

BROMLEAGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY FOR THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY · No.2 AUGUST 1974

FUTURE MEETINGS

These meetings (except where stated) will be held in Room N.204, North Wing, Stockwell College of Education, The Old Palace, Rochester Avenue, Bromley and will start at 8 p.m.

Monday *The why, what and how* *Mrs J. Read and*
9th September *of local history research* *Miss E.M. Plincke*

These will be general introductory talks explaining the pleasure which can be obtained from an intelligent study of the history of the area in which we live and the lives of those who have resided in the area in the past. The fascination of the discovery of aspects of the past, and the means by which this discovery can be made, will be explained. It is hoped that arising from these talks members will be encouraged to take an active part in the work of the society. There is so much to be done and all members can help in some way with this work, and it is hoped that they will do so. Our area has a wealth of history, for here have lived the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the clever and the ignorant. All that we know of human life, and it is all here to be discovered and recorded for the future.

Tuesday *The History of Transport* *Charles F. Klapper, FCIT.*
8th October *in the area.*

Mr. Klapper was in the road haulage business for many years before he transferred to journalism. He is a transport journalist and historian and was for a number of years the editor of *Modern Transport*. He was a founder member of the Omnibus Society in 1929, and was President of the Omnibus Society, the Railway and Canal Historical Society and the London Underground Railway Society.

Friday *A Collection* *Mr & Mrs Marcus Arman*
18th October *of Bygones*

Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Arman have an interesting and extensive collection of bygones, objets d'art, etc. etc. They have very kindly invited members of the Society to see their collection and arrangements have been made for the visit to take place at 7.30 for 8 p.m. on Friday, 18th October. This collection is well worth seeing and it is very nice of Mr. & Mrs Arman to extend this welcome to their home to see their surprising collection. Members are asked to meet at 7.30p.m. on Friday 18th October at 28 Rodway Road, Bromley.

Wednesday *The Postal History of* *M.M. English*
13th November *Bromley & District*

Mr. English is the Editor and Publicity Officer of the Kent Postal History Group. He is particularly interested in the postal history of this area. He has done considerable research in the records of the Post Office. His talk will be illustrated with letters, prints, etc., from his extensive collection. He would like to contact members who may share his interest in postal history or who have any documents relating to postal history or old letters which he could study. His address is 50, Somerden Road, Orpington (Phone Orpington 29083).

President:

Members will be pleased to learn that His Worship the Mayor of Bromley (Councillor Kenneth V. Crask) has said that he will be very pleased to act as President of the Society during his year of office.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND CINE

On their forms of application for membership, some members said they were interested in building up a collection of photographs of the area. It is proposed therefore to call a meeting of these members to discuss how they are doing this and what help can be given to them by the Society. It would seem highly desirable to have a photographic record of historic buildings in the borough before they are demolished, and a slide show of such buildings would make an interesting evening for one of the Society's meetings. Those who have

already intimated their interest in building up such a collection of photographs or slides will be approached, but if anyone else would like to join the group they are invited to let the Hon. Secretary know.

If anyone is interested in cine-photography and would like to join in the production of a cine film with the emphasis on the history of the area, they are invited to let the Hon. Secretary know.

HOW MEMBERS CAN HELP THE SOCIETY

RESEARCH

This autumn a beginning will be made with research projects. Research is an essential part of any local history society and is certainly not as formidable as it may sound; for the work involved can range from something comparatively easy like to study of the development of a small area — e.g., the area in which you live — over a certain period, say, since 1914; or it can be a larger project such as the development of a much larger area, or the study of a family whose members have resided in the area, perhaps for generations. It is all local history.

Every possible assistance will be given by the members of the committee of the Society. Beginners will, if they wish, be advised as to an appropriate research project, or if they have anything in mind, will be advised as to its suitability. Next they will be told of the material that may be available and will be advised as to the course they should follow with a view to the ultimate result of the research either forming a basis for a talk to the Society or of a paper to be published by the Society.

There are no doubt members who have experience of research and would like to take part in a group project or feel they would like to undertake an individual project or develop a partly completed project. All this could easily be arranged, and the big advantage is that it would be done in the friendly company of other persons also interested in local history, where your work could be read and discussed by others.

MEMBERS NIGHT

On Wednesday, 12th February, the Society will be holding a members' night. This is an opportunity for members to bring along their historical treasures to show and discuss with other members. The idea is that three or four members either show their objects of historical interest and talk about them, or they give a brief talk of about 15 minutes on some aspect of local history which they have studied or are interested in. This is your opportunity so, volunteers please to the Hon. Secretary, (Farnborough 58679).

Records of the area

If you have any photographs, documents or records of old Bromley or the places within the area of the present London Borough of Bromley, please let Miss Plincke know. These records can be so valuable to local historians and it is tragic that many of these family "heirlooms" are lost because the owner takes no action to see that they are preserved. Their importance cannot be stressed too strongly. Family records, including diaries, old maps, old photographs, old documents — all of these may be of great local historical importance, and if this is so they should be preserved. Miss Plincke; the Hon. Secretary and members of the Committee would all be pleased to advise as to the importance of any records you may have. If you do not wish to part with the originals, steps can be taken to photograph old documents and maps, and the originals will be returned to you. The copies will then be available for study by future students of local history. ❧❧❧

It is essential that research should be undertaken by members of the Society and therefore any members who have not already stated their interests are asked to complete the attached form and return it to the Hon. Secretary, or to let him know that you are willing to help. You will then be invited to a small informal meeting to discuss the next step.

WORK ON LOCAL HISTORY RECORDS

One of the ways which members who feel that they have no "flair" for research, can help is by doing some voluntary work on the local records in the Bromley Room at the Central Library. Miss E.M. Plincke, the local history librarian at Bromley, will be very pleased to discuss with members the sort of help they could give.

The Quarterly Newsletter

This is intended to be a means of communication both with members and between members. The newsletter will contain information about forthcoming meetings and about the Society; notes on the local history activities of members and local history generally, and any other information which is likely to be of interest to members. If you have anything you would like published please send it to the Hon. Secretary at 163, Tubbenden Lane, Orpington. It may be a request for information or help with a local history project, a comment on the Society's affairs or a note of local historical interest. The Hon. Secretary will be pleased to hear from you.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The Committee will always be pleased to receive suggestions as to the future activities from members. At present a programme of monthly talks has been arranged and it is hoped to start research groups working in the near future. As members will have read in this news-letter it is also hoped to get a photograph survey of the borough — from a historical point of view — going, and to build up a cine film. The recording of church and churchyard monumental inscriptions is a task for which the assistance of members is sought — as is also the recording of old buildings and objects of historical interest. Have you any other ideas as to the work which the Society should be tackling — if so please let us know?

ANNUAL PUBLICATION

It is the intention of the Society to issue an annual publication containing certain talks which will be given at our meetings; the results of research activities and contributions by members. It may not be possible to issue a booklet this coming winter, but if members have any piece of research which they have completed or any contribution which they consider worthy of publication, they are asked to submit it to the Hon. Secretary for consideration by the Committee for inclusion in a future publication by the Society. Naturally any such work for inclusion in the Society's official annual booklet would be expected to be original work and of a high standard.

Bromley Library: Local History and Archives Section

Members wishing to study books and documents on the history of any part of the borough are advised to consult Miss E.M. Plincke, who is in charge of the Library's Local History and Archives collection.

The library holds a substantial and growing collection of books, pamphlets, maps, photographs and archives for reference use and anyone is welcome to visit the "Bromley Room" at the Central Library to study this material. The bulk of the collection relates to the London Borough of Bromley, but general works on Kent, and histories of many towns and villages in Kent are also available.

Collections of local material excluding archives, are also held in the Reference Libraries at Beckenham and Orpington, and other branch libraries have smaller collections relating to their immediate areas.

The archives can be consulted at the Central Library. It is regretted that until the new library is opened, a proportion of the archives are in store and therefore several days prior notice is required if these are wanted. Material held in the archives includes local government records from the late nineteenth century onwards; a sizeable collection of documents relating to land transactions and a few records of local businesses.

Anyone seeking detailed information should consult Miss E.M. Plincke as to the sources available and readers are welcome to telephone the Library (01-460 9955, extension 58) to find out whether Miss Plincke will be on duty at the time they expect to call.

The hours of opening of the Central Reference Library are:

Monday and Thursday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MEMBERSHIP

At the time of writing the Society has 110 members. This newsletter is being sent not only to members but also to a number of others who it is believed are interested in the Society's objects and activities. These are invited to become members. The rates of annual subscription are:- Members £1. Husband and wife £1.50. Pensioners 50p. Junior members, i.e. under 16 years of age 25p. Full-time students over 16 years of age 50p. Corporate Members i.e. schools, youth clubs, etc. £3. The Hon. Secretary is F.J. Whyler, 163, Tubbenden Lane, Orpington.

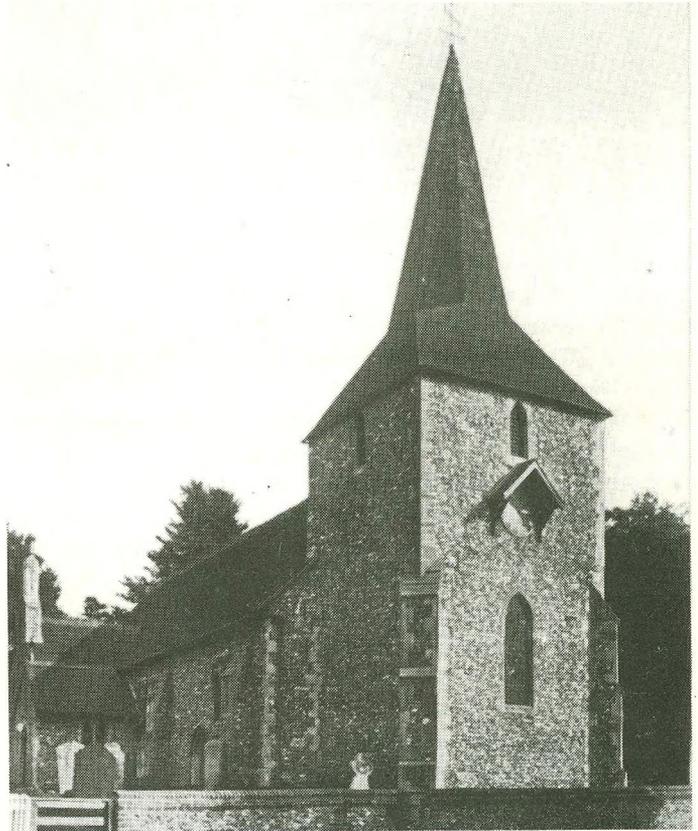
When applying for membership you are asked to state your particular interest — e.g., whether you are interested in the history of a particular area; a family or even a street — archaeology, a particular period of history, the administration of poor relief, the hospital service, etc., etc.

Your interests will then be recorded and you may be invited to an informal meeting with other members who share similar interests. You will have the opportunity of discussing the undertaking of research in to the subjects concerned.

Darwin and Downe

It is understood that consideration is being given to the installation of a window in St. Mary's church, Downe, in commemoration of Charles Darwin. Nothing was put in the church in memory of Darwin when he died in 1882 because the vicar at that time, like so many other people, was strongly opposed to Darwin's theory of evolution. He was however buried in Westminster Abbey and there is a memorial stone to him in St. Mary's churchyard.

When members of the Society visited St. Mary's on 13th July, it was found that the Verzellini brass had been removed from the floor of the church, and we were told that it was intended to fasten it to the wall of the church. Verzellini was a merchant from Venice when Shakespeare was writing his Merchant of Venice. He was a glass maker who got a permit from Elizabeth I to make glass on condition that he taught others. He bought Downe and much surrounding land and here flourished with his wife, six sons and three daughters. He died in 1606.



Downe Church

INFORMATION WANTED

...about Colonel Long and the Cawston family who lived at Bromley Hill, in what is now the Bromley Court Hotel;
...about Lt. Col. K.M. Kirkhope, who served in India for many years — lived in Farnborough and was a member of the Orpington U.D.C.

...about Farnborough Hall;

...about the Wells family — who were shipbuilders at Deptford and lived in Bromley;

Any information please to the Hon. Secretary, 163, Tubbenden Lane, Orpington.

The Priory, Orpington

It is understood that the outbuildings and the stables, which are now very dilapidated, are to be restored and used as offices. The cottage at the end is also to be restored and the original entrance will be kept intact. Full use of existing materials will be made where-ever possible and any new materials required will match them.

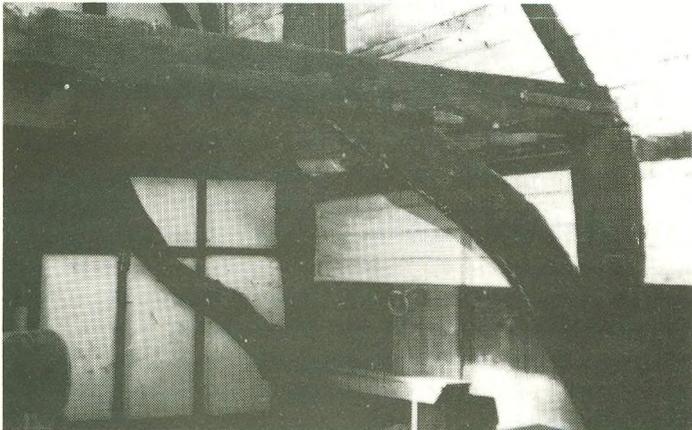
The Revd. F. Chenevix Trench includes in his book "The Story of Orpington" (published in 1898) descriptions of the Priory as it was in 1634 and in 1882.



Outbuildings — viewed from Church Hill — The Priory, Orpington, (6.10.1967) (Photo, courtesy Bromley & Kentish Times).

In medieval times the building was known as the Parsonage or Rectory because it was the residence of the rectors of Orpington. The name Priory seems to have been acquired in recent times and perhaps derives from the fact that the Prior of Christ's Church, Canterbury, was the lord of the manor.

The Revd. Trench says that the building is one of the very few pre-reformation rectories that has come down to the present day, and shows the kind of house that was supposed to be suitable for a fairly well-to-do rector of the 14th and 15th centuries. The priory stands on land which in 1032 was given by Badsy to the Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury. The first record of the house appears to be in 1270 when Hugh de Mortimer was rector and although he had seven other livings, resided at the Priory and in that year enquired into matters concerning Monks Horton Priory "in the hall of my rectory at Orpington".



Outbuildings, The Priory, Orpington. First floor room — old struts shown in detail. (6.10.1967). (photo, courtesy Bromley & Kentish Times).

There is an entry in the Canterbury records showing that three rooms of the building were erected in 1393, and in 1471 William Selling, the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, made great improvement in "the apartments of the Prior in

the Manor of Orpington". The Hon. Richard Spencer died here in 1661, and there is a monument to him (and members of his family) in All Saints, Orpington. He was the second son of the first Baron Spencer of Wormleighton, a Royalist who raised a considerable sum of money and two regiments of horse for Charles I. After the death of Lady Spencer in 1675 the property passed to the daughter's husband, William Gee, and remained in the possession of the Gee family (who later took the name of Carew or Garew) until 1854, when the Ecclesiastical Commissioners sold the glebe lands. The property was then conveyed to Charles Barry, who sold it in 1865 to Herbert Broom, on whose death in 1882, it was purchased by Lt. Col. B.G. Lake, who owned the property when the Revd. Trench wrote his book about Orpington. In 1900 Lt. Col. Lake left the Priory and in 1903 it was occupied by T.A. Roberts. Col. Percy Schletter resided there in 1905 and later it was bought by Col. Hughes, who died in 1952, when the property was leased from his widow by Orpington U.D.C. The open air theatrical entertainments provided by Mrs. Hughes on the lawn of the Priory were very popular. In 1947 the Urban District Council bought the property from Mrs. Hughes, and for some years it was used as offices, and then the scheme of combining the old building with a library was conveyed as a suitable way of ensuring the restoration, preservation and continued use of this fine old house. The new library was opened to the public in December, 1960, when it was reported that the restoration of the building had required great skill. All one can add is that the restoration of the outbuildings and stables will probably require even greater skill.

The Great Hall of the Priory is now a museum which all members are advised to visit. It is intended to arrange an organised visit by the Society sometime in the future.

GRAVESTONES AND MONUMENTS

The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies is making a national collection of inscriptions from churchyard gravestones and church monuments. This is part of their British Vital Records Index project and the collection will be deposited with the Society of Genealogists — although in the case of any work done in this area, it is hoped that a copy of the record will be kept at the Bromley library. In view of the destruction of many gravestones and monuments the project is regarded as important and urgent.

All our local churchyards contain important genealogical information. Members are invited to assist with the compilation of this index. In the first place it is desired to know if such a record has been prepared in respect of your local church. If it has not, then you are asked to help. Volunteers please let the Hon. Secretary know.

It is understood that at St. Nicholas, Chislehurst, plans are being prepared to remove a number of gravestones which have been damaged and it is hoped that by the time this newsletter is published a team will have compiled a register of the information on these stones.

If you do engage in this work, what is required is a transcript of everything on the monument that is still legible, particularly the names, dates, relationships, occupations, places and other similar information. It is suggested that those recorded should be where the person named was born before 1875. This covers most persons not included in the general registration files which began in 1837.