Llandrindod Wells & District U3A AGM and Lecture Meeting March 2019

Adventures in the Screen Trade - Deborah Moggach

Report by Clive Barrett

Chairman Berwyn Woolnough welcomed everyone to the AGM. He then gave his Chairman's report an overview of the Llandrindod & District U3A activities during the last 12 months, notably commenting on such diverse talks and stating that the local group is flourishing and positive. This is seen by the fact that last month 180 members attended the lecture meeting, there are now 283 members, and 30 interest groups. He thanked in turn everyone who had helped the local U3A in any capacity, including the coordinator and leaders of the above interest groups. Treasurer's Report Alun Thomas gave the financial report stating that the local U3A is in the same position as last year, with the result that subscriptions would remain the same at £25.

The election of officers then took place. Chairman Roger Malvern, Vice Chairman Bob Shorter, Treasurer AlunThomas, Committee Secretary Kathie Richards Jones Membership Secretary Nick Talbott Programme Secretary (to be announced later) the two Committee members are Jan Wilsher and Mary Davies. Martin Nosworthy was again appointed as Auditor. New Chairman Roger Malvern recorded the group's very grateful thanks to Berwyn Woolnough for his three years of dedicated service to the Chairmanship and added that he would be a very difficult act to follow. He firstly stressed the importance of the "May Day Medley", which the local U3A is organising with celebrity guest speakers, and mentioned that the Charabanc group is running a trip to Bath in June.

The new Chairman then introduced the speaker for the morning, Deborah Moggarch, an author from Presteigne, whose talk was entitled "Adventures in the Screen Trade " , and followed her journey from writing novels, particularly "Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" to becoming a film. Deborah started by saying despite changes in one's direction in life, "its never too late to start again".

The speaker talked about some of her 20 novels, a number of which have been turned into films, especially "Best Exotic Marigold Hotel", she has also adapted other peoples' novels for BBC films. Previously Deborah lived in London, but about 8 years ago she moved to live with her husband in Presteigne and "gorgeous" Radnorshire. The author has not surprisingly found life in a small town of 2,500 inhabitants where the locals are very friendly much different to London, and "an extroadinary experience". One of her more recent novels is called "Heartbreak Hotel", and features an imaginary person who lives in Knockton(based on Presteigne). He was something of an entrepreneur, who ran a run down bed and breakfast business, which never made any money. Similar to nearly all novels nothing goes right. However he hits on the idea of having different courses at the establishment, including a dating agency. Further he thinks that the practical ones attending can help fix things up at the b & b, and thus the house will be updated cheaply.

Deborah then explained about the ideas behind " Best Exotic Marigold Hotel". The film features older people carrying on enjoying their lives, with endless holidays " eating into their children's inheritance". I was impressed with the quality of her imagination of life on the Welsh borders. I further thought that the humour she showed throughout the talk was appreciated by the

audience. Regarding her “Hotel” screen play she stated that in India and other parts of Asia younger people look after their parents and grandparents. The idea behind the film was to outsource the elderly into warmer climates, and there is evidence that they feel at home in say India, because this country is law abiding and shows respect, so much so that retirement in the subcontinent is not such a bad idea. As a novelist she maintained that she “lives” for several weeks with the different made up characters she has created. Adding the book is very different to the film, and that the long transition is faut with danger and problems. She was obviously pleased to visit the film set in India to see and meet the experienced actors living together in a hotel. She also wrote a book called “ Tulip Fever” which had a more interesting story than the title suggests, and discussions took place with no less than famous film director Steven Speilberg about the possibility of making into a film. However this possibility was destroyed because the Government of the time closed a tax loophole, and when Harvey Weinstein became a possible director, the personal scandal surrounding him erupted. Despite these major setbacks Deborah arranged her own alternative small premier in London, which means it can come out and go on general release.

The speaker very sensibly I thought (because she probably expected) left enough time for questions which included------ how much control do authors have over film rights? first start writing?---- when she lived in such a different country namely Karachi, India, in 1970's when as a writer she felt liberated, and confident to write novels. How long does it take to write a screen play or novel ?---- mentioned her latest “The Career” a comic book about old age which took 6 months to write. A vote of thanks was given by new Chairman Roger Malvern who commented that it had been an amazing talk about writing, and the interaction between individuals, adding that we had not previously heard a speaker with such interesting name dropping!!!!