



FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER No. 49 - Winter 2011

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the September meeting we welcomed back guest speaker Michael George who gave us his illustrated talk on 'Sir John Moore.' Michael started by saying we have always been in the front line simply because of our friends over the water and that he was going back in time 200 years when we were in the middle of a conflict with France, 1793. The French Captain of the artillery was Napoleon Bonaparte who wanted to invade and destroy Britain. The local Council was required to make a list of able-bodied men and equipment to fight off the French Imperial Guard if they had invaded whilst the navy were waiting for the French fleet to leave Boulogne. Michael talked about Lord Nelson following on with Lieut. General Sir John Moore who was Commandant at Shorncliffe Camp in 1801 and who was largely responsible for the training of the new light infantry, who at that time were beginning to replace the cavalry. He was also responsible for coastal defence which included building the Martello Towers and Hythe Canal. He resided close to the site of the Memorial in Sandgate when he was in command at Shorncliffe. Moore left Folkestone in 1808 to try to get a foot hold in the Spanish Peninsular; however his troops were greatly outnumbered so he decided to retreat to Corunna in January 1809. He thought retreating was the best option to save loss of life, as it was, he lost 5,000 troops from his army of 30,000. Moore himself died from a cannon shell wound which took out his shoulder. At this time his mother and sister lived at York Cottage in Castle Road, Sandgate. In memory of Sir John Moore statues were erected in Sandgate, Shorncliffe, Glasgow, and Corunna. There was also a library built at Shorncliffe called the 'Sir John Moore', which opened in 1923. Fifty people attended the meeting.

The October meeting started with the Annual General Meeting. Standing for election were: Chairman Alan Taylor, Vice-Chairman and Hon. Secretary Don Gregory and Hon. Treasurer Paul Tatt. There being no other nominations these officers were duly elected. Paul Tatt has taken over from Shirley Gregory who was treasurer for eleven years.

There were three nominations for the committee they were: Shirley Gregory, David Fisher and Hilary Tolputt. There being no other nominations they were duly elected. Committee members remaining from the previous year are: Peter Bamford, Vince Williams and Des Cornell.

After a short brake we welcomed Ruth Parkinson who gave us her illustrated talk on the Royal Pavilion Hotel. Ruth started by saying that in 2008 she won a grant from the

Arts Council to make a film on the people who stayed at the Pavilion Hotel. She showed us many visitors' lists down the years and spoke about famous people who had stayed at the hotel. One in particular was Charlotte Rothschild who stayed there every year for many years, each time writing letters to her relatives, a number of which Ruth read out to us. The Duke of Cambridge stayed at the hotel twice when he was inspecting the troops at Shorncliffe Camp. Another was John Leech a cartoonist for the Punch Magazine; Ruth showed us some of his Folkestone cartoons. Queen Victoria stayed at the hotel in 1855 when she met the King of Sardinia who arrived on the P.S. 'Vivid' from Bolougne. This is when the Hotel was given Royal status and became the *Royal Pavilion Hotel*. Ruth finished by showing us pictures of the cellar under the Grand Burstin which is the original cellar of the Pavilion Hotel, also pictures of the Victorian restaurant and the west wing of the old hotel which still survive. Sixty- three people attended the meeting.

At the November meeting we welcomed member speaker Harold Francis who gave us his talk about his reminiscences as a Folkestone Schoolboy. Harold started by tell us what was going on round the world just prior to the outbreak of WWII. He then told us about the various organisations which were set up including ARP and Home Guard and the cross channel ferries being used as troop ships, landing craft carriers and hospital ships. Harold spoke about the number of Folkestone children who were evacuated to Wales and where they went. He said he went to Monmouthshire in South Wales, but after passing the examination for the Grammar School he had to move to Merthyr Tydfil. Harold said he enjoyed his time in Wales, but when he came home for Easter 1942 he said he had enough of Wales and didn't go back. Being back in Folkestone Harold saw many "hit-and-run" raids that were made by German Messerschmitt 109's carrying 250kg HE-bombs and he finished by talking about the buildings he saw damaged or destroyed around the town. Eighty people attended the meeting six of whom were visitors.

Sixty-six members and friends attended this year's annual dinner on Friday 14th October at the indoor bowls club.

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Dates for your diary:

The next coffee morning at The Langhorne Hotel will be Wednesday January 2012 at 11 am.

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

We would like to welcome new members: Linda & Nick Paine, Jack (John) Gill

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

Martello Tower No. 3

The main news item in the Folkestone Express, Sandgate, Shorncliffe and Hythe Advertiser' for Saturday 31st July 1926 covered the exceptionally violent thunder storm the previous Tuesday afternoon which had caused widespread damage in the town. It reported that at 3.45 p.m. "there was a terrific flash of lightning followed by a clap of thunder which shook the whole town."

The Martello Tower on the East Cliff overlooking the Harbour was struck by lightning and badly damaged. The brick shell of the tower, which varied in thickness

from seven feet on the landward side to thirteen feet to seaward, was split open and a mass of brickwork over the entry port dislodged. Debris were scattered up to 100 yards around the building.

The next morning a chestnut fence was put up around the base of the tower and a photographer from the Borough Engineer's Department sent up to record the damage. Some eight or ten onlookers had gathered including Council officials and it is from the personal observations of one of the latter that this account is written.

A lone schoolboy was standing at the fence looking up at the damage. Apparently it was decided not to ask him to move and the photograph was duly taken with him in place. He was definitely alone and dressed as a well to do schoolboy of the period.

Later, when the film was developed, a shadowy figure appeared to the right of the boy, with the fence visible through it. An enlargement shows the figure to be that of a young male about the same age as the schoolboy but dressed quite differently in a jersey, shorter trousers, bare legs and feet and without a cap. The figure appears to have its arm linked with the schoolboy and to be looking up at the damage with him.

The developed film caused sensation and an inquiry. The obvious conclusion that it was a double exposure was soon eliminated. There was a group of onlookers who would certainly have spotted the elaborate set-up needed to produce a second figure; and it would certainly not have been in the interests of the photographer, a professional carrying out a routine assignment, to perpetrate a complicated practical joke.

The film manufacturers confirmed it was not a double exposure and stated there was no conceivable image that could have been on the film before it left the factory in its sealed container. Even if, in some way, the image had been put on the film it would have been beyond the realms of possibility that it would have been of the same size and with its arm linked to a figure that happened to be in precisely the right position when the film was exposed.

Photographic images are produced through the reflection of light rays from objects, focussed through the lens of a camera and reacting with the light sensitive chemical coating of a film in other words a physical process. The fence is visible through the figure and the only conclusion is that, for a brief period of time less than the exposure time of the camera and too short a period for the human eye to register, there was the form of a young male next to the schoolboy sufficiently solid to reflect light and cause a chemical reaction on the exposed film.

There has never been a satisfactory scientific explanation put forward, although there has been no lack of meta-physical theories. Unfortunately with the time lapse between taking and developing the photograph the schoolboy could not be traced. The negative and all prints were ordered to be destroyed but it so happened that one print and an enlargement were somehow overlooked.

Jack Gill





Damage to the tower



The boy and shadowy figure to the right

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