



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT  
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
[www.folkestonehistory.org](http://www.folkestonehistory.org)

### **NEWSLETTER No. 59- Summer 2014**

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT** by Alan F Taylor

At the March meeting we welcomed guest speaker and author Bob Preedy who gave us his presentation entitled 'Sandgate through the Ages.' Bob showed some Aerial views starting with the West Leas which was originally called 'Sandgate Plain' where cricket was played. The famous cricketer W.G. Grace actually played there. He talked about Cliff House, Palm Beach and Conamur School on the Riviera. As he continued through Sandgate he was picking out buildings which are not there any more and what had taken their place. Coming back from Seabrook, Bob told us about: the Lifeboat Station which was called the 'Goose Cathedral,' later becoming the Life-Boat Café before being demolished in 1956 and replaced with a petrol station; the Military Hospital on Hospital Hill; the Sandgate railway branch line from Sandling which opened on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 1874 and closed on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1931 and Encombe House which was destroyed in 1978 by a mysterious fire. Encombe's entrance gates however are still there today. Two notable events were the loss of the 2,033-ton sailing ship 'Benvenue' in the great storm on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1899 and the landslip which started on Saturday evening, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1893. Also mentioned was the Sea Point café which opened as a tea lounge in 1930, at which time the proprietress was Mrs. M. Gresham-Smith. The building was undermined by storms on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1949 causing part of the building to collapse; it was subsequently demolished. Bob spoke about: Sir John Moore who was the commandant at Shorncliffe Camp between 1803 and 1805 and his memorial which was unveiled on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> November 1909; the Coastguard Cottages; Devonshire Terrace which was also damaged by the storms in 1949 and again in 1968; the Alfred Bevan Memorial Convalescent Home, 113 Sandgate High Street, formerly the Beach Rock Convalescent Home founded by the London Samaritan Society and opened on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1892 (Homevale House now occupies the site); The Alhambra Palace of Varieties which became the Rex cinema and later Rayner's Beach Club - this site is now occupied by Tower Court; The Royal Kent hotel; and Caffyns Ltd Motor Engineers, formerly Maltby's Motor Works, which was destroyed by fire on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1960. Riviera Court now stands on the site. Other buildings Bob spoke about were the Ship Inn, Pear Tree Cottages, the Wesleyan Church, and the Star and Garter Convalescent Home, formerly Enbrook House, which later became the Police Training College and now is the site of the Saga building. Bob also talk about Granville Parade, Sandgate Castle and Sandgate School.

Fifty-five people attended the meeting eight of whom were visitors.

At the April meeting we welcomed Christine Waterman who gave us her presentation on 'The Mason Dieu, Dover'. Christine said she was the curator at Dover museum for twenty years after

which she worked in the housing department for Dover District Council, but is now retired, and she is the Vice-Chairman of St Margaret's Bay History Society.

The original building on the site of the present Mason Dieu was built in 1203. The Royal Charter of the Mason Dieu, forming the earliest Monuments of that ancient hospital, was founded for the relief of pilgrims by Hubert de Burgh, (1160-1243) Earl of Kent. It was run by the Augustinian Monks.

From 1544 to 1834 the building was a Victualling Store for the navy. Mason Dieu House was built for Mr Russell but was used as the Navy Victualling Office from the reign of Queen Elizabeth until after the Battle of Waterloo. Subsequently, it was occupied by the commanding Royal Engineer at Dover until it was sold as a private residence. In 1881 the building was purchased by the Council to house its museum and is now Council offices.

Christine spoke about the Market Square and Court Hall which was built in 1605 and the Gaol built in 1818.

Ambrose Poynter the Architect (1834-1881) was commissioned to design a restoration for the Mason Dieu. £3,500 was borrowed to do the job, but Ambrose Poynter died before the work started in 1861, so the work was overseen by William Burges, architect.

In 1866 at the cost of £7,000 a prison was built on the side of the Mason Dieu plus a new council chamber which is still used today. Then in 1881 the Function Hall, Police Station, Museum and Civic Centre - Connaught Hall were all refurbished under the supervision of William Burges at the cost £17,500. Christine finished by speaking about the Town Hall clock, the Mayor's Parlour with its decorative ceiling and the Astley Organ.

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

At the May meeting we welcomed member speaker and author Martin Easdown who presented us with his presentation on 'The Great Air Raid on Folkestone'. Martin started by showing pre-war images of the Leas, Metropole Hotel, Victoria Pier, fishing fleet and Harbour.

He went on to talk about what was happening in Europe during 1914 before war was declared. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, on 28 June 1914, set in train a series of diplomatic events that led inexorably to the outbreak of war in Europe at the end of July 1914.

After the sinking of four German battle ships on December 16<sup>th</sup> 1914, the Germans retaliated with a bombardment on Scarborough followed by a salvo on Hartlepool causing the death of 114 civilians plus 18 military personnel. He spoke about the first Zeppelin raids on the night of 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> January 1915, targeting Norfolk leaving 4 dead and 15 injured; and the raids on Sitingbourne and Faversham on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1915, Ramsgate on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915 and Otterpool Camp, between Lympne and Sellindge, where 15 Canadian soldiers were killed on October 14<sup>th</sup> 1915.

During 1916 the East Kent coast was subject to German naval seaplane raids - towns bombed included: Dover, Broadstairs, Ramsgate, Walmer and Margate.

Up until this time Folkestone was unscathed, but on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1917 German Gotha bombers due to raid London aborted due to cloud cover so they attacked Kent. The places bombed included: Luddesdown, Harvel, Linton, Maden, Pluckley, Smarden, Kingsnorth, Shadoxhurst, Mersham, Ruckinge, Bilsington, Lymnpe airfield, Sandling, Hythe, Sandgate. At Folkestone 51 bombs were dropped 31 exploded, 14 didn't explode and 6 fell in the sea. Properties were damaged in: St John's Street; Bouverie Road East including Christ Church School; Osborne Hotel on the corner of Bouverie Road West and Christ Church Road; West Lodge at 21 Manor Road; the Central station;

the corner of Foord Road and Radnor Park Road; and Tontine Street at 6 pm, where one bomb killed 61 people. Some of them were in a potato queue outside Stokes greengrocers and others taking a leisurely stroll along the street. This was the first ever raid on Britain by German Gotha bombers - 78 civilians and 18 military personnel (96 in total) were killed in Folkestone and its neighbourhood.

Martin continued by showing us portraits and gravestones in Cheriton Road Cemetery of those who were killed, many of them children. He finished with images of the Military Cemetery at Shorncliffe Camp where school children laid flowers on 13<sup>th</sup> June (Dominion Day) 1917. The ceremony continues to this day, but is now held on 1<sup>st</sup> July (Canada Day).

Sixty-two people attended the meeting, fourteen of whom were visitors.

.We would like to welcome new member Mike Cole.

### **Battle of Britain Diary Folkestone 1940 continued**

**September 15<sup>th</sup>** Enemy patrols reported after 9.00 a.m. between Lympne and Dungeness at 11.30 a.m. Main raids crossed coast at various points, including Dungeness. Mixed formation of Dornier Do 17's and Do 215's, escorted by Bf. 109's at heights between 15,000 feet and 26,000 feet – the bombers looked like black dots trailing streams of vapour. Five Spitfire squadrons intercepted raids making for London, running battles over East Kent for three-quarters of an hour. One yellow-nosed Bf. 109 was attacked over Maidstone by a Hurricane, managed to glide as far as Hamm's Farm, Bilsington before crashing onto a garage and destroying car inside, and killing two women. A Polish pilot with No. 253 Squadron forced landed with engine failure after combat over Dungeness; another Bf. 109 reported missing. Three more Bf. 109's brought down at Dymchurch; Lympne and St. Michael's, Tenterden.

**September 16<sup>th</sup>** Some bombs dropped S.W. of Woodchurch at 8.35 a.m., one house damaged; and another slightly damaged. A German bomber exploded in the air - large crater in a field, killing one civilian who was not found until two days later. Four UXB's reported near Sellindge Farm at 7.00 p.m. Six h.e's dropped at Woolpack Corner, Biddenden at 3.00 p.m.

**September 17<sup>th</sup>** Bombs dropped by Lydd just before midnight, four on Pigwell Farm, four in sea 300 yards off Lade Coastguard lookout; large h.e. dropped ½ mile S.W. of Brookland Church at 12.45 a.m., during heavy night raids on London coming in over Dungeness. Some 20 high explosives, many incendiary bombs, two oil bombs dropped near Alkham, 5 h.e's near Chilton Nursery, one UXB at Chilton Farm, many bombs in fields; minor damage to unoccupied bungalow. Three h.e's 300 yards N.E of Old Cheney Court, New Romney at 1.00 a.m.

**September 18<sup>th</sup>** More night bombing, at 2.10 a.m. high explosives and oil bomb dropped near Wittersham; two h.e's at Gulfbourne Farm, Appledore at 3.00 a.m. Two UXB's reported at Paraker Wood, near Hythe cemetery at 4.00 a.m., one of which exploded at 12.15 p.m. Elham A.R.P. reported bombing during the evening, whistling sound followed by loud explosion, large crater discovered 20 feet deep and 20 feet in diameter. At 9.45 p.m. incendiary bombs dropped at St. John's Farm, Swingfield – assistance of Hawkinge A.F.S. and pumps from Dover and Folkestone called for – fire still burning at 1.00 a.m., extinguished at 7.30 a.m. Some 60 incendiaries dropped at Davidson's Farm, Stelling Minnis. At Rolvended two h.e's dropped at 9.30 p.m., at Halden Place, where a German parachute was also found. Mainly fighter sorties during the day.

**September 19<sup>th</sup>** Up to seventy fighters, operating singly, crossed the coast at Dungeness. At 11.00 a.m., magnetic mine was found at Woodchurch; No 6 Bomb Disposal Squad was informed.

**September 20<sup>th</sup>** Few minor raids during the morning, twenty aircraft crossed the coast at Dungeness flying at 13,000 feet, during the morning.

**September 21<sup>st</sup>** Five raids during the day for aerodromes south of London, crossing the coast at Dungeness, over Lympne and Dover. At 11.20 a.m., 3 high explosive bombs dropped near Appledore Station and an hour later another 200 yards west of the Tenterden to Newenden Road. Bombs also dropped to east of New Romney Coastguard Station, near Slynches Farm; and an oil bomb at Jesson's Farm, slight damage to buildings.

**September 22<sup>nd</sup>** Another scare that the invasion fleet had sailed, and rumours that landings were imminent; reported that code word 'Cromwell' issued again. At 4.15 a.m. four h.e's dropped at Elham, one damaged the Police Station four more dropped on East Kent Hunt Kennels, 5 hounds killed. Three-inch water main burst. Three bombs dropped in meadow at Curtis Farm, Stowting. Main road at Elham clear by 7.00 p.m., the burst in water main having been controlled.

**September 24<sup>th</sup>** Raids on Hythe and Saltwood just after noon, four bombs dropped on footpath at Hearne Wood, Saltwood, three more at Swan Lane, Sellindge where overhead electricity cables were severed, supply cut locally. Red House, Seabrook was partly demolished, and road partially blocked, not cleared until 1.30 p.m. At Hythe Station considerable damage and UXB reported near north entrance. Two houses slightly damaged in Saltwood Road, minor damage to gas and water mains; incendiary bomb on Hythe Golf Course; high explosives and an oil bomb in grounds of Seabrook Lodge. More high explosives near School, which was occupied by the military; UXB near a bungalow exploded just after 6.00 p.m. Several UXB's between Hythe Station and the Royal Military Canal discovered at 5.00 p.m., road opened to traffic at Seabrook at 5.40 p.m., gas and water supplies were restored just before 8.00 p.m., railway station opened for traffic.

**September 25<sup>th</sup>** Just before 12.00 noon four h.e. bombs and an incendiary dropped near the lifeboat house at New Romney; damage to Britannia Inn and several houses. During the night three h.e's and an oil bomb were dropped at 2.00 a.m., in open country north east of Goudhurst.

**September 26<sup>th</sup>** Early evening raid on Folkestone at 5.30 p.m., h.e's and incendiaries dropped at West Cliff estate, one house badly damaged, gas, water mains fractured, fires controlled by Auxiliary Fire Service. British fighters shot down Bf. 109 near Dungeness, enemy pilot missing. At New Romney, several h.e's dropped near Jesson's Farm on road leading from A.259 to farmyard, slight damage to farm buildings, road blocked and new bridge over sewer on A.259 was damaged. An hour previously four bombs were dropped in fields near Horton Park, Monks Horton, one being a UXB.

**September 27<sup>th</sup>** At 8.00 a.m. there was the first signs of enemy activity, bomb carrying Me 110's escorted by Bf. 109's were making for London, attacked all the way by British fighters; bombs were scattered indiscriminately. At 11.45 a.m. high explosives were dropped in the Holy Trinity Church area of Folkestone, including one UXB midway between Castle Hill Avenue and Grimston Avenue finally exploded at 4.50 p.m. making a crater 15 feet deep, but without damage to property or causing casualties. The A.259 road, which had been closed, re-opened after bomb exploded. A Bf. 109 was forced down at Leadbetter's Farm, near Monks Horton House. Another Bf. 109 was shot down by a Spitfire from No. 222 Squadron off coast near Dungeness at 12.20 p.m. More bombs dropped near Jesson's Farm, New Romney at 11.50 a.m., but the burst water main at Hythe had been repaired. During the morning there were reports of civilians being injured by cannon shell splinters at Bourne Farm, Sandhurst, near Tenterden. An enemy machine was reported to have crashed on the Bethersden to Biddeden road, blocking the road.