

## Hartford Conservation Group

The Group held its Annual General Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> October when the Committee and Officers for 2018/19 were elected. Following the business part of the evening Chairman Mike Humphrey introduced the speaker, Mike Petty, who took us back to the floods of 1947. 100 square miles of Fenland were flooded, including many villages along the Great Ouse. 1947 began with heavy frosts which made the ground very hard. Next came the heavy snow, which fell on to the already frozen ground. Very quickly the snow began to melt and because the ground was frozen due to the earlier frost there was nowhere for the melted snow to go but to channel its way into the rivers. Rivers were unable to cope with the speed and quantity of water, river banks weakened and collapsed. Over Fen flooded and residents had to evacuate, farmers had to move animals and machinery to higher ground.

German PoW's helped to secure river banks. It was a national disaster and servicemen from the Army and RAF were drafted in to help. When one river bank collapsed it was decided to fill the gap by forming a metal box using American amphibious tanks

The Denver Sluice could not cope with the flood water as it coincided with high tide in the Wash. The sluice gates could not be opened to let the flood water out as the sea water would rush in.

The harvest the following year was very good as the flood water brought back fertility to the land.

Lessons were learned from the floods and the new Denver Sluice was built and the New River that runs to Kings Lynn constructed. Water is stored in the New River and piped to Newmarket and then to Essex.

Questions were taken from the floor and Mike Humphrey thanked the speaker for a very interesting talk delivered in Mike Petty's own inimitable style.