



Learn, Laugh,  
Live

Pier Views—December 2024

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## From the Chair:

And so another year draws to a close.....

It has been another busy year for **BRu3a**, with two outdoor activities at Middleton Fete and the Ageing Healthily event at the library in Bognor. My thanks to all of you who helped on the day!

Our numbers are up to around 550, and I hope that the groups, the monthly talks, and other events are providing members with what they want. The important thing to remember is that if we are not doing that, then you **MUST** let us know; otherwise, we cannot make changes.

Our annual Group Leaders meeting will be on the 12th December when Trevor Pitt and Hartley Elder will give a presentation to show the GLs the new website and the advantages of the Beacon system. The former will go live for all members in the coming weeks and will be a vast improvement on what went before and members will find it a much more useful resource for our **u3a**.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Trevor and Hartley for all their hard work and that of their support teams of proof readers, checkers and those doing jobs that I really don't understand.

I must also thank Mike Sawyer for all his hard work over the last few years as group co-ordinator. He picked up the job 'cold' with no handover from a previous GC and has done a sterling job. He has initiated new groups, running at least two himself, he has encouraged group leaders to continue with their group and has had to deal with the fall out from groups 'going rogue' or wanting to disband. He has decided to step down from the role although will continue to run his groups.

Fortuitously Phillip Henke was on hand to take up the reins and you will become accustomed to seeing him at the back of the hall at monthly meetings.

We have also lost the facility for meetings at West Meads Community Centre for reasons that need not be gone into here. It does mean that French Conversation, Current Affairs and Crime and Punishment will be meeting somewhere else in the New Year but no doubt Phillip and the various group leaders will be letting you know where and when.

All that remains is for me to thank you all for your continued support, I look forward to seeing you all at January's meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> for the talk about the Royal Observer Corps, and to wish you and yours a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year.

Iain



## Supper Club

A really great meeting tonight at the Oyster Catcher Climping.



A great meal and night at Fino's



Bognor Regis u3a members and visitors at the September monthly meeting were given a talk by Robin Shapland on the subject of Hot Air Ballooning. Sadly, Robin did not bring a balloon with him!!! So up, up and away, here we go.

Robin began the talk by recalling his own history. He began his working life as a bricklayer and became interested in motor cycle scrambling, at which he became proficient, until his career was ended by injury in 1979/80.

Though his family, he became interested in aviation, not fixed wing, but Ballooning.

One weekend, with his girlfriend, they went to a balloon festival at Southampton. The next year he went back and talked to manufacturers and eventually visited a balloon factory.

His early ballooning career began in Southern Ireland in July 1980, where he took part in the Irish National Championships.

In order to fly a hot air balloon, you need a private pilot's licence. This requires 20 hours flying time, five exams and a flight test in your own balloon.

He had a balloon weighing 77kilos and a nylon envelope. This enabled the balloon to carry four people. How much lift you get depends on the air temperature on the day and a higher temperature means less lift.

One day he got a phone call from the organiser of the National Championships in Ireland, saying they needed a pilot in Cork. It would be an all expenses paid trip, flight, accommodation and refreshments. He would be required to fly over of two balloons over Cork for a mental health charity. However, flying within such an airspace is very controversial. No instructions as to air routes, height etc, given. During the flight they flew a very low over Cork International Airport and a 737 aircraft appeared to be getting very close. So, they called the airport and explained the situation, only to be told, do not worry!!!!

To become involved in commercial flying, you need to get a sponsor and a commercial licence. ICI offered him to do so for £10,000.00 and a new balloon envelope. He expected to fly worldwide for ICI on promotions etc. Unfortunately, ICI was sold off, so this was all cancelled.

He explained that passenger flying is very different, more exams, which are very detailed. The pass mark is 75% and a very few pass first time. Robin said he got lucky and achieved a mark of 100%.

He started passenger flying an advertising balloon for a firm of jewellers who offered customers a free flight if you purchased engagement and wedding rings from them!

During one flight around Cobham, a police inspector received lots of calls about a balloon apparently in Heathrow airspace, saying the balloon was flying too low and over a crowded space. All was found to be correct and there was no need for police involvement.

In order to carry 12 passengers, you need 25,000 cubic feet, a basket 8 x 4, with 3 passengers in each segment. Such an envelope cost approx. £65k and with the accessories approx. overall cost of £100k.

Robin said that there are more astronauts in the world than the holders of his licence.

When carrying passengers, it is imperative that the pilot ensures the weight being carried does not exceed the capacity of the balloon. On one trip 12 people arrived and one lady was obviously, shall we say, larger than declared. Robin had a word!! One of many amusing items.

Another was a trip in the Uckfield area. The balloon was travelling at 8 – 10 knots and had a lot of inertia. However, in order to slow the landing, the basket caught the tops of trees. The basket stopped, but the envelope kept going and fell into a lake. Very Jeremy Beadle!!

Robin said that he was asked to go to Abu Dhabi, as part of a two-balloon flight for the Crown Prince, flying 10 people in each balloon in a long-distance marathon event.

Preparation for this event would take 5 days. During the preparation, with the local workers on board, a false wind blew over the balloon and sucked it up. The workers panicked and jumped out. This left the anchored vehicle dangling 20 feet in the air. On the day of the flight the workers refused to fly, so the crew had to take their place. Normally, at the end of a flight, vehicles are at the landing site to return all passengers and the balloon to the base. This flight was into the desert and no such arrangements had been made.

He piloted another flight in Austria over the Alps, where there is only 10% of a flight path and often that is restricted. The flight was over a valley, a landing site was found, all passengers got out into deep snow, but the view was worthwhile.

Another time, he flew over a glacier which was about 10k feet, above sea level, you needed to clear it by 3kfeet but at 13k feet it was -50 C degrees and very cold.

He said that in the area of East Sussex, he has permission from several farmers to use their land for landings and for which he usually rewards them in liquid form. On one occasion, he had made such an arrangement with a particular farmer, but on the day, conditions were not suitable to land in this field. So, he landed in a neighbouring farmers field and duly rewarded the farmer who insisted it was his field

also. However, the initial farmer was upset at me being in his neighbours field so claimed it as his.

On another flight, a number of well dressed and beautiful young ladies arrived for a flight. However, all did not go to plan and the basket tipped over and was dragged across a muddy and manure filled field, but the passengers all thought the experience, albeit terrible, was hilarious.

One very memorable flight was sponsored by Whiskas cat food as an advertising event over Auckland Harbour, New Zealand. They flew over the harbour bridge, which had 6 lanes of traffic. As the balloon passed over, all traffic stopped and it even made the local press and was reported on national tv.

Flying hours are strictly controlled and especially those required for specific licences. All these are set by UK authorities.

He was offered a job in France, but refused, so an Australian balloonist he knew, was offered the job. However, he did not have sufficient flying hours to qualify for a commercial licence as required under UK limits. However, the limits do not apply in France, so he took the job. On the day of the flight, Robin got a phone call from him, asking how do you stop the balloon. Robin asked where he was, only to be told, in flight. Robin advised him how to do a controlled

landing over a mobile phone!

One momentous event he was involved in was the “Around the World” attempt. He did radio broadcasts, was involved with the meteorology forecasting, alongside other such individuals. The event was a success and he compares it to a 747 making a trip to America against a flight to the moon such are the technicalities required.

He said many people come along and express fear of heights. In his experience only 2 passengers have asked to land early and one of those was in order to be the centre of attention. He said that all such fears disappear after about 2 – 3 minutes of leaving contact with terra firma

Nowadays, only Virgin offer flights in the South, which is a shame, as it is considered the best for flying.

In 2014, a company flying for less than their costs, became bankrupt, leaving 18,000 passengers without their flights. This caused a downturn in the number of people wanting to fly.

Robin considered that his years in ballooning were at its heyday.

Robin donated the fee for his entertaining talk to The Snow Drop Children’s Charity.

A Q&A session followed:

Q) How do you steer

A) By air currents, you need stable air, so early mornings and evenings are the best time.

Q) Do licences have to be renewed.

A) Yes, a check flight with a CAA examiner every 13 months

Q) How do you choose where to land.

A) You start looking for a landing site about 30 mins before you want to land. It must be outside congested areas and airspace and there must be vehicle access. Landowners must give their permission to retrieve the balloon, but any airborne object has the right to land. Avoid animals!

Q) How do you deal with a complete failure during a flight.

A) At about 1000 feet, you can descend slowly without causing any damage.

Q) Do passengers have to comply with the pilot's instruction.

A) Yes, and they have to sign a pre-flight disclaimer. On one flight a lady took us to court because she did not like the landing in a field. On all of the 13 charges we were acquitted and she was liable to pay all the court costs of Approx £85,000

Q) Are you obliged to return the passengers to the start point.

A) Yes.

Robin was thanked for his very entertaining and informative talk.

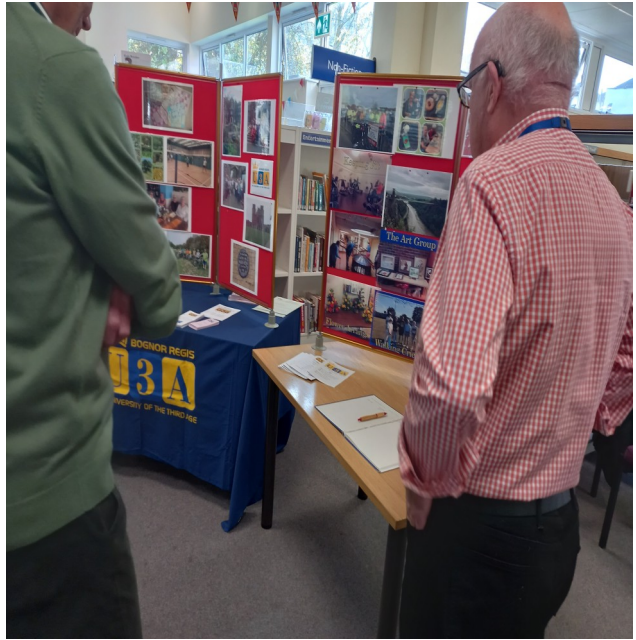
### Flower Arranging

Flower arranging today was the Hogarth Curve. Very impressive.



Bognoruz3a had a stand a the Ageing Healthy event held in Bognor Library, at which we were very busy and had many enquiries. Also, making contact with other organisations was useful.





## **Not a trip on the Waverley:**

The brochure arrived with a special deal for Seniors, take a friend half fare! What a great idea I thought and quite quickly recruited over 30 people. The trip was to Yarmouth, then around The Needles and Freshwater Bay. I 'phoned Glasgow with some queries and made a booking. They would have to send two invoices because there were two destinations, OK!

Shall I get a coach to take us all to Portsmouth? Definitely not, as the train worked out 60% cheaper with the various deals they offer, and without using our senior railcards. In discussion with the treasurer, I discovered she had not received the invoices so another phone call to Glasgow to be told that they had no record of my booking, this just four days before we were due to go. But there is lots of capacity so no problem. EXCEPT the Yarmouth part of the trip is cancelled and the trip is now around the island. A blizzard of emails and five people drop out immediately. However, Waverley will send the revised invoice although the treasurer must pay immediately. So, job done. Really looking forward to Thursday 16.43, we are going tomorrow!, I get an email advising me that the arrangements have been altered and we will now depart from the International Ferry Terminal at Portsmouth and not from the Wightlink berth at the station. There will be a shuttle bus to get us from the station to the terminal, but we MUST be there by 12 noon, so no point in catching the 11 41

from Bognor then as arranged with everyone.



Another flurry of emails re-arranging the times by an hour. On the day everyone is there promptly, coffees are drunk, tickets are handed out and then at 10.30 we make our way to Platform 3 to go to Barnham. As we go through the barrier a message flashes up to tell us that someone has been hit on the line and no trains are going west from Barnham, i.e. to Portsmouth. But we can use our tickets on the 700 bus, which will not get us there by 12 noon and the Waverley are very insistent that we **HAVE** to be there by then or not get through security in time. Three of the group get on the bus and go, where they ended up, I am, go home, and have a refund, which the Waverley promised and will have been received and paid by the time you read this, I hope.

The Waverley, when I spoke to them to confirm the bank details for the refund, were sorry for our disappointment but hoped that we would enjoy a trip with them in the future.....

### BRu3a visit the D-Day Museum in Portsmouth

On a chilly and slightly murky day members of the Family History group visited the D-Day Museum in Portsmouth. Jane Weston had done all the groundwork checking times, prices, etc., and whether there was a car park and who was going with whom, a bit like D-Day itself.

Being a u3a group most got there early and hit the coffee shop. Jane got us organised, tickets bought and at 10.30 we went first to see the TLC, which stands for Tank Landing Craft! [and not what you were thinking! ] This amazing craft has been restored and kitted out with artifacts, including a tank or two, as if it were still in service!



We all clambered around, marveling at the cramped quarters and the exposure these men would have faced from the elements and incoming hostile fire. We survived, but for us, it was the interaction with a group of primary school children moving at high speed.

On to the museum itself. It tells the story of the build-up, the events of the day and what followed in the days after the invasion. The exhibition follows a timeline told through memorabilia, recordings, diary entries, maps and photographs, the dummy 'Ruperts', the work of the French resistance and the stories of heroism on the part of the troops and the privations experienced by the civilian population. Whilst we remember the 73,00 Allied deaths, we, this side of the Channel, tend to forget the 20,00 deaths among the people of Normandy.

It was interesting to meet a party of French students also going around looking at things from the English point of view before going back to France to visit the equivalent museum in Caen. Even having looked at the museum exhibits trying to get an idea of the enormity of the enterprise it is quite impossible!

**The Overlord Embroidery tells the story of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy in 34 extraordinary hand-stitched panels with a total length of 83 metres.**

Lord Dulverton commissioned the embroidery in 1968 and Sandra Lawrence, a young British artist, designed the embroidery. She looked at hundreds of wartime photographs as she researched the subjects she had to portray.

The Overlord Embroidery was stitched by a team of highly skilled women at the Royal School of Needlework in London. They used a technique called appliqué, stitching smaller pieces of fabric onto a larger background piece to recreate the pictures in Sandra's designs.

The embroiderers transferred the designs onto linen using an ancient method called 'pricking and pouncing'. They pricked thousands of tiny holes through the lines on a tracing, pinned it on top of a panel and rubbed a fine powder called 'pounce' through the holes to make a trail of dots. They joined the dots together with a pencil line to reveal the design.

More than 50 different materials were used in the Overlord Embroidery, including actual uniforms. Everything was stitched by hand.



ore than 50 different materials were used in the Overlord Embroidery, including actual uniforms. Everything was stitched by hand.

It took five years to stitch the Overlord Embroidery. The final panel was finished in January 1974.

It was generally agreed that it was a very interesting visit and would repay a second visit as you could not take everything in in one go. It also put into perspective something of what our parents and grandparents went through. It undoubtedly would have given some inspiration for further research for those long winter months to come.

A huge thank you to Jane for firstly suggesting it and then doing all the initial planning

### **A day in Iran as a Housewife**

Bognor U3A members and visitors were presented a talk by Sandra Simmonds, the second part of her story, "A Day in Iran as a Housewife".

Sandra did a brief recap of talk 1 (Life under the Veil) to bring everyone up-to-date.

Iran is the second largest country in the Middle East, it borders with Iraq and Turkey. It was formerly known as Persia, in 1935, it was renamed to Iran. In 1941, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (Shah) was installed until he was overthrown by Ayatollah Khomeini (who had been exiled in France for 14 years).

In World War II, Iran was jointly occupied by Great Britain and Russia,

The religion is Islam although there were several divides, Sunni, Shi'a, Bahai's. They all share the Islamic beliefs and articles of faith. The split between these are not stemmed from spiritual differences but purely political ones. In this sense, many people compare the two groups with Catholics and Protestants, they share some common belief but practise in different ways.

This dates back to the death of the prophet, Mohammed, and who was going to take over the leadership of the Nation.

The weather in Iran is of two extremes, in the summer it is very hot, reaching 40 degrees, in the winter it is very cold and dry. Iran is built on the edge of a desert, the buildings are not robust and earthquakes leave massive destruction.

The age for consent of marriage, at that time was 13, her mother-in-law married at this age to a man, 29 years her senior, she had 4 boys by him. Her husband worked for the Shah's undercover police force the Savak.

At that time women didn't appear to have much freedom and were the property of their husband.

On display, Sandra had her wedding album of when she married in UK on 15th October 1977. Her mother-in-law was present wearing westernised clothes, totally uncomfortable for her, but she wanted to please her eldest son.

She went on to explain in great detail about the procedure for prayer showing rosaries and a description of what they represented along with the materials they were made from. Interestingly enough you can make decisions with a string of beads.

Her life on a daily basis was explained from going to prayer to making breakfast for her husband then going shopping with restrictions walking 7 paces behind him.

Even to preparation of food, which at times she struggled with, but her mother-in-law was her backbone and assisted and presented the food as Sandra's.

Food plays an important part and Persians are very proud of what they serve, great care is taken. The foundation of their dishes is rice combined with fish, chicken and lamb, but definitely NO PORK, accompanied with onions, garlic, vegetable, fruits, nuts and herbs.

Special occasions, New Year, Ramadan, birth of a baby, a funeral, all were explained in great depth. Each household has to prepare a special table, the haftsen table representing the 7 angelic heralds as follows: Life/rebirth, health, happiness, prosperity, joy, patience and beauty. A mirror will be placed on the table to reflect new images for the forthcoming New Year.

Sandra did not own a table. Hers was a tablecloth on the floor. The mirror would be propped up against the wall.

Housework was minimal, none of the mod cons we take so much for granted, fridge, freezer, hoover, washing machine.

The restrictions and cultural background was hard to adjust to, it was world's apart to how I had been brought up in UK. Once your childbearing days are over and done with, that is when you are allocated your own room, you were invited into your husband's room on request.

Sandra worked for an Italian/Iranian company, her boss was a man, who was an Armenian (a christian Iranian) not a muslim. He protected Sandra as much as he was able.

Bringing her story to a close, Sandra stated, if people are still in doubt about her story! On show is her wedding album in UK along with a photocopy of her Iranian passport, a bracelet/ ring - wedding presents from her mother/father-in-law at her I

Iranian wedding. Her name was changed to Eptihajh from Sandra.

Their plan was to stay in Iran for 5 years with work, then return to UK to set up home and have a family.

The effect of the Iranian Revolution had on women was huge, for some it brought restrictions such as. New dress code, for others it gave them the opportunity to get education on a par with men.

The constraints that women have been required to live under, have taken their toll, there is a higher rate of suicide for women than what there is for men. Even the separation of the sexes, is becoming less rigid.

In the area of politics, women are becoming increasingly powerful, they can stand and vote at elections, they can become advisory judges, join the police force, attend and play football.

We can only hope, in years to come, the future will bring changes.

This is my story.

There followed Q&A session –

Who decides changes – Women rebelling, but the religious leaders still rule. One day Sandra was at a bazaar, a woman saw a small bit of her showing and hit her. So, the old ways are still there and women's groups are still not allowed to open. Tourists never see the real life, but Iran

is a beautiful country. However, many Iranians emigrate to seek a better life.

Do you have any contacts in Iran – Not allowed. Her Father-in-Law became a religious leader. When she came back to the UK, she was put on a blacklist. Her Mother-in-Law insisted she keep her wedding ring as a memory of her. Her Husband could not go back to Iran for 5 years, but we still have an Iranian interest.

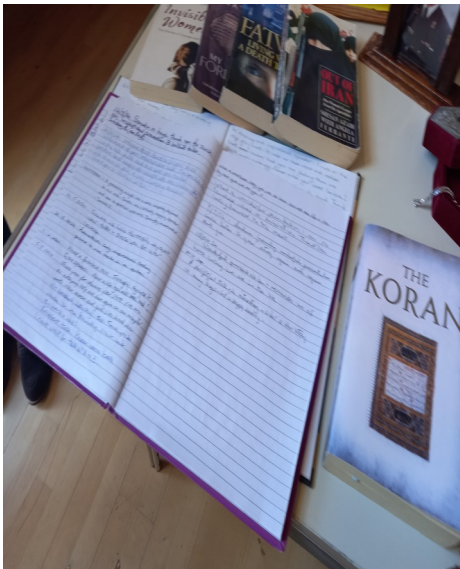
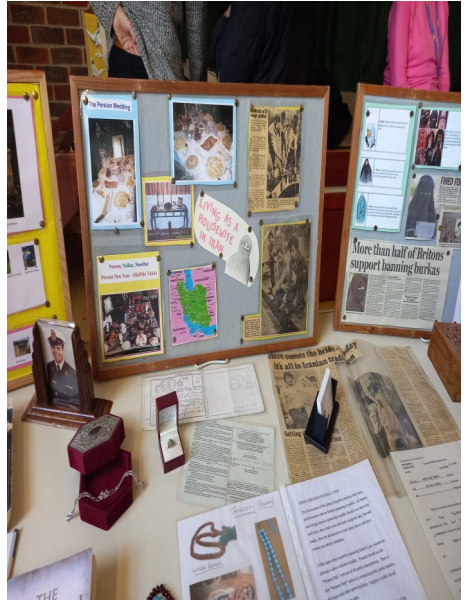
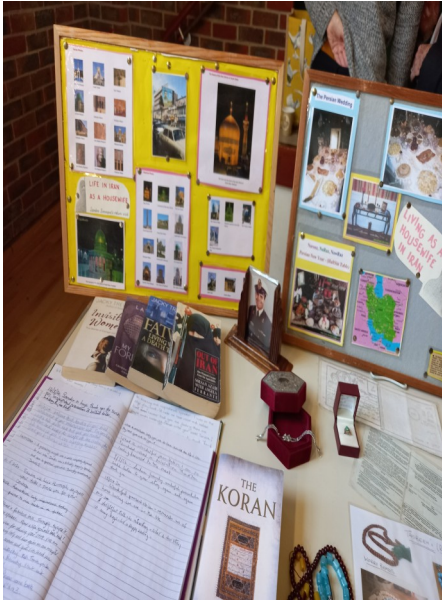
Do rules and regulations come from the Koran – No, from being handed down by past generations and adapted. There are nowadays cultural differences between generations, with younger people making their own decisions.

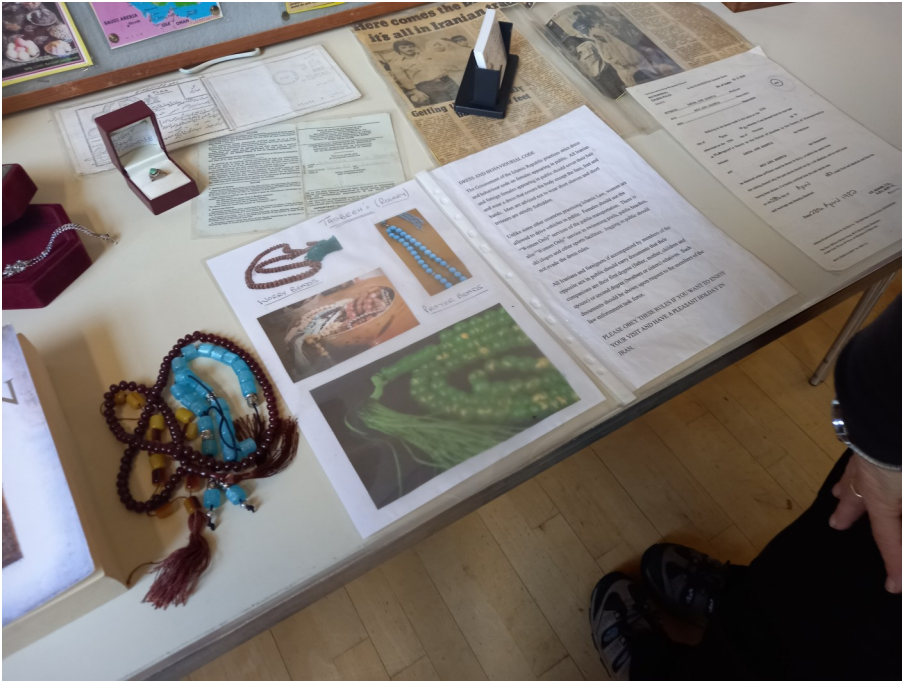
Do Iranian men visit the UK – Yes and they love it all.

How do families cope – They adapt themselves to the environment. The Shah for example was always in the UK and lived a western life. He eventually fled to Egypt, where he died of cancer.

Julie Cruickshank thanked Sandra for her fascinating talk and said that we look forward to part three in May 2025.

There follows photos of Sandra's personal possessions and memories of her time spent as Iranian housewife.





## The Strenuous Life of Theodore Roosevelt from James Dickinson

Members and visitors attending the monthly coffee morning heard a talk by James Dickinson about the life of the lesser-known Roosevelt President of the USA, Theodore. This article is based on his talk.

Theodore was born in 1858 into a wealthy family living in the Oyster Bay area, north of New York City. He was severely asthmatic and his father insisted he get involved in many athletic disciplines, including boxing, which he continued through most of his life, although his doctor suggested that he should get a “desk job” because he also had a heart condition. He was still boxing while President when he was hit by an opponent detached a retina in his left eye, leaving him blind in that eye.

He had a strict upbringing in the Dutch Reformed Church which was very conventional, he was home-educated by his father mostly in literature, history, geography, and science, with no formal education until he went to Harvard – but in those days that was based on money rather than educational achievement. He studied biology and was a keen naturalist and supporter of nature although his love of hunting is now at odds with what is meant by conservation today. The most famous story of Roosevelt today is when he refused to

kill a bear that had been cornered for him to shoot. But, since the bear was old and injured he ordered it to be put out of its misery. This led to the children's toy, the teddy bear. Roosevelt hated the name 'Teddy' and much preferred to be known by his initials 'TR'.

He became a vigorous and healthy adult and preached the doctrine of "the strenuous life".

He believed this doctrine should apply as much to the nation as the individual. He wrote books on other subjects including one on ornithology when he was just 19 and also an acclaimed book on the 'American War of 1812' with Great Britain.

His father died soon after he left Harvard and he inherited a large sum of money. He initially decided to work as a lawyer but then entered public life in New York. He was engaged to his childhood sweetheart, Edith Kermit Carow, but the engagement ended suddenly. He later became engaged to Alice Hathaway Lee and they married and had a daughter, but Alice died a couple of days after her daughter's birth. Theodore's mother died on the same day leaving him deeply depressed. He went into the country and spent time hunting, looking at conservation issues and writing more books.

Two years later he met Edith again and they decided to get married which they did in London, and went on to have a

further five children together. TR went on to pursue his public service ambitions and became a member of the New York Assembly, He didn't become mayor but was appointed City Police Commissioner. He travelled city-wide and saw that life

in New York was a nightmare for many immigrants. He "cleaned up" the police, ensuring the job was done properly and that promotion was on merit. His success in this role helped him to be seen as a credible national politician.

After the next election he was given the role of Commissioner of the Navy, which he was very pleased about as he saw conflict between the USA and Spain as imminent and he knew a strong Navy would be needed.

TR left government to raise a regiment known as the 'Rough Riders' to fight the Spanish in Cuba. TR was Colonel and trained the men who fought exceptionally bravely and won the Battle of Kettle Hill. But TR was not awarded the US highest medal for bravery, the Congressional Medal of Honor, until 2001, long after his death.

He was again persuaded to stand as Governor of New York and was elected narrowly. This led to him being seen as a credible presidential candidate, and at the next election he was offered the role of Vice President to William .

McKinley, which, after initial reluctance, he accepted. But six months into this term William McKinley was shot by an anarchist and died 8 days later, so Theodore Roosevelt was sworn in as president in 1901. He was 42 years old and remains the youngest US president to date.

He became involved in construction of the Panama Canal, which significantly shortened the lengthy and dangerous journey around Cape Horn. The US got its way by good old bribery and corruption. \$50 was paid to each Colombian soldier removing them from the scene and Panama was created, for which the US had already drafted a constitution and had designed a flag. The opening of the canal in 1914 happened without much fanfare as WW1 had started.

The US had gained economic power in the world but not much political power. TR

commissioned a new naval fleet, the current fleet was small and composed of wooden ships so he commissioned 16 new, steel, battleships, painted white and bristling with guns. They set off on a 43,000 mile circumnavigation of the world to show that the USA had arrived as a world power.

He also followed his love of the natural world and set up national parks and reserves in every state, 230 million acres in total, starting with North Dakota to maintain sustainable levels of wildlife. In 1909, having decided not to stand for

election in 1908, he set off on a safari into Kenya, taking with him a selection of guns and rifles. He believed in sustainable hunting. This was a very liberal approach by the standards of the time although very much at

variance with what is acceptable now.

He had a final foray into politics in 1912 when he stood for election as an independent, he beat Taft, who had replaced him, but was beaten by Woodrow Wilson.

He also had another expedition, this time into the Amazon with Colonel Cândido Rondon in 1913, trying to follow the path of the River of Doubt. They hit a lot of problems with insects and disease, their canoes were not suitable and were damaged in the rapids, they had insufficient food and were tracked by the indigenous people who they thought were likely to kill them. By a third of the way through their planned expedition they were in very poor condition and TR was close to death. He recovered but never got back to full health.

He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his efforts to end the Russo-Japanese war, and in 1917, following USA's entry into WW1, he wanted to lead a volunteer force, similar to his Rough Riders, into France, but to his disgust President Woodrow Wilson refused.

He died at home, in his sleep, at the age of 60, of a coronary embolism. He had been planning another run at the presidency 14 years later another Roosevelt became president, Franklin Delano, he was a distant cousin of Theodore and they knew each other quite well, although they had different political views. His wife, Eleanor, was Theodore's niece.