

Medieval Folkestone

Text for Lecture given 12 August 2010 at University Centre, Folkestone for the HLF project, Folkestone : A Town Unearthed

I've been asked this evening to give a short talk on Medieval Folkestone, providing a review of the history and development of the town and port from the early medieval period through to the close of the Middle Ages, that is from the seventh through to the end of the fifteenth century. From the outset it is important to realize that there are few surviving local historical documentary sources and the archaeological evidence is equally scanty. Nevertheless there is sufficient to present a broad outline and interpretation.

Folkestone is first recorded as a distinctly named place – *Folcanstan* - in about 700 (696/716). The place-name contains two distinct elements, *Folc* and *stan*. The first element may be either a personal name – *Folc* personal names are common in medieval place-names in Kent - or refer to *folca* – folk, people - giving the meaning - the people's stone – the location being an important central place that later became the hundred meeting-place. Place-names of this type though do not suddenly come into existence, but can go through long periods of development and adoption, so it can be assumed that Folcanstan was named and known at an earlier date.

The reference to *Folcanstan* in 700 occurs in a charter from Whitred, king of Kent confirming the privileges of the Kentish churches and monasteries and on which the abbess of Folkestone appears as a signatory. From an early date there has been an association of Eanswythe with Folkestone. The earliest reference for this occurs in the mid eleventh century Kentish Royal Legend, part of the compilations making up the Life of St Mildreth, which records that Eanswythe was the daughter of Eadbald, king of Kent and that he founded a nunnery for her at Folkestone where she was buried. Besides this we know nothing else about Eanswythe. Other traditions concerning her are derived from later medieval hagiographies – sacred biography or lives of Christian saints - and chroniclers, such as John Capgrave (1393-1464), William Thorne, a monk at the Abbey of St Augustine, Canterbury (fl. 1397) and Gervase of Canterbury (d. 1210), and can be safely set aside as stories embellishing the lives and confirming the sanctity of Eanswythe.

Nevertheless the association of Eanswythe with Folkestone can be accepted. There is no foundation charter for the monastery at Folkestone and it could in fact have been established at any time during her life and probably then dates from the second half of the seventh century, sometime after 650. Even so it can be classed as one of the earliest monastic institutions founded in Kent. Understanding the context in which the monastery at Folkestone was established is important. It was founded during the Conversion Period, following the re-introduction of Christianity to England by St Augustine in 597, at a time when there were close connections between Kent and Merovingian Gaul where religious houses of this type were already well established. It was also founded with a royal guarantor, her father Eadbald (d. 640). Royal patronage of female monasticism at this time was a complex blend of religious, political, social and economic issues.

Entry into the religious life was one of the gendered roles for women in the nexus of the royal kin-groups of early Anglo-Saxon England, in this context the family of Eadbald and his son Earconberht, and, whilst the religious role may have been the principal and more significant one for Eanswythe, safeguarding sections of the royal domain against the depredations of rival, and often related, dynasties formed an important reason for the foundation of such a monastery, especially when there must have been a considerable investment of resources in establishing and maintaining it. Folkestone then was a monastic aristocratic institution with an attached congregation of secular clerics, an arrangement which has given rise to the modern term of double minsters.

As we have seen, by 700 Folkestone was described as a *monasterium*. There is no evidence for the monastery during the eighth century, but it seems likely that the community of clerks settled at Folkestone developed independently of the monastic body so that by the early ninth century it was well established, being endowed with property of its own. In the will of the reeve Abba dated 833/839 the sum of 50 pence severally was bequeathed to the community at Folkestone suggesting secularity. The will also directed that Abba was to be buried at Folkestone and bequeathed 10 oxen, 10 cows, 100 ewes and 100 swine, with an additional annual bequest from his lands of 6 ambers [? weight] of oats, 3 weys [weight 224 pounds] of bacon and cheese, 400 loaves, 1 ox and 6 sheep to the minster there.

Much the same can be deduced from an account dating from 844 recounting the settlement at Canterbury by Archbishop Coelnoth of a dispute concerning estates belonging to one Oswulf, bequeathed by him to the church and then held by the monasteries at Christ Church, Canterbury, Folkestone, Dover and Lyminge. The estates were claimed by a certain Aethelwulf, but the claims of the minsters were upheld. The language used by Coelnoth in the charter '*et familiam aet Folcanstane*' is precisely applicable to the existence at Folkestone of a community of secular clerks, '*familia*' established by the archbishop. The same charter also shows clearly that the divisions of property between secular priests and those under monastic observance, however lax, occurred contemporaneously with the separate endowment of baptismal churches in the diocese of Canterbury, the charter including amongst its witnesses nine priests whose names occur among the '*familiae aet Folcanstane*' and also at Dover and Lyminge. By this date priests were serving a large compact parochia of unknown extent, but which can be roughly equated, though in an altered form, with those recorded in the later Domesday Monachorum, a document which will be referred to later.

It has been supposed that in the later ninth century Folkestone minster, like others, became untenable under the threat of Danish seaborne raids. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that Minster-in-Sheppey was attacked as early as 835 by the Danes who, in 851, stormed Canterbury. Although no direct evidence exists for the fate of Folkestone, it is perhaps reasonable to assume a similar situation there. This has been based largely on a charter, a grant by King Athelstan, apparently dating to 927, that gave to Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, land at Folkestone '*uniquondam fuit monasterium et abbatia sanctarum virginum ubi etiam sepulta est sancta Eanswida*' – where there was once a monastery and where St Eanswida was buried - adding that the place had been destroyed by '*pagani*'. The charter also records that Athelstan's gift was made in order that the monastery should be restored.

The charter however does not survive as a single sheet original document, but as a copy amongst the archives of Christ Church, Canterbury, and in its formulae is not an authentic copy and borders on being a forgery, perhaps compiled to secure the estate at Folkestone for Christ Church, Canterbury. In the eight surviving charters of the ninth and tenth centuries referring to Folkestone there is no mention of an abbess and more significantly the restoration was probably part of the same process of separating the monastic community from the clerics serving the parochial system of ecclesiastical organization. Again, in a document dated between 1016-1020 there is a reference to a priest at Folkestone, whilst two charters of Cnut, one undated, re-emphasize the connection with Canterbury. The first is a grant of land at Folkestone to Christ Church, Canterbury after the death of Eadsige, the king's priest. The second dated 1038 also concerns the grant of land at Folkestone to Christ Church, Canterbury. Finally, another charter of confirmation dated 1042, from Edward the Confessor, also concerns the granting of land at Folkestone and elsewhere to Christ Church, Canterbury.

The late tenth and eleventh centuries also saw changes in the growth of the number of parish churches, deriving their income from private endowments and from the various dues whose payment was enforced by law such as plough-arms [13th day after the Ascension], tithe, church-scot [St Martin 11 November] and burial fees. The growth was a slow and gradual process and due largely to private benefactions so that by the eleventh century a considerable number still remained in private ownership. In the Folkestone area this process is best exemplified by the case of the Church of St Martin, Cheriton and to some extent by the Church of St Oswald, Paddlesworth. This private benefaction of proprietary churches was part of the process of the development of the parochial system, with parish boundaries being well established within the landscape by the end of the tenth century.

Evidence for the mid eleventh century ecclesiastical organization of Folkestone is set out in the Domesday Monachorum, a survey compiled by Christ Church Canterbury in 1100 of the ecclesiastical organization of Kent, both before and after the Norman conquest. It records some 365 churches across Kent, a large number of which must have been in existence in the late Saxon period. The survey records Folkestone as the head-church, a minster, of a large parochia with subordinate churches and chapels located at ten other places, including Hawkinge, Cheriton, Hougham and Alkham. The organization is perhaps reminiscent of a much earlier system, perhaps reflecting the original extent of the endowment that must have gone along with the foundation of the monastery at Folkestone in the later seventh century, and out of which were later carved the medieval parishes of the area, served by the community of priests known to have been based at Folkestone. The Domesday Monachorum, providing a link with the Norman period, is the last source of evidence for the Anglo-Saxon church and monastic community at Folkestone.

In the late tenth century the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records how, in 933, Anlaf (the Norwegian Olaf Trygvason) came '*with 93 ships to Folkestone and harried outside*'. Again, in 1052, the Chronicle records the account of Earl Godwine and his son Harold, their depredations along the southern seaboard of Kent and the seizing of hostages and any ships found serviceable at Romney, Hythe, Folkestone, Dover and Sandwich. The account of Earl Godwine's depredations and the varying values later given for Folkestone in Domesday Book have been cited to suggest the final destruction of the minster at Folkestone.

It is unlikely however that Godwine would have devastated, even in part, his own earldom and the Chronicle in the same entry records how he had already won over the support of the people of Kent.

Whatever the outcome of these events, Folkestone appears to have weathered the Danish attacks, surviving as a centre of ecclesiastical life, but perhaps with its endowment diminished and the parochia altered and shrunken into the form listed in the Domesday Monachorum. Moreover, the late Saxon charters of Cnut and Edward the Confessor clearly indicate the continued presence of the church at Folkestone following the Danish raids of the mid to late tenth century. What form this took, apart from the development of proprietary churches as centres of parochial life, is difficult to assess and it is uncertain whether Folkestone remained as a monastic community in the tenth and eleventh centuries. At best the charters emphasize the close links by then established with Canterbury and it is probable that Christ Church enjoyed the revenues from Folkestone during the late Saxon period.

Having charted the foundation and development of the monastic community and church what do we know of the remainder of Folkestone during the Anglo-Saxon period? The answer is very little. For the late sixth and early seventh century we have the evidence of a small sample of the local population from a group of inhumation burials found on Dover Hill. A total of 49 graves were excavated there between 1889 and 1910. Arranged in rows they formed the south-western section of what must have been an extensive cemetery that extended across the southern slope of the Downs. Other burials are recorded as having been found in 1819 and further finds were made in the 1840s and 1850s, but the original extent, layout and size and periods of use of the cemetery has not been established. Finds accompanying the burials, which were orientated north-west with feet to the south-east, include spearheads predominantly dated to the late sixth to early seventh century as is a gilded silver disc brooch set with red garnets, but there was also a vessel known as a Frankish bottle-vase from one grave that dates as late as the mid seventh century. Another one of these vases was recovered from a burial mound close by Castle Hill in 1848. Other finds have been recovered from the top of the Downs at Martello Dairy Farm comprising a disc brooch and beads of late sixth century date. How closely can this cemetery be associated with Folkestone? It is possible it was sited atop and on the southern slopes of the Downs on edge of a known territory, but the presence of earlier prehistoric burial mounds in this area, which would have been highly visible in the landscape in this period, would have been an important consideration, with burial being located in what would have been considered to be an area of established burial. The dates of the burials from the late sixth through to the mid seventh century span the Conversion Period and represent the final phase of non-Christian burial. Thereafter burial probably occurred in closer association with the monastery and churches at Folkestone and the other chapels and churches in the district.

There is no evidence surviving of the form and layout of the early monastery at Folkestone. It can be assumed to have comprised a small single-cell church, perhaps with an apse at the eastern end with side chapels added later, along with a range of domestic buildings. It has also been assumed that it was sited on the West Cliff in the area of what later became known as the Bayle and the topography, an isolated headland overlooking the sea, suggests this was an ideal location to site an early monastic community.

There is also the evidence of the presence of later churches on the headland, and it was also the area chosen for the foundation of the later medieval priory. There may also have been some form of adoptive use of ruinous Roman buildings on the headland.

What remained of the monastery, if anything survived of the fabric of the original buildings at all, was possibly seen by early antiquarians between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In the mid sixteenth century John Leland noted that *'yn the walls whereof yn divers places apere a great and long Briton brikes'* and William Lambarde observed *'some broken walles, in which are seen great bricks (the markes of Bryttish building)'* Later, in 1722, William Stukeley saw *'two pieces of old wall'*, on the edge of the cliff, *'seemingly of Roman work'*. Stukeley's observations are important, as he was hesitant about the supposed Roman date of the ruins he saw. Much later, in about 1790, Edward Hasted observed *'a small part of the foundations, with an arch in the wall of it, about three feet from the ground, which is turned with Roman or British bricks (of which there are several among the ruined foundations)'*. The evidence as a whole would seem to point towards a late date for the buildings described. There is also the evidence of the sites of two churches indicated on a 1698 map of the Radnor Folkestone Estate denoted as *'ruins of a church'*, one of a pair so described, on the cliff edge of the Bayle. These ruins, visible and extant from the mid sixteenth century probably relate to the later ninth and tenth century minster churches or perhaps the first Benedictine Priory founded within the Bayle in 1095. In either case the survival of these buildings suggests that erosion of the headland has not been so severe as to suggest that all trace of the early Anglo-Saxon monastery has been lost. Recent excavations on the edge of the Bayle at Henwood in 2006-7 has provided more evidence of the Anglo-Saxon occupation of this area. The evidence consists of a series of inter-cutting refuse pits, some backfilled in the mid-late Saxon period during the ninth and tenth century, others backfilled in the early Norman period, between 1075-1125. One pit contained a clay mould used for the production of small items of decorative metalwork. Stylistically this can be dated to the eight to ninth century and is clear evidence for metalworking. These refuse pits would have been located to the rear of properties, buildings that would have fronted onto the Bayle. The pits also produced residual sherds of pottery that can be dated as early as the seventh century, the first tangible material evidence for occupation on this headland during this period. Other excavations elsewhere on the Bayle have also produced quantities of late Saxon pottery, including during the investigations on the edge of the cliff in 1981.

It is evident however that some erosion of the headland has occurred. John Leland noted that *'The castel yard hath bene a place of great burial ; yn so much as wher the se hath woren on the banke bones apere half stykyng owt.'* In the 1850s Samuel Mackie also noted, *'The ground in the vicinity is literally full of human skeletons, lying, apparently without any regard to position, and often within a few inches of the surface of the road. Quantities of bones are invariably thrown up whenever any excavations are made.'* At least one intact inhumation burial orientated east-west, probably eighth century or later, has been recorded on the south western edge of the Bayle in 1916 and human bone has been a regular find in later medieval contexts during excavations elsewhere on the Bayle. Overall the evidence suggests an extensive unenclosed lay and monastic cemetery attached to both the early and late Anglo-Saxon monasteries and churches.

Besides these ruins on the Bayle, the remains of another possible mid-late Saxon masonry building were uncovered in the early 1870s, in the Folly Fields area, between Warren Road and Penfold Road. Some of the seven buildings found there were clearly Roman, but the fabric of one, a rectangular structure marked A on the plan, was described by the recorder, the Canon Jenkins, as similar to that in a building uncovered by him at another seventh century monastic site at Lyminge. The building found at Folly Fields is probably the chapel dedicated to St Botolph recorded in later sixteenth century records and also that described by John Leland at about the same time as *'Toward a quarter of a myle owt of the town is a chapel of St. Botulfe on a likelyhood of further building sumtyne'*. Clearly by this date the building was ruinous. The excavations in the 1870s and again in 1952 also uncovered a number of inhumation burials, those found in 1952 orientated east-west with the head to the west and arranged in a north-south row about 1.5m apart, and as in the 1870s, also described as cutting through the walls of the buildings. The burials are tentatively dated at the earliest to the eighth century on the evidence of situation, orientation and lack of grave goods. Although they could possibly also be of later date forming part of a cemetery to the medieval Chapel of St Botolph, the association of Roman structures, early burials and a medieval chapel suggests there is much more to be found out about the use and occupation of this part of Folkestone during the early medieval period.

Besides its function as a religious centre the early monastery at Folkestone would have had an important function as an economic centre. As has been seen its territorial endowment was large and would have included a number of farms located inland from which it derived its revenues. Some of these agrarian centres would have survived into the medieval period, others would have failed. Two such early seventh century failed settlements have been found, one at Dollands Moor, the other at an isolated location north-west of what used to be Biggins Wood. That at Dollands Moor, south-west of Peene, consisted of two sunken-floored timber built structures. The houses, with axial post-holes for stout timbers supporting the ridge of the roofs and posts for the structural corners, were lined with small stakes which probably retained horizontally laid planked walls. Associated finds included grass-tempered Saxon and broadly seventh century pottery fabrics and forms as well as loom weights and animal bones, all recovered from the backfill of the houses and associated features. That north-west of Biggins Wood included a building of similar type but of earlier date. In all seven sites dating to the mid-late Saxon period were recorded during the archaeological investigations undertaken ahead of the construction of the Channel Tunnel terminal. Another, located south of Cheriton Hill, consisted of a series of pits backfilled with the debris of shell fish. Those settlements that did survive include those Newington and Dalmington where archaeological excavations have uncovered the remains of barns and associated occupation dating from the late tenth to early eleventh century.

Finds of early Anglo-Saxon coinage from Folkestone include at least three seventh century gold Merovingian coins dated 590-670 and a number of early English or Continental silver pennies dating from 675-750. Such finds may of course have come from burials, but finds of late seventh century silver pennies or *sceattas* is indicative of the presence of the minster also perhaps serving as a stimulus to the development of a port of trade in the eighth century.

What form this took and how this developed is unknown, but the 1052 entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle demonstrates the presence of a seafaring community during this period with perhaps some form of sheltered anchorage in existence at the foot of the West Cliff.

Mention has been made of the Domesday Monachorum, a survey compiled by Christ Church Canterbury in 1100 which sets out the ecclesiastical organization of Kent in the mid-late eleventh century. The other great survey of the period is that made in 1086 by William I following the Norman invasion of 1066, the returns from which were drawn up in what later became known as the Great Domesday. The reasons for its compilation are a matter of debate. Although it can be taken as a fiscal assessment, enabling William to know the potential revenues from taxation, its arrangement does not lend itself to such use and its compilation must also have had a political dimension, listing holdings held by tenants in a form clearly showing they were held ultimately from the king, establishing the feudal nature of ownership and reinforcing William's position and status. This is the form in which Folkestone is listed in the survey. At its head, as tenant-in-chief, it lists William of Arques as holding the Lordship of Folkestone stating that it answered, or was valued at, 39 *sulungs*. The description includes all the elements, arable, meadow, woodland, mills, of a large manorial holding that comprised the whole of the Lordship of Folkestone, a territory that extended well beyond Folkestone proper. The first entry probably relates to the paramount manor of the Lordship based on Walton which is listed as containing land, that is arable, for 120 ploughs, with 14 plough lands forming part of the demesne, 208 villagers [*villeins*] and 83 smallholders [*boarderers*] between them having 45 ploughs, 5 churches, 3 slaves, 7 mills valued at £9 12s, 100 acres of meadow and sufficient woodland for the pannage of 40 pigs. Following this is a list of ten sub-tenants, all men-at-arms with Anglo-Norman names, although it does include a certain Baldric, with holdings varying in size, composition and value and which likely describe the later manorial holdings which became known as named places from the early thirteenth century. A salt-house is also listed, presumably located along the coast west of Sandgate in an area of salt-marsh later known as the Slypes. Otherwise there is no mention of the coast and harbour, perhaps because it fell under the direct control of Christ Church, Canterbury and owed no obligation in terms of tax or vassalage. The inference is also that there was no town, as there are no burgesses or others listed, and that as a central place Folkestone as we know it consisted only of a diminished ecclesiastical estate and a small seafaring community with a small stade by the end of the eleventh century.

By the late eleventh century the Lordship or Honour of Folkestone was held by Nigel de Muneville. In 1095 he granted the church of St Easnwythe, and all other churches of his demesne, along with various other possessions, to the Benedictine Abbey of Lonlay in France, at once re-founding the monastic community, but clearly defining it as an alien priory. For forty years or so the new priory was located within the area of the Bayle, and it is likely that one or more of the churches described as ruinous on the 1698 map of the Folkestone estate belonged to this monastery. The source for this re-founding of the monastic community at Folkestone is a later grant of confirmation made to the monks in 1137 by William de Abrincis, the then Lord of Folkestone. The charter is known only from a copy made in 1425, but refers to the removal of the monks from the castle of Folkestone, where they were founded, to a new church outside, the present church of SS Mary & Eanswythe, and gives the reason as being that they were apprehensive of the state of the cliff. Thereafter the church served as both a parochial one and as the conventual church to the new Benedictine priory.

The priory was finally surrendered in November 1535 following a visitation in October when it was reported that it was occupied only by the prior and one sick monk, that the parish church belonged to the priory, which with the glebe lands, formed almost its whole revenue. The house was described as in decay, consisting of one hall, one chamber, a kitchen, and a little parlour underground. Although the barns were well filled with corn, there were only a few cattle. The Prior and monk were said to be both guilty of serious offences. At the time of its surrender in November however the house was described as being well repaired, the prior a good husband, being later granted a pension, who was beloved by his neighbours. The property was first leased to the Edward Lord Clinton, the Lord of Folkestone and subsequently granted to him in January 1539. The priory buildings survived into the seventeenth century as depicted in elevation on a plan of 1625. By the later eighteenth century the buildings had been demolished, a plan of 1782 showing the locations of three buildings, one described as a pigeon house, another the Mansion House, the latter converted out of the surviving monastic buildings located on the seaward side of the church. Of these buildings only the prior's lodgings remains at the junction of Church Street and the Bayle, although it is likely that other masonry buildings forming part of this medieval monastic complex survive fossilized in later structures on the Bayle.

The confirmation charter of 1137 is the earliest record of the presence of a castle at Folkestone. It was of course a retrospective grant and description and this suggests that the real reason for the monks moving to a new site was the desire of the Lord of Folkestone to fortify the headland at a time when the country was in upheaval during the civil wars between Matilda and King Stephen in the 1130s. Investigations on the south-western edge of the inner Bayle in 1981 recorded a wide ditch, probably forming the southern edge of these defensive works. The ditch, later backfilled in a single episode from the slighting of an internal bank, contained pottery dating no later than 1125. From this date this fortified place probably became the seigniorial residence of the Lord of Folkestone. For a brief time in May 1216 it accommodated King John. On his departure the coast was raided by French who left the harbour and town in a dilapidated condition. The Bayle was probably the location of the building mentioned in 1263, described as being surrounded by a stone wall containing a dovecot and garden. There are a few references to the castle in the fourteenth century. In 1377 an order went out to John de Clynton, then Lord of Folkestone, *'to repair with his household to Folkestone castle by him held near the sea and there abide with power of men at arms, armed men and archers in his company sufficient to defend the same.'* The boundaries of the Bayle have remained intact, but put to different use, as the site of a coastal battery in the eighteenth century, then as a coastguard station and is now occupied by residential properties.

Another castle, comprising a motte and bailey was constructed on top of the Downs, the site of which is now known as Castle Hill. Excavations here in 1878 showed that the visible earthworks were constructed in the twelfth century. Besides a silver penny of King Stephen, fragments of glazed imported pottery as well as coarse pottery of twelfth century date were found within the make up of the inner rampart. The excavations also produced fragments of architectural stonework, including a carved fragment of a twelfth century chalk basin or font from what was described as the citadel, as well as the head of a knight and a pinnacle suggesting that more substantial buildings once occupied the interior. There were also other finds of the same date, including arrowheads, blades and a horseshoe.

A simpler form of earlier eleventh century earthwork on the site however cannot be ruled out. The site is located on the coastal route followed by William following the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and it would not be out of place for a fortification to have been thrown up to guard the coast.

There are no significant surviving local records for the medieval period, the earliest borough records comprising a correspondence dated May-June 1464 between John Lord Clynton and Say, the Lord of Folkestone and The Mayor, and Jurats of Folkestone concerning a dispute with Thomas Banys, a monk and sometime the prior at Folkestone. The borough records otherwise commence with fragmentary Chamberlains Accounts from 1515 and then from 1541-1545. Medieval records emanating from the king's offices of state of the Exchequer and Chancery however include a long series of inquisitions, grants and writs relating to Folkestone dating from the mid thirteenth century. A significant proportion of these documents are grants and confirmations to the Lord of Folkestone and to the priory of Folkestone, which was taken into the hands of the king during the intermittent wars with France between 1337 and 1453.

From a local perspective the most interesting of these is an inquisition or survey taken in 1263 on the death of Hamo de Crevecoeur, Lord of Folkestone, providing a description of the manorial demesne. In total it included some 825 acres of arable, pasture and meadow as well as *'a capital messuage at Folkestone, well built, enclosed with a stone wall and including within the enclosure a dovecote.'* The extent also gives detailed descriptions of the acerages and land uses as well as the field names of the lands attached to each of the subordinate granges or farms and manors within the Lordship. These include some of the place-names familiar today, including *Waletune* [Walton], Terlingham and Newington. It also describes a park at Folkestone, enclosed by a hedge, containing in circuit a league and a half containing 22 acres of meadow, 10 acres of underwood, pasture, 3 fishponds and fifty acres of large oaks and white thorns. Other documents include an order made in 1233 to take money out of the lands formerly belonging to William de Albrincis, Lord of Folkestone in the late 1130s, for the repair of the court houses at Folkestone which are stated to having belonged to William. By 1233 these buildings must have been at least a century old. Other series of documents such as the Assize Rolls and Lay Subsidy Rolls record the other small farms or manors making up the Lordship of Folkestone. Broadmead is mentioned in the 1270s, Morehall in 1247, whilst Coolinge and Foord are first recorded in 1327 and 1347. Many of these places remained as agrarian centres into the early twentieth century, but are now submerged in the suburban expansion of Folkestone. The park at Folkestone survived through to the late fifteenth century. In 1460 John Manfield was granted the Lordship of Folkestone, with the keeping of the park there on John Lord Clynton and Say's forfeiture of the estate. He was to regain it in 1471. It is probably during this period that the moated site was constructed at Park Farm as a lodge at the eastern end of the park.

The survey of 1263 provides the first reference to the existence at Folkestone of quarries which were stated to be worth 20s per annum. A later inquisition of 1271 provides further information referring specifically to the quarry at Folkestone in which mill stones and hand mill stones are dug. Later leases of the mid seventeenth century refer to the quarrying of stone along the shore between East Wear Bay and Sandgate.

Along this stretch of the coast are the exposed formations of the successive levels of the Lower Greensand, known as the Sandgate and Folkestone beds. Landslip and coastal erosion of these cliffs has resulted in the deposition of areas of eroded rocks of ragstone along the foreshore and across the intertidal zone. Traces of reefs lifted up as a result of landslips can be seen on the west at Church Rocks and again east of the harbour and extensive deposits of ragstone also outcrop at Copt Point. Some of the stones were extremely large. In the sixteenth century a large rock, known as the mooring stone, was specifically protected and the later seventeenth leases specifically excluded the rocks lying in the vicinity of the harbour and at the foot of the West Cliff or Priors Leeze. Presumably these reefs also served as rudimentary breakwaters, moles and piers during the medieval period. Much of the stone would therefore have been quarried across the foreshore south of Folkestone towards Sandgate and in the area of Copt Point. The stone was also quarried for building purposes. In 1300 the accounts of Merton College, Oxford record that six great stones were obtained from Folkestone, to lay under the granary of Elham Rectory, the cost of the carriage from Folkestone amounting to 6s. Millstones continued to be produced until the fifteenth century. In 1405 the Chamberlains accounts of the City of Canterbury record the purchase of a black millstone made from Folkestone stone and in 1462 the will of William Bennett, alderman of Canterbury provides for the purchase of 300 feet of ashlar or Folkestone stone for the construction of a wharf or common quay at the Kings Bridge Mill in Canterbury. There were also specific orders. In 1342 the sheriff of Kent accounted for £13-10s spent on 300 stones dug in the quarry of Folkestone and drawn out of the sea in various places, and afterwards cut and hewn into round balls for the king's machines ; one hundred weighing 600 lbs each, and the same number 500 lbs and 400 lbs respectively; and another £7-10s for another 300 stone balls of various weights. Again in 1351 the Patent Rolls record the appointment of William Aubyn to take four thousands of stones for his engines from the quarry of Folkestone, during the period of the wars with France. In 1356 a further order went out to the Warden of the Cinque Ports to send over to Calais those stones for warlike engines which had been prepared at Folkestone. These few examples show that the stone was carried both inland and across the channel. Barges are mentioned in 1374 and presumably these types of vessels were used in the carriage of stone coastwise and to transport material to other larger ships lying off shore. On other occasions large numbers of ships were employed. In 1440 a commission was made to transport the stone for the building or repair of the walls and towers of Calais, to ascertain the carrying capacity of each ship, and to have them loaded at Folkestone. The exploitation of the stone continued during the fifteenth century and must have contributed both to the wealth of the town and the growth of a skilled local trade. In 1361, for example, Andrew Mason of Folkestone is appointed along with John Sumyng to select hewers of stone, carpenters and other workmen for work on the king's castle at Sheppey. In 1342 reference was made to the stones being drawn from seas. The supply must have been gradually exhausted. Leases for the working of the stone quarries however were granted through to the end of the eighteenth century, but by then only on a small scale, for the work was limited to two hewers of stone and ten cartloads of stone a year, to be used only for the repair of buildings within the Lordship of Folkestone. The ready availability of cheap local supplies of stone during the medieval period suggests that most of the buildings in the town would have been constructed of rough and dressed greensand ragstone. One of these buildings, dated to the late fifteenth century, but reusing moulded stonework of much earlier date, was examined prior to demolition in 1916 on the north-western edge of the Bayle.

As a member of the Cinque Ports, Folkestone must have supplied some of the ships for the king's service. In 1299 its obligations were assessed at seven boats, each to be manned by twenty men and a boy. It seems however to have never supplied more than one vessel. We know little of the development of the harbour during the medieval period. Recent investigations however have at least determined that a narrow tidal inlet was located as far as what later became known as Old Seagate. Here a large masonry wall, dated to the twelfth century and interpreted as a quayside was recorded in 1999 along the line of the Old Seagate. This, and a pit or well shaft containing pottery dated to the period 1075-1125, is the only archaeological evidence for structures and activity in the harbour area during the medieval period.

With these conditions and the lack of a deep water anchorage the boats used at Folkestone could never have been substantial vessels. Most would have been clinker built vessels of shallow draught, easily drawn up onto the single banks which would also have served as areas for the drying out of nets, shipbuilding and carrying out of repairs. Most would have been employed in mackerel fishing, carried out seasonally in the North Sea and landed at Yarmouth for sale. There was also a lucrative business in cross-channel trade as well as piracy. A detailed account of one such act of piracy is recounted in the Patent Rolls dated 16 November 1471. It describes the complaint of Martin de Antiaga of Bilboa who was sailing to London in a ship called the Saint Bartholomew laden with wines and other merchandize that was seized by Robert Frenche and Thomas Street, the masters, and other pirates of a ship called the bote of Folkestone. Again, in 1374 one of the barges of Folkestone was ordered to deliver all the goods and merchandize lately taken of the merchants of Genoa. In 1378 piracy in the Channel invited reprisal from the French who pillaged and burnt the town of Folkestone, presumably the houses and facilities clustered around the mouth of the harbour.

What then of the corporate history of Folkestone? Folkestone became a limb or member of the Cinque Port of Dover probably sometime in the thirteenth century during the period when the authority and prestige of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports was at its zenith, supplying as many as twenty-six ships for the king's service in return for its privileges. As a limb of Dover, Folkestone received its constitution from the charters which applied to these ports in general. With the decline in importance of the Cinque Ports from the early fourteenth century Folkestone petitioned and obtained in 1313 a Charter of Incorporation from Edward II, which was later confirmed in charters of 1328 and 1331. From the early fourteenth century then there was an established constitution comprising Mayor and Bailiffs and later 12 Jurats taken from the freemen of the town, governing and administering the town and port of Folkestone through a Court of Record and a Court of Requests, but always along with the Lord of Folkestone. The freemen also had other responsibilities. This included orders to maintain the watch on the coast and make searches of persons going overseas. A watch at Sandgate is mentioned in 1257 and again at Folkestone in 1263 and 1271. In 1333 an order was made to the Bailiffs of Folkestone to make searches in ships to prevent silver, whether in money, vessels or bullion, being taken out of the country. Later, in 1364 orders went out to William Perkyn and John Baldewyne of Folkestone to ensure that no one was to cross the sea without the king's licence and for those that had licence, that they were diligently searched.

Despite the decline in influence of the Cinque Ports, Folkestone, as a member the Confederation continued to try and exercise the rights this conveyed, but seemingly to little effect. In 1413 the then Mayor of Folkestone, Thomas Raby, was arrested and committed to the prison at Flete for refusing a writ of the king on the ground that he was within the liberty of the Cinque Ports.

Finally, bringing the story full circle, mention should be made of the find of an early cremation burial discovered in about 1850 during excavations for the foundations of new buildings on the Bayle. The burial consisted of fragments of a pottery vessel, assumed to be the burial urn and probably broken by workmen, with burnt bones together with a large iron spear head or sword fragment. The finds have not been preserved, but the pottery was exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries in London and accepted, and on this basis the cremation is probably fifth or sixth century in date, although its association with an iron spear head or part of a sword points to more than one burial of differing dates having been found. This is the only evidence for this period from Folkestone. There is some late fourth century imported Germanic pottery from the excavations of the Roman villa on the East Cliff in 1924 and human bone was recovered from the filling in of the apse end of the bath house suggesting some form of late/post Roman use and occupation of the site. Clearly there is need to locate archaeological sites that could be investigated to fill out the story about the occupation of the Folkestone area from the late Roman period through to the sixth century. But this project is entitled Folkestone a town unearthed before 1500, and for the present the story begins with the foundation of the monastery and the first use of the place name *Folcanstan* in the seventh century.

©Richard Cross 2010