

SNODLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 3

September 1998

SOCIETY NEWS

Correspondence

Correspondence and enquiries about the Society (including applications for membership) should be addressed to Dr. Andrew Ashbee, 214, Malling Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5EQ (tel. 01634-243001). The Society has produced some attractive application forms which should be available e.g. at the Library and at the Council Offices in Waghorn Road.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the new season are due on 1st September 1998. They remain at the same rates as last year: £5 individuals (£2.50 aged 14-17); £7.50 joint adult membership; £10 family; £50 corporate. Cheques (payable to Snodland Historical Society) should be sent or given to the Treasurer, Mr. Jerry Hayes, 2 Dowling Close, Snodland, Kent ME6 5PF.

Season 1998-1999

The **Annual General Meeting** will be held in the Devonshire Rooms on Wednesday, October 7th at 8 p.m. The agenda and financial statement is enclosed with this newsletter. Following the formal part of the proceedings, Mrs Julia Howe will give a talk on Parish Registers.

Other meetings, all at 8 p.m. in the Devonshire Rooms:

Wednesday, 4 November 1998: Jeremy Ashbee, an assistant curator for the Historic Royal Palaces

Agency, will give an illustrated talk on current research and work on the White Tower at the Tower of London.

Wednesday, 2 December 1998: No formal lecture, but an evening for members to view slides of Snodland and hopefully to tap memories of people and places.

Wednesday, 27 January 1999: Michael Fuller, author of books on the watermills of this area will give an illustrated talk about local watermills. Michael is kindly allowing us to republish his chapters on the two Snodland mills as one of the Society's pamphlets.

Wednesday, March 3rd 1999. Paul Oldham, the new President of the Kent Archaeological Society and a former Mayor of Maidstone will talk on 'The Rise of Maidstone'.

Wednesday, April 7th 1999. To be decided.

Society News

The exhibition held on 4th May was very successful and was well attended throughout the day. Our French visitors from Moyeuivre-Grande were very appreciative. We are most grateful to Holmesdale School for the loan of a number of display panels which allowed us to make the best use of the space available.

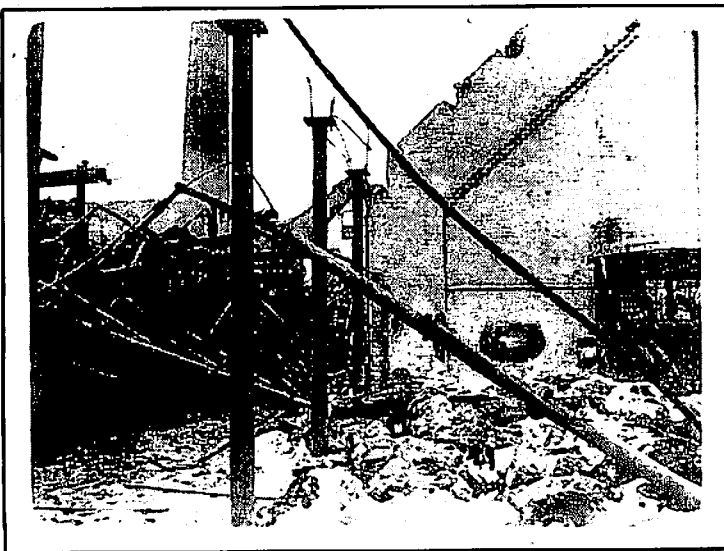
About a dozen people on each occasion joined in the two walks (a) to Paddlesworth and the Pilgrim's Way on 7th June (the same day as the Parish Boundary Walk took place) and (b) on 5th July: up New Road/Ladd's Lane to Upper Halling

and return via Lords Cross Lane. These proved to be enjoyable occasions and with the help of old maps it was possible to trace much that had changed or disappeared.

All the Snodland Censuses from 1841 to 1891 have been put on computer databases. This allows each one to be sorted by the various headings: surnames, occupations, addresses, places of birth, etc., in addition to the normal order. Work has now begun on the Snodland and Ham Hill parts of the Birling Censuses. (Before 1898 these included all that part of Snodland to the south of Rocfort Road and Chapel Road; the 1891 census names more than 100 households in this area.)

Picture Catalogue

A few more pictures have been added to the collection during the summer. In particular John Soane has acquired previously unseen photographs of the 1906 mill fire, which have been copied. (We now have 28 different pictures of the fire.) Also we have scanned some excellent colour photographs taken by the late Arthur Harrison during the excavation of the Snodland Roman Villa which he supervised. The originals have been bequeathed to the Kent Archaeological Society.



One of the new pictures of the Paper Mill fire which occurred on 12 August 1906.

Pamphlets

Two more have been produced:

No. 7: John Thorpe describes Snodland, Paddlesworth and Dode in *Registrum Roffense* (1769) and *Custumale Roffense* (1788) (16 pages, £1).

Thorpe published the texts of nine early documents relating to Snodland together with transcriptions of memorials in the church, many of which have disappeared since his time. His pictures of Paddlesworth and Dode are the earliest known. Thorpe was born at Luddesdown, so took a particular interest in the two churches, which is evident from his accounts of them.

No. 8: Andrew Ashbee: *The Early History of the New Church in Snodland* (1855-1882) (19 pages, £1).

Research by others gave a lead to this pamphlet which explores how the Hook family brought the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg to Snodland, and how they were supported in this by some of their paper mill workers. The pamphlet also includes an account of the life of Thomas Lewin Marsden, the minister for most of this early period, compiled by present members of the family—an excellent example of what can be achieved by those tracing their family history.

Pamphlet No. 9 will be larger: Michael Fuller's accounts of the Snodland and Holborough mills.

Registers

The Society aims 'To research, record, document and publish' and one area which will be of use to family historians in particular is in providing transcriptions of baptism, marriage and burial registers. Most are no longer held in the parish. It is intended to deposit copies of these at the Snodland Library, the archives at Strood and the Society of Genealogists as well as in our own collection. We will be happy to make extra copies for general sale, although it is unlikely that many would want such things. The first three issues are now ready:

1. A List of Burials at Christ Church Lower Birling, 29 November 1894 to 6 January 1966 (18 pages with index; £2).

2. Baptisms recorded in The Church Book of the Independents, Snodland (1836-1868), and Certificates of Baptisms at the Congregational Church, Snodland, 11 March 1883 to 24 January 1907. Also included are nine Snodland baptisms entered at the Bethel Chapel, Rochester, and the Ebenezer Chapel, Chatham. (22 pages with index; £2)

3. Register of Burials at Snodland Cemetery (arranged by surname) 19 March 1896 to 17 April 1952 (50 pages; £4).

We are very grateful to the Town Clerk for allowing the temporary loan of the first Cemetery register to enable No. 3 to be transcribed. But some of the clergy signatures have defeated us!

The present whereabouts of many of the Non Conformists registers for Snodland is uncertain, but we are trying to trace them.

A Stroll Around Old Snodland

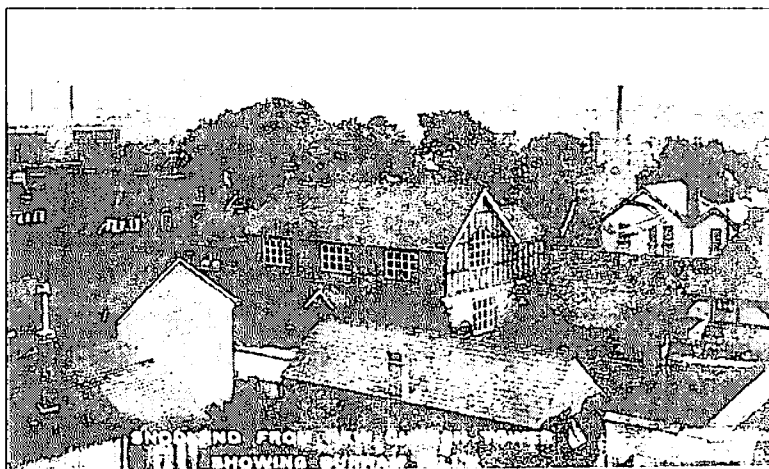
Chris Howick has written this perambulation around Snodland (beginning and ending at Christ Church) which is published by the Society. It includes 21 illustrations. The aim is to explain something of the history of Snodland as the walk progresses and to point out past and present landmarks. (32 pages: £1.50). We hope to put this on wider sale than the pamphlets.

Museum/Heritage Centre

Preliminary building work on the Old Fire Station in Waghorn Road is scheduled to take place this autumn to make it suitable for a Museum and Heritage Centre. The Society will be expected to play a leading part in setting this up, so any ideas, thoughts on potential exhibits and offers of practical help will be welcome. It is to be hoped that the Society's Library and Reference Collection will be housed there.

Booklet on the Clock Tower

As mentioned in the April Newsletter, Peter



This picture was probably taken c.1910-1920. In the foreground is the 'Manual Training Class Room British Schools', built in 1893, and the gap next to it was filled by the Old Fire Station in 1922, now to become the Museum and Heritage Centre for Snodland.

Wooton, a clock historian, is joining forces with Andrew Ashbee to write a booklet on the clock tower. Peter has published two excellent articles on the tower in the magazine *Clocks* (May/June and June/July 1998: Vol. 21, Nos. 5 and 6) which will form the basis for parts of the booklet. The intention is to produce a glossy brochure with lots of illustrations, on the lines of the well-known 'Shire Albums'. This will be sold locally and to clock enthusiasts. Work is in hand.

SNODLAND ARCHIVES

No. 3

The Family Records Centre, Myddleton Street, London.

Following the closure of the Chancery Lane building of the Public Record Office and the consolidation of all the holdings at Kew, it was realised that a central London centre should be retained for those researching family history. The Family Records Centre has been created for this purpose and is already extremely active. (Nearest tube stations: Angel or Farringdon.) On the ground floor it houses the indexes of Births, Marriages and Deaths (from 1838) of the General Register Office, which were formerly in Somerset House and then St Catherine's House. On the first floor are microfilm copies of all the censuses

1841-1891. (1901 will be added at the end of 2001.) Here too are many microfilm copies of Non Conformist registers deposited with the Registrar General, although at present Snodland is hardly represented. There are also microfilms of all the wills, administrations and inventories proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury to 1837. This Court had overriding jurisdiction in all England and Wales and should always be searched if local Courts fail to record a will or administration. In earlier years it was the preferred Court for wealthier people, but during the 18th and 19th centuries more and more people proved in this Court rather than local ones. The microfilms are of the register copies; the original wills are kept by the Public Record Office and have to be ordered in advance at Kew.

Another tool available at the Family Records Centre is the International Genealogical Index compiled by the Mormon Church. For many years this has been available on microfiche (relevant parts are also held in each County), but recently the whole has been put on CD-ROM. One can type in a name or names and let the computer do the searching - a remarkable aid. However, caution must be exercised. The reason for the index is that the Mormons encourage their members to trace their ancestors in order to baptise them posthumously—to them baptisms by other denominations are invalid. Although the Index has many millions of names, it is still far from a complete survey of all extant registers. It does not concern itself with deaths and burials, only baptisms (and to a lesser extent, marriages). Spellings are as in the original, so variants should be investigated. My own experience with searching for 16th and 17th century musicians is that the dates given in the microfiches may be unreliable. Before 1753 the new year was calculated from 25 March, so one has to be careful to check whether any dates between 1 January and 24 March are 'Old style' or 'New style'.

'The Defence of Britain'

The Society has signed up to participate in the Defence of Britain Project. This is run by the

Council for British Archaeology and is supported by a consortium of national and local bodies. Denis Anstey (86 Malling Road) is to be the Society's liason officer.

The Project sets out to record all aspects of the defence of Britain during this century.

At the A.G.M. there will be a desk where members can sign up to assist in the project. We need members to help to perform a whole range of tasks—there is a job for everyone to assist in the creation of an important local archive for use in the years ahead.

There will be a brief presentation at the A.G.M. describing all the jobs to be done. Some members have been approached to assist in setting up the project, but this is not an exclusive club!

House Names

Another project in which all members can assist is to record the extant house and terrace names around the parish. There have been several changes to numbering and names over the years. In earlier times (as shown in the censuses) houses were known by name more than by number. Some were even called after the people who built or lived in them. It often remains difficult for people tracing their family history to be able to decide confidently where their ancestors lived, so the more information we can gather the easier will such searches become.



Wyndham House, so called because the first resident came from Wymondham in Norfolk