

The Sinking of the Grosser Kurfürst off Folkestone

by Ian Harvie, MA



Rescuing Survivors of the Grosser Kurfürst



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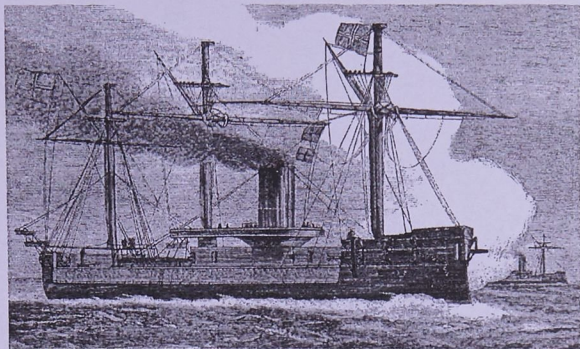


Folkestone Local History Leaflet No. 8

The Sinking of the *Grosser Kurfürst* off Folkestone

The squally showers that descended on the English Channel in the early hours of Friday 31 May 1878 had, by 9 am, lifted to reveal a clear sky and calm waters. People strolling out across the clifftops at Folkestone found their eyes drawn towards two small sailing boats some miles offshore. To the east three black and fully rigged steamships were also visible making their way slowly down Channel. Many onlookers remarked on the close proximity of the two lead vessels, sufficient to confuse some into believing they were seeing one ship. Suddenly the inshore vessel began behaving erratically and showed an alarming list to port. Within minutes her upper works were fully exposed to those onshore. Then she disappeared from view. Rumours circulated that the stricken vessel was none other than the navy's first ironclad, **HMS Warrior**. In the hours that followed however, as the dead and living were brought ashore, the name on their capbands revealed that it was in fact a German warship, the **Grosser Kurfürst**.

Launched in 1875, the **Grosser Kurfürst** ('Great Elector') was a prestige vessel in Germany's fledgling navy. Over 300 feet long, she had a respectable maximum speed of 14 knots. Her main armament consisted of four 10-inch rifled Krupp guns mounted in twin turrets amidships supplemented by two 6¾-inch guns at her bow and stern. Her other main weapon was a projecting bow ram, an obligatory feature



THE "GROSSER KURFÜRST"

of all capital ships of the period following the devastating use of ramming tactics by the Austrians at the battle of Lissa in 1866. The 9.2-inch armour-belt, which protected her hull, was sufficient to deflect most shells but useless against a well-aimed ramming attack.

If the ship's weaponry, machinery and construction materials pointed towards the Dreadnought battlefleets of the future, her rigging, masts and spars bore testimony to the residual influence of the sailing fleets of the past. The **Grosser Kurfürst** was a hybrid, spanning two distinct eras of naval construction. She was also one of the first warships designed and built entirely in Germany. Her seven years on the stocks, from 1868 to 1875, were followed by a further three years fitting out. She set out on her maiden voyage on 29 May 1878 without undergoing any sea trials.

The **Grosser Kurfürst** left Wilhelmshaven for the squadron's summer cruise accompanied by her sister ship **Preussen** and the broadside armoured frigate **König Wilhelm**, at 368 feet long the largest ship in the German fleet. She was also the most powerful, carrying eighteen 9.4 inch Krupp guns on her main deck and a further five 8¼-inch guns on her exposed upper deck. Like the **Grosser Kurfürst**, her ordnance was supplemented by an exaggerated bow ram that could scythe through the water at 14½ knots. Aboard her, and in command of the squadron, was Rear Admiral Carl Ferdinand Batsch, a 'coming man' in the German navy. He had, as his flag captain, an able and experienced officer in Captain Heinrich Kuhne. The same was also true of the **Grosser Kurfürst**'s captain, Count Alexander von Monts, a veteran of the Schleswig-Holstein war of 1864. Unfortunately, the crews of Batsch's ships were largely made up of semi-trained conscripts who in turn were officered by men of limited sea-going experience. The problems this caused were exacerbated in Monts' case by the unfamiliarity of a new ship, which was plagued by teething troubles.

The morning of Friday 31 May saw Batsch's squadron approaching the Straits of Dover *en route* for Plymouth, its first port of call. Despite sharing Monts' unease about the inexperience of his crews, Batsch intended putting both men and ships through their paces on their voyage south. Conditions were ideal for squadron manoeuvres. Only the gentlest of easterly breezes disturbed the surface of the water. Clear skies rendered visibility perfect. Around 8.30 am Batsch ordered his ships to close up. The **Preussen**, astern of Batsch in the **König Wilhelm**, gradually closed to within a cable's length. The **Grosser**

Kurfürst, slightly abaft her starboard beam and steaming a parallel course further inshore, also closed to within 100 yards of the flagship. At 9 am the ships passed Dover. Satisfied they were holding station comfortably, Batsch retired below after seven hours on duty. Captain Kuhne accompanied him, leaving the vessel in the hands of the officer of the watch, Lieutenant Oskar Klaus. He in turn supervised 19-year-old Otto Rantzau at the helm.

Aboard the **Grosser Kurfürst** Monts privately questioned the wisdom of practising close order steaming so early on in the voyage. Unlike Batsch and Kuhne, he remained on the bridge. As the ships passed Folkestone at around 9.30 am Monts sighted two sailing vessels, a brig and a barque both flying Norwegian colours, passing directly ahead of the squadron. In accordance with the 'rule of the road' he ordered a turn away to starboard. The ship passed astern of both vessels comfortably.



Count Alexander von Monts, Captain of the Grosser Kurfürst

The same was not true of the **König Wilhelm**. Believing there was plenty of sea room, Klausa gave orders to cross ahead of the two fishing boats. Almost immediately he realised his mistake. Agitated, he barked instructions to alter course so as to bring the ship astern of both vessels. Rantzau responded by swinging the helm hard over. Slowly the ship's long, projecting bow veered away to starboard. It now pointed however at the **Grosser Kurfürst**, back on her original course and less than 100 yards away.

From the bridge of his ship, Monts watched these manoeuvres with growing alarm. The **König Wilhelm** was bearing down on him at a speed of around ten knots. All too aware of the danger, he ordered full speed ahead. With luck his ship would just avoid a collision: at worst she might receive a glancing blow to the stern. On the **König Wilhelm** however, Klausa and Rantzau were in an agony of confusion. Orders to port and starboard the helm followed in rapid succession. At the critical moment Klausa lost all self-possession: 'The other way!' he screamed as Monts' ship loomed up at him. Infected by Klausa's panic, Rantzau instinctively turned the ship to port and onto a direct collision course once more with Monts' vessel. In desperation, Klausa ordered the ship's engines to be reversed. It was a futile gesture. With a grinding crunch her bow ram plunged into the side of Monts' ship with the force of 9,600 tons of iron behind it. The ship's bowsprit fouled the **Grosser Kurfürst's** rigging, bringing down her mizzen topgallant mast with a thundering crash. Cutters and other small boats were smashed and swept away. Monts' ship recoiled violently but continued under way. As the **König Wilhelm's** ram disengaged itself,

it tore away at the **Grosser Kurfürst's** armour plating 'like the skin of an orange'. A gap 20 feet long by 14 feet wide opened up in her port side between the main and mizzen masts.

Below deck on the **König Wilhelm** the impact was barely felt. Instead of a violent jolt, no more than a slight shuddering indicated anything was wrong. On deck however, shock and confusion prevailed. As the ship swung clear, sea water poured in through her damaged bow, flooding her forward compartments. The ship plunged violently. Orders were given for the immediate closure of her watertight doors, but even so water began to seep aft. Kuhne and Batsch, back on the bridge once more, made preparations to beach her. Fortunately, the crew remained calm and disciplined. Hammocks were wedged into the breach caused by the impact, whilst on deck a handful of crew managed to haul a sail over her bows. Down below, the engine room staff manned pumps to contain the flooding. After a while it became clear that the ship would remain afloat after all. Satisfied that she was in no immediate danger of sinking, Batsch abandoned all thoughts of beaching her and directed his efforts instead to helping the **Grosser Kurfürst**.

The situation aboard Monts' ship was grave however. As the ships sheered off, water poured through the chasm in her port side, flooding the stokehold and furnaces. Steam shot out of the condenser scalding the flesh off those nearby. Only a handful of stokers managed to escape, either through the hatches or else up the ventilation shafts. With the ship circling towards the shore, Monts' thoughts too turned towards hopes of beaching her. But as she began to heel over he quickly realised

this was impossible. Reconciled to the inevitable, he ordered the ship's boats to be lowered. The sharp angle of list meant that few boats on the starboard side could be launched however: those on the port side had been largely destroyed at the moment of impact. Tangled ropes and the debris of collision impeded what efforts were made. Nevertheless, by cutting their ropes, a handful of boats eventually got away. As the list increased growing numbers of men clung to the starboard bulwark for support. Then, as she heeled over onto her beam end, they began dropping into the water. A group of 30 men, up on the forecastle, jumped overboard at the bow despite the pleas of the boatswain. They were caught in the netting slung beneath the jib boom. Entangled and unable to free themselves they were dragged under as the ship subsided. Those already in the water floundered around looking for bits of wreckage to keep them afloat. The ship's hammocks, designed to act as floats in just such an emergency, had been removed from their normal storage place however and went down with the ship. Having taken to the water himself, Monts felt himself sucked under as the ship slipped beneath the surface. The pressure on his lungs was intolerable. Just as he was about to pass out the suction ceased and he shot to the surface where he was hauled into a lifeboat more dead than alive. Others were less fortunate. Some sailors reached boats only to find they were already crowded. Unable to scramble aboard many drifted away and were sucked under by the massive vortex caused by the ship as she foundered.

From the moment of collision until she disappeared beneath the waves, less than 15 minutes elapsed. Appalled witnesses of the disaster at

Folkestone and Sandgate noticed a plume of white steam breach the water's surface, suggesting that the ship's boilers had exploded. Then all fell silent as the sun shone down on an otherwise placid and innocent-looking sea. A small patch of black was all that remained of the **Grosser Kurfürst**. Close inspection revealed it to be men struggling to stay alive. Boats launched from the **König Wilhelm** and **Preussen** plucked survivors out of the water before they succumbed to their injuries or exhaustion. They were aided by several boats of the Folkestone fishing fleet that happened to be nearby. The **Emily**, under master Richard May, took on board 27 survivors and the **Susannah** a further 18. In the **Emily's** case an officer who clambered aboard immediately set about rescuing his colleagues by means of a boat-hook. Because of the danger of swamping however, the boats were forced to avoid going in amongst the mass of bodies, confining themselves instead to the periphery. Even so, 85 men were saved by Folkestone fishermen. In less than half an hour all who could be saved had been saved. Out of a total ship's complement of 497 men, 276 were lost, including seven officers. Three of those rescued subsequently died of exhaustion.

Within days of the sinking the first funerals took place. Crowds lined the streets as the corpses of three ordinary seamen — *Sunke, Muntzers and Muller*... made their way along Tontine Street, Grace Hill and Rendezvous Street to the Parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe prior to burial in the town cemetery. Others soon followed. *Sarnowski, Weiss, Honkfeldt, Rummel*... Each was accorded full military honours, their coffins draped in the imperial flag of the German Reich. *Funk, Krabbe, Backaus, Kenscher*... For weeks, scores of corpses were washed

ashore or else plucked from the sea earning the finder £1. *Kromp, Rorkener, Baumann, Schutt...* Some were mutilated and decomposed. One, *Count Schwerin*, carried a reward of £100 from his family desperate to recover the body for interment in Germany. *Vogel, Schomberg, Lange, Frericks...* A rumour circulated that divers had found a hatchway clogged with the bodies of men trapped in their frantic efforts to escape. *Weber, Wolf, Granack, Dahl...* By the end of June the people of Folkestone were so upset by the endless procession of military funerals that Council officers ordered all further interments to be private and low-key. *Poelmann, Werlich, Preussner, Benson...* But the bodies still washed ashore. And for all their sensitivity, people still queued up to gape at the disfigured corpses as they lay awaiting burial in a boathouse down by the harbour. *Hagan, Fischer, Konak, Faulke...* On the latter a diary was found with a prophetic entry for 30 May: 'Who knows that before long we may all be drowned, and I may find a grave at the bottom of the sea.' Seaman Faulke, dressed in his blue uniform with gold anchor badges on the shoulder and white gloves on his hands, found his final resting place not at the ocean's bottom but in a small plot of land in Folkestone cemetery, alongside scores of his comrades from the **Grosser Kurfürst**.

The mass grave of the **Grosser Kurfürst's** victims is marked today by a grey, stone obelisk set apart from the other memorials in Folkestone cemetery. For many years after the disaster the names of those who perished were inscribed on its sides. The anti-German sentiments evoked by the First World War however led to the monument's

desecration and the eventual removal of the names so that it now records the fact of the event and little else. Nevertheless, for the greater part of the First World War, the people of Folkestone ascribed their immunity from bombardment by German ships and Zeppelins to the Kaiser's enduring gratitude for the kindness shown towards the survivors in the immediate aftermath of the sinking. This misplaced faith was rudely shattered when on 25 May 1917, almost 39 years to the day on which the **Grosser Kurfürst** sank, a bomb landed in Tontine Street killing 73 Folkestone men and women.



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2001

Divers plundered wrecks of artefacts worth £250k

Two divers have been fined more than £60,000 after plundering shipwrecks off the Kent coast.

David Knight and Edward Huzzey, both from Sandgate, admitted raiding ships and illegally keeping eight bronze cannons from the wreck of a 19th-century British merchant ship in the English Channel in May.

Their haul, estimated to be worth more than a quarter of a million pounds, was plundered from the shipwrecks of German submarines from the First World War and an unknown 200-year-old wreck carrying English East India Company cargo.

Now the pair have been fined £63,500. Knight must pay £7,000 and Huzzey £6,500 with both men ordered to pay £25,000 costs.

They also took three propellers from submarines, lead and tin ingots as well as other artefacts.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency said diary entries revealed Knight and Huzzey used explosives and sophisticated cutting equipment.

Knight, 51, a roofing contractor and marine businessman of Castle Road, and Huzzey, 55, a seafood technician, of Granville Parade, admitted 19 offences between them under the Merchant Shipping Act, the first dating back to 2001. Under Brit-



Some of the china plundered from shipwrecks by two divers from Sandgate

ish law, finders of lost underwater treasures have a legal duty to inform the MCA within 28 days and deliver the items to the authorities if requested.

The MCA first thought six of the missing cannon had been sold on but have retrieved them in the last fortnight.

Alison Kentuck, the MCA's

receiver of wreck, said: "It is not a case of 'finders keepers'. All wreck material found within or brought within UK territorial waters must be reported.

"By reporting you are giving the rightful owner the opportunity to have their property returned and adding vital information to the historic record.

"Those who don't could find themselves facing hefty fines."

Passing sentence at Southampton Magistrates' Court last week, District Judge Calloway said the operation was on "an industrial scale" with the resources used "valuable and substantial, good quality lifting equipment and explosives".

Divers admit looting of historic shipwreck

Pair guilty of illegally salvaging artefacts



LIGHTS: Most of the items have been recovered

By Eleanor Jones

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TWO divers who failed to declare the finding of shipwrecked items thought to be worth more than £250,000 are to be sentenced on July 2.

David Knight and Edward Huzzey, of Castle Road and Granville Parade, Sandgate, respectively, took eight bronze cannon, lead and tin ingots, propellers and other artefacts from wrecks off Kent, including those of a First World War German submarine and a 200-year-old ship carrying East India Company cargo.

The pair last week pleaded guilty to 19 offences between them, under the Merchant and Shipping Act.

Most of the items have been recovered, but six bronze cannon are still missing.

Alison Kentuck, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's receiver of wreck, said: "Our message is clear: all wreck material found within or brought within UK territorial waters must be reported to the Receiver of Wreck. It is not a case of finders keepers.

Declare

"Finders of wreck have 28 days to declare their finds. By reporting, you are giving the rightful owner the opportunity to have their property returned, and you may be adding important information to the historic record.

"Legitimate finders are likely to be entitled to a salvage award,

but those who don't declare items are breaking the law."

The MCA is aware from diary entries that Huzzey and Knight used explosives and "sophisticated cutting equipment" on the wrecks.

Mark Dunkley, English Heritage's maritime designation adviser, said: "The investigation has highlighted the need to tackle heritage crime, wherever it occurs, so that the remains of our past remain part of our future."

The MCA is appealing to the public for help finding the six missing cannon, which were built in 1807 and bear the English East India Company logo, VEIC.

■ Anyone with information should call the Receiver of Wreck on 02380 329474.



Some of the items taken from shipwrecks by divers, who admitted failing to declare to The Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Wreck raiders' £250k haul

Two divers have admitted failing to declare artefacts worth more than a quarter of a million pounds they plundered from shipwrecks.

David Knight and Edward Huzzey, both from Sandgate, raided ships and illegally kept seven bronze cannons from the wreck of a 19th century British merchant ship in the English Channel.

The pair also targeted the shipwrecks of German submarines from the First World War and

an unknown 200-year-old wreck carrying English East India Company cargo.

Their haul also included three propellers from German submarines, lead and tin ingots as well as other artefacts.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency, which said the value of the items is more than £250,000, said diary entries reveal Knight and Huzzey used explosives and sophisticated cutting equipment to free wreck material.

Knight, 51, a roofing contrac-

tor and marine businessman of Castle Road and Huzzey, 55, a seafood technician, of Granville Parade, admitted a total of 19 offences between them under the Merchant Shipping Act.

Under British law, finders of lost underwater treasures have a legal duty to inform the MCA and deliver the items to the authorities if requested.

Alison Kentuck, of the MCA's receiver of wreck, said: "Our message is clear: all wreck material found within or brought within

UK territorial waters must be reported to the receiver of wreck. It is not a case of finders keepers.

"Finders of wreck have 28 days to declare their finds to the receiver.

"By reporting wreck material you are giving the rightful owner the opportunity to have their property returned and you may be adding important information to the historic record."

English Heritage assessed the importance of objects seized and has provided expert advice to

investigators.

The pair appeared at West Hampshire Magistrates' Court, in Southampton, where the MCA is based, and are due to be sentenced on Wednesday, July 2.

The MCA is appealing for help in finding six bronze cannons still missing. They were built in 1807 by W&G and have the English East India Company logo (VEIC) on them.

Anyone with information where they are asked to 02380 329474.

REMINISCENCES OF THE FORESHORE

The Disaster of The German Ironclad "Grosser Kurfurst"

CONTINUING his reminiscences of the Folkestone foreshore in the nineties and nineteen hundreds, Mr. G. H. Cooper recalls the wreck of the great German battleship, "Grosser Kurfurst," on a lovely morning in May, 1878. He also describes two other incidents of the sea.

(By G. H. Cooper)

Continued from the "Folkestone Herald" of March 18th, 1944.

The Pleydell Social Club, to which I referred last week, had as a feature of its activities the promotion of periodical musical evenings at which the talent was provided by its own members. Thus it did much to cultivate self-expression and talent besides fostering good fellowship. In the summer many of the members used to camp on the land of Mr. Robert Marsh Gammon at Paddlesworth, and on Sunday afternoons, tea in camp, or at the Red Lion, then kept by Mr. Dixon, who was innkeeper and smith, was a popular event.

The Jubilee of 1887 was royally and loyally celebrated up there.

FADED OUT

As members married and grew older or left the town, it gradually faded out, but two of them kept up the association until 1911. These were Mr. Samuel Pilcher, who passed away that year, and Mr. Richard Cooper, uncle of the present writer.

The last named carried on as a lone camper until the late twenties.

These veterans in their later days saw a revival of camping among groups of young men from the business houses and offices in the town; they also saw the beginning of the Boy Scout camping locally.

It may be a long way from the beach, but before leaving the subject of camping, I think it is correct to say that the first patrol camp of Boy Scouts in this district was at Coombe Farm in 1908.

Between then and the outbreak of the War in 1914, standing summer camps were held at the Royal Marine Terlingham.

Mr. Jack Fairbairn and Mr. Decker of the Borough Engineer's staff were two of the leaders.

DRIVEN ASHORE

Older residents of the town will remember the Asdar, a Norwegian bergie that ran ashore at the foot of the runway of the gentlemen's bathing carriage, on the morning of September 25th, 1896, followed shortly afterwards by the Baron Holberg, also Norwegian, which grounded about 150 yards further east.

The first named, Capt. de Bergh was on a voyage from Archangel to Southampton with timber; the Baron Holberg, Capt. Lauris Larsen, was bound from the Baltic to Dublin, also with timber.

Contemporary press interviews record that each vessel, after having proceeded on her voyage to off Shoreham, was forced by the rising westerly gale to run before the wind for shelter this side of Dungeness. Then as the wind veered and the gale grew in force, each tried to make for mid-Channel, but too late.

BROADSIDE ON

First the Asdar was driven broadside on to the beach between the two piers; then the Baron Holberg met a similar fate.

The lifeboat, "J. McConell Hussey," which had been christened in much public ceremony just over two years before, was launched and her crew succeeded in getting four men off the Asdar. Then the lifeboat's steering gear became disabled; she had to make for the shore and could not be launched again.

The remainder of the Asdar's crew of ten and the whole complement of the Baron Holberg, also ten, were saved by lifelines thrown by the Coastguards' rocket apparatus.

The Hythe lifeboat crew carried out a plucky launch and a hazardous voyage from Hythe to Folkestone, which showed their spirit although they were not able to render any other service. A lifeboat was also brought from Dover in tow of a Harbour Boat, too.

The rescued sailors were entertained at Mason's Restaurant, Harbour Street, and by a Colonel Eves who was a visitor in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Conley, 7, Marine Crescent.

WIRE TO THE CZAR

One man of the Asdar's crew was a Russian, and it is recorded that he insisted that a telegram should be sent to H.I.M. the Czar to express thanks for the help and sympathy Folkestone people had rendered.

The Czar was at the time staying at Balmoral with the Queen.

The Vicar (Canon Woodward)

sent round the Town Crier to give notice of a Thanksgiving Service at the Parish Church at 5 p.m.

This service was attended by the Norwegian Consul, the rescued sailors and most of the local public men of the day. The Vicar delivered a most address which although very appropriate in a religious sense, seems after this interval of time to convey a rather queer note of condescending pity towards the shipwrecked mariners.

UNDERSTANDING

For example, he said that although they could not understand what he was saying, they knew enough of what it was, to understand that it was a thanksgiving to Almighty God for their preservation.

It is apparent that the almost universal knowledge of the English language among Norwegians to-day did not then exist. This is borne out, too, by the lifeboatmen's statement that it was difficult for them to make themselves understood by the foreign sailors.

A collection amounting to £61/11/4 was taken on their behalf and was handed to the Norwegian Consul for distribution among them.

It is stated in the contemporary report that the lifeboat was launched between the two bathing carriages.

OLD FAMILIES

The names of the crew are those of old-established Folkestone families and are worth recapitulating. They were Dirz May (cox), Steve Cook, H. Carter, A. Philpott, G. Philpott, E. Major, Baker (2), G. Punnett, F. Felberly W. H. May, D. Hall, D. Cornish, W. Dalby, &c.

Only personal reminiscences that we can add to this story are that it was indeed a great gale, that the run fell in sheets, and that nothing was to be compared with it had occurred since November 11th, 1891, the day the Benvenue was wrecked off Sandgate and a house near the Leas was severely damaged by a fall of the chimney stack.

It is curious that by the Saturday afternoon the gale had fully abated, and at low tide many spectators boarded the ships as they lay on the beach at the water's edge. The present writer and his father were among these.

THE GROSSER KURFUERST

Since the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, the world has experienced two great wars and many serious disasters in times of so-called peace; consequently, public opinion has become hardened to, or even dazed by, events that have claimed a great toll of human life.

That was not so much so in the period under review; otherwise it would be difficult to account for the tremendous

impression that was made by the sinking of the German Ironclad, "Grosser Kurfurst," off Folkestone on May 31st, 1878.

My father was at the time a young man who had just left employment, preparatory to starting in business for himself, and was taking a short holiday in his home town.

PERFECT DAY

He used to describe the morning as one of those perfect early summer days, which do occur sometimes in May with the sea as smooth as a millpond.

He was walking on the Leas and noticed three ironclads attempting east near the bathing channel course. There was also a large sailing vessel, a common sight then, which was lacking to pursue her course. In order to avoid her the ironclads had to alter direction with the result that the Kaiser Wilhelm rammed the Grosser Kurfurst. My father's attention was suddenly riveted by the sight of the latter turning over and hundreds of the crew struggling in the water.

He rushed to the house of an uncle nearby and asked for the loan of a pair of field glasses, saying excitedly that there had been a great disaster at sea.

So far as he was concerned, an incredible seemed the idea of any disaster, that the uncle's reaction was to suspect a sudden seizure of insanity in his father. However, in the course of a few minutes he corrected the fact with his own eyes.

RESCUES

The fishing fleet was returning to port and succeeded in rescuing many of the men; nevertheless, there was a casualty roll of some hundreds.

The German government eventually erected a memorial on the ground in which the recovered bodies were buried at Cheriton Road cemetery, and for many years a party of German sailors used to visit the German Navy at the time the memory of their lost comrades.

This was perpetuated as late as the period between 1906 and 1914, for I remember once being disturbed at my work at the Gas Office in Radeswegus Street by the rhythmic beat of feet, and on looking up noticed it was a detachment from the German Navy. I have also childish memories of seeing these practices proceeding through the town in earlier years.

It was a common rumour in the town in the last war that because of the people's kindness and sympathy towards the German Navy at the time the Grosser Kurfurst sank, the Kaiser had given instructions that the town should not be attacked during the current hostilities. That rumour died on May 25th, 1941, when Folkestone was bombed; 73 people were killed by a bomb that fell in Tontine Street.

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who, what, why,when & where

BARN MORE GOT IT

SUNDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2012

Wreck of the Benvenue November 1891

This story first caught my imagination when, amongst old family photos, I found a picture of the life boat Meyer De Rothschild and her crew. Following a little research I found that one of my ancestors was a crew member of that life boat and regretfully lost his life in pursuance of his duty. This post is a small tribute to him.



This is a much shortened account of a dramatic event off the coast of Kent which featured ingenuity, collaboration,bravery and tragedy. It also proves that voyeurism is by no means a modern phenomenon.

On November 11th 1891 a fearful storm hit the south east coast of Kent, caught by the ferocious seas the full rigged ship Benvenue in command of Captain Moddrel with a compliment of 32, encountering mountainous seas eventually arrived off Sandgate Kent at 5am on that dark morn. Meanwhile a French schooner the Eider was smashed to bits under the sea wall between Hythe & Seabrook. Coast Guard Hennessey, coxswain of the Seabrook life boat succeeded in rescuing two sea men by lifebuoy & rope but the French captain with his wife & child drowned.

The Benvenue now close inshore began firing distress rockets, with the heavy seas now flooding her bow she foundered 450 yards off shore, 27 seamen made it aloft into the mizen top but captain Moddrel was drowned in his cabin, two seamen and two apprentices, named Bruce & Ironmonger were washed overboard , one clung to an upturned table, Bruce almost made it to the shore near the Royal Kent Hotel, but the mountainous sea claimed them all. Wreckage from the ship started to be washed ashore, casks of rum,linseed oil,vinegar,candles, clothes & even rolls of linoleum littered the beach. With typical British accord 200 armed soldiers were brought from nearby Shorncliffe camp to guard the property.

By now Hennessey with a volunteer crew had brought the life boat from Seabrook to Sandgate coast guard station slipway and attempted to launch but without success. The life boat was then taken to Hythe & launched but soon capsized and one young coast guard, Charles Fagg was drowned when his cork life vest was washed from him. Further attempts at rescue were halted until night fall due to 80 mph winds.

at 11am the body of the French captains wife drowned at Seabrook appeared in the breakers stripped of her clothing. She was taken from the surf by coastguards who reverently covered her body for removal to the Bevan hospital. All this time the crew of the Benvenue were still huddled in the rigging of the stricken vessel. During the day 17 rockets were fired in attempts to get a line to the ship but without success, at one point Alderman Daniel Baker, a strong swimmer insisted on being allowed to brave the surf with a line attached & it was only the refusal of captain Smythies R.N which prevented him losing his life in a hopeless task.

A further attempt to get a line across was made by the army, a long iron rod hastily welded to a cannon shot with a short length of wire attached to a line was fired from a 15 pounder gun but the line broke.

BLOG ARCHIVE

► 2014 (3)

► 2013 (9)

▼ 2012 (4)

▼ November (4)

Wreck of the Benvenue November 1891

who, what, why,when & where: Poor RFC aiman

Did you vote for your new PCC yesterday ? Think it...

Poor RFC aiman

ABOUT ME



Sandum

Researcher in genealogy & History with special interest in early aviation & the Royal Flying Corps. Volunteer with the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust & museum. Now working on WW1 project for 2014

[View my complete profile](#)

By mid afternoon the population of neighbouring towns had gathered on the sea front, 3000 residents were wired from London with many arriving by train and to analyse traffic. Information arriving in the afternoon helped to effect the rescue of the ship at the point of danger. The storm abated and the life boat launched, she was quickly along side & the 27 crew taken aboard and eventually landed at Folkstone, exhausted after 15 hours in the rigging, being exposed to one of the worst storms of the 19th century.

Foot note:


Captain Moddrel was laid to rest in St Martins Churchyard Cheriton where his gravestone can be seen.

Charles Fagg the brave coastguard who lost his life had been married just a few months, his wife received £150 by local subscription.

The figure head of the Benvenue currently resides in the bar of Bognor Regis Yatch club in West Sussex.



Posted by Sandum at 18:13

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DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
1 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON S W 1
01-222 7877

From the
Parliamentary Secretary

Albert P Costain Esq MP
House of Commons
London SW1

4th March 1971

Dear Albin

Please refer to your letter of the 18 January to Peter Walker, which was sent to me for reply, about the wrecks of the "Texaco Caribbean" and "Brandenburg" off Folkestone and the possibility of damage arising in Sandgate if explosives are used during dispersal operations.

We have been in touch with Trinity House on this matter and have been informed that it is not their intention to blow up these wrecks though small cutting charges may be used. They note the concern of the Sandgate Society and will bear the points raised by that Society in mind in dealing with the removal of these wrecks. Tenderers are asked to state what methods they would use to deal with wrecks and careful consideration is given by Trinity House to the proposed methods with a view to elimination so far as possible of danger, damage or pollution before a tender is accepted.

Trinity House are aware of the value of advising the local authorities concerned of wreck removal operations when such operations could otherwise cause alarm.

Yours ever

Anthony Grant

ANTHONY GRANT

PS: Remember the same will, of course, also apply to the clearance of the wrecks of the 'Nikki'.

Mr. H.B. Chaplin.

Mrs. E.B. Breenwall

Mr. D.G. Vorley,
1, Castle Road,
Sandgate.

Dear Sir,

„ H.M.S. SANDGATE

I should be grateful if you could inform me if, according to your records, there ever has been an H.M.S. Sandgate? I am informed that there was, and that it was sunk during the 1939-45 War.

If this is so, could you kindly supply me with some interesting details of this ship, or refer me to a likely source of information, where I might also obtain a photograph.

This Society is shortly holding an Exhibition on Sandgate, and we wish to include as many interesting items as possible.

Yours faithfully,



Hon. Secretary.

The Officer in Charge of Naval Records,
The Admiralty,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

From ALBERT P. COSTAIN, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON, SW1

March 9th, 1971

Dear Mrs. Kerr,

You were good enough to send me a copy of your letter of January 15th addressed to the Secretary of the Corporation of Trinity House regarding your Society's concern about the effects upon land movement at Sandgate in the event of explosives being used to disperse wrecks in the Channel.

I passed this on to Mr. Peter Walker, and you will be interested in the attached assurance which now comes from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. B. A. Kerr,
Hon. Secretary,
The Sandgate Society,
Somerville Lodge,
Hillside,
Sandgate,
Folkestone, Kent.



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From: The Secretary

Our ref.
L.560/2/5
L.560/20/4

Your ref.

22nd January, 1971

Dear Madam,

WRECKS "TEXACO CARIBBEAN" and "BRANDENBURG"

Thank you very much for your letter dated 15th January, 1971, in which you point out the possibility of landslips on the coast in the vicinity of the above wrecks, should explosives be used during dispersal operations.

Please note that this information will be most carefully borne in mind during consideration of the question of removal of these wrecks.

197

Yours faithfully,

for Secretary

[The Hon. Secretary,
The Sandgate Society,
Somerville Lodge,
Hillside,
Sandgate, Folkestone,
Kent.]

Smugglers & Shipwrecks

DUNGENESS BAY, in the lawless days of smuggling and privateering, is a hotbed for the covert landing and transport of contraband by daring gangs of smugglers out to defy the Excise men. During the Napoleonic Wars, their traffic is tolerated for, Sir John Moore finds, they and their relations in Flushing can be useful as spies.

John Gough remembers a well-organised gang in the village - a bold and hardy set of men, operating under pseudonyms, their favourite haunt being the 'Fleur de Lis' tavern. Sandgate is well served with tunnels and cellars.

Local customs authorities here were quite clear about the allegiances of the Folkestone people. One commented... 'As most of the inhabitants of Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe are in the confidence of the smugglers, no information can be expected of them.'

To guard the shore a Watch House stands just west of the Castle (Radnor lease 1798) and an 1843 survey of Shorncliffe Ordnance Ground marks a narrow site as 'Coastguard'.



- [The notorious Aldington Gang](#)
- [Dr Syn and the Smugglers](#)
- [Smuggling in Kent](#)
- [The Owlers](#)



- [The Coastguard](#)
- [A smugglers song](#)
- [Smuggling in Sandgate](#)
- [Smugglers in Britain](#)

SHIPWRECKS, indeed, are numerous along this often merciless Bay. In westerly gales or fog, schooners, ironclads, steamboats founder and heroic rescues follow. They are a tragic, haunting scene to those on shore.

In 1825, John Gough a small boy of seven, beholds the wreck of an East Indiaman *The Lady of Calcutta* in which 790 passengers, returning troops and seamen perish: *For weeks after I saw in my dreams the hair of women floating on the water as I had seen it in reality when the boats went out to fetch the scores of bodies, or they were washed ashore.*

In 1878 two German ships the *Grosser Kurfurst* and the *Koenig Wilhem* veer to avoid a Norwegian barque, and collide while floundering in the sea. Lifeboats and fishing vessels are able to save 218; the rest perish and finders of bodies on Sandgate beach are rewarded with a pound.

In January 1883 the iron sailing ship *Plassey* is beached off Sandgate.

In 1891 gales blow with unprecedented violence. Among vessels in distress, the 2000 ton full-rigged *Benvenue* breaks from a tug and sinks 300 yards off Wellington Terrace while the crew takes refuge in the rigging. *The lifeboat now the Coastguards try to launch/To rescue those poor fellows in the mast/They fail; the liquid mountains hurl them back/Nor can a rocket face the roaring blast* (Verse 4, C.H.1891).

As a small boy, Victor Foley of Wellington Terrace, witnesses the horror. His epic painting done in later life, hangs in Sandgate's Public Library.

- SEE FILE 114.

The November gales of **1893** reach 90 miles an hour and the Sandgate Lifeboat is launched 60 times to aid vessels in distress.

- **The wreck of the Benvenue** - this long and detailed account of two wrecks within hours of each other is written by the editor of the Hythe Reporter in November 1891.
- **When the Benvenue was wrecked** - a tribute to Mr. Wright Griggs who was awarded the silver medal for his gallant work in connection with the wreck of the ship Benvenue, off Sandgate
- **The Ship Wrecks List website** was first established in August 1999, to help those seeking the details of their ancestors' ships; passenger records; contemporary immigration reports; newspaper records; ship wreck information; ship pictures etc.



Wreck of the three-masted BENVENUE November 1891. Coastguards attempt rescue with rocket apparatus and field gun

Content for Sandgate-Kent Local History pages is mostly taken from '[Rise and Progress of a Village](#)' - by Linda R ne-Martin

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FOLKESTONE, HYTHE & DISTRICT HERALD

London Office: The Adelphi, John Adam Street, London, W.C.2
Tel.: 01-839 7151

Herald Buildings, The Bayle, Folkestone Tel.: 52231 (5 lines)
84 High Street Hythe. Tel.: 66667

SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 1971.

Folkestone —where the action starts

ALL praise must go this week to Folkestone Corporation's efforts to get action on the undoubted need to improve shipping safety in the Channel.

Letters have now gone to all local authorities along the coast, from Medway to Land's End, calling for their support by making representations to the Prime Minister, appropriate government departments, and to the Corporation of Trinity House.

Such concerted action will undoubtedly strengthen the case for urgent consideration to be given to the problem at international level by all the governments concerned.

In the past few weeks we have seen enough of disaster in the Strait of Dover.

Three ships sunk and 51 people killed is appalling, not to mention the death toll among marine and bird life, caused by the oil which has polluted our beaches.

Measures must be taken quickly to remove the present dangers in the Channel.

But it is equally important that these measures should not result in any further damage to property ashore, nor damage underground services, as could happen if large explosions occur.

The Mayor of Folkestone, Councillor John Jacques, ever-concerned for his town, wrote to the Prime Minister seeking his personal support in an endeavour to secure co-operation by all Western European maritime nations to engage underwater demolition experts to work on the wrecks, and to ensure their disposal in such a way that no further damage is caused on shore.

And this week it was made clear by the Department of Trade and Industry that when tenders were considered for clearance of the deadly wrecks, the method of disposal was an important factor.

What is surprising, however, is the fact that the letters to local authorities in the south should have ever needed to be written.

The problems which Folkestone faces arising out of the dangers involved in the present routing of Channel traffic are common to all these resorts.

Let us hope that their response will not be just an apathetic: "But what can we do . . . ?" Folkestone has already given them the lead.

concussed by a blow on the head, undeterred, led his men into

leadership and courage, won a credit to his reputation

125-53

F&H GAZETTE, No. 24 10 MAR 1971

£500,000 WORK ON WRECK BEGINS

FIRST steps in the £500,000 job of breaking up the three wrecks in Death Alley were taken yesterday.

Three vessels from the Southampton salvage firm that has been awarded the contract were above the wrecks just seven miles off Folkestone.

Surrounding them were the 14 wreck buoys and two lightships that now ring the disaster area, where 51 people died in seven weeks.

The second lightship was moved into position on Sunday.

It is difficult to estimate how long it will take the disposal experts to clear the wrecks of the Texaco Caribbean, Brandenburg and Niki.

A SPOKESMAN for the

salvage firm—Risdon, Beazley, Ulrich and Harms—said it is likely to be many months.

He gave an assurance that there would be no large explosions in connection with the work.

Asked if the company was concerned about the possibility that more ships might go through the area while the disposal work was going on, the spokesman said:

"That is a very difficult question to answer, but Trinity House has made every effort that can possibly be made to ensure that the area is safe."

In a statement issued at the weekend, Trinity House estimated the cost of the disposal job at £500,000.

HIGH TIDES AT FOLKESTONE

(March 10)

	a.m.	Feet	p.m.	Feet
Today	11.09	18.5	11.25	19.4
Tomorrow	11.40	19.4	11.56	20.4
Friday			12.10	20.0
Saturday	0.26	21.0	12.39	20.5
Sunday	0.53	21.2	1.08	20.4
Monday	1.21	21.0	1.35	20.0
Tuesday	1.47	20.5	2.03	19.5
Wednesday	2.14	19.7	2.34	18.8

(Subtract seven minutes for Dungeness)

LIGHTING-UP TIMES

	p.m.	a.m.		p.m.	a.m.
Today	7.25	to 6.55	Sunday	7.32	to 6.45
Tomorrow	7.27	to 6.52	Monday	7.34	to 6.43
Friday	7.29	to 6.50	Tuesday	7.35	to 6.41
Saturday	7.30	to 6.48	Wednesday	7.37	to 6.39

'SUPPORT US'^{P.1 Col.7.} CALL TO RESORTS

12557

A CALL went out from Folkestone this week to every other seaside authority on the coast, from the Medway to Torbay—114 in all—to petition for steps to be taken at international level to make the Channel safer for shipping.

The letter was sent out by the town clerk, Mr. Noel Scragg, acting on instructions from the town council.

Folkestone, through its Mayor, Councillor John Jacques, has been the only seaside authority so far to show any initiative.

Lack of effort by other councils was criticised by Folkestone Town Council last week. It was then that the council decided to write to them asking for support.

As the letters were being sent out this week, Councillor Jacques reported that he had received an acknowledgment to a personal letter he sent to the Prime Minister after the third shipping disaster off Folkestone two weeks ago.

DANGER

And the M.P. for Folkestone and Hythe, Mr. Albert Costain, has received a letter from the Department of Trade and Industry assuring him that before a tender for the removal of the Channel wrecks was accepted, Trinity House studied the proposed methods of disposal.

This was done, said the letter, with a view to eliminating, as far as possible, all danger, damage or pollution while the work was being carried out.

In his letter to coastal authorities, Mr. Scragg wrote:

"Another factor which undoubtedly must receive consideration, is the improvement of navigational methods in the Channel, particularly in the present-day use of large oil tankers, when a collision could result in severe pollution by oil.

"I hope your council feel that they can support the measures which have been instituted by making representations to the Prime Minister, to appropriate government departments and to the Corporation of Trinity House, as this will undoubtedly strengthen the case for urgent consideration to be given to the problem at international level by all the governments concerned."

SEE 125/47/3

THE BENVENUE PAINTING

This painting by Victor Foley, a local man who had seen the sinking of the Benvenue as a lad; when he grew up he made this lovely painting from his memory of the day he had witnessed it.

I have spoken to Linda Rene Martin who clearly remembers the painting hanging above the fire place in the old Sandgate Library now known as the Reading room. Linda was the chairman at that time of the Sandgate Heritage Trust and remembers in 1984 KCC moving out all the contents of the library prior to it being moved to the new premises at James Morris Court in the High Street; and that KCC agreed to loan the paintings hanging in the passage and old library which included 'The Benvenue' painting in perpetuity to the Trust.

This painting was done by a Sandgate man for Sandgate and should remain in Sandgate where it belongs.

In November, 1891, a large cargo ship bound from London to Sydney was driven on the rocks just beyond Coastguard Cottages by fierce winds. It had been accompanied by a tug, the tow rope had parted and the steering gear gave way.

Some of the crew tried to swim ashore and were drowned while the rest climbed up the mizzen mast and clung to the rigging. They could see the crowd on shore plainly and even make out the colour of the ladies' dresses. Rockets with lines were fired but fell short. The Hythe lifeboat had capsized with loss of one life, those at Littlestone and Dover could not be launched because of the fierce storm.

The wind was dropping. There was a call for volunteers amongst the crowd and a scratch crew of five boatmen, including postal clerks and bricklayers, responded. The Sandgate lifeboat was launched from a temporary slipway made of driftwood. It finally reached the wreck, where the exhausted crew, after their 16-hour ordeal, fell into the boat "like so many bees" as the mate described them. They were taken to the Queens Hotel and Lockie's Restaurant where hot food and beds awaited them.

The coxswains were presented with a silver medal by the National Lifeboat Institution.

The masts remained sticking out of the water. The wreck was finally demolished in September, 1892, by means of explosives fired by electricity. The inhabitants had been nervous for fear of damage to their houses, but it all went off quietly.

Their fears were realised, however, with the great landslip of March, 1893.

(Sandgate Visitors' List, 1891/2)

The proposal has been put forward by the Mayor of Folkestone, Councillor John Jacques, who believes the British and French Governments, whose coastlines are most vulnerable to a tanker disaster, should get together immediately to invoke such legislation.

Reverse

Councillor Jacques sent a letter on Tuesday to Prime Minister Mr. Edward Heath setting out this idea and a number of other proposals to rid the Straits of Dover of what he calls 'maritime madness in the Channel.' The letter was delivered by hand.

Councillor Jacques has been forecasting a Channel disaster and Saturday night's sinking of the Niki with the loss of at least nine men and a woman adds weight to his deep concern over present routing of ships.

Councillor Jacques supports Trinity House views that the present Keep Right voluntary system should be reversed and made compulsory.

This would mean that two ships on a collision course would turn into deep water instead of the present arrangement where an alteration to starboard means ships turn into shallower water and also the busy coastal shipping lanes.

Assurance

The problem now is moving the three wrecks.

Trinity House were in the process of considering tenders for the removal of the Brandenburg and Texaco Caribbean when news came in of the week-end's third disaster.

Removing wrecks from the Channel close to busy shipping lanes is a long and hazardous task in any event.

So Trinity House, who will have to foot the bill for the mammoth operation, are hoping that the successful firm will agree to clear the wreck of the Niki at the same time.

One easy and successful method of clearing a wreck is by using a large explosive charge. But this was not possible in the Channel for a number of reasons.

The first and most important is that the town of Folkestone is on the same bed of rock strata that the wrecks are laying on.

Any explosion, however small, would send earth tremors running inland and cause minor earthquakes in and around Folkestone.

The already unstable



Mast of the Greek ship Niki marks her grave off Folkestone

Ventish. Exp. new

FRJ. -5 MAR 1971

A-1

areas of Sandgate, Encombe and East Cliff could themselves face a disaster in such an event.

A Trinity House spokesman confirmed on Wednesday that no such explosions were contemplated. Only small charges for cutting purposes would be used and these would produce no shock waves and would not be audible beyond a few hundred yards from the wreck site.

Councillor Jacques also suggested in his letter that the Prime Minister should invite every Western European maritime nation to send underwater demolition experts to help clear the wrecks.

'Slur'

"All maritime nations have a vested interest in protecting their shipping and seamen's lives from the dangers at present existing in the Channel and I would have thought they would have welcomed an opportunity for maritime co-operation," said the Mayor.

As a short term measure the Government announced this week that maritime nations were being asked

to warn all ships leaving their ports that there are wrecks in the Channel.

Trinity House put a second lightvessel on Station and a further nine buoys, bringing the total now marking the three wrecks to 14.

A spokesman said that whatever happened it would take many months of hard work to clear the wrecks to ensure a draught of 70ft for shipping.

Owners of the Greek freighter yesterday accused the British authorities of abandoning the seamen to their fate. They suggested the crew of the Trinity House wreck lightvessel — a few hundred yards from the disaster scene — could have helped.

A Trinity House spokesman commenting on the Greek allegation, said: "It is an outrageous slur upon men doing an extremely difficult and dangerous job for the benefit and safety of seafarers of all nations."

Lloyd's count the cost

THIS week Lloyd's said that the cost of the three disasters had been high.

The Texaco Caribbean hull was insured for 5,200,000 dollars and Lloyd's share of this was £1,300,000. The Brandenburg was insured (hull value) for 2,900,000 marks and Lloyd's share was 30 per cent, or £100,000.

The Niki was insured for 350,000 dollars and of this, 260,750 dollars was placed on the London insurance market.

How about that?

ON Wednesday afternoon the Belgian trawler Z 484 steamed right through the centre of the wreck area, ignoring every warning signal sent by the lightvessel, including flash and sound rockets.

may close

Bilsington and Warehorne primary schools may be closed in July, 1972, when a hall and four classrooms have been completed at Hamstreet primary school. Ashford education executive have recommended the closures on educational and economic grounds. The 26 children at Bilsington and 33 at Warehorne would then have to school at Hamstreet.

The new Hamstreet buildings should be completed in March next year.

Working on the railway line

Boys from Finchden Manor, Tenterden, and members of the town's junior youth club will be among those taking part in Operation Spring Fever tomorrow and Sunday.

The Kent and East Sussex Railway Association are calling for another big effort by volunteers to carry out essential work on the track close to the town which they hope will soon be in use again.

newsagent retires

FAMILIAR figure of Mr. William Atkinson has been missing this week from Hythe's High-street, where for eight years he ran a newsagent's and tobacconist's business.

Sixty-four year-old Mr. Atkinson retired last Friday. He moved to Hythe from Bourne-mouth where he owned a hardware shop but, before that was a newsagent at Hastings.

He and his wife, Patricia, live in Palmbeach-avenue, Hythe, where Mr. Atkinson now plans to spend most of his time tending the flower garden. Their daughter, Susan, 21, is a nurse at the Royal Masonic Hospital, London.

Mr. Atkinson's successor is Mr. Douglas Scott, a newspaper wholesaler from Folkestone.

with hunting, they would then start on other sports such as shooting and fishing.

He thanked farmers and landowners for their co-operation during what had been a good hunting season.

Mr. R. J. Martin continues as chairman and the joint secretaries are again Mr. H. E. B. Kelsey and Mr. W. S. Furnival. For the first time, two women

s, Sir Edward!



nected with the Conservative party in the Ashford area for 66 years.

He has been to every meeting of the Boughton Aluph committee for many years. After he had conducted the business of Monday's annual meeting he handed over to his successor, Mr. George Oliver, who was the

retiring chairman.

Later this year the Conservative committee hopes to plant an oak tree on the green at Boughton Aluph as a reminder of what Sir Edward means to them.

In the picture: Sir Edward (centre), Mrs Hilary Deedes (left) and new president, Mr Oliver.

ROBBERY TOWN 'STICKS OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB'

ASHFORD was a town which "stuck out like a sore thumb" a judge said on Tuesday. It was a place, he said, where robberies were committed and the stolen property often found its way to south-east London.

Before the court at Kent Sessions, Canterbury, was John Thompson, 30, of New Cross-road, South-east London, who admitted handling stolen cigarettes and spirits worth more than £1,000.

Thompson was jailed for nine months by Judge John Streater who said it was a serious matter because of the value of the property.

The prosecution said the property had been part of a £4,500 haul stolen from International Stores in High-street, Ashford, between December 9 and 12. Thompson denied burglary

the store and taking a van without authority and those pleas were accepted by the prosecution.

The court was told police found some of the stolen spirits at Thompson's glazier's shop and other goods at his home.

Defence counsel told the court that Thompson bought the goods from a young coloured man who called at his shop. The man offered to deliver other property to Thompson's home and he accepted the offer.

Thompson, he said, suspected the property was the proceeds of a burglary but nevertheless helped to unload a van and place the property in his home.

Thompson had earlier motor-ing convictions and one conviction for assault in 1964.

10 postmen out of 300 at work

EIGHT postmen and two part-timers are delivering letters in two towns and four villages within the Ashford postal area. But none of them is working in Ashford itself where there have been no collections or deliveries since the postal strike began on January 20.

They are collecting mail from their local post boxes in New Romney, Lydd, Dymchurch, Egerton, Woodchurch and Brabourne.

Mr. Mick Fuller, secretary of the Union of Postal Workers' No. 1 Branch to which the men belong, said: "The Ashford postal area is one of the biggest in the country."

Vast

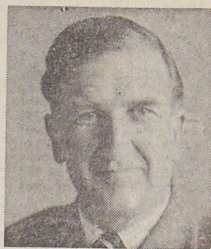
"It covers all villages between Headcorn, Dungeness, over to Stanford and back to Tenterden, an area of 360 square miles. In this vast area, out of a total staff of 300 postal workers, we have 10 union members at work."

Mr. Fuller explained that the post boxes from which the men collect the letters each day are plainly marked to show people that letters posted there could only be for local delivery.

The union members are maintaining Special Services hospitals and undertake to get urgent letters to all parts of the country.

Mr. Fuller said: "We also deliver letters for the county council welfare department, for the Ministry of Social Security in country districts and for doctors if asked. This work is done mainly during the evenings. We are not being paid for it but we get our petrol."

"We did not want this strike. All we want is a negotiated settlement. We hope that our friends in the Ashford postal area will accept our sincere apologies for any inconvenience caused."



Mr Older

become members of the Hunt committee. In previous years, women have only been able to be co-opted members but the situation was regularised on Monday when it was agreed to find two places for them.

The new full members are Mrs D. M. Potter, of Bridge, and Mrs S. Hayward, of Ick-ham.

Members were told that the West Street Hunt point to point would be held at Aldington on March 27. Annual East Kent point to point is on Easter Monday, April 12, also at Aldington.

Bus cut routes get reprieve

TEMPORARY reprieve for a number of unremunerative rural bus services in the Ashford and Romney Marsh area has come just before service withdrawals were due to start from Sunday.

Kent county council has decided to meet the East Kent Bus Company's request for financial assistance needed to maintain a number of buses.

The subsidy is being paid for a limited period only. During the next few weeks, negotiations will continue between bus operators and the county council with a view to ascertaining future route viability.

Among the bus services which will not now be affected are those between Ashford and Rye Ashford and New Romney, Ashford and Brook, and Ashford to Hythe via Aldington and Brabourne.

From Sunday, the No. 10 service between Maidstone and Folkestone will be running at 40-minute intervals instead of the present 30-minute service.

SHIP'S PICTURE TELLS A STORY



BOLD AS BRASS: Arthur Healey and Sonny Griggs

Ill wind recalled in gift to band leader

HE'S not a man to blow his own trumpet, or tuba, but when Sonny Griggs retired from the Hythe Town Concert Band friends thought it was something worth making a noise about.

Sonny, 75, played tuba with the band for 40 years, serving as chairman since 1972.

A party to mark his achievement was delayed after Sonny suffered a stroke.

But after making an amazing recovery, Sonny, of Orchard Valley, was presented

with a painting of the ship Ben Venue by former band master Arthur Healey at the Royal British Legion Mountbatten Hall.

The vessel, which sank off Sandgate in 1891 has special significance for the Griggs family.

Sonny explained: "My family were involved in saving the 27 crew members when the lifeboat was launched in hurricane force winds."

"This painting is an absolutely wonderful gift."

125/54

MP tells of some startling facts

THE standard of equipment, particularly navigational aids, the competence of some officers in using equipment, and the ignorance of basic safety precautions on ships, have all been witnessed over the past few months.

Cases have been cited of a ship that sailed in circles for three hours because its equipment was faulty, of radar that had to be kicked before it worked, of an oxy-acetylene cutter being used on the deck of a tanker.

In Parliament, Mr. Albert Costain, M.P. for Folkestone and Hythe, said recently: "I have received some startling reports about the condition of navigational aids and life-saving equipment.

"I am told that some of the navigation equipment, particularly on tankers and ships which undertake long voyages, is lacking in maintenance.

NEAR MISS

"One pilot told me that after a long voyage, skippers were having to rely on automatic navigation because of the shortage of crews."

One ship's pilot, Captain Edward Harding, of Minster, has also reported a hair-raising trip on a foreign oil tanker.

Captain Harding had the task of piloting the tanker from anchorage at the Nore, down Channel as far as Folkestone.

For a start, he reported, there was a 20-minute delay when a steam valve jammed.

Once under way the tanker "approached dangerously close to an outward-bound 200,000-ton tanker."

"After a near miss with a fruit carrier, the tanker resumed her outward course," he said.

"After examining the rest of the navigation equipment, I found, apart from wireless-telegraphy, we had no means of communication."

Wrecks will not be blown up

STRONG tidal currents will make the disposal of the three wrecks more difficult.

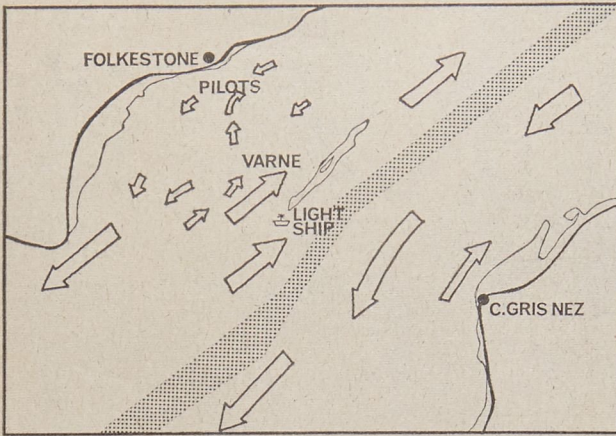
There are only a few specialised firms capable of doing the job, one of them being Folkestone Salvage Company.

It will be up to the company that is awarded the contract to decide how best to remove the wrecks to restore the 70-foot clearance which is needed.

But an assurance has been given by Trinity House that they will not be blown up.

FIRST of the wrecks to be broken up will be the bow section of the Texaco Caribbean, which lies only four feet below the surface at low tide.

A salvage expert, who has examined the Texaco Caribbean and the Brandenburg, thinks it possible to pump the oil out of their tanks before disposal work starts to avoid risk of further pollution.



The diagram shows the shipping route proposed by Trinity House and the Company of Master Mariners. The stippled line running through the centre of the Channel represents a no-man's-land for ships. The arrow south of the Varne lightship shows a proposed deep-water route that the pilots claim is not fully utilised at present. Small arrows near Folkestone show how vessels in the coastal zone would turn

to pick up or drop pilots. Large arrows show the main shipping lanes. Under these proposals ships giving way to starboard when faced with cross-Channel traffic would turn farther into their own lane. The existing two-way traffic flow is the reverse of these proposals. But this means that vessels giving way to crossing traffic turn into shallow coastal water or into other shipping's lanes.

IT'S MARITIME MADNESS

MARITIME madness was condemned this week by the Mayor of Folkestone, Councillor John Jacques, in a special interview. "It is quite obvious from the Niki disaster that this maritime madness, similar to motorway madness, has come over a lot of people," he said. Councillor Jacques said the master of the cross-Channel ferry, Chantilly, had told him that the area of the wrecks was lit up at night by the lightships and flashing buoys "like the Champs Elysées."

"How anyone could go ploughing into an area like that it is difficult to imagine," he said.

"It just seems to me to be complete utter folly. In circumstances such as these it is clear that in some way people will have to be protected from themselves."

The Mayor said he was particularly worried about another explosion, especially if it should occur near the shore.

"We have got to dispose of these wrecks, but I am afraid of any more explosions," he said.

"I remember what happened when the Polish freighter, Kielce, blew up."

"A part of the town—Encombe—is not all that steady and I fear a big underwater explosion could cause an earth tremor of the sort that could start off a certain amount of sliding, particularly at Encombe and East Cliff."

"No one knows at the moment whether there is still gas trapped in the compartments of the Texaco Caribbean.

"Further to that the Brandenburg was outward bound from Hamburg, and her fuel tanks are pretty well full.

Pollution

"If they do not pump that out, the pollution is going to be quite enormous along the coast on both sides of the Channel.

"That is why I have written direct to the Prime Minister.

"I know, too, that our M.P., Mr. Albert Costain, is pressing for the insurance world to do something about the situation, but Lloyd's say

Mayor calls for action

who is not competent to handle the radar, and who can put the vessel on automatic pilotage while he goes off for 10 minutes for a cup of tea," said Councillor Jacques.

"In these waters anything can happen in 10 minutes."

"The Niki did not respond to any of the efforts to contact her.

"One can only come to the conclusion that they had no one on watch at the time."

In his letter to the Prime Minister, delivered in London late this week by hand, the Mayor said:

Once again there has been another tragic accident in the English Channel off Folkestone, despite all the efforts by Trinity House to ensure that the area is well buoyed and warnings are adequate.

It is obviously essential that the wrecks of the Texaco Caribbean, Brandenburg and Niki are removed at the earliest opportunity, since masters of ships are ignoring all the warnings, and brave lives are being lost through this complete disregard of navigational safety precautions.

The wrecks are a great hazard, and I feel that you

could do a great deal to expedite their removal by inviting all western European maritime nations to send a team of underwater demolition experts to work on these hazards and to speed up their removal.

I appreciate that the easiest way of disposing of these wrecks would be to blow them up, but I fear the effects upon the town of Folkestone, particularly should there be pockets of gas still trapped in the compartments of the Texaco Caribbean.

Parts of the coastline of this area are unstable and are still trapped in the compartments of the Texaco Caribbean. A violent underwater explosion could well cause very serious damage.

Protect

It is for this reason, and a wish to protect the citizens of my town and their property, that I beg you to ensure that the methods of destruction used should be as gentle as possible.

It is also understood that there is still a certain quantity of fuel oil remaining in the wreck of the Brandenburg, and this again would cause wholesale pollution of the beaches all along this coast, just at the start of the summer tourist season, with disastrous effects upon our holiday industry.

Believe me, my dear Prime Minister, our concern is chiefly for the lives of those who earn their living on the sea and to you as a yachtsman and a native of this beautiful county of Kent, I appeal for help to protect their lives and also the livelihood of the people of the coastal towns.

COMPLIMENTARY DINNER TO THE SANDGATE LIFEBOAT CREW.

On Monday evening the Rev. H. Russell Wakefield (Vicar of Sandgate), and Mr. J. J. Jones gave a complimentary dinner to the Coastguards, the Lifeboat Crews, the Military from Shorncliffe, and those who assisted in many ways in rescuing the crew of the ill-fated ship *Benvenue* which foundered off Sandgate on the memorable 11th of October, 1891. The dinner which was plentiful and excellent was served at Hatton House (Beach Rocks) Convalescent Home, the Rev. Wakefield in the chair. Amongst those present we noticed Capt. Smythies (Commanding this district of the Coastguards), Major Cantley (West Kent Regt.), Major Penfold (Mayor of Folkestone), B. Horton (Mayor of Hythe), and several members of the Corporation of Folkestone and Hythe, and the Sandgate Local Board, Mr. Wilks (Town Clerk of Hythe), Revs. Woodward and Palmer (Folkestone), J. H. DuBoulay, J. P., T. Onslow (Chief Officer Sandgate Coastguards), S. Maxted, W. M. Jenner, J. J. Jeal, and about one hundred others. The room was nicely decorated with a commercial code of flags; hung on the south walls was a piece of the wrecked vessel which bore the name "Benvenue," and strange to say this souvenir was washed ashore in three different pieces, attached to it was a cord that was thrown by the life saving apparatus across the ship. Each of the guests was furnished with a button-hole of real flowers, kindly presented by Mrs. Wakefield. After dinner all were supplied with cigars, tobacco and "churchwardens" and refreshments.

The Rev. H. Russell Wakefield addressed the assembly. After some preliminary remarks, in which he apologised for omitting a long string of toasts, he explained why the entertainment had been arranged by himself and Mr. Jones. They thought if there was any good money about Sandgate, the best thing to be done with it was that it should go to the fund going to be raised for the lifeboat crew, and that it would be a great pity to take any of it for the purpose of an entertain-

ment to sacrifice themselves and give up whatever they could not only for the men around them, but for the sake of the God who loved them.

The speaker then gave the first toast that of "The Queen," which was loyally responded to.

Mr. Jones said the next toast was "The Visitors." They had the Mayor of Hythe, Mr. DuBoulay, the Brothers Jeal and Mr. Wilks, Junr., the latter he said was the cause of the lifeboat being launched, and deserved their honored recognition. He had only mentioned these few names but there were hundreds who were willing to do all they could, and a large number were amongst them. Some may have been overlooked, and he hoped they would take no offence at it as all praise was due to them just the same. It was impossible to get the names of all who helped. He had received £50 from the owners of the wrecked vessel, as a subscription for the lifeboat crews. They had men in the room representing the nation; they to-day had made the country what it was wherever the English flag flew. These men did noble acts even when their lives were sacrificed. (Cheers).

The Chairman said Sir Edward Watkin (the Borough Member) was unable to be present, but he had written him asking him to give them his respects, and that he would gladly add to his ten guinea subscription to the Lifeboat Fund any further sum that was necessary.

Mr. Onslow said he gave on behalf of the Coastguards a silver mounted walking stick to Mr. Jones, in recognition of the services he rendered last Wednesday. No man could have done more in getting the lifeboat off than Mr. Jones did and in a few more appropriate remarks Mr. Onslow handed the souvenir to that gentleman amid much enthusiasm.

Mr. Jones was so affected that he was scarcely able to acknowledge the gift.

Mr. Gill, a representative of Messrs. Watson & Co., the owners of the ship, spoke of the brave conduct of the lifeboat crews.

The Revs. Woodward, Palmer, and the Mayors of Hythe and Folkestone also

THE LIFEBOAT ENQUIRY.

THE VERDICT.

The public inquiry into the capsizing of the lifeboat at Sandgate last week was held at Hythe on Wednesday. Hennessey, the coxswain of the Sandgate boat, which rescued the crew of the *Benvenue*, replied to a question which had been handed in to Capt. Chetwynd by a man named Brice, as to whether two of the crew did not jump out of the boat, when it was being launched in the morning, & say they had had enough of it. The Witness, who had on the previous night stated that two men did jump out of the boat after they had been knocked back by the sea, now stated that he had ascertained that the two men referred to were Thomas Moore and Stephen Moore. When they refused to go in the boat, he replaced them by others. The two Moores were not regular men of the crew; they were taken on for the day; they had been in the boat before for practice, and Thomas Moore went out in the evening, and assisted in rescuing the crew.

Capt. Chetwynd remarked that the lifeboat was a voluntary service, and anyone could retire from it if he chose. The Moores were, therefore, within their rights. But to do so might cause great inconvenience, and possibly panic, and a man who exercised his judgment in not going on one occasion should not be allowed to go in the boat again.

Stephen Moore, a fisherman, stated that on the morning of the 11th he saw some of the crew shouting for volunteers to go in the boat for Folkestone. He went into the boat with the intention of going to Folkestone, and when they turned the boat round he asked the coxswain where he was going, and he replied, "I'm going to launch off here." Witness said, "You will drown every man." The coxswain said, "Let her go, boys," and the boat was launched; but before it had got off the carriage a big wave came and knocked her back. If the boat had gone out in the breakers every man must have been drowned. In his opinion, they ought to have taken the boat to Hythe. He vol-

they went the third time. He could have gone himself in a six-foot punt.

William Watson, said he was one of the crew and he believed the weight of the haul-off wrap on the starboard side assisted in the capsizing of the boat.

Wright Griggs, a fisherman, and one of the crew, stated they had no difficulty in launching the third time, and if the lifeboat had not gone off he would have gone with his own boat, 18ft by 6ft. The sea in the morning was the heaviest he had ever seen.

John Keneale, a painter, said he was in the first and second boats. They went to Sandgate with the intention of launching there. Nothing was said about going to Folkestone. When they got the boat ready there was a large number of boxes washing ashore and the "helpers" all scratched after them, leaving the lifeboat, and apparently thinking nothing about the poor people on the wreck. If they had stuck to her, he believed they would have got off to the ship safely. There was no danger in launching to the leeward, because they knew the tug was keeping to the shore to pick their boat up.

Mark Elliott stated he was a boatman at Hythe. It was quite correct that the "helpers" left the boat to go after the boxes; but when they found there was nothing in them they went back to the boat. In his opinion the haul-off rope ought to be twice its present length.

Thomas Moore was called, and he explained that the reason why he left the boat was because he considered it was unsafe to launch at Sandgate. He told the coxswain he ought to go to Folkestone, or he would drown every man. He was the third man to get into the boat which succeeded in rescuing the crew. He would have gone off before if the boat had not been locked up.

Capt. Smythies.—Did you consider it your business when you got into the boat to interfere with the coxswain and tell him where to go?—No, sir.

Fredk. Goodall stated that he had hold of the mizen sheet when the vessel capsized. He tried to pull Fagg to the shore, but he let go; he afterwards hung

going to be raised for the lifeboat crew, and that it would be a great pity to take any of it for the purpose of an entertainment, and therefore they determined to do "that little bit" themselves (applause). But they were not allowed to do it. In the first place Mr. Jones had a friend recently come there to reside. Mr. Wainwright, who contributed very liberally indeed to the expenses of the entertainment that night. And there was one other very important person indeed, who would not allow them to do it all themselves, and that was their friend General LeQuesne, Commandant at Shorncliffe. He went up to the Camp to interview him and to know whether he could come down that night. He said he was sorry to say he could not, but he would give a subscription. Ho (Mr. Wakefield) replied that he was not allowed to take anything, but he insisted, and the result of the dispute was that he accepted one fifth of what General LeQuesne wanted to give, so they might guess he wanted to give a great deal indeed (applause). Then as to what they wanted to do. First of all, they wanted to have there those who manned the boat each time, on that day. They would have liked to have also their friends from Lydd and Dover, but that was simply impossible. They did not want any remark at all as to success or want of success—there was no want of trying (applause). There was no want of heart or energy on the part of any one. He was quite sure they all felt they were grand Englishmen who had done their utmost. He referred especially to those who had charge of the rocket apparatus, and to those who assisted in launching the boat, and personally to Colonel Courtley and Captain Anesley, who he said had received marks of appreciation for his distinguished services elsewhere. They had not got the men together simply to praise them—they would have plenty of that. It was to show that from

The Revs. Woodward, Palmer, and the Mayors of Hythe and Folkestone also gave speeches.

Mr. Wilks said that Mr. Graham, inspector of lifeboats, told him that he had never had a more efficient and gallant crew than those who manned the lifeboat on Wednesday last.

Amongst the many healths that were drunk were "The wives of those brave fellows who were drowned"; this was drunk in silence and brought tears to the eyes of many; another toast was "The dear ones at home, and our wives and families."

Mr. Maxted said every one's intention was good, but he hoped better lifeboat accommodation would be forthcoming, so that there would not be another seventeen years allowed to pass before other lives were saved. Every one appreciated the gallantry of the Coxswain Hennessey, and he asked them to drink the healths of Hennessey and the sea-faring men along this coast.

The toast was drunk with rounds of applause.

Hennessey, the 1st Coxswain of the Sandgate lifeboat, on rising was loudly cheered. He regretted all his boatmates were not present that evening; Fagg's death he would never forget, neither should he forget the kindnesses of the people of Sandgate for entertaining his boat's crew, and the hospitality of the Vicar and Mr. Jones. The capsizing of the boat was a terrible blow. He should never forget it until he was dead. He did not expect to live amongst them for ever, and if ever he should meet a man of Kent in his travels he should give him a hearty shake of the hand. On one occasion he was wrecked on the coast of Africa amongst the cannibals; it was a great relief when he was rescued by a steamer, as also it must have been when the crew of the Benvenue were rescued. It was not for

the breakers every man must have been drowned. In his opinion, they ought to have taken the boat to Hythe. He volunteered to go to Folkestone, and when he knew that was not the intention he came out of her, because he could see death staring him in the face if he went off. No boat would have lived in the sea. The boat was launched to leeward, and that would have made it impossible to reach the Benvenue.

In answer to Capt. Smythies, Moore said the wind was dead on the shore, but the tide was running eastward, and the boat ought to have been launched far enough to the west to allow for the action of the tide.

Mr. Graham.—Did they chose this place on account of a tug being outside?—No, sir.

Mr. DuBoulay said it was his impression that the lifeboat was going to be taken to Folkestone, and there picked up by the tug. He had a message telegraphed to the tug to follow her down eastward.

In reply to Capt. Chetwynd, Chief Officer Onslow said he signalled to the tug to pick up the lifeboat, but he did not say it was going to Folkestone to be launched. From the signal he gave, he meant the tug to pick up the boat at Sandgate.

Mr. G. S. Wilks said he telephoned to Folkestone for a tug, and the reply he got was that they could not send one.

Hennessey was again examined, and stated that he did not call for volunteers for Folkestone, and had no intention of doing so; neither did he hear any one else.

Mr. G. S. Wilks said the reason why the lifeboat did not go out in the afternoon was that he had a telegram from Dover, which stated that the Doyer tug had started the lifeboat of that town, and he thought under the circumstances it was useless to put the local boat off. The telegram came from the Chief Officer of

the Doyer tug, who stated that he had hold of the mizen sheet when the vessel capsized. He tried to pull Fagg to the shore, but he let go; he afterwards hung on to the boat, but was drowned. He thought it was necessary for the Lifeboat Institution to provide surf lines.

In order to clear up some conflicting statements with regard to the third launching of the lifeboat, and which appeared to cause some feeling, Capt. Chetwynd called David Philpott, who said he got into the boat at Sandgate, and was given permission by Mr. G. S. Wilks to act as coxswain. He did his duty as coxswain the whole time, and Hennessey stood in the boat beside him. He did not recognise Sadler as second coxswain.

Robert Weatherhead, who described himself as boatman to Sir Edmund Hay Currie, at Folkestone, said he was the second coxswain.

Hennessey, recalled, said he gave all orders at the wreck. There was a lot of talking in the boat, and he was obliged to ask the men to keep quiet and collected if they wished to save life. After they got the crew off the Benvenue, and they were going to Folkestone, the lifeboat crew commenced to sing, and lost discipline. He gave way to them to a certain extent, as he thought it would be the wisest plan.

During Hennessey's evidence Weatherhead made several interruptions, and there was quite a scene in the Hall. Captain Chetwynd said the inquiry was a very serious one, and he hoped they would conduct themselves properly, whatever their feelings might be; otherwise he would be compelled to adjourn the inquiry.

Albert Sadler said he was placed in the boat as second coxswain just before it was launched. The duties of coxswain were all undertaken by Hennessey.

Nicholas Charles Williams, of Cheriton, one of the crew, confirmed the statements of Sadler and Hennessey, remarking that it was quite immaterial to him whether the men came from Folkestone or the rock of Gibraltar.

had done their utmost. He referred especially to those who had charge of the rocket apparatus, and to those who assisted in launching the boat, and personally to Colonel Courtley and Captain Annesley, who he said had received marks of appreciation for his distinguished services elsewhere. They had not got the men together simply to praise them—they would have plenty of that. It was to show that from the very bottom of their hearts they respected them; they esteemed them for what they had done, and they believed that whatever happened to them during their lives, if ever such work were to come again, they would go and do it in the same way with the same gallantry as they did on Wednesday (applause). They also thought meeting together like that encouraged them all. Anything like warmth, which was produced by meeting together—did not mean the physical warmth which some of them were feeling (laughter)—but warmth of heart, which bound men together—and it was a grand thing that they should be bound together, for they must remember that unity was strength and they would go forth determined to be more true brothers than ever they were in the days before. They would always remember, God knew, Wednesday and its dangers and difficulties and its final success; and the pain that must have come to many families they would remember; and they would all remember their gathering there that night, and in the remembrance of it they would be encouraged to go on being true Englishmen. He was not going to make any boast about Englishmen. He was brought up away a good deal from Englishmen, and he was not going to say anything disparaging to other nations, but there was something in an Englishman that he had not found anywhere else—something that he could not define—and he would not attempt it. But the Englishman had a very great future in the world. The moral of the whole story of Wednesday was summed up in the lines

The noblest best who loveth best
All things both great and small.

The man who worked best was the man who loved best, and he was the most use-

until he was dead. He did not expect to live amongst them for ever, and if ever he should meet a man of Kent in his travels he should give him a hearty shake of the hand. On one occasion he was wrecked on the coast of Africa amongst the cannibals; it was a great relief when he was rescued by a steamer, as also it must have been when the crew of the Benvenue were rescued. It was not for him to say, but it was a credit to all who launched in that fearful storm on Wednesday last.

Cheers and hurrahs for Hennessey filled the room.

During the evening several ladies were present and sang some very appropriate songs, while Coastguardsman Hocking and Mr. Brvran gave two lifeboat songs, and Mr. Gill a recitation.

Cheers were also given to the military. The Hythe town band was also present.

doing so; neither did he hear any one else.

Mr. G. S. Wilks said the reason why the lifeboat did not go out in the afternoon was that he had a telegram from Dover, which stated that the Doyer tug had started the lifeboat of that town, and he thought under the circumstances it was useless to put the local boat off. The telegram came from the Chief Officer of the Coastguard. At five o'clock another telegram came, stating that the Dover lifeboat and tug had had to put back. At half-past nine in the morning he sent a telegram to Lydd and Littlestone, saying that a crew was in the rigging of the Benvenue, off Sandgate; that the Hythe and Sandgate boat had been capsized; and asking them if they could get down with their boats. At half-past three he received a message that his telegram had not been delivered because the wires were damaged.

Capt. Chetwynd then examined the coxswain as to the advisability of removing the lifeboat house from Seabrook to Hythe. He stated that from the time of seeing the signal it would take the crew forty minutes to get to the lifeboat house at Seabrook, running all the way. They would get a start from the boathouse in one hour; it would then take three-quarters of an hour to get back to the launching place at Hythe, so that would take an hour and three-quarters to launch at Hythe. It would probably take 2 hours and a half to get to Folkestone. If he had the boat at Hythe he could get it off in half an hour. On one occasion when there was a wreck the Sandgate people brought the boat and met the Hythe crew half-way along the road. He would have taken the boat to Hythe on the morning of the 11th, but for the loss of time which would have resulted. They did not ship any water in going off on the third launch. They had to go through two small seas; but they did not break over the boat. When along the wreck there was a strong tide, but they took 27 off the rigging of the Benvenue all the time. They encountered no seas in going to Folkestone, and they had no difficulty in getting into the harbour. A coastguard's

Albert Sadler said he was placed in the boat as second coxswain just before it was launched. The duties of coxswain were all undertaken by Hennessey.

Nicholas Charles Williams, of Cheriton, one of the crew, confirmed the statements of Sadler and Hennessey, remarking that it was quite immaterial to him whether the men came from Folkestone or the rock of Gibraltar.

The Mayor of Hythe (Mr. Horton), who was present at the launch, corroborated the statements that Hennessey and Sadler were in charge of the boat when she left the beach. Wright Griggs, a member of the crew, Mr. Edward Palmer, Mr. J. J. Jeal, & Capt. Smythies also corroborated. The inquiry then closed.

THE RESULT

of the enquiries was declared yesterday (Thursday). The Court found that the Lydd lifeboat was efficient, and the crew did their best to save the lives of the shipwrecked sailors. As regards the Sandgate boat, it was declared to have been quite right to attempt to launch at Sandgate, and also to launch from Hythe in the face of the storm when one man was drowned. The boat was taken back to Seabrook for repairs, and at the third launch the crew of the shipwrecked vessel were saved. On the latter occasion the Court was of opinion that Hennessey was in charge of the boat. It was reported to be advisable to move the lifeboat to Hythe, and to have a large lifeboat stationed at Dungeness, and these suggestions are to be laid before the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

THROAT IRRITATION AND COUGH.—Soreness and dryness, tickling and irritation, inducing cough and affecting the voice. For these symptoms use Epps' Glysterine Jujubes. In contact with the glands at the moment they are excited by the act of sucking the Glysterine in these agreeable confections become a speedy healing. Sold only in boxes 7½, 10s 1s, 14½, labelled "JAMES EPPS & CO., Homeopathic Chemist, London." Dr. Moore, in his work on "No es and Throat Diseases," writes: "The Glysterine Jujubes, prepared by James Epps & Co., are of undoubted extensive curative or palliative effect," while Dr. J. C. Holmes, Senior Physician to the Municipal Dispensary and Ear Inflammatory, writes: "After an extended trial, I have found your Glysterine Jujubes of considerable benefit in almost all forms of throat disease." Epps' medicaments are sold in Deal by S. Dunn.

Heroes of a lifeboat rescue

A RECENT Extra Memories feature about the wreck of the Benvenue off Sandgate has brought fascinating pictures and background information to light.

The 2,033 ton cargo ship was wrecked off Sandgate during a storm in 1891.

Edwardian rambler Felix vividly described the dramatic scene as frantic attempts were made to rescue the crew.

Medal

Now Fred Moore, son of one of the gallant volunteer lifeboatmen who saved the Benvenue's crew from almost certain death, has come forward with these

GALLANT GRANDDADS ON PARADE

superb old photographs.

Taken by W. K. Jacob, the Sandgate photographer and Volunteer Fire Brigade chief, they show the heroes on their way back from Folkestone by road and outside the lifeboat station.

Fred's father Thomas, a fisherman, is seventh from left in the lifeboat station



Horses pull the lifeboat back to Sandgate after the rescue.

photograph and his uncle Albert is eleventh from left.

Fred has another fine souvenir of this heroic rescue — his father's silver medal inscribed "He bravely did his duty."

Fred believes the

EACH week in Extra memories David McDine is following in the footsteps of the Edwardian writer Felix, who rambled around the Folkestone and Dover area at the turn of the century. Here you can find out how much the local scene has changed since the good old days.

donor was a local benefactor who got into trouble for not having permission to include the Queen's head on the medal.

His father, also a volunteer fireman, often talked to Fred about the rescue.

He and the other volunteers were cheered as they rowed the lifeboat "Meyer de Rothschild" out to the wreck after a crewman had been drowned in an earlier attempt.

Felix reported: "When it arrived under the mast and took on board the men who had faced death for many hours cheer-ing again broke out.

The lifeboat now drifted away from the wreck amidst cries of "They're saved!"

The survivors were rowed to Folkestone and one of the photographs was taken when the lifeboat was being pulled back to Sandgate by road.

"When they reached the old tollgate at the bottom of the hill they had to saw the gatepost off to get the lifeboat through," Fred recalls.

Thomas Moore was 84 when he died after the last war — a gallant old volunteer.

How many other local families can recognise their brave grandfathers among the lifeboat crew?



Whose grandfathers? The gallant rescuers outside the lifeboat station.

MR ENTERPRISE



**Jobless
Peter
wins
£5,000
to start
business**

Peter with his family — from left, back, Andrew, nine, Peter, Janet, Lee, 13, and David, 11; front, Ian, seven and Alan, five.

A **JOBLESS** man has been given a second chance to work for himself.

Peter Garnett, 35, of Dover Road, Folkestone, has netted £5,000 as the first winner of an enterprise award.

It will enable him to set up a business to reclaim aluminium from scrap.

And with five hungry sons to feed, Peter and his wife, Janet, are delighted he was selected from



"That attracted us because we want to encourage enterprise which helps reduced unemployment," said Mr Rawlings.

"Bright ideas need help and if you have one and are unemployed you can't put it into practise — it's a vicious circle."

The competition will be run again next year and Mr Rawlings wants to see the idea spread throughout Britain. He hopes other

SWEET

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TO CLEAR

"SEAL"
TWIN 3ft x 6ft
SPRUNG EDGE D
TO

(40)

FOLKESTONE VISITORS' LIST AND SOCIETY

In Cask and Bottle. Folkestone Stores—Beach Street

The Wreck of the "Benvenue."

A FISHERMAN'S STORY.

BY HAL BERTE.

YES, sir, we're only fisherfolk, a rough and ready sort,
Whose simple lives are mostly spent in bringing fish to port;
We're not exactly lifeboat men, but still we do our share,
And when there's volunteers required you'll always find us there.
Seen wrecks? Well, yes, as boy and man I guess I've seen a few,
For more than once our fishermen have made the lifeboat's crew;
And when the "Benvenue" was wrecked with thirty souls or more,
The Folkestone fishermen it was who brought her crew ashore.

I've seen a few November gales, and pretty stiff ones, too,
But never aught to equal that in which the "Benvenue"
Was wrecked and sunk off Sandgate here within the sight of land,
With crowds of people looking on, who could not lend a hand.
Her masts above the angry sea alone remained, and there
We saw her crew all huddled up, and breathed a fervent prayer
That she might last till help arrived—that help we wished to give
But could not, for in such a sea 'twas plain no craft could live.

We saw the lifeboat launched and then, a sight I shan't forget,
One awful wave, a piercing cry, "My God, the boat's upset!"
A fearful fight for life, and then the awful shout, "One's lost!"
But yonder crew, they must be saved no matter what it cost.
Time after time, with rockets then to reach the wreck they tried,
But not a rope could stand the stress of such a wind and tide.
The hours went on, the storm still raged, the moon rose in the sky,
And now there seemed but little else than leave them there to die.

Nay! not while British hearts are made of sterling bulldog stuff.

"A crew—who'll man the boat again?"

Answered a fisher bluff,—

"The fishermen of Folkestone will, we only want the word."

Oh, how the people cheered at that; such cheers were never heard.

They got the word, a hundred helped, and soon the boat was manned,

Five thousand eager, wistful eyes keen-watching from the land.

A shout! What's that? From lip to lip the glorious message goes—

"She's launched—she's safe," and cheer on cheer to highest Heaven rose.

Yes, sir, they reached the wreck all right and brought her crew to shore;

They only did their duty, sir, as men, and nothing more.

But if you ever hear folk sneer at fishermen I wish

You'd tell them straight we can, if needs, do other things than fish;

And if they ask for proof just tell how Folkestone's lads went forth

At duty's call, without a fear, and faced a sea of wrath,

How in November, ninety-one, in fiercest gale that blew,

They launched the boat and brought to land that luckless vessel's crew.

Origins							
Home	Club	Waterside	Landside	Cof	Social	Faq	Sale Items
Updates	Tel No's	News Oct 07	Notice Board	Gallery	Find Us	links	Contents
Feed back							

Brief History

Bognor Regis Yacht Club was founded in Peter & Paul Hickman's House, Aldwick Avenue, Bognor Regis in 1949. The Club was built on the Culver Cottage site in 1950/51 and the first Commodore was an original founder, Geoffrey Oxley.

The Club prospered and was very successful for many years and was known to be the home of the "Merlin Rocket" an expensive clinker built sailing dinghy. A fairly large fleet was accommodated here and in fact the Club boasted a National Champion in George Slack. Peter Frampton also sailed a Merlin Rocket and was a Commodore in 1975/76. However with the advent of two other clubs within 6 miles of each other, Pagham to the west and Felpham to the east, there was increased competition for the sailors, and in the seasons of 1980-81 the Club fell on bad times.

The current Vice-President and Commodore from 1983-1986, Alan Steed, had other ideas, however and promptly introduced the Club to Catamaran Sailing, by racing "Hobiecat" here. This proved to be a very popular and a small fleet built up at the Club. At the same time a group of Windsurfers joined the Club and with Sailors and Surfers working an playing together the Club again prospered and is now well known as one of the South Coast's leading Cat and Windsurfing Club.

The Club has a Lady Figurehead which originally was from the "Benvenue" Merchant ship which was damaged in a storm during the 1800's while on its way to Sydney, Australia, and was washed up on a beach at Sandgate, Kent. The "Lady" was planted on the Yacht Club roof as a hoax by members of the Bognor Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association (R.A.F.A.) who had themselves been saddled with by members of the Worthing Branch of R.A.F.A. Both Branches were invited to the Yacht Club for an official handing over ceremony and were pleased that the "Lady" had found a very suitable permanent home, in front of the Flag Pole looking out to sea.

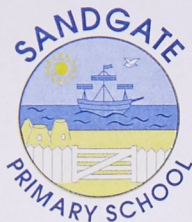
After some years, however, the softwood had rotted and the "Lady" taken into storage until repairs could be afforded.

The Grand Daughter of the Captain of the "Benvenue" noticed the "Lady" missing while walking along the promenade and upon being told why promptly offered to pay any restoration costs. The work was duly put in hand and in 1982 the "Lady" was restored to her former glory and returned to the Club where she resides inside now but still facing the sea.

Previous Commodores Report from 1957

A report by our 3rd Commodore of seasons 1957 - 1959 Alex Rose passed on by his son Chris. Reading through the report things do not seem to have changed in all this time only the names, boats and costs..

[Link to PDF file or read the below copy](#)



Re BENVENUE

Coolinge Lane
Folkestone
Kent CT20 3QU

Telephone:
01303 257280
Facsimile:
01303 251422
E-mail:

enquiries@sandgate.kent.sch.uk

Head Teacher: Mrs H P Tait, M.A.

From:
Cirilla,
Radnor Cliff Crescent,
Folkestone,
Kent, CT20 2JQ
14 February, 2011.

Dear Linda,

Thank you so much for your charming note about the display in Sandgate Library which I have passed to Mrs Meryl Goldsmith, the History Subject Leader at Sandgate; I know she will be gratified to receive it. The children worked very hard on this.

I had seen the picture of the Benvenue painted by Victor Foley and knew the pupils had been given the day off by the Head. It must have been dreadful watching the poor sailors hanging onto the mast and for hours not being able to launch the lifeboat. Then when the Sandgate lifeboat was taken to Hythe and launched, it capsized. The wait before the wind subsided and a second crew eventually reached the vessel must have been agonizing. I can well imagine that it would have haunted the onlookers for many years, and a child would have felt particularly helpless. It was a miracle that so many were saved. Victor, according to the census, was ten in 1891 at the time of the disaster.

When I look back at my notes and those of my friend Annie Bamford, I realize that there are many points we still need to research about Thomas Odo Foley who died in 1918 serving with the Canadian infantry. In particular, we don't really know when he went to Canada. Thank you also for the folder of items for the school including three copies of your history of Sandgate which you dropped off at my house. They will be a most useful addition to the school library. We will see if we can digitise the slides while the articles on Slavery are most interesting. Thank you, Linda, for your encouragement of our young pupils.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

Hilary Tolputt



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

SILVER FLAIR
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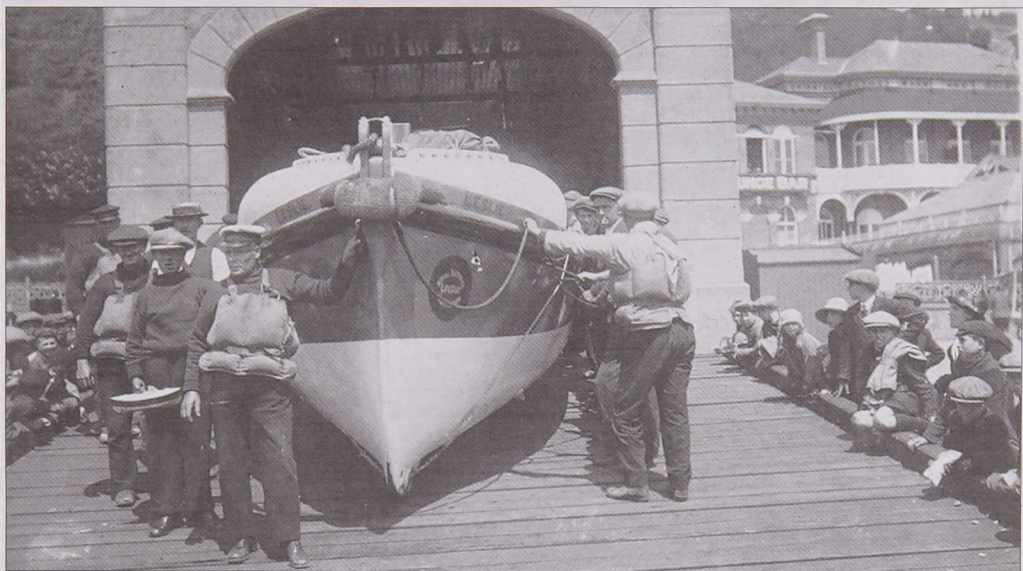
Kent NGfL
Website Winner



Healthy Schools

www.sandgateprimary.co.uk

The tragedy that inspired heroes to tame the ocean



Volunteers: Lifeboat Leslie and crew with coxswain William Baker

ON A dark morning in November 1891, the cargo ship *Benvenue* was towed through the English Channel on its way from Glasgow to Sydney.

The journey so far had been difficult, with high winds continuing as she passed Folkestone, but the tug towing the 2,000-ton vessel kept going, despite the mighty waves.

Suddenly, just after 5 am, the tow cable between the two snapped and the liner was swept towards the shore near Brewers Hill, Sandgate.

The captain dropped both anchors but the sea crashed over the vessel and it started to sink.

The 27-man crew took to the rigging to take down the sails, but at 9.30am she turned over.

Because Folkestone had no lifeboat, the men had to wait more than 11 hours to be rescued and, sadly, the captain and his apprentice both went down with the ship.

It was an event that was to shape local maritime history.

Historian Alan Taylor explains: "The only lifeboat was in Hythe but its crew was unable to row to the

Way we were



Antony Thrower
Antony.Thrower
@KRNmedia.co.uk
01303 851683

rescue because of the winds.

"Just eight days after the sinking a public meeting was held at Folkestone town hall, and a lifeboat committee was formed to ensure no one would have to wait again.

"It hadn't been the first time people had drowned near there. In 1873, 350 lives were lost when a Spanish steamer rammed into the sailing ship *Northfleet*.

"In 1878, another 300 people were killed when two German warships, the *Grosser Kurfurst* and *Koenig Wilhelm*, collided. "The *Benvenue* tragedy forced them to act."

The Folkestone Lifeboat House was built opposite the lower station of the Leas Lift.

The 38ft-long, 8ft-wide John



Launch: The John McConnel Hussey on the open water

McConnel Hussey was built by William T Ellis and had 12 cars.

It arrived in Folkestone in December 1893.

A second lifeboat, *The Leslie*, was introduced in 1903.

Mr Taylor said: "The town was meant to also have a new motor

lifeboat, but by the time she was ready, the lifeboat institution had decided to close the station in Folkestone.

"This was because Dungeness already had a motorboat which had a much greater reach than the old sailing and rowing boats.

"The Folkestone station closed in October 16, 1930."

The two lifeboats were launched 25 times and saved 26 lives.

Mr Taylor said: "They helped change the opinion that the coast near Folkestone meant certain death if your ship ran into trouble."

LR-14

An abortive attempt to launch the lifeboat



THE GALE: THE WRECK OF THE THREE-MASTED SHIP *BENVENUE* OFF SANDGATE.—COASTGUARDSMEN TRYING TO THROW A LINE TO THE CREW BY THE ROCKET APPARATUS.

Off the coast of Kent the gale blew with unprecedented violence. One ship went ashore at Romney; another at Hythe, a French schooner, from which four men were rescued—the captain, his wife, and child being drowned. The wreck of the *Benvenue*, however, in dramatic interest overshadowed all other disasters. She was a full-rigged ship of about 2,000 tons. She broke away from a tug, and came ashore off Sandgate. The vessel sank 300 yards from shore, and the crew took refuge in the rigging. Unrelenting attempts were made to reach them by the rocket apparatus, but without effect, the wind being too strong. A field gun, firing a line attached to a shot, similarly failed. Several attempts were made to

launch the lifeboat; one of them succeeded, but the boat immediately capsized. The fearful sea rendered it impossible to despatch tugs or lifeboats from Folkestone or Dover, and during the whole day the greatest excitement prevailed among the crowd of onlookers lining the sea front. When darkness set in the shipwrecked men had not been rescued. To cheer them with the knowledge that they had not been abandoned, a bonfire was lighted on the shore. At eight o'clock it was decided by the local lifeboat men to make one more effort to get out. It succeeded. The lifeboat, after tremendous efforts and several narrow escapes, was at length launched, and in

twelve minutes reached the wreck. A heavy sea still ran, and the work of rescue was extremely difficult; but it was skillfully accomplished, all the people on the *Benvenue* being taken off safely. The lifeboat, with the men rescued, reached Folkestone soon after ten o'clock. The hearty shout which was sent up by those on shore when the lifeboat was launched was heard by the sufferers. That was the first ray of hope they had had. The *Benvenue* was bound from London to Sydney, and was being towed up Channel when the gale sprang up. Some other particulars of the disaster will be found on page 4.

NBY

1891

6d

Coast Cottage
149 Sandgate High St.
Near Folkestone
Kent CT20 3BZ

3 November 1985

Dear Joan,

THE WRECK OF THE BENVENUE

As you know, all previous correspondence on the subject of its return (October 1982 on) was passed to County Councillor and Mayor Kelland Bowden -- (our former County Councillor having failed in the matter).

Kelland 'phoned me last week, on our return from abroad, and asked me to pass the good news on. He has been in touch with the KCC Museums Service at West Malling where the oil painting is now under restoration. He was successful in getting an undertaking that, when work is complete, the picture will be come back to Sandgate.

The 'when' and the 'where' will require further diplomacy on his part, but we can all be sure that we will do his best to see that the Benvenue returns to its rightful place.

At the moment, it would be best to let matters rest in his capable hands.

While writing this letter, Joan, I am also taking the opportunity to enclose a copy of a letter which I wrote a month ago to Dennis Vorley. A reply from the Trustees would now be much appreciated.

All the best,

Sincerely yours

Linda

Linda René-Martin

18th July, 1965

Mr. H.B. Chaplin

Mrs E.B. Greenwall

Mr. D.G. Vorley,
1, Castle Road,
SANDGATE, Folkestone,
Kent.

Dear Madam,

Thank you very much for your helpful letter containing so many interesting details. Our appetite for copies of these drawings is not in keeping with the Society's limited funds and therefore we need to avoid duplication of type in our selection of those to go on show.

We would like to inspect these drawings if possible, and I wonder if you would kindly tell me if you personally, or one of your assistants, could show them to us if one or two of our Committee members came up to the Museum. As most of us work on weekdays, could they be made available on a Sunday. If not, would a Wednesday afternoon be convenient. I should be grateful if you could reply as soon as possible in order that the necessary arrangements may be made.

Regarding H.M.S. Sandgate, the Head of Naval Records has informed us that this ship was a Gate Class vessel of 270 tons built during the first World War by Workman Clark and launched 28th November, 1917. Laid up from 1919 to 1933, she was then re-commissioned for use in Eastern waters. She was finally sunk on 13th February, 1947, off Trincomalee after developing a leak in her hull.

I hope the foregoing will assist you in identifying H.M.S. Sandgate.

Yours faithfully,



Hon. Secretary.

Mrs. E. Tucker,
Print Room,
National Maritime Museum,
GREENWICH.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

(RECORD OFFICE (NAVAL))

Empress State Building, LONDON S.W.6

Telephone: FULham 1244, ext. 3183

Our reference: N/RO 23/65 (SN.6884)

Your reference:

9 July 1965.

Dear Sir,

H.M.S. SANDGATE.

In reply to your letter (undated), received in this Department on 2nd., July 1965, I am pleased to confirm from Naval Records, that there was a ship bearing the name of Sandgate and give below details of H.M.S. SANDGATE which I trust may be of use as one of the items of interest for the Exhibition on Sandgate which your Society is holding.

H.M.S. SANDGATE was a Gate Class Vessel of 270 tons, built during the first World War by Workman Clark and launched on 28th., November 1917. She was built for the Dover barrage and after this commission was subsequently laid up from 1919 to 1933. In October 1933 this ship was recommissioned and joined the East Indies Fleet for service at Singapore where she served until her transfer to Ceylon in April 1939.

During the second World War, H.M.S. SANDGATE was used as a Barrage Vessel and later as a Boom Gate Vessel at Trincomalee, Ceylon. From the end of World War II until she sunk in shallow water, after developing a leak in her hull at Boom Depot, Trincomalee, H.M.S. SANDGATE was used for storing balloons and component parts. After salvage this ship was taken to sea and finally sunk in deep water $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Round Island Light on 13th., February 1947.

It is regretted that the Navy Department do not keep photographs of H. M. Ships which are not in commission. However, it may be possible for you to obtain a copy from:

The National Maritime Museum,
Greenwich,
London, S.E. 10.

Yours faithfully,

The Honorary Secretary, / at Head of Record Office (Naval).
The Sandgate Society,
1 Castle Road,
SANDGATE, Kent.

The Hythe lifeboat put off at Seabrook at about seven o'clock, but the attempt was unsuccessful, and it came ashore broadside on. The boat was then brought on to Hythe, when it was very successfully launched by means of the hauling-off line.

The scene at this moment was very exciting [Ed. this meant 'moving']. It was pitiable to witness the farewells between husband, wife and children as the men started on their perilous voyage. One poor woman stood trembling and pleading with her husband not to go; but he pointed to the wreck and said, 'There's women and children aboard' and took his place in the boat.

Another young wife, only married a short six months, and had only been quartered at the station a fortnight ago, was hysterical. Poor woman! She is now a widow. Her fears were but too truly realised.

At about a quarter past nine, the lifeboat shot into the water amid the cheers of the crowd. When she got about 200 yards from the shore, a sail was hoisted, and shortly afterwards, to the horror of all, she was seen to capsize, throwing all her crew into the water. The names of the crew are as follows: Coastguards Civilians Lawrence Hennessey – 1st Cox Thomas Watson Albert Sadler (Sandgate) – 2nd Cox Ned East Mark Elliott Wright Griggs Patrick Buckley William Griggs Henry Burton Harry Griggs Joseph Fielder Jesse Goodsell Albert Oaten Jack Kneale Fred Goodsell James Jago (Sandgate) Charles Fagg Jock Hennis Thomas Doolan Day Total: 20 Brave men, all of them, ready to lay down their own lives to rescue others. There they are now struggling in the water, with the sea running mountains high.

Will they all reach the shore alive, or are some to receive a watery grave? I had got as far as the Baths when I heard Tommy Stickells say 'She's capsized!' 'Back I went, and opposite Ormonde Terrace I saw a sight which I hope I may never see again – a dozen black heads just showing above the water and rapidly nearing the dreadful breakers. Elliott, Fielder, Oaten and Doolan all managed to get back into the lifeboat when she righted herself. The brave Hennessey, who had, a few hours before saved four lives, was now in danger of losing his own. His previous exertions were now telling upon him, and as he neared the shore he managed to grasp the lifeline and shouted 'If there is anybody aboard, save me for God's sake!'. He was then dragged in, and the boat, with its five occupants, got to shore safely. Hundreds of people lined the shore watching the drama unfold and were horrified when they saw the lifeboat capsize. Fortunately, the four crew who were still aboard managed to right the boat but the others were at the mercy of the angry sea. Many of the onlookers waded through the boiling surf to help the men ashore but sadly there was one fatality, Coastguard Charles Fagg whose young wife, as we read, had been so worried about him joining the lifeboat crew.

The Hythe Reporter continues the account - I don't know the names of all those who rendered help; I wish I did, but among them were B T Winnifrieth, Rev Winnifrieth, Collier, Ernest Wilks, Fred Brett (who saved Jack Kneale), Tommy Stickells, Dick Crump, George Vile, Jack Griffey sen. and Harry Griffey, Hamilton, Jim Carter, W Rowsell, F I Curtis, Harry

Evenden, J P Shilston, Jack Griggs (who rushed in and saved his brother Bill, who was almost done for, and after that, dashed in again and brought out a coastguard), – there, it's no use, I can't mention them all.

I am requested by Hennessey the coxswain, on behalf of the lifeboat crew, to thank all those kind ladies and gentlemen who so thoughtfully sent spirits to the lifeboat men and for taking them into their houses. Among these I must not forget Mrs and Miss Porter, who almost insisted upon him occupying a bed in their house, and Mrs Ashdown, 1 Marine Parade, and Mrs Pilbrow and others who took the men into their houses. It will not be out of place to record the valuable assistance rendered by Arthur Williams, and other members of the late ambulance class. It only testifies to the value of the St John Ambulance Society. Dan West was most conspicuous with his bottle of brandy, and I have personally to thank him for a 'swig'

With night time fast approaching and Dover lifeboat, despite a valiant effort, being forced back by the hurricane force winds, the crew of the Benvenue were in serious danger. Their only hope was if the lifeboat, the Meyer de Rothschild, could be launched again. The Rev Russel-Wakefield was largely responsible for this third launch, he had been urging local men to try once more and had been through to Folkestone Harbour looking for volunteers. Many men responded to his pleas and hurriedly made their way to Sandgate where a crew was selected.

After dragging the lifeboat down to the boiling surf they managed to get the Meyer de Rothschild afloat and finally reached the Benvenue rescuing twenty-seven of the crew. The survivors were taken to the safety of Folkestone Harbour where they were greeted by the cheers of the large crowds that had gathered there.

We pick up the story from The Folkestone Chronicle and Advertiser, Saturday, November 14, 1891 - The chief mate of the BENVENUE (Mr SAMUEL WEBSTER) was interviewed by the reporter on Thursday morning at the Queen's Hotel, where he was located with nine of his fellow survivors.... During the morning, the survivors drew up a memorial which was signed by the whole of the men, in which they expressed their desire to tender their heartfelt gratitude for the manner in which the crew of the lifeboat went to their assistance when all hopes had vanished, and also for the kind way they had been treated by the people of Folkestone, especially at the Queen's Hotel and the Harbour Restaurant.

Edward Carpenter in his book, Wrecks and Rescues off the Romney Marsh Coast, tells us that the Silver Medals of the [Lifeboat] Institution were awarded to Hennessey and Sadler and that later Hennessey was awarded the Albert Medal and the Lloyd's Bronze Medal. The Lloyd's Bronze Medal was also awarded to Sadler and [William] Griggs.

As a result of the suggestion by Coxswain Hennessey at the official enquiry following the disaster, the lifeboat station was transferred to Hythe where the majority of the crew lived and where the launching was better than at Sandgate. On the completion of the new lifeboat station The Meyer de Rothschild was moved to Hythe, becoming operational in 1893.

SOCIAL HISTORY

From the Archives

THE SHIPWRECKS (Part 2)

In NL 190 we read how the Hythe Reporter began its detailed and sometimes graphic report of the ferocious storms 125 years ago in November 1891 that saw the sinking of the Eiden and the Benvenue off the coast in Hythe Bay.

In Part 2 we pick up the story in the Hythe Reporter after Mr Hennessey, the coxswain of the Hythe Lifeboat, had rescued four Frenchmen from the Eiden.

Soon after I heard the (four Frenchmen) had gone, I saw the Hythe lifeboat being taken to the shore to be launched to save the crew of the ship 'Benvenue' of Glasgow, with a crew of 32 and a general cargo bound for Sydney.

The ship had struck about the same time as the schooner, and was lying off Wellington Terrace, Sandgate. About seven she sunk, but remained in an upright position, with the masts high up above the water, about 400 yards from the shore.

The crew took to the rigging, and sheltered themselves in some of the sails on the lower yardarm of the mizzen mast. One of the men fell off into the water, but was drowned on nearing the shore.