

For centuries sailors have been well aware of the phrase in the Book of Common Prayer –  
***Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night.....***

The words and their order changed over the years but the meaning remained the same and so they will have been very grateful when the lookout spotted the unmistakable flashes of a lighthouse, signalling a danger or navigational aid point. Very grateful, that is, providing it was roughly where they expected it to be, otherwise ??????????????

Our May Zoom talk was given by Mark Lewis, Education Officer for the Association of Lighthouse Keepers. Pharology, the study of lighthouses and other navigational aids, proved to be an enjoyable and fascinating topic. Starting with the ‘Pharos’ of Alexandria, built around 200BC - one of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World - Mark took us on a journey through their evolving history - construction, methods of illumination, and operation.

There are over 250 lighthouses still in use in the UK, all now automated. However, until the end of the last century it was a different story, with the usual 6 weeks posting of keepers to remote lighthouses often extended by weeks or even months due to bad weather. We learnt about some of their absolutely extraordinary heroic stories as well as their day-to-day duties of ensuring the light continuously flashed with its own unique sequence. They also played a really major role in search and rescue at sea.

It was a special sort of job, requiring a group of special people, helping to keep those in our often treacherous coastal waters safe.

Although the Society is almost 50 years old with around 150 members, we always welcome new members. Apart from us having our Friday social evenings with good company, interesting talks and a good supper – with the odd glass of wine or other beverage – we are committed to our aims (see [www.bensington-society.com](http://www.bensington-society.com)) which can be summed up as “Helping to keep Benson a great place to live” and that can’t be bad. So, following the Council’s request to help “Forge a Benson Fit for the Future” (p34 June’s Bulletin), when the Council tells us how they wish us to be involved, please take part in any process that will help them try and sort out how the Village will prioritise the spending of the CIL money coming from the developers of the recent and planned developments along the A4009. This money is a ‘one-off’ gain and spending it is time limited (“use it or lose it”).

The Society’s summer break is now upon us but as there may still be changes to the ‘Road Map’, coupled with the Parish Hall extension and the unknown potential of the Community Hall (the PC has not yet taken ownership) it means that we cannot yet plan our ‘Reunion Party’ and resumption of our ‘normal’ Friday evenings. So, watch this space.

David McGill