

# AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Issue No.73



December 2014

## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Well here I am sitting at my computer wondering how to follow Shirley's informative and amusing letters that we've all had the great pleasure of reading over the last four years. It won't be easy as "Shirley, you are a hard act to follow" and although it was said at the AGM it does bear repeating that all U3A members owe you a great big thank you for all your work on our behalf.

What I would like to say on behalf of Dot and myself is that we are going to share some of the duties of Chairman because like so many of us in the U3A we are people who 'do'. Between us we play bowls – carpet, indoors and outdoors; go on gentle walks; play cards; appreciate wine; garden; go on outings and theatre trips; organize the First Aid courses; paint and make the tea and coffee to name but a few. It was over a 'cuppa' that we deplored the fact that our U3A might be no more and agreed that if there were no one else we'd have a go.

It's that having a go that I feel is at the heart of our U3A. Members are not content to sit in an armchair and vegetate as our attendance at groups and meetings shows. When new groups are advertised the list to join fills quickly as do the outings and holidays. So what is it about being on the Committee that stops us all from volunteering immediately? Are we suddenly overcome with shyness or filled with doubt about our abilities? I don't know and it's something that we need to know, so please over the next few months have a think about it and let me know your views. I've already had a suggestion that each member of the Committee put together a short piece on their role so that members know what they will be expected to do. Dot and I had very little idea of what the two roles entailed, but when deciding to have a go it helped to know that there are eight other people on the Committee to help and that we would not be on our own. We felt our U3A was worth saving because it is great in that it provides us with so many chances to learn and grow, and taking up one of the positions on the Committee is just such a chance. So when volunteers are being asked for don't take that step back, step forward into a great opportunity to learn and grow.

Wishing you all a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year.

*Meryll Coe*

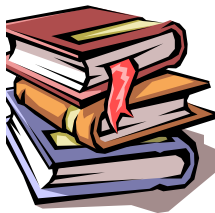
## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS



### READERS' CIRCLE 2:

This group was started in September 2007 with just 5 members and grew to 11. However, due to members recently relocating to different parts of the country our group now numbers 8 so we do have 1/2 spaces for new people at the moment. We meet in members' homes once a month on a Wednesday between 10.30 and 12 noon and after a short discussion on things in general we then get down to the real business of dissecting the book we have been reading that month. Some opinions given don't match others showing that each person's interpretation of a story can be very different! This makes for a lively discussion each month!! We all contribute to choosing a book for the month – either recommended in the media or encompassing one of our members' particular likes i.e. historical, family sagas, fiction and non-fiction, biographies, etc.

Instead of a book choice in August, we enjoy a day out for lunch and chat about our various personal reads amongst other things. Most importantly, we quite often read a book which normally would not have crossed our minds to read. Sometimes we go to old favourites. New publications are also read if they appeal. Very occasionally a DVD of a book made into a film is enjoyed. This is a way of enjoying books with like-minded people and can fill both summer and winter leisure time indoors or out. A good way to spend time learning. Join us!!



*Brenda Daniel*

### CRAFT GROUP:

#### Demonstration by Ann Shepherd of Wendover U3A

Ann Shepherd from Wendover very kindly gave her time to demonstrate how to make fabric covered Christmas baubles. She not only brought along her expertise but also extra materials for everyone to use.



We took a polystyrene ball and marked eight segments. We cut a line down each segment and pressed fabric into the cuts until the ball was totally covered. We then used ribbon to hide the join and attached a hanger. These baubles are light weight and have the added bonus of not breaking should they fall. We all took home a finished bauble and were pleased with our efforts.

*Heather Edwards*

**Our London walkers remind us of the lovely weather we've enjoyed this autumn as they linger in the sunshine near Canary Wharf. Tony Poth took this photo.**



## **EXPLORING LONDON WALKS**

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October when we went on a planned 'Wapping to Limehouse' walk was an unexpectedly hot day for the time of the year. Our route took us to Tower Hill Underground station in order to start the walk at the nearby St. Katherine's Dock. However, starting at this station coincided with the destination of hundreds, if not thousands, of people who were going to see the poppy display in the moat of the Tower of London, entitled 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red'. The crush of people forced us to reappraise our plans. We were able to organise ourselves so that everyone had the opportunity to move forward in the crowd, get a view of the poppies and take photos where possible. We then, as a close knit group, moved steadily against the flow of the crowd and made a very circular route across many road junctions, to the east of the Tower to continue the walk.

We had perfect weather to walk along the Thames for much of the route. We were fascinated by the redevelopment that had taken place of the huge number of docks that had occupied this part of London. It was good to see many historical sites, including the Old Stairs that led down to the shore line, and passed some of the old pubs. We had an enjoyable lunch at 'The Grapes', overlooking the river, which was an atmospheric pub that Charles Dickens had described in the text of the book 'Our Mutual Friend'. By good fortune we decided to travel back to Marylebone by an alternative route using the DLR and Jubilee Line. We subsequently discovered that Tower Hill Station had been closed for safety reasons due to the vast crowds.

*Peter Harding*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:



I am writing to U3A members to introduce myself as the new Museum Director at the County Museum – which is now (since August 1<sup>st</sup>) a charity. We have always regarded U3A as one of the stars in our lecture circuit firmament and I'm hoping now to recruit new volunteers who might be involved with us at the main museum or in our Museum Resource Centre at Halton.

Volunteering has lots of benefits for museums besides the time and skill contributed. I see our volunteer work as bringing the professional staff closer to day to day reality and allowing the public to feel more empathetic with the museum. It also gets the name of the museum out to a wider public and creates a sense of community participation that casual visitors can relate to. Our volunteers at the moment are all members of the Friends or Patrons and Rosemary Gibson from the F&Ps has been assiduous in making and sustaining contacts. Just lately we have got a new group of recruits signed up for more public facing work and for care of the collections and education resources.

We still need more help to meet the public in reception, to encourage more spend in the café and shop and to help visitors sign up for our Gift Aid scheme. I am looking for 3 hour stints on a morning or afternoon once a week and if you can commit to that (even with time out for holidays) it would be most appreciated. We have a target of 15 for this work and so far have just 3 signed up! Others have undertaken Gift Aid processing, shop records maintenance, school loan box preparation and one or two more have come forward to help Keepers further with collections documentation and packing. More are needed especially

for publicity; using excel sheets to keep things under review and control – and for a rich variety of new tasks that the Keepers have been preparing.

At the end of September we will hear from the HLF whether the County has been successful with its application for grant to refurbish and extend the Halton Resource Centre. Volunteering will be critical to the success of that project and to the preparation of new stories and methods of public presentation there. The Keepers have all understood the extra burden that will fall on them and are looking for ways in which volunteer help can take charge of some of their normal work – new openings and new responsibilities lie ahead for all involved – I hope some of you will be interested in helping to realise them.

*Richard de Peyer*

I would like to send my profound thanks to Meryll and to Dot. They have literally saved Aylesbury Vale U3A. An organisation that has been running so successfully for more than twenty years and given so much pleasure to so many people could not be allowed to die. I wish them every success in their efforts over the next year. I hope someone will be willing to take on the task in a year's time.

*Val Young*

**Eleanor Roosevelt once said “Beautiful young people are accidents of nature. But beautiful old people are works of art.”**

## YOUR NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2014–2015

**Chairman for one year only: Meryll Coe**

**Vice-Chairman for one year only: Dot Simmons**

**Secretary: Peter Gasson**

**Treasurer: Bob Colliver**

**Groups Coordinator: Hazel Burgess**

**Hall Managers: Dave Merrison and Roger Walker**

**Membership Secretary: Diane Richardson**

**Outings Coordinator: Gay Hancock**

**Social Activities: Maxine Robinson**

**Speakers Secretary: Alan Robinson**

### HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES



#### STILL WANTED – NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

Thanks to Meryll Coe and Dot Simmons, we have a Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the current U3A year (up to October 2015). But we are not out of the woods yet. At the AGM next year we will need a new Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Secretary and Membership Secretary will have completed over four years in post, and the Treasurer and two other Committee members will have completed their three-year terms. So we are on the lookout for volunteers to step into the breach.

We have recently reviewed the joining forms that members have filled in and found some members who have said that they would be willing to serve on the Committee. So we propose to arrange a meeting, or perhaps more than one, early in 2015, to which we will invite potential volunteers, without obligation, and explain the Committee posts and what they involve. We would also welcome to these meetings any other members who might be interested in joining the Committee or who would like to know more.

Please look or listen out for invitations and announcements. And please consider taking on one of the Committee posts – the future of Aylesbury Vale U3A depends on you!

## THE SUMMER IN CAMBRIDGE

Now that we are well and truly into the Winter it is a good thing that we have so many happy memories to share. One of my life-long ambitions – to go punting on the River Cam and see those beautiful college buildings and grounds while trailing my hand in the water – has at last been achieved, just proving that it is never too late. I have to confess that while getting into the punt was relatively easy if a little ungraceful, getting out again was much harder. I felt sorry for the two undergraduates, not to mention the other U3A passengers, who had to haul me out rather inelegantly!



But it was a wonderful afternoon, in blazing hot sunshine, and the views were all that I could have wished for. All in all another highly successful venture, thanks to Gay and Ian Hancock.

### *The Editor*

One of the many interesting sights seen by the London walkers was the 'Gloriana' which preceded the Queen's barge used in the Thames Pageant for the Jubilee celebrations.



The wooden model of a hippopotamus (below) seen in St Katherine's Dock and nicknamed 'hippopothames' was another more unusual sight. It also took part in the River Pageant.



Photos by Peter Harding and Tony Poth



**TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:** Julie Blease, Angela Brown, Sue Brown, Karen Dodd -Barker, Martin Game, Priscilla Head, Anne & Alan Ilsley, Jennifer James, Janice Kay, Carole King, Rosetta Kingston, Frances Lavender, Rita Price, Pauline Shelton, Carmela Smith, Sally Smith

### THE ANNUAL SUPPER QUIZ

Our quiz was once again organised by Maxine Robinson, who with her husband Keith set the questions and kept order (more or less) throughout the proceedings. It is thanks to them that 47 members enjoyed an entertaining and amusing evening, followed by the usual fish and chip supper. The final results were very close, but this year's 'Brain of Aylesbury' team consisted of Diane and David Richardson, Jean and Pete Woodman, Peter Gasson and Liz W (surname unknown). Our congratulations to them.



As always, questions followed various themes with varying degrees of difficulty. Keith always has a round based on the Highway Code, and rather worryingly that seems to catch out a lot of licence holders. One round was on medical matters. Which one of the following factors about the mosquito is true: it feeds only at night, it stores blood in its legs, only the females bite humans, or there are none in Canada? Could you guess the film title from this clue? My girlfriend works in an amusement park. The sports round: Allison Fisher is connected with which sport: diving, polo, snooker, or table tennis? And you wonder why everyone seemed to do well on the wine round: Suhindol wine comes from which country?

### GROUP NEWS

**Chess Group:** Denis Wright has now taken over the management of this group.

**Garden Group:** There have been no volunteers to take over the running of the Garden Group. This is a great pity as this had developed into a very large group with an autumn / winter programmes of talks and demonstrations, and some much enjoyed outings in the summer. Could you help?

**Proposed Antiques and Collectibles Group:** There have been some requests to form this group, but so far no volunteers to arrange the programme. There is lots of help available from neighbouring U3As and the Third Age Trust – so don't be shy.

## SEPTEMBER AT THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

In excitement and anticipation 47 U3A members set off for London and our visit to the Houses of Parliament. Our coach driver Elliot was a star and deposited us outside the Jewel Tower on the dot of 10.30 a.m. After a welcome drink we toured this small Tower, which was part of the original Palace of Westminster, before walking to Central Hall to enjoy an appetising lunch in the Wesley Cafe. After lunch we congregated outside the Palace of Westminster for the highlight of our day. Divided



This picture taken by Tony Poth shows members gathering at St. Stephens entrance awaiting their Guides.

into two groups we enjoyed the wealth of information that Mike and Helen, our tour guides, shared with us. We even learned how the early Speakers of the House of Commons went to the toilet without

leaving their seat! Today John Bercow can ask a deputy to stand in for him if he needs to leave the House. The Palaces are resplendent with gold leaf and historical frescoes as well as more modern statues of particularly famous prime ministers. It proved a marvellous lesson in the history of our nation and its royal family. Thoroughly enjoyable!

Later in the afternoon we boarded the bus for a short trip to Chiswick House and Gardens for final refreshments. Some of us even braved a walk around the beautiful gardens in the autumn drizzle and arrived home at 7 p.m. tired but fulfilled after a very successful and entertaining day out.

*Bobby Cadwallader*

### YOUR GENEROSITY !

**At the September meeting it was announced that there was to be the usual voluntary collection to help the Play Group which uses the small hall at the Community Centre. We have done this for a number of years. This year the Play Group is to use the money to hire a small touring pantomime group for the children's Christmas Party. Thanks to your generosity the sum of £236 was handed over to the leader. We hope that the children, and their helpers, enjoy their party!**





## SPEAKERS CORNER



### **WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY: Paul Ranford – ‘The Light Ages’**

This will be Paul’s third visit to AVU3A. His topic is again related to the History of Science, and is the tale of the transfer of scientific knowledge from ancient Greece to Medieval Europe via Islamic (Arabic) philosophers, who held the torch of learning and scholarship while the light of European intellectual activity was almost extinguished during the ‘Dark Ages’.

### **WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY: William French – ‘Welcome to my World – the Butler’**

William will tell us about his 30 year career of service and take us through some highlights of his working life amongst the rich and famous, including a period spent in the service of the Royal family and several film stars.

### **WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH: Mike Brown – ‘The Suburban Front in the Second World War’**

This talk should bring back memories for a number of us! Mike is an acknowledged expert on the Home Front in WW2 and has written extensively on the subject. With the use of slides and examples of the physical objects themselves he will seek to re-create the atmosphere of those difficult times, and the highs and lows of people’s experiences.

### **DON’T FORGET THE CARD LADY!**

A reminder to let people know I still send cards to people who may appreciate them. I send “Get Well”, “Best Wishes” and “Sympathy” cards for instance. Just contact a member of the Committee or me, Val Young.



### **AYLESBURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL BURSARY**

Each year AVU3A gives a bursary to be awarded to a pupil at Aylesbury Grammar School for community involvement, either within school or in the local area. Peter Gasson and I attended this year’s senior prize-giving at the school where we received thanks for the generosity of AVU3A. This year the bursary was shared by two boys – Dan Crutchley for his work at the Stocklake Park School, and Jamie Drew for forming a new Comedy Club at the Grammar School.



*Diane Richardson*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January:** Join members new and old, and associates too, for a coffee morning at The Broad Leys Public House, Wendover Road. This is a chance to exchange views, learn about different groups and pass on your own knowledge. Join us at 10.30 a.m.

**February 23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>:** The bowls club visit to Torquay.

**February 12<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup>:** These are provisional dates. Keep an eye open for final details of a Chinese Buffet to celebrate the Year of the Sheep – a new venture for us, perhaps one for those who had a surfeit of Christmas Lunches!

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March:** We know that some of you have yet to visit Bletchley Park, the home of the wartime code breakers. Well this is your chance! Final details to follow from Gay and Ian Hancock.

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March:** The second of our 2015 Coffee Mornings for all members at the Broad Leys, Public House, Wendover Road at 10.30 a.m.

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March:** A visit to the Loughborough Bell Foundry with Brian Robson. All places on the Bell Foundry tour have been taken, but there is still room for another nine members on the coach to Loughborough – and plenty of other sights to see! The reduced cost for those members is £14.

**29<sup>th</sup> May to 3<sup>rd</sup> June:** A Taste of Herefordshire. Once again Ron and Rosemary Meadowcroft are arranging a week's study visit. Not far to travel this year, and not one to be missed. The tour is based on a hotel on the outskirts of Hereford, and will probably include a dabble by the River Wye, maybe crossing into Wales, and depending on the weather we may see acres of cider apple blossom, and maybe taste a little of the final product.

**Please note that we have several other visits in the pipeline, and we just need to finalise the dates. They are all dependent on several other things! We are hoping to offer as varied a programme as last year, with possible trips to Bath, Stratford, Brooklands Museum, Wisley, another National Trust property somewhere, and London. And don't forget, any member can arrange a visit and we will help with the organisation. So if there is somewhere that you have always wanted to visit – why not invite some of your U3A friends to join you, and book a coach !**

*Gay Hancock*

## OUR READERS WRITE!.....

**Schoolboy howlers:** In mediaeval times most people were alliterate. Joan of Arc was burned to a steak and canonised by George Bernard Shaw.

**Know your English language:** Only three words in standard English begin with the letters 'dw'. Can you name them?



**Seen on a road sign:** Slow Children Crossing.

My husband and I divorced over religious differences: He thought he was a God – I didn't.

Don't take life too seriously. No one gets out alive.

I don't suffer from insanity. I enjoy every minute of it.

Consciousness: That annoying time between naps.

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

**Trouble with your computer?** Tech. Support: "At the bottom left hand side of your screen, can you see the O.K. button displayed?" Customer: "Wow, can you see my screen from there?"

**For the wine tasters:** The consumption of alcohol may make you think you are whispering when you are not. The consumption of alcohol may cause you to think that you can sing. The consumption of alcohol may create the illusion that you are tougher, smarter, faster and better looking than most people.

**Some historical facts:** Bread was divided up according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf; the family had the middle, and guests got the top or 'The Upper Crust'. Bath time was different too: A big tub was filled with hot water. The man of the house enjoyed hot, clean water. Then the rest of the family had their baths the last of all being the babies. By that time the water was so dirty that you could almost lose someone in it. Hence the saying 'Don't throw the baby out with the bath water'.

**Don't forget sports:** Q. What goes putt, putt? Ans. A bad golfer.  
Q. What game is played by 20 people in a telephone booth? Ans. Squash

**Now for the crime wave:** Local police hunting for the 'knitting needle nut case' who has stabbed six people in the last 48 hours believe that the man may be following a pattern.

**Sex discrimination?** I heard some men saying that they wouldn't feel safe on an aircraft if they knew that the pilot was a woman. I thought that was ridiculous – it's not as if she'd have to reverse the thing!

Answers to 'dw' words: Dwarf, dwell and dwindle.

## OUR THANKFUL VILLAGES

Whenever I go to Somerset I try to include a visit to Wells Cathedral, taking the local bus. The return route travels along the foothills of the Mendips towards Cheddar and eventually to the coast. A few years ago as we approached one of the villages I noticed a sign 'Rodney Stoke – A Thankful Village'. I was intrigued by the sign but didn't discover its meaning until a few weeks later when I switched on the radio and heard the BBC interviewing a man who had been tracking villages where all the men who joined up in WW1 had returned home safely. I subsequently visited the local library and obtained a print-out of the BBC News Magazine which contained fascinating details about these villages.

In 1930 the popular writer Arthur Mee had discovered a small number of communities which suffered no fatalities in WW1. He identified 32 of these although over the years the number has grown to 51 and some of these, including Upper Slaughter (belying its name) were part of a small number to be 'doubly thankful' where all had returned from both WW1 and WW2. In 2013 a small group of motor cyclists set out to visit every one of the 'Thankful Villages' in the U.K. and in so doing raised contributions for the Royal British Legion.

In our area they visited Stoke Hammond and Puttenham where they would have seen a small brass plaque set on the wall near the entrance to the Church and bearing the names of the 15 men who enlisted and survived, It reads "For their Gallant Service and Safe Return – Thanks be to God". All over the country similar tributes may be found to those who served their country and all returned home to their 'Thankful Village'.



Puttenham Church and its plaque

*Sheila Thompson*

Last date for copy for the Spring Newsletter will be February 12th so please send any items you may like to share with us to Shirley Stokes on [treveris9@btinternet.com](mailto:treveris9@btinternet.com) or by post to 9 Windsor Road, Aylesbury HP21 7JG. Telephone 01296 392726  
But don't wait for the closing date; the Editor likes to receive copy as early as possible so that she knows what spaces are left to be filled!

Thanks are due to our Secretary Peter Gasson for help with the ordering and printing and to Alan Robinson for proof reading And of course to all of you who send me articles and photographs. We are always in need of more material, so if you belong to a group which is doing something interesting, or have an unusual photograph, please share them with us.