

## GENERAL MEETING 2015

### **JANUARY 2015: DAVE THOMAS, CVS VOLUNTEER**

Our January Guest Speaker was Dave Thomas from Gedling Community & Voluntary Services (CVS) who talked about Volunteering. Why volunteer? Who wants to work for nothing? To use your experience, to change the world (in small, small way), keep active. Very politely (in talking to a U3A) Dave suggested that perhaps we know more about volunteering than he does!

We don't forget that the ethos of the U3A is that our members combine their skills and energies to create the activities we do and each one who helps to run a group is volunteering. 90% of people volunteer - a very loose definition (doing something without payment for the benefit of the community or person - but shopping for your granny doesn't count.)

There is a trend moving away from the more formal volunteering with big organisation towards more single one-off tasks - e.g. environmental work at a Country Park for 2-3 hours. The fastest growing sector is on-line computer work from home (and that is the older people developing new skills).

### **FEBRUARY 2015: MARION SMITH, CHARITY WALKER**

Marion Smith from our U3A neighbours in Burton Joyce came to tell us she walked from Land's End to John O' Groats in 2012, as you do .....and then she began filling in the details of how it was done and all the mishaps along the way. Marion had found herself at a loose end at the age of 69 when her husband died, and decided to walk the length of Britain, all 1,100 miles, to celebrate her 70th birthday (Yeah, I know, we've all been there, done that).

Sue Fairweather was name checked as helping with maps and satnav. Marion set out in March to do it the back to front uphill way hoping to avoid the dreaded Scots midges season. So she started out when Cornwall was freezing and too early for bluebells. The mishaps? Colliding with a road sign while walking looking down, couldn't get up for the weight on her back, covered in mud and after a mile realised she had lost her glasses, found them intact in the middle of the road. Losing a boot in a bog, escaped without it and a friendly farmer rescued it. Broke her glasses three times. Left her mobile phone behind in a Youth Hostel. Lost her satnav behind a bin in a toilet. She caused an incident by stashing her rucksack at a cottage to retrace her steps to find a mislaid map - the cottage owner found the rucksack and called the police. Had to take a small boat across the River Severn to the only pub around. Crossing Kinder Scout in the Peak District in the freezing snow was where she considered giving up.

On, up through Scotland where she rescued a runaway horse and helped its injured rider. She was walking solo and camping in her little tent on any suitable piece of grass. The kindness of strangers was an recurring feature – pubs who gave her a free meal or room for the night (always gladly accepted). Meeting other people doing the same walk. Marion made it all the way to John 'O Groats .....and got the train back to Nottingham. All to raise money for Cancer Research and the Air Ambulance. So – an inspiration to all U3A members. Try things outside your comfort zone. You don't know ...

### **MARCH 2015: TIM PRESTON, WOLLATON HALL**

Tim Preston came as our guest speaker to talk about Wollaton Hall and Park, illustrated with slides. It all began with the Lord of the Manor, Francis Willoughby, who wanted to build an impressive house to attract a visit from Queen Elizabeth I, thus enhancing his status (It never happened). He had borrowed money for the construction from the famous Bess of Hardwick (Wollaton is a few years older than Hardwick Hall). He had used stone taken from the old Lenton Priory and quality Ancaster stone for the facings.

No-one significant came to stay at his grandiose scheme. He died broken-hearted. An underground well passed through the cellars which kept food and wine cool and feeds a small underground reservoir known as the Admirals Bath (recently opened to the public). The upstairs

toilet was operated through a chute built into the walls to deposit waste onto the garden. This had to be cleaned by a servant from inside the chute.

In the 1830's the ground floor was extended for better servants' quarters but the family didn't generally live there. A later Francis Willoughby was a great naturalist and did acknowledged sketches of wildlife. His son Thomas was an MP for Nottingham and became Lord Middleton. The local church has many Willoughby monuments and graves.

By the 1920's two Lord Middletons died within 2 years of each other and the whole estate was sold to the Nottingham City in 1925 for £200,000, who sold parts of the grounds off for housing. The Hall has subsequently had about £9 million spent on its renovation and needs another £9 million.

In the grounds the Camellia House (built 1923) is an early iron framed building which uses underground heating and rainwater channelled from the roof. There is also a 500 year old oak tree near the Derby Road entrance.

#### **APRIL 2015: CHRISTINE DOUGHTY, DISTRICT JUDGE**

Christine Doughty finally got to speak to the April meeting after we had to cancel her previous booking last year. When she began her career as a judge, they tended to be male, middle class and members of clubs. She had to use the male judge's toilets. She dealt with mostly civil cases including Road Traffic Accidents - "its amazing how many stationary cars bump into each other". There is a whole industry in fraudulent accident claims.

A lot of her cases are now related to the bedroom tax, repossessions, etc. and she finds that few of them deserved to be evicted. Small claims cases can often leave both sides disgruntled as there is usually two sides to the dispute. Divorce cases are mostly behind the scenes, ticking boxes. Unresolvable ones come to the judge.

#### **MAY 2015: ANDY SMITH, A LIFE IN MUSIC**

You can't go far wrong with a Guest Speaker who hefts a semi-acoustic guitar and introduces it as Elvis. Andy Smith's act was about his ordinary life through songs he had written throughout it, interspersed with little stories to illustrate the roots of his song writing. Starting with a Blues about being a baby, going on to Big Top about clowns in the circus – you get the idea – having his first pint at 16, the effects of his first Vindaloo curry after too many pints (the feelings you have "when the world is coming out of your bottom"), playing guitar to his neighbour's drums accompaniment from through the house wall. His early long distance romance with his wife – exchanging cassette tape compilations by post, through to bedtime stories for his children and who takes the most cherished guitar when his son moves out.

Not just his own songs, he did very good versions of famous songs (John Denver's Leaving on a Jet Plane, Don McLean's Vincent, Ralph McTell's Streets of London with a good voice and clever guitar picking style and had the audience singing along. He used a number of instruments, a few guitars, mandolin, banjolele. As with a lot of our Guest Speakers, it didn't look much on paper, but people were still talking about it days later.

#### **JUNE 2015: MIKE DAVEY, KIWI ADVENTURE**

Mike's slide show was about his camper van holiday around the South Island of New Zealand. There is a big difference between the North and South Islands in levels of development and temperature (can be very sunny but cold but still beware of the UV light). The lakes, for which the South is famous, are huge - being up to 60 miles long – and provide a lot of hydroelectricity. The main roads are in better condition than the British ones despite the large delivery lorries with 3 or 4 trailers powering along and stopping for no one. In the camper van sites they get so busy at Christmas / summer that a fish and chip van stays for the season. Bunge jumping can cost £190 for a jump and housing is expensive. Keeping a balance between the Lord of the Rings tourism and preservation of the wild areas.

A fairly low key presentation but you couldn't argue with the stunning lakeland photos.

### **JULY 2015: ALEC THOMPSON, BEE KEEPING**

Three committee members had decided to stand down from the committee for the forthcoming year. Tom Grainger presented them with a bottle of wine in appreciation of their contributions over the last few years.

There was a real buzz (sorry!) of interest around our July speaker, Alec Thomson, on beekeeping. The talk was fascinating and we learned how the beekeeper could manage the 'personality' of a hive and make it less aggressive, by changing the queen bee (re-queening). Drones have a short, idle life, compete to mate with the queen and then are unceremoniously booted out of the hive. Worker bees, the females, are very active by contrast, and do everything to maintain and develop the hive. Worn out by their labour, they too only live for a few months. We also found out what we could do in our gardens to encourage bees and Alec brought along bee friendly plants to buy and his local honey. The featured group was Bonsai and around ten miniature trees were on display, aged between 4 and 40 years old. Several members complimented the display and a couple signed up for the group, which concentrates on the practical side of growing bonsai.

### **AUGUST 2015: MO COOPER, ST ANNS ALLOTMENTS**

[90354,r]Mo Cooper told and showed us the history of the vast area of the St Anns Allotments (aka Hungerhill Gardens). They date back to 1605 when the land was given to the Nottingham Corporation who leased parts to local Burgesses as genteel gardens who, in turn, leased subdivisions. Many had quite grandiose summerhouses (including wine cellars) for entertaining outside the congested city. As the city expanded in the 19th Century, the functions of the gardens gradually changed to smaller plots and the growing of food as allotments. Even as allotments plots, they were still large and enclosed with high hedges. In hard times (according to the 1861 Census) a few families actually lived there in the old summerhouses. After many had been derelict for years, the Gardens are now being restored and, interestingly have a Grade 2 Listing as Historical Gardens – the same level of importance as Buckingham Palace Gardens. St Anns Gardens is also a Biological Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its significant wildlife. It is a hidden treasure of Nottingham.

### **OCTOBER 2015: TONY HORTON, PIRATE RADIO**

Tony Horton was invited in as a late replacement as guest Speaker for October. He gave us the history of the era of Pirate Radio, interspersed with snippets of music, talk or jingles from the radio. The history started with the Lord Reith era at the BBC. They didn't much like entertainment until broadcasts from the near continent in the 1930's (Radio Normandy and of course later - Radio Luxembourg) on a commercial basis of popular music and advertisements (We Are The Ovaltines).

After the war Normandy had stopped and Luxembourg took over – broadcasting a Top Twenty every Saturday night (fading) from 7 – 12pm. Music clips "Cruising Down The River" - the heads in the audience started nodding in time. BBC's charts started in 1948 with Teddy Johnson, but the BBC still insisted on approved scripted commentaries and the use of orchestras/big bands playing the tune – all to limit the amount of "needle time" broadcast.

The record companies weren't happy not getting their proper recordings played and largely switched to Radio Luxembourg (cue the famous "Horace Batchelor's famous Infra-draw Method" guaranteed to make your fortune on the football pools!). As the BBC continued to drag its heels over 'pop music' broadcast in this country, the enterprising Ronan O'Rahilly (who as a Record Label owner couldn't get his records played – Georgie Fame's Yeah, Yeah) set up his own station on a boat off the coast at Felixstowe. The famous Radio Caroline was born in 1964 (first record - The Stones with 'Not Fade Away'). The signal didn't fade away like Radio Luxembourg's did.

Copycat Radio Atlantic set up nearby off the coast of Frinton) until O'Rahilly bought it and created Radio Caroline North in the Irish Sea. The two Carolines had 7 million listeners at their peak. Radio London joined the competition (producing John Peel, Kenny Everett, etc.), as did others including Radio Scotland and Screaming Lord Sutch. By 1966 the Government found a way to shut them all down (The Marine Broadcast Offences Act) from August 1967. The end of an era – very short lived but glorious.

I suspect that a lot of you, like me, have records stashed away that you first heard on the Pirates. Memories, eh? Well done Tony.

## **NOVEMBER 2015: SEWING AND CRAFT SALE**



## **NOVEMBER 2015: Organ Donation**

Carol Donnalsen was our guest speaker at the November General Meeting. She spoke eloquently and passionately about the need for organ donations – not as a professional public speaker, but simply as a mother who lost her son in a road accident and discovered that he had agreed to donate his organs to be used in the event of his death.

Carol was horrified at first but came round to realise it was a good thing as a range of people benefited from the transplants of his corneas, hip, kidney, etc. Carol now attends a lot of events, promoting the Organ Donor Card because there are not enough donor organs available at the moment. She advises anyone considering going on the Donor Register to do so (with a little warning about donors wishes sometimes being over-ruled by family not being aware of those wishes, or not brought forward in a busy hospital scenario).

A couple of eye catching statistics – If the patient's wishes are unknown, the consent rate from the family is 46%. ...and refusal rate from the family is 54%. Whilst most people say they support organ donation, only 31% of people are signed up to the Organ Donation Register. Carol begged the common question – Would people who say they don't agree with organ donation, accept an organ if needed?

## DECEMBER 2015: CHRISTMAS PARTY



