



FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the September meeting we welcomed guest speaker Dr John Ray who gave us his talk on 'The Battle of Britain.' John is a historian and former schoolmaster. For forty years he taught history in Kent schools, the last twenty-four as Deputy Headmaster of a large secondary school in Tonbridge. He has a Doctorate in History awarded by the University of Kent. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and has set questions on aviation for the B.B.C. 'Mastermind' programme. John said at the start of the Battle of Britain he saw a German plane shot down over Sevenoaks where he lived, the pilot bailed out, but his chute didn't open and we all cheered. Other people said, "why did you cheer the man is dead?" I said, "because he came over here to kill us!" The Battle of Britain started on 10th July 1940 and finished on 31st October 1940, but on 7th September the Germans changed their tactics and started attacking London as against airfields, railway stations and factories. John gave us a very detailed and informative account of the Battle of Britain lasting 50 minutes.

Sixty-seven people attended the meeting six of whom were visitors.

The October meeting started with the Annual General Meeting. Standing for election were: Chairman Alan Taylor, Hon. Secretary Peter Bamford, Hon. Treasurer Paul Tatt. There being no other nominations these officers were duly elected.

There was one nomination for the committee, Brian Adams, and there being no other nominations he was duly elected. Committee members remaining from the previous year are: Hilary Tolputt, Vince Williams and David Fisher.

Seventy people attended the meeting.

After a short break we showed a DVD entitled *Folkestone through time*. This DVD was produced in April 2012 by Nick Paine. It falls into three sections - the first being a brief look at the history of the town, through postcards and photographs, with a brief coverage of events.

The second, and middle, part of this offering was old cine film taken by Nick's father, Ken Paine, showing the demolition of parts of Folkestone. This project was started by the Council in April 1972 and covered a period of about fifteen years. Ken's dedication in recording events as they happened has to be applauded. It allows future generations to get a good idea of how Folkestone was and what it went through to be what it is today. The original cine film and a copy on DVD are with Screen Archive South East. This, together with details of other films Nick's father made, can be explored by a visit to their website.

Finally, the third part of the film was taken by Nick in April 2012 who visited many of the places shown in the middle section to enable 'then and now' comparisons to be drawn. Future viewers of

this DVD – perhaps 40 years from now – will be able to see if some of the plans in hand today have reached completion. And who knows – someone now may be recording the events of today so that in the future someone else may wish to add another chapter!

Seventy people attended the meeting, two of whom were visitors.

At the November meeting we welcomed our member Chris Phillips who gave us his illustrated talk on 'The History of Enbrook House, Sandgate.'

At the time when the village of Sandgate was becoming a popular coastal resort, John, 4th Earl of Darnley (1767-1831) of Cobham Hall bought the grounds at Enbrook and built a marine villa. Also in 1822 he added a Chapel of Ease. On his death in 1831 his second son, Hon. John Duncan Bligh, inherited the property. The original house had been embellished over the years but was pulled down in 1852 and the familiar new mansion was constructed in the centre of the estate – to the designs of Samuel S. Teulon. After living in the house for twenty years, John Bligh died and the estate was inherited by his only daughter, Countess of Chichester, the wife of Walter, Lord Pelham 4th Earl of Chichester. The Countess died in 1911 and Sandgate's Chichester Hall was built in her memory.

The estate ownership transferred to Major L. E. Bligh who, within a year, put the property up for auction. However it failed to sell and records do not detail its use during the First World War, but in 1919 it was sold to the Red Cross who reopened it within a year as their Star and Garter Home for injured service personnel. Then when refurbishment of their Richmond house was completed by 1924, Enbrook House was rebuilt to the designs of Sir Edwin Cooper, as a holiday home for the disabled of World War 1.

Enbrook House reopened in 1928 and showed a Cape Dutch style with rectangular rooms and neat stuccoed walls. The port corchere and nearby chimney from the Teulon designed building remained and now highlighted two very different architectural styles.

During the Second World War the building was evacuated and leased to the Home Office for use as both training and stores for the National Fire Service. From 1946 it became one of eight provincial police training centres. As No. 6 District, it encompassed Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire and the Isle of Wight. In those days, and until the merger in 1967, no fewer than thirteen forces were catered for at Enbrook as most counties contained small forces with County Borough status. As well as basic police training, Enbrook also offered student instructor courses and, due to its location, was also used by colonial and foreign police forces.

In 1977 the estate was purchased by Saga who for a decade used it as offices. Staff increases then made it too small and it was sold to the builders, Wimpey. Site plans were drawn up to develop the area with a Hotel, a sports centre, a restaurant and nursing home. A later plan included over three hundred houses and these would entail the demolition of the Commandant's house on Sandgate Hill to ease access to the grounds.

At this time though, the housing market was stagnant and Wimpey, after refurbishing and advertising the Kent House development, sold the estate back to Saga. The Enbrook House Grade 2 listing, obtained in March 1975, was removed and all buildings on the estate were demolished by 1993.

Designed by Sir Michael Hopkins, Saga's iconic new headquarters was then ready for business from November 1998. The Pavilion was offered for community use and there remains highly valued public access to the well maintained verdant grounds.

Fifty-nine people attended the meeting



The Star & Garter Home was here from 1920 before the major rebuilding project four years later

For anybody who has not yet paid their subscriptions a reminder these are now due.

We would like to welcome new members: Eleanor Brooks and Mrs J F M North

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of Ann Nevill who died on 16th October aged 84 years. Ann was a founder member of the Society; she was on the working committee when the Society was formed in 1984/5. Ann had a MA (Oxon) in history; she was a local historian and author of a number of books.

May I join the Officers and Committee in wishing all our members a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

Battle of Britain Diary Folkestone 1940

July 4th From this date flights of Hurricanes and Spitfires were sent from Sector Stations, such as Biggin Hill, to operate from Forward Landing Grounds, one of which was Hawkinge. No. 32 Squadron engaged some Messerschmit Bf. 109's off Folkestone, shooting one down into the sea, and damaging another. One of their Hurricanes was forced down, aircraft damaged but pilot unhurt. A second UXB reported at Elham.

July 5th A spitfire of No. 64 Squadron, flown by a Fleet Air Arm Pilot, landed at Hawkinge after being damaged in combat.

July 6th At 5.20 a.m., three high explosives dropped at East Cliff, property within a quarter mile radius, including the sanatorium at Warren Road, which had only just recently been evacuated of patients. Only casualty was Mrs Lillian Allan, an A.R.P. warden, who suffered an injury to her eye. One house demolished. One UXB dug out of the garden of No. 21 Wear Bay Crescent by Bomb Disposal Squad. No air warning given prior to raid.

July 7th Three Spitfires of No. 65 Squadron shot down late in the evening, all three pilots being killed; Hurricane operating from Hawkinge crashed at Chilberton Elms at 10 p.m., aircraft destroyed and pilot killed.

July 8th Flight of Spitfires from No. 54 Squadron was attacked by formation of Bf. 109's while Spitfires were attacking formation of Messerschmitt Me. 110's which had crossed the coast near Dungeness. Two of the Spitfires were shot down, another damaged, all pilots safe, but one badly wounded. No. 32 Squadron had a Hurricane damaged off Dungeness, but it landed safely back at Hawkinge, while a Heinkel He 111 bomber was shot down by pilot of No. 85 Squadron off Folkestone. A Spitfire from No. 610 Squadron damaged a Bf. 109 off Folkestone, the pilot landing back on French coast, although wounded. Between 3.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. several houses were damaged by machine gun fire in Folkestone, one woman being killed; much aerial activity over the town.

July 9th About mid-day three Me.110's shot down into sea off Folkestone by No. 43 Squadron, while a workman was killed by a stray bullet in a house in Bournemouth Road.

July 13th Spitfires from No. 64 Squadron engaged some Bf.109's south of Folkestone; one enemy fighter was shot down, and another damaged-landed back in France. No. 64 Squadron lost one of their aircraft which forced landed back at Hawkinge after being damaged by ack-ack fire over Dover, the pilot being uninjured. Hurricanes from No. 56 Squadron were also involved in the same engagement, downing two German fighters.

July 15th Spitfire from No. 74 Squadron landed at Hawkinge after being damaged during an attack on an enemy bomber, which was shot down.

July 17th Dornier Do. 17Z damaged in combat with Hurricanes from No 615 Squadron off Folkestone, bomber landed on French coast, no casualties. Two bombs dropped near Brookland Church, superficial damage by blast to surrounding buildings.

July 18th Spasmodic raids on Channel Ports, including Folkestone.

July 19th No. 141 Squadron arrived at Hawkinge with their Defiant two-seater fighters. On their first patrol at 12.30 hours they were attacked at 500 feet by twenty Bf.109's. Five Deviant's were shot down south of Folkestone, while another landed near Hawkinge village-all within five minutes of each other. One gunner bailed out over the sea and was presumed drowned, seven crew members killed and one wounded. Hurricanes from No. 111 Squadron intercepted the Bf.109's and shot down 14 of them, the Germans claimed 12 Deviant's shot down for the loss of one Bf. 109.

July 21st A Hawker Hector biplane was claimed to have been shot down near Folkestone by a Bf. 109, which was in turn shot down by fighters from No. 238 Squadron.

July 22nd Attacks on convoys and shipping along south-east coast.

July 25th A convoy was attacked off Abbots Cliff by Junkers Ju.87 dive-bombers, escorted by Bf. 109's. One ship was damaged, the convoy already having lost five of the 21 ships during attacks off Dover. No. 610 Squadron intercepted the fighters, and shot down three Bf.109's. German 'E-boats' tried to attack the convoy during the late afternoon, but were driven off by two destroyers which had been sent out from Dover to help protect the convoy. They returned later to finish off three of the crippled vessels.

David D. Collyer