



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

NEWSLETTER No. 101 – Spring 2025

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor.

December's meeting was our, now annual, **local history Christmas quiz**. Terry Begent had set 25 multi-choice questions, and Tony Hill and Brian Adams had taken twenty-one 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 and Tony gave us the answers and we added up our totals. The winning team was Vince and myself with 36 marks out on 46, and second was Mark's team with 35 marks.

Forty-five people attended the meeting of which four were visitors.

This year there was no meeting in January due to it being New Year's Day.

The February meeting was a talk by Floortje Hoette, which was an **update on the Folkestone's Leas Lift**. She explained that people will now start to notice that work that has commenced on the restoration project, then explained how they had got to this stage and what the future holds for our Grade II* Listed funicular railway!

Flo, as she is known, said that Apex, a London based contractor, had been awarded the contract for the restoration, worth £5 million; which will include finalising designs, completing surveys and clearing overgrown vegetation – the later has already started.

She went on to say by November 2023 funding of £4.8 million had been secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which meant the target of £6.6 million had been reached. Historic England has given an extra £200,000 which will fund work on the sheave wheel – the vital part in raising and lowering the carriage cars.

After our break for refreshments, Flo introduced Edward Wealend who is an engineer and Vice Chairman of the board of trustees for the Leas Lift. He said he had been working on the project for seven years.

He went on to say they were going install two new electric water pumps to pump the water up to the tanks on the Leas, which are cast-iron and very rusty, so they have decided to line them with steel tanks. He also said to help fund the cost of electricity they hope to put solar panels on the old track where the step cars once were. He then went on to say the sheave wheel, sometimes called the brake wheel, has already been taken out and is being worked on; and that when it is replaced some alterations will be made so the public can see it working. He also said the carriages are due to be lifted off their tanks to check for leaks and the carriages will be re-painted.

Flo also told us about the proposed new café which will be on the west side of the existing building, for which planning permission has been granted, and that it would be in keeping with the existing

building. It will not be directly run by the lift company, but obviously money from whoever gets the franchise would help to finance the running of the Leas Lift.

Flo talked about the alterations that will be made to the lower station – windows will be fitted so the public can better see the cars going up and down; easier accessibility for wheelchair users and pushchairs and prams; a window in the pump room, so the public can see the historic pumps which will be run periodically. Also at the east end of the lower station there will be a community room for exhibitions and talks etc.

There will also be a kiosk on the Leas (which they already have planning permission for) to sell tickets and give out information about the lift.

She went on to say that Folkestone College students will be given the opportunity to become involved and that the Leas Lift Company is engaging in an educational project with seven local schools in Folkestone. It will be taking part in the Charivari this year too. There will also be an open day for local people to bring along their photographs of the lift; the idea being, to build up an historical archive. She also said they have volunteers doing short heritage walks and have appointed Yaz Norris as their Community Engagement Manager who wants to get volunteers involved to conduct oral history recordings.

I think one of the most important things Flo told us was that Lord Radnor had given the lift to the Folkestone Leas Lift Charity Company, and they have the deeds! And the sound of the squeal of the brakes will still be kept!

Seventy six people attended the meeting, of whom 21 were visitors.



Clearing the weeds and vegetation in 2025



A view, showing the proposed café, on the left-hand side of the image



The proposed cafe

Update on the Fishing Heritage Museum

The Folkestone Fishing Heritage and History Museum opened on Good Friday (29th March) 2024 and closed on 31st October during which time we had 5,542 visitors.

We had many favourable comments in our visitors' book from various countries including France, Germany Italy, Belgium, Australia, Canada, America, New Zealand, Hong-Kong (which a Chinese waitress from The Captain's Table café translated for us), also one from Russia, which my son, Andrew, translated.

Our museum is one of 57 museums in Kent that belong to "Wheels of Time", which is a Kent Children's University (KCU) quality assured activity.

Badges, with the museum's logo on it, are available to any child aged between 5 and 11 years. We gave out 169 badges and were one of the top contributors.

The museum will be opening this year on Good Friday, 18th April.

Alan Taylor



We would like to welcome new members: Sue & Barry Rolfe, Mary Lloyd and Gail Rogers.

On a rather sad note, former member, Roy Wilson has died aged 86 years. He is acknowledged in Folkestone - A Pictorial History by Charles Whitney (published 1985). Some of the photographs in this book are credited to him.