

Alresford Historical & Literary Society

Newsletter November 2019



Shakespeare and the Flying Scotsman



With Professor Simon Barker

Head of English and Creative Writing at Chichester University



on Wednesday 20th November

7:30 Methodist Church Jacklyns Lane, Alresford. Visitors Welcome: £3:00 at the door.

Synopsis.

This illustrated talk will begin with an account of the Flying Scotsman rail service which linked Scotland with England from the year 1924, developed from the earlier 'Special Scotch Express' which had operated since 1862.

The locomotive *Flying Scotsman* played a similar role to its predecessor. Built in 1923, its first public appearance was as an exhibit at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924, before being deployed on the service after which it was named. At the end of mainline steam operation, the locomotive *Flying Scotsman*, by this time in private hands, was shipped to North America to begin an extensive tour of the USA and Canada. The locomotive hauled an 'exhibition train' which served as an 'ambassador' for British businesses. Owner Alan Pegler sought backing from numerous British companies and exhibited their products in the train's carriages. As a theatre enthusiast, Pegler was most proud of one element of the touring exhibition; a carriage dedicated to promoting the alluring **Royal Shakespeare Company**, an institution drawing to the end of its first decade of productions. The talk will include recent recollections of the tour from one of the representatives who traveled across the USA with the train.

The talk will examine the symbolism of the locomotive, the train service, the *Flying Scotsman* tour, and the **Royal Shakespeare Company** and will discuss the relationship between *Shakespeare* and National Identity in the 1960's, looking back to the post-war years of the Memorial Theatre and then to issues of *Shakespeare* and National Identity in the years since, especially in the context of changing perceptions of nationhood in our own period.

Newsletter. Latest copy date for the December issue is Nov 29th 2019 Please note this date
Please send Copy to Robert Fowler 01962 734125 email to: secretary@alresfordhistandlit.co.uk

October meeting Review:

The Murder of Sir Harry Oakes, Bahama 1943
with Paul Stickler

Self-made multi-millionaire Sir Harry Oakes, the wartime refuge of a wealthy elite with some dubious connections lived in a luxurious mansion in the Bahamas. One morning in 1943 he was found dead by a house-guest.

The island's governor, the exiled Duke of Windsor, influenced the choice of local detectives who then proceeded to conduct an incompetent investigation. Someone had made it look as if Oates burnt to death in his bed, but in fact a blow to the head had killed him. Suspicion fell on a playboy boyfriend of Oakes's daughter but after a controversial trial he was acquitted. The case remains unsolved despite many books and theories that have abounded.

Using his skills as a senior CID investigator Paul Stickler detailed the facts, anomalies and unanswered questions. Why were the FBI and Scotland Yard not involved? Why were blood stains not analysed? Was the investigation deliberately botched? Did the Duke interfere to conceal his own dubious dealings and German contacts? Was this a mafia killing connected with underworld gambling? Who did kill Oakes? What was their motive?

Members enjoyed Stickler's crystal-clear presentation but he deliberately left them to form their own conclusions. After answering many questions and having been greatly entertained they went home intrigued by a case that crime writers still puzzle over.

Provisional Programme for 2020 - dates for your Diary

Here are some of the talks arranged for the Society

Jan 15th Operation Nightingale and Rat Island Rescue
With award winning Archaeologist-Richard Osgood

Feb: 19th "Just Williams, Makers, Saviours and Destroyers"
With Anna Withers, Winton Blue Badge Guide

March 18th Arthur Conan Doyle- His life and writings.
With Julia Mayo

April: 15th AGM folloed by "Victims" - the Wicked and
Wonderful Satire of James Gillray: (18th Cent Satirical
Cartoons with Graham Lumb)

May: 20th "Streetlife in 18th century Winchester". with
David Neilson. (Includes stories of the 'Muckabites')

Executive Committee to April 2020

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Recommended Reading by Jane Hutchence

The Trials of the Kings of Hampshire
(*Madness, Secrecy & betrayal in Georgian England*) By Elizabeth Taylor

This is a story with much local interest. The main subject is the "mad" Third Earl of Portsmouth (formally John Charles Wallop) who inherited great wealth.

He moved from being controlled by his mother and family to being married off to an older female caretaker and later after her death to a second unfaithful wife.

He was connected with the Austen Family at Steventon and was friends with Lord Byron.

Portsmouth's obsessions were far from normal and unhealthy to say the least; including frequent attendance at funerals and blood letting.

In a family conspiracy he was sent to Trial for Lunacy in 1823 by his brother who wished to safeguard his inheritance.

Portsmouth may have been unstable but the question arises as to whether he was just mad, rather shy or unable to function socially.