

Romance of Pub & Inn signs

At the April meeting of the Herne & Broomfield Local History Group, David Harper gave a fascinating talk to the group called 'The Romance of Pub and Inn Signs', which he accompanied by a series of very colourful slides. He said that his interest had started many years ago in the 1950's and 60's when he began collecting the cards that Whitbread's used to produce to illustrate and publicise their chain of public houses.

He explained that by the late 17th Century it had become quite common for owners of Ale and Beer houses to advertise their wares, to a still widely illiterate public in the form of a sign hung outside with a picture such as a bunch of grapes or a tankard of ale on to it and from there the wide variety of signs that we recognise today originated.

Over the past 15 to 20 years he has been researching the stories and legends which lay behind these pictures, which could almost be regarded as a pictorial local history of their own, by visiting the premises (many of which have now closed), county archives and talking to older local inhabitants. This has culminated in him publishing a very detailed book covering 200+ signs found in Kent and East Sussex on this subject. Copies of this are available at The Fleur de Lis Tourist Information Centre in Faversham price £14.95.

Alan Dilnot, Chairman, thanked him for giving a very interesting talk and for stimulating some ideas as to where other areas of local history could be found. (He asked members did you know, for instance, that the 'Upper Red Lion' in Herne was once known as "The Five Bells" and why it change its name?) This and many other interesting facts about the area he said were going to be included in the history compilation that the Herne & Broomfield history project group were working on at present. He would always be glad to receive any other interesting facts and pictures of the local area which could be included.