



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
www.folkestonehistory.org

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the December meeting we welcomed guest speaker Chris Shaw who gave us his presentation on 'Shorncliffe Redoubt'. Chris started by telling a little bit about the 16th, 17th & 18th century defences followed by the purchase of Shorncliffe in 1796. He said the Redoubt was made out of sand. He then showed an image of the Victorian water tower with a bridge across to it followed by an image of the Redoubt as seen today. Chris followed on with 19th century defences including the Martello Towers and Hythe Canal; development of training at Shorncliffe; the key personages and regiments, such as: Sir John Moore, who was colonel in chief of the 52nd (Oxfordshire) Light Infantry; the 1808-1809 Peninsular War; Moore working with William Swiss (1745-1827) of the Royal Engineers; Sir David Dundas, Colonel Coote, and William Stewart Lieut-colonel of the rifle corps (the 60th rifles were established in 1797 and 95th rifles in 1803) and the 52nd Monmouthshire Light Infantry.

Then came the Victorian Era – expansion, Napoleon, the Crimea 1853-1856, Royal Visits, the Boer War (1880-1881) and the Old Garrison Church. He also showed us a plan of the Government ground at Shorncliffe in 1924.

Chris then spoke about the barracks under threat of demolition, and some that had previously been demolished which included: the listed Racquet Court at Burgoyne Barracks, (built 1867-1873 by Royal Engineers); Burgoyne Barracks; the Royal Military Hospital (1892-1970); Ross Barracks; Somerset Barracks and Risboro' Lines.

In part two Chris spoke about the 20th century: the Kaiser at Shorncliffe in 1902, World War 1; Kitchener's army; presenting the colours on 12 October 1917 and the 203rd Canadians. He then briefly mentioned the Tontine Street bombing in 1917, Canada Day Commemorations at Shorncliffe Cemetery; Shorncliffe at the outbreak of war in 1939; Glider training at Shorncliffe; and more recently the Junior Leaders.

Chris finished by talking about looking forward to the future in the 21st century in light of the redevelopment plans for new residential housing at Shorncliffe; the aims of the Shorncliffe Trust and recent media attention such as the 2007 visit by Channel 4's Time Team, and an attempt in 2014 to score a Christmas Charity hit single.

Forty-seven members attended the meeting.

At the January meeting we welcomed member speaker Alec Perry who gave us his talk on the Radnor Family, illustrated by myself. Alec warned us that his talk could be subjective because he acted as Agent in Folkestone mainly for the 8th Earl of Radnor.

Laurens des Bouverie started it all, and Alec posed the question - how did the Huguenots, some penniless immigrants, come to such power in business and the aristocracy? Laurens was born in 1536 near Lille, now in France but then in the Spanish Netherlands. The name Bouverie probably came from "boeuf" – French for "beef". Indeed his parents were cattle farmers, wealthy but modest landowners and civic leaders. But like so many French speaking people, they were strict Catholics. Laurens however was attracted to Calvin who founded the Protestant religion in Geneva, inspired by Martin Luther. His father told him "if you don't go to Mass on Sunday I will have to report you to the Inquisition" – which of course meant torture and even burning at the stake. So Laurens left home and

probably walked to join other Protestants in Frankfurt, where he thought he would be safe. Exhausted he rested on the steps of a house whose owner found him and was very sympathetic having had a similar background. He took Laurens in, gave him a job in his silk factory, where Laurens became accountant. He learned much about the silk cloth trade and married the owner's niece. She then inherited a small fortune when the owner died.

Philip 1st of Spain then sent the Duke of Alva with his army to try to crush the Protestant movement. Many, now known as Huguenots and including Laurens, moved to England in 1568; Queen Elizabeth 1st, who had replaced her Catholic half-sister Mary, was very tolerant and the refugees were welcomed in Sandwich where they initially settled. A few years later the St. Bartholomew massacre took place when some 3,000 Protestants were killed by Catholics in France. You may know there is still a Church in the Sandwich Cattle Market built from the timbers of a ship, given to the town by grateful Huguenots in about 1602. The pillars supporting the gallery are the two masts of the ship.

In 1575 Laurens and his wife, were among better-off émigrés required by the Privy Council and the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, to move to Canterbury. Here they introduced silk and light cloth making to the local weavers. So again they were welcomed by the residents. Laurens became active in Church affairs and became a Deacon of the Walloon Church. This survives today in the French services every Sunday in the Black Prince Chapel of the Cathedral. The 8th Earl often attended and indeed was the Chief Huguenot in England. The family motto in Latin became "my Country is dear but liberty is dearer" – dear France having been exchanged for the freedom of England.

Three years after his wife died in 1591, Laurens married again and moved to Threadneedle Street in the City of London in 1604. Here he retained his Church interests, but expanded his business before dying in 1610 a moderately rich man. He had 7 children and they were encouraged to marry other Huguenots. These immigrants brought their skills in banking, medicine, silver-making, the military, the arts and much else including decorative plants – the start of flower shows in this country. French Huguenot Generals helped Marlborough (Winston Churchill's ancestor) to win his wars, and provided a Commander of the Grenadier Guards, who finally became head of the British Army. The 2nd Earl helped form the East Kent Militia – later the Buffs. In short they were probably better educated than the locals and worked hard. Because of his duties in religion, Laurens disliked every form of persecution and gave his successors their radical and liberal political views. Many became Whig M.P's.

Of those who survived the plague several were apprenticed as merchants and settled as Agents in the Levant, mostly in Turkey, but also in Aleppo and Cyprus, dealing mainly in cloth with the Far East. Although this made them wealthy, the main dangers were storms at sea and Barbary Pirates – who often kidnapped and ransomed their victims. Laurens's grandson Sir Edward was knighted by James 1st on one of his own ships (he owned a fleet) and then became a Baronet. Two of his sons were knighted by Queen Anne in 1713.

Then trade in the East began to decline and there was a swing to land ownership in various English counties, including quite recently an office development on the corner of Pleydell and Bouverie Streets off Fleet Street. One of Sir Edward's sons had become Governor of the Bank of England in 1707 and another was one of the first Directors of the South Sea Co. but after selling his shares, avoided the famous bubble. The 3rd son, Jacob, returned from Aleppo in 1691 went into politics and was attracted to Kent. As a local M.P. he bought houses and land in Hythe and Stone Street. He was re-elected 3 times. In 1697 he bought the Honour and Lordship of Folkestone and Terlingham from Sir Basil Dixwell. He was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Kent by the Earl of Romney – who was Lord Lieutenant and Warden of the Cinque Ports. As a Baron of the Cinque Ports, Jacob supported a stade of the canopy held over George 1st at his coronation in 1714. Folkestone was then much smaller than Hythe – just a run-down fishing village.

In 1698 he commissioned a detailed survey of the Manor. Many of the maps are now in Longford Castle – the Radnor home near Salisbury. Alec had one of the maps in the Manor Office, despite pressure from the County Council, who were collecting everything for their archive in Maidstone, because his predecessor had said "sorry we need it for day to day management". Then the Folkestone Estate measured 4,561 acres, and was valued at £1,014 19s 3d. It included 15 farms, Swingfield Minnis, woods, the Warren, the beach to low water, the site of the harbour, various stone quarries and the King's Arms. This became a home for Jacob called the Manor House, then the

Cistern House – it was rebuilt in 1861 and finally leased as the Old Town Hall – now the base of the Town Council. The Hythe properties were later sold, but Ingles and Plain Farms plus Morehall were bought.

About 1722, the Commissioners of the Customs House rented the Warren to guard against smuggling, which was to get worse until the early 19th Century. By an Act of 1777, any suspicious looking person seen loitering within 5 miles of the coast, could be arrested!

Having changed the family name in 1736 from Des Bouverie to Bouverie, another Jacob became the first Viscount Folkestone in 1747, and in 1765 his son the 2nd Viscount Folkestone was created the first Earl of Radnor. His first wife was Harriet Pleydell and when she died; her father obtained an Act of Parliament to enable Pleydell to be added to Bouverie – hence Pleydell-Bouverie. Many of our roads are named after somebody – Earls Avenue, Dixwell Road, Bouverie Square, Pleydell Gardens, Grimston Avenue etc., and 3 children of the 8th Earl – William Avenue (now the 9th Earl), Lucy Avenue, Belinda Court – all now in Broadmead Village.

After several jetties were destroyed by storms, the Jetty Act of 1766 raised money for new ones, necessary to preserve the Parish Church and lower part of the town. The sea then came up to the cliffs below the Battery in the Bayle. The major industry in the mid-18th Century was still the fisheries, and cutters would take fish to the London market at Billingsgate. In 1798 the site of the present harbour was leased to the Corporation, subject to wrecks and other royalties including crabs landed, reserved to the Lord of the Manor. Finally in 1807, following a petition by the 2nd Earl to Parliament, the Folkestone Harbour Co. was created.

The 2nd Earl had also supported the Americans in their War of Independence started in 1776, for which he received a nice letter from George Washington shortly before he died. Also in early 1800, there was a threat of invasion by Napoleon's *Grande Armee*. The Earl gave money for local defences – the Martello Towers and the Hythe Canal, with cannons on the Battery, the Bayle. Another point of interest was the Peninsular War in Spain and Portugal. Crews would row cutters to France at night carrying money for our troops. This all led finally to a 2nd Act in 1820, and the harbour was somewhat badly built by the Folkestone Harbour Co. supported by wealthy citizens.

An Act of 1825 allowed the 2nd Earl to grant building leases to stimulate building development – being cheaper than freeholds. There was usually then an option for the builder to buy the freehold. The 3rd Earl spent large sums making roads including Sandgate Road, paths, the Leas etc. In 1832, Folkestone Water Co. was formed, in which the Earl was a major shareholder. (As a result, Alec, our speaker, became a non-executive director a few years ago.) But it was the Railway in 1843 (when the Earl was Chairman of the S.E. Railway Co.) which brought more demand and the Railway Company bought the Folkestone Harbour Co. (then bankrupt) and restored the harbour.

A famous London Architect, Sidney Smirke, was then employed to prepare plans for development. This was firstly for the east cliff area near the then railway station in Dover Road. A bridge was needed to cross the Tram Road valley – now the Radnor Bridge. Much drainage, engineering work and planting was necessary to stabilise the ground. The Radnor Cliff area was planned. Tontine Street and Radnor Bridge were built. Development west from Guildhall Street to Christchurch began and new layout of the Leas prepared. About 1850 the 3rd Earl gave the land for Christ Church to be built – which as you know was destroyed by a German bomb in 1942.

In 1868 he had Holy Trinity Church built to encourage development westward. His policy then was for a Church every ¼ mile as the town expanded, so that everyone could walk to Church. He paid for the Chancel of the Parish Church to be restored, as well as helping to maintain the Church until the 1930's.

In 1881 Estate Duty was introduced, which led to the disposal of more freeholds. In 1885 the 4th Earl gave the Council 20 acres at a peppercorn rent to construct Radnor Park. In 1887 the Central Railway Station was built and 2 years later more land adjoining the park was given for the Royal Victoria Hospital to be built. In 1901 the 4th Earl was made Mayor. Land for various churches was given under an Act of 1883 which required that if any part ceased to be used for worship, the whole would revert to the Donor, with its buildings. This Edwardian era was the high spot of the town's prosperity – a 1st class seaside resort and harbour. In 1912 Smith-Woolley was appointed to act for the estate and the Manor Office was built. Ingles Manor and the Barn already existed as part of the farm, but the Barn was later destroyed by fire in March 2001. In 1924 the East Cliff area and the Warren were given to the Council for the enjoyment of the townspeople. In the 1930's the foreshore, Rotunda, boating lake and outdoor swimming pool were built by the 6th Earl, The Rotunda was

designed by David Pleydell-Bouverie, an Architect. The outdoor swimming pool was used by Channel swimmers for practice. The Rotunda and boating lake were leased to Tom Cooper whose daughter married Jim Godden. The Leas and cliff were leased at a peppercorn rent to the Council, which was given later on, in the early 1970's, the right to buy the Toll Road, adjoining gardens and foreshore.

In 1956-7 Radnor Bridge was transferred to the Council. In 1961 Alec bought back Hawkinge Aerodrome for the 7th Earl – it had been acquired by the MoD for the front line in the Battle of Britain. For the 8th Earl a major redevelopment at the back of the Leas was submitted, but the architect's plans were altered by the Planning Department of the Council to what you see now. However there was some success in attracting major employers from London – the Institute of London Underwriters, The Orion Insurance Co., Welfare Insurance, Wm Dawson publishers, Victory Re-Insurance (then Legal & General) and Sainsbury supermarkets.

When Wilf Harris was Mayor he said that Folkestone Golf Course prevented the town from expanding, so Alec acquired what is now Sene Park Golf Course – designed by Henry Cotton. The old Folkestone course has now become Broadmead Village, Lynwood, Shearway etc. Alec is particularly proud of the Sports Centre for which the 8th Earl gave the land and was involved in raising the cost of building it – about £½ million.

Lord Radnor was Chairman of the Trust, the members being Sir Albert Costain, then the local M.P., Keith Shipton, Sir Gerald Glover who gave ½ acre, and County Cllr. Alan Straw. Alec was Secretary to the Trustees. The Mayor joined the Trust later. The Sports Centre was opened by Princess Anne in 1972.

The talk was followed by clips of film starting with 'Folkestone at Play' & 'Folkestone at Work' (both from 1904) and were followed with clips of Pathe News including Gandhi's visit to England (1931) and Queen Mary's visit to Shorncliffe Camp (1939)

Fifty-five people attended the meeting 6 of whom were visitors.

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of Neville Bush on January 5th aged 92 years.

We would like to welcome new member Terry Begent.

The February meeting was brought forward to Monday 2nd this was due to the Winter Shelter Scheme using the hall on Wednesdays and the church being closed for electrical work.

I was the speaker and I presented my talk on 'Folkestone During the Great War 1914-18'. I started with the events which took place in Europe before Great Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August 1914. I followed with the major part Folkestone played during the War starting with the recruiting campaign; tourists in Europe; arrival of Belgian Refugees in August 1914; German Reservists being arrested at Folkestone Harbour; the Belgian Cycle Corps; hotels and boarding houses requisitioned for Hospitals; Folkestone Harbour opening for the transportation of troops in March 1915; South Eastern Railway Company's Turbine Steamers used for troop-carrying; The Mole Canteen on the harbour; the arrival of Canadian Soldiers; King George V and Lord Kitchener's visit; Rest Camps numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4; the bombing by German Gotha planes on May 25th 1917; the sinking of the Turbine Steamer 'Onward' after she caught fire; Lord George disembarking at the harbour after signing the Peace Treaty in Paris; Peace Celebrations and Peace Teas in 1919; the arrival of a German U-Boat on January 3rd 1919, which was open to the public; the First World War Tank on the Durlocks which was presented to the town by Major-General E.D. Swinton on July 29th 1919; the War Memorial on the Leas, unveiled by Vice-Admiral Sir Roger J.B. Keyes on December 2nd 1922; the Machine Gun Memorial which stood at the entrance to Cherry Garden Avenue, unveiled by Sir F.H. Sykes on February 19th 1921; the Cairn Memorial unveiled in 1923; Memorial Boards which were in local schools and churches; and finishing with the Shorncliffe Military Cemetery.

Thirty-eight people attended the meeting 1 of whom was a visitor.