

FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

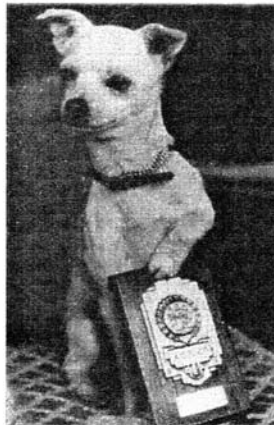
NEWSLETTER No. 35 –Summer 2008

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the March meeting we welcomed back our guest speaker and author Chris McCooey who gave us his talk on 'Kent Heroes'. Chris started by telling us about William Adams (1564-1620) who was the first Englishman in Japan. He taught shipbuilding and mathematics there and was eventually made a Samurai, the highest social rank in Japan. On 16th May 1620 Adams died and he left an estate of about £500 which was divided equally between his families in Japan and England. In his home town of Gillingham there is an impressive William Adams Memorial and a clock located in Watling Street. Chris also went on to tell us about a dog *Lady de Mouse* of Pembury who was a hero because she alerted the occupants of a flat who were asleep, that their flat was on fire. Hugh Caswall Tremeneheere^{1st} Baron Dowding (1882-1970) masterminded the victory of the Battle of Britain. Percy Henry Gordon, another hero, went to Rochester from London on a day trip on Good Friday April 5th 1912 and dived in the river to save a small girl from drowning, but in doing so lost his own life. A memorial tablet was placed on the castle wall at Rochester and the Royal Humane Society granted an In Memoriam Certificate, whilst the Carnegie Trust awarded the hero a Bronze Medal.



William Adams



Lady de Mouse

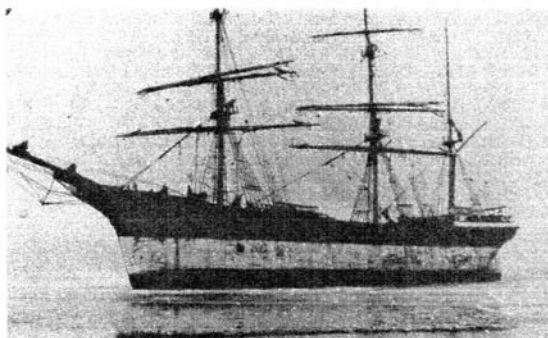


Sue Ryder

Daphne Joan Pearson (1911-2000) was the first woman to be awarded the George Cross. She pulled a pilot from an aeroplane loaded with unexploded bombs at Detling on May 30th 1940. Sue

Ryder (1923-2000) "light a candle" devoted her life to helping the incurably ill. In 1976 she was appointed a CMG and created a life peer, Baroness Ryder of Warsaw in 1979. Rebecca Stephens was born in 1961 at Kemsing in Kent and became the first British woman to conquer Mount Everest. Then she went on to climb the rest of the Seven Summits. Chris's last story told of Sturt's Battle with the Hawkhurst Gang – and the facts behind the legend of William Sturt. Seventy-two people attended this meeting, six of whom were visitors.

At the April meeting we welcomed back guest speaker Edward Carpenter, who presented us with an illustrated talk on 'Wrecks & Rescues of Romney Marsh'. Ted started by telling us about the loss of the emigrant ship *Northfleet* on 22nd January 1873, when 311 lives were lost, this resulted in the reopening of the Dungeness lifeboat station in 1874. He followed on by naming the ships that had gone ashore in the area including the steamer *H.A. Brightman*; the three-masted schooner *Elizabeth Alice*; the four-masted barque *Kelton*; the schooner *Ben Aigen*; and the German barque *Schiller*. He then told us the names of the lifeboats that had been stationed at Dungeness which finished with the loss of the Rye lifeboat *Mary Stanford* and all her crew on 15th January 1928. The *Mary Stanford* was launched as the German steamship *Smyrna* and the *Alice* of Riga which had been in a collision off the Sussex coast in storm force winds. The *Alice* started to sink and her crew were rescued by the *Smyrna*, but the Rye lifeboat was unaware of this as there was no radio communication in those days. Eventually she capsized and her entire crew of thirteen were lost. Eighty-four people attended the meeting twelve of whom were visitors.



The barque *Schiller* shore at Littlestone on 7th November 1906

Twenty-five members and friends visited Crabble Mill on Wednesday 30th April. The visit started with a welcome cup of coffee or tea after which we had a guided tour of the mill followed by a very nice lunch. Many thanks to Shirley and Richard Monk for arranging the visit.

At the May meeting we welcomed guest speaker Diana Beaupre who presented her illustrated talk, the 'Canadians at Shorncliffe camp during World War I.' Diana said that following Confederation in 1867, hundreds of emigration information centres were set up across England and Scotland between 1900 and 1913. The resultant emigration helped establish Canada as a Dominion.

The *Boer War* of 1899-1902 marked Canada's first official dispatch of troops to an overseas war. Over the three years of the *Boer War*, 700 Canadians served overseas and 267 lost their lives. After the *Boer War* Canada retained a permanent Militia force of 3000 men.

When war was declared on Germany on the 4th August 1914, Canada was the first Dominion to respond. The Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden, promised to send an Expeditionary Force of 22,000 men. Within days, recruitment centres across Canada were swamped with 33,000 volunteers. Over 65% of these enlisted men were British born.

After a 10-day ocean voyage, 32 transport ships carrying the Canadians docked in Plymouth Harbour on October 14th 1914. However, with no facilities or plans in place the men were kept on

board although the horses were unloaded. It took nine days to transfer the men from ships onto trains destined for the Salisbury Plain tented camps, where they would undergo four months training before being sent to France. Due to poor conditions and very wet weather the camps became breeding grounds for infections.

Forty thousand Canadian soldiers arrived in Plymouth in February 1915 and boarded trains for Shorncliffe Garrison under the command of General Sam Steel.

Diana then read out a number of letters that the Canadians had sent home to their families and loved ones. She told us what life was like in Folkestone during those war years, including the bombing raid on Friday 25th May 1917, also about the Canadians being buried in Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, and Church Slope Road being renamed The Road of Remembrance as a lasting memorial.

In excess of 600,000 Canadians came to fight in the Great War of which 65,000 were killed.

In 1919, whilst the majority of soldiers returned to Canada, twenty thousand chose to remain in England after demobilisation.

The special relationship that was forged between the Canadians and the people of Folkestone particularly around Shorncliffe, still exists today ninety years later and is commemorated with an annual Flower Ceremony at Shorncliffe Cemetery.

Eighty-four people attended the meeting four of which were visitors.

The Society donated a set of DVD's 'Memories of Folkestone' to the Constitutional Club for their Charity night which raised £1,400 for the Macmillan Nurse & The Odyssey Programme Charities.

Dates for your diary:

There will be a photographic exhibition on 'Old Cheriton' in St Andrews Church Hall (corner of Surrenden Road) on Saturday 21st June starting at 10.30am.

A guided tour of the Salutation Gardens, Sandwich Wednesday 11th June at 3 p.m. (Make your own travel arrangements)

Annual Outing: Coach & Ferry to Boulogne for the day Saturday 5th July £18 per person.

We would like to welcome our new members: Mrs Anne Houlahan, Walter Townley & Don Firkin. On a rather sad note I would like to announce the deaths of former members Eric Tomlin who died on 29th February 2008 aged 86, Charles Phillips who died on 8th March 2008 aged 94. A photographic display was put in St. Paul's Church, at the Police Training Centre at Sandgate, as a tribute to Charles Phillips Q.P.M. who was Commandant there for many years.

Roy Humphreys who died on 27th March 2008 was an aviation and local historian, he was a mine of information and wrote several books including: *Target Folkestone*, *The Dover Patrol 1914-18*, *R.A.F. Hawkinge 1912-1961*, *A Pictorial Study of Hawkinge Parish* and Co-Author of *A Pictorial Study of Alkham Parish*. Roy was also instrumental with myself and Eamonn Rooney in negotiating with Lisa Holden from S.D.C. to put a photographic exhibition in the Leas Club to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. This was done in conjunction with the Shepway Festival, 8th -16th September 1990.

An Open Air Cinema at Folkestone.

By Eamonn Rooney

Several books have been published about cinemas in our area and I hope to publish one in a couple of year's time – this article is an abridged extract from part of that work. These books have made mention of an open-air cinema in Folkestone – albeit in a very superficial manner.

The Folkestone Herald reported in its issue of the 1st March 1902 on the opening of a Hippodrome at Dover by a Mr Transfield, the musical arrangements being 'under the direction of

Mr. Robert Forsyth, of Folkestone. (Mr. Forsyth was lessee of the Victoria Pier at Folkestone.) The Dover Hippodrome closed on the 31st May.

The Folkestone Herald reported on 14th June 1902 that Mr. Transfield had secured a site off Black Bull Road and that he was erecting *'a comfortable well-appointed Hippodrome which he will open on Monday 23rd June'*. Rather belatedly the erection of the Hippodrome (without notice) was reported to the Buildings Committee on 24th June. The Folkestone Herald reported on 28th on the opening of the grandly named Royal Coronation Hippodrome, which had opened on the 23rd.

As well as equestrian performers the Hippodrome also featured music-hall turns and as a harbinger of things to come, Mr. Transfield announced in August in the Folkestone Herald of *'a special reproduction on the Bio-Tableaux of the Coronation Procession ... exhibited by Professor Theobald'*.

The Hippodrome left Folkestone in 1902 but returned in June 1905. A Mr De Wet on behalf of Mr. Thomas George Transfield submitted an application explaining that Mr. Transfield wished to bring his Hippodrome to Folkestone for five months, commencing on Whit Monday. There was to be a string band consisting of eight performers. The admission prices were to be 2/6, 2/-, 1/6, 1/- and 6d. and the programme would comprise 2 ½ hours of continuous performance. It was remarked that the Hippodrome had enjoyed *'such a successful season here three years ago. The building will be vastly superior to any of the previous ones; a specially well constructed building having been erected'*. It would seem it had only secured a 14-day licence for the Folkestone Herald of 1st July carried the announcement *Last Week Of The Present Season*.

Further licence must have been obtained however for it was reported in the Folkestone Herald on 8th July that *'Transfield's Hippodrome will be closed for alterations on Monday, and will reopen on July 17th'*.

Perhaps the most unusual cinema application the Borough Council ever had to consider was that which came before them in 1912 for an Open Air Cinematograph Enclosure at the back of Linden Crescent.

The Highways and Buildings Committee of Folkestone Borough Council met on 7th May to consider the application. Permission was granted and the matter was then passed to the Watch Committee, which met to consider it on 22nd May 1912. The plans submitted by the Open Air Cinema Company, Limited and Mr. A. R. Bowles, Architect, were approved subject to the building being removed within six months. A licence was granted with the proviso that no exhibitions were to be given on Sundays.

The Folkestone Herald of 25th May carried a lengthy report on this cinema noting *'an innovation in the moving picture world will be introduced to the public within the next few days when the Open-Air Cinema will open at Linden Crescent'*. The newspaper went on to observe *'the daylight cinema is an absolutely new development, which England will present to the world'*. It was reported that the people behind the enterprise had decided to present it *'to the world via Folkestone, and the local community are looking forward to its first appearance'*. The cinema featured a specially treated screen of scientifically prepared canvas impervious to moisture, and *'a magic coating of silver-faced material, whose ingredients are a strict secret'*. The enclosure occupied a space of about 100ft by 40ft at the back of Linden Crescent and could accommodate 500 people *'who could sit in the open air on a beautiful summer's day... In wet weather a sliding canvas roof can be drawn across the top'*. The project was set to move to White City for the season following its debut at Folkestone which goes some way to explaining its short stay in the town. After the departure of the cinema, a Hippodrome was re-established at the site, by a succession of operators other than Mr. Transfield. The last mention was in 1917 after which time the site was subsequently put to a number of other uses – not all involving entertainment - but was eventually built on and is now occupied by Dawson Road and Bolton Road.

Some residents still remember a painted advertisement on a gable wall in the vicinity of Linden Crescent. Although a photograph of the cinema enclosure appeared at the time in a local newspaper I have never seen a printed copy of it. Has anybody got a photograph of the cinema and the gable advertisement?

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