

Borderlines

December 2016



The magazine of Llandrindod and District U3A



Introduction from the Editor

Hello and welcome to the December edition of Borderlines. I'm delighted to announce that Kathie Richards Jones is joining me in producing it. She has a lot of experience in this field and we are looking forward to working together. We are very grateful to the committee for agreeing to fund more up to date software and to Nick for his endless patience in training us on it. With Kathie and Nick's help the magazine will be much more professional.



There is a drawback, though. At the moment I can be fairly flexible, and rearrange articles or sizes or fonts just before going to printing in order to accommodate everything. We won't be able to do that in future so would like any contributions as soon as possible.

With best wishes for a Happy Christmas, Margaret

Welcome

We would like to welcome (or, in some cases, welcome back!) The following new members

Sept : James Young

October: Francesca Bantock; James and Mercia Dailey; Margaret Easteal; Brenda and Dan Healy; Lucy Housden; Leslie Lewis and Allan Simcock.

November: Delphine Carter; Edward Johes; David Nicholson; Mandy Rolland and David Swindale .

We hope you enjoy your time with Llandrindod and District U3A

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Cover: Jane Stevens as the Bird Woman from Mary Poppins. See middle pages.

Photo Barbara Warner

We did it!

The Annual Quiz for the U3A Mid Wales Network took place at The Hotel Metropole, Llandrindod Wells on Saturday 29th October. The quiz master was Roger Bowen of Crickhowell U3A and six teams participated. The event was won by The Die Hards (Llandrindod) and the team was comprised of Pat Barlow, Kelvin Evans, Margaret Mason, Helen



The Die Hards



The wise owls

Spain and Martha Wooldridge. Welshpool finished second with one of the Brecon teams third. Other teams were the Wise Owls (also Llandrindod David and Elaine Blackman; Penny Everett; Jane Page and Sue Turner), Brecon Penyfan (who only had a team of 3) and Llandovery.

The quiz was very well set with a wide variety of topics including antique objects to identify. All teams thoroughly enjoyed the event and look forward to next year. Although consistently in the top three, Llandrindod has not won the event since the first year of the quiz, so we are delighted with our success this time. Text Kelvin Evans, Photographs Berwyn Woolnough.

Cinema Group

Christmas showing plus mince pies!

December 16: A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur (Bing Crosby, William Bendix)

Doors open 2.15, lights out at 2.30. Please let Roger Malvern know if you are attending. 01597 823806

Membership Statistics

Our membership numbers and geographical spread of members continues to grow.

I thought you might like to know that we reached a record attendance for a meeting this November with 136 members attending, 5 new members, and 1 taster session. A grand total of 142 people and yes we did need to get out more chairs and extra tea and coffee. A combination of a popular speaker topic and Christmas lunch orders?

Working out the average, taken from the register records over the last eight meetings, the average per meeting is a rather unfortunate 124.75 people, two short of 1000 individuals listening to the last 8 speakers. **Karen Latham**



Beware Brits Bearing Gifts

At the beginning of the 70s Germany was short of English teachers, and I was one of those selected to go over and help.

Before being let loose in a school all the successful candidates had to attend a week-long orientation course. We were a mixed bunch as far as proficiency in German was concerned, so lectures were delivered in excellent English by our hosts. However, the course leader, who could have passed as a native speaker, tended to make bizarre errors when using idioms: "Since then a lot of sand has flowed under the bridge"; "Rome wasn't burnt in a day"...

I commented on this to one of my colleagues. He explained that Herr Dr Schmidt was fascinated by idioms. He always carried a notebook and was continually asking people for new ones to add to his collection. So, when approached by him, I was well prepared. As he opened his notebook I caught sight of some of the contents: "I can't tell you off the sleeve", "The world is my ashtray"...

And now it was my turn. "Heard this one?" I asked and he noted it down. You can imagine how delighted I was when he brought the last session of the course to a close with the words: "Well it's 12.30 so if you'd like to gather up your bits and t*ts, we'll have some lunch". And that's what we did.

by Berwyn Woolnough



SINGING FOR FUN IN VICTORIAN WEEK 2016

This year the Singing for Fun group joined in the festivities by holding a singalong in Holy Trinity Church in keeping with the 'Stories from our Childhood' Exhibition there.

Once again our members showed their talents not just by singing but by having fun dressing up as characters from some well-known childrens' books.

We chose one book from each decade of the 20th century, starting with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* published in 1900 and picked a song to celebrate each story, ending with *John Brown's Body* as a rousing climax to complement the book *The Last Silk Dress* published in 1999.

Queen Victoria and her entourage were guests in the audience and, in reply to a question from Martha, stated that was "very amused" by the performance...

Photos and text Barbara Warner



The event starred Jane Malvern as the Wizard in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*; Sue Turner as Bobby in *The Railway Children*; Ann Wheatley as Mary in *The Secret Garden*; Bob Atkins as *Rupert Bear*; Penny Everett as *Winnie the Pooh*; Ann Morgan as Mary Poppins and Jane Stevens as The Bird Woman both from the *Mary Poppins series*; Richard Davies as *Biggles*; David Horne as Julian, Don Warner as Dick, Mary Davies as George, Joy Hilsden as Anne and Timmy the Dog (kindly drawn for us by Karen Latham from the Art Group) all from the *Famous Five series*; Ewart Hilsden as Caractacus Potts and Dorothy Jones as Truly Scrumptious from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*; Humphrey Morgan and Martha Wooldridge as evacuees in *Carries' War and Fireweed*; Barbara Warner as the hippopotamus in *There's A Hippopotamus On Our Roof Eating Cake* and Janice Horne as Susan in *The Last Silk Dress*.

Seniors Banking...

Shown below, is an actual letter that was sent to a bank by an 86 year old woman. **The bank manager thought it amusing enough to have it published in the Times.**

Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my cheque with which I endeavoured to pay my plumber last month.

By my calculations, three nanoseconds must have elapsed between his presenting the cheque and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honour it.

I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my entire pension, an arrangement which, I admit, has been in place for only eight years.

You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my account £30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways. I noticed that whereas I personally answer your telephone calls and letters, --- when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become.

From now on, I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person.

My mortgage and loan repayments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank, by cheque, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate.

Be aware that it is an OFFENSE under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope.

Please find attached an Application Contact which I require your chosen employee to complete.

I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative.

Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Notary Public figure, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course, at MY convenience, I will issue your employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me.

I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modelled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone bank service.

As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further.

When you call me, press buttons as follows:

IMMEDIATELY AFTER DIALLING, PRESS THE STAR (*) BUTTON FOR ENGLISH

#1. To make an appointment to see me

#2. To query a missing payment.

#3. To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.

#4 To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.

#5. To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.

#6. To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home.

#7. To leave a message on my computer, a password to access my computer is required.

Password will be communicated to you at a later date to that Authorized Contact mentioned earlier.

#8. To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 to 9

#9. To make a general complaint or inquiry.

The contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service.

While this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration of the call.

Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

May I wish you a happy, if ever so slightly less prosperous New Year?

Your Humble Client

And remember:

Don't make old people mad. We don't like being old in the first place, so it doesn't take much to piss us off!

Contributed by Karen Latham



My “Favourite Place” - the Elan Valley

by Clive Barrett

Here the water begins its journey to Birmingham from the Foel Tower, near the Garreg Ddegh Viaduct, descending by gravity to Frankley Reservoir, near Kings Norton.

Prior to 1891 the Elan Valley was a small community consisting of cattle and sheep farms, with one or two lead mines, with Rhayader being the nearest market town. But then the City of Birmingham Corporation purchased 71 sq.miles of the valley, so that its citizens could lay claim to all the rain that fell in that area - an average of 70 inches per year - and two years later construction work began.

One of the two substantial residences that would disappear under the water of the Caban-Coch Reservoir was Nantgwilt (the other was Cwm-Elan). It was here in 1812 that the famous poet Percy B. Shelley lived with his first young wife Harriet. The house inspired the novelist Frances Bett Young to write “The House Under the Water”. Later George Yourdi, resident engineer for the dams project also lived there. - now only the garden walls can be seen when the water level is low (last noticed in October 2003 after a very dry summer).

Following a recent genuine fall in our garden (when I fell backwards knocking myself unconscious and apparently hitting my head on an unknown object) I imagined what the Valley was like before it was submerged. I dreamt that one day in 1812 I visited Nantgwilt, in the lower valley of the River Claerwen, for the purpose of interviewing the poet on behalf of our branch of the U3A, about his life and career. I had thought carefully about the questions to put to him and began by asking him about his early life. He told me he had been born into a very wealthy middle class family, and his father was Sir Thomas Shelley, a Whig Member of Parliament. His mother Elizabeth Pilford was a Sussex landowner. Percy enjoyed a happy and contented childhood, spent fishing and hunting.

From my research I knew he had attended Eton College and was eager to know if his time there had been happy - he paused a second before replying and then to my surprise indicated that he had been bullied both physically and mentally by older boys. However he admitted he had been keen on science, was mischevious and liked playing practical jokes.

After securing a place at University College he published his first Gothic novel “Zastrozzi” in which he vented his early atheistic worldview. In 1810 he also published “Original Poetry” and (anonymously) a pamphlet called “The Necessity of Aetheism” - for which he was expelled from Oxford!

Lastly I asked about his personal life. His wedding to Harriet Westbrook took place in Scotland on 28th August 1811 and the couple had first visited his uncle at Cwm-Elan before deciding to live at Nantgwilt.

Before I was able to ask him more, the now famous poet insisted on showing me around his home and lovely walled gardens. There was just time for a final look before I proceeded home - the oncoming waters once again submerging the entire long lost valley - which I had seen and imagined...