



Chair Chat December 2018

CHRISTMAS!!

I come from a large family so for all of my early life Christmas Day consisted of big family gatherings with silly party games, singing and dancing, and a cold turkey supper with 40 people crowded into a very small room. Boxing Day was when the family divided into two factions to go and watch Charlton or Millwall and the atmosphere for Boxing Day tea depended on how the football teams had got on.

The family is now too big to meet all together, apart from significant wedding anniversaries, or sad to say, funerals.

This Christmas someone very close to me won't even know if it is Christmas or just another day. But I look back on those past Christmas times with much affection and I am grateful that I have those memories.

Times have changed and we now have so much more, and there is so much more advertising and pressure for us all to have a "Happy Christmas". Somehow, we can feel a failure if we are sad at this time or we don't have what the advertising would make us think is the perfect family with the perfect dinner and the perfect presents.

Christmas for everybody is different so however you are spending the day I would like to wish all members a peaceful time, and a healthy New Year.

Sandra Goulding

~~~~~

**Monthly Meetings and Speakers:**

The main meeting is held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month at 2 p.m. (be there by 1.45 pm to get a seat!) at Roberts Hall behind Christ Church, Bexleyheath Broadway.

|             |                  |                                 |
|-------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| December 13 | Christmas Social | With Ukulele Group Tuning Fluid |
|-------------|------------------|---------------------------------|

Watch this space for news of 2019 meetings and our amazing speakers!

~~~~~

SEASONAL JOKES

What are the three ages of Father Christmas?

First of all, you believe in Father Christmas.

Then you don't believe in Father Christmas.

And finally, you become Father Christmas!

GROUP NEWS AND VACANCIES

Lynne Brown has started a new Backgammon Group. There are vacancies at present. If interested please contact her.

Attention all Group Leaders

The dreaded Returns will be reaching you in early December. Could you please let Pat Fearnside have the completed Forms **as early in January as possible**. It will make a change from writing out Christmas Cards!

DOWN THE DRAIN FROM U3A NETWORK IN THE SOUTH AND EAST OF GREATER LONDON

 TO COMMEMORATE THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF THE ESTEEMED ENGINEER *SIR JOSEPH BAZALGETTE*, WE PRESENT A DAY OF EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE PEOPLE OF LONDON. EXPLANATIONS WILL BE FORTHCOMING ON THE SEWAGE OF LONDON FROM THE BIG STINK TO THE 21ST CENTURY TIDEWAY PROJECT. U3A CITIZENS OF LONDON ARE ADVISED TO BOOK THE DATE OF FRIDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2019 IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO ATTEND AT THE PREMISES OF OUR PARTNERS THE LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES. TICKETS AND BOOKING DETAILS WILL BE AVAILABLE SHORTLY. TO BE THE FIRST IN THE KNOW SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAILS AT [HTTP://EEPURL.COM/CZQLJ9](http://eepurl.com/czqlj9)

THIS EVENT IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RENOWNED U3A NETWORK IN THE SOUTH AND EAST OF GREATER LONDON. **EMAIL FOR MORE INFORMATION FROM U3AGLSENETWORK@GMAIL.COM**

.....

Local Lights

Please remember to collect your theatre tickets for Hair.

Hot tip: Bring a blank cheque to every meeting as there will bound to be a theatre trip or outing you would like to book. Money talks!

Local Lights is open to everyone. All welcome. We are looking forward to Hair, Calendar Girls and Abigail's Party in the New Year. The bigger our group, the greater the discount!

Local Lights would like to wish all U3A members a Merry Christmas
And a very peaceful, healthy, happy New Year.

REMINDER

It has been pointed out to me that some members are not being fair to their Group Leaders. If you have booked to go on a trip and you cannot go at the last minute, then you are still liable for any expenses that the Group Leader has paid on your behalf.

If you give enough notice that you are unable to go then there is a chance to find a

replacement but last minute cancellations must be paid for, Just recently, twelve people didn't go on a trip on which they had previously booked a place, which meant that the Group Leader had to find the shortfall because the guide still needed to be paid.

So please bear this in mind when you can't go at the last minute.

We are all grateful to our Group Leaders who work hard to organise very interesting tours for us and we must show our appreciation by not giving them unnecessary problems.

Thank you for your co-operation,

Sandra Goulding

Chairman

THEMED WALKS

On a sunny but cold day at the end of October we met at Dartford station for a walk around Brooklands Lakes in Dartford. We went through the town, then the market, which was busy. At the Library, we entered the adjoining Park Gardens, a beautiful area with attractive flowerbeds full of colourful plants. Following the path through the park we reached "The Cafe in the Park", opened in 2011. There, at the table on the terrace, was an unusual sight - a skeleton sitting on a chair with a cup on the table in front of it. Perhaps it was a reminder that the Halloween was only a few days away. The cafe had an extensive, reasonably priced menu and a big advert on the wall showing 'Traditional cream tea at £5.2' and 'Afternoon tea at £6.95'.

After refreshments, we continued our walk partly along the river Darent, then along the lakes. For a while, the path consisted of a narrow stretch of land, with bushes and trees on the edges, going in between two lakes as if dividing one lake in two. It was very peaceful. Here and there, we passed anglers, some well equipped with small tents, some even with sleeping bags; their numerous fishing rods were gently swaying nearby. I stopped to ask one angler what kind of fish there were in the lake. 'Carp. Do you want to see a picture?' was his reply. And he proudly showed me, on his mobile, a picture of himself holding a big fish; I presume it was a carp. In my ignorance, I admired it.

During our walk we crossed two bridges and to our surprise went through a well-lit tunnel with background music. The edges of the lakes were surrounded with woodlands, with some vegetation in pleasing autumnal colours. Varieties of water birds were present, too. Towards the end of our walk we passed by a building used by Dartford cadets. Finally we crossed a large field. There, in the middle, was 'The Henry Wellcome Bandstand' as stated on a large board. On Summer Sunday afternoons there are bands playing on the bandstands entertaining the public, free of charge.

From two other information boards we learned the following facts: (1) at this area, where the lakes are now, it used to be a cartridge factory producing ammunition. The lakes were formed in 1920s-30s by quarrying for sand and gravel. Now it is used for fishing competitions. And (2) the two tunnels were built in 1923 to allow the river Darent to pass under the new by-pass. The west tunnel was converted as a pedestrian walkway and opened in 2009.

Once back in town, we stopped for lunch at 'The Royal Victoria and Bull' pub, the oldest building in Dartford, dating from 1703. Apparently, the word 'Bull' does not refer to the animal but to an old document known as 'bull'. The pub has a long gallery overlooking the former yard used, in bygone days, by stagecoaches. Now it is a long bar with chandeliers.

This was not a very long walk but greatly enjoyed in attractive surrounding, so near home.

Tomira Carson

TOWN AND AROUND

All outings at own risk

THERE APPEARS TO BE A MISCONCEPTION THAT OUR OUTINGS ARE ALWAYS FULL. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO COME TO THE MEETINGS YOU MAY PHONE OR E MAIL MAIRE CARR ANY TIME

NO OUTING IN DECEMBER

Monday 14th January 2019. The Palace of Westminster. Meet Charing Cross at approx. 10.15 using first Freedom Pass train available. Walk down Whitehall (or bus), to meet our guides for tours of the House of Commons and House of Lords. Free entry courtesy of the Rt. Hon Sir David Evennett MP for Bexley and Crayford. However a £3.00 donation please which we will pass on to Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice.

Tuesday 12th February 2019. Westminster Abbey and the Queens Diamond Jubilee Galleries. Meet Charing Cross approx. 10.15 using first Freedom Pass train available. Walk down or catch bus to Abbey. Audio guided tour of the historic Abbey, resting place of many Kings and Queens and then up (lift available) to the recently opened Queens Diamond Jubilee Galleries to view ancient artefacts, books, and paintings. £15.00.

Monday 4th March. The Mansion House. Meet Cannon Street Station at 10.30ish, using first Freedom Pass train available then short walk. One hour guided tour of the Lord Mayor's office, the setting for many official civic occasions. £3.00

PAYMENT, PREFERABLY BY CHEQUE MADE OUT TO U3A BEXLEY, MUST BE MADE AT TIME OF BOOKING. See notices in Roberts Hall for more details. **If you are on the reserve list for a trip please keep day free, or let Maire know as soon as possible if you are unable to come.**

Please make a note of our Mobile telephone numbers, which are printed in the Newsletter so we can be contacted by phone or text even on the day of the visit.

Organiser: Margaret Collins		
Bookings: Maire Carr		
Money: Sabine Wayt		

TOWN AND AROUND

Visit to the Tallow Chandlers Hall

By Margaret Collins

On a rather cold November morning we met at draughty Cannon Street Station for our short walk to Dowgate Hill and our visit to the historic Tallow Chandlers Livery Hall. We walked through a corridor between buildings and entered into a lovely courtyard with lots of huge lead troughs filled with flowers towards the main entrance door. We were warmly welcomed by the Beadle, sadly not in his grand uniform with wooden staff, who gave us a most interesting and informative tour. The Guild has been on this site since July 1476 purchasing a merchants house for the sum of £166.13s.4d. The original medieval Hall was destroyed by the Great Fire in 1666, with the present

Hall being rebuilt in 1672. There was some bomb damage during the Blitz, but not complete destruction, and it was one of the few Guild Halls not too damaged and they were able to offer the use of their premises to other guilds until they could rebuild their own Halls. Some Halls were never rebuilt so they still use this Hall for their Banquets and meetings. A window in the Banqueting Hall shows the Crests of these Guilds.

Tallow is a by-product of cattle and sheep after slaughter when the hides, fleece, and meat have been separated the residue fat was then rendered to produce tallow for lighting. A jar of tallow was handed around to smell, it definitely had a strong smell of animal, and beeswax was the preferred fat for candles for churches and fine homes. He also lit a fine tallow candle which burnt down rather quickly as it was so soft. Tallow is no longer used for lighting, but is a component of other products including cosmetics, lubricants, diesel, and paint.

In the 15c the Tallow Chandlers were given the right to confiscate any inferior goods and they ensured the product was to a set standard for candles and illumination. This increased the power of the Guild and encouraged membership from an allied group of tradesmen to a body with a monopoly of the trade. This has since developed into a charitable organisation promoting education, charity and fellowship. They support schools and any hardship of their members.

In the 1700s Londoners were required to display a light outside their homes, and of course tallow was the cheaper choice and well used. If lamps were not lit the Guild could impose a fine which then increased the wealth of the Tallow Chandlers. However by 1807 gas lamps for street lighting were introduced and later superseded by electric street lighting. Therefore the fortunes of the Guild slid downwards and membership decreased.

We were taken up a wide oak staircase, lined with oak panelling inscribed in gold with the names of the masters from the 14c to the present time to the Court Room. Again oak panelled and with beautiful windows. This is where any new members would come to be initiated, and in the past any misdemeanours dealt with and fines given. Around the walls were exact copies of the original Grants and Charters with their huge seals given by the Monarchs over the last 500 years. Some beautifully illuminated but all fascinating. On the landing was a model of the Livery Guild's beautiful barge which was sold in 1799, but the coat of arms was retained and now hung in pride of place.

We were then taken into the Banqueting Hall with its wonderful stained glass windows, ornate ceiling painted green with gold embossing. We were told that a bomb had come through the ceiling and down into the basement but fortunately did not explode. The bomb was defused and removed so damage was limited. Pictures of past Masters were hung on the walls. The coat of arms was explained, although it had been changed many times over the years. The Guild was linked to St John the Baptist, and his head on a platter is part of the crest along with four doves of peace holding springs of olive. There was a recurring motif of the scallop shell and this again was a reference to the link to St John the Baptist.

The Parlour is used for small functions, or for gatherings before Banquets, was again oak panelled, with windows looking down on to the courtyard. It had a wonderfully ornate plaster ceiling, and did have some original panelling, although it has been restored many times due to ground movement particularly due to the trains running so near. However we were assured that a structural survey had taken place recently which gave it the all clear.

It was a fascinating building with layers of history going back some 500 years and tucked away behind other buildings so even those who had worked nearby were unaware of its history. I am so pleased we came.

~~~~~

**Executive Committee 2018 - 2019**

|                            |                       |  |                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chair                      | Sandra Goulding       |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Vice Chair                 | <b><u>VACANCY</u></b> |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Secretary                  | Maureen Wright        |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Treasurer                  | Ron Clayton           |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Membership                 | Douglas West          |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Speakers                   | <b><u>VACANCY</u></b> |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Group Liaison              | Pat Fearnside         |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| E-mail & IT                | Nino<br>Parascandolo  |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Social Secretary           | Thelma Wilkes         |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Catering                   | Vi King               |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Hall Manager<br>/Database  | Nino<br>Parascandolo  |  |                                                                                                                                  |
|                            | Cynthia Allen         |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>NON-COMMITTEE ROLES</b> |                       |  |                                                                                                                                  |
| Meet & Greet               | Edna Sutton           |  | Please let Edna know of personal events e.g. significant birthdays, anniversaries, condolences, etc. so that she can send cards. |
| Newsletter Editor          | Mary Jupp             |  |                                                                                                                                  |

***Please submit all contributions to January newsletter by***

***Midday -Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> December***

**Please ensure you contribute before the cut-off and have an email acknowledgment from me that I have received your contribution!**

**Thank you - and many thanks to all our contributors.**