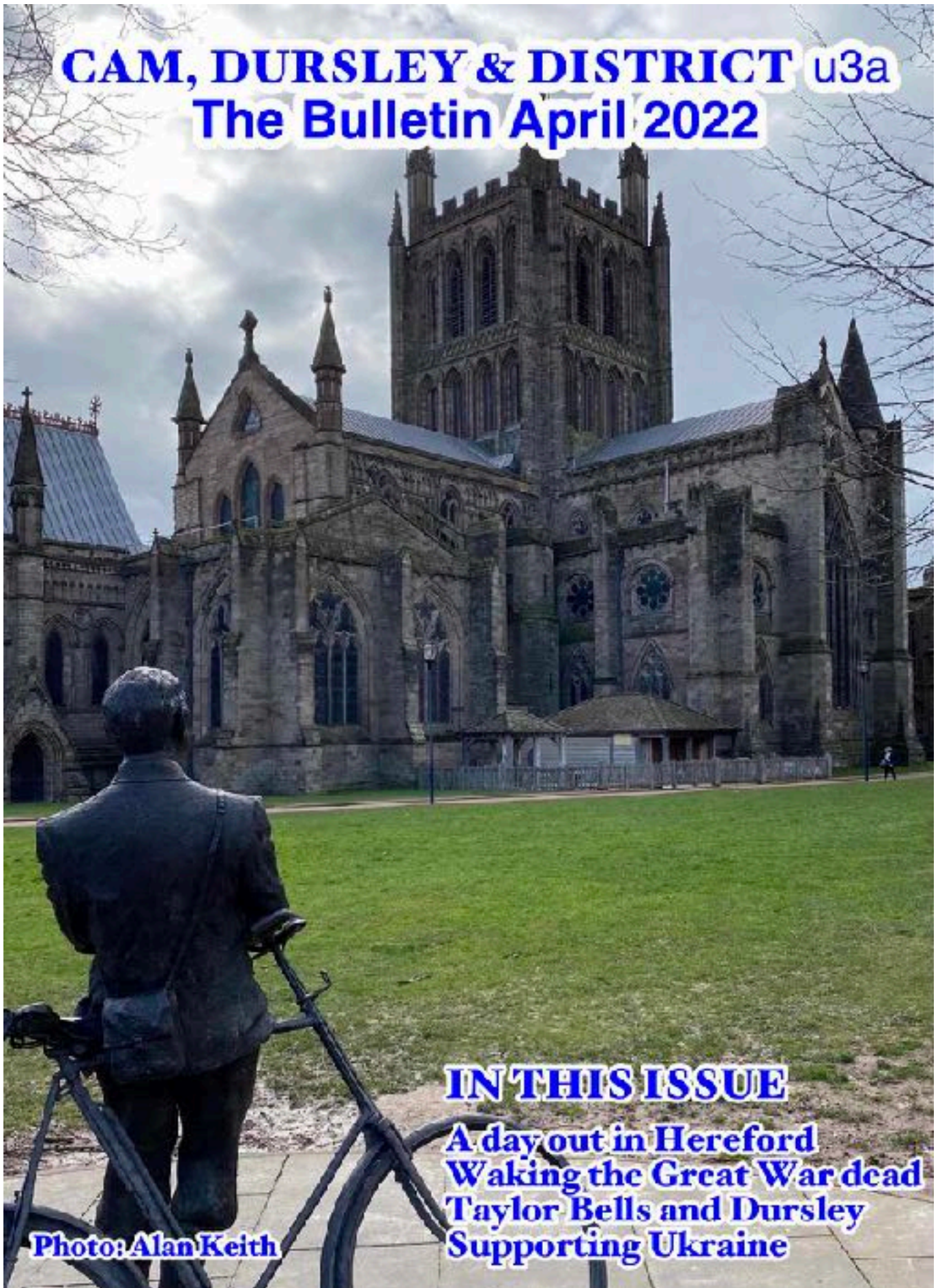


CAM, DURSLEY & DISTRICT u3a **The Bulletin April 2022**



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Photo: Alan Keith

Branch News

Supporting Ukraine

We are all horrified and appalled by the tragic events in Ukraine and I'm sure most of you will have found ways in thoughts and prayers or cash and kind to help this beleaguered country. Some members have even suggested that our Branch should donate any surplus money from our funds.

Appealing as this is, our charitable status prevents it. The national u3a constitution does not provide a u3a branch with the power to raise funds for another charity that does not have similar charitable objectives to itself. This is a fundamental part of charity law, as all money raised by any charity should be spent on its own charitable objectives.

We may however purchase a service from another charity, examples being hall or speaker hire. We can also link to bona fide appeals run by other UK charities, and can advise members to make any donations safely to a trusted charity partner. Individual members who want to make a collection for Ukrainian appeals can do this in their personal capacity and pass the money to the selected charity.

One of our members already quick off the mark is Danielle Ellis, with a very special coffee morning from 10.30 am on 2nd April, organised by herself and Friends of Slimbridge Church at Slimbridge Village Hall. Funds raised will go to aid children and families in Ukraine via the British Red Cross and UNICEF. Freshly baked hot cross buns and bread will be on sale, together with a selection of cakes. You can even sit and have a cup of coffee or tea. Entry is free.

Danielle's asking you to place your orders for bread and buns in advance and offering free delivery within Slimbridge Parish. There's a [web site](#) where you can register and select what you'd like to buy.

All proceeds from the online sale of bread and buns, with the exception of credit card processing fees, will go to help Ukraine. Income from the coffee morning will also be included. All ingredients are being donated.



Please tell me about any other events planned so they may be publicised in future editions of the Bulletin.

Equality Diversity and Accessibility

We are pleased to welcome Elaine Brown, from Horsley, as our new Accessibility Coordinator. There'll be more about Elaine, including details of how to contact her, in the next edition of the Bulletin.

Group News

The presentation on the “Local Voices - Working Lives” Oral History Project attracted around 60 members and guests. There were several expressions of interest from members willing to work with Paul Rummer and his team, either as interviewers or interviewees. Pam Davis is investigating how a partnership with GL11 might work and will be reporting back in due course.



Pam also wants you to know that the Thursday Table Tennis group welcome players of all abilities at 2.00pm most weeks in the Chantry Centre. “The aim is to keep active and have fun,” she says, “though we do sometimes have trouble remembering the score” Contact her if you fancy coming along.

Anyone for Tennis? “We have been back playing tennis on Thursday mornings for few weeks now” says Frances Neal. “We have not had a lot of rain and we have only had to cancel once for bad weather. We have space for one or two more players, as we could use both two courts on Dursley Rec. If you are interested, check us out on the U3A groups page, email me, jfn.dursley@gmail.com or come along and meet us”.

Rosemary Canning has been busy planning ahead. Please put 6th December in your diaries for the John Rutter Christmas Celebration at 3.00 pm at the Royal Albert Hall. She has a confirmed reservation for 61 “marvellous” seats and a coach booked. In the meantime there is also a concert at the Royal Albert Hall with Mahler's rarely performed masterpiece “Symphony of a Thousand (8th Symphony)”. The event is described as having a huge orchestration, massed choirs, a stellar line up of soloists and an organ. It promises to be a titanic performance of a rarely performed masterpiece. It's on Sunday 23rd October again at 3.00pm. If you are interested please let her know and she will reserve some tickets. You don't have to pay for either until the autumn but she does need to know numbers. Email her here.

News of both a historic place and a garden well worth a visit. The Historic Places and Gardening Groups have a coach trip to Hellens Manor, a Tudor mansion in Much Markle on 6th May. The dog friendly gardens are designed along Tudor and Jacobean lines to reflect the house's history, and include a yew labyrinth, a rare octagonal dovecote, a physic garden, a knot garden and wonderful views to the Malvern Hills. The grounds cover 150 acres of ancient SSSI woodland and wild flower meadows, with trees ranging from Wellingtonias and Blue Atlas Cedars to many rare varieties of fruit trees. Carol Tipper is now taking bookings and group members have been emailed with the details. More information on our [Historic Places](#) web page.

Group Reports

Natural History

At their meeting on 10th March, the group enjoyed a presentation by Andrew Bluett on Owls. Andrew is a leading member of the Gloucestershire Raptor group, the Gloucestershire Naturalists Trust and Cheltenham Bird Club. He gave a detailed scientific exposition of the current status of all the owls likely to be seen in the British Isles. This was a fascinating talk about everybody's favourite bird and we were delighted to learn that many of the species are doing quite well. We ended on a rather sad note however when we learned that the tree at Frampton, where to the delight of walkers and bird watchers for many years a male tawny owl has been sitting sleeping during the day, blew down in the recent storms.

No meeting in April. The next indoor meeting will be at 2.00 pm at the usual venue on Thursday 12th May. "we are highly honoured", says Alan Keith, "to be having a presentation from Jen Gilbert on the project to conserve limestone grassland. She delivered a summary of this project recently on Winterwatch on BBC2".

Country Walking Group

On a rather drab, dull, day ten members met at the Cam Peak car park for a short, three mile, walk to Downham Hill and back. It was very muddy underfoot but the rain held off and we were able to enjoy the 360 degree views of the Cotswolds from the summit. The summit is of course reputed to be the site of of a 19th century smallpox hospital; hence its alternative name of Smallpox hill. Little remains on the summit today apart from an avenue of lime trees leading up to the foundations of a building which has long gone.

The next walk will be on Thursday, 5th May. Alan Keith will send out details of the venue in due course. He plans to be on a walking holiday in Spain in April, so If anyone else wants to lead a walk please let him know and he will circulate the plan.

Family History - *Graham Ellis reports on a recent talk*



Nicola Nash is employed by the Ministry of Defence and works in the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre at Imjin Barracks. She is an archaeology graduate with an interest in military history inspired by her grandfather's naval career. When the post was advertised, she thought it would be her ideal job. She is part of an all-female team who, as a part of their duties, try to identify bodies found in war graves that have been disturbed, usually as a result of new building work, and then arrange for their reburial. The Centre deals with all deaths and compassionate cases within the armed forces. Other responsibilities are to arrange the repatriation of soldiers to the UK who die, or whose family are taken ill.

They currently deal with 40 to 60 referrals a year. The process starts when a soldier's body is discovered, anywhere in the world from northern Europe to Korea. In a typical case study, nine bodies were found near Polygon Wood close to the village of Passchendaele in 2018. These were identified as Northumberland Fusiliers from their cap badges and tunic buttons. The burial site is in the area of the Passchendaele Campaign, so they had a date and time window to search the war diaries. These give a day-to-day detailed record of what a regiment was doing at any given time, wherever they were in the field. The Battle of Polygon Wood was on 15 October 1917, it showed that two officers and a number of other ranks were killed.

The war diary records them moving into position in previous days, with a reference to a trench map location. This location corresponded to the map reference where the bodies were found. Records now available online name ten soldiers who died on that day. They only had nine sets of remains, so the tenth individual was perhaps closest to the explosion, probably a mortar shell, that killed them. Two were officers and one body had a ring with initials and an ID bracelet, so they were able to identify him directly. A second body is more than likely that of the other officer. A swagger stick was also found at the site indicating an NCO, another of the names listed. The remaining bodies were examined by an anthropologist to give height, age and any other information that could be used to compare with the army medical records to find a match. Many records of other ranks from World War I were destroyed during the blitz, but officers' records are still intact.

The next stage was DNA testing. All the unidentified soldiers had samples of DNA taken when they were discovered. When usable DNA is found, if service records are available, the ages and heights of those soldiers listed as

missing can be compared to further reduce the possible matches. Obtaining confirmatory DNA now begins. In the case study, a soldier had no siblings or direct descendants to test for a match. They eventually found a match from a fourth generation, descended from an aunt. Once the bodies found are identified, relatives are informed and the soldier is given a full military burial. It is important for current soldiers to see that even their comrades who died a century ago 'will never be forgotten'. Looking forwards, the French are going to build a new canal across the Somme. Nicola knows that they are going to find many bodies there, potentially thousands, demonstrating how much work there is still left to do.

Historic Places

The Historic Places group went to Hereford on 4th March visiting the Cathedral and the Black and White House in the morning, then the Cider Museum in the afternoon, reports Sally Beynon.

The first Saxon cathedral was completed in 794 and a Norman building was begun in 1079. The tower was built later on four arches, which were not strong enough to hold the weight, resulting in collapse of the tower and twisting of the nave. James Wyatt did the present Victorian rebuild in the medieval style. The ornate tomb of Thomas de Cantilupe, born in 1215, is in the cathedral. He was canonised in 1320, which resulted in many pilgrims visiting the cathedral. The only Saxon manuscript remaining is the Hereford Gospels. Also, the cathedral houses the largest remaining chained library in the world and a medieval map of the known world called the Mappa Mundi made in about 1300 by Richard of Holdingham.



During the tour, several interesting items were explained. The lid of the Norman font used to be locked as the holy water was so valuable. The faces of the twelve Apostles around the font were destroyed during the Reformation. There are three modern stain glass windows, two of which, by Thomas Denny, are in the South Audley Chapel to celebrate the writings of Thomas Traherne. The third, called Ascension, was designed by John Main to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the SAS, who are headquartered outside Hereford. Made from more than 3000 pieces of glass, with 40 different colours, mostly blue, and in two layers, the colours change and shimmer as the observer moves. In the chancel, the choir stalls are 14th century and the floor tiles are Victorian. Bones stored in the crypt were once burnt and the ash sold to be added to ale to make it more intoxicating.



The Black and White House, a timber-framed Jacobean house built in 1621 is now a museum. It was originally both a wealthy residence and a shop in Butcher's Row, situated in the city-centre. It survived the Civil War and the destruction of neighbouring houses in the early 1800s. As part of Hereford's busy Victorian market, it was used as a saddlers, fish shop, hardware shop and finally a bank. The building was restored in 1927 and converted into a museum. On display are two seventeenth century court cupboards with ornate carving, several beds, nursery furniture including a cradle and child walker, and a spinning wheel.

The Hereford Cider Museum has been run by an independent trust since 1973 and organises several events during the year, including a Cider Making Festival. Once part of Bulmers' buildings and orchards, it's now a museum to preserve the history of cider making. The equipment on display in the main part of the museum included a circular horse-drawn cider mill, a cider press and fermentation barrels. For the smaller concerns, journeymen brought mobile equipment to the farms to crush and press the apples. Natural yeasts on the apples caused the fermentation into cider. A second fermentation of the sediment produced a weaker cider that was given to the workers. Men and women drank ten and five pints per day respectively. Many different varieties of cider apple were grown. Itinerant families would be housed on farms to pick the fruit from the large trees. Now trees are smaller, the whole process is mechanised. Parts of the cellars are open, with information on how 'cider champagne' was made. Cider was bottled before fermentation had completed, the corked bottles were stored with the neck down, the bottles turned every day, the neck frozen and the 'cork' of frozen sediment removed, the bottles were topped up with cider and re-corked. Despite using this traditional French method, the term 'Champagne' can't now, of course, be used. Perry, from pears, was also made but the older trees took many years longer to produce pears than apples. Bottle washing equipment and coopers equipment for barrel making was also on display. The tour ended with samples of cider and perry followed by tea and cake.



Science and Engineering: *the bells ... the bells!*

Here's a follow up to last month's report on the Loughborough Bell Foundry. Donald Gibson discovered that St James' Church, Dursley has a peal of Taylor Bells and John Taylor, the son of the founder, had been involved. Donald asked me to tell you more.

The Parish Church of St James the Great has a long history, dating back to the 13th century. An older building was demolished and replaced in 1320. The original tower stood until 1480, when a new one, with clock, bells and a steeple was constructed. All went well for the next 200 years, but in 1698 the steeple collapsed, killing some of the bell ringers. A national appeal was launched to cover the £2,000 rebuilding costs, but it wasn't until the reign of Queen Anne in 1709 that the tower was replaced, minus the more expensive steeple.



New bells were installed in 1824. In 1903 however, a survey by an expert working on Upper Cam church suggested that some urgent repairs were needed. The cost would amount to the large sum of £400, probably more. Fund raising began in earnest at the end of the year, with a strong evocation from the Reactor that the people of Dursley should emulate their neighbours in Cam, Berkeley and Wotton-under-Edge and renovate the bells.

The churchwardens, wisely, decided to get a second opinion. Enter John Taylor. Local press reports stated that “a more thorough examination of the framework and gear and of the bells themselves has been made by Mr Taylor of the eminent firm of bell founders at Loughborough, who have had some of the most important work of this kind entrusted to them, including the bells for S. Paul's and Worcester and Exeter Cathedrals. His report shews (sic) that the matter is even more urgent than had been supposed”. Mr Taylor advised that the whole peal should be recast, as the present bells were “of poor tone, and much out of tune. If this is done, the cost would approach very nearly to £400. If, as has been suggested, the peal is made a heavier one, of about the same weight as that in the tower of Wotton-under-Edge Church, Dursley must be prepared for a considerable addition, and for a probable cost of about £520.”

The fund organisers met in April 1904 to consider the two estimates. They went for the thorough reconstruction of the belfry with new supports, girders, and re-cast bells. Well, Dursley wouldn't want to be outdone by Wotton, would it. Taylors duly got the contract and work started in June to dismantle the bells and ship them to Loughborough.

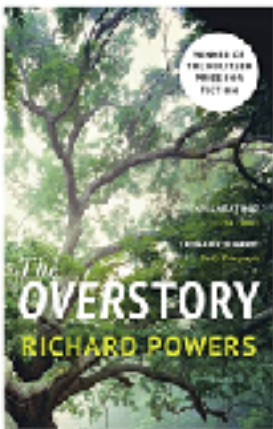


The recast bells arrived at Dursley in the last week of August. The bells, as well as the rotten beams previously taken from the belfry, were inspected by a very large crowd, including the inevitable "snapshottist". Each of the eight bells had a Latin inscription, and on the tenor appeared the names of the Rector and churchwardens. Later, John Taylor attended a celebration dinner in the Old Bell Hotel, where he said "the new peal is

the "last word" in bell-founding, indeed, there was no reason why they should not last for centuries".

The centenary of the bells was celebrated in 2004 with a series of special events, including an exhibition and a feature in the Gazette, from where most of this story is taken. Thanks also to Andy Barton's Dursley Glos Web local history website and the Dursley Heritage Centre. As for Taylor Bells, it's still going strong as the only remaining bell foundry in the country.

Bookworms book group: *Report by Sue Dunn*



The Overstory, by Richard Powers is an epic book is about trees, and conservation, climate change, and the relationship between trees, that have lived for hundreds if not thousands of years, and human frailties. It is a long and complicated book, definitely not an easy read, although a couple in the group recommended it if you had COVID, and were unable to do anything else. The first part was divided into eight separate stories of individuals and families, and their diverse relationships with trees. The rest of the book dealt with how these people came together in different ways and moved on in their relationship with the trees, and with each other.

Richard Powers is an American. We agreed that we might better understand an English version. We thought that the initial chapters of people and families could be made into a book each on their own, with maybe fewer of them. There was at least one character who did not seem to have a role in the second part of the book at all. The main part of the book was very long and needed editing. Some parts were tedious and lacked clarity, some were interesting which kept the reader going. Some of the group finished and mostly enjoyed the book, some did not. But the discussion, as usual was interesting, with some very diverse opinions. If you enjoy edge-of-your-seat thrillers, this book is not for you. If you love trees, it may be possibly.

Coming Up

Date	Group	Event
Thurs 21 April from 10.00	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church 'Those were the Days, the Sixties' by David and Virginia Adsetts
Friday 22 April 10.00-13.00	Gardening	The Coach House Garden, Amply Crucis Garden visit plus Plant Sale Details from Danielle Ellis
Thurs 28 April All Day	Science and Engineering	The Museum of Bath at Work and the Herschel Museum of Astronomy Details from Paul Sheppard
Friday 6 May All Day	Historic Places Gardening	Hellen's House, Much Markle Tour of Tudor House and Garden More details from Carol Tipper
Thurs 19 May from 10.00	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church "Charlotte Bronte & Jane Eyre" by Dr Keith Hooper
Tues 31 May Tues 7 June 10.00	Science and Engineering	Javelin Park Energy from Waste Plant Two more opportunities to visit the new incinerator Details from Graham Ellis
Friday 10 June All Day	Historic Places	Llancaiach Fawr Manor and Abergavenny More details from Carol Tipper
Friday 1 July All Day	Historic Places	Raglan and Chepstow Castles More details from Carol Tipper
Thurs 16 June from 10.00	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Annual General Meeting and talk Paul Barnett - "The Life and Times of Henry Hook VC."
Thurs 23 June All Day	Science and Engineering	The STEAM Railway Museum, Swindon Details from Tony Wooldridge
Thurs 14 July 10.15	Gardening	Bourton House Gardens Tour with the Head Gardener Details from Danielle Ellis

**Full details of all these events, and lots more planned for 2022 are on our website.
Use the Bluebird to send leaders an email.**

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