



Tetbury & District u3a Newsletter

June 2023

Message from the Chair

I hope that you are all well and enjoying the summer sunshine. Hopefully the balance of sun and rain is sufficient for all our gardeners.

As a u3a we are going from strength to strength. Membership is growing and new groups starting. Look out for an Art Appreciation Group and a Blues Jamming group ! Do keep the ideas for new groups coming. Let Audrey our groups' co-ordinator know, and we'll set wheels in motion.

Our membership subscription for the coming year will be due in July. I'm afraid that we have had to bow to the inevitable and against a background of increasing costs we will need to raise the subscription to £10. We hope that you agree that still represents good value for money , giving access to ten monthly talks as well as the opportunity to join interest groups. Our forecast shows, based on what we know

at the moment, that we will then be able to maintain that level of subscription for the following year.

Thanks as ever for your continued support !

Monthly Speakers

On **Monday 17th July 10.30am** at the Goods Shed Steve Roth will give a talk on *Crime and Punishment*, a story of rogues, ruffians, and the merely unfortunate. Discover the origins of Robin Hood and meet the Peaky Blinders of the Middle Ages. Join highwaymen - charming and otherwise - and their often equally famous steeds. Come face to face with the gallows and the troubled men hired to administer the rope. Travel the seas with the men and women transported to Australia and find out how prison entered an age of enlightenment.

Group News

The Historic Buildings Group

Our May visit was to Acton Court, near Yate. The visit was well supported (just under 40 members) and the weather was glorious. Our extremely knowledgeable guide Roger explained the features of the house in the context of its history.

In 1535, one of England's most colourful kings, Henry VIII, came to stay at Acton Court with his second wife Anne Boleyn, while on his royal summer progress around the West Country. The owner of Acton Court, Nicholas Poyntz, wanted to impress his sovereign. So, for Henry's pleasure, he built a magnificent new East Wing on to the existing moated manor house. The new wing was a splendid testament to Nicholas Poyntz's loyalty to his King. He went to immense trouble and expense to impress Henry, decorating the state apartments lavishly and fashionably. He was well rewarded as it is thought he was knighted during the royal visit.

Today, the East Wing which was built in just nine months comprises most of what remains at Acton Court. It offers a rare example of 16th century royal state apartments and some decorations which are said to be the finest of their kind in England.

Also surviving, hidden in the masonry until it was discovered during conservation work in 1994, is the King's "en suite" garderobe, or privy.



Sir Nicholas went on building at Acton Court until his death in 1556. The long gallery was a daring construction for its time, the eastern

half still survives. It has large windows and a painted frieze of biblical text and moralising verses in Latin.



During archaeological excavations at Acton Court, there were many exciting finds, thought to be associated with King Henry's visit. These include examples of the finest Venetian glass of its time, Spanish ceramics, and some of the earliest clay tobacco pipes yet discovered. Dating from the late 16th century, these support the view that Sir Walter Raleigh gave one of the first demonstrations in England of the technique of smoking during a visit to Acton Court in 1520.

One item of particular importance was found by chance in a nettle patch next to the building. It is a Cotswold limestone sundial designed by the royal horologist, Nicholas Kratzer, dated 1520.

The Poyntz family-owned Acton Court from 1364 until the 1680s when the direct line of succession ended, and the house was sold. It was subsequently reduced in size and converted for use as a tenant farmhouse. The building's fortunes declined to the point of dilapidation in the 20th century. It is due to this neglect that Acton Court was left largely untouched, and as a result a unique Tudor

building has been preserved virtually intact. If you missed this splendid visit, you could see this hidden gem when Acton Court is open to the public 31st May to 2nd July. See www.actoncourt.com for more information.

Our June visit is to Bowood House & Gardens (Wednesday 28 June), and on Wednesday 19 July we are visiting Kelmscott Manor for a private guided tour and lunch. We have a trip to Salisbury on Wednesday August 16 to visit "Arundells", the former home of Sir Edward Heath.

Contact historicbuildings@tetburyu3a.org.uk for more information about these visits.

The Wednesday Book Club

On Wednesday 31 May seven of us met at The Royal Oak to discuss 'Hidden Figures' by Margot Lee Shetterly, the incredible story of Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson and Katherine Johnson.

Shetterly started researching her book about the role of African/American women who overcame both race and gender-based discrimination and segregation to play a major role in the space race. Called "Computers" these women started work, with such dignity, in the all black West Computing unit. A story that needed telling but not an easy read as there were so many facts and figures.

We're not meeting in June as a lot of us are away so our next meeting will be Wednesday 26th July when shall discuss 'The Vanishing Half' by Brit Bennett. New members welcome.

bookclubwednesday@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Gardening Group

The group met on 22 June on a gloriously sunny day at the American Museum Garden at Claverton, near Bath. Their website describes the garden as, "Grade II listed and set on 125 acres of green, rolling topography with stunning views across the valleys. Featuring designs by famous American landscape architectural firm Oehme Van Sweden (OVS), the gardens represent some of the most iconic movements in American landscape design and include the New American Garden, Mount Vernon - which is a replica from George Washington's famous house outside Washington, DC - a dell, an arboretum, amphitheatre and children's garden along with a wilderness trail and parklands for further exploration."



Monday Book Club

Our May meeting had fewer members as a number were away on holiday, but we still had a very interesting evening. We had read *Young Mungo* by Douglas Stuart; on the whole it received a vote of 4 out of 5 with one of the group giving it a 0 for the subject matter. It was difficult to read in some parts but was an interesting book and was enjoyed by others as much as his first book, 'Shuggie Bain'.

We are holding our June meeting at the Royal Oak on Monday 26th when we will be discussing 'The Fall' by John Preston about the downfall of Robert Maxwell. Robert Harris of the Sunday Times called it the best biography of the media magnate - by turns engrossing, amusing and appalling. The amount of money that Maxwell spent during his lifetime was truly eye watering and how he ran his businesses could only end in disaster.

Our next book is the 'Hare with the Amber Eyes' by Edmund de Waal which won the 2010 Costa Biography Award and tells the true story of collection of 264 Japanese wood and ivory carvings, none of them larger than a matchbox, which belonged to his great uncle Iggy. When he later inherited the 'netsuke' they unlocked a far more dramatic story than he could ever have imagined. From a burgeoning empire in Odessa to fin de siècle Paris, from occupied Vienna to post-war Tokyo, de Waal traces the 'netsuke's' journey through generations of his remarkable family against the backdrop of a tumultuous century.

bookclubmonday@teburyu3a.org.uk

Boules Group

We entered three teams into the Tetbury Hospital Boules Tournament on Sunday 28 May: The U3a Hotshots, The Tetbury Tea Bags and the Rolling Stones!



The hotshots missed the quarter final by one point.



The Tea Bags made the quarter final!

The main thing is that everyone enjoyed a great day out with Lunch a bonus!



And talking of competitions, two teams from Tetbury & District u3a entered the Tetbury Bowls Club 'corporate day' competition for non-bowlers on Saturday 3 June. It was a new experience for all of our entrants and the 'woods' took a bit of getting used to. Suffice to say we didn't trouble the leader board but at the end of the day a game of 'spider' was played (all 40+ entrants simultaneously bowling one wood from the perimeter of the green at a central 'jack') and our own Keith Hodgson ended closest to the jack and was presented with a bottle of booze!

boules@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Ukelele Group

When we started out 10 sessions ago I don't think the ten or so of us would have thought we were going to have such enjoyment. Our first "gig" in May for the good folk of Upton Mill saw us all strumming away to well-known 50 and 60s numbers from Lonnie Donnigan, Cliff Richard and Elvis. Mike, our mentor and wonderful teacher was there with the patter, and we were warmly welcomed - even being requested for a

repeat visit. Our ukeleles have become part of our lives with "you are my sunshine" stuck on repeat in the brain, but we all leave our Tuesday session with broad smiles and a huge sense of achievement. Is it too early to start learning "We Three Kings of Orient Are" ? We may not be a hugely talented group, but we are not short on enthusiasm and laughter.

ukulele@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Play Reading Group

May saw us, no not dancing round a maypole but close, we were in Larkrise to Candleford, Flora Thompson's world where she grew up in Oxfordshire in the 19th century (1876-1947). She wrote a trilogy based on her own experience. The play required a fair amount of singing which for us ended in giggles as we would never describe ourselves as a choir! It was lovely to catch the flavour of the time and follow the main character as she left her community to work in the post office in a nearby town. Maybe one day we will read more of the story. Due to popular demand we are proposing to set up another group which will meet on a different day of the month. We normally meet on the last Monday of the month. Watch this space for more information.

playreading@tetburyu3a.org.uk

History Group



The History Group stayed close to home for its last meeting. After some short introductory scene-setting talks given by David Walker, Bob Kelley and George Keeling the group examined the influence of the various arts movements on Victorian church architecture. St

Saviour's, Tetbury, is an interesting example as it was built at a time when the Tractarian movement in England was harking back to simpler times and many artists were pioneering a return to the Gothic and early renaissance painting. Taking time out from working on the new houses of parliament being built in London, Augustus Pugin oversaw the construction of the ceiling in the chancel of St Saviour's and probably had a hand in the design of several fittings such as the large "gasolier". To see the influence of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and William Morris one should go to Selsley Church where the stained-glass windows were all made by them.

While at St Saviour's the group sought out the 16 commonwealth war graves surrounding the church which give an idea of the breadth of world war casualties. As well as Royal Navy, Army and Royal Airforce personnel there are representatives from Canada and Australia, with a single woman, Serjeant (sic) Cynthia Sedgwick of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, who was the daughter of a Tetbury doctor and died in London in 1942.

New Groups

Art Appreciation Group

An Art Appreciation Group will be starting in July. It will be quite a small group, to enable good discussion. It will meet monthly, generally at 2:30 on the first Wednesday of the month . For the first meeting members will each bring a copy of a painting they like and talk about it to the group. After that at each meeting members will focus on an agreed topic and find out about it to share with the rest of the group for up to 15 minutes each. Initially topics will be about painting. This might be broadened over time.

If you are interested in joining the group , please contact our Groups' Co-ordinator. groups@tetburyu3a.org.uk

Blues Jamming Group

Anyone got a guitar and enjoys the blues, both a little bit of playing and singing? How about a "blues jamming" group? The idea would be to get together at agreed frequencies, get some blues guitar and songs and jam. It could be electric or acoustic guitars - please be assured that this would be very much an amateur group. I am very amateur indeed but having just been on a basic blues guitar retreat it was great fun just playing in a group. The idea would be, perhaps, to bring a classic blues song along, share the chord structures and some of the licks and riffs for it. Just have some fun .. very casual and informal with a beer or two? Contact Michael Thomson at bluesjamming@tetburyu3a.org.uk if you are interested.

And finally

To all Group Leaders:

This will be my last Newsletter as I am stepping down from the u3a Committee because my 3-year tenure is just about up. Caroline Hose has kindly offered to take on the role of Newsletter Editor and will be producing the next and subsequent Newsletters for the foreseeable future. Please be kind to her and don't forget to send in your Group reports promptly so she can keep the membership updated on all your comings and goings. Your reports are vital to inform members, especially new members, and to show how welcoming we are. I have enjoyed publishing your news and look forward to reading all about Tetbury & District u3a in future. Please use the contact:

newsletter@tetburyu3a.org.uk to send articles to Caroline.