



Newsletter

Affiliated to the Third Age Trust
Registered Charity No. 1165448

Issue 107

March 2021

FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN.

Unfortunately, it is now nearly a year since I first put together a few notes regarding how BU3A hoped to operate during the Covid crisis. Whilst the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel is getting a bit brighter, there is still a long road to travel before we will be able to consider some 200 of us congregating in one room. However, the latest news regarding vaccinations and falling infection rates does give us some cause for optimism.

As you are aware, thanks largely to the sterling efforts of Andrew Adams for the technology, and Bernadette Pitt for booking the speakers, we have held a number of 'virtual' lectures, which have proved successful and been well supported. For those members who do not have access to the Internet, the Committee have been hand delivering news updates.

Due to current circumstances, we have not been able to hold the 2021 AGM yet, but the accounts have been audited, passed to the Charity Commission and a copy included in this newsletter. Please be assured that an actual (rather than virtual) AGM will take place as soon as it is possible under Government guidelines.

Finally, and I'm sorry to harp on the same old theme, but most of the Officers and Committee, including myself, are now past our 'sell-by' date, by which I mean we have served longer than the Constitution strictly allows. We are all prepared to stay on to see our U3A through the present crisis, but we will need willing volunteers once things return to normal. I look forward to hearing from you!

With best wishes, Peter Lester.

Political Correctness – the New Insanity?

Andrew Baker, our speaker for November, compared the development of what would previously have been differences in opinion that could be discussed, to the current situation where there are those who only have one view, and anyone differing from this are considered the enemy of the people and have to be silenced by whatever means possible. The silent majority are fearful of saying anything out loud against these views.

The main sources of difference are looked at through two lenses – social justice and identity politics. There is the issue of sexuality that has become a choice, with support from medical intervention, rather than a biological fact. There are also issues about ethnicity and religion. In political correctness there is “verbal etiquette”, WOKE.

The new culture is intolerant and stifles those of independent thought. There is also the issue of hate crime. Students have campaigned for the dismissal of lecturers who have ideas that diverge from what is considered correct, on grounds, to some extent, that it is upsetting to be taught by someone with an opinion they find uncomfortable, resulting in the word “snowflakes” – those needing protection from thoughts they find uncomfortable.

In the past we would celebrate eccentricity and not crush those who think differently.

Following the lecture there was a discussion about some of the issues.

Mary Dunbavin

Lecture Meetings

The following lectures have been arranged to take place via Zoom.

The log in details will be sent to members by email about a week before the talk. They will be scheduled to start at 10.00am and you will be able to log in to the meeting from 9.45am

Monday 12 April

A policeman's lot can be quite an interesting one

Neil Sandler

Monday 10 May

A Dairy Farmer's Wife

Jane Barnes

Monday 7 June

Great British Eccentrics

The Curious Incident of Agatha Christie



What is it about our continuing fascination with detective ‘who-done-it’ stories? The publishing phenomenon and prolific novelist and playwright Agatha Christie (1890-1976) has certainly profited from this, as explained by our December speaker, Stephen Wells. Agatha originally trained and qualified as a nurse – hence all the poisoning incidents in her stories! Her books have been outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. The first one was published in 1920 for which she was paid £25, and inadvertently locked her into an unwelcome six book contract with the publisher.

Having completed that and then her bestseller in 1926, “The Murder of Roger Ackroyd”, she suffered two shocks, one after the other – her much-loved mother died and the discovery of her husband’s affair. Perhaps because of this, early in December 1926 she drove into the night and promptly disappeared, thus sparking the biggest manhunt in British history involving 1,000 police, hundreds of civilians, and, for the first time, some aeroplanes. Her car was eventually found on the edge of a quarry called “Silent Pool” but no sign of Mrs Christie, so it was at first assumed that she had drowned. Three famous writers of detective stories – Conan Doyle, Edgar Wallace, and Dorothy L Sayers – were summoned to try and solve the mystery, but without success. It was not until a banjo player at Harrogate’s Swan Hydro Hotel spotted her there, and eventually persuaded the

police to take him seriously, that Agatha Christie was found. Her husband went to collect her but she was in no hurry to leave, saying she had no memory of how she had got to Harrogate. Throughout her life, she never spoke about this ‘curious incident’, but the daughter of her best friend and confidante many years later revealed that this had been specifically to cause maximum embarrassment to her husband over his affair – she had even booked into the hotel with the same surname as her husband’s mistress! In 1927 Mr & Mrs Christie were divorced, soon after which Agatha travelled to Iraq (then Mesopotamia), presumably to “get away from it all”, where she met her second husband, to whom she remained happily married.

Stephen went on to describe, and show us extracts from, lots of Agatha Christie’s books and films starring the great and the not-so-good actors over the years. David Suchet’s quintessential Poirot (1989-2013), and Joan Hickson’s Miss Marple (1984-1992) are perhaps the best known, but those two actors had previously appeared in Christie plays and films as other characters. The very latest film of “Death on the Nile” was due out in October 2020, starring and directed by Kenneth Branagh, but has not yet been released. From the trailer we were shown, this looks an excellent one for all Christie fans.

Her Devon home, Greenway House, is now owned by the National Trust and open for visits. Our new Treasurer, Brenda Last, kindly offered any BU3A member a loan of her extensive collection of Agatha Christie books – she has most (but not all) of them.

Stella Chamberlin

The Semi-Pro Sixties

The January Zoom Meeting saw an attendance of approaching 100 members who were entertained by David Caulfield talking about his experiences as a semi-professional musician in the sixties and seventies.

Although we were all “muted” on Zoom during the talk I am sure that there were several members who, like myself, were saying “Oh yes I remember that” or “I had one like that”.

During his talk David gave us a wide range of memoirs of experiences, starting from his first guitar and his first live performance, through entertaining in pubs and clubs and going on to appear on “New Faces” on television. Although not winning they did get some very positive feedback which obviously made it all worthwhile

There is no doubt that David enjoyed his time as a musician, made many long term friends and met several well known performers. David’s talk fully reflected the stages of development of his experiences from the terrifying first time on stage as a support act to playing in pubs where you were very close to the audience that had no hesitation in letting you know if they didn’t like the performance.

Laurie Marshall

A Poor Existence – Victorian Street Life



A survey in 1867 found that the majority of Londoners earned less than £300 per year. This amount would have allowed a family to live and have at least one servant. The London streets at this time were busy with people, horses, carts, shops and stalls. They were also smelly with open sewers resulting in the Great Stink of 1858 when even parliament was affected.

The details for this talk in February by Graham Harrison were from the works of Henry Mayhew, a journalist and co-founder of Punch, who, having interviewed people living on the streets, had recorded the state

of London's poor in articles which were collected into a book in 1851. This was to bring about an understanding of the plight of the poorest. There were three types:

Those who would work – if work was available

Those who could not work – the disabled and sick.

Those who would not work – the criminal classes.

Most were making their living on the street, buying and selling, for example “cures”. Some who were “begging” would have something they could sell to avoid being arrested, for example the blind bootlace seller.

The most affluent were the costermongers, who usually had their own rounds and their own culture. Some could read and write and some were members of the Chartists; they enjoyed a riotous protest to get their own back on the police. Oranges that had been squeezed for their juice could be boiled to plump them up for sale as whole fruit. There were also refreshment stalls. At that time oysters were the food of the poor.

There were scavengers and finders such as the rag and bone men. Dog excrement was collected for the leather industry, earning the finder about 8d to 1/- a bucket.

With dirt and horses in the street there were also crossing sweepers clearing the way for the more affluent to cross the road without having to step in anything unpleasant. Some of these would be quite young boys, their only required tool being a broom.

With the invention of photography, mostly carried out in studios, some moved onto streets, mainly in yards. There was quite a lot of cheating going on as it took a long time to process the photographs so they purchased samples from the studios and if someone was in a hurry would pass these off as their own photos – most people at that time would not have seen themselves clearly as mirrors and lighting were poor.

The chemicals involved in photographic developing were often used for other purposes. Silver nitrate to dye hair black and nitric acid to remove warts. As there were renegades selling all other types of remedies, it was a case of buyer beware.

Various entertainments abounded, conjurors, acrobats, musicians from the tolerable (skilled) to the intolerable (no use). Some musicians would find out where there was someone ill, gather together outside and start to play badly until they were bribed to leave!

Mary Dunbavin

IN MEMORIUM £ s d



Fifty years ago on 15 February 1971 the UK changed its coinage from librae, solidi and denarii

(pounds, shillings and pence) to decimal coinage. ‘Old Money’, as it soon became known, had been around from 775AD, evolving over the ensuing centuries – Edward I in 1280 introduced the groat and the gold sovereign was introduced by Henry VII in 1489, when the testoon (shilling) was also first minted. So, we had to be persuaded in quite a strong campaign by the Government of the day to accept the change.

At first it was a little like in the days when we first travelled abroad to strange, exotic countries such as France or Belgium, when we would just present a handful of foreign coins to the shopkeeper so that he could take what was owed for the purchase.

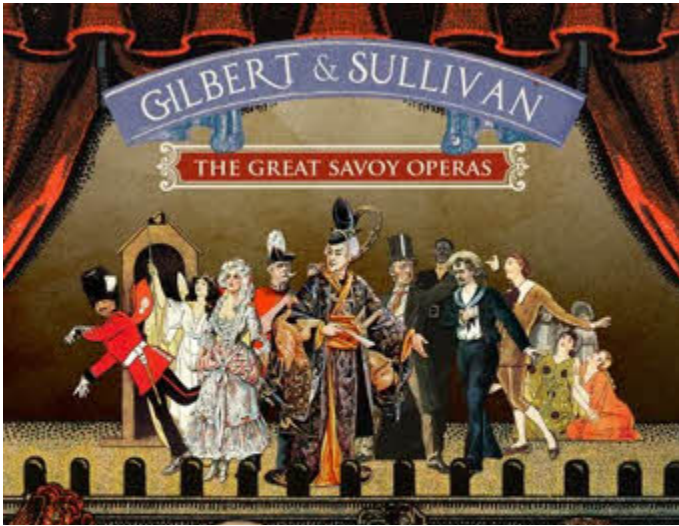
The old money had history and quirkiness and the coinage names were lyrical – farthing, ha’penny, thru’penny bit, tanner, bob, florin, half a crown or even guinea. They all inspired nursery rhymes or songs, like ‘Oranges and Lemons’ and many will remember others. But who will remember dear Max Bygraves singing ‘Decimalisation’ at the time. ‘Oranges and Lemons’ dates back to at least the 18th century.

It was Jim Callaghan, the Labour Prime Minister, who set the ball rolling in 1966 by announcing that “the change to a decimal coinage will bring considerable benefit to the economy”. But it was under the Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath in 1971 that we took on decimal coinage. Many of us around at the time will remember with affection when mother or grandmother would slip a few silver sixpenny pieces into the Christmas pudding or when we needed a penny for the ‘loo’ – 20p now? Pre-decimal pennies are still used to adjust the pendulum of Big Ben apparently,

Will we soon be a cashless society?

Bryann Ward

The Works of Gilbert & Sullivan



OUR March speaker, Bernard Lockett, eruditely and enthusiastically informed us that dramatist and librettist William S Gilbert with composer Arthur Sullivan were Victorian collaborators over 25 years of 14 comic operas, being the first musical theatre productions. This is still a record in world theatre, surpassing the likes of Andrew Lloyd Webber (who wrote 12) and Rodgers & Hammerstein (8).

Gilbert was from a wealthy family, and trained to become a barrister, so evidently had a way with words. However, he soon became disillusioned with the bribery and corruption of how the law was administered in Victorian England. This was the beginning of his social conscience, and he started to write about the 'haves' and 'have-nots' of the time, noting that only 5% of the population benefitted from the Industrial Revolution. He soon gave up the law, and began to write plays and small dramas, making friends with Charles Dickens at The Garrick Club. He made people laugh at themselves with his prolific political and sometimes outrageous writing. He created fanciful "topsy-turvy" worlds where each absurdity is taken to its logical conclusion—fairies rub elbows with British lords, flirting is a capital offence, gondoliers ascend to the monarchy, and pirates emerge as noblemen who have gone astray.

By contrast, Sullivan was from a very poor Irish immigrant background, his father being an occasional trumpeter in a military band. However, Sullivan was a musical prodigy, having mastered all the band's instruments by the age of 8, attended the Royal Academy of Music at 17, and went to Germany at 19 to study the whole essence of classical music and composers. He found five lost works by Schubert (which he re-orchestrated) and made friends with Rossini, but was a fun-loving person who wanted to write for a wider audience. His first work opened at London's Adelphi Theatre in 1867, which

Gilbert attended in his role as theatre critic. This is where they met and became friends, to write their first combined production in 1871 which, because of the eccentric story line, was a disaster and ran for only eleven performances. However, Sullivan continued to write church music, such as the well-known 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and 'It Came Upon a Midnight Clear'.

The theatre impresario, Richard D'Oyly Carte, fostered their collaboration, which produced the satirical 'Trial by Jury' (using Gilbert's legal knowledge) and then 'HMS Pinafore' which criticized the government's inequalities and hypocrisies such as landlubber Mr W H Smith (he of the stationers) being made First Lord of the Admiralty in spite of his complete lack of naval experience. Later there was 'Utopia' which highlighted the shoddy practices of big business - still pertinent today.

All their shows were produced in the same way, with Gilbert being the meticulous stage director, then Sullivan setting it all to music with memorable melodies that could convey both humour and pathos, giving strength to the perhaps controversial comments made. For the first time, their shows were very much enjoyed by people from all walks of life in the theatre together, and it was always ensured that there were plenty of seats available for the less well off. They were never sued for their political comments such as "the House of Lords does nothing in particular, but does it rather well"! They both promoted women's education and suffrage some 30 years before Mrs Pankhurst. In spite of Gilbert's legendary mean-ness with money, they enjoyed a clever, friendly and respectful partnership.

Sullivan was knighted by Queen Victoria, but Gilbert was not conferred that honour (probably because of his political writing) until 1907 by King Edward VII "for services to the law" to which he'd returned after Sullivan's death. Their recognition is now worldwide, second only to Shakespeare in the English language, but equally enjoyed by non-English speaking countries as their works on social reflection are still valued today.

Modern G&S productions do not change the words or music, but production values have changed since the Victorian era, so that there is now much more movement on stage, dancing, and with huge choruses, all making the shows much more alive. They were ahead of their time in many respects, influencing many later musical-theatre composers. There are G&S Societies everywhere (including Ipswich), and Bernard hopes that there'll be a G&S production in Bury soon, which he urged us to attend and enjoy.

Stella Chamberlin

Educational Visits



Hello everyone. It has been a long time since we all last met. We hopefully look forward to seeing you all again later in the year for some lovely days out on our educational adventures. Meanwhile, look after each other and stay safe.

Maureen and Linda

Portrait of a Suffolk Village

Brenda Picking who, until recently, was responsible, with her late husband Don, for setting out the chairs for the monthly lectures, has recently published a 160 page book on the history of Hesselton.

Nearly 60 years ago she and Don moved to the village where they raised their two daughters. With an interest in history she was surprised she could not find any book about the village's history and decided to start her research.

She has spent many hours at the Bury Records Office searching the census, tax records, court hearings, wills, maps and photos. The older villagers willingly reminisced with her, passing on their stories and those handed down by their families. These include wartime adventures, burning cottages, journeys by horse and cart and life generally in a rural Suffolk village.

For Brenda it has been a labour of love that took 50 years to put together as she fitted it around her family commitments and busy life. It was Don who urged her to put her findings into a book so it is fitting that it is dedicated to him.

The book costs £7.99 with proceeds going to Hesselton Church Preservation Society. Over 80 copies have already been sold but are still available by contacting Brenda on 01359 270909.

Blackbourne U3A accounts

2019 accounts

I have reviewed the accounts for 2019 as part of doing this year's accounts and have made a couple of minor changes in the analysis. The net expenditure is slightly less as two items for £40 and £95 in January 2020 actually related to the 2019 accounts. These adjusted 2019 figures are shown on the 2020 accounts as the previous year's figures. If anyone wants to see the 2019 accounts in more detail please contact me.

2020 accounts

A number of members have overpaid, mainly because they did not alter their bank standing orders when they or a partner left the U3A. Where I had no contact details, I have treated them as donations, the remainder I have tried to refund.

With the lockdown there has been less expenditure particularly on hall hire and speakers although the zoom licence for a year cost £115. The bank balances are currently fairly healthy, although we will have to pay a substantial amount in affiliation fees to the Third Age Trust in April. Hopefully we will be able to manage many more activities later this year.

I have included a summary of the accounts for the newsletter and the detailed sheets will be on our website but if anyone would like to ask questions please contact me on treasurer@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk

*Brenda Last
BU3A Treasurer*

If you decide not to renew your membership, please let Andrew Adams, the membership secretary, know – membershipsecretary@blackbourne-u3a.org.uk or 01359 408151 and cancel your standing order at your bank

Items for the next newsletter to be published in June should be sent to bryann@brysuward.plus.com

Blackbourne U3A

Registered charity number 1165448

Income and expenditure account**For the year ended December 2020**

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Funds brought forward at 1 January 2020	3486.04	6,511.67
Income		
Subscriptions	5805.00	6,110.00
Visitors	0.00	8.00
Income tax refund (Gift Aid)	500.59	
Sundry income	109.60	56.00
Bank interest	7.12	15.75
	<u>6422.31</u>	<u>6,189.75</u>
Less: Expenditure		
Hall hire	472.00	1,289.00
Lecture speakers fees	540.00	1,305.00
Printing and stationery	177.90	782.49
Postage	111.63	457.90
Affiliations	2195.88	2,213.87
Refreshments	82.46	49.23
Convenors lunches	0.00	308.40
Anniversary event	0.00	605.44
Equipment	0.00	369.00
Web site design fees	463.22	1,671.55
Sundry costs incl zoom licence	179.60	163.50
	<u>4222.69</u>	<u>9,215.38</u>
Excess of income over expenditure	2199.62	-3,025.63
Funds at 31st December 2020	<u>5685.66</u>	<u>3,486.04</u>

Statement of assets and liabilities**As at 31st December 2020**

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Cash funds		
Bank accounts	7,870	5,997
Prepayments		
Affiliation fee to Third Age Trust (Attributable to period 1.1.21 to 31.03.21)	541	549
	8,411	6,546
Liabilities		
Members' annual subscriptions (Attributable to period 1.1.21 to 30.6.21)	2,725	3,060
Net funds	<u>5,686</u>	<u>3,486</u>

Bank and cash at 31st December 2020

Current account	3,719.86
Deposit account	4,138.90
Cash	11.15
	<u>7,869.91</u>

reduced for unpresented cheques totalling £63.90