

AYLESBURY VALE U.3.A.



Issue No. 71

June 2014

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN:

A few Sundays ago I woke early and at 6 a.m. listened to the Sunday edition of 'On Your Farm'. I might have turned over and gone back to sleep had it not been for the fact that the farm in question was sited on the Somerset Levels, and it was heart-breaking to hear the personal accounts of the farmer and his wife about their living conditions. They would be living in a temporary mobile home for another couple of years. The flooding had caused the almost complete ruination of their farm house, and every job on the farm, like feeding the cattle which were housed safely but some miles away, was taking three or four times as long as normal. Those of us living safely on dry land must really feel sympathy for them, and I expect that, like me, many of you are expressing the hope that this is the last time that they have to face such awful hardship.

Those of you who have been members for some time will no doubt remember Alex Paterson's excellent talk about climate change quite a while ago. I am sure that many of us think about the prospects of life as it will be if the temperatures rise, and the storms flood vast areas whatever the causes. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has recently published its most comprehensive study yet into the effects of the rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It makes quite frightening reading, and while I do not understand all the nuances, there is much to make us think. They found that the negative impacts of climate change already outweigh any possible benefits of rising temperatures.

Other scientists say that we shouldn't be so pessimistic, but look on the future as a series of challenges. I wonder what it holds for the next generation? We think in terms of one life time, but scientists consider periods in millions of years. 252 million years ago the Permian period was named 'the great dying' when, in the biggest mass extinction in history, 95% of marine species were killed off, so there is nothing new under the sun. In the meantime, I think I am going to enjoy life as it is at present, and save my worries for the inhabitants of the Somerset Levels, and all those areas of the U.K. which suffered from this year's floods.

Shirley Stokes

Do you know what connects Aylesbury Vale U3A and the Tour de France?

Photo by
Heather Edwards



Le Tour de Bunting!

Ladies from our Craft Group have been busy over recent weeks responding to a call from the Harrogate Council and have made over 50 colourful knitted bunting shirts which will represent the colour and shape of the Tour de France riders' shirts. (The Council hoped to receive 3,000 donations. At present they are up to 22,000 and still counting!) These will be used to decorate the Harrogate district when the cycling tour visits Yorkshire on the 5th and 6th of July. However if you cannot make it to Yorkshire, keep an eye out for them on TV as you support our UK riders in the two Yorkshire stages of this year's Tour. If you do intend to visit Yorkshire this year the bunting will be hung outside from the end of May through until the end of September and if the jerseys are in a suitable condition once they are removed the plan is to sew them together to create colourful blankets to donate to Oxfam. Some will be donated to Carers Resource for them to re-knit into fun items for fund-raising.

Visit our website to find links to the Tour de France and Le Tour de Bunting! <http://www.avu3a.org.uk/wordpress/>

Rosemary Meadowcroft

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: Subscriptions of £15 for full membership are due on 1 August. They can be paid directly to the membership secretary, Diane Richardson, at the monthly meeting or posted to her at 100 Kynaston Avenue, Aylesbury, HP21 9DS. Cheques should be made payable to 'Aylesbury Vale U3A'. It would be very helpful if those members who want their new membership badges posted to them could enclose a stamped addressed envelope for this purpose.

If anyone does not wish to renew their membership they are asked to let Diane know as soon as possible so that she can contact those on the waiting list to offer the places to them. She can be contacted by email at membership@avu3a.org.uk or at the address above or by phone on 01296 437265. It would be very much appreciated if those who are not renewing could return their badge holders and directories, including the contents, to any member of the committee.

JEWELS WHICH WERE LOST FOR OVER 300 YEARS:

Many members recently enjoyed a rather special, if cold, day in London exploring Spitalfields and visiting the Museum of London to see the first exhibition of the 'Cheapside Horde'. Cheapside was at the commercial heart of the City of London in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, with shops for the sale and manufacture of luxury goods, including many goldsmiths. The location where the hoard was found is thought to have been the cellar of a Jacobean goldsmith's house and his stock in trade was probably hidden away when he went off to fight in the English Civil War and was one of a row known as Goldsmith's Row which was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666.



In 1912 some workmen demolishing several derelict old buildings broke through into a long built over cellar and made an amazing discovery of some 500 items including cameos, rock crystal bowls, necklaces and rings, bodkins, buttons and beads. The temptation was too much for them, and they hid the pieces in their hats, handkerchiefs and pockets and took them off to a gentleman called George F. Lawrence, known as 'Stony Jack'. He had for many years paid workmen to bring him their finds, and was reputed to have toured the pubs offering navvies £1 or a pint of beer for anything of interest that they found. On this particular day the workmen involved went along to his shop and emptied out their sack of earth. He immediately realised the historical importance of their find, paid them off and contacted one of the museums with which he was involved. (Mr Lawrence eventually became the official Inspector of Excavations for the very new London Museum.)

Items were dispersed amongst a number of museums, and the exhibition which was seen by our U3A members was the first time that they had all been displayed together. One of the things that was special



about this find was that the jewels were not the familiar type made for the aristocracy, but those designed for the merchant classes whom one newspaper described as 'the jet setters of their day'.

Almost every precious and semi-precious stone was represented – there were even one or two counterfeit ones – proving that nothing changes!

The Editor

OUR U3A: By Jenna Wood

For many years in Aylesbury Vale
Older people could tell a tale!
Instead of sitting by their fires
They pick up books; get up and go
To French or music or so and so.
They really are such live wires.

Some put on boots and walk for miles,
Round muddy fields, climbing stiles –
Not alone I'd like to add

Always with others which makes them glad.
They learn all sorts of useful things
Experiencing the joy that brings.

They meet old friends, make new ones too,
There's never time for feeling blue.
Not really old, but young in heart,
They find it good to take a part.
There's something for them every day
In Aylesbury Vale's U3A!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Exploring London Walks:

I am sorry to announce that I will no longer be able to conduct the 'Exploring London' walks due to a health problem. May I take this opportunity to thank Norman McRae and Ray Halsey whose co-operation and assistance have helped to make these walks so enjoyable over the years.

But all is not lost! I am pleased to inform all those interested that the walks will continue under the guidance of Peter Harding and Tony Poth. By the time that you read this letter, it is hoped that the first of their walks will already have taken place.

Bill Gibblings

The Garden Group:

It is with deep regret that I can no longer continue to organise the Garden Group due to extenuating circumstances. Ann Dwyer is also having to give up. We have done a programme up to October which I will oversee. Is there anyone out there who would be willing to take on this group? I would be happy to act in an advisory capacity and the format could be different. I have enjoyed running this large group and feel that I am letting you all down after so short a spell of leadership but I have no choice.

Chris Reading

Daphne Shearer thought that readers might be interested in 'The Great British Sculpture Show' at Hatfield House which runs until 30th September. A walk around the gardens took her past some 82 sculptures, and there was also a café, and a variety of shops. She



sent these photos to encourage you to visit!



Dancing Skeletons and Durer's Rhinoceros in bronze resin



A VERY WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Richard Clark, Pat Cowell, Judith & Robin Hamilton, Gerry Keep, Jane & Tony Manwaring, Jane McCarthy, Sue Morgan, Jennifer Mann, Roger Murphy, and Susan Smith.

HAVE BOWLS—WILL TRAVEL!

We are at the start of yet another Bowls season as I write, with much to look forward to. However we have not been idle while we “wintered”. 54 of us went to Bembridge in February to play in an indoor Bowls tournament against teams from around the country. We did get two teams as far as the quarter finals, alas no further, but the bonus of not doing better is that we had a day free to explore the island and we could use our bus passes over there! It was an excellent few days that everyone enjoyed – or so they all said.

Encouraged by this venturing across the water, in April six members from our U3A joined a group organised by Broomwade Bowls Club to Tavira in Portugal. We played four games against local clubs who of course were all well used to bowling outside in the sun while we had yet to venture outside and it is quite different to indoor bowling. While we did not win a match we did have several winning rinks and our three ladies, Elinor Paterson, Daphne Shearer and Mary Rogers, all figured in the highest winning rink during the week each receiving a small prize. Hopefully we will now all have a slight advantage over players here who have yet to adjust to an outdoor rink, at least for the first couple of games!



Tavira is a charming town on the Algarve, not too touristy and we had an excellent hotel with both an outdoor and indoor swimming pool. There was entertainment each evening but most of us played cards or pool though we missed Cyril with his dominoes. The weekend was free so we took a ferry to the Ile de Tavira before lunching al fresco in the town. Next day we went on safari which we were told means a journey – no lions or tigers but a whole day in jeeps exploring the countryside up and down mud roads with orange groves, fig trees, cork trees etc and many wild birds. We saw the real Portugal and stopped for an excellent lunch where everything was grown locally including the chickens, as much as we could eat and drink and all in brilliant sunshine. Now we are hoping for similar weather for our season here.

Mary Rogers

P.S. Mary is too modest to say so, but she was personally awarded the ‘Top Lady’ title by the organisers. Many congratulations to her.

The Editor

INTER-U3A MEETINGS A report from Peter Gasson

A series of liaison meetings between Aylesbury Vale U3A and other local U3As has been taking place over the past eighteen months and is now well established. The programme began in October 2012 with a meeting organised by Aylesbury Vale U3A at Aylesbury Bowls Club. Representatives of five other U3As attended for a wide-ranging discussion in which we talked about matters of common interest. Since then there have been three more meetings, and at the last two the meeting has focused on one particular topic – speakers at one, visits and excursions at the most recent. Some useful information has come out of these, for example a list of speakers drawn from several U3As. The next meeting will concentrate on interest and study groups.

To date we have met representatives of the U3As of Aston Clinton, Buckingham & District, Haddenham, Mid Bucks (Aylesbury), Tring, Wendover and Weston Turville.

THE TRANSPORT GROUP



Photo by Ron Meadowcroft

Members of the Transport Group recently had a fascinating guided tour of what has been described as “The cathedral of the railways” – St. Pancras station.

When the Midland Railway finally opened its London terminus in 1868, it wanted to make a splash. For those of you who have passed through this station without giving it a second glance, here are some comments that members made.

“I was impressed by the architecture. I had never noticed the beautiful frieze of Minton tiles before.”

“I loved the decorative arches of red and white brick. They reminded me of the mosque in Cordoba.”

“Compared to the elegant façade of the Great Northern Hotel, the St. Pancras edifice is way over the top!”

“I found the Victorian history of the structural engineering of St. Pancras and King’s Cross fascinating. The design engineers for St. Pancras understood the problems associated with King’s Cross, built 16 years earlier, and were able to overcome them by revolutionary design.”

“The single span roof they created is amazing. I didn’t realise it was the largest structure of its kind in the world at the time.”

“I had never thought about why the station is built above ground level. It’s to get over the Regent’s Canal. They went under it at King’s Cross and the trains had an awful job climbing the gradient out of the station!”

“I didn’t know they used to store barrels of beer brought down from the northern breweries in the undercroft.”

COFFEE FOR ANYONE ?

I was at the April U3A meeting listening to the notices, when I was jolted upright by Shirley saying that it would be good to have an article about the coffee mornings for the next newsletter. The idea had honestly never occurred to me and was swiftly followed by: 'I organise them but whatever would I write?' – well...the meetings are on alternate monthly Wednesday mornings in the Broad Leys pub on the Wendover Road, from 10.30 a.m. onwards. There is unlimited coffee (or tea if you prefer it) although you have to move fast if you want a biscuit! The cost is £1.75 per person.



They were originally meant as sociable gatherings for all members, particularly those who cannot come to the monthly meetings. Now we welcome a mix of Associate Members and full members, and they provide a way of learning about the activities of various groups. We usually have anything from a dozen to thirty members there, giving you the chance to meet new people, put faces to names and enjoy laughing and talking. What more can I say except that the dates for the rest of this year are 16th July, 17th September and 19th November? See you there!

Maxine Robinson



DO YOU KNOW THE MEMBERS OF YOUR GROUP ?

We have a very successful and friendly U3A – so much so that we now have Associate Member status to allow more to attend our popular groups. The internet is the medium used most frequently to search for local activities – please note that no personal details are put on there, other than a name, and any emails from that source are channelled through the U3A host mailbox. It is highly likely, therefore, that Group Leaders will receive enquiries from interested parties whom they do not know.

As all activities are the responsibility of the Executive Committee, who are the 'insured', attendance at groups is normally limited to those who are paid up Full or Associate Members with Aylesbury Vale U3A (AVU3A). Should there be vacancies, and it doesn't prevent attendance by one of our own members, we have a local agreement that the Group Leader may extend membership to paid-up members of neighbouring U3As.

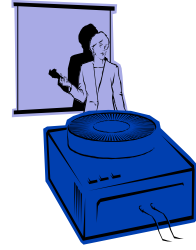
Sometimes we receive queries about group attendance from those who belong to no U3A. If you don't know whether someone is a member then please remember to ask to see their membership card, to check it is valid. Occasionally, there may be a special case for admitting others. These should be put to the Executive Committee for approval. Remember that for a very small annual fee all those over the age of 55, not in full-time work, can join and enjoy our whole range of activities. If you know someone who wants to do so, then put them in touch with Diane who will facilitate their joining us.

Hazel Burgess: Groups Co-ordinator

SPEAKERS CORNER

WEDNESDAY 9TH JULY: CYNTHIA FOWLER – BRAZIL

Our globe-trotting ex-chairman, Cynthia Fowler, will show her own film and talk about her recent extensive tour of Brazil, covering the history and geography of the country, which is the largest and most diverse in South America. We will see Brazil via several long journeys into the hinterland and Amazonia, starting in the most spectacular city, Rio de Janeiro. A great deal of travelling was necessary in this country of huge distances. For example a visit to see one of the larger tributaries of the Amazon involved a six day river trip. Those of you interested in the many different indigenous peoples of Brazil will not be disappointed as many will be shown living along the banks of the huge tributaries of the Amazon. Cynthia's film will also show the other side of Brazil with cities where the rich and poor are so far apart in income, and the difficulties ahead for such a large fast-growing country.



WEDNESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER: MIKE BEECH – FROM CONFUCIUS TO THE 21ST CENTURY

Mike Beech, who has visited AVU3A previously, will give a wide-ranging talk on China. He will cover the history from the earliest Xia dynasty in 2000 BC through to the final dynasty which came to an end in 1912, and will highlight the Great Wall of China, and the Terracotta Army in the city of Xian. He will then bring us right up to date with the massive changes to the Chinese way of life over the past 30 years. China has emerged from its traditional agricultural past to become a major source of manufactured goods for the world. At the same time it has become a superpower in geopolitical terms.

WANTED – NEW CHAIRMAN !!

I have decided that I will relinquish the post of Chairman at the October Annual Meeting. I have now held the post for 4 years, (and was previously Secretary for 5 years). High time for a rest for me, and the chance for a change for you. It has been an extremely enjoyable experience, and I would recommend it to anyone. So please give serious

thought to the new appointee and, as we have not had a Vice Chairman to share the burden this year, we urgently need to fill both posts. Please do not hesitate to volunteer – if I can do it so can you! I will be happy to talk with anybody who would like to know what is involved.

Shirley Stokes



EMERGENCY FIRST AID TRAINING

Dot Simmons will be arranging another Training Session for our members (by popular request!). It will be held at the Aylesbury Bowls Club on 13th October from 9 – 12 noon. The fee is £10. We would encourage you to attend – in an emergency this could be a life-saver!

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

LEARNING ABOUT LONDON:

If you happened to walk down New Fetter Street in London on 25 April 2014 you could have seen Aylesbury's MP. But this was only a statue of the infamous John Wilkes who was MP for Aylesbury in 1757 and also Lord Mayor of London. However, you would also see a group of U3A London Walkers from Aylesbury Vale posing for a photograph around the statue, with their new mascot.



The walk 'West of St. Paul's' gave us the chance to see some of the places that inspired Charles Dickens. The stories of 'A Christmas Carol', 'Pickwick Papers' and 'Oliver Twist', for example, included references to parts of London that we actually walked through. Many of us then lunched in 'The Olde Cheshire Cheese' which Dickens used as it was local to his newspaper office in Fleet Street, so they say.



Photos and text from Peter Harding

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

THURSDAY 10TH JULY: A day visit to Brighton to do as you please. The Royal Pavilion, the famous 'Lanes' for shopping, the promenade, and the train which takes you to the Marina, cafes and promenade are all within easy reach. Cost £18 per head.



WEDNESDAY 16TH JULY: Our next very sociable Coffee Morning at the Broad Leys Pub on the Wendover Road at 10.30 a.m. Tea and biscuits available – cost £1.75 per person. Please come and join us!

THURSDAY 28th AUGUST: A day in Winchester and The Vyne. The morning is spent in Winchester with its cathedral, its medieval Great Hall, its working water mill (NT) and of course the shops. In the afternoon we go to The Vyne, a wonderfully preserved Tudor country house with beautiful gardens (NT). Price to be confirmed. Outings@avu3a.org.uk.

WEDNESDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER: Another date for a very enjoyable Coffee Morning for all members at The Broad Leys P.H., Wendover Road at 10.30 a.m. Come along and join the rush for the biscuits!

MONDAY 24TH – TUESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER: the Thursford Christmas Spectacular with an overnight stay. Details from Gay and Ian Hancock Outings@avu3a.org.uk.

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION.....

Hazel Burgess looks back.

It was a beautiful sunny morning and the scent of new mown grass filled the air. Tea and coffee were served in beautiful matching china, in a newly refurbished room. The table was laden with home made delectable cakes and savouries. Not a garden party but the annual group leaders' meeting at the Bowls Club. We were there to celebrate the work of our study groups and to take feedback from our members, and we recognised that the success of our friendly U3A was due to the sum of all its parts – predominantly our 40-plus groups.

After discussion, we felt it was important to continue to display the work of our groups in an appropriate way. We will still have tables at our monthly meetings but, rather than allocate these to all, it will be to those who say they would like to use this medium. Group leaders who wish to reserve a slot should contact Hazel Burgess, Groups Co-ordinator.

We still want to see what others do and hope they will send articles and photos to Shirley for this newsletter. As the internet grows in popularity for all, especially through the growing use of smart phones and tablets, we would like to see more group news on our highly acclaimed website – news and pictures should be sent to Ron Meadowcroft who will arrange this. The Committee will also consider other ad hoc celebratory events to showcase the activities of groups.

It is not only thanks to group leaders, but also to Dot Simmonds, Sheila Syrratt and Bobby Cadwallader who helped provide the delicious refreshments for their meeting.

‘A LEADER IS ONE WHO KNOWS THE WAY, GOES THE WAY, AND SHOWS THE WAY’

This quotation attributable to John Maxwell seems to describe Bill Gibbings’s contribution to ‘London Walks’. First, as Deputy Leader to Norman McRae and then as Leader assisted by Ray Halsey, Bill has completed 53 walks over 10 years. Bill has led walks through the alleyways of the City, the parks and woodlands of London and was always looking for a new walk. This is a considerable achievement and shows dedication that will be missed now that Bill is not able to continue.



Walkers will remember Bill enjoying some interesting locations, illustrated by these photos. Thank you for your knowledge and enthusiasm Bill.

Peter Harding



Photographs contributed by Ray Halsey & Tony Poth



TRUSTED TRADESPEOPLE

Sheila Sylvester tells us that while you are very good at passing on the names of tradespeople who have done satisfactory work for you, she hasn’t had many requests for names. The service is only there to help you, particularly if you are new to the area, so don’t forget about it!

Contact: Trusted@avu3a.org.uk.



LOOK FORWARD TO.....

The Thames Valley Network has some exciting activities planned, so we thought we would whet your appetite with these 'early warnings'.



Local History: 30th September, Methodist Church, Witney.

Poetry – The Works of Modern Poets: 29th October, Emmbrook School, Wokingham.

Digital Photography – The Photographer's Eye: 19th November, Benson Village Hall.



And in 2015...

Books: March, John Mason School, Abingdon.

English Painting – Hogarth to Pre-Raphaelites: 10th April, Rewley House, Oxford.

Saving the Nation's Heritage – The Work of The National Trust: May, Waddesdon Manor.

Forensic Science: May/June, Culham Laboratories.

Plants and the Oxford Botanic Gardens: July, Oxford Botanic Gardens.

Philosophy: September/October, Rewley House, Oxford.

History of Opera: November, Rewley House, Oxford.



Meanwhile, both this year and next the popular Historic Pathways Project will continue with a programme of study days, meetings and walks. To end this year's work there is to be a St. Birinus Pilgrimage event on 5th July – Churn Knob, Blewbury, to Dorchester Abbey – and a Study Day on 24th September at the River & Rowing Museum, Henley on Thames.

For more information visit the website: www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk or speak to Geoff Young who is our representative.

Last date for copy for the Autumn Newsletter will be August 10th 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! As soon as you have news to share send it to the Editor 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.