

# FINCHCOCKS

*Goudhurst, Kent*

Perhaps it was the strange name, or perhaps the poor June weather, or simply that the Dover Society members do not like long journeys by coach but, our excellent Social Secretary kept on worrying about the trip being 'undersubscribed'. Indeed there were only about 20 takers for what turned out to be a most memorable and enjoyable trip.

The journey to Finchcocks' estate was delightful. The driver meandered along the lesser roads and lanes of Kent letting us enjoy the pleasantly green, well framed countryside with its gentle hills and prosperous-looking valleys. We arrived at Finchcocks on time.

Mrs Burnett, the co-owner, met us and, after a welcome coffee break, gave us a brief, but informative, lecture on the Finchcocks family who had acquired the estate, built the country house, and given their name to the area. When the Burnetts took the building over it had been serving as a school, and after alterations, such as removing 12 washbasins from certain rooms, they turned it into an intriguing and entertaining pianoforte museum.

Entertaining indeed, Richard Burnett co-owner, curator, concert pianist and talented lecturer first explained, and then demonstrated upon various types of virginals, spinets, clavichords, chamber organ, musical boxes, British and continental pianos which had been built from the 17th century onwards. The designers sought after tone quality and quantity or volume as they strove to keep up with ever-growing audiences and, consequently, ever larger concert halls. Many ingenious devices were added to the keyboard to control the behaviour of the strings so that the tone colour could be altered. The outstanding item of the morning was a performance of Mozart's "Turkish Rondo" played upon a piano built about 1814 by Johann Fritz of Vienna. This involved a moderator to alter the tone colour, a bassoon—a strip of parchment pressed on the strings to give a rasping sound—and a padded beater. The latter was used to strike at the sound board from underneath, whilst at the same time three bells were struck and a strip of brass fell on the strings to create a cymbals clash. All these "additions" have to be worked by the pianist using knees or feet, but in the hands of an expert they produced a glorious clashing sound when used—rather reminiscent of the steam organs we used to hear at fairgrounds.

Thus passed a most informative and entertaining hour and we went on to lunch. The optimistic among us braved the June weather and picnicked in the gardens. After lunch we wandered around the garden for a while admiring both the planted sections and the modern "wilderness section" to allow native grasses, flowers and insects to survive. It was rather cool, however, and the party sought the warmth of the coach. We had thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and willingly returned an hour earlier than planned.

On the way home our General Secretary thanked Lyn for arranging such an interesting expedition—and also the coach driver for the selection of the route. Our expert Social Secretary need not have worried about being "undersubscribed" though. On the way home Jeremy and Sheila Cope—our raffle experts—produced their little yellow bag, organised a raffle, and this, added to the fares, covered all expenses and left the Dover Society about £8.00 to the good.

Why all this talk about money? Well, if you ask the Treasurer to write about a trip what else do you expect?

*K. W. BERRY*