

Tonbridge History Autumn 2015



Spot the difference: Four photographs show how the appearance (and name) of one of Tonbridge's most historic buildings, the Port Reeve's House in East Street, has changed over the years. The first three are from postcards in the THS/Skinner collection: 1 'Ivy Cottage', postmark 1903; 2 'The Old Toll House', unknown date; 3 'The Portreeves House', postmark 1935. No. 4 shows the Port Reeve's House in 2008.

Society News

Tonbridge Historical Society

Founded: 1960

President – Joy Debney

Past President – Christopher Chalklin

Committee

Chairman – George Buswell

Vice Chairman and Website

– Anthony Wilson

Secretary – Madge Woods

Treasurer – Pat Mortlock,

Archives – Sally Robbins

Minutes – Pam Sharland

Publicity – Vanessa King

Audio-visual Officer – Deborah Cole

Other Committee Members:

Roger Barham

Pam Boorman

Jackie Davies

Co-opted Members:

Shiela Broomfield (*Archaeology*)

Pat Hopcroft (*Pictorial Records Collection and Kent History Federation Liaison*)

website: www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk

Subscription: £9 per person (£3.00 for under-18s), due on 1st March annually for the following season.

Non-members are welcome as guests at all meetings on payment of £3 at the door (under-18s free).

From the Chairman

‘Tonbridge Through Ten Centuries’ continues to sell well. At the time of writing (late July) we have sold nearly 900 of the first reprint order and have just taken delivery of a second reprint. To sell nearly 2,000 copies in five months is a considerable achievement and shows that there is a real interest in the history of Tonbridge.

Elsewhere in this *Newsletter* there is a feature on 124 High Street (formerly Moss Bros) and it illustrates how important Tonbridge is for historic buildings. Kent Archaeological Society’s Historic Buildings Committee is considering a project to investigate some of these buildings. So if any member has information (documents, pictures, history etc.) about any of Tonbridge’s old buildings please contact me either through the website or at any of our talks.

George Buswell

Recent Meetings

At our February meeting, art historian Martin Heard helped us see the First World War with new eyes. His profusely illustrated talk showed us how the ‘isms’ of the early twentieth century influenced the work of artists of the First World War, looking particularly at the British artists such as the Nash brothers, Wyndham Lewis and Stanley Spencer.

In March Deborah Cole, one of our own committee members, took us on an engaging and authoritative tour through one of the less familiar periods in Kentish history, the early part of the

first millennium A.D. Her talk spanned the centuries from the Romans to the Anglo-Saxons. It was illustrated with photographs showing the extraordinary skill of the early craftsmen who worked with jewels and precious metals.

Following the AGM in April Jules Dussek, a retired surgeon with a deep interest in food, spoke about diet in the 19th century. He looked at the extreme contrast between the diet of the rich and the poor. He described the very basic diet provided for those unfortunate enough to have to go into the workhouse – mainly bread and gruel – and then showed how the wealthy in the same period ate elaborate meals and employed French cooks.

The middle class also became interested in good food using the ideas put forward by Mrs Beeton in her book 'Household Management' and by Eliza Acton in her 'Modern Cookery' written in Tonbridge and published in 1845.

Lecture Programme 2015-16

All meetings are held in the Riverside Room at the Angel Centre.

Thursday, 10th September, 7.45 pm

Magna Carta – with specific reference to Kent and the Cinque Ports

Peter Tann

The speaker has history degrees from Cambridge and London Universities, but his career was in international banking and business. In retirement, he is indulging himself in his lifelong interest in history, especially local history. He lived outside Faversham for nearly thirty years, and was chairman of the Faversham Society 2009-11. He now lives in Walmer. He will be happy

to sign copies of his book about the Royal Charters of Faversham, for those who wish to buy one.

Thursday, 8th October, 7.45 pm

A brief history of the Huguenots and their contribution to Kent

Amy Dimmock

The majority of the Huguenots arriving in England landed on the shores of Kent. Some passed through on their way to London or East Anglia but a large number remained and set up homes here. In this talk we will hear about some of the Huguenots who lived in our area and the skills and trades they brought with them. There will also be an opportunity to get up close to artefacts from the newly opened Huguenot Museum. [The museum, in Rochester High Street, is open from Wednesday to Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm and on Bank Holiday Mondays from 10 am to 4 pm. www.huguenotmuseum.org]

Saturday, 14th November, 2.30 pm

Two-session meeting with tea. Booking is essential for this meeting – a form with details of charges is available from the secretary.

The Signs of the Times (how to read medieval art), and

The Politeness of Princes (the reality of medieval etiquette and table manners)

Imogen Corrigan

Members will recall this speaker's fascinating talk to our Society on the Luttrell Psalter. After two decades in the Army, she changed career graduating from University of Kent with a 1st class honours degree in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval History,

and is currently studying for a Ph.D. Running a number of lecture/study tours in the UK and Europe, she is also a regular lecturer on board cruise ships.

Thursday, 10th December, 7.45 pm

With brass knobs on – a brief survey of door furniture

Christopher Proudfoot

The speaker is a retired auctioneer with a lifelong interest in obsolete domestic artefacts and mechanical devices. Apart from locks and doorknobs, he also collects gramophones and early lawn mowers, and has an interest in architectural detail generally.

Thursday, 11th February 2016, 7.45 pm

The Medway Valley during the Roman Occupation

Simon Elliott

The speaker is a local archaeologist who is studying for a Ph.D., looking specifically at Kent during the Roman occupation. He is very keen to engage with local communities with regard to his research.

Thursday, 10th March 2016, 7.45 pm

The real Downton Abbey – Edwardian Service

Ian Porter

The speaker is a novelist, historian and public speaker, and has his own walks company in London for which he guides all 35 walks. He does many talks, mostly specialising in 19th and early 20th century history and is a particular expert on the Suffragettes and Jack the Ripper. He loves Downton Abbey and one of his great grandparents was a servant so he has done lots of research into the subject of servants.

Thursday, 14th April 2016, 7.30 pm

Annual General Meeting

followed by

Fortress Tonbridge: 1939 - 1945

George Buswell

Our Chairman will tell the story of how Tonbridge played its part in the defence of Britain during the Second World War, including the Ironside Line and pill boxes, bombing raids, POW camps and Flying Bombs.

What has Tonbridge to do with the Magna Carta?

If you go to the British Library (where an exhibition on the Magna Carta runs until 1st September) the Clare family crest of three red chevrons on gold shouts at you from the balcony. It is there because Richard de Clare, Lord of Tonbridge castle and Earl of Hertford, and his son Gilbert were almost certainly present at Runnymede thrashing out a peace agreement with King John. They were among the 25 Barons selected to oversee the final

agreement and make sure that the King complied.

All the pomp and promise of Runnymede came to nothing however, as the King gathered more support and with renewed optimism tore up the great charter. But this was only the beginning and the Clare family, among others, persisted in driving political reform, with their own interests at heart of course!

Gilbert the Red, Earl of Gloucester

and Hertford and his brother Thomas, while still teenagers found themselves at the centre of the greatest political drama of the century. In May 1264, they and Simon de Montfort faced King Henry III and Prince Edward on the battlefield at Lewes. Like John before him, Henry repeatedly ignored custom and abused his rights. Like John he attacked Tonbridge by making a small diversion to Gilbert's stronghold on his way to Lewes. This time however, the barons were victorious and the king and prince were captured and imprisoned. A triumvirate of Gilbert, Simon and the Bishop of Chichester planned a new government and later that year they summoned the first 'House of Commons'.

In January 1265, 120 prelates, two knights from every county and citizens from the towns and the Cinque Ports met at Westminster to determine the fate of the royal prisoners and to discuss future government. The most important outcome was that Henry and Edward swore to observe the Magna Carta and this confirmation (known

as the *Inspeximus* meaning 'we have examined') was sent to the sheriff of every county with the order that the Magna Carta was to be read aloud in the county court twice a year.

It wasn't long before the Clare brothers fell out with Simon de Montfort (power had gone to his head) and they helped Prince Edward escape. Together they defeated Simon at the battle of Evesham in May 1265. In spite of this the Montfortian Parliament had, earlier in the year brought the Magna Carta and its principles of good government to the attention of Prince Edward, the future King Edward I. In 1297 he had the Magna Carta copied onto the first statute roll incorporating it officially into English Law. From then on it was read twice yearly in cathedrals as well as county courts and was set to become the most used, influential and celebrated document of English history.

Deborah Cole

[An original copy of the 1300 edition of Magna Carta is on show in Maidstone until 6th September – see page 8.]



The triple-chevron crest of the de Clares appears twice on a souvenir mug ...



... and regularly flies over Tonbridge Castle

124 High Street

This historic building, adjacent to The Chequers, which was most recently occupied by Moss Bros, reopened in June this year as an Artisan Bakery and Café, giving customers the chance to see inside a building dating back to the early Tudor period. A Tonbridge yeoman, Thomas Lamparde in his will dated 22nd August 1593 left the property with directions that the churchwardens

should give the proceeds to the town's poor. It later became a saddler's (allegedly patronised by Queen Victoria when still a Princess). In 1934 it was carefully restored and opened as a high class dairy and restaurant by Edgar J. Aplin of Tunbridge Wells – even offering special savoury teas during the Second World War despite the limitations imposed by rationing.



124, High Street, Tonbridge

Amazing Success
of
APLIN'S
15th CENTURY
DAIRY & CAFE
124, HIGH STREET,
TONBRIDGE.

Over 4,000 people visited these premises during the first four days. Everybody should visit this wonderful old-world building which is one of the finest examples of early Tudor Period, and seats 150 people, a delightful place for

MORNING COFFEE, LUNCHEONS,
:: :: **TEAS, SUPPERS.** :: ::

Cafe Open Daily until 9 p.m. Sundays 11 a.m. to 9.30 p.m.

These wonderful old rooms may be hired for Parties, Whist Drives, etc.

One of the finest sights in the Country.

From The Courier, 29th June 1934

Family History: 'Barber alias Nynne'

Geoffrey Barber of Western Australia, a THS member, has produced a truly remarkable book of his family's history and presented a copy for THS archives, for which we are most grateful. Entitled 'Barber alias Nynne - five hundred years of family history in Rotherfield, Tonbridge and Brighton', the book is much more than simply a genealogical record.

In its 300 pages there is information about the lives of numerous antecedents in the Barber and related families, the places where they lived, and the context of their lives. The many colour illustrations include maps and original documents. A number of Tonbridge families of the period c1670-1840 are mentioned.

As an example of how to research and present family history this book must have few rivals. Copies are also available in Tonbridge Reference Library. The author's website is *www.barber.org.au*.

Some royal visitors

Supporters of Richard III may be intrigued to know – or be reminded – that their hero spent a little of his childhood in Tonbridge, according to historians. For a few months in 1459-60, Cecily Neville, the wife of Richard of York, was lying low at Tonbridge Castle, the home of her sister, Anne Stafford. With Cecily were three of her children, the youngest of whom was the seven year-old boy who would eventually be crowned Richard III.

Probably the briefest royal visit in Tonbridge's history took place on 19th June 1849. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were on their way to Tunbridge Wells to call on the Queen's aunt Adelaide. At Tonbridge, according to *The Times* 'the train necessarily stopped for a few moments to exchange engines. Her Majesty was presented ... with a dish of very fine grapes and a bouquet of flowers, which had been sent over ... by Mr Joyce of Tonbridge Castle. The train then proceeded ...'

50 years ago – the end of steam



In June 1965 scheduled steam-hauled trains ceased to run through Tonbridge, 123 years after the first one came through. This photo was taken at Tonbridge Station in 1949.

Here and there

Forthcoming history courses

WEA Courses in Tonbridge

Historic Journeys through England:

10 weeks from 29th September,
10.15–12.15, Methodist Church,
Higham Lane

*Eleven US Presidents from Jefferson
to Obama:* 11 weeks from 7th January
2016, 2–4, Angel Centre

*Architectural History: Yorkshire–County
of Contrasts*, 5 weeks from 12th January
2016, 10–12, Methodist Church,
Higham Lane

*Philosophy: 'Power and Change –
Machiavelli, Gramsci and Lenin':*
7 weeks from 13th January, 10–12,
Angel Centre

Minority Groups in Medieval Times:
7 weeks from 23rd January 2016,
10 am–12 noon, Methodist Church,
Higham Lane

Kent Adult Education Courses

in the Adult Education Centre,
Avebury Avenue

Reassessing Richard III: 2 weeks from
Saturday 10th October, 10–12

The History of Roman Kent: 2 weeks
from Saturday 7th November, 10–1

Home Front Britain 1914–18: 2 weeks
from 2nd February 2016, 1.30–3.30
(www.kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk)

Exhibitions

At the Kent History and Library
Centre, Maidstone

1 'In Comitatu Kantie' - life in Kent at the time of Magna Carta

'Documents from the County
Archives, and objects contemporary to
Magna Carta will illustrate how people
lived, worked and played within the
structure of the Law and the Church.'

2 Magna Carta Rediscovered

This touring exhibition includes the
actual 1300 Faversham Magna Carta
which will be discussed in our THS
talk on 10th September. Details:

www.magnacartarediscovered.co.uk/

Both exhibitions run from 26th July
to 6th September during the Centre's
normal hours (M, Tu, W, F 9–6,
Th 9–8, Sat 9–5. Closed Sundays.)

Admission is free.

A moment of nostalgia

Are you dismayed – and who isn't? –
by the sight of the vast Waterside
Reach development now looming over
Waitrose car park? Then try to picture
the same scene little more than a century
ago when the area now occupied by
Waterside Reach, Waitrose, the car
parks and much of the Sovereign Way
industrial estate was one huge field.
Known as Botany Bay Meadow, and
doubtless covered with wild flowers
in season, the 25-acre expanse was
bounded on all sides by streams.

THS Newsletter is compiled by George Buswell and Anthony Wilson. Our thanks to all contributors. Deadline for the next issue: 1st Feb. 2016