

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

NEWSLETTER No. 97 Spring 2024

Chairman's Report by Alan Taylor

The December meeting was a Christmas quiz. Terry Begent set 25 questions giving a choice of answers; Tony Hill and Brian Adams also took twenty-two photographs around the town to be identified. After the refreshments with tea, coffee, hot sausage rolls and mince pies, the raffle was called. Then Terry & Tony told us the answers and we added up our totals. The winning team was, Mark, Vince, Frank and Jenny Barraclough & myself with 42 marks out of 45 and the second team was Peter & Annie Bamford & Caroline Groombridge with 41 marks.

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

At the January meeting we welcomed guest speaker Mike Perry, the Folkestone Miniaturist, who had created a model for Folkestone Museum of how the **Roman Villas at East Wear Bay** may have looked. Mike is a former Art Director for film and television, with *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and *The Italian Job* amongst his credits.

Mike had purchased three books on archaeology to help him understand the Roman Empire and then showed us a plan of the Roman Villa Site from S.E. Winbolt's book entitled 'Roman Folkestone, A record of excavation of Roman villas at East Wear Bay,' published in 1925.

Mike then had made a proof model of the villa before approaching archaeologists: Andrew Richardson, Keith Parfitt and Paul Dalton to look at it to see if they thought it was correct, albeit there were a few parts that even they couldn't all agree on.

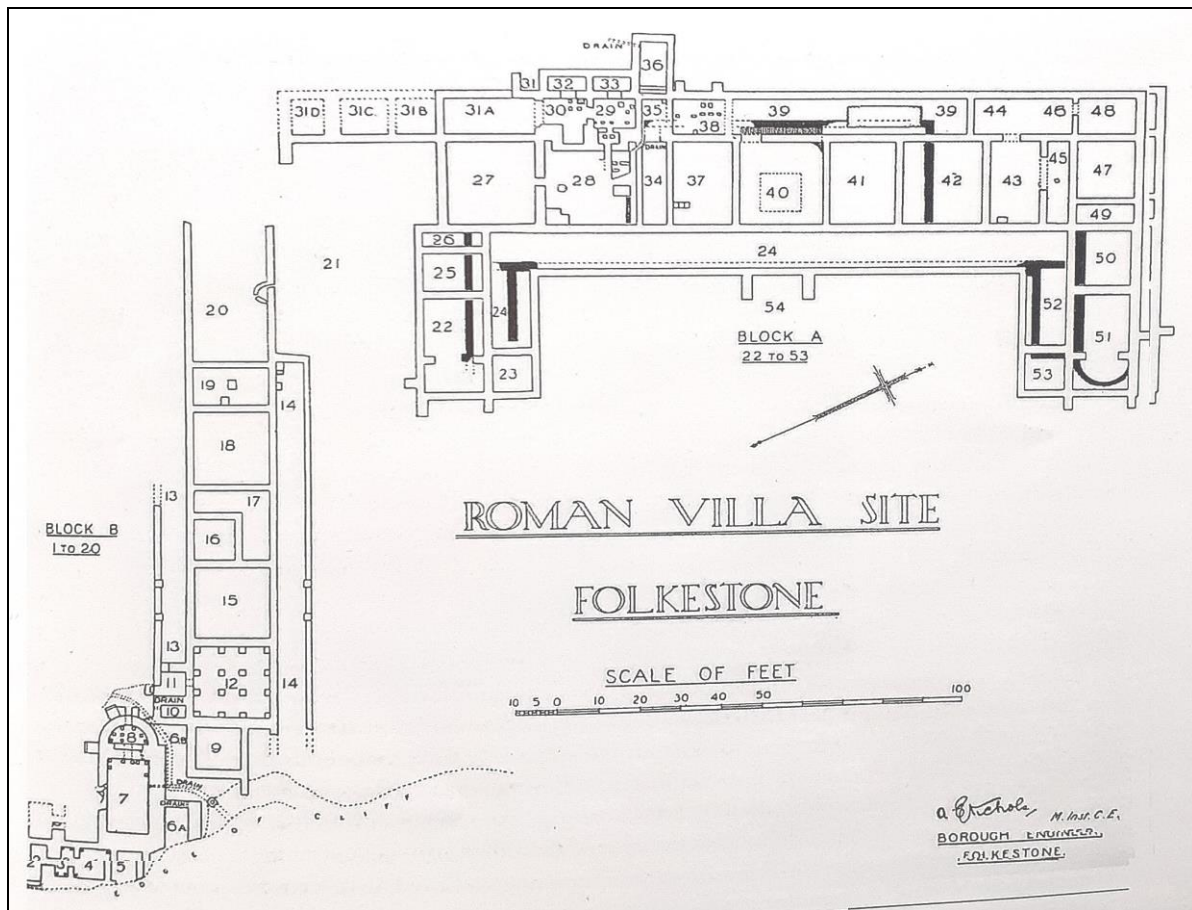
Some tiles found by Winbolt were stamped with or marked with letters 'CLASIS BRIT' or 'CLBR', these are abbreviations for the *Classis Britannia*, which seems to have functioned mainly as an army service corps, but the first thoughts were it was a naval base for the Roman fleet in British waters, but due to the fact that there were very few of these tiles found, it is thought it was the residence of a wealthy landowner and his immediate family.

Mike went on to explain about the materials he used and how he built the model and that it is now in the Town Museum for anybody to see.



After the break Mike showed us another scale model he has since made of Folkestone Library and explained how he made that one.

Forty-two people attended the meeting seven of whom were visitors



At the February meeting I was the speaker and I presented by talk entitled '**Folkestone Then and Now.**' I started with building the pier extension, and included images of a hovercraft on the beach, my speedboat, the seafront development, an engraving of the Customs House, the outer harbour, The Stade, the drinking fountain, the Princess Royal pub, The Road of Remembrance, the Pavilion Hotel, the beach, The Leas, Osborne Hotel, various shops in Sandgate Road, the Parish Churchyard, Rendezvous Street, Grace Hill, the Old High Street, Dover Street and the surrounding area, the Black Bull Pub, The Smallpox Hospital, Leon Watson, the photographer's shop (where Lacies is in Dover Road), Canterbury Road and finishing up with St Johns Street. A total of 124 images.

Sixty-six people attended the meeting of whom twenty-two were visitors.



From Boy Band to Banking... by Vincent Williams

Some might think it a strange connection to link high street banking in a seaside town with the pop charts, but Folkestone can lay claim to having such a connection and it seems only appropriate, with the town now pitching itself culturally as a music town, that mention is made of a pop music pioneer who lived locally and sadly has recently passed away in the summer of 2023.

The King Brothers were a vocal trio originally from Essex comprising of Denis, Michael and Tony who first performed on television in 1952 and in 1956 became the youngest Variety act to play the London Palladium. Between 1957 and 1961 they had 8 top 40 UK hit singles and have been later described as perhaps Britain's first boy band. Their hits include: A White Sport Coat (And A Pink Carnation), Standing On The Corner, Mais Oui, and their final hit was 76 Trombones.



They appeared on stage and television with Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Frankie Vaughan, Roy Castle, Shirley Bassey, Alma Cogan, Ronnie Corbett, Bruce Forsyth, Morecambe and Wise; as well as with American stars such as Bobby Darin, Howard Keel, Sammy Davis Jr, Judy Garland, Sarah Vaughan, and Frank Sinatra.

But by 1970, the music scene had moved on; Variety was dead, and the band once known as "Britain's Teenage Rhythm Stars" called it a day and the members went off to pursue separate careers. Of the three brothers, Denis continued to have a successful music career as a composer for film and television. Of his best remembered themes, The Adventures of Black Beauty and Lovejoy will be remembered by many, but Denis also wrote a TV theme with connections to Folkestone – for the short-lived 1992 BBC Saturday night drama, Moon & Son, which was set in Folkestone and Boulogne and starred Millicent Martin.

But... of even more local interest... if you did your banking at Lloyds Bank either in Sandgate Road or the Bouverie Road West sub-branch in the 1980s, there is a fair chance you would have been served by Tony King. Tony was the middle brother in the King Brothers; born 21st January 1937. After his career in entertainment had come to an end he went to work for a music publisher before working in a variety of roles, including a milkman, before joining Lloyds Bank. He initially worked in London but moved to the coast, and when I left the Harvey Grammar School I worked with him, cashiering mainly at the West Folkestone sub-branch, and in between customers, being told various stories from his life and not just from his showbiz days.

I also occasionally played golf with him, always teeing off on Saturday mornings just before sunrise at the Hythe Imperial, trying to get the first nine in before the course became too crowded.

Whilst working in London one of Tony's customers was Georgi Markov, the Bulgarian writer and dissident, who, whilst waiting for a bus on London's Waterloo Bridge, was famously assassinated in 1978 by the Bulgarian Secret Service (assisted by the Soviet KGB) using a poisoned tipped umbrella.

And being both a keen golfer and of shorter stature, Tony was once sent a set of golf clubs from Ronnie Corbett who had traded up and thought that his old set of clubs was still serviceable enough and suitable for someone of Tony's height!



The above photograph shows Lloyds Bank Sandgate Road staff celebrating the bank's centenary in Folkestone in 1987 and Tony King is pictured 4th from the left.

Message from Go Folkestone:

As mentioned in the recent talk on the Victoria Pier and its Foundation Stone, our history society has made a donation to help restore the stone (by re-inscribing it) and re-position it near to where it was originally placed. Richard Wallace from Go Folkestone has emailed our society expressing his thanks for the donation and help with the project from members. Go Folkestone have now got the Council and owners of the Victoria Pier Foundation Stone on the same page i.e. one agreeing to donate it and the other agreeing to take it specifically for positioning near its original location. The finer details are now being worked out with council officers and the parties involved.

New Shops Project:

Back in 2013, the Society embarked on a project to photograph every shopfront in Folkestone and Cheriton whenever the shop or business changed. This is so an archive can be preserved for future generations.

We often as a Society get asked whether we have a photograph of a particular shop or business taken decades ago, and for some we do, but sadly for most we do not. With the advent of digital photography it is now so much simpler (and cheaper) to photograph things today... so the plea from the Club Secretary is, that if anyone notices a shop that has changed hands, can they please let Vince know and he will photograph it... or if you have your mobile phone with you, take a photo of it and it can be emailed to Vince. We also keep hard copies of each photo (printed to 7 x 5 inch size).

And if anyone has any old photos of former shops or businesses, we would love to be able to take a digital scan of them to further expand the archive.

Other Notices:

We would like to welcome new members: Thomas and Nicola Jones, Zoltan Kmeller, Jim Wallman, Graeme Fuller, Bob Edden and Mike Perry.

On a rather sad note members Gordon Elliott and Col. Mike Umbers have passed away.