

Chairman's Letter

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1940-2017

Trevor Ledamun
Mike Rowe



Our Open Meeting in September was once again a successful event and we thank Jenny Tomlin, our Groups Co-ordinator, for all her hard work in organising it. Thank you also to the group leaders who were there to represent their groups and offer information; also thank you to all those who served refreshments to keep us all going. We hope you all enjoy the groups you have joined and find it a rewarding and stimulating year, learning new skills and renewing old friendships or making new ones. We particularly extend a warm welcome to those who have just joined Malling U3A and we all know how important it is to make our new members feel welcome.

I reviewed our first ten years in the August edition and it is so good that Malling U3A has sustained our activities with 445 members at the last count and 60 interest groups, but we should not rest on our laurels. Indeed, one of our long-standing group convenors commented that despite some excellent table displays in the hall at the Open Meeting there seemed to be an apparent shortage of members signing up. This may have been that some groups were already up to their complement and meet in homes where space is limited. Looking at the group figures reported in Beacon, there are 8 groups with 5 members or less; 17 with membership in the range 6-10; 21 with 11-20; 6 with 21-30; and

3 with membership over 30 (walking and village visits). We have encouraged local parish magazines to publicise our annual open meetings to encourage new members and we have had tables at the Pensioners Advice and Information Fairs hosted by Tracy Crouch MP. Some more long standing U3As in the Sevenoaks area use their Chronicle newspaper for formal advertisements and editorial publicity and this is something that your Committee will be discussing. I am firmly of the belief, however that new members are best encouraged through personal recommendation and contacts and I encourage you all to 'spread the word' of the social and health well-being advantages of U3A membership, particularly in this time of concern for mental health and loneliness in older age, so that Malling U3A continues to thrive and provide a service to the community.

Parlez vous francais?



Tea Rota October:

Brian Lloyd Williams, Jenny Tomlin, Patricia & Richard Meehan

Advance warning for November:

Ann Underdown, Pat Bell, Stephen Hatfield & Rosemary Lea
Brenda Hurd

This month has seen the sad loss of one of our stalwart original U3A members, Trevor Ledamun, who has worked tirelessly behind the scenes procuring and looking after our computer & projector equipment, doing all our newsletter and handbook printing and many other things, as John Davies said in a tribute at the recent funeral service "all below the parapet". Trevor led the Digital Photographic group from its earliest beginnings and was a founder member of the Computer Group; the whole theme of tributes paid to Trevor was that he went out of his way to help everyone with their queries and could be relied on to do whatever was asked of him, with friendliness and good grace both for U3A and the wider community of his home in Trottiscliffe. A further tribute at the service used the words of a poem by James Whitcomb Riley "A good man never dies" and we will certainly remember Trevor and his unstinting support for U3A in the years to come. Our thoughts are with his wife, Chris, daughter Emma and their families.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Thursday 7 December

12.30 for 1pm
Angela Storey

Don't miss out-the booking deadline is early November!

3 course festive meal complete with mini mince pies and Christmas crackers at Hadlow Manor Hotel. Please complete the attached flyer and return to Angela ASAP for fun, fellowship & lot's of ho ho ho!

Walk London Group 1

Philippa Hayden

As you can see, WL1 members were in very famous company during their October walk - not only meeting Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, but also King George VI, Queen Mary, Queen Victoria, Edward VII and Queen Anne as Anne and Jeremy Sargent led us on a tour of statues in and around St James's Park. As well as royalty we also met Florence Nightingale, General de Gaulle,

Lord Kitchener, Clive of India, Captain James Cook and Earl Mountbatten to name just a few.

The walk included the Canadian War Memorial and the National Police Memorial both of which were particularly moving, as was the beautiful and serene Guards' Chapel at Wellington Barracks that we visited.

In all we saw 42 monuments, statues and memorials and although many of us have worked in London or have been frequent visitors to London over the years, it was surprising how much of what we saw was new to us. But then, that is what Walk London is all about.

Monumental: the WL Group 1 Trekkers gather under the watchful gaze of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mum



Poetry for Pleasure Group 2

Dianne White

What better way to celebrate National Poetry Day than for Reading Poetry for Pleasure, Group 2, to take themselves off to Sevenoaks Literary Festival to hear radio broadcaster and presenter, Emma Harding, speak about *Writing the Waves: The Art of the Radio Poem*?

It was a fascinating hour during which, as Ms Harding pointed out, since poetry comes directly from the oral and aural traditions, it is no coincidence that poets have worked in radio, exploiting its abil-

ity to use sound, and silence, to offer listeners the imaginative space to engage with poets in the creative process. Through the use of historical recordings and readings, including the velvet voice of Richard Burton reading the opening of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood*; Louis MacNeice's verse drama *The Dark Tower*, and WH Auden's *Roman Wall Blues*, with music by Benjamin Britten, Ms Harding took us on a whistle-stop tour of the ways poets have used the medium.

Her illustrations included *Singing the Fishing*, fishing ballads interspersed with conversations with fishing families; and sound poems in which the spoken word, sounds and silences overlap and interweave in ways which are impossible for

the written word.

Some of these examples from present-day broadcasting make demands on the listener which many of us found challenging, though it did provoke healthy discussion afterwards!

I came away remembering a couple of Emma Harding's final comments: Our best-known poets, past and present, have been, and are, committed to the use of radio, because poets are committed to expanding their readers' imaginations. Radio allows us to use our imaginations whereas the simply visual closes them down.

No doubt Shakespeare would have been exploiting the potential of radio if he were alive now!

Computer Group

Ken Chatters

Chris Daly was on holiday, so Ken Chatters was dragged out of retirement to talk about the latest Microsoft Windows 10 Creators Update and extended this by going into the revised version of Windows "Photo" Program.

Member were shown how to download their photos to their computers using this program, to form photo albums, and to enhance photographs.

Look & Learn: Blade Runner reboot?



FUTURE MEETINGS - with Chris Daly
7 November: What gadgets do I want for Christmas - Ideas for presents

4th December: Internet Banking and mobile payment systems

NO meeting in January.

Meetings are open to all MallingU3A members and start at 14.00hrs at Ryarsh Village Hall. Cost is £1.00 each including tea & Biscuits. Just turn up if you are interested.



The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new

"From classical times, through many centuries of Christianity, man and nature were considered to be in the reliable pastoral care of God. But in the 19th Century God died, and Artists weren't feeling too well either."

Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New

This is what I see. Is this what I see?

Paul Cezanne about 1890/2.

Hillside in Provence. National Gallery, Trafalgar Square

In brief

Monthly Meetings

October 24 Meeting

Wildlife on your doorstep

Tom Way

November 28 Meeting

The Master

Sir Noel Coward as actor, writer & painter
Frances Hughes

2018 Diaries

Anne Sargent

Orders are now being taken for next year's U3A Diaries at a bargain price of just £2.50! Please make cheques payable to Malling District U3A or money with your order to Anne at meetings. Alternatively you can post your order to



Lost & Found

Jenny Tomlin

Did anyone lose a silver dangly earring at the signing up afternoon on Tues 26th September at Ryarsh Village Hall? One was handed to me and it would be nice to reunite it with its owner!

Kings Hill U3A

Netherlands Trip

Please find attached details of a trip to The Netherlands which is being planned by Kings Hill U3A. Please reply direct to Graham Hall if you are interested.

Sunday November 19

Newsletter copy deadline

Copy deadline for the next issue is **Sunday, 19 November**.

Please email contributions together with pics, if possible, to the Editor, S Sangha at: dumbodds@gmail.com



Malling U3A Event

Regent's Canal Cruise

Vivian Rubin

About fifty U3A enthusiasts set out on a luxurious Brookline coach. What a great visual advantage to have all the seating upstairs.

We arrived at Camden Lock in good time and walked to where it was believed our boat was moored. One of the members consulted the Sat Nav on her iPhone and announced that we were heading in the wrong direction. She was right, so we retraced our footsteps and were somewhat surprised to find ourselves at a cafe with the entrance to the quayside down a steep flight of stairs. We had 45 minutes before boarding, so we all sat down to enjoy the various coffees that were on offer. Unfortunately the staff were overwhelmed by the sudden arrival of so many people and this caused a considerable delay, however, when the coffee eventually arrived it was very good and most welcome.

Once on board our boat, the "My Fair Lady", we were offered a good selection of wines, and then served with an excellent light lunch. Having gone through our first and only lock, we were then able to relax and enjoy the wonderful scenery. It was a beautiful day, and there was a great sense of tranquillity as we journeyed through lush green banks, landscaped gardens and majestic trees. I felt very fortunate to be sharing it all with so many good friends.

When we reached "Little Venice" the boat turned round and headed back to Camden Lock. Out of the blue came an announcement, "Would we like a commentary on the return?" "Yes Please" was our answer. These are just a few of the facts that were included in the light-hearted commentary: Under the masterplan of JOHN NASH[1750 - 1836],

the canal was created in 1816 and completed in 1820. Being friendly with the Prince Regent [later George IV] he named it Regent's Canal. Nash built a house for himself on the Canal. One of the houses that we saw in a similar style we were told had been sold for £100m.

- LEONARDO DE VINCI [1452 - 1519] redesigns of canal locks are still used worldwide. He realised that the existing locks were cumbersome, heavy, and inefficient. He increased the width of the wooden gates and mitred the edges to 45 degrees. This created an apex, so that when the incoming water hit the gates it forced the two mitres into each other causing a much tighter seal.

- REGENT'S CANAL BARGE EXPLOSION 1874. The barge "Tilbury" was third in a train of boats being towed by a steam tug, loaded with a variety of goods, including three barrels of petrol and five tons of gunpowder which caught fire, causing a massive explosion as the barge went under the Macclesfield bridge at North Gate, Regent's Park. Sadly the crew were killed, the bridge destroyed, a number of houses demolished and windows blown out a mile away.

- GIN TO WATER. We were told that a barge on the canal with a consignment of gin in barrels destined for Gilbey's was found to contain only water. What an unpleasant surprise. We arrived back at Camden Lock, with two hours to explore this large extraordinary market. It was an enjoyable and memorable Canal Cruise. Our thanks go to the organiser Dianne White, her supporters and our skilful photographer Val Ray.

Smiling now but wait until they discover that the most dangerous sandwich filling on a boat is a leek



A voice to the dispossessed



Valerie Willsher, Book Group 1

Recently we spent a month reading and learning about Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell, novelist, short story writer, biographer, social reformer and minister's wife. She is probably best known for writing *Cranford* which was adapted for TV in 2007. We looked at two of her political/social novels: *Mary Barton* and *North and South*.

Born in 1810, Elizabeth Gaskell was the daughter and wife of Unitarian ministers (although her father William resigned his post and became a treasury official and journalist) and her novels were greatly influenced by her religious beliefs. Unitarianism had its roots in the Reformation of the 16th century and its followers were regarded as heretics because they believed not in the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit but in the unity of God – hence the name. The first Unitarian church in the UK was opened in 1774 and there is still a Unitarian Chapel in Maidstone, near the Hazlitt Theatre. In addition to Mrs Gaskell, well-known Unitarians include Joseph Priestley, Charles Dickens, Thomas Jefferson, Louisa May Alcott, Frank Lloyd Wright and Tim Berners-Lee.

The Unitarians' belief in social reform, in education for women and in reason, philosophy and science working alongside religion is clearly shown in the novels of Mrs Gaskell. She was much concerned with the squalid living conditions of the poor. No-one before had really given a voice to the dispossessed although Disraeli published his novels *Coningsby* and *Sybil* in the 1840s, referring to "The two Nations of England, the Rich and the Poor." Also, in 1843 Carlyle coined the phrase "the condition of England" to describe social and political inequality. So Mrs Gaskell was tuning in to a concern felt among the political and literary classes. She advocated social reconciliation: a better understanding between workers and employers, between the respectable and the outcasts and her principles still had something to say to us today! Although she is perhaps now thought of as a minor novelist, in her time she was regarded as the equal of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot and was a friend and the first biographer of the former. Her first novel attracted considerable interest and she was invited by Charles Dickens to have her subse-

quent work published in the literary periodicals that he edited. Mrs Gaskell had a natural gift for storytelling and her characters were authentic because she lived among them in Manchester and knew them well. However, her tendency to melodrama and predictable plot devices irritated some of our group more than others.

Half of us read *Mary Barton* and the other half *North and South* which gave a broader perspective from which to consider her work. Elizabeth Gaskell started to write her first novel, *Mary Barton*, partly as a distraction from the grief caused by the death of her young son. The novel is set in Manchester in the 1840s when the Chartist movement was at its height fighting for political reform and the enfranchisement of the working classes. The story centres on Mary Barton and her father John, a mill-worker and active trade unionist. We discovered that the author had wanted to call the book 'John Barton' but her publisher suggested the change to put the emphasis on his young daughter, obviously thinking it would sell better as a domestic and romantic novel. The author's intention, however, was first and foremost to highlight the political and social situation. Indeed, Mrs Gaskell herself described her motivation for writing the novel: "I had always felt a deep sympathy with the care-worn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want. ... The more I reflected on this unhappy state of things between those so bound to each other by common interests, as the employers and the employed must ever be, the more anxious I became to give some utterance to the agony which from time to time convulsed this dumb people." Those who read *Mary Barton* noted a gradual change of emphasis in the book which starts with the political and social conditions but is overtaken by the story of Mary and her two lovers and the trials and tribulations that occur when one, the mill owner's

arrogant son, is murdered and suspicion falls on the other, Mary's true love Jem. It all ends neatly and, after a last-minute court room appearance worthy of peak time television viewing, Mary and Jem emigrate to Canada where they live happily ever after – a touch too conveniently for the more cynical members of our book group! Some found it rather more hard-going on the page where the action is interspersed with long passages of description, introspection and commentary compared to adaptation of *North and South* on television some years ago. That's the 19th century novel for you! A study of the contrasting values of the rural south and the industrial north, the novel seeks to show that neither has a monopoly of truth and virtue. Margaret Hale and her family are uprooted from a Hampshire parsonage to Milton, a fictional northern cotton town where the self-made man and the manufacturing classes are held in high esteem. Conversely, there is little respect for meek, educated southerners leading their slow, dull lives. As well as the north/south divide, Mrs Gaskell explores the class struggle between masters and men, as she had done in *Mary Barton*. It takes danger, misunderstandings and deaths before Margaret and mill owner John Thornton unite, put aside their prejudices and realise that neither is perfect. We vary our reading, considering both fiction and non-fiction, current and classic novels. Looking at the work of Elizabeth Gaskell took us deep into 19th century social, religious and political life from which we have now escaped to a contemporary tale of migration from Eastern Europe to the UK – Rose Tremain's *The Road Home*.

dark Satanic Mills?

