

OPEN MEETING REVIEWS

1. The Christmas Truce presented by Alan Reed

Alan Reed was our Speaker, an experienced author and lecturer on World War 1 topics, gained from living and studying in both France and the UK. His subject was 'The Christmas Truce' a contentious subject thought by some to be a myth.

This fact was soon dispelled as the research and evidence of the actual 'Truce' which took place between the Saxon Army and the Warwickshire Regiment over the Christmas period 1914 is documented in the diary of Captain Robert Hamilton, who commanded the Royal Warwickshire Regiment at the front over that period. Alan Reed's work on the subject was triggered by a meeting with Andrew Hamilton, the grandson of Captain Hamilton, when they met at Kingsley School where Alan Reed was giving a talk on the first World War, prior to escorting a party of schoolchildren to Normandy. Since they met the alliance has triggered several publications on the subject.

It was an extremely interesting account supported by an two original maps of the actual terrain being defended, (one British, one German), together with photographs and cartoons of the soldiers.

Jacqueline Richards

2. Finger Prints for Detection

Sue Clegg is a retired Police Officer who became the *first woman Fingerprints Expert in the UK*. Her talk encompassed the history, methodology and present day use dating back to Babylonian times in 1900 BC. The earliest trial recorded was in Roman times, 2000 years ago when a palm print made in blood was used.

Fingerprinting as we know it today was developed in Calcutta by Sir Edward Henry building on the work of William Hershall in Bengal in the 1850s. Each and every person's fingerprint is unique and has **16 distinctive characteristics** all based on the **Mathematical Theory of Probability**. There are **7 patterns worldwide** which differentiate between both male and female and biological origins. It is now used in conjunction with DNA to provide evidence in court.

Sue Clegg's experience and expertise were used as evidence in a number of headline cases including the **Black Panther, the Estate Agent Kidnap and Hells Angels**.

Since her retirement Sue is very involved with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Jacqueline Richards

3. Margaret Daniels from Stroud in Gloucestershire

was described in our Speakers Diary as 'Gloucestershire's Answer to Pam Ayres'. Margaret writes in a humorous vein and her poems span many important signposts and mundane everyday events, in just about everyone's life, from experience of first falling in love, sharing a home, babies arriving, young children starting school and then leaving home, and the joys and sorrows of these occasions. She kept us all greatly entertained sometimes to laugh out loud sometimes with moments of pathos which struck a chord.

She has been writing poetry since she was 11 years old and has won prizes and performed at the Cheltenham Literary Festival, Gloucester Writers Circle and her local paper. She

does not publish her work but prefers instead to read her poems herself.

Any fees she earns or donations she receives go to the James Hopkins Trust, a charity, which helps severely disabled children and their families.

4. JANE AUSTEN 200 NOT OUT By David Richardson.

This Talk was written specially for the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's death.

He sought to explain Austen's continuing popularity 200 years after her death and to offer new insights into the world she so memorably created.

Jane was born into a family of 8 children, with 6 brothers and 1 sister, Cassandra, to whom she was very close. Their Father was a clergyman, She wrote poems, plays and stories from an early age. However she is known primarily for her 6 major novels, all of which were written/published between 1811 and 1817:

1811 Sense & Sensibility

1813 Pride and Prejudice

1814 Mansfield Park

1815 Emma

1817 Persuasion

1816 Northanger Abbey

All interpret, critique and comment on the landed gentry at the end of the 18th century: the dependence of women on marriage in the pursuit of favourable social standing and economic security. Her style uses biting irony, along with realism and social commentary. She was also a prolific letter writer, although few remain, the greater number being edited or destroyed. Maybe, it is suggested because Jane experienced periods of deep unhappiness and was "an embittered, disappointed woman, trapped in a thoroughly unpleasant family".

Whatever our personal opinions her novels continue to be published and enjoyed, turned into television and film dramas, and e-books 200 years after her death.

Jacqueline Richards

For Kenilworth U3A