

AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Issue No. 69

December 2013

A GREETING FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This is the time of year when we tend to wish each other, and any passing tradesman or shop assistant, a 'Very Happy Christmas'. If you are a member of our German or French language groups you might prefer 'Fröhliche Weihnachten' or 'Joyeux Noel'. On the other hand the Welsh among us like me or Diane Richardson might say 'Nadolig Llawen'. I wonder how often we really think about what we are saying. Just like 'Good Morning' it has become such a common phrase that we probably no longer stop to think of the very real wish behind those simple words. For many people this is a special and magical time of year, although our perceptions of it have undoubtedly changed during our lifetimes. Do you still look back fondly to the time (now many years ago) when we couldn't wait for it to come, and every day started with 'Is it here yet?' Then later when many of you were parents yourselves there was still the excitement seen through your own children's eyes. Now as Grandparents there is perhaps all the fun without some of the hard work of preparation.

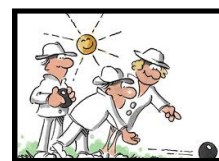
But for many people Christmas is a very bleak time of year. Recent research estimated that some 250,000 elderly people are alone and lonely, and the relentless pressure to be jolly must make it all seem far worse. We may in our own security think of them as killjoys, but don't forget that there are many very good reasons for their reactions. They may be experiencing bad health, bereavement, family members may be miles away or even overseas, and too many these days are experiencing real financial pressures. For those people living alone and with no close friends or family, the two or three days of other people's celebrations, when the streets tend to be empty, and there are not even many shops open to give the illusion of company, must seem to stretch interminably. It is said that 11% of over 70s have never spoken to their neighbours and a further 33% have only spoken once a month.

In that epitome of a Christmas story, 'A Christmas Carol', Charles Dickens wrote: 'I have always thought of Christmas time when it has come round as a good time; a kind, forgiving charitable time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers...' So while we celebrate, let us really think of the meaning behind our glibly expressed 'Happy Christmas'. I wish all of you, whatever your circumstances, a truly Happy Christmas with at least some of these essentials – time, love, the ability to give to others, and peace and companionship.

Shirley Stokes

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

THE BOWLS GROUP:

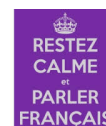


Once again we have enjoyed our Bowling throughout what has been a wonderful summer. We played our annual match against Aylesbury Town Bowls Club on a very hot day and once again we lost despite a huge win by Jo March, Tony Simmons and Alex Paterson on their rink. I think the more competitive bowlers from the Town are beginning to appreciate that the relaxed style of the U3A can be great fun and though we do try to beat them we don't get too despondent when we can't. The Mixed Pairs winners this year were Kath Barnett and Peter Woodman and the Scutt trophy, which is a singles competition, was won by Margaret Friend, congratulations to them all. The season has now ended until late April 2014.

After last years Bowls holiday, four of our members had won a place to play in the Champion of Champions for a prize of £3,000 which took place in October at Warners in Hayling Island. Alex and Elinor Paterson with Brian and Bronwen Saunders were the talented four but a further 12 of us decided that this was a wonderful opportunity to grab a late break while at the same time showing our support for them. Alas the opposition was too strong for our team on the day but it has given us all something to strive for next year when we will be in the preliminaries at Bembridge. Nevertheless it had been a relaxing five days with good company, excellent food and plenty of entertainment but the biggest bonus was warm sunny days. Now let's hope the weather will be kind to us again next February.

Mary Rogers

LET'S TALK FRENCH:



The French Group is one of our longest running groups beginning soon after the formation of Aylesbury Vale U3A. It started with both a beginners' and a more advanced section, but after the beginners had progressed and the advanced group closed it was re-named 'Let's Talk French'. The group meets in the home of leader Pat Skeggs, and on alternate Wednesdays a small corner of Buckinghamshire becomes French. The 'Je ne sais quoi' factor that makes it fun owes a lot to Pat and husband Bill (who makes the tea) who have enjoyed many happy holidays in France and came to love the country and its people. (This proves that they both possess 'people skills' as not every Frenchman has forgiven us for Waterloo!) Other members own property in France, and their experiences are an invaluable source of anecdotes and up-to-date information. We like to share what is quirky and fun about French life.

In the course of our afternoons we may read from French magazines about the wine trade, sport, folklore and festivals as well as the lives of the rich and famous. Often there is a DVD relating to our topic. Sometimes we watch a full length film in French, bien sûr. For homework we usually prepare a small talk which may involve research with a dictionary at hand. At other times we discuss food and restaurants and are happy to converse in French at that level without too much prompting. Occasionally we have a quiz (end of term) or a 'jeu de mots' (excellent prizes). Enfin, when next we notice a French family looking lost in London we may have the confidence to say 'Bonjour' before pointing them in the right direction!

Pat Quirke

AN IRISH IDYLL *by Phil Rance*

After an unusual start at Bedgrove, the Leprechauns did depart,
Roger pulled the stops out and everyone took heart.
Carefree ride to Holyhead including a leisurely lunch,
and a mill pond Irish Sea, kept us a merry bunch.
Dublin was a whistle-stop, but we managed a Guinness
Tour,
"Och, no problem laddie, cos we're going back for more."

On to Belfast and pubs, and some, and gardens botanic.
You'll never see anything like the expedition Titanic.
Down the Shanklin, up the Falls,
But Stormont really tops them all.
On to Harland and Wolff, the splendid Titanic show,
Back to The Crown post-dinner, watch that Guinness
flow.

On we pressed to Derry (add London) and its fine wall.
A hearty meal set us up, to heed Greig's dance guide call.
The Bushmills distillery, the whiskey we did sup,
And some had meals on plates, and tea from a mug not cup.
The Giant's Causeway rock formation is a site you must behold.
Then back to Great Western Hotel, and a swim that's warm not cold.



Lynne Dawson, Greig Sneddon
and Sheila Sylvester in front of
the Stormont Parliament Build-
ing
Photo taken by Roger Fox



Jean and Peter Woodman
at The Giants Causeway
Photo. By Gavin Ewan

Back south to Dublin, and Roy chose a scenic route.
Caring for all individuals, getting cases out the boot.
A coach tour of the city, from Liffey all around.
Then back to the Plaza. We're on known comfy ground.
A music, dance and feast evening with beautiful Irish girls.
Clap along with the music; watch their perfect twirls.

An early start, 'cos a ferry we must catch.
Pick up your case, check your room, before you drop the
latch.
The sun reflects on the water. The waves look kind of swell.
Roger sorts out the venues, and arranges the weather as well.

Into Holyhead, docked steady. We're just right with the tide.
Then back on Roy's magic coach for that gentle homeward ride.

Thanks to Roger from all the travel-
lers for all his hard work; he de-
served this Bushmills Whiskey!

Photo taken by Roger Murphy





A VERY WARM WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

Helen Amato, Jane Anderson, Helen Bavington, Jen and Mike Blount, Val Clayton, Sandra Cook, Bridget Grant, Gerry Lewis, Roger and Vivian Lord, Linda Page, Richard Paver, Val Tomlinson.



Tony Poth snapped our walkers on the Marsworth Canal towpath



Peter Ashton noted with trepidation this notice which greeted our U3A visitors to Portsmouth. 'Had they heard that we were coming?' he wondered.

Transport Group

The Transport Group continues its lively programme of activities, and has sent in news of a recent visit when several members (plus a guest) enjoyed a tour of Booker Aviation at Wycombe Air Park on September 2nd. Peter Ashton wrote: 'We had a very enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide who later divulged that he was a fireman at the airfield. We were shown the workings of a small helicopter, had a tour of the hangars including that of Personal Plane Services who, for many years, have been involved in restoring, or building replicas of, vintage aircraft. Several films have featured examples of their work. One of the planes receiving attention was a Spitfire and we were surprised to see a few very expensive vintage cars at the back of the hangar. Our tour ended with a visit to the control tower where the two young ladies on duty explained their work in keeping the numerous light aircraft, gliders and helicopters clear of one another within a two mile radius of Booker.'



Photographs from Peter Ashton



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

The Aylesbury Vale U3A Prize for Community Involvement:

As you were unable to attend last evening's ceremony, I am sending you a copy of the Programme for our Senior Prize Giving. As you will see, the young men who won the Prize are Charlie Henderson and Harmy Mat-tu.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your generosity in donating this prize.

Stephen Lehec
Head Master: Aylesbury Grammar School

and by e-mail

A note from Phil Joiner, Editor of the Wanstead and Woodford U3A saying how much he enjoys reading our newsletter and forwarding a copy of theirs. He notes that his Granddaughter has been telling all her school friends the 'Teddy Bears Pick Nick' joke which appeared last December, so thanks to whoever sent it in!



Another e-mail from Switzerland from Carole Sunderland, who with others hopes to set up a new retired persons' organisation in her country to be called 'Collegium 60 plus' saying how impressed they are by our website.

And from Avis Furness, Chairman, Reading U3A:

I would like to thank you very much, on behalf of our Town Study group, for your help in rescuing our visit to Aylesbury from complete disaster!! The contacts you made for us and the arrangements you made went perfectly, and we had a brilliant day.

N.B. Those thanks were due to Ken Evans who left the October meeting early to lead a guided walk, and to Keith Robinson, husband of our Social Secretary Maxine, who met the group for coffee at the King's Head on arrival.



GET A

FREE PASSPORT !

Did you know that British Nationals can now get a free passport if they were born before 2nd September 1929? Thanks to Hilary Carter for drawing this to our attention while walking along a rather muddy towpath at North Mars-ton.

Gilly Snookes sent us this photograph taken after a recent 'Gentle Walk' which illustrates that food is never far away from any U3A activity.



Don't forget the 'Card Lady'.

We like to remember any of our members who are ill, in hospital or could do with a bit of good cheer from their friends. Val Young undertakes the duty of sending Good Wishes to those members, but she can only do that if she knows about them. Please keep her informed about anyone you know who might like a friendly greeting, or a word of sympathy. (We can't send Birthday Greetings as that would be a full-time task with over 450 members!)

AFTER THE A.G.M.

There was a good attendance at the Annual Meeting in October, and we thought you might like to have confirmation of the membership of your new committee which will in due course be updated in your Pink Handbook/ File which I hope that you all keep handy.

Chairman:	Shirley Stokes
Vice Chairman:	Vacancy – applications welcome!
Secretary:	Peter Gasson
Treasurer:	Bob Colliver
Group Coordinator:	Hazel Burgess
Membership:	Diane Richardson
Social Activities:	Maxine Robinson
Speakers:	Alan Robinson
Outings Coordinator:	Gay Hancock
Hall Manager:	Dave Merrison



"Whew! That was close!
We almost decided something!"



Some weary London Walkers outside the Old Royal Exchange Building (left) and in Leadenhall Market. (Walker Tony Poth was taking the photos!)

THE WILDLIFE GROUP VISIT BELGIUM/NETHERLANDS

Eleven participants including friends, naturalist John Wyatt and his partner who proved to be excellent guides, travelled to Europe by car. We arrived in the rain – just like England, but the birds, mainly adult and young cormorants, were plentiful and largely ignored the weather. On the second day our first stop was a huge nature reserve of Het Zwin where the white storks were surprisingly obliging for the photographers amongst us. By now we had crossed into Holland and coffee was taken opposite one of the earliest post windmills – the whole structure rotates to catch the wind. The coast along the Westerschelde estuary is typical of this area with a tall dyke at the sea edge and behind were areas ideal for sea and water birds as there were many small lakes and water channels all sheltered from the strong winds blowing from the sea. Three types of geese have chosen this area to spend the winter away from their usual habitats. We also paid our respects at a memorial to the brave Canadian soldiers who had fallen in the fierce WW2 battle to liberate the city of Antwerp.



One of the birds that the group did see...

Photo Lois Robinson

We wanted to see how the people of Holland protected themselves from the sea and the risk of floods from the estuaries that form a large part of their SE coast. We had seen the tall dykes and noted that many were being raised even higher to counter the threat of global warming. We visited one of Holland's most famous engineering feats – the sluice dam across the Oosterschelde – at the visitor centre (on a man made island) we were shown a film of the story of its construction. A fine lunch set us up for our return journey via Brouwersdam where the gulls put on quite a show for us dropping shellfish onto the rocks to open up the shells – despite storm force winds and rain. This did not seem to deter the turnstones and oyster catchers from continuing to forage amongst the rocks. The final stop of the day saw us viewing spoonbills feeding before they flew further south for the winter.

Day four saw us visit Holland again visiting Grenspark De Zoom – KH, a large nature reserve consisting of heathland, woods, bog and lakes, shared between Belgium and Holland. One of the objectives of this visit was to see the black woodpecker – well, we can attest to its presence because we heard it, but it was otherwise elusive. However the weather was kind to us and we had a long walk in the sun in beautiful surroundings. The final day saw us on the road home via Diksmuide which is the site of a famous WW1 museum and memorial .



...and the one they missed!

All in all a varied and interesting trip with 51 species of wildlife being recorded together with doses of marine engineering and history! The company of AVU3A members was excellent as usual and served to offset anything the weather tried to throw at us.

Alan Robinson

MORE NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

Creative Writing Group:



We started writing together about February 2013. I had been looking and making enquiries about this topic and was surprised that we didn't already have one. I volunteered, and had details of five other members who were also interested passed to me by the group coordinator. Initially we met up at a few pubs. It was difficult to arrange times and days to suit other members' activities. We soon settled to meet in members' homes, which has been most successful. Information from the Third Age Trust and the helpful handbook for creative writing groups for U3A was so informative. Initially we wrote about when we were young, memories, truths, untruths, just to get members in the mindset of their childhood experiences, and to be able to put it down on paper. If someone is interested in words, writing, books, experiences, thoughts and very importantly imagination, they can channel this desire with like-minded people. Some of our group have not attempted writing since they were at school.

We have done many topics suggested in the handbook i.e. eavesdropping, the heirloom, downsizing, the lump under the bedclothes, or a celebration gone wrong. Our new one this month is 'the web' which is a bit challenging, but is good for the grey matter. One of our writers, Jenny Corton, said something very apt, I quote: 'From little acorns big oak trees grow.' That says it all doesn't it? We are a friendly open minded group and would be interested to assist, help or just greet possible new members. They would be most welcome.

Vivienne Makin

p.s. You may remember that the Chairman appealed for material to go into the District Council's exhibition to commemorate World War 1 next year. Jenny has written an excellent short story for us, and it is hoped that other groups may also produce suitable material so that U3A is well represented.

OUR ANNUAL QUIZ & SUPPER:

This year we had new quizmasters – Maxine and Keith Robinson and Anne Dwyer – and our grateful thanks go to them for another great evening. The questions were still as fiendish as ever ranging through Film and Television; Historic Buildings and their Cities and the Highway Code. (The latter was particularly complicated, and the team with the lowest score in this round were presented with up-to-date copies of the Highway Code to refresh their memories!)

This year's winning team were Jean and Peter Ashton, Gay and Ian Hancock and Libby and Eric Rose (not for the first time!). We have to pay tribute to their collective genius.



SPEAKERS' CORNER

WEDNESDAY 8TH JANUARY:

MAGISTRATES IN THE COMMUNITY □

Two representatives from the Magistrates' Association will explain the role of the magistrate and how they act as a link between government and magistracy



WEDNESDAY 12TH FEBRUARY:

WILL PHILLIPS: TREASURES OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY COLLECTION:

Will is a member of the Social History Collections Team from the Bucks County Museum, and is going to take us behind the scenes to show us the Museum store and illustrate how some of the exhibits demonstrate ways in which key aspects of life in Bucks have changed from Tudor times to the present day.

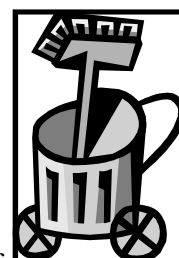
WEDNESDAY 12TH MARCH:

DAVID BUTLER, M.B.E. : CORDITE, CASTROL R AND THE 2012 OLYMPICS.

Following an explosion which left him severely disabled at the age of 11, David was determined to pursue life to the full. The challenges that he overcame led to an appearance at the age of 17 on the TV programme 'This is your Life' and he has filled his adult life with activities such as motor racing and rock climbing as well as a successful business career. His efforts to open up the world of sport to the disabled led to the award of an MBE in 2010.

HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES:

Signing in for meetings: We know that you all get 'captured' to sign in when you arrive for the monthly meeting, but don't forget that you need to sign out if you leave early. That will be vital in case of any emergency.



Our much lauded website: We get much praise for our website thanks to Mike Bean and Ron Meadowcroft, so please make sure that you look at it regularly! www.avu3a.org.uk

More about our Groups: Don't forget to look at the information tables at the back of the hall: in January, presented by the Psychology and Social History Groups, and in February, Bowls and Bridge, while March will feature Play Reading and Craft Groups. This is an opportunity to see what they are all doing and maybe decide whether you would like to join one of them.

Friendly Neighbours has been replaced by **Trusted Tradespeople**. If you have been pleased with a worker who has done a good job for you please contact me so that I can pass on your recommendation to other members who may need their services.



Sheila Sylvester

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TUESDAY 7TH JANUARY: The Gentle Walks Group visit one of their regular winter walks on paved roadways at the Eythrope Estate in Stone. Members meet at 11.00 am. and walk 'gently' for about an hour. Those who wish to may book a pub lunch afterwards. Please contact Veronica Stagnell on the phone number given in your pink handbook. These walks are very popular so an early request to join in is vital.



WEDNESDAY 15TH JANUARY All new, associate and existing members are invited to come to The Broad Leys pub on Wendover Road, Aylesbury (just past the Police Station) to enjoy tea/coffee and biscuits and talk about our U3A activities. We meet at 10.30a.m. and the cost at the time of printing is £1.75.

TUESDAY 4TH FEBRUARY: Another Gentle Walk, this time in Wendover Woods—details as for January.

TUESDAY 4TH MARCH: A walk around the Fishing Lake and Heron Path in Wendover. As always the group will meet at 11.00 a.m. but early confirmation with Veronica is essential as the numbers are getting too big for comfortable walking.

WEDNESDAY 19TH MARCH: Another of our Coffee Mornings for new, associate and existing members to meet at The Broad Leys pub on Wendover Road, Aylesbury (just past the Police Station) to enjoy tea/coffee and biscuits and talk about our U3A activities. We meet at 10.30a.m. and the cost at the time of printing is £1.75.

TUESDAY 15TH APRIL: Garden Group Talk on Roses, 3. 30 p.m. at Quarrendon and Meadowcroft Community Centre.

SUNDAY 18TH MAY: Garden Group coach visit to Exbury Gardens in Hampshire which belongs to a branch of the Rothschild Family. It is not far from Beaulieu and has its own steam railway. Full details later.



SUNDAY 22ND JUNE – SATURDAY 28TH June: This year's Study Visit is once again being organised by the Meadowcrofts, and judging by past experience is not to be missed. Home base will be in Torquay and the sights of Devon await.

SUNDAY 13TH JULY: Garden Group coach outing to visit Sissinghurst Garden in Kent designed by Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson, diplomat and author. Famous for its White Garden and Rose Garden and the maze. Full details later.





MARINE CORPS EXERCISES FOR THE OVER 60'S

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room, with a 5-lb potato bag in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides. Hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax. Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer. After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb potato bags then 50-lb and eventually, try lifting a 100-lb potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute.

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag.

SOME NEWSPAPER ADS:

Wedding Dress for Sale. Worn once by mistake. Call Stephanie.

For sale by owner. Complete set of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 45 volumes. Excellent condition, £200 or best offer. No longer needed, got married, wife knows everything.

AND FROM THE CHILDREN.....

Teacher: Why are you late? Student: Class started before I got here.

Teacher: John, why are you doing your maths multiplication on the floor? John: You told me to do it without using tables.

Teacher: Kevin, how do you spell 'crocodile'?

Kevin: K-R-O-K-O-D-I-A-L. Teacher: No, that's wrong. Kevin: Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

Teacher : Donald, what is the chemical formula for water? Donald: H I J K L M N O.

Teacher: What are you talking about? Donald: Yesterday you said it's H to O.

AND FROM OUR SENIOR CITIZENS:

I'm the life and soul of the party..... even if it lasts until 8 p.m.

I'm very good at opening childproof caps.... with a hammer.

I'm smiling all the time because I can't hear a thing you're saying.

I'm sure everything I can't find is in a safe secure place, somewhere.

I'm beginning to realize that aging is not for wimps.

FROM THE CHURCH NOTICE BOARD:

The Fasting and Prayer Conference includes meals.

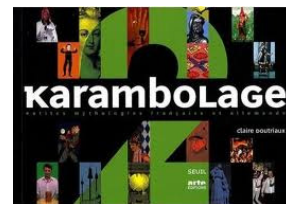
Irving Benson and Sarah Caster were married in our Church on Saturday – so ends a friendship which began in their school days.

Weight Watchers meet on Friday at 7 p.m. Please use the large double doors at the rear of the hall.

GRÜß GOTT: LIEBE LESER !

The work in preparing for the German Conversation Group is shared amongst its members. Gay Hancock, a former German teacher, usually prepares something for the first half hour, improving participants' knowledge, giving them speaking practice and taxing their memories.

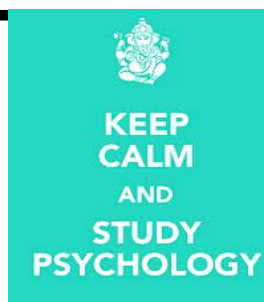
Christine and Bob Burr produce lots of reading material including transcripts from a programme on the Arte Television Channel programme 'Karambolage' which humorously compares German and French culture, and amusing snippets on events like the International Beard Growing Championships. Between the three of them they create quizzes and information sheets on German customs, culture, sayings, politics, wine and poetry – the list is endless. The Group has read some Grimms' fairy tales and famous children's stories as well as a few Easy Readers. They play games, do tongue twisters and role plays. They say that the emphasis is on fun, but they do learn a lot too. Sometimes each member prepares a report in German on their travels, and as some people go to wonderful places, they may enjoy a whole afternoon, with photos. To finish, after a very welcome tea and biscuits provided by Margrit Kennedy, they generally watch a piece from 'Karambolage'. There is plenty of scope for originality and Gay has had them all doing some German Folk Dancing and even playing 'Countdown' in German!



From information supplied by Christine Burr and Gay Hancock.

PSYCHOLOGY GROUP:

Those of you who took a close look at the Autumn mailing from the Third Age Trust, which had copies of both 'Third Age Matters' and 'U3A Sources' (the magazine which has useful information for Group Leaders who wish to infuse some new ideas into their programmes), will have seen that our Psychology Group has a full page spread – with a photograph. Congratulations to Gavin Ewan and the group members on achieving national fame!



Last date for copy for the Spring Newsletter will be February 13th 2014 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 me articles and photographs.