



Alresford Historical & Literary Society

NEWSLETTER - 1st November 2023

Our next meeting: 7:30pm Wed 15th Nov in the Methodist Church
Barrie Lees will present a talk on "George Wither
***The Local Civil War Writer Jailed Four Times by Both Sides*"**

Local poet George Wither was hugely popular in his day but is now almost forgotten. He was also a celebrity thanks to being jailed at least 4 times as he tried to navigate his way through the rules of James 1, Charles 1, Cromwell and Charles 2. He was always ready to criticise the government, royalist or parliamentary – and as a result was incarcerated twice under kings, and twice under the Commonwealth. He took Parliament's side in the Civil War and became infamous for abandoning Farnham Castle to the royalists without a shot being fired. He was mocked mercilessly but defended himself fiercely and at length. After Charles 1's execution he was employed to help sell the king's extensive collection of pictures.



Wither, who had many friends and many enemies, was a warm-hearted optimist who didn't take himself too seriously. He was hopeless with money but there were no reports of mistresses or drunkenness. Was he a heroic campaigner, or just an idiot? [BL]

On Alresford Pond, Wither wrote: *"Two pretty rills do meet, and meeting make Within one valley a large silver lake"*

A comment on our last talk: "Ukraine – A Troubled Land" by Glenn Gilbertson

The planned talk on Winchester Prison by Liz Kavanagh was cancelled at short notice following a positive test for Covid on the morning of her talk! We hope to reschedule Liz's talk next year.

Glenn's talk provided deep insights into how Ukraine is looked upon by many Russians. While in no way condoning the Russian invasion, Glenn explained that Ukraine is felt by some Russians to be part of their heritage; indeed Kiev was the first capital of The Russian State! The talk was illustrated by photos taken when Glenn visited 10 years ago as a tourist, and we saw cities across the country from Kiev and Odessa, to Chernobyl(!) and Yalta in Crimea. One poignant image was of a tank painted in jolly colours in a children's playground – Ukraine was at peace then. No-one thought that tanks would ever again be needed, but this is still "A Troubled Land".....! [MD]



At our annual Black-tie dinner on 27th Oct we welcomed Guest of Honour The Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson and his wife Christine. Nigel's excellent talk on his role as its Lord-Lieutenant soon broadened into an appreciation of the history and importance of Hampshire, and it was nicely spiced with amusing anecdotes. The evening was a great success with 50 of us joining in the celebrations. [MD]

Best wishes to you all from Mike Dickens
Hon Secretary, secretary@alresfordhistandlit.co.uk