



Term starts with Tony's tempos



For our first live meeting in 18 months, back at Breaks Manor, what could have been more appropriate than a talk by our own Tony Tutton (“Minister of Fun”) called “My Life in Music from Coronation to Corona”, charting his life in the music world? The hall was packed – 114 members attended, and Tony’s reminiscences with musical interludes were a splendid start to the new Autumn term.

We learned that Tony was born in Walthamstow in 1947. His mother, Joyce, taught dance and tap and played the piano and piano-accordion. At the Coronation in 1952, Penrhyn Grove Street party, games, tea and children’s entertainment and stage show were organised. Tony’s grandmother made all the stage costumes out of crêpe paper, his mum choreographed the show using her dancing skills, and his father built the scenery.



There was a photograph of a group of beautifully dressed children [see above] – guess who was in the middle at the front?

For the scenery Tony's father built a pet-shop window filled with toy dogs – so of course everyone sang “How much is that doggie in the window?” Two members of the cast dressed up as tramps and sang “We’re a couple of swells”. Tony made his debut on stage aged six singing “In a Golden Coach”, a song written for the Coronation.

We were treated to a musical interlude as Tony played these three songs for us. Our members were singing along (at least I was!). Dickie Valentine sang “In a Golden Coach” and I felt nostalgic for the old days when you could hear the words.

Tony’s early musical memories were some of his father’s classical music, such as the Overture to “The Thieving Magpie” by Rossini, that were played on his grandparents’ old wind-up gramophone. Other songs played were Nellie Lutcher singing “Fine Brown Frame” and “Shotgun Boogie” by Tennessee Ernie Ford.

Then Tony’s father bought his own radiogram, costing 49 guineas. The first three 78 records Tony bought, in 1957, were Tommy Steele, “Singing the Blues”; “Cumberland Gap” by Lonnie Donegan; and Buddy Holly singing “That’ll be the Day”. Tony played all three songs and there was singing and foot-tapping by the audience.

In 1956 skiffle became popular. The Quarrymen was a British skiffle/rock'n'roll group formed by John Lennon in Liverpool.

Tony was influenced by The Vipers skiffle group playing “Don’t you rock me daddio”, and by Chas McDevitt and Nancy Whiskey singing “Freight Train.”

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U3A Welwyn-Hatfield NEWSLETTER

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In 1958 Tony joined the Boys Brigade, wearing the smart uniform, and there was another sweet photo with guess who in the middle at the front? Of course, he joined the band and played the drum in the brigade band at various gigs including church parades. Each year there was a drum competition: Tony won it three times and was awarded “The Silver Drumsticks”. Unfortunately they were very thick so not suitable for playing the drums!

The Beaucrees were formed in Walthamstow in 1963 after Tony had purchased his first drum kit (see photo below). There were several ideas for names for their band, including The Scorpions and The Drifters, but Cliff Richard did not like that one! The road manager suggested BeauCrees, so that name was chosen temporarily: *beau*, French for beautiful and *Crees* meaning creative sound. The six band members wore smart Prince-of-Wales checked trousers.

Questions frequently asked of Tony were: what was the greatest number of people you played to, and what was the least?

One of the largest gigs the Beaucrees played was at a big stock-car racing venue holding 15,000 fans. Another band concert was booked for RAF Chicksands. They were about to start when there was an emergency signal: the NCOs scrambled and everyone left. Yet they

had to play because it was part of the contract! So, for the first and last time, the Beaucrees played to nobody at all!

The Beaucrees' first recording was made in Denmark Street (“Tin Pan Alley”) in a small studio, called Regent Sound, which is still there today. The record, called “I Still Love You”, was written by the band.

The Beaucrees also did an all-night recording session at Olympic Studios in Barnes in the same studio as the Small Faces were recording “My Mind’s Eye” during the day – Tony played us the record.

During his musical adventures Tony met many famous people including Jimmy Tarbuck, Eric Morecambe, Ernie Wise, Faith



Brown, Lulu, Dickie Henderson, Jess Conrad, Tommy Trinder, and Roger De Courcey and his cheeky bear Nookie. In the Rainbow Room at Derry and Toms the Beaucrees played with a famous magician, Robert Harbin, who performed the amazing illusion he devised, “The Zigzag Girl”. Tony said he saw him perform this illusion live on stage and he still doesn't know how it's done.



Tony in full voice

By 1979 disco was popular and the Beaucrees stopped performing. Thirty-three years later, in December 2011 they held a reunion dinner and had the idea of “getting the old band back together” [à la Blues Brothers!]. Since then they have played at clubs, dances and parties – including many u3a's.

Tony has been booked to play at a function in London during the Queen's platinum anniversary next year. This concert will commemorate his 69 years as a musician since he first appeared on the stage as a small boy, six years old.

Thank you Tony for a most interesting and amusing morning. Your talk with musical interludes was one of the best I have heard at u3a, and took me down memory lane.

Text by Gillian Simpson; photos by Peter Fox

Notes from the Chair



What a joy it was to be back to our weekly meetings from 8 September! The sun shone – as it was to on many Autumn Wednesdays – and our venues looked considerably “spruced up” before our return. We had a really good range of speakers and the foyer areas were full of people collecting bookings for events: Jean and Tony were offering holidays for 2022; Ann, Roy and Dianne were taking bookings for the Christmas Lunch at Mill Green Golf Course; and Tony Tutton was offering tickets for his Autumn Dance at the end of November. Peter Fox reported a steady trickle of new members and

Sue Talbot was on duty as Treasurer. Members and visitors were registered on entry, usually by Elaine and Davina, and our team of volunteers were on hand to welcome new members and visiting speakers and to serve coffee. Of course we had to observe some Covid 19 restrictions by the use of masks, social distancing and self-service coffee to name a few. But it was all worth it to be “back to normal”. As can be seen from the above, this takes teamwork.

The events started with a big “Hit”. Tony Tutton gave a presentation on “My Life in Music – Coronation to Corona”. This included many photographs and recordings from the last sixty years including his influences and brushes with celebrities. This was highly entertaining and very nostalgic. Tony is a popular presenter and the event attracted over a hundred members. We, the audience, had a really good time. What a great way to start the year!

As is usual the talks are very varied and random, but all are interesting with a range of experienced speakers. We had talks about the use of police dogs, magicians in art, Sweeney Todd, a career in the WRAF – just to begin. My own personal favourites were Geoff Bowden on the Life and Times of Irving Berlin because it was so entertaining and well supported with images and recordings; and the Tony Eaton talk on The Duke of Windsor and the Nazis. This was quite astonishing and very well researched. So a big “well done” to the Speakers team of Corrie Godfrey and Jill Longman. At the time of writing we still have our December events to come which include the Christmas Party and Quiz with drinks and the Christmas Lunch at Mill Green Golf Course. We so missed these sort of events last year.

As the term has gone on more of the study and interest groups have restarted. We have had considerable problems with rooms and room charges for these groups, but hopefully this has been resolved; most people are aware of the issues which arose and the committee’s efforts to reach a fair and equitable solution. I need to express my thanks, especially to Joan Scales and Sue Talbot for the inordinate amount of work involved in this, and also to Steve Hall and all the committee for support. I hope our groups will continue to be the impressive feature of WelHat u3a that they have always been and rise like the phoenix from the ashes of the present “troubles”.

In other news – tests have been going on to see if we can record some of the talks on Zoom to use for members unable to get along to Wednesday venues. We also have Thursday meetings on Zoom for people who wish to continue the “coffee morning” format which

operated during lockdown. Thank you, Ann Davies, for facilitating this. So – on to the future!

I have mentioned many of the committee and their efforts on our behalf. I should add my thanks to Marie Scales, our Secretary, whose work in committee is invaluable and keeps us all up to date with policies. Roger Swaine manages our website with great efficiency and expertise and, of course, Hazel Bell, without whom we would not be communicating in this excellent publication. Many thanks for all the committee for their cheerful support and efforts.

So, I am looking forward to the events planned for 2022 and wish everyone a really good new year.

Pam Williams

Meet the Groups 2021

Meet the Groups is usually a regular annual event in our programme but, in common with just about everything else in life, this was disrupted last year. So it was that, on 10 November, we gathered to discover more about some of our wonderful groups for the first time for more than 19 months.



Fourteen groups set out their stalls, and while that is just a fraction of those available to us through Welwyn Hatfield u3a, they illustrated what a wide range of activities and interests are on offer to our members. From Bridge to Watercolours, from Architecture to Wildlife Watchers, enthusiasm and ingenuity was evident on all sides.

Over a hundred members attended, with some new faces coming along for the first time, and Group Leaders were on hand to talk about their displays and answer questions. Our Groups Coordinator, Joan Scales, to whom we are grateful for organising the event, was pleased with the response. The groups represented were, of course, just a fraction of those available to us through Welwyn Hatfield u3a, and there is always the possibility of new groups starting up.

We gazed at pictures from trips made by Photography members (see photo below) and trips planned by the Travel group. We contemplated stretching our minds over World Affairs and our legs through Walking. A comparatively new group, Wartime Memories, had an eye-catching and thought-provoking display of materials collected and produced as part of their explorations into members'





experiences as young children in a time of war (see photo on page 21). As ever, the artistic and creative talents of our various art and craft experts were much in evidence and indeed the overall impression I gained was of a colourful, lively buzz of interest, the buzz dying down slightly when the Ukulele group began to play, entertaining everyone during the second half of the morning.

It is always interesting to gain an insight into what some of our Groups get up to – let's hope there won't be such a long wait until we can do it again!

Text by Jill Longman; photos by Peter Fox

Christmas Dance

Well, what a wonderful evening Saturday 27 November was! For a few hours we could forget our concerns, don our glad rags and dance the night away to music performed by our own Tony Tutton and his amazing musicians.

The occasion was particularly poignant this year for many of us, as for the last two years, going out at all has been difficult and uncertain. In fact the last time we had the pleasure of going to a u3a Christmas dance was way back in 2019.



The band played many of the old favourites remembered from our youth. Artists such as The Searchers, Cliff Richard, the Stones, with a special tribute to Charlie Watts who died last year, Elvis, and not forgetting John, Paul, George and Ringo.

Throughout the evening we made our moves, strutted our stuff. “Strictly” dancers had nothing on us – scores of 10 all round!

We paused only for a fish-and-chips supper delivered by our favourite supplier. This provided a welcome rest for the band.

When Tony announced the end of the show, of course we all yelled for more, and of course we were rewarded, by an excellent rendition of Roy Orbison’s “Pretty Woman”.

Such a fantastic evening’s entertainment! The hall echoed with sounds of dancing, singing and laughter. Thanks to Tony and the Simply Sixties Band. We look forward to the next time!

Ann Madell; photo by Peter Fox

Christmas Party

After the strangest eighteen months in most of our lifetimes we were able to hold a slightly modified but real Christmas party and quiz this year on 8 December. Last December, of course, there was a virtual one on Zoom with virtual prizes ...



We did not bring food to share; people brought their own nibbles. We did offer drinks as usual but people brought their own glasses.

The Quiz, however, did not change, neither did the Quizmaster! Tony Tutton had meticulously prepared a three-round quiz for the members who came along – around forty of us.

Round One was ‘Who is this?’ Photos of various well known people, alive or dead, were put on the screen with judiciously placed shapes covering most of their relevant features. Some were straightforward, such as Greta Thunberg, but I don’t think anyone recognised Enoch Powell and very few recognised Priti Patel.

Round Two was Christmas questions – very seasonal and tricky too. How many of Santa’s reindeers have names beginning with D? In which ocean is Christmas Island? Most of us thought the Pacific – a lone voice in our team said the Indian but we ignored her and lost the point! Where was St Nicholas born? Of course it had to be Turkey – but many of us got that wrong.

Finally ‘Guess the Theme Tune’ which was a selection of radio and TV themes. Who remembers Housewife’s Choice, Top of the Form and Pot Black? We were scratching our heads saying “I remember that”, ‘Oh what’s it called?’ ‘Wasn’t it the one with that woman ...?’

So out of a possible 35 points the team I was in – only five of us, somehow managed to win with 29 points. We shared a delicious box of chocolates.

Thank you, Tony, for another triumphant and really enjoyable quiz. After the quiz people sat in their teams or mingled a bit (socially distanced of course), enjoyed the festive food they'd brought along and toasted each other with a selection of the drinks on offer.

I filmed the quiz on Zoom so it was available for ten days on the website for anyone to access. This enabled Suzanne and John Brown to do it from their exile in Tasmania. They scored 19.

Hopefully next year we can go back to our normal format. I'm really looking forward to that!

Ann Davies; photo by Peter Fox

Christmas lunch

Well, what a great end to a very difficult year! On Wednesday 15 December nearly a hundred members attended the Christmas Lunch at our new venue, Mill Green Golf Club, Welwyn Garden City.

Lunch began with a bang as everyone pulled crackers, and heads were soon decorated with golden party hats as we all exchanged the cracker jokes amidst much laughter. The food soon followed, and a three-course, traditional Christmas Lunch, followed by coffee and mince pies was enjoyed by all. Much chatter and laughter ensued as members made new acquaintances or renewed old ones.



This final event of the year ended a very busy few months as groups were reformed, live Wednesday morning presentations resumed, and we enjoyed our first Autumn Dance and Christmas Party since 2019. With over a hundred members turning out on a freezing night for the Dance and nearly a hundred attending the Christmas Lunch, it shows that, despite all the difficulties we have faced this year, we go into 2022 with the same indomitable spirit to Learn, Laugh and Live as we have always had.

Steve Hall; photo by Jill Longman

Group News

Thursday Zoomers

The great lockdown eventually ended, and in September 2021 our u3a members were able to resume face-to-face general meetings on Wednesday mornings. There were, however, some members who were somewhat disappointed: those people cannot easily leave their homes for various reasons and had become used to spending Wednesdays attending either a Zoom talk or a Zoom chat session. I wondered if those members in particular would have any interest in replicating the Chat sessions, but on a different morning: so mentioned it to Jill Longman. Consequently we proposed a weekly



Thursday Zoomers group. It's open to all members who can use Zoom, but primarily it's aimed at those who are housebound and might feel cut off from the u3a.

We spend time talking about what we've done recently; some people have told tales of their adventures during their working lives; we've held quizzes, and generally spend time chatting and laughing a lot. It's really interesting finding out about our chequered pasts! We often put the captions on to help our hearing-impaired members.

Around 12–15 people turn up regularly, but we do have room if anyone else would like to join in. Our first meeting of 2022 is on Thursday 6 January. If you'd like the link please contact me.

Ann Davies – annfovd@hotmail.com

Travel

Northern Ireland, September 2021

Initially, I was not very enthusiastic about this holiday – but how wrong could I be? With travel considerably curtailed during the last couple of years, a jaunt across the Irish sea became more appealing. So I approached it with an open mind – and what an intense experience it turned out to be. The contrast between the stunning scenery of the Antrim coast and the ever-present sense of history and “the troubles” created a sharp relief which heightened the experience.

We took a flight from Luton to Belfast around midday and soon found ourselves at our very attractive hotel, the Dunadry Hotel and Country Club at Templepatrick. En route we met our Blue Guide, Tommy, and driver, Jimmy, who made a great double-act; both full of good humour and local knowledge.

Day 1 – It was a really sunny morning as we set off for the centre of Belfast. We headed for Stormont, the seat of government (see photo opposite) and, unexpectedly, were afforded a visit to the inside





of the entrance hall. The guards were friendly and happy to chat. Plenty of photos on the wall illustrated the progress of this building. What surprised me was the age of the building – it was constructed only in 1932, shortly after the partition of Northern and Southern Ireland. It stood on a hill overlooking a large park open to the public.

On our way here it was a revelation to see the sheer number of murals on almost every corner wall and the division between the Catholic and Unionist areas of the Falls Road and the Shankhill Road. Both areas showed masked gunmen among their illustrations (see photo overleaf). Our guide assured us that the authorities were trying to encourage less militant representations and for people to view them as artworks. But what was certain was that they recorded both past and present divisions with partisan flags flying in both areas. We were shown evidence of much investment in housing in these areas but it was still apparent that the communities were mostly separated and often enclosed in fences – the only progress being that through roads were open. We took a lunch break in the centre of the city close to the City Hall and not far from Queen’s University.

In the afternoon we made our way to the docks area to visit the Titanic Experience. This was so much more than a museum and nothing could quite prepare us for this amazing multi-media “experience”. It demonstrated the pride of the designers and builders of the ship as the exhibition took us through the building of the ship with the aid of film, recording, sound effects and the use of actors and



reconstructions of cabins and other areas of the ship. There was even a re-enactment of the launch party of the ship. There was a dizzying “trip” through the areas of the ship with the aid of film and even a “ride” which took us from the depths of the hold to see and hear the building of the ship. We are all familiar with some aspects of the disaster but this exhibition revealed some of the personal stories of individuals who had been on board. And to conclude there was some modern film examining the wreck site and items from the wreck. Overall, it was totally mesmerising and offered many fresh insights into this disaster. We finished our tour with a visit to the grounds of Belfast Castle. A very full and thought-provoking day.

Day 2 – On this day we headed up to the Antrim coast on our way to the Giant’s Causeway. This was another extremely stimulating day as the coastline was spectacular. Unfortunately, it was rather cool and drizzling but somehow appropriate for such a background. This is an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Causeway is a World Heritage Site. First we passed Dunluce Castle – a very atmospheric ruin on the edge of the cliffs, somehow looking even more impressive in the mist..

Then we stopped at the Visitor Centre to make our way down the coastal path to the Causeway. I must say I found this “moderate” walk quite challenging; some members were able to use the buggy service. However, the causeway itself is astonishing with its basalt hexagonal

columns. Then we had to walk back up the slope!! Most of us got quite wet. We then explored more of the coastline by coach with stop offs to view the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge and several lovely villages. We passed through the nine glens of Antrim on our scenic route back.

Day 3 – was a trip to Derry or Londonderry – even the name of this city reflects the dissent that exists. Graffiti can be seen on road signs and, apparently, it's often referred to now as "The Walled City". We drove through the Sperrin mountains and, on arrival, drove around the Bogside before walking part of the 400-year-old city walls. Then we visited the Tower Museum, which appeared quite small on the outside but contained a wealth of information on the history of Northern Ireland. We were reminded that King James I sold off tracts of land to the English and Scottish aristocracy and merchants. The original Catholic landowners fled the country in an episode known as The Flight of the Earls. This aspect of history was further expanded in the exhibition on The Plantation at the Guildhall, situated opposite. Then we learnt of the background to the famous Battle of the Boyne when King William (a Protestant) invaded and gave rise to a history of conflict.

So, departing more well-informed than when we entered, we set off for our train ride from Derry to Coleraine. This is a picturesque journey, described by Michael Palin as one of the most beautiful rail journeys in the world. And so it was, running along by the coast road by Lough Foyle: another stark contrast between an exploration of the dark past and the beauty of the scenery in this part of the world.

Day 4 – Well, this was our last day but we still had one more delight in store before our return flight. On a beautiful day we drove to another of the six counties, County Down, to visit Mount Stewart House and Gardens on the edge of Strangford Lough. Once again, the drive along the edge of the Lough was spectacular. Once there, we had plenty of time to explore the exceptional gardens, set out in themed areas, some with a definite Italianate influence.

From there it was a short distance to the airport – and so ended our holiday, packed with a range of sights and experiences. I am so glad I went. All this would not be possible without the sterling work of Jean Davis and Tony Bristow, our organisers, who arrange everything so efficiently and smoothly. We are all very grateful for their efforts.

Text and photos by Pamela Williams

Travel Group Plans for 2022:

26-30 May – Cardiff, Somerset and the Wye Valley – applications now available.

11-15 July – Lincolnshire – there are still some twin/double rooms available.

19-23 September – Isle of Man – applications available in January.

Ukulele Group

Does fame beckon?

Since this group started in Autumn 2018 with a few hesitant beginners it has grown considerably. Dave Charlwood has led them at all kinds of engagements (or ‘gigs’ in pop-group speak). He is keen that the group’s repertoire should contain diverse kinds of music with few, if any, George Formby-type songs. They play country songs, all different kinds of pop music and even some Gilbert and Sullivan!

These started tentatively at a Meet the Groups session in April 2019, then as support to Dacorum u3a’s ukes group at the summer party that year. In late 2019 they played at a care home in WGC and a school in St Albans. All was progressing well – but what happened during March 2020? As if we could forget! The pandemic Covid-19 struck, and all face-to-face meetings stopped.

After a year or so, as soon as lockdown eased off, we started meeting outside in various gardens to resume practising. I’m saying ‘we’ now because I joined Ann and Roy Madell as supporting singers.

At last we were free to entertain members at the first face-to-face u3a WelHat meeting after the pandemic. It was the Garden Party at Breaks Manor on 21 July – what a difference two years makes! The Chair of Breaks, Barry Clark, happened to be there during the performance. He must have been impressed because afterwards he asked if we would be interested in playing at an event he was organising at Breaks to thank Volunteers who had worked at the University Vaccination centre. This duly happened on 14 August (see photo opposite). During one of the songs towards the end of the set we noticed smoke coming from one of the speakers! Something had burnt out – no one was harmed but it was quite a moment. The speaker was unplugged and we carried on regardless, just like real troupers.



Another day, another gig! This time on 30 August at the Flower Festival of St Luke's church in Hatfield. It was the Bank holiday, cold and wet, but we had a good time and an appreciative audience.

Dave was frustrated with us at times as we played faster and faster during songs. He said we needed a drummer or a *cajon** player to keep us in order. Does anyone believe in fate? I was Welcomer at our first General Meeting in September. A new member, Stephen Green, arrived and when I asked 'What kind of groups are you interested in?' he told me that he was a drummer and did we have any music groups ... Dave was there, so they were swiftly introduced! So now we have our percussionist to add to the kazoo players and the accordionists. We are going from strength to strength and gaining in confidence.

We entertained at Meet the Groups at Ludwick on 10 November this year (*see photo on page 6*). Then we played at Eleanor House in St Albans on 8 December. We sang an eclectic mix of Christmas songs and well known classics. There was a most appreciative audience at this retirement complex, singing along and tapping their feet. They collected for Isabel Hospice and gave us £57.20. (*See photo above.*)

Covid-19 hasn't stopped affecting us. We were due to play at a WGC primary school in November. The music teacher is introducing

* A *cajon* (Spanish for drawer) is a box-shaped wooden instrument used in South America, played by slapping the sides or top, similar to a drum.



the ukulele to pupils and wanted us to demonstrate – but just before we were due to play there was an outbreak in the school, so it's been postponed. The same thing happened at the Galleria – we had a three-hour slot on Saturday 11 December, but that was cancelled too.

We are all really enjoying our repertoire and it's being added to all the time. We've had an email asking us about playing at the Digswell Dementia cafe next term, and possibly at the Woolmer Green Farmers market. So our fame is spreading!

We are very grateful to Dave and Tony Dodds for all their hard work in keeping us going and under control! It really is good fun to play music and entertain people. Long may it last!

Ann Davies

Wartime Memories (and Postwar Thoughts)

The two Wartime Memories (WW II) Groups began in June 2021 when members were emerging from our most modern crisis – not of war, but of worldwide pandemic.

Initially applicants' ages spanned the years from before till after the Second World War. In another fifteen years, there would be no survivors left – so time was of the essence!

We met to share wartime and post-war childhood recollections and



The Wartime Memories Group's display at Meet the Groups, 2021

Photo by Peter Fox.

to consider how the two world wars had influenced our parents' lives, our own existing attitudes, and those of our children and grandchildren. Predictably, in differing ways our two groups have each wondered about a future for those to come.

As we began to make sense of our individual wartimes and those of our parents or contemporary caring adults (in evacuation perhaps), we struggled in both groups to understand the blanket obscuring pain and shock of unspoken adult experience. For us children, certain aspects were often taboo. One might cause anger or deep upset by asking about a death or a betrayal. The unspeakable remained, often unspoken, leaving painful questions about a relative now long dead.

Have we inherited some of this – must it always be bad? Are our families interested? Do we share with them, or are some aspects of our pasts buried? Could they even have an unconscious message of taboo?

If our memories are inherited, does that take away their validity?

Some members' wartime recollections have been assembled in a compilation, which can be read on our website at –

http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk/groups/wartime_memories.html

As well as memories, many new avenues are there for us to explore.
We will continue this discourse in the two small groups, with occasional joint meetings to share our parallel processes.
We have perhaps three vacancies to fill. Do think about joining us!
We meet on Tuesdays at 2pm till 3.30pm in WGC, twice per month: Groups 1 & 3, 2 & 4.

Mary Perren
01707 327 289 or maryperren@icloud.com

Spring Term 2022 – Wednesday Meetings

Doors open at 9.45am. Tea and coffee are served from 10.00am to 10.30am. The meetings start at 10.30am with notices, followed by the talks. Bring your own cup or mug for free tea or coffee."

JANUARY

5 Ludwick Family Centre, Welwyn Garden City

Roger Mason – “Robert Maxwell – Did he fall or was he pushed?”
Robert Maxwell disappeared from his yacht in the Canary Islands in November 1991. Shortly afterwards his dead body was found in the water. Did he fall, did he jump, or was he pushed?

12 Breaks Manor, Hatfield

Mike Beech – “History of a Victorian Glassworks”

We look at the early 16th-century history of the area near Fleet Street where Whitefriars glassworks originated; how they developed into one of the greatest producers of top-quality Art Nouveau glass; how Burne-Jones, Henry Holiday and Rossetti projected beautiful stained glass windows and how, in Dickensian conditions, the artists and craftsmen managed to produce glasswork of such fine skill and delicacy.

19 WGC

Stephen Barnard – “Pictures from the Pally”

Stephen tells us about the early days of BBC Television at Alexandra Palace.

26 Hatfield

Paul Rabbitts – “Bandstands – History, Decline and Revival”

The History of the Bandstand, from their origins in the mid-18th century to their heyday during the Victorian park-making era, and their subsequent decline after World War Two.

FEBRUARY

2 WGC

Damien O’Dell – “Adventures of a Ghosthunter”

Damien will share with us personal encounters with ghosts in over twenty years of investigating haunted properties.

9 Hatfield

John Loadman – “How Rubber put the Bounce into the Industrial Revolution”

Conventional wisdom credits the harnessing of steam power and the development of large-scale production of steel as the drivers of the Industrial Revolution, but this talk proposes that the vulcanization of natural rubber in 1843 was the main driver for the second stage of that revolution. It looks at how this discovery came about and the important advances it made possible, including the birth of the plastics industry.

16 WGC

ART & PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

Displays from our Art and Photography Groups.

23 Hatfield

Geoffrey Hollis – “Sir Theodore Chambers – WGC’s Third Man”

Sir Theodore Chambers was chosen by Ebenezer Howard in 1920 to be the first Chairman of the Company that built Welwyn Garden City. He held that post until 1948 and became its last Chairman when it was nationalised by the government and subsumed into Welwyn Hatfield New Town. It is widely accepted that his skills, contacts and drive were key to getting the City built. This talk will cover his life and achievements which went far beyond Welwyn Garden.

MARCH

2 WGC

Graham Harrison – “Victorian Street Life”

Graham Harrison is a partner in Sun Jester’s family business which has worked in the field of education and training for over 28 years. Regular clients include English Heritage, National Trust, The Royal College of GPs and the NHS.

9 Hatfield

35th AGM

16 WGC

Helen Fry – “MI9 – the Secret Service in WW2”

A history of this highly secret Military Intelligence department for escape and evasion during World War Two.

23 Hatfield

Maggie Radcliffe – “Venice, City of Dreams”

A year in the life of this beautiful city. The winter floods, carnival, regattas, film festival, glass blowing, lace making, transport and tourist attractions, including St Mark’s Basilica and the Doges Palace, also the many problems caused by the floods and tourists.

30 WGC

Chris Burleigh – “Immortalised in Print”

It is said that we each have a book inside us, and it is quite classic for people to try to realise that dream when they retire. This talk relates one person’s journey in getting into print, drawing out many of the points that must be considered by anyone thinking of self-publishing, and covering features of publishing which the average reader may know nothing about.

The Summer term starts on 27 April, in Hatfield.

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