



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT  
Local History Society**  
[www.folkestonehistory.org](http://www.folkestonehistory.org)

## **NEWSLETTER No. 73 – Winter 2017**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** by Alan F Taylor

At the September meeting we welcomed member & speaker Hilary Tolputt who presented her talk entitled 'Fashionable Folkestone.' She began by showing a railway poster of 1911 advertising the town as Fashionable Folkestone and went on to discuss the factors that led to Folkestone being given the accolade, "Fashionable" and what was meant by this term.

She discussed the remarkable increase in Folkestone's population in the second half of the nineteenth century, the coming of the railway, the purchase of the harbour by the South Eastern Railway Company and the various improvements which led to the growth of Folkestone as a cross channel port. The ease of travel to the Continent from Folkestone was an important inducement in persuading people to visit and settle in the town.

By 1860, the town's infrastructure – gas works, water supply, sewage & paving was in place. Furthermore, the decision of the major landowner and Lord of the Manor, Lord Radnor, to employ the best engineers and architects of the day was important.

The development of the Leas and the roads from Castle Hill Avenue to Sandgate Hill was discussed. The large buildings in the West of the town, often designed for one family with their servants and with a communal garden in the middle, were contrasted with some of the roads around the harbour where large artisan families often existed in overcrowded accommodation. Not all of Folkestone was fashionable!

Various reasons were given for the town's development as an exclusive resort. Two of the Earls of Radnor made their home in Folkestone; the place was a favourite with royalty, and this encouraged others who aspired to be in the upper ranks of society to live here or to visit.

The town also developed the reputation of being a healthy place and many who were in poor health and looking for a change, or retirement were encouraged to take short holidays in the growing number of classy hotels, or to come to live here. This reputation as a healthy place also encouraged the opening of large numbers of private schools in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in West Folkestone.

Bathing was popular both indoors at the 1869 Bathing Establishment and outdoors in the sea using bathing machines. The Leas water operated balancing lift was opened in 1885 to take visitors to and from the Leas to the beach and proved so popular that three others (Leas Step Lift, Metropole & Sandgate) were opened by 1904.

Apart from bathing, there were many other attractions, including the town's own orchestra and other bands which played at three bandstands; while from 1888, the Pleasure Gardens Theatre staged

plays and concerts. Behind the theatre were tennis courts and early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cricket ground was laid out at the Cheriton Road sports field.

Slides were shown of the Leas Shelter, the Leas Pavilion and cinemas. The attraction of the Victoria Pier which opened in 1888 were discussed and how by 1907, wrestling, beauty contests and roller skating took place. To the West on the beach was the switchback, a wonderful roller coaster.

Added to which, Folkestone by the turn of the century had a huge range of shops such as music, furniture, drapers, butchers, grocers, wine merchants and jewellery shops. The town guide of 1899 boasted of Folkestone's position as a half way house between London and Paris.

In conclusion, the 1911 railway poster was again shown and attention drawn to the many attractions on it which helped us to understand the development of Fashionable Folkestone.

Fifty people attended the meeting, seven of whom were visitors.



The 5<sup>th</sup> October meeting was the Annual General Meeting. Standing for election were: Chairman Alan Taylor, Hon. Secretary Peter Bamford, and Hon. Treasurer Paul Tatt. There being no other nominations these officers were duly elected. The committee members are: Hilary Tolputt, Vince Williams, and Brian Adams.

After a short break the screening of a DVD entitled 'Folkestone, Spacious and Gracious' took place. The DVD was copied from a promotional cine film made for Folkestone Town Council late 1960s.

Thirty members attended the meeting.

I was the speaker at the November meeting presenting my talk entitled "The History of Folkestone Warren". I began by saying that I had fond memories of the Warren as my family camped there for many years.

Images were shown of: an engraving drawn by H Harding published in 1822, a view looking west showing the Warren and East Cliff, a brown wash and pen drawing by Henry Moses dated

September 1844, showing Martello Tower No.1 and the Warren Inn. The next two images were from a Nelson's Guide book, "Folkestone and Neighbourhood" published in the 1870s. These views are coloured, one looking east and west. Early coloured prints were called chromolithographs, however the views in this guide book are cheaper prints produced by simplifying the number of colours used and are called "Aquatints". I then moved on to the Warren Inn which opened in 1875 and closed in 1892, losing its licence for drinking after time. It stood on the East Cliff just below Martello Tower No.1. after which the inn became "The Warren Tea Gardens" until 1924. I then showed an image of the Warren Dairy Farm in the 1920s which was also near Martello Tower No.1 and run by Edwin Burbridge. The next image shown was a painting of East Wear Bay depicting two cottages said to be used by smugglers - the roof of one being an upturned boat. The next image was the Pelter Brig, a gun boat which ran ashore in 1826. It was used as a Coast Blockade from 1826 to 1831 and by the Coast Guard from 1831 to 1862 after which she was broken up. The next image was a water colour by Joshua Marsh painted in the 1820s depicting a fisherman carrying his Kettle nets at Lydden Spout.

The following images were of the railway between Folkestone and Dover, which has three tunnels; Martello, Abbot's Cliff and Shakespeare. The first train to run from Folkestone to Dover was on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1844. There was a landslide blocking the railway line in January 1877 near Abbot's Cliff tunnel and another on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1877 which was over the top of Martello Tunnel. The line after these landslides was reopened on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1877.

Images were then shown of another landslip which occurred on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December 1915 which closed the line for the rest of WW1, reopening on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1919. Also on the same date at 6.15p.m. Fred and Emma Weston's house, "Eagles Nest" slid 60 feet down the cliff face. The house and everything in it remained intact except they were unable to open the door so they climbed out the window. The house was subsequently dismantled and hauled up the cliff by Epps, a building firm from Ashford, and rebuilt at Little Chart where it still stands today.

In 1920 Folkestone Corporation took over control of the Warren from its owner Lord Radnor and in 1924 new bylaws prohibited grazing in the Warren. Footpaths were constructed, bathing cabins were built in East Wear Bay, c1922 which only survived a few years before being destroyed by storms.

The Warren Tea Chalet was erected and gardens laid out in 1922 and the area was called "Little Switzerland." The Tea Chalet was closed during WW1 and fell into disrepair and finally burnt down. A new tea chalet was erected in 1960.

An image of two cottages was shown which were on the land side of the railway. One was occupied by Henry Reed and his wife Sara. Henry was a plate-layer on the railway and this area was between Martello Tunnel and Shakespeare Tunnel. They had a daughter Elizabeth who was born in the cottage in 1879.

The sea wall was built in 1926 to stop cliff erosion by the sea and buttresses were added ten years later to stop the sea wall being forced seawards.

I spoke about my family camping in the Warren from 1930 to 1939 and again from 1946 to 1960. We had various camp sites pitching our tents at the Spring Bank Holiday and leaving them until September. We spent every weekend camping and all the school summer holidays there.

Images were shown of: guards on the cliffs overlooking the Warren during WW1, landslips in 1937 and 1939 when both lines were blocked, building the first apron in 1947 to stabilise the cliffs, building the camp site in October 1964, the great storm on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1987 showing the ferry Hengist ashore, chalk falls at Abbots Cliff blocking the sea wall on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1988, the coffer-dam built to take the spoil from the tunnel in September 1988, the experimental boring machine used in the 1920s being removed from above Martello Tunnel and a baby Minke Whale 18 feet long washed ashore on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2000.

An attempt to build a Channel Tunnel was started in 1880 at Shakespeare Cliff and ceased in August 1882 for security reasons, and in 1886 a shaft was sunk for a coal mine. It had problems with water seepage and by March 1905 the pit had only produced 12 tons of coal so it closed in 1909. Charlie Gatehouse was born and brought up in the Warren he worked on the first Channel Tunnel attempt, as well as the coal mine and finished up as caretaker of the site until he died in 1953 aged 89.

Images of Shakespeare Cliff Halt were shown which was on the Folkestone side of the tunnel, and to finish I showed an image of a Hitachi Class train heading east through the Warren on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2009 which was on a driver training trip. South Eastern's full high-speed domestic service started in December 2010.



Sixty-one people attended the meeting, eighteen of whom were visitors.

We would like to welcome new members Rosalind Briggs, Marion Dunster and Mrs G. Rogers.

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

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

**Registered Charity No 295994**