

KINGSTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

After our AGM in October Brian Alloway gave a fascinating lecture entitled "Our Daily Lead" in which he highlighted that the metal was widely used in antiquity as well as recent times most notably today in cosmetics, PVC stabiliser, paint pigments and wire rope. In Devon, medical conditions due to lead poisoning were known as *Devon Colic* and *Devon Palsy*. Brian reported that it had even been suggested that the effects of lead may have been partially responsible for the fall of the Roman Empire where its widespread use caused health problems for both plebeians and patricians! He continued to give examples of famous individuals who suffered/died from lead poisoning; also some forty years ago tinned baby food cans had contained lead in their make up. On a final positive note Brian advised—"do not keep spirits and Port in in lead crystal decanters — — — —DRINK THEM!

In November we had a very successful visit to Lady Astor's House, 3 Elliot Terrace in Plymouth. We were treated to a very detailed and informative tour by Steve, the Mace Bearer for The Lord Mayor. Steve entertained us with stories of Nancy Astor's early life in England as a bride of Waldorf Astor and he related how she became the first female Member of Parliament to take up her seat when her husband accepted a peerage and entered the House of Lords; in 1919 Nancy won the Plymouth seat for the Conservative and Unionist Parties. She had a tendency to be saucy in conversation, yet religiously devout in behaviour which confused many English people but won the hearts of others. In our tour of many interesting rooms there were a number of outstanding paintings of famous people including one of Nancy Astor with Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour in the House of Commons. There was also a letter from the late King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who visited Plymouth during the second World War, giving their support to the devastated city. Finally, Steve organised refreshments for us upstairs in the drawing room, a room which looked out across the Hoe towards Plymouth Sound and Drake's Island; this concluded our visit on a lovely sunny Winter's day. Our next event will be "Christmas at The Dolphin" at 7pm on Tuesday, December 13th. Please let Jennie Stanley(01548 810819) know if you wish to join us; there is a list of our events programme and publications on our website kingstonlocalhistory.co.uk .