

ZOOM Meetings
Booked for 2.15 p.m.
Chat 1.45 p.m. to 2 p.m.
Notices 2 p.m. to 2.15 p.m.

Date	Speaker	Title
17 th June 2021	Adam Smith	Victorian Food and Dining

Jane Elliston

Geoff Short – Chair

As you will know, this is my first meeting as Chair of Mid-Bucks (Aylesbury) u3a. I am pleased to be elected to this role which has been very ably filled by Simon Reeks for the last 4 years.

My first thoughts must be to thank Simon for all his efforts over this time, especially in the last 18 months, faced with the difficulties of Coronavirus and the effects this has had on, not only our u3a group, but the whole u3a and other charities.

My thanks go also to the current members of our committee who have all signed up for at least 1 more year! They too have worked tirelessly to keep us going over this difficult period.

Finally, my thanks to all the group leaders and you the members for keeping faith with the group over these months.



As I say, I'm only just starting out as Chair and, as you can imagine, there hasn't been the usual hand over and there is a lot to learn – so bear with me if I make mistakes! Simon has promised to keep a watchful eye on me and I'm grateful for that!

Dave Rogers – Editor

Summer Solstice at Stonehenge

Nobody knows the purpose of Stonehenge; how it was built or who built it.

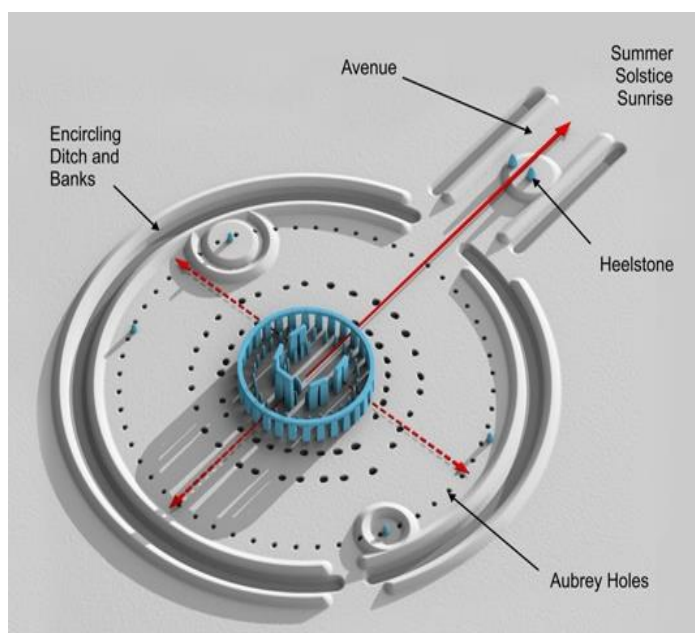
Beginning in 3000 B.C., the first Stonehenge was a circle of stones or posts within an encircling ditch and bank. All that remain are the Aubrey Holes. Experts estimate that about 200 people are buried on the grounds. Important funeral ceremonies would have taken place at this [Cemetery](#).



Modern DNA testing techniques show that the builders of 2500 B.C. came from Turkey so could not be the same group as built the encircling ditch and bank. Stonehenge was made up of an outer circle of 30 standing stones called “sarsens”, which surrounded five huge stone arches in a horseshoe shape. There were also two circles made of smaller “bluestones” – one inside the outer circle and one inside the horseshoe. The sarsen stones (30 feet high) were all quarried from an area 15 miles north of Stonehenge near Marlborough. The monument’s smaller blue stones have been traced to the Preseli Hills in Wales- a journey of 250 miles away. Stonehenge was completed in 1500 B.C. – it took a thousand years to build in four stages.

One theory is that Stonehenge became a [Hospital](#) where patients were brought to drink the healing waters flowing from the spouts at the base of the bluestones similar to Roman spars in later years. The evidence lies in the discovery that some bodies in the cemetery are misshapen without traditional burial objects found with them. Another theory is that Stonehenge was a [Place for Festivals](#). Rubbish pits close to Stonehenge contain half-eaten food and no-other domestic waste as found at other henges. Maybe such festivals took place in a [Temple to the Sun or Moon Gods](#). Modern-day Pagan and Druid groups believe it is their right to worship in their [Cathedral](#). It wasn’t until the 16th Century that the key text of Druidry was transcribed showing that these Modern Druids were not around before 1500 B.C.

In 2500 B.C. the builders focused on assembling the rocks in such a way that at the summer solstice, the sun rises above the Heelstone and shines onto the center of the circle. The summer solstice is the longest day of the year and the time for completion of sowing crops. It is celebrated on 21st June. Similarly, the sunset on the winter solstice celebrated on 21st December (shortest day of the year) performs in a similar manner with the last sun’s rays reaching the center of the circle. Thus, Stonehenge is a [Calendar](#) linked to the study of the stars. On 21st June, Stonehenge can expect 2000 people to join the Druids but none on the 21st December. The latter date was likely to be more important as it was the time when ancient farmers killed their cattle – too expensive to feed them during winter even with a good harvest!



For me, the best theory is that Stonehenge is a [Stoneage Computer](#) calculating solar or lunar eclipses.

David Mummery – Secretary

Our website contains details of our activities and event schedules to take place. There is also a diary of events organised by the Thames Valley Network. I watched Mark Lovett's talk on "The British Prime Minister, a President in all but name". It was magnificent. Just shows what is available for entertainment.



Changes are made regularly but it also needs input from the groups and members to keep it lively and informative. It keeps members in touch with what is going on and any activities they may wish to be involved with. Please let me know of any content you may wish to be shown or any items you wish to be included.

We shall soon be meeting at the Community Centre and trips are being planned. Details of the holiday for 2022 are already on the website.

Would you like to try being Secretary or Membership Secretary or even running the Facebook page?

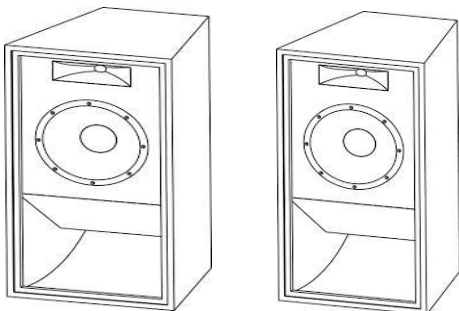
It's time for someone (you?) to have some fun. Grab the opportunity to work with me or another member to improve your group. Like exercise, it could be a lifesaver!

David Wilson – Treasurer

Having been in the position for nearly twenty years, I am retiring as the Treasurer at the next AGM at the latest. **We need to find a new Treasurer to take over from me.** It is far from an onerous position and requires no accounting skills, just common sense and being able to use simple Excel spreadsheets. The records consist of a cash book on a spreadsheet the totals from which are copied onto the annual accounts at the year end. The other regular job is to write cheques as necessary and to bank receipts from subscriptions etc. If you are interested, I am happy to talk it through with you and will be available to help with any questions after you have taken over.



HALL ORGANISER



We also need somebody, not necessarily the same person, **to take over the setting up of the sound equipment at monthly meetings and to liaise with the Council if necessary.** This entails carrying the loudspeakers, which are quite heavy, and which I can no longer do because of health problems, plugging them in and putting the microphone out ready for the meeting. Liaising with the Council is usually once or twice a year and is no problem as we have a very good relationship with them.

Jasmine Reeks – Membership Secretary

MEMBERSHIP

Membership stands at 145.

Birthday Greetings to all you June babies. Enjoy your other celebrations too.

YARN CRAFTERS

It is still a question of wait and see. Whether there is 21st June re-opening and with the rise of variant delta, I am still undecided.

LOCAL HISTORY

Our next Local History Zoom talk is Thursday 24th June, when Roger King will present a talk entitled Aylesbury in the Not-Too-Distant Past. We will send out a Zoom connection to Local History Members but other members who wish to view, please contact Simon and he will send it to you as well.

HARCOURT ARBORETUM, OXFORD LODGE, PEACOCK GATE Nuneham Courtenay OX44 9PX

Harcourt has long been a family favourite. We have visited it in all seasons and all manner of weather, well maybe not a blizzard. The highlights are the bluebell wood in spring, wildflower meadow in summer (see photograph) and the Japanese acers in autumn. Our latest visit, earlier this month was on the day it rained. Never mind, as we took water-proofs and plastic bags for sitting on whilst we enjoyed our flask of coffee.

If you are a member of the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, have an annual pass or are registered disabled, you do not have to pre-book at the moment. Just show your pass or ID. If none of these apply, you need to book an entry slot and pay on-line (see the website). Facilities, at the moment, include portaloos at the top of the car park, not the pleasant ones in the gatehouse but when you must ... There was also a coffee and snack trailer, which may have been open because it was half term.



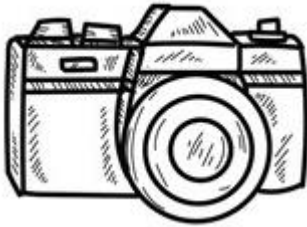
The arboretum is now owned by Oxford Botanic Gardens but it was part of Nuneham Estate at Nuneham Courtenay, the grounds of which were designed originally by Lancelot Brown. The estate was purchased by the Harcourt family in 1712 and the new house built in 1756 when the village was demolished and moved. The first trees were planted in the Arboretum in 1835 when Edward Vernon-Harcourt commissioned landscape designer William S. Gilpin to design an 8-acre pinetum. He was responsible for the grassy glades lined with rhododendrons interspersed with shrubs and conifers. The estate was sold to Oxford University in 1948. The Oxford Botanic Gardens were given the 4.6-acre site in 1963. It grew steadily as more land was acquired and is now a site of 130-acres, the last 50 of which were purchased in 2006. I remember them planting the trees in the foreground of this photograph. The estate, not including the Arboretum was sold by the university in 2017. In 2020 a proposal surfaced to quarry gravel on the estate!

In the Arboretum, apart from the stunning flora, peacocks roam. This one was photographed amongst the Rhododendrons. These are not domesticated but are said to be descendants of the birds introduced by the Harcourts in the 19th century from the Indian sub-continent. Recently, pig families have been used to clear parts of the grounds. Sadly, by the beginning of June the sow and her grown-up piglets “had gone on their holidays”. It is unknown if a new porcine family will be in situ later in the year. On one occasion we saw deer in the grounds but the fencing has been improved.



Jane Elliston

PHOTOGRAPHY



The photography group will resume monthly meetings on Thursday 8th July 10.30 at Jane’s house. Please bring photos of last month’s topic and your favourites taken during lock down.

If you would like to visit the group with a view to joining, please contact Jane on 07788494380.

ARTISTIC COFFEE MORNING

If you dabble in creative arts or not but are interested. Come and chat over coffee with like-minded people and be inspired.

First meeting is on Tuesday 6th July 10.30 at Jane’s house. Just bring yourself and 50p for refreshments.

For further information contact Jane on 07788494380

Hey Covid, don't make us sad,
Try this vaccine so we'll get better.
Remember to stay away from our hearts
and then the world can be so much better.

Hey Covid, don't be afraid,
You had your time but now it's over,
A Mayfly gets only just a day
You've had a year, its' time to crossover.

And any time you feel the pain, Covid, refrain
Don't fight against what you know is karma
for well you know that it's a fight that you must lose
For no one can win against big Pharma

So, make your peace and let us out, Covid, don't shout
Be happy with all the time we gave you
And you know it's not all you, Covid you fool
Your time came from half the stupid humans.

Hey Covid, don't make it bad
Be well-mannered, no hateful letter
A whimper is all that we will expect
And then the world will be so much better

Claire Nevins

Can you recognise the Song that was used for the rhyming pattern?



Members will be encouraged to share their knowledge, and contribute ideas and themes for the group.

Tony Vickers

“Don’t make an exhibition of yourself”



Designed to be the world’s showcase for arts, scientific progress and manufactures, the Great Exhibition opened in Hyde Park, London on 1st May, 1851. Covering over 30 acres, it was the world’s first mega event of 100,000 exhibits (no prices were displayed) from nearly 14,000 exhibitors under the enormous glass roof of London’s Crystal Palace. Over forty countries brought their products to the world’s first international industrial exhibition, where they were viewed over 141 days by more than six million visitors. The exhibition was a vast showcase for nations and colonies of the physical power and material wealth produced by the Industrial Revolution. For many, it was a celebration of human ingenuity and scientific skill, symbolising peace, progress and prosperity.

Nevertheless, from inception it soon became a major Victorian squabble that rumbled on well after its closure in October. Constant disputes arose over finance, the site and the building. Serious objections were raised over the choice of Hyde Park; many, such as *The Manchester Guardian*, considered the whole scheme unworthy, while others wanted it moved either to Dublin or The Isle of Dogs. Various church leaders offered severe rebukes to those tempted by materialism and the gods of gold, silver, glass and iron. During its construction (it was a ‘last-minute’ design and housed the world’s first paid for flushing toilets – hence spend a penny) it was seen as *The Great Temple of England*. There were constant fears over cost, design, safety and purpose. Critics saw it as nothing better than a glaring, flashy, vulgar fair and an opportunity for drunken sexual encounters. In essence, it was the first example of a prefabricated building, three times longer than St. Paul’s Cathedral. Supporters described it as ‘A blazing arch of lucid glass, leaps like a fountain from the grass’.

Exhibition space was at a premium, with Britain taking 50% and rows broke out over which nations should be invited to exhibit and what they would place on display. The French persistently attacked the organisers for not including paintings as exhibits. Fox Talbot, the pioneer of photography, fell out with the organisers and his scientific work was relegated to a minor side show. Never before would so many people be gathered together under one roof for such a long time. Many foreign countries emphasised luxury, splendour, imperial power and wealth. The crumbling Ottoman Empire used the exhibition to enhance its image as a modern luxury culture.



With the impact of the 1848 European revolutions still firmly in the mind, fears grew of notorious Russian and German revolutionaries sneaking into London to link up with local insurrectionists. Russia attracted a barrage of criticism, with British exhibitors forecasting they would bring in cholera or spy on their technologically advanced products (mechanical harvesters, photography). Nursing a serious image problem, Russia was described ‘as a barbaric people living in arctic cold and ruled by tyrannical despots. Many of their 376 exhibitors either appeared late or never arrived. With no ‘track and trace’, numerous crates of expensive exhibits disappeared from dockside or en route to the site. Conspiracy theories blossomed; over 13,000 extra troops and 2000 additional police stood by. The Tsar (Nicholas I) feared for his family’s safety.

Strict bans were placed on alcohol and gambling within the exhibition amid fears of uprisings and insurrection. Stories emerged of masses of foreign visitors ordering specialist native dishes designed to shock and spread fear; Chinese eating stewed dog; Tartars swallowing quarts of mare’s milk; chieftains ordering ‘baked young woman for two, followed by cold missionary for dessert’. The unprecedented onslaught of foreign visitors meant serious attention was given to travel arrangements, accommodation and security.

The only day most working people had free was Sunday, and the Exhibition was not open on that day. In mid-June, as admission prices fell to 1 shilling on weekdays, a group of 800 agricultural labourers and countryfolk from Lingfield in Surrey came as day visitors ‘in rural attire, with faces and manners to match’.

The next day, on 16 June 1851, amid considerable panic, a balloon carrying two passengers narrowly avoided crashing into the transept of the Crystal Palace. Despite the prophets of disaster, the exhibition was a resounding success. Out of its profits (over £200,000) and initiatives blossomed the V & A, the Natural History Museum, Imperial College, The Albert Hall, art, design and scientific education and mechanics institutes. It brought a massive boost to London’s tourism industry, to railway travel and the excursion business, to exports and advertising as the new consumer culture (especially food, fashion and furnishings) and globalisation ‘took off with a bang’.





Postscript – London Remembers

You can still visit the footprint of the original building in Hyde Park, marked out by plaques near South Carriage Drive (Editor). The information board you can see in the photo has a plan showing the location of the 5 different plaques that commemorate the Great Exhibition; all laid into the ground, 4 at the 4 corners of the building: [NW](#), [NE](#), [SE](#), and [SW](#), and this one, in the middle of the southern facade where the entrance was. These plaques and the information board are a [permanent public art project](#) by the artist Virginia Nimarkoh, unveiled in May 2011.

April Smart – Family History

The Family History Group has resumed meeting once a month in person. We share our progress and brainstorm our dead ends together. After seeing examples of what some of us have found through having a DNA test, another member has sent off a sample and is waiting for her results

Please bring your notes, old family photos and certificates, if you have any, to hand. Between us we currently have membership of Ancestry and Find My Past which we can consult during meetings.

Our next meeting will be at 2.00 on Wednesday 7th July at 22 Neyland Drive, Aylesbury HP19 9SA

Further Information from April Smart - apriltruscottsmart@gmail.com or telephone 07816 295223

Simon Reeks – Gadget Group

Another month of increasing activity as the various Covid related regulations have eased. Members have kindly donated two lovely devices, a Sony laptop (which I have refurbished and passed on) and a Dell "All in One" PC which I have yet to tinker with (this is where the computer is built into the screen so is a lot smaller, if you're interested, please get in contact). I've written before about resisting the "convenience" of subscription auto-renewals - the McAfee antivirus annual subscription for a member was going to be £70, I sourced the IDENTICAL software for £7!



If you need any help or advice about (non-Apple) gadgets, please contact me (01296 482735 or reeks@fangio.co.uk).

Next Contribution Date Friday 9th July
Contributions Welcome from ALL Members