FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the June meeting we welcomed member/speaker Eamonn Rooney. On this occasion his talk was on "Folkestone Pubs." He took us for a tour round Folkestone talking about many of the oldest pubs in the town and how in some cases their names had changed several times. Eamonn with co-author Martin Easdown has written two books on the subject, *Tales From The Tap Room* and *More Tales From The Tap Room.* Seventy-four people attended the meeting, fourteen of whom were visitors

On 15 June eighteen members met at the Pavilion for a coffee morning. We feel this is a good way for members to mix and have a chat. The numbers were down on the previous coffee morning held at the Grand, so perhaps we will return to the Grand for the next one.

Thursday 29 June. We were invited by the Classic Film Club to the Silver Screen Cinema to celebrate 110 years of moving films in Folkestone. The first showing of a cinematic film in Kent took place in the old Pleasure Gardens Theatre.
After watching the film *Brief Encounter* we projected clips from our video films, Memories Of Folkestone 1 and 2 and also a seven-minute film taken around Folkestone in 1904 and clips from a film entitled *Welcome To Folkestone (1959)*. The latter films came courtesy of: Screen Archive South East, Brighton.

Annual Outing 1 July: This year we took a train ride from Tenterden to Bodiam on the Kent and East Sussex Railway.
The coach left Cheriton at 9.30 a.m. arriving at Tenterden about 10.15 where we had time for coffee and browse round the gift shop before boarding the train. Arriving at Bodiam we had two and a half hours to visit the castle, walk along the river Rother, have lunch in the restaurant or visit the pub. We left Bodiam at 2.30 p.m. and on our way back we tucked into a splendid cream tea. On arrival at Tenterden we had about an hour to visit the museum or look round the shops before we returned to Folkestone. Unfortunately we didn't have a full coach, but I think those that came enjoyed their day out despite it being very hot.

At the July meeting we welcomed back guest speaker, Peter Ewart who presented his talk, "Steady the Buffs". He said the regiment went back to 1 May 1572. In the 17th century they were known as the Holland Regiment and their emblem was a Dragon, their uniform was red with buff facings. By 1782 the regiment was known as the "East Kent Regiment". The Buffs depot in Canterbury was opened in 1881. From 1914 red tunics were only worn for ceremonial purposes. The Victoria Cross centenary was celebrated at Folkestone in 1956 with a floral flowerbed on the Leas. The regiment had new colours in 1955 presented by the Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment, His Majesty King Frederick the fourth K.G., King of Denmark. The Queen's own Buffs and the Royal West Kent's amalgamated to become the "Royal Kent Regiment" the celebration took place at Shorncliffe Camp on 23 June 1962. Fifty-four people attended, ten of whom were visitors.

Unfortunately at the August meeting our speaker, Colin Breed, had to cancel due to an operation. In his absence we managed to get Hugh Coleman who presented his talk on Wildlife from Dungeness to Sandwich Bay. He told us that Dungeness is the oldest R.S.B.P. reserve in the country and it covers 2,400 acre's. The talk also covered Park Gate, Elham where there is an Orchid reserve, Lydden, Temple Ewell where there is a Wild Life Trust where Orchid's and

Butterflies can be found, Sandwich Bay, which is on the bird migration route, followed by Pegwell Bay where there is a Nature Reserve. Hugh showed many superb slides of birds, orchids, butterflies and insects. Forty-five people attended, six of whom were visitors.

Next month will be the Annual General Meeting we need four new committee members, so if you would be willing to stand or know somebody you would like to propose, please come and see me or a member of the committee.
Due to the ever-increasing fees we are paying our speakers the committee is proposing a small increase on subscriptions. It will be the first time they have been increased since 1994!

We would like to welcome new member: Michael Williams.

A reminder of some dates for your diary:

Trip to the Theatre Royal, Margate: Wednesday **11 October** to see *My Fair Lady.*
Christmas Lunch: **Friday 15 December** at the Bowls Club.

A.F.T.

THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

The Channel Tunnel Works at Dover commenced by the Submarine Continental Railway Company, of which Edward Watkin, Bart. M.P., Chairman of the South-Eastern Railway Company is the presiding director. On Saturday the 18th February 1882 Sir Edward Watkin conducted a party of thirty or forty gentlemen from London to inspect these works, the Lord Mayor of London being one of the party. They descended the shaft walked a thousand yards under the sea, and admired the working of Colonel Beaumont's compressed-air boring machine. They had the electric light, by which the tunnel was illuminated from end to end. In anticipation of this visit Sir Edward had directed a luncheon to be prepared in the tunnel, which was partaken in a chamber in the side of the heading tables and stools being set there for the occasion. The chamber was subsequently converted into a siding.
The party spent upwards of an hour in the tunnel, and then went to the Lord Warden Hotel Dover, where a luncheon, to which the Mayor and some of the members of the Dover Corporation had been invited.
The Channel Tunnel was again opened to another party of London visitors when Sir E. Watkin could not be present, but his place was taken by Mr. Miles Fenton, general manager of the South-Eastern Railway, aided by Mr. Shaw, Secretary to that Company. Under the guidance of Mr. Francis Brady, C.E., engineer of the Channel Tunnel, and Colonel Beaumont, R.E., the visitors, six at a time, put on rough overalls to save their clothes from dust, descended into the shaft by means of an iron cage, such as is used in coal-mines. The shaft was sunk in the chalk at the foot of the "Shakespeare Cliff," between Folkestone and Dover, and was about one hundred and sixty feet in depth. The opening was circular, with boarded sides, and the descending apparatus was worked by a steam engine. At the bottom of this shaft was a square chamber dug in the grey chalk, the sides of which were protected by heavy beams; and in front was the experimental boring. A low-roofed circular tunnel, about seven feet in diameter, the floor of which was laid with double line of tram-rails. The tunnel was admirably ventilated, and on visiting days was lighted with electric lamps. The stratum through which the experimental borings had been made was the lower grey chalk. This material, while perfectly dry, and very easily worked, it was sufficiently hard to dispel any apprehensions of crumbling or falling in. The main feature of the Channel Tunnel scheme, as designed by the engineers of the Submarine Continental Railway Company, was that of constructing the tunnel altogether in the lower measure of the grey chalk.
The length of the Submarine Continental Railway Company's Tunnel, under sea, from the English to the French shore, was to be twenty-two miles; and, taking the shore approaches at four miles on each side a total length of thirty miles of tunnelling. The approach tunnel descended from the daylight surface by an enclosed gallery, with an incline of 1 in 80, towards Dover, to a point on the Southern Railway Company's line. The exact point was at the western end of Abbot's Cliff tunnel. The opening is situated on a plateau formed by the debris, which was blown down by the famous blast that took place in the construction of the South Eastern

Railway between Folkestone and Dover. The shaft passed through about 40ft. of overlying debris; it then touched the white chalk, which is pervious to water; after which it went down to the beginning of the tunnel, which was 100 ft. below the surface of the sea. A heading, three quarters of a mile long, was driven in the direction of the head of the Admiralty Pier.

The heading was 7 ft. in diameter. Machinery was then going to be constructed so that the 7-ft. hole could be enlarged to 14 ft., by cutting an annular space, 3 ft. 6 in. wide, around it. The one machine was to follow the other, at a proper interval; and the debris from the cutting by the first were to be passed out through the second machine. The compressed air, like wise which was necessary to work the advanced machine was similarly passed through the machine coming behind only two men were needed for each machine.

At the end of the tunnel the visitors found one of the Beaumont and English compressed air boring machines at work. The length of this machine from the borer to the tail end was about 33 ft. Its work was done by the cutting action of short steel cutters fixed in two revolving arms, seven cutters in each, the upper portion of the frame in which the borer was fixed moving forward 5-16ths of an inch with every complete revolution of the cutters. In this way a thin paring from the whole face of the chalk in front is cut away with every turn of the borer. A man in front shovelled the crumbled debris into small buckets, which travelling on an endless band shot the dirt into a "skip" tended by another man. The skip when filled was run along a tramway to the mouth of the shaft. These trolleys, each holding about one third of a cubic yard were drawn by men. The rate of progress made with the machine was about one hundred yards per week. Colonel Beaumont anticipated no difficulty in making the machine cut its way at the rate of 3-8ths of an inch per revolution, and getting five revolutions per minute, which would give a rate of advance of two inches per minute. The boring at the time of this article had advanced to a length of 1250 yards, which is a rate of three miles a year. Simultaneous borings from the French side at the same rate would complete the tunnel in three and a half years.

The shape, which the completed tunnel was assumed, was probably to be a circle, 14 ft. in diameter, but flattened at the bottom to receive the rails. It was to be lined with 2-ft. thickness of cement concrete to prevent accidental falls of chalk. The concrete was to be made of shingle from Dungeness, and cement formed from the grey chalk excavated from the tunnel itself.

The ventilation of the tunnel will be more than enough supplied by compressed air that was used to drive the boring machines. This air will be conveyed, from the pumping-engines at the shore ends, to the centre of the tunnel, by means of cast-iron pipes of 8 in. or 10 in. diameter.

If the tunnel had opened for traffic, the trains would have run through by means of Beaumont compressed-air locomotives weighing from sixty to seventy tons and would have been charged with 1200 cubic feet of air, compressed to the density of seventy atmospheres. This would have given sufficient power to draw a train of 150 tons gross weight the distance of twenty–two miles under the sea. Assuming that the rate of travelling be thirty miles an hour, the air discharge by the engine would give a supply of free and pure air to the amount of 200 cubic feet, approximately, which would be far in excess of what was needed by the passengers in the train. To provide against the possibility of any inconvenience arising from the engine having in itself no recuperative power, there would have been pipes, containing compressed air at a pressure of 1000 lb. to the square inch, laid along the tunnel, and kept constantly charged.

The tunnel would have been defended by existing, 80-ton turret guns situated on the end of the Admiralty pier and also from ships on the sea. The arrangements for flooding or otherwise blocking the tunnel would have been controlled from the fortress, through the shaft at the east, end of the Shakespear's Cliff tunnel. The air-compressing station would have been on the cliff above the railway at that point; and it would have been completely commanded both from the sea and from the Pier, and also from the guns of the fortress. It was also proposed that the mouth of the tunnel and the hydraulic lift should be commanded by guns, in casemates to be excavated in the solid cliff behind the station. These guns would have been protected by iron, shields, and their position, while it would have afforded a close and direct fire on the tunnel's mouth, would have been made absolutely secure against escalade.

There was controversy between different military authorities and politicians regarding the effect, which the tunnel would have upon our safety from the risk of a foreign invasion. Colonel Beaumont replied to the arguments of Admiral Lord Dunsany and of military man Sir Garnet Wolseley, who disapprove of the Tunnel upon these grounds. Having been himself employed three years in the construction of the Dover fortifications, Colonel Beaumont assured them that by the natural strength of the position, and by the powerful works erected there, at a cost,

including the turret at the end of the Pier, somewhat under a million, Dover may be regarded as "a first-class fortress, quite safe from any *coup de main* from without." He assumed that the entrance to the Tunnel will be under the command of guns mounted in a strong outwork, and also under fire from the sea; and that a communication, by a small gallery and shaft, will be made between the point where the heading passes under the sea and the interior of the works. There would be arrangements, under control of the military, for letting the water of the sea into the Tunnel; but these arrangements, which would be kept secret, would be of such a nature that they couldn't be tampered with improperly, while they could be promptly put in operation without the assistance of technical experts. The position of the inclined gallery, connecting the end of the Tunnel with the main railway lines, would have been such that the trains, on emerging from under the sea, must be lifted bodily, by suitable hydraulic apparatus, to the daylight surface. Without the aid of such hydraulic apparatus the ends of the Tunnel would be blocked in such a way as not to be reopened for some time. Hence it would be evident that, supposing a party of two thousand men could pass through the Tunnel by surprise, and could reach the bottom of the shaft at the Dover end, they could surely get no further. "The inclined gallery is blocked; and to be lifted to the surface would require the assistance of the lift for a long continuance of time; while if the inclined gallery were open to them, they would only emerge to find themselves under the guns of the fortifications; and unless they could take Dover from the outside by a *coup de main,* they would be utterly unable to control the Tunnel in the slightest degree." But Colonel Beaumont admitted that it is possible for a thousand men, as imagined by Lord Dunsany and his military authority, to pass through the Tunnel unobserved. "They cannot come by train; as, irrespective of any suspicions on the part of the booking clerks, special train arrangements would have to be made to carry so large a number; they cannot march, as they would do, at intervals of ten minutes, or oftener, without cessation, day or night." He proceeded to answer the objection, that the arrangements for blocking the Tunnel might not be available when required, or that the persons in charge of them might be incapable. The provision that he would think needful would be two or three 6-inch iron mains, laid from the sea direct into the Tunnel; each main furnished with stop-valves, duplicated to render an accident absolutely impossible. The keys to work these stopcocks should be in charge of the officer of the guard. No dynamite mines, submarine batteries, and secret wires, would be needed. He thought arrangements should also be made by which the ventilating engines, used for the ordinary purposes of the Tunnel, could pump the smoke from their own furnaces into the Tunnel, in place of fresh air. This could have been easily and simply done, and would soon produce an atmosphere through which no living being could pass. Colonel Beaumont then asked how is it possible for such arrangements to miscarry? The only supposition deserving to be considered is that of Dover itself being captured by an enemy, so that the mouth of the Tunnel, with its approaches, would be in the enemy's hands. If we had lost command of the sea temporarily, and the enemy had landed twenty or thirty thousand men on our coast, there would have still have been time for us to block or flood the Tunnel, or to destroy its ventilation or the hydraulic lifts, which could have been done by firing a single charge of dynamite. The enemy, if he had command of the sea, could bring over troops and supplies as well without the Tunnel as with it. But if we regained the command of the sea, the Tunnel would have been of no avail to the enemy. For both its approaches, the open mouth and the lift would have been under fire of our ships and a few shells would render it impossible to use the Tunnel at all. "It appeared therefore that at only time when by any stretch of imagination, the Tunnel would be source of danger, no invader could by any possibility make use of it.

"To sum up my arguments," says Colonel Beaumont, "I submit that absolute conditions of safety are secured, if, in the construction of the Tunnel, the following conditions are observed

"1. The mouth of the Tunnel, to be outside the fortifications of Dover, and under fire of its guns.

"2. The entrance to the Tunnel, whether by lift or inclined gallery, to be under command of fire from the sea.

"3. The works to be capable of being flooded, or otherwise stopped, from a point within the fortifications."

This article appeared in the London Illustrated News, March 4, 1882.
Taken from Alan F. Taylor's collection.