

20th
Anniversary

Aylesbury Vale U3A Newsletter 20th Anniversary Edition

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NEWSLETTER

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A LETTER FROM A PAST CHAIRMAN

I congratulate the Aylesbury Vale U3A on celebrating its 20th Anniversary. I joined the organisation after I retired in the early 90's and three early memories stand out. I recall the main meetings at the Bucks County Sports and Social Club near Stoke Mandeville Hospital chaired by Eric Dorrance—supported by regular interjections from one of our founder members. It is the late Eric Dorrance whom we must thank for our very existence. He was a leader, a very good speaker and a very hard worker. I recall a talk he gave on the geology of New Zealand and some of his images remain in my mind to this day.

My next early memory is of the Jazz Group led by Len Bickley in his own home. I was brought up on classical music so this was something completely new that U3A brought me. Thirdly, not so new, but nostalgically enjoyable were the meetings of the East Anglia Group led by Leslie George, again meeting in her own home. We had previously lived in East Anglia so it meant a great deal to us

The major event that turned my retirement around came with the death of Eric Dorrance when I was invited to become Chairman—a position I held for the statutory 5 years. I still regard it as a great honour to have served in that capacity. It led to lasting friendships, particularly with those members who took office and served on the committee during those formative years. It was during this time that Sir Roy Harding who had been elected President suggested that his post be discontinued as it was inconsistent with both our own constitution and the practice of other U3As.

Our organisation continued to flourish and one of its great success stories is that it helped to establish at least three others which in their turn have created more. The retired folk of Buckinghamshire can now enjoy a vast array of subjects to absorb—casually or seriously. That is how it should be, for to remain healthy we are told that we must do three things—keep active mentally and physically; keep our hand-eye coordination and mix with others. U3A creates the opportunity to do all three, and more, in one organisation.

This special celebratory Newsletter has been designed to show both something of our history, but also something about the members who make it such a happy organisation. I wish Aylesbury Vale every success in the future.

Ed Schoon

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

Your committee is pleased to announce that the following people have agreed to accept Honorary Membership in recognition of the major part which they played in the launch of Aylesbury Vale University of the Third Age

SIR ROY HARDING
BARBARA BOOTH (nee MENCHES)
FRED BUSH
RON FISHER
ARTHUR HORLOCK
JOHN MASON
LESLEY RICHARDSON (nee HEATHER)
BARBARA WHITAKER



From l to r: Fred Bush, Lesley Richardson, Chairman Mike Meacham, Barbara Booth, Ron Fisher, Barbara Whitaker and Arthur Horlock.

Photo. By courtesy of Peter Ashton

Some 186 members saw the presentation of the awards at our January Meeting. Sadly, neither our first President Sir Roy Harding nor Secretary John Mason could be with us owing to health problems. The Chairman reminded members that the University of the Third Age Movement began in the U.K. in 1982 and by the end of 1989 had developed some 60 groups. Aylesbury Vale has the distinction of being the 67th! As the Certificates were presented the recipients regaled us with memories of those early days—one (guess who) even bursting into song!

Barbara Whitaker reminded us of our first Chairman's dictum—'You teach me and I'll teach

Honorary Membership Awards cont....

you'. 'This is not a pensioners social club, but an academic institution encouraging older people to continue to learn' she said. 89 year old Arthur 'Joss' Horlock who had travelled from Nailsea in Bristol remembered being the 10th member to sign up, and although not currently in membership of his local U3A has spent over 20 years of his retirement helping children with reading problems. He recalled that he began in Buckinghamshire with children in an Infants School in Bierton. 'If you want to know all the gossip in a village, talk to the infants' he said 'there are things I daren't even repeat'. Fred Bush told us of the earliest days of U3A and how pleased he was to still be able to see it growing. Ron Fisher talked of the friendships that abound, and the willingness of members to be involved.

In his letter of congratulation Sir Roy said 'The success of Aylesbury Vale U3A. has surpassed my wildest expectations' and more than one of those present echoed that sentiment.



Members enjoy the presentation of Honorary Awards at the January Meeting

Photos. By Peter Ashton



Our soon-to-be Honorary Members relax before the ceremony

Photo by Peter Ashton

20 YEARS OF MEMORIES

Time flies

Helping Friends

Interesting Activities

Retired and Busy

Doing Things Together

Active learning

Good Company

Enjoyment

This was the legend on the front cover of the scrapbook started by Eileen Davis shortly after the foundation of Aylesbury Vale U3A. It provides a fascinating snapshot of those early years. It is full of photographs and it is noticeable that in almost all of them U3A members are smiling and enjoying life. Members both old and new have been sharing their U3A memories with us, and here are just some of those comments.

One of the earliest guest speakers talked about Whiskey. 'I persuaded my husband to come along, and he thought that with that sort of topic it would be just the job for him.' Another contributor- also still happily a member said 'I thought at first it would be a very intellectual group, but I decided to give it a whirl'. He joined the geology group, while his wife followed her interests in music, and exploring London on the

walks that had started right from those early days. As both of them are still members, we assume that the whirl turned into a full scale commitment. Another remembers that while still working she used to bump into the London Walkers as she travelled up to various meetings in the Capital. 'They were always trying to persuade me to play hookey', she said, 'and as they seemed to be having such a good time, I vowed to join as soon as I was eligible'.

An Advertiser/Gazette newspaper article published in 1999 in celebration of the 10th Birthday declared 'Third Agers are a Lively Lot', and the photos in the album certainly bear that out. They show day visits to Greenwich, The Guildhall and Freemasons Hall in London; The Geoffrey Museum; Burford in the Cotswolds, the Chatley Heath Semaphore Tower, the R.H.S. Wisley; the National Waterways Museum in Gloucester, National Postal Museum; and a guided tour of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Those are just a few examples of visits undertaken in the first 10 years, and many of you will realise that they have often been repeated as members come and go. Our second decade has taken us to sites as varied as the British and Natural History Museums, The Hindu Temple at Neasden and the UK Atomic Energy Authority Research Facility at Culham. There have been dozens of others too over the 20 year period.



Members on a visit to the Dutch bulb fields

Study Visits are also an ongoing feature of the programme. There are photographs of tours in Derbyshire, York, Newcastle, Norwich, Durham, Cardiff, the Manchester area (with a tour of the Granada Studios); Pendle (and the witches) and the Lancashire countryside, and remember the record ends in 1994! Geoff Young recalls his first study tour as organiser when he had arranged a trip on the Paignton to Kingswear steam

railway and a boat trip up the River Dart. "The train was due to leave at 2.00 p.m. and as usual our Driver—Terry—had us at the station in good time so that we all had a chance to look around before boarding. As Val and I came into the booking hall we were greeted by a row of grey haired U3A'ers all eating their ice creams. Just like a Sunday School outing, but with a time shift" he recalls. "It was such a happy sight and everyone was having a really good time!" That view is borne out by another correspondent who wrote—My initial involvement with U3A was quite a long time ago now and started a friendship which has been, and still is, so good and of great value. It is something that doesn't often happen later on in one's life. When I had only been to two meetings and didn't know anyone it was announced that there was just one space left on a holiday going to Yorkshire and I very rashly took it up. It was a great holiday. As they all have been and I am indebted to U3A and glad that I found the

...AND THEREBY HANGS A TALE:

William Shakespeare said it first, but we have plenty of tale tellers amongst our friends, and often those tales have involved members looking back into their own ancestry; looking at Aylesbury in days gone by, or delving deeper into British history in general. Here are just a few examples. The Genealogy group is helping its members to explore their own ancestry. One member has traced her ancestry back to a page boy who was present at the execution of Charles 1st. Others have contacted relatives they didn't know they had!

Some 5 years ago our first Honorary Member Philip Roche, now sadly no longer with us, talked and wrote of the Aylesbury he remembered from his school days. Learning to write with a pen; thick strokes down and thin up, pothooks and 'don't make so many blots' One afternoon at school in Queens Park lessons were halted and a long crocodile of children shepherded by teachers and police, were taken to Victoria Street to see the flag pole on Hazels building which had snapped off at the base and was laying down the slope of the roof. Imagine that sort of extra-curricular activity happening today! Local historian and member Hugh Hanley has published a book on the William Harding Charity. It gives not only background information on the founder and his family, but studies the aims of the charity and how it has felt the need to change direction in recent years to keep pace with our rapidly changing society. He has also written on the Thomas Hickman Charities and the history of Prebendal House. Ray Juniper produced a booklet 'Reflections of a County Town Boy' which is available from the County Library. (He has also penned 'An Airman Remembers' and brought an Uncle's diary up to date— perhaps that too will be published in due course!)

Pam and Derek Ayshford have taken a long historical look behind them starting about 25 years ago in the early days of home computing to establish an index of the men on the British ships at the Battle of Trafalgar. After their retirement and with more time and more powerful computers they set themselves a target of publishing something for the bicentenary in 2005. The final product was a CD with details of over 21,000 men and material for a talk which they have delivered all over the country and beyond...from Meadowcroft to Nelson, New Zealand! Those of us who took one of our many excellent outings to the Royal Naval Dockyard at Portsmouth were thrilled to see large displays of CDs with the Ayshford name writ large all over them.



Then you may remember reading about the equally fascinating task of preserving the record of memorials to servicemen who fell in the first world war. June and Nigel Underhill believe passionately that those brave men should not be forgotten and they determined to play their part in keeping the memories alive. When they wrote an article for a previous issue in December 2006 they had covered about one third of the County. You can look on their website to see how far they have progressed since then. (www.buckinghamshireremembers.org.uk). While there are many village and town war memorials, there are also less obvious plaques and artefacts tucked away within churches, village halls and schools.



They particularly mentioned the altar frontal in Stewkley Church—still used occasionally. It commemorates Captain B.A. and Lieutenant G.A. Smith-Masters and was made by their mother and sister who incorporated their own hair into the embroidery of the hair of two angels who represent the two brothers. The sister also used material from her wedding gown.

In more recent times, a member recorded a special visit made to see the arrival of the last of the Concorde flights from the U.S.A. into Heathrow, while another who had found his mother's account of her life related how she saw one of the Kaiser's navy zeppelins coming over Derby where it dropped a bomb on Stanton Ironworks. It is a joy to be able to share the wealth of memories that our members hold.

THE SECRET OF STAYING YOUNG!

According to a recent scientific survey being physically active, taking part in group events, learning something new and devoting time to charity can all help to slow mental decline as you get older. By the year 2071, it has been calculated that 21.3 million people will be over the age of 65 years, and 9.5 million older than 80. They note that there is a need to reverse the negative stereotyping of 'third agers' and I am sure that many of you note that everyone under 50 seems to treat you as if you were born old and have not achieved anything in your lifetime—let alone put down your pipe and flung away your slippers after the dreaded (by some) 60!

It is high time that we showed them something of what can be achieved even after we have reached that magic age of retirement—and wonderful it is too. Some of you have (modestly and sometimes reluctantly) shared news of your many exciting and worthwhile activities. These activities have nothing directly to do with Aylesbury Vale U3A except that they prove that we have a lively and interested (as well as interesting) membership. We don't need scientists to tell us how to keep our lively minds—we have U3A.

A number of our members have learned to swim at long last, and now boast of how many widths or lengths they can achieve. One intrepid lady learned to scuba dive at 59, and regularly travels to the Red Sea to experience some of its amazing sights. We certainly haven't given up on exercise and our walkers plough on through wind and rain. One previous non-walker discovered that she had diabetes and undeterred began to take part in the local diabetic annual sponsored 5 mile walk. From there, with a little persuasion, she joined their monthly 8 to 13 mile walks and for the last 2 years has undertaken an annual expedition which covers any distance between 8 and 13 miles daily. "It is" she says "great fun physically and socially and a great achievement which I would never have managed in my younger years!"



Even our London walks throw up some gems and are enhanced by our previous experience (surely the whole point of our organisation). On a tour of the Chelsea Embankment looking at one of its churches and admiring the clock on the tower, a quiet voice suddenly said 'I helped to make that clock, and it's probably got my name still inscribed on it'. A quick return to the church and a delighted verger sent us all up the bell tower, and there sure enough was his signature as clear as on the day he wrote it there. It was only later that we discovered that he had also been responsible for the clock on Big Ben for many years. That is the trouble with most of our U3A friends, they are often too modest to share their experiences until an opportune moment arises.

Overseas travel is almost 'de rigueur' and perhaps has replaced the 'grand tour' undertaken in former times by much younger men and women. There can be few countries that our third age explorers have not visited—bird watchers to the Galapagos Islands; geographers to Antarctica; animal lovers on safari in South Africa, wine drinkers to France, archaeologists to Ireland and so on. Of course many of you have lived for periods of time during your working life in countries ranging from Japan to Egypt, and families too are spread throughout the world with weddings and christenings taking place all over the British Isles and overseas. In this issue alone we can enjoy an Olympic Games referee telling us of his experiences in Beijing, and in past issues we have heard about Bowling in Argentina and visiting an 'adoptee' in Zambia. But there are simpler pleasures!



One of our lady members says 'When I retired it was not the big things that I wanted to do—the long haul trips abroad or the university degree, but the little ones. To spend the day cultivating my vegetables and making soup from them; to go back and pick up the hobbies that I didn't have time for when I had a job and a home and children to look after. It is a great pleasure to me to be able to go and read plays once a week; to listen (and sometimes to present) a talk on artists and paintings; to go for a walk in the country; to paint (and discover that I am no better now than I was at school!). The U3A enables me to do all these things, and many more, at a tiny cost while helping to keep my mind active.' Long may it last

A NEW INTEREST: *ED SCHOON*

I have two main hobbies—history and railway modelling—hopefully to museum standard. On reading an account of the railway races in the north in 1888, when the East Coast and West Coast routes were in strong competition, I embarked on a project which I estimated might take 5 years to fulfil. It began in 2003, and was to research the carriages of the West Coast train used for the whole journey from Euston to Edinburgh Princes Street as well as the three locomotives used. The first took the train from Euston to Crewe, the second from Crewe to Carlisle, and the third—Carlisle to Edinburgh.

My research revealed many interesting accounts including a very long report in *The Times* of 1888. It confirmed that enough technical information was available from which to build accurate models. The original locomotives south of Carlisle belonged to the London and North Western Railway and those to the north to the Caledonian Railway. So work commenced and at the time of writing I am putting the finishing touches to the third model locomotive. The original 'radial' carriages were built at Wolverton and had no corridors. Only the First Class passengers had access to lavatories and it was probably as well that the train accomplished a non-stop run in 3 hours from Euston to Crewe. It was then the longest non-stop run in the world! In order to pull the communication cord it was first necessary to find it outside the carriage by opening the right hand window when facing the engine.



Ed Schoon's model of the 1888 Racing Train in 7mm scale.

My models of the first locomotive and carriages were completed in time for the 2006 International Competition of the Gauge-0-Guild at Telford arranged to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. The complete train was entered and to my surprise the locomotive "Waverley" won the 'Carson Trophy', and the West Coast Joint Stock Carriages won the 'Pemberton Wheel'. I also published an article on the prototype and the research. An earlier event of more local interest perhaps was when the County Museum in Church Street held an exhibition on 'Metroland'. My model of a Metropolitan Railway Brill Branch train was in the same glass case as models loaned by London Transport.

....AND JOAN SCHOON ADDS....

I attended the inaugural meeting which is described elsewhere and watched the election of the members who became the steering committee. Ten years later I attended the 10th Birthday celebration with a meal and speaker at the Civic Centre—a memorable day. Now at 20 years, it is a joy to see so many of the original members still involved. We went on several of the study tours: the Potteries and Well Dressing in Derbyshire, based on Keele University; a Kent Tour including visits to Brogdale, the gene bank for every apple and pear tree, and Dover. On that occasion we were based at the University in Canterbury and enjoyed an evening talk on the Cathedral before a visit. Our Cardiff visit was centred in a hotel opposite the Millennium Stadium and we toured two Roman sites—Caerleon with its amphitheatre and well preserved Roman baths (where a Roman leather bikini had been found!); and Caerwent which was the site of a military camp. This latter was an archaeological site, and a real challenge in a wheelchair, but I managed to see it all with the help of some strong U3A gentlemen.

My own main group interest has been in genealogy under the guidance of Alan Dell and I have traced our families back to the 17th and 18th centuries. I remember too with gratitude Bill Skeggs who used to run our computer group. He was a great help and challenged me to continue when things were not going right. Telling others about our U3A has encouraged friends to join, adding to my own enjoyment.

THE BEIJING PARALYMPICS 2008 : with Tony Simmons

We arrived at the Paralympic village after a 12 hour flight and I found my flat on the 8th floor of 9, with only a view of the 9 storey block opposite. Although some of the accommodation was less Spartan than others, by the luck of the draw mine was the most basic. Our next task was to collect our uniforms so we set off by bus to the Power Lifting venue to pick them up and find out if they would fit. No they did not. Then to the tailor next to change most of the uniforms supplied (despite the exact measurements being sent in 6 months earlier). I have yet to receive a uniform that fits first time at any major championship. Back to the village again by taxi for a meal in the Meal Tent (approximately 250 yards long by 120 yards deep.) A selection of food was on offer includ-



ing Asian, European, Halal, and a large cold meat and Salad Bar, and there was always McDonalds! Twelve days later the food selection was about the same as on the first, not a great variety, but it was available for twenty four hours—so who can complain. Within the village were outlets including a bank, supermarket, florist and a traditional tea café, plus others but no pub. We had use of a Gym, Sauna and Swimming Pool, and in the evening a very loud Disco. There was an open air show every night from 8 to 10 with Magic, Singing, Dancing and other Chinese acts. The opening ceremony in the Birds Nest Stadium was very colourful, musical and emotional, also full of excitement for the coming Paralympic Games.

On our day off, as a group we went to the Great Wall at Badaling. The wheelchair facilities were a slope and manual help up to the Cable Car, not easy to access but we made it in the end. On our return we walked into the Forbidden City, which was very dramatic to say the least, and must be seen to be believed. Tiananmen Square had a floral display on two sides which was out of this world. I was also invited to attend a reception at the British Ambassador's residence in Beijing, where it was good to meet lots of non-games people. By the way I did work while I was there for 14 days. There were around 200 Power Lifting competitors to referee over 7 days. No luck with the British entrants. It was on the last day of competition that my moment of fame arrived; to act as Chief Referee for the 100kg class for men. The Chinese Dong Qi's first attempt at 243Kg for a new World and Paralympic record was given three white lights. He then went on to break it twice more but failed on his fourth attempt, so the World and Paralympic record now stands at 247.5Kg



Will I ever return to China? You never know. I am looking forward to 2012, where God willing I will be in line for a uniform that does not fit and a basic room with a bed. I don't expect that will change! China for me has really opened up to the Western ideals of disabled awareness and competition amongst all people.

One World One Dream

Although he was too modest to tell us himself, we have learned that since writing this article for us, H. M. the Queen has sanctioned Tony's admission to the Order of St. John as Serving Brother in recognition of his services to St. John Ambulance and the Community and Disabled Sport and he was invested in London. Many congratulations to him from all of us.

FOR WHOM WE SERVE...

We know, and are grateful to, the many members of our group who give tremendous voluntary service to their fellows within U3A. Whether that be leading a group, arranging outings and theatre trips, making the teas and coffees, putting out and clearing away the chairs, tables and equipment, or acting as First Aiders—the list is endless. The committee and its officers too work hard behind the scenes to ensure that we have good equipment, excellent speakers, meet all our statutory obligations, keep up with developments through the Third Age Trust, liaise with local schools and so on. Perhaps we don't say thank you often enough! People often



tell me that this is a friendly U3A, and that is entirely due to the many who give selflessly of their time and (often hard) labour. We couldn't do without them.

But many of you also give time to other organisations. We have Past Presidents and Officers of other organisations amongst our members; The Rotary Club, The Lions, Soroptimist International, and Inner Wheel to name but a few.

Some help in Charity Shops, while others provide transport for the collection of donated goods. One lady spends 3½ hours a week as a volunteer dog walker for Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. Val and Geoff Young coordinate the Princes Risborough Good Neighbours Scheme which provides transport to the dentist's or doctor's surgery or hospitals. Many of you are reluctant to tell how much time you give to others—so in recognition of all that voluntary work, we print just one account of one member's con-

WHAT ARE YOUR INTERESTS ?

This is a regular question when filling in any sort of application form. I often list gardening, natural history, upholstery, heraldry and Church Recording. This last often prompts the question 'What's that?' Last June the Garden Group visited Lord and Lady Carrington's gardens at Bledlow Manor. As we explored the Lyde Garden we could see the local village church, and had we ventured in on the first Thursday of that month, we might have seen a group of people with note books, tape measures and even binoculars. These visitors, all absorbed in their tasks would have been members of the Thames Bucks Church Recorder Group whose purpose is to make a detailed study of the contents in any church. (We are all also members of N.A.D.F.A.S., the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies) Our Thames Bucks group is one of the oldest in the country.

We may spend a year or more visiting the chosen church and producing a record of its contents, describing items accurately and researching their history where possible. Each member of our team is given a specific responsibility—windows, stonework, textiles, silver, metal work, library, pictures, woodwork, memorials and miscellaneous items which might include details of the bells, or the organ. Most essentially we also appoint a photographer and a scribe to compile the total eventual report. My own particular role is to research the memorials which may range from large stone monuments, stone slabs, memorial tablets and those small brass tablets commemorating a gift given to the church, often in memory of a special person. Each has to be measured, described in minute detail and the inscription written down. Copies of war memorials, including all names listed, are sent with photographs to the Imperial War Museum where they are continuing to work on their data base of all U.K. War Memorials—launched in November 2005; Memorials with Naval connections go to the Maritime Museum in Greenwich.

Studying these can be quite poignant. In the small Church in Radnage are two tablets each recording the death of one of the Vicar's sons; the elder died in 1872 while serving in H.M.S. Wolverine off the East African Coast, while the younger died in 1879 during the Zulu War. Lane End too has a touching memorial 'In affectionate memory of Harriet Grant (b. 1823—d. 1915) for 48 years the loving nurse and friend

of her ever grateful charges—C.T.S., W.H.S. and A.T.B.D.’ (We have not yet been able to trace their complete names). All of us can find some particular object we can enjoy, be it a small roundel of stained glass depicting a lapwing in the porch of Nether Winchendon, a set of beautifully worked hassocks made to celebrate the millennium, or a wonderful double door at Ludgershall carved from solid oak by a local craftsman in the shape of a great tree, and on it he depicts many of the birds and creatures found in the local area.

My own favourite is to be found in the small church at Cadmore End where there is a moving memorial in the form of a font cover bearing the names of all those who gave their lives in the two World Wars. After the 1918 Armistice a local lady artist from the village who had been both deaf and dumb since childhood made the cover from materials donated by the villagers—copper coins, silver thimbles or spoons and other trinkets. A silver figure standing atop the memorial was modelled by a village mother and child who represent the families of Cadmore End and the homes for which the men fought and gave their lives.



The John Wesley Room Doors

The doors were carved in the early 1990's by local craftsman, N. Les Adams whose skill equates to those who carved the capitals. Carved from solid oak they show not only some of the village buildings, including the church, a distant view of Brill windmill and also some of the varied wildlife to be found around the village. What perhaps most surprising considering the skill of the work is the fact that this was the first commission for a new church building.

Finally, when all our records are completed our splendid compiler gathers them into a book which is presented to the church at a special service. Other copies are made and sent to the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Council for the Care of Churches, the National Monuments Record and N.A.D.F.A.S. House. The information may be of use to a future researcher or, sadly, to the police or insurance company in case of theft or vandalism. In the words of the Bishop of London 'A church record ensures that the identities of imaginative and skilful craftsmen are preserved for future generations. Church recording is an enterprise which is significant not only to the church member, but to the community at large'. In Bucks we have a wealth of beautiful churches and those of us who study their contents find our work as Church Recorders fascinating—often challenging— but immensely rewarding and enjoyable.

Sheila Thompson

EYE WITNESS TO HISTORY

In 1989 I had to attend a business meeting in the British Embassy in East Berlin. I awoke early in my West Berlin Hotel ready to cross over the border through 'Checkpoint Charlie' and turned on the T.V. I was much confused by pictures showing people scaling walls and cheering and celebrating. What? My German language skill was of the "another beer please" standard, so I channel hopped until I found the American Forces Network channel that told me that during my sleep **'The Wall Came Down'**. It was Thursday 10th November 1989. Breakfasted and with papers in briefcase I walked apprehensively to the checkpoint. Having used this entry point before, nothing could have prepared me for the incredible signs of jubilation

on display! Nobody was interested in my passport or visa and on the East Berlin side were confused looking border guards (previously stony-faced and surly) with flowers stuck in their gun barrels and helmets. People were dancing and kissing everybody—even me. As I walked down Friederichstrasse to our embassy in Unter den Linden, the queue for the border crossing was at least 400 metres long, and everyone was talking to everyone else—quite unheard of for East Berliners! I arrived at the Embassy to meet surprised looking staff who explained the East German Government's volte-face, and was advised that our meeting was to go ahead—business as usual. Having finalised details of the exhibition on British

Health Care Equipment it was back to the British Embassy for tea and a debrief. I was accompanied back to Checkpoint Charlie by one of the embassy staff to be met by a queue almost 1km long. He suggested that I walk to the front of the queue waving my British Passport, which elicited shouts of encouragement all the way to the checkpoint where there were more embraces and flowers for me.

After returning to my hotel I went off to rubberneck the sights. There were Trabant cars on all the streets. East Germans were gazing in amaze-

ment at all the consumer products and fashions on display in the shop windows, and there was a feeling of surprised happiness that could almost be touched. Even next morning on my way to the station I was amazed at the throngs of people on all the streets looking so happy and talking to each other. What a sight to see especially after the 20+ years of the Berlin Wall. My only regret—that I didn't have a camera with me.

Mike Burrows

AND FINALLY—A MESSAGE FROM AN HONORARY MEMBER:

In the early days of U3A A.V. it was Eric Dorrance's enthusiasm and generosity of spirit that set the tone when we were thinking about what might be achieved and how we should go about it. We acknowledged the importance of 'serendipity' and hoped that chance might favour our prepared minds. Plans were not too detailed. There was space for suggestions from all quarters. Members contributed informally to the development of Aylesbury Vale without always realising it. Early group leaders and their supporters were especially important in the creation of the ethos which has lasted. Conviviality sprang from sharing. There was a lot of laughter, a sense of joy, and for some, an easing of loneliness. Diffident members gained confidence sometimes surprising themselves by their achievements. All these things still happen!.

The third age is a time to reflect and savour again treasured moments and small delights, as we have read elsewhere in the issue. I felt that the U3A was -and still is- an opportunity to add to our stock of them. A sense of 'otherness' helps. 'Otherness'? That sense that some things seem to have an extra dimension of their own. Children know about it. It is recoverable if you have lost it. It is about experiencing with an artist's eye and a poet's ear. Fanciful imagination? Of course! Delight cannot be pinned down. If that old lady in purple with a red hat ran her stick along the variety of Victorian railings in Marylebone— she could end up dancing a rumba.....

Ron Fisher

My thanks, as always, to those of you who have been persuaded to share memories of Aylesbury Vale U3A over the past 20 years, and to members who have somewhat reluctantly told of some of the many activities that have kept them involved since retirement. (I had to do some bullying!) Despite ending his term of office as Secretary, Alan Robinson nobly volunteered to keep on proof reading the newsletter for me, and as he knows, saves me from my worse errors.

Jim McKay has done sterling work in selecting and arranging the cover photos. Thanks to our many recorders who carry their cameras with them on days out. A small sub-committee oversaw this special edition and my thanks to them on your behalf.





THIRD AGERS ARE A LIVELY LOT

By Ann Jones

THE 1989 people who have been living in a growing group of older people's homes in the city have been celebrating their 10th anniversary. The group, which was founded in 1979, has grown from a small group of people to a large community of over 100 people. The group is now known as the 'Third Age' and is a lively and active community. The group has a variety of activities and events, including social gatherings, outings, and volunteer work. The group is also involved in community projects and has a strong sense of purpose. The group is a testament to the fact that older people are a lively and active lot.

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Q Sir Robert (right) speaks over the phone during his 10th birthday party.

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