

**Thursday 14th December 2006**

***The Battle of Edgehill and the Edgecote Trail – David Buxton***

In some ways this might have been sub-titled ‘New light on an old battle’. Our speaker opened with some fascinating comments about no one expecting a prolonged Civil War, merely one battle and then quite quickly a progression to peaceful negotiation.

Edgehill seems to have been a logical location for this battle largely because of the natural progression of the rival factions from Nottingham (the Royalists) and Northampton (the Roundheads). This led to personal locations of Charles at Sir William Chancie’s house at Edgecote House and Essex at Kineton.

David Buxton talked at length about the role of mercenaries in the Battle of Edgehill and how significant were a whole series of disagreements within the respective armies about the disposition of forces. At the centre of these arguments were figureheads such as Sir William Balfour for Parliament and Sir Jacob Astley for the King. Ultimately there was no winner at Edgehill and Essex failed to bar Charles’ progression to London.

The second half of the talk was about the trail – twenty miles of waymarked footpath from Edgecote, site of an earlier battle during the Wars of the Roses, to Edgehill.

Though the Battle of Edgehill ended with no immediate winners, it can be said that the present day evolution of a trail has been a success for everyone.

**Thursday 11th January 2007**

***The making of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography – Alex May***

The *Dictionary of National Biography* can be traced back to its nineteenth century founder, the publisher George Murray Smith. He was a man of many parts as he was also owner of a mineral water business. The way he shaped the *Dictionary* was greatly influenced by Cornhill editor Leslie Stephens who wanted the book to feature notable figures from every walk of life.

When Stephens’ health failed, Sidney Lee took over and for the first time evolved what we would now call a mission statement.

The Victorian work was published during the years 1885 to 1901 in 63 volumes. Three supplementary volumes followed and altogether these accounted for over 30,000 lives.

During the course of the twentieth century many new lives were added thanks to the work of the Oxford University Press. Research revealed new information on existing lives but also focussed on women and those people involved in business, culture and entertainment, colonial affairs and the activities of those in Britain who originated abroad, which had been under-represented in earlier volumes.

The new complete edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was published in 2004 and on time. It featured over 54,000 lives.