



Fairford & District Newsletter

Issue 172

April 2011



The Wonders of Westonbirt by Jenny Bartlett

www.fairfordu3a.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1072658

General Meetings

Palmer Hall, 2.30pm

5 April

The Wonders of Westonbirt
by Jenny Bartlett

3 May

AGM followed by Chocolate, a
400 Year Love Affair by Janette
Rowlatt

7 June

Morning Dew—traditional tunes
by Mike and Pat Ledbury

New members

A warm welcome to the
following new member:

Barbara Last

Today, 5 April

Jenny Bartlett is a volunteer speaker
at Westonbirt, and she will be
describing the seasons and events
that happen there. She will also be
telling us about plans for the future
at our beautiful National Arboretum.

May's AGM will be followed by
Janette Rowlatt, acclaimed
Chocolate Gourmet, who will be
telling us about the history of
chocolate. Her talk will include
'tutored tastings'.

In June Mike and Pat Ledbury in
costume will take members on a
journey accompanied by live music,
light-hearted anecdotes and
comments. This is presented by a
retired Headmaster who believed
that learning should be fun.

Tea Rota

May 3 : Book Circle 1
June 7 : Birdwatching
July 5 : Biography

Pétanque weekend page 4
Walking with Pub Lunch meeting
page 4
Choral Society page 5
Cycling restarts page 7

Secretary's Notes

Next of kin cards

The U3A has had printed some cards which can be used to record next of kin details on one side and medical information on the other. Each card is approximately 3.5 X 2 inches. Before we purchase any we need to gauge interest, so if you would like one please let the secretary or one of the committee members know.

National and regional U3A events

For information about these events: Kew Gardens - behind the scenes, 5 May, Positive Thinking Meeting, 19 May and the various Summer Schools in June, July and August, visit the website www.fairfordu3a.org.uk or contact me.

Pete Evans
01285 713069

Oxford Walking Tour, 5 May 2011

There are still some places available for the Oxford Walking Tour to be led by Alastair Lack, an Oxford City Tour Guide, following his entertaining talk on the 'BBC World Service' in September last year. The walk will be about two hours, and Alastair will join us for refreshments afterwards at 'The Vaults'. The cost is £4 per person and forms can be obtained via committee members.

Visits to Highgrove Gardens, Wednesday 8 June and Tuesday 28 June 2011

Although most places are reserved, we are opening a waiting list for last minute cancellations, so if you are interested and haven't yet applied, forms can be obtained via committee members.

Jean Crowley
01285 711775

Attention all Walkers!

Change of circumstances necessitates new arrangements for the Walking with a Pub Lunch group, and I am looking for volunteers and assistance. If you could lead a walk for the group – maps, details and instructions provided if required – this would be much appreciated.

There will be a meeting of all interested parties at 10.30am on **Friday, 8th April** in the Mico room (top floor, front stairs) at Fairford Community Centre, coffee and biscuits provided. I hope we can then arrange walks for the next six months or more.

If you would like to help with running the group, or could lead a walk but can't attend on April 8th, please contact me before the meeting.

Geoff Bishop
01285 713747
gbishop@talktalk.net

Pétanque weekend on the Isle of Wight

Some of the group are planning to take part in a pétanque weekend on the Isle of Wight and are able to invite non-group members to participate. The dates are Friday 14th - Monday 17th October. The cost of £175 per person includes coach travel from Fairford including ferry, three nights half-board accommodation, at The Carlton Hotel, Sandown with TV and tea and coffee in all rooms plus evening entertainment! Single rooms are limited.

This is a pétanque weekend and tournaments will fill most of the day on the Saturday and Sunday, taking place at Sandown and Shanklin Rugby Club who will be serving drinks and food. If you wish to come but not play pétanque it is not obligatory - enrolment for games takes place each morning.

This sounds like good value and good fun. If you are interested please contact me. Numbers have to be confirmed and deposits paid by the end of April.

Phil Trickett
01285 712421

U3A March

At the March meeting members were again treated to a lively and unusual talk. Nell Gifford of Gifford's Circus, with no aids but her striking presence and clear voice, told the touching story of how her idyllic childhood at Minety ended abruptly when a serious horse riding accident left her mother in a coma and the family moved to London.

After studying English Literature at Oxford University, Nell persisted with her fascination for circus life and encountered many aspects of it by working in several countries. She contrasted the brilliant paintwork and clean efficiency in Germany with the drab experience of being in a French circus on the south coast of England but everywhere she went the same warmth and family spirit of supporting each other, which had coloured her early childhood, made her more than ever determined to have a circus of her own.

To survive the highs and lows of achieving this required breathtaking resilience and a truly supportive husband but, as many people in this district know, Gifford's Circus is now an eagerly awaited treat in the Cotswolds and it is all done with talent and no 'wild' animals.

Nell reinvented the British circus and last year won the Groucho Maverick Award which celebrates inspirational and pioneering individuals who break the mould in the arts.

Sylvia Jones

Fairford & District Choral Society

Fairford & District Choral Society's next performance on Saturday 9th April in Fairford at 7pm in St Mary's Church will be Dvorak's Stabat Mater preceded by a contribution from the choir of Fairford Primary School.

Soloists: return visits by Natania Phillips - mezzo soprano and Henry Herford - bass and first appearances with F&DCS by Katherine Crompton - soprano and Nicholas Pritchard - tenor. We are delighted to welcome once again Fiona Brown as our accompanist on the organ.

Tickets will be available at the beginning of March from Blenheim Antiques in Fairford's Market place, or from John and Jane Read, 01285 71368, or on the door.

GROUP EVENTS

Biography Group

We will meet on 18 May at 3pm at Iris's house to discuss more biographies of our choice.

Please note change of date! New members will be very welcome!

Kevin Hannigan
01367 250246
hannigan100@hotmail.com

Book Circle 1

Tuesday 12 April

We next meet at Pauline's home to discuss 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee. Please let Pauline know if you are unable to come on 01285 713714.

Denny Rawlinson
01285 711009

Book Circle 2

Tuesday 12 April

We will meet at Jane's house at 2.30pm to discuss 'Angelina's Children' by Alice Ferney. Please let Jane know if you will be unable to attend.

Kevin Hannigan 01367 250246
hannigan100@hotmail.com
Jane Pugh 01285 712184

Bridge Improvers

The group meets every Monday afternoon from 2 to 4 pm in the Heritage room, Fairford Community Centre.

All bridge players welcome, partners and refreshments provided.

Margaret Bishop
01285 713747
mbishop@talktalk.net

Chess

Wednesday 20 April

The next meeting will be at my house at 3.30pm.

Mike Bennett
mish252379@aol.com
01367 252379

'A common mistake that people make when trying to design something completely foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.'

Douglas Adams

Birdwatching

Tuesday 19 April

This month we shall visit the Woorgreen area of the Forest of Dean. The mix of trees in this area is quite different from last month's visit to Savernake Forest. There is also the added interest of a small lake which is home to a number of water birds. Some of the ground near the lake is fairly rough and can be very muddy. If it has been very wet we will adjust our route accordingly. The spring migrants should be arriving to add to our usual collection of tits and other residents.

We will have lunch at the Woodmans Arms as usual and the afternoon can be used as people wish. Meet at the Fairford car park at 9am as usual. Speech House Hotel is about 45 miles from Fairford.

Richard Morgan
01285 712085

'During April rainfalls the pig gets butchered, the oxen get fattened and the sheep laughs.'

Sicilian Proverb

Cycling and pub lunch

Wednesday 13 April

Please note the date! Time to pump up your tyres and oil your gears! Now that sunny Spring is here it is time to get our wheels turning.

As it is our first ride we shall have a gentle potter out to Langford to one of our favourite pubs. A cruise through Southrop, a glide into Holwell, downhill by the Wildlife Park, and then freewheel to The Bell, all in glorious sunshine. Home via Little Faringdon.

Meet at Fairford at 10.30am or at the Memorial Hall Lechlade at 10.50am (or thereabouts).

Paul O'Shaughnessy
01367 850262

Family History 1

Wednesday 20 April

This month I *hope* to be able to welcome you to my home for the meeting we had to postpone. Continuing the theme of records of humble ancestors, we shall be looking at Administrations which were often granted on the estates of Labourers.

Please let me know if you are not able to attend.

Miriam Scott
01285 713441

Family History 2

Wednesday 20 April

We will meet at my house as usual and Philip Meaden will talk to us about the English workhouse.

Forthcoming events – Fanny Hugill will talk to both family history groups in June about her experiences as a REN working at Dover in the build-up to the D-day landings and being one of the first women to go across to France.

Michael Johnson
01285 712637
sanaelma@yahoo.co.uk

Five Rhythms Dance

We regularly dance at the Palmer Hall on the third Wednesday of the month, at 10am. New dancers welcome.

Gillian Bilbrough
01285 712579

Joyce Deane
01285 851408

*'St George he was for England,
And, before he killed the dragon,
He drank a pint of English ale
Out of an English flagon.'*

G K Chesterton

French Conversation

Intermediate

For the next two or three months at least, meetings will take place fortnightly in members' homes. Please contact Michael Yorke on 01367 253286 or Tegid Pugh on 01285 712184 for up to date information.

Bon Courage!

Rosemary Westlake
01285 712329
idrwestlake@cotswoldwireless.co.uk

Advanced

New members are always welcome. We usually break into small groups of about five and spend about 45 minutes discussing whatever takes our fancy, and in the last 15 minutes take turns reading aloud from a magazine published for groups like ours.

Kevin Hannigan
01367 250246
hannigan100@hotmail.com

Garden Group

Thursday 21 April

We are certainly looking forward to our visit to Val Bevington Wood this month. We will meet at Val's at 2.30pm for a look at her garden, general discussion about our own gardens and how they are coming along and this will be followed by a delicious tea which Val has kindly offered to provide - we are all looking forward to it already!

If you are able to come, please let me know **NO LATER THAN THE MORNING OF MONDAY 18 APRIL** so that I can let Val know numbers by the afternoon of that day.

Penny Phillips
01285 711360

Geology

Wednesday 9 March

The Geology group meets regularly at the Chapel in Milton Street on the second Wednesday of the month at 2.30pm.

Clive Watson
01285 713003

German Circle

Please contact Karin for further details.

Karin Forman
01367 252675

Golf

We will have met in March. I will be in touch with all members to arrange an April meeting.

I look forward to hearing from all new, current and prospective members.

John Yorke
07546 818485
yorkejohn@live.co.uk

Keep Fit

We meet each Tuesday at 9.15am at Fairford Community Centre.

Eddie Rosser
01367 252504

*'When the cuckoo sings in an
empty bough
Keep your hay and sell your cow'.
Old Farmer's Saying*

Latin

Thursday 7 April

The group will meet at 2.30pm at my house. Please contact me if you are unable to come.

Susan Greig
01285 810274

Model Group

The Model group meets each Thursday morning.

For further details please contact:

Jim Sullivan
01367 252539

Music Listening

Friday 15 April

Please note that this meeting will take place at the home of Geoff and Margaret. It would be a good idea to check with them nearer the time that this is still convenient. The theme is 'O', which should produce a nice variety of contributions.

Mary Chick
01285 712126

Needlework

The Needlework group will meet on April 13 and 27 at the Chapel.

For further details please contact:

Thelma Hardie
01285 713971

Pétanque

The group meets each Wednesday from 10-12noon in the car park of St Thomas's Catholic Church in Horcott Road, except for the first Wednesday of each month when we shall play at The Red Lion, Castle Eaton.

It is not obligatory to stay for lunch but the pub will provide coffee mid-morning. New members are always welcome.

Phil Trickett
01285 712421

Philosophy

Wednesday 20 April

The next meeting will be at 2.30pm at my house in Poulton. The topic for discussion will be 'Imagination'.

Dan Deane
01285 851408

Poetry Circle 1

The Poetry Circle meets on the first Friday of the month.

For further information contact:

Keith Cottam
01285 711054

Poetry Circle 2

The Poetry Circle meets on the first Friday of the month.

For enquiries please phone:

Mary Chick
01285 712126

Recorders

Our dates for April are the 8th and 22nd (to be discussed as it's Good Friday) and we will be starting with Monica's treble class from 2-2.30pm for those who would like to add another string to their bow (so to speak). The main group will follow on at 2.30 and finish at 4.30pm. Please come to the Farmor room on the ground floor of the Fairford Community Centre.

If there are any more recorder players who would like to join a friendly, mostly non-judgemental group with nice biscuits please contact:

Hilary Bradshaw
01793 720037

Postcard Group

Tuesday 19 April

The pilot meeting was held on March 22nd with about a dozen members attending. Much interest was shown in the formation of a group and it has been decided to hold a further meeting in April at John's home at 2.30pm when we will discuss the future programme.

If you could bring two or three of your favourite cards, we all can share looking at them and enjoying them. If any members who were not at the pilot meeting would like to come along, they will be most welcome – but please phone me to let me know so that we shall have an idea of the number wishing to attend.

It is envisaged that meetings normally will be held on the third Tuesday of the month.

John Higgs
01285 712488

'The cuckoo comes in April, and stays the month of May; sings a song at midsummer, and then goes away.'

Traditional Proverb

Rummikub

Thursday 14 April

The group meets on the second Thursday of each month at our house in Lechlade from 2-4.30pm for some friendly games of Rummikub. New members will be welcome.

For further information or explanation please refer to the Fairford U3A website or telephone me.

Mary Bennett
01367 253287

Short Tennis

Short Tennis takes place in the Palmer Hall on Mondays, starting at 3.30pm.

If you are interested please contact me or come to a session and find out more.

Margaret Trickett
01285 712421

'April weather, woman's love, rose-leaves, dice, and card-luck, change every moment.'

German Proverb

Spanish

This Spanish group is for beginners, but those with some Spanish are welcome! Meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday mornings, 11-12 noon, at my home.

Frank Hall
01285 712583
fkhall@talktalk.net

Straddlers

Thursday 21 April

The walk this month is around the picturesque Cotswold town of Winchcombe and passes the attractive historic ruins of Hailes Abbey, and the restored 15th Century manor house Sudeley Castle.

From Vineyard Street in Winchcombe, we will walk in a northerly direction out of the town and take Puck Pit Lane to pick up the Cotswold Way.

Heading north east for about two miles we will then turn south east at the ruins of Hailes Abbey and climb gently for 1.25 miles to the hamlet of Farmcote. We will then walk in a southerly direction for a couple of miles along the Campden Lane before turning west along the Wardens Way past Sudeley Lodge, Sudeley Castle and back to our starting point in Winchcombe.

The walk is approximately 8.5 miles in length, there are about nine gates/stiles and three gentle inclines, the steepest of which is the 1.25 miles from Hailes Abbey to the hamlet of Farmcote (do not let this put you off). Part of the walk is through fields which are likely to be muddy, part on farm tracks and the remainder on made up lanes with very light traffic, mainly farm machinery. On a clear day the views on the walk are outstanding and include the Malverns, Guiting woods, Winchcombe etc. Bring coffee and lunch as normal.

Meet at Fairford car park at 9am or meet at Vineyard Street in Winchcombe at 9.50am for a 10am start. Suggested passenger rate is £4.00

Reginald Thoburn
01285 712397

*'Twas Easter-Sunday,
The full-blossomed trees
Filled all the air with fragrance and
with joy.'*

From 'The Spanish Student' by
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Striders

Tuesday 26 April

We start from The Mount Inn at Stanton (GR 072343), where we've been before, but for a different walk. From The Mount we go down the hill to the church then turn north across gently undulating fields, past Laverton and on to the posh village of Buckland. Skirting the back of a rather nice Holiday Property Bond complex we proceed easterly past a couple of small ponds and up a short but quite steep hill onto the Cotswold Way. We then turn southwards passing around the Shenberrow Settlement, from where it's all downhill, back to The Mount.

Total distance is about six miles. The first part may be muddy if we have had recent rain.

Meet at Fairford car park at 9.30am or at The Mount Inn at 10.15am. The staff at The Mount are reluctant to allow us to order lunch until we return, but I will press them to change.

Suggested passenger contribution from Fairford £4.50.

Contact information
Mike Bennett
01367 252379

Strollers

There will be no walk in April: our usual day and several alternatives considered are given over to Bank Holidays - ecclesiastical, political and matrimonial.

We plan to meet on Friday 27 May – possibly in Bibury – details next month.

Don Cobbett
01285 712692
dbcobbett@tiscali.co.uk

Traditional Jazz

Thursday 7 April

The group meets on the first Thursday of each month at our house in Lechlade from 2-4.30pm.

This month we shall listen to Traditional British Jazz recorded in the last few years.

Come and join us. Give it a try!

Ian Bennett
01367 253287

Walking & Pub Lunch

Wednesday 13 April

Geoff has allowed me to lead his next walk and it is based at the Lamb Inn in Crawley, just north of Witney. The 4½ mile mostly flat walk (OK there's one short hill!) takes us to the picturesque village of Minster Lovell with its ruined 15th century hall, before returning to the lovely Cotswold village of Crawley. There is only one stile and we shall walk at your normal pace!

The Lamb is popular with walking groups and its menu can be seen at <http://www.thelambcrawley.com/foodanddrink.htm>. Do wear strong shoes or walking boots because, although it was dry when I walked the route, it would be muddy in places after any significant rain.

Please meet at the Fairford car park at 9.15am or at the Lamb Inn just before 10am to pre-select and pay for your lunch choice.

John Burrows
01367 253056

Yoga

The Yoga group meets each Monday in the Community Centre at 10.15am.

Gillian Bilbrough
01285 712579

GROUP REVIEWS

Biography Group

We met on 24 February to discuss the choices of our members. 'Decline and Fall' – the 2nd diary/memoir by Chris Mullin was not considered to be as interesting as the first, as he was now out of government, and heading out of Parliament too. The impression was that though a good diarist he may not have been that good as a constituency MP.

John Moore's 'Portrait of Elmbury' describes growing up in Tewkesbury and is one of a trilogy in a similar vein. He describes everyday life more from the aspect of the town than the people.

'The Woman I was Born to be' describes the life and meteoric rise to fame of Susan Boyle. Born the 9th child into a devout Catholic family in Glasgow, there were difficulties at her birth which shaped her life and led her into low self esteem and depression. As a child she had 'strong lungs' and eventually had music lessons which led one day this unlikeliest of people to shoot to fame on Britain's Got Talent.

The 'Autobiography of Martin Luther King' is interesting as a reminder of the appalling treatment of negroes in the South (and some northern cities too) in the first half of the last century. King seemed to accidentally find himself drawn into a leadership role, although it is hard not to feel for his wife and children whom he badly neglected. There are (too) extensive quotations from sermons/speeches which do slow down the narrative.

Kevin Hannigan

'I was slightly brain damaged at birth, and I want people like me to see that they shouldn't let a disability get in the way. I want to raise awareness - I want to turn my disability into ability.'

Susan Boyle

Birdwatching

Our first visit to Savernake forest for many years was well supported as usual and we were rewarded with a very pleasant spring morning. Savernake is a very old forest and some of the huge old beech and oak trees are spectacular, particularly at this time of year when you can see the whole structure clear of leaves.

There were not as many birds as we might have expected at this time of year but of course the summer migrants have yet to arrive and many of the residents may have suffered earlier in the winter. We did find a representative of most of the expected woodland species with the notable exception of a great spotted woodpecker which, though heard in the distance, was not seen. The elusive lesser spotted woodpecker I saw on my recce did not reappear but we were pleased to see red kites flying over.

Richard Morgan

'No-one can say how old Savernake Forest is. It cannot be less than 1,000 years old, as it is referred to in a Saxon Charter from King Athelstan in 934AD, being called 'Savernoc' It is certainly older than the other great Forest of southern England, which was only planted over a century later by the Normans, and whose name reminds us that it is younger than ancient Savernake - the New Forest.'

www.savernakeestate.co.uk

Book Circle 1

During times of momentous and historic change writers sometimes produce works which fictionalise the state of the nation. Such a work is 'A Week in December' by Sebastian Faulks which we discussed in March. This was not a book most of us enjoyed, but it is an epic novel mirroring broken modern values and lifestyles, as did Dickens, Trollope and Mrs Gaskell in previous centuries. It is important to note that this book was published in 2007, before the credit crunch, and powers its way through seven days in that year.

It begins with the wife of Britain's most recently newly elected M.P. preparing for a celebratory dinner party. Her seating plan introduces us to many characters we will learn about; too many to remember without constant back page turning. There are those who must be included because they have propelled her husband on his way by power, influence or funding. We feel that something hidden and morally offensive is providing food and drink at the tables of the uncaring or unenlightened powerful.

Through one guest we are exposed to a ruthless financial genius, who cares only for money and the thrill of illicit currency dealing. He shows no concern for his dysfunctional family; his fourteen years old daughter appears to be on a constant sleepover, and his sixteen years old son shuts himself away in his 'mod con' bedroom hooked on psychotic TV reality shows and super strength cannabis, whilst his mother sits lonely and sedated on white wine, too indifferent to visit him in his room.

Terrorism too rears an ugly head, when the only child of a naïve Indian immigrant couple, who have made money and found status manufacturing curries and chutneys, becomes embroiled in a group determined to destroy the country which offered it freedom.

The diverse characters reveal Faulks' prophetic disquiet at the greedy self-interested behaviour about to fall apart. Like his literary precursors he gives some promising, perhaps unlikely, outcomes. A happy read – no, but one that makes us think, and hopefully not be too discouraged to speak and stand up for values which experience has shown us makes sense of listening to and caring about others.

Denny Rawlinson

Book Circle 2

Our book for February was 'The Help' by Kathryn Stockett. Kathryn was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, and as a child she was unaware of the deep racial divides around her. In this her first book she recounts in detail the relationships between well-to-do white women and their black maids. It is rich in humour, anger, tenderness, oppression and courage.

The story takes place in Jackson, Mississippi in 1962. Miss Skeeter, Aibileen and Minny are the main characters. No one would believe they would be friends; fewer still would tolerate it. But as each woman finds the courage to cross boundaries they come to depend and rely upon one another. Each is in search of the truth, and together they have an extraordinary story to tell.

Most of our members enjoyed reading this book even if some had early reservations and difficulty accepting the author writing in a thick dialect of African Americans. One member thought it didn't emphasise enough the rage and darkness that the women must have felt. She felt that the author didn't get to the heart of the matter. Others didn't agree and quoted passages where anger was shown but thought that anyone speaking out against the system would be very brave as being a maid was the only employment open to them.

The white women also had to conform to the social customs and comparisons were made with English society a century ago with our families and their nannies, and where everyone had to keep to their place and where employers were unaware of the lives and feelings of their maids.

This book generated a lively discussion and the afternoon was enjoyed by us all.

Josephine Toomer

'April is the month in which people have always eagerly awaited the arrival of the cuckoo, indicating that spring is truly on its way. The coming of the cuckoo was linked in folklore to the weather.'

Cattern, Cakes and Lace by Julia Jones and Barbara Deer. 1987

Garden Group

After what has seemed like never ending days of gloom with grey and overcast skies, the Garden Group were favoured with a beautiful afternoon of sunshine for our first proper outing of the year.

We set off from Fairford car park with our spirits uplifted due to the weather and also for the forthcoming trip, the first visit to Frosts Garden Centre near Kingston Bagpuize for some of us, and a happily repeated experience for others. The garden centre is part of the Millets Farm Centre so there was the added bonus of a visit to the well stocked farm shop for an extra treat.

We spent a very pleasant afternoon wandering around and the plant centre certainly aroused our interest with quite a few purchases being made, now, hopefully safely planted in their new homes.

It was lovely to have Pat Stevens with us for the first time as a new member. Please do get in touch if you enjoy your garden and would like to enjoy other people's, both small and large and have the benefit of the friendly, social aspect as well.

Penny Phillips

Philosophy

Our topic was 'Does travel broaden the mind?' Initially this might seem trite and commonplace, but during the course of discussion which ranged from ancient civilizations such as the Spartans, who banned individual travel; the Romans who considered travel to Athens educative and young Western Aristocracy who were required to travel to be accepted as sophisticated members of society. Confucius was an exception to this widely held notion; he maintained man should be content to view the world from his preordained and designated place in society. We concluded that travel in its broadest sense was very different from the glossy brochures and group solidarity we initially imagined; although the universal prevalence of modern technology came dangerously close to reducing everyone to a common denominational level.

Verna Reay

Poetry Circle One

The March meeting saw a return to Lechlade, this time to Celia's home, but hosted with her kind permission by Ken Miles. The theme was 'Stargazing' - to be interpreted as broadly as we liked. And so it was!

From their own pens, Joyce gave us pause for thought with 'Touring the Cosmos', while Ian amused us with the difficulties he encountered in trying to view the journey of Venus across the face of the sun. Barbara read 'A child of the eighties' by Derwent May, extolling the virtues of past film and stage stars - sadly, now all dead!

Each and every contribution, from the poetic giants like Wordsworth and Graves to the lesser known Ten-Horn and Kagawa, seemed to reflect new light from our stargazing onto our own little speck of the universe.

Ken Miles

*'Lo! From quiet skies
In through the window my Lord the Sun!
And my eyes
Were dazzled and drunk with the misty gold,
The golden glory that drowned and crowned me
Eddied and swayed through the room...'*

From 'In Examination' by Rupert Brooke

Postcard Meeting

John Higgs, the well known deltiologist (collector of postcards), opened a whole new world when he talked to a select group about the subject. Little did we know what interesting information would keep us spell bound for an hour.

The golden era for postcards was the early 20th century. In 1840 Rowland Hill was tasked with sorting out the postal system; before that date the receiver had to pay for letters and it was expensive. The pre-paid penny post was born. In 1870 the first cards with pre-printed stamps were produced. Gradually they evolved from plain postcards to cards with commercial adverts and even order forms. In London at that time there could be 12 posts a day so it was an effective and quick form of communication.

In 1894 unstamped cards began to be sold and from then picture postcards blossomed. In 1902 the first divided back was issued. John showed us examples of various photographers' work: the seaside views of Louis Levy, the saucy postcards of Donald McGill, the cat postcards of Louis Wain and others.

Postcards are categorised into various types:- souvenir, greetings, hold-to-light, novelty and social history cards are examples. Photographers were just as clever then as nowadays using the same postcard view and doctoring it by adding different features and adding colour selling the same view with alterations over many years. Good cloud patterns could also be added. Postcards can be also a valuable source of local and family history.

It was an enthralling hour and such was the interest most of the group were keen to learn more about this interesting subject.

Alison Hobson

'No hobby quite compares with collecting postcards in the way it caters for all interests. Whether you're a football fan, mad about the royal family, keen on local history, a railway buff or a student of ornithology, picture postcards offer you a marvellous stimulus for your hobby. And for those merely nostalgic and interested in the events and fashions of the past century, the postcard encapsulates it all.'

www.postcard.co.uk/postcard_magic.php

Recorders

We're doing very well for numbers – 16 at the last meeting even with some people missing – we definitely need the bigger room now! We're hoping to have a contra-bass soon, which will make a huge difference to the sound. I think the ceilings are high enough. The main problem (apart from not being able to play it) will be finding music with big bass parts though, as we have so many players now, we should be able to use some of Steve and Ann Marshall's Easy Orchestra pieces which some people will have played at May Hill. It'll mean that sometimes the parts will split but that only makes it more challenging! The music is no harder than we're used to so no need to panic.

The Welsh folk song suite is sounding very good now that some of the bumps have been ironed out of Owain Glyndwr and, having similarly sorted out the Irish, we really must see what we can do with the Scots and English. I'll have a rummage through the boxes.

Hilary Bradshaw

'St George was first made patron of the Order of the Garter in 1348 and was then declared patron saint of England. After the victory (attributed to him) at Agincourt, the festival of St George became a day for great civic celebration, and in the olden days jousting was held, with knights challenging all comers to feats of skill. The day ended with feasting, and presumably, much drinking of ale and mead.'

Cattern, Cakes and Lace by Julia Jones and Barbara Deer. 1987

Strollers

On Friday 25 March, twenty Strollers gathered at the Corinium Hotel for the start of a somewhat different stroll. Our leader for this occasion was Bill Irving of the LMHA (Living Memory Historical Association). As we walked through the streets of Cirencester, he showed us remnants of WW2 defences. We saw tank-traps still in position and two machine-gun apertures that are Britain's only holes with a preservation order on them! He also told many amusing stories that the Association have gathered, including the time that the bells of Cirencester Church were rung to give notice of an invasion – sparked by what was thought to be a parachutist landing, but turned out to be the remains of an errant barrage-balloon! Many of the stories rivalled those from the Dad's Army television series.

After two entertaining hours, we returned to the Corinium Hotel and an excellent lunch.

The LMHA have created a museum in part of the old hospital premises, including the last remaining Air Raid Shelter in Cirencester, in Sheep Street. It is open every Saturday from May to October. If you are interested in visiting, or have any war-time objects to give or loan to the museum, please contact Bill on 01285 650012.

Don Cobbett

'We [the LMHA] feel that every period in Cirencester's history should be celebrated and known by those who live and work in the town and brought to the attention of all the visitors the town hopes to attract in the future.'

From [www.yourcirencester.co.uk/Cirencester Air Raid Shelter.html](http://www.yourcirencester.co.uk/Cirencester%20Air%20Raid%20Shelter.html)

Timetable of Group Activities

Monthly: Golf, Chess on a Wednesday. Needlework and Recorders meet twice monthly. Pétanque and Cycling April-October only.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Monday am	French Yoga	French Yoga	French Yoga	French Yoga
pm	Bridge Short tennis	Bridge Short Tennis	Bridge Short Tennis	Bridge Short Tennis
Tuesday am	Keep Fit	Keep Fit Spanish	Keep Fit Bird watching	Keep Fit Spanish Striders
pm	Main meeting	Book Circle 1 Book Circle 2	Postcards	
Wednesday am	Pétanque	Walking & PL Pétanque	Five Rhythms Pétanque	Cycling & PL Pétanque
pm		Geology	Family History 1 Family History 2 Philosophy	Chess
Thursday am	Model Boats	Model making	Model Boats Straddlers	Model Boats
pm	Latin Traditional Jazz	Rummikub	Garden	
Friday am				Strollers
pm	Poetry Circle Poetry Two	Recorders	Music	Recorders

Please send items for the May issue to Alison Hobson email: alisonmhobson@googlemail.com
01285 711768
no later than

22nd April