

Bethersden Parish Records

For those new to the Village and to any who may be unaware of the existence of the above Society you may find the following details both interesting and informative.

Formerly stored in chests and other places within the Church and Village, registers, books and papers dating back to the early 16th century were unearthed. The majority of these were in very poor condition and it was for the purpose of restoration that in 1987 the present Society was formed.

Since that date fund raising events, donations from local charities, grants from the Lottery Fund, Community Action South Kent, Kent County Council and Ashford Borough council together with membership fees (£15 for life) have all helped to raise over £25,000 for the purpose of restoration. Our collection is indeed unique and it is generally accepted that the Bethersden collection is one of the best and most complete in the County. The entire spectrum of Village life is covered within the various papers and volumes which are a wonderful commentary on the lives and work of local people through the ages. For those wishing to peruse original items from our collection this can be done by prior appointment or they can also be viewed from microfiche at the Archives Department of Canterbury Cathedral.

Day to day running and organisation is delegated to an elected committee which meets from time to time to discuss matters appertaining to the books and papers in their care. The Society is also a Registered Charity. From time to time the Committee arrange a display in the Village Hall or St. Margaret's Church when photographs of bygone days, papers and documents dating back 500 years together with churchwardens' and overseers' accounts are displayed.

With continued support and interest we are anxious that items which have been safely held in the Parish for five centuries should remain here. We trust that the foregoing information may have proved of interest and brought to your attention a Society which has always maintained a relatively low profile but since its founding has achieved a great deal to keep Bethersden records in an excellent state of repair and within the Village to which they relate.

The Parish Magazine carries details of how to contact the Keeper of the Records or access may be made through the internet to brian@islandfarm.co.uk