

Teesdale u3a

Martin Lloyd was the speaker at the March meeting and his talk had the intriguing title of 'Passports, Assassins, traitors and spies'.

Using three true stories Martin described how particular events had been instrumental in determining the form of our passports. In 1858, Felice Orsini was able to enter France by impersonating the holder of a British passport in order to attempt the assassination of Napoleon the third. Orsini had used a British passport in the name of Thomas Allsop. This use of foreign passports caused political difficulties for Britain and other European countries and eventually brought down Palmerston's government. As a result, the protocol for issuing passports was changed for all time. One state would not be able to issue a passport to a National of another state and no longer could an Englishman travel abroad on a legally issued Belgian or French passport.

The second story began in 1914, following Germany's declaration of war. US tourists were anxious to leave Germany and with the assistance of the American Embassy, Charles Inglis relocated to Edinburgh. Apparently, he took long bike rides where he could overlook the Naval Base at Rosyth. He then moved to Ireland from where he wrote many letters to a contact in Stockholm. These letters contained military information for the Germans and he was arrested by the Royal Irish Constabulary for spying. His real name turned out to be Charles Hans Logi and he had been sent to the US to set up a spy ring, obtaining an American passport in the process. He was found guilty of spying and executed in the Tower of London by firing squad. In future it was a requirement that all passports needed to include photographs.

The third story took place in May 1945, when two British army officers were walking along the German border and noticed they were being tracked by a German who said he was Fritz Hansen. He was actually carrying a British passport in the name of William Joyce, also known as Lord Haw Haw, and he was arrested under the Treason Act of 1945. Only one witness was required to convict him and that turned out to be Inspector Albert Hunt who recognised his voice, from hearing him speak at political rallies. He was found guilty and hanged at Wandsworth Prison; killed by a British passport he should never have had.

Ian Reid