

Wilmington Society Annual Report 2018

Our first speaker after the AGM n February 2018, was Annie Kemkaren Smith, Curator of Leeds Castle. Annie gave us a fascinating account of the 900-year history of Leeds Castle from Norman stronghold, the private property of six Medieval Queens of England and a Palace used by Henry VIII. In the 1930s Leeds Castle was purchased by Lady Baillie who carried out much restoration and entertained High Society from London. At our May meeting Alan Payne gave us an illustrated talk entitled ‘Seaside Sauce’ which gave an interesting account of Donald McGill who became a leading pioneer of humorous seaside postcards. In July, Keith Whitmore gave a power-point presentation on Dartford’s old Shops and Businesses which brought back many memories of the town’s history. At the October meeting, Ted Hobday, the Head Guide at Brogdale National Fruit Collection gave us a detailed account of the huge national fruit collection near Faversham and he brought with him samples of apples of different varieties which we were able to divide up and pass around the room. A number of us were encouraged to visit the National Fruit Collection in the New Year.

Our Annual Outing was a City and Village tour of the ‘Mad Jack Fuller Trail’. Mad Jack Fuller was at one time High Sheriff of Sussex and a Member of Parliament for Southampton and later Sussex. He was also a philanthropist who built a number of follies in the Sussex countryside, some of which we viewed. Our coach journey through Sussex was very enjoyable but the pub at which we had morning coffee and lunch left a lot to be desired, not least because of the misinterpretation of our lunch orders and the steep steps to use the facilities!

The Annual BBQ and Walk was well attended with a number taking part in the walk and over thirty members enjoying the excellent BBQ lunch.

The Society has contributed to the cost of the planters placed under the four Village Gates and the floral displays provided have been excellent. There have been many other issues discussed, including proposals to expand capacity at local schools, and comments made to the appropriate authorities.

I recently came across my first Chairman’s Report to the Parish Assembly which was dated 9th April 2003 and gave a report of our activities during 2002. The items mentioned included a visit to ‘Station X’ at Bletchley Park; the positioning of the Village Map and suggestions made for improving the area outside the Memorial Hall.

After some sixteen years as Chairman of the Wilmington Society I have decided to stand down at the AGM in February 2019 and let someone else take over the leadership. I have very much enjoyed the privilege of being Chairman over the years and I am pleased to say a lot has been done by the Society to improve our Village, in close cooperation with the Parish Council. I could not have carried on for so long without the unfailing support of the other Committee members.

John Strachan, MBE, RD, Chairman