



IN TIME

Ely U3A History Group Members'
Newsletter



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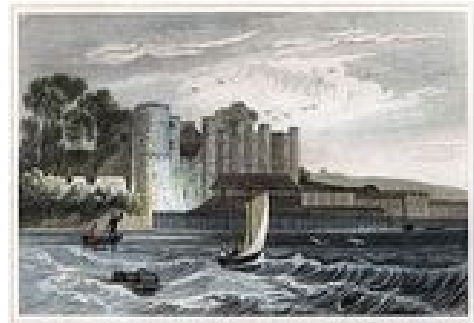
Welcome to this week's newsletter - IN TIME. This week we discover what the Gillingham line was and learn about bastle houses. We also find out about the era of the NHS spectacle, as well as hearing more from Alderman Newton's Cambridge diary and getting more help from the hundred year old book 'Consult me for all you want to know.'

Please keep your articles coming we are always in need of them. Send your articles to Maggie Haverson (email address supplied in the email containing this newsletter).

Gillingham Line Cut – Heather Carruth

Gillingham Line cut, it sounds like a headline from the Beeching Era, but in June 1667, during the second Anglo-Dutch war, it would have been breaking news, announcing one of the worst ever defeats in Royal Naval history.

The Gillingham Line was a six-inch thick iron chain built as a navigational barrier across the Medway near Gillingham. Replacing earlier versions, probably dating back to Henry VIII's reign, this then state of the art defence system had been built during the English Civil War to repel a possible attack by the Royalist fleet. Owing to its great weight it lay at its lowest point practically nine feet under the water, so it was still possible for light ships to pass over it. The chain, together with the fortress of Upnor castle were supposed to protect the English ships at anchorage in Chatham dockyard and Gillingham from attack.



Upnor Castle

As the Dutch fleet took Sheerness then advanced quickly up the Medway, ships were hastily sunk by the English to reinforce the chain by adding additional barriers. The chain itself was heightened near to the river banks with blocks in a bid to stop the Dutch fleet's progress, but to no avail. These support blocks were soon destroyed, then the Dutch fire ship *Pro Patria* breached the chain. The Dutch engaged shore fortifications with cannon fire, burned or captured three capital ships and ten more ships of the line then captured and towed away the English flagship, HMS Royal Charles.



The stern piece of the Royal Charles at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam

To prevent the 16 other English war ships from being captured, they were sunk by their crews making 30 ships in total lost. An air of panic prevailed in England as a full scale invasion was feared.

Politically, the raid on the Medway was disastrous for King Charles II's war plans and led to a quick end to the war and a favourable peace for the Dutch. The King was said to be particularly hurt by the fact that the Royal Charles was towed back to the Netherlands and displayed as a tourist attraction.

Bastle Houses - Maggie Haverson



Family history reveals that some of my ancestors lived in Bastle houses. You may know what these are, but I was not familiar with the name and needed to investigate. My family comes from border country and Bastle houses were a type of fortified farmhouse built from the mid 16th to mid 17th century. They are found along the Anglo-Scottish border, in the areas formerly plagued by border reivers or raiders who stole cattle and sheep from English farmers. The name bastle is said to derive from the French word "bastille".

The bastle house was built with defence in mind, they had extremely thick stone walls (about 1 metre thick). The stones used to build the bastles were massive yet often they contained no mortar which was a material few men could source or afford. Instead the stones were held together with wedge-shaped off-cuts of those that were dressed. This practice was known as 'galletting'. The roof tiles were made of heavy stone which were impossible to set on fire and were held in place by sheep bones. The ground was floor devoted to stable space for the most valuable animals, and had a vaulted stone ceiling between it and the first floor. This ceiling had a trapdoor which accessed the family's living quarters on the floor above, which during the times before the suppression of the reivers, was only reachable by a ladder which was pulled up from the inside at night to keep the family safe. The windows were small or even only arrow slits.

Many bastle houses still survive today testimony to their fortified nature, some are ruins while others have been modified into dwellings or farm buildings

Making a Spectacle of Yourself – Ian Forrest

Prior to World War II all health care provision in the UK was private; some people had insurance which paid most or part of the costs, but there was a movement towards a comprehensive national health care provision. The outbreak of war stopped these deliberations, but all hospitals were taken under government control.

Despite the ongoing war, in 1941 the Ministry of Health agreed a post war policy of universal health care. The Beveridge report in 1942 included a recommendation endorsing this concept. The BMA and many ministers rejected the idea. However in 1944 the Cabinet published a White Paper which gave the basic concepts of the NHS:

- Services should be free at the point of use
- Services were to be financed by general taxation
- Everyone was eligible for care (even people temporarily resident or visiting the country).

After Churchill lost the 1945 election, Clement Attlee's Labour Government pressed ahead with these ideas with Aneurin Bevin guiding the National Health Service Act 1946 through parliament. The Act gave each resident a General Practitioner, who would act as the point of entry to the system. Patients would have access to medical, dental, nursing and eyecare that they may need without having to pay for it at the time.

Many doctors were against the provision and early in 1948 the BMA voted against it, but Bevan worked hard to bring them on board and when the Nation Health Service was launched on 5th July 1948 it was considered a success.

[Some snippets from 1660's Cambridge – Clinton Tweed](#)

As recorded by Aldeman Newton in his diary

2nd September, 1666 – Fire Fire



“On Sunday between 1 and 2 of the clock in the morning in the City of London began in Pudding Lane there at a french bakers house to be fyred (and it being a great north east winde) continued most feircely burneing from that time until Thursday in the afternoon being the 6th of September it burned down parishes with the Churches and consumed all along from where it began to the Tower and alsoe towards Westminster as far as Temple Bar. Not above 2 or 3 persons were consumed by the fire.....most persons got them away into the fields.”

16th July, 1667

“Tewsday some out part of The Towne of Ely was on fire and great part of it was burnt downe that is to say some little or Cottages in Newnham there to the number of 6 or 7 were burnt downe.”

[More advice from: Consult me for all you want to know – Wendy Rolph](#)



Returning to my lovely advice book published in 1902 I have been looking for tips to help all those souls recently bereft of their hairdresser, barber, beauty salon or make-up counter.

Chapped hands: Rub them night and morning with raw linseed oil.

(I'm not sure that this is a terribly good idea considering linseed oil can be used as an impregnator, a pigment binder in oil paints, a plasticizer and hardener in putty!)

Complexion, to Improve it: It is good to rise early in the morning, drink a cup of milk, walk into the fields and wash the face in sparkling dew. For a good face wash Infuse sifted bran in the best vinegar; add, well beaten, the yolks of 3 or 4 eggs and 1 grain of ambergris. Distil. Bottle and cork well.

Depilatory: Saturate the part well with fine oil. In about an hour wipe it off; then take finely powdered quick lime 1 oz; powdered orpiment 1 drachm (a bright yellow mineral consisting of arsenic trisulphide) mix with white of egg and apply with a small brush.

(Quick lime is caustic and I suspect it is most likely one would remove not just excess hair but skin as well!)

Pomade for the hair: Best lard, 4 ozs; castor oil 4 ozs; white wax 3 drs. Melt and mix. When cool add oil of bergamot and lavender 15 drops of each.

(Bring back the anti-macassar.)

Rouge; Make a decoction of best Brazil wood, powdered and best vinegar. Boil half an hour, strain and replace on the fire. Dissolve a quarter of a pound of alum in a pint of best vinegar. Mix the two liquids and stir well. The scum which arises, on being carefully taken off and gradually dried, will make a beautiful and harmless rouge.

(Alum is commonly used in dyeing and tanning processes)

Baldness; Rub the part morning and evening with onions until it is red and afterwards rub with honey. Or wash it with a decoction of boxwood. Or electrify it daily.

(Not too bad but the first suggestion would probably attract flying insects whilst repelling intimates.)

Razor – to sharpen: The simplest method of sharpening a razor is to put it for half an hour in water to which has been added one twentieth of its weight of sulphuric acid and after a few hours set it on a hone. Nothing further than a smooth polish is necessary. Use the strap of a soldier's knapsack on which some fine black lead has been rubbed.

Again, I hope you have found these amusing but please, don't try them at home.

Petty's Pick of the Week

Every day Mike Petty posts on his Facebook group "Fenland History on Facebook" a number of newspaper clips from his massive archive of local events reported "on this day" <https://www.facebook.com/groups//102684982076955>

Tyrannical servants - Past Snip July 22nd 1902

The problem of the general servant is with us always.

The tyranny of the domestic, her varying moods and fluctuating caprices seemingly know no end. Her demands have gradually become more peremptory and extensive for some years past and housekeepers have become painfully familiar with Sundays off, evenings out, cycles in the kitchen and swains in constant evidence.

The Cambridge autocrats of the kitchen are now going a step further; the very latest request is a week's holiday at the Coronation. It is not stated whether the majority of them propose attending the Abbey

This story appeared in a Cambridge newspaper on this date.

