

**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
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NEWSLETTER No. 94 – Summer 2023

Chairman's Report by Alan Taylor

Unfortunately our March meeting's talk on Folkestone cinema organs was cancelled due to ill health so I gave my talk on **'Folkestone Fishing Heritage & History Museum.'** I started by saying the idea of a fishing museum was Frank Bond's, who said Folkestone's fishing industry is sadly in decline and we should have a museum to remember the industry, which was once one of the main industries in Folkestone. (The peak was in the year 1900 when there were about 100 fishing boats fishing out Folkestone)

I went on to say that in 2012 we set up a fishing museum in the Sassoon Room at Folkestone Library where we stayed for three months and re-opened in 2013. We were also in a shop at the bottom of the High Street in 2013 for a three day fish festival. In 2014 we were in the disused Folkestone Harbour Booking Office and stayed for three years. In 2018 all the artefacts etc. were stored in Folkestone Trawlers, then in February 2019 we took over the building which was originally Ovenden's blacksmiths & engineering workshop, where we still are.

I showed images of the all the places we had been, and finished up talking about Wheels of Time which is an educational activity for children between the ages of five and twelve where they can collect a badge at any of the museums in Kent that are in the Wheels of Time project.

Forty-two people attended the meeting, nine of whom were visitors.

At the April meeting we welcomed our secretary Vince Williams who gave us his talk entitled **'100 Years Of Folkestone Rotary Club.'** Vince started by saying that Paul Harris (1868-1947) of Chicago founded the Rotary movement in 1905, which has expanded to 35,000 clubs in 200 countries. The plan was to bring together a few local businessmen to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern with meetings taking place in individual homes on a rotating basis, hence 'Rotary'. Folkestone has two Rotary Clubs, and the oldest, Folkestone Rotary Club, was officially chartered in 1923, although members had started setting the club up in August 1922.

He went on to talk about the various activities, including the Folkestone Competitive Musical Festival and Christmas Collections, and the various places the Rotary Club have met in Folkestone over the years; and the money raised for various charities, of which the Folkestone Half Marathon has raised over £560,000 since it started in 2006.

For the last part of his talk, he showed us images of shops which Rotarians ran such as: Broadley Bros. men's outfitters; Murdoch & Co, music warehouse in Sandgate Road; Tatt's Restaurant in Cheriton Road; Walter Moncrieff, tailors, in Sandgate Road; Flashman & Co. also in Sandgate Road; Otto Marx builders who had their office at 153 Sandgate Road & Ocle & Son jewellers, 35 Sandgate Road.

Forty people attended the meeting, six of whom were visitors.

At the May meeting we welcomed our treasurer Terry Begent who gave us his talk entitled **'Folkestone Walls'**. He started by reading a quotation from *"Folkestone and its Neighbourhood"* by Samuel Mackie, published in 1856 who was in the opinion that the whole town had at some time been enclosed by walls but could offer little evidence to support this other than snippets that he found in the local town records that have long since disappeared.

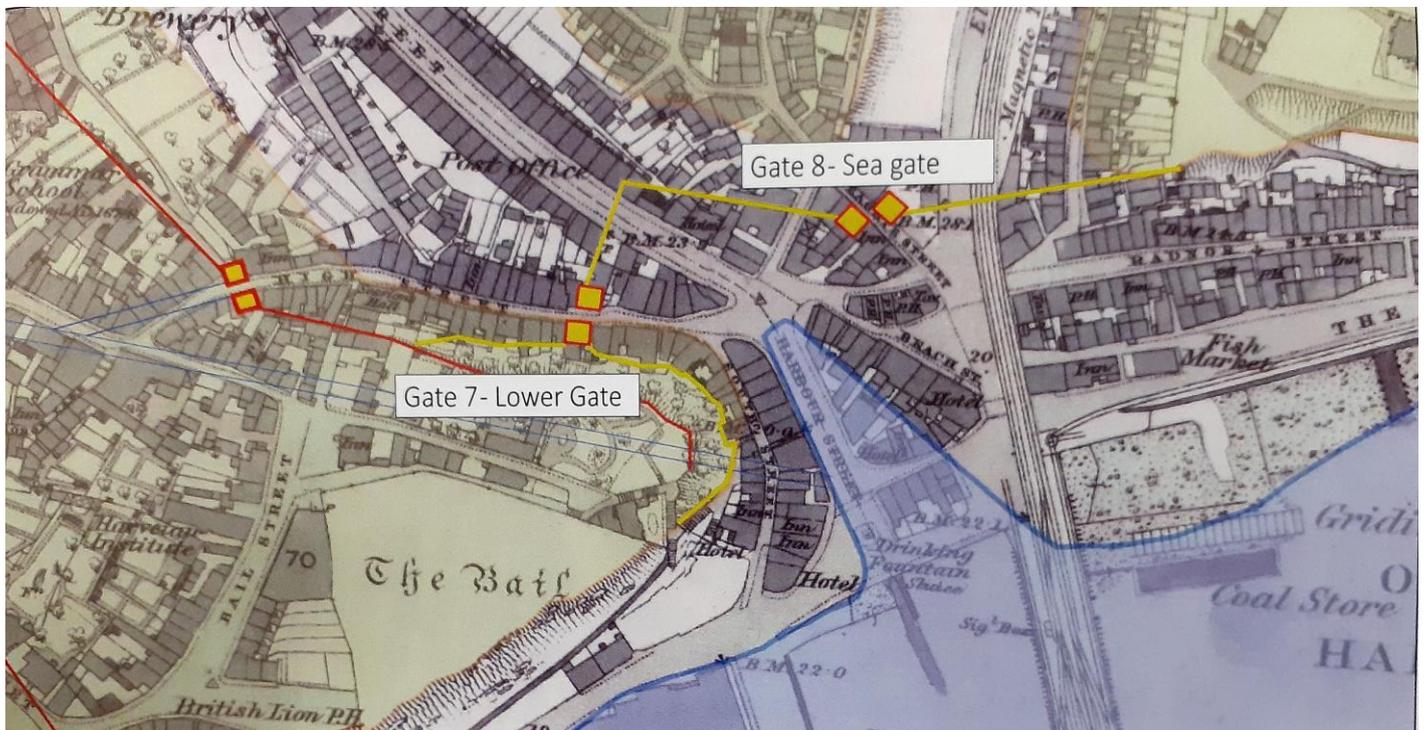
He showed us portions of stone walls which were possibly entered by gates including: *Sea Gate, Banker's Gate, West Gate, Nether Gate, Lower Gate, Shorelands Gate & Cophill Gate*. He spoke about the towns of Hastings, Rye, Folkestone & Dover which all have high cliffs and low land between them which would be the ideal place for an army to invade - so they needed to be protected.

He went on to speak about the Roman invasion, the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain, Viking raids and invasions, the Norman Conquest, the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) & Henry VIII's coastal defences.

In the second part of his talk Terry spoke about the Edwardian Walls, the Priory Wall & various isolated walls.

During Terry's talk he showed us examples of similar walls in other towns all supported by early town maps and photographs.

Forty-four people attended the meeting eight of whom were visitors.



Astley Hospital – A Remembrance By Keith Garratt

Dam House, or Astley Hall, was once used as the administration block of a hospital, with wards built in the grounds. In 1902, additional land was purchased on Coldhurst Lane, to build wards for smallpox patients. On 23 October 1914, a group of 29 Belgian refugees arrived at Astley, having fled their homes from German invasion during World War 1. It was decided to house them in the smallpox hospital, which had been unused since 1906. This story, although fictional, uses the above facts as its inspiration. (With thanks to Thomas McGrath and www.ifthesewallscouldtalk.com).

This is a fictional memoir of one of the female refugees.



“23 October 1914. The day I first came to Astley, part of Tyldesley. Not that I knew then where I was. I was 23.

We had had to leave Belgium in a rush. The Germans were advancing so quickly that our way was out could be blocked if we delayed even a few minutes to pack. But we did get to Ostend. It was chaos there and Jerome, my husband, got separated from me and our two month old daughter Marie. He ended up in a different boat.



Marie and I crossed in a trawler. I had never been to sea before. It was a stormy night. I was violently seasick. Strangely, Marie seemed hardly affected. She slept most of the time.

When we landed at Folkestone, we were put into a group of about 30 people. My English wasn't good then but I kept asking about Jerome. I was told not to worry. They would make sure he was sent to the same camp. By trains and horse cart, we made our slow journey. Northward I know now.

Finally, we were told we had reached our camp. We were taken to a building that I could tell had been some sort of hospital. Later I learned it was part of Astley Hospital,

I received the news about Jerome one week later. Small boat. Storm. Swept overboard. Body not found. I was so grief-stricken that, at the time, I could not take in the details. In that, my darkest hour, I met Nora Roberts. I owe her so much.

Nora has been widowed about 25 years before. Her husband had died in a mining accident when her son, Arthur was less than one. So, then Nora said she could understand my grief, I believed her. She invited us to tea regularly. We talked about anything and everything. My English got better. Arthur joined us when he could; when he wasn't on shift at the nearby pit. In the evening, he walked us back to the hospital.

When, some months later, the time came for us to move on, I was starting to feel happiness again. What happened next? That's another story!"

Credited to: Keith Garratt - Tyldesley Creative Writers.

Notices by Alan Taylor

A photographic exhibition on the history of the Parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe was set up in the church to celebrate 125 years since the death of the Rev. Matthew Woodward. The Society has also put on other exhibitions: one at the Holy Trinity Church on Royal Visits to Folkestone for King Charles' coronation, also on in St Martins Church on the History of the Church, also to celebrate King Charles' coronation.



Alan Taylor with Canon Tony Shepherd who was a Curate in the church in the 1970s

Tony also gave a talk in the Parish Church on Saturday 29th April to celebrate the legacy of Canon Matthew Woodward, Vicar of Folkestone 1851-1898, on the 125th anniversary of his death.

We would like to welcome new members: Jill Westwood, Tracy Davidson, David Kesby, Peter McLaren & Sharon Norman.