

CANTERBURY ROTARY BOOK CL
Notes of a meeting held on 8th November 2018
at the home of Alan and Diana Forrest

1. PRESENT: Alan and Diana, Neil, Tony, Gill, Judith, Viv, Pauline, Brian

2. APOLOGIES: Caroline, Richard, Georges, Colin and Jennifer

3. BOOK: "The History of Bees : by Naja Lunge translated from Norwegian by Diane Oatley. Three short stories concerning bees (and imparting a good deal of practical information about bee keeping) , which are set at different periods of time , here chopped and mingled into one in the modern fashion -which you may either find artistic - or infuriating. The first begins in mid C19 England, and essentially concerns William, who had aspirations as a natural historian, but who, following a disastrous marriage, has a larger family of daughters plus one useless son, which he supports , with varying degrees of success, from a seed shop. Falling into depression and lassitude, which is not helped by his former tutor, Rahm, he takes to his bed and the business folds. Quite how the family survives is not clear, but William revives, restarts the seed business, and conceives the idea of a new form of beehive made of wood (as distinct from the earlier straw hives), which is designed to facilitate taking honey without loss of bees, and sets about having a patented prototype made and publicised, only to be dashed by Rahm's appearing and pointing out a prior patent. One of the daughters now rides to the rescue with a small alteration to the hive which enables the bees to produce honeycomb rather than wax - and there is some success. She also produces a small child which is perhaps her brother's by one of the village girls.

It is now 2007 in Ohio, and George is a farmer who also keeps bees. His only child, Tom, is not interested in the farm , but is a literary student. George thinks once he has got over his literary interests, Tom will settle back into the farm - and therein lies the friction between George and his wife , Emma. George takes his hives around other farms as pollinators, and we learn a lot of the problems of beekeeping, including the phenomenon of colony collapse, which George suffers as does his childhood friends , who has built a large business out of the questionable practice of transporting the bees around. We also learn that Charlotte migrated to Ohio with the child, who turns out to be an ancestor of George, and the author of a textbook on seeking and hive construction. In his distress, George contemplates suicide by exposing himself to angry bees (and the irony of their destroying him after he has destroyed some of them is noted) - but Tom rides to his rescue in the nick of time.

Last in time - but first in the book - it is 2098 in Sichuan province, China. We meet Tao - she and her husband , Kuan, work as hand pollinators of fruit trees after a disastrous collapse of the bee population. We are told they did reappear, but by then hand pollination was deemed more efficient. They are desperately poor , but have one child - Wei Wen, and are saving up for a second child. On a holiday outing, Wei Wen succumbs to a mystery attack and is rushed off to hospital. For some reason that is not apparent, Tao is not allowed to see him , and her part of the story becomes a frenzied journey across China to try to find him. In the course of this, she visits ghost cities where civilisation too has collapsed, and when at last she finds the boy, alas deceased from a bee sting, remarkably, she meets the female president of China. En route she has acquired a copy of the book written by Tom about bees, and this she persuades the president to read - and so, we presume , comes some hope of salvation.

Jennifer and Colin had written to say they found the book sad (though they wished they had been able to be with us). Georges found it his kind of book. Neil felt plausibility fell down with Tao, but liked the interplay between George and Tom and felt the whole book was about the relationships between generations. Judith found parts difficult to believe -Tom was too good to be true. Viv found

it hard to visualise the scale of the distance covered across China by Tao. Tony thought of Orwell as he read the book and was amazed at how quickly civilisation had fallen apart. Pauline thought it sounded like science fiction but mentioned her son keeps bees. Alan had missed one of the date changes and got confused, but thought there were some very nice passages about bee culture and liked the descriptions of the relationship between Charlotte and her father. For Viv, the story swaps around too much between the different tales. Gill remarked on the recent trip to the raspberry farm with GSE when we were told they bought 12 boxes of bumble bees a year, without queens, to keep the canes pollinated. In all, quite a good read.

4. OTHER READS: Pauline - "A Gentleman in Moscow" - enjoyed by her and the club read or 2 back; "Secrets of the Italian Garden" - Andrew Crofts' "The Long afternoon" - Giles Waterfield about a couple living in a lovely house in Menton before WW1 trying to decide whether to go back to live in London after war breaks out but ending when he shoots himself "the Guernsey Peel and Potato Pie soc'. Judith - Ian McEwan "On Chesil Beach", "Pride & Prejudice", E L Monroe "Ragtime"; "The remains of the Day" - Ishiguro; Patrick Gale - "A Place called winter" and "Perfectly good me". John Updike "Maples short stories" - quite interesting; Jennifer Winterton - "A Gap in time" - good- and Viv says she gave a good lecture; Simon Mawer - "Prague Spring" - novel set in the 1968 uprising very good (I agree having read it too); Gail Honeyman "Eleanor Oliphant is completely fine"; Eric Morganstein "Thre Night Circus" - 2 people in deadly conflict, . Gill "Lamentation" one of the Shadlake stories of the Elizabethan lawyer - very good but very long. Tony - Graham Green "Power and Glory" - based on fact and a film featuring Dirk Bogarde who we all had difficulty recalling; Kate A Atkinson "Where there be good men"; Donna Leon - but he did not recall the name. . Neil - John Grisham "Rooster Bar" and Mtt hilton "Simon Greenman" ? - both veery good; "The Beast side" - interesting and different story about a black man in Baltimore; "Red Notice" - Bill Browder - non fiction about investing in Russia; Anthony Beevor - "Arnhem: - non fiction and very good. He was also looking forward to Max Hastings' book about Vietnam. Viv - "Great War" - an anthology of letters in the Imperial War Museum which he fond very moving; "Cousins" - Sally Vickers-family saga; "This is going to hurt" - Adam Kay - authors diaries as a doctor ion the NHS- must read dark humour; "Man of Iron" - Biography of Thos Telford - Julian Glover; Alan "Waterways of the western Front" - book mostly of photographs of a strip of land with canals that served the allies - available from <http://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/buybooks> - £18. Diana - her brother Jeremy's autography "Breaking News"; Brian - Kate Atkinson "Transcription" about a typist recruited by MI5 in WWII - rather less disjointed than some of her books; "Prague Spring"; "Collusion" "Luke Harding - Russian meddling with the Trump election

5. THINGS DONE: Pauline - trip to Scotland taking in Glasgow and St Andrews - delightful. AS also holiday in Umbria staying in a (Very) old monastery that was once a roman temple with outings to Assissi and Perrugia: Arts Soc lecture by retired Dr James Grant about medicine and art where symptoms of disorder could be seen from the picture eg goitres. Had been to some of Tim Jones' film showings including some of Vic's old films she had not previously seen. cinema - "Bohemian rhapsody" - wonderful (agreed) and the new "A Star is born" - disappointing. Judith - films "Darkest Hour" and Guernsey Potato etc of which I should think she has now had enough. Cruise on the Douro and U3A trip to the NW featuring well known holiday spots - the Anderton Boat lift, Portsunlight and the Manchester ship canal, (that Les certainly knows how to give a girl a good time!) a brief trip to Sweden for a christening, an old time music hall, talks on Elizabeth Fry and "The woman who ate her husband" about the Mona Lisa were good but not so that at the Bridge History Soc about witchcraft in Canterbury (disappointingly there wasn't much). Gill - Jon Suchet talk at the festival and film Christopher Robin - she hadn't realised it is a cartoon. Tony - films "The children act" and "The Wife" - both excellent, trip to Glasgow much improved since his last visit, and festival Hilary Kay, Good Gnus and King Singers. Neil - "The importance of being Ernest" - somehow not right Trip to US Mt Washington, Rockwell Museum, Edith Wharton's house. Film - Bohemian rhapsody. . He is going to see "Katrina and the waves" at Deal. Viv - lot of Festival talks - best Alice Roberts about relationship between animals and humans. Other highlight was Bryn Tufel - A lan also saw him and reminded him of his debut in Brussels in Magic Flute. Alan had also been to the Turner to see the opening of Patrick Heron exhibition - he had rather liked Heron before, and now likes him rather less. Alan and Brian had both seen the excellent EU Chamber Orchestra Festival concert and the very good talk by Taittanger and "Elegie" - a history of

Rachmaninov with music. Brian also mentioned a trip to the PO museum and underground railway at Mt Pleasant -Tony had also seen and enjoyed that

6.DONM: Thursday 10th January 2019 7.30pm chez Pauline at 32 Nunnery Fields Canterbury CT1
3JT Book - Bill Browdler -“ Red Notice”