

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends

A Happy New Year to you all. Surely this year cannot bring as many political surprises and challenges as the last but whatever happens on the national and international scene, I hope that 2017 will be a healthy, rewarding and peaceful year for us all.

In November I attended a workshop in Crawley organised by the South East U3A Forum on making the most of online educational resources within U3A groups. It was ably led by Rodney Buckland of Meopham U3A with active participation from everyone attending. There is a wealth of material out there: during the day we ranged widely over MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), TED (Technology, Entertainment & Design) talks and other similar resources. If you are looking for new ideas for your groups, why not investigate what is available? www.ted.com and www.futurelearn.com are two useful websites. The FutureLearn courses are provided free by universities across the world and typically last for only a few weeks. A quick glance reveals courses on history, art, languages, literature, science and many more. They are really intended for individual learning but can easily be adapted for use with a group as long as one member of the group registers and signs up for your chosen course. You can then use the materials in a group situation however you wish.

The University of the Third Age has a useful introduction to MOOCs on its website (www.u3a.org) where there is a link on the first page to "U3A Advice on MOOCs". This includes case studies from U3As which have used one of these courses including, in Kent, Thanet U3A where the History Interest Group watched a three week long course on the Battle of Waterloo and then met up "for a lively discussion". If your New Year's resolution is to try something new in 2017, why not take a look?

Best wishes

Valerie Willsher

Chairman Malling U3A

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Refreshments

Tea Rota For January :

Anne Sargent, Adrian Bouwens,
Jill Browning and Judy Dadswell

Early warning for February:-

Michael Chapman, Sylvia Chapman,
Nevill Cording and Angela Coslett-Derby

Brenda Hurd



Monthly Meetings

(4th Tuesdays in Ryarsh Village Hall at 2 pm)

January 24th

'Ten Brave Men and True'
by Richard Snow

Our speaker comes from Pembury and was for ten years Fund-raising Director at Hospice in the Weald. Richard will be speaking about the contents of his recently-published book, 'Ten Brave Men and True', which tells the life-stories of the ten Victoria Cross holders who are all remembered in the Victoria Cross Grove in Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells.

For those who wish to visit, the Grove is near the Bayhall Road entrance to the Park.



Richard will also speak about the medal and its background, and will talk about the Victoria Cross Grove, how the project started, and about the lives of some of the heroes involved, including Charles Lucas, the very first VC who is buried locally at Mereworth, and John Brunt VC who has a pub named after him in Paddock Wood.

Three of the ten were killed in action, and the subsequent lives and careers of the others are well documented in the book: the stories are, in turn, astounding, poignant, shocking, funny and sad – so we are in for an enthralling afternoon!

Richard has also written 'All for Valour', the story of Captain John Brunt, VC, MC. Copies of his most recent book, the subject of Richard's talk, will be available, and all profits are donated to 'Help for Heroes'.

February 28th

N.B.—Stop Press—Due to speaker being unavailable this subject will be replaced by one on Magic—details to be circulated shortly (Ed)

"Satirist to Insanity -
Celebrating the life and
work of James Gilray"

by
Ian Keable



James Gillray was the natural successor to William Hogarth but differed in concentrating on political, as opposed to social, satire. He was uncompromising, and fearless, in his caricaturing of politicians and the royal family alike. Combined with his brilliant draughtsmanship and engraving skills was a love of modern and classical art and literature which he seamlessly weaved into the subject matter of his prints. Although Gillray's reputation plummeted during the Victorian climate of moralistic righteousness, he is now generally accepted as the first, and the greatest, political cartoonist - an influence even today on the likes of Gerald Scarfe, Steve Bell and the television programme Spitting Image.

In Voice and Verse: Elizabeth to Elizabeth

About 45 of us were treated to a rare feast of English music and verse on Saturday 12th November in Ryarsh Village Hall, followed by a jolly dinner at the Duke of Wellington. In Voice and Verse is the name of a trio of professional musicians and actors. Heather Chamberlain is the pianist; Lance Pearson, the reader, and Belinda Yates, the singer.



The show, called Elizabeth to Elizabeth, presented a selection of poetry, prose and music from the past five centuries, centred on the various monarchs. There was solemnity, with the farewell speech of King

Charles I, and jollity with the Vicar of Bray. We had a bit of Gray's Elegy, some church music, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Rule Britannia, as well as poetry from both World Wars. Many well-known pieces were intelligently chosen and superbly performed, accompanied by a PowerPoint display of photographs and text, ably operated by John Davies.

The highlight of the evening, for me, was Beethoven's piano variations on the tune of the National Anthem, which the composer had known as a folk tune. This led to the culmination of the evening, when we all sang the anthem, for the Queen's 90th birthday. It was a lovely celebration of Englishness.

We then trooped across the road to the Duke of Wellington for a jolly two-course dinner to round off an excellent evening, thanks to Jenny Williamson's usual efficient organisation. Thanks also go to the rest of the Outings committee for arranging the evening's entertainment. I hope we can do something like it again.



Richard Lea

News from the Groups

Singing Group 2

If there is enough interest Anne Sargent would like to start a second singing group.

So, please get in touch with her if you are interested and then she can arrange a get together to discuss convenient days and times.

MOTO Group

Three U3A Members were responsible for the convening of the MOTO (Members On Their Own) Group and I would firstly like to record our thanks to Glenys Stittle, Mary Wiles and Jean Finnie for their commitment to setting up the group. All three have retired from organising and I agreed to take on responsibility at the last Signing Up Day. 14 members registered and so that was sufficient to continue the Group.

During our first sessions from September to December we have managed to support several local events including a performance of "Quartet" by the Meopham Players; this was billed as "A Theatre Experience" that encompassed dinner at Bartella's prior to the show. Then some travelled to Macnade's of Faversham (known locally as "Harrods in the Shed") to enjoy lunch and shop in readiness for Christmas. Next we attended our Group Christmas Lunch at the Duke of Wellington and finally "Afternoon Tea at Christmas" at Woodlands Garden Centre held in the Grotto.

Another visit to Meopham Players to see their Panto is planned for January and a visit to hear G4 in concert in March.

I hope this demonstrates that we are a continuing vibrant Group, so thank you to all participants and hopefully we look forward to a very successful year ahead.

Val Valvassura

Computer Group

Before Christmas we had a talk about choosing a tablet computer, so to help you get started the next meeting of the Computer Group will feature a talk on "Setting up your Android Tablet and phone". The meeting is at 14.00hrs in Ryarsh Village Hall on Monday 6th February. All are welcome. Cost is £1.00 including tea & biscuits.

Chris Daly

Places on the "Aspects of Kent Culture" Study Day, planned for Wednesday, 1st March are filling up quickly, so to secure your place send in your applications as soon as possible. The flyer with details was distributed with the November newsletter, but contact the Editor if you have mislaid it and would like to come.



Kate Adds

Kings Hill U3A Holiday to Holland

We have received an invitation from Kings Hill U3A for any of our Malling U3A members who may be interested to join them on a trip to Holland. The dates are 11th to 15th May, travelling by Eurostar and based in Utrecht at a cost of £410 per person (singles +£70). The itinerary includes Amsterdam, Oudewater, De Haar Castle and the Keukenhof Gardens. Contact Kings Hill U3A Chairman, Graham Hall if you are interested.

February Newsletter:

Copy is required by Sunday, 19th February
Please send material to the Editor, Mike Rowe at
mike.quintain@gmail.com