

Howard Robinson – Oliver Cromwell and the Battle of Worcester.

Howard Robinson, a Member of 'The Battle of Worcester Society' and a nine-times great-grandson of Oliver Cromwell, gave a most informative, interesting and lively PowerPoint Presentation on his ancestor, Oliver Cromwell. He traced the life of this illustrious person, from his birth to his death with humour and passion, using contemporary sources as well as current research. He also debunked some of the myths and legends about Cromwell, citing historical documents and present-day experts.



Howard Robinson and 'The Battle of Worcester Society' Insignia.

Starting with Cromwell's birth and early life in Huntingdon, his life story unfolded, charting his education, family crises, early career in law, marriage and selection for Parliament at the age of 29. Howard was quick to point out that in those days Members of Parliament were selected, not elected, by a very small percentage of the population. There was also an emphasis on Cromwell's early Puritanical background, influenced first by his Schoolmaster, Thomas Beard, and later by his marriage to Elizabeth Bourchier, daughter of a wealthy Puritan fur merchant.



Oliver Cromwell, 'Warts and everything' by Samuel Cooper (1656)

The state of the Monarchy was explained, and examples were given of the arrogant handling of both the populace and the Parliament by King Charles I. When opposed by Parliament, the King raised his Standard at Nottingham and War was declared in 1642. The King headed south with his army and the Battle of Worcester was held at Powick Bridge. This was the first skirmish of the Civil War, lasting 20 minutes and the Crown won a decisive victory over the Parliamentarians. The first phase of the Civil War had begun. Cromwell, from this defeat, and as a Captain of Horse, began to build a New Model Army.

The Group heard how Charles I forced Parliament's hand with his stubbornness and lack of culpability, stating 'I do not regret any of the deaths the wars have caused'. This led to his execution and the Council of State, headed by Cromwell as the Lord Protector, working with Parliament as the 'Commonwealth'.

There were three phases of the Civil War, which Howard explained with animated diagrams, contemporary maps and charts. He detailed the strategies of the final Battle of the Civil War, centred again on Powick Bridge, Worcester, using step-by-step animation of the opposing sides' strategies and Cromwell's decisive victory using a tactical pincer movement.

Howard emphasised that Cromwell was not an agitator, but a Backbench MP and that throughout his life and career, until 1647 (when Charles I escaped from house arrest) he was a supporter of the monarchy. He reluctantly agreed to the King's execution, but was not the first signatory of the 59 names on the Death Warrant. He also made clear that Cromwell had not been a dictator, as some supposed, but in fact only vetoed two decisions in Parliament.

Cromwell's legacy was that grounds were laid for a restrained monarchy, and grounds were laid for our Parliamentary democracy, both of which we enjoy today.



Powick Old Bridge, Worcester.

The Presentation also included light-hearted quizzes, humorous asides and parallels between Parliament then and now. Howard was warmly thanked for his outstanding depiction of one of England's finest and most controversial figures. At the end the Group enjoyed cakes for refreshments, to celebrate the tenth Anniversary of the History Group.

Heidy Hague.