

Llandrindod Wells and District u3a Lecture Meetings

Meeting reports 2010 – 2016

Reports were not produced for all meetings.
This archive document contains all meeting records that are
available for meetings before 2017.

Produced by Llandrindod Wells and District u3a, July 2021

Llandrindod u3a lecture meetings

2016

January	Driving - A Skill for Life		Geoff Smith
February	Banking - "fings ain't what they used to be!"		Richard Davies
March	Dr Livingstone, I Presume? A solo walk across Africa		Fran Sandham
April	Sharing Shakespeare		Phil Bowen
May	Blindness: Fearlessly living with the most feared disability.		Kevin Russell
June	Framespotting: Changing how you look at things changes how you see them.		Lawrence Matthew
July	Offa's Dyke: A journey in words and pictures.		Jim Saunders
August	<i>No meeting</i>		
September	Palaeontology		Joe Botting
October	A Human History: 60 million years in transition		Nick Marchmont
November	Two Ships in the Night: Titanic and Empress of Ireland.		Mike Watkins and Wilma Hayes
December	Air Ambulance		Helen Pruett

 indicates that a report of the meeting is included in this archive document

Llandrindod Wells U3A A.G.M March 2016

followed by

Dr Livingstone, I Presume?

Fran Sandham

Report from Clive Barrett compiled from notes received from Penny Everett, the new Vice Chair.

Chairman Bob Atkins opened the meeting welcoming visitors and new members. Notices were given out on forthcoming events, Porthcawl Study Day, All Wales Conference, and the Creative Writing Group Study day on 17th May. Bob Atkins in his Chairman's Report reflected on another hugely successful year, he thanked officers and the Committee, group co-ordinators and members for their support. Membership now stands at 260, and no less than 40 new members have joined since the last A.G.M in 2015. The following Officers and new Committee members were proposed, seconded and elected for 2016/17 : Chairman Berwyn Woolnough, Vice Chairman Penny Everett, Secretary Karen Latham, Treasurer Mary Russell, Programme Secretary Helen Wyton, the three new Committee members are Denise Krutsche, Ann Harvey and Sue Havard, replacing Mary Davies, Clive Barrett and Chairman Bob Atkins, who are standing down. Martin Nosworthy was again appointed as Auditor. New Chairman Berwyn Woolnough recorded the group's very grateful thanks to Bob Atkins for his two years of dedicated commitment to the Chairmanship and the continuing success of the local U3A.

The speaker for the morning Fran Sandham was then introduced by the new Chairman Berwyn Woolnough. Fran immediately took us to November 1871, when two white men met for the first time: the first a young flashy reporter Stanley and the second an old man down on his luck, Dr. Livingstone. It is also a matter of some controversy whether Stanley ever uttered the very famous phrase "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?". The background is Stanley, was employed by the proprietor of the "New York Herald" Gordon Bennett who gave him the assignment and the promise of funds to go off to Africa and find Livingstone.

It is some time before Stanley can send his report back to the New York Herald, but by happy coincidence no other report gets through in the meantime as the transatlantic cable is broken. Livingstone agrees to writing a letter of thanks to Gordon Bennett which underpins the veracity of Stanley's report and he has his scoop. Stanley's celebrity rises and falls during the following years. His true origins are revealed as relatives from Wales appear, but he manages to surmount these difficulties and is eventually knighted, he died in 1904. Dr. Livingstone continues to fail in Africa by not finding the source of the River Nile and eventually dies in a remote African village. Further his heart is buried there and his body brought back to England, where his funeral is attended by an enormous crowd, and Stanley is one of his pallbearers.

Llandrindod & District U3A April 2016 Lecture Meeting

Sharing Shakespeare – Phil Bowen

Report by Clive Barrett.

The new U3A Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the 2016/17 session. He gave current news of various interest groups, particularly noting that the local U3A's 10th anniversary celebratory lecture took (will take) place on Monday 25th April at 2--30p.m at the Metropole Hotel and the keynote speaker will be Rami Seth M.B.E. and his talk is entitled "Nobody speaks English like an Indian", the lecture will be followed by afternoon tea.

Berwyn then introduced the speaker for the morning, Phil Bowen of the Willow Globe Theatre Penlanole, near Llanwrthwl, who about 12 months ago was the High Sheriff of Radnorshire for a year. His talk was entitled "Sharing Shakespeare" and he spoke about his acting experiences over the last 40 years, touring all over the world with Shakespearean plays. Phil interestingly mentioned famous and not so well known actors and producers he had either met or knew of through a mutual friend. For example he knew Charles Simon, who played Dr. Dale in "Mrs Dale's Diary" on radio, and even mentioned a theatre architect. Amongst many different countries he visited in the 1970's he toured India with Shakespearean plays and mentioned that books about the famous playwright and his plays sell all over the world. The speaker gave a very informal talk and his stories and tellings were generously laced with humour which pleased the appreciative audience.

Later he and partner moved to Mid Wales and got the idea of "Sharing Shakespeare" which is defined as finding out together what Shakespeare is about. They are involved in finding out how people relate to one another exploring Shakespeare, and also translating into sign and 80 other languages. Phil and Sue organise performances at Penlanole, near Llandrindod Wells with the lovely natural countryside of Mid Wales as the backdrop. Further this year between the 6th and 9th of July they are holding an event at the local Willow Globe, "Sharing Shakespeare Festival" including visits from various actors involved in social theatre. Following his excellent talk the speaker then answered a number of questions such as those relating to professional, amateur actors and touring community groups. He ended with a mention of the local U3A theatre group's visit to Stratford the previous week to see "Hamlet" referring to that particular performance depicting an African cultural background within the original Danish setting.

Phil Bowen was thanked for his fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable talk by the new U3A Chairman Berwyn Woolnough

Report Of Llandrindod & District U3A May 2016 Lecture Meeting.

Blindness - Kevin Russell

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Berwyn Woolnough welcomed new members and those taking taster sessions. He gave news of various interest groups including calligraphy, singing for fun, virtual travel and computers. The Chairman then introduced the speaker Kevin Russell, whose talk was entitled “ Blindness: Fearlessly living with the most feared disability”.

Kevin commenced by saying he had acclimatized to blindness, and can cope living with the disability. He talked in turn about his childhood, education, finding a job, travelling, shopping especially on the internet, books, hobbies, and broadcasting. The speaker commenced by saying that his sight was poor early in his life, however he could see shapes and some colours. However his hearing was okay because he had responded to sound, with his sight actually failing in his mid 30's. He spoke about different aids to blindness such as braille, mobility training, use of a long white cane and touch type. After attending a boarding school for the blind in Liverpool, the speaker later won entrance to Worcester College for the Blind, after passing “O” and “A” levels, he went to university with the intention of being a French/ German teacher. However he changed direction making a career in computer programming, having a job with I.B.M for 29 years.

Kevin then spoke about his experiences of travelling around on his own, his shopping and on line supermarkets experiences. He described his hobbies as an avid record collector, enjoys reading by the use of braille, interested in computing, access technology for blind people, a big fan of radio, especially the internet type, and he praised the R.N.I.B talking book service.

The speaker showed examples of what has been done to assist blind people including “feel” notches on books of postage stamps to show whether 1st or 2nd class. Kevin then gave his attentive audience some demonstrations, including various screen reader uses, penfriend labeller, also talking scales for food and cooking instructions and other aids. He then answered questions on retraining memory, brain patterns in blindness, and in recent years improved technology making it easier to study.

Kevin said about improved other senses his hearing is very acute, he stated that he had no desire to have a guide dog at present, and would he take advantage of sight possibly being restored. Finally he mentioned about his broadcasting---a weekly show on Internet radio at 7p.m on Tuesday evenings: “Flash Back Gold” on www.the-phoenix.net . The speaker was thanked by Chairman Berwyn, who said that Kevin in an interesting talk had showed including technology how positive he is. Nick Talbott was also thanked for assisting the speaker with the computer technology at the lecture.

The speaker at the next lecture meeting on Monday 13th June will be Lawrence Matthew, whose subject is “ Frame Spotting---Changing how you look at things changes how you see them”.

Report of Llandrindod & District U3A June 2016 Lecture Meeting

Framespotting - Lawrence and Alison Matthews

Report by Clive Barrett

Vice Chair Penny Everett welcomed everyone especially the new members, she was standing in because Chairman Berwyn Woolnough was away. She gave various news items about the local branch, and individual leaders gave information about different interest groups including, Art History and Computer. Those members attending, whether the full house had something to do with the wet morning, must have wondered from the title had they been given the exact content of the talk, although some may have had reservations possibly many others were pleasantly surprised with the outcome. Penny then introduced Lawrence and Alison Matthews, who were previously a lecturer and a statistician and now write books. Their new ideas of "Frame Spotting" shows new ideas in the way of doing things and as their talk and book states, changing how you look at things: changes how you see them., have brought respected views and complements from some celebrities.

Lawrence with the aid of examples and a power point presentation, plus Alison's assistance went on to explain their theories and give examples. "Frame Spotting" also involves seeing the bigger wider picture of the whole world. He gave the example of a car, within a frame we all see the advantages of getting around, but outside that frame a vehicle can be lethal, and questions like do we really need a car are asked. The actual questions are, firstly outside the frame look at actual questions and language used, and second keep asking the "why" question for root causes. Thirdly different frames can place/share the blame for problems on manufacturers or individuals "Framing is blaming". Another example the speakers used was climate change, decisions are down to individuals, but it is necessary for them to see the overall system.

The theories can be applied to Government policy and carbon rationing. He also gave details of emissions in a frame, whereas outside there is fossil fuel extraction. Agreements with the aid of negotiations on climate change, with Governments naturally or obviously look after their own countries. Rather than be concerned with the interests of the planet. Lawrence also spoke about economic recovery considering growth, lack of progress, big planet sized problems, and there is an alternative frame to growth. "Frame Spotting" leads to new ideas, but it will not change opinions, growth makes people rich. What's your story? --- human beings have done well in progress, with heroes fighting back in a lost cause, we are forced to wake up, and leave our "flat earth thinking" behind. The speakers working as a duo also explained the "Cusop Fables" which they have written, but were left out of their book by the publishers. They summed up their lecture with the following statements, natural physical growth is good up to maturity, adapt to the new situation, and our species are coming of age.

Questions were then invited and they included the following; Frames for huge multi national corporations, why didn't they use the fables in the book, it was thought that fables which are inhabited? put messages across simply, and bring matters to life. Framing in advertising and for understanding the way forward, mention was made of existing frames which expand due to all sorts of things, spot and overall frames were also mentioned. Framing the message, referendum of the future e.g. European Union. Vice Chair Penny Everett in thanking Lawrence and Alison for a deep thought provoking lecture commented that the co speakers had covered a lot of ground.

The next Llandrindod & District U3A lecture will be on Monday 11th July at 10-30a.m at the Metropole Hotel when the subject will be "Offa's Dyke": A journey in words and pictures, by Jim Saunders.

Report of Llandrindod & District U3A July 2016 Lecture Meeting

Offa's Dyke - Jim Saunders

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Berwyn Woolnough welcomed everyone and news was given of various interest groups, and also the results of the feedback on the use of computers by U3A members was announced. The Chairman then introduced the speaker for the morning Jim Saunders, whose talk was entitled “ Offa's Dyke--- A Journey in words and pictures”.

Jim was the Footpaths Officer for the Offa's Dyke Association for 18 years, he has written a book on the dyke, and more recently one on the border town of Hay on Wye. After giving a short history of his own working life, he began his talk by following the Offa's Dyke footpath from south to north with the aid of words and a colourful presentation, with innovative photos.

The speaker explained that about 80 miles was left of the “ earthwork and ditch”, whereas the Offa's Dyke Footpath was 178 miles long stretching south to north from Chepstow to Prestatyn. He described various castles and churches situated along the route, and explained the footpath in walking sections e.g. Pandy to Hay and Kington to Knighton, especially mentioning the Offa's Dyke Centre at the last named. Interestingly he described how the dyke earthwork was formed and constructed, describing where in places there is still a natural slope e.g. Llanfair Hill, Clun. Jim went on to describe the route northwards also showing pictures of flora and fauna, from Knighton, via Kerry Ridgeway, the Vale of Montgomery, Llanymynech Hill, Chirk Castle, Llangollen, the Clydian Hills (Iron Age Forts) and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

As described by the speaker the Offa's Dyke Footpath ends on the coast at Prestatyn. Jim then answered questions about his subject, including the remarkable feat of building the dyke, especially as the population was comparatively low at the time, possibly the tools would be timber with iron tips. In the past there have been pioneers in the study of the earthwork, notably Cyril Fox in the 1930's, David Hill, and of course the founder of the footpath, Frank Noble of Knighton.

In thanking Jim Saunders for such an interesting talk Chairman Berwyn commented on the excellent photographs the speaker had taken of the whole route over a period of time.

There will be no U3A lecture in August, the lecture meetings recommence on Monday 12th September at the Metropole Hotel at 10:30a.m when Joe Botting will speak on “ Palaeontology: What makes this area globally unique for fossils”?

FOOTNOTE: My claim to fame as described to Jim Saunders at the above U3A lecture meeting:

“ In 1972 with my late father I walked the entire length of the then 168 mile Offa's Dyke Footpath in 11 walking days, the footpath having been opened the year before in July 1971. We walked from north to south the normal route being the other way around in those early days, so we were regarded as pioneers of that direction. About 15 years later, my daughter also completed the walk with a boyfriend, north to south, so I am the middle of three generations who have completed the Offa's Dyke footpath!!!

Report of Llandrindod & District U3A September 2016 Lecture Meeting

Palaeontology - Joe Botting

Report by Berwyn Woolnough

The first meeting after the summer break took place at the Metropole Hotel on Monday 13th of September. The speaker was Joe Botting, an eminent paeleontologist who now lives and works in the town.

He explained that the area between Llandrindod, Builth and Llandegley, known as the Builth Inlier, has a globally unique fossil history. The sequence of rock layers reveals the remains of an ancient volcanic island dating back some 450 million years, a time when Wales belonged to a micro continent drifting northwards through southern latitudes. Because of earthquakes and violent eruptions together with a sinking sea floor, fossils have been preserved here, often in great abundance. The area is world famous for trilobites, but in recent years it has been discovered that these are just the tip of the iceberg. There are sites nearby with exceptional preservation where the fossils of creatures can be found which are not preserved under other conditions.

The next meeting takes place on October 10th, when the speaker will be Jen Green, telling the amazing life story of her Aunty May - "From Mill Girl to Model."

Report of Llandrindod Wells & District U3a October Meeting

A Human History - Nick Marchmont

Report by Clive Barrett

The speaker at the October Llandrindod & District U3A lecture meeting was Nick Marchmont, who stepped into the breach because the scheduled speaker Jen Green had suffered a stroke in the summer and was unable to give her talk. His topic was the "History of Humanity", and in his comprehensive lecture he spoke about the different periods of the earth's development and the history of civilization to the present time. Nick did this by describing the individual sites where evidence of ancient civilizations have been found. The areas where this evidence has been located, on the border of the Czech Republic and Austria, a site in modern Syria and South West Turkey, another site is Chataihac in Turkey. The earliest probable permanent settlement is Jericho, whilst Mesopotamia came later, and also later came Arad in North Iraq.

The first Empire builders were the Sumerians, with the start of modern civilization and they used language unrelated to any on earth. In fact Sumer and Egypt developed at the same time, they traded and a state society formed, the development of language, writing, alphabets and written methods of transmissions----he summed up by saying the rest is history.

Local U3A Chairman Berwyn Woolnough thanked Nick for standing in at very short notice, and showing such tremendous enthusiasm in a well delivered lecture.

Llandrindod Wells & District U3A Lecture Meeting November 2016

Two Ships in the Night - Mike Watkins and Wilma Hayes

Report by Clive Barrett

Berwyn Woolnough, Chairman of Llandrindod & District U3A welcomed everyone to the November lecture meeting, and announced that the official opening of an Exhibition of the work of the Art group, would be on Friday 2nd December. He also mentioned the Christmas lunch following next month's lecture meeting, the film group, the setting up of an indoor bowls group, borderlines, singing and recorder, a new botany group, French conversation and gardening groups.

He then introduced the two speakers, the husband and wife team of Mike Watkins and Wilma Hayes, whose talk was the story of two ships, entitled "Two Ships in the Night". Firstly it was Mike's turn to speak about the RMS Titanic. He posed then proceeded to answer the questions, why they were built, who was on board and what happened to the ships. In the early decades of the 20th century there was fierce competition between the White Star Line and Cunard on size, the three ships, Titanic, Olympic and Gigantic built at Harland & Wolff, Belfast by the former were 50 % bigger than the Cunard vessels. Although it was a ship of dreams it was commonly known that the number of lifeboats and jackets were less than the number of passengers. He went on to describe the famous and not so famous people on board, including Lord John Jacob Astor and Sir Cosmo and Lady Duff Gordon, who were one time land owners near Walton, New Radnor. The speaker also mentioned Henry P. Hodges, a wealthy businessman, and the crew members including the brothers Cecil, asking the audience to remember the last mentioned names until later in the lecture. He spoke about the fact the not full compliment of passengers were taken on board, so there were less provisions but a normal sized cargo. Mike went on to relate the timetable of the Titanic's sinking, warnings and looking for ice, collision with iceberg, woman and children first, the ship going down within 20 minutes. He also gave an account of the aftermath, the inquiry which started the next day in the USA - which firstly concluded that no one person was responsible, but at the later British Inquiry blamed Captain Smith for excessive speed. The roles played by the rescue ships the S.S. Capathia and the S.S. California, the latter criticized for not going earlier was also discussed.

The second part of the lecture was given by Wilma Hayes, herself originally from Canada, and it involved the "Empress of Ireland". She gave a short history of Canada, culminating in the fact that the Canadian Pacific Railway, diversified into other forms of transport, such as the Transatlantic Steamships, using the St. Lawrence River Seaway. The RMS Empress of Ireland was built in Germany, being a mail carrier capable of the fast speed of 19.5 knots. She was an elegant and beautiful luxury working ship, and carried 100,000 immigrants to North America, mainly from the Scandinavian countries. The master of the Empress of Ireland was Captain Henry Kendall, who had previously been involved in the arrest of Dr. Crippen, with the first use of the Marconi wireless. On 28th May 1914 the Empress left Quebec, later with Captain Kendall on the bridge, the lights of another ship were seen, entering a thick fog bank in the St. Lawrence River, she then collided with a heavily laded coal carrying vessel, the Storstad. Although it felt like a small bump, a large hole resulted, and the impact cracked both boilers. The radio operators had a difficult time in summoning help, but did weel under the circumstances, the ship sinking in only 14 minutes - 840 people died and 465 were rescued.

In fact the crew on the Empress fared better than the passengers because they knew the layout of the ship well. The subsequent inquiry found in favour of the Empress - the Storstad was confiscated for repatriation and took part in World War I. The difference between the two ships - the Titanic is remembered for the famous shortage of lifeboats - this did not apply to the Empress, it was her 96th crossing and the crew were very experienced.

Speaker Mike Watkins then explained his personal family involvement in the Titanic tragedy, his great uncle was crew member Charlie Cecil, who was lost. Although his grandfather, Ernie Cecil(Charlie's brother) survived his employer Henry P. Hodges perished making it a double tragedy. In World War I Ernie was in the trenches serving in the Royal Hampshire Regiment. Wife and Co-speaker Wilma then further surprised the fascinated audience, when she broke the news that a member of her family on her grandmother Violet's side was lost on the Empress of Ireland. The speakers then answered a number of questions from the appreciative U3A members.

In thanking Mike & Wilma Chairman Berwyn Woolnough said that the local U3A had always been fortunate to have good speakers and today was no exception, because members as well as learning more about the Titanic and the Empress, the speakers had informed their audience about their family involvement in the two ships. Next month on Monday December 12th, at the Metropole Hotel, the speaker will be Steve Jones from the Wales Air Ambulance, and this lecture will be followed by the members' annual Christmas lunch.

Llandrindod Wells & District U3A Lecture Meeting December 2016

Wales Air Ambulance

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Berwyn Woolnough welcomed everyone to the December pre Christmas meeting, and introduced the speaker for the morning Helen Pruett, who is the Wales Air Ambulance Community Coordinator for South Powys. She firstly traced the history of the service which commenced in 2001 with one helicopter. There are now three, plus an additional one transporting patients from hospital to hospital for further treatment in the Cardiff area. Helen then described aspects of the changes, development, and technical advancement of the helicopters over the last fifteen years. Compared with the early models, there is now all the equipment on board e.g for blood transfusions, together with highly qualified medical staff. The speaker also described the difficulties such as isolated locations, mountainside landings and bad weather.

Helen then mentioned the cost of running the service of 6 and a half million per year, and that 24,000 cases had been experienced. The money needed is raised by public donations, by volunteers, fund raising events, legacy donations, the Air Ambulance lottery, standing orders, and she also mentioned the cost of a new helicopter. The speaker then answered a number of questions relating to the service including, the amount of funds(reserves) who makes the decisions to call the helicopter, crews duties and maintenance, collaboration of different areas and crews, independent charity status, crossing the border both ways, specialist doctor and paramedic staff, Air Ambulance procedure at hospitals. At the end of the questions recent past U3A Chairman Bob Atkins said that the Welsh Air Ambulance performed a wonderful role and service. These sentiments were echoed by the present Chairman Berwyn Woolnough in his vote of thanks, and he emphasised the importance of modern technology in the operation of the service.

Following the lecture Rhian Hill performed a very different type of entertainment, an ancient,seasonal solstice poem, accompanying herself on the flute. The audience then sang a carol “ God rest you Merry Gentlemen”. Afterwards some members performed an hilarious session of the old BBC TV children's programme “Crackerjack” featuring the Double or Drop game, and this was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. An excellent Christmas dinner prepared by the Metropole Hotel staff followed complete with a short general knowledge quiz.

The speaker for the first lecture meeting of 2017 on Monday 9th January will be Andrew Wyton of the Gwystre, near Llandrindod Wells and his talk is entitled ” An impression of beauty and delight: Gardens of the Edwardian Era”.

Llandrindod u3a lecture meetings

2015

January	Buddhism		Chris Pegrum
February	Sacred Geometry and an Investigation of the Beauty and Simplicity of Form		Nick Marchmont
March	Reports from Interest Groups		
April	Abbey Cwm Hir		Dr John Davies
May	Does Foreign Aid Work? Oxfam and the UN: a personal journey		Peter Coleridge
June	Changing Natural History of Radnorshire		Dr Fred Slater
July	Planning for Major Emergencies and Disasters		Jim Deacon
August	<i>No meeting</i>		
September	Keeping Secrets: 4000 Years of Codes and Cyphers		Mark Baldwin
October	the Historical Harpsichord and its Modern Revival		Andrew Wooderson
November	Walking the Camino De Santiago		Ann Harmon and Vic Everill
December	Flamenco Dancing		Christine Stockton

 indicates that a report of the meeting is included in this archive document

JANUARY 2015 MEETING

'A Buddhist Glimpse of Enlightenment'

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone and gave news of various groups together with a pre-notice of the AGM in March.

He then introduced Chris Pegrum whose lecture was entitled "A Buddhist Glimpse of Enlightenment", in which he gave a different slant on the religion, rather giving facts about aspects of Buddhism such as meditation.

Chris opened his talk by mentioning the Beatles and their guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The Buddhist tradition is represented by meditation which he defined as "the want (requirement) to be content rather than worry about something not being done". Noise is a distraction to meditation whereas peace and tranquillity are the positives. As a correspondent I feel I must comment that our U3A lectures are always different and varied. The speaker then numbered different states of Buddhism and their aspects.

- 1) Erotic Sense Desire---Imagine a beautiful lake or pool.
- 2) Ill Will Animosity--- Niggles from the past, thoughts of revenge against people block the way to joy.
- 3) Anxiety and Fidget --- Never content can't sit or listen---age of anxiety.
- 4) Sloth and Torpor---Couch potato.
- 5) Doubt and Indecision----Healthy speculation and forever fence sitting ---never commit—blocks the way to joy. The start of proper meditation and wellbeing "state of joy", state of integration, open eyes back to ordinary world, after super state of imagination, see lovely crystal pond and pure clear water, mental clutter gone.
- 6) State of Inspiration----Third State—Water Lilies--- Joy wells up and body becomes a raptured state of permanent wellbeing.
- 7) Joy and Rapture becomes Bliss—State of Radiation---Super Normal

Speaker Chris also mentioned four more minor "states". In these the boundaries between us as individuals and outside forces begin to merge. Then when one goes back matters in the real world do not feel as serious as previously.

Finally he posed the question "Is this a natural state of joy"? Chris admitted he couldn't say.

Chris Pegrum then answered questions on his talk which revealed that Buddhism is a way of life rather than a separate religion, energy developed in meditation is carried

back into the world, it is a more spiritual world which is added to life experience. He was also asked about Buddha, and the Buddhism concept of a future life. In the East it is taken for granted that there is life after life--- a new life. Harmless and ethical life theories to improve the human lot.

The speaker was thanked by Committee member and Interest group Co-ordinator Martha Wooldridge.

The speaker for the next Llandrindod & District U3A lecture meeting on Monday 9th February at the Metropole Hotel at 10.30 a.m will be Nick Marchmont . He is an independent researcher with a lifelong interest in ancient cultures, vanished civilisations and old knowledge. Nick has a particular interest in sacred geometry and has been developing his presentation on the subject for the last six years. His talk to the U3A “ An Illustrated Introduction to Sacred Geometry and an Investigation of the Beauty and Simplicity of Form” has been delivered at open-air events, science festivals and talk venues and has been enthusiastically received by a wide variety of age groups and by amateurs and specialists alike.

FEBRUARY 2015

“An Illustrated Introduction to Sacred Geometry and an Investigation of the Beauty and Simplicity of Form” – speaker: Nick Marchmont

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone, especially new members. He introduced Geoff Wilks, Road Safety Officer for Powys, who spoke about the yellow triangle scheme, which means medical facts concerning drivers can be stored in glove compartments. He also mentioned driving schemes available for mature drivers.

The Chairman mentioned that places were available on a Garden group visiting trip to David Austin Roses, near Wolverhampton, on Thursday 11th June.

He then introduced Nick Marchmont, who is an independent researcher with a lifelong interest in ancient cultures, vanished civilisations and old knowledge.

Nick's lecture was intriguingly entitled “An Illustrated Introduction to Sacred Geometry and an Investigation of the Beauty and Simplicity of Form”. He showed models and explained about the 13 different shapes, including a 10 sided decagon, forms, spheres and explained how they grow. The speaker mentioned the plain geometry we all did at school, identifying different shapes including triangles, squares, pentagons and cubes.

Nick stated that the ancients did know a lot and mentioned the basic elements of earth, fire, water and ether, the combinations two of the different elements could form, and how spheres can be divided into different parts.

Amid some amusement he went on to describe some objects as female e.g. a football (which is kicked about mainly by males!!!!). Earth and air are perfected from nature's first ever pattern named “The Flower of Life”.

Finally, to sum up, he spoke about the manifestations of shapes and the basics of geometry especially squares, cubes and triangles. The talk had started with the speaker showing models and explaining about the basic forms and shapes, which he developed and explained well and the attentive members got more into the topic as it went along.

The Chairman thanked Nick for such a fascinating lecture, which had progressed from basic items to complicated shapes. He joked that it was the first time that he had enjoyed a lesson in mathematics!!!

The speaker then answered a number of questions including about ancient civilisations such as the Incas, and whether intelligence and ideas are inherent in individuals of such peoples, or just learnt.

Nick Marchmont was thanked by Michelle Damsell for “such a mind boggling talk”

LLANDRINDOD WELLS & DISTRICT U3A “SHOW AND TELL” FOR THEIR AGM

For their AGM this year, U3A Llandrindod Wells & District decided against the traditional format of the Agenda followed by a Speaker and decided to wrap the business of the AGM around a programme to “showcase” their activities and welcome members of the public to come and see what U3A was all about. Another opportunity to dispel the myth that because the title includes “University” – you need a degree to join !

As usual, our meeting was held in The Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells and Interest Groups had an assigned area to display and talk about their subject, and we were all in place by 10h00 and ready to meet our public. Complementary Coffee and Tea were available, and our Meeting Room and foyer area swiftly became filled by members and visitors; numbers swelled as people moved around the two rooms to take the opportunity to visit the Groups and find out about their activities.

Taking our seats, the formal Agenda commenced at 10.h45 and our Chairman, Bob’ Atkins, smoothly took us through the business of confirming the required nominations for the 2015/2016 Officers and Committee, who were elected “en bloc”, and thanking the Officers and Committee Members from the previous year, with a special mention for Fay Ramsden who was retiring from service on our Committee after a number of years. The Reports from our Chairman and Treasurer were then presented, approved and seconded, bringing the formal business to a conclusion.

Berwyn Woolnough (Vice Chairman) then took over the microphone to introduce a session where a number of our Group Co-ordinators each gave a short presentation about the format and activities of their Groups. Topics ranged from Church Visiting and Creative Writing to UFO’s (Unfinished Objects (of the Sewing Kind) Welsh History and Welsh Language; in total 16 groups were represented (we have 23 in all) and we began this sessions with music (the Recorder Group) and finished in the same vein (with the Singing for Fun Group). Six of the Co-ordinators made excellent use of technology to share their enjoyment of Garden Visiting, the Book Circle, Armchair Travel, Music Appreciation, Walking, Cinema and, appropriately - the Computer Group.

After everyone’s appetites had been stirred by the presentations, there was another opportunity to tour the Groups, find out more - and sign up for something new. The morning was judged a great success - many came and twelve new members joined, to add to our current membership of 220.

As our Chairman commented at the end of the meeting “Llandrindod Wells & District U3A is alive and kicking!”.

APRIL 2015

Abbey Cwm Hir – Dr John Davies

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone especially new members, and introduced Dr. John Davies, the speaker for the April meeting. He had given a U3A lecture in July 2013, about the background to “Abbeycwmhir” and was now returning to focus on part two. Firstly he referred to a new book entitled “Abbeycwmhir” by Roger Coward, who was attending the lecture and had copies of the book to sell after the meeting. Dr. John said he regarded this book as an overview of the village and the author had taken matters forward. The speaker then spoke about the foundation of Norman Cistercian Abbeys in different parts of Wales. The Norman Earls established the Abbeys e.g. Whitland after moving from Fishguard and Robert Fitzstephen set up Strata Florida.

It is doubtful for various reasons that Abbeycwmhir was set up in 1143, more likely 1st August 1176. The Abbey formation in Wales was split into two types those of the Norman Lords and those of the Welsh Princes. There was also the “Welsh Civil Service” and the “daughter houses” e.g. Ireland. Dr. John showed by means of a power point presentation the sites of various abbeys and other places. He spoke about the original and later structure and cloisters and in the 13th century there was a lot of reconstruction which fitted into the accepted pattern of the rebuilding of Welsh abbeys. The speaker also mentioned the type of local stone used for building, whilst most of the stone used for decoration was imported. Experts can date the building by the stone e.g. some imported stone into Wales came from Grinshill, Shropshire.

However, it has been found in recent years that the stone at Abbeycwmhir more likely came from South Radnorshire in a line across to Ludlow (Downton Castle sandstone). Dr. John spoke about the walls which remain at Abbeycwmhir today, and how the stone was brought down from the quarries by an incline route or alternatively around the coast by boat. The position of the cloisters was marked in 2008, showing the thickness of the walls, and he also spoke about the memorial stone to Llewellyn. The speaker talked about Owain Glyndwr, a known supporter of Richard III, he (Owain) stormed and destroyed Abbeycwmhir. Finally of interest, the recycled stones from Abbeycwmhir have in past years appeared in Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire churches.

Dr. John then answered various questions about the stones and buildings of abbeys especially Abbeycwmhir. A vote of thanks for such an informative and interesting talk was given by Ann Harman.

The speaker next month on May 11th will be Peter Coleridge and his lecture is entitled “Does Foreign Aid Work? Oxfam and the UN: a Personal Journey”.

MAY 2015

'Does foreign aid work? Oxfam and the UN, a personal journey.'

Peter Coleridge

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone especially new members. He announced that four new interest groups were starting up, namely: Art, Spanish, Genealogy and German Conversation Groups.

Bob then introduced the speaker for the morning, Peter Coleridge. Peter became Oxfam's regional director for the Middle East from 1981 to 1994. He worked for the UN in Afghanistan under the Taliban for eight year and for the same organisation in East Africa for two years.

The speaker has done extensive research on development and disability in poor countries, on which he has published two books and many articles. His lecture was entitled "What is development? - a personal journey". Peter emphasised that the audience would be seeing the topic through another person's eyes; it just happened to be him. He then posed a number of questions such as: how much of the money reaches the destination it was intended for? and how much is spent on administration? What do we mean by poverty and non- political charities? what is aid? and who are migrants?, with the speaker focusing on his own journey. He also effectively used a power point presentation for easier explanation.

Peter gave a personal historical background to his talk by describing the lives of his grandfather and grandmother who were an engineer and a doctor respectively under the auspices of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1908 in the Congo, Central Africa.

He then spoke about some people who had inspired him: Kurt Hahn, who founded Gordonstoun, Outward Bound and Atlantic College. Brazilian Paulo Freire said "you should take responsibility for your own development". Julius Nyerere of Tanzania once said "Develop people not things-----they can only develop themselves".

Joining Oxfam in 1981 in the Middle East, he started community projects for disabled children in that region. He then studied development and disabilities in various countries; to this end he met groups of disabled people with the idea of hearing about their problems. Later after writing a book on disabilities he wanted to focus on that much neglected subject.

In that direction he got a job with Oxfam in Afghanistan. The war there caused injuries, so Oxfam set up orthopaedic workshops, other disabled children at home rather than school, and there are community disabled groups. An idea in developing countries is to set up

groups of self- help working together for a common goal and different forms of agricultural development where it is needed.

The speaker then answered excellently a good number of questions on all aspects of the topic, especially regarding Oxfam. Peter Coleridge was thanked for his very interesting talk by Chairman Bob Atkins.

The speaker at the next Llandrindod & District U3A lecture meeting on Monday 8th June will be Dr. Fred Slater of Newbridge on Wye, and his talk is entitled "The Changing Natural History of Radnorshire".

June 2015

The Changing Natural History of Radnorshire

Dr Fred Slater

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone and spoke of the Art and Genealogy interest groups, and news was given of the Garden trip to David Austin Roses.

He then introduced the guest speaker for the morning, Dr. Fred Slater of Newbridge on Wye. The speaker is, amongst other appointments, a member of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society's Directorate Board and Council, he is a Chartered Environmentalist, Fellow of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, and a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Societies. Dr. Fred's current interests include the production and bio-diversity of willow and perennial rhizomatous grasses produced as renewable energy crops; amphibian, otter and crayfish ecology and the ecology of ephemeral upland pools. He is the author of over 150 reports and publications, and two books and chapters in several more mainly about the ecology of Mid Wales.

Dr Fred's talk was entitled " Changing Natural History of Radnorshire - Perception and Reality". The speaker noted that a lot of people are now interested in wildlife but he intended focusing his lecture on the difference between perception and reality.

He stated that salmon, trout and eels are declining, due to the great silting of rivers, and one wonders how things have survived. How many curlews and lapwings are there, cuckoos are scarce and skylarks are rare. There is half the number of butterflies, and birds and flowering plants have decreased.

However there is a lot of peat in Wales and this has preserved the pollen grains etc. He mentioned Cors-y-llyn, the bog near Newbridge, which tells us something about the natural history chronological order starting with the Ice Age, pollen, trees, forests and landscapes. Erosion of peat means all the heathers grow, but it is difficult for plants to get water in those conditions, resulting in no nutrients.

Peat and peatlands have changed over time, they were used for ritual burials, forestry then grew over them and a reduction of carbon in the atmosphere. As a matter of interest 40 years ago there were a number of dairy farms around Newbridge, now there are hardly any.

Dr. Fred spoke about the students who came to the Field Centre at Newbridge. At Hir Nant a student found a rare cave hoglouse. He also spoke about changes to conifer forests, which were previously deciduous woods, and how vegetation changed, such as gorse living where thorn had originally grown and in time died. Cow wheat, moths, lichens, mean woodlands come into life in the spring. Further the type of birds

such as merlins which nest in crows' nests. He noted that nest boxes were first put up at Llysdinam in the 1920's by Sir Charles Venables Llewellyn, and later Sir Michael. Rivers have changed much in nature over the years, with salmon numbers dropping significantly. When Dr. Fred first came to the area 40 years ago, he met a grandfather who used to live in the Ithon Valley. He described to the speaker that if a house was built in a day and had smoke coming out of the chimney by the morning it belonged to the person who built it. The man also related the story of a massive fireplace in a small cottage, which was used for smoking salmon, this was the family's main and staple diet for the winter.

He also spoke of trying to help the salmon come up water; fresh water mussels which had declined by the 1990's, in the past there were fresh water sponges now difficult to find, and the dipper. Dr Fred then spoke about the water based project at Craig Goch Dam in the Elan Valley, and the proposal in the past to build a new higher reservoir which was later abandoned. The present reservoirs have a definite impact on wild life---- where there is no oxygen in the water it is not suitable for wildlife.

The speaker then mentioned the ecology of Llandrindod lake, with reed beds around and bitterlings(type of carp) and terrapins in the water. He then restated his original themes of perception and reality---- great crested newts now well distributed, frogs and toads, goosanders and mandarin ducks. In uplands such as Aberedw ponds, such as pitwert, fairy scrimp and mink are found. Encouraging otters to live along the riverbeds, population low in 60's and 70's, but they have recovered in numbers. Crayfish were abundant 40 years ago but have now declined, with hardly any left mainly because of the crayfish plague. Interestingly the midwife toad has now appeared in this area. The agricultural change from silage to hay has had a big impact on meadows, the presence of glow worms, some lawns there for 100 years and different species of fungi. Dr. Fred also mentioned invaders, such as weaterfern, giant hogweed, japanese knotweed, pigmy weed from New Zealand and others.

The speaker ended his very interesting and informative lecture by mentioning Stanner Rocks, near Walton which he described as the best place locally for rare plants, including the radnor lily which was found in the 1970's. He also mentioned Gigrin Kite Feeding Station near Rhayader. He ended by speaking about different species of bats, and the fact that we now know much more about them, also woodmice, doormice, pinemartens beavers, lynx, and wolves. How agriculture has changed, the advent of bio mass crops .

Dr Fred then answered a number of very varied questions from the appreciative membership, and he was thanked by local U3A Committee member Clive Barrett.

Meeting on 14 September 2015

4000 years of Secrecy 2055 BC- 1945 AD- A Brief History of Codes and Ciphers

Dr Mark Baldwin

Report by Barbara Warner

After welcoming everyone, particularly a number of new members, and giving out numerous notices (see Noticeboard), Chairman Bob Atkins introduced the guest speaker, Dr Mark Baldwin (see Speakers' Biographies).

Dr Baldwin went back in time to the Phaistos Disc of c. 1700 BC in Crete and the Rosetta Stone of c.200 BC in Egypt to illustrate that codes and ciphers are no new invention but back in various forms for several thousand of years.

He first gave clear definitions to help good understanding of the language of cryptographers:

CODE – a system for changing one type of information into another, not necessarily to disguise it e.g. bar codes

CIPHER- a system for disguising a message by re-ordering the letters or by transferring it into another letter or symbol.

PLAIN TEXT: the original message

ENCIPHERED/ENCODED TEXT: the message transformed in order to conceal its meaning

Dr Baldwin then went on to describe and explain the various types of Ciphers which can be Transposition based e.g. Scyale, Grid, Grille or Substitution based e.g. Caesar, Standard, Enigma or other 'Hidden' Most ciphers are of the first or second type as 'hidden' messages are difficult and need a great deal of time to compose.

He explained each of the types, giving working examples and showing how secure and effective each one can be in its simplest form and by adding extra features like keywords and algorithms to make them more complex and difficult to decipher.

The earliest 'machine' Dr Baldwin has seen to aid ciphering is a French pocket cipher device of 1675, though he has a drawing of one dating back to the 16th century in which letters are substituted by symbols which makes it look more secure but in fact just makes it more complicated.

Using the alphabet not in alphabetical order adds many additional cipher patterns – 400 million, million, million instead of 15 or 51 if the alphabet is reversed and written from right to left. This invention was thought to be the ultimate in security but has not proved to be the case as frequency analysis of the letters of the alphabet will suggest whether the type of cipher is transposition or substitution. The analysis of frequency of letters (which is different in different languages) can also help those who are familiar with such analysis decode or decipher by trial and error.

The Vigenère cipher invented by Bellasiss in 1553 uses a keyword to upgrade from monoalphabetic to polyalphabetic. Although this cipher can be broken if the message is long enough for repetition to be apparent, the security can be improved by a very long keyword. This idea led to the invention of the famous enigma machine by the Germans during the 2nd world war.

There are a number of types of CODES including one book codes where the sender and recipient both have one book and two book codes where they both have two books, one containing the plaintext and the 'hatter'. Numbers can be used instead of letters and can be made more complicated and secure by adding the date, so the code changes each day. To break a code requires the interception of numerous messages and the reconstruction of the Code Book which takes time. The process is much accelerated if the Code Book is captured.

Although modern codes use technology and are written in binary form Dr Baldwin finished his talk by showing how effective a manual method can be. A handwritten coded message from World War 2 was discovered by David Martin when he was renovating the chimney of his house in Bletchingley, Surrey. Among the rubbish, he found parts of a dead pigeon - including a leg, attached to which was a red canister. Inside the canister was a thin piece of paper with the words "Pigeon Service" at the top and 27 handwritten blocks of code.

The message - which attracted world-wide media attention - was put in the hands of Britain's top codebreakers at GCHQ in 2012 and they remain convinced the message is impossible to decrypt without access to the relevant codebooks!

Report of Meeting December 2015

'Flamenco Dancing' by Christine Stockton

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone to the December meeting held recently at the Hotel Metropole. He went on to outline the programme for the morning, namely the monthly lecture, mini pantomime and annual Christmas lunch. He then introduced the speaker Christine Stockton and her talk "Flamenco Dancing".

The talk was based on a course she did in Granada on the history of flamenco. The story starts with the Romans in the 1st and 2nd centuries, then covers the Moorish occupation of Spain and the Reconquest. Later in the 15th century came the expulsion of Jews and Muslims, followed by the development of flamenco with Andalusian Gypsy communities in the 19th century. The last named kept the dancing going with 12 beat bar rhythm, coming into its own when the repertoire expanded and the dances were happier with gypsy tangos.

Christine played archival recordings illustrating how the style of singing and dancing flamenco has changed over the years, since it first emerged into the public arena in the late 18th century. The speaker also gave a flamenco dancing demonstration, with the aid of either a shawl or fan, of the different dances over the years. She also mentioned that later in the 20th century the flamenco guitar came into being.

Christine then answered several questions about flamenco dancing including hand movements, conveying the feel of the music, and by request she also showed and played the castanets. Finally she added that flamenco costumes have changed as well as developing at different times over the decades.

The speaker was thanked by the Chairman who said that when he arrived today he knew nothing of flamenco, but that he would be leaving with a lot of knowledge of the dance.

Following a short break U3A members gave their colleagues the only opportunity to see a unique production when they gave a performance of their mini pantomime "What Cinderella Did Next".

In the very enjoyable show the main cast were splendidly supported by members from the following U3A groups: Singing for Fun, Art, Recorder, Garden Visiting, and of course Creative Writing. The best compliment I can give is that it was worthy of further performances to other groups or organizations, rather than one showing. Following the pantomime entertainment, over 100 members enjoyed the Metropole's first class Christmas lunch.

The next U3A lecture meeting will be on Monday 11th January 2016, at the Metropole Hotel commencing 10-30a.m. at the start of Llandrindod & District U3A's 10th anniversary year. The speaker will be Mr. Geoff Smith of Llanyre, Secretary of the Mid Wales Advanced Motorists, whose talk is entitled "Driving--- A Skill for Life".

Llandrindod u3a lecture meetings

2014

January	Are Bees Intelligent?		Gareth Davies
February	The Wye and Usk Foundation		Dr. Stephen Marsh Smith
March	Caught in a Spiral		Doreen Gough
April	Another Man's Shoes		Ellie Targett
May	What ever happened to Trixie Skyrme?		Jen Green
June	Hearing for the Third Age		Peter Lyons
July	Engine Oils - Meeting the needs of today and tomorrow		Nick Burton
August	<i>No meeting</i>		
September	The Kyffin Williams Bequest		Lona Mason
October	Mozart's Messiah		David White
November	Mary Morgan of Presteigne		Eric Rees
December	The Changing Role of Women		Dr Colin Hughes

 indicates that a report of the meeting is included in this archive document

LLANDRINDOD & DISTRICT U3A

JANUARY 2014 LECTURE MEETING

'Are Bees Intelligent?' – Gareth Davies

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairperson Jane Malvern welcomed everyone to Llandrindod & District U3A's first monthly lecture meeting of 2014. She spoke about nominations of officers and committee members for the group's AGM in March. She also mentioned the Film group which normally meets on the third Friday of each month, and also a new for fun singing group and news of the photography group was given.

Jane then introduced the speaker, former Chairman of the U3A group Gareth Davies, who needed no introduction. He has been a member of the local U3A since its founding and as a former Llandrindod High School teacher had lived in the town for 50 years. Gareth has been a beekeeper for 45 years, and he still keeps bees and advises others on their care.

The title of his talk was "*Are Bees Intelligent?*". He commenced by saying bees are social insects now living in hives in numbers of 50/60 thousand; previously they lived in hollow trees or caves. The speaker went on to describe the composition of the hive, including the net like sheets of wax honeycombs, hexagonal cells, nurseries for larvae or young bees. The combs or cells remain upwards which avoids spillage (clever or intelligent?) It has been established that the hexagonal shape is most economic, strongest and best shape for cone building. So much so that humans cannot fail to be impressed by the complexity of the honey comb structure, making it a case of clever bees.

Gareth then spoke about colony structure, one single queen, three to four hundred drones, and 50/60 thousand workers, activities, speaking about division of labour, body structure and workers co-operating together in a super animal organism.

The colony cycle is of the eggs hatching to larvae, turning into pupae, then metamorphosis takes place and the young bees hatch out. Worker bees, after four weeks in the colony, become guards at the entrance. The insect becomes

aggressive when the colony is under threat. Bees collect nectar and outside pollen and eventually nectar is processed into honey.

The speaker described the “dance method” of showing the other bees where and in what direction the nectar on plants was, with 30 circuits of dance meaning 300 metres away, the bee also showing a straight line to the particular plant, very clever by the bee.

Gareth then spoke about swarming and why they perform this activity. The colony needs to perpetrate and reproduce and if the queen’s substance (royal jelly) is too large or not enough in density, it triggers the establishment of a new colony via swarming. In the event beekeepers try to control swarms. Bees will then make preparations for the new queen, select larvae, and produce royal jelly, then the new queen will emerge and look for a new home.

Honey bees make a very important contribution to the economy by producing 11 million jars, and producing wax. Because the insects can no longer survive in the wild, beekeepers are their custodians.

The value to the economy begins because every flower has to be pollinated, with bees trapping and carrying pollen. One third of the annual human diet has been produced by the pollination of bees so that beekeepers are welcomed by farmers to orchards.

The speaker concluded by explaining the damage that the “parasite mite”, which has now spread this country from South East Asia and later Europe, has done in recent years in the form of varroa. Although in the past honeybees have been taken for granted, Gareth said he was pleased that research was going on regarding their well being and future survival.

The speaker then answered some varied questions on bees, including the integral one around which his talk was centred, i. e. Whether bees are intelligent or work by instinct.

The vote of thanks to the local speaker was given by Patsy Godfrey, former Chairperson and Programme secretary, who was also at one time the Welsh Representative on U3A’s National Committee. The speaker for the Monday February 11 U3A Lecture meeting will be Dr. Stephen Marsh-Smith and his talk is entitled “Wye and Usk Foundation”.

**LLANDRINDOD & DISTRICT U3A
FEBRUARY 2014 LECTURE MEETING**

‘The Wye and Usk Foundation’

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairperson Jane Malvern welcomed everyone to the February lecture meeting, and gave news of the cinema and art history groups. Later in the meeting she also announced that this year’s Welsh U3A Conference will be held at the Pavilion, Llandrindod Wells on 26th March 2014.

Jane then introduced the speaker for the morning Dr. Stephen Marsh Smith, OBE, a founder and Chairman of the Wye and Usk Foundation, whose talk was about the above organisation. In 2011 Stephen was awarded the OBE for services to the environment and he lives on the banks of the Wye in Powys.

The speaker outlined the history, progress and present activities of the Foundation, which became involved in matters of the environment in the 1970’s. He then described the highs and lows of salmon fishing from the late 19th Century up to the millennium.

A turning point in the maintaining and improving of fisheries in the latter part of the 20th Century was the Water and Fisheries Act of 1975. This was followed by the severe drought of 1976, with the resulting death of fish; river poaching; water transfer and the over exploitation by rods.

Then came the Flood Alleviation Scheme of the 1980s e.g Leominster. He then explained generally the history and change in fishing activities including salmon numbers, and at what points up stream on the Wye, Severn and Monnow the salmon can reach.

Dr Marsh Smith said The Foundation is a registered charity and aims at projects to look after the Wye and Usk because it is an area of national beauty. He also detailed river problems, water quality, reduced marine survival rates and farming problems, treating the streams and sand lining the rivers, all resulting in the improvement of the fish population.

Other problems tackled are the barriers to migration e.g. stones etc, and the repositioning of weirs so that the fish can get back up the river to spawn and also by means of constructed fish passes and concrete shutterings. The Foundation have in recent years constructed no less than 62 fish passes and repositioned 19 weirs on the Wye, and also the Lugg and Arrow where monitoring and habitat regeneration has also taken place. This extensive redevelopment and replacing of river banks has

greatly helped fish stocks. There are also farming and forestry issues because of the use of too much phosphate, sediment pesticides and abstraction, soil management and the obvious serious current problem of flooding. The Foundation is looking for a positive result by 2015, including salmon being supported in the majority of catchment areas. He also mentioned invasive weeds such as great hog weed and Himalayan balsam; crayfish; a project to extract gravel from rivers to help navigation; letting schemes and the fact that Wye salmon catches are getting better each year.

Stephen then answered questions from a very attentive audience on what had been a very interesting lecture. The questions included: farmers co-operation and fencing off rivers; the very current problem of river flooding; volunteer staff at the Foundation; the organisation's relationship with the Environmental Agency; an educational project about water especially involving children and farmers. The work of the Foundation has helped not only fish but other species such as birds.

The vote of thanks was given by member Humphrey Morgan, who said that the speaker had shown a different aspect, had opened our eyes and had given us an educational talk in our advancing years which after all was the aim of U3As. He added that the lecture had been topical because of the current national interest in water due to the present floods.

The meeting next month will be held on Monday 10th March at the Metropole Hotel at 10.30a.m. when Llandrindod Wells & District U3A will be holding the AGM, followed by local person, Doreen Gough, talking about quilts, the lecture is entitled "Caught in a Spiral".

Lecture Meeting

‘Caught in a Spiral’

MARCH 2014

Report by Clive Barrett

Newly appointed Chairman, Bob Atkins introduced the speaker for the morning Doreen Gough.

She firstly introduced herself as a member of the Quilt Association, detailing the story of how the quilts were collected in Llanidloes and how the Minerva Art Centre (which was formerly a disused garage) started. Whilst working at Llanidloes Museum in 1985/86 Doreen saw an exhibition of old Welsh quilts and she was “hooked”. Then, with the aid of an individual collection, she organised an exhibition in the town of Welsh and North Country quilts for six weeks in 1995.

Doreen was a member of a group who purchased the old Minerva Garage for exhibitions organised in 1998 and 1999. After the original collector went to Japan with his quilts and didn’t return to Llanidloes, Doreen found sufficient old and new, antique and contemporary quilts and enough to lend for the next summer exhibition.

Following the next several years of six week exhibitions a local group was formed and they decide to run a quilt course and membership now tops 50. In 1999 the group received donations and grants which enabled them to renovate and update the Minerva Building, incidentally “Minerva” is the Goddess of Wisdom and Craft”!!!!

Doreen then spoke about storing the quilts, a similar problem to a museum, they also purchased proper boxes. The quilts need to be unpacked every three/ four months, the biggest fear being that of moths. The quilts are then photographed and the present storage area is now full.

She went on to describe the history of particular quilts, some of which are held in family possession. Doreen explained about a couple of quilts she had brought with her, firstly a Welsh one, the central design of these are virtually all spirals. The speaker emphasised that was where she got the title of her talk “Caught in a Spiral” because she was swept off her feet by an interest in quilts. She admitted to always being a stitcher and doing some driven thread work, and attending a City and Guilds in Embroidery in the past.

For this year’s Quilting Exhibition between the 12th and 22nd April, the speaker hopes to complete the quilt she started 20 years ago!!! Doreen then spoke about the restoration, repair, conservation and care of old quilts. She displayed the second quilt she had brought to the lecture, namely the log cabin patchwork, which is a traditional Scottish or Scandinavian design. She concluded by mentioning Welsh quilts which were made quickly over the summer months, rough and ready, as opposed to the upper class ones with family recreation time to produce works of art.

The speaker then answered questions which proved to be very varied and included, how long does it take to make a quilt, the relation of styles to different areas e.g. the rope, flowers, chain, and strip design of the north country. The age of quilts was also mentioned, the earliest being 1830, and the fact that some quilts were made by prisoners. Doreen Gough was initially thanked by Bob Atkins, who called it a very interesting talk and he was also assured that men do get involved in quilting.

An official vote of thanks to the speaker was given by Morfyd Stratford, who said she had first met Doreen many years ago in Llanidloes arranging flowers and that the border town is famous in America for quilting. In thanking she hoped that U3A members had enjoyed the lecture.

Next month (April) the speaker will be Ellie Targett, who was born in Norway and now lives in Herefordshire and her lecture is entitled "Another Man's Shoes".

APRIL 2014

**‘Another Man’s Shoes’
Speaker: Ellie Target**

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed both new and existing members to the April meeting. He spoke about the annual all Wales U3A meeting which had been held in Llandrindod Wells recently, and gave news of the theatre visiting and cinema groups, and also mentioned that member Ian Paget had volunteered to help the web editor Barbara Warner with the group’s website. He then introduced the speaker for the morning, Ellie Targett, and briefly described her several interests and achievements.

Ellie began by stating that her talk would be about her father, Sven Somme, who had been a professor of marine biology in his native Norway. The general background was that, as well as more well known invasions, Hitler also invaded Norway, with King Haakon fleeing to England, and Norwegian Nazi Vidkun Quisling leading the country.

She described the natural hatred of her father towards the Nazis, leading him to join the local resistance. His profession was as an Inspector of Fisheries, and a specialist and world authority on salmon. He had the added advantage of also speaking English and German.

Ellie spoke about her childhood in the Norwegian winters of snow and ice, and also dressing in national costume on National Day(7th May)and dancing for the cruise ships, something which still happens today. In 1940 her father ran a fisheries school, was forced to give up his house and lived in a flat above, where he listened to Churchill morale boosting speeches on the radio.

Between 1940 and 1942 he produced an underground newspaper and posted the printed message out. It was about this time that a colleague in Oslo asked him if he would join the resistance, his brother Yacob was also involved in the movement. His job was to photograph the German installations along the Norway coast, receiving instructions as to the number of German soldiers involved. They used an ingenious method of communication, instructions with microfilm being placed under a postage stamp, (details of this operation have been shown on the “Antiques Roadshow”).

At one point a German map was stolen, photographed by her father, and the airport concerned bombed. Her father was eventually arrested and detained, but he escaped from a passenger ship before it sailed (the book is based on her father’s record of his escape). However he went into the mountains to cross Norway, walking for the next 22 hours before, cold and hungry, he met a young girl who, together with the local shepherd, helped him to make good his escape.

On the 60th anniversary of his walk (2004) sisters Ellie and Yule and some friends followed their father’s difficult and dangerous journey across the mountains. At one of the houses on route they met a kind old lady who returned their

father's shoes, at the time her 19 year old brother had exchanged his more suitable mountain boots for Sven's "office" shoes !!!!

Ellie and her companions found the mountain footpath bleak with nowhere to hide and ravines with loose scree slopes. Continuing in her father's footsteps, the 2004 expedition walked towards Sweden, this distance would have taken another 6 days. There were three rivers to cross, where in 1944 her father received a map of the border area; they met wolves, bears and elks, and on their last day they walked from 9a.m to 10p.m. As a sincere tribute to her father Ellie and friends made a sacrifice of socks and candles.

The speaker then answered questions from an intrigued audience. Her father walked 350 miles in 8 weeks, lived to tell the tale but rather tragically died of cancer in 1961. In giving the vote of thanks member, Duncan Thomas, having heard Ellie speak previously, spoke of an incredible and wonderful story. He had also seen the mountains of Norway, and read her book about her father, "Another Man's Shoes" which members were able to purchase after the lecture.

For Monday 12th May the speaker will be Jen Green whose lecture is entitled "Whatever Happened To Trixie Skyrme?".

JULY 2014

'Engine Oils – Meeting the needs of Today and Tomorrow'

Speaker: Nick Burton

Report by Clive Barrett

In the absence of Chairman Bob Atkins, who is recovering from a recent operation, the Vice Chair Berwyn Woolnough welcomed everyone to the July meeting and made various announcements.

He then introduced the speaker for the morning Nick Burton, who is now a Senior Lubricants Deployment Technologist at Infineum UK Ltd. This company is one of the world leaders in the formulation, manufacture and marketing of petroleum additives for fuels and lubricants.

Nick, the son of retired dentist Lance Burton and his wife Jane was brought up locally and educated at Llandrindod Wells High School. Given his present senior appointment it is excellent to see a local boy achieve so highly

Nick's lecture was entitled "*Engine Oils - Meeting the needs of Today and Tomorrow*". The speaker went into considerable details regarding engine oils, concentrating on the following headings: The important distinction between oil and petrol; the purpose of engine oils; the components of engine oil; its formulation; and, finally, meeting the needs of the future.

As a general summary Nick stated that engine oils contain many chemicals and they are an integral part of keeping an engine running. He then answered questions on the recycling of old oil, different oils for varied conditions e.g. the frozen Siberia, red ex, aluminium, and crude oils in engines, Further questions from the audience included the disposal of chemical oil in engines and the shelf life of oil, about two years.

The speaker received a vote of thanks from U3A Committee member Clive Barrett, who thanked Nick for his very comprehensive talk, adding that although obviously science based he had given everyday comparable examples, which had helped everyone understand more clearly, and he felt sure that following Nick's talk members knew much more about engine oils than they had done previously.

The next U3A meeting takes place on Monday 8th September at 10.30 a.m at the Metropole Hotel, when the speaker will be Lona Mason, a curator at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth and whose present task is organising the Sir Kyffin Williams Bequest. Her talk will be on all aspects of caring for the Bequest and also a look at Kyffin's time in Patagonia in 1968.

SEPTEMBER 2014

‘The Kyffin Williams Bequest’

Speaker: Lona Mason

Report by Clive Barrett

Vice Chairman Berwyn Woolnough chaired the September meeting in the absence of Chairman Bob Atkins who was in hospital, and to whom best wishes were sent. News was given of various interest groups and it was announced that the local U3A group was now on social media Facebook.

Berwyn then introduced Lona Mason, who has been a curator at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth since 2006. She has been involved with the cataloguing, conservation and care of the Sir Kyffin Williams’ Bequest, and her talk was based on all aspects of the caring and co-ordination of the project.

In her talk Lona also looked at artist and painter Kyffin’s time in Patagonia in 1968, where he spent several months using different mediums of paint e.g. water colours. In Patagonia Kyffin was surprised with the Welshness of people who had “never been to Wales”. As well as showing a large number of slides, Lona played an audio of the artist speaking about the Patagonia Welsh, their lives and buildings, including chapels which he recorded. He did pencil drawings of local birds, trees etc. the idea being to bring back images of Patagonia and then paint and finish the work at home in the UK.

Altogether in the region of 330 paintings and 200 drawings were left to the National Library as The Kyffin Bequest.

The speaker then answered a number of varied questions about Kyffin, his life, paintings and his relationship with the National Library of Wales, the beneficiaries and those who hold the copyright.

A vote of thanks was given by Phyllis May, for what she described as “an enthralling talk” in which Kyffin came to life as a person. She added that she hoped Lona would be invited back to speak again in the future.

The speaker for the October meeting on Monday 13th at 10.30 a.m. at the Metropole Hotel, will be David White and his talk is entitled Mozart’s “Messiah”.

December 2014 Meeting Report

The Changing Role of Women

Dr Colin Hughes

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone especially the new members. He gave news of an invitation from the BBC for contestants for “The Great British Bake Off” and for “Hair” for amateurs interested in the subject of hair. The Chairman also gave news of a new computer group and the existing cinema group. He then introduced the speaker for the morning, Dr. Colin Hughes of Llandrindod Wells, and his subject “ The Changing Role of Women in Society” in the 20th Century. The speaker subdivided his talk into Women at Home, at Work and in Politics.

Women at Home

Dr. Colin described how the different classes namely working, middle and upper lived in the past. He mentioned the soup kitchens and the depression of the 1930's, together with the social security changes which came after the Second World War under William Beveridge.

The speaker also outlined other happenings which greatly affected women such as the birth bulge of 1941 to 1960, birth control, improvements in housing provision, and other gadgets such as gas cookers, vacuum cleaners and washing machines that all improved the woman's life at home.

Women at Work

Traditional female jobs were either domestic or employment in a factory. The registering, conscription and recruitment process for World War 1 saw women undertake other duties such as nursing and associated tasks, ambulance drivers, engineers; they flew aircraft during World War 11, and were in the Land Army as agricultural workers and in the timber corps.

Following the 1914—18 war women didn't want to go back solely to “kitchen duties”. In the 1939—45 war more women were needed as the fighting progressed, as well as those mentioned above, they became WRENS or joined the army.

After 1945 there was more work for women with the rebuilding and construction of the country, female progress being helped by the Education Act 1944, bringing compulsory secondary education to at least age 15. This resulted in more access to training colleges; furthermore, women worked in industry e.g. Hoover, Merthyr Tydfil, and there were more hotel and local government jobs.

Dr. Hughes also mentioned the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, which helped towards more equal employment. He mentioned a number of Welsh ladies who have risen to the top of their chosen profession despite “the glass ceiling”. These include fashion guru, Laura Ashley, writer and author, Elaine Morgan and Menna Richards, Controller of BBC Wales.

Women in Politics

He mentioned suffragists and the more violent suffragettes, who engaged in such activities as window smashing raids and arson. However all this protesting resulted in women over 30 having the vote under the 1918 Reform Act and in 1928, all women over 21.

Nancy Astor became the first woman MP in 1918 and between 1928/31 Megan Lloyd George was the first woman Welsh MP, representing Anglesey. The speaker mentioned some prominent women politicians of the recent past and present including Margaret Thatcher, Barbara Castle, Betty

Boothroyd, Harriet Harman and Anne Clwyd. He showed, by quoting figures, how the number of women in the Welsh Government, the Cabinet, and Parliament are still unbalanced number wise as compared with men.

Dr. Hughes then answered questions and member Sue Parsons gave a vote of thanks describing the lecture as a “fascinating roller coaster”.

Following the meeting members were entertained with a singalong of carols and Christmas songs led by U3A’s “Singing for Fun” interest group and, after the annual seasonal lunch, they had the pleasure of listening to the Recorder group.

Llandrindod u3a lecture meetings

2013

April	Music and the Wesleys		David White
May	What You Can Catch Abroad		Dr Graham Lloyd
June	Court Proceedings – the Media and Reality		David Farrar, QC
July	Abbey Cwm Hir		Dr John H. Davies
August	<i>No meeting</i>		
September	Wills, Probate and Intestacy		Geraint Jones
October	Age Concern Wales		Sara Rochira
November	Environmental Health		Catherine Davies
December	Nobody's Fool - Victorian Gooseberry Clubs		Andrew Wyton

Earlier meetings

December 2012	Hawksdrift Falconry Centre		Layla Bennett
August 2011	Keynote Lecture: Victorian Wales		Dr John Davies
October 2010	History of Radnorshire		Dr John Davies
November 2010	Sigeric's Journey to Rome		Heather Burnley

 indicates that a report of the meeting is included in this archive document

REPORT OF APRIL 2013 MEETING – ‘Music and the Wesleys’

Report by Clive Barrett

Vice Chairman Bob Atkins welcomed everyone to the April lecture meeting, and then proceeded to give the latest news of the interest groups. He then gave a brief resume on David White, the speaker for the morning, who has had a lifetime involvement in music, notably in cathedrals and choral societies and, since retiring to Powys, with Cantorion, Irfon Singers and Brecon Cathedral.

David White began his lecture, which was entitled “Music and the Wesleys” by stating that he had had a good grounding in his chosen subject because his father was a Methodist minister.

The speaker went on to tell his audience that John and Charles Wesley, the latter wrote 6,000 hymns plus extra poems, spear-headed the Wesleyan movement in Mid Wales. Charles came to the Builth area in 1747, when he also visited Llandrindod. Two years later he married Sarah (Sally) Gwynne of Garth House and they moved to Bristol, and never returned to Garth, one reason being the Gwynne family moved to Ludlow. With the aid of handout illustrations and his own musical accompaniment on the organ, David White explained the Wesley family tree.

In 1747 Charles compiled a massive volume hymn book, and the speaker explained how different tunes from Lampe and those written at about the time of Handel were allocated to Wesley hymns at various times. There is also a held belief that, whilst writing hymns, Charles had the tunes of Purcell and Dryden in his mind at the time. The speaker was funny at times with a dry sense of humour.

He went on to speak about other members of the family. Sarah and sons, Samuel and Charles (Junior), were fine musicians. Samuel fell out with his family after becoming a Roman Catholic; this decision affected his life and opportunities and he later suffered from depression. In 1824 Samuel set words of his father’s hymns more to resemble Handel tunes rather than the earlier Lampe compositions. Samuel Sebastian Wesley (grandson of Charles) was in Hereford, Exeter, Winchester and Gloucester Cathedrals and wrote some good music (1834).

David White then answered questions about his talk and the explored subject. He was thanked by U3A member Ann Harvey, for such an interesting lecture. She added that David had revealed much more than we knew and that it was good to hear about other family members, and the family’s local connections.

MUSIC FOOTNOTE: “A Wesley Festival Weekend” is being held at Garth near Bulith Wells between the 23rd and 26th May 2013, with a number of the events at nearby Llanlleonfel Church including a re-enactment of the wedding of Charles Wesley and Sarah Gwynne.

The speaker at the next Llandrindod U3A lecture meeting on Monday 13th May at The Metropole Hotel at 10.30a.m. is Dr. Graham Lloyd, who originates from Newbridge on Wye, and his talk on infectious diseases is entitled “What You Can Catch Abroad”.

U3A May 2013

Report of the meeting by Clive Barrett

What You Can Catch Abroad – Dr Graham Lloyd

Chairperson Jane Malvern welcomed everyone, asking for a moments silence for member Mila Skinner had passed away recently, and also gave news of the various interest groups.

She then introduced Dr. Graham Lloyd from Warminster, Wiltshire, a Consultant Clinical Microbiologist who has spent 35 years in the development, treatment, and research of infectious diseases at home and abroad.

He firstly outlined his extensive career including working in Portadown Public Health Laboratories. Here he studied the problems of infection, how they are transmitted and the need for protection for the scientists and the buildings they work in.

Dr. Lloyd, who has family connections with Newbridge on Wye, spoke about worldwide collaboration, the sources of infectious diseases, and how they travel e.g by means of bird migration and movement of people around the world. He further outlined the identifying of bacteria, viruses and laboratory and clinical protection of the environment and the scientists. The speaker gave an excellent power point assisted lecture with appropriate humour at times.

He stated that there was a problem dealing with viruses in the real world, “or out in the field”. He also quoted the example of the West Nile Virus which has spread from part of the USA to all of the North American continent.

The speaker then answered questions from the well attended U3A audience. Dr. Lloyd was thanked by Press Representative Clive Barrett for a fascinating and very informative lecture. Clive added that the talk had been both enjoyable and intriguing from an expert on infectious diseases both in this country and abroad.

The speaker at the U3A’s next lecture meeting on Monday 10th June at 10.30a.m. at the Metropole Hotel will be David Farrar Q.C, and his lecture is entitled the “ Contrast between Media and Reality of Court Proceedings”.

U3A Llandrindod - Meeting 10 June 2013

Court Proceedings – the Media and Reality

David Farrar, QC

Vice Chairman, Bob Atkins, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Guest Speaker, David Farrar, QC.

David Farrar is an eminent barrister who studied modern languages and law at Cambridge University, was called to the Bar in 1967, became Crown Court Recorder from 1983, took silk in 1986, specialised in serious crime and financial crime, including fraud, money laundering and corruption. He became Head of Chambers in 1999 and dealt with the first case in the UK using DNA profiling as evidence. He is now looking forward to retiring from full time employment.

David Farrar, QC, talked about the contrast between how litigation is portrayed in the media and reality. Although not keen on watching too much court room drama on TV in his leisure time, he thinks that the picture is often grossly distorted giving us a 'pyjamas and fireworks' perspective, similar to 20/20 Cricket compared with a Test Match.

Barristers undertake the role of advocacy either in defending or prosecuting. Advocacy has 3 elements : dealing with Judge; addressing the Jury; and examining, cross examining and re-examining the witnesses. The third element is the most demanding, requiring many skills in dealing with the witnesses courteously, with the overall aim of controlling them. Cross examination is the most demanding part and can be the most intoxicating exercise in the job. In the media, this is often portrayed as a vigorous attack, aiming to undermine witnesses but in reality the duty of the defence advocate is to challenge evidence which is contrary to that of the defendant and can be a delicate process, often concerned with damage limitation rather than offensive destruction.

Giving detailed examples from real life cases, David Farrar illustrated how reality is different from the myths that permeate portrayal in the media. He explained the benefits and disadvantages of different types of questions – open, closed and leading -, the amount of time need for preparation, the need for flexibility, the importance of having ability to respond to the unexpected, for tenacity, simplicity, brevity and the need to avoid arrogance or a pose of intellectual superiority.

Quoting at length from the evidence given at several high profile and important trials, he showed how important the subject and technique of questions are in the cross examination process. Examples included the questions that caused Oscar Wilde to lose his libel case against the Marquess of Queensbury; the Cadbury libel trial against the London Standard newspaper in 1908 for accusations about its use of slave-grown cocoa; and some moving, detailed evidence extracts from the cross examination of Goering during the first Nuremburg Trial.

In conclusion David Farrar pointed out that cross examination does not always go to plan,

especially in criminal trials, and that sometimes an apparently inconsequential question can produce dramatic results as occurred in one of his own cases at a murder trial.

After members had asked a number of questions, U3A Member, Berwyn Woolnough, gave a vote of thanks to David Farrar, whom he has known for over 50 years since university, for an interesting and entertaining talk and summed up by saying that he would rather be defended by this barrister rather than prosecuted by him!

‘Abbey Cwm Hir’

Dr John H. Davies

July 2013

The Chairperson Jane Malvern welcomed everyone to the July meeting “on a lovely morning” and asked for a moment’s stood silence for member Freddie Davies of Newbridge on Wye, who passed away recently.

She gave news of the various interest groups including three new or proposed ones, namely tea dance, creative writing and a film group and the existing theatre and art history groups. Jane also announced that the recorder group would be playing under the Rock Park canopy on 7th September.

She then introduced Dr. John H. Davies, the noted Welsh geologist and historian, who is Chairman of Abbey Cwmhir Trust, and his lecture entitled “Part of the History of Abbey Cwmhir” was funny at times.

He traced the history of the Abbey and other nearby abbeys such as Dore in Herefordshire and Strata Florida in Mid Wales (1164) through the centuries including the religious order of Cistercian monks, whose structures were recognised as designed the same. Dr. Davies stated that Abbey Cwmhir Abbey was originally founded in 1143 and refounded in 1176, but today there is not much of the structure left. Later the new church was built in the nave of the old one, and in 1231 Henry III had the Abbey burned down.

He also mentioned the connection with the Welsh Prince Llewellyn ap Gruffydd, who tried to push the Mortimers out and the long standing debate whether Llewellyn was buried at Abbey Cwmhir Abbey or Cilmerly where he was killed, it being commonly believed that he was buried at the latter. During his talk Dr. Davies spoke generously about his present research into building stones in Wales, relating the interest to the fact that the stone for Abbey Cwmhir came from Grinshill, Shropshire, plus local stone from nearby quarries.

After answering various questions the speaker was thanked by member and former Vice Chairman Peter Drummer for an informative and humorous talk.

There will be no U3A meeting in August; however the autumn term will resume with Geraint Elfyn speaking about “Wills, Probate and Intestacy” on 9th September 2013 at 10—30a.m at the Metropole Hotel.

Llandrindod Wells U3A Meeting September 2013

‘Wills, Probate and Intestacy’

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Jane Malvern welcomed everyone back after the summer break and asked for a few moments silence for member Dorothy Barry who had passed away recently. News was given of the various interest groups, including those of Church Visiting and the newly established Cinema Group. She also mentioned and asked for volunteers for the annual Mid Wales quiz which, this year will be held on Saturday 2nd November at the Caerberis Hotel, Builth Wells.

Jane then introduced Geraint Jones, who graduated in Welsh in 1974, later studying and qualifying in law. He now practices in his Llandrindod business with one of his sons and advises on communal litigation. His lecture was entitled ”Wills, Probate & Intestacy.

He opened by telling briefly of some unusual wills, which helped make for a humorous at times lecture. Geraint also spoke about the ‘power of attorney, the financial and personal details of a will, the duties of the Executors, if no will intestate, and the obtaining of letters of administration. He went on to mention gifts and bequests, property ownership, inheritance tax and contested probate. Geraint ended his comprehensive and informative lecture by recalling funny aspects of famous people’s wills. He then answered questions from his potential customer audience concerning various parts of his lecture.

A vote of thanks was given by local U3A Vice Chairman Bob Atkins, who spoke of a very interesting and helpful lecture, the high level of its contents being recognised by the large number of questions at the end. Bob added finally that the importance of making a will had been stressed.

Llandrindod Wells & District U3A lectures have in the past always been very varied; however next month (October) the group continues with another mature theme . On Monday 14th October at the Metropole Hotel at 10.30a.m with coffee at 10.00, the subject is “Age Concern Wales” and the speaker will be Sara Rochira.

OCTOBER 2013

Age Concern Wales – Sara Rochira

Report by Clive Barrett

Jane Malvern (Chair) welcomed everyone and gave a brief resume of the different new and existing interest groups now available to members. She then introduced Sara Rochira the Older Peoples Commissioner for Wales, who is certainly in the news at present because of a report she is busy preparing and in fact her arrival on the morning had been delayed by a BBC interview!!!

Sara has previously been involved with many NHS organisations, been Director of RNIB Cymru and also Age Alliance Wales. She was appointed by the First Minister for four years (two terms) and she went on to describe her main duties including extensive statutory, safeguarding discrimination, legal powers, the review of public bodies such as Health Boards and Local Authorities. Further her powers of entry e.g. to care homes.

Sara said that she was a public servant, but regarded herself as a voice for older people and champion in the Principality, independent of the Welsh Government. She mentioned that older people should have access to health, be protected from abuse and neglect, community and residential care should be provided, and promised to protect older people against discrimination including in the use of language. Sara maintained that the nearly 1 million older people in Wales were the nation's greatest asset, and she wanted to give this important group their "voice" back.

To bring matters right up to date, she spoke of her project which started that day (Monday 14th October), namely The Residential Care Review, which includes quality of life at the forefront, whether residents in the care homes are kept safe. She proposes to eventually visit all the 100 homes, including the 50 high risk care homes before Christmas and speak to the older people, carers, and relatives. In the New Year she intends visiting the remaining homes (without notice) and get questions answered there. In June 2014 her findings will be published and her report should highlight what is being done towards the aim of quality of life and its value, meaning and purpose.

The speaker then answered members' questions on older people, the whole care system, and the front line social carers.

I would suggest that Sara was a direct and clear speaker and she is fully aware of what she wants to achieve, but unless I am very much mistaken I felt that the majority of members were of the opinion that she had undertaken a terrifically difficult task against the odds. The speaker then answered questions about the environment we live in, why some older people feel isolated and lonely, indeed why they have got to that position where they have to be encouraged to make friends, now that family relatives often live away from older people.

Sara Rochira was given a vote of thanks by the U3A Group's Programme Secretary Mai Ellis, who spoke about the very interesting and plenty to discuss lecture. Adding

that she was glad Sara had been appointed to stand up for “our age group”, because of the way she had answered the extensive questions, and because of the work she is attempting to do.

The speaker for the next Llandrindod Wells & District U3A lecture meeting on Monday 11th November at 10.30a.m. at The Metropole Hotel will be Catherine Davies who will talk about “Environmental Health”.

U3A Llandrindod – December 2013

Report by Clive Barrett

NOBODY'S FOOL- VICTORIAN GOOSEBERRY CLUBS

Chairperson Jane Malvern welcomed everyone to the December and last meeting of the year at the Metropole Hotel, which was followed by the annual Christmas lunch. She then introduced the speaker for the morning Mr. Andrew Wyton, a horticulturist with an MA in Garden History, and former Baptist Minister. His talk was entitled “ Nobody’s Fool—The Serious World of Victorian Gooseberry Clubs”.

He opened his lecture with a brief history of gardens, mentioning that owners in the past had the power and wealth together with ideas and ideals, whilst the ordinary person did the work and practicalities in the garden. The speaker said for his MA he had studied garden history which included the great and the good including Capability Brown, the famous landscaper. Andrew added that in recent years he had been involved in horticulture professionally in Nottingham.

He then went on to speak about “Victorian Gooseberry Clubs” and the history of the humble fruit, which was first brought to this country from France in 1276. The speaker also mentioned some of the origins of sayings associated with the fruit, e.g. “born under a gooseberry bush” and “third in a company or chaperone”. The fruit was easy to grow and was popular in the poorer mill and textile towns of the north and 180 Gooseberry Clubs grew up. In a way the clubs were the idea of the rich to keep the poorer members of society away from the pubs----but ironically the clubs met in public houses.

From the humble beginnings of only 5 different varieties, this rose to 3000 in the 1800’s. The basic idea of the clubs was for the individual member, under strict rules, to achieve the ultimate honour of growing the “heaviest” gooseberry. The lists of the growers were published in the growers register until 1909, when gooseberry mildew virtually wiped out the humble fruit.

Today when only about 11 clubs remain, the present world record is held by Kelvin Archer of Nottinghamshire and, size wise, it is as big as a duck's egg!!!!

The speaker then played the Gooseberry Club's anthem on C.D. a folk song about the fruit. Throughout the talk Andrew displayed a nice touch of humour and in fact he was very funny at times. He then answered questions from members including, gooseberry identification by experts, the fact that it is grown across Europe and USA, and that there are other clubs florist (a general one) and for particular flowers e.g. carnation, dahlia and petunia. The speaker was thanked by member Adele Bevan, who mentioned that she was originally intrigued by the title and that Andrew had brought his keen sense of humour to the talk, adding that gooseberries make good wine.

The January meeting, the first of the new year, will take place on Monday January 13th at the Metropole Hotel starting at 10.30a.m. when member and former Chairman, Gareth Davies, will be the speaker and his talk is entitled "Are Bees Intelligent?".

Report of U3A Meeting December 2012

By Clive Barrett

This year's U3A Chairman Jane Malvern welcomed everyone to the December meeting, and gave news of the various interest groups. She then introduced the speaker for the morning, Layla Bennett of Hawksdrift Falconry Centre, near Builth Wells.

Layla has always had a passion for birds of prey, and even as a child she used to watch all the different species of birds coming onto the bird table in her parents garden in the Dernol Valley. She has been a Falconer since she left school at the age of 16. Her first job was to be involved in bird control on industrial sites in South Wales. Her company is 'Hawksdrift' which she created and established and has been run by Layla since 2006.

From those small beginnings Layla has become a noted provider of National Falconry services, and now employs seven people. The company, which has 38 birds of prey including hawks, falcons and owls, specialises in the promotion of falconry as a traditional country sport and to the conservation, protection and rehabilitation of wild birds of prey. It also aims to educate both young and old alike, at schools or in lectures, in the traditions of the countryside and the way forward regarding conservation issues. The eight acre site, as well as a falconry centre, is also a "mini" nature reserve, with over twenty species and growing of native wildlife to be seen.

Layla gave an excellent informal and informative talk, allowed two of her birds "Hope" a Harris Hawk and "Olivia" a Barn Owl to fly above the audience and land around the Hotel Metropole room. She explained the real jobs that birds of prey do, such as controlling problem birds and pests. During the lecture members asked various questions.

The Owls are kept for education purposes especially "Olivia" who visits schools. At the end of her lecture Layla answered more questions on aspects of her work including airfield bird control by falcons. These birds of prey work very much on eyesight to get their food. They originate from Siberia, Persia and came across to Britain with the Crusaders. On the other hand Owls have amazing eyesight and notable hearing, they can hear the heart beat of a mouse 50 yards away, but have a much smaller brain capacity. Layla explained that to keep performing Hawks one has to abide by legislation, regulations, and hold insurances and licences.

Chairperson Jane Malvern summed up by saying that the morning had been extremely interesting and joked that it wasn't often that live birds could be seen flying around the Metropole! Vice Chairman Peter Dummer thanked Layla for such a fascinating and entertaining talk. Following the lecture meeting members enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch, with after meal entertainment provided by the local U3A's Recorder Group.

The first U3A Lecture meeting of 2013 will take place on Monday 14th January at 10.30a.m at the Metropole Hotel, when the speaker will be Will Adams, Curator of the Radnorshire Museum, and his talk is entitled "Llandrindod Museum".

Keynote Lecture 2011

VICTORIAN WALES

Dr John Davies - August 2011

Notes from the Lecture by Barbara Warner

In 1889 Queen Victoria was staying in Merionethshire when she asked her Private Secretary to tell the Prince of Wales what an excellent and enthusiastic reception the Queen had received and how they must visit frequently. In the 64 years of her reign, she spent 7 years in Scotland, 7 weeks in Ireland and 7 nights in Wales! Nor did she he ever visit Llandrindod.

Her first visit to Wales was to Anglesey before she came to the throne on her way to visit Ireland via Holyhead with her uncle George IV, when he received the news that 'his enemy' was dead. His first thought was that his wife was dead, when the 'enemy' referred to Napoleon (II).

Victoria next two visits to Wales were inspired by her husband, Prince Albert who was fascinated by engineering structures. They visited the Britannia Bridge in 1852 and the iron sailing ship 'SS Great Eastern' in the harbour at Holyhead in 1853.

In 1868, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) visited on the Queen's behalf, during her period of withdrawal from public life after the death of Prince Albert. On his way back from Ireland, he opened the new water works at Caernarfon – and succeeded in drenching a number of dignitaries!

Later visits by the Queen included 1889 when she visited Bryntisilio, near Llangollen, to meet the biographer of Prince Albert, visits to Prime Minister Gladstone at Hawarden Castle, to Penrhyn Castle and the Eisteddfod in 1892 and to Aberystwyth from where she returned by train from Machynlleth to Cardiff, praising this journey as 'wonderful'.

Victoria wrote voluminous letters to her daughter Vicky the Younger in which she was often disdainful about Wales, especially about the pressure for Disestablishment of the Anglican Church. It was her forceful view that 'there is no church of Wales' to the change of wording eventually to the 'Church In Wales'. Her disdain is also apparent in her reference to 'that fellow, Lloyd George'.

The general attitude of the Welsh towards Queen Victoria ranged from warm approbation to adoration, though anti-Royalist and republican views were also held by some. The Welsh liked her for two reasons: the first was her association with and descent from the Tudors and the second that she was a Protestant. The next in line to the throne was the Duke of Cumberland and the Welsh felt that Victoria as Queen saved them from this vicious reactionary who became the Elector of Hanover.

At an Eisteddfod at Abergavenny, a view was put forward that Victoria had a large quantity of Celtic blood and she was therefore more aligned to Wales than to England. Adulation came to a head when the Queen died and newspapers in Wales were printed with black edges.

She was praised for her high sense of morality in an era when the public was aware of the corruption of many in the aristocratic circles and Victoria was held up as an example of a good simple life. Some obituaries described her as the 'Great White Mother' and that she 'could qualify as a full member of the Bethel Chapel'.

Queen Victoria had no real understanding of the constitutional monarchy and believed that she ruled as a consecrated monarch by divine right. Originally a Whig supporter in the early years of her reign, Victoria tended towards conservative thinking and was later in collusion with the Tories, opposing causes championed by Radicals such as the Disestablishment of the church; democracy; egalitarianism; tax on landed estates; teetotalism. At the time, little was known of her views or the active political role she played. The secret extent of her political influence has only become known over time. Gladstone suffered in silence as he was a royalist supporter. She influenced Peel's resignation (when she was a Whig), the dismissal of Palmerston; the 1851 recognition of Napoleon; the Crimean War.

What was the extent of anti-royalism in Wales?

The real issue was about money. In the early years of Victoria's reign she received £375,000 a year plus the revenues from her duchies and payments to her children. Concern was expressed in Parliament about the number of children she had and the future cost of supporting them. After she went into seclusion from around 1861 to 1889, questions were asked about why she should be paid when she was not carrying out her royal duties as well as controversy about income for her grandchildren. A Committee was set up to consider the royal finances. Parnell was one of the members of this committee. Since Victoria had come to the throne she had received over £26m. The question of an allowance for the Prince of Wales was debated in the House of Commons.

Non-conformists found the relationship between the throne and the altar offensive, the essence of non-conformism being that Christ alone is head of the church. The Chair of Denbighshire Magistrates is reported as stating that the Queen had ignored Wales for 50 years. Farmers refused to pay tithes to the established church on the grounds that they were paying to support their own chapels.

But there is no real proof of republicanism. The 19th Century republic was not socialist but based on the American model. In 1871 there was a massive protest in Hyde Park but it was short lived and Dilke's motion for a full enquiry into the Queen's expenditure was defeated 174:2. Dilke later had to apologise for his views expressed when he was 'young and foolish'.

After the pomp of the Diamond Jubilee in 1889, and flattery from Disraeli, the Queen became less of a recluse but anti-royalist feeling did not die altogether. The scandal surrounding the Prince of Wales in a card playing swindle Wales caused a revival of feeling and a concern about what would happen when he became monarch because of his shameful behaviour. Queen Victoria, too, expressed concern about her son's behaviour and whether the monarchy would survive after her.

In 1894 a son was born to the Duke and Duchess of York. This event coincided with the death of 251 Welsh miners. Although the Queen sent a message of congratulations to the Duke and Duchess, she refused an address of sympathy regarding the miners' deaths.

By the end of the century the widening of the franchise and the organisation of political parties caused a decline in the power of the monarchy. When Queen Victoria came to the throne she was an acclaimed monarch with little reservation in Wales but by the end of her reign this was no longer the case.

History of Radnorshire

HISTORY OF RADNORSHIRE

Speaker: Professor Dr John Davies

13 October 2010

Warning! This account has been written from my notes taken during the lecture. It does not attempt to re-create the comprehensive and entertaining talk given by Dr Davies but to remind us of some of the many items he highlighted so that we can find out further information or visit the places mentioned. If readers find any inaccuracies please let me know! Barbara Warner

Radnorshire is often viewed as 'Cinderella Wales' – place that is thinly populated where not much has happened and if it didn't exist it wouldn't matter!

At the time of the 1832 Reform Act, counties with 23 times the population of Powys had the same representation in Parliament. (This Act took seats away from boroughs with very small populations). The abolition of the ancient counties in 1974 resulted in the anomaly of Radnorshire District Council with 18,000 population compared with Glamorgan with 750,000.

Marginalisation of their county is resented by the inhabitants of Radnorshire for, although less than 1 in 100 inhabitants of Wales live here, Radnorshire contains 10% of the surface of Wales. It has been of central strategic importance through the centuries, playing a highly significant role in many respects.

There is evidence of a substantial population from as long ago as 4,000 BC in pre-historic tombs and, at Walton, a palisade which is the largest prehistoric monument covering 35 hectares. Temperatures in the Bronze Age were higher than today, with heavy rainfall. This may be why habitation occurs during this period at higher land levels, avoiding wet and boggy valleys. Evidence of barley and wheat grown as high as 1500 feet and herds of cattle explains the large amount of cairns and stone circles in the upland region of Radnorshire. Barrows at Beguildy and Standing Stones at St Harmon stamp the identity of pre-historic peoples on the landscape here. Ritual and religious objects show their inventiveness and the range of Bronze Age monuments make up an 'open air museum'.

Later, as the climate became colder and more severe, there is an evident decline in the population of hill forts.

Radnorshire holds a strategic geographical position on the Eastern fringes of Wales. It was a frontier region. One of the first Roman Forts was built at Clyro and the Roman practice camp at LLandrindod was the largest in Europe. The fact that there was still a need for fortifications up until the end of the 4th century show that the Romans lacked success in subduing the population in Radnorshire.

Early Christianisation of the county is very evident with the great saints of the Celtic Church honoured here, including a disproportionate number of the mother churches in Wales, including Glasbury and Glascwm. The Church at Old Radnor houses an 8th century font and there is a 10th

century font at Newchurch.

In the 8th century, the evidence of the massive earthwork, Offa's Dyke, running from Sedbury Cliffs in South Wales to Prestatyn in North Wales, shows the existence of the kingdom of Powys, separate from the kingdom of Mercia. Marking the Eastern boundary of Powys, Offa's Dyke is perhaps the greatest engineering feat of the 1st millennium Christian Era.

Powys was under the control of Gwynedd in 865 and became independent in 1063 and was made up of the area between the Wye and the Severn. In the 1180s, Giraldus Cambrensis described the entry of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Old Radnor to seek Welsh volunteers to the 3rd Crusade. His sermon had to be translated into Welsh for the population to understand it.

In the early 13th century, the evidence of castle building – for example Painscastle- shows that Powys moved its borders south. Llewellyn II of Wales led an army and fought on the banks of the River Irfon at Builth. He is thought to have been skilled at Cilmerly and stories suggest that his body was buried at Abbey Cwm Hir, the great Cistercian abbey, as a poignant memorial to independent rule in Wales before control was yielded to Norman knights.

By 1300 the Mortimers had become the leading family in the area and a long struggle for power ensued. There is evidence of a motte and bailey castle at Womaston, the earliest castle of this type in Britain. Most castles are in ruins today but they still provide an exhibition of medieval structures in the area.

Evidence of early medieval craftsmanship can be seen at Llanbadarn Fawr, Gladestry, Bleddfa and Glascwm and there is a later medieval rood screen in Llananno Church. At Beguildy there is evidence of rich secular building which shows use of the finest timber in the Hall house.

Radnorshire features in early Welsh literature, including Francis Payne's 'Wanderings in Radnorshire' in which 'Greater Radnorshire' includes Kington and much of Herefordshire. At Hergest, the Vaughans saved medieval Welsh manuscripts, including the Mabinogion and accounts of early medical practices in Greater Radnorshire.

After Owain Glyndwr led a revolt in 1402 and was victorious at the Battle of Pilleth, all lands between the Wye and the Severn were subsequently given to the Mortimer family.

In the 13th century a medieval new town was created at New Radnor and the medieval plan of three main streets with transverse streets is still evident there today.

By 1536 the county of Radnorshire was in existence. The fact that Radnorshire became county when it could have been added to Brecon, is an indication of its status, with the Crown Lordship based on New Radnor.

Yet the poverty of the areas was stressed by later commentators. Radnorshire has little in the way of natural resources and it remained a troublesome area for those in control of the country. Assize Courts met at New Radnor and at Rhayader but the second judge sent to the Assizes at Rhayader was murdered by the plaintiff. Presteigne then became the centre of law and remained so until 1889 when the Court was transferred to Llandrindod. The Judge's Lodgings at Presteigne is now a fine museum showing how a Victorian Judge of Assizes lived.

The Acts of Union in the 16th century gave one Member of Parliament to every county and to a number of small boroughs, e.g. Knucklas. Although Radnorshire still had a comparatively small population it produced a number of distinguished MPs. In the 19th century, Radnorshire Borough's

MP, George Cornewall Lewis, was tipped to succeed the Prime Minister, Palmerston, but died before him. The 77 foot high monument to him, just outside New Radnor, became a model for the Albert Memorial.

Reform Acts in 1885 and 1918 led to the disappearance of, first, the Radnorshire Borough's MP and, then, the disappearance of the Radnorshire County seat.

Other famous 19th century Radnorshire men include Edward (Celtic) Davies; Thomas Phillips who founded Llandovery College; and Thomas Price.

In the 18th century, Welsh was still the first language of the people of Radnorshire. There are references to the use of 'Vile English jargon' and in 1775 at Glascwm, a petition was made against a minister who couldn't conduct services in Welsh. But the Anglicanisation of Radnorshire in the later 18th century meant that Radnorshire lacked the resources for cultural revival that occurred in other parts of Wales.

Some notable buildings of the 19th century are the black and white houses at Gregynog, Knighton and Norton. The rise of non-conformism led to The Pales, a Quaker Meeting House, one of Dr Davies's recommended '100 places to see before you die'.

The 19th century also shows evidence of human manipulation of the landscape. Major works include the coming of the Mid Wales railway and the building of the Viaduct at Knucklas and the building of the reservoirs in the Elan Valley, with the flooding of a village and mansion to achieve this. Minor works include the creation of Llandrindod Lake and the Dell in Victorian times. The exploitation of the springs as medicinal waters led to the development of Llandrindod Wells as the 'Mecca' of the nation and to the early installation of stainless steel lavatory bowls, the porcelain ones being 'too feeble for the purpose they were subjected to'!

Access to Llandrindod Wells by rail made the town a natural venue as a conference centre and the prosperity that developed from the Spa and the conferences led to the development of this Victorian town .

In the 20th century Radnorshire became home to important festivals and, in 1963, Llanelwedd was chosen as the home of the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society. The Royal Welsh Show is still held there today, attracting visitors from all over the country and is a fitting event to mark Radnorshire out as an important place in the centre of Wales.

Further Reading: 'A History of Wales' by John Davies

Sigeric's Journey to Rome

Notes from Heather Burnley's Talk -
November 2010

Heather Burnley was invited by fellow artist Jannina Veit Teuten to join her in a Project to celebrate the Millennium in 2000 by following the route of Archbishop Sigeric in 990AD, along the Via Francigena, a 1900 kilometre historic route, running from Canterbury to Rome. The route is an ancient pilgrimage route and one used by merchants through four countries, England, France, Switzerland and Italy. Sigeric travelled the route to receive his pallium from the Pope, as required by all Roman Catholic Archbishops. Whilst Sigeric, in the 10th century travelled on foot or riding a mule, Heather and Jannina travelled in camper vans, stopping off at many of the places where Sigeric made overnight stops a thousand years before them. Jannina exhibited her beautiful water colour paintings and Heather her sculptures and puppets which they used to tell the story of Sigeric's journey.

Heather and Jannina started their journey, not at Canterbury, but at Glastonbury where they held their first exhibition in St John's Church there, to celebrate that Sigeric had been Abbot of Glastonbury before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury. From Canterbury they followed the Pilgrim's Way, making 80-90 stops and holding 23 exhibitions in the four countries they travelled through, from August 1999- Christmas 2000. When Sigeric made the journey he visited 23 churches along the way, all of which except one are still standing today.

The Project received European Funding from the Culture 2000 Programme and Heather produced an illustrated booklet of the story of Sigeric's Journey, based on his diary. Heather's lifesize statue of Sigeric on a mule, her puppets and Jannina's paintings accompanied them on the journey in a trailer. A women's group in North Wales, the Pencils and Threads Embroiderers Group, helped to make clothes for the puppets.

Heather and Jannina received wonderful help, support and hospitality from many people along the way. The object of the project was to raise money for the Children's Centre in Jerusalem and they succeeded in raising several thousand pounds.

The route they followed, La Via Francigena, is a medieval merchants' route as well as the Pilgrim's Way. It is getting better know and waymarked, though much of the route through France has disappeared. It travels through the St Bernard Pass, though Heather and Jannina had to find an alternative route for this section as they felt the camper vans + trailer might not make it!



Heather Burnley assisted by Penny Everett with puppets of Sigeric and Pope John XV



Peter Dummer admires the mule!