

Open Door Cathars - Dangerous Heretics or Good Christians?

Open Door on 19 November was led by Edna Gain at Micklefield Green House. Some 16 of us were given quite a varied diet: a Quaker reading, a Buddhist prayer, a Latin hymn, a reading from the apocryphal gospel of Thomas and, at the end, a Muslim closing prayer. All this was presented to us by John Roe.

John described how the Cathars, a dualist Christian sect with roots in the East, flourished in the 12th and 13th centuries, especially in Southern France and Northern Italy. 'Dualism' here implies a belief in two, usually equal, gods, one good and one evil, a view contrary to orthodox Christian teaching. The Cathars did not accept that a good God could have made the world with all its corruption and hate, and they held that the church in Rome was mistakenly following the Satanic God, not the beneficent one they worshipped.



The Cathars believed themselves to be good Christians, claiming an ancestry back to the Early Church. Although rejecting the Old Testament, they aimed to follow the teachings of Jesus and to live a pure and simple life, typified by their beliefs in pacifism, vegetarianism, reincarnation and equality between the sexes. They were intolerant of Catholicism and publicly preached that the Roman Church had abandoned the beliefs and practices of the Early Church and frustrated the work of Christ on earth. By the 13th century the Cathars' opposition to Rome had become a major embarrassment to the Pope. With the support of the French King a crusade was launched against them and they were ruthlessly exterminated, the last Cathar being burnt at the stake in 1412. At the conclusion of this fascinating history lesson we enjoyed the usual high quality tea. **Anthony Pyne**

Sarratt Local History Society

Our November talk by Alan Ruston on 'Old Hertfordshire Maps' was enthusiastically received by an audience rather reduced both by the weather and other functions on the same day. However this gave an informality to the evening which at times developed into a discussion over the maps that Alan had brought along. Very early maps were 'concept' maps, not accurate at all but showing the rough disposition of towns and villages enabling one to get around. Early travellers both at home and abroad could obtain 'itineraries' which described their route from one town to another and,



finally, they could engage a guide to take them to their exact destination. They could also engage guides to take them across counties: it seems that the military sometimes had to do this. The first printed and coloured map of Herts was produced by William Hughes in 1863 - such maps were meant for the gentry and not to be taken out and used! Then came triangulation, which allowed very accurate maps to be made, used in Europe in the 1740's but not here for another 50 years - the powers that be, both political and religious, feared that such maps could be of use to insurgents! However our own troops needed good maps and produced their own, hence the Ordnance Survey. They started in about 1804 and produced the best maps ever of this country. During the 19th century many specialist maps appeared showing routes for walkers and cyclists, town maps showing the disposition of various religious groups, where cholera had appeared and even the disposition of wealth around London! **Philip Buller**
Our next meeting will be at 7.30 for 8pm on Tuesday 26 January in the Village Hall. The brief AGM will be followed by a talk by Clive Foxell on 'The Story of Metroland. How the Met line changed this area and future developments'. Everyone is welcome.



Sarratt Evening WI - AGM and 25 Anniversary

At our AGM in November, the front hall looked more like a box at Royal Ascot on Ladies Day. Everyone came in their 'posh frocks' and some very stunning hats. After the business matters (during which the Committee were re-elected with the addition of Mrs Elaine Perkins and Mrs Linda Clough and the President, Treasurer and Secretary were also re-elected) Mrs Kavanagh was presented with a Bouquet of Flowers as she has now been President for 15 years and has agreed to continue for year 16. Mrs Ann Parsons then read us one of her famous 'ditties' and Mrs Jean Curl explained the new Resolutions system.

When all this was over it was serious Party Time to celebrate our 25th Anniversary and Hertfordshire's 90th Anniversary. The wine flowed and we had a superb selection of nibbles and savouries provided by Mrs Margaret Eteen. Mrs Curl and Mrs Parsons then judged the outfits and Mrs Linda Clough and Mrs Mary Turvill were the winners. A jolly good time was had by all!

We look forward to welcoming you all to our 25th Celebrations on 28 January. Tickets are available at the Post Office or phone 265897. Happy New Year!

Jackie Boughton