

Round the groups

A full list of all the interest groups appears on our website <http://u3asites.org.uk/wolverhampton>, and a printed list is available on request

Poetry Appreciation

Meets

- On the first Monday of each month
- At 2.15 pm
- In members' homes as arranged each month

The current membership is 12. Please contact Marian Graceson 01902 765567 if you are considering joining us.

Having recently taken over the group coordinators role from Martin Murfitt this will be my first newsletter contribution on behalf of the Poetry Appreciation Group.

I and the group would like to take this opportunity to thank Martin for his conscientious, sensitive and good humoured guidance for the group over recent years. We are very pleased that he will remain as an active member.

Each month members bring two or three poems to share. There is no pre arranged topic. Members read their first poem in turn and then the next and sometimes there is time for a third. They may explain why they have chosen each poem and information about the poet, style, dates etc. may be offered by the reader or other members of the group. Sometimes photocopied 'handouts' may be given out and a poem may be repeated at the request of members to help us more fully appreciate its meaning. Members might also opt to recite a poem from memory.

In this relaxed format we are able to enjoy well known and well loved items and are given fascinating introductions to unfamiliar works or poets from any era, nationality or language (translated). There is of course always time for refreshments, notices and information and general chat (often still on poetic themes).

A selection of choices from recent months follows.

Owen Sheers (1974 -) *The light fell*

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) *Loves Philosophy*

Mary Oliver (1935-2019) *Wild Geese*

Carol Ann Duffy (1955-) *The Human Bee*

Robert Frost (1874-1963) *After Apple Picking*

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) *She was a phantom of delight*

Alfred Noyes (1880-1958) *The Elfin Artist*

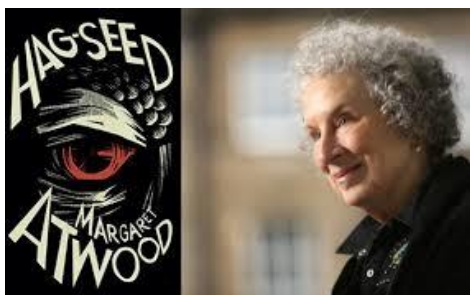
Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) *Passionate Shepherd to his Love*

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) *The Net Menders*

Marian Graceson

Reading Group 1

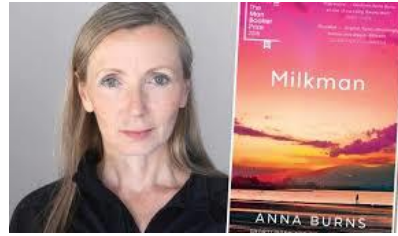
We started our year in September with *A Little Life* by American writer Hanya Hanagihara, a journalist by profession, who is a fourth generation resident of Hawaii, with a mother from Seoul. This is a challenging book on several levels - mainly its size of 720 pages! A book about child abuse will always be a difficult read, and this was one that resulted in a vigorous discussion. It is so good when we have such a varied response to a book and this was certainly the case. Not for the faint hearted.



Hag-Seed by Margaret Atwood is an example of a modern re-writing of a classic tale. In this case it is based on William Shakespeare's *Tempest*. What an extraordinary writer she is - still writing and still pushing the

boundaries. I understand that various well known writers have been commissioned to write novels based on a classic.

I won't mention every book we read this year, so many good ones



which are recorded on the u3a web page. one book most of us approached with trepidation was *Milkman* by Anna Burns, which was generally considered by the critics to be a 'difficult read'. Set in

Northern Ireland during the Troubles, with no names, just statuses such as 'first brother in law' and 'wee sisters'. Most of us disagreed with the 'difficult' label, but had lots to say about it. Once again we had a lively discussion. The question arose as to why it won the Booker, always a difficult question to ponder. Try reading it and see what you think.

Not all the books we read were equally popular, but we have all had exposure to books we may never have read and I, for one, am grateful for that.

Jeanette Black

Brush up your Shakespeare

This group has so far studied '*Love's Labour's Lost*', one of Shakespeare's most enduring romantic comedies, and '*The Tempest*'. We all use the same version of the text, discuss the Introduction and then read through the play out loud and discuss it as we go along. Most of us haven't studied Shakespeare since school so it's not too heavy and we also watch performances on DVD,



We don't meet now until January when we'll be studying '*Measure for Measure*' recently on at Stratford. This is a highly topical play about the abuse of power, sex and morality. Is it ever justified to do a bad thing for a good reason? That's the dilemma facing Isabella. Should she refuse Angelo's advances or submit in order to save her brother's life?

We meet monthly on Tuesday mornings from January to July at my home in Newbridge. Hope to see you then. Keep an eye on the website for more details, the version of the play we'll be

using and the monthly meeting dates in 2020. You can message me via the U3A website Shakespeare page to let me know you're coming.

Ben Whitney

Science & Technology

It is pleasing to report that the Group continues to increase in numbers of attendees and in the involvement of members in presentations (utilising various types of media including YouTube, handouts, screen based) and in depth discussions etc.

The matters covered are quite eclectic and range from some quite testing subjects through to the curious. We are progressing through the great scientists (Darwin, Da Vinci), great engineers (Brunel) and great inventors (Tesla, Turing) with many still to come. Another sphere of interest has been the 'world of disease', including dementia, and the incidence & treatment of disease today compared with the 1950's.



Our external visit this summer was to Severn Trent's sewage treatment works, where (notably without the expected strong odours!) we were shown how human & industrial waste is processed and, amazingly, how they

produce the majority of the whole company's needs for electric power from the waste they process.

The group are looking forward to hearing about and discussing further the wonderful worlds of science and technology

David Tordoff

Social Issues

The Social Issues group meets on the morning of the fourth Thursday of each month, except for August and December. It perhaps goes without saying, but the topics chosen for the Social Issues monthly meetings are determined by the members themselves. Typically, an individual or small group of members will identify a topic that is deserving of further discussion and analysis and agree to lead a session on the topic in the month chosen by them. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that the topics are wide-ranging and varied. In the past year, for instance, we have had sessions on issues such as mental health, populism, the environmental crisis and the overuse of drugs, particularly to children who are 'labelled' as problematic.

Starting from the statistic that 1 in 6 adults have a mental health condition, the mental health discussion focused around the way 'austerity' policies and practices have eroded provision, a situation most of the group considered unfortunate. The populism session found that populism referred to, and was based upon rhetoric and policies for the advancement of 'mythical entities such as a country's 'true people'. The rhetoric and policies often results in racist, sexist and other discriminatory activities. Cultural populism, meanwhile, tends to emphasise religious traditionalism, law and order, sovereignty and painting migrants as enemies, whilst anti-establishment populism paints the true people as hard-working, honest victims of a state or situations run by special interests and political elites, who ought to be rejected or freed from. Does this all sound familiar??

Alongside such topics, we have also had sessions on less usual topics, such as the necessity for beauty within our lives. There was an extensive discussion about what beauty is (in the eye of the beholder?), but also discussion about the ways that the arts, as essential components of beautiful experiences, are being downgraded, and losing out in current educational and economic policy and practice to more 'useful subjects' or activities, despite cultural activities being a major earner for the UK.

The Social Issues group tries to establish a regularly updated programme of topics and sessions, with the September session focusing on Homelessness in Wolverhampton, with an external guest speaker, whilst October will be focussing upon education issues. Please feel free to come along to experience a session, or contact me to get further details.

Neil Moreland (n.moreland@blueyonder.co.uk)

Spanish Improvers

'Noticias' is the Spanish word for 'news'. Since November of last year, this activity has become a regular component of our weekly sessions; each member prepares a few sentences saying what we

have done in the past week, or a particular news item we have read, seen or heard about. This has enabled us to practice our Spanish language skills and experiment with new vocabulary. We have learnt some very interesting facts and often funny stories from members about a variety of topics, including:

- a trip to an early Glastonbury festival (and why he's not been to a concert since!)
- a visit to a fascinating museum
- a tragic family story from 100 years ago
- a fire on a ferry
- the experience of having a new boiler installed
- and some lovely stories about family events, grandchildren etc.

Some of us read what we have prepared, some of us use crib sheets while others try to do it from memory. There is usually the opportunity then to ask a few questions about what we have heard, and we are often able to discuss the topic further.

We are now starting to realise how far we have come in our Spanish learning since the group started four years ago. We are also attempting GCSE questions and developing a degree of spontaneity. Thank you, Christine, for your well-prepared lessons and support. Several members visit Spain on their travels and use the listening & speaking skills learned in class to converse in the language. One of our members, Wendy, writes:



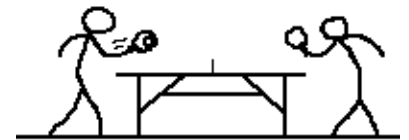
"Since starting Spanish with U3A just over 3 years ago, I have been fortunate to have visited parts of rural Spain each year – this was my main reason for taking the classes. Each year has seen me speaking Spanish with more confidence; to begin with merely ordering

meals in restaurants or asking how much items were in shops. This year, however, we had two mishaps – one a puncture on the motorway, and the other a broken windscreen wiper. I was delighted that the people I spoke with in the tyre depot and the car spares garage were able to understand my requests for replacement parts and deal with the necessary work efficiently. In the case of the windscreen wipers, they had no Right Hand Drive wipers in stock but assured me that they could get them for 9 am the following morning. Upon arrival at the garage they had been delivered overnight by carrier – from Italy as none were available in Spain!"

Tim Jevons

Table Tennis

Do you want to
Keep your body and mind young?



Speed up your reactions?
Stimulate the release of endorphins for that 'feel good' factor?
Stave off Dementia?
Improve your hand / eye co-ordination?
Forge new neural paths in the brain?

AND

Have FUN at the same time?

No need to look any further. We do all this and more at our weekly Table Tennis sessions on Thursday mornings.

LOTS of laughter, determination and some improvement keep our members returning for more each week.

Beginners welcome.

Faith Russell 01902 618 432

Playreading

We have 3 groups that meet monthly.

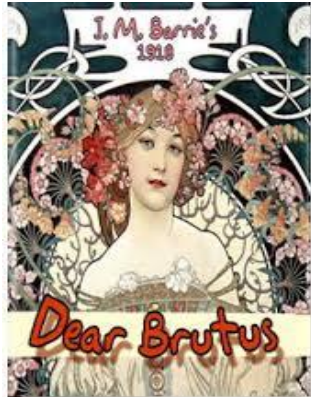
Group 1 on Friday afternoon at 2pm has spaces if anyone would like to try it or join.

We have read a variety of plays including *Ten Times Table* by Alan Ayckbourn, and *Androcles and the Lion* by G.B.Shaw which Group 3 particularly liked. Last Christmas we had a seasonal ghost story called *The White Carnation* by R.C. Sherriff, and we have another spooky play lined up for the coming Halloween!

Plays are often difficult to fit into a two hour session which means there's rarely time to socialise much over a cuppa. Hence Group 3 decided to omit the play during our August meeting and had a very enjoyable cream tea at Helen Currie's house, supplemented by some of us reading short passages from our favourite literature. We're looking forward to reading *Dear Brutus* by J M Barrie in September.

(Reminder to members: casting plays can be tricky so please confirm attendance in good time!) We are all hugely indebted to Sheila Moore for her work in obtaining copies of the plays from Staffordshire Library, and also to Margaret Barr for help with casting.

Sheila Moore, Margaret Barr, Ruth Byrne



Ukulele

We go out as the full and also as a smaller group. So far this year:

- We have helped Sandwell U3A's ukelele group get started.
- Feb 6th Bromley Place Penn Road carers' entertainment where we re-donated to their funds the money raised.
- Feb 8th an event at Albert lawn tennis club for Compton Care.
- An 8-week beginners' mandolin course.
- March 2nd & April 6th social evenings for ukeles and mandolins at Tettenhall Institute - just to play for fun.
- May 10th Compton Care in the Woods day centre.
- May 11th St. John's School Bishopswood for their 50th anniversary.
- August 4th Willenhall Park bandstand.
- August 14th Long Knowle Library for a blind/partially sighted group
- September 13th the Beacon Centre for the Blind, raising money for Activeyes.
- September 14th an event for Chris Collins in Stourbridge.
- September 20th a small group will entertain a dementia group at St.Michael's RC church Coalway Road for third year running
- St.Aidan's church and St.Philip's church for social events
- Beacon Blind Centre Sept 13th with Wulfruna ladies' choir
- Sept 14 as part of entertainment in Stourbridge
- We have also held a few social evenings at the Tettenhall Institute where uke players bring along family and friends to join in for a good singsong.

Future events :

- October 1st at a wedding celebration in Birmingham
- November 15/16th at Codsall Beer Festival
- November 21st at a local retirement living centre
- November 24th at Penkridge Victorian market.
- December 6th at the Codsall Fair, also for third year running.

We continue to donate to charities:

Air Ambulance; Cancer Research; Acorns Hospice; Hero paws; Alzheimer's; Social fund for a care home on the Penn Road.

Gill Stevens

Walking

It has been a good year for the Walking Group, with all the walking dates successfully filled without any arm twisting. The walk leaders have had some tricky conditions to contend with and some had to change walks at the last minute. One report back to me said the walk was wet, wet, wet! Wet weather has been a characteristic of more than one walk. One canal walk took place under worsening weather conditions, resulting in most to return by bus, though three brave (or foolhardy!) walkers continued the walk back towards the start after lunch.

Another aspect of a good walk has been the food eaten afterwards. We have eaten in pubs and cafés, including one with a Persian theme and also had a few picnic lunches.

For the October walking holiday in Hartington in the Peak District

we had good weather and were, once again, able to provide walks of differing lengths and difficulties. Nearby were the reservoirs of Carsington and Tittesworth Water, where members were able to have a flat walk and go as far as they wanted in lovely surroundings and use the cafés. Longer walks around Hartington meant that sometimes we had to go through Squeeze Stiles; fortunately all members managed to get through.



During walks previously we had encountered pubs with no food but this year on the holiday we found the pub with no draught beer! Bottled beer was on offer but some walkers fancied a pulled pint. Our first walk of the New Year was a short one along the canal and railway track from Compton. It was on a cold and frosty day but had a good turnout (22). Another very popular nearby walk (25) was from Albrighton with many of the walkers commenting they had never done the walk before. It was a bright spring day with good views and we walked through David Austin Roses. There was also a good turnout (19) for the annual flower walk in April. Having said that, not all walks were so well attended, which can be disappointing to those volunteering to lead the walk. Nonetheless, those who do go on the walks usually have a good time, even if it is raining.

In June the annual evening walk and meal from Cross Green, Coven, took place in sunny conditions and the canal was the start and finish of the walk. Thirty one walkers came and enjoyed a meal at the pub afterwards. Cannock Chase concluded our current walking programme and came at the end of the heatwave. Getting to the start many walkers encountered traffic problems but twenty six members made it to the start.

Our next walking programme comes out on the 1st August. Check it out on the website and if you would like to join us ring me on 01902 339894.

Linda Moreland

Some Upcoming Events

(please submit as Event: Venue: Date: Time: Contact no.)

Pumpkin Parade:Kingswood: 18 Oct: 4.30-7.00; } 01902 558132

Games Night & Goulash: Kingswood: 16 Nov: } "

W'ton Symphony Orch: Grammar School: 23 Nov 7.30: 845789

Movie Meet-up: The Lighthouse: 30 Sept: 4.35: } 01902 423852

Movie Meet-up: The Lighthouse: 7 Oct: 6pm: } "