

Teesdale U3A – Report of Monthly Meeting – September 2019

Lucy Adlington provided a 'one woman' show at the September U3A meeting. Lucy runs the History Wardrobe and provides a stage performance featuring the dress and way of life of people, particularly women, in various time periods. This performance featured women in WW2. Lucy liked to give a name to her clothes and began with Ernest's jacket. Ernest had been awarded the Croix de Guerre whilst on active service in France and his wife Ada had been a nurse.

Nellie was a hairdresser, but she became an auxiliary and was asked to sew. She and her sister Mary made uniforms for servicemen and they had put 'good luck' notes in the pockets. Some of these notes received replies. Nellie was even sewing panels on RAF planes using very long needles. Also, at the time women known as night witches, were flying Russian Po-2 planes in open cockpits.

The government introduced a utilitarian scheme using artificial fibres and a mending culture developed. The expressions 'another ladder darn it' and 'make the best of it' were commonly used. Left over silks from the making of parachutes were often used for nightdresses. The linen used for plans in architects' offices became very useful. Around the world, women made drab silks look good.

Many women were also employed in the land army and some became lumber Jills. They often had to wear clothes which were much too big. The overall situation improved somewhat when nylon became available towards the end of the war.

How do you dress for an air raid shelter and do you need a bag to keep your essentials in? Lucy showed some lovely embroidered women's trousers from China. Clothes were often made and worn to 'keep one's spirits up'.

What did spies wear? Certainly, silk was used to make plans as it doesn't rustle. Lucy even had some items from Bletchley Park which had been personalised with embroidery.

Lucy finished with a well-known story of a German parachutist who had been taken prisoner by an English woman who said to him 'you are now my prisoner and I am going to make you a nice cup of tea'.

Lucy gave a brilliant theatrical performance, with a variety of local accents and an amazing wardrobe of clothes. She was ably assisted by Alan and Iris.

The vote of thanks was given by Hazel Yeadon who has recently produced a booklet entitled 'What did you do in the War Granny'?

The next meeting is on Thursday 24th October when Chris Lloyd is speaking on Lewis Carol and the importance of our area in children's literature.

For more information about U3A contact Ian Reid: tel 01833 631304

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