



FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 6 – Spring 2001

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

The Society was recently involved in the South East Film & Video Archive's *A Century of Folkestone & Kent on Film* held at the Sassoon Gallery, Folkestone Central Library on Wednesday, 28th February 2001. Janet Adamson, the Heritage Officer at the library, asked if we were prepared to provide our large screen video projector, and myself to operate it, for the evening and we duly accepted. The evening was a great success, attracting a full house of 90 people, who saw films on Folkestone, Hythe, Canterbury, Broadstairs and Margate.

On the same subject, a few years ago June and Ken Paine donated to the Society a large quantity of ciné film shot around various locations in Kent. With their permission we have donated this film to the South East Film & Video Archive, who in the near future will provide us with videos containing the footage.

The *Cheriton Then and Now* photographic exhibition, set up by Peter and Anne Bamford, was held at Cheriton Library from 16th December 2000 to 3rd March 2001. The exhibition was very well received, with Peter and Anne receiving many compliments on a very interesting and educational display, which was also visited by a number of local school groups.

By request, we are also re-running the Enbrook House photographic display in Sandgate Library. So for those of you who missed it last time, now is your chance to see a very fascinating display.

Our treasurer Tom Leftley will be standing down at this year's October AGM after 14 years sterling service. Considering Tom was initially only standing in until we found someone else to take it on, I think he has served us extremely well! So therefore we are seeking a new treasurer; and if you are interested please let us know as quickly as possible; October will soon come around!

We have recently spread our wings further with a new member from Montjavoult, in France and I would like to welcome Roland Forsyth to the Society. Roland has strong family connections with Folkestone; his great-uncles Robert and Lloyd Forsyth were managers of the Victoria Pier from 1907-37 and were also involved in a number of other local (and national) businesses, including the Queens Cinema in Tontine Street and the County and Olympia skating rinks. Robert was also a local councillor from 1906-9 and again from 1913 until his death in 1934.

For those of you unable to attend February's meeting, I would like to mention that a presentation of the book *Francis Frith's Kent* was made to Daphne Heaver. Daphne, a founder member of the Society, has also served on the Committee and until recently was our representative at the Kent History Federation quarterly meetings at Maidstone. Our grateful thanks go out to Daphne for all her hard work on behalf of the Society.

We have recently received from the Sandgate Society a donation of 70 35mm slides of Folkestone in the 1960/70s, plus an aerial photograph of the East Cliff, two WWI ration cards and a 1915 National Registration card.

David Fundrey has recently re-stocked our bookstall with lots of new titles, so pay him a visit the next time you are at a meeting.

Your Editors are always looking for more articles for the newsletter, so please feel free to contribute on any local history topic. They've no need to be typewritten and could be handed (or sent or e-mailed) to either Martin and Linda, or myself.

NOTICEBOARD

Forthcoming Events at Folkestone Library:

Archaeological Finds Day – Saturday 19th May, 10.30a.m. to 3.30p.m. Sassoon Gallery.

Flappers & Follies: Folkestone in the 1920s – Saturday, 23rd June, 10.00a.m to 5.00p.m.

For those who have access to the Internet (or if not, 1 hour sessions can be booked for free at main libraries), the 1891 Census for Norfolk will be on line (and indexed) from 1st May until 31st July 2001. This is being used as a pilot for the National Census of 1901, which will be available from 2nd January 2002.

Members who enjoyed the recent book on Folkestone pubs *Tales from the Tap Room* by Martin Easdown and Eamonn Rooney may be interested to hear a follow up is planned for 2003. This second volume will cover Sandgate, Cheriton, Shorncliffe, Morehall, Seabrook, Hythe, Newington, Saltwood, Lympne and West Hythe; and joining Martin and Eamonn in both researching and writing the book will be Linda Sage and Hythe historian Mike Lilley.

Once again the print run will be limited to 500 copies, but unlike the first volume it will not be available in local bookshops. The expected cost for a copy of the book is due to be around £10-12 (for a generous amount of pages), and for a deposit of £5, to be paid just before it goes to print (a proof copy will be available for inspection), each purchaser will be listed in a subscribers page at the front of the book and will be guaranteed a numbered copy on a first come first listed basis. Each purchaser can order as many copies as he wishes, and a provisional order can be placed from anytime now.

Within the valley of the Cherry Garden 1816

The fine valley opening before it interspersed with woodlands and hop gardens offers a charmingly varied landscape in which the town of Folkestone and its church, the Martello Towers, the white cliffs towards the south-east, and the wide expanse of sea, are only a few of its numerous and interesting pictures. The Cherry Garden cottage is fitted up as a house of refreshment, and is much visited in the summer season from Folkestone, Sandgate, and the neighbourhood. It is not unusual for young persons to enjoy a sprightly dance upon the turf in the cool of an evening.

Near the Cherry Garden, and occupying a summit of a lofty eminence is Castle Hill, which is described by Camden to have been originally a Roman fortification.

The Floundering of the *Good Intent* and *Pride and Envy* off Folkestone Harbour on the 5th October 1904

by

Martin Easdown,

with personal reminiscences by Jack Saunders, skipper of the *Good Intent*,
and Folkestone lifeboatman David Philpott

The sudden appearance of a strong south-westerly gale during the dark evening of Wednesday, 5th October 1904 caught a number of fishing vessels off Folkestone unawares; and they were soon running before strong winds through waves of immense proportions in their frantic bid to reach the sanctuary of Folkestone Harbour.

Sadly the Eastbourne fishing smack *Pride and Envy* (NN21) went down near the harbour with the loss of its three crew members Charlie Brown, Jesse Goldsmith and Samuel Barnard. Brown's nine-year-old son, staying in Folkestone, was told of his father's death while playing in the street with some new-found friends.

Another vessel to find itself in peril was the Folkestone fishing smack *Good Intent* (FE21), returning from fishing off Hythe with three members of the Saunders' family on board, and though the boat was still afloat it was heading dangerously towards the treacherous rocks of Copt Point. The stricken crew fired distress flares, which were seen ashore by the large crowd gathered on the Stade, but the launch of the Folkestone Lifeboat *Leslie* was delayed when the vessel kept being swept back onto the beach by the huge waves. However, following a great struggle (of which the events are described below) a successful rescue of skipper Jack (53) and his two sons John (32) and Edward (26) was duly carried out, though their craft was dashed upon the Copt Point rocks and was a total loss.

Jack Saunders later recalled the events of that most dramatic night of his life: *'We had got right opposite Folkestone, and when we were hauling in round the pier, a very heavy squall of wind came and blew our mast in three pieces over the side. That caused us to drive away and we had to get an anchor overboard as quickly as possible, for fear of driving on the rocks. We showed red flares, and after we had shown a second lot the maroon went up for the lifeboat. We lay there for some time, but the lifeboat did not come, so we showed another flare. We had burnt five flares, and had only two more left, and we had no matches. My son went below and stirred the fire up, and found one cinder that was a bit red. We then soaked an old jacket in paraffin oil, and set that alight with the cinder. That burnt in a bucket and the lifeboat saw that, and made for us. They came towards us, but the wind and the sea were so strong they were taken clean past us and the crew were some time getting her round. As she came up to us again she shipped a heavy sea that washed two overboard from the lifeboat, and all the oars on one side were knocked out. They got them aboard and pulled up close in shore. They came up again towards us, and let go the anchor, and sheered right down alongside. We threw a rope to them, and pulled the two boats together and got out as quickly as possible into the lifeboat. My two sons, John Jnr. and Edward, would not leave before I got clear of the boat first. The boat had not filled with water, but as several heavy seas had broken over her she had parted from one anchor. We had not left her a quarter of an hour before she struck the ground, and at the same time a great sea struck her and she drove in on to the rocks. As the tide began to flow, she was knocked in by the sea farther on to the rocks, and she keeled over on to her side and the bottom was knocked out of her. About an hour before the lifeboat came to us we saw the mast of a boat (the *'Pride and Envy'*) drifting towards us. A heavy sea knocked her just inside of us, and although we tried to assist her, she struck us, and passed by. This was the first that we knew of a boat going down.'*

The troubles encountered by the crew of the lifeboat were recalled by David Philpott, who at 59 was Folkestone's oldest lifeboatmen and the recipient of a bronze medal for his part in rescuing 27 of the crew of the *Benvenue* on 11th November 1891: '*The maroon went off, and the boat was shoved out of the house. While it was on the beach the crew got into it and haul ropes were put out from the end of the Victoria Pier. We were pulled down into the sea, but the waves were so strong we were driven broadside on and the lifeboat was filled several times with water. It was twenty-five minutes from the time the maroon was fired before we were properly launched, and when we got opposite the pier we found a smack from Shoreham lying there at anchor, and found she was alright.*

The next we saw was a red flare off Copt Point, and we went down with the sail up, and when we neared it the coxswain asked who it was. A reply came from the smack "it's Jack Saunders". We were just astern of the smack when a heavy sea caught us and washed young Leonard Saunders and Jack Spearpoint out of the boat. But the next heavy sea washed the boat right on top of them, and we managed to scramble them on board. We turned round and pulled our oars towards the smack, and after a bit we got our anchor down. We sheered down alongside and asked Jack Saunders and his two sons if we could give any assistance to the boat. Jack replied "No we only want to get out of it". I fancied it was striking on the rocks as it lay there, for it was only in water six or seven feet deep.

While we were turning round to regain the smack we saw what looked like a mast go by. Mr Cook, the coxswain, thought it was a buoy, but when we got up to it we could see that it was a main mast of a sunken smack, and we could hear the sail flapping on top of the water. There was nobody on it, and we could not hear any cries for help so we continued back to the harbour. We went out again to offer assistance to the Shoreham boat, but they said they were alright'

During the inquest on the disaster, Coxswain Stephen Cook, who won the RNLI Silver Medal for his excellent leadership during the rescue, criticised the siting of the lifeboat station on the beach due to the fact the tide was often out when a launch was required. He recommended an alternative site off the South Eastern Railway Harbour Pier, but the station was to remain where it was until it was closed in October 1930.

In the year following his ordeal, Jack Saunders took possession of a new boat the *Happy Return* (FES), named in honour of the safe homecoming from the wrecked *Good Intent*. The money for the new boat had been raised as a result of a public appeal started by the Mayor of Folkestone George Peden. Sadly, Mr Saunders was to suffer further heartbreak during the First World War when two more of his sons, Victor and Beat, lost their lives fighting for their country.

On a happier note to end with, the *Happy Return* has managed to survive to this day under the name *Britannia* and is being restored to her original lugger rig in Penzance by the Mount Bay Lugger Association.

Sources

Folkestone Herald
Folkestone Express

Rain, Wreck & Ruin: Disaster and Misfortune in Folkestone, Sandgate, Seabrook and Cheriton by Martin Easdown and Linda Sage (Marlin Publications 1997)

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