

Report of Malvern Civic Society Meeting on 12 January 2018

Malvern Civic Society opened the 2018 talks programme on 12th January at the Eden Centre on Grovewood Road, Malvern with a talk by Penny Platts on:

THE HISTORY OF CIDER.

Starting with an amusing poem, Penny pointed out that apples had always had a bad press after biblical story of Adam and Eve. Dilwyn an early Welsh noble man wrote in 1667 AD "man should only drink cider". Was this a reflection on the local water /beer quality? However earlier records show that by 600 BC the Hebrews were drinking "shibar" an apple drink and later on the Romans developed a taste for an apple drink when they occupied Kent in the 1st century AD. At least the "apple drink" was clean with no diseases unlike the local water supplies.

The Romans tried to fit the local customs into a convenient spot on **their** calendar. The feast of Halloween in October matched a good place for the apple harvest and the feast of POMONA the Roman god. There was a need for a good and reliable apple tree and its fruit. A low growing tree resistant to gales appeared in Herefordshire which cropped well. This was SCUDAMORE RED STREAK and so a good source of apples was available. John Evelyn 1620-1706 a literate man and a noted horticulturalist, gardener and tree specialist wrote many books and articles including an essay on apples and cider which included the Scudamore Red Streak and its value in the production of cider.

Cider production became a means of making money on a small business scale. A good cider orchard needed more than one variety of apple, one with a sharp or bitter flavour for tannin as well as sweeter varieties. Pulping the apples used horse power to move the apples round in the trough before modern machinery was used. The liquid was drained off, sieved and then stored.

The Herefordshire area had many small scale cider businesses which included Westons and Bulmers which are still in production today. The ceremony of Wassail (Waes hael or good health) which has its roots in the medieval period is still practised today. Here the trees are blessed usually on 12th Night so that they will yield a good crop in the coming year.

The next talk will be on February 9th titled STREAMLINE WORCESTERSHIRE by Philip Butler, with an Art Deco theme in which he will highlight some outstanding buildings of this period.