



# **SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CLUB**



**Victoria Baths, Manchester**

**NEWSLETTER No. 53**

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Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the 2019 January Newsletter where you'll find reviews of the SUWC events of the past few months and news of what's in store over the spring and summer. Highlights of forthcoming events include news of how recent excavations have helped to uncover the history of Sheffield Castle and the plans for developing the area around the Castle site. We'll be hearing about a locally based charity which uses music to improve the lives of people living with dementia. Our Spring lunch and talk will feature more local history as we discover the link between a local inventor and Girl Guiding. We go further afield for our Summer outing which is a visit to two interesting venues in Manchester – the Elizabeth Gaskell House and the Victoria Baths.

We hope you and your friends are able to join us at these and other events. Please remember to book your places either by email or using the booking forms included with the Newsletter. New members are always welcome and our Membership Secretary Eve Fawcett can provide details of how to sign up.

## **RECENT EVENTS**

### **24<sup>th</sup> September: Coffee Morning**

The annual coffee morning get-together on 24th September was a wonderful way to meet up with old friends and to make some new ones. As always, the Masonic Hall provided a warm and welcoming venue for us and the coffee was good.

A variety of second hand books were on sale and I managed to pick up, for £1, a novel by a relatively unknown and forgotten 19th century writer published by Persephone Books. This is an independent publishing house specialising mainly in little known women writers of the late 19th and early to mid 20th centuries. I have a collection of Persephone books which focus, largely, on women's lives of the period. My new book was a lucky find!

Rosemary Hannon, our Chair, reminded us of some very interesting forthcoming meetings and speakers. The attendance was good and many people were still busily talking at 12pm, a sure sign that the morning was a great success.

### **17th October: AGM and talk on Rhubarb Farm**

#### **Chair's Report**

2018 marked the 80th year of the Sheffield University Women's Club. The club started in 1938 under the guise of the Ladies' Tea Club when I understand everyone wore hats and gloves! Times have changed and the University has changed. In 1938 there were about 1000 students now there are about 25000. And we have changed but that didn't stop us celebrating the 80th anniversary in March at our Spring lunch. It was a memorable event and it was lovely to see so many of our very long standing members there sharing their reminiscences with some of the more recent members. Who would have guessed that at one time members of the Women's Club were passionate dressmakers and put on a fashion show modelling their own dresses? Indeed this event was one of the highlights of the year for me.

In addition to our wonderful lunch we had a wide range of talks on astronomy, the history of snuff-taking among women, making textiles and a wonderful talk by Tim Birkhead on birds' eggs and especially guillemots' eggs. He spoke for about an hour but I could certainly have gone on listening to him all afternoon.

Apart from talks there were of course our outings. In December we went to Ecclesall Woods and spent the morning making Christmas wreaths under the guidance of one of the rangers.

In January we had a fascinating tour of St Marie's Cathedral, which has fairly recently been renovated. In July we tried a new venture for our summer outing. One of our members, Margaret Fall, who as many of you probably know has been organising holidays for the last 20 years, very kindly offered to organize the summer outing. So in July in combination with some of Margaret's regular holiday goers we went to Buxton. The day started in the Dome with wonderful talk by another member, Mary Wragg about John Carr of York who was the architect of the Crescent in Buxton in 1779-89. After lunch many of us walked down to the Crescent which was in the final stages of a £50 million restoration to become a visitor attraction and hotel.

The summer would not have been complete without the garden party and this year lo and behold it didn't rain! So we were able to sit in the sunshine in Hilary and Bob Page's beautiful garden and enjoy great company and all the wonderful cakes that members had provided.

This year we have had 87 members and have been delighted to welcome 5 new members Rowena Bunning, Ellen Reid, Bridget Fawcett, Angela Karck and Anne Coult. Welcome to you all.

Sadly two of our very longstanding and highly regarded members died during the year; Rhiannon Clayton, who was actually the stimulus for us to organise the reminiscence lunch and more recently Aileen Austin. They will be greatly missed.

We have had a good attendance at most meetings. I decided earlier in the year to email those on email with occasional reminders about meetings and I hope that is something that people find useful.

I have very much enjoyed my first year in the Chair but could not have done it without the support of the excellent committee. While I don't like

to mention specific people I know that the rest of the committee will agree with me that Alison Allen-Booth has done an amazing job in editing the Newsletter and to all intents and purposes been Events Secretary for most of the year. So thank you Alison. We and particularly Alison, are delighted that Jean Needham who was co-opted onto the committee earlier in the year has now taken over the role of Events Secretary.

Two members of the committee come to the end of their term today Shirley Newman who has done a sterling job as Membership Secretary. She handed over to Eve last year but remained a very active committee member. It was her discussions with Rhiannon Clayton, shortly before she died, that was the inspiration for the 80th anniversary lunch. Shirley did a superb job contacting the all the longer standing members and persuading them to share their memories with us on that day. Thank you Shirley.

Also coming to the end of her stint today is Ann Evans who unfortunately can't be here today. Ann has been Minutes Secretary and a very active member of the committee for the last 3 years. But she is not disappearing completely as she will be giving a talk on Whiteley Wood Hall and Girlguiding Sheffield at the spring lunch in May.

I feel that we have had an enjoyable and successful year and look forward to seeing everyone at the events we have planned for you next year.

The formal business of the AGM was followed by an inspiring talk by SUWC member Jennie Street, who in 2011 was a founder member of Rhubarb Farm, a horticultural social enterprise project based in the village of Langwith on the north Nottinghamshire / Derbyshire border. Jennie, now the managing director, described how two acres of land that previously belonged to the Coal Board, have been transformed into a thriving scheme that became the 2017 Rural Business Awards Community Project of the Year.

Having begun in 2011 with a grant of £48000 from Bolsover District Council, three staff members, and the planting of an onion bed in March that year, Rhubarb Farm now has 18 part-time members of staff

(equivalent to 9 full timers) and grows 57 varieties of fruit and vegetables on its two acres. Additionally, there is now a wildlife area and pond; the project grows edible flowers, keeps 100 hens, raises four pigs (donated by a local farmer) between the months of November and April, and has honey supplied by a local bee-keeper in return for being allowed to keep his hives on the property. The WI offer on-site cookery classes and provide a lunchtime meal for the volunteers who are the backbone of the project, at £1 per head.

The primary focus of the project is on improving lives. Jenny described Langwith, a former mining village, and the wider Bolsover district, as deprived areas facing severe challenges. While some volunteers find their own way to the project, a majority are referred, being ex-offenders, or people with drug and alcohol issues, mental health problems, learning disabilities, or school students struggling with their behaviour. Horticultural work can itself be therapeutic, but the benefits of the project far exceed this. Jennie told us that working co-operatively with others breaks down the social isolation and barriers experienced by volunteers, while their self-esteem is boosted by seeing their produce sold to members of their local communities through a vegetable bag scheme, and to businesses such as Welbeck Farm Shop. A number have gone on to take paid employment with the project, and others have been helped into training through the educational courses that are offered on-site. But, what perhaps testified most to the success of the project was the delight evident on the faces of the volunteers shown in Jennie's photographs. 'Fun is intrinsic to success,' said Jennie. It was clear from shots of the activities of the Red Barrows Aerobic Dismay Team that there is plenty of both at Rhubarb Farm.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> November: The Habit of Art -The Lowry**

First performed at the National Theatre in 2009, 'The Habit of Art' arrived late in the Alan Bennett *oeuvre*, some forty-nine years after his brilliant performance in the 1960 review, 'Beyond the Fringe' brought instant fame. Nevertheless, this work includes all the familiar Bennett components of incisive humour, humanity, emotion and insightfulness in a plot of some complexity, another Bennett trait. And at seventy-five

when he wrote this, the ageing playwright demonstrated that his ambition and power to shock remained undiminished.

The ingenious scenario is a play, 'Caliban's Day', within a play, a chaotic set providing the context for two ageing actors to rehearse for an imagined 1972 meeting in W.H.Auden's Oxford rooms between two scions of twentieth century British culture, Auden and Benjamin Britten. Britten is writing an opera based upon 'Death in Venice' by Thomas Mann, Auden's father-in-law and Auden is the preferred librettist.

Bennett induces some complexity from the onset; the director is absent (in Leeds, Bennett's birthplace) and the stage manager, Kay, superbly played by Veronica Roberts, steps in to direct and to play an absent actor's part, when Neil, the author of 'Caliban's Day' arrives on set, aghast at changes to his text initiated by the cast.

Bennett maintains a complex plot with a limited cast, where a curmudgeonly Auden (Fitz in the play 'within') is played to perfection by Matthew Kelly, and a repressed but gracious and refined Britten (Henry in the play) played by David Yelland, interact where the text being rehearsed is constantly interrupted by prompts, noisy argument and discursive asides, but Bennett avoids such potential for confusion by allowing stage-manager Kay to provide an 'armature' to link the play's disparate elements and maintain the play's focus.

Mistaken identity adds further confusion; Auden confuses Humphrey Carpenter (Donald in 'Caliban's Day') from the BBC who has arrived to interview him, with his rent-boy date providing further comic opportunity when a justifiably offended Carpenter retorts, '...but I was at Keble!' But overt allusions to homosexual practices and predilections (both Auden and Britten were acknowledged homosexuals) are not for the easily offended and allusions to them are over-represented in the script. Moreover, Auden's talking furniture and Donald's surprising appearance in drag playing a tuba seemed unnecessary in a play already rich in comic intervention.

Although the set communicated an appropriate sense of chaos, its 'static' nature appeared to limit dynamic stage direction, and constantly bland lighting throughout both acts further diminished the play's potential for

visual effect. But these remain minor criticisms in a thoroughly engaging production from our 'national treasure' playwright's significant *opus* with its seamless mix of emotion, humour, and sheer technical brilliance.

**21<sup>st</sup> November: Talk by Dr Julie V Gottlieb, Reader in Modern History, Sheffield University – “Viewing and reviewing the century of Women’s (Partial) Suffrage.**

Dr Gottlieb treated us to a wealth of facts, dates and evaluation, amazingly summarising the century of suffrage in just over an hour.

Her first debate, 'Who deserves the credit for winning women the vote?' evaluated the two main contenders, firstly the WSPU (the Women's Social and Political Union) headed by the Pankhurst family, who sought suffrage by militancy and provocation, gaining publicity with a political agenda. Dr Gottlieb surmised that their methods possibly held the movement back, antagonising the government who couldn't be seen to 'give in'. On the other hand the NUWSS (the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies) were law abiding, conducting peaceful lobbying guided by Millicent Fawcett.

She also considered that possibly the First World War won women the right to vote, was it earned through their sacrifice, work and duty to the nation? Or was it the war itself? Where the basis for citizenship shifted, it was service not gender that became important. Lastly, was suffrage inevitable as a result of logic and democratisation taking their natural course?

Dr Gottlieb's research leads her to the conclusion that the actions of women were the most important factor, and that all principle activists should be memorialised. The recently erected statue of Millicent Fawcett in Parliament square, with 59 Figures on the plinth is, of particular significance in that it links both past and present.

Further significant moments to the importance of suffrage were celebrations in 1939, on the 21st anniversary of the Representation of the people Act. Also, 1968, which was the 50th anniversary, and the start of the Women's Liberation Movement.

To today and with the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act, and the right of women to stand for parliament, women are more on the map with the Vote 100 celebrations. Dr Gottlieb concluded that with memorial, suffrage can be a continuing agent of change, hopefully to inspire a new women's movement moving on from the poisonous politics of today.

### **7<sup>th</sup> December Christmas Visit to Hardwick Hall**

This year's Christmas outing was to Hardwick Hall, built by the indomitable social climber and femme extraordinaire, Bess of Hardwick. We all met up outside her architectural gem of a mansion, set on a hill overlooking the M1 and made our way into the Hall. The entrance hall had been beautifully decorated by volunteers. Lighted Christmas trees and lots of white decoration set against the dark panelled walls made our entry exquisitely atmospheric, reminiscent" someone remarked, "of Miss Haversham". Lining the



stone walls, as we climbed the imposing front staircase, were the Flemish and English tapestries, faded with time but still magnificent. These had been brought from Chatsworth to Hardwick in the 1850s, apparently to cover the white walls which the 6th Duke did not like. As we made our way through the house the theme of white with silver and gold lighting was all around us, decorated Christmas trees everywhere. There were images of miniature houses made of white card placed on white table cloths. White chrysanthemums, white lilies, white roses, all was a symphony in white and silver and gold and, here and there for contrast, were swags of greenery around mantelpieces. A visit to the kitchens was

a bit of a disappointment but perhaps the volunteers' creative resources had flagged by this time!

The sky had brightened during the day and the wind had dropped a tad so a quiet stroll through the garden with its carefully clipped hedges and beds of lavender was a very pleasant way to end our visit.

Thank you very much, Rachel, for arranging this delightful start to the Christmas festivities.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> January: Talk on Forensic Facial Reconstruction by Katherine Linehan. 2.00pm at Tapton Masonic Hall**

Dr Katherine Linehan leads the Human Anatomy team in the Department of Biomedical Science at Sheffield University. She is a specialist in teaching cadaveric dissection at undergraduate and postgraduate level and is an expert in pedagogy. She uses a range of innovative techniques to engage students, including the development of a course teaching facial reconstruction, a technique used to assist in the identification of deceased individuals from their remains. She has also created an online version of this course; "Finding Mr X" based upon a real murder case that happened in Sheffield in the year 2000. Katherine will talk about the process involved in identifying an individual from their remains as well as exploring how these techniques can be used to teach the next generation of Crime Scene Investigators.

### **Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019: 11.00 Millennium Gallery, Sheffield. Talk and tour of the exhibition "Leonardo da Vinci: A Life in Drawings". Meet in the Gallery reception area by the Arundel Gate entrance at 10.45am**

Twelve remarkable drawings by Leonardo da Vinci drawn from the Royal Collection are being displayed at the Gallery as part of a major nationwide exhibition marking the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the artist's death. The exhibition will include examples of all the drawing materials used by the artists and present new information about his working practice and

creative process. The morning will start with a talk from one of the Gallery staff and we will then be free to tour the display at our leisure. This event, for which the booking form was in the September newsletter, is now fully subscribed.

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March: Talk –The Work of the Lost Chord charity by its Chief Executive Helena Muller. 2.00pm Tapton Mason Hall**

Lost Chord is an innovative charity based in South Yorkshire, dedicated to improving the quality of life and well-being of those living with dementia using interactive musical stimuli to increase their general awareness and self-esteem. The charity was founded by Helena Muller in 1999 and from its earliest beginnings with 11 residential homes in Rotherham, Lost Chord has expanded into many parts of South Yorkshire, North Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, with satellite schemes in other parts of the country. The charity prides itself on visiting the same homes each month in order to build on the responses achieved in previous successive concerts.

**March Theatre Visit:**

The next SUWC theatre visit be on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 2.30 pm when we shall be returning to the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. Their spring season reflects the stories of a 21<sup>st</sup> century city and we have arranged to see "Barber Shop Chronicles" by Inua Ellam. The closing date for application was 9<sup>th</sup> January.

**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April: Talk on the Excavation of Sheffield Castle by Prof John Moreland and Caroline Butterworth. 2.15pm at Tapton Masonic Hall**

John Moreland is Professor of Medieval Archaeology at the University of Sheffield and chairs the University Castlegate Steering group which brings together researchers from five faculties including architecture. Carolyn Butterworth is a Senior University Teacher in the department of Architecture and has been involved in the Castlegate project for several years.

The University Steering group is working in collaboration with the City Council, Hallam University, Friends of Sheffield Castle and others firstly to uncover the full history of the site of Sheffield castle and then based on these findings, to start a regeneration of this area as a gateway to the city.

The excavation of the castle, which started last August, is now complete. We look forward to hearing from John about the new findings and how these relate to what was previously known about the history of Sheffield Castle.

While the archaeologists were excavating the site Carolyn Butterworth was working with the City and Cultural Engagement office and Friends of Sheffield castle to produce a vibrant and creative vision for the future of the area which she will tell us about this afternoon.



**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May: Spring Lunch and Talk by Ann Evans**  
**11.00am at Girlguiding Sheffield's**

**Outdoor Activities Centre, Whiteley Woods, Common Lane, S11 7TG**

Ann is an SUWC member and has been involved with Girlguiding Sheffield since she was 8 years old, as a guide, then a leader, adviser, and commissioner. Girlguiding Sheffield is rightly proud of this mini-estate, which have been in their possession for over 70 years. Situated on the edge of the city, almost in the Peak District, the facility offers opportunities for experiences and activities galore. Ann will tell us more about the land and its buildings, which have a history going back almost 400 years and have a connection with Sheffield inventor Thomas Boulsover. After the talk there will be a fork buffet lunch provided by PJ Taste who pride themselves on their use of local

produce. The cost is £15 which includes coffee before the talk and soft drinks with lunch.

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June: Garden Party at the home of Rosemary Boucher. 2.30pm at 18 Endcliffe Avenue, Sheffield. S10 3EL**

Once again Rosemary has kindly invited us to hold our event in her lovely garden. The Garden Party is always one of our most popular events, whatever the weather. It's an opportunity to catch up with old friends and perhaps meet new ones over a cup of tea and delicious home baking. Guests will be also very welcome to join us on this friendly relaxed occasion. Your contributions of cakes and scones will be gratefully received on the day, but please help us to plan the catering by sending in the booking form in good time, or by emailing or phoning Events Secretary Jean Needham by 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

**Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> July: Summer Outing - Coach trip to Elizabeth Gaskell's House and the Victoria Baths. Coach leaves from the car park at Tapton Masonic Hall – please arrive by 8.45am for prompt departure at 9.00am. You can leave your car there free for the duration of our trip.**

Our Summer Outing this year is to two fascinating Manchester venues. **The Elizabeth Gaskell House**, now Grade II\* listed, was built in 1835-41 in what then were the outskirts of the city. Elizabeth lived here from 1850, with her husband William and their family, and wrote most of her famous novels in the house. She also entertained many visitors; Charles Dickens, John Ruskin and Charles Halle among them. The house is a delight, beautifully presented with great attention to the small details of the life of the author and her family. We will have freedom to explore the rooms (no roped-off areas!) and the pretty restored garden. The house is fully accessible; there is a tea room and a second-hand book stall.

**The Victoria Baths** was the winner of BBC 2's first 'Restoration' programme; the restoration is stunning. Opened in 1906 when the Lord

Mayor described it as ‘a water palace’, it contains Turkish baths, a Laundry, Slipper Baths, an Aeratone and swimming pools. We shall have a guided tour to view the interiors with wonderful stained glass, rich terracotta, intricate tiles and mosaics. (There is a flight of stairs to an upper gallery, but the pool can also be viewed from the lower floor).

The cost of the outing is £36.50 which includes the coach and driver’s tip, admission to the Elizabeth Gaskell House, and admission and a tour at the Victoria Baths. Also included is a sandwich lunch with tea or coffee at the Baths. Please fill in the lunch choices form when you make your booking.

The coach will be able to park adjacent to both venues and we will be arriving back in Sheffield between 5.30 and 6.00pm.

We think this will be an excellent day out and we need at least 20 people to make it viable. So please book early, and at the very latest by 11<sup>th</sup> June. Guests will be very welcome.

**Monday 23rd September: 10am to 12 noon. Coffee morning to be held at Tapton Masonic Hall.**

As usual we start our autumn programme with an informal get together where members can meet up and exchange news after the summer. Guests are very welcome to join us and you undertake to pay £2 for each guest. As on previous occasions, the committee will provide biscuits to go with the coffee and we will have a stall for books in good condition. You will also be able to renew your membership, saving us £££s in postage.

**OUR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS:**

**Gardens Group:** We meet to share lifts at the lower end of Snaithing Lane and with six seasons of visits successfully over, we’ll be planning our 2019 programme early in the New Year. The diary will be e-mailed to you in good time to get the dates in your diary. Ideas for visits from members are very welcome.

**Walking Group:** The walking group meets on the first Tuesday of every month at the bottom end of Snaithing Lane to share lifts to the start of

the walk. Members take it in turns to lead a walk of about 4/5 miles long which usually finishes near a pub where lunch is available. The group is very friendly and help can be given for members who are uncertain about leading a walk. Visitors and new members are always welcome. For those who prefer a less strenuous walk there is the **Shorter Walks Group**.

**Theatre Outings:** Twice a year in Spring and Autumn members of the group travel to another city to enjoy a matinee performance of an interesting or amusing play.

