



**SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY  
WOMEN'S CLUB  
NEWSLETTER No. 60  
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**GARDEN PARTY - JUNE 2022**

**[www.sheffield.ac.uk/suwc](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/suwc)  
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Dear Members and Friends

Welcome to the September Newsletter and the start of a new SUWC year. As usual the Newsletter has reviews of recent events and previews of what you can expect in the coming months. Poetry, 3 D fabric design and the history of the Bustle are among the topics for forthcoming talks, and as usual the Coffee Morning and Book Exchange on Monday, 26th September starts off our Autumn programme. As we've been doing this year, we will only be sending out booking forms for events that have to be paid for or where numbers are limited. A list of all the events for 2022/23 is being sent out with the Newsletter, so please make a note of the dates in your electronic or paper diaries.

A reminder that if you haven't already renewed your subscription please do so by 12th September.

As Jacinta mentioned in her recent email all members will receive an email copy of this Newsletter. If you don't usually have the electronic version, this will give you an opportunity to see how it looks - and see the photos in colour! If you have previously asked for a printed version, you will also receive a paper copy of the Newsletter. I know that many of you prefer to have a paper copy but with increased costs in both printing and postage we may have to review how we distribute the January Newsletter.

This is the final Newsletter I will be editing. I'm passing the baton to the very capable hands of Pat Holmes. I've very much enjoyed compiling the Newsletters over the last seven years and would like to thank all the members who've kindly contributed reviews and photos which have been much appreciated.

*Alison Allen-Booth, Editor*

## **RECENT EVENTS**

### **25th January: A Closer Look at Nature by Bob Russon**

Bob Russon's lifelong interest in the wildlife around us was enthusiastically displayed in a colourful slide presentation. Bob literally "zoomed in" on a wide variety of creatures that can readily be seen and photographed in the city, the surrounding countryside and even in our own back garden, just with the aid of a simple bridge camera and a pair of binoculars. He showed us at least as many different species as there were members in the audience, with a diversity of beaks and bones, fur and feathers, eyes and talons adapted to suit form to function and enable them to survive the rigours of life out there and to reproduce successfully. From robins to rodents, badgers to butterflies, some familiar, some increasingly rare due to the threats to the environment, some preyed upon, some the hunters, it was a fascinating insight. Hopefully the talk encouraged us all to get out there and have our own closer look at nature.

### **24th February: The Made Together Programme by Professor Vanessa Toulmin**

Professor Toulmin commenced an inspiring talk by outlining her background and interests showing how they led to her involvement in The Made Together Programme. Her wide range of experience includes projects demonstrating economic vibrancy through culture and heritage such as regenerating seaside resorts. From a fairground family, she became founder and Research Director of the National Fairground Archive at the University of Sheffield. With a passion for popular entertainment, she has been the university's champion for the arts and was awarded a Chair in Early Film and Popular Entertainment.

Vanessa became Director of City and Culture, Partnerships and Regional Engagement at the University of Sheffield. Working with organisations and individuals across South Yorkshire, the 'Made Together' programme was developed in 2019 to regenerate the region with a brief to make South Yorkshire greener, more

innovative, healthier and more vibrant. The work, signed off and supported by the university for which it is a major initiative, is underpinned by research excellence and expertise. The university's role is as an enabler, honest broker and provider of access to wider funding. This involves evidence and data capture and facilitating partnerships. The partnership has had an important role in supporting Sheffield's post Covid-19 recovery and Vanessa was involved in collecting data on the real time impact of the pandemic which has enabled Sheffield to win funding.

Although Sheffield has many strengths such as art and music, and is very good at promoting events, it tends not to promote the city as a whole as well. Vanessa has been instrumental in bringing cultural groups together across the city and working with Arts Council England to support festivals such as Off the Shelf and the Festival of the Mind. The university supported a successful bid to the Government's Future High Streets Fund in 2021. This money will put culture at the heart of the city and create further investment opportunities. Vanessa outlined the vision for the city centre including plans to retain existing shops in the city centre and develop Event Central on Fargate as well as the Front Door Scheme which is considering the use of vacant upper floors of buildings.

The university is now examining how it can help with prioritising the needs of the rest of South Yorkshire. Vanessa's energy and enthusiasm shone through her talk on The Made Together Programme and the large part she has played in it.

### **23rd March: Lead Poisoning in Sheffield 1880 to 1920 by Michael Collins**

The meeting was well attended especially considering it was such a warm and sunny day and everyone appreciated Michael Collins' interesting talk. He's lived in Sheffield since 1976 and when he retired from his Consultant Radiologist post he started, amongst other things, to research how the population of Sheffield has suffered from lead poisoning.

He explained the devastating consequences for people poisoned by lead and how that could happen. The poison could be cumulative when it's inhaled or ingested. There is no safe level and it is stored in the person's bones and teeth. Children and women of reproductive age are particularly vulnerable to lead ingestion. Low grade poisoning symptoms can include feeling unwell and depressed, having abdominal pain, and constipation. Severe poisoning affects nearly all systems in the body including the brain. Lead poisoning is difficult to diagnose because there is a delay between exposure and symptoms which can mimic other diseases and illnesses.

Michael explained that people suffered from exposure to lead from ancient times as it was used in a variety of processes including glazes on pottery and paints. In Sheffield it was used from the 16th century in the file cutting process. The men and women who did this work would have lead dust on their hands which was then accidentally ingested. In Sheffield the employers of these workers were slow to adopt machine file cutting which could have prevented this hazard.

William Harwood Nutt (1869- 1943) was a pioneer Radiologist who looked into lead poisoning in women and children in 1906. But even before this, in 1882, there had been a report of an investigation into suspected lead poisoning. However, because of the difficulty of diagnosis and any accurate data, it is difficult to know the actual prevalence in Sheffield but at one time nearly one third of the population in Sheffield was probably suffering from lead poisoning.

In the late 19th Century diachylon, a lead plaster, was available in every working class home for use on cuts and sores. However it was known to cause abortion if swallowed and because it was cheap was widely used as a way of controlling fertility. Its use was debated in Parliament in 1906 and eventually banned in 1917.

Another way the people of Sheffield could ingest lead was by drinking the water from the Redmires reservoirs that flowed through the lead lined pipes of the city. The acidity of the water reacted with the lead of the pipes. These reservoirs were privately owned in the 19th century. Sinclair White, the Medical Officer of Health in

Sheffield from 1885 to 1887, wrote a report into this situation. The local newspapers got hold of this story and the Sheffield Independent detailed an increase in local lead poisonings. In 1888 the Sheffield Municipal Authority bought out the Water Companies but still nothing was done to remedy the situation. An alkaline additive to the water would have stopped the reaction between lead and the water but it took four more years for treatment to be implemented. It is difficult to know how many people suffered and died.

In present day Britain houses built after 1970 have plastic pipes communicating with the mains pipes and plastic is the norm for new piping. However lead is still a potential threat. In countries where health and safety control is undeveloped battery recycling produces risk for people. In America, in 2016, the river providing water to people in the city of Flint, was identified as contaminated with lead. President Biden is now trying to eliminate lead piping in water supply. There are parallels between Flint and Sheffield which show it can happen again. The talk was absorbing and thought provoking on many levels and members responded with questions and comments.

### **30th March: Theatre Visit: "Sheila's Island" at the Lowry Theatre**

It was a select group of six who took their splendid, front row balcony, seats in the Lowry Theatre for the first club theatre outing for two years. The location was an island in the Lake District. Four women 'executives' were a team, sharing a team-building expedition. They had managed to capsize and sink their boat, get to this small island minus some of their gear, seemed to be without means of summoning help, and the rest followed. They proved quite hapless as one thing after another went wrong and this provided the humour. Placed in the stressful, unexpected situation, different personality traits surfaced and the bonds, intended to be strengthened, were stretched almost to breaking point. But, help arrived just in time. The four actresses were onstage pretty well all the time. Despite their portrayal as incompetent out of their comfort zone, they

managed to get out of their wet clothes and dress in dry ones in full view of the audience while maintaining rapid fire dialogue - demanding roles indeed. For the audience, the play is entertaining though not requiring much interpretation and could be regarded as a relaxing occasion. It is scheduled for a tour of many towns and cities so some may have a chance of seeing it elsewhere.

### **7th April: Why the NHS Brexit Bus Changed My Life by Professor Tammy Hervey**

Of Hungarian and Russian heritage, Professor Hervey grew up in Scotland with a strong sense that “life isn’t fair.” As a law undergraduate from Glasgow University where courses in European law were compulsory as they were not in England, Tammy was in an ideal position to teach European Law at Durham University having completed her PhD at Sheffield University. Prior to the Brexit Referendum in 2016, Tammy worked with colleagues on the impact of health care in the UK and published books and papers on this topic.

Originally, Tammy had been sceptical of the EEC before it morphed into the EU. The EEC had concentrated on issues of trade and business and seemed, to Tammy, to care little about social issues. But as the EEC became the EU, Tammy changed her mind about the European Project as social issues became more important to the EU. During the Referendum campaign, Tammy became concerned about the prominent NHS logo on the side of Boris Johnson’s famous Red Bus. This suggested that the NHS endorsed the statement that the £350 million given to the EU weekly would be spent on the NHS. Tammy tried to find out who had approved the use of the logo but no one responded. Following the Referendum Tammy and her colleagues began to work with politicians and civil servants to try to clarify the impact of Brexit on the NHS. This led to increasing committee work, appearances on radio and TV and much more grant funded work on exploring the effects of Brexit on health care.

And so Tammy`s life changed. From the quiet cloisters of academia her work has become much more public and has had greater impact on policy than she ever expected when she started her career. The results of Brexit are still unfolding and Tammy has been enabled to turn her attention more fully to her original realisation that “life isn’t fair” and explore fertile new ground to make Britain a fairer place for us all.

## **24th May: Visit to Kelham Island**

### **Hawley Collection**

Sheffield’s proud history of tool making was beautifully illustrated by Jean Thornton in her talk at the Hawley Collection housed in Kelham Island Museum. Any Sheffielder in want of a top quality, Sheffield-made tool for pretty much any purpose would have made for Ken Hawley’s shop which opened in the late 1950s and ran for forty years. SUWC member Jean was our perfect guide as she has been a dedicated volunteer at Kelham for 20 years and has concentrated on the development, display and cataloguing of the Collection.

Ken Hawley, dismayed at seeing businesses closing down and seeing tools and equipment thrown into skips and bins, was driven to start collecting these examples of Sheffield’s skills. He rescued not only tools but also vital catalogues and inventories. His watchword was ‘you’ll not be wanting this, then’. These treasures grew and grew and were initially stored in the attic and sheds at his own home. Mrs Hawley eventually lost patience and suggested a new home for them was needed.

By 1991 Janet Barnes, director of the Ruskin Gallery, found the ideal space at Kelham Island for the 70,000 or so items. The Heritage Lottery Fund, donations from interested individuals and some American funding, helped with setting up the collection thus safeguarding the history of the manufacture, processes, skills and technological and social aspects of the industry. A database has been set up and has a world-wide audience.



We had time to view the Collection's displays of a huge variety of tools including edge tools, surgical instruments, domestic cutlery, metal and woodworking tools, measuring instruments, silversmithing tools, huge pairs of scissors for a manufacturer's display, film of tradesmen at work and a beautifully decorated saw, a wedding gift for one of Queen Victoria's daughters from the manufacturer.

A chance to see, hear and feel the vibrations of the steam-operated rolling mill in action, another of Kelham's gems which runs daily at noon, was also part of our day. Jean then gave us an entertaining quiz; 'name the purpose of this (arcane) tool' to finish a memorable morning.

### **Walking Tour of Kelham Island Area**

Walking on cobbles between old buildings, industrial hulks, stonework softened with time, the river never far away, it was hard to imagine that 400 years ago Kelham Island had been nothing but fields and orchards.

Our group, led by local historian Anders Hanson, learnt how the so-called island had been created by diverting the River Don into a goyt where the water would power the various mills, burgeoning as Sheffield's new industrial heartland grew and prospered. The oldest building – a cotton mill, once a silk mill - became the workhouse; silversmiths, such as Dixons and the Globe Works flourished, their wares sent world-wide. The frontage of the Globe Works, seen from the dual carriageway, was the first – and very impressive – building of the industrial quarter travellers came across after miles of fields.

At its manufacturing height in the 1860s and '70s, Kelham was full of filth and stench from factories and chimneys, with little regard to health, safety or pollution, a hotbed of labour unrest. Hard lives were lived. Today, in contrast, there are attractive, eco-friendly flats and houses, still in the industrial style. Attractive wall art abounds and names of the lanes in old metal street signs echo the past – Bakers Yard, Cotton Mill Walk, even Lizzie Lane named after the legendary elephant which worked around Sheffield during WW1.

Breweries and pubs flourished - many now gone - first starting in front rooms of houses, notably the Fat Cat, the Ship Inn – the oldest pub in Kelham Island - and the notorious Bull Inn, now a children’s nursery. Interestingly, out of Sheffield’s grime and stink emerged two women of note, namely Mary Anne Rawson, a great campaigner and philanthropist, and Mary Hutton ‘poetess’. Kelham Island still buzzes. The Jarvis Cocker mural watches over it all.

### **20th June: Garden Party at the home of Maria and Narendra Bajaria**

Gardens have played a large part in our lives over the last two years, and here we were on a lovely sunny Summer's day being welcomed to Maria and Narendra's garden for the Garden Party.

Following well set out instructions we made our way from the car and were almost at our destination but pondering whether to turn right or left when we saw June waving to us. We were shown the way along a path bordered by a colourful rockery which opened onto Maria's delightful garden. We strolled along admiring the variety of flowers, sometimes needing a little help remembering names! An eye catching focal point was a pretty arbour framed with a climber, the leaves of which were tipped cream and pink, an ornamental Kiwi plant. It looked stunning.



Tables and chairs had been set out to suit sun lovers or shade seekers. On each table there were pretty flower arrangements which were much admired. The refreshments were all set out with a tempting selection of cakes. It was lovely to sit and chat together in the warm sunshine in relaxing surroundings. How lucky we were with the weather! There was a feeling that things were beginning to be more

'normal' after two strange years, and appreciating that social occasions like this were becoming part of our lives again. Members gave donations to Maria's chosen charity - the Ukraine Red Cross Appeal - which raised the excellent sum of £465.60.

Our thanks and appreciation go to both Maria and Narendra who kindly shared their garden with us for this happy event and to the committee for all their hard work to make it happen.

### **6th July: Visit to the Gladstone Pottery Museum and Etruria Museum**

This trip was an insight into the industrial life of the Stoke area and the role of the Potteries in national life. We received a huge amount of information so this is a quick skip around our visit.

Pottery production in the area began around the 1700s, as a result of good local supplies of coal, clay, salt and lead.

The Gladstone Museum is a working museum containing brick (or bottle) kilns which were a feature of the area. Their shape gives them the name 'bottle'. In the 1950s there were over 2,000 bottle ovens in



the area, but today there are fewer than 50 and the Gladstone is the only complete Victorian pottery factory from the days when coal-burning ovens made bone china.

We were shown the processes within the factory, learnt of tough working conditions, some of the industry's particular language and workers' hierarchies, and how new machinery and ways of working gradually put people out of work. For many of us it was a revelation that bone china is

actually made from 50% crushed bones!

We saw inside a bottle kiln and could only try to imagine the incredible heat and dangers to the men who worked to pack the ‘saggers’ (containers used to contain the pots while being fired) high into the kiln.

After a lunch at the Gladstone, we went on to the Etruria Industrial Museum, which our guide described as the ‘dirty end’ of the potteries, containing the Handley Museum, Burleigh Pottery (the last working pottery in Stoke), and Cheddleton Flint Mill. The Mill is the only remaining steam-powered potter’s mill in the world. ‘Etruria’ was a name created by Josiah Wedgwood who had a love of the Italian region of Etruria. The waterways were critical for industry and Etruria is built around the Trent and Mersey and the Caldon Canals. We learnt of the production of bone and flint needed for the pottery industry, and saw the great 1820s steam-powered beam engine, forge and canal workshops.

This was a fascinating information-packed tour and I for one could have spent the whole day in either one of these museums, just immersing myself in learning about the area and its industrial heritage. I will certainly be going back to see more of the area, it was a great inspiration.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS:**

### **Monday, 26th September 2022: 10.00am-12 noon Coffee Morning and Book Exchange, Tapton Masonic Hal, Hallam Room**

Join us as we get together for the start of our new season. Bring along the books you've read over the summer and acquire some new autumn reading. A box for donations will be provided.

**Wednesday, 19th October 2022: AGM and Talk, 2.30pm Tapton Masonic Hall, Hallam Room**

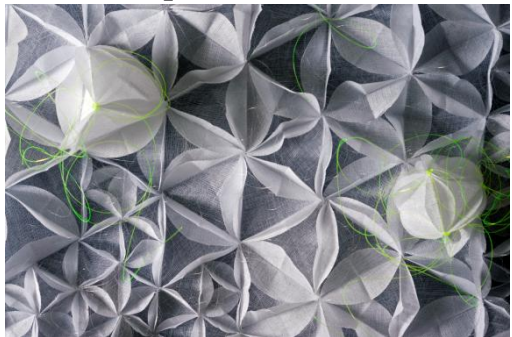
**Coffee and cakes will be served from 2.00pm and the AGM will be followed by a Talk: 'A Life with Poetry' by Jenny King, English Teacher and Poet.**

Jenny King was born in London during the Blitz. Following an English degree in Cambridge and teacher training in Nottingham, she taught English. She married and moved to Sheffield where she continued to teach. She has written poetry all her life and has published three pamphlets - Letting the Dark Through (1981) Tenants (2014) and Midsummer (2020) - and a full collection, Moving Day (2020.)

Jenny's talk will range from starting to write as a child, poems about her early life from an adult perspective and then about her children and life together and the publication of her first pamphlet, following a creative writing course. Other poems will relate to family, memory, the passing of time and the experiences of everyday life. She will finish with some recent poems about moving to a flat from the house she had lived in for nearly 50 years

**Thursday, 17th November 2022: Talk, 2pm for 2.15pm start, Tapton Masonic Hall, Hallam Room, Peggy Fearn, textile artist and lecturer in Visual Arts 'Working in three dimensions. Inspired by modern architecture and sculpture '**

Following a chance conversation, Peggy Fearn enrolled for a City and Guilds Creative embroidery course at The Sheffield College, having already studied Printed and Woven Textiles at Leicester College of Art in her youth. Since



that first day at college, teaching, designing and exhibiting has become her life.

She has become more and more interested in working in 3D and has been inspired by modern architecture and sculpture. Following a good deal of experimentation, her work has gradually changed from organic curves to the discipline of mathematical folding techniques. She'll be talking about her latest projects, looking at sculptural pieces, but also cutting geometric shapes into the fabric first.

**Wednesday 7th December 2022 : Christmas Event - 2pm for 2.15pm start, Tapton Masonic Hall, Hallam Room:- Talk by Ann Marples, the Bustle Lady**

Anne is a historian specialising in the mid-Victorian era, 1875 - 1888, when the pace of change was at its greatest. She covers all aspects of history within this period: social, economic, industrial, scientific, and architectural. She is known as The Bustle Lady, as this era of history is when the Bustle Dress was the height of fashion.



Her talk will explain the history of the Bustle, how it came about, and the part that Sheffield played in the global fashion phenomenon that was the Bustle Dress. She will cover the different dresses that a middle class lady would have for different occasions, what materials they were made of, how you would have obtained one, and how much a typical Bustle Dress would have cost. She'll also bring a range of items including, a corset, and of course a Bustle cage. Anne will be wearing a

Bustle Dress of 1888, and will explain how the various pieces of the

outfit go together - everything you need to know to achieve the fashionable silhouette of the time.

**Tuesday, 17th January 2023 Talk and Demonstration 2pm for 2.15pm start, Tapton Masonic Hall, Hallam Room: Ron Jarman - Taiji**

Ron, with the assistance of his wife, Liz, will outline what Taiji is, what it is not, its history, and its recognised health benefits, followed by a demonstration of a sequence of the movements that are involved in practicing Taiji. He'll then invite any of us, who want to do so, to take part in one or two of the movements to get an idea of what is involved in learning the art.

Ron and his wife are originally from Essex, and have been in Sheffield since 1978. Both are now retired from their respective careers in insurance and financial planning, and IT. He started to practice Taiji because of a health issue in 1991 and at age 65 decided to enrol on a six year senior coach training programme. Liz has also trained in Taiji over the last few years, and is qualified to coach level.

## **OUR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS**

**Gardening Group:** We were out of action at the beginning of the season due to the pandemic and, as the virus was and is, still circulating, we restricted ourselves to local gardens to avoid car sharing. Our first visit was to see the Bluebells in Ecclesall Woods, followed by refreshments in the cafe there. Following that one of our members kindly opened her garden for us, followed by the 'Grey to Green' initiative in the city centre. In September we will hear about the work done by the volunteers in Whirlowbrook Park

### **Walking Group:**

The walking group normally meets on the first Tuesday of every month. Members take it in turns to lead a walk of about 4/5 miles or 2/3 hours (not a fast pace). Visitors and new members are always welcome to join us. Generally we meet at the walk starting point at

10am, but we can also offer lifts or car sharing. Some walkers stay on for lunch together. Details are sent out a few days in advance

**The Shorter Walking Group:**

The group has been re-established and meets at 10am on the first Tuesday of every month for a short walk to a coffee shop!