

REVIEW OF SELSEY/SELSEY BILL WALK TUESDAY EVENING 8TH AUGUST 2017.

Despite the threatening skies a resolute band of 13 met in the East Beach car park for the final evening walk of the summer along the promenade to Selsey Bill and then back through the town.

Luckily the early drops of rain soon stopped and the sky became clearer with even a touch of blue.

We soon passed the Lifeboat station, with a boat ready to be launched for training purposes. In 1909 the remains of a Steppe Mammoth fossil was discovered just off the coast here, the only one so far found in this country instead of the more usual woolly mammoth.

According to Bede in the 8thC Selsey means Seal Island, although he does say it is really a Peninsula from the Latin as the western approach through Fishbourne and onto Chichester was a river channel. Just before the Roman invasion sea levels were rising in the area which has continued with much land being lost to the sea especially at Mixon Reef (Rocks) just off Selsey Bill. This area over the past 2000 years has seen the largest land loss due to erosion, with over 250 yards being lost in the past 50 years.

Again according to Bede when Wilfrid landed in mid 7thC to convert the South Saxons, he found the population starving due to famine and no rain for 3 years. Locals were so desperate that he saw 50 try and throw themselves off a cliff. Was this cliff at Lagness meaning a headland, which has now reverted to farmland and is inland. He taught them how to fish and not just for eels.

Wilfrid founded a monastery at Selsey despite an earlier Celtic one being at Bosham.

Rumours that there was also a Saxon Cathedral but no evidence found, but with rising sea levels could have been at Mixon Rocks which was used for mining limestone in area back to Roman times, and could also been the site of cathedral and even an earlier Roman road linking the coast onto Bognor and Worthing. However Wilfrid was given land by the king in Selsey and became bishop there so could have been a cathedral but probably made of wood.

There is a deep channel at the side of the reef and divers have reported seeing large blocks of worked limestone there. As the reef was mined up to the 19thC the blocks could be of that date.

Beautiful clear views of the cliffs on the Isle of Wight were seen from Selsey Bill.

The walk took us back through the town where plenty of houses/cottages were noticed made using the Mixon reef limestone.

Great fossil hunting area amongst what is known as the "Bracklesham Beds". Remains of marine life that lived in a shallow sub-tropical sea. Muds and clays from more recent "Ice Age" have left Mammoth and Elephant bones. More than 60 varieties of "sharks and rays teeth" have been found.

The Quaternary period from 2.5million years to date is split into the Pleistocene (from 2m to 10,000 years-not to be confused with plasticine era, followed by the Holocene from 10000 to date.

On the way back we managed to lose 3 people including the usual one-due to window gazing! Six of us stopped for an el fresco fish and chips at the local café-very good too.