

In Contact

November, 2007

The newsletter of Durham U3A

Our new editor

I am delighted to welcome Eileen Wormald as the new editor of In Contact. Pam Edwards has edited it since its first edition and has been the driving force behind our quarterly publication. She now feels it is time for a new director to take over. The club is very grateful for all the work she has done.

We wish Eileen good luck in her new position and I am sure members will support her by producing items of news, reports of group activities and literary efforts. Thank you, Eileen.

Derek Sowell

Editorial

It is never easy to take over from a skilled and long-serving editor so please bear with me while I settle in. I would ask you, particularly, to put up with my idiosyncracies – all editors have them – but let me know if anything really annoys you. The content, of course, depends on you – I cannot be idiosyncratic with no copy – so please contribute reports, anecdotes, stories, jokes. I cannot promise to publish everything sent to me and must reserve the right to amend: in the well worn phrase “the editor’s decision is final”.

Eileen Wormald

Talking of Books

When I look at the size of the Harry Potter books I am reminded of the comment by Ambrose Bierce who said “*The covers of this book are too far apart.*” There is something daunting about six or seven hundred pages which makes me hesitate to make a start. When time to read is at a premium – usually snatched half hours late at night – investing so many nights in one two kilogram tome does not seem too attractive. I envy those who can sit for hours reading with a clear conscience.

We all have our favourite books and favourite authors and, thank goodness, there are still libraries to keep us supplied. Despite the inroads being made by DVDs and the availability of internet terminals there is still an energetic readership, even with the growing number of softback editions. Alfred Hitchcock said “*This paperback is very interesting, but I find it will never replace a hardcover book - it makes a very poor doorstep.* “

As ever, the committee would like to see more interest groups. Are there members who would support a group interested in discussing the books they are reading, books they have read – or books they don’t wish to read?

Derek Sowell
Chairman

Books

Mister Pip Lloyd Jones

A stronger contender for the Booker Prize (the winner not announced as I write) is Mister Pip by Lloyd Jones. It is the story of a teacher's struggle to continue educating the young in Bougainville, one of the island states of Papua New Guinea during and after a bloody civil war. As I read this I was taken back to a time when, as a lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea, I was asked to take an in-service course for teachers on that island. My husband who, having retired, was with me in PNG (as, incidentally, my "dependant spouse" – a source of some amusement to my colleagues who were mainly from patriarchal groups) came along to Bougainville, an island dominated by a vast, internationally owned copper mine which provided a large proportion of PNG's national income. We were taken to look at the mine but I had to work, so Harry, alone, was given the grand tour of the mine and the "company town" with its hospital, cinema, shops and leisure complexes as well as houses. All this largely for the expat employees. When Harry hired a "ute" (a small flat-bedded 4-wheel drive truck) to drive around he island, he found the prosperity soon disappeared and the Bouganvilleans were clearly not benefiting from the mine's profits. We read later,

therefore, with sorrow but little surprise that the islanders were demanding a “fair share” of the profits which, denied them, led to a long and bitter conflict with the PNG Government.

Perhaps “Mister Pip” will tell us what life was like during and after the civil war since little news reached us in England, and I will think of the handsome teachers (reputedly the blackest people in the world and certainly shining examples of “black is beautiful”) with whom I spent a happy and rewarding week.

Eileen Wormald

Pub Lunch Group

We meet on the last Wednesday of the month at venues which are recommended by members of the group throughout the area. We will be having our 21st in January at Peggy’s Wicket which sounds interesting. On 28th November we will be visiting the “Hare and Hounds” between Coxhoe and Sedgefield, then joining the U3A lunch at New College on 13th December. New members are always welcome – but I need to book places in advance, so please let me know if you are interested in joining us. There will be a list at the U3A meeting, or telephone me on 01388 816921.

Kay Hetherington

***Recorded Music Appreciation Group
Summer Special***

It was a sunny, dry but windy day in July when some of our music group, plus two guests, attended Bill Sterling's home in Seaham for a musical afternoon. This was followed by tea, cake and biscuits, chat and a wander about the garden. The plan for the afternoon was for everyone to bring a recording or recordings of their choosing to be played and we enjoyed a very wide range of music.

For our monthly sessions during the remainder of the year we try to choose music to suit most tastes. Of course, we cannot please all the people all the time but we do try hard. This is your chance to listen to music you may not normally hear; I am amazed at the many different types of music I now enjoy.

If you are a music lover, then why not try our group and, if you have a burning ambition to do your "Desert Island Discs", then this would be your opportunity, although we cannot offer Kirsty Young to interview you, as our budget does not stretch that far.

The Recorded Music Appreciation Group meeting is held on the last Saturday of the month at 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Carrville Methodist Church, so come along to enjoy good music, good company and a cup of tea.

Joy Fallon

An Outing to Bowes Museum and Rokeby Park

On the slightly misty, but warm, Monday morning of June 11th, a group of 20 U3A members set off from Durham in a small coach to visit Bowes Museum and Rokeby Park. The outing was organised by the conveners of the Poetry Group, mainly to see Rokeby where Sir Walter Scott wrote the eponymous poem. Since Bowes was “on the way”, it was arranged to see the Queen Mother’s Water Colours exhibition there, and have lunch before going on to Rokeby. This we did. It was only a very short journey to Rokeby which is a house where guided tours are not available to the public as individuals but only to small groups which book beforehand. Robert Latter greeted the group and talked to us about the history and architecture of the house, before we went to see the interior. By this time the sun had sent the temperatures soaring and we were all glad to feel the coolness of the house.

It was delightful to be with our excellent guide; objects were pointed out, and facts given, from a personal point of view, rather than the group being “talked at”. We were invited to sit anywhere and touch furniture and objects in the rooms – we were even invited to play the piano! – trusting us to treat everything with care and

respect. Afterwards, some energetic people had time for a quick walk to the atmospheric river gorge, but most of us spent the last minutes there admiring the grounds and views of the countryside.

Our grateful thanks go to Margaret, John and Bill, and especially to Joy who did the bulk of the organising. Please may we have another day like it?

Monica Flook

Visits

I recently went to see the Falkirk Wheel, a fine example of modern architecture and engineering in a canal setting. Claimed as the world's first rotating boatlift, it is the centre attraction of The Millennium Link Project which was opened in 2000 and offers a direct waterway route between Edinburgh and Glasgow by transferring boats with relative speed between the two Lowland canals of the Union and Forth & Clyde. The "once proud industrial canals" have been restored and aim to provide much in the way of leisure activities on and off the water. The towpaths, for instance, have been made suitable for walking or cycling. I enjoyed the boat ride in a "gondola" which takes you from one canal to the other. To be sure of a ride it is advisable to book ahead.

Carol Mason

Speakers for 2008

- 10 January** Dr. W. Cowan
Disaster Glasses
- 14 February** Mr. Mike Amos
History of The Northern Echo
- 13 March** Polly Atkinson (Tour Leader)
Life on the Road
- 10 April** Sid Flawther
Behind the scenes at Wimbledon
- 8 May** Mr. Michael Storr
The Brook Hospital for Animals
- 12 June** Revd. Ruth Crofton
Charles Dickens and the North East
- 10 July** Julian Harrop (Beamish Museum)
Snooping on Snaps
- 14 August** Carol Attwell
How Libraries have evolved
- 11 September** Joyce Quinn (ex M.E.P, North East)
New Arrival in the House of Lords
- 9 October** Margaret Timothy
Homeopathy
- 13 November** **North East Museums and Galleries**
- 4 December** Maureen McCauley
A Life of Music

Our next number

The next newsletter will be published in April, 2008 and contributions should be sent by February 29th (it's a leap year) to e.wormald@btinternet.com