



**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
www.folkestonehistory.org

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the March meeting we welcomed guest speaker Kevin Harvey who presented us with his talk entitled 'Historic Landscapes & Buildings of South East Kent in 3D'. Kevin said that he was inspired by 3D photography after going to Brian May's talk at the book festival in the Quarterhouse during November 2010. It was about Brian's book entitled, 'A Village Lost & Found'; it chronicles the history of a series of stereo photographs originally published in 1856.

Kevin then showed us 2D images and then the same images in 3D including: the North Downs, Summerhouse Hill; St. Dunstan's Church on the Marsh, St. Augustine's Church at Wood Church; Fairfield's 13th century church, St. Peter & St. Paul's at Newchurch with its leaning tower and Old Romney's church where a Walt Disney's Dr Syn film was made. Kevin said most of the Marsh churches were built on mounds to prevent flooding. Kevin continued with: Edith Nesbit's wooden marker, Dymchurch Church (which he said was the biggest church on the Marsh), St. Nicholas' Church at New Romney founded by Bishop Odo, the listening ears, Dungeness fishermen's beach and various boats, Littlestone's drinking fountain which was built to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, Martello Tower's No's 24 and 25, Lympne Castle, Studfall Roman fort; Hythe Canal, Hythe fishermen's beach, Sir John Moore statue; Sandgate Castle, Capel bronze age mound, Capel dish; Dover Western Docks & across to the Eastern Docks, a monument for Louis Bleriot the first man to fly across the channel, Dover Castle, Pharos & Saxon Church, the Western Heights, the Drop Redoubt and the Grand Shaft. After our break Kevin continued with images nearer to home starting with St. Martins Church and Samuel Plimsoll's head-stone; Sandy Lane, Shorncliffe Redoubt, the Canadian Cemetery, the Harvey Statue, the Bandstand, the Zig-Zag path, the Lower Leas Coastal Park, Leas Cliff Hall, Leas Lift, War Memorial, Parish Church, Bayle Pond, Step Short arch, Cairn Memorial; Pent Café; Fountains; Harbour Pier; East Cliff Pavilion, Inner Harbour, Rocksalt restaurant, the Mermaid, Coronation Parade, Sidney Cooper Weston Memorial, Shangri-La, Bradstone Avenue, a bird's eye view of the town, the Roman Villa dig; and views of the downs finishing with the Channel Tunnel Terminal.

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

At the April meeting we welcomed speaker member Nicholas Reed who gave us his presentation on 'Turner and Constable in Folkestone'. Nicholas, after showing a painting of Saltwood Castle, started at Folkestone and went through to Hythe.

Constable had two difficult sons who he brought to a boarding school at the Priory on the Bayle. When he came to visit them he would do some painting. On one visit (1833) he took his sons out in a boat and painted Folkestone from the sea, which was of the Parish church & Millfield Mill area. For most of the paintings Nicholas showed us close ups of detail and also showed contemporary images.

He said Turner did four water colours of smuggling at Folkestone and the next image was a water colour by Turner looking west from what is now the East Cliff Sands, followed by a Constable looking

towards Dover. He then showed contemporary images of the Priory on the Bayle, front and back which illustrated what Constable would have seen when his boys were at boarding school there. Nicholas said Constable's family sold six paintings to the British Museum in the 1880's.

The next painting was a Constable from the sea showing what is now the Road of Remembrance and the Parish church; then another one of the harbour in 1833, which is now in the Victoria and Albert museum; followed by another one of the harbour now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; then another Constable showing what was possibly the Kingsbridge with the Pent Stream flowing under it, the Parish church and Bayle Battery. Another Constable showed the harbour silted up with sailing ships, which is now in the British museum. The next one also by Constable looking east from the west beach showed the harbour, which is also in the British museum; followed by another Constable looking west showing Mill Point rock outcrop. This painting is in the Oldham Art Gallery. The next painting was another Constable showing a windmill at Folkestone which belonged to Mr Stace it stood on the east side of what is now Bradstone Road and is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Nicholas then showed us some examples of smock and post mills in Kent. They were followed by four Turner paintings of smugglers, which are all in the Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio. He followed on with a Turner painting which was owned by the late Lord Clark who lived in Saltwood Castle. Nicholas then showed us the only painting of Hythe which was by Constable looking from the Old London Road. To finish he returned us to the paintings of Saltwood Castle.

Fifty-eight people attended the meeting six of whom were visitors.

At the May meeting we welcomed guest speaker Brian Bamford who presented us with his talk and demonstration of 'A Soldier in Wellington's Army'. Major Bamford with a private and corporal made a dramatic approach by marching into the hall in full military uniform. Brian said they were dressed as King George III 1st Foot Guards who are still going today as the Grenadier Guards. He then proceeded in telling us about the uniform starting with the hat which was called a 'shako' it was taller at the front than the back this was so the enemy would think the soldiers were taller than they really were, and it had a white plume at the back. They also wore something round their necks called a 'stock' which was made of leather; following on with the tunic, Brian said it was red because in battle there was so much smoke from their muskets that if the tunic was a dark colour they would not be able to see one another. Their boots had square toes this was so they could be worn on either foot to get more wear out of them. These boots were designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel's father. Brian then spoke about the 'Brown Beth India Musket' and his two soldiers demonstrated the drill, how to load the musket and fix bayonets.

Brian then proceeded to tell us about the Napoleonic Wars in which Britain declared war against France on 18th May 1803. Napoleon fought about 60 battles and lost seven, mostly at the end. The great French dominion collapsed rapidly after the disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812. Napoleon was defeated in 1814, and then once more in 1815 at Waterloo after a brief return to power. The Allies then reversed all French gains since the Revolutionary Wars at the Congress of Vienna.

Brian finished by saying that his reenactment regiment practiced drill at Dover Castle for three hours one Sunday a month.

Forty-five people attended the meeting three of whom were visitors.

We would like to welcome new member Margaret Care.

Folkestone's New Sea Water Bathing Pool

The new bathing pool was part of the foreshore improvement scheme costing £100,000. The plans for the pool on the foreshore between the Southern Railway Pier and the Victoria Pier were approved by the Town Council on 3rd March 1936. It was built and owned by the Folkestone Bathing Company who was also the owner of the indoor swimming baths on the Lower Sandgate Road, which they took over from the Folkestone Bathing Establishment (later called Marina) in 1933. Trial holes were sunk

in the beach for the new pool and as a result of these the architect was satisfied that there were no engineering difficulties in the construction. By April 1936 the legal formalities between the Manor Office (owners of the foreshore) and the Folkestone Bathing Company had been completed. The pool was designed by T.H. Mawson of Lancaster to Olympic standards it was 165 feet long by 75 feet wide and the depths were 2 feet 6 inches at the shallow end and 10 feet where the diving boards and chutes were erected. The changing rooms had fresh water showers; there were also two cafes, twenty day bungalows and a car park. The pool held 364,000 gallons of salt water which was steam heated and kept at a temperature of 70° Fahrenheit. Special provision was made for Filtration, Purification and Aeration by installing the very latest scientific and hygienic plant giving more than 100% of the requirements of the Ministry of Health. The pool costing £30,000 was built by local builders, Messrs Otto Marx and work started on 3rd April. Otto Marx were instructed to use local labour and if possible materials produced locally.

The Folkestone Herald for 6th June 1936 reported that; a delightful new kind of Bathing Beauty competition was being arranged by McIlroy's (local drapers) in connection with the Gala Opening of the pool. All the entries were in teams of five and were open to five towns in Kent: Folkestone, Hythe, Dover, Maidstone and Ashford. The Folkestone Herald for 20th June reported that Lord Radnor accompanied by the Deputy-Mayor with officials of the Folkestone Bathing Company inspected the construction work of the new pool.

The Folkestone Open-Air Sea Water Bathing pool was opened on 11th July 1936 taking just 79 days to build. It was opened by Mr Ralph Lynn, the famous stage and screen comedian in the presence of Lord Radnor, the Deputy-Mayor and Mayoress (Alderman and Mrs A. Castle) who were welcomed by Mr Wilcock, Chairman of the Folkestone Bathing Company Ltd. Miss Anna Pollock made the first dive into the pool, she was diving champion of North Scotland. Diving displays were given by three members of the Folkestone Swimming Club, Messrs E.E. Harris, C Roberts and John Comer. An inter-town swimming race was the first competitive event to take place in the pool. Teams of four men and women entered from Canterbury, Maidstone, Dover, Ashford and Folkestone. The Canterbury team won the ladies race with Folkestone second. Maidstone won the men's race with Canterbury second. The prizes were presented by Mr Ralph Lynn.

A team of 8 physical Culture girls gave a delightful display, but owing to bad weather, McIlroy's "White Star" team of mannequins, which included Miss Winifred Scott, Beauty Queen of Scotland was postponed. However, during the afternoon the band of the H.M. Coldstream Guards played a number of tuneful selections.

Mr Edward "Ted" Brazier was pool attendant from when it opened in 1936 until he retired in 1970 aged 65 years. The pool became the headquarters of the Folkestone Swimming Club; it was also used by the schools in the area for teaching their pupils to swim and also to hold their swimming galas. It became the official Channel Swimming Headquarters when the first International Cross Channel Swimming Race was organised by the Daily Mail in 1950. Throughout July and August of that year half the pool was allocated to the general public and half to Channel trainees - the division being made by roping off the two areas. Hundreds of holiday-makers visited the pool daily to view the training procedure and speculate on the swimmers' chances. The race was such a success that another one was planned by the Daily Mail for 1951 to celebrate the Festival of Britain. The Channel Swimmer, Sam Rockett, who was the first Briton across in the 1950 race, became a training supervisor for the *Daily Mail* Channel Race in 1951, and was made assistant manager of the pool by Mr William Nash, manager of the Folkestone Open-Air Bathing Pool. There wasn't a cross channel swimming race in 1952, but in 1953 Billy Butlin, the holiday-camp king, asked Sam if he could use the Folkestone Pool as his Channel Swimming Headquarters and a race sponsored by him was organised. Two more channel swimming races followed, one in 1954 and the other in 1955, both organised by Billy Butlin.

In 1963 the Folkestone Bathing Company put the swimming pool and skating rink (which they had built in 1955) up for sale. The Folkestone Council Amenities Development Committee agreed to purchase both the swimming pool and skating rink for £20,000 at their December meeting (1963). In

the early months of 1964 the Council spent £6,000 on repairs and re-decoration of the pool and Ted Brazier became the pool superintendent. The official re-opening took place on Saturday 23rd May 1964 by the Mayor, Councillor H.J.V. Johnson. Six members of Kent County Constabulary frogmen team gave a diving demonstration at the opening gala and four members of the Police Cadets' life-saving team gave a demonstration of the dangers of an unskilled swimmer trying to rescue a drowning person. They showed the correct and incorrect methods of approach, how to lift the body from the water, and artificial respiration.

In 1978 Shepway District Council gave the pool up as a dead loss and proposed to fill it in and make a skateboard rink on the site. However Jimmy Godden saved the pool from its fate, by modernising it and it re-opened in 1979. In June 1981 Mr Godden acquired the freehold of the sea front (16 acres) and the swimming pool was filled in November 1981 with the accompanying buildings demolished except for one which was converted into the Roundabout Café which was formerly the entrance to the pool. The area was covered with tarmac to accommodate a Sunday Market. In 2006 Roger de Haan purchased the seafront from Mr Godden and in 2009 the Roundabout Café was demolished.

