Llandrindod Wells & District U3A Lecture Meeting April 2018

Life as a Gardening Editor - Tamsin Westhorpe

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Berwyn Woolnough welcomed everyone to the April meeting, including new members. He gave the notices, a meeting for new members at the Herb Garden, the Film Club's next showing, study days at the National Library of Wales, a concert at Holy Trinity Church when the U3A's recorder and hand bell groups will be taking part, Charabanc and Theatre Visiting groups news, plus the possibility of a new interest group for the deaf.

The Chairman then introduced the speaker for the morning, Tamsin Westhorpe, whose lecture was entitled "Life as a Gardening Editor". Nowadays Tamsin is in charge of the four acre gardens at Stockton Bury near Leominster. She firstly described how she learned the gardening ropes with experienced gardeners, including later raising eyebrows as the first female gardener with Bournemouth Parks Department, together with attending a course at Sparshott College, Winchester. Then various jobs in Garden Centres, and starting on a gardening magazine later becoming editor possibility because she had a deep passion for the subject. Tamsin worked for different magazines, notably "Amateur Gardening" where she followed no less a gardening personality than Alan Titmarch as editor. She described the faster weekly pace of the weeklies, as opposed to the top quality monthlies more laid back approach. Today she freelances for Gardeners World and The Telegraph, as well as looking after the Stockton Bury Gardens. Tamsin then told members of some surprising background details of producing gardening magazines, the importance of words, the race for pictures, especially for the cover, and how they are produced.

As an editor she liked to use her own ideas, rather than copying others, an example being visiting and writing a book about famous chef Raymond Blanc's Oxfordshire garden, and producing a book about his gardens. A gardening magazine staff member could be testing artificial feed for six months, the speaker stating that gardeners are the hardest people to sell a produce to. She added that product testing on lawn mowers she learned a lot!!!! At times she told some humurous stories, saying that the "people" side of gardening is the best bit. Tamsin suggested some of the best gardens in the UK to visit, and added that a lot of young people were coming into horticulture, and following such traditional crafts as scything and beekeeping, and stories of youngsters setting themselves up in gardens. The speaker also spoke about women in horticulture, and mentioned "Sybylle of Sissinghurst". Tamsin then answered a couple of questions, but the lack of enquiries showed how informative her talk had been. When asked about which local gardens to visit she suggested Hergest Croft, near Kington, Westonbury Mill Water Gardens,Pembridge and Hampton |Court, near Leominster, and she also suggested that those interested should consult the National Gardens Society yellow book. Chairman Berwyn Woolnough thanked the speaker for such an enjoyable and light hearted talk.

At the next Llandrindod & District U3A lecture meeting on Monday May 14, at 10:30am at the Metropole Hotel, the speaker will be Professor Richard Rathbone and his talk is entitled "Killing and Dying in East Africa: An ignored but terrible chapter in the history of The Great War".