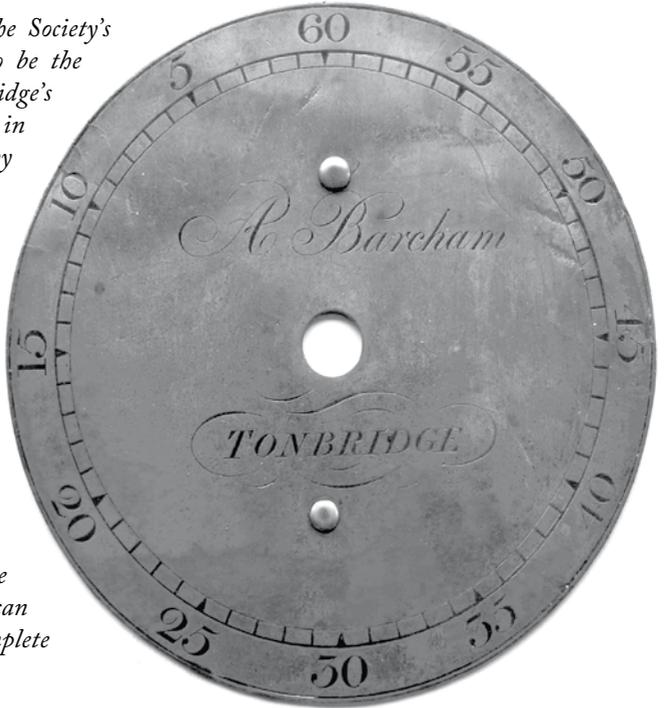


This 6 inch metal disc from the Society's artefact collection is thought to be the only surviving part of Tonbridge's Town Hall Clock. It was made in the early nineteenth century by a local clock and watch maker, Asher Barcham, at his premises near The Chequers in the High Street.

In the 1970s an expert identified this component as the clock's 'second plate'. At that time the clock was in the Council Offices in the Castle in pieces, but the rest of it is now missing.

The Town Hall stood in the High Street at the foot of Castle Street from 1798 to 1901 and can be seen in the postcard below, complete with clock.



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

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

I enjoyed standing in the High Street on October 11th watching a re-enactment of King Harold's march to Hastings in 1066 reach Tonbridge – although six mounted soldiers and one foot soldier made up a rather small army! (See photo opposite)

With reference to more recent history can I also highlight an appeal for photographs showing North Tonbridge in the 1950s and 1960s. Tonbridge North Library (at York Parade) was set up 50 years ago and librarian Martin Best is interested in any photographs from that period showing particularly the Cage Green/Willow Lea/Whistler Road areas. He is normally based at North Tonbridge Library and if photos are brought in to him he will take a copy and return them.

Our AGM is only a month away so, as usual, we would welcome contact from any member interested in being involved with the running of the Society, either by joining the Committee or one of the specialist groups such as Pictorial Records, Medieval Research Group, or to help with the Archives, Publicity or the Society Website. If you are interested contact me or any member of the committee. *George Buswell*

AGM

The Society's 2017 Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday, 13th April at 7.30pm in the Riverside Room at the Angel Centre. Details are distributed with this *Newsletter*.



*October 2016: Re-enactors in the High Street on the 950th anniversary of Harold's march to Hastings
Photo: Derek Hopcroft*

New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following who have joined the Society in the past year: Robert Baughan, Jo Beech, Katie Cameron, Peter Chadwick, Angela & Anthony Cosham, Ruth & Melvyn Davies, Catherine and Martyn Daynes, Trevor Holland, Richard Holme, Derek Hopcroft, Sidney & Patricia Judge, Sue Knight, Jan & Sean Lloyd, Geoffrey & Gillian Marks, James & Mark Martin, David Phillips, Angela & Nicholas Woollett.

Recent Meetings

Our new season began with an enthralling talk in **September** by Jay Carver about the many archaeological finds unearthed in the work to construct London's Crossrail line. The timespan ranged from shark's teeth from 75 million years ago to remains of a slipper from a vanished Victorian

shipyard. Unattached skulls, and buried bodies featured prominently. Skulls from the Roman period may be those of Britons executed by the Roman militia. Layers of neatly arranged burials found near Charterhouse Square were found by DNA testing of teeth to be those of Black Death victims. Burials found near Liverpool Street were those of some of the 30,000 Londoners buried in a notorious cemetery there in the 16th and 17th century. *[An exhibition of the Crossrail finds runs from 10 Feb - 3 Sept 2017 at the Docklands Museum, London]*

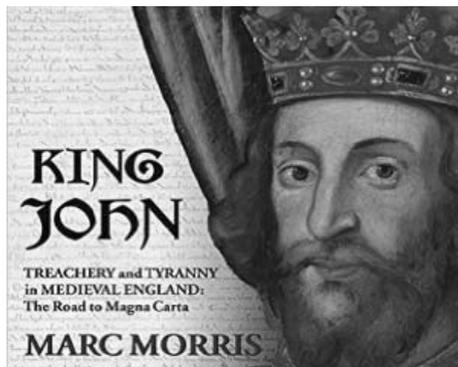
In **October** Jennifer Ward looked at the life of Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare. Elizabeth was the youngest daughter of Gilbert de Clare, Lord of Tonbridge Castle from 1262 until his death in 1295 and Joan of Acre, Edward I's daughter. She was married when only 13 and by the age of 27 had had three children and been widowed three times. She never married again

and styled herself 'Lady of Clare' after her main estates in Suffolk. Over 100 of her detailed household accounts have survived and the speaker used these to show what life was like in a noble medieval household. Her most important and long-lasting foundation was Clare College, Cambridge. This began when she was asked to support University Hall, founded by Richard de Badew, in 1336. When Richard handed over his rights as patron to Elizabeth in 1346, she made further grants and it became known as Clare Hall.

In **November**, in the two session meeting, David Carder first looked at the organisation and development of monasteries set up by Religious Orders such as the Benedictines and the Cistercians and what medieval monastic life was like, including a daily routine of eight prayer sessions, beginning with Lauds at 5 a.m. and finishing at 6 p.m. with Vespers. In his second talk David, using a wide range of illustrations, examined in detail how a medieval cathedral was built and showed how a range of skilled craftsmen were needed

– including stone masons, carpenters, sculptors and roofers. Many thanks to everyone who brought cakes for the tea!

In **December** we welcomed Marc Morris back to talk about King John – the subject of his latest book. Marc showed that he fully deserved to be called 'Bad King John'. John imprisoned his 15 year old nephew Arthur and had him starved to death in 1203 and had 20 Welsh hostages hung at Nottingham Castle. He lost virtually all of England's continental possessions and bankrupted the crown trying to regain them, leading to a war with the English Barons and John's forced agreement in 1215 to the Magna Carta.



TONBRIDGE HISTORY

The website of Tonbridge Historical Society



The Historical Society's website www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk continues to expand and now provides 1453 pages of text and photos devoted to Tonbridge History.

Recent additions, of particular interest to family historians (who can of course access the site from all parts of the globe) are mini-biographies provided by Pam Mills and Dave Swarbrick for every Tonbridge person

who died in the two World Wars, and also the volunteers who served in the VAD hospital on Quarry Hill in World War I.

Transcriptions of all the memorials in Tonbridge Parish Church can also now be found on the site.

To find all these additions go to:

www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk and click on **People** in the left hand column.

Douglas John Elliott - TUDC archivist 1958-65

An appreciation by his daughter, Christina Stapley

I was just 11 years old when my father became Honorary Archivist to Tonbridge Urban District Council. I learned from him a love of history and the rule of using primary sources. Well versed in medieval Latin he consulted documents from that period forward and we spent many Saturdays studying the contents of long neglected solicitor's records in dusty outhouses.

More time was involved in gathering memories, photos and other memorabilia from older members of the public. Early newspaper records also supplied fascinating material for the regular articles written by my father for the press which in turn brought new information.

Working ceaselessly to build the Town collection, he requested the property deeds, 130 year old Inn sign and also received the king post of the Bull Hotel on its demolition in 1963 for the Tonbridge Historical Society. In the absence of storage many items spent some time in our home before being passed on, the king post being the largest!

My father always hoped to resurrect the Tonbridge Museum which had closed in the 1920's. Some items from this remained in the Council attics while others had gone to local schools and elsewhere. In 1960 both the Historical Society and Town Council welcomed his enthusiasm and idea, but neither the Castle nor the soon

to be vacated Technical High School building behind the Library proved viable.

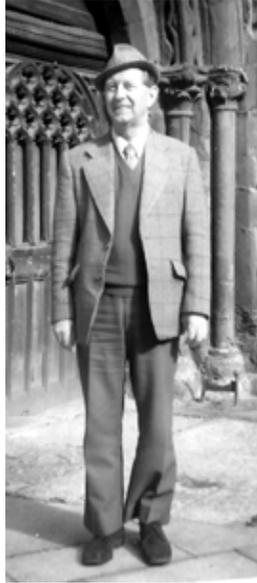
Three of the initial seven lectures in 1959 which led to the founding of the Historical Society were given by him and I well recall his amazement at the attendance of over 100 people at his introductory lecture. Sponsoring the Society together with Miss Hardy, he was the first Chairman. Always ready with factual anecdotes, often amusing; he drew people's interest by bringing the past to life.

When we moved away in 1965 Douglas Elliott was made an honorary member of THS and sadly the Research Group which

he headed had to be discontinued*. An article in *The Kent Messenger* on his resignation paid tribute to the work he had done for the town, saying "Tonbridge owes him a deep debt of gratitude, but he will leave behind him his own permanent and stimulating contribution to local affairs in the form of the Society whose robust health the present secretary Mrs. G. Hodge, attested in her excellent report at the last annual meeting."

I am delighted to know that his work is continued by Historical Society members today.

*The Research Group was revived by Dr Christopher Chalklin and has gone on to produce 7 books. - Ed.



175 years ago The Railway comes to Tonbridge

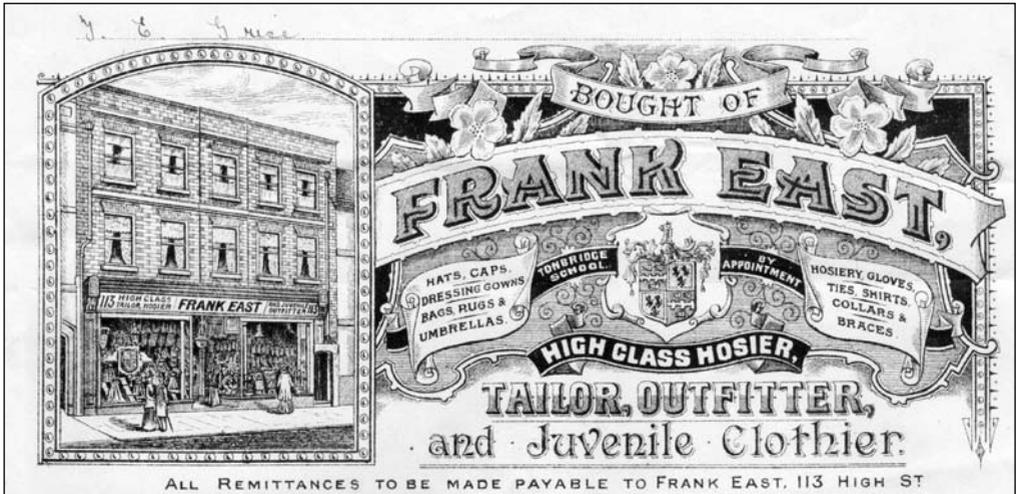
On Thursday morning the South Eastern Railway was opened as far as Tunbridge, and the first train which left that place at a quarter before eight in the morning reached town a few minutes before ten,— The down trains were despatched at half-past nine. There were, however but few passengers. There are to be four trains each day (except Sundays), and carriages are procured at Tunbridge to convey parties to Hastings St. Leonard's, Tunbridge Wells, &c.

The opening of the railway from Tonbridge to London on 26th May 1842, after six years of planning and construction, seems to have passed without ceremony or celebration. The public were informed of the event - surely one of the most significant in the town's history - only by brief reports such as the one above, which appeared in a number of newspapers. The journey to London Bridge, via Reigate, took two hours, with a single fare costing 10 shillings first class

(roughly equivalent to £20 today) and 6s 6d second class. Initially you could take your horse with you for 17s6d or your own four-wheeled carriage for £1, horses extra, but these facilities seem to have been withdrawn fairly early on.

Ten cottages were built near the station for railway staff, who included John Jorden the Ticket Collector, who was paid 25 shillings a week, and William Chard and Frederick Cooke, who were appointed as Gatekeepers.

From the archives



In a more genteel age, shoppers could expect to receive a monthly invoice from shopkeepers in the town, handwritten and with an elaborate billhead, of which this is an example

LAMPS at 90

LAMPS, the Local Amateur Musical PlayerS, celebrate their 90th anniversary this year, and have created a book featuring images, memories and curios from their archives.

The group was formed in Tonbridge in 1927 by Mr Charles Barkaway, as a fundraiser for Judd School Rugby Club. Over the next four years they toured around Tonbridge and the surrounding villages as a 'concert party' putting on variety shows, with assistance from pupils from Tonbridge Girls Grammar School. In 1931 a committee was formed and the name LAMPS adopted. The players took residence at The Medway Hall on Bradford Street. In 1938 they moved to The Tonbridge Repertory Theatre (soon to be renamed 'The Playhouse' - see photo). When the Playhouse was sold in 1955 the



company transferred to Southborough and The Royal Victoria Hall where they remained almost exclusively until its closure in 2014.

They return to their Tonbridge roots in 2017 to present 'The Mikado' at the E.M.Forster Theatre, Tonbridge School, from 4th to 8th April.

For more information visit www.lamps.org.uk



The LAMPS production of 'The Fountain of Youth' at the Medway Hall, Tonbridge, 7-9 February 1933

Here and there

Forthcoming History courses

Kent Adult Education Courses (Details from Adult Education Centre, Avebury Avenue or www.kentadulthoodeducation.co.uk)

Castles of Kent and Sussex: 5 week course from 22nd April (10 – 12noon)

The England of Jane Austen: 2nd and 9th May (10 – 12 noon)

One day Courses (10 – 12 noon)

The England of Charles Dickens: 25th April

Buildings of Tonbridge (guided tour): 13th May (10 – 12.30)

The history and context of the Southborough Valley: 10th June

Explore Tonbridge Castle in its medieval context: 15th July

W.E.A. Courses. Details from Susan Savva (01732358272).
weatonbridgesecretary@gmail.com

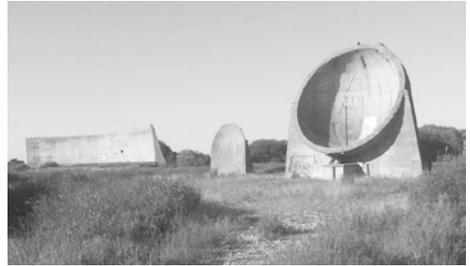
Day school: *World affairs - The Middle East.* 11th March 2pm-4.30pm. Tutor Brian Beeley

Day school: *People, Politics and Power.* 10th June 10.30 am-3.30 pm. Tutors Ron Edwards, Brian Beeley

Course: *Philosophy of Maurice Ponty.* 6 weeks from 3rd May. 10.00 – 12.00. Tutor, Greg Artus

Sound Mirrors Open Day

An open day is being held at the Greatstone Mirrors in Dungeness on 15th July 2017. The three concrete 'listening ears' range in size from 20 to 200 feet. Built between 1928 and 1930-30, the historic reflectors were part of Britain's national defence strategy, designed to pick up the sound of approaching enemy aircraft. Details: theromneymarsh.net/whatson/2017/07/15#events



Tough justice

From the Maidstone Gazette

In January 1837, George Murdock was tried for stealing a quantity of apples, the property of Thomas Hilder, at Tonbridge. It appears that Mr Hilder lost, on 20th Nov., two bushels of apples from his oast house. In consequence of information, Mr Harris, the constable, watched at a place where the apples had been deposited, and in a short time the prisoner and a boy came to the spot, to whom he gave some apples, when Harris took him into custody.

Sentence: Transported for life.

THS Newsletter is compiled by George Buswell and Anthony Wilson. Contributions are welcomed and should be sent to THS, 7 The Ridgeway, Tonbridge TN10 4NQ. Deadline for the next issue is July 15th.