

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 2016

Last year's annual report ended with my thanks to everyone who has helped me during my time as our society's Hon. Secretary. I thought at the time that it would be the last annual report that I would write. However, my successor stood down from the role late in 2015 so this year, we have a Chairman's Report and I find myself writing it for the 27th time. A new Secretary will be appointed at the 2016 A.G.M. and hopefully the normal pattern will then be restored.

The Society has continued to thrive, with just over 250 members and good attendances at meetings. Our biannual bulletin 'Cleveland History' and our triannual Newsletter continue to be well received. Copies of these are sent to several local and national libraries.

Once again, for the umpteenth time, our Programme Secretary Allan Wilby produced a varied selection of speakers and topics for our four Saturday morning twin-talk meetings. Among other things, we learnt how the North East was 'turned upside down' during the Civil War and how Danby was 'sold' in the 'great sale' of 1654. Those who didn't already know it discovered that Middlesbrough was 'a town of rampant sin' in the 19th century and that during the same period Hartlepool and Stockton witnessed some sectarian conflicts. We also found that there were more 'aspects of Roseberry Topping' than we might have supposed and more 'fires of York Minster' than the two famous conflagrations. Thanks are due to all our speakers and to our hosts at the Dorman Museum and Middlesbrough College. I mustn't forget our special thanks to Allan for organising the programme and booking the speakers. Without properly checking, my guess is that Allan must have arranged well over 250 speakers and talks during his time as our Programme Secretary. In fact, if we include the many day schools he has helped to organise, the number must be well over 300. I hope that his efforts have given him as much satisfaction as we have all enjoyed through attending these talks.

Allan of course was one of the organisers of our 18th joint day school at Teesside University. The title of the 2015 day school was 'Private Lives: Diaries in Local History'. The diaries in question spanned three centuries and were spread geographically across County Durham and the Cleveland Plain. Thanks are due to the six speakers as well as Allan Wilby and the staff of the university's Centre for Regional and Local Historical Research, especially Diana Newton who was both organiser and one of the speakers.

Some of our members have been busy in other local history events, for example the Christopher Dresser Festival at Middlesbrough's Dorman Museum and the Local History Day School at Stockton Library. As in previous years some of our members have given talks and guided tours for other groups.

In Spring 2015 the J.T.Packett Prize was awarded for the fifth time. The winner, receiving £250, was Ian Lawrence whose entry was entitled 'Cathay, Cabbages and Criminals: A Biography of William Wilson'. A runner's up prize of £50 was awarded to Ami Becker for her essay on 'The Role of Married Women in the Religious Crisis of 1960s Britain, in Particular, Teesside'

Thanks are due to our Editor, Val Harrison, our Vice Chairman Jacky Quarmby and our Treasurer Margaret Wilby for their work through the year. The Society's website has been looked after by Alison Brown and the web team. Jenny Braddy has looked after our Society's Newsletter and Bookstall for yet another year. She has asked me to thank everyone who has helped her with these. Thanks are also due to our Membership Secretary, Lee Firth, and our Distribution Officer, Dorothy Thomson, who have kept our members supplied with all the Society's regular communications for many years.

Geoff Braddy