



Winter 2021 Magazine

Registered Charity Number 1132055
Website <http://u3asites.org.uk/bishops-stortford>

Committee Members



		
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The view from the Chair

Hello everybody. Trust you are all keeping well and safe during this horrid pandemic. To make life more difficult the rules about who and where you can meet are constantly changing. I write this article in November in the middle of Lockdown 2. Like all sequels it is not as good as the original. Who remembers Grease 2?



By the time you receive this Magazine in January we may well have started a national vaccination programme and hopefully be well on the way to opening up society again. Fingers crossed.

Your Committee cannot wait to get going again to support you, in any way we can to ensure a rapid return to normality.

One thing which has come out of the pandemic is the rapid acceleration in the use of modern technology. The monthly meetings reverted to Zoom in July and the meetings are attracting significant take up helped by a good quality of speaker. I agree however with the view that it is not the same as having face to face contact and mingling beforehand at the Methodist Church Hall. That it is why we plan to return to the traditional monthly meetings as soon as it is safe to do so and members feel safe enough to attend.

Talking of the BS U3A Committee, in March we are scheduled to hold the AGM. This meeting is important as we need to conduct crucial business such as reviewing and passing the accounts and appointing or renewing committee members. As a registered charity it is a legal requirement that we conduct our business in accordance

with our constitution so I would ask you all to do your best to attend either virtually or in person if we can meet again.

U3A thrives on member participation. I look at the Groups and see very keen dedicated people giving it their all. The committee also relies on similar commitment from members.

I mentioned that as a charity we have to observe certain legal rules which are set down in our constitution. These rules limit the time which committee members can serve so we are constantly looking for 'fresh blood' to keep the organisation going. There is an immediate requirement for a secretary and treasurer plus other roles. So, if you feel like you can provide a little more time to help run your U3A please contact me by phone or e-mail. The current role holders are happy for any new volunteers to shadow them for a period until they are fully up to speed. So, what are you waiting for?

Well that's all from me – hope to see you all soon.

Jim Paterson

Chairman, Bishop's Stortford U3A

Tel: 07504 104679

e-mail: Jim.paterson@bsu3a.org.uk

Bishop's Stortford u3a

Minutes of the 35th Annual General Meeting, held at the Methodist Church, Bishop's Stortford 9th March 2020

The Vice-Chairman, Jim Paterson, welcomed all to the meeting in the absence of the chairman.

1. Apologies for absence: Keith Hicks, Roz Howlett, Stuart Jacobs.

2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM.

These had been circulated to all in the Winter Newsletter. They were accepted as a true record.

Proposer: Jenny MacGregor

Seconder: Linda Scott.

3. Matters Arising: None

4. Chairman's Report

Jim read out a message from Keith which thanked all members, Group Co-ordinators, Trustees and volunteers in whatever capacity for their involvement over the year.

5. Treasurer's Report (Jack Treves)

a. Presentation of the 2019 Annual Accounts.

These have been passed by the Independent Examiner and the Committee. A copy is attached to the file copy of the AGM Minutes, available on the website or via hard copy on request. They have been prepared in agreement with Charity Commission rules and have explanatory notes for the members which the Treasurer covered in his speech. The Independent Examiner had picked out a couple of wording difficulties which had been followed up on.

The Treasurer asked for questions. There were none. After a vote, the examined accounts for the year ended 31st December 2019 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Proposer: Richard Cawse

Seconder: Theresa Paterson.

Vote: Unanimously accepted.

b. Approval and Appointment of Independent Examiner.

Peter Bass had agreed to do this for another year.

Proposer: Jenny MacGregor

Seconder: Wendy Shipperlee.

Vote: Unanimously approved.

6. The Election of Officers

Jim Paterson to be Chairman

Proposer: T. Paterson

Seconder: M. MacGregor

Jim Budd to be Speaker Arranger.

Proposer: S-A Budd

Seconder: J. Hannigan

Chris Morris to be Beacon Co-ordinator

Proposer: R. Anderson

Seconder: R. Cawse

Roz Howlett to remain as Groups Manager

Proposer: J. MacGregor

Seconder: Janet Gray

Rene Locke to remain as Committee Member

Proposer: R. Ingells

Seconder: L. Scott.

All votes: unanimously accepted.

7. AOB

- a. The History 1 meeting is on 24th April, not as stated in the Diary.
- b. Third Age Trust Advice re. Coronavirus: If you are unwell don't attend your group(s) and let the Trustees know so that they can decide whether any monthly meetings should be cancelled.
- c. Next monthly meeting: 20th April: The History of Spoken English.
- d. The members were invited for tea / coffee, cake and the viewing of jigsaws.

Message from the Editor

It is always wonderful to receive your news and views that you want to share with the other members. I do reserve the right to edit articles and photographs so that they can fit within the overall layout of the magazine, especially as we have a limit of 48 pages. Please email articles to me, preferably in Word, with images sent separately for inclusion in the next magazine which will be sent to the printers in May.



Lesley Mishan
lesley.mishan@bsu3a.org.uk

Bishop's Stortford u3a AGM
Methodist Hall, South Street or via Zoom
Agenda 2.30pm Monday 8th March, 2021

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Chairman's Report.
5. Treasurer's Report.
6. Approval and Appointment of the Independent Examiner of Accounts.
7. Election of Officers.
8. AOB

AGM Election Form Bishop's Stortford U3A.

Nomination Form for the Election of Committee Members which Incorporates being a Trustee of Bishop's Stortford U3A. AGM 8th March 2021

Name of Candidate (Block Letters)	Signature of Candidate *	Position / Vacancy	Date
Proposer name and signature.**			
Secunder name and signature.**			

Please return the completed form to the Secretary, Kim Shaw at kim.shaw@bsu3a.org.uk or 5 Thorley Hill, Bishop's Stortford CM23 3ND by Monday 8th February 2021.

*I (the candidate) am not disqualified from holding the position of Trustee of BSU3A.

**The proposer and seconder may not be a member of the current executive committee.

Desperately Seeking Secretary

Are you vaguely well organised and able to take notes?

Would you like to meet up with a really pleasant group of people every month and help to steer our U3A post- Covid?

In that case, how about becoming our Secretary?

My allotted term comes to the end in March, and I firmly believe new ideas and enthusiasms are the right way to keep an organisation vibrant and interesting. The work isn't onerous and I'll be here to help you into the role. If you've been thinking it's time for a new interest, now is the opportunity!

Contact me on kim.shaw@bsu3a.org.uk or Jim Paterson (Chair) on jim.paterson@bsu3a.org.uk to find out more.

Kim Shaw
Secretary BSU3A.



Membership Renewals for 2021/22

What a strange year it's been! But one of the things that hasn't changed is that membership renewal payments will still be due by 31st March 2021 for the new Membership Year of 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

At the time of writing this, it is still very unclear whether we will be able to restart our normal 'face-to-face' Monthly Meetings before the end of next March. Clearly if we cannot do so, this avenue for renewing membership will not be available.

However, there remain other ways to pay the £15 Membership Subscription at any time between 1st January and 31st March 2021

1. **Post or deliver a cheque** (payable to 'Bishop's Stortford U3A') to myself at 5 Pishiobury Drive, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 0AD. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of your Membership Card(s).
2. **Pay online by Bank Transfer** using the following information
Sort Code 40-12-03
Account No. 01675540
Reference Your surname and Membership Number
(which is printed on your current Membership Card)
Name of account Bishops Stortford University of the
Third Age
Classification Business

Sending me a stamped addressed envelope for the return of your Membership Card would be helpful. If circumstances change, there will be updates to this information using Newsmail.

Kath Hird

Where do our subscriptions go? Changes in 2019



Until the production of our 2018 year end accounts it was relatively easy to establish how our subscriptions were being expended. However, in 2019 we were instructed by both the Charity Commission (CC) and the Third Age Trust (TAT) to change our accounting presentation which resulted in it being impossible to discover where our subscriptions were being spent and, more importantly, whether we were making a surplus or a deficit on our subscriptions and other ancillary income.

The changes that were imposed upon us were twofold:

1. We were required to include in our accounts all income and all expenditure of every group. This had a significant effect on our accounts by increasing income by some £29,000 and expenditure by £27,000.
2. We were also required to apply different accounting rules for our trips and outings. Prior to 2019, we merely reported a small total net surplus on all our trips each year (in 2019 this amounted to £91). In previous years we had shown at the back of the accounts as a separate schedule, the receipts, payments and net surplus of each trip, the total of which agreed with the total net surplus shown under income. Under the direction of the CC and the TAT we are now be required to open out this net figure by showing in our accounts additional income of £38,500 and additional expenditure of £38,400 for 2019. Although this presentation has no effect on our net surplus or deficit for the year, it is certainly more confusing. After adopting these amendments, although our 2019 accounts met all legal requirements, I felt that they were less informative than in the past. To combat this, I did consider expanding the formal accounts to include on a columnar basis, groups' income and expenditure under their respective headings and with an "admin" column reflecting the figures much as we had shown them in the

past. I subsequently discounted this approach as it would have made the formal accounts far more complicated, lengthy and confusing.

I did, however, produce a hand out at the AGM showing this columnar approach but, not unexpectedly perhaps, I returned home after the AGM with more copies than were handed out at the meeting!

Expenditure

Our subscriptions, together with gift aid and other ancillary income, have always provided us with the funds to meet our expenditure. The main expenditure falls under the following headings:

1. Payments to the TAT include capitation, postage costs of the Third Age Matters magazine and Beacon. In total, this is our most significant outgoing.
2. The hire of halls for monthly meetings (Methodist Church) and for committee meetings (Elsie Barrett Room).
3. The costs of speakers at monthly meetings.
4. Printing costs of the bi-annual Bishop's Stortford u3a Magazine together with its distribution costs.

Summarised Income Statement (excluding groups).

I have set out a table below showing for 2019 a summarised version of the Income Statement as it would have previously been produced. All these figures were included in our formal accounts, but the recently introduced changes have had the effect of concealing the majority of them!

The first three items under expenditure relate to TAT charges. Capitation is charged at the rate of £3.50 per member and has been static at this rate since 2010. Annual postage costs in relation to the five copies of the Third Age Matters magazine cost us £2.90 per household and are increased each year in accordance with postal charges. Beacon is charged at the rate of £1.00 per member, having been increased in 2019 from 50p per member. This substantial percentage increase was to

cover the costs of improving and updating the system and will remain in force until the TAT has recovered its losses incurred on this system.

SUMMARISED INCOME STATEMENT	
(excluding groups)	
	2019
	£
<u>RECEIPTS</u>	
Subscriptions	10,661
Gift aid	974
Other receipts	337
	11,972
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Capitation	3,858
Magazine (TAM)	2,122
Beacon	862
Total TAT expenditure	6,842
Hire of halls	1,871
BS U3A Magazine (incl. postage)	2,578
Speakers	1,044
Other expenditure	2,679
	15,014
Deficit for year	(3,042)
Retained income brought forward	7,834
RETAINED INCOME carried forward	4,792

In 2019 total TAT expenditure represented 46% of our total expenditure and 64% of our subscriptions and was therefore a significant consideration in my recommendation to the AGM in March 2019 to increase

our subscriptions from £10 per annum to £15 per annum with effect from April 2020.

The Future

At the last AGM of the TAT, held in September 2020, the necessary majority of its members approved an increase in the capitation fee of 50p per member (from £3.50 to £4.00) with effect from 1 April 2022. As a result of this increase, I have recalculated our 2020 forecast and also produced forecasts for 2021 and 2022 to establish whether we can absorb this increase. My calculations indicate that this will be possible without a further increase in the level of our subscriptions.

After taking into account the above increases in two of the three TAT charges, together with the increase in the level of our subscriptions, in 2022 total TAT expenditure will fall from 46% in 2019 to 44% of total expenditure and from 64% to 54% of subscriptions. Although a reduction in both percentages, the charges by TAT will continue to represent a significant liability to Bishop's Stortford U3A and can only be funded by our subscriptions and gift aid. My calculations also indicate that, in addition to retained income, our bank balances will be sufficient to carry us through until at least the end of 2022.

Prior to the impact of Covid-19 the TAT had decided to recommend to its 2020 AGM an increase of £1.00 in the capitation fee but in the light of the current crisis, they subsequently reduced this recommendation to 50p prior to the AGM and this was approved as mentioned above. However, this does mean that we have a potential liability of an additional 50p per member (totalling £450, based on my recalculated forecasts) hanging over us. On the basis that the TAT implements this increase with effect from April 2023, I believe that the revised capitation cost can also be absorbed by both our retained income and bank balances in that year.

Jack Treves
Treasurer

Beginning to Zoom



This time last year, who would have thought that phrases such as “rule of six” and “Have you got your mask?” would have become everyday currency? However, one bright spark to come out of the gloom of no trips, holidays or face to face meetings has been the advent of Zoom.

I have to confess, it takes me a while to join up because I’m never sure if I can just press a link or search messages for numbers and passwords. I also haven’t attained the dizzy heights of pretending to be on a desert island or an alien planet that others have achieved; I still have to check that my background doesn’t include a shaming untidy jumble! Zoom, however, has opened up all sorts of possibilities for me.

Now, I can continue to attend Committee Meetings, I can be told first hand about all sorts of things like Madame de Pompadour, Treasures of the British Museum and Derek Jarman’s Garden. I can even attend political rallies and ask questions, all from the comfort of my own home.

2020 may go down in history as one of the longest years we’ve ever experienced but, with over 83% of our membership now on email, at least it’s encouraged us to use technology (albeit with caution) to keep communicating. So, if you haven’t Zoomed yet, it’s relatively painless: give it a go!

Kim Shaw

Weekly Walking Group

In March the Coronavirus Pandemic put an end to the Group meeting and our organised walks had to cease.



However, individuals continued to undertake walks on their own, or with a partner/friend, in the countryside and it wasn't uncommon to cross paths with someone in the Group.

Thankfully, in September, after Risk Assessments had taken place, we were permitted to start meeting as a Group once more. We were exempt from the 'Rule of Six' and as many as thirty of us could walk together as we were permitted to follow the guidelines laid down by The Ramblers' Association. Unfortunately, we still had to suspend our Ambles when we would have met at a Pub, gone for a walk and then returned to enjoy lunch together – hopefully it will be possible to recommence them sometime in 2021.

At the time of writing this report we are back in 'lockdown' so, once again, walks have had to be suspended but, hopefully, it will be possible to get another couple of walks in before the end of the year.

Valerie Porter
Group Co-ordinator
Weekly Walking Group

Join the **Family Tree group** to find out more about your ancestors.



Crime and Punishment

Josiah Branchflower

- Born 1800 Taunton, Somerset - (A silk weaver)
- In the 1830s moved his young family to London for a better life. Prospects no better in Bethnal Green.
- In 1841 wove the silk for Queen Victoria's gown for the Plantagenet Ball.
- Was this robbery, described below, naivety on his part, simple ignorance or was he after a good time?
- Died in Bethnal Green in 1870.

William Branchflower

- A grandson of Josiah and son of John and Ann born 1876 in Bethnal Green.
- Last discovered in 1901 in prison on Dartmoor!!!

An unsavoury incident was to involve Josiah, late at night in 1850, whilst returning from selling his silk in Whitechapel.

Reynold's News London, Sunday 1st December 1850.

“Hocussing and Robbery” – Joanne Driscoll, a smartly-dressed and good-looking young Irish woman, was placed at the bar on Thursday at Worship-street police-court, before Mr. Hammill, charged with having stolen a bag containing £32.9s. in gold and silver monies, the property of Mr. Josiah Branchflower, a silk manufacturer in Sebright Street, Bethnell-green. The prosecutor stated, that he was proceeding through Osborne-street, Whitechapel, on the evening of Tuesday last, when he was accosted by the prisoner, who invited him to accompany her home, or to

treat her, and although he positively refused to comply with either request, she persisted in her opportunities, until he at length was induced, to escape from further molestation, to enter a public house, where he ordered some liquid to be supplied to her. After paying for the liquor, he was about to quit the house, when he was intercepted by the prisoner, who handed him a glass, into which she poured some of the spirits, and having insisted upon his partaking of it, he drank a small portion, but was immediately afterwards seized with an overpowering stupor, and had no recollection of anything that subsequently ensued until he found himself lying upon a bed in one of the upper rooms of a house which he afterwards ascertained to be a place of notoriously bad repute, in Thrall-street, Spitalfields. The only persons in the apartment were the prisoner and another woman, who had divested him of the whole of his clothes, and were busy rifling the pockets of his trousers, in which he had previously deposited a bag containing £15 in gold and about £17.9s. in silver money. He made a strenuous effort to raise himself from his recumbent position, but was unable to do so, and the prisoner and her accomplice succeeded in securing the bag and its contents, with which they darted out of the room, and effected their escape. As soon as he recovered himself sufficiently to raise the alarm, he made his way into the street, and communicated the particulars of the robbery to a policeman, whom he furnished with a minute description of the prisoner, and was apprised on the following evening that she had been taken into custody. In her defence the prisoner denied all participation in the robbery, but the magistrate the depositions to be at once, and she was committed to Newgate for trial taken.”

The prisoner was sentenced to six months hard labour!

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Old Bailey - March 1897

John Clark (27) and William Branchflower (22)

Robbery with Violence on Walter Wilson, and stealing his watch.



Branchflower and Clark were found guilty of robbery with violence in the East-road, City-road. On the evening of the 16th ult. the prosecutor, Walter Wilson was in the East-road, and was attacked by the prisoners, who robbed him of his watch and chain. He was tripped up, when he attempted to follow the prisoners. A large number of

convictions were proved against the prisoners, five convictions by Clark, who had been flogged for a similar offence, and seven by Branchflower. Sentenced to seven years penal servitude each.

The accused used the most filthy and violent language upon hearing the sentence, and were forcibly removed by the warders.

William Branchflower last appears in records on the 1901 census as a convict on Dartmoor.

Dave Branchflower

U3A Bishop's Stortford CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

We are a small group interested in creative writing. We formed four years ago and have tried a wide range of experiments with our writing from poetry to prose, fiction to factual reporting and storytelling from fifty words to several thousand words. Our crowning achievement is an anthology selected from our work and we intend to produce another.



Like everyone else, we have had to adapt to cope with Covid-19 and now meet via Zoom which has enabled us to continue. Everyone is kept informed and actively contributes and we take it in turns to suggest topics. You can read some of our writing on the next few pages.

We would welcome other U3A members who are interested in writing. Why not join us. We will help in any very way we can including help with Zoom. We are a friendly group and no one is put under pressure.

If you are interested, contact Kathy Sumpter by email: gerry.sumpter@yahoo.co.uk

Peter Latham

The Seven Deadly Sins



As I lay musing in my bed
Am awful thought came to my head.
Homework not done for Peter's Zoom
By 6 a.m. I'd left the room.
Tiptoed downstairs, quiet as a mouse
Mustn't disturb the rest of the house.
Write about a deadly sin
Who's daft idea was that?
Some seem fairly topical
But others are old hat.
I fear the sin of wrath
Would hardly challenge me too far.
I feel it pretty frequently
When driving in my car.
I must have led a sheltered life
For none have much appeal.
Gluttony and sloth I could not
Do with too much zeal.
Although at first I thought
That lots of research would be fun.
I'll keep my law abiding life
And stick with just the one.

Kathy Sumpter October 2020

Lust?



He only recently moved into the manager's office following the retirement of his boss. The secretary came into the office to go through the morning mail. She had been sad when her old boss left but was excited by the fact that her new boss was only a few years older than her and very smart. She also looked forward to a more open and easy relationship, rather than the formality of her old boss.

"Look, Jenny," he said, "I've noticed the way the lads in the office drool over you but I think you are something special. I thought, in our new situation we could become a good team – I'm sure you know what I mean."

Although she found him attractive, his approach had been rather sudden and direct, particularly since until now, she had not felt any vibes coming from him. "I'm not sure what you mean," she said

"Well," he said, "I need to do a lot of travelling and it would be useful if you travelled with me as my PA. We would stay at very nice hotels and between engagements we could catch up on work saving me time when I returned. You could also take notes during meetings – there would be lots for you to do and I am sure you would appreciate some excitement and a little luxury living."

"This is a bit of a surprise to me," she said, "would you mind if I think about it for a day?"

"Of course," he said, "I am sure you realise I am an ambitious man and I really need a PA who understands me. Let me know if you're up for it tomorrow morning."

She thought about the proposition throughout the day and hardly slept that night. She herself was ambitious but she had always thought she would eventually meet the right man and conventionally get married. Ways were changing however, and she did like her boss. It would be great fun visiting interesting places and enjoying a bit of the high life. Also, she was not in a relationship nor was she a naive teenager. To top it all she did actually fancy him. "What the hell" she thought, "go for it!"

The next morning, she waltzed into work as fresh as a daisy and all the staff sensed the glow as she took the mail into the boss's office.

"Well?" said the boss as she sat down opposite him.

"Yes," she said, "I will do it but I would like to clear a few things."

"Of course," he said, "fire away."

"I'm sure everyone will know what's going on but I would like some assurances for my own peace of mind," she said.

"Not sure where this is leading," he thought but waited for her to continue.

"Well," she said, "I understand what is required of me but would always expect a separate room to be booked for me as I have never been able to sleep in a shared bed."

His face suddenly lit up and he said, "Oh I see! There will be nothing like that. Didn't you know - I'm gay. My partner will think it hilarious when I tell him of your concern."

Peter Latham, October 2020

The Seven Deadly Sins

Envy

Tricia's mobile buzzed discreetly alerting her to a text message. She picked it up with a sense of foreboding, she'd had several unsettling messages recently. The first said simply "I've noticed you're here". Who could have sent it and what did they mean by "here", the village where she shared a flat, the school where she taught or elsewhere?



Tricia was just half a term into her teaching life. She had breezed into the local mixed secondary school like a breath of fresh air and charmed everyone with her enthusiasm and vivacity. Delinquent 15 year old boys held doors open for her and girls tried to copy her style. Her colleagues liked her; she was respectful to senior colleagues but also innovative.

The only thing which marred the excitement were the texts. The second one said "I've been watching you." Later, just after Tricia had been asked to organise a school production, she received a third saying "You're not as perfect as you think." This implied that school was the connection. She put on a determinedly brave face and kept her fears to herself. How could someone have her number, she only gave it to close friends and family.

Just before half term, another text appeared. This one read "You're not wanted here." She burst into

tears and thought she must tell someone. She got on well with one of her flat mates, Paula, who worked part time in town. Paula seemed horrified and felt that Tricia should tell her deputy head. At first Paula was a sympathetic sounding board but in time Tricia found her suggestions trying. She began to look strained and was prone to headaches. She felt it couldn't be anyone she knew because she would recognise their number.

During the half-term, she returned to her family home and immersed herself in normality, home cooked meals, walking the dog, meeting up with friends. Heaven! Reluctantly she returned to the flat a few days earlier than planned. Laden with goodies, she let herself in. Paula was in. Paula was also in Tricia's room wearing one of her outfits and with others strewn on the bed.

"What's going on?" Tricia asked tensely.

"Oh, sorry, I thought you wouldn't mind if I borrowed something. I've got a DO at work tomorrow and nothing to wear. I'll put them all back. You're not cross are you?" Paula blustered.

Tricia curbed her annoyance. She tried to shake it off but it was more hassle; now she needed to put a lock on her door.

Downstairs Paula potted about making coffee blithely pretending nothing had happened. Tricia moved Paula's phone from the coffee mat, and the messages came up.

"Oh, new phone?" she said casually. It was clearly that of her persecutor. Evidently Paula had one mobile for normal use and a secret one. Paula,

already discontent with her life, boring job, not much money, no boyfriend, not much of a looker, had seriously envied Tricia.

Tricia was livid and aired a few home truths. Richard, the third flatmate, also returned home early and could hardly fail to hear the heated exchange. He was attracted to Tricia and had noticed the change in her with concern. Once he understood the reason, he suggested that he and Tricia could move elsewhere together. He sent a terse email to their landlord, Paula's father, citing her sinister behaviour as the reason.

Richard and Tricia were lucky and quickly found a flat. Within a month they had moved in, as flat mates, not as a couple, but who knows.

Kathy Sumpter

Spooky Encounters

My Italian friend and I had passed a pleasant morning in the Este Palace Water Gardens. The gardens close at 1pm so that all true Italians could enjoy the



“pisolino.” As we walked through the ancient hill town to catch a bus back to Rome, we were aware that there was hardly a soul about, the streets were deserted. Until, that is, we heard the sound of raised voices echoing down the streets. The sound grew louder and to our surprise, as it drew nearer, it became evident that the raised voices were English.

“Uligani inglese!” said my friend. This was the time when English football hooligans had earned a shameful reputation throughout Europe.

As the noisy group rounded a corner, I was relieved when they appeared to be perfectly normal tourists rather than the young jobs I had feared. I therefore resisted pulling my friend into the safety of a side street and we carried on walking towards them. As we approached, I was astonished to realise that one of the party was an ex-colleague with his wife and another couple. We greeted one another and I introduced them to my friend who was amused by the surprise encounter and their evident embarrassment.

It transpired that they had taken a daytrip from Rome and had been given a couple of hours to explore and have lunch. Ill-advisedly they had decided, in the heat of the day, to walk to the top of the hill town which to their surprise was exclusively residential and found themselves hot, sticky and irritable searching in vain to find refreshment. The tension was quickly assuaged when we

offered them a drink of our water and suggested they accompanied us the short distance downhill to where there were several restaurants. We decided to join them and after a pleasant meal together, we took our bus to Rome and our friends continued their trip.

A year later, my wife and I, heading home from Venice, were in a queue waiting for a “vaporetto.” As the vaporetto approached and the gangway was slid out, there, ready to disembark was the ex-colleague I had bumped into outside Rome. This time he and his wife were with another couple.

“Do you know” he said, “We haven’t had a meal on this trip half as good as the one we had with you last year in Rome. I have just said to our friends what a pity we could not meet you again as you might have some suggestions.” Whilst causing a minor hold up on the gangplank, we exchanged a few words of excited chatter and I passed on a few suggestions. The vaporetto raced its engine and we just had time to leap on board to start our journey home.

Some months later, I attended the funeral of the ex-colleague. It was a funeral where many people say a few words about the deceased. One speaker, who I did not immediately recognise, talked about the wonderful holiday they had had so recently in Italy and the extraordinary coincidences of the chance meetings.

Peter Latham
January 2020

A tale of Hatfield Forest



The name of Ruth Ellis will probably be familiar to most readers. She has her place in history as the last woman to be hanged in Britain. At the time I was not really aware of this headline event, nor the controversy that gripped the country, but within a few years it seeped into my consciousness and the case continues to fascinate.

Reading a book entitled *La Pendue de Londres* last year (the title means Hanged in London) I found my interest piqued by a section describing a visit to *la forêt d'Hatfield*. The author, a French journalist and screenwriter named Didier Decoin, related an incident when Ruth Ellis and a lover called Desmond Cussen, accompanied by her 10 year old son Andy, drove to Hatfield Forest from London. While they were there Cussen produced his revolver and showed Ruth Ellis how to use it. She fired several shots into a tree. Some weeks later on 10 April 1955 outside a pub in

Hampstead, Ellis shot and killed David Blakely, the man she had wanted to marry.

Did this episode in Hatfield Forest really take place? The French book is a novel, but is supported by many contemporary sources and is liberally sprinkled with facts including names, dates and places. Originally I took the scene as described at face value. But a few months ago there was a well-researched documentary on BBC Four which revisited the case, raising questions about the conduct of the police investigation and the Old Bailey trial. In one programme of this television series we see that Cussen, Ellis and her young son went by car to Penn in Buckinghamshire and on the way back they stopped at a wood. There we saw played out the scene that was placed in Hatfield Forest in the French novel.

As a resident of the area who has known Hatfield Forest for decades I had not heard of a connection with Ruth Ellis, so I was intrigued to read this version. As to what really happened, I am inclined to suppose that Mr Decoin was using literary licence.

Richard Owen

A Postcard from Shetland

By Chris Dell

Today's credit cards, mobile phones, the internet, social media, Skype and global positioning systems were just a dream awaiting invention back in August 1962 when this story begins. At that time my identical twin friends, Alan and John McEwan and myself, were in our early twenties and avid but impoverished travellers, with hitch-hiking and youth hostelling a way of life.

While downing a beer or two with Alan in our local pub the Prince Albert, north of London, we mulled over a postcard from John showing Norwegian fishing boats in Scalloway, a fishing port on the west coast of the Shetland Isles, Scotland, where he was working.

Both brothers had girl-troubles. Alan's girl had just dumped him and cancelled a planned walking holiday for them in Germany's Black Forest. John scribbled on the postcard that his new girl-friend was moving to Edinburgh. As his job too was finishing he suggested Alan joins him to go youth hostelling in Scotland.

"Lucky them", I first thought. Then recalling my time in Scandinavia two years previously I couldn't resist this opportunity to escape from my tedious office job and a dodgy girl relationship. So over another pint I suggested we "cadge a lift across to Norway on one of those fishing boats". Having lost his girlfriend, Alan was enthusiastic for this alternative holiday before starting his new job at the University of Hull in mid-September. So I quit my job and just two days later and bearing rucksacks, we set out to hitch-hike northwards to Scotland with plans to meet John at a youth hostel in Edinburgh.

I'd know that laugh anywhere

In Edinburgh we couldn't find John in the hostel he'd mentioned. It could have been one of three. We

decided to phone home to see if he had left a message. There was only one available phone box at the Waverley railway station. Alan dialled his home number and received the engaged signal so pressed Button B to retrieve his four pennies. Meanwhile I was eyeing two nice-looking young fillies waiting nearby. "Perhaps they can put us up for the night?" to which Alan in a flash responded "I don't fancy yours!" causing me to laugh loudly. John's head then appeared from the adjacent phone box "I'd know that laugh anywhere! Great to see you both." We three stayed the night in the hostel and got ready for our journey north to the Shetland Islands.

Shetland here we come

After hitching to Aberdeen, which was then a major deep sea fishing port, we took the St. Magnus overnight ferry to Lerwick, capital of the Shetland Islands. Arriving there, we enjoyed a few hours looking around the town, guided by John, then bedded down in the youth hostel. Undecided where to go next we wandered to the docks next morning where the captain of a fishing boat flying the Swedish flag said he might take us to Sweden but it was an on-shore decision. Mr Brendal, the on-shore manager for the boats, took kindly to us and said he'd try for a free passage, and to contact him the next day.

That was encouraging so to amuse ourselves we made some fishing tackle out of twine and a bent safety pin and caught dozens of pillocks off a jetty using bacon fat as bait. The fish swam in the very clear water and when they nibbled the bait we easily hooked them in. Back at the hostel we shared our bounty with the other occupants. We also purchased a few supplies including a tin of chicken soup and bread rolls.

In the morning Mr Brendal told us a Norwegian Society Sea Rescue boat, the *Skomvaer II*, will be heading for the Faroe Islands and the captain is willing to take us. He reckoned from there we could take another boat going to Norway. We thanked him for his kindness

and left for the local library. We learned that the Faroes is a self-governing region of Denmark in the North Atlantic Ocean, 170 miles northwest of Shetland and halfway between Iceland and Norway. Visitors are welcome and we should expect changeable weather from brilliant sunshine to hill fog and showers. Although the inhabitants have their own language with its roots in the Old Norse dialect of the Vikings, English is widely understood. That sounded great and we were enthusiastic to visit the Faroes.

Our excitement mounted during our last evening on Shetland at a regatta dance. "Lots of women here" I observed "but where are their blokes?" My question was answered when we saw a circle of men in the toilet passing round half bottles of spirits. One of them, knowing John, invited us to join the circle. We thought it rude to decline then after a few circuits I staggered outside to sober up in the drizzle. I guess we must have had a good time because next morning we couldn't remember very much about it!



The hospital rescue ship *Skomvaer II* took us from Lerwick in Shetland to Klaksvik in the Faroe Islands.

Welcome to the Faroes

Early next morning we boarded the *Skomvaer II* and gave the captain a carton of 200 cigarettes as a thank you. The calm sea in the shelter of the Shetland Islands soon turned rough with the boat bobbing like a cork on enormous waves. Still fragile after our evening in Lerwick, we were about to be sick when the captain threw open the cabin door: “No make sick in sink, block pipe – go up on deck!” The sea was so angry that even the hardened sailors were hanging over the side. We joined them then resumed our misery in the cabin for 16 hours. We ate nothing during the journey and vowed never to do this again.

The following day found us in Klaksvik where most visits to the Faroes begin. Our heads still spun and the land seemed to be moving under our feet. We wandered aimlessly all day to recover then booked into a hostel for the night.

Clearing our arrival with customs and police, we took the Britons Pride ferry around the islands to Torshavn, the capital. We soon forgot our feelings of nausea as we marvelled at scenery unlike anything we had seen before – searing rocks thrusting from the ocean and cries of puffins, guillemots, razor bills and fulmars flocking the cliffs of the uninhabited islands. Arriving at Torshavn we booked into the Seaman’s Home where, to the relief of other occupants, we each had a much needed bath. During the following days we explored this very prosperous island with its smartly painted houses, a modern well maintained fishing fleet, and many American luxury cars, but only a couple of miles of tarmac road. Unfortunately the high cost of living was rapidly exhausting our funds.

We found that very few boats leave the Faroes for the UK but a lift to Denmark would allow Alan to return to university from there. Most boats headed either for Iceland (Britain’s adversary in the ‘Cod War’ after Iceland had unilaterally extended its territorial waters), or Greenland (even further west).

One morning a rusty fishing trawler entered the port for repairs. Approaching the boat we were surprised to hear familiar sounds of expletives: "Get that bloody radio fixed or we can't go out fishing!" followed by a typical response in similar colourful language.

The captain, pleased to meet fellow Englishmen, invited us on board and generously offered us breakfast with great mugs of tea. When he heard that Alan had operated a marine radio the captain offered him a job with his own cabin, a percentage of the catch profits, a trip back to Grimsby after fishing in Icelandic waters, and deckhand work for John and myself. Suspicious that we would end up gutting fish on deck in the freezing cold of the North Atlantic or a nightmare vision of us floating off the coast of Iceland, we were relieved when Alan was unable to raise anyone on their radio and couldn't repair it.

Next day we asked some local girls what young folk do for entertainment in Torshavn. They told us about the Red Barn dance hall so that evening we found it just outside the town. On the dance floor the men, obviously well lubricated, were trying to dance with the girls. "What do you think of the blokes getting so sloshed?" John asked one of the girls. "We prefer them that way" was the surprising answer!

Back at the harbour office next morning a helpful assistant phoned the British Consul to find us passage to Denmark or Norway. We also tried the Swedish Consul who told us a boat will be heading to Esbjerg in Denmark the next day but when we returned in the early morning the boat had already gone. The Swedish Consul then suggested we try a whaling boat called *Caribia* going to Ålesund, Norway. That was ideal so after haggling the Norwegian captain agreed to take us all for 200 kronor (£10 in English money).

On boarding next morning we were alarmed to see a huge harpoon on the foredeck. The boat was returning to Norway after taking a crew of Greenland whalers home. There were no cabins or blankets so we made do with the

primitive bunks used by the Greenlanders. The journey seemed interminable but we arrived at Ålesund where we spent the rest of the day relaxing at the youth hostel.

At last we are in Norway

Next morning we took a bus and ferry from Ålesund to Molde, famous for its beautiful panoramic mountain view. The youth hostel was closed so we found a deserted boat house with a partly sheltered bench outside. Hungry and cold, we remembered the tin of chicken soup, so we started a fire to heat it up.

Unfortunately we hadn't made a hole in the tin to relieve the pressure – it exploded spraying chicken soup everywhere so we bedded down on the bench, still hungry and cold.

We awoke to a very frosty morning with ice covering the puddles. Alan left us for his long journey south to Oslo where the British Consul funded his repatriation to England in time to start his new job, and confiscated his passport until the loan was repaid.

John and I were also seriously short of funds so we tried to find work in Molde. There was nothing on offer so we continued through more mountainous scenery to Vikebukta, Åndalsnes then south to Lillehammer where we stayed in the youth hostel.

Back on the road we tried to reach Oslo but groups of Norwegian soldiers had the same idea. Although our rucksacks had a small British flag sewn on the back, the soldiers were understandably given priority so we took a train to Oslo. At the youth hostel we were particularly touched by a Norwegian we chatted to and who, knowing we needed to find paid work, very kindly gave us 10 kroner each.

Sweet music and dirty dishes at the Metropol

After finding some basic accommodation we approached the Metropol restaurant and jazz club in Akersgaten where I had worked two years previously. It was a very popular venue in Oslo where world famous jazz musicians such as

Coleman Hawkins, Stan Getz and Bud Powell performed in the dining area above the kitchen.

We were grateful when the manager Rolf, who remembered me from 1960, offered us jobs for 14 days washing up in the large kitchen starting at 4:00pm. During our two weeks at the Metropol and associated restaurant Frascati, we worked single shifts from 7:00am to 4:00pm and often, double shifts from 7:00am right through to 11.30pm.

Rolf remembered that I could play piano so despite my unkempt appearance he often asked me to play background music for half an hour to the lunchtime diners. He insisted that I wore my apron and introduced me as the washer-upper who could play classical piano music and a bit of Dave Brubeck jazz. I must admit I wasn't particularly good but it did earn me free lunches and a few tips from the customers.

The long and winding road

When our 14 days expired we still couldn't afford to take a boat to England so we hit the road again.

Leaving Oslo we didn't get far before darkness fell so we slept on a bench in a bus shelter. Next morning a bus arrived and we persuaded the driver to give us a lift to Gothenburg in Sweden where we checked in at the youth hostel. The next morning a Swedish lorry driver offered us a lift to Helsingborg provided we help him unload his cargo of scrap metal, after which we took a ferry to Copenhagen. We knew that Copenhagen was famous for its lager so having been denied any beer for so long John suggested that we join a group of tourists visiting the breweries to get some free samples. So merging with the tourists we went round the Tuborg brewery in the morning and the Carlsberg brewery in the afternoon taking full advantage of the free samples at the end of each tour.

Leaving Copenhagen we hitched to Nyborg and stayed free in the Aabenran youth hostel near the German

border because nobody was in attendance. From there we hitched into Germany to Hamburg where two policemen kindly found us a lift in a Dutch lorry on its way to Cologne. We awoke in the back of the lorry the next morning and continued through Germany, Holland and Belgium where, desperately short of funds, we slept in a deserted building in Ostend.

Finally on 6 October 1962 we had just enough money for tickets on the ferry from Ostend to Dover. From there we hitched home to Enfield arriving tired and broke at midnight but very enlightened after our Nordic experience.

On reflection

We friends experienced many often unexpected and volunteered acts of kindness in those weeks. We were strangers to them; Mr Brendal the port on-shore manager, the captains of the *Skomvaer II* and the *Caribia*, the Norwegian man in the Oslo youth hostel, not forgetting the many lorry and car drivers.

Truly, things were very different in the carefree days of the early Sixties. Hitch-hiking today is not always safe nor do drivers offer lifts easily from thumb-waving backpackers. Suitably funded, young travellers today can explore the whole world, secure in the knowledge that via satellite, direct contact with their families is only a few clicks away. Short of cash? Funds can be transmitted in seconds. For us, a few weeks on our own in the Sixties, relying on each other and our own ingenuity with no lines of communication, now that was an adventure!

Chris Dell



Chris on board a ferry between the many islands of the Faroes on a return visit in 2004.

This true story was written from daily diary entries by Chris Dell with help from his travelling companions John and Alan McEwan. Before retiring, John, who now shares his time between Suffolk and Portugal, ran his own research project management company. Alan, who now lives in Vancouver Island, held a senior position at Acadia University in Nova Scotia. Chris, still in the UK, ran his own multilingual desk-top publishing company.

'A Postcard from Shetland' is the sequel to 'To Hallen and Back' published by Michelle Tupy in the anthology 'Love Alters'. Both stories follow on from 'Black Notley Blues', a personal testimony detailing Chris Dell's memoirs as a teenage patient in a UK tuberculosis sanatorium in 1958/59.

More details on www.stortdoc.com.

Poetry Corner



Grief

A bow to the forgotten

Grief is the jagged edge of mourning
It is the dead bee lying on the busy streets as we
walk by
It is the silence that meets us where there should be
bird-song
The empty air where butterflies once fluttered like
rainbows in the sun

The slow-motion grace-fall of another tree under the
chainsaw's teeth
Grey tombs of coral in a dead sea

It is the silent tears at midnight that no-one sees
And the wolf-howl under a vast sky

It is the heart-cry of all our ancestors
The lost lands of ritual and meaning
The grey pavements where once we danced among
the ancient oaks and the hanging moon

Grief is the heart-memory of all we treasure
The river of loss

Flowing underground
Through all our days

Joseph Mishan

In The Glasgow Fair

Life's strange the way that lovers meet
Paths trod so far apart, yet still
They cross in the twinkling of an eye
And bring together a love so sweet

Hand in hand, we walked along
To mountainsides where sheep trails drew us
Ever closer, we had fun
But of the future we didn't know then

... So I'll be there

Puffins skimmed the sea so clear
Seagulls flew where once we wandered
Around the island's cliffs and shores
And the glens we held so dear

But life then changed, we're not sure when
Like shoreline tides that rose and fell
You ran or stumbled, no-one could tell
Us of the future - we didn't know then

... So I'll be there

You now embrace me with a smile
Not arms that now refuse your will
But a tender heart that loves me still
And that smile, that lovely smile

Let's celebrate the life we had
And life conceived amongst the heather

Where we lay down in summer time
Life was good, and we were glad

So I'll be there, in the Glasgow Fair
To say farewell where first we met
In the Glasgow Fair, I'll be there
I'll be there, I'll be there

Brian S Farley © 2003



Note: "Glasgow Fair" was a holiday fortnight when all the factories in Glasgow shut down. That's when I met my late wife, Valerie, who died in 2012. The poem is about our life together. I was interviewed on Woman's Hour about that - just Google BBC "Woman's Hour Brian Farley" to find the podcast. Mine is the 2nd chapter.

All I Want for Christmas is a Cuddle

(On Zoom we asked our little three year old great-granddaughter, Lottie, what she'd like for Christmas. Her reply was, "a cuddle.")



All I want for Christmas is a cuddle.
I really don't want any more than that.
You can keep your books and tokens
and your posh plush coats
and your warm and fluffy cosy knitted hat.

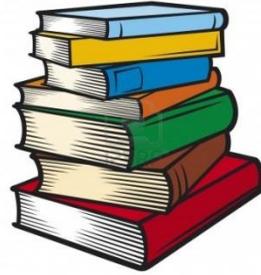
All I want for Christmas is a cuddle.
I want to hear you knocking at my door.
I don't need trees or tinsel
or a chocolate box.
I just want you coming to my house once more.

All I want for Christmas is a cuddle.
I want to see your lovely smiling face.
I wish to be with family,
to see you gathered round,
to talk and laugh together at my place.

All I want for Christmas is a cuddle.
With all that's going on it's made me see
that in our lives what is important
never can be bought.
And a cuddle from your family is free.

Adrienne Tinn
17 November 2020

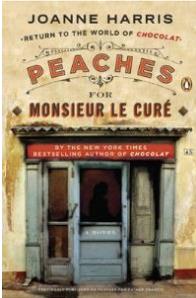
Book Corner Recommendations



Joanne Harris - Peaches for Monsieur Le Cure

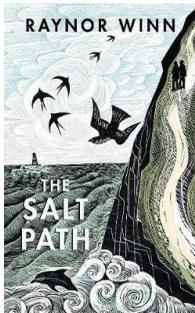
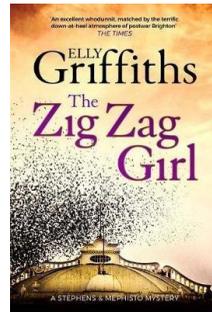
This is the third novel of a trilogy which started with Chocolat.

Vianne Rocher revisits Lansquenet, some eight years after the setting of the story in Chocolat, when Monsieur Le Cure was most obstructive towards her. However times have changed and after various events, Vianne comes to the aid of her former enemy. It is an interesting update which will be enjoyed by fans of Joanne Harris.



Ellie Griffiths - Zigzag Girl.

This is a crime novel set in Brighton involving a theatrical group who have a magic trick called the Zig Zag Girl. The plot and scene setting is well thought out, encouraging the reader to become involved with the characters. A good absorbing read.



Raynor Winn - The Salt Path

This is an uplifting true story of a couple who lost everything and embarked on a journey across the South West Coast Path. The husband is terminally ill and their livelihood has gone but they make the decision to

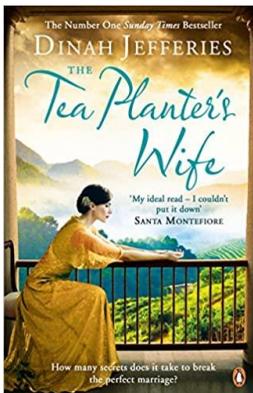
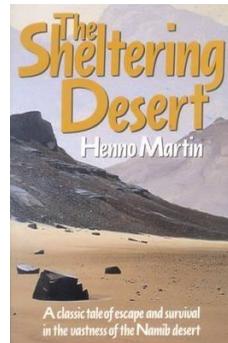
carry out the 630 mile walk. The wife is honest with her feelings and the story shows us how to come to terms with adversity and the healing power of the natural world.

Henno Martin - The Sheltering Desert

The book is about two German geologists who are pacifists and do not want to fight in World War 11, and with their dog Otto, decide to hide in the Namib desert.

They stay hidden for over two years, living as the ancient bushmen did.

There are excellent descriptions of the desert, mountains and rivers, together with their feelings of hunger, thirst and fear. An enthralling read.



Diana Jeffries - The Tea Planter's Wife

A very interesting read of the life of a young tea planter's wife in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. Both husband and wife are keeping secrets from each other. The plot keeps the reader wondering how events will turn out. The scene setting is very descriptive and the different cultures are well

portrayed.

This book is an easy read and ideal for lazy days.

Sue McEvoy - Book Group 6

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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Our U3A Ethos



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Bishop's Stortford U3A

Is a self-help organisation run entirely by volunteers, relying on everyone making a contribution of some kind.

We look to members to give time and effort as well as to receive the informal learning, enjoyment and friendship that the various activities provide. Our U3A can only thrive if all members accept this principle.

A new group only comes about when a member expresses an interest in a particular area and others join to form the group and run it themselves with support from the committee.

Everyone can play some part in our U3A, whether it be leading or taking an active part in a group, serving on the committee or volunteering to help in some other capacity.

Courtesy & Common Sense Reminders

For U3A Group Members

The U3A is run by volunteers who give their own time freely for the benefit of our groups so:

Please

Take note of the organiser's phone number and/or email address in order to let the leader know if you are unable to attend a meeting.

Let the leader know if you wish to leave the group, as there may be a waiting list.

If you miss three sessions in a row without contacting the leader, it will be assumed that you no longer wish to be a member of that group.

Arrive at the group meetings in good time.

Make a note of meeting dates and times.

Remember that individual groups are self-funding, so contributions may be requested when there are expenses to be covered.

Thank you