

**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
www.folkestonehistory.org
Registered Charity No. 295994

NEWSLETTER No. 84 – Winter 2020

Chairman's Report by Alan Taylor

Dear Member,

I hope you are keeping well and safe; things are looking a bit more promising with the possibilities a COVID-19 vaccine so we may be able to resume our meetings about April next year. Since you received the information pack from us Folkestone has had one of the lowest virus rates in the country; let's hope it stays that way!!!! Until the government restrictions are relaxed, we cannot hold our monthly meetings so we are keeping in touch by sending you the following articles and book reviews. You will also have a separate pamphlet compiled and printed by Terry Begent about Folkestone's part in the creation of the internet.

The manuscript printed below as 'Folkestone before the coming of the railway' was given to me by the late Reg Briggs, who along with John Brickell (last owner of Roland's Rock Shop), and fisherman David Sharp, claimed that there was a Right of Way across the beach where Jimmy Godden wanted to extend his amusements. Back in 1936 when Lord Radnor cleaned up the beach, he built a horseshoe of huts for the long shore fishermen and boatmen to replace their own beach huts. The case was settled out of court and unfortunately Jimmy Godden got his own way and demolished the horseshoe of huts.



The beach before the 1936 clean up



The horseshoe of fisherman's huts can be seen between the open air skating rink and the Boating Pool café.



A History of Marrin's Bookshop by Patrick Marrin

In 1948, former Trade Unionist and First World War veteran George Marrin and his wife Doris opened Marrin's Bookshop on Cheriton Place, where The Cat Basket is now based.

George had first encountered Folkestone as a soldier on his way to fight in the trenches in the First World War, and was one of thousands of soldiers who marched down the Road of Remembrance to cross the Channel en route to battle at the Somme. Almost thirty years later, following his Doctor's recommendations of sea air, George and Doris would move to the town permanently. While the bookshop on Cheriton Place predominantly sold new books, George's interest in the antiquarian book trade grew and in 1952 he would found Kipps Bookshop in Hythe. Kipps specialised in antiquarian books, prints and maps, and very quickly expanded, opening another premises in Canterbury.

However, the 1950s would prove to be a difficult time for small booksellers, and after a very short time, the shops were sold. George and Doris continued bookselling from their home, and in 1962, after Jackson and Jackson Architects and Surveyors moved premises, were offered the ground floor of 149 Sandgate Road, where Marrin's Bookshop remains to this day.

In 1970, when the upper floors of the building became available to rent, George, Doris and their sons Patrick and John made it their family home. Patrick, aged just 16 years old, gleefully helped George with collecting dusty book collections from large homes in the West End of the town that owners were beginning to find too large to maintain. Discovering volume after volume of great merit in libraries that had been forgotten in attics, the shop began to build a strong reputation within the mysterious world of Antiquarian Book Dealers. In acquiring broad ranging and high-quality material, George's personable approach in all his relationships ensured that lively conversation and respectful exchanges of ideas were always to be found in his company. His self-taught knowledge and genuine curiosity were the basis for Patrick's own evolution into the shop's Proprietor, and while he had originally planned to go to Art School in Folkestone, found his life's work pursuing the same passions as his dad. Father and son would work side by side until George's 90th birthday in 1986, after which he would conquer his fear of flying and travel to Venice and Florence which he had so enjoyed reading about through Ruskin and Vasari.

After George's death in 1991, and following her own retirement from teaching, Doris began to work in the shop, and greatly enjoyed meeting the customers her husband had come to mean so much to. She formed many friendships over the next ten years, and played a vital role in ensuring Marrin's bookshop maintained its place in the hearts of its community. She passed away in 2001.

As one of the oldest shops in the town, Marrin's Bookshop has remained a treasure trove of literary gems, as well as holding a wealth of local and Kent-based history on its shelves. While there are many fascinating items that have come through the shop, one of the most notable was a 1631 edition of "The Wicked Bible" - infamous for a typographical error in The Ten Commandments where "not" had been removed from "Thou shalt not commit adultery". Upon discovery of this shocking mandate, copies were recalled and destroyed by order of the King, with very few surviving. In the mid-1980s Patrick purchased a very battered copy from a small auction for a song, and once painstakingly restored it would go on to sell for £23,000 at Sotheby's. The current estimate for a copy of this item would be in the region of £50,000.

Welcoming to all, the shop remains true to George's spirit, respectful of its contents, but never too serious. As his son Patrick joined him in the business George told him: "You'll never become rich, but it's better than working!"



Marrin's Antiquarian Bookshop

Folkestone before the Coming of the Railway – author unknown

John Moss, a local boatman of Dover Street at Folkestone, was 89 in 1843. In that year the South Eastern Railway Company purchased the harbour and built a branch line to serve it from the new London to Dover railway which ran at the back of the town. He was asked to give "evidence of the exercise of rights by the inhabitants of Folkestone and the public on the beachy ground and sea shore at Folkestone and over the property of the South Eastern Railway Company". His submission gives a fascinating insight into what was at that time little more than a village. In the 1841 national census, Folkestone's population was just 4413. Two years later the arrival of the railway forever changed both its character and its fortunes. (* meaning that he was born in about 1754)*

Moss gave evidence stating that during his long lifetime he had been well acquainted with the coast and beach. He recollected the seashore before the harbour was constructed when the sea came up over the Stade and over the site of the railway works there towards the east, thence in nearly a straight line to the site of the present North Foreland Inn ¹ and by the side of the arch of the Tram Road and nearly to Tiffens Library (then the site of the old watch house which he frequently entered).² The sea nearly reached the site of the Paris Hotel where there was a blacksmith's shop ³ and the junction of South Street and Kingsbridge Street ⁴ so that it came up to the foot of the cliff to the westward to a point nearby the old church. He also remembered that at times, during spring tides, the sea flowed up South Street.

There was a jetty near the present end of South Street and boats used to be drawn up there with a second jetty at the foot of the cliff just below the Parish Church. There were no buildings from the site of the Paris Hotel on the beach westward to where the Pavilion Hotel Clock Tower House ⁵ and other buildings stood, up to the site of the present Bathing Establishment.⁶ He recollected capstans standing on the Stade and boats being drawn up to them. Along the beach westward from the site of the Paris Hotel, where the blacksmith's shop then stood, towards the Parish Church he saw fishermen spread their nets when the water was out. He also remembered the foundation stone of the harbour being laid when Mr Thomas Baker was Mayor in the year 1808 and saw the works completed.



After the stone wall on the south and west sides of the harbour were built, the beach gradually formed to the south and west sides of the harbour and he remembered the Railway Works being

constructed since when the sea had receded. Before the Pavilion Hotel was built the site was used as a boat builder's yard and work shop occupied in part by Thomas Farley Marsh and Charles Golder. He saw boats being built there and saw them carried over the beach and launched into the sea. The first Pavilion Hotel was converted from a shipbuilders' shop and was afterwards pulled down for the new Pavilion Hotel to be built. At that time there was space left, as there always had been for the public to pass along between it and the sea – he himself passed over this area and the whole line of the beach to the Westward on foot without any interruption and saw people pass and re-pass there both on foot and with horses, carts and other vehicles. Boats were also drawn up and nets spread by the fishermen along the whole line of the beach. He had never known of any interruption until the recent arrival of the South Eastern Railway Company.

¹ Now the site of the ladies toilet and kiosks on the Stade

² Now the site of the fountain & Chummy's

³ Now Gillespie's

⁴ Now the re-aligned Harbour Street

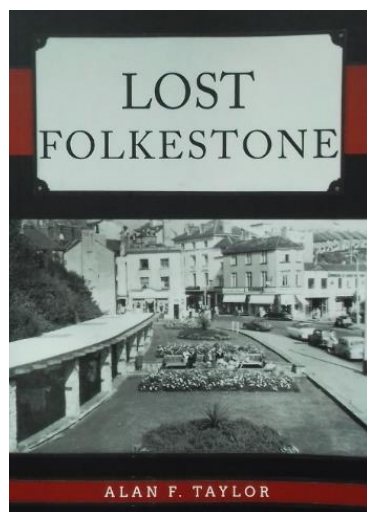
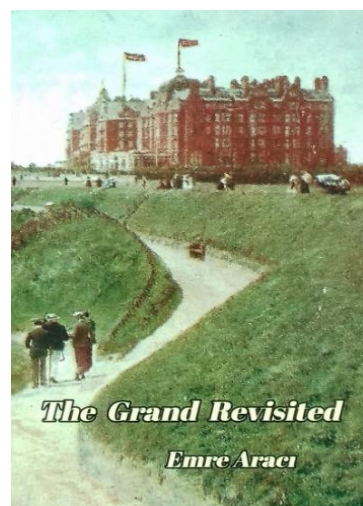
⁵ Now the site of the Grand Burstin Hotel

⁶ Just east of the Leas Lift

Latest Publications reviewed by Vince Williams

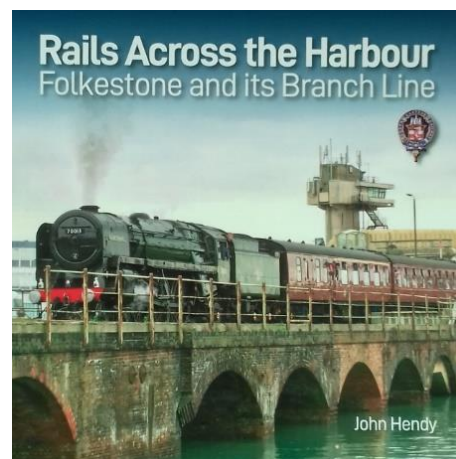
It seems that the lockdown brought about by the COVID pandemic has had some advantages to local history in that it has afforded people some free time to publish books, albeit some were in the process of publication already. Sadly for me work has meant I have been too busy to add to this list! But here is a brief rundown of what is new, the cost of each book, and where they can be purchased, if not already available from our society.

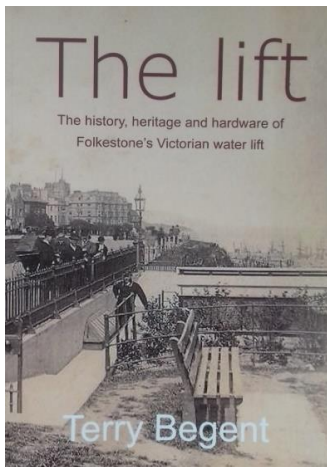
Local resident of The Grand, Dr Emre Araci has privately published a book chronicling the history of the hotel from its opening to the current day called **The Grand Revisited** (162pp £15.00). The author, a music historian, has put together a well-illustrated collection of stories and vignettes from the hotel's history and it is a very accessible read. The book is available to purchase from Marrin's bookshop in Sandgate Road.



Alan Taylor's **Lost Folkestone** (Amberley, 96pp, £14.99) will be a popular book and gives us a selection of photos from 1898 to the 2000s and includes many photos taken by local photographer Richard Taylor in the 1960s which have not been collected in a book before. The book has a good selection of photographs taken throughout the town; of the warren and harbour area and many local shops and businesses that are no longer there. Of particular interest will no doubt be the photos of the Rolling Stones playing at the Odeon Cinema, and the Guinness Clock on the Marine Gardens. It is also great to see that the publisher Amberley has improved the quality of the colour photographs in this book as some of their previous publications suffered oversaturation of certain colours.

John Hendy has another maritime themed book out entitled **Rails Across The Harbour** (Invicta Maritime, 72pp, £12.95) which details the coming of the railway to Folkestone and the history of the branch line to the harbour from the mid-19th century until the port's decline and rebirth as the Harbour Arm in recent years. Another well-illustrated book and profits from the sale of the book will be benefiting St Peter's Church.

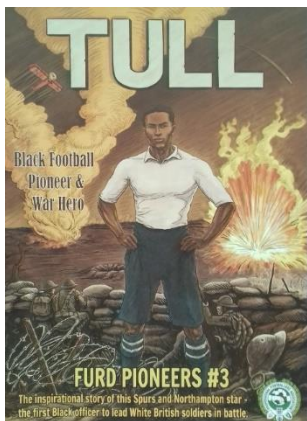
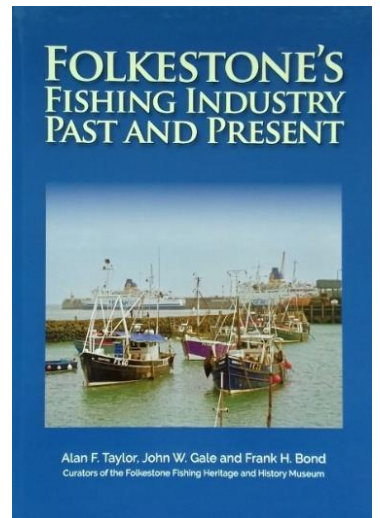




Terry Begent has self-published a history of the town's last remaining water lift on The Leas. Simply called **The Lift** (224pp, £16.00), this large A4 sized book contains many photographs of behind the scenes workings of the lift; and as well as a history up to the lift's eventual closure in 2016, gives a good degree of detail of the technical workings and hardware not covered before.

Another larger format book, also A4 sized, is the excellent self-published book by Alan Taylor, John Gale & Frank Bond, curators of the Folkestone Fishing Heritage and History Museum. Limited to only 200 copies, **Folkestone's Fishing Industry Past And Present** (144 pp, £16.95), as well as being a

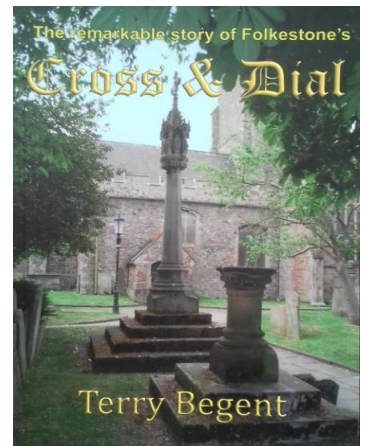
quality hardback, this book is illustrated throughout with photographs and illustrations, again chronicling the area from early records to the present day. Very accessible to read, the chapters include information on the various trades, everyday life and notable disasters; and the book also contains many appendices giving more detailed information for those who like extra reference material, for example, the numbering and naming of the fishing fleet, and sizeable catches.



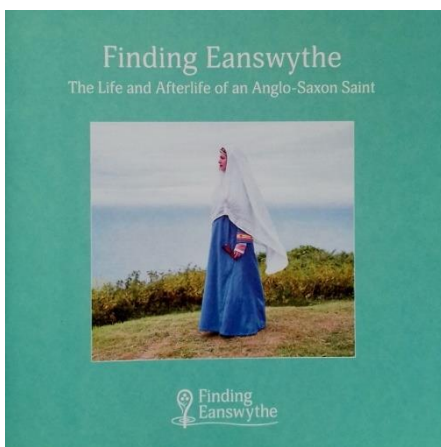
Tull, Black Football Pioneer & War Hero (Football Unites Racism Divides, 14pp, £1) is a comic that can be picked up from Folkestone Museum. During a recent refurbishment a box of these were found and are now on sale for a ridiculously cheap price and a great way of engaging with younger readers, or for older ones to learn the Walter Tull story without having to necessarily read Phil Vasili's biography.

Club member Terry Begent has indeed been busy in lockdown and has offered us another self-published book, called **The Remarkable Story of Folkestone's Cross & Dial** (72pp, £8) speculatively looks at the various ornamental

crosses and sundials that have stood in the parish churchyard over the centuries and their significance to the town as a whole.

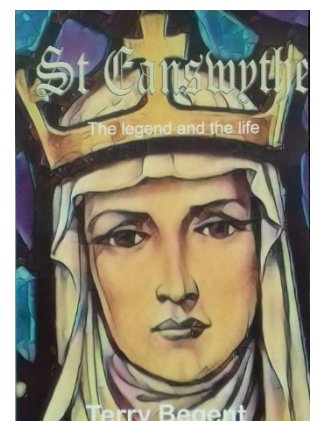


On the subject of St Eanswythe and following the recent national media coverage following the dating of the bones thought to be of the saint, there

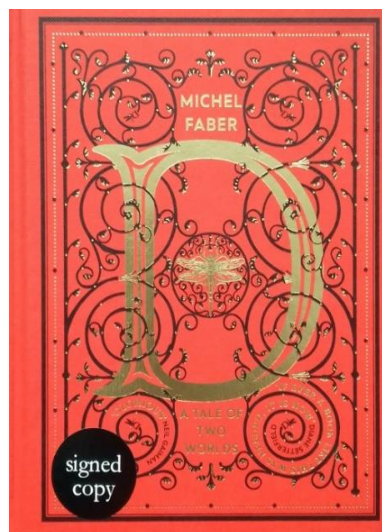
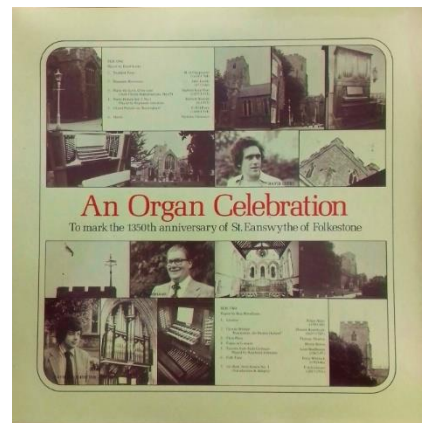


are two books about Folkestone's famous patron. **Finding Eanswythe, The Life and Afterlife Of An Anglo-Saxon Saint** (Canterbury Christ Church University, 54pp, £5) is an overarching account of the project and its findings. A very interesting and scholarly read, and a definite addition to my collection; my only criticism would be the quality of the printing and cover of the booklet itself, for what is such an important local history booklet in the history of the town. Again, this is available from Folkestone Museum.

Just before the Finding Eanswythe project published their volume, Terry Begent also gave us **St Eanswythe The Legend And The Life** (46pp, £2.50). Although the dating of the relics from the Finding Eanswythe project has now superseded some of the information in Terry's book, it pulls together the known information and poses enough questions in a more user friendly style to make both volumes worth purchasing, especially at this now discounted price.



Also, as a result of the Finding Eanswythe project another oddity came to light – not a book but a record. In the Parish church was found two boxes containing copies of a LP produced in 1980 of organ music. Entitled **An Organ Celebration: To Mark The 1350th Anniversary of St. Eanswythe Of Folkestone**, if you still have a record player it is worth picking up a copy of this LP for just £5 from St Mary & St Eanswythe's church. It features music played on both the organs of St. Eanswythe and St. Augustine churches in Folkestone.



And finally, again not a history book, but this time a novel set in Folkestone. Internationally acclaimed author Michel Faber, who now lives in Folkestone, has had published his latest work which is a children's novel called **D – A Tale Of Two Worlds** (Doubleday, 296pp, £16.99) The book is set in the seaside town of Cawber which is a fictionalised version of Folkestone with many places described familiar to the local reader. The story is in two halves and concerns a local schoolgirl who in the first half discovers that the letter D starts disappearing from words in the English Language and the second half of the tale involves her going on a Narnia-esque journey into a fantasy land to discover the source of the problem and to right the wrong. This book is available through major online retailers and bookshops, however initial copies were signed by the author and distributed to the Waterstones chain of bookshops which is where I picked up my copy.

So that's a quick look at the latest releases, and I will continue to bring you news on future publications in the New Year.

Drain Covers – a request for your help

Just a reminder that if you have a drain cover with a builders name on please photograph it or let Annie Bamford or Brian Adams know as they are photographing them to record local builders.



This one, Jiffix Ltd, Folkestone is on Alan Taylor's path.

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New Facebook Page

Another bit of good news is that Mark Hourahane has set up a Facebook page for the society. To access it go to www.facebook.com/group/folkestonehistory/

If you are a Facebook user please do use this site, as we will be lots of previously unseen photos of the town and hopefully it will attract new members to the society.

Shop Fronts project – an update and a request for help

Over the past ten years members of the club have also been photographing shops whenever they change hands, or when their signage changes. The idea behind this project is to help not just historians now, but also future generations of historians, by photographing the Folkestone of today. To date almost 4500 photographs have been taken and added to our archives. And not just new photos of shops and business, but some older photos of long gone shops, too, have come to light and been donated.

So, if any member notices a shop front that changes, or an old sign that becomes uncovered, please could they let us know so we can photograph it; or better still if you are able to and can take a photo on your mobile phone and email it to us, that would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

And a final Christmas message from your Chairman...

May I join the officers and committee in wishing members a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

Alan Taylor