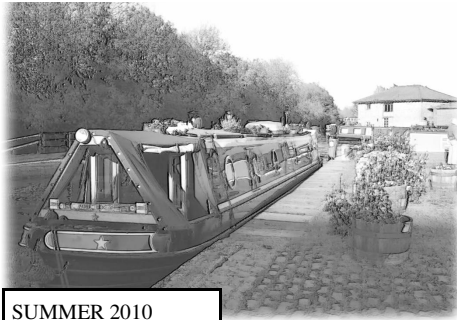
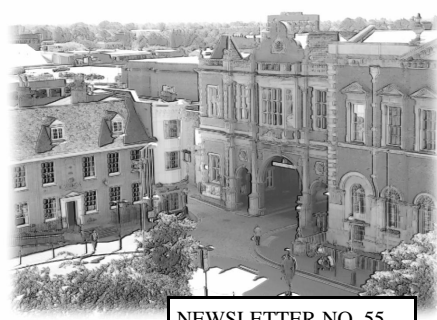
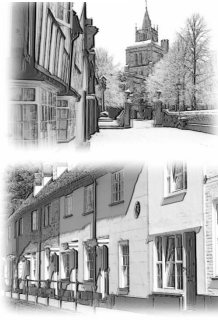


Aylesbury Vale U3A



SUMMER 2010



NEWSLETTER NO 55

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

“The objects of the U3A are to advance the education of the public and in particular the education of the middle aged and older people”

So states our Constitution in the Directory. But what is education? I suggest that education includes any activity that challenges you to learn or to teach. Some middle aged and older people have found formal education and employment disagreeable so that on retirement they adopt a passive life style which avoids any educational challenge. Our U3A culture offers an active life style alternative.

The AVU3A Directory lists a broad gradation of educational activities from the more ‘Recreational’, including sports, games, walks etc to the more ‘Academic’ activities such as languages, history, music and art appreciation etc. All of our groups are run by volunteers who are enthusiastic about sharing their own knowledge and interest with others. Anyone preparing to explain a subject to others is pleased to discover that it is an excellent way of deepening their own appreciation of the subject.

As explained in Pat Skegg’s article on page 2, we owe the initiation of the U3A in 1972 to our neighbours in France. However, a disadvantage of the French U3A culture is that it pays for university lecturers. The much less formal British U3A culture gives you, our members, maximum potential for initiative and flexibility in learning and in teaching. Do make full use of it by joining at least one of our existing groups. Even more satisfying, if you have special knowledge that you would like to compare and share with others, help to set up a new group and run it in a way that suits yourself and the other members that you will find will be keen to join you!

As further encouragement, many surveys have shown that older people who keep their minds and bodies active with educational activities within a supportive social group are more likely to remain happy and healthy. Many experienced members of our own U3A are excellent examples!

Alex Paterson

L'Université du Troisième Age

“University of the Third Age (the retirement years)” (UTA in France) is the name given to the numerous organisations that have done much to improve the lives of so many elderly people. These UTA's owe their existence to a Frenchman, Pierre Vellas, lecturer at the Toulouse University of Social Sciences. Mr. Vellas, a man of extraordinary energy, was concerned about the increase in the number of elderly people in France and other countries. His concern was justified. By the year 2000 there (will be) over 12 million people in France over 60 years of age.

Pierre Vellas realised that this increase in the number of old people led to many social problems; the feeling among the elderly that their lives had little purpose and that a growing number of them were suffering from solitude and loneliness. He believed that it was important that these people continued to pay an active role within society, and that the experience they had gained over the years was not lost to the community.

In France in the early 1970's, contrary to what existed in Great Britain, there were no extra-mural courses for adults in the universities. However, a recent government decree had required that French Universities provide educational services for older people, and Mr. Vellas realised that the new law opened the door to the improvement of the lives of older people by giving them access to university, which many of them had never experienced.

Mr. Vellas had the idea for a new kind of educational organisation for which he himself suggested the name “University of the Third Age”. This ‘university’ would be open to all people over 50 years of age who were no longer in full

time paid employment, whatever their qualifications (or lack of qualifications). The classes would take place in the buildings of Toulouse University, and instruction would be given by teachers from the University and local educational establishments. UTA members would be able to use the facilities of the University.

This first UTA at Toulouse offered educational classes in art, languages, travel, history, philosophy, yoga and music. The UTA started off with a summer school in Toulouse in 1972 and offered lectures, outings and other cultural activities. The enthusiasm for the UTA was such that Mr. Vellas encouraged people nearby to participate in it. The success of the system spread and other university towns began to create their own UTA's.

Individual membership varies between 250 and 2,000 people and there are about 100,000 members in all.

Mr. Vellas has travelled throughout France to encourage their creation and in other countries of the world. In 1973 following a conference held in Toulouse an international association of UTA's was created.

A UTA is basically an independent local organisation and in France is made up of a committee of local retired people who negotiate with the nearest university for use of its facilities. Usually it is the members who decide the choice of courses although these are given by lecturers from the university who are paid for their time. In Great Britain the organisers of the first British group (U3A) thought it would be identical to the French model. However, the first university contacted showed little interest in the scheme as it already provided extra-mural classes and

provided another choice for older people. Fortunately, the organisers realised that members were capable of organising their own activities and had the necessary knowledge at their disposal. The result was that self help and mutual aid became the essential features of the British U3A's which are organised in a less formal manner than their French equivalent. A conference was held in 1982 and a National U3A Committee was formed. Also a number of the people who attended that conference subsequently set up their own U3A's. To keep enrolment fees low, tutors are unpaid volunteers. Today there are 743 groups in Britain with a total membership of 230,000 members,

Currently in many countries of the world UTA's are fulfilling an important role in helping older people to lead happy and active lives. Among the many benefits UTA members are enjoying are the pleasure of acquiring new skills, living more active lives and making new friends. They are also continuing to play a useful role in our society.

Elizabeth Edwards

Reproduced by courtesy of the publication 'La Vie outre Manche' which is used by Pat Skeggs for her French Group



The 'Gentle Walkers' enjoyed an early Spring walk on Coombe Hill in perfect weather. Here they are in the shadow of the monument, while below they were delighted to meet the 6 newly imported New Forest Ponies who are helping to manage the grassland.

Both photos by Gilly Snookes



The wonderful topiary at Rodmarton Manor.

Photo by Tony Simmons.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

Current Affairs Group 2—Behind Closed Doors:

After our initial greetings we rearrange the classroom (our venue) into a mini boardroom and settle down comfortably surrounded by friendly lively faces. Our questions are handed over to the Chairman for the day who decides which one to take first. All questions are important, but when a really interesting one comes up the atmosphere becomes electrically charged and everyone waits eagerly to give his/her opinion. Soon we are involved in discussion and problem solving in political, social educational or environmental fields. In the process we moan, become serious, raise our voices and even laugh trying to find a solution. Sometimes we all agree and come to a decision quickly but at times we go round and round in circles and still no solution! Then what do we do? We quietly leave it there and go on to the next question forgetting for the moment that we are 3rd agers trying to put matters right in this world of ours.



Occasionally we read out an interesting passage from a newspaper or magazine and share our viewpoint on that, or talk about an episode from our own lives, often coming up with a joke to make the group laugh. You can imagine the atmosphere when there is a full attendance. The allotted 90 minutes goes very quickly until we disperse and go our own ways, definitely feeling happier and looking forward to the next meeting.

Pushpa Mirchandani

Looking at Photographs: Correction

The date for looking at members photographs of Ascott House should have read June 16th — and not May 19th. Apologies from the Editor.

The Ladies who Dine:

Having enjoyed a lunch at Bob's Barn recently, members of our 'Out and About' group have decided to try a regular monthly date to eat out together. The rules will be simple; a day each month to be set aside - (possibly a different day of the week to give everyone a chance). Different restaurants and types of menu to be selected – anyone can make suitable suggestions of places they have enjoyed. Details will be circulated by letter or e mail and even if there are only one or two takers the meal will go ahead. It is hoped that this will encourage people to try different restaurants in the evenings with sometimes new companions. Eventually all members of the group will get to know each other well, which is the whole point of the Out and About Group.



Anne Wales

POTENTIAL NEW GROUPS:

Singing:

Several members have expressed an interest in a singing group. You do not need to have any previous experience, but the breathing exercise would be good for you! The group would also be looking for a volunteer piano player to accompany it.

Scrabble:

Although some people have expressed an interest this group has not yet got off the

ground. We know that it would be welcomed by many.

French Language:

A long standing and highly successful group which does not have any room for new members. It is proposed that a second group be formed.

If you are interested in any of the above, or indeed in others that we haven't yet thought of please contact Groups Co-ordinator Jean Coussens.

GARDEN GROUP MEMORIES:

Each spring the Garden Group holds a plant sale and for the last four years Barbara Lane has hosted the event in her very pretty garden. We have, so far, been lucky with the weather and the whole afternoon is always very pleasant with tea and cakes and chat. When I look around my own garden now it is interesting to see how many of the plants have come from other members gardens and it is a very happy thing to be able to pass on cuttings and seedlings myself. So often the flowers in our gardens remind us of friends and family who were fond of these particular plants and sometimes the specimens in our own gardens are descendants of those very same plants. So not only is our plant sale an economical way of passing on plants; the plants themselves are a reminder of friends which will stay with us for many years.



Barbara Fraser

WEEK-END IN THE NEW FOREST:

Details of place and time of coach pick up have yet to be confirmed, and those who have already booked will be notified in due course. I would be grateful if those on the trip who are not joining all three guided walks could let me know which, if any, they would like to do so we have numbers and a plan for the coach driver who will take the others on to Beaulieu and/or Buckler's Hard as required. Although the trip is now fully booked if there is anyone who is interested and would like to go on a waiting list in case someone drops out at the last minute then please could they let me have their name and phone number and I will let them have more details.

Jean Ashton

The History Group coach trip to Worcester:

Our first study trip of the year was a huge success with a full coach travelling to Worcester on a rather cold, dull morning in early March. The trip was arranged with the History Group as part of their studies of the Civil War. Unfortunately their leader, Geoff Young was not able to come but undaunted we split up and after an early coffee, were soon exploring the town. Some people visited the historic Queen Anne Guild Hall built by Thomas White a pupil of Wren in 1722. Others visited the Cathedral or the Worcester Pottery Museum. After lunch we all joined together for a conducted tour of the Commandery. This ancient building in Sidbury, just outside the city walls was originally a monastic building attributed to Saint Wulfstan, conveniently located on the main road to London, Bath and Bristol to provide travellers with aid. Thomas Wylde bought the Commandery in 1545 and his great grandson Robert Wylde II, a barrister was one

of those responsible for the surrender of Worcester to Parliament. The house was used by William, 2nd Duke of Hamilton, Royalist Commander in Chief as his own personal Headquarters. We were shown the view from the courtyard garden of the hill called Fort Royal that was captured by the Essex Militia who fired the captured Royalist guns on the Sidbury Gate. All brought to life by our very helpful guides. Another interesting part of the Commandery was the wall and ceiling paintings believed to be part of the medieval chapel. One showed the murder of Thomas à Becket another looked like someone being stretched on the rack. It is believed the sick were brought into this chapel to be healed but most of us felt they would probably have been frightened to death.



Edward Elgar surveys the shoppers in Worcester
Photo—Ron Meadowcroft

Ron Meadowcroft



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

Cherry Jefferson, Mary Stones, Chris Reading, Sam Black, Valda Brewster, Pam Dixon, Dorothy Lee, Jan & Ron Adams, Liz Bonham, Marie Mullet, Phyllis Reed and Jill and Tony Davis making a welcome return.

OUTDOOR BOWLS:

Just a reminder that our summer bowls season has started — despite the weather. Why not try your hand? Thursday mornings at the Aylesbury Town Bowls Club. Contact Mary Rogers





Our own Silver Beatles on the famous Zebra crossing outside the Abbey Road Recording Studios!

Taken on one of the London Walks by Peter Ashton

Our 'down-to-earth' Chairman
Taken on a recent visit to Iffley meadows to see the snake's head fritillaries

Photo by Peter Ashton



DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE APPROVED TRADER DIRECTORY ?

The County Council's Trading Standards section has recently published its first annual directory whose aim is to promote local, responsible, reputable businesses and at the same time provide invaluable assistance to consumers looking for businesses that they can trust. All the business listed have been vetted by Trading Standards Officers.

Once the businesses have been independently checked by the officers, including references and criminal record bureau disclosures from those working in consumers homes, they can join the scheme and display the 'Buy with Confidence' logo. Customer feedback will be monitored and membership of the scheme has to be re-

newed annually to ensure that the information is up to date. Any complaints will also be monitored, and if there are any problems which cannot be resolved directly, the team may offer mediation to assist both parties in resolving the complaint.

Copies of the booklet can be obtained from Buckinghamshire County Council, Trading Standards Service at County Hall.



A Spring Outing to Kew Gardens and the National Archives:

The weather forecast looked set to be wet and miserable but our cheerful members did not



Philip Shurvell looking rather worried by the carnivorous plants.

Both Photos by Ron Meadowcroft

look too perturbed and everyone came fully prepared with macs and brollies at the ready. Terry our driver made good time and dropped most of us at the Victoria Gate taking eleven on to the National Archives with Joan Thorley and Alan Dell of the Genealogy Group in charge. Those with the Photography Group were determined to make the best of the day even though their leader, Derek Fowle had been too sick to join them. A few of them took advantage of the free guided walk led by a volunteer guide. She showed us a number

of gems in the Palm house and in the gardens pointing out interesting trees and the historic vistas that make up so much of the landscape. Others took the Kew Explorer for a guided commentary on the gardens. Even without sunshine the carpets of yellow daffodils were in full bloom and the blue

and white alpinines “Glory of the Snow” from Turkey were indeed a glorious sight; enough to brighten any day. Fortunately the expected rain came later in the afternoon and most of us managed to dodge the showers by nipping into one or other of the greenhouses, the palm house being extremely humid in the damp weather. Between showers the more energetic climbed up onto the tree walk for an aerial view of the tree tops. Others were entranced by the wealth of botanical illustrations on display in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery together with interesting fossils and artefacts.



The Queen's Beasts at Kew Gardens

The Photography Group managed a few good pictures and successes were reported by those visiting the National Archives; all agreed it was a great day out and the experience worthwhile.

Ron Meadowcroft

IF YOU WANT A HAPPY AND SATISFYING RETIREMENT DEVELOP A STRONG SOCIAL NETWORK!

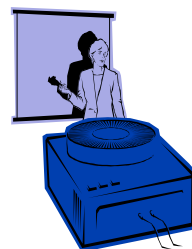
A recent newspaper article reported that Psychologists at the University of Greenwich had undertaken research into people's experiences of retirement. They found that friendships rather than family held the key to happiness. Dr. Oliver Robinson, who led the research team said that “social circumstances matter in retirement — it's not all about money”. The most surprising find was that retirees who had children or grandchildren were no more satisfied with life than those without them.

Sent in by Meryll Coe

SPEAKERS CORNER

JULY 14th : Horatio Nelson: Life and Loves - James Taylor

Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson has inspired countless artists, authors, historians and poets to paint and write about his life and times. Nelson may have been short in stature by modern standards, but he was tall in deeds and his death on the deck of his flagship HMS Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1805 sealed his popular fate. Our Speaker is a former curator of paintings at the National Maritime Museum, and the talk will examine Nelson's life and loves through a wide range of historic paintings, drawings, water colours and prints.



AUGUST : No meeting

SEPTEMBER 8th : The Capable Mr Brown – Russell Bowes

Russell Bowes, a freelance garden historian, takes a look at the life and career of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown – a man who changed the face of England for ever. Born into poverty and obscurity he became renowned across the world as the father of the English landscape garden movement.

HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES

Attendance at the monthly Meetings:

Our monthly meetings are attracting an ever higher attendance (as some of you may have already realised from the lack of parking spaces). We now regularly top the 200 mark, and the average for this year - discounting January — is 208; over 57% of our total membership.



Theatre Trips:

We are still looking for a volunteer to take on the Group Leader's post for the Theatre Outings. We are fortunate enough to live within reach of a number of exciting venues – all the London Theatres, The Swan at High Wycombe, as well as those in Windsor, Northampton, Oxford, Stratford upon Avon and several others. Over the lifetime of our organisation many hundreds of members have enjoyed all sorts of theatrical experiences, and it would be very sad if the tradition was broken! Sadly no-one has come forward yet. So why not think about volunteering. There would be plenty of help available.

2011 Diaries:

U3A diaries for 2011 will be available in October, their price has remained at £1.90 each and this year they will have a dark blue cover. Orders will be taken at the July and September meetings, please note that we must have cash (or preferably a cheque) with your order.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TUESDAY 15TH JUNE: Garden Group Coach visit to RHS Hyde Hall. Cost £13.50 inc. entrance fee. Coach leaves Jansel Square at 9.15 a.m. arriving home at approximately 6.00 p.m.

TUESDAY 22ND JUNE: Garden Group visit to Edwin Rye's garden by car. Meet 2.30 p.m. Jansel Square. Admission £2 inc. cold drink. If going direct — 11 The Paddock, Wendover at 3.00 p.m.

TUESDAY 6TH JULY: Garden Group outing by coach to Capel Manor, Enfield. Cost £15 including entrance fee. Coach leaving Jansel Square at 9.15 a.m. and departing to arrive home at approx. 6.00 p.m. Restaurant on site.

WEDNESDAY 14TH JULY: Visit by Car to the Plant Specialist, Great Missenden — also Gypsy House (home of the late Roald Dahl). Admission £4. Meet 2 p.m. Jansel Square. Home made teas available. No 1 Church Street also open if time permits

TUESDAY 20TH JULY: Outing to Berkeley Castle and the Jenner Museum. Cost £22 inc. admission to the castle. Entry to the Museum at your own expense (£4 concession). Coach leaves Jansel Square at 8.00 a.m.

WEDNESDAY 21st JULY: Photography Group visit to College Lake Nature Reserve. (September 15th Meeting - exhibit College Lake Photographs.) No Meeting in August.

WEDNESDAY 21ST JULY: Coffee Morning for members at The Broad Leys public house Wendover Road, Aylesbury at 10.30 a.m. Cost £1.75. Come and talk to old friends, and if you are a new member please come and make new ones!

TUESDAY 10TH AUGUST: Another Garden Group visit to the Mid Bucks U3A Allotment at Bedgrove — meeting 2.30 p.m. at Jansel Square.

THURSDAY 12TH AUGUST: Visit to the Eastbourne International Air Show. Cost £22 including fare and a reserved outside viewing seat which will be yours for the day. At time of printing some places still available although it may not be possible to book extra seats on the Promenade. Contact Ron Meadowcroft for further details.

THURSDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER: Theatre Matinee with an excellent lunch at The Mill at Sonning. The Play is "Spring and Port wine". Inclusive Ticket £46.

TUESDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER: Another date for the enjoyable and very busy Garden Group. A visit to Cedar House, Bacombe Lane, Wendover. Cost £5 inc. tea and biscuits. Meet at Jansel Square at 2.30 p.m. to arrange lifts.

WEDNESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER: Another of our coffee mornings at The Broad Leys Public House at 10.30 a.m. Cost £1.75.

FRIDAY 17TH TO SUNDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER: Local Walks Group - walking week-end in the New Forest based on Bournemouth. Non walkers welcome if space permits. Full details from Jean Ashton.

ELECTION SPECIAL

Yes, we know that you have had enough of elections for this year, but there is just one more very important one - for Aylesbury Vale U.3.A.

We shall have four essential vacancies to fill on our committee when we hold the Annual General Meeting in October. We shall be losing our Chairman, Vice Chairman, Speakers' Secretary and Groups' Co-coordinator. The present incumbents have given us sterling service but replacement will be vital. So please give the issue some thought well in advance of the 13th October meeting. There would be lots of help available for anyone putting themselves forward, and all of the present office holders would be pleased to talk to you about their present roles and the time commitment necessary.



The Gentle Walks Group enjoyed a visit in the spring sunshine to Waddesdon Manor to see the tulips. They much enjoyed the very warm day — although not so many tulips due to the late Spring !

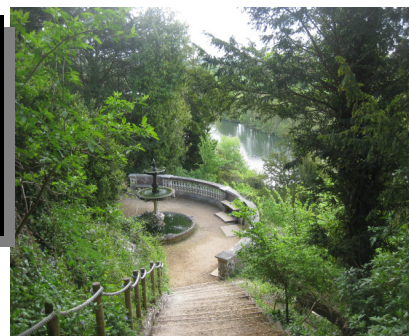
Photo by Tony Simmons

..... Brenda Daws, Pauline Cook and Barbara Fell were not so lucky with the weather at Kew!

Photo. Ron Meadowcroft



Hot off the press from Liz Mossford — the garden group visit to Cliveden



Your Annual Subscriptions are due on the 31st July; (cheques for £12.50 should be made payable to AVU3A). I will be collecting subs at the July meeting, but will not be paying cheques in until after 1st August. New badges will be issued at the September & October meetings. October is the latest date for renewal.

Jim McKay

URGENT NOTICE

ADVANCE NOTICE!



Ron & Rosemary Meadowcroft are proposing to arrange an Autumn visit to Finchcocks Musical Museum (Picture above) in Goudhurst near Tonbridge wells in Kent. Finchcocks is a fine Georgian manor set in a beautiful garden surrounded by parkland. It now houses a celebrated collection of over 100 historical keyboard instruments, of which more than 40 are in full working order.

It is a living museum with entertaining demonstrations. Further details and dates will be announced at the June meeting. Time permitting there will be a lunch break in Tunbridge Wells



Contributions to the newsletter are now appearing regularly in my post or by e mail and I am very grateful to all those who take the trouble to send items in to me. However, I still always have one or two blank pages by the closing date! I should particularly welcome news from the groups – and remember that it doesn't always have to be the group leader who sends them in. Thanks, as always, to the innumerable members who help with the production of the letter, send photographs in and whose eagle eyes spot my typing errors.

Last date for copy for the Autumn Newsletter will be August 1st so please enjoy your holidays, but don't forget to contact Shirley Stokes on treveris9@btinternet.com or by post to 9 Windsor Road, Aylesbury HP21 7JG. Telephone 01296 392726