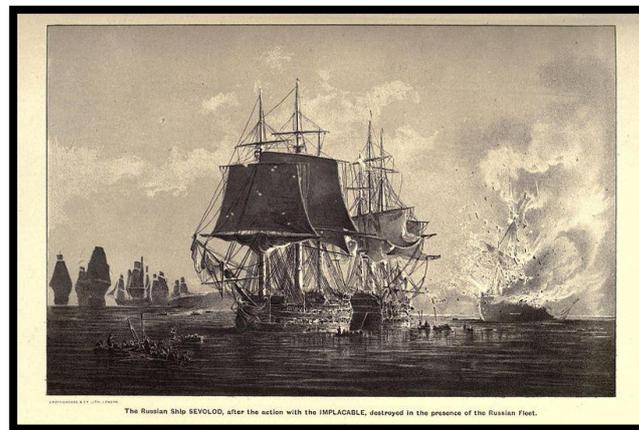


Letters from Nelson and Nine Teapots

Thursday 20th March, at the Somerset Heritage Centre



Although there is a monument to his memory in Butleigh, it is probably true to say that most people in Somerset have never heard of Sir Samuel Hood. Mary Siraut, the Victoria County Historian for Somerset, helped to rectify this by offering members of SANHS and their guests a glimpse into his life and career, illustrating some of her talk by reading letters Sir Samuel had received from Lord Nelson, showing a warm affection between them. He was still only 14 years old when his naval career commenced, eventually rising to the rank of Vice-Admiral after commands in HMS Juno, HMS Aigle, HMS Zealous, HMS Venerable and HMS Centaur, before taking charge of the East India Station. Although he won a number of distinguished awards for bravery in the West Indies, the Mediterranean (including the Battle of the Nile), the Baltic Sea and Spain, he did miss the Battle of Trafalgar, though only because he had one of his arms amputated after a previous naval action against a French frigate. Nevertheless, he was back in the fray shortly after, until an accident with a warming pan eventually left him unable to continue his military duties.



But this talk was not just about the battles. Mary Siraut also gave a glimpse into his private life and the setting up of his home after he had married Mary, the heiress of the Mackenzie family. He still spent a lot of time at sea, whilst Mary spent large sums on household “necessities,” including the nine teapots mentioned in the title and twenty dozen dinner plates! When his wife did join him in India she became the first lady to shoot a tiger there. Unfortunately it was shortly after this that Sir Samuel died, probably from malaria.

A most interesting talk, with some excellent slides, was followed by tea and sorely tempting cakes.