

MR & MRS PERCIVAL

Lamorbey & Sidcup

LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY



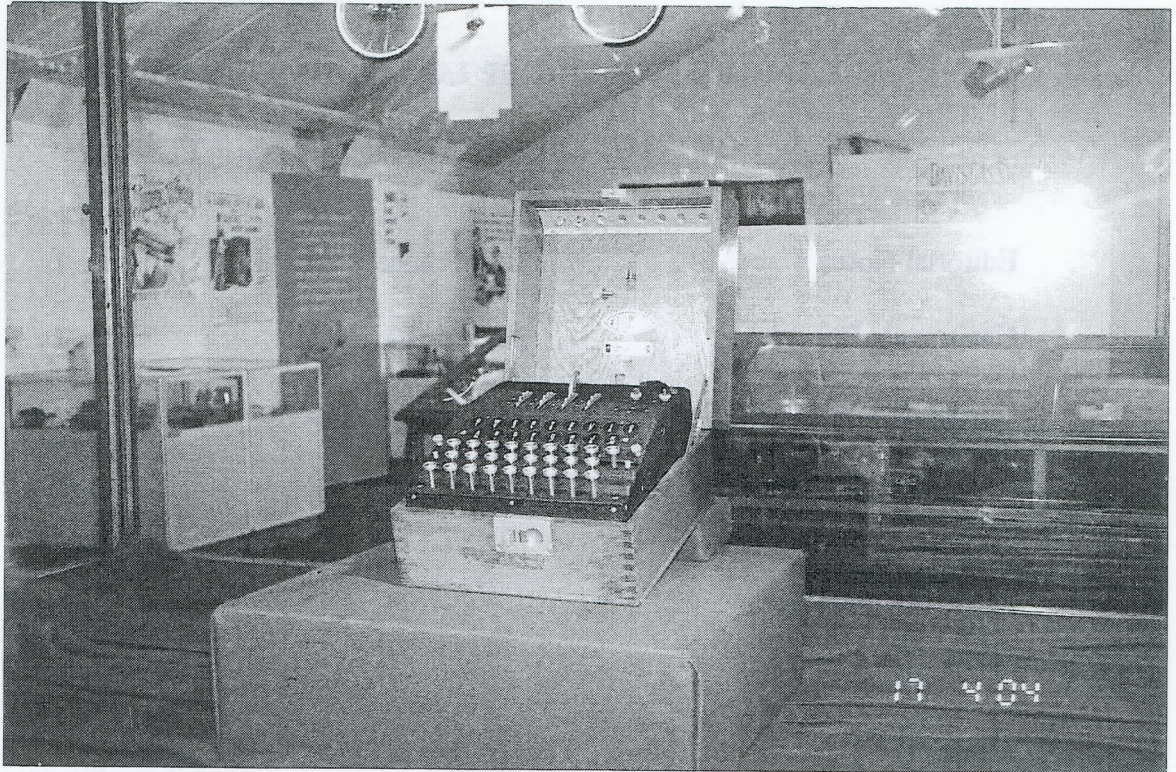
NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2005

LAMORBEY & SIDCUP LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

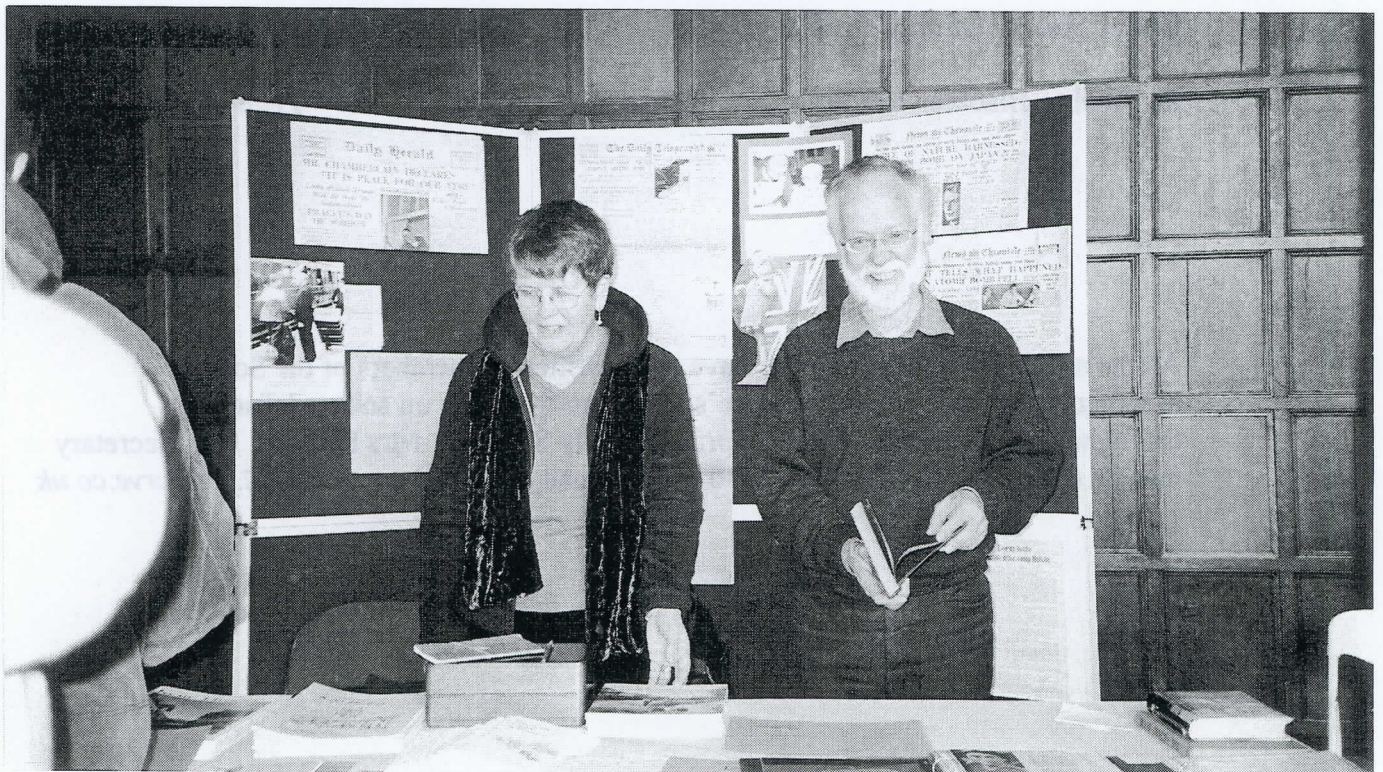
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All the articles in this Newsletter have been written by members of the Society. Meetings take place at St.Lawrence's Community Centre on selected Tuesdays throughout the Autumn, Winter, Spring & early Summer. Mrs Percival, Hon.Secretary may be contacted on 020 8300 3830 or by e-mail frances@percival4842.freeserve.co.uk



THE ENIGMA MACHINE ON SHOW
AT BLETCHLEY PARK



JOHN AND JENNY CHARLES MANNING OUR STALL
AT THE LOCAL HISTORY & FAMILY HISTORY FAIR

EDITORIAL NOTES BY FRANCES PERCIVAL

All seems to be well with the Society after our move and the next item, written by Eric details the lead-up and consequent move to St. Lawrence's Community Centre.

We of course no longer have the opportunity of announcing ourselves in the Borough brochure year by year whereby we gained new members but now relying on word of mouth for new membership. Please spread the good news that we are free to take some new members.

At the recent Local History and Family History Fair we had a stall selling some of our booklets and a display of newspaper headlines from the commencement of WW2 until the end. People were interested in our stall and asked questions on our locality. Two members of the public promised to visit the Society – which they did. The whole committee participated in some part of the day with Gill Brown and Dorothy Connelly putting up our display the day previous.

Thanks must be given to Jackie Evans for attending and reporting on the Sidcup Partnership meetings even though she has this year been unable to attend our meetings.

In Sidcup, generally, we are now used to residents going to Safeway – now Morrisons – for their food and household buying. It is so much nearer than travelling over to their store in Erith. The Black Horse of Sidcup High Street is now firmly named the Blue Rose – this after much protestations from the local community. One cannot visualise stagecoaches drawing up at the Blue Rose as they did outside the well-known Black Horse when the High Street was one of the main routes to Maidstone.

There are two Sidcup anniversaries this year – the firstly, Longlands Primary School will be celebrating its centenary. Our member, Jennie Hicks when visiting Whitstable a few months ago became friendly with Pam Vaughan who in her early years lived in Sidcup. It transpired that she attended Longlands Primary School during the war and says that one of her very nice teachers was killed during an air raid, which she found quite upsetting. Pam's walk to school took her through Little Birches where on one occasion a lady took her into her shelter until the 'All Clear' was sounded. She lived in Westbrooke Road and is still in touch with three school friends from her 'Longlands' days. Although she has lived in Tankerton for the last 35 years, remembers Sidcup with great affection.

The official celebrations will take place during the week commencing 17th October 2005.

The second anniversary to be mentioned is that of the Sidcup Literary & Scientific Society which this year will be celebrating its 125th year of inception. Just imagine Sidcup in 1880 just 14 years after the railway (Dartford Loop via Sidcup) came to the area. Many residents would have taken the opportunity of travelling up to the City of London and the West End for employment. The 1881 census shows the heads of many households working in banks and the legal profession. Possibly a horse and trap would have been waiting for them on their return to Sidcup Station. Again from the census you notice that it was the age of families employing servants who in many cases were born a considerable distance from Sidcup. It was also the time when these societies came into being – debating societies, garden societies and choirs etc.

Within the Literary & Scientific Society members lectured on their own subjects and it was in fact quite a learned society. So all power to those who have handed the baton down over the generations that it is still very much part of the Sidcup scene having interesting and stimulating lectures. So much so that members today forsake their television screens for the meetings.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON OUR MOVE – Eric Percival

On Tuesday 21st September 2004 we held our first meeting in the St.Lawrence's Community Centre. Nearly two years before this day Frances & I met with Richard Easterbrook (Adult Education Officer for the Borough) to be told that in future our standing within the Adult Education College would change. We were given the option of either becoming part of the 'College's Quality Controlled Programme' or we could rent space. The rent to be charged proved to be too excessive especially as we would be required to pay for the alternate weeks when we did not use the hall. We had also been told that should a college class need the room they would have priority. The options were put to a meeting of the Society who voted overwhelmingly to 'go private'.

Then started an urgent search for alternative accommodation. As we were the Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society it was necessary to hold our meetings in the Sidcup area, not noted for the abundance of suitable halls. A survey of those available, including the Kemnal Scout Hall (courtesy of the wife of one of our members) indicated that the best for our use would be St.Lawrence's. To do this we would have to change the day of our meetings from Wednesdays to Tuesdays, which was agreed with some regret.

During the spring of 2004 members agreed that we would incorporate the usual fee to the Borough and the Society subscription so that for the following 2004/2005 year the subscription would be £20. Our Treasurer, Janet Cooper issued renewal forms that she asked to be returned to her together with cheques. We were all keeping a weather eye on the returns but we need not have worried members kept their promise and renewed so that our complement was much the same as usual.

Going private brought many advantages such as not being bound by college regulations but also disadvantages. We had to purchase our own projector and microphone and we would have to purchase and make our own tea and coffee! The cost of the equipment was covered by two generous donations following the death of two of our long-standing members. We also received a generous gift from Denise Baldwin & Kathy Harding from the sales of their book, 'Along the River Cray'. Margaret Sharpe agreed to take on the task providing tea and coffee during the interval and she quickly found some willing helpers. The task was made easier by a committee decision not to make any charge for the tea/coffee and biscuits.

Now all was prepared for the big move. Expecting problems on the first night our programme secretary was requested to find a friendly speaker who would not be upset if things went wrong. Ken Chamberlain, Chairman of the Erith & Belvedere Local History Society spoke to us on HMS Worcester – needless to say everything went off smoothly. We had settled in to our new abode.

Having broken with the Adult Education College, it is fitting that we acknowledge the help we have received from it since our society was founded in 1952 at Lamorbey Park by Harry Ingram, the first local Adult Education Officer for Kent County Council. Subsequently, under Bexley Council, David Nicholle and latterly Richard Easterbrook.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU – ROY COLE

By Bess Dzielski

Part of the reason for these short articles is, as I have explained before, the need to introduce in more detail members who be seen quite regularly at meetings, and yet, through sheer force of numbers we have little opportunity of chatting to on more than a passing occasion.

Sitting unobtrusively at the back of the meeting Roy Cole maintains a very low profile – so low, in fact, that most of us are unaware of his part in the new arrangements since we left Alma Road. No storage space in the new quarters means that our equipment has to be brought in for each meeting and this is where Roy offers help to Eric Percival by immediately on arrival setting up the projector thus allowing Eric to concentrate on other arrangements.

Although I can give him a year or two in age we are both East-Enders, for he comes from Canning Town, subsequently moving to Millwall as part of a large extended family. Baby sitting, he said was ‘not a problem’. This, of course, was part of London that suffered heavily during the Blitz owing to the proximity of the Docks. The family was evacuated on several occasions to Derbyshire and Nottingham, and like so many children at that time Roy’s education was badly disrupted. Subsequently he stopped being an East-ender when they moved first to Barnehurst then Crayford and eventually Erith and became a Kentish lad. Leaving Crayford Secondary Modern at fifteen Roy started an electrical career serving a five year apprenticeship in Radio and TV followed by National Service in the RAF then back to the South-East London Tech for several years to pass the City and Guilds Certificate. A subsequent career with various employers ended with redundancy from ILEA in 1990, then another ten years at Dulwich College retiring in 2000.

Married to Dawn in 1962, having met the love of his life at a dance at the Yorkshire Grey, they moved to Sidcup where they now enjoy life with two daughters and four grandsons. But well before retirement he and Dawn had joined us at Local History when we met in the old days at Lamorbey Park. Time is now taken up with hobbies, walking bowls, computers, and our Chairman and Secretary remember with great pleasure Roy’s arrival on their doorstep on the evening of their wedding-day, producing immediate digital photographs of their great occasion!

GETTING TO KNOW YOU – DENISE BALDWIN & KATHY HARDING

By Bess Dzielski

Known in the Society as ‘The Girls’ and modestly describing themselves as such, even they are the first to admit that such a description is only comparative. ‘Girls’ they might be to the majority of us mature/grey-haired/balding/intellectual/local history buffs, (choose your own description here), but as parents of adult offspring their position in life is at least approaching the mature stage. They are, in fact, twenty-two years long-standing members of the Society having joined in the good old days at Lamorbey Park. The notes they gave as the basis for this article shows the great deal they have in common – both teachers, both with adult children, both interested in history, theatre, cinema, and both obviously happily married to long – suffering husbands whom they take care to acknowledge gratefully!

Denise is a Sedcopian except for five years in Nigeria where her father’s work took him, attended St.Joseph’s Convent in Hatherley Road. Then St.Joseph’s, Abbey

Wood and later Colona College for teacher training. She specialised in primary school teaching in Thamesmead and Dagenham rising to become Deputy Head while raising two sons and getting them through university. She retired four years ago but still uses her time constructively. She represents the Society on Bexley Council's Conservation Advisory Committee and is a governor of St.Mary & St.Joseph's Catholic School and also of St.Luke's Sixth Form College. Lately she had taken on the responsibility of finding and booking the Speakers for the Society. She also guides at the Red House. And I, for one, am most grateful for her generosity in allowing unbooked visitors who gaze appealingly to join a tour. (I recently presented her with four Parisiennes with no English and two Japanese with very little, as extras but she coped).

Katherine – and I write these words with some trepidation – tends to be the quieter one! A local girl from Beckenham, scion of a Welsh mining family, she is also a teacher in a primary school, trained at Digby Stuart College, became Deputy Head at St.Stephen's Welling, and is married to a maths teacher. Of her three children, one daughter also teaches. Since she relaxes in her French cottage near Limoges one assumes she is a fluent Francophile.

'The Girls' met twenty-four years ago when their children attended the same school. Their immediate interest was the locality and they got together to develop the interests they have shared so regularly with us. They acknowledge the encouragement the Society gave them in pursuing their researches, particularly from Pip Hayward and John Mercer. They have produced seven illustrated talks and their current one 'Along the River Cray' has been accompanied by a book produced by Bexley's Local Studies Department

The pleasure they take in their friendship and joint interests comes over strongly and we look forward to their next performance – noting, with regret that nothing appears in the current programme.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU – ALAN GODFREY

By Bess Dzielski

When I started reading Alan's note, written in impeccable handwriting, I thought 'This is the first time I've written about a policeman'. By the time I had finished reading his notes I thought 'This is a completely happy and fulfilled man'.

Born in 1938 in Chislehurst and reared during the Second World War his background and upbringing were typical of the period. He attended St.Nicholas Church of England School, Edgebury Secondary Modern and Bromley Technical School, was interested in Scouting, Church Choir, used the public library (Biggles & Arthur Ransome) and listened to the 'wireless'. Then he took up teenage politics – Ban-the-Bomb marches, interest in the United Nations and began showing an increasing interest in public and social concerns. National Service took him to Cyprus but besides sunbathing he also needed to be vigilant for this was a period of unrest there. But he continued his interest in Scouting by running a troop there for the children of servicemen – an activity he later continued in Sidcup

After de-mob he couldn't settle for the commuting life and put his increasing social concerns to use by joining the Police, for, as he puts it 'security and job satisfaction. He stayed a Beat Constable aware that his continued contact with the public was for more rewarding than form-filling and since promotion in the police force depends on the willingness to take exams, remained with his feet firmly on the ground. Much of his time was spent in the East End at North Woolwich, but I wouldn't refer to him as

George Dixon! He was awarded the British Empire Medal before he retired in 1993. Marriage to Frankie in 1963 produced a son and three grandchildren and another strand in life as she is an accomplished singer and Alan acts as her accompanist. In retirement he has continued making a difference in the community. Although he describes himself as a Humanist he gives much service to Footscray Baptist Church in gardening and conservation and together with his wife helps care for Footscray Meadows. Alan's contributions to the Society include articles in the Newsletters and his originating the Society's Millennium Project of a snapshot of life in Sidcup in the year 2000. And when he's got some time to spare they enjoy theatre going, walking, old churches and travel. And I can't help thinking that herein lies some excellent material for a Members' Evening sometime.

Continuing members' remembrances of their school days-

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY SCHOOL DAYS - JOHN MERCER

My first memory of school was falling off the end of a bench and howling. That was at an infant's school somewhere in Windsor. My parents moved to Bexleyheath and I was sent to Ellesdon House, a private school in the Broadway. The house is still there but it is now a solicitor's office. Miss Kingston was the teacher I remember. She was young with her hair in a bun. She was kind and capable. I can remember two activities in particular. One was having an outline map of England and a sheet for all the counties. We had to stick the counties into their proper places on the map. The other was playing a circle game. Every one had the name of a city and when Miss Kingston called out the names of two cities those bearing the names had to exchange places without being caught by someone in the middle. I loved these two activities and I believe they led me to an interest in geography that has never left me.

At nine my friend Cecil Shefferd and I were sent to Cottingham's Grammar School, a private school situated next to Upton College and opposite to Danson Park Gates. I can recall the arguments in the family over this decision. My Grandfather (a former elementary teacher) and my Father saying that I should attend the local council school like every one else, and my Grandmother (also a former elementary school teacher) and my Mother saying that the private school would be best for me. You can see who won the argument! As I was an only child my parents could just about afford to pay the fees.

I was happy at Cottingham's. Mr John Agnew was a Scot and he taught mathematics. He used to say to his best behaved pupils, "Totter down and ring the bell, Smith." He was nominally the Headmaster and another of his duties was to ensure that the inkwells were filled. It was a great honour to be the ink monitor to go down stairs, take up the large bottle of ink and carefully pour the ink into the inkwells in each desk. I can still smell the ink: a rust, dusty kind, metallic kind of smell.

There was one teacher who I loved dearly. She was Mrs Oswald, also a Scot: tall and brisk, who could switch her mood from kindness and praise to fierce denunciation. She could foam at the mouth when in a rage! We had pen nibs attached to our pen handles. I was poor at handwriting and scratched and made blots how ever much I tried to do best copper plate. One afternoon when practising writing, Mrs Oswald seized my pen from my hand and threw it out of the window to land three storeys down. "Now go and fetch it, you miserable boy". So why did I love her? She was

kind as well as fierce. She immediately consoled me in my distress and helped me to bend my hand at writing. I recall one afternoon when there was thunderstorm. Beryl Gage (we were about 11 by this time) was terrified of the storm and Mrs Oswald took her on her lap and comforted her. I met Beryl, most amazingly, about three years ago and asked if she remembered that incident. She did not, but I did and still do. I think I was sweet on Beryl. We had one bad master, a Mr Hocking. He was very good at buttering up at parents' evening, but totally lazy and terrifying as a teacher. I learnt nothing from him, except still in silence for a whole lesson!

During the Spanish Civil War when feelings ran high amongst the senior boys in support of the Republican forces, we had a Spanish lad; I suppose he was 17 or 18. He told us that he was going to Spain to fight. We all assumed that he was going to fight for the Republicans. When he said he was to fight for Franco, some of the boys threw stones at him and made his life at school a misery. I wonder what became of him?

Soon after the school was sold to a new proprietor and it was renamed University School. We had new buildings and the teaching was better, but our uniform was changed from blue blazer to a striped red and black that we thought was too conspicuous. On the way home one day a crowd of boys from Uplands School pursued me. I ran but was being overtaken. So unwillingly I turned to fight. The leading boy skidded on his hobnailed boots and fell at my feet. I ran off and jumped on a convenient trolley bus and so got away!

At the new school we had a wonderfully enthusiastic geography master, from Wales. He was unconventional to say the least. He wore cufflinks where a collar stud should be, tie loose. And he cleaned the blackboard with his academic gown. He covered himself with chalk and half the class as well! We laughed with him, not at him, and learning was fun. We all learnt from him and I do not think anyone failed in their Geography School Certificate.

I was never much good at sport. I could run and learnt to score for the Cricket Team that has given me an abiding interest in cricket. The only sports trophy I won was for taking part in a successful tug o' war team. An ex-policeman coached us and our team beat all comers!

I left school at 16 in July 1939. Within a few weeks we were at war. My first job was a messenger for Air Raid Precautions (later known as Civil Defence). My school was bombed in 1940 and became a fire station. Now it is Brampton Road Adult Education Centre. I often wonder what happened to all those of us who left school when I did.

Little did we know as we sat at our desks in the 1930's that war was approaching us and that our generation would be actively engaged in it.

MY SCHOOL DAYS – By Robert Ottley

When I was young I went to Crook Log Primary School but left in 1979 and then attended Bexleyheath School in Graham Road. This was due to the family living at Wellington Road, Bexley.

At Primary School I do not remember being very good at many things but I could do times tables very well and I once won an egg and spoon race because I was the only person not to drop the egg.

At senior school I was good at some things like history and geography. I once had had a map of the world and had to guess the names of various places. I guessed

many of them correctly including Monrovia the capital of Liberia. At this time I had a very nice teacher called Mr. Wetherley.

I was not very good at woodwork, RE, games or music but was reasonably good at science. Science lessons covered all the three main sciences, biology, physics and chemistry and I had to take part in numerous experiments.

At junior school I had occasional day trips out to various places including a trip to Fishbourne Roman Palace, near Chichester in West Sussex. Later at Senior School I went to see Lullingstone Villa near Eynsford in Kent. I also remember going to see an exhibition on the Vikings. I also had two longer trips out while at school. One of these was to Swanage during my last year at Primary School. It was in early May 1979 when we stayed in a small hotel about fifty yards from the seafront. While there we visited Corfe Castle, Studland Bay and Brownsea Island Nature Reserve. It was enjoyable, not a holiday but an educational trip.

A few years later in the Spring of 1983 I went on a similar educational trip for a few days to Penzance. The weather was diabolical especially on the day we went to Lands End being very wet, very windy and I feared for a moment of being blown over the edge. It must be said however, that the hotel was good, supposedly the second best in Penzance so the trip overall was very enjoyable.

At school I do remember doing one language and that was French but I cannot say I was very good at it. Even today my French is very limited but the French lessons as well as teaching French words and phrases I taught me a little of French history and a little of the many French regions. I did a project on Joan of Arc learning for instance that she was born in a village called Domremy in Western Lorraine, which was not then part of France.

“AN APPLE A DAY, KEEPS THE DOC AWAY”.

By Freda Elam

Way back in time there were orchards in what is now St. John's Road, Sidcup. In my front garden I have one ancient apple tree, its bark is peeling off and it is rather hollow and well over fifty years old. It produces a mellow cooking apple and to begin with the apples were huge. Over the years fewer and the smaller they became.

In 2004, most apples were marked in some way but still edible and I was able to freeze a few.

Every year for some while now I have given my tree a hug (I can get my arms around the trunk) and have said “Thank you for your efforts” because each year I think it will be the last but I will see what 2005 brings forth.

The apple hasn't a name, so with a sample, I went over to Ruxley Manor Garden Centre to see if they could help. They were very kind but could not suggest the variety but suggested I contacted the following:- “Keepers Nursery at East Farleigh near Maidstone. I wrote to them and gave details as far as I could but they also needed an apple for an ‘Autopsy’ !! So, one apple, plus twig with leaves was dispatched first class.

I have now had a reply. It was certainly worth all the effort and I am really thrilled with the outcome. My apple has the lovely name of ‘Golden Noble’

Thought this would stand as a wee bit of ‘Fruity Local History’.

STATION X by Joan Seymour

Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, holds a unique place in the history of Britain for the work on code breaking carried out there during the Second World War. It proved to be an extremely interesting venue for the Society's outing April 17th 2004.

We arrived in bright sunshine and drove through the imposing main gates into the Park, and could see that Bletchley was a very large estate indeed with many beautiful old trees. We could see a large a mansion, a lake and blocks of huts and buildings around the grounds that housed the Establishment. The Mansion is Victorian with Edwardian additions and in 1883 the owner was Sir Herbert Leon, MP for North Buckinghamshire and a friend of Lloyd George. In 1938 it was taken over by the Code and Cypher School of M16, who also brought a chef from the Savoy Hotel to cook their meals.

In the Hall of the Mansion we heard a fascinating talk by a lady who worked there during the War, and who took us on a tour of the buildings. She explained what work went on in the various huts, showed us a big mock-up of the Colossus machine which was used to break the Enigma code used by the Germans. She also told us several anecdotes of life at Bletchley, including one about security at the Establishment. Apparently members of staff were allowed to have their families living with them, and they walked openly in and out of the grounds with no check at the gates – the wives to the shops and the children to school. This was to prove to any interested bystander that nothing of importance was happening at Bletchley!

All the huts were numbered, and Hut 4 is now a restaurant and bar. It was originally used for work on the Naval Enigma keys used by the German U-boats. It now provides an excellent lunch and teas. In Hut 12 is an exhibition relating to de-coding machines and also houses the machine, which was stolen a few years ago but eventually returned. A Block contains an exhibition about Winston Churchill and his life, also a display of military uniforms of the War. One of the buildings is now an Enigma cinema showing Pathe News films of the War. There is also a very good Visitor Centre and bookshop.

We all gave a vote of thanks to Frances & Eric and our coach driver. There is so much to see at Bletchley Park and I think we all came home feeling that a day at Station X was a day well spent.

A DAY IN WEST SUSSEX by Joan Seymour

On May 29th 2004 we left Sidcup for an interesting and enjoyable outing to Sussex. After a straightforward journey via the M25 and M23 we arrived at Bosham, where we received a warm welcome at the Berkley Arms. The generous supply of coffee and biscuits was much appreciated after our drive.

The village of Bosham has an interesting history from Norman times, and the great Chancel arch in the ancient church is shown in the Bayeux Tapestry. There are many picturesque buildings and cottages, some with a fine display of roses in their gardens that we admired while walking through the village to the harbour.

After this welcome break we resumed our tour through West Sussex to Chichester, where we stopped for lunch and walk in the City. It proved to be a very busy place, especially in the centre, which is now a pedestrian precinct around the old Market

Cross. It was good to spend time in the lovely old Cathedral, and we had the added bonus of a lunchtime concert being given by a visiting choir. An unexpected pleasure!

On leaving Chichester we drove to the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, which is on the Downs near the village of Singleton. This is a fascinating place where old traditional buildings of the countryside, such as houses, cottages and workplaces, have been rescued from destruction and rebuilt. There are many different buildings to explore, one of which is of special interest to us as it is the Medieval North Cray Hall house which some of us can still remember in its original place, before it was given to the Museum in 1968. It lay in pieces for some years before it was rebuilt and open to the public. Another fine house is Bayleaf, a Wealden timbered house which is now surrounded by a garden of the same era. Behind the house is a great Barn, and a piggery where we found some delightful Tamworth pigs happily rooting about. The Museum covers many acres and contains a great diversity of things to visit, and the setting is beautiful surrounded by the South Downs. We found a very good tea place in the Tudor kitchen, with excellent homemade shortbread. The whole Museum needs a book to describe it all and one such was available in the well-stocked bookshop.

The journey home was enjoyable, through some of the lovely countryside of Sussex, and the whole day was one to remember despite some drizzle and clouds in the afternoon! A hearty vote of thanks to Frances & Eric, and our driver for taking us safely on a fairly long but very pleasant journey.

A SHOOTERS HILL WALK – ERIC PERCIVAL

Members of the Society met on the evening of 9th June, 2004 by the Water Tower on Shooters Hill for a stroll along the paths to Sevendroog Castle. This pleasant part of South London owes its existence to the foresight of the old London County Council who purchased the various estates when they came on to the market in the 1930's.

The first stop was at Jackwood House. The group then continued to Sevendroog Castle, an 18th century folly built to commemorate the victory of Sir William James over pirates off the Malibar Coast of India. The 'Castle' has for some time been neglected and is no longer open to the public. When open in the past you could from the top of the Tower enjoy magnificent views of London. The building has been one of the subjects of the BBC 'Restoration' programme and might well enjoy a new lease of life. From below the Tower the party enjoyed looking at the site of Castlewood House – now a rose garden. On returning to the car park at the top of Oxleas Meadows we were reminded that under the Meadows lies the 1983 reservoir.

A NEW ELTHAM WALK – GILL BROWN

On the 16th June 2004 a group of about twelve members of the Society met at New Eltham library. The evening was dry but cloudy. Our leaders were Dave & Janette Cunliffe who had done extensive research on this seemingly ordinary area.

The railway came through Pope Street as New Eltham was originally known in 1866 but the trains didn't stop until a station was built twelve years later in 1878.

The Co-op was originally built in 1921 and the current building was erected in 1931. Pope Street school opened in 1881. It was not renamed Wyborne until 1951. You can see a plaque set into the wall saying LSB (London School Board) Pope Street School for Boys and Girls. You can also see the bell on the roof.

The 'Beehive' public house was built in 1897. It had a bowling green in its grounds. New Eltham has a small claim to fame in that the Pears Soap 'Bubbles' poster was printed in a factory in the area.

We continued our walk along Footscray Road to Clare Corner, a small development of houses built on land owned by Clare College, Cambridge. We then made our way back towards the station by way of part of Green Lane, seeing the crescent shaped terrace of Victorian cottages in the distance. Turning down Blanmerle Road we were surprised to see a tennis club complete with clubhouse in front of some of the houses. We crossed over Southwood Road and went into the grounds of All Saints Church where there was quite a development of housing. Back to the Railway Bridge and down Avery Hill Road passing the entrance to Stanley's which was a small industrial estate. It is now being developed as a housing estate. W.F.Stanley made scientific instruments and had amalgamated with Heath & Co.,Ltd. who made navigational instruments.

We passed Theobold's Cottages circa 1817 which were well maintained by their current owners and then Sparrows Lane where Charlton Athletic have their training ground.

New Eltham is certainly worth a closer look and thanks to Dave & Janette we had a most enjoyable and informative evening.

TOUR OF BROMLEY COLLEGE by Frances Percival

On the Saturday afternoon of 26th June 2004 saw a group of members touring Bromley College situated just off Bromley High Street. It is an architectural jewel from the 17th century having been commissioned by the then Bishop of Rochester, John Warner. The commission was given to Captain Richard Ryder who had worked with Sir Christopher Wren whose influence you can see in the buildings of Bromley College. The Bishop had been homeless during the Civil War and appreciated being restored to his Palace at Bromley and he in turn wished to help the widows and children of Anglican clergy who were penniless and homeless but had remained loyal to King & Bishop. Bishop Warner was almost unique in the aftermath of the Civil War of housing these Anglican dependants.

The College now admits not only the wives and children but also at retirement age the clergy themselves. We were fortunate that the Revd.Ron Smith took us on a guided tour of the College (he had a lovely sense of humour) and allowed us to see his quarters which were impeccable. He then showed us Sheppards College, which is a later addition to the original college. Before entering the College he had been the Vicar in Parishes both in Slade Green and Crayford and latterly during holiday periods had presided at Holy Communion at the Holy Redeemer, Days Lane.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our tour of the Colleges and it was odd to leave by a path that led us straight to Sainsburys and Saturday afternoon shopping.

A few weeks back on the TV programme named 'Cash in the Attic' the College was featured with the Collegians sorting through their possessions to see what could be auctioned. The money received was to be used for a memorial garden. The items did quite well at the Auction so much so that the gardener was asked to prepare a larger

garden than at first anticipated. The Collegians were very pleased and about half a dozen lined up for a photocall and amongst them was the Revd. David Cossar who had only recently retired from being the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Lamorbey.

There had been some correspondence in the local newspaper regarding the issue of Sidcup being London or Kent. We had an opportunity during members' evening for some discussion when Jackie Evans told us of the local feeling when Sidcup was made part of the London Borough of Bexley. Roy Hopper also spoke and from his article you will note that the placing of Sidcup and Chislehurst within a given authority has been a vexing question for many years. Editor

Joan Seymour, was very interested in the debate and gave me the following piece which nicely sets off Roy Hopper's thought provoking article.

SIDCUP, KENT INTO GREATER LONDON

Over forty years ago it was proposed that Sidcup, which had long been part of Kent County Council, should become part of Greater London. This caused many debates and local feeling ran high. At the meeting of the Society on October 19th 2004 we heard two very interesting talks on the subject.

Jackie Evans told us that in 1961 a White Paper was read in Parliament regarding Chislehurst & Sidcup Urban District Council. The first plan was for the combination of Sidcup, Chislehurst and Orpington, but this was dropped, as the population of Orpington was considered too small. There was a great deal of protest about the proposed changes and debate continued. Incidentally it was announced that Sidcup could keep the Kent postal address. In 1965 the Debate was lost, Sidcup was 'dragged kicking and screaming' into Greater London and became part of the Borough of Bexley which included Bexley, Sidcup, Crayford and Erith.

Roy Hopper who retired from the Chislehurst Library was initially employed by Kent County Council and latterly of course by Bromley Council, spoke of the problems encountered with the change of status. It was difficult dealing with the different authorities systems especially when staff was moved from one library to another.

In the library, the slogan was "Kent Forever, LCC Never! In 1963 there was much concern when the UDC decided to demolish the old Water Tower on Summer Hill.

So, the London Borough of Bexley was formed in 1965 becoming one of the buffer zones between Kent & London.

KENT FOREVER, S.E. NEVER! Some Kentish Thoughts by Roy Hopper

Living as we do in Sidcup, Kent, within the London Borough of Bexley, *are* we still in Kent or are we now part of London? From time to time this question comes up and it is clear from reading correspondence in local papers of yesterday and today that agreement will never be reached. It is a question of personal perception and seems to have something to do with your age and your sense of history, and your concept of your home territory. My son, born in Bexley in 1966, considers that we are part of London. All I can do is to state my personal view. In doing so I should also mention the distinction between Kentish Men and Men of Kent, decided by which side of the

Medway you are born. I was born in Kent west of the Medway, which means I am a Kentish Man. Believe me, this concept matters to all Kentish folk!

Nothing annoys me more than to hear Sidcup, or other towns which are still postally in Kent, referred to as being in south-east London, simply because they are within a Greater London Borough. For many years before the advent of these super-boroughs we were aware of being within the Greater London area, even though we were still in the administrative County of Kent. As far as I am concerned I felt then, and still feel, proud to be Kentish, and have no wish to be any closer than I am to London. In *Webb's History of Chislehurst*, published in 1899, there is a mention of "ever advancing London." What's new, we ask ourselves? Recently we have heard references to the idea of the M25 as the new London boundary. Where will it stop? I suggest that it stops right here, where we live.

As I see it we are a kind of buffer state between Kent County and London Town, with certain advantages. We are on the fringes of London but not an intimate part of the metropolis. We are equally on the fringes of Kent but not any longer part of the county from an administrative point of view, except that we retain Kent as our postal address. We have many connections with London: the Metropolitan Police, the Metropolitan Water Board (now Thames Water), London Electricity Board (now London Energy), London Transport buses (well sort of). If we are old enough we have a Freedom Pass providing free public transport within the Greater London area, a wonderful idea. We know that there are rumours about the creation of super-boroughs by further acts of amalgamation, which might result in Bexley merging with Greenwich; this seems to me to be a political manoeuvre, and something to be resisted.

A buffer state is not usually a happy place to be, either squeezed between two giants or torn apart by them. But it seems to me that a reasonable state of balance has been reached, along the lines laid down way back in the early 1960's. This was when the Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London began to talk about the composition of the proposed new boroughs, with an ideal minimum population size of 200,000. It was intended that the former UDC's would remain whole within the new boroughs, one early proposal being that Chislehurst & Sidcup UDC would combine with Bexley, Crayford and Erith to produce that level of population in a new London Borough of Bexley. Many residents favoured this idea. However, in spite of C&SUDC being overall successful for thirty years, Chislehurst itself was never really happy being 'married' to Sidcup. There were geographical and historical factors working against this concept, dating back to the early years of the 20th century, one major factor being the A20 Sidcup Bypass of the 1920's.

At the turn of the century around 1900, you could walk uninterrupted from the fairly new urban area of Sidcup High Street along a winding country lane to the rural village of Chislehurst. The old parish of Chislehurst included Frognal, home of the of the Manors of Scadbury and Chislehurst, Sidcup Place, St. John's Church, the ancient hamlet of Sidcup. Sidcup Hill and – would you believe it – half the parish and village of Foots Cray, at some time referred to as "the Lower Borough" for electoral purposes. There was no physical division between Sidcup and Chislehurst at that time, until the A20 Sidcup Bypass road unevenly divided the ancient parish of Chislehurst. This created a real barrier between the resulting two uneven parts of Chislehurst, and whilst that portion north of the A20 became increasingly a part of urban Sidcup, the area to the south retained much of its rural character. They became different territories. The heart of Chislehurst was by then very remote from Sidcup, and had little in common with it. When the new UDC of Chislehurst and Sidcup was formed

in 1934, in spite of strenuous efforts to reunite the two in which the local papers played a considerable part, it seems fairly clear from reading the *Chislehurst and Kentish Times* of the period that, for a large number of people living either north or south of the Bypass, unification was pointless. You will note that there never was a *Chislehurst & Sidcup Kentish Times*. The two areas were *separate*, had different local papers, different natural centres, different perceptions, different loyalties, and separate railway lines. But – they were both still in the County of Kent.

It is a matter of record that, when in 1963 the old Water Tower at the top of Summer Hill, Chislehurst, was demolished, there was such cries of outrage in Chislehurst that the Resident's Association, a very influential amenity society founded in 1933 to defend the independence of Chislehurst within the proposed UDC, voted at its AGM in 1963 "That under the Greater London Plan Chislehurst prefers to be linked with Bromley and to be severed from Sidcup along the line of the A20 road, and that a telegram be sent to our MP to this effect." Many people thought that the decision to demolish demonstrated indifference to Chislehurst on the part of the local council at Sidcup Place, and it was in effect, the final straw.

And where does all this leave us over the question of being Kentish? In May 2001 some correspondence arose with the very amiable Peter Harrison, who edited a column entitled *Say la Vie*, (*sic*) in *The Mercury* (which was once *The Kentish Mercury*) in which he looked "On the bright side of life in South East London". That was his perspective, based as he was in Deptford. Peter mentioned a reprimand received from a reader who objected to 'SE London' reference when, as he said, Bexley is *not* SE London but Kent. Peter recognised he had "dropped something of a bombshell" when he began to receive more and more correspondence on the subject. I wrote to him along the foregoing lines, including an explanation of the distinction between Men of Kent and Kentish Men, and he subsequently referred to "Roy's lovely nonsense about being a Kentish Man." Nonsense? He had no concept of this and neither apparently could he understand that Kentishness was so strong within me that I could never consider myself a Londoner. Had I been born in London, I have no doubt that I would be equally passionate about it, and proud to be one, but I happen to be Kentish, and nothing, no boundary changes, no arguments about ceasing to be Kentish just because Sidcup happens to fall within a Greater London Borough, will ever change my mind. My Kentish roots run far too deep for that. To quote a local war cry of the 1965 era: "Kent Forever, S.E.never!"

I thought it might be an interesting exercise to list the outings that have been Organised for the Society since 1992 – so here goes:-

May 92	Hythe, Rye & Winchelsea
July 92	Lancing College & Brighton Pavilion
Sept 92	Crystal Palace
Oct.92	Windsor & Runnymede
Apl. 93	Dulwich Village & Picture Gallery
May 93	Essex & Suffolk. Hadleigh, Sudbury, Hedingham & tea on the Colne Valley Railway.
June 93	Evening Tour of Charlton House

- June 93 Pattenydenne Manor, Kent
- Mar 94 Walking Tour of Clerkenwell
- Apl. 94 Hampton Court
- May 94 Otford, Maidstone & Charing (Archbishop of Canterbury's Palaces on his way to Canterbury)
- Oct 94 Evening Tour of the Manor House, Sidcup.
- Oct 94 Afternoon Tour of the Library, Avery Hill, University of Greenwich
- Nov 94 Imperial War Museum
- Mar 95 Afternoon Tour of Crossness Engines
- Apl. 95 Faversham & Brogdale Trust (Repository for all known Apple varieties)
- May 95 Tenterden, Hastings & Battle.
- Feb 96 Afternoon Tour of the 'Co-operative' Archives at Woolwich.
- Apl. 96 Syon House & Osterley
- Apl. 96 Chelsea Pensioners & National Army Museum
- June 96 Arundel & Firle
- Apl. 97 St.Albans & Waddesdon
- June 97 Conducted Tour of the Island of Sheppey
- July 97 Afternoon Tour of Eltham Palace (prior to English Heritage)
- Aug 97 Frogmore House & Savill Gardens
- Oct 97 Down House – Home of Charles Darwin at Downe
(We were one of the first parties to visit after English Heritage took this property on.)
- Mar 98 Conducted Afternoon Tour of Docklands
- Apl. 98 Tudeley Church (Chagall Stained Glass Windows) and Tunbridge Wells. This has been the only time we have employed a Blue Badge Guide as an experiment but felt their service was unnecessary.
- May 98 Maldon for Thames Barges, Crossing Temple for Knights Templar & Tiptree for Jam buying and afternoon tea.
- Apl 99 Upnor Castle and Conducted Tour of Rochester
- June 99 Hindu Temple at Neasden and Chiswick House. We had lunch in the restaurant in the park and were spotted by a restaurant critic of the Sunday Telegraph and became part of his critique on the restaurant – it was quite funny!!!
- July 99 Tour of the Royal Arsenal Barracks at Woolwich
- Feb, Apl. & May2000 3 parties of 20 each on Musical Evening Tour of Westminster^{ABBEY} in the company of the Purcell Singers
- Apl. 2000. Day Tour of the Dome – could not prise some of the ladies away so that the coach could bring us the short distance home.
- May 2000 Elham Valley, Walmer Castle and St.Margaret's Bay
- Apl. 2001. Cambridge & Grantchester where we had tea in the famous orchard.
- Apl 2002 Chatham Historic Dockyard
- May 2002 Stamford & Burghley House
- Nov 2002 Afternoon tour of Lamorbey Park now known as Rose Bruford College
- Mar 2003 London's City Hall and Southwark Cathedral
- May 2003 Waltham Abbey, Greensted Saxon Church, Chelmsford & Ingatestone Hall.
- May 2003 Morning tour of the Houses of Parliament with a Permit from our Member of Parliament, Mr Derek Conway.

Oct 2003	Wellington Arch & Apsley House
Feb 2004	Talk and Tour of National Portrait Gallery
Mar 2004	Further visit to Crossness Engine
Mar 2004	Afternoon visit to Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich
Apl 2004	Tour of the 'Enigma Home' Bletchley Park
May 2004	Bosham, Chichester & Weald & Downland Museum, Singleton
Oct 2004	'Milestones' – The Hampshire County Depository at Basingstoke.

It has really taken me back typing this list and remembering the fun in preparation of all of them. How many do you remember being part of? Frances P.

FAREWELL TO BLACKFEN LIBRARY

Walking to Blackfen Library on Wednesday morning 2nd March, 2005 for the Farewell Reminiscence Session organised by Friends of Blackfen Library, the only visible sign of damage was the graffiti sprayed on the doors – but this was par for the course on most public buildings these days. But whatever it is that will cost £100,000 to repair, and therefore makes the work uneconomic according to Bexley Council, didn't seem obvious. The building, less than seventy years old is still in remarkably good shape and clearly cherished by the Friends who have campaigned for its retention. But campaigning was not going to have much effect when the Council have had the thought for some years to transfer it up to Blackfen Road, notorious for its lack of public parking.

But the die is cast and I have no doubt that the information we will be given on the use of the new building in Blackfen Parade after its first year or so will 'prove' that the Council was right and library users wrong.

But enough of the Cassandra theme! It was a morning of great pleasure meeting up with long lost colleagues, some retired, others on my staff with whom I worked years ago now much higher in the hierarchy. And readers, many of whom I have known for so long that we could spend time discussing our grandchildren. We looked at each other's photographs and pored over the file on the library's history including the one of the staff at its opening in 1937. I was able to point out the assistant to whose job I succeeded when she left to marry. And I realised that altogether I had spent thirty-eight years of my life in that building.

But it would be curmudgeonly not to wish every success to the new lease of life and hope that it acquires as loyal a following as the old service had. Bess Dzielski

