

Didcot & District Archaeological and Historical Society

James Sadler the First English Aeronaut

A talk by Richard O Smith Thursday 9th February 2017

A light-hearted and at times hilarious talk from Richard O Smith about James Sadler and the other early pioneers of flight with hot air balloons.

Since the beginning of time man has a fascination to fly like the birds and many drawings can be found of early flying machines, but by the 18th Century the technology had advanced enough to allow foolhardy men with money and a head for heights to conquer the skies.

Richard first of all described his own personal life growing up in windswept Lincolnshire and his local town of Boston, his work on writing comedy for Radio 4 on the Now Show and News Quiz and a collaboration with Hugh Dennis on one of his many books he has published.

Richard commenced his talk with the Montgolfier Brothers successful flight in December 1783 with their paper balloon, their success triggered many other attempts to by other European Balloonists to take to the sky mainly Frenchman and a couple of Italians, the French Government offered a substantial cash prize for the first balloonist to cross the Channel, there were also attempts to cross the Irish Sea.

James Sadler a former pastry Chef, was the first Englishman to fly in a balloon he took off from Christ Church Meadow Oxford in October 1784 flying some 6 miles to the East he continued to fly balloons from many parts of England and went to work for the admiralty improving artillery designs ,remarkably he survived his ballooning exploits and died naturally unlike many others who died in Ballooning exploits he is buried in St Peter in the East Church Graveyard Queens Lane Oxford ,the church now being the library of St Edmund Hall College.

Once again an enthralling evening we are looking forward to next month's talk by Martin Way on Early Days of Stage coaching

David Taylor

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