



CHARING & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.charinghistory.co.uk



CDLHS newsletter 'As and When' September 2023 edition

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**Many thanks to Martin Pym, Kate McIver, Keith Oram and Steve Beck
for their contributions.**

Current

Committee News

Committee and Archive Group Changes

At the AGM in May, I announced that Celia Jennings was standing down from the Committee, along with Alex Norris from the Archive Group

Celia has organised our Talks for the past 5 years, and 'held the Society together' during the pandemic, by arranging Talks via 'zoom' - often at very short notice. We thank Celia for her very significant contribution to CDLH's continuing success

Kirsten Moon has stepped up to take over from Celia, who remains heavily involved with the Archive Group

Alex has been an absolute stalwart, and has made an extremely significant contribution to CDLH over the very many years that he has been involved with the Archive Group. Thank you Alex, from all of us

Regrettably since the AGM, John Easun has left the Committee, which is a great shame. John will still be an active supporter of our Talks, and we look forward to seeing him and Susan each month.

Keith Oram

Things to look forward to

Proposed Outing to the Weald and Downland Living Museum at Chichester

The museum contains rescued homes and buildings that tell the stories of people who lived and worked in SE England for over 1000 years. It's also home to 'The Repair Shop' series of programmes - although entry to their barn (which is basically a TV Set) is not available

We are in the early stages of planning this visit which we hope will take place towards the end of June 2024

The entry costs (2023) for Group Bookings are £13.50 for adults, and £11.60 for 60+, while coach costs vary between £23 pp for a 29 seater coach, £20 for a 39 seater and £16 for a 53 seater (assuming each coach option is full)

So in general terms, the indicative costs are circa £32 pp

The estimated journey time is 2 hrs, so we would leave Charing at 09.00 to arrive by 11.00, and return from the Museum at 16.00 to be back in Charing around 18.00

Hot and cold food is available there

We'll asking people at Thursday's Talk for expressions of interest.

CDLHS talk: September 14th, 2023

Clothmaking in the Weald of Kent

by Tony Singleton



The talk will cover the growth and decline of high quality woollen clothmaking in the Weald, how it employed a large number of people and the skills that were required in the several stages of its production.

Since moving to the Weald Tony Singleton has been fascinated by the various aspects of its history and has spent much of his spare time researching local history.

He has been an active member of the Cranbrook History Society for about 35 years, and is a retired teacher .

Talk starts at 8 pm in Charing Parish Hall,

Station Road, Charing, TN27 0JA

Tea, coffee and a chance to chat from 7.30

*and the opportunity to see our carefully traced copy
of the detailed 1813 map of the Charing area,
which was on display at the fete.*

*Annual membership begins this month: sub which includes all talks @£10
(Non-members welcome @ £3)*

Coming Up in This Year's Programme of Talks 2023-2024

Celia has worked hard to book a range of talks for us to look forward to. The programme brings us various fields of history in different periods with both a local and a national focus. There should be something to interest each of us, and a great deal to stimulate most of us.

We are pleased to welcome four speakers who have not been to CDLHS before, and also glad that three engaging speakers, who in previous years have given us 'food for thought,' are returning.

Forthcoming Talk Titles are:

Clothmaking in the Weald of Kent

The Artists who Outwitted the Nazis

Grinling Gibbons, Britain's Most Famous Woodcarver, 1648-1721

Medieval Graffiti

Our World Turn'd Upside Down

What Happened to Childhood? A History.

Viking Life and Legend

ARTHUR BAKER by Martin Pym

Arthur Baker retired from the Indian Civil Service to Charing and lived in Burleigh House at the top of Burleigh Road with his wife and his unmarried sister. Quietly understated, he was very generous to the village.

Tall, friendly and wanting to join in the life of the village, he was particularly keen to join the Charing Guild of Players who regularly performed in the Church Barn. The Charing Guild of Players was formed by the Rev. Peter Burkett in 1946 and initially performed annually in the village hall.

Arthur Baker was a really keen actor and, with his moustache, wonderful at putting over the character of the English country gentleman in almost every role he played. He was meticulous at learning his lines, good at rehearsals, very good fun to act with, and always good company.

He loved the Church Barn and its stage, and once the Barn was finally built and opened, he took part in several of those early plays, the first being Christopher Fry's *The Lady's Not for Burning* in May 1958. This was produced by Donald Bain who was a friend of Christopher Fry, and the author visited The Barn during rehearsals. Everyone hoped for lots of plaudits from the author after he watched a short, carefully rehearsed scene, but instead he simply laconically muttered, "Oh yes, very good". Disappointingly noncommittal!

In *The Wind in the Willows*, Arthur took the part of Badger - I was Ratty. He was such a lovely man to act with and he enjoyed taking part so much.

He was a really lovely man to be with - I enjoyed regularly calling in on him just to chat with.

He was one of many people who played a vital part in the early days of Charing's own playing field. He gave me £1,000 (a lot of money in those days - it would now be worth around £33,000) to help pay for the first instalment on the newly purchased Playing Field beyond the Moat Estate, hence its name, The Arthur Baker Playing Field.

He died on 9 January 1970.

Charing Guild of Players (this includes notes taken from the Guild's website)

ARTHUR BAKER *contd*

There must be a gap in the records as the first play known of, after the Guild's first performance in 1946, was in December 1952 when *Quiet Weekend* was performed in the village hall. Over the next five years there were another five productions, all in the village hall.

On April 28 1958 the national press reported that 'the parishioners of Charing had erected a new theatre under the North Downs'. In 1956 the vicar, the Rev. Patrick Lury, together with parishioners and Guild members, paid £100 for a C17th tithe barn located at High Halden, some nine miles distant. Its fine old timbers were lovingly dismantled and rebuilt over a period of two years on a site adjoining Charing church. Unusually for an amateur theatre, it included a fly tower to store the scenery. Liz Warrender funded the stage velvet curtains, in memory of her husband and my uncle, the actor Harold Warrender. Alongside his acting, television, radio presenting career, his credits in film included the 1948 *Scott of the Antarctic*, alongside John Mills, Christopher Lee and Kenneth More.

When that type of tithe barn was first designed, a joint's pieces of timber were numbered with the same Roman numeral to match, to help the builders construct the barn accurately. This also obviously helped with the barns being re-erected. Patrick Lury was helped in the dismantling and rebuilding by Frank Ruglys whose daughter, Margaret, became a brilliant, life-long teacher at Charing Primary School. The Ruglys lived in the house opposite Wakeley House in the High Street.

Another thespian in the village was Donald Bain who lived at the top of Charing on the Pilgrims Way (he had earlier lived in a cottage at Burnt House Barn owned by his sister, which my wife and I rented and lived in (the same cottage) when we first married in December 1960). He was well built, with a beard, larger than life and very jolly, a keen cricketer and married to Jessie Evans, a professional actress in the West End. He produced several plays for the Guild.

Martin Pym

Looking back;

Remembering our AGM



The AGM was held for the second year in the relaxed setting of the Church Barn, at 7.30 pm. It aimed to be part of a social evening. This year we had the additional bonus of an impressive display of Detectorists' 'finds' unearthed locally on the Downs.



The meeting started promptly and the essential formal reporting, voting on finances, and electing

the President and committee for the following 2023/24 year was all conducted efficiently.

In summary CDLHS had had a successful year. The talks had been well attended, Membership was good and finances healthy; money from the sale of tea towels had been used, as intended, to successfully restore the Barwick painting, (The Chair's full resumee of the year will be uploaded onto the website)

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2023 AGM *contd*

The remainder of the evening was then free for people to enjoy some wine / soft drinks and nibbles, and mingle. There was plenty of time to socialise, to look closely at and appreciate the impressive display of ‘Detectorist finds,’ as well as work out the answers to Steve’s enjoyable ‘Kent Quiz.’ (For those who’d like to try it –we’ve included it at the back of this issue) Altogether a successful and pleasant evening in the relaxed setting of the Church Barn.



The Detectorists' Finds (May AGM)



Robin discusses one of his finds

We were very lucky that the Detectorists, Robin and his wife Denise kindly agreed to come to our AGM and display some of the objects they'd uncovered. They live in Charing and detect locally. This area has a great deal of flint, which Robin said is formed over millions of years from compacted chalk (the darker the colour, the sharper the flint). They brought along about 16 trays of their 'finds', all carefully sorted and labelled: this was just a small part of their complete collection.



A part of display

They record their 'finds' and then carefully clean and preserve each of them with renowned 'Renaissance wax.' They are very careful about handling all the objects, so deterioration and damage are minimised. They liaise with the 'Finds' officer at Maidstone Museum and also KAS (Kent Archaeological Society).



The find Robin was most pleased with was a 3,500-year-old bronze axe head. He went on to describe how he found a couple of axe heads near each other and contacted KAS. They then did an organised dig, which uncovered a total hoard of 18 axe heads. It was suggested that the hoard may have been an offering to gods for good crops.



3,500 year old axe head, one of a hoard of 18

The Detectorists' 'Finds' May AGM *contd.*



Robin describes to Steve

Robin said that the most intriguing find was part of a Roman bronze finger from a statue. The Finds officer from Maidstone Museum thinks it may indicate a Roman temple in the area. Robin hopes that the rest of the statue will be found.

- Finds Officers or Finds Liaison Officers (FLO) work with the public, their role is to examine identify and record the finds. They are responsible for entering the information on an online database. This process enables researchers to gain valuable insights into the past of an area, e.g. communities and societies, trade routes, and technological advancements, these can all be discovered from logging finds

**from <https://discovermetaldetecting.co.uk/>*

Valerie Yeeles

Kent Mining Museums Trip Tuesday 20th June 2023

Sylvia booked visits to Elvington & Eythorne Heritage Centre and Kent Mining Museum at Betteshanger on Tuesday 20th June 2023. The two museums were fairly close to each other and approximately a 45 minute drive from here. Both museums opened on a Tuesday especially for our CDLHS outing. Pete had originally suggested the venues and liaised with Wealden Wheels..

It proved to be both popular and very worthwhile, Please read the next pages for Kate's vivid account and fantastic photographs

If you weren't able to go with CDLHS, and are interested in finding out more, please see

<https://elvingtonaneythorne>

<https://www.kentminingmuseum.co.uk/>

Our fantastic trip to Elvington and Betteshanger mining museums

We had a fantastic day at Elvington and Betteshanger mining museums.



Everyone we met was warm and welcoming and very interesting. Colin, a volunteer whose father and grandfathers had been miners, told us about the history of Kent mining.

Volunteer Colin (right) (Elvington)



A very well-placed poster at the bottom of the stairs at Elvington

It started in 1890 while digging an early attempt at a channel tunnel at Shakespeare cliff in Dover. The tunnel was abandoned and a coalmine was established. Several people were at pains to tell us that contrary to popular myth none of the mining was done under the sea, although the seams do extend across the channel to meet up with the French coalfield. 40 bore holes were drilled, and there could have been extensive mining across East Kent, but only 4 further mines were established.

The East Kent Light railway was established to transport the coal and houses were built as homes for the families of miners migrating from established coalfields in other parts of the country.

There was initial hostility to these migrant workers, particularly before they established pit-head baths, so men had to go home in their working clothes and covered in dirt. Schoolchildren spoke in a variety of accents and eventually developed their own way of speaking.

Elvington and Betteshanger mining museums *contd.*

Of course, what we remember of Colin's talk was that it was so hot in the pit that the miners often worked either naked except for boots and helmets, or wearing pants: sometimes women's; as these er... kept everything tucked in more tidily.

Downstairs we were shown a variety of artefacts, and upstairs a small space was packed with a treasure trove of things to look at



Strike memorabilia at Elvington

and people to talk to, like John who told us about his experiences as a miner,



*John, nickname 'goat', who was 15 when he started work.
He'd been there a week when 2 men died.*

and Doreen, a miner's wife who worked hard to feed her children during the 80's strike.

Elvington and Betteshanger mining museums *contd.*



A chandelier at Betteshanger (Look carefully to see the mining lamps and miners' tools)

At Betteshanger an extensive country park has been built on the spoil heaps and after hold ups and financial setbacks a new purpose-built museum was opened last year and has been very successful.

Maddie took us round their display boards, and downstairs to see more artefacts and exhibitions about miners in both world wars and the Spanish Civil war. John, 'the last miner in Kent' (Betteshanger closed in 1989) told us about his experiences.



Volunteer Maddie (Betteshanger)

Jim, the last miner in Kent. He did turn the lights off on the way out.

by Kate McIver

**2022-2023 was an entire season
of real 'live' talks and socials!
and completed by a successful outing**



What did you think of it?



The committee would really like to hear from you

Did you come to the socials?

Were they enjoyable?

What didn't you like?

Would something make it better still?

Reminders of 2022/2023 talks on next page

Was there a talk that was thought provoking?

Did you have any that were particularly enjoyable?

Did you listen to any engaging speakers?

Were the visuals easy to see?

Was there a topic that made you curious to find out more?

Was there a subject that you'd like included ?

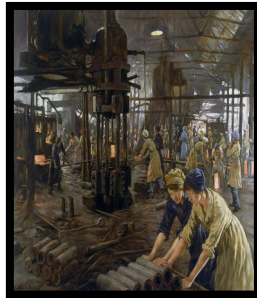




'The Pudding Pans or the Mystery of the Sands' by Bill Phillips



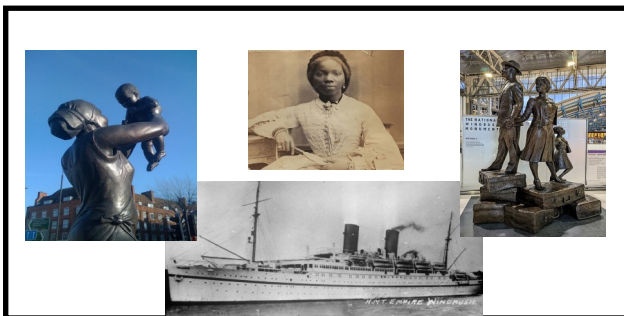
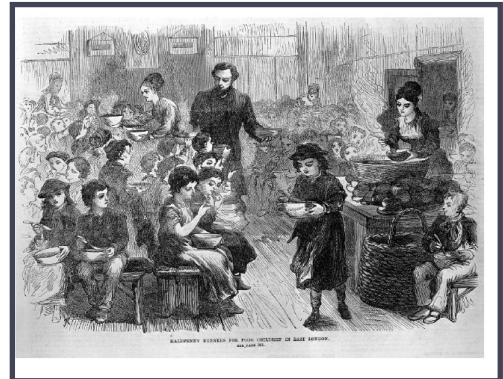
Witchcraft in Seventeenth Century Kent: Murder and Mercy at the Maidstone Assizes by Dr Rebecca Warren



'How the Great War changed Kent' by Martin Watts

by Martin Watts

Victorian Philanthropy: A Golden Age by Hugh Cunningham



'Before Windrush: the presence of black people in Britain' by David Killingray

The History and Restoration of the Paddle Steamer 'Medway Queen', the heroine of Dunkirk by Mark & Pam Bathurst



'Samuel Pepys and the Strange Wrecking of the Gloucester' by Nigel Pickford

Steve's Quiz from AGM

Cities, Towns & Villages	
1	Other than brewing beer, what else was principally manufactured in Faversham ?
2	Name a local village to here that shares its name with a London tube station ?
3	Name the only town or village in Kent containing the letter "Z" ?
4	What have the villages of Tilmanstone, Chislet, Betteshanger and Snowdown have in common ?
Dickensian Kent	
5	Charles Dickens moved to where in Kent in 1817 aged five when his father was posted to the Naval Dockyard ?
6	On 9 June 1865 Dickens very nearly met his premature demise here in Kent. What were the circumstances ?
7	From this unfortunate experience, he wrote a ghostly short story. What was it called ?
8	In 1881 while digging a trial boring for a proposed Channel Tunnel near to Dover, what was found beneath the ground ?
The River Medway	
9	In which county does the river Medway rise ?
10	To the nearest 5 miles, how long is the river Medway ?
11	How many bridges and tunnels cross or go under the Medway (road & rail excluding footbridges) ?
12	What is the distinction between a Man (or Maid) of Kent and a Kentish Man (or Maid) ?
Roman Kent	
13	In 43 AD the first Roman invasion of Britain occurred. Where did they land (nearest current location) ?
14	Who was the Roman Emperor at the time ?
15	Where did the Romans build the first crossing of the river Medway ?
16	What was the name of the major road the Romans built from the Kent coast to London ?

Odds & Ends	
17	In which James Bond Book by Ian Fleming (<i>but NOT the film</i>) is Charing specifically mentioned ?
18	Where in Kent did Ian Fleming live where he wrote the first couple of Bond books ?
19	Who lived in that house before Fleming ?
20	Which very sweet desert dish is said to have originated on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent ?
21	What "first" took place at Leysdown on the Isle of Sheppey in April 1909 ?
22	What is the approximate area of Kent (Square Miles) ?
23	What is the current population of geographical Kent (includes Medway) ?
24	When was the building of the current Canterbury Cathedral started ?
25	Since its foundation, how many Archbishops have there been since the first in 597 ?

ANSWERS

Cities, Towns & Villages	
1	Gunpowder / explosives
2	Warren Street
3	Brenzett
4	They were the four Kent coal mines
Dickensian Kent	
5	Ordnance Terrace, Chatham
6	Staplehurst Train Crash
7	The Signalman
8	Coal
The River Medway	
9	West Sussex (Turners Hill)
10	70 miles
11	48 - 39 road & 8 rail bridges & 1 road tunnel,
12	Kentish Man – West, Man of Kent is East of the Medway
Roman Kent	
13	Richborough
14	Claudius
15	Rochester
16	Watling Street (broadly the A2 today)
Odds and Ends	
17	Moonraker
18	St Margarets Bay
19	Noel Coward
20	Gypsy Tart
21	First flight by a British built aeroplane
22	1384 Sq Miles
23	Approx. 1.8M
24	1070
25	105



The CDLHS stall at the Charing 2023 Summer Fete proved to be very popular. We were so pleased to see so many people interested in our traced copy of the 1813 map of the Charing area and the accompanying record book.

We also sold quite a few copies of our CDLHS books on Charing history, (all monies go towards speakers' fees, equipment and refreshments).

And, despite the wind, our gazebo and display stayed standing to the end!



We hold contact information of members, and interested people, to send them society news and information on local history. We do not share the information with third parties.

If you would rather not receive emails from us in future, please email

Hon.Secretary@charinghistory.co.uk