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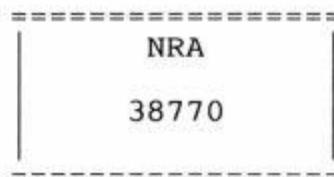
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Rochester and District Society of Arts

Rochester upon Medway City Archives

Civic Centre
Strood
Rochester ME2 4AW

Reference no: DE 53/2

*Rochester-upon-Medway
Studies Centre*

DE53/2/

*RECORDS OF THE ROCHESTER AND DISTRICT
SOCIETY OF ARTS 1948-1958
AND OTHER LOCAL
VOLUNTARY SOCIETIES c.1950s,1971*

DE53/2 Transferred from Rochester Library, Kent County Council to Medway Area Archives Office 30 July 1990

DE302 Transferred from Rochester Library, Kent County Council to Rochester-upon-Medway Studies Centre 18 March 1993 (accessioned 4 Nov. 1993)

All items in this list are DE53/2 unless otherwise stated in the list entries.

INTRODUCTION

Rochester and District Society of Arts

The inaugural meeting of the Rochester and District Society of Arts was held at the Guildhall in Rochester on 7 October 1948. Subsequent meetings were held at the Central Public Library, Northgate, Rochester.

Present at this meeting were Ald. A. C. Lyle, Mayor of Rochester and Frederick Baines, City Librarian, besides about 50 other persons. At this first meeting the name of the society had been changed from Rochester and District Arts Club.

The City of Rochester exercised a form of patronage over the new organisation but the society's activities were self-directed. The City Librarian reported on the development of the Society to the Library Committee of the City Council on 9 September 1948 and again on 14 October 1948 (Council Minutes available at this Centre). (At that time and until 1974, Rochester City Council was statutory Library Authority for the district. In 1974 Kent County Council became sole statutory Library Authority for the Administrative County of Kent.)

As at 1 January 1955, the objects of the Society were to:

*coordinate the efforts of organisations engaged in the promotion of activities relating to the Arts, with the full cooperation of such organisations
to supplement these efforts by promoting cultural activities not provided by such organisations
to establish an Arts Centre where such activities may be promoted and to encourage the better appreciation of the Arts*

Membership was open to persons over the age of 14 and to affiliated societies

During the inaugural meeting, it was anticipated that the work of the new society would be directed along the lines of art, literature, drama, "other activities" and music, for which activities honorary organisers were appointed.

It is apparent from the Society's minutes that by 1958 music and film were the members' principal interests as in May of that year, Basil H. Smith, Honorary Secretary reported the motion to wind-up the society but for the music and film groups to continue as societies in their own right.

It is clear that the Society was by 1958 succumbing to the same malaise which had afflicted the Rochester Book Society (collection 9S at this Centre, computerised list available via UNOFFICIAL menu) which had itself been wound-up in the immediate post-War period.

The minutes for 25 September 1957 record "a clash between the Literature and Music Groups over Thursday evening programmes" and for 13 November 1957 the minutes relate that "Col. Hale...asked for the opinion of the members of the Committee on whether it would be desirable or possible to hold a Christmas Party in 1957. The general feeling seemed to be that the party should not be held.

The surviving records comprise two minute books, removed loose enclosures and a bundle of correspondence. By comparing these records with those of the Rochester Book Society (9S), Gillingham Arts Club records 1949-1978 (DE15), and the minutes of Rochester City Council and Chatham Borough Council, a fuller picture of arts activities in the Medway Towns could be painted. Also of interest is the file of Strood Rural District Council relating to the Festival of Britain in 1951, 1949-1951, (SRDC/76). (The list of the Strood RDC collection is available via the LGOVSRDC menu).

As sequels to these developments of the 1940s and 1950s, it should be noted that in May 1987 Medway Arts Centre was opened in the Old Chatham Town Hall by Rochester-upon-Medway City Council, the successor authority to Rochester City Council (abolished in 1974) and Rochester-upon-Medway City Council also employed from 1994 an Arts Development Officer, based at the Civic Centre in Strood.

Medway Theatre Guild

Contained in this collection are two copies of the constitution of the medway Theatre Guild, which describe the objects of the Guild as

- To coordinate the activities of dramatic societies in the locality*
- To encourage drama and the allied arts*
- To provide instruction in all aspects of dramatic art*
- To organise an annual drama festival*
- To provide a community theatre for the Medway area*

It is possible this organisation originated as the breakaway Drama Group of the Rochester and District Society of Arts, see item DE53/2/3/16 below. This supposition arises from the obvious similarity in each organisation's objects and the likely competition which would have ensued. It is recommended that searchers examine copies of local newspapers held at this Centre to follow the development of local theatres since the decline of Medway together with Local Authority minutes.

Northgate Society, Rochester

No further information about this organisation was available at the time of writing. However, on the occasion of the meeting recorded in this collection, their subject of discussion was Foulness Airport, Essex and suggests they may have been a pressure group.

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<i>7</i>	<i>Northgate Society, Rochester</i>	<i>1971</i>

*PRINTED SOURCES AND OTHER ARCHIVAL SOURCES
AT THIS CENTRE*

Printed sources

Programmes of the Rochester & District Music Group 1958-1977[gaps] VF.MED.367

Printed ephemera of other Medway voluntary societies inc. Rochester Farmers' Club 1880,1887, schedule of Arts & Crafts Exhibition 1949,etc. VF.MED.367

Medway Theatre Guild: "The mystery of the finding of the cross", by Henri Gheon at Festival of the Friends of Rochester Cathedral MED.792.VF

Local newspapers for Medway Towns held at this Centre

Other Archival Sources

Records of the Rochester Book Society 1797-1946 (9S)

Records of the Rochester & District Natural History Society 1879-1980 (DE368)

Records of Gillingham Arts Club 1949-1978 (DE15)

Printed item: "Chatham Town Hall:an Arts Centre for Chatham" comprising feasibility study April 1986 prepared by Jude Kelly, Tim Foster & Michael French Assocs. (CEN/CS/2)

Minutes and files of Rochester City Council and Chatham Borough Council (RCA & CBA)

Minutes of Strood Rural District Council 1897-1974 (SRDC/1-46)

Files of Strood Rural District Council on leisure provision 1933-1974 (SRDC/501-535, 873-879); on the Festival of Britain 1951, 1949-1951 (SRDC/76)

- Rochester and District Society of Arts 1948-1958

- 1 *Minute book* 1948-1953
- Inc. *Treasurer's monthly or two-monthly accounts*
- Chiefly comprises pasted-in TS minutes with some MS minutes at front. All signed by chairman.*
- Inc. *organisers' reports*
- Inc. *lists of names and addresses of members and names of elected officers*
- [See /4 for removed enclosure]*
- 1 vol./c.150pp.*
-
- 2 *Minute book* 1953-1957
- As /1 above*
- [See /5 for removed enclosures and continuation of minutes]*
- 1 vol./c.30pp. used*
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- 3 *Correspondence between F. Baines and B.N. Smith care of Central Public Library, Rochester, honorary secretaries and outside individuals or society members about invitations to speakers, group visits, venues for meetings, arrangements for society activities and appointments to office.* 1949-1957
- Inc. *printed tabloid "What's On in the Medway Towns" week beginning 25 Dec. 1949 (DE53/2/3/1)*
- Inc. *two letters from H.E. Bates, The Granary, Lt. Chart, Ashford to Baines confirming arrangements to speak at the General Meeting and for a meal beforehand 14 March, 8 April 1949 (DE53/2/3/3-4)*
- Inc. *correspondence about terms of use of old Corn Exchange, Northgate, Rochester as venue for society meetings 1949-1950*
- Inc. *copy out-letter to Mr. C. Frid, 57 North Street, Strood replying to resignation of the 20 members of the Drama Group from the society, 21 Nov. 1950 (DE53/2/3/16)*
- Inc. *copy out-letter about open-air exhibitions on Rochester Esplanade containing Society's badge in letter heading in form of coat of arms 14 May 1954 (DE53/2/3/27)*

Inc. copy out-letter to G.W. Sheldon, chairman, The Grayne Players, Kent Oil refinery Ltd., Grain, discussing Sheldon's proposals to build an arts centre in Rochester and describing the Society's own attempts in this regard, mentioning a building fund in abeyance and naming their own Group as "The Rocastrians", 16 Sep. 1954 (DE53/2/3/30)

Inc. copy out-letter to the Town Clerk of Rochester stating how six years previously the Society had footed the bill for the redecoration of the old Corn Exchange, 31 Jan. 1955 (DE53/2/3/33)

Inc. pen and ink drawing of Society badge incorporating the coat of arms of the City of Rochester and the inscription "art, music, drama"
Starched linen, c.1950s (DE53/3/3/45)

Inc. 5 pages describing the Society and its component groups probably for public relations purposes, c.1950s (DE53/2/3/46-50)

[DE302]

1 bundle/50pp./items

- 4 List of attenders, annual meeting 21 Oct. 1953, removed 21 Oct. 1953 from DE53/2/1.

1p.

- 5 Loose items removed from DE53/2/2 comprising TS minutes, treasurer's reports, secretary's notes, lists of attenders and some in-letters, representing in part un-pasted-in sequence. 1955-1958

1 bundle/35pp.

- The Medway Theatre Guild c.1950s

- 6 Two stencil TS copies of the constitution of the Medway Theatre Guild c.1950s

[DE302]

1 bundle/6pp.

- The Northgate Society, Rochester 1971

- 7 *Stencil TS report and discussion on disadvantages of Foulness 1971
Airport, Essex 4 Dec. 1971, society meeting at Northgate
Inn, Rochester*

[DE302]

3pp. in folder

*City Archivist
July 1995*