

At a recent meeting your Committee agreed that for a trial period they would issue a Society bulletin. There will be no formal pattern to it and we hope to produce it twice a year.

Recently three of us visited the Archive above the Information Centre at Totnes. We thoroughly recommend a visit. It contains a great many photographs, mostly of the South Hams including over a hundred of Ringmore. Many of these are already in our archive and some of us will remember Pam and Stan Brunskill giving the Society an interesting talk illustrated by some of our slides. We ordered copies of photographs that we don't hold and hope to have them as part of a future day's display of some of the more interesting items from our archive. A fascinating discovery from our visit was that Mrs. Price, one of the helpers with the Totnes collection, is a Hoopell: a family whose connections with Ringmore and Bigbury go back many centuries.

We have recently had two excellent evenings on 'The Three Hares' and 'Elizabeth the First as an Icon'. These were two of our very best evenings. Remember the outing to Fursdon House on May 16<sup>th</sup>!

As Terry Pearson was speaking on Elizabeth, we might have pondered the responsibility of historians for our views of the past and whether or not they importantly shape our lives and destiny. In particular, there are the ways in which various historians have portrayed her as fervently Protestant or politically ambivalent about religion or fundamentally Catholic in the old English and not the Roman tradition. Much of this debate seems to become relevant in succeeding centuries even, perhaps, leading to civil wars; and today may be relevant for Anglicans.

And then the question of her marriage...Why did she not marry? Was she traumatised by an early sexual assault by the future Duke of Northumberland? Was there no Protestant prince of equivalent political stature? Would marriage have diminished her own political and constitutional standing? Or was she really not a proper woman as a Venetian ambassador once famously claimed in a despatch back to Venice! And behind all these questions, layers and layers of other questions...What political significance did her 'virginity' have? What dangers would marriage have posed for her, the 'political' nation, the Church and the succession? How did her refusal to marry shape the seventeenth and subsequent centuries? In what sense, if any, do any of these questions matter? Have the answers given, the reams and reams of argumentative prose, the meticulous research, any importance for us save as intellectual exercise, the satisfying of curiosity about previous generations or the material for biographies and historical novels of immensely varying quality? You may well think these questions don't matter, that historians are mere observers of the past. But ponder how politicians, mostly with scant knowledge of history, often use history to bolster their political stances. Why, at the University of Kiev in Russian Communist times, were many Russian historians beavering away at research into the seventeenth century English Civil Wars?

Questions and discussion after Dr. Greeves' talk on the Three Hares revealed amazement at the work and effort that had gone into his search for an answer to the 'Hares' enigma. This wonderful source material : what was it about ? Why was it where it was ? From there it was an easy step to thinking about source material in general. What sort of sources do we trust ? How analytical do we have to be about the past before we become convinced of truth? Is there a hierarchy of importance within source material? Is the written of more importance than the visual or the oral ? How does the historian go about validating and giving precedence to each type?

Shortly some very valued members of the Society are leaving the village. They have given incalculable time to the Society and helped to bring it to the excellent village society that it is : Jacqueline and Mike Patterson and Geof Dykes. Anne Dykes, too, has been much treasured as a regular attender at meetings and as a behind the scenes helper. It is not mere convention but with deep conviction that we should thank them and wish them all happiness. For Anne and Geof taking the plane might be a step too far but perhaps we might hope that Jacqueline and Mike will join us sometimes at our events.

A few last thoughts : firstly, the Committee (in particular Barry Old) does try to contact people moving into the village with a view to their joining the Society. If you think that the Society is a GOOD THING , perhaps you might also do your part in recruiting new members. And the matter of future speakers : if you know of anyone we might ask to speak to us , please let a Committee member know. Or if any member has a relevant topic on which they would speak, please don't keep it to yourself. Finally, please let Dennis Collinson have any comments on or criticisms of this Bulletin venture by telephone or when we meet : at the Tyntesfield evening, at Fursdon or whenever.