



Number 9 - Autumn 2013

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CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Medway Chronicle

'Keeping Medway's History Alive'

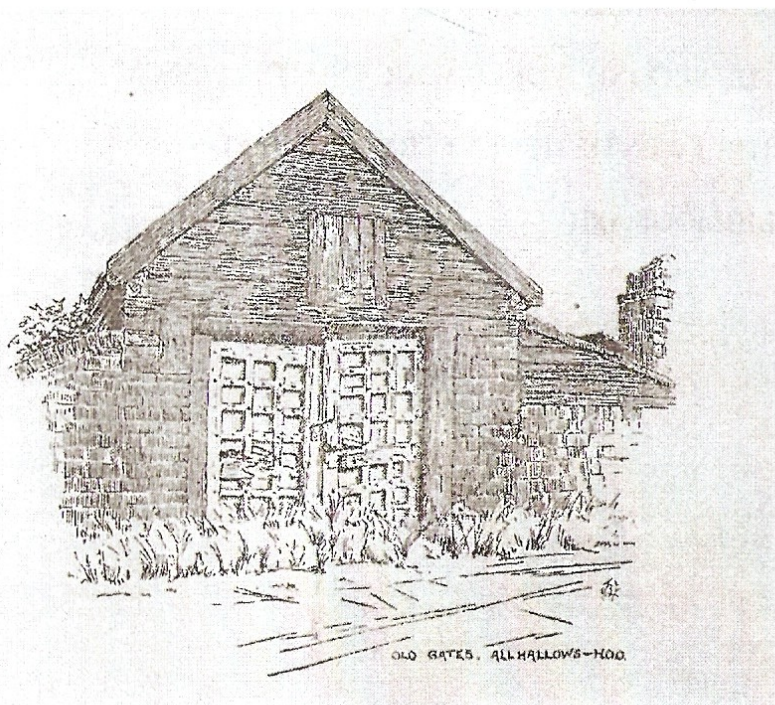


Contents

MEDWAY • ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL • ALLHALLOWS



View of the main village street in 1928. The building in the left foreground was the gate house to Allhallows Place a large Tudor mansion, demolished without a trace. Also of note, the old cottages on the right, demolished during the 1950's.



Drawing of the old gates to Allhallows Place.

CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

meets at the Lampard Centre,
The Sallyport, off Mansion Row,
Brompton, on the second
Thursday of each month
(excepting January and August.)
Hall open at 7.15pm, talks begin
at 7.30pm.
Subscription £10 pa. Attendance
fee £1, £3 for visitors.
Good disabled access.
*New members and visitors are
most welcome.*

President. Brian Joyce.

Officers of the Society

Chairman. Barry Meade.

Vice Chair. Len Feist.

Hon.Sec. Sheila Erwin.

Hon.Treasurer. Briam Meade

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THE MEDWAY COUNCIL

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Programme 2013/14.

November 14th Fort Amherst.

Dana Adler.

December 12th **Society Xmas
Evening.**

January. 2014 No Meeting.

February. 13th Bishop Gundulph.

David Gutteridge.

March 13th Flanders Fields.

Melanie Barton Gibson.

APRIL AGM

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ART AND TECHNICAL

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View of the church and Rose and Crown from Binney Road 1928.



The former village shop – Post Office in 1928. This building was used as the poor house until 1832, when it became a lodging house before becoming the village shop.

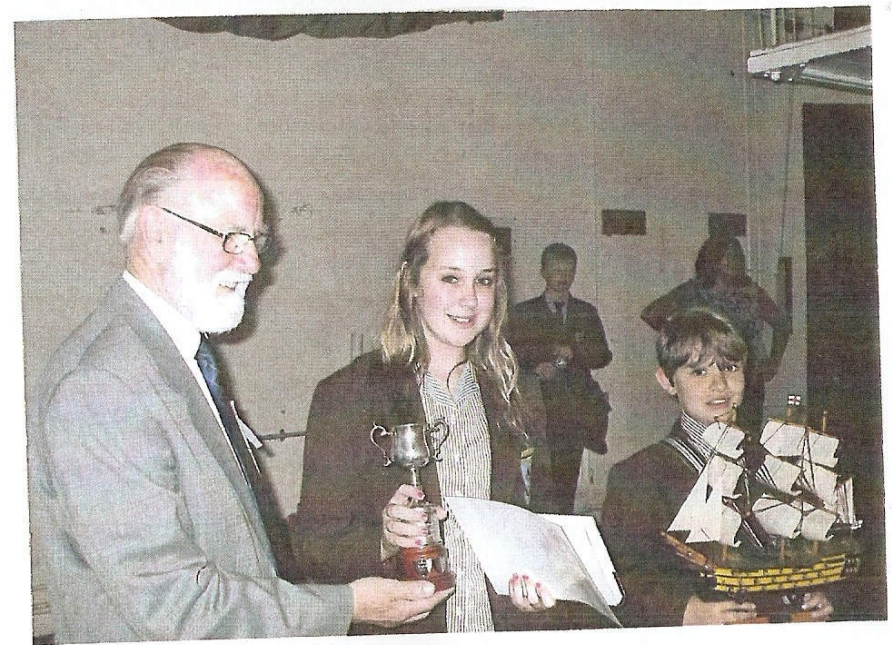
SCHOOL NEWS. Local History Prize.

On July 22nd the Chairman, Barry Meade, and I attended the morning assembly of Years 7 & 8 at Sir Robert Napier School to present the Society's award for History Research to **MYRTLE GOLDSMITH** for her work on the "The Impact of World War One on Medway".

The School's own prize went to **BEN PEARSON** who was presented with a model of a sailing ship. Certificates were also presented to a number of other worthy pupils.

The standard overall was very impressive. The school is to be congratulated for encouraging such an enthusiastic response.

Hon.Sec.



THE GREAT WAR – 1914-1918

IN MEMORY OF THOSE LOST OR INJURED

Marking the 100th Anniversary of the War.

This Society is joining with other groups in the Medway Towns in an effort to preserve memories and artefacts of WW1 which relatives, who lived during those awful days, may have left behind.

We often hear of people not knowing what to do about letters, diaries, photographs or oral history etc., left to them and we are anxious to record as many of these treasures as we can, before they are lost forever.

So many Medway men were lost and they and their families deserve to be remembered.

If you have something you would like to share with us about life at that time, abroad or at home, please ring 01634 865176. Or be our guest at our July 11th meeting next year at the Lampard Centre, Brompton. Hon.Sec

Extract from Myrtle Goldsmith's WW.1 project.

Each side had its hero's or leaders. Germany had Kaiser Wilhelm II Great Britain had Herbert Henry Asquith then David Lloyd George. Well Gillingham had their own hero. Major Jimmy (James) McCudden. His achievements were incredible. In his aeroplane (S.E.5a) he came into battle lots of times with German planes and many of them would go down in flames and not return to their airfield. His death came as a great shock to Gillingham as he was such a hero. He died from an accident on the runway he was taking off from, he crashed into trees bordering the aerodrome. He was thrown from the machine and fractured his skull and did not regain consciousness and passed away just 2 hours later.



River Reflections. Walking the Bank..

by Jack Lacey, ex River Inspector.

Walking the banks with stick, camera and notebook took up many hours, often pleasurable, though much depended on the weather. The aim was to walk the entire area once a month, reporting on the state of the banks; the progress of the work for which consent had been given and the discovery of others for which it had not.



GLN.14.

BY THE MEDWAY, GILLINGHAM.

NUMBER 14.

The Inspector for the Swale area covered the Swale, Faversham and Milton Creeks and those Rochester-based checked from Maidstone down-stream to Grain on the one side and Rainham, Lower Halstow, Otterham Creek and Kingsnorth on the other.

The Isle of Sheppey was to a greater or lesser extent shared, the area of Elmley and Harty Ferry being of occasional interest. The latter contained the longest walk, extending

some fourteen miles from Kingsnorth Ferry Bridge along a winding path on top of the earthen sea-wall.

I was surprised to find the herds of Friesian cattle objecting to passage. The several herd-leaders made aggressive forays up and on to the sea wall and sometimes drove me down the other side and once had me floundering in the mud. It was with relief that at the walk's end a steep rise led to a little dell and the Harty Ferry's Inn where my chief, Bill Webb, was waiting with a pint of that unique black mild beer brewed by Messrs. Shepherd and Neame of Faversham. About this time the landlord of the inn revived the ancient ferry, with the aid of a wartime amphibious craft. It was not a success.

The work led to an intimate knowledge of river access points and footpaths, some much used and others barely known. Some were not signposted while others landowners and farmers were concerned to remove.

One gentleman I met in the Bayford Marsh area told me pleasantly that he had been "...trying to close this path for twenty-five years!" He did not claim to have knocked down the sign which I had photographed. A favoured way of closing paths was (and is) to dump earth and rubble across a path at a selected point so as to visually suggest no access. All but the determined would be put off and in a few months the grasses and weeds greened the pile into a bank.

The staff of the Shire Hall passed on copies of their up-to-date collection of footpaths. They told me the interesting fact that one footpath a day is closed-off throughout Britain.

Twenty years later this would still appear to be the case.

THE DEFENCE OF THE MEDWAY TOWNS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By Brian Joyce.

Readers curious to know how the Medway Towns would have coped if the Germans had invaded Britain can satisfy their curiosity by reading CHATHAM GARRISON- PLAN TO DEFEAT INVASION at the Medway Archives and Studies Centre.

This document is dated October 1941, before the USA had joined in the war, and at a time when Hitler's defeat of the Soviet Union seemed inevitable; Britain appeared to be as vulnerable to invasion as it had been in the Summer of 1940. The document is labelled 'Highly Secret'. I cannot do it justice here. I will introduce parts of it and urge readers to examine it for themselves.

The "Chatham Area" consisted of the four Medway Towns, but excluded what were then outlying areas such as Rainham and Walderslade. It was defined as a Category A Nodal Point – a defended locality which may become isolated and have to hold out for six days before relief arrived. Most fighting would be done by Kent Home Guard Units.

Executive power would lie with a committee consisting of Home Guard Commanders, Senior Police Officers and local Mayors, advised by Fire and ARP Commanders Medical Officers of Health etc.

The document explains the Order of Battle with the locations of troop concentrations, the whereabouts of

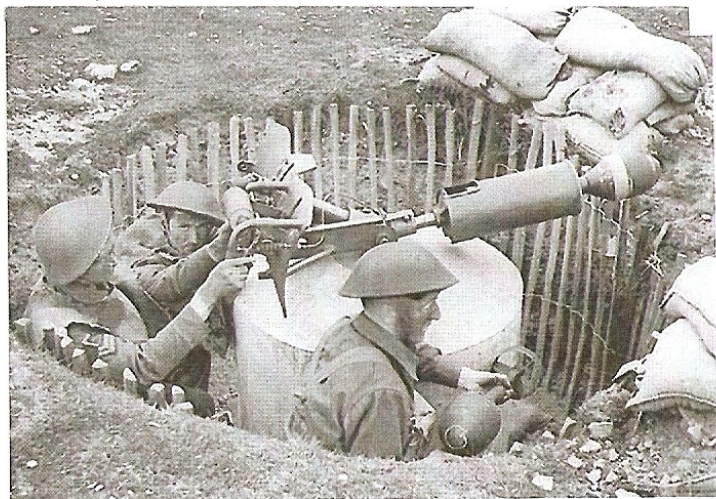
petrol and anti-tank mine stores, transport arrangements etc.

A belt of land between 200 and 500 yards deep in front of the defensive perimeter would be cleared of civilians. Inside the perimeter, the civilian population would have to "stand firm".

Some examples of defensive measures included:

FORTIFIED HOUSES: There is a substantial and very detailed list of buildings where a stand would be made. Examples include the bathroom of 4 Wharf Road (Walnut Tree House and Coffee Rooms) Gillingham, loopholes cut into the first floor of 2 Strood High Street (ie adjacent to Rochester Bridge) and strengthening of the walls at 179 (The World's Stores), 186 (Woolworths), 191 (Home & Colonial) and 196 (H Samuel) Chatham High Street.

SPIGOT MORTARS: These were anti-tank guns which could be fixed to concrete pedestals. These pedestals were constructed throughout the Medway Towns, e.g. at 13 New Road, Chatham, behind a garden wall at the corner of East Row and Maidstone Road, Rochester, and behind the Marmite advertisement on Watling Street Chatham, opposite its junction with Canterbury Street.



three. Interestingly, one would have been installed under the railway arch at Otway Street, complementing the fougasse described above*

Other examples would have been in the roadways under the Luton Arches in Chatham, and three at the Chatham Hill/White Horse Hill junction.

ARTILLERY. Six-pounder guns were to be sighted at many locations, including opposite the Crown and Anchor pub at the eastern end of Chatham High Street, (presumably to intercept tanks that had got through the Luton Arches road block) and at the Star Hill/City Way junction in Rochester.

I cannot cover any more of this fascinating document due to pressure of space. Readers who make the trip to Medway Archives should remember that it is closed on Wednesdays and for two weeks stocktaking in November.

Phone ahead to book a document table.

The Document Reference Number is MP/WW/6



Anti-Tank
Pimples
located off
Mill Road
Gillingham

FOUGASSES: These were improvised mines, consisting of 40 gallon drums filled with inflammable material and placed on hills and corners where enemy vehicles would have to slow down. When triggered, they would engulf the tank or lorry in flames.

The location of many firing points are listed in the document, e.g. the front room of 91 Delce Road, Rochester, a loophole in the wall of the upper floor of 17 Skinner Street, Chatham and in the garden of 190 Windmill Road, Gillingham.



Effect of a Fougasse

In October 1973 a 40 gallon drum filled with tar and benzene was found buried in a railway embankment near Otway Street in Chatham.* On checking the defence document we can see that the firing point for the fougasse was in a greengrocer's shop at 1, Otway Street.

ROAD BLOCKS: The sites of 625 are listed, the most common consisting of reinforced concrete cylinders 90cm high and 60cm in diameter, deployed in groups of

? VIC'S MEDWAY QUIZ

1. Which Bishop began the building of Rochester Cathedral?
2. In which year was Gillingham Incorporated as a Borough?
3. Which crusading order was granted land at Strood by Henry 2nd?
4. Which man pioneered the overland route to India?
5. Eustace, Horace and Oswald were members of which Rochester based family?.
6. What was Gillingham Football Club's original name?.
7. In which year did Rainham become part of Gillingham?.
8. Which Parish was a part of Strood before becoming a parish in its own right?.
9. Which family owned the Gillingham, Chatham and Strood Invicta Cinemas?.
10. Who was the architect who designed Chatham's Town Hall and Theatre Royal?.

Answers – carefully hidden...

Vic Chidley.

ALLHALLOWS

By Len Feist



Allhallows, another of those outpost villages that have stood the test of time. Although they have all seen many changes, apart from Grain, Allhallows has witnessed the most, in as much as the defence of Kent came to this village too.

Allhallows is well documented for its age and occupation back to Neolithic, Bronze, Roman, Anglo Saxon. It is recorded that these lands belonged to Godwin Earl of Kent.

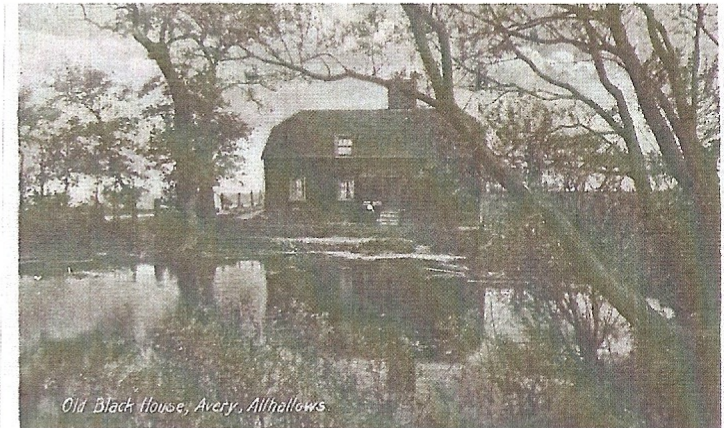
There is every possibility of a church at this time because there was an Abbey at Hoo and after the Norman invasion the area came into the hands of the church and parts were given, sold off, or even confiscated.

Up to the time of Henry the eighth the church was Roman Catholic. It could be said that not a lot changed in the way things were run from then on.

Farming and fishing, (and perhaps some smuggling) were a source of income in those early days.

The farms were to a degree small hamlets in themselves, set around the main village, which included the church. This is an interesting building much altered over the years. Some of its walls are of great thickness giving rise to Norman or maybe Saxon date.

The population at this time seems to be low owing to the fact that the marshland around was a great attraction to mosquitoes which spread Malaria, or as it was known locally, the "Marsh ague". Deaths of the very young and the elderly were common because of a reduced immune system.



The fort, called Slough Fort, being hidden behind ground that is now the Leisure Park, was for the protection of the rear of the extensive fortification on the Isle of Grain, which was in turn built for the defence of Sheerness Dockyard and the rivers Thames and Medway in the event of a French invasion.

The work was completed towards the end of the 1860s. There have been modifications over the next 30 years.

It remained in use until the 1930s and was sold off into private ownership. It was a small zoo for a time.

During the Second World War the fort was again taken over for defence in case of an attack by Germany. It was afterwards returned to private ownership in the hope that it would become part of the development of this part of Allhallows. It was going to be quite some scheme, but it depended on people being able to get there, so in the 1920s it was decided to bring a branch rail link to it.

The first train arrived in 1932 and in the first year of opening 6500 visitors came to the area but I'm afraid the re-development never got off the ground, so many things slipped backwards, including the rail link. The leisure park was sold off, much to the dismay of folk.

The village still attracts many visitors but the sandy beach has all but gone under the waters. Allhallows fought alongside Cliffe with regards to the proposed airport, and now the latest proposal for a Bovis island has to be challenged. I am sure this 'outpost village' will fight another day. Will it win?



THE VILLAGE STREET, ALLHALLOWS.
Doors of old mansion on left.

12.

THE ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL AT WIGMORE

Part I. The temporary Hospital at Hempstead.

By Joyce Stewart

In 1879 the Gillingham Local Board decided that they would not co-operate with Chatham and Rochester in the building of a hospital for infectious diseases. The Town Clerk stated at a meeting that a hospital built in Rochester would be too far from Gillingham and, should they ever need such a hospital, they would build one of their own.

The Inspector's reply was that if this were the case they would also "bear the whole expense" of such a venture.

Chatham and Rochester went ahead and in 1883 the St Williams Hospital was built in Rochester.

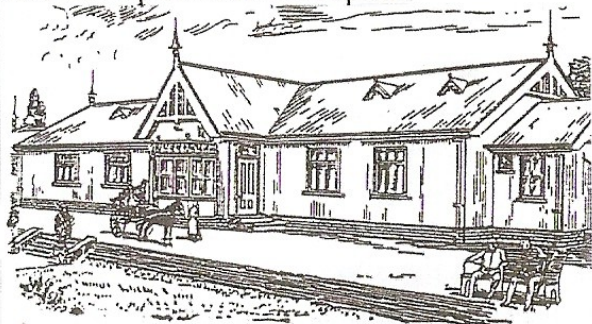
In 1885, following several cases of smallpox in the area, the Gillingham Board decided to erect their own Infectious Diseases Hospital and in 1887 it was built on the site which was later occupied by the Municipal Buildings.

On 21st November 1901, at a meeting of the Sanitary Drainage and Hospital Committee, the Medical Officer of Health, Dr Warren, was asked to report on precautions in the event of outbreaks of smallpox. A few weeks later he reported that a case of smallpox had been taken to the hospital in Canterbury Street,

13.

the patient having been put into a tent in the grounds as the hospital had never been used for smallpox patients before. This patient was a man called Mallen who had contracted the disease at Erith and came to stay with his mother at Virginia Road, New Brompton. The use of tents in such cases was not uncommon and was to be encouraged further the following year in an article by Dr.J.C.Thresh, published in the Lancet of April 26th 1902.

It was arranged that Dr. Warren and several councillors should visit Hempstead with a view to finding a suitable site for a temporary hospital. This they did the next day and it was agreed that a coach house and stable could be converted into a temporary Hospital. This was on Councillor Simmon's land and enquiries were to be made for the purchase of other land for a permanent hospital.



An artist's impression of the Alexandra Hospital (from a brochure produced by manufacturers, Humphreys Isolation Hospitals of Knightsbridge).

The temporary hospital was opened almost immediately and on 5th December 1901 Mallen was moved from Gillingham to Hempstead and placed in the converted coach house.

The interior of the walls was matchboarded and a partition was built between the coach house portion and the stables, patient one side and nurse the other.

Meanwhile, the Council had visited the temporary site and Mr.R.D.Batchelor, who was with them, offered to sell them a piece of land at Wigmore for a permanent hospital. After much discussion it was agreed that this land was the best available and the offer was accepted.

It was made more generous still when he said he would make a free gift of the land, subject to a few stipulations, and suggested that the hospital should be called the 'Alexandra' – presumably after Queen Alexandra. Its location was to be half a mile away from the temporary hospital at Wigmore.

In December 1901 it was reported that another man called Vinall had also contracted smallpox. Norris, the Inspector of Nuisances, got in touch with the Port Sanitary Authority asking for permission to place Vinall on the hospital ship 'Elk' at Rochester, the temporary hospital being full, but Dr. Pritchard, the Medical Officer, refused permission because the case had not broken out on the river. He also mentioned St. Williams Hospital was not sufficiently complete to take smallpox patients but perhaps in two or three months they would be able to accept a limited number.

Having been told by Dr. Warren to find somewhere to put Vinall, Norris visited a gypsy encampment near Luton Waterworks and purchased a caravan.

Once thoroughly scrubbed, it was taken to Hempstead, where it was placed alongside the coachhouse.

Norris himself was vaccinated the next day, and then took Vinall to Hempstead. Several other patients, including the Chapman family, contracted the disease and eventually even Norris fell ill and was taken to the new Alexandra Hospital when it was opened the following January. Luckily for him, having had the vaccination, he recovered after a time.

However, the Chapman family were not so lucky. They were owners of the land which was next to the site of the temporary hospital at Hempstead.

Stephen Chapman was a market gardener who lived with his wife and a child in a house adjoining his parents. The stable in which the smallpox patients were housed was only 200 yards from Chapman's house. On December 18th, Chapman's daughter aged 7 and a half was taken ill with smallpox and she later died on December 26th, as did Chapman's parents in early 1902. Chapman and his wife contracted the disease but eventually recovered. He brought a case against Gillingham Council to recover damages in respect of the illness caused to himself and his wife and for the loss of the services of the child. It was alleged that the Council had been negligent in selecting the site and in not providing proper nurses. Rubbish had apparently been thrown on open ground outside the stable and this included dirty bandages

and food etc. Windows and doors were left open and it was suspected that the disease could have been spread by 'aerial convection' in this way.

However, in his defence, Mr Norris said that he had visited the site several times in order to take Jeyes Fluid and Jeyes Powder and sulphur for disinfecting clothes and he had seen Mr Hill, the male nurse, putting rubbish in a ditch and covering it with lime and then with earth, and also the windows and doors had been shut when he visited the site.

In the end, however, the jury decided that the site was about the worst possible which could have been chosen and that the child caught the disease after the hospital was open and the defendant was granted £250 damages. The jury said that the Council had acted incautiously when it sited the temporary hospital at Hempstead.

To be continued.....

Correction. Apologies are due to Miss Stewart for incorrectly spelling her name in the last issue.

Editor

WICKHAMPTON THE CROSSROADS.



By Brian Joyce

The opportunity arose when Barnard's New Palace of Varieties burned down in 1934. After the site was cleared, Watts Charity leased part of it to Lyons. A teashop, which could cater for up to 200 customers, was opened in August 1936.



Passers-by were enticed in by revolving glass shelves in the window, which displayed some of the shop's more attractive products.

LYONS'
FIRST CHATHAM
TEASHOP

Food for home consumption was sold by the “Sallies” who manned the sales counters.

Thanks to the then prevailing Sunday trading laws, Medway people could not avail themselves of this transatlantic experience on the Sabbath, but in the week, Lyons opened at 8.00am and closed at 9.00pm, with an additional hour on Saturday evenings.

The staff delivering this service were usually recruited locally but attended training courses in London, which presumably instilled in them a sense of belonging to a new type of go-ahead company.

The Second World War, with its need for female workers in the defence industries, changed all this. During and after the



War, the Lyons teashops became self-service, with queues of customers shuffling along the rows of metal doors. Undoubtedly, the magic of the pre-war experience had gone. Eventually, the Lyons Teashops (rebranded as Jolyons) seemed increasingly old fashioned and down-at-heel.

There were new forms of up-to-datedness, with the Lyons group opening its first burger restaurants (Wimpy Bars) in the 1950s. Chatham gained its own branch at the High Street's junction with Globe Lane, not far from Jolyon's, in the 1960s. As Michael Karaloucas, the manager of the Chatham Wimpy Bar claimed in 1975: "The days when people are prepared to queue for their food is coming to an end. I suppose we are all getting a little lazier, and I think most people these days like to have a meal in cosy, comfortable surroundings with waitress service".

The Chatham Jolyon restaurant closed in August 1975. As John Davis, Jolyon's area manager said: "The self service in the old Jolyon's restaurant was too slow. We need a faster system today". The wheel had come full circle.



Now occupied by Starquest.



THE GENERAL STRIKE

Part 2. THE AFTERMATH.

By Sheila Erwin.

The General Strike was called off on May 12TH. During a dispute in 1921 the number of working days lost had been 85,870.000 and since that year the figure had declined to 7,950.000 in 1925. However The General Strike of 1926 saw the number of days lost soar to 162,230.000. About 3 million workers of various occupations were involved.

When the announcement that the strike had been called off the relief of people all over the country led to scenes of rejoicing "as had been seen at the end of the Great War". It was noted that the outward calm of the residents of the Medway Towns during the strike "gave place to a spirit of general rejoicing"

The Chatham Town Council met on the Wednesday evening. The Mayor, Councillor G.A. Rosenberg said he was sure his colleagues would rejoice with him in the calling off of the strike. Directly the meeting was over a portion of the Strood British Legion Band, in the vestibule adjoining the Council Chamber, played "God save the King" and "Rule Britannia".

In Rochester there was a Thanksgiving Service at the Cathedral, attended by a large congregation, headed by the Mayor and Mayoress of Rochester, Councillor and Mrs R.W.Dale, the service being "very impressive in its Solemnity and devotional character". The local tram service had resumed, and a full service was promised as from Saturday 15th May.

The Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham News reported; "Apart from the suspension of the tramway service, there was little indeed to indicate in the Medway Towns that a serious industrial upheaval prevailed. This speaks volumes for the tact, patience, and common sense of the people of the neighbourhood".

Some workers, however, faced a very difficult situation once the Strike had been called off; On Thursday morning a number of bargemen, some of

whom had been employed by a local firm for 25 years, were told that they were no longer required. A similar fate befell some railway employees.

Trade Unionists were bitter that the strike had been called off and blamed the leaders of the Unions for having committed a colossal blunder in having led the men to break their contracts with the Companies.

For most people there was a feeling of relief as they looked forward to the Whitsun Holiday.

On 21st May The Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham News was given over to advertising, and the following events illustrate the change of mood;

Peace proclaimed. Go to Upnor for Whitsun and be Happy.
Specially augmented fleet of Boats for the holidays
by Gillingham Pier Motor Boat Service.

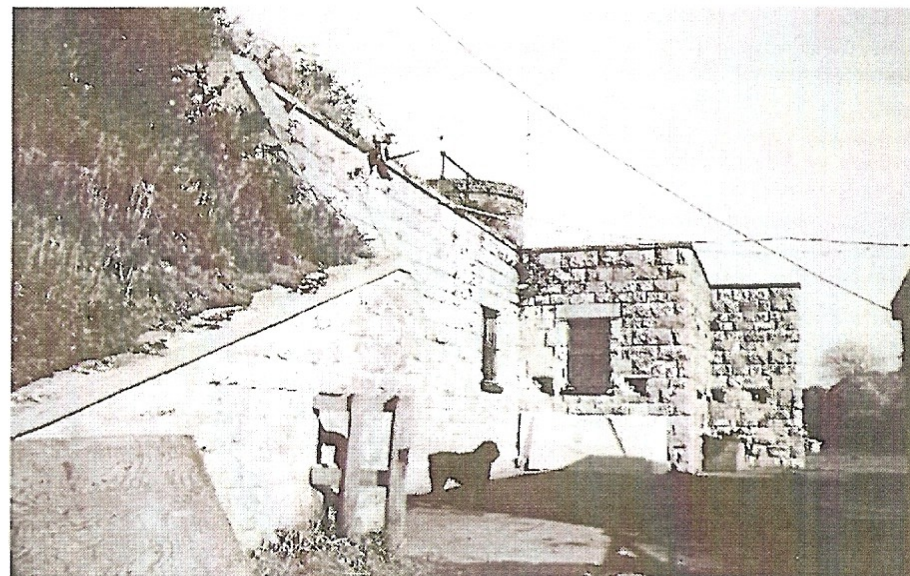
Winter Gardens (Formerly the Palaise De Danse, Rochester)
Dancing till midnight every night and Whitsun Attraction.

Town Hall Chatham. Special Whitsun Dance Programme.

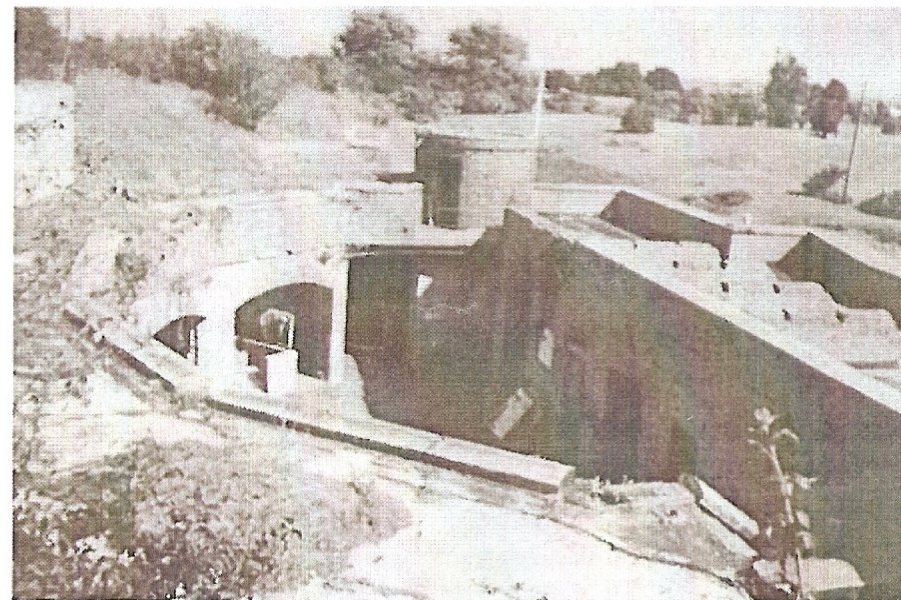
The Services Club, Chatham, are having "A big Night on Whit-Monday"

Orange Coaches, Whit-Sunday, Eastbourne 8/6d return.
Accommodation limited. Early booking advised.

1. Gundersen. 2. 1903. 3. Knights Templar. 4. Thomas Waghorn.
 5. The Short Family. 6. New Brompton Football Club.
 7. 1928. 8. Strindberg. 9. The Crook Family. 10. George Bond.



Rear and entrance to Slough Fort, built in the 1870's to prevent an enemy landing on the Thames Estuary. Now a riding stables.



Roof view of Slough Fort showing the courtyard and Casemates which held the heavy guns mounted on the Fort in the 19th Century.