



Where do Novelists get their ideas from?

2pm, 28 February Ryarsh Village Hall

Our speaker this month is Bobbie Darbyshire with a light-hearted talk – 'where do novelists get their ideas from?'. From initial spark to realisation on the page, Bobbie will explain how the complex world of character, location, plot and subplot arrives in a writer's mind.

Bobbie Darbyshire won the 2008 fiction prize at the National Academy of Writing and the New Delta Creative Nonfiction prize in 2010 with her book *Beads on a String*. Her latest novel is *The Posthumous Adventures of Harry Whittaker*; earlier ones include *Oz, Love, Revenge and Buttered Scones*, and *Truth Games*. She has also worked as barmaid, mushroom picker, film extra, maths coach, cabinet minister's private secretary, care assistant and volunteer adult-literacy teacher, as well as in social research and government policy. She lives in London and hosts a writers' group, and we can look forward to an interesting and entertaining afternoon.

Derek Carpenter, Speaker Secretary

The Short View

As we enter February I am thinking forward to our AGM in June: this may seem a way off I know. We will be looking for some new members to join your committee. If anyone is interested in finding out more please contact me or any committee member. It would also be possible for you to observe one of our zoom meetings to get a feel of how things work. Any new committee members will be welcomed and supported and there are also a number of short courses that are very useful for new committee members.

As you know some committee roles are for a specific time period so my 3 year term as chair finishes in June, as does that of our two vice chairs – so we are in real need of members to fill these particular roles as well as needing committee members, who without having a specific role to start with, can help with the various events we want to put on over the year and to bring some new ideas to how our u3a works. Personally, I found it very helpful to join the committee for a year without having a particular role and learnt a lot by being involved in various projects – maybe this is some-

thing that would appeal to you?

Just to remind everyone – the ethos of the u3a is 'For the members – by the members', so please consider if you can offer some of your time and expertise to help us keep building a strong and vibrant Malling u3a.

A number of u3as in Kent are struggling to fill their committee roles and sadly one or two face the prospect of closure should they not be able to fill these posts. It would be a dreadful shame to find ourselves in this position. So I urge you to think about whether you would be prepared to join our committee, if so please talk to any existing members if you would like to find out more.

Chrys Short, Chair



Make tea not war

February Tea Rota

Jenny Tomlin & Vivienne Lindridge

March Tea Rota

Norma and Eric Diston

Beth Minall

Do you come by car to our monthly meetings?

Very occasionally a speaker at the monthly meeting needs to be collected from West Malling Station, usually at about 1.15pm. Most of our speakers have their own transport and make their own way to Ryarsh Village Hall, but there are a couple of times each year when we need to offer transport from the station, returning them afterwards. Is this something which you might be able to do? If this is a possibility please give Derek Carpenter a ring and if two or three folk offer you may only be needed once a year. Derek would be very grateful for any offers.





Woolly hat walkers

To top last year off, a group of 12 hardy souls walked around Maidstone. The day looked a bit grey so we were all prepared for rain, which arrived for a brief spell near the end. Our route took us from Queens Road down to the river via the railway bridge. Then along to the law courts, avoiding the river which had flooded over the path. From there we followed the river on the north side, marveling at the speed that the river was flowing. No chance for Pooh sticks. At our half way point out came the mulled wine and cakes, we know how to live!

Then it was up the hill and across the fields to Fant, admiring the grand views of the river in the valley below, as we chatted. From there it was around the old Barming Lunatic Asylum, now flats. Did you know that's where the word "Barmy" comes from?

From there it was up to the hospital and through the lanes back to our cars. This year has seen the group walk the fields and hills from Faversham in the East to Charing in the west. So if you are fit and up for between 4 and 6 miles (on occasion 7) why not walk with us on the 3rd Wednesday of the month?

Shaun Gurteen, u3a Walking Group.

Scrabble in Spanish

The U3A Spanish Intermediate Group is a group of 6 and we meet in each of our houses twice a month. During the year the group convenor changed; Jane Jewitt decided to hand on the torch after leading the group for the last 3 years, and we would all like to thank her for the great job she did. There is a mixture of speaking, listening, reading and translating, using sources such as the leading Spanish newspaper "El Pais", and a book

of gripping short stories in Spanish. We each take turns reading aloud and then translating, and the group all pitch in to help fill any gaps in knowledge. Usually someone in the group can remember the meaning of a problematic word or phrase, but if all else fails there's always Google translate. Sometimes we play scrabble in Spanish, which is always a lot of fun, and we have also watched a popular Spanish tv series on Netflix, which is certainly the most challenging thing we have tried. We watch with Spanish subtitles which is a huge help and it's great to be able to rewind and go through again, with frequent pauses to translate and make sure we've all followed the plot. Fortunately, one of our group has worked in Spain and has a knowledge of Spanish slang. One highlight was our annual Christmas lunch at an excellent and long established family-run Spanish restaurant in Maidstone. The tapas were top notch as usual and a good time was had by all.

Alan Farley Convenor



Women at war

If you heard our January talk you will remember that it provided a fascinating insight into the wartime exploits of 2nd World War spy Nancy Wake, a member of the SOE. By one of those serendipitous coincidences that sometimes happen, this month Book Group One has been reading *A House in the Mountains* by Caroline Moorehead. This is an eye-opening account of the women who worked for the resistance in the mountains around Turin in the last couple of years of the war.

Most of us knew very little about the Italian resistance before reading this but were blown away by these courageous women who carried messages, wrote and circulated news sheets, committed acts

of terrorism – blowing up bridges and so on; they hid partisans in their homes, they organised strikes in factories. They turned their hands to anything that helped the cause. One of the women featured in this book (Ada, widow of a prominent anti-fascist and mother of a teenage son) wrote in one of the partisan newspapers: "I am an insignificant little woman, who has revolutionised her private life, a traditionally female one with the needle and the broom as her emblems, to transform herself ... into a bandit." They were successful largely because they were underrated and taken for granted. Traditionally confined to roles as mothers, wives and housewives, for the most part no-one had the imagination to suspect them as they travelled around with their shopping bags and prams – often hiding weapons or letters beneath the covers.

Sadly after the war these courageous women were expected to return to their domestic responsibilities but they had a wider vision than just defeating Mussolini's fascists and Italy's former allies, the Germans. They wanted to lay the foundation for a more equal society when women would be given the vote and be involved in post-war reconstruction. They campaigned for equal pay, child-care, maternity leave and an end to dangerous factory conditions. They were in effect social reformers and their achievements deserve to be better known.

Valerie Willsher, Book Group 1

Poetry in motion

Poetry Group 2 is a small, friendly group meeting monthly in each other's houses to talk about poets, their lives and works. We alternate between a particular poet and a theme. In the recent past we will have looked at children's poems, Oscar Wilde and festivals. Then looking forward and in the near future we will be studying American poets, foreign lands and Ted Hughes. Three of our members attended the U3A poetry summer school last year which provided an entertaining session listening to their feedback.

Carole Shepherd, Convenor

Anne's knee slappers

Chinese release first balloon photos from Missouri.

