



## Meet the Groups 2019



**The Glass Domed Roof of Galleries Lafayette in Paris *photograph by Alan Green* displayed on the Photography Group's Boards at Meet the Groups, 2019**

Every year I worry that we won't have many visitors at our Meet the Groups event as it's the last meeting of the term. This year I was worried that we had too many! In fact 196 visitors signed in at Ludwick on 3 April (almost double last year's attendance) and were very enthusiastic about what they saw and heard. Nineteen groups were represented, ranging from painting, photography and craft through to games such as Mah Jong via various history groups,

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technology and IT. There were some great displays of books, amazing photos, paintings and craftwork for members to peruse: the work on display that members had created was exceptional and really impressive. One photo shown in the Photography Group's display appears on our front cover; two more on pages 10 and 11.

We were fortunate enough to have three demonstrations. The Recorders Group tackled three difficult pieces, from Bach to folk, which were very well received. The newly formed, very brave (and very nervous) Ukulele Group also played three pieces and sang along

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

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**Beryl Orchard and Maggie Thomas with the display of Greetings Cards**



**The Recorder Group performing**

(photo on page 16). Many of us were encouraged to join in with their final piece, 'Always look on the bright side of life' – very appropriate! Then the T'ai Chi Group brought some peace and calm to the hustle and bustle of the morning with their slow and graceful movements. Some members even joined in for the warm-up exercises at the start.

For the first time our archive keeper, Myrtle Pit-Keithly, brought along some of the archives to display. They were fascinating documents from more than thirty years ago.

I'd like to give a big thank you to all the groups who came along with such fascinating displays. I'm always in awe of the talents we have in our midst.

*Ann Davies, Groups Coordinator; photos by Peter Fox*



**Malcolm and Myrtle Pit-Keithly with our U3A archives**

*A new member gives her impression of the display:*

I thought that although busy, Meet the Groups was an excellent opportunity to speak to group leaders and find out exactly what activity took place in the group. I spoke to Stephen Brown who leads the London History Group at some length; he was informative and encouraging and I'm likely to join that group. I was also interested in the Genealogy Group. Finally (as I was providing a bridge table for the Bridge Group!) I had a good chat with Elaine Barrow, in charge of the stall.

It all took the mystery out of what happens in the groups, and was very welcome to a new member.

*Penny Barratt*



**Interest in and discussions of the Photo Group's images displayed**



**Don Busolini leading a demonstration by the T'ai Chi Group**

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## Notes from a former Chair

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**Suzanne Brown**

When is a Chair not a Chair ? Well, I'm now not a Chair – however, I'm providing notes ...

2019 has already provided us with a great variety of Wednesday morning talk topics: harmony singing, tragedy, history, humour, intrigue and, I believe, our first talk where our members have played an active part, as they read personal statements of survivors from the sinking of the *Titanic*. All good stuff, and no doubt the Speakers Team are already searching out more fascinating talks for our delight and enjoyment.

Our membership is thriving, with a steady intake of new members joining. Those who attend on Wednesday mornings can't have missed our Welcomers sporting the Welcome sashes recently introduced. These have proved a great success with new members and 'first timers'. From their comments we know that having a specific person to greet them has been much appreciated and made that rather daunting experience for some people, less so. Should



**The Barber Shop Singers performing on Wednesday 16 January at Breaks Manor**  
*photo by Peter Fox*

you fancy joining the Welcomers Team, do contact me: it usually works out at just one morning a term – [suzannebrown39@gmail.com](mailto:suzannebrown39@gmail.com)

If you are a regular on Wednesdays you will also know that we have been encouraging members to obtain Next of Kin cards, available at reception on Wednesdays, to keep inside their membership badge holders, which of course are always worn to meetings (please!). Any medications, regularly taken, can also be listed on the card, or on a separate piece of paper. This is a sensible and useful precautionary measure, to ensure that should someone be taken ill, we know who to contact and medics attending are immediately assisted. We now have a blanket and space blankets at each venue, to keep people as comfortable as we can should medics need to be called on their behalf.

At the AGM, our Treasurer stepped down; however, she has offered to be on hand to help our new Treasurer take over the role. Judy Grant has been Groups' Co-ordinator, Vice Chair, Chair and Treasurer, serving nine years on the committee, which is an amazing contribution. Working closely with Judy I have got to know what a great support and friend she is, always willing to help, and with such sensible suggestions to solving problems – what a star!

Another star who is stepping down from her Vice Chair role, however, continuing for another year as our Groups Co-ordinator, is Ann Davies. She has been brilliant leading the Wednesday meetings during my long absences, and she does a wonderful job supporting all the Group Leaders, keeping them informed and helping them sort out any issues. A huge thank you to both of you, Judy and Ann for all you've done for me and for our U3A. My very grateful thanks to our committee, it has been great fun working with you all (well, perhaps not wading through GDPR!) – I will miss our happy repartee at committee meetings ... Many thanks to Richard Griffiths for taking over as our next Chair and to all those who have recently joined the committee, my best wishes for the future.

Unfortunately I will be the shortest serving chair for WelHat U3A. I apologise for this; however, as I am planning to spend six months overseas each year (see page 18), it would not be practicable to carry on as Chair. My grateful thanks to all the many people who have aided and advised, guided and



**Judy Grant**

befriended me during my short tenure. I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know you and become good friends.

With over 60 study groups in Welwyn Hatfield U3A there is no shortage of topics to find out about and new skills to learn. I think you could probably spend all day every day of the week at U3A, should you have the stamina to do so! I hope the next term is a stimulating one for you all, that your fascination for finding out about things doesn't wane, that good health prevails and your love of life and good friends continues always. Take care of yourselves and each other.

*Over and out, Suzanne x*

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## Notes from a new Chair

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**Richard Griffiths**

It is only a few weeks since I took the role of Chair of our U3A, and I am conscious of the hard act it is for me to follow, knowing the people who have occupied this position before me. Thank you to all of you for giving me this opportunity to lead you for the next two years.

My special thanks to Suzanne Brown who was your Chair immediately prior to me, for the way she conducted our affairs and made sure the vibrancy within our Club was maintained. Best wishes to her and John in their move to the other side of the world. I am sure there are some people in Welwyn Hatfield U3A who will keep contact with them and keep us up to date with their new adventure.

My first engagement as your Chair was to attend the New Members Meeting on 25 March, attended by some 25 to 30 people, which was very well organised and conducted by Tony Tutton. Thank you Tony, and well done!

A few days afterwards, I attended a Meeting of the Herts Network which covered a wide range of activities: more about that in the coming weeks. I say congratulations on your behalf to Penny Barratt, who was elected as a Committee Member to represent us on that body. Penny will update our Committee on the latest Herts Network Meetings.

One item that came out of the Herts Network Meeting in March was that one U3A wants to start a Table Tennis league to play against other U3As. There's a challenge for our new Table Tennis group!

The vibrancy within our U3A is plain to see. Many U3As meet monthly, compared with our weekly meetings.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible. Support and enjoy your U3A!

*Richard Griffiths*



**Penny Barratt**

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## Group News

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### **Creative Writing**

Following our AGM on 13 March, as usual, Members of this group read examples of their work. Introducing the members, Jenny Roden said that, for them, this was the equivalent of Meet the Groups, as they had nothing physical to display on those occasions. She told us that they meet weekly, in Humphrey's Bar at Campus West, choosing a topic to write about each month, and sharing the results – prose, poetry or dialogue, with appreciative critique and creative discussion.

Four examples of their work were read, all first-person narratives. There was 'The Place Where I was Born' by Mary Theobald, as spoken by a piece of music; 'The Wedding' by Jenny Roden, as spoken by a rose; 'After the Funeral' by Ann Higgs, as spoken by a woman who had (accidentally?) killed her husband; and 'Evacuation', a poem also by Ann Higgs, as spoken by a small boy.

### **Exploring London Group 3**

Our outing in the Spring term was in two parts. The first was to visit The Postal Museum at Mount Pleasant which is a short walk from Kings Cross station.

We arrived on a cold and blustery day in time for a quick coffee, then on to the "Mail Rail" driverless train which used to take and deliver mail bags from other mail depots under the streets, but



**Postal Sorter on train *photo by Pam Class***

nowadays runs in a circle purely for the tourist. Somewhat cramped, but a great experience! This was preceded by a short film detailing the history of the postal service along with several examples of mail bags, train sorting offices and the machinery needed to service the carriages. After looking in the gift shop, we paused for lunch and had the opportunity to see the fascinating exhibition about the history of the English postal service.

Most of us then boarded a number 17 bus and rode to The



**View from the Sky Garden *photo by Tony Dodd - 'A wet day in London'***

Monument bus stop by London Bridge, walked around the corner to Eastcheap and up Philpot Lane to 20 Fenchurch Street, affectionately known as the “Walkie Talkie”. We were up and away to the Sky Garden, which is a large area at the top of the building, planted with trees and shrubs, offering magnificent views over London. There is a bar and restaurant available and a chance to sit and watch the other tourists and students sheltering from the rain! We ended our day with a brisk walk, back to Moorgate and home.

At the time of writing this, our other trip in this term to Neasden Temple is planned for 18 April. We are looking forward to the contrast!!

*Sue McLellen & Tony Dodd*

### **Photography Group**

These two photos were displayed on the Photography Group's Boards at Meet the Groups, 2019.



**Reflections – Forest of Bowland** *by Liz Carter*



**Greater  
Spotted  
Woodpecker**

*by Peter Fox*

## **Travel / Holidays**

The History and Heritage of Porto  
5-10 September 2018

Many of us might have visited the Algarve in Portugal or Lisbon, but Porto was a lesser known destination and conjured images of The Douro with its picturesque rabelo boats, its port trade symbolised by the don in black cloak and Spanish hat, the oak casks and those glasses of deep ruby port – as shown in the photo of our hotel hallway by Pamela Williams overleaf. But we were to discover much more in this region. We set off in late summer, believing this to be a chance of some last rays of the summer sun, but little knowing that our summer back home was to last much, much longer last year. We arrived at the Axis Hotel on the northern outskirts of the city. It was a modern business hotel with plenty of facilities but not in the most attractive area that could be wished for strolling or exploring.



Our first full day gave us a guided tour of the ancient city of Porto. Our first stop introduced us to the spectacular railway station, the Estacao Sao Bento. The entrance was covered in the typical azuleiros – or decorated blue and white ceramic tiles. The tiles were used to create large murals which depicted the history of Portugal and, higher on the walls, the history of transport. Close by was the Stock Exchange which was a former palace. It had a grand entrance hall, quite breathtaking in its decoration in the Islamic style and luxurious rooms and offices upstairs. Near this building was the church of Sao Francisco, quite unremarkable on the outside, but inside every inch seemed to be heavily gilded. It is described thus: “The interior is a triumph of Baroque decorative richness; altars, walls, vaulting and pillars disappear beneath a forest of 17C & 18C carved and gilded wood, representing vines, cherubim and birds.”

After lunch we visited a totally different structure – the very modern Casa da Musica designed by Rem Koolhaas. This was a large concert hall surrounded by several studio areas. This was a fine example of very modern architecture and provided a distinct contrast to our morning visits. The day was rounded off with a short cruise on the Douro. The sun shone and it was most pleasant as we passed under several bridges; saw the traditional vessels that were used to transport the port; and the warehouses along the river bearing the familiar



**The group beside the Basilica de Santa Luzia *photo by Jean Davies***

names such as Cockburn, Sandeman, etc. Thus ended a very full day.

Our second full day afforded a slightly more leisurely start as we visited the pretty riverside town of Amarante with its spectacular Sao Goncalo bridge, dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There were rows of 17<sup>th</sup> century houses with wooden balconies along the narrow streets. It was a good destination for walking by the river and exploring the town and possible lunch venues. In the afternoon we had a tour at the Aveleda Wine Cellar. This began with a walk in the very extensive and sometimes quirky gardens. And then the wine tasting! This was a very relaxing establishment and beautiful environment in which to spend an afternoon.

On our third full day we travelled to Guimares, which had been the capital in 1139. This was a lovely old town with cobbled streets. Indeed we visited many previously unknown (to us) towns which proved to be delightful gems.

In the afternoon we visited Braga, this was the country's religious capital in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We visited Bom Jesus do Monte, Portugal's



most spectacular religious sanctuary, famous for its giant Baroque Escadaria stairway designed in 1722. Some of us walked down and up again and others took the funicular! Braga was another lovely town with fountains, shops and an old cathedral.

Day 4 we explored the Minho region and first visited Viana do Castelo, a 13<sup>th</sup> century town which was once a fishing centre. We then made our way to the Basilica de Santa Luzia – high above the town, the basilica is an impressive sight, being modelled on the Sacre Coeur in Paris. It was completed in 1926 and the interior was very simple and calming. We then descended to the town of Ponte de Lima where we had free time to explore this riverside town.

And so we came to our last day, but we still had plenty of time to explore the town of Aveiro. This too was a lovely coastal town. I loved the beach hut style houses (shown in photo by Pamela Williams above); it felt quite like a seaside resort. The town had many shops and restaurants to sample. There were even gondolas and, of course, ice cream!

And so, all too soon, the tour came to an end. Many thanks, of course, to our great organisers, Jean Davis and Tony Bristow, without whom these travels would not work nearly so well.

*Pamela Williams*

## **Ukulele Group**

Last autumn, overhearing a chance remark about how our U3A was slightly unusual in NOT having a Ukulele group, a relatively new U3A member responded “I play the ukulele – ” and his hand was promptly bitten off. Following the usual process of collecting names of interested members, an inaugural meeting was held in November and the Welwyn Hatfield U3A Ukulele Group was born (the temptation to call it Uke3A was resisted).

Some members had played the uke in the past but, for various reasons, given up. Others confessed to early attempts to play the guitar which had not come to fruition, so the “easier” option of ukulele appealed. A number of us came along as complete novices. All of us are approaching the task with enthusiasm and good humour. We meet twice a month and together we strum and sing, pluck and perspire, encouraged and advised by our leader, Dave Charlwood, who demonstrates what we are aiming at and reminds us of the importance of frequent practice in between meetings.

The chance to perform at the “Meet the Groups” session on 3 April prompted even more frantic practising. Many of you will have witnessed the results and can judge our progress for yourselves, so I’ll take this opportunity to emphasise once more that we’ve only met about half-a-dozen times so far and we will get better!



**The Ukelele group performing at Meet the Groups *photo by Peter Fox***

Personally, my interest in the ukulele began when I saw the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain performing — wonderfully entertaining. Many of our members are looking forward to seeing them when they appear at the Alban Arena in June. We've a long way to go before we reach that sort of level, but we are enjoying the journey.

New members would be welcome. Please contact Dave Charlwood on 01438 714903.

*Jill Longman*

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*The twenty-first in our series of profiles of distinguished Welwyn Hatfield U3A members features ...*



### **Suzanne Brown**

Suzanne Mardell was born in Hatfield (on Birchwood Estate), and was a pupil in the second intake at Bishops Hatfield Girls' School. She took her OND in Business Studies at Mid-Herts College in WGC – where she met John Brown, a Telecoms-Engineer-to-be. She began studying Accountancy and was accepted on the NHS Finance Trainee Scheme, a four-year programme that took her into most hospital departments.

John and Suzanne married in 1970, living first in Bedfordshire, then St Albans, where Suzanne commuted to work at London University College Hospital. At the conclusion of her NHS programme, they took off for three years travelling the world – Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific, South, Central and North America, and the Caribbean, working their passage. They returned to the UK in 1975 and settled in Old Hertford Road in Hatfield. Suzanne worked as a Finance Officer for St Mary's Hospital, in Paddington, London, until leaving to start their family.

The Browns moved to The Ryde, Hatfield in 1981. Suzanne spent nine years at home there, bringing up their three children, and meanwhile joining several organisations: Hertfordshire Chorus; The Ryde & District Gardeners' Association (as a founder member); and the local branches of National Women's Register and National Childbirth Trust (becoming a breast-feeding counsellor for the latter).

While the children were small she returned to paid employment, selling Usborne Books through party plan, organising her work around nursery times and when she was able to have the use of their one car. She proved successful and soon became an Area Team Manager. When all three children were at school she joined Hertfordshire County Supplies Customer Services team, part-time, in term-time only, which she felt very fortunate to find – never dreaming she would stay there for the next 22 years. She set up the outside sales team covering Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and north London, and, after managing this team, moved to manage the Marketing and Business Management Team, and finally the Catalogue Production Team. She enjoyed using her negotiating skills raising sponsorship for the catalogue, and her artistic eye and aptitude for attention to detail to manage the production of an annual catalogue containing some 5000 products, which gave her much satisfaction.

Suzanne and John retired on the same day in September 2011, and made another extensive visit to Australia in 2012, visiting old friends and meeting the family of their future daughter-in-law. They joined Welwyn Hatfield U3A in April 2013, having just returned from another Australia trip, this time for the marriage of their eldest son. Suzanne joined the Architecture, Arts Appreciation, Exploring London, London History, Theatre, Travel and Walkers Groups. In 2014 she became our Membership Secretary; in 2015, leader of the



**Suzanne at Cygnet, in the car park behind the U3A venue *photo by John Brown***

Arts Appreciation Group and, with John, started the second Exploring London Group, as the first was full. Suzanne relinquished the Arts Appreciation leader role after a couple of years as she found that being Membership Secretary demanded a lot of her time. She attended the National U3A AGM in 2015, and the Summer School in 2016. In 2018 she succeeded Jean Mackie as Chair of our U3A.

In 2014 the Browns' elder son and wife settled in Tasmania, with their only daughter, then 10 months old. John and Suzanne regularly visited each year, and in 2018 when a second daughter arrived they stayed with them for two months, enjoying helping out and grandparenting. They joined and attended meetings of nearby Cygnet U3A – reported by Suzanne in our Newsletter No. 59, pages 12-14. She wrote: 'It was most interesting to visit another U3A group on the other side of the world and find how similarly organised it is to ours.'

This visit made the Browns determine to spend half of each year in Tasmania with the new generation, half in Hatfield. So now they have downsized in Hatfield, moving from The Ryde to a smaller house and garden in Park Meadow, while a house is being built for them in Tasmania. Suzanne has resigned as Chair of our U3A, after one year in office. Her Farewell Notes are on page 5 of this newsletter.

So the Browns now have dual U3A membership, belonging both to Welwyn Hatfield and Cygnet — and active all year round in both, by dint of email! As Suzanne concluded her report of their Tasmanian visit – 'What a wonderful international organisation U3A is!'

*Hazel Bell*

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### Summer Term 2019 – Wednesday Meetings

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#### APRIL

*24, Breaks Manor, Hatfield*

**Brian Freeland: "The View From The Wings"**

Brian's theatre career started in 1959, direct from National Service, as Trainee Manager at the London Palladium, and has taken him to 43 different countries. He has worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, Sadlers Wells & London Festival Ballet Companies, Scottish Opera, Nottingham Playhouse & Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop Company.

*page 18 U3A W-H Newsletter No. 61, Summer 2019*

## MAY

*1, Ludwick Family Centre, Welwyn Garden City*

**Ann Milner: “Living & Teaching in Chongquin China”**

Ann lived and worked in Chongquin for three years, teaching conversational English to University students. Her talk covers her experiences and feelings.

*8, Hatfield* **Pauline Martindale: “Behind Closed Doors”**

Pauline’s hobbies include Public Speaking, Choral Singing, Photography and Volunteering. She is also an area photography judge, going to various camera clubs to judge their competitions. She enjoys travelling around to engagements thus enabling her to meet many people.

*15, WGC* **Peter Waine: “WGC Centenary Foundation”**

Welwyn Garden City will be 100 years old in 2020. Peter is Chairman of The Centenary Foundation, a team of volunteers who are working to bring about a host of events to help celebrate this fact.

*22, Hatfield* **Ted Childs: “The Production of Inspector Morse”**

Ted, a producer and writer, was one of the founders of Euston Films established by Thames Television in the early 1970s. He went on to become Executive Producer on an extensive range of films and series for ITV. (This much anticipated talk was originally planned for last September, but Ted was unfortunately unable to join us then. Happily, we were able to rearrange so that our members don't miss out on Ted's inside knowledge of this popular series.)

*29, WGC* **Saffron Summerfield: “Milton Keynes to Mississippi”**

A lively, entertaining talk with music, featuring a brief history of the guitar, in which Saffron plays Classical, Spanish and Mississippi Blues music along with her own songs and tunes on 2 Guitars and Cuatro. Anecdotes and stories from a career in music which started in a North Bucks Village to performing live on John Peel’s BBC Radio shows, recording nine albums, and a single at Abbey Road Studios.

## JUNE

### 5, Hatfield Alan Haines: “The Baby Boomer Nostalgia Show”

Alan Haines is going to give us a quirky reminder of what it was like growing up in post-war Britain. He hopes to trigger some fond memories.

### 12, WGC Sarah Harrison: “Stories Of My Life”

Sarah Harrison’s first novel, published in 1980, was the million-selling *The Flowers of the Field*, set in the Great War. Since then she’s enjoyed consistent success as an author, and has also ventured into stand-up and song-writing.

### 19, Hatfield Philip Cain: “Barrow to Baghdad and Back”

Philip’s work has taken him to many countries around the world, the last ten years of which were spent in the Middle East. Since retiring in 2015, he has become an author and guest speaker, and will tell us how a career that began in Barrow in Furness ended in Baghdad.

### 26, WGC Warren Ashton: “Clichés, Proverbs and Phrases – Don’t Touch Them with a Bargepole!”

Well-known phrases, how they ended up in our language.

## JULY

### 3, Hatfield Alan Wise: “Loneliness – The Epidemic of Our Times”

Alan is a leading psychologist/psychotherapist working in both the NHS and the private sector. His talks are educational and entertaining and will open your mind to a new way of thinking about life.

### 10, WGC Andy Smith: “Wartime & Romance”

War is a grim business, but romance doesn’t come to a grinding halt. In wartime and peacetime, love soldiers on.

### 17, Hatfield Garden Party

Plus quiz and live music from “The Ukerythmics” (Dacorum U3A Ukulele band). Please bring finger food and garden chairs.

*Autumn term starts on 11 September at Hatfield.*