

# Society Outing

## Battle Abbey and Eastbourne - 18th July

Derek Donnelly

A beautiful morning to the start of the day as we made our separate ways to our coach pick up points around the town starting with 0745 at Kearsney. The coach was on time and so were all the passengers at all the pick-ups so Kevin, our driver for the day, was able to depart without any delay.

A nice country drive through to Tenterden, where we had a short stop, then on towards Battle, following the scenic route through the countryside. Once into East Sussex and as we came nearer to Battle we started to see strange figures dotted about in some of the villages and gardens along the way. When we drew up in the square in Battle they were all over the place, on benches, slumped outside shops, standing in shop windows and doors. Scarecrows! We had arrived on the last day of the Battle and East Sussex Annual Scarecrow Competition. This annual event is run for charity and lots of the locals take part, not as the scarecrows, but with their own dummies.

We were given a time to return to the coach and then everyone went off to have



Annual Battle and East Sussex  
Scarecrow Competition



Battle Abbey School

a look around or for a bit of refreshment. We had a quick cup of coffee and then went into Battle Abbey and had a leisurely look around. While walking through the grounds my brother-in-law came across a swarm of bees that had come out of one of the hives and was clustered on a small tree. He reported it to a member of staff who went to get the beekeeper before they flew off. Needless to say he didn't linger in that part of the garden for long but managed to get a photo of them which is here along with a couple of the scarecrows.

### A Little Bit of History

The Abbey takes its name from the town and was founded to commemorate the bloody battle that saw William the Conqueror assume control of England in 1066.

The high altar of the abbey church was reputedly on the spot where Harold died and is now marked by a special commemorative stone. Little remains of the original abbey buildings but its impressive gateway dominates the south end of Battle High Street.

The remaining cloisters, part of the west range, were leased to Battle Abbey School shortly after the first world war, and the school remains in occupancy to this day. Although referred to as 'Battle Abbey', it is actually named 'St Martin's Abbey'.

The Abbey was founded as a result of a vow made by William in an Abbey at St Valerie Sur Somme, before the sea crossing, in which he promised to establish a monastery free of Episcopal control if God granted him victory. The Chronicles of Battle Abbey, which date from around 1180, state it was "founded by the Conqueror in expiation for the sin involved in the conquest."

We re-joined the coach and set off for Eastbourne on a pleasant drive, via the country roads, and it wasn't long before more scarecrows appeared alongside the road as we neared Pevensy as they were holding their own scarecrow competition. Arriving in Eastbourne we were dropped off near the pier and given a time to return to the pick-up.

Everyone went off, some for a stroll along

the pier, others along the promenade and some in search of refreshment. We went along the pier, which is under repair from the fire that destroyed part of it, and headed towards the end. A bracing breeze helped us along but once seated in the lee we enjoyed the view along the seafront and watching the small boats and the people fishing.

We then went for a walk along the promenade, had some refreshment and afterwards sat on the promenade with an ice cream enjoying the weather.

Back to the coach and homeward bound along the coast road past Rye and then up towards the M20, where we met Operation Stack and were diverted down the old A20. It caused a slight delay for our journey but it made a change to see the old A20 just like it used to be on a Bank Holiday pre M20.

It only leaves me to say thank you to Patricia from all of us for organising yet another splendid day out in good company and our thanks to Kevin for getting us there and back safely.

## River Dour Partnership Jeremy Cope

As I reported in the July newsletter things had stalled but I am pleased to report we have formed a committee consisting of myself, Martina White, Anita Luckett, Deborah Gasking, Ray Newsam with Kirk Alexander and Sue Bradford from White Cliffs Countryside Partnership. I am very grateful to them all - the usual reliable volunteers prepared to put their hands up.

South East Rivers Trust, a charitable organisation, has secured funding to install a fish pass at Morrison's dam and one at Minnis Lane. We will be discussing this

project with the Trust and putting forward comment and ideas to try and ensure that there is a local input. Among other ideas we are working on are volunteer river wardens, publicising the Dour riverside walk and investigating painting the ornate ironwork on Barton Path just off Beaconsfield Avenue Bridge.

I went past the old pond at Morrisons. The pond and its banks are rich with riverside plants and I could not help but admire the bull rushes.