

## Village Echoes

### JUST A MINUTE!

As many may know the History Society has had to re-locate its archives following a change of archivist. Those involved in the relocation have been side-tracked by some of the archive contents especially the hand written minutes. On the surface they may seem dry but they offer a good way to trace the history of the Society and a window to village life in years gone by.

Although there was an earlier incarnation of the Society, it understandably ceased with the advent of the Second World War whilst other, more important, matters took precedence. A meeting was held in July 1964 of some 36 people to consider resurrecting the Group. It was unanimously agreed and the aims and rules were set down. Meetings would be held on the first Tuesday of the month, as is still the case, with an annual subscription of 5/-. At that first meeting, which 55 people attended, Mr Christopher Hussey, owner of Scotney Castle, was elected as President, an illustrious appointment indeed. Regular meetings took place and after the first year the Society was in profit to the tune of £5.19s.

The Society started to accrue a collection of documents and artefacts to be saved and protected. In July 1969 it was presented with a shoemaker's vice previously used by the village 'Snob'. Another random minute noted a surprise visitor, an 'Arab from the court of the late King Ibu Saud of Saudi Arabia' – no explanation was given!

It has been surprising to discover notable names in the list of speakers, including much published local historian, the late Cecil Pile of Cranbrook. However, speakers didn't have to be illustrious to create interest. Many of the members had had first hand memories of the last war and an evening in June 1966 heard from an air raid officer, the billeting officer, a special constable, the work of the village first aid post and items from the ambulance log. Apparently, recordings were made of the evening but its whereabouts are now sadly unknown. This meeting was so successful that it was followed up two years later with memories of the Relief of Mafeking in 1900, experiences as a Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse working at Lidwells in the First World War and the difficulties with harvesting hops during the war periods.



Regular outings were organised including one to Sissinghurst Castle by invitation of the late Nigel Nicolson who gave a talk and personally conducted a tour of the buildings, including the family's private apartments. Members were then given the freedom to roam the garden. This was all before it became a National Trust property.



Another memorable outing was to Lullingstone Roman Villa when the members were guided by Lt. Col. Geoffrey Meates, one of the leaders of the team who carried out the original modern excavations between 1949 and 1961. He supervised the cleaning of the mosaics in 1955.

It was noted that on one occasion the speaker failed to turn up because he put the wrong date in his diary. This happened to the present Group recently but we were unable to find out the reason for his absence! The evening in November 1967 was saved by Gordon Batchelor, our late Chairman, who produced a projector and slides and gave an impromptu talk on an archaeological dig that he and his family had taken part in. This led to an outing later in the year to see the site in Stonegate, a happy outcome and the speaker did rebook for a later meeting. Gordon gave many talks to the Society, many notes of which have survived, including one on the Beresfords of Bedgebury, which preceded his later book.

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