

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 Lefebre 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.