

of our Society members had enjoyed, on another very warm day, a trip on this great wheel with its spectacular views over London. Having passed the 'Eye' we sailed on under Westminster Bridge and were then presented with beautiful views of the Houses of Parliament. Lambeth Bridge, Vauxhall Bridge, Battersea Railway Bridge and finally Chelsea Bridge followed in quick succession. In Chelsea Reach with fine views of the Chelsea Royal Hospital "Princess Pocahontas" was expertly turned and we began our return trip to Gravesend seeing the various sights again but from a different aspect.

Passing Thamesmead we had the excitement of a very rare sight in the Thames, in fact so rare that its presence had made headlines in the national papers. A dolphin was seen swimming

alongside us. This animal had entered the Thames a few days earlier. The fact that a dolphin could survive in this part of the Thames testifies to how clean the river has become compared to forty years ago when the water was black with scum and nothing lived in it!

The trip continued uneventfully back to Gravesend. We have to thank the crew of "Princess Pocahontas" for an enjoyable and informative river cruise brought to life by an extremely knowledgeable and interesting commentary. For me, having spent some of my youth in Gravesend and having spent a lot of time on the waterway, it was particularly nostalgic. The superb weather which we enjoyed and which enhanced the trip was obviously ordered by our social secretary Joan Liggett!



## Vines, Wines... ...and Railway Lines



by Richard Liggett

The title of the outing was a vote catcher in itself. On 21st July, a lovely summer day, we arrived, eagerly and too early, at the vineyard and had to await the arrival of our guide. This gave us a chance to sit in the sun over a drink!

After a gentle stroll around the vines, learning of the early struggles to grow a decent crop from one third of an acre to the present twenty-two acres. The grapes are mainly of German origin. The next stop was the winery, which has modern wine making machinery. Harvesting usually starts in October and bottling in March. Cider is also brewed, using locally grown apples.

A large ploughman's lunch followed. There was only one slice of bread, about half a loaf!

Our next port of call was the Kent and East Sussex Railway, which is one of the many railways built by Colonel Stephens. There is also a great collection of railway artifacts, including the world's smallest standard gauge steam engine, named Gazelle. This locomotive was used in Shropshire. It was wonderful to travel through the lovely Kent and Sussex countryside at a speed which left enough time for us to enjoy it, not forgetting the cream tea on the return trip. After all that eating my shirts have shrunk!

Arriving back in Dover, clutching our wines and ciders, we sounded just as if we had arrived off the ferry from France!