

# KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER



No. 15

Jan Spring 1990

## VILLAS OF PLAXTOL

On the 23rd of February 1859 the Reverend Lambert Larking recorded in his journal "a letter from Major Luard announcing the discovery of a Roman villa on the identical spot which I had indicated at Plaxtol - and falling in with my view that it is 'gniacum'".

Luard, who lived at Ightham Mote, had been keeping a careful eye open for chance discoveries at Allen's Farm in Plaxtol since 1857 when the farmer, a Mr Martin, had deep-ploughed a field and discovered the stone foundations of buildings. The farmer had at the same time found a quantity of Romano-British tile and pottery, but what must have particularly attracted the Major's attention was a 190mm high bronze statuette of the goddess Minerva. He exhibited this at the second Annual General Meeting of the recently formed Kent Archaeological Society in Rochester in July 1859.

Farmer Martin had meanwhile begun further improvements on his land and had encountered more foundations when grubbing up tree stumps in a plantation just south of the previous site. This time Major Luard was permitted to undertake an excavation and in due course found a building measuring 16m by 12m and containing at least six rooms, one with an apsidal end. He recognised that one room could have been a bath and noted indications of a pillared hypocaust in another. In retrospect the building seems to have been a bath house which would have been attached to a larger Romano-British house, with the usual arrangement of hot, tepid and cold rooms and a series of plunge baths. Judging from recent aerial photography and soil resistivity surveys, the "Villa Minervae" was and hopefully still is, much more extensive than Luard imagined and may have measured some 80m by 90m overall. It may have been arranged in a courtyard plan. Unstratified pottery from the site ranges in date from AD 70 to AD 250.

The 1859 report on the site was vague as to the exact location of the building and exploratory work was done by George Payne in 1893, by Cliff Ward in 1970 and by the writer in 1986. We can now be fairly confident as to the location, but the years of uncertainty have probably been a protection from the treasure seekers who have been visiting the site and carrying away Roman materials since at least the 1950s.

Major Luard was never to find another bronze at Plaxtol. The Martin family retained possession of the Minerva - as they had every right to do - for nearly a hundred years, until one day in November 1954 a descendant of the farmer brought the statuette into the museum office at Maidstone and presented it to an astonished Allen Grove, then the Society's curator. Minerva, besides being goddess of wisdom, war and the liberal arts, is said to have had a zeal for navigation. She must have been pleased with her move to Maidstone, for it was clearly she, who about a year later guided the plough of another Plaxtol farmer, John Cannon, into a substantial buried structure at Sedgebrook Field, half a mile north of Villa Minervae.

Little was done at the new site beyond establishing its Roman date until June 1986, when it was learned that the field was to be subjected to deep excavation. The land owners, Fairlawne Estate, planned to cut a drain trench across the field and to begin mechanical subsoiling. Exploratory excavation had to begin at once. As the site lay outside the working territories of local archaeological groups in this part of Kent, Council was persuaded that the Society itself should undertake the work and provide the necessary funding. The writer agreed to direct the excavation and work began on 7th July 1986.

The initial plan was to carry out three weekends' trial excavations at Sedgebrook and establish what was to be found on the site. Almost immediately substantial ragstone walls were discovered at a shallow depth and the plan of a second Plaxtol villa started to emerge. Before the trial period had ended the land owners, impressed by the discovery, had offered to resite their drain and to postpone subsoiling until the following spring. So began a fairly leisurely rescue excavation of the complete building. The work was not finished that year and it was covered for the winter and resumed in 1987. At the end of 1988 most of the villa was backfilled but work on the margins of the site continued until November 1989.

The villa at Sedgebrook proved to be of winged corridor type, larger, at 26m by 14m, than Major Luard's building, but probably much smaller than the overall size of the Allen's Farm site. It had been built after AD 125-150 and occupation had continued at least until the early fourth century.

The central room had been built on foundations set deep in the clays of the hillside. It was floored with ragstone and mortar, mostly eroded away by ploughing and it had been divided into three chambers. Each wing consisted of a square room with later extensions. Much of the mortar floor of the corridor survived, but plough damage had left only a single shattered ragstone block to indicate the central entrance to the villa. The south wing had been extended for the construction of a channelled hypocaust for a small bath suite. The north wing extension was much deeper than the general floor level and was lined with thin wooden planks; these had been completely burned before a mass of building debris and clay fell into the room some time after AD 180. Included in the fall was a silver rat-tail spoon of 2nd century date bearing the graffito "APRIL". Doubtless one Aprilis was the owner of the spoon and perhaps for a time, of the Sedgebrook villa.

The spoon and a small selection of other finds from the "Villa Aprilis" is being retained by the Fairlawne Estate for a permanent display cabinet in the 18th century mansion formerly owned by the Cazalet family.

R. A. C. Cockett  
Fawkham & Ash Arch. Group.

### Connaught Pumping Station

Dover Transport Museum Society Project.

*K.A.S. Council voted a financial grant towards this very worthwhile project. The following account of the work to date has been sent by the Dover Transport Museum Director, Mr. Colin Smith.*

The pumping engine at Connaught was built by Worthington-Simpson and was one of a pair for installation at Dover to replace the beam engines, Numbered 5055, it was first steamed in 1939. The other engine, No. 1056, did not come into operation until 1954 and is now in the Forncett Industrial Museum in Norfolk.

The engine is of triple expansion design with high, intermediate and low pressure cylinders of 14", 26" and 42" diameter respectively. All have strokes of 36". The designated output was 96,000 gallons per hour at 25 r.p.m.

The engine was taken out of service in 1976 and has lain idle in a cold, damp atmosphere since then. In an attempt to reduce the amount of condensation in the engine house we are installing two extractor fans. The boilers were taken away and scrapped and the boiler room used for other purposes.

A boiler was located in the basement of a hotel and many months



work were expended in removing this boiler and transporting it to Dover. Work had commenced on cleaning this boiler and constructing the new boilerhouse when Tilmanstone Colliery was closed. We heard that more modern, vertical boilers were in use there and a working party was dispatched to investigate. We managed to acquire one of the boilers which, after much work, we were able to transport to the Museum together with a steam winch which, we are told, was used to sink the first Tilmanstone shaft around 1909.

The boiler has since been installed within the boilerhouse which is now ready to receive its roof. Unfortunately the Water Company dictated where the boilerhouse was to be built and it has cost us many months of extra work and a lot of extra money to excavate a chalk bank and build a wall for retaining purposes.

The boiler has had an initial examination by the boiler inspector and having "passed its fizzical" the next stage will be for a full hydraulic test when all the necessary fittings etc. have been put back on. If the boiler test is successful, and if we can complete the pipework to the engine, and if there are no major problems with the engine itself, and if we can afford the coal, we should be in steam for Easter! We are currently negotiating with another recently closed installation in the area for a chimney for the boiler and a quantity of spares. Does anyone have a set of firebars for a Cochrane boiler in their shed! Apart from the steam section, the Dover Transport Museum also houses a varied section on transport, with many items of local interest.

Exhibits range from the full-sized coaches, fire engine and other vehicles including cars, motorcycles and bicycles etc. to hundreds of models of vintage transport including ships buses and commercial vehicles, trains, trams and aircraft. Add to this the varied selection of relics and other smaller items, plus four railways under construction (00 gauge, 0 gauge, 5" gauge, and 2' gauge) and you will see that our Museum, although not large, can provide hours of interesting browsing. Open Easter to the end of September, Sundays only, from 1100 to 1700. K.A.S. members may view the project any Sunday morning during the regular working party time. 1000 to 1300, by special arrangement with the Museum Director and Secretary, Mr. C. Smith, 33 Alfred Rd. Dover, Kent. Tel. (0304) 204612.

## Recent Publications

**HISTORY OF ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, MAIDSTONE.** by D. A. H. Cleggett. The above title has just been published and concerns the history of the church from 1876, when it was built, until 1988.

Copies of this printed and illustrated book may be obtained from St. Michael's Parish Office, 109 Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, Kent ME1 1JL. Price £25 inclusive of handling and postage.

**KENT COUNTRY CHURCHES CONCLUDED.** by James Antony Syms. 1969. Published by Meresborough Books. p.b. £5.95. This is the third and last of Mr Syms' conspectuses of Kent Country Churches. He admits in this volume the inclusion of some which are now parish churches of towns such as Sandwich and Tenterden but which undeniably, were once the focus of life in village communities.

The two previous volumes, also published by Meresborough Books, presented a knotty problem to the artist, bearing in mind how often with a camera one has to struggle to avoid trees, walls and tombstones to register the whole or principal aspects of a building.

**KENT COUNTRY CHURCHES.** p.b. £4.50. and **KENT COUNTRY CHURCHES CONTINUED** p.b. £5.95. D. Coast.

**A VICTORIAN PARSON** by G. H. Van Loo. There was an error in the note on Mr Van Loo's book which appeared in the last K.A.S. Newsletter. The telephone number to ring is Canterbury (0227) not the number shown.

## K.A.S. Publications

Available at K.A.S. member's rates.

**MONOGRAPH SERIES (1979) Vol. I: G. W. Meates, The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent. I. The Site.** 28 x 22 cm., pp. 219, 35 figs., 30 pls. (+2 in colour), full-colour jacket, cased, £7.50 (+£3.00 p.&p.).

(1986) Vol. II: M. J. Fuller and R. I. Spain, **Watermills (Kent and the Borders of Sussex)**, 28 x 22 cm., pp. 203, 90 figs., 4 pls., full-colour jacket, cased, £15.00 (+£3.00 p.&p.).

(1987) Vol. III: G. W. Meates, **The Roman Villa at Lullingstone, Kent. II. The Wall Paintings and Finds.** 28 x 22 cm., pp. xxx + 330, 91 figs., 7 pls. (+18 colour), full-colour jacket, cased, £20.00 (+£4.00 p.&p.).

(1988) Vol. IV: D. Sherlock and H. Woods, **St. Augustine's Abbey: Report on Excavations, 1960-78**, 28 x 22 cm., xxxi + 366, figs. 94, pls. 52 (+3 in colour), full-colour jacket, cased, £20.00 (+£4.00 p.&p.).

(1988) Vol. V: R. J. Pollard, **The Roman Pottery of Kent**, 28 x 22 cm., pp. xxxviii + 247, 69 figs., full-colour jacket, cased, £20.00 (+£3.00 p.&p.).

**OCCASIONAL VOLUMES (1981) (Ed.) A. Detsicas, Collectanea Historica: Essays in Memory of Stuart Rigold**, 28 x 22 cm., pp. xxx + 315, 66 figs., 64 pls., jacket, cased, £7.50 (+£4.00 p.&p.).

(1983) (Eds.) A. Detsicas and N. Yates, **Studies in Modern Kentish History presented to Felix Hull and Elizabeth Melling**, 28 x 22 cm., pp. xv + 230, 7 figs., 20 pls., full-colour jacket, cased, £5.00 (+£3.00 p.&p.).

**RECORDS SERIES (1980) Vol. XXII: C. R. Cuncer, Lost Glass from Kent Churches**, 22.5 x 14 cm., pp. xvi + 170, 9 figs., 15 colour pls. full-colour jacket, cased, £5.00 (+£2.00 p.&p.).

(1984) Vol. XXIII: (Ed.) C. W. Chalklin, **New Maidstone Gaol Order Book, 1805-1823**, 22.5 x 14 cm., pp. 186, 2 pls., jacket, cased, £5.00 (+£2.00 p.&p.).

(1984) Vol. XXIV: (Ed.) K. L. Wood-Legh, **Kentish Visitations of Archbishop Warham and his Deputies, 1511-12**, 22.5 x 14 cm., pp. xvii + 343, frontispiece, jacket, cased, £12.00 (+£4.00 p.&p.).

(1988) Vol. XXV: (Ed.) H. C. F. Lansberry, **Sevenoaks Wills and Inventories in the Reign of Charles II, 1625-1649**, 22.5 x 14 cm., pp. xxxvi + 268, 8 pls., jacket, cased, £20.00 (+£3.00 p.&p.).

Orders with cheques payable to the Kent Archaeological Society to: Dr. A. P. Detsicas,

## Events, Outings, Lectures

**VISIT TO HOLLAND.** Five Day Continental visit to Holland, May 21st. to 25th. Staying 2 days near Amsterdam and 2 days near Utrecht. Usual excursions packed in. Approx. cost - only £195. - Depends on exchange rate but cost is as always inclusive. (normal supplement for single rooms).

**VISIT TO MID-SUSSEX.** A Saturday in June (date not yet confirmed) Whole day coach trip viewing Saxon Churches, Mills and a Stately Home. Cost about £8-9. Pickups in Maidstone.

**GOODNESTONE/NORTHBOURNE area.** East Kent. Saturday afternoon in the Chateaux (date not confirmed). House/Garden - Strawberry

**BLACKHEATH area.** Half day trip. Saturday 15th, Sept. 1990. Coach pickups Maidstone and Bexley. Interesting houses on Heath. Cost about £7 (depends on distance).

Further details can be obtained from Mr. M. Crane, Members should send their Continental Trip and by the 5th for details on the English outings. Enclose S.A.E. please.

## Lower Medway Archaeological Research Group Dig at Sharstead

Since May a small section from the L.M.A.R.G. have been hard at work excavating a site at Capstone Farm Country Park just outside Chatham. The site was reported as a possible part of Sharstead Manor and it was hoped to discover mediaeval structures, even perhaps Roman origins, as indicated by the site name.

The farmhouse is sited on top of a hill and was demolished in 1950, useful material being removed and walls collapsed on to the foundations.

At present (31.10.89) the brick rubble and growing undergrowth have been removed and the ground floor plan exposed. The house had been divided at some time into two dwellings providing four rooms on the ground plan, two for each half, with brick-floored kitchens and remains of hearths and water boilers. A very large cellar, which had been cut into the chalk of the downs and partially flint-walled, lay under one room and shows signs of several stages of rebuilding, including a possible entrance from the kitchen which had been bricked-up and filled with rubble.

The floor material under each room is being examined and a few interesting objects from 1790 onwards have been identified. The whole site contains the remains of bullock yards, a barn and other outbuildings and although there is little sign of 'important finds', the L.M.A.R.G. diggers are learning a great deal about building construction, as well as muscle building, obtained from shifting the piles of bricks. The site provides a valuable training site for new members of the Group, supervised by Alan Ward. Research into the history of the site has provided lists of owners/ occupants back to 1831, and the site has been brought to life through a visit by one of the last occupants who described the farm when last seen in 1941.

There are no amenities on the site; no mains services, with water drawn from a spring-fed well and a rainwater cistern, the usual outdoor privy and a very long walk or horse ride to any shopping facilities. Despite this primitive situation the Census records show that there had been as many as fourteen people living on the site in 1841 (including nine children of the two families, plus a farm labourer lodger!). The whole social history of the site provides an interesting glimpse of rural life over the past two hundred years, and more is to be discovered.

Down the hill from this site lies the 'big' Sharstead Farm, which is the certain site of the ancient manor that has a recorded history from 1270. There is no chance of excavation at the moment for it is a working farm but research records have been collected and with all other items of information - the site of the mill, where the water course ran, the ponds, ancient trackways, burial sites and other evidence of long occupation are being collated into a dossier to flesh out the material evidence that is surfacing at the dig.

There is a great deal of work still to be done and each week adds a little to our present knowledge of this ancient farm site.

Reported by Peter Dawson, L.M.A.R.G.



BRATTLES FARM MUSEUM, Staplehurst, A Spring Country Evening. For details see enclosed leaflet.

BRADBOURNE HOUSE. Date in early Spring to be arranged. A Musical evening, organised by the Library Committee. Members will be able to view the restored and cleaned Twisden family portraits, attend a lecture by Mr. B. Gipps and listen to some pleasant singing voices. Further information from Library Committee Secretary, K.A.S. Library, Maidstone Museum, St. Faith's St., Maidstone. ME14 1LH. S.A.E. please.

CRAYFORD MANOR HOUSE. One day School, organised jointly by K.A.S. and Crayford Manor House Adult Education Centre 10.15 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., on ASPECTS OF KENTISH HISTORY; it is hoped to include illustrated lectures on *Old Soar, the 700th Anniversary; Conservation in Kent and The Kentish Hop Industry*. To be held on Saturday, March 3rd. 1990, at Crayford Manor House, Mayplace Road East, Crayford, Kent. Tickets from Crayford Manor House, price £3, to include morning coffee and afternoon tea. Facilities for eating packed lunch. Pubs nearby.

K.A.S. MEDWAY & GILLINGHAM BRANCH. Meetings are open to anyone who has an interest in the subjects of the lectures. Meetings are held at the Rochester Guildhall Museum, High St., Rochester, commencing at 7.30 p.m. Coffee and biscuits are served from 7.00 p.m.

Tues. 13th Feb. 1990. *Anglo Saxon Remains in East Kent viewed from the Air*, Jim Bradshaw of Ashford.

Tues. 17th April 1990. *Professional Painters in the Medway Towns*, Michael Moad and Ron Baldwin.

BEXLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP. A day Conference on LONDON BOROUGH of BEXLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE, with the theme "Where from Now?" To be held at Harenc School, Rectory Lane, Sidcup, 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Sat. 24th Feb. 1990. Details on request from Bexley Archaeological Unit. Footscray Place Estate, Rectory Lane, Sidcup, Kent DA14 5BP.

PUBLIC LECTURE. *The Archaeology of South East London*, by Derek Garrod. Wed. 7th March 1990 at Hall Place, Bexley. Tickets £1.50 from Local Studies Section, Hall Place, Bourne Road, Bexley DA5 1PQ.

ROMNEY MARSH RESEARCH TRUST, SPRING LECTURE. On Friday, 16th March 1990 by Professor John Hutchinson of Imperial College. *The hill-slopes behind Romney Marsh, and the dramatic effects of landslips on the Roman Fort at Stutfall*, to be followed by a glass of wine. To be held in the Great Hall, Lympne Castle. 7.30 p.m. Enquiries and S.A.E. to Mrs. Jill Eddison, M.A., Langley Farm, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3HF.

COUNCIL FOR KENTISH ARCHAEOLOGY, with Folkestone and District Local History Society.

One day Conference: SOME ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES & RESEARCH IN FOLKESTONE & DEAL. On Saturday 21st April 1990 at South Kent College, Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone, 11.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Morning: Visit to Mayor's Parlour, Civic Centre, with guided tour by Town Mayor. Display of photographs and finds of Folkestone and Deal at South Kent College.

Afternoon: SOME ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES & RESEARCH IN FOLKESTONE & DEAL - an afternoon of talks on local archaeology and history including: *Folkestone, the making of the modern town.*

*The History and Excavations of the Folkestone Roman Villa, Quernstone reduction in Folkestone, Excavations at St. Richard's Road, Deal.* Tickets: Price £2.00 (payable to C.K.A.) from C.K.A. S.A.E. please.

## Letters

### Ruined Churches in the Rochester Diocese

The Council for British Archaeology is collecting information concerning ruined churches in the whole country. I have been asked for information relating to such churches in the Diocese of Rochester and would be grateful for details of any known to K.A.S. member. Any ruins in Kent outside the Rochester Diocese do not come within the scope of this limited enquiry.

A printed form is available giving details of the information required and any help which can be given in this survey will be appreciated. Please contact: Peter J. Tester,

### Church Bier

I should be very grateful to anyone who could tell me anything about the type of old church bier which has four large wheels, brass rails and a handle for pulling in funeral processions. I should like to know the approximate date when these were in use, and how rare they are today. Molly Lewis.

### Flying History

I am a researcher with a small group of aviation enthusiasts who research the histories of aircraft and the men who flew them during World War II.

On February 3rd 1943, twelve Lockheed Ventura bombers of 21 Squadron Royal Air Force were detailed to bomb an enemy held airfield near Lille in France during daylight. The mission was entitled 'Circus 258'. The bombers were to have fighter protection by three Spitfire units - 64,122 and 208 (Polish) Squadrons.

Two of the Spitfire Squadrons returned to their base leaving the bombers escorted by the twelve aircraft of 308 Squadron. It was at this point that the formation was intercepted by up to fifty enemy fighters. On crossing the English Coast the formation broke up and made their way back to bases in ones and twos. The fight put up by the bomber crews and by the Polish pilots was so good that only one of the bombers was shot down and two were severely damaged. One aircraft, piloted by Flight Sergeant Heagerty was forced to crash land at Manston and Sergeant Derrick H. Lear whose Ventura, serial number AE774 and coded YH-V, which had been hit by enemy fire was also forced down. The aircraft was flying on one engine and with his fuel tanks shot up, Sergeant Lear managed to crash land his aircraft between Eythorne and Knowlton, west of Deal, all the crew getting out safely.

I would like to hear from anyone who remembers any details of Sergeant Lear's aircraft crashing or anyone who might be able to add to the story of 'Circus 258' or from any K.A.S. members who might have a personal story of this period to tell.

Steven P. Betambeau

RE. HAACUS RUSSELL. See Letters, K.A.S. Newsletter No. 14

I would like to thank all the members who have been in touch about this gentleman. When all the information is cordinated I hope we shall know more about him.

K. M. Roome.

### The Medway Boat Trip

The 23rd September was another fine warm late-summer's day, ideal for our trip on "Kentish Lady II" from Maidstone, on the winding pleasant waterway which divides East and West Kent.

We passed through unspoilt countryside under fine stone bridges, aided by an excellent set of guide notes. Just a little too late for the hops this year, but this was compensated by the green grass, revived by recent rains after a long hot summer, and sheep and ducks.

"Kentish Lady II" is designed similarly to the river and canal boats for "abroad" with good viewing through the wide windows and roof. On the return journey we were entertained and informed by slides of hopping and hoppers in their heyday.

A memorable afternoon with time for old contacts to be renewed and new ones made amongst a party which came from all over the County, from East and West Kent.

Thank you, Mrs. Lawrence.

K. M. Roome.

### Tebbutt Research Fund

This fund was established as a tribute to the life and work of the late C. F. Tebbutt, OBE, FSA., and applications are invited, from individuals and groups, for grants towards research into the Wealden Iron Industry. It is anticipated that approximately £200 will be available from the fund and anyone interested should write a suitable letter of application giving details of themselves together with relevant information concerning the research envisaged.

Details should be sent, not later than 31st March 1990, to the Hon. Secretary, Wealden Iron Research Group, Mrs. Shiela Broomfield, so that she can pass them to the Panel for their consideration.

### Fieldwork Grants

Are you planning an excavation or fieldwork within the county of Kent during 1991? Grants are available from the K.A.S. to assist with work carried out by Affiliated Societies or individual members.

Applications on the appropriate form (obtainable from the Hon. General Secretary) by 1st October 1990

### Volunteer Wanted

Members will have noticed that the resumption of the Newsletter has made possible an improvement in the number of functions run by the Society. The next move I would like to see is a programme of lectures and meetings, but to do this we need a volunteer to do such things as issue tickets and book halls. Obviously, ideas for lectures will be welcome but we have several of these only waiting for someone to make the arrangements - under the general direction of the Honorary Secretary. If anyone has any suggestions, please would they make them to Arthur Harrison or me? Anyone willing to discuss what is involved is welcome to telephone me.

Kenneth Gravett, President.



## Kent Archives

K.A.S. members will be pleased to learn that considerable changes have been taking place within the Kent Archive Service which, will greatly enhance the service already available to researchers. The Canterbury Cathedral Library has been merged with the East Kent Archives Service, its headquarters being retained in the Precincts, Canterbury. Changes have been made to the interior of the search room and the lighting and heating have been improved. The catalogues have been increased and card index etc. updated and made more easily accessible.

It is hoped that within the next year microfilm viewing and printout facilities will be available. All the parish registers for the Diocese of Canterbury should be available on film soon whether the original registers are deposited in Canterbury or Maidstone. Visitors are still required to book a ticket in order to be sure of a place.

Good news also is that after considerable delays over the last twelve months the Medway Area Archives Office at Strood Civic Centre is now nearing completion. The Kent Archives Service will supply staff and servicing and the cost will be met by Rochester-upon-Medway City Council.

Among the collections to be transferred from Maidstone are the Parish records for the Medway area, Medway and Strood Union records, Watts Charity records and numerous small collections including hospital and school records. The Rochester City Archives were formerly held at the Rochester Museum and the Senior Archives Assistant at the Museum, Pat Salter, will be in charge of the newly formed Medway Area Archives Service. The search-room accommodation is somewhat limited, there being only room for four to six people.

East Kent Archive Service opening hours. Mon. to Wed. 9.30 to 4.30. Reservation needed. Apply: Canterbury Cathedral Archives, The Precincts, Canterbury. Tel. Canterbury 463510. Contact above address for opening hours of East Kent Branch Offices at Folkestone and Ramsgate.

West Kent Archives Service opening hours. Tues. to Fri. 9.00 to 4.30. Reservation needed. Apply: West Kent Archives Office, County Hall, Maidstone. Tel. Maidstone 694363. Contact above address for opening hours of West Kent Branch Office at Sevenoaks.

Members will be pleased to learn that from Saturday 12th May 1990 and thereafter on the 2nd Saturday each month researchers will be able to use the West Kent Archive facilities at Maidstone. Branch offices at Folkestone and Ramsgate will also be open on certain Saturdays from late Jan 1990. Advance bookings will be required.

Finally, Kent Archives Bookshop at County Hall, Maidstone, open Tues. to Fri. 9.00 to 4.30 have for sale a selection of books, maps and gifts.

areas where they can carry out their own research. Members can contribute just as much from surface recording and archival research as those members who are more enthusiastic about underground exploration.

Members of the Group are willing, at short notice to check out subsidences, explore and carry out a survey and advise householders, developers and planning authorities on the extent of a collapse or working and then suggest remedial or emergency measures. There are four nominated Field Officers each covering a specific area. (Ashford, Bexley, Chatham, London).

Anyone interested in learning more about the Group or becoming a member should write to Mr. R. LeGear.

K.A.S. members are welcome to attend any meetings or activities organised by K.U.R.G.

## Shoreham and the Dark Continent

On the west wall of St. Peter and St. Paul, Shoreham, hangs a large painting by a long forgotten Royal Academician. It depicts, set against a rural Kentish background of church and hills, the homecoming in 1875 of the vicar's son, Lt. Verney Lovett Cameron, R.N., from deepest Africa, Cameron, a descendant of the Cameron of Lochiel who fought against the Young Pretender at Culloden in 1746, had been sent to Africa at the head of a small expedition organised by the Royal Geographical Society, to make contact with Dr. Livingstone. Finding the doctor already dead, the group pressed on across Africa, and in doing so, became the first Europeans to complete the crossing of the continent.

But the expedition lacked one essential in the days of Empire — Union flag. Each man sacrificed a portion of his clothing in the requisite colour so that one could be roughly sewn together. The tattered remnant, brought home by Lt. Cameron, hung for almost a century in his father's church, before being taken down by a later vicar who placed it in a wall cavity in an unknown part of the building. If it has not already rotted away, perhaps one day it may be retrieved.

Lt. Cameron died a few years later in a riding accident; his grave can be seen on the north-east side of the churchyard.

Joy Saynor.

## Kent History Federation Panel of Lecturers

The K.H.F. has published a list of lecturers and the subjects on which they speak. This will be of great value to all hard-pressed Secretaries of Local History and Archaeological Societies. Copies may be obtained from Hon.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS to K.A.S.** These are now due; see enclosed sub. form.

Please note the new K.A.S. PUBLICITY LEAFLET enclosed in the Newsletter. W hy not persuade a friend to join or enroll a relative as a birthday gift?

Newsletter. W  
birthday gift?

Members can obtain 'Tote' bags, Tea Cloths, Ties, (Navy blue, Maroon, Green or Grey; please state colour required) by post from Mrs J Tea

Saynor. Bags £6. stitching or embroidery the badge design into the cloth. Mrs J Tea has kindly designed for the K.A.S. a guide for showing the Society badge and, if time allows, a favourite jumper. Chart is obtainable in front of a stamp. Cheques made payable to K.A.S.

75p +  
The Hon. Editor of the Newsletter welcomes all letters, articles and communications and would particularly like to receive comments on information, finds, books and related topics. Illustrations, if relevant, always helpful and can assist readers in identifying objects, understanding points and following arguments.

The Editor, however, wishes to draw the readers attention to the fact that neither the Council of the K.A.S. nor the Editor is answerable for opinions which contributors may express in the course of their signed articles. Each author is alone responsible for the contents and substance of their letters, items or papers.

Material for the next Newsletter should be sent by 1st March 1990.

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## Kent Underground Research Group

(A Branch of the Kent Archaeological Society).

To many people mining is an activity that is restricted to the Industrial North with the exception of a few coal mines near Dover. In fact, the very term 'Mining' is usually associated with coal but this was only one of the many minerals that have been mined in Britain over the years. Prior to this century, Britain was an important producer of metals and Derbyshire lead and Cornish tin were a major reason for the Roman invasion.

So how does the South-East fit into this? Surprisingly enough, this is one of the oldest mining areas in Britain. At Cissbury, in Sussex, there were Neolithic flint mines which produced the material to manufacture flint tools and the Forest of the Weald was for many years the centre of an iron industry. Near Maidstone, white sand was mined for use in the glass industry and gypsum was (and still is) mined at Mountfield. The number of above mines pales into insignificance when compared to the excavations which have been made in Chalk, a mineral which has been exploited continuously since Roman times.

The purpose of K.U.R.G. is to identify the remains of these industries and carry out research and preservation wherever possible.

We are mining historians — a unique blend of unlikely opposites. We are primarily archaeologists and carry out academic research into the history of underground features and associated industries. To do this we must be practical and thus have the equipment and expertise to carry out exploration and surveying of disused mines etc.

Unlike other mining areas the South East has few readily available records of mines and mining activities. Therefore, an important part of the Group's function is to maintain an up-to-date record of sites past and present. Members are encouraged to carry out research into individual sites and this information is published in the Group's newsletters and publications.

Through membership of the National Association of Mining History Organisations, the Group is in contact with over 40 Societies and Museums throughout Britain, which allows liaison and exchange of information.

Mining history is a relatively recent branch of archaeology and there is great scope for original research in the South East. We welcome new members who have an interest in mining history and experts within the Group are able to teach them techniques of safe underground exploration should they desire to learn. They are welcome to assist with ongoing projects and we can suggest many