

FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.folkestonehistory.org

NEWSLETTER No. 46 -Spring 2011

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

Due to heavy snowfall the December meeting didn't go ahead. Twenty members turned up, but the speaker couldn't make it. We sat around chatting, drinking tea, coffee and eating mince pies for about an hour before making our way home. By which time conditions had got a lot worse. My car would not have got up the hill in Dover road from the Health Centre without the help of three boys pushing me!

On Wednesday 15th December members gathered at the Langhorne Hotel for a coffee morning.

Boxing Day Dip

I would like to thank all those members who kindly sponsored me. I raised a grand total of £240. Half the money will go to the Kent Air Ambulance, which was the charity of my choice. Apart from getting a medal and cup of mulled wine I also won for the fourth year running the cup for the oldest dipper. From all those people who sponsored me two were lucky in the draw, Peter Bamford and Dick Pace both won a bottle of Cava.

We don't usually have a meeting in January, but Don suggested we have a 'Music Evening', which he and Shirley duly arranged. Pete Brown was on keyboard and Colin Hodges on guitar/banjo. We were all given song sheets, and started with carols followed by War Song Medley's and Sing-A-Long Medleys. I requested a couple of numbers by George Formby and Colin played and sang, 'Leaning on the Lamp Post' and 'The Window Cleaner'.

Some members offered to bring along food, so we had a finger buffet, plus tea and coffee during the break.

Forty-seven members attended the meeting.

The February meeting was an illustrated talk on, 'From a Soldier in Sandgate to a Controller of Double-Agents in World War II' by Nicholas Reed. The soldier from Sandgate was his grandfather Thomas, whose name now appears on the Sandgate and Folkestone War Memorials. The Controller of Agents was his father, Ronnie Reed, who was in M15 from 1940 to 1976.

Ronnie was also involved in Operation Mincemeat, subject of a recent TV programme. This wartime Operation was also known as *The Man That Never Was*, and involved planting a body with fake military plans, to mislead the Nazis. It was outstandingly successful, and saved the lives of thousands of soldiers in 1943.

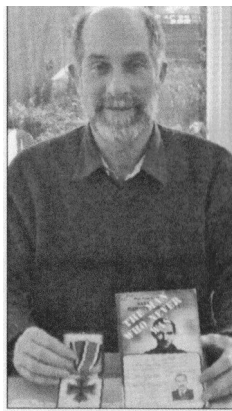
The man whose photo was used for the Identity Card of the body, was Major Ronnie Reed. Nicholas is currently completing his book on his father, to be called *My Father Was The Man Who Never Was*.

Two reverent British films

In 1956 a film was made about the Operation. It was entitled *The Man That Never Was*, and starred Clifton Webb. Ronnie Reed was also the Case Officer for Agent Zigzag, real name Eddie Chapman, about whose life another film *Triple Cross*, starring Christopher Plummer, was made in 1966. Chapman was the only British agent to be awarded the Iron Cross by Hitler, and Chapman later gave it to Ronnie.

Souvenirs from the War

In the photo attached, Nicholas Reed holds his father's Identity Card, as well as the book which has Ronnie's photo on its cover. He also holds the Iron Cross awarded to Chapman by Hitler.



Seventy-six people attended the meeting eleven of whom were visitors.

Dates for your diary:

There will be a coffee morning at the Langhorne Hotel Wednesday 20th April at 11 am.

We would like to welcome new members: David Fisher and Mr R.C. Brisley

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of Eileen Frankland who passed away on 22nd January. Eileen and her husband Eric were founder members of the society, they made their house available for the societies committee meetings. Eileen was a member of the committee and recorded our minutes for many years, she will be sadly missed!

A Village Lost & Found at The Folkestone Book Festival – by Vince Williams

On Wednesday 10th November 2010 I made my way to The Quarterhouse in Tontine Street to hopefully meet up with one of my childhood musical heroes - a multi-millionaire who has sold over 300 million records, and possibly an unusual choice of speaker at Folkestone's Book Festival. However Brian May (if you hadn't already guessed) from the rock group 'Queen' is also a qualified astrophysicist having co-authored a book on the history of the universe with Sir Patrick Moore, but more interestingly, for this article anyway, a noted collector and expert on Victorian stereo (i.e. 3D) photography.

It was on this count that he had been invited to give a talk for the Book Festival with Elena Vidal, the co-author of his latest book "A Village Lost & Found." This book chronicles the history of

Hinton Waldrist in Oxfordshire across a series of stereo photographs originally published in 1856 by pioneering early photographer T. R. Williams.

At 8pm the doors opened on a packed crowd of 250 sat down clutching a pair of plastic 3D glasses similar to those one would've been given if they'd gone to the latest Hollywood 3D blockbuster movie, such as 'Avatar' – only this was going to be much more interesting!

Brian May, despite having played to millions of people as a guitarist, including playing 'God Save The Queen' on the roof of Buckingham Palace for Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee in 2002, was softly spoken yet his knowledge of his subject matter kept the entire audience enthralled for the talk lasting about an hour. And when he had drawn things to a close with his co-speaker, mentioned that he still had a few photos if anyone was interested – so we all sat there for another 45 minutes totally enrapt.

The crowd was a real mixture of people and ages; some with interests in photography, some in history (I had noticed Alan and Eamonn among the crowd), and a large number of comparatively younger fans (although actually middle aged) there simply because it was a chance to see a music legend albeit in a non music capacity.

Fans were blown away by the images of haystack and farm wagons, or cottages and their occupants coming right out of the screen as the 3D glasses provided their magic. Brian May and Elena Vidal explained their research of how they had located the village, researched the people in the photographs and even recreated modern stereo views of the same scenes using the same photographic techniques (and highly dangerous chemicals) used in the mid 1800s. This was not just an excellent presentation but easily the best talk I have even seen given in my life.

I had encouraged our Chairman Alan to bring his collection of stereo photographs of Folkestone along as I had heard that Brian May was a collector of such items and might be pleased to see another's collection, but Alan was initially reluctant as he felt he didn't want to trouble such a celebrity who would no doubt be tied up with signing books after the event. I must admit there was a bit of a hidden agenda in my request to Alan as I anticipated (rightly) that an announcement would be made that only books would be signed and not records or CDs! With a collection of stereographs, I might just be able to curry enough favour to persuade the odd signature on a couple of my Queen CD sleeves as well as the book!

Alan did bring his collection of about 100 stereo cards of Folkestone, and in queuing for a signature on my book I let Brian May know that Alan was standing behind him with his album of cards. Alan not wanting to be trouble did apologise and said that if it wasn't convenient he wouldn't want to hold the book signing queue up which looked like it would take well over an hour to clear. But Brian & Elena's response to seeing the album was to reassure Alan that the queue could wait and a stereoscope was assembled and both spent time viewing the cards. Alan went away beaming and pleased that he had brought his cards along... whilst I went away having seen a fantastic talk by one of my music heroes – oh, and as a bonus I had got some of my CDs signed!



Some memories of Folkestone

Since I left Folkestone in 1964, aged 21, most of my memories are childhood ones. Here are just a few which I hope might be of interest.

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Early memories

One of my earliest memories is sitting on my Dad's workbench, watching him repair shoes in his boot and shoe repair shop in Foord Road at the bottom of Palmerstone Street, near St John's Church. On the opposite corner was a fish and chip shop. I can still remember the distinctive smell of leather as I watched my dad hammering in tack, nailing new soles to shoes.

I also remember going blackberrying up the 'new road' with the whole family, brandishing walking sticks used for getting at the blackberries more easily. The 'new road' ran along the foot of Sugar Loaf Hill and is now a major road taking cars to Dover (Churchill Avenue).

My first school was Mundella Primary in Black Bull Road. Miss Fagg was the headmistress at the time. I still recall the outdoor toilets in the playground, and having to ask for toilet paper when you wanted to go.

A further memory is 'crabbing' in Folkestone Harbour. My brothers and I would get scraps of fish from the fish market of the whelk stalls, tie them to pieces of string and dangle them in the water in the harbour. We would catch tiny green crabs. I guess we threw them back in again afterwards.

Memories of a young man

As a young man I spent many happy hours at the Rotunda, on the seafront. It had a slogan, something like – 'You'll wonder what keeps the roof up'! It was a large round building full of slot machines, pin-ball machines etc. I used to love the 'What the Butler Saw' flickergraphs – you turned the handle and got an illicit glimpse of scantily-clad women. In the Rotunda they had a great old jukebox which played old 78's. I remember listening to the new rock'n'roll hits – Presley, Fats Domino, Chuck Berry and the like.

Nearby were the dodgems and a roller skating rink – a good place to meet the girls, I seem to remember.

Of course the Lower Sandgate Road and zig-zag path up to the Leas were good places to go for walks with the girls!

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