

AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Newsletter Issue No. 62

March 2012

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

One of the disadvantages of a quarterly publication is that some things seem really out of date by the time we write the next one! Many events happen over the Christmas and New Year period that by March seem just a distant memory. Winter is hopefully behind us, and we can look forward to some early Spring Blossom. One thing that never changes, whatever the time of year, is the amount of unwanted post which comes through the letterbox. In U3A we receive a lot of correspondence from organisations which note the word 'retired' or 'third age' in our literature and immediately equate it with 'needy'. We are offered help with hearing aids, money problems, mobility or to enable us to interact with other people. (We are never offered help with high-end fashion or fast sports cars or expensive equipment.) Now I know that we all, from time to time, want, and would no doubt welcome, additional help with our affairs. We are all 'needy' at some time in our lives, but it is the assumption that we are not capable of finding our own answers, or even finding out who to contact for assistance that irritates me most (and yes, I do realise how lucky I am.)

Many cultures cherish their older relatives and other citizens. They acknowledge, as we do in U3A, the wealth of life experience tucked away in the third ager's head. The Chinese follow the lead of Confucius who first advocated total respect for your elders. The Native American respects his elders too, and the older members of the tribe often take on significant roles as teachers and caretakers of the young. The Vietnamese consider their elders to be the carriers of tradition, knowledge and wisdom. I suspect that there are still other cultures which see no place at all for their old folk. Even amongst those with the strongest cultural heritage, change will inevitably come about as the next generation lose interest in tradition. The world of limited resources and lack of jobs and money will no doubt encourage many younger people to look at the generation above them as users of finite resources and of having had their chances in life.

Thinking about all these things leads me to feel very positive about life in Buckinghamshire, despite any problems which come our way. We can all look back and see the advantages of our own life-time. Just think back to the November speaker last year who reminded us that 'Poverty, Pestilence and War' were ever prevalent. You might say that they still are, but the recent excellent talk on the history of the Aylesbury hospitals showed us just how far we have advanced in the area of health as just one example. How often do we say "I am glad I didn't live when.....!" Equally, I hear many comments like "I'm glad I won't be here to see....." For all of us, our own life span is probably the best – it is after all the only one that we have. To quote John Dryden - 'Happy the man, and happy he alone, he who can call today his own; he who, secure within, can say, tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today'.

Shirley Stokes

YOUR GROUP LEADERS GET TOGETHER

The Annual Meeting of all the group leaders was held, as usual, in January. The lounge of the Aylesbury Town Bowls Club provided us with a relaxing place to meet (thanks to the hard work of Dot and Tony Simmons) and with tea and biscuits in hand we settled down to find out what you feel about U3A. We know from last year's minutes that some group leaders feel that it is not necessary for them to attend if their particular group is already full and has no room for new members, but we would appreciate their input. The Executive Committee is relatively small in number but taken all together the membership of our 40 plus groups adds up to a couple of hundred more voices who can help us to see what is needed and to enable us to make more democratic decisions. The leaders of the individual groups are naturally more closely in touch with their particular participants, and can pass on their views.



A number of interesting points were raised from the floor; these included better ways of welcoming newcomers; improved ways of offering helpful advice to new (and existing) group leaders; the appointment of 'hosts' for each monthly gathering; the value of the existing coffee mornings for new members and the possible institution of a morning meeting to be held either 6 monthly or annually specifically for them. Several suggestions were also made for new groups which it was felt would be of interest. There was discussion about how to make better use of the Website, improving the follow up of the interests declared on membership application forms and the possibilities of introducing more 'short courses' or 'one off' day workshops.

But this was truly a two way conversation, and Officers were also able to give information about the help available from the Third Age Trust's Resource Centre; the activity display tables at each monthly meeting; the format of the new Directory; the new Associate Membership scheme (in which there were currently 13 people) and the Treasurer's requirements for the reimbursement of incidental expenses. We felt that this was a very productive end worthwhile gathering, and we shall be following up many of your suggestions throughout the coming year.

Anne Wales: Group Co-ordinator



SAVE WORRY—JOIN A WINE GROUP

Winter is obviously a very tricky time for wine tasting. Time is at a premium with last minute shopping for presents, working out menus, sorting out where visitors will sleep if they stay over, deciding which invitations to accept and which to decline. So this is when all the valuable work put in during the year comes to the fore and we are able to choose just the right wine to go with the meals we have prepared and which will be most acceptable for the friends we are visiting. Being part of a wine group takes all the hassle out of that side of what is a hectic time, so make your new year resolution to come and join us. Wine Group 2 are a very jolly bunch of members who like wine and are happy to explore the different varieties available. We don't hold to any pretensions and are as happy to try wine from the cheaper end of the market as the more expensive one. Sometimes we concentrate on a producer, sometimes a grape, more often a country or area and we usually find something that we like. The whole idea is to find out the wines we like and maybe wouldn't have thought of buying and be able to identify those we really don't want to buy however cheap they may be. We are currently looking for a venue for a summer lunch and a possible visit to a winery. So if we sound like your sort of people give me a ring on 01296 483454

Your very good health in 2012

from Meryll Coe and Wine Group 2

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

BECOME A THEATRE GOER!

The theatre group is up and running again. A list of up and coming shows at the Waterside Theatre will be posted on the notice board at each meeting, so please put your name beside anything that might be of interest to you. Once I have 10 or more people interested I can make a group booking. Please be aware that I need at least two months' notice in order to book and collect money. If anybody has any suggestions to make please do not hesitate to contact either myself, Pauline Colliver, or Jenn Merrison.



Pauline Colliver

HISTORY GROUP

As the new History Group leader, I spent some time before our first meeting last September working out a proposed programme for the coming year. Having presented this at our first meeting (and also supplying detail for publication in the handbook!), our members suggested that a look at more contemporary history was their preference. Being someone who recognises a change of wind direction fairly quickly, I was happy to suggest that we look to the origins of World War 2 and World War 2 itself. Surprise, surprise - that is what we have been involved with since then.

We are going back in history for 2 sessions - Edward 1st and also social changes in the 18th century. So far we have covered the Spanish Civil War as a precursor to the main subject and then we have looked at the conflicts on a year by year basis. So our proposed programme this year is:-



Feb 14th—Edward 1st; Feb 28th—1942/43; Mar 13th—1943; Mar.27th—18th Century Britain. Our final session on April 17th will be an end of year ad hoc session with (hopefully) members giving 5 minute presentations relating to relevant historical, scientific or other anniversaries that relate to the date. Tea and biscuits provided!! (Re-start on 11th September)

I couldn't run this group without the help of Veronica Stagnell and Barbara Fell. Thanks to you both.

Mike Burrows

PATCHWORK PROGRESS

The Patchwork Group started last September and is progressing well. We are a small, mixed ability, group working on a range of different projects. Several members started on small projects by making quilted cushion covers or quilting panels to make into tote bags. Two members went straight into making quilt tops and one of these is now fully pieced and basted with the batting ready to quilt the layers together. We are all looking forward to seeing the finished result. In December we took time out to do a Christmas table topper project. These hexagons could be finished in less than an hour and make a pretty Christmas gift.

Running the group has been very rewarding but challenging. Members are all at different stages with their projects and have different needs. Happily everyone has worked hard and been very patient with my lack of teaching skills. We hope to progress to more advanced projects as confidence and skills increase. **Please note** change of time; the Group now meets from 1.00 p.m. to 3.00p.m. not as in Directory.

MORE NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

THE GARDEN GROUP

The Garden Group is organising some coach outings for the summer. We hope to give priority to Garden Group members so, if you have not yet contacted me to let me know which outings you are interested in, you are welcome to do so.

Times, dates and costs are yet to be confirmed. We have the following visits in mind:



To Beth Chatto's garden in Essex in May. As these gardens are open to coaches either in the morning or afternoon, we intend to take the coach to Colchester and either look around Colchester or have lunch (or both) and then go on to Beth Chatto's for the afternoon. Cost is expected to be around £20-24.



Coton Manor

We plan to visit Coton Manor in Northamptonshire in June. We have been to this garden before about 5 years ago but it is so lovely we thought it was worth a return visit. Cost approximately £20.

The last visit will be to Charleston near Lewes in Sussex in July. Charleston was the home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, members of the Bloomsbury Group, and the house was decorated by them in a Post Impressionist style. This visit is being arranged mainly for the Art

History Group but as the garden is very good we thought some Garden Group members would be interested in joining. Cost probably around £20-24.

All of these visits will be open to the general membership after group members have expressed their preferences, and details will be announced at the appropriate monthly meeting.

Barbara Fraser

THE NEW SCRABBLE GROUP

This fairly new group has been meeting every fortnight on a Wednesday afternoon since last September and I think I can say we have enjoyed every session. Initially about sixteen people signed up, but the largest number has been eight and most weeks so far there are usually between four and six of us. We usually manage to complete two games per afternoon plus refreshments and a bit of a chat! We have come across many new words and have certainly been brushing up on our spelling!



We are also very lucky to have the amazingly enthusiastic and versatile Jean Coussens in our group – she arrives each time with a very large Scrabble dictionary and a very beautiful board complete with turntable. So I've bought a turntable for my very ordinary Scrabble set(s) to try to keep up and although I thought I had a de luxe Scrabble dictionary, it is not a patch on Jean's. So if you want to have a go at playing 'Posh Scrabble', this is the place for you!

Eve Daintith

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



While on holiday in Northern Cyprus I decided that I would hire a car. A car was delivered to our hotel at the appropriate time, and I was presented with the rental agreement which I was asked to read and sign. This I did, after questioning the meaning of clause 8 below:

The hirer hereby absolves the (car hire company), their servants and/or agents from any liability whatsoever under Section 108 of the contract Law or ordinance or under Section 5.1f Torts Law or Ordinance.

It made no sense to me nor, when asked, to the representative of the hire company. Reluctantly I signed the form. Could anyone explain to me what is meant by clause 8?

Roy Knight

Some facts and figures for you—

Just to keep you awake and on your toes!

It is estimated that by 2015 nearly three billion people will be on the Internet, that's about 40% of the World population. One million minutes of video will be watched online every second.

And just to make things even more interesting - global Internet traffic will reach 966 exabytes a year.

Now just in case you can't remember how big an "exabyte" is, think **big**. 1 EB is 10^{18} bytes or 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes, which is pretty big whatever way you look at it.

Ron Meadowcroft

Your 'Chairman's Letter' in December (*re downsizing*) really rang true to us as we nearly moved 5 years ago having lived in our home since November 1978. Because of a problem at the beginning of the chain it all fell through and we then got cold feet on the whole project beginning to appreciate what we would be giving up.

We had thought we would 'downsize' - a kind of marketing expression and euphemism glossing over the considerable disadvantages that smaller accommodation would bring. As you say it is not just size but giving up your home and all that goes with it. So perhaps the moral of the story is to move only if you really need to and not to save a few bob on heating bills or other relatively small considerations.

With all best wishes for 2012 in the home that you, like us, have lived in for quite a while!

Sony & Jill Davis

Have you seen that odd sign on a machine in Tesco? It reads 'Turn Your Coins Into Cash'.

I haven't used it. Call me old-fashioned, but I'd always thought coins *were* cash.

Peter Gasson

AS ALWAYS—A VERY WARM WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS: DON'T FORGET TO SAY 'HELLO' IF YOU SEE AN UNFAMILIAR FACE AT THE NEXT MEETING !



We welcome one new full member: Zosia Bedford.

We are also very happy to announce the names of the newly instituted Associate Members -

Peter and Linda Barratt, Carol Blyth, Anne Burrows, George Clark, Theresa Creamer, Marjorie Cullen, Barry Hough, Gordon Leese, Angela Rainbow, Margaret Robertson, Brian and Molly Sanderson,

ARE WE BEING FOLLOWED BY THE T.V. CAMERAS ?

Do ever get that feeling you are being followed or maybe get the impression you have been there before? Sometimes we find this applies to our Study Trips. In the last few



Avebury Manor taken on our visit in May 2011

weeks we have seen on television 'The Manor Reborn' featuring 500 year old Avebury Manor which we saw last May on our walking tour. The Manor, owned by the National Trust, has been restored by the BBC in the programme with Penelope Keith and Paul Martin; each room featuring a different period in the history of the house. We wonder at the skill of the craftsmen hand printing wallpaper in China or weaving silk in a water-powered mill in Hampshire.

Then there was a wonderful programme, 'Illuminations, The Private Lives of Mediaeval Kings' with Dr Janina Ramirez taking us into Henry's Hampton Court to share the

love notes between the King and Anne Boleyn. Nina told us how Bruges was the city where some of the greatest illuminated books were made and Mediaeval Art merged with the Renaissance. Only last October we walked through that gilded arch of the Town Hall and saw the views from the bridge, where we had our photo taken.



U3A members on the bridge at Bruges during the long week-end in Brussels; October 2011

Then there was James May in his programme 'Manlab' making paper at the 'Paper Trail' on the very evening after our visit; and as I write, Dr Jonathon Foyle is 'Climbing Great Buildings' and swinging on ropes between the Liver Birds in Liverpool. (That is where we took the ferry across the Mersey on our Chester study tour).



On more than one occasion during the last year the Television Vans which carry equipment for the 'Antiques Road Show' have been arriving as we leave, or even leaving as we arrive at various sites. And hands up those who saw Michael Portillo taking the tram up the Great Orme just as we did. Isn't television wonderful!

Ron Meadowcroft

We all took the tramway up the Great Orme as part of our Chester Study Visit in May 2011

THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT OF COFFEE.....



Maxine Robinson, a member of the Readers' Circle, has asked us to thank everyone from U3A who supported her coffee morning in aid of Research into Prostate Cancer. She raised the grand total of £544 –with books to spare.

BRITISH PRIME MINISTERS

The History Group recently held a Lunch (post Christmas or early Spring?) at the Harding Restaurant at Aylesbury College, and this is the quiz that Member Ann Dwyer set to amuse them between courses,. Do you recognise all of them ?

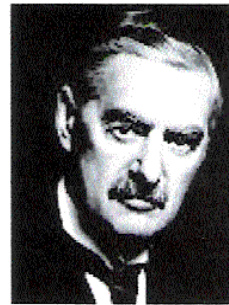
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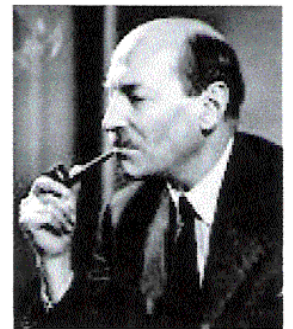
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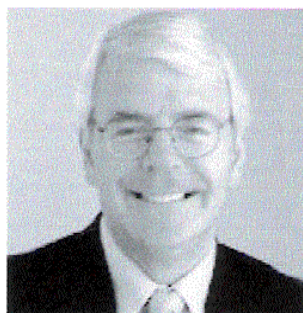
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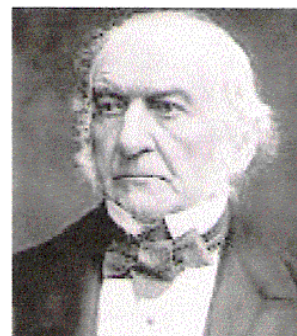
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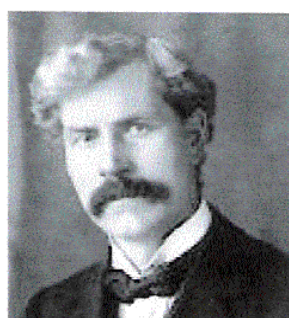
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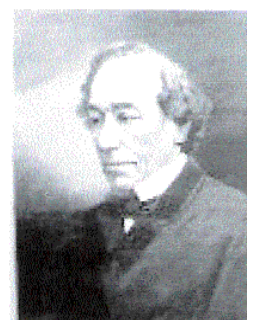
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THE OUT AND ABOUT GROUP

The Out and About Group is now in its second successful year with a membership of 25. They have enjoyed a varied programme and outings have included a visit to an auction house, a walk around the Secret Gardens of Aylesbury and visits to Craft Fairs at various venues. They joined a coach trip to the Hampton Court Flower Show and to a Blossom Trail although all the blossom had gone as it had come out early. Nevertheless we had an enjoyable day. We have walked alongside the Thames, had lunch on the way and caught a boat back.

One of the actions that has developed is that new friendships have been made and, as well as the Group outings, individuals have got together in twos and threes to do things they would not have done alone.

This is one of the aims of our Group and it seems to be working well.

Two of us with similar interests went on a Symphony Cruise to Norway along with other musical passengers and were able to join a choir on board. We then had the privilege of singing in the Cathedral at Stavanger. We later travelled to Cuba - another exciting experience. Others have also joined together to go on holiday. Smaller groups have gone to the seaside for the day, or met up for morning coffee or afternoon tea.



Jean Coussens with the Pearly King and Queen of Crystal Palace

In November Ann Wales and I went to a Remembrance Service at St. Paul's, Covent Garden - the actors' church with plaques around the wall celebrating the lives of many famous names: Boris Karloff, Margaret Rutherford, Ivor Novello and Charlie Chaplin among them. We met up with the Pearly Kings and Queens and enjoyed our conversations. I was particularly pleased to meet with the Pearly King and Queen of Crystal Palace, as one of my sons and his sons are dedicated followers of the football team. Nearer Christmas four of us visited Covent Garden Market buying some interesting presents. We were also able to look at the Christmas Lights and window displays in Oxford Street. Two more members went off to see the Northern Lights in February—so all in all you can see we are quite an enterprising and lively group.

Jean Coussens



Mary Rogers presents the trophy and prizes to Elinor Paterson and Tony Simmons—the winners of The Dorrance Trophy in the Summer Pairs Competition at the Bowls Club Annual Dinner held at the Foxhills Bowls Club.

Photo by Dot Simmons

British Prime Ministers: The Answers

- 1) Robert Walpole 2) Gordon Brown 3) Neville Chamberlain 4) Winston Churchill
- 5) Lloyd George 6) Harold Macmillan 7) Margaret Thatcher 8) Clement Attlee
- 9) Edward Heath 10) John Major 11) William Gladstone 12) Robert Peel
- 13) Herbert Asquith 14) Stanley Baldwin 15) Ramsay MacDonald 16) Benjamin Disraeli

HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES



NEW JOINT HALL MANAGERS:

We were delighted to be able to announce at the January Meeting that David Merrison and Roger Walker have volunteered to take on joint Hall Manager duties. This involves setting out the tables, all the sound equipment which helps to make our speakers audible to all, and any special requirements specified by the main Guest Speaker. A very hearty thank you to them!

WATERSIDE THEATRE VISITS:

We were equally delighted that Pauline Colliver and Jenny Merrison are taking on the roles of Theatre Visit arrangers. We hope that you will let them know what you would like to see. We should be making good use of our new theatre.

YOUR DIRECTORY AND HANDBOOK:

We hope that by now most of you will have collected copies of the new handbook. The new format will enable us to keep your news more up to date, as we can change a page at a time should a new interest group be formed or a new Group Leader take over an existing group. It would be very expensive to post these out to members, so please contact the Membership Secretary, Diane Richardson, to arrange to collect yours if you haven't been able to collect it at a monthly meeting. It should contain all that you need to know about our organisation, its Officers and Interest Groups. (And, don't forget, should you for any reason decide to leave us, we would like to have your copy returned for the next new member.)

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP:

It has been decided to offer potential new members the opportunity of taking out 'Associate Membership' to encourage them to stay with us until a vacancy arises. This membership would enable them to join in any activity or group which has room for them, but debars them from attending the monthly meeting. (As you will have noticed, the hall is usually full to capacity on those occasions, and we cannot find space for any additions, other than the occasional approved guest for whom permission to attend has been sought.) Membership Secretary Diane Richardson will be able to give full details to any potential new members.

REVISED WEB SITE ADDRESS:

Please note that we have a slightly different web address: www.avu3a.org.uk/wordpress. We hope that you can find time to look at it regularly. We often receive complimentary comments from other U3As, and are asked to give advice to their web masters. It attracts a lot of favourable attention, and receives 'hits' from all over this country and overseas.

FOR SALE AND WANTED:

In response to a request from some members we now have a space on the notice board at the monthly meeting where you can advertise any items you need or want to dispose of. The rules are simple! You can display a postcard sized notice—dated please so that we can make sure that things are not hanging around for ever. The responsibility for the items is entirely a matter for the seller and prospective buyer. U3A cannot make any guarantees. Our friends across the pond have a saying 'One man's trash is another man's treasure'. So start treasure hunting!

SPEAKERS CORNER



11th April - "Images of Nature part 1" - Peter Preece

Peter Preece is a wildlife photographer. He and his wife are both retired and spend a lot of time travelling around the U.K. and Europe photographing as he says, "everything he can find from insects to animals".



This presentation covers mainly birds that Peter has photographed in his garden or in hides in the woods owned by the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.

Peter has promised to explain about the food he uses to entice different species of birds, the hides he builds and the types of camera equipment he has.

9th May - "Caravaggio" - Susanne Carr

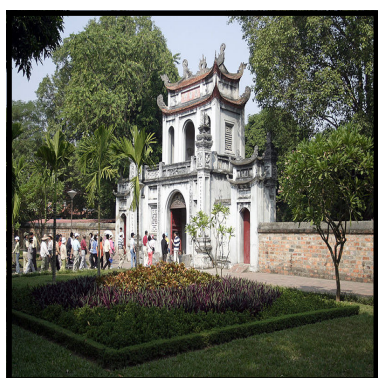
Susanne Carr is an eminent Art Historian who lectures at Oxford University. She specialises in Western European Art from 1200 to 1960. After a successful talk in 2010 on Vermeer, Susanne is returning to give us an insight into the paintings of Caravaggio (1571-1610).

Supper at Emmaus: oil on canvas 1601
National Gallery, London.



13th June - "Vietnam and Cambodia" - Cynthia Fowler

This month we have our very own Cynthia back to share some more of her travels. Many of you will remember that, last year, she stood in for a speaker who was stuck in traffic. Then she gave us an insight into Russia. I am sure her talk on Vietnam and Cambodia will be just as fascinating.



Main gate of the Temple of Literature, Hanoi, Vietnam

GROUP TABLES tell you what is going on in all our groups and are placed at the back of the main hall.
April: Looking at Photos & Design and Technology: May Gardening and Art: June Current Affairs 2 & Readers' Circle 2: July: Genealogy & History



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WEDNESDAY 21ST MARCH: A Coffee Morning at The Broad Leys pub on the Wendover Road to which you are all invited. It is particularly hoped that those of you who have recently joined will be able to come along and meet some of the more longstanding members to find out what U3A is all about. Coffee costs £1.75 and we meet at 10.30 a.m.

WEDNESDAY 21ST MARCH: Day visit to St. Albans with a guided tour of the city and a private tour of the Abbey (please note the change of date from the 22nd).

TUESDAY 3RD APRIL: The Gentle Walks Group tackle the Marsworth Reservoirs and Canal. They will meet at the Bluebell Tea Room in time to start the walk at 11.15 a.m. There is a charge for parking at this site. Transport can usually be shared for those with no cars. At all of these walks lunch is booked at a local hostelry for those who wish to stay although some of you may need to get away early.

TUESDAY 10TH APRIL: The Garden Group visit Preston Bisset Nursery near Buckingham for a talk and demonstration on hanging baskets. Those who have been before will know that there is always a wonderful stock of plants for sale.

12TH—16TH APRIL: 49 members will be visiting the Netherlands and attending the Floriade garden festival which happens every ten years.

SUNDAY 15TH APRIL: A Gentle Walk at Waddesdon Manor. This is one of our special week-end walks to enjoy the Spring flowers which are usually spectacular. For the last two years we have enjoyed wonderful weather! We meet in front of the Manor by the booking kiosk. (Entry free for National Trust Members.)

TUESDAY 1ST MAY: Join us for a gentle walk around the lovely bluebells in Wendover Woods—although the seasons are not always reliable. Park and meet at the central services near the café. As there is a parking charge it is best to share cars where possible. The walk will start as always at 11.15.

WEDNESDAY 16TH MAY: Another coffee morning which provides an opportunity for new, associate and long term members to meet together. 10.30a.m. at the Broad Leys P.H., Wendover Road £1.75.

FRIDAY 18TH MAY: Group walking tour to Bourton-on-the-Water. Once again we are arranging a visit which will be enjoyed by walkers and non-walkers. The 'Gentle Walkers' will be able to stroll along the footpaths and explore this picturesque village, while the 'Local Walks Group' will take a more energetic walk in the surrounding countryside. There is also plenty to do for those who do not wish to walk far at all!

TUESDAY 5TH JUNE: The Gentle Walks Group will return to College Lake hopefully in good weather. The wild flower reserve should be at its best, and of course there are always plenty of birds to observe. There is ample parking space although a donation is requested. Walk begins at 11.15 a.m.

21ST—26TH SEPTEMBER: Study tour to Kent.

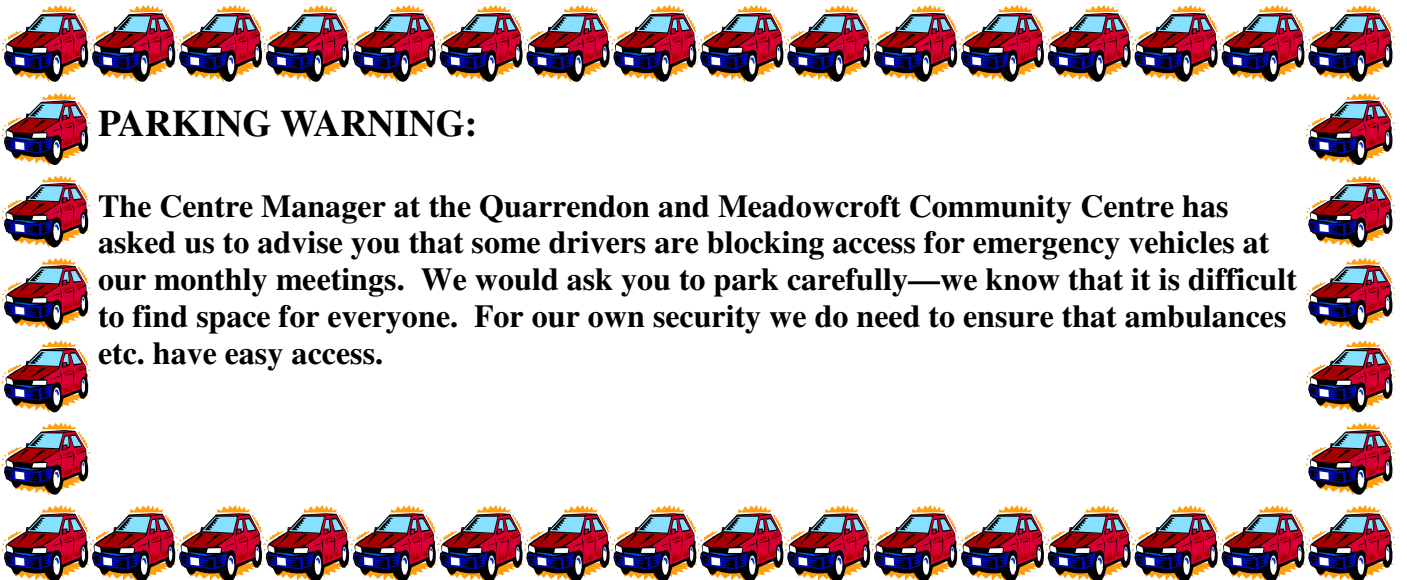
(Please note that the Lichfield day visit in July has been cancelled).



The Gentle Walkers braved a snowy February day to enjoy a walk in the Rothschild grounds at Eythrope— followed by a welcome lunch at The Bottle and Glass.

Photo taken by the only in-trepid male walker—

Tony Poth



PARKING WARNING:

The Centre Manager at the Quarrendon and Meadowcroft Community Centre has asked us to advise you that some drivers are blocking access for emergency vehicles at our monthly meetings. We would ask you to park carefully—we know that it is difficult to find space for everyone. For our own security we do need to ensure that ambulances etc. have easy access.

Deadline for copy for the Summer edition is **May 9th** (although it is always helpful to have material earlier) to be sent to:

Shirley Stokes, 9 Windsor Road, Aylesbury HP21 7JG: Tel: 01296 392726
or e mail: treveris9@btinternet.com

Once again many thanks to all of you who have contributed: to Alan Robinson for proof reading and to Bob Davies who has volunteered to sharpen up the photographs. Our indefatigable Secretary Peter Gasson does all the other hard work—seeing that the printing orders and bills are dealt with on time, delivering the copy and collecting the large boxes containing the finished newsletters.