



Folkestone & District Local History Society

WWW.Folkestonehistory.org

NEWSLETTER No. 66 – Spring 2016

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the December meeting we welcomed member speaker Chris Phillips who presented us with his illustrated talk on The History of the Leas Pavilion. Chris started by showing a slide of the Leas Lift; he said it was the first of three lifts to be built and it was a means of getting from the foreshore to the Leas just about where the Leas Pavilion was to be built. The next slide was a bird's eye view between Cheriton Place and Longford Terrace showing the proposed site for the Leas Pavilion.

The idea for the Leas Pavilion came from Frederick Ralph. In 1901 he had seen a piece of land adjoining the Longford Hotel and upon it proposed to erect a high-class tea room. However, the hotels either side of the land enjoyed long leases from the Earl of Radnor that included an 'Ancient Lights' clause, which meant that no building could be erected upon the ground that would 'block the daylight'. The architect Reginald Pope designed the building below ground level, which met with approval from the Radnor Estate who granted a lease on the land. Contractors Castle & Son were hired to prepare the ground by removing 5000 loads of soil and erecting brick retaining walls. By June 1902 the building was completed and on 1st July it was officially opened by Lord Radnor.

The Leas Pavilion was a fine building with its terracotta front façade and art nouveau styled windows. Shops lined the entrance; initially occupied by a jeweller, florist, baker and tobacconist and two billiard tables were placed in the basement. The tea room was fully licensed - up to 450 diners could be accommodated and there was a ladies orchestra, occasionally with vocalist.

The entertainments proved so popular that in 1906 a small stage was built below the gallery and concert parties were introduced to the newly styled 'Café Chanson'. The 'Gipsies' were amongst the earliest acts.

In 1911 a cinematograph was installed and films were shown at the end of each live performance. This was short-lived venture as the films were soon scrapped after the machine caught alight one evening.

In 1928 Jimmy Grant Anderson erected a proper stage and introduced rows of seating to convert the building into a theatre. Afternoon tea matinees were introduced and three times a week every other row of seating would be removed and tables put in their place.

Jimmy Anderson stayed for just one year and in 1929 Arthur Brough and his wife Elizabeth Addyman were engaged, initially for six weeks, but later extended to ten. Their 'Pioneer Players', soon to be re-christened The 'Arthur Brough Players', were an immediate success and stayed for 40 years.

During WW2 the Pavilion was closed on 25th May 1940. It reopened on 18th June 1945, and in January 1951 Peter Walter joined the Broughs as their partner and co-director. In 1963 the Arthur Brough Players celebrated their 1000th production amidst falling audiences. Arthur Brough performed his last regular season in 1969. The lease passed to Richard Burnett, of the 'Penguin Players' and Peggy Page between 1970-2 and then Sally Howard between 1973-6. Charles Vance, took over in 1978 and set up the charitable organisation 'The Folkestone Theatre Company' with his wife Imogen, the Director of Productions.

Improvements carried out to the building included further enlargement of the stage, new seating and wiring (1979), a new red carpet, redecoration and bar (1982) and new café (1985). Due to falling attendances the theatre closed at the end of 1985 season, following the production of 'An Unexpected Guest' by Agatha Christie. The building was converted into the Leas Club with bar, a bowling alley and pool and snooker tables by the Warburton brothers. It opened in 1986, but sadly closed in 2004.

Eighty – one people attended the meeting, thirty-one of whom were visitors.

The January meeting was an open evening where members bring along items of local interest. Peter Bamford brought memorial plaques for the Rev. Husband from St. Michael's Church; Vince Williams - stereocards & viewer plus Folkestone postcards; Chris Phillips - Sandgate and Folkestone postcards; Margaret Care - the Stokes family papers and photographs; Richard Monk - Folkestone philatelic material; Brian Adams - his grandfather's postcards in the original albums; Alan Taylor - the late Ken and June Paine's files on building the conference centre, Leas Cliff Hall, Lower Leas Coastal Park and Plans for the Town Centre Development. After the break we showed two films, 'The Peoples War - 60th Anniversary of V.E. Day - 5th May 2005' and a film promoting Folkestone c1965.

Thirty two people attended the meeting, four of whom were visitors.

At the February meeting we welcomed guest speaker Andrew Morgan who gave us his talk entitled 'A Medical Officer and his duties 1914-1918.' Andrew came dressed in a medical officer's uniform for 1914. He wore a cloth hard cap, a tunic, which had the rank (Major) on the cuffs, cord britches (because they did a lot of riding), putties and soft boots. Medical Officers carried a sword, but never drew it or fixed bayonets when on parade.

Medical officers were not initially considered as valuable - in 1914 there were only 9000 but by 1919 there were 54000.

They were also responsible for removing arms and ammunition from injured soldiers, and they carried Red Cross flags and wore Red Cross arm bands. The medical corps had sixteen trained stretcher-bearers and each soldier carried two field dressings.

Injuries from shot (small balls) were called shrapnel wounds before bullets were introduced, and when tin helmets were first brought in they were called shrapnel helmets. Andrew spoke about the Royal Army Medical Corps Manual, which was published in 1911 and reprinted in 1914.

He said that a regiment had two battalions one at home and one abroad and that they only had two machine guns to a battalion whereas the Germans had six per battalion. German tactics were to aim at the lower half of the body to splinter the leg bones.

If a soldier had a broken leg, initially in 1914-15, rifles were used as splints, but 78% of soldiers died with these leg injuries due to the leg not being able to bear weight and the broken bones moving and severing arteries causing the patient to bleed to death. So later a purpose made splint, the Thomas splint, bore the body weight at the groin area and the broken leg was able to be strapped and restrained from movement. As a result deaths due to broken legs fell to below 1%.

Andrew spoke about enlisting, medical training and 'The Golden Hour' - the name used for getting soldiers to an operating theatre within an optimal time for success.

A field ambulance consisted of 200 men who were responsible for getting casualties to a clearing station. Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD) were introduced to provide field nursing services and Folkestone was No. 43.

The Medical Corps won seven VC's, two of the Corps won two each.

Dogs were used for finding injured soldiers and their equipment.

The last duty of a medical officer was to confirm death.

Gas warfare was used in 1915 on the Western Front, but contrary to popular opinion, didn't have a lot of impact!

Andrew finished by showing a short film.

Fifty-nine people attended the meeting, three of whom were visitors.

The Society would like to welcome new members Andrew Beeching and Eileen Hobbs.

Recent finds at Eversley, Coolinge Lane, Folkestone, by Hilary Tolputt

It is hard to imagine a more idyllic site for a school than the land which was acquired for the building of Eversley at the beginning of the twentieth century. No houses had been built opposite the school site in Coolinge Lane which was still very much a country lane. On the same side as the school were Coolinge House with its Georgian façade and the white walled Coolinge Farm house, while to the

west the school looked over the arable and lush pasture land of Coolinge Farm. To the south were the playing fields of Praetoria House and Pelham House School, and to complete the vista, the English Channel was beyond. Miss Kate Nancy White, the Head of Eversley School, (which in the 1890's occupied three buildings in Earls Avenue and was advertised as a private school for "young ladies") moved her pupils into the imposing, spacious boarding school, designed by William Newton Dunn and Son, in 1905/6. This exclusive girls' school remained here for the next thirty years.

Since then, the building has had several changes of use. It was requisitioned by the military in the Second World War, and afterwards acquired by KCC who used it firstly as an emergency Teacher Training College, then as the Girls' Technical School. Following adaptation of the building, it was opened in 1967 by the Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Boyle as a residential college providing in service courses mainly for teachers. At the end of the century, KCC sold the building which became a school for Japanese students. The Edwardian building has now been converted into luxury apartments and while the contractors were working on the conversion in 2014, several interesting finds were made.

The foundation stone of the Chapel of the "Young Ladies" School was unearthed and in a rectangular recess in the side, a champagne bottle wrapped in newspaper and Hessian was discovered. Within the bottle were the remains of a document which had disintegrated into two larger pieces of paper along with several smaller pieces, all in a much degraded, crumbling, powdery state but obviously containing a list of signatures. It was impossible to handle these pieces of paper without causing further damage. The developer of Eversley Park, much interested in the history of the building, arranged for a repair of the foundation stone and wished to find out more about the pieces of paper in the bottle.

The help of Deborah Colam, a Conservator who does much work for English Heritage and who will be our speaker at the Local History Society's meeting on 4th May 2016, was sought. This should be a very interesting meeting giving us information on how to look after archives, photographs and artefacts which are so essential for a local historian. The process undertaken by Deborah took two months and included treating the pieces of parchment by eradicating the mould, cleaning, stabilizing, fitting the pieces together and mounting them in such a way that the document could be handled so that many of the signatures could be read. The signatures on the four edges are still very difficult to read where damp has caused much damage, and the ink has faded. However, the central section has been recovered.

Once the parchment could be deciphered, the first question to resolve was the dating of the document in the bottle. The foundation stone recorded that the stone was laid by the Right Reverend, the Lord Bishop of Dover June 13th 1908, and beneath was a quotation from the Book of Proverbs, 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.' However, the champagne bottle was wrapped in newspaper dated August 3rd 1923, which was sealed with wax inside a hessian sack. Had the original document in the bottle been removed and another inserted some time after 1923?

In fact, once the names could be read they were compared with the 1911 census for Eversley and it was found that several of the names on the document were also on the 1911 census. Although it was possible that some of the staff in 1911 would still have been there in 1923, the pupils record on the 1911 census were very unlikely indeed to have been at the school twelve years later.

The pupils' names duplicated on the document and the 1911 census were: Gladys Godson, Eileen Godson, (daughters of a solicitor at Heckington in Lincolnshire), Vera Margaret Duff Porter, Doris E. Morton, Mary F Lucas, Phyllis Layton, Doris Garrard, Muriel Sharp, and Dora Riddoch. Dora who was fourteen at the time of the Chapel consecration lived at Fonthill, Reigate, where her father's occupation was described as Ship Broker and Agent. Dora is to be found on the electoral rolls of Reigate from 1927 until her death aged 61. Another signature on the document is that of Hilda Price, who although not on the 1911 census is on the 1901 census aged eight years. There were several of the staff – maids and teachers on both lists. Finally, the last two readable names are F. Evelyn Gardiner and his wife Daisy. The Reverend F. Evelyn Gardiner was the Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Folkestone in 1908 but had retired by 1923.

It would be an enormous task to research the family history of all the names on this list – nearly one hundred. However, what is clear is that they came from all parts of Britain. Daughters were obviously sent quite a distance from home to boarding school. Of the more unusual names on the document, the early life of Lillian Aimee Stavert was researched. She was born in 1892 and so was sixteen at the time of the consecration of the Chapel. Her father had farmed four hundred and ten acres in Helsington, Westmorland but had died three years before the consecration of the Chapel. By 1911, her widowed mother "of independent means" was living near Kendal with three of her children including

Lillian, aged nineteen, who had left school. Her mother died later in the year on 9th June 1911, and aged twenty two, Lillian was married in Kendal in 1914.

Her husband was a manager of an explosives factory and shortly after the outbreak of war he was gazetted a Second Lieutenant in the King's Liverpool Regiment. He was killed in action in 1917 and Lillian was widowed aged twenty five. Perhaps it was as well that the girls who signed the document in 1908, presumably with high hopes, had little thought that the country would be at war within six years, and what changes that would bring to their lives.

Of the staff at Eversley, the signature of Kate Nancy White, the Head, can just about be deciphered under that of the Bishop of Dover. She had been Head of the School since it had been located in Earls Avenue in the 1890's and had also founded Eversley in Horn Street, a home for convalescent children which the girls at Eversley School in Cooling Lane supported. Ethel Rose White, her sister, and Edith Fergusson are both listed as teachers at the school on the 1901 and 1911 censuses and also signed the document.

Other signatures to be found are Annie Bowles, Kate Butterworth, Mary Bricknell, Emily Andrews and Minnie Peerless. Annie was the Housekeeper and the others all housemaids at Eversley. The marriage of Mary Bricknell to Mr A.V. Marsh is recorded in the local paper in 1912, and among the wedding gifts recorded are those given to the couple by the Head (bedroom suite), the Head's sister (toilet set), the Head's friend in India (cashmere cushions), the pupils (Crown China tea service) and the maids (a dinner service).

Additional finds at Eversley included three military identity discs, only one of which was readable. It belonged to a Canadian soldier of the Second World War. He was Sergeant M. Sylvester, whose religion was given as Roman Catholic and fortunately, as he is not in the list of Canadian casualties, must have survived the War. The Canadians were active in Folkestone in the period before the Normandy landings erecting decoys to suggest to the Germans that the landings would be in the Pas de Calais area and would be spear-headed from this part of Kent. It would appear that Eversley may have played some part in this.

The recent finds have encouraged me to look further at the history of Eversley School and its first Headmistress, Kate Nancy White.

Hilary Tolputt, 1 November 1915



Eversley, School for Young Ladies

Registered Charity No. 295994