



u3a The Bulletin June 2022
Cam, Dursley & District

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Branch News

It's the Annual General Meeting at 10.00 am on Thursday 16th June. You've still got until Wednesday 1st June to send any nomination papers for election to next year's committee to Sue Gibson. The AGM will be followed by our regular monthly branch meeting, a talk by Paul Barnett on "The Life and Times of Henry Hook VC.

Last month's talk, "Charlotte Bronte & Jane Eyre" by Dr Keith Hooper, was an entertaining and informative run through the life and career of this Bronte sister. 'Jane Eyre' was a revolutionary book, stated Hooper. Published initially under a male pseudonym, the literati of the time couldn't believe it was actually penned by a woman. But as Charlotte herself said; " I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am an author". The plot of the book parallels that of 'Pilgrim's Progress'. Characters, locations and events are drawn from her own life and experience, even down to a local legend about a mad wife in the attic of a nearby property.

Group News

The first Group Leaders meeting since before the Covid pandemic, with 25 groups represented, was held on 24th May. Committee members updated the leaders on various issues, including Financial Control, Risk Assessments and Bulletin Contributions. Our newly-appointed Accessibility Coordinator, Elaine Brown, was introduced.

Most of our groups kept going in various ways during lockdown, including Zoom, emails, WhatsApp or text messages, phone calls, or Facebook. Inevitably some groups, for various reasons, didn't survive. Casualties, which have now closed, were Archaeology, Architecture, Church Explorers, Geology, Records, Monday Skittles, Spanish and the Bookends Group.

The good news is that most groups are again holding face to face meetings and many of our group activities are in full swing. A decision will be made soon about renewing our Zoom license, since very few of us are using it. However, there are still a few groups that are struggling. Rosemary Canning doesn't want to continue running the Concert Group and the Lunch Club also doesn't have a leader. The French Group is finding it difficult to keep going and Cycling is on hold because the leader, Paul Lewington, is injured.

Pam Davis is doing her best to help these groups to keep going if possible. They are still on our list and we hope they can stay! Including these, we now have 44 groups and over 440 members.

We also have some new groups. The Dowsing Group, thanks to Trish Mills and Barbara Davis, is a huge success. Members report they have a great time at the meetings, then go off and enjoy lunch together. You can read about the group's survey of St James' Church later in the Bulletin.

A very enjoyable Cryptic Crossword Group has started.

Other new groups are in the pipeline and more are always welcome. Thanks to all our Leaders for your hard work through some very difficult times. Let's look forward to all our future u3a activities including possibly an Autumn Open Day. Looking ahead to the next month, here's some things you can still join in.

The Natural History Group will be meeting at the Coombe Hill and Old London Road reserve, Wotton-under-edge. at 2.00pm on Thursday 9th Jun, led by Wotton local Celia Tanner. There is plenty of parking on the roadside beside Conygres Scout field in Old London Road, near the crossroads from Adeys Lane and the lane leading down to Waterley Bottom. Coombe Hill is steep in places so walking poles and strong footwear is recommended, although there is an alternative top flat path. There will be a couple of stiles to negotiate. Target species, weather permitting, will be butterflies and flowers.

The Play Reading Group will be at the Chantry Dursley on Tuesday 14th June at 10.00 am to read Edward Albee's drama 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf'. No acting skills required, just an opportunity to become someone else a couple of hours, plus enjoy coffee and biscuits. Just turn up if you fancy having a go. Terry Pascoe did just that last month and says that he thoroughly enjoyed himself.

On the downside however, **Science and Engineering's** trip to the Steam museum in Swindon planned for 23rd June is off, due to insufficient numbers.

But there's still time to book a place on the coach to Somerset for a tour of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station construction site. Contact Dave Waugh via the Bluebird on [web site](#) for more details and to sign up.



Group Reports

Science and Engineering: *Bath's Mystery Museums*

Our April visit was to a couple of Bath's lesser known attractions, reports Paul Sheppard. Many tourists from around the world visit the museums in the city centre, unaware of the interesting historical exhibits in the *Museum of Bath at Work*, situated in Julian Road, halfway down Lansdown Hill. Established in 1978 in a building dating from 1777 that was once a Real Tennis court, the museum houses a series of authentically reconstructed workplaces, workshops and display galleries.

Stuart the only paid member of staff, showed us a "Bath Chair", a three wheeled carriage invented by James Health to carry people up and down the steep hills. Our guided tour started with a visit to the extraordinary engineering and soft drinks factory of Victorian businessman J. B. Bowler. Over 50 years ago, the entire contents of the factory in Avon Street was photographed and then transported to the Museum building and re-constructed exactly as it was in its former home. We saw the shop counter, a fully equipped belt driven machine shop and many examples of "one off" items that were made for large companies. There was even a small foundry for casting gears and items related to plumbing.



Bowler's other claim to fame was the production of flavoured and gassed mineral waters. The company perfected a way to produce and store the carbon dioxide and a device to inject the gas into bottles. The first bottles had rounded bases and could only be stored on their sides, thus keeping the corks moist to prevent the gas from escaping.

The later version had a loose marble as a stopper. Millions of these bottles, all made by one Yorkshire factory until the patent expired, and fully reusable, with just an occasional replacement of a rubber seal, were used worldwide. Surprisingly, a modern example of a glass marble stoppered bottle is still made in China.



The Museum also has a car manufactured in 1914 by the Horstmann Car Company of Bath. Sidney Horstmann's business operated from 1914 until 1928, making around 2000 cars. One model even had a Dursley made Lister engine. He first made his

fortune through inventing a timer to switch street lights on and off. He also made and sold the first illuminated sign, individual one foot high letters made from bent pipe with a series of holes emitting burning town gas, then joined to make a word.

We concluded the morning at the *Herschel Museum of Astronomy* in New King Street, in the 18th century terrace house where the amateur astronomer William Herschel, using a telescope of his own design, discovered the planet Uranus. His observations doubled the size of the known solar system.



Herschel constructed a seven-foot reflector telescope, a modern full-sized replica of which is on display on the Ground Floor. *(As you saw on the cover, your Editor couldn't resist a peek through the lens, and paparazzo Brian Wetton couldn't resist the snap)*



The reflector was cast in the basement of the house from an alloy of copper and a high percentage of tin. The mould was made from a mixture of horse manure and plaster. The cast reflector then required weeks of hand polishing. To speed this up, he also invented a polishing machine.

On one occasion the molten metal escaped from the forge and caused the flagstone floor to explode. In the attic was a treadle operated lathe used to produce eye pieces.

On the 13th March 1781, Herschel, using his telescope in the back garden, discovered the planet we now know as Uranus. He originally named the planet, to the delight of King George III, *Georgium Sidus* - *George's Star*. The rest of the world called it Uranus after the Greek deity Ouranus, the sky. Instantly famous, Herschel gave up his career as a musician to become the king's personal astronomer and moved to Slough, nearer Windsor Castle . Here, he built a giant, 40 foot long, telescope.

He also discovered infra-red light. While using a glass prism and filters to examine sun spots he noticed that his control thermometer, which was positioned just past the red side of the spectrum, was hotter than any others. From this, he deduced that there must be another form of light beyond the visible spectrum.

Dowsing for Beginners - *the Force is with them*

This is one of our most successful newer groups. Barbara Davis gives us an introduction to the ancient art and describes a recent session in St James' Church, Dursley.

When you hear the word dowsing you might think of a person walking around, holding a Y shaped hazel twig, looking for water. This is still a valid use of dowsing, but these days most dowsers use thin metal L shaped rods, or even a pendulum.



There is a lot more to dowsing than just looking for water. The rods could answer yes or no to any simple question on health, archaeology, or 'energy lines' in the earth. Beginners have training sessions with instruction and practise on how to dowse. The first full scale practical session, with the church's permission, was in St James' Dursley. After an introductory talk, members were given a sheet with guidance on archaeological and earth energy to help with their investigations. They

were then asked to find and date the oldest area of the present day site. Here's what they deduced.

The church was built over an ancient pagan holy site. There was a small stone circle in the centre of the aisle. A Saxon church was located in the corner of what is now the Lady Chapel. The Saxon site was found to continue outside. It was possible to trace its outline and identify the site of the altar. Also traceable was the outline of a chapel used by the Guild of Tanners.

The group was also challenged to date the stained glass windows and pulpit, which proved to be Victorian alterations. The font was more complex, as the mediaeval basin was relocated and set on a Victorian base. This was an easier find, as the original site is now marked with a beautiful mosaic. It is an added bonus when something found by dowsing can be verified.



The group was also asked to find lines of energy in the church. Areas of positive energy were traced from the altar, font, pulpit and lectern, with a line of positive energy traced down the central aisle. A ley line (explaining these would take a whole new article) was found across the back of the church from the entrance door.

The morning concluded with a comparison of findings before our leader revealed the official 'Guide to St. James' Church' in which the results could be verified. And no, our novice dowzers hadn't seen this document before the session! If you'd like to try dowsing for yourself, contact our leader Trish Mills through the Bluebird on the u3a website.

Historic Places *contributed by Sally Beynon.*

In May the group visited Hellens, a Tudor/Jacobean manor in Much Marcle, Herefordshire Marches territory. Today it's run by a trust and a small community live and work there. Hellens is entwined with much of England's history. The name comes from generations of de Helyon wardens, who ran the estate in the absence of the owners..





The first recorded owner, dating from 1057, was Earl Harold Godwinson, later King Harold II. In 1066, William the Conqueror gave the land to his standard bearer, Walter de Lacy. Benedictine Monks later took over running the 100,000 acre estate. Subsequent owners were the de Balun family, who in 1215 witnessed the signing of the Magna Carta; Isolde Mortimer; and James Audley, the companion to the Black Prince, The Walwyn family resided in the house for several generations with Richard, who entertained Queen Mary Tudor; Hetty who was imprisoned by her mother for 30 years after a failed elopement; and Charles Walwyn Radcliffe Cooke, an MP who persuaded Hugh Weston to develop his cider business. During the Civil War, Roundheads killed a monk when they were searching the house for its Catholic owner after the Battle of Ledbury. Musket damage in the stone doorframe is evidence of Civil War activity. Later occupants were the painter and Queen Victoria's great-niece, Helena Gleichen and author Axel Munthe. Helena stored paintings from the Tate Gallery in the Stone Hall at Hellens during the Second World War, but they were removed after a bomb hit the hall.

Amongst the many historic heirlooms are some owned by Anne Boleyn. Paintings by Tintereto, Gainsborough, Hogarth, Van Dyke, Peter Lely and Goya, part of Wharton Collection are on display. Arts Society volunteers have worked to conserve the historic fabrics and hangings. In 2011 a pair of hand-embroidered Crewel worked curtains were made to replace the threadbare brocades in the Music Room. Their design is based upon a traditional 'Tree of Life' pattern. A 'Hellens Bayeux' crewelwork frieze, a nine and a half metre long embroidery, is being made, It will show the historical events of the house through the ages and, when completed will hang in the minstrel's gallery.

We were shown around the hall, the dinning room, the east hall, and the music room. The hall was used as a Baron's Court and above the fireplace is the emblem of the Prince of Wales, obtained at the battle of Crecy. The dining room is still used by the community. The east hall was for receiving

guests and contains a staircase carved by John Abel (b 1578) and a fireplace mantel carved from a Jacobean bedstead.



An English Renaissance frieze decorates the panelled Music Room. The first of three bedrooms was Bloody Mary's bedchamber, thought to be haunted, The second bedroom has embossed leather wallpaper, and a portrait of Ann Boleyn's great-niece. The third bedroom, where Hetty Walwyn was imprisoned for thirty years, may originally have been a chapel.

The formal garden layout is Tudor and Jacobean and includes a yew labyrinth, an octagonal dovecote, a physic garden, a knot garden and views to the Malvern Hills. The estate includes spring flowers, wild flower meadows and 150 acres of ancient SSSI woodland with including Wellingtonias, Blue Atlas Cedars and many rare varieties of fruit trees. In the outbuildings are some old carriages and the old pear press for making perry.



Country Walking Group



Seven stalwart members of the walking group met at Coaley Peak car park and picnic area on Thursday, May 5th for a five mile walk over Frocester Hill and through the woods to Uley Bury, from where we made a circuit of the Iron Age fort and enjoyed excellent views of Dursley before returning.

Coming Up

Date	Group	Event
Thurs 2 June 10.30	Country Walking	Bank Holiday Walk from Kingshill up Stinchcombe Hill and back
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
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 15.00	Gardening	Moor Wood Rambling Roses Details from Danielle Ellis
Friday 1 July All Day	Historic Places	Raglan and Chepstow Castles More details from Carol Tipper
Thurs 14 July 10.15	Gardening	Bourton House Gardens Tour with the Head Gardener Details from Danielle Ellis
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 Atack 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

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

NEXT EDITION - JULY 2022 - COPY DEADLINE FRIDAY 17th JUNE

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