

March 2012

Volume 2, Issue 4

## Chairman's Message



Photo of our Chairman Derek Boughton with the 1844 Tithe map which is kept in the Church vestry.

**STOP PRESS.....** Recent research by Derek has revealed WWI VC winner William Richard Cotter's mother was at one time an Elham resident. Full article to follow in our next edition.

## EHS now has a Facebook Group

Following on from the success of a couple of other local towns we now have our own Facebook group where people (EHS members and non members) can upload pictures and make comments about Elham's history. If you are on Facebook then please take a look at <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/317708811602063/>. The Ashford history group has over 2,000 members worldwide, with over 3,300 historical photos, to date we have 15 members and 40 photos, so let's see if we can increase those numbers!



Our Facebook Home Page

# Elham Historical Society

## Forthcoming Events

**11th March Visit to Bletchley Park** by Real Socialising. Cost £28.00 pp for members of Real Socialising

**1st April Visit to Ottinge - £5.00 FULL donation to Charity.** Add your name to the reserve list for a future date.

**20th April AGM** – Elham Village Hall. 8.00 p.m. Time to renew membership and hear what has been achieved in 2011.

**26th April Visit to Canterbury Cathedral.** Meeting at the Welcome Centre at 10.45 a.m. This will be a detailed guided tour. The cost will be £13.00 pp or £6 for those who hold Precinct Passes.

**11th May Elham Riots** - an updated talk by EHS Chairman Derek Boughton – Elham Village Hall 8.00 p.m.

**4th June Jubilee History Exhibition** – Elham Methodist Hall – many interesting artefacts from the historical archives.

**8th August Guided tour of Pugin's House, The Grange, Ramsgate.** A fascinating Landmark Trust building. Cost £2 pp plus small donation to the neighbouring church.

**14th September Talk about the Leas Lift, Folkestone** by Terry Begent. Elham Village Hall 8.00pm

**5th October A talk by Nicolas Reed about his father whose secret work in the 1940's helped win the war.** Elham Village Hall 8.00 p.m.

**6th October Visit to the Menin Gate and Ypres** being arranged by Real Socialising. More details to follow.

### To be arranged:

A Tour of Canterbury Cathedral Archives

Steam in Elham - a Re-run of Richard Moffatt's excellent talk about the Pegden Brothers of Elham

Visit to Provender House

**For more information and to book your places please contact [asladden@btinternet.com](mailto:asladden@btinternet.com)**

**We would welcome suggestions and ideas for other talks and visits**

## The Sinking of HMS Hythe in 1915

The Hythe was a cross-channel paddle-driven ferry, with a displacement of 509 tons. She was built in 1905 for the South Eastern and Chatham Railway, and worked the Dover-Calais route. The vessel was requisitioned at the outbreak of war and became a minesweeper, based at Scapa Flow. In 1915, the Hythe was sent to work on troop movements in the Dardanelles.

The Sarnia also began life as a ferry, in 1910 for the London and South Western Railway. In war service she became an armed boarding steamer. With a displacement of 1498 tons and a top speed of 20.5 knots, Sarnia was a much larger and more powerful vessel than the Hythe, whose limit was only 12 knots. The men of the 1st/3rd Kent Field Company Royal Engineers (including **A. W. Watson, the father of Elham resident Bill Watson** \*\*) boarded the Hythe at Mudros Bay, en route for Cape Helles. With them was 1st/2nd Kent Field Company Royal Engineers, bound for the same destination. Two transports were available – the Hythe and the Redbreast. The story goes that the company commanders tossed a coin to decide which vessel each company would take. Captain Reggie Salomons and 3 Company took the Hythe.

The Hythe left Mudros Bay at about 16:00 on 28 October 1915. She was severely overloaded. Men were packed on the

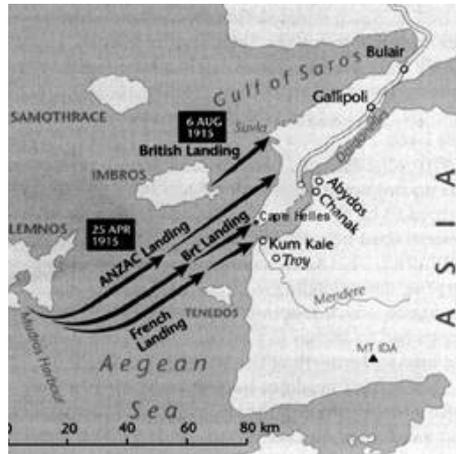
decks, many huddling under an awning that had been rigged to give a little relief from rain and spray. At about 20:00, as they neared their destination, men donned their kit, drivers went to their vehicles, and the Hythe doused all lights. Within minutes the lightless Sarnia was spotted, steaming back empty to Mudros Bay from Cape Helles, and on a collision course.

Some accounts suggest that Sarnia mistook the Hythe for a submarine and rammed her deliberately. I doubt it. We know that both vessels made at least one change of course but it seems that neither slowed down. The Sarnia struck the port side of the Hythe with such force that its bows cut halfway through the ship. That brought the Hythe to a dead stop and caused its mast to collapse on the awning. Many were killed instantly by the bows and the mast but the others fared little better because the immense damage caused the Hythe to sink rapidly. It was all over in as little as ten minutes. Many drowned trapped

under the awning or in the cabs of their vehicles. The others had little or no time to gain the railings and throw off their kit before they were in the sea. As always, fortunes varied. A lucky few scrambled from one vessel to the other without getting their feet wet.

\*\* Note added by Elham Historical Society

Clive Maier 8th May 2004 (source - Internet)



## Changing Map of the Middle East

Those of our readers who have access to a computer may enjoy this fascinating website which shows a constantly changing map of the Middle East region over the past 5,000 years. It illustrates how various "empires" have risen and fallen over this period...in just 90 seconds!

Try it for yourself...

[www.mapsofwar.com/images/EMPIRE17.swf](http://www.mapsofwar.com/images/EMPIRE17.swf)

## The British Newspaper Archive is now available On Line!



For the first time ever the British Newspaper Archive makes it possible for you to search millions of pages of historical newspapers from the comfort of your own home.

Searching for news articles, family notices, obituaries, advertisements and letters is completely free and

there is a wealth of new information ready and waiting to be uncovered. A fabulous resource for family history researchers who logon!

[www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)

## Good News from Westenhanger Castle



Those members who joined our first outing to Westenhanger Castle will be delighted to learn of an award that they recently received. This was the Angels Award, given for craftsmanship skills in rescuing the Smythe Barn and it was awarded by a panel of judges which

included eminent authorities on heritage buildings as well as Melvin Bragg, Michael Winner, Bettany Hughes and Andrew Lloyd Webber! In fact the awards were the brainchild of Lord Webber in conjunction with English Heritage, The Daily Telegraph and the BBC Culture Show.

## EHS Newsletter – Apology

An error has been pointed out in our article on the East Kent Hunt in our last issue. We had said the buff collar of the hunting jacket is worn in memory of "The Buffs".....they were the Royal East Kent Regiment – not the West Kent.

## Your Memories of the Hurricane of 1987

This year will be the 25th anniversary of the Great Storm of October 1987 so we thought it would be of interest to our members to recount some of Elham residents' memories.



*15<sup>th</sup> October 1987 "Batten down the hatches, there's some extremely stormy weather on the way" – Michael Fish*

On the night of 15 October 1987 one of the strongest UK storms ever recorded passed over Kent.

At the time, this storm was the strongest seen in the UK in over 280 years.

It left 22 people dead and the UK insurance industry facing £1.4bn in claims. Had the storm passed over in the daytime then these figures would no doubt have been higher.

While it is often referred to as a "hurricane", it did not meet the meteorological criteria set out for this category of storm.

That said, the winds did reach hurricane force and it was the winds that caused most of the damage.

Millions of trees were blown down, power lines were destroyed, roads and train lines were blocked and ships were capsized.

The storm will, of course, always be remembered for Michael Fish's infamous forecast.

However, subsequent analysis of the storm has shown that an accurate forecast would have required detailed knowledge of the upper-levels of the atmosphere over the Western Atlantic - something that was not available at the time.

Maybe it is time to forgive and forget! (info from the BBC News Website)



This photo was taken of Willow Cottage just after the tree was cut down, however you can see the remains of it along the edge of the wall and of course the gap in the wall. There is minor damage to the East facing roof, with the most extensive damage unseen on the South facing side.

*View of Vicarage Lane—Photo by Monica Holland*



This is the Sealink vessel Hengist pictured here wedged on the concrete apron at Folkestone Warren. The vessel was initially moored in Folkestone Harbour, however the strong winds were causing the ship to break mooring lines and hit the harbour wall, so the captain decided to put to sea. Unfortunately when they left the harbour the sea was so rough that it caused an electrical problem resulting in both engines failing and the ship ended up on the concrete apron. When the tide went out bulldozers piled shingle and sand from the beach up against the hull to prevent further damage.

*Photo by Bryan Badham*

## Your Memories of the Hurricane of 1987

### Jane Blain Remembers:

I well remember 1987 as it was the hurricane that caused David and I to meet and the rest, as they say, is history! (All of which took place out of Elham so no use whatsoever for the EHS).

However, David recalls it bringing about a 'war-time' camaraderie, especially in Collards Lane as Prospect House had a coal fired AGA and it was

the only method of cooking and having hot baths and showers for its inhabitants. He recalls eating some of the most strange, but exotic meals, basically whatever was de-frosting in everyone's freezers.

After about ten days when a particularly big stew was near completion on came the lights; this was both surprising and somewhat disconcerting as the electric cables were strewn across the gardens. The stew was forgotten and urgent,

improvised methods of supporting these cables, trying to protect them from the ground and themselves, became somewhat of a priority. Then, when they had accompanied their mission, everyone returned to the kitchen to eat the rather overcooked communal meal.

The final p.s was that after the 'clean up' had taken place the house had a grand supply of logs that lasted just under two years!

### Robert and Morag Bagley wrote:

"Hurricanes and tsunamis seem to have one thing in common: before the forces of nature strike, there is an eerie, deathly calm, and so it was in the late evening of 15th October 1987. There had been warnings of a major transatlantic storm heading towards Britain but the Met Office concluded that it would pass to the south missing us and head towards France. As we all know, it changed course hitting southern and central England full force (18 people died) as well as northern France (4 people died). Thursday, 15th October 1987 was an ordinary working and school day for us. Back home in the evening we had supper; our daughters (Clare aged 7 and Caroline aged 6) did their homework and were then parcelled off to bed. I took our beloved spaniel, Henry, for his late night stroll. I noticed that it was very still and slightly warmer than usual. Morag and I then retired. Having slumbered off, we were woken by Henry barking furiously. I went downstairs. No-one had come to the house. I went into the back garden. It was unusually warm outside and very, very still and quiet. I ticked Henry off for all the fuss he was making and sent him back to his bed. But he was so right; he had the intuition and I was so wrong. In the early hours we were woken by the appalling, indeed frightening, noise

of a fearsome gale. Then we heard tiles from the roof and the south elevation of the house crashing to the ground and smashing. Pound signs glimmered gloomily in my sleepy brain! The howling gale intensified. I looked out our front window. It was surprisingly light. I could see our ancient yew trees bent parallel with the ground. Roof tiles continued to spin off and smash on the ground. We discussed whether to wake the children and move downstairs but stoically decided against it (nothing like a bit of "stiff upper lip"! ). The power had failed and we went to find torches and candles. Then came an enormous rumbling bang on the roof at the back of the house. We did not know what it was - but it didn't sound good! We were also worried that the chimney up the side of our bedroom was at risk. We gathered up the girls and their bedding and decamped to the sitting room with the dog. In the morning, come sunrise, the gale had waned. There being no electricity, we took comfort that we still had the AGA which provided hot water. Morag decided to have a bath, going to the back bathroom under the rear cat slide roof. I went outside to inspect the damage. The roof had been stripped of most of its tiles, the exposed beams and rafters giving it a skeletal appearance. There was debris everywhere, not all of it from our house, and the dustbins had been carried right round to the other side

of the house; was this Armageddon?! A neighbour discovered a garden shed had arrived over the wall. In the back garden I saw that the very tall chimney, which protrudes from the cat slide roof, had been knocked over on to the slope. That was the cause of the bang we had heard. It was lying across the rafters (all two and half tons of it!) but mercifully, ancient though they are, they withstood the impact. Morag was in the back bathroom. I rushed upstairs and said, "You get out of that bath and you get out of it now!" She was right under the chimney. The chimney contained the AGA's flue. Fumes were coming into the house so we had to turn it off but we still had the fireplace. The weather changed. It got colder and began to rain and rain for days. In times of calamity, such as the hurricane and severe winters, Elham is a truly wonderful place to live. Everyone pulls together. We had only a camp stove to cook on and a freezer full of thawing food, but everything was shared and eaten at the houses of those who had better cooking facilities. We had five days of parties which the children will never forget! The community spirit here is something for which we are truly thankful. Eventually we had the roof put back to rights and other repairs done by our wonderful builders, Marlow's of Lyminge, and we are still living happily here in Coopers."

## Your Memories of the Hurricane of 1987



**Ken London** remembers it well as they were due to travel to Devon for a nephew's wedding the next day. "Such plans were rendered null and void during that night as we lay in bed listening to our roof being torn off – a most frightening experience! More frightening, in retrospect, the next morning, was that I had actually ventured out into the rear garden in the middle of the night to try to see what damage was being caused. It was horrific, with the force and noise of the wind and hearing the crashing and banging in all directions as buildings, sheds, outhouses, trees and anything else, were being torn apart. I say, in retrospect the next morning, because once daylight came and the wind had died down, I again went out to inspect the damage only to find the garden strewn with debris from afar, including sheets of broken glass, some quite large. I dread to think of the consequences had I been struck by any of those! Fortunately, my stay outside had been very brief due to the conditions the previous, horrific night.

The damage was however considerable, the main roof had been stripped of tiles in patches all across, the greenhouse was no more, it looked as if a giant foot had stepped on it and flattened it. What glass had not been taken by the wind was shattered and three very large old fruit trees had been torn out of the ground. Remarkably, another had been laid over about 45 degrees but this we later managed to upright and it still produces masses of fruit today.

I recall the village was cut off for most of the next day due to fallen trees which needed clearing so, irrespective of our damage which needed attention, we could not have made our journey. The outcome for us was a new roof and new greenhouse paid for by our insurance company who, in all the circumstances, reacted very quickly, as did a friendly local builder who, although now swamped with work, very quickly secured our roof from the rains until the replacement could be carried out. I can recall that, for weeks after, wherever we went in the district, there were uprooted trees waiting to be cleared, and of course, further afield the sad loss of the Seven Oaks at Sevenoaks."

**Richard and Maggie Newington**, whose cottage backs on the Churchyard recall having a professional golfer called Susie Moon staying with them at the time of the Hurricane. She was due to take part in a major competition at Broome Park and the Newingtons held a supper at Church Cottage with friends on the night of the storm. During the course of the evening the weather became increasingly windy. Maggie says she got up to close the window in the early hours of the morning and remembers looking out and seeing "everything white and boiling in the churchyard!" Having had a fairly "boozy" supper she then went back to bed and to sleep!

Richard got up early to take the dog for a walk, unaware that there had been a storm, and was greeted with a scene of complete devastation all around. He got to the corner of the road and saw the big tree that had crushed the Old Vicarage Wall leaning on the house Willow Cottage opposite. It had brought the cable down with it when it fell and pushed it under the gable. As the wind moved the tree the whole building was being lifted up and down by the movement of the tree. Richard managed to get a hammer and hit the gable which released the trapped cable and the building settled itself down again. The Old Vicarage had lost 40 trees altogether.

Susie Moon had to report in person to Broome Park to claim her appearance fee but in order to get there she had to climb over Richard and Maggie's garden wall, by ladder, carrying a huge great golf bag, through the churchyard as there was no other way of getting out. She was met the other side by Dr Robert Stewart who managed to get her by car to within walking distance of Broome Park. Maggie's lasting memory is of this elegantly dressed lady golfer struggling through the catastrophic devastation all around to reach her lift to Broome Park!

Apparently by lunch time the road had been cleared by collective effort and Richard managed to get to work in Kent and Canterbury Hospital driving across the fields at Bonny Bush Hill! None of his colleagues in the Maxillo Facial Lab had managed to get in to work. Maggie and Richard remember that they had no power for a long time after the storm and their children managed to arrange baths with friends all over the village. Memory also has them spending a lot of time eating in the pub!



## Your Memories of the Hurricane of 1987

### John Palmer Remembers:

October 16<sup>th</sup> 1987 is a day indelibly etched into my memory. For years afterwards, the sound of a strong gale filled me with apprehension and dread.

I have kept a journal since I was a young lad and sure enough thumbing back 24 years, there is my account of Michael Fish's non-hurricane.

As a family we had been to the Marlowe Theatre the evening before and even then the rain and wind were fierce. The gale was blowing the props around the stage as backstage doors were blown open several times during the performance of Mozart's Magic Flute. We got wet through just walking back to the car-park by the West Gate.

The howling wind woke me at five o'clock the following morning. I glimpsed out of the bedroom window and a scene of utter devastation met my eyes in the half light. Kent peg tiles were being ripped from Pear Tree's roof and were fluttering like playing cards across the yard outside. There was the sound of breaking glass and trees were bending at ridiculous angles.

We were due to send a batch of lambs to Canterbury market that morning which meant loading them at 6.30 a.m.

I tried to telephone cousin George, but there was no reply. It was suicidal to venture out into the yard as the tiles were still whipping across at high speed and being hit by one would have caused serious injury. Surprisingly the electricity was still on so I made myself a cup of tea while deciding what to do.

By seven o'clock the wind was beginning to ease and the rain had stopped. George Butcher the truck driver rang to say he did not think he would be able to get through because of fallen trees blocking the road and in any case he was afraid of being blown over in his high-sided cattle truck.

Cousin George and I met at the Farm Buildings and surveyed the scene of devastation. Sending lambs to Canterbury Market was out of the question so it was not worth getting

them into the loading pen. The scene shocked us both as the damage wrought by the storm was horrendous. Kent peg tiles had been ripped from house roofs by the thousand. Slates littered the road outside and large holes had appeared in the roofs of our farm sheds. Even the heavy lead ridge flashing had been torn away from the frame, twisted like wet cardboard and dumped in the road. One farm trailer had been blown down the yard track and only stopped by a heavy tank full of treacle. Asbestos sheets had been prised off the cattle yard roof and cladding sheets were missing. Guttering had been ripped off the grain store and there was a gaping hole where the ventilator sheet had been.

Two very wet cold sows were still lying on their straw patches in the Old Orchard; their arcs had been lifted out of their paddock and deposited some fifty yards away plugged against a hedge. I believe they were both in shock and understandably bemused! Of course all the old apple and plum trees had been uprooted and the fences demolished.

This presented an immediate and serious problem.

Many fences had been broken and flattened. This meant that stock could wander at will on to roads and neighbour's land. The first priority was to check our boundary fences and then to determine which meadows were stock proof. Not many were. Gradually, the enormity of the damage dawned on us and the size of the task of temporary repairs was daunting.

Another particularly sad aspect was the uprooting and destruction of so many trees.

Having grown up on the farm, many of the trees had become like old friends. I had climbed many as a boy, some easy, some difficult and a few impossible. About 100 mature trees had succumbed to the gale on North Elham Farm and were now lying on their sides, shattered and broken. The smell of torn wood was all pervasive and

lasted for days. Many had survived the ravages of the war when dozens of oaks were cut down for the 'war effort'. Ash trees dating back perhaps to early Victorian times or even before, had all perished in a few rapacious hours: irreplaceable. Uncle Bill's ugly barn at Grimsacre was another victim and Jimmy Baker's caravan at Worldswonder was blown over and his greenhouse crushed.

Gradually over the next few hours the extent of the destruction became apparent. All roads were blocked by fallen trees and that included the Valley Road and the Denton Road. Council gangs were out in strength to clear these vital roads for the emergency services. Many people took the day off work as travel was almost impossible, not only in the immediate locality but over the whole of the South East. Never before had the face of Kent been so radically changed in such a short time.

We spent the following week chain sawing up the trees as best we could. Even to-day some still remain in Pierceley Wood where they fell as we never got round to them. It was a tragedy that so much valuable wood, oak, ash, beech, maple and sycamore, was just left to rot as there was so much of it. On the other hand, the price of Kent Peg tiles soared as so many were needed as replacements on listed buildings. This made them very attractive items to thief, which became a nightmare.

The imprint of that frightful night must remain with everyone who experienced the aftermath of it. The cost of repairing the damage it caused was enormous, county-wide. It served to remind us that when it comes to controlling Nature, Man's efforts are puny.

And to think that on the Met Office weather forecast the evening before we were told 'there'll be a bit of a wind but nothing to worry about!'

March 2012

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## Postcards

Don't forget our wonderful collection of vintage postcards are available from The Cosy Tea Rooms or Elham Valley Stores, all in the High Street at a cost of 60p each or £4.50 for a pack of nine.



## It's your Newsletter!

We've got lots of good "stuff" to tell you about in these newsletters but we hope that you, our members, will also provide contributions.

Everyone will have their own special areas of interest so, to stop us banging on about our own obsessions, send us your thoughts and photos etc. Letters to the Editor are always appreciated!

**Please email me at**

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