

AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Issue No. 68

September 2013

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

My weekend newspaper recently ran several pages of advice on choosing an 'App' – short for an 'application' for those of you who, like me, have not indulged. They boasted that these are pieces of software (for use on your smartphone) that will 'change your life for ever'. Apparently you can do things like booking train tickets, or playing scrabble while on the move. When I see people out and about with earphones glued on, or texting away on their mobiles, I often think of that classic poem by W.H. Davies: 'What is this life if full of care we have no time to stand and stare?' Am I alone in worrying about how those often young minds will develop? Are they too self absorbed to observe other people's behaviour, to register changes in their existing environment or to be able to laugh at the many absurdities that many of us see everyday? How do they learn about human relationships and human behaviour? Just by reading about them? It has been said that chatting, surfing and texting plunges users into a little world of their own, making them lose their awareness of others. (Did you know that Brick Lane in London, well known to our London Walking Group, has become the country's first 'safe text' street with lamp-posts padded to protect distracted mobile phone users? And no, I didn't read that on April 1st!) A major road safety report detailed the rise in the number of school children killed or injured while using mobile phones on their way to school.

I was not convinced by reading in the same article details of the 'useful' apps you might like to buy. Apparently the most popular ones include a game called 'Angry Birds' – something to do with wicked green pigs and stolen birds' eggs. As an encouragement it advises the reader that not only have more than a billion users downloaded this app, but that the Prime Minister is also obsessed by it. I must in fairness admit that one or two sound more useful like booking your holiday, or getting a weather forecast. But why would you want to do any of those things while you are on the move? The writer probably feels that time must on no account be wasted, but how unimaginative if you have to access another's man-made programme in order to fill in your time.

Have they never sat on a London bus and watched historic buildings passing by, or looked out of a train window to admire the British countryside streaming past? How can you learn about your own country if you never look at it? I suggest that in U3A we continue to watch and learn for ourselves.

Shirley Stokes

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

READERS' CIRCLE 2

Four members went to the Thames Valley Network Book Readers' Workshop at Wokingham in the summer travelling with Jean Ashton – our lovely driver. Despite the weather being a bit unkind we had a very enjoyable day there and attended three of the numerous workshops in total – each of us picking the one that appealed to us. Workshops were in the morning after a couple of talks and then lunch which we all enjoyed. After lunch we were invited to swap



The Poet and Novelist Helen Dunmore was one of the participants at the study day.



Tea and coffee seems to figure largely in the activities of Readers' Circle 1 seen here at their usual monthly meeting in a member's home. Photo taken by Peter Ashton

three books we had bought with us for three which had been handed in by other people there. Then another trio of talks ending with a goodie bag of various magazines and a couple of new books we were allowed to take home. There was a suggestion box also, so we did give a few hints which we hoped would help them on the next Workshop as this was their first. The day ended with tea/coffee and biscuits and a chance to chat with U3A members from other areas. All in all a very enjoyable day for us all.

Brenda Daniel

LONDON WALKS

The latest London Walk visited Soho and Covent Garden and the group was photographed by Tony Poth.



They said that they didn't realise that they were standing outside a Massage Parlour! Below left, the group in Soho and below right, enchanted by China Town.



A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Hello

For those of you who are looking for stimulating things for your group to do why not consider this? There is a huge range of material available through the **library service**. Held in the basement of the main library in Aylesbury, items can be borrowed on an ordinary library card. If you have an organisational library card you would be able to borrow items on a more long term basis. Ask at the library about how to get such a card. You can order the items and get them sent to a library nearer to you within Buckinghamshire, so that you can pick them up from there. Allow a week for this to happen if you want the items for a particular date.

The material is a range of reminiscence tools. **It includes games, photographs of famous faces from the past, a suitcase of old objects and some mock-up old newspapers.** All of these items are designed to encourage chat about past times, stimulate memories and encourage shared exchange of past experiences. In my experience they encourage lively discussion and laughter. To access the items either: go to the library

on Walton Street in Aylesbury and ask them if you can look at the reminiscence items in the basement.



Or go to this site: <https://buckinghamshire.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/OPAC/BSEARCH> Once there select the 'subject' tab and type 'Reminiscence' into the search box. You will then be presented with the full list of what is available.

If you want to find out more contact the library service: library@buckscc.gov.uk 0845 2303232.

They really are worth a try!

With best wishes
Lynne Maddocks

Community Engagement Officer
(Voluntary sector & older people)
Aylesbury Vale District Council

OUR PRIZE-WINNER AT THE GRANGE SCHOOL We give an annual bursary to the Grange School as a 'thank you' for our use of the premises. This year's bursary was awarded for service to the community by a student. I attended the annual prize-giving evening at the school just before the end of the summer term and was very pleased to have a chance to met the prize-winner, Year 10 student Charlotte Byrne. She received the award for fund-raising and community service to two charities: the Scoliosis Association and the Ronald McDonald House Charity, which provides accommodation for families visiting children in hospital. Charlotte's fund-raising initiatives included cake sales, raffles, and 'mufti days', on which (by arrangement with the school) students pay a contribution to come to school out of uniform. It was a pleasure to see our bursary used to recognise such good work.

Peter Gasson

PSYCHOLOGY OUTDOORS!

In May, almost halfway through this year, it seemed timely for our group to get out and about. We were then becoming familiar with topics and terminology which match the school AS and A2 psychology curriculum. This is leading up to a proposed joint workshop with one of the local schools, fulfilling one of the U3A's aims to forge links between generations. To this end we studied the sixth form students' subjects 'Minority and Majority Influence'. Minority Influence is more easily understood as 'One strong person'. We watched the classic 1957 black and white film '12 Angry Men', starring Henry Fonda blistering with idealism. He persuasively alters the perceptions and prejudices of his colleagues on a court case murder trial jury.

Majority Influence translates better as 'Obedience to Authority' and so we found ourselves on a trip to the former USAF base at Upper Heyford, a ghost-base to the presence of 17,000 American military and their bombers in the alliance of the Cold War and later in support of Operation Desert Storm. We tried to imagine where aircrew's own moral and ethical values would prevail, if even allowed to surface in the conscious mind, in an escalation to the brink of a nuclear conflict, and the pressures on each individual to conform to the dictates of the Chief of Staff in a closed military group.



The inner High Security compound:
Both photos by David Cook



Check-in before take-off!

Toughness is a quality of our members too, and it was no surprise that Eileen Goudie came on the tour despite a recent bicycle accident, her arm immobilised. Eight of our group of twelve enjoyed the day despite a cool breeze over the Oxfordshire landscape. The tour guide Don was a retired senior managing civilian craftsman. He had multi-tasked in civil, mechanical and electrical engineering roles, effectively keeping the base running with his small but skilled team. He showed us a video film, from the earliest air force days through to the arrival of the Americans and up to the

present day. We drove to various stops (the hammerhead runway is almost two miles long) and he shared his anecdotes as we looked at jet engine test areas, bomb stores and the command centre. The base which included a school and a hospital was decommissioned in 1994. Paradoxically the emptiness of the 1,200 acre site made it fairly bristle with authority, fitting our subject of study nicely.

Monthly topics earlier this year were: Attachment and the work of John Bowlby; The Role of Pets, with speaker Myrna Holgate from Pets as Therapy; How we make Decisions, including group input with dilemmas from our own lives; and a Light-hearted look at Love. The best format for our meetings is a short presentation to give the background of each topic followed by an open forum with the opportunity to bring a personal story. After all, between us we have a group memory bank of about 800 years! We follow a code of confidentiality which encourages such accounts. This in turn makes the group more cohesive. Our aim is to steer away from being too academic and simply see the application of psychology to real life. For example 'minority influence' has created some great changes in history and 'majority influence' helps us to understand the factors leading to excesses in war or in locked institutions.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

WINE APPRECIATION GROUP 2. The Outing



Our stalwart wine tasters.
Photo from Meryll Coe

The discussion was long and detailed. The venue was decided on and further discussion set a date that would ensure everyone could go and we would have the best conditions for the outing. Wednesday 15th May 2013 was the coldest and windiest it could possibly be, so much so that even the owners of Frithsden Vineyard rang to see if we still wanted to visit. U3A members and especially those in Wine Group 2 are made of very stern stuff and wrapped up against the cold we sallied forth for our tour.

Yes, it was cold and the vineyard is on a hill so the wind was ferocious, but the welcome from owners Natalie and Simon Tooley made up for it. The tour was informative focusing on the grapes needed to produce wine in this country, how they are grown, pruned and harvested to produce the wine. Simon explained some of the problems faced with our weather and had the photos to illustrate them. We saw where the wine was produced and learnt how to remove the sediment from sparkling wines, a neat trick of turning the bottle upside down and then freezing the neck, then followed the serious part of the tour – the tasting. The wines produced here are mainly white with one rosé, all very drinkable. Included in our tour was one of the best ploughman's lunches ever, made up of local produce and washed down with a glass of wine. All in all well worth the effort and cold noses for what was a great outing.

The vineyard is open most weekends, has a shop and puts on events throughout the year. So if you're looking for something different do give them a visit. Whatever the weather the welcome is warm.

Meryll Coe

ARE YOU AN UP-TO-DATE TEXTER?

Mary Rogers has sent us these helpful shortcuts for our age group! ATD (At the Doctors); BFF (Best friend's funeral); BTW (Bring the wheelchair); BYOT (Bring your own teeth); FWIW (Forgot where I was); WAITT (Who am I talking to?).

We hope that you find them useful.



CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP 2:

We meet on alternate Tuesday afternoons from 2.45 to 4.15pm at Aylesbury Grammar School, during term time. We enjoy lively discussions on varied topics arising in the news including ethical, moral and other issues. Our members bring along written or word processed topics which they wish to raise at each meeting and hand them to the Chairperson of the day. We each take it in turns to be Chairperson. Whatever the topics, by the end of each meeting, we usually all end up smiling and looking forward to the next get-together. We resumed our fortnightly meetings on Tuesday 10th September 2013 at 2.45pm at Aylesbury Grammar School. We are hoping to expand our group membership and would welcome new members or visitors, so if you're interested in joining us or just coming along to see what a meeting is like, please contact me.

Betty Sharp
Group Leader.



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO OUR MANY NEW MEMBERS

Joyce & Robert Clarke, Alan Green, Clare Hawes, Lillian Langford, Gerry Lewis, Gill & Richard Moore, Jan Paver, Brian & Valerie Piggott, George Reeley, Brenda & Ken Roberson, Bill Stoker, Dorothy Stoker, Richard Watson.



WELCOME TO OUR WEBSITE!

I hope that all of you who can are using our website – if you are not others certainly are. Since this time last year it has had 7,538 visits or hits. The largest number were from the UK (5132), USA (762), India (830), Philippines (161), Canada (70) and Australia (66). But there were also visits from about 96 other countries – everywhere from Qatar, through Mongolia to Afghanistan. A warning perhaps to be careful about what we write on-line! Of course we don't know why they looked or what they were interested in, or even if they hit the site by accident! Somebody must be finding it interesting. We are becoming an international celebrity. Our grateful thanks to Mike Bean who researched these statistics and to Ron Meadowcroft But they are looking for help, so if you are knowledgeable about computers.....

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



WEDNESDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER: Why not join other associate, new and existing members at The Broad Leys Public House on Wendover Road (just past the Police Station) at 10.30 a.m. for a tea or coffee and biscuits? You can discuss group activities, get to know fellow members and find out more information about Aylesbury Vale U3A. The Cost is £1.75.

THURSDAY 10TH OCTOBER: Hurry to buy your tickets for our always-sold-out Quiz! It will start at 3p.m. with a cup of tea before the quiz followed by a fish and chip supper. Licensed bar available. Tickets £7. Teams of 6 in advance please to avoid a scramble for seats.

TUESDAY 15TH OCTOBER: Garden Group whole day visit to Sheffield Park (National Trust) to see the autumnal colours. Landscaped by Capability Brown. Tea Room with light snacks. Cost £20.50; NT members £12. Leaving at 8.45 a.m. Non-Garden Group members welcome if spare seats available.

THURSDAY 31ST OCTOBER: A matinee performance of 'Seven Brides for Seven Brothers' at The Waterside, 2.30 p.m. Tickets £23.50. Don't miss it if you want to be totally exhausted by the dance routines! See Pauline Colliver for tickets and further details.

WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER: Maxine Robinson invites you to our final coffee morning of 2013. Please come and join us at The Broad Leys (details as for September).

FRIDAY 22ND NOVEMBER: Another Waterside Matinee at 5.00p.m. 'Priscilla – Queen of the Desert'. All of the well priced U3A Group discount tickets have now been sold.

THURSDAY 12TH DECEMBER: The annual Christmas Lunch will be held at Aylesbury College. Details to be announced at the September meeting.

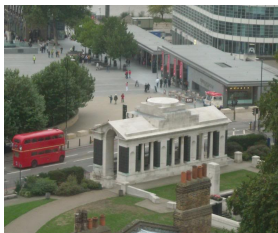
TUESDAY 17TH DECEMBER: 40 seats have been booked for The Mill at Sonning. Ticket price (theatre and supper) £45.50. As those of us who are devotees know, the food is splendid and the whole evening an unhurried pleasure. The play is 'Not Now Darling' by Ray Cooney and John Chapman.

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY 19TH/20TH DECEMBER: Why not give your grandchildren – or children of all ages – a special Christmas treat? The Pantomime at the Waterside this year is 'Sleeping Beauty' – 19th December at 2.30 and 20th December at 7.30. Ticket price £14.00.

MORE NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

LONDON WALKERS TAKE THE TRAIN

Henry VIII may have kept his hunting dogs on the land we now call the 'Isle of Dogs', but he could not have envisaged the fun we had on a cold, wet day last Spring. We were fortunate to be in the dry and warm for much of the time on varied train journeys. This 'walk' became an experience of many forms of rail transport in London, from conventional train into London: underground trains and the Dockland Light Railway to the new Overground Railway route: ten train journeys in total!!



The Merchant Seamen's War Memorial

You may wonder what sightseeing we did. We visited the Merchant Seamen's War Memorial at Tower Hill, then, taking the DLR to Island Gardens, we walked the short distance to the River Thames to have a superb view of Greenwich and the Cutty Sark on the opposite bank of the river whilst catching sight of the entrance to the pedestrian tunnel that crosses under the river at this point. After passing through the unique Mudchute City Farm we experienced how unnerving it still felt to stand next to a carefully conserved World War II gun amidst associated bunkers and sandbags. We recovered as we gradually made our way through the stunning modern developments in such places as Millwall Inner Docks, West India Docks, Canary Wharf and Cabot Square. If this gun or the remaining cranes and the now

redundant metal structures of a busy waterfront area could speak, what tales would they have to tell! But, as we witnessed, it is now an area of impressive modern architecture, evolving transport links contributing substantially to an attractive, vibrant business world.

Thanks to our leaders Bill Gibbings and Ray Halsey for organising this fascinating journey that saluted the past whilst giving us the chance to admire current features of London in 2013.

Peter Harding



The above article, and these delightful photo-montages were sent to us by Peter Harding. They depict some of the 'train' walkers and a part of the Canary Wharf complex.

SPEAKERS CORNER

WEDNESDAY 9TH OCTOBER : RAY ORTH – THE WENDOVER ARM OF THE GRAND UNION CANAL AND THE WORK OF THE WENDOVER ARM TRUST



Ray Orth is a leading force in the restoration work on the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal. He will give a brief history of the Wendover Arm, including when and why it was built, a little of the activities during its life and the reasons why it was eventually closed. He will then describe the work of the restoration being carried out by the Wendover Arm Trust.

Want to learn more ? – www.wendoverarmtrust.co.uk/

WEDNESDAY 13TH NOVEMBER: PAUL MAYHEW-ARCHER – 32 YEARS WITH BBC RADIO AND TELEVISION COMEDY

Paul has been a script editor, and producer of many popular programmes, including ‘I’m Sorry I Haven’t a Clue’. He has co-written several sitcoms including ‘The Vicar of Dibley’. He will (no doubt) have plenty of anecdotes to recount and will play clips from some of the programmes. He is doing the talk for the (financial) benefit of Comic Relief.

WEDNESDAY 11th DECEMBER: JEAN AND BOB PURDY

Our speakers (entertainers) are Jean and Bob Purdy who will give us an ‘Antiques Variety Show’ appropriate for the Christmas holiday time. Jean is a member of The Magic Circle and also a Past President of the Zodiac Magical Society. They will entertain us with magic and memories from the 40s and 50s. Do NOT bring antiques for valuation apart from ourselves!

Alan Robinson (Speakers Secretary)

HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES:

Information Tables: Please take time to look at the table at the back of the main hall which demonstrates the activities of some of our groups. In October we will share news of the Wildlife and Nature Watch and London Walks Groups and in November it will be the turn of Ten Pin Bowling and Wine Appreciation. There will be no display table in December – we need the space for our annual mince pie and wine festivities!



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 9TH OCTOBER

Don’t forget to wear your membership badge if you want to vote. We still need nominations for Chairman, Vice Chairman and one committee member.

NORTHERN HIGHLIGHTS: NORTHUMBERLAND & DURHAM:

If there is anything you need to know about the North East, just ask the members who went on the latest Meadowcroft Study Trip. Thanks to an extremely varied itinerary and a very comprehensive quiz, there is not much we don't know! Our lunch stop on the way up was at Nostell Priory in West Yorkshire. This Georgian mansion was built to show off the Winn family's wealth, using the best that money could buy, and houses one of the largest collections of Chippendale furniture in the world. From our excellent hotel in the heart of the countryside, we explored Northumberland and County Durham far and wide. We were impressed by the elegant buildings and contrasting bridges of Newcastle and by the modern Sage Gateshead Centre. On next to the rural peace of Cherryburn Cottage, the nineteenth century home of Thomas Bewick, Northumberland's greatest artist, engraver and naturalist. (Have you heard of Bewick's swan?) The next day it was back to Roman times with a visit to Vindolanda near Hadrian's Wall. Our guide vividly described the daily life of this Roman fort – not for the faint-hearted! They are unearthing new finds all the time. The Vindolanda writing tablets displayed in the museum are numbered amongst Britain's greatest treasures and are “postcards” from Roman Britain mentioning such topics as birthdays and underpants!

Wallington House near Morpeth is well worth a visit for its hall of huge pre-Raphaelite paintings, a beautiful hidden walled garden and its collection of dolls' houses. The largest is nearly nine feet long and has a lift, corridors and even a water system (with leaks to prove it!). Another day took us to the stunning Northumberland coast. At Bamburgh, the Grace Darling Museum told the story of this brave girl and the rescue of five people on a stormy day in 1838. Up at the castle we had a splendid view of the sweeping sands and surf (and of some of our group paddling!). The castle was originally Norman although much restored. Particularly striking is the King's Hall with its 300 tons of teak in the ceiling. From Bamburgh we crossed the causeway to Holy Island and the ruins of Lindisfarne priory, where Christianity came to the north and the famous Gospels were written.



Daphne Shearer took this photo of 'a local' on Lindisfarne

We spent a full day at Alnwick Castle. It is not hard to believe that the Duke of Northumberland is richer than the Queen when you see its sumptuous rooms and priceless furniture and paintings. They were erecting an upmarket marquee for the wedding of his daughter the day we visited. Sadly, we were not invited! Millions have been spent remodelling Alnwick Garden. It is set apart by its unusual water features and its Poison Garden. You would be surprised at some of the plants hidden behind its locked gates. Would you have expected to find the castor oil plant or aquilegia there? On our final day we visited Durham and its cathedral. Mostly Norman, its sheer grandeur is unsurpassed and no trip to the area is complete without it. After a quick 'hello' to the Angel of the North, we headed for Beamish, an open-air museum recreating life in the North East. The shops in the Victorian town displayed goods that seemed scarily similar to those from our childhood! We recoiled at the sight of the ferocious looking instruments in the dentist's surgery, bent ourselves double in the dark mine shaft, rode on old trams, buses and trains and saw how people lived in the Pit Village. This is a fascinating place and a 'must' for any return visit. Thanks again to Ron and Rosemary for all their hard work.



How to spot a hoax e-mail.

You will undoubtedly at some point receive an e-mail warning about the 'latest virus', or a call to support some 'just cause' by forwarding an e-mail, or even an emergency request to send money to someone. You may be offered the chance to become rich by helping someone move money from country to country. Sometimes hoax e-mails can appear to come from people you know. This can happen if they have had their e-mail hacked, or they may have fallen for a hoax themselves. Some hoax e-mails may contain viruses. Even if they are not technically dangerous to your PC, they can slow down your service by swamping the network. Never act on any e-mail you think is suspicious; and don't forward chain e-mails – they waste everyone's time.

Look out for any e-mail which:

- Asks you for money. It may seem obvious that you shouldn't send money anywhere in response to an e-mail. However, people still fall for this and it continues to be worthwhile for the hoaxers to send out requests.
- Asks you for personal details. If the e-mail appears to be from your bank, for example, it may ask you for your user name and password. A real bank would not ask you to provide personal information by e-mail.
- Is badly written – lots of CAPITALISATION, (IMPORTANT!!! or THIS IS NOT A JOKE!!!). Flagrant overuse of punctuation, and general bad grammar and spelling, is a giveaway.
- Asks you to tell all your friends, or forward to everyone in your e-mail contact list. It does this because someone wants to waste everyone else's time and you should not help it to do this. It is in no way trying to be a helpful public service.
- Claims to be 'not a hoax'. A hoax will typically contain details that try to convince you. There may be references to reputable companies such as Microsoft. Reputable companies would not send out such chain e-mails. Don't be fooled.
- Stresses a sense of urgency or predicts dire consequences. Hoax e-mails may appear to be from a friend asking for your help in an emergency. They may play on your sympathy, purport to be helping look for missing children, reporting animal cruelty, or asking for prayers for someone suffering a terminal illness.
- Has a history of circulation. Look for lots of >>> marks on the left hand side. This indicates an e-mail has been forwarded many times. Hoax e-mails can keep going for as long as someone continues to forward them on.

Received from Aylesbury Vale District Council's I.T. Department

CHANGES TO GROUP DETAILS:

The Recorder Group will no longer meet at the Salvation Army Hall but at a member's house, recommencing on 19th September. Ring Pat Kuryba for further details.

Ten Pin Bowling Group: From September there will be a new leader – John Hayward.



U3A Members admire the Font in Salisbury Cathedral. It was designed by William Pye, Britain's foremost water sculptor and completed in 2008. It was the Cathedral's first permanent font for over 150 years. It combines both stillness and movement, with living streams of water flowing from its four corners while a perfectly still smooth surface of water reflects the architecture around it. All the photos on this page from the Meadowcrofts.



Our fairly new Camping and Caravanning Group show that they know how to dine in style on the sea front at Swanage, Roger, Lynn, Greig and Ron ignore the rain and Roger Fox and Gavin Ewan cope with their own catering at a Corfe Castle camp site!

Last date for copy for the December Newsletter will be November 13th 2013 (the same date as our normal monthly meeting) 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 especial thanks to all of you who send me articles and photographs. Please don't forget me when you are arranging your next outing or have a particularly interesting speaker at your group meetings.

A reminder that our website address is: www.avu3a.org.uk/wordpress/ where you can get your messages and information out faster than waiting for the next meeting.