



# **SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CLUB**



**The Crescent, Buxton**

**NEWSLETTER No. 51**

**January 2018**

**[www.sheffield.ac.uk/suwc](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/suwc)**

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Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to 2018 and our January Newsletter where you'll find reviews of the SUWC events of the past few months and a look ahead to our spring and summer programme. Coming up we've got talks on textiles, why bird's eggs are the "most perfect thing" and the culture of drinking through the ages. There's an opportunity for you to relive your particular memories of the Club when we celebrate our 80th anniversary with a special lunch in March. For our summer outing this year we're visiting Buxton to hear how the Grade One listed Crescent is being restored to its former glory.

We look forward to seeing you at these events and, as ever, friends are welcome to join us. Please remember to book your places 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.

If you want to contact the Club you can now do this via our new email address: [womensclub@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:womensclub@sheffield.ac.uk)

## **RECENT EVENTS**

### **25th September: Coffee Morning**

This was the first event for the Academic year 2017/18 for the SUWC. There was an opportunity to complete a membership form and pay the subscription if necessary. Then one could progress to the refreshments with a brief diversion past the Book Sale table on the way. Suitably armed with a cup of tea or coffee one could settle into greeting long standing friends, meeting newer members and the overseas wives and catch up with what had happened over the summer and discuss future plans. There were over 30 people present and plenty of space and tables to sit at if you wanted to. We were all welcomed by Amanda Wade, our Chair, and future events on the programme were highlighted, Anne Mitchell, our Events Secretary, was on hand to provide extra information and bookings. This was a pleasant way to kick start a new year

### **25 October: AGM with talk/poetry reading by Pat Sanderson**

The Club's 79<sup>th</sup> AGM was well attended, with around 30 members present, and apologies received from a further eight. The minutes will be presented at the 2018 AGM but are available from Ann Evans to anyone who wishes to have an advance copy.

The minutes of the 2016 AGM were approved. Amanda, as outgoing Chair, then reported on another enjoyable year for the Club with a good mixture of activities from enlightening lectures to our ever-popular social events such as the annual garden party and, this year, a Spring lunch followed by a guided walk through the Porter Valley. Eve Fawcett and Helen Lloyd gave the reports from the sub-groups: Garden Visits (which has enjoyed terrific support this year), Theatre Outings, and Walking. Rosemary Hannon explained the accounts; in view of the increase in subscriptions this year, and small surplus made this year from events, the Committee has decided that a further increase in subscriptions is not needed at the present time. Rosemary paid tribute to our auditor, Hilary Shenton, and the accounts were then approved by a show of hands.

Amanda voiced her thanks and appreciation to Anne Mitchell and Finola Marks whose terms on the Committee have concluded, as has her own. Elections to the Committee followed, with Ann Evans, Alison Allen-Booth, Rosemary Hannon and Shirley Newman standing for re-election, and Eve Fawcett (returning), Gail Freeman and Rachel White standing for election. All were approved unopposed.

It was then Amanda's enjoyable task to introduce our new Chair, Rosemary Hannon, who expressed her pleasure in the possibilities of her new role, with new committee members to welcome.

After the formalities of the AGM and 'club business' it was a pleasure to relax into the peace and quiet calm of Pat's presentation. Having observed and written about life from a young age, Pat's working life as a teacher and a counsellor allowed her to note the way of humanity and the world but didn't give her time to develop her writing further. That is, until her retirement, and in that, set free, she encouraged us all to get out there and follow our dreams. In her case to communicate through words the feelings and thoughts we all have as we go through the challenges of life. "*If Not Now, When?*" her first self-published book, is an encouragement for us all to get on and do the things we have always wanted to do, what is there to lose?

Her overall desire to put into words and report on the vagaries of everyday life fuelled a bounty of subjects ranging from observations on world politics, friends and family, the media and music. At times emotional, at times quirky with a sideways glance at the world, she expressed in words all the things we see and feel around us, keeping us entertained and amused, making us think.

## **16<sup>th</sup> November: The Cherry Orchard, Nottingham Playhouse**

Firmly established within the British theatrical repertoire, *The Cherry Orchard* has been enduringly popular with theatregoers and directors alike. Completed in 1904 after a prolonged gestation owing to Chekov's tuberculosis (from which he died in the same year) the play, although identifying overt class conflict within late nineteenth century Russia, nevertheless has a timelessness, depicting, as it does, the plight of the 'underdog' within the context of profound social tensions culminating in the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

The play opens with impoverished landowner Madame Lyubov Ranevskaya returning from Paris to her estate which, including the celebrated cherry orchard, is to be auctioned. In the event, the brash, wealthy, Alexander Lopakin, son of a serf (Russian serfs were emancipated in 1861) is the successful bidder and represents convincingly within this narrative, an emerging confident middle-class alongside a declining aristocracy. Pundits have described Chekov's plays as impressionistic and the often brief appearance of peripheral characters within a large cast reinforces this judgement. But the themes within the play surrounding a declining aristocracy intent upon preserving its status alongside a burgeoning middle class found favour with such luminaries as Eugene O'Neill, G.B. Shaw and even Arthur Miller (Shaw remarked that every time he read a Chekov play, he was inclined to burn his own; some would argue that such an inclination should have been realised).

Director Giles Croft's attempts at modernisation were not universally felicitous; currently fashionable 'colour-blind' casting is generally welcome, but in the opening scene merely served to confuse an audience unfamiliar with the Chekov *oeuvre*, despite exemplary performances from Evlyne Oyedokun as Anya and Babirye Bukilwa as Varya. Staccato disjointed directions on a generous proscenium stage denied the production a real sense of cohesion, not alleviated by infelicitous downstage entries and exits stage left and right. Croft appeared to struggle with Chekov's characteristic duality of comedy and tragedy in that the former were insufficiently comedic and the latter, most particularly in Kenneth Allan Taylor's portrayal of Firs' tragic end, less

than dramatic. Nevertheless, the ingenious set design where demountable building components were hauled into the fly tower to symbolise destruction of the Ranevskaya country pile in the final scene, seemed an apt response to the Cherry Orchard's denouement, and major players, Sara Stewart as Madame Ranevskaya, Robin Kingsland as her comic, eccentric brother, and most emphatically, John Elkington as the greedy opportunist Alexander Lopakhin, served to maintain the familiar dramatic pace of Chekov's masterpiece.

### **28<sup>th</sup> November: The Amateur Astronomer**

Bill Leatherbarrow gave a well attended and thoroughly inspiring talk although I find the immense size of the universe still difficult to comprehend. After retiring from the Russian Department of Sheffield University, he was able to follow a long standing interest in amateur astronomy, becoming friends with Patrick Moore and succeeding him as President of the British Astronomical Association for 2011.

I agreed with his description of astronomy as 'accessible science with mind boggling concepts'. He described how the size and emptiness of space provoke a sense of awe which can be mystical. Our galaxy, the Milky Way is two and a half million light years from that of Andromeda – the light we see is all from the past – we are recycled goods, the atoms of our bodies and everything else are made from the stars of the past.

He then talked about his interest in the moon and bright planets, from helping with NASA-led observations around the time of the moon landings, to observing the skies with the help of various telescopes today. Amateurs can contribute a lot with modern computers and digital images. Time can even be booked on telescopes in faraway places to do your research. He showed lunar pictures of craters formed by asteroid impacts 4 billion years ago with mountain ranges and valleys and lunar maria formed by lava flows. We also saw images from Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter, as well as the sun, which is a massive ball of plasma. It must only be viewed with special solar telescopes. Its coronal mass ejections can damage satellites and earth communications but also give us the beauty of the aurora and noctilucent clouds.

Finally we went beyond the solar system to star clusters such as the Pleiades, which are stellar nurseries of dust and gas, and to the death of stars, which collapse as they run out of fuel and send debris into space. The universe is an infinite whirlpool of galaxies as shown in images from the Hubble telescope.

We need dark to see the night skies, so were encouraged to go home, turn off the security lights and get our binoculars focused on the moon and beyond!

### **13th December: Christmas Wreath Making Course**

A group of us spent an enjoyable and creative session at the Ecclesall Woods Woodland Discovery Centre. The morning started well with very good coffee made by Ann Evans, together with home-made mince pies (for me, the first of the season).

Ann had also brought a colourful and varied selection of cones, teasels and ribbons to add to our wreath decorations and to help us her skills as an experienced flower arranger to help us.

Clare Ropson, who is one of the rangers and part of the core group of permanent workers at the Centre, was our course leader and had us promptly started on our wreath making. Clare had collected large bunches of two types of willow, one spotted willow and the other unidentified, probably more than a hundred stems of each and a similar amount of red dogwood stems, which are at their brightest at this time of year.

Clare demonstrated the smooth but firm technique of holding the stem at its thickest end and bending it in to a circle shape following the natural curve of the stem, and at the same time threading the thin end through and around the circle, so weaving the stem around the shape as we worked. The outer curve of the stems is known as the back and the inner the belly. A canker occurring in the stems can cause them to crack during this bending process and even without that, some of us caused kinks in the stems which were to be avoided if possible, so as not to spoil the smooth circle shape. This was repeated with two more stems and the whole took on a very firm feel. Given that the stems were about six or

seven feet long and we mostly inexpert, there was a degree of waving and ducking going on across the room at this stage as well as a little hysteria. We then brought green branches in from outside which had been cut from a Christmas tree and yew tree that morning and were still very wet. Pieces of about a foot long from these were used to form the covering of the base by pushing them into the twined stems of willow at approximately two inch intervals. These green branches were then bent down around the shape and tied around it with garden twine.

Next we decorated the wreaths as we chose, some with more natural items like rosemary, cones of different shapes and sizes, holly and ivy; and/or with ribbons and artificial berries etc. These were fixed in to the wreath with garden wire as Ann reminded us that they would be spending their Christmas out of doors and might be subjected to rough weather. (It would be interesting to hear whether the wreaths survived!)

We also had time to make a smaller circle of the red dogwood stems in order to form the base for a table decoration or candle holder. The technique was identical but these stems were much more pliable and so easier to bend and handle. Their colour was stunning.

The pleasing result was that although all of us had followed the same technique, each of the wreaths was unique depending on the decorations we had chosen. I think though that we were all very satisfied with the results.

The whole event was great fun. We did get a little wet and dirty but an especial treat was that although we made quite a mess on the tables and floor, Clare and her colleagues cleaned up at the end as we left with our lovely Christmas decorations.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> January Guided tour of St. Marie's Cathedral.**

This event is fully booked.

**Tuesday 6th February: Talk by Professor Allison James – My Textiles Journey'. 2.00p.m. at Tapton Masonic Hall.**

Allison James, who retired from the University's Department of Sociological Studies in 2014, pioneered new approaches to the sociology of childhood and became a leading figure in the development of interdisciplinary childhood studies. However, in this talk she describes a very different aspect of her life, and says:

‘Since I was a small child I have loved all things textile – cloth, wool, embroidery threads – but for many years this passion remained largely unfulfilled. School, university, motherhood, work all intervened in their various ways to distance me from my love of textiles. However, over the last five years, I have been able, at last, to return to that passion. In this illustrated talk I will relate what, for me, has been a journey of discovery, one that has opened up a fascinating world of textile art and one that, along the way, has helped me to develop my own creativity and skills with all things textile.’

**March Theatre Visit:** The Spring theatre visit will be to The West Yorkshire Playhouse on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> March to see "*This House*", a biting comedy about political infighting at Westminster in the 1970s, but still pertinent today. All 28 tickets sold out quickly before New Year. uk. There will be another trip planned for the Autumn.

**Monday 12th March 2018 at 12.30 p.m: Spring Lunch and SUWC Reminiscences at The Hallamshire Golf Club, Redmires Road S10 4LA.**

This year we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of The Ladies' Tea Club which later became the Sheffield University Women's

Club. A lot has changed in the club since 1938, both in terms of who we are and what we do. The committee thought that the Spring lunch would be a good opportunity for us to look back at the history of the club with the help of old photographs, copies of the Newsletter which has just reached its 51st edition, and reminiscences from some of our more long standing members. We hope that as many of our long standing members as possible will be able to come to this event and share their memories of the club with our more recent members. In addition if you know anyone who is a former member we would be delighted if you would bring them along. If you can't come but would like to share your memories please contact Shirley Newman.

(Tel No 2302203 or email [shirleynewman9@gmail.com](mailto:shirleynewman9@gmail.com)).

The Hallamshire Golf Club is situated on Redmires Road, Sandygate and has ample car parking space. The lunch will be two courses and include a pre-lunch drink. Wine and soft drinks for the meal will be on sale at the bar.

Menu:

Roast Loin of Pork with Trimmings **OR** Baked Fillet of Salmon on a Bed of Garlic Spinach coated with a Watercress Sauce **OR** Mild and Fruity Vegetarian Curry with Rice

All served with seasonal vegetables and potatoes

Mixed Berry Brûlée **OR** Fresh Fruit Salad

Tea or Coffee

The cost of the meal will be £21.00 and menu choices need to be pre-ordered on the booking form.

Closing Date: Monday February 26th 2018

**Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> April: Talk by Professor Tim Birkhead –Fantastic Facts about Birds’ Eggs. 2.00pm at Tapton Masonic Hall**

Tim Birkhead is a renowned zoologist and ornithologist and Professor of Behaviour and Evolution at University of Sheffield. His research focuses on populations of birds and their reproduction.

Tim has made important contributions to the field of behavioural ecology - the study of how animal behaviour evolves under the influence of environmental pressures. He’s written a number of books about various aspects of his work including “*The Most Perfect Thing – Inside and Outside a Bird’s Egg*” which was shortlisted for the Royal Society Insight Investment Science Book Prize 2016. He’ll be explaining why a bird's egg, something which most of us take for granted, is a nearly perfect survival capsule--an external womb--and one of natural selection's most wonderful creations.



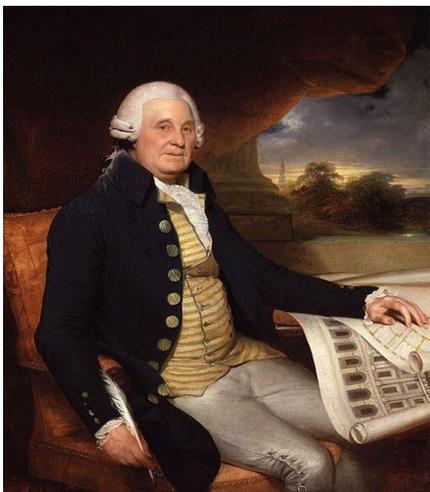
**Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May: Talk by Angela McShane – The Culture of Drinking. 2.00pm at Tapton Masonic Hall**

Angela McShane is a social historian, specialising in research into the history of intoxicants, popular political song and the material culture of the everyday in early modern England. In September 2017 she took up a post as Research Development Manager for the Wellcome Collection and is an honorary research fellow of the V&A (where she was formerly head of early modern studies in history of design). She is currently working with a research team based at Sheffield University investigating the importance of intoxicants and intoxication to the economic, social, political, material, and cultural life of England between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries and this is the fascinating topic she’ll be exploring in her talk.

**Thursday, 7th June: Garden Party** Hilary has kindly invited members to her home in Fulwood for our annual June Garden Party. 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 Alison Allen-Booth by 24th May.

**Wednesday, 11th July. Day Trip to Buxton with a talk “John Carr and the Buxton Crescent “**

Our Summer outing this year is being arranged in conjunction with Margaret's Holidays. Many of you will be familiar with the excellent trips organised by Margaret Fall who is an SUWC member. She's put together a great day out for us when we will learn about the Buxton



Crescent which was the centrepiece of the Fifth Duke of Devonshire's plans to establish a fashionable Georgian spa town in Buxton. The grade 1 listed building designed by John Carr is one of the most architecturally significant buildings in the country and is currently being restored. The coach will leave at 9.30am from 64 Silverdale Road, and there may be further pickups around Brocco Bank and Fulwood when passengers' locations are known.

Arriving in Buxton, we will have coffee in the Dome before hearing the talk by Mary Wragg, member of both the University Woman's Club and Margaret's Holidays. We then have a soup and sandwich lunch before being taken down into the area around the Crescent in our coach where a representative from the Heritage Trust will update us on the work being

done. Afterwards there will be around an hour to wander around Buxton and the gardens or have a drink or ice cream before rejoining the coach for home at 4.00pm. The cost of the day of the day is £34.00 which includes coach with toilet, lunch, talk and all tips and a donation to the Heritagén Trust.

**Monday 24th September: 10am to 12 noon. Coffee morning to be held at Tapton Masonic Lodge.**

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 very 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 five seasons of visits successfully over, we'll be planning our 2018 programme early in the New Year. We hope to start in February with some snowdrops and run through to September. 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. Friends and visitors are always welcome to join us.

**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.