

AUTUMN RAMBLINGS: Labouring Martyrs, and Miners Who Painted

Many of us will remember seeing, 24 years ago, Bill Douglas's *Comrades*, on Channel Four television if not during its short cinema run. It was a beautiful, moving, idiosyncratic film telling the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, their grievances, arrest, trial, transportation to Van Dieman's Land and eventual return. Before our short autumn trip to Dorset, with Tolpuddle on our itinerary, my wife found that the VHS copy we had made at home had long since died, but after our visit to the small but splendid Martyrs Museum in the village we bought a copy of the recently released DVD and watched it again in the cottage that evening.

What a story of exploitation by landowners, duplicity and entrapment by the judiciary, Judas-like betrayal and perjury, versus comradeship, sacrifice,* suffering, endurance, the power of public protest and eventual triumph over all adversity, is there! As part of the "general movement of the working classes for an increase of wages", Tolpuddle labourers led by farm labourer and lay Dissenter (Methodist) preacher George Loveless (played by Robin Soans in the film), met their "masters", who promised that they would be paid the same as others in the district, a promise witnessed by their Anglican vicar (Freddie Jones), who undertook to see that it was kept – a fact "this hireling parson"(1) later denied. On discovering, however, that these others were being paid ten shillings a week while they were still paid but nine, soon reduced to eight, on the advice of one sympathetic local magistrate (Michael Hordern) Loveless and other representatives met the chief magistrate, James Frampton Esq. (Robert Stephens) and were rebuffed, their wages subsequently reduced to seven and then six shillings. Loveless having read "accounts of Trade Societies" they then "resolved to form a Friendly Society among the labourers" (1) – i.e. a Trade Union – to pursue their palpably just cause. Two months after this Frampton and other local magistrates had a placard printed issuing a "CAUTION" against "Labourers" being "induced...to attend Meetings, and to enter into Illegal Societies or Unions, to which they

bind themselves by unlawful oaths....,” thus to be “Guilty of Felony, and be liable to be Transported for Seven Years.” This “Caution” was applied retrospectively to the Tolpuddle Six, together with a mutiny and conspiracy law designed years before to suppress the naval mutiny at the Nore. In fact, such a society was not illegal, but oath-taking was. Loveless, however, was very much a man of peace, unlike those involved in the Captain Swing riots, which had so frightened the landowners a few years earlier. The six having been found guilty at the rigged trial and asked if they had anything to say, he passed the following written statement to the judge:

“My Lord, if we have violated any law, it was not done intentionally: we have injured no man’s reputation, character, person or property: we were uniting together to preserve ourselves, our wives, and our children, from utter degradation and starvation. We challenge any man or number of men to prove that we have acted, or intend to act, different from the above statement.”

This was “then mumbled over to a part of the jury, in such an inaudible manner, that although I knew what was there, I could not comprehend it.....Two days after this we were again placed at the bar to receive sentence, when the judge...told us, that not for anything that we had done, or, as he could prove, we intended to do, but for an example to others, he considered it his duty to pass the sentence of seven years’ transportation across his Majesty’s high seas upon each and every one of us. As soon as the sentence was passed, I got a pencil and a scrap of paper, and wrote the following lines:

<i>God is our guide! from field, from wave,</i>	<i>God is our guide! no swords we draw,</i>
<i>From plough, from anvil, and from loom;</i>	<i>We kindle not war’s battle fires;</i>
<i>We come, our country’s rights to save,</i>	<i>By reason, union, justice, law,</i>
<i>And speak a tyrant faction’s doom:</i>	<i>We claim the birth-right of our sires:</i>
<i>We raise the watch-word liberty</i>	<i>We raise the watch-word, liberty,</i>
<i>We will, we will, we will be free!</i>	<i>We will, we will, we will be free!” (1)</i>

Three or four years later, as a result of a nationwide campaign, they were. And from the funds raised they were able to obtain leases to farm land in Essex, in and near Greensted. They continued to campaign,

supporting the Chartist movement, so that, under pressure from the local squirearchy and the vicar, five of them, including Loveless and his family, emigrated to Canada, while only James Hammett (a young Keith Allen in the film) returned to Tolpuddle, where his grave has a place of honour in the churchyard.

George Loveless was clearly a remarkable man, self-educated and very well read. Had he been around seventy years later it is not hard to imagine his dedicating himself to the education of fellow labourers and founding a branch of the Workers' Educational Association!

Those who have seen Lee Hall's play, *The Pitmen Painters*, based on William Feaver's true account, may remember that the WEA class in the mining village of Ashington, having had lectures from University dons on topics such as Geology and Evolution, had hoped to move on to Economics, but there being no tutor available had reluctantly agreed to classes in art appreciation. Today Art Appreciation and History classes are our most popular offerings. In the play, George Brown, colliery worker, antiquarian and class secretary, receives the new tutor, Robert Lyon, very coldly, doubtful about his academic standing. When Lyon, realising that his lectures are meeting with bafflement and incomprehension, comes up with a practical alternative to his "contemplative method", a "specially devised course...on how to draw and paint" as a way into appreciation, Brown, a stickler for "The Rules", initially objects that he will have to consult the "Regional Committee" first. "At that time the WEA was all theory: nothing which could possibly be interpreted as being of any use for making a living could be taught." However, Lyon got his way and the group of Pitmen Painters thrived. Nowadays although there is no such hard and fast rule, branch courses are still principally for interest and normally non-utilitarian and branch members are more likely to be retired than currently in work; but the WEA also runs Community, Skills for Life and Second Chance to Learn programmes that attract funding and can help people looking for work. In the play Brown at first refuses to allow his young, unemployed nephew to join the class; nowadays we would welcome younger members: "whether you are a little older than

18 or just a little younger than Methuselah” we offer courses for you. And nowadays, of course, branch secretaries are much more welcoming.

Ron Marks, Chairman

(1) From George Loveless’s “The Victims of Whiggery: A Statement of the Persecutions experienced by the Dorchester Labourers; with a Report of the Trial; also a Description of Van Dieman’s Land and Reflections upon the System of Transportation” (published after his return in 1839). (T.U.C.)

*The spy gave false testimony against James Hammett, who had not been present at the meeting, mistaking him for his married carpenter brother, John; James kept quiet to protect him and was duly sentenced.

Afterthought

In September my wife and I were privileged to join Chelmsford Branch on a visit to the recently re-opened and expensively restored Strawberry Hill House, the extraordinary Eighteenth Century home built in Gothic style by Horace Walpole. It is well worth a guided tour, and I'm sure that somebody who was in the party will want to write a report for the next issue of EF NEWS. The contrast with the humble homes of the Tollesbury Six couldn't have been sharper!

Ron

ROY MARDELL

It is with much sadness that we have learnt of the death of Roy Mardell, for many years Secretary of Thaxted Branch. We would like to convey our condolences and very best wishes to his family and all who were close to him.

NEW ROLES IN THE REGION

As you will all know there has been a major re-structuring of both the national and regional WEA over this summer. This is to enable the WEA to respond to the challenges of our constantly changing adult learning environment and in particular to ensure our educational ideals are not lost in an increasing mechanistic and materialistic society. This has been very challenging for us all, particularly as it has coincided with the retirement of Carolyn Daines after her 19 years of devoted leadership of the Eastern Region/District. She has helped ensure that there is a structure for us to move forward in a stronger fashion led by our Regional Educational Manager, Phil Coward, whose role has been changed to include many of the tasks previously undertaken by Carolyn. We also have a new Association Education Director, John Williams, who now represents Southern and Eastern Regions at the Association's Senior Management Team Meetings.

I have been fortunate to be appointed as the Adult Learning Manager to lead the Cultural Studies Strand which means that my role now has a wider focus as I oversee the Branch programme in the whole region more strategically. My new role will mean working in a new management team (RMT) under the direction of Phil Coward. Although I am still based at home I am now generally working in Cambridge for one day a week to enable us to manage the region and as a team to look at how we improve what we do already and look at new developments. The management team includes, two other educational Area Learning Managers, our own Sarah Moore (Community Involvement & Projects) and Gorete Downey (2nd Chance to Learn and Accreditation) In my Cultural Studies Team I have two full-time organisers who will now report to me: Margaret Todd working in Norfolk, Suffolk and , with me, in Essex and a new organiser to be appointed in October to cover the three shires, Cambs, Herts and Beds.

This enables me to have a stronger voice for the Branch programme over the whole region and allows me to work together with my team to ensure that we are providing the support which you all need in order to maintain our vigorous exciting programme of courses. I will be

attending management meetings to help the Branch programme link up with all of the other work we do in the Region and be working with the other members of the RMT, Jacky Grainger (Finance) and Jacqui Taylor (Operations) , to ensure that wherever possible we make finance and administration as easy as possible for all.

As you probably know I am keen to broaden the curriculum offer and to find new ways of working more collaboratively in order to sustain the geographical reach of our programmes. Although my main task is now not as an organiser I will be helping out when needed e.g. at course planning time, as the east of the region is so large. In these tasks I am aided by the administrative staff team and particularly Beckie Bowman who is maintaining her oversight of the Essex Branch programme. I will also be maintaining my strong links with the Essex Federation and, as part of my new role, looking at how we can support our volunteers more to do what we already do and also to investigate new ideas.

May I take this opportunity of thanking all of you who have helped me during my first two years of working for the WEA as I have learnt a tremendous amount from being part of this large dynamic Branch county. These are exciting times and not least because the region will celebrate its centenary in 2013. I am looking forward to continuing to work with you all.

Tina Nay

RAYLEIGH BRANCH

Spring 2011

Representative of the People

Tutor: Roger Cooke

We travelled from the Saxon origins of Parliament to the 1920s -a long journey in 10 weeks. Each week we had a handout of relative facts for each reign and then in the session we discussed various aspects; who represented the people, how often did they meet, what was their purpose and why did our Parliament survive at times when European governments were collapsing?

It was surprising to learn that for many centuries Parliament wasn't important. The absolute ruler was the Monarch, who met more regularly with his advisors. But when they needed more money for wars Parliament was called and voted "yes" Some monarchs realised the importance of occasionally inviting barons and landed gentry to a sitting of Parliament and so keeping their support. Other never called a parliament, to their cost e.g. Charles 1 did not call one for 11 years.

After the Restoration many things changed. Parliament met more regularly and had more power. MP's eventually were paid and we saw the rise of the two party system, Whigs and Tories with the Labour party emerging at the end of the 1890's.

The Industrial Revolution was another milestone. The new towns of the north had no representation in Parliament and changes were made. Over the years there have been many reform proposals but still no perfect solution has been found to make Parliament truly representative of the people.

Beryl Porter

Hidden Treasures

Tutor: Graham Slimming

During the Spring term, Graham Slimming guided the Monday class, by means of words and pictures, through a tour of hidden treasures. Each week, Graham took us to a different surprise destination. Our Grand Tour started in Liverpool, at Studley House. Here we saw the

19th century paintings and Chinese porcelain collected by Victorian merchant, George Holt.

The following week, we visited the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, 40 acres of beautiful Sussex countryside that is home to a collection of historic buildings.

We stayed in Sussex and visited Berwick Church, which contains extraordinary murals painted by members of the Bloomsbury set. Our next virtual trip was to Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. This is the former home of curator Jim Ede and houses his eclectic collection of artworks, pictures, furniture, glass, ceramics and natural objects.

Graphic art and architecture were the subjects of the following week, as we visited the London Transport Museum in Bethnal Green.

Week six took us to the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich. This was another eclectic collection, where we saw beautiful art nouveau jewellery, British modern art and world art. British sculpture was the next treasure, as we toured the Henry Moore Foundation at Perry Green. Week eight was totally different, as we visited the American Impressionist colony at the Florence Griswold Museum in Connecticut. We returned to Britain, to the Watts Memorial Chapel at Compton, Surrey. This tiny chapel pays homage to the arts and crafts movement and was built by local people.

Our final week was the Brighton Pavilion, hardly a hidden treasure. We looked at the Mogul and Arab influenced fantasy that forms the exterior and studied the Chinese and Regency inspired interior.

There was something for everyone in a course that touched on different genres of art. Graham revealed his hidden treasures in an informative, entertaining manner. There were plenty of ideas for summer trips and further discoveries.

Gill Sutherland

Appreciating First World War Poetry

Tutor: Ron Marks

After Christmas, there were only 12 in our class, but we had the privilege of studying the poetry of the First World War under the able guidance of our tutor, Ron Marks.

One of the great pleasures of the class was listening to recordings of beautifully read poems, written by the well known poets such as Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg as well as some lesser known poets. We saw how their poetry developed. The work of young poets, some barely out of their teens, was rapidly honed to poetry of great expression and maturity. The naivety, patriotism and glorification displayed at the start of the war developed rapidly into graphic descriptions of the horrors that they experienced. Many of the poems had a tragic beauty, although written with bitterness, rage, sadness or even trench humour.

The class studied how poetry is especially suited to the communication of intense feelings and experiences.

Ron put a great deal of thought and work into each week's lesson, using carefully selected sound recordings, video clips and a generous selection of handouts. Many thanks to Ron who sensitively guided us through the profound and important poetry of the first world war.

Gill Sutherland



COLCHESTER BRANCH
The Ground Beneath Our Feet
Tutor: Ken Newman

“This is what I have seen.”

the late Professor Derek Ager, geologist

Summary

In order to understand the Earth beneath our feet we need a knowledge of the nature and origin of rocks and the minerals they are made up of. These are areas of study in geology called petrology and mineralogy. The latter is fairly apparent and is the study of substances, such as quartz and calcite, which are inorganic, crystalline and have a fixed composition and, when aggregated, form rocks. Petrology is the study of rocks as rocks, that is, what they are made of and how they originate. Minerals are the building blocks of rocks and cannot be divided by mechanical means into smaller components. They are the same chemical composition throughout. With the proper tools and effort, sometimes quite considerable, rocks can be separated into their constituent minerals. Some kinds of rock, such as limestone, are made up almost entirely of one mineral, calcite. Others, such as granite, are made up of several minerals.

We were to cover in the first term the global setting of rock and mineral formation, the order of mineral formation, mineral morphology and the physical properties and identification of a range of important minerals. Then, in the second term, the formation, recognition and classification of igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks.

Mineral Formation

Beneath the Earth's continental crust and the ocean crust there is a region known as the lithosphere. It is this region which is broken up into what are called tectonic plates which are moving and, in many cases, colliding. When an oceanic plate collides with and descends beneath a continental plate (subduction) there is the accompanying formation of magma, molten rock. An example is when the oceanic Nazca Plate collides with the South American Plate. At great depth, what were surface rocks melt and can reform into granite. This is hotter and lighter than the overlying rocks and it rises up through them. At the other side of the Pacific, the collision of the other part of the Pacific

Plate with the Asian Plate has given rise to an island arc - Japan. When an oceanic plate is dividing and expanding, as is the Pacific Plate, basaltic magma erupts on to the ocean floor and gabbro magma intrudes into the oceanic crust. Continental plates in collision, as is the Indian Plate with the Asian Plate, result in mountain building, orogeny. In this case the Himalayas. This cycle of mountain building by ocean plate growth and decay followed by continental plate collision is known as the Wilson Cycle.

Mineral associations in igneous rocks

The fundamental control on the mineral composition of any rock is the nature of the material from which it has formed. For an igneous rock, this is the magma, a liquid mixture of various chemical elements. As the magma begins to cool, its composition determines which minerals will crystallize out first. As progressively lower temperatures are reached, other minerals will crystallize, while those minerals which crystallized at the higher temperatures may cease to form. The temperature ranges over which the essential minerals of igneous rocks can form during cooling of a magma have been plotted. Where there is a gap between the temperature ranges of two minerals, those minerals are only exceptionally found together in igneous rocks. Thus, olivine is never found with quartz and very rarely with alkali feldspar. In contrast, minerals whose ranges of crystallization temperatures overlap are commonly found together, so that olivine, pyroxene and calcium-rich plagioclase feldspar form a predictable mineral association. These associations are the basis for most igneous rock classifications and are of help in examining the mineral.

Mineral Forms

There are thousands of different minerals but the number of crystal forms that they can take is much fewer. Mineral forms are grouped into seven systems, within each of which are a number of crystal classes. Our tutor gave us an imaginative and memorable way of describing these seven Symmetry Systems of Crystals.

The Cubic System can be pictured as a sugar cube. If we then stick two cubes together then we have the Tetragonal System. Flattening this out into a matchbox shape gives a picture of the Orthorhombic System and a stack of envelopes askew in two directions illustrates the Triclinic

System. The Hexagonal System can be pictured as a pencil (unsharpened) and the Triclinic System as a “Toblerone” packet.

All of the external physical characteristics of minerals that we see are a consequence of the internal atomic arrangement of their chemical make up. There is a basic “unit cell” for each mineral which is repeated throughout. As an example, rock salt is made up of sodium and chlorine atoms and it has a unit cell in the form of a cube. The sodium and chlorine atoms alternate in a simple arrangement.

The major rock forming minerals, however, are silicate compounds, that is, the “silicate” part is made up of one silicon atom surrounded by four oxygen atoms to form a strong tetrahedron with the silicon atom at the centre and an oxygen atom at each corner bonded together. They can combine with another characteristic element, usually a metallic element. These silicate units can form a single group, a single chain, a double chain, a network or a sheet. Additionally, more than one element can be combined with silicate groups.

Practical Work

Right through the course we were given the opportunity to get “hands on” experience of looking at mineral and rock samples. We worked in groups of four or five students using our developing skills of observation. We did not become “virtuosi of the magnifying glass” but we got pretty good at it. A small magnifying glass and a field reference book (Ken’s “half-price” book) were well used. Just the feel, the heft, of a sample gave a good general indication of what it was with its colour, lustre and fracture. Black or white samples can be deceptive, however. Do not taste white samples!

At the end of the course we had a test (mock groans from students) where we were able to use a wider range of techniques including, for example, crystal form, grain size, the streak on a tile, hardness and the presence of fossils. Also, to identify carbonate rocks and minerals, we applied a dilute HCl test. As we worked through the list of characteristics, we could relate these back to what we had learned.

Our tutor had arranged a visit to the Sedgwick Geological Museum at Cambridge, which is world class, and of special interest is the minerals section. We were met by Dr. Riley who gave us the background to the

museum and, by special arrangement, gave us access to their building stones collection.

Essex Rocks

We can now look at Essex rocks. Flint and chert are both forms of silica. Flints were formed in the Upper Chalk strata from the decay of the silica skeletons of sponges. Then the layer of silica gel was squeezed into the cavities left by dead sea creatures to form irregular shapes, having a black core and a white cortex, the outer layer. When struck, they have a conchoidal fracture giving sharp edges. Chert is formed, additionally, in other strata but has a jagged fracture. Sarsen stones come from a strata of sand and gravel laid down possibly around 50 million years ago. One form is very hard and has had the grains cemented by dissolved silica, silcrete, in warm conditions, the only conditions under which silica dissolves. The other form has a hard outer skin of iron-rich silica with soft yellow sandstone inside. There are various ideas on the origin of the word sarsen. Two from Old English are sarstan, trouble stone, and salstan, great stone. The precise geological history is still debated on their formation, hardening and break up by cambering, folding. The most likely time of movement is the Anglian glaciation for transportation and solifluction, slumping, into valleys. This leads groups of them to be called “greywethers” as they resembled flocks of sheep. (See also Essex Journal Spring 2011: K. Newman). Puddingstone is a conglomerate of well-rounded pebbles in a very hard quartz-cemented matrix so hard that fracture passes through the pebbles. Septaria come from the strata called the London Clay formed in the Eocene, 55 million years ago, when the climate was sub-tropical. They are claystone concretions and have internal mineral-filled cracks, or septaria. The mineral is usually calcite (calcium carbonate).

Around Colchester, there are examples of the uses of the rock found in Essex. The gatehouse of St John’s Abbey has a fine example of knapped flints, known as “flushwork.” Colchester Castle walls have a great deal of septaria nodules and there is an unusual sarsen stone in Greenstead. An example of puddingstone made into a Palaeolithic axe is in the Castle Museum. Further afield, there is the use of clunch (hardened chalk) in Saffron Walden Church.

Conclusion

A fair amount of work to get through, appreciate and think about. All helped by group practical study of hand specimens. This approach is what always has attracted students to Ken's courses. There is always something very worthwhile to be got out of each session, but one needs to put in some thought and effort to get the reward.

With an inquiring mind and an educated (to some extent) eye, we became aware that the world around us can be a really interesting place. So-called dull rocks become a source of inquiry and knowledge. Minerals become even more amazing and their internal structure a fascinating world of symmetry.

One cold morning, Ken said that he was now going to show us our local, free, rock museum. So we put on our coats, told the coffee ladies that we would be back soon for a hot drink and left CMC. Ken stopped us just outside in Maidenburgh Street and said, "Here you are!" Looking down we saw blocks of red Shap granite, Leicester granite and other examples that we had walked over day after day and not noticed.

In Ken Newman's series of courses over the years we have been shown by illustration and example how to look at things with a better informed eye and use what we have learned to see what we have not noticed before. The ground beneath our feet, the seas around us and the skies above are now a great deal more interesting and enjoyable.

Ray Hedley

FAREWELL

Ken Newman is having to give up being a regular tutor for the WEA. How do you say "Thank you" to such an inspiring teacher? Elizabeth Crockford, a long-time student, had the lovely idea of giving a surprise, informal, class party for Ken and his wife at her home in Colchester. Almost all of the students from the last course came. It was a splendid, memorable day thanks to the kindness and very generous hospitality of Elizabeth and her husband Neil.

LITTLE WALTHAM BRANCH
Wildlife and Conservation in East Anglia
Tutor: Fred Boot

This was a fascinating series spanning time from the ice ages to the present day. It was presented with many slides, photographs, diagrams and charts (sometimes as many as 80), which opened up the topic for us in a vivid way.

The glaciations of land carried out U- shaped valleys, chiefly seen in the north of the country, and eventually the British Isles separated from Europe and the English Channel emerged. A mixed broad-leaved woodland evolved as the land Williams

dried out with the retreat of the ice sheets under warmer conditions.

These woodlands are the real woodland habitats of which very few survive to this day. Most of our present woodlands would be described as ‘alien’ shaped by man with introduced species as he occupied the land some 5000 years ago , first as hunter-gatherers, and then as sedentary farmers, the land shaped to his needs. By clearing spaces in the woodlands, fields emerged for crops and meadows for grazing livestock. Coppicing controlled the trees and furnished stakes for fencing and building huts, and large trees such as oak, elm and ash, were allowed to achieve standard height to supply timber for later house building or ships.

Boundaries were needed to contain open spaces for husbandry and ditches, hedges and dry stone walling were set up. Some of these ancient boundaries can still be traced to this day. Flora of all kinds developed, both in woodland and fields. Unfortunately we have lost many of our ancient wild flowers through over-use of chemicals and poor management.

Other open spaces were lowland heaths and commons; the common lands managed for the good of villagers allowing foraging for animals. Wetlands – rivers, ponds and man-made canals were necessary for the irrigation of crops and the watering of animals and humans. Most of Eastern England is very dry because the rains which blow in from the

Atlantic are almost spent when they reach us. A lot of useful wetland has been lost through the drainage of the fens.

We discovered other amenities by digging underground. There are no great limestone areas in East Anglia, except for the chalklands on the Essex/Cambridge borders. Excavation has revealed good deposits of gravel and these are found widely in our area. When gravel is exhausted it may fill up with water and create a new wildlife habitat or, unfortunately become an infill site for waste disposal.

As the wild spaces slowly decline because of increasing need of new towns and buildings, so it is essential to preserve our footpaths, grass verges and churchyards to continue to promote safe havens for the decreasing wild flower species.

The County Wildlife Trusts help with this preservation and interested people can volunteer to become surveyors and recorders of various designated sites. Our remaining wildlife heritage is precious. It behoves us to work for its preservation lest we lose it forever.

This course was followed by a very interesting field trip to Chafford Gorges near Dartford. Fred explained the geology of this former chalk quarry and pointed out how nature had slowly taken over after most of the chalk was extracted. Now the Gorges are managed by Essex Wildlife Trust and many orchids can now be found flourishing which together with the areas of water and an excellent visitor centre make for a very pleasant and instructive visit.

Eveline M Wyatt and Margaret Williams

MAPLESTEADS BRANCH

Encounters with Famous Scientists Tutor - Roger Bawden

Encounters with famous Scientists' may not immediately suggest the possibility of a field trip for WEA members incorporating some serious retail therapy, and lunch in a pub with a ceiling decorated with naked women. However, encouraged by our Tutor, Roger Bawden, the Maplestead Branch set out undaunted. Undoubtedly the convenience of Park and Ride made a trip into Cambridge an easy option, and an enjoyable and enlightening day unfolded. Never ones to miss a treat, we met in the coffee lounge of John Lewis, and fortified by cappuccinos and brownies, we set off for the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences. An introductory talk was given by one of the curators as we stood beside the beautiful giant Stegasaurus at the entrance; he pointed us towards the Darwin Gallery, and we spent an hour exploring the comprehensive collection of fossils rocks and plant materials collected by Adam Sedgwick and others.

Keen to avoid culture overkill, lunch was the next essential. We walked past the famous Cavendish laboratories to the 'Eagle' where Crick and Watson had made the famous announcement of their discovery of the structure of DNA; we inspected the plaque that marks the table at which, six days a week, they habitually sat, working out their calculations and consuming vast quantities of beer. The fish and chips was excellent, and the wine flowed, but sadly no such brilliant scientific breakthrough ensued. The Eagle was also a great favourite with RAF pilots during the last war, and we admired the graffiti that covered the ceiling, done with cigarette lighters and candle stubs apparently; if you look very carefully, you can detect the outline of a naked woman, sketched in lipstick. Some of the men in our party were good at this.

After lunch, a short walk took us to the Whipple Museum, which had fascinating and user-friendly displays based on the History of Science. Most people then chose to go on to the Scott Polar Museum, which had opened in 2010 to great acclaim, and was shortlisted for Best Museum

(only beaten by the British Museum's '100 objects 'project.) There is a fascinating range of exhibits, including artifacts from Scott and Shackleton's expeditions, and a wonderful display of Inuit dolls.

We are so lucky to have such amazing resources on our doorstep, and many of us said that we would be making a return visit before too long.

Jill Newton

Sue Peters

Marion Stenberg

LAWFORD AND DISTRICT BRANCH

Report for 2010-2011

The Autumn Term started with Mr Simon Doney, his subject was Victorian Britain - Workshop of the World, which was all about the development of industry. This followed on very neatly from last year's course with Dr. Susan Lomax on the-Department Store. Mr Doney's slant was more on the industrial side and it explored the effects on social issues such as poverty, health and the workplace, etc. A very worthwhile course and very applicable to life today.

We had a bad start to 2011 as our tutor Mr David Cooper had to retire due to a recurrence of ill health. At very short notice Tina Nay was able to contact Mr John Walker (from Suffolk) who was able to start later in January. His subject was Timber Framed Houses in East Anglia, 13th to 17th Century. This course was made all the more interesting by the enthusiasm of the tutor. We can now all identify the different types of timber constructed medieval houses and the introduction of chimneys! This was illustrated by a trip to Valley Farm at Flatford during our last session. In all a very informative and enjoyable year.

Mrs. Joyce H. Wrobel

COLCHESTER BRANCH

Coming in from the Cold

Tutor: Peter Dale

Traditional Irish Music

Introduction

Peter Dale gave another imaginative course in Spring 2011 which members joined in and very much enjoyed. This was on how “Art” or classical composers had used the music of people on the margins: the Jews, the Gypsies, the Irish and the Blacks.

This note is about the great variety of instruments that the Irish have used and absorbed into their tradition.

The major instruments used in traditional Irish music, dating back to the eighteenth century, include fiddles, harps, whistles, flutes, and bagpipes. Of these instruments, the uilleann pipes and the harp are the most distinctly Irish representatives, as the other instruments were found in similar forms in the rest of Europe. Accordions, melodeons, and concertinas were introduced to Ireland in the late nineteenth century, and have since become central to the tradition. Other instruments were adopted in the twentieth century. The inclusion of traditional and recently adopted instruments in the performance of Irish traditional music reflects both its conservative nature and its contemporary dynamism. The cultivation of older instruments underscores the important relationship between contemporary performance and Irish history. The relatively recent incorporation of instruments from other traditions, such as the guitar, bouzouki, and synthesizer, also reveals an old pattern, the ability of the tradition to absorb new ideas and become more vital because of it.

The Instruments

The uilleann pipes belong to the bagpipes family of reed instruments having a reservoir of air in a bag made from the hide of an animal. The bag is inflated either by a mouthpipe or by bellows. Other main parts of the bagpipe are the chanter and the drone pipes. The chanter is a fingered melody pipe made of wood, cane, or bone, with a single or double reed at its upper end. There are three drones which can give a

chord. The political and social repercussions of the Great Famine, along with the introduction of mass produced melodeons, and concertinas, from Germany and England, helped to bring about a decline in uilleann piping throughout the late nineteenth century.

Harps have been part of Irish culture for over a thousand years. The earliest extant Irish harp dates back to the late fourteenth century and is now housed in Trinity College in Dublin. This instrument is similar in construction to those made in Ireland for eight hundred years. These harps were strung with up to forty five brass and wire strings and made with a body of high density wood that was often highly decorated. The harps of today are much more lightweight than the old wire strung variety, but similar in shape and construction. Like the older instruments, they range in size from the knee held variety to large floor standing instruments. They are usually strung with nylon (or gut) with wire in the bass, containing an average of 34 strings.

The contemporary Irish fiddle is identical to the standard European violin. Although there is evidence of bowed instruments in Ireland since the eleventh century, the modern violin or fiddle probably came to Ireland from Scotland in the seventeenth century. With the decline of the harp and uilleann pipes, the fiddle became the preferred instrument for traditional music in many parts of Ireland and this preference continues to the present day. Irish fiddling styles differ considerably from one region to the next, and because Irish music is essentially melodic, ornamentation of the melody is partly what distinguishes the playing of one player from another.

The concertina belongs to the free reed family of instruments, including accordions and melodeons, all of which are popular in Ireland today. ? The concertina is a hexagonal, button operated, bellows type "squeeze box" played with the fingers from both hands. It was developed in 1829 by Charles Wheatstone in England. Wheatstone's instruments became known as the English concertina, and were characterized by having the same note sound on both the push and the pull.

For many players, the tin whistle provides their entry into the world of Irish traditional music. Because of its cheap construction, portability, and accessibility, the tin whistle, also called the penny whistle, or *feadog stain* in Irish, is often a child's or beginner's first instrument. It

dates back to the nineteenth century in Ireland, although whistle-type instruments date back to antiquity. The immediate precursor of the instrument was a wooden flageolet that appeared in the late eighteenth century. Each whistle has six finger holes, similar to the chanter of the uilleann pipes, but pitched an octave above. Overblowing (or using more air) produces a second octave. The newest addition to the family of whistles is the low whistle, which plays an octave below the standard whistle in d, and it has become extremely popular as a concert instrument.

The Irish flute is a wooden, transverse instrument similar to the European baroque flute. Little is known about its history in Ireland until the eighteenth century, although it was already very popular throughout Europe. It was not commonly played in Irish traditional music until the middle of the nineteenth century when mass production in England and Germany made it more affordable. Because of increased demand, flute makers began producing instruments in Ireland in the mid-1970s, most based on the old English designs from the nineteenth century. Makers today in Ireland, England, and the United States offer varieties of flutes ranging from keyless models to instruments with up to eight keys.

The guitar, banjo, mandolin, and bouzouki are the most recent additions to the tradition, aside from electric instruments. The bouzouki, a Greek long necked lute, was adapted to Irish music in the 1960s. The guitar was used to accompany some of the early recording artists. At first it was used primarily to accompany songs, but by the early 1970s, it was used to accompany tunes.

The bodhran (pronounced "bough-rawn") is a frame drum consisting of a shallow hoop of wood, covered on one side with a stretched animal skin and reinforced with cross pieces of wood, cord or wire. It is played with the bare fingers or with a wooden beater. One hand does the beating, and the other is used either to hold the cross pieces or to press or even slap the skin from inside the drum.

The piano has played an accompaniment role in the performance of Irish music since the early 1900s. Its use has often been restricted to recordings, ceili bands, and Irish dance orchestras, commercial contexts in which harmonic accompaniment was required. Electrical keyboards

and guitars often fulfill this role today. Piano accordions were popular in ceili bands, but are less favoured in traditional music today.

The Tradition

Traditional musicians must not play all the time, with all the instruments going at once, like present day ceili bands. Ideally, it would begin by stating the basic skeleton of the tune to be played, this would then be ornamented and varied by solo instruments, or by small groups of solo instruments. The more variation the better, so long as it has its roots in the tradition, and serves to extend that tradition rather than destroy it by running counter to it.

Ernie Edmunds

EPILOGUE

WEA, for a good part of its hundred years or so, looked on the tutorial method as “the jewel in the crown.” Students embarked on a main line of study and, with guidance from the tutor, selected the series of courses term by term that would help them along this line. With an emphasis on active participation. Parts of WEA still do this, an example being the programme of music courses Peter Dale has conducted at Colchester Branch. The first class was relatively small (for Colchester) but as word got round subsequent courses filled the room available and sometimes had to be moved to larger accommodation. Some students did not take the whole series but there was a continuity that everyone could appreciate. Ernie Edmunds’ two essays (the previous one was in Spring) are one student’s reflective and perceptive response to the journey of exploration.

Our tutor has many courses on music in his portfolio created for a wide audience and he never seems to run out of imaginative ideas. The Colchester students were disappointed not to be able to share their experience and enthusiasm with others.

Over the years, there were, among many others, the symphony, the concerto, instrumental combinations and influential composers. There were “milestones” in music such as Monteverdi’s opera “Orfeo”, the sonata form and classicism. I do not think much of importance was left out of the programme - there is not space to mention everything. We discussed how art and literature had inspired composers and how

composers had used “music from the periphery.” The music of despised peoples, Jews, Irish, Gypsies and Blacks with such beneficial consequences.

When we were ready for it, we took on “What is music for?” All our classes were pretty lively but this one even more! We witnessed many wonders in music such as Ravel’s Piano Concerto in D for the left hand. A double wonder of composition and playing which “made one proud to be human.”

Peter Dale had quoted Cavafy, the Greek poet, and one of his poems “Ithaca” catches the mood of our journey:

Ithaca

“When you set out on your journey to Ithaca,
pray that the road is long.

.....

Pray that the road is long.
That the summer mornings are many, when,
with such pleasure, with such joy
you will enter ports seen for the first time;
stop at Phoenician markets,
and purchase fine merchandise,
mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
and sensual perfumes of all kinds,
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
visit many Egyptian cities,
to learn and learn from scholars.”

Ray Hedley

WRITTLE BRANCH

The Writtle Branch continues to run three sessions per term and the 2011 Spring Term was very well supported.

Representation of the People

Tutor: Roger Cooke

We have enjoyed several history courses tutored by Roger and were delighted with his **new course** on the development of Parliament. We like being involved in the discussions that are part of any course led by Roger and he provides good handouts. We learnt that we have the oldest surviving continuous parliament and unlike France and America our Constitution is not written. We discussed the implications of this throughout the course.

Back in the time of Henry 3rd Parliament met only to confirm the taxes needed to raise money for wars and they met briefly and infrequently, when and where the King chose. We learnt how long it took for the balance of power to transfer from the King to the Parliament.

We covered the way the Civil War affected party allegiances over the subsequent years.

We moved on to the emergence of the Lords and the Commons and the development of Parties. The political cartoons lampooning or vilifying the opposing party were entertaining.

The ‘mother of Parliaments’ survived repeated reforms and became a successful institution.

Music at the Movies

Tutor: Chris Green

It has been some while since Writtle has held a music course and we felt this would have a wide appeal. How right we were. Our tutor covered a huge variety of music starting with the early music scores developed to accompany ‘silent’ movies. We learnt how the different studio systems in the USA, Russia and Britain affected the conditions for composers. He illustrated the course with a fascinating variety of clips so we watched old classics including some Russian clips. We

identified subliminal musical messages in a Nazi propaganda film, and then enjoyed the work of the GPO Film unit producing early documentaries like *The Night Mail*. The course included case studies on specific composers, Russian, Jewish émigrés and the more recent composers like John Williams, James Horner and Howard Shore.

Chris ensured our involvement by encouraging volunteers to discuss a film, or a genre, which had a personal significance and he provided the clips for the contributions on, for example, animation, *Dangerous Moonlight* and *Dr Zhivago*.

It ended with the realisation that the status of ‘film composers’ has changed enormously and their work is now properly valued and played regularly in the Concert Halls.

Russia in Revolution 1900-1930

Tutor: Ted Woodgate

Writtle WEA was delighted to welcome Ted back after his course on Essex Agriculture in the 19thC. This course took us from the position of Russia in 1900 through to the impact of World War One when the Tsar took charge of the military, leaving the Tsarina in charge of Russia, and the eventual murder of the Royal Family. Then we moved on to the Civil War and Communism and ultimately to the impact of the Revolution on the contemporary world.

We learnt about the lives of Marx, Trotsky, Lenin and Stalin and their impact on Russian History. Ted was an excellent speaker and the course was very interesting with good handouts and very good DVD excerpts.

Summer Outings

The first trip in May was an ideal follow up to the previous term’s talks by Fred Boot. We toured the Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve. It provides an amazing and varied habitat because gravel extraction left a variety of soils, ponds and watercourses. The wild flowers were plentiful and the birdsong so prolific that it was hard to pick out the renowned nightingales.

The photo shows members of our group enjoying a talk by the Head Gardener of Cressing Temple on our second outing. This lovely walled

garden has restored features and appropriate planting with an orchard and wildflower meadow. We went on to explore the magnificent Tithe Barns and to enjoy a delicious cream tea.

The third trip was further afield to the amazing National Trust 'Arts and Crafts' house of Standen in West Sussex. Built by the architect Philip Webb for a London solicitor and his family it retains many original features, fabrics and wallpaper designed by Webb's friend William Morris. By using local materials for the hard landscaping in the garden the Arts and Crafts theme continues. The ladies of the house were skilled embroiderers and much of their work survives. A most enjoyable day and our thanks go to Veronica Dilley for her organising skills.

Mary Roberts and Brian Adams

MALDON BRANCH

"Recent Developments in Agriculture"

Tutor: Andrew Nottman

Following our Autumn course on "People Power", Andrew Nottman's course on "Recent Developments in Agriculture" was keenly awaited. The pros and cons of organic food and sustainable living had been fully discussed in the previous course so class members were well primed. As a pleasant surprise three local farmers signed on, giving a welcome breadth of opinion and experience.

Andrew's experience as a lecturer at Writtle Agricultural College followed many years of practical farming and gave us an exhaustive overview of modern farming. Developments in machinery, from the eighteenth century to the present day, were followed by similar vast changes in crop and livestock breeding. A survey of feed and pesticide chemistry, plus transport changes, led inevitably to the place of organic farming in the industry's future.

Finally the thorny topic of E.U. subsidies left us all somewhat bemused at their complexity. All in all, none of us will ever look at breakfast on the same light again! A course to recommend to any Branch.

Max Earnshaw

RAYLEIGH BRANCH

Autumn Term 2010

Hyenas in Petticoats

Tutor: Valerie Morse

“Hyenas in Petticoats” is a quotation from Hugh Walpole’s writings and Valerie took the life stories of 10 women who challenged the attitudes and conventions of their times to try and change the lives of women who often lived very difficult lives. Petticoats obviously indicate the 10 women and hyenas, although not particularly flattering, does indicate the tenacity and perseverance applied by these women in trying to change the laws and attitudes of those in power in their time.

Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, the Pankhursts and ,more recently Jennie Lee, are all well known and need no introduction. Mary Queen of Scots was the earliest and you may wonder why she was chosen. Probaly because she was a continual thorn in the flesh of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth 1st and as a Catholic considered by Elizabeth’s advisors to be a threat to the throne.

The remaining 5 hyenas are less well known. Mary Wollstencraft, born in the mid- 1700’s became one of the first women to get books published, her first being Thoughts on the Education of Daughters in 1786 after a monumental struggle as education for women was a radical idea. Caroline Norton, born in 1808, wrote political articles and after leaving a violent husband and losing custody of her children and any right of seeing them campaigned endlessly for mothers’ rights until eventually a bill was passed in Parliament allowing mothers custody provided that they were of good character.

Prostitutes in Liverpool became the cause for Josephine Butler who lived from 1828-1906 and earlier this year I learnt from the radio that there will be a dedication window for her in Liverpool Cathedral. Annie Besant, born in 1847, was probably the least well-known. She realised the appalling conditions and general poverty experienced by poor city people, particularly with their large numbers of children. She toured the country and published articles about these problems. Eventually she

moved to India doing the same work where she died in 1933, She was possibly the first pioneer to advocate birth control.

Our final hyena, Daisy Countess of Warwick was a local Essex girl, living most of her married life at Little Eastern, near Great Dunmow. She was quite a character, had numerous affairs including one with Edward VII. Her husband, Duke of Warwick remained faithful to her despite acknowledging that 2 of their 4 children were not his. Daisy was very involved in politics and social work.

It was a really successful course with 34 attendees including new faces , younger members and 6 stalwart men who were keen contributors throughout the course. Valerie was an excellent lecturer making all the classes stimulating and entertaining.

Jean Baldwin

Ragged Schools

Tutor: Stephanie Madden

Stephanie stepped in at the last minute when the WEA were let down by a previous tutor. We had a good attendance for the class and I believe this shows that we all got a lot from it. The main sources used were readings and audio from Oliver Twist which was very atmospheric plus a booklet published by the Copperfield Road Ragged School Museum. In addition to this we were provided with a lot of interesting source material including photocopies of admission registers showing the types of work done by the parents (if the children had any) many photographs and copies of publications at the time both for and against the setting up and running of education for the poor. We were made aware from this of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor as it was seen by those who were not as poor.*

The main movers before the education act included Lord Shaftesbury, who was a powerful political ally, Dr Barnardo, who was hands on and made himself a real nuisance with the rich and influential until he got what was needed, and Charles Dickens who made people aware, through his fiction, of the facts. The State's attitude was certainly influenced by these people and their works as the crime perpetrated by the poor and the uprisings across the channel were issues of the day that needed to be faced, not to mention the Demon Drink. The Milleniumist

Church had their own agenda to save souls and the schools themselves first arose out of existing Sunday Schools where it was necessary to learn to read in order to study the bible. When Barnardo and Shaftesbury became involved the numbers of children were increased by offering food, teaching hygiene and giving the opportunity to practice it, and eventually teaching the basic knowledge to give children the opportunity to be employed and to break the circle of poverty. We had a field trip to the Limehouse Ragged School and were able to appreciate the size of the premises and be very impressed by what could be achieved in such a small space. The Victorian era is just about two lifetimes away, almost in touching distance, and the Museum and this course made it feel very close and many of us felt that issues now could be influenced by studying what was done in those times.

The course left me with a real admiration for Barnardo, who, however controversial, was dealing with issues of the time with all the passion and talents at his disposal.

If you get the opportunity I would recommend both the course and the museum

Dorothy Hopwood

Samuel Pepys, His Life and Diary

Tutor: Paul Strickland

In the Autumn term, a class of 18 studied Samuel Pepys, His Life and Diary tutor with Peter Strickland.

Pepys led a full and interesting life and from 1660 -1669 he kept a diary, written in a form of shorthand. He wrote with candour and humour detailing everything from the most mundane details of his life to the great events of state.

The diary is such a huge and wide ranging work that we concentrated on certain aspects, studying a different topic each week. Some of the topics studied were, Pepys work at the Navy Office, the Dutch Wars, his relationship with his wife, other amorous encounters, some of the key characters who appeared in his diary and his obsession with his health. Studying Pepys Diary leaves you feeling that you really know this ambitious, complex man, who through ability and hard work increased his station in life and his personal wealth. He could be mercenary but he

grasped all that Restoration London had to offer. He took a great interest in science and indulged his love of fine clothes, wine, women, food, music and the theatre.

Led by Peter, Pepys writings gave us a vivid and personal insight into a fascinating life.

For a more detailed account of the course, may I recommend the article written by Richard Banks in the latest Essex Federation News Sheet. Thank you Richard.

Gill Sutherland

HATFIELD PEVEREL BRANCH

It's a question often posed in our WEA branch committee – “What shall we do in the summer?”

This year it was suggested that we could look again at the village tithe map – a very precious document carefully stored in our local church. So we would use St Andrews church hall, and perhaps offer a tour of the church itself. After that – ideas came fast and – like Topsy – the day “just grew”.

So, one Saturday in August, the Hatfield Peverel WEA group were in the church hall, with the Tithe Map for 1831 spread out for us all to look at.

The day started with a talk from Jane Andrews who told us what life would have been in the village of Hatfield Peverel at that time, especially for the “ordinary” people – farm workers making up the majority of the population. There were several landowners in the parish, and Jane told us a lot about the charitable funds which were set up with the Church, to help those who were unable to work. There was a “poor house” in the village before the Union Workhouse was built in Witham, and we heard extracts from letters asking for help, and records of what was given.

Next we all looked at the tithe map with Jim Page. Stored in the church, and about 10 feet square, it was hand drawn, on large sheets of paper, carefully grafted together. Jim Page talked us through it, with markers carefully placed so that we could orientate ourselves. The “main” roads

were then as now, each field is marked with a name, and there is also a ledger documenting who owned which field, who used each field, and what its use was. Jim had also obtained copies of maps held by the local records office, based on the tithe map, showing the land owned by each of the local “big houses” and what the land was used for. Everyone was fascinated by this, with its fine details, and another picture of the village in the 1830s soon emerged.

After lunch, picnicking in the grounds of the church and vicarage, we went into the church to hear Ivor Smith talk to us about the history. It had been built in the eleventh century, as a priory cell, as part of lands given to Ranulf de Peveler, husband of Ingelrica, a mistress of William the Conqueror. The original building was the traditional cruciform shape, but the tower collapsed after a fire, and was never rebuilt. The original nave was used as the priory and parish church. The priory buildings were demolished following the reformation.

After a walk around the outside of the church, looking at how it had changed over the years, we went back inside with Myra Wilkins to look at the heraldry. Many of us were surprised to learn that what we had always taken for granted – windows with coats of arms set into them, and the many plaques and memorials – gave much information about the local families, and their lives and families.

The final part of the afternoon was to hear Margaret Joslin talk about life in the village during the last fifty years, and how things have changed. We learnt about the brickworks which used local clay. She described the process through a year, from digging the clay to the final production of bricks, and reminded us that The Terrace, a row of houses almost isolated from the village by the building of the A12 bypass in the 1960s, had been built using these local bricks. The Terrace was finally demolished as part of the recent road improvements. Several of the audience were able to contribute their own reminiscences of how things were and it was a most enjoyable discussion.

The day was a great success, and everyone went away having learnt a great deal about the village we live in, and how it has developed over the centuries.

Lesley Naish

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