

NOTES OF A MEETING OF CANTERBURY ROTARY BOOK CLUB
held on 18th August 2016 chez Colin and Jennifer McKone

1. Present: Viv, Georges, Jennifer, Colin, Tony, Alan, Brian

2. Apologies: Gill and Caroline

3. Book : Bill Bryson - "The Road to Little Dribbling" . The book ,is sub-titled "More Notes from a small island" and is a re-run of his previous tour of the UK. Viv enjoyed the book, and it made him smile, but thought Bryson 20 years grumpier. Georges compared the book with "I shall not hate" in that both were written from a standpoint - this one tells us a lot about the state of Britain, especially that things are shabbier than they were. Jennifer thought Bryson unfair to people who could not answer back - for example, the reference to "cow trampling". She got irritated by the book, did not think it funny or follow what he was trying to prove. Alan found the book more negative than positive, though there was a good analysis of the numbering system of British roads, while Tony found it incredibly boring. We all felt Bryson's CPRE connection had an influence on the book and that he would have been better advised to concentrate on the little visited places. But then we had a sip of wine , and Jennifer told us how the book made her go back to Seaford and look down on the cottages and see the countryside at its best - and we cheered up a bit.

4. Other reads: Viv - Sir Alec Ferguson "Leading" - a textbook on how to get the best out of people and "The Devil in the Marshalsea" about the debtors' prison. Also, Kate Atkinson "A God in Ruins" with all the flashing backwards and forwards in time that Colin feels is the present mantra of creative writing tuition (and led me in the case of this book to be uncertain whether or not some of the characters were ever supposed to have existed - though I suppose that's a philosophical question for all fictional characters which maybe Georges can explain another time!). Georges was re-reading "Sophie's World" by Justine Gaander - his nephew who lives in France was studying philosophy at school, and Georges suggested that he read this book - and bought him a copy in French, which the nephew had avoided reading until now, when he felt he had to, as he was about to pay Georges a visit - while Georges , having forgotten what it is about, had felt obliged to re-read it - an interesting case of mutual obligation. All this led to a philosophy discussion - Viv told us about a conversation with his daughter's Italian boyfriend on the subject of doing philosophy in schools. Tony did a degree in philosophy after retiring as a scientist, he wasn't sure that school was the right place to study the subject as you need to have a bit of experience of life first, and referred to the "Philosophy of motorcycle maintenance" - but I was not sure whether that is the name of a book, or a reflection of problems he had with his bike. However, he had enjoyed Bertrand Russell, and this led Georges into some very deep waters, questioning what is real , and whether we imagine the world into existence. Leaving aside whether this is the same as the scientific method of hypothesis followed by research, Colin brought us back to earth by explaining how , af ter 25 years as a scientist, his life had been turned round by joining Oxfam and going in and out of the Philippines , where he was struck by the relationship between rich and poor, and was led to believe life would get better. . Jennifer had really enjoyed "Hard Times" by Dickens, having been tempted into it by "Barnaby Rudge", and had also read "Fighting on the Home Front" by Kate Adie - history of the changes in the position of women as a result of WWII. Tony had also been fired by Barnaby to read "A Tale of 2 Cities" and "Oliver Twist" and had re-read "1984"- Orwell, which he saw coming more and more to pass, and "The Blasphemer " by Nigel ? Terrell - a good book. Alan had run out of reading matter on holiday, and found himself reading about Chris Fruerne (who he had thought was a C20 poet) and "The Churchill Factor" by Boris Johnson - not sure how much was the ghost writer, but it was a good read, the subjects arranged by theme and not chronologically. Me - "Golden Hill" by Francis Spufford - a very interestingly written tale of a visit to New York by a mysterious Briton in 1746, "What a carve up"- old book by Jonathan Coe, and, wip, Music at Midnight - John Drury - really good biography of George Herbert and The Silk Roads" by Peter Francopan - history of Eurasia.

5. Things done. Viv - went to see "Present Laughter" - Noel Coward also "Circles" at the Turner (several others saw this too). Jennifer - a trip along the South Coast including visit to Verwood Gallery at Hastings - there a very interesting window onto the sea makes you feel you are looking

at a picture - Chichester Cathedral and the Piper tapestries, and the gardens at Great Dixter - and finally Quex Park with all sorts of things including many stuffed animals. Tony had been to the newish Supreme Court on a Friday when it does not sit but allows visits. He had seen "Show Boat", "Guys and Dolls" and "Hamlet" - terrifying - all on transmission. He was about to go to Berlin and then up the Oder. Alan had had a busy July - "The Cunning little Vixen" and "Benedict and Beatrice" at Glyndebourne and 2 weeks in France, visiting all sorts of festivals, and a photography event in Arles. Me - visit of the Compton Verney gallery - good small art collection and good collection of miniatures, inc some Hilliards, and an amusing 1950s exhibition with a collection of the illustrations for "Janet and John go Shopping" - all very bright colours and smart clothes - antidote to the real times? "Elijah" in Birmingham Town Hall, "An Inspector Calls" - the Old Stagers - very good, a steam train ride from Carnforth - "Brief Encounter" - the clock and refreshment rooms are still there - to Scarborough for a 93rd birthday, and an exhausting amount of dog care

6. NEXT MEETING: Thursday 6th October 2016 7.30pm chez Colin and Jennifer. Book "The Girl on the Train" by Paula Hawkins. Georges had recommended "This Thing of Darkness" by Harry James, which we might consider for another time

FINALLY a big thank you to our kind hosts, Colin and Jennifer, for making all this possible