

## Everything changes, nothing perishes.

Folkestone was once a thriving seaside resort with a pier and ferry terminal, many fine hotels and guest houses, a theatre, cinemas, golf course, schools and colleges, and the world famous Leas with its water-driven lifts. Since I arrived in the early 1960s much of the town has disappeared - the Pleasure Gardens Theatre, the Hotel Continental Wampach, the Odeon Cinema, Bobby's, Brampton Down School and now the heart of the town is being redeveloped. The Leas is still with us and there is still one lift, the golf course is a housing estate, many of the schools have been turned back into flats, the pier is merely a couple of rusty stains on the foreshore and the harbour is sadly derelict. Buildings are not merely the sum of their parts; they are like time capsules that capture the essence of their inhabitants and the events that have taken place in and around them. Folkestone had some beautiful buildings and still does have a few classics such as the Leas Cliff Hall and the Grand and



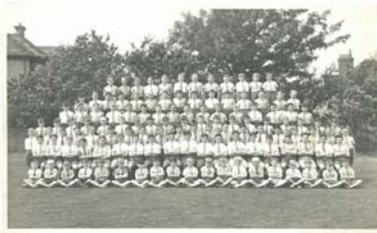
Metropole Hotels. Those that have vanished have in the main left nothing but a smudge in the town's historical record. Not all our lost buildings have been "redeveloped", some were casualties of war – Athelstan and Feltonfleet Schools on Shorncliffe Road, the Parish Church on Sandgate Road and a certain greengrocers shop in Tontine Street. Many buildings have remained but have changed use – Bobby's, the exterior promises grandeur within, but one is disappointed. The Town Hall is now a cinema-cum-bookstore and the Methodist Church on Grace Hill is now an eatery!



Westbrook House School is Folkestone's only preparatory school. Founded in 1947



by Kenneth 'Fozzie' Foster who hailed from Selby, the school was a dream job that he ran until 1968. It has now been taken over by Niall Washington-Jones, who, determined to bring it back into prominence in Kent after years in the educational wilderness, said recently: "Westbrook House had been through the doldrums following many successful years as Westbrook House, Dover College Junior School, Dover College Prep and in 1994 Westbrook House again. This school has had more incarnations than the Dalai Llama! In 1997 it came together with St Mary's Convent as St Mary's Westbrook. On the face of it, this seemed to be a sensible idea, but as so often with schools, they were in fact two horses pulling in different directions. The schools were separated again in July 2005".



The Old Westbrookians' Society was founded in 2006 to research the school's past, preserve the memory of its founder, and to promote the new Westbrook House School's future. During one of its many reincarnations the history evaporated and its staff and pupils passed on or moved away to the four corners of the world. At this point in our research we have more questions than answers. We know a great deal about life at the school, activities undertaken by

the pupils at school and on trips away, but we are still in the dark in some areas:

- Where has all the stuff from Athelstan and Feltonfleet Schools gone (they were both destroyed during WW2)?
- Is there anyone in the area who attended the Folkestone Trained Nurses' Institute at 56 Shorncliffe Road?
- Why did Fozzie move to Folkestone after the war? (His brother, Groupie, was stationed at Hawkinge, but was that enough of a reason to set up a school in the town?)
- What did Groupie do during the wars?
- How did Fozzie finance his school in 1947?
- What part did Lady Bicester and Lady Ellenborough play in the school's early days. And, what was the connection between the Fosters, Bicerses and Ellenboroughs?
- Fozzie named his school after a country house where he had played as a child. Where was that house and does it still exist?
- Where did the 'Playroom' originally come from? And where did it go during Richard Rottenbury's tenure? (Fozzie purchased it secondhand from Beachborough School, but where was it originally made?)



These are a few of the many questions which need the attention of amateur and professional sleuths. Each week there will be a new selection of questions as well as

a selection of answers or "breakthroughs" in our researches. So, if you fancy being a bit of a Sherlock Holmes, please get in touch and of course, if you attended Westbrook House School, Dover College Junior School (Westbrook House) and St Mary's Westbrook between 1947 and 2005 as a pupil or teacher, and would like to help, please contact the Old Westbrookians' Society by emailing me at [officeoldwestbrookians@gmail.com](mailto:officeoldwestbrookians@gmail.com) or visiting the website [www.oldwestbrookians.cjb.net](http://www.oldwestbrookians.cjb.net) and leaving a message in the guestbook. We look forward to hearing from you all you sleuths out there!

