



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
Local History Society
www.folkestonehistory.org**

NEWSLETTER No. 102 Summer 2025

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At our March meeting we welcomed member speaker Hilary Tolputt who presented her talk on **Stories In Luminous Brilliance: The Marvel Of Canterbury Cathedral's Stained Glass Windows.**

Hilary started by saying that the Cathedral employed a team of conservators who looked after the stained glass she then went to talk about Thomas Becket and then took us on a tour round the Cathedral talking about the images on the glass.

The following is from a book on the Cathedral:
The ancient glass of Canterbury Cathedral is one of the glories of medieval English art. Its miraculous survival can only make us long for the days when practically the entire Cathedral was glazed with windows glorifying great figures of the Old and New Testaments and celebrating moments in the lives of saints such as Thomas Becket. Though much of Canterbury's ancient glass escaped the pious iconoclasm of the Reformation and the Civil War, various panels have been shifted and



This fragment of rose marble, in the pavement of the cloister's east walk, may one have been part of Becket's shrine.



reset in different parts of the church. These include part of the Nave's west window, formerly in the Quire clerestory and originally showing Christ's descent from Adam, and the window in the south-west transept whose panels originally lined the Quire and Trinity Chapel retain their 12th and 13th century glass, in the French tradition best exemplified at Charters, with which Canterbury certainly bares comparison. Some of them parallel Old and New Testament stories and others portray the acts and miracles of St Thomas Becket. These still have their original metal framework, and recent cleaning has restored their brilliance, variety and narrative vividness.

The figure of St Thomas Becket made from fragments of 13th century glass, by Samuel Caldwell junior (1919)

Forty-eight people attended the meeting of whom eight were visitors.

At the April meeting we welcomed guest speaker Peter Le Feuvre who presented his talk on **The History of Postling.**

Peter started by explained that Postling was between Hythe and Ashford and followed on by talking about the church – in Domesday book there is mention of two “oecclesialae” in Postling. There are only two places besides which are stated to “oecclesialae” instead of the more important “oecclesioe”, these being Polton (a small manor at Dover, given like Postling, later, to the Abbot of St Radigund) and Dartford. Probably these were attached, almost as private chapels, to manor houses. Peter went on to say two-thirds of the building which now constitutes the nave is definitely pre-Norman and may well have been built in the reign of Edward the Confessor. The original dedication of the church was the somewhat rare one of “to Mary, Mother of God”. This is common in the Greek Church, so may possibly have been chosen by Theodore of Tarsus, who was Archbishop in 668.

Peter then said they have a copy of the Tithe Map. He spoke about the furniture, goods and ornaments, a two-handed chalice cup , memorials in the church, the list of vicars from the year 1200, old church registers, vestry book, churchwarden’s accounts, tithe books, and overseer’s accounts.

Peter then spoke about the owners of Postling Court, Manor of Postling and the Manor of Heanewood and the two farms, Pent and Shrine.



Pent Farm is the largest in Postling, although its fame derives from its literary association. Owned in the early 20th century by the novelist Ford Madox Ford, who wrote *Parade's End*, its most famous occupant was Joseph Conrad who leased Pent Farm from 1899 to 1920 and wrote *Nostromo*, *Lord Jim*, *Typhoon*, *Chance and Romance* in that time. His frequent visitors included H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. Since the 1990s Pent Farm has become an increasingly popular airfield offering flying lessons and pleasure flights, making Postling a vibrant

community in a spot designated in 1968 as part of the Kentish Downs AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

Fifty-six people attended the meeting, eleven of whom were visitors.

Celebrating May Day and the Folkestone International Folklore Festival by Vincent Williams

On Saturday 3rd May at St. Martin’s Church, Cheriton, the Society put on a display celebrating Folkestone’s International Folklore Festival which was held in the town between 1961 -1989. This was the first time the Society has collaborated with Folkestone Museum since its two WWI exhibitions, and thanks must go to Cory Clover, the museum’s new manager for access to the photographs and ephemera which has been recently donated to the museum by John Field, son of the late Barnett & Olive Field who had been at the forefront of the local folk revival scene after WW2 and set up the festival. 76 people came to look at the exhibition, including John Field and James Frost who is the custodian of Folkestone’s Hooden Horse, which he kindly lent us for the day.



Then on Wednesday 7th May we welcomed James Frost who gave a talk on **The Hooden Horse & The Folkestone Folk Revival**. The first part of the talk explained what Hoodening is – *a country masquerade at Christmas time, similar to guising or mumming plays*. Hoodening is an East Kent custom and the first written documentation of it comes from the 18th century, although its earlier origins are somewhat debated. The decorated horse has a Waggoner (who leads the horse), a Rider (who often abuses the horse and is thrown off), a Molly (a man dressed as a woman who sweeps with a broom) and musicians and sometimes other characters. The party would often walk miles from village to village performing and singing songs and were commonly gratified with beer and cake or perhaps money. Hoodeners were mainly documented in the Thanet area but the southernmost group was at Elham. No original plays are known to exist and the practise died out in the early 20th century. St. Nicholas-at-Wade still however have their pre-WWI horse.

The second half of James' talk focussed on the folk revival and Hoodening in Folkestone. Local Westminster Bank Manager Barnett Field and his wife Olive were instrumental in leading the folk revival after the Second World War. Barnett had located the Walmer Court Farm Hooden Horse in 1955 and tracked down Jack Lamming, a surviving member of their Hoodeners, This horse, together with a colt made from driftwood by Jack shortly before his death in 1956, were donated and put on display in Folkestone Museum where they remained until 1999.

During the 1950s, countries in Europe were revitalising pastimes and sports following the Second World War and a huge variety of groups and associations formed covering a multitude of interests. Locally, the Folkestone District National Dance Group was founded in 1950 under the leadership of Olive Field who had taught international folk dancing and 'keep fit' before the War. Pipe Major Malcolm Nicholson formed the Nicolson Pipe Band in 1951 and soon both were being invited across the Channel to Holland. Barnett was also a founder member of East Kent Morris in 1953 and made the Folkestone 'Brown Horse,' based loosely on a photograph of a destroyed Deal Hooden Horse, for the Folkestone Corporation's Coronation Celebrations held at the East Cliff Pavilion in 1953. By now, Hooden Horses were no longer just used at Christmas. Beckenham's Hooden Horse, made in 1933, is documented as performing with a Morris Dancing side in 1939.

In 1954 Olive & Barnett founded the Folkestone's Handbell Hoodeners and 'Brown Horse' would also perform at their events.

A letter from Mrs Dorothea Nicolson, wife of the Pipe Major, to the Folkestone Herald in 1959, advocated the creation of a Folklore Festival, there being no such other folklore festival being held in England.

Barnett and Olive were asked to steer the project because of their interest in folklore, folk dancing and music. They had roots in Folkestone and both had a wide range of contacts with similar folk dancing groups in Europe. So in 1960, when Barnett was the Squire of the East Kent Morris Men, both Barnett and Olive became responsible for the taking the revival of the only traditional folklore custom known in East Kent connected with the Hooden Horse to the next level.

Barnett gave a talk to the Folkestone Rotary Club in January 1961 in which he anticipated that the first International Folklore Festival, to be held from the 17th to 24th June 1961, would attract about 150 folklorists from the countries such as Austria, Portugal, Luxemburg, Holland, France, Sweden and Wales, with Polish refugees from London also due to take part in a festival comprising mostly of folk dancing. The Festival, if successful, would then be held every two years. Over the years, performers from other countries would also attend as the festival grew in size. The other countries that sent delegations to perform were: Switzerland, Spain, Romania, Yugoslavia, Italy, Germany, Finland, Czechoslovakia and Belgium. An enormous Swedish style maypole was erected on The Leas and danced around at every Festival until 1975 when it broke. James also explained that dancing around the Maypole with ribbons is actually a Victorian addition to the tradition.



With reciprocal visits from Folkestone's folk groups to the continent and with 'Brown Horse' being required by both the Handbell Hoodeners and East Kent Morris, a second horse was made in 1963, the white 'Invicta' horse which is still used

by East Kent Morris today. A further 'Giant Horse' was made in 1967 for the procession in the Folklore Festival itself, following visits of Giant figures from Boulogne at the previous two festivals. The last Festival was held in 1989 and a plaque commemorating the festivals can be found in the Sensory Garden, near the Leas Cliff Hall.

James also talked about the resulting trend of renaming of pubs in the 1950s and 60s to The Hooden Horse; although most have changed their names back and the only two surviving are at Willesborough and a relatively new pub at Westwood Cross. Other customs associated with Hoodening that were covered in the talk included the receiving of the Whitsun Ale at Charing Church and Hop Hoodening which started with a blessing in Canterbury Cathedral and ended up at the Hooden Horse Pub at Wickhambreaux.

And although Folkestone's International Folk Festival has come to an end, it still has influence to this day – Broadstairs Folk Week was founded in the 1960s by a friend of Barnett Field and more recently there has been a FolkeFest in 2022 and the 2024 Charivari Day was themed around British Folklore. There will also be a folk themed artwork at the 2025 Triennial called The Folkestone Elephant; and James is curating an exhibition of Hoodening at Folkestone Museum in 2026.



Not only was 'Brown Horse' on display at our talk, but a guest, Doug Quinney, a former Sandgate Hoodener, brought along Eustace The Sandgate Unicorn.

*"If ye the Hooden Horse do feed,
Throughout the year ye shall not need."*

Fifty-three people attended the meeting of which eleven were visitors.



We would like to welcome new member David Yeats.