

THE HARBOUR W.I.

As President Jackie Frost was unwell, the February meeting of the Harbour WI was opened by committee member Diane Beere who welcomed 51 members and 4 visitors. She then introduced Jackie Marsh-Hobbs to talk about her 'Passion for Piers'.

Jackie is a member of the National Pier Society and really is passionate about piers!! Her illustrated talk showed some of the 59 surviving piers now left out of the original 100. The first pier was built in Ryde in 1814 to replace a landing stage. Landing stages submerged, so piers were built higher to make access to the paddle steamers easier. Before this small boats had to row passengers out at high water! When Leith Pier was built in Edinburgh, King George III was asked to open it but refused to go on it as it was only three foot wide. The structures became sturdier and more stable but this was expensive.



When Eastbourne pier was built it was funded by selling shares and had three 'Grand Openings' – one when it was half built, another when it was fully built and then another five years later, in 1877, when it was repaired after a storm!

As piers became increasingly popular during the Victorian era, famous architects were asked to design them. They became more and more intricate with the use of cast iron decoration. The maintenance costs were significant and some piers built theatres and pavilions to house entertainment and generate income. Many singers and comedians started their careers in pier theatres. Hastings pier was the first pier with a pavilion. These pavilions became amusement arcades and tea rooms.



As the costs increased the piers were sold to private owners; many of whom failed to maintain them. A number of piers were breached during the Second World War to prevent enemy landings; some were destroyed by boats crashing in to them; others in storms or by fire but Jackie felt that the main reason they lost their popularity was people going on cheap foreign holidays in the 1970's. The last pier was built in Deal in 1957. It was to replace one destroyed by a Norwegian vessel going through it!

After tea members were asked to sign up for the Annual Meeting of the ESFWI at The Winter Gardens on the 28th March and the coach trip to Amberley Museum on the 12th June.

The Crafty Ladies are at Sandie Goman's house on the 19th February, the Lunch Club is going to The Friday Street Farm on the 21st February and the Fourth Tuesday Club will meet on 27th February at Seasons.

The next meeting is on Monday 11th March at 2pm in the Sovereign Suite of the Sovereign Harbour Yacht Club. The speaker will be Peter Allen with his 'Tingling Tales of Theatre Ghosts'.

Information on the Harbour WI can be found on the S.H.R.A. website.

www.shra.co.uk/wi