

May newsletter

Hello everyone and welcome to the newsletter for May and I would just like to say on behalf of us all, how lovely it was to see Penny and Derek back at Monday morning meetings.

Now, I'm going to begin with something I finished with in the April newsletter, namely the isolation hospital in Catherine de Barnes. I put out a request to see if anyone would like to research the hospital and share their findings with everyone. Luckily, Alistair rose to the challenge and this is what he found out.

ISOLATION HOSPITAL CATHERINE-DE-BARNES



In the April Newsletter we printed a picture of the Isolation Hospital in Catherine-de-Barnes. Here is a little bit about the history of the place. Isolation Hospitals were set up across the country to treat people with infectious diseases such as smallpox, diphtheria, tuberculosis and scarlet fever, in an attempt to prevent the diseases spreading quickly through the population.

Solihull is known to have had three purpose-built Isolation Hospitals and a "Fever Shed" between 1870 and 1985. The "Fever Shed" was a temporary wooden structure, in the garden of Solihull Union Workhouse in Lode Lane, hastily set up around 1870 in response to a smallpox outbreak in the area. It could only be used by members of the "pauper classes".

Solihull's first purpose-built Isolation Hospital was opened in 1877 in Bickenhill. It cost around £2,000 to build, and could hold 12 patients. It dealt with 50 cases in its first three years.

A second Isolation Hospital was opened in 1904, the Smallpox Hospital in Marston Green, which could provide for 16 cases at a time, and operated until 1933.

Solihull's third and final Isolation Hospital was opened in 1910 at Henwood Lane in Catherine-de-Barnes. It was designed for 56 patients, with separate blocks for scarlet fever, diphtheria and typhoid. In 1913 the hospital dealt with 45 cases of scarlet fever, two of diphtheria and one of typhoid. However, as these infectious diseases became less prevalent, the hospital at Catherine-de-Barnes became used as a post-natal maternity hospital from

1950. But in 1966 the maternity unit was suddenly closed, and overnight the hospital reverted to being a smallpox hospital, due to an outbreak of the disease in the Midlands. Over an eight-week period 31 patients were dealt with, and all survived. After this, the Catherine-de-Barnes facility became the regional Isolation Hospital, on permanent standby, but there was little activity until 1978, when Janet Parker, a medical photographer at Birmingham University, contracted smallpox and was admitted to the hospital, where sadly she died, as did her father.



The building remained on standby until 1985, but was never really required, costing £40,000 a year to maintain, and described as "the Marie Celeste of the NHS". In 1985 the hospital was finally closed, as smallpox was considered to have been eradicated from this country. The building was completely fumigated and apparently turned into luxury homes.

Thank you, Alistair for a really interesting piece!

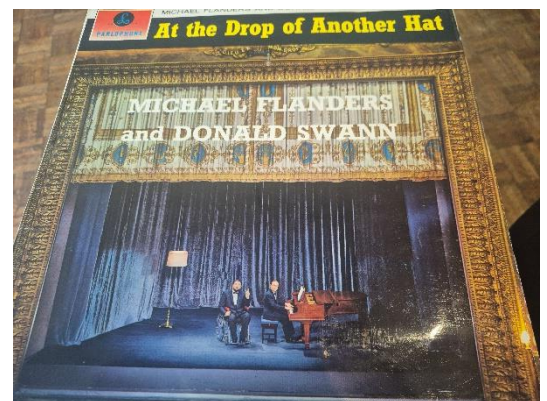
Watch this space in our June newsletter as Angela wants to share her information about the isolation hospital with everyone.

Monday morning meetings

We kicked off April with a fantastic talk by Alistair entitled 'Tarzan's Garden', this being Thenford Gardens near Banbury, owned by the retired politician, Michael Hesseltine. You certainly whet our appetite Alistair and many of us are now looking forward to visiting the gardens in June. This was followed by our very own Vera who shared with us her visit to Kharkov and Moscow in the 1990's, giving us an insight into what life was like then. Lots of facts and some very funny moments too!



Rounding off our April talks, Trevor Langley, an outside speaker, delivered his talk – An Encounter with Flanders and Swann. Trevor presented a morning of music and history as he shared highlights of the lives of Flanders and Swann, their music and, examples where their influence was felt in the music of others.

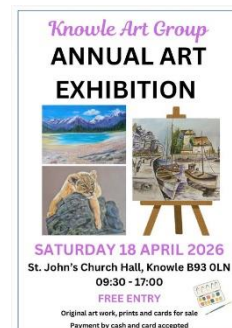


Walking Group

The walking group visited Earlswood Lakes and the surrounding area on 17th April. The weather was dry and warm and the highlight of the walk were the signs of Spring everywhere! Carpets of bluebells and white anemones covered the woodland floor; mother ducks watched over their ducklings on the lake and even a frog put in an appearance. We finished with a pub lunch – the icing on the cake!

Knowle Art Society

Recently, Lynette shared leaflets for this annual event with everyone. I visited the exhibition and saw some wonderful art. Lynette had 2 paintings exhibited there, both of ballerinas. I was intrigued about this and decided to find out more about her choice of subject matter. After visiting her beautiful home, I found out so much more.



Lynette was head of make-up at what was ATV and became ITV. She has many tales to tell including one about Mick Jagger and a beard! She did the make-up for many dramas and plays and particularly loved period stuff and character work e.g. aging people or creating faces for those who had been 'injured' in a particular scene. This included Roger Daltrey's face after he'd been in a 'car crash' in one of his films! She said his make-up took about an hour to do every day and he would go off and scare people in the canteen afterwards. The make-up artists also visited morgues or contacted hospitals for help in order to make injuries look lifelike!

She was the make-up artist on Crossroads and I'm sure we all remember that.



Lynette says very occasionally she sees her name in the credits of some old shows and that she can't help commenting on the make-up on shows she watches now (whether it's particularly good or bad).

After retiring, Lynette took up drawing using pastels, focusing on portraits of course, as all her working life had been about the face. Lynette attends Knowle Art Society sessions once a week where she works on her pieces. She chooses pictures that she likes and uses these to create her portraits. As I was sitting chatting, I noticed the Queen mum looking at me!

As these drawings were taken in situ, you will notice the light falling across them, but it doesn't detract from the beauty of each piece.

You'll recognise these famous ladies!



This is one of Lynette's favourite drawings entitled 'Remember me'. It was entered into a competition arranged by the famous artist Jack Vettriano and was one of ten finalists. Unfortunately, Lynette could not attend as she was on holiday but she received an email from Jack saying he might just steal her drawing one day!

Lynette loved the fact that he asked the same questions of the piece that she wanted the viewer to ask - Do you remember her how she was? Where is she now? What has she done with her life?



Alongside the portraits, there are a number of pastel drawings of ballerinas in her house – she used to do ballet and loves the shapes ballerinas make whilst dancing.

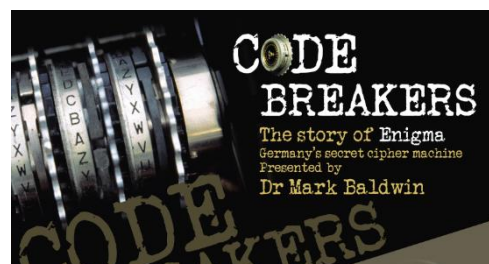
Thanks Lynette, for a very interesting chat and for sharing your beautiful, quirky home with me.

What's on in May in the local area

You may find these events to be of interest to you.

Fri 8 May: The Core Theatre - Codebreakers – The Story of Enigma

This show by Dr Mark Baldwin tells one of the Second World War's most fascinating stories. He has made a detailed study of the Enigma machine, the code-breaking work at Bletchley Park, and U-boats and has built up a unique collection of slides which illustrate the main features of those important facts of the Second World War.



The show is divided into two parts and is followed by an opportunity for questions, then a hands-on demonstration of one of the very few surviving Enigma machines.

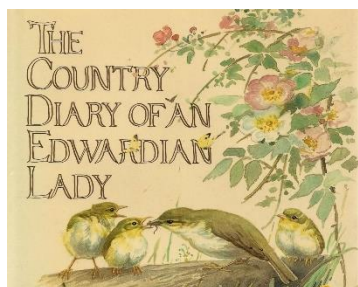
May 16th: Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens drawing event

A drawing inspiration taken from Edith Holden's 'The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady'.



Castle Bromwich
Historic Gardens

Visitors are invited to have a go at capturing images of Spring in their drawings. Paper and drawing materials are provided or you can take your own. Everyone is welcome and there is no need to book.



Across the day, Edith Holden enthusiast and collector, Rachel Smith- Chopra, will be there to share her experiences and knowledge of Edith Holden's travels around Birmingham and Solihull.

May in history

On 6th May 1954, twenty-five-year-old medical student Roger Bannister became the first man to run a mile in under four minutes at Oxford University's Iffley Road Sports Ground. Bannister's finishing time was 3 minutes and 59.4 seconds.

He was regarded as Britain's best middle-distance runner at the time, but, in the 1952 Olympics he failed to win the 1500 metres despite being widely expected to win. He came 4th. In the months that followed he toyed with the idea of giving up athletics before he decided to set himself a new goal of becoming the first man to run a mile in under four minutes.

The scene for Bannister's finest moment was an early race in the 1954 season at the Iffley Road track. Running alongside Bannister in this annual match between the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) and the University were his friends Chris Chataway and Chris Brasher. They planned the whole attempt together with both his friends acting as the pacemakers. Until this time, so many athletes had tried and failed to run a mile in less than four minutes that people had concluded it to be impossible and Bannister had been told by physiologists that not only was running the four-minute mile impossible for an athlete to do, but attempting to do so was dangerous to one's health. Bannister used scientific training and pacing with his friends to break the world record.



Traditional May celebrations

The Padstow 'Obby 'Oss 1st May



A tradition unique to Padstow is the strange monster known as the 'Obby 'Oss who dances through the streets on 1st May every year. It is said to be a festival steeped in pagan mystery. Historians have found that the earliest record of the Padstow 'Obby 'Oss dates from 1803 and only those with Padstow heritage can join the dance. There's a huge procession with dancers, drummers, musicians and local people dressed in white costumes decorated with ribbons, cowslips and bluebells taking part. The main draw is the red and blue 'osses', also known as the Blue Ribbon and the Old.

The 'osses' are made from wooden frames covered in black oilskin with a small horse's head featuring a snapping jaw. They take separate routes and are led out by a 'teaser' carrying a club. The teaser's purpose is to dance in front of the 'oss' and goad it, while the crowd follows. At the end of the circuit, they meet at the maypole. They are said to die and be resurrected on the next May Eve. They are said to try to grab pretty maidens on their way.

Tradition has it that any woman who goes beneath the apron of the 'oss' will be married or pregnant within the year! In former years this involved trapping the maiden under its skirt and covering her with soot. (Some of the older generations recall seeing unmarried women running the length of whole streets to escape its clutches rather than be caught). The creature's snapping jaws are placated with coins and the money now goes to charity.



Touchwood Hall



Does anyone remember this place or know anything about its history?

Find out more next time.

Thanks for taking the time to read our newsletter. If you have anything you would like to share with our group, let me know.

Chris