

November 2011

Volume 2, Issue 3

Chairman's Message

Our very efficient editor Dilys tells me that, as there is so much good stuff in this Newsletter, there is only room for about a hundred words from me, and – oops – that's already wasted a quarter of them.

My brief message then is, read this edition with pleasure, but offer criticisms and comments if you have any (and articles for the next issue). Make a note of future events, and keep an eye out for emails from our equally efficient secretary Andrée, telling you of other plans.

Much of my time recently has been taken up with making an index of the occupants of Elham Cemetery. It may be some time before this is incorporated into the EHS Database, but Barry is adding to it most weeks, so keep watching that space.

And, for those of you not on email, we will make sure you are kept informed in other ways.

The Past Comes to Life in Ottinge

When Alison and Chris Jelly moved into Bridge Cottage, in Ottinge, the previous occupant had left an intriguing surprise for them.

Together with the deeds of the property, which was built for railway workers next to the Ottinge sidings in 1880, was a time capsule that had been unearthed when an extension was built in the 80's.

The fascinating contents include:-

A campaign medal from the Egyptian war dated 1884-6 – I think this must be the Khedive's Star, a bronze medal awarded to all British soldiers who served at Suakin.

A large gold wedding ring – probably a man's.

A Snake belt buckle probably a man's and another smaller buckle which could have been a ladies.

A military button and another very rusty button.

The back of a decorated ladies' locket.

A chain – maybe for a fob watch, and a hook.

A religious medal depicting "Our Lady of the Scapular"

A penny dated 1916

A coronation Medal dated 1911 issued by Barratt and Co with the slogan "Sweets are Pure" on one side and the head of the monarch, George V and his queen, Mary of Teck on the other. King George was crowned in Westminster Abbey on 22nd June

A Taster of Forthcoming Events

Friday 16th December 2011 - At talk by Andrew Joynes on **The Life of Percy Powell-Cotton** (to be followed with a **visit behind the scenes at Quex Park** in the Spring).

A possibility for a winter evening – a film and a talk about local boy made good – Christopher Marlowe.

Sunday 11th March 2012 Bletchley Park – (£28.00 members/£30 non-membs of Realsocialising)

Duxford Air Museum and Windsor and Eton – both dates and costs t.b.a.

April - **Guided Tour of Canterbury Cathedral and the City** with a suitable lunch stop between the two.

May - **Talk by Derek Boughton on The Swing Riots**



and was the first of the Windsor dynasty.

An undisclosed coin depicting a sun.

6 Clay pipe bowls, one with a head and the legend "Je suis le Beau Jaco" and "Jacob" inscribed on it and others variously decorated.

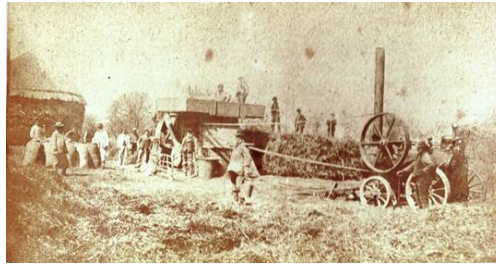
According to Bridge Cottage's previous owners, the first resident was a Mr White and co-incidentally a Captain L. A. White is mentioned as having served at Suakin on the Red Sea on the Shropshire History website. Could this be a possible link? More research obviously needs to be done!

Steam In Elham

If you thought this was going to be a boring talk about the nuts, bolts and gauges of traction engines then you were mistaken!

Richard Moffatt, grandson of Fred Pegden gave a wonderful, no notes talk, about Elham's engineering dynasty – "The Pegden's". Illustrating the very early days of their involvement with traction engines during harvesting at Standard Hill Farm in 1874, Elham Brick Works in 1888, the Boer War in 1899, their snow ploughing and agricultural contracting activities in the 1940's and 50's, through to the demolition of the Elham Valley Railway bridge at Worlds Wonder. All brought to life using rare and previously unseen photographs from the Pegden family album.

The evening would not have been complete without mentioning their "Traction Engines Rallies", and the possibility that they were actually the first people in the world to hold such events. The intention of the early rallies in the 1950's was to allow a few engines to compete against each other with an estimated crowd of 200 people watching, it turned



Thomas Pegden (centre - in the smock) seen here Harvesting at Standard Hill Farm, 1874, using a 8HP Clayton portable steam engine.

into a major event with tens of thousands of spectators cramming onto the site, with cars parked in every available field in the area. Could this ever happen again we wonder?

Over 80 people attended the talk, including past and present owners of traction engines that have passed through the hands of Pegden Bros. A large number of people have contacted us to say that having now heard about the talk they wished they had come along! Richard has therefore agreed to repeat this talk at a daytime venue in the village so that older residents can also attend. Watch this space for further details and try not to miss it

this time around!

The Elham Historical Society are very grateful to Richard for giving us the opportunity to scan and archive the complete Pegden Family archive of photographs, posters and documents. We have only covered a small amount of this valuable collection and look forward to working with Richard on further presentations which will hopefully give a complete record of their contribution to the village of Elham and the world of traction engines.

Girl 'murdered' by Roman soldiers in north Kent

The body of a girl thought to have been murdered by Roman soldiers has been discovered in north Kent. (April 2011) Archaeologists working on the site of a Roman settlement near the A2 uncovered the girl who died almost 2,000 years ago.

"She was killed by a Roman sword stabbing her in the back of the head," said Dr Paul Wilkinson, director of the excavation. "By the position of the entry wound she would have been kneeling at the time."

The Roman conquest of Britain began in AD43, and the construction of Watling Street started soon afterwards linking Canterbury to St Albans.

A small Roman town was built on the route, near present-day Faversham.

Dr Wilkinson is the director of SWAT Archaeology - a company which carries out digs before major building work takes place on sites which may hold historical interest.

He was in charge of a training dig excavating Roman ditches when they made the shocking find.

Dr Wilkinson said that she had been between 16 and 20 years old when she was killed, and her bones suggested that she had been in good health.

One can only imagine what trauma this poor girl had to suffer "

He also believes the body had then been dumped in what looked like a hastily dug grave.

"She was lying face down and her body was twisted with one arm underneath her body. One of her feet was even left outside the grave," he said.

The burial site was just outside the Roman town, with cemeteries close by.



Dr Wilkinson said the body was found with some fragments of iron age pottery which would date the grave to about AD50, and suggest that she was part of the indigenous population.

Another indication of her origin, according to Dr Wilkinson, is the orientation of the body.

Romans buried their bodies lying east-west, whereas this body was buried north-south, as was the custom for pagan graves.

Many people have a romantic view of the Roman invasion, Dr Wilkinson said. "Now, for the first time, we have an indication of how the Roman armies treated people, and that large numbers of the local populations were killed.

"It shows how all invading armies act the same throughout history." he said. She will be re-buried at the site.

Information source - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-13211331>

Season's Greetings.....

As we flinch at the thought of another bad winter we thought it might be salutary to look back at some of the "bad" winters that Elham has experienced in the past.

Farmer, Bob Martin, in his book "**Ramblings Round my Life**" remembers a particularly difficult journey home from London in the late 50's after looking at hop samples. They returned to their car and noticed some snowflakes in the very cold wind. "We were quite concerned at this as a few flakes in London could mean a lot of snow at home. And so it turned out. We got to Lenham, 30 minutes or so from home and the traffic came to a halt so Jim (Higgs) got out and walked up the road to assess the problem. He ran back to the car and said we should turn round and go back as he could see the cars in front being drifted in. This was a notorious area in those conditions so we retraced our journey until we came to a route I knew that would take us through the Weald and should be less hazardous. We got within a mile or so of home quite unprepared for what we found as we drove down the road to Jim's farm, I was confronted by a snowdrift much higher than the car! These roads were often in cuttings and in such weather got drifted in as the wind blew even a small snowfall off the fields and through the hedges, depositing it in the roads making them impassable. I backed out and Jim got out to walk up the hill whichever way he could find. He arrived home to find that his wife Pauline had got caught out in the storm and had got a touch of frostbite.

My journey, after being denied the route open to Jim, took me through the village of Elham to a right turn that would take me to my house, but again a large drift told me what to expect for the rest of the way, even if the car could make it. I drove back to the village noticing that there were no lights in any of the homes. I had hoped to park in the Rose and Crown car park then walk up the hill to home. I went in and found the pub lit only by candles. There had been an N.F.U. meeting in there and a few stalwarts were still

there. After explaining to the landlord about the car, I started the horrendous journey home, stumbling through the deep, drifted snow, wearing only the light shoes I had worn in London. The noise from the wind blowing across the fields and through the woodland areas that night was unbelievable. By now I was so cold that all I could think of was getting home to dry myself and get warm. At last as I got to more exposed ground, I left the deep snow behind as the strong, bitterly cold wind blew the snow away from me as I walked across the field leaning into the wind which at times in the more exposed places with no wind breaks made it difficult to stand. At last I got home but lack of electricity did not help to make things very comfortable in the old farmhouse. I then found that my wife, Doreen, had been caught out nearly a mile from home at one end of the farm and had to abandon her car and walk home, Graham, my second son, could not be collected from school and with many more small children had to be bedded down in the school. Doreen's car had snow drifted into it and was dug out by a nearby farming friend. When the roads were cleared sufficiently we went to tow it out and found that the engine compartment was a large block of ice. " Apparently, the car suffered no problems despite the awful weather it had endured!

Mary Smith had catalogued the appalling weather of 1940 in her diary, and Dennis Knight, in his book "**A Harvest of Messerschmitts**" set out some highlights:

12th January Thirty-six degrees of frost has been recorded.

17th January The snow was about eighteen inches deep on level ground, but when driven by the wind, the drifts were ten feet or more. Manston aerodrome was unusable.

18th January The officers (of the London Rifle Brigade, billeted in Temple Cottage opposite Beachborough Park) were well off for fuel, but there were nights when they thought they were going to perish. The extremely cold weather caused an acute shortage of fuel in the men's billets and stern measures had to be taken, such as only

allowing them to burn fallen wood. If the officers hadn't kept a firm grip on the situation, the soldiers would have felled the magnificent parkland trees around the houses. Doors, chairs, even wooden scrubbing brushes were inclined to disappear and they all had to be accounted for. Several billets were cut off by snowdrifts and the men collected rations on home-made sledges.

19th January Herbert Wilcox, Headmaster of Elham village school, looked around at the handful of red-cheeked children who had managed to get there. He couldn't see out of the windows for ice, the pipes were frozen, the lavatories wouldn't work and there wasn't any water. He decided to close the school.

25th-26th January After a thaw, driving sleet turned to snow and Hawkinge village and the aerodrome were snowbound and cut off. Buses stopped running and the road to Folkestone was impassable.

30th January The cold weather was causing havoc amongst the animal population....starving sheep and dead rabbits all over the place. In their frantic efforts to keep alive, animals had gnawed the bark from trees and stripped the hedges of twigs.

12th February Snow began to fall again....Manston was closed because of snow.

18th February Another blizzard cut Elham off from the outside world, but somehow the Royal Mail van got up Derringstone Hill and along the valley.

25th-27th February It continued cold, but temperatures rose above freezing during the day. The thaw sent torrents of icy water pouring down from the hills and, to add to the misery, low-lying roads and cottages were flooded.

13th March During the night the wind veered to north and the barometer fell to 29.

14th March Snow blizzard. The blizzard, driven by gale-force winds, lasted for five hours and Elham was again cut off.

Well, what ever the weather throws at us...it won't be anything we haven't endured before!

Have you any memories of bad weather – perhaps the hurricane – and how it affected life in Elham?

A Brief History of the East Kent Hunt

For some Elham residents the Hunt is synonymous with the village and for many locals, Richard Blakeney, Huntsman for over 30 years, epitomised the East Kent Hunt. Richard retired in 2009, but the history of the hunt probably goes back to the 18th Century, although there are no records before 1814 when Sir Henry Oxenden became Master, until 1825. Our hunt is the most easterly hunt in England, bounded by the sea in the South East and split by the M20 and the mainline railway. The area stretches from the Romney Marsh in the South to Canterbury in the north, Ashford in the west and Dover in the East and includes chalk grassland, forestry and ploughed land. Traditionally it was called a "soldiers' hunt" because it attracted riders from military centres in



"The Funeral of Selby Lowndes – Master of the East Kent Hunt for 30 years. Note the hunting boots turned the wrong way!"

Canterbury, Dover and Shorncliffe. In memory of The Royal West Kent Regiment their jackets carry a distinctive buff collar – the regiment was known as "The Buffs."

The first recorded Master, Sir Henry Oxenden, had a particular theory regarding hounds, believing that spayed bitches were better and had more drive than their sisters. Apparently his theory gave them 14 seasons of excellent sport.

He was succeeded by Lord Fitzwalter, possibly jointly with Mr, William Deeds, and when their term finished in 1832, Mr F. Brockman of Beachborough Park ushered in a period of prosperity. He was an excellent Master for 38 years and was extremely popular with farmers and covert owners despite a wicked sense of humour. He made the controversial decision to introduce French foxes!

He was succeeded in 1870 by the 7th Earl of Guilford who built kennels and stables at Waldershare at vast cost and

hunted four days a week at this own expense. His knowledge of hounds and breeding, together with Mr Brockman, helped establish a first class pack. He resigned in 1879 and moved to the Cattistock where, sadly, after 3 seasons, he was killed in a hunting accident and, it was said, was mourned by "the whole of England."

Between the years 1879 and 1900 there was a series of 8 short Masterships before the redoubtable and much loved Henry W. Selby Lowndes came from the North with his strong views and stronger language! He held the reins for 30 years and introduced a "Foot-Followers Meet" which was held on Easter Mondays to thank the people of Folkestone and Dover for their support. Often, when the hounds met at Capel, 2,000 supporters would turn out! His biography recounts that he was "no feather-bed and motor-car Master and during his first cubbing season he had often twelve miles and more to travel to five o'clock fixtures, which necessitated him rising at two o'clock and walking to kennels (two miles) in top boots, to make a start with hounds at three o'clock. Yet after a long morning's cubbing it was not uncommon thing to find him playing in a village cricket match in the afternoon."

A feature of The East Kent Hunt has been the length of service of many of its' Masters, and the stability this provided has ensured good sport for over 200 years. Another run of short Masterships was followed in 1967 by Reg Older of Brabourne, who was Master until 1988, then joint Master with, variously, W.G.H, Piper, E. Maylam and S. Furnival until 1997.

Richard Blakeney, as Huntsman, has continued the long service tradition, joining initially as Whipper-in in 1970 and becoming Huntsman in 1976 when David Bartlett retired, but the latter years have not been without incident.

1968 – A number of hounds were lost on the railway at Smeeth, which must have been heart-breaking, but Richard tells me that foxes no longer run that way.

1963 – Foot and Mouth

1967/8 – Foot and Mouth – a whole seasons hunting was lost.



1996 - The Hunt moved to new kennels in Elham. (It had moved from Waldershare to Elham itself in 1879.)

1978 through to the '80's - Several years of attention from hunt saboteurs.

2001 – The most recent outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease which we all remember so clearly. It caused a crisis in British agriculture and tourism and over 10 million sheep and cattle were slaughtered.

2004 – East Kent "Satin" won 1st Prize (Winning Bitch Puppy) at Peterborough.

18/2/2005 – The Hunting Act 2004 came into force in England and the pursuit of foxes with hounds was banned. The EKH has continued within the law. They are the only hunt in the South East to take fallen stock. When Richard joined the hunt this service was free and now disposal costs are in the region of £120.00 a ton.

2008 – Ardingly – South of England Show. Richard, at his last show, led 200 hounds around the showground in the Hound Parade on his adored horse "Ben," cheered on by a vast crowd.



28th March, 2009 – Richard's last day' hunting at The Priory, Bilsington, where Huntsmen from all over England attended and 31 Hunts were represented.

25 Years in Elham by Bryan Badham

“Time flies when you are having fun” - That well used saying certainly applies when you come to live in Elham!

Having spent a great deal of time in Browns Estate Agents and subsequently in the Rose & Crown pouring over the latest property offerings, Wendy and I finally decided on Eden House and we moved in on the 28th August 1986.

Summer was just about coming to an end and harvesting activities were going on all around. We quickly started to go on walks, exploring the numerous footpaths that criss-cross the valley and it has to be said that this exploring has gone on for years and I am sure we have not found all the walks yet.

I was fascinated by the old abandoned Elham Valley Railway and enjoyed rummaging around the old station platform and coal wharf sidings, as well as walking along various parts of the old line, including the tunnel at Bishopsbourne where you could walk through from end to end – very spooky! Our first real taste for “country living” came in the winter of that year when we were cut off entirely due to heavy snow falls. The roads that were usually kept open for the milk tankers to get through were completely blocked and electricity supplies were interrupted for days. This was not the end of the world though as we had our local shops, a camping stove complete with kettle and there was always a welcome at any of our three pubs. Eventually money supplies ran out in the village and IOU's were exchanged to keep everyone fed and watered.

October 1987 proved very interesting indeed. We woke early on the morning of the 16th to the sound of roof tiles peeling off their usual resting place and smashing on the ground. The hurricane force winds were whistling down the valley from the direction of Lyminge. Our roof was creaking so loudly that we got up and went down stairs just in case it came down or took off. I opened the front door only to close it quickly as debris was flying along the High Street towards Barham. There was a particularly large crash when the chimney on the side of Coopers came tumbling down, I imagine that Robert and Morag remember that vividly.

When day finally broke and the winds had eased slightly I ventured outside and found the lead sheets (some 3'x 5' in size) had peeled from the ridge of the

Methodist Church and were now either pointing towards Canterbury or on the ground. I found our friends Jim and Conrad who were walking along the road in a daze as a tree from the grounds of the vicarage had crashed through the roof of their home Willow Cottage, narrowly missing Jim who was still in bed. Once again we were cut off, this time by fallen trees and other debris. Once again the electricity was gone, this time, in our case, for a week, however the community spirit ensured that we all survived and apart from the lack of a hot bath we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves!

When thinking about what to write I did not want to list numerous businesses and people that have come and gone. However some are really worthy of note and were an important part of our early days here in Elham.

Dennis Caister's Butchers Shop – This was a thriving business and attracted many people from Elham and along the valley. Dennis was an Elham boy, although when running the shop during our time here he lived in Shepherdswell. He would drive in to Elham for 6am every day to get the shop ready for business and did not leave until well after 6 in the evening. He and Don were always very friendly to us, they kept an eye on the house whilst we were at work and signed for parcels in our absence. At the weekend Dennis was always there and if the weather was good and meat for a BBQ was wanted, he would always come round with a wonderful selection of meats, even if the shop was closed. Christmas was an exceptionally busy time and the shop ceiling was covered with hanging birds and other meats for the festive period. Despite a wonderful SOS – *Save Our Shops* campaign he sadly had to call it a day and the shop door was closed for the last time.

Mrs Baird's Ironmongers - Well what can I say? Stepping through the door was like stepping back in time. You could buy anything from a single nail, bolt, nut or screw, through to a garden spade, sink plug, paint, crockery, dustbins and tools, whose purpose in life I knew not! Sometimes you had to wait a while for Mrs Baird to come through from the sitting room or for her to finish taking a special order from the customer in front of you. There was no need to get in the car to go to

Lyminge of further afield, thereby saving you both time and money.

Addington's Bakery – Another business that supplied the village, parts of Canterbury and pulled in people from in and around the valley. My fondest memory of the bakery was when driving home at the end of a night shift, the closer you came to the village the smell of freshly baked bread wafted through the car window. Magnificent!

The Police Station and Houses – Here lived our village PC, who was often seen walking around the village and surrounding areas or tinkering with his tractor on the drive. Having a PC in the village certainly seemed to reassure people, occasionally you could even find him carrying out investigations in the pub!

Other shops and businesses that were here during those 25 years were: Joyce's Post Office & Gift Shop (now The Cosy Tea Rooms), Julian's Tack Shop (now The Old Bookshop), Elham Service Garage ideally located for servicing, repairs and yes – even petrol, Joyce's Newspaper & Sweet Shop (now Trelawney Cottage), Acrise Pottery (now The Old Bakery), The New Inn, Tim Roberts Wine Importers (adjoining Trelawney Cottage) and the NFU Office (now a physiotherapist). Other businesses have come and gone, most notably for us The Blue Vinney where Tom enjoyed working in the kitchen from the day it opened to that the it sadly closed.

If you look at old photographs of the High Street and other parts of the village and compare it with today, outwardly very little appears to have changed. Elham is still a hidden gem, set within the beautiful Elham Valley. The thriving clubs, societies, churches, and organisations are a credit to the many community minded volunteers that run them and most importantly the people of Elham that willingly support them. The village hall and sports facilities are a fantastic asset for the whole village. Play For Elham have done wonders with the George V Playing Field, a far cry from the old swings and see-saw that Tom used to play on.

We are certainly very fortunate to live in a beautiful village, set in a wonderful valley and to be part of a thriving, vibrant community.

Does anyone else have any memories of changes in the villages they'd like to share?

November 2011

Who is Who

Chairman

Derek Boughton

Vice Chairman

Bryan Badham

Secretary

Andree Sladden
Cherry Cottage
New Road
Elham CT4 6TQ
☎ 01303 840336

Treasurer

Dilys Webb

Newsletter Editor

Dilys Webb - dilyswebb@btinternet.com

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Keep informed about our latest projects and activities -

www.ehs.elham.co.uk

Postcards

Don't forget our wonderful collection of vintage postcards are available from The Cosy Tea Rooms, the Rose and Crown 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

dilyswebb@btinternet.com