



Issue No. 56

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A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Today, most people are living longer after their retirement from work and family obligations, thanks mainly to improvements in health care and diet. As the membership of religious and other traditional institutions continues to drop, many older people adjusting to retirement can question the future direction and meaning of their lives while regretting that they have reduced social contact.

Further education is one way to address these concerns by developing an interest in new subjects and leisure activities while socialising with others in a similar situation. All of these activities are known to contribute greatly towards maintaining mental and physical health.

Unfortunately, budget restrictions arising from the impact of the global recession are causing a major reconsideration of the relative priorities for public spending on further education and leisure activities. Indeed, it is only fair for our society to allocate the highest priority to the education of our younger people in schools and universities, rather than to the further education and leisure activities of retired people. Tuition fees are already forcing young students to take on large debts, and the parents of young children are faced with increased preschool and school expenses.

The U3A concept of self organisation and self teaching offers older people excellent opportunities to take responsibility for much of our own well-being. By cooperating effectively together, we are self funding rather than a burden on the state. To ensure that each of our U3As continues to develop, our organisations must be proactive in encouraging all of our members to generously contribute their time and experience to their U3A, while also benefiting as much as they can from it. For example, experienced members could be invited to help new members to find their feet, later encouraging them to contribute to their U3A in whatever capacity they can such as helpers, Group Leaders or committee members.

Demand on the U3A movement is growing quickly throughout the UK as many older people turn to it for fulfilment. May each U3A evolve rapidly enough to meet this challenge successfully!

Alex Paterson

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

THE LANGUAGE OF CHESS:

Krishna Chaudhuri who is one of the leaders of the Chess Group has sent us a letter all about English as the international language of choice for today's chess tournaments. In the late 19th Century however, German was the chosen means of communication. (The German words 'blitz' and 'zugwang' are still in use in the English game). He also tells us that the world's oldest Grandmaster, and possibly the world's oldest chess player, Andor Lilienthal died recently. (This year a young Norwegian—Magnus Carlsen aged 19 became the youngest player to top the world rankings, demonstrating that Chess is a game for all ages. You may also have read in the Bucks. Herald recently that a 11 year old pupil at Aylesbury Grammar School won first place at the National Chess Junior Squad Championships.

THE CHESS GROUP

Meets fortnightly on Tuesdays at the Leader's home from 10 to 12 noon. Offers a rewarding experience whether you have played regularly or not looked at a chess board for 30 years.

This sent the Editor on a web search for other interesting facts. She found listings for words used in chess in 73 different languages. References to the game seem to go back to the 10th century, and the languages quoted range from Esperanto to Estonian; Afrikaans to Amharic and Finnish to Faroese. The meanings of familiar terms also change: The rook can mean a tower, a large farm or a wagon, while the Bishop is translated as messenger, elephant or jester. The term 'checkmate' derives from two Persian Words which mean 'the king is defeated'.

REINFORCED TEAM TAKES THE BRIDGE GROUP FORWARD

Ian Harper has accepted an invitation from Cyril Reed to succeed him as deputy to Group Leader, Bob Burr. (Cyril will continue to remain on call when required) Started in 2005, the group has since attracted around 30 members including guests from other local U3A's with whom we have special arrangements. It is hoped in time, that they will 'follow suit' so to speak and establish Bridge in their own clubs, with a view to inter-group competition



Twice monthly (on the first and third Wednesdays) open meetings are held at The Aylesbury Squash & Tennis Social Club, Wendover Road Aylesbury. Additionally, rosters are posted for on-going Mon Wed & Friday fixtures with four players alerted well in advance, where, when and with whom, to compete in Rubber Bridge matches which take place in the homes of volunteer hosts. Significantly, Bill Norman, a 'diamond geezer' who has made a study of Bridge over many years, joined recently and set up 'knowledge improving seminars' now optional at some of the Wednesday open meetings.

For more information on these activities contact Bob Burr or Ian Harper.

ANSWERS TO HARROGATE STUDY TOUR QUIZ:

1) Bramley Apple 2) River Skell 3) Lead Mining 4) Lewis Carroll (Dodgson) 5) Involved in the killing of Thomas Becket 6) Old Mother Shipton 7) Elephant

THAMES VALLEY NETWORK.

For the benefit of new members let me first explain what the Thames Valley Network is. It is a grouping of U3As within the Thames Valley, usually taken as Berks, Bucks & Oxon; all cooperating to make being in a U3A more fun and more interesting and to exchange ideas. As you can see this gives you the opportunity to try something new with your group members.



The Thames Valley Network is continuing to arrange various interesting study days covering a vast range of subjects. The latest, The Riverside Project, has events throughout this and next year and I will try to bring them to you as they occur. As you have probably guessed they are mainly for walkers but not necessarily so. Photographers are asked to add their pictures and Local History Groups their observations on the environs, both domestic and industrial. Eventually it is hoped that the development and heritage of the river will come out. More on that later. For those members interested in Architecture there is a Study Day at Rewley House, Oxford on the 24th November, The Attraction of the Gothic.

2011 continues with Historic Towns of the Thames Valley in March— a continuation of the previous events. The Global Economy in April at Rewley House. Arts & Handicrafts: Workshop demonstrations of skills to be held in June. Philosophy, September, again at Rewley House and Four Opera Masterpieces in November also at Rewley House. The 2012 programme will follow with various subjects and I will give you all the details nearer the time otherwise you will only forget or have lost the Newsletter !!



The other study days are aimed at Group Leaders and Committee Members, the object being to introduce new ideas for the Group leaders to try out on their Groups and again to share ideas. The aim of the training for Committee Members is to give potential officers an idea of what is expected from that position and explain the running of U3As and the Third Age Trust. The whole point is to make it fun and interesting and try to encourage members to come forward to fill vacant posts without the worry and uncertainty of not knowing what is expected of them.

If you want further details of any of the Study Days you can find them on the Notice Board at the Monthly Meeting or ask me or Secretary, Tony Dobbs and we will point you in the right direction.

Geoff Young

SWIMMING GROUP NEWS:

Sadly the swimming group reports that as from the end of July there will be no more free swimming in Aylesbury Vale. It was good while it lasted!



THINGS I WISH I KNEW ABOUT MY FAMILY HISTORY

Your Editor recently dropped a strong hint that it was time somebody in the Genealogy Group shared some of their findings with U3A Newsletter readers. I am rising to her challenge, but with a difference. I am going to share two of my frustrating dead ends. They concern a family jug and a family legend. The family jug, cracked but otherwise carefully preserved, bears the initials GH 1827. My maternal grandfather, Frederick Hewitt, told me it had been passed down from his great-grandfather, George Hewitt. Was he right? Well, perhaps.



His great-grandfather was indeed George Hewitt. This much is clear. George Hewitt was born around 1783 and worked as a tailor in Lambeth, South London. But was he the GH of the jug? The snag is the date. Why would a man in his mid-forties decide to have a commemorative jug? Commemorating what? There is a possible answer. George Hewitt does not appear in Lambeth parish records until 1815. From that date he had three children – Frances, Thomas and Joseph. But by then he was well into his thirties, and in those days couples usually started families in their early twenties. So did George Hewitt come to Lambeth from elsewhere? And when living elsewhere, did he have other children? And was one of them an eldest son called George after his father? And did this George come of age in 1827? It is a neat hypothesis. Can I prove any of it? No.



So on to the family legend. “Of course,” my great-aunt Alice used to say, “my mother was the daughter of a French nobleman.” It sounds promising. Is there a long-lost title? Perhaps an ancestral chateau somewhere?

My great-aunt’s mother – my great-grandmother – was easy to find. Her maiden name was Elizabeth Amelia Aldridge and on census returns she consistently claimed to have been born in Taunton, Somerset, around 1836. In search of her forebears I wrote to, and visited, the Somerset Record Office in Taunton. Did I find a French nobleman? No. Did I find Elizabeth Aldridge’s parents? No. Did I find anything? No. Her origins could hardly have been more obscure. Her marriage certificate might have helped – it would at least have given her father’s name and occupation – but – guess what? – there is no record of her marriage either.

So was the French nobleman never more than my great-aunt’s fantasy? Or her mother’s fantasy? There is nobody left to tell us.

Don’t let me put you off family history. Unsolved mysteries and tantalising clues add to the interest. And there is always a hope that one day you will stumble on the answer.

Peter Gasson

GENEALOGY GROUP:

The genealogy group would like to send warmest thanks to Alan Dell who is to retire from the leadership after nearly 20 years. His unrivalled knowledge will be sadly missed.



You obviously have to be able to be physically supple in order to join the Wildlife and Nature Watch Group. This picture taken by Peter Ashton shows Group Leader Cynthia Fowler kneeling to study a green winged orchid while she herself is being closely studied by other members of the group!

New member Dorothy Bates made this delightful sketch of Fountains Abbey on the 2010 Study Visit while the rest of us were exploring the ruins.



SUMMER PLAYScheme APPEAL:

Like all good families we have developed our own 'traditions'. Twice a year we hold a collection at the monthly meeting in order to help to fund the Christmas Party and Summer holiday event. At the June meeting our collection amounted to £280 which was gratefully received by Rachel Hillier on behalf of the 'Meadowcroft Munchkins'.



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

Joan Lewis; Mary Steele; Dorothy Bates; Jean Rayner; Chris & Bobby Lowe; Maureen Cox; Ann Burman; Audrey Sargent & Barbara Rowlinson.

THE GARDEN GROUP'S YEAR:

Our first coach outing this year was to Cliveden; probably best remembered by those of our generation for its association with the Profumo affair in the 1960s. It was rather a chilly day but we explored the beautiful Chinese water garden, the long garden with topiary and admired the lovely parterre. Some of our more active members went down the woodland walk to the river Thames. The RHS garden at Hyde Hall was our next visit in June when the roses were at their best and the rose rope walk was amazing. The multi coloured poppies were also much admired. The original garden of Hyde Hall was the Hilltop Garden and contains numerous features including the herbaceous border, ponds, rose garden, gold garden and shrub rose border.

Capel Manor gardens set in 30 acres was unknown to most of us but proved to be perhaps one of the most enjoyable gardens we have ever visited. "Sunflower Street" contains seven small back and front gardens designed by students of Capel Manor College. There was also a walled garden, Japanese garden, an Italianate maze, trial gardens and much, much more. The students were very cheerful and helpful, and the weather was particularly kind to us.

Most of us are no stranger to Edwin Rye's garden in Wendover which we visited in June when his roses and delphiniums are spectacular. It was a very hot day but Edwin kept us entertained and informed about all aspects of his garden. It was a rather rainy day when we visited The Gypsy House, Roald Dahl's garden in Great Missenden but undaunted we viewed the enviable vegetable garden, and herbaceous borders. The caravan parked in a field of wild flowers was very pretty. We then moved on to the Plant Specialist nursery across the road and were tempted to buy yet more plants for our own gardens.



Barbara Fraser

GREAT NEWS!

Our search for a new arranger for the much loved theatre outings is over. We have a volunteer! We welcome Pam Taylor to this post and look forward to many more pleasant theatrical occasions. You will see from the 'Diary Dates' page that she has already planned some visits to the new Aylesbury Waterside Theatre. It looks as though we have another exciting season of music and drama ahead.



TAI CHI:

Our Groups Organiser was amazed when the board inviting members to express an interest in Tai Chi was placed on the table at the back of the hall at the last meeting. Within minutes both sides of the sheet were full. Two taster days have already taken place and judging by the smiling faces as members emerged from the hall—they were a great success. (A few more male participants would be very welcome!).



A HOLIDAY WITH A DIFFERENCE OR 'CARRY ON CRUISING'!

Three Aylesbury U3A ladies (all Widows + 1 Widower friend, Michael - yes, we have heard all the jokes) went on a 12 night cruise to the Canary Islands and Lisbon, on the Fred Olsen liner "Balmoral" - sailing from Dover. To say that it was an eventful cruise brings to mind Agatha Christie or a 'Carry On' Saga. It began on our second day when two of our cabins were flooded and we were moved to new (and better) ones - a burst pipe from above meaning that a lot of buckets had to be placed along the corridor. Two days later Rita's carpet in her new cabin was saturated - evidently the previous week in Dry Dock, Chlorine Filters had not been tightened up. This time Rita was not moved - they brought out a large machine to suck up the water and then put in large machines to dry up the carpets. However, the first three days saw a lot of buckets around and carpets up with some new ones hastily being laid down. Text messages from my family were pretty hilarious: "Which one of you left the tap on?"; "Keep your Life Jacket on permanently" and "Are you on the Titanic, do not put anything on the floor!" For our first 3 days on board when we passed through the pub all we heard was hammering and drilling as a large cupboard to house musical instruments, was constructed - why this could not have been done the previous week when in Dry Dock is beyond me.



Then there were the casualties! During the cruise on 4 different occasions 4 people were air-lifted by helicopter to hospital; (that can cost up to £35,000 a time, so I hope they all had adequate Insurance); two taking place during the night and two during the day towards the end of the cruise. On top of that 3 people died of heart attacks, one body being removed at Gran Canaria (last but one port of call) and flown back to Dover whilst the wife continued the cruise; the other two being kept down in the morgue. In Madeira one lady in a wheelchair was taken off the ship by ambulance to hospital and in Gran Canaria one man missed the ship, did not have his Passport with him, so had to pay £90 for a temporary one and pay for a flight to Lisbon to pick up the ship again.

There were some good things too. One high note - whilst we were in Lisbon the Pope was visiting (he must have known we were coming) and en route to the Maritime Museum on a stretch of dual carriageway his cavalcade went past on the other side of the road. The evening entertainment was very good and the food excellent. Generally the weather was very warm in our ports of call, although at times the sun was obscured by the ash cloud. Only on one day returning to Dover the sea was rough and I took photos of the small swimming pool with waves on it. However, do not let me put anyone off on going on a cruise - my previous experiences have all been excellent, with none of these traumas!

Margrit Kennedy

TWO SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS (from an anonymous correspondent)

To keep milk from turning sour—keep it in the cow

An octogenarian is an animal which gives birth to 8 young

MORE NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

LOOKING AT PHOTOGRAPHS



Member Edward Daily sent this photograph of the photographers looking quite exhausted after their outing to Askett House Gardens.

POETRY GROUP 2:

This group finished its summer term in style. One of its long standing members, Ena Stanton, celebrated her 90th birthday—a wonderful excuse to finish the season with champagne and a birthday cake! During the first 9 months of the year members have looked at the work of women poets, and followed themes as varied as 'clothing' 'parts of the body' and 'night'. Themes are suggested by the members, but it is amazing how often a theme which is thought to be easy turns out to be very difficult, while another brings forth a plethora of suitable titles. Fortunately, the group has a large library of poetry books between them, and they have never yet been totally stuck (while allowing quite a lot of latitude on some occasions). One member who shall be nameless became famous for saying 'this poem is not quite about.....'

READERS CIRCLE 2:

This group had a display table at the July Meeting. A number of their free books were taken home, and they collected £9.70 which has been sent to the Prostate Cancer Charity. Circle 2 is now full with 11 members filling their respective lounges once a month. (As we had 3 new names at the last meeting, they have been passed on to Group 1 — and if they don't have room we may have to start a 'group 3'!) Members had their usual outing in August in place of their meeting and enjoyed lunch at The Unicorn in Cublington.

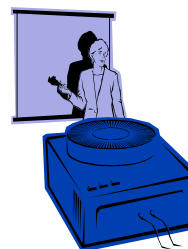
Brenda Daniel

Ron Meadowcroft took this group photograph showing all the study group members outside the excellent hotel in Harrogate.



SPEAKERS CORNER

October 13th : National Parks : Not Ours, But Ours to Look After – Adrian Thornton



Adrian will show what ‘National Park’ means in England & Wales, and take us on a brief illustrated tour of the present twelve National Parks. He will explain what National Park Authorities are and do, and the relative roles of those authorities and the National Trust, as well as some of the threats and problems the National Parks constantly face. The talk will be illustrated with striking colour slides.

November 10th : Our Species – Alex Paterson

Alex will present a further topical and thought-provoking talk on the many major global risks to which our species is exposed, some of our own making such as overpopulation, war and climate change and others such as earthquakes, plagues and asteroid impacts. He states that ‘We freely share the impressive scientific advances that have improved the lives of many. Can we extend this sharing to genuine international cooperation to address these urgent global risks in time to benefit future generations ?

December 8th : A Medieval Christmas – Peter Bull

We have a real treat for our Christmas meeting. Peter Bull is a much sought after musician who gives solo performances of historical music at venues such as the Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace, playing period instruments.

‘A Medieval Christmas’ will include pieces played on the sinfonye (hurdy gurdy), recorder , flute, dulcimer , and some medieval carols sung to the medieval lute.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations and thanks to the 16 members who were presented with their First Aid Certificates at the July Meeting — and to Dot Simmons who arranged it through her friends in the St. John Ambulance Brigade.



David Alleston; Hilary Carter; Jean Coussens; Brenda Daniel; Barbara Fraser; Beatrice Grant; Hazel Godley; Jan Hann; Ivy Model; Janet and Michael Meacham; Ron Meadowcroft; Tony Simmons; Margaret Stacey; Veronica Stagnell; and Heather Talbot.

HARROGATE AND NORTH YORKSHIRE STUDY TOUR:

Some 41 U3A members took part in this year's annual study tour. Many had taken part in previous years, but there were also some study visit novices who were very welcome. Rosemary & Ron Meadowcroft had gone to enormous trouble to make the tour interesting - from the specially prepared video of the places we were to see shown on the coach video screen to while away the boredom of motorway travelling; to the quiz which made us all read notices and plaques and ask questions of curators and guides. Members learned about the harshness of life in the Victorian Workhouse at Southwell; admired the beautiful gardens in Harlow Carr and found out about the life of the "White Monks" at Fountains Abbey. The weather was superb and we walked along the banks of the Aysgarth Falls (somewhat affected by the drought) and clambered (with various degrees of agility) on the spectacular Brimham Rocks. At Patley Bridge we saw the very old sweet shop established in 1827 and many were the purchases made and the comments of 'I remember those'. Knaresborough claimed 'Ye Oldest Chymist Shoppe in England' - though as far as I know nobody purchased any of the opium or heroin advertised in the original purchases book in its window! There was much much more - you'll just have to come next year to enjoy the experience for yourself.

In case you want to experience some of the quiz questions you might try the following extract -answers on page 2

What sort of apple is associated with Southwell in Notts?

What is the name of the river at Fountains Abbey?

What was the predominant industry started in the 15th Century at Grassington?

What was the name of the writer whose Father was a Canon of Ripon Cathedral?

Why did 4 Knights hide in Knaresborough Castle in 1170?

Who was Ursula Southeil?

What animal armour appears in the Guinness Book of Records?

5 STOWAWAYS—BATS ALSO TRAVELLED TO HARROGATE:

I joined the North Bucks Bat Group when it was set up several years ago. Bats are a protected species and you may not catch or handle them without a licence. The exception is looking after an injured adult or a lost baby. I have been a recognised carer for several years now. There is a roost of Natterer's Bats at Nether Winchendon Church. These are less common than Pipistrelles. The bat group has been monitoring these bats and explaining to the church wardens that as well as being protected they are rather special, and please not to be upset by the mess they make. Which although it is untidy it is not really unpleasant. This year quite a lot of babies have fallen out of the roost and been found alive on the floor. Several members of the bat group have been fostering these bats. Nine were brought to me; all were very small and to start with they licked milk off a paint brush. As I was joining the Harrogate Holiday I couldn't leave them at home. By the start of the holiday only 5 survived and they were lapping milk out of a milk bottle top and being hand fed mealworms. By the end of the trip they had given up milk and fed on mealworms only. They are now flying round in a mosquito net tent and I hope to take them back and release them in Nether Winchendon by the end of August.



Erica Godman

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TUESDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER: Garden Group visit to Cedar House, Bacombe Lane, Wendover; meeting at Jansel Square at 2.30 p.m. to arrange lifts. Cost £5 inc. tea & biscuits

WEDNESDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER: Regular monthly Coffee morning at The Broad Leys pub on Wendover Road at 10.30 a.m. Cost £1.75 A chance to come and chat with other members.

TUESDAY 12TH OCTOBER: Garden Group talk at Aylesbury Grammar School 2.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.—Peter Richardson from Preston Bissett Nursery.

TUESDAY 12TH OCTOBER: Visit to Finchcocks Musical Museum, with its collection of over 100 historical keyboard instruments (with demonstrations) and Tunbridge Wells.

THURSDAY 14TH OCTOBER: Our new Theatre Outings Organiser is booking tickets for a performance of Swan Lake by the Northern Ballet Company at the brand new Waterside Theatre in Aylesbury. The Cost will be £12.50 and Pam wants to be able to make the bookings immediately after the September meeting. However if you are not reading this until later, it still might be worth contacting her: Pam Taylor on 01296 381802 or e mail at pamtaylor@talktalk.net

WEDNESDAY 20TH OCTOBER: Photography Group visit to Quainton

TUESDAY 9TH NOVEMBER: Garden Group at Aylesbury Grammar School at 2.30 p.m.—Roger Askew on Savill Gardens.

WEDNESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER: Photography Group will exhibit their Quainton photographs at Stone Methodist Chapel, and the themed ‘Sunset and Sunrise’ photos.

WEDNESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER: Another Coffee Morning at The Broad Leys at 10.30 a.m. Cost £1.75

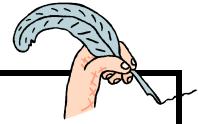
THURSDAY 18TH NOVEMBER: A date for your diary! Another of our ever popular Fun Afternoon Quizzes at the Aylesbury Bowls Club followed by supper. Full details later.

FRIDAY 10TH DECEMBER: Our Christmas lunch is already booked at Green Park, but you will be relieved to know that you don’t have to make any decisions yet!

THURSDAY 6TH JANUARY 2011: Good advance notice of a proposed visit to the new Waterside Theatre for the Pantomime ‘Cinderella’. 7 p.m. performance; price £8

JUNE 2011: The next study visit—to Cheshire.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



May I take this opportunity to thank Ron and Rosemary Meadowcroft for yet another memorable Study Trip, which took place in June, staying in a very comfortable Hotel in Harrogate. This Study Tour to Harrogate and North Yorkshire was a great success. It was enjoyed by all and packed with very interesting places to see - we were also lucky with having good weather the entire time. The Quiz they presented us with provided us with a lot of fun and an opportunity to chat with everyone, as we passed around ideas about the answers. I am sure we all learnt a lot more by having to be observant and avidly read all the notices to find out the answers. Well done and I look forward to the next one.

Margrit Kennedy

I would like to thank the Aylesbury U3A for inviting two members of the Aston Clinton U3A to join their trip to Harrogate, and for making us feel so welcome. My information about 'the bats' appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

Erica Godman

When I heard about the study trip it was an opportunity to experience something new. I started to prepare myself, having little knowledge of the outside world. Would I be able to mingle with the U3A crowd? Thoughts went around in my mind. Then I decided that I would remain myself — as I am — and rely on the sociability and friendly aspect of the tour group.

Well, it really was a 'study tour' but in a light hearted manner. Everyone was friendly towards each other and kept busy collecting material to answer the questionnaire which was handed to us at the beginning of the tour. I was surprised to read the itinerary and to see how much we had done. Yes! We were young again.

Congratulations to Rosemary and Ron for their good organisation, and to the U3A for bringing these international senior citizens under one umbrella for so many years.

Pushpa Mirchandani

I seem to get lots of material for the newsletter from some groups—but none at all from others. Please let your fellow members know what you are doing. It could gain you some new members if you have room — or spawn a second group. 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 Winter Newsletter will be November 10th so don't forget to contact Shirley Stokes on treveris9@btinternet.com or by post to 9 Windsor Road, Aylesbury HP21 7JG. Telephone 01296 392726