



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
www.folkestonehistory.org

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the December meeting we welcomed our guest speaker Len Howell who presented his illustrated talk entitled "The History of Dover Castle". Len said he had been a guide at the Castle for six years and that he was a Dovorian. He spoke for twenty minutes about the history of the castle after which we had our refreshment break, and then Len continued by showing some slides.

Before King Henry II began to build the stone castle in the 1180s, on what may well have been the site of an Iron Age hill fort, the Romans had already built a lighthouse on the heights after they had invaded in AD43, to guide ships into the harbour.

The Anglo-Saxon church beside the lighthouse was once probably part of a Saxon fortified settlement. Restored in the late 19th century by Sir George Gilbert Scott and William Butterfield, it is the largest and finest Saxon building in Kent.

Immediately after his victory at Hastings in 1066, William the Conqueror strengthened the defences with an earthwork and timber-stocked castle. From then on Dover castle was garrisoned uninterruptedly until 1958.

In the 1180s Henry II remodelled the castle, planning its great tower as a place to entertain, as well as a last redoubt for a strategically important castle. It has three floors of rooms, the topmost being state apartments for the King. Henry welcomed distinguished visitors to England – particularly noble pilgrims travelling to the new shrine of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. The archbishop was slaughtered in front of the altar by Henry's household knights on 29th December 1170, ten years before the great tower was begun. On the second floor of the great tower is a chapel dedicated to Becket.

Building work continued in the first half of the 13th century under King John and Henry III, who completed the successive rings of defensive walls surrounding the great tower. In 1216-17 these defences were twice put to the test when Dover withstood a long siege by an invasion force led by Prince Louis of France in support of English barons rebelling against King John. Following the siege, John's son, Henry III, added three powerful new gatehouses and a fortified spur extension to the castle. By the 1250s the medieval defences has assumed the extent and shape they retain today.

After the Middle Ages Dover was continuously garrisoned up to the 20th century and although it declined in importance from the 16th century, it still hosted royal visits by Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Charles I's queen, Henrietta Maria.

From the 1740s onwards the medieval banks and ditches were reshaped as the castle was adapted for artillery warfare. Later in the 18th century, when England faced the threat of invasion from Napoleonic France, more additions were made to the castle's defences. To house the large numbers of troops needed to man them, a network of tunnels was dug in from the cliff face for use as barracks.

By 1905 advanced technology made it possible for coastal artillery around the harbour to be controlled from a central Fire Command Post built on the cliff edge. Its commanding position led the Admiralty to site a signal station on top of it in 1914, from which the Navy controlled the movement of all ships in and out of the harbour.

The Napoleonic tunnels were brought back into service in the Second World War. From 1939 they housed the command centre that controlled naval operations in the Channel. It was from here that in May 1940 Vice-Admiral Bertram Ramsay organised the evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk.

Over the next few years the tunnels were extended to serve as both a hospital and a large combined headquarters responsible for guarding the Straits of Dover and involved in preparing for the 1944 invasion of Europe.

During the Cold War, this network of tunnels was transformed into the secret location of one of Britain's Regional Seats of Government, with the role of organising life in the event of a nuclear attack.

Fifty-seven people attended the meeting, two of whom were visitors.

The January 2017 meeting was an open evening where members bring along items of local interest. I took postcards albums containing street views, hotels, The Warren and East Cliff; Peter & Annie Bamford took postcards of hotels & hospitals, Military Folkestone, The Leas, gardens & hills; Chris Philips took postcards of The Leas, lower seafront and Folkestone town; Vince Williams took postcards of Sandgate Road, Tontine Street, Radnor Park & Dover Road, also Stereocards of Folkestone and albums of photographs of Folkestone shop fronts - a project he has taken on for the Society to record the changes over time of Folkestone's businesses; Roland & Hilary Tolputt took Roland's family Bible from his mother's side of the family dated 1772; Brian Gavin took books of local interest and Brian Adams his grandfather's postcards in original albums.

Sixteen members attended the meeting.

At the February meeting we welcomed guest speaker Andrew Richardson who presented his talk on Three Wars, One Soldier – The life and times of Joseph Shepherd, KRRC: A brief summary of the life of his great-grandfather, Joseph Shepherd, who lived for many years at 13 Kent Road, Cheriton, the house where Andrew lived as a young boy.

Joseph (usually known as Joe) Shepherd was born on 16th November 1879, in Dundalk, Ireland, the son of Private John Shepherd of the 2nd Dragoons. The Shepherds moved to Fulham soon afterwards, and it was there that Joseph grew up with his elder siblings Harriet and Jack, and step-brother Thomas. One of the fondest memories of his childhood was skating on his roller-skates underneath army horses; clearly the family retained links to the army, although by 1881 John Shepherd's profession was listed as night watchman.

Sadly, this happy family life was not to last for Joseph. Whilst still a boy he lost both his parents, and was sent to live with an aunt. She was very strict and sold most of his possessions, including his beloved skates. Perhaps it was in an effort to escape her that he joined the army, attesting in the Royal Artillery at Eastbourne on 25th March 1896. On this occasion Joseph gave his age as 18 years and 2 months. In fact he was only 16 years and 4 months.

By the outbreak of the Boer War, Joseph was a rifleman in the 2nd Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps, based in India. The battalion was shipped directly to South Africa where it was one of the units besieged with Sir George White at Ladysmith from November 1899 until March 1900. Joseph, who was always fond of horses, remembered how terrible it was to have to eat them during the siege.

By May 1902, Joseph was back in India, guarding Boer prisoners of war. At this time he obtained a black wooden box with carved lid, made by J. Hofman, a Boer POW, at Kakool (in modern Pakistan). This box holds Joseph's most treasured possessions and papers, including his medals and many documents relating to his life.

J. Hofman may be Josias Hamilton Dijk Hoffman, who is recorded as having been captured at Doornkop on 4th February 1902 and who is listed as one of the Boer POW's held at Kakool.

Joseph transferred to the army reserve in December 1903 at Rawal Pindi and five years later he was discharged from the army at Winchester.

On 24th September, 1908, he married Clara Pearson of Folkestone. It is not known when Joseph and Clara first met, but the 1901 census shows his sister Harriet lodging at 6 Ashley Mill Cottages in Cheriton with the Pearson family. Joseph and Clara went on to have four children, Frank,

Nell, Kath and Gwen, and by the outbreak of the Great War the family was living at 13 Kent Road, Cheriton, which was to remain the family home until the late 1970's.

Joseph re-enlisted in the King's Royal Rifles at Folkestone on 10th January 1916. He was initially posted to the 6th (reserve) Battalion. This was followed by a stint of retraining on the Isle of Sheppey. His army papers describe him at this time as being 5'10" tall, with a fresh complexion, blue eyes and dark brown hair, and a scar on the back of the head. He had tattoos on both forearms. Subsequent documents describe his height as 5'11"; in any case, he was remembered as a tall man for the time.

By October 1916 Joseph, now holding the rank of lance corporal in the 6th KRR, underwent a cookery course at Camberwell. This is the last record of Joe serving with the 6th Battalion. At some point between this date and the beginning of March 1917, he embarked for France, where he joined the 11th (Service) Battalion of the KRRC, probably as a casualty replacement. His service on the Western Front had begun.

Like many soldiers in the trenches, Joseph found that his boots soon wore out. One day he spotted a boot, in much better condition than his own, apparently lying abandoned on the trench floor. He picked it up in the hope that he could replace one of his own pair, but on finding that it still contained its previous owner's foot, he decided to stick with his old boots!

Amongst Joe Shepherd's effects is a single fragile sheet of paper with a typed list of names on one side. The document reads as follows:

NOMINAL ROLL of men to be trained as Scouts, in accordance with 59th Inf Bge Letter .Z1.251 dated 2/3/17.

"A" Company.

R20200.	Cpl.	Shepherd.J.
R16684.	Rfm.	Smart.H.
R9323.	"	Ward.M.
A200517.	"	Daws.P.J.
R6145.	"	Walker.R.

"B" Company.

A200243.	L/C	Allen. W.H.
R15818.	Rfm.	Withington. L.S.
R11064	"	Berry. J.
A200614	"	Pell. A.
A200246	"	Ambrose. A.

"C" Company.

R4937.	L/C.	Blainey.W.
R11089.	Rfm.	Jones.G.
R13249.	"	Harper.H.
R21121.	"	Green.H.
R24014.	"	Woodcock.G.W.

"D" Company.

R29358.	L/C	Lewan. S. P.
R9462.	Rfm.	Myers. J.
R292	"	Dunning.R S.
R628	"	Revell. W. P.
R2486	"	Haldenby. O.

H A [B] Evison [?] Lieut & Adj.
11th (s) Batt. Kings Royal Rifles.
3/3/17.

As the senior NCO on this roll, it would appear that the document was passed to Joe at some point, probably so he could round up the named men for their training. On the reverse of the sheet are a series of pencil sketches of map symbols in Joe's careful hand.

On 4th April 1917, 10th and 11th King's Royal Rifle Corps attacked the village of Metz-en-Couture in the extreme south-east corner of the Pas de Calais. The official Regimental History describes the ensuing action as "a brilliant attack" which achieved all its objectives by 6.30pm that day. Casualties, however, were very heavy, amounting to 28% of those engaged killed, wounded or missing. The 11th Battalion lost 29 and 100 wounded. One of the latter was Joe Shepherd, who sustained a gunshot wound to his left arm; he never regained its full use.

A photograph among Joe's belongings shows a group of wounded men and nurses in front of the VAD Hospital, Leeswood Hall, Mold, North Wales, dated 27th September 1917. Joe is visible

standing in the back row in this photograph. One of the nurses, Ada Hodgkinson, kept a book in which soldiers convalescing at Leeswood Hall would write or sketch. The book includes two well executed sketches by Joe, both poking gentle fun at the officer class.

Still suffering from a wound from which he would never completely recover, Joseph was discharged from the army for the second time on 22nd March 1918, just short of 22 years after enlisting for the first time.

Three years after his discharge, in January 1921, Joseph found employment as an electricity meter reader for the Folkestone Electricity Supply Company, with a weekly wage of £3. The Managing Engineer who employed him stated that it would be necessary to review the position at the end of three months due to his physical disability (his left arm never functioned properly after his wound). In the event, Joseph kept this job until his retirement in November 1944.

The Second World War saw Joseph step forward one last time to serve his country. His papers include a request to attend Folkestone police court at 8pm on Friday 24th May 1940 to sign up for the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), later to be renamed the Home Guard. In the event, though, it was as an Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Warden that Joseph did his service during World War II. A photograph on the F&DLHS facebook page shows eight ARP wardens outside Cheriton Library in 1942. Joseph is seated in the front row. Joseph survived his third war unscathed and lived on into the years of peace surrounded by his children and grandchildren, who remember him with fondness as a kind and gentle man. He died in late 1967 and is buried in St Martin's churchyard, Cheriton.

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



We would like to welcome new members Anthony Edwards, Roger Bell, David Snow, Gordon Elliott & Annie Charlier.

On a rather sad note I would like to announce that former member Vicky Fedarb died on 8th December 2016 and member Anita Gavin on 31st December 2016.

The Kent History Federation One Day Conference will be at Sandwich on Saturday 20th May see Alan Taylor for details.

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