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The Bulletin July 2022
Cam, Dursley & District

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PLUS AN ORIGINAL SHORT STORY
FROM CAROL BARTON

Branch News

Our Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday 16th June. Chair Terry Pascoe thanked committee members for their energetic and enthusiastic service. He paid particular tribute to retiring Secretary Sue Gibson, thanking her for her dedication and knowledge, and presenting her with a splendid bouquet.

Terry went on to review the year. He welcomed our emergence from covid restrictions and the introduction of new or revised policies, especially those making our activities more accessible. New Accessibility Officer Elaine Brown will be happy to help anyone to take part in any of our meetings and ventures. We now have members taking part with other community groups and consequently increasing our influence throughout the Cam and Dursley District. The Oral History project will provide members an opportunity to share their stories and memories from the earlier days of this community. We are delighted to support and work alongside GL11 with this new venture. Terry went on to thank everyone who ensure all our visits and activities continue to work so well. He said "We are a lively and thriving organisation with wonderful members who enjoy one others company. Thank you for renewing your membership and allowing me to chair our meetings."

Treasurer John Walton introduced his report by thanking previous incumbent Richard Barlow, for steering the financial ship through some very turbulent waters and establishing today's sound and strong financial structure. He also thanked Assistant Treasurer John Hobson, who has proved very calm and knowledgeable. His experience and advice have been invaluable. We are in good shape, coming out of Covid-19, are well placed to go forward with a high degree of confidence. To summarise, it has been a mixed year, in terms of activity, but financially we are in a sound and stable position and the future is looking good.

The new committee for 2022-2023 is:

Chair - Terry Pascoe Secretary - Karen Morris Treasurer - John Walton
Asst Treasurer - John Hobson Membership Sec - Luke Wilson
Group Coordinator - Pam Davis Speaker Coordinator - Alan Keith
Vice-Chair & Welfare - Myrtle Moreton-Cox
Bulletin Editor - Brian Gornall

In other branch issues, the annual contract with Zoom has been renewed for another year. While most events are now face-to-face, the option to

hold longer meetings and discussions online is still available. Contact Graham Ellis if you need to book a slot.

As Welfare Officer, Myrtle Moreton-Cox is keen to ensure that she is kept fully aware of any members who might need our support or help. Please pass on any news of illnesses or bereavements of which you think she might not have heard.

The GL11 Oral History Project will be starting a new series of interviews soon. This time they'll be focusing on Cam. Any members who feel they have interesting stories and reminiscences to share about growing up and living and working in the area should contact Brian Gornall.

And finally, perhaps a bit early for this news, but our popular Christmas Quiz and Social will be back live in December.

Meeting Report



Our post AGM presentation by local historian Paul Barnett set out to restore the reputation of Henry Hook VC. Hook was long known as one of the 11 recipients of the Victoria Cross after the successful defence of Rorke's Drift in Natal on 22nd January 1879. In a myth busting talk, Barnett explained how the famous 1964 movie *Zulu*, produced by and starring Welsh actor Stanley Baker, not only downplayed the role of the Warwickshire soldiers actual

involved in the battle, but portrayed Hook as a hard drinking malingerer shamed into heroics by others. The truth was rather different. Private Alfred Henry Hook was born at Churcham, just outside Gloucester on 6th August 1850. After a spell in the militia, he joined the 24th Battalion of the 2nd Warwickshire's in 1877. The regiment was deployed to South Africa where it took part in the abortive and short-lived campaign against the Zulus. The Zulu forces attacked the Mission Station at Rorke's Drift, defended by a small but well dug in and armed garrison. Hook was part of the squad who volunteered to defend the hospital building, holding off Zulus and helping patients escape through a hole in the wall. A life-long teetotaller, he certainly didn't raid the medicine cabinet and sup the brandy.



Hook bought himself out of the army 17 months after the Battle, but his behaviour then was not exemplary. He left his wife and children in

Churcham, moved to London and worked as an 'inside duster and later 'umbrella caretaker' at the British Museum. Divorcing his wife, he remarried in London, but after contacting pulmonary TB he returned to Gloucester where he died in 1905 aged 54. He is buried in Churcham.

Group News

The Art Appreciation Group

Recent topics, *reports Rita Dee*, have included a presentation on "The Power of Black and White", a look at some printmaking techniques and examples of tools used, paintings highlighting use of the colour blue, and a look at items and prints illustrating the development of photographic equipment and techniques.



The visit to the exhibition of contemporary kiln-cast glass at Museum in the Park, Stroud, was enjoyed by all and the accompanying short film gave a great insight into how some of the pieces had been produced.

Our last meeting in June is an illustrated presentation on the life and work of artist Henri Rousseau. We'll take a break during the months of July and August, then continue meeting every second and fourth Wednesday morning starting on 14th September. Proposed topics for autumn are an introduction to sculpture as an art form and women in art. New members are always welcome (we could do with a few more) and none of us are experts, just a group of people who enjoy looking at and discussing art-related topics.



The Mahjong group meets every 3rd or 4th Wednesday at 10.30am in members' homes. If you would like to join, whether or not you can play already, please get in touch with the leader, Carol Barton, via the Bluebird on our website or email cbarton@hotmail.co.uk

Six members of the **Natural History Group** met at the Coombe Hill and Old London Road reserve, Wotton-under-edge. on 9th June. They were ably led by Celia Tanner, who lives locally, and saw a good many species of plants and insects. The plants included Limestone





woundwort, Common spotted orchid, Pyramidal orchid, Bee orchid, Common broomrape, Horseshoe vetch, Small-flowered geranium, and Wild thyme. The insects included a Short-horned grasshopper, Marbled white butterfly, Small blue butterfly and meadow brown butterfly.

On the day of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, four of the **Country Walking Group** ascended Stinchcombe Hill in brilliant sunshine before walking a full circuit to Drakestone Point, where they enjoyed magnificent and clear views extending as far as the Black Mountains, the Malverns and the Mendips. On the summit, which they learned to their surprise is also officially the Stinchcombe Village Green, they met the team preparing the bonfire for the evening's celebrations.



Group Reports

Science and Engineering



There has been a steady demand all year for visits to the Energy from Waste Plant at Haresfield. The last slot for 2022 was on 7th June. Here's the party kitted out in PPE and ready for the tour. There are more tours booked for next February, but Graham Ellis reports that such is the popularity, these are already sold out with a waiting list. He hopes to obtain

more dates for later next year. Watch the Events Page on the website for further news. In the meantime, remember, there's a full account of what goes on at the plant in the December 2021 edition of the Bulletin, still available online.

There is a brand new visit, in the pipeline, or rather the fermentation vat. Join us at the Woodchester Vinyard on Monday 3rd October at 2.30 pm for a guided tour and tasting at the winery to learn about the complete process of viticulture and winemaking. More details on our website.

Dowsing for Beginners

Every time we have a meeting, it seems to be even better than the one before, *reports Trish Mills*. Eleven of us met in glorious weather on Tuesday 14th June at the Nympsfield Long Barrow on Coaley Peak. This included a couple of new members who needed an introduction to dowsing, so I took them and Barbara helped the rest of the group dowse the Long Barrow itself. Rosemary had befriended three passing French ladies who were walking the



Cotswold Way. As I joined them Rosemary said, 'Do you have spare rods for them?' which fortunately I did. We went through the basics, and one of the French ladies began translating for her friends, which was more than distracting! Quite soon they needed to continue walking and went on their way, probably telling the world they'd met a right bunch of weirdoes en route. Meanwhile, Barbara showed the group how to ask their rods to indicate how long ago the long barrow had been constructed (5,500 years) and approximately when (3500–3800 BC-ish). Phrasing questions carefully is vital. You can't just ask how old or how long, because the stones themselves are millions of years old, and that could confuse things. Asking how many bodies were buried there isn't useful either. Answer: none. They would probably have had sky burial in those days, leaving the bodies outside so the birds could pick them clean, and then stone-age man would lay out the bones with due ceremony.

All dowsers had been forbidden to look at the information board until after they had dowsed, and it tells us some 20 bodies were found. However, when I demonstrated dowsing for a quantity of anything e.g. was it more than 10? Yes. Was it more than 20? No. Ok, was it 11? 12? 13? and so on up to 17, when my rods crossed in agreement. So the remains of seventeen bodies, I reckoned. Interestingly, some of Barbara's group also had a Yes at 17, so maybe the information board isn't accurate?

With dowsing, concentration is vital, so after an hour and a half, I was shattered. There had been a lot of distractions, what with dividing into two groups, the three French guests, and multiple gliders being towed aloft above our heads. Afterwards seven of us stayed on to enjoy a picnic in the sun. It was a lovely time of camaraderie and conversation with like-minded

souls, catching up and calming down, sharing how well we had dowsed (or not). They had all done particularly well, and were excited and so enthusiastic.

They even asked what we would be doing at the next meeting. I will shortly be preparing a new programme for the next six months, and with all the earlier suggestions and volunteering, I am hoping each one will be even better than the one before

Historic Places *contributed by Sally Beynon.*



The June visit was to the Tudor Llancaiach Fawr Manor north of Cardiff. It's now owned by the local council and features tours with fully costumed guides, set during the Civil War in 1645 when owned by a Colonel Prichard. Three of Colonel Prichard 'servants' showed us around; the agent and surveyor of the property, the dairymaid and scrivener. During that year, the Colonel was away at the war, supporting whichever side held Bristol: now it was the King.

The Colonel, although a Puritan, enjoyed good food and fine wines. Only single women and widows could own property, so his wife had no rights. A picture of the Prichard family included two skulls representing their daughters who had died aged 3 years and six months. A door from the withdrawing room led to an indoor privy for the gentry only. Waste went down a shoot into a gutter, which drained into the brook. The agent explained the guest beds were better than the family beds and the guest chamber had its own privy. Two flues from the kitchen kept the large main bedchamber warm. Only the top half of the headboard was carved as the gentry slept in a sitting position to avoid 'the angel of death'. The mistress complained about the Colonel's prudence with money and everything being worse than at her childhood home. Clothes were folded and stored flat with herbs. Servant bathed after the gentry in the same bathwater, or in the water butt. The children and maid slept in bedchambers nearby.

Money from rents, cattle, coal and lead were collected in the steward's office. Taxes collected were paid to either the King or Parliament, depending upon which side Bristol was supporting.

Fifteen servants lived in the house and fifteen more nearby. The dairymaid showed us the servant's hall. Servants were given three meals and eight pints of beer a day, shoes, clothes, remains of the food from the table, and warmth from the fire. Everyone drank beer rather than dirty water, with the servants getting the second, weaker brew. The scrivener showed us the

small kitchen. Typical meats served to the family were leveret, pork, beef, venison and mutton.. Washing up was done in the brook, upstream of the privy outlet. The scrivener took us into the great hall where feasts were held once every six weeks. Tax and justice court sessions were held every one and three weeks respectively. We saw metal cuffs, branding iron and a scolds bridle. The latter was usually used on wives, but sometimes on drunken men.



Gardening Group by Pat Uglow



We made a private visit to Moor Wood Rambling Roses on the 23rd June, in a beautiful farmland estate in the village of Woodmancote, near North Cerney. A Captain Claude Robinson chose to live there in 1911 and the present owners, Henry and Susie, the third generation of his family, made us all so welcome. We were conscious of their generosity in giving us so much time as it was obvious that maintenance of the farm land, the garden and especially the outstanding National Collection of about 150 rambling rose varieties was more than a full time job. In the past, six full time staff had been employed but now just two part-timers helped out with cutting the lawns and hedges. We were taken on a walking tour round the various sections of the garden. Henry pointed out some interesting trees, especially the Tulip Tree which was in flower and an ancient Cedar of Lebanon, thought to be about 300 years old. Saplings of both species had been planted about 10 years ago, to replace the older trees in the future. The rambling roses were spectacular with colours ranging from deep red, shades of orange, pinks and white and with varied flower heads and petals. They scrambled everywhere – up and over the walls, up the side of the house, over roof tops and through the trees. Henry reckoned there were many other varieties to add to the collection. They always opened their garden to the public, under the Open Gardens Scheme towards the end of June and donated all the money taken to Macmillan Nurses Cancer Support and Marie Curie, as some of their family had benefitted from the help of these charities. We completed our visit with a welcome cup of tea and



home-made sponge cake, sitting on the patio. It had been an impressive visit, not only because of the garden but also because of the family attitude to coping with the present situation but being realistic about changes which would have to be made by the son and heir to this peaceful valley, as he took over responsibility of the farm and gardens.

Creative Writing *Carol Barton has a timeless lesson for us all*

Dan lifted the net curtain, "There they are again. Silly buggers! There's three of them. I bet they're not all from the same household."

"Sit down and have your cup of tea, they're not doing us any harm" encouraged Jane. "No, but they may live with grandparents," Stan insisted. "Backwards and forwards they go. That's the third time I've seen them this morning. No 'one hour a day' exercise for them. They must be in and out of that supermarket all day. Bloody teenagers. If this was 1939 they'd be out-there fighting for our country. Can you imagine that? Can't even stay inside to save us." He took the mug of tea.

Dan was getting depressed. He knew he shouldn't complain. They had it easy, compared to some. He had his garden and Jane had her crochet. He missed his grandchildren, though, and he worried about his daughter, who was a care assistant. The children seemed happy, being 'home schooled' by their dad. Dan looked forward to seeing their smiling faces every Sunday in their family 'Zoom' chat. What would they do without technology?

After he'd had his tea he took a dining chair and took up his position by the window. There was a wren hopping about in his front garden, and a sparrow hanging on the bird feeder. The weather had been kind and the garden was looking beautiful. There they were again, the three yobs! What did they think they were doing? Suddenly one of the boys caught his eye and waved. He dropped the curtain quickly. The cheek of it!

After lunch he sat back in the chair again, to 'watch the birds'. It wasn't long before the boys were back, walking in the other direction this time. They waved again, but he pretended not to see them. Later he went into the kitchen, it must be nearly time for another cuppa. Jane was leaning against the sink, struggling to breathe. "Inhaler," she managed to wheeze. Dan went upstairs as fast as his arthritis would let him and rummaged in Jane's drawer. There it was. Jane suffered from seasonal asthma, brought on by an allergic reaction to tree pollen, but he'd never seen her this bad. Jane shook it and tried to use it but it was empty. She slid to the floor, requiring all her strength to breathe.

What should he do? He couldn't go out. Caz was at work, Will had the children. He dashed to the front door. "Hey there, Grandpa," said one of the boys. What excellent timing. Dan explained the situation and they told him to phone Jane's doctor and arrange a prescription, while they set off for the chemist's. They'd be back in no time.

Soon Jane was resting comfortably, and Dan was thanking the boys for their quick, calm response. Apparently they were brothers who did all the shopping for their elderly or ill neighbours. Not all heroes wear capes.

Coming Up

Date	Group	Event
Thurs 21 July 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "A Different View of the World" by Andrew Bluett
Thurs 28 July All Day	Science and Engineering	Bristol Harbour Cruise and the Underfall Yard This trip is now full, contact Bob Attack re waiting list
Thurs 4 August All Day	Historic Places	Easton Castle and Ledbury More details Carol Tipper
Thurs 25 August All Day	Science and Engineering	Hinkley Point C Construction Site Details from Dave Waugh
Thurs 2 Sept All Day	Historic Places	Judges Lodgings, Presteigne More Details Carol Tripper
Wed 24 Sept All Day	Gardening	Wye Valley Sculpture Garden and Clouds Rest Details from Danielle Ellis
Mon 3 October 14.30	Science and Engineering	Woodchester Valley Vinyard, Details from Graham Ellis
Fri 10 October All Day	Historic Places Science & Eng	Worcester Porcelain Museum & The Commandery Details from Carol Tipper
Thurs 20 Oct 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "The Alzheimer's Society by Nicola Eveleigh
Fri 4 Nov All Day	Historic Places	The Birmingham Assay Office Details to follow from Carol Tripper

**Full details of all these events are on our website.
Use the Bluebird to send leaders an email.**

**THE BULLETIN TAKES A SUMMER BREAK IN AUGUST
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ALL CONTRIBUTIONS MAY BE EDITED FOR PUBLICATION.