



### U3A Christmas Party 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011

A hoard of Wel-Hat U3A members descended on the Homestead Court Hotel on the last Wednesday of the autumn term dressed to the nines and ready to party. The hotel dining room was looking very festive and colourful with the tables laid out complete with Party Favours and Christmas Crackers. Soon the crackers were being pulled, party hats were donned and the pre ordered food was served. As wine flowed the noise level

increased and rude noises were heard, but not to worry it was just those loud balloons jetting around the room. There were some red faces caused by the effort of blowing them up, but it was worth it to see them shooting across the room into other tables causing gales of laughter. The food was good, the company excellent and a good time was had by all - and the pictures prove it.

# Anniversary celebrations



On 29 February we celebrated our Silver Anniversary: 25 years since Welwyn-Hatfield U3A affiliated to the Third Age Trust. Ludwick Family Centre was gaily decorated for the occasion. Two Guests of Honour were welcomed: Val Fieth, who set up the first meetings in 1986 from which the branch grew, and Joan Bensley, its founder-Chairman.

After we had heard and thoroughly enjoyed an excellent talk on the history of illusion, with stunning examples, Sue Kershaw outlined the history of our U3A. It had grown through the 25 years from an initial six enthusiastic members to the current 634, with 54 special study groups. She paid tribute to the sequence of thirteen Chairmen (six of whom were present at the meeting), who "had given unstintingly of their time and expertise"; to all the dedicated committee members; and to the group coordinators "who provide stimulation for our minds and bodies". All our endeavours are people-oriented, she said: the members are the essence of U3A, strongly motivated. She looked forward to our 50th anniversary in 2037, sure that the branch would remain "vibrant, active and positive".

A special cake, baked by Phyl Grainge and

ceremonially cut by Val, Joan and Sue, was distributed, glasses of champagne provided, and a toast drunk to U3A. Then Chairman-elect Judy Grant reminded us of life and conditions in 1987, with a show of slides from that year. As Sue said, this was the present: we had just reviewed the past; "The future is up to you".

*Photographs by Geoff Bowers*

## Our Silver AGM

The Annual General Meeting on 7 March was extremely well attended. In her final Chairman's Report Sue Kershaw referred to the new W-H U3A office — a laptop; the introduction of Standing Orders for subscription payment; the new use of email and the website for communication with members; the move to Breaks Manor as the venue for our Hatfield Wednesday meetings; and the celebrations of our 25th anniversary. Mike Dorrington, Treasurer, reported an increasing membership and healthy funding for the forthcoming year. Other reports showed an average attendance of 160 at the Wednesday meetings, 33 speakers at these during the last year, and 54 Special Study Groups.

Taking over as the new Chairman, Judy



Grant paid tribute to Sue Kershaw on her two years in the office, saying that Sue had worked tirelessly on our behalf, showing a clear vision and attention to detail; she was always approachable and keen to be in touch with members. Her assertion that we all owed Sue a great debt of gratitude was met with hearty applause.

Following the business part of the meeting, members of the Creative Writing Group — Catherine Foster, Tony Godfrey, Ann Higgs,

Jean Hughes, Roy Madell and Harry Smith — gave readings from their group's "homework". These were much applauded, and, as Judy said, included items both funny and moving.

The Group's fourth anthology, *Voices*, contains four poems and twelve stories. It costs £2.00, in aid of the National Deaf Children's Society.

*Photograph by Aidan Bell*

## Meet the Groups

This annual event on 28 March in Ludwick Hall again provided an inviting exhibition, well attended. Our 56 groups (two new ones, London History and Travel, were exhibiting) showed stalls plentifully displaying books (German, History, Italian, London History, Philosophy/Psychology, Play Reading, Poetry, World Affairs) and photographs (Architecture, France, and — of course — the Photographic Group. This last had a succession of colourful digital photographs showing on a firedoor in the foyer, as well as printed photographs on boards. Watercolours showed their own productions. The Music Appreciation Group showed CDs; Wildlife Watch, details and pictures of their outings.

The Creative Writing Group showed samples of their writing. Family History had an elaborate display of certificates, census pages, genealogical trees and other old documents, the Gardening Group put up a great display of flowers and herbs, gardening implements and books, fronted by Peter Reeves.

There were animated displays by the Canasta Group, with four players seated at a card table engaged in a game; and the Line Dancing Group, led by Bill Sloane: first in a demonstration dance by five members, then, after issuing a challenge to the audience to join in, a mass dancing chorus.

*Photographs by Ron Benfield and Val Fieth*





## Group news

### ART APPRECIATION GROUP

The group enjoyed an informative year in 2011. We watched videos about the lives and works of various artists, and made visits by public transport to John Wesley's Museum, St John's Priory, Chiswick House, the British Library, the Wellcome Institute, the V&A museum and the Brompton Oratory.

We travelled to Richmond and Ham House, a lovely National Trust property, and to Brighton, where as well as seeing the sea we toured the magnificent Pavilion. In August we visited Waltham Abbey and Copped Hall where we saw the renovations and were given a very informative history of the house. Our last visit was to Birmingham, where the museum housed part of the Staffordshire Hoard and the Art Gallery had

an outstanding stained glass windows gallery. In the afternoon we visited the Cathedral, which has fine Burne- Jones windows.

We have now started our 2012 programme. We have watched videos on Manet and Holbein, and visited an excellent exhibition on Dickens at the Museum of London. The group picture taken there shows, from left to right, Carol Ewen, Angela Farr, Pat Brown, Teifi Massingham, Jean Weeks, Joyce Key, Jean Withey, Margaret Lewis, Margaret Tavner and Sue King.

April will see us in Aylesbury and Claydon House. We have two public transport outings arranged: in May, a backstage tour of the Royal Opera House, and in September a visit to the Royal Academy. Our planned coach outings are to Guildford and Watts Gallery in

June; Chelmsford and Hylands House, which includes a cream tea, in July; and Grimsthorpe Castle and Gardens in August.

All U3A members are welcome on our coach outings. For further information on ticket sales contact me on: 01707 263206.

*Pat Pearce*

and Hartham Park. The group put up a most impressive display at Meet the Groups, and is starting a project based on the AIM motorway.

*Examples of the group's work shown below are "Hot Chestnuts" at Mill Green by June Copping and "Fireworks at Hatfield House" by Pat Ellis.*



## PHOTOGRAPHIC GROUP

This group continues to produce its own fortnightly illustrated newsletter, which can be seen on the W-H U3A website by clicking on it in the list of Study Groups. Topics for meetings in the last five months have included Photoshop Elements, Desk Top Publishing and Portraits, with Out and About visits to Waterford Heath, Verulamium Park, St Albans Abbey, Mill Green Christmas Fair

## RECORDER GROUP

Our group may be the oldest in W-H U3A. Margaret Turner and Mary Ruffett attended the first Open Meeting at Campus West in 1986 to discuss the formation of a local U3A. Mary asked for a U3A Recorder group, and Margaret said she would convene a Recorder group and host it at her house; but after one session found she had bitten off more than she could chew, and asked me to tutor the new group. I was (am) a playing member of the local branch of the Society of Recorder Players, and was running an evening class for teachers. I agreed.

We started, Mary brought her friend Doris Bullen, some members of my teachers' class came, and soon we could play simple trios. When the group got too large to meet in a house the local authority kindly allowed us to meet rent-free in the lounge of a Council flats complex.

The group continued to grow, up to 27 at one time, but then gradually shrank to just



eight, as members died, moved away, or had to give up because of eye-trouble, arthritic fingers or other ill- health.

Margaret Turner moved away – how we missed her! – and Connie Jenkins took over as Convenor for several years, but eye and health problems made her give up, and Rita Roberts took over. After Rita’s death Belinda Putley took over, but administrative details and demands changed and I was able to take over from Belinda.

In 1992-3 our members attended a course and met people from Seaford U3A. We helped them to enlarge their repertoire, and had joint concerts with them with a group led by Margaret Turner’s daughter. Some of us went to Margaret’s U3A group in South Wales for a weekend. A group of us spent a fortnight in Arisaig, West Scotland, swimming and walking in the mornings and playing recorders in the afternoons and evenings.

We are now 18 strong, still meeting on Thursday mornings, and enjoying a wide range of music from the 17th to the 20th Century. Our recorders are descants (the small, shrill instrument taught in schools), trebles (which for musicians of the 17th Century were equal to flutes), tenors (an octave below the descants) and basses (an octave below the trebles). A treble sounds 5 notes, a fifth, lower than a descant, and sounds like a soft flute – indeed, the French name for it is “flute douce”. A descant can sound just as “douce” but it takes careful breath control to prevent the dire shrillness that schoolchildren and their families have to endure in the early stages.

Few of our original members are left – Greta Plowman, Belinda Putley, and me – but new members have joined from far-off places: Old Welwyn, Hatfield, St Albans, Watford, Hertford and even Enfield as well as Garden Citizens.

We do a lot of sight-reading, and I do very little teaching! I just produce the music, say

how fast I think it should go initially and conduct it, listening for inaccurate reading of notes, accidentals, counting and rhythms. Otherwise the members teach themselves.

Recently we celebrated our end of term by going to “Body and Soul” at Christchurch Parkway where we were given a splendid lunch. To thank them we played a 17th century motet and Henry Purcell’s “Fairest Isle”. A joint concert with them was arranged.

I have occasional small groups of players at my house to encourage them in their sight-reading and give practice in playing one-to-a-part. Also I give one-to-one lessons (usually) for people who feel not quite up to the standard of the rest of the group.

*Diana Reddaway, Convenor (and conductor) of the Recorder group.*

## **THEATRE TRIPS**

Any theatre visit organised by Margaret Hakansson is certain to run like clockwork and be thoroughly enjoyable. So it proved in January when a coach load of our U3A members travelled to the charming, small Watermill Theatre near Newbury.

The Theatre is a converted mill beside the gently flowing river Lambourn in the village of Bagnor – which could almost have served as the setting for the play we were to see.

*The Wind in the Willows* is a classic story for children, written in 1908 by Kenneth Grahame. It was later adapted as a play, then as a TV series (1984-88) and as a film in 1996. The Watermill had chosen the play as its Christmas 2011 production.

After an excellent lunch in the restaurant we settled down in the packed auditorium for the final matinée performance. It told a tale of friendship and adventure among Riverside rodents, and was filled not only with action but also with loud music played by the cast on a variety of instruments – and fun.

A Water Rat and a Mole idle away their time on a river bank (sometimes going afloat

in their small boat) little knowing that they, with the wise Mr Badger, are about to embark on a hectic adventure. Their friend, the incorrigible Mr Toad, is obsessed with his latest acquisition (a motor car which he drove wildly around the stage) and upsets the tranquil lives of everybody – including himself. The tale unfolds as the friends try to outwit the marauding Weasels of the Wild Wood and fight to reclaim Toad Hall for its rightful owner – which, of course, they eventually do!

The final applause left no doubt that everybody had thoroughly enjoyed the show. Thanks again, Margaret!

*Harry Stull*

## **Email Circulation**

We now have email addresses for about 70% of our membership and have put in place a system to circulate emails to these members.

This offers considerable possibilities for improving communication so that we can announce news, coming events and study group activities, and also, in an emergency, such as bad weather, advise members of meetings being cancelled.

Early emails using this system have included announcements of a Digital Photography Course and a History of London Group.

If you have an email address and have not received these messages, please email [mail@u3awelhat.org.uk](mailto:mail@u3awelhat.org.uk) and we will see your details are added.

---

## **Obituary**

### **Martyn James Lomas, 1935-2012**

Martyn gained a double 1st in Classics at University College, Oxford, then studied Physics there. He spent most of his working life with ICI, originally in Teeside. After his marriage to Rosalie in 1961 he was transferred to Welwyn Garden City 1963, where his two sons were born. After leaving ICI he worked for The British Sulphur Corporation until he retired in 1996.

Martyn and Rosalie joined Welwyn Hatfield U3A in 2003. He tutored the Latin

class from 2004 until just before his death, freely passing on his great depth of knowledge about ancient and modern languages, particularly his love of ancient Greek. This was of great help too to the Roman History group. He also led the Spanish group for many years. Martyn and Rosalie often went on the U3A holidays.

Martyn had a great presence: he will be missed both at the Wednesday meetings and by the groups he was involved in, but we are extremely lucky in having Rosalie take on his mantle to tutor our thriving Latin class.

*Ann Smith*

### **U3A Welwyn-Hatfield NEWSLETTER**

Published three times yearly, in January, May and September. Edited by Hazel K. Bell  
Available on the Website, in full colour, plus cumulative index to issues 1-39, at  
[www.u3awelhat.org.uk](http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk)

© U3A Welwyn-Hatfield 2012

Printed by Triographics Printers Ltd, 121 London Road, Knebworth, SG3 6EX

Copydate for September 2012 issue is 6 August 2012.

Send copy and photographs to [hkb@aidanbell.com](mailto:hkb@aidanbell.com)



# Wednesday morning meetings - Summer 2012

*APRIL 25, Hatfield: John Wing 'Malt, Milk and Medicine'*

John is a retired pharmacist who spent thirty years in the Medicine Safety Division of Glaxo. Since retirement he has given much of his time to Ware Museum and is an active member of Ware U3A.

*MAY 2, WGC: Louise Reed as 'Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst'*

Louise speaks as Mrs Pankhurst, talking about her early endeavours to promote votes for women, including life in Holloway.

*9, Hatfield: Johnny Tait - 'From Red Coat to Hatfield'*

Johnny has been in the entertainment business for many years. He will tell us about life as a Red Coat, as a comedian and his involvement in the theatre.

*16, WGC: Keith Baldwin - 'What a laugh!'*

Keith, a former Household Cavalry Soldier and retired Police Officer, will take a healthy look at laughter, plus a chance to have a chuckle or two.

*23, Hatfield: Justin Burgess - 'A Brief History of British Funerals + Q&A'*

Justin works in his family's business of Funeral Directors, which has been part of the local community for over 160 years.

*30, WGC: Meryl Catty - 'Our Newspaper Heritage'*

Meryl is a freelance lecturer and currently Vice President of the East London Family History Society.

*JUNE 6, Hatfield: Martin Lloyd - 'Passports, Traitors & Spies'*

Martin is a writer of history, travel humour and fiction.

*13, WGC: Jerry Stone - 'The Day They*

*Launched a Woodpecker'*

In the 1980s Jerry was on the curatorial staff at the Science Museum, covering Astronomy, Space and Exploration collections. He is a Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society and the Royal Astronomical Society and Director of the Mars Society UK.

*20, Hatfield: Jack Andrew - 'Robert Burns'*

Jack speaks as Robert Burns. He worked as a college lecturer until his retirement in 2010. His wife, Carolyn, helps Jack to bring his talks to life and provides music and history.

*27, WGC: Peter Lawrence 'Hidden Historical Treasures of Whitehall'*

Peter is a retired member of Royalty and Diplomatic Protection at Scotland Yard; an author, broadcaster and Freeman of the City of London.

*JULY 4, Hatfield: Carly Walker - 'Rubbish, Waste & Recycling'*

Carly is the Waste and Recycling Officer for Welwyn Hatfield District Council.

*11, WGC: Robert Keating - 'The Rothschilds and Waddesdon Manor'*

We will hear about the Rothschild family and their connection with Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire.

*18, Hatfield: Colin Oakes - 'Charles Dickens' Funny Childhood'*

Colin is qualified in Archaeology and London Studies. He has talked to us before on 'John Betjeman's London'.

*25, Roe Green Hall, Hatfield, 2-4 pm - ANNIVERSARY GARDEN PARTY.*

Food will be provided. Bring your own chairs if you wish to sit outside.

**Next Term starts on 12 September at Welwyn Garden City, with an Art Exhibition.**