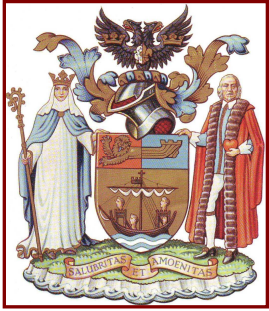# History of the Town of Folkestone

It is impossible to say when people first settled in or around Folkestone. The area still has some of the natural landscape through which our ancestors of 70,000 years ago roamed. People fished, hunted wild animals and collected fruit, nuts and shellfish from the chalk Downs and seashore. Using flints found in the chalk cliffs they made sharp tools for hunting, butchering and turning hides, wood and rushes into clothes, containers and shelters. Since then, the area has witnessed the lives of many people, including Bronze, Iron Age and Roman settlers; medieval farmers, smugglers and fishermen, soldiers and sailors defending the coast against Napoleon Bonaparte, the country's enemies of two world wars and, more happily, holidaymakers from the days of Queen Victoria to the present.

The origin of the name "Folkestone" has invited much discussion over the years – there is a suggestion that it comes from Folca's stone, a rock marking the meeting place of local people, although who Folca was and where his stone was remain mysteries. Even the spelling of the name was not resolved until a 19th century lord of the manor insisted on Folkestone being spelt as it is now.

The departure of the Romans towards the end of the 4th century AD and the advent of the Anglo-Saxon invasions brought Saxon and Jutish peoples to this part of England. St Eanswythe, daughter of King Eadbald of Kent, founded a nunnery on the cliff top of Folkestone in AD 630 and she is remembered for her gifts of food to the poor.

At the time of the Doomsday survey in 1086, Folkestone's population comprised of 209 villagers and 83 smallholders. It was not until 1205 that Folkestone was granted the right to hold a market every Thursday, this being confirmed in a Charter of 1215 – Folkestone was beginning to enjoy the status of a small town – the community's fishing and farming industries together with its quarrying trade, added to it economy.

In 1313, King Edward II granted the Town a Charter of Incorporation, by which it could elect a Mayor, bailiff and 12 jurats. It was about this time that Folkestone jointed the Cinque Ports as a "corporate limb" of Dover.

The Tudor Period saw Folkestone with a population of about 500. In 1545, towards the end of Henry VIII's reign, 24 councillors were added to the Corporation of Folkestone. The Mayor was elected every year on 8 September at the cross in Folkestone Parish Churchyard. On 1 April 1578, during the reign of Elizabeth I, William Harvey, Folkestone's most famous son, was born. He studied medicine and lectured on topics concerning the circulation of the blood.

The 18th and early 19th centuries brought a growth in smuggling, in the town and increasingly, wines, tobacco, silks and general luxury items were smuggled from the Continent. Law enforcement officers, stationed along the coast, made little impression on the local population, most of whom were in the smuggler's confidence.

Modern Folkestone is a product of the Victorian age. The coming of the railway in 1843, the development of the harbour and the Earl of Radnor's decision to create a superior resort in the middle years of that century, were the factors that made the town of today, with fine buildings, attractive parks and gardens and a seafront varied in character. Folkestone became a busy channel port, with a passenger and freight service operating to Boulogne.

Modern industrial and commercial developments have broadened Folkestone's economic base and the town now has within its bounds the entrance to the Channel Tunnel, a rail/road link to the Continent.

As a result of its position on the main communications corridor between the United Kingdom and continental Europe, Folkestone is set to experience a future as long and as significant as its past.