

Cotgrave & District



Quarterly Gazette

No 11

Autumn 2018



Welcome to the latest edition of the Quarterly Gazette of Cotgrave & District U3A. We cover news from the Groups, forthcoming events and other interesting items happening in our U3A. If you want any items included in future issues please let the Editor know.

Cotgrave & District U3A 5th Birthday and Pre Christmas Party

is being held at The Welfare on 30th November 2018.

Tickets are now on sale.

Any items for inclusion or comments please send them to
The Editor at cotgraveu3a@hotmail.com

*This Gazette is produced by Cotgrave & District U3A.
Views expressed are not necessarily those of the U3A, the Committee or of the Editor*

TREASURER'S MUSINGS of the Cotgrave & District U3A 2018



Now that everything has been “set up”, the Treasurer’s job within our U3A is, now, a bit of a doddle, really. The “set up” merely involved sorting out the bank and cheque signatories (who are changed or added to as new officers are appointed at the AGM) and the devising of certain forms to make life easier!

Though we are a very small U3A, our receipts from Riviera Travel top up our subscription receipts and well cover our expenses and the purchase of any useful equipment, of which we now have a very good selection.

Our Groups are well managed by our Group Leaders and are self funding, so we don’t have to subsidise any of them and I don’t have to interfere with their running! Thanks, therefore, to those Leaders.

Most of the Treasurer’s work is at the beginning and end of the U3A year. At the beginning, there is payment in and recording of member subscriptions and, at the end, preparation of the accounts ready for the Auditors and the AGM. Again, the efficiency of our Membership Secretary, Sue Childs, makes the former very easy.

I also have Malcolm Baxter as unsung Assistant Treasurer, able and ready to help out as and when...

In the middle of the year there is only payment of speakers and room hire and the paying in of subscriptions of any newly joining members.....oh, and the submission of invoices to Riviera Travel.

Most of you know, but for those who don’t (though there is a reminder in the Gazette), U3A is the chosen charity of Riviera Travel and the company pays 10% of the total cost of holidays and trips arranged by a U3A through them. We were alerted to this by our member, Hannie Woolsey, who, again, as most of you know, has worked as a guide for Riviera for many years.

I will be resigning from the job at 2019’s AGM, because I don’t believe that any job should be hung on to for too long, when there are others perfectly capable of doing it.

We were told of a horror (in my view) story of one U3A where the same committee and officers had been incumbent for 12 years, their explanation being that nobody else volunteered to do the job! Well, of course they wouldn’t! Who would stand against a member of a clique like that?!

Anyway, I rant on! Fortunately our U3A is not like that, and I hope nobody feels that we are likely to be. I happen to think the formation of our U3A is the best thing that has happened in Cotgrave for many a year. Before then, I knew one person to say hello to: now I feel I can count new friends in the dozens and |I hope you all do too.

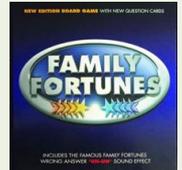
Chris Soar

CARD AND BOARD GAMES

We have continued to meet over the summer months and, as usual, have enjoyed each other's company and a wide variety of table top games. Having said that, I am always on the lookout for new games and you might see me scouring the shelves in charity shops for something else to delight our members.



Many thanks to one of our members, Maggie Spencer, for donating a couple of brand new boxed games. Both of them have long been firm favourites on television - one is Catchphrase and the other is Family Fortunes – and I am sure we will get lots of fun from trying to avoid the familiar ‘Ugh ugh’ buzzer.



The friendly competition has been almost as hot as the amazing weather we have had but perhaps the temperature might settle now that we are moving into Autumn.

Thank you to everyone who comes along and helps our event to continue to be so successful.

Singing for Pleasure

In addition to occasionally singing in French, Dutch, Maori and German, we have now started to try a beautiful Polynesian song. There's a lot of work to do on it because, as well as strange sounding words and a new tune, we are adding harmonies which really bring it to life.



To that end, we have spent 10-15 minutes at the beginning of each session during August learning and practicing some of the basic principles of harmonising. We do produce some great sounds when it all comes together and I am truly grateful that the Group's members tolerate my sometimes rather demanding ambitions. Well done, everyone – you are all stars!

We have been running under the present format for 5 years now (where on Earth did the time go?) and we continue to meet every Wednesday evening. If you are interested in joining why not let me know?

Computer Club “A Helping Hand”

Let's face it, most of us have spent many a frustrating day or so trying to understand the weird and wonderful ways of our computing devices.

Like as not Google or You Tube can help out.
But so, too, can The Computer Club.

We come together once a month to try to help out, as best we can, by discussing computing problems encountered by our members and explore ways in which other members may conceivably have experienced and possibly solved them . . . in essence, very much a “Workshop” session.

We've explored the worlds of SKYPE and DROPBOX, looked at the mysteries of recording, playing back and storing of thousands of music tracks.

More recently we've shared our experiences of “Scammers”, how to recognise and deal with them.

It doesn't matter how seemingly trivial your problem/experience might be . . . we're all “amateurs” trying to help each other.

So, do come along with your laptop, tablet or smartphone . . . we'll try to lend a hand to sort out whatever problem you've encountered.

Tony's Autumn Quiz 2018

1. Madame de Pompadour was mistress of which French King?
2. Derby, Pelham and Russell have all been what?
3. What does 'vulpine' mean?
4. What and in which country is the world's highest waterfall?
5. What animals pull the God Thor's wagon across the sky?
6. Where was the world's first duty-free shop?
7. In which film does Bette Davis play Mrs Van Schuyler?
8. Krypton, Xenon and Ununoctium are all what?
9. Add the fraternal sporting surname Graeme and Peter
10. What letter should appear next in this sequence?

A F E J I N M ?

Answers on Page 8

Group News

Art Group

We were lucky enough to get my niece to sit for us to practise portrait drawing. For most of us this was a first attempt and Zara was a perfect model.



We displayed our recent artwork at the Cotgrave Festival in the main marquee. This was very well received by the public and we chatted to many people about the U3A and its variety of activities.



The Art Group continues to grow, welcoming two new members recently.

We are all working on pieces to display in the church to commemorate the First World War in November.

Group News

Walking Group

The 'Short Walks' in terms of distance has progressed successfully during the last three months. The weather has been somewhere between warm and hot on each of our 3 walks.



Walk 1 was a requested walk by some members wishing to visit Highfield and the University to view the rhododendra, splendid in their assorted colours and the University Grounds. Our visit to view the flowers was followed by the discovery of the East Midlands Conference Centre and its associate Hotel, some of the University Lodges, Sporting Facilities and finally the café by the side of the lake for a refreshing break.

The second walk started at the Library in West Bridgford and followed a network of small roads to find the Studio Theatre. The walk continued to Edwalton and Morrison's where we succumbed to a break for a coffee. The return to our start point was via the Grantham Canal Towpath to Mabel Grove and the Library.



Our 3rd walk was to follow the Hoodwinked 2018 trail through Nottingham and we were able to visit 27 of the 33 Robins situated around the city.

Table Tennis

This group, which started in January 2018, has grown in numbers with 12 regular attendees. The Group meet on the afternoons of the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at Cotgrave Leisure Centre. As the months have passed the members have all improved their table tennis skills.



Theatre Group

Top Hat, Theatre Royal

On Saturday 2nd June, many of our members went to see Top Hat performed by Carlton Operatic Society at the Theatre Royal. It was an extremely accomplished performance, played to a packed audience.

The singing, acting, dancing, choreography and stage settings were splendid, all accompanied by an excellent and well directed orchestra.

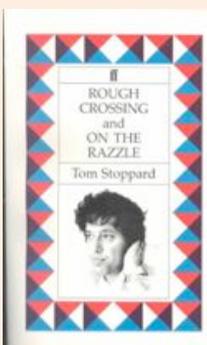
Apparently, most of the dancers had never danced before rehearsing for this show.

All of this was undertaken by an amateur society, full of energy and evident pleasure. We left the theatre with lovely songs ringing in our ears.

We shall keep an eager eye out for Carlton Operatic's next production.



Rough Crossing, The Lace Market Theatre



If you ask the average person to think of an English playwright, several might come up with the name of Tom Stoppard. In fact, he was born in the Czech Republic. He has spent his life writing numerous books, films and plays and being knighted and becoming an octogenarian along the way.

Rough Crossing, which 13 members saw in June, was written by Tom in 1984 but is set in the 1930s. It is a comedy-drama-musical mixture which revolves around 6 characters (5 men, 1 lady) who are travelling on board the *SS Italian Castle* from France to America. The plot includes a romance, an affair, a musical being written and several appearing/disappearing glasses of cognac which were the focus of some of the comedy elements of the play.

The first laugh came within less than 10 seconds of the play starting (surely that has to be some sort of record?) and more and more followed in rapid succession. The actors skilfully achieved the precision comedic and verbal timing to keep the audience interested - even throughout some complex and convoluted plot-lines and dialogue. The songs, which were written by Andre Previn (now there's a surprise!), were pleasant, well performed and the scenery, whilst minimal, was perfectly adequate to make us believe we were on board ship.

Overall, we enjoyed a very relaxed (and inexpensive) Saturday afternoon being thoroughly entertained by a small cast of enthusiastic and talented actors.

Continued on next page

Group News

Theatre Group (continued)

She Stoops to Conquer - The Lace Market

An old favourite - many of us remember it from school. Mrs Hardcastle complains to her husband that their house is old and looks like an inn, and in fact it is taken for one when two young men turn up. One is Sir Charles Marlow, who has come to woo Kate Hardcastle; the other is Hastings, who wants to marry her cousin Constance. Mrs Hardcastle has a son by a former marriage, Tony Lumpkin, who is gross and stupid, as his name suggests. He has been earmarked for Constance. Marlow is very shy with women of his own class but as he thinks Kate must be the serving wench ... well, it all ends happily, nobody has to marry the person they don't want to, everyone gets whom they want in the end - or nobody, in the case of Tony Lumpkin, which is just as well.



The Lace Market did the play splendidly. One of their strong points is costume, and they had every opportunity to go to town with period dress in this play. No weak performances and a relaxing, enjoyable afternoon to end the season.

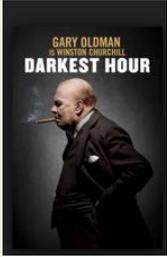
At the time of writing this, we have yet to go to The Wipers Times, on August 29th. I quote from the Royal Centre website. "Ian Hislop and Nick Newman's *The Wipers Times* tells the true and extraordinary story of the satirical newspaper created in the mud and mayhem of the Somme. In a bombed out building during the First World War in the Belgian town of Ypres (mispronounced Wipers by British soldiers) two officers discover a printing press and create a newspaper for the troops. Far from being a sombre journal about life in the trenches, they produced a resolutely cheerful, subversive and very funny newspaper designed to lift the spirits of the men on the front line. Defying enemy bombardment, gas attacks and the disapproval of many of the Top Brass, *The Wipers Times* rolled off the press for two years and was "an extraordinary tribute to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity."

Tony's Autumn Quiz 2018 ANSWERS.

1. Louis XV.
2. British Prime Ministers (Lords).
3. Fox-like.
4. Angel Falls in Venezuela.
5. Goats.
6. Shannon Airport.
7. Death on the Nile.
8. Gases.
9. Pollock.
10. 'R' The sequence moves forward five alphabetical places then back one.

Group News

Film Club



There were only two features at Long Clawson during this summer season with no film being shown during August. The June film was *'Darkest Hour'* telling the tale of the huge decisions which Winston Churchill, played by Gary Oldman, was forced to make to stop the advance of Nazi Germany.

The July film *'Loving Vincent'* told in an animated painted format the life of Vincent van Gogh.



The Broadway season started with *'Nothing Like A Dame'* where actresses Eileen Atkins, Jude Dench, Maggie Smith and Joan Plowright recalled their careers and reminisced about their humble beginnings. The foreign language film presentations were *'The Young Karl Marx'* set in 1844 Paris where Marx met a young Friedrich Engels, *'Le Crime De Monsieur Lange'*, a witty farce of murder and corruption and *'Pope Francis: A Man Of His Word'* a documentary which sets out to present his work of reform on today's social questions.

'The Piano', a restoration of the original film, and the story of a mute woman's rebellion in Victorian era, New Zealand was followed by a similar themed film 'The Hardy Price' which depicted the final three years of Oscar Wilde following his release from prison for indecency. A biopic of the Frankenstein author and her tempestuous marriage to poet Percy Shelley was the subject in *'Mary Shelley'* whilst *'That Good Night'* told the tale of a terminally ill famous writer seeking reconciliation with his son. *'The Book Shop'* set in a late 1950's sleepy American town saw Florence Green open a bookshop and expose the conservative locals to the best literature of the time.



'Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again' sees a pregnant Sophie seeking to find out about her mother's past and how relationships forged in the past resonate today with 'Christopher Robin', now a working class family man and having seemingly lost his way in life, encountering a childhood friend in Winnie the Pooh.

Sheila Hancock plays the part of 'Edie' in the film of the same name, which tells of an elderly woman, following the death of her controlling husband, deciding to fulfil a lifelong dream of climbing a Scottish mountain.



High Court Judge Fiona Mayer, portrayed by Emma Thompson has a difficult decision to make when dealing with a case of a young man just short of his 18th birthday refusing a lifesaving blood transfusion whilst in the eyes of the law he is still legally a child in the film *'The Children Act'*

Luncheon Group



June saw us going to the growing chain of value for money Italian food, Gusto, having now finally reached Nottingham and joined the growing list of restaurants in in the Bridgford Road/Central Avenue area.

So, as we're always on the lookout for new types of venue for our monthly U3A Luncheon, we thought we would give it a go . . . the more so as it is placed conveniently on the Nottingham/Cotgrave bus route (hop on/hop off . . .no need for the car!) . . . Needless to say we found it easily enough . . . just hop off at the Co-op in Central Avenue.

We were expected and greeted by a team of waiters (false dawn, see later!).

We had done our homework . . .the excellent value for money lunch was priced at 12.95 for two courses so we quickly ordered the Milanese-style meatballs (very tasty) and the pan fried fillet of sea bass (woefully over-cooked).

But the real disappointment was the service which was just not up to scratch . . .we were lucky . . .we ordered promptly and were able to hop back onto the Cotgrave bus pretty smartly . . .some of the rest of our party weren't so lucky . . . they were overtaken in the ordering hierarchy by a raucous crowd of cricket enthusiasts just popping in for a quick lunch between innings . . . and hence demanded and enjoyed priority. . . our bus was departing as they received their starter!

So, would we return? Yes, providing we'd checked first with the restaurant on its booking (and cricket!) arrangements for the day in question!

At 12.95 the set lunch is good value for two plates of classic middle range Italian foodand don't forget . . . you don't need the car!



The July Meeting of the Lunch Group found 19 members returning to the Willow Tree in West Bridgford.

There was a good selection of "pub grub" with most people choosing from the Lunch Menu.

From this menu Mains were £6 with Starters and Desserts being £3 each.

As on our last visit, the staff were pleasant and dealt efficiently with a couple of last minute alterations to our orders.

We were seated all together and the food came out so that everyone was served at the same time.

A pleasant couple of hours.

The August outing was to The Rancliffe Arms at Bunny. This was the first time the Luncheon Group had ventured to Bunny and also a first for some of the members. The service was very good from pleasant staff in nice surroundings. The quality of the meals varied from very good to fair, the Crispy Malaysian Chicken dish receiving some adverse comments . . .(it turned out the chef had tried a new cooking oil . . .the restaurant reacted well by offering a free pudding or coffee). The fish pie had more potato than fish. Steak pie was enjoyed with good pastry and vegetables were nicely cooked. In general the occasion went down well with good social chat, clean plates and drained glasses.



Group News

Knit & Natter

We still meet on the first Monday of the month usually at the Leaders house. There are 7 regular members in the Group who continue to share our expertise with new members or those in the Group who wish to learn new skills some of which are shown below



Travel Discussion Group

We didn't meet in August and the June and July meetings were of a different format, in that we didn't talk about places in the world to visit, but discussed how we could arrange an annual 4 or 5 day trip abroad for the whole membership and also the possibility of day trips, or trips with a 1 or 2 night stay, within our own country.

This has resulted, as you all now know, in Maureen arranging next year's trip to Berlin and Malcolm organizing of the day trip to Chatsworth on 17th November.

How many of us have said that we've travelled many times abroad but would really like to see more of Britain?

More ideas and suggestions will undoubtedly follow, so watch this space!

Maureen's monthly Newsletter gives all the details for the September meeting.

Croquet Group

The last three months have produced sunshine for all games, indeed once or twice requiring a fan in use under the pavilion roof.

We have also had several new members (10 in all) come and join in, which spreads the meeting and welcoming of the general membership, because it's within the groups that members get to know each other better. In the case of croquet, between 8 and 12 members sit and chat, whilst watching 4 players thrash it out on the court, in the gentlest of contests.

As I've continually mentioned before, because our very much simplified game takes only 20 minutes or so, with 4 players a round (the proper game takes over 3 hours), everyone has at least 2, and sometimes 3 or 4, games. Again, as I've mentioned before, though members improve in their game, the improvement is not such that they cannot be beaten by a new player - it's a very levelling system! For example, Rita, who joined us on 23rd August, and who'd never played before, came second (and very nearly won), in a game including "seasoned" players!

If you haven't already had a go, why not pop in and join us? - You don't have to play if you don't want to (though you most likely will). Just sitting, chatting, and watching the players, is relaxing and enjoyable, especially with a hot cup of coffee or tea, and squash when it's hot. Try it!

Comedy Corner

I've just burnt my Hawaiian Pizza

I should have put it on aloha temperature

Real Ale Group

The Real Ale Group visited two of the ever reliable Castle Rock Brewery pubs in June and July – The Poppy & Pint in Lady Bay and The Embankment at Trent Bridge. The former is so named because the brewery took over the British Legion premises on Pierrepont Road in Lady Bay. The deal was that they kept on the bowling greens and tennis courts with the result that it is a delightful family and community venue for all the residents of Lady Bay.



The Embankment is, of course, the former Boots premise just over Trent Bridge. Again, the brewery has made an excellent job of refurbishing the premises and providing an attractive and popular pub.

Both pubs have a very good selection of ales and beers and an acceptable menu of pub grub.

Our August venue was the Gamston Lock, the closest pub on the bus route. This is not a venue to which we will return. There was a choice of only three ales and the menu was distinctly unexciting! The staff did their best but the system was not to our liking. Disappointing!



In September we travel outside our comfort zone! We are visiting the Star Inn in the far off metropolis of Beeston which requires a tram journey.

What adventure! What excitement!

History Group

We continue to have a steady membership of 15-20 and still meet on the second Monday of every month at The Manvers in the village at 2-3.30. We have kept to our published programme for the year. This continues to run..meeting on local work, then visit, then speaker. We recently had an excellent talk from one of our members, Carole Pimblett on her work on ancestry and the meaning of words and place names. We were interested in the meaning of Cotgrave! We continue to have a number of members who are active researchers, including Carole and John Orton. We also had a talk from another member, Michael O'Connor...this was an impromptu affair on his research into his family roots. It seemed to go down well. Next month we are hoping to have a talk from John Ludlam or a visit to the Framework Knitters Museum in Ruddington. So come and join in the fun. We are once again indebted to the work of Paul Childs and Malcolm Baxter without whom we would have difficulty running.

Science Group

The Science Group is forging ahead with a wide range of talks from both members and invited speakers. Following on from Tom Foxon's talk about 'The Weather', we are lucky to have Mike Merrifield, head of the Astronomy Department at Nottingham University, coming to speak to us about 'Telescopes' and Mike Seymour, ex-BP, to speak about oil exploration.

From within the Group we have Keith Lindsell talking about Rocks and John Ainsley about 'Where does my ??? come from?' The Group Leader struggles to fill in when all else fails! And remember that the Group is intended for non-scientists – new members are always welcome – don't be afraid that it will be too difficult. You can contact me at 'john.orton1@talktalk.net'.

Group News

Coffee and Chat

We now have over twenty regular members of this popular Group that meets the fourth Wednesday of the month at 10.30am. What a good way to start a day! U3A is all about people meeting together for an activity that interests them. Well, our Group does not disappoint. The Group basically has a good conversation over a drink and perhaps a piece of cake or bacon sandwich. It attracts both women and men to just chat about anything that interests them or just sit and listen. If you don't drive a lift can always be arranged to venues out of Cotgrave.

Recently we have visited the updated East Bridgford Garden Centre which has been developed, as many garden centres have, to sell anything from a party dress to a toy bus. It also has of course plants to sell. It is now quite large and after meeting with the Group for a drink and a chat members can visit, if they wish, lots of other sales departments.



We have also met in the Wellington Cafe at the Bradmore Garden Centre. This is one of the Group's favourite venues. Here, too, is a good range of different sales departments with a cafe which is always welcoming.

Finally, this Group has met several times in Cotgrave at the Manvers Arms. We tend to go there every alternate session as it does not involve any travelling. Here too we are always welcome and anything we spend on cake is donated to a charity.

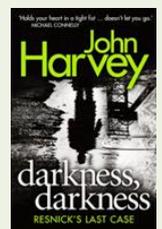
We are planning a trip to Chocks Away next at Nottingham Airport, Tollerton and perhaps if the weather is kind we will sit outside and see several aircraft movements.

So do come along and give us a try! It is a good Group to join with almost as many men as women attending. It is a good way to get to know members in a relaxed atmosphere.

See you there soon we hope!

Book Club

During the last 3 months we have visited the Nottingham area, parts of Britain and Italy. The first book was "darkness, darkness" by John Harvey, a local author. The main part is set during the Miners' strike 30 years ago but is stirred up by the discovery recently of a girl's remains during demolition of tenement housing. A war between the past and present, in a country wracked by guilt and vengeance, a country torn into pieces. A brilliant, important and moving book about the legacy of 1984 and where and who we are now. Lots of discussion and members revisiting those memories of local events in their mining village. Scored 6/7.



The next book was "The Road to Little Dribbling" by Bill Bryson. In 1995 Bill wrote about his trip around Britain and this book is the new version. He guides us through the best and worse of Britain with his own comments and opinions on The National Trust, Bognor Regis, people and the changes that have taken or not taken place. There were some laughs, some dry/ dull moments and some enlightening facts...so was educational. We had some interesting discussions and feedback but generally thought his previous book was better. Scored 5/6



The final book is "The Liberation" by Kate Furnivall. This is set in Italy in 1945. British and American troops attempt to bring order to the devastated country. This epic novel is an unforgettably powerful story of love, loss and the long shadow of the war.



Creative Writing Group

A recent topic at the Creative Writing Group was “A Memorable Occasion”. This was one contribution.

Now with my increasing age, I don't remember things so well as previously. But then, if the truth be told, I never was particularly good at remembering. Maybe that was why I didn't pass my professional exams! Although those days in Westminster's Central Hall still live with me.

And then my National Service Call-up; again, not forgotten...but not an occasion I enjoy remembering. Even the time I had the satisfaction of halting The Old Man's car; it was a fire drill, and our hand-propelled – pushed, that is – fire cart was arriving to cross the road into the barracks just as the Colonel's limo came along the road. Being on Guard duty, I was able to hold my rifle out (across my chest -- as we had been instructed, in case you thought otherwise) and I was aware of T.O.M. winding the window down ready to give me a, erhm, mouthful. He actually grinned to see the cart being trundled across his path.

One good moment was after another such Guard duty (as a Corporal, that seemed to come around quite often), this time a Saturday so that I was able leave the barracks on early Sunday morning. Without changing from uniform into my civvies; which turned out to be lucky. I walked to the main London-bound road, had barely got there when a car stopped, even without my thumb being raised. "Where you off to? London?" When I mentioned the Edgware Road, it turned out that he was actually going along it – so I got a lift to my doorstep.

Memorable, well, yes, but fleeting. Recalled only because of this task?

So much is of a fleeting nature; good at the time, but needing some trigger to bring it to the forefront of the mind. I consider that such a memorable occasion would be the event that needs a mere touch to do just that – a trigger, maybe, but one that can occur often--- a song, a smell, a plate of food, a sight of, say, flowers, a sunset.

For me, that almost ever present ghost is contact with my six surviving children.

Now that they are parents themselves, most of them anyway, I don't actually see them so frequently. But the modern mechanical, or rather-- technical, means of communication mean they are (or can be) in touch.

And the time that such contact brings flooding forward is the celebration we arranged for our thirtieth wedding anniversary.

For that sort of gathering we called on, of course, not only relatives but friends from across the years. And they came from the extremes of England (the former Scots residents had wandered over the border, to Northumberland), representing all those places we had been involved with.

It was held at nearby Trumpton Hall. The day itself turned out sunny, but not too hot. We had previously been there for a literary reading event; had seen the preparations for a wedding reception there, and with merely a look at each other, duly booked it for our event. We had, of course, previously been talking about such a celebration. On The Day, the huge marquee was lined with long tables, pristine white clothes covering them, but also with smaller, round settings. All decked with a striking display of blossoms (so striking, that I cannot recall even the colours, let alone the varieties! But that is me, the effect of that display is what remains). The meal was very good, catering for all dietary concerns, with such drinks as the guests requested. We finished in there with some circle dancing, and then spilled out onto the lawns, and wandered around the lakeside. A good time was had by all.

Indeed a Memorable Occasion.

But THE memorable occasion was thirty years previous.

And I still love you.

Speakers Corner (1) - Best Borders; Perennials for Herbaceous Borders

Our June meeting was favoured by a most impressive talk by Stuart Dixon, illustrated by beautiful slides of his own garden at Hebbs Farmhouse, Stoke Bardolph. He bought the eighteenth century farmhouse in a decrepit state some years ago and has restored it to its original condition and surrounded it with a wonderful garden of perennials. He now has something like 2800 slides taken over the years and we were able to enjoy an excellent selection, starting from a horrific picture of the acre of devastation with which he was initially faced!

Roses are clearly one of his favourite plants and we saw many beautiful examples, glorious both en masse and as individual blooms. He showed us several examples of lovely combinations of rose and clematis – he said that he never grows clematis on trellis or tripod, arguing that it should always be mingled with rambling roses, even though that might occasionally lead to pruning problems. One particular favourite of his is the musk rose, with its characteristic scent, though not, perhaps, to everyone's liking. Then there was



another rose which gloried in its razor-sharp thorns, forming a totally impregnable barrier to human intervention. He imagined there must be numerous old barns scattered about the countryside which contained ancient Austin Sevens or Rolls Royces, slowly rotting away behind barriers of these roses.

I lost count of the number of other perennials which he described and which he unhesitatingly named and dated - I think we were all more than a little impressed by his wonderful command of detail which demonstrated his obvious love of them all. There were delphiniums, hollyhocks, iris and phlox, black-eyed susans, lobelia and scabia, to mention but a few. There were jet black irises and there was also something called *Lobelia siphilitica* which sounded rather off-putting in spite of its obvious beauty to the eye. Yet another favourite was something called Aswego which, apart from looking delightful, was also used to make tea – not very nice, in Stuart's opinion.



Stuart also mentioned quite a number of famous gardeners with whom he was well acquainted, including Geoff Hamilton who started the trend for gardening broadcasts, now getting somewhat out of hand. Geoff, at his peak could count on eight-and-a-half million listeners. We were all somewhat shocked by the price now charged by today's gardening celebrities but I can't resist recording one wonderful quote which would surely never gain acceptance on a modern programme – in reference to a rose named Constance Spry, this broadcaster claimed that "Constance Spry is no good in bed but just loves it up against a wall." I suggest that this sums up very well a delightful and enjoyable talk. May the U3A continue to enjoy its share of humour.

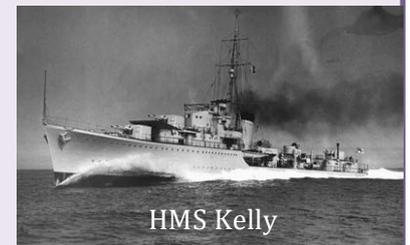
Speakers Corner (2) - The Controversial Mountbattens

The July meeting enjoyed an excellent talk by John Whitfield on Lord Louis and Lady Edwina Mountbatten. Without a single note, he spoke for an hour and kept us all fascinated by a wealth of detail, while still contriving to provide a broad overview of his subject.

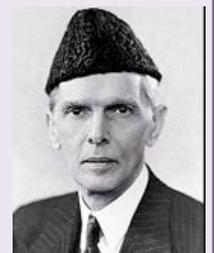


Louis Mountbatten's father was of German origin, rejoicing in the title of Prince Louis of Battenberg. He had ambition to follow a naval career and saw better opportunity in the English navy, reaching the rank of First Sea Lord by the beginning of the First World War. However, anti-German sentiment stimulated him to change his name from Battenberg to Mountbatten (a made-up name). Louis the son nevertheless was keen to emphasise his royal pedigree, while he, too, pursued a career in the Navy. 'Royal' he may have been but rich he was certainly not. By contrast, Edwina was of less exalted ancestry, being effectively ignored following her mother's death and father's remarriage when she was fourteen years old, but becoming extremely rich when her father died, inheriting no less than £2.5 million. Their marriage was unconventional, in the sense that Louis concentrated on his naval career, which took him around the world, and on a love of fast speedboats, while Edwina devoted herself to a life of luxury, pursued at a frantic pace. She was also multiply unfaithful. In fact, John regarded it as something of a mystery that they should manage to produce two legitimate daughters.

Mountbatten began his naval experience as a young man aboard a battleship, later took up with Edward Prince of Wales, went to Australia on the 'Renown' (a battle cruiser), went tiger shooting in India and graduated to having his own command on a destroyer named 'Kelly'. This was twice damaged at the beginning of the Second World War, then was totally destroyed in action in the Mediterranean. Churchill appointed him head of Combined Services in 1942 and he was involved in a crazy attack on German-occupied Dieppe. It was intended to be some kind of rehearsal for D-Day but was a total disaster in which thousands of Canadian troops lost their lives. Mountbatten contrived to place the blame everywhere but on himself! He may have been at least partially successful in this for, in 1943, he was put in charge of South-East Asia Command and displayed considerable charisma in dealing with a range of diplomatic problems – indeed, he seemed to take a liking to Asian personalities, which was to colour his future diplomatic life. In the meantime, Edwina made an even greater volte-face by turning herself into a strong supporter of St John's Ambulance Brigade, for which she worked with a zeal commensurate with her earlier hectic social life. After the war, she joined her husband in the Far East and worked prodigiously to resuscitate prisoners-of-war from Japanese prison camps.



Perhaps surprisingly, Mountbatten was a firm supporter of the Atlee Labour Government and the Prime Minister saw him as the ideal man to take responsibility for bringing independence to the Indian sub-continent. This, indeed, he did, though only at the expense of many thousands of lives following the Muslim leader, Jinnah's insistence on there being a separate Muslim state, now called Pakistan. The carnage associated with transferring millions of people between the different regions was appalling but in this instance the fault probably didn't lie with Mountbatten – no-one could have done anything to prevent it, given Jinnah's intransigence. Sadly, perhaps, Mountbatten lost a lot of friends, not because of the loss of life but because he was seen as a traitor for 'losing' a vital part of the British Commonwealth.



Continued on next page

Speakers Corner (2) - The Controversial Mountbattens (continued)

A much less well known contribution to national politics came in 1960 when Mountbatten used his undoubted charm to coax the secrets of the Polaris nuclear deterrent out of reluctant American hands. Apparently, numerous British politicians had tried and failed to persuade their American counterparts to part with its secrets and no-one gave Mountbatten a chance but he proved them all wrong and we are, to this day, the proud owners of the Polaris submarine technology as a direct result of Mountbatten's charisma! 1960 also saw the death of Edwina, leaving Mountbatten to soldier on until his assassination by an IRA terrorist in 1979.



Comedy Corner

The inventor of the throat lozenge has died

There will be no coffin at his funeral

How did I feel when I could not recall the Roman numerals for 51,6 and 500

LIVID

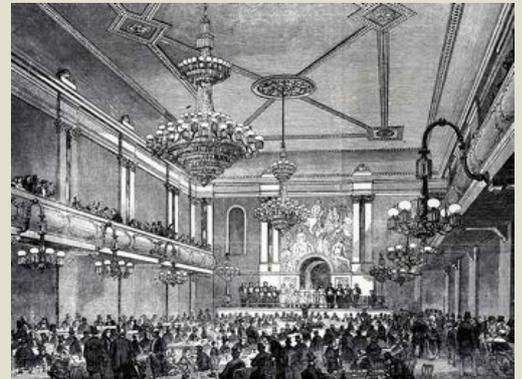
What did Cinderella say when her photos did not turn up?

One day my prints will come

Speakers Corner (3) - Masters of Mirth

Mike Storr – from Burton Joyce – addressed our August meeting at very short notice, following a breakdown in communication with our scheduled speaker, for which we must be extremely grateful. His subject was “Masters of Mirth” – an affectionate look at some favourite music hall characters who made us laugh (mainly) in the 1950s. His ability to reproduce the style and accent of the original performers was remarkable and certainly entertained our meeting to the full. He asked for no fee but welcomed donations to his favourite charity, Asthma UK.

Music Hall was born at the beginning of the nineteenth century in numerous taverns, scattered round the country but mainly in London. It seemed that liqueur was an essential part of the process, as evidenced by the lack of success of various prohibitionist organisations to establish alternative venues. But Music Hall really took off when an entrepreneur by name of Charles Morton inaugurated a purpose-built hall capable of holding some three hundred people. An interesting feature, dependent on the lack of the internet, was the fact that comic performers were able to thrive on just one or two catch phrases for as much as five years. By moving from venue to venue they could amuse new audiences who had never heard their acts before.



Examples of Mike’s favourites began with Rob Wilton, doing his ‘Home Guard’ monologue: “The day War Broke out, my missus said to me” etc, she wanting to know just what he thought he could usefully do towards the war effort, while he struggled to justify his joining the Home Guard, together with ‘seven or eight others’. Rob had started life as an engineer and, like so many of his contemporaries, drifted into music hall almost by accident.



Sir George Roby was another such but, unusually, had a good education and ended up at Cambridge University. He started his stage career by working as an assistant to a hypnotist, during which he discovered that he could sing well enough to attract large audiences and frequently captivated as many as four separate audiences in one evening. A surprise to me was the name ‘Marriott Edgar’ who was apparently a prolific writer of amusing monologues, including one of my favourites, ‘Albert and the Lion’ (part of Stanley Holloway’s well-known repertoire) which Mike rendered perfectly for us.



He also presented an excellent rendering of Gerard Hoffnung’s famous ‘Bricklayer’ monologue – another of my own favourites. In the interest of maintaining some approximation to a balance between the sexes, his next performer was Pam Ayres, with several of her inimitable poems, followed by Sir Bernard Miles, the founder of the Mermaid Theatre in London, who, it turns out, was also something of a comic performer, himself.

Altogether, this was a highly entertaining hour, much enjoyed by all of us. There was a clear consensus among the people I spoke to that we should invite Mike to come again and it turned out that he has a ‘Masters of Mirth – Sequel’ so we may well be seeing him again before long.

And Finally



Welcome to the new members who have joined since the
Summer issue of the Gazette.

Caroline Mitchell and Aileen & Bernie Besnard

If you are booking a holiday with Riviera Travel don't forget to mention your membership of Cotgrave & District U3A at the time, as they kindly donate 10% of the cost of the holiday to your U3A.

(Please also let the Treasurer, Chris Soar, know so he can claim the money back.)

Articles for inclusion in the next edition of the Gazette should be sent to

The Editor by 1st December 2018