

*A fine and subtle spirit dwells
In every little flower,
Each one its own sweet feeling breathes
With more or less of power.
There is a silent eloquence
In every wild bluebell
That fills my softened heart with bliss
That words could never tell.
(Anne Bronte)*

The snowdrops carpeting the churchyard of St Botolph's Swyncombe have gone but now comes the time to walk the dog in the woods above the church, by Cookley Green. Already - I'm writing before Palm Sunday- the bolder are blue in flower and the glut of green promises the rapture of bluebells coming into their own sweet time. Bluebells ring in spring's hope like no other and hereabouts the village wild British bluebells achieve a wilder profusion than I've never seen before in my life.

In March we touched the wilder raptures of Cardinal Wolsey's career atop the dizzy heights of political power in the Tudor spring of King Henry VIII's reign. Professor Glenn Richardson shared some of the insights of his recent research with the Society in an informative and entertaining talk. Wolsey's career is a reminder to all times and all ages no matter how far you rise you are never more than a single slip from a catastrophic fall. Glenn has promised to return to Benson for an author talk at the Library once his new biography of the Cardinal is published.

By the time this is published Chris Hearn will have talked to us on founding the **Loddon Brewery** and by then we will have no doubt sampled some of the golden dew they brew. The merry month of May will bring the social historian and author Toni Mount to the Society. Toni will talk on the subject of *the Medieval Housewife* on 31st May. The following afternoon Toni will give an author talk at Benson Library on her latest crime novel – *The Colour of Lies* - her seventh in the series of Sebastian Foxley Medieval Murders.

Talks later in the year include the subjects of Thames Valley Recusants (September) and William Morris (October). Our evenings include a supper for £5 and a fully licensed bar. These evenings offer a chance for newcomers to mingle and meet with older Bensingtonians. If you are new to village, please come along. There is a welcome table for guests and visitors all of whom will be warmly received.

At the last Committee meeting on 27th March, Sue Fowler has announced her intention to retire from the Committee at the end of this year and consequently we will be looking for a volunteer to look after the Catering on the society meetings. Please let either David McGill or John Murphy know, if you might be interested in helping out in this capacity. This also give us an opportunity to thank Sue for all her hard work over these past years.

At the same meeting, David McGill announced that Fenella Galpin had agreed to take on organising the Talks from John Murphy. There had been some negative feedback over Talks. An investigation established that the balance between local subjects and others had remained the same over a period of years and there was no real basis for the reported impression that the subjects focused more on men's interests than women's but it was hoped if there was unconscious bias this would now be addressed by Fenella's role in selecting speakers.

The Committee also noted that although no subjects of local interest had been raised for discussion after the monthly meetings that the Society continues to trial ways of involving members in such discussions as they arise. Finally, the Committee approved its continuing aim build and maintain a strong link to the Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Team and noted arrangements have been put in place for a continuing dialogue and attendance at each other's meetings, as and when necessary

The bluebells will have died away by the time I next write. The flowers of spring are like a botanical clock, flowering minutes ticking gently through their brief days in the sun from year to year. Last comes lilac. Benson is rich with many varieties of glorious lilac, its bushes heavy with heavenly scent in the late days of May. Lilac brings to my mind memories of boyhood, and of a sad but poignant poem by Walt Whitman: *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*

*In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle...*