Risen from the Ashes

The evening entertainment on Thursday 22 September explored life in London following the Great Fire of 1666. Although the media had recently covered the anniversary in a range of ways, Sally Baker’s research had unearthed many fascinating and little known facts to add to our knowledge of the Restoration.

Through the device of conversations between famous diarists of the time – Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn – the audience learned about the legacy of the fire in terms of the rebuilding of the city, the start of the fire insurance business and the exciting developments in science through the work of Robert Hooke and Isaac Newton. There were links to the changes in social life with the Restoration of the Monarchy following the time of Oliver Cromwell, including a look at the plays and poetry of Aphra Behn, the first woman to earn her living through writing (mainly very risqué plays and poetry). Conversations between Elizabeth Pepys and her best friend Betty Martin (later to become one of Pepys’ many mistresses) highlighted the wider range of goods available in the new shops and market halls.

Images of paintings, portraits and documents provided visual were projected throughout the evening and a research paper written by Derek Darwent was available for the audience to take away with them.

The evening was punctuated with songs of the time sung by Edward Marston and accompanied by Richard Hare, a local music teacher. Richard also played contemporary music on his electric harpsicord to link the items of the show. His harpsicord provoked a lot of interest from the audience during the interval.

Presenters: Sally Baker, Mike Cockett, Pat Cockett, Geraldine Horn, Jackie Lucas, Pauline Milborough, Peter Roberts
Music: Richard Hare, Edward Marston
Tech and images: Pat Cockett
Front of house: Kate Perring, Jenny and Brian Tarner
Photographs: David Fisher