



FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 20 – Autumn 2004

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the May meeting we welcomed back the Author and Publisher Bob Ogley who gave us a most interesting and informative talk on Doodlebugs and rockets: the subject of one of his books. It proved very popular, attracting 71 members and visitors.

At the June meeting, our guest speaker was Mike Martin, who was talking about the history of the Victoria Cross. Lieutenant Colonel Martin served 28 years in the Royal Hampshire Regiment, the last of which was at Dover where he commanded the regiment. After leaving the army, he spent 20 years as a military guide, a job that took him and his wife all over the world. Now in retirement Mike spends his spare time giving talks about various aspects of the armed forces. His talk was most interesting and entertaining, giving an insight into the people, along with the dates and various ways, who won the Victoria Cross. There were 58 members and visitors at the meeting.

It was unfortunate that our guest speaker for July, Audrey Wind, was unable to come due to ill health. Audrey was going to talk about Bletchley Park and her personal experiences, however instead Don Gregory provided two video films: one on Coastal Pleasure Paddle Steamers and the other on Glen Coe and Steam Trains in Scotland. The later developed a fault so we only saw part of it, it was just one of those nights!

The annual outing this year was a trip to Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes, on Saturday 17th July. 42 members and friends left Folkestone at approximately 8.30 am, 38 visited Bletchley Park and the other 4 went to Milton Keynes. Bletchley Park was formerly the home of Herbert Leon, a London financier, and his family from 1883-1912. In 1938, as the threat of war loomed, the Government Code and Cipher School, then based in London, needed a safer home. Searching the countryside, MI6 found Bletchley Park, which was in the hands of a property developer. The building was ideally placed at the junction of major road and rail connections and was to become the most important communications centre in the history of modern warfare. At the end of the war, the site became in turn a Teacher Training College, Training Centre for GCHQ, a GPO Training School, and later a CAA Air Traffic Control Training School. In 1991 the site was empty and plans were afoot to demolish all the buildings to make way for a housing development. However, following a farewell party of over 400 people who had worked at Bletchley during the war, a trust was set up. Bletchley Park Trust, a Registered Charity, aims to secure the site's future by building on the wartime codebreakers pioneering scientific progress. To date the trust hasn't secured any government or lottery funding. Guided tours taking 1½ hours were on hand all day, but seeing the Enigma machines including the rare "Abwehr" G312 and the Colossus, the world's first programmable electronic computer, was the highlight of the day for me. There was also much more to see, including vintage vehicles, a diplomatic wireless exhibition, the Churchill Collection, military and fire-fighting vehicles, the original Bombe hut and machine replica, a exhibition on 100 years of cinema and model railway exhibition plus the mansion and grounds. I thought it was a most interesting day, well worth the long drive there and back. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to Tom Leftley for arranging the outing.

August we had an illustrated talk by one of our members Michael George, who gave us a most interesting and informative talk on the Defence of Kent 1793-1804. The talk was on events of 200 years ago when French Generals, the most noted one of course being Napoleon, targeted the coast from

Folkestone to Rye for an invasion. In 1798 local volunteers armed with forks, spades, pickaxe handles or anything that could be used as a weapon formed into the East Kent Volunteers, with 6000 of them assembling at Moat Park for a review. Michael and his son have written a book on the subject entitled *Coast of Conflict - the story of the South Kent Coast 1793-1918*. This is due for publication in November and the Society will have signed copies for sale. Michael's talk was well supported with 64 members and visitors attending.

I would just like to remind you that the Annual General Meeting is only a month away. If you would like to stand for the committee or know somebody who would, please contact me or any other officer or member of the committee. It would be nice to see some new faces come forward!

THE BAPTIST BURIAL GROUND

By
John Cook

One small piece of land still remains in the centre of Folkestone, untouched since the 1850s. The burial ground can be found in Bradstone Road, known in earlier times as the Rope Walk. It stands in a third of an acre of land close to what was Stace's Water Mill. It is believed that the land was given by the Stace family around 1740 for the burial of members of the Baptist Church, the first burial being of Mary Stace in 1747, a daughter of John Bennet Stace. The last burial was of William Pledge in 1856 following the Act of Parliament, which forbade the use of private cemeteries. A book, to be found in Folkestone Library and compiled by William Loftie Rutton F.S.A. and Lt. Col. Richard John Fynmore J.P. in 1910, contains the following names and dates from M.I.s to be found at the Baptist Burial Ground, taken from the *Folkestone Express* of 27th April 1895:

Juliana Blessley - died 1850, age 6
Elizabeth Cook - died 25th April 1841, age 73
Elizabeth Cook, her daughter - died 21st April 1801, age 2
Thomas Crouch - died 11th August 1843
Bennet Cullen, daughter of Edward & Elizabeth Pope - died 1842
Bennet Finn, wife of Thomas - died 9th May 1803, age 79
John Finn - died 27th February 1838, age 74
William Thomas Finn - died 29th December 1813, age 87
Rachel Gittens, wife of William - born 28th June 1780, died 24th January 1837
Thomas Gittens - died 9th November 1791, age 51
William Gittens - born 23rd May 1776, died 12th February 1836
Ann Hoy - died 1773
Elizabeth King - died 18th April 1830, age 63
William King - died 25th August 1836, age 69
Benjamin Lefevre, and Phoebe, his wife - no dates
Mary Milles, wife of Richard - died 26th July 1866, age 81
Richard Milles - died 5th April 1852, age 69
Mary Mummery - died 3rd February 1816, age 66
Mary Mummery - died 26th September 1845, age 68 at Hurley, Berkshire
Robert Mummery - died 5th October 1826, age 66
Edward John Ottoway - died 1842
Mary Pledge - died 23rd November 1847, age 33
Mary Pledge, wife of William - died 1858, age 87
William Pledge - died 30th September 1856, age 82
Elizabeth Pope - died 6th November 1843, age 84

Bennet Stace - died 17th February 1747, age 68
John Stace - died 18th August 1754, age 68
Mary Stace - died 25th October 1747, age 29
William Harvey Stace - died 20th November 1850, age 59
James Viney, died 1833, age 15
Mary Viney, died 1831
Thomas Viney, died 1836
John Sutcliffe Welsh, age 22
Catherine West - born 28th September 1846, died 9th July 1856
Ebenezer West - born 19th March 1854, died 10th July 1856
Isabella West - born 23rd September 1851, died 3rd July 1856
MacDonald West - died 17th January 1856, aged 42
Margaret West - died 24th April 1894, aged 82 at Kirkdale, Bootle

The Folkestone Sun-Walk
by A. E. Bush (1938)

Come to the Folkestone sun-walk,
Perched in the upper Leas,
Sheltered from Winter's ice-blast,
Open to Summer's breeze.

Here you may bask in sunshine:
Here you may take your ease:
Here you may dream your day-dreams,
Day-dreams that heal and please.

Here you may catch the music
Blackbirds and thrushes sing,
Music of joyful living
Trilled by the birds in spring.

Here you may shed your shackles
Over the cliffside steep:
Then you may soar in spirit
High o'er the restless deep.

Here, as your eyes gaze seaward,
Millions of fairies dance:
Daughters of sun-kissed wavelets
Dance between here and France.

Here you may see great liners;
Near, light racing skiffs;
Out on the clear horizon
Glimmer the white French cliffs.

Come to the southern sun-walk
Perched in the lofty leas

Come to the Folkestone sun-walk:
Come now and take your ease.

RED SKY AT NIGHT

By
Martin Easdown

At around 6.30 p.m. during the evening of Saturday, 11th November 1899, a man passing by the Plain noticed smoke billowing from the extensive workshops of Councillor Daniel Baker, a well-known local builder. The alarm was quickly raised and within ten minutes the fire brigade had arrived on the scene, only to witness that the blaze was well established.

After deciding there was no way the premises could be saved, the brigade decided to concentrate all their efforts in preventing the fire from spreading to nearby houses, offices and a paint shop with its highly inflammable contents. Unfortunately, their plans were soon laid bare when it was discovered that the hoses were too short to carry the water from the hydrant in Sandgate Road. Sheepishly, the fireman could only stand and stare as the blaze intensified, while their colleagues were sent to fetch the longer hose. The situation was described as being akin to when 'Nero fiddled as Rome burned'.

Eventually the longer hoses arrived, and with the entrance of the Sandgate Brigade, the two forces spent the next seventeen hours trying to fight what had now become a colossal conflagration. They were assisted by 100 men of the Royal Artillery and other regiments, who evacuated the adjoining houses and moved furniture out into the street. A line of the soldiers also held back the immense crowd, which had gathered to watch the thrilling battle between two determined foes. All through the night, the flames flickered high up into the dark night sky, painting West Folkestone a vivid shade of red. Showers of burning timber reigned over the exhausted firemen, who rang wet with the sweat of honest toil in spite of the chill of the night. Many hardy souls continued to brave the cold throughout the small hours by keeping themselves warm on the intense heat of the fire. Further warmth was gained from the chestnut and coffee stalls set up by enterprising punters.

As dawn began to break, the fire fighters eventually gained the upper hand in this titanic struggle, and by noon on Sunday the blaze had almost been extinguished, save for the smouldering whispers of its final death throes.

Mr Baker discovered he had not only lost his workshops, but also a large amount of valuable timber and furniture; and to make matters worse he was only partially insured. However, to soften the blow, his rich connections throughout the town, including the Mayor, assisted in starting a fund, to which there many contributions.

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