

WELWYN & HATFIELD  
**U3A**  
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE  
[www.u3awelhat.org.uk](http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk)  
Registered Charity Number 1019563  
**NEWSLETTER Spring 2019 Issue 60**

## Art & Photography Exhibition 2018



This picture seems to suggest the scene for the seasonal festivities reported in this newsletter – our Christmas party, lunch and dance. But no – it's "Morning Dew Spider" by Michael Nicolas: one of the photographs displayed at the Art & Photo exhibition in November.

This annual event drew more than 130 of us to enjoy a wonderful display of the talents of some of our most skilled and artistic members. Six groups were represented, each setting out an impressive array of

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

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members' creations. Several artists were working away on paintings as we looked on in admiration.

Two very recently formed groups were taking part in the exhibition for the first time, showing they have got off to a flying start. The **Painting** group showed an interesting variety of pieces, including landscapes inspired by photographs and studies of figures composed with an eye for shape and colour; the **Oil Painting** group's display included some wonderful portraits, with Muriel Montgomery working skilfully on a view of Stanborough Lakes (*picture above*).

The **Watercolour** group set out some lovely pieces including landscapes of countryside and coast and here again we were able to see a "work in progress" – so fascinating to those of us who wouldn't know where to start!

Returning for their second year, the **Craftea** group showed beautifully made items such as quilts and embroidered pictures, plus a very attractive display of Christmas tree decorations, which were available to buy for 50p each (*picture overleaf*).

Among the pieces displayed by the **Multi-Media Art** group was a striking portrayal of the demolition of the old Shredded Wheat site, with a huge, bright red machine reaching across the pale, crumbling buildings, like a dinosaur tearing at ancient forests. Other works shown by this group included a superb portrait of an alpaca which caused several people to comment that it was so realistic that it could have been a photo!



More than 80 photos were displayed by the **Photography** group, including stunning landscapes, close-up studies of glorious nature and wonderful facial expressions (*picture below*). One of its photos is shown on the front page, and two in the Photography group's report on page 17.



All those manning the stalls were happy to chat about their various inspirations and techniques, and how their particular group operates; all were happy to encourage new members to give them a try. So, to all of you who have ever wondered whether your creativity could be nurtured into bloom – what are you waiting for?

*Jill Longman; photos by Peter Fox*

*Groups' Coordinator Ann Davies expressed a big thank you to the group leaders and members who took part.*

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## **Christmas party / Quiz**

The atmosphere was buzzing on 5 December at Ludwick Family Centre at our annual quiz and party. Eighty or so members came prepared to feed the 5000 and to exercise their brains in one of Tony's great quizzes! There were six rounds of ten questions. We overheard agonised remarks like "I do know, just give me a moment, I'm sure it starts with an S; Is it George the III or IV? (Actually it was George V who was supposed to have said the immortal words 'bugger Bognor'); Isn't it Emmerdale, no I'm certain it's Coronation Street, well I think it is, hang on, it's on the tip of my tongue ..." etc. The winning team managed 55 out of 60 points. Some people pretended not to be too happy as the same team won last year too (most of them Committee members – our U3A is in good hands!).

Plenty of drink as well as tasty food, both sweet and savoury, was supplied by members including a delicious fruit cake baked by our own David Banks. This year the surfeit of food left at the end was donated to the Food Bank at the New Zion Church in Cole Green Lane.

Tony had said that a prize would be given to the person in the most festive outfit, so there were lots of red tops, Santa hats and flashing jewellery, etc. After a little deliberation the bottle of (vintage!) Prosecco was awarded to a very fetching Sue McLellen.

This was a very promising start to our Christmas festivities – as the photo overleaf, by Peter Fox, shows.

*Ann Davies*



### **Christmas Lunch**

Welwyn Hatfield U3A certainly knows how to celebrate the festive season! There have been a series of really joyous events, culminating in the lunch at Homestead Court Hotel on 12 December, but not forgetting the Dance which was to conclude our seasonal activities. Many groups had their own celebrations: for me, it began with the Arts Appreciation group's trip to Bury St Edmunds Christmas Market with its rows of market stalls, smells of food and mulled wine and music. Then we had the party and quiz and to round off, the Christmas Lunch, attended by some hundred members.

Homestead Court is a good venue as it has a large dining room, very pleasant surroundings and easy access for most members. The place was decked with seasonal decorations – and so were we! There was plenty of glitz and glamour in evidence and smart gentlemen to accompany us. The whole event was most convivial and all thanks must go to Linda Kent-Taylor and Ann Glover for organising it.

There was a good range of choices for the lunch menu which consisted of three courses, followed by coffee and mince pies. The organisation of the pre-ordering was excellent and not without complications, but this was all managed well and everyone received



their choices, even if they had forgotten what they had ordered! Thanks again to Linda.

On entering the dining room, the tables looked very festive with hats, crackers and little gold boxes. We all raided these and began frantically pulling crackers and attempting to blow up balloons. I guess we behaved like children at a party but the great thing about “the third age” is that we didn’t care and we were having fun. I can’t resist adding a cracker joke that John Brown contributed:

“Why did the orange take a grape to the party?”

“Because he couldn’t get a date!”

So, there was much mirth and jollity with long balloons flying about the room with no respect for age or person. And so the courses proceeded, with plenty for all and all our needs catered for.

Here I must commend the staff whose service was most attentive and I must mention our member, Mary, an important part of the team.

And so a vote of thanks was given and we wound up the occasion. It is true to say that Christmas can be a bitter-sweet occasion for many of us, but U3A affords us so many opportunities to be among our peers and to celebrate the spirit of friendship with good cheer.

*Pamela Williams*

### **Christmas Dance**

Ditty of thanks to (WelHat U3A member) Tony Tutton's group:

There's a band we all love, the Beaucrees  
Who play music for us just to please.  
So we dance, tap or sway  
In any old way  
Till we sit 'cos of back, feet or knees!



On behalf of the 130 or so members who came along on 15 December and once again enjoyed the fabulous atmosphere the band creates, I'd like to give many thanks to the group for another memorable evening of music, fun, laughter and nostalgia. The fish and chips were good too!

*Ann Davies; photo by Peter Fox*

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## Notes from the Chair

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Goodness, as I write, nearly at the end of another busy term with Welwyn Hatfield U3A – where does the time go?

I know, it's listening to all those fascinating talks on Wednesday mornings! Such varied topics: the pitiful childhood of Norman Wisdom; the intriguing Yoga journey; the musician whom half the audience seemed to know; that wonderful garden – and to get us in the mood, a Tudor Christmas! All interesting topics, delivered with such enthusiasm – great stuff!



The Art and Photo Exhibition was wonderful and very well attended. If you missed this, make sure you get there next year. Such amazing talents we have among our members: photographers, painters, sketchers, needleworkers and crafts people – all talented, all modest about their achievements, and great inspiration for those admiring their skills.

What a very social time of the year December is! Our Christmas Party, with our quiz created and run by Tony Tutton – well done Tony, another fun morning, when the old grey cells got a testing, followed by our buffet. Thank you to everyone who contributed: not a jelly in sight (phew!). More fun and silliness was enjoyed at the Christmas Lunch at Homestead Court.

A number of new groups have commenced during the autumn term; Oil Painting, Painting, Table Tennis and Ukulele, and Theatre trips have restarted. Thank you to all those who have offered to take the lead with these groups; I hope they flourish. The Travel Group enjoyed five days in Porto, Portugal at the beginning of term. There have been many trips in the UK: to Coventry and Bury St Edmunds with Arts Appreciation; Beales Arboretum with Gardeners; various visits to London with the four Exploring London groups; and Walkers and Strollers groups have been exploring the Hertfordshire countryside (and pubs) – what an active lot we are!

A huge thank you to everyone who is involved in all the planning and organising of study groups, trips, activities, talks, behind-the-scenes administration and the practical help which keeps our Wednesday meetings running smoothly – THANK YOU ALL!

Even with all this generosity of people's help, we still need more members to come forward to help spread the load. In compliance with the U3A Constitution, Welwyn Hatfield U3A will not be allowed to continue to function after our AGM in March 2019, should we not have filled the committee vacancies of Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer. Help would be available for new officers from existing and previous committee members – they wouldn't be thrown in the deep end, so please think about getting involved, don't leave it to others, or there may not be a Welwyn Hatfield U3A group any more at all ...

Another busy year of U3A activities is waiting for us all to enjoy during 2019 with our sixty-three study groups. We have an enormous wealth of experiences and knowledge to share with each other. Whatever you choose to do I hope you find fulfillment in your achievements and have much fun and enjoyment sharing your U3A time with friends.

*Suzanne Brown*

### **How are we doing as a U3A?/ Welwyn Hatfield U3A – what works well – even better if ...**

You may remember that, in February, we held an afternoon tea to thank all those people who help to make our U3A run so smoothly, especially Wednesday meetings, which take such a lot of organisation. (Our Group Leaders are similarly celebrated in September.) Of course, it was not just an invite for sandwiches and cake (although they were delicious!) because we asked colleagues to reflect on what worked well within our U3A and how we could make it even better.

It was wonderful to see all the positive comments that were made, particularly about the welcoming and social atmosphere both on Wednesday mornings and in groups. Friendship and the chance to make new friends are particularly valued. People appreciated the wide range of study groups and the many trips that were available to go on. Wednesday morning meetings were especially enjoyed, with positive comments about the wide range and quality of speakers – plus the fact that they are held weekly and so well organised. (The majority of U3As hold meetings only monthly.)

There were also a good number of useful suggestions for improvements, which the committee have been gradually working



through. It was felt that more emphasis should be put on viewing the website as it's the first source of info, for new members in particular. Suzanne, our Chair, is now regularly mentioning this at Wednesday meetings. She is also reinforcing the 'orange dot' system on badges to indicate new members so that everyone can ensure that they are welcomed into our U3A community. Of course, it's always important to remember one's own badge – and wear it too! Portable equipment for the hard of hearing is now available and used regularly by several study groups.

One suggestion was to advertise our U3A more widely, although the committee was concerned about creating an expectation that could not be fulfilled – especially with regard to capacity on a Wednesday morning. It was felt that leaflets in doctors' surgeries could be a good idea to help combat loneliness. There were some requests for additional entertainment events and some more active groups. Table tennis has now been set up, as has a ukulele group, but, as ever, any new group requires someone to organise it – so volunteers, please! There was a request for more information about those groups with waiting lists; this was raised with Group Leaders when they met in September. We now have two very popular dances each year along with two quizzes, so, once again, anyone happy to organise other

events such as a choral evening – we'd love to have you on board!

Wednesday morning meetings are much valued, but there was one suggestion about enabling greater mixing and mingling. Any suggestions as to how we can do this would be gratefully received. The same can be said for reaching out to ethnic minorities within the community. Staying with Wednesday meetings, colleagues are now being regularly reminded to approach front-of-house staff prior to putting up new notices, so that we can keep track of what is on offer and ensure that all notices are up to date.

It is great to see that the circulation of the rota list, which now includes front of house, projector and welcomers as well as refreshments, has resulted in new faces volunteering – many thanks to them for signing up. However, we are always looking for more folk to share the load, so please don't be shy – do come forward! You will always be 'shown the ropes' and helped out by the regular team. Many thanks to the committee for the work done to date and all those volunteers who are working to ensure that the Welwyn Hatfield U3A goes from strength to strength.

*Jean Mackie, Past Chair*

### **Tour Guide system**

You will be pleased to know that we now have a tour guide audio system for use on outings such as Architecture, Exploring London, Gardening, Travel/Holidays, etc.

This allows members to hear guides clearly on outings in noisy conditions or where it is physically impossible to get close enough to a guide or tour leader to hear what they are saying.

The equipment includes receivers as shown opposite with over-the-ear, earpieces, rather than having to put an earpiece in your ear (which is an option). *See image on left.*

Plus of course a similar transmitter unit with optional microphone (lapel or headset). Members who already have a 'loop' compatible hearing aid do not need to take their hearing aid out; they simply wear a necklace-type loop of wire that communicates with their own personal hearing-aid as shown. *See image on right.*



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## Group News

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### **Architecture**

Passports, visas, travel insurance were not required by the hard core of 35 members that attend the Architecture Group on Monday mornings. Despite the lack of these normal essentials for globe-trotting, we have visited:

*The Netherlands*, considering the design principles employed in keeping the sea at bay;

*Japan* and other earthquake-prone regions of the world, including the design of earthquake-resistant buildings;

*Venice* – Spent a “night” looking around;

*France*, having a look at Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp chapel;

*Athens*, exploring the finer design points of The Parthenon;

*Barcelona* – a revisit and update on the push to complete Antonio Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia;

*France and the UK*, delving into the 18th century Romantic Theory;

*Poland and The Ukraine*, probing the UNESCO Tserkvas wooden churches;

and *China*, analysing the UNESCO Fujian Tulou houses .

Lights out, we get away at 10am on Mondays for our visits, stopping for a hot drink and a biscuit, and back in full earnest in our search for knowledge – and return home by midday. Despite such tiring and punishing schedules the members keep coming back for more.

You might think that the idea of a day visiting Peterborough Cathedral would be looked down upon, as it is after all only just up the



**Peterborough Cathedral**

road from Welwyn Garden City, taking some 70 minutes by coach. Not so, as the 50-seat coach was more or less full. We broke with tradition by stopping for our drinks and biscuit upon our arrival, the Cathedral catering staff doing their utmost to look after us. We split



**The Group enjoying Cathedral hospitality**

into groups and, headed by very experienced guides, we were shown and tutored inside and all around the Cathedral. A couple of hours later, lunch was taken in the many cafés and restaurants that lurk just outside the Cathedral precinct. Mike and Janet even managed to do an emergency shop for their very recently born first grandson.

There was still time to revisit the Cathedral, taking a closer, longer, more reflective look, this time unattended. The numerous photographs taken during our visit to the Cathedral in May will serve as a good reminder when we review it in our last December meeting when the weather is not usually as kind. Always a popular meeting this one: maybe the presence of mince pies has an influence.

I take the opportunity to express my personal thanks to a group of dedicated members who provide invaluable help to the Architecture group. These include Elaine Evans, Bryan Milburn, Carol King, Dick Grainge, Diana Whitehead and the numerous tea makers. I have the easier task on a Monday morning of nattering about any topic on Architecture.

*Michael Nicolas*

### **Exploring London Group 3**

Our outing in the autumn term was to The Crystal building at the Royal Victoria Dock near Canning Town.

We travelled to Stratford, walked past the O2 complex on the Greenwich peninsula and boarded the cable car for a ten-minute trip across the Thames. There were spectacular views of the docks, across London and the City Airport.

The Crystal building is sponsored by Siemens and billed as the place to explore the future of our cities and one of world's most sustainable buildings – a knowledge centre and home to the largest exhibition dedicated to urban sustainability.

We had booked for two complementary guided tours, the first of which told us the history and purpose of the building and included some of the exhibits. We then paused for lunch in their café before the second tour, which taught us more about the construction of the building, its sustainable features and a look behind the scenes. After I visiting the gift shop, as it was a nice afternoon, we explored around the glass exterior before making our way home.

At the beginning of December our group travelled to Victoria to



**The Group beside the cable car outside the Crystal building**  
*photo by Roger Francis*

visit Westminster Cathedral with our guide, Sonja Park. This iconic masterpiece is sandwiched between glass office blocks and has a 273ft high Campanile Bell Tower. After Mass finished we explored the inside of the building which contains some magnificent mosaics on walls and ceilings and an altar with many carvings and decorations.

We walked from the cathedral, through the back streets, with our guide explaining the architecture of the lovely red brick apartments in this area of Westminster. We lunched at the very busy Wesleyan Hall café which is in the lower ground floor of the Methodist Central Hall opposite Westminster Abbey.

The main event of this outing was an extensive tour of the historic Westminster Abbey, Sonja pointing out its many statues, chapels and memorials to the famous people who are buried there. This building is so large and filled with so many historical artefacts that it is impossible to appreciate totally in a short visit.

Many coronations, famous weddings and funerals have also been held here; video screens staged around the perimeter relay these proceedings. The Queen's gallery at the top of the building offered views of the church Nave and the Houses of Parliament, and we saw more priceless artefacts including the Magna Carta.

Some of us stayed in the Abbey until evensong, enjoying a wondrous choir who filled the rafter with harmonies and song. A long, full and enjoyable day.

*Sue McLellen & Tony Dodd*

## **Photography**

These two photographs were displayed at the Art and Photo Exhibition on 21 November:



**"Norwegian Tranquility" by Stephen Hodges**



**"Old Sailor's Tale of the Gale" by Bill Hinckley**

## Playreading

On the third Tuesday morning of each month, the Playreading Group convenes to enjoy an armchair-excursion into the world of drama. We get to immerse ourselves in the characters of a play, sometimes well-known but often completely new to us, taking on a part and speaking the words, without having to worry about make-up, props, audience, or remembering lines.

Not all of the members of the group are steeped in knowledge and experience and no one is expected to turn in an Olivier-style performance (fortunately!). We enjoy the opportunity to explore a new piece or to re-visit and learn more about a title we recognize, but don't always remember clearly. All kinds of plays have been enjoyed over the years, from light comedy to more thought-provoking dramas, from any era. Titles we have read recently include *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne (intense and rather perturbing), and *Yes, Prime Minister* by Anthony Jay (so hysterically funny that at one point we were all incapable of speaking our lines due to spluttering and giggling).

We meet in the home of one or other of our members and those who wish to can take a turn at choosing what we will read, also deciding on casting. We are a small-ish group and everyone gets to read at least one part during each play. On a couple of occasions when fewer than usual have been able to attend, this has required serious concentration (“Oh, sorry – am I Claire as well as Harold?”) but we rise to the challenge!

*Jill Longman*



## Poetry

Generally members of the Poetry Group read and discuss published poems. Sometimes they also write poems. Here is one written by Sheila Witchy, appropriately in November 2018.

### *Poppies*

Fully in bloom, a scarlet sunset  
Drapes the killing field.  
Blood laced petals and  
Dark eyes of sorrow yield.

Flanders flowers of forlorn lives  
Bend their heavy heads,  
Comforting brave men  
Who died in our stead.

From nature's umbrellas raindrops fall  
On Remembrance Day  
In shimmering silence,  
Kissing where souls lay.

Seeds sadly rattle their requiem.  
Autumn twilight rings  
The soldiers' anthems.  
Wistful choirs sing.



*Photo by Liz Carter*

## Strollers

Eighteen members of the U3a Strollers group enjoyed a circular walk around a lake near Stanstead Abbots on 18 August, afterwards enjoying a leisurely lunch in the pub restaurant.

As well as consuming blackberries during the walk, a number of members also took the opportunity to pick blackberries to take home, for blackberry pie and ice cream!

*See photograph by Peter Fox overleaf*



**The Strollers at Stanstead Abbots**

## **Travel/Holidays**

### *The Historic Houses and Heritage of Suffolk “Among the fields of barley”*

It had been a glorious summer and the temperature forecast for our day of travelling, 15 July, was 28 degrees! So dressed in our summer clothes and, with our sun hats on, we departed. Our first stop was at Lavenham, which seemed deserted in the heat. Of special interest here was the National Trust’s Lavenham Guildhall, an early 16th century timber framed building, one of the best preserved in the country. This is a beautiful building from the outside with its lime-washed walls and timbers and, inside, there were many interesting exhibits. There was a small café with outside seating under the shade of trees, which was most welcome. The town also boasted a lavishly constructed wool church completed in 1525. It is a large church with a high tower, reflecting the town’s medieval wealth from the wool trade. It was a cool place to explore on a hot day! The town has a large proportion of

well-preserved half-timbered houses. Mainly because of the decline in the wool trade, the town was left undeveloped. The town was affected by Dutch refugees settling in Colchester and producing cheaper and lighter cloth and from cheaper imports from Europe. So that proves nothing changes much over the centuries!

We then proceeded to Sudbury and Gainsborough's House. The house dates back to the 16th century and is the birthplace of the painter Thomas Gainsborough. It displays more of Gainsborough's work than any other gallery. We are perhaps more familiar with Gainsborough's portraits but the gallery revealed that Gainsborough turned to portraiture as a more lucrative art form. Here we saw many examples of his poetic vision in his landscapes, often fused with the portraits.

And then to our hotel – The Mill at Sudbury – and what a fine hotel it was. Situated on the banks of the River Stour and overlooking the meadows which had been common land for centuries with cattle grazing and many opportunities for walks, it was ideal. The restaurant was very good and there was an outside terrace for relaxing evenings.

**Day 2** This morning we set off to enjoy a two-hour cruise on the River Deben. Once again, the sun shone and it was most relaxing and very scenic. Even travelling by coach was enjoyable for the pretty cottages and fields of lush gold. In the afternoon we visited Sutton Hoo, an Anglo Saxon burial site where the Sutton Hoo treasure was discovered. The displays were excellent and interesting, though all of the treasure has been removed to the British Museum: but there were replicas, and the Sutton Hoo helmet has been described as "the most iconic object" ever found from the period. Most of us took the walks to inspect the mounds where the objects were found.

**Day 3** This morning we headed to the coast, to Aldeburgh, a delightful town. A stroll along the unspoilt promenade led to the Britten monument and, in the other direction, a Martello tower. A centre of arts and culture and in an area of outstanding natural beauty, the town attracts many visitors. In the afternoon we headed to Ickworth House with its huge central rotunda, fine gardens, acres of Capability Brown parkland and a fine collection of Old Master paintings. It was interesting to see some restored coronation robes from the coronations of both George V and VI, and to explore the servants' quarters. The Italianate garden was the highlight of the outdoor spaces.

**Day 4** On this day we crossed the border into Essex to visit the Roman city of Colchester and the Colchester Castle Museum. This



**The Britten monument at Aldeburgh**

was once the capital of Roman Britain and was destroyed by Boudicca, invaded by the Normans and besieged during the Civil War. But it survived the visit of our U3A group! We then departed for Constable country on the Essex/Suffolk borders. First we went to Dedham, where the painter John Constable went to school, and then to



**The group outside Audley End House and Gardens**

Dedham Parish Church. We continued to East Bergholt where Constable had a studio and where there was an interesting church with no spire or tower, but instead the bells were housed in a shed-like structure. By the power of the internet, we were enabled to listen to the bells via someone's phone. Finally, we visited Bridge Cottage at Flatford, just upstream from Flatford Mill. Here there was an exhibition about John Constable. It was really possible to visualise the paintings here as many of the scenes and subjects of his work remained the same. Willie Lott's Cottage was a beautiful, peaceful scene.

**Day 5**, 19 July came round all too soon and found us packing up for departure. But there was one more visit en route: English Heritage's Audley End House and Gardens, near Saffron Walden. It was certainly a grand house in the best English stately homes tradition. There were many paintings but mostly reproductions. I particularly enjoyed the Victorian nursery suite. The gardens were extensive and a delight on another warm summer's day.

And thus, our trip was over. Once again, thanks are due to Kathy Dugan, Jean Davis and Tony Bristow for such a varied and well organised tour.

*Pamela Williams*

## **Wildlife Watch**

I am a new recruit to Welwyn Hatfield U3A but a very enthusiastic member. I enjoyed taking part in a 'Wildlife Watch' group outing coordinated by Janet Lewis on a trip to Rutland Water on 6 November. From the outset Janet was friendly, welcoming and helpful. On arrival at our meeting point all participating ladies were also very friendly and welcoming. Off we set on our 70-mile trip to lovely Rutland Water and all managed to arrive within a few minutes of each other. Wow, what a fabulous day I had, enjoying strolling around the various 'Hides' watching a fabulous selection of birds! As a fairly new Bird Watcher I would like to thank all the lovely ladies (and you know who you are) who were so helpful, informative and friendly. Such a lovely day out – and I now thoroughly look forward to the next trip out to Fishers Green in December.

Thanks to you all for a very special day out!

*Liz Carter*

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

### **Ann Davies**



Ann Fovargue, whose father was of Huguenot descent, was born in Wales at the end of World War II, as her Welsh mother was spending her pregnancy in the safety of South Wales at her sister's house. After the war the family moved to a new home in Hitchin, where Ann grew up and attended school.

Determining early that she would be a teacher, she spent three years at St Gabriel's college in Camberwell, a teacher training college affiliated to London University, where her speciality was French, with Drama and PE. This was followed by a fourth year at Caen University in France.

On her return, in 1967, she was appointed Acting Head of the French Department at Baldock Secondary School, which was expanding and becoming the Knights Templar School which it is today. Two years later she married the Head of the Art department, Keith Davies, a Welshman from the same area as her mother's family. They moved to Burford in Oxfordshire where they taught in separate schools, until Ann took time off from her career to become the mother of two sons.

The family then moved to Tooting for two years and finally settled in Harrow. Ann went back to work in a small independent school and stayed there for twenty years, thoroughly enjoying teaching French again and taking pupils on trips to France.

Keith died in 1996. Ann then taught mostly French but some RE at Chesham High School. She met Chris, her new partner, at a social event. Coincidentally his mother was Welsh and from the same general area as Ann's family.

Ann took early retirement in 2004 to enjoy travelling with Chris. Sadly, he was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's in 2007 and had to move into a succession of care homes. Ann's mother, still living in Hitchin, also became frail, so Ann decided to move into Chris's house in Welwyn (in the county where she'd grown up) to be on hand for both of them. Ann's mother died in 2010 and Chris the following year.

Some months after Chris's death, wondering how to fill her time, Ann fortuitously recalled a French A level comprehension passage studied with her bored pupils some ten years before about a French organisation for older people, *L'Université du 3ième Age*. She wondered if there was anything like it in the UK – looked on the internet – and there was her answer. After several weeks of plucking up courage she sought out the local branch, Welwyn Hatfield, and ventured to her first meeting, feeling very lonely and nervous. This was just when Marion Sklar had initiated the “Welcomers” scheme for new members, and Ann was warmly welcomed by Marion and Sue Dorrington, so that she eagerly joined, in 2012, and has become steadily more involved ever since.

First Ann joined the Book Club and Scrabble group. She went on many trips with the Exploring London group, Theatre group, and Travel – with the last, to Newcastle, the Lake District, Italy, Montenegro and Portugal (and with the Book Group, to Venice!). She now belongs also to Apple Users Discussion, Consciousness Studies, the Gardening group, the Lunch Club and Shakespeare; attends most Wednesday morning meetings, garden parties, dances and Christmas lunches; and has participated in the Welwyn Hatfield teams in three of the Herts Network quizzes.

Ann put her expertise at the service of U3A, setting up (and still leading) French and Spanish Beginners Groups. She became Groups Co-ordinator (jointly with Jean Mackie) in 2014, which post she still holds, and Vice Chair in 2016 (likewise still in post). She is a prolific and valued contributor to the newsletter, having reported there many of our social events and displays.

She still has time for other activities – singing in a choir, volunteering and gardening at Isabel Hospice, and visiting her grandchildren.

In fact, Ann has been a Poster Girl for our U3A, telling New Members at the coffee morning held each term for them, how she came to Welwyn as a nervous stranger, joined U3A – and now enjoys life to the full!

*Hazel Bell*

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## Review

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### *Keeping Up Appearances –*

A DVD detailing the life of the man who designed WGC

Local resident Geoffrey Hollis, who has spoken to several U3A Architecture groups, in partnership with the WGC Heritage Trust has created a DVD of a talk he recently gave to a live audience on the life and work of Louis de Soissons. Consulting with the family and trawling through archives, he has uncovered photos and information that throw a different light on the man who designed the plan for Welwyn Garden City .

We are introduced to Louis Emanuel Jean Guy de Savoie-Carignan Soissons, younger son of Charles, the Count de Soissons, a direct descendant of the royal house of Bourbon. He was a man of the arts, an RA Academician, who dressed like a Frenchman and loved good food and wine.

In just over an hour Mr Hollis delivers a wide-ranging and interesting talk, inviting the audience to contribute, which they do ... and they laugh a lot. A most engaging speaker, he clearly knows his stuff as he takes us through the architectural history of WGCity and the other work of de Soissons – who was no one-trick pony.

Mr Hollis discusses the architectural styles of Welwyn Garden City – the neo-Georgians of Guessens Road, lovely maisonettes on Knightsfield, right at the top of the town, reached by the iconic Baroque white bridge; the 1100-seat theatre, inaugurated in 1928 for a population of 6,000. Apparently Welwyn Stores building was not favourably received by architects because it ‘didn’t look like a shop’! We were reminded of the fine buildings that have disappeared.

The talk is illustrated with interesting photos, plans and builders’ prints, some of which were, apparently found on eBay! There was a reveal at the end and I’m not going to break the spoiler code by telling you. But it was interesting, and explains the title of the DVD.

I’m sorry to have missed the live version – I wish I’d been there. Surely there’s no better recommendation than that! I hope he repeats it. In the meantime, I would recommend that you buy the DVD – a bargain at £3 from [www.welwyngarden-heritage.org](http://www.welwyngarden-heritage.org) or calling 07580 197160 or 07891 963469. I guarantee you’ll be interested enough to watch it more than once!

*Carol Bush*

**JANUARY**

*9, Ludwick Family Centre, Welwyn Garden City*

**Bill Hamilton: “Man on The Spot”**

Bill Hamilton’s talk comprises reflections on fifty years as a journalist, broadcaster and BBC Television News Correspondent.

*16, Breaks Manor, Hatfield*

**Sarah Stevens: “Hertfordshire Ladies Barbershop”**

Members of Hertfordshire’s only ladies Barbershop singing chorus, ‘Welwyn Harmony’, introduce us to their style of singing: a presentation with some illustrative acapella singing from some of the chorus.

*23, WGC* **Jim Nicolson: “My Uncle – The Battle of Britain”**

This talk covers the life of Mr Nicolson’s relative, also called James Nicolson, who became the most highly decorated fighter pilot in the RAF in the Second World War. His interactive presentation covers his early life, his wartime exploits and what happened to him and his family afterwards.

*30, Hatfield* **Steve Lester: “Titanic – Her Launch to Loss”**

Steve has advised several TV Companies about the *Titanic*. His expert knowledge gives the true story rather than the Hollywood version.

**FEBRUARY**

*6, WGC* **Hugh Granger – “Interactive Aspects of English”**

An intriguing look at various aspects of English, in which the audience is involved. This talk was devised for U3As.

*13, Hatfield* **Mr Laurence Summers: “The History of London”**  
(Part 1)

Mr Summers is a Blue Badge tour guide. He will cover London history from the Romans to the Medieval period.

*20 February, WGC: **Stephen Barnard: "J Arthur Rank"***

Stephen has a background in writing and publishing, and worked for Readers Digest for 21 years. He is also a part-time lecture for WEA and The Settlement in Letchworth.

*27, Hatfield **Tony Maisey: "Spare Part Surgery"***

Tony is a retired NHS GP, always interested in health education, with a sense of humour.

### **MARCH**

*6, WGC **Tony Eaton: "Invasion 1940 – What If?"***

This talk reveals several previously unknown facts about "Sea Lion", the German plan to invade Great Britain.

*13, Hatfield **32nd Annual General Meeting***

Followed by readings by the Creative Writing Group

*20, WGC **Dr Nichola Hawkins: "Agricultural research at Rothamsted: 1843 and today"***

Rothamsted Research in Harpenden is the oldest continually-running agricultural research station in the world. We will hear about its Victorian beginnings, testing the effects of fertilisers on crop yields, through to the cutting-edge science of today, aiming to continue to improve food production while reducing the environmental impacts of agriculture.

*27, Hatfield **Trevor Baker: "The history of Sainsbury's"***

The talk will illustrate the history of the Sainsbury Business from the first shop in Drury Lane in 1869, through four generations of the family to the floatation of the Company on the London Stock Exchange in 1973

### **APRIL**

*3, WGC **Meet the Groups***

Our groups display their products and illustrate their activities, to attract new members.

*Summer term starts on 24 April at Hatfield*