

# CAM, DURSLEY & DISTRICT u3a

Branch News



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## Group News

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### GROUP UPDATES

#### Writers' Workshop

Bring out your hidden author! Every second Tuesday of the month in the Chantry Cafe, between 3 and 5 pm. Writers' Workshop has been going successfully for four months now, and is well supported, but we still have room in our ranks for anyone who would like to join in. Our way of working means you can fit in anytime, anywhere. It is designed for all sorts of approaches; for those who want to write but don't know how to start, or perhaps those who've started writing and don't know how to stop! Or those who would like some tips on how to navigate the thrills and spills of getting published. And for those who are feeling ambitious, we have the treat of a short story competition coming up in the New Year. So, if you are not sure if it is for you, or simply if you'd like to try something new, why not come along and find out – we promise not to bite! Contact Carol Wilson.

#### Play Reading

Next meeting, Tuesday 14th December in the Chantry, Dursley, to read "A Man for All Seasons" by Robert Bolt. Bring £3 for room and script hire. Everyone gets a chance at all the parts. New, especially male, voices welcome. Contact Lisa Randell

#### Other Group News

Calling all cryptic crossword puzzle enthusiasts!. New group starting soon. Contact Pam via the Groups Co-ordinator button on the website or by email at [cam.u3a.groups@gmail.com](mailto:cam.u3a.groups@gmail.com) Non-cryptic replies appreciated. The Psychology Group, planned for a January start, has been postponed indefinitely. The Dowsing Group is set up and will begin in January. The French Group is hoping to resume meetings on Zoom soon.



## Group Reports

### Walking Group

Eight members left Long Street car park Dursley in beautiful autumn weather on November 4th for a three mile hike over Cam Peak and Cam Long Down before returning via Chestals. They enjoyed magnificent views of the Bristol Channel, the Black Mountains and the Malverns.



The next walk will be from Wotton-under-Edge through Conygre and Westridge woods to Nibley Knoll and the Tyndale Monument. The distance is 4.2 miles and the going is easy, dog friendly, and with good dry footpaths. Meet at the car park on Tabernacle Road, at 10.30am on Thursday, December 2nd. Ordnance survey reference:- ST75557 93607 Postcode:- GL12 7EF. If you haven't been before the car park is hidden from the road, down what appears to be a private drive. It may well have a temporary notice saying "Wotton Auction Rooms". It does not however belong to the auction rooms.

### Historic Places - *Chippenham*

Sally Beynon reports that the group visited the historic town of Chippenham on November 5th for a presentation in the museum, lunch at the Angel Hotel and a guided tour. The small museum is owned by the town council and staffed partly by volunteers. It moved to the present building in 2000 and was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh. The ethics of the museum does not allow natural history or archaeological finds to be accepted. Displays are changed every two months. The museum has put on numerous exhibitions over the years involving many local residents in costume. Outdoor historical events often took place. Items on display varied from excavated pottery, the history of the Vikings attacking King Alfred in 878AD, eighteenth century home and farming equipment and modes of transport, a WWI display, clothes for dressing up, and a modern art exhibition by local artist, Sam Heath. One display that caught the eyes of the group concerned Wiltshire's association with pig farming. The pigs pictured reminded several people of the window of the old Smith Rogers pork shop in Dursley.



The afternoon tour included information about the history of Chippenham. Roman occupation was in scattered farmsteads. The Anglo Saxons established a village in the top part of the current town in about 600AD. Chip may have derived from cheap, a market, or from the name of a person. Ham could have come from the Anglo Saxon (hem) for home or (ham) a water enclosure.

King Alfred had a lodge that he visited regularly, mainly for hunting and to collect taxes. In 878AD, the Vikings from Gloucester attacked during the Twelfth Night feast. Alfred fled to Somerset where he gathered his troops and used guerrilla warfare to put Chippenham under siege. The Viking leader surrendered and Alfred won back his lands. If Alfred had lost, the Danish language would have been spoken throughout England. He was the king who had Latin Christian texts translated into English.

Medieval buildings can still be seen in St Mary's Street, which was a wealthy and quiet area until the noisy and smelly industry of cloth fulling was built behind the houses and the road became the main thoroughfare for the stagecoaches. In 1865 a mob threw stones at the houses in protest because a Liberal was not voted in as one of the two MPs representing the town. St Mary's Church was built in

the fifteenth century over the Anglo Saxon Church where Alfred's sister married the King of Mercia. Oliver Cromwell is thought to have stayed in the Pack Horse, one of the two stagecoach inns.

The fifteenth century Yelde Hall had many uses, including the Guildhall, an armoury, a fire station, a lockup for pirates, council offices and, now, as part of the museum. The lock up, a 1816 re-enacted council meeting, and the history of the railway are on display at present in the Yelde Hall.

There are many fine houses from Georgian Chippenham, which was referred to as 'Little Bath' at this time. Chippenham was on the main route from London to Bristol and the southwest, so was very busy with travel via coach, canal and then train. The spur of the canal has been filled in to make the current bus station.



## Science and Engineering - *Energy from Waste*



With the COP26 climate conference about to start, October 28th was the perfect day for your editor to join Science and Engineering's visit to Gloucestershire's controversial waste incinerator at Haresfield. You must have seen it, either as you pass junction 12 of the M5 or even in the distance from Stinchcombe Hill. Its use encapsulates the current debate. The contents of your grey wheelie bin, hopefully everything not recyclable, which previously was tipped and buried as landfill, is now burned. Our

local environment benefits but globally, CO<sub>2</sub> levels increase a bit from what is essentially a fossil fuel power station. The plant, commissioned in July 2019 after legal challenges, is operated by Urbaser, Europe's third largest environmental services provider, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council. It was a climb of eight flights to the classroom and visitor centre, where Education Officer Di Green told us more. The site processes 97% of the county's previous landfill waste to provide a continuous supply of electricity for about 25,000 homes.



With PPE donned, we began the tour, realising why we were at the top of the building as we looked down into the tipping hall. Here, a double-length container lorry, one of over 100 deliveries a day and full to the brim with waste, weighed in and out, cautiously backed into one of several narrow openings in the concrete wall and dropped a revolting residue of rubbish into a cavernous, below ground, bunker. There, a plethora of used nappies, food wrappings and the odd old sofa or mattress were mixed by giant grabs. The stink from the pit permeated the site. Every 10 minutes, the grabs hoisted a load up and out into the feed chute to the combustion grate.



Descending down we glimpsed, through shielded windows, a hellish blaze, 850°C plus. Burning on the grate takes an hour, and the residual ash is collected out of the bottom. Any larger bits of metal (the odd cutlery, garden tool or coins) are separated before the ash, 40,000 tonnes a year, leaves site by lorry for a specialist plant where even more metal is recovered. What's

left is used for road construction. The hot flue gas passes over water filled boiler tubes to produce high pressure steam for a turbine-generator, electrical output 16.5 MegaWatts (MW). A net 14.5 MW is supplied direct to the grid, said to be equivalent to 17 land based wind generators. Steam is recycled in a closed system by use of an air-cooled condenser.



Flue gases are discharged to the atmosphere after cleaning and filtration. Ammonia is used to abate harmful nitrogen dioxide. Hydrated lime reduces acid emissions. Any dust particles are trapped in bag filters. These are cleaned as necessary and the residual ash treated elsewhere.

The plant has strict emission limits set by the Environment Agency, who receive online updates every 15 minutes. Local communities have their own monitoring equipment, and have reported no significant increase in pollution, only noting a general decrease during the lockdown from the nearby M5.

Urbaser seem happy with the economics. 80% of income comes from the £100 per tonne charge for waste and the other 20% from sale of the electricity, which, we were told, goes direct to the County Council. Throughput is capped at 190,000 tonnes a year but even so the plant will pay for itself in under 10 years. No figures were however available for the annual amount of CO<sub>2</sub> released to the atmosphere.

## Natural History

Seven members, from both Cam and Dursley and Stroud u3as, met on 14th October for a fungus foray around Lower Woods at Wickwar. This is a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust nature reserve with a large variety of wildlife. On this occasion however the main concern was Autumn fungi. The guide around the reserve was veteran John Ryman who has an unrivalled knowledge of Lower Woods and of the fungi which appear magically every autumn. Members identified a great many species, mainly by using the smartphone app "Seek". The most impressive was the Magpie Inkcap" (pictured).



The next meeting was at Frampton Lakes one of their favourite haunts in quiet Autumn weather. There was an interesting variety of wildfowl on the lakes, including Gadwall, Wigeon, Mallards, Tufted duck, Heron, Little egret and a mixed flock of gulls.

Our next event will be a Christmas photo quiz in the back room of the Methodist Church on Thursday December 9th at 2.00pm.

## Travel Group - *A Baltic Tour with the Wettons - Part Two.*

Brian and Christine continued their Baltic Tour with a visit to St Petersburg. They faced a lengthy and problematic wait at the Russian border. St Petersburg is an untypical, westernised, Russian city. Surprisingly, it's only just over 300 years old, having been founded in 1703 by Peter the Great who was determined to establish a port with unrestricted access to the Baltic Sea for trading with other countries.

Perhaps the most famous sight in St. Petersburg is the Hermitage, which incorporates the State Rooms of the Winter Palace and one of the world's most famous museum and art gallery. It is said that if a visitor was to view every single exhibit, it would probably take about ten years. Nearby Palace Square was the scene of the massacre of Bloody Sunday in 1905 when thousands of peasants and their priests made a peaceful protest to the Tsar about their appalling living conditions. The demonstration, broken up by the Palace Guard left about 1,000 dying in the square. Lenin's Bolshevik supporters attacked The Winter Palace from the square in 1917, thus securing the Revolution.



Catherine Palace is just outside St Petersburg Whilst queuing to enter Brian and Christine were entertained with music, from high opera to Glen Miller. The Palace, designed for Tsarina Elizabeth, was named in honour of her mother, Catherine the First. The stunning facade of this building is almost one thousand feet long and the Nazis made this their Headquarters in their attempt to take over the city in World War II. When they retreated after 900 days they systematically looted the treasures and

destroyed the decorations, leaving it as a smoking ruin. Restoration, started during the Stalin era, has seen the decorations and treasures returned to their original glory and breathtaking splendour.

The Wetton's hotel was near Victory Square, with the huge monument to the "Heroic Defenders of Leningrad" (as St Petersburg was then known). An enclosure contains continuously burning flaming torches a 157 foot high red granite obelisk and larger than life bronze sculptures depicting those who fought to defend the city during the siege.

Other highlights of the stay included a boat trip along the city's canals onto the River Neva, St. Isaac's Cathedral and Decembrist's Square. The focal point is the 1782 Bronze Horseman, a statue of Peter the Great erected as a tribute from Catherine the Great. The granite base alone weighs 1652 tons. It is thought to be lucky for newly-weds to be photographed here and many were taking advantage. St Petersburg is famous for its ballet and an evening visit was paid to the impressive Alexandrinsky Theatre to see 'La Sylphide'. The other cultural highlight was a spectacular concert by Russia's top Siberian Cossack Folk Dance Troupe. It turned out to be far easier leaving Russia than it had been getting in.

The final part of Brian and Christine's Baltic tour took them to Estonia. You can enjoy hearing about it on Thursday 2nd December at 2.15 pm. This is a change from our regular meeting pattern of the second Thursday morning of the month. If you would like to attend, please email Myrtle on [moretoncox@gmail.com](mailto:moretoncox@gmail.com) All u3a Members welcome.

## Coming Up

Date	Group	Event
Thurs 13 Jan 14.00	Natural History	Dursley Methodist Church Gordon McGlone on "Birds. Bees. Butterflies and Bats"
Thurs 20 Jan from 10.00	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church - talk by Liz Davenport Woodchester Mansion - an unfinished masterpiece"
Mon 24 Jan 10.30	Gardening	Zoom Talk by Patsy Rayner "Japanese Gardens"
Thurs 17 Feb from 10.00	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church "Stories of Britain in Pictures and Song" by Robin Burton
Thurs 24 Feb All Day	Science and Engineering	Tour of John Taylor Bell Foundry Loughborough More details from Duncan Gibson
Fri 4 March All Day	Historic Places	A trip to Hereford The Block and White House, Cathedral, Cider Museum
Thurs 17 March from 10.00	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Patrick Marks on "A Trip to The Wash by Narrowboat"
Thurs 24 March All day	Science and Engineering	Morgan Motor Co Factory Tour More details from Brian Gornall

**Full details of all these events, and lots more planned for 2022 are on our website**

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