



Issue No. 59

AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.

Summer 2011

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Is it my imagination or is life getting more and more complicated? Almost every time I turn on a radio or television, I hear a politician saying 'We want to give the voter more choice' Well I don't want more choice ! Life was much simpler when one got water from the Water Board, electricity from the (only) Electricity Board, and if ill, one went to the local hospital. I think that computers are amazing things, although I know that not everyone in U3A agrees with me, but they too can make life more complicated. I have recently bought a new car – the same model as last time but 'updated' and 'computerised'. The book of instructions devotes the first eleven pages to 'How to open the car door'. Because I hadn't read it before I collected the car from the garage, I just pressed the remote control on the key. Job done! There seem to be buttons for everything. I can raise the seat; lower the seat belt; see how far I could travel on the petrol left in the tank. It tells me when I should change gear – up or down – and where I am at any given moment. I was amused last week to note when visiting a friend that I was outside her house. I did know that. Today in the post I received yet another credit card size card with a long user ID and a request to register another password in order to access multiple online government services. It thanks me for registering – but I didn't know I had!

However, I believe that as we get older we have to try to keep up to date with new technology, so that we don't always have to rely on our children or even grandchildren to tell us what to do next. I remember Professor Colin Blakemore coming to address a U3A meeting some years ago. He assured us that there was ample evidence to show that if we use any part of our brain regularly, it can continue to grow and develop. With all this new technology to catch up with, I wonder if our skulls will grow as well and ensure a good fit for our expanding brains? U3A is a wonderful organisation for enabling us to go on learning new things, and there is always somebody who knows more about any given subject than we do, so that in a friendly and caring atmosphere we can admit our ignorance and share our expertise. (Perhaps that is what my new car is doing; I must talk to it more often).

Shirley Stokes

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

CRIBBAGE AND DOMINOES:

Alan Brialey is the new leader of the Cribbage and Dominoes Group, with Cyril Reed as his deputy. Currently almost 30 strong, the group meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month from 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon at the Aylesbury Tennis & Squash Club on Wendover Road.

True to the original concept of the University of the Third Age, the Group has on-going 'teach in' tables for new members who have never played the games before so that they can come along and learn. New members are invited to attend and observe if they wish, or participate at any level. The charge is £1 per session which includes tea and biscuits. It is often good to hear previously new members returning from their holidays having taken their equipment with them to while away quiet hours. Don't delay – just turn up or give Alan or Cyril a call for more information, and the certainty that you will get a 'jammy dodger' with your coffee.

*Alan Brialey
Cyril Reed*

MANY GROUPS ENJOYED THE SUNSHINE:

As soon as the sun began to shine in April, members of our U3A took to the road. The Garden Group visited Ascot House near Wing where they were delighted to find that the house, as well as the gardens, was open for the day. The views from the grounds were beautiful, and the spring flowers and topiary impressive. While touring the house they bumped into members of the Mid Bucks U3A Garden Group out and about on the same mission! The 'Gentle Walkers' explored the tow path at Marsworth taking a round trip as far as the Marsworth flight of locks, and then back through the village on a day that was overcast but remained fine. (Lunch had been booked at The Swan with permission to park in their yard, but the group arrived to find the place quite derelict with all fittings stripped out. While they were able to park there free of charge, a hasty visit to The Bluebell Café across the road confirmed that a very satisfactory lunch would be available). That was followed a week later by a walk around the grounds of Waddesdon Manor to see the Spring Bedding. Out and About members crossed the county boundary to take part in a guided walk, firstly around the town of Berkhamsted, followed by a guided tour of the castle ruins with a talk on its history, development – and later ruin.

THE PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP:

This Group has created a flickr group for its members on www.flickr.com/groups/avu3a Ron Adams also has his own flickr page which contains many photos of Aylesbury past and present. The address is www.flickr.com/photos/dlanorsmada

RETURN TO COLLEGE LAKE.

You may remember that in the Spring Newsletter there were photos of members of the Gentle Walks Group visiting College Lake Nature Reserve. I thought that members might like to learn a little more about the Reserve, as it is a wonderful place to take visitors and grandchildren! The venue is situated at Bulbourne, two miles north of Tring. Grant Atkins, an employee of Castle Cement at Pitstone, had the original vision to develop this chalk quarry into a wildlife nature reserve in the 1970s and for this he was later awarded the MBE. The lake has been developed into different habitats, embracing over a thousand species of wildlife, on a mix of open water and marshland and is owned and administered by the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust.



The new Visitor Centre funded with help from the National Lottery Fund was opened in 2010

In 2001, Bill Oddie, the well-known twitcher of 'Goodie' fame, cut the ribbon at a ceremony to commemorate the doubling in size of the lake. In 2009, TV wildlife presenter Simon King commented on air that he had never seen a polecat and was privately invited to visit College Lake to observe the resident there. Although we didn't see this exotic animal, we were able to view many bird species during our brief visit. As the pathways were extremely muddy, we were prevented from walking far and spent time observing the birds from several hides overlooking the lake. We saw a heron in flight and a flock of over-wintering widgeon, who use the wetlands for feeding and roosting. There were also native coots and



The resident polecat pictured at College Lake

swans in view. A new £1.6 million Visitor Centre was officially opened last year by the presenter Steve Backshall of BBC's The Really Wild Show. This attractive building, displaying a wide variety of information regarding the resident wildlife, is constructed primarily from timber and local materials. There is also a small café which is open at weekends and Bank Holidays. From a large observation window in the spacious barn, which is used for educational visits, we enjoyed watching at close range a variety of birds, including chaffinch, robin, blue-tit, great-tit and blackbird, all feeding from both hanging and table feeders, quite undeterred by an invading squirrel enjoying a free meal. Next season, the Gentle Walks Group will certainly visit College Lake in the summertime, when we should also be able to enjoy the Cornfield Flowers Project, which was started in the eighties and was one of the first in the country to actively conserve these beautiful wild flowers.

N.B. Don't forget you can see all these photos in full colour if you look at the newsletter on our own U3A website: avu3a.org.uk

READERS' CIRCLE 2 Monthly in Members' homes – Wednesdays 10.30 – noon

This group was started in September 2007 with just 5 members and we have now grown to 11. So at the time of writing our group is full. However, there is now a new Readers' Circle 3 which has room for new members. We meet in members' homes 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. There are often opinions given which 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 exploring one of the locations which a book has described, ending with lunch, or we may just lunch out and chat about our various reads. 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 hours indoors or out. A good way to spend time learning.

Leader: Brenda Daniel

Deputy Leader: Libby Rose

OUT AND ABOUT!

This group, now in its second year, has about 26 regular members meeting at the Broad Leys on the last Thursday of each month to share tea, coffee and biscuits and decide what members might like to do. Both individuals and groups suggest and then participate in the activities. The forming of new friendships is at the heart of the meetings encouraging those who are on their own to get 'out and about' with new friends. Activities so far have included a day at the Tring Auction Rooms; afternoon tea at Hartwell House; a historical walk around Wendover (with a wonderful tea at the end of it) and a tour of the new Waterside Theatre. Two members who had never been on holiday together before enjoyed a cruise to Norway, and as both enjoyed singing had an opportunity to sing in Stavanger Cathedral. The monthly dinners have been very successful and happy as our picture shows. Restaurants with a different cultural flavour are chosen encouraging members to try foods from a country which may be new to them. We have recently taken a coach tour through the Cotswolds on 'The Blossom Trail' although unfortunately most of the blossom was over, and we will shortly be visiting the Hampton Court Flower Show. We are a very busy group!



Photo and article from Jean Coussens.

BOWLS ACROSS THE SEA !

On a damp and dreary February day 46 members and friends of the Bowls group set off to play in a Bowls tournament at Warners in Bembridge on the Isle of Wight. We had a comfortable coach ride and ferry crossing, The competition was run over 3 days with each team of 4 playing just 3 games against some strong opposition. We had just one team who won all 3 of their games and thus progressed to the quarter finals on the 4th day – Tony and Dot Simmons, Tony's sister Carol and a fairly new bowler Margaret Eakins who played superbly throughout. Well done to them all for keeping our flag flying. There was plenty to do in the hotel for those not bowling, quizzes, wine tasting, line dancing classes and a swimming pool, fitness centre and beauty salon catered for all tastes. All except those who had done so well at Bowls had a full free day on the Thursday which was the finest day of the week and some took a cruise round the island, some went to Osborne House whilst many took full advantage of their free bus passes to tour the island and visit whichever town took their fancy. The food was excellent and we had entertainment each evening preceded by Bingo with one of our group winning a nice cash prize. I had my palm read and the print out said “the best is yet to come” with many more wonderful things in store for me. If it was only to be believed but at least if I ever feel down I can bring it out to read and it's sure to lift my spirits!



Our quarter finalists
Photo from Dot Simmons



On the way home—but still smiling!
Photo from Dot Simmons

Friday morning came all too quickly but our driver Chris was waiting for us at 9.45 and once aboard our coach he regaled us with a hilarious tape of interviews from the Real Breakfast show and the hapless Galloways that kept us in fits of laughter until we reached the ferry. It was a great holiday that certainly did us all good, as Alex said, one never knows where Bowls will take one and though it wasn't quite Brazil or Cape Town, it was over the water!

Mary Rogers



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Rosemary Gibson ; John Harwood; Christine Bailey; Jonathan & Margot Hill; Moira Bishop; Jean Batty and Olivia & George Hodgetts

And a very happy 100th birthday—recently celebrated by ex member Freda Walduck .

YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY

Having seen a recent buzz of activity on CUSS (Computer Users Support Service) concerning scam emails I thought that the points raised were very relevant to us all whether or not we are into computers. The news is full of lurid accounts of people falling foul of some scam or other and we imagine that as U3A students and graduates of life we would never fall for things like that. Well think again, the best scams are those that pass a normal person's scrutiny and they are nothing short of criminal fraud. Should we be worried about fraud and our personal security? Well yes; concerned—but not worried. We need to check out our own personal security, preferably with a relative or friend so that we can act from a position of strength rather than be worried. Here are a few ideas, none of them difficult and all very effective.



- **Your House.** Most crime is against property, not people, so when did we last check our locks and windows? The Home Office is a good place to start, they produce a leaflet – **Be Safe be Secure**. You can get one free by phoning **0870 241 4680** Now that you are secure can you get back in? What if you lose your key? Why not leave one with a relative or neighbour rather than under a flower pot?
- **Your Telephone.** Most unsolicited calls are automatically generated by sales companies or random nuisance callers. Both probably don't know who you are. Why not take your name out of the directory and buy a modern phone with caller recognition and use the answer phone to screen incoming calls? Get a man to record your message and say "We can't take your call at the moment" so that callers do not know who you are, that you are away or that you are alone. Then you need only answer when you know who is calling. Automatic calls will just ring off.
- **Mobile Phone.** If you live on your own why not get yourself a mobile phone; they are cheap and easy. Use it when the car breaks down, when you miss your bus or feel unwell. Use it to phone a relative or friend at the same time every day to let them know you are well, keep your calls short. Ask a family member to program in all your regular numbers, your breakdown company etc. and don't give your number to anyone else. Include an entry for **ICE** – In Case of Emergency. This should be someone the Emergency Services can contact who can act on your behalf. Don't forget to take your new mobile and a torch to bed with you every night. Practise using your phone in the dark, most will light up and your mobile will work in a power failure.
- **Night Callers.** Don't answer the door after dark. Ask friends and relatives to phone before visiting preferably using their mobile from outside your house for safety!

Continued on next page

- **Doorstep Callers.** Take a very hard line and never answer the door to anyone you do not know. You already have a good electricity company and don't wish to change so why bother to talk to them at the door? If you want a tree pruned or your driveway mended, ask a friend for a recommendation; or try our own U3A 'Friendly Neighbours' scheme.
- **Fire.** When did you last check your smoke alarm, have you even got one? The Buckinghamshire Fire Brigade will come and fit one free and check your house for safety. So why not phone them on **01296 74 4477** they might even send a big red engine just for you!
- **Credit Cards.** If you read all the newspaper reports you would imagine that having a credit card was the most risky thing on earth. In fact a card payment is probably safer and certainly more convenient than carrying large amounts of cash. You do need however to follow safe procedures, for example with your chip and pin. Read the advice in the leaflet **Be Safe be Secure** which I mentioned earlier; let us tackle fraud from a position of strength and security.

Ron Meadowcroft

HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED LEGAL ADVICE ?

As we have welcomed many new members in the last few years, we thought that this might be a good time to remind everyone of the LawCare Service. As part of your membership of the U3A you can obtain free round the clock access to professional legal advice. This is a 24 hour telephone advisory service on all legal and related matters. The Executive Committee holds a LawCare Card and a confidential code number which confirms your membership of the scheme and which can be obtained as required from the Secretary or Chairman. The advice will be confidential and you could be offered guidance on the steps you should take to protect your rights. Your issue could be a domestic one; a personal injury claim; a motor related dispute, landlord/tenant dispute etc. Their publicity leaflet states "It is often seemingly trivial problems which cause the most anxiety, and it is for this reason that advice is available on the simplest through to the most complex of matters"..



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Several members have pointed out that this year we will experience 4 unusual dates 1/1/11; 1/11/11; 11/1/11; and 11/11/11. Now take the last two digits of the year you were born in plus the age you will be this year and it will equal 111. Crazy but true. Do the maths for yourself!

MORE NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP (2)

The country's finances are often the subject of debate at the current affairs meetings at the Aylesbury Grammar School. In case you too have difficulty in understanding when a politician uses the term 'billions' in a casual manner, Cyril Reed has sent us the following aide memoire. The definition came from one advertising agency which tried to put the figure into perspective.

A billion seconds ago, it was 1959

A billion minutes ago, Jesus was alive

A billion hours ago, our ancestors were living in the Stone Age

A billion days ago, no-one walked on the earth on two feet.

He hopes that this makes things clearer for you!

THAMES VALLEY NETWORK.

The Thames Valley Network held its AGM on the 6th May at Chinnor and was well attended by most of the affiliated U3As. The first bit of good news was the fact that for 2011/2012 there will be no affiliation fee, due to the fact that the events and Study Days proved so successful that we now have a good balance. The Regional Representative, Colin Mitchell (Wokingham), has completed his three years on the NEC of the Third Age Trust and Pam Jones has said she would be willing to stand for election to this post. This will be decided at the their AGM later in the year, so she will be looking for our support.

Once again the Events Team has been busy and all the new projects can be seen on the notice board. One comment made by the team was that some events were a little low on numbers and one had to be cancelled through lack of support. It was pointed out that individual U3As arrange their own events and there are only so many days in a week and they must expect some slow movers. Of course The Riverside Project is going well and drawing to its close in October with a three day residential course at Wellington College Crowthorn (let's hope the fires are out by then!).

The Committee for the Network was re-elected with two members leaving, Brand Sharpe (Wendover) & Peter Jarvis (Thatcham) and Susie Berry of the Ridgeway U3A joining. Pam Jones, Witney, remains Chairman

Should you require any further information either contact me or look on the websites.

Geoff Young

SPEAKERS CORNER



13th July 2011 – Russia, Past and Present – Mike Beech

Mike Beech worked for over thirty years for Kodak as an internal Management Consultant visiting most European countries. This talk will present some interesting aspects of a coach journey through Russia. It will include architecture, the transport system and many beautiful buildings including the Kremlin and the Hermitage and we will see how these contrast with the poverty in the countryside.

August – No meeting

14th September 2011 – Isambard Kingdom Brunel – David Richards

David Richards is a founder member of Wendover U3A. He retired 11 years ago and it was suggested he give a talk to his own U3A. David says that the talk went down so well that he has continued to give talks to other groups. The talk covers Brunel's major projects: the Clifton suspension bridge, the Great West Railway, Box Tunnel and his three great ships.

12th October 2011 – Downing Street and Its Inhabitants – Colin Oakes

Colin Oakes has been an archaeologist since 1968. He has an MA in the History of London and is still actively involved in researching the subject. This will be his fourth visit to Aylesbury Vale U3A when he will talk on Downing Street and its inhabitants.



This carved oak was spotted by the 'Out and About' visitors on a recent trip to Pershore

Photo from Jean Cousens



A LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Jean and I were grateful that you acknowledged our contribution to the Supper Quiz in the last issue. But we only compiled the questions, and would not wish to take more credit than is due. Jill Bartlett, our Social Activities Co-ordinator was responsible for liaising with the

Bowls Club and ordering the Fish and Chip supper. A team of people helped with arranging tables on the evening, staffing the bar, and of course there were many willing hands in the kitchen. Thanks is due to all of them..

Peter Ashton



Participants on the Isle of Wight bowling holiday were delighted by this shop sign which reads: 'Free husband crèche – drop while you shop'.
Photo From Daphne Shearer

SECRETARY'S HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: For those of you who send your subscription in by post (£15 due at the end of July) remember that we now have a new Membership Secretary. Her address is: Diane Richardson, 100 Kynaston Avenue, Aylesbury HP21 9DS.



Your Committee has reluctantly decided to close membership and review the position in a year's time. We now have over 400 members, and attendance at monthly meetings is often over 200 – perilously close to the maximum capacity of the hall. From July this year a waiting list will be established – a task for our new Membership Secretary.

Jim McKay has been Membership Secretary since 2006. Both he and past Secretary Tony Dobbs are moving to the south coast. Our warmest thanks go to them both for all their work on behalf of U3A members. We wish them well in their new homes and, perhaps, new U3A's.

Anne Wales is also a new co-opted member of the Committee, prepared to take over the post of Groups Secretary from Jean Coussens at this year's AGM.

And with the Waterside Theatre right on our doorstep we are still looking for a Theatre Visits Organiser!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TUESDAY 14TH JUNE: Coach trip to Hever Castle, Kent. You could contact Ron Meadowcroft to see if there are any late vacancies! (Cost £24 inc. entrance to Castle and Gardens).



TUESDAY 5TH JULY: Another visit for the Garden Group and friends to Tring Park by car.

TUESDAY 12TH JULY: Visit to Merriment Gardens, East Sussex, famous for its herbaceous borders. Cost of Coach and entrance fee £18. Departing from Jansel Square at 9.30 a.m. and arriving back at 18.30 p.m.

TUESDAY 19TH JULY: The Garden Group will be visiting Hillesden House near Buckingham. Meet at Jansel Square at 2 p.m. to arrange lifts.

WEDNESDAY 20TH JULY: A visit to the Weald and Downlands Open Air Museum in Sussex. This is the leading museum of Historic Buildings in England dating from the 13th to 19th century set in over 40 acres including a working water mill. <http://www.wealddown.co.uk>

WEDNESDAY 20TH JULY: Coffee morning at The Broad Leys, Wendover Road at 10.30 am. Cost £1.75. All members welcome.

TUESDAY 9TH AUGUST: Local Garden visit to Red Kites, Bledlow Ridge. Meet at Jansel Square at 2.00 p.m. to arrange car lifts.

WEDNESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER: Coffee Morning—Join us for another friendly get together—especially if you are a new or recently joined member. We meet at 10.30 a.m. at The Broad Leys, on Wendover Road and coffee costs £1.75

SEPTEMBER: Date to be arranged – Visit to Denbies Vinyard and Polesden Lacey near Dorking. Once owned by Thomas Cubitt, Denbies Wine Estate overlooking Box Hill is the largest vineyard in England. Polesden Lacey, was the venue for the honeymoon of the future King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and has extensive grounds. Leaving Jansel Square at 8.30 a.m. Arriving back at 6.30 p.m.

THURSDAY 20TH OCTOBER: Early warning of our ever popular Quiz Night and Fish and Chip Supper. Numbers are restricted to 64, and we know that tickets are snapped up quickly – so keep your ears open for the announcement.

FRIDAY 9TH DECEMBER: Another ‘early warning’. Our Christmas Lunch will be held at Hardings Restaurant, Aylesbury College and numbers will be limited so book early!

THEATRE VISIT AND RIVER LUNCH CRUISE:

We arrived at the Embankment with London bathed in sunshine. After a slight blip getting our boarding pass we eventually boarded our boat. We were served with a lovely three course meal during our one and half hour trip and both sides of the river could be clearly seen, as all the seats had unhindered views. A running commentary kept us informed about some of the more outstanding buildings along the route including three of the oldest and infamous pubs on the waterfront; “The Prospect Of Whitby” built in the 1520s; “The Mayflower” so named to commemorate the sailing from here of the Pilgrim Fathers to the New World and “The Captain Kidd”. On this site stood “Execution Dock” where pirates, thieves and vagabonds were hung.



What was the waiter saying to Margaret Lengthorn?

Both photos. taken by Ron Adams on the lunch boat on the Thames



When we disembarked the Playhouse theatre was only a five minute walk away. Our seats were in the centre of the stalls – a perfect position to see the show. 'Dreamboats and Petticoats' had a good story line and the music had us all dancing in our seats, taking us back to our younger years. At the end of the show one of the lead singers sang, “Let’s twist again” and some young!!! ladies in the audience got up and were twisting in the aisles.

The theatre visit put the final gloss on a perfect day and thanks should go to Pam Taylor and Heather Talbot for all the hard work involved in organizing it all. Let’s hope we can have some more days out like this in the future.

Norman McRae

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Last date for copy for the Autumn Newsletter will be **14th August** ; 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.

Thanks as always to the Robinsons (proof readers extraordinaire) and perhaps for the last time to Jim McKay who helps to ensure that the photos are well presented. Our loss will be the South Coast’s gain!