

## **THE LIFE AND WORK OF WILLIAM HOGARTH**

### **SPEAKER: JOHN BREARLEY**

John Brearley is a former Head of Visual Arts at Waingel's Copse School. He entertained us with a fascinating, humorous and informative talk about the artist William Hogarth.

John began by setting the scene for William Hogarth's (1697 – 1764) life and times. He described the social situation in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century, especially in London: the squalor, the contrasts between the rich and the poor, the appalling housing conditions, the moral laxity of society in general. Prostitution was rife amongst the aristocracy and drunkenness was rampant amongst the poor, who drowned their sorrows in either beer or gin. In 1720 there were 700 gin distilleries and over 3500 outlets! Two of Hogarth's most famous paintings are "Gin Lane" and "Beer Lane".

Hogarth was born in Smithfield and made his name initially as an apprentice silversmith whose artistic designs gained him a considerable reputation. His great claim to fame, however, is the series of satirical paintings he produced of the lives and times of the great and good. Hogarth had a deep sense of morality and injustice and he sought to expose this through his art, which he hoped would educate the poorer classes. Fortunately he left explanations of who the figures were in the paintings.

Hogarth was so appalled by the squalor and poverty that many children were brought up in, that he was a founding member of the Coram Fields Foundling Hospital in 1712.

William Hogarth is known as "The Father of English Art".