



OPEN DAY REPORT

PLUS

Nuclear New Build in Somerset
Kinnersley Castle Visit
Review: The Beekeeper of Allopo

Branch News



Our Open Day on the 5th October was a stupendous success, and we now have over 100 new members. Thank you to everyone who helped in anyway, and particularly to Pam Davis, who coordinated and drove the whole event.



To publicise the day we had tried hard to reach as many people as possible in our local towns and villages. There were posters, flyers, social media postings, stories in parish magazines and invitations handed out in the street. Members spread the word to friends and neighbours and best of all, brought them along on the day.

Group Leaders had come in early to put together displays showcasing their activities and were ready to chat to visitors and answer their questions. From the moment the doors opened, people flocked in, greeted by smiling 'welcomers' to point them in the right direction. Visitors could try Kurling or Dowsing and entertainment was provided by the Acoustic Guitar group.



The Chantry cafe was soon doing a roaring trade, with praise from the customers as to the quality of its cakes, Feedback from visitors mentioned the number and variety of the interest groups available. Other comments noted the friendliness and enthusiasm of the leaders and committee



members, as well as the spacious venue and how easy it was to move around the tables and even try out some activities.

One of the busiest areas was the Membership table, where the team had pens and a pile of forms ready, but after less than half an hour they needed more.



By lunchtime there were 101 completed forms and the Treasurer’s cash box was overflowing. The following morning two more forms dropped through the Membership Secretary’s door. Says Pam “I think we’re back”.

So a special welcome to all you new members who are reading our Bulletin for the first time. It’s your publication and the way we let you know about what’s gone on and what’s coming up. You’ll find details of how to get in touch at the end of this edition.

Chair, Terry Pascoe writes:



“I would like to express my thanks to everyone who contributed to our recent, very successful, Open Day, in particular the leaders and volunteers representing our groups. The atmosphere they helped to create at the Chantry Centre was, undoubtedly, a huge factor in helping to attract so many new members on the day. People left expressing their approval of the variety and quality of what we offer those who have retired and the feeling of friendship and fun our activities engender.

We were especially pleased with the support we received from the Chantry Centre itself. Mark and his colleagues attended energetically to

our needs and were on hand to offer assistance throughout. We loved the café with its delicious cakes and hot drinks and we are most grateful to Jude and her helpers for the welcome they gave us all.

Most encouraging of all was the attendance and support of so many members who came with their friends and neighbours to find out more about the things we do to enhance our retired lives! It was an unexpected bonus for us to receive over 100 completed membership application forms on the day, with more people taking forms home to return later or to share with friends. All of our groups report an increase in their membership and some now have good problems to overcome in accommodating everyone. The committee welcomes all our new members and are planning a special gathering soon to discuss their future within our u3a. We will be here for anyone who wishes help or guidance with our customs and practices which, I hope and trust, will always be uncomplicated and eminently sensible.

I look forward to seeing you soon at our regular monthly meeting in the Methodist Church. The next, a talk on the work of the Alzheimer's Society, is on Thursday 20th October from 10.00 am in Dursley Methodist Church. Meanwhile thank you all once again for a great Open Day.

Remembering Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II



This beautiful flower arrangement in Dursley Methodist Church was made by one of our members, Angela Fowler, who belongs to the Craft and Textiles group. She made the arrangement for our September monthly meeting especially to honour the late Queen. It was an appropriate focus for our members as we observed a few minutes silence. Thank you Angela.

Group News

Group co-ordinator Pam Davis looks forward to an exciting future thanks to the influx of new members. She reports that before the open day we had over 470 members and 43 groups on the website. We now have over 570 members, and experience over the years suggests that we need to have at least another 17 new groups. We need to find ways to create these and increase the capacity of the ones we have. The biggest challenge will be to find new leaders. If you were one of those who gave us suggestions

at the open day Pam would love to hear from you. This also applies to any member with ideas and suggestions for new groups or would like to lead one. Email her on groups@camanddursleyu3a.org.uk

Groups also need to be aware of the inevitable increase in room hire costs. Dursley Methodist Church is increasing its charge for small meeting rooms from £15 to £16 per session from 1st November. A fuel surcharge, an extra £3, may be added to this for the winter months. The Chantry Centre trustees will also be increasing their charges, but haven't made a final decision about them yet. Other venues are likely to follow suit.

Group Reports

Historic Places from Sally Beynon

The group visited Kinnersley Castle and Presteigne Judges Lodgings on 2nd September.

Kinnersley Castle, a Norman castle near Hay on Wye, was built to protect the English marches from Welsh unrest. There may have been an earlier Saxon dwelling on the site. Since then, it has changed hands many times.



One owner of note is Roger Vaughan, a catholic, who built a priest hole under the bathroom and added a third floor to the house. There is a legend that an ancestor of the Vaughan family, 'Black Vaughan' and his black dog appear when a death is imminent. The Baskervilles lived at nearby Baskerville Hall and they gave Conan Doyle permission to use the story in 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', provided it was set elsewhere. Other interesting owners include a Major Davy, who invented the Davy Fire Escape, Lord Brocket, a Nazi sympathiser who was under house arrest here during WWII, and Peter Walker a formula one driver, who only lived in the house for three months in the 1950s. Henry Garratt-Adams purchased the house in 1954 when it was threatened with demolition, and three generations of his family have lived there since.

The interior of the house contains items from various periods. Two unusual carvings are a wooden bearded lady on the landing and a plaster green man in the Tudor room. The eight acres of grounds include large yew hedges, a giant cedar tree, an orchard, a walled kitchen garden and one of

the largest ginkgo biloba trees in the country. The leaves of the ginkgo tree are harvested for herbal pharmaceuticals each year.



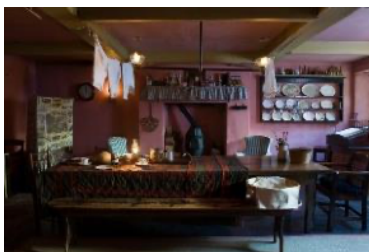
Presteigne became the venue for the Court of King's Great Sessions in 1542 and was the legal seat of Radnorshire for more than 400 years. A Shire Hall was used for the trials and hearings and a lodging house for the judges also held a gaol. By 1826 it was in such disrepair that a new gaol was built on the edge of town and tenders to build a new Shire Hall, Court of Justice and Judge's

Lodging on the site of the old gaol were submitted. Edward Haycock, an eminent architect from Shrewsbury, was chosen to do the work. Due to lack of money, the building was not finished and the lodging rooms not furnished until 1829.

The first Great Session in the new building sentenced a horse thief to death, later commuted to transportation for life, and a man who had stolen clothing from his employer was given fourteen years transportation. In 1888 Llandrindod Wells became the home of newly formed County Council, although the legal duties remained at Presteigne until October 1970 when the Assize judges left, followed by the Magistrates Court twenty years later. Many social functions, meetings, elections and space for the local museum and library were accommodated in the Shire Hall during the twentieth century.



In the early 1990s the decision was made to repair the Shire hall and open it to the public as a museum. The attics were full of furniture, silver and other items used throughout the centuries, which were used as a basis of a museum display. A audio guide takes visitors from the court room to the judges dining room and drawing room; upstairs to the bedrooms, judges dressing room and bathroom; then down to the basement to the servants quarters, kitchen, pantry, drinks cellar, wet larder and two holding cells. The narration takes the visitor back to the 1860s and describes the life of the occupants and new inventions. Robert Hardy and several locals played the parts of the staff.





Science and Engineering: *"A visit to Hinkley Point C" by Brian Gornall*

New build nuclear power stations are back in the news, with Government approval announced for another plant in Suffolk. The design is the same as Hinkley Point C (HPC), now under construction in Somerset, so the recent visit to that site by the Science and Engineering group was well timed. I used to know the area well through my work, but it's over 20 years since I was last in Bridgwater, the nearest town to the site. The area had changed considerably, with new build housing estates, and a new bypass round the town, investment thanks to EDF (Electricite de France) the operator of the UK's remaining nuclear generators, and the developers of HPC.

I don't intend to go into details here about how nuclear power stations work. Suffice to say that HPC is a pressurised water reactor (PWR), extensively used in France and around the world but with only one, Sizewell B, in the UK. EDF developed their own bigger version, producing considerably more power, and HPC is this design, based on a prototype still under construction in France and operating versions in Finland and China. And HPC has some important safety improvements, insisted on by the UK's nuclear regulators, which are now being back fitted in Europe.

The capital investment required for nuclear stations has always been large, and inevitably bigger stations cost even more. HPC's price tag has now risen to nearly £26 billion. We could see where the money's being spent right from the start of the visit. Our coach dropped us at a park-and-ride

off a new bypass to the village of Cannington, the closest community to the site. After being checked in, photo ID mandatory, there was a safety briefing before a transfer to one of a fleet of buses serving the site. There's no site parking and all workers were required, on pain of the sack, to use the free buses.



But our first stop was in Cannington. Construction and future operating staff are being trained at Canning College. The Visitor Centre is in Cannington Court, which also now houses a conference centre and 60 room hotel. We watched an immersive video presentation on

the build and grabbed a group photo. Once on site, it's strictly no photography and no leaving the tour bus. Thankfully there were lots of photos online.

HPC is about 6 miles from Cannington. En route we could see a power line, with new design towers, to take the output to join the National Grid at Avonmouth. For environmental reasons, part of the line will be underground in a tunnel under the Mendips.



The complex itself is enormous, over 400 acres, and is much more than just a building site. We entered at the southern end through security and drove clockwise along the wide roadways, each junction traffic light controlled. There were offices, training facilities for every aspect of construction and operation, a medical

centre, catering, and even accommodation for 510 workers. With the workforce due to peak at about 8,000, there is an off-site facility for another 1000 in Bridgwater.

Everyone was in PPE from top to toe, hard hats, goggles, high-vis waterproof jackets and trousers, safety shoes. No wonder we had to stay on the bus.



Bisecting the site is Green Lane, a retained and enhanced wildlife corridor with an active badger set and rehoused colonies of bats. 65,000 trees and shrubs have been planted to date.

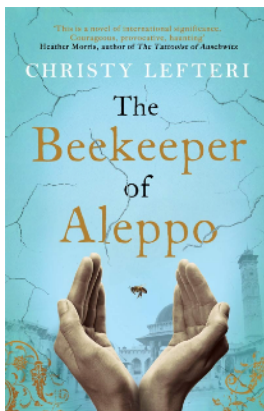


The tour continued past the jetty, where large items arrive by sea, several concrete making plants, and on past the first of the two reactor pressure vessels. Each ring of the vessel is assembled on site before being lifted into place by 'Big Carl', the world's largest crane.

This brief account really doesn't do justice to the enormity of the whole project. The pictures from the EDF web site help, but unless you've seen it for yourself it's hard to grasp the sheer engineering achievement. The predicted date for completion is now 2027. The site will generate 3,000 Megawatts of electricity. You can follow electricity demand and production online, and as I write this at the start of October 2022, that would be about 10% of the UK's daily usage. With the prospect of colder winters ahead and world events shaping the price of energy, maybe the HPC project will prove to be a financial success as well as an engineering triumph.



Bookworms Book Group by Sue Dunn



'The Beekeeper of Aleppo' by Christy Lefteri is the story of Nuri, a beekeeper and his wife Afra, who is an artist. They lived a simple life in Syria, rich with family and friends. Then came the war, and it was all destroyed. Nuri and Afra were forced to leave Aleppo and join cousin Mustafa in England. The story follows their dangerous journey whilst coping with their damaged selves. Gripping from the beginning, this book was enjoyed, if that is the right word, by our group. It gives a great insight into the plight of refugees and promoted much discussion. It is a story without politics, but of love, and loss, and bravery and hope. Highly recommended.

Coming Up

Date	Group	Event
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 from Carol Tripper
Thurs 17 Nov 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "A Holiday in Ukraine" by Anne Scott
Thurs 24th Nov 10.30	Science and Engineering	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "Engineering Challenges in restoring the Cotswold Canals" All members welcome
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
2023		
Thurs 19 Jan 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "The Great Western Air Ambulance" by Steve Moulds
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

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

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ALL CONTRIBUTIONS MAY BE EDITED FOR PUBLICATION.