

**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
[www.folkestonehistory.org](http://www.folkestonehistory.org)  
Registered Charity No. 295994

## **NEWSLETTER No. 89 – Spring 2022**

### **Chairman's Report by Alan Taylor**

At the December meeting we welcomed our Hon. Secretary Vincent Williams who presented his talk entitled **Folkestone's Pleasure Gardens Theatre**. Vince started by telling us about the fore-runner of the Pleasure Gardens, which was the National Art Treasures Exhibition. Vince went in to great detail about the various rooms, galleries & outside grounds.

The Exhibition only lasted 6 months before closing due to the lack of footfall so the second half of his talk was about what came after it: the Pleasure Gardens Theatre followed by the Orion Insurance building which is now the Police Station. Once again Vince went into great detail about the performances held at the Pleasure Gardens and he showed us many programmes from down the years.

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

At the January meeting we welcomed member speaker Hilary Tolputt who presented her talk entitled **The Travels of Private Ernie Horton in WW1**.

Hilary started by saying it was the wishes of Ernie's daughter and sister, Eva, that Ernie's autograph album and medals should be returned from Canada (where Ernie emigrated to after the war), to his home in Folkestone. Hilary then spoke about the family background before saying that Ernie enlisted in the 2/2 Home Counties Field Ambulance on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1915. Following on from covering his army career, Hilary spoke about Ernie's diary showing many of the drawings, names of the artists, and annotations.

Hilary finished by talking about how she and Mark Hourahane transcribed the diary before having copies printed.

Thirty-three people attended the meeting five of whom were visitors.

At the February meeting we welcomed member speaker Kevin Harvey who presented his talk entitled **A Study of eight 17<sup>th</sup> century Estate Maps**.

Kevin started by talking about the Lords of the Manor of Folkestone with Basil Dixwell (1625) & Jacob des Bouverie (1697). The title Earl of Radnor was created (albeit for a second time) in 1765 with William Bouverie. It's interesting to note that some of Folkestone's roads are named after the Lords of the Manor!

Written on the maps there is a table explaining the things contained on the maps, with on some a letter and others a number explaining who owned the land or house etc. Kevin zoomed in on some of these; even things like rabbits were drawn in the Warren section of one of the maps. To illustrate the

sea there are ships drawn on the maps and even a mermaid on one by what is now the Mermaid beach. Was the Mermaid Café named after the drawing on the mermaid? We will never know!

Forty-seven people attended the meeting twelve of whom were visitors.

At the March meeting we welcomed guest John Hendy who presented his talk entitled **Rails Across The Harbour**. John started by talking about the coming of the railway to Folkestone and Dover, and that Dover had been a ferry port transporting passengers to Calais, Boulogne and Ostend many years before Folkestone.

He then spoke about Folkestone harbour being built between (1808-1827), and due to the harbour mouth silting up with sand and shingle due to the prevailing south west winds and tides, Folkestone Harbour Company had gone into liquidation and put the harbour up for sale for £18,000.

John said that after the railway arrived at Folkestone in 1843, Joseph Baxendale, one of the directors of the South Eastern Chatham & Dover Railway, was dissatisfied with the sloppy way in which the ferry service operated. He was the Chairman of the South Eastern Railway Company and one of the instigators in buying Folkestone harbour; and by August 1843 a Folkestone-Boulogne service was up and running.

He then went on to talk about: the branch line to the harbour and the various proposed routes including along the Lower Sandgate Road which was opposed by the Lord of The Manor, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Radnor; the harbour station being built; a low water landing being built; and the pier extension built between (1897 -1904).

After 40 years, the South Eastern Chatham & Dover Railway Company formed a working union with the South Eastern Railway becoming the South Eastern & Chatham Railway Company in 1899.

John spoke about the different types of ferries that ran out of Folkestone: paddle steamers, turbine steamers and motor ships, and the car ferry terminal being built and which opened in 1972.

The last sailing out of Folkestone was on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1991 with the Stena Horsa sailing to Boulogne ending an era lasting nearly 150 years of the Folkestone–Boulogne service. The port finally closed in 2001 after a few other shipping companies had operated out of the port including a Seacat and freight ships.

Fifty-eight people attended the meeting eighteen of whom were visitors.

### **Thirty Years On by John Hendy**

On New Year's Eve 1991, the Sealink car ferry *Horsa* left Folkestone for Boulogne for the final time thereby closing the historic daily connection between the two ports.

The link had commenced in 1843 and following its closure, low capacity, high speed SeaCats operated what soon became a seasonal service. This duly succumbed in 2000 while a purely freight service lingered until the following summer.

As St Peter's was built to serve as 'the Mariners' Church', the ship's red ensign, and that of her sister vessel, *Hengist*, were presented to the then priest, Fr Peter Houghton, and today hang in the Sacred Heart Chapel. There they remain as a reminder of our close links with the port and the vessels and crews which once served it.

Today's visitors to the greatly sanitised port and its railway station can have little idea just how busy and important this once proud Gateway to England once was. Millions of people passed through during its operational years including many members of the Royal Houses of Europe, pilgrims,

politicians and diplomats, holidaymakers, day-trippers, refugees and soldiers travelling to the carnage of the Western Front during the Great War.

Their last view of 'Blighty' was the harbour and its picturesque buildings topped by St Peter's Church.



### **The Cherry Garden (Written for the Folkestone And District Water Company's Open Day 1st July 1981)**

In the Neolithic times fortifications were built on Castle Hill immediately east of The Cherry Garden. Cattle were sometimes kept within them and brought down the hill to water at a pond on the site now occupied by the smallest of the three open reservoirs and named the "Bateman". West of the pond stands Cherry Garden Hill capped by a tumulus in which was buried a Neolithic chieftain whose responsibilities doubtless included the water supply. The pond was fed by six springs which issued naturally from the hillside at various points along its north side.

In 1848 the Folkestone Waterworks Company was formed. The prehistoric pond was enlarged and made into a reservoir and a second and larger reservoir, later named the "Hart" was constructed on its south side. The springs were the only source and the total quantity impounded was no more than ten million gallons which soon proved inadequate.

Wells were sunk into the Folkestone beds of the Lower Greensand at various times from 1851 to 1891 and water from them was pumped at Shearway pumping station into the Bateman Reservoir when needed to supplement the yield of the chalk springs.

During the nineties the Hart Reservoir was enlarged and the long narrow reservoir on the east side was constructed and named the "Spurgen" bringing the combined capacity of the three open reservoirs up to 20 mg. gross. At the same time, an adit known as the "Terlingham Tunnel" was driven for 650 yards northwards into the hillside to tap underground water below the upper part of the Alkham Valley which is situated in the surface watershed of the river Dour. The main bringing water from the wells in the Greensand was diverted so as to discharge into the Spurgen Reservoir over the clearly visible pip and the splash plate immediately below it.

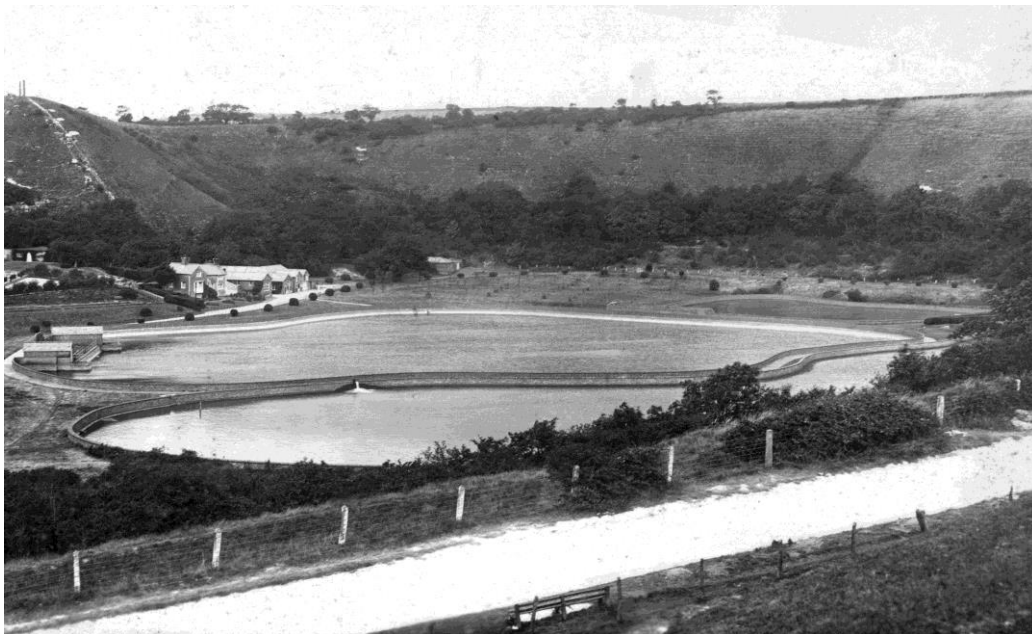
Water from the open reservoirs was passed through primitive filters and pumped by stream pumping plant, preserved in the steam museum, to a one million gallon impounding reservoir situated on the

side of Cherry Garden Hill known as the “Sherwood” Reservoir. Later a modern filtration plant was constructed south of the Hart Reservoir and electrical pumps installed. The six horizontal pressure filters are each capable of passing 15,000 gallons per hour and are cleaned by blowing air through them and backwashing for up to ten minutes.

After sterilization with chlorine, water from this station is supplied to lower and west Folkestone. The original 9” diameter cast iron pipe to Folkestone Town Hall laid in 1848 is still in use, but subsequently an 18” diameter pipeline has been laid alongside and other large mains to the east and west Folkestone.



**The Cherry Garden, 1860**



**Cherry Garden Water Works showing all three reservoirs**

### **Notices by Alan Taylor**

We would like to welcome new members: Sheridan Mitchell, Eileen Carr, Barbara Beveridge, Peter & Deborah Bates, Bob Ratcliff, Felix Robinson, Terry Conybeare, Dean Horlock & Trevor Ward.