

u3a The Bulletin December 2022
Cam, Dursley & District



**Seasons Greetings
from Cam, Dursley & District u3a**

Branch News

As we approach Christmas and the end of 2022 it's good to report that our u3a has shaken off the pandemic blues and clearly isn't suffering from long covid. Following on from our open day success, we've had two well attended coffee morning to welcome our new members. You really are an enthusiastic bunch with great ideas for new groups. More on this in the next section.



The recovery is also apparent in our meetings and talks in the Methodist Church. Nearly 100 of you enjoyed the recent Science and Engineering talk on the Cotswold Canals and there's been healthy attendances at the autumn monthly meetings. In October, local Services Manager Nicola Eveleigh told us about the important work of the Alzheimer's Society in supporting dementia sufferers. Dementia is the UK's biggest killer, but a diagnosis is not an immediate death sentence. It's important to seek help early, as some medication is available. Sufferers can still live well and stay socially active. Advice is available in Gloucestershire by phone on 01452 525222.

In November we reflected on the war in Ukraine when Ann Scott recalled a holiday in the happier time of Autumn 2018. She travelled from Lviv on the Polish border to Kyiv, spending time in both cities, viewing the continuous fields of wheat from the train and then a bonus day in the capital after missing her flight home.



Members showed their support by donating around £200 to the Red Cross Ukrainian Appeal.

There's even more to look forward to before 2023 arrives. Janet Ball will be challenging us with her Christmas Quiz, in the Methodist Church from 10.00 am on Thursday 15th December. With mince pies and mulled wine to follow, we need to know how many teams are entering. Please email Karen Morris on karen-morris125@hotmail.co.uk to reserve your place.

Group News

Group co-ordinator Pam Davis reports many very promising suggestions for new groups, some of which are already beginning to get off the ground. Choose from below and let her know if you'd like to join the contact list.

Whist: Sylvia Moreton-Cox has volunteered to lead this group but would like an assistant as she doesn't have email. There are about six new members keen to join but you need about 16 to make the group work.

Short walks (2 to 4 miles, 2nd Wednesday in the month): This small group is new., maximum ten members, and will be led by Ann Lacy and Rachel Williams. To begin with the walks will start from Slimbridge village hall. The first walk is planned for 11th January. Places must be booked in advance.

Cycling: This group is planning a New Year Revival. A great way to get rid of those extra Christmas pounds. If you have a bike hiding in the garage now could be the time to get it back on the road.

Garden Club: Jenny Henderson has offered to lead this new group if enough members are interested. It's about hands-on gardening and sharing ideas and knowledge about plants, possibly including plant and seed swaps and visiting each other's gardens. She suggests meeting monthly, possibly initially at her house. This group is in addition to our Gardening Group which is mainly for those who enjoy garden visits.

Dolls Houses: If anyone is interested in making or refurbishing Dolls Houses Dudley Haestier has suggested starting a group to share ideas about how to do this. So, if you are planning such a project, possibly to make a grandchild very happy this could be the group for you.

Canasta: Sue Gibson has offered to lead a Canasta group.

Archaeology: There are lots of members who would like to join an Archaeology Group, but we have learned from past experience that this group really needs a leader with some knowledge and expertise to keep it going. We can only run this group if we can find such a person. Pam would love to hear from anyone who feels they could take on the role.

Art Club: Artist Rita Dee will lead a new practical art group for up to 15 members, with instruction for those with little or no previous experience. Rita will advise on the various materials used for art, such as watercolours, so please don't buy anything in advance. Those with more experience are welcome to come and work on their own projects. Sessions will be in the Garden Room at the Chantry Centre on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, 2.00pm to 4.00pm with a fee of £3 per session payable on the day to cover room hire.

There are one or two other group ideas in the pipeline but not quite ready to advertise yet. We are always open to your suggestions.

If you are interested in any of the groups mentioned above, please email Pam at cam.u3a.groups@gmail.com

Group Reports

Historic Places from Sally Beynon

Early in November the group visited the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter, which also houses the Assay Office in a new purpose built site on Morton Street. The trip to the assay office started with a presentation on the history of hallmarks for precious metals in the UK and a display of large, small, old and new silver items and various tools used. All jewellery must be sent for assay before a jeweller is allowed to sell it. The assay office will not hallmark a piece that does not meet the standard. Today it grades the quality of precious stones and undertakes valuations of old jewellery.



The first assay office to weigh and analyse the purity of precious metal was established in London in 1327. Between 1470 and 1600 more assay offices were set up around the country in cities such as York, Edinburgh and Chester. All metal worked in Birmingham had to be sent to Chester's assay office, resulting in damaged and even stolen designs.

Matthew Boulton, who made silver goods, joined up with Sheffield metal workers to lobby Parliament and assay offices in Birmingham and Sheffield opened in 1773. Birmingham and Sheffield campaigners met at an inn called The Crown and Anchor in the Strand, London, hence their hallmarks are a crown and anchor respectively. Today only four assay offices remain; London, Edinburgh, Sheffield and Birmingham. Hallmarks consist of the sponsor's or maker's mark, the standard mark giving the quality of the metal, the assay office mark and the date letter for the year. The purity of gold is measure in carats, where 24 carat is 75% pure. Pre-1950, jewellery containing a stone could be sold without a hallmark and a ring Sally inherited has just '18 carat written' on the inside. In 1975 hallmarks were introduced for items made from a mixture of metals. Commemorative hallmarks celebrated the Queen's gold, diamond and platinum jubilees.

The Jewellery Quarter also contains the School of Jewellery, silver factories, a Museum of Jewellery, the Jewellery Business Centre and many shops selling jewellery and offering to buy old gold and silver items.



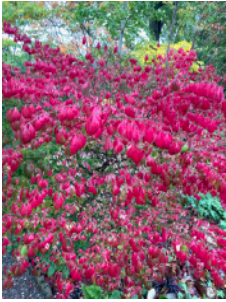
Along the recommended tourist route were the Chamberlain Clock, two Victorian Cemeteries, Key Hill and Warstone Lane. The narrow canal had a steep towpath made of bricks laid on their side to allow the horses to get a foothold.

Gardening Group: *Old Court Gardens and Picton Nursery by Danielle Ellis*

For the last outing this year, we visited Picton Gardens, at Colwell on the lower slopes of the Malverns, open to raise funds for the National Garden Scheme. Some intrepid members had an interesting encounter with a bull before they got to the garden but arrived safely. It even stopped raining whilst we looked round. Despite it being late in the garden season, the garden was ablaze with colour.



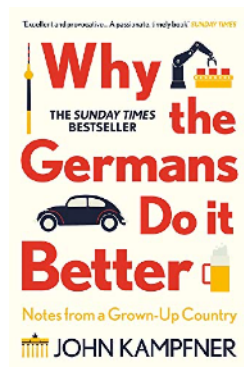
The nursery was established in 1906 by Michaelmas Daisy breeder Ernest Ballard to start commercially producing his plants. Nowadays, it holds the national collection with more than 430 varieties. In what is quite a limited space, paths wound through flowerbeds giving us new discoveries at every turn. In addition to the Michaelmas Daisies, we discovered beautiful autumn colours – tall acers, chrysanthemums, dahlias to name but a few.



In one area, the plants were planted in beds of similar size plants making choosing our favourites a little easier. You might think these plants are all tall. Not so, some are very tiny indeed. Bees were everywhere. Of course, we couldn't go home without buying plants and noting those out of stock until next year. A fitting end to some memorable visits this year

Bookworms Book Group by Sue Dunn

'Why the Germans Do it Better' by John Kampfner was a very interesting book so different from our usual choice, and simulated much animated discussion. We learned a lot about Germany. The book was a sometimes overwhelming mine of information. The facts came thick and fast dating from the end of the Second World War to the almost present day, so it became impossible to remember it all. It certainly educated us in how Germany coped after the war, how they all pulled together, the Marshall Plan, and the coalition governments, the feeling of calm about their achievements, and lack of boastfulness, despite the title of the book.



There was also a strong feeling, even up to the present day, of the people making atonement for their part in the war. This is a very well written and complex book, and worth a read if you have the time.

There is room for one or two new members in our group. We meet in each others houses on the third Wednesday of the month. It would be advisable to be a car driver as we are split between Wotton and Dursley.

If you would like to join us, please contact us via Pam Davis.

Science and Engineering, reports Sally Beyon. visited the boutique vineyard at Woodchester on 3rd October for a tour of the vines and winery and some wine tasting. Woodchester Valley winery started in 2007 with a trial planting of vines at Culver Hill Amberly. This expanded to the Woodchester site in 2012 and Stonehouse in 2013.

The slopes at Amberly and Woodchester are ideal being on limestone, well-draining and south facing. The Romans may even have grown grapes there. The Stonehouse site however is mostly clay so a different grape variety is grown.



Ten grape varieties, including Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, are grown at Woodchester Valley to produce a selection of white, rose and red sparkling and still wines. The company built its own winery at Woodchester Farm in 2016, and it now boasts a tasting room, a shop and accommodation. There are now forty five acres of vines with the newest plantings undertaken in 2019 and 2022. The vines are pruned in the autumn, buds form in spring, fruit forms and the grapes are hand-picked in late summer. The vines are self-pollinating. When the weather is frosty, candles are lit between the vines to keep the air moving and prevent the vines becoming damaged.

The quality of the harvest depends upon the weather. Bunches of grapes must be picked gently, and then crushed in the hopper. To retain the characteristic aromatics of wines produced in a cool climate, the grapes are lightly pressed and fermentation is slow and cool. The pressed remains are sent to a local farmer as cattle feed. Red grape skins colour the red and rose wines. Natural yeasts are not used as the outcome is unpredictable. Fermentation takes about two weeks. Some wines are stored in oak barrels for a couple of years and some are a blend of



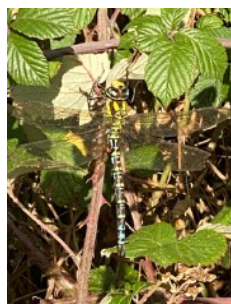
different grape varieties. A mobile bottling plant comes to the vineyard. Sparkling wines are made by the classic method. After bottling, a second fermentation occurs. The bottles are stored upside down and turned daily so the sediment collects in the neck. On completion the necks are frozen so that the sediment can be easily removed.

Following the tour of some of the vines, and the winery, we returned to the tasting room. There were five wines for tasting, all with about 12% alcohol per volume: two still white wines, Culver Hill and Bacchus; a Pinot Rose; and two white sparkling wines, Cotswold Classic and Reserve Cuvée. Due to limited quantities, the red wine is not including in the tastings, but there were a couple available for those wishing to buy a glass to try.



But you don't have to go to Woodchester to buy it. Your editor spotted examples on sale at the Leaf and Ground Deli in Dursley. Other retailers are available

Natural History: *by Alan Keith.* Six members met on a beautiful, warm sunny autumn afternoon at the car park on Watery Lane, Frampton for a walk around the lakes on the Frampton Estate. It is naturally a quiet time of the year. There were very few birds in evidence, but Black-headed gulls, Herring gulls, Coot, Great-crested grebes, Herons and a Lesser white egret were seen. However at this season of mists and mellow fruitfulness the leaves were beginning to turn their characteristic autumn colours, providing a tremendous display.



There were great numbers of fruits and berries in evidence. The black berries had long since started to rot but we were able to pick and taste a number of pears and damsons. The real stars of the afternoon were the dragonflies which were busy mating during their last few days in the sun before the onset of winter.

Country Walking Group: Seven of us met at Tesco car park on Thursday morning for a short 3 mile easy walk lasting about two hours, *reports Alan Keith*. We walked through Rackleaze nature reserve and then along the old course of the Dursley railway, past the new residential development and the site of the recently discovered Roman villa, eventually reaching Halmore Lane and visiting Halmore Mill. The proprietor uses an ancient water mill to generate his own electricity.



We then walked through Upthorpe and back through the fields. We were blessed by the weather throughout. It stopped raining just as we arrived and remained dry and sunny until we returned.

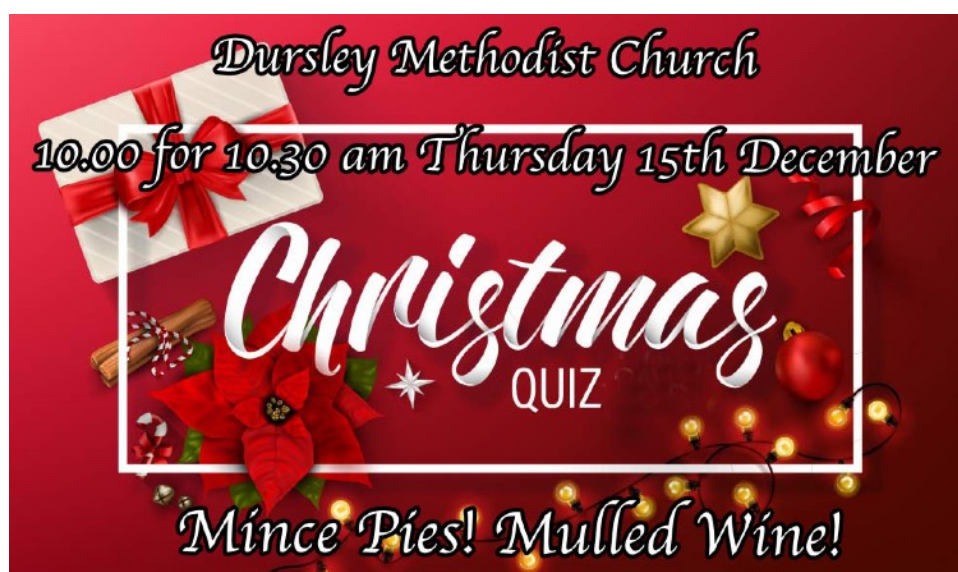
Art Appreciation:

This autumn, *says co-leader Rita Dee*, we've enjoyed some excellent illustrated presentations on a variety of topics, most recently being the life and work of Henri Matisse, as well as a visit to an exhibition of wildlife linocuts at the Nature in Art Gallery, Twigworth. Our next meeting is on 14th December with visiting speaker Tricia Norton, new members welcome as usual. Tricia will be presenting the work of artist Diego Velasquez.



Our group is now lucky enough to have two leaders, with Mike Ingleby looking after the programme content for next year. Mike has already contributed a session on classical sculpture and has previously taught art history to adults, so we can look forward to some fresh ideas.

Coming Up



Date	Group	Event
Mon 12th Dec 12.00	Science and Engineering	Old Spot Dursley Christmas Social
Thurs 15 Dec 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Christmas Quiz and Social
Thurs 19 Jan 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "The Great Western Air Ambulance" by Steve Moulds
Thurs 26 Jan All Day	Science and Engineering	STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway, Swindon Details from Donald Gibson
Fri 3 Feb All Day	Historic Places	Walking Tour of Royal Wotton Bassett Details to come from Carol Tipper
Thurs 15 Feb 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "The Vale Berkeley Heritage Railway; an Update"
Fri 3 March All Day	Historic Places	Harvington Hall, Kidderminster and the Carpet Museum Details To follow from Carol Tipper

Our website, in common with that of other u3a sites, is in the process of being restored. Full details of these events may not yet be available. If you would like more information please email me on mag.u3a@gmail.com and I will pass your query on to the appropriate leader

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