

Retired Members Group

"Queen Victoria. Who Do You Think She Was?"

Dr Simon La Frenais

Held on Tuesday 22nd October 2019

In this extremely well researched historical paper, which was beautifully illustrated, Simon traced the birth of Queen Victoria to her unexpected coronation and subsequently the birth of her and Prince Albert's nine children.

As an unaware carrier of the sex linked recessive gene for haemophilia, her offspring had married into the majority of royal houses of Europe, such that her unofficial soubriquet as "The Grandmother of Europe" was richly deserved. Half of their daughters were carriers and half their sons affected. The gene lives on, but the question is from where did it come? A genetic mutation is unlikely for this mode of inheritance and thus her legitimacy is challenged or whether she was a changeling.

Discussion was passionate!

Chris Evans

"Clergy Behaving Badly"

The Reverend Fergus Butler-Gallie

Held on Tuesday 10th December 2019

Fergus is the recently ordained curate to the Liverpool Parish Church of Saint Nicholas. He had studied history and Czech -Slovak at St Johns College Oxford and theology at Cambridge University. In his mid twenties he has already authored two bestselling books.

In his talk, not sermon, he compared the role of doctors to that of clerics of whom he painted amusing portraits of idiosyncratic priests and bishops whose behaviours caused them to be included in his Field Guide to the English Clergy.

The Bishop of Exeter had been a poorly performing student but was well connected with means of his own and the portly vicar of Bude in Napoleonic times often sang on a rock in the Atlantic dressed as a mermaid. Another Cornish vicar built a barbed wire fence around his church during the Second World War whilst yet another preached to a congregation consisting only of cats. A vicar with a poor memory failed to turn up at two of his own weddings and only attended the third when fellow churchmen urged him not to forget he was to marry the bishop's daughter.

Discussion centred on whether such abnormal behaviour was attributable to syphilis. A fitting conclusion was reached when the race to attend the dying was between the doctor and the priest.

Our largest congregation adjourned for a festive lunch and Xmas spirit.

There was a general appreciation that sermons at the parish church must now be very well attended.

Chris Evans