

August 2011

Volume 2, Issue 2

Chairman's Message

It's good to report further progress in this edition of the Newsletter, including agreement with the Village hall on the use of the Mary Elgar room, where we now have three six foot cupboards to store some of the village archives. We hope shortly to do the quality check on the Monumental Inscriptions project, and we have done a number of interviews with old inhabitants (one was me), and will be publishing some results fairly soon. Indeed we need to do that fairly quickly to claim a grant from Kent Archaeological Society towards the cost of recording equipment.

I hope that by now most of you will have viewed the Database, which Barry is adding to week by week. It is drawing responses and enquiries from round the globe. Among recent visitors to the village (and now EHS members) were Liz Stephen from Nottingham and Susan Baumann from Canada, with their husbands.

Liz was looking for her ancestors, the Braggs, and Bryan and I were able to show her places associated with the family, including my house, where three of them died violently on the morning of 30 September 1846. A day of mixed emotions for Liz!

Susan was looking for Rucks, and while she and her husband were lunching at the King's Arms, I was able to produce a copy of a probate inventory showing that Richard Ruck was landlord there in 1705. After lunch we had an amazing chance encounter in the churchyard with her distant cousin Nik Emery, from Sheppey, who had already found a Ruck tombstone of 1688, one of Elham's earliest.

Flare Path

Eleven intrepid EHS members hit the high spots of London when they attended a matinee performance of the Terrance Rattigan play "Flare Path" in May.

The stellar cast, including Sienna Miller, James Purefoy and Sheridan Smith, was not the only attraction...the tribute to the collective spirit of the wartime bomber crews and their partners was what we had really gone to see. And we were not disappointed. Rattigan's genius for barely expressed emotion held the first part back a little but we all felt that in the second half, the refusal of the characters to give in to their feelings, had one or two of us biting our lips or holding back a tear.

The play was written in the darkest days of W.W.2 and was based on the author's own experiences flying dangerous missions in RAF bombers as a rear-gunner – the most dangerous position. The programme told us that the survival rate of those who flew with Bomber Command was less than 50%. We held this in mind as the play unfolded in the gorgeous little Theatre Royal in the Haymarket.

Internet research had provided us with a terrific lunchtime venue – Le Troisieme in Panton Street - very French both in menu and service and reasonable too. Catching the rush hour train home, however, was an "interesting" experience that we are glad not to have to do on a regular basis. Rattigan is certainly in vogue at the moment but I think we'll wait for a production with a relevant historical theme before we hit the high spots again!



Henry's War – Oh what a night to remember!



On Friday 24th of June a capacity audience of over one hundred people were kept spell bound by Henry Shackleton as he told of his early life living with his mother at Rhodes Minnis, his time at The Harvey Grammar school, joining the RAF, where he went on to train RCAF pilots in Canada and finally becoming a Lancaster bomber pilot in a Pathfinder squadron. This is when Henry's war took a turn for the worse as he was shot down over Berlin in January 1944. The audience in Elham Village Hall felt all sorts of emotions throughout the evening as Henry eloquently recalled the humorous antics of his fellow RCAF crew as they carried his mother's Austin 7 into the Officer's Mess, as well as telling us of the sad loss of four of his crew over Berlin and the dark days whilst he was a POW in Stalag Luft III and Stalag Luft IIIa.

The evening was made all the more special for Henry as in the audience was another ex-RAF aircrew member Mr. Arthur Mummery of The Street, Kingston. They both recalled events during WWII as they looked over the exhibition which had been put together by Henry and the EHS team. Arthur was a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner on another Lancaster

squadron, whose aircraft on one raid was actually bombed by the plane flying above. Although badly damaged the pilot skilfully brought Arthur and nearly all of the crew back safely back to England. Apparently one member of the crew unsurprisingly thought the plane was going down so bailed out and was subsequently taken POW.

Also in the audience were members of Henry's family who now have a wonderful record of 'Henry's War'!

The "buzz" of the evening did not stop on Friday night as Henry and the EHS were the talk of the Cosy Tearooms on Saturday and the Elham Farmer's Market on Sunday.



Telegram written by Margaret Smith, Elham's Post Master, advising Henry's mother that he was a POW

Forthcoming Events – 2011

Tuesday 9th August 10 am **Kent Battle of Britain Museum, Hawkinge**

Friday 26th August 2pm (meet in The Square at 1.15) **The "Grand" Tour**, Guided tour of the Grand Hotel, Folkestone, with cream tea - £7.75 per person

Sunday 11th September 2pm (meet in The Square at 1.30) **Return Visit to Tappington Hall, Denton**
Fascinating talk and tour, and Sue Clough's wonderful homemade cake

Friday 23rd September 8pm, Elham Village Hall - **Steam in Elham with Richard Moffatt**
Richard's family, the Pegden's and the Steam Engine Rallies of the 50s & 60s

Friday 28th October 8pm, Elham Village Hall - **History in Folkestone**. A talk by Leslie Hardy and Linda Pierce – Oral Historians and a chance to compare the Folkestone experience with our own progress

Early next year

A talk by Derek Boughton

A guided tour of Canterbury Cathedral

A talk about the Folkestone Leas Lift

We would welcome suggestions and ideas for other talks and visits

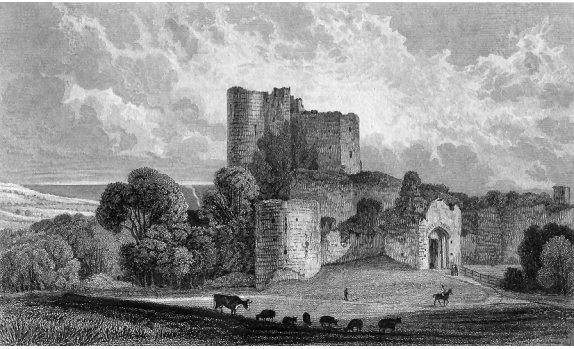
KAS Historic Buildings Committee and the Wye Rural Museum Trust

are running a One-Day Workshop on Building Interpretation and Recording

on Saturday 10th September 2011, 10am - 4pm at The Agricultural Museum, Brook (near Wye). Cost £12

For further details & to book (before 31st August) see Kent Archaeology Society website www.kentarchaeology.org.uk

Visit to Saltwood Castle



We felt wonderfully privileged to be shown around Saltwood Castle by Jane Clark herself. The weather was surprisingly good and the grounds looked at their best. The chance to view this historic house, home to the late Hon. Alan Clark M.P., and his famous collection of vintage cars, fulfilled our expectations.

We'd done our homework before we went so we knew that a castle had been built by Aesc, son of Hengist, King of Kent on this site in 488. Records show that King Canute signed over the deeds to the Church in 1026 and thereafter there was joint occupation by priests, notably the Archbishop of Canterbury,

and garrison commanders. It held a commanding position dominating the area from the coast to Canterbury and Capel. The castle is known as the site where the plot was hatched to assassinate Thomas Becket (1118-1170) but more recently it was home to the art historian Lord Clark of Saltwood (1903-1983) and his son Alan Clark who wrote his famous diaries during his time in Margaret Thatcher's government.

To be able to wander the castle rooms, with their panelled walls and lavish artworks, while sunlight shafted through ancient windows was a quiet pleasure, and I was impressed with the huge diversity of the art collection started by Lord and Lady Clark.

Equally impressive was the cream tea which rounded off the visit after we had been privy to a view of Mrs Clark's new kitchen garden – this was obviously her current pride and joy, despite living in such a delightful setting!



Elham's Red Telephone Box

As we went to press for our May EHS Newsletter we mentioned that our red BT telephone box was looking rather sad and that volunteers had offered to refurbish it. John Goodson had the bright idea of raising our concerns with BT themselves and after a few emails he was contacted by Mark Johnson from BT Payphones who used Google Earth to view the telephone box and agreed it needed urgent action to restore it. John's first email actually went to the BT Director responsible for payphones which certainly accelerated our refurbishment plans as the BT contractors arrived within just a few days and look what happened!



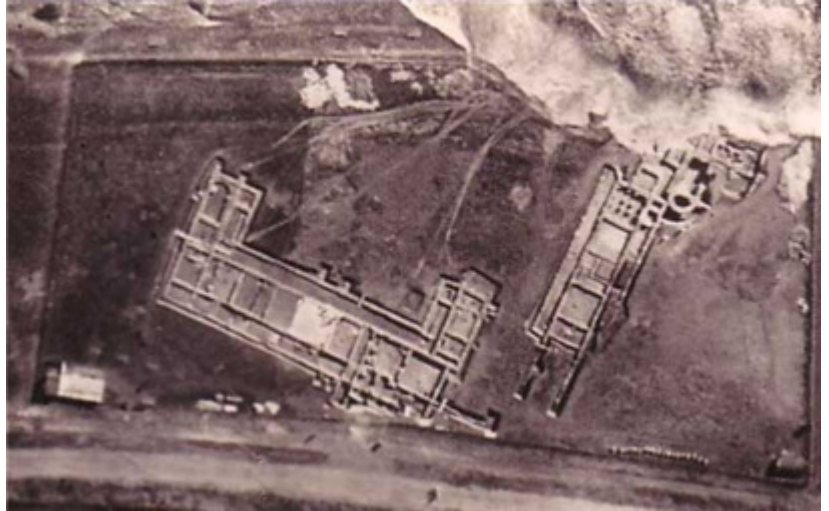
Thank you John for volunteering to organise the refurbishment of what is a prominent and useful part of our village. A few years ago BT were planning to replace it with a modern telephone box and so we are very fortunate to have this iconic old style red one. Now that it is "Listed" let's hope that we can keep it looking this good for years to come, so if you see someone trying to set light to it or spray paint it (all of which has happened here) then please deter them!

What should we turn our attention to next I wonder – a working party to refurbish The Well?

A Town Unearthed (Community Archaeology in Folkestone) - a talk by Andrew Richardson of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust

Those of us who cannot manage to get down into an excavation with our trowels in hand, were glad of the opportunity to live vicariously when Andrew Richardson came to talk to us about the Roman Villa dig on the East Cliff in Folkestone.

He started his talk by outlining the work that had initially been carried out by S. A. Winbolt, with the help of his daughter Rosalind, on the initial excavation in 1924. This, although it uncovered much of the Roman building, had been a quick dig, and much, he felt,



had been lost. In the intervening years a great deal of the structure, mostly the bathhouse, has been lost over the cliff, due to erosion. Apparently many finds have been picked up from the beach beneath the cliff and sometimes items, especially tiles, are still found. Some tiles carry the inscription CLASIS BRIT or CLBR which indicate that they were the property of the British Fleet and may indicate that the Commander of the Channel Fleet, who was also the Imperial Administrator for Wealden Iron Industries, may have lived in the villa, or at least had a hand in the building of the Roman structure.

The site was left exposed during the war and later filled in by the local authority but was dug again in 1989 when evidence was found of a prehistoric settlement beneath the Villa confirming Winbolt's discoveries of several important Iron Age cremation burials which had established the sites early origins. At that time many amphora and quern stones were found on the beach, and last year's excavation seems to confirm that the site was an important quern production centre during the late Iron Age and early Roman periods.

Andrew Richardson was happy to answer our many questions and, although he couldn't say with complete certainty whether the Villa had been lived in by a Roman official or a high status Briton, he was able to tell us about the coins dated AD360 found on the site of a second villa and the indications for an Iron Age timber house. He said he felt certain that the site shows every indication of constant occupation since before the land bridge with the continent was lost.

Members of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust are working in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University College and the Folkestone People's History Centre to carry out this year's dig. They spent time over the winter sorting and recording the finds made last year and Andrew Richardson explained their hopes of excavating areas that have not yet been looked at on this site over the summer. They are seeking volunteers to help them, not just with the digging, but with other tasks like the washing and the careful recording of the finds, and showing visitors around the site. If you would like to join them in any capacity log on to their website, or email them at townunearthed@canterbury.ac.uk or better still, pop down and take a look for yourself.

Andrew Richardson offered to take us on a guided tour of the site towards the end of July – so we will keep you posted about this.

Famous People... Leonard and Thomas Digges

KENT'S BRILLIANT MATHEMATICIANS

This part of Kent has been home to many famous people but have you come across the man known as “the Einstein of the Tudor Age”, who was responsible for laying the foundations of the modern sciences of surveying and meteorology, as well as being a noted mathematician?

In fact, he was a close neighbour, born at Digges Court, Barham, and his name was Leonard Digges. He came from a wealthy and ancient family who owned the Manor of Barham and was born around 1520. We know that he was admitted to Lincoln’s Inn in 1537 but although it is assumed he attended a University, probably Oxford, there is no proof of this.

In 1547 he purchased the manor Ancient Wootton Court had been Canterbury in AD 800 by Cenulf, and the church were supposed to in the 12th century, but it had Reformation. Leonard lived here (born 1546), and together they mathematicians of the 16th refracting telescope thirty years Leonard was an Anglican who against Queen Mary and the for treason and saved from the Earl of Lincoln) to whom he “*Prognosticat of Right Good Effect*”, 1553, which was essentially an almanac with astronomical information on how to tell the time at night from the stars and describing instruments for observation. Known as an architect and a master of fortification he applied mathematics to surveying, navigation and gunnery, and invented the instrument we know as the theodolite.



Having given his son his early education, Leonard died when Thomas was only 14 and he grew up under the guardianship of the philosopher John Dee from whom he received advanced mathematical instruction. Thomas decided he wanted to continue his fathers’ work and went on to publish his scientific works with some of his own observations included.

Thomas served as an M.P. for Wallingford and had a military career as a Muster-Master General to the English Forces from 1586 to 1594 during the war with the Spanish Netherlands. He was appointed as General Surveyor and Engineer to Dover Harbour by Queen Elizabeth I and he built the enormous artificial harbour complex which now forms the Western Docks. However, it is as the first person to expound the Copernican system of a heliocentric model of the universe that he is perhaps best known, and he went further by proposing that the universe is infinite, containing innumerable stars throughout endless space.

He became the leader of the English Copernicans and used his observations of a new star called “*Tycho Brahe’s supernova*” of 1572 to justify the heliocentric system, risking accusations of heresy by the Catholic Church with his suggestions of alternative cosmologies.

Married to Anne St. Leger, Thomas was the father of Sir Dudley Digges M.P., who completed Chilham Castle in 1616. He was an eminent statesman and a member of the Virginia Company who launched the colony of Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. His other son, Leonard, (named for his grandfather) was a notable poet and translator and friend and admirer of Shakespeare.

They seem to have been a high achieving family who flourished in the fertile soil of the Elham area!

of Wootton from King Henry VIII. given to Athelard, Archbishop of King of Mercia. The manor house have been built by Ivo de Woditon passed to the Crown during the with his more famous son, Thomas were regarded as the two finest century, inventing, it is said, the before Hans Lipperhay and Galileo! took part in Wyatt’s rebellion Spanish alliance. He was attainted execution by Lord Clinton (later dedicated his publication

August 2011

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Postcards

Don't forget our wonderful collection of vintage postcards are available from The Cosy Tea Rooms, the Rose and Crown or Elham Valley Stores, all in the High Street at a cost of 60p each or £4.50 for a pack of nine.



It's your Newsletter!

We've got lots of good "stuff" to tell you about in these newsletters but we hope that you, our members, will also provide contributions.

Everyone will have their own special areas of interest so, to stop us banging on about our own obsessions, send us your thoughts and photos etc. Letters to the Editor are always appreciated!

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