

FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No. 40 – Autumn 2009

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F. Taylor

At the June meeting we welcomed our guest speaker Roger McKenna who gave us his talk on Leonard Cheshire VC. Roger told us Leonard was the son of Professor Geoffrey Cheshire, DCL, LLD, FBA, a barrister, academic and influential writer on English law. He was born in Chester but brought up at his parents' home near Oxford. He was educated at the Dragon School, Oxford Stowe School and Merton College, Oxford. He graduated in Jurisprudence in 1939. After the outbreak of World War II, Leonard applied for a commission in the Royal Air Force and was initially posted to 102 Squadron. He became Wing Commander of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, and followed Wing Commander Guy Gibson as commander of the 617 Dambusters Squadron. He was nearing the end of his fourth tour of duty in July 1944, having completed a total of 100 missions, when he was awarded the VC. He pioneered a new method of marking enemy targets, flying in at a very low level in the face of strong defences. In four years of fighting against the opposition he maintained a standard of outstanding personal achievement. On one occasion he flew his P-51 Mustang in slow figures of 8 above a target obscured by low cloud, to act as a bomb-aiming mark for his squadron. Cheshire was, in his day, both the youngest Group Captain in the service and, following his VC, the most decorated. On his 101st mission, he was official British observer of the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki from 'The Great Artiste', an event which profoundly changed him. On his return from the mission he left the RAF and went home to his house, Le Court in Hampshire. Cheshire learned nursing skills and in 1948 he founded the Leonard Cheshire Foundation charity, now styled "Leonard Cheshire", which continues his work. It provides support at home, or runs homes, for disabled people throughout the world. On 15th July 1941 Cheshire married an American actress, Constance Binney, but the marriage was short-lived. Then, on 5th April 1959, in Mumbai's Catholic Cathedral, he married Sue Ryder, also the founder of a charity. From this marriage he had two children, Jeremy and Elizabeth. In 1991 he was given a life peerage, sitting as a cross-bencher. He lived through his final illness Motor Neurone Disease and died of heart failure on 31st July 1992. Queen Elizabeth II paid personal tribute to him in her Christmas message in December 1992. In the BBC poll to find the 100 Greatest Britons, Cheshire attained position 31. His Victoria Cross is displayed at the Imperial War Museum, London. Sixty-three people attended the meeting three of whom were visitors.

The photographic exhibition which was in a shop at 6 Rendezvous Street was removed and put in the Leas Cliff Hall for the Multi Cultural Festival, Thursday 11th June it was then returned to the Rendezvous shop on Friday. On Saturday I opened the shop for the Multi Cultural Festival selling our books and postcards etc., my takings £66.50. It was an interesting day as I shared the shop with Satori Images. In the basement there was a ten minute video playing on Jimmy Hendrix Experience to Folkestone. His base player was an ex Harvey Grammar Schoolboy Noel Redding. Jimmy Hendrix one of the great guitar rock legends who played in Folkestone during the 1960s.

On Wednesday 17th June twenty-two members gathered at the Langhorne Hotel for a coffee morning.

The photographic exhibition on 'Old Sandgate, Seabrook & Shorncliffe Camp' held at St. Andrews Church Hall on Saturday 20th June was a great success. The DVD's Memories of Folkestone 1900-1970 were playing continuously from 10.30am to 4pm and proved very popular. At the end of the event the donations received enabled us to support Kent Air Ambulance with a sum of £150.

At the July Meeting we welcomed our member, speaker and author, Vince Williams who gave us his talk on the 'History of Cheriton.' Vince divided his talk into two parts, part one, a brief history of Cheriton and part two Cheriton shops past and present. He started by showing two old maps, 1769 and 1908. He said the name Cheriton was derived from the Old English words "*Cirice tun*" meaning "Church farmstead" or farmstead with or by a church", whilst the parish church, St. Martin's, near the top of Horn Street is the oldest surviving building in Cheriton. He went on to show us an early picture of All Souls Church with just farm land all round it. Vince said, Cheriton up to the end of the 19th century had been very much an agricultural parish. However with the growth of Folkestone and Sandgate as holiday resorts, and the proximity of Shorncliffe Camp provided new industries and employment. There were in total 39 laundries. The first vicar of All Soul's the Rev. R.E. Johnston coined the phrase: "*Cheriton Street is the wash-tub of Folkestone*" when he described Cheriton's new found industry. Vince went on to speak about the Unity Inn, Ashley Mill, the Village Hall, Cheriton Electric Theatre, the Dormobile works, Nickolls transport and the Baptist Church in Cheriton. This was followed by part two, 'Cheriton shops past and present.'

Seventy-seven people attended the meeting nine of whom were visitors.

Annual Outing Saturday 11th July: This year 47 members and friends went by coach to Westerham and Chartwell. We arrived at Westerham about 10 am where we stayed until 1.30 pm. Some people visited the church of St. Mary which is a splendid example of 13th, 14th, and 15th century work. It has a tower with spire containing a clock and 8 bells: there are brasses with effigies and several stained glass windows, including one to the memory of General James Wolfe. General Wolfe was born here on January 2nd 1727, (he was the victor of Quebec, September 13th 1759).

After lunch we moved on to Chartwell arriving at 2.45 pm. where there was lots to see, the main attraction being the house which Sir Winston Churchill purchased in 1922. Apart from World War Two Churchill spent as much time here as he could until his death in 1965.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Don and Shirley Gregory for making all the arrangements for a splendid outing.

At the August meeting we welcomed Roger Rawlings who gave us a talk about the National Coastwatch and their station at the East Cliff. Roger told us the National Coastwatch was made up of volunteers and that they were formed after a number of Coast Guard stations around the country were closed in 1994. The first coastwatch station opened at the Lizard Peninsular after there had been an incident there. There are now 38 stations. He said the Coast Guard station at Dover could not see the Warren or East Cliff Sands because their vision was blocked by Shakespeare Cliff. Roger went on to say their job was to search and watch the English Channel and report any incidents to the appropriate people i.e. coast guards, police or lifeboat stations. He went on to say how they had started in the year 2000 at the old coast guard station, moving on to Martello Tower No3 then in 2002, to their present home an old WWII gun emplacement. In 1967 due to the volume of shipping in the channel the Government introduced a voluntary separation zone. After a three ship incident in January and February 1971 between the *Texaco Caribbean* the *Brandenburg* and *Niki* with a total loss of 51 lives, the Government made the traffic separation zone compulsory. From 1999 all ships over 300 tons have to radio Dover Coast Guards giving details of where they are from, where they bound and details of their cargo.

Sixty-six people attended the meeting of whom four were visitors

As you know the Folkestone and District Local History Society is a very successful and forward looking Society, both with its monthly meetings, talks and social events.

However, in order to continue in this vein we would like to take this opportunity to invite more members to participate in the management of the society by becoming committee/officers. The involvement required would be attendance at six committee meetings through the year and occasional assistance at monthly meetings. I know of your continued interest and support, therefore I hope you will consider the above.

The A.G.M. is on October 7th at 8 pm at the Holy Trinity Church Hall. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Kind regards,
Alan F. Taylor.

Dates for your diary: There will be a coffee morning at the Langhorne Hotel 16th September 2009 at 11 am.

Christmas Dinner at the Indoor Bowls Club, Cheriton Road, Folkestone on Wednesday 16th December 7pm for 7.30 pm, cost and menu to follow.

We would like to welcome our new members: Anne Sweetapple and Mr & Mrs Herbert

Bray's Patent Traction Engine

This engine is the invention of Mr. Bray, of Folkestone, and possesses advantages over all others now in use for its simplicity and usefulness. The wheels of the traction-engines adapted for ploughing or dragging weights over soft ground have not had sufficient hold upon the ground when constructed in the ordinary manner. By Bray's patented improvement the wheels are constructed with teeth or blades, which enter the ground and obtain a firm hold. The teeth are made to slide or move in and out by an eccentric motion, so that they clean themselves of the soil and are again ready to enter the ground, the smooth surface of the wheels being also cleaned by means of self-acting scrapers. The eccentric capable of adjustment, so that the projection of the teeth may be varied, and thus the wheels may at pleasure be made to act like ordinary wheels. The adjustment enables the wheels to run upon hard ground when required: the extent to which the blades enter the ground may be varied by shifting the eccentric so as to cause the point of greatest protrusion to be at some other point. Experiments have been made on Broadmead Farm, Folkestone. The engine was set to work three ploughs in frame, over a light loamy soil, the ground rather wet: the quality of work done in a day of ten hours was at the rate of six acres, at a cost of not more than 4s. per acre. The following certificate was given immediately after the work was done:-

November 29, 1857.

Sir,- The result of your day's experiment on Broadmead Farm has more than answered our expectation, and we have no hesitation in saying that the land was as effectually ploughed as if it had been done by horses.

To Mr. Bray.

(Signed)

(JOHN JEFFEREY, Broadmead Farm.

(HUNT JEFFEREY, Wallin Farm.

The next experiment was drawing a load of ten tons up Dover-hill, a gradient varying from 1 in 7 to 1 in 11: it went up with perfect ease, and also came down with the same load. For agricultural purposes it is intended to draw six ploughs, drive a thrashing or other machine, and as a fire-engine it is invaluable, steam being raised in forty minutes; it is steered with perfect ease, and only requires two men to work it; the consumption of fuel is one shilling per hour. The engine is an 8-horse, and is fitted with Baron's patent cup-surface boiler, and is worked to a pressure of 60lb. to the square inch. The weight of the engine is six tons.

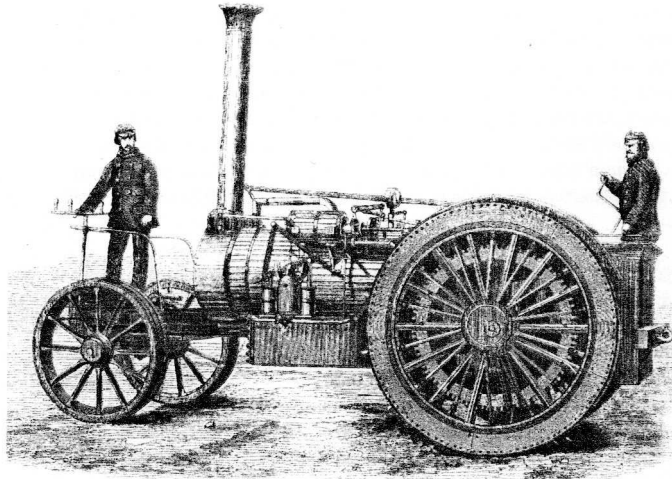
It has generally been supposed that an engine of that weight would sink into soft ground, but experiments have proved that the greatest depth it sank has been three-quarters of an inch.. It has been estimated that a great saving would be effected by farmers having an engine of this construction, as it would be capable of going upon the land, taking or fetching home an immense quantity of manure or crops, the wagons only requiring a slight alteration, and if required to run upon hard roads its speed could be increased at pleasure.

For India it is particularly applicable, as it would convey over the country in a day of ten hours 300 men, with baggage, stores, etc., fifty miles; the advantage and saving would be immense, as a train of artillery might be transported, and the horses would then be ready for work on arrival at their destination. If such an engine had been employed during the late mutiny in India, how many valuable lives might have been saved.

The accompanying Engraving of Bray's Traction-engine is from a photograph by Venables, of Folkestone.

By direction of the War Department a series of experiments were carried out on Tuesday afternoon, in order to test the efficiency of Bray's adjusting tooth traction-wheel steam-carriage, for the purposes of locomotion on common roads, and for the conveyance of heavy loads. The experiments were witnessed by Captain Boxer, Colonel Pickering, Colonel Abbott, J. Anderson Esq., and other members of the Ordnance Select Committee, and the result has proved the superiority of the invention as compared with the various descriptions of traction-carriages previously tried for Government service. The carriage was loaded with three 68-pounder guns, of a total weight of twenty tons, and steamed away from the Royal Arsenal, past the Royal Artillery Barracks, with the utmost ease, although this portion of the journey was a considerable incline. The route was continued across Woolwich common, and down the New road to the Arsenal, at an average speed of two miles and a half per hour. The machinery is served by one of Barron's cut service-boilers, the consumption of fuel being three quarters of a cwt. of oven-coke per hour. The engine is of eight horse power, and by the application, when necessary, of an instrument termed a tooth to the wheels, the vehicle will steam over soft ground without sinking, an advantage peculiar to this invention, and which is essential, should the carriages be used, as stated, for the removal of heavy guns on the Arsenal marshes.

*This article appeared in the London Illustrated News, May 29, 1858.
Taken from Alan F. Taylor's collection*



Bray's Patent Traction Engine

Registered Charity No. 295994