

THE COCKPIT

A Publication of the Chislehurst Society (founded 1934)



The Cockpit, on Chislehurst Common, has been the traditional meeting place for Chislehurst people on all great occasions, from time immemorial

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The Rambler's Rest, by Ian Gibbs

It's not all that long ago really, but in 1956 we built a house in Oakleigh Park Avenue off Summer Hill and when it was finished the builder, Coopers of Catford, invited me for a beer at what they claimed to be the best pub in Chislehurst, i.e. the Rambler's Rest. It was, and still is, a lovely pub, and the four landlords over the last 50 years have always managed to keep a lovely pint.

It has always been a smallish pub but back then it was a lot smaller than now. Apart from the one lino floored bar there was a grim looking Ladies' Lounge some four steps lower than the main bar with a small serving hatch for ladies brave enough to order their port and lemon through it. In those days it was quite common in pubs for the 'gents' to be outside and the Rambler's



Rest was no exception. So out we men kept trekking to make way for the next pint, down a steep concrete path with a step half way down to a very unfriendly 'loo'. Getting back to the warmth of the pub was worth it, however, and so was the beer. In 1956 a pint of beer cost 1s 10d: that's about 9p in today's money, instead of the £3.50 or thereabouts that it now costs.

I was working abroad most of the time in those days. In 1964, on one of our infrequent visits home, I was to find lots of changes. Not only to The Rambler's, which had been extended taking in the so called Ladies' Lounge to make a good-sized second bar as well as inside toilets, but also outside, where, much to my horror, the old Water Tower Building, arching over the road, had gone! Not counting the caves, that was the only real landmark Chislehurst had, in my view.

Memories of Chislehurst by Roger Speers

I was born in November 1939 and lived in Degema Road, and my earliest memories are of the war years. Many of the children from the road were evacuated, but a few of us, including my brother Ken, remained behind. Everything was on ration and I can remember my father, much to my mother's disgust, going round the pig-bins at night to collect food to feed our chickens so that we could have fresh eggs. These pig-bins were chained to lamp-posts and were very useful as a wicket for us youngsters when we played cricket in the road. Sometimes the postman would join us in our games.

I can remember a V1 Doodlebug heading for our house and my father throwing my brother and me into the Anderson shelter. It sailed over our rooftop and crashed into the houses at the top of Green Lane, killing a number of residents.

I attended St Nicholas' Church School, it being the only primary school in the area. We were often sent home in the winter when the outside toilets were frozen, much to our delight. In those days my brother and I would go home for lunch, in West Chislehurst, which was well over a mile from the school. When our mother was out for the day we went for lunch to the British Restaurant, which was situated next to the library, where the entrance to the car park is now.

I joined St Nicholas' Church choir as a probationer when I was seven, and had to wait several months before becoming a chorister. Probationers had to attend a practice on Thursdays, after school, at Wardley, in Church Lane. This was the home of the choir-mistress, Anne Murray, and her mother made us large jugs of cocoa, which went down a treat. Our bus fares (1d) were paid and we received a further 1d for each service and practice attended. Our big 'paydays' were weddings. A guinea (21 shillings,

now £1.05) was shared amongst the boys attending. Whatever we received, it seemed a fortune in those days. On Ascension Day all the pupils attended a morning service, after which we had the rest of the day off as a holiday.

In 1949 I sang at the funeral of Sir Malcolm Campbell (pictured right), who held the world land speed record [*in Bluebird*]. On his coffin was displayed a blue bird. His grave is situated near the Lych Gate.

The father of one of the choirboys worked at Heatherbank Hotel, which was on Summerhill, and a few of us entertained the guests at Christmas with carols, and we were suitably rewarded.

In my early years my brother took me on my three-wheeler bicycle to Chislehurst station, where we would collect train numbers, and on certain days we would climb the embankment in Barfield Road to watch the Golden Arrow speed through.

For those who remember the cinema, affectionately called the Bughutch, we would spend 6d for the front seats and when Mr Cripps, the owner, was not around, we would creep back to the 1 shilling seats for a better view.

How many people remember chickens running across the road where Elmstead Lane and William Barefoot Drive meet? This was before Coldharbour estate was built, there being a farmhouse near the junction. [*Coldharbour Farm*]

In the early 1950s the Kent 20-mile road race was held a number of times in Chislehurst. It was a lapped course and started and finished outside St Nicholas' School. It proceeded along Manor Park Road, St Paul's Cray Road, St Paul's Wood Hill, then up the A20 through the arched house [*Archway Cottages*] and Scadbury Park, and we youngsters followed the race on our bicycles. I remember Tom Richards, who came second in the 1948 Olympic Marathon, competing in one of these races.

Finally, I should mention some of the celebrities who, to my knowledge lived in Chislehurst during my early years.

Stuart Hibberd—Radio Personality; Lester Ferguson—Entertainer; Joan Regan—Singer; Peter West—Broadcaster; Les Graham—Motor Cyclist (rode for Gilera in TT races).



A dance hall in Kemnal Road: a war memory, by Ken Gummer

*K*en Gummer first came to Chislehurst as a soldier in the Second World War. In a covering letter to the manuscript of this memory he says: 'It was coincidental that we moved to Chislehurst in 1958. Elmstead Lane then was a quiet road, with gas lighting, no pavement outside the house, and hardly any traffic. In icy winter weather traffic often had difficulty in climbing the slope from Walden Road towards Mottingham, and the same in Downs Avenue.' He now lives much nearer the High Street.

A dance hall in Kemnal Road? Outrageous, you might say: but let me explain. It was autumn 1942 when I was posted to Chislehurst. So what could an army conscript do in the evenings? Well, there was the Chislehurst Cinema (now St Patrick's Church), or the NAAFI in South House, Kemnal Road. Farther down Kemnal Road at Foxbury was the venue every Tuesday evening when the resident ATS organized their weekly dance.

It was strange to revive memories of those Foxbury days during the Heritage Open Days in September 1996. I recall that the musicians performed on a convenient dais, which was at the base of the staircase, and the spacious entrance area became the 'dance hall.' Apart from the decorations, little seemed to have changed. Saturday evenings too were enjoyable, at the dances in the Bull's Head Hotel in Royal Parade.

My worst memory of Chislehurst was the day when we were ordered to march in full gear, including rifles, and wearing gas masks, from the Cockpit (which was the parade ground), past the Water Tower, down Summer Hill, and returning via Old Hill. I was glad to reach my billet at Blanchard House, then a large Victorian house but now a block of flats, opposite the pond in Green Lane.

I spent more hours than I care to remember in the porch of Wayside, on the corner of Manor Park and St Pauls Cray Road, on guard duty. The guardroom, in a Nissen hut, was almost opposite in the wooded area that still exists.

At the corner of Royal Parade and Church Row was the telephone, which I used to telephone my parents in south west London. A call to Streatham cost four old pennies, and I recall feeling ripped off at the charge. You see, Streatham is only about 6½ miles from Chislehurst, so one would have expected to pay twopence for the call. Not so: Chislehurst, being more than ten miles from Oxford Circus, commanded a higher tariff. The telephone box is still there, but the manual phone of the 1940s, with Buttons A and B, has long since gone.

It was a short walk from Blanchard House for our mid-morning 'cuppa' at a cafe in a glass lean-to behind 35 Green Lane. The owner, a Mrs Slegg, served us very well indeed in rationed Britain.

My Chislehurst residency came to an abrupt end in 1943, when I received a telegram from the old Post Office (now Café Rouge), reading: 'PLEASE REPORT BACK TO THIS UNIT FOR POSTING.'



Motor Fire Engine for Chislehurst

The following is from a 1912 edition of The Fireman: Journal of the Fire Protection Force.

Less than two years ago, the Chislehurst Urban District Council purchased a Merryweather 'Greenwich Gem' horse-drawn steam fire engine, but found that the value of the machine was considerably minimised by the difficulty of obtaining horses; the latter were retained at a small fee, but often when required were found to be engaged on other work. The local brigade were sorely perplexed over the matter, and eventually a solution was found by Messrs Merryweather offering to take back the steam engine in part exchange for a new petrol motor engine of the well-known 'Hatfield' pattern. We give an illustration of the engine, which is capable of pumping 300 gallons a minute, and is fitted with a standard four cylinder petrol engine of 50 HP. It is capable of travelling at a speed of 35 miles an hour on the level; and the numerous hills in the neighbourhood of Chislehurst possess no terrors for this powerful engine.

The official trial took place on Wednesday June 5th. An excellent run was made from the maker's Greenwich works to Chislehurst, but unfortunately any efforts that might have been made in creating a speed record were nullified by the driver's wholesome respect for the speed limit regulations, and also by the fact that two of the passengers shed their caps at different stages of the journey. In each case a stoppage was necessitated in order to enable the recalcitrant headgear to be recovered.

After a preliminary trip round the Common, the Chislehurst manual engine (supplied in 1893) and the new motor, preceded by a contingent of Boy Scouts with a band, and followed by an admiring crowd of locals, preceded in stately fashion through Chislehurst West, and finally brought up alongside the Prickend Pond, where the pumping operations were to take place. Chislehurst was evidently on holiday, for a large gathering of children and grown-ups had assembled round the pond, where they commented upon the contrast presented by the old fashioned manual and the up-to-date motor. The preparations were quickly made; a length of delivery hose was run out, and the strainer end of the suction hose was placed in the pond, where a stalwart fireman in waterproof boots stood on it and kept it well under water. The movement of a single lever transferred the power of the motor from the propelling mechanism to the pump, and in a few seconds a powerful jet was sent soaring aloft high above the trees surrounding the pond.

Tests were then made with the engine drawing direct from the main. This was first tried with a hydrant alongside the pond, where a half-inch jet from the main



Chislehurst's Motor Fire Engine

*Presentation to Mr Burton
(Picture courtesy of Peter Ribbons)*



showed 50lbs pressure. With the pump at work this was increased to 170lbs. The engine then proceeded to Kemnal Road, and 'worked' from the identical hydrant that was employed at the destructive fire at Mr Tiarks' house in November 1909. Here a three-quarter-inch jet was employed, and gave a pressure from the main of 45lbs. With the help of the pump a pressure of 170lbs was obtained. Two half-inch jets were then tried and showed 40lbs, which the pump promptly converted to 130lbs. Greater pressures could have been attained, but there was not sufficient water from the main to feed the pump to its full capacity. A great feature of the 'Hatfield' pump, however, is that it can utilise a small quantity of water to the best advantage; all that is necessary being to open the by-pass valve connecting the suction and delivery passages.

This concluded the pumping tests, which were acknowledged to have passed off in a most satisfactory manner. Several of the Chislehurst Councillors, with visitors from neighbouring brigades, were then taken for a run over some of the Chislehurst hills. The toughest problem was Imperial Hill, which runs up from Bickley to Chislehurst Common. This hill is very steep and has several awkward turns. It was also negotiated under unfavourable conditions, as the motor came on to it from a side turning, and was compelled to proceed at a very slow pace. In spite of this drawback, however, the speed was quickly accelerated, and what was undoubtedly a very severe test was overcome in excellent style.

Amongst those present at the trials were Councillors Robinson, F. J. Knight, C. Dabner, and A. Spooner, Messrs. H. E. Knight (Clerk to the Council), W. J. Winter (Surveyor), Chief Officer Norton (Bromley Fire Brigade), Chief Officer W. A. Farnham and Second Officer B. W. Smith (Sidcup), Chief Officer A. Hewett and Second Officer Dean (Sutton-at-Hone), and Second Officer Lanaway (Colombo). The Chislehurst Brigade was under the charge of the new Chief Officer, Captain J. Pierce. The trials were conducted by Mr W. J. Rushforth on behalf of the makers, and Engineer Rayment drove the engine. Mr G. S. Lewis, the newly appointed engineer of the Chislehurst Brigade, who would have charge of the engine in future, was also present.

An adjournment was subsequently made to the fire station, where Mr L Burton, on behalf of his father, Captain Burton, who has recently retired from the command of the local brigade, received a testimonial in the shape of a roll-top desk, a framed photograph and a cheque for £55 (the total amount subscribed being £64 10s 6d.). The presentation was made by Mr H. J. Hadrill, ex-Chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee, who said it gave him great pleasure to present to their veteran captain the testimonial subscribed to by the residents of Chislehurst, in appreciation of his services. [*Several*

complimentary speeches omitted here The company then adjourned to the Crown Hotel where the excellent repast provided by Host Downes was greatly appreciated. Mr Robinson presided and was supported by Mr T. May, JP (Chairman of the Council), Mr D. A. Dabner and Captain J. Pierce. The rest of the evening was spent in convivial manner with song and speech, Mr Robinson again occupying the Chair.

Editorial comment.

This so well conveys the sense of ownership and personal pride in the local Fire Brigade, felt by the villagers. It helps to explain the sense of outrage and despair expressed when the village fire station next to the Tiger’s Head was closed as the process of nationalisation took hold from 1941 to 1948, and responsibility passed to Kent County Council. It was vital in wartime that there should be complete uniformity in equipment, hydrants, hose couplings and so forth. The Chislehurst Residents’ Association minutes for 1952 reflect some of the local anger and frustration at the sense of personal loss of the village’s own fire brigade, but nothing could be done. The Old Fire Station became the garage for the Chislehurst & Sidcup Libraries mobile library, as the Editor can recall. When the Greater London Boroughs were formed in 1965 the London Fire Brigade took over. Subsequently it became the HQ of the Commons Conservators, as it still remains. The Old Fire Station was built on glebe land in 1893; before that date there was an even older fire station in Church Lane, about where the mortuary chapel is now, and some very picturesque cottages occupied the land between it and Watts Lane. These were demolished in 1892 when the graveyard was extended.



The Fire Brigade display at Prickend Pond, June 1912



The Chislehurst I Knew, by Eddie Driscoll

Having served in the Royal Navy for a number of years, tradition has always played an important part in my life. My experience, serving as a comparatively young police constable in the Chislehurst area during the 1950s, played a very important part in what is described today as 'job experience.'

The Chislehurst I remember from those days has obviously changed, and the world as we know it has also changed, so why not this small village? Set in the outskirts of the south London urban sprawl, and fighting to maintain its unique village atmosphere, Chislehurst is part of the London Borough of Bromley, its well-being administered by Bromley Borough Council.

I recently walked its High Street one evening, having dined in one of the many restaurants, which have replaced the small shops. The latter were very prevalent in those far off days. The street's architecture has changed very little, with the structures adjoining the pavements being still as I remember them. Their use may have changed, but with progress there is a price to pay. Some would say too high a price; perhaps it is not easy to accept change, particularly if you speak for the middle-aged generation. I observed that the street and the whole village appeared alive and vibrant. I say village, because that is just what it is. Notwithstanding the boutiques, bistros and beauty parlours, which have replaced the butchers, bakers and greengrocers, it still happily retains that feeling of being in a small community.

If I had walked that same street at that same hour of the day in the 1950s, the street probably would have been empty, with perhaps a few passing cars, and the odd late drinker waiting to cross the narrow street. That is not to say there was no crime in those days. There was crime; houses were still broken into, people were still being assaulted, and unfortunately were still dying, either by someone's hand or through natural causes. It is a sombre reflection but those things still occur today, perhaps more frequently, but one thing is for certain; they do occur and one cannot lay the blame at the recent opening of a new restaurant or wine bar.

Chislehurst may have lost some of the characters that I remember as I performed duty in that area, but I am certain there is a whole new breed to take their place. I have formed that opinion even though I no longer pound the beat in six weekday shifts, followed by three weeks of night duty. When I visit the area now, I can still distinguish the feeling that the people who live there really care about it. It's more than just a residence; it's a way of life. As a Police Officer, patrolling the area mostly on foot, or perhaps a gent's bicycle, or, if you were really lucky, a motor cycle, you had

the opportunity to get to know the residents, and perhaps what was more important, the non-residents of that area. Although I was part of the mighty Metropolitan Police, and was extremely proud of that fact, the residents looked upon my serving colleagues and me as 'their' policeman.

A policeman nearly five decades ago had the opportunity to converse with the inhabitants. He was told just what was going on in that community, and he was not only trusted with that information, he was expected to act upon it. The police service is now aware of this, and although there is a need for the use of technology in fighting crime, I am of the opinion that there is no substitute for that good old-fashioned 'Dixon of Dock Green' approach.

That last subject has provided me with the necessary link and a good reason to get off my soapbox. Chislehurst of bygone years had more than its fair share of celebrities and I have a feeling it still has. The author of *Dixon of Dock Green*, and many other works, was Lord Ted Willis, who resided not a million miles from the ponds of Chislehurst. I was told on very good authority that an elder constable at the local station provided Lord Ted Willis with a number of anecdotes, admittedly hearsay, but possible! I can recall that Lord Ted and his wife were kind enough to accept an invitation to the Police Annual Dinner which I organised, and he gave an excellent address on behalf of the guests, praising the work of the police in this country.

The singer Joan Regan also lived close by, and I can recall an officer stopping and questioning a vehicle that was parked outside her address at 4 a.m. It transpired that the car was there to convey Miss Regan to a film studio. The officer's action was taken under the much-maligned Metropolitan Police Act of 1839. Today, it would probably result in a complaint; then, a letter of gratitude was received by the Commissioner for the officer's vigilance, and subsequent action.

I am not aware that anyone who is lucky enough to be a millionaire actually boasts about it. When I was transferred to the Chislehurst sub-division I was informed, whilst 'learning beats,' that Camden Park Road boasted ten millionaires. Millionaires are perhaps more plentiful in this day and age than they were in the 1950s. Today's soccer fields abound with millionaires. A good karaoke singer could also make a claim to that distinction. But millionaires in my years at Chislehurst were really something. They were regarded with a great deal of awe and respect. One of the millionaires was of the Spicer family, the paper manufacturers. I had the privilege of calling at the house, which had a small private zoo; alas, during my time, the owner passed away, and the house was converted into apartments. There were many other houses in this particular



*The High
Street in 1951*

road, the owners of which I feel sure were of equal social standing, but for reasons best known to them, they did not actually shout it from the rooftops.

One house I remember well, the owner being the director of a well-known building society, who fell foul of a Duty Police Inspector. Intruder alarms were something of a novelty in those days, and police responded to a number of calls to this residence. Most of the calls were received on a Saturday evening. When the Inspector arrived on the scene one evening, he observed that a party was in progress, and that all the participants were standing on the lawn awaiting the arrival of the police. It transpired that all partygoers were given a ticket with a time, which might correspond with the arrival of the police. The one whose ticket came nearest to the actual time would win the jackpot! The house owner was *'suitably informed'*, and to the best of my knowledge, it did not occur again.

Another celebrity character was a Miss Tiarks, who resided in a prestigious area on Chislehurst Common. This dear old lady frequently drove her car at the break-neck speed of approximately five to ten miles per hour along the High Street, followed by a great deal of traffic. On her approach the officer on patrol in the High Street would immediately find a parking position for her and hold up the traffic whilst she diligently parked her vehicle. She was a member of the well-known banking family. [*The Tiarks were great benefactors especially to the poorer members of Chislehurst society, and until the 1930s*



Scadbury House - the home of John Marsham-Townshend

resided at Foxbury in Kennal Road. – Ed

Scadbury Park is now administered by the London Borough of Bromley. During my service in the Chislehurst area the owner of the property resided in a splendid house within the estate. To the best of my recollection his name was Major Marsham-Townshend; I am not absolutely sure that I am correct but it would be remiss of me not to mention this very fine gentleman. I do not use the word 'gentleman' lightly, for indeed he was just that, in every sense of the word. I was introduced to him when being shown my 'beat.' The Constable who was my tutor was John Danaher. I can remember vividly being ushered into a magnificent room by the housekeeper. We were served refreshments, and for the purpose of these notes I can recall it was Darjeeling tea. As I looked round the room my memory returned to a film I had once seen, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, featuring Sir Alec Guinness. The scene depicted a room hung with paintings of this gentleman's ancestors. I was most impressed. I can never recall the Major driving by without stopping, and passing the time of day. He was indeed an excellent ambassador for his social class.

A number of years later I attended the house in another capacity. It had been burgled and its owner, now in the twilight of his years, was terribly upset. I was able to recover some of the stolen property. I understand that a short time later, after he had left, the

house was the subject of an arson attack, a very sad ending for all concerned. I did have the privilege of knowing this fine man. He was certainly worthy of his position in life.

[*This would appear most likely to have been Major John Marsham-Townshend, who became Lord of the Manor when his father Hugh died in 1967. John died in 1975, and the house was destroyed by fire in January 1976 – Ed]

No one who resided in Chislehurst at that time could say they had not heard of 'Smokey Joe'. He could never be described as a pillar of society but he was certainly a celebrity in every sense of the word. He was a vagrant, who propelled himself on a tyreless, brakeless bicycle. He kept warm by suspending a tin containing hot wood embers from the handlebars. He travelled far and wide, with sightings as far as New Cross and Blackheath. Unfortunately, he only came to police notice when drunk. I remember having to take him into custody outside Chislehurst Railway Station. For some reason he had covered his head with his jacket, and was causing a great deal of anguish to people using the station. He refused to remove the jacket, so I was forced to carry on a brief conversation via the garment's sleeve. He was obviously drunk and very incapable. He was, as I recall, charged under the name of G. Cumow. There were many stories and myths relating to his way of life; that he was a casualty of the First World War, and he came from a titled family, were just two of many stories. I recall local tradesmen providing him with food and clothes, particularly Mr Battle the baker, who would never see 'Smokey' go without. Smokey lived in a makeshift structure in the vicinity of Botany Bay Lane. I can also recall a local photographer taking some very good studies of this 'Gentleman of the Road'. The photographs illustrated every line in the face of this character; his countenance depicted what a hard life he had endured.

Other celebrities I remember were Eric Williams, the author of *The Wooden Horse*, the Second World War escape story, later the subject of a film. He lived in Prince Imperial Road, the later name for Station Road. I believe Lester Ferguson, a well-known singer of the day, originally owned the house.

As that well-known opera relates, 'A policeman's lot is not a happy one' and there were many incidents that one never forgets, and time will not erase. On a number of occasions I noticed a very stylish sports car driven through the High Street, when personalised number plates were only just becoming popular. The driver was the son of a local businessman. On reporting for duty at 5.45 one morning, my first task was to inform the father that his son had met with a fatal accident that morning. No matter how many times one carries out this assignment, it never becomes any easier.

As soon as he opened the door he knew why I was there; he expected the worst, and on this occasion it was. I made him a cup of tea, we discussed the weather, and when I thought he wanted to be alone, I left.

Chislehurst was also the home of a very talented motorcyclist, the son of a local building contractor. I am told he was 'advised' by a police traffic patrol officer, who had followed him down Green Lane, to take up the sport. The officer was impressed with his style, and he became a top rider, appearing in the Isle of Man T.T. I later had the task of taking a statement for the Isle of Man police authority from another local rider, who had witnessed the man's fatal crash during a T.T. race.

I believe the future of Chislehurst Police Station is once again under review; this time, I understand, there will be no reprieve. It was closed for the first time in the late 1950s, from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. Officers still paraded for duty there, but the front office was closed to the general public. The residents were not happy with the situation, but evidently it was to be. Thieves have a habit of discovering a weakness in the system, and if at all possible exploiting that weakness. The TV outlet directly opposite was raided after midnight and after removing a considerable amount by car, those responsible thought it so easy that they returned for a second helping. Much to their disgust the burglary had been discovered in their absence, and on their return to the scene of the crime, they found the night duty relief waiting for them and they were arrested! The station resumed normal opening hours for a number of years after that. Times have changed and police do not have the resources necessary to provide the service required.

During the early fifties Chislehurst was still able to boast a cinema. This was situated at the northern end of the High Street. It bore a resemblance to one featured in an old Peter Sellers film entitled *The Smallest Show on Earth*. It was very well run, so alas, I can recall only ever being called to the location once during my time at Chislehurst. I think this was when someone had mislaid their ice cream money! It later closed, either due to the increased popularity of cinema at that time, or to its limited capacity. [*In fact the Priest at St Mary's RC Church, Father T. P. O'Beirne, had his eye on it, and made a successful offer for it in 1960 to its owner, Charles Cripps – Ed*] It was converted into St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church but its outward appearance still resembles the former cinema.

My service in Chislehurst was indeed a happy one, and it has provided me with many pleasant memories. I could relate many more anecdotes when I think of my time there.

Editor's Updates

Chislehurst Memories

By an unfortunate coincidence the authors of two recent items in our Chislehurst Memories series died at about the time of the publication of their articles in the Summer 2012 edition. Sir William Ryrie, who wrote about the trees of Hawkwood, died on 6 July and an obituary appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on 21 July. Peter Munns, well known in the local Scouting movement, died at the end of September. The Editor regrets that publication of these articles, written some ten or twelve years ago, was delayed for so long, but such material remains of lasting value. This is at least part of the purpose of *The Cockpit*, to create something of a local historical archive. It seems reasonable to assume that articles about various aspects of Chislehurst in bygone days will always be welcomed by, and, we hope, will remain of interest to, the current generation of readers. If any reader feels inclined to write something, however brief, about some aspect of their own experience of Chislehurst life, the Editor will be very happy to consider it for inclusion in *Cockpit*, though it is not possible to guarantee when that may be! Anything in the nature of current news should be addressed to Tony Allen, Chairman of the Society, for inclusion in *Chislehurst Report*.

Scadbury update news: old photographs discovered

The Scadbury Special edition of *The Cockpit*, published in Summer 2011, produced a positive response from a Mrs Jeffreys, who lives locally. Having read about the forthcoming ODAS Open Days in September that year, she contacted her cousin, Mrs Rice, who lives near Southampton. They recalled visiting their grandfather, George Hutcherson, who was then working on the estate and living with his wife at Cottage No. 3 adjacent to the moated site. The cousins visited Scadbury during the Open Weekend, and talked to Janet Clayton, the current Chairman of ODAS, and told her about their grandfather. Mrs Rice had some old photographs relating to her own and some of the other families who lived in these cottages, as well as the Marsham-Townshends who lived at the 'Big House' nearby, and copies were sent to Janet Clayton. She published them in the February edition of ODAS Archives, together with a useful historical account to set the photographs in their proper context. This particular edition of ODAS Archives is Vol. 34, No.1, for February 2012, pages 271–274.

Scadbury update news: confirmed date of demolition of moated house

In September 2011 ODAS received an e-mail from Mr Richard Selwyn-Sharpe of Yorkshire, a descendant of the Selwyn family, of which John Selwyn inherited

Scadbury manor following the death in 1733 of his uncle Sir Richard Bettenson, Lord of the Manor. Webb's *History* relates that John Selwyn then gave Scadbury to his son-in-law, the Honourable Thomas Townshend, after which event Thomas pulled down the old house intending to rebuild it. Richard Selwyn's e-mail told of the discovery in the family archives of a letter written by Frances Hewett, née Bettenson, to her niece, who was the granddaughter of Frances' eldest sister, Albinia (John Selwyn's mother). It is a long and somewhat rambling letter, and is dated 20 March 1738, but it strikes a vivid spark in a key passage that relates of the family that 'they are quite out of love with Scadbery, (sic) that they are pulling it down and carrying all the materials to build at Danson'. That was where John Selwyn lived; he held significant posts in the Royal household in London, and Danson, adjacent to Watling Street, provided him with a swift route to the capital. His house is long gone. Its foundations are drowned beneath the lake that Sir John Boyd, Selwyn's successor at Danson, created when he was building his new house at the top of the hill in Danson Park in the 1760s.

Interested readers can pursue much of this in the pages of Webb, which for all its scholarly work was unable to determine a date for the demolition of the old Scadbury house: but how about that, plus the newly discovered photographs, for two wonderful slices of luck to come ODAS' way? A just reward, I think, for the 26 years of dogged hard work that its members have put in to piece together the history of this ancient moated site. A full account, written by Stephen Archer, appears in ODAS Archives, Vol. 34, No.2, for May 2012, pages 287–291.

Local History Group

Are you interested in learning more about our local heritage?

We are starting a local history group for interested people to research and produce stories, maps and images about Chislehurst, past and present. We will arrange an inaugural evening discussion in the new year to agree how the group will operate.

Anyone interested will be warmly welcomed.

Tempted? Please contact us: localhistory@chislehurst-society.org.uk

You can contact the Chislehurst Society

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