



FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 39 – Summer 2009

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the March meeting we welcomed back guest speaker Derek Boughton who gave us his illustrated talk entitled 'The History of Elham'. Derek started with a general view of Elham, he said a hundred years ago Elham had a railway and a windmill, and it was the third largest Parish in Kent sharing boundaries with ten other Parishes. Elham had a market granted by Edward I which was held there every Monday in the square until the latter part of the 18th century. There was also a market held in the High Street, it was known as the 'Upper Market' and was held until 19th century.

The Abbot's Fireside: a fine timbered building, is said to date from the fifteenth century, but there appears to be nothing in the present fabric to substantiate this. The date 1614 is carved on a bracket in the old parlour, and an inscription in the centre panel of the over mantel, 'Richard Hayes, the Smithies Arms, 1614', tallies with the style and detail of the building. The building was an inn for about two centuries when it became known as 'Keeler's Mansions', and was divided into three cottages, and remained so until 1938, when it was restored, and opened as an hotel-restaurant. Derek went on to talk about the pubs: Rose and Crown 15th century, Kings Arms 15th century, (formerly the 'Cock') dating from 1830, the name changed to Runway Inn for a brief time before being restored to the Kings Arms. He also spoke about the Red Lion in the market square and the Five Bells which closed about 1800 and, is now a house. The New Inn dating from 1826, closed in 2003. It was formerly the 'Three Tons' dating from 1740. Derek talked about the boundaries, the hop growing, the windmills and Elham Manor. The present Manor House dates from the execution of Sir Simon Burley in 1387. He owned the manor at that time which stands at the top of Culling's Hill. He then talked about the various houses around the village, many being timber framed, but now re-fronted in white stucco. He also mentioned The Church of St. Mary The Virgin, dating from about 1180 and the Methodist Church dating from 1839. This was followed by a Sport and Recreation Poster for 1840 which highlighted fox hunting, cricket and the Gardening Society. Derek finished with pictures of the 1953 Coronation.

Eighty-three people attended the meeting two of whom were visitors.

At the April meeting we welcomed our guest speaker Colin Breed who gave us his illustrated talk on 'Royal Visits to Kent.' Colin said when he retired from the Kent Police force he was a Detective Chief Inspector. He mentioned the IRA bombings in Kent and the security work of the police. He trained at Sandgate Police Training College in the 1960's and by the age of 21 he was a Rural Officer, stationed at Sturry. He was promoted to Sergeant and moved to Folkestone where he was promoted to Inspector. Colin was involved in the enquiry for the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster spending months in Belgium. In 1992 he was promoted to Detective Chief Inspector and was in charge of security arrangements for Royal Visits. He worked with Robert Leigh-Pemberton, the former Lord Lieutenant of Kent who prepared the programmes for the royal visits. Colin told us about the Duchess of Kent's visit to the Canterbury St. Lawrence Cricket ground, Princess Ann's visit to RAF Manston to open the new sergeants mess, Prince Charles visits to Tyland Barn and Hothfield Common, the Queen Mother's visits to Walmer Castle, the Queen's visit to Chatham Historic Dockyard, the opening of the Queen

Elizabeth Bridge, a visit to Broadstairs for the naming ceremony of a new Lifeboat and finally Princess Diana's visit to Tunbridge Wells to open the new shopping centre. After retiring from the police force Colin got a job with a private company as a recruiting officer for the police. Seventy people attended the meeting one of whom was a visitor.

At the May meeting we welcomed back our guest speaker Cyril Baldwin who gave us his illustrated talk on 'Brandy, Baccy & Smuggling.' Cyril started with Rudyard Kipling's definition of a smuggler. He said smuggling was as old as money and ships and that smugglers started by plundering ship wrecks. He went on to say how much money could be made from buying and selling and that these people were called 'free traders'. Cyril said some of the worst towns for smuggling were places like Deal and Sandwich where if they were caught they never got convicted because invariably everyone was involved including the local Mayors'. In the eighteenth century the government became responsible for dealing with smugglers. In particular Cyril mentioned the Hawkhurst gang. The main incentive in this area was wool, for which the smugglers got £3 a bale; 150,000 bales were leaving the country illegally annually. If the smugglers got caught or shot at the officers they could be hung, hence that's where the saying, 'I might as well get hung for a sheep as a lamb' is derived from. Cyril spoke about the brandy and gin coming in to the country and that the smugglers would need finance for which the banks sponsored them. There were groups of men called 'Bat Men' who formed a protecting ring on the beach when a smuggling run was coming ashore. These men would earn seven or eight shillings for a night's work which was a lot of money in those days! Cyril mentioned some church yards in which there were head-stones for smugglers. Deal was noted for its good boat builders and seamen, they built fast boats for smuggling guineas and were called 'Guinea Boats.' In the 1900s Deal was raided by the authorities, invariably they didn't find anything because the smugglers had been tipped off, but if they were caught their boats were cut into three pieces. There were various methods of signalling, one was to use 'Spout Lanterns', which were used at night all round the coast. Hasted in history of Kent said, at Whitstable it became illegal to carry a light within a mile of the shore. Another method of signalling was to use the sails of a windmill, if the sails were vertical it meant the revenue men were about. Cyril said funeral processions were also used for smuggling, instead of a body in the coffin there would be tobacco, also dolls were brought into the country stuffed with tobacco. Edwin Lukin who invented the lifeboat was caught smuggling, his headstone is in Hythe church yard. Cyril spoke about John Wesley who went round the country telling people not to smuggle and that the government offered rewards to people reporting smugglers. In 1817 a coastal blockade was formed, but that didn't work either. Finally he finished by saying, today smuggling still goes on in a big way with drugs and illegal immigrants. Seventy people attended the meeting one of whom was a visitor.

Eight members of the Society attended the Kent History Federation Conference this year. It was held on the Isle of Sheppey and hosted by Sheppey Local History Society. The day started at the Borough Hall, Queenborough, with two illustrated talks one entitled, 'Sheppey scene one hundred years ago' and the other 'Early Birds'. The talks were followed by a DVD 'Early Aviation on Sheppey', an appropriate subject as Sheppey has just celebrated the Centenary of Aviation in England at Leysdown and Eastchurch. After lunch there was a choice of seven visits. In my opinion it was, as always, a thoroughly good day.

Dates for you diary:

There will be a coffee morning at the Langhorne Hotel on Wednesday 17th June at 11am.

A photographic display will be held at St. Andrew's Methodist Church (corner of Surrenden Road) on Saturday 20th June 2009 commencing at 10.30 a.m.. All monies raised will go to the support of the Kent Air Ambulance.

A Change in the Programme:

1st July, Vince Williams will be giving his talk on Cheriton and the Great Flood 1953, by Mrs Sadler will be on 2nd September.

The annual outing will be on Saturday 11th July to Chartwell, stopping for coffee and lunch in Westerham.

We would like to welcome our new members: Mrs M. Chapman, Mrs Clevely and Mr. R. Green.

Recollections of WWI in Folkestone by the late Margaret Johnson of, 4 Abbot Road, Folkestone.

Margaret's father was a policeman and her mother was a Warman, an old Folkestone family. She had worked for Stephen Penfold as a Governess to his son Geoffrey who died in the war and is commemorated by a brass plaque in the Parish church.

I thought perhaps I should make an effort to put down some of the memories I have of things that happened years ago when I was young. Some are quite clear and some are quite surprising when someone else remembers something I had forgotten. A few recollections of Folkestone prior to 1914 are but a picture of a popular seaside resort, much frequented by visitors who liked to go over to France. The hotels were grand and catered for a rich clientele. King Edward VII used to stay at the Pavilion, the Metropole and the Grand Hotels which were well filled in the summer as it was a prosperous place then.

Things changed quite a lot in August 1914, Folkestone was still busy, but all the time troops were going over to France and there was an air of frantic haste. Our summer visitors had gone over to Boulogne and couldn't get back as all the cross Channel boats were on war trips. Soon after this the refugees started to come. Some came on little rowing boats and were very exhausted. The authorities gave them a welcome and many stayed with families locally. We had a Belgian family staying with us until they could find accommodation further inland. At school we had little Belgian children in our class and at playtime we tore up newspaper 'tres petit' to fill pillows for those who were accommodated in halls and schools. We all did what we could to make them welcome. Our Mayor, Stephen Penfold was knighted afterwards. We were encouraged to learn French, which consisted of strings of words and I can remember the way the Belgians would interrupt and say 'and in Flemish it's.....? There was an office dealing with the Belgian army in Sandgate Road and a wounded soldier, who stayed at our house worked there. He used to practise the mandolin in the evenings but the chief pleasure of his life was to go to the Leas Shelter and listen to the orchestra. His English was not very good and he called my mother 'Mamam' and my dad was 'Harris.' I think he was older than either of them. One of the rather pathetic sights was a little group marching round the town carrying a Belgian tricolour and singing or whistling the National Anthem 'Le Brabancon.' They were recruiting among the refugees. A few stragglers followed. Their newspapers were sold in the streets and one was 'FrancoBelge - deux centimes aujourd'hui.' We got used to the cry.



Belgium Refugees arriving at Folkestone August 1914

By 1915 we had soldiers from the South Staffordshire Regiment billeted on us. They used to drill out in the road but were soon whisked over to France. We received letters or 'Fieldcards' telling us how they were for a while after they left. I often wonder whether any survived. One boy called Fred Betteridge

was my favourite (I was only 7 at the time). He bought me a lovely Easter egg in a bed of violets. I was thrilled. A photo of us all together survived for many years, but like everything else, it was destroyed in the bombing of the second World War.

We were used to bangs and mines going off in the Channel and the heavy Naval guns they used in that war were heard sometimes for weeks on end, so on a fine afternoon on 25th May 1917 we took little notice of the bangs until they got louder. A friend and myself were on East Cliff. We had a 'measle holiday.' They used to close the schools during epidemics. When we looked out over the town we saw the explosions; then a wounded soldier from St. Andrew Convalescent Home made us go into the nearest house, where the occupants were all crying and very upset and frightened. It was all so unexpected; no shelters or systems then. When we could get home we found everyone out in the road. The windows were all smashed and lots of the ceilings were down. One little man was going round saying 'what I want to know is whose going to pay for all this.' There were three dead sheep on the railway bank at the end of the road.

That evening my friend's mother was keen to go and see what had happened in the town, so she took us down to Tontine Street. We were not able to go farther than the end, but it was all confusion. Trucks came by covered up with sheets and cloth from Gosnolds Department Store and several confused people were out hunting for relatives who had not returned home. We heard that seventy people had been killed by that bomb. Some girls from our school had perished. Some people around that evening had shrapnel in their arms and legs. Everyone seemed dazed. We heard that some troops up at Shorncliffe camp had been killed and for many years afterwards we used to take flowers over in their memory. Lots of them were Canadians. We never forgot.

Many of the streets of large houses were rest camps housing soldiers who were due to go over to France to join the fighting. Many marched down the slope from the Leas, now called the Road of Remembrance.

A couple with a barrel organ played marching tunes and the troops shouted 'Are we downhearted' 'No!' even though the troops realised that casualties over the other side were high. The casualty lists were published on the back of the newspapers at the beginning of the war. I have never forgotten Armistice Day out in front of the Town Hall. Weight of sorrow and worry seemed to be lifted. Peace celebrations came the next summer and we were all given a shilling to spend at a fete in Radnor Park.



Peace Tea in Radnor Street 4th August 1919

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