



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
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NEWSLETTER No. 95 – Autumn 2023

Chairman's Report by Alan Taylor

At the June meeting I was the speaker presenting my talk entitled '**The Demolition of Folkestone**' 1970 – 2004. I started by saying that Fr. Nesbit, Parish Priest at The Catholic Church of Our Lady, Help of Christians & St Aloysius, Guildhall Street, gave me about forty-five 35mm slides most of which showed the demolishing of part of Shellons Street, Cheriton Road, Bouverie Road East & Bouverie Square in 1972. The new road was to be called 'The Northern Distributor Road' and it was in preparation for making part of Sandgate Road pedestrians only. The new road was never completed; there should have been a flyover from Grace Hill to Dover Road!

I was encouraged by Eamonn Rooney to use the slides for a talk on the new road which I duly did and I gave it to this society after the AGM in 1989. (This was my very first talk!)

The talk consisted of 104 slides starting with Bouverie Square; building the bus station; the buildings to be demolished, and the demolition of them on the roads previously mentioned; building the new road called 'Foresters Way,' after the pub which stood on the corner of Shellons Street & Grace Hill; and also building the office block which, Saga occupied and the car park next to it.



The second half of the talk was about the left-hand side of Shellons Street being demolished from Grace Hill to St Eanswythe Terrace; the houses in St Eanswythe Terrace in 1979 and the Drill Hall in 1989. The site was used to build Lidl supermarket and the car park in 2001. The Gun Tavern & Gun Forge was demolished in 1985. The Bouverie Hotel was re-named "Victoria" in 1986 and No's 17 to 25, formerly Bouverie Road East, from the corner of Alexandra Gardens including the Victoria Hotel, were demolished in 2002.

Seventy-three people attended the meeting 33 of whom were visitors.

At the July meeting we welcomed guest speaker John Harris who presented his talk entitled '**The Commonwealth War Graves Commission**'.

John started by saying his father did 34 years in the Royal Navy which encouraged him to take early retirement to work for the war graves commission.

He went on to say the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) is an intergovernmental organisation of six independent member states whose principal function is to mark, record and maintain the graves and places of commemoration of the Commonwealth of Nations' military service members who died in the two World Wars. The commission is also responsible for commemorating Commonwealth civilians who died as a result of enemy action during the War. The commission was founded by Sir Fabians Ware and constituted through Royal Charter in 1917 as the Imperial War Graves Commission. The change to the present name took place in 1960.

The commission is currently responsible for the continued commemoration of 1.7 million deceased Commonwealth military service members in 153 countries. Since its inception, the commission has constructed approximately 2,500 war cemeteries and numerous memorials. The commission is currently responsible for the care of war dead at over 23,000 separate burial sites and the maintenance of more than 200 memorials worldwide. In addition to commemorating Commonwealth military service members, the commission maintains, under arrangement with applicable governments, over 40,000 non-Commonwealth war graves and over 25,000 non-war military and civilian graves. The commission operates through the continued financial support of the member states: United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and South Africa. The current President of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is Prince Edward, Duke of Kent.

John went on to talk about the First World War followed by the Second World war, post-second world war, Burial sites, Qualifications for inclusion, Architects and sculptors, Common architectural designs and features, Cross of Sacrifice and stone remembrance, Headstones, Horticulture, Commissioners, Financing, Reburials and identification, Vandalism, inequalities in commemoration. John finished by talking about the Cemeteries in Kent and various civilian cemeteries where some military personal are buried.

Thirty-seven people attended the meeting 6 of whom were visitors.



At the August meeting we welcomed Ian Gordon who presented his talk entitled '**Remembering Folkestone's Shops In The 1950s**'. Ian started by saying his talk was not historical and that he and his brother were brought up in a flat opposite Radnor Park backing on to the Central Station, hence his love of trains. He said he and his brother would go shopping with their mother getting on the bus at the Central Station and getting off in Guildhall Street.

The first half of Ian's talk was about the shops in Rendezvous Street he started by talking about the Savoy Cinema which was actually in Grace Hill, following on with Prince Albert Hotel, J. Butcher news agent, Wiltshire motor cycle engineer, the Baptist Church, Lewis & Hyland drapers, Empire fruit stores and Playfair the shoe shop. Ian then spoke about the shops the other side of the road including Turners the jewellers, Vye & Son grocers, Cameron Rainwear, Burton's tailors & Plummer Roddis who sold just about everything.

In the second half, Ian talked about shops in Sandgate Road including: Hepworths clothiers, Stuart Apps engraver & cutler, Marks & Spencer Ltd., East Kent Arms, Sainsburys, Home & Colonial grocers stores, Maison Faraon, tobacconists, Oclée & Son Jewellers, Sharp & Sons, dairymen, Midland Bank (now HSBC), Lloyds Bank, the Esplanade Hotel, South Eastern Electricity shop & Barclays Bank. On the other side of the road Ian started with the Queen's Hotel, Woolworth's, the National Provincial Bank, International Stores, Murdoch & Co music shop, the Odeon Cinema, Musgrave & Co. drapers, Timothy Whites & Taylors Ltd chemists, Upton & Sons who sold just about everything and finishing with Bobby's.

Seventy-two people attended the meeting 39 of whom were visitors.

The Victoria Pleasure Pier And Its Foundation Stone by Tony Hill.

After a turbulent start to its life the construction of the pier started with the laying of the foundation stone by Viscountess Folkestone on Saturday the 7th of May 1887. The contractors were Heenan and Froade of Manchester who went on to build the Blackpool Tower. The consulting engineer being Mr. M Noel Ridley.

The pier had a "shaky" start to its life with changes in name and ownership with Earl Radnor granting a 900-year lease. Things settled down and a new revised plan was presented and accepted and work began in early 1887.

An invitation went out to the Viscountess Folkestone to lay the foundation stone which she duly accepted and on Saturday the 7th of May 1887 the ceremony of laying the stone went ahead .It was a glorious day after the bad weather of the previous months. The band of the Band of the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers were present - what a spectacle that would have made.

There were many notable people of the town present with crowds lining up along the Leas and at all vantage points around, straining to get a glimpse of the proceedings. A special Ode was written and sang which was met with prolonged applause.

We jump forward a few decades and the Second World War is upon us and with Folkestone being a front-line town, fortifications began which included a breach of the pier, as this was viewed as an important landing spot for any invading forces. It never recovered from that point on, and in 1953-4 was completely demolished. The foundation stone lay on the beach and was unceremoniously brought up to Ingles Barn in Castle Hill Ave, there it remained until a fire gutted the barn in 2003. A contract was given for the remains of the barn to be cleared and along with the debris and the stone was removed. This was taken to the contractor's yard and remained there. The stone was moved around until it found a resting spot blocking an entrance into the property. (It is to be noted that the stone weighs in at around 1 imperial ton - so it is a heavy lump). The now owners tried to build up interest in 2014 but this failed, until early this year, 2023, when the leader of the Capel Ramblers who had walked past the stone on many occasions contacted Alan Taylor who then emailed the committee. The leader of the ramblers had wondered what the stone was but hadn't noticed a faint inscription until when the sun was low and the stone was damp. I picked up that email and went looking for the stone. A campaign was started to bring the stone back to Folkestone with the help of Go Folkestone.

Stonemasons were given an order to re-cut the faint inscription which is near completion and talks are now commencing with the current council and landowners to find a suitable home and display for the stone close to where it started its life.



The Foundation Stone is Cornish granite which fairly unusual these days.

Notices by Alan Taylor

We would like to welcome new members: Susan Hamilton, Anthony Graham

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of Peter Bates

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.