

# u3a

The Bulletin Summer 2022  
Cam, Dursley & District



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PLUS AN ORIGINAL POEM  
FROM DAVID WILKINSON

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 Branch News
 

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Welcome to this double edition of your newsletter, marking the activities of some of our groups throughout a mostly very hot and dry summer. It isn't over yet, and there'll be more stories to come. It almost seemed like old times out and about, but there are still a significant number of mask wearers, marking what's become the new normal. We now go forward into a new season of events and activities. Membership of our branch has fallen over the pandemic and your committee believe that now is the time to reintroduce ourself to our communities and encourage more people to join us. There'll be a chance to do just that at our Open Day, which will be at the Chantry Centre, Long St, Dursley on Wednesday 5th October. Groups will be promoting their activities, and there'll be chance for prospective members to chat to leaders. But it's not just for newbies. We'd like as many existing members as possible to come along. You can find out more about those groups you've always wanted to join. And most importantly, please bring along those friends and neighbours who aren't yet part of our fellowship, but with the right encouragement and support just might be.

Come and socialise, the Chantry Cafe will be open, and I can tell you from experience that the cakes are excellent. Look out for publicity on posters, flyers and social media over the next few weeks. Let Pam Davis know if you can help get the word out. Remember, nothing beats word of mouth and personal recommendations.

And it's not just for Cam and Dursley. Let's see more of our friends from Berkeley, Wotton, and all our neighbouring communities.

There's lots to look forward to this autumn in the way of talks, days out, sports, and even a pre-Christmas trip away to Chatsworth  
*Brian Gornall, Editor*



**NO LONGER WORKING FULL TIME OR RAISING A FAMILY?  
NOW'S THE TIME TO MAKE THE MOST OF LIFE.**

**COME TO OUR  
OPEN DAY**

**WEDNESDAY 5th OCTOBER 2022  
THE CHANTRY CENTRE, LONG ST,  
DURSLEY, GL11 4JB  
FROM 10.30 am TO 1.00 pm**

Refreshments available  
**FIND OUT ABOUT OVER 40 SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS  
OR HELP US SET UP NEW ONES**

**WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS, INCLUDING FROM  
BERKELEY, WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE AND OUR NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES.**

**More details on our website: [u3asites.org.uk/cam-dursley](http://u3asites.org.uk/cam-dursley)  
or email [enquiries@camanddursleyu3a.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@camanddursleyu3a.org.uk)**



**LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE!**

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## Meeting Report

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July's open meeting was a thought provoking presentation, *A Different View of our World, by Andrew Bluett*. His collection of images gave us a bird's eye view of our world, not just metaphorically looking over the neighbour's fence thanks to Google Maps but on a global scale, how humanity is changing the world, not necessarily for the better.



Starting with the beginnings of reconnaissance during the first World War then on to U2 spy planes and now satellites, aerial photography has always had a military connection. There is now free public access to some US military records, and he showed one image from the notorious Area 51 that demonstrated how the real purpose of this top secret airbase in Nevada had been concealed behind a fanciful security spin about UFOs.

Satellite imagery can also be used for historical search. One picture showed traces of properties in Scotland destroyed in the 18th century under the Highland Clearances. Of much greater significance for today however is its use in meteorology. As we begin to notice locally the effects of global warming so scenes from the Antarctic cemented its reputation as the barometer for the world. "The next 10 years will decide the fate of the planet for the next 10,00 years" he declared.



We ended in deep space, with images from the Hubble telescope. The Pillars of Creation are at the heart of the Eagle Nebula, 7,000 light-years from Earth. The new James Webb telescope is looking back even further, 13 billion light years, to just after the dawn of the universe. Bluett's closing thoughts: "Look up at the unknown and wonder. Look down at the earth and marvel"

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## Group News

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### The Art Appreciation Group

The Art Appreciation Group is resuming meetings every second and fourth Wednesday morning starting on September 14th with a presentation on the work of artist John Piper. The image shows a painting by Piper of some of the buildings in Priory Parade, Cheltenham. Before the end of this year we can also look forward to an introduction to



classical sculpture and two talks by visiting speakers on Diego Velazquez and Henri Matisse, as well as a visit to an art exhibition. New members are always welcome to join at any time. None of us are experts, just a group of people who enjoy looking at and discussing art-related topics

In other news, Pam Davis reports that new member Cherie Gordon-Eales, who has kindly stepped forward to lead the **Lunch Group**. More about this next time. Others always keen to socialise are MOTO, or Members On Their Own. Here are some of them on the veranda at Dursley Methodist Church.



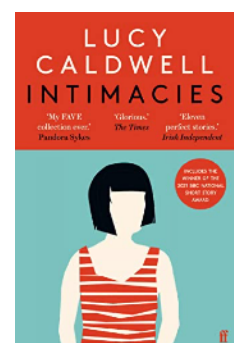

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## Group Reports

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### **Bookworms Book Group** by Sue Dunn

*Intimacies*, by Lucy Caldwell, was a different, but worthwhile, read from usual for our group. It's a compilation of 11 easy to read short stories, and it won the BBC National Short Story competition in 2021. There is a lot of complexity in the tale, as is the nature of the genre. All but four are written in the first person, which has the advantage of making it much more personal. They all encompass women's issues, especially surrounding babies, born or unborn, or looked forward to in the future, or not. There is a theme running through of women shouldering guilt, of anxiety and difficulty with decision making. Certainly many of the characters were feeling vulnerable in the moment of the story, but also very responsible in their unquestionable love for the baby.



We mostly felt it was difficult to read more than one story a day as each needed processing and reviewing. However, it is a well written book, and the stories are short. As Bookworms are a group of women, we were able to relate to a lot of the situations in the stories, and it produced much interesting discussion. It would be interesting to know what men would make of the book.....

**Science and Engineering's** trip in July, organised by Bob Atack, took the group, including your editor, to Bristol and the Underfall Yard, an impressive but little appreciated example of Victorian ingenuity that still keeps the Bristol Docks safely in operation despite the immense tidal variations of the River Avon. The yard is at the mouth of the harbour and what better way to reach it than with a trip from Temple Meads station on a Bristol Ferry. Today, pubs, cafes and floating night clubs now congregate where warehouses and businesses flourished in what was once the country's second biggest port.



Many of us were familiar with the parts of the floating harbour, but only from the ferry was it possible to grasp just how far inland the original moorings stretched. We sailed from Temple Quay past Castle Park and the Old City, past St Mary Redcliffe, the Mathew, SS Great Britain, and on eventually to the Cumberland Basin and the lock at the Hotwells end of the harbour for a view of the Clifton Suspension Bridge.



The Rivers Avon and Frome were first modified for use as docks in the 1240s. They were still tidal and at low tide ships would often run aground. "Shipshape and Bristol fashion" described how vessels and their secured cargo were capable of taking the strain of repeated strandings on the mud. The present harbour, with a dam and locks, was created at the start of the 19th century. But the harbour kept filling up with silt, and sewage, so it had to closed periodically, drained, and the obnoxious residues dug out. In the 1830s Isambard Kingdom Brunel was hired to make improvements. He built under cuts through the dam to scour the silt back into the river. The sluices, later improved, still operate but now they are automated and computer controlled.

The power house at Underfall Yard was built in 1887. The room which is now the visitor centre housed three boilers, which powered steam hydraulic pumps used to power the harbour's hydraulic system of cranes, bridges and locks. There are now three electric pumps in the adjacent room. We saw a demonstrate of how it all worked. In the adjacent tower a 100 ton weight is lifted up above a tank. The weight then slowly falls to pressurise the water in the hydraulic pipes. This accumulator ensures a smooth delivery of pressure, including peak demand, without needing to run the pumps continuously. We visited the maintenance workshops, also from the 1880s. Much of the original machinery survives.



The visit concluded with a walk around the Cumberland Basin to view the locks and the New Cut which takes the Avon out around the Harbour. Then it was back on the ferry to Temple Meads where our party separated for members to do their own thing in Bristol before returning home.



## Dowsing

*The Dowsing Group spent its summer meetings continuing investigations at two of Dursley's churches. Barbara Davis brings us more from St James', but we start with Trish Mills, who reports on the findings at St Mark's, Woodmancote.*

You wouldn't normally go for a walk around a grave yard or cemetery, would you? But it's a great opportunity for dowsing! You can approach the grave from the back, and ask 'Is there one person buried in this grave?' and if you get a No, ask 'Are there two people buried here?' If it was one, you can ask 'Was it a male?' or 'Was it a female?'. You can even ask for the dates they died, and born too if you are feeling ambitious. Then you can go round to the front of the tombstone and see if you were right or not.

Dowsing St Mark's Church came as a wonderful surprise. From the front it's one of those blink-and-you-miss-it edifices, but we received a warm welcome from one of the Church Wardens, proud of how many Dursley 'names' were to be found there, notably several of the Bailey family, Bloodworth, Walters and Vizard to name a few. The saddest grave bore

the Pedersen name, Mikael and Ingeborg Pederson, relatives of the inventor of the famous bicycle, a pauper's grave marking the death of their only daughter, aged just six months. We were also able to dowse for war graves in amongst the others, all done quietly and with great respect. It's good to remember them.



The greatest surprise, however, was how large the graveyard is behind the church itself, which goes all the way back to Rosebery Avenue. A footpath winds through it, a well-known shortcut, which prompted us to dowse for ley lines. Sure enough we found more than one ley outside, and a strong one inside the church too. Even though they haven't been

dowsing for very long, some of our members are very good at it already, and wonderfully enthusiastic. After just six months there are 28 of us, so unfortunately we need to close to new members for now, but you are welcome to join the waiting list if you would like to.

*The next session, on 9th August was to investigate further at St James Church, Dursley. Barbara takes up the story.*

It was a very hot day, so we began inside the church by investigating ley lines and distinguishing leys from other lines of energy such as the good energy coming from the altar. Ley lines are energy lines but not all energy lines are ley lines. They are straight lines often laid down in the past by people walking between prominent points in the landscape. When ley lines are traced on a map we often find that churches, cathedrals, castles and other important buildings are sited along them, benefiting from the energy laid down in the past. Energy lines are invisible to the naked eye but can be found by dowsing. Some sensitive people can locate them by feel without needing rods or pendulum. Our rods indicated a strong ley line running along the path beside the church building leading to the Broadwell, a source of good quality water. If a well has completely pure water it is deemed a holy well.

During our previous dowsing session inside the church we had discovered the corner of a pre-Norman church by the Lady Chapel, so we went outside to see if we could trace the rest of it. Our rods indicated that there were two previous chapels. We decided to investigate the second one. It is important when dowsing to focus on a specific era as sites have

usually been built on many times over and confusion reigns if everyone is not focused on the same building and dates. Questioning our rods yet again, it appeared to be a wooden building with a thatched roof. The outline was picked out with marker flags, which don't show up too well in the photos as the yellow flags blended in with the parched grass. More dowsing indicated that the Saxon church had been built on the site of an ancient stone circle. This was small in size but of the same age as the ancient stone circle discovered inside the Church during our previous visit. One hour in the heat was enough as the dowzers were getting hot, and tired mentally. However everyone agreed it had been an interesting session.



### **Gardening Group by Jean Gornall**

On the beautiful bright morning of 14th July, around 30 members of the Gardening Group, ably organised by Daniel Ellis, assembled in front of an impressive stone built tithe barn adorned with enormous magnificent hanging baskets overflowing with flowers. This was the start our visit to Bourton House Gardens, near Moreton in Marsh.



We were shown round by head gardener Jacky Rae, who astounded us with her knowledge, dedication, and sheer hard work she and her two fellow gardeners had to put in to produce and maintain the stunning borders. Along the side of the path to the gardens were masses of pots of tender plants. These had been

over-wintered under cover then brought out to form this display. Aeoniums and Abutilons galore, as well as dahlias and fuchsia.

This is not a subdued garden. Plants stood tall, and although closely planted each flower had room to show its glory. Purples and oranges in one border, lemons and blues in another. All vibrant contrasts looking joyful together. The White Garden, by comparison, was peaceful and inspiring. These borders were planted out each spring after the displays of tulips had been lifted.





It takes a month to replant, each plant being painstakingly staked. Vast numbers of canes and enormous balls of string are needed. The gardening year follows a set pattern. After the hard work of planting and tending comes hedge cutting and dead heading, interspaced with escorting around groups of visitors. Later, enormous numbers of cuttings need to be taken and nurtured to ensure the following year's displays. In late autumn comes the hard work of lifting, root trimming and potting up.

Moving through the garden we came to the main lawn in front of the 18th century manor, Bourton House. It looked impressively large, but has only five main bedrooms. The garden once had a reputation for imaginative topiary, but box blight has forced its removal. Areas are being redesigned, one with grasses and yew, which will eventually be clipped into shape.



Another was sowed with an annual wild flower mix. The display of poppies and cornflowers just begged to be photographed. The tithe barn now houses the cafe, with tables and sunshades spilling out into the garden. There we enjoyed coffee while others were tempted by sandwiches and cakes. There were plants for sale, all of course carefully staked. BBC Gardener's World Adam Frost is quoted as saying Bourton House is

"probably one of the best summer gardens I have ever seen". We could hardly disagree. I came home intending to buy more canes and string ready to stake my plants at the beginning of the next gardening season.

## Historic Places

*It was castles time in July and August for the group, and all three visited had strong links with historic attempts to control the English-Welsh border. Sally Beynon tells us more.*

On the 1st July we visited Chepstow and Raglan Castles. Although the castles are only fifteen miles apart, they were built for very different purposes. Both fell into ruin and were ransacked during the Civil War.

Chepstow Castle was built for defence in 1067, shortly after the Norman Conquest, on the top of a cliff above the River Wye. Obvious differences can be seen in the construction: Chepstow Castle had narrow arrow-slit windows, thicker walls and an enormous door for defence. The 1150 door still remains with iron plating on the outside and lattice wood with mortice-and-tenon joints on the inside.



The younger Raglan Castle was built in the 1430s, possibly over the site of an earlier motte-and-bailey castle, as a fortress-palace in rolling countryside. It has large ornate windows, extensive elaborate gardens with fish ponds, orchards and woodlands, The aim of this castle was to impress. Various Earls of Worcester transformed Raglan into a magnificent country-seat with a fashionable long gallery and one of the finest Renaissance gardens in Britain. It was involved in one of the longest sieges of the Civil War and eventually fell to the Parliamentarians who deliberately destroyed the castle and looted all the treasures. A piece of Tudor wooden panelling was rescued from a cowshed in the 1950s and is on display in the gift shop.



Eastnor Castle at the foot of the Malvern Hills, with an arboretum, deer park and lake, was visited on 4th August after a stop in the nearby market town of Ledbury. The castle was built between 1810 and 1824 by the first Earl Somers to exhibit the family wealth. 250 men were employed during the first six years of construction, 4,000 tons of stone, 16,000 tons of mortar and 600 tons of wood being used during the initial eighteen months. It looks like a medieval fortress guarding the Welsh Borders.

Pugin was employed in 1849 to redecorate his Drawing Room in the more elaborate Gothic Revival style. Further alterations during the 1860s and 1870s can be seen in the Long Library and the State Bedroom. By the 1870s, the estates exceeded 13,000 acres. The earldom ceased in 1883, and by 1920 most of the land had been sold and the art collection had

been divided between the family. In 1926 the then Lord Somers was appointed Governor of Victoria and the family moved to Australia. Eastnor was left unoccupied. Emptied for the government during the war, Lord Somers' widow returned to Eastnor to live in the servants' wing between 1945 and 1949. The family had been hit by a £200,000 tax bill (£8 million in today's money) on the death of her husband. The parents of the present



owners moved into the Castle in 1949, to make repairs, one room at a time, with money from the estate income and sales from the art collection. Repairing the battlements of the four main towers after a storm in 1976 was paid for by the first government grant received. James Hervey-Bathurst and his family moved to Eastnor in 1988, and restoration and internal repair of the Castle accelerated. External repairs were helped by

English Heritage grants of over £250,000. Since then repairs have continued thanks to income from tourism, corporate entertaining, weddings and conferences. Today the castle has several rooms with beautiful painted ceilings and ornate wall paper, extensive wall coverings of Italian tapestries, many examples of inlaid furniture, a lot of pieces of old armour and weapons, marble fireplaces, a chapel with stain glass windows and several cabinets of stuffed birds



### **Creative Writing** *'What If?' by David Wilkinson*

Relaxing with a glass of red and feeling slightly squiffy

I tend to contemplate my fate and all those things "what-iffy"

What if I hadn't picked up the phone or answered that damned letter

Would I be happier alone, would things have turned out better?

How about that interview I failed so miserably?

Stardom beckoned, or so I reckoned, but it was not to be.

A tragic lack of a certain magic makes us what we are.

And looking back at what we lack doesn't to get us far.

If I could have my time again, this time I'd get it right.

Or maybe not, and my bolt is shot, but it's nice to think I might.

Could've, should've, crazy maybe's, would've, but you see

This just produces lame excuses for ending up as me.

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## Coming Up

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Date	Group	Event
Thurs 2 Sept All Day	Historic Places	Judges Lodgings, Presteigne More Details Carol Tripper
Thurs 15 Sept 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "The Stroud Woollen Industry" by Jennifer Tann
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
Wed 5 October 10.30 - 13.00	All Members & the Public	The Chantry Centre, Dursley OPEN DAY
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
Thurs 17 Nov 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Talk "A Holiday in Ukraine" by Anne Scott
Thurs 15 Dec 10.30	Branch Meeting	Dursley Methodist Church Christmas Quiz and Social
<b>2023</b>		
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"

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

**NEXT EDITION - OCTOBER 2022 - COPY DEADLINE FRIDAY 23rd  
SEPTEMBER**

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possible, target around 500 words. One or two photos per item welcome. Please  
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