



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
www.folkestonehistory.org

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the September meeting yours truly was the speaker. I gave my illustrated talk entitled 'Past & Present Folkestone.' The talk illustrates the many changes which have taken place around Folkestone. How streets have changed, buildings have disappeared, the sites being redeveloped, also the many changes in the shops where one business closes or moves and another business occupies it. I actually showed 120 slides out of a total of 600 which I have in this particular talk. It is an ongoing task taking photographs of the shops as the businesses change and I have to update my slides. Eighty-one people attended the meeting, eight of whom were visitors.

The H.G. Wells society held their annual festival at the Grand Hotel on the 17,18 &19 September. We were invited to take part. I put on a photographic exhibition on Sandgate, projected the 1900 to 1914 DVD 'Memories of Folkestone' on to a large screen and set up our book stall.

Saturday 25th September Vince Williams and Peter Bamford set up a photographic exhibition at St Martins Church for their Harvest Festival. The photographs were on disappearing churches, WWI in Folkestone, The Victoria Pier and views around the harbour. There were 160 photographs in all. They also set up our book stall.

The October meeting and A.G.M. was attended by 60 members. Standing for election were: Chairman Alan Taylor, Vice-Chairman and Secretary Don Gregory, and Hon. Treasurer Shirley Gregory. There being no other nominations these officers were duly elected.

There were no nominations for the committee, so the existing elected committee members will be standing for another year (except for Eileen Frankland who has retired due to ill health). They are: Vince Williams, Peter Bamford, Chris Phillips and Des Cornell.

After refreshments we welcomed guest speaker Martin Gurdon who gave us a humorous talk entitled 'Travels with my Chicken.' Martin told us he was an orphan and started life in a home before being adopted. His adopted parents lived in the country and kept chickens, this is where his love of chickens began. Martin eventually worked for the Daily Telegraph as a journalist writing about cars. When he got married he lived in the country again and his wife said, I know you love chickens, would you like to keep some? Of course the answer was yes. Martin's chickens were not just for producing eggs they were his pets, they all have names and were treated like his family. Martin told us many stories about his chickens which were quite funny.

Our 25th Anniversary Celebration Dinner was held on Friday 15th October 2010, at the Folkestone Bowls Club, Cheriton Road. 78 members and friends attended including invited guests, Rev. Charles Whitney

and his wife Ann who came up from Tewksbury to be with us, also the Mayor of Folkestone Tom McNeice and his wife Kate. After our three course dinner Charles, the Societies first Chairman, made a speech after which he presented me with a silver Chairman's Chain of Office. I responded with a speech, which was followed by the Mayor and his wife. Vince Williams then projected 60 images on to large screen depicting the Societies events over the past 25 years, whilst Peter Bamford, his son Jack and daughter Leila handed out souvenir booklets to all those present.

At the November meeting we welcomed member and speaker Chris Phillips, who gave us his talk on 'Victorian Architecture in Folkestone.' Chris started by paying tribute to the late Rev. Alan Gibson who gave the same talk to the Societies members twenty five years ago. It was the very first talk, held at Dover College Junior School, so we thought it would be fitting to start the year with the same talk! Chris spoke about Lord Radnor commissioning the London architect Sidney Smirke (1842) to draw up plans for housing developments on both East and West cliffs. He followed on by showing various buildings around the town telling us the names of the architects, builders and style of building. Among the architects he mentioned were: John Pope, John Bradford, Joseph Messenger, Ewan Christian, Andrew Bromley, Len Stokes, Roland Barker, Frank Newman, Samuel Sanders, Charles Voysey, Seaton Dahl and Whichcord & Blandford.

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

Dates for your diary:

There will be a coffee morning at the Langhorne Hotel, Wednesday 15th December at 11 am.

We are holding a Musical Evening at the Holy Trinity Church Hall on 5th January 2011 starting at 7.30 pm. featuring Pete Brown, well known pianist and entertainer and Colin Hodges, guitarist, bass player and escapee from Bill Barnacles Jazz Band. You will be invited to take part in a sing along which will include many songs from yesteryear. Coffee and tea will be provided as usual, but you are welcome to bring along some food to create an American Supper. This is a special evening – and not to be missed.

For anybody who has not yet paid their subscriptions a reminder these are now due.

We would like to welcome new members: Mr & Mrs Tunbridge, Miss Jean Reed, Mr Ian Ward, Chris Raines and Jane Carr.

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of former member Lesley Grimoldby who died peacefully in her sleep on 4th October.

May I join the Officers and Committee in wishing all our members a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

A Meander Through The Cotswolds

There can be few places as attractive and of such historical interest as Stow on the Wold. We spent a week there last September as a base for exploring the Northern Cotswolds and found everything we were looking for and more! The local rhyme refers to "Stow on the Wold, where the wind blows cold," and it is certainly the highest town in the Cotswolds, at 800 feet, but maybe the warmth of the local welcome overrode the climate for us. The market square, complete with market cross, is surrounded by honey coloured Cotswolds stone buildings, adorned with colourful hanging baskets. Narrow alleyways run between which were used to count and herd sheep on market days. According to Daniel Defoe, it's said that during one day in the nineteenth century, 20,000 sheep changed hands! Nowadays you are more likely to find visitors wandering the town, exploring the nooks and crannies and photographing the Victorian stocks on the green. The Royalist Hotel is advertised as the oldest inn in England, built in 947AD. It's full of curiosities, having witch marks over the fireplace, to ward off evil spirits and leper holes at the entrance. Of course, along with every other ancient pub it professes to be haunted, a fact which I can neither defend nor deny.

In 1646, Stow was at the centre of an important skirmish of the Civil War. The Parliamentarians were superior in number but the Royalist fought valiantly, eventually retreating back into the town where, according to local legend, the blood flowed so deep that the ducks bathed in it! The Royalists, led by Sir Jacob Astley, surrounded and incarcerated 1,600 in the church. Many Cotswold churches were used as temporary prisons at the time. There are however few towns here that don't have a Civil War tale to tell! Shortly after this event, the King surrendered and the first Civil War was at an end. A memorial to the fallen is found today in the church.

In the eighteenth century excitement broke out in the town when a chalybeate spring was discovered at Lower Swell, an adjoining village. Everyone knew of the prosperity of Bath and Cheltenham and wanted a piece of the action! The spring was said to heal eye problems and generally aid a persons well being. A pump room was built, where water could be drunk or carried away in bottles, and the townsfolk sat back, rubbing their hands and waiting for an influx of the sick. Sadly, Stow never achieved the status of a spa town – perhaps it was too near the others, or simply just lacked royal patronage. The Spa cottage can still be seen at Lower Swell, decorated with an unusual, oriental style but the well has been dry since 1930, so we didn't linger! With such a rich history, we were surprised to find the town has no museum, but the past is all around and is easy to trace for those who are interested.

After such an enjoyable outing to Chartwell, I was keen to visit Bladon, the burial place of Sir Winston Churchill. On arrival, we headed straight for the village tearoom, for refreshment, and then began the walk to the church. It was easy to find the Churchill plot, as although still early, there were already visitors paying homage. Churchill is in good company, surrounded by his immediate family. I understand the original area looked somewhat different and that restoration has taken place over the years. Churchill's only surviving child, Lady Mary Soames had left a basket of cyclamen on her husbands memorial, bearing a poignant message in her own hand, which somehow linked the past with present.

On entering the church, there was a small photograph display of Winston's life, both political and family. There was also information regarding the funeral and how the sleepy village of Baldon prepared for it's most famous day – the day when the world's spotlight fell on their small church. We learned that so many people gathered to pay their respects after the funeral, that the police erected floodlights so they could file past the graveside until after midnight. I stood there myself, reflecting on how much the present generation owe to his leadership and wondered how many realise the price we could have paid without his foresight. As we drove back through the beautiful Cotswold countryside we passed Blenheim Palace, grounds and exhibitions are so extensive they need a full day to do them justice so regretfully, we left that for another time.

The end of a holiday can sometimes be an anticlimax, but our visit to Snowhill Manor, on our last day, certainly did not disappoint! The manor house itself was built in 1500 and extended in 1600. it was occupied by tenants until 1919, when Charles Paget Wade came into the picture! Here was a man who had begun collecting curios from the age of seven. He followed his interests, later qualifying as an architect in 1907. In 1911, a private income from estates in the West Indies, allowed him the opportunity to indulge his passion and he became involved in the Arts and Craft movement, using his skills and experience to create and restore, and this is where we find him when war broke out in 1914. Wade served King and Country with The Royal Engineers. While in the field canteen one day, he was leafing through back issues of Country Life when he was attracted by a picture of Snowhill in the property section. On leaving the army in 1919, he decided to make his home there. As you can imagine, there were good reasons why the house hadn't been snapped up! The buildings were ruinous with an overgrown jungle surrounding them. Undaunted, Wade gathered a team together and began to use his experience in restoration, preserving as much of the original as possible.

Throughout the following years, he spent his time gathering 22,000 objects until, due to lack of space, he was forced to live in the Priest house outside. He had no electricity, listening to "March Binding in the Marsh", on his battery driven wireless whilst using the main house for storing curiosities. In 1951 he presented the Manor and grounds to the National Trust, who care for it today. Wade died in 1956 and was buried at Snowhill.

With so many objects of interest in the house I can only mention a few of the most memorable which particularly appealed to me:- A beautiful Cantonese cabinet, with elaborate decoration dating from 1720 caught my eye, and an Act of Parliament clock (when taxes were imposed on personal clocks) In 1797 people relied on public timepieces. This clock came from a tavern in Essex. On display

was an exquisite set of Jacobite wine glasses, cleverly engraved so that sympathisers could safely raise their glasses to “the King across the water.” Nearby was a drum said to have been beaten at the Battle of Waterloo. It was a very disconcerting room because of the 26 suits of Japanese Samurai armour hiding in the gloom. It was easy to imagine they were real warriors so I moved on quickly only to be confronted by a mummified bat hanging in the kitchen! These were just a few of Wade’s curiosities, although according to Queen Mary, “the most fascinating thing was Wade himself.” He certainly seemed eccentric, often dressing in extraordinary costume for his visitors, which included John Betjeman, Virginia Woolf, Graham Greene and JB Priestley. Priestley described him as “my eccentric but charming friend in his fantastic manor house.” Virginia Woolf cursed him as his habit of having no clocks telling the correct time, ensured she was late for her next engagement.

The garden is beautiful, full of cottage garden favourites and designed by Wade as a series of outdoor rooms. You move from serene pools to walled gardens, terraces and vistas, accompanied by the hum of bees, dragonflies and butterflies, for Snowhill was the first National Trust garden to be run completely organically, and is a testament to the fact you can have a lovely garden without chemicals. Of course, having a dozen or so National Trust gardeners helps too! We spotted a beautiful patch of lilac autumn crocuses in a woodland area.

The Manor is approached through landscaped gardens and woodlands, and its lovely restaurant overlooks the valley. The Trust also grazes donkeys, cows and sheep in the land around, making it a delightfully rural scene. I think the National Trust have struck a very fine balance between allowing visitors to share in Wade’s creation but still protecting the fabric and contents of this unusual property. It really does look as if Wade had just left! They operate a timed ticket basis in order to safeguard the fragile exhibits so we arrived early at this very popular attraction. It was a pleasure to visit and a place I would recommend wholeheartedly.

Janice McStea



Market Cross and the Kings Arms, Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire.