

## **REPORT ON THE OCTOBER MEETING**

The speaker at this well-attended meeting in Bosham Village Hall was **ANDY THOMAS**. His talk was entitled '**LEWES AND BONFIRE NIGHT**'. He is one of Britain's most experienced presenters and authors on 'unexplained mysteries', cover-ups and the paranormal. On this occasion he was a most enthusiastic speaker about the history of Lewes and its folklore traditions.

Andy was born and brought up in this historical town of Sussex and he took us on an interesting tour through the centuries to the present-day. The slides that accompanied his talk were excellent and portrayed the atmosphere in the town on the occasion of its annual and enormous Bonfire Night festivities. He showed the many 'Mounds' in the town which could have been there since the Iron Age. HLAEWAS (which means HILLS) was the old name for LEWES. There are the ruins of the Priory, the Grange Gardens and the Anne of Cleves Museum. Some walls are built using 'mathematical tiles' (to be economical), a 15<sup>th</sup> century bookshop and three churches all dedicated to St. John.

There is an imposing looking building housing the Law Courts and warehouses overlooking the River Ouse that were once part of a thriving shipbuilding industry have now been converted into luxury residences. To this day there are many regular street markets. The Harvey Brewery which started in 1790 is still surviving, despite opposition.

The Bonfire Night is a tradition dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century when between 1555 and 1557, seventeen men and women were burnt in the street. Wreaths are still laid at the War Memorial where the Protestant Martyrs were executed and at the same time to pay homage to those killed during the World Wars. There are seven Bonfire Societies - Borough, Cliffe, Commercial Square, Neville Juv., South Street, Southover and Waterloo and each provides major firework displays with the whole evening now being much more family friendly. It is an extremely noisy event – wear ear defenders– 40-50,000 people attend, lots of pyrotechnics, barrels of fire races, massive bonfires and a huge firework tableau, but it is well-managed, organized and maintained. If you want to go, you have to be there on 4<sup>th</sup> November and get a badge or membership card to participate.

The November meeting is on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 2.30pm when members will be pitting their wits in a Quiz.

Jennifer Fidler