

# Tonbridge History

Autumn 2016



*A recent addition to THS archives - see page 6*

## Society News

### Tonbridge Historical Society

Founded: 1960

*President* – Joy Debney

*Past President* – Christopher Chalklin

#### Committee

*Chairman* – George Buswell

*Vice-Chairman and website*  
– Anthony Wilson

*Vice-Chairman and Audio-visual Officer*  
– Deborah Cole

*Secretary* – Madge Woods,

*Treasurer* – Pat Mortlock,

*Archives* – Sally Robbins

*Minutes* – Pam Sharland

*Publicity* – Vanessa King

*Other Committee Members:*

Pam Boorman

*Co-opted Members:*

Shiela Broomfield (*Archaeology*)

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

Roger Barham

*website:* [www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk](http://www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk)

*Subscription:* £9 per person (£3.00 for under-18s), due on 1<sup>st</sup> 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

I hope that you have all had a good summer – and that July and August saw better weather than earlier in the summer (writing this in early July). We have an interesting and varied programme of talks to look forward to and Madge Woods has our thanks for her hard work in organising them.

I spoke at the AGM about the move of the Society's Archive collections from its quarters in Castle Lodge in Castle Street, to new accommodation on the first floor of the Castle itself (above the 'Gateway' and entrance to the Tourist Office). This finally took place on 1<sup>st</sup> August. The Society is grateful to Tonbridge and Malling Council for their help in the move and for their continuing support for the Archive.

*George Buswell*

### Recent Meetings

At our February meeting, Simon Elliot looked at how quarries in the upper Medway valley played a key part in the building of Roman London. Over 1 million ragstone blocks were used in constructing the Roman Wall which encircled Roman London and it took 1,750 boat trips to move the stone from the Medway quarries. It was a 250 km round trip and took two days. Simon referred to a Roman ship which sank at Blackfriars, was excavated in 1991 and found to be carrying a cargo of 52 tons of ragstone.

In March Ian Porter showed how the

television's *Downton Abbey* related to the actual work and life of servants in Edwardian Britain. He made the point that although outdoor servants were rarely seen in the TV series they actually outnumbered the indoor servants. Also in a large household 'below stairs' would be run by a House Steward rather than a butler – his responsibility would have been dinner arrangements and wine. A single large dinner party could cost £60 at a time when a scullery maid would only earn £20 annually.

Following the AGM in April, our Chairman, George Buswell, gave a talk about Tonbridge during the Second World War. He looked at how the town was part of the defences planned to cope with a possible German invasion – pill boxes, barbed wire barricades and anti-tank blocks in the High Street. He described how Tonbridge coped with the Luftwaffe's bombing campaign: 969 air raid alerts between 1939 and 1944, the risk of 'flying bombs' (V1s) from June 1944, and from September 1944, V2 rockets. Tonbridge also had a Prisoner of War camp (off Pembury Road where Weald of Kent Grammar School now stands) housing first Italian and then German P.O.Ws.

### **Lecture Programme 2016-17**

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

*Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 7.45 pm*

#### **Portals to the Past: Crossrail archaeology discoveries across London**

Jay Carver

The speaker is Project Archaeologist for the Crossrail Project in London, one of Europe's largest railway and infrastructure construction projects. He will describe the highlights of the six-year archaeology programme undertaken for the project – a story that takes us from prehistoric hunter gatherers via Roman and Medieval London to the great 19<sup>th</sup> century ship- building period in London's Docklands.

*Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 7.45 pm*

#### **Life in a Noble Household in the 14<sup>th</sup> century: Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare**

Jennifer C Ward

Elizabeth de Burgh was the youngest daughter of Gilbert de Clare, the 'Red Earl', Lord of Tonbridge Castle. Our speaker is a former senior history lecturer at Goldsmith's College with a special interest in the lives of mediaeval women and in the de Clare family, and has written widely on these subjects.

*Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### **Monasteries and Monastic Life**

and

#### **Building a Mediaeval Cathedral**

David Carder

The speaker is a popular WEA lecturer with a special interest in historic buildings. His previous lively and profusely-illustrated talks to our Society have been well received.

*Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 7.45 pm*

### **Bad King John?**

Marc Morris

Note the question mark! The historian and broadcaster Dr Marc Morris makes a welcome return visit to tell us about the controversial subject of his latest book, titled 'King John: Treachery and Tyranny in Medieval England'.

*Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017, 7.45 pm*

### **Witchcraft in Tudor & Stuart Kent**

Jackie Eales

The speaker is Professor of History and Faculty Director of Research at Canterbury Christchurch University and a Past President of the Historical Association. Her previous talk to us, in 2013, shone new light on Kent in the Civil War. Tonight's topic relates to another of her special interests, the role of women in Kent in the Tudor and Stuart periods.

*Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 7.45 pm*

### **Elizabethan & Jacobean Deer Parks in Kent**

Susan Pittman

Well into the 17<sup>th</sup> century, ownership of a deer park was still regarded as a status symbol of the highest order. Deer hunting was enjoyed by the elite and venison was so highly prized that it was not sold, but bestowed as beneficence upon the favoured few. Dr Pittman will share her lifelong interest in Kent and its landscape history, and especially its deer parks, of which Tonbridge once had four.

*Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 7.30 pm*

Annual General Meeting followed by

**Tonbridge in pictures: the 1960s and 70s** - an evocative browse through some of the new images in the Society's archive relating to a time which is living memory to some of us but will be new to many others.

## **950 years ago**

### **“Did Harold turn left at the traffic lights?”**

*This is the intriguing title of a short paper, dated 1976, in the THS archives. In it the author, identified only by the initials A. G. E. J., considers the question of whether Harold's army might have passed through Tonbridge en route to the Battle of Hastings. In recognition of the forthcoming anniversary, we reprint it here. (The traffic lights mentioned in the title were at the junction of Vale Road and the High Street in 1976, now replaced by a roundabout.)*

In 1066 King Harold left London on 12<sup>th</sup> October and reached Caldbeck Hill, near Battle, on the 13<sup>th</sup>. He fought and lost the battle on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

The distance from London to Senlac [the battle site] was 60-70 miles, and he must have camped somewhere, but it is not known where. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is most uninformative:

‘... he gathered together a great host, and, came to oppose him at the grey apple-tree, and William came upon him unexpectedly before his army was set in order.’ Other sources give no fuller detail.

It has been assumed that when Harold left London he marched along the Old Kent Road to Maidstone,

and thence to Senlac. There are a number of reasons for thinking that he may perhaps have come through Tonbridge:

(1) Time was crucial. If Harold had been given another half day the battle might have gone in his favour. He had spent five days in London, gathering his forces and could lose no time on the march.

(2) By coming through Tonbridge, he would have saved 5-6 miles, or an hour or so on the march. He would have arrived at Caldbeck late on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and an hour or two would have helped him to organize, and would have allowed his troops to eat and sleep before the battle early next morning. Speed of advance and surprise were Harold's strongest points. The suggestion that much of his



army was in a state of considerable exhaustion does not hold water. His army had covered 200 miles from York in five marching days, and could have reached Senlac in two days. His Housecarls [professional soldiers] had rested for five days in London, and the fyrd [forces raised locally] would have come no great distance.

(3) Maidstone would have been the meeting place for the fyrd in the first place, but Harold would have had no need to go there to pick them up. He probably heard of the landing by William on 1<sup>st</sup> October, when at York, and he set out for London on the following day. His messengers could have reached London by the 4<sup>th</sup> and

Maidstone by the 5<sup>th</sup>, giving a full week to gather the fyrd from all parts of Kent and Sussex. They could easily have been directed to meet him somewhere in Sussex along his route. It seems as if late in the day of the 14<sup>th</sup>, after the battle had been lost, some of the fyrd arrived at the Malfosse (to the north of Battle) from the north.

(4) The Rochester-Maidstone-Battle road would have involved his forces in crossing the Brede, broad and tidal, at Sedlescombe. The road from Tonbridge through Whatlington would have avoided that. If he had come through

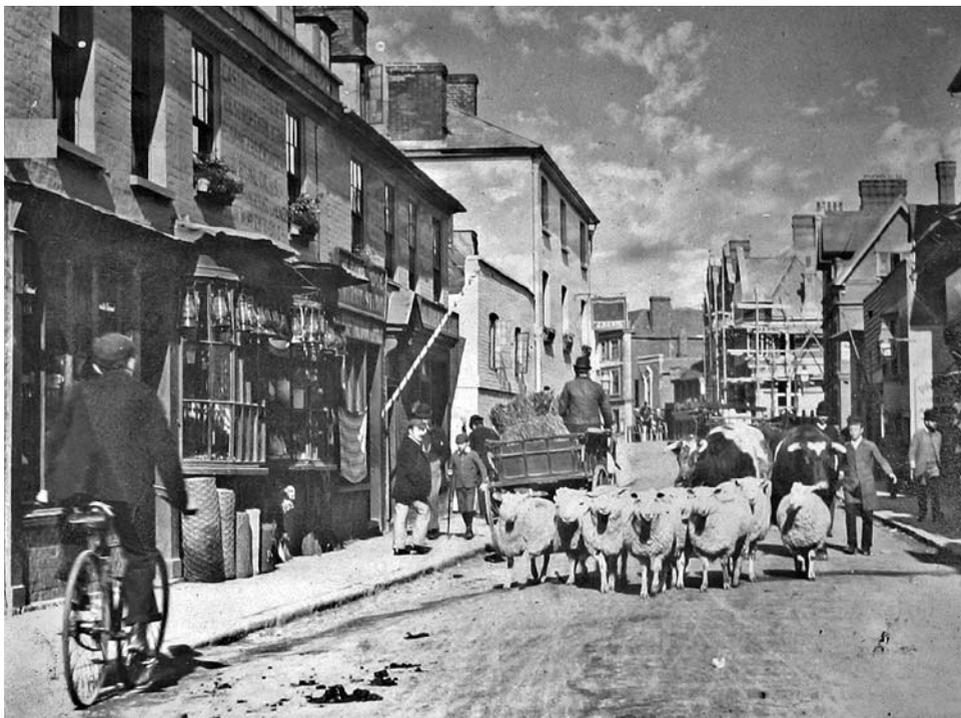
Sedlescombe he would have had a difficult cross-country march to Caldbeck Hill, without roads, and his left flank would have been open to attack. This last risk would have been avoided by coming

through Whatlington. He would have no difficulty in finding local guides to tell him the position of William's camp and to choose the best route for him.

(5) After the conquest, a castle was built at Tonbridge. This may, among other things, have been recognition that Tonbridge lay on the more direct route to Hastings Castle.

So, if Harold used the Tonbridge road, he would have crossed the bridge, marched along the causeway as far as Vale Road, and then have taken the Pembury road which went obliquely up the hill, across the goods yard [now station car parks] to join the present Pembury Road somewhere between Lavender Hill and Goldsmid Road.

## Tonbridge High Street in the 1890s



**Tonbridge High Street in the 1890s:** *The view is looking northwards towards the Big Bridge, from a point roughly outside today's Starbucks. This part of the High Street was then much narrower than it is today. Livestock are returning from the market. On the left an ironmonger displays his wares outside his shop. Beyond it the large building is the Loggerheads public house, later replaced by the Post Office, now the Humphrey Bean. Beyond the bridge, on the right, the new building nearing completion is today's Pizza Express. The image is from a lantern slide recently acquired by the Society.*

### Cricketing clowns come to Tonbridge

The notice reproduced on page 1 advertises the visit to Tonbridge in 1869 of a cricket team comprised of clowns, who played in clown costumes and performed clown antics on the pitch.

According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the leader of the troupe, 'Croueste', was actually Edwin Crowhurst, born in Bromley. He went on to have an illustrious career, clowning his way around cities in Europe, America and the colonies, and running

his own circus. One of his early stunts was a race along the Thames between three clowns drawn in tubs by geese. Prosperous for a while, he eventually died in a workhouse.

A further visit by the cricketing clowns on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1870 proved irresistible to Tonbridge children, causing the Head of Bank Street School to comment in the School Log that 'attendance was very poor due to a cricket match played by clowns'.

## Exhibition

### *Hopping Down in Kent*

*A Year in the Life of a Hop Garden*

at the Kent History and Library Centre, James Whatman Way, Maidstone, 1<sup>st</sup> August to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2016, Admission free.

The exhibition is devoted to hopping, using films from Screen Archive South East as part of the British Film Institute's 'Britain on Film' Rural Life programme. It features film and original documents focusing on the annual activities within a traditional garden from planting to harvesting, as well as the work of the growers, pickers, brewers and the wider industry.



## Inside the Castle in 1322 AD

When Tonbridge Castle changed hands in 1322, an inventory was made of everything left inside it. It provides an intriguing glimpse into mediaeval castle life. The list includes:

3 carcasses of oxen, one defective  
62 young porkers  
16 tuns of red wine  
2 several vestments... interwoven yellow upon vermilion [for the chapel]  
1 plain chalice of silver  
1 altar-cloth  
2 pairs of plate [armour?]  
1 habergeon [chain mail jacket]  
1 helmet of rusty iron  
2 saddles for ladies, one with pillion of cloth of gold, the other of green cloth  
1 tumbil [instrument of punishment]  
22 common crossbows

3000 quarrels [short arrows for shooting from crossbows]  
15 old ribs of whalebone  
1 baldric [ornamental belt or girdle]  
1 furnace of iron  
2 large lance staves to joust with  
1 box, full of rolls of accounts and memoranda  
5 tables  
2 pairs of trestles  
33 ladles or spoons  
22 pewter saucers  
1 large kettle of brass  
1 saucepan of 4 gallons  
2 anvils  
6 bellows for a forge, defective  
.. and finally  
4 prisoners, in the Castle by command of the king.

## Here and there ....

### Forthcoming History Courses

#### **W.E.A. Courses in Tonbridge**

At Tonbridge Methodist

**Church, Higham Lane, Tonbridge:**

*Historical Journeys Through England*  
(Tutor David Carder) 10 weeks from  
27<sup>th</sup> September, 10.15–12.15 am

*Art 'Face Value'* (Jill Denham). Day  
School 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2 – 4.30 pm

*Politics and Religion in The Middle East:*  
(Brian Beeley). Day School 7<sup>th</sup> January  
2017, 2-4.30 pm

*Power of Ancient Greek Art* (Deborah  
Hyde) Day School. 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017,  
10.30 – 12.30 pm

*Current International Issues* (Jim  
Chrystie) 11 weeks from 10<sup>th</sup> January  
2017, 10.15-12.15 pm

#### **Kent Adult Education Courses**

at the Adult Education Centre,

**Avebury Avenue**

**Day Schools:**

*The Gunpowder Plot:* 24<sup>th</sup> September,  
10–12 noon

*The Battle of Hastings:* 1<sup>st</sup> October,  
10–12 noon

*Robin Hood and Prince John:* 19<sup>th</sup>  
November, 10-12 noon. Repeated 31<sup>st</sup>  
January 2017

*History of the Christmas Carol:* 6<sup>th</sup>  
December, 10-12 noon

*Home Front Britain 1914–18:* 11<sup>th</sup>  
February 2017, 10 am – 4 pm

### Longer Courses:

*Chaucer and his Pilgrims:* 8 weeks from  
4<sup>th</sup> October, 10 – 12 noon

*Reassessing Richard III:* 2 weeks from  
26<sup>th</sup> November, 10 – 12 noon

*Latin for Historians and Family*

*Researchers:* 3 weeks from 14<sup>th</sup> January  
2017, 10-12 noon

([www.kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk](http://www.kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk))



### **Study Day at King Charles the Martyr church in Tunbridge Wells**

- the history of the church and its parish.  
Organised by Kent Archaeological  
Society

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October, 10 am - 4 pm

Details from Mrs J Davidson, 7  
Chatsworth Road, Gillingham ME7  
1DS or website [www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/churches-committee](http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/churches-committee)

### **Hadlow Historical Society**

*The Story of the SS Great Britain* - talk  
by George Buswell, 27<sup>th</sup> September,  
8 pm in the Upper Room, St Mary's  
Church, Hadlow.

Visitors welcome - £2