

To travel more than just Local to get a bit of exercise and visit the Seaside for a lovely Fish & Chips by the sea , wonderful ! There was talk of a Countryside walk and Picnic!

I'm sure you are looking forward to visiting your Family and Friends having afternoon tea in the garden when the weather gets better.

My job on the Committee in the last year has been quite easy. I had to cancel Speakers for last year and luckily able to get most of them to transfer to this year. Fortunately, most are able to do a Zoom meeting.

I have put in the following Zoom meetings as they stand now. These could change. I hope you are and will continue to enjoy our Zoom meetings.

Keep Well, Safe and Keep Smiling
Terry

Booked Zoom meetings

Thursday March 11th Paul Robbins (yes, Again!)
Great British Eccentrics. I understand very funny.

14.00 -15.00 (see separate Details below**) Get in early - limited to 100 Viewers

***Paul Robbins is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.*

Topic: Great British Eccentrics
Time: Mar 11, 2021 01:45 PM London

The website version of this newsletter does not contain the meeting details or password for obvious reasons; they are contained in the printed version which has been sent to members. Please contact Terry if necessary.

Please Make Sure all Radios T/V's any music or background sounds are turned off.
Paul will mute everyone. If you want to ask questions at the end of his talk Please put your hand up. Thank you.

Thursday 8th April. Pauline Martindale
Behind Closed Doors. The Personal Experience of a Prison Officer.

14.00 -15.00 (Details to Follow)

Thursday 13th May. Ian Keable (he came to see in 2019 an excellent speaker) Charles Dickens The Conjuror.
Including (maybe) some Dickens Tricks .

14.00 -15.00 (Details to Follow)

Thursday 10th June. Delia Taylor The Roaring Twenties
A lighthearted talk with Short Videos

14.00-15.00 (Details to Follow)

Thursday 8th July. Our return to Roberts Hall*. Grand meet up.
Come along and meet up with your friends some of whom you have not seen in person for over 12 month

More Details later

More book reviews from Maureen, Jenny, Cynthia, Norma and Carole - Members of the Welling Library Book Group

“Different Class” by Joanne Harris

After many years at St Oswald’s Grammar in North Yorkshire, Latin master Roy Straitley has seen all kinds of boys come and go, the clowns, the rebels, the underdogs and those he calls his Brodie boys. But every so often there’s a boy who doesn’t fit the mould, a troublemaker. A boy capable of twisting everything around him. A boy with hidden shadows inside.

A new broom has arrived at the school, bringing Power point, sharp suits and even sixth form girls to the dusty corridors.

Really enjoyed this Joanne Harris book and have recommended to my son in law who is Assistant Head at a Boy’s School.

“Mariana” and “The Fancy” by Monica Dickens

I have read 2 novels by Monica Dickens, firstly “Mariana” published in 1940, about a girl growing up through the 1930s. She lives as the author did, trying out different lives as a dressmaker in Paris, a student at drama school, a secretary and companion. This comes from a publisher’s review:

“The contemporary detail is superb, her descriptions of food and clothes are particularly good, and the characters are observed with vitality and humour” All the things I enjoy in a book really.

The second was by the same author (having bought a box of 18 of her books on eBay) called “The Fancy”, published in 1943. If I say the two main themes are women’s war work and rabbits, you’d probably think it very dull but it is a very human story about love, family life and independence. I found it very thought provoking.

“The Doll Factory” by Elizabeth MacNeal

I have just finished The Doll Factory by Elizabeth MacNeal. This book nowhere fits into the joyful category but is excellent in every way, especially as this is the author’s first novel. Set at the time of the Great Exhibition in 1850, MacNeal captures the atmosphere of that time - the poverty in the dark areas of London, the difficulty to just exist compared to the wealth of others.

The story centres around two sisters, Iris and Rose who, when the story begins, both work at a Doll Emporium painting faces onto china doll heads. Iris, with her vivid red hair, is spotted by an artist - Louis Frost - who asks her to become his model.

Interestingly, Louis (a fictional character) is part of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood that includes Gabriel Rossetti, Holman Hunt, Johnny Millais etc. and they are brought into the story. There is also Albie, a typical Victorian urchin whom Iris befriends and the sinister Silas Reed, a sad, deranged man who kills and stuffs animals to earn a living. Louis and Iris eventually fall in love but the climax of the plot centres on Silas Reed and the ensuing, awful consequences. A great read and very recommended.

“Dachshunds, The Long and The Short of Them” by Caroline Donald.

A lovely little book with lots of wonderful pictures. This is not a “how to care for your dog” book but more a “how to enjoy your dog” book. There are also quotations and one I particularly like is “I would rather train a striped zebra to balance an Indian club than induce a dachshund to heed my slightest command.” Over time we have owned two dachies for a total of twenty-seven years and I would agree with that quotation, as they have both been very stubborn in their own way. A delightful book for dipping into to read the various, real doggy stories.

“Joy and Josephine” by Monica Dickens

Dickens’ 7th novel published in 1948. It starts in 1918 when 2 baby girls are brought to a children’s home, one for adoption after being abandoned in a church porch, the other to be looked after temporarily until

her rich grandparents can take her home. There is a tragic mix up and years later one of the girls tries to find out which identity is rightfully hers. Is she Joy, or is she Josephine?

Monica Dickens was born in Chepstow Villas in Notting Hill, near the Portobello Road, and she uses this location for the girl's childhood home, bringing it to life wonderfully.

My only criticism is that the ending seems a little rushed compared to the rest of the book, but perhaps that was because I didn't want the book to end.

The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides

This is a shocking psychological thriller with a twist at the end. For six years, Alicia Berenson has been locked up in a secure psychiatric unit for the murder of her husband Gabriel by tying him to a chair and shooting him. Since the event she has refused to speak and spends her time painting furiously and can become violent if not heavily medicated. Theo Faber, a psychotherapist sets out to unlock her story. It is a gripping tale as the stories of both protagonists unfold. and I certainly did not guess how it would end. It's well worth a read if you like this sort of thing.

"The Quickening" by Rhiannon Ward

The book is set in 1925.

It is written mostly in the first person by Louisa, a female photographer who has been given a job photographing items in a disintegrating mansion prior to their sale by auction. She is heavily pregnant, and her husband resents her working, but they need the money.

She finds the place ominous and the residents unwelcoming. While she is there, they hold a séance, a copy of one held previously in the late 18th century, attended by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, famous for his interest in the supernatural.

The atmosphere is sinister. Louisa hears piano music and singing that no one else can hear. She sees a feral little boy in the garden, but the occupants of the house insist that she has imagined him, or he is just one of the local children playing around.

Gradually, with the help of a visiting journalist, she discovers the secrets of the house.

If you like Gothic novels, you may like this. It is slightly creepy in places, and the characters are well drawn, but M.R.James it ain't.

Different Kinds of Good Weather by Cynthia Allen

There's no such thing as bad weather, just soft people. If you want to see the sunshine, you have to weather the storm. Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, snow is exhilarating; there is really no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather. Nike founder Bill Bowerman

Britain's weather is said to be unique. It is regarded as temperate, with mild Summers and Winters. When we are experiencing a sultry Summer's day, where even the simplest activity seems to be beyond us, or a bitter Winter's day when we feel unable to get warm, it may seem anything but temperate, but compared to many countries, it is positively clement. In Siberia, for example, temperatures can range from plus 38⁰ to minus 67⁰ Celsius.

The changeable English weather is known in meteorological circles as a temperate oceanic climate. It is influenced by the fact that this is an island, positioned between the Atlantic Ocean and the large land mass that is continental Europe.

We are close to the path of the Jet Stream, made up of Westerly winds flowing West to East, and the Gulf Stream, a warm and swift Atlantic Ocean current originating in the Gulf of Mexico. Both have a strong influence on our climate.

As Meteorologist Helen Chivers says, "there is a lot going on meteorologically where we are."

Generally, the climate of the UK is cool, and often cloudy and rainy. High temperatures are infrequent. Rainfall is fairly evenly spread throughout the year, although the West is wetter than the East. Winter (December to February) tends to be grey and wet.

A hot topic recently has been that of climate change. It is said that the amount and frequency of rain in the UK will change. Winters will be wetter, Summers will become hotter and more prolonged. Views differ on the causes of this, some saying it is the fault of mankind's damaging influence on the earth, others that changes in climate have always happened at regular, if infrequent, intervals, citing evidence from the last Ice Age, for example. Most reputable scientists have adopted the former view.

Now, what about this year? The Farmers' Almanac has predicted a cold, wild mix for 2021, its extended forecast stating that this Winter could be brutally cold and snowy for much of the country. So far, so accurate!

The long-range forecast for Britain is that April and May will be warmer and drier than normal, with an early hot spell in early to mid-April. Summer will be hotter than usual, with the hottest periods in early and mid-June, early to mid-July, and early to mid-August.



Have your bikinis and ice cream makers at the ready!

Town and Around 2015 Visit to Bletchley Park By Margaret Collins

Our coach journey to Bletchley was thankfully unaffected by the unknowns of the M25/M1 and we were there in good time to be welcomed by a member of staff who gave us a small map and suggestions on how to spend our time whilst visiting this huge site.

Sir Herbert Samuel Leon purchased Bletchley Park in 1878 after his second marriage to Fanny Higham. He was a wealthy financier, politician and philanthropist. His first wife had died in 1873 leaving him with two small children; two further children with his second marriage also lived in the house. What fun they must have had in the extensive grounds. The early Victorian mansion with its gabled roofline had been heavily added to during their occupation. Apparently, they travelled widely, and Fanny would come back with another idea for the house, and alterations were a continuing theme with her. Every downstairs room was heavily panelled, marble or wooden fireplaces, very ornate plaster ceilings, doors and door furniture of the highest quality. When Fanny died in 1937 the estate and house were sold, and the house was eventually purchased by the Government Code and Cypher School. It was recognised that to keep up with codebreaking, which had been in operation since the First World War, this would make an ideal building out of London, along with the many huts that would be required for the Army, Navy and Airforce to listen, decipher and crack the Nazi codes and cyphers.

Bletchley Park during WW2 was known as station Y, but because it was the 10th to be put in place (others around the British Isles, including of course our Hall Place) it was affectionately known as station X. The rooms were set up to reflect the use they would have had during WW2, but because of the film the Imitation Game, some of which was shot on site, the rooms had some of the feel of the film set with tweed jackets and old typewriters, ancient telephones, green cups and saucers we all remember from church hall weddings. The beautiful Library with its fabulous bookcases and fireplace had been used as a Naval Intelligence office. It seems hard to realise that this site had three shifts of 1,500 staff each day, mostly civil servants, coming and going all the time to ensure 24 hour listening. These were mostly especially recruited very intelligent young girls and men who were billeted in local houses. Each one did not know what his neighbouring hut did, and all had to sign the official secrets act. Most of Britain was unaware of the purpose of this codebreaking factory until 1974 when a book was published in America, which spilled the beans.

After lunch, some of us joined a guided tour, and this really brought the site to life. As we walked around the extensive grounds being told the stories of the activities of the huts and buildings there was highly atmospheric soundscape of sounds of the past, such as laughter, a tennis match, motor bikes, a steam train, church bells and airplanes. Our guide explained how each of the huts was used, and there were clear boards outside giving further explanations. He took us around the back of the mansion and pointed out the collection of classic cars housed there. During the war, there were some 170 despatch riders on motorbikes taking and bringing in post and documents every day.

We then left the guide and visited the various huts and blocks. There were exhibitions in all the huts, including one regarding the use of homing pigeons during the war both for military and press use. In Block

B, there was a rebuilt Bombe, the first codebreaking machine which shortened the WW2 by several years and saved countless lives designed by Alan Turing. This machine was first conceived by Polish mathematicians and electro engineers and brought to Britain in 1938, but was improved upon by Alan Turing and the huge team. The Poles called it a Bomba, after an especially large ice-cream desert, which was anglicised to Bombe by the team. The Bombe was an electromechanical device used by British cryptologists to decipher German encrypted Enigma messages. This was the forerunner of the huge deciphering machine Colossus. A very knowledgeable lady was giving a demonstration which was very interesting, even if I could not really understand it all not being a mathematician or electromechanical engineer. I can change a lightbulb however. In some of the huts, there were interactive light touch tables, which encouraged you to think about the difficulties of the codebreakers working day. In other huts there were videos telling the tales from the perspective of the youngsters who were operating, listening, and deciphering the coded messages.

In this block were interesting displays showing how they managed to break even the Japanese coded messages, and how the bombing of Pearl Harbour prompted the USA to help in our struggle. Boards and pictures showed how double agents were recruited and the valuable and dangerous work they did to bring information for our use. A special cabinet held some of Alan Turing's personal possessions including his Teddy bear, and watch. There was also a really beautiful slate statue of him, sitting at a desk with his books around him.

Just time to go back to Block C for a cup of tea before leaving for home. This also had an exhibition showing the modern day danger of hacking our computers and other devices and how to stay computer and phone safe. A most informative and educational visit, but the lighter touches also made it enjoyable, and we were even given an Annual Pass to come back again and see a bit more.

Executive Committee 2019- 2020

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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		

All contributions for **APRIL** newsletter to be submitted by Midday **Monday 29th March 2021**

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