

General Meeting 2019

January 2019: DR IRFAN MALIK - DULMIAL VILLAGE IN WW1

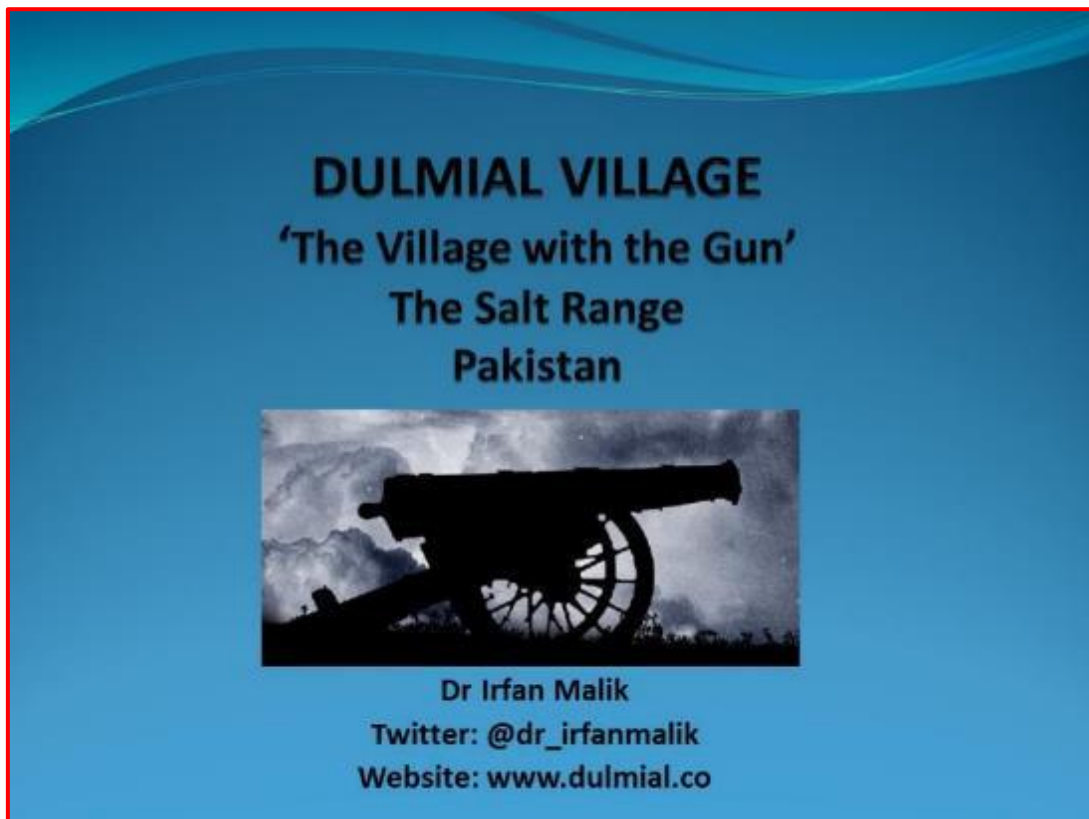
Our speaker for the January was Dr Irfan Malik, a local GP known to some of our members, and his subject was the role played by his ancestral village during the First World War.

Dulmial is a village approximately 100 miles south of Islamabad in modern day Pakistan. Its locals have a long history of being courageous and warlike, and soldiers from this area have supported the British since the time of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. The village is famous for having sent 460 to fight for the Empire during the First World War, over 100 of them being Viceroy-commissioned officers. This was the largest contribution of any village in South Asia.

In the Second World war more than 800 villagers took part, and after partition they also contributed to the Indian and Pakistani armies. In 1925 their contribution was acknowledged by the gift of a cannon by the British. The former naval gun was transported from Jhelum first by train and then in a cart drawn by up to 16 oxen over a period of two weeks. It was mounted at the entrance to the village with a plaque, and as a result Dulmial is known in Pakistan as "the village with the gun". Undivided India's contribution to the First World war was over 1.5 million troops, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh. Of these 13,000 were awarded gallantry medals including 11 VC's. Some 75,000 were killed, including 9,000 on the Western Front. As well as men, nearly 200,000 animals and nearly 4 million tons of supplies were sent over to Europe, at a cost of £19M in today's money.

Dr Malik went on to detail how the troops were organised and the campaigns in which they were involved, and the contribution to both wars made by other members of the Empire. A very interesting talk.

Nick Clark



February 2019: DAVID BELL – THE PLAGUE DOCTOR

Our speaker for February was David Bell - The Plague Doctor. Though neither medic or historian he gained an interest in historical medical practices when he retired from his native Newcastle to a cottage in Eyam, the famous "Plague Village" in Derbyshire, and discovered that its famous waterfall was on his property.



In 1665 members of the village had isolated themselves from the outside world when the great plague hit, and although 260 out of 350 villagers died, their self-sacrifice must have saved a great many lives in the more populous surrounding area. This led David to consider what options were open to plague victims, when modern medicine and accurate human biology were unknown.

Doctors of the time made some diagnoses based on inspection of faeces, or the colour, cloudiness or taste of the patient's urine. A diagnosis of diabetes could be made from the sweet taste of a urine sample, and malabsorption of proteins produced a frothy urine sample. Treatments were often based on the "Doctrine of Signatures" which held that a medicinal plant resembled in some way the part of the human body for which it was specific. For example, celery was specific for ailments of bones and joints, (smiling) bananas for depression, lungwort for chest problems and so on

Ailments that were not treatable by herbs might require surgery, this was not undertaken lightly in an age before anaesthetics and antiseptics. David gave a detailed account, that comes to us from Samuel Pepys' diary, of his operation to remove a bladder stone by Sir Thomas Hollier, an eminent surgeon. This was a harrowing procedure with a low level of success, but Pepys took the risk, and for the rest of his life he held a celebratory dinner on the anniversary of his successful operation. There followed further lurid tales from Pepys' accounts of his maladies, and the remedies used.

To finish his talk, David recounted the story of Eyam, how plague had been introduced to the village in a bundle of old clothes, how the village voluntarily quarantined itself and how the then owner of his cottage lost his whole family within two days and isolated himself at the waterfall with only his dog for company. Nine weeks later after the danger had passed he was rescued by surviving members of the village.

An entertaining and wide ranging talk from an obvious enthusiast.

Nick Clark

March 2019: JACK PERKS – WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

Jack Perks introduced himself as a locally based professional wildlife photographer whose work has been used by the Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, Greenpeace, and television in general. He showed a series of clips of his work to illustrate the breadth of his interests. Happy to film any type of wildlife his main enthusiasm is for fish, he is a self-confessed “fish twitcher” and has set himself the task of filming every UK freshwater species in its natural environment.

He has regularly contributed to *Springwatch* and a clip showed him explaining his enthusiasm and the techniques that he uses.

Later, on live television he presented the results of a national poll that he had suggested to name the most popular British fish. He thinks that Grayling should have been very high on the list due to its attractive appearance and intricate spawning behaviour, but the most popular choices were, in reverse order, Tench, Stickleback, and Brown Trout.



His interest in general wildlife took him to the Shetlands for three weeks where the wildlife is very accessible, but good weather and light conditions for photography are rare. He came back with successful pictures of puffins both on land and underwater. He needed to camouflage himself to get close enough in the water and found that a home-made puffin hat was very effective. This footage will be broadcast soon. He got good underwater shots of seals, and was also fortunate to see Killer Whales on several occasions, but was not tempted to film them underwater!

Further clips illustrated his work and wide interests, including footage of White Tailed Eagles, Pine Martens (who find high quality jam an irresistible lure), Ducks, Water Voles, many species of wild bird and spiders as well as landscapes.

A very interesting and entertaining talk, I for one will be looking out for Jack in future nature programmes.

Nick Clark

April 2019: ANDY BETTISON – RETIRED FIRE INVESTIGATIONS OFFICER

Our speaker at the April meeting was Andy Bettison, a recently retired Fire Service Station Manager who had specialised in fire investigation in the later third of his long career. To become a Fire Investigation officer on the Nottingham force requires eighteen months training, after which, with the approval of one's peers one can lead an investigation.

His talk illustrated the processes and techniques of a fire investigation by giving details of a recent one which he led. Initially called out as Officer in Charge he attended two house fires during the same shift, both of which involved hazard to the public. Since it was obvious that these fires required investigation Andy requested to be stood down as officer in charge and take up his role as Investigating Officer, which must be totally independent from the active firefighting.

Once the investigation starts the first thing is to take photographs to establish the location. From then on all pictures are evidential and the scene is thoroughly recorded including areas that were untouched by the fire. No one else may enter the premises till the investigation is complete.



Evidence comes in many forms: from the smoke marks on the walls one may be able to determine the site of the original fire: the cracks in broken glass can indicate whether heat damage, explosion or physical breakage is responsible: pale ash is indicative of the hottest part of the fire. Samples may be taken for chemical analysis if a fire accelerant is suspected. Evidence that electrical plugs were in position during the fire is made by removing plug and exposing the clean area underneath.

Verbal evidence from other parties may only be considered after the inspection and recording of physical evidence has taken place. This reduces the risk of bias in interpreting the evidence, the story must fit the evidence - not vice versa. Specially trained sniffer dogs can be used to identify suspects. In this example, analysis of material sent from both fire scenes (each investigated by a different Fire Investigation Officer) and material gathered from a suspect were proven to be the same. This eventually led to a successful conviction for arson.

This was a very interesting talk, full of incident and detail. It was notable how careful the collection and documentation of evidence must be in such cases. The audience asked Andy several questions at the end of the talk, and gave him a warm ovation. We wish him well in his retirement.

Nick Clark

May 2019: BOB MASSEY - TITANIC

Our speaker in May was our good friend Bob Massey who came to give us a talk entitled "Gone in 2½ Hours - The Sinking of the Titanic".

When launched this ship was the largest and most sophisticated of its time, being designed for rapid transatlantic shipping of mail, and carrying several classes of passengers in accommodation ranging from very luxurious for the very rich to adequate but plain for third class, and it's novel design was said to make it unsinkable. The story of her tragic loss during her maiden voyage is very well known, and Bob's talk gave a very detailed account of this, pointing out the unlikely combination of circumstances which allowed the tragedy to occur.

Among these were that the crew were all new to the ship and had not been familiarised with it, and only five percent of the crew were watch officers or able seamen, Although the Titanic carried more than her statutory requirement of life vessels they were grossly insufficient to rescue all passengers, it was assumed that in the event of an emergency, rescue ships would soon be on hand. The radio operators were busy with passenger's messages and failed to pass on warnings of heavy ice from other ships to the bridge. Bridge officers relied on lookouts to warn of hazards ahead. When an iceberg was spotted dead ahead it took over thirty seconds for the helm and engine room to respond, and the avoidance manoeuvre was ineffective, The ship struck the iceberg at an angle and a spur of ice damaged several of the plates and opened up five of the watertight compartments. If the collision had been head on it is probable that the ship although damaged would have remained afloat. Forty five minutes after the collision 13,500 tons of water had entered the hull at a rate 15 times faster than it could be pumped out and the ship was listing badly.

Ship's captain Andrews ordered stewards to alert all passengers and bring them to the boat decks but third class had a small allocation of stewards and many passengers spoke no English and could not understand instructions. There was no public address system on board. The deployment of lifeboats was hindered by passengers not following instructions and the inexperience of the crewmen ordered to deploy them. There were further tales of mistakes and missed opportunities, for instance the distress flare rockets turned out to be white rather than red and were ignored by a nearby ship, calls for help were missed by passing ships where the radios were not monitored overnight, and so on.

Among all this this were also tales of great courage and sacrifice among the crew and passengers. A very interesting talk from Bob, as usual.

Nick Clark



June 2019: Summer Social - Pointless!!

For our summer spectacular quiz at the recent General Meeting our hosts, Pat and Richard Downing, became almost indistinguishable from Richard Osman and Alexander Armstrong (respectively) and put the assembled teams through several rounds of the competition.

The knockout rounds ended with a nail biting tie-break to decide the worthy winners. In the meantime there was much nattering and consumption of tea / coffee and cakes. All agreed that it was a very successful event.

Pat and Richard would like to thank everyone who helped at the June social. *“They all helped to make the morning the success it was. Because we were both busy by the stage we are unsure of who actually helped!”*

July 2019: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CYBER CRIME: Keeping you safe in an electronic age.

This talk for our July General Meeting was given by Richard Downing who described the dangers of insecure use of the internet and some procedures to take to keep oneself safe. With reported cybercrime incidents last year at 1.6 Million and rising and an estimated 1 in 10 people being affected it is important to protect yourself. Here is a brief list of simple safeguards.

- Passwords - make sure they are sufficiently complex and are renewed regularly
- DO NOT use a public PC such as in an internet cafe to conduct secure transactions, e.g. Banking or Online purchases
- Social Networking - Check your Privacy settings
- Facebook - Don't tell anyone when you're on holiday and never disclose any IDs or Passwords
- If your Privacy settings are open, the whole world can find out about you
- APPs. If you receive a bill to be paid online, call or write to the company and ask their finance department to confirm the bank details you have received.

Richard's talk covered this in much greater detail and he would be happy to run a workshop on the subject if there is sufficient interest. If this is for you please let him know.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Many thanks to the Committee members standing down this year



Lynne Jaremczenko



Sally Bailey



Sue Fairweather



Tom Grainger

.... And welcome to the new committee:



August 2019: GEOFF PARKINSON – MY LIFE IN PRISON

Our speaker at the August meeting was Geoff Parkinson who told us of his “Life in Prison”, not as an inmate but as a member of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at Lowdham Grange Prison. He first gave us a guide to the layout and organisation of the Prison and then went on to describe the history of prisons from Elizabethan times, through the Victorian concept of Reformatory prisons till in 1898 all prisons were put under government control.

Boards of Visitors were set up to inspect these and the 1952 prison act, still in force, set out the powers of these Boards. In 2003 the name was changed to Independent Monitoring Board to better reflect the role of being the eyes and ears of the Minister, and to ensure that prisoners are treated fairly and decently. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons is the separate professional body that makes periodic inspections of prisons and reports back to the government.

The IMB at Lowdham consists of a board of sixteen volunteers nominally representing the ethnic and gender make-up of the general public who carry out day-to-day observation with rights to full access to all areas and organisational paperwork. They regularly inspect the food, taking meals with the inmates and, for privately run establishments like Lowdham, have a watching brief over the

compliance of the contractor with their service level agreement. The IMB is notified whenever a prisoners taken into segregation cell or special accommodation for their own safety and their situation will normally be Inspected within 24 hours. They are also notified in the event of a serious incident, hostage, riot, suicide etc.

The whole board meets monthly with the director and reports any concerns and may make suggestions which may be acted on or ignored Lowdham is a modern and privately run Category B prison Housing up to 920 mostly in single cell accommodation. Inmates are locked up from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. All cells have toilet and many have a phone. It is run by a Director alongside a Ministry of Justice Controller who monitors compliance with the contract with Serco.

Geoff went on to describe the prison service in general, mentioning some of the changes seen in more recent times, such as the development of the Tactical Response Group (44 highly trained officers who are first responders in a riot situation, and the "Tornado Teams" (groups of officers with special training from nearby prisons to give mutual aid as backup). He also pointed out that "prison is big business!"

There are currently 123 prisons in the country of all categories, including 20 immigrant holding centres and 37 short term holding centres at airports, ports and the like, each of which has its own IMB. The whole IMB system costs £3M per year. A very interesting look at our prisons and the work of a voluntary monitor of standards. Thank you Geoff .

Nick Clark

September 2019: PAULA CORNWELL – MIND YOUR MOTOR MANNERS

We welcomed Paula Cornwell to our September meeting, who in the persona of the Hon. Mrs Victor Bruce ("My name is Mildred but you may call me Mrs Bruce") gave us a talk entitled "Mind your Motor Manners." This was based on her experience as a pioneer automobile racing and rally driver and how she wished to encourage women to learn to drive. She described how In 1927 she had won the Coup de Dames in the Monte Carlo Rally and immediately followed that with a long distance return to London via Morocco as a publicity stunt for AC cars.

It was her earnest wish that more women should feel themselves fit and able to take to the road driving an automobile, and humorously gave us her tips and observations. Drivers should possess as many of these six desirable characteristics as possible - patience, courtesy, imagination, quick judgement, determination and sympathy, all of which were illustrated in conversation with the audience, very few of whom admitted to having all six.

She then gave us her thoughts on appropriate dress for driving, In open cars ladies hats should be not too tight, firmly secured with no distracting fluttery accessories, and with a large brim - useful as a sun shade. Long scarves should definitely not be worn in open cars as illustrated by the recent sad demise of Isadora Duncan. Be also aware that long strings of pearls can become caught in the controls and break!



As for coats, in open cars one only needs a dust coat to protect one's pretty frock, in the winter a skin or fur coat is recommended, securely belted to reduce drafts. Woolly gaiters should be considered to save oil and grease stains from the pedals on one's stockings. "Driving affords no saving on shoe

leather”, soles and heels will wear rapidly when activating the pedals so a good pair of brogues is recommended, you can change into your stylish shoes when you arrive. We were then given a chance to practice the approved hand signals, and proper use of the horn.

In conclusion she was able to assert that as long as you managed your motor manners you could manage your motor. A very well received and entertaining talk.

(For a biography of Mrs Bruce and a catalogue of her many exploits see

<http://www.retro-speed.co.uk/showfeature.asp?art=12558>

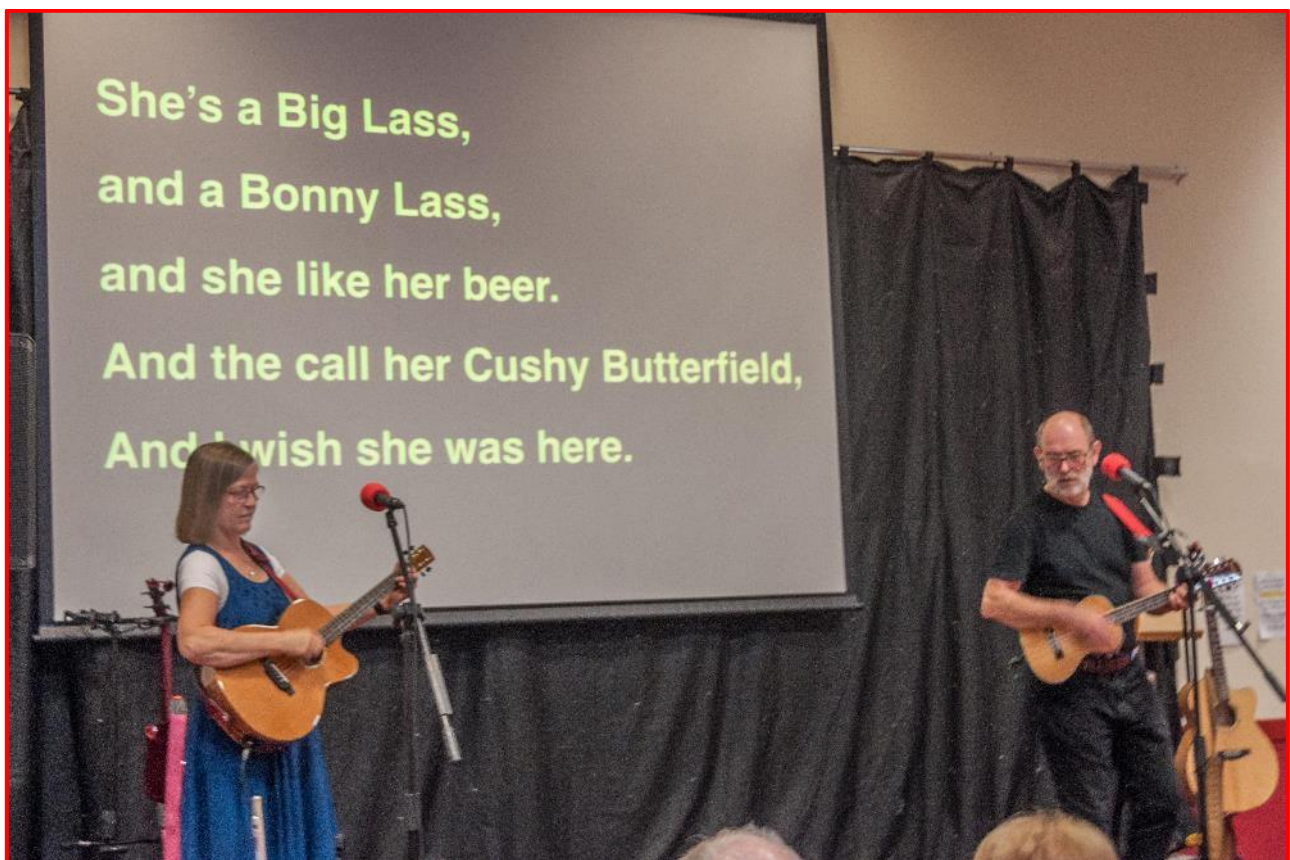
Nick Clark

October 2019: FOOLS GOLD

Our entertainment was provided by Fool's Gold, two talented multi-instrumentalists Steve and Carol Robinson who entertained us with a series of songs, telling the stories behind the songs and encouraging us to sing along. Steve, being a proud Geordie introduced songs from the North East about coal mining, and traditional songs like “Scarborough Fair” and “Cushy Butterfield”.

After some short tuition in Geordie pronunciation we were pretty successful at joining in the choruses. Several other songs followed sung by Carol from new compositions to old favourites like “Cockles and Mussels” and “Goodnight Irene” with enthusiastic support in the choruses. A very different and successful entertainment.

Nick Clark



November 2019: BOB MASSEY – CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

We said hello again to Bob Massey, who had come to give us his talk on The History of our Christmas Traditions. He explained that the Christian celebration of “Christ’s Mass” was not initially celebrated on the date we associate with it, It was in the fourth century that Pope Julius I declared December 25th as the official feast day, In pagan Rome this had been celebrated as the birthday of the god Mithras, as well as being the traditional time of the midwinter festival of Saturnalia, In Nordic countries the winter solstice had been celebrated as Yule, and it is from these pagan festivals that many of our Christmas traditions are derived.

Saturnalia was a wild time of feasting and a relaxing of social norms, the roles of slave and master were reversed, gifts were exchanged and a temporary master of ceremonies could be elected to lead the merriment. These are reflected in our gift giving and the custom of members of the armed forces being waited on by their officers on Christmas day. In medieval times a temporary Lord of Misrule, or a boy bishop were elected to oversee the festivities in secular and ecclesiastical courts.

Yule was a time of feasting in the darkest days of winter in anticipation of the new year. The Yule log had to be large enough to burn continuously over the twelve days of celebration and It was traditional to decorate the hall with evergreen foliage. This gives us the Twelve days of Christmas, and Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe as decorations. The Christmas tree was also traditional in Germanic areas, only being adopted in England in imitation of Queen Victoria’s royal family. The celebration of Christmas as a family holiday was given impetus the example of the royal family and with holiday time becoming more common.

Boxing day is so named because of the tradition of opening charity and individual’s gratuity boxes on that day.

These are a few of the many interesting facts and stories contained in Bob’s fascinating and timely talk. Thank you Bob

Nick Clark

December 2019: CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our December meeting was a Christmas social event which started with our Drama Group’s production of ***Christmas at Oojimaflip Hall***, a murder mystery which kept everyone on the edge of their seats - when they weren’t laughing in the aisles.

Then, during a break for coffee and mince pies the dance floor was cleared for a session with our own rock’n’roll band ***U4iA***.

Thanks go to all who made this a great success.

Photographs by Mike Pointon, David Colyer and Sue Fairweather.

Nick Clark

