

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

## **Chairman's report.**

### **NEWSLETTER No. 87 – Autumn 2021**

Dear Member,

We hope you are all well and keeping safe. We are re-starting meetings on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021, which will be the AGM followed by a talk by me on *Watercolours of Folkestone – 1820s to 1850s*.

On a rather sad note, members Marion Dunster passed away in November 2020 & Richard Monk in August 2021.

For the forthcoming year, we do have some vacancies on the committee so if you would like to stand or nominate somebody could you please let me know. Also, after 30 years, Mary is stepping down from serving the teas and coffees, but happily will still be coming to the meetings. So, would anyone be willing to help serve teas and coffees at the break time in the meetings? If any volunteers could let me know on 07307 474227 please, I would be most grateful.

Until then we hope you find the following articles interesting.

Alan Taylor

### **Len Offer & The Folkestone Cooperative Society, by Vincent Williams**



In our Spring 2020 newsletter (no.82) we had a very good article from Sue Sheppard on the history of Folkestone Co-op. I am currently writing a history of Folkestone Rotary Club for their centenary, and Len Offer was a President of Folkestone Rotary Club in 1960-61.

Within their archives is a short biography of Len which gives a few more glimpses of the former Co-op Secretary and corrects the date Len took over at the Folkestone store, which was in fact, 1946 and not 1949.

Len Offer was born in Swindon on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1912. After leaving school he obtained employment with the Swindon Co-operative Society, in the accounts department. He married his wife, Edna, in 1943 and both had a love for music. Len played violin and played with the Swindon Symphony Orchestra and his wife was a piano teacher.

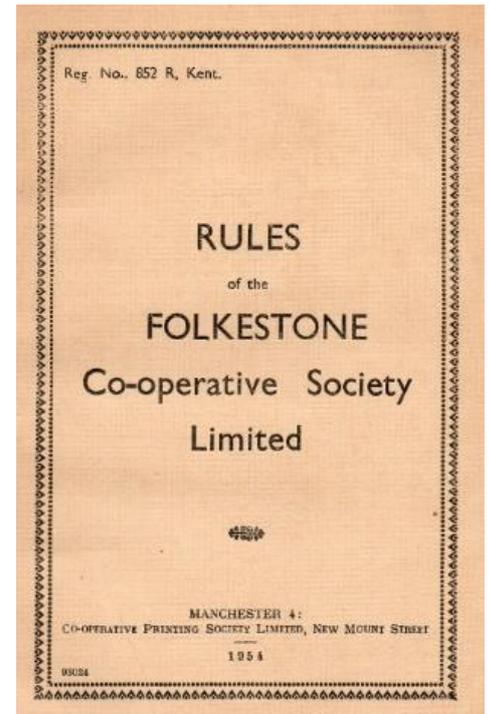
In the Rotary archives there appears to be a slight disparity as to when he came to Folkestone. One article states he was

appointed Chief Executive of the Folkestone Co-operative Society in 1945, but his obituary states that he moved to Folkestone in 1946. He joined Folkestone Rotary Club in 1947 and both Len and Edna were fully committed to the First Church of Christian Science.

As well as Folkestone Rotary President in 1960-61 he also was elected as District Chairman of the Rotary District of Kent & Sussex for their 1967-68 year. Len had also been appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1950 and was a member of the Folkestone, Ashford & District War Pensions Committee and the Council of Folkestone Chamber of Trade. Within the Co-operative Societies he also held the positions of Honorary Secretary of the Co-operative Secretaries Association (Southern Section), Vice-Chairman of the Co-operative General Management Association, and as a keen golfer was Vice-Captain of the Co-operative Golfing Managers' Society.

When the Dover Road store closed, Len's redundancy upset him. However Len bounced back gaining employment for the South London company Winn and Coles; so Len and his wife, Edna, moved to Bromley in 1968. Len became Winn and Coles' Company Secretary and Director of their Canadian operations, working well past normal retirement age. He joined the Rotary Club of Bromley, although he did come back to Folkestone for Folkestone Rotary Club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1973.

After Edna passed away in 1980, Len later visited friends in Florida, and it was here he met his second wife, Dorothy. They married in 1982 and they would spend winters living in Florida and the summers back in England. Len also joined the Rotary Club of Fort Myers Florida. They moved back to Folkestone in 1994 to a flat overlooking The Leas and both got involved again with the First Church of Christian Science locally; and Len re-joined Folkestone Rotary Club. Dorothy died after a long illness in November 2000 and Len passed away on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2002.



### **From the Common Assembly (town council) minute book 1812 – 1835**

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Liverpool  
Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports

That the principal, if not the sole support of the Town of Folkestone is the Fishery, there being above fifteen hundred persons employed every year during certain seasons in catching and curing fish.

That the trade of fishing has been materially injured and the most profitable part thereof nearly put a stop to by the numerous depredations committed by the foreign boats upon the Folkestone fishermen many of whom have been robbed of their nets or fish and wholly prevented from exercising their occupation.

That the foreign boats are considerably larger and carry a greater many more men than the Folkestone boats and are therefore enabled to overpower them and if some check is not put upon the foreign boats the trade of fishing at Folkestone must be wholly relinquished which will be attended by ruinous consequences to the Town.

That your Memorialists humbly submit to your Lordship that it would materially benefit and assist the fishery of this Town and of Great Britain generally if limits were fixed to the Fisheries of the British nations as the Folkestone boats have never occasion to go more than nine miles from the English

Coast for fish and even if they had occasion they would be prevented from so doing by the obstructions and annoyances of the foreign boats.

Your Memorialists therefore humbly pray your Lordship to be graciously pleased to afford the Town of Folkestone such relief in their premises as your Lordship shall see fit and proper.

*Given under the Common Seal of the said Mayor and Jurats and Commonality, 20 Dec 1825 having been read at this meeting ordered that the corporation seal be affixed to the same and that it be forwarded by the Mayor to the Earl of Liverpool directly.*

### **Blessing of the Fisheries 2021, by John Hendy**

The annual Blessing of the Fisheries took place on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June in the presence of the Bishop of Chichester, the Rt. Rev'd Martin Warner SSC.

A grey and miserable day developed into one of bright sunshine as the procession wound its way down The Durlocks and on to The Stade. Once again, due to the current COVID regulations, the occasion was less involved than usual but thirty or so members of our congregation, in addition to the Mayor and members of Folkestone Town Council, participated in the service.

It was then back up the hill where a rousing rendition of Peter the Fisherman was safely sung outside in the church car park, and Bishop Martin celebrated and preached at the Pontifical High Mass assisted by Fr. Mark (Deacon) and Fr. David (Sub-Deacon) while Fr. Bruce led the intercessions.



Following the Mass, we all assembled in the 'Vicar's Garden' for a quite delicious and memorable lunch which was painstaking prepared by Bidfood's excellent Martin Eshelby and Andy Kemp to whom we owe a tremendous debt of thanks and gratitude. This completed a wonderful day of true fellowship which, for all those who participated, will be remembered for many years to come.

### **A History of St Hilda's School, Folkestone (1901-1914), by Vincent Williams**

The front page of the first edition of a new St Hilda's school magazine, published in time for Christmas 1910, reads, "A desire has been expressed by the girls and those interested in St. Hilda's for some record of the life and progress of the School." I have edited together extracts from across the set of these annually produced magazines, which were sent back to Folkestone in 2020 from a relative of a former pupil who was clearing out some family papers, to provide a history of this private school for girls which existed in Folkestone from 1901 – 1914. Sadly the contributors are not named and so cannot be credited, but I have kept the text wherever possible to that which was written by the pupils.

**1903** – Miss Abbott came to Folkestone and started work at St. Hilda's (79 Bouverie Road West). It was a day school only, and had been in existence for two years earlier under Miss Ridsdale, who gave it up to be married. That spring the first boarder arrived. We had a small tennis tournament in the Pleasure Gardens during the summer; there was a wild flower competition. In the autumn we went to a series of lectures on 'Italian Pictures.' We also had a completion of quotations from Scott and Wordsworth.

**St. Hilda's, 79, BOUVERIE ROAD WEST,**  
**FOLKESTONE.**

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**DAY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.**

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*Thorough English. Conversational and Grammatical French and German taught by Foreigners. Music. Mathematics. Drawing. Calisthenics, etc.*

**HIGHEST REFERENCES REQUIRED & GIVEN.**

FOR PARTICULARS APPLY TO  
**. . MISS ABBOTT, Principal.**

**1904** – The first school magazine was launched forth – a manuscript of priceless value! We attended lectures on Architecture by Mr. Gaskell and went to hear the renowned Czech violinist and composer, Jan Kubelik, play. We started Swedish drill in the school. Shakespeare reading by the girls took place on Tuesday evenings throughout the winter.



**1905** – A new epoch in the life of the school began. It migrated to the corner house next door (31 Earls Avenue). Many rules and regulations were made, and a decree went forth that a portion of the 'Christian Year' was to be learnt every Sunday. There were lectures that year on the Epistle to the Ephesians, on 'German Song,' and on 'Browning.' Class singing was started, also Debates, and the Golden List. Miss Law came to us that autumn.

**1906** – Miss Law gave Modern History lectures on Monday evenings. This summer we had the first meeting of the Old Girl's Guild, which had been founded in July, 1905. We also attended that year lectures on Shakespeare by Prebendary Palmes.

**1907** – Drill tunics were started, and we gave a drill demonstration. A school library was formed, also a French table, at which food and French language began and still continue to be digested together. Mr. Shibley Jamal gave us an account of the work of St. George's School, Jerusalem, of which school he is a master. At the end of the year we had our first fancy dress dance.

**1908** – A conservatory was built on to the end of the dining-room during the Christmas holidays; also a new cloakroom, and the old one was turned into the parlour. The school attended some Church History lectures given by Mr. Clayton. In the autumn of the year the day girls were passed on to Miss Duigan. We had our bazaar in aid of St. George's School Jerusalem, and we were able to send £20 as the result of it.

**1909** – The adjoining house in Earl's Avenue (No. 29) was added to the school, and the old schoolroom was converted into a drawing room. Lectures on Italian pictures were again given by Mr Gaskell. Mrs. Herbert Morrell kindly gave the school a silver cup (the Morrell Challenge Cup) to be held by the best player in the tennis singles. (If held for three consecutive years it becomes the holder's property.) Some of the girls went to hear Sir Ernest Shackleton's lecture in the Guild Hall. The A division in French went to see 'L'Avare' played.

**1910** – In the Summer Miss Abbott instituted Prefects' Tea on Sundays, likewise a form of torture called Musical Evenings. Miss Fogerty first came to us for Elocution in the Christmas Term.

**1911** – Hockey was regrettably given up in the Autumn and Lacrosse took its place, and for the first time in St.Hilda's School life we have taken up the excellent game of Basket-ball, under the able coaching of Miss Guilbert. Miss Abbott took the Sixth Form to a series of three lectures given by Mr Hilaire Belloc. Miss Nicholson has started cooking lessons, and eight of the senior girls can now manage to cook a plain dinner.

**1912** – Miss Abbott provided us all with hymn books which were handed round before prayers, and in the Summer we had a Tennis Court of our own at the Pleasure Gardens. In July we also saw Dixon and Gore of the British Isles win the semi-final of the Davis Cup against the French at the Pleasure Gardens.

**1913** – The Fifth Form was divided into an Upper and a Lower Fifth after Christmas, as the school was getting larger. Miss Law introduced an Observation and Deduction Chart, which was hung up in every Form. In the Summer, blazers were first presented to the Tennis team. And we watched Canada beat the Belgians in the Davis Cup semi-finals at the Pleasure Gardens in July.

**1914** – In the Spring Term the Sixth Form was given up for the time being and a 'Kensington' took its place. Mr. Wilkes came down several times to coach us in Lacrosse. After Easter we came back to find many changes. Miss Abbott had taken over the next door house in Earl's Avenue (no. 27), and a way into it was made through the old schoolroom. In April we raised £17 11s. 5d. in aid of the restoration of Sandgate Church and in July we watched Great Britain beat Belgium in the Davis Cup quarter-finals. Then in October, great excitement was caused when the school moved to Stevenage owing to the War, where for one term we lived in three separate houses. Owing to the War garments made by the Old Girls were sent either to the Army or to the Belgian Refugees.

**1915** – Elmwood Manor, at Baldock, which Miss Abbott had taken and which would have made splendid house for us all burnt down, so we came to Oswald Court and St. Ninians. In the Autumn the Sixth Form was revived – in the cloakroom! The Kensington still continued, and the two Fifths became the Senior Oxford and the Lower Certificate. Miss Hordern took over the St. Hilda's Scouts, which had been started in the Summer.

The Christmas 1915 magazine is the last that references the School being in Folkestone. It had by now moved and did not return to Folkestone after the First World War. The Earls Avenue property became a boarding house after the Great War, although retaining the name St Hilda's, and was run by Miss D. Hulme of which the last entry can be found in the 1940 Kelly's Street Directory. There is no mention of this building being on the site in subsequent street directories although it was not bombed in the War. Alan Taylor remembers that the building was demolished to make way for the current building built by George Stone. The decline in domestic holidays and rise in package holidays abroad, especially from the 1960s onwards may account for the building's demise. An entry in the 1968 Kelly's Street Directory is the first mention of the modern block of flats called Marlborough Court which now occupies the site that was 27-31 Earls Avenue, although 79 Bouverie Road West still exists.

The magazines contain a selection of essays and accounts of current affairs (e.g. Captain Scott's Antarctic expedition or the start of the First World War), school gardening, debates, sporting activities, school trips, and poetry, of which the two poems below give a snapshot of school life in the early 20th century. But St Hilda's Magazine also relied on input from its old girls and provided updates on what was happening in the lives of the Old Girls and the update for Christmas 1915 showed many working in V.A.D Hospitals due to the First World War.

Although not working for the war effort but certainly worth mentioning for an entirely different reason was 'Old Girl' F. Spencer who had landed a job as Private Secretary to the author and creator of the fictional priest detective Father Brown, G. K. Chesterton, having just typed his latest book 'The Crimes of England.'

### **Must and Musts Nots at St. Hilda's! Summer 1910 by H.W.C.**

You must not talk upon the stairs.  
    You must not miss one step.  
You must not bang the door or sing  
    When walking in for prep.  
You must not whisper angry words  
    When someone pulls your plait,  
Or when within the cloak-room's rush  
    They step upon your hat.  
You must not scamper down the stairs  
    Till Sylvia's face looks black,  
Whilst in an awful voice she roars-  
    "Your hands behind your back!"  
You must not look through class-room panes  
    To see the soldiers pass.  
You must not grumble when at night  
    You miss your bath – but say  
"My watch was wrong, and yours is right"  
    And quietly go away.

But yet you must do certain things.  
    You must sit up quite straight  
And pass the salt to her next door  
    And take away her plate.  
You must talk French to Mademoiselle  
    When walking near in croc.  
You must forgive the wretch as well  
    Who gives your heel a knock.

You must when coming in for school  
    After your early game  
Look wonderfully calm and cool  
    And do your work the same.  
You must to music lessons go  
    With quite a cheerful face,  
To learn what you already know  
    In treble and in bass.  
In ante-room and on the stairs  
    Quite silent you must be  
And in the cloak-room I'd beware!  
    The silence-list you'll see,  
You must not play or make a mess  
    But shoes must stow away  
Before the cloak-room mistress  
    Has chanced to pass that way.  
You must be down at once for tea  
    Or else you miss your cake,  
And that's a rule though hungry  
    We'd love for old sake's sake.  
You must enjoy your Saturday eve  
    And long to sit and play,  
Dreading the time when you must leave  
    The stool and walk away.  
In fact you must do everything  
    And stick to every rule  
Under Miss Abbott's ordering  
    Within St. Hilda's School.

And if one does not know what the *croc* is in the last poem...

### **The St Hilda Crocodile by Helen Cruttwell**

At Folkestone, in the gentle breeze,  
Upon the much frequented leas,  
All clothed in navy-blue, one sees  
    St. Hilda's famous crocodile.

It really is a pleasant sight  
To watch each young St. Hildarite,  
With tie of blue both dark and light,  
    Disport herself in crocodile.

When she grows tired she does not grunt,  
Nor kick the heel of her in front,  
Nor swerve like some ill-managed punt,  
    But walks along in crocodile.

And when her hat from off her blows  
In patience after it she goes;  
She has no ladders in her hose,  
    It would not do in crocodile.

In autumn's rain, she takes her gamp,  
And toddles off to Caesar's Camp,  
For some delightful rural tramp  
    Where she may break the crocodile.

And when the frost lies white as chalk,  
Then seeks she the Madeira walk,  
And faster than French lecturers talk  
    Will run St. Hilda's crocodile.

Ah few in Folkestone town can beat  
The rhythm of her marching feet:  
I doubt if any would compete  
    Against St. Hilda's crocodile.

Yet one thing gives me quite a shock,-  
They call this crocodile a croc.  
It seems to me a shame to dock  
    The tail of such a crocodile.



27-31 Earls Avenue (now  
Marlborough Court)  
& 79 Bouverie Road West in 2021.