



**UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE
NEWSLETTER January 2014 Issue 45**

The full colour version of the newsletter is on our website at
<http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk/newsletters.html>

Art and Photography Exhibition



The third Art and Photo Exhibition and Demonstration by the Greetings Cards, Multimedia, Photography and Watercolours Groups opened the 2013 Autumn term. It was held at Ludwick Family Centre on 11 September; the hall was packed for the occasion, having wide examples of the groups' work, with several artists working there on their creations.

The 133 members attending enjoyed the wide range of artwork on display and chatting to the group's members about their work. All the participants were eager to share their enthusiasm for their chosen activity and encouraged those attending to try their hand, even if they hadn't done any sort of artwork since leaving school.



Mary Price of the Mixed Media Art Group with a picture painted by Tony Brown



The Watercolour Group's display

Merle Davey & Joy Willitson from the Greeting Cards group were keen to show what can be achieved by showing their own creative designs, some of which were purchased by members. There's room for more in the class if you're interested in giving it a try.

Mary Price, Anthony Brown and Rachel Adams were busy at the Multi-Media Art A display, showing their skills at acrylics, pastels and watercolour. Occasionally members of the group may go on a course and share their knowledge with the others. They do have one new member following this event and space for possibly three more.





"The Art and the Artist", taken at the exhibition by Jean Tookey.

Christine Hester and members of the Multi-Media Art & Craft Group B were working at and talking about their own crafts, and displayed a variety of items produced by the group. Tapestry, knitting, jewellery, mosaics, crocheting, painting with oil or watercolours and drawing with crayons, pencil or charcoal, are tackled by them. Knitted scarves and hats have been sent to soldiers in Afghanistan and teddy bears sent to Africa. Two new members have joined recently and there is room for more.

Ivan Ladley, Ken Wright and David Dickinson mounted a display of photographs to show

the mixture of subject matter chosen by their Photography group. This group covers different aspects of photography throughout the year, having recently had a session on developing negatives, from someone who has obviously been involved in photography for many years. They have gained a few new members from the exhibition and have space for a few more.

There were four or five people representing the Watercolour group. As Cecil Covell explained, it's not easy to demonstrate this skill. Having a wide example of the group's work and talking about how they are very much a self-help group learning to hone their skills, often using photographs or still life to work from, was the best way to encourage others to have a go. There are only six to eight places available, due to space constraints, and the group is currently at maximum capacity.

Suzanne Brown

First three photographs by Geoff Bowers

U3A Conference 2013

Our Chairman and Vice Chairman, Judy Grant and Jack Wood, representing Welwyn Hatfield U3A, attended the National AGM and Conference in September. They recommend the full account of this occasion given in *Third Age Matters* Issue 9, Winter 2013 (pages 4-7), as covering every aspect of the event, very interesting and well-written.

Notes from the Chair

Happy New Year to everyone! I hope your Christmas went well and you enjoyed the festivities and the break. Since the last newsletter we have had a term packed full of activities and study. This culminated in the Christmas Party and the Christmas Lunch. Many thanks to all those who contributed to their success. As I write, it is the end of November so I trust that I may predict much enjoyment!



As the days lengthen we generally find that our enthusiasm and energy levels rise, so it is a good time to consider joining a new group or starting one. I would particularly like to welcome new members and hope that you will find interesting groups and congenial companions. There will be a New Members' Coffee Morning on Monday 24 February 2014.

At this point I would like to welcome a new member of our Committee. Carol Mills has taken on the position of Secretary and we hope that she will enjoy this.

I would like to raise another matter. As a committee we are in the process of examining our finances, particularly our outgoings. The rental for our Wednesday Meeting halls has recently risen, more groups need paid accommodation and the payments made for established groups have increased also. We aim to keep you in the picture about our progress and would welcome any thoughts that you may have. We will not make any changes in the near future.

I am sure that this new term will be filled with interesting study and enjoyable social occasions. As many of you will know, we have recently had problems with seating everyone attending the Wednesday Meeting at Breaks Manor. We are looking into the possibility of purchasing more chairs and I will keep you posted as to our progress.

Best wishes to you all,

Judy Grant

GROUP NEWS

Details of all groups' activities and plans can be found on our website at <http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk/groups.html>

Book Discussion Group

We had enjoyed reading and discussing *Miss Garnet's Angel* at our monthly Book Group meeting. Written by Salley Vickers, it tells the story of Julia Garnet who goes to Venice after her friend dies. She encounters the paintings of Tobias and the Angel (Raphael) in the local church and finds her lifetime of caution seriously challenged – like the shifting sea-light of Venice, nothing here is quite as it seems.

Over tea after the discussion someone said 'why don't we go to Venice and find the church of St Raphael?' Why not indeed?

Although most were keen to go, only five of us could make it. So, on a wet Sunday afternoon in early September, Maggie Bolland, Gwen Clarke, Ann Davies and I met at our group organizer, Marion Sklar's house, and with astounding speed and efficiency she found and booked us a four-day trip to Venice.

On 13 October, armed with maps and copies of the book, we headed off to Gatwick Airport for a very civilised (timewise at least) 2.40pm flight to Marco Polo. On arrival we were a little dismayed to find that our hotel was twenty minutes outside the city, but cheered up when we booked in to cosy little rooms and headed off to a trattoria in a local piazza. Over glasses of astoundingly good and cheap local red wine and plates of pasta, we sat outside and watched the locals making their nightly promenade.

The next day dawned misty and after a breakfast of mostly cake, bread and jam (well, we were on holiday!) we set off on the number seven bus to Venice and arrived just as the sun came out. What a breathtaking sight! Amazing buildings, statues, bridges, shining water of the grand canal. After a coffee stop we headed through the colourful stalls of the fruit market in search of St Mark's Square. Needless to say we lost our way many times and appreciated the chance to look at the fashion and glass on sale in the shops and the stunning churches and piazzas we happened upon.

Eventually we found it. Although our plan had been ice cream at Florian's, it was in the shade, so we settled for the café across the square. There we enjoyed pizza and coffee at eighty-five euros while basking in seventy-five degrees of sunshine and listening to the band. In the late afternoon, with aching feet, we fell thankfully into a vaporetto and spent two hours gliding up and down the Grand Canal taking in all the wonderful buildings and the Rialto Bridge lit by a stunning sunset and later by a huge pink moon.



Miss Garnet's quintet enjoying their literary trip to Venice

Day two dawned bright and sunny and, full of anticipation, we headed off in search of Miss Garnet's flat and the church of St Raphael. A vaporetto ride to the Academia Bridge and a leisurely walk took us to the waterfront where we sat in brilliant sunshine eating ice cream and listening to the church bells calling and answering. Maggie noticed that across the water was the sculpture of Alison Lapper, faintly pink in the glorious light of Venice. What's that doing here? – of course, it's the biennial.

Tearing ourselves away, we walked off into a different, quiet world of canals and deserted little squares, speculating which apartment might be Miss Garnet's, until one of us remembered that there was no apartment – it was fictitious! We had suspended our disbelief and stepped right into Miss Garnet's Venice and her sensible spinster schoolmistress's shoes!

On arrival in the quiet little square we found the church of St Raphael, with its front on the canal and St Raphael, Tobias and the dog above the door. This is the church that Salley Vickers stumbled upon one afternoon and spent years trying to find again; when she did, it inspired her to write the book. Imagine our surprise to find other women of a certain age wandering around with copies of the book in hand – we had thought we were the only ones to think of doing the pilgrimage!

Inside the church, the paintings and statues were just as Salley Vickers described them, full of beauty and drama. We felt we really had stepped into



Miss Garnett's world. Reluctantly we left, and headed out into the sunshine, back to the Academia for a quick tour of the Leonardo exhibition.

Our last day dawned sunny and bright with the news of a general strike. Apparently October, November and December is strike season, although nobody seemed to know why they were striking. We took a taxi into Venice where there was an air of celebration as everyone made the most of the day off work, apart from our taxi driver, who declared it 'very disaster'.

After wandering around in the sunshine, stopping for coffee and pasta we made our way back to the airport and back to earth with a bang – flight delayed! But what a great time we'd had.

The next book on our list is *Confederacy of Dunces* – so, perhaps a trip to New Orleans in 2014!

Carol Bush

Photographs by Marion Sklar

Canasta Group

The Canasta Group is celebrating five years since it was formed in 2008 by Sylvia Somerton. The numbers have increased since then, with twenty-one members attending the celebration on Tuesday 22 November. The group has been known to have six tables (of four players) playing on a Tuesday; it is popular, friendly and competitive. Meetings are held in Springfield House, Marsden Green, WGC on the 2nd & 4th Tuesday each month at 2.00 pm.

Our pictures show the group at play, and Sylvia holding the celebration cake made by Joan Lammiman. Sylvia is now stepping down as co-ordinator and taking a back seat, passing the job to Ann Glover.

Tony Lammiman



Exploring London

On 8 November forty members of the Exploring London Group had a guided tour of Tower Bridge. Splitting us into two groups, our guide led us around all parts of the iconic bridge, including the engine room, recounting the history and workings of the bridge and some amusing anecdotes of happenings during the bridge's long history as a central feature of the centre of London.

Our last trip this term will be a walk around old Marylebone in the afternoon of 13 December which will allow our members to stay in the west end of London to view the Christmas Lights.

Our first trip next term will probably take place in the later part of February.

Dennis Edwards & Bridget Durham

Photos by Tony Lammiman





Photography Group

The group ended the summer term with an excellent buffet lunch and puzzling attempts to identify each other from pictures of their infancy. They showed photographs with a Gold theme, photos of Lavender Fields, and their own slide shows; discussed composition and cropping, enhancement of photographs, and portraits; and compared colour with monochrome for photographs, and how/whether to change them.

We show examples of their portraiture: “See no evil” by Shirley Benfield, and one of Viv Turner by Anita Hoyle.



The **Creative Writing** group is changing the day of meeting from January 2014. They will meet on *Monday mornings, 10-12*, commencing on 13 January. This is to make parking more convenient for members. The group meets at the Free Church in Church Road, Welwyn Garden City, and is co-ordinated by Jean Hughes.

Wednesday meetings – Autumn Term 2013

We had some interesting speakers on a variety of topics in the Autumn Term. Unfortunately Alastair Bayford from the Landscape Group was unable to come to talk to us about The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park as arranged, but you can go to see it for yourself as the park is now open to the public, tours are available and the first residents have moved into the village. (For further information go to: queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk.) We were very grateful to Jack Wood who stepped in at the last minute and gave us an excellent talk on 'My Art on My Sleeves'.

We plan to rebook the talk on Knebworth House, which was cancelled in October, and hope to welcome Clare Fleck for this in the Summer Term.

Jack took the stage again at the Christmas Party at Ludwick Hall on 4 December, providing cunning rounds of questions for the quiz before we all enjoyed the splendid finger food and drinks.

Sandy Pizzey



The Christmas lunch at Homestead Court Hotel on 11 December.

Photograph by Judy Grant

A challenging afternoon

It was a very pleasant autumn afternoon on Wednesday 30 October when 12 intrepid volunteers from the Welwyn Hatfield U3A branch ventured over to Chiswell Green to take part in the annual U3A Herts Network Quiz. We were amazed to see just how many branches from across the region were participating – 24 teams of six in total, with some branches, like ours, entering 2 teams. As you can imagine, the hall was pretty crowded!

Our hosts, St Albans, made us all feel very welcome. Our tables were laid out with plenty of scrap paper along with answer sheets and a ‘marathon’ British sitcom quiz, to answer before the break. Our chosen team name was ‘The Hogarths’, inspired by our talk about Hogarth that morning; our partner team was called the Wellies.

There was an initial hiccup with the sound system, resulting in cries of ‘Can’t hear!’ – reminiscent of some of our Wednesday morning meetings! However, the problem was soon sorted and then we were off – 8 rounds of 10 questions each.

Both Welwyn Hatfield teams had a promising start, scoring 9 out of 10 for Round 1 – Local Heroes and Heroines. The individuals selected were interesting, especially ‘The Queen Mother’, who, apparently, was described by Hitler as the most dangerous woman in Europe. Our subsequent scores never quite lived up to our initial success. We both used our Jokers (which teams could use to double their points on a round of their choice) on the science round and both came out with a disappointing score of five. We fared better on music and history but really came a cropper on Phobias and the Natural World. We had no idea that chionophobia was a fear of snow and that achluophobia was a fear of the dark! The Wellies, however, did get the right answer to triskaidekaphobia – fear of the number 13. In the Natural World round, arguments over the smallest continent – Europe or Antarctic? – all came to nothing as the answer was Australia! We debated long and hard over the remaining questions and, somehow, always seemed to plump for the wrong answer, even though the correct answer had been proposed by someone on the table-how frustrating! Both teams were pretty good on the sitcoms, scoring 17 and 19 out of twenty.

Would you believe that, at the end, both teams had exactly the same score of 65 out of 100! Our efforts were surpassed by quite a few teams, with the winners, Lea Valley, scoring an impressive 84.5. We were about joint fifteenth. We were disappointed that there was not a specific literature round (yet a third time!) and that perhaps some

lighter topics could have been chosen. Nevertheless, congratulations to St Albans for a lively and enjoyable afternoon. We certainly came away knowing more about phobias!

Jean Mackie

The seventh in our series of profiles of distinguished Welwyn Hatfield U3A members features ...

Phyl Grainge

Philomena Cantwell was born in Ireland and educated there at a convent school. At 17 she sat the exam to work in the Land Commission of the Civil Service, and left to work in an office in London for three months while awaiting the results. She passed the exam: but Ireland saw her no more. With the alternate paths before her of returning to train while living in a Dublin hostel run by nuns, or remaining in the exciting London of the '60s, our girl chose the latter option. She never entered the Civil Service, but remained a London office worker.



Phyl met Dick Grainge in 1965 and married him in 1967. His work at British Aerospace brought the couple to Harpenden, then Bucks, and finally to Hatfield in 1974. When their three children went to school, Phyl worked in IT and financial services; then became Personal Assistant to the Director of Fundraising and Public Relations at the Isabel Hospice for six years, until she retired.

Phyl joined U3A in the first year of her retirement – agreed to use her secretarial skills to help the newsletter editor, Peter Lomer – then, when his wife became ill, she found herself newsletter editor and on the U3A committee while still a fresher. Her love of cooking – “always happy pottering in the kitchen!” – led her to help Pat Pike with catering for the annual Garden Party. Then, when Pat retired, Phyl took over as head of our Catering Team, managing the Garden Party, Christmas Party and Christmas Lunch each year.

Phyl has joined many of our groups: Art Appreciation, Book Group, Canasta, Italian, Lunch and Walking. Truly a full participant in U3A!

Phyl thinks U3A “a fantastic organization! Provides both learning (in her case, through the Italian and Art and Book groups) and enjoyment (for her, Canasta, walking and lunch)!”

Hazel Bell

Wednesday meetings – Spring Term 2014

JANUARY

8, *Breaks Manor, Hatfield*



Peter Padwick: 'The Story of Music Hall'. Christine and Peter Padwick have a background in teaching and raise money for charity with their talks and murder mystery weekends. This talk will take us from the early 19th century to the end of the First World War and will include short Music Hall songs and historical facts.

15, *Ludwick Family Centre, WGC*

Les Sullivan: 'The Flanders Experience'. Les is a song writer/singer and appears at festivals all over the UK. Originally writing for the UK Folk scene, he now writes for many genres including Theatre, Video and the Internet. This talk is a series of stories from a weekend visit made in November each year for ten years, which have given him the inspiration for many of his songs.

22, *Hatfield*

Sean Lyons: 'How to have Happy Feet and the History of Chiropody'. Sean is a podiatrist in Welwyn Garden City. After qualifying he worked in NHS clinics, specialised in the diabetic foot and went on to become lead podiatrist with a central London teaching hospital. Together with a colleague he then set up his own practice which he combines with his NHS work.

29, *WGC*

Hugh Granger: 'How Our Language Evolved'. Hugh talks on many subjects but this talk is his favourite because, many years ago, he was Chief Examiner in English Language. We will hear the main influences that led to the development of the world's youngest and fastest growing language, from the earliest times to the present day.

FEBRUARY

5, Hatfield

Barry Dodge: 'The Earlier Henry Moore'. Barry was a tutor at the Open University and a lecturer at various arts centres and colleges. He was a guide at The National Gallery and has done research for the English National Opera. For the past five years he has been a guide for The Henry Moore Foundation. We will hear about Moore's work from the 1920s to the 1950s, with a brief look at a few examples of his later work.

12, WGC

Helen Leonard: 'Life as a Child in the Tower of London'. For the first sixteen years of her life Helen lived in the Tower of London as her father was a Beefeater. As a child she found it a fun place to play hide and seek and frequently met the Queen and members of the Royal family.

19, Hatfield

Damien O'Dell: 'Military Mavericks'. Damien is a historian and author. In the talk today we will hear about six warriors who influenced how battles and wars were fought and won.

26, WGC

Paul Whittle: 'Toy Train to the Clouds'. Paul is a Freeman of the City of London with a background in banking. He served in the Royal Corps of Signals TA and is interested in military history and heritage transport. This illustrated talk will take us on a fifty-five mile ride on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway which still uses some of the old, British-built, steam locomotives. We will hear about the work of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society, of which Paul is Vice Chairman.



MARCH

5, Hatfield

AGM

followed by readings from the Creative Writing Group

12, WGC

Marion Maule: 'Japanese Festivals'. Marion has requested a twenty-foot-long table, so there will be something special to see! She has spent a great deal of time in Japan. We will hear about the many festivals there, some to appease the deities and others to give everyone good fortune and a safe life.

19, Hatfield

Bev Curtis: 'From Domesday to S.S.S.I. — a brief history of Sherrards Park Wood'. Bev has lived in Welwyn Garden City next to the woods for more than thirty years and is one of the Wood Wardens who voluntarily help with light tasks in its management. He is also interested in local history.

26, WGC

Fran Sandham: 'Dr Livingstone, I Presume.' We heard about Fran's solo walk across Africa last time, and now welcome him back to hear this human-interest story behind the famous meeting in 1871 between the two African explorers, Dr David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley. Their meeting proved to be the journalistic scoop of the century and Stanley's words became the most famous greeting in history.



APRIL

2, *Hatfield*

Peter Lawrence: 'A Policeman's Lot – from the Krays to the Royals'. Peter is a retired member of Royalty and Diplomatic Protection at Scotland Yard and President of the Woodford Historical Society. He is also an Adult Education Tutor. This talk reflects the dramatic change in policing methods and the laws that governed police duties from 1960 to 1992, when Peter retired.

9, *WGC*

Meet the Groups

Where all our groups can set out their stalls, display their products or subjects, and encourage new members to join.

Next term starts on 7 May at Hatfield

NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS

These will be held at Harper Adams University College, Newport, Shropshire, from 14 to 17 July, and at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, 18-21 August. Details are in the latest issue of *Third Age Matters* and on the National U3A website – <http://www.u3a.org.uk/>

The batch of courses at Cirencester will include Jack Wood lecturing on "The Great Composers" (Music Appreciation) as Tutor (for the third time).

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 1-44, at

www.u3awelhat.org.uk

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Printed by STEPS, St Etheldreda's Church, Hatfield, Herts

Copydate for May 2014 issue is 6 April 2013.

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