

History Group Members Research Meeting on 04-11-19



From l - r: Audrey Hobbs; Tim Yates; Tina Jenkins; Jenny Rand; Elaine Yates; Nita Crutch; John Rand.

A wide variety of topics were presented at the annual Members Research meeting, highlighting the varied Members interests. The 'audience' appreciated the amount of time and energy that was put into each Presentation, and the opportunity to discover new and interesting material.

1: Tina Jenkins: The unfortunate Colonel Despard.



Edward Marcus Despard (1751 – 1803).

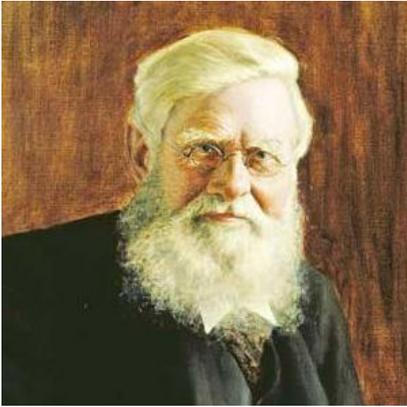
Tina used as the basis for her talk the book 'The British Revolution That Never Happened' by Mike Jay. Edward Marcus Despard was an Irish soldier who served in the British Army. He was regarded as both a hero and a traitor. In the recent 'Poldark' series on television, a character named Ned Despard was portrayed and was based on the real Edward Despard. Tina referred to the parallels between the series and the real person many times in her talk.

Tina gave a biography of Despard and a summary of his Army Career. He had worked with Nelson in Jamaica, and was later promoted to the Spanish Bay of Honduras as Superintendent over a motley crew. While there he apportioned land irrespective of colour or ethnicity, which created tensions and trouble and made him enemies. His marriage to a black woman caused him to be ordered back to England, where he eventually found himself in prison, and on release, bankrupt. Later in his career he was accused of being a traitor and the potential assassin of King George III.

Although defended by Lord Nelson, he was found guilty of treason and hung, drawn and quartered. He was buried in an unmarked grave in St Paul's Cathedral. The injustice of his trial and execution still resonated years after his death.

Tina used contemporary prints, portraits and documents in her PowerPoint presentation, to bring to life the colourful and tragic end of an unsung hero.

2: Audrey Hobbs: Alfred Russel Wallace.



Alfred Russel Wallace (1823 – 1913).

Audrey's presentation highlighted the life of 'The Father of Geophysical Entomology', whose research and study influenced Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection. Audrey gave a biography of Wallace and a resume of his career and his travels, especially to South America and the East Indies. As a British naturalist, explorer, geographer, anthropologist and biologist he is best known for the 'Wallace Line', which separates Australia from Asia.

3: Tim Yates: Robert Recorde.



Robert Recorde (1510 – 1558).

Tim's presentation was interactive and humorous, as he informed the History Group about a significant Welsh physician, inventor and mathematician. Using a PowerPoint presentation, he gave a biography of the Founder of the English School of Mathematics, and Comptroller of the Mint to Edward VI. Through a Q & A conversation with the Group he revealed that Recorde invented the 'equals sign' (=), the sine and the square root and was the first modern mathematics teacher. He also published a number of books, of which the most famous is 'The Whetstone of Witte'. Unfortunately, Recorde had a conflict with William Herbert, of the powerful Herbert family, and died in prison aged forty-eight.

4: John and Jennie Rand: Sir Rowland Hill.



Sir Rowland Hill (1795 – 1879).

John and Jennie Rand presented a 'local boy made good' to the Group, including many new facts of which the group were previously unaware. Born in Kidderminster, a brief biography was given, before Hill's achievements were related. These included his progressive attitude to education, abolishing corporal punishment and encouraging sports activities, including swimming. He also advocated self-government for schools. Hill was also a painter. He is best known as a social reformer, campaigning for a comprehensive reform of the postal system, based on the concept of Uniform Penny Post. His solution of pre-payment facilitated the safe, speedy and cheap transfer of letters. Another reform was the Mulready System of pre-printed postal stationery and another reform was the South Australian colonisation system. Hill was also a director of the London-to-Brighton Railway, introducing reforms in travel.

There are three public statues to Sir Rowland Hill, one in London near The Museum of London, one in Birmingham and the third outside the Town Hall in Kidderminster. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

John and Jennie presented their subject with great affection and some humour.

5: Elaine Yates: The History of – Pizza!



Margherita pizza.

Elaine recounted the history of the world's favourite fast food, its chronicle of migration and technological change. Mention of the pizza goes back to 1900 BC and is mentioned in Virgil's 'Aeneid'.

In late C18 Naples it became the staple diet of the 'Lazzarone', but the crushing poverty of this section of the populace made it a despised meal. However, in the late C19, during the reign of King Umberto and Queen Margherita, it found favour, as the Queen enjoyed this form of food with tomato, mozzarella cheese and basil and

thus the 'Margherita Pizza' was born. Citizens migrating North took this particular cuisine with them, thus spreading its popularity. During the second World War American soldiers in Italy enjoyed this 'new' meal and took variations of it back to the USA. Tourism continued to spread this food, in many new forms, round the USA and then round the world. It further developed with the availability of fridges and freezers and in the 1960's 'Domino's' established the first home-delivery service.

Elaine used contemporary pictures from the C19 to enhance her presentation, also giving information on early ingredients. As she commented: There is social, economic and technical history baked into every slice!

6: Nita Crutch: These Shoes.



Illustrative purposes only (courtesy of Marks and Spencer plc).

Nita recounted, with considerable humour, a memorable cruise she had made, some years previously, when her shoes (a pair of trainers) had played an important part in providing comfortable support during a whirlwind visit to Israel, Egypt and Cyprus in three days.

The visit had taken place just before the Arab/Israeli War and was very well organised. On her first day she had visited Bethlehem, which came as a shock, as the stable in which Christ is supposed to have been born was not a cosy modern stable (as Christmas cards would portray), but a bare cave.

On the second day Nita visited Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall and the Mount of Olives, as well as The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus Christ is said to have been crucified and buried. Her comment was that it was a very rushed day and she was grateful to have worn a pair of comfortable shoes.

On the third day Nita visited Egypt, where the organisation was 'less precise'. However, she still managed to visit Cairo and the Pyramids, experience a camel ride, visit a papyrus factory and The Museum of Antiquities.

Displaying her shoes, Nita explained how the comfort and support of 'These Shoes' had enabled her to enjoy, rather than endure, this significant visit to special places.

During the break in the afternoon Members enjoyed a generous and varied selection of cakes provided by other members. The whole afternoon was considered a great success, and the research and hard work of the participating Members, who gave presentations, was very much appreciated.

Heidy Hague.

