



Park Farm Community Cherry Orchard Group AGM Followed by Talk on Historical Agricultural Buildings

At 7.30pm on Wednesday 25th February, the Cherry Orchard Group held their 6th AGM meeting at Lynsted church.

On entering the building, attendees were instantly impressed by the newly refurbished facility with new chairs providing the flexibility to set the meeting up in adequate space and comfort.

Guests were offered light refreshment before settling down to the business part of the evening, whereby Tom English was voted in as Chairman, and Lizzie Spilman as Vice Chairman for another year. All other members of the committee remained the same along with their individual responsibilities. Tom's Chairman report can be read in this Newsletter, under separate cover.

Formalities done, David Carder displayed his excellent knowledge and understanding of different types of historical, agricultural buildings starting with timber framed, boxed barns, with aisles for storage, which were predominantly built in Essex, Kent and Devon and used for threshing and winnowing corn. The oldest example of such a building is Cressing Temple barn, in Essex, that dates from the late 13th century and was built for the Knights Templar. There are examples in Lenham and Faversham with Frinsbury, at one time boasting the longest building, until a third of it was burnt down. Brook Barn, built in 1370, has amazingly clean carpentry and can be visited by the public. Barns were also brick-built such as Westenhanger barn in Folkestone dated 1575.

David then turned his attention to Oast Houses, which were used for drying hops from Flanders in the 14th century until we started producing them in England in 16th century, harvesting them in September. Golford in Cranbrook, built in 1740 is the oldest example in the county. Hops would be brought in, dried above a furnace, cooled and then pressed into hop pockets or sacks. The rotating cowl, on the top of the roof, which turns away from the wind to produce a draught, was introduced in 1790's. Round kilns, that you can also spot locally, were built between 1815 and 1875, when they reverted to square structures. Examples of such oasts can be seen in Chiddingstone, Sissinghurst, Sandling, Bluebell Hill and Beltring hop farm and of course, Scuttington Manor.

Watermills, used to grind grain, were the next topic of discussion, with the Domesday Book of 1086 recording 352 of them, in Kent, in 137 locations along the Downs and the north-kent coast. The oldest working mill, dating from 1797, is in Sheffield and is a Snuff mill. The Cornlaw of 1815, protected English corn,

resulting in high returns for landowners, as corn couldn't be imported. David did go on to explain the different types of mill for example 'undershot' where the mill sits in the stream and the water goes under and 'overshot' where the water goes over the wheel, along with 'highbreast', all of which convert the energy of flowing water into power. The oldest example in Kent can be seen in Crabble, near Dover. The existing building was constructed in 1812 but there has been a mill on this site since 13th century.

David also gave us a background history to windmills, which were originally used in the Middle East as far back as 600 A.D. in Iraq but the first reference to one in England was in Bury St Edmunds, with Canterbury using one in 1200A.D. Fine examples can be seen in Chillenden, Cranbrook, Ashford and Herne Bay amongst other places.

David's presentation was extremely informative and interesting. Personally, I am far more observant now, as I drive round our local lanes, with a greater awareness of the wonderful history that our countryside holds within some of its old, agricultural buildings.

Report by Ann Haffenden