schleswig-Holstein. In payment for their services, Vortigern, king of the Britons, gave the Jutes the Isle of Wight, part of what is now Hampshire and, in what is now Kent, the Isle of Thanet. Within a few years, the Jutes turned against King Vortigern and drove the Britons from east Kent, establishing their own kingdom to the east of a line which runs approximately north-south through a point, now known as Rainham Mark, approximately 2 kilometres (1¼ miles) west of where Berengrave LNR now is. The Berengrave area therefore came under the control of the Jutes

Note: To this day, those born to the west of this line are known as 'Kentish Men' (or Maids), whilst those born to the east are known as 'Men (or Maids) of Kent'

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- TAKE NOTHING BUT MEMORIES - LEAVE NOTHING BUT FOOTPRINTS - KILL NOTHING BUT TIME -