**Stratford sub Castle Guild February 2020**

**The Falkland Islands & South Georgia
Speaker - Sarah Buttenshaw**

Sarah started her talk by first describing her journey to the Falklands which involved a flight first to Buenos Aires, then on down to Ushuaia which is on the tip of Argentina. This was followed by 36 hours on board ship until they arrived on the West Coast of the Falkland Isles.

She then went on to describe the coast which is full of open country and lots of sheep. The steep cliffs are a breeding ground for Black Browed Albatross. There were also lots of Rock Hopper Penguins, only found on the Falklands. The trip then took them on to Saunders Island which had beautiful beaches, Gentoo and King Penguins and also the Caracara birds. In all there are fifteen species of penguins. As they left this island they were all asked to take a big bag and pick up all the rubbish that had accumulated on the beaches.

They then sailed round to the capital, Stanley, which again is a very open area and like living in a time warp. There were some beautiful houses built in the rein of Queen Victoria, but with tin roofs as there is no slate on the island. Beyond Stanley there are more lovely beaches but unfortunately there are still land mines, a hangover from the war, so only the penguins can enjoy them.

The ship then sailed for South Georgia across the Atlantic Convergence, this is where the warm water of the Pacific meets the cold water of the Antarctic. The voyage took 3 days and on the way they saw Wandering Albatross which have an 11ft wing span. The sea is full of nutrients, mainly krill so there is an abundance of wildlife including whales, penguins, sea birds and seals.

Sarah then talked briefly about the Shackleton expedition which sailed in 1914 to South Georgia and how the ship got stuck in the ice in 1915 and was eventually crushed. However despite hazardous seas and mountains Shackleton got all his crew safely back to South Georgia. After the war he tried again with another expedition but died in 1922 and is buried on South Georgia.

On South Georgia they saw a multitude of King penguins and also enormous Fur Seals, they almost became extinct because of hunting for their fur but as this is now banned the numbers have recovered. There is still a Scientific Expedition on the island, as sadly climate change is having an impact with the glaciers slowly melting and they are monitoring these conditions.

Sarah ended her talk saying we live in a fragile world and it is up to us to look after it. She gave a most interesting talk with beautiful photographs. She also mentioned this was her second trip, which lasted three weeks and would love to go back if funds allowed.

*Lynne Pender*

At our next meeting we will hear from Steve Herra on the “The Body through the Porthole” – a true murder mystery on the high seas: was the accused guilty or was it all a terrible mistake? Come along to find out on Wednesday 11th March at 19.30 in the Reading Room.