



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

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Chairman's Report by Alan Taylor

At the March meeting we welcomed member speaker Kevin Harvey who presented his talk entitled '**35 Years Of Folkestone Photographs**'. Kevin is a very good amateur photographer who prides himself on taking unusual images with high definition!

Kevin's talk started on the Rotunda beach then moved onto the Leas Cliff Hall when the Channel Suite was added. From there it went to the Pilot Tower and then images of the Harbour Pier/Arm. That was followed by the Dover Road bingo hall which was demolished for F51. The images then went to the hills for views of the flyover being built and the terminal site before returning to the seafront and east cliff with snow pictures and storm pictures. The last two sections were the ATU villa dig and the Finding Eanswythe project with pictures of the relics. The second half concentrated on transport with image selections of the Grand car show, air shows, steam trains, boats, Russian submarine and finished with images of the final ferry in 1991.

Forty one people attended the meeting, twenty of whom were visitors.



At the April meeting, Terry Begent gave a talk on the history of St Mary and St Eanswythe, Folkestone's parish church, and the churchyard in which it sits. Churches are normally built to serve the spiritual needs of a community, but Folkestone is unusual in that the first building was built long before the town came into existence, so the talk explored the reasons for this and the importance of its location on the cliff tops.

Many historians record the fact that the Romans had a Pharos on the site while they had a presence in the town, and it has been suggested that this served both as a watchtower guarding against Viking raids and as a means of communication with ships in the channel and the town of Boulogne, on the other side of the channel.

Terry traced the evolution of the church from a stand-alone tower, probably built to replace that Pharos, once the Romans had gone, into what is called a tower-nave church where the congregation gather in the base of the tower to worship and sometimes for protection during the Viking raids that continued to plague the country right up to the Norman Conquest. That tower was also built on the meeting place of the Folkestone Hundred, close to the moot stone that stood where the Town Cross now stands.

Those raids forced the early priory to close and Christian worship declined until King Athelstan gave Folkestone back to the church of Canterbury by a charter in 927 AD. It is believed that the Chancel was added to that tower sometime after that.

The talk went on to show how the church evolved in response to a number of national events, with the biggest change being the addition of a Benedictine priory on the south side of the church in 1325 AD. This extension also included the addition of side aisles and a nave at the western end of the church. Thomas Banes, appointed as prior in 1464 by the Pope, squandered the income of the priory on his own life of luxury in London and it gradually fell into decay and dereliction. So much so, that it readily surrendered to dissolution in 1535 at the start of the Reformation.

The connection between the buildings of the priory and the main body of the church was demolished at this time so that King Henry VIII could realise the value of the priory lands by leasing them out to Edward Clinton, Lord of the Manor at the time. The church buildings faced a gradual deterioration, firstly at the hands of the puritans in the 17th century and then in the face of the Great Storm of 1705, which blew off the eastern end of the building.

This decline was halted by the appointment of Matthew Woodward as vicar in 1851, who was tasked with restoring the grandeur of the church, which he did in the face of opposition from the local church committee, who thought that he was taking both the building and the services that took place within it too far back towards the church of Rome. Woodward undertook a series of restorations, spread over forty years that left the church in the good condition it is in today.

Fifty five people attended the meeting, ten of whom were visitors.



On Wednesday 1st May, Vince Williams gave the Society a talk about Folkestone in the First World War. The talk, illustrated with posters, newspaper articles, postcards and photographs from the time, took us through the key events happening in the Folkestone area from the start of the war in 1914 until peace was declared in 1918.

Vince, described the mood in the town, as the inevitability of war approached; followed by the arrivals of fleeing refugees from the continent and the recruitment and mobilisation of British troops in the area as well as the return of the first wounded. 1915 saw the arrival and training of Canadians in the town in earnest, and the sightings of Zeppelins in the Channel. The creation of Rest Camps were also covered and the grandfather of one of the guests at Wednesday's talk was instrumental in the running of the No.2 & 3 Camps and became the Deputy Town Commandant for Folkestone and has provided additional material for use in future talks.

Vince also covered the various restrictions placed on Folkestone during the war as well as rationing, and also covered the employment of female workers in the town, what social activities and entertainments were still being put on, certain criminal activities amongst the soldiers and their 'camp followers', as well as the various morale boosting royal visits and Rudyard Kipling's visit and speech.

The naval and aerial battles off the coast of Folkestone were also covered including the 1917 air raid; and 1917 was also the year that the Chinese Labour Corps arrived and the first Canadian Flower Ceremony was held at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery. The talk finished with the sabotage of the S.S. Onward in Folkestone Harbour and the return of peace in 1918. There are a final few copies of Vince's book on Folkestone in the War still available through the Society.

Seventy eight people attended the meeting, of whom twenty eight were visitors.



Above: Rest Camp No.2 (Bathurst Road area) & Below: Rest Camp No.1 (Marine Parade)



We would like to welcome new members: Sue Sheppard, Karen Maguire, Mile Cuerden, Marie Cororan, Jacqueline Chatfield, David Brown, Graham Blackman, Edward Parry & Debbie Musselwhite.