



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

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**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY**  
**AND ACCESSIBILITY**

**Photo: Alan Keith**

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**Branch News**

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## **Equality Diversity and Accessibility**

### **A message from Branch Chair Terry Pascoe**

As Chair of our District u3a, I thought members might like to know that your committee has been considering the issues of Equality, Diversity and Accessibility to ensure that all our meetings, groups and activities are open to everyone.

We have adopted a policy which seeks to ensure that our members have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. We will aim to tackle inequalities whilst ensuring everyone is treated fairly without facing any discrimination. In the u3a we want to learn from each other and to share our skills and knowledge. Diversity, the recognition of our differences is essential to that process.

We now need to find a volunteer from within the membership who is prepared to help us move forward. An Accessibility Champion would be able to help identify the differing needs of our members and find ways for those needs to be met in everything we do. If you feel able to take on this important task, or would like more information, please contact Pam Davis.

Work has already begun. We have briefed group leaders. We are reserving the front row of seats at monthly meetings for any member who requires seating close to the screen or speaker. Microphones will be connected to a hearing loop. Wheelchair access and guidance for visiting speakers is also already in place.

We welcome your positive contributions to this discussion and would encourage anyone who feels their needs are not yet being met to talk to group leaders or committee members at any time.

We are pleased to note that membership is still increasing. If you are enjoying your membership as much as I think you are, please tell everyone and encourage them to join and enjoy the experience of learning from friends in the community.

*One change already in hand is the reformatting of The Bulletin in a type face and font size recommended for those who have difficulty reading print.*



## Oral History

You are invited to a u3a event of particular interest to anyone who is interested in the recent history of Cam and Dursley.

“Local Voices - Working Lives” is an Oral History Project based at GL11 in Cam. Paul Rummer and his team recorded stories and memories of the working life of local people in the recent industrial past. In this presentation they will share with you the background to this project, how they collected the stories and what they discovered about Dursley’s history and its people. This fascinating talk is on Monday March 21st at 2.30 pm in Dursley Methodist Church. Please bring £1 towards room hire. Refreshments available.



Please contact Pam Davis on [cam.u3a.groups@gmail.com](mailto:cam.u3a.groups@gmail.com) if you plan to attend.

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### Group News

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Most of our groups are now back in action.

The Bridge Group and the Fifth Amendment Book Group are both looking for more members. The Bridge Group, leader Richard Gwyer, meets in the Dursley Methodist Church most Tuesday afternoons. Rhoda Wadsworth leads the Book Group, which meets on the second Monday of the month in members’ homes. Contact them in person or via the Blue Bird on the website.

Church Explorers is still looking for a leader and will be removed from our list unless someone comes forward soon.

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## Group Reports

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### **Natural History**

Fifteen members of the Natural History Group enjoyed an afternoon of bird watching at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, on Thursday 10th February, reports Alan Keith. There was a good deal of activity on the reserve, as migratory winter wild fowl started to collect together ready for their annual migration to Northern Europe and the Arctic. Members witnessed the magnificent spectacle of a flock of several thousand golden plovers and lapwings circling round over the reserve. There were also large numbers of curlews teal and wigeon, as well as all the usual water fowl. A peregrine falcon was also identified preying on the flocks of waders. Those who stayed until 4.00pm also witnessed the swan feed, one of the last of the season. Trust staff feed the Bewick's swans, and any other birds who turn up, before their long migratory flight to their breeding grounds in Siberia. They may depart as soon as the next week. It was gratifying to learn that after a long period of decline, mainly due to hunting, these wild swans are finally making a come back.



### **Gardening - Japanese Gardens**

Members of the Zoom Garden Group, in conjunction with Evesham Gardening Group, enjoyed a fascinating talk by Patsy Rayner on 24th January, writes Jane Bridge. Patsy spoke on the development of Japanese gardens from the Sixth Century up to the present day, where Western influences have infiltrated style and philosophy.

Patsy has been visiting Japan with her husband twice a year for the past 18 years to visit her son, his Japanese wife, and their three children. Her love of Japanese culture was very apparent and opened our eyes to the spiritual elements behind the teachings of Zen and Shintoism, respect for age and transition to enlightenment and perfection reflected in the designs of the gardens.



There is little garden space on the four main islands of Japan but what space there is, a window box, a back yard, a balcony is filled with symbolic plants, embracing the tranquility of Nature. Stone, rocks, water capture in miniature mountains, lakes, mosses and forest from the topography of the larger landscape. Greys and greens predominately and in Spring, amazing cherry blossom, albeit fleetingly for a few weeks.

May I also recommend Monty Don's series on Japanese gardens, available on the BBC iPlayer, which certainly dovetails beautifully with such an inspirational talk. Patsy also offers other talks on Japan which might be of interest to some other of our groups. See her website [japantalks.com](http://japantalks.com)

## **Gardening - Snowdrops at Colesbourne**

The first visit of the year was to the gardens at Colesbourne Park. They are renowned for their snowdrops and we were astonished by the number and variety, *reports Danielle Ellis*. We had private a tour led by the owner, a spritely 87 year old Sir Henry Elwes, who had us spellbound with his stories, not only about the snowdrops but some of his rare trees. His ancestor the

plantsman Henry John Elwes was born and died at Colesbourne, but from the age of 17 he spent at least part of every year abroad. During his visit to Turkey in 1874 he came across the fine large snowdrop which was subsequently named after him *Glanthus elwesii*. Before he left Turkey, he arranged for a large number of bulbs to be sent back to England, the first of many millions exported ever since. The present day collection has been built up over the years through purchases, gifts and exchanges with other collectors.



Sir Henry (*photo Valerie Moores*) led our tour of the garden. We learnt to distinguish between the different snowdrop varieties as we were guided through the wood, George's garden, the Arnotts (named for magnificent drift of scented *Galanthus S. Arnott*), passing the extraordinarily coloured lake, through ice house hollow, the formal garden and the courtyard. Everywhere we looked, drifts of snowdrops spread into the distance. We discovered that some snowdrops start flowering around Christmas Day and others will flower until April. We saw singles, doubles, yellow varieties and so many more. I think we all came away with

a favourite in mind and a fair few have found their way into our gardens. The majority of snowdrops do not seed and need to be divided when they get to a suitable size clump. An essential tip we learnt was NOT to plant in the green as to do so damages the roots. We should mark where the clumps are and divide in July when suitably robust. Carolyn and Henry Elwes, and more recently gardeners Shane Ball and Will Fletcher plant out thousands of snowdrops each year and new varieties are added when possible. The collection now totals some 350 cultivars.

If you ever get the chance to visit, especially with a guided tour, don't hesitate. You can also sign up for our next garden tours, the Coach House Garden, Ampney Crucis on Friday 22nd April, and a guided tour by the Head Gardener of Bourton House Garden on Thursday 14 July 2022. Full details on the branch web site.



## Science and Engineering - *Taylor Bells of Loughborough*

*February 24th saw a keen coach load of members, including your editor, plus a couple of motorists, head for what turned out to be an outstanding day out organised in style by Donald Gibson.*

Our u3a has visited many scientific and engineering businesses, but Taylor Bells of Loughborough might be the first that still uses a century old technology, albeit with one or two modern twists. John Taylor and Co can trace its lineage back to the 14th century, and the present site, now the largest bell foundry in the world, opened in 1859. They now make single bells, peals, chimes, carillons and even musical handbell sets. The fillings and frameworks are also produced, and there are plans to restore and reuse the original ropewalk. This proud heritage is well represented in the Foundry Museum, run by a charitable trust.



*In the Furnace Gallery, the oldest, and loudest, attraction, was a collection of bells from around the country. Wooden mallets were supplied and the opportunity to clang away was irresistible.*

Bell making was explained on film. Moulds are made using the original loam process. Loam is a mixture of red and black sand, chopped hay, water and horse manure. The final dried, porous, mix allows gases to escape during moulding. The mould is carefully smoothed to the correct shape and size, then decorated and burnished. The casting, using bell metal (77% copper, 23% tin), takes place in the sandy earth of the foundry floor, where the bell cools slowly over two days to give the best sound.

Our visit coincided with the casting of a bell for St John the Baptist Church Eastnor, near Ledbury. We joined their bell ringers on a gallery above the foundry floor to watch. First, the molten bell metal, at a temperature of 1200 degrees, was poured into a large bucket, where willow wood, a natural source of salicylic acid, was incinerated to improve the flux of the pour. Once clean of surface slag, the bucket was carefully swung by crane to the buried mould,

where it was gently and slowly poured into the head. Any surplus metal did not go to waste. It was poured into a trench in the sand for cooling before recycling into a future cast. Eddie Hamilton and I grabbed some photos.



It would be a couple of days before the new bell could be freed from the mould, so we next visited the part of the factory where the process would be completed. We were in the large original Victorian structure, bricks once white washed but now a dirty grey. And while the foundry floor was sand, we stood on what looked like stone tiles, but were in fact more forgiving oak blocks, as fitted in the 19th century. Workers have occasionally been known to drop a clanger.

The bell needs to be tuned. The machined metal tuning is by a technique developed by Taylors in 1896, the five tone principle. The bell tuner uses the five main harmonics, and when the correct frequency is achieved for each, the bell is said to be in-tune with itself. Tuners are trained under an apprenticeship scheme. While digital aids are now available, Taylors rely on tuning forks and a well trained ear.



The factory keeps the tuning forks for all the bells they have ever made, so if a replacement is needed, the tone of the ring will be exactly the same.



Also archived are the dimensions of the circular wooden wheels that carry the bell ropes. The table in the carpentry shop is, again, an original from when the factory opened. Over 25,000 bells have been made in this Loughborough factory. Probably the most famous is 'Great Paul', over 16 tons in weight, cast in 1881, and still hanging in St Paul's Cathedral, London.



*This account can only give a flavour of what was a fascinating day out to both a part of our industrial heritage and a modern successful business. If you're in the East Midlands, make a visit to the museum part of your trip.*

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## Coming Up

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Date	Group	Event
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"
Mon 21 March 14.30	Oral History launch	Dursley Methodist Church "Local Voices, Working Lives" with Paul Rummer
Thurs 24 March All day	Science and Engineering	Morgan Motor Co Factory Tour More details from Brian Gornall
Fri 1 April All Day	Historic Places	Visit Stanway House, Gardens, Mill and Fountain More details from Carol Tipper
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
Thurs 5 May 19.30	Concerts	St David's Hall, Cardiff Music from the Golden Age of Cinema
Friday 6 May All Day	Historic Places	Hellen's House, Much Markle Tour of Tudor House 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

**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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