

## FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

### NEWSLETTER No. 36 –AUTUMN 2008

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

At the June meeting we welcomed back guest speaker and author Bob Ogley who gave us a talk on 'The Spirit of Invicta'. Bob said he had written a book on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Kent which took him five years to put together. He went on to say the first owner of an automobile came from Tunbridge Wells, whilst flying was started in Kent by the Short Bros. and Rolls. The first World War saw ten million men go through the port of Folkestone. Many famous writers lived in Kent, i.e. Edith Nesbit, Enid Blyton, H.G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle. Nancy Astor, a Kent MP, who didn't get on with Winston Churchill, said "if you were my husband I would put arsenic in your coffee." He replied "if you were my wife I would drink it!" The first talking films were seen in Chatham. Speed records were also held by people who lived in Kent, Sidney Wooderson over land, Malcolm Campbell on water and Neville Dukes in the air. 1953 saw the end of rationing and people started buying televisions. In 1952 Ian Fleming (creator of James Bond) moved to a house on the beach at St. Margaret's Bay previously occupied by actor and composer Noel Coward. Bob spoke about some tragedies i.e. the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise and of Royal Marines barracks being blown up by the IRA, which killed eleven Marines. Bob finished telling us about some Kent achievements, these were: building of the Thames Barrier, the Medway Bridge and the Channel Tunnel and also remarked that Kent has more miles of motorways than any other county. Seventy five people attended the meeting two of whom were visitors.

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> June twelve members visited the Salutation Gardens at Sandwich where they enjoyed a guided tour which was most interesting and informative.

The photographic exhibition on 'Old Cheriton' held at St. Andrews Church Hall on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June was a great success. In excess of four hundred people visited and at one point there were seventy people in the hall. The DVD's 'Memories of Folkestone' 1900-1970 were playing continuously from 10.15am to 4.45pm and proved very popular.

At the July meeting we welcomed back guest speaker Paul Holt who gave us his illustrated talk on Samphire Hoe. Paul told us how Samphire Hoe came about and that it is owned by Euro Tunnel. He went on to tell us about some of the proposed ways to cross the channel and that the first boring machine was tested at Abbot's Cliff in the 1880's. The Beaumont drilling machine was then moved to Shakespeare Tunnel where the first attempt to build a fixed link was started. Paul then spoke about the current Channel Tunnel and also how Samphire Hoe was formed from the spoil. He said 31 different plant seeds were collected in the Warren and taken to Wye College where they were planted in some spoil from the tunnel. The plants were then taken to Samphire Hoe and re-planted. To date they have recorded 27 species of Butterfly, 200 species of Moths, Dragon fly's, Lizards,

Adders and Slow Worms on the site, together with 200 species of Birds. There are also wetlands on the Hoe where Mallard Ducks have nested. The latest venture was the building of some enclosures to graze sheep where they hope to graze cattle in the near future. Paul said the Hoe is now attracting about 10,000 visitors a year.

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

Annual Outing Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July: This year we hired a coach and 39 members and friends took the ferry to Calais from where we had a very nice scenic drive along the coast to Boulogne. We stayed in Boulogne for a few hours before re-joining the coach to visit Auchan after which we drove back to Calais to join the ferry and return home. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Shirley Gregory for making all the arrangements.

At the August meeting we welcomed guest speaker Brian Fagg who gave us his illustrated talk 'Gems of Kent.'

Brian said he had taken his slides during the 1960's and 70's when he was working as a surveyor around Kent towns and villages. When he saw buildings he thought were interesting, he took photographs of them.

Brian started his talk by telling us facts about Kent. He said Kent had the longest coast line of any county in the Country, it was famous for growing hops and cherry's and that Kent is the nearest county to the continent, whilst Britain's smallest town is Fordwich, and the Cranbrook wind mill the tallest in England.

Brian's first slide was the Kent Coat of Arms - 'Invicta' and he told us what the various logo's stood for. His second slide was a view of the French coast which again indicated how close we are to France.

South Foreland lighthouse was the next slide, Brian said it was from here Marconi set up his first ship to shore radio system. This one was followed by North Foreland light house which was the last one to be manually operated. Louis Bleriot was the first man to fly an aircraft across the Dover Strait, on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1909. He landed in Northfall Meadow on the cliffs at Dover. Charles Rolls, of Rolls-Royce was the first man to undertake a non-stop two-way flight across the Channel, on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1910. From Goudhurst Church tower one can see 57 churches round Kent. Brian showed us many more interesting buildings around Kent including a grade II listed 'Privy.' The last slide was of Ramsgate Harbour, the only Royal Harbour in Britain given its title by King George IV and where they still fly the Royal Standard today. Ramsgate was the chosen place by George IV as his embarkation and landing place for his visit to Hanover. The King arrived at Ramsgate on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1821, where he slept at the house of Sir William Curtis, near the esplanade which overlooks the Harbour, hence the Royal status.

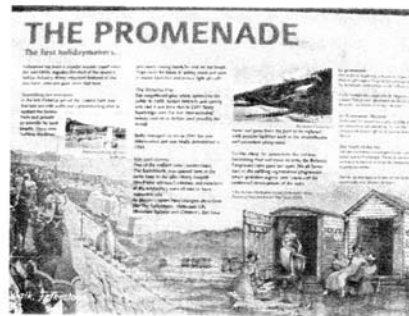
Sixty-six people attended the meeting six of whom were visitors.

The Society has been involved in the making of some historical information boards which are now in place around Folkestone.

The ones I have seen are at the entrance to the Lower Leas Coastal Park. This one has an image of the Promenade, Victoria Pier and Switchback Railway. The one at the Mermaid Café has the same images as the previous one. The one at the bottom of the Zig-Zag path has images of the path and the construction workers. The Tollgate Cottage is also featured as is the Vinery with images of the structure. All the images including the Bandstand are in excellent colour. Let us know if you find anymore.

The photos are acknowledged as follows - 'By kind permission A. Taylor FDHS.' Unfortunately, however the graphic designers have omitted the '&' and 'L' in F&DLHS.

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The Society has been loaned two vacant shops, No. 6 Rendezvous Street and 4a Church Street by the owner Anthony Pound. At present we have photograph displays in the windows, but at a later date we may open them to visitors providing we can get some willing helpers!

**Dates for your diary:**

There will be a coffee morning at the Langhorne Hotel 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at 11am.

Christmas Dinner at the Indoor Bowls Club, Cheriton Road, Folkestone on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 7 pm for 7.30 pm, cost and menu to follow.

We would like to welcome our new members: Jean Green, Stanley Kelland, John Meek

As you know the Folkestone and District Local History Society is a very successful and forward looking Society, both with its monthly meetings, talks and social events.

However, in order to continue in this vein we would like to take this opportunity to invite more members to participate in the management of the society by becoming committee members/officers. The involvement required would be attendance at six committee meetings through the year and occasional assistance at monthly meetings. I know of your continued interest and support, therefore I hope you will consider the above.

The A.G.M. is on October 1<sup>st</sup> at 8 pm at the Holy Trinity Church Hall. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Kind regards,  
Alan F. Taylor.

**HOW A TOWN CRIER OUTWITTED AN EARL**

**When Put Off the Beach at Folkestone He Hired a Boat and Used a Megaphone.**

**NOW HE DEFIES LORD RADNOR**

**Says the Beach May Belong to Him, but the Sea is England's –“Chopper” Anderson is Popular.**

Special Correspondence THE NEW YORK TIMES Published August 27, 1911.

LONDON. Aug. 18. – How an Earl has been “bested” by a town crier is told in telegrams from Folkestone.

"Chopper" Anderson, the town crier of Folkestone, is very popular with visitors, and wherever he goes when on duty a crowd of visitors follow him. The Town Clerk draws a salary running nearly into four figures, the Surveyor and Public Accountant's remuneration runs into handsome three figures, but the visitor knows little of these great men. With "Chopper," however, it is quite different. He receives no salary from the corporation. His privilege is the use of the town's bell. He has the privilege also of providing at his own expense a gold-laced top hat and suitable uniform.

"Chopper's" remuneration is derived alone from his "cries" – lost, stolen, found, or strayed, &c. For each he charges a fixed sum. But "Chopper" is a born humorist, and he interlards his pronouncements with running commentaries, and even sometimes ventures into rhyme. Visitors laugh and the children especially follow him from point to point.

"Chopper," however, is not allowed to have things all his own way. Earl Radnor is owner of the foreshore and Leas under cliff, and it is here that thousands congregate. The boatmen, hawkers, and others, if they use the beach, have to pay tribute to the Earl. Last year, when Folkestone's crier with his bell attempted to inform visitors as to what was going on, he was turned off the sacred beach by the Earl's uniformed constables.

"Chopper" in full uniform, met a Morning Leader correspondent yesterday, and asked if he had heard about his megaphone. The Leader correspondent confessed he had not, whereupon "Chopper" said: "I've beat 'em." He added that there were thousands on the beach the other morning, so he hired a boat, and got a man to row him for a mile or so along the shore. "I rang my bell," he said, "and then shouted my cries through a megaphone. And didn't the visitors stare! Why, ladies heard my voice up on the Leas, and they left off listening to the Blue Viennese Band in order to hear my cries.

"If they will not allow me, a Folkestonian, to walk along the foreshore, I defy them to stop me 'crying' on the high seas. The beach may belong to Earl Radnor, but the sea within the three-mile limit belongs to England."

Article by permission of Christine Warren, Winipeg, Canada.



**Jack 'Chopper' Anderson was Folkestone's Town Crier from 1910 to 1931**

**Registered Charity No. 295994**

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