

EF NEWS
SPRING EDITION
2016

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Last time the ‘hook’ for my ramblings was the ‘nine point circle’ and the missing ‘still point’ of its ‘turning world’. (See Autumn 2015 edition.) Finding the ‘hook’ for this article has proved difficult – inspiration absent. However, when one of our tutors for the forthcoming Spring One Day School, Wendy Barnes, sent me her copy for the leaflet, she included the following biographical passage:

One of the joys of retirement is the increased opportunity to spend your life doing what you want to do – learning what your real passions are. It turns out that, for me, my passions are (apart from my dogs) teaching, with which I’ve been involved, to varying degrees, most of my working life, and history, which has been a continuous thread, albeit often overshadowed by the need to earn a living. The WEA courses satisfy both my passions, involving me in all aspects of history and allowing me to work with people who also find teaching/learning satisfying and often enthralling. Facilitating this mutually rewarding experience is a great privilege – and tremendous fun. Often I find I am introducing people to the sources upon which historians build their interpretations of the past and to the many issues that surround those interpretations – a useful addition to the skills which we all need in reading or watching the news of the modern world. Understanding the ‘hows’ of history is almost as important as understanding the stories and their context. Empathising with the past, understanding the ‘whys’ of people’s lives, is also a focus of my courses with my favourite quotation from L.P. Hartley: “The past is a foreign country – they do things differently there” the underlying axiom. One of the students’ comments that I was really pleased to read was “She almost made me believe she had been on Gloriana’s progress”.

I would heartily endorse Wendy’s sentiments. Like Wendy, I retired (twice, as it happens) from teaching, mostly in comprehensive

schools in my case: in 1997 (early) and 2005 (quite late) but have continued to teach ever since, entirely for the WEA apart from occasional days of supply work in the earlier ‘retirement’ years at Colchester Royal Grammar School. So it is 52 years – and ‘still counting’ – since my teaching practice month in Langley Park Boys’ Secondary Modern School near Durham. While earnings top up pensions to a very small degree, my main reasons for persisting are similar to hers. I enjoy it, it helps to keep alive my own brain, as well as those of others, I hope, and to share my love of great and powerful literature that is not just a product of history and its creators’ lives but has helped to *make* history and has *changed* lives.

Readers, many of you would be able to provide your own testimonies as to how novels, plays, poetry and other works of literature may have changed your lives. But how can I justify the assertion that they have helped to *make* history? Well, consider **Chaucer** and his satiric attacks on the corruptions within both the religious and the secular institutions of his time, then the writings of the Christian humanists such as Rabelais, Erasmus and More and the ferment of argument leading to the reformist movements that eventually swept through Europe.

Let’s continue with **Shakespeare**, the four hundredth anniversary of whose death we commemorate on 23rd April this year: the inventor, according to Professor Harold Bloom, following Dr. Johnson, of “the human as we continue to know it”, “explaining us, in part because he invented us”, a major influence on Freud and twentieth century psychology, still providing us through dramatic action, dialogue and soliloquy, in comedies and tragedies, with insights that remain contemporary into: politics, the nature of war, love, male friendship, female fellowship, power-play between men and women and within families and states, family relationships, the corrupt effects of money; the psychology of jealousy, of demagoguery, of the impulse to revenge, of despair, of madness, of faith and of religious fanaticism; into the nature of evil and its power to deceive and

destroy the good, and the corresponding possibilities of salvation, often through suffering, often of young men by young women (played by boys) or of erring fathers by steadfast and virtuous daughters; and the need at times to “speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.” And a major influence on the writers who have followed him and have themselves helped shape history. That, as they say, is ‘just for starters’. The past may be another country, but they don’t *always* do things *so* differently there!

Leap over Voltaire, Diderot and the other great rationalist writers of **the Enlightenment** and their influence on the development of science and beliefs in liberty and free speech and the advent of the American and French Revolutions, and come to the **Romantic Movement**. Consider Blake and his attacks on the exploitation of children for cheap labour (Charles Kingsley too), on the effects of the industrial revolution, on the impoverishment of the environment and of the spirit; Wordsworth and John Clare on rural poverty, exploitative landlords and the effects of the enclosure movement, helping to create awareness of the conditions of agricultural labour; Coleridge on the primacy and “shaping power” of the Imagination, without which could there have been some of the revelatory insights prompting the theories later proved by experimental Science? As for *The Ancient Mariner*, what is that great poem but a philosophical and imaginative anticipation of the Butterfly Effect theory?

Consider Wordsworth and Coleridge on the quest for the truth within, seeking to understand the world through the understanding of the individual self; their belief, drawn from Rousseau, in the innocence of the child at birth then corrupted by sophisticated society and the industrial world, and thus the need for a Natural, discovery-driven education (Plowden?); their often solitary wilderness walks in search of wisdom and a unifying force in Nature, seeking to expose and counter the growing dislocation of Man from Nature in their modern world: do we not perhaps owe to these Romantics ideas that stimulated some of the minds that produced

environmentalism, green belts, garden cities, the Kinder Scout trespass, the Ramblers and the Right to Roam, even the Gaia principle of James Lovelock?

As for Shelley's socialist ideas expressed in some of *Queen Mab* and his great political poems such as the sonnet on England in 1819 and *The Mask of Anarchy*, provoked by news of the Peterloo Massacre – these were to have a direct influence on the Chartists and on Engels and Marx. He followed Mary Wollstonecraft and her husband, William Godwin, Mary Shelley's parents, in ardently advocating the Rights of Women. His ideas on free love (not to be confused with Byron's 'belief' in promiscuity) also influenced that movement too. His faith in the power of the masses to overcome tyranny through non-violent action (as in *The Mask of Anarchy* and his 1812 Dublin pamphlet *An Address to the Irish People*) anticipated and may have influenced Tolstoy, who in turn influenced Mahatma Gandhi and his work in South Africa and then, of course, India.

Without Keats and the inspiration of his sensuous language, would Wilfred Owen have become such a powerful poet, shaping, with the other great First World War writers, our views of that war (including the view, criticised as simplistic by Jeremy Paxman in his television series and book, of all war as futile.)

To bring to an end what has perhaps become an overlong dissertation: **Dickens!** The power of the writings of Dickens, novelist and journalist, and the celebrity status he achieved helped to change Victorian society for the good. He lambasted with both pen and tongue attitudes to the poor, as in *A Christmas Carol*, the Poor Law and Parish Relief in the countryside and the treatment of orphans, as in *Oliver Twist*, the continued exploitation of child labour, as in *David Copperfield*, the conditions in some English boarding schools for poor or unwanted children, particularly in Yorkshire, as in *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*, the harshness of some supposed philanthropists, their deliberate or unwitting cruelties, the application of Utilitarianism to education and the grim working

conditions in Lancashire mill towns, as in *Hard Times*, the treatment of debtors as in *David Copperfield* and *Little Dorrit*, the class bias of the law as in *Great Expectations*, the cupidity of lawyers and the denial of justice by a rotten legal system, as in *Bleak House*, and the circumlocutions of civil servants and politicians as in *Little Dorrit*. He worked with Angela Burdett-Coutts on a number of her philanthropic projects and was influential, through his friendship with Charles West, in the foundation of the Hospital for Sick Children in Great Ormond Street. If the WEA had been in existence in his lifetime ... who knows?

Ron Marks.

**EF NEWS
AUTUMN EDITION
2016**

Please send contributions to the editor
by 5th September

SUMMER SCHOOL 2015 COLCHESTER

Waterloo

Tutor: Rosemary Williams

For the second successive year Rosemary Williams returned from Wales and graced us with a 3 day Summer School on *Waterloo*, from 22nd to 24th June on this, the 200th anniversary of that landmark battle. For many years, up to December 2013, Rosemary presented popular History Tutorials at Colchester WEA of an excellence and breadth that would more than stand comparison with the efforts of many contemporary TV Historians. So it was with this Tutorial, which covered much more ground than the mere word *Waterloo* might suggest and which provided knowledge, colour and drama on a scale that rewarded those present with a lasting insight into the events and politics of 19th Century Europe that would lead to, and flow from, the battle of *Waterloo*. Rosemary helped us to enjoy this journey into European history by her illuminating life histories of the leading personalities involved: Napoleon (and his large family), Wellington, Blucher of Prussia, Prince William of Orange, plus sketches and references from a supporting cast that included French Marshals (two of whom were described as “amazing”) European Statesmen and Monarchs. The narrative was enriched with memorable quotations from characters as diverse as Metternich, Talleyrand, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo and Wellington. Especially enlightening was Rosemary’s guidance through the complex manoeuvres and dramas of the Battle itself and the individual failings and successes.

Marshals of France

The honorary title of Marshal of France brought great status and financial security. It was conferred on military commanders of outstanding quality and was limited to 20 at any one time. The two Napoleonic Marshals highlighted by Rosemary were Michel Ney and Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte.

Michel Ney: He was lauded by Napoleon as “*the bravest of the brave*”. He was the model dashing French hero, displaying courage and élan but also showing exemplary determination and compassion when safely leading home surviving soldiers from the *Grande Armée*, abandoned by Napoleon in Russia. Ney had been one of the Marshals to tell Napoleon that he should abdicate in 1814. Treated with some honour by the restored Bourbons, Ney famously promised them, in 1815 on Napoleon’s escape

from Elba, to “bring Napoleon back in an iron cage” Instead, he re-joined Napoleon and played a major role at the battle of Waterloo where, critically, he was unable to occupy the Quatre-Bras crossroads and help eliminate the Prussian forces completely. In his epic novel *Les Misérables* Victor Hugo quotes Ney at Waterloo as *. frantic with the lofty greatness of the death he had embraced .covered in mud and blood, magnificent, crying “Come and see how a Marshal of France dies on the battlefield”* However, Ney did not die on the battlefield but on his return to France, he was treated as a scapegoat by the Bourbons and executed, following a trial by Peers (at his insistence). To the last, as he faced the military firing squad on 7 December 1815, Ney displayed remarkable courage and dignity.

Jean- Baptiste Bernadotte became King of Sweden, ruling for some 26 years, and was the founder figure of the present royal family of Sweden. Whilst he hardly bears comparison to the colossus that was Ney, nevertheless Bernadotte did succeed in conveying the perceived honour and status of a Marshal by a famous remark that he made in 1840. This was on the occasion of the return of Napoleon’s body from St Helena to France when he said “ *Tell them that I, who once was a Marshal of France, am now only King of Sweden* “

Two Napoleonic Luminaries:

Joseph Fouché (1759-1820) and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand.... (1754-1838) Two remarkable characters who dominated French affairs and who were used, if not always trusted, by Napoleon were Talleyrand and Fouché. Both were extremely able, extremely manipulative, and both had a good sense of self-preservation allied to sound political judgement. Both men began their careers in the Church which merely provided them with a convenient starting point for their rise to important positions of power held over long careers. Fouché was in fact an atheist and Talleyrand was accused by Voltaire of “*throwing his priesthood in the gutter.*” He was only reconciled to the Church on his death-bed at the insistence of his family. Fouché excelled in his major role as Head of Police/Security having a vast network of informers rumoured to include Josephine, former wife of Napoleon. Napoleon recognised him in these terms:” *intrigue was as necessary as food for Fouché, he intrigued all the time he had to have a finger in every pie*” Fouché, as a regicide, was eventually exiled and died in poverty.

Talleyrand was prominent in French affairs in many roles: Revolutionary, Adviser, Foreign Minister, Ambassador, Statesman and, briefly, de facto Head of Government. His influence was immense, not only in France, but across the international stage. In 1808, he did not shrink from telling Czar Alexander I “it falls to you to save Europe.....[by] facing up to Napoleon”. His status ensured that defeated France was treated almost as equals by the Four Allied Powers at the Congress of Vienna 1814-1815 which featured luminaries such as Metternich , Wellington, Humboldt and Tsar Alexander . His activities and intrigue earned him a memorable rebuke from Napoleon: “*nothing for you is sacred you would sell your own father ... I have laden you with honours and there is nothing you would not do against me.....*” But perhaps the most appropriate last word lies with Metternich who, on being informed of Talleyrand’s death exclaimed :”*And what did he mean by that ?* ”

It is impossible to leave these two characters without referring to Chateaubriand, who on seeing Talleyrand and Fouché entering a Palace room together late in their careers, recorded the sight in these words ” *suddenly a door opened, silently in came Vice leaning on the arm of Crime. M.de Talleyrand supported by M.Fouché. The hellish vision passed slowly before me*”

Napoleon

Rosemary gave us an enlightening overview of Napoleon’s astonishing career. We learned of his vision, his huge ambitions, his mastery of military strategy, his energy, and his gifts for leadership. His Grande Armée powered across Europe with bloody, dazzling success until, largely a victim of his own hubris, Napoleon suffered demoralising failure in Russia and, ultimately, defeat at Waterloo, a battle described by Wellington as “*the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life*“

Born in Corsica son of an impoverished nobleman (a Corsican Separatist) and a very strong-willed Mother, Napoleon was educated in a French School, attended Military College and then a School of Artillery where his military prowess began to emerge. His mastery of Artillery led to rapid promotion in the service of Revolutionary France as it engaged in war. He became the youngest ever French General. His military genius and relentless quest for “la Gloire” won him memorable victories across Europe. He famously crowned himself Emperor of France and he appointed members of his family over areas/countries his Grande Armee had conquered:

Naples, Holland, Spain, Tuscany, Westphalia. He abdicated after the disastrous Russian campaign but came back from exile on Elba and was unchallenged in France at the beginning of his *100 days* when he boldly issued an invitation to any non-believers in these words " *If there is a soldier among you who wishes to kill his Emperor, he can do it : here I am* "

With some popular support, Napoleon organised troops and supplies in anticipation of attacks on France by the Allies convened at the Congress of Vienna. Then, typically taking the initiative, Napoleon decided to head swiftly into Belgium to drive his forces between the widely separated Armies of the Allies who were assembling : the British and Dutch under Wellington (Westwards of the main road from Charleroi to Brussels) and the Prussians under Blucher (Eastwards of that road). For Napoleon, Brussels and the cutting off the Belgium coast from the Allies was the prize. He surprised Wellington (" *Napoleon has humbugged me* ") by his sudden arrival at the critical "hinge point" point of Charleroi and soon achieved his objective of first defeating the Prussians (at the battle of Ligny) enabling him to turn his attention to Wellington's Army. Napoleon was confident that he would win and sweep on triumphantly to Brussels. However, fatally for Napoleon, his subordinates allowed the defeated Prussians to retreat "in good order" so that they were able to join up with Wellington in the vital late stages of the battle at Waterloo.

On the final day at Waterloo, Wellington deployed his main body of men in the "reverse slope" position on a ridge protected from French Artillery with other forces committed to deter French advances at three vital forward defensive farm locations (Hougoumont, La Haye-Sainte and Papelotte). Wellington's men famously held the farm house at Hougoumont all day but the French broke through the two other garrisoned farms and, late in the day, Napoleon sensed victory as he sent in his elite Imperial Guard up to the ridge for the kill. At about 7pm Wellington prayed: " *God send me Blucher or night* ". Crucially, at the ridge superbly disciplined British rifle power, delivered at point blank range, surprised and repulsed the French who were forced to retreat. With Prussian troops finally joining up with Wellington and pursuing the French forces, Napoleon realised that his day was lost and he left this his final, and bloodiest, battle scene. Wellington the victor went on to honours and glory but when later asked to nominate the greatest General of history he gave a soldier's

recognition of Napoleon in these emphatic words:” *in this age, in past ages, in any age: Napoleon*”.

Napoleon’s post-Waterloo experience was of course very different. He abdicated as Emperor, was prevented from leaving for America, then unsuccessfully sought refuge in England: “*I throw myself on the hospitality of the English people...and the protection of their laws ...the most powerful, the most constant and the most generous of my enemies*”.. Napoleon sailed for England but was not permitted to land whilst his fate was being decided. He remained anchored at Torbay where the English flocked to see him. Despite seeing himself as *the guest of England*, Napoleon was deemed to be a prisoner of war and was exiled to the inaccessible South Atlantic island of St Helena where he died six years later. However, in 1840, Napoleon was to have a posthumous taste of La Gloire when his body was transferred to France and was later entombed at Les Invalides, Paris. There he rests in permanent state, a colossal figure in French history and an everlasting tourist attraction. Napoleon was responsible for countless deaths and misery but he was also responsible for extending French law and culture as well as power. He remains an historical figure of lasting debate and attention. Was he a tyrant, an “enlightened” despot, a great military man, or simply a bad man etc? Whatever the view, it is beyond dispute that Napoleon made an enormous impact on European life and, for future generations, he will always be a major player on the stage of military and political achievement.

Salute to Rosemary

Rosemary’s masterly preparation and presentation (which included some 300 projected images (in colour with covering text) was complemented by commentary and additional information. We were totally absorbed for 3 days in this exciting unfolding of the story of Waterloo. But this was much more than Waterloo: it was a rich story of Europe, of towering personalities and of defining events, occurring before Waterloo, at Waterloo, and after Waterloo.

Thank you Rosemary, for rewarding your WEA audience with deep knowledge and enduring images of so much that is embraced under the name Waterloo.

Frank O’Connell

BILLERICAY BRANCH

Elizabeth to Elizabeth: English Music from Elizabeth 1 to the Present Day

Tutor: Peter Goodwin

When Billericay's independent music group lost its tutor, I persuaded our democratic WEA Branch Committee to apply for a music course (with a guarantee of some new faces). The Committee was delighted to support this new course and subject as it reflected the views and feedback from the Billericay WEA Branch course selection consultation and meeting in bringing new and different courses to Billericay.

I needn't have worried whether the music tutor would reach the high standard of previous WEA tutors. Peter Goodwin's 'English Music from Elizabeth to Elizabeth' course brought the subject alive with deep knowledge, copious illustrations, both visual and aural, all laced with wit. He even had baritone Richard Hodgson, a friend, to perform live in Week 4, illustrating styles of song.

Course members started recognising distinctive sounds of crumhorns, sackbuts and virginals and more composers' styles than simply Purcell and Handel. We 'met' Byrd, Tallis, the Lawes brothers and other early composers and later Finzi, Warlock/Heseltine, Sullivan, Elgar, Holst, Delius, Bax, Vaughan Williams, Britten, Walton, Tippett and others including Lloyd Webber.

Peter also presented some interesting views and was dismissive of the 19th Century German sneer of England as "Das Land ohne Musik" (The Country without Music) with much evidence to back up his argument (though we lacked a Mozart or Beethoven, I think).

What were Peter's other views? Take the plunge and engage him, as we did, with many keen participants in excellent discussions.

A number of us would have welcomed a 10 week course and this is particularly so when you are thoroughly enjoying such a course as this one. Our Branch's decision however based upon feedback as well as other practical reasons has long since been in favour of 8 week courses between 2pm and 4pm with a break and not the 10 weeks of 1.5 hours. My lone voice of the gentle gender (male in case you didn't realise) worried about some tutors having to change a planned 10 week course to that of 8 weeks, although we could see that other Branches also held 8 week courses. The

8 week decision seems to work for us and indeed class members who enjoy a ‘half term’ break in the programme plus it is financially better keeping course costs down and our course numbers up. There are advantages!

Billericay WEA Branch Committee would certainly welcome hearing the views of other Branches on this matter and indeed that of tutors. The Committee would also be happy to talk through the advantages with other Essex Branches.

No matter 8 or 10 weeks, I can wholeheartedly recommend Peter Goodwin as a tutor and his course ‘English Music from Elizabeth to the Present Day’.

Geoff Taylor

COLCHESTER BRANCH

Symphonies that changed the Musical World

Tutor: Chris Green

All though this course was entitled ‘Symphonies that changed the musical world’, it was nothing less than a full-blown history of the symphony. Expertly guided by the accomplished choir-master and conductor Chris Green we learnt about the development of the symphony from its humble beginnings as interlude music in an opera or oratorio to its nineteenth century apogee in the Romantic era. Originally consisting of just three movements it was expanded to elements of the dance suite and divertimento such as the minuet and the familiar four-movement symphony began to take shape. Chief among the exponents of this form were Haydn and Mozart. They followed a format which began with a fairly fast movement in sonata form—exposition, development, and recapitulation. The second movement was usually slower, the third based on the minuet. This was often the lightest, the most carefree of the four. The last movement was again quick but may have included a theme and variations.

As time passed and the instruments of the orchestra developed it was in Beethoven’s hands that the symphony took on a much more dramatic and ambitious form. It was with his third symphony, the Eroica, that Beethoven changed the course of music. In its scale and sound it broke new ground and this by a man who was beginning to struggle against his growing deafness and the superhuman effort required to turn his original

thoughts into the works we know so well today. Beethoven bridged the gap between the classical era of the eighteenth century and the new Romantic age which his music did so much to create. He reached his peak in the ninth symphony which introduced voices into the symphony for the first time. By this time his deafness had resulted in the end of his performing activities and his largely withdrawing from society.

The Romantic era was continued in the works of Mendelsohn, Schumann, Brahms, and Bruckner. Bruckner works were on a massive scale, with vast sweeps of melody and owed much to Wagner who was his hero. As the end of the nineteenth century approached the influence of nationalism began to come to the fore in music. Composers like Tchaikovsky and Glazunov in Russia, Dvorak in the Czech lands, and Sibelius in Finland represent this increasing trend.

Chris Green spent some time talking in detail about the revival of English music at the end of the nineteenth century after centuries of having no major composer since the time of Purcell. Indeed, England had been described as 'the land without music'. Parry, Stanford, Elgar and Vaughan Williams take centre stage in this new renaissance. Elgar who was largely self-taught and a Roman Catholic found it difficult to make his way at first until his success with the 'Enigma Variations' brought him recognition in his forties. His first symphony, first performed in 1908, was an immediate success and was performed over a hundred times in its first year. His second, following on three years later, took longer to win acceptance until championed by Adrian Boult in the 1920s.

The course also touched on the symphony in America which produced a vast range of styles both by native composers and emigres who had made their home in the country. Ives, Bernstein, Schumann, Copland, Harris and Hovhaness were looked at as well as that relatively rare phenomenon, a female composer, in this case Amy Beach.

All these subjects were enlivened by Chris' own anecdotal experiences as a conductor and with many interesting recorded extracts on CD and DVD. In the twentieth century the symphony has been pronounced dead many times but refuses to die, even though ideas of what a symphony is differ widely. The form still continues to attract and inspire composers.

Phil Beeton

HALSTEAD BRANCH

Celebrates 100 years

The Halstead Branch of the WEA was founded in 1916 and was one of the first in Essex. Records from the very early days are sketchy, but we know there were 24 members in 1916 and by 1917 evening lectures were being held in the [Halstead] 'Cooperative Society Rooms'. Classes were limited to single evening lectures at that time and early subjects included: *The Ethical Value of Literature, American Poets and the Fight against Slavery and Reconstruction after the War*. The latter subject reminding us that Britain was at war, and yet adult education was still considered important enough for Halstead to start a WEA branch. Or perhaps the war was one of the drivers?

Either way, the branch was soon thriving and by 1924 it was running a two year course entitled *The Evolution of Government*. The tutor was J.R.M. Butler, a Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge, and uncle of a certain R.A. Butler, who often attended the lectures on his way back from the House of Commons. 'Rab' Butler was a student and lecturer in the WEA movement for over 10 years and went on to become a Vice-president of the national body. He was also famously linked by marriage to the Courtauld family who had a large influence on Halstead.

Since those early days Halstead WEA has run many high quality courses on a wide variety of subjects which, of course, is what WEA branches do - and continue to do in 2016. And that brings us to our 100 year celebrations. We are planning a day which we hope will be a mix of education and entertainment, as follows:

- A morning session led by WEA tutor and historian Ted Woodgate during which we will discuss life in Essex in 1916: how were people managing, what were their living conditions like? How did the war affect employment, or the role of women? What did they do for entertainment? Why start WEA lectures now?
- Lunch
- An afternoon slideshow showing scenes of old Halstead along with anecdotes from local historian Malcolm Root
- Tea and, of course, a birthday cake!

In addition we hope to have displays showing a time line of branch activities along with memorabilia from the last 100 years.

This event will take place on Saturday 21st May 2016, at Halstead United Reformed Church, between 10 am and 4 pm. We welcome WEA members and non-members from far and wide so please watch the usual places (Essex Federation website, branch announcements, WEA newsletters, local posters etc.) for further updates, and tell your friends. In the meantime for more information, and to book a place, call Viv on 01787 476036. As many of you will know, Halstead is a great place to visit for lunch (or longer) so why not come and see what we've been up to during the last 100 years!

Dave Bazley, Branch Chairman

WRITTLE BRANCH

Autumn Term 2015

Decoding History through Myth and Fairy Tales

Tutor: Lionel Sims Tuesday morning

An intriguing and perhaps misleading title. I was attracted to the course partly by the title and partly because the required reading before starting was some of the Fairy Tales by the Brothers Grimm (Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Rumpelstiltskin). I had not read Grimm since childhood so this seemed like a good chance to re-connect. Lionel Sims is passionate about his subject and delivers his material with much cross referencing and story-telling. He also sent us all his lecture slides by email, so we had no excuse not to know the material.

We looked at Grim but very fleetingly and the rest of the time was spent with the Greek myths of Apollo and Delphi. This was new territory for me and I found much of it fascinating, though I was never sure in what direction we were going, north or south! I did not feel we had done much decoding of history, perhaps I missed some vital clue or perhaps the course title was misleading? A better title might have been 'The anthropology of myth and fairy tale'. However, I did come away determined to read more Greek myth and to discover why Cinderella went to the Ball not once, but three times!

John Howden

Shakespeare's Women"

Tutor: Ron Marks. Tuesday afternoon

We welcomed Ron back after his excellent course on Shakespeare's Villains to learn about Shakespeare's Women. Ron's expertise and enthusiasm for Shakespeare kept our large class enthralled. We started by discussing the real women in Shakespeare's life. Then we studied a few extracts from the Sonnets, before moving on to the Plays. The boys who played the female characters had to learn these lines and deliver them with emotional subtlety, before the age when their voices broke. It explains why the number of young women in the Plays is limited. It also adds a nuance when the actor is playing a girl, like Viola, who is pretending to be a boy.

We explored a wide variety of female roles, some empowered, some victims and watched a selection of productions from the last thirty years. There were daughters, sisters, wives, mistresses, queens and maids each interacting with fathers, lovers, husbands and sons. Ron added helpful information about the language and the political and social background to the plots. Many thanks again Ron for an enlightening course.

Mary Roberts

Gustav Klimt and Total Art

Tutor: Suzanne Bode Wednesday evening

Throughout the Autumn Term our Wednesday evenings were lit up by the colour and richness of the work of the Viennese artist, Gustav Klimt and that of his contemporaries. As on previous occasions art historian, Suzanne Bode, gave us a well-researched, well-presented, beautifully illustrated and informative course. We studied the various aspects of Klimt's work and his influence upon other artists all set within the historical and social background of the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Many of us were familiar with Klimt's wonderful portraits of society women but we were all pleasantly surprised at his ability as a landscape artist. A thoroughly enjoyable ten weeks.

Steve and Sue Bacon

OBITUARIES

Obituaries for Norman Bevan and Brian Daniel

At our AGM last Spring our Chair Jane Daniel and our Secretary Grace Bevan both stood down to spend more time with their husbands, who were seriously ill. The new Chair, myself, and the new Secretary, Anita Curtis, have found they left large shoes to fill.

Norman Bevan was the first to die on the 26th September 2015. He had Parkinson's with Dementia.

Grace and Norman had first met at school. Norman became a successful businessman who had a love of sailing. He and Grace had two sons. At his funeral they remembered how he knew when to stop them making mistakes and when to let them fall but be there to pick them up and set them on the road again: a skill every parent knows is extremely hard to master.

When Grace first became the Chair of Writtle WEA and later the indefatigable Secretary, Norman was there to share the load and encourage her in everything that she did. In short, they were a team.

During his retirement Norman walked each Monday morning with a group of Writtle friends. They have said of Norman that his dry wit, his tales of life and travel, his interest in the local countryside, all these made him such good company and an appreciated and loved member of the group. As they walked the footpaths, climbed the stiles and slithered through the mud, Norman was clearly a happy man pursuing a pastime he loved.

He found time to attend our classes and could often be heard making a quick-witted comment about the class from the back row where the "naughty group" sat.

Brian Daniel died on the 28th December 2015 at home after a long battle against cancer.

Jane and Brian met when they both worked at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire when Sir Bernard Lovell was in charge of the telescope that was to play such an important part in the dawn of the space age. His career took him as far as Australia when for a year he had to leave Jane and their daughter, Claire, behind in England.

We all knew that Jane and Brian loved orienteering but we were not aware of the major part he had played in setting up the activity in the East of England, including helping to write the rules.

He was there to share the work-load with Jane when she took on the task of being the chair of the Writtle Branch. His technical knowledge saved many a lecture when equipment decided to misbehave. His pride in the job that Jane accomplished as Chair shone through and saw her blossom in the role.

Both Norman and Brian are not only a loss to their families but also to everyone they came into contact with. Two thoroughly decent men who were always willing to help others and who sought to be the best that they could be at all times.

Dianne Collins, Chair of Writtle Branch.

Beryl Dartnall

Frinton Branch was sad to hear that Beryl Dartnall had passed away on Boxing Day at the age of 91. Beryl was the Frinton Treasurer for many years, a role she fulfilled even when she was no longer able to attend meetings. Some of you will also have known Beryl through her work for the Essex Federation.

Beryl spent much of her early life in Sevenoaks, Kent. She dreamt of reading history at university but the family deemed higher education unnecessary for a daughter. Instead, she entered the family accountancy firm, Raineys, and became a fully-qualified Accountant. Beryl married the Architect J. Ambrose Dartnall. They did not have any children but Beryl enjoyed the love and support of her step-children and extended family.

A Memorial Service was held at Frinton Old Church. Beryl was remembered for her diligence, sense of humour, deep Christian faith, and unstinting work for the Girl Guide Association as well as for the WEA. Fittingly, the music at the service was played by one of Beryl's former Girl Guides.

Valerie Holmes Librarian, Frinton