

Refugee Restored



1914 Belgian refugees flee Antwerp from the German invasion

Local residents are being offered the chance to see the restoration of a major Folkestone artwork "The Belgian Refugees" up close and live over the next few months.

In August 1914, 64,000 Belgians arrived in Folkestone fleeing from the German invasion. They arrived terror stricken and few had any clothing, except what they were wearing.

Nation-wide appeals were made for food and clothing and the response was immediate and very generous. A refugee committee was established to help the refugees and was headed by Folkestone's Mayor Alderman Stephen Penfold, who was later knighted for his war services and those of the Town.

Fredo Franzoni, an artist from Belgium, transferred the scenes he witnessed to canvas. The artist's impression of the arrival was



1914 Belgian refugees at Ostende waiting to escape to England

presented to the Folkestone Corporation in July 1916 as a thank you for the Town's hospitality and warm welcome. Belgian Refugees, local officials and people connected with the Refugee Relief Committee in Folkestone are depicted in the painting.

The canvas is 3 metres by 2 metres and was hung in the Town Hall and the Leas Cliff Hall before being installed at the Library. Over the years the painting has become damaged as the conditions in the library were not ideal. Now hung in The Grand the painting will undergo some much needed restoration. Over December and January visitors to the Belgian Refugee Painting will be able to see at first hand the restoration work taking place.

For more information about viewing the restoration email liz.timmins@folkestone-tc.gov.uk or call **01303 257946**.

