

AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Issue No. 72

September 2014

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I seem to receive quite a number of telephone calls which begin with the immortal words 'we're not trying to sell you anything, we are just conducting a short survey'. That is usually the point when I put the phone down. I wonder how useful many of these surveys are. My newspaper sometimes prints summaries of survey results too – often tongue in cheek I suspect. One I came across recently studied how long customers are prepared to wait in a restaurant for their chosen food to be served. Apparently in Scotland the time was 14 minutes 48 seconds; in the South East 15m 8s and in the East Midlands 16m 30s. I think that the answers may depend on how much of a hurry the customer is in, whether the meal is part of a social occasion – and how pleasant the company is! Another piece of research studied whether dog fleas can jump higher than cat fleas which might help you to decide which pet to choose if you want to stand less chance of getting bitten. Do you know why woodpeckers never get a headache? Well somebody does! And what a pity that I have neither time nor space to tell you the world's funniest jokes.

On the other hand many of you will be interested in the survey from Saga Services which showed that grandparents play a pivotal role in supporting their grandchildren. Almost half of those questioned helped out with the school run, and 41% provided childcare during the school holidays. Parents can also source a lot of information to assist them in finding out what their young do. I came across all sorts of research items while thinking about this letter. Sometimes the results seem to contradict what we all think we know, but it may be that the wrong questions were asked! I saw a quote somewhere that said 'people use statistics as a drunk uses a lamp-post, for support not illumination'. I think I am going to stand by my final discoveries: that the oldest sibling (me) is usually the most likely to succeed; that the oldest female sibling (me again) is the most ambitious (not true) and more importantly, that people born under the star sign Gemini (me again) are the most likely to join the 'U.K.'s 1,000 wealthiest people lists' (I am still waiting).

Shirley Stokes

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP:

Vivienne Makins has informed us that the leadership of the above group has changed. The new group leader is Linda Wells.

CRAFT GROUP:



At the beginning of June the Craft Group was fortunate enough to have a talk on Spindle Spinning from Marilyn Wright. Our own member Sheila Cruickshank had arranged for Marilyn to come along and share some of her knowledge with us. We didn't realise just how interesting she would be! She is totally addicted to spinning and extremely knowledgeable. She writes, lectures and teaches. She is a teacher of Black-foot Spinning which she learnt from a Native American, Judy Maierhofer, whilst at a retreat in America. She has now gone on to run workshops at that same retreat.

She showed us examples of numerous spindles ranging from a simple twig to beautifully carved spindles from Russia. She had samples of many different types of raw materials including cotton bolls (still on the stem), silk hankies (a square of layers of silk straight from the cocoon) and various types of wool, many of which she herself had hand dyed.



We all thoroughly enjoyed her visit, but I don't think many of us will be taking up spinning. It is a rather time consuming hobby!

Heather Edwards

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:



It has been suggested that Aylesbury Vale U3A could start a travel group. This would enable like-minded people to meet and share their enjoyment of anything travel related. We know that many of you travel extensively, and whether you are one of those, willing to share your memories, or just an armchair globetrotter I would be keen to hear from you. If there is sufficient interest in starting a group please register your interest by e-mail or 'phone.

I currently travel to the Princes Risborough U3A to join in their Travel Group, and in the year that I have been attending, there have never been less than 30 members!

Linda Chapple



Peter Ashton was sneaking around with his camera in Exeter on the Devon Study Visit, and issued a challenge to the Editor to print this photo. From l to r: Joan Thorley, who refuses to have her photograph taken if she sees the photographer first, Margaret Lengthorne, and the editor well disguised.

THE DORRANCE TROPHY July 24th 2014 from Mary Rogers

The Bowls group play a mixed Pairs competition each year for the trophy named after Eric Dorrance who helped to start our U3A and was chairman until his death. It was his idea to start a Bowls group and he became passionate about the game so it was only fitting when we became more competitive that we named our main competition after him. This year we were blessed with a hot sunny day and 28 players (14 pairs) took to the green to battle it out. The final game resulted in Roger Walker and Elinor Paterson beating Eddy Clifford and Kath Barnett in a closely fought match. Well done to them all! The whole day was a relaxed and happy occasion with many thanks to Aylesbury Town's green keeper Keith Stratful who not only prepared a good ground to play on but also stayed all day to help us run the event. Thanks are also due to Ron Lloyd for all his work in organising and to Billy McCunn who not only played but also manned the bar for us when we stopped for our picnic lunch and afterwards while we watched the Final – most welcome on such a hot day!



The London Walks Group on their Princess Diana Memorial walk were joined by a new friend during their refreshment break, and Tom Day holds up the 'rock on top of a rock' near the Serpentine Gallery.

Peter Harding took these photographs.



You may remember that quite a long time ago, we were invited to submit material for an exhibition to commemorate the First World War Anniversary. Jenny Corton of the Creative Writing Group sent us this excellent and moving short story, and we wanted to share it with you.

“THE COMRADES IN ARMS”

The old inn sign swung creakily backwards and forwards above the three men sitting around the wooden table in the quiet pub garden. It was July 1982; the weather was sunny and warm and high above in the wide Lincolnshire skies, larks were trilling gleefully. Three generations separated the two eldest from the young man in the trio nursing their pints – Harry Page and his old friend Bert Walker and the youngest, Peter Page – Harry’s great grandson. Harry and Bert liked to reminisce about their past – they’d been born in the village within months of each other and had gone to the village school, and then later, Wintringham Grammar School. When they’d left school, each found good employment and had remained friends throughout the years. A lifetime of adventures was stashed away in their memories – both good and bad – they never tired of each other’s company.

Today was a special day for Harry. His great grandson Peter lived quite a distance away and as often happens, Harry and Peter had never really been able to enjoy a chat; family reunions were always noisy affairs with everyone talking loudly and catching up on all the family gossip. Today was different though. Peter sat back, enjoying seeing his great granddad and Bert nudging each other’s memories as they recollected events. “So what **did** you do in the war?” – Peter asked them the often-repeated question. Harry laid down his pint glass slowly on the wooden table – “do you really want to know lad? – if you do, we can tell you a tale or two.” Peter had a couple of hours to while away and urged the old man – he knew he’d been in World War I but he’d never really known what his great granddad’s war service had involved.

“Well boy – me and Bert – we were both 20 years old – we’d left school at 15 and gone straight to work on Grimsby dock – hard work but we were both strong and we had good mates and a steady wage to take home to our mums. We’d heard about stirrings of trouble in France but we never really gave it much thought – we were young and carefree and that was another country – far away in our minds. One day in 1914, we went into work and were called up by the foreman. He showed us all a letter he’d received from the Government from Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State. The letter stated that our old head teacher from Wintringham Grammar had decided to contact former pupils and others to form a new battalion to join the Lincolnshire Regiment in preparation for defending England against the enemy. Me and Bert didn’t waste a minute – we headed off home and told our families we were off to volunteer. What larks we would have – we weren’t the only ones from the village – there were ten of us in total – we’d all grown up together. We went to Grimsby, to recruit. Our battalion was to be named ‘The Grimsby Chums’. We waited a couple of weeks to be sent for, and when our papers arrived we were sent to our unit to learn how to march and become “proper” soldiers – we were so bloody excited to be going away and we couldn’t wait to get over to France to teach those Germans a thing or two. The day we marched out of Grimsby, in full uniform and with our shiny new boots and kitbags – we couldn’t stop smiling and waving – our families and all the town seemed to come out to see us off.

“ ‘We’ll be back soon – keep smiling!’ We thought **we** were the lucky ones – leaving our humdrum jobs and going off to France – what an adventure!”

Harry stopped speaking, wiped his eyes and took a long swig of his beer – his old friend took over the story – helping each other as always. “We landed in France in January 1916 after a long, cold journey, took up our places in our new Regiment and established our camps – our battalion had joined the 101st Brigade of the 34th Division. In July we were moved to the Somme – the Grimsby Chums were in the first wave attacking the Germans in the local village. One terrible day, a massive mine was detonated beneath the German trenches and our troop rushed forward to occupy the crater. We were trapped there for the rest of the day, bombarded by German **and** British artillery. A few of us made it into the German trenches.” Bert’s eyes glistened and he stopped speaking. Harry put his arm around his old friend’s shoulders – they dipped their heads and then Harry looked up at Peter – “We found out later that the Grimsby Chums suffered 502 casualties on that one day – 1st July. Harry and I were two of the lucky ones.”

“They renamed this pub **The Comrades in Arms** – to honour the memory of the 810 members of the Battalion who were killed in action or died on service.” Peter had listened silently. He shook his head sadly “and I never knew – you’ve kept this to yourselves all these years.” Bert spoke for the two of them “Yes – us and all the others – no point in troubling anyone else, but in our minds, all our comrades in arms are still young.”

Two hours had passed by so quickly – Peter got up, gave his great granddad a hug and shook Harry’s hand. “My lift is here – better go now – hope to see you very soon.” He adjusted his camouflage trousers over his shiny black boots, picked up his kitbag and walked over to where the Army truck was waiting to take him and his mates to RAF Brize Norton to catch their VC10 to the Falklands.

“Keep smiling boy” Harry called, and Peter waved and climbed into the back of the truck to join his own Comrades in Arms.

Peter Harding took this photograph of the Bomber Command Memorial on a recent London Walk, and we thought this an appropriate place to show it.





WE WELCOME OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Ann Alcock; Ann Brion; Glen Campbell; Janet Colchester;
Kathy Creasy; Hazel Eggleton; Jim Green; Mike Hickling;
Janet Logsdail; Terry Pearson; Irene Rayner; Jackie Robinson; Keith
Robinson; Irene Scott; Sylvia Sherwood; Ron Warner



OUR ANNUAL BURSARY TO THE GRANGE SCHOOL

them on a job well done.

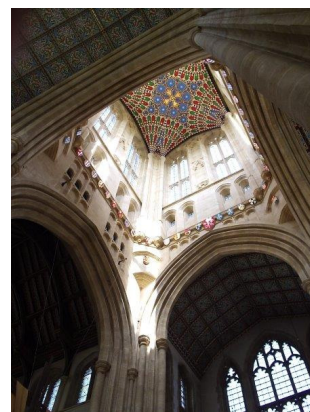
The Head has informed us that this year our prize is to be awarded jointly to Lucy Rymer and Amy Clayton. Over the last year the girls have given daily support to a fellow student on her return to school after a long absence due to a serious illness. We congratulate

SUNNY SUFFOLK : OUR OUTING TO BURY ST. EDMUNDS AND LAVENHAM

On a lovely May morning our U3A coach headed east to the county of Suffolk. Despite its lack of hills, Suffolk has charming small towns and villages and a lovely rural landscape. It's the county of Constable and Gainsborough after all! Our first stop was Bury St Edmunds, now by-passed by the busy A14, but a bustling, historic market town nevertheless. After a quick coffee, we're off to seek its treasures. Most people visit the cathedral, a site of pilgrimage and worship for more than a millennium, its buildings evolving over the centuries and considerably altered even over the last fifty years. Ruins of older church buildings lie inside the lovely Abbey Gardens, like the cathedral a place of beauty and tranquillity.

All too soon we're heading to Lavenham with its streets of half-timbered houses. In the medieval period it was one of the twenty wealthiest places in England. These riches are reflected in the spectacular perpendicular church, built around 1500 on the proceeds of the wool trade, and in the Guildhall and the houses of the wealthy wool merchants. Lavenham is a place around which to wander, while savouring the atmosphere created by its stunning buildings.

We returned to Aylesbury happy and refreshed and very grateful to Ron and Rosemary for organising such an enjoyable day.



With some difficulty Peter Gasson photographed this view looking up at the tower of the Cathedral!

Jan Hancock

OUR DEVON STUDY TOUR IN PICTURES
From Rosemary Meadowcroft, Norman McRae and Gay Hancock



Whether in the hotel, on the high seas, or simply enjoying the sunshine Aylesbury Vale U3A members always seem to be having a good time.





Our 'Gentle Walkers' meet the Chelsea Pensioners in their Dining Room and in the Chapel. The observant amongst you will have noticed a small blue duck in recent photographs. He is their new 'mascot' and has been photographed at many famous locations. One day he may have his own web page!

His personal paparazzo on this occasion was Peter Harding.

Discovering Dishes

Our cookery group has gone from strength to strength since our inaugural meeting in January. In June we held a barbecue on a gorgeous sunny lunch time. We tested recipes for several different marinades with meat, fish and vegetables, and enjoyed some delicious home-made salads and sauces. Our final meeting before the summer break was an afternoon tea party also held in a summer garden, though not quite so much sun this time. This did not deter us from tasting some wonderful canapés, tea breads and cakes and sipping a fruit punch albeit under the gazebo! Taking turns to meet in members' houses, over the past 6 months, we have all learned new techniques, tried new foods and developed our culinary skills. We have had lots of fun trying out each other's recipes. Our Cook Book now runs to 35 pages with many varied and tempting recipes. All our meetings have been very exciting and great social occasions. Of course the food enhances the friendship! We are delighted with our success and have agreed to extend the group.

We now have room for 2 new members.

Anyone who is interested can contact Bobby Cadwallader.



The group enjoying good food and laughter in Bobby's garden

Photo from Bobby Cadwallader



SPEAKERS CORNER

WEDNESDAY 8TH OCTOBER: SUSANNE CARR ON STANLEY SPENCER



This will be Susanne's third visit to our U3A. She will give a wide ranging talk on the work of one of England's most famous artists, who could also be described as one of our local artists as he lived in Cookham. Stanley Spencer painted an astonishing variety of subjects so there should be something for everybody. Susanne has promised to keep the rude ones to a minimum!

Those of you who have attended Susanne's previous talks on Vermeer and Caravaggio will remember that Susanne pulls no punches in her analysis of an artist's life and work. We should expect the same this time and we can look forward to an informative and entertaining session.

WEDNESDAY 12TH NOVEMBER: IAN CURRIE – "THE DAY IT RAINED CRABS AND FROGS"

Ian Currie is another return speaker to our U3A. and is well known in the South East region for his involvement as a weather forecaster with regular spots on BBC local radio stations and television. His previous talk to us on the Frost Fairs on the Thames was very enjoyable and particularly well received.

The title of his talk indicates that Ian's weather talks are certainly out of the ordinary, and we can expect this particular weather forecast to be full of surprises.

WEDNESDAY 10TH DECEMBER: RON ADAMS – SONGS AND MONOLOGUES FROM ACROSS FOUR COUNTRIES

Our speaker for our annual December festive meeting is one of our own members and is appearing as a result of the many recommendations we have received from the membership and others. Ron has been collecting and performing regional music, songs and monologues from around the UK for many years and we can expect a wide variety of music, information, and entertainment.

Alan Robinson: Speakers Secretary

HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES:

Christmas Cards: A reminder that it has been agreed that a selection of Christmas Cards from 'Cards for Good Causes' will be sold at the November monthly meeting.

Children's Play Group: For a number of years you have made a voluntary but always generous donation to enhance the Christmas activity for our small neighbours in the next room. Many of you asked to be warned in advance so that you may bring cash with you. The collection this year will be made at the October meeting and will be used by them to hire a small touring pantomime group.



DEVON, GLORIOUS DEVON!

Our 2014 Study Visit written by Ian Hancock

Despite a 7.30 am start, there is a buzz of anticipation as we depart, and Ron is soon handing out the quiz, having made the usual facetious remarks. Our first stop is at Tyntesfield, a veritable treasure house of Victorian life built in about 1830 on the proceeds of selling fertiliser based on South American guano. Victorian recycling! Our hotel in Torquay is lovely and we are only a short walk from the sea, although after a large dinner, it provides something of a challenge!



These U3A Belles enjoy the sea front in Torquay.

Photo by Gay Hancock

The first day was spent in Exeter, a delightful and welcoming city. Its magnificent cathedral, dating from around 1400, claims the longest uninterrupted medieval vaulted ceiling in the world, arising from the fact that it has no central tower. We strolled alongside the River Exe with its tasteful regeneration blending old and new.

Tuesday being a free day, most people gravitated to the seafront, and many took the boat across Torbay to Brixham. This small fishing port with its colour-washed buildings sparkled in the sun and seafood goodies on the harbour proved to be irresistible.

Wednesday took us to Dartmouth with the Royal Naval College overlooking the attractive small town below. A short trip along the River Dart brought us to Greenway, the holiday home of Agatha Christie. After climbing the steep path to the house, most of us were ready for refreshment and a quiet stroll through an environment so redolent of the 1950s.

Thursday brought a break in the weather, and even in June the upper reaches of Dartmoor looked sombre. The granite church in Widecombe-in-the-Moor, built in the 14th century and enlarged in the next two centuries on the proceeds of tin mining, is prominent from the hills above and fascinating to explore. A large plaque details vividly how, in 1638, the church was struck by lightning, killing four and injuring 60 others. Our second stop was at Buckland Abbey, a 700-year-old house built around a former Cistercian abbey. This had much to offer, including a recently authenticated self portrait by Rembrandt, and Sir Francis Drake's drum.



Gay Hancock's photo of the very impressive A La Ronde

On Friday we travelled to A La Ronde, a sixteen-sided 18th century house built for two spinsters. Although much altered, its quiriness remains, notably the prevalence of sea-shells and feathers in the highly unusual decoration. In the afternoon we visited Bicton Botanical Gardens, a visual delight in the bright sunshine, particularly the world-renowned 17th century Italian garden with its tapestry of bright colours set amongst sloping lawns. On Saturday we returned via the Victorian resort of Clevedon with its Grade 1 listed pier of 1869, at which the paddle steamers used to dock. Amongst some 10,000 small brass plaques sold to support restoration is one for Ron's mum, who lived to the age of 102. There's hope for Ron yet!

We are so grateful to Ron and Rosemary for organising a holiday of such variety and contrast. As somebody remarked, it was leisurely but things just happened when they should!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



WEDNESDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER: Another date for a very enjoyable **Coffee Morning** for all new, associate and long standing members to get to know each other at The Broad Leys P.H., Wendover Road at 10.30 a.m. Come along and join the rush for the biscuits! It is always a sociable occasion, and the background noise increases as the morning wears on!

TUESDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER: Day outing to either Duxford or Cambridge

Choose where you would like to spend the day. The coach will call at both venues. The Imperial War Museum Duxford is home to a collection of over 200 aircraft as well as tanks, military vehicles and boats. Entry fee £14. In Cambridge you can stroll around the colleges and the Backs or perhaps visit the Fitzwilliam Museum or the Botanical Garden. Price £17pp. Depart Cam Mead, Bedgrove 8.30, return 6.30 approx.



THURSDAY 9TH OCTOBER: The annual U3A

Quiz will be held at the Aylesbury Bowls Club from 3 p.m. onwards. The tickets cost £8 which includes a Fish/Chicken and Chips supper. They will be on sale at the September meeting, while Associate Members may apply direct, or obtain them at the coffee morning or through friends attending the monthly meeting. Further details from Maxine Robinson – Social@avu3a.org.uk.



TUESDAY 21ST OCTOBER: Coventry and Charlecote Park.

In Coventry we have booked a slot for you to visit St Mary's Guildhall if you wish. It is reputed to be the finest medieval guildhall in the country. There is also the cathedral, of course, and the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, which has an exhibition on the Great War in Coventry.

In the afternoon we go to Charlecote Park (NT), a superb Tudor manor house with Victorian furnishings on the banks of the River Avon. You can visit the house, stroll in the grounds and see the many outbuildings and carriage collection. Price £17 pp for coach only. Depart Cam Mead 8.30, return 6.30- 7.00 approx.

WEDNESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER: The last of our popular Coffee Mornings for 2014. Come and relax before the Christmas rush. Details as for September 17th.

MONDAY 24TH – TUESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER: The Thursford Christmas Spectacular with an overnight stay. The Thursford Christmas Spectacular is the largest show of its type in the country. With a cast of 130 professional singers, dancers and musicians, it is a fusion of the seasonal and sacred, with famous chart-topping pop favourites being sung alongside traditional carols.

Details of all outings from Gay and Ian Hancock - Outings@avu3a.org.uk

DIARY DATES CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE...

THURSDAY 11TH DECEMBER: Christmas Lunch at Harding's Restaurant, Aylesbury College. Only 30 places have been booked this year. There is plenty of parking, and lunch will begin at 12.30p.m. The cost is £17.95 for two courses, £20.95 for three courses. Both choices include tea/coffee and a mince pie. No tips are included in the above price. Tickets will be on sale at the October and November meetings while Associate Members may obtain them direct from Maxine, at the next Coffee Morning, or through friends already attending the main monthly meeting.

FEBRUARY 23RD TO 27TH: THE BOWLS CLUB IN TORQUAY .

Our Bowls Club has arranged another of their much anticipated annual bowling weeks. In 2015 they will be staying in the same complex as the Summer Study Visit last June. Needless to say the summer tourists wandered along to inspect the indoor bowling facilities, spacious gymnasium and various swimming pools, and pronounced them suitable for Mary Rogers and her merry crew!

MORE HOUSEKEEPING

U3A DIARIES

The U3A pocket diaries for 2015 will have a grey cover, and the price is being held at £2.00. As last year, there is no need to order. We will get in a stock and sell them at the Sept., Oct. and Nov. meetings – cheques or cash.



AGM 2014

With this Newsletter you will receive the AGM papers for this year's AGM on 8 October. Please remember – we **must have** a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman to take our very successful U3A forward into 2015.

Last date for copy for the December Newsletter will be November 12th 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 of course to all of you who send me articles and photographs. Please don't forget the website and the newsletter when you do anything that may interest (or impress) other readers.