

# AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Issue No. 65

December 2012

## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN:

One of the younger members of my family recently asked me whether I had ever gone on line on my computer and "googled" my own name. Of course I hadn't. Why would anyone have any information about me, since I had never knowingly entered any? Well, you live and learn. Under my own name I have found minutes from the County Council quoting a presentation on the role of the University of the Third Age. There were extracts from past issues of this newsletter where my name had been mentioned. There was even a copy of an email I had sent out on our own computer users' website asking for help when something had gone wrong. That happens quite frequently as I cannot claim to be an expert; but how embarrassing to see that my pleas for help (resulting from my own inadequacies) have gone around the world! Equally interesting was the information about all the other Shirley Stokes's. Some had been involved in the world of education just as I had, but there were also those who had worked in the fields of psychology or real estate – even one who was cited as a 'first responder for Twiggs County Fire and Rescue Service'. Lives were laid bare, sometimes through their own entries on Twitter or Facebook, but others because articles had appeared in local newspapers or in court records.

I now know a great deal about a certain Shirley Stokes who was the wife of a Mayor of an American City. I am aware of her dress sense, and what a wonderful mother she was, and how calm and capable in all situations. Then she was divorced in 1974 after 16 years of marriage and went on to 'secretly' wed a Pharmacist. (Although how secret that was since it appeared in the local paper I am not sure). Sadly her second husband was wounded and subsequently died as the result of a robbery. The latest news is that they are trying to find her as she was left \$106,000 in his will! If you ever run out of a library book to read, all life is there on the web.

I recently saw that a photo of me has appeared on my Facebook site, although I hadn't put it there, and had only set it up to see photographs posted by my young relatives travelling the world. But seriously, isn't it frightening that our every utterance seems to be recorded somewhere? I even found a site that would tell the world if you lived alone – burglars must be delighted. As I have said before life seemed to be much simpler and safer in the pre-computer age. Despite the recent excitement about newspaper 'hacking' scandals our lives already seem to be an open book !

*Signed by the real Aylesbury Shirley Stokes*



## A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS

We hope that you enjoy the following two contributions:

I have heard a bird sing in the dark of December  
A magical thing and sweet to remember  
We are nearer to Spring than we were in September  
Oliver Herford (1863—1935) U.S. artist and writer

And on a slightly less serious note!

What would have happened if the three Wise Men had been three Wise Women ?



They would have asked for directions



Arrived on time



Helped to deliver the baby



Cleaned the stable



Brought practical gifts



And left a casserole

## FLYING THE U3A FLAG !

On our recent study visit to Kent members continued to advertise U3A. In Rochester Cathedral a guide impressed by Ron's 'exam sheet' turned out to be the group leader of Medway U3A's Social History Group. She was so impressed by our diligence in searching out answers that she is going to produce a similar quiz sheet for her own group. In Leeds Castle a room guide, again giving us some required facts, asked all about U3A and said "I am retiring in two years time and I think it is a wonderful idea for keeping one's mind active. I shall join." (We gave her information about Medway, and the address of the national website.). On yet another visit a gentleman official also asked us all about U3A, so maybe we have encouraged another potential recruit.



## OUR SCOTTISH ADVENTURE:

I awoke one dreary Sunday morning filled with fear and trepidation. I was about to embark on a coach trip to the Edinburgh Tattoo having been press ganged into it by Greig Sneddon and his country dancing cohorts. I was pleasantly surprised to find that modern coaches are vastly superior to the charabancs of my youth. Thanks to our driver, Gordon, we were making good time until we suddenly left the motorway to go on a scenic tour of the surrounding countryside in order to find a pub called "The Lord Nelson". Upon our arrival we were greeted by a few plates of curly wedgies and very little else and the queue for the ladies left a few of our group with worried looks on their faces. Fortunately everybody was in good humour, which was maintained throughout the trip.

That night we stopped in Carlisle, a city once belonging to Scotland but now in England after we took it back when they weren't looking! So far the weather had ranged from miserable to more miserable, so our hopes for fine weather in Scotland looked pretty bleak. When we arrived in Glasgow the following morning the rain was worse and Greig's accent was getting stronger. In George Square in the centre of the city, a pipe and drum competition was in progress and I'm told that I



was on the local news that lunchtime, (no autographs please!) We took an open top bus city tour and enjoyed a sail down the Clyde before we went to our hotel. After our first dinner Greig had organised a Scot-



Scottish Night at The Lorne Hotel, Glasgow and Greig Sneddon welcoming the Piper who traditionally piped in the Haggis: both photos from Roger Fox

tish country dancing evening and even managed to get me onto the dance floor! The following day we drove to Edinburgh and after a guided tour around the city, were taken to the Royal Yacht Britannia to spend the afternoon. The weather had really improved by now and I gazed out of the yacht's restaurant windows across the clear blue waters drinking my Earl Grey, munching my cake, and trying to imagine the Queen standing in line waiting for a full English. Then it was back to Edinburgh to attend the tattoo on a fine evening. The theme was the Queen's Diamond Jubilee combined with a history of Scottish industry. The climax was a firework display to the tune of "Diamonds Are Forever". After our first day travelling the weather had improved and it was pleasantly warm.

Following a hectic Tuesday, Wednesday was taken at a more leisurely pace with a boat trip on Loch Lomond, a lunch break in nearby Callander, (where some members were delighted



Is Jen Merrison reacting to a threat from Greig Sneddon? Taken on the delightful Loch Lomond cruise by Roger Fox

to see an advert for new members for the local U3A) and then back to Glasgow for a special Scottish evening laid on by the hotel. The haggis was duly piped in and the appropriate tot drunk, followed by a dance demonstration. The evening really set the seal on what I think all



Our photographer John Harwood snapped Sheila Syrratt and Lynne Dawson who seem to have captured a Canadian piper in George Square in Glasgow.

of the party would say was a very successful trip. We made a brief stop at Gretna Green on the way home where Greig went down on one knee, but fortunately two of us rescued him in time. Roger Fox had organised a first rate visit and even provided a series of quizzes to keep us entertained on our longer journeys. Greig acted as his interpreter (although his Scottish family who joined us one evening told us that he had become so English that they couldn't always understand him !) Our warmest thanks to Roger for all his hard work; who knows, now that he has organised one successful visit he might try another. We all hope so, although I personally could do with a few less bagpipes!

*John Harwood*

### **U3A Leads the Way.**

Have you noticed that as soon as we heard the talk on 'ear-worms' all of the media took up the issue? Radio, television and the press all had articles about these pesky creatures. Congratulations to Jeni Davies for keeping Aylesbury Vale ahead of the field.



### **S.O.S. TRADESMEN WANTED:**

For many years I have kept a list of Tradesmen (under the heading 'Neighbours' on page 5 of your pink file) who have been employed satisfactorily by other U3A members. Neither they, nor U3A are recommending them to you, but simply giving you a name or names which you might like to follow up. Although this service has been well used, the list is now getting rather out of date. If you have satisfactorily used the services of a plumber, carpenter, fencing contractor, decorator or any other specialist recently why not let me know their name and contact details so that I may pass them on to others who are still searching.



*Muriel Beech*



## A LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE PARALYMPIC GAMES 2012

Once again this year I was selected to be a referee for the Weight Lifting events at the Paralympic Games. This time I was on home soil. A total of 30 referees were invited from all parts of the world except the USA and Canada. My games uniform fitted for once so no alterations needed (although one poor referee found that all that fitted was his trilby hat!) They did run out of ties, socks and sports and casual wear. The Olympic Village was like a huge housing estate with blocks of anywhere between 3 and 15 stories. The dining hall alone was approx. 5 football pitches in size, and you could get English, American, Caribbean, Chinese or Indian food and, of course, McDonalds. The competition was a great success with world and paralympic records falling at all sessions.



Tony Simmons had a busy summer acting as a referee for Weight Lifting at the Paralympic Games. These photos show him outside the Excel arena where the event took place; a good lift at 250 kgs. and just one of the enormous dining halls.

Competition sessions began at 12 noon, 1500 hours and 1800 – three sessions a day for 6 days with a total of 198 lifts. The best day for me was the last when an Iranian lifter was expected to lift over 300 kgs. Alas it was not to be; he lifted it but it was judged a ‘no lift’. A total of 300 kgs. has never been recorded in the world yet – perhaps next time. My only unfavourable comment was that the transport from the village to the Excel centre, our venue, was poor. Every day we travelled in on the Docklands Light Railway train with all the other crowds. Our venue was 100% full (6,000 people) on two occasions, and 80% for the remainder. Needless to say it was very noisy!

*Tony Simmons*

### LUCKY NUMBER 5:

Have you realised that this month December has 5 Saturdays, 5 Sundays and 5 Mondays?



### WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE NEXT?

Our fairly new Theatre Visits organiser, Pauline Colliver, would like your suggestions about what theatre performances to book. So far many of us have enjoyed visiting the new Waterside Theatre. But if you have any other suggestions, Pauline would love to hear from you.



## AYLESBURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL BURSARY:

Anne Wales and I attended the Senior Prize Giving evening in September to see our Bursary being awarded. Our AVU3A prize for Community Involvement went this year to the team of Blair Davies, Ben Drake, Greg Duncan, James Gamble, Sam George, Simon Loose and Luke Starr. They have been working with the charity Young People's Cancer Trust and as I previously reported had decided to donate their award to that cause for which they had already raised £2,000. The evening included a performance by the AGS Jazz Band – excellent but rather noisy if you were in the front two rows! The Prizes were presented by Old Boy, now Captain, Robert Last, a Training Captain with British Airways, and a former Fast Jet RAF Pilot who had flown Jaguars and been a member of the Red Arrows. (He had also been in the crew of the 'Golden' plane which brought the Olympic Flame into this country.) His address to the boys was admirably short or, as he put it, 'not a long haul flight just a short hop'. He was stressing the importance of the many important attributes needed in any career, and which can't be taught at school – people skills. So he advised the boys to work hard at their studies, but not forget the wider community and the importance of relationships.

We have received a letter from the Headmaster which says 'Thank you for taking the time to join us last evening to see your prize being awarded, it was wonderful to have you with us.' We were certainly made to feel welcome and, as Anne said, good to see that many teenagers work hard and achieve a great deal while still enjoying a host of leisure activities both within the school and outside it.

*Shirley Stokes*



Two photos. from Tony Poth of perhaps the last fine 'Gentle Walk' on Coombe Hill (followed by a very welcome pub lunch



Ron Adams sent us some lovely photographs taken on another Gentle Walk. Two of our members face an uphill slog on the road back from Eythrope Park. There were other beautiful foliage photos which need to be seen in colour to do them justice, so please look on the website.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Re the Continuing Story of the Buckinghamshire Swan: I was very interested in Sheila Thompson's article on the Buckinghamshire Swan and her note that "The mustered men of Buckingham are gone under the Swan – the badge of that old town." In May 2007 I was privileged to attend the unveiling of a memorial plaque to men of the First Buckinghamshire Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry who in May 1940 defended the town of Hazebrouk in Northern France. The following is an extract taken from the dedication service.

*Bronze was chosen for the plaque as Buckinghamshire lacks a suitable characteristic stone and by happy chance bronze was also the material from which the Bucks battalion cap badge was manufactured and which in turn, gave it the nickname 'The Swans'. The seemingly miraculous evacuation of most of the British Expeditionary Force and many French troops from Dunkirk captured the public's imagination even as it happened. But it is surprising – to put it mildly – that the sacrifice of many infantry battalions and supporting troops to keep open the escape route to the beaches should have received so little recognition until as late as 2006. The delaying actions fought by single British infantry battalions, many of them Territorials such as the Buckinghamshire Battalion, against German armoured divisions, deserves to be remembered by following generations as a supreme example of British heroism in the defence of freedom. So this memorial is the 'Swans' swansong, to be sung continuously from the wall of a school, whose building replaced the orphanage that was the Battalion's*

*Headquarters until  
destroyed in the final hours  
of the defence of Hazebrouk  
in 1940.*



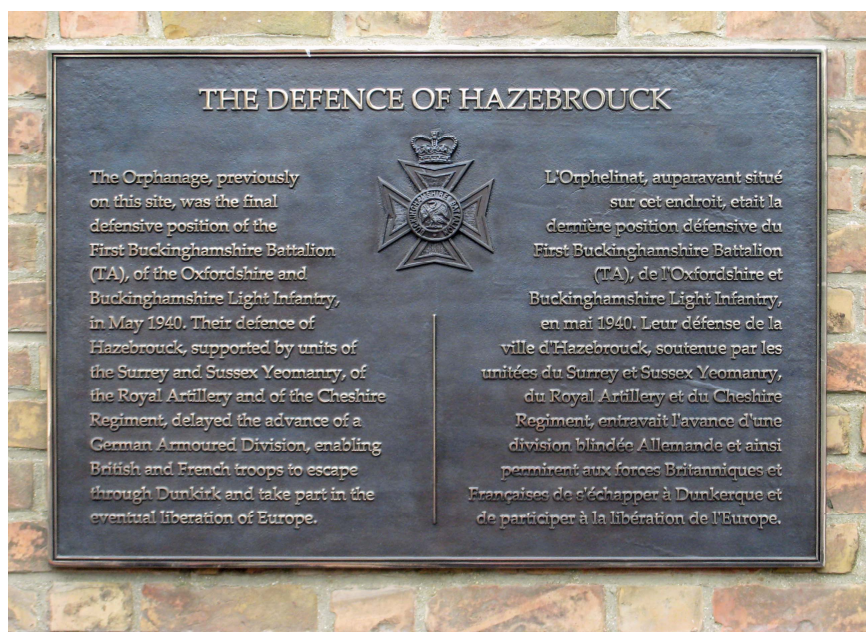
Members of the battalion that managed to escape through Dunkirk took part in the D Day landings in June 1944, the 1st Battalion as beach groups and in the siege of Caen. The 2nd Battalion re-rolled as part of the 1st Airborne Division landing in 6 Horsa gliders to capture Pegasus Bridge. You can see a photo of the plaque overleaf.

*Ron Meadowcroft*

I was interested in the article by Yvonne Noble re: the 1984 Paralympics. I too was involved, as I worked in the Occupational Therapy (OT) Department at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. In the 50's and 60's all medals for the Paralympics were made by the OT patients; first cut from a brass rod then turned on a lathe and later engraved with names and wording. Purses to contain the medals were hand stitched by bed patients, and the press studs were also made. The Archery hooks and elbow protectors for high lesion patients were made by the OT therapists as were the gloves for table tennis. Competitors made their own leather arrow quivers. Each competing nation received a banner again sewn and couched by the OT staff after work. We also helped with the actual games. Many pieces of equipment and other 'gadgets' were made individually in those days within the Department by patients and staff as they were not commercially produced.

*Jan Hann*





## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU IN 2013

The highlight of our U3A year is not Wimbledon, Ascot or Henley but the Annual Quiz and Supper. Tickets are like gold dust and sell out as quickly as they become available. In October our Quiz Masters, Paul Fincken and Jane Hobson once again produced a fiendish set of questions with Rounds entitled: Recent News; Aylesbury; The Last Three; British Sitcoms; Music with Coastal Connections; Eggheads-History; Jobs; Trades and Professions; and Places in Literature. The worthy



Winning Team was Jean and Peter Ashton; Pauline and Alan Brialey; Gay and Ian Hancock and Libby and Eric Rose. The rest of us trailed along behind their genius! Our thanks as always to Paul and Jane who tell us that they would like a rest next year, so this is your chance to take on the reins of power and volunteer to be our 2013 Quiz Setters. Many thanks also to Jill Bartlett who made the initial arrangements and turned up on the night complete with arm in a sling; to Chris and Jean and all those who stepped in to help with the arrangements; to the ladies in the kitchen dispensing the fish and chips and desserts not to mention tea and coffee before the quiz. Special thanks to Dot and Tony Simmons. Where there is a hot water urn, there you will find Dot also. An unsung heroine.

Correction: Like all good newspapers we like to publish apologies for our errors. In Sheila Thompson's article in the last issue on the significance of the County Coat of Arms we misprinted a word 'the bird ..with its raised wings and a crown round its neck from which hangs a chain is said to be 'ducal gorged and crowned'. It should have read '**ducally** gorged and crowned'. Our apologies to Sheila.



### **A VERY WARM WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS:**

Peter Baker, Roger and Jackie Browell, Molly Butler, Judy Clarke, Kay Coleman, Rita Cromar, Barbara Fry, Denise Harman, Janet Johnson, Adam Lawson, Norma Moore, Lorraine Perry, Chris and Paul Rosentall, Wendy Sackett, Mike Samuel, Phil and Heather Scoltock, Jan Stiegeler, Pamela Withers. John Dix, Carole Hogg, Gill Hopkins, Dan McGregor, Nikki Murray, Marjorie Pilkington, and Pauline Williams.



And whether you are a new, associate or long standing member don't forget to visit our website for up-to-date news of events at [www.avu3a.org.uk/wordpress](http://www.avu3a.org.uk/wordpress).

### **A FEW WORDS FROM OUR GROUP CO-ORDINATOR:**

At our September meeting I announced the results of the questionnaire which many of you kindly took the time to complete. We wanted your thoughts on our U3A; why you liked your membership; what could be done to improve it; what your interests were and what new groups you would welcome. The answer which jumped out at me was that you all said that you liked the friendliness; you liked the company and learning something new and enjoyed getting out of the house. All those who answered belonged to one group, commonly three, and a few hardy souls found time for 6!

Apart from one or two suggestions about things over which we have no control (parking, too small a hall etc.) you were largely satisfied with what the U3A and the committee does for the membership. On the question of people's interests and what new groups they would like to see many of you said that you were quite satisfied with what was on offer although there were some suggestions for new groups that do not yet exist. I am trying some different approaches to see if we can gather together people with similar interests without the need for a group leader. We are also planning to hold a special informal meeting early in the new year for new and associate members so that they can get to know each other and give us their views on our organisation and to answer any questions that may already have arisen.

*Anne Wales*  
*Group Co-ordinator*



### **TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE:**

Brian Robson sent us this photo of the clock on The Leas at Folkestone and asks if you can see what is wrong with it?

Answer on page 14

## OUR SEPTEMBER STUDY VISIT TO KENT.

Do you like plenty of variety, to see and learn a lot and enjoy good company? Our visit to Kent provided all of this. It spanned 1800 years of history (with just a few gaps) and gave us the chance to explore some of the many delights of the county. On the way to our hotel in Folkestone, we called in at Rochester. There is far too much to see in one day, but the town centre is quite compact and we were able to visit a few of the main sights. The cathedral is England's second oldest and because it is relatively small, it has an almost cosy feel. It boasts some glorious Norman architecture as well as the first fresco (painted in 2004) to be created in an English cathedral for 800 years. A stone's throw away stands the impressive keep of the castle, one of the best preserved examples of Norman architecture in



Ron Adams took these photographs on the (very wet) Kent holiday. First we took refuge in and enjoyed a guided tour of Canterbury Cathedral; then it was a dash through the rain for Gay and Ian Hancock.

England. Climbing its many steps and walking through its narrow passages, we had a real sense of what it must have been like to live there. We also learned what happened to 40 unfortunate pigs (you'll need to ask Ron about that one!) Some of us paid a visit to the Six Poor Travellers' House. Unlike its occupants in Tudor times, however, we received neither board nor "entertainment", nor 4 pence to spend, and left empty handed!

Our only sunny day was spent at spectacular Leeds castle, enjoying the beautiful grounds, watching a falconry display and roaming through the castle itself. As a Norman stronghold, later developed into a royal residence and finally evolving into a private home, the castle gave us an insight into many periods of history.

The next day took us to the lovely Sissinghurst garden. Each of its series of garden rooms created by hedges and walls has its own individual colour and design. From there we went on to a very different landscape at Dungeness. We all wondered what sort of person it takes to survive on this windswept, rain-lashed shingle outpost in the shadow of a gloomy power station. From there we rode the delightful miniature steam railway to Hythe, marvelling at the tiny engines and stations on the way. We enjoyed an unexpected visit to Walmer castle. Torrential showers limited our time in the formal gardens, but there was much to see in the castle, which has been the official residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports since the 18th century. Memorabilia from Wellington, Churchill and the Queen Mother are on

show. Later that day, Margate provided a real contrast. The new Turner gallery is worth a visit (when there is an exhibition on!), but what we saw of the High Street left some of us feeling very grateful for what Aylesbury has to offer!



A sunny view of Leeds Castle taken by Ron Adams

Our last morning found us at Lullingstone Roman villa. It is among the most outstanding Roman villas to survive in Britain and we saw rare wall paintings and spectacular mosaics. We were also able to watch a short film on the discovery and development of the excavations surrounded by an enthusiastic if a little noisy group of primary school children.

Finally, it was on to Chartwell, Churchill's much loved family home, which remains much as it was when he lived there. The house has an instantly homely feel and the beautiful gardens provided us with spectacular views over the Weald of Kent. Thanks to the Meadowcroft quiz, which made us read everything and ask far too many questions of long-suffering guides, we ended the trip much wiser than we started it, even if somewhat windswept and bedraggled. Thank you, Ron and Rosemary, for another thoroughly enjoyable holiday (but please try a bit harder with the weather next time!)

*Gay Hancock*

## HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES:

### **Psychology Group has a new leader:**

After many years of leading this group, Ken Evans has decided to stand down. Our thanks are due to him for all his hard work. We are pleased to welcome Dr. Gavin Ewan who has volunteered to replace Ken and keep up the good work. We know that the group members are looking forward to his contribution.



### **Have Your Photograph Taken !**

Ron Adams has kindly agreed to take some photos of all committee members and group leaders so that we can have an 'identification' board at our monthly meetings. If you haven't been snapped yet, please see Ron at the next monthly meeting. Say Cheese!

### **Day Outings and Study Visits:**

Don't forget that after several years of excellent service, the Meadowcrofts are giving up this task. We are looking for a replacement. You could just volunteer to take on one single outing to a site which interests you so please think about it. Responsibility for the annual study visit could also be a separate task. We have all enjoyed our days out and would miss them should no one volunteer to replace Ron and Rosemary.

**Email Addresses:** We would ask you all to let the Membership Secretary have up-to-date email addresses and remember to inform her when you change your provider.

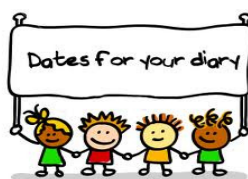
**Your Pink Directory:** We would be grateful if all group leaders would ensure that their entry in the Directory is up-to-date –particularly if there has been a change of leader.





In September, members of the Wildlife and Nature Group spent a week-end on the South Coast visiting the Arundel Wetlands Centre and bird watching at Farlington Marshes, Pagham and Hayling Island under the expert guidance of John Wyatt. We are not sure how far out our past Chairman had paddled.

Photos from Peter Ashton



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY:** Calling all new and associate members to join us for morning coffee and biscuits at The Broad Leys Pub on the Wendover Road at 10.30 a.m. It gives us the opportunity to find out more about U3A and all its activities. Cost £1.75 per head. Please come and join us.

**TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY:** Roger Kemp will be giving a talk on 'Butterflies' at the Garden Group meeting at 3.05 p.m. at Meadowcroft Community Centre.

**TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> MARCH:** The Garden Group Speaker will be Jill Carey 'Roadside Plants from Australia to Alaska'.

**WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> MARCH:** The second of our 2013 coffee mornings, which are held every 2 months. Details as above.

**THURSDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MARCH:** *Goodnight Mr Tom* at the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre; matinee performance – Tickets £18.50

**WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> MAY:** The next Coffee Morning for members old and new and committee members too (your chance to tell us how to do things better!) Details as for January.

**THURSDAY 16<sup>th</sup> MAY:** ; *Birds of a Feather* also at the Waterside Theatre – Matinee performance – £15. (With the original cast, Pauline Quirk, Linda Robson and Lesley Joseph.)

**14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> JUNE:** The Northumberland Study Visit will take place from 14 – 20th June 2013. Unfortunately it could be the last one to be organised by the Meadowcrofts. Why not take part (it is always enjoyable) to see whether you might take it on for 2014?

**Another Study Visit in 2013:** Keep your eyes open for news of a proposed visit to Ireland. Details later

## YOUR NEW COMMITTEE FOR 2012—13

After the elections at the Annual General Meeting, the constitution of your new committee is as follows:

Chairman:	Shirley Stokes
Vice-Chairman	Geoff Young
Secretary:	Peter Gasson
Treasurer:	Bob Colliver
Group Coordinator:	Anne Wales
Hall Manager:	Dave Merrison
Membership:	Diane Richardson
Social Activities:	Maxine Robinson
Speakers:	Jeni Davies

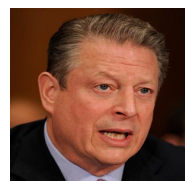
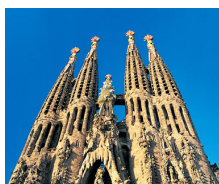


1 Vacancy – a volunteer welcome

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Our Quiz Masters Jane and Paul thought that you might like a 'taster' of this years quiz questions. (One from each Round)

- 1 What is the name of NASA's rover which is sending back pictures of the surface of Mars?
- 2 The Roald Dahl Children's Gallery at the Bucks County Museum has graphics and illustrations created by which artist?
- 3 Who were the last three leaders of the Conservative Party?
- 4 Clue to a British sitcom: *Smaller and smaller revolutions*.
- 5 What is the name of the theme music to Desert Island Discs?
- 6 How many spikes are there on the crown of the Statue of Liberty – 7, 9, or 11?
- 7 Which John Le Carre novel was made into a film in 2005 starring Ralph Fiennes and Rachel Weisz?
- 8 What London street did Monica Ali write about in 2003?
9. Name the city:      10. Name the year      11. He celebrated his 64th Birthday in 2012



**Quiz Answers:** 1. Curiosity 2. Quentin Blake 3. Ian Duncan Smith; Michael Howard; David Cameron 4. Ever Decreasing Circles 5. By the Sleepy Lagoon 6. 7. The Con-stant Gardener 8. Brick Lane 9. Barcelona 10. 1965 11. Al Gore.

**The Wrong Clock ?** There is nothing wrong with the clock shown on page 9 - or rather there would not have been **anything** wrong if you lived in France shortly after the French revolution. On 5th October 1793, the recently formed Republic of France abandoned the Gregorian calendar in favour of an entirely new model, "*The French Republican Calendar*",



which became the official calendar of France for 13 years. Each day was made up of 10 hours; each hour was divided into 100 minutes and each minute into 100 seconds. Artist Ruth Ewan designed and installed 10 clocks in Folkestone to illustrate the concept as part of Folkestone's Arts Triennial and the Cultural Olympiad. The picture opposite shows the more familiar format which appears on the rear face of the page 9 clock. And if you hear that the EU in Brussels is proposing to metricate our Calendar, remind them that it has been tried before and it didn't last long!!



### **BILL GIBBINGS HELPING THE POLICE WITH THEIR ENQUIRIES !**

You may recognise Bill Gibbings, leader of London Walks, helping a plain clothes detective in his enquiries. To the utter surprise of the group it had been infiltrated by a gang of pick pockets when travelling on the Central Line on the way to start the September walk. The majority of the group were prevented from leaving the train by two big, scruffy men. Little did we realise

that these men had been tracking the pickpockets who had congregated near the exit so as to make their 'pick' when the train jolted to a stop. Fortunately nothing had been taken from any of the group members. The photo shows the three suspects facing the wall with their hands outstretched. A lovely blonde girl in our midst suddenly appeared to be helping with the arrests; she turned out to be a lovely blonde policewoman. By the time we raced to the top of the escalator there were vehicles with sirens, blue flashing lights and policemen ready to help in the arrests. The walkers that day may never forget hearing, "You're nicked, you're nicked, you're nicked. Cuff 'em". We were pleased that the scruffy looking gents were there doing their jobs so covertly.

*Peter Harding*

### **CALLING ALL CAMPERS !**

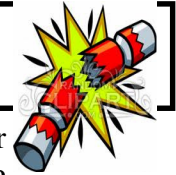
The new Camping and Caravanning group has held the first meeting, with 20 members signed up, including those with tents, caravans and motorhomes. We are keen to explore different areas, using everyone's expertise and experience in choosing sites and exploring the local places of interest. Exchanging information and camping tips will help us all make the most of our trips away... there is even some talk of travelling to Le Continent! If anyone would like to join the group, our next planning meeting is on March 6th for the coming season.

Contact details from Lynne Dawson.





**A CHRISTMAS CRACKER OF SOME OF THE ITEMS YOU HAVE SENT IN DURING THE PAST YEAR.**



**Progress?** At this time in our history we have taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider motorways but narrower view points. We spend more but have less; we buy more but enjoy less. We have bigger houses but smaller families; more conveniences but less time. We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge but less judgement; more experts yet more problems; more medicines but worse health.

**Some Call Centre Conversations:**

RAC Motoring Services: Caller : Does your European Breakdown Policy cover me when I am travelling in Australia ? Operator: Does the policy name give you a clue?

Caller asking about legal requirements while motoring in Europe: If I register my car in France, and then take it to England, do I have to change the steering wheel to the other side of the car?

One Caller asked for the number of a knitwear company in Woven. Operator: Woven – Are you sure? Caller: Yes, that is what it says on the label – Woven in Scotland.

On another occasion a man making heavy breathing sounds from a phone box told the worried operator “I haven't got a pen so I'm steaming up the window to write the number on.

Tech. Support: I need you to right click on the Open Desktop. Customer: O.K. Tech. Support: Did you get a pop-up menu? Customer “No”. Tech. Support. O.K. Right click again. Do you see a pop-up menu? Customer “No”. Tech. Support: O.K. Sir, Can you tell me what you have done up until this point? Customer. Sure. You told me to write 'click' and I wrote 'click'.

**Some Schoolboy Howlers:**

Q1. In which battle did Napoleon die? Answer. His last battle

Q2. Where was the Declaration of Independence signed? Answer. At the bottom of the page.

Q3. What is the main reason for divorce? Answer. Marriage

Q4. How could you lift an elephant with one hand? Answer. You would never find an elephant that only has one hand.

Q5. The Potomac River flows in which State? Answer. Liquid.

**And finally – one to make you groan!**

A teddy bear who is working on a building site goes off for his tea break and when he returns he notices that his pick has been stolen. The bear is very angry and reports the theft to the foreman. The foreman grins at the bear and says “Oh, I forgot to tell you, today's the day the teddy bears have their pick nicked.

(Don't blame me – you sent them in!)

## **SPEAKERS CORNER**

### **9th January - Gordon Rogers – ‘Churchill's Toyshop’**

Some of you, I know, have been reading “Churchill's Toyshop” by Stuart MacRae but for those of you who haven't ..... It all started in 1939 when a Military Intelligence Research department was set up to develop weapons for ‘irregular warfare’. Following an air raid on London it was relocated to a large country house called ‘The Firs’ in Whitchurch.

Gordon writes “My connection with the ‘Toyshop’ (The Firs) is that, as a boy, I attended there and came away with a couple of Blacker Bombards strapped to the cycle crossbar and a box of L-Delay fuses in the pannier. My interest was rekindled recently when the new owner, Chris Mann, invited anyone with wartime knowledge of the premises to contact him. Twelve of us did so...” Since then Gordon has met with the sons of the men in charge and also the relations of some of the boffins. He has followed up fresh leads on the Internet and finally produced a Powerpoint presentation which has enabled him to give several talks at the house.

First Bletchley Park and now Churchill's Toyshop. This is going to be such a fascinating talk.



### **13th February – Dr. Tony Maisey – “Ageing – How Do We Age and Why?”**

Dr. Tony Maisey is well known to many of you both as a practising doctor and as a speaker. This month he will be talking about “Ageing”. He not only informs, but also entertains us with his amusing anecdotes and lastly he hopes to give us something to go away and think about. I am sure he will do that.

### **13th March – John Woolley – “The Great Train Robbery”**

We have all heard about the Great Train Robbery when, in 1963, the Glasgow to London mail train was held up and £2.6m was stolen (now estimated at the equivalent of over £26 million). PC John Woolley was sent to Leatherslade farm where the gang met up before and after the robbery, to check on 'suspicious goings on'. John will tell us about the investigation, the trial and how he met the main players in this most famous of robberies.

*Jeni Davies. Speakers Secretary*

Last date for copy for the Spring Newsletter will be February 13th 2013 so please send any items you may like to share with us to Shirley Stokes on treveris9@btinternet.com or by post to 9 Windsor Road, Aylesbury HP21 7JG. Telephone 01296 392726 But don't wait for the closing date; the Editor likes to receive copy as early as possible so that she knows what spaces are left to be filled!

Thanks are due to our Secretary Peter Gasson for help with the ordering and printing and to Alan Robinson for proof reading and particularly to Alan and his son Phillip for helping to get the new computer up and running! And of course to all of you who send in articles and photographs.