

HERNE BAY HISTORICAL RECORDS SOCIETY

REPORT ON THURSDAY 19TH OCTOBER MEETING

A fascinating talk was enjoyed by members at our last meeting when Cliona Kilroy from Canterbury Auction Galleries shared some of her experiences as an auctioneer and valuer with the gallery over the years. She first explained some of the background to the work of the auction rooms.

She said that they held a two day auction every eight weeks, selling the full range of antiques and collectables from jewellery to ceramics, silver and furniture. These sales were extensively publicised via a fully illustrated catalogue, together with local and national advertising. This involved valuing, photographing and preparing every item individually as well as arranging to hold pre-sale viewing sessions and placing all the details online. She explained that this was a cyclical process involving expertise in many different areas with a great deal of precise planning, following a similar routine each time. She then went on to describe in detail with magnificent illustrations several of the latest specialist sales that both she and the gallery had been involved with. The first of these was the fantastic collection of Chinese Gods which had been the lifetime work of the late Mr Keith Stevens of Ashford. This comprised mainly small wooden painted and gilded statues as well as some bronze images which had been painstakingly and lovingly collected by him for over 50 years amounting to 1000's of items. All kept and displayed in a specially converted garage. The amount of specialised work on behalf of the auction gallery by dedicated Chinese experts to get these items to a dedicated sale, was described by Cliona and kept members spellbound. The second example she took was the unique auction sale of sections of the removed masonry and stone work of the west window of Canterbury cathedral collected because of its complete recent restoration. This took place in the cathedral's own Stonemason's Yard instead of the traditional auction room with all proceeds going back to the cathedral. The complete uniqueness of this material had made it impossible to do any pre-valuation of the pieces from the very large to small stones fashioned into book-ends and Cliona said it had been an absolute privilege to be involved in such an historic event.

Members were all very appreciative of such a fascinating, well presented and insightful talk.