

Marsh and Hoe: THE NOVEMBER MEEETING

MERRIL LILLEY

ON 17TH NOVEMBER Dover Society members were fortunate to hear two excellent speakers on local places of interest.

Dick Bolton entertained us with a talk on the churches of Romney Marsh. he made an introductory sweep through history, explaining the development of the Marsh and the founding of the earliest churches, before moving on to a detailed examination of churches to be visited on the Marsh today. There are 14 ancient churches, of which only one is redundant and, in addition, there are 9 ruins.

"Evil in winter, grievous in summer
and never good" William Lambard
and

"As Egypt is the gift of the Nile
This level tract has by the bounty of
the sea
Been by degrees added to the land

So that I may not without reason call it
- A Gift of the Sea".

William Camden

Similarly, in the second half of the evening, Matthew Shepherd, of the WCCP, gave an overall history of the site before focusing on the wonder of Samphire Hoe today and treating us to a "year of flowers" on slides.

From 31 species of local plants originally introduced to the site, there are now 118, the greatest surprise appearance being the orchids, a profusion of common spotted and just 3 rare spider orchids. Their exact location remains Mathew's secret!

A few shrubs have appeared, not always welcome; buddleia, willow dogwood and sea buckthorn. Wildlife increases gradually; butterflies, spiders, dragonflies, moths, grasshoppers and crickets. Countless birds make migration stops. The occasional vole or weasel is sighted.

Since April 1997, the official opening, Samphire Hoe, now with toilets, office, maps, signs and seats of driftwood, has attracted 40,000 visitors.

Matthew, too, ended with a quotation,

"Enjoy the earth gently, for if it is
damaged, it cannot be repaired".

Our chairman welcomed Matthew, a newcomer to Dover and thanked him for his graphic, enthusiastic and knowledgeable address.



OLD ROMNEY CHURCH, from the East

Dick gave a fascinating account of 13 churches, with lots of local anecdotes and references, details of architecture, stonework and interiors, spending a little more time on his favourites, like New Romney, venue for film-makers (Dr Syn) and Lydd, the "Cathedral of the Marsh", where he also included intriguing snippets from the tombstones. In all cases he illustrated his points with appropriate slides and, where possible, followed these with a John Piper painting of the same scene.

He ended with a dramatic Piper painting of one of the ruins and with two opposing quotations about the Marsh.