



October 2019

Volume 9, Issue 2

Interim Chairman's Message

Until they think warm days will never cease...

And so the seasons pass in my year as Interim Chairman of the Elham Historical Society. Spring and summer have been spent on outside visits. In May we went to the Roman Museum in Canterbury, where the thought occurred to more than one of us – musing on the grandeur of the ancient past - that 'civilisation' is very fragile indeed!

The June visit was to Sandwich, during the intense downpours of early June: a predictable climate is something else that cannot be counted upon nowadays. In July a large EHS group toured Elham's remarkable Hawthorne Trenches reconstruction, where members sat down to a well-attended tea almost exactly a hundred years after the Armistice Village Tea held in the gardens of the Old Vicarage in the summer of 1919.

August took us to the splendid Maison Dieu in the centre of Dover, where a helpful guide led us to the nooks and crannies of a medieval pilgrims' hostel, and showed how it was later transformed into a naval quarter-master's depot and then into a proud Victorian civic centre filled with ornate heraldry and stained-glass evocations of Dover's past. As I write, we are preparing for the final outside visit of the season, to Stelling Minnis church with Derek Boughton as our guide.

Much has been written about the success of the Audrey Hepburn Season, commemorating the ninetieth anniversary of the film star's birth and her childhood association with Elham. It will culminate in a gala showing of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* at the village hall on 19 October, when I will attempt to show – in a brief (I promise!) powerpoint presentation – why it is one of the most significant Hollywood films of the twentieth century.

At about the same time in the autumn, the older children at Elham School will be honing their imaginations for a writing competition sponsored by EHS, taking as their subject Elham's Manor House. Again as I write the school-children are visiting this ancient building in two separate groups to meet Patrick and Diana Wheeler (to whom we are very grateful indeed) and hear from the Manor House's current Lord and Lady about its history.

And so indoors for an interesting series of Winter talks. On October 11th Geoff Doel will tell us about *Legendary and Ghostly Kent*, and in the first and last weeks of November there will be a pair of festive events tailored for the run-up to Christmas. On November 8th Imogen Corrigan's talk 'The Goose is Getting Fat' will concentrate on the culinary traditions of the Christmas feast, and on November 30th we can all put her advice into practice by bringing along our own festive goodies and settling down for an entertainment by Geoff Hutchinson entitled 'What is Christmas?'

On the other side of 'the feast of the returning sun' (and how hard it is in the depths of Winter to imagine the songs of Spring!) the subject matter of our talks will range across Kent. In January we will hear from Will Palin about his plans for the restoration of the Sheerness Dockyard Church on the Isle of Sheppey, and in February and March respectively there will be talks about the Redoubtable Women and the Resilient Farmers of the Elham Valley.

A busy and productive year indeed! Thanks to all our Society's members for their support and enthusiasm, and in anticipation of some enjoyable discussions at forthcoming events.

Andrew Joynes

Saint Ethelburga.... who was she?

This summer, with the dig at Lyminge Church getting underway, our local, 'home-grown' Saint has been much in mind, but I wonder how many people know who she was, or the important role she played in our history?

Archaeologists were aware that Canon Jenkins, the rector at Lyminge, had dug in the churchyard in the 1850s and, being an academic who studied old documents, he was aware that Ethelburga had originally been interred somewhere on the site and he set out to find out just where. What he discovered was the foundations of the original stone-built church from the 7th Century, but his research led him to believe that this building was a vast basilica, possibly built on the site of an earlier Roman villa or temple. This year's archaeology confirmed his findings, including the probable site of Ethelburga's tomb, but disproved his theories about the scale of the building or its Roman origins. He had left his discoveries uncovered for some years as illustrations at the time show us, but when the site began to deteriorate it had been decided to cover it up, so for decades people had walked up to the church unaware they were passing over so much history!



We now know that this tiny church was built in a similar style, and with similar materials to those of St. Pancras, in Canterbury and St. Mary's at Reculver, and that, in addition to housing the tomb of St Ethelburga, there had been a shrine to St Eadburg, the 3rd Abbess at Minster, who had been translated there and flourished for many years before the community moved to Canterbury following the Danish raids. The late medieval structure excavated near the war memorial, and the pottery finds there, confirm that this site had been a busy monastic enclosure around the end of 7th Century, but, by the time of the burials found in the church's chancel, probably during the 13th century, the memory of the original church's existence, had been forgotten.

Kent in the Anglo-Saxon period was not an insignificant backwater, but a kingdom ruled, according to the historian Bede writing barely a hundred years later, by a *Bretwalda*, the greatest political power in England, ruling over all the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. King Aethelberht had married the Christian princess, Bertha, daughter of Charibert, King of the Franks, and Kent was of sufficient importance for Pope Gregory the Great to send St Augustine and his missionaries to convert the then pagan kingdom to Christianity. It was into this royal dynasty that Ethelburga – who was known as Tatae - was born and, in AD 625, was sent north to Northumbria, to be King Edwin's second wife and, in turn, to convert him and his court to Christianity.

Because of Bede's interest in Edwin we know a great deal about their life and times. He tells us that when Edwin had first asked for Ethelburga's hand her brother, King Eadbald, had originally refused saying that it was not lawful to marry a Christian virgin to a pagan husband, but when Edwin promised to allow her, and all her entourage liberty to observe their own religion in his Kingdom, and to examine Christianity himself and maybe convert, his request was granted. So Ethelburga became queen and took with her Bishop Paulinus to instruct the king and oversee his conversion. Apparently this took time and needed encouragement from Pope Boniface who sent presents.....Queen Ethelburga received a silver looking glass and an ivory gilt comb!

Saint Ethelburga.... who was she? /cont

Life at this time was precarious and Bede tells the story of an attempt on King Edwin's life. On Easter Day a year after their marriage, an assassin sent by Cwichelm, the king of the West Saxons, attacked Edwin with a poisoned weapon and his life was saved when a servant, Lilla, protected the King and died in his stead. Queen Ethelburga was pregnant and the shock brought on the birth of her daughter Eanflaed. Bishop Paulinus thanked God for saving both the King and for the safe delivery of the Queen and the King, so delighted, agreed his daughter should be consecrated to Christ. She was the first Northumbrian to be baptised with some members of the royal household. However, it was not until 627 that Edwin finally agreed to baptism himself, together with their son Ethelhun, who sadly died soon after and was buried at York Minster. Thousands of people followed Edwin's conversion and so Roman Christianity began to spread through the north.

Battles were still fought, and the fierce heathen warrior King Penda of Mercia, brother of Edwin's first wife Cwenburga, invaded Edwin's kingdom and, at the battle of Hatfield, killed Edwin and his eldest son Osfrith. Queen Ethelburga had to escape by sea to the court of her brother King Edbald, taking with her Paulinus and her young children.

It is at this point, around 633, that King Edbald gave his sister land at Lyminge and it is here that she would have lived, probably in one of the great royal halls discovered on Tayne Field in previous digs. We know from the quality of the finds from this site that life would have been lived at a very high standard. Fine drinking vessels, evidence of feasting and gaming and drinking, a concrete floor (almost unheard of at this time) lead us to an image a life of some comfort. However, Queen Ethelburga was a Christian and would have needed a church, and we now know that the early church was built just before or just after her death in September AD 647. Here she founded probably the first nunnery in England where, it is thought, she was joined by her sister St. Edburg, and where they both took the veil, having established one of the earliest – if not the earliest – monasteries to be founded in Anglo-Saxon England.

Her role in helping the spread of early Christianity in this country should not be underestimated....and she lived just down the road in Lyminge!

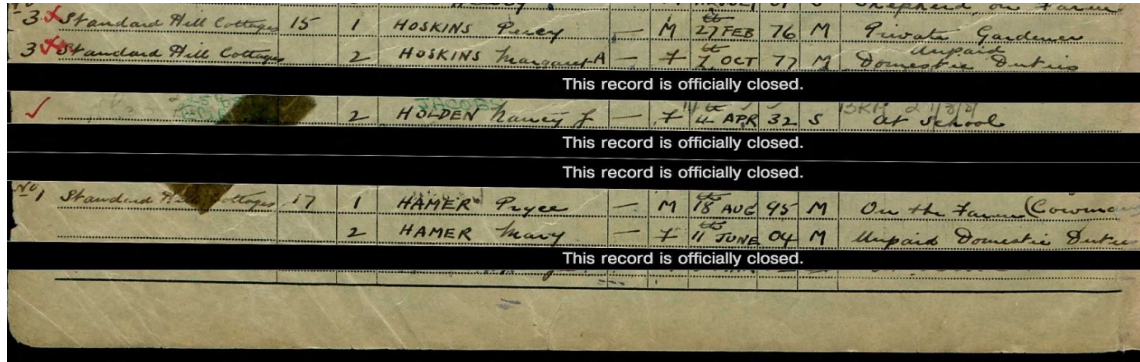
For full details see geopaethas.com and [Pathways to the Past](#)



An aerial view of the 7th Century church with the porticus of St. Ethelburga on the right!

Audrey Hepburn – a Chance Encounter

I was in the King’s Arms one Sunday lunchtime and mentioned to friends that I was meeting Dominic King of Radio Kent to talk about Audrey Hepburn in Elham. A stranger at the bar said “Pardon me for butting in, but my wife’s father, who is a bit confused, claims that he went to school with Audrey when he lived in Elham”. It transpired that he and his wife, who live in Uttoxeter, were in Elham looking for her grandmother’s grave, which they had failed to locate in the cemetery. Having logged all the graves, I was able to point them in the right direction, and then we got to talking about her Dad and his memories. We agreed to keep in touch.



From the 1939 Register I was able to establish that the family, Pryce and Mary Hamer, with two names redacted, which would have been their sons George and Albert, lived at Standard Hill Cottages. George, then seven years old, is the father of my new friend Sylvia Lymer. I sent to her and her husband Keith a photograph of Standard Hill Cottages, hoping it would help to trigger his memory.

George came up with some great memories, He remembers walking down to school past the Station, where air raid warnings were signalled by the hoisting of a red flag, and the “All Clear” by a green one. Just as well that this system was replaced by a siren, which remained in situ long after the war.

It was Mrs Hubble’s school at West Bank that he attended. His lessons took place in the dining room, but once a week the boys would join the girls in the lounge, where Mrs Hubble would play the piano, and he recalls marching up and down to the tune of “The Grand Old Duke of York”.

He also attended Sunday School at the Methodist Church, and still has the Bible given to him on 16th December 1939 in which the teacher had misspelled his name as “Aymer”.

He remembered that their neighbours were the Holdens and the Hoskings, that Mr & Mrs Leek lived at Standard Hill Farm.



All the locals attended a cricket match when a team came down from George Parker’s London building company. My mother, who worked at Henbury, also remembered that, and showed me the meadow at Dreads where it took place, though she had a rather more vivid memory of being chased by a bull when mushrooming in the same field.

George also remembers watching dogfights overhead during the Battle of Britain, and his father dodging bullets from a German fighter. Later in 1940 they returned to Shropshire. When they arrived at Marshbrook Station young Albert, five years younger than George, said “Hitler won’t get us here, will he mum”.

D.B.

Obituary - Bryan Shepherdson



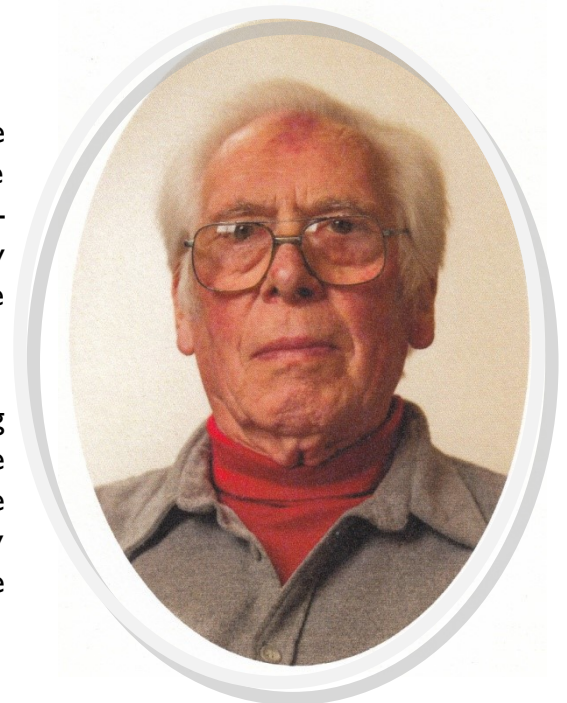
Bryan and Jo Shepherdson arrived in Elham on Decimal Day – 14th February 1970 – so well over half his life was spent as part of our community, and his contribution was immense. From our very beginning in 2010, Bryan was a keen supporter of the EHS, hardly ever missing a meeting, and he could always be relied on to expedite the business of the AGM.

The packed church for his funeral bore testament to the good works that he had done not only in Elham, but throughout East Kent from his work as a Rotarian, and his involvement with the farming community, which continued long after his retirement from the trade.

Obituary - Tony Wheatley

Though they lived at Faversham, Tony and Sally Wheatley were among the most regular attendees at EHS meetings. Tony wore his years lightly, and his sudden death just before his eighty-second birthday came as a great shock. Tony was an honorary North Elhamer both through his marriage to Sally Palmer and the fact that their son Pete now farms at Gate House.

Tony's funeral at St Peter's & St Paul's, Ospringe, was an uplifting occasion. That church and its community had been one of the main focuses of Tony's life. The minister conducting the service had known him for over fifty years, and the singing was led by almost thirty of his fellow members of the Kent Police Male Voice Choir. His indeed was a full, active, and valuable life.



Elham Shops, - Part 4

It can clearly be seen that **West End House** in The Row was once an emporium of some size from the bow window which replaced its shopfront, and the two storey warehouse doors to the left of the building. As with our surviving shop, whose history I will deal with in my next article, its story can be traced to 1830, from evidence given about the Swing Riots in that year. On 18th October William Johnson of Elham, grocer, testified "On the Monday night which Sankey's machine was broken I went with Mr Roots about 9 to the White Horse at Wingmore. There was a shout of 'Here comes Jack Roots' (Roots is a constable) and some went out the back. On my return I met 20 or 30 men going towards Wingmore. I did not know any of them". The magistrates were trying to get witnesses to name names, but Johnson, like many others, was too cagey to do so. As a man with a strong social conscience, he was not unsympathetic to their cause.

In 1830 William Johnson was a bachelor of about 34, and was still unmarried at the 1841 census, but his assistant Mary Birch became his wife sometime after that, and they went on to have six children. When he died in January 1959 four were still at school, and Mary continued to run the business for a few years, employing three assistants as had William. The Johnsons were staunch Methodists, and his gravestone is one of the four in the little graveyard in front of the Methodist Schoolroom.

In the late 1860s James Sprinks from Sussex bought the business and started a family with his young wife, a Dover girl. They were deeply affected in 1878 by the loss of a one year old (who is commemorated on a gravestone by the south church path), but the business was prospering and by 1881, as well as four shop assistants and a domestic servant, they had a nursemaid for their one year old daughter, and James's sister was acting as companion to his wife. The Sprinks's continued to flourish, owning another shop in Bouverie Road, Folkestone. They were employing a housekeeper in 1901, and enjoyed quite a long retirement after they sold to Leo File in 1904.

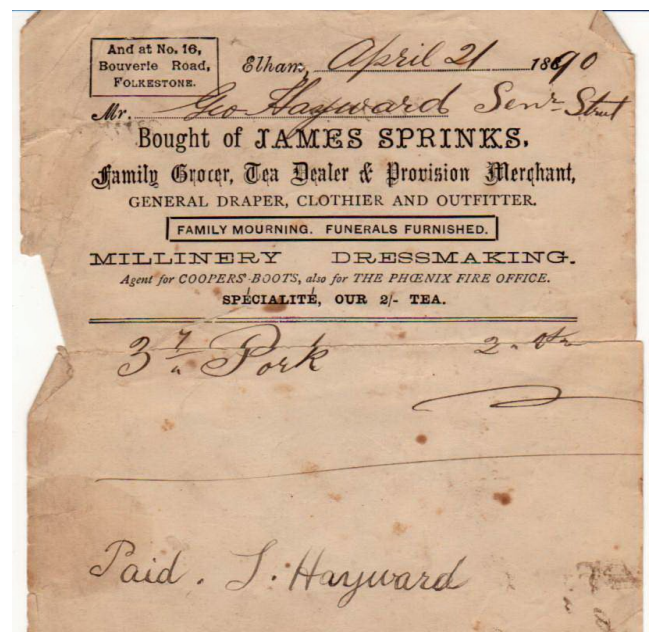
For a short while previously Mr File had run a smaller grocery store in the High Street, where the archway now leads into Coach House Mews. He remained at what he called the West End Supply Stores until 1924, when he had a change of occupation and moved down to become landlord of the King's Arms. It was from there that his daughter Leonie married Leslie Ames, a wedding that made the national press (Harold Larwood was the best man).

From 1924 the shop became part of the chain owned by Vyes "the Kentish Grocers", whose headquarters were in Ramsgate, very much a family firm with good old fashioned values. For some years the branch manager was Albert Clout, Ann Laker's grandfather, and the company ethos showed in the good treatment he and his family received after he suffered a disabling stroke in 1948. He had worked for them since 1902.

Eventually Vyes became part of the Liptons chain, a more hard-nosed outfit, and they suddenly closed the store on 28th February 1970. The last manager, Ron Morphett, was offered a post at their Folkestone branch, but he had to find a new home. He wished to stay in Elham for the sake of his young family, and was able to obtain a council house in Cherry Gardens. He died all too young, but his widow, Mollie, stayed on as a valued member of our community, latterly at Wayfaring, until her death in 2017.



The shopfront, familiar to generations of Elham shoppers



This 1890 bill shows the range of goods and services provided by James Sprinks

Programme of Events for 2019/2020

Friday 11th October 7.30pm - Talk by Geoff Doel - Legendary and Ghostly Kent

Friday 8th November 7.30pm - Talk by Imogen Corrigan - The Goose is Getting Fat

Saturday 30th November 7.30pm - Christmas Supper and Entertainment by Geoff Hutchinson

Friday 24th January 7.30pm - Talk by talk by Will Palin on Sheerness Dock Yard.

Friday 28th February 7.30pm - Talk by Derek Boughton - Elham Women 1217 – 1914

March - Talk by Bill Phillips, from Herne Bay Museum, about Roman Pudding Pans (date and venue to be confirmed)

Friday 17th April 7.30pm - AGM

Unless otherwise stated all events are at 7.00pm for a 7.30pm start in Elham Village Hall. Admission costs: EHS Members £3.00, Non Members £5.00.

There is also a Non EHS Member charge for external visits. Places can be reserved by emailing elhamhistorical@gmail.com



Saturday 19th
October 7pm
Elham Village Hall

Hear Andrew Joynes talk about the making of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, then sit back and enjoy the film. Bar and film refreshments available. There will also be a retiring collection in aid of UNICEF.

Tickets £8.00 from

Jan 840820/stanyonjan@aol.com

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S

Ticket price includes a welcoming glass of fizz!

Event organised by Elham Village Hall Association and Elham Historical Society

2019

Who is Who

Interim Chairman

Andrew Joynes

Vice Chairman

Barbara Athow

Secretary

Jackie Christian

Treasurer

Richard Athow

Membership Secretary

Richard Athow

Speaker & Visits Co-ordinator

Andree Sladden

**Any of the above can be contacted via:
elhamhistorical@gmail.com**

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 now have our own Facebook group where people (EHS members and non members) can upload pictures and make comments about Elham's 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:

elhamhistorical@gmail.com