

### Sizergh in the Spring

As the Gardening Group set off on a mid-May morning, there was, once again, snow covering the tops of the Fells. However, our day remained dry with a few sunny periods and by the time we returned to Penrith the snow had disappeared.

The group has been to Sizergh on previous occasions but at different seasons and the gardens always

have something different to look at. We stopped at Lower Sizergh Barn for coffee and it was apparent that there had been quite a few changes from the last time we came. The car park has been extended and the shop has been enlarged. The ground floor is packed with goodies and is a foodie heaven.

There is a stunning selection of cheeses in a counter that runs the width of one wall. Fresh veggies and meats were in abundance – any cook would love a few hours here let alone a

coffee break! The lower floor houses prints and sculptures and just round one corner is a lovely selection of gardening ornaments. The upper floor café has been reorganised to make it larger and has been refurbished. It is a light, airy and contemporary setting in which to eat tasty lunches, drink very good coffee and munch home made cakes. Some of the tables have windows overlooking the milking parlour and milking can be observed at set times.

After being fed and watered we set off for the very short journey to Sizergh Castle. The castle is National Trust property and the home of the Strickland family for 700 years. The staff couldn't have been more welcoming and helpful. We all split up to make our own way



**Sizergh Castle and Gardens**

round the gardens. The tulips were fantastic – vibrant shades of red and yellow filling a long border in the sheltered walled garden. There was a keen, icy breeze around and it was good to be in the lee of it behind the walls. The Acers were lovely, most now all in leaf and showing beautiful colours,



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ot to mention all the magnificent cherry blossom. Dotted here and there, were a few casualties of the coldest winter we've had for a long time. Everyone agreed that all our gardens have suffered – both plants and containers not surviving the penetrating frosts. The rock garden, built in the 1920's was in full bloom and took our breath away. It looked so lovely with a myriad of colours from so many diverse plants. Ferns were just unfurling showing off their "shepherd's crooks". It must be one of the loveliest alpine gardens in the area.

All this looking had made us hungry, so we set off for the café where we had a very good lunch at a reasonable price. The castle has been associated with the Strickland family since 1239 and houses many pieces of furniture, paintings and ceramics. As a friend and I had recently

joined the History of Furniture Group we were very interested in looking at all the oak furniture. We tried to apply all the knowledge that we had gained from our tutor, Peter Makin, and identified lots of features that we wouldn't have been able to do a few months ago. It certainly made our visit even more interesting; so engrossing, in fact, that we fell behind and before we knew it, it was time to leave for Penrith. Our next trip is to Heighley Gate Garden Centre and Belsay Hall in Northumberland on 14 June and following that to two private gardens in the Appleby area.

The trips are open to all U3A members and not just the Gardening Group. For more information contact Yvonne Radcliffe 01768 866304 or Sue Crothers 01768 210631.

**Sue Crothers**

### **.Chairpiece**

My term as Chairman concludes at this month's AGM. I have enjoyed meeting many of you at our various events and am sorry not to have met everyone at some stage, except through these pages. I gratefully thank all who have helped and supported me during the three years, especially and particularly the committee. I shall be staying on committee for a little longer as our link with the North West Region and the Cumbrian Network of U3As.

I see from this N/L that, as usual, there are things to do this summer. Do join us at Newton Rigg's wonderfully diverse and experimental gardens in July for the Summer Outing, and don't forget the events also provided by the NW Region and available through the 'links' button on our website.

Definitely my final appeal for assistance is for someone to help maintain our website. Full training given, but new ideas needed. See page.....

### **Penrith and N Lakes U3A joins the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

This month sees innovation in our U3A. We have split the role of Membership Secretary into two separate jobs. The **New Member's Secretary** will take the calls from first enquirers and do what is necessary to sign them up. The **Re-enrolment Secretary** will be especially busy every March and April when re-subscriptions are due, and will also maintain the database of members in order to do the labels for Newsletter delivery for instance, and also their e-mail dispatch.

Before now the Membership Secretary did it all, but when we reach nearly 500 members by the end of a year and some 60-70 new members join each year as well, the role has become very time consuming. Our retiring Membership Secretary, Margaret Wickens, is to be marvelled at and deeply thanked for her super-efficient management of the whole lot for the last five years.

Where we join the 21<sup>st</sup> century is our purchase of a mobile phone with a dedicated phone number for first enquirers to our U3A. This means that the phone number remains the same whoever is New Member's Secretary and she/he can hand it over to someone else whilst he/she goes on holiday, and there will be a dedicated message of welcome on it so he/she can go out for the evening without disappointing an eager would-be-member!

The new number is 07938 595017

**Angela Davies**

## **NORTH WEST REGION**

### STUDY DAY ON ENERGY

**7th July 2010 from 12.30 to 17.30(approx)  
at St Cuthbert's Church Centre, Lytham Road, Fulwood, Preston.**

The following speakers are so far fixed

Prof Max Irvine (lately Vice Chancellor of Birmingham University and lead author of a report to Royal Society

of Edinburgh on Scotlands Energy Needs)

Prof Christopher Whitehead (head of the school of Chemistry at Manchester University and an expert on the the production of Hydrogen)

Dr John Bissell (Consultant to The Manufacturing Institute in Manchester and an expert on Nuclear Power)

We are hoping to add one more speaker.

Overall we will cover all the main options for power generation available in the foreseeable future including considerations of their practicality and the importance of an appropriate mix. Final details will be available later. Cost £10 per person.

**Application form from Mike Head (01768 862511) or on Penrith & NL website.**

## **For Peat's Sake**

As our thoughts turn towards summer and making the most of our gardens, we should make sure that we are buying only peat-free compost.

It is a fact that gardeners are continuing to destroy our peat bogs; 3 million cubic metres of peat are extracted from the UK and Ireland every year. This releases 500,000 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> equivalent. If peat were just removed from composts and grow-bags, it would cut those emissions at a stroke and would be the same as taking about 350,000 cars off the road. Around 70 per cent of peat is used in horticulture, much by amateur gardeners who consider it the best way of encouraging plant growth. I, for one, did not realise that multi purpose composts contain between 70% and 100% peat.

Sadly, in northern Europe, peat is being extracted more quickly than it is renewed on moors and bogs. Peat extraction in the UK also disturbs rare wildlife Some 38 per cent of peat sold here comes from the UK, with 56 per cent coming from Ireland and 6 per cent from the Baltic states.

In 1999 there was a Government aim to eliminate peat from all but 10 per cent of compost by 2010, but it is still present in 46 per cent of the compost sold in Britain, so in March this year, a new target was announced to phase out the use of peat compost in amateur gardens by 2020. This would also help end the destruction of our precious peat bogs and the loss of birds, plants and insects that rely on them.

Despite many claims to the contrary, peat is **not** necessary to grow most plants. A recent *Which?* survey found that alternative composts including bark, green compost, wood waste, wood fibre and coir. performed better than peat for growing potatoes and flowers in pots.

Defra acknowledges peat is best for some "very specialist uses and plants", such as carnivorous plants native to peat bogs and some ericaceous plants native to moorlands, but advises gardeners to use peat-free compost for all main garden uses. It offers advice at [www.direct.gov.uk/buyingcompost](http://www.direct.gov.uk/buyingcompost)

**Val Bowen**

Sources: The Observer; The Independent.

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## April Monthly Meeting Report

Manchester wanted more water. They had flooded Thirlmere in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but that was not enough to supply the growing population, and the needs of industry. Again they looked to the Lake District, and so a remote and idyllic valley was sacrificed, and the Haweswater Dam scheme began.

This was the beginning of a fascinating talk by Pat Garside of the Bampton & District Local History Society, not so much about the construction of the great dam, but of the community established for the workers. Bampton, the nearest village to the site of the dam, was considered too far away, so a bare hillside leading into the Mardale valley was chosen; it was a place called Burnbanks.

Manchester Corporation planned Burnbanks in great detail, as a model village. They had no wish to see a sprawling shanty town spring up, and thought that the workers would be more settled, and motivated if they had a home and family to go home to after work. Many of the workers came with their families, and single men were housed with families. A large proportion of these single men were "navvies", who spent their lives going from one big building site to the next.

The first buildings constructed were hostels for the single men engaged on the heavy work; clearing the site, and building the huge dam walls. Most came from Manchester, and Lancashire industry generally, and from West Cumbria, where unemployment was severe. At one end of the hostel there was a long corridor with narrow sleeping cubicles on each side, and a small area beyond with a stove. At the other end lived the housekeeper and her family; the housekeeper's husband would be a worker on the dam. In the house end it was the housekeeper who cooked for the men.

As well as hostels, family bungalows were built, until, eventually, there were 66 dwellings. All these houses were built in kit form, quickly erected on very shallow foundations. The exterior walls were made out of cast iron plates, bolted to a cast iron skeleton.

In the centre of these plates was a flange into which a wooden block was hammered, and to this wood was fixed the inner skin. There was no insulation, and so it was cold in winter, and hot in the summer. Condensation was also a problem. However, facilities were laid on that other local places did not enjoy for another two or three decades – electric light, hot and cold water, a bath, and an indoor toilet.

Other wooden bungalows were built, a little away from the main village, occupied by managers, engineers and other professionals. These were owner occupied and more attractive, and even had a verandah. These are still to be seen, where the road into the modern Burnbanks forks off from the road to Mardale Head.

So Burnbanks became quite a mixed community. There was a policeman, seconded from the Westmorland force, and paid by the Manchester Corporation. A dispensary was set up, and a doctor visited regularly. They also built a recreation hall and a dance hall. The spiritual needs of the people were met at the Mission Hall, the foundations of which are visible next to the Coast to Coast path that runs through the village.

Between 1935 and 1940, the population of Burnbanks reached about half that of the Bampton area, and this meant an influx of lots of children. Bampton School numbers increased dramatically, and Manchester provided a large wooden annexe to accommodate the new arrivals.

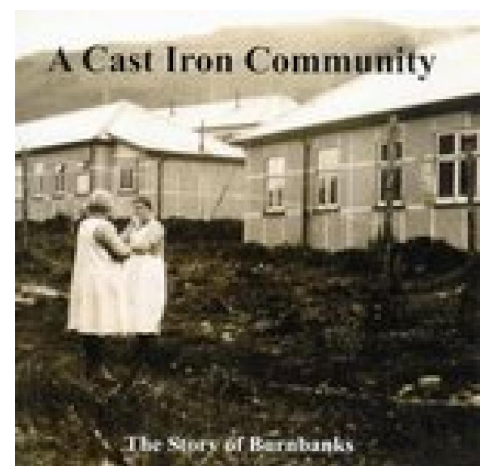
A disparate group of people grew together. They did not isolate themselves, but integrated into the local community – the children through school, and the women, through the WI. A bus service to Penrith was provided, and local traders began to visit.

Although work was hard, they knew how to relax and enjoy themselves. Extensive allotments

were started, and a small number are still used today by United Utilities to grow Juniper seedlings. They had a bowling green, and a football team, Haweswater United, which, in 1938, won the Westmorland Senior Cup. Concerts became a regular part of village activity. The social life was very rich, and people were proud of what they had. Burnbanks was a civic success, a viable and vital community, greatly helped by Manchester Corporation's vision.

The dam itself was finished in 1942, and most of the workers left to join the forces or do other war work. Several lost their lives. After the war the village was a quieter place, but more attractive as trees grew to blot out the vast wall towering above. Gradually the population decreased as the project was completed, and eventually all the original houses were demolished. A new, much smaller, village has replaced the old. They are still all bungalows, and built on the (much improved) footings of some of the old houses. It is a very desirable place to live.

The Bampton & District Local History Society published a book in 2006, entitled "A Cast Iron Community – the



Story of Burnbanks", and it won the Lakeland Book of the Year in 2007 – a fascinating story, and you can see further details on their website [www.bampton-history.org.uk/burnbanks](http://www.bampton-history.org.uk/burnbanks).

**Grattan Bowen**

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## From little acorns grow great oaks.....and beautiful furniture

The History of Furniture Group met at the end of April. This was the first meeting following the "taster" that co-ordinator, Peter Makin, held in March.

Peter began this vast subject with a short history of oak furniture, oak being one of the earliest woods used to fashion the first chests and stools. It was fascinating to hear about the evolution of furniture and the presentation was well illustrated with slides. We learned that the furniture made depended on the wood available and the tools needed to make it.

England had plenty of oak and it was well regarded as an excellent material to use for strong furniture. There were no saws to start with and all furniture was made from planks that were riven from huge logs. This was achieved by splitting the wood along the grain with a special type of axe and wedges. Later, came the two-man saw and the sawpit.

As Peter took us through the centuries we saw the furniture evolve from simple stools to beautifully carved chairs, plain "cup boards" that were open sided boards which held plate to the ornate cupboards of later times. We discovered bobbin turned legs and linen fold panelling. We saw lovely caryatids (a sculptured female figure used as a column), guilloches (ornamental borders consisting of

paired ribbons or lines flowing in interlaced curves around a series of circular voids), and gothic tracery carving. Also, we now know the difference between carpenters, joiners, cabinet makers, turners and ymagers.

In early days the Trades Guilds were a mighty force and there were strong demarcations in skills. Carpenters made articles that were put together with nails; joiners made joints e.g. dovetail; cabinet makers were skilled men making fine furniture; turners, turned wood on lathes and ymagers were wood sculptors. Peter had made miniature model oak chests and drawers to illustrate how they had been constructed. We briefly covered handles and escutcheon plates before we ended the session.

We all found it extremely interesting and Peter encouraged lively discussion about aspects of the furniture we were looking at. Conversation continued over the break and we all felt we had learned something from the session. We're now looking forward to future sessions dealing with other woods such as walnut. Who'd have thought that furniture could be so exciting?

If you would like to learn more, contact Peter Makin e-mail: [pandcmakin@aol.com](mailto:pandcmakin@aol.com) or tel: 01931 714201. The group meets the fourth Tuesday in the month 10am – 12 noon.

**Sue Crothers**

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## May Monthly Meeting Report

Stephen Hewitt gave us a fascinating tour in search of nature in Cumbria, and how a museum such as Tullie House has a very up-to-date role to play in twenty-first century natural science.

When there's a sighting through the forest trees of a rare animal like the pine marten, as happened this winter in south Lakeland, am I the only one with the romantic hope that a secret colony survives deep in the forest? Or was it a new arrival, spotted in a great habitat simply because great habitats have more pairs of binoculars and expert heads?

Similarly with red squirrels, are ours merely recent immigrants from Bergen via Newcastle and not native at all as some opponents of Save our Squirrels have claimed? Enter evidence-based science, and DNA evidence from dated specimens in museums. Yes, we can prove we do really have local native squirrels as well as incomers from the east. There is less evidence for continuing colonies of pine martens, where evidence from road kill suggests new arrivals.

Think otters are cute? We heard how they feast on the hind legs of toads, peeling the poisonous skin off and abandoning this together with the rest of the body. Enjoy insects? Then join the hunt for the missing 25% of British insects that haven't yet been recorded in Cumbria.

You can browse through the records for Cumbria or for your parish online at <http://www.lakelandwildlife.co.uk/> and find how to add your own sightings.

**Frances Bell**

## Noticeboard

### Penrith Music Club 2010-11 Subscription Concerts

Once again Penrith Music Club brings us an outstanding series of six concerts, opening with a recital in September by that consummate pianist Martin Roscoe and including the Britten Sinfonia in November. Two internationally renowned groups: the Vogler String Quartet and the Aronowitz Ensemble perform in October and February respectively. January's concert is given by the fine baritone Marcus Farnsworth and the series concludes in March with the brilliant young pianist Alexandra Dariescu.

The combination of established artists and rising stars has proved a formula for excellence over many years and this should be again a series that all music-lovers should not miss. For subscription details please contact Jim Burns on 01768-896557 or email [jasmburns@btinternet.com](mailto:jasmburns@btinternet.com).

### Carlisle Festival 3 July to 11 July

Carlisle Festival 2010 is exciting and inspirational classical music performed by some of the country's finest artistes To find out more

about the Festival and how to book tickets online, by post or in person, visit [www.carlislefestival.org.uk](http://www.carlislefestival.org.uk)

### Notice to all members from National Office about Carers in the U3A.

The Third Age Trust has extended its liability insurance policy to cover the attendance of a companion or carer for members who need assistance in order to attend interest groups. It is hoped that by doing this, members in this situation will be able to enjoy the full benefits of U3A membership.

### Digital Projector

A second digital projector has been purchased recently as more groups and monthly meeting speakers require it. Both are available to any U3A group and may be borrowed by contacting Walter Anderson on 01768-862531.

A couple of weeks notice would be appreciated. For those unfamiliar with their operation a demonstration of how to use them is being organised for later in the year. Details in the next Newsletter

If you experience any problems in **receiving your newsletter by email**, or if you would prefer to receive it by post, please contact the membership secretary, Margaret Wickens, 01768 864994 [margaret@wickens.demon.co.uk](mailto:margaret@wickens.demon.co.uk) with any changes or queries .

**If you would like to receive any part of the Newsletter in LARGE PRINT, please contact the Editors.**

### Editorial Team

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**Copy deadline for the next issue is ? 2010**

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