



Spring 2013 Tonbridge History

TONBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Above: The non-violent Suffragette Pilgrimage passing through Tonbridge on 21st July 1913, accompanied by a number of local boys and watched by shop assistants. The building on the left in the background is 124 High Street, now Moss Bros, adjacent to The Chequers. See page 4.

From the Chairman:

We have reached the beginning of 2013, the midway point of the Historical Society programme and the end of my tenure as chairman.

One of the pleasures of office has been to see the development of the Newsletter. I am always eager to see the pictorial selection made by the editors and this issue's image of suffragettes is as well-chosen as ever.

The members of the THS Committee have always been remarkable for their level of knowledge and the energy they use in the service of the society. Working with them has been an education for me.

My thanks go to both the Committee and all the members who make this such a stimulating and thriving part of Tonbridge life. *Jenny Poxon*

Society News

Tonbridge Historical Society

Founded: 1960

President – Joy Debney

Past Presidents – Stella Hardy MBE,
Joan Thirsk CBE, Dr Christopher Chalklin

Committee

Chairman – Jenny Poxon

Vice Chairman – George Buswell

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

Treasurer – Pat Mortlock,
6 Keswick Close, Tonbridge TN9 1LP

Minutes & Archives – Sally Robbins

Publicity & Website – Anthony Wilson

Refreshments Organiser – vacant

Other Committee Members:

Deborah Cole

Vanessa King

Co-opted Members:

Shiela Broomfield (*Archaeology*)

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

website: www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk

AGM

The Society's 2013 Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday, 25th April at 7.30pm in the Riverside Room at the Angel Centre. Details are on a separate sheet distributed with this Newsletter.

Recent meetings

The new programme began in September with a talk by Peter Gillman on the history of domestic lighting. He pointed out that the poor in the Middle Ages who used tallow candles (made from animal fats) sometimes had to choose between lighting the candle or eating it! Candles were still widely used in the 19th century, as shown by Bryant and May making 3 million matches a day in 1850 to light them. The speaker also covered the development of gas, oil and finally electric lighting.

In October David Carder gave us a very well-illustrated talk on mediaeval hospitals and almshouses using many examples from Kent including almshouses in Tonbridge.

The two session November meeting

was well attended with members enjoying the usual array of tempting cakes and scones. They also enjoyed two very entertaining talks by Ian Bevan on Victorian London, covering the main buildings and other features of the period, and Victorian Leisure including the theatre, seaside and organised sport. He finished with the music hall and even got the audience to join in the chorus of 'Down at the Old Bull and Bush'!

The Christmas meeting saw Dr John Ray bringing back memories for many people with his talk on 'The Queen and the 1950s' and he created a particularly vivid picture of life in Britain in that decade including the growth of television. He also described holiday outings to Hastings when the fare from Sevenoaks was 8 shillings (40p).

The February speaker was Professor David Killingray, returning to speak on 'Black Travellers in 19th century Africa'. He gave many examples of

the way black Africans were closely involved in travelling in Africa throughout the 19th century, but were far less well known than European travellers such as Richard Burton, Mungo Park and David Livingstone. One example, Samuel Crowther, was released from a slave ship in 1820, aged 14, and taken to London where he trained as a priest and then became the first bishop to serve in tropical Africa. Another was Thomas Freeman, the son of a slave, who became a Wesleyan missionary in West Africa.

Forthcoming meetings

Thursday, 14th March 2013, 7.45 pm in the Angel Centre. Talk entitled 'Policing the Past: a decade of fighting heritage crime in Kent and beyond' by Andrew Richardson.

Thursday, 25th April 2013, 7.30pm. Talk on the Norman Conquest, by Marc Morris, preceded by the AGM.

Recent Acquisition

THS Archives have received material relating to the 1st Tonbridge Scout Troop, from its founding in 1908 up to 1958, consisting of Minute Books, Account

Books and photographs. The example below shows the Scouts' entry in one of the popular Venetian Fêtes held annually on the river until the 1950s.



100 years ago – from the Tonbridge Free Press

‘THE SUFFRAGETTE PILGRIMAGE’

In our Spring 2012 Newsletter we carried an account of a meeting in Tonbridge in 1912 opposing giving women the vote. However the Suffragette movement continued to grow and the following year saw militant suffragettes launch a campaign of civil disobedience and violence. This included blowing up part of David Lloyd George’s house in February and, in June, Emily Davison throwing herself in front of the King’s horse at the Derby and dying from her injuries. Many suffragettes, though, were opposed to militant action and a National Pilgrimage to show this took place in the summer of 1913. Part of it reached Tonbridge on 21st July 1913 and is shown in our photo on page 1. The event was reported in the Tonbridge Free Press on 25th July:

In connection with the Women’s Suffragette Pilgrimage members of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, which are non-militant and non-party, paid a visit to Tonbridge on Monday when meetings were held at the Public Hall and Angel Corner.

At the latter place the speakers were Miss Muriel Matters and Miss Griffith Jones (NUWSS organiser for Kent), one of whom towards the end greatly aroused the indignation of a great number of the male portion of the crowd, and on leaving she was the subject of considerable hustling all along the High Street and police protection had to be sought.

At the meeting in the Public Hall there was not the least disorder, with Mr E C Goldberg presiding over a fair attendance. Mr Goldberg said they were met together that night under exceptional circumstances which had never before prevailed in Tonbridge ... and he concluded his remarks by saying with all sincerity that he wanted women to have the vote because he believed that the community could not afford to

do without their help in that direction. (applause!)

Miss Griffith Jones stated that the National Union had undertaken a huge pilgrimage in order to show the public that there were thousands of constitutional suffragists compared with the few militant women.

A resolution was moved by Mr Malcolm Mitchell “that this meeting held at Tonbridge in support of the constitutional demand for women’s suffrage believes that the exclusion of women from the parliamentary franchise is unjust and calls upon all His Majesty’s ministers to introduce a measure removing that injustice without delay.”

Various speakers spoke in favour and the resolution, on being put to the meeting, was declared to be unanimously passed.’

Some women were given the vote in 1918 and all women over 21 given the vote in 1928. (For more details see the THS website: www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk/events)

Where there's a Will

A large number of mediaeval and Tudor Kentish wills have been transcribed and can now be found (with some difficulty) on the Kent Archaeological Society website: go to [http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/research](http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/research.htm)

.htm and click on 'Introduction to Transcriptions'.

As a taster, here are some extracts from the will of William Borowgh 'late vicar of Tonbrige', dated 23rd June 1529.

First to the mother churche of Rochester 12d, more to a preest to singe for my soule in the church of Warton where I was born ...

To Thomas my brother, ... £6.13.4. and my secund fetherbed etc. and to his wif a gown of Kentisshe russet furred with squyrell ... [also] to the said Thomas a grey horsse

To Nicolas my brother, £6.13.4. and my great salt of silver ...

To Anne my brother James' doughter, my secunde salt of silver and my best fetherbede, my best blewe gowne furred with shanks [fur from animal leg].

To my cosyn Margaret the wife of Alyn of Grenewich, 20s...

[To] Alyns Wives suster dewlling in London, 30s and my thurde fetherbed.

To Richd Baret, my kowe and 20s.

To Sir Edmond Hynde, my violet gowne with Saint Thomas worsted.

To the church of Tunbridge, ... my spones of silver to make a paire of cruetts. More, to the same church two of my best coverletts the oon to hang behynde the sepulcre and the other to lye afore the high awter ...

To the College of Cobham, a great brasse pott and more, to the said Collage to the intent that they shall synge dirige [dirge] and masse solemnly for my soule and all Xten [Christian] soules, xxs and a bibill in prynt.

I geve all my wood to the pour people of this towne ...

Every godchilde of myn, 12d apece ...

I will the lease ... for a house ... lying in the towne of Tonbrige the yerely rent to be spent at the churche of Tunbrige for a yerely mynde [remembrance] for dirige and masse and pour people ...

'A collection of old stones'

The sad story of Tonbridge's Town Museum

The venture began with good intentions. When the Urban District Council purchased the Castle and its grounds as a public amenity in the 1890s, they resolved to set aside a room in the Castle to illustrate the history of Tonbridge. They even intended that once the Museum had become established, they would spend up to a ½ penny rate on purchasing items for exhibition.

The nucleus of a collection already existed, since for some years previously the Free Library Committee was acknowledging the receipt not just of books but of 'many other gifts [forming] a valuable collection for the Museum which it is hoped to provide as soon as funds can be obtained ...' The Council splashed out £50 to purchase a collection from a Mr Fibott of Tunbridge Wells, and found storage space in one of the local schools.

When space became available at the Castle, the Libraries and Museum Committee appointed one of their number, Mr E W Handcock, as Honorary Curator, but did not think they yet had a sufficiently attractive collection, one member describing it as 'a collection of old stones'.

A Mrs Stradling came to the rescue, offering part of her own collection, Mr Ives donated some polished agates and Colonel Whittaker of Chiddingstone House chipped in with a pair of showcases of stuffed birds. Finally, on 18th October 1905, the Town Museum was ready for opening, a ceremony performed by the Revd Dr C C Tancock, Headmaster of Tonbridge School.

The Museum was housed in the space now occupied by the Tourist Office, remaining there until the 1930s. When Kent County Council took over the Library service they had no use for the Museum and closed it down, to the dismay of Tonbridge's Urban District Council.

Members of the Beeching family – local bankers – offered a very generous £600 to keep the Museum going, but with war now on the horizon the scheme came to nothing.

And the exhibits? John Hilton tells us that 'a few of the relics' were still on display in the Castle dungeon in the 1960s at least.

Perhaps some of our readers can add to this story?

(Adapted from 'Tonbridge Tales - Aspects of Local History' by John Hilton)



At an event in the Castle grounds in 1909, the Museum entrance can be seen behind the splendidly-hatted Ladies' Chorus.

From the archives

A poster printed in 1892, in which the Chairman of the Local Board exhorts the citizens of Tonbridge to spruce up their town in readiness for a royal visit.

Princess Henry of Battenberg was Queen Victoria's youngest daughter, Beatrice. She had been invited by an enterprising Vicar of Tonbridge to call in here on her way from Windsor to Tunbridge Wells and open the Church Fête, held at the Castle. On the day, according to Frank Chapman, a violent storm blew down trees and wrecked tents, despite which enough money was raised to pay for a heating system in the Parish Church and the construction of the Parish Church Rooms.

Princess Beatrice lived on until 1944.

TONBRIDGE LOCAL BOARD.

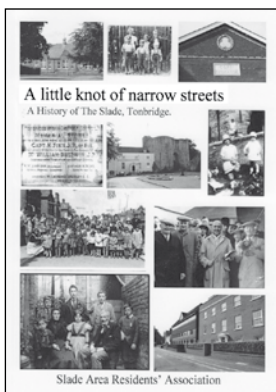
ROYAL VISIT TO TONBRIDGE.

ON the occasion of the Visit of Their Royal Highnesses Prince and Princess Henry of Battenberg on Tuesday the 28th June inst., it is hoped that the Tradesmen and Inhabitants generally will do their best to give the Town an *attractive appearance* by decorating their premises, and by keeping the Roads and Pathways clear of Boxes, Packing-cases and the like. This is especially desirable in the Streets forming the route of the procession, viz: Barden Road, High Street, Bordyke, East Street, and Bank Street.

FRANK EAST,
Chairman of the Tonbridge Local Board.

TONBRIDGE,
18th June, 1892.

Here and there



'A little knot of narrow streets'

This delightful history of the Slade area of Tonbridge, to which THS members have contributed, is now available from Mr Books or the Tourist Office. With sections on the Fosse, Market, Workhouse and Bank Street and Slade schools, there is much of interest to a wider audience than just Slade residents. Much of the book is devoted to oral history – reminiscences of life in the Slade gathered from some of the long-term residents. Compiled by Jacquie Wyatt and published by Slade Area Residents' Association, the book is excellent value at just £3 from the Tourist Office.



The splendidly rejuvenated **Hadlow Tower** will be open to visitors on Thursdays from this May until October. Advance booking will be required. Details will be on the website www.hadlowtower.com. Anyone interested in serving as a voluntary steward at the site is invited to register their interest.

Forthcoming history courses in Tonbridge:

Kent Adult Education courses (at the AEC, Avebury Avenue)

One day Saturday courses (10-3):

Life in Norman Kent, 20th April

Black Death: Blessing or Curse?, 15th June

Middle Ages Spin Doctoring, 6th July

One day Sunday courses (10 to 12):

In Search of the Wealden Hall House, 16th June

Discover West Malling's Historic Buildings, 30th June

W.E.A. courses (Contact: Rosemary Walker, 01732 366346)

6 week *Philosophy* course at the Angel Centre, starting 17th April (10 to 12)

One day courses at St John's Hildenborough:

Scottish Colourists, 13th April (2 to 4 30)

Current Affairs, 8th June (10 30 to 3 30)



Exhibition

The social and political campaigns which were organised around the struggle for votes for women are highlighted in the current exhibition **'Inspiring Women – revealing hidden histories from West Kent'** at Tunbridge Wells Museum. Perhaps surprisingly, Tunbridge Wells was home to one of the most active women's movements outside London in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Open until at least the end of March. Admission free. 01892 554171.