

February 2005

Venue for meetings

Our committee have again had extensive discussions on the venues for our meetings and although we have received only a few comments, the consensus of opinion is that many members would like the meetings to move back to the village hall as they find the walk to the school on dark winter evenings too intimidating.

In order to more accurately ascertain the feeling of members we will be holding a vote by show of hands at the March meeting and if there is a vote in favour of returning to the village hall we will put this into operation with the start of next seasons programme starting in September 2005.

If you are not attending the March meeting but would like your views known please telephone any member of the committee to register your opinions. Please let us know how you feel.

In order to make the facilities at the village hall more accommodating for our meetings we will be making more use of our portable sound system and we are also negotiating with the village hall committee on the provision of a permanent drop down screen. These two improvements should make visibility and audibility much better.

We will of course still be restricted in numbers at the village hall by the terms of the letting regulations and by the number of the seats, which is approximately 70, and if there is a demand over and above this number we will, if there is time, change the venue or restrict the admittance to first come, first served. Any comments on these proposals would be appreciated.

Notes about this season's programme

Christmas Get Together Tuesday 14th December

A complete sellout for a very enjoyable evening with Quodlibet, our local singing quartet at the White Horse. We have however received a complaint that the menu provided was not what was advertised in the programme. Despite our efforts to ensure that our programme was accurate and also despite assurances that the menu printed in the programme was to be the one supplied, we were as disappointed, as no doubt you were, when we were advised that the menu would be changed only a week before the event, and when there was insufficient time to notify all those who had booked.

The Nailbourne Tuesday 18th January

There was a very good and indeed unexpected turnout for this very interesting talk by John Shelton of the Kentish Stour Countryside Project.

Once again we have received a complaint about the fact that the programme said the talk would be on the Nailbourne, but instead was on the work of the Kentish Stour Countryside Project with only passing references to the Nailbourne. Nonetheless many people expressed their opinion on how much they enjoyed the talk. Unfortunately once we have engaged a speaker, despite having discussed the topic with them beforehand, we are completely at their mercy as to the content of the talk.

There was also a complaint that the normal coffee/tea and biscuits were not provided. This was due to the unforeseen absence of those volunteers who normally provide this service. If any is aggrieved by this we are ready to welcome volunteers to fill the gap.

Forthcoming events

Member's Social Evening Tuesday 15th February

By the time of receiving this newsletter this event should have taken place. This meeting was in the upstairs room at the Plough & Harrow and once again we were restricted in numbers and it was fully booked with a waiting list.

The committee make no apologies for the restriction in numbers as it is surely better to have events that are fully or overbooked than to have to cancel meetings.

Canterbury Brick by Brick Tuesday 8th March

This talk by Dick Bolton, who is always entertaining and instructive, will show the different building techniques and materials used in the buildings of Canterbury and district. As usual this talk will be in the **School Hall at 7.30 pm.**

Agincourt & Montreuil Saturday 23rd April

We have reached the numbers sufficient to ensure that this coach trip will definitely run but there are still a **few places left** so if you want to go either fill in the slip or telephone John Bishop to ensure a place.

We must point out that this trip will be crossing the channel by **ferry**, so those who may have been put off by thinking it was by tunnel can now book.

For those who are going please remember that a **passport** will be needed and insurance to cover health or the **new form E111**, the old form is now no longer valid.

Kent History Federation Conference Saturday 14 May 2005.

We trust all those who are interested in attending this event have been in touch with Dr. Maurice Raraty, if not please do so as soon as possible, he will be able to supply full details.

Big Houses in Bridge Tuesday 24th May

You may recall we were negotiating for this talk on the three big houses of Bridge to take place in one of them—Bridge Place. We did try to hold a function there last year but due to restoration work which is still continuing we had to change the venue at the last minute. Bridge Place is almost certain not now to be available and we have therefore decided that the venue for this meeting will now definitely be **the School Hall** at the usual time of 7.30 pm.

Chilham Saturday 25th June 2005.

Details of the Summer Walk in Chilham were not received in time for the brochure but this has now been fixed for Saturday 25th June 2005 and we will meet at the Recreation Ground Car Park at 2.00 pm.

The cost will be £2.00 for members and £3.00 for non members and this does not include a cream tea.

We have been offered a visit to a members garden that is open under the National Gardens scheme with the possibility of tea being provided there, further details will be advised in the May newsletter. In the meantime please send in the slips and advise if you require tea to be booked.

We are hoping to include a visit to the grounds of the castle which has been undergoing restoration over the last year but this is not guaranteed. Even so there is much of interest in this largely unspoiled village.

Committee members

We would like all members to consider carefully whether they would like to serve on the committee. This society is run for and on behalf of its members and if you would like a say in what happens then please contact any member of the committee. Contrary to popular belief you do not need computer skills but without more people willing to help this society will no longer operate.

Published By David Gilmour on behalf of Bridge and District
History Society.
Telephone 01227 832450.

April 2005

Forthcoming events

Agincourt & Montreuil

Saturday 23rd April leaving at 7.30 am

This coach trip will definitely run as the coach is virtually full but there are still a **few places left** so if you want to go telephone John Bishop to ensure a place.

Despite the notice in last months newsletter we must point out that this trip will be crossing the channel by **tunnel**, so those who may have been put off by thinking it was by ferry can now book.

Don't Forget

- Passport
- Euros
- Health insurance or Form E111

The old form E111 is no longer valid so make sure you have the up to date version, obtainable from the Post Office. This will be valid until 31 December 2005 when it will be replaced by an EU card.

The coach will **leave** Bridge Post Office at 7.30 am on Saturday 23 April so please ensure that you are there in good time.

We have arranged a guided tour of Agincourt which will mean we will not arrive Montreuil until 2.00pm—2.30 pm or later and as there are limited eating facilities at Agincourt we suggest a packed lunch would be a good idea.

Kent History Federation Conference Saturday 14 May 2005.

We trust all those who are interested in attending this event have been in touch with Dr. Maurice Raraty, if not please do so as soon as possible, he will be able to supply full details.

Big Houses in Bridge

Tuesday 24th May

This meeting will now definitely be **the School Hall** at the usual time of 7.30 pm.

We expect this meeting to be full of interest for all our members. The talk will take the form of three 20 minute talks on each of the three big houses, Bourne Park by John Bishop,



Bridge Place by Dr. Maurice Raraty



and Bifrons by David Gilmour.



So much new information and rarely seen pictures of the houses and their occupants have been unearthed during the research for these talks I am sure you will learn so much from them.

Chilham

Saturday 25th June 2005.

Details of the Summer Walk in Chilham were not received in time for the brochure but this now been fixed for Saturday 25th June 2005 and we will meet at the Recreation Ground Car Park at 2.00 pm.

The cost will be £2.00 for members and £3.00 for non members and this does not include a cream tea.

In our last newsletter we stated that we have been offered a visit to a members garden that is open under the National Gardens scheme with the possibility of tea being provided there. In fact this garden is not in the National Gardens scheme but is open during some summer days to raise money for the local church, so any profits that are made from our teas will be going to this good cause.

We are hoping to include a visit to the grounds of the castle which has been undergoing restoration over the last year but this is not guaranteed. Even so there is much of interest in this largely unspoiled village.

Notes about this season's programme

Member's Social Evening

Tuesday 15th February

This evening was fully booked and those who attended had a very enjoyable and informative evening with a talk by Chris McLean. Some of the pictures he showed had not been seen before and were not even in the Society's archive. As usual the refreshments and the socialising afterwards were much appreciated by all those who attended.

Canterbury Brick by Brick

Tuesday 8th March

This talk by Dick Bolton although it would seem to be a dry and dusty subject was actually of great interest as Dick took us through the history of brick building with many examples of houses from Bridge and from Canterbury. Dick was as always a very entertaining speaker and kept everybody interested right to the end.

Until the arrival of the railways many of the houses he illustrated were built of local bricks and he also showed how the different patterns which can still be seen on some of the buildings were created. Those who did not attend have missed out on the mysteries of English bond and Flemish bond which were fully explained by Dick in his inimitable manner.

Venue for meetings

In view of the overwhelming show of hands at the last meeting we will be changing the meetings back to the Village Hall with the start of next seasons programmes. We will keep you posted on our meetings with the village hall committee on our efforts to make the hall more hospitable.

Committee members

In our last newsletter we asked all members to consider carefully whether they would like to serve on the committee. This society is run for and on behalf of its members and if you would like a say in what happens then please contact any member of the committee.

Contrary to popular belief you do not need computer skills but without more people willing to help this society will no longer operate.

The response to our request was very small and we would urge those who could help to step forward and help us keep this society running.

Questionnaire

The next newsletter which will go out with the new programme will also contain a questionnaire which we would ask you to fill in and return. We need to know what our members like and dislike in the talks, visits and other arrangements we make. Have your say about your society.

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September 2005

10th Anniversary Issue

A message from our chairman.

Welcome to the tenth season of Bridge & District History Society. It hardly seems possible that ten years have passed since our early meetings held in the Hunter Room with about a dozen members. I hope that you all felt our last seasons was a success. We had some interesting talks and enjoyable visits.

The trip to Agincourt seemed to go down well especially as it was held on St. Georges Day. I thought our French hosts were very understanding however the weather could have been better.

There is so much to look forward to in the future and I hope you continue to support us as you have in the last decade.

We will be calling on you for a lot of assistance over the next couple of years and I feel sure you won't let us down.

A special thank you to all the committee for their help over the last season and I look forward meeting you all again over the coming months.

Venue for meetings

You will have noticed that we are returning to Bridge Village Hall for meetings but please note that due to circumstances beyond our control we are not able to get the usual Tuesday night slot. So please check your programme for all the dates of and days of the meetings. We have been promised substantial improvements by the Village Hall Committee. These will include a drop down screen and our sound system should ensure a better view and more comfortable listening. We have also been promised, in due course, that the chairs in the hall will be replaced with padded seats. We are sure that this change of venue will be more convenient for members.

Kent History Federation Conference 2007—Bridge.

The Kent History Federation have decided to award the 2007 annual day conference to Bridge.

We would be expected to make arrangements for approximately 200 delegates who would descend on Bridge for the day. In line with previous conferences the format will be for several speakers to talk on topics of local and regional interest in the morning and tours to places of historical interest in the vicinity in the afternoon.

There will be a considerable amount of work to be done and your committee will be primarily involved but will require additional help with all the arrangements. Many things need to be organised such as seating, car parking and catering and anyone who can help in any capacity is asked to make contact with any member of the committee, please do not wait to be asked and please do not expect the committee to shoulder the whole burden. If anyone has any ideas or can think of anything special we could do don't keep it to yourself but let us know. We will be organising walking tours of the village for the conference delegates. We are also conscious that the title of the society is Bridge and district and we will organise visits to the adjacent villages where possible.

This will be an important day in the life of Bridge and we hope a great boost to the local economy as these delegates will be spending money in the village not only buying food and drink but goods and services in entrance fees to various establishments. Should the conference as expected make a profit then any surplus will be divided between the federation and your society. We want this conference to be the best yet so lend a hand and it will be.

Notes about last season's programme

Agincourt & Montreuil

Saturday 23rd April

A full coach set off from Bridge on a gray but dry morning to travel via the tunnel to Agincourt. The museum there is very well equipped and we were given an extensive guided tour which included hands on exhibits of what a battle scene looks like through a helmet (Very difficult to see anything that is not straight in front of you.) and models of the battle field in miniature. We then went on to Montreuil, a small town which was originally on the sea but is now inland and its connection with the headquarters of General Haig in the First World War is commemorated by a statue of him in the main square. Despite the drizzle which started soon after our arrival our members explored this quaint old town and we had an enjoyable afternoon before returning home again via the tunnel.

Kent History Federation Conference

Saturday 14 May 2005.

This was held at Edenbridge this year and those who attended had the usual enjoyable day. May we ask those who did attend to make themselves known to the committee as their views on how a conference should be run would be most helpful.

Big Houses in Bridge

Tuesday 24th May

Over 60 members and guests enjoyed the talk by David Gilmour on Bifrons House, Dr. Maurice Raraty on Bridge Place and John Bishop on some hitherto unseen aspects of Bourne House. We were fortunate in obtaining many pictures of all the houses as they would have looked in their heyday even though Bifrons no longer exists and Bridge Place is but a shadow of its former self.

Chilham

Saturday 25th June 2005.

Twenty of our members were blessed with good weather on this summer Saturday walk around Chilham visiting many of the old houses in the village. We had a look at the new entrance drive to Chilham Castle and the Elephant House—used for keeping elephants to clear the timber in the woods. A visit to the Church included a tour of the graveyard for one member looking for their ancestors. The day was finished with a lovely tea in members Tim and Hilary Derouet's beautiful garden at Myste.

This season's programme

Just a few notes about the new programme. The refreshments at the Christmas Evening will be supplied by some of our members and will include much traditional Christmas fare and the format of the evening will be very much a social get together. The Barnstormers presentation will be in the round and will be very lively evocation of the forties era.

The visit to the Stonemason's yard is restricted in numbers and if there is a large demand we will try to organise a further visit. So book early.

The member's evening of reminiscences will be very informal and we would encourage those members who were at the inaugural meeting to tell us of their experiences.

The Bridge Bounds walk, on Saturday 24th June will be led by Martin and Jenny Vye and is intended to be a gentle summer evening stroll around some of the bounds of the parish of Bridge taking in the local beauty spots and finishing in a local hostelry for those who need to quench their thirst. It promises, subject to the weather, to be a very pleasant evening.

Committee members

As you will have seen on the front page we intend to host the 2007 Kent History Federation Conference. The committee will need help in organising and running this event and we would ask all volunteers to contact a member of the committee. Don't leave it all to the present committee members.

Questionnaire

Enclosed with this newsletter is a questionnaire that we would like you to complete and return with your subscription to Dr. Maurice Raraty or hand it in at the first two meetings of the new season. The answers to this questionnaire will help the committee plan future events and to arrange as many events as possible to comply with what you would like to do and hear.

Published By David Gilmour on behalf of Bridge and District History Society.

Telephone 01227 832450.

Please email any comments to:

dgilmour@freeuk.com

November 2005

10th Anniversary Issue

A message from our chairman.

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, there have been some changes in the Committee of your Society as a result of John Bishop's most regrettable resignation from the Chairmanship.

He has been a stalwart organiser of outings and adventurous trips abroad, and a friendly and unflappable chairman of meetings. Now it is the turn of your erstwhile Treasurer to take on the role. I hope I will be as successful as we embark on our eleventh year, with membership once more well over a hundred, some important discoveries behind us (with, I'm sure, more to come) and a full programme for the rest of this year.

The committee is already thinking about ideas for next year, and has already started planning for our biggest day yet: the arrival in Bridge of 150 members of other local history societies for the annual One Day Conference in May 2007.

Meanwhile, we have this year's Christmas special event next on the list. It promises to be particularly interesting for those with long memories!

I wish you all the best for the season to come.
Maurice Raraty

New Committee

Following on from the request for new committee members we are pleased to advise you four new committee members have now been appointed.

They are John Cardy, v Tim Derouet, Joan Hill and Alan Walton. I am sure they will bring a new vigour and fresh ideas to the Society.

The Chairman

John Bishop our chairman for the last 9 years has had changes made to his work pattern and as a consequence cannot attend as many meetings as hitherto had been possible. As a result of this he felt that he could not give the society his attention and the leadership that they deserved and has resigned from his position.

As he had been our chairman almost from the beginning of the society it was with great regret that your committee heard the news and we would like to thank John for all his efforts on our behalf over the years without which the society would be a great deal poorer. He has been instrumental in arranging overseas visits and has worked tirelessly to organise many of our events.

He will continue to run the talks and events he agreed to run for this season and slips addressed to him should continue to be sent. He will remain on the committee.

I am sure all of the members will hear this news with great regret as John has been a great ambassador for the Society and has always been willing to help and advise at all times.

Many thanks are also due to Janet Bishop for her efforts in doing the hundred and one things always required of a chairman's wife and the many things done behind the scenes to keep things running smoothly.

When your committee received this news from John they had no hesitation in unanimously electing Dr. Maurice Raraty as Chairman. As a consequence Maurice has resigned as Treasurer and he has been replaced by John Cardy.

This season's programme

Our first meeting this season was in **September** and we heard Peter Ewart talk to us about the Swing Riots.

This protest by agricultural labourers was against the harsh conditions in the farming counties of the south and east of England in the 1830s. Peter told us how the name of the Swing Riots came from tracts and letters purportedly signed by a Captain Swing threatening dire consequences if demands were not met.

The protest began in East Kent here at Lower Hardres and spread throughout the eastern counties. It was directly responsible for the Poor Law enacted in the 1840s which established the workhouses and of course the one in Union Road Bridge.

As always Peter was a lively and entertaining speaker and the meeting was enjoyed by all those present.

Our second meeting in **October** was a talk by Dr. Maurice Raraty on the Star Hill Dig. This was the first use by the Society of our new data projector. This excellent presentation ranged over the discovery of anomalous features in aerial photos of Star Hill—the hill on the road out of Bridge to Dover—and their investigation by a unit led by Paul Wilkinson. They had two digs uncovering a iron age hexagon but during this they came across what seemed to be an Anglo-Saxon cemetery. A further dig this year revealed the cemetery and there were many pictures of the finds and of the excavation which included the spear of a warrior and a completely undamaged glass hemispherical cup together with a coin of King Wihtred which placed the cemetery in the early 8th century AD.

The presentation was followed by lots of questions and also a lively debate on the merits of disturbing ancient burial sites.

Our third meeting in **November** was a talk by Michael Peters on the Huguenots. Although Michael was well versed in his subject and gave a very informative talk it was presented in an unusual and unexpected way by using large cards to pass round the information instead of using slides. Although this tended to distract from what Michael was saying the information contained in the cards was of great interest. This meeting was well attended and provoked a lively range of questions at the end.

Forthcoming events

The Christmas Evening on **Thursday 15th December** still has a few places available please ring John Bishop immediately if you wish to go. It promises to be a lively and entertaining evening with the appropriate music to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.

The visit to the **Stonemason's yard in March** is restricted in numbers and is now fully booked. but if you are interested please still send in the slips as we are organising a waiting list with a view to trying to arrange another visit. If anyone requires transport from Bridge, please telephone Meriel Conner. For those unsure of the position of the yard it is through Brett's yard immediately after the railway crossing in Broad Oak road.

Please note that the time of the visit is **10.30 am** and not 2.30 pm as shown in the programme.

The new Committee

As a result of the resignation of our chairman we have reconstituted the committee and elected the following officers and committee members:-

Chairman—Dr. Maurice Raraty	Tel. 830508
Secretary—Jenny Vye	Tel. 830983
Treasurer—John Cardy	Tel. 721360

Committee members

John Bishop	Tel. 832596
Meriel Conner	Tel. 830487
Tim Derouet	Tel. 730080
David Gilmour	Tel. 832450
Joan Hill	Tel. 830215
Alan Walton	Tel. 832351
Barry Whiting	Tel. 830506

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Telephone 01227 832450.

Please email any comments to:

dgilmour@freeuk.com

May 2006

Kent History Federation Conference 2007

Several members of the committee attended the 2006 conference in the Darenth Valley and gleaned valuable information on how we would host this important event.

The fire at the Red Lion has been a blow to our hopes but we are putting contingency plans into operation in the event that the pub will not be open in time for the conference.

As the facilities in the village are restricted we will be limiting the numbers who can attend to 150 and we would expect that most of these will come from outside our society.

As mentioned in the last newsletter we are making considerable progress and the speakers have all been finalised. We did ask for volunteers to help with this event but the response has been minimal.

I have had some response, but more would be welcome.

We will require many people to help with setting out displays, ushers, reception committee, registration, setting up equipment, serving coffee and tea, serving lunches, preparing lunches, tour escorts, preparing signs, laying out chairs, transporting chairs, car park attendants, printing name tags, maps and instructions. If you can help in any capacity please give your name to Jenny Vye on Canterbury 830983 as soon as possible, letting her know in what capacity you can help. This will be a very important event both for the society and for the village and we want it to go as smoothly as possible, which we can do with your help but we cannot do it without your help. Come forward and be a part of our team.

Most of the jobs will not be hard or difficult but we want the rest of Kent to know what a good society there is in Bridge.

The Star Hill Dig

In view of the recent controversy over this excavation our chairman has asked for a personal statement to be published.

Those members who have been following the progress of the dig this year will know that it has now ended. The excavations that have been concluded (though sadly not completed) had promised to be one of the most exciting events to have taken place in Bridge, revealing evidence of the history of the village since well before the Roman invasions including until (most recently) the uncovering of a flint from a flintlock pistol of not so long ago, and the remains of even more recent military occupation. The final survey has offered evidence of more than 80 graves and cremation burials from the Anglo-Saxon period and before, overlying signs of habitation on the brow of the hill from a much earlier and probably pre-Roman age. The dig has however thrown up many more questions about the lives of the early villagers than it has been able to answer.

The inspiration for the dig came some four years ago from an aerial photograph of the field, which revealed a large hexagonal structure, and a number of round barrows. The hexagon was in the following years partially excavated, revealing a ditch surrounding it, and a pit in the middle. In the course of this find, a number of graves were discovered last year in very close proximity to it. The presence of graves in the field has been known for over two centuries, since some were uncovered (or 'turned over') by the Vicar of Nackington, the Rev. Bryan Faussett, in the late 18th century. The probability of further discoveries in this rich archaeological area is very great. The extent of this cemetery however was unknown, and still remains so, since its boundaries have not been found. What purpose the hexagon

(below)

served, its age, or what its precise relationship to the graves might be, is, it appears, still a matter of dispute among archaeologists. These are questions demanding answers, but they are questions which unfortunately will not now be answered. Nor will we know any more about the people of Bridge who first populated the village: whether they were rich or poor, noble or peasant, soldier or farmer; whether the old story about 'Old England's Hole' has any substance; or why 'Star Hill' has traditionally been so-called. The possibility of further discoveries to rival those of Sutton Hoo, or, more locally, the Kingston Brooch of exquisite Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship, has been put back, perhaps for a generation, even though it is clear that this immediate district was of cultural and political importance as a meeting place in early Anglo-Saxon times. We must once more fall back on legend and speculation, for the site has been closed, and the dig prematurely suspended. This result has been achieved by a campaign of what (for lack of clear evidence) I believe to be unwarranted discredit and



disinformation, by some who for their own reasons did not seem to want these questions answered.

This I perceive to have been inimical to the unprejudiced pursuit of knowledge, and to any spirit of open-minded and collective enquiry. We remain in ignorance, and have sacrificed a real opportunity to learn more about our past here in Bridge. I for one am profoundly dismayed and saddened by such an outcome.

Maurice Raraty

This seasons meetings

The visit to the Stonemason's yard of Canterbury Cathedral was very interesting. The yard is situated in Broad Oak in Brett's yard and considering the vast size of the Cathedral and the amount of stone needing restoration the operation is really quite small. We were first shown the stone in its raw state as it arrives from the quarry. It is then cut up into usable portions using either a massive chain saw or a huge circular saw. We then saw the design office where the templates for the stone are made with three dimensional instructions. After the stone is in usable sizes it is then carved by the masons using the templates although long experience means they do not have to refer to them as often as you or I might have to. The skill in the carving is amazing and it is difficult to remember that this is being done with stone and not wood the masons make it look so easy

Our members' evening on the 18th April was as usual well catered for by Chris and Melanie MacLean who always look after the society in the best possible way with the limited facilities at their disposal.

The visit to the Museum of Kent Life on Saturday 20th May started inauspiciously with torrential rain on our way to the Museum and on our arrival. However by the time we boarded the Kentish Lady the sun had come out and we had a lovely cruise from Allington Lock down the Medway to the Archbishop's Palace where we turned round and returned to Allington Lock. The boat trip took an hour from start to finish and was very leisurely and restful. At Allington we broke up for lunch and after lunch went round the Museum. They have several very interesting displays on hop farming, and the processing of the hops in the oasts together with much historical equipment. We had a look in the hopper's huts, both the tin ones and the brick built ones as well as the outdoor communal cookhouse. The other buildings at the museum housed 19th and early 20th century cottages, a chapel with a schoolroom, a farmhouse and a village hall. The schoolroom was supposedly 1930's but many of us could remember classrooms and desks just like it into the 1950's. The village hall was a typical East Kent village hall, unfortunately we could not explore it, as they were using it for a wedding reception on the day.

Published By David Gilmour on behalf of Bridge and District History Society.

August 2006

The new programme.

A message from our chairman, Dr. Maurice Raraty.

Welcome to another new year for the Society. We have I hope put together a particularly attractive programme, with several talks on subjects very close to home, not least a visit to what was once the district workhouse in Union Road, which at one time housed more than a quarter of Bridge's population, though one wonders how far the lives of the inmates impinged on the village. Not far removed from this perhaps is a talk on the history of the prison service (!) while at the opposite end of the economic spectrum we have a talk on perhaps our most colourful resident, Count Louis Zborowski, and his association with the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway.

The most important event of the year however will be the Kent History Federation Conference in May, when we shall be privileged to play host to representatives from a hundred other history societies throughout Kent. This will surely put us really on the map. We are a group of small villages – smaller than the usual for this event, but we do in fact have one of the larger memberships, reflecting the considerable interest in local history here. With the keen support and cooperation of many of our members we are sure to put on a good show: preparations are well advanced, but there are still all sorts of ways in which members can help. Just let any of the committee members know that you will be available on the day!

Please let the Membership Secretary know if you have changed your address or if you want a programme to be sent to a friend.

First of all apologies for the errors in the printing of the programme, it was a case of either getting the programmes printed and out to you on time or correcting the mistakes and maybe having the programme out after the season had started. The Christmas Evening is on the 19th December but it is a Tuesday and not Thursday as printed in the programme. The visit slip is correct.

We have tried to put together an interesting and varied programme with many items of local interest. The visits we have planned to the workhouse and to the cathedral precincts will be enhanced by those leading these walks who are not only very knowledgeable but also very enthusiastic about their subjects.

Alan Walton not only has a great interest in the old workhouse he even lives it. It would be interesting to compare the Bridge workhouse with others in Kent as I think the comparison would show that Bridge for most of the time was a fairly enlightened example and although conditions were by today's standard unacceptable, then it was considered better than starving in a farm labourer's cottage. I am sure this will be a most interesting visit and a pleasant and informative evening.

Meriel Conner will be leading a walk in the cathedral precincts which has as many items of interest as the interior of the cathedral. There are many parts still visible of the Priory of Christ Church which was here until the dissolution of the monasteries, some of the buildings have been taken over by the cathedral and some by Kings School. With luck and fair weather it should be a lovely summer evening's walk through the history of the cathedral.

In September we have Richard Eales talking to us about the Domesday Book. Although Bridge is not specifically mentioned in the Domesday Book as a village it is mentioned as a hundred. We shall be enlightened in this talk.

Dr. Mary Dixon will be talking about the Old Town Gaol in Dover which if your interest is roused by the talk, still exists and can be visited in the Town Hall at Dover. Dr. Dixon will also elaborate on the inauguration of the new police force in Victorian times and its effects on the keeping of law and order.

Harold Trill has many short films of this part of Kent and he will be showing a selection of his collection. These films are not often seen and this will be a rare opportunity to look back on how things were, brought to life in front of your eyes. These old films are very helpful in recalling the past, those who recently saw some old video clips on the Medway shown on Meridien television would have been as surprised as I was at how much heavy industry there was on the Medway and how it is now. This change has come about within the lifetime of most of our members.

The talk by Richard Filmer on the traditional crafts and industries in Kent is almost a follow on from the old films. He will be showing the rural side of industrial change. So much has changed and so much has disappeared, many crafts have died out because there is no demand but they have also died because there is no one left to carry on the craft. It has to be said also that health and safety requirements are stifling many of the old ways and this is likely to be much worse in the future.

The member's evening at the Plough and Harrow was planned before we heard that Chris Maclean was leaving for Faversham. We will still go ahead with the evening even if we cannot use the Plough and Harrow but we may have to change the venue. Details will be advised in a later newsletter. Alan Walton will be talking about Count Zborowski who was so interested in railways he even had one set up in the grounds of Higham House—The Higham Railway. He played an important part in the establishment of the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway.

The Christmas evening on the 19th December should be informative as well as entertaining. Dr Geoff Doel and his assistant Mick Lynn will be producing an interactive commentary on Christmas

in Kent as it used to be celebrated in the rural areas. There will be the usual hot and cold Christmas buffet. This year's celebration will be much nearer to Christmas than usual, so we expect the Christmas spirit to be much in evidence.

The visit to Chilham Castle in May is being arranged by Meriel Conner and we are hoping that we will be able to visit the interior of the castle which is not normally open to the public. Further details will be advised in a later newsletter. As mentioned in the programme, those who help with the Bridge Conference will be given priority on this visit which will almost certainly have a restriction on numbers.

Last seasons meetings

The final meeting of last season was the Bridge parish boundary walk which was enjoyed by a small number of participants.

KHF Conference, Bridge

The arrangements for this conference are well in hand. The main conference will take place in the School Hall on the Saturday morning. The conference venue will be signposted at the entrances to the village and we hope that car parking will be available on the recreation ground. At lunchtime we expect to provide lunches for most of the delegates in the village hall and probably one other venue. After lunch there will be a programme of visits to various places including walks in Bridge, Bishopsbourne, Patricbourne and Bekesbourne. So if during Saturday afternoon you see a crowd of people being shepherded about the district you will know who they are. Other visits are to Chilham and Canterbury, some of which we are including in the programme for our members after the conference.

After the visits the delegates will have a final tea in the Village Hall and then depart. We would expect the delegates to visit various establishments in the village, such as the local pubs (those still open), and the shops during the lunch break and after tea and so to benefit the economy of the village.

Published By David Gilmour on behalf of Bridge and District History Society.

November 2006

As this is the last newsletter before Christmas I would like, in advance, to wish all our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I see, this Sunday, that the Archbishop of York is taking issue with those who are downgrading our traditional Christian observances and more power to his elbow. By definition our members are interested in history and a part of that, is continuing with age old tradition and keeping the spirit of a festival alive. I was in Canterbury on Saturday the 11th November and was pleased to note that the two minutes silence at 11.00 was observed by most people. It is only right that we should do these things on the correct day and not shift it to a convenient Sunday. I always look forward to seeing the decorations going up in Bridge and in Canterbury and the world would be a much duller place if we did not celebrate Christmas.

This is of course all leading up to a plug for the Christmas Evening on Tuesday 19th December when we will be entertained to a traditional Kentish Christmas. There are still some places available so get those slips in to Jenny Vye, you will be guaranteed a good evening.

Please note that the day is Tuesday 19th December and not Thursday as printed in the programme and the format of the evening will a talk illustrated with slides by Dr. Geoff Doel and folk songs by Dr. Mick Lynn who is the folklore expert. The hot and cold buffet will be supplied by Alan Walton and I sure will be up to the same high standards as last year when we received many, many favourable comments. Those who attended last year had a very enjoyable time and this year will be no exception.

We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday 19th December which is less than a week before Christmas Day.

Previous meetings

The first meeting this year was on the Domesday Book. Richard Eales who is a lecturer at the University of Kent and specialises in this period gave an interesting talk on many aspects of the records within Domesday and although Bridge is not mentioned in Domesday except as a meeting place of a hundred he pointed out that many places that were known to exist from other sources were not included in the record. Richard expounded very clearly why Domesday was compiled and how and also mentioned that although it was commissioned by William the Conqueror it is likely that he never saw it as it was probably completed after his death. We are fortunate in this country to have such a record which has no known parallel in any other European country.

The second meeting this year was a talk by Mary Dixon on Dover's Old Town Gaol and also on the role of the newly formed police force. Mary told us of the various local jails and of the Acts which eventually replaced all the local jails with county jails with the exception of the Dover jail which continued. It is unfortunate that an excellent presentation was marred by the low attendance which may have been due to the violent rainstorm just prior to the start of the meeting.

The third meeting was an evening of old films on Thursday 23rd November. Now, by an evening of old films, we do not mean a load of old rubbish such as you would see on television, but films made about local places and events and rarely seen. Harold Trill has to his great credit collected and preserved these films which would otherwise have been destroyed long ago and they are a unique encyclopaedia of social history. Harold had a number of short films and covered many interesting aspects

of local history including the finding of witch charms which are either symbols inscribed on walls or beams or in one instance a charm written on paper and wrapped round a nail fixed in the chimney breast. He also showed us witch bottles which were buried in the hearths or door sills to trap the witches.

Included in his short films was a visit to the cinema at Broadstairs which can seat up to a hundred and in the off season shows many films for the Thanet Film Club and is a one man band run by the owner's son who is projectionist, ticket seller and does any other job that needs doing.

Another film showed Dr. Hewlett Johnson, The Red Dean and his house and café at Charing Hill. The café is now an Indian restaurant, how times change!

Kent History Federation Conference

David Starkey, pictured below, has very kindly agreed to open the Kent History Federation Conference at Bridge in May 2007. He is a historian whose latest book is *Monarchy: From the Middle Ages to Modernity*, published by Harper Press at £20.00. He also has the television series *Monarchy* currently running on Channel 4. Many of our members may well know him as he lives locally at Barham.



We have now finalised all the speakers and the tours and the budget has been submitted to, and approved by, the Federation, so we are all systems go. We will be setting up the school hall and the village hall on the evening of Friday 11th May and would welcome all hands to the pump both on that evening and on the following day.

An illustrated booklet on the History of Bridge is being produced for sale at the conference by Mrs. Meriel Conner. We will announce in a future newsletter when this booklet is ready as this will also be available for sale to our own members.

Bekesbourne Son-et-Lumiere

Those of you who went to the Son-et-Lumiere at Bekesbourne in September 2004 will be pleased to learn that an edited version of this entitled a History of Bekesbourne Church and Village is now available on DVD and can be played on any DVD player.

Copies are available at £10 from the Membership Secretary

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The normal format plays on the British television standard (Region 2 PAL) but if you wish to send it to relatives in the USA it can be produced in US format (Region 1 NTSC).

The DVD is in full colour and runs for 66 minutes.

Higham Park

Extensive redevelopment plans have been submitted for Higham Park and any objections have to be registered with Canterbury City Council on or before 1st December 2006. Their Reference is CA/06/01431/BEK. Information on these plans can be obtained from Mrs. Mimi Hoare, Trees, Bridge Hill, Bridge, CT4 5AX Tel. 832518

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