

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

NEWSLETTER No. 104 – Winter 2025

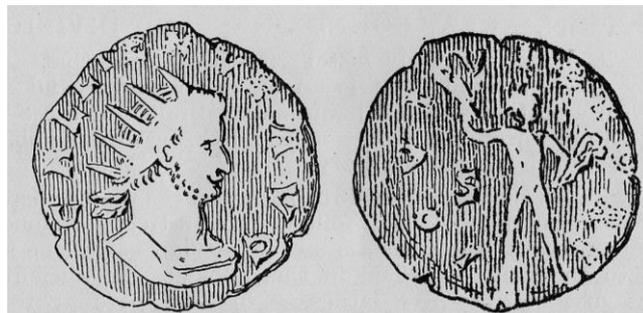
Chairman's report by Alan F. Taylor

At the September meeting we welcomed Rob Baldwin who presented his talk entitled **Excavating Queen Ethelburga's Church: The Pathways to the Past project in Lyminge**.

Rob started by talking Lyminge during the period from 480-1066 and gave us a short history of Queen Ethelburga. In A.D. 625 Etheburga married Edwin of Northumbria, but after his death she returned Kent and established one of the first Benedictine nunneries in England at Lyminge which she led until her death in A.D. 647 and where her remains were buried and later venerated.

The area south of the church was first excavated in 1859 by the then Rector, Canon Jenkins, who discovered stone foundations and thought they were of an earlier church founded by Queen Ethelburga. However, there were many problems with what he recorded and the way he interpreted his discoveries and his estimations about the size and design of the original building. Moreover, as the structure was reburied in 1929, it was not possible to say for certain what he had found. There was certainly value in re-examining the site.

This coin of Gallienus, Roman Emperor 260-268 A.D. was discovered in hearth of the remains of Queen Ethelburga's Church, October 25th 1929



So after our tea-break, Rob told us about the dig which started on 8th July 2019. The tarmac path to the main entrance to the church was removed as was the path alongside the Memorial Garden



leading to the gap in the boundary wall between the Old and New Churchyards. However, of Canon Jenkins' plan (c1874) of the excavations, the 2019 excavation found only one section to be almost correct, and the plans of the original building were revised. Rob said the archaeological team dug trenches in the New Churchyard where they discovered a lot of Kent peg tiles, a piece of Roman brick, a shard of late Saxon pottery made locally, and a shard of a green glazed vessel – probably 14th century. Rob finished by talking about press coverage and the exhibition in the church.

A view of the curved chancel of the Anglo Saxon church

The Society put on a photographic display of **Past & Present photographs of Shops around Folkestone** as part of the Heritage Open Days. It was held in the Masonic Hall, Grace Hill on Saturday 13th September 10am to 4pm, and was set-up by Tony Hill who was supported by Mark Hourahane and Brian Adams.



The October meeting was the **Annual General Meeting:** Standing for election were: Chairman Alan F. Taylor, Hon. Treasurer Terry Begent, Hon. Secretary Vince Williams. There being no other

nominations these officers were duly elected. The committee members standing again were: Peter Bamford, Tony Hill, Brian Adams, Mark Hourahane and Shay Collyer. There being no other nominations these committee members were duly elected.

Also after the October meeting, after the AGM, Terry Begent presented his talk entitled **Quirky Folkestone.**

Terry started by explaining the link with the White Feather movement, as a sign of cowardice, to Folkestone. Admiral Charles Fitzgerald, who lived in Folkestone, was so incensed by the number of men of military age loafing and idling around town that he recruited 30 local young women to accost any young men not in military uniform and present them with a White Feather to remind them their Country's needs and enlist for the army.



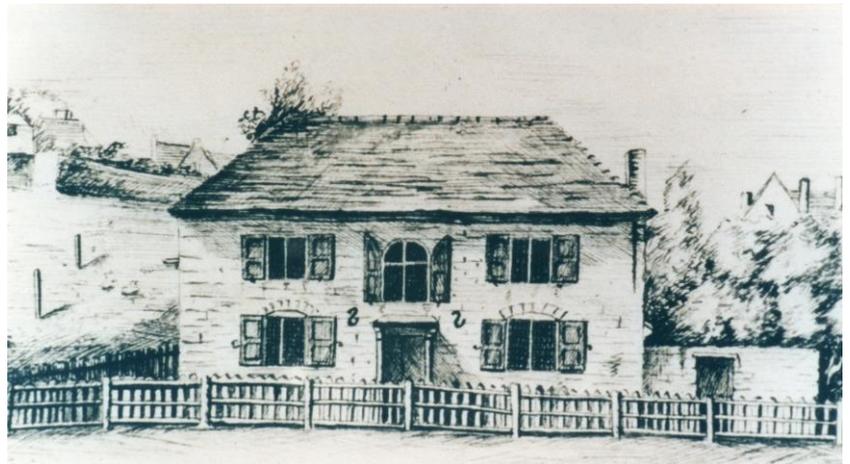
Terry went on to talk about the Sidney Weston Memorial which was moved from the Leas to the East Cliff to make way on the Leas for the War Memorial; the silting up of the harbour; mixed bathing including men skinny dipping; the German battle ship Grosser Kurfurst being in collision with the Koening Wilhelm in May 1878 caused by the Koening Wilhelm having to take evasive action to miss a sailing ship. 300 German sailors were lost and their bodies were picked up by Folkestone fishermen and the German government erected a monument in memory of the dead in Cheriton Road Cemetery in 1881. Terry also spoke about the World War 1 bombing on Tontine Street on 25th May 1917; the Folkestone Military Cemetery at Shorncliffe where there are 305 Canadian soldiers buried there and local school children lay flowers on Canada Day - a tradition which began in 1917; and the connection that Folkestone has with the British Tomb of the Unknown Warrior which is in Westminster Abbey. Reverend David Railton, who was curate of Folkestone Parish Church, conceived the idea for the Unknown Warrior. Forty-nine people attended the meeting six of whom were visitors.



A Very Short History of Folkestone Baptists by Vince Williams

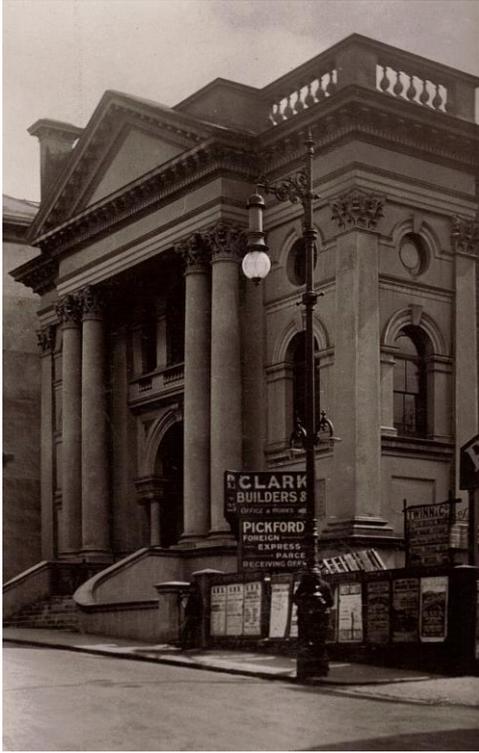
At the November meeting I gave a talk on the history of Folkestone Baptist Church that I had given for their 275th anniversary weekend in September at their church at Hill Road. I have been fortunate to be approached by the church and allowed access to their archives and asked to write a book for their anniversary which has been published with the funds raised going back to their church. (The book has almost sold out already, but I do have a few hardback copies left)

The Baptist movement in England dates back to the early 17th century. There are references to religious dissenters visiting Kent in the 17th century and General Baptist groups worshipping in Folkestone can be dated to around 1667. Later a breakaway group of Particular Baptists started meeting at John Stace's water mill from about 1720 and built their own meeting place in Mill Bay in 1729. It is this group of Baptists that the modern Hill Road church traces their origins back to, although originally John Stace's Baptists were a branch of the Canterbury Particular Baptist Church and didn't become independent until 1750. Hence why 2025 is their 275th anniversary.



Folkestone Baptist Church has Minute books dating back to 1729 which gives a full account of their history, membership, actions, and occasional disputes, and my recent book gives a full account of many of them. John Stace also gifted the Baptists a piece of land for their burial ground in Bradstone Road in which the earliest stone is 1747 and burials were discontinued at the site in 1855.

With the growth in population in Folkestone caused by the coming of the railway, the Baptists outgrew their Mill Bay meeting room and built a chapel in Rendezvous Street in 1845, but this chapel was found to be wanting in size and was completely rebuilt in 1873 and opened in 1874.



It could be said that the Rev. William Sampson, who came to Folkestone in 1867 and later became Secretary of the Baptist Union, put the Folkestone Baptists on the map nationally, but it was the Rev. J.C. Carlile who arrived in 1898 who was the most famous minister the church has had to date. The Rev. Carlile, served a year as President of the Baptist Union; edited the national weekly newspaper, The Baptist Times; received public recognition for both his war and public services; and counted Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd-George as a friend; as well as being invited to the White House by President Woodrow Wilson.

Folkestone Baptist Church has seeded other local churches, whether through a membership split over doctrinal issues (Zion Chapel in St. Michaels St., Uphill Chapel at Hawkinge, and temporary use of properties on the Bayle), or the deliberate setting up of a 'daughter' church at Cheriton and Mission Halls in North Street, Harvey Street and Hill Road.

The church at Hill Road was originally a mission to a district of Folkestone to serve the new housing developments in the area.

But when the Rendezvous Street church started to become expensive to maintain, a decision had

to be taken as to whether to stay or move. The last service at Rendezvous Street was held on 1st November 1987 and work commenced to extend the Hill Road chapel in 1989 with the new extended building opening at the end of the same year. The Rendezvous Street building was sold and has been refurbished and today is a Wetherspoons pub. Folkestone Baptist Church continues to use the Hill Road site, which provides a vital hub for many community groups and services to this day. And if you want to learn more about the Baptist church's history and activities please contact me if you would like to buy one of the remaining books.



Thirty-four people attended the meeting of which eight were visitors.

Notices by Alan Taylor

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

For anybody who has yet paid their subscriptions – a reminder these are due.

On a sad note former member Christine Cook died on 27th June aged 81 years, and member Margaret Care passed away in October.