

Brian Margotson on Ghosts, Royals and Ferrymen

Brian gave a talk packed full of anecdotes with emphasis on the social history attached to working ferries around Britain. He began with those with a musical theme such as “Ferry across the Mersey” followed by intriguing historical events linked to ferries such as the escape of Charles 1 from the Roundheads across the Severn to Wales. He described ways ferries have overcome mooring difficulties as illustrated by the mobile jetty at Salcombe and the use of a folding gangway on a frail jetty at Felixstowe.



Brian also mentioned our local ferries including Bosham to W. Itchenor, Hayling to Southsea and, of course, the Gosport Ferry which I have described in our recent newsletter.

He explained that ferries were established for a variety of reasons including the need for waterborne transport in the Industrial Revolution and where a legal obligation for rights of way existed.



He had some odd stories too such as the steam engine ferry on Lake Windemere carrying a coach and horses. It was here also that a ferryman responded to a call of “Boat” at night, and, finding no passenger, “paddled back like a man possessed” and died 3 days later! Apparently an exorcism was performed on the banks afterwards.

Rather unusual “ferries” were also covered in the talk such as the transporter bridge with gondola across the R. Usk at Newport, the Severn Tunnel car carriages from Pilning (closed once the Severn Bridge was built) and our local Hovertravel at Southsea. It’s been going for 60 years and is the only one in the world!



The transporter bridge and gondola on the R. Usk



The talk was altogether on a fascinating topic which kept our interest throughout.

Thank you Brian!