

ANGELA EVERETT

18

changed in art work?  
Spring

# Lamorbey & Sidcup

LOCAL  
HISTORY SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2003

Produced by Frances Percival

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9th June 2002 - Anniversary Dinner - Hop Farm - Paddock Wood

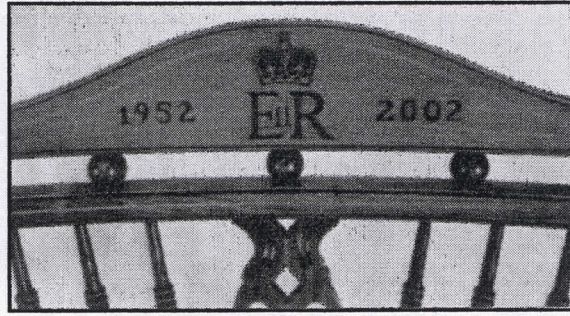
Upper Photograph - Members and Friends

Lower Photograph - Janet Woods & The Choir

*See article Page three*

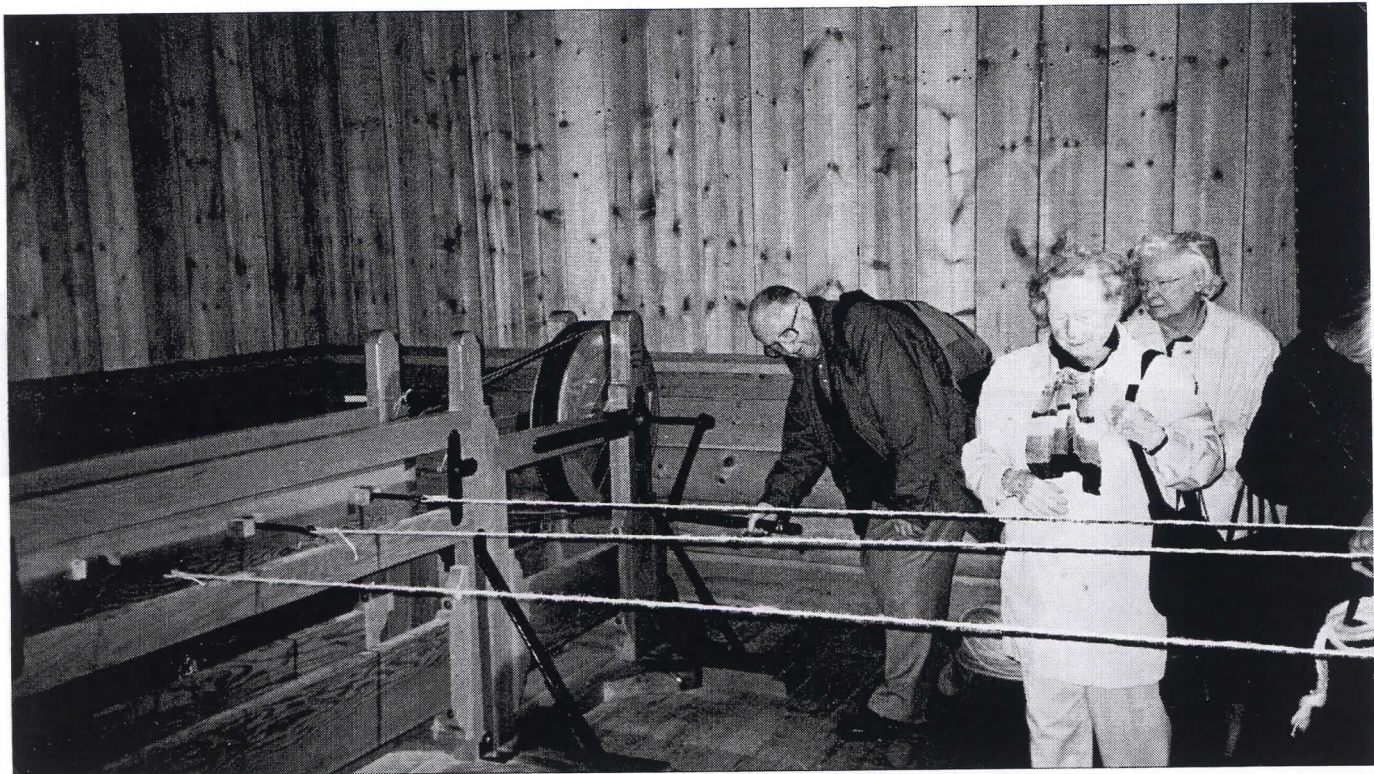


**Queen's Golden Jubilee**



**The Mendlesham Chair**

*See Article on Page 6*



**The Ropery - Chatham**

**Den Brittain helping to make Rope  
with Barbara Wilder & Dorothy Ryder assessing the job**

*See Article on Page 3*



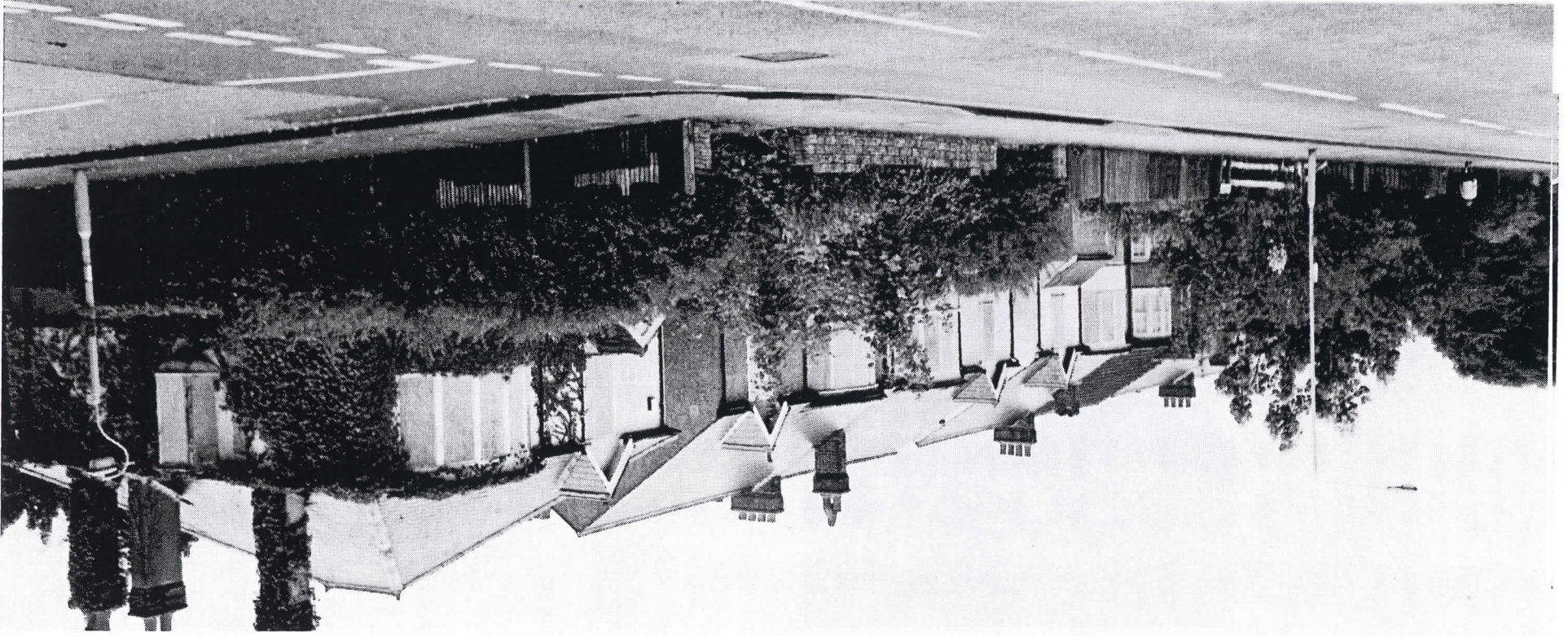
St. John's Church, Sidcup

*See the article on the bells - Page 8*

We shall never see that beautiful red foliage again!

Ready for demolition!

Corner of Elm Road & Grassington Road



LAMORBEY & SIDCUP LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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All articles are written by members of Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society





## EDITORIAL BY FRANCES PERCIVAL.

I put together the last Newsletter in Autumn 2001 so consequently the material for the next one mounted up and we now have a bumper edition. The Committee suggested that the Newsletter from now on should be produced in the Spring which means that the content will reflect a calendar year rather than an academic year.

There is much to record from the last 15 months - our Society's fiftieth anniversary and our activities therefrom and some members remembering their thoughts on Her Majesty The Queen's Golden Jubilee. We have some more write-ups on members schooldays. So, this newsletter has quite a varied content which I hope you will all enjoy. I was delighted when I realised how many members had sent contributions in, and thank them for heeding my exhortations for material.

## LAMORBEY PARK - 50 YEARS ON

Janet Woods

It could have been a trip down "Memory Lane" revisiting Lamorbey Park on Saturday 23rd November, 2002 to see a production of Nicholas Nickleby performed by the students of Rose Bruford College. I enjoyed touring the house and seeing once again the room where the Society met (now used as a temporary design room) and the area where we had our tea or coffee sharing this facility with other students. The billiard room was important as this was where the Society first began in 1952. I enjoyed visiting the music room and the library and looking down to the lake and remembering those Saturday afternoon study times attended over the years.

I had not been there since the Society's last meeting on the site in the 1990's. At that time I felt rather anti-Rose Bruford College. I resented the fact that they were taking up their option to lease more of the site from Bexley Council in order to expand the College and add new buildings. My feelings were not simply fuelled by the proposed imposition of new buildings on the parkland and the dwarfing of the fine seventeenth century house. I accepted that these were valid objections, and I certainly felt it was appropriate for the local history society to meet in a building of such historically architectural significance. I enjoyed the rural atmosphere walking through the park when coming from Sidcup station, or walking by the footpath to the back entrance when we came by car. However, my main objection was the usual quite irrational one when any change is proposed: we were there; we had been there for well over 40 years; we were happy there; we had a friendly cohesive Society; and the world would come to an end if we moved.

Well I am glad to day the world didn't come to an end. There were undoubtedly teething problems in our first months at Alma Road but these are best forgotten, because since we were finally allocated the hall in which we now meet, the Society never looked back. Our numbers were able to expand from the limit of about 40 at Lamorbey Park and although there are now so many more of us, we have managed to retain the same friendly atmosphere that existed at Lamorbey.

So what did I think when I saw Rose Bruford College as it is now? As well as enjoying the high standard of production which is reviewed in the next article, I came away pleased that we have such a college in the borough. The facilities have attracted a high

standard of student, enabling the College to compete with others in London, and the site on which it stands with the parkland and the very much older building must add to that attraction. So as well as revisiting old haunts it was exciting to visit the new building and go behind the scenes of the theatre in the round and see rooms used for drama and dancing; costume design and preparation (sewing machines in plenty); rooms used for teaching stage design; theatre lighting; stage management; plenty of drawing boards and computers and other prosaic aids for creating the illusion that we are somewhere other than sitting in a theatre seat.

Although I enjoyed my Society years at Lamorbey, it was a treat to see the extended college now used by young people full of hope and ambition and determined to learn the skills of their chosen profession.

We still have - and can be justly proud of - our logo\* We may be at Alma Road, but our roots go back to Lamorbey Park.

(\* *This refers to the hunting horn which I took from the Malcolm family heraldry seen on the face of the house. Frances Percival*)

#### THEATRE TRIP TO ROSE BRUFORD ON SATURDAY 23RD NOVEMBER 2003.

Gloria Dixon

After our fascinating trip around the old and new buildings of the Rose Bruford College, we looked forward to taking our seats for the production of the first part of Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby. As we waited, we had the added bonus of seeing the Director of this production - Crispin Bonham Carter. The doors to the auditorium opened and for many of our group it was quite a surprise to realise that the theatre was built in the round. Looking like a circus ring, without the sawdust. there was very little scenery, just a red winding catwalk about two inches from the floor. a delightful wooden farmyard - child size - and two rag dolls. The lights dimmed and the action began. It was an excellent introduction, catchy, fast and easy on the eye. Within no time at all many characters had been introduced, some with humour, some with pomp, some with sadness. The story began to unfold and I certainly felt as if I was part of the action, being so close to the actors. The students were well versed in their lines and had an amazing ability to change the feeling of the play from tragedy to comedy. With hardly any props their performance had to be polished to achieve the reactions required from this powerful drama. The stagecoach scene especially emphasised this to me. With the aid of two tattered umbrellas used as wheels and a canopy which comprised a sheet on two sticks, the passengers within the coach swayed and rolled and certainly convinced me they could easily be riding over the bumpy roads in Victorian times! The horrific conditions of the school which Nicholas was sent to as a teacher, were particularly harrowing, but within minutes the same cast, with just a subtle change in the lighting, were engaging in a comic scene playing cards. Marvellous training from their tutors certainly paid off and the whole production was filled with obvious enjoyment from all the cast. I would imagine that within the next few years several of the students from this wonderful college will become household names in the theatre world. For me, the two and a half hour performance flew by & I came away looking forward to visiting the theatre again in the near future!

## OUR FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Bess Dzielski

'What a lovely time we had!', 'Such a good evening', All the company was so pleasant', 'Weren't the singers great'. These were just a few of the comments that confirmed that 'a good time was had by all'.

In greater detail, however, it was the Society's Golden Anniversary Dinner that was being talked about. For it's not just Royalty who can have a Jubilee - and ours was as well deserved as that other one that took place last year! Born fifty years ago, we have had our ups and downs, increased membership, moved home from Lamorbey (wherein our name originated) to Alma Road, launched a number of projects and publications, enjoyed a wealth of speakers and managed to produce one wedding. And equally important, produced that atmosphere of enjoyment and friendship which is our hallmark. But enough of this conceit! Down to the facts. We celebrated at the Hop Country Farm near Paddock Wood, where a barn and oast had been converted to a banqueting room. The journey there was appalling due to the weather and a steam engine that could not be passed. Eventually we reached our destination when we offloaded from two coaches! We visited the Hop Story Museum and the Decades Experience, both out of the rain, before assembling for drinks and even found a waiter who produced cups of tea for those who had joined the Band of Hope in their youth.

The meal was excellent; Salmon, Chicken and a Vegetarian option with various delectable goodies to follow. Even more excellent was that speeches were kept to a minimum. Our Chairman, Eric Percival proposed the Loyal Toast and also the health of the Society. He especially thanked Janet Woods for her impeccable organisation of the evening. Flower were presented to Janet and also to Frances our hard-working Secretary. Later we were entertained by the Melody Singers - a delightful group with a repertoire of popular light music.

Almost everyone could remember something special that caught their eye. Me - I remember the peacocks, and Eric noted the rabbits! And everyone noticed the glorious sunset after the rain had passed. And insofar as we are a highly efficient organisation, irons will almost certainly be in the fire for 2012!

## OUTINGS IN 2002

Eric Percival

The first of our two visits was on 20th April to:-

**CHATHAM** This was a revisit to an old friend as this was the second visit the Society had made to the Historic Dockyard. We arrived at opening time - 10am - making directly for the Wheelwrights Restaurant for morning coffee. We then divided our group into two sections for guided tours. This acted as an introduction to the Yard, after which members could examine the features at their leisure. At the Ropery we were shown the art of rope-making and came away with a sample made by some of the group. Other highlights were the Wooden Walls exhibition complete with a mechanical rat running across a beam, access to a submarine and a fine collection of lifeboats. Many of our members took the opportunity to clamber down the conning tower of the sub. and were very proud of their prowess. There are two museums in the Dockyard, one

devoted to the Dockyard itself and the second dedicated to the Police, which was unfortunately closed. As part of the day's programme we should have taken a trip on the paddle steamer 'Kingswear Castle' but due to an overrun on routine servicing, the trip had to be cancelled. However, it gave us all the more time to enjoy this unique, mainly open air museum.

Our second outing on 4th May was to:-

STAMFORD. As it was the fiftieth year of our existence, our tour organisers decided to extend the range of travel. So, after an 8am start we journeyed up the A1 arriving at the Garden House hotel, Stamford, for an urgent comfort stop and coffee. Here our guides joined us, who directed our driver to the central coach park where we split into two parties for a tour of this delightful old town. (It was used for the setting of a TV adaptation of George Elliot's Middlemarch). Then came a break for lunch with strict instructions to be back at the coach by 2.15pm to make the short journey to BURGLEY HOUSE. This was the home and still is of the Cecil family for over 400 years and latterly the site of the world famous horse show. The tour was an individual one with stewards in each room to answer questions on the contents. Because we are all interested in history our society visits to such places bring to life the historical figures that are referred to so many times in our lectures.

Refreshments were then taken in the Loggia tea-room before setting out on our longer than usual journey back to Sidcup.

Our thanks once again to Frances & Gill for their efforts on our behalf.

#### MARCH 2002 - VICTORIA, CANADA

Judith Hobbs

On our first morning in Victoria on Vancouver Island we awoke to a lovely spring day with blue skies and sunshine. My husband, Jack and I were on a club tour of British Columbia with our friends from Sidcup Rugby Club.

After a huge Canadian breakfast, our party was picked up at our hotel, The Best Western - Carlton Plaza by two minibuses and taken to another hotel on the harbour front. People were milling about everywhere, stalls were busy, flags were flying and boats were bobbing up and down on the water. We were kitted out in our special dry suits in order to embark on our whale watching adventure off the Canadian coast. We helped each other to struggle into the bright yellow insulated spacesuits which would hopefully keep us dry, warm and afloat should any of us be unfortunate to fall overboard!! Laughing and giggling and complete with tukes (hats), gloves and small towels we waddled to where our craft was waiting at the harbour. We were welcomed on board by two handsome young men who were in charge of the boat, a flat bottomed inflatable craft complete with a toilet. We sat in rows like telly tubbies in a sardine can and were told to hold on to the rails in front of us at all costs!

The engines roared and off we went, leaving the harbour behind. We sped across the bay and down the coast towards America - very fast !!! Our eyes scanned the ocean for tails, spouting or splashes - anything that would mean whales - but to no avail. However, we were soon joined by a playful school of porpoises who leapt along side of us for several minutes. MAGIC.....

Back in Victoria we said our goodbyes and started our waddle back to the hotel to change. There were even more people everywhere enjoying the spring sunshine. Then one of our party noticed that the 'Union Jack' which had been flying from one of the buildings had now been lowered to half-mast. We asked several people the reason for this but no-one seemed to know. We eventually heard from one of the players who was speaking to his girlfriend on his mobile phone that the Queen Mother had died.

Later, back at the hotel, we switched on our television to discover a nation in mourning. Every channel was showing tributes to the Queen Mother with footage of all her trips and links to Canada. The Canadians seemed genuinely sad and were very keen to talk to us 'Brits' and offer their condolences.

I can assure you that, that night, never were so many glasses raised by our party to "The Queen Mum - God Bless Her".

## THE ROYAL GOLDEN JUBILEE - 2002

Dorothy Ryder

Having sat on the pavement all night in May 1953 to see the Coronation Procession and helped organise a Silver Jubilee Party with my neighbours in 1977, I felt I should do something for the Golden Jubilee.

Time seemed to be passing by and nothing was arranged so we asked our two daughters, their husbands and four grandchildren to come for an early evening meal on Saturday June 2nd. Within a few days an evening party for about 30 had been organised. We managed to buy some flags to decorate the lounge - everyone was so surprised as it was done in such a short time. A memorable time was had by all.

On the Sunday morning whilst having our breakfast we decided that the next day we would go to the City to "See the Queen". We made for St.Paul's Cathedral but there were too many people for us to see anything so we decided to go near the Guildhall and see the Queen in her new Bentley when she went from St.Paul's to the Guildhall for lunch. While we were waiting we found a coffee shop open and we had a welcome coffee and muffin. The police found this shop useful for refreshments as they had been on duty from 5o'clock in the morning. We wandered around for some time to take in the sights. The large cranes on the building sites were all straight, painted white and flying flags. We eventually took up our position on a corner of the route where we would have a good view of the cars coming towards us, then swinging round and up to Guildhall. On a traffic island near us was a man with a heavy television camera on his shoulder looking through the lens, on and off for hours. The bells of St.Paul's Cathedral rang out and filled the air with excitement. The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh had alighted from the magnificent Coronation Coach at Temple Bar and used the new Bentley for the for the rest of the journey to St.Paul's. The horses with the empty coach and other less sumptuous coaches used by the rest of the Royal Family passed us going to Wallbrook where there were lots of lorries and horseboxes parked to return them to the Royal Mews. By now we were surrounded by crowds of people, all happy, chattering to each other and waiting to "see the Queen". The City and Metropolitan police chiefs were in the road near us with lots of officers. Looking towards Guildhall there suddenly appeared an ordinary grey car. The police lining the road all looked at it as it passed them but when it reached the corner where we were standing, the car was surrounded by lots of police. The driver was questioned, then he did a three point turn

to the cheers of the crowd and sped back towards the Guildhall. I still wonder how he managed to be on the route that the Queen would be using in a matter of minutes!

Great excitement, as the police kept answering their mobiles, looking up the road and then, at last, the Burgundy car came into view. The cheering was deafening as Her Majesty The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh glided past. I will always remember the beautiful blue of her hat.

We were home in time to watch the rest of the day on Television.

## INCIDENTS IN THE JUBILEE YEAR

Angela Everett

In June, Derek & I were staying with our farming friends in Clungunford in Shropshire. Returning home from a day in Wales, we drove off the beaten track to a small village called Dolau to see the preparations for the Queen's visit on June 12th. We joined a queue of cars driving past the field where marquees were set up ready for the Royal visit. Local people were bringing arrangements of flowers and had made an imposing structure, an archway, for the Queen to drive through. We chatted to the local policeman and were waved cheerily on our way.

We had seen a photograph in the Shropshire Star of the steam engine that was expected to pull the Royal Train on the Heart of Wales Railway line through to Dolau. Up early on the 12th to watch the England versus Nigeria football match in the World Cup, we left immediately the game was over to drive to Bucknell. Jim assured us that this was where we would have our best chance of seeing the Royal Train as it would have to slow down there for the level crossing. We joined a crowd (for Shropshire) of local people, school children and visitors, on and around the station. (Stations on this line are nearly all private houses now. To board the train you just put out your hand as if to stop a bus and buy your ticket en route). The children had come down from the village school and were all waiting expectantly on the platform.

The first disappointment was the sight of the oncoming train, pulled by a diesel engine. Derek handed me the camera after half-heartedly taking a photo of the engine and I prepared to take my photo of the Queen. Two security guards waved from the first carriage then the train pulled slowly through the station - with all the blinds closed.

I felt particularly sorry for the schoolchildren who had been standing patiently with their Union flags, ready to wave them. Still, we had been near the Queen even though we hadn't seen her.

Later in the summer we were on holiday in Suffolk. We spent an afternoon at the Rose Festival in the village of Hacheston. While I was dithering over which plants to buy, Derek was able to spend a long time chatting to a cabinet maker. This man had made a beautiful Mendlesham chair which he hoped that the Queen would sit on when she attended a concert in the Abbey Gardens in Bury St. Edmunds. When I went to look for Derek I found him sitting on this chair while he was talking to the craftsman, Albert Lain. Mr. Lain had written to the Queen to ask her permission to use the chair after the concert, as a prize in a draw raising money for charity. In this case, The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute.

On July 15th we went to Ipswich for the day and spent the afternoon in the Wet Dock area. Bunting was being draped on the yachts moored there and a man was carefully painting the railings outside the Custom House. However, it wasn't until we were sitting on a seat eating ice creams that a man asked us if we were waiting to see the

Queen. He told us that she was coming there - the next day. We did see her in the evening on the local television news 'Look East', standing near those newly painted railings!

Later in the week we found a photograph in the East Anglian newspaper of Her Majesty sitting on the Mendlesham chair!

So our memories of the Jubilee Year are of the times we didn't see the Queen - but we were close!!!!

(I think Angela & Derek's journeying indicate the depth of the tours that the Queen undertook during Jubilee Year. Editor).

### LEST WE FORGET

Ann Brunton

At the 11th November Remembrance Day parade service we were told the story of the origin of 'Taps' when a Union soldier rescued a wounded and dying man from 'no-mans land' only to discover that it was a Confederate soldier and also his own son. The pain and emotion of that event is hard to imagine.

When James and Louise, from our Scouts and Guides, read out the names of all the servicemen from Congregational and Methodist churches who had died in the first and second world wars, the name Crombie was read out three times, and the link between those two family tragedies immediately came to mind.

D. James Crombie and his Mary lived at Highden, 20, Hatherley Road, and attended the Congregational Church. Dr. Crombie was a GP and a doctor at Chislehurst & Cray Valley Hospital and Sidcup Cottage Hospital. He was also a Justice of the Peace, a local councillor and chairman, of the managers of Longlands School and a founder member of the Sidcup Golf Club and President & Hon. Secretary of Sidcup Literary & Scientific Society.

The Crombies had three sons, William Maurice, Ian O, and James MacHattie, all of whom enlisted in the army for the 1914-1918 war and one daughter. Ian had been at Wadham College, Oxford for one year when war broke out. He served in the Middlesex regiment and died on the Somme on 28th July 1916, aged 21. His younger brother, James, had been Head Boy at Epsom College and had gained a place at Christ Church, Oxford, when he enlisted. He served in the Royal West Kent Regiment and died from wounds in Flanders on 2nd July 1917, aged 20.

Dr. Crombie himself died in early April 1918 after suffering from 'internal troubles' which two operations failed to cure. The local paper reported that 'the doctor accepted the loss of his two sons with a fortitude and calm which one could only silently admire; but though he did so give them up without a murmur for their country's cause there can be no doubt their death hastened his own death'. He was held in the highest regard in the area in all walks of life, and his funeral service at the Congregational Church was attended by a large and representative congregation.

The third and eldest son, William Maurice (known as Maurice) served with the armed forces in Baghdad and was unable to attend his father's funeral, although his wife did. Maurice died on active service soon afterwards but no details are available.

One can only imagine how the family coped with such catastrophic losses in so short a period of time and grieve for the waste of talent and potential. The Crombie name lives on in Sidcup in Crombie Road, named after the doctor.

**BELLS OF ST.JOHN'S - SIDCUP**  
from a leaflet handed to the Society by Freda Elam.

In our last newsletter we had the story of the perpetual Flagpole at St.John's, so Freda thought we might like a few facts on the bells. There are six bells in the tower, originally cast by Thomas Meare in 1843. Two weigh 9 cwt each, two 6 cwt each and two 4 cwt each. The fifth and tenor bells were recast in 1901. The peal of bells was rehung by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1951. In the 1974 the ringers courageously removed the bells themselves under the leadership of Peter Dale, when they were then sent to Loughborough for repairs. On their return the ringers replaced them in the belfry. The whole exercise was said to be 'a marriage of economy and enthusiasm'.

The writer of the leaflet had the opportunity of observing the weekly bell practise for which she had to climb a stone spiral staircase before reaching the ringing chamber. The room had a lofty, wooden ceiling from which six long ropes or sallies were suspended. These were covered in thick cropped wool in the usual red, green and blue colours. The bellringers stepped forward, each taking a bell rope within their hands, with arms extended upwards. High up in the belfry the bells were resting in an upright position prior to being rung. She says it was marvellous to see the long heavy ropes spring into action on the command of the Tower Captain. He was calling with the age old 'ringers language' such as :- 'Look to' - 'Take hold' - 'Trebles going' - 'She's gone' - 'Dodge up to get to the four' - 'Let it go' - 'Pull hard' and '3 and 4 up to the front'. So keen was the Captain's hearing that he could immediately detect which ringer was not conforming to the given change. Ringing does require physical exercise leaving the exponents rather breathless but at the same time being part of a team making a glorious sound.

So, next time you hear the bells of St.John's ringing over the High Street, the new supermarket, the Manor House grounds and Queen Mary's Hospital, remember those that are expending so much energy in the creation of music that has echoed around the countryside for hundreds of years.

Frances Percival - Editor

**OUR LOCAL PARKS**  
by Phyllis Streets

We are very lucky in this area to be surrounded by so many parks and open spaces and I cannot help wondering how long these will remain. My introduction to these parks probably began after the war when my father became a Park Keeper covering Holly Oak Woods (which is between Days Lane and Willersley Avenue), Willersley Park and Marlborough Park. I was of an age when my brother and I could visit these parks on our own.

Dad was responsible for patrolling the three parks, taking Tennis Court money in Willersley and making sure the Pavilion and Changing Rooms in Marlborough Park were suitable for the team playing football that weekend. He also had to ensure children did not cycle through the parks and did not misuse the children's playground equipment or play cricket with a hard ball. When he did approach anyone carrying out these misdeeds, he rarely had any trouble stopping them and found that young people were well mannered and respected him. Would that happen today ?



Many of the children who came into Willersley Park were from the Hollies and my brother and I got to know one or two of them. During summer holidays and because my mother thought we would like to be with dad, we spent many hours in those parks, especially as we never went away on holiday. The streams in all three parks were an awful temptation and when dad's back was turned, we used to jump from side to side or tightrope across the pipes that occasionally crossed the streams. He always thought the water was stagnant and full of disease until Dr.O'Keefe, who used to live in the area, encouraged his own children to paddle barefoot in them.

Dad enjoyed his job, although during the winter it would be quite lonely and cold. His little hut was kept warm with a coke stove but of course he had to be out patrolling quite a lot. He got to know all the regular tennis players and it was from one of these gentleman, that I discovered the Biro pen - he had one, which he showed with pride to Dad & I, probably one of the first. At the end of the day, Dad had to total the money from the tennis courts and a council employee would collect it to be taken to one of the two cottages just inside Sidcup Place which were the homes of Mr.Dingwall and Mr.Hoath, Park Superintendent and his Assistant. When this employee was on holiday, Dad would take it himself.

I can remember Lord George Sangers Circus coming to Marlborough Park and because of Dad, my brother and I were given free entry to the show. You could also pay to see all the wild animals (including lions and tigers) outside in their cages before the show began. As you can imagine, before the advent of television, this was very popular.

During the Whitsun holidays a combined Schools Sports Day was held in Marlborough Park with nearly all the schools in the area competing. It was a real fun day with cups and trophies to be won and crowds attending.

I think Dad had this job for about 12 years and finally left when his health started failing. A disadvantage of being a parkkeeper in those days was that you earned a lot less money in the winter because you worked less hours and you had to have your summer holidays in May or early June before the schools broke up for their summer break. I might add that for several years I hardly went into a park - I hated the places - but with two sons I found regular trips to Danson Park (which I lived nearby) were always on the programme and occasionally I have taken nostalgic walks through the Parks my Dad had patrolled with such pride all those years ago.

#### GETTING TO KNOW YOU - NO 4 - MARY BOORMAN

Mention the name Home Guard and everyone immediately thinks of Captain Mainwaring and the 'stupid boy', so you might be as surprised as I was to hear that Mary Boorman served in it during the War. Granted she didn't actually parade with a pitchfork but she served in the orderly room in Danson Road, dealing, she says 'with rotas and counting bullets'. Because of her employment she was in a reserved occupation, but we will come to that later.....

The daughter of a policeman, Mary was born in Barking but led a peripatetic childhood moving to wherever her father's career took the family, living variously at Camden Town, Gillingham, Chatham and Portsmouth, and coming to rest eventually at Dartford. But not for long; after training as a comptometer operator she became assistant to an auditor with a firm of Chartered Accountants, and resumed the travelling life which included, on one occasion free passes to Blackpool Pleasure Beach!

Subsequently she worked for a firm which estimated for the building of houses by the New Ideal Homestead - a function which, on the outbreak of war was quickly changed to army camps and aerodromes, which was how she became an essential worker. And this is when her sojourn began with the Home Guard - and among other talents is being a Red Cross First - Aider.

She married just after the outbreak of war, in October 1939; her husband then left for Egypt with the Eighth Army and they didn't meet again until the war was over. She then settled down to become a housewife and her two daughters have given her four grandchildren, two of each. But Mary has been a widow since 1956. So she went back to the building trade and worked with firms building power stations and motorways, retiring after some twenty years.

She travels and has a long- standing connection with friends in France and has been a member of the Society since the days of Beverley Nunns. Her experience in some unusual areas of working life could well provide some interesting anecdotes for a Members' Evening. Motorways and the Home Guard don't figure in many women's Cvs.

Bess Dzielski

#### GETTING TO KNOW YOU - N0 5 - ERIC PERCIVAL

When it was decided that our Chairman would be the next subject for this series I metaphorically rubbed my hands! Eric Percival and I have friendship which includes much 'light badinage' or 'airy persiflage'! Call it what you will it still means 'enjoying having a go at each other'. So I thought about the things I might use to have a dig! I thought, and I thought, and I thought about the times he visited me during a spell in Queen Mary's, bringing me papers and magazines (I'll come on Sunday mornings when the religious lot are at church!) and I thought about the times he has checked my tyre pressures because I can't kneel down, and I thought about the time he saw a nail in one tyre and promptly changed the wheel in full view of Valliers Wood Road, and I thought 'O dear, I can't have a go at him after all, because he has been a really good friend'.

So here is a straightforward, unbiased account. Eric's a Londoner, born in Islington but living variously in Brixton and Streatham, and like most of his generation, an evacuee first to Devon and then to South Wales to avoid the flying bombs. Post-war he attended St.Leonard's School in Streatham and Balham Secondary School, leaving both with no particular aim in view other than to earn an honest crust. He started work with Burroughs Wellcome in the export department, then to shipping and then on to the adventure of National Service. He joined the RAF to work on aircraft engines and served at RAF Dishforth and then at RAF Cottesmore as part of an international squadron. After demob it was back to the firm in the buying department.

In 1960 Eric married Mary, they had two children, Andrew, and Jane, who has given him three grandchildren, but unhappily Mary died in 1990.

Burroughs Wellcome now decided to locate some departments to Dartford which is how they came to settle in Valliers Wood Road, but he was back to London for a spell and when he found he could take early retirement he did so in 1984. But the life of idleness he contemplated proved to be a false hope. His son's enthusiasm for Scouting led to Eric resurrecting a youthful connection with the movement and eventually he became Chairman of the 2nd Sidcup Group. Further time was taken up by being in charge of a voluntary scheme for placing long - term unemployed in helping elderly and disabled people with gardening - in spite, he says, of knowing nothing of things horticultural - and then expanding into other projects for the Greenwich Community Projects Agency.

He can't remember how long he has been in the Society; ( must be 20 years - Editor) he says it seems like forever and certainly he remembers meeting at Lamorbey in the Billiard Room, and he's now also Treasurer for the Kent History Federation. So this all leaves little time for hobbies but he's a great collector of town guides.

The two years or more since he and Frances married have been taken up by travel and a building programme which sounds as if it is producing Percival Towers.

A final example of his generosity can be seen in giving me lifts to Quizzes, but this might be tempered by the fact that he thinks I might get us a point or two by knowing something about books.

Bess Dzielski

#### GETTING TO KNOW YOU -NO 6. - ANNE & KEITH BRUNTON

*It's a bit late in the day to get to know Anne & Keith Brunton since this tribute is written as we hear the news of their impending departure to the North.*

*Anne has been a long-time member of the Society and made an especial contribution to our Millennium Project by photographing the babies born in Queen Mary's Maternity Department at the beginning of the new Millennium.*

*Her own account of their lives and interests is so complete that we can do nothing better than reproduce it here*

*Bess Dzielski.*

Anne was born a third generation South African with ancestral roots in Scotland & Suffolk. After training as a nurse in Africa she came to England in 1964 and qualified as a midwife at Kingston-on-Thames. In 1971 she met Keith, married him the following year and moved to Sidcup. Keith was a widower with three teenage children and when Fiona and Ian were born Anne had responsibility for a family of five, while continuing her midwifery career at Queen Mary's Hospital. In recent years she has had particular involvement in support for families who have been bereaved.

Anne's interest in history led her to become an active member of the North West Kent Family History Society and Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society where for many years she has enjoyed the meetings, activities and outings. She has also been much occupied in recent years as Church Secretary at Emanuel Church and as one of the leaders of the 1st Sidcup Cubs.

Keith was born into an army family and spent six years of his childhood in India. He served for seven years in the Royal Navy, followed by two years in a City insurance company and thirty six years in Customs & Excise. Since retiring in 1994 he has worked part-time as a freelance interviewer for the National Centre for Social Research. Keith has sung with the Bromley Philharmonic Choir and the Magpies Choir in Sidcup for many years, and he shares Anne's enthusiasm for both family and local history. He was unable to find enough time to attend the Lamorbey Society meetings regularly, but came occasionally and always went on the outings.

In 2003 they will both retire and are planning to move to Northumberland to be closer to the Children and Grandchildren who are now settled in Edinburgh and Newcastle.

*The Society is indebted to Keith who has for very many years been our' Examiner of Accounts' requiring no fee but only accepting a bottle of wine as recompense. We say a big thank you to him for his time and interest over that long period. Frances Percival - Hon.Secretary*

## MEMORIES OF THE BLACK HORSE ( and other things!)

Fred Ryder

In June 1942 I was a 16 year old school boy living in Welling and attending Eltham College. I was fortunate enough to be selected to play cricket for the 1st XI against HMS Worcester, the Royal Naval training establishment based at Foots Cray Place.

My friend and fellow cricketer Geoff Page and I were told to meet the master in charge and the rest of the team at the Black Horse, Sidcup. We lived opposite each other in Welling and strange as it may seem Sidcup was almost a foreign country as far as we were concerned. We cycled from Welling to Sidcup and arrived at the appointed time. We stood there and waited and waited - no one came! After what seemed an eternity the master in charge appeared on his bike pedalling furiously. "What the hell are you two doing here" he asked indignantly. "We are waiting at the Black Horse as instructed" we replied. "No you are not" he retorted, "the Black Horse is in Sidcup High Street - this is Halfway Street and you are at Ye Olde Black Horse". Eventually we met up with the rest of the team and the match was played and lost.

Another couple of memories from the same day. The cricket ground was located in Rectory Lane nearly opposite All Saints Church Rectory. It was not a very level ground and I remember fielding on the square leg boundary and I could only see the top half of the batsman at the wicket. It made fielding a little bit of a lottery. At the interval, tea was taken in Foots Cray Place which I unfortunately do not remember much about except that the curried rice on the menu was something I had never experienced before. The cricket ground is now a car park for Merton Court School and of course Foots Cray Place no longer exists, but now living a few minutes away, the memories never fade completely. In particular, it will always be the Black Horse - Blue Rose!!!!!!Never heard of it.

## SOCIETY SCHOOLS OUT PROJECT

The Schools Out project was a suggestion made at one of the society's committee meetings as a project that everyone in the Society could participate in. Schooling is something none of us have been able to avoid and its effect on us is part of our individual history. We all have a story to tell. Denise Baldwin.

*Anne Brunton's and Phyllis Parker's schooldays were published in the Autumn 2001 Newsletter*  
Editor

### 1. MEMORIES FROM MY SCHOOL DAYS - BRIAN WOODS.

My school career started at St.Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary School, Welling in 1937 at the age of four. My parents were among the thousands of young couples who had moved into the area to live on the new estates. We had a more immediate interest as my father was a bricklayer employed by Stevens, and he took a mortgage on one of the houses on the Steven's estate. St.Michael's, the local C of E school, was not finished, and Fosters was full. I have hazy memories of St.Stephen's but I know I was happy there and rather wished that I was a Catholic. I have a particular memory of the Catholic children going to a service and eating breakfast in the school classroom afterwards. Although I ate a hearty breakfast before leaving home and was not required to attend the religious observances nor eat another breakfast, I did feel that there was a lot to be said for a religion that provided breakfast later in the morning.

Being left handed, I can remember having particular difficulty with writing and anything involving scissors. But I can also remember when we were graded for handwriting and a list was pinned to the wall, I was chided by a Nun for immediately looking for my name at the bottom of the list. She advised me that as I always wanted to do well, I should have faith in my intentions and expect to see myself at the top of the list. I can't remember where on the list I actually found myself (I suspect near the bottom), but I do remember the incident and think kindly of that Nun who obviously believed in encouragement rather than disparagement.

However when I was ten I experienced a different type of encouragement. By this time my father had joined the London Fire Brigade and I had moved to Holbrook in Suffolk with my mother and younger sister. Here I attended the village school and was taught by 'Old Dot Doughty' as she was known. Looking back this seems a particularly disrespectful title for such a good teacher used to teaching village children at the small school, who adapted to having her class roll swollen by evacuees from all over the place, with all different experiences, and yet be able to show the same level of care and stimulation to each child. My particular memory here, was my feeling of pride when I had done six sums in the allotted time span as against my neighbour who had only done four, only to find that whereas Kathleen (a naturally slow girl) was congratulated on her achievement and sent out to play, I was chided for my lackadaisical approach to my work, kept in during playtime and set the task of increasing my workload from six sums up to twelve.

I count myself fortunate in having passed through the hands of the gentle Nun and the 'Doughty Dot'. I wonder what an Ofsted inspector would have made of their teaching methods!

## 2. MEMORIES FROM MY SCHOOLDAYS - VALERIE ALLEN

I was born in Sidcup in 1931 and my first school was Halfway Street Infant School where I started my scholastic career in 1936. It was quite a small school and the first two classes shared the hall. I remember we had to learn to read from picture cards before progressing to a primer. Mother had taught me at home from books brought home by my brother from his school at Days Lane. These had bright blue covers and all the consonants were printed in blue, the vowels in red. As a result I think I only had to read a few cards before being given my first book.

Another thing I recall from that time is having to have a sleep when we arrived after going home for lunch (no school dinners in those days). We slept on oval shaped rush mats for a short while. I always detested school milk and my friend Margaret & I had to go to Miss Smiles' office (the headmistress) each morning to drink our milk. I still dislike cold milk today.

Our uniform was brown and gold - brown gym slip and blazer, gold coloured blouse and brown and gold striped tie. I know I sometimes had to wear my brother's grey socks when I had made a hole in the ghastly mustard coloured stockings we wore.

I think in those days we went up a class whenever the teacher thought we were ready for the next stage. Consequently, I spent about 18 months in the top class under the tuition of Mrs Dagnell until I was old enough to go to Burnt Oak Lane Junior School.

I started there in September 1939 just at the outbreak of war. This seemed very large to me as it was on two floors with a balcony running round the hall. I recall the assembly we had each morning and whenever I hear or sing the hymn 'Oh to be a Pilgrim' I think

of those times, as it was the first hymn we learnt there. I had attended Sunday School from a very early age so I knew some of the hymns but this was a new one.

Each morning after assembly we had drill in the playground - I believe almost in all weathers.

Some of the teachers I remember from Burnt Oak were Headmaster, Mr Day. He had a wooden leg. I think he lost a leg in the first World War. There were three classes for each year but I only recall the teachers whose class I was in ( the 'A' class), Miss Pedley, Miss Horsman and Miss Furse. In the top class I sat next to a boy named John Clapham, one of twins. I was hopeless at art. Miss Furse was teaching us about Tudor times and we were supposed to draw the costumes. John was good at art, so tit-for-tat, he did my drawing and I let him copy my maths, which subject he disliked. When it came to taking the scholarship to go to Grammar School he passed and I failed.

There was a Mr.Pavely who taught gardening. He always wore plus four suits in a hairy gingery coloured material. We had allotments at the side of the school and used to grow vegetables to help the war effort.

We had brick built air raid shelters and used them for the purpose of practising in case there was a raid but I cannot recall actually using them for that purpose. We always had to carry our gas masks to school and take a packed lunch in case we were unable to get home for lunch. Willersley Avenue was considered to be halfway between home and school and we were instructed that if the air raid warning went and we were between home and that road we should run home quickly. If we had crossed the road then we had to run on to school. Needless to say the first part of the journey was slower in the hopes we could return home.

We had very large classes - something like thirty five to forty children.

Our uniform there was grey and green. I can recall the names of most of the children in my class and still see some of the friends around the area.

At the beginning of the war we attended school for half the day, alternating weekly by morning or afternoon. I presume this was so that there were not too many children in the building at any one time.

After leaving Burnt Oak I progressed to Sidcup Central School in Alma Road but my education there was rather curtailed due to the war. I went to live with an aunt in Leytonstone for a year when my mother was in hospital and then again in 1944 I was evacuated to Oxford where I attended a Church of England School. This was very small - only five classes for ages four to fourteen.

On returning to Sidcup I had already sat for the scholarship to go to the Sidcup Technical School which I passed. I attended there from 1945-1947 , taking the secretarial course. This school was based in Coopers at Chislehurst.

On the whole I enjoyed my time at school although I was never one of the high fliers. Compared with today's education ours was very basic but I think we were all taught to the best of our ability.

### 3. MEMORIES OF MY SCHOOL DAYS - FRANCES PERCIVAL

My most vivid memory of my early growing up years was tied up with evacuation. As with Valerie Allen, I was born in 1931, not at Sidcup but Bethnal Green Hospital in the East End of London. So at the declaration of War, I was nearly eight and at the time was holidaying with my Auntie & Uncle at Westcliff-on-Sea. Mum came down to collect me and I was told that I was to be evacuated with the rest of my school. We children were taken to a collection point at the Jewish School in Middlesex Street

(i.e. Petticoat Lane) and then with our gasmasks and nametags on us, were taken over the road to Liverpool Street Station to be put on the steam train for an unknown destination. (A postcard was sent on to one's parent on arrival with address of one's billet). I don't remember the actual journey but our destination turned out to be Kings Lynn in Norfolk. There we were taken to a large hall where there was a lot of activity going on - local people coming in and claiming their number of evacuees. This went on for some time until our contingent was whittled down and I really wondered if anyone out there wanted me! Eventually a lovely 70 year old couple claimed me together with a little Jewish girl. Now she came from a family of very strict Jews where she needed to have certain kinds of food. The old people found it all very confusing and I think that the little girl only lasted in Norfolk for about four weeks. It was an unfair situation to put both parties in. However, I can proudly say that I stayed six months and was one of the last to be claimed back by my parents.

Dad used to work at Woolwich Arsenal walking from Shoreditch to London Bridge to catch the workman's train. After a while it was decided that Dad would transfer to Chorley Arsenal in Lancashire and we would be evacuated there as a family.

Our base was Fleetwood, near Blackpool. Dad, Mum and my sister Pamela returned to London after a while and I stayed behind because I was enjoying being educated in a decent manner. I think I must have been there for about two years returning home with a Lancashire accent, no doubt soon supplanted by the London intonation.

I think we youngsters born in the late 20's - early 30's had our education in fits and starts. For history classes I remember the number of times I went back to the Romans as I joined the different schools. Nevertheless, I do remember being taught poetry and how all these years later lines suddenly pop into my mind from what I must have learnt then. I think we were proud of what we did learn in such difficult circumstances.

The war-time coloured our future! I eventually passed an examination at fourteen that allowed me entrance to Raines Foundation Grammar School in Stepney, I was put into a form that been together probably for two years so consequently had to catch up on Algebra, Geometry, French and German. This was no easy task but I became sixteen quite quickly and against my will, Dad decided that I should leave school and go out into the world. So, I never had the opportunity to discover whether I would have been university material! I could not have been too ignorant as I ended up being Chief Cashier in a large branch of an insurance company!

#### 4. MEMORIES OF SCHOOL DAYS - THE LATE PETER GRANGER

Notes by the Editor

We do not have a written piece from Peter but many will remember when he gave a short talk on his school days. What we do have is a photograph he presented to us at the beginning our schools project of he and his fellow pupils at an LCC School in S.E. London. You will find this photograph in the newsletter. Our Peter is second on the left of those standing. He fortunately for us stood still whilst the photo was being taken so that we can see his features quite clearly. You will see he has labelled it - Sad little children - all forty of them, sad looking teacher, sad looking classroom and the 1920's - sad times.

Perhaps we could put some of the apparent sadness down to difficult photography - it was taken indoors. Ladies fashions and hair styles were not conducive to the teacher looking glamorous and perhaps there was a certain amount of sadness on Peter's part.

Of course, there was general sadness in the 1920's as it was the decade of the National Strike and the plight of the miners causing them to march to London from Jarrow. We understand from Frances Ward that a copy of this photograph is also lodged with the Greenwich Local Studies.

#### OBITUARY - PETER GRANGER

Peter was very much a man of the old school - if he took on a job he was determined to fulfil it to the best of his ability. As our Treasurer, he was inputting society data during his dying weeks. When Jack Saunders stepped back from being Treasurer I ventured to ask Peter whether he would take on the position. He said he would do it for about two years whilst we found somebody who could act on a more longer term basis. He then set about computerising the society accounts producing an up-to-date set of figures for each committee meeting. We are also grateful to Peter that he masterminded the initiation and the writing of the Society Constitution which takes in, our unusual position of being individually registered at Alma Road. All his skills of his working life came to the fore on this as he was before retirement, managing director of an engineering company. His wife predeceased him when he then decided that he would join local organisations. He phoned me and enquired about the Society - liked what he heard - and became one of us. On the first night he came I introduced him to Bob and Mavis Walker with whom he became firm friends. On one of our tours he sat next to Jean Davis who told him of Bexley Civic Society - then he became a member of that. From there he became a real working volunteer of the Crossness Engines Trust which he thoroughly enjoyed, seeing the great cathedral of steam coming to life again. I must mention that he was also involved with FROBLOMS i.e. Friends of Bexley Libraries and Museums. Some of you may have seen him at the days in Hall Place grounds when FROBLOMS demonstrated farm equipment of yore. I am sure he must have been involved with other organisations!

He leaves a son and daughter and two granddaughters, all of whom were most grateful for the letters that you sent Peter when he was in the nursing home in Suffolk.

The Society says, dear old Peter, Rest In Peace with our thanks for the valuable work you put into the Society.

Frances Percival - Hon. Secretary

We also record the passing of two of our lady members, June Hughes and Marjorie Butler.

#### OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND - SEPTEMBER 2002

Alan Godfrey

In September my wife, a friend and myself, went to London in order to see a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. This outing coincided with various buildings being unusually opened to the public. As we walked along the Strand we came to St. Mary-le-Strand, a baroque style church marooned in busy traffic, like a small island in a river. Across the church fence was a banner advertising the 'Open House' weekend and inviting people into the church. The short walk from the gate to the front door of the church took us past a well tended garden. The traffic noise began to subside as we went into the cavern-like interior. The church windows were set up high on the walls to reduce the traffic noise. The nave was free of pillars and the ceiling rounded. Our ears were soon assailed by tea spoons clicking which led us to be served with coffee and biscuits by the 'Friends of the



Church'. The church was built in 1717 by James Gibbs who was a pupil of Sir Christopher Wren. Gibbs had visited Italy bringing back the idea of baroque architecture which he used when designing this church. It is now dedicated to the Womens Branch of the Royal Navy .

We walked on, along the Strand, past the Law Courts, until in Fleet Street we saw an interesting clock on the first floor level incorporating figures about to strike a bell with a large mallet. We entered the church and realised that a Romanian service was taking place. It is used by various East Europeans faiths as well as the Church of England.

( Alan is obviously referring to St.Dunstans in the West..Editor)

The next port of call was to the old offices of the Daily Express now owned by a Japanese firm. The foyer is a jewel in London's crown of architecture. In the centre of the ceiling was a giant star which appeared to have burst, casting its rays across the ceiling. Both the star and the rest of the ceiling were in silver gilt. On the walls were huge dioramas of the nations and industries of the world done in the 1930's art style. The floor was made of black and green rubber as if it was the sea. At the back of the foyer was a staircase, circular in style, winding up six or so floors. It was lovely to stand in the stairwell and look at the stair hand rail spiralling upwards like the pattern on a snail's shell.

Just across the road at St.Bride's Church, posh cars and posh people were arriving for a wedding. We had hoped to visit Wren's Wedding Cake church (the spire is reminiscent of a wedding cake) but just before we arrived it had been closed to the public due to the wedding ceremony. So we went round the corner to a square to eat our packed lunch where we could hear the strains of the Wedding March. Having finished our lunch we decided to gatecrash the wedding. As we passed the Press Association building under an archway, we walked passed a down and out man asleep in his sleeping bag with a bottle of wine nearby. We entered St.Bride's and heard the beautiful bride and her groom make their vows. The inside of the church was gutted by fire in 1940 but has been restored with wood of light oak. The small choir was professional with the singing of the highest quality and was very moving to listen to. The organ came into its own with the playing of 'Jerusalem'; the sound transmitted itself via the church floor and made our legs vibrate. The building was heated via the Press Association next door and the church is full of plaques commemorating the Barons of Fleet Street. The music from the organ had even woken the tramp outside the church who came in clutching his sleeping bag and bottle.

We went on to the St.Bride Foundation Institute, built in 1891 as education centre for the printing industry. This was not an 'Open House' but in the basement where there had once been a swimming pool was a small theatre where we saw a performance of 'HMS Pinafore' performed by the Opera de la Luna. The Singers had written a prologue to 'Pinafore' which was set in a village hall. The 'Vicar' came on to the stage and asked for people to audition for parts in 'Pinafore'. The Singers had infiltrated the audience and so got the main parts! The 'Vicar' did get us all to sing the Willow Song; then he divided the audience in half so that one side sang 'Willow' and the other side sang.....! What a lovely day we had in London, full of the 'WOW' factor.

(Look out for the 'Open House' booklet at the beginning of September and see how many places are open to the public. It is fun to see how many buildings you can visit on either the Saturday or Sunday or the whole two days without tiring too much!!!! Editor)





The Home of Dr.Crombie corner of  
Hatherley & Granville Roads

*See article Page 7*

Local History Fair 17th November, 2001

Our new Society tablecloth  
(with Denise Baldwin & Kathy Harding)







THIS IS MY LCC SCHOOL CLASS IN S. E. LONDON, c 1929

Sad little children (40)

Sad looking teacher

Sad looking classroom

Sad times, 1920's

*Peter Granger.*

Peter is the second on the left of those standing

*See Article on Page 15*





# Lamorbey & Sidcup LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

50th Anniversary Dinner  
Jubilee Year - to Queen in Shakespeare / Suffolk