

## THE HARBOUR W.I.

Despite the atrocious weather there was a good turnout for the November meeting of the Harbour WI. President Diane Beere welcomed 60 members.

The speaker, Robin Keyte gave a talk on a local wreck, the *VOC Amsterdam*. The wreck lies on the beach at Bulverhythe near Hastings and can be seen at low tide. It was wrecked on its maiden voyage to Batavia [now Jakarta] in 1749 during a violent storm.

VOC was the Dutch East Indies Company and was the world's largest trade and shipping company in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. They traded all over the world with their fleet of over 150 ships.

*VOC Amsterdam* had left the shipbuilder's yard in Amsterdam with Captain Willem Klump at the helm, to pick up a cargo in Texel (one of the Dutch Wadden Islands, off the coast of the Netherlands). The cargo was worth millions of pounds in today's money. They also took on 126 soldiers, 5 women passengers and a crew of 198.

After three false starts they finally set sail in January 1749 but with sickness on board and storm force winds they made very slow progress. After two weeks battling against the stormy winds, the captain decided to shelter in Pevensey Bay but smashed the rudder off as it was too shallow. They continued for 3 more days with no steering before beaching the ship off Hastings.

Even though Bulverhythe was a sparsely populated area in the 17/18<sup>th</sup> century, thousands of people arrived on the beach in the hope of looting. The army were called in and took 27 chests of silver gilders and ingots to the Bull Inn for safe keeping - but one had disappeared!

There were no casualties but 55 bodies were buried in the cemetery of St. Clements Church in Bulverhythe. They were thought to have died of Yellow Fever. The soldiers and crew were sent back to Holland and Captain Willem Klump continued his career for many more years.

It is possible to walk round the protected wreck site at very low spring tides. It is still Dutch property and believed to have a hold full of precious goods! A replica of the vessel was completed in 1990 and is moored in Amsterdam



Lunch Club	Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> Nov. at Kings Restaurant [The College]
Family History Club	Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> Nov. at 2pm Sue Howes
Craft Club	Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2pm at Sandie Gomans
4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday Coffee Morning	Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 10.30am at Seasons

The Harbour WI Christmas Lunch is being held on the 10<sup>th</sup> December at the Cooden Beach Hotel.

The Annual Meeting of the ESFWI is being held in the De La Warr on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026 with Charlie Dimmock from *Love Your Garden* as one of the speakers.

The next meeting is on the 8<sup>th</sup> December at 2pm in the Sovereign Suite of the Sovereign Harbour Yacht Club. It is the Christmas Party meeting with festive food and music and a talk by Pat Bryer titled '*Choice Joyce - A Flavour of Joyce Grenfell*'.

Information on the Harbour WI can be found on the S.H.R.A. website. [www.shra.co.uk/wi](http://www.shra.co.uk/wi)