

Current Bexley u3a Groups

Armchair Travellers (**Vacancies**); Choir (**Vacancies**); City Explorers; Crochet; Family History Advanced; French Conversation (**Vacancies**); French Intermediate; Gardening (**Vacancies**); German Conversation; Heritage Railway (**Vacancies**); Italian; Jazz Appreciation; Life Story (**Vacancies**); Listening to Music; Micropubs (**Vacancies**); More of London; Photoshop Workshop; Play Reading (**Vacancies**); Poetry Reading; Ramblers (**Vacancies**); Reading for Pleasure; Rummikub – 4 groups; Scrabble (**2 Vacancies**); Self-Help Art; Spanish Conversation (**Vacancies**); Stitchers; Strollers (**Vacancies**); Wartime Memories; Alternative Book Group (**2 Vacancies**).

If you are interested in any of the above groups, please contact me –Text, Whatsapp, leave a message on Voicemail, or E-mail me. I will get back to you with details of the group or groups that interest you.

Cynthia Allen (Group Liaison)

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Hello from Devon - part two

Well I have been in Devon for six months so I only have 49 years 6 months to go before I am a full Devonian! Not too sure if I will make it!

Apart from not seeing so much of my very good friends in Bexley u3a I must confess I do not miss the M25 and Erith. The pace of life is a lot slower, people here actually talk to you and you don't even know them! That took a bit of getting used to.

So what have I been doing?

Started Training on the South Devon Railway not only as a travelling Ticket Inspector but also a Bus Conductor! Yes, I am now a Bus Conductor. Why you might ask .The South Devon Railway own a Routemaster bus built in 1964. The bus is used for variety of activities including a rail replacement service. Back in February on the Saturday after one of the big storms The Railway was running a restricted service not because of the Storms but they were upgrading the track at the end of the line. They used the bus to complete the journey to Totnes. I was asked if I would like to come along for a bit of training. One of the stops in Totnes was the Railway Station. The main line was closed due to storm damage so when turned up in our big Red Routemaster Bus some people got very excited thinking it was their Replacement bus Service to Exeter. We had to disappointment them as we were only running 4 miles to Staverton Station to connect with the Steam train. It was fun though. I now await my next adventure on the bus.

I am thinking of being a Tour guide here in Devon as I am getting several friends wanting to visit so I will be working out a timetable of events and places to go.

I am now on a Hall Committee and Speaker Finder (same as u3a Speaker Secretary) for a Probus club.

I have also started with Moorland Community Care as a Befriender. Visiting at the moment an elderly Gentleman just for a chat and a cup of Tea. I may also do some Voluntary driving for them as well.

I have finally been able to join Chudleigh u3a. I felt a bit sorry for them as the group only started three years ago and they were just building their membership, Covid came along and of course all that stopped. I went to my first visit in late January. Now I was always used to walking into a Roberts Hall with over 100 members, this time at Chudleigh 22 members and they thought that good! They have around 150 members on their books. plenty of scope to improve. Incidentally, their membership fee is £20 p.a plus a £1 admission to the monthly meeting. All u3a's in this area are about the same.

Changing the Subject, I read with great interest the article in the March Newsletter Regarding The Co-op in Lewisham and Jones and Higgins in Peckham. After leaving School not knowing exactly what I wanted to do with my life I worked at the Co-op in Rye Lane Peckham for five years before being transferred to the Walworth Road Store as assistant Manager. While at Peckham, I worked as relief in the Lewisham Store when short of Sales assistants. Both the Peckham and the Lewisham stores had the Lamson System for transferring cash. It was fun to use. You put the money into a tube, open the flap, this sounded like a vacuum cleaner (which basically it was, it sucked out of your hand into the pipe system to a cash desk). There the Cash clerk would take the money out and return any change and a receipt back to you. Each pipe had its own destination so you always got your tube back, great fun I used to love using it.

Jones and Higgins was at the other end of Rye Lane. I used to wander around the store to see what was on sale. However, that was not the only reason, I fancied a Young lady who worked on one of the counters in the store. Sadly, I never got to take her out as believe it or not I was not brave enough to ask her out! I did however buy several pairs of ladies tights, but then that is another story.

As Some of you knew I made a Visit to Bexleyheath and Erith Playhouse middle of March. This gave me chance to make a Surprise visit to The Evergreen Revellers Choir. It was really lovely to see them all. I had an idea maybe they would come to Devon to continue the Choir here! So far I have not made contact with a Suitable Choir here in Devon, What do you reckon ? No I am not paying your removal costs !!

I wish you all the best. I will pop in another article later on with more of my adventures in Devon.

Terry From very Sunny Devon , well it is today while writing this article.

March 23rd 2022

Ten Pound Poms

Following on from my 'Big Move' in the February Newsletter, I thought some of you might be interested in hearing about the Australia my husband and I encountered in the 1960s.

We migrants in those days were known as 'Ten Pound Poms' due to the fact that we only paid £10 each for a passage to Australia , as long as we stayed for a minimum of 2 years. We didn't take offence at this term as it was usually said with good humour and in our case we couldn't have felt more welcome. There are several interpretations of the 'Pom' or 'Pommie' word so I won't elaborate on that.

We arrived in Fremantle Harbour, Western Australia on board the 'Fairsea' on November 16th 1965 and I remember the temperature that day reaching 96 deg F. We were met by Andy whose home was in Perth but whom we'd met 12 months earlier in London, when he worked at the same engineering office as my husband and they became friendly. He was responsible for our choosing Perth, rather than any other Australian city, as our future home. It was good to know someone on arrival and as he and his then girlfriend had found us a flat to move into we avoided staying at one of the many migrant hostels. I'm told they 'left much to be desired' and consisted of basic huts. So there we were in our one bedroom flat near the University and the Swan River, in one of the best locations in Perth. We were surrounded by young people (we were only 25) and many were students at the University, so it wasn't long before we were invited to join them on the balconies for a drink, to listen to music or just for a chat. We were given lifts to the beach and I might add those Perth beaches with white sand and the vivid blue Indian Ocean were sublime! After a month or so we bought a second hand car, a Volkswagen Beetle so we were able to explore further afield. I didn't drive at this time but my husband had passed his test in London. It took me another couple of years before I went for my licence in Perth. In 1968 we bought our first brand new car...another Beetle and this served us well for 36 years (albeit as a 'second' car in the its last few years).

We both secured jobs as soon as we arrived and we were very amused when my husband's new boss came to the door of our flat the morning after his interview and said 'You've got the job mate. See you next week!' Such was the informality of Perth in those days. I was lucky to have 2 months before I started teaching as it was the long summer holiday during December and January. I began my new job on the 14th of February 1966 which happened to be Decimal Currency Day in Australia. We were converting to dollars and cents! I had been appointed to run the Kindergarten for 5 and 4 year olds in a suburb called Cottesloe (near the beach) and I stayed there for 6 years. I had 30 five year old children in the mornings (Mon to Thursday) and 20 four year olds for 3 afternoons a week. Friday was a 'non-contact day for preparation, shopping, ordering, interviewing parents etc. Kindergartens at that time came under the auspices of the Kindergarten Association of Western Australia (who appointed the staff) and were run by a committee of parents, who met once a month. I filed a report at each of these meetings and submitted any requests for equipment. I was delighted when they decided to buy a piano soon after I arrived there, knowing that I played and was very keen to introduce the children to lots of music and movement and songs. For a while I was known as 'Mrs Wilson from England' and a bit of a novelty but they were very welcoming. I had one assistant to help me so it was a demanding role and very different from being a teacher in a classroom in this country with a headmaster or headmistress to deal with the administration.

In 1970 we bought a block of land in the hills, called the Darling Range, east of Perth city and in October 1971 moved into our first home, (which my husband had designed) 6 years after our arrival in Australia. This was the home I sold in 2012 before coming back to live in this country. I was given a transfer to another Kindergarten closer to our new home but my husband still travelled into the city each day.

We did a lot of exploring in the 60s and early 70s. Western Australia is a vast state but we managed to travel quite some distances north, south and east of the city, camping overnight in most places. We loved the old gold-mining towns such as Kalgoorlie and the seaside towns south such as Margaret River and Busselton. We even drove across to Sydney and on to Brisbane in Queensland in 1966. Had we been less naïve we probably wouldn't have tackled such a journey! It took 3 days to drive across the Nullabor Plain to Adelaide, 1600 miles away and that included 600 miles of unsealed road full of corrugations and potholes. We survived the experience, as did the Beetle...

After leaving the 'Swinging London' of the 60s, we found Perth to be a culture shock and in some kind of time-warp in comparison. However, with the sun shining down on the street Christmas decorations, the Jacaranda trees in their purple glory, palm trees, black swans, very little traffic and a Bob Dylan concert, we had a lot to be grateful for. We settled in quickly and didn't look back.

Pamela Wilson

BOOK REVIEWS

From Hilary:

The Museum of Broken Promises by Elizabeth Buchan

Laure is an au pair in Prague in 1986 when communism rules. Her lover Tomas is a dissident musician, and both come to the attention of the authorities. Laure escapes, but Tomas doesn't.

Years later Laure opens the museum in Paris, but she's obsessed with finding out what happened to Tomas.

I found the parts of the book set in Prague a bit slow and tedious and would have liked more about the objects in the museum. I didn't enjoy this book as much as her book *The New Mrs Clifton*.

From Carole:

Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart

A friend of mine did not like *Shuggie Bain* and commented that she felt that many people had read it because they felt they had to because Stuart's novel had won the 2020 Booker Prize. However, I very much enjoyed reading the novel. It tells the story of a gentle teenager, Hugh (Shuggie) struggling to live with his adored but alcoholic mother Agnes in the grim working-class Glasgow of 1980s as the coal mining industry went into decline. It is gritty and sad but also funny and sometimes even uplifting, as Shuggie struggles to cope with life and his mother slips further and further into alcoholism and oblivion. It is based on Stuart's own early life, and as ever, I am in awe of the resilience shown by some young people in overcoming adversity although we are constantly being told these days that their mental health is very fragile.

To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf

A short while ago one of my granddaughters had to read *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf for A-level and she absolutely hated it. I had never read any of Woolf's novels although I knew much of her life and those of the Bloomsbury set, so I decided to see why she always made the list of top novelists in the 20th century. I chose *To the Lighthouse* and can honestly say I have never read anything so boring in my life, apart from *The Life of Pi* perhaps! Nothing happens – this is a whole novel about a trip to the lighthouse which is only actually visited at the end of the story.

It is the story of Mr and Mrs Ramsay who have a holiday home on Skye that they share in the summer with their eight children and several friends. The story is all about the thoughts of these people. Any events are almost asides. In Part 1, we hear vaguely about a proposed trip to the local lighthouse but it's mostly about Mrs Ramsay's stream of thought on a wide range of subjects and her knitting. Part 2 is set 10 years later. Mrs Ramsay is dead; her son Andrew has been killed in the trenches and one daughter has died in childbirth. Again little is told of these events, and we only hear the thoughts of the cleaning lady employed to ready the house for visitors again. Part 3 – Mr Ramsay and some of his children, together with some of the original guests, arrive and they do finally get to the lighthouse although I am not really sure why. It is supposed to be the most autobiographical of Woolf's novels and I think I can see how a) she is held in reverence by feminists and b) her mental state of health. I suppose it is beautifully written with some amazing descriptions, but this style of writing is not for me. I like some action and in-depth characterisation.

City of Tears by Kate Mosse.

This is a sequel to *The Burning Chambers* and continues the story of Minou Joubert and her family during the religious wars between Catholics and Huguenots in 16th century France. Excellent as always

The Fear Index by Robert Harris

A scary story of a rogue algorithm that gets out of hand and how its inventor frantically tries to destroy it. It involves stocks and shares, jiggery pokery on the Stock Exchange and hedge funds which don't usually interest me, but as always Harris spins a good tale with lots of interesting characters. Excellent but scary. It has just been made into a film by Sky.

From Jenny:

The Taming of the Queen by Philippa Gregory

Kateryn Parr a 30-year-old widow in a secret affair with a new lover, has no choice when a man old enough to be her father who has buried 4 wives, King Henry VIII – commands her to marry him! Kateryn has no doubt about the danger she faces: the previous Queen lasted 16 months, the one before barely half a year. But Henry adores his new bride and Kateryn’s trust in him grows as she unites the royal family, creates a radical study circle at the heart of the court and rules the Kingdom as Regent. From an author who has described all of Henry’s Queens comes a deeply intimate portrayal of the last: a woman who longed for passion, power and education at the court of a medieval killer. I loved the book.

The Phone Box at the Edge of the World by Laura Imai Messina

I was introduced to this book at the last Book Group meeting, and I just had to read it. What a lovely book! Based on a true story – We all have something to tell those we have lost – it is a book that will help many going through bereavement. Such a wonderful read.

The Seamstress by Maria Duenas

Aged 12, Sira Quiroga was apprenticed to a Madrid dressmaker. As she masters the seamstress’s art her life seems to be clearly mapped out – until she falls passionately in love and flees with her seductive lover. But in Morocco she is betrayed and left penniless. As civil war engulfs Spain Sira finds she cannot return and so turns to her one true skill and sews beautiful clothes for the expat elite and their German friends. With Europe rumbling towards war, Sira is lured back to Franco’s Nazi-friendly Spain. She is drawn into the shadowy world of espionage, rife with love, intrigue, and betrayal.

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All contributions for **May newsletter** to be submitted by
Midday ***Monday 2nd May***

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