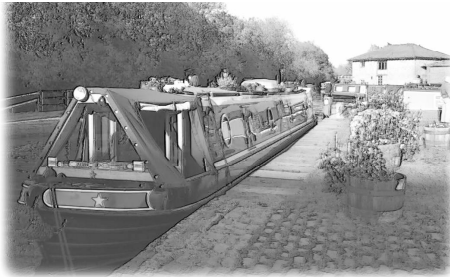


Aylesbury Vale U3A



Issue No. 60

Autumn 2011

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I have calculated that since I took early retirement almost 20 years ago, I have listened, always with interest, but with variable degrees of enjoyment, to about 340 talks. That number does not take any account of the many T.V. or Radio programmes I hear, nor the daily newspaper articles and non fiction books I may read. I have learned about the work of the air ambulance crew; the coroner; a man who catches smugglers; a restorer of works of art; teachers, doctors, jewellers and so on. I have heard from august personages such as an ex Speaker of the House of Commons; a retired Head of M.I.5; a Curator of the Royal Palaces; a world famous scientist and many more. This is the sort of learning that becomes imperceptibly a part of the vast store of information docketed and filed away in that wonderful computer - the human brain.

As well as membership of some of the groups covered by our U3A programme, I have learned so much from individual members; in casual chats over cups of tea or while walking alongside someone on a London stroll. I hope that in the pages of the newsletter we are sometimes privileged to learn more from the varied experiences of our fellow members. Mention a holiday in Japan, and somebody has lived there for two years; gaze upwards admiringly at a clock in the tower of a London riverside church and somebody says quietly 'My signature is probably still up there on the casing'. We never stop learning - and in the most enjoyable way. We all have these stories to tell.

Cicero is quoted as saying "It is not the body alone that must be supported, but the intellect and soul much more. For they are like lamps, unless you feed them with oil, they too go out from old age". We are often told that crosswords are an excellent form of mental stimulation as long as a) you can find where you put down your glasses and b) find the newspaper.

In U3A we need have no fears. We have opportunities to feed both body and mind.

Shirley Stokes

A SUNNY DAY AT HEVER CASTLE

After such a changeable 'summer' the two Barbaras who run the Garden Group were to be congratulated on choosing one of the warmest and sunniest days to visit Hever Castle in Kent. Most famous for being the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, the second and arguably most influential wife of Henry VIII and mother of Queen Elizabeth I. It was at Hever Castle that Anne first met Henry who became infatuated with her after his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, failed to provide him with a male

heir and he tired of his former mistress, Anne's sister, Mary. Henry's passion for Anne led him to reform the Church of England, placing himself at its head, in order to divorce Catherine. However, Henry and Anne's life together was not to end happily as he became enraged with her for not providing him with a son. In 1536 Anne was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London on a charge of High Treason based on adultery and incest with her brother. Anne was executed on 19th May 1536, Henry went on to marry another four times and Hever Castle reverted to the Crown.



The Lake from the terrace used as an open air theatre.

Photo from Peter Ashton

The oldest parts of the castle, the gatehouse, walled bailey, moat and drawbridge date back to 1270. The Boleyn family added the Tudor dwelling inside the castle wall in 1500. But the building we see today was extensively restored in 1903 by William Astor who filled it with treasures and built the private wing as a mock Tudor village to avoid changing the ambience of the old castle—and to give him extra space for entertaining! He also added the extensive gardens and lake, which were much enjoyed by the large party of U3A members and friends.

How about this for a house extension? William Astor's' guest house (now available for hire for weddings and private functions

Another of Wendy Copcutt's excellent photos.



Photo by Wendy Copcutt



N/B. Our talented photographers took many other pictures which are well worth visiting. Why not look on our website to see them all in full colour? avu3a.org.uk

CESHIRE AND NORTH WALES STUDY TOUR

“Welcome aboard the Skylark!” With Ron’s familiar phrase ringing in our ears, our intrepid group of travellers set off on what was to be a varied and action-packed tour. Before long we were trundling through the gates of Little Moreton Hall, a unique timber-framed Tudor manor, and immediately set about the serious business of cheating at Ron and Rosemary’s quiz. Feeling somewhat inebriated by the effect of walking on its undulating floors, we eventually emerged into the tranquillity of the lovely garden populated by hungry ducks before heading off to our hotel.

A cacophony of cultures greeted us next day on our arrival in Chester - roaming Romans, strolling minstrels and racy racegoers, the latter processing in a steady pilgrimage down the high street to the racecourse. We were treated to a delight of Rows and ruins, crypts and hypocausts, almshouses and town houses before succumbing to the more modern pleasures of shops and tearooms to fortify us for another evening of animated discussion on exactly why the Dee Bridge collapsed in 1847- (the quiz again.)



On our guided tour of Chester
Photo by Tony Simmons



This time Tony Simmons is the photographers ‘victim’ while he made some new friends at Little Moreton Hall
Photo by Dot Simmons

Ron and Rosemary had ordered ideal weather for our trip to Llandudno. In glorious sunshine we scaled the heights of the Great Orme on the cable-hauled tram (one of only three of its kind in the world) and enjoyed spectacular views along the Welsh coast. From there we drove to the beautiful Bodnant Gardens and strolled in the blaze of colour of the formal flowerbeds and (for those with the energy to negotiate the steep slopes) along the stream in the leafy dell.

The next day we spent a fascinating morning at Port Sunlight, the village created by William Lever for his soap factory workers and which even today would be the envy of many.

In the afternoon, to the strains of the Beatles, we took the ferry across the Mersey and discovered that in the mid 19th century you could have spent your summer holiday on its banks at New Brighton, a resort developed to rival its namesake in the south.

It was back to Wales again next day and through unspoilt countryside to Llangollen and a canal cruise 126 feet up in the air across the Pontcysyllte



Our intrepid sailors join a narrow boat for the voyage across the Pontcysyllte aqueduct

Photo from Ron Adams

CHESTER continued....

aqueduct. Now why *didn't* that collapse? (Yes, you've guessed—that quiz again!)

Homeward bound and a visit to a more solid-looking Tudor mansion this time—the Ferrers family home at Baddesly Clinton. They made priests very welcome there and when danger threatened provided three escape holes for their comfort (if you didn't mind using the toilet shaft as your entrance and standing in water from the moat.)

Our grateful thanks go to Ron and Rosemary for all their hard work in giving us such a thoroughly enjoyable holiday.

Gay Hancock



Ascot Races or Ladies who Lunch ? No—just some glamorous U3A members trying on hats at the exhibition of Accessories in the Lady Lever Gallery at Port Sunlight.

P.S.

from the Editor. It would be helpful if, when you are sending photos in, you could pencil the name of the photographer and the names of the subjects (and the venue) on the back of each picture.

RON AND ROSEMARY'S QUIZ

It has become something of a tradition for Ron and Rosemary to set participants some 'exam' questions on the study visit, relating to places to be visited. While not taken too seriously, it does encourage members a) to talk to each other (usually swapping answers) b) to take more notice of and actually read the information provided at each venue and c) to talk to Guides and Park Rangers to find answers. It was noticeable on the Great Orme Head in Llandudno that if asking one of the Rangers about the flora or fauna they would respond "Ah, you must be with the U3A group"

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

GENTLE WALKS: Organiser Veronica Stagnell

Although the hardy members of this group keep walking all through the Autumn and Winter, we thought that you might like to know where we have walked so far this year. We have explored both Wendover (the bluebells being one attraction) and Ashridge woods. We walked the canal at Marsworth travelling along the tow path until (most of us) reached the Marsworth flight of locks; then back through the very pleasant village for a lunch at the local café. Waddesdon Park is a good venue for us in the winter months when footpaths may be muddy, and we also visit the Manor to see the spring flowers and bedding schemes. College Lake nature reserve was a new venue for us this year although we chose the muddiest day of the year for our perambulations! Coombe Hill is another favourite venue although that can also coat our boots with mud. We regularly check up on the delightful wildflower meadow along the Heron Path in Wendover, not to mention the fishing lake with its mass of water lilies. Finally, the Rothschilds feature again when we walk from Eythrope Road for The Pavilion end of the estate. Needless to say food features regularly on these occasions and we view the walks as pleasant social events which get us out into the fresh air and see us enjoying lunch in good company

THE OUT AND ABOUT GROUP: Organiser Jean Coussens

As mentioned in a previous newsletter a number of members of this group visited the Hampton Court Flower Show on coaches arranged by the Wyevale Garden Centre in Aylesbury. The arrangements were excellent and they even had a gardening quiz to keep members occupied on the journey. (They have obviously copied Ron and Rosemary Meadowcroft's example). The only disappointment was the weather! It poured with rain from the moment we arrived until about 45 minutes before we left. Needless to say the Floral Marquee was very well patronised although even in there the floor of chipped bark was floating on an inch of water near the entrances. It was quite a sight to behold some of our party picnicking under umbrellas on the park benches. What a pity that nobody took any photographs. Even the B.B.C. camera crews were swathed in assorted waterproofs and having to run between exhibits. If any of you watched the broadcasts featuring smiling presenters, with only the odd umbrella appearing in the background, you would not have believed how bad it was. Despite all that the day was enjoyed and many small parcels of plants and assorted paraphernalia arrived safely back on the coaches. Thanks to Jean Coussens for organising it—although she should have done something about the weather!



The Photographers are photographed!
Ron Adams sent us this photo taken in the summer when the Photography group visited West Wycombe Park. They are looking at some ceiling paintings and were lucky enough to be given a talk by one of the conservators about their renovation of the external wall paintings

AN EXTRACT FROM THE CHESTER EXAMINATION PAPER Answers below

Little Moreton Hall:

In what century was the house built?

Who was the carpenter who made the gabled windows by the East Wing and Great Hall?

When was the building given to the National Trust?

Chester:

Who was the Roman Emperor when Chester was built?

There is a new stained glass window in the Cathedral Refectory. What is it called?

What event does the Chester clock celebrate?

Llandudno:

What family were the biggest landowners in Llandudno?

When did the Great Orme Tramway open?

As the tram is cable hauled what was the trolley pole used for?

Port Sunlight:

Who created Port Sunlight?

Where was the original Lever family business?

Name the three members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood?

Liverpool:

What are the 'Three Graces of Liverpool'?

What are the two road tunnels under the Mersey called?

What 1981 film featured The Oval Sports Centre in Bebington as the 1924 Olympics venue?

Answers:
Little Moreton Hall: 15thC. Richard Dale: 1938 Chester: Vespasian, The millennium or
Creation Window; Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Llandudno: The Mostyns, 1902,
Communications. Port Sunlight: 1st Viscount Leverhulme, Bolton; Dante Gabriel Rossetti;
John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt Liverpool: The Cunard, Royal Liver and
Port Authority buildings, the Kingsway and Queensway, Chariots of Fire.



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

Chand Bhoobun, Pat Binks, Brenda Cole, Bob & Pauline Colliver, Tom Day,
Ann Fitzpatrick, Heshmat & Pearl Georgy, Margaret Graham, Gerry Rusby,
Mary Hawksford, Liz Hazel, Richard Lane, David Lawrence, Ruth Matthews, Sue McGill,
David & Jenn Merrison, Phillip Rance, David Richardson, Eric Rose, Pat Scales, Christine
Scott, Pamela Stocks, Jackie White, Ivy Williams, Rita Wilsher.

NEW—THE VIRTUAL U3A.

If you were at the June monthly meeting you may remember that the Chairman announced the formation of a 'Virtual U3A' (VU3A) formed in January 2009. It is on-line only and affiliated to the Third Age Trust. One of its principal aims is to provide the U3A experience for those who may be isolated in some way—by geography or circumstances—and unable to play a full part in a terrestrial U3A.

The fee is currently £12—again payable on-line only—and all that is necessary is for the applicant to have a computer connected to the internet (Broad band preferably). Groups usually consist of 6–12 people, with one elected a leader/co-ordinator and a quick look online will show existing groups dealing with areas such as literature, science, photography etc. There is also an on-line 'common room' where members can 'chat' with others, suggest new areas of interest or just share ideas.

If you know anyone who might be interested they can look at the site on www.vu3a.org where they can get details of existing groups and apply for membership.

HOW TO BE A U3A COMMITTEE MEMBER

One of my first acts after taking over the job of Secretary to the Aylesbury Vale U3A was to attend a training day organised by the Thames Valley Network with the title 'Committee Matters'. Held at Witney, the day brought together committee members and aspiring committee members from U3As across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and beyond.



The session was chaired by Pam Jones of Witney U3A, Chairman of the Thames Valley Network. It began with a ten-minute Powerpoint presentation about the Network. Those of you who attended our monthly meeting in January may remember Pam Jones showing it then. There were two main speakers: Lin Jonas, Company Secretary of the Third Age Trust, and Mike Long, National Education and Development Officer. What they gave between them was a wealth of useful information and guidance about running a U3A, covering such topics as insurance, accounts, constitution, the role of trustees and the role of the group co-ordinators. They were able to reassure us that the national office could be called upon to help with serious difficulties. Colin Mitchell, our Regional Trustee on the National Executive Committee, also spoke briefly about his role.

A break for a buffet lunch, provided by members of Witney U3A, provided an opportunity to compare notes with representatives of other U3As. The cost of the lunch and of the rest of the day was covered by the Network. As far as I know the training day is held only once a year, but I would recommend it to anybody who is thinking of joining our Committee in whatever capacity.

Peter Gasson: Secretary

OUR DAY BACK AT SCHOOL !

Last year three of our members took part in a mentoring day at the Grange School. This year we were invited to repeat the exercise, and three brave members volunteered. This is an account by one of them— Jenn Merrison who was accompanied by husband David and Brenda Tumulty.



Despite our initial trepidation on receiving the paperwork for our visit to the Grange School, we arrived promptly to a warm welcome from Michele Kew who is their Marketing and Communications Officer. Our task looked daunting but after an informal briefing from Michele and a welcome cup of coffee we were assured that we were only expected to mingle, listen and encourage. Then followed another short briefing in the main hall with the Year 9 pupils. They were told that their task was to prepare a presentation and activity to welcome the new September intake who would be visiting the following week. We were all allocated a class and guided to our classrooms by friendly pupils. The pupils had to include certain criteria namely GELS—Grange Enterprise and Learning Skills—which would be part of the new intake's future curriculum. It centred on such areas as leadership, creativity and independence. We were all surprised at how bright and inventive these 14 - 15 year olds were. Some brilliant ideas came out of it!



Our morning was spent with two different classes both of whom were friendly and co-operative. One group from each class went on to the final judging. After a pleasant lunch the hardest bit of the day was upon us - choosing whose presentation was to be used on the induction. We sat through nine speeches, some nervous, some confident but all brave. After much difficult deliberation with three of the Grange teachers, a team who had named themselves KECTEB (anagram of all their initials) were the winners. Their activity was a Treasure Hunt around the school designed to team-build and to give the new pupils the chance to get to know the vast building.

A great day was had by all of us thanks to the Grange.

NOTES LEFT IN MILK BOTTLES— sent in by a reader

Sorry not to have paid your bill before, but my wife had a baby and I've been carrying it around in my pocket for weeks.

Please don't leave any more milk. All they do is drink it.

Sorry about yesterday's note. I didn't mean one egg and a dozen pints, but the other way round.

No milk. Please do not leave milk at no. 14 either, as he is dead until further notice.

Please leave no milk today; when I say today, I mean tomorrow. I wrote this note yesterday.

HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES:

WILL YOU HELP US TO RUN THE AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A. ?

Annual General Meeting:

Don't forget our A.G.M. on October 12th. We need a new Treasurer and a new Hall Manager to take over from Ken Cooper and Roy Knight, who intend to step down. A member with a background in accountancy, finance or banking would be ideal for the office of Treasurer. For the Hall Manager some knowledge of sound systems would be useful (have you ever run the PA system at a fete?) If you are interested in either post, please have a word with the Chairman or Secretary, or with the present incumbents.



We are still without a Theatre Organiser. We should be very pleased if somebody would take on this post, especially now that we have the Waterside Theatre on our doorstep.

Bank cheques:

Good news for charities like ours: the banks have decided that cheques are to stay. The Payments Council, a banking industry body, has decided that they will be kept 'as long as customers need them'. Cheques were to be phased out by 2018, but the Payments Council has changed its mind in response to the weight of public opinion.

Key-rings:

A U3A key-ring is now available. It is made of metal, costs £1.50, and can be obtained from the U3A online shop via the U3A website—www.u3a.org.uk—along with other U3A merchandise. You will need to register if you do not already have a user name and password

Peter Gasson



A NOTE FROM THE 'MUSIC I LIKE' GROUP

Hello! Are there any music lovers out there?

Our Group now has room for a few more members so why not come along and spend a relaxing hour and a half on alternate Tuesdays afternoons listening to a member's choice of recording.? You would hear a selection of much loved music and get the chance to play some of your own favourites to us.

Those interested please contact either Gerard Boyle or Bill Norman.

SPEAKERS CORNER

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’.

9th November – From Poverty, Pestilence and War - A History of the Aylesbury Hospitals – Dr. Anthony Knight

Dr . Anthony Knight is a retired Consultant Physician, having worked at Stoke Mandeville from 1974 to 2005 in the Department of Medicine, with a special interest in diabetes. He has used his professional knowledge and his keen interest in history to produce what promises to be a fascinating talk on “A History of the Aylesbury Hospitals”

14th December – Let Me Entertain You – Betty Page

Betty Page is an ex-school teacher and an actress. She presents comic monologues in the style of Joyce Grenfell. I am sure she will entertain us superbly at our Christmas meeting.

Jeni Davies



Tony Simmons took this photo which he entitled: Speak no evil; hear no evil and see no evil !

N.B. Details of these and other activities from: u3atvnetwork.org.uk

NETWORK DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 1st October:

A Wildlife Activities Day at Dinton Pastures Multi-Activity Centre, Hurst, RG10 0TH. This has been organised by Wokingham U3A.

Tuesday 15th November:

The chance to study Four Opera Masterpieces, at Rewley House, Oxford at a cost of £12.50.

MORE NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

INDOOR BOWLS GROUP:

This Group, along with U3A Groups from Wendover and Haddenham, is very concerned by the news that the Jardine's Bowling Centre in Aylesbury has been threatened with closure. Rumour has it that it is to become a shop. After many years of enjoyable bowling it would be a real shame if this facility was no longer available. An on-line petition has been started for those who might like to comment.

Jean and Peter Ashton

THE GARDEN GROUP:

The Garden Group were again very lucky with the weather on their visit to Savill Garden this May, very sunny and warm but not too hot. The rhododendrons and azaleas were at their best and we spent our time wandering the paths and admiring these. The Queen Elizabeth Temperate House where we saw citrus fruits and a mass display of sinettias was also very attractive. In November last year we had a talk from Roger Askew about Savill Garden and it was interesting to see the plants and flowers he talked about. He did not mention though how many jackdaws seemed to live in the gardens, playing the part normally taken by pigeons and sparrows and stealing crumbs from the tables outside the restaurant.

Merriments, a 4 acre garden set in the farmland of the Weald, which we visited in July has magnificent borders which showed off its plants to wonderful effect. Over and over I heard people say 'I've got nearly all these plants in my garden but they look so much better here'. It is, of course, all to do with having such deep borders and using dozens of plants whereas most of us work with much smaller space and fewer plants. There was also a wild area which included a bird watching hide where we were able to see a wide variety of birds feeding. Later in July we visited Hillesden House near Buckingham. This is a 5 acre garden with a large formal area, herbaceous borders, ponds with fountains and waterfalls. The beautiful Koi carp in one of the ponds followed us around hoping we would feed them. Our successful visit to Hever Castle is reported on elsewhere in the newsletter.

Barbara Fraser

FINANCE GROUP:

We meet at The Bell Public House Lower Road Stoke Mandeville HP22 5XA on the 2nd Thursday each month at 10.00am - 12.00noon First meeting of 2011/2012 was on Thursday 8th September. We aim to have speakers on Income Tax, Living Wills, Fuel Poverty, Wills Inheritance Tax and on subjects which arise from our talks. The next meeting will be on October 13th.

Margaret Crafts



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WEDNESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER: U3A Coffee morning at The Broad Leys, Wendover Road at 10.30 a.m. Price £1.75 We know that we have a number of newly joined members and hope they will be able to meet with us.

TUESDAY 11TH OCTOBER The Garden Group has arranged a local visit to Acer Corner, Wendover. If you wish to participate please meet at Jansel Square, Aylesbury at 2.00 p.m. to arrange lifts

THURSDAY 20TH OCTOBER: The tickets for our Quiz are sure to sell out quickly. The cost is a very reasonable £8 which includes a Fish & Chip supper. We gather at the Aylesbury Town Bowls Club at 3.00 p.m. for a chat and cup of tea, and the Quiz begins at 3.30. Supper follows at about 6.00 p.m. It means an afternoon of fun and friendship—and we still get home in the early evening.

TUESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER: Garden Group meeting at Meadowcroft Community centre at 3.15. Jill Carey to give talk on 'Our Worldwide Gardens'

WEDNESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER: Another coffee morning—all members welcome. See 21st September notice above for details

FRIDAY 9TH DECEMBER: Last year only a small number booked Christmas Lunch, so this year we are going to a smaller venue—The Harding's Restaurant at Aylesbury College. This means that you will have to book early to be sure of a place. Tickets available at the September and October meetings. Price to be confirmed.

Once again my thanks are due to many people. I shall miss Jim McKay who helped when photographs needed adjustment. Is there anyone out there with photo computer skills whom I could call upon if I feel that I am not doing justice to a members photo? As always Alan Robinson spots every small error on my first draft and helps me to produce a rather more polished version. Secretary Peter Gasson sorts out the essential 'nuts and bolts' of production and then there are all of you who allow me to bully you into submitting items for publication—not forgetting our excellent photographers. (As I have said elsewhere, it would be helpful if you could pencil in the name of the photographer, the venue and names of any members featured on the back of the photo.)

Just as with the Forth Bridge, we now need to start on the next December issue. **Material please by the date of our November meeting, 9th November to:**
Shirley Stokes, 9 Windsor Road, Aylesbury HP21 7JG, tel: 01296 392726 or by email to: treveris9@btinternet.com