

# HIGH LANE U3A NEWSLETTER

[www.highlaneu3a.org.uk](http://www.highlaneu3a.org.uk)

Editor

Jean Drinkwater

[newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk](mailto:newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk)

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HIGH LANE  
U3A



## RI/U3A 2009 Lectures

Two High Lane members attended this year's lectures. The venue was the refurbished headquarters of the Royal Institution in Mayfair, and although this was the day the American President arrived in London for the G20 Conference, all was quiet in the area.

The lecture hall was packed and seating rather cramped but this did not detract from the three outstanding presentations, each delivered by a most eminent expert.

### Volcanic Hotspots and the Environmental Impact by Dr Tamasin Mather

The surface of the Earth consists of tectonic plates in constant motion and at their edges they can collide or tear apart. The volcanoes all around the Pacific Ocean are caused by colliding plates. The mid Atlantic volcanoes are due to the plates tearing apart.

The intensity of the eruptions vary from those continuously erupting with relatively small amounts of steam and ash, to super eruptions which have enormous explosions and devastating consequences. The caldera which is now Yellowstone Park was caused by a super eruption and this will eventually be repeated.

The Global environmental impact of eruptions varies according to their violence but the vast amounts of ash and sundry chemicals thrown into the upper atmosphere by a super volcano can block the sun for several years and can cause a mini Ice Age. Surprisingly however, all the evidence now shows that the constant ejection of volcanic materials to the atmosphere has a beneficial effect in balancing the carbon cycle and therefore sustaining the conditions for life.

### Regenerative Medicine by Professor Chris Mason

Conventional medicines are largely management techniques, not cures - eg. Insulin manages diabetes but a cure would need a pancreas transplant which is not an option. Some defective organs can of course be replaced by a transplant but there is always a gross shortage of donors.

The long term future is clearly in regenerative medicine. By using stem cells or healthy cells from another part of the patient's own body, damaged organs can self repair. This is proven technology and whilst it is early days, certain such procedures are already clinically approved and in practice.

It will take several years for the full potential to be realised. Every individual procedure has to be thoroughly tested to satisfy the Regulators that it is safe and effective. Then robotic production methods have to be designed and tested to ensure consistent quality and minimum cost.

#### How Optics Shaped Physics by Professor Ian Walmsley

From Euclid in the third century BC, through to Newton in the seventeenth and Einstein in the twentieth, scientists have investigated the interfaces of light and matter. In the Middle Ages it was realised that light is a fundamental constituent of the cosmos. Then Newton established the laws of Universal Gravitation by using optical instruments which also demonstrated that light consisted of particles. The form of light's spectrum however, could not be accounted for by conventional physics but diffraction and polarization of light were soon explained using wave models.

In the nineteenth century James Maxwell unified electricity and magnetism by using Faraday's theories of force fields and in the twentieth century Albert Einstein established the theory of Special Relativity and Quantum Mechanics. Research and development are of course continuing in many fields including the use of short pulse, very high energy laser blasts to achieve the extraordinary high temperatures required to initiate nuclear fusion.

Although the last subject exposes the writers' limited knowledge of physics, the three presentations and the subsequent question and answer sessions were extremely interesting and they are really looking forward to attending the 2010 lectures.

Mike and Margaret Snape

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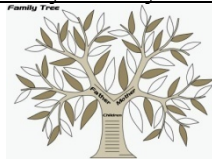
Computer Group



Due to the poor numbers attending it has been agreed with the Chairman to suspend the computer group until the autumn at which time the situation will be reviewed. The present numbers attending would not be viable without a significant increase in charges.

Frank Catterall

## Family History Group



The group have now met 5 times since the end of January and have had mixed fortunes, proving that 'Who Do You Think You Are?' gives a rather rosy impression of tracing your ancestors. However, whilst one member has spent most of her time proving that she did have a father, others have fared better. Amongst other discoveries members have traced, a blind musician, a christening in Ireland in 1798 and a grandfather's WWI army record.

We have looked at Civil Registration of births, marriages and deaths; interpreting Census Records; certificates and the information they contain and local sources of family history.

Future sessions will cover Family History Societies, Parish Records and resources available on the LDS website. The group have access to the National Index for the 1881 Census and a Microfiche Reader for reading microfilmed documents.

We will stop for the summer at the end of June and hope to restart again in September, given enough support.

Jean and I would like to welcome Sue Harlin to the team. Sue has been helping us from the start and has proved invaluable.

If you would like any further information about the group please contact Jean Drinkwater, Sue Harlin or me.

Pat Christopher

## Churches and Pubs



Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, an overcast morning, saw 42 members leave the Village Hall to travel to St. Oswald's Church in Ashbourne.

The pleasant drive from Buxton to Ashbourne was somewhat marred by the fog that prevented us from admiring the beautiful countryside. On arriving in Ashbourne we found that St. Oswald's is one of the grandest churches in Derbyshire with a magnificent steeple that deserves its title of the Pride of the Peak. The glorious tower with its spire rising 212 feet has been looking down on the old town of Ashbourne since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Construction of the church began in the early part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century but evidence suggests the site was used for Christian purposes well before the arrival of the Normans in 1066.

The earliest part of the building is the Chancel and the small brass plate recording the consecration by the Bishop, Hugh de Patishul in 1241 is still on the wall of the present St. Oswald's Chapel in the south transept. This plate is the oldest such example in England and probably the second oldest in Europe.

The present appearance of the chancel owes much to the restoration by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1876.

Notable features of the church are the fine east window of the Chancel, a small 13<sup>th</sup> century window in the north transept, which houses the Boothby Chapel, also in the north transept, which houses the finest local collection of tombs and alabaster on marble monuments. These include the tombs of the Cokayne family, the Boothbys and Bradbourne family, and they stretch from 1372 to 1838. The most famous is that of young Penelope Boothby who died in 1791 at the age of six. The white marble tomb depicts a child lying on a mattress in a long simple frock with her hands clasped, and is the most famous work of Thomas Banks. It carried the inscription 'She was in form and intellect most exquisite.' In 1788 Sir Joshua Reynolds depicted Penelope in his painting 'The little girl in the mob cap.'

The church has beautiful stained glass, old and new. About 20 shields of ancient heraldic glass fill the tracery of the east window, and in the clerestory of the north transept are what is left of various coats of arms of old Ashbourne families.

Upon leaving the church we emerged into glorious sunshine and, following a pleasant drive down the country lanes of Derbyshire, we arrived at the quiet sleepy village of Brassington. Here we had a most enjoyable lunch at the ancient tavern called Olde Gate; this is a listed building full of old furnishings and fittings, from a fine ancient wall clock to rush seated old chairs and antique settles. Log fires blazed, gleaming copper pots sat on a 17<sup>th</sup> century kitchen range and pewter mugs hung from the beams. The stone-mullioned windows looked out across the garden and the stone-walled pastures. A number of members rounded off the visit with a leisurely stroll around beautiful Carsington Water which is a few minutes drive from the Olde Gate.

It was a great day out. and our thanks go to Steve Reynolds who organised it.

#### June Fielding

#### St Michael & All Angels, Macclesfield & The Church House, Sutton

On April 15<sup>th</sup> 2009, thirty happy souls made their way in fine weather to visit the church of St Michael & All Angels in Macclesfield. The church has been located in the Market Place since 1278 and is therefore known locally as The Church In The Market Place.

Many changes have taken place over the years, thanks to the generosity of 'the great and the good' of the town. Major additions such as the Legh Chapel ( 1442) and the Savage Chapel (1502) where the heart of Thomas Savage, Archbishop of York, was reputedly enclosed in the walls even though his body was buried at York Minster.

The first class of the Kings School was founded in a small upper room of the church, in 1502, where the school master slept. The church also boasts of having the only peal of 12 bells in the county with a tenor bell weighing some 26cwts.

A re-ordering of the church was completed in 2004, to allow for more flexible use of the building.

Thank you to Rev David Wightman for an enjoyable and informative tour.

The group then drove to The Church House in the village of Sutton for light refreshment. A very pleasant time was had by all. Thanks to Steve Reynolds for arranging.

Should anyone be interested in borrowing the précis version of 'The Story of Macclesfield Parish Church', please contact:

Joan Wheelhouse

#### Discussion Group



In March we discussed the plea by Sir Liam Donaldson to increase the price of all alcoholic drinks to at least 50p per unit. It was thought that his prime concern was the rising cost of alcohol related diseases both to the nation and the N.H.S., plus the waste of police resources and the general costs of alcohol related violence and anti-social behaviour. However, as alcohol is probably the oldest socially accepted drug, banning it outright is not feasible. It was tried in America with devastating results. It was thought that even if the price was increased, this would not stop the high levels of consumption which would be helped by Super-market sales, Happy Hours, Lo-Cost Booze and similar outlets. This is in spite of the fact that there is a slow but steady decline in the number of pubs in Britain. It has been reported that Britain is third from the bottom in a European League of binge drinking, being surpassed only by Bulgaria and the Isle of Man. It must be slightly ironic to be legless in the land of Three Legs. As for banning the sale of Alcopops, well I'll drink to that.

Jim McDermott.

## Philosophy Group

The group met on 23<sup>rd</sup> February and we continued our discussion on a Positive Mental Attitude. It was emphasized that one should always think of one's self in a positive manner. The benefits of associating only with people who have a positive attitude to life were also discussed. We also looked at the 'self' and that it consisted of three overlapping parts:

- a) the inherited self through the genes of the parents referred to as the nature self,
- b) the learned self reflects your conditioning by parents, peers and society.
- c) the choosing self.

Whereas a and b reflect your past your choosing Self deals with the present and, more importantly, your future. This gives you the opportunity to create the Self that you want. The group were also introduced to the concept of positive self-talk which research has proved to be a powerful self-improvement method. It is the method employed by successful athletes.

The group also met on 23 March and the topic was Simone de Beauvoir the French existentialist philosopher. Most philosophers agree that de Beauvoir's greatest contribution to philosophy was her revolutionary 'magnum opus' --

The Second Sex, 1949. Simone's recognition was slow in coming because she was a woman writing about women from a feminist perspective. Also she was in the shadow of her colleague and lover Jean Paul Sartre. Simone was fighting to have woman recognised as a person in her own right and not to be referred to as man's 'Other.' Her famous assertion was, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a women.' By this de Beauvoir means to destroy the essentialism which claims that women are born 'feminine' rather than constructed to be such through social indoctrination. The group had a lively discussion on the present day status of women and although things had improved in many respects there was still a long way to go before 100% equality was achieved. Unfortunately due to circumstances the group meetings will be suspended until after the summer.

## Heritage Group - A Visit to Stockport Town Hall



On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 24 members went on a tour of Stockport Town Hall. Before we started our tour, we were taken for coffee in one of the committee rooms by Cheryl, our guide for the day.

The tour began at the original front entrance that leads to the magnificent Italian Marble Staircase and entrance hall. She told us that the Town Hall was designed by Alfred Thomas Brumwell, who also designed Woolwich Town Hall and the City Hall in Belfast. Stockport Town Hall took 4 years to build and was opened on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1908 by the Prince and Princess of Wales (later to become George V and Queen Mary). Part of Heaton Lane was renamed Prince's Street in honour of the occasion. The Town Hall is very much a working place and is also well used for all manner of functions, thus earning money for the Borough. The marble on the staircase had to be replaced in 1966, but the rest of the marble in the hall is in very good condition. At the top of the stairs is a gallery with photographs of past mayors, the mayor's office and dining room (which we did not see) are off this gallery. We were taken into 3 oak panelled committee rooms that have dividing partitions which can be folded back thus making one large meeting room.

The Council Chamber was our next stop, in this room there are 4 semi circular stained glass windows depicting the Charter of Freedom, the Coat of Arms of the Borough, the Sovereign, and the Prince of Wales. The oak benches are decorated with carvings representing honour, liberty, justice, truth, and wisdom, and the seating is upholstered in green leather. Full council meetings are held in this room, it is also used for performing wedding ceremonies, the collection of civic silver lines the walls of the corridor just outside the chamber. There were items of mayoral regalia on show including the Mace which is made of gold plated nickel and measures 4ft.2in. in length. Unfortunately, the Mayor's chain of office, which is solid gold, was not on show, but we were told that it was presented to the Borough in 1872 and at that time it was valued at £225.

Onward we went to committee room 213, which was designated as the ladies rest room in 1920 and has its own facilities (almost en suite), it is now used by brides at weddings, some of the furnishings are of the art deco period.

After the tour we enjoyed an hour of music played on the Wurlitzer Organ by Byron Jones, this organ was 1 of 14 in the world designed by Jesse Crawford in America. The organ came to the Town Hall in 1977 from the Free Trade Hall in Manchester and before that from a cinema, it is now owned by the Lancastrian Theatre Organ Trust. Lunch time organ concerts have been held monthly in the magnificent ballroom since 1999 and are very well attended. After the concert we were given information into the workings of this wonderful instrument by a gentleman from the Trust.

Some of the group were then taken to the staff restaurant where we enjoyed a well earned lunch at a very reasonable price before making our way home.

#### VISIT TO RENISHAW HALL FRIDAY 22ND MAY

An optional main course buffet lunch may be pre-booked (which will ensure reserved seating in the Gallery Cafe after the Hall Tour).

Poached Salmon and/or Roast Gammon with Hot New Potatoes and assorted Salads.

The cost is £6.25 per person and if you wish to take advantage of this option, would you please let us know. The Cafe will also be serving, hot meals, sandwiches, drinks etc.

The Coach will depart High Lane Village Hall Car Park at 9.00 am in time to arrive at Renishaw for CoffeeTea and Biscuits.

#### Walking Group Report – 25<sup>th</sup> March



The eight who ignored the dismal weather forecast, of heavy showers driven by a fierce nor'westerly wind, were rewarded by a very pleasant walk in the meadows, stream valleys and foothills round Rainow and Lamaload. Roger and Jean Drinkwater led us into a new area for many. The showers were infrequent and not too heavy, and the wind was often helpfully on our backs. Skylark and curlew greeted our passage, and we had good views towards Kerridge and White Nancy, Waggonshaw Brow and Cat's Tor, and distant glimpses of Shining Tor and the Cat and Fiddle road. Moles appeared to have been working overtime, but the many sheep were undeterred as we passed Ginchlough, Brock Low, Valeroyal, and skirted past Thornsett farm.

Although the paths were damp, we were spared the mud of the past two walks, as we returned in leisurely fashion to the Robin Hood, on Stocks Lane in Rainow, for some very well presented meals. The Cheshire chat and repartee lasted well into the afternoon, and Roger and Jean were well praised for their walk!

#### Dining Group



27 members of the Dining Group enjoyed an excellent meal at The Midway, the winner of pub of the year 2008, on Thursday the 9<sup>th</sup> April. All the staff were extremely efficient and polite which added to our enjoyment. Our next venue is The Judith Mary restaurant canal boat on Tuesday evening 16<sup>th</sup> June. We shall be leaving from Whaley Bridge at 6.45 p.m. Please give your names to Margaret or Jean at the next meeting if you are interested.

**Items for the next newsletter to be with the editor by Tuesday the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009**