

Village Echoes

On page 535 of the Goudhurst Coronation Book is the headline "*The Greatest Neurology Centre.... Founded on Beads*". The centre in question was the National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery. It still exists today and is generally known as the NHNN.

The beads (pictured) were the work of spinster sisters, Johanna and Louisa Chandler who, along with their brother Edward, were instrumental in raising the money that enabled the founding of the hospital in 1859. It was originally called "*The National Hospital for Diseases of the Nervous System including Paralysis and Epilepsy*" and Edward Chandler acted as Secretary of the hospital committee for many years. Another sister, Maria, was married to Thomas Calcutt, who was a butcher and they lived at Pleasant Place, Goudhurst, which stood where Whites now stands on the Bedgebury Road.

Edward, Maria, Johanna and Louisa (baptised in 1816, 1817, 1820 and 1822 respectively) were the children of Edward and Maria Chandler and grew up in London. However, the children were orphaned at a young age and were left in the care of their maternal grandparents. Unfortunately their grandmother was later left paralysed following a stroke. As a result the sisters became aware that there were no institutions devoted to the welfare of poor people who had been paralysed. They therefore resolved to devote themselves to providing a hospital for paralytics. Their aim was to raise £200 - a considerable sum in the 1850s and the equivalent of about £15,000 today – and then to hopefully find other benefactors. They started to make and sell small ornaments made from silver wire, beads and shells which were sold from the Post Office located in Goudhurst House on the High Street. We know that the sisters also had lodgings at Goudhurst House, which they presumably used when they were visiting their sister and brother-in-law. Louisa, who suffered ill health because of a chest disease, might also have hoped to benefit from the country air.

Having raised £200, the Chandlers managed to secure the interest of the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman David Wyre, who also suffered from paralysis. He called a meeting at the Mansion House in London, the result of which was the founding of the hospital in 1859.

Sadly, Louisa did not long survive the foundation of the hospital but Johanna continued with her good works. She served on the Hospital Committee and the Samaritan Committee, which assisted outpatients. The connection with Goudhurst weakened with the death of Thomas Calcutt, in 1865, and then Maria's move to Croydon, where she is shown in the 1871 census. Maria lived with a companion and one servant, Ellen Hodgkin, whose family lived in Kilndown. Nevertheless, some contact with Goudhurst must have been retained because there was a sale of "Useful and Ornamental Articles" in aid of the Hospital held at Maypole House in October 1870. The sale was organised by Miss Mary Parker an aunt of Miss Hinds whose father, George Hinds, was a solicitor and owned Maypole House.

Johanna died at her home in London in 1875 and is buried in Highgate Cemetery. Edward died in 1881. Today the NHNN is the UK's largest dedicated neurological and neurosurgical hospital and, together with its neighbour the Institute of Neurology, is a major international centre for research and training.

Local History Society
Email: info@goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org
Website: www.goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org