

March Geography Report

March's 'smorgasbord' of five presentations was enjoyable and entertaining. Some serious points were raised during the meeting but there was also much laughter.

Ian Royston set the ball rolling with an amusing account of his travels around the country's rail network. Since taking up 'The Challenge', which he started whilst at university, Ian has endeavoured to travel on all Britain's passenger network. This has involved lengthy consultation of timetables and rail atlases and some early departures to catch a service running only at rush hours or over a freight line. We discovered that some trains don't appear on timetables but still carry a few passengers who are aware of their existence. This keeps the line open, as the closure of a line is complicated and must follow legal procedures set down by Parliament.

Les Knight had found a fascinating book in the Book Exchange at the Grinton Literary Institute. "Brilliant Maps", written by Ian Wright, includes some intriguing maps, for example, global variations in plugs and sockets, countries with the most Miss World winners, countries with no McDonald's and alternative names for Christmas gift-bringers! A few of us are planning a visit to Grinton to see what other literary gems can be found!

Jane Harrison then introduced the research projects which the Geography Group hopes to undertake with the Climate Solutions Group. These would investigate aspects of the weather and climate in Teesdale. The possible project titles were outlined and there was some discussion as to where information might be obtained and how the research might proceed.

After the break, Ann Richards spoke about Ross Clarke's book "Not Zero: How an Irrational Target Will Impoverish You, Help China (and Won't Even Save the Planet)", which she thought might provide useful background reading. A lively discussion ensued.

The meeting closed with a presentation by Jane Harrison on biogeography. This focussed on the flora of an alpine valley in the Haute Savoie. She outlined the factors influencing the vegetation, looking in a particular at the influence of climate and topography. She concluded by briefly considering the impact of man on these habitats, particularly given the recent mild winters.

Report by Jane Harrison

Next meetings:

Thursday 20th April 2023. 2.10pm in the Witham. Gerald Blake will talk about "The Geography of pre-colonial Africa."

Thursday 18th May 2023. 2.10pm in the Witham. "Celebrate Africa" – an afternoon of talks about the continent.