

**Bidford and District History Society:
'Shakespeare as he was spoke, and Other Matters'**

Guest speaker at the Bidford History Society meeting on Friday 19th January was Stanley Ellis, formerly Senior Lecturer in English Language at Leeds University and a popular broadcaster in the 1980s. He is celebrated for his part in the arrest of the Yorkshire Ripper, when he correctly identified the sender of the hoax tapes as living in Sunderland, and most likely not the Ripper himself.

It was an eventful occasion. Heavy rain and a power failure at 7.00 p.m. necessitated shifting the meeting from St. Laurence's Church across the street to the Church Hall where, fortunately, the lights were kind enough to stay on. So a massive audience, packed like sardines into the church hall, listened with fascinated attention to Mr Ellis' review of the development of English dialects from Shakespeare's time to the present.

Starting with Shakespeare himself, and the use of invented and dialect words in some of his best-known plays, Mr. Ellis quoted from *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to make his point. Drawing on earlier research work of his own, he led the meeting across England from Devon to the Scots border (and beyond), pinpointing the niceties and the curiosities that distinguish one village from the next, and sometimes one part of the same village from another.

In answer to one of the many questions put to him, Mr Ellis had to admit that it was not the South Warwickshire dialect that was his favourite, that honour falling to the Northumbrian 'burr' prevalent in areas of central Northumberland. His own Yorkshire accent certainly gave a great deal of pleasure and contributed to the colour of a memorable evening.

The meeting on 16th March will be a nostalgic talk on 'Local Railways' by Martin Bloxsam, MA, M.Ed. Membership for the rest of the year (ending in July) is now half price at £5.00 per person, and £2.50 per visit by non-members.