

Tonbridge Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2022

From the Chairman

As I write this towards the end of June, the Society can look back on the last year with a great deal of satisfaction. We have managed to have a successful book launch - *Medieval Tonbridge Revealed* - held appropriately at the castle, three AGMs - one delayed and two on time - and a full session of speakers. So given the trials and tribulations of the last couple of years, hopefully we can look forward to a less disruptive period!

Enclosed you will find the Society's programme for 2022-23. Jane Richardson has put together a varied range of topics. and we look forward to welcoming Marc Morris and Professor Sir Roderick Floud and the other speakers to our meetings.

Finally I would like to say thank you to you all for the support you have given the Society and the committee members over the last couple of challenging years. I look forward to seeing you all in September.

Stay safe in the meantime.

David Phillips

PS: Testing the water!

To assist the Society in moving with the times, the committee would like to hear your views on receiving the Newsletter in an electronic format. If you are happy or not! Or would prefer to receive a hard copy, please could you advise the Secretary or other committee member by email or at the September or October meetings. With rising postal charges, this change would offer the Society scope to save on costs.

The committee will then make a judgement based on your views. The earliest this could come into effect would be the Spring 2023 Newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Lecture Programme 2022-23

Thursday 15th September 2022, 7.45 pm: Tales, Titbits & Trivia – Chris McCooley

The strange tale of Cromwell's head, the Goudhurst Tit, the Kent *samurai* Will Adams, Hawkhurst and its connection with the OXO cube, the Horsmonden inventor of the stomach pump, cobnuts, the Uckfield missionary who ministered to the Ainu of Hokkaido, the adventures of Sarah, our Tamworth pig and how Malcolm Muggeridge saved my bacon. The speaker was born in Tunbridge Wells and grew up in Kent and having travelled extensively returned to the area in 1986. He has since been a freelance writer.

Thursday 13th October 2022, 7.45 pm: The Anglo-Saxons: a history of the beginnings of England – Marc Morris

'Sixteen hundred years ago Britain left the Roman Empire and swiftly fell into ruin...Into this violent and unstable world came foreign invaders from across the sea, who established themselves as its new masters'. Marc Morris is a historian who specialises in the Middle Ages. He presented the television series *Castle*, and has written a number of books, including the most recent best-seller of the same title as this talk.

Saturday 12th November 2022, 2.30 pm: two-session meeting with tea – Jack Cranfield

A celebration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Historical Society had been planned for Autumn 2020, but COVID intervened! As a belated celebration, the November meeting this year will be provided free to all members. Members will still need to register for the meeting (to help with catering) and visitors will still be welcome at a cost of £5.

1 The Tudeley Ironworks and medieval ironworking in the Weald

The Tudeley Ironworks in Kent offer a rare insight into the history of a Wealden ironworks and the daily lives and activities of its smiths through the unique survival of accounts, from the first half of 14th century. As part of a PhD project sponsored by the Wealden Iron Research Group, a combined archaeological and historical approach has been taken to investigate this important site, comparing the results of archaeological survey to the documentary record to reconstruct this site and determine its importance in the local and wider medieval economy.

2 Anglo Saxon Metalwork: design and symbolism in the 5th-7th centuries

The Anglo-Saxon period was a time of considerable change in material culture and is particularly characterised by the distinctive metalwork and evolving styles produced by highly skilled craftsmen. Some of the most famous metalwork in British archaeology comes from this period and includes the Sutton Hoo assemblage and the Staffordshire Hoard. Through a selection of case studies, this talk will discuss the variety of metalwork from this period and the changes that occurred as well as considering the symbolic significance of artefacts in conveying power, status, ethnicity, and religious ideology.

Jack Cranfield comes from Sussex, studied archaeology at Cambridge University and is currently studying for a PhD at Exeter University looking at the Medieval Iron Industry of the Weald, so his talks should give us the most up to date information about the topic. Jack is also a member of the Wealden Iron Research Group (WIRG) who are sponsors of his PhD project and have been investigating iron production in the Weald since 1968.

*Thursday 8th December 2022, 7.45 pm: **Purchasing Paradise: the money that paid for the great gardens** – Professor Sir Roderick Floud*

This talk is based on Sir Roderick's best-selling book *An Economic History of the English Garden*. The speaker is an economic historian, author of books on the history of human height and, most recently, a well-reviewed economic history of the English garden. He is now writing, for Penguin, an economic history of Britain since 1660. He was a university vice-chancellor and provost of Gresham College, London, and received a knighthood for services to higher education.

*Thursday 9th February 2023, 7.45pm: **The Retrial – (examining social morality and the law of late Victorian Tonbridge)** – Pam Mills*

In a time of high social morality, the discovery of a murdered child at the Vauxhall Inn on New Year's Day 1902 caused great uproar. The police detectives were instantly called in and with their zeal and determination arrested Harold Apted who was subsequently hanged for this offence two days before his 21st birthday. The talk explores the case, the influence of the press and the need for justice. Pam Mills is a well-known member of Tonbridge Historical Society and has recently completed an MA. She continues to research the history of Tonbridge, through photographs and documentary evidence in local archives.

*Thursday 9th March 2023, 7.45 pm: **The House that the Rich built for the Poor: SPCK workhouses 1721 - 1776** – Peter Joyce*

An exploration of the background to the four SPCK workhouses in Medway. This exploration will look at the legislation preceding the workhouse and the men that made the workhouse a reality. In this journey through Medway's past, we will explore topics ranging from the theft of Port to early wooden pipes and

many things in between. There will also be a chance to explore two books which are contemporary with the 18th Century workhouse and central to its story. Peter Joyce is a Lay Chaplain at Canterbury Christ Church University and a potential ordinand in the Church of England with degrees in Theology. His work centres around 'Excluded Congregations'. He is currently a Kent Archaeological Society scholar working on a doctoral thesis exploring 'Parochial charity in the lower Medway valley in the long eighteenth century'.

Thursday 13th April 2023, 7.30pm: AGM followed by Tonbridge, Floods and 1968 – George Buswell

This talk comes out of research done for the section of the book *Tonbridge through Ten Centuries* looking at floods, and particularly the disastrous flood in 1968. It will make extensive use of pictures from the Society's pictorial records collection. George Buswell was the Society's chairman for 6 years up to 2019 and is now the Society's archivist. He was part of the team who wrote *Tonbridge through Ten Centuries* and has continued his research based on this popular book.

From the Archives

A recent interesting donation is a collection of about 150 1/76th scale model vehicles showing the transport fleet operated by Johnson Bros of Aylesford and Tonbridge from the early 1930s to the late 1950s. The donor's father worked for the firm for nearly 30 years and left a list of company vehicles which the donor spent 20 years recreating in accurate detail – even down to the individual vehicle registrations. In Tonbridge the firm were part of S.E. Tar Distillers (SETAR) which operated a distillery near the present Vale Rise roundabout, processing crude tar to produce a range of products such as road tar and creosote. S.E. Tar tankers, like the one shown here, went out to gas works in Kent, Surrey and Sussex to collect the crude tar produced as part of the gas making process. Our Spring 2022 *Newsletter* included a photograph of the depot with one of the vehicles.



Left: model 21 – Leyland Hippo Bulk Tanker (SE Tars) 1937 registration DYL 514.
Right: model 28 – AEC Mammoth Master Recovery vehicle 1937 reg JG 588.
The models are less than 10 cm in length.

Historic timepiece



This impressive Rolex watch recently changed hands for £155,000. What made it so desirable was that its original owner, Flight Lieutenant Gerald Imeson, had worn it when a PoW in Stalag Luft III at the time of the 'Great Escape' in 1944. Imeson later lived in Hildenborough with his wife and children, and readers with long memories may remember him as an active member, and Committee Member, of THS. He died in 2003 aged 85.

150 years ago

The Tonbridge Free Press

Nearly five thousand issues of the Tonbridge Free Press newspaper, spanning the years 1871 to 1962 have recently been digitised by the British Library. They can be browsed or searched from home on www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk (subscription) or free in Tonbridge Library. The following extracts give a taste of what Tonbridge people would have been reading about in the autumn of 1872.

TONBRIDGE RACES -- These races took place on Wednesday and Thursday and were but poorly patronised by residents of the town and neighbourhood. ...

SHOCKING ACCIDENT ON THE RAILWAY – Early last Monday morning a shocking accident occurred on the railway, between Tonbridge and Paddock Wood which resulted in the death of a labourer named George Miles, of Tonbridge, 24 years of age who, we understand, was shortly to have been married. ...

SANGER’S GREAT CIRCUS – The united companies of the above world-renowned establishments, comprising the greatest Riders, Gymnasts, Vaulters, Wire Walkers, Contortionists, Rope dancers, Clowns, etc. etc. that ever travelled this country, will visit Tonbridge on Tuesday Aug. 27th ... The Grand Procession will start from the Circus at 1 o’clock. ...

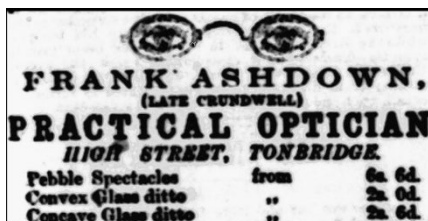
TONBRIDGE CATTLE MARKET – The terrible prevalence of foot and mouth disease interferes considerably with the trade of the market.

TONBRIDGE: 14th KENT RIFLE VOLUNTEERS – Tuesday, August 27 – Second and third class firing at 5 p.m. Ammunition will be issued at the armoury from 3.45 to 4 p.m. ...

HOPS – the hop is making satisfactory progress, and with the renewal of fine weather a good yield may be expected.

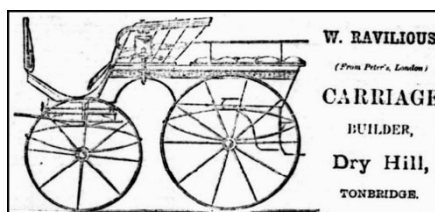
The **GREAT EASTERN** steamship, lying in the Medway above Sheerness ... is taking on some of the new electric cable to lay from Land’s End to Halifax.

A WATERLOO VETERAN – We last week recorded in our obituary notices the death of Mr Samuel Wheeler, at an advanced age. We have since been informed that this elderly gentleman had the honour of serving under Wellington, and was present at the Battle of Waterloo, he being then twenty-one years of age. He ... to the last retained vivid recollections of the stirring scenes in which he had borne a part. ...



FRANK ASHDOWN,
(LATE CRUNDWELL)
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Convex Glass ditto	"	2s. 6d.
Concave Glass ditto	"	2s. 6d.



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SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY.
A
CHEAP SPECIAL EXCURSION
TO
St. LEONARDS & HASTINGS,
On Monday, 25th August,
From Tonbridge 9.20 a.m.