

SAUNDERSFOOT AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

For its last lecture of the 2016-17 programme the Society welcomed back David Dando whose subject had as ever an enigmatic title, on this occasion 'The Seas that launched a Thousand Dreams.'

The title was a clever play on words for his subject was the late night shipping forecast by each sea area and to put the audience in the right frame of mind an extract from the theme music, Ronald Binge's 'Sailing By' was played. Forties was represented by the Bell Rock lighthouse, a remarkable feat of engineering by Robert Stevenson completed in 1811. Stevenson was a noted builder of lighthouses, constructing many of the best known and complex of their type, including Point of Ayre in 1818 and Cape Wrath in 1828. The story for Cromarty was the grave of one Sandy Woods who, anticipating the Day of Judgement and wishing to be first in line, was buried in 1690 outside the churchyard wall. A trip across the North Sea followed, to North and South Utsire to discover that the actress Marilyn Monroe's father emigrated from there to America to seek his fortune.

Back across the Sea to Tyne, Dogger and Fisher to hear the story of Grace Darling whose father was the keeper of the Longstone lighthouse on the Farne Islands. Grace's courageous rescue of shipwrecked mariners was later used as an emblem of female bravery and daring by the Suffragette movement for whom she became a poster girl. Humber was illustrated by the bizarre tale of the Russian fleet's attack on Hull trawlers in 1904; on route to engage the Japanese navy many thousands of miles away the Russians mistook the fishing boats for their enemy and opened fire. At Cromer the statue of Henry Blogg commemorates the most decorated man in RNLI history. And the coastline in that area attested to a sea intent on reclaiming the land.

Dover bore witness to the damage to the old town wrought by German long range artillery. In all some 216 people lost their lives when over 2,500 shells landed, usually without any warning. Wight was for writers, Portland for stone and Plymouth sailors and explorers. At Lundy we met the pirates of the De Marisco family whose bold attempt on the king's life in 1242 led to execution and their elimination from the island. Fastnet, the teardrop of Ireland, gave way to the rough seas of Biscay and on to Fitzroy, named after the founder of the Meteorological Office and former captain of the Beagle. The dangerous Malin Head, graveyard of planes, submarines, ships and even tanks was followed by Hebrides and the story of Flora MacDonald and the Jacobite rising. It also gave us the comic tale of the SS Politician, wrecked off the Isle of Eriksay in the Outer Hebrides and later dramatised in the film Whisky Galore. The tour of the shipping forecast ended with Fairisle sweaters of a possible Moorish pattern and wrecked galleons of the Spanish Armada.

Our speaker was warmly thanked by our chair, Mrs. Mary Cavell, for an unusual and entertaining lecture. While a varied and attractive programme is being put together for the 2017-18 season members are reminded that our trip to the town hall and museum in Pembroke, and then on to Monkton Priory for a tour and tea, has been arranged for Wednesday 17 May. Members are advised to be at the town hall for 2.00.

The Society will be mounting an exhibition with the title 'A Saundersfoot Miscellany' in the Regency Hall between 10 and 13 August. Members willing to perform stewarding duties should pass on their names to our chair.