

Marking probability theory

AN 18TH-CENTURY minister who has helped gamblers pick winners for almost 300 years will be celebrated at his university, it was announced yesterday.

The Rev Thomas Bayes devised a theory that takes some of the guesswork out of betting, and helps forecast outcomes more reliably.

Bayesian theory is used every day across the world.

It is built into software that forecasts events, from movements in the financial market to changes in the weather.

Bayesian statistics are also used to filter email spam.

The Presbyterian minister, who studied logic and theology at

Edinburgh University, will be commemorated in a workshop and public talk to mark 250 years since his death.

Bayes' methods are used to forecast results based on knowledge, such as estimating how a horse is likely to perform by taking account of its previous races.

The talk, *How To Gamble, If You Must* (Courtesy Of The Reverend Bayes), will be given by Professor David Spiegelhalter of Cambridge University.

It will examine modern applications of Bayes' theory, including catching doping athletes, predicting volcanic eruptions and gambling.

Professor Chris

Williams of Edinburgh University, who organised the event, said: "If Bayes were alive now, I think he would be amazed to see the impact of his work."

Bayes was born in 1701, the son of London Presbyterian minister Joshua Bayes.

He never published what would eventually become his most famous accomplishment.

Instead, his notes were edited and published after his death by philosopher and preacher Richard Price.

The talk is at 5.30pm on Monday September 5 in the Appleton Tower, Crichton Street, as part of a three-day Bayes workshop, running until September 7.

