

## SAUNDERSFOOT AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The January meeting of the Saundersfoot and District Historical Society was preceded by the Society's annual general meeting at which the officers and committee were re-elected with the exception of Mr Doug Havard who stepped down. He was warmly thanked for his hard work over many years. Mrs Ann Eion was elected in his stead.

The subject of the monthly lecture was 'Village Memories' and the large audience was entertained by the recollections of Messrs Duncan Hilling, Peter Williams and Don Ellis, the latter standing in for Mr Gerald Rogers who was unwell.

Saundersfoot was mining village. It came into being for the export of coal through its purpose-built harbour and at its peak the colliery at Bonnaville's Court employed around 1300 people with a dominant influence on the local economy; that economy was largely self sufficient with the village supplied with five bakers, four butchers, a slaughterhouse at Brooklands, three filling stations, and an undertaker whose small mortuary was where the Argosy now stands.

A number of village pastimes and entertainments were described: sports at Coppet Hall with motor-bike races with bookmakers and prize money, an eisteddfod organised by the Congregational Chapel, a male voice choir, the infamous treacle bun race, longshore sports, greasy pole and swimming races, local football and, of course, dances and concerts in the Drill Hall.

At one time the village was policed by a sergeant and a constable and while motor cars were few it was not unusual for men to be seen bicycling the wrong way down the one-way streets. That was alright though – they were locals.

Some of the older types of property were touched upon, in particular, clom cottages. These were small, often thatched places, with walls of thick mud or clay mixed usually with straw and sealed with limewash. Such cottages, now long since demolished, could be found on St Bride's Hill, off the Ridgeway and in Stammers Road.

Coal was brought from the inland collieries to the harbour by means of a narrow gauge railway. Initially the coal drams were horse drawn but a small steam engine was acquired in 1874 for the run below the Incline to the harbour and on through the tunnels to Wiseman's Bridge and Stepside. A second engine was introduced for the line above the Incline in 1915. Local pilots competed with one another for the work, and fees, for bringing coasters into the harbour.

The chairman of the Society, Mrs Mary Cavell, warmly thanked the three speakers for their informative and entertaining talks.

The next lecture meeting of the Society will be at 7.30, Wednesday 18 February at the Regency Hall when Susan Baldwin will speak on Tudor Tenby