



LOOSE ENDS

(No.2 October 2007)

Our thanks to those who contributed to this issue. *Loose Threads No.9* is in the pipeline and will hopefully be published before the end of the year

Society Matters

Since we last met in May there have been two highly enjoyable perambulations; to Stoneacre in June, and to the Carriage Museum in July.



Forthcoming meetings include:

October 8 - The Battle of Britain
(Dick Collinson)

November 12 - A Day in November: The
Mary Stanford Lifeboat
Disaster
(Geoff Hutchinson)

Also a Bring-and-Buy book sale.

December 10 - The Golden Age of Mechanical
Instruments (Paul Bellamy)

Followed by punch and mince pies.

(All at 7.30 in Loose Infants School)

The Annual General Meeting on 14 January will be a crucial one, as unless a new chairperson and a treasurer are forthcoming, our future is at stake. The Society has been in existence since 1989 and it would be a sad blow to have to curtail our popular monthly meetings - although the Research Group activities could continue. Please do your best to be present at the AGM to lend your support as we try to resolve the uncertainties of our future.

Our Archives are now housed in the Loose Swiss Scout headquarters in Pickering Street. We need to obtain two metal storage cabinets and some shelving, a folding table and a small heater to counter condensation. Once we have sought advice from CKS regarding the best method of safe storage and everything is in place the archives will be more accessible to members.

The original collection consisted of nearly 250 photos, but in the past few years the collection has been supplemented by several hundred more photographs, most of which were donated to LAHS, or loaned for copying, for publication by the Society and the Friends of All Saints' Church in their book *Loose and Linton – A Pictorial History* (now out of print).

A catalogue of the 300 or more documents in the archives is now available on disc.

Families of Wartime Loose

This 264- page document has been completed – at last! It contains details (rather more, in some cases, than others) of the 85 men and two women of the Loose area who gave their lives in the two World Wars, together with details of some of the families. Discs are available for those who are interested, or printed copies can be supplied (at £15 each) for anyone who prefers to have it in book form. It can also be found at http://www.vuplayer.com/margaret/families_of_wartime_loose.pdf A copy will be available for perusal at the Monday meetings.

Items of General Interest

A Faithful and Devoted Nurse

In his article 'A Trustworthy Pony Boy' in *Loose Threads* 8, Mr A.W.Earl referred to the Cornwallis family's housekeeper as Mrs Mc???. The lady in question was in fact, Mrs McMahon, the family 'nanny', and her grave (see below) can be found on the north-west side of Linton churchyard.

The inscription on the grave's kerbstone reads: *"In affectionate memory of Fanny Miriam McMahon, for many years a faithful and devoted nurse to the children of Mr and Mrs Cornwallis of Linton Park. Died 4 February 1912."*



Fanny's grave is close to those of the Cornwallis family, some of whose memorials are pictured below.



The Cornwallis graves



Memorial to Captain Fiennes Wykeham Mann Cornwallis, killed in Ireland in 1921 during the Irish Civil War



Memorial to the first Baron Cornwallis and his wife Mabel

'Happy Birthday' From Loose to Thomas Telford

Loose was the scene of one of many events held this year to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the birth of Thomas Telford, one of Britain's greatest civil engineers.

On 21 June Quentin Leiper, president of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), unveiled a plaque on Loose Viaduct, opened 177 years ago on what was then one of Britain's first bypasses.



*Quentin Leiper unveiling the plaque
(Photo: Institution of Civil Engineers)*

Previously the Maidstone to Cranbrook turnpike road had run up and down Old Loose Hill, through the heart of the village. This was a steep and dangerous road for heavily laden horse drawn carts and wagons, and would have been even more hazardous for the steam-powered traction engines and road locomotives that would soon become a common sight on Kent's roads.

In 1820 Henry Robinson Palmer, one of the founders of the ICE, surveyed the route for a new road through Loose, for the Maidstone-Cranbrook Turnpike Trust. He did this on behalf of Telford, who had recently become the institution's first president.

Robinson's plan included diverting the dangerous stretch of the turnpike road on to a gentler gradient to the east of Old Loose Hill and crossing the Loose Stream and Salts Lane with the present modest but elegant single-span structure. Some argue that it should really be called a bridge; after all, the multi-arched structures erected over wider stretches of water around Maidstone are all called 'bridges'!



*Brianna Whyatt pays her tribute to
Thomas Telford
(Photo: Institution of Civil Engineers)*

Built by a contractor whose name is not known, Loose Viaduct was opened in 1830 – four years before Telford died – and today, looks much as it did then, except for the footpath added to its west side in the 1930s.



*Loose Viaduct, showing the footpath built on
its west side in the 1930s*

The unveiling of the plaque was witnessed by a group of Loose schoolchildren, one of whom – 10-year-old Brianna Whyatt said, ‘*The people who live in Loose and probably those who visit are very grateful to Thomas Telford for designing this lovely viaduct, which has kept Loose as a beautiful and peaceful village.*’



The Loose Viaduct spanning the Loose Stream and Salts Lane.

(An article on the history of the Loose Viaduct is being prepared for publication in *LooseThreads* No.9)

Model Marks Centenary of Loose Trams

In 1907 an electric tram service between Loose and Maidstone was introduced, operating from a terminus at the top of Old Loose Hill, near the shops overlooking Loose Green. The service continued until 1930 when the trolleybuses took over, followed in 1967 by motorbuses.

The terminus closed in the 1990s and buses now stop near its site while en route to and from other destinations south of Maidstone.

To commemorate the centenary of the opening of the terminus, Ken Kimber of Boughton Monchelsea is building a scale model of Loose Green.



*Loose Green tram terminus in 1909, showing the King's Arms pub, village shops, passenger shelter and a tram ready to set off to Maidstone. This was one of the photographs that Ken Kimber studied while making his model.
(Photo by permission of Maidstone Museum and Maidstone Camera Club)*

After making several visits to the site and studying old photographs in minute detail, Ken worked out what all the buildings at the Green, and those nearby between Nos. 620 Loose Road and the top of the hill, looked like in the early years of the 20th century.

Using styrene for the buildings, and improvised materials such as an old green bath towel for grass, he has worked for more than 500 hours to make a meticulous reproduction which even includes a tiny electric tram that runs to and fro on 00 gauge model railway tracks.

The terminus is, in fact, seen as it was in 1909, after its passenger shelter was erected.

The last details to be added will be the King's Arms signpost, telegraph poles, the traction poles that supported the trams' electric cables, and the oak sapling that replaced the original one that was planted in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee – only to die a few years later.

Ken has also built models of East Farleigh Railway Station and the Palace Avenue area of Maidstone in the 1950s, featuring the police station and M&D bus station.

We hope to display Ken's model of Loose Green at one of our forthcoming meetings.



Ken places a horse and cart outside the King's Arms pub on his model of Loose Green. One hundred years ago the buildings to the right were a slaughterhouse; a butcher's shop; a grocer's shop and a tea-shop. Since then the pub has been converted into a house; a new house has been built on the site of the slaughterhouse; the butcher's shop was until recently, an antiques shop; the grocer's shop has become an estate agency and the teashop is Loose Post Office.



Detail from Ken's model of Loose Green, showing styrene buildings, bath towel grass and a tiny tram on 00 gauge tracks.

Local Slavery Abolitionists

The bicentenary of slave trade abolition seems to have generated comparatively little local interest although the group of Anglican, largely evangelical, abolitionists centred on Teston contained perhaps the country's most effective campaigners, and William Wilberforce's most

ardent motivators. This is not to deny the pioneering work of Quakers and Methodists but, as non-conformists, they tended not to be listened to.

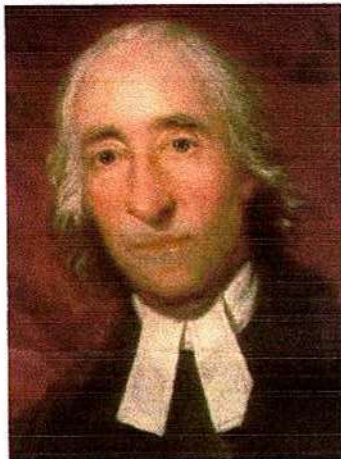


Admiral, Sir Charles (later Baron) Middleton

Charles Middleton of Barham Court, Teston, was "the enabler", the catalyst bringing together dedicated people, ably prompted by his wife, Lady Margaret. Two officers who had served under him became national celebrities, a famous educationalist and pamphleteer lent her weight, and the spearhead of operations was William Wilberforce, M.P. Barham Court was where they all met over the years from 1780, as Middleton successfully became Tory M.P. for Rochester; First Lord of the Admiralty and friend of Prime Minister, William Pitt.



Barham Court, Teston



Reverend James Ramsay

James Ramsay was a naval surgeon in West Indian waters under Captain Middleton. Retiring through injury he took holy orders. His church in St Kitts was financed by sugar plantations. Ramsay worked to convert slaves to Christianity and to alleviate cruel treatment, which antagonised planters and even church officials. Eventually he returned to England with his servant, a freed slave called Nester – now both buried in Teston churchyard. Ramsay took the livings of Teston and Nettlestead which were in the gift of the admiral. He wrote *“The Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies”* in 1784 which was promoted by Middleton and which brought him both fame and controversy for the rest of his life through powerfully presented argument. He impressed William Pitt as he dined with him several times at Keston (Bromley). He died in 1789 aged 56; before his work bore real fruit, such as parliamentary debate, so later it was not afforded the credit it deserved.

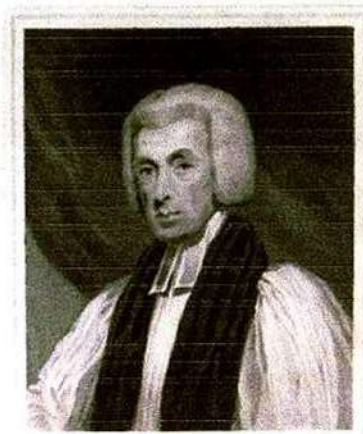
... tend in turn the mill and boiling
all night. They sleep over their work;
sugar is ill tempered, burnt in the boiler
and is
now- **grinds off an hand,** and
of those slowly worn down creatures
feed it. Still the process of making sugar
is carried on in many plantations, for months
without any other interruption, than during
some part of day light on Sundays. In some
plantations

Part of Ramsay's writings



Thomas Clarkson

Thomas Clarkson, also once an under-officer of Middleton's, briefly served as curate at Nettlestead. Inspired by Ramsay and given access to R.N.Dockyards by Middleton he interviewed countless sailors, slavers and all involved to establish and publicise the true nature and extent of slavery. He conveyed the facts to Parliament via sympathetic M.P.s. Incidentally, his younger brother, John, gained fame for his over-ambitious efforts to “repatriate” slaves from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone by “rising from the dead”. He was about to be buried at sea when sounds of life emanated from his canvas shroud.



Reverend Beilby Porteus

Later bishop of Chester then of London, Beilby Porteus began his ministry as vicar of Hunton and embraced the cause. Inspired by Ramsay he urged the church to oppose all aspects of slavery



Hannah More

Hannah More co-founded the United Church Foundation Schools movement and one of the first schools for the poor was established at Teston as a result of her stays at Barham Court for abolition meetings. Sandgate Primary School is proud of similar origins. A tireless and valuable intellectual supporter of Wilberforce, Hannah died in the same year – 1833.



William Wilberforce

Short in stature and in ill health for much of his life, William Wilberforce, the antislavery movement's best friend in Parliament, is remembered today as a great orator and a towering figure in British history.

Persuaded by Ramsay's writings, William Wilberforce frequently came to Teston to meet him and the former fellow M.P. and friend, Sir Charles, to help the movement forward. While a guest of Pitt at Holwood Park, Keston, Wilberforce famously pledged to pursue the cause to the end, under an oak tree, which is still preserved. The slave trade was officially abolished in 1807, though some clandestine operations continued, and slavery itself was not illegal until the Act of 1832 – the penultimate year of his life. He was back in this area at this time staying with his vicar son at East Farleigh vicarage. He had had to sell his home to pay off another son's debts. Yet another son, Henry William Wilberforce, became incumbent at East Farleigh subsequently. He later turned Roman Catholic and established a meetinghouse in Maidstone for the few residents, mainly at the barracks, of that denomination. William was buried in Westminster Abbey but his wife and various descendants lie buried beside East Farleigh church porch, the latest interred in 1987.

Father William had become the voice and influential force in Parliament, latterly popularised by supporting groups nationwide. The Clapham Sect, for example, may have attracted more credit as a group than the old Teston Evangelicals; perhaps undeservedly, for the latter had previously done the "spade work" when they were few and opposition was intense.



The Wilberforce Arms – East Farleigh

(Thanks to Charles Hitchcock for this article)

Mary Busbridge 1928-2006

(A tribute from her sister Lorna Evans)



Mary was born in Loose, the elder daughter of Herbert and Daphne Busbridge who lived in Grove Cottage, Pickering Street. She spent all her school days at the Sacred Heart convent in Maidstone, apart from six months when her mother took Mary and her sister to North Wales to have a break from the air raids during the war.

On leaving school, Mary did a pre-nursing course at Chatham, before going to do her General Nursing course at St. Thomas' Hospital in London. She spent four years there and qualified as a State Registered Nurse.

From there she did a midwifery course at the Woolwich hospital for Mothers and Babies, and a short spell in Bristol to do her practical training.

Mary had always wanted to nurse sick children so she returned to London to train for three years at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

For the next nine years she worked at the Bristol Children's Hospital where she was very happy, enjoying life with her friends in that city and nursing children.

Mary returned to Kent to be near her ageing parents and was Night Sister at the Kent & Canterbury Hospital, before coming back to live with her parents and working at the West Kent Hospital as a Sister on the children's ward.

Her parents died in 1976 and Mary moved to Bearsted where, for the first time, she had her own home – which she loved. She especially took a great pride in her garden. Until her retirement she worked at the Medway Hospital as Sister of the children's ward, but once retired she was free to travel and enjoy village life. She joined the local History Society and was a keen member of the church. She enjoyed entertaining her friends and visiting those who lived further afield. She also spent much of her time caring for friends who were elderly or disabled. Mary was also appointed as a manager at Loose Primary School.

Mary's was truly a life of service to others and she is much missed by family and friends since her death from cancer in March 2006.

Go on a sentimental journey ...

An hour of nostalgic journeys around Maidstone on trolley buses and motor buses, and sequences of steam trains at Maidstone West Station, are featured on "No Trolleys to Loose," a collection of old films and videos published on a DVD produced by Wilf Watters and Martin Jenkins.

Most of the films were made between 1928 and 1973 but the Maidstone public transport "Centenary Parade" of 2004 and shots of surviving trolley buses are included.

LAHS members can order the video by sending an email to enquiries@onlinevideo.me.uk or by writing to Judith Smith, Signal Box Ltd, 1 Albion Street, Leicester LE7 7DD. Price £18 inc p&p.