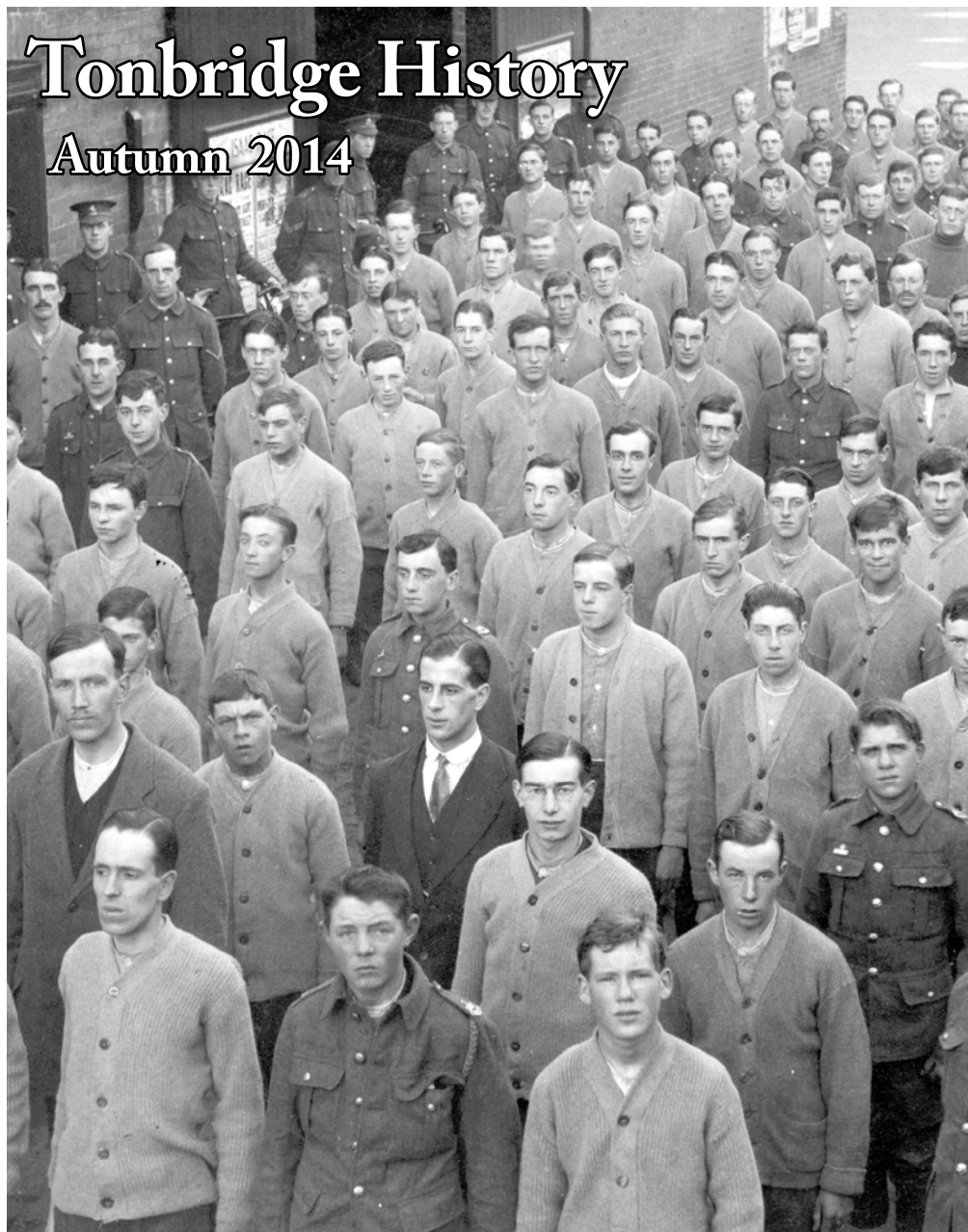


Tonbridge History

Autumn 2014



TONBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

*Recruits at the Royal West Kent Drill Hall (formerly the Corn Exchange)
in Bank Street, probably in August 1914 - see pages 6-7.*

Let us know if you recognize any of your ancestors!

Society News

Tonbridge Historical Society

Founded: 1960

President – Joy Debney

Past President – Christopher Chalklin

Committee

Chairman – George Buswell

Vice Chairman and Website
– Anthony Wilson

Secretary – Madge Woods,

Treasurer – Pat Mortlock,

Minutes & Archives – Sally Robbins

Publicity – Vanessa King

Audio-visual Officer – Deborah Cole

Social Events – Jenny Poxon

Other Committee Members:

Roger Barham

Pam Sharland

Co-opted Members:

Shiela Broomfield (*Archaeology*)

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

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 hope that you have all enjoyed the good summer weather which has made up a little for last winter being one of the wettest on record and, starting in September, we can also enjoy the new, interesting and varied programme of talks. The outbreak of World War 1 100 years ago is marked elsewhere in this *Newsletter* and it is also good to see substantial progress in the reconstruction of Tonbridge's Memorial Garden with the aim of completion in time for the Remembrance Day service in November this year.

Stella Hardy

Stella Hardy, who will have been known to many THS members as Chairman and President of the Society, died at the end of May 2014 at the age of 96.

Stella was influential in many areas of the life of Tonbridge and her energy and professional position as Divisional Librarian led her to initiate the founding of Tonbridge Historical Society, as well as the Tonbridge Branch of the Workers' Educational Association.

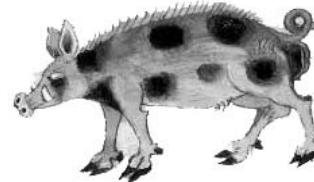
Her active involvement at all levels of the WEA led to the award of an MBE for services to Adult Education. At her funeral we revelled in memories of an awe-inspiring woman who was tremendous fun to be with. We will miss her laughter, her anecdotes and her love of life. – *Jenny Poxon*



Recent Meetings

At the **March 2014** meeting Anne Carter spoke about Gad's Hill Place in Higham which was built in the 18th century by Thomas Stevens who was twice Mayor of Rochester. It is better known though as being the house where Charles Dickens lived for the last 16 years of his life and indeed was the only house Dickens actually bought. She mentioned the Swiss Chalet which is now in the grounds of Eastgate House in Rochester. It was given to Dickens by a friend – Charles Fechter, an actor and theatre manager – and arrived in pieces in 94 boxes with the assembly instructions in German. Dickens used the upper floor as a study and was writing in it when he died in June 1870.

In **April**, following the AGM, Imogen Corrigan gave a well-illustrated talk about the Luttrell Psalter, the illuminated manuscript from the 14th century, made for Geoffrey Luttrell who came from a rich family who owned much of Lincolnshire. It is a substantial book weighing 14lbs and measuring 14" by 10" and Imogen brought her own facsimile copy with her. The original has 309 vellum leaves with 150 psalms. The text was written by a single scribe man but four artists were used for the beautiful illustrations showing many aspects of medieval life. It gives a fascinating snapshot of Medieval England.



Lecture Programme 2014-15

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

Thursday, 18th September, 7.45 pm

Traditional Kentish Trades, Crafts & Industries

Richard Filmer

Our speaker has a keen interest in vernacular architecture, travel and local history together with traditional trades and skills, both locally and worldwide. The presentation will show both town and country craftsmen, of yesterday and today, at work in workshops, fields and forest, illustrating the essential place of traditional craftsmen in the South-East of England.

Thursday, 9th October, 7.45 pm

Tonbridge Castle's Great Gatehouse – the architecture reassessed

David Martin

Our speaker is a retired archaeological researcher at University College London, where he currently holds an honorary position as a research fellow. He is Past President of The Vernacular Architecture Group and an active researcher into the timber-framed buildings of the South-East of England, particularly East Sussex, for which he was made a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

Saturday, 8 November, 2.30 pm

(Two-session meeting with tea. Booking required: a form is enclosed with this *Newsletter*).

In the first of two related talks, **Archaeology at Knole**, we will hear about the results of two years of

archaeological investigation of the building complex and landscape at Knole, and the future work to take place as part of the National Trust's major Heritage Lottery Funded conservation project at the property. The speaker, Nathalie Cohen, works part-time for both the Thames Discovery Programme at Museum of London Archaeology, and the National Trust as Regional Archaeologist for Kent & East Sussex.

This will be followed after tea by

Graffiti at Knole: the hidden history

This talk will present the findings from an on-going project studying the graffiti at Knole, and the hidden history of the house that it is gradually bringing to life. The speaker, Matthew Champion, is a historian/archaeologist, Project Director of the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey, a volunteer-led community archaeology project that aims to undertake the first large scale systematic survey of medieval graffiti in the UK.

Thursday, 11th December, 7.45 pm

The Story of the London Eye

Bob Appleton

The talk will tell the story behind the Millennium Wheel, now the London Eye, along with an introduction to 'Big Wheels' (Ferris Wheels) from the 19th century, such as those in Chicago, Paris, Vienna and the first 'Big Wheel' in London at Earls Court.

Thursday 12th February 2015, 7.45 pm

Artists of the First World War – the Triumph of the Avant-Garde

Martin Heard

The speaker is an independent art historian who, since retiring from

information technology both in continental Europe and North America, has devoted his time to researching Art Historical periods and subjects that have garnered his interest over the years. In this talk he shows how early twentieth century modernist artists responded in visual terms to the challenges of the Great War.

Thursday, 12 March, 7.45 pm

The Early Kingdoms of Kent, 100BC to 600AD

Deborah Cole

Kent was the first recorded English kingdom which some say swallowed up the previously independent West Kent. In the very colourful and controversial history from 100BC to 600AD what can be told about war lord and tribe becoming king and state? Deborah is a THS Committee Member who has a PhD in medieval archaeology and recently published a book 'The Tonbridge Circular Walk – in the footsteps of mediaeval knights'. She also leads WEA courses on early Kentish history and Kentish places.

Thursday, 16 April, at 7.30 pm

AGM, followed by Gluttony and Starvation in the 19th Century

Jules Dussek

Gruel, bread, soup, a little cheese and hardly any meat was the starving labourer's diet. More shocking than this was the diet of the workhouse and prison.

Jules Dussek is a retired surgeon, with a passion for food which he has been able to indulge whilst cruising the canals of France.

From the archives

Tonbridge Castle auctioned at Christie's in 1813

Tunbridge, Kent.—By Mr. CHRISTIE, at his Great Room, in Pall-mall, THIS DAY, at one precisely, in 2 Lots, A Most desirable and valuable FREEHOLD ESTATE, consisting of the Manor of Tunbridge, with Court, Lect and Baron, Quit Rents, Fines, Tolls of Markets and Fairs and extensive Fishery. Also the ancient Castle of Tunbridge, of which part has been formed, at great expence; into a most substantial and comfortable stone-built Mansion, with offices of every description, and capital walled kitchen gardens, in high order, the interior of the Castle now laid out as a beautiful lawn and modern pleasure ground, over hanging the river Medway; the Keep and its environs form a valuable plantation of ash, &c. for poles. In the whole about six acres, with the freehold castle meadows, about twenty-seven acres, and the priory meadows, nearly fifty-six acres, watered by the river Medway, forming a most desirable residence, in a genteel neighbourhood, and in a country unequalled for beauty and fertility.—The premises may be viewed, with tickets, to be had of Messrs. Stoores and Son, solicitors, Tunbridge, of whom Particulars may be had; and of Mr. Christie, Pall Mall. Particulars may also be had of the Printers of the Maidstone and Lewes Papers; at the Crown, Tunbridge; Crown and Royal Oak, Sevenoaks; and Auction Mart, City.

From the Morning Chronicle, 19th March 1813. The Castle was put up for auction by the Woodgate family following the collapse of the Tonbridge Bank. It was purchased by a Mr William Bailey. Little is known of Bailey, but a Woodgate letter suggests he wanted to sell the Castle the following year for £9000.

Exhibition
at the Kent
History &
Library Centre,
Maidstone
ME14 1LQ

**4th August -
31st October
2014**

Admission Free

Details:
Tel: 03000 413131
historyandlibrarycentre
@kent.gov.uk



In Their Own Words
Kent Voices of the First World War

Exploring life in Kent during the First World War,
through first hand accounts

Tonbridge: August 1914

The outbreak of war in August 1914 has been commemorated this year in many different ways and it is interesting to look at the reaction shown in the *Tonbridge Free Press* newspaper, which reflects the fact that Britain had not been involved in a major European war since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. The general feeling was that the war would last only a few months. The reaction would have been far different if people had known it would go on for over four years, cause the collapse of three empires (Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian), the deaths of more than 8 million soldiers and wound over 21 million on both sides. From Britain and the Empire nearly 1 million died, including 400 from Tonbridge.

Within hours of the declaration of war in 1914, Territorials ('Terriers') were being called up.

From the *Tonbridge Free Press*, 7th August 1914:

'TERRIERS CALLED TO THE COLOURS Enthusiastic Departure from Tonbridge

From the great cities and towns down to the smallest hamlet there prevails one enthusiastic spirit of patriotism and loyalty and on all hands there is that

universal love for and devotion to, the Old Country and its revered monarchy which thrills us with somewhat unwonted pride and delight at the fact that we are under the protection of the British Flag. War has come upon us like a thunderbolt and practically at a



In August 1914, men who were not already Territorials rushed to enlist for Lord Kitchener's new army. This postcard shows the send off given to recruits from the staff of the Whitefriars Press as they march past the Bull Inn (on the site of Peacocks) in the High Street.

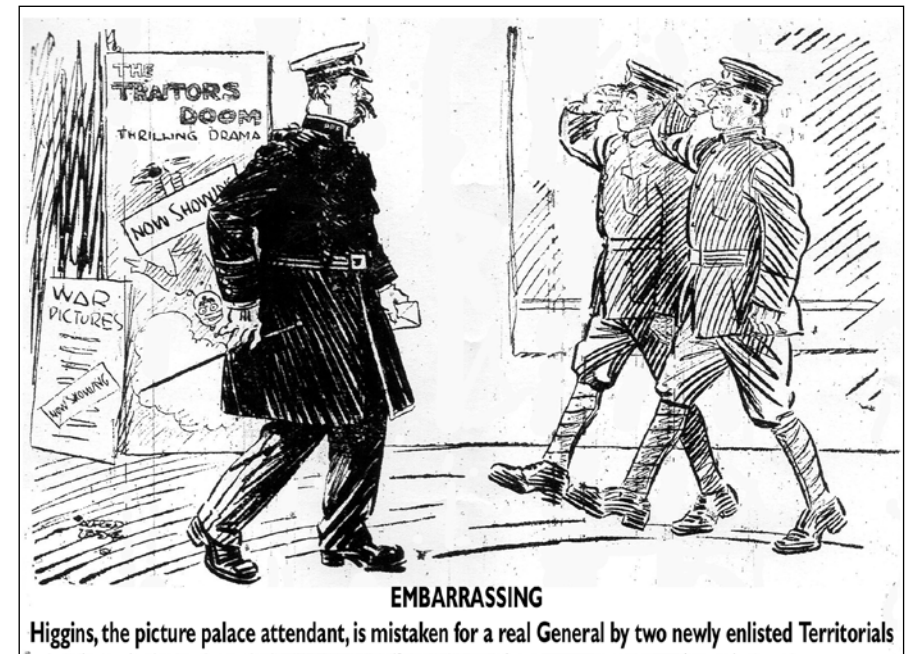
minute's notice orders have been given for the mobilisation of the Territorial Troops. It was late on Tuesday night that the members of No. 1 Company Kent Royal Engineers received orders to proceed to Sheerness; they turned up, with one exception, to the man and that exception was a man delayed at London Bridge who joined his comrades later... The war cloud has burst and as a nation we are called up to face one of the greatest crises in the history of our Empire. A great task lies before us and we must approach it in a spirit worthy of the great traditions of our nation. Everyone must feel the burden since it is the burden of all. Division means cleavage and only Unity is strength.'

Elsewhere in the *Free Press* on that date there is a report of an 'unprecedented rush on food supplies

and the grocers of the town and district have been besieged with big orders and importunate appeals for food all this week.'



Men from the City of London Royal Fusiliers at Tonbridge Station. The regiment was one of many passing through the town during WW1.



A month into the war and this cartoon published in the *Tonbridge Free Press* on 11th September 1914 shows there was still a light hearted feeling about the situation.

Here and there

Forthcoming history courses

WEA Courses in Tonbridge

Exploring Historic Towns, Buildings and Industries: 10 weeks from 30th September, 10.15 - 12.15

Philosophy: 10 weeks from 1st October, 10 - 12.15

Literature: 'The Road Taken'

Part 1: 10 weeks from 2nd October, 10 - 12.15

Part 2: 10 weeks from 15th January, 10 - 12.15

World Leaders of the 20th century:

11 weeks from 8th January, 2 - 4

The River Thames, Part 2: 5 weeks from 13th January, 10 - 12

The Wars of the Roses: 5 weeks from 24th February, 10 - 12

Kent Adult Education Courses

in the Adult Education Centre,
Avebury Avenue

Home Front Britain - Beginner's Guide:
2 weeks from 27th September, 10 - 12

Home Front Britain: 8 weeks from 17th October, 1.30 - 3.30

A History of Medieval Women: 10 weeks from 2nd October, 7.15 - 9.15

Latin for Historians: 2 weeks from 8th November, 10 - 12

(Details: www.kentadulteducation.co.uk)

Canterbury Archeological Trust

The Trust is running a number of one-day courses during the autumn. Topics include *First steps in archaeology* (6th September), *A crash course in Roman Britain* (18th October), and *The archaeology of the Kingdom of Kent* (22nd November). For a full list, and to book, go to www.canterburytrust.co.uk/community_archaeology/archaeology-courses/.

Joint Afternoon Meeting

A joint study afternoon organised by the Council for Kentish Archaeology and two other organisations takes place on Saturday 18th October, 2 - 5 pm, at Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury. Subjects are: *If the Kaiser Should Come - Defending Kent*, *Fifty Years of the Council for Kentish Archaeology* and *Britain and the Great War - A Nation in Arms?*

Tickets, free to members or £6.00 for non-members: send s.a.e. to CKA, 7 Sandy Ridge, Borough Green, TN15 8HP, cheque payable to CKA.

Rye Medieval Conference

Yet another event on 18th October is this one-day conference with six speakers, on the theme of *The Hazards of Life and Causes of Death in Late Medieval England*. Details and booking from www.ryemuseum.co.uk/medieval-conference/.

THS Newsletter is compiled by George Buswell and Anthony Wilson. Our thanks to all contributors. Future contributions should be sent to THS, 7 The Ridgeway, Tonbridge TN10 4NQ. Deadline for the next issue: 1st Feb. 2015