



# Snodland Historical Society

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## 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; e-mail: aa0060962@blueyonder.co.uk); or to the Secretary: Mr. Neil Miners, 13 Gorham Close, Snodland, Kent ME6 5EZ; e-mail: neilminers@yahoo.co.uk

## Subscriptions

Members are invited to renew their subscriptions for the new season 2006-7. Rates are unchanged. These can be paid at meetings or sent to the Treasurer, Mrs. Patricia Gest, 1, Vauxhall Crescent, Ham Hill, Snodland, Kent, ME6 5JT. Membership will cease if a subscription is unpaid by February 2007.

## Meetings

**4 October 2006.** Annual General Meeting. Followed by short presentations on local historical topics.

**1 November 2006.** Monty Parkin makes a welcome return and this time will give a humorous talk entitled 'Yesterday's News': items which have caught his attention when researching in old newspapers.

**6 December 2006.** The usual evening of slides of old Snodland and of Hambrook's Kent pictures. Mince pies and wine will be served.

**31 January 2007.** We are delighted that Sarah Palmer, Professor of Maritime History at the University of Greenwich and Director of the

Greenwich Maritime Institute will give an illustrated talk: 'The Old Life and New Life of the River Thames.'

**7 March 2007.** To be arranged.

**4 April 2007.** Geoff. Harvey: 'Defending the Medway and Chatham Dockyard'. A fascinating talk on the fortifications (most still to be seen), illustrated from the air as well as from the ground.

**2 May 2007.** To be arranged.

## Other events

The two additional meetings held this summer were both very successful. We had a warm welcome at the Cranbrook Museum and were very impressed by the excellent displays in a lovely building. Hopefully we will be able to organize further visits of this kind.

Next summer there will be a 'Snodland Festival' between 7th and 22nd July. Two 'Historical Walks' round Snodland are planned.

Another Local and Family History Open Day for Medway will be held at the Civic Suite, Civic Centre, Strood, on Saturday and Sunday, 15 and 16 September 2007. We have been invited to participate and have accepted.

## Publications

Work for the 'England's Past for Everyone' project has prevented progress on creating any new publications, so there is nothing much to report at present. Andrew Ashbee's 'A Little History of Snodland', published in 1994, went out-of-print in about four years, but it would have been risky to order another print run. Now,

however, we have the facility to make our own copies on demand, so it is available again, very slightly revised, in A4 size, still at the old price of £7.50. The summary of the 1891 census printed at the back of the volume has been omitted and the complete 1901 Snodland census (with the addition of Ham Hill) has been printed separately (£5). It is intended that the newspaper cuttings 1865-1881 shared between two old publications: 'Notes from Snodland Rectory' and 'A Selection of Newspaper Cuttings' will be brought into a single volume. (Copies of the 'Selection' have run out). Unfortunately the photocopied images from the original papers do not scan well, so much typing is required!

### Friends of Medway Archives

Earlier this year the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Study Centre was formed. Its primary aim is to raise funds to help with repair and purchase of documents. (The earliest All Saints register, which has been unavailable for consultation for some years, is one of the first books to benefit from this programme and can now be seen via the MALSC's cityark web-site.) We have joined as a Society (the first one to do so). Although it may seem that benefits to us are few, we would like to support the work of the Centre, where all our parish documents are held. The Friends will advertise our exhibitions at the Museum and our list of lectures on their web-site. The Friends also arranges a series of lectures, visits and exhibitions. Details will be found on their new web-site: [www.foma.btik.com](http://www.foma.btik.com) and there is also a newsletter, currently at <http://ajthomas.com/theclocktower>. In future this may move to the new site. For the benefit of those without internet access these are the next planned events (at the Archives, Civic Centre, Strood):

(a) talks at 7 p.m.: 10 October. What's in the map cabinet?; 21 November: Tony Farnham: Sailing barges in their heyday.

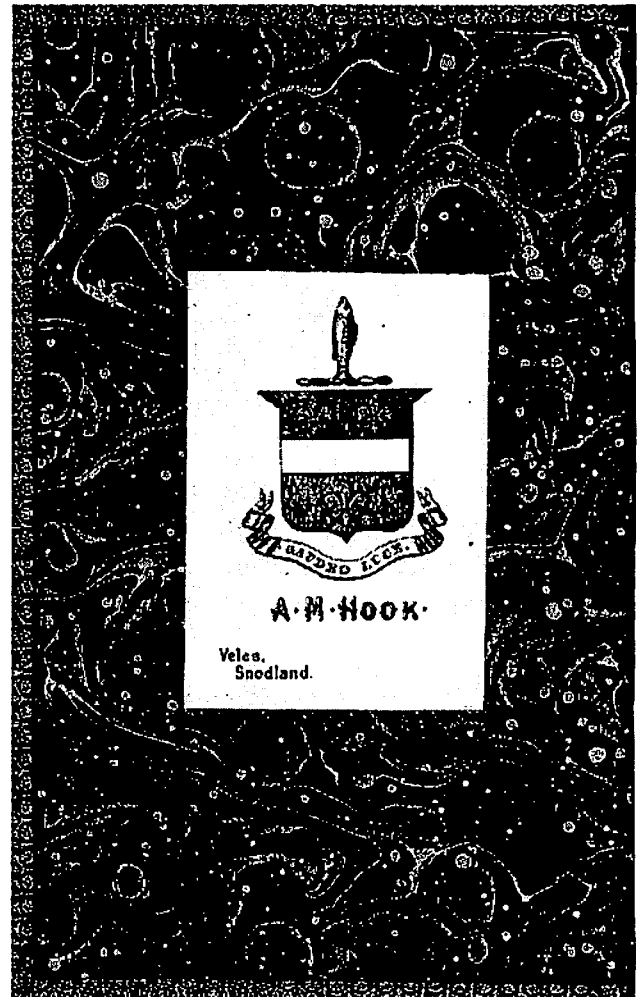
(b) exhibition: 7 September to 3 November: Jewish presence in Medway.

It is essential to book for those wishing to attend

the talks: 01634 332714: £3 per talk.

### Swedenborg books

In May a periodic check on second-hand Snodland books available via the internet revealed one of writings by Emanuel Swedenborg with a book-plate showing it belonged to 'A. M. Hook'. Anna Maria (1803-1881) was the mother of Charles Townsend Hook and the one who first involved the family with the Swedenborgians (in Norwich). Although it cost £190 it seemed worth retrieving this important piece of Snodland's past, so it was ordered. The next day I received a phone call from the bookseller (in Worcester), telling me that he actually had another 21 volumes! All but one were beautifully bound in leather and contained rare mid-nineteenth century prints of Swedenborg's works. Most incorporated Anna Maria's bookplate. The total cost was £1315, but we agreed a price of £1090 (post free) in view of their historical interest to Snodland and the fact that the collection would remain



together. Clearly our Society did not have immediate funds for such a purchase, so an application was made to the Partnership. It is gratifying to report that the Town Council has bought (and now owns) the volumes and we thank them very much for their interest and help. The collection is kept in the bookcase in the Museum and can be seen on request:

*Arcana Coelestia* 12 volumes and 2 index volumes; *Apocalypse Explained* 6 volumes; two volumes of shorter works bound together, all published between 1840 and 1856..

In one of the books the bookseller found a card from 'Boz' [Charles Dickens] addressed to 'Mrs Hook' 'with kind love'. I was curious to discover how they arrived at Worcester. The bookseller bought them at auction in Exeter. At his suggestion I sent a letter via the auctioneers asking them to pass it to the vendor, which they did. She kindly made enquiries within her family for me, but without much success. We do know, however, that the books belonged to her grandfather George Dicks, 'whose family had belonged to the New Church since Swedenborg's time' - an affiliation still continuing with his descendants. George Dicks died many years ago and there are now no relations able to help. It seems possible, then, that the books may have passed directly from Hook to Dicks.

### Museum

From July to December there is an exhibition commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the great mill fire of 12 August 1906, together with a small group of pictures for the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Strood to Paddock Wood railway. We are very grateful to Smurfit Kappa Townsend Hook for the temporary loan of items from their archive, some of which have now been copied. Of particular interest is the 'Private Journal' of Charles Townsend Hook - an account book, linking with the one we already hold on permanent loan, and the insurer's report concerning the fire. This disputes the cause of the fire and shows that eventually they paid considerably less than the firm was hoping for.

Through the good offices of our Treasurer, we

have been given a fine large map cabinet. This enables us to keep the maps and other over-size papers flat rather than in tubes (and also makes the place look a lot tidier!). As our collection grows more storage space is constantly required and I am very grateful to Bob Coomber for making shelves and supplying other storage facilities.

We have also been given an original 1867 OS map which the County Archives no longer needed. We already had a copy of part of this - the village itself - but the map extends northwards through Holborough to Halling and shows some of the industrial workings in Burham and Wouldham.

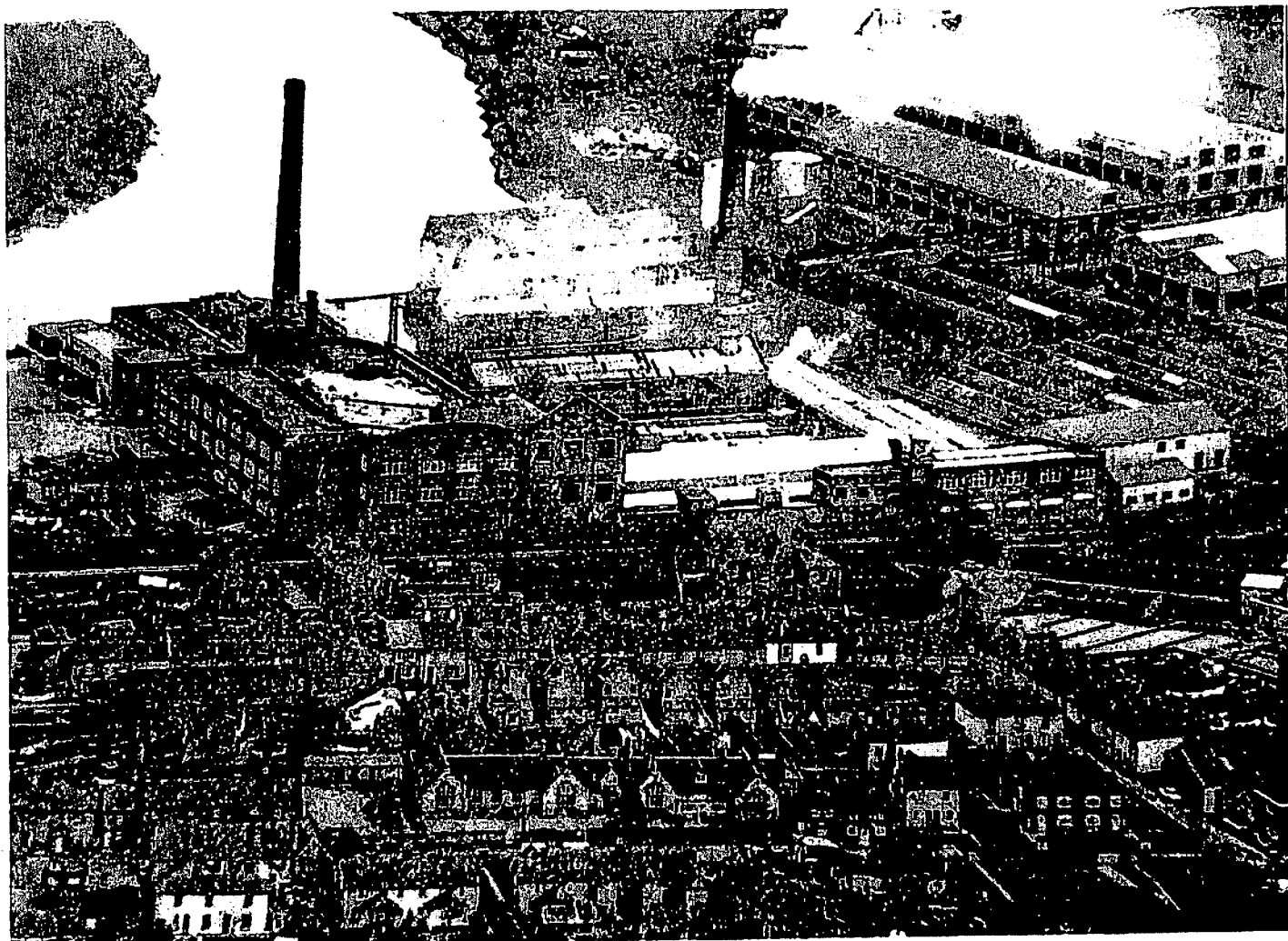
The latest Hambrook postcards (in colour) we have purchased are of Barfreton Church; Minster Church, Thanet; Coldred Church; Birling Church and School; and Halling Church. Also: Leybourne church from the Park (Stedman/Hambrook) and two early cards of the Waghorn statue at Chatham.

We have purchased two second-hand books: (a) the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (July 1997) which contains a fine article by Sarah Searight: 'A Waghorn Letter Book for 1840' (the hitherto unknown book of letters is owned by a philatelic firm). Intriguingly Waghorn himself was an early member of this Society. (b) H. D. Edwards, *The Mid Kent Water Company. The First Fifty Years 1898-1948* (Maidstone, 1954).

### 'England's Past for Everyone'

#### (a) Snodland Survey

As part of the Kent *England's Past for Everyone* project, on Saturday 23rd September a team of volunteers under the direction of John Vigar will be photographing and surveying the pre-1914 buildings in Snodland. This will be a rapid external survey (from the road), entering details on a printed form. It is hoped to make a photograph of each property (even though many have had major face-lifts). Originally the Director of EPE had made the cut-off date 1900, but now believes 1914 to be more sensible. However, this substantially increases the number of houses to be surveyed to about 600. Two other similar surveys have already taken place at Eccles and at Aylesford, but Snodland is much the largest. It is acknowledged nationally that insufficient research has been done into the houses



*A good illustration of the need for the housing survey. A couple of buildings in what was Brook Street and about half of the houses in May Street are virtually all that remain from this mid-20th century photograph.*

of ordinary workers, so these surveys will be most useful. We shall also try to include buildings which have been demolished (using photographs and other material held at the Museum), but this aspect will take longer to complete. I would hope that our Society would be able to supply a good number of volunteers (I already know of one or two) since it has proved easiest to work in groups of two. **If you are able to help at any time from 10 a.m. on the 23rd, please let me know.** Bring a packed lunch and a clipboard or similar hard surface. We will meet at the railway station forecourt, where John will explain how to complete the forms before work starts. A minimum of a dozen people will be needed; more will make the work easier.

#### **(b) General progress**

Since the beginning of the year a team of

volunteers has been collecting data of many kinds. Regular meetings have kept all informed of progress and there has been a good deal of exchange of information between the various groups. Census transcriptions have revealed that the photographer A. N. Hambrook was living at Manor House (opposite the church) in Halling at the time of the 1901 census; his father was foreman at one of the cement works. He was aged 26 and already occupied as 'printer and stationer'. By 1903 he was in Snodland. The celebrated one-armed postman William Collins, who travelled between Snodland and Rochester, was living in Station Road, Strood. His son William is listed as 'comedian' - perhaps he was a regular part of the entertainments in the theatres in the Medway Towns. A wealth of other material is coming to light which contributes to Snodland's history and that of the local industries.