

TRIP TO THE THAMES BARRIER

Some 30 members enjoyed a trip down river to the Thames Barrier in July. It was a fascinating day, despite the warm weather. We met at Westminster Pier and soon boarded the *M. V. Sarpedon*, most of us choosing to sit on the open upper deck where there was a refreshing breeze and good views of all the buildings and bridges being pointed out by a member of the crew. On arrival at the Barrier, with its iconic stainless steel roofs gleaming in the sunshine, we were met by our guide, Pam, who gave us an introduction to the site. Then a presentation gave us more detail about the Barrier and how it works. Since its opening in 1982 the Barrier has been closed 182 times, protecting London from flooding. Fifty of these closures took place during the winter of 2013-14 when it rained and rained and rained. The decision to close the 10 steel gates is made when a combination of continuously monitored data indicates that flood risk is high. In addition to the main Barrier near Woolwich a number of other barriers have to be closed at the same time, the nearest to us being the Dartford Creek Barrier on the River Darent. Downstairs in the Visitor Centre we explored more information, and watched an excellent video of life and work on the Barrier. Before boarding our return boat, we had a walk along the river which gave excellent views. Many thanks to Ken Robinson for organising a very good day.

Celia Smith

