

Copy for next
newsletter
(August/September)
should be
submitted by
20 July 2019

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A word from the Chair

Hello

Thank you to all of you who attended the AGM last month, it was a good turnout. For those of you who were not able to come I would just like to let you know of the changes to the committee. Judith Turnbull, Christine Massey and Linda Clough retired and Colin thanked them for all that they had done over the years. We have one new member, Sally Lewis. Thank you Sally for volunteering I hope your arm wasn't twisted too far behind your back! Colin, having completed his full term of Office, has stepped down from Chairman and will now be a committee member. Don Sutton has taken over from me as Vice Chairman and I am the new Chairman. Pam Bushell was elected to continue as Treasurer. Presentations were made at the meeting and Colin was thanked for his service to the U3A. I think you will agree his is a hard act to follow but I will do my best.

On your behalf Kerry and I recently attended a meeting of the local U3As. It was an interesting and informative meeting – it is always good to see how other U3As work and to give ourselves the occasional pat on the back because we think we are doing okay. Please let us know if

you think otherwise. We do have a Suggestion Box on the table near the door so if you would like to make a suggestion please use it. Suggestions can be anonymous but if you want personal feedback you can sign it. We do discuss any suggestions we receive at committee meetings to see whether or not they are viable.

I hope all the members who joined earlier in the year are settling down and have found Study Groups in which to participate. Remember if you are interested in anything in particular and find that there is no group or the established group is full please let our Study Group Co-ordinators, Sue Bussey and Debbie Kingston, know so that we can find out if anybody else is interested and then, hopefully, we can start another group.

For those of you about to go on holiday have a good time and we'll see you soon.

Margaret

MONTHLY MEETINGS DIARY 2019

Meetings held in Sarratt Village Hall at 10.30 am - 12.30 pm

3rd July	'Medical Detection Dogs'	Jan Grant
14th August	'Protecting Yourself Against Frauds and Scams'	Steve Roberts
11th September	'Forensics in the Police Force'	Chris Truran
9th October	'Failed to return - Amy Johnson and Leslie Howard'	Tony Eaton

ROUND THE GROUPS

GARDENING

April meeting

This month we were treated to an excellent talk and slideshow by Neale Holmes-Smith who monitors wild plants and flowers throughout Hertfordshire in order to protect our most rare and endangered species.

He talked passionately about the drastic effect of the removal of old hedgerows, creating vast fields in order to produce more crops, sadly at the expense of our native wildlife.

We learned about different methods of traditional hedge layering, and the reason why there are watercress beds at Sarratt.

His slides of the Hertfordshire countryside through the seasons were spectacular.

It's good to know that people like him are working to record and preserve our wild landscapes for future generations.

PS Thank you to everyone who brought flowers for the spring table!

May Outing



Our May outing to the Hemel Food Garden (part of the Sunnyside Rural Trust) was lovely. The weather was perfect and our guided tour round the surprisingly extensive site took us along the canal, past fruit runs, vegetable beds, free range chickens, through tranquil and wild areas and finally into some huge greenhouses filled with colourful bedding plants, contracted by Dacorum Borough Council.

The Sunnyside Rural Trust is a self funding charity set up to help people with learning disabilities by giving them the opportunity to work and develop their skills, increasing their confidence and their chance of employment. In fact the workforce did look remarkably happy!

After visiting the farm shop, (where only ethically grown produce is sold) we had coffee and cake and a well deserved rest either in the comfortable cafe or outside in the glorious sunshine.



Contacts: Gill, Chrissey and Jane

EXPLORING LONDON GROUP 1

7 June – In the footsteps of Matthew Shardlake - £9
We meet our guide Andy outside Chancery Lane station Exit 3 at 11am. Tracing the footsteps of C.J Sansom's Matthew Shardlake and his 'side kick' Barak through the streets of Tudor London starting with Staple Inn, a beautifully restored Tudor façade a stone's throw from Shardlake's fictional home in Chancery lane near Gatehouse Yard and his Chambers. The red brick Gatehouse dating from 1518 still stands today. Then to the dark heart of Tudor London, where his good friend Roger Elliard is found murdered in Revelation, Ludgate Hill where Tabitha the talking Parrot resides in Dissolution, The Shambles, Bladder Street, The Pope's Head Tavern, Grey Friars, the 'Hole' at Newgate Prison: we rediscover those "lost" streets and nodal points of Shardlake's world.
Suggested route: 9.35 Met line from Chorleywood, 9.39 from Ricky to Finchley Road, Jubilee to Bond Street, Central line to Chancery Lane.

5 July – Visit to The Old Bailey - £10
Our morning begins earlier than usual at 10am in the Old Viaduct pub, opposite the Old Bailey in Newgate Street, with a coffee, croissants and a talk about the history of the court and places of interest connected with it. Then follows a visit to an original cell from Newgate Prison. Visitors are then given a printed list of the most interesting cases on that day and are taken to the public galleries where they can view a trial of their choice. We will need to take an earlier train today. Meet by the café outside St Paul's station at 9.55.
Suggested route: 8.57 Met line from Chorleywood, 9.01 from Ricky to Finchley Road, Jubilee to Bond Street, Central line to St Pauls.

2 August – Medical Bloomsbury, Lepers and Leeches - £10
We meet our guide Barry (he led us on a walk in the Harley Street area last year) at 11am outside Russell Square station. St. Giles was the patron saint of lepers, cancer patients, disabled people, epileptics, the mentally ill and the sterile, too say nothing of outcasts, beggars and poor people. Gives you a feel for the neighbourhood's past, doesn't it?
Suggested route: 9.35 Met line from Chorleywood, 9.39 from Ricky to Kings Cross, Piccadilly line to Russell Square.

Contacts: Jan and Judith

BOOK GROUP 1

We have made a list of the books we are hoping to read this year.
In January 2020 we will let you know how we got on !

2019 has us down to read the following books

Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman
The Runaway Family by Diney Costello
Stoner by John Williams
Ikigai by Hector Garcia

La Belle Sauvage – The Book of Dust Volume 1 by Philip Pullman
The Trouble with Goats & Sheep by Joanna Cannon
Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts
An officer and a Spy by Robert Harris
A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry
The Essex Serpent by Sarah Perry

This list may also give you an idea for another book you could pick up and read.

We have found, over the years, that there have been very few times when we have all been in agreement over a book, which leads to interesting discussions at each of our monthly meetings

Contacts: Penny Bulgin and Julie Hawkins

JAUNTERS

May 17th we visited 'The Vyne', a Tudor mansion outside Sherborne St John near Basingstoke.

It was transformed from a cluster of medieval buildings into a Tudor palace between 1500 and 1520. This was the work of William Sandys who became Lord Chamberlain to Henry VIII in 1526. The Vyne is now approximately a third of its original size.

It suffered during the English Civil War and in the 17th century the sixth Lord Sandys sold The Vyne to Chaloner Chute, a barrister and the Speaker of the House of Commons. It was Chaloner Chute who reduced the size of the building and modernised it. He commissioned John Webb to add the classical portico in 1654, the first of its kind on a privately owned English country house.

Recently there was an urgent need for the whole of the roof to be replaced. £5.4m was raised by events such as the rooftop walkway and Tag-a-Tile. The roof conservation project took place from March 2017 to February 2018 at which time the 41 miles of scaffolding was removed.

The rooms are full of paintings; also impressive tapestries. There are 1500 acres of gardens, woodland and wetlands.

The Vyne is very much 'work in progress. The volunteer guides are good but there is a need for a brochure. Worth a visit.



Pam Hough. Contact: Rosemary Daines

ENGINEERING HERITAGE

The group recently went on a visit to the Post Office museum and the underground railway, known as Mail Rail, that originally took sacks of mail to and from Mount Pleasant sorting office to other post offices and railway stations.

After a quick snack in the cafe in the group went into the museum proper and walked through a section that showed the development of the postal system in the U.K. A system of carriage of letters has existed from Roman times but it was only for the elite or royalty. In 1516 Henry VIII introduced a Master of the Posts to carry the Royal Mail. It was not until Charles 1 that the post was made available to the public and the recipient had to pay the postage. The actual method of delivering went from individual horse riders that took the messages through to coaches and eventually to motor vehicles, trains, and finally internationally using ships and aircraft. It was more regularised in the 19th century when postage stamps were introduced during Queen Victoria's reign.

There was a very interesting display of various vehicles that had been used to transport letters and parcels and also a variety of uniforms.

Voices from the Deep was a special exhibition about mail that was discovered in a sunken ship. Torpedoed off the coast of Ireland on 16 February 1941 the SS Gairsoppa had lain deeper than the Titanic until it was discovered in 2011. Because it was holding silver of an estimated value of £150million efforts were made to recover it and in 2013 48 tons of silver were recovered plus a significant number of sacks of mail. Many of the letters recovered were displayed in the exhibition and were a moving record of letters from servicemen and other individuals.

Towards the end of the visit we went for our timed trip on Mail Rail. The trains have obviously been converted for passengers with seats and windows as previously they only carried sacks of post. They are very low, nothing like a normal underground train, so it's a bit tight for passengers.



Closed containers for sacks of letters and parcels now turned into rather cramped coaches for passengers.

The route was circular and we stopped at a couple of stations where previously mail would be off-loaded and collected. At these stations pictures were projected and commentaries given to tell us about the interesting history of Mail Rail.

Tony Briselden

Our April visit was to the Kempton Steam Museum at Lower Feltham. We collected our pre-booked tickets for the Guided Tour and grabbed a coffee whilst we waited for everyone to arrive. The first thing you notice as you enter the building is the massive size of everything. The 62 ft Triples face each other on opposite sides of the building and we joined our Guide on level 1 of the gantry for an in depth look at the static Triple. As we admired the controls to make it run smoothly, we heard the now restored Triple after a couple of attempts burst into life. It was surprisingly quiet as it ticked over and after our tour was complete we went over to have a good look. It's great to be able to see the connecting rods going up and down and the crankshaft turning.

The other highlight for me was the restored pair of Mercury Arc Rectifiers that convert AC to DC. The lightning effect in the glass bowls reminded me of an old Frankenstein Movie.

Our final treat was a ride on the Narrow Gauge Railway (a remnant of the railway that brought coal from the Thames to fire the original boilers). The ride was great but the weather was rather windy so we decided to call it a day. It was a great morning out and the people running it, most of whom are Volunteers, deserve a big Thank You and our support.

Mike Hanchard

Trips planned for the second half of the year include: the RE MUSEUM – CHATHAM in July, the AMAZON FULFILMENT CENTRE in August, CANAL TRIP in September, LEIGHTON BUZZARD NARROW GAUGE RAILWAY in October and the RAF MUSEUM –film show –HENDON in November.

Contact; Sheila Malin

Cycling

Our 2019 programme has got off to a faltering start with our first short ride being cancelled because of appalling weather and our second short ride cancelled because no leader was available. However our two long rides benefited from nice weather and the format of longer rides this year has opened up further lovely areas of the Chilterns.

Our programme continues with some interesting new long rides to Burnham Beeches and around Windsor and Windsor Great Park. We've also extended one of our existing rides to include Wendover Woods. Our short ride in April is a favourite ride around the outskirts of Watford demonstrating the unexpected lovely scenery in the immediate vicinity. Our other rides explore the area around Sarratt and Croxley Green.

We welcome any riders who would like the opportunity to cycle in company and have enjoyable exercise whilst exploring our lovely Chilterns countryside and helping their immune systems. Our rides are not fast, we ride at the pace of the slowest rider and we won't lose you.

Contact: Brian Johnson

BIRDWATCHING

We met in December for the first time for a month or so at the Aquadrome car park for a walk around Stockers Lake. It was a chilly day and dull but the small flock of house sparrows which are always in the bushes by Stockers Farm didn't mind and they continued with their familiar cheeping as we walked past. On the lake were flocks of gadwall, tufted duck, pochard and several red crested pochards a larger and more colourful edition of the more common one. A winter visitor we are always pleased to see is the goldeneye and two were seen that morning. A few siskins were feeding on the Alder tree catkins but as it was getting chillier by the minute, we called it a day and headed for home.

A dozen of us met at Hillfield Park Reservoir near Aldenham for a trek along the Affinity Water Company's reserve which is managed for wildlife by The Herts. & Middx. Wildlife Trust. The warden for the reserve gave us a short talk about the reserve and the fact that the reservoir is more of a standby in times of need rather than a full working one supplying drinking water etc. to the public. Canada geese and lots of gadwall ducks were easily seen together with coots and moorhens on the water whilst on the grassy banks and meadows a large flock of redwings were feeding and parachuting in amongst them, a few meadow pipits which are always special. After a couple of hours wander we returned to the cars and made out way home.

Our February birdwatching took place at Rye Meads, a RSPB reserve alongside the River Lea. The bird feeders attracted lots of blue, great and coal tits and in the trees nearby a small flock of long tailed tits were congregating. Four or five brown rats were seeking food in the muddy banks of a small dyke but we saw no water voles unfortunately although they are seen at different parts of the reserve. Views from the various hides across the lagoons produced lots of teal, gadwall, tufted ducks and plenty of gulls including lesser black backed and common gulls. Quite a few shovelers were easily picked out as their chestnut coloured tummies and glossy green heads shone out in the gloom of the day. The daintier shelduck was also seen, distinguished by the red beak, black head and neck and breast band of bright chestnut red. A kestrel hovered over the wet meadows and a buzzard was seen high up in the sky but the morning was getting damper so we sat in the hide near the car park for lunch after which a few made the extra journey to the Amwell reserve which is delightful on a warm sunny day, to see if the bittern would show itself. The rest of the party headed for home. In spite of the gloomy weather we had enjoyed our few hours birdwatching.

Irene Oulsnam.

Contact: Alan Wharton

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Little did I think that nearly 12 years ago when I came to the inaugural meeting of the new Sarratt & District branch of the U3A and ended up on the Steering Committee that I would still be here today in 2019.

Due to being a previous Study Group Leader in S.W. Herts with 60 members it seemed a good idea at the time to volunteer to become Study Group Coordinator but faced with the task of setting up several groups all at one go I looked for another like minded willing victim to help me and Sue Bussey already a friend fitted the bill and so we became a double act which has continued to this year.

Now 12 years later and with many original Study Groups still going strong but with lots more grey hair and whilst I still have some marbles of intelligence I've decided to stand down as I now have more family commitments which means I can't always commit to meetings and responsibilities so Debbie Kingston who has been shadowing me for the last year will be taking over my role at the AGM in May and I will be happy to sit with all of you at the General Meetings and relax whilst Sue and Debbie become your new Joint Study Group Coordinators and partners in crime.

As Debbie puts her own stamp on the role please remember the word STAMP and continue to let me have all your used postage stamps as I'm still collecting them for Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. Just remember to separate the stamps into UK & Foreign varieties as it makes it easier for their staff to deal with and put them in the pink box on the table at the back of the hall.

I will still have some responsibility as Sue has persuaded me to be the Study Group Contact for Line Dancing so look out for me in my Stetson and fringed Boots and come and join me in this new group. It's a good way to keep fit !!

Finally thanks to Sue ,the committee and you all for making my role as a Joint Study Group Coordinator an easy one. We have a great branch but it does need input from all of you so. in future when Sue and Debbie ask for volunteers to be a Group Contact please make their job easier and say yes.

Thank you

Judith T
Joint Study Group Coordinator