

The speaker for the May meeting was Bill Avenell – a retired teacher of Geography who has always been interested in the mixture of science and superstition behind well-known sayings or folklore. His talk was entitled “Why was the Shepherd delighted?” Well, there could be many answers to that question – perhaps his wife had packed him a really excellent lunch that day or he had managed to account for all of his sheep and none had gone missing.

However, the answer that was given was all about weather lore and it turned out that ‘Red Sky at Night – Shepherd’s Delight’, ‘Red Sky in the Morning – Shepherd’s Warning’ is absolutely spot on! Bill talked about the causes of our weather in Britain, which include our position on the Earth, global winds and sea currents. He explained the origins of clouds and their types and the reasons for some of the sayings about clouds. He talked about rain, snow and hail.

He explained that people over the ages, growing crops, had obviously observed the weather with concern and that many of the sayings related to this, although some weren’t true. For example, it has never been recorded that there were forty days of rain after it rained on St. Swithin’s Day. Here is a saying you may not have heard before: ‘When in Bosham earwigs gather, be sure to follow lousy weather’. (Well, you won’t have heard of this – as Bill made it up!)

The Earth’s atmosphere contains air, water and dust particles that cause light rays from the sun to change direction as they pass through slightly different densities of air – this is known as refraction. Here’s an amazing thing: The Sun’s rays can travel 93 million miles to Earth in only 8 minutes!! Our speaker ended his talk by saying that global warming is changing all the factors that affect our weather, so we may need new sayings in the future.

At the 5th June meeting to be held in the Village Hall at 2.30pm there will be a Quiz which always provides a lot of fun and testing of brains. If you’re new to the village or simply think now is time to join the WI, please come along and you would be made very welcome. For more information please look at our website www.boshamwi.co.uk

Jennifer Fidler