

Somebody bet on the Bayes – it's only logic

By **Jen Lavery**

AN 18TH century clergyman whose mathematical legacy helps take some of the guesswork out of betting is to be celebrated at the University of Edinburgh.

The Rev Thomas Bayes devised a theory that helps people forecast outcomes more reliably.

Although it is taken for granted now, the minister's theory helped gamblers realise they could cut some of the risk involved, by studying how

a horse had performed in previous races before betting on it.

A workshop and public talk will take place to mark 250 years since the cleric's death in 1761.

Bayes studied logic and theology at the university from 1719 until 1722.

His theory is now 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.

Organiser Prof Chris Williams said: 'If Bayes were alive now, he would be amazed to see the impact of his work.'

The talk on Bayes, entitled How To Gamble, If You Must, will take place next Monday. It will examine some modern applications of the cleric's theory, including catching athletes who use drugs, predicting volcanic eruptions and gambling.



Gambler's aid: Rev Thomas Bayes