



South Hams Society

BULLETIN

January 2012

The views expressed in this Bulletin are those of the authors and are not necessarily to be taken as those of the South Hams Society.

Chairman's Message

The Society's committee wish all our members a very happy New Year. We seem to have aired some of our preoccupations, litter, light pollution, climate change and renewable energy with some success in 2011 - certainly if we can judge by the numbers attending our events.

The last year seems to have demonstrated again that in a period of recession when it comes to a choice between the environment and development on our over-stressed planet, the environment always loses out. Perhaps because we haven't paid for it the environment doesn't factor in the economist's demand for growth. But we know that it is not possible to have continuous economic growth without destroying our environment. We have to find another way to live and perhaps our economic circumstances will oblige us to.

Central and local government accept the economist's mantras about growth at all costs. Even when there are strong public views against development some of our councillors appear to believe that they have a unique insight into the communal good whatever the community itself may say. At the same time proposals that might benefit both the community and the environment are passed over. We hope that 2012 will see an increased respect for the environment and local views.

You can visit our website southhamsociety.org to read our letters on planning applications, bulletins, find out more about what the Society does and express your own views using our forum.

Wind Turbines

In the past two months farmers in the South Hams have applied for planning approval for 7 medium sized wind turbines. The application documents for each of the turbines have been compiled by the turbine developers as agents for the applicant and claim benefits in carbon reduction.

The height to the tip of the blades of these turbines is 24-27 meters, above the height of all but the largest mature trees and well above the height of the smaller 5kW turbines which have been previously installed in the South Hams. The sites chosen are above the 100 meter contour where the turbines are visible at long distances and from many places.

The turbines are within the AONB or close to its boundary. Each application has reports on Landscape Impact and Noise carried out by the turbine developer. The reports uniformly assert that the visual impact and noise of the installations will be zero or insignificant, in one case even from footpaths that cross the fields where the turbines are sited.

The electrical output claimed for the turbines ranges from 36% of the full load output in one application to 64% in another. The best existing turbines achieve 30% of full output, the UK average is 21% and with the wind speeds on these sites it could be as low as 17%. From these outputs exaggerated claims for saving carbon emissions are made in some cases using further incorrect assumptions.

None of these applications appear to have investigated alternative sources of renewable energy although farms have sources of bio-mass from the management of woodlands, bio-gas from the anaerobic digestion of the waste of farm animals such as dairy herds and sites for photo-voltaic panels such as roofs of barns.

The majority of residents of the South Hams support renewable energy but only where it does not injure their amenities. There are scores of letters objecting to these applications as an inadequate solution to climate change and on their noise and effect on tourism.

South Hams District Council's published planning policy in its LDFs is unclear regarding wind turbines even within the AONB. The AONB Unit itself has commented on only one of these four applications - Chivelstone - where it has made a rather weak objection late in the day.

The South Hams Society believes that renewable energy can make a useful contribution towards reducing carbon emissions and on shore wind turbines have a place in the process. However to make a significant contribution many hundreds of wind turbines would be required. This we believe is unacceptable in the AONB. Other less damaging methods of generating renewable energy must be explored and exploited before we allow the Area to become covered in turbines and polluted by their noise. I hope that in our next issue we shall be able to cover these alternative methods of generating renewable energy more extensively.

John Chalmers

The case of the travelling litter bin

There is possibly some variant of Parkinson's Law which decrees that if a potential trap exists for the unwary, a Council foot will somehow find its way into it. But in the South Hams we are lucky in having a council which believes that when you are up to your fundament in alligators it is time to stop draining the swamp!

Batson people are rather pleased with their newly designated Official Village Green and so it was unlucky for the council workers concerned that when they arrived to start moving the nearest litter bin from its traditional spot at the side of the road by the pumping station known as "Batson Halt" and reposition it on our newly hallowed turf, that they should immediately be spotted by a civic-minded Batson lady of a certain age who promptly told them in no uncertain terms that they could not do that there 'ere.

Originally it must have seemed so simple: unthinking motorists had often parked right up against the bin, making it quite impossible for the council's team to get access to empty it. Some drivers had even parked so close that they had reversed into the bin and damaged it. So what better solution than to move the bin on to the green where it would be readily accessible to litter leavers and bin emptiers alike?

But this new Village Green factor – word of the new status had apparently not at that stage percolated right through the SHDC communications network – clearly changed the situation and, ever anxious to defer to local sensibilities and with sincere apologies for any upset, the team withdrew to decide on a new location. Soon a decision was reached - just alongside the walk from Batson to the Boat Park: still on grass, still protected from inconsiderate drivers, still easily accessible to the public, and on the water rather than the road side so that it was protected from careless drivers too. Discreetly, without causing any more fuss or ado for the local residents, a concrete base was laid and the bin was bolted to it. Bingo – problem solved!

Unfortunately Batson still was not happy. It had been noticed over the years that this bin can quickly become over-filled, particularly in the tourist season, and a certain amount of rubbish then gets dumped by its side. In the new position this could easily get blown or even kicked into the creek. And the new position was rather prominently and unattractively in full view of people sitting on the memorial seats on the green, trying to enjoy the beauty of Batson creek. Would it not be better, the village suggested, to return the bin to its original location and protect it from cars by simply banging in a small post, like those preventing parking on the opposite side of the road? If it would help a couple of residents would be delighted to meet some of the council's team on site and try to jointly agree a solution to suit all parties.

In the end no meeting was needed. The council team saw the logic of the suggestion and quickly repositioned the bin near its original place, with a stout post set in front to protect it. Thank you Steve Mason from the South Hams team and thank you local councillor John Carter for your help and quick response. As they say, it's good to talk.

A Batson Busybody

A New Years Day Experience

We'd agreed to meet a group of friends from the Society at 11 am below Overbecks for a brisk walk around Sharpitor and lunch at East Soar Farm.

The weather forecast was for rain, but being optimists, we didn't really believe it, so some of our number were not

very well prepared for the occasion! We set off at a good pace, and then the rain set in heavily, stinging our faces as we rounded Sharpitor above Starehole Bay. The mist was thick, but we could see the dark brown heather of the fields, criss-crossed by sheep paths over towards Bolt Head. We picked our way down the stony path, jumping over the running water as we reached the fields below, we then turned up the valley towards the farmhouse, set in this rugged, beautiful landscape.

Behind the farmhouse is a timber framed, open fronted barn with a kitchen in the corner and long wooden tables and benches. We peeled off our soaked jackets and stood under the warmth of the tall gas heaters. John Graham produced some cherry brandy, which was very welcome and we began to thaw out! The enterprising young South African couple, Schalk and Marijke, who have lived here since April with their three children, produced tea and coffee. Then a large black pot arrived, with some very tasty butternut squash soup and a jug of cream and hot rolls, followed by large slices of chocolate and carrot cake and scones. It was the most enjoyable lunch, provided by welcoming hosts, for a modest amount, and then we put on our damp clothes again and set off across the fields for the 20 minute walk back to Overbecks.

In addition to providing lunches and teas for walkers Schalk and Marijke also run a camp site next to the farmhouse for visitors. They also offer groups of children with learning and other difficulties a chance to stay at the site, to go walking with them and enjoy being in the countryside, which is so beautiful and unspoilt, and which we have the good fortune to have on our doorstep.

Frances Robinson

Any Questions on Renewable Energy - a report on the evening

Over 140 people packed out the function room of the Kings Arms on Saturday evening to listen to an 'Any Questions' debate on the importance of renewable energy in the South Hams. The event was organised by the South Hams Society and chaired by the President of the Society, and local resident Jonathan Dimpleby. It was supported by the South Devon Coastal Renewable Energy Network (SDCREN) and Towards a Sustainable Kingsbridge (TASK).

The four panelists were John Watson, founder of Riverford Organic Farm, Merlin Hyman, CEO of Regen South West, John Constable, Head of Policy and Research at the Renewable Energy Foundation and Paul Baker, Technical Services Manager from Energy Action Devon and co founder of South Devon Coastal Renewable Energy Network.

A well attended exhibition organised by SDCREN and TASK was held in advance of the meeting to illustrate the various renewable technologies, local projects and initiatives.

Jonathan Dimpleby started by saying that the overarching objective was to reduce carbon emissions and minimise climate change. Renewable energy is a principle way of achieving this but not the only way. Questions to the panel covered the proposed reduction in the Feed-in-Tariff, the importance and relevance of wind generated power, nuclear energy, tidal power, the sensitivities of our local landscape, community installations and concerns that many are heading for fuel poverty.

The panel warmed up by giving their opinions on the importance of meeting carbon reduction targets. Whilst the exact implications of global warming cannot be predicted, said John Constable, 'cleaning up the energy industry' was agreed as a crucial measure for achieving a sustainable way of life across the globe. John Watson added that irrespective of climate change he feared the cost of energy and ongoing economic turmoil threaten energy security and that on this basis alone communities and families should seek to establish greater resilience and control in how they consume utilities and goods.

A question on the Feed-in-Tariff raised concerns whether the proposed 25 year subsidy could be guaranteed and if the proposed halving of the tariff for domestic photo-voltaic installations would compromise the take up of renewable systems. No guarantees for government actions could be given by the panel but a straw poll of the audience indicated that local interest in investing in PV remained high despite the drop in subsidy.

With great good humour Jonathan Dimpleby swiftly changed tack and led the debate into what the audience had anticipated would be the most controversial issue of the evening: wind power. There seemed to be a consensus that wind can make a significant contribution to energy supply in the UK as has been demonstrated in other countries including China. John Constable, however, reported that the Renewable Energy Foundation had concluded that the

cost of wind power, particularly off-shore, in both financial and environmental terms should rule it out from being deployed on a large-scale. Whilst many in the audience agreed with this, and doubted its value for money for reducing carbon emissions, the majority expressed a desire to see the vast wind resource in the South Hams tapped, although avoiding significant impact on the South Hams countryside was seen as an essential. Another straw poll of the audience indicated that the audience was evenly split on the attractiveness of wind turbines in our landscape.

There seemed to be little support from anyone on the panel or in the audience for any new nuclear power facilities. The world's supply of uranium was limited, costs associated with nuclear installations continue to rise and the panel doubted that any investment money would be found.

There was fairly strong support from the panel for continuing development of tidal stream and tidal range systems - particularly the former - which may have particular relevance around our shores and in our estuaries. However, the point was made that installations in the sea are at an early stage of development and are likely to be costly and take time.

The justification and level of government subsidy associated with renewable technologies was debated at length by the panel. Merlin Hyman made the point that subsidising energy was not new; nuclear power has been heavily supported in the past and the cost of disposing of nuclear waste exceeds the level of investment in renewables. From the audience Bob Willars responded, to murmurs of approval, that taxpayers money may be better utilised by investing them in renewable energy than being handed over to support the doomed Greek economy.

John Constable presented a hypothesis that, worldwide, governments faced with financial meltdown would abandon any pretense to being green and utilise cheap coal and gas until it ran out. He offered as evidence the fact that China and India had already demonstrated that the short term economic benefits of cheap energy were justifiable given the contribution this made to economic growth and the immediate benefits this derived. A chilling thought said Jonathan Dimpleby. This trajectory would see untold environmental harm.

A questioner expressed concern that renewables drive more into fuel poverty. The Renewable Obligation raised the cost of energy and was paid by all while only the affluent amongst us could invest in renewables and benefit from the Feed-in-Tariff. The assumption was disputed by some of the panel but it was accepted that more must be done to support communities in need, the work of Totnes Renewable Energy Society and, SDCREN were highlighted as initiatives where all members of the community can benefit. The panel concluded that in the absence of any clear government strategy, the best approach is to tackle things at an individual and community level.

A final question pointed out the growing need to save energy as an effective way of minimising climate change and asked the panel for suggestions. Putting on another pullover and turning down the thermostat were the most cogent suggestions.

Those interested in knowing more about the range of renewable technologies available are encouraged to contact SDCREN on Tel. 01752 235180 Mob. 07739351184

Email karl@energyactiondevon.org.uk Website <http://www.sdcren.btck.co.uk>

Tom Jones

Bio-digesters - steps on the way at Cuckoo Farm

We have built and installed a small scale bio-digester but have not been able to find an appropriate person (i.e. commercial premises gas engineer) to 'officially' attach the biogas pipes to our domestic system, despite making many telephone calls. We also need someone / an organization to analyze the quality of the gas that our bio-digester produces so that we can make adjustments where necessary to the feedstock. We have had other priorities on the farm since building the bio-digester and so have had to put this project on the back burner (if you will pardon the pun).

There have been various studies done on small-scale biogas production, most of which seem to indicate that small-scale production is not viable. The Chinese system that we have built is a much more affordable design than the other systems we have investigated. There are many variations of successful small-scale design but most of them rely on warm ambient temperatures, e.g. in Sri Lanka, where a different type of methanogenic bacteria can be encouraged to produce methane. The Chinese design is more suitable for temperate climates.

The quality and quantity of biogas from a bio-digester depend on many factors - input of feedstock (some commercially viable large scale bio-digesters are fed with crops grown in adjacent fields - madness on so many levels!), the

temperature of the 'slurry' generally and at different levels within the tank, agitation of the slurry etc., etc. It is a complex issue.

The Chinese have been harnessing the power of biogas for the past 60 or 70 years with millions of small-scale village /commune bio-digesters accepting the waste from pig pens and community toilet facilities. Blocks of apartments are being built with their bathroom waste being fed straight into bio-digesters underneath the adjoining car park, with the biogas produced being fed straight back through to the apartments or commercial users nearby - a closed loop system, always the most efficient.

The system we have bought into involved us buying a set of moulds (plus spare sets of ancillary equipment) from a Chinese company, the MD of which has won a United Nations award for sustainable innovation. These moulds can be re-used many hundreds of times, adding to the affordability of this particular design. We would be happy to rent out our set of moulds and provide other equipment if any member of the SHS would like to create their own bio-digester. The design would be most appropriate for a farmer, smallholder, holiday complex, campsite, horse owner who would have a ready supply of feedstock - biodigestible waste material.

Zoe Woodham

Anemometer Mast at Higher Torr, East Allington

Energy4All, which describes itself as a social enterprise supporting the development of community-owned renewable energy projects, and Clearwinds, a development company, have put forward some initial proposals for two wind turbines near Torr Quarry Industrial Estate. One would be just to the south of the estate and one would be between the estate and the A381, so they would be quite close to the Beech Tree Farm site for which an application for turbines was dismissed on appeal in 2009. Each turbine would measure 77m to the tip of the rotor.

SHDC has just granted temporary (18 month) planning permission for a 50m anemometer mast for the collection of wind data at the site of the proposed turbines. It will be about 100m outside the South Devon AONB. The AONB Unit initially lodged an objection but subsequently withdrew it. The county council drew attention to the high local archaeological importance of the site, which is probably a pre-historic enclosure. It is also about 400m from a peregrine falcon nesting place designated as a county wildlife site, and concerns were raised at the risk to fast-flying falcons posed by the 1000m of guy wires supporting the mast. The RSPB advised that markers on the wires would take care of that, but did indicate that actual turbines on the site would be at about the minimum acceptable distance from the nest.

The application attracted one letter of support, from the farm on which the turbines would be placed. The Society and 67 individuals objected. Of the five closest parishes, Churchstow, East Allington, Loddiswell and Woodleigh objected but Buckland Tout Saints did not.

In the application, the officer report, and the discussion at SHDC's development management committee, it was repeatedly stressed that the mast application had to be treated on its own merits – it was not the thin end of a turbine wedge. (Whether everybody would accept that must be open to doubt – there is a memory of the Nature Conservancy allowing geological borings to be taken in order to test whether the development of the Cow Green reservoir in Teesdale was geologically possible. When the borings showed that it was possible the Nature Conservancy objected to it on the basis that it drowned part of a National Nature Reserve. The case was lost at parliamentary inquiry partly on the basis that the Nature Conservancy had not objected until a late stage.) The officer recommendation was for approval of the mast, and 20 members voted that way. One voted against because of the feeling in his ward, and one did so at least in part because of concerns for the peregrines. The member for Thurlestone ward, which also includes Buckland Tout Saints, Churchstow and South Milton, is not a member of the committee but spoke against the application.

Energy4All is based in Cumbria, Clearwinds in Hampshire. Neither is known to have any connection with this area. Consultation between them and local communities on the turbine proposal has in theory been going on since July. They have been asked serious questions not only about the practicalities of the project but also about its economics, the financial structure and governance of the enterprise, and the source and destination of any profits. Despite reminders, virtually no answers have been forthcoming.

John Graham

Kingsbridge Kino's return to life

The Cinema Club at the Reel Cinema, Kingsbridge Kino, returns to the screen this spring with a full programme running until June. Following the near miraculous recovery of its founder from viral encephalitis (Simon Keyes was at death's door while in a coma which lasted for three months earlier this year) a small group has got together to help him get the club back up and running.

Membership of the Kingsbridge Kino costs £20; admission to each film is £5 for members and £8 for visitors. Join the club on the night at the Reel, or by contacting Simon at simon@kingsbridgekino.org or on the web site www.kingsbridgekino.org where you will find information on who we are, the full spring programme and our aims and ambitions.

On January 28th the Kings Arms, our favourite post screening watering hole where much discussion about the evenings' films takes place, will host a gala evening themed on the film Cabaret. The evening will include Cabaret highlights, a two course meal, a raffle, a film quiz and the first AGM of the new club. Come along, enjoy the entertainment and company and have a say in the future of your Club.

Our next film on January 15th is *Hukkle*, a fun film from Hungary about bucolic life in a village where things may not be quite what they seem.

Tony Watson

Winter Wading Birds Cruise with Gordon Waterhouse

On Saturday 28th January 2012 we will have a cruise around the Salcombe/Kingsbridge Estuary using one of the Island Cruising Club launches. If you have read Gordon's Nature Diary in the Gazette you will know that over 3000 birds were seen at the pre-Christmas count including Wigeon, Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Lapwing, Curlew, Greenshank and many birds we are more familiar with.

Meet Gordon at 10 a.m. on Whitestrand and bring binoculars, plenty of warm clothing (it can be colder than you ever believed possible especially if there is a wind) and maybe flasks of hot drinks. We will stop for soup and rolls on board the Egremont at 12 noon, before catching the launch back to Whitestrand at about 12.45.

There are 11 places on the launch. Please book and pay £15 to the ICC office, tel 01548 844300. For more information on this or any other events, please contact Vivien Napper 01548 842405, viv@rathlyn.eclipse.co.uk or Flo Stathers 01548 857567 flostathers@hotmail.co.uk

Beach Cleans, Spring 2012

Saturday 14 January. Meet at the car park near Gara Hotel (which is still under construction) at 1 p.m. before walking down to the beach. The cafe is not open 'till mid April, so do bring picnic/flask if you wish. LW is 15.13, but as all the debris gathers near the top of the beach this shouldn't be a problem. The National Trust will collect the rubbish from the top of the beach. This walk is only suitable for the fairly fit. Gloves, bags and 'pinchers' are supplied.

Saturday 11 February. Meet by the South Milton Beach Cafe, (who kindly supply refreshments to volunteers after the clean) at 11 a.m. LW is 14.19 but again most of the rubbish is deposited near the top of the beach. Energetic people might like to walk west to Leas Foot Sand and Yarmer Beach and along the dunes by South Milton Ley. They are invariably full of plastic especially at this time of year. Work permitting, Maya Plass of Learn to Sea will join us and help to complete the forms which we send of the Marine Conservation Association (MCA) after each clean.

Saturday 10th March. Meet in Marsh Lane which leads to West Charleton Marsh at 11 am. LW is 13.22 which should allow us time to go round Wareham Point. Bring a picnic, but if the weather is very poor we could go to the Ashburton Arms. It's still a good time to see the winter migrants and Gordon Waterhouse is hoping to join us.

Saturday 21st April. Meet at Soar Mill Hotel Car Park (behind the Hotel) at 11 a.m. Walk down to the beach where Vanessa of Soar Mill Seeds will join us to look at birds and other things of interest in this beautiful valley. The hotel very generously give volunteers refreshment which usually includes a superb cream tea! -even at lunchtime. LW is 13 01.

We have done our best to avoid clashing with Kingsbridge Farmers Market, especially in December and times do vary. It is particularly important to be mindful of the incoming tide at West Charleton and Batson. Most other beaches can be cleaned several hours either side of high water.

Dogs are generally discouraged, but use your common sense.

We complete a survey of everything collected and send it to the Marine Conservation Association who add it to their data base for analysis.

For more information on this or other Society activities contact Vivien Napper 01548 842405, viv@rathlyn.eclipse.co.uk or Flo Stathers 01548 857567, flostathers@hotmail.co.uk or the website

Forward Planning for Kingsbridge

A Steering Group has been formed for the development of a masterplan for two sites identified in the Site Allocations DPD for Kingsbridge. The sites are K1 - to the south west of the hospital - and K5 - opposite Westville and next to the industrial area. The Steering Group advises the Pegasus Planning Group who put the master plan together.

The purpose of the master plan is to provide an outline of the land uses on the sites for housing and employment, vehicular and pedestrian access, types of housing and employment units. The masterplan will include the requirements for open space, education, leisure and recreation and care of the elderly and the facilities for waste and recycling.

To confirm the town's requirements the Steering group will be consulting widely with the community. It will use local publications, the library and Information Centre, exhibitions and workshops. There will be a website describing progress with a forum for comments.

The Society has a place on the Steering Group and would welcome comments from members on how they think the sites should be developed. The next meeting is on 1st February and you should get in touch with John Chalmers on 01548 844174 or email on john@croftroad.eclipse.co.uk. southhamsociety.org

Kingsbridge Car Parking

Kingsbridge Town Council have extended the use of Residents Concessionary Parking Permits during Fore Street road works when through traffic is not allowed. From 3rd January 2012 the Residents Concessionary Parking Permits will be valid in all Kingsbridge Car Parks from 3:00 pm to 11:00 am (this is an extension to the normal validity times of 4:00 pm to 10:00 am).

Permits cost £21 and are available from South Hams District Council on tel: 01803 861 234.

They are valid for 12 months and allow free parking in all South Hams Car Parks between 4:00 pm and 10:00 am.

The Remembered - A short Story

The sun had long since set behind the hills. A tide of shadows filled the town with dark places and a graphite moon squinted through the embers of a smoked mackerel sky. The workers had trudged home and now sat in-front of television screens, sipping tea and thumbing newspapers. Upstairs the children slept on full bellies, dreaming of toppling play-ground bullies and first kisses.

On the estuary the boats snoozed on oily waters, dimly lit by the parade of blue lights along the promenade. The daffodils had shrunk into their ruffs and the tulips rested easy after a day spent pouting and posing. Down in the mud and murk of the estuary bed, claws and tentacles felt their way through the gloom, while the seaweed clung to the old tidal wall, beckoning the dark with gout-ridden fingers.

The estuary rat stood upright on the bottom of the ferry boat steps, pawing his twitching pinky nose while hatching his plans for tonight's moonlit raids. At the end of the slip-way, mother duck slept with one eye open and beak under wing, ruffled only by the mullets as they jumped with mud in their gizzards, sending ripples over the black marbled water.

The town clock rang out a lonely chime. The landlord had polished the last of his glasses and the laughter about days gone by had long since departed the inn on the end of the harbour. All was quiet. The only things stirring were memories and mice.

A vagrant mist had shrouded the estuary like a widow's veil and as the eerie procession passed by, even time appeared to stand still to pay its respects. It was then and only then, that they appeared. Some were dressed in their

Sunday best and others in uniform. Some walked in stony silence while others consoled their crying eyes with gentle finger tips. All of them had their names remembered on benches and beneath trees and saplings along the promenade.

‘Has anyone seen my Jack?’ said the woman in the flat shouldered jacket. ‘I’m running late but I need to tell him something important, so if you see him, be sure to tell him I’m here, won’t you.’ Her hair was full of Victoria curls and her face glowed like roses. She seated herself on the bench where Jack sits every Sunday afternoon. ‘If I find out he’s in the pub again, I’ll have his guts for garters,’ she said, tapping her wrist watch again before bursting into tears. ‘Oh Jack, please hurry up,’ she whimpered, ‘it’s getting late.’

Further down the path stood a broad shouldered man with swept back grey hair and a square chin. He wore a brown cardigan over a shirt buttoned to the collar and stood before the weeping branches of a silver birch. The flowers on his plaque had aged like old newspaper under floor-boards but he saw the petals as though they had never been picked. ‘It didn’t quite turn out the way we planned did it my love,’ he said with a throaty gruffness that descended into a pause. ‘That boiler still needs looking at, don’t think I’ve forgotten.’ His widow smiles in her sleep.

‘I’ll call someone about it tomorrow,’ she says, ‘I promise.’

Beneath the statue of hope the fallen ones had gathered to sit, resting on elbows as they talk, sharing cigarettes and playing cards. One of them writes a letter he’ll never finish, while another tunes a gargling wireless for news of home. These were the good old boys who had downed tools and kissed their sweethearts goodbye with a promise of return, while adventure tugged at their cuffs.

‘That’s three of a kind,’ said the handsome Tommy through a Woodbine cigarette. ‘I told you I was feeling lucky tonight.’

‘I hope you bring that luck with us tomorrow,’ said his pal. ‘We’ll need it for the big heave-ho.’ Tonight they rested under the anchor of Saint Philomena in a town they saluted all those years ago.

The ghostly figures whispered and talked as the mist began to suck and draw, then, in a wink of the night, they were gone. Memories of their departed souls stay chiselled and etched on wood and in stone; names longing to be spoken aloud once more. The promenade was still again, the only thing to be heard were the aching joints of the old estuary wall as it wobbled and leaned to and fro.

Dan Stathers

Post or e-mail?

The Society is considering the possibility of sending out its Bulletins by e-mail instead of posting hard copies, in order to reduce paper use and postage costs. Some members have already opted to receive the Bulletin in this way: if you would like to join them please e-mail the membership secretary.

South Hams Society: Officers and Committee, 2011-12

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