

THE JANUARY MEETING

Reported by Derek Leach

ON 17 JANUARY AT THE FIRST MEETING OF the Society in the new millennium and the new century we were treated to an appropriate feast of two presentations given by respected senior members of the Society, both of whom are experts in their field. The first was by Jack Woolford taking us back to the first millennium. Despite gaining a double first in History and spending a lifetime as a professional historian, Jack had never made a presentation to the Society before. On this special occasion he was supported by his three children and their spouses. Jack was followed by Budge Adams, a lifelong Dovorian, a keen observer of the town's buildings and its people and an avid collector of local photographs who gave us glimpses of the town in the last century.

A Thousand Years Ago: The End of the First Millennium A talk by Jack Woolford

Jack began by telling us that there is no such thing as history:- only documents and artefacts and historians who want you to believe their explanations of cause and effect. As Lord Balfour said: 'It is not history which repeats itself but historians who repeat one another', though this should be qualified: 'Copying from one book is cheating; copying from two books is research'. Since Jack had used twenty-two different sources including many via the Internet he could not be accused of cheating!

Jack told us that as far as Britain is concerned, written history began with incorporation into the Roman Empire between the first and fifth centuries AD. Between the time when the Roman legions withdrew from Britain in 410 to defend Rome and the last Roman Emperor was deposed in 476, Angles and Saxons, not to mention Jutes, had invaded, conquered and occupied the south and

within two hundred years dominated what was to become 'England' at the expense of the previous 'natives'.

An important influence was the landing in Thanet in 597AD of Pope Gregory the Great's missionary, Augustine.

Control was in perpetual dispute between the warlords of Kent, Essex, Sussex, Mercia and Northumbria etc. but their competition to be top dog meant that eventually someone would be top dog and incidentally create a united kingdom. In the eighth century, victory in the wars for the kingship of England appeared to be going to Offa of Mercia, the man who caused the defensive dyke to be built against the Welsh. The title "Bretwalda" - overlord - was in constant dispute.

At the end of the ninth century there was yet another sequence of raids and invasions, followed by occupation and conquest by the Vikings or Danes. Viking expansion may have been triggered by global warming, which melted the ice caps, facilitating island hopping.

By this time England was invasion-worthy as a wealthy country with a



Alfred the Great

14 healthy balance of trade. Farming fertility made possible the production of surplus food to maintain a tenth of the population in towns by the year 1000. There was a market for land for urban investors with rural land to sell. Every town had a mint and coins were minted, melted down and re-minted by the million. Danegeld, an early stage in the history of land (not income) tax, tried to buy off the Danes when valour failed. Not being stupid they came back for more.



Ethelred coin

Initially, in the eighth century, the Vikings raided for loot: the monasteries and abbeys of Lindisfarne, Jarrow and Iona, etc, were wealthy as well as holy. In the ninth century some began to settle and the Danelaw, which Alfred the Great had to recognise, and to which he, too, paid Danegeld, covered possibly a third of 'Englaland'. Alfred's kingdom of Wessex gradually, notably under Athelstan, took the lead in the counter-offensive but the other kingdoms continued to fight amongst themselves.

In the tenth century the Holy Roman alliance of papacy and empire, of archbishops and bishops with kings and dukes was replicated in England. In 973

Edgar was anointed 'king of all Britain' by Archbishop Wulfstan at his coronation in Bath, from which the current coronation ceremony substantially derives. Successors, Edmund and Edgar, Eadwig and Ethelred were all 'kings of England', although in 955 Eadwig failed to appear at his coronation because he was in bed with somebody's mother and her daughter at the same time!

So, in 999, the millennium in England prospect was, short of miracles, nothing to look forward to. King Ethelred, who succeeded because his elder brother Edward was murdered in 978, faced the climactic transition from Danish raids to Danish conquest. In 987 Somerset and Devon were raided, in 981 E. Anglia and Kent; Kent again in 991,994 and 999. Having ravaged Northumbria and the Isle of Man in the year 1000, Ethelred paid £24,000 in danegeld in 1002 and then caused Danes in London to be massacred. Sweyn Forkbeard invaded in 1003 and in 1012 Essex and E. Anglia changed sides. Ethelred, who had vainly sought neutrality from Normandy by marrying the Duke's sister, Emma, in 1002, fled there in 1013, returned when King Sweyn died in 1014 and died himself in 1016 when Canute became king, not only of England but of most of Scandinavia too.

Consequently Ethelred had a bad write-up in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 1010: the Terry Sutton of the day reported: 'And when they were in the east, the English army was kept in the west. And when they were in the south, our army was in the north'. His wife, Emma of Normandy, married Cnut and her sons by both husbands inherited: Harold Harefoot by Canute and Edward the Confessor by Ethelred.

The Danes - or Vikings - were not nice people. Having extorted £48,000 danegeld in 1012, they pelted Archbishop Alphege of Canterbury with bones and ox-heads and finished him off with an axe. His font

is in River church. However, they accepted existing English boundaries including the divisions into shires and hundreds (like the former kingdom of Kent) in the ninth and tenth centuries as well as their coinage, courts, taxes, reeves, and eventually, churches and priests. After the raids it was not surprising that there should have been a monastic revival in which they were converted. Moreover, because they, too, spoke a dialect of Old German they were akin to their Anglo-Saxon subjects and created a lazy man's lingua franca, English, which has little grammar and no unbreakable rules.

What was life like for the 'common' people in 1000AD? In about 1020 a scribe in the scriptorium at Canterbury produced the Julius Work Calendar which, month by month, depicts the mainly agricultural activities throughout the year.

Although they were worn out and arthritic by age 50, the million or so Anglo-Saxons were tall and healthy, with worn but sound teeth. It was a very smelly time, created by both animals and humans with little personal hygiene.

Slavery existed and serfdom where labour was given to the local lord in exchange for protection. Houses were wooden and thatched with holes for windows and chimneys.

As for diet, they had no sugar; there was fish and meat - beef, mutton, pork, poultry, game and venison; bacon, tripe, black pudding, sausages and pies; fruit and some vegetables (but not spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels, runner beans, potatoes or tomatoes). Tobacco was not to appear for several hundred years. Wine was produced and was not much stronger than beer: sweet & porridgy but, unlike water, safe because it was boiled. In the Domesday Book of 1086 there were 38 vineyards south of Ely. Every year there was a hungry time when stores of food had been used and before the new harvest. There were feasts at Easter, Whitsun, Christmas and at ploughing, harvest and haymaking times.

In the autumn there was pannage when animals were allowed to roam freely to feed on acorns, beechnuts and chestnuts. There was hunting (but no



SEPTEMBER

38



PAGANS AND PANNAGE

Julian Calendars

OCTOBER

39



WAR GAMES

rabbits pre-1066) for the rich which was a useful training for war.

Crazy bread was made from poppies, hemp and darnel; hallucinogens were made from ergot on rye; agrimony was boiled in milk for virility; eggs, wine and fennel were used for chilblains; ashes of burned bees for baldness; leeches for bloodletting. Cauterising was performed with red hot pokers and trepanning was practised - drilling holes in the skull to release evil spirits.

For entertainment there was music and games including chess, backgammon and noughts and crosses.

With the triumph of Christianity there were fine church buildings and monasteries complete with dormitories, refectories, libraries, chapter houses, infirmaries and scriptorium. Leper hospitals existed. Domesday Book (1086) also records 5624 watermills.

In concluding his detailed research with fifty-two illustrations, Jack compared life now with life in 1000 and concluded that there were obvious differences, but these were mainly technological. Jack thought we should feel kinship with and praise these unfamous men and women - the fathers and mothers that begat us.

A Dover Miscellany *A talk by Budge Adams*

The second speaker of the evening was Budge Adams who treated the audience to another selection from his 1800 photographs of Dover - mostly taken during the past century which Budge lived through except for the first ten years. He explained that, unlike Jack Woolford, he was not an historian, merely an antiquarian.

Billed as a Dover Miscellany, Budge took us first down the River Dour. Starting in River we

enjoyed views of the Dour by Crabble Corn Mill, the river flood meadows at Buckland before the Conqueror Paper Mill was built and several views of Buckland Bridge. He explained that the bridge is still in essence the original 1790 construction. The photographs included a deserted bridge except for ladies in their Edwardian Sunday best walking in complete safety from traffic, a horse bus and a crowded scene dominated by trams. The view downstream from the bridge had hardly changed. Looking toward the Cherry Tree bridge we recognised the former Co-op building, but the well-kept market gardens along the riverside have long since disappeared. Some recognised St Barnabas Church built in the last century but never completed and demolished after the war. Budge then took us to Charlton with a photograph showing the newly-built Charlton Church towering over the ancient Old Charlton Church, which was then demolished. We saw the Bridge Street bridge and what used to be on the Pioneer/B&Q site - not only the Dover Engineering Works which made the world-famous GATIC manhole covers, but the small terraced artisans' houses that made way for the works.

The river meadows of Maison Dieu Fields looked idyllic, but progress meant that Maison Dieu Road was built through them without apparently any local knowledge, since, as we saw, when Budge was young the road was subject to frequent



Lower Road, River