



The Library and Technical Institute in the 1930s. See page 6.

Society News

Tonbridge Historical Society

Founded: 1960

President – Patricia Mortlock

Past President – Christopher Chalklin

Committee

Chairman – David Phillips

Vice-Chairman – vacancy

Secretary – Madge Woods,
56 Derwent Road, Tonbridge TN10 3HU

Treasurer – Pam Boorman,
156 Vale Road, Tonbridge TN9 1SP

Programme Secretary – Jane Richardson

Minutes – Pam Sharland

Archivist & Publications
– George Buswell

Audio-visual Officer – Deborah Cole
Shiela Broomfield (*Archaeology*)

Pat Hopcroft
(*Pictorial Records Collection*)

Sally Robbins

Robert Greenhill

e-mail: info@tonbridgehistory.org.uk

website: www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk

Subscriptions – due on 1st March
annually for the following season:

Single membership (over 18): £12

*Joint membership (any two members
living at the same address):* £20

Age 18 or under: free

Non-members welcome at all meetings:
£3 (donation) at the door.

AGM

The Society's 2020 Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday, 16th April at 7.30pm in the Riverside Room at the Angel Centre. Details are distributed with this *Newsletter*.

From the Chairman

With the approaching lighter nights and quieter weather(!) we can now look forward to our spring talks. One of the great opportunities we have as a society is to meet and chat with other members and guests over a cup of tea/coffee – still free! – before the start of each meeting. This all requires an effort on the part of members of the Committee, without whose support the Society's function would grind to a halt.

Unfortunately, this year three members have decided to stand down from the Committee at the April AGM, and on your behalf I would like to thank them for the collective years of excellent service they have given the Society. We shall be down to nine members out of a possible fifteen on the Committee so we do need to replace them, plus add a few others to assist in the smooth running of the Society. If you feel that you cannot commit to the Committee there are other activities we need help with, such as setting up the AV equipment at meetings.

Later in the year THS will celebrate its sixtieth anniversary and at our double session in November we, hopefully, shall have something special in the cake department!

The years ahead will see the Society face many challenges, as well as opportunities to expand our knowledge of Tonbridge, but to make it happen we do need your support.

So please don't be shy – contact either myself or any other Committee members if you would like further information, or email info@tonbridgehistory.org.uk. Helping to run the Society is an excellent way to find out more about Tonbridge, past and present – David Phillips

Secretary's and Group Reports 2019-20

Members wishing to find out more about these activities should get in touch with the Secretary in the first instance (secretary@tonbridgehistory.org.uk) or speak to a Committee member at any of the Society's meetings.

Secretary's Report

Your committee has met on four occasions and is at present in discussion with the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council regarding the listing of the historical assets of the town [see page 7 for details]. Our website is very successful, thanks to Anthony Wilson, and we receive many requests for information and copies of various photos. There is a great interest in family history at the moment and we receive many enquiries regarding the shops and houses where their families worked and lived.

We have enjoyed a varied programme this year ranging from Cabinets of Curiosity to the post medieval iron industry in the Weald. Our November meeting on the Lees Court Estate, together with cream tea, was a great success. Thanks must go to Pat Mortlock for buttering all those scones and to members for all the wonderful cakes.

Finally, we must thank both Sally Robbins and Deborah Cole, who are standing down from the committee, for all the sterling work they have done over the years. *Maadge Woods*

Group Reports

Archaeology

My remit as leader of the Archaeology Group for THS is mainly to keep an eye on any building/road works in the area and undertake occasional watching briefs on behalf of KCC. I receive copies of the publications of Kent

Archaeological Society and Council for British Archaeology South East Group and bring them to THS meetings for all who wish to read them.

After the spring gales some of the fencing safeguarding the spiral path on Tonbridge Castle Motte was damaged and needed replacing. THS was contacted by Historic England and I was asked to watch the contractors dig the holes for the new fence. I completed the task and submitted a report and photographs to HE – nothing of any significance was revealed but it was an interesting morning especially as a PR exercise alerting the contractors to the necessity of keeping watch for any interesting unusual features especially when the site is known to be of historical importance. My report will be added to the HE archives on Tonbridge Castle. Apart from this I just kept the usual look at local developments etc.

Shiela Broomfield, Dip.Archaeol, F.S.A.

Archives

The Society Archive (based at the Castle) continues to receive donations of Tonbridge related material – both documents and artefacts – including in the past year photos, artefacts and documents linked to the Beeching family who set up Tonbridge's first successful bank and a large collection of copies of late medieval wills linked to the Tonbridge area (which are still being catalogued). The archive catalogue is available on the Society web site (www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk)

and any member wishing to look at an archive item should make contact and an appointment will be arranged.

George Buswell

Pictorial Records

This year we have concentrated on working through the files to check the condition of all the photographs. This is a very slow process but it allows us to view each image and opens a window into the history of the town. Many of the early photographs can be viewed on the website.

We were invited to put a display in the Castle Chamber on the Medieval Weekend last year as the Heritage Day was moved to a later date in September. We chose to highlight the wide variety of sporting activities shown in the Pictorial Records.

My thanks to the group members for their work throughout the year.

Pat Hopcroft

Research

The research and writing for the book on Mediaeval Tonbridge is coming to an end, with a set of 1428 to 1430 accounts forming the basis of the final chapter. One character emerging from these accounts is William Bruges, who was in receipt of an annual gift from Tonbridge of £2 (approx. £1,250 today) and a fallow deer from the Lord's parks on the feast of John the Baptist, 'whenever the Lord (Humphrey Stafford) pleased'. William was the first holder of the office of Garter, Principal King of Arms, in the royal household. Today, the Garter advises on heraldry, titles and armoury and is the first to publicly announce a new monarch. The present holder,

Thomas Woodcock, recently entered the spotlight when advising the Queen on the appropriate use of royal titles. In about 1430, William Bruges had ordered the creation of an illustrated book, *The Garter Book*, now in the British Library, showing the 25 founder members of the Order of the Garter, one of whom was Ralph Stafford, Humphrey's great grandfather and the 5th member. William Bruges appeared to include himself in the book, kneeling before St. George. Was the money gift from Tonbridge helping to finance this project?

Deborah Cole



Ralph Stafford in the Garter Book

Recent Meetings

Martin Crowther opened our current programme of talks in *September* with a look at 'Cabinets of Curiosity'. These were private collections, normally displayed in cabinets, showing anything considered unusual or rare and were eventually to evolve into the concept of a museum. He began by looking at the late 16th century natural history collection of the Italian Ferrante Imperato which included a stuffed crocodile hanging from the ceiling.

Another collector was Ole Worm, a 17th century Danish scholar whose collection included the last live Great Auk – brought from the Arctic – and also what were labelled as unicorn horns but were in fact narwhal tusks. A renowned British collector was Sir Hans Sloane who on his death in 1753 bequeathed his collection of 71,000 items to the British nation, thus providing the foundation of the British Museum, the British Library and the Natural History Museum.

In *October* Pam Mills returned to talk about the Suffrage movement in Tonbridge which was active in the years leading up to the outbreak of war in 1914. Miss Jessie Taylor who was Headmistress of Tonbridge Grammar School for Girls in this period was an important member of the movement as was the Head of Tonbridge School, Mr Charles Lowry. Pam made the point that there were far more non militant suffragists than the militant suffragettes, and in 1913 part of the national mass march for Suffrage came through Tonbridge and finished at Hyde Park. Some women got the vote in 1918 and in 1919 Mrs Jane Darling became Tonbridge's first female councillor.

The two talks at our *November*

meeting looked at different aspects of the history of the Lees Court Estate near Faversham which at one time covered 85,000 acres. The first speaker, Clive Drew, was concerned with the mediaeval period, and the four families who held manors there, three of whom are mentioned in Domesday. Of these only the Sondes family name now survives, and that will end when the present Lady Sondes dies. Family members are commemorated in the associated mediaeval churches at Throwley, Sheldwich, Badlesmere and Leaveland, all of which are worth visiting.

After tea Richard Taylor described some of the exciting discoveries made by archaeologists digging at Stringman's Field on the Estate in 2018-19. Investigation of a bronze age barrow led to the unexpected discovery of much earlier remains, including a neolithic 'causewayed enclosure' with pottery sherds dating from c3350-3000BC. He explained that 'work on this fascinating and enigmatic site will require many years of investigation and research by the Kent Archaeological Society to uncover its many secrets'.

Toni Mount in *December* told us what Christmas was like in the Medieval period. Celebrations could start as early as December 6th and go on to February 2nd. Food could include wild boar though not turkey. The rich might have a 36 lb 'Christmas pie' which included parts of a goose, 2 ducks, a fowl, 2 partridges and 2 pigeons! Wassail was a popular Christmas drink which was apple based with spices such as nutmeg, cinnamon and ground ginger, honey and quantities of ale, and was served warm. Mystery plays with scenes recreating events from the Bible were

popular entertainment.

In *February* Imogen Corrigan entertained us with a whistlestop tour of the history of seafaring with all its attendant hazards. History was changed by storms and shipwrecks, as when Henry I's White Ship went down with many of his family on board. Favourable winds helped the Vikings 'discover' North America, but adverse ones delayed the start of the Norman

Conquest. Captains tied ropes round their ships to prevent them breaking up in storms, and merchants hedged their bets by sending goods in several small shipments rather than one large one. Charts were inaccurate, and peppered with monsters and whirlpools.

From the Past ...

The Public Library (on the corner of Avebury Avenue and the High Street - *see page 1*) has recently been refurbished both inside and out but externally it still looks much as it did when it was opened 120 years ago on Friday October 26th 1900 by Lord Avebury. The first suggestion of a free Public Library in Tonbridge had been made in 1881 by Mr J.F. Wadmore and in 1882 a library opened in the High Street in what had been a private house bought by the Local Board for £1,600. It was eventually decided to erect a new building to house both the Library and the Technical Institute at a cost of £6,000.

The *Courier* in its edition of 2nd November 1900 described the building as 'somewhat plain and comprised of red brick with stone dressings but in the centre is a floriated panel containing the arms of the Urban District Council and the motto "Salus Populi Supreme Lex". The interior is spacious and, well lighted, ventilated and heated and while the Library is entered from the High Street, the Technical Institute is by a separate door at the side.

There was obviously considerable concern that the Library stayed in good condition as shown by the 1909

warning notice about 'soiling Library Premises' - the ten shilling (50p) reward is equivalent to about £40 today. There was also concern about the books. It wasn't until 1924 that readers could browse the shelves and directly choose books. Previously readers had to choose from a list showing numbers only, which matched book titles shown in a catalogue which borrowers had to buy.

**TONBRIDGE URBAN
DISTRICT COUNCIL.**



Soiling Library Premises.

WHEREAS complaints have been received of persons having soiled the Walls and Floors of the Public Library Premises by spitting,

Notice is Hereby Given,

that instructions have been issued for proceedings to be taken against persons so acting or committing any offence against the provisions of the Libraries Offences Act, 1898.

Readers are invited to give information to the Librarian or to the undersigned, and a

Reward of Ten Shillings

is offered for the communication of any facts resulting in a Conviction.

Update on Plans for a List of Local Historic Assets for Tonbridge & Malling

I would like to bring you all up to date on this matter since our last Newsletter:

The Society met with the Leader of the Council, Nicolas Heslop, Senior members of the Planning Department and Members of Tonbridge Civic Society in July 2019, and presented a robust case built around the following criteria:

- THS view this as a borough-wide and not just a Tonbridge issue
- An LLHA (List of Local Historic Assets) is acknowledged by Historic England and the Council for British Archaeology to play an essential role in the Planning process
- Planning Inspectors are taking a more robust view during the appeals process on whether or not LLHAs are in place, complete with case studies
- Our neighbouring boroughs Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells have in place or have made a commitment to the development of LLHAs, and have offered to assist TMBC and other stakeholders in the development of an LLHA for our borough.

We received a response in early September which we responded to in early November. In our response the Society felt the Council's offer that 'Officers will give consideration to whether a local list should be introduced' and 'any list would need to be a borough-wide endeavour' fell considerably well short of the requirements for an LLHA within the Council's Draft Plan. We also

reiterated that THS has always seen this as a borough-wide issue and again offered to assist the Council in the preparation of an LLHA and requested the Council reconsider their view and provide a more positive response and match the efforts of our neighbours Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. To date we have not received a reply.

In December 2019, when the Planning Inspectors opened up the Draft Plan for further public consultation, we took the opportunity to submit a representation in respect of the lack of an LLHA, and set out that the current Draft Local Plan relies too heavily on the National Planning Framework. We again reiterated our key criteria, supplemented by the support given by Communities Secretary, Robert Jenrick, in an article in November 2019, wanting local people to nominate local historic buildings for listing, and the important part they play in keeping a community's identity thriving.

During this period we have kept our MP Tom Tugendhat fully informed of our actions and he is supportive in our objectives and keen to meet and assist us in any way possible in achieving a LLHA.

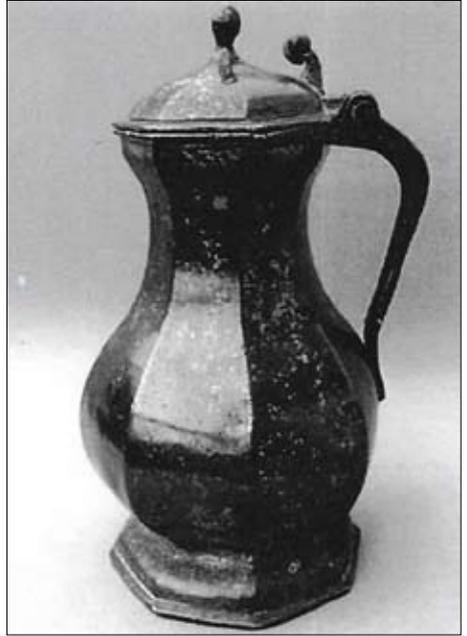
Currently we are writing to the Council requesting them in the light of current events to reconsider their existing position and provide a more positive response. I will keep you all and Tom informed on how we progress.

David Phillips

Lost property

This 10-inch high wine-flagon was found in the silt of the Medway near Tonbridge Castle in 1984. It is made of pewter and probably dates from the first half of the 14th century. It was made in England or Flanders, and the lack of corrosion indicates it is made from metal of the highest quality. It would have been used to serve wine at high table during meals in the Castle hall. So how did such a prestigious item end up in the river?

The flagon was sold at Sotheby's for £21,450 to a collector who kept it hidden in a bucket of dishcloths under his kitchen sink because it was so valuable. It was sold again in 1997 for £28,500, this time to a Belgian collector. The identity of the original finder has not been revealed.



Goodbye, Beales

Beales in the Angel Centre, with its predecessor Bentalls, was not the first or the longest-lived department store to serve the needs of Tonbridge shoppers. That honour goes to Frank East's, a prominent feature of the High Street for 100 years until the 1968 floods put it out of business. With its broad frontage East's shop occupied the space now filled by shops from Boots to The Pavilion.

East himself served the town in many other ways, including as Chairman of the Local Board and Urban District Council, County Councillor, and J.P.

THE MODERN SHOP
devoted entirely to the
service of those who
would be better dressed
. . . . who would have
brighter furnishings
whose table and house
linen would be irreproach-
able, and to whom that
best economy, wise
spending, appeals.

**FRANK
EAST**

The Centre of Fashion,
TONBRIDGE.