



Poynton u3a News

poyntonu3a.org.uk

Issue 42-2

10th Nov 2023

Poynton u3a Update

General Meetings

On Tuesday 21st November, we have *Jayne Stubbs* telling us about *Learning to Fly at 58*. Remember, General Meetings are in the Civic Hall for the foreseeable future.

On Tuesday 19th December, we have the Christmas Meeting when the entertainment will be provided by the *Fingerless Magician*. Entry is by ticket only. If you are unable to attend the November General Meeting to obtain a ticket, you may be able to get a ticket if you contact the Membership Secretary (membership@poyntonu3a.org.uk) before 1st December.

The first meeting of 2024 is on Tuesday 16th January when Alice Walker will be telling us about her lifelong love of quizzes and career as a serial quiz show contestant, and describe the whole slightly terrifying experience of becoming the 2022 Mastermind Champion. The full list of speakers for 2024 will be in the December issue.

Membership Renewal

Applications for renewal of your Poynton u3a membership for 2024 will be accepted (by post only) throughout January. Details of how to renew will be published in December's newsletter. The cost of renewal continues to be £10.

Contributions to the Newsletter

The timing and length of the newsletter is dependent to a large extent on the contributions submitted by our members. If you would like to write an article or provide some pictures, send your contribution to news@poyntonu3a.org.uk

Diners' Club

I have booked The Farmers Arms in Poynton on Thursday 23rd November at 12.30pm for our next lunch. We do need to pre-order and the new menu is available. Please send me your menu choices without delay if you have indicated you are attending the lunch. Remember, the venue requires a deposit of £5 per person.

Barbara Tankard

Members' Contributions

A war baby

I was born in the middle of the Second World War at a time when my mother was living variously between her own mother's home in Moss Side and her mother-in-law's home in Ardwick while my father was engaged in protecting King and Country somewhere else. My birth was originally intended to take place in St Mary's Hospital, Manchester, a major hospital on Oxford Road and a short walk from Moss Side. However, as the war progressed and the Blitz of central Manchester occurred in the Christmas of 1941, thoughts had turned to moving maternity provision out of cities. And gradually, as the war progressed favourably, plans were also made to designate and prepare hospitals close to the centre of major cities and on major rail routes solely for the dispersal of significant quantities of casualties which were expected when landings in Normandy began.

So, my mother was diverted from St Mary's Oxford Road to a hastily prepared location out of harm's way - Collar House Prestbury - which was owned by the Mosely family and which was then called *St Mary's Hospital Branch, Prestbury* which is on my birth certificate. However, this was somewhat less than convenient for visits by anyone who didn't possess their own means of transport and/or a telephone – the norm in those days. If/when I am asked nowadays for my place of birth it seems that a response of "Prestbury" changes some people's assumptions of me - and not always quite in the way of my youngest granddaughter who simply commented "Born in Prestbury - retired in Poynton. You haven't got very far in your life grandad have you!". Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings!

I have no idea how my mother arrived in Prestbury. She merely commented to me that there were two major entrances signposted *Officers* and *Other Ranks* – so she knew at once where to go. She had no means of contacting members of the family but was told she would be advised how to get back when the process had been completed to everyone's satisfaction. I was born very early on a Thursday and the following Monday morning I made my first public appearance. My mother didn't have a watch but remembered it was still completely dark and she was very worried indeed when she began the journey which lay ahead that day back to her mother's home. Together we were removed from *St Mary's Hospital Branch, Prestbury* to the bus terminus on the A6 at Hazel Grove - a bit further down the A6 than the present 192 Terminus and the Park and Ride which was only created in its present form in 2015. My mother might not have been particularly pleased had she known that I was beginning my public life in a society near to an area where in 1750 John Wesley preached and described as "one of the most famous villages in the country for all manner of wickedness." But what interested my mother was a small single-decker bus with a uniformed female driver who seemed genuinely overjoyed to be having our company - particularly when I smiled at her!

The bus route of course went down the A6 into Manchester as it does now. So, my mother, assuming the bus would stay on the A6, asked the driver to drop us off at a place where she would have the shortest possible walk with me across to Oxford Road and her mother's house in Great Western Street. The bus driver informed her not to worry and that in fact on the journey she would be picking up only nursing staff who were going to work at St Mary's Hospital on Oxford Road and she was certain that when we got there one of the nurses – in fact more than one - would wish to go with her (and me of course) the 500 yards or so to my grandmother's house before they "clocked on" at the hospital. My mother said that, as she listened, the weight of the world fell from her shoulders; and I too seemed still to be smiling. So off we went to Stockport, on to Levenshulme and on towards Longsight, crossing over via Dickenson Road to Wilmslow Road, picking up more nurses along the way until we reached St Mary's. Although I didn't publicise my presence, all the new passengers came to see me when they heard about me as they got on the bus and crammed the aisle to have a few words with me. Of course, I was speechless. But I kept practising my one ability – how to smile. For the first (and, sadly, probably the last time in my life) I apparently held everyone in thrall simply by smiling at them. I had reached the zenith of my fame. I was the sole topic of discussion – and all of it favourable – by whomsoever we met. All this had happened in less than the 100 hours since I had been born and quite a crowd of my admirers insisted on accompanying us to my grandmother's house, carrying our luggage or preferably me. If my mother had any worry, it was simply that I had not yet cried. Of course, there was only one way for me to go from there; and it wasn't "up"!

David Sewart

Castlefield Basin

In the previous issue, I described some of the interesting warehouses that are to be found in the Castlefield Basin. In passing, there were also views of a couple of the large selection of bridges criss-crossing the canal network. There was the award-winning white footbridge, the Merchants' Bridge, and the double lift bridge outside the Grocers' Warehouse. Here are some more examples.



Two bridges produced by the same company, Marsh Brothers of Bakewell. They look as though they belong to the 1800s but are dated 1990! The bridge on the left is underneath the two arms of the Castlefield Viaduct. The left arm went into the Great Northern Warehouse and is currently the site of the National Trust urban garden; the one on the right went into Central Station and now carries the Metrolink track into Deansgate-Castlefield station. *(The lines leading to the Great Northern Warehouse and Central Station can be seen on the map in the previous issue. – Ed)*



In front of the Castlefield Viaduct is the lower-level bridge carrying the Altrincham line. Through the arches of the bridge, can be seen the Potato Wharves.

Located nearby on Liverpool Road is a pub called the Oxnohle which is the name of a variety of potato in favour in Georgian times.



With the Dutch-style lift bridge, the weight contained in the upper part at the left-hand side counter-balances the weight of the bridge allowing it to be easily moved (although it doesn't look as though it has moved recently).



And finally, Bridge 101 where the Rochdale Canal meets the Bridgewater Canal. The Duke of Bridgewater was so concerned that the Rochdale Canal would “steal” his water from the Bridgewater Canal he had a special lock built at the junction to control the flow of water. This is the well-known Lock 92 (Duke's Lock) and alongside the lock he had a Lockkeeper's Cottage built (on the right below).



The Church in the background of this picture was formerly Knott Mill Congregational Chapel. The building was converted to a sound recording studio in the 1980s and owned by Pete Waterman, best known for Stock Aitken Waterman. Rick Astley recorded "Never Gonna Give You Up" in the chapel.



Continuing the pop music theme, situated almost under the Castlefield Viaduct is a bar which opened in 1996. It is called Barça, originally part-owned by Mick Hucknall of Simply Red.

We need to be grateful to the Central Manchester Development Corporation for kick-starting the redevelopment of this area which prior to the 1980s was a very run-down part of Manchester.

Derek Gatenby

Dementia

My Husband is staring into space
Sitting on his own in the sun
He's reading last week's newspaper
His face is burning
No cream on his skin to protect
Just sitting there
He's wearing a T-shirt that needs to go in the wash
And trousers too are soiled
He doesn't care, you see he's now getting lost
Won't speak for a while not a word
Then laughs at nothing
Looking expectantly at me
To see the invisible joke
He goes to sleep in an instant
But says he never dreams
Wakes up in sad confusion
His brain's on time delay
Sometimes he cries a little
Then says he's sorry
No good to you anymore
I will change tomorrow, be different and more
Tomorrow never comes
He still says he loves me
And I'm sure that he does
But the man he has become, is now a stranger
There is a moment of joy
When he suddenly remembers
The past things he did enjoy
I hope he's happy in himself
That's all that I can wish
For the man I love and married
His brain is turning to dust

Mary Kelly

Year's End Game

Autumn totters on the edge of winter
Early mornings dark and broody,
Windows blind with condensation,
Bushes stand with rainfall beads.
Shugging into heavier sweaters,
Search for stocks of scarves and gloves,
Checking radiators - need for bleeding?
Draw the curtains early doors.
Foraging for spare light bulbs,
Batteries too for household torch,
Stock up canned goods 'ere the snow,
Ensure the freezer nicely full.
Scan the stores for early buying
(Christmas gifts are now on show),
Make hazy plans for coming season-
Hope goodwill pervades the special day!

Ian Beverley

*Ian has informed us that his poem
Wintering which appeared in the
February 2021 edition of the newsletter is
featured in the Winter edition of the
periodical **This England**.*

Tales from the Isles of Scilly – The Flower Industry

Background

The Isles of Scilly form an archipelago of five main inhabited islands and numerous other small rocky islets (around 140 in total) lying 28 miles off Land's End. The main islands are St. Mary's, Tresco, St. Martin's, St. Agnes and Bryher.

The Isles of Scilly have a temperate oceanic climate which borders on a humid subtropical climate. The average annual temperature is 12°C, the warmest place in the British Isles. Winters are, by far, the warmest in the UK due to the moderating effects of the North Atlantic Drift of the Gulf Stream. Snow and frost are extremely rare. The largest recorded snowfall was in January 1987. Summer heat is moderated by the Atlantic Ocean and summer temperatures are not as warm as on the mainland. However, the Isles are one of the sunniest areas in the south-west.

The Past

The story of the flower industry starts in the 1870s when a St. Mary's farmer, William Trevillick, realised that the daffodils growing wild around his farm were flowering more than a month earlier than they did on the mainland. He sent several bunches to Covent Garden and was surprised by the prices they fetched. This encouraged him and his neighbours to begin cultivation focusing on tazettas, multi-headed, scented narcissi originally from the Mediterranean.

Thomas Algernon Dorrien-Smith succeeded his uncle, Augustus Smith, as Proprietor of the Isles of Scilly in 1872. (*There will be more about Augustus and being Proprietor of the Isles of Scilly in subsequent articles – Ed.*). In the early 1880s Thomas realised the potential for the daffodil crop in Scilly and invested in the development of the new industry. In 1882, he visited London, Holland, Belgium and the Channel Islands, where he obtained 190 different varieties, which were distributed to his tenants. He was also instrumental in establishing the planning of protective shelter belts (see below), thus establishing both the flower industry and the layout and character of the islands much as we see them today.

Initially flowers were picked ready for export in full bloom, whereas subsequently the emphasis changed to picking and exporting flowers in bud.

The flower industry in the late 19th century was largely responsible for transforming the islands from an impoverished state to a thriving prosperous community. In the early to mid-20th century, agriculture, mainly devoted to narcissus growing was the mainstay of the economy and the basis for Scilly's prosperity. In the glory days of the 1950s, up to 200 million sweet narcissus and daffodil stems were grown and hand-picked on Scilly every year. They would be carefully packed and loaded onto boats from St Mary's to Penzance to meet the overnight London flower special at the town's railway station. Wooden boxes of flowers were stacked in wagons and hauled upcountry by a fast engine in time to be on

display for buyers at Covent Garden Flower Market in central London before dawn the following morning. For decades they would be the first blooms of spring to be enjoyed by flower lovers in the capital.

However, recently the fortunes of the flower industry have declined as a result of foreign competition. There used to be around 90 productive flower farms on St Mary's and surrounding islands. Now there are only around a dozen, but they still manage to deliver more than 20 million narcissus and daffodil stems a year.

Shelter Belts

The Isles of Scilly have a mild climate, but are battered by strong winds laden with salt. To grow crops or flowers, the wind needs to be filtered and kept away from the gardens and growing fields. Fast growing, salt tolerant trees are needed, and these were imported in the 19th century and planted in shelter belts on the island. Deciduous trees are not really suitable for all-year round protection because they lose their leaves in the winter. Hence, evergreens have been imported from as far away as New Zealand to provide the shelter belts.



The Present

We visited the Isles of Scilly in September and were given a guided tour of one of the flower farms, Churchtown Farm on St. Martin's. The farm provides a home delivery service with scented narcissi being sent out between October and April, and scented pinks between May and September. We were there when the pinks were coming to the end of their season and the narcissi were not yet ready.



Pinks in cold storage awaiting despatch



A demonstration of packing the flowers

In mid-October, we decided that we would try ordering some narcissi. The flowers arrived on time by first-class post and were packed using just cardboard and paper.

The flowers lasted about a week in the vase.



Carol and Derek Gatenby

Things to Do

No new Crossword this month. Here is the solution to No 56.

G	O	O	D	F	O	R	N	O	T	H	I	N	G	
		V		E		E		R		E		O		M
		R	E	S	T	R	A	I	N		S	A	M	B
D		R		A		C		A		I		I		R
O	D	D	S		W	H	E	T	S	T	O	N	E	S
U		U		S		I		E		A		E		H
B	L	E	A	T	I	N	G		S	T	R	E	A	M
T				A		G		D		I				A
L	O	U	N	G	E		T	O	W	N	H	A	L	L
E		N		E		K		W		G		C		L
S	E	D	U	C	T	I	O	N	S		L	E	G	O
S		R		O		T		L		U		T		W
L	L	A	M	A		B	R	A	D	S	H	A	W	
Y		W		C		A		N		E		T		
		I	N	A	H	I	G	H	D	U	D	G	E	O

Sudoku No 47

	5	4					2	
	7		6		2	1		
	2	1		3		8		
		2			8	7	1	
4					1	2		
							6	
				8			5	
	8			2	7	4		

Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

Below is the solution to No 46

7	5	4	9	1	8	6	2	3
1	2	8	3	6	7	9	5	4
3	6	9	4	5	2	8	7	1
4	3	6	5	8	1	2	9	7
8	9	2	7	3	4	5	1	6
5	1	7	2	9	6	4	3	8
9	4	1	6	7	5	3	8	2
6	7	5	8	2	3	1	4	9
2	8	3	1	4	9	7	6	5

More quiz questions from Hooha.

1. Who was Edith Swan Neck?
2. How many eyes does a bee have?
3. What is a Bandicoot?
4. What nationality is Greta Thunberg?
5. Who was a leading suffragette from Leicester?

Below are the answers to the questions in the previous edition.

1. Which of the Scilly Isles is famous for its wonderful gardens with exotic plants and trees?
Tresco
2. What is Piggly Wiggly, founded in 1916?
America's first self-service grocery store.
3. What was the name of the Salford boot maker in the play Hobson's Choice?
Will Mossop, played by John Mills in the 1954 film
4. What age was Eleanor of Aquitaine when she married her second husband, the 18-year old King Henry II?
30
5. What is a Belted Galloway?
A traditional breed of Scottish cattle.