



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
www.folkestonehistory.org
Registered Charity No. 295994

Chairman's Report.

NEWSLETTER No. 90 – SUMMER 2022

Chairman's Report by Alan Taylor

At the April meeting we welcomed guest speaker Len Howell who presented us with his talk entitled '**Operation Fortitude – The Secret Success of D Day**'.

Len started by talking about a two-way spy called Garcia who built a fictitious spy network in Britain containing 27 agents, none of whom were real. His German handlers were so impressed with his work he was rewarded with the Iron Cross. The credibility that German High Command gave Garcia's information meant he was able to convincingly sell the Allied deception to them, leaving the Germans completely unaware they were being manipulated.

Up to a year before the Allies stepped foot on the Normandy beaches, a deception campaign was being formulated. It aimed to throw German High Command off about exactly how Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt planned to penetrate Hitler's Fortress Europe. Its name was Operation Bodyguard and the secret department known as the London Controlling Centre (LCS) mapped out its finer details. Operation Fortitude was one of the major elements of Bodyguard and focused on creating invasion threats from the United Kingdom into various parts of Western Europe. Fortitude South focussed on creating confusion about the Allied channel crossing.

Thirty two people attended the meeting six of whom were visitors.

At the May meeting I was the speaker and I presented my talk entitled '**Lost Buildings in the Harbour Area**'.

My talk covered the areas damaged by a parachute mine which landed on 18th November 1940 - Beach Street, Harbour Street and Seagate Street; the rebuilding of the area and realigning of the Tram Road, and building the Tram Road car park etc.

Eighty people attended the meeting forty of whom were visitors.

The speaker for the June meeting had to cancel due to ill health, but Vince Williams stood in at short notice with a talk entitled '**Old Cheriton**'. Vince started by showing a number of very early maps of Cheriton which illustrated how rural the area was. He followed by talking about the oldest building in Cheriton, St Martin's church and the Manors of Cheriton and where they were located.

The second half of the talk showcased many other of Cheriton's iconic buildings including its pubs, its other churches, the village hall, cinema, Ashley Grange, sports stadium and the almshouses. It was a most interesting and informative talk!

Forty-six people attended the meeting of whom seventeen were visitors.

The Making of the Railway between Folkestone And Dover by Gordon Browne (written in 1962)

The following will be of interest to many. It has to do with the making of the railway between Folkestone and Dover. An old handbook reports the matter as follows: - A chalk cliff rose to a height of 375 feet above the level of the sea. And at the expense of at least £15,000, to remove the obstacle, (a mass of chalk 300 feet long and 375 feet high, with an average thickness of 70 feet), Mr. Cubitt determined to try the effect of gunpowder by means of galvanism, one the boldest attempts probably at the time that the mind of man ever conceived. The explosion took place on January 26th 1843. A great deal of anxiety had been manifested by various parties in consequence of the immense quantity of gunpowder used on the occasion, there being no less than ten tons of that destructive article employed. The sole management of this undertaking was vested in the person of General Pasley.

A Gigantic Operation

The account goes on to state: Three galleries, and three different shafts connected with them, were constructed in the cliff. The length the galleries or passages was about 300 feet. At the bottom of each shaft was a chamber 11 feet long, 5 feet high, and 4 feet 6 inches wide. In each of the eastern and western chambers 5,000 lbs. of gunpowder were placed and in the centre chamber 7,500 lbs. making in the whole 17,500 lbs. The gunpowder was in bags placed in boxes. Loose powder was sprinkled over the bags, of which the mouths were open, and the bursting charges were in the centre of the main charges. The distance of the charges from the cliff was from 60 to 70 feet. It was calculated that the powder, before it could find a vent, must move 100,000 yards of chalk, or 200,000 tons. It was also confidently expected that it would move one million tons.

Preparations for Ignition

At the back of the cliff a wooden shed was constructed, in which three electric batteries were erected. Each battery consisted of 18 Daniel's cylinders and two common batteries of 20 plates each. To these batteries were attached wires, which communicated to the end of the charge by means of a very fine wire of platinum, which the electric fluid, as it passed over it, made red hot to fire the powder. The wires, covered with ropes, were spread on the grass to the top of the cliff, and then, falling over it, were carried to the eastern, the centre, and the western chambers. Lieut. Hutchinson, of the Royal Engineers, had the command of the three batteries, and it was arranged that when he fired the centre Mr. Hodges and Mr. Wright should simultaneously fire the eastern and western batteries.

The Explosion

Shortly after ten o'clock the Directors of the South Eastern Company accompanied by Mr. Cubitt, the engineer, and several of their friends, proceeded from the Ship Inn through the new tunnel recently cut through the rock under the battery, which is also a tunnel in the railroad, to Shakespeare tunnel, and thence to the foot of the cliff to be blasted down. Two o'clock came, and general excitement amongst the great crowd became intense. At ten minutes past two Mr. Cubitt ordered the signal flag at the Directors tent to be hoisted, and that was followed by the hoisting of the rest. A quarter of an hour soon passed in deep anxiety. Not a word was uttered. At exactly 2.26 p.m. a faint indistinct, indescribable, moaning, subterranean rumble was heard, and immediately afterwards, and then almost simultaneously about 500 feet of the summit began gradually, but rapidly, to sink; the earth on which the marquee was placed trembling under the shock.

Some Effects

There was no roaring explosion, no bursting out of fire, no violent crushing, splitting of rocks, and comparatively speaking very little smoke: for a proceeding of mighty and irrepressible force, it had little or nothing of the appearance of force. The rock seemed as if it had exchanged its solid for fluid nature, for it glided like stream into the sea, which was at a distance of about 100 yds, perhaps more

from its base, filling up several large pools of water. The first exclamations which burst from every lip were: 'Splendid,' 'Beautiful.'

The next were isolated cheers, followed by three times general cheers, from the spectators, and then one cheer more. All were excited – all were delighted at the success of the experiment, and congratulations flowed upon Mr. Cubitt for the magnificent manner in which he had carried his project into execution. Thus terminated an experiment which had been completely crowned with success. As Round Down was, or is, on the main Folkestone – Dover line; I thought many of my readers would read the above with interest.



Round - Down Cliff, The Great Fall, created 26th January 1843

Folkestone & District Local History Society's Platinum Jubilee Exhibition



On Friday 3rd & Saturday 4th June 2022 our Society held its first exhibition since 2018's WW1 exhibition at the Town Hall.

To celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, we put on two photographic exhibitions – one on Royal Visits to Folkestone, which Alan Taylor had previously compiled and Vince Williams added to with more recent photos, doubling this exhibition in size. Peter & Annie Bamford also displayed their collection of Folkestone Jubilee and Coronation china, medals and other ephemera; and other local

royal memorabilia were contributed by Vince Williams, Mark Hourahane and Tony Hill. The second exhibition was on the History of Shorncliffe Camp and was put together by Vince Williams. The Society also had its local history bookstall at the exhibition, and provided guided tours of the church.



The exhibition was held at St. Martins Church, Cheriton, and helped provide an extra attraction for the church's Jubilee party. Over the two days about 300 people visited and if you visited on the Saturday afternoon you could also have partaken of a cream tea, enjoyed live music and even tried your hand at bellringing!

Thank you to all those committee members who organised the event, to those who helped provide extra photographs and also to all those members of the Society who attended. The feedback has been extremely positive and hopefully its success will generate even more members for our Society. It would also be great if we could hold an annual local history exhibition.

Notices by Alan Taylor

To celebrate the 200th anniversary St Paul's Church Sandgate, a photographic exhibition was set up in the church on 1st June. It consisted of photographs of Sandgate Hill and High Street.

We would like to welcome new members: Mandy Atherton. Jan Clarke, Fay Meek and Marion Chapman