



SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CLUB



Christmas Lunch at the Hallamshire Golf Club

**NEWSLETTER No. 63
January 2024**

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Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the January 2024 Newsletter. The SUWC's Chairs and committee send you best wishes for 2024.

We have had several recent changes to the committee, notably, Jacinta Campbell who has completed her term of office as Chair. We are very grateful to Jacinta for her considerable contribution especially in keeping the club running during the difficult time of the pandemic. She has been replaced by two joint Chairs - Alison Allen-Booth and Rosemary Hannon, both of whom have played valuable roles in the past and who will serve for a period of one year only. Lindsay Reynolds has replaced Brenda Zinober, our excellent Treasurer, who with Belinda Barber has stepped down from the committee after many years' service and Lesley Walker has taken over the role of Membership Secretary. It is important that we have some new ideas and skills and we invite anyone willing to join the committee to let a member of the committee know.

I should like to say a big 'thank you' to all those who have contributed to the newsletter writing excellent reviews which remind us of the very interesting events we have enjoyed during the latter part of this year.

We hope you enjoy the programme planned for you. Details of all forthcoming events are in the newsletter so please put them in your diary. The previews will, hopefully, whet your appetite. They include: our summer visit to Newby Hall, a garden party at the Whiteley Woods Outdoor Activity Centre plus a variety of talks.

This edition of the newsletter will be offered by email to all members and in print form only to those who do not have email access and have expressed a wish for a hard copy. Please help us by collecting those hard copies at meetings, wherever possible, to save on postage.

RECENT EVENTS IN 2023

25th September: Coffee Morning and Book Swap

SUWC lives on! We had a lively coffee morning to mark the beginning of the academic year 2023-2024. It was a perfect September day, sun pouring in through the windows of the Hallam Room. Lots of space here for us to circulate or sit and enjoy the tea/coffee and catch up with friends after the summer. There was also a bookstall to browse, always popular!

On arrival, we received the programme for 2023-2024. There are many interesting talks and events to look forward to. Thank you to the committee for all the planning this entails.

18th October: AGM, Chair's Report



‘A warm welcome to you all, both members and guests. This is my final job as retiring Chair. It has certainly been a growth experience for me, but also a pleasure and a great privilege to have had an opportunity to give back something to the club that so warmly welcomed me and offered me friendship when we first arrived in Sheffield 1998.

I think the club has had an interesting and diverse range of activities over the past year. I will briefly reflect on the key events, but firstly I would like to offer heartfelt thanks to all on the committee who have worked together to organise and deliver these events. A mention too, for Alison Allen-Booth and Nikki Kearsley who have provided great additional support to me and the committee. I would also like to thank you, dear members, who have attended the events and who have been really kind to me during my time as Chair. It has demonstrated the spirit of friendship and community that keeps the club going.

At the last October AGM in 2022, Jenny King kindly shared her poetry with us. All your poems moved me, Jenny, but the one that keeps coming back to me is the one about the cherry red swimsuit. I now find myself with five granddaughters to shop with or for. Your sentence ‘I assumed my choices were the best, but...’ came back to me when I was shopping with four-year-old Chloe who knew exactly what dress she wanted. Of course, she was right!

In November, Sheffield textile artist, Peggy Fearn, came to show us her 3D work which was inspired by architecture and sculpture. Her numerous, impressive pieces of work were displayed around the room for us to get a closer look.

In December we were entertained by Ann, The Bustle Lady. She was a living mannequin, wearing the full works which she had made herself. The bustle style may be due for a comeback as the winter sets in and fuel prices rise! The many layers of petticoats and paraphernalia have many attractive elements for me.

January brought a different tempo to our meeting with Ron and Liz Jarman elegantly demonstrating Tai Chi. A video showed a young woman who was masterly in the art. We later managed to have a workshop session with Ron and Liz where we could have a go at the movements.

In February Peter Miles spoke, about the history of the Theatre group at the Great Hucklow Playhouse. Sadly, I missed this one as I had Covid, but the feedback was very positive.

March brought Professor Pam Enderby who gave us a talk rather controversially titled ‘Men speak, women communicate’ This session delved into the nuances of communication styles between genders, shedding light on the differences and similarities. It sparked engaging discussions, with members sharing personal experiences and reflections. The talk emphasized the importance of understanding and valuing diverse communication patterns, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

April was the Spring Event at Whiteley Woods. A massive thank you to Ann Evans and her team for such a wonderful day. The basket weaving

demonstration by Rachel Hutton was impressive and certainly more impressive than my resulting willow weaving; no less enjoyable for that. Lunch was exceptional too.

In May, Judy Simons shared with us a deeply personal and enlightening talk about her Jewish family's history in the 1950s. Through her narrative we were transported to a different era, gaining insights into the challenges and triumphs of her ancestors. This event offered us all a fresh perspective on family, heritage, and resilience.

June brought perhaps the most anticipated event of the year – the summer garden party. Shelagh and Geoff Marston shared their beautiful, extensive garden with the club. The sun shone warmly down, there was music, much chat and laughter, and of course cakes! This was not just a casual gathering, but also an opportunity for members to chat, share stories, and celebrate the spirit of the club. The pleasant weather and the vibrant atmosphere made it a memorable day for all attendees. Sadly, I was otherwise occupied at the Northern General Hospital, but I was with you in spirit and it happened beautifully without me! Thanks to all those hands that pulled together to make the day such a success.

In July 33 people boarded the coach to Saltaire. It was a marvellous day. The rich history of the place was engagingly told by Maria Gott, AKA Mrs Toothill. Mike, apparently embraced with enthusiasm, the role of Mr Toothill and was suitably pleased when he heard the news of the pending arrival of their 13th child. The art tour introduced many works of David Hockney which were on display in the Salt Mill gallery and gave a good insight into the variety of his work.

The University Women's Club has once again proven its commitment to working together to foster friendship and a sense of community among its members. The variety of events ensured that there was something for everyone. I would like to express my gratitude to all the members for their active participation and contributions, making this year a success.

We have a good programme arranged for the forthcoming year which I hope you will enjoy.'

The AGM was followed by a Talk by Emeritus Professor Mike Campbell on ‘Is That a Big Number?’

Mike was introduced by Rosemary Hannon, a former colleague. He was Professor of Medical Statistics in The School of Health and Related Research, and is now Emeritus Professor in the School of Medicine and currently a member of the Government's Public Health Data Advisory Board.

Big Numbers A billion in the UK used to be one million million, but in 1974 Prime Minister Harold Wilson brought the UK into line with the rest of the world - a billion everywhere is now defined as one thousand million. A trillion is a thousand billion. Here are some big numbers: the UK Economy is £2 trillion, the National Debt is £1.7 trillion, the UK population was 50 million in 1950, and is now 68 million.

Questions Statistics may be convincing, but can be used for political purposes to sell something, to change our behaviour. We must ask questions: Why are we being told this? What is being compared with what? What has changed over time? Should I do anything about it? Is it plausible? Mike made us laugh by telling us of a report from New Zealand during a torrential flood; 30 thousand pigs had been swept into a river. Plausible? No! 30,000 pigs was actually 30 sows and pigs!

Examples I have picked out the Covid Pandemic, and Women's Health: topical and relevant to our group. There were many other examples in the talk - Police recruitment, doctors' salaries, the Budget etc. which showed how statistics can unexpectedly be selected or manipulated for a political message.

Covid Death rates from several countries from 2020 to 2023 showed surprising differences, but deaths from Covid depends on whether Covid is tested for. Use was made of a statistic which calculates the *excess* deaths, which is the total observed deaths for all causes minus that predicted from death rates observed before the pandemic. An example was the UK versus France. The population of France is similar to UK and yet the UK had 250,000 excess deaths from January 2020

until now, whereas France had only 150,000. We can learn by analysing the differences.

The *Women's Health* presentations reminded us to seek advice before making changes to our lives. Mike reported studies on women taking HRT, and on women taking the Oral Contraceptive pill (OC). Purely observational studies appeared to show health benefits of HRT; women on HRT appeared to have less heart disease than women not on HRT. However, it was possible that wealthier, more health aware women were more likely to take HRT. What was needed was a randomised trial and the Women's Health Initiative randomised trial (WHI) showed, on the contrary, that women on HRT had a slightly higher risk, not lower, of heart disease and cancer. The OC study was observational comparing women on the 3rd generation pill compared to women on the 2nd generation pill. It appeared to show that women on the 3rd generation pill were twice as likely to develop a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). When the results were published, some women immediately stopped their OC. For many women who stopped taking the OC before seeking alternative contraception, pregnancy was the result, during which there is a very much higher risk of DVT and there was a subsequent rise in the number of abortions in the UK. The Press had neglected to compare the increase in risk, called the Relative Risk, (RR) with the background or Absolute Risk Difference (ARD). The RR of a DVT was twice as high in women taking 3rd generation OC compared with women on 2nd generation OC. However, the Absolute risk of a DVT for a woman in her 50s is very low. A very small risk, when doubled, is still very small.

In order to demonstrate whether a number is big or small one should always have a comparison group which is similar to the study group in basic characteristics. Beware 'orphan' numbers (e.g. 'the Government spent £x millions on this problem') which have no comparison group and are, therefore, largely uninterpretable.

Thank you, Mike for a fascinating and thought-provoking talk, and thank you also for your help in presenting the statistics and ideas correctly for this report HP.

**16th November: Talk by Patrick Dickinson –
'The River Sheaf and its Route to the Station'**



A tale of derring-do was just the thing for us all on a raw November afternoon. A wet suit, a huge torch, an inflatable boat, a brick on a long rope for an anchor, specialist photographic equipment and expensive lightbulbs, all were required for careful preparation and key to this daring and quite dangerous exploration. What, exactly, was underneath Sheffield Midland railway station?

Patrick Dickinson was brought up near the city's suburban rivers which fascinated him as a boy. As our guide to this subterranean adventure, he could finally answer his big question – where does the River Porter go when it vanishes underground?

Early in the 19th century, near to Sheffield station, Pond Street was a desperate, cholera-ridden quagmire. A solution was for the Midland Railway Company to culvert the river underneath the station's platforms and dry up the ponds accordingly, a satisfyingly all-round problem-solving scheme.

Faced with a deep blackness, unknown surfaces underfoot and above, Patrick surveyed the tunnels and small waterfalls with a huge torch and a pole with which to check every footstep onto safe ground. He realised that the best way to make a photographic record was to use a technique called light painting – waving the torch around whilst opening his camera’s shutter for a long exposure. To his astonishment, the pictures were superb, with details of the brickwork crystal clear.

From Granville roundabout to Blonk Street Patrick followed the culverted River Porter to its confluence with the River Sheaf, hearing the rumbling of trains overhead in the station. Over time, Patrick has made many journeys through the stone-built tunnels, arriving at the amazing and legendary Megatron, a huge brick-built domed space big enough to contain a row of terraced houses. It would both cope with huge amounts of water below and support the weight of the trains above. A repaired area showed evidence of war bomb damage, still pitted with shrapnel. The huge corbels offered secure places for the scaffolding, enabling the curved vast brick roofs to be built.

The final stretch to the River Don outlet required the use of the inflatable dinghy, having first checked that the brick anchor was effective! The atmosphere was humid, the concrete arches of the ceiling beautifully mirrored in the perfectly still water. Sadly, as daylight reappeared, the ten-foot weir made it impossible to complete the trip in one go. But what a splendid adventure for Patrick, nevertheless!

7th December: Christmas Event

Talk by Professor Clyde Binfield ‘Pastiches for Purists: Portmeirion, Poundbury and Bekonscot Too’



On a dreary, December day, the cheerful welcome to the Hallamshire Golf Club boosted our spirits as members and friends packed themselves neatly into the room. The three foci of the talk, though very different, had the unifying feature of places planned for a purpose and based on bygone times.

Portmeirion was probably the best known to our audience. Clyde described the setting and showed many wonderful pictures. Clough Williams-Ellis (1883-1978) was a well-born sprig of a Welsh-English family which made their fortune in Welsh slate. He became an architect with a vision. This project began in the 1920s by renovating an existing grand house in a picturesque spot in an estuary in north-west Wales. He then created a fantasy village around the rocky coast line. Styles were eclectic and drawn from a variety of British and continental buildings. Some were models of real features in the houses of various grandees and others were actual items culled from demolished or renovated buildings. It was a collection of follies artistically arranged in a wonderful setting. He continued to add features and novelties until almost the end of his life. It remains a visitor attraction.

Started in the late 1980s, Poundbury was a planned, urban attachment to the historic town of Dorchester in Dorset, aiming for an increase in population of about 6,000 to the area and enlarging the town by about a fifth. It was built on Duchy of Cornwall land, which included Poundbury Farm. The transaction enabled the (then) Prince of Wales to collaborate with Dorset County Council and become closely involved in the planning and decision-making. He relished the role and was 'hands-on'. There is integration of housing, retail and business, the aim being a walkable life in spacious squares and roads. Housing was to be a seamless mix of private and (45%) affordable. Local public transport was essential for a relatively car-free environment. Many different architects were involved with a focus on Dorset vernacular and neo-Georgian styles. As development proceeded beyond the turn of the century, initial starkness mellowed, weathering occurred and trees and greenery grew with increasing acceptance. There is clear royal influence in the naming of squares and streets and some buildings in Queen Mother Square are named after racehorses.

It began with a model railway which had outgrown the house and garden of Roland Callingham in the 1920s. Bekonscot, in Buckinghamshire, became the first model village and is still considered the best. It is of its time and encapsulates prosperous town life of the 1930s. Edwardian houses have Arts and Craft features and some are replicas of local landmark buildings. Besides the railway which is central, there are buses, canals, a castle, church and lido and even a small airfield. There is a small gauge railway enabling visitors to be part of the townscape. It has stood the test of time.

After this well-received talk, we trooped to the bar, eagerly thinking of future summer visits. Then to the main, decorated room for our Christmas dinner which was cheerfully served by a small team of very young-looking staff.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN 2024

at 2.15 p.m. at Tapton Masonic Hall unless otherwise stated

Thursday, 18th January: Talk by Rose and Alex Krzyz ‘Our Travels in Pictures’



Alex and Rose had an insatiable travel bug, until COVID came along and knocked it on the head. In this talk they attempt to show how their photographs rekindle the joy of travel and they talk about the different ways these photographic memories can be preserved. Alex is a Londoner born and bred; son of Polish refugees displaced during the Second World War. Rose was born and educated in Malta and only moved to London after marrying Alex 50 years ago this year. They are both retired science teachers who used to teach in London secondary schools. They moved to Sheffield, once they retired, because they had many visits to the place that was home to two of their children’s spouses. These visits soon dispelled their London-centric vision of Sheffield and they have, so far, spent 12 happy post-retirement years here.

Wednesday, 7th February: Talk by Stephen Marland of the Modernist Society – ‘What's Special about Concrete?’



With their use of concrete, flat roofs and jarring angles, modernist buildings seemed to be the epitome of what people didn't like about Sixties and Seventies architecture and many of them have already been demolished. However, in recent years there have been growing calls for these so called “brutalist” buildings to be preserved. Stephen Marland will take us on a tour of some of Sheffield’s modernist buildings including Park Hill and the Moore Street Substation and show us why we should revise our views about concrete.

Stephen is a speaker and tour guide for the Modernist Society which seeks to promote and preserve modernist buildings. His background is in teaching photography and working as a photographer and in retirement he is a researcher and writer.

Tuesday, 5th March: Talk by Rod Auton – ‘Chesterfield Canal History and industrial Heritage’



The talk will focus on the Chesterfield Canal – a journey from Chesterfield to the River Trent along this beautiful waterway, learning about its history, the restoration to date and the plans for the future.

Tuesday, 16th April: Talk by Dr Deborah Bullivant MBE, DL, EdD ‘Grimm and Co.’s Magical Approach to Helping Children to Write Stories’



Deborah is the Founding Chief Executive of Grimm & Co., a Yorkshire arts-based education charity built on a bedrock of research, that uses the joyful discovery of stories to support children's development of their socio-cultural literacies. Deborah's career spans all phases of education, primary as an educationalist, but with a firm belief in the power of the arts in breaking down barriers, unlocking potential and unleashing imaginations that build positive, confident narratives.

In March 2024, Grimm & Co. opens the doors of its new home, the world's first Emporium of Stories. This enchanting space will be home

to the Feastery (story-themed cafe), Book-Nook (independent book shop), the Apothecary to the Magical (story themed gift shop) with secret doors to writers' pads where story making and creative literacy activities take place with children, young people, families and teachers.

Deborah will tell the story of Grimm & Co.'s journey with visual illustrations and an opportunity to ask questions.

Tuesday, 21st May: Talk by Dr Jennifer Stephenson FRCGP – ‘Pharmacists and Physicians’

Jenny is first and foremost a GP, but is also a historian, author and speaker. She is well known in Sheffield and beyond for her fascinating lively talks. She is an absolute pleasure to listen to and will captivate any audience. We are delighted to welcome her to the Women’s Club, particularly as she has such a busy schedule.

Wednesday, 19th June: Visit to Newby Hall and Gardens



Our summer coach trip this year is to be to Newby Hall just outside Ripon. The Hall sits in 25 acres of spectacular gardens with herbaceous borders, rockeries and orchards. We plan to have an organised tour of the gardens and optional visit to the house which will be opened especially for us. As well as the gardens, there is so much more going on here. For example, the incredible dolls house, fantastic teddy bear house to say nothing of the miniature railway alongside the river. The gardens are primarily flat with clear paths and benches although the woodland walk is rather rougher. There is an excellent restaurant and delicious ice cream! A thoroughly super day out with something for everyone.

Tuesday, 16th July: Garden Party at Whiteley Woods Outdoor Activity Centre, Common Lane, S11 7TG. 2.00 – 4.00 p.m. with a talk on the Bloom Charity by Kate Evans

The venue for our Garden Party this year is the Whiteley Woods Outdoor Activity Centre, where we had a very successful Spring Lunch last year. Members and guests will be able to enjoy an afternoon of tea, cakes and conversation in the pleasant and extensive grounds of the Centre. If we are unlucky with the weather, there will be plenty of accommodation indoors. As an added attraction we will have a talk on a gardening theme. Kate Evans will tell us the story of Bloom, a Sheffield charity, a not-for-profit organisation that offers free therapeutic horticulture to women to help improve and manage their mental health in the three gardens they have across the city.

Kate is a former nurse who started as a volunteer at Bloom three years ago and is now a director of the charity with a paid role organising the growing of cut flowers which they sell at their flower shop on Chesterfield Road. She also works as a self-employed gardener.

Monday, 23rd September tbc 10 a.m. to 12 noon Coffee Morning

Our autumn programme for 2024 will start with an informal get together where members can meet up and exchange news after the summer. Guests are very welcome to join us and as, on previous occasions, we hope to have a stall for books.

OUR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS INCLUDE:

The Longer Walking Group

This group 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. Details are sent out a few days in advance so just ask to join our emailing list.

The Shorter Walking Group

This group meets at 10.00 a.m. on the first Tuesday in the month opposite 26 Riverdale Road for a short walk through Endcliffe Park to a local coffee shop. New members would be very welcome.

New committee members would be very welcome.

Newsletter No. 64 will be published in September 2024.