

Retired Staff Association

Newsletter

March 2016

Issue 37

I wish all the readers a very Happy New Year - not sure whether you think this is too late. Since the last issue the weather has been very wet but not too much snow in the Coventry and Warwick area.

Those who read the last Newsletter or were present at the AGM will know that Issue 36 was to be my last. Finding a replacement seems to have hit a few snags but a new Editor takes over from the Spring lunch. To avoid loss of continuity I agreed to keep going for this issue. Although the new Membership Secretary took over after the AGM, Bill still receives some cheques from those who have not caught up with the news but I'm sure things will settle soon.

In addition there have been changes in the University; Professor Stuart Croft took up his appointment as Vice-Chancellor and President on February 1st and I am sure all the WRSA wish him a successful term of office with the University going from strength to strength. Sadly a great supporter of the WRSA, Mr Ken Sloan the Registrar, will be leaving the University at the end of July. Another of our recent speakers is on the move; the first Dean of the Warwick In London activity will be Abhinay Muthoo. He will stand down as Head of Economics once his successor has been appointed.

Volunteers came forward to lead the 2015 walks but Kay Rainsley would be delighted to get some new Members to organise walks in 2016. There are a number of blanks on the Calendar on page 18. Please note that Sue Beech is deputising for Kay until May, more of this on pages 9 and 14.

The link to the membership rates, which shows the different costs and level of memberships of the sports facilities is: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/sport/memberships/staff/>.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
AGM, Lunch and Talk	2
Music Scholarship winner	6
WRSA Bursary Winners	8
Walking Group News and Reports	9
Visit to Cardiff	15
Christmas lunch	16
Membership Secretary Report	16
Women of Warwick WI	17
Summer Cricket	17
Farewell	18
Calendar of Walks 2016	18
The WRSA Committee	19

Dates for your diary

Walks see page 18 for details

18th April, Spring Lunch, Scarman House.
Speaker: John Clegg F.R.C.S. (formerly Orthopaedic Surgeon, Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust): "Rotary Polio Surgical Camps in India".

10th May, Visit to London, The Imperial War Museum's Churchill War Rooms. **CANCELLED**

10th October, AGM and Autumn Lunch, Scarman House.

AGM, Lunch and Talk, Scarman House,

12th October 2015

The WRSA functions that have a lunch and interesting talk on the agenda are popular with the membership and when the AGM is added this makes the event even more inviting. The 2015 AGM was no exception and 98 Members (this is the maximum number that Scarman House can accommodate) indicated they wished to attend. It was a lovely autumn day so everyone was in good spirits.

The afternoon started with the AGM in one of the meeting rooms. Joan Cole, Chair of the WRSA, welcomed all those who were present and apologies for absence were noted. Joan thanked the hard working committee and gave special mention to Bill Prichard who was giving up the role of Membership Secretary after 10 years of service and Elizabeth Prichard who would be stepping down from editorship of the Newsletter. The Minutes of the meeting are published separately.

Following the AGM WRSA Members returned to the ground floor for lunch in the Courtyard room. As usual the Staff of Scarman House put on a very tasty buffet lunch and were very attentive to the needs of the diners. Once replete everyone returned to the meeting room for the talk. Joan Cole welcomed the speaker, Professor Mike Shattock, who was known to most of the people present as a former Registrar of the University.



Since Mike retired from the University of Warwick he has been a Visiting Professor in the Centre for Higher Education Studies in the UCL Institute of Education where he was the founder of the MBA in Higher Education Management. During the last 16 years he has received a number of awards and recently received a fifth Honorary Degree, the latest from Ghana, where apparently the receipt of the award was quite a memorable experience.

Mike Shattock thanked the WRSA Committee for inviting him to speak and to introduce his latest book, "The Impact of a University on its Environment". The book was published as a contribution to the University of Warwick's 50th anniversary and all the proceeds go towards helping students in need. Copies may be purchased from the University Bookshop.

Mike started the talk by explaining that the impact of a university on its environment should not be measured simply on the basis of the effect its expenditure made on the local economy. The economic approach, which has tended to dominate institutional impact studies, has been too narrow and tells nothing about the social, educational and cultural impact or the manner in which a university can inject an innovative, modernising and creative spirit into a community.

The two questions he posed were:

1. What has been the impact of the University on Coventry and Warwickshire and on the wider West Midlands over 50 years?
2. Has the University met the aspirations of those in Coventry and Warwickshire who campaigned for a university in the 1950s and early 60s?

His talk concentrated on the first of these questions.

For two decades from 1945 Coventry was a 'motor car boom town' with the automotive industry accounting for 35% of the City's employment. However, the skills base employed in Coventry was rather low compared with other sections of the automotive industry based in Birmingham and the Black Country. Coventry's prosperity peaked in 1960, when the bid was made for the University. Its economic and social character was quite different from that of Warwickshire which depended on farming and tourism.

There has been a considerable shift in the economies in the last 50 years. The economy of Coventry has declined steeply from the time the University was established while the economy of Warwickshire (mid and south but not the north) has risen to a level of affluence comparable to that enjoyed in the most prosperous parts of the country outside London. In Coventry the economic output per head of population was 8.5% lower than the national average and Nuneaton and Bedworth (north Warwickshire) are 35% lower, figures which contrast sharply with Warwick district which has a figure 17% higher than the national average.

Of course, the University has had an important economic role in both local authority areas because it is a large employer and its spending power has become a major element in the region's economy although it has not yet been able to rectify the imbalance. However, the University offers a great deal more than this 'passive' contribution. Three particular areas where the University has demonstrated a proactive role in addressing local and regional economic issues and the development of a knowledge economy are the Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG), the Warwick Business School (WBS) and the University Science Park.

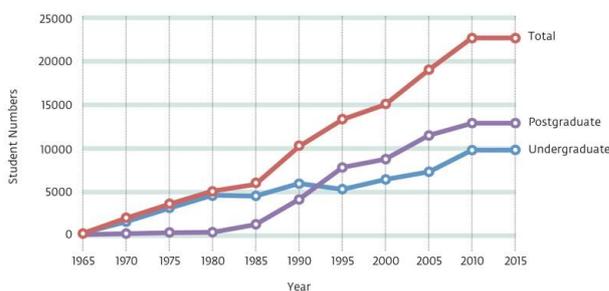


Figure 1. The growth in student numbers taught on the University campus 1965-2015

During its 50 years the University has experienced steady growth in contrast to the decline and volatility of the industrial environment. The growth in student numbers (now 23,000 excluding MBA distance learning and WMG students taught overseas) has far exceeded the expectation of the founders. This is not atypical for this period

because of the general expansion of UK higher education from 4% of the relevant age group to almost 50%. What singles out the University is the fact that the postgraduate population exceeds the undergraduate number as shown in Figure 1.

In parallel with this growth in numbers the role of the University as an employer has become more important. In 1987 it was the 10th largest employer in Coventry; by 2013 it was the third largest, only behind Coventry City Council and University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire. In 2015 its expenditure was over £500 million. This progress has to be measured against the life cycle of industry in the area. Of the companies that were prime supporters of the University when it was founded only two had remained in business in 1987; of the 15 companies which had the closest connections with the University in 1987 only 4 remained in the top 15 in a similar list in 2013 and 6 no longer existed.

The decline in the automotive industry was in no small part due to poorly qualified management and a lack of R&D. A report published by the CBI in the late 1960s indicated that in the whole of the UK automotive industry there were only 20 employees with PhDs and only 15% of senior managers were qualified engineers or technologists. The industry has

changed significantly with WMG at the heart of the revolution. In 2014 more than two hundred Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) R&D staff were working jointly with WMG on the Warwick campus. £150 million is being invested in a National Automotive Innovation Centre (NAIC) adjoining the International Manufacturing Centre (IMC) building. This represents a long term commitment between JLR, Tata Motors, WMG and a network of supplier companies. The impact of WMG and WBS has accelerated the development of an active community of SMEs which give vitality to the local area and the region. Over 3000 alumni from the WBS graduate programmes live or work in the region contributing to a vibrant SME culture as well as to both private and public sector enterprises; nearly 50 of them work for JLR. The development of SMEs has also been strengthened by the Science Park with its 130 science and technology based tenants and its outreach programmes like the Minerva Network which comprises 158 'Business Angels' distributed in seven centres throughout the West Midlands. WMG is contributing to the production of a trained workforce at all levels, PhD, Master and Bachelor degrees. In addition it has created two University Technical Colleges known as the WMG Academies, in Coventry and Solihull, each training 14 - 18 year olds, from the area, to enter the engineering industry.

The sociologist Richard Florida in his book, "The Rise of the Creative Class", analyses the factors that encourage urban communities to be innovative including the ability to attract, cultivate and mobilise creative people. Florida would not have found many of these factors in Coventry or Warwickshire in 1960. At the heart of the process, he describes, is the presence of a major research university performing cutting edge research, attracting graduate students and encouraging companies to locate nearby. Such a university attracts people not just engaged in science and technology and the arts but creative professionals in business, finance, law, healthcare and related fields. Mike suggested that the evidence provided in his book demonstrated that the University had amply fulfilled that role.

The output from high quality research has an international dimension. The more a region reaches out to engage with wider communities the more competitive it becomes. An example of the benefit of internationalisation was the introduction of the Tata group to the West Midlands by WMG. In addition this internationalisation has transformed the student profile; in the last 35 years the number of international students has risen from about 200 in 1980 to almost 6000 in 2015, a change paralleled by the increase in international staff, now 33% of the academic community. The influx of these staff and students represents a considerable accretion of talent to the community and a widening of social contact. This together with the University's partnerships with universities in Melbourne and New York has made it a global knowledge hub for the region.

In addition to its academic role, the University has played an important part in the day to day life of the community over the last 50 years. This is the result of three activities which were not envisaged until after the founding of the University; the Warwick Arts Centre, a programme for Continuing Education and the provision of a close association with local schools. The driving force for the Warwick Arts Centre was the first vice-chancellor, Jack Butterworth. The Warwick Arts Centre could not have been funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) so private funding was essential. Plans to take the idea forward coincided with the establishment of the May 29th Charitable Trust, a body set up by Miss Helen Martin who lived in Kenilworth, about 1 mile from the University. The focus of the Warwick Arts Centre was to attract an audience from a wide area outside of the University whilst at the same time providing space for the Music Society and a venue for student performance in music and in drama.

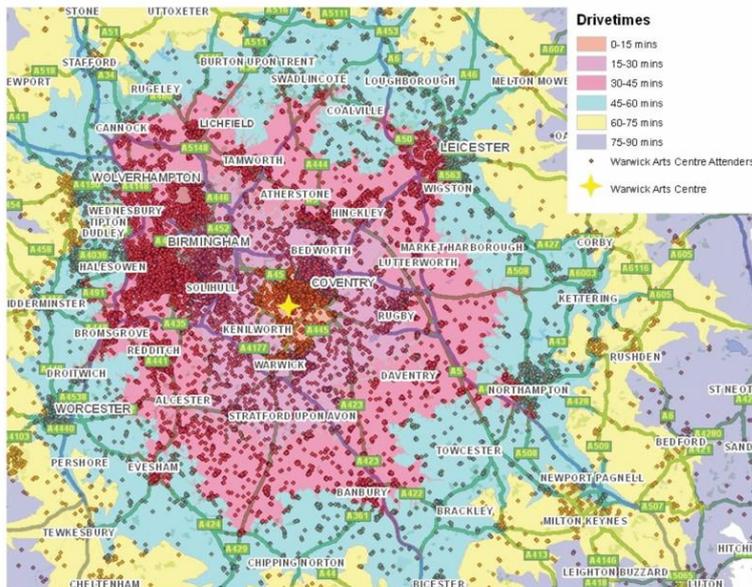


Figure 2. Analysis by the catchment area of 45 minute drive time where 82% of the Warwick Art Centre audience live

The Arts Centre attracts an audience of 250,000 a year with another 35,000 visiting the Mead Gallery, one of the largest modern purpose built galleries in the UK. About 82% of the Warwick Arts Centre audience live within a catchment area with a 45 minute drive from the campus, as illustrated in Figure 2. It has become the major arts venue outside Birmingham and considerably more accessible for the population of Coventry and Warwickshire.

Continuing education for adults has been provided in different forms since the beginning of the

University but has always been present. Currently it features in the Centre for Lifelong Learning which offers a variety of programmes attracting over 800 people a year. For many of those taking part it has been a life changing experience allowing them to proceed to professional careers.

The University maintains a close involvement with local schools. Most of the primary and secondary schools have contact with the University and several have Warwick graduates on their staff. Schools, along with the local community, make extensive use of its sports facilities. The swimming pool, indoor tennis facility and climbing wall are particularly popular with schools. The Mead Gallery organises sculpture tours and other events and engages with some 750 primary school children a year. Although, over the years, the number of teacher training places has been misguidedly reduced by the Government, it currently stands at about 300. Associated with this there are about 300 schools, spread over the Midlands, involved in teacher training partnerships with the University. Half of the cohort of newly qualified teachers from the University takes permanent teaching posts in Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull enhancing the quality of the teaching force. In addition over 300 serving teachers are taking part-time MA programmes in educational innovation or educational leadership.

Mike concluded his talk by returning to his original questions relating to the aspirations of the founders and the impact of the University on its environment.

On the first, the activities of WMG completely matched the ideas of the first person to propose a university in Coventry, the Bishop of Coventry, Dr Neville Gorton. Dr Gorton was Bishop of Coventry from 1943-1952 and an early advocate of a university of technology, a “marriage between industry and technology on one hand and academic knowledge on the other”, an approach strongly endorsed by major figures in the Coventry engineering industry. The UGC, however, discouraged the university from doing engineering and only conceded under pressure that it could do so if it restricted itself to engineering science, a position that the university was forced to accept until the establishment of WMG in 1980. The UGC also refused initially to support Business Studies but the development of a suite of self-financing programmes which ultimately led to the creation of WBS, rebalanced the academic agenda on the non-science side. Two other vocational areas originally proposed by early proponents

of the idea of a university were medicine and agriculture. The medical school was established in 1999; there is no school of agriculture but the takeover of the Horticultural Research Institute goes part way towards that wish. The founders never imagined though Jack Butterworth always did, that the university should become one of UK's leading universities, but it now comfortably occupies a position in the top 10 of 140 university and university-level Institutions. Legitimately it could be argued that the joint gifts of land to found the university represented the best investment that Coventry and Warwickshire ever made.

On the second, the arrival of the University has brought significant changes to the community. The economic performance of the area has been invigorated. Had the University not been founded when it was the area might have looked like the North East in economic terms. The performing arts would have remained concentrated in Birmingham and the community would have retained an inward looking culture lacking a drive towards modernisation and innovation. The University has increased employment opportunities not just because it is one of the largest employers in the area but because it provides a key source of trained manpower which both attracts inward investment and stimulates new economic activity. Its presence has enormously enhanced the potential for the area to compete in the UK's knowledge society.

After answering questions from the audience Joan Cole thanked Mike for his account of the University's impact over 50 years.

The audience expressed their thanks in the usual manner.

More details can be found in "The Impact of a University on its Environment" by Michael Shattock, ISBN 978-0-9570404-9-6.

Music Scholarship 2016

The University of Warwick awards a number of Music Scholarships each year from donations from individuals and groups. At the 2013 AGM the Warwick Retired Staff Association agreed to fund a Music Scholarship for 3 years. You may recall that the award last year went to a singer, an engineer who went on to gain a 1st class MEng degree. This year, the award has gone to a lady cellist from Malaysia, Shing-Ji Tan. I met with Shing-Ji in the Warwick Arts Centre on 15th January and we had a most interesting chat.

Congratulations on winning a Music Scholarship, please tell me a little about yourself and why you chose the University of Warwick.

I am from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and in my first year of a Mathematics degree at the university. I chose Warwick *mainly* for its maths department and the nature of the course, though I also favoured it being in a quiet area, away from a crowded city centre. I was told that of all the universities in the UK, without a music department, Warwick's music scene was one of the most active and had a beautiful concert hall.

Why did you choose the cello?

I play both the piano and the cello, though the cello is my main instrument and it is for this instrument I was awarded the scholarship. Although I started with the piano I knew I wanted to learn a string instrument. My piano teacher at the time said she thought the cello suited me well, so being a 6-year-old I followed her advice. I haven't looked back since. I started playing when I had just turned seven. I began to feel a lot more comfortable with the cello but I'm not entirely sure why. It could have something to do with the fact that the

cello is held so close to the body that it feels part of you, whereas the only contact you have with the piano is the fingers on the keys and the foot on the pedal.

How much music did you play in Malaysia?

When I was younger, I played in the orchestra in my music school, and in the school orchestra (with which I performed the musical *West Side Story*). My first real orchestral experience was with the MPYO (Malaysian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra). I was just 11 years old when I auditioned for a place in the cello section, not expecting anything at all, and received my acceptance letter when I had just turned 12. I stayed with this orchestra for six and a half years, right up until I left for the UK. During the latter half of my time with the MPYO I was the principal cellist. I loved the responsibility of pulling the section together to work and make music as a team. Most of our performances were held in the Dewan Filharmonik Petronas, a beautiful concert hall with brilliant acoustics, within the Petronas Twin Towers.



With this orchestra, I performed under the baton of a number of conductors, including Kevin Field (our conductor until he left a few years ago), Fabian Russell (conductor of the Australian Youth Orchestra), and my final performance was with the renowned conductor Benjamin Zander (Boston Philharmonic), with whom we performed Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony. We also toured nationally and internationally, including Singapore and Brisbane. I have also performed on a few occasions with the MPO (Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra).

This must have required a great deal of rehearsal time so was there time for anything other than orchestral work?

There were 3-4 music camps per year with the MPYO and in the middle of the longer camps we often had a chamber concert. As a result of this I have been a part of many chamber groups, ranging from trios and quartets to octets. I recently performed the Mendelssohn String Octet with other MPO Members, and the Vivaldi Double Cello Concerto as a soloist with the MPYO. In 2010, I joined a string ensemble called the Kuala Lumpur String Project (KLSP), led by MPO musicians; the Sunday rehearsals were often the highlight of my week.

How will the music scholarship help your musical development while at Warwick?

I joined the University's symphony orchestra the first week I arrived in Warwick, and performed in a concert with them last term. From there, I was invited to be a part of Warwick's performance of Mozart's opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, which I gladly accepted. We have been rehearsing hard, and there will be three performances of it next week, from the 21st to 23rd of January. I was amazed at how students who didn't even study music or anything related to opera performance were able to pull off such a huge production, but they did - and they did it well. I was particularly impressed at our conductor, a student himself, since being able to conduct even fairly well is no small feat.

To be honest, I mainly auditioned for the scholarship to ensure that I am part of the music scene at Warwick in more ways than just the orchestra. I wanted something that would be a lot more fulfilling creatively - to make music, and have discussions of musical interpretation, with other musicians. A few days after my scholarship acceptance email, I

received an email from another scholar concerning the formation of a scholar's quartet for which a cellist was needed. We have had a few immensely enjoyable rehearsals, and plan to have weekly rehearsals leading up to a concert by the end of term.

Your time management must be excellent. Before you left school you were doing a great deal of music making and rehearsals but you also must have found time for your studies.

Well, they pretty much balance out one another. I still remember what Benjamin Zander said to me during our masterclass (he's also a cellist); he had assumed I was pursuing a career in music, and when I told him I wasn't, he asked what I planned to study at university. When I said "mathematics", he laughed and exclaimed, "why, that's the same thing!" (This is the best reaction I've received to my degree choice.)

Sometimes people would think I do a bit too much music and as a result, I wouldn't be able to focus on my academic studies. Well, I did perform regardless of it being right in the middle of my exams, if it had been too much for me, I wouldn't be at Warwick! To me, music is an essential part of my life, that's why I went as far as to hunt for and buy a second cello here in the UK. At times, playing the cello - especially with the KLSP - was the only way to completely clear my mind. I felt like I was always able to walk out of the rehearsal room with every burden lifted. So they essentially balance each other out; I honestly would not be able to function without either music or mathematics. Yes, it was stressful, and I was often learning an entire term's worth of Chemistry from scratch in a week while cursing my recent string of rehearsals, but really I wouldn't have it any other way.

Would you like to add anything else about your interests?

I had a few months off before coming to Warwick, and I spent part of it in a violin-making workshop. I learned a little about violin-making and how to use the tools. I almost finished making my first violin, entirely by hand. All that's left is the setting up and varnishing, which I will do during my vacations. I have always loved making things (like arts and crafts), and violin-making was the perfect way for me to spend the post exam period.

WRSA Student Bursary Winner 2015-16

This year there were only two applications for funding, mainly owing to late advertisement following staff changes in the Human Resources office. Of these, only one was considered to meet the criteria for selection. Accordingly, an award of £350 was made to UniBrass to



support its planned event on 20th February 2016 in the Warwick Arts Centre. UniBrass is a student-run university brass band entertainment contest which has been run by the University of Warwick since February 2014. This year it will attract 19 brass bands from universities across the UK and a series of workshops will be run by

brass players with international reputations. The Bursary will help with a component of the event which was trialled in 2015, a 'Performers Platform' where local musicians will be invited to perform in the foyer of the Warwick Arts Centre.

Members will recall that UniBrass received an award last year and members who attended the event regarded it as money well spent. This will be the last year that Warwick will act as host for the event.

There was no formal presentation this year so I thought readers might like to see Warwick brass band at rehearsal time, they all seem to be having an enjoyable time.

Note added after the UniBrass event. The competition was of a very high standard and 19 universities took part. The winners were Manchester University. The evening ended with a Gala Concert given by the Black Dyke Band. The conductor, Professor Nicholas J. Childs, was full of praise for the organisational skills of Warwick. In a prize draw Warwick won a valuable Besson International Euphonium. In the Gala Concert programme there was a public 'thank you' to the WRSA for their generous contribution.

Walking Group News and Walks Reports

Wandering and Wondering

With retirement comes choice – how to spend one's time in a fulfilling, exciting, interesting, pleasant way whilst keeping fit and healthy. In addition there is the daily choice of what to eat and who to eat it with. One way of solving all of the above whilst enjoying new surroundings both inside and outside is to join the WRSA Walking group.

This year we've walked, eaten and socialised all over the county in the company of like-minded people. We've exchanged ideas, swapped stories and shared intelligence on local walks and eateries from Market Boswell to Meriden and Hatton to Corley. But that has only whetted our appetites for more.

Thank you to all of the walk leaders and participants who have made 2015 so interesting and enjoyable. Any Member of the WRSA is welcome to join us on our walks and partake of a pub lunch or just walk or lunch. Unfortunately I am unable to co-ordinate the walks programme for the first four months of 2016 as from January I shall be embarking on a world cruise from Southampton. If you're wondering what will happen – worry not. I have handed over the baton to Sue Beech, who has agreed to fill in during my absence. Many of you will have met Sue whilst participating in the walks; she introduces herself below.

Kay Rainsley, Walks Co-ordinator

I am slightly daunted by the prospect of covering for Kay – she is such a good organiser and leader – but I will certainly do my best to keep the walking group on the right track. (I nearly wrote 'running well', but that might give the wrong impression!)

At the moment I'm not entirely sure what I've let myself in for, at the time of writing I've not had my handover meeting with Kay. I'm hoping it won't be too difficult - and that everyone in the group will let me know if I forget anything, or could do something better.

Meanwhile thank you to those of you who have already submitted details of walks for 2016 and I wish you all a Happy and Prosperous 2016.

Sue Beech, Deputy Walks Co-ordinator January-to May

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Walks Reports

Report on walk from Hatton, 27th August 2015

On a dry, bright morning, 17 walkers including one grandchild met at Hatton Country World to start the four and a half mile walk. As we crossed the first meadow the dew was heavy on the grass. The farm track was rutted and muddy after heavy rain earlier in the week. We stopped to admire the fine views across fields towards Warwick, the castle could be clearly seen on the horizon.

Following another farm lane we reached Wilderness Cottage and admired two large white pigs in a paddock opposite. Turning right through a gate we entered the woods and walked single file along a narrow path. As we left the woods we came out into the sunshine and then walked through a corn field for a short distance. We crossed a road into another wood, traffic noise was increasing from the M40 as we walked alongside a wire fence that separated us from the motorway. As we left this wood we passed a large badger set and entered into another field. The walk was delayed for a while as the walkers helped themselves to an abundance of blackberries in the hedgerows. Eventually we had all climbed over a stile and walked along the road past Hatton Station where we joined the canal.

The canal was opened in 1799 when it was known as the Warwick and Birmingham Canal. It was built to carry coal to Warwick and Leamington to help develop industry. In 1932, the Grand Union Canal Company was formed to make the canal more commercially viable.

After about 15 minutes the top of the first of 21 locks of the Hatton flight came into sight. After a short break to enjoy the scenery and take some photographs we were off again taking the path across the pedestrian bridge over the railway. We followed the marked trail round two fields back to Hatton World car park. Maya, our young visitor who had skipped along the farm tracks and agilely climbed over gates told us she was not tired but was very hungry. Lunch was taken at the Durham Ox, Shrewley where meals had been pre-ordered and arrived promptly.

Hazel and Alan Colliver

Report on Lapworth walk, 24th September 2015

Tradition, Culture and Cuisine

We managed to incorporate all three in our September walk which led us along the tow paths of first the Grand Union Canal which came into being in its current form on 1st January 1929 and then the Stratford upon Avon Canal.



After just a few minutes walking we reached the Kingswood Junction and followed a flight of locks bordered by trees before reaching a marina full of brightly coloured narrow boats painted with traditional flowers. Sunshine is a marvellous tool for encouraging conversation and we exchanged greetings with fellow walkers, boaters, cyclists and day trippers. Luckily for us the fledgling Inland Waterways Association had intervened in 1947 to rescue the northern section of the canal from disuse. The southern section was restored by the National Trust between 1961 and 1964 after an unsuccessful attempt to close it. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother re-opened the canal in 1988 and responsibility for it was transferred to British Waterways. During this stretch we saw mallards, swans, moorhens, coots and geese.



Wandering from the canal we approached Packwood House and its famed topiary garden. Many of the walkers exclaimed that they hadn't seen the Tudor house and gardens from that angle before. Planted around 1850 the trees take around a month for three gardeners to clip them into their familiar shapes. Our route then took us through a wide avenue of trees until we re-joined the road and witnessed a private collection of 60s cars including a Ford Mustang and a Morris Minor.

Soon we were back on the towpath, this time beside the Grand Union Canal which was considerably wider than the Stratford. At 286.3 miles it is the longest canal in the UK having come into being on 1st January 1929 and further extended in 1932. We were able to enjoy the scenery until we reached the Navigation Inn where the group of twenty weary walkers was able to replenish their depleted energy stores.

Kay Rainsley

Report on Berkswell walk, 15th October 2015

Balsall Common to Berkswell and Curds and Whey

From the White Horse car park, twenty-one walkers set off to walk from Balsall Common to Berkswell. From an entry which ran down the side of the car park the walk headed into open fields which led to Berkswell station. In the first field there were several cattle grazing and amongst them was a large bull. The cows and bull were peacefully eating grass on the left hand side of the field and ignored all the walkers following the footpath on the right. The route took us through the subway into Baulk Lane. Following this country road we took a left turn into a farm road to look at Ram Hall, built in the 16th Century. The farmhouse has wide chimneys and the remains of a moat. It is reported to have a priest hole and is famous for the delicious Berkswell cheese. The cheese is made using unpasteurised milk from Friesian and Dorset sheep. The sheep were nowhere to be seen so we didn't feel guilty for sampling a small piece of the cheese. Returning to the road which led into Berkswell village, the walk went past the Bear Inn. Situated just outside this 16th Century Inn was the village's old water pump. We stopped for a group photo by the stocks on the village green. The stocks have an unusual number of leg holes, five instead of six, alleged to have been built to accommodate a one-legged ex-soldier and his two regular drinking companions.



Famous people from Berkswell include: Jeremy Brett, an actor best known for his TV role as Sherlock Holmes; tennis player Maud Watson, the first ladies singles champion at the Wimbledon championships in 1884; and R. E. S. Wyatt (known as Bob) who was England Cricket Captain for a number of years from 1934. The village museum contains information on the tennis player and cricket captain and exhibits some of their sportswear.

Walking past the almshouses, the museum and the wishing well, we continued through the churchyard and entered the Berkswell Hall estate. We were told the church were serving coffee and cakes that morning but walkers reluctantly resisted the temptation for a break and continued along the route which took us along a planked wooden walkway just above a small stream. On the right we passed Berkswell Hall which was built in the early 19th Century by Sir John Wilmott but now is privately owned apartments. Passing the lake, the walk led us straight through a copse into farmland. At the main road we turned right and crossed the bridge over the west coast mainline. We took another right turn into Wootton Lane which led into the narrow road of Wootton Green Lane. We were surprised that a large dustbin lorry was heading towards us down the lane with the driver shouting "breathe in" as it passed. All walkers squeezed themselves into the hedgerow and the lorry passed by safely. We still had three more fields to cross before entering a green lane. Taking a few shortcuts through a housing estate and passing a duck pond, we headed back for lunch at the White Horse where the staff were waiting for our arrival.

Marie Lucas

Report on Historic Warwick walk, 26th November 2015

The historic sights of Warwick obviously tempted a large number of walkers on the day, totalling 28 in number.

Although the weather was forecast to be dry sadly this was not to be as we had drizzle most of the time. Never mind we have no control over the weather!

Starting from the Racehorse Pub we went into Warwick town passing Westgate, Lord Leycester Hospital, the Old Court House and Thomas Oken House where we stopped for our photo shoot. We then made our way down to the River Avon in St. Nicholas Park and via the "tink-a-tank" passage up to the Town Square. From there the walk became more rural as we made our way on to the Grand Union Canal and onwards to the Saltisford Canal Basin before making our way back via the



racecourse to the pub. We were pleased to hear feedback from the group saying that they had passed sights of Warwick they had never seen before.

The food served at the Racehorse pub was very tasty and plentiful. Thanks to you all for joining us on the walk, we very much enjoyed your company.

Lyn Owen

Report on Newbold Comyn, Leamington Spa walk, 21st January 2016

On a grey, frosty morning 15 members met our walk leader, Martyn Bradley, in the car park by the Newbold Comyn Arms. We started this 7 km walk with a short, steepish climb up some forty metres to the top of the Campion Hills. Unfortunately the views across south



Leamington to the Cotswold edge were shrouded in mist. We walked on paths around the golf course then crossed a lane and a stile into grassy fields passing by Redhouse Farm, crossing two further stiles we reached the River Leam. Here we met the public footpath leading to Offchurch. Branching off to the right over another stile to cross a field still frozen underfoot we re-entered Newbold Comyn Country Park via a

firm path through the wood. We were unable to complete the walk by returning along the river side as the bank down to the river was steep and very muddy. This meant we missed the chance to stop in the bird hide overlooking the restored wetland opposite Radford Semele. Continuing along the wooded path, with the sun trying to break through the clouds, we returned to the Newbold Comyn Arms for lunch. Thanks to Martyn for a very enjoyable walk.

Hazel Colliver

Report on Wilmcote walk, 9th February 2016

Wilmcote is perhaps best known because it is where Mary Arden's House, administered by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, is located. This walk, starting at the Mason's Arms, Wilmcote, went round the House, not in the tourist but the topographical sense, in that the circular route that we followed enclosed within it Mary Arden's House and its grounds. The weather had been very wet in the week before, and a small, but select, group of walkers left the pub at the appointed hour on a chilly but sunny morning and, heading approximately southwards, were quickly out in the open country, passing along the edge of a field of horses and then crossing a training gallop where we saw three racehorses (but only walking). Veering right, down a pasture, with 'splasy' wet bits in the long grass in places, we joined a woodland track at the bottom, where a member of the group spied, off a side path, what was to all appearances an up-market bus shelter, set back in the trees. We investigated, discussed what it might be and why it was there, and took a photo.

We followed the track up the hill, deviating to the side in places to avoid the wet bits, and reached a quiet road, which by way of a path alongside an arable field and a further short length of road, brought us to pasture, wet in places. Finally we reached a path alongside an arable field, with the canal a short distance to the side through trees and a hedge. At one point the path degenerated into a very large pond, which we avoided by a short detour onto the field where we found the claggiest mud you can imagine. (I met a fellow-walker a couple of days later: "Have you got the mud off your boots yet?" he enquired!). Relief was at hand when we reached the bridge over the canal, and we doubled back along the towpath towards Wilmcote and our lunch. The pub, somewhat unprepossessing on the outside, accommodated us well and provided an excellent lunch. Those who were put off joining us by the wet weather the week before missed an interesting and enjoyable experience.



Chris Hall

Walks co-ordinator on a world cruise with husband

Les - Panama to Pacific crossing

The Panama Canal was both interesting and exciting. Local dockers boarded the ship and took over the whole operation. Small trains run alongside the canal to help haul the big ships through the locks. There were some hefty metal tow lines attached to the ship and we motored through held in place by our stays. We went through the Gatun lock and on to the enormous Gatun Lake which was blown out by the U.S. There were many small islands and hundreds of frigate birds as we traversed the lake. After the San Pedro Lock we continued to the Miraflores Lock and out into the Pacific Ocean. Our ship only just fitted into the lock – the wider locks should be ready in June 2016 - started by the Spanish and now being continued by the locals – it has taken all of their money.



We crossed the equator with the attendant ceremony and have certificates to prove it.

Two days at sea and we come to Ecuador – loved the people – it's the first time I've felt tall – I'm taller than a lot of the men let alone the women. There are huge iguanas wandering around in the local park

Peru is amazing – a real mix of past and present. We visited the Ballestas Islands and saw hundreds of sea lions and thousands of birds – penguins, pelicans and other seabirds. The boat trip out to the island was extremely fast and there were only four Europeans with a boat full of over 40 locals. The next port of call is Nuku Hiva with a population of about 3000.

We've been playing table tennis, I've been playing darts, we've been to dancing lessons (tango today) and enjoyed the classical concerts, the enrichment programme which includes a guy who was a professional diver and owns a diving museum in the Isle of Wight plus a whale and dolphin expert from Whalewatch and Robin Oakley who was a political journalist.

In addition we're using the gym and the pool plus visiting the disco on some nights. We're partaking in the quizzes with some success and we've made some new friends.

Kay Rainsley

Visit Report

Report on visit to Cardiff, 17th November 2015

The day dawned somewhat overcast. I had to drop off our dog at a day kennel before going to Memorial Park. The journey did not start well, I realised just after leaving home that my route was blocked by a closed road where a bridge was being repaired. This forced me onto the A45 Tollbar Island which I had been trying to avoid. However, eventually, I got through this and having dropped off the dog, I arrived at Memorial Park just after 08:00. I appeared to be the first to arrive! No sign of a Harry Shaw coach. Panic or not?

Eventually, I received a phone call from Jean Norman, "Where are you?" "I am waiting for you lot at Memorial Park", I replied. "We are on the coach, waiting for you!" One would expect Harry Shaw coaches to be painted up as Harry Shaw Coaches but, not this one, it was heavily disguised!

We therefore set off a little late with all 43 Members on board. As you would expect, the traffic was fairly heavy and as we approached the M5, we started seeing messages that the M50, the chosen route, was closed.



By then Storm Barney had started to make its presence felt. The only alternative route was via the Severn Bridge. Our driver was not happy. This would add 40 minutes to the journey and the driver had no money to pay the toll if the auto payment system on the coach, did not work!

The payment system, did not work so I found £20 to bail him out. We arrived in Cardiff after 11:00 and by which time the storm had started to work itself into a frenzy. Undaunted, most of us made our way, as custom demands, to local cafes and bars.

Cardiff offers a lot of choices and it is a fairly compact city, although the weather conditions meant that indoor venues were mainly the order of the day. Many went straight to the shops. Others took the covered area of the 'open top' bus tour to see as much of the City under cover. This tour allows passengers to get off at a number of stops and rejoin at any point. With my travelling companion, June Clarke, we chose not to leave the bus but when we

could see out of the window, through the driving rain, managed to get a feel for the City; the Millennium Stadium, the National Assembly buildings and the Millennium Centre etc.

By early afternoon, whilst the rain had eased, the Castle beckoned. It features a number of attractions, including views from the top of the keep, the Castle Apartments, the Roman wall and a Regimental museum beneath the shop and Restaurant.

After the Castle Tour, Storm Barney had decided to work itself up again and the wind and rain increased. By 15:50, everyone was ready to board the coach and we set off to battle our way through the afternoon traffic and horizontal rain. Fortunately the M50 had reopened so we could use the preferred route, although it is toll free to leave Wales via the Severn Bridge, the return journey was much easier than the journey down.

I think everyone enjoyed to day but the weather could, certainly, have been better!

Denis Welchman, Visits Co-ordinator

Christmas Lunch

Our Christmas lunch was held as usual at Scarman House, on Tuesday 15th December. For the first time ever, everybody who had booked for the lunch was able to attend and 102 Members and guests sat down to enjoy either a traditional turkey meal or a choice from the fish and vegetarian options. The wine flowed, as did the conversation and laughter, and there was a very congenial atmosphere as retired members of the University caught up with their erstwhile colleagues. Indeed, the level of enjoyment was such that several hours after lunch had ended many people were sitting in groups in the lounge of Scarman House chatting and drinking coffee.

Jean Norman, Secretary

WRSA Membership

This is my first report as Membership Secretary and I would like to thank everyone who has supported me during my first few months.

The number of members remains fairly constant in spite of all the effort we put into getting new people to join. Currently we have 268 names on the list; of these four are new members who have joined since October. I have received two resignations and sadly one of our members has passed away. The response to our last mailing has been patchy. In spite of two reminders there are still 32 people on the list who have neither paid their subscription nor informed me that they no longer wish to take part in WRSA activities.

For those who already have membership of the sporting facilities please note that the renewal date for this activity may not be January (it depends on the date your subscription started). For those wishing to join please contact Tim Wilkinson (Human Resources, telephone 024 7652 2244) details of the website are on Page 1.

Correspondence reaching Members depends on the accuracy of the details contained in the WRSA database; please inform the Membership Secretary of any changes to your personal details (address, telephone number and/or email). Please check your details in the list circulated just before the AGM.

It would be very helpful if you could provide the Committee with a current email address as information about events and opportunities for Members often comes to light outside normal posting schedules.

Elaine Lenton, WRSA Membership Secretary

Women of Warwick WI

Our WI group started in October 2014 and is one of very few workplace WI's across the country. We meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 5.15 pm for a 5.30 pm start until about 7 pm, using various locations around the University.

Our focus as a group is to learn, take part in different activities and, most importantly, have



fun! We currently have 26 members and are looking to increase this number as we go into our second year – our members are both current University employees as well as several ladies from the local Community and as a WI group – all ladies are welcome!! The annual membership cost is £37.50 and this pays for the 11 meetings per year (we do not normally meet in

August) and 10 magazines per year which are sent directly to your home.

You can find out more about our group, see what we have done over the last year and see what activities are planned for the future months by looking at our website (details below) or contacting the committee by e mail on: womenofwarwickwi@gmail.com

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/insite/wow-wi>

We look forward to hearing from you!!

Julie Taylor President

Summer Cricket

During the summer time, various cricket teams derived from the Departments of the University of Warwick take to the cricket pitches at Cryfield to battle each other in the thrilling 20-20 format of the game. Matches are on weekday evenings starting at 5:30 pm over at Cryfield with all the kit provided. The captains of the sides are always looking for new players and welcome all levels of ability. Please note you do not have to be in that department to play for the team as many departments do not have a team. (Retired staff and Undergraduates are welcome to join).

If you want to join a team or want further information please contact a captain, any queries please contact League Organiser Chris Wood email: itslibcricket@warwick.ac.uk or easiest way is to Register Your Interest on the website at:

www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/sport/active/inter-departmental-cricket/register_interest_in_cricket.

Farewell

We report the death of former Members of the WRSA who will be sadly missed by family and friends as well as WRSA Members.

Professor Alec Ford a Founding Member of the Economics Department, Pro-Vice Chancellor and long-time Member of the WRSA who died in March 2015.

Mr William (Bill) K J Perkins; Laboratory Administrator, Chemistry Department and Member of the WRSA who died in December 2015.

Mr Alec Stables, Maths lecturer at Westwood and first Chairman of Joint School of Professional Studies and Member of the WRSA who died in February 2016.

Latest Walks Information – 2016

<u>Day/Date/Area of walk</u>	<u>Walk Leader(s)</u>
Tuesday 12 th April Industrial Coventry	Eleanor Nesbitt
Thursday 19 th May Hunningham	Sue Beech
Wednesday 15 th June Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden	Barry Meatyard
Thursday 14 th July tba	Alan and Hazel Colliver
August	
Tuesday 6 th September Literary trail – Coventry	Eleanor Nesbitt
October tba	Kay Rainsley
Thursday 24 th November Brandon Woods or Draycote Waters	Marie and Alan Lucas

COMMITTEE 2015/2016 CONTACT DETAILS

Chair	Joan Cole	colejoanm@aol.com
Secretary	Jean Norman	norman467@btinternet.com
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Membership Secretary	Elaine Lenton	elaine.lenton@ntlworld.com
Walks Co-ordinator	Kay Rainsley	kay.rainsley@live.co.uk
(from January to May)	Sue Beech	sue@beech.net
Visits Co-ordinator	Denis Welchman	j.d.16.snowford@hotmail.co.uk
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	Pat Scott	patscott1@btinternet.com
University support	Tim Wilkinson	rsa@warwick.ac.uk or tim.wilkinson@warwick.ac.uk

There are several documents which may be of interest to the WRSA Members on the website: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/assoc/rsa>

Elizabeth Prichard,: Editor