



Sully and District u3a Newsletter September 2023

Sully, Penarth and Dinas Powys

Here is the latest news from your Sully u3a.

Group News

Insole Court visit – from Paul Moorcraft

On one of the hottest days of the year, Friday 8 September, 27 hardy and also curious souls set to out to visit Insole Court (Cwrt Insole) in Llandaf, on the outskirts of Cardiff.

The place was significant to me when I was a student at the nearby Canton High School. I used to study in the public library there and indulge in an occasional cwtch in the ornamental gardens. I knew that a charity had taken over the place from the Council and have seen one or two TV documentaries about the restoration, but I was very keen to see what had happened there since I last visited as a school boy in 1967.

Before meeting the other u3a team members I had a light lunch in what was originally the potting shed. First of all we were subjected to an overlong lecture but the tour of the Grade 2* listed Victorian Gothic mansion was inspiring. It was designed originally for the wealthy businessman James Harvey Insole, where he and his family lived from the mid-1850s. The family had made its money from coal, especially the Cymmer pit in Rhondda Cynon Taf. They were also involved with railways and Barry Docks.

As their fortunes rose the house was expanded to include various neo-Gothic flourishes copied from William Burges's exquisite work on Cardiff Castle. The friezes and woodwork still survive in the Insole Court (which I knew as Llandaff Court)

In 1932 the Council took over the estate not least to enable the development of the Western Avenue orbital road. The last members of the family left in February 1938.

During WW2 the building was used and abused by various war-time agencies including the Auxiliary Fire Service. After the war the mansion was used for adult education classes as well as a library, and parts were converted to flats for council employees.



Despite on-off attempts to restore the building, by 2006 it was closed on safety grounds. In 2016 the Insole Court Trust began operating the site – after epic battles with the council and local politicians.

Gradually the mansion is being restored and it is open to the public every day. It is used for various health and educational classes.

The council and Welsh government have spent millions as have various lottery funds. The local community works hard to keep this wonderful piece of Victorian legacy alive.

My old school is still connected to Insole Court. Every year the pupils commemorate the Cymmer mining disaster that killed 114 men and boys in 1856. The mine was owned by the Insoles and was a main source of their extravagant lifestyles. Eventually the mine managers were blamed - not the owners who had refused to spend more on safety issues such as better ventilation.

I urge everyone to visit the excellent restored mansion and gardens and maybe enjoy coffee and cake in the cafe.

Knitters and Stitchers visit to Bath – from Wendy Gruffydd

Fourteen members of the Knitting and Stitching group braved the ferocious heat on Saturday 9th September to visit the *Selvedge* textile exhibition held in the American Museum in Bath.

This is a beautiful building set in 125 acres of green, rolling topography, with breathtaking views over the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The stunning gardens were designed by famous American landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden (OVS), and the Manor House features spectacular collections of American decorative and folk art, including a world-class quilt collection. There are temporary exhibitions showcasing a range of different topics, as well as the American Garden Deli and shop. It is well worth a visit irrespective of whatever particular exhibition is being showcased.

On this occasion, however, we were keen to see the collection of thirty merchants and makers curated by a team behind the textile magazine *Selvedge*. Traders presented a range of rare vintage fabrics, covetable haberdashery and skilfully hand-made textile treasures. Some of us spent more than we should have!



Canasta

The Canasta group has started! A fun and friendly session now takes place every Wednesday from 10-12 in the Williams room at the Old School. For more info on this or other group activities, please contact Gill at groups@sullyu3a.co.uk

Badminton Group

The badminton group no longer runs under the patronage of u3a. However, anyone wanting to play can join the Over 50s badminton group at Cogan Leisure Centre, which meets every Friday at 10:00. The cost is £2.70 per session with an Expressions card, bookable in advance, by phone, in person or via the app. There you will find u3a members and many others playing and chatting! Therefore, **we need a Convenor** to help organise our members. Information and guidance for Group Convenors is contained in the Sully u3a Groups Handbook, which is accessible via the link at the top-right of the Groups page on our website. If you would like to become a Convenor, please let anyone on the committee know and we will give you as much help as is required.

Groups Open Day

The Annual Open Day will take place on **Thursday October 12th** from 2 – 3.30 pm, when anyone interested in finding out more about Sully u3a's many activity groups – from painting to pétanque, gardening to guitar – can browse the stalls and chat to members. It is a showcase of what Sully u3a does, so please, come along either to run your group's stall or to browse and discover other groups which might interest you. Please feel free to bring a friend, even if they're not a member.

For info on any of the groups, please contact Gill at groups@sullyu3a.co.uk

Speakers

This month's talk was **The Wonderful Things about Bees – report by Jane Deary**

Are bees like humans?

If Sully u3a members were expecting bee expert **Professor Robert Pickard** to deliver a talk on the mechanics of bee keeping, they would have been very surprised to hear him predict that we might all be eating honey bee burgers by the 2050s.....

As an international authority on the biology of honeybees, and from his decades of research and personal observation, Professor Pickard was able to demonstrate the intelligence of bees, their influence on all earth's life, and how they are both like and unlike humans.

We may all know that honeybees, as plant pollinators, are crucial to the survival not just of humans but also of insects, birds and other animals in the food chain who ultimately depend on something that has feasted on a plant. But many in the audience were surprised to learn that bees can be taught new tricks if there is a reward of food, and that they have even been trained to play football! It is thought they are also the only animal, other than humans, who are capable of directing another member of their species to a distant location without actually taking them there. This is the purpose of the complex communication 'dances' they perform to direct other bees to a good food source.

We humans may think of ourselves as social beings, but Professor Pickard revealed that honey bees demonstrate the ultimate version of 'society'. Here there is no notion of individuality. Every action is performed solely to ensure the survival of the community. Social bees control one another's bodies chemically, making their queen into an egg laying machine totally under the control of the female worker bees. They also control the balance of the sexes in a colony so that there are just the right number for each role. It is a brutal existence, with those worker bees often

physically ejecting the male drones from the hive, into certain death, after they have had their one chance at mating with the queen.

Perhaps a more appealing picture provided by Professor Pickard was that of a bee hosting a braula fly. The fly was getting its meal by cleaning up the mandibles of the bee's mouth. This was aiding the bee so much that it appeared to be not only tolerating the situation, but even to be stroking the fly as it did its work!

And in case you were wondering, 'Why honeybee burgers?', the answer is that the nutritional value to humans of these little creatures far outweighs that of beef, chicken, or pork. Watch this space.



This bee colony may seem chaotic, yet it is highly organised.

5 Minutes with... A member

As I have now run out of committee members to show off, I am offering all members the opportunity to have their 5 minutes of fame. If you have an interesting tale to tell of your life, I'm sure other members would love to hear about it, so please send me a photo and some words, along the lines of previous *5 Minutes* items and I'll include you in future Newsletters.

Please send your contributions to me at Newsletter@sullyu3a.co.uk

Thanks, Claire

National News

Please click on the link below for the recent mailings from National U3A. (CTRL-Click) to access.

[Latest update from the Third Age Trust](#)

[Newsletter Express](#)

Christmas 2023

Booking for the Sully U3A Christmas Party – 14th December 2023 at 1.30pm

Hello everyone, especially those who have not yet booked their place.

It's time to make your bookings for the Sully U3A Christmas Party 2023. To book your place please email David Briggs – Social Events Organiser at christmasparty@sullyu3a.co.uk and include the following details for any number of people: -

- a. Forename(s) & Surname(s).
- b. Everyone's U3A Membership Number.

David will confirm your bookings within a few days by email from u3aparty@outlook.com so lookout for yours arriving in your Inbox or maybe Spam!

For anyone who does not use email, there are forms pinned to the U3A Notice Board at the Old School. Fill one in and "post" it in the nearby U3A Mailbox. They will be collected regularly.

See you there!

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For more information on Sully U3A and up to date information on Group activities. Please visit our website:

<http://www.sullyu3a.co.uk/>

On behalf of the Sully U3A committee, I wish you all the best and hope to see you at one of our general meetings.

Regards,

Claire (Sully u3a Newsletter editor)