

# AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Issue No. 70

## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

March 2014

On our many outings, Aylesbury Vale U3A often visits sites which come under the purview of 'English Heritage'. According to its own web site "English Heritage exists to ensure that the best of the past is kept to enrich our lives today and in the future." One of its policy statements says that it wishes to '...maximise the number of high quality cultural educational opportunities for children and young people both in and out of school'. You will see that it doesn't mention education for adults. We have had several queries about the educational role of U3As. In fact on a visit to Walmer Castle we were clearly told that they didn't normally welcome U3A groups, as they were really not educational outings. For me that misses the whole point of adult education where there is a choice of what to learn and how to learn it. I looked at a clip from a short video made by their Education Director about 'educational visits' but again that was all about 'school visits'. Now to be fair, there may be a whole section about informal adult learning which I missed – there were a lot of sites – but judging by our experience its qualities are not appreciated.

The English philosopher John Stuart Mill defined education thus: 'Education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect.' Surely that is what our U3A activities are all about. We know what we want to learn, and we use our own methods to enjoy that learning. I don't know about you, but I have never have liked those stately homes where one is herded from room to room, attended by a well-meaning guide who proceeds to explain every detail of a painting I may not be interested in, but ignores a piece of tapestry or embroidery, or the books in the bookcases, which may fascinate me. It always reminds me of early visits to the USSR with groups of teenagers, when visits to the Hermitage involved me giving the youngsters ten minutes off every now and then, while the accredited guide told us very earnestly and at great length how many bricks made up the building or how many tons of a particular material were used in its construction.

Perhaps if our experience is typical this is an issue which the Third Age Trust could take up. Education should be a joyous and life-enhancing experience and not necessarily a classroom lecture, although we know from our monthly meetings how interesting and informative straightforward talks can be. I want to go on visiting new places and learning more about new (and old) interests. So come on English Heritage, make us older learners more welcome and broaden your interpretation of 'education' to be the whole-life thoroughly enjoyable experience that it is for many of us.

*Shirley Stokes*

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

### Scottish Country Dancing

For some six years, the leaders of this group, Greig Sneddon and Lynne Dawson, have organised a Burns Night Supper in January to raise money for charity and to introduce other U3A members to the traditions of Scotland. This year some 100 members and friends enjoyed a night of haggis, singing and dancing. They raised £1,152 for their chosen charities, making a total of over £6,000 over the six years that they have arranged this event. They are to be congratulated, along with all those many U3A members who served supper, sold raffle tickets, helped with seating plans and the myriad of other tasks that had to be organised. Greg's accent and Robbie Burns' poems made a rare combination – enjoyed by all.



These photos were taken by John Harwood at the Burns Night Supper. In the first Greig Sneddon welcomes the Haggis by reading out Robbie Burns' famous 'Address to a Haggis', described as the 'Great Chieftain o' the puddin-race'. In the second dancers take to the floor at The Hub in Aston Clinton.

### WE REALLY DO NEED YOU !!

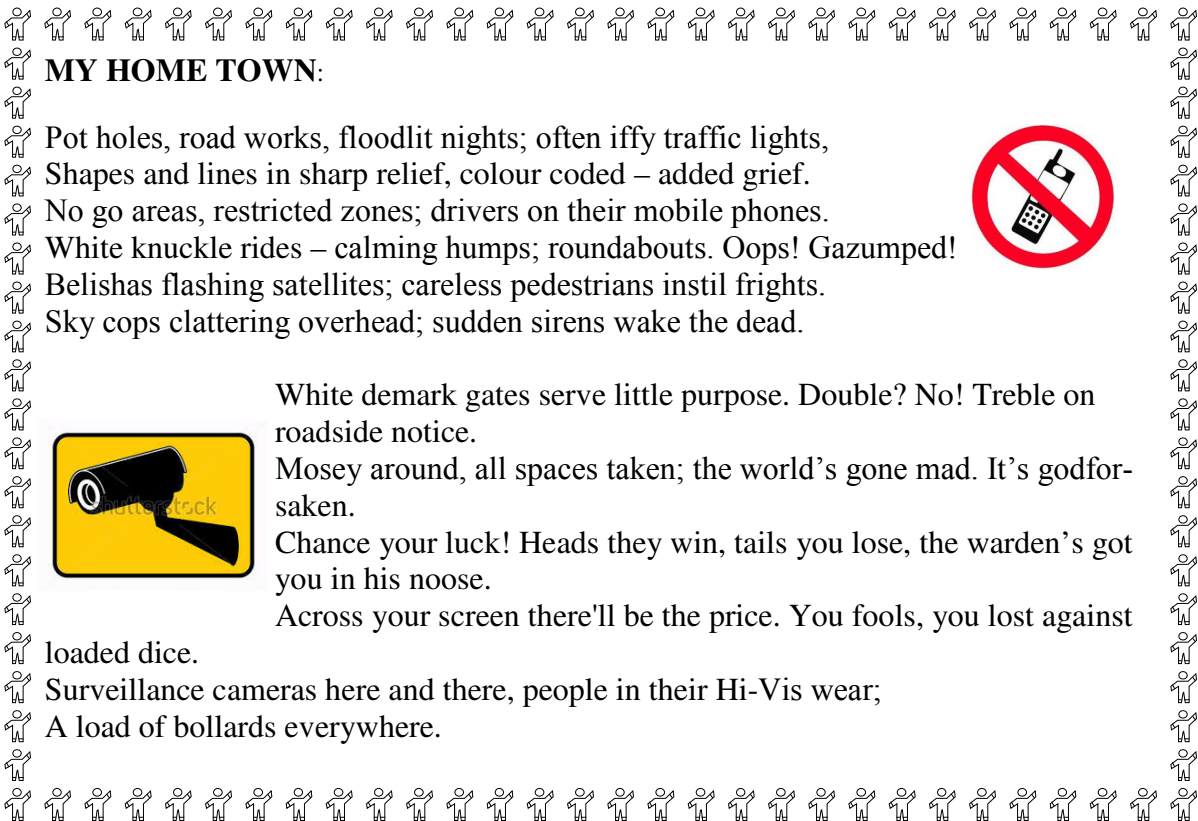
Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see a full page plea for help written by our Secretary, Peter Gasson, but the Executive Committee wanted to stress the very urgent need for a volunteer for the role of Vice-Chairman. The current Chairman may wish to stand down at the end of our 2014 year. In any case she will have to resign at the 2015 AGM having completed the maximum term of 5 years. Now is the time for a potential vice-chairman to shadow the role for a few months – so please give it some serious thoughts. This is a post which must be filled.




Thought for today:

You know you are getting old when your bank sends you their free calendar – one month at a time!

Those of you who are suffering mild road rage caused by the traffic build-ups in Aylesbury will appreciate these lines composed by Cyril Reed, and the following one penned by Vivienne Makin.



**MY HOME TOWN:**  
Pot holes, road works, floodlit nights; often iffy traffic lights,  
Shapes and lines in sharp relief, colour coded – added grief.  
No go areas, restricted zones; drivers on their mobile phones.  
White knuckle rides – calming humps; roundabouts. Oops! Gazumped!  
Belishas flashing satellites; careless pedestrians instil frights.  
Sky cops clattering overhead; sudden sirens wake the dead.  
  
  
  
White demark gates serve little purpose. Double? No! Treble on  
roadside notice.  
Mosey around, all spaces taken; the world's gone mad. It's godfor-  
saken.  
Chance your luck! Heads they win, tails you lose, the warden's got  
you in his noose.  
Across your screen there'll be the price. You fools, you lost against  
loaded dice.  
Surveillance cameras here and there, people in their Hi-Vis wear;  
A load of bollards everywhere.

### GETTING OLDER

They walked together hand  
in hand  
Joked like they were still  
sixteen.  
He looked at her with spar-  
kling eyes  
And said 'Sweetheart, you  
are so grand.  
Tell me dear, why are you  
blue?  
Hold my hand and tell me  
true.'  
Awoke today, my air was  
gone  
I was like a dying swan  
Pressed the button at the  
light.

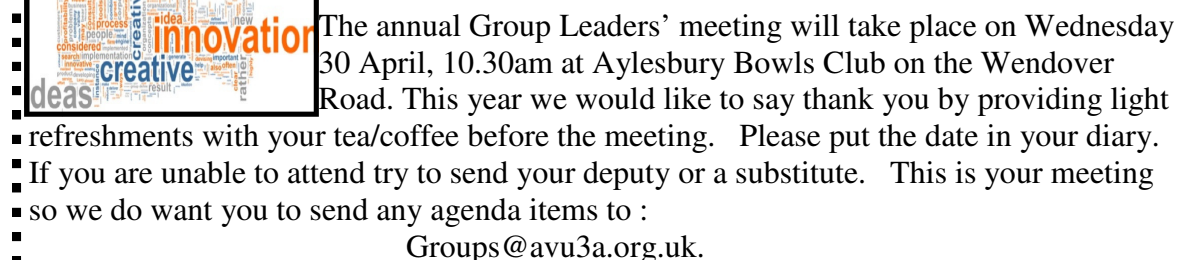
Does the AA want a fight?  
Waited for the green to  
flash  
We're too old to wildly  
dash.  
Oh my dear, it's gone to  
red,  
Should I spend my time in  
bed?  
'Cars come first' AA man  
said.  
'No extra time old dears to  
dawdle.  
I don't give a toss for fee-  
ble!'



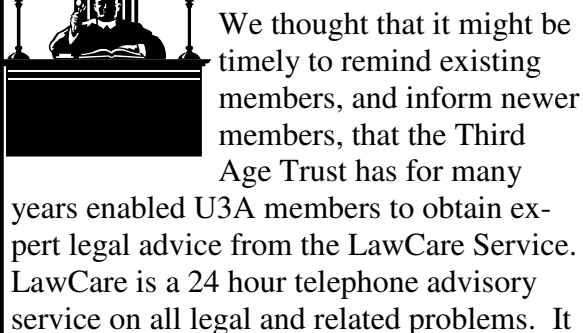


For any outing to stand the maximum chance of success, it is vital that it isn't planned too close to another, and certainly not to the same destination! In order to avoid this happening, Ian and I will be your Outings Co-ordinators. If you intend to plan a visit, we ask that you first get in touch with us, so that we can make sure there are no clashes before we put it on the calendar and the website. Several of our members have organised outings and still lived to tell the tale! They will say how satisfying it is to organise a trip that we can enjoy together. Why not give it a go?

## CALLING ALL GROUP LEADERS



**YOUR ROUND THE CLOCK ACCESS  
TO PROFESSIONAL  
LEGAL ADVICE:**



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*This black and white copy does not do the picture justice, so why not look at it in full colour on our website, where the newsletter is reproduced? Go to [www.avu3a.org.uk](http://www.avu3a.org.uk)*

Jean and Peter Ashton are frequent – and very much appreciated – contributors to our newsletter. Their photographs are always particularly welcome. We were not surprised to see one of them in the latest Titan (travel firm) magazine ‘The Scenic Route’ which recently held a competition to find ‘The Travel Photographs of the Year’. We were delighted that Peter won First Place in the ‘People’ category. We reproduce here this winning photo ‘Vietnamese Lady’.

The judges commented: ‘Elegant and perfectly framed, this scene of everyday life in Vietnam charmed the judges.’

### **THE GOLDEN AGE OF MNEMONICS:**

One of our members received a book at Christmas all about mnemonics. Do you remember them? Of course you do, they were the handy little jingles which helped you to remember important facts. Before the days of computers they helped us in quizzes, or to impress our friends with our knowledge. The word comes from the name of the Greek goddess of memory – Mnemosyne. Many of us still repeat ‘30 days hath September, April, June and November’ when looking for a date. A well known one recalled the sad fate of Henry VIII’s wives; ‘divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived’. If you can’t remember the order of the planets – Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus. Neptune and Pluto are remembered simply by the sentence: My Very Easy Method. Just Set Up Nine Planets.

Some were designed to help with spelling: ‘I before E except after C’. One of my own favourites helps with differentiating between practice and practise and licence and license: ‘S is the verb and C is the noun; That’s the rule that runs the town.’ And how about ‘Desert and Dessert’ – a dessert has two sugars. Another tricky one could be ‘rhythm’ – ‘Rhythm Helps Your Two Hips Move’ should do the trick.

In the geography class we never forgot the names of America’s Great Lakes, if we remembered ‘HOMES’ – Huron. Ontario. Michigan, Erie. Superior. Now I suspect children just rely on Google !

*The Editor*

**Amendment to the Pink Directory:** Please note a correction to the e-mail address given for you to contact the outings organisers. It should read: [Outings@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:Outings@avu3a.org.uk)





Never let it be said that a little rain deterred our 'Gentle Walkers' pictured by Tony Poth in Wendover Woods on their February outing. (The hot bacon sandwiches in the café afterwards were very welcome !)



## HOUSEKEEPING NOTICES

**Display Tables:** We often forget to look at the displays at the rear of the hall at each monthly meeting. It is one easy and interesting way to find out what individual groups are doing. In April it will be the turn of Current Affairs 1 and Readers' Circle 1; in May, Wine Appreciation 2 and Local Walks will display their wares, and in June it will be up to Opera Appreciation and Photography for Pleasure to share their interests. We know that some groups feel that there could be a better way to share their activities. If you can think of a different way to involve groups your committee would be interested to hear from you.

**Social Events:** At the moment our social events are largely confined to the Coffee Mornings, Fish and Chip Supper Quiz and Christmas Lunch. While we don't wish to give Social Events Organiser Maxine Robinson too much additional work we are interested in your ideas for other activities which would be welcomed by you. (Volunteering to organise something would be even more welcome, but don't let that deter you!)



### **TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:**

Marilyn Andrews, Corinne Brown, Addy Fraser, Rosemary Frost, Pauline Humphrey, Barbara Matthews, Jan Patrick, Roger Priest, Jim Purdy, Ken & Sheila Satterthwaite, Rosalie Temple, Christine Thomas, Kathryn Tones, Joanna Watsham, Dennis Barling, Pam Dawson, Vi Heritage and Diana Lewis.



Some of the photos in the last newsletter were a little blurred. Part of it was my fault for making them too small, in an effort to put as many in as possible! But there was also a production fault. This one was too good to miss, so I am putting it in again. It shows some weary 'London walkers' outside the Royal Exchange building and was taken by Tony Poth.



### **PLAY READING WEEKLY ON TUESDAYS – A PLEA FOR MORE READERS**

We know that some people may be deterred from joining us as we meet weekly on a Tuesday. However we are happy to welcome those who can only attend fortnightly, to fit in with other group meetings. We already have 2 members who do just that. Unfortunately we cannot accommodate members on an ad-hoc basis, as we need to know the number in advance so that we can cast the play we are to read. It is very difficult if we cast a play for 11 people, and then find that only 8 turn up! It has not helped that the County Reserve Stock (from whom we obtain the play sets) now only opens one day a week. Unfortunately that day is Tuesday, so it only gives us Tuesday afternoons to look at plays to cast in the following week. We take turns in going to the Library, selecting a play and casting it. We have a hard core of 10 people attending regularly. We are a happy, friendly group and all get on well together. So if you would like to join us, please contact me or my deputy Cherry Jefferson (tel. nos. in the handbook), or at [playreading@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:playreading@avu3a.org.uk).

*Dorothy Chater*

## MORE NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

### From the Crafts Group: Another U3A Friend Leaves for the Coast

January was a sad time for Val Penn's many U3A friends when she moved from Aylesbury to Charmouth on the Dorset coast. Val has been a member of AVU3A for more than 12 years and has contributed so much to our organisation. She has been on the committee as membership secretary and a member of many groups. She was also leader of the Needlework Group and an instigator, with Heather Edwards, of the very successful Crafts Group. At her last Crafts Group meeting she was presented with some gifts and a poem to thank her for all she has done for us. Val will be sorely missed but for some of us this will not be goodbye but au revoir as she will be joining our study tour in Devon this summer and no doubt there will be other reunions. Our love and thanks go to Val and warmest wishes for a wonderful time by the sea.



We have a good friend  
called Val  
To us all she has been such a  
pal.  
She's inspired us when lead-  
ing  
Our stitching and beading  
What a Gift, what a Guide,  
what a Gal !

*Jean Ashton*



Jean's photo shows Val with her typical smiling face opening her farewell gifts

### Recorder Ensemble:

It is with much regret that we have to announce that, owing to the sad death of Group Leader Pat Kuryba, the Recorder Ensemble has decided to disband. If there is anyone out there who feels that they would like to start a new group, please contact the Groups Coordinator.





## SPEAKERS CORNER

### 9th April: Zachary Taylor “Around the World with a Guitar”

Zachary is an excellent example of a polymath. He gave up an early career in engineering to follow a life of music and as a maker of musical instruments. He studied the guitar in Spain and also became a successful performer with the lute. His research into the history of the musicology and the construction of the guitar led to the teaching of lutherie in universities and colleges in the UK and Spain. He considers that teaching guitar making to Spaniards is one of his greatest successes. Zachary will entertain us with examples of exceptional guitar music from exotic and exciting places.



### 14th May: John Wyatt “Pseudocraters, Midges and Harlequins ”

John is well known to the members of AVU3A as this talk will be his seventh. This time he will talk to us on the subject of Iceland which straddles the Atlantic Ridge and is thus a land constantly shaped and reshaped by fire (at least 15 active volcanoes), ice (11% is permanently covered) and water (numerous dramatic waterfalls and rushing rivers). The resident population is, however, only 320,000 but this figure is considerably surpassed annually by the tourists who pour in to enjoy its outstandingly beautiful scenery, great abundance and richness of wildlife, natural hot springs and, of course the Northern Lights. Iceland also has a fascinating history including the World’s first Parliament and the three Cod Wars.

### 11th June: Tony Long “Cracking Cryptics”

This talk will be a light-hearted look at the mysteries of cryptic crosswords.

Tony has 50 years’ experience of solving and 20 years of compiling cryptic crosswords, and thus is ideally placed to reveal the secrets of solving these brain teasers. He has a long experience of amateur dramatics and has combined this experience with his crossword expertise to create a show which will solve some of the mysteries in an entertaining way.

With a step by step analysis of every type of clue, and tips on how to tackle any puzzle, all illustrated on our large screen and all presented in a highly amusing way for the aspiring cryptic solver.

**THE AYLESBURY FLOODS:** Whilst we have been lucky to escape the worst of the floods, we asked Tony Poth to let us have these photos: the first two taken at Buckingham Park and the last at Holmans Bridge on the A413 (said to be the site of a 1642 Battle).



## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**WEDNESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH:** Why not join other members and officers at the Broad Leys Public House (Wendover Road) for tea/coffee and a chance to chat? We meet at 10.30 a.m. and the cost is £1.75. New and Associate members are particularly welcome.



**TUESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH:** A London visit entitled 'Barrow Boys and Bankers'. The coach party will visit the East End and the Museum of London, and lunch is included in the price of £38. Further details from Gay and Ian Hancock: [outings@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:outings@avu3a.org.uk)

**THURSDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY:** By coach to Bury St Edmunds and Lavenham, details to follow.

**SUNDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> MAY:** The Garden Group is arranging a visit by coach 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 to take you on a tour of a part of the extensive grounds. The cost is £25 and the coach will depart from Quarrendon and Meadowcroft Community Centre at 8.45 a.m.

**WEDNESDAY 21<sup>ST</sup> MAY** This is our third Coffee Morning of 2014. We meet at 10.30 a.m. at the Broad Leys Public House. Tea/coffee £1.75. This is always a pleasant occasion. Why not give it a try if you haven't been before?

**MONDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> JUNE :** Coach outing to the Savill Gardens at Windsor including main course lunch and afternoon boat trip with tea on board. Then we drive to Runnymede for a 2 hour boat trip with cream tea. The cruise takes us through Old Windsor Lock, past the village of Datchet and through the grounds of Windsor Castle and back to Runnymede. Intended departure from Cam Mead, Bedgrove at 8.30 a.m. Cost to be confirmed.

**22<sup>ND</sup> - 28<sup>TH</sup> JUNE:** The 2014 Study Visit to Devon, based in Torquay.

**SUNDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> JULY:** The second Garden Group visit will be to the famous Sissinghurst Garden in Kent, designed by Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicholson, the diplomat and author. It is famous for its White Garden, Rose Garden and Maze. Bookings are not yet being taken, so put the date in your diary and if you need further information on either Garden Group outing contact Chris Reading.

**MONDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> – TUESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER** -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. The range covers everything from solo singers to full four-part choral numbers with amazing dancing and costumes. Fifty coaches per day travel from all over the country to this hugely popular show. Please note that there is to be an overnight stay. For more information contact Gay or Ian Hancock on [outings@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:outings@avu3a.org.uk).

## AYLESBURY VALE U3A – SECURING THE FUTURE

The Aylesbury Vale U3A is a highly successful organisation. There is a waiting list for full membership, and we have over 50 active groups thanks to the enthusiasm and work of our Group Leaders. But to ensure our future we need other contributions and skills from our members – skills we are sure many of you have even if you are too modest to say so!



We need members to serve on the Committee, which has the overall responsibility for running the organisation. Particularly we need a Vice-Chairman. Shirley Stokes is in her fourth year as Chairman; she needs to be able to hand over to a successor. The Vice-Chairman is a member of the Committee and so has a chance to familiarise him- or herself with the Committee's work and the issues it deals with before taking over the Chair. Sooner or later we will also need people to take over from other officers and Committee members. They do not have deputies, but here's a suggestion. If you are interested in joining the Committee, but want to know more about what it involves, come along to one or two of its meetings as a guest, or talk to one of the current Committee members, or even shadow one of them to get an insight into their role.

As technology advances more and more rapidly, we also need members with knowledge and understanding of IT and its various applications. We have a website which is widely admired for its professional design and its contents, and we are fortunate in having members with the skills to keep it going, but we could always do with more. We think that our newer members, particularly those who have recently retired, may be more up-to-date with computer applications than some of us who have been in the U3A rather longer. We should be pleased to hear from them.

We would also like to hear from members with a knowledge of sound and PA systems. The Meadowcroft Centre is not ideal for sound; its acoustics are not of the best and it does not have much internal cabling. We must be able to get the best possible sound out of the equipment we have. And there are non-technical but equally essential tasks. We could do with more people to help to clear the hall of tables etc. after meetings – not too difficult as we pay to have the chairs removed. The more members who volunteer for this, the quicker the job, and the less often each volunteer will be called upon. And although we have enough names to make up a coffee-making rota for the year, it is always helpful to have reserves.

None of these contributions need be onerous or a burden. But they will ensure a secure future for our U3A and its 500 full and associate members. ***Volunteers, please talk to the Chairman, Secretary or any member of the Committee, or to a group leader.***

*Peter Gasson*

**Programme Card:** We are still waiting for suitable photographs to embellish the annual programme card – currently an uninspiring picture of our meeting place. We know that we have excellent snappers out there, and even a photographic group. We are waiting!

### 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.



Our hardy walkers don't let a bit of mud put them off!

Taken on the monthly walk at Weston Turville by Ron Tomasina.

Last date for copy for the Summer Newsletter will be May 14th so please send any items you may like to share with us to Shirley Stokes on [treveris9@btinternet.com](mailto: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. We are always in need of more material, so if you belong to a group which is doing something interesting, or have an unusual photograph, please share them with us.