

THE BELL INN



THE MYSTERY OF THE BODIES IN THE BELL

AN ENDURING LOCAL MYTH

Sean McNally, March 2017

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A. The Story

A story has grown within the community about The Bell Inn at Hythe in Kent. The story is portrayed as fact in a wide range of written publications and web pages targeted at audience groups as diverse as historians, local residents, Kent tourists, and ghost hunters.

I first came across the story when I inherited the task of writing a tourist leaflet on the historic pubs of Hythe High Street and quickly found that there was dissent on aspects of the story and started to research the differences by seeking local oral tradition and written evidence – ideally contemporary. Of local oral tradition, there was no shortage, of written accounts there was plenty and conflicting, of contemporary evidence there was a marked absence. My research moved hurriedly forward when on 14 March 2017 I received an enquiry via the church asking

A little bird tells me that you are researching local pubs - have you come across anything that may help this gentleman?

I am attempting to locate the burial location of two bodies discovered in The Bell Pub, Hythe in 1963. They were concealed behind a wall and later determined to be Revenue Officers. I am wondering if this vague search request is possible in your burial registers?

The complete story, as I give it here, is a compilation in my own words, of all that is on websites and publication, including all oral embellishments.

Back in the 1960s, a bloke

[also told as an historian, an archeologist, an architect, a builder, a decorator, a barman, the pub landlord]

Was having a pint and when he leaned back, as his head touched the wall he heard it was hollow. So he took out a ball point pen and worked a small hole. He could feel a draught through the hole and made it bigger and he could just see a big area behind.

So he told the landlord

[also told as the landlord decided to redecorate]

So they removed the panel/bricks and behind it they found an old inglenook fireplace and sitting by the fireside

[some say on the floor or under the floorboards]

were the skeletons of two Revenue Officers

sitting up in full customs-men uniforms

complete with boots, belts, hats and badges

[one source states that they were S lock belts]

[another source states “and identification”]

which were all in very good condition,

[some say “decaying”]

and some beer mugs, pipes and keys

They took the bones to the Police Station and they were sent to the Coroner.

Finger bones were kept and displayed in the pub

The Coroner said they were pig bones.

[another version is that the Coroner said that because they were wearing S lock belts they were Revenue men who had fallen foul of smugglers]

“But that’s not true, they really was customs men, it was a smugglers’ pub and they’re just saying that ‘cos they don’t want people to know that the smugglers won.”

This paper compiles the information available to

- show extent of the story
- examine any evidence
- separate the truth from the myth

B. Extent of the story

This is not an extensive reproduction of what is available but serves to demonstrate that the story is set in these categories

- Ghosts
- Smuggling
- Pubs
- History

What I found disturbing is the way the story is portrayed as historical fact with no reference to source or date or reliability. To best demonstrate this

- Web pages have been simply reproduced by cut & paste of the text.
- Written publications have been scanned and reproduced as an image so that no editorial interference detracts from the way the information is portrayed, save that I have super-imposed a red box to make the relevant section easier to find.

B.1 Ghosts

From: Ghost Pubs, live page 21 March 2017

<http://ghostpubs.com/haunted-pub/the-bell-inn-hythe>

Parts of the inn have history from the 15th century. A Grey Lady haunts the cellars. She was, witnesses report, said to have been a former proprietor who died giving birth to a child at the Bell Inn. When the huge inglenook fireplace here was opened up for renovation some years ago, the builders unearthed old beer mugs, clay pipes and a bunch of keys. They also found the bodies of two Revenue Officers who had been murdered and bricked up. Witnesses reported, at the time that their uniforms, boots and belts were still in good condition. Various local customers maintain they have seen the ghosts of those two men sitting adjacent to the inglenook fireplace.

From: Kent Live News - haunted pubs, live page 21 March 2017

<http://www.kentlive.news/east-kent-s-most-haunted-pubs/story-29767228-detail/story.html>

A Grey Lady is said to haunt the cellars, apparently a former proprietor who died during childbirth. The ghosts of two murdered Revenue Officers have also been spotted sitting in the inglenook fireplace which had been bricked up to conceal their bodies

B.2 Smuggling

From: Kent Life – smuggling pubs, live page 21 March 2017

http://www.kent-life.co.uk/food-drink/6_mischievous_smugglers_pubs_in_kent_1_4504673

Reckoned to be the oldest pub in Hythe, parts of The Bell Inn date back to the 15th century when the town was a prosperous port.

The pub sits atop a stream and casks of spirits were floated in through a tunnel in the cellar and discreetly suspended from the ceiling. The chimney stack served as a lookout point (the footholds remain visible) and goods were moved between rooms via gaps between two inglenook back-to-back fireplaces. In 1963 a startled builder made a gruesome discovery; bricked up behind one of the fireplaces were the bodies of two 18th-century Revenue officers in remarkably well-preserved uniforms.

From a person's blog of 21 April 2016, live page 21 March 2017

<http://voicesdidmyheadin.blogspot.co.uk/2016/04/smuggling-tales.html>

The Bell Inn in Hythe played a huge part in my life. I call it the "pub at the bottom of the hill" in the book *A Pillar of Impotence*, many of my Kent friends met me there. Long before it was my local it was a smuggler's pub. They say the tunnels going through to the mill house behind still exist. In the 1960s the then landlord decided he wanted to open up the chimney to have an open fire. They did not expect to find the skeletons of two customs officers complete with decaying uniforms and identification bricked up in there. That is precisely what they found.

B.3 Pubs

From: Folkestone Then and Now - Pubs, Warren Press, live page 21 March 2017

<http://www.warrenpress.net/FolkestoneThenNow/FolkestonePubs.html>

The gruesome discovery of two skeletons behind the ancient fireplace of a pub pointed to a double murder back in the days of the smuggler. The inglenook chimney in the Bell, in Seabrook Road, Hythe, had been the final resting place of two Revenue Officers. The unfortunate souls had been killed in mysterious circumstances and their bodies bricked up.

The grisly find was made in 1963 when builder Colin Lepper, a regular drinker at the pub, offered to uncover the old chimney. Nigel Dowe, who runs the pub today, say "The skeletons, still wearing their boots, belts, hats and badges, were taken to the local coroners. All, that is, except a couple of finger bones that were displayed in the bar for years as unusual souvenirs of the pub's history."



[Photo copyright Warren Press. This web page is a re-type of the Herald article of 8 April 1999 plus a photo]

B.4 History

From: Dover Kent History, live page 21 March 2017

<http://www.dover-kent.com/Bell-Hythe.html>

Parts of the inn have history from the 15th century. A Grey Lady haunts the cellars. She, witnesses report, is said to have been a former proprietor who died giving birth to a child at the "Bell Inn." When the huge inglenook fireplace here was opened up for renovation some years ago, the builders unearthed old beer mugs, clay pipes and a bunch of keys. They also found the bodies of two Revenue Officers who had been murdered and bricked up. Witnesses reported at the time that their uniforms, boots and belts were still in good condition. Various local customers maintain they have seen the ghosts of those two men sitting adjacent to the inglenook fireplace.

[this is a linked copy of "Ghost Pubs"]

The image of the printed and distributed publication is at this live page 21 March 2017

<http://westbrook50.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/3propertymatter.pdf>



The Bell

Historical Research

Words by Mike Lilley
Photograph by McLaLa

Hythe is a cinque port, but is a port of lost pride. Hythe lost its harbour a long time ago due to the silting of the harbour mouth.

The Bell Inn once stood on the quayside, and of course it was a regular attraction to sailors & merchants

Smugglers used the Inn during the 18th & 19th centuries and also we are told in the 17th century. It has never been established how old in fact The Bell Inn is, as at one

to Hythe. The building itself stands over a tunnel built close to a millstream, and it is told wine, tobacco & spirits were kept safe for a quick removal if the Excise Officers turned up.

The fireplace could be the original once uncovered during alteration work, when a collection of bones, clay pipes & keys were found.

Behind The Bell is a water mill and there is a protruding alcove which has a window facing out to the sea

In 1963 a rather gruesome discovery was made when a local builder offered to uncover the old chimney

Jack Swain, an old carter, tells it that the window was used to spot the excise men when they were close. Then the sluice of the millstream was opened to the full, so in fact no one could get into the tunnel past the churning wheel and the gushing water. In 1963 a rather gruesome discovery was made when a local builder offered to uncover the old chimney. What was discovered were two skeletons, which may have been Excise Officers. The skeletons still had their boots, belts, hat & badges - these were taken to the local coroner



There is space of a barrel width between the back to back fireplaces, which was a good way to get the contraband from the cellar to the upstairs room.

The chimney-stack was used as a lookout post. There were traces of footholds carved into the stone, and the good view from the top would have given time for the smugglers to notice the Excise Officers approaching. An earlier landlord in fact climbed the chimney & actually found an old clay pipe, which may have belonged to an old smuggler.

So that is part of the history of The Bell Inn - there is more to tell, about assaults in 1860, stealing money in 1868 & drowned man inquest in 1890

[copyright Property Matters]

From an Army blog site – November 2014, live page 21 March 2017

<https://www.arrse.co.uk/community/threads/what-lies-beneath-troglodyte-travels.221551/page-2>



geezer466



ACAB said: ↑

We have something similar in Hythe. The Bell Inn has a tunnel that used to run out to sea to allow smugglers bringing in Brandy and Champagne. The place was renovated by my Father in Law in the early 60s and the main fireplace (which was bricked up) opened and two skeletons found. The Coroner decided that because they were wearing S lock belts that they were probably Revenue Men who had fallen foul of the smugglers.

Didn't it flood with water when they opened the hatch at the other end?

geezer466, Nov 2, 2014

#22

the inn. The *Bell* has an old smugglers' tunnel where casks of brandy and rum were floated through to the watermill behind. Contraband was also hidden on hooks in the attic and behind fireplaces, and the smugglers carved a foothold in the chimney stack so that they could climb up and use it as a lookout point.

In 1963 two skeletons wearing boots, belts, hats and badges were found concealed behind a fireplace and are thought to be victims of some dastardly murder. Local rumour also has it that the weatherboarded timber of the house, said to be over 400 years old, was salvaged from wrecks in Dymchurch Bay in the days when

in November 1820, 250 members of the gang unloaded a galley laden with spirits, tobacco and salt, and wounded three members of the Blockade force and captured another. The downfall of the gang occurred after they killed Quartermaster Richard Morgan at Dover on 30 July 1826. A large reward prompted informers to lead the Blockade men to Aldington and Ransley and some of his gang were arrested. Following their conviction, they were transported to Tasmania, and the end of the Aldington Gang marked the demise of large-scale smuggling in East Kent.

The formation of the Coastguard under the jurisdiction of the Royal Navy in 1831 led to

[copyright Phillimore & Co]

From: Kent Seen, pub unknown, August 1990

Michael Mirams

INN KENT

The Sign of The Bell

AS A GOING concern, the British pub started life some time before the English Church. The ancient Romans had tabernae in every town, where off-duty legionaries could indulge their drinking habits and fritter away hard-earned sesterii. After the Anglo-Saxons re-established Christianity in the island, an inn or alehouse sprang up in every community, and could usually be found near the church. Thus many hostleries were called the Bell, or multiples thereof: the Five Bells, Six Bells or Eight Bells were not uncommon. A notable exception to the rule, in Kent, is the Railway Bell in Folkestone, opened in 1863 to serve the passengers who alighted at the Junction Station. The pub name recalls the bell which rang to announce the arrival or departure of trains, but the premises were rebuilt in 1961, and have outlasted the railway station, which closed in 1965. At Walmer near Deal, the Thompson's Bell Inn is a reminder of the local brewery of Edmund Thompson, demolished long ago, whose brewing memorabilia can be viewed inside the bar.

Hythe is a Cinque Port, albeit a port of stranded pride which lost its harbour and maritime status centuries ago due to the silting up of the harbour mouth. The attractive weatherboarded Bell Inn, probably the oldest in the town, once stood at the quayside, and was a regular venue for sailors and merchants. Smugglers frequented the inn during the 17th and 18th centuries, and the building actually stands over a tunnel, constructed close to a millstream, where tobacco and spirits were kept in readiness for quick removal if the Excise Officers turned up. A hoist, held by a hook in the attic, is a survivor of those dangerous times, as is a fireplace, possibly the original one, uncovered during alteration works, along with a

HOTELS | INNS



A seafront tavern in medieval times - The Bell at Hythe

collection of bones, clay pipes and keys.

Sandwich too has lost its port, but as late as the 1600s it was still important enough for King Charles II and the Duke of York to pay the town a visit en route to Dover to meet their mother. During the Civil War, a man claiming to be Charles, Prince of Wales, set himself up at the Bell Tavern on the Quay, and was treated with all the deference due to royalty, until an old friend of the real Prince exposed him as an impostor. Nearly twenty years later, the real Charles, along with York and Prince Rupert, gladly accepted a glass of sack from the Town Mayor outside The Bell, whose successor, The Bell Hotel, is Sandwich's largest hostelry.

The sign of The Bell hangs at both ends of Bluebell Hill near Chatham, the pubs being known respectively as the Upper Bell and Lower Bell. There is no religious connection here, but a century or so ago the road was such a narrow thoroughfare that two teams of horses pulling a coach were unable to pass each other. Consequently, a bell was rung at either pub to announce the departure of a stagecoach, thus avoiding traffic jams.

The village of Leeds, near Maidstone, is famous throughout the world for its picturesque castle. It also has good inns, including the Ten Bells, whose name commemorates the bells housed in the massive church tower, the last of which was cast in 1617. The pub was known by its present name in 1720, and until the manual picking of hops died out in the 1950s was regularly used by

London's East Enders who came hopping down in Kent.

At the turn of the century, pints of ale were served from long tin baths, kept behind the bar, when trade was brisk. The tipplers seemed not to mind, but what would today's Environmental Health Department have thought of it all?

In less secular times, some inns were called the Bell & Crown, cementing the links between Church and Monarchy through the landlord's loyalty to the Crown. For centuries, it was customary to ring church bells and hand bells on all 'royal occasions', and some of them bore inscriptions, exhorting the ringer to 'Fear God, Honour the King'; this motto was frequently seen on the inn sign.

Canterbury's Bell & Crown was licensed under that name in 1862, although an alehouse traditionally stood on the same site, next to St. Alphege's Church, as long ago as 1200. At that time the landlord, Peter Cook, paid a quarterly rent of 18d, and subsequent hosts included Arnold of Eastery and Thomas of Chilham. It was Thomas Newman who gave the pub its present title, to celebrate the marriage of Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Alice, to Prince Louis of Hesse. They in turn were the grandparents of Lord Louis Mountbatten, and great-grandparents of the present Duke of Edinburgh. A regular visitor to the pub in recent years was the late Archbishop, Michael Ramsey, but according to a plaque outside the building, the present landlord is unlikely to apply for the position of Primate of All England.

[copyright Kent Express, K&M]

Aug 1990
KENT SEEN

C. The Evidence

One would expect first hand local evidence to be reported in local papers. The most recent reference I found was from the Express of 8 April 1999

8. Kentish Express, Thursday, April 8, 1999

Murderous se

THE GRUESOME discovery of two skeletons behind the ancient fireplace of a pub pointed to a double murder back in the days of the smuggler.

The inglenook chimney in the Bell in Seabrook Road, Hythe, had been the final resting place of two Revenue Officers.

The unfortunate souls had been killed in mysterious circumstances and their bodies bricked up.

The grisly find was made in 1963 when builder Colin Lepper, a regular drinker at the pub, offered to uncover the old chimney.

Nigel Dowe, who runs the pub today, said: "The skeletons, still wearing their boots, belts, hats and badges, were taken to the local coroners.

"All, that is, except a couple of finger bones that were displayed in the bar for years as unusual souvenirs of the pub's history."

The Bell is reputed to be the oldest pub in Hythe and is believed to have been the ancient harbour pub when the town was a flourishing port.

The deeds to the building were lost when the inn was owned by the Mackeson Family, who ran the brewery in Hythe, so the exact age of the Bell is unknown.

Its positioning meant it was strongly connected with the smuggling trade from the mid 17th to the mid 19th century, and relics of this notorious past remain today.

There is the inevitable tunnel in the cellar and a mill stream runs under the premises, along which smuggled brandy and rum were floated in.

The kegs were hidden by being hung from hooks in the ceiling when Revenue men came snooping around.

This was a legendary hiding place on the Marsh for casks of brandy, one of the smugglers' favourite cargoes.

This week JOANNA HERNON takes a look at the Bell at Hythe in our series on Romney Marsh pubs.

Another hiding place was in the mill-stream itself, which flowed from the mill wheel. This tunnelled drain, with ledges on either side, proved a convenient hiding place to store contraband.

When the Military Canal was built in 1804, engineers extended this underground waterway. It was a popular dare for children to walk its length.

The Bell is exactly what an old public bar should look like, complete with a double inglenook fire place.

There is a gap of a barrel's width between the back to back fireplaces, which was a quick and convenient way to get smuggled goods from the cellar to the rooms upstairs.

The chimney stack was also used as a look-out point. Footholds are carved into the stone and the view from the top would have given smugglers a chance to hook up the barrels if the authorities were approaching.

A former landlord climbed the chimney and found a clay pipe, perhaps belonging to a smuggler who enjoyed a quiet smoke when it was his watch.

The pub also has a ghost of a woman in a black cloak.

She flits from wall to wall at the back of the restaurant, in what is believed to be the oldest part of the inn, possibly the stable block.

Nothing is known about the mystery woman, but she has been seen by a number of people who all give the same description.

Relatives of Stephen Lade, the innkeeper in 1846, are visiting from Australia in August and want a tour of the ale-house.

'The
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The parts of the story to which this article seems to give credibility are [red box]

- 1963
- Skeletons
- Boots, belts, hats and badge
- Coroner
- Finger bones kept and displayed at pub

As a separate incident, the paper reports [green box]

- Clay pipe found in chimney

C.1 Searching 1963

If the more spectacular part of the story – the uniformed skeletons – has any basis in truth one would expect to find a lot of media “noise” after the event which would enable one to work backwards to the actual date of the original contemporary report.

This is a pub, the brewery and landlord would have worked to keep the story in the news and bring in customers.

Working backwards through 1963, I would have expected to find

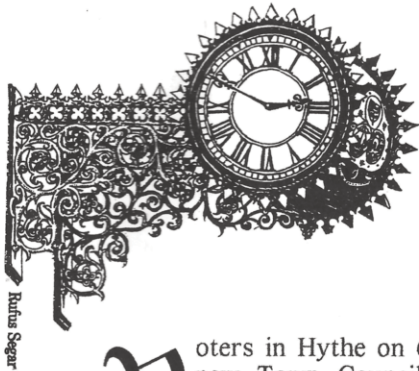
- Adverts in multiple papers for months after the event, covering a wide motorist range [prior to drink/drive laws] along the line of “see the pub where ... good parking, lunches only 5/-
- Pictures and articles of the fingers on display in the pub
- Articles and photographs with local regulars telling their reaction to the display
- Articles and photographs with local regulars telling their story of what they saw
- Pictures of the uniforms and the landlord, or mannequins dressed in replica uniforms with the landlord
- Pictures and articles from inside the pub
- Inglenook and replica uniforms
- Landlord/locals by the inglenook fireplace
- In 1963, the abolition of the death penalty was still big news, so there should be a high degree of media “noise” at the risk of this being murder disguised as archaeology.
- Pictures of the pub with a panda car outside
- Front page news of the event

A complete reading of all editions of the Folkestone & Hythe Herald for 1963 gave nothing, not even a mention.

C.2 Searching 1962

Another historian suggested 1962, but a reading of all issues of the Herald for the whole of 1962 achieved no result.

Mike Umbers, another local historian had written about the event in the Hythe Civic Society newsletter and used as his source an article in the Hythe Gazette in April 1962 – not the Herald



HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

Newsletter

No 88 JUNE - JULY 1999

Voters in Hythe on 6th May elected a new Town Council with an astonishing Conservative content of 16 Councillors, with one Liberal and one Labour. Reaction, as after all democratic elections, varies from (through clenched teeth) 'The people have voted, the bastards', to a smug 'We have a mandate'. It will be wonderful if HTC can now pull in one direction on one manifesto, and the issues constructively considered, as between colleagues in debates of calm goodwill. The shiny new Council assembled for the first time on 13th May, and gave the previous Mayor, Cllr John Schonher, a ringing vote of approval for a second term, as a demonstration of their complete support. This is our new way of electing our Town Mayor, brought in after the 1998 Town Meeting, and designed to ensure that a new Council has the opportunity to make its own choice of chairman, by open independent vote of the councillors.

THE TOWN MEETING In addition to the usual Reports from the Mayor and the Chairmen of Hythe's important Societies, two motions from members of the public were submitted to the Town Meeting on 15th April. Both were passed and will have to be considered by HTC. Mr Binns proposed a running track on The Green 'to develop self-discipline in young people'. We suspect that this amenity would not compare with the attractions of the High Street, and that in any case, if it can be afforded at all, a running track round the South Road sportsfield, where there are also showers, might be preferred?

Miss Rayner proposed that Hythe do not celebrate the arrival of the Millennium until the old one is over; ie in December 2000. We feel sure that she follows her own logic and has her car serviced at 20,001 miles, but we guess that, like those villagers in Kipling's story, who voted the Earth was flat, Hythe might find itself out on a limb, and something of a laughing stock. The restaurants and pubs were not keen, and actually hope to cash in at *both* years' ends. Miss Rayner certainly proved that we celebrated the end of the 19th Century at the end of 1900 not at the end of 1899, but our Victorian forebears did not have to contend with the Computer Bug, the Dome, and the Churches' Candle - all of which are likely to make the 31st of December 1999 rather hard to ignore.

The Guardian picked up the story, and sent down a Reporter. It was pleasant to read a visitor's

description of our town, and to see a colon correctly used in a newspaper. *'It's a very sound place indeed. . . a delight: a rambling erratic High Street, with hills behind and the sturdy church of St Leonard presiding benignly over the scene... a seafront almost Frintonian in its trinket-free self-restraint.'* The Herald, which knows us better, slammed us as *'pedantic number-crunchers'* determined to spoil the fun. If it helps to calm things down, remember that 1997 was probably the Millennium of Christ's birth, and 2000 will be 5760 to the Jews, 1420 to the Moslems, and the Year of the Dragon to the Chinese.

BEATING THE BOUNDS As brisk as bees, if not altogether as light as fairies, did the 46 citizens meet their Mayor on Easter Monday to Beat the Parish Bounds. We could go on in this Pickwickian vein, but it was actually more a case of Hearts of Oak and Macs of Plastic, for rain threatened and a 15 mile walk lay ahead. Though 46 did the full course, including the Town Sergeant and Caretaker, over 80 did parts of it, including the Acting Town Clerk. £2125 was raised for the Hospice on the Hill (and other moneys for other charities). An excellent centre-page colour spread of the event appeared in the Kentish Express on 8th April. In that issue appeared a very full 'What's On?' by Richard Carroll (you can ring him to publicise events on 268354) and the Express won the Hythe Story Count that week, though their feature on the discovery in 1963 of the skeletons of two Revenue Officers (*'still wearing their boots, belts, hats and badges'*) bricked up in the chimney of the Bell Inn came as a surprise. Frankly we did not believe it, and our indefatigable researcher did some indefatigable research and reports what is likely to be the truer if less dramatic version, which she found in the Folkestone and Hythe Gazette of 4th April 1962; this reported the unbricking of the chimney and the find in a niche of mugs, clay pipes, bones and keys. But the bones in the picture are few and *very* small.

Our Chairman, a gentleman of an archeological turn of mind, was present at the removal of a Victorian fireplace from a different chimney in the same pub, also in the 60's. Again, a 400 year old brick cavity was revealed, but no bones. Still, The Bell is a fine-looking pub which stood once very near the shoreline, and was certainly a smugglers' haunt, with possibly a hide in the Mill-stream tunnel below. Today, to put it politely, it is a pub for young persons.

An archive exists of the Folkestone & Hythe Gazette in Folkestone Library.

Here is the article written at the time of the finding in the pub. It is the only contemporary record, Folkestone & Hythe. From this article which gives names and photographs and is dated and contemporary, one can quickly deduce the truth from the myth which has developed around it.

[copyright Kent Express K&M]



Bones & the Coroner

The myth surrounding the truth talks about

- bones being taken to the Police Station
- sent to the coroner
- turning out to be pig

Hythe Police Station was decommissioned in 1996, so any bones would have been taken there. Fortunately there is a contemporary history written by a civilian who worked there for much of its lifetime. In her memoirs she notes the following incident in her book "Hythe Police Station 1913-1996, Diana Spencer.

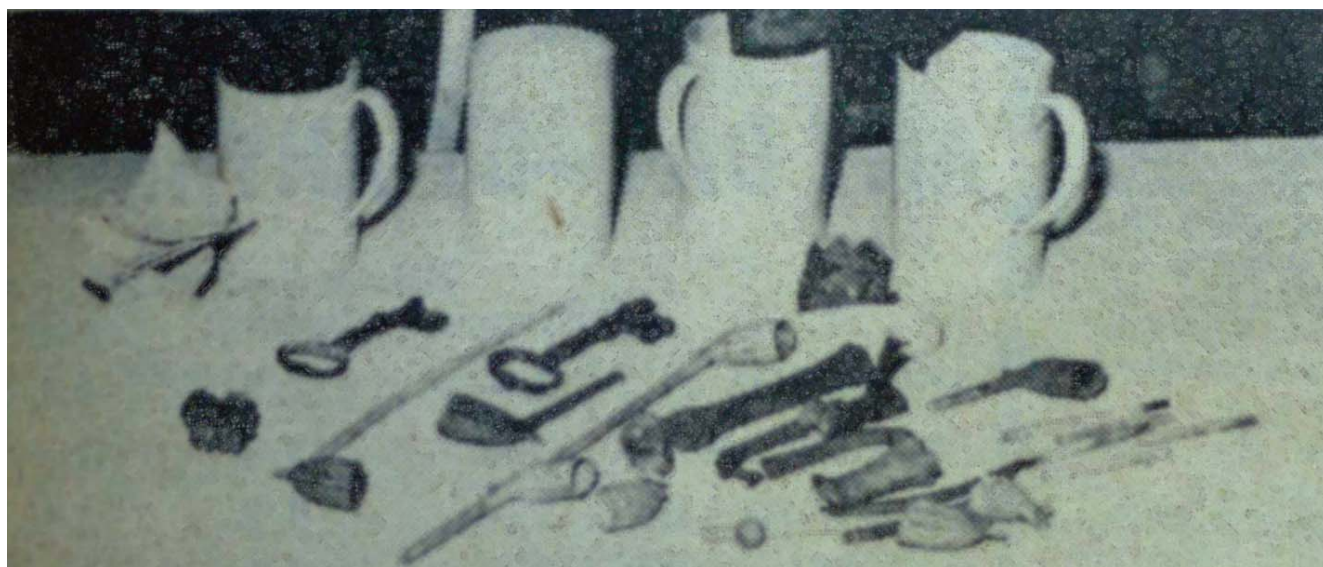
The find clearly caused a flurry of activity and probable much speculation locally. Her final comment perhaps gives credence to the embellishments to the pub incident "...what macabre imaginings it provoked"

On a late November afternoon the station received a call from a firm of builders who were renovating an old shop in the High Street. One of the men had found some bones hidden under the floor boards. A small, fragile, sad little collection not easy to identify. Alongside they also discovered a pair of tiny hand stitched slippers. They were made of leather, once soft and delicate, now discoloured and rotting, and had doubtless been worn by a very young child. All work ceased and the police were advised. On later examination by an expert the bones proved to be those of an animal. The slippers were dispatched to a museum and we heard no more about them. It's the sort of 'find' that might make a couple of lines in the local paper. Renovations to the shop were completed and a minute piece of history disappeared from sight forever. But what macabre imaginings it provoked.

[copyright Diana Spencer]

D. Truth or Myth with Conclusion

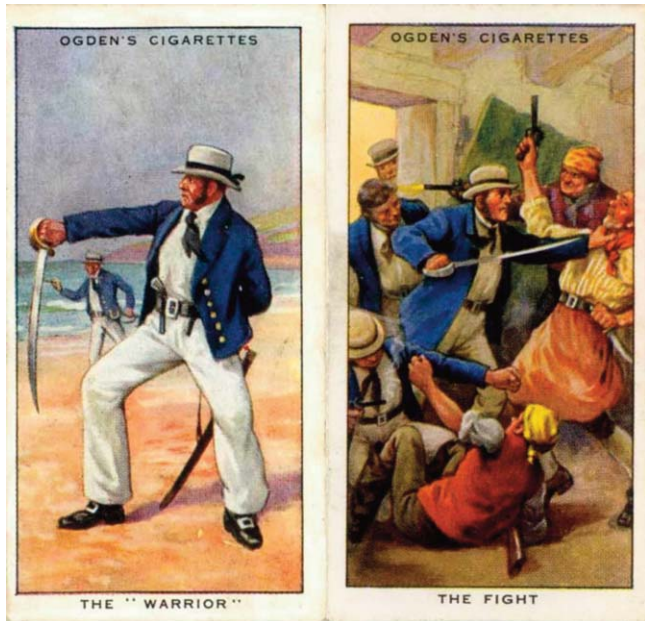
Part of the story	Myth/Truth
Back in the 1960s	T
a bloke	M
Was having a pint and when he leaned back and his head touched the wall he heard it was hollow.	M
So he took out a ball point pen and worked a small hole.	M
He could feel a draught through the hole and made it bigger and he could just see a big area behind.	M
So he told the landlord	M
<i>landlord decided to redecorate</i>	T
So they removed the panel/bricks and behind it they found an old inglenook fireplace	T
and sitting by the fireside <i>[some say on the floor or under the floorboards]</i>	M
were two skeletons of Revenue Officers	M
sitting up in full customs-men uniforms complete with boots, belts, hats and badges <i>[one source states that they were S lock belts]</i> <i>[another source states "and identification"]</i>	M
which were all in very good condition, <i>[some say "decaying"]</i>	M
and some beer mugs, pipes and keys	T
They took the bones to the Police Station	M
and they were sent to the Coroner.	M
Finger bones were kept and displayed in the pub	M
The Coroner said they were pig bones.	M
<i>[another version is that the Coroner said that because they were wearing S lock belts they were Revenue men who had fallen foul of smugglers]</i>	M
But that's not true, they really was customs men, it was a smugglers' pub and they're just saying that 'cos they don't want people to know that the smugglers won.	M



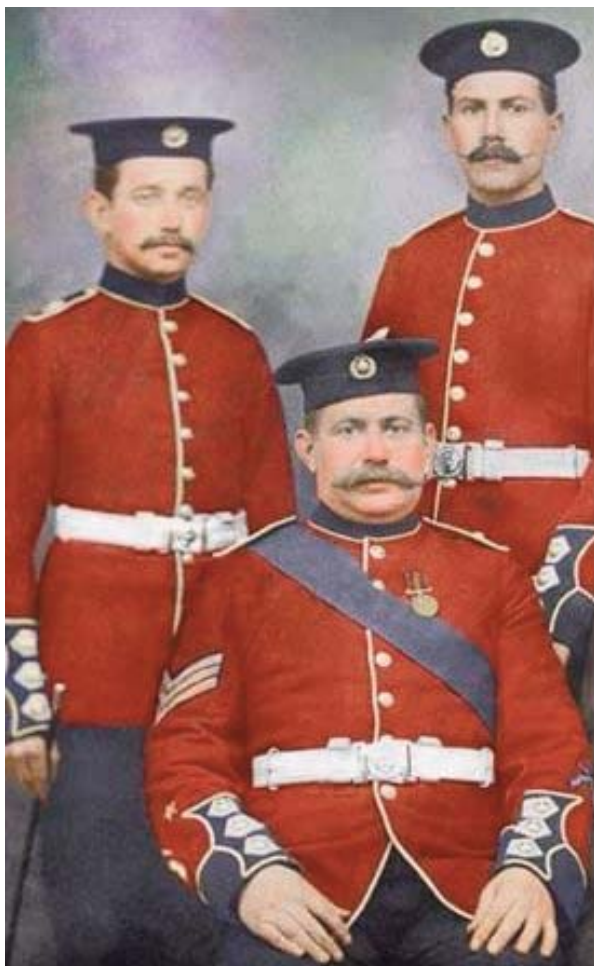
So the final story is that during redecoration the fireplace was uncovered and some beer mugs, pipes, keys and bones were found. The photograph of the finds indicates that the bricklayer who closed in the fireplace did not bother to first clear away the supper leftovers of beer and pork chops from the night before.

Credit must be given to the residents of Hythe who have grown a myth around these meagre facts, and which is still going nearly 60 years later.

Possible Uniforms of the 'victims'



The preventive men of the Blockade, as portrayed by Ogden's cigarette cards of 1932



[photo in public domain, no copyright]

Typical uniforms of the marines of the early 1800s who were likely to be the style of soldiers and sailors on "The Blockade." The prevention of smuggling was "The Blockade" of the south coast.

Sean McNally.
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