



FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the June meeting we welcomed back guest speaker Brian Doorne who presented us with his power-point talk entitled 'Dover to Dungeness.' Brian started at Dover with images of the White Cliffs, Dover Castle the Coastguard Station, Ferry Terminal, Cruise Terminal, Sea Front and the statue of the Miner, he said the statue is now at Fowland, Betteshanger. He then moved on to Samphire Hoe saying there was 4.9 million cubic metres of spoil there from the Channel Tunnel. The Hougham Mast was next followed by the Cliff Top Café and the Battle of Britain Memorial.

He then moved to Folkestone Coast Watch Station on East Cliff followed by the Harbour, Lower Leas Coastal Park, Leas Lift, Leas Cliff Hall, Band Stand and Ghurkha Flower Bed. Views of Sandgate were next including the Castle, High Street, Sir John Moore statue and Coast Guard Cottages. Brian then moved on to St. Leonard's Church, Hythe, the Canal and the new electric passenger boat, Hythe fisherman's beach, Martello Towers, Light Railway and Sound Dish the early radar system. Moving on towards Dymchurch Brian showed pictures of Studfall Castle, the Redoubt, New Beach Holiday Camp, Dymchurch Sea Wall, the New Hall which is where William Pitt the Younger spoke to the farmers convincing them that the Hythe Canal was a good thing for them because there would never be a shortage of water for their land. Moving on to New Romney we saw pictures of St. Nicholas Church, New Romney Town Hall and Assembly Rooms. This was followed by the Littlestone Drinking Fountain which was erected to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, a Water Tower, Jolly Fishermen pub and Pilot Inn. Lydd came next with images of the Town Hall, Museum and old houses. Brian finished with Dungeness RSPB, Lifeboat Station, Derek Jarman's Cottage, Britannia Pub, Nuclear Power Station, its outfall and Lighthouses. Eighty-three people attended the meeting two of whom were visitors.

At the July meeting we welcomed guest speaker Owen Leyshon who gave us his illustrated talk on 'Romney Marsh.' Owen works for the Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership who are now in their fourteenth year. Their job is to help care for the special beauty and wildlife of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness. Owen started by showing us a picture of a 'looker' hut at Dymchurch and another one at New Romney, he said, there were 300 built, but there are only ten left, one of which is going to be converted into a visitors centre. He talked about the drainage on the marsh and said during the summer months boards were put across the ditches to hold the water so the farmers could use it for irrigation. Owen said the Romney Marsh was the third largest marsh in the county. He went on to tell us about the concrete structures at Denge and

that they are the remains of part of an acoustic early warning system, designed to detect engine sounds from approaching aircraft. They are known as 'Sound Mirrors' and were constructed in the years 1928-1930. He said the Royal Military Canal was started on 13th October 1804 with government funding and that it was built because of the threat of invasion by Napoleon. Owen then showed us pictures of some of the 30 churches on the Marsh including: St. Peter and St. Paul, Dymchurch, St. Mary in the Marsh, and St. George at Ivychurch. He told us about the wildlife, the dragon fly's, Marsh frogs called 'laughing frogs', moles, brown rats, mink, and great crested newts. Owen then talked about Dungeness, and that it was a private estate purchased by Gordon Pain in 1951. He spoke about the five lighthouses at Dungeness, the wild life including leeches. He finished with a slide of Fairfield church and said there were no burials there because the water table was too high and it caused flooding. Eighty-two people attended the meeting five of whom were visitors.

Outing to Eastbourne

Early on July 2nd, the sun was shining, blue cloudless skies, in fact perfect weather. By 7.30 am Shirley & I had arrived at the coach station to pick up our Crosskeys coach and our driver Glyn.

Our first pick up was Black Bull Road, then the bus station in the square and finally Music Bay. With an extremely comfortable coach and everyone in good spirits we headed for Rye where we stopped for a short break and then onto Eastbourne via Hastings, a popular route.

We arrived at Eastbourne at 11 am and alighted at the famous pier. Everyone then went their separate ways, some to Beachy Head by bus, others to the Sovereign Harbour Marina, some to the shops, of which there were many including big stores such as Marks & Spencers, British Home Stores, Little Chelsea, Enterprise Centre, Arndale Centre, the Albert Parade, Brassey Parade. Others visited the 999 Emergency Services display, Continental Market, or took a trip on the Dotto trains, visited the Lifeboat Museum and the Museum of Shops. There were many street cafes, bars and restaurants, including the Victorian Café on the Pier plus crowds of visitors enjoying the fine hot weather. Fortunately a light breeze provided relief from the heat.

After our mini tour, Shirley & I enjoyed a ride on one of the Dotto trains and headed for the Pavilion where we were to enjoy a cream tea in a delightful building and a chance to relax and converse. After 4.30 pm we all meandered back to the pier in time to board the coach at 5 pm and settled in our comfortable seats and relaxed ready for the journey home. A perfect day plus excellent weather.

The choice of Eastbourne for our 2011 summer trip arose from the suggestion from Brenda Cannon (who handles our book sales) on a recent questionnaire. Our thanks firstly to Brenda for the idea and to Shirley, who as ever ensued our visit to 'the sunniest place in the UK' went like clockwork.

For the August meeting we welcomed David Brocklehurst from the Battle of Britain Museum who gave us his illustrated talk on 'Kent Battle of Britain Trust.' David started by saying there was 2,938 Battle of Britain Pilots, and between 16th July and 31st October 1940, 544 allied airman and 2,698 Luftwaffe airman lost their lives. During the same period 967 British pilots were captured by the Germans and 1023 aircraft lost. The Germans lost 1887 aircraft. One of the first British casualties was J.D.C. Joslin from No. 29 squadron who was killed on 7th July 1940. The first German shot down was Lieutenant Johann Bohm. The next British Pilot to be shot down was E.W. Mitchell from 79 squadron on 8th July. David went on to say Hawkinge Cemetery has 205 British wartime graves. He then showed us an Aerial view of R.A.F. Hawkinge and said out of all the airports it was the heaviest bombed. The first attack was on 12th August and there were 220 bomb craters from that attack, but being a grass runway it didn't cause too much disruption. The holes were quickly filled in and run over with a steam roller.

The 18th August turned out to be the hardest day, and it became the turning point in our favour. David told us that when a pilot had shot down five aircraft he was called a fighter-ace. David also said he and his colleagues campaigned to get Shepway Council to name some of the roads on the housing estates, built on the airport named after the Battle of Britain Pilots. He finished by talking about the Cross Channel Guns and the 12 inch Howitzer on the Elham Valley Railway Line.

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

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 5th at 8pm at the Holy Trinity Church Hall. I look forward to hearing from you shortly,

Kind regards,
Alan F. Taylor

Dates for your diary:

Anniversary Dinner Friday 14th October at the Bowls Club, Cheriton Road. For details contact Shirley Gregory-tel: 01303 246682.

We would like to welcome new members: Penny & Glyn Smith, Denver Toft and Fred & Shirley Hills and Paul & Karen Tatt.

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of former member Bert Burgess who passed away on 30th June aged 95 years.

St Paul's Church Sandgate and Crickets' Ashes

Surprising though it may seem, there is a connection albeit tenuous between St Paul's church and the Ashes. First, it is necessary to look at where St Paul's fits into the Enbrook estate and how that came about.

When John, 4th Earl of Darnley 1767-1831 bought the land in 1806 he built a marine villa called 'Belle Vue'. In addition he had a chapel of ease built on the edge of the grounds – a picture of this chapel can be found in St Paul's.

On his death, his son the Hon John Duncan Bligh (a diplomat 'the English Minister at Hanover') succeeded to the property but not to the title which suggests that the property was not the main property in the family.

The original house was demolished in 1852 and a mansion was built in the centre of the grounds where the Saga pavilion is today. The architect was Samuel Teulon. At about the same time St Paul's church was built in the grounds employing the same architect. It is possible to see similarities between the original building and St Paul's church (see photograph).

During these years St Paul's had galleries as well as pews; pictures of which can be seen in the church. The north gallery was reserved for the owners of Enbrook who allowed the Wardens the use of any surplus space for a fee of 5/- per year.

Returning to the Bligh family; in 1882 the Hon Ivo Bligh 1859-1927 was a member of the cricket team when the Australians claimed a victory for the first time on English soil at the Oval. This event was portrayed as the death of English cricket.

When England toured Australia the next winter Ivo Bligh was appointed Captain. During this tour a group of Melbourne ladies including his future wife Florence Murphy burned a bail from the deciding test, sealed the Ashes and presented them in an urn as a joke. On his death in 1927, Lord Darnley bequeathed the Ashes to the M.C.C. to be kept at Lords.

After the First World War Enbrook was sold to the Red Cross. It was almost completely transformed and having been put to several different uses was demolished in 1996 to make way for the current building.

It would be nice to think that although it was not his personal residence, the 8th Earl of Darnley might have had some contact or visit to Enbrook house and possibly to St Paul's church.

Chris Phillips St Paul's church Sandgate February 2011.



St. Paul's Church

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