

Essex Branch of the Historical Association

Saturday May 7th 2022

Defeating the Napoleonic Empire

Dr. Michael Rowe

The talk, “**Defeating the Napoleonic Empire**” will consider whether the Napoleonic Empire might have won & survived. It will argue that the conflict with Britain was of central importance: It was Napoleon’s strategy of defeating Britain economically, through an embargo on trade, (the so-called Continental system), that led him into Spain & Russia. Unfortunately, France ended up seriously overstretched militarily. Furthermore, the trade war impoverished France more than Britain, which was in a better financial & industrial position to sustain a long drawn-out conflict. Importantly, and general accounts neglect this, public opinion within the Napoleonic Empire became increasingly disillusioned: Wars are about morale as much as sheer military power, and on the morale side of things, the Napoleonic regime proved deficient. Hence its surprisingly rapid collapse in 1813 & 1814.



Dr. Michael Rowe had been based in King’s College, London and is currently a reader in Modern European History. He is an active member of the German History Society and was engaged in the Waterloo200 events. His research interests include Nationalism & Identity Politics in Europe, c1750-1914, the French Revolution & Napoleonic Wars, Religion & State in Europe, c1750-1914, French & German History, c1750-1914 and the History of Warfare, c1700 onwards.

He has published several books, including the following on the Napoleonic era; *Collaboration & resistance in Napoleonic Europe: state formation in an age of upheaval, c1800-1815* (2003), *From Reich to State: the Rhineland in the revolutionary age, 1780-1830* (2003), and (jointly with Alan Forrest & Karen Hagemann), *War, Demobilisation & Memory: The Legacy of War in the Era of Atlantic Revolutions* (2016).