

THE CHRISTMAS FEAST 1997.....LEO WRIGHT

The Christmas Feast on the 13th December was the warm-hearted occasion it has always been - and not only because the heating was on! The attendance was up to the usual number, approaching a hundred.

We could not hear anything of the Chairman's opening words - they never thought of acoustics in 1130 A.D. when the Refectory was built - but we knew we were welcoming the Mayor of Dover and the French visitors from the Calais Accueil and the Association France-Grande Bretagne and we did.

The Refectory has been immaculately decorated and cleaned, with appropriate chandeliers and the one hundred years of portraits re-hung. The new caterer has made his mark and the accueil of the waitresses was exemplary.

The only disappointment was the absence of Roderick Spencer and his singers, unavoidably engaged elsewhere. However, Ken Palmer and Vice-President, Lilian Kay, at the shortest notice, led the singing of carols admirably. If the singing of The Twelve Days of Christmas was indeed a competition, then I think our table won - but then, we had Colonel Bolton, Captain Lefebvre of Seafrance Renoir and Captain Levy on our table.

A splendid evening - thanks once again to Joan and Dick for all their efforts.

Of Creeks and Islands: THE JANUARY MEETING

PETER BENNETT

KENT'S LONG DISTANCE FOOTPATH - The Saxon Way - closely follows the shoreline of Roman Times for a distance of 140 miles.

In our first talk Christopher Wade, with the help of his own excellent slides, took us in imagination from Princess Pocahontas's tomb, in St. George's Churchyard at Gravesend, to a pretty Regency terrace at Herne Bay.

Soon we were alongside Kent's first canal locks and the ill-fated Gravesend to Chatham Canal. By the time it was completed, its military purpose, as a by-pass for the Thames Estuary, was no longer relevant. It failed as a canal and now carries a railway track.

We changed direction for a better view and took the high path, the Norrad, over Northward Hill, across the Hoo peninsula, looking down on Pip's marshes and the bird sanctuary. At Cooling we saw the castle and in the churchyard the multiple graves

mentioned in Great Expectations.

The Medway repair yard, the yachting marina and the Whittington Stones soon appeared, the latter marking a City of London boundary since 1204.

We paused at the West Door of Rochester Cathedral to consider the origin of the Catapala tree which has stood (well, leaned!) there for 190 years, probably planted by a pious pilgrim.

The twists and turns of the path by the River Swale mean that a seven mile journey becomes twenty miles following the creeks. Did you know that King James II was seized by fifty fishermen at Elmley?and what about the Chetney Lazarette, an uncompleted quarantine station?

Christopher Wade's enthusiasm enlivened every minute of his talk. He is team leader of KCC Rights of Way group and his work coincides with his interests.



There was a change in the programme for the evening, owing to the ill-health of the scheduled speaker. We were fortunate that Professor Brian May of the Ramsgate Society, and his wife Brenda, were able to step in to give the second talk. Their subject was "Ramsgate:

some problems and possibilities".

The Ramsgate Society is taking the lead, among several voluntary groups, in a programme to revive the town. To focus their activities they have produced a paper to help define these "problems and possibilities."

Ramsgate in the past was a watering place, attracting the famous, fashionable and royal visitors who stayed in elegant Regency houses. Secondly, it has been important as a port, and garrison town in wartime since Napoleonic times and, thirdly, a popular fishing, yachting and seaside resort in peacetime.

What are its key features today? asked Professor May.

While there is unemployment and social and economic deprivation, there are signs of regeneration of the port and ferry services and of the infrastructure of communications and business. Finance is available, as it is a European Development area.

He defined the problems as follows: a poor image, low morale and confidence, local authority dominance and weak

project delivery. Among the possibilities he mentioned enlightened partnerships, revised values, destination attractions and heritage priority.

The Ramsgate Society has been running a campaign programme yearly from 1996, building awareness of the town's heritage, founding a town magazine, holding an Image Survey and Image Award Scheme and, this year, a Revival Campaign.

Brenda showed slides of volunteers, suitably dressed, representing famous visitors or residents of the town, such as Jane Austen, Vincent van Gogh and Elizabeth Fry, who have all appeared in the on-going summertime Costumed Walks about Ramsgate.

Our Chairman thanked the speakers for their excellent lectures and Brenda for showing the slides.

DEADLINE

FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The last date for the receipt of copy for issue No. 32 will be **Monday 15th June**.

The Editor welcomes contributions and interesting drawings or photographs.

"Paper copy" should be typed at double spacing - if it must be hand written please write clearly and at wide line spacing.

Accurate fully proof-read "copy" on computer discs is most welcome - almost all types can be handled - but a prior phone call to 01304 205254 to confirm would be helpful.

Publication in the Newsletter does not imply the Society's agreement with any views expressed nor does the Society accept responsibility for any statements made. All published material remains the copyright of its authors, artists or photographers.

Society Badges

The wearing of a Society Badge reminds the general public (who really do have eyes to see) that the Society is a viable and energetic non-political voice for Dover. The beautiful little enamelled Lapel or Brooch Badges are to Philomena Kennedy's original design, in black on a white ground, surrounded by a gold line defining the shape of the badge and are available from the Treasurer, in either type, for £2 post free.

Just contact the Treasurer, Jennifer Gerrard, at 77 Castle Avenue, or phone her on 206579 (with a cheque or P.O. if possible) and she will very quickly ensure that a badge is in your hands.