

SAUNDERSFOOT AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Following the successful AGM in January a large audience of members and guests gathered to welcome our speaker, Gary Davies, whose illustrated subject was Artefacts of Industrial Saundersfoot.

For over two hundred years Saundersfoot, and the nearby villages of Wiseman's Bridge and Amroth, have been the sites of significant industrial activity centred upon the mining of coal and iron ore and associated works. Old photographs can reveal the exterior look of a place but it is the discovered artefacts that provide the detail. When the ground is broken and the soil disturbed pieces of an industrial age come to light and allow us to understand better our shared past. The coal folds at Saundersfoot, Coppet Hall and Wiseman's Bridge are examples of process: mined coal would be stored in large bunkers at these locations until a sufficient quantity had been amassed for export. Flat bottomed schooners would beach on the tide, the ballast quickly tipped onto the sand and replaced by coal; the whole strenuous operation undertaken by hand.

A number of unusual illustrations revealed the workings of the iron ore 'patches' between Wiseman's Bridge and Amroth where a section of the cliff would be mined, often linked by tunnels lined with shaped stone. Winter-stocked ore would be brought to the beach in summer along temporary tramways, the tracks of which would in earlier times be locally made but later could be bought in a variety of shaped sections.

A number of very early photographs showed clearly the development of Saundersfoot, though the overall shape of the village appeared to have been established by the mid-nineteenth century. A panorama of the village centre around 1860 showed Cambrian Terrace under construction and the Milford Arms still in existence. Another unusual image revealed the Fan Pit with the Waddle exterior fan clearly in operation, one of the earliest, if not the earliest, application of this machinery. A final photograph Bonville's Court colliery posed something of a mystery: was the stone keep of Bonville's Castle destroyed by the mining industry or was it simply submerged under the spoil and remains there to this day?

Our speaker was warmly thanked for a fascinating and informative lecture by Mrs Ann Einon. The next meeting of the Society will take place on Wednesday, 20 February at 7.30 in the Regency Hall, Saundersfoot when Dr Llewellyn Davies will present 'In the Footsteps of Richard Fenton – an historical tour'. Non-members are as ever welcome to attend on the night.