

Founding of the School

In 1852 Canon Matthew Woodward, vicar of the church of St Mary and St Eanswythe wrote to Earl Radnor:

'Folkestone contains a population of nearly 6000 souls, a large proportion of which is of the Poorer Classes. The population has increased very rapidly during the last few years; but, it is to be regretted, the means of affording an Education to the Children of the Poor has not increased in proportion. There are no National Schools for Boys and Girls in which they can be trained up under the sheltering wing of the Church of England'

Canon Woodward goes on to describe how:

' the indescribable ignorance of many of the Young Men, who gladly attend an Adult Evening School, which I have opened to them gratis, very forcibly urges the necessity of more School accommodation for Folkestone'

It was thus, largely through the 'meritorious exertions' of Canon Woodard, who raised money by public subscription and persuaded the Earl of Radnor to grant a suitable site on what is now Dover Road, that St Mary's Higher Grade School was founded in 1854, in association with the National Society for Promoting Education. The National Society had been founded in 1812 and had begun to establish and coordinate elementary education across the country. This was many years in advance of the Act of Parliament which laid a statutory duty on local authorities to provide schools.

S. J Mackie in his 1859 'Handbook of Folkestone for Visitors', informed readers that the buildings were erected from designs by Messrs Messenger and Keeble at a cost of £2400.

H Stock described the building as

'a series of neat Gothic buildings of Kentish ragstone, with Caen stone mouldings and dressings, comprising spacious school rooms for boys, girls and infants with classrooms and residences for the master and mistresses. In the largest room two full services were held every Sunday by the Sanction of the Archbishop, 'for the children and the accommodation of persons resident in that locality.'

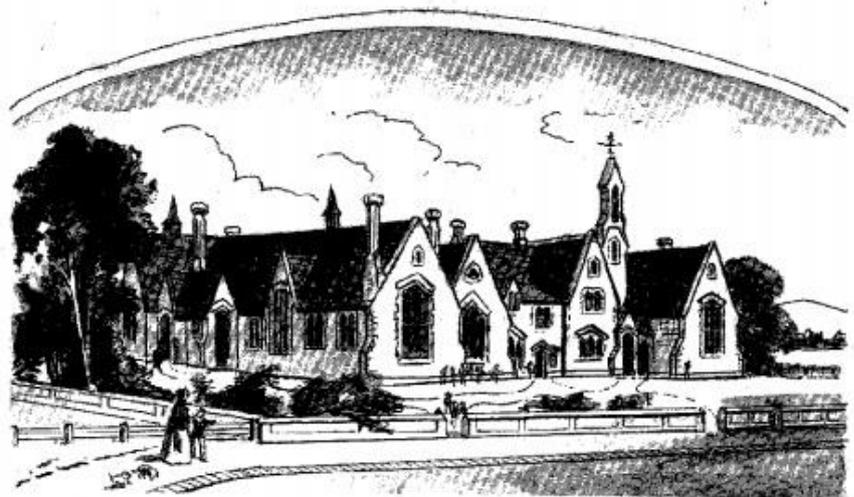
Until the Second World War, St Mary's functioned as three separate schools, Boys, Girls and Mixed Infants, each with its own Head Teacher. As a Higher Grade School St Mary's was regarded as being superior to the other local schools which were founded as Board schools. Children paid to attend St Mary's (in 1871 two pence a week for infants and sixpence a week for older children) whilst the Board schools were free.

St. Mary's Higher Grade Schools.

Originally there were 3 schools, each with its own Headteacher, all in the one building.

Girls' Dept:
buildings
at rear, on
this side ↘

Porch, →
Entrance to
Infants' Dept:
C.



St. Mary's School, Falkestone

From Architects Drawing 1854

↗
The street,
now called
Dover Road.
D.

↗ ↗
2 front gables,
Infants' Dept:
A.

↑
Tiny gabled
window etc.
Headmaster's
house. B.

↖
2 end gables
Boys' Dept

1870s and 1880s

Miss Grace Taylor who attended St Mary's in 1897 and whose father was a pupil in 1871 wrote the following account:

'My father was a pupil at St Mary's and two things he told me in reference to the school were the unwholesome conditions of the inadequate toilets and a verse the boys made up about their Headmaster Mr Ulliyett -

'Old daddy Ulliyett is a nice old man,

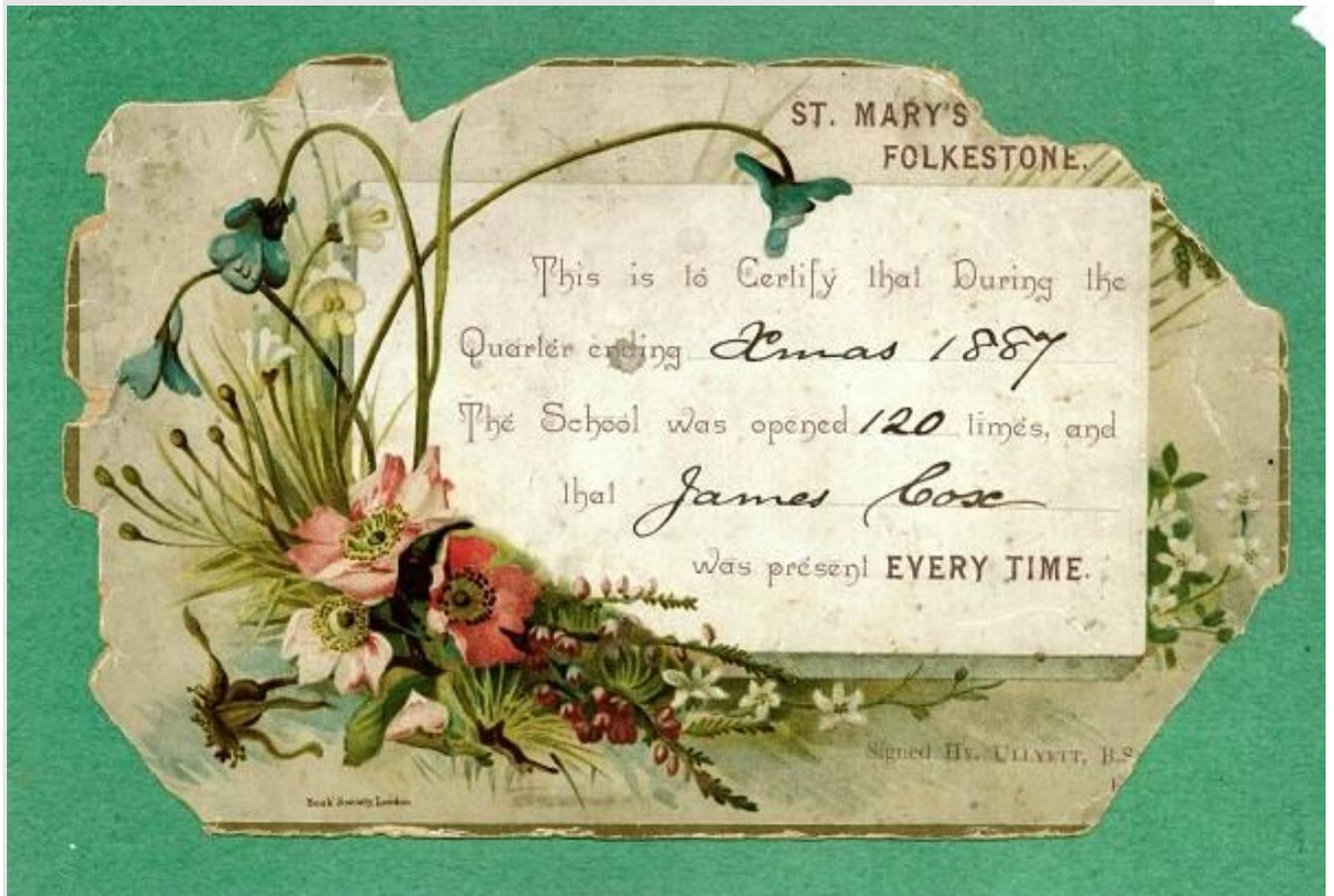
He tries to teach you all he can –

Reading, writing and arithmetic,

But he never forgets to give the stick'

Another early pupil remembers how the children 'swanked' about the fact that St Mary's was a Higher Grade School:

'We looked down on the 'Dover Road Dustbin Raiders' (the children at the Dover Road Board School situated at the lower end of Dover Road) who called us the 'St Mary's Monkey Show'.



Full attendance was encouraged then as it is today – here is a certificate presented to James Cox for full attendance in the quarter ending Christmas 1887

1890s

Four of the Makey children, Cissie, Elsie, Evelyn and Albert attended the school between 1890 and 1908. Here are some of their memories of the school:

'In this period there were 250 – 300 pupils. Fees were six pence per week or nine pence to include French and Drawing. The Headmistress always carried a cane and rather favoured the well-dressed children

School inspectors frequently came to inspect class rooms and facilities. Children were taught Scripture every day with the Prayer Book on two mornings a week and the Bible on Fridays. A hymn was sung every morning.

Slates and slate pencils were used every day except Fridays when there was a weekly examination and foolscap paper was provided.

Homework was only given in the 7th class and the X7th which contained pupils who had already completed a year in the 7th and in this class special lessons were given in bookkeeping etc.

There were only 15 minutes a day playtime a day at 10.45 a.m. There were no school lunches and no uniform except a badge.'





1900-1910

The rivalry with the Dover Road Board School continued into the new century. Children were now required to wear uniform and Kitty Ratcliffe reminisced:

'When the children used to go to Church complete in their uniform of gym slip, white blouse and white panama hat, as they passed the Dover Road School the pupils used to shout rude things at us.'

Kitty continues 'we learnt Latin and French and went once a week to the Woodward Hall for dancing.... We were not taught to write with letters joined up but did mostly printing.

We didn't have a mixed school except for the infants, the Big Boys had half the school nearest to the Post Office and there was a big wall separating the play grounds.

We used to go the Radnor Park on Empire day each year, having practiced the 'Salute to the Flag' in the playground. We enjoyed that!'

1915 – 1926

Mr H J Saunders recollected that during this period Arthur J Hall was Headmaster.

'Religious Education was held in the mornings after assembly when one hymn and one psalm were sung. The boys studied Reading, Writing and Arithmetic including Algebra and Geometry and French. After school boys took part in football and cricket and might go swimming every Friday after school at a cost of 6 d per week in the old swimming bath in the Lower Sandgate Road. St Mary's was the first school in Folkestone to teach with organized swimming classes. This eventually led to the founding of the old Folkestone Swimming Club by Mr Hall and Mr

Whewell. In addition to swimming, there were gardening classes and carpentry once a week for the Standard IV boys'



St Mary's School Swimming Club sports day October 1922



St Mary's School Swimming Club Summer 1922 Outside the old swimming baths in Lower Sandgate Road

Although life at school seems to have continued as normal through the Great War, children could not ignore its impact. Almost 65,000 Belgian refugees arrived in the town during the war and Folkestone was the main point of embarkation for the hundreds of thousands of troops including many Canadians leaving to fight in the French and Belgian trenches. The fathers of many pupils were killed in action and the school's roll of honour commemorates the many former pupils who died while serving their country.



Mr Saunders recalled the numerous outings on which children were taken while he was at the school. These included regular attendance at Folkestone Parish Church for Saints Days, Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day and All Saints Day.

Children continued to attend the annual ceremony of 'Saluting the Flag' held in Radnor Park with all Folkestone Schools. This was accompanied by a military band from Shorncliffe Camp in the morning. The afternoon was always considered a holiday.



Empire Day 1920

Mr Saunders wrote that

'St Mary's school had always organized regular coach outings round the countryside but in 1922 this was altered to a day trip to Boulogne on the SS Maid of Orleans to visit a French School where we sang 'the Marseillaise' in French, The school was above the town on a road to the British War Cemetery which we visited..... (This annual day trip to France was still taking places over 50 years later)



Members of St Mary's School staff at British war memorial Boulogne July 1923

In June the children visited the Canadian graves at Shorncliffe with other schools, taking flowers to put on the graves (a tradition that continues today). Members of the gardening class in 1924 received maple seeds from

Canada which they grew at Park Farm and the trees were eventually planted round the Canadian cemetery at Shorncliffe where they still grow today.

Mr Saunders also informs us that when Professor Ninbolt discovered the East Cliff Roman Ruins in 1925-26, he called for volunteers from St Mary's School to help with the digging and cleaning. Mr Saunders was one of the boys who helped with washing and cleaning the pottery pieces and bones.

1930s and 1940s

Life at St Mary's continued in much the same vein up until 1939. Children continued to celebrate Empire Day on 23rd May each year and to visit the Canadian war graves in June. An annual Prize Day was held each May at the Woodward institute and another highlight of the year was the Folkestone Schools' Sports day on Radnor Park also in May. Another regular event for the girls' school was the choosing and crowning of a May Queen, followed by the performing of country dances around a maypole. Similar May Day celebrations were still taking place in the 1960s.



Empire Day Parade Radnor Park late 1930s



May queen celebrations in the 1930s

The school also put on regular theatrical performances often with elaborate costumes. These were much enjoyed by pupils and their parents.



Infant school concert 1929 – dresses were made of paper by Miss Harrison



Standard IV theatrical production 1937. Play director Miss Plumb



Late 1930s production

In the 1930s, before free secondary education was generally available, children would often continue at the school until the age of 13 or 14.

In 1931 an HMI visit noted that

'although there is no Parents' Association yet, the parents take a very keen interest in school matters and help teachers by providing a school uniform, by encouraging homework and by supporting them in many out of school activities'

The infant school log for 1931, notes that on September 7th

'the school reopened after five weeks holiday - the building has been redecorated throughout in buff and chocolate and is looking very well'.

The three schools continued to provide pupils with a range of educational visits - On September 30th 1933 fifty one girls of Standard 1 & 11 were taken to London by six members of staff to visit the Houses of Parliament, and in 1934 36 girls and 6 teachers went to Hampton Court. On 6th June 1935 the girls' school closed for an educational visit to Southampton Docks. In July 1931 the boys visited the South Kensington Museum, Westminster Abbey and the Zoological gardens. In 1934 on November 6th the boys' school log notes that the school closed to mark the occasion of fifty years of Service as a member of the Town Council by Mr Alderman G Spurgen Chairman of the Folkestone Education Committee.

The boys' school log book notes proudly that on May 3rd 1933

'the boys' football team was successful in winning the Chadwick Cup beating their opponents Morehall Council School by 2 goals to 1.'

The schools' log books record that from 12-19th May 1937 the three schools (Infants, Boys and Girls) closed for the Coronation of George VI and Queen Elizabeth and the Whitsuntide holiday and the infant children were provided with a bus drive, tea and visit to the Cinema as their share in the Coronation celebrations. On 11th May, the older boys received beakers presented by his Worship the Mayor in honour of the Coronation and on June 4th 1937 the St Mary's Old Boys Association presented to the boys' school a framed photograph of His Majesty the King to commemorate his coronation.

In June 1939 the boys and girls schools were closed all day for an idyllic excursion to Windsor and then down the river to Hampton Court.

However, in September war was declared. The schools' logs note 'The school reopened under emergency conditions. Two weeks extra closure for war have been necessary. Folkestone Schools are attending for morning sessions only'. The log records that on 28th September 'the Ballamore Road Junior Boys' School from Downham Estate (near Catford in South East London), an evacuated school, begun to use the buildings. On 30th October 'air raid warning sounded at 9.15 a.m. and 'All Clear about 9.20. Four boys did not return to school after the all clear sounded.

On a somewhat lighter note the school was closed from February 13th 1940 to February 19th 1940 'on account of the unsatisfactory state of the lavatories that are frozen'

Nevertheless as the political situation worsened, it became obvious that France would fall to the Germans and Folkestone would be in the front line of an expected invasion attempt. It was therefore decided to evacuate the school and on June 2nd there was a general evacuation with the Deputy Head Teacher to Monmouthshire in Wales where the children were distributed amongst the villages and attended school there full time. His Worship the Mayor of Folkestone visited the evacuees in Wales on 28th November 1940.

The 1944 Education Act made primary and secondary schooling free for all pupils and the school reopened on 16th April 1945 as a Church of England Primary school voluntary aided by KCC and catering for boys and girls below the age of 12.

The school continued to celebrate all the important Christian festivals and to visit the Canadian war graves each year. A highlight of these post war years was also the annual visit to Clough's farm near Denton where children could experience life in the country.



On the way to Mr Clough's wood at Denton 1948

The move to the East Cliff

The original buildings were modified and extended in 1911 and 1962 but in the 1970s it was decided that the buildings should be replaced and the infant department was rehoused in a new building on the current 4.2 acre site on the East Cliff in 1976. The site had originally been a sanatorium, founded in 1871 for infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, measles and scarlet fever. It was known as 'Mary Magdalene Home for Children' but expanded during the First World War to accommodate recovering soldiers. The building had been damaged badly by a bomb in 1940. It had passed to the police department before being demolished in 1967. In 1980 the government agreed to allow the erection of the junior building on the new site and the junior department moved in September 1982.



Children visit the new site to see progress with the building of the new school

The Head Master who presided over the move to the new premises was Arthur Pendlebury-Green. Thanks to his exertions, the new building was opened by the Queen Mother whose visit to the school caused much excitement.



CLARENCE HOUSE

S.W. 1

14th June, 1982

Dear Headmaster.

Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother has bidden me write to let you know how much Her Majesty enjoyed visiting St. Mary's School at Folkestone.

Queen Elizabeth was particularly impressed by the design and layout of your new buildings, and it indeed gave the Lord Warden great pleasure to meet so many of your students and members of staff.

The Queen Mother was delighted by the warmth of the reception she received on arrival at the school, and was very touched by the kind thought of so many young people in wishing to present Her Majesty with so many flowers and other gifts.

It was a very happy day, and one which Queen Elizabeth will long remember.

*Sincerely,
A. Pendlebury-Green*

Comptroller to
Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother

A. Pendlebury-Green, Esq.,
Headmaster.

Letter received by the school from Clarence House regarding Queen Mother's visit to the school.

On Ascension day 12th May 1983 the building was dedicated by Robert A K Runcie Archbishop of Canterbury in a carefully orchestrated and highly memorable day for all concerned.

A pupil wrote the following charming account of the great day:

'The 12th May was a very special day for St Mary's School. It was the official opening for St Mary's new building. It was to be a particularly busy day for the archbishop. To begin the day we went to church and the service was

taken by the archbishop himself. He wore a mitre which is a sort of hat and a cassock which is a sort of dress and a kind of scarf called a stole. But he pointed out that even though he wore these clothes he was really just an ordinary man. As it was Ascension day, we talked mostly about what happened on Ascension day 1983 years ago. Afternoon came and the archbishop came to the opening ceremony. I found that, by now, the archbishop looked tired and ill looking and not the bouncing lad we usually see him as. I also found he was taller than I had thought and looked middle aged. He had a good sense of humour. He didn't act as though he was a man of authority but came down a pe to our standard. You could see that he enjoyed a good laugh and he took an interest in the work he saw in the classrooms as he came round the school. It was a very enjoyable day and it proved to me above all else that Robert Runcie, the archbishop of Canterbury, is a good man.'



The Headmaster, Staff and Pupils of
St. Mary's C.E. Primary School
are pleased to welcome



to a performance of
'ELIZA'
in the Hall of the Junior Building,
Warren Road Folkestone.
Friday 15th. July 1988 at 7.30 p.m.
Please produce this card at the door

One of the most memorable theatrical productions to take place on the new site was the school's presentation of Eliza.

In 2001 a KCC Nursery building was added to the site and in 2011 our new link block was completed. This has provided additional classrooms space and offices and has linked the three buildings very effectively. The new building was formally opened by the Bishop of Dover in 2011.

Conversion to an Academy

On 1st February 2013 the school became an Academy. This presents an opportunity for St Mary's to adapt, in order to provide an education that will better equip our children to thrive in the 21st century, whilst preserving the Christian values that have formed the bedrock of our school since its foundation.

Information on St Mary Magdalene's Home for Children

Most of the information below has come from three people:

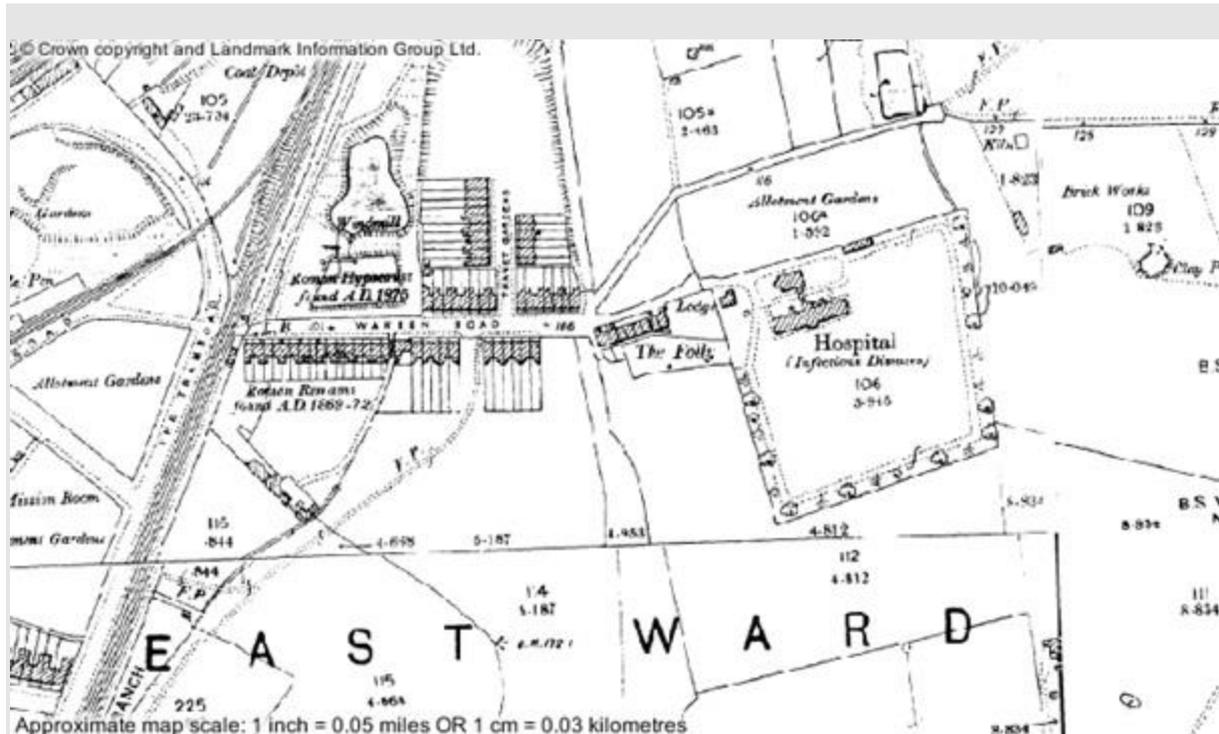
- Alan Taylor (altayl439@aol.com), who is part of Folkestone and District Local History Society.
- Christine Warren (christinewarren@mts.net) who runs the Folkestone Then & Now website.
- Michael Roche (michael.roche1@btinternet.com) who was a volunteer of the A Town Unearthed project.

They all live, or have lived, locally and are a gold mine for local history. I'm sure they would be more than happy to help with any questions or provide any information on Folkestone if you needed it for other class based work

It appears there is not much information out there on the Sanatorium which is a shame. Alan sent me some photos of the East Cliff Sanatorium which I shall use below but as yet I cannot find any of the inside. My own Grandparents spent time in Sanatorium's as children in the 1930s so I have drawn on their experiences to fill some of the gaps.

Sanatorium's were run like hospitals and provided a clean, sterile environment with professional care for those who were suffering from long term illnesses or infectious diseases. Houses at the time were not subjected to the cleaning products we know and love today, and food could be scarce or unaffordable making balanced healthy diets unobtainable for most households. Fresh air was believed to have multiple health benefits for chest diseases, and I suppose if you lived in an urban centre before the Clean Air Acts of the 1950s it would have helped, so most activities would take place outside or the windows would be left open all year round, whatever the weather. In the Sanatorium the patient was well fed (probably better fed than they would have been at home), children went to school in the compound (often outdoors to maximise the intake of fresh air), they were taken on walks to benefit from the fresh air, and the whole experience was generally pleasant. In Folkestone the council decided to erect the East Cliff Sanatorium on 18th February 1871. At the time it was believed that many infectious diseases and medical conditions could be cured or improved by 'taking in the sea air' or going sea bathing. Folkestone was one of the more popular sea side resorts, and remained so until the popularisation of air travel and cheap holidays abroad, and had many hospitals, sanatoriums, and medical clinics where people could get better and enjoy themselves at the same time!

A map dated 1897-1900 shows the hospital at the end of Warren Road. All of the maps are taken from KCC's HER (Historic and Environment Record) at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/ExploringKentsPast/>. It's simple to use, just pop your place of interest – in this case I entered 'Warren Road' and then selected 'Folkestone' off the Parish drop down box. It lists the sites in the area and there is an option to view the results on a map which I find so much easier to use! Once you are in your map there is a drop down box beneath the map on the bottom right called 'Historic Map' and you can pick which one you want! It'll bring the historical OS map up and you can play around with that.



You'll also notice to the right of the map, near the train tracks, they have written that Roman remains have been found! These are now completely covered by roads and houses but we believe they may be associated with the Villa (I will do a post on the Villa site in the next few weeks). Kelly's Directory in 1913 (like our modern day Yellow Pages) states...

'...The Sanatorium for Infectious Diseases (smallpox excepted), erected in 1877, at a cost of about £2000, on the East Cliff, contains 10 wards, with 41 beds and 16 cots and detached offices. New wards for typhoid and diphtheria, administrative blocks, and a mortuary and laundry were erected in 1898 at a cost exceeding £6000, and 12 additional beds provided. There is also a small pox hospital, built under the hills about a mile from the town and containing 12 beds...'

...so there was enough demand for the facility to expand the site in 1898. At this point I would imagine that the hospital was staffed by nuns but there is no official evidence for that. I don't have any photos for the early phase of the Hospital so we'll move to the next map which is dated 1907-1923.



You can see the houses beginning to creep towards the Sanatorium as the town expands towards the sea. We have some photos from this period, and these are explained below. At this time it was often referred to as The St Mary Magdalene Home for Children. St Bernardo's Children's Home was on Wear Bay Crescent not far from this site.



This is the site in 1915 during the construction of new military wings of the Sanatorium. I believe that it is Martello Tower 2 in the background, now a holiday let. During the First World War Folkestone, along with Dover,

played a huge part as they are very close to the French coast; so close that people in the town could hear and see bombs going off in France! Folkestone was the main port that shipped troops out to the frontline, Step Short (<http://www.stepshort.co.uk/>) are a local society set up to honour and remember these people, and for more information do look at their website. In 1917 Folkestone was subjected to one of the first German aeroplane bombings when bad weather forced the planes, which were heading to London, to turn back and they dropped the bombs over the town; one landed in the middle of a busy street killing many women and children who had been queuing for groceries, and amongst others one was dropped on the East Cliff area by Martello Tower 3. Although the Sanatorium didn't suffer a direct hit the blast from the bomb by Martello 3 was enough to blow the windows out of the buildings.

Folkestone became a place for injured soldiers to recover. It had a large number of hospitals and sanatoriums which were easily adapted or expanded to accommodate the patients and our sanatorium was no exception. The Sanatorium my Grandfather was a patient in was adapted in the same way, although when they began to take in soldiers they stopped taking other patients, and when the soldiers left the building was closed as a hospital. Here is another photo of the military blocks going up, the buildings in the background are along Wear Bay Crescent and still exist today!



So we leave the First World War behind and move onto the Second World War. Here's another map dated 1929-1952. The Sanatorium is now almost completely surrounded by houses and the development continued along the East Cliff until quite recently. During the War the buildings were directly hit by a bomb in July 1940, I don't know whether anyone was hurt in the incident but air raid shelters and other prevention methods were in place so I'd like to hope not.



The Sanatorium looked like this.....



...and as you may notice is called The Borough Sanatorium. I'm not sure why they changed the name, it may have something to do with the military using it, maybe it didn't accept children once they had moved in, or perhaps the local authority purchased the hospital. The large building in the middle of the photo, facing towards us, is the original Victorian block. The brick building to the right, that looks like a house, is probably part of the administrative buildings added in 1898, and the two nearest us are likely to be the military blocks added in 1915. I am reliably informed by Mike that 'The Borough Weather Station' was moved to The Lees as he used to use it in the late 1950s as a young lad. One final picture from this period is below.



It shows the nurses being given gas mask training in 1938 by H. W. Gill.

My final photo comes from the 1950s. You can see the houses creeping along the road, in less than 20 years all the allotment gardens had been built over.



You can see they have removed the military blocks. Many were pre-fabricated structures only intended to be temporary so their removal is not surprising. All the gardens and allotments covering the area would have been remnants of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign to combat the food shortage brought about by not being able to import much food from abroad. Rationing did not finally stop until 1954.

The Sanatorium was demolished in the late 1960s. The World Wars had advanced medical science and the advent of antibiotics and inoculations made many of the diseases that had affected the patients treatable, or non-existent in some cases! Many Sanatoriums became redundant and were either turned into medical wards, residential properties, or demolished altogether.