



Elham
Historical
Society

September 2023

Volume 13 Issue 2

Chairman's Message

I had been studying the history of Elham for many years before the foundation of the EHS. One connection which goes back to 2003 is with Ed Morrows of Ocean City, New Jersey, who in that year had been in contact with his distant cousin Freda McDougall. Both were descended from Charles Rootes, who practised as a doctor in Elham for about twenty-five years until his death in 1803, Freda died in 2008, but Ed and I remained in contact by email over the years, filling in the details of a very interesting family tree. On Friday 22nd September Ed and his wife Donna came to Elham, and it was a real joy to spend a few hours with them and another distant cousin, Sue Prebble, and her husband Mike. We got to know each other over a splendid lunch at the new King's Arms, and then had a very happy tour of the village. The highlight was probably going into the Well House, for which thanks to Jeremy and Laura Benson. Here they were able to see a title deed which named Charles Rootes, and take home a scan of it.

We parted with a hug, and a promise on all sides to keep in touch. Such meetings are rewarding in themselves. What I was not expecting was the contents of an envelope which Ed gave me. Inside the card which thanked me for my help over the years were five crisp Twenty Pound notes. I have accepted the gift to add to the EHS publication fund, so another incentive to get into print!

DMB

Forthcoming Events

Unless otherwise stated all events are at 7.00 pm for a 7.30pm start in Elham Village Hall

Friday 6th October - Changing Face of Elham

Friday 3rd November (TBC) - The future of the EHS

6th December (TBC) - EHS Christmas Meal

Jan/Feb 2024 - Changing Face of Elham - Part Two

March (TBC) - Steam in Elham talk by Richard Moffatt

April - EHS AGM

**Admission costs: EHS Members £3 Non Members £5
(There is also a Non EHS Member charge for external visits)**

Space at Elham Village Hall may be restricted so please arrive early.

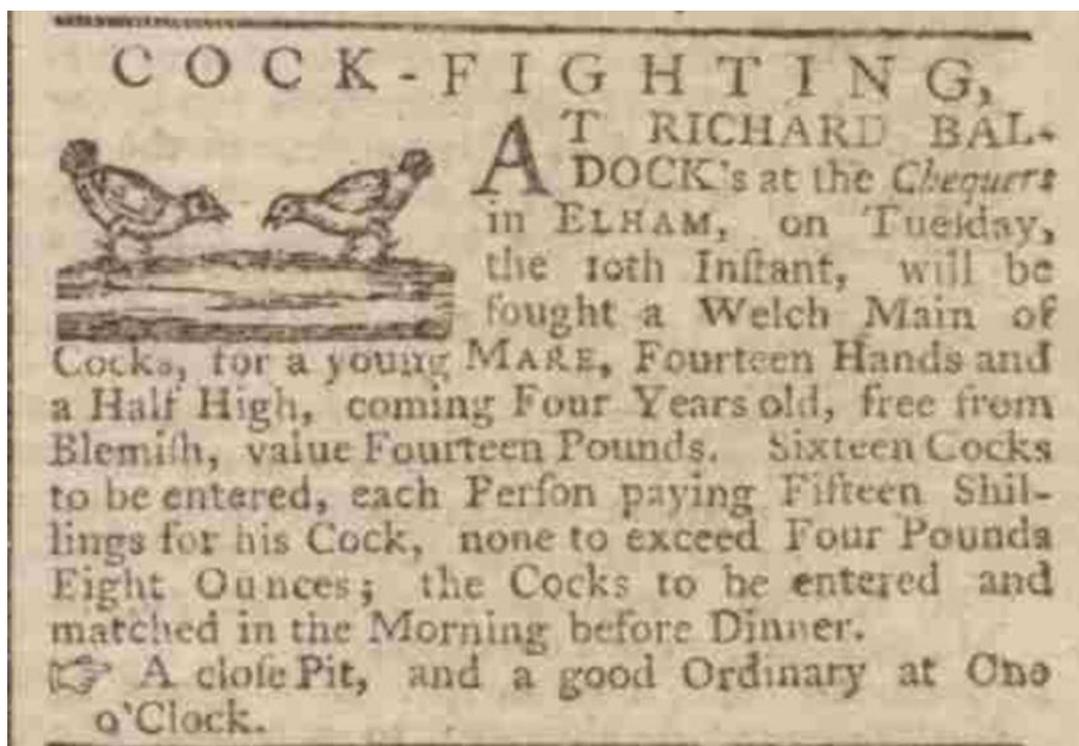
Poshing it up

I remember Dr Felix Hull, the Kent County Archivist when I first took an interest in local history, saying that he wondered if he had stumbled on a Roman settlement when he came across a 'Dux Farm' in one of the maps in his care. Not too much research was needed to determine that it was actually 'Ducks Farm'.

When I was a boy there were certainly those who tried to call the road running down from the church 'Duke Street', but the nearest we could get to the aristocracy were Lords of the Manor who were Baronets, and none of them lived in the parish. The clue to its real, and now firmly established, name lay with Water Farm and the Nailbourne at the bottom.

At the other corner of the Square, there was a campaign between the wars, led by Mrs File at "The Willows", to change Cock Lane, which, let's be frank, has certain associations, into 'Market Lane'. It's good that we no longer put cockerels in pits to bet on the outcome of their fights, but we cannot disguise the past.

I have never found evidence of cock fighting at the King's Arms, despite its previous name, and that of Cockpit Cottage. On the other hand, we do know that it took place at The Chequers in the High Street, from this advert in the Kentish Gazette in April 1770:



Coincidentally the recent reopening of the King's Arms on the 8th September came roughly a hundred and ninety three years after the name change in 1826.

In the early nineteenth century the Parish Vestry, which administered the civil part of church affairs, mainly the relief of the poor, met on alternate Mondays, and in strict rotation between the Rose and Crown, the Three Tuns and the Cock.

They met at the Cock on the 31st July, when they agreed to allow Henry Read a gaberdine and a pair of trousers. Six weeks later, on the 11th September, they met at the King's Arm's. On that occasion they resolved to get a warrant to apprehend William Marsh, who had absconded from his family leaving them unsupported.

Poshing it up /cont

It will always seem strange to me that the pub's name change took place during the reign of King George the Fourth, who was hardly our most popular monarch. And, in case you are wondering, the Three Tuns became the New Inn between the 21st September and the 19th October 1829. The pub was largely rebuilt at this time, probably in two stages to enable business to continue, and this may account for the completely straight joint which you can see in the front of the building.

Back to my poshing up theme. After the Hog Green estate was built in 1962-63, one early resident tried to get it spelt with two gs, perhaps wishing to suggest an association with Viscount Hailsham, rather than that most useful of animals, the pig.

I spent the first twenty odd years of my life living at the corner of Vicarage Lane, and I was amused to find that area described in one manorial document as 'Fleabury Corner'. I didn't think I would get much support if I tried to re-introduce it, but such pejorative names are not uncommon. I have always known the lane from New Barn to the Farthing in Lyminge parish as Louseborough Lane, but that has been poshed up to 'Loughborough Lane'. Field names often reflect the poorness of the soil. Lots of Elham fields and meadows were called The Rough, but one at Grimsacre was The Roughest, and it's certainly about the stoniest that I know in the parish.

At Ottinge one plot was known as Cacky Bit, and I imagine that Mr Rolfe was not at all unhappy when the Elham Valley Railway decided that they must have it to build their siding and the railwaymen's cottages. One name I was rather fond of has all but disappeared. Our wonderful Kent Wildlife Trust nature reserve is known as Park Gate Down or the Hector Wilks Reserve in honour of the man who did so much for it. However when I was a boy we would go there and pick not only cowslips but also orchids to take home to mum, and I knew it only as Madam's Bottom. There is a great story, which might be true, that one day Percy 'Ten Ton' Wright, a County Council lengthsman, was working there. A chauffeur driven car stopped and the driver asked where they were. When Percy replied that they were in Madam's Bottom, the fur-clad lady in the back said 'Don't be insolent my man', and they drove on.

To conclude this rather rambling article, let me return to the theme of Roman misattribution. Some like to think that the name Standard Hill relates to the raising of a standard at a battle long ago, even suggesting that it was that of a Roman legion. The name is much more likely to refer to standards, the individual single stemmed trees, usually oaks, which are left standing when a stretch of woodland is coppiced. Standard Hill Plantation, which lies on the left of the road from Elham, is indeed a good example of this practice. When it was coppiced some years ago one resident complained to the parish council that it had been 'destroyed'. In fact the practice of coppicing, when most of the wood is clear felled leaving multiple stemmed stocks to regenerate, is the best way to ensure the survival of ancient woodland, and also benefits both flora and fauna. The name Plantation suggests that this particular wood is not 'ancient' in the strict sense of having been in existence since before 1600, but that doesn't detract from its ecological importance.

DMB

Elham Primary School Essay Competition 2023

The essay competition was devised by Andree Sladden in conjunction with Elham Primary School. The EHS made available funds for books to be given as prizes for each class plus a cup and special prize for the overall winner.

This year's theme was Coronations and there were many splendid essays written and drawings created making it very difficult for the judges (Gillian Ratcliffe, Wendy Badham and myself).

This year's winner was Lola in recognition of an outstanding essay and the Andree Sladden cup was presented to Lola in St Mary's church on Friday July 21st.

Ian Sladden



Elham to the Cotswolds – a long journey with a long history

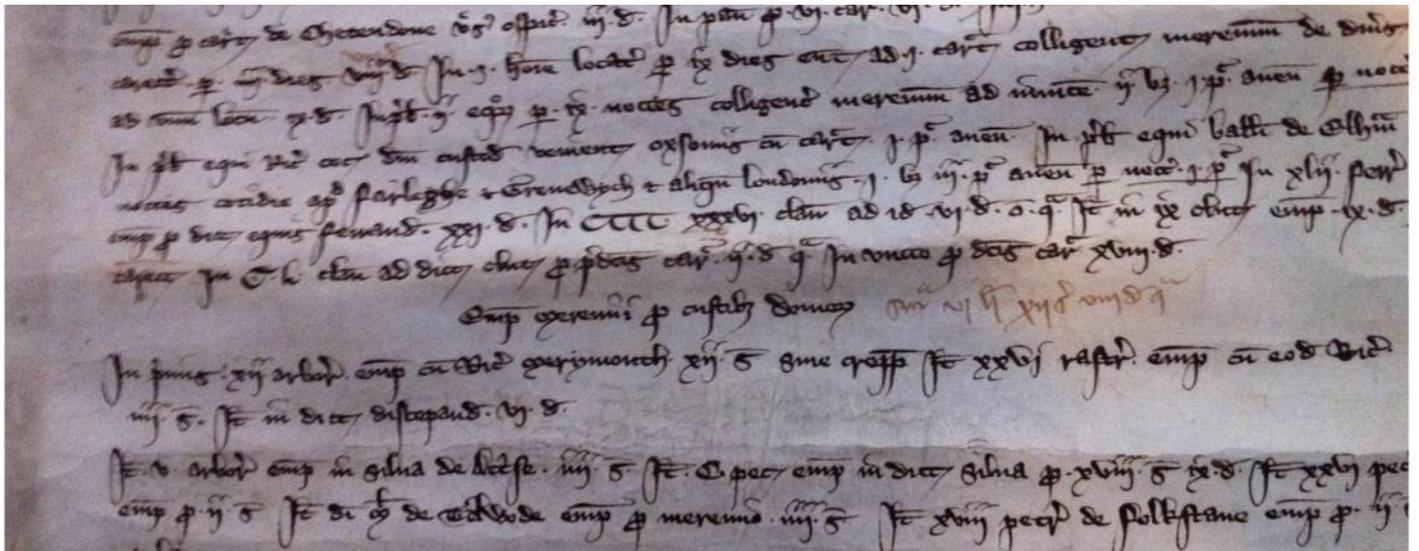
When the Elham Gardening Society trip to the Cotswolds took place in June, some of the party were aware that this was not the first time that this journey has been undertaken. Some of us were in the group which went there in 2008, led by the late great Hugh Buckhurst.

What may surprise you is that a small group from Elham was making exactly the same journey EVERY YEAR in the last decades of the thirteenth century, and throughout the fourteenth, even after the pandemic which disrupted their lives in 1348-49 (yes, there's nothing that hasn't happened before).

So, how did this come about? In the 1260s, Walter of Merton, an immensely wealthy man was buying up estates to endow his new college. These properties were scattered throughout the country, apparently randomly, but I wonder if he had a plan with networking between them in mind.

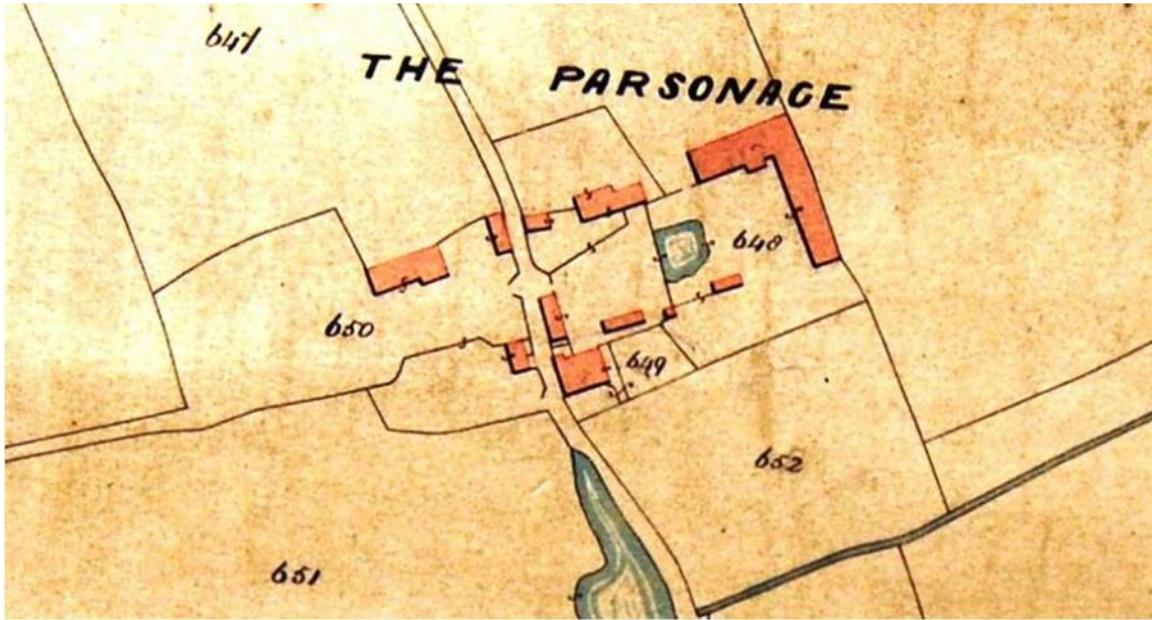
Walter of Merton had acquired the advowson of the parish of Elham, together with Parsonage Farm at North Elham (just forty acres) in 1267. The advowson gave the College the right to collect the tithes from most of the six and a half thousand acres of our very large parish, a lucrative asset which caused resentment over the years, culminating the Tithe Wars of the 1930s, in which Elham farmers took a prominent part.

When Merton College built the large new Tithe Barn at Parsonage Farm in 1344, it certainly involved networking between College estates. The oaks of which the barn was built were felled not at Elham, but on the College's estate at Farleigh in Surrey, west of Biggin Hill. They were transported by road to Greenwich, and as part of this operation two teams of oxen came down from another College estate at Cuxham, south-west of Oxford.



This is part of a document that details the whole operation. From Greenwich the timbers were shipped to 'Folkstane' (see the last line). While on the quayside there, a watchman was paid three shillings and four pence so the timber could be guarded 'day and night'. Dodgy place, Folkestone.

Elham to the Cotswolds – a long journey with a long history / cont



This plan was drawn almost exactly five hundred years later for the Tithe Apportionment, c1845. By then there was a long range of later buildings attached to the barn, but even without that you can see that it was much larger than the converted barn on the other side of the road. Sadly, nothing of it survives.



Merton College's stewards lived at Parsonage Farm, part of which is probably the oldest domestic building in the parish. From the 1290s, and probably before, they had established the practice of travelling each year to the markets and fairs of the Cotswolds to buy horses, which they would then bring back to Elham for resale. They could not do this alone, and took with them two or three village lads to ride and lead the horses back to Kent. They went every year to Winchcombe, where most of the purchases were made, but sometimes he would also buy at Chipping Camden, Stow-on-the-Wold, and other markets. There is still an annual horse fair at Stow.

Elham to the Cotswolds – a long journey with a long history / cont



Back in Elham the horses would have been sold in the Upper Market, as the High Street was known until the eighteenth century. In this space, they could be trotted up and down to show their paces.

They used two routes on the homeward journey, both of which involved staying overnight at other Merton College estates wherever possible. If they came via the Hog's Back, then a more expensive night at an inn in Guildford could not be avoided. On the Thames Valley route one of their regular stops was at a Merton property just outside Windsor. On the Gardening Society trip, the first stop was at the Savill Garden, similarly located.

The whole enterprise could take up to six weeks, and after expenses were paid, some years must have shown a loss. The twelve horses sold at Elham Market in 1298 for £9-1s-8d had cost £7-18s-0d. The expenses for that year are not recorded, but there can have been little, if any, profit.

Sometimes horses were sold on tick. In 1328 Thomas atte Sole bought a black horse for twenty-two shillings, paying four shillings down, and promising the balance at Ascensontide the following year. William Packer obtained similar terms for a bay horse with a white star on its head. Its price was twenty-six shillings and eight pence, but he paid six shillings and eight pence up front, again with the balance due the next Ascension Day.

The College really cannot have made much money out of this enterprise, but for a whole century, successive generations of Elham lads were able to broaden their horizons in a way which was not open to most of their peers.

DMB

AUDREY HEPBURN PLAQUE

For some little time the Society has been working on the above. When Audrey was a young Audrey Ruston she lived with her mother for three years (1936 to 1939) in the property now known as Five Bells, Duck Street, Elham .

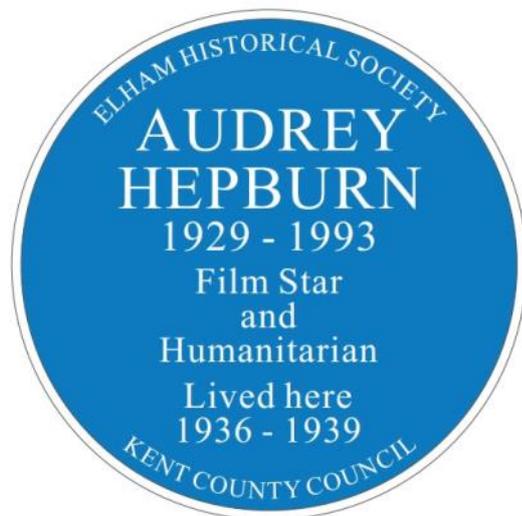
The much missed Andre Sladden carried out the initial work in connection with the plaque, including contacting the company (called Signs of the Times- 'SOTT') which makes the English Heritage London blue plaques. We have continued this work.

Frances Horton, the owner of Five Bells, has very kindly consented to the plaque being erected on the back wall of her property, so that it faces towards the Square, and should be able to be seen by all entering the Churchyard from the Square or walking down Duck Street.

SOTT have given a quote totalling £455.40 to include manufacture, delivery and VAT. Your committee have accepted this quote on behalf of the Society, and it is hoped that the finished plaque will be with us in early October. In appearance the plaque will be very similar in design and colour etc to a London blue plaque. It's diameter will be 400 mm. The quote from SOTT is most competitive, and we did not think we could do much better than go to the company used by English Heritage. To the £455.40 must be added installation costs (as yet undetermined but not a great amount), plus the cost of the unveiling ceremony. Obviously until we have the plaque it would be premature to 'name a date', but all members will be kept informed about this.

Thanks entirely to the good offices of Susan Carey, Elham's County Councillor, we have received a grant of £500.00 from the County Council, and this will go a very long way towards defraying all the costs involved.

Keith Mortimer



2023

Who is Who

Chairman

Derek Boughton

Vice Chairman

Dilys Webb

Secretary

Deborah Capon

Treasurer

Bryan Badham

Membership Secretary

Ian Sladden

Postcards

Don't forget our wonderful collection of vintage postcards at a cost of 60p each or £4.00 for a pack of eight. These are always available at our meetings in the Village Hall.



*Keep informed about our latest projects and activities -
www.elhamhistorical.org and www.ehsdatabase.elham.co.uk*

For more information about local events please visit www.elham.co.uk

Follow us on our Facebook page

We have our own Facebook Page where people (EHS members and non members) can view information and our historical pictures, as well as make comments about Elham's rich history. If you are on Facebook then please take a look.

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:

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