**Llandrindod Wells & District U3A Lecture Meeting January 2018**

**Eccentricity – Look where it's got me! - Jan Swindale**

**Report by Clive Barrett**

The January meeting was opened by Llandrindod Town Crier Janet Swindale, with the usual "oye, oye" declaration. In the absence of the Chairman Berwyn Woolnough, and Vice Chair Penny Everett, the website editor Nick Talbott welcomed everyone including new members, and gave the group's notices. He stated that it is now possible to organise a visit to Powys Archives either as a group or individually. Nick also mentioned the AGM in March, the the voting for officers and committee to be considered, the Art group now meeting on January 31, and the Theatre Visiting group's visit to Stratford Upon Avon in June to see "MacBeth".

Nick then introduced speaker Janet Swindale, whom he described as "our wonderful town crier". Her talk was entitled " Eccentricity ---- Look Where Its Got Me" Janet commenced by speaking about her parents, her father was in the Royal Engineers during the war. She mentioned her experiences with air raid shelters in at least two homes where her family lived. Janet was born in Bedford, loved dressing up at an early age, and in one of her first stage performances wore a "crimpling" dress and a liberty bodice. When her parents moved to Worcester, Janet transferred to Nunnery Wood Secondary School, where she later fell for a sixth former, her future husband David, and later she attended Worcester Technical College. She also joined Kays Theatre Company at the New Swan Theatre, proceeding to relate the parts she played and her experiences on stage.

When Janet and husband David moved to Llandrindod Wells in 1972, the future Town Crier joined Llandrindod Wells Theatre Company, playing Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz". She thought that the local company had improved over the years-- and was now as good as some professional companies. Away from the theatre the speaker went on to describe some of the more unusual activities she had tried, for example the West Midlands Safari Park trapeze, paragliding in Tunisia, drove the Telford Steam Railway as an unlikely birthday present, and joined Talgarth Gliding School. Janet then went on to outline her many activities performing or writing, organising and producing with the Theatre Companies, pantomimes, Music Hall and the town's Victorian Festival over many years. Regarding performances I particularly remember the speaker as Vesta Tilley, Popsie Wopsie, Emmeline Wellington Boot, and a mainstay in the Suffragettes. She organised and produced the latter at Victorian Festivals, also writing and producing various wedding events, including pearly, World War 2 forces , below stairs weddings and other events. Janet also mentioned her working career in different local solicitors offices, and her experiences working for the Crown and Magistrates County Courts. In recent years she has helped and been involved with her grandchildren in school drama projects. She has also been involved with the Tangent Circle/ Charter and Round Table. For many years Janet was Badge Secretary for the Boy Scouts, even playing Lady Baden Powell, and in recent years has been involved in " The Race for Life".

The speaker went on to talk about the Town Crier competition, culminating in being invited to be Llandrindod Town Crier in 2013, being accepted in the Guild of Town Criers in 2014. Her aim being

to represent and promote the town, especially welcoming visitors arriving at the local rail station by train. She gave a brief “History of the Ancient & Honorable Gulid of Town Criers”, and stated that she had been involved with the Transition Town May Fayre, mentioning that this year (2018) is the 150th anniversary of the Heart of Wales Line being completed, and last year had been part of the Queen's Baton visiting Llandrindod Wells. Janet declared that she enjoyed the role, and making people happy. The talk was probably one of the most humurous and entertaining experienced at a local U3A lecture, signified by how quickly the time passed. At the end rather than questions there were observations from members who obviously really enjoyed the morning. One of these statements was that in the early years the Victorian Festival received generous grants, but that in more recent years dedicated volunteers had carried on the great tradition of the nine day event with very hard work. Janet was thanked by Nick Talbott for a wonderfully entertaining talk.