

Our speaker in February was Pete Smith who worked for English Heritage for nearly 30 years, latterly as a Senior Architectural Investigator.

Pete's well illustrated talk was on Rufford Abbey, covering the Victorian and Edwardian periods when it was the country house of the Savile family, connected to the Lumleys, Earls of Scarborough.

John, the 8th Earl succeeded his father in 1835. He chose to live at Rufford in preference to the other family seats, possibly to avoid the scandal associated with his unconventional, but apparently happy domestic life. He employed the up and coming architect Anthony Salvin to remodel the interior. On the death of the 8th Earl, the estate passed to his son, Captain Henry Saville of the 2nd Life Guards, a well known racehorse owner. He remodelled the stableblock and sawmill. His younger brother Augustus Savile, who succeeded him, was a personal friend of the then Prince of Wales who often stayed at Rufford for the shooting and the Doncaster Races.

The inter-war years were the final glory days of Rufford. The estate was sold in 1938, passing through various hands before being finally purchased by Nottinghamshire County Council in 1952. Controlled demolition started in 1956. It is now a designated Country Park, the coach house and stableblock being converted into shops, a cafe and craft gallery.

The large gathering was proof of Pete Smith's popularity at our meetings and he was warmly thanked and applauded.