



KENT UNDERGROUND RESEARCH GROUP

Newsletter Issue Number 127

April 2019

LOCAL NEWS

NEW LONG HOLE IN LANGDON

ROBERT HALL

MARCH 2019

It is not often that we get to watch a new pedestrian tunnel being dug through virgin chalk, but that has been the case over the last couple of months at Langdon Hole, just east of Dover.

For over a century the "Langdon Stairs" have presented an improbably straightforward zig-zag footpath down the face of the White Cliffs to give access to the foot of the cliffs just east of the port of Dover. The path once started from the compound of the original Coastguard buildings in Langdon Hole. Later, it became a means of access to the searchlights associated with the guns of the Langdon Battery above that protected the entrance to Dover harbour. Later still, in the Second World War, the original two searchlight positions were augmented by a third that was linked to Fan Bay Battery, again as part of the defences of Dover Port.

In more recent years, the Langdon Stairs became a normal, albeit steep, footpath that culminated in a steep metal ladder for the final drop onto the

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Editors Note:

I hope you enjoy this bumper Spring newsletter; many thanks to all who have contributed to the wide variety of 'hot off the press' and archive material included in this edition.

It was very sad to hear about the death of Harry Pearman - he has certainly left a legacy that will be fondly remembered by so many of us within KURG.

Articles, announcements or suggestions for the newsletter can be e-mailed to me at:

angie.harwood@talktalk.net

Angie

beach. In August 2013, the last zig (or possibly zag) was partially destroyed by a rockfall.



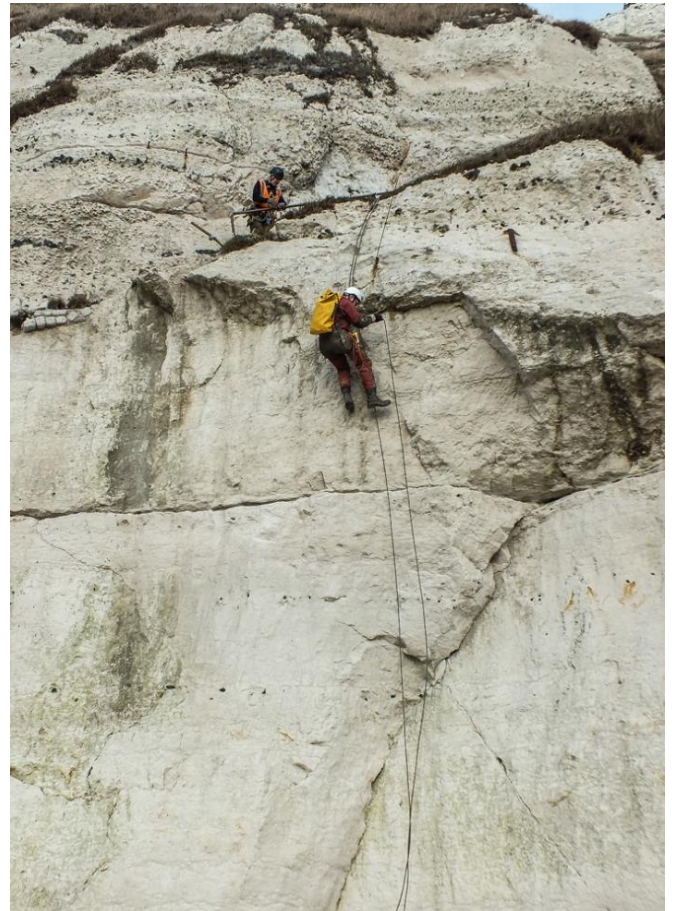
The Langdon Stairs zig-zag down the right-hand side of this picture taken from a ferry in September 2018; the searchlight positions, ladder to the beach and rockfall can be seen in the lower middle of the picture



A closer view of the last zig-zag in December 2016; one of the remaining searchlight positions and the final metal ladder to the beach can be seen to the left of the picture and the rockfall debris and the resulting gap in the final zig-zag can be seen on the right of the picture

As a result, for the last five years or so, access to the beach down the Langdon Stairs has been

limited to those using ropes, or to certain reckless souls keen on traversing 10 metres above a vertical drop on a thin crumbling ledge with minimal convincing handholds. Surprisingly, it has become apparent over recent months that Darwinian evolution has not thinned out the numbers of the latter by as much as one might have expected.



KURG member Jon Barker abseils down to the beach from the final zig-zag; the use of a double rope proved wise, as one rope was later found to have been badly damaged by flints in the chalk

The National Trust thought long and hard about how the footpath might be repaired. The path had been in the form of a bridge-like structure attached to the cliff. A replacement was possible, but was felt to be unlikely to survive in the long term, given the rate of cliff erosion and likelihood of further rockfalls.

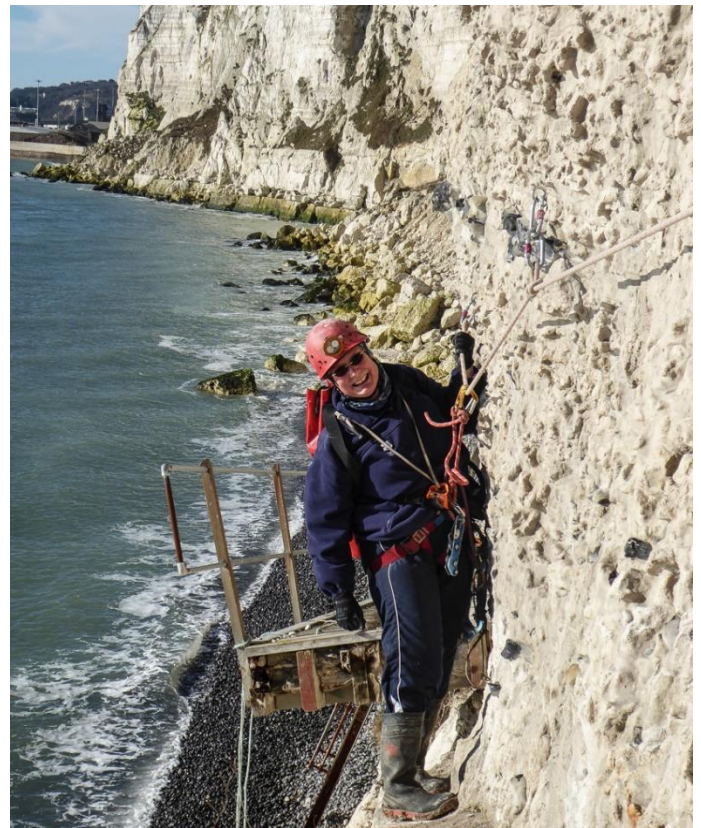
An alternative plan was devised in the form of the excavation of a new pedestrian tunnel that entered the cliff on the final zig above and before the site of the collapse and then passed through the cliff behind the collapse on an incline to emerge into the existing tunnel that accessed the back of the searchlights. Pedestrians could then exit this tunnel directly behind the existing metal ladder to descend to the beach. Although simple in concept, such a scheme involved considerable investigation and administration. A variety of permissions were required: not all of which may be immediately apparent or logical.

Whereas Mother Nature cheerfully throws 10,000's of tonnes of chalk cliff into the sea in a winter storm, aspirant tunnellers are not permitted to do so in even tiny fractions of that amount. Disposal of chalk spoil from tunnelling was therefore going to be a key concern, as few volunteers could be found to lug wheelbarrow-fulls of chalk up the Langdon Stairs. The solution was found to infill the western part of the searchlight tunnel that had in part already been damaged itself by storms and rockfalls.



Graffiti in the searchlight tunnel recorded by KURG; apparently scratched on 1 September 1939 in the last days before the onset of the Second World War, DV Coe of the Royal Engineers in Dover recorded his presence

Before this could be started, a survey of the existing searchlight tunnels was made, as much of it would inevitably become inaccessible or damaged by either the tunnelling itself, or by future pedestrians. Part of the associated graffiti survey was carried out by KURG members.



KURG member Emma Scheck on the removable rope traverse installed by contractors to access the tunnelling works; this picture was taken in February 2019 during the last stage of the graffiti survey

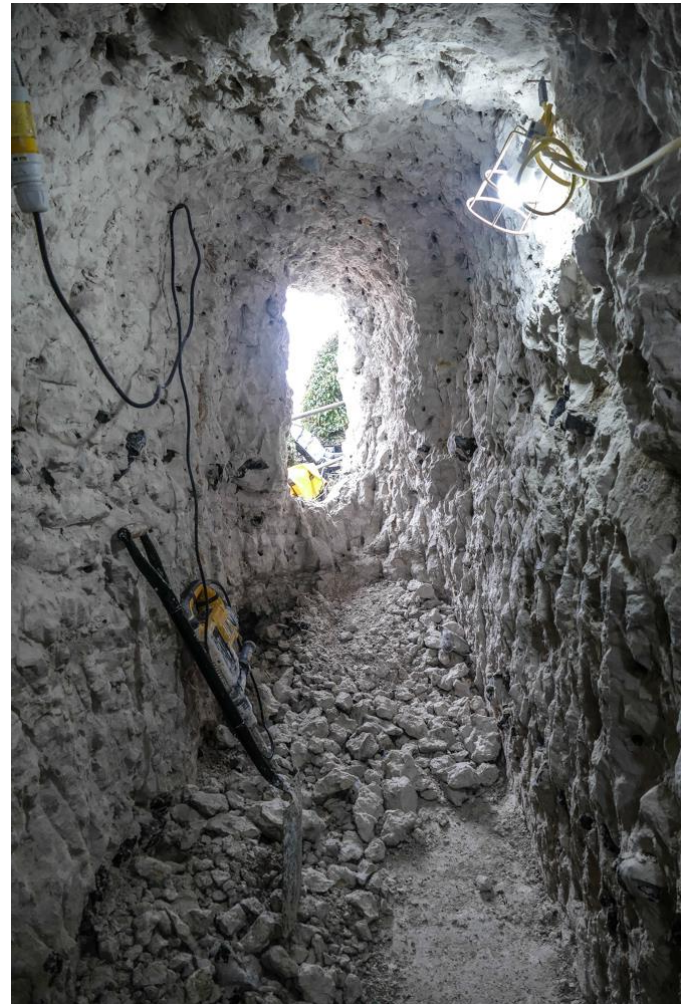
The contractors commenced their tunnelling work from the far end, in order to reduce the risk of members of the public interrupting their work. Access was solely by means of a traverse across a narrow ledge secured by rope. They soon learned to remove the rope except when it was actually being used to traverse the ledge – but even then, a surprising number of lemming-like tourists tried to get across.

The tunnelling through the chalk took longer than originally intended, as the rock with its flint nodules proved more resistant than expected. Although the contractors used electrically powered implements rather than the compressed air Holman Bros equipment of the 1940s, the resulting tunnel has pleasingly similar evidence of drill holes in chalk to the nearby Second World War vintage Fan Bay Deep Shelter. That shelter took just three months for the 172 Tunnelling Company of the Royal Engineers to construct, including laying a concrete floor and fitting colliery arching and arcuate sheet lining. This now seems even more impressive given the time taken to excavate this relatively short tunnel with modern tools - albeit in wartime there were no concerns about simply throwing chalk spoil over the cliff edge.



The new tunnel under construction in February 2019; to the right is the existing tunnel linking the searchlights to the location of the metal ladder to the beach, and behind the camera is the existing tunnel to the searchlight positions

Breakthrough of the new tunnel to the zig-zags occurred on 27 March 2019. After some more work later this year, the new Tunnel is expected to be quietly opened to allow the public (relatively) easy access to the beach down the Langdon Stairs for the first time in over five years.



The point of breakthrough to daylight on 27 March 2019

Access to the new Tunnel is currently locked pending the further work being undertaken. However, we can arrange for access by appropriately equipped KURG members in the interim.

SHELDWICH ICE HOUSE

PETE BURTON

MARCH 2019

John Puckett KURG member and batman (chair of the Kent Bat Group) has coerced KURG members to clear yet another icehouse.

Quite how he manages this feat on a regular basis is beyond our belief but there we are again, clearing an icehouse for use as a bat roost.

To my knowledge this is the fourth such undertaking that KURG have completed; previous sites were at Lullingstone Castle, Vintners Park and Mote Park. However this one looked like an easy task as it appeared to be much smaller than previous sites.

It started with the writer clearing the entrance floor of spoil and debris and measuring the opening for a secure Thorne Engineering door. This was duly fabricated by that most civil of engineers, our very own Paul Thorne in a fashionable oxide red.



He along with Emma Scheck, Robert Hall and John Puckett attached the door to the icehouse and started to excavate. However all wasn't as appeared and although the building was quite narrow it continued vertically, many bottles and pots being uncovered during the dig.

www.kurg.org.uk



A return visit was planned to clear the remaining spoil from the site, due to other commitments only the famous duo the magnificent two Steve's were able to help the writer with this task.

We felt that any moment the bottom would reveal itself but no, after five hours and a huge spoil heap we had still not cleared the site. The air was getting rather unpleasant in the lower reaches of the icehouse so we decided to call it a day.

However the two Steve's - Christian and Tanner had dug themselves into a huge hole!! With no ladders on site we had to revert to a tow rope and tied footloops to get them out - some,unfairly, say we should have left them there !!

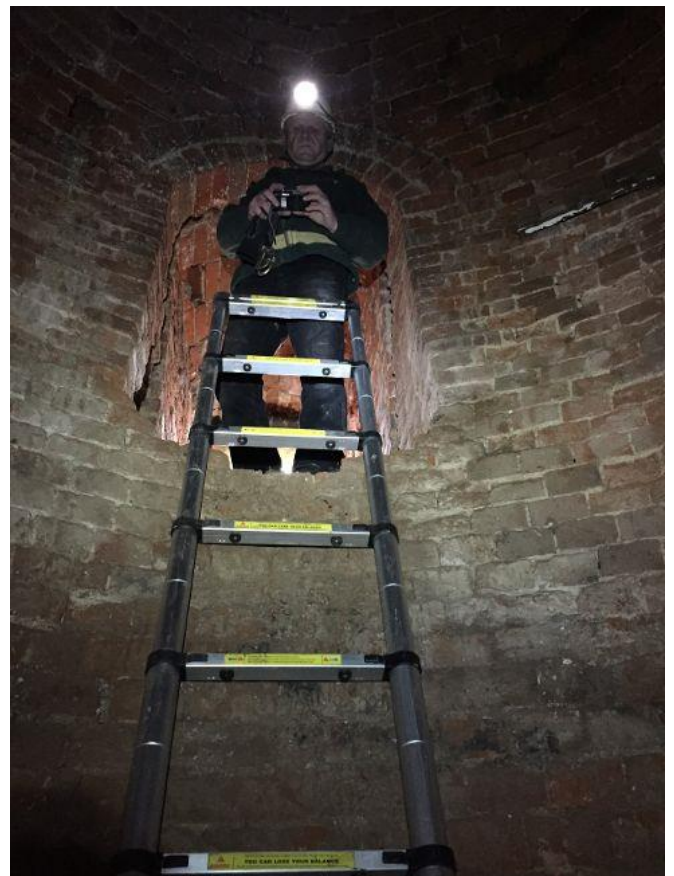
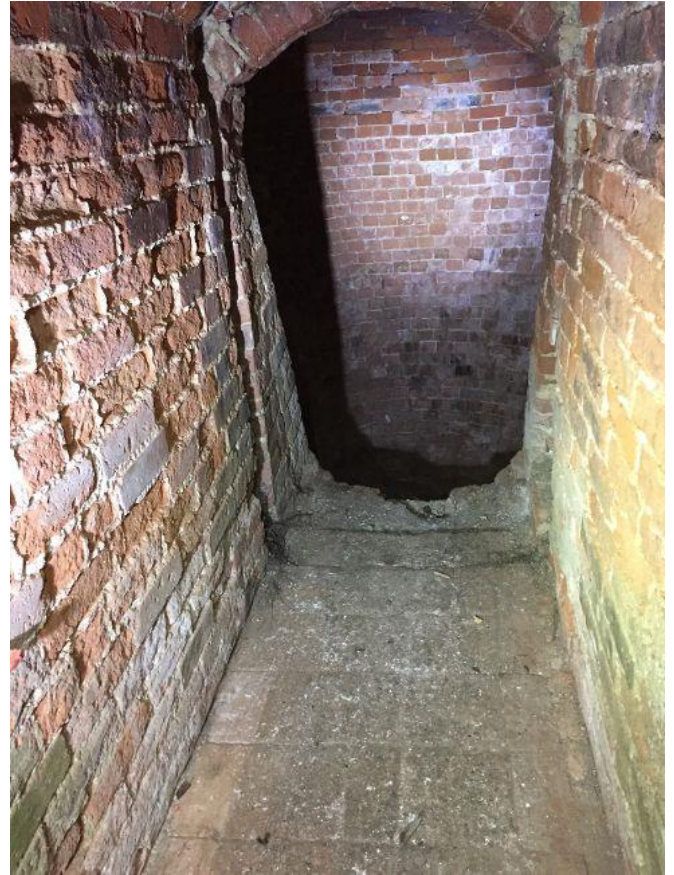


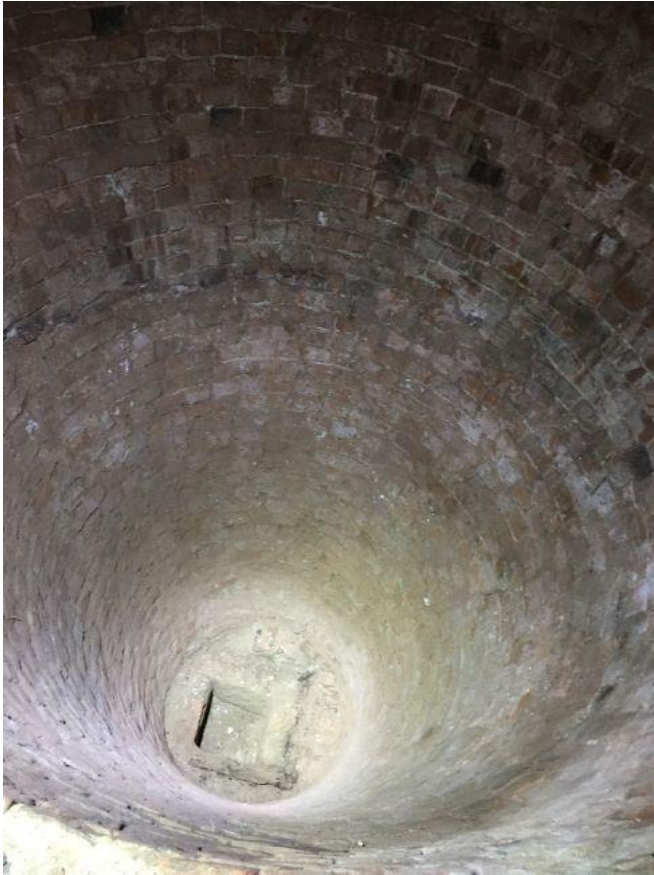
"the two Steve's behind a spoil heap of their own making"

Many more bottles and pots were uncovered including a complete old Lambeth pottery hot water bottle. Several skulls were also found which were identified as cats, some which appeared to have been shot in the head.



A third visit was planned with the same group and very soon, this time, the drain at the bottom appeared and we had another roost site ready for John and his bats. We started excavating at floor level and eventually hit the drain 10ft down, with 8ft above our heads it was nowhere near as small as we had expected when we started.





As this icehouse is not actually in Sheldwich it is being renamed the Two Steve's Icehouse after the colossal effort they put in on a cold wet winters afternoon - just look at that spoil heap.

Many thanks to all who helped, we couldn't have done it without you.

ARCHIVE MATERIAL

PETER BURGESS

MARCH 2019

In contrast to the scoop on "Langdon Hole", here are a few not so hot off the press accounts from the last century and earlier – Ed!

SNAP MINE - 1893

Sussex Agricultural Press, 22nd July, 1893

Tunbridge and District N.U.T. Association

The annual summer meeting of this association was held here [Wadhurst] on Saturday the 15th Juy. Special invitations were sent to teachers residing in the district to attend in order that the advantages of joining the union should be placed before them. Between 50 and 60 teachers were present on the occasion. The programme commenced with a cricket match with the Wadhurst Town Club, and an eleven under the captaincy of Mr. W.A. Diggins. In this match Mr. T. Harrowing gave a capital display of batting for 55 when he was unfortunately run out, he also bowled remarkably well taking eight wickets. The match resulted in a victory for the home eleven. Scores, W.C.C., 139; teachers, 103. A very pleasant feature of the outing was a visit paid to the Iron Mine in Snape Wood by nearly 40 of the party. It is well known that large quantities of Sussex iron ore were melted by means of the wood obtained from the Wealden Forests. The mine is in excellent preservation and has lately been made quite accessible. The party was conducted by G. Abott, Esq., of Tunbridge Wells,



who is well known for the interest he takes in matters of this kind and who gave some interesting information on the subject. A capital tea was provided in the infant school-room by Mr. Brooks, which was rendered the more enjoyable by the addition of a quantity of peaches, nectarines and grapes, &c., the present of A. Croft, Esq., of South Park. After tea the party was photographed and then an adjournment was made to the field near the school, where various games were indulged in. A very pleasant day was concluded by a brief meeting in the school-room when Mr. Passingham, the president of the association, gave a short address on the "Advantages accruing from membership of the N.U.T.". Several teachers gave in their names to Mr. Cope, the secretary. The promoters of the outing are to be congratulated on the admirable manner in which everything was carried out.

HOSEY COMMON - 1928

Kent And Sussex Courier, 2nd November, 1928

The sale of farm and land at Hosey Common, from the Kent and Sussex Courier, 2nd November 1928. Mentions a "stone quarry" - the mines?

**LADY WEARDALE'S FARM
FOR SALE.**

Lady Weardale's Westerham freehold, Frenchstreet Farm, 135 acres, will be offered in two lots, at the Mart, on November 6th, by Messrs. Curtis and Henson (Mount-street). The old oak and stone house and 122 acres, at Hosey Common, form the first lot, and there are 25 acres of woodland in it. The other lot consists of 12 acres, on which is a sandstone quarry. A correspondent says: "If repairs or new buildings are required it will not be forgotten that the Bricklayers' Union is represented at Westerham." Frenchstreet Farm is separated by Puddledock-lane from Mr. Winston Churchill's property.

CURTIS & HENSON.

BETWEEN CROCKHAM HILL & BRASTED.
A DELIGHTFUL OLD-WORLD FARM,
situated adjacent to Hosey Common, 500ft. up, with a Residence eminently suitable for conversion, known as

FRENCHSTREET FARM, WESTERHAM,
containing 2 Sitting Rooms, 6 Bedrooms, etc. Stone flagged Garden with Bridge and Pond, Orchards, Buildings, Three COTTAGES, Pasture, Arable and Woodlands, together with SANDSTONE QUARRY, in all

135 ACRES,
forming a Miniature Estate. Freehold.
Solicitors: Messrs. Rooke and Delacombe, Westerham.

FOR SALE by AUCTION on
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6th,
at THE LONDON AUCTION MART, Queen Victoria Street, E.C., at 2.30 p.m., by
MESSRS. CURTIS & HENSON, 5, Mount Street, London, W.1.

DENEHOLE AT CRAYFORD – 1935

The Sphere, September 7th, 1935

The description accompanying two photographs reads "A notable find in Kent: An ancient dene hole (underground chamber attributed to the Danes or other early Northern invaders) was brought to light recently on a housing estate in Crayford.

Many specimens of dene holes have been found in Kent at various time, but opinions are divided as to what they were originally used for. Some say they were dwellings and others that they were draw wells for the extraction of chalk for agricultural uses, but the most likely explanation is that they were storehouses for grain. In later times some of these tunnels were occupied by smugglers..."

I wonder if any of the people can be identified in the photographs after all these years?



...a member of the inspection party is seen being lowered down the 60 ft. shaft...



...three of the men at the bottom of the shaft where they discovered six rooms each about 20 ft. by 10 ft...

The same article contains some interesting photographs of Staffordshire cave dwellings...



UNKNOWN LOCATION - 1940

The Sphere, October 12th, 1940

This attached photo was published in "The Sphere" October 12th, 1940. Can anyone positively identify its location?



The description reads; "Villagers shelter in caves from air raids. A labyrinth of caves - soundproof, bombproof and perfectly ventilated - provide

shelter from night raiders for the people of a Kent village. The caves were formerly worked for sand used in brick-making. Hurricane lamps light the caverns; and on the soft sandy floor, men, women and children sleep in safety”.

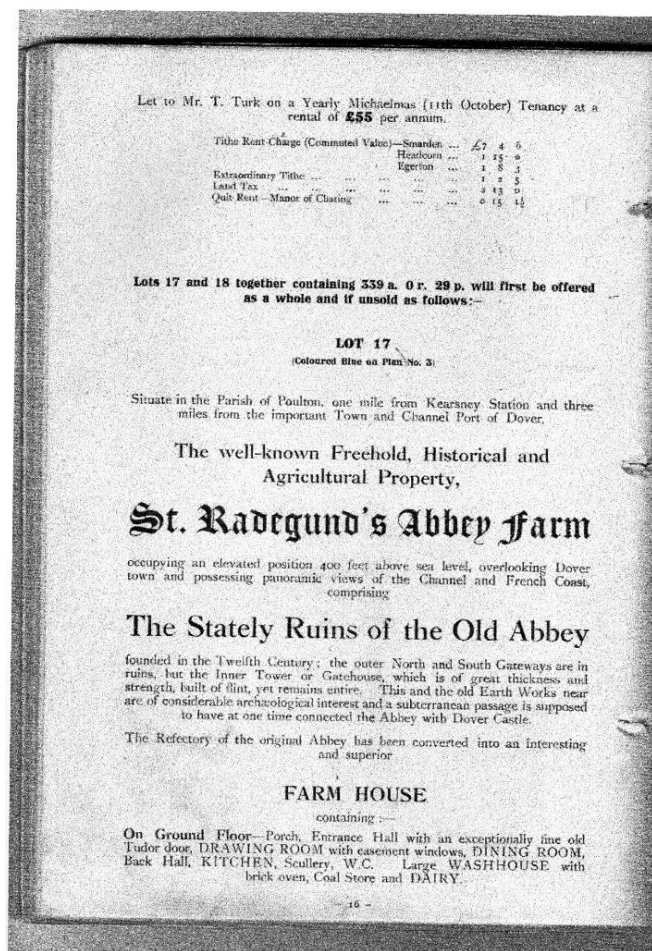
ST RADEGUND'S ABBEY FARM

PETE BURTON MARCH 2019

"and a subterranean tunnel is supposed to have at one time connected the Abbey with Dover Castle"...

Only three miles apart!!!!

Anyone seen it?



The history surrounding the origins of this abbey, including pictures of the initial building and its current state is documented at:

<https://doverhistorian.com/2013/09/14/st-radegunds-abbey/> - Ed.



USEFUL WEBSITES

The following links or sites have been sent in by readers, and provide an insightful picture of the underground scene!

The latest edition of International Mining News can be found on-line at: <https://im-mining.com> "International Mining is a global publication covering mining and minerals processing technology, methods, equipment and services" (im-mining.com, accessed on-line, 19th March 2019). Although a password is required to access the March newsletter, there are a wide range of articles that are not password protected, such as "Kazakhstans new mining code", "Ore-sorting" and "The value add in mining equipment finance and leasing".

Another local news article detailing some famous Kent tunnels, with potted history and photographs can be found at:

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/kents-tunnel-vision-197649/>

Featuring, Rochester's Short Brothers tunnels, Hollingbourne Zero station, Dover War tunnels, Folkestones Naval bunker, Ramsgate tunnels, Darenth Wood denehole, as well as a mention for the Margate Shell Grotto, an underground cell in Ashford and nuclear bunker in Pluckley.

A digger driver made a macabre discovery in Whitstable, Kent in January when his excavator struck black rubble bags full of human bones during drainage work. The bags were buried six feet underground and are believed to contain the remains of up to six people. More details at: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/digger-driver-uncovers-bones-up-13951873>

Plans to extend the London Underground Bakerloo line to reach Lewisham have received support from the Millwall football team – more details can be found at:

<http://www.eastlondonlines.co.uk/2019/03/ready-to-be-published-lewisham-step-up-campaign-for-bakerloo-line-extension/>

Lewisham Council has been working together with Southwark Council in efforts to secure the Bakerloo line extension, which was proposed in September 2018, due to start construction in 2023 and is hoped to be completed by 2029. The councils believe that the proposal will push plans to regenerate Old Kent Road with two new underground stations and a new stop at New Cross Gate, as well as extending the line to Ladywell, Catford, Lower Sydenham and on to its end station, Hayes in Bromley. The construction proposes to deliver 25 percent more capacity with potentially 36 trains running per hour instead of the initial line operating with just 22 trains per hour.

The two councils, Lewisham and Southwark, have also set up a webpage, backthebakerloo.org. The website aims to encourage people to pledge their support and explain their visions for the extension and its benefits.

Currently, funding for the scheme remains uncommitted.

TfL has set aside £19.6 billion for a total of six line extensions across its Underground, Overground and tram networks by 2038. In addition to the Bakerloo line extension, plans include extending the Northern line to Battersea, the Elizabeth line to Ebbsfleet, the DLR to Thamesmead, the London Trams network to Sutton and the Overground to Barking Riverside. More details can be found at:

<https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/tfl-sets-aside-20bn-for-six-line-extensions/10041205.article>

A scandalous report from Kenya regarding closure of an underground prison run by Somalia's intelligence agency in Nairobi to detain hundreds of extremist suspects and journalists can be found at:

<https://www.660citynews.com/2018/12/16/somalia-closes-underground-prison-amid-abuse-allegations/>

And just when you thought going underground might just help you escape the topic of Brexit...

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-6836321/Underground-bunker-MoD-no-deal-Brexit-command-centre.html>

The armed forces have re-instated the underground command centre last used by the MoD as a base for the London 2012 Olympic response. It will play a role in the contingency plans for the UK leaving the EU with 'no deal' as part of Operation Yellowhammer. The bunker will be used as the base for operations required to deal with requests for MoD support from other government departments, as well as directing troops.



OBITUARIES

Harry Pearman

16th July 1934 – 26th February 2019

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF UNDERGROUND MINES AND QUARRIES IN ENGLAND

John Barnatt, Historic England, Feb 2019, £30.00.
ISBN: 978-1-84802 -381 -9.

An introduction to the underground mining and quarrying heritage in England with photographs by Paul Deakin, and content which includes:

- descriptions of all known underground products and all important archaeological features with emphasis on particularly rare and important sites
- Extensive glossary contains explanation of mining terms

Or, as described by Emma, "The book covers both a review of all the raw materials exploited in mines and quarries in the past across England, and a review of all known types of underground archaeological evidence that exists underground. It is extensively illustrated, with many photographs by the late Paul Deakin".



Harry Pearman sadly passed away on the morning of 26th February aged 84. He had been battling Parkinson's for a number of years.

His great interest in underground matters began when he started caving with a Chelsea scout group in the early 1950s. He was a founder member of the Chelsea Speleological Society and produced the immensely useful and popular CSS Record series of publications. Many members of KURG, Wealden and Sub. Brit. were introduced to underground sites in the south east through these excellent journals.

Harry's National Service years were spent in the RAF in Air Traffic Control on an operational air field. In an interview with Angie for KURG newsletter 100 (April 2010) he recalled with his usual gentle humour:

"From 1952 to 1954 the Government felt that it had need of my services in the R.A.F. It was my job to prevent the Russians from invading East Anglia, for which I can claim some modest success".



The first in the CSS series was volume 3: ***Secret Tunnels in Surrey*** in 1963. (Volumes 1 and 2 were published by the short-lived London Speleological Group). He then turned his attention to Kent which is when Harry and I first met when he was gathering information for volume 4 which was dedicated to deneholes and similar excavations which was published in 1965.

Word soon got around that someone was gathering information on all types of underground features and Harry became the recipient of notes and articles on various sites from enthusiastic contributors from all over the south east and beyond.

The last one of the Records produced by Harry was vol. 36 ***Caves and Tunnels in S. E. England - Part 20*** (2012)

As well as the south east he continued to be involved in the wider caving community and was a leading member of the William Pengelly Caves Study Trust based in Buckfastleigh, Devon. All the background research papers and notes for the various CSS Records formed a part of the Trusts' library which Harry founded and housed at his home for many years until it was eventually moved to Buckfastleigh.

Famously, in the 1960s, he was involved in an excavation of a back-filled Roman well at Findon in West Sussex which lasted around eight years. An old airship winch was utilised and forced air ventilation had to be employed as the dig descended deeper down the 3ft diameter shaft. The project was finally abandoned after eight years when, at a depth of 210ft, the bottom had still not been reached, although some Roman artefacts had been recovered.

Harry worked in local government all his life starting in the old London County Council and for 14 years up to his retirement in 1994, was in charge of the London Borough of Bexley's Data Processing Department. This professional expertise enabled him to compile and maintain the electronic CSS / KURG data base of underground sites from 1990 onwards.

His contribution to the surveying, recording and publication of underground sites of all kinds was immense and this was recognised by him being given Honorary membership of various organisations including: CSS, Sub. Brit., William Pengelly Caves Trust, and of course KURG,

where he was a founder member and contributed widely in our Newsletters and Research Reports.

I have had the privilege of Harry's friendship for around 55 years. He was a quiet, amusing and gentle person, very generous and was always happy to share his vast knowledge. He was a very competent underground surveyor and working with him on numerous sites around the south east measuring and recording all manner of subterranean spaces was a great pleasure and will be fondly remembered.

His funeral was held at Eltham Crematorium on Friday 22nd March which was attended by many of his friends and colleagues from the underground community.

Rod LeGear



and reminders...



PRACTICE DATES

June – October 2019

South East Cave Rescue Organisation (SECRO) is a voluntary organisation tasked with providing cave rescue services to the South East of England. Contact Emma for more details if you are interested in attending the upcoming practice events (kurgsec@gmail.com). All welcome.

www.kurg.org.uk

Member: NAMHO and BCRA

16 June 2019 - Outdoor practice (location to be confirmed, but hopefully at a denehole in Kent)

28 July 2019 - Evening Pub session (probably at The Hatch, between Redhill and Reigate)

20 October 2019 - Indoor session Tunnel Road East, Reigate. (If the new shaft in Tunnel Road West is available, expect some SRT/Hauling practice.)

SERIAC 2019

April 13th, 2019

This year, the Kent Archaeological Society is hosting the South East Regional Industrial Archaeology Conference (SERIAC) at Dartford Grammar School on Saturday April 13th, with KURG members involved in both the organising and presentation. Topics to be covered include; Ragstone industry from Roman Times, Aircraft manufacture by Short Brothers at Rochester, Sound Mirror Experiments in the 1920s and 1930s, The excavation and recording of the Castle Hill brick and tile works alongside the A21 near Tonbridge, The history and investigation of a Linseed Oil Mill on the Medway, Rochester Bridge mechanism and construction Crossness Engines restoration.

Cost for pre-booked delegates will be £12. Cost on the day will be £15. A buffet lunch may be prebooked at a cost of £10. Further information and Booking Form can be accessed online (<https://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/sites/default/files/seriac2019.pdf>) or via Mike Clinch (mike@mikeclinch.co.uk).

LONDON UNDERGROUND STEAM 22nd & 23rd JUNE 2019

A commemorative steam service will be run between Ealing Broadway and High Street

Reg. No. 09340863¹⁴

Kensington to mark the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the District Line, London Underground and the final time that steam trains are expected to travel on the central London Underground network due to signalling modernisation on the Circle, District, Hammersmith and City and Metropolitan lines scheduled to start in 2021.

There are only six special steam powered train journeys planned, and tickets are expected to sell out fast. To find more details regarding the service, and purchase tickets if still available, visit the London Transport Museum's website. Prices are expected to be around £150 for a standard ticket.

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