

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

## **NEWSLETTER No. 100 - Winter 2024**

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

At the September meeting we welcomed member speaker Sue Sheppard who presented her talk entitled **Infected Folkestone**.

Sue started by saying the talk is not about Folkestone being infected, but infectious diseases such as smallpox, typhus, yellow fever and scarlet fever etc. She went on to say Folkestone had evolved from a backwater to a fashionable resort after the coming of the railway in 1843 and that Lord Radnor owned most of the land in Folkestone which he started leasing out to build large houses and hotels.

She said Folkestone became a health resort and with the influx of visitors there was an increase in infectious diseases so discussions took place to build a Sanatorium. A number of sites were discussed, the chosen site was on the East Cliff and a Sanatorium was built in 1877. It was run by a committee of councillors and over the years there were problems with staffing and the cost of running the hospital. But due to demand an extension was built, which opened in 1898.

With the outbreak of the World War One there was an influx of Belgium refugees, many staying in Folkestone, which caused a problem because the number of people with infectious diseases increased. So in 1915, a Temporary Sanatorium was built for soldiers. In 1920 the Shoreline divisional officer offered the War Blocks to the council and after much discussion they purchased them and Sue went on to explain what they were used for. The Sanitary Committee changed its name in 1921 to the Health Committee and dealt with a wide range of issues which had expanded since the war including the fear of an epidemic of Spanish Influenza.

In 1940 a number of evacuee children from London were treated for measles, however, the war took a turn for the worse when in May, the Germans had got as far as the French channel ports of Calais and Boulogne. So the government decided to have a mass evacuation of children, as well as the vulnerable; away from exposed areas such as Folkestone. Then there was an influx of 6,000 refugees from the Continent, all of whom were medically inspected at Folkestone harbour. Just two weeks after the Dunkirk evacuee troops had gone and the Isolation Hospital was empty it was bombed and equipment from the hospital was distributed to other hospitals and infectious patents were sent to Ashford's Isolation Hospital.

Sue finished by talking about Post-War Healthcare; the demise of the Isolation Hospital; patients being sent to Dover Isolation Hospital, the birth of the NHS, the death of the Matron, Miss P. G. Hart. In June 1959 the Sanatorium buildings were demolished and finally in 1966 there were plans to build homes for old folk. The new building was called Philippa House, in honour of the ex-matron Philippa Gertrude Hart.

76 people attended the meeting, 16 of whom were visitors.



*The Borough Sanatorium, Folkestone.*



**Under construction  
the temporary  
Sanatorium for  
soldiers in 1915**

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 and Mark Hourahane. There was one proposed new member to the committee Shay Collyer who was duly elected.

Also at the October meeting, after the AGM, Debby Jones presented her talk entitled **A Folkestone House Through Time: The Alderman's Secret**.

Debby Jones of Gorddinan Consulting, local genealogist and house historian, gave an interesting talk, on the house called The Rivulet, in Radnor Park Avenue and its occupants, from 1900 to 1939. The first residents were recently widowed solicitor, mayor and Alderman, Frederic Hall, and his four children. Eventually, in the nineteen twenties, they were joined by his second wife Bertha Mary Ryan and their son, Richard. Bertha had grown up at the Bushel and Strike beerhouse in Little Chesterford, Cambridgeshire, where her father was 'mine host.'

Following Frederic's death, The Rivulet was sold to Folkestone architect Francis Hedley Castle, and at that point split into flats. At the outbreak of the Second World War, a register was taken of everyone resident in the country. On this, the 1939 register, a schoolgirl from Berlin was noted as living in one of the flats with Francis, his wife Reine and their children, David and Wendy. Her name was Inge Herrnberg. She had just celebrated her fifteenth birthday. Inge had arrived on the SS Europa in June, in a group of two hundred refugee children.

Inge probably did not stay very long in Folkestone. She went to Cheltenham, became a children's nurse and, in 1943, married Cyril Woods, a jeweller, then serving in the RAF. Inge's father, Walter, a businessman, did not make it out of Berlin, but her mother, Else, managed to get to Portugal and then to the United States. After the war, Inge and Else were reunited in America. Inge and Cyril settled there too.

There followed a lively discussion on Frederic's involvement with the Folkestone Racecourse, Francis Castle's work as an architect and the difficulties of locating children who came to the country on the Kindertransport on the 1939 Register (Inge's name was almost illegible.)

64 people attended the meeting, 17 of whom were visitors.



**York House, Frederic Hall, Solicitors.  
Cheriton Gardens**



**Rivulet House, Radnor Park Avenue**

The November meeting was a talk given by Vince Williams on the **Legends & Ghosts of Folkestone**. This talk was split into 5 parts:

**Act 1: Magical & Mystical creatures** covered the 1883 poem by F. Armitage called 'The Legend of the Warren', Edward Knatchbull-Hugessen's tale 'The Pig of Cheriton', the 1839 poem 'The Fiery Serpent', and other tales attributed to the stupidity of Folkestone's inhabitants (especially Mayors!). Also covered were mermaids, with the illustration for a proposed mermaid statue from 1971, and there mention of H.G. Wells' story 'The Sea Lady' which also features a mermaid. Deformed creatures that have been on show over the centuries were also covered including the freak pigs, the great serpent of 1742, and a 4-legged duckling. Sadly a stuffed 8-legged kitten and a 6-legged lamb that were given to Folkestone Museum but were too hideous to put on display and subsequently destroyed!

**Act 2: Miracles** covered St Eanswythe related tales including the 1886 story called 'The Herring Fishing.' Also in this section was mention of the legend of The Dogfish Woman from a 10<sup>th</sup> century work about Leechdoms and Charms.

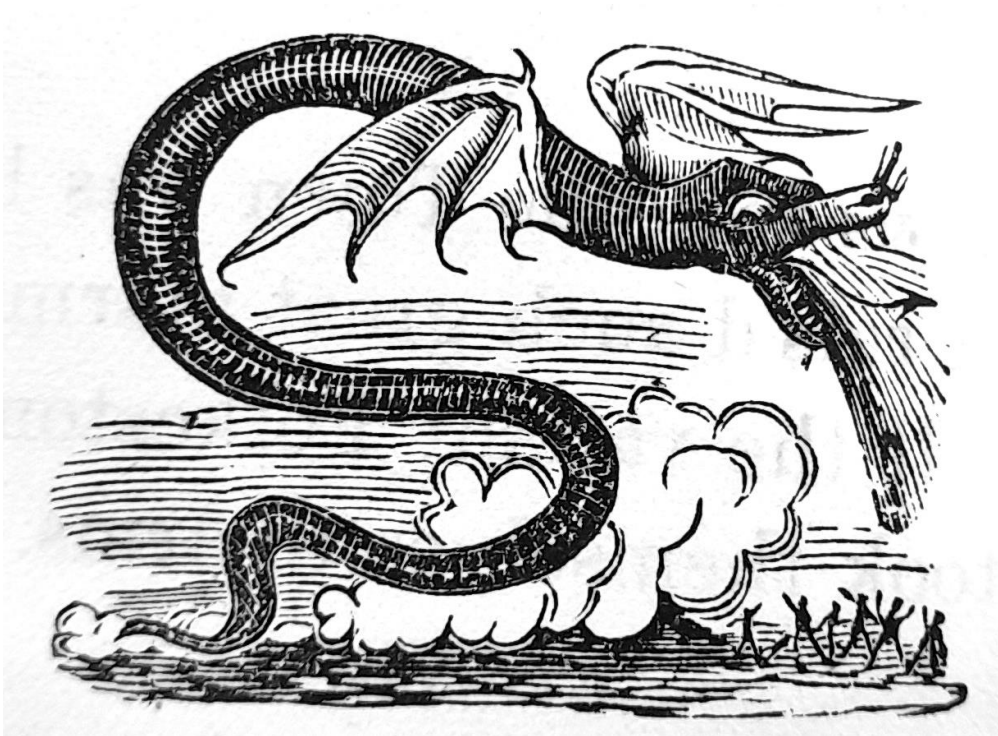
**Act 3: Witchcraft** covered the 16<sup>th</sup> century witch Margaret Browne and the 19<sup>th</sup> century witch called Abigail from Paddlesworth; as well as the tale of The Leech of Folkestone from 'The Ingoldsby Legends.'

**Act 4: Haunted Houses** covered both the suicides and murder at Underhill House and alleged subsequent hauntings; and poltergeist activity in the haunted air-raid shelter at Enbrook Manor which was investigated by Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle.

**Act 5: Ghosts** covered various stories from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries where ghostly impersonators had been apprehended usually in the Bayle or Foord areas of the town; and the infamous 1926 photograph of the Martello Tower on East Cliff was shown with the supposed image of a ghostly child.

The talk ended with an **Epilogue** about **The Severed Head of Oliver Cromwell** which was between 1832-1842 owned and occasionally displayed by Dr Wilkinson in Seabrook.

61 people attended the talk of which 18 were visitors.



### **Notices by Alan Taylor**

We would like to welcome new member Paul Grundy.

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

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