

GENERAL MEETING 2017

January 2017: BOB MASSEY – GOOSE FAIR, part 2

This month's speaker was the redoubtable Bob Massey, to give us his second part of the story of Goose Fair. As usual, Bob was informative, amusing and interesting.



Starting from a Charter granted by Edward 1 about 1245 the Fair is one only two such fairs in the UK. The other is the smaller *Goosey Fair* in Tavistock, Devon. Geese had their feet tarred and gritted to withstand the walk (or should that be waddle) from the Lincolnshire Fens to market in Nottingham Market Square, in front of the Exchange Building was the traditional location for Nottingham's Goose Fair, but this changed when the City burghers decided to build the Council House in 1927. Some 12,000 protesters attended to express their feeling about this move, which was also opposed by the Showman's Guild, who saw a drop in profits. The proposed move to the Forest was also opposed by the residents of that area, who were going to have their peace shattered.

The new site entertained not only Goose Fair but also a cattle market, and in 1928 the first Fair following the move, a football match between County and Forest! The Fair also included, until 1931, a circus but this was replaced by the appearance of Bostock and Wombwell's Menagerie, which was an opportunity for people to see exotic animals they would not otherwise see. These included the unfortunate Wallace, the (allegedly) Untameable Lion.

Part of the reason for the move to the Forest site was that many more stallholders were bidding for places in the Market Square than it could accommodate. The Forest answered this problem and the event expanded, providing the City coffers with increased profits.

By 1933 the Showman's Guild praised the event as being better than ever. We learned, amongst other things, that the "midgets" on show were more often than not, children; that Al Capone's car was exhibited at the 1933 show, before becoming a Presidential limousine! As late as 1964 advertisements were still being placed for "Girls to Tassel, Shake Dance and ACRO" (whatever that last one was!).

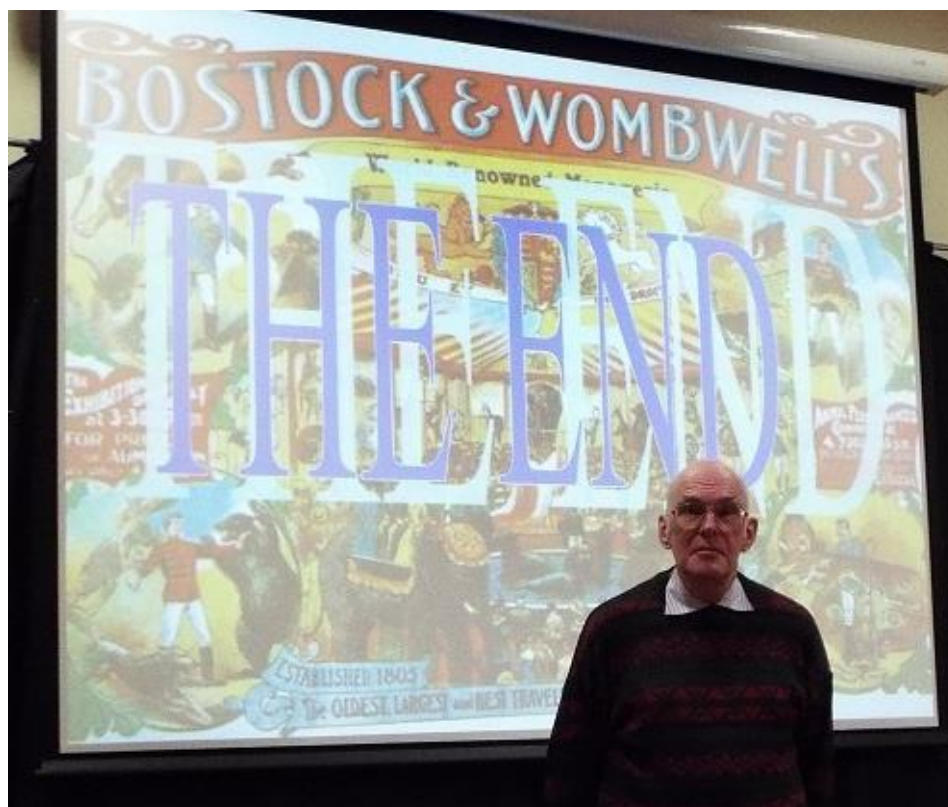
Only on a handful of occasions was the Fair not held: - in 1646 due to plague; 1752 when 11 days were lost due to the move to the Gregorian Calendar; the four years of World War 1; and then from 1939 to 1942 during World War 2. The Fair ran for 8 days in July 1943, then in August 1944 when it formed part of the "*Holiday at Home*" campaign, encouraging people not to travel unless necessary due to shortages. 1945 saw the return to the traditional date of the first Thursday in October.



As early as 1929 there were calls for the Fair to be extended to 6 days, but other than 1943 and 1944, it remained a 3 day event until the start of the 21st Century when it was extended to 5 days, Wednesday to Sunday, but the restricted Sunday opening was dropped in 2007 as it did not prove to be as popular as first thought.

On a sentimental note, a couple who spent part of their honeymoon at the Fair in 1919, celebrated their Diamond Anniversary there in 1979.

Andrew Merriman



February 2017: TONY HORTON – 1950'S MUSIC

A welcome revisit by Tony Horton, this time talking about popular music of the '50s. With musical illustrations he took us through a decade which saw a huge change in popular music tastes, and the invention and rise of the "Teenager". At the start of the decade the popularity of the Big Bands was declining, although bands such as Ted Heath's were still popular playing American-influenced dance music. Music broadcast on the BBC was intentionally bland and inoffensive, artists like Alma Cogan and Eddie Calvert being representative.

Records imported from America were very popular but got little play on the BBC who only had limited "needle time" and so cover versions of the American hit songs were broadcast using live bands and home grown vocalists - the original artists were seldom heard on the radio.

Popular music of the early fifties was mostly ballads. Popular films of this early fifties also supplied many hit songs, many of which were re-recorded by British artists such as Vera Lynne, Jimmy Young and Lita Rosa.

By 1955 there was a general move towards newer styles of music, evidenced by the huge popularity of Bill Hayley and Rock around the Clock. Around the same time there was the brief phenomenon of skiffle led by Lonnie Donegan but Rock and Roll was here to stay with British stars like Tommy Steel, American originals like Paul Anka and, of course, Elvis Presley. This new international popular music culture for youth originated in "Black" America and was resisted by the U.S establishment, resulting in the popular hits being by white, clean-cut youths like Tab Hunter, Buddy Holly and Elvis, while the originators like Little Richard and Chuck Berry were less well known.

In the U.K. a generation of local Pop Stars were created, notably from the stable of Larry Parnes, many given trendy new stage names like Billy Fury and Terry Deane. Other successful pop stars at the end of the decade included Michael Holliday, Adam Faith and Cliff Richard with his backing group The Shadows who had an independent career. Traditional Jazz was also popular at the end of the '50, with artists like Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk. Rock and roll bands were now in place which would become the foundation of the music of the '60s (to be documented by Tony in the future - can't wait!)

Nick Clark

March 2017: BARBARA MEYER – SHERWOOD FOREST

The speaker for our March meeting was Barbara Meyer, a wildlife photographer whose initial interests were in endangered big cats like the Amur Leopard, but who found a commonality in the problems facing them in the wild with those facing British species - loss of habitat, disease etc. which brought her to study in Sherwood Forest.

She was permitted to set up trail cameras in the Sherwood Forest National Nature Reserve which is managed as an open woodland area, attempting to replicate its medieval past, and which was designated Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1954. Woodland birds are plentiful, especially at the feeding stations, but much of the animal life is less easy to spot, being either naturally timid or nocturnal such as badgers.



Grey squirrels are abundant as well as many birds - Blackbirds, Nuthatches, Chaffinches, Tree Creepers, Jays, Tawny Owls, Buzzards, Redwings (in season) and various Tits, all feeding on the woodland floor or in the nesting season, gathering nest building material.



Four types of deer have been recorded on camera - Fallow, Red and Roe as well as Muntjac, a non-native species, but now widely distributed. Cattle are allowed into areas of the Forest by ancient right, and can cause damage to the ecosystem detrimental to deer, but which benefits badgers by breaking up the ground. The Badgers in the forest do not appear to hibernate and are active through the year. They are very sociable, separating only to forage independently. They use middens and replace their bedding regularly. There was fascinating footage of young cubs playing under the supervision of attentive parents.

The local foxes seem to be on good terms with the badgers, at times re-using former badger setts and being in close contact without aggression. There was further footage of young fox cubs playing while their mother foraged.

In summary, Sherwood Forest still retains a diverse variety of wildlife, but it is crucial to maintain the extensive areas of undisturbed environment, and when used as a resource by the public to keep dogs under control and never (please!) leave litter.

Nick Clark

April 2017: JUDITH WRIGHT – THE HISTORY OF BOOTS

The speaker for the April meeting was Judith Wright, an archivist at Boots who gave us a history of the company with many pictures of former sites in the city, many of which were greeted with murmurs of recognition by the audience. The Boots story began in 1849. Its founder John Boot was an agricultural worker from Radcliffe-on-Trent with a passion for herbalism and a strong Methodist ethic, who decided to open a small herbalist store in Nottingham, where there was an opportunity to deliver healthcare to impoverished factory workers.

On his death at the early age of 44 the business was continued by his wife Mary and his 10-year old son Jesse. At 13 Jesse left school to help in the shop but continued to educate himself, self-improvement being a strong goal. He eventually took over the running of the business, expanding into larger premises in Goosegate with large display windows for advertising products. His very successful business model was to buy in bulk and to sell in small, affordable packages sizes for cash only.

As the business grew he was able to set up shops outside Nottingham, initially in Lincoln and Sheffield. The success of the business caused some envy among rivals and to counter the

insinuations that some products were adulterated the company was officially registered as The Boots Pure Drugs Company, and from 1884 qualified pharmacists were employed as dispensing chemists. Jesse's wife Florence, who he met on much needed holiday in Jersey, had a huge impact on the Boots brand since she worked in partnership with Jesse and brought with her interests in fashion and art and design, diversifying the choice in the shops and making them attractive, some even having cafe's with dance floors.



The Boots lending libraries were another idea of Florence's, introduced in about 1899 to supply an early subscription library before the advent of public libraries. These were extremely popular, at their peak in the late 1930s exchanging 35 Million books a year.

Worker's welfare was very important, and Boots was quick to offer day trips and outings to its workers, engendering a family spirit in the company. Staff benefits included in-house clinics, doctor's surgery, and even a school for young employees to complete their education and improve their prospects.

The period of the First World War was busy time for Boots, despite one third of the workforce being on active service. Their roles were covered by woman workers, making medicines and comforts for the troops as well as ninety thousand gas masks per week at peak production. In 1920 the company was sold into American ownership which enabled investment opportunities and led to the purchase of the Beeston site to centralise production. Jesse's health was now failing and the American owners soon made son John the new Director. John was a very able businessman, continuing his father's plans and introducing many of his own, such as branches in rural areas, 24-hour dispensaries and pensions for all staff. He was so successful that in 1933 he was able to organise a business consortium to successfully buy back the company.

The Beeston site was ideally suited for development, being cheap and having very good road and rail transport links. Multiple factory buildings were erected on the site culminating in 1933 with the iconic D10, the "Wets" factory, now a grade I listed building and still in full use. In the same year the 1000th shop opened in Galashiels with great ceremony. Jesse Boot had died in 1931 at the age of 83. In the last decade of his life he was very active in using his personal fortune to enhance the lives of those in Nottingham and at his wife's home of Jersey. He gave money to hospitals, parks, the Embankment gardens, retirement and children's homes and such, but his most significant endowment was the purchase of the land on which the University was built.

During the second world war the factories escaped any damage despite being involved in crucial war work. Once the post war depression was over the company has prospered with innovative products such as Ibuprofen and a series of mergers and acquisitions leading to its present position as a prominent part of the international Walgreen Boots Alliance.

Nick Clark

May 2017: VINCE EAGER – YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO ROCK & ROLL

Vince Eager, born Roy Taylor in 1940, first described his childhood in wartime Grantham and his early experience of singing as a chorister. He soon found it easy to supplement his income at Christmas by carol singing.

After his voice broke he took up amateur dramatics and discovered great pleasure in performing. With other members of the drama group he joined a harmonica based band, until influenced by Lonnie Donegan they formed a skiffle group.

This proved very successful and after a year they came second in the *World Skiffle Championship* at The Locarno, Streatham, broadcast live on BBC television. This immediately led to an evening playing at the now legendary 2i's coffee bar in Old Compton Street, the fashionable venue for the Skiffle Set where they were offered a residency.



An offer then came from impresario Larry Parnes to join his stable of rock and roll musicians, and adopt new stage names. Their first job was at Churchill's club, a fashionable cabaret night club, popular with American visitors (including Rock Hudson and the Frank Sinatra *Rat Pack*), this being one of the very few clubs where Kentucky Bourbon was available.

Vince went on to describe the touring that followed this period with recollections of living and working with other Larry Parnes Rock and Roll stars such as Marty Wilde, Billy Fury, Cliff Richard and Joe Brown (who incidentally had rejected the suggested stage name of Elmer Twitch!).



There was also regular work on television with such shows as *Six-Five Special* and *Drumbeat* on BBC and *Oh Boy!* on ITV. Regular features in teen magazines such as *Boy Friend*, *Mirabelle* and *Roxy* also kept Vince in the public eye.

This was a very an entertaining insight into the British Skiffle and Rock & Roll craze of the 1950's from someone at the very centre of it. There is apparently more to more to tell should we invite Vince to speak to us again in the future!

Nick Clark

June 2017: ASCOTTINGHAM AND, THEY'RE OFF!

Where were the dulcet tones of Peter O'Sullivan? Our hosts, Whispering Tom and the voluble Richard, in his best Brian Blessed impersonation, both victims of the vagaries of the sound system, guided us through the rules of the betting, the runners and then egged everyone on to place their bets. Mind you, we didn't hear of Lester Piggott, Gordon Richards, (Peter Ennis), Dick Francis or even Frankie Dettori as our jockeys. So, whilst some chose according to the horses' form, others chose according to the colours of the silks!

Sprightly Sally marshalled everyone onto their tables with a mixture of success, as like the odd headstrong racehorse, there was a fair deal of bumping and rearing.

Our excellent Richard Herrod staff poured and served the bubbly on arrival, with of course, a non-alcoholic alternative for the drivers amongst us.

We had the first three races, with each person betting on their own selection, the aim being to amass as much dosh as they could as this would all go into the table pot for the last race.

First race winner was Banana Republic at odds of 3 to 1, with Grape Shot at 16 to 1 and Peachy Cheeked at 4 to 1. Those with binoculars were able to follow it all closely and there were the beginnings of cheering as the horses came in towards the finish line.

The second race results were, Miss Demeanour at 4 to 1, Mister Sitter at 11 to 1 and Miss Fired at 5 to 1. The cheering and egging on of the horses rose in intensity and everyone was getting more into enjoying themselves.

Race three was again loudly cheered and the result was a win for Rum 'n Raisin at 4 to 1, followed by Mint Choc Chip at 12 to 1 and Cookies 'n Cream at 25 to 1. This prepared everyone for their refreshments at the break.

A veritable army of sandwich makers had turned out a banquet of refreshments for us to enjoy, and a big vote of thanks needs to go to them, as besides buttering bread and stuffing in the fillings, they all had to get into their finery. Luscious Lynne stalwartly manned the urns with help from many bookies, stewards and others. We enjoyed our break before the last race, and, of course, a good gossip.

The would-be Mrs Gertrude Shillings, vying for first prize in the Hat competition all looked very much the part, but even though there were some worthy gents tifers, it was an all ladies' affair with Lynne White declared a very worth winner. Well done to ALL the ladies who arrived in their best glad rags and some innovative millinery creations. Those gents who came with their own idea of what the well-dressed punter should be wearing, also deserve a pat on the back.

The it was time for the last race, where all the money that had been accumulated by individuals on the table was available to bet with. There were several permutations available, from betting everything on one horse, through spreading all the money over up to three horses, to making a bet whilst retaining part of the available dough. The aim was to be the table with the most money at the end of this, the last race.

Tables each came up with their own name. The process for the winning table was someone coming up with the idea of Crème de la crème, through someone pointing out that the heat would make the cream sour, then to the inevitable conclusion of Yoghurt! How convoluted can one get?

And so to the final race. Once more as the race progressed the cheering grew and grew as a particularly exciting finish almost had the punters on their feet as Lord Sauron came in from some way back to take first place at 11 to 1, with Professor Moriarty at 4 to 1 and Count Olaf, also at 4 to 1 following on.



Yoghurt was in the enviable position of having £10,850 to gamble with, so they retained £1,850, placing £3,000 to win on each of three horses. Having backed the winner, they ended up with £33,000 winnings, plus their stake and the amount they had retained, giving them a winning total of £37,850. They were also awarded a bottle of bubbly each. Well done to the Yoghurt table.

Our volunteer Bookies, and Head Bookie Pat, all did sterling work with collecting the “money” and keeping a record of who had won what.

Finally, besides a big thank you to all who helped in different ways, an equally big thank you to all you members who came along and contributed to what was generally felt to be a most enjoyable social gathering of Carlton & Gedling U3A.

William Coral



July 2017: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was our fifth AGM and a very healthy 180 members turned out to hear Chairman Tom Grainger take us through his report for 2016/17, Richard Downing present his Treasurers report, to propose a change in Membership Fees for to 2018/19 year, and elect our Officers and Executive Committee members.

Tom spoke about how we have gone from strength to strength in the five years we have been together. This has been due to both the efforts of the Executive, but, more importantly, to you, the members, who have encouraged so many friends, neighbours and relatives to come along and join us. Very many members have come to us as a result of positive things being said about Carlton & Gedling U3A. We hope to continue to keep our groups open to all, as this is a big plus for us and members, who do not end up on a waiting list.

Our conveners continue to do excellent work ensuring that groups run as smoothly as possible and to make new members welcome. New ideas for groups are always welcome, as are new conveners. Don't forget too, that if you think you could help with Executive Committee duties, you can come along to a couple of meetings, held on the Monday following the General Meetings, to see if you would like to become involved by being co-opted. We can co-opt up to four members and in time they will hopefully decide to join us as full members and help spread the roles involved.

Thanks to the hard work of Richard Downing, Nicola Dandie and the Executive Committee, we are in a healthy financial position. So much so that we are coming close to the limit of funds we can hold under Charity Commission rules. This is why the Executive are proposing that fees for the 2018/2019 year are reduced. Richard can demonstrate that with less than our current level of membership we can afford to do this and still maintain a balance sufficient to run the U3A, even taking into account possible room rental hire increases. The meeting endorsed this reduction, which will come into force from next year.

Tom thanked the retiring members of the committee, Christine Cracknell, Nicola Dandie, David Dobbs, and Phil Barlow for their service on the Executive Committee over the years. Although we have 5 Officer posts, nominations were only received for 4 posts. Endorsed by the membership, Tom Grainger was re-elected as Chairman, as was Richard Downing as Treasurer, whilst Lynne Jaremczenko was elected Business Secretary and Pat Downing was elected as Vice Chairman. The election of the 7 Executive Committee members, Sally Bailey, Tricia Terndrup, Nick Clark, Sue Fairweather, Graeme Bunting, Beverley Eyre, and Andrew Merriman were also endorsed by the membership.

We finished the business of the meeting by 11:40 and were free to socialise, visit the Market Place or drink tea and coffee! Hopefully we will continue to see you at your groups and the General Meetings through the coming year.

Andrew Merriman

August 2017: CAROL LOVEJOY-EDWARDS - NOTTINGHAM IN THE GREAT WAR

Carol told us that she has written two books about the Great War, Nottingham In The Great War and Mansfield In The Great War, and is about to publish a third on the role of women in the Great War.

There were some interesting facts in the fascinating talk and we heard that at the outbreak there were several undercurrents which impacted on the citizenry of Nottingham; Suffragettes, the Irish Question and Home Rule, and the impending Royal Visit of King George V and Queen Mary. We then learned something which I suspect was unknown to everyone in the room. The Royal Visit had been arranged following a successful shooting party at Welbeck Abbey. This was attended by, amongst others, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who's shooting in Sarajevo, as we all know, led to the outbreak of the Great War. Apparently, a stray shot whizzed past him, narrowly missing! What would have happened, we wondered (well I did anyway) if it had led to his death at that stage?

The onset of the War led to a number of false hopes, such as “it will all be over by Christmas”, the same call being heard at the start of the Second World War, whilst the fatalists saw the might of the Germans as being too strong for us to resist. It led to the banks closing for 5 days to avoid a run on their reserves. The Post Office response was an emphatic “don’t blame us if your post and parcels are late, it’s not our fault” – typical.

There was a rush to enlist by men of all ages and hoarding of goods followed panic buying. As early as September 1914, only two months after the opening of hostilities, Nottingham began to receive injured soldiers. These were the less severely wounded as those with more serious wounds were treated at hospitals in the south of England. By the end of the War there were some seven hospitals in the Nottingham vicinity.

From October 1914, Belgian refugees began to arrive in the City. Church groups, particularly the Methodists, met them and helped them find accommodation and feed them until they could find employment.

Throughout the War there was a relentless push for recruits, with speeches, some given between films at cinemas, marches and poster campaigns. People were sent on a massive guilt trip as they were asked, “if your neighbour can send her son, why not you?” and the like. The Exchange Building in Market Square (precursor of the Council House we see today) had banners appealing to women to send their menfolk to fight at the front.

With farming employees and farmers going off to fight, shipping being sunk by the enemy and hoarding at home, food supplies became short, but rationing was not introduced until towards the end of the conflict. DORA, The Defence Of The Realm Act, gave the Government wide powers to bring in regulations to assist the war effort, with loaf orders, swede, tea and sugar orders. Allotments were permitted and encouraged, as was the keeping of pigs.

Staff at Boots knitted scarves, balaclavas and gloves for the sailors on board HMS Nottingham, until the Captain advised the Council that all the crew were well equipped and surplus had been donated to other ships! Boots also produced a magazine with local news for former employees who were now enlisted in the forces. Raleigh’s cycle works were converted to arms production and the local textile companies were producing uniforms and kit for the troops.

There were two Zeppelin raids on Nottingham in 1916. In January the first raid managed to hit nothing, shedding its bombs over the open countryside! The September raid however, managed to demolish houses in Newthorpe Street and killed two people. The Midland Railway had been permitted to keep its lights burning and these had enabled a degree of more accurate navigation. When the Coroner invited the Railway to attend the inquest of the dead, to explain why the lights had remained on, the Company declined.

A Private Isherwood had been detailed to guard the Midland Railway and one night challenged a mysterious figure, who appeared to be carrying a gun. Despite calling on the person to “Halt” on two occasions, he shot the person dead. This “intruder” was found to be William Weston Pickard, who was walking to his home, from the Meadows, having visited friends there. Mr Pickard was carrying an umbrella and was deaf.

The Military Service Act of 1916 brought conscription into force and those affected were deemed to have been enlisted in general service with the colours or in the reserve. If the latter, they were forthwith transferred to the reserve, where they came under the control of the Army. There were exceptions and appeals for exemption or delay entering service were heard by Tribunals that comprised Magistrates and local Councillors, and also an Army representative. In the event of an appeal failing, the man was immediately passed into the custody of the Army. We heard how two actors who failed to attend their call up to the ranks as they claimed that they were not who the

papers named and were using their stage names. The actors were on stage at the Theatre Royal and were marched off by the Army!

Fundraising, led mainly by women, raised funds to help equip the army in many ways, including 30,000 comfort boxes to Nottinghamshire troops, £45,000 during Navy Week to help replace HMS Nottingham, which had been sunk. Funds were also raised for Tank Week in 1918.

Despite stepping into the breach, to replace the men off fighting the War, women were still subjected to serious inequalities. Nottingham Council successfully got women working on the trams and this was thought so innovative that places around the country, like Portsmouth, wanted to know how it had been achieved. Secretaries and school girls were encouraged into land work at week-ends and went on 2-week training and work at units established at Colston Basset and Welbeck Abbey. Women were also allowed to be window cleaners, but only ground floor windows! 1916 saw the first female taxi driver in Nottingham.

Munitions workers were trained at University College Nottingham, for employment at Kings Meadow and Chilwell. At the latter they became known as Canary Girls because of the effects of the chemicals in use turning their skin yellow. The enormous explosion of 1918 at Chilwell was speculated to have been caused by sabotage or bad management, but in order to minimise the news of the disaster, there was no inquiry into the incident. 134 were killed, but only 32 could be positively identified. Those who could be identified were claimed by their families for separate burial whilst the majority were buried in a mass grave at Attenborough St Marys Church. Our speaker confessed at this point how emotional she found it recounting this incident.

Of course, with the end of hostilities, the women, how had been so undervalued before and after the war, were pushed out of their jobs for the returning men.

Criminality went on as usual, with some new crimes being identified from out of the DORA regulations, like the watering of milk or the Separation Allowance, which was paid according to the salary being earned before being taken into the Army. Fines were imposed for exaggerating the level of income, claiming for dependent children who were no longer children, etcetera. Trading with the enemy was also an offence, of course. One unfortunate local businessman was interned and lost his business due to the actions of an employee, when the owner himself was ignorant of events. A Carlton soldier returned home after a prolonged absence only to find that his wife had recently given birth. After some time he drowned the baby in the dolly tub and was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. Because of the outcry this caused his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

We also heard that the diary of a Hucknall soldier, who fell into an exhausted sleep in the back of his lorry during a heavy bombardment by the Germans without being disturbed, is now in the Nottinghamshire Archives.

And so the “War to end all Wars” was finally over – but after only twenty years it all kicked off again!

Andrew Merriman

September 2017: LEE BOYINGTON - CLIMBING MOUNT KILIMANJARO

This month's speaker was the intrepid Lee Boyington, who, along with 8 other volunteers made the climb up Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. We heard how this dangerous climb is attempted by some 25,000 people yearly, with about 1,000 not making the summit and 10 per year dying in the attempt, which is more than are killed crossing the roads in Carlton. The dangers involved include altitude sickness, ice and the distances involved, but no cars.

Lee came to consider making this attempt following a chat he had with a 60-year-old acquaintance when he himself was 55 years old. He thought that if this fellow could do it at that age, then he ought

to have a try, even though, like his acquaintance, he had done nothing like this at all. His wife suggested that he must be having a mid-life crisis, but Lee retorted with the question of how many 110-year-old people did she know?

We were then advised that our British mountains are merely serious hikes in comparison with what he was contemplating. Having decided that the best way would be to take the longest route, which would give a longer time to acclimatise to the altitude, and hopefully avoid altitude sickness which could spell the end of the attempt, he set about finding volunteers to join him and to raise funds for charity. This is something Lee and his wife have done for many years.

Costs for the volunteers would be in the region of £3,000 each. The kit needed was very expensive, for example gloves at £70 a pair. These later went onto eBay and made £80! Being a Freemason, Lee reached out to the Lodges in Nottinghamshire and through a combination of sponsorship and fundraising events the necessary funds were made and 9 volunteers were identified. These included 5 policemen, 1 funeral director and a lone lady.

Training was extensive, although there would be no substitute for combating altitude sickness than to actually make the climb. Carrying 10 kilos of kit saw the mountaineers tackling Snowdon, twice, as well as Scafell and Mam Tor. Lee even went climbing during a holiday on Majorca, where he climbed a nearby mountain with only goats for company!

Eventually the climbers were ready and flew off to Tanzania and went into a compounded Hotel. They were all nervous as they went through the route, which would take them through nearly all the ecosystems in the world. This included, jungle, desert, heathland and ice. The group had with them a team of 35 porters, who all carried 20 kilos, compared with their own 10 kilos. The porters all seemingly flew past the climbers in order to arrive at the next stopping point and set up camp before they arrived!

The importance of ensuring that they had enough water to drink was emphasised by one of their number ignoring this necessary instruction, and coming close to being sent back. He recovered after a while and the climb continued. The route took an undulating path entailing much scrambling over the terrain. The guides took good care of the group and when asked how much longer they would be walking were always told "5 minutes". This meant 3 hours, and a pause to talk about the trees was meant to give the team time to have a short break to help recover from their exertions. After one 11-hour stint, through the heat of the day, the lady in the party found the will to carry out her yoga routine.

After 6 days, the group finally reached the summit and took a photo of the flag with all the Freemason Lodges that donated to the cause emblazoned on it, as well as one of the "Cops on Top", the five police officers in the party. After many problems, the group had a feeling of achievement at reaching their goal, and then it was time for the descent. Now the short route was taken and in one 4-hour stint they descended 10,900 feet! The descent finally took them 2 days and reckoning up the distance travelled, up and back down the mountain, came to 43 miles.

At the end, they made a creditable £25,000 for charity, which was only slightly less than they had aimed for.

Andrew Merriman

October 2017: BOB WILDGUST - THEATRE LIFE IN NOTTINGHAM, 1760-1965

I wonder how many amongst us realised that Theatre in Nottingham started as far back as 1760? This was what our speaker, Bob Wildgust, took us back to, and then brought us forward to more modern times.

Our first Theatre Royal was opened in 1760, on St Mary's Gate. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by enemy bombing during the Second World War. It was a "high-brow" establishment, catering to a more refined middle class, and the entertainments, reflecting this, included dancing.

Later developments for the entertainment of the masses came from what were originally known as Song and Supper Rooms, which eventually led to the growth of the Music Hall. Some early examples were the Black Swan, Golden Ball, Rifleman and the Durham Ox all coming into being around the early 19th Century.

Then there was the Crown and Cushion on Fletcher Gate, just up from the Cross Keys which is still there of course. The Crown and Cushion was described in 1876 as a miserable, pestilent place full of low-life and ruffianism.

In 1884 the first real Music Hall was built on Chapel Bar, St George's Hall. It had been funded by money from the Lace industry and women were allowed in for free. It was lavishly decorated with mirrors, mural and chandeliers. One of the managers was Harry Bell, who was also the father of Vesta Tilley, who appeared there very regularly in her early career. She eventually became known as the "British' best recruiting sergeant" during the First World War.

The Old Malt Cross in St James' Street was opened in 1887 and had very small stage holding only two or three performers. Touring stars who appeared there included Charlie Chaplin, Fred Karno and Little Tich. This latter was a polydactyl as he had 5 fingers and a thumb on each hand, with some webbing, and 6 toes on each foot. In 1900 the place was closed down by the authorities, being described as a den of iniquity. One of its incarnations was as a Carpet Warehouse, but was rescued in the 1980's and became a community based theatre, where it is now possible to obtain snacks. During it's time as a Music Hall, the caves below were used for the really low paid who could listen to the acts above.

Other theatres to have graced, or otherwise, the City were the Gaiety Palace on Market Street, which has now become the Euro Car Park; the Hippodrome which became the Gaumont Cinema, which succumbed somewhat to the Nottingham Empire, built by the Moss Empire Theatre Group. Plans were drawn up for the first twin theatre at the Hippodrome, which had a Repertory Company, members of which found cheap lodging locally whilst the stars used the County Hotel next door.

The Theatre Royal was built in 1865 for the Lace Manufacturers John and William Lambert at a cost of £15,000. It was described as being a place of innocent recreation, moral and intellectual entertainment, aimed at a higher class than that which frequented the local Music Halls. In 1897 there was the first refurbishment and in 1969 was purchased by the City Council and underwent an extensive refurbishment and reopening by Princess Anne in 1978.

Just around the corner, the Moss Empire built the Nottingham Empire Music Hall, which aimed to provide variety entertainment above the others. However, on the opening night the trapeze fell off! Acts that appeared there included Max Miller, Petula Clark, Billy Cotton and his Band, Tommy Steele, Harry Worth and Margot Fonteyn (shouldn't she have been at the Theatre Royal??!!). When Laurel and Hardy appeared in the early 1950's they had to have a taxi to travel from the County Hotel to the Empire because of the crowds of fans.

By the 1950's television had started to make inroads into the market for Music Hall, with licences going rapidly from 150,000 to 1,000,000. This led to changes in entertainment as the Music Halls tried to stem the draining away of their market by developing ever more "exotic" performers and performances.

For example, we were treated to a lady banjo player "en pointe" in ballerina style (no, it wasn't Margot Fonteyn!); another lady playing a violin who proceeded to bend over, almost double, backwards and then rise again, all the while playing her instrument; and finally, a lady xylophonist playing and gradually going into the splits!

Then they went even more down market by introducing ever more risqué acts, with striptease shows at the Bulwell Olympia, and performances titles such as “Panties Inferno”, “Julius Teaser”, “Fanny Get Your Thumb” and (dare I say it) “Tits”!(This Is The Show!)

We still have the Theatre Royal, and then its expansion of the Concert Hall, the Lace Market Theatre and the Arts Theatre on George Street. And, of course, the Nottingham Playhouse, which started life as Pringles Palace, was then sold to the Nottingham Theatre Trust in 1948. There the likes of Joan Plowright and John Neville performed. It was decided that Nottingham should have a custom-built drama theatre and in 1963 the new Nottingham Playhouse was opened, and Neville performed in *Coriolanus*, directed by Tyrone Guthrie.

Andrew Merriman



November 2017: DANNY WELLS - JOSEPH PAXTON, THE BUSIEST MAN IN ENGLAND

NO, this is not the man who introduced the printing press to England, nor the inventor of Paxo stuffing! These are questions that people ask our speaker, and I think we were all intelligent enough not to fall into that trap! (That's not quite correct as two of our members, at least, suggested to me that he was indeed the 15th Century printer!)

Anyway, that aside, we heard about the great Joseph Paxton, gardener, architect and Member of Parliament. From very humble beginnings, Paxton started work as a gardeners' boy at 15, for the amusingly named Sir Gregory Osborne Page-Turner at Battlesden Park, near Woburn.

After several moves, and by altering his date of birth, he was appointed as an under gardener at the Horticultural Society's Chiswick Gardens. The 6th Duke of Devonshire lived in nearby Chiswick House and met the young Paxton, who impressed him with his skill and enthusiasm. The Duke had inherited his title aged 21 and besides 200,000 acres of land, and £70,000 per year, he also inherited 8 Stately Homes including, Hardwick Hall, Bolton Abbey, Lismore Castle, Devonshire House, Burlington House, Chiswick Hall and of course, Chatsworth.

He persuaded Paxton then only 20, to be Head Gardener at Chatsworth, and whilst the Duke was in Russia (for the next six months), Paxton took the coach to Chesterfield. Arriving in Chesterfield at 4:30 am, he walked the 12 miles to Chatsworth, climbed a wall, took a look at the kitchen garden, and set the gardening staff to work at 6:00 am and then fell in love! All this by 9:00 am.

The lady he fell in love with was Sarah Brown, who was the niece of the housekeeper at Chatsworth. Sarah was the daughter of a mill owner and brought with her a £5,000 dowry. More importantly, she also had a strong managerial instinct and this allowed Paxton to concentrate on his other work. They eventually had eight children who were largely raised by Sarah.

The gardens at Chatsworth, from a 1609 drawing, were exceedingly formal, regimented and geometric. Paxton redesigned the garden around the new north wing of the house and added to the collection of conifers on the estate. This became an arboretum of some 40,000 trees representing 1,670 species, which is still there today. He became skilled at removing large trees, starting with a Weeping Ash which he moved from Kedleston Road in Derby to Chatsworth. Bearing in mind that he had no modern equipment of the type we take for granted, he lifted it with an eight-ton root ball. It took 450 labourers to set it in place at Chatsworth, having taken 3 days to move from Derby and necessitated the taking down part of the entrance at Chatsworth to allow it to pass through. It was described by Sarah as "a bunch of sticks until Summer comes"!

To demonstrate just how much the Duke of Devonshire admired his head gardener, he commissioned a portrait of Paxton in 1836 and shows that class barriers between the two had been utterly demolished. It has been supposed that the story of how Paxton came to develop the Cavendish Banana, which is the species that is consumed in most of the world today, and named it for his patron, is somewhat apocryphal, but it would appear that it really is the truth. Apparently Paxton came across an illustration of the Banana on a Chinese Wallpaper at Chatsworth. This was supposed to be a quaint story, until fairly recent renovations revealed a remaining piece of the very wallpaper!

The Great Stove, a greenhouse that Paxton designed to maximise light entering, was built between 1836 and 1841. It was 227 feet long and 123 feet wide. It was heated by eight furnaces, using 350 tons of coal per year and there were seven miles of pipe. It cost £36,00 to construct. In 1843 Queen Victoria visited Chatsworth and was driven in a carriage through the Great Stove, which was lit by 12,000 lamps. Being so expensive to operate, it was not heated during WWI and the plants died. In 1920 it was eventually demolished, but because it had been so robustly built, it took dynamite to complete the job!

The Duke had been impressed by Blaise Hamlet, near Bristol, which had been designed by John Nash for the retired employees of the owner of nearby Blaise Castle, that he asked Paxton to design

something similar for Chatsworth's staff, and the Village of Ensor sprang forth. The building took longer than expected, as the Duke suddenly took Paxton on a nine-month tour of Europe. Sarah was left at home and in a letter that survives, details the accounts and devotes a whole five lines to the birth of their daughter.

Paxton had a house built for him and his family by the Duke, and during her visit to Chatsworth, Queen Victoria insisted in walking to Paxton's house. Sarah and the family stayed here for the rest of their married life, although Paxton did eventually have a home in London, so they did spend much time apart.

In 1844 Tsar Nicholas was due to pay a visit and Paxton was asked by the Duke to design something appropriately extravagant to impress the Tsar. Paxton dug an 8-acre lake on the moor 150 metres above the house to provide the gravity feed for the fountain, which reaches 296 feet high. Unfortunately, the Tsar never turned up.

Another necessary construction was for a huge tank to accommodate the Victoria Regia lily from the Amazon. Seeds had found their way to Kew, but they had been unable to get the plant to flower. A seedling was given to Paxton, who managed to achieve the flowering within a few months, but it involved enlarging the tank. Each time it flowered, the flower was sent to Queen Victoria.

Paxton was taking commissions outside of his employment with the Duke and was interested in public parks, after the first one was opened in Derby in 1840. Paxton created Liverpool Princes park and Birkenhead's park, which was used as the basis for the design of Central Park in New York. He also invested in the Midland Railway and was close friends with Stevenson as a result, as well as Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who was perhaps the greatest of the Railway engineers. When Rowsley Station was opened, it made access to Chatsworth readily achievable, thus making the House one of the most visited places in England. Paxton also started a newspaper with Dickens as a rather bad editor! It was Dickens who said of Paxton that he was the busiest man in England. The newspaper was called the Daily News and was still being printed in WWI.

Then in 1850 it was decided to hold an international competition for the construction of an Exhibition Hall in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851. The design had to be for a temporary construction, simple design and to be completed in time for the opening of the Exhibition set for May 1851. 245 designs had been submitted and rejected. Paxton mentioned to a friend, who was also an MP, about a design for the hall and Paxton was pressed to make a submission, but within nine days. As a Director of the Midland Railway, the great man was busy and had a full day's board meeting in Derby. Paxton was said to have spent the meeting doodling on his pink blotting pad, a design for the hall.

Eventually, after much argument this design was accepted, and the cost was much lower than anticipated. The Hall was 1,848 feet long, 408 feet wide and 108 feet high. It required 4,500 tons of iron, 60,000 square feet of timber and needed over 293,000 panes of glass. Yet it took 2,000 men just eight months to build, and cost just £79,800. Quite unlike any other building, it was itself a demonstration of British technology in iron and glass. Much of this fabric was prefabricated. It was dubbed the Crystal Palace by Punch magazine and the name stuck.

Because of an outcry about the fate of Elm trees in Hyde Park, Paxton changed the design to provide a transept to accommodate the trees. Paxton also courted controversy, and annoyed Prince Albert, by suggesting that entry be free. Sparrows, roosting in the Elm trees were a nuisance, until the, by then, rather crust Duke of Wellington suggested to the Queen, "Sparrow hawks Ma'am". We heard of an amusing incident at the opening ceremony, when a Chinaman, thought to be an emissary from the Chinese Government, prostrated himself in front of the Queen. The Government of the day had been trying, without any effect, to set up Trade deals with China and it was assumed this was their representative. However, this was not the case and much embarrassment was covered up.

Architects hated the Hall, but over the 46 days of the Great Exhibition, 6 million people visited, which was the biggest movement of people in Britain at the time. For his work on the Palace, Paxton was

knighted and given a reward of £5,000. After the close of the Exhibition, the hall was broken down and re-built in Sydenham, with towers added at each end, which had been designed by one of Paxton's friends, Brunel. The cost of this rebuild was nearly ten times the cost of the original build. This was a debt that the owning company never discharged. It stood at Sydenham until destroyed utterly by fire in 1936.

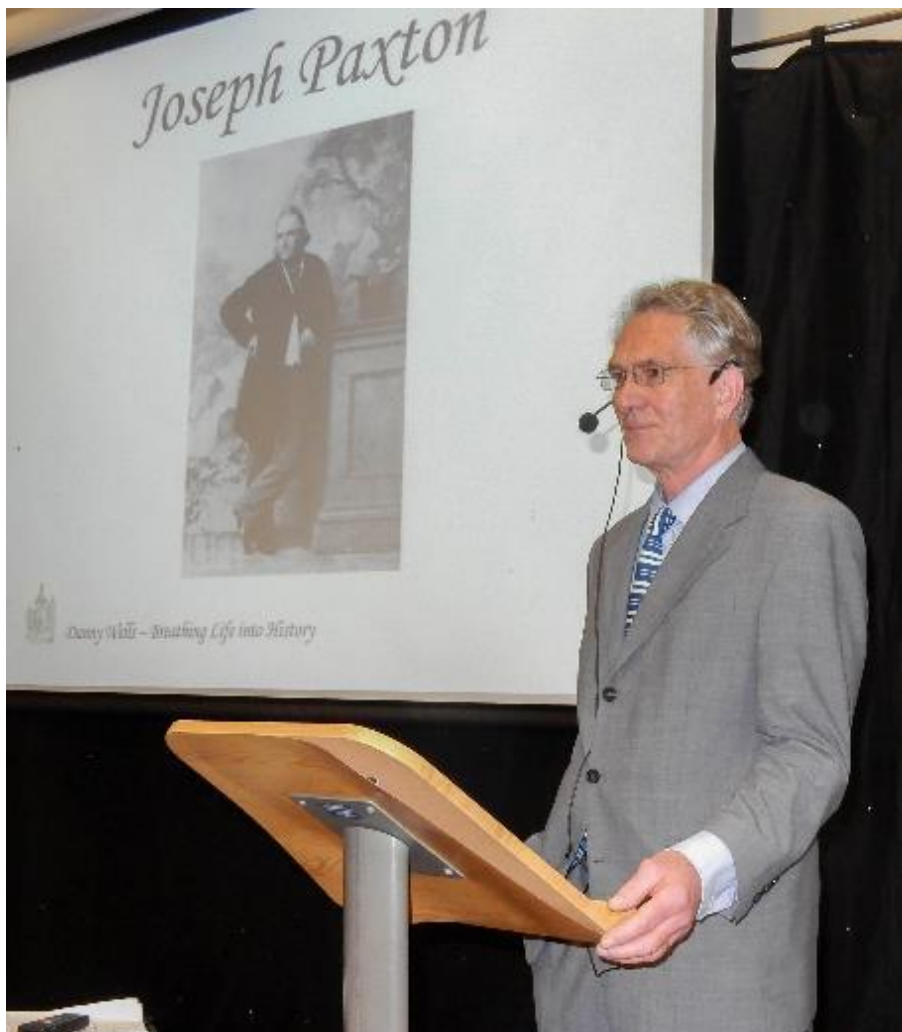
Paxton was also involved in designing a French Style chateau for Baron Meyer de Rothschild at Mentmore in Buckinghamshire and this led to a commission for Château de Ferrières at Ferrières-en-Brie near Paris, for one of the Baron's cousins. This Chateau was to be the same as Mentmore, but twice the size!

Paxton became MP for Coventry in 1850 and remained so until his death in 1865 at Rockhills, Sydenham a home he had built for himself. Sarah never lived there but remained at their home in Chatsworth until her death in 1871. The Duke had died in 1858, when Paxton retired as Head Gardener, although he continued working on other projects until his death. He was buried next to the Duke in Ensor churchyard.

Paxton died a wealthy man, not so much from his job at Chatsworth as from his shrewd investment in Railway stocks.

This was an interesting talk, well delivered by our Speaker Danny Wells who received appreciation from all of those present.

Assistant Editor



December 2017: CHRISTMAS PARTY



To see video footage of the Christmas party go to YouTube and do a search on "**Carlton & Gedling U3A**".