



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

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the December meeting we welcomed back guest speaker and author Chris McCooey who presented us his talk on 'Smuggling on the South Coast in the 18th Century.

Chris was born and raised in Kent; he was educated at Oxford University after which he spent ten years in Japan where he taught English. After teaching there for 10 years and marrying a Japanese girl he spent one year studying in California before coming home in 1986 to Southborough, Tunbridge Wells to fulfil his lifetime ambition to be a writer. He has written many books including *Kent Scandals – Sensational, Salacious and Sad*, *Kent Women – Famous Infamous and Unsung*, *Kent Characters – Wacky – Weird and Wonderful*, *Kent Heroes – Brave – Resourceful and True*, *Sussex Heroes and Sussex Characters* and *Smuggling on the South Coast in the 18th Century*.

Chris said public opinion towards smuggling on the South Coast was accepted, but in the 18th Century the government decided to do something about it so they decided to stop wool being exported it should stay in this country, they were met by worried farmers getting the best price. 18th Century Britain became a strong trading country so it needed a strong navy to protect our trade. The government taxed luxury items such as tea, tobacco, brandy and spirits to pay for the navy. This increased smuggling, so the government employed 69 riding officers around the south of England to try and prevent smuggling, but they were not very effective.

In 1815 the government introduced Coast Blockade because the threat from Napoleon had diminished so they were stationed in the Martello Towers, 1830-1840.

Chris went on to tell us about the Goudhurst affair; The Poole Custom House Robbery; The Charter and Galley Murders, and The Chichester Trial.

He finished by saying the book had only just been published by Amberley and that it was his thesis when at University 41 years ago.

Fifty-three people attended the meeting two of whom were visitors

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 May 19th 1804, when the long-awaited orders were given. The first sod was turned at Seabrook on October 30th 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 then showed us some pictures of Hythe Venetian Fate 2013 they were followed by 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, 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.

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

We would like to welcome new member Mrs Diana Gilee-Duthoit.

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of Ted Friend on December 12th 2013 aged 91 years.

Battle of Britain Diary Folkestone 1940 continued

September 1st Two attacks launched during the late afternoon on Hawkinge and Lympne by a mixed force of fifty aircraft. Sgt. G. Allard of No. 85 Squadron was involved in combat over Folkestone. He shot down one Dornier in flames, and also got another which crashed in flames on the beach. He then forced landed at Lympne after being attacked himself. His Hurricane was later bombed by a single raider, killing one airman and wounding another while they were repairing the machine. Allard also shot down a Bf. 109 on his last patrol of the day, which landed at the water's edge. A Hurricane of No. 253 Squadron was shot down north of Dungeness at 2.30 p.m., the pilot being killed.

September 2nd Air activity throughout the area all day. At 08.45 a.m. an ambulance was sent to Hill House, Stowting where a British pilot had crashed and was injured, taken to Willesborough Hospital. A British ack-ack shell was reported at Mount's Bottom Meadow, Elham at 8.45 p.m. At Hythe an enemy fighter was shot down on the rifle range of the Small Arms School at 8.30 a.m., pilot was later arrested by the Army. An enemy bomber was shot down by ack-ack fire into the sea off Hythe at 8.15 a.m., and an enemy fighter crashed at Saltwood just previously. A Polish pilot forced landed at Horton Priory at 8.30 a.m., machine was badly damaged, pilot uninjured. During the afternoon a British fighter crashed on the railway line, a ¼ mile from Appledore station (pilot O.K.); a Belgian pilot parachuted to safety in the same area, plane not located – all incidents approximately 1.30 p.m. Bombs dropped at New Romney late afternoon and a British aircraft crashed near Bell's Corner, pilot slightly injured.

September 3rd Two Hurricanes from No. 303 (Polish) Squadron were shot down during the morning raid, one landing near the Tenterden-Wittersham road. At night reports were received of flares and lights seen over Hythe and New Romney about 9.15 p.m.; stationary white lights, red flares and green lights dropping into the sea were reported. Bombs were dropped at New Romney (nine h.e's) and Burmarsh (incendiary bombs). German spies landed early morning – captured.

September 4th At 9.34 a.m. bombs were dropped west of Lympne, and at Sellinge and Horton Priory; Lympne aerodrome shot-up by fighters. Roads were damaged at New Inn Green and Sellinge; nine houses and the church at the latter village were also damaged, but no damage to buildings at the aerodrome. One UXB reported at Harden Field, New Romney at 12.00 noon. A Hurricane from No. 111 Squadron was shot down 6 miles off Folkestone by Bf. 109's at 9.25 a.m. Two Bf.109's were shot down over Folkestone by No. 111 Squadron, one of the pilots being rescued by German A.S.R. During the evening bombs were dropped at Burmarsh between 9.00 p.m. and midnight. A 'Gas Alert' was issued at Folkestone, Elham, Hythe, New Romney and Dungeness at 8.11 p.m.

September 5th Attacks developed about 10.00 a.m. on airfields, including Lympne. No. 72 Squadron was still using Hawkinge, and encountered Bf. 109's while on patrol at 27,000 feet during their first patrol of the day. Enemy fighters were shot down by Hurricanes and Spitfires from Nos. 234, 111, 43 and 501 Squadrons in the area. During the evening more red flares, some changing to white, were observed rising from the sea off Hythe between 9.30 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. One bomb fell near the junction of Dymchurch Road and Burmarsh Road at 9.30 p.m. Pilot Officer D.C. Winter of 72 Squadron baled out too low when his Spitfire crashed at Covert Wood, Elham at 2.25 p.m.

September 6th Two attacks on Folkestone carried out during the day, Cheriton was machine gunned during the morning, and a child was killed. At 1.00 p.m., a heavy raid crossed Dungeness for London, intercepted by No. 1 Squadron. Bombs were dropped at New Romney, on the road to the Emergency landing ground from the A.259; six UXB's reported near Middley Cottages, and two more on the edge of the A259. Seven bombs dropped near St. Mary's Bay post office; two bungalows damaged, electricity supply temporary cut off. At 6.00 p.m. further attack over Folkestone, bombs dropped at Ladbroke Farm, Acrise and intense aerial activity over Hawkinge. At 8.10 p.m. Incendiary bombs dropped near Lydd Station and Coastguard lookout. Two Bf.109's were shot down off Dungeness by No. 43 Squadron about 9.30 p.m., and another was downed at Hawkinge. At the airfield a Bf. 109 landed when it ran out of fuel.

September 7th Hawkinge received another heavy raid at 11.30 a.m., when a shelter was hit and six persons killed, including four women and the local policeman. Eight UXB's confirmed, and two houses demolished in the village. One Bf. 109 shot down off Folkestone, and another near Dungeness. Several bombs dropped opposite the Martello Tower at New Romney at 5.45 p.m.; four UXB's on A.259 road; three houses badly damaged, three other slightly damaged, water main hit. Invasion alert issued, cancelled next morning.

September 8th During mid-day raids, a Spitfire from No. 41 Squadron was shot down towards Dover at 12.05 p.m., pilot being killed. A Hurricane of No. 501 Squadron shot down a Bf. 109 off the coast at 1.00 p.m.

September 9th Area again shelled as cover for enemy convoy sailing between Calais and Boulogne.

September 10th Six small raids crossed coast at Dungeness for Biggin Hill area, only one got through fighter screen.

September 11th Second and third raids of the day came in over Folkestone during mid-afternoon, enemy convoy including several large transports seen making from Calais to Boulogne –

appeared to be escorted by warships. Hurricane of No. 46 Squadron shot down at 3.50 p.m. north of Dungeness. No 1 R.C.A.F. Hurricane shot down and crashed near Romney at 4.19, pilot was uninjured. Spitfire from No. 91 Squadron forced landed at Hawkinge after combat with Bf. 109 at 4.40 p.m., repaired and shot down again at 6.20 over Gravesend.

September 12th No. 72 Squadron, formerly operating from Hawkinge, withdrawn to Biggin Hill. Just before 1.00 p.m., two high explosives dropped in field $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Woodchurch, followed by two incendiary bombs, one of which injured a sheep.

September 13th Bombs dropped in Park Farm area, Folkestone, also on Golf Course at 2.50 p.m. Several wagons came adrift from a freight train on the Elham Valley line at Lyminge, smashing through the crossing gates at Elham, despite attempts to apply the brakes. Bombs dropped at Pound Hill and Sandy Lane, Fittenden at 3.25 p.m., six more at King's Wood, at 5.00 p.m. During morning six high explosives dropped in Marsh Quarter, south of Goudhurst, and on Course Home Farm, near Cranbrook.

September 14th During the night bombs dropped at New Romney, large number of incendiary bombs near Old Romney, two h.e.'s on road west of Howell Railway Crossing – line blocked; UXB's dropped in area of Wheelgate Farm. Two canisters of incendiary bombs dropped in field off Kennett Lane, Stanford at 3.45 a.m., fire service called out to deal with 80 -100 incendiary bombs at Hayton Manor, also two oil bombs and craters from high explosives found near Old Chapel Cottage, Stanford; four more oil bombs at Pent Farm, Newington. Seven h.e.'s dropped at 2.50 p.m. near New Romney, three more at Woodchurch about an hour later, poultry houses slightly damaged. At 5.20 p.m., eight h.e.'s near Old Harbour Inn, New Romney, north of A.259. At 10.48 p.m. explosion reported N.W. of Witterham. Three UXB's near Hernden Farm Cottages, which had to be evacuated.



Mk1 Pillbox disguised to look like a café, the Leas