

## **Report of February Meeting**

Once again, our meeting was tinged with sorrow, as we remembered another member who has passed away. Merise MacKenzie will be sadly missed, and our sincere condolences go to Roy and their family in their loss.

Our speaker brought a cheery note to the proceedings however. Stephen Sylvester told us of his experiences as a Bevin Boy during the Second World War, and it was evident that despite the stark reality of working down the pits in South Wales, life was not without its moments of humour. Many are perhaps unaware that two out of ten conscripts were chosen at random to work in the pits during the war, as there was such a shortage of coal. During the time he was first trained as a fresh faced conscript, he earned himself the nickname of Romeo, having come from public school via a theatre repertory company. The harsh conditions in the pits can be imagined, since the provision of a pithead bath-house was considered the height of luxury. Mr Sylvester told us of his two mile underground walk to the seam, the pitch darkness illumined only by the miners' handheld lamps. He also carried his tin carrying the everlasting pilchard sandwiches provided by his landlady – these were much appreciated however, by the pit pony that hauled out the coaltrucks, and also by the rats if they were left uncovered. The dangers of the job were many, and the rewards few.

As always, there is a varied programme of County events to look forward to this spring, and at Kilmington we have our 75th anniversary in April, and trip to Hartland Abbey coming up in May.

Carole Bolton won this month's competition for a wartime photograph, and Margaret Dare won Flower of the Month with an exquisite miniature iris.

Joan Cudmore