

The MELBOURNE Salon

French & Australian Dialogues

You are invited to the next Melbourne Salon at the Alliance Française
51 Grey St., St. Kilda

Thursday 10th May 2018, 7pm - 9 pm

Were it but for a lemon

Dr James Tibballs



The influence of scurvy on French exploration, conquest and colonisation in the 19th century was dramatic. While the two nations, France and England, rivalled each other in scientific discoveries and competed for new territories, the state of health of the crews of their sailing ships could not have been more different. When the *le Géographe*, captained by Nicolas Baudin, and the *Investigator*, captained by Mathew Flinders, met by chance while exploring and mapping the south coast of *Les Terres australes* (South Australia), the crew of the British ship was hale and hearty but that of the French was pitiful – exhausted by scurvy. Why so different? Although long known to be antiscorbutic, citrus fruit was not adopted by the British Navy as an antiscorbutic remedy until 1795, whereas the French Navy did not adopt this remedy until at least 70 years later, if at all – by which time steam was replacing sail. This presentation examines the reasons why the acceptance of citrus fruit was so tardy in both nations, more so in France than in England. In France, medical ideologies, squabbles over the sailor's diet, competing and false remedies, and a certain reticence to learn from their enemy all hindered the fight against scurvy, the scourge of the sea. "Were it but for a lemon" France could well have had more success in war and in colonising lands in the Pacific.

Dr James (Jim) Tibballs is an intensive care physician who has recently completed doctoral studies in French. He is a long-time Francophile – working in a Paris hospital in the 80s, now living three months each year in rural southern France and continuing his interest in French at the Alliance Française de Melbourne and at the University of Melbourne.

Cover charge (includes cheese and wine) \$15; Bookings and pre-payment essential please:
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