

FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the December meeting we welcomed guest speaker Georgia Reed who gave us her talk entitled 'Lighthouse Ahoy'. Georgia said her talk was in three parts: 'The need for lighthouses, building them, and the brave men who lived in them'. The last lighthouse to be decommissioned was the Northforeland in November 1998, whilst the first Beacon was built in 1499. Georgia then read a quote from the book 'A History of Lighthouses' by Patrick Beaver. There were three ships including the 'Romney' and 'Eagle' wrecked on the Bishop Rock, in the Scilly Isles. Looting of wrecked ships was rife and there was no mercy, plus landlords actually charged more rent for houses close to the shore. False lights were used by the looters to entice ships onto the rocks. In the 15th and 16th centuries the coast of Britain was unprotected and 500 ships were wrecked and 8,000 lives lost.

In 1514 Trinity House took charge of all lighthouses and King Henry ordered them to make rules for sailors and train pilots. Private companies had built the lighthouses for nearly 200 years but in 1836 Trinity House took over 72 lighthouses, 11 lightships and 20 beacons. Dungeness was the first lighthouse to be built privately. The Roman's built a lighthouse at Dover (Pharos) and a sister one at Boulogne. The lighthouse at Eddystone Rock is 14 miles from the coast so getting out there to build it was a big problem as was the weather. Henry Winstanley who owned 5 ships was the first man to build a lighthouse on Eddystone rock. The lighthouse was completed in 1697, but during the great storm of 1703 it disappeared. One year later John Rudegard built a new tower which lasted 46 years before it was destroyed by fire. John Smeeton was the next man to build a new lighthouse on Eddystone rock, which took three years to build and stood for over a 100 years. The Eddystone Lighthouse appeared on the English penny in 1937 then suddenly disappeared in 1961.

Life in the lighthouses was hard and the men had to have good health and good teeth. Their main duties were keeping a look out, sending up rockets if a ship got too close and keeping a log book. All lighthouses have a different flashing pattern, so another job was to check that the flashing pattern was correct. The lighthouse keepers did 12 weeks on and 6 weeks off.

Georgia finished her talk with the Grace Darling story.

Sixty people attended the meeting two of whom were visitors.

On Friday 12th December thirty-three members and friends had Christmas dinner at the Indoor Bowls Club in Cheriton Road.

I would like to thank all those members who kindly sponsored me for the Boxing Day Dip. I raised a grand total of £280. Half the money will go to the Kent Air Ambulance, which was the charity of my choice. Apart from getting a medal and a cup of mulled wine I won the trophy for the oldest dipper (72 years).

On Wednesday 14th January members gathered at the Langhorne Hotel for a coffee morning.

At the February meeting we welcomed back guest speaker Brian Doorne who gave us his illustrated talk on Hythe Canal. Brian started with a brief history of the canal. He said there was a defence plan drawn up in 1794, soon after the French Revolution and the threat of an invasion by Napoleon. It involved flooding Romney Marsh by breaching the sea-wall and removing the sheep, cattle and population. Colonel Twiss, a Royal Engineer, and Colonel John Brown, in command of the Royal Staff Corps discovered the plan wouldn't work. So their defence plan was to build Martello Towers and their second plan was to build the Royal Military Canal. The canal would run nineteen miles from Seabrook to Iden Lock, where it would join the Rother. It would be built in reaches, angled to one another, so that enfilading cannon-fire could be brought to bear against assault troops attempting a crossing from the southern bank. Secondly and most important, it would allow horse-drawn barges to carry troops, munitions and rations to any threatened point. In two hours, barges could cover up to ten or more miles. Although the army was eager to start in 1804, approval could not be obtained from the Cabinet until William Pitt became Prime Minister on 19th May 1804, when the long-awaited orders were given. The first sod was turned at Seabrook on 30th October, 1804. The Rother was reached twenty-two months later, in August 1806, and a navigable and defensible waterway then extended from Seabrook to Winchelsea. Brian followed up with a guided tour along the canal, showing us pictures of the Law-Day Oak tree at Bonnington where to this day they have an annual Parish meeting. The next stop was St Rumbolds Church at Bonnington, followed by Bilsington where he showed us the monument in memory of William Richard Cosway who was killed in a coaching accident. After viewing St. Peter and St. Paul Church we moved on to Ruckinge and the Mill Cottage and Church. This was followed by Ransley Green which was named after the Ransley smuggling gang, progressing then to Ham Street, St. Mary's Church, Warehorne and St. Mathews Church. The next stop was Kenardington Church from where the National Trust owns the canal to Appledore. Brian showed us some pictures of Appledore including the Church plus the quaint Fairfield Church which still has boxed pews, though it is not on the canal route. It was onwards then to Iden Lock and the river Rother, Rye, Camber Castle, Winchelsea and the end of the canal at Pett Level. Sixty-four people attended the meeting five of whom were visitors.

Dates for you diary:

There will be a coffee morning at the Langhorne Hotel on Wednesday 15th April and Wednesday 17th June at 11am. respectively.

A photographic display will be held at St. Andrew's Methodist Church (corner of Surrenden Road) on Saturday 20th June 2009 commencing at 10.30 a.m.. All monies raised will go to the support of the Kent Air Ambulance.

The annual outing will be to Chartwell stopping for lunch in Westerham on Saturday 11th July.

We would like to welcome our new members: Mr Desmond Collins, Mr Brian Hudson, Mr J. Philpott, Mr Wynne, Mrs M. Stacey, Mrs M. Dunster and Mr & Mrs Mailes.

Queen Victoria's last visit to France

Once more the Queen is settled in the Riviera. Owing to unpropitious weather the Royal journey was delayed for two days, but eventually the trip was made under the most pleasant conditions of fine weather and calm sea. Everywhere along the route, from Windsor to Folkestone, her people had come out in force to wish Her Majesty God-speed, and as the train ran into Folkestone crowds lined each side of the embankment. There was not much for the general public to see at Folkestone, for the gangway from the train to the *Calais-Douvres* was covered in, and only a group of officials, including the General in command of the district, the Mayor of Folkestone and his daughter, and Sir E. Sassoon, were presented to the Queen. But it was a gay scene nevertheless – the guard of honour on the quay, the vessels in harbour dressed with bunting, the bands, the bells sounding cheerfully, and the *Calais*

Douvres running up the Royal Standard directly the Sovereign touched her deck. With Her Majesty were Princess Beatrice and her second boy, Prince Leopold, the Duchess of York, and Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein. The Royal party at once sat down to lunch in a specially constructed deck-house, which reminded the Queen of her favourite surroundings in the *Victoria and Albert*, the furniture being covered with the same design in rosebud chintz, chosen by the Prince Consort so many years ago for the Royal yacht. The saloon was prettily hung with pale green, two writing-tables and a couch added to the comfort.

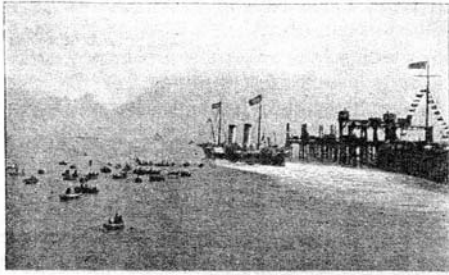
Vases of mimosa and daffodils were the only decorations. Whilst luncheon was going on the Queen's pets were brought on board—her birds, a collie, her favourite white Pomeranian "Tourie," and little Prince Leopold's pet pug "Bosco," and as soon as the meal was over the *Calais-Douvres* started, escorted by the Trinity yacht *Irene* and a flotilla of eight torpedo-destroyers. Two of the flotilla kept ahead as "look-outs," and the others ranged themselves three each side of the Queen's vessel.

By the Queen's wish the *Calais-Douvres* went leisurely, so that the crossing occupied 1 hr. 23 min. When the vessel reached French waters the destroyers saluted and turned homewards after a complementary message from Her Majesty, while the *Calais-Douvres* steamed into Boulogne harbour amidst Royal salutes from the batteries, and the cheers of the crowds on the other side of the quay. When the vessel had reached the quay, the Queen came out of the deckhouse and sat outside to receive the Mayor of Boulogne, Dr. Aigre, and other French officials, who brought various bouquets. Her Majesty greatly delighted the Boulonnais by alluding to the pleasure felt in her former visit in 1855. The presentations over, the Queen was conveyed up a beautifully decorated covered way into the Royal saloon, the guard of honour presenting arms and playing the National Anthem as the train started. Eleven carriages and one engine composed the Royal train, the two saloons in the centre being those in which Her Majesty always travels when abroad. Furnished in pale green, the drawing room compartment was a mass of flowers, including an exquisite gold basket of heliotrope and yellow orchids sent by Baron Alphonse de Rothschild, the chairman of the Chemin de Fer du Nord. The Queen was especially pleased with two large photographs illustrating her former visit in 1855—her arrival and a view—taken from pictures in the Boulogne Museum. Meals were served in the train and there were no stoppages of importance until Toulon was reached on Sunday afternoon, when Her Majesty expressly asked for the Sub-Prefect to express her sorrow for the recent terrible explosion. At Cannes the Prince of Wales, Princess Louise, and the Duke of Cambridge were waiting for a few minutes' greeting. — Our photographs of Barton Alphonse de Rothschild and M. Albert Sartiaux, general manager of the Northern Railway, are respectively by P. Petit, and V. Daireaux, both of Paris.

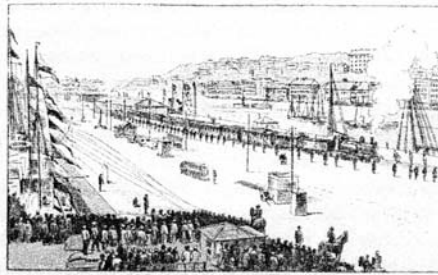
After a long spell of rain and wind "Queen's weather" had returned in time for Her Majesty's arrival at Nice, and the town had hung out flags and made every preparation for a hearty welcome. Crowds had poured in from all parts, lining the whole route from the station with troops ranged thickly in the road. The Duke of Leuchtenberg, the British Consul and his wife, and the district officials welcomed the Royal party as they left the train, and after the presentation of various bouquets the Queen and Princesses drove off escorted by Horse Artillery and gendarmes. The crowd saluted the Royal visitors enthusiastically, noting how well they all looked after their long journey, and in a very few minutes the Queen was in her old quarters at the Hotel Regina. Her Majesty's rooms on the first floor are the same as in previous years, but freshly decorated. Her drawing-room—looking south—has red art hangings and yellow satin drapery, her private dining—room in Elizabethan, with red velvet and walnut furniture, while her bedroom, with its two windows looking west and north, is in Louis XVI. style, with mahogany furniture and pink hangings. They were filled with flowers on the Queen's arrival, the loveliest gift being from the Nice Municipality—a gondola with a Royal crown of carnations and narcissus in the prow, and four swallows—typifying Her Majesty's four visits to Nice—holding ribbons with congratulatory inscriptions. In the body of the gondola were two vases full of roses and white lilac.

The Queen was not at all over fatigued by her long journey, and was quite ready next day to begin her morning drives in the neighbouring Villa grounds and the afternoon excursions. As there are comparatively few foreign Royalties on the Riviera just now Her Majesty will not have many visitors, but the Duke of Saxe-Coburg is coming for a ten days' stay and the Duke and Duchess of Connaught are also expected.

The Duchess of York remains with the Queen until the end of the month, when her place will be taken by Princess Christian.



The "Calais- Douvres" With Her Majesty On Board
Leaving Folkestone



The Queen's Train Leaving Boulogne

Taken from 'THE GRAPHIC' March 18th 1899.
Alan F. Taylor's collection.



Will anyone fill daddy's pipe?

Tune - "Has anyone seen my cat"

My daddy to the war is gone to fight the German,
And all our brave British soldiers are doing all they can,
But when the battle's o'er they lay tired on the field,
They need a smoke to cheer them so to you I make an appeal.

CHORUS

Will anyone fill daddy's pipe?
Will anyone fill daddy's pipe?
Smoke, smoke smoke bacca, bacca bacca,
Will anyone fill daddy's pipe?

Now Tommy Atkins loves a smoke as everyone does know,
He gets plenty of shot and shell but tobacco comes in slow,
So let us do our level best to cheer him on the field,
So once more to you again I make an appeal.

CHORUS

Now all you that stay at home and enjoy your evening pipe,
Think of your brother Tommy on the battlefield to-night,
The rain comes down, he's cold and wet through,
He needs a smoke to cheer him, so once again I appeal to you.

God save the King

Composed by the Folkestone Town Crier, Aged 65 and his little grandson aged 3.

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