



IN TIME

Ely U3A History Group Members'
Newsletter



Edition 1

2nd April 2020

Welcome to the first issue of In Time our U3A History Members newsletter. Following on from the lead of the U3A Transport Group we think that a good way to keep the links with our members is to produce a weekly newsletter to which you are all invited to contribute. We expect it to be two or three pages in length depending upon how much information you send us. We have seen from many of our meetings what a fund of historical knowledge our members have, so in these difficult times how about putting fingers to keyboards and sharing it.

Here are a few suggestions for topics you might like to write about, childhood memories of places, things you did, a short review of an historical book/film you enjoyed, snippets from your family history, 'life before' - for example mobile phones. Perhaps we could run a section on 'I never knew that' – interesting bits of historical information that, who knows, could be expanded into a talk when we finally emerge from isolation. I am sure you will have lots of ideas, but please restrict the number of words to 300 or less if possible, so that we can have a good variety of topics in each issue, and please send pictures to illustrate your piece if you can.

Please send your contributions to me, Maggie Haverson [REDACTED] Peter Lee has kindly agreed to arrange distribution of the newsletter

U3A History Group Programme Peter Lee



The last meeting before the Covid-19 lockdown was a fantastic *tour-de-force* by Mike Petty on the life and poetry of James Withers, the Cambridgeshire Bard. Mike was able to deliver from memory a great deal of Withers's poetry, which at one point he suggested was more Pam Ayres than Shakespeare. Even so, it is remarkable that someone so famous and well respected in his day, should be so little-known today.

At that point we had a good programme of monthly talks taking us to the end of the year, but I have agreed at least with our speakers for April and May that they will postpone their talks till all this is over. Tim Young

was to have talked about the 'History of Education in the 20th Century' and Wendy Ramsell about her visit to Easter Island and her account of its mysteries. Further talks by Roy Williams on the Air War of WW2, Kevin Boardman on the Oregon Trail, Maggie Haverson on the Sandringham Estate Villages, Heather Carruth on Anna of Cleves (Henry VIII's fourth wife) and our trip to Castle Acre are subject to changes in their dates. I think that you will agree that it was a good and varied programme, and something to look forward to. I am sometimes asked what kind of history the group focuses on. Quite frankly it depends on what our speakers volunteer and I think that it is wonderful that a good proportion of talks are from our own members. If you don't want to volunteer a talk yourself, please consider organising one for us or at least taking your turn with the tea and coffee, or write a piece for this newsletter.

Reading Corner -Maggie Haverson

The Shardlake series of historical novels

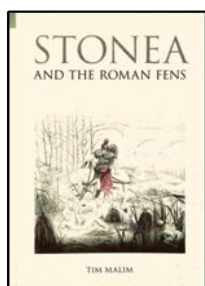
We are all restricted to our homes so what better time to snuggle down with a book especially one that provides us with some historical background. For me this has been the Shardlake series by C J Sansom. Set in the time of Henry V111 and Thomas Cromwell the seven book series (yes seven), tells the tale of hunchback lawyer Mathew Shardlake and his investigations on the behest of Thomas Cromwell. If you like historical fiction with a lot of fact built in and a good murder mystery, then this series is for you. I am just finishing book two Dark Fire (the first in the series is called Dissolution), but can't wait to start book three - Sovereign. Compulsive reading and you'll learn a lot about sixteenth century England



Stonea -Peter Lee

A few years back I was trying to organise a trip to Stonea, which I had heard Mike

Young talk about. I acquired the book shown here, which covers not only the Iron Age fort but also the Roman town at Stonea, and puts it all into context. The fort is a possible site of the battle of 47AD mentioned by [Tacitus](#), in which the Iceni inhabitants were defeated by the Romans, and this would make it the earliest known battle site in Britain. This is just 18 miles by road from Ely. The book by Tim Malim is beautifully produced, and you can buy it pre-owned on eBay for just over £10. It contains remarkable maps of the Roman fens showing landforms, channels and settlements in this area. It would be a great subject for a talk, and subsequent site visit. Between 1853 and 1966, there was a railway station at Stonea on the still-busy Ely-March line.



Drop 'em a postcard -Roger Haverson

We've got a bit addicted to Antiques Road Trip, and this has morphed into regular visits to the monthly general auction at Haddenham. Lots are often leftovers from house clearances and occasionally boxes of assorted postcards turn up. They go for a pound or two and I have taken to snapping them up. I had really no idea what to do with a box of over 200 assorted pictorial postcards, I thought I might sort them, but into what categories, and subdivisions? In the end I decided to just look through and enjoy them.



The trouble is you start to read them. You might say this is voyeuristic, but the content is never intimate, even though it was never meant for you to read! You quickly find you have got "sets" from individual correspondents to their families about holidays, work trips or travels. This is because the recipients have meticulously saved the cards from sons on gap year travels, added those from uncle Joe in Scotland who sends one a month, and filed them all away in a shoe box under the bed. And that's where they were when the house clearance boys moved in and dumped them in the van with all the other little personal treasures. Its sad, but to a social historian it's gold-dust.

It was not till 1894 that the Royal Mail gave permission to sell picture postcards in the UK. We must all have memories of sitting in the rain on the second day of our holidays whilst mum writes dozens of cards to people she saw yesterday - Just like Facebook really! My ever expanding random collection gives me pleasure in several ways. They are beautifully produced to the highest standard of colour printing and always taken on blue sky days to portray a glimpse of

an ideal landscape! They also open up hundreds of opportunities for further research, especially the more local ones. I found one of Burston School. Heard of the Burston School Strike? I hadn't, more of that in a later post. And they are insights into people's lives what they did and how they lived. Why not email in and tell us about any interesting cards you have got. Better still -drop us a postcard!

Quilting Clubs - Maggie Haverson

I come from a mining background my ancestors having been coalminers in Co Durham and when researching my family history I came across the mention of the Durham quilting clubs. Quilting clubs were often the salvation of a miner's wife and family if their miner husband was killed or injured in the pit. Durham quilts – also known as North Country quilts - are well known for their usually large and elaborate centre design surrounded by an area of infill often of roses, feathers, leaves and ferns and an outer border.



Generally it was the men who designed the quilts and the women who made them. In the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century many quilting clubs came into existence in the pit villages of the North East helping mining families to make ends meet. A club would be run by one quilter and consist of about 20 members. Each member would pay a shilling a week which covered the cost of materials and when finished the quilts would be sold.

There is a fascinating book written by Amy Emms (born in 1904), called The Story of Durham Quilting which tells of her lifelong involvement with Durham quilting and the quilting traditions of the North of England. The Beamish Museum beamish.org.uk in Co Durham has a collection of some 350 Durham quilts which is recognised both nationally and internationally as a collection of world importance.