

Number 24, Autumn 2011

And so farewell to a disappointing summer and greetings to a new session in this our 15th year. A warm welcome to all, especially to our new members, new groups and new co-ordinators. They bring a breath of fresh air, which has to be good for all of us. We have an interesting and entertaining programme of general meetings to look forward to, our groups are in good heart, and off we go.....

Do you find it difficult to get to sleep at night? A friend of Louise told her that instead of counting sheep she found it far pleasanter to walk through an imaginary garden. This is how Louise imagined such a walk, through a garden and through the year:

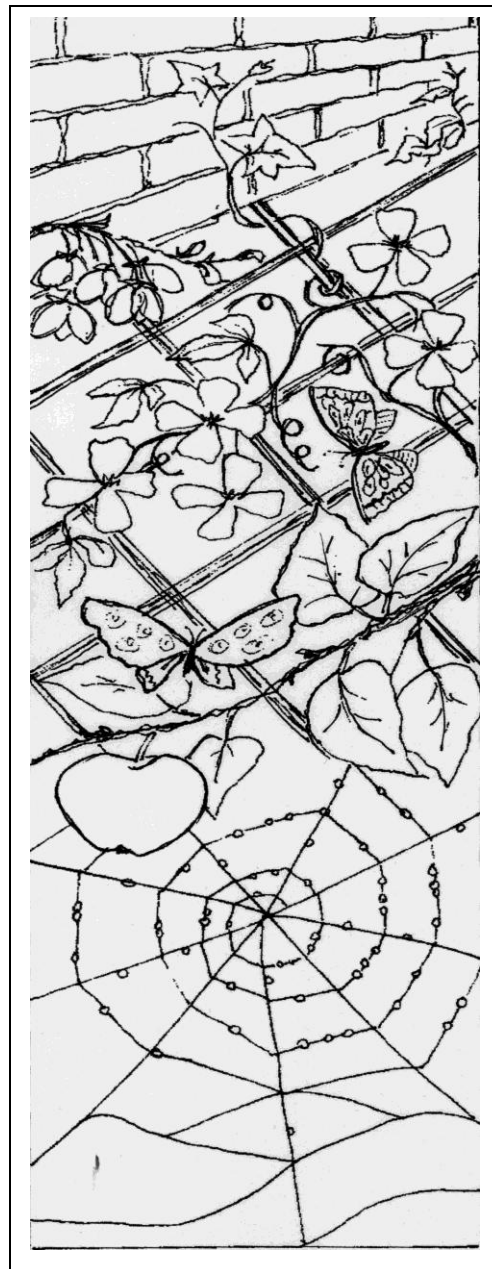
Leave the grey and clattering town,
Littered, derelict and chill,
Pass the grimy, trampled weeds
And last year's shrivelled leaves until
In a drab, brick wall a door swings open
And beckons to a secret garden.

Soft sunshine warms the rambling path
And jasmine scents the gentle breeze.
Demure pale groups of daffodils
Dream beneath the wakening trees;
Along their branches, blossom crowds,
Exuberant as the billowing clouds.

Aubretia pools submerge the rocks
Where limpid saxifrages cling
And delicate blue forget-me-nots
Surge beneath the trellising,
Which lithe clematis weaves with flowers
To cheer the brooding blackbird's hours.

Through streets of gaudy summer blooms
Go shopping with the bumble bees,
Then follow a dallying butterfly
Through fern-edged paths among tall trees
Heat drowsy, rest, serene and cool,
On lichened rocks, beside a pool.

Leaves glow golden in the sunset,
And dark hips glint where roses grew,
Heavy apples bend the branches
And spiders' webs are pearled with dew.
Fulfilled, all wait in quiet repose
The pure, white sculpture of the snows.



Our Summer Outing to Bletchley Park

On Tuesday, 25th August, fifty U3A members, replete with knapsacks and bags, goodies and books, set off in the drizzling rain to Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes, in anticipation of discovering the secrets of the WW2 Enigma code breakers. Preceding our departure we encountered our first riddle when the coach arrived late, without the official driver!!

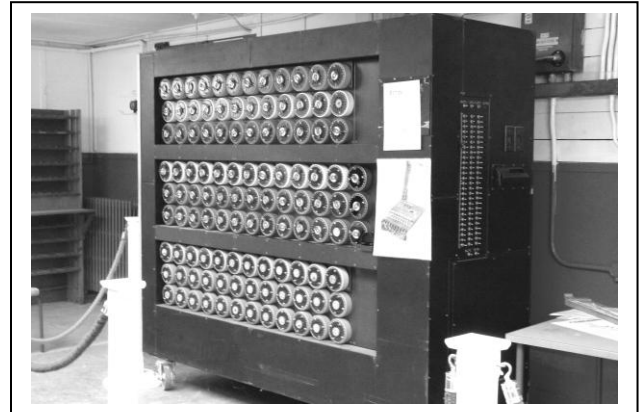


On arrival the most surprising revelation was that the park is set in the middle of a housing estate, explained by the fact that in the 1940s Milton Keynes did not exist. After a quick lunch at the Hall, during which we were told that we had arrived later than expected, we were whisked off by our guide, Mr. Hugh Davies (no prizes for guessing on which side of the Severn the erudite Mr. Davies was born) and he proved to be a most knowledgeable and entertaining “leader of the gang”.



The story of Bletchley Park actually starts in Poland and Paris and is far too complicated for any attempt on the writer's part to explain it all here. Suffice to say that without the extraordinary abilities of the main code breakers and technical wizards (to name a few would be a discredit to those omitted), coupled with the dedication of the

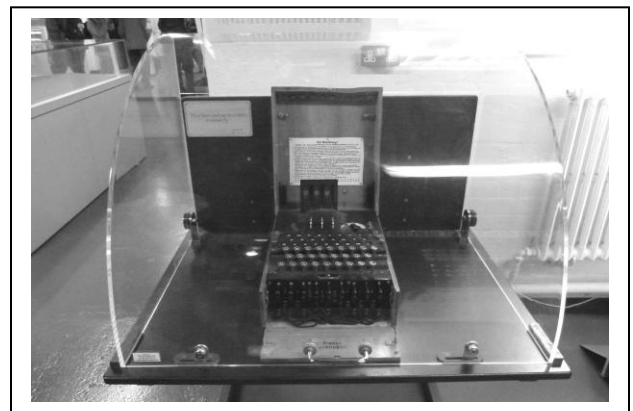
young women performing the essential roles of listeners, motorcycle despatch riders, registration operators, BOMBE machine* operators, translators and evaluation officers and the ubiquitous typists, the resulting extraordinary and immense contribution to the allied war effort would not have been possible. Altogether some 8,500 people worked at Bletchley and not one of them betrayed the secret nature of their work!



BOMBE machine

Bletchley Park did not win the war: the people at the sharp end did that, but without their efforts the war would have lasted longer and thousands more would not have survived.

If you were not able to join us on our visit but are interested in the enigma of the Enigma and would like to see the birthplace of the modern computer, and so much more in the field of espionage and deception, I strongly recommend that you go and see for yourself.



ENIGMA machine

Finally may I offer the thanks of the entire party to Ann Eales for all the effort made in organising this most edifying excursion.

*Yes, it is spelt correctly, and it didn't go bang either. Check it out on Google.

David Starmer

In spite of it being the coldest summer for 18 years, U3A members don't give up and some of our groups went ahead with their annual summer activities, with upper lips well stiffened:

Real Food Group

We were lucky with the weather this year for our annual garden party and picnic. Once again we met in Eileen's lovely garden, this time along with the **Gardening Group**. The pooled home-made food and drink was delicious, the garden full of flowers (and no weeds! Eileen had been busy) and the company easy-going and friendly. And then --- the hotly contested annual croquet match with six



teams competing.

As usual chaos reigned, there was much hilarity, and Jeanette and Tony were the eventual winners. In all, a very happy afternoon.

Walking Group

We had another very successful summer picnic and treasure hunt organised by Margaret Barr with her usual thoroughness and originality. This year we found ourselves in Wombourne.



That the one?

After a picnic lunch at the old railway station we moved to Wombourne Civic Centre to start the treasure hunt. We had 30 questions, ranging from

easy (e.g. Boxley's phone number), to challenging questions like "where might you expect castanets and sangria?"



Where to next?

The answer wasn't a Spanish restaurant; it was a house named Asturias. Several people had problems finding a penny farthing. Unfortunately it had a car parked in front of it!

As well as the questions we had eleven photos to identify, with a similar range of challenge. After the treasure hunt afternoon tea was taken at the Tea on the Green in Maypole Street and the marking took place. John Sheard and Diane Tordoff had to run outside to answer a tie-breaker, as their teams both had top marks. The eventual winners were Diane and David. The wooden spoon was awarded to John and Jeanette.

Jenny and Geoff Williams

Local History Group

Our summer visit this year was to Haden Hill House in Cradley Heath. The Old Hall, the original Haden family home, is open to the public only on special days, including Heritage Open Days, but the House was opened specially for our group visit and guided tour.



In 1877 when George Alfred Best inherited the estate he built Haden Hill House to be “a modern residence worthy of his status”. When he died the house, contents and grounds were put up for auction. Local subscription raised £11,000 to ensure that the houses and 55 acres of park remained in public possession. The park was opened to the public in 1922. and the deeds eventually handed to Rowley Regis UDC. Later the park and buildings were saved by the local Preservation Society and Park Protection Trust. Restoration work began in 1983 and the House opened to the public in 1989. Some of Mr. Best's original furniture and belongings are on display, along with a fine collection of contemporaneous furniture and objects.

Our visit was particularly enjoyable as we had the house to ourselves. I would recommend a visit to all U3A members who enjoy old buildings and a walk in very beautiful grounds.

Ann Eales

Around our stay-at-home groups:

Understanding Opera Group

At our June meeting we planned our programme for the rest of 2011 and the early months of 2012. To coincide with the live relays from Glyndebourne this summer at the Lighthouse, we studied Britten's chilling short opera “The Turn of the Screw”. We then attended the performance which was thrillingly good, even if it did leave us feeling somewhat unsettled.

The forthcoming WNO seasons have inspired us to go on to consider Mozart's “Don Giovanni”, Verdi's “La Traviata” and Berlioz' “Beatrice et Benedict”.

It is possible that we shall be looking at Wagner's “Tristan und Isolde” later next year!

Andrew Milligan

Latin group

Discipuli octo sumus. Liber Latinum Cantabrigiensem legimus, cum consilio doctoris Brenda Luck.

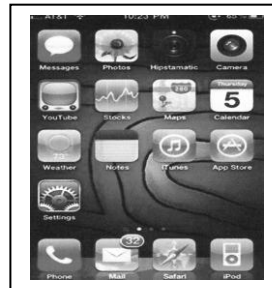
John Henly

(Quid hoc sibi vult? -Ed.)

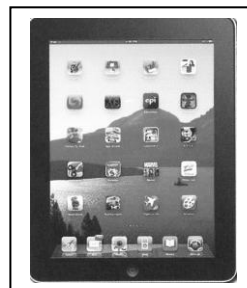
Cinema Group

The group has been reconvened with a new co-ordinator, Janet Kerr, and is meeting for the first time in September. Will members who are interested but missed this inaugural meeting please contact Janet for details on (01902) 683901 or janetlouisekerr@hotmail.com

A Salutary Tale for Techno-nerds



It all began with an iPhone. In March our son had his 17th birthday and we bought him an iPhone. He loved it.

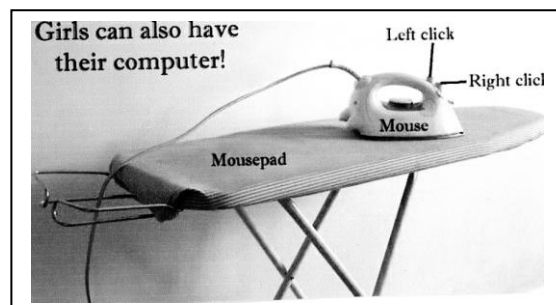


I celebrated *my* birthday In June and my wife made me very happy when she bought me an iPad.



In August for our daughter's birthday we got her an iPodTouch

My wife's celebration was in September so I got her an iRon



I tried to point out that the iRon can be incorporated into the home network with the iWash, iCook and iClean....that's when the fight started! I hope to be out of hospital next week!

Editor: Christine Moore