



Garden Party 2023



The annual Welwyn Hatfield u3a Summer Garden party was held at Breaks Manor on 19 July. It is a hotly anticipated event as it involves food. Eating our own picnic seems to have become the norm since Covid.

The day began with the traditional anxious scanning of the weather forecast. Rain was predicted for the afternoon. Sensitive noses could detect the scent of precipitation in the air – but it narrowly avoided Hatfield and the afternoon was sunny. Sunny and quite warm – some picnickers wished they had opted for short sleeves.

The gardens were looking lovely; the roses were well worth a sniff. After the sniffing, the festivities started

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with a performance from our own WelHat Ukes. The musicians played a selection of songs from the 1950s to the present day - well, nearly the present day. Stuff that we have actually heard of.

The music was followed by Tony Tutton's Famous Quiz. The picnickers took a partial break from trudging and formed themselves into teams, discreetly allying themselves with people who looked as though they were brainy and might have a well-preserved memory.

u3a Welwyn-Hatfield NEWSLETTER

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The questions were up to Tony's usual standard and kept everyone well entertained. There was a lot of head scratching and "I knew that wasn't right!" The winners received Cadbury's Creme Eggs (which probably looked a lot more appealing when the sandwiches and cake had gone down).

The quiz was followed by a final short set from WelHat Ukes. Reviews included "Haven't they improved?" "Better than last year" and from Anne Watkins; "Really, really good and some lovely voices." One anonymous critic said "They are not as good as Katie's Jumping Fleas." Your reporter, having seen the rival ukulele group, must reluctantly concur.

The afternoon ended with a speech from our chairman (or is it chair?) and much-deserved applause for the committee. Then we all packed away our picnic things, checked the grass for litter and went home. It was a wonderful garden party.

Julie Grey

Notes from the Chair



(This time from a chair in the grounds of Windsor Castle on a trip with the Arts Appreciation Group.)

We have reached the end of another term, with our usual Garden Party at Breaks Manor, and our u3a continues apace with a high level of activity, thanks to the hard work of our Committee members and Group Leaders. Our success of course would not be possible without the continued commitment of our members, supporting our many activities, and the volunteers who help to make it run smoothly and efficiently.

This last term there have been a number of outings by various groups, including a seven-day trip to the Scottish Highlands. You can read about some of these activities in the articles in this Newsletter. We now regularly have over 100 members at our Wednesday



Diane Coxon

morning meetings, which continue to cover a wide range of interesting topics. When I speak to friends in other u3as they are very surprised that we are able to offer weekly talks on such a wide range of subjects, when most u3as offer only a monthly meeting. All credit to the Speaker Bookings team for their hard work and wide-ranging research.

We began this year with a number of changes to the Committee, and this term we have had two more. Diane Coxon has stepped down from the Committee and her role as new Members Secretary. I should like to thank Diane for fulfilling this important role and also for helping organise last



Sue Talbot

year's Christmas Lunch. Committee member Ann Madell has taken over as New Members Secretary and I wish Ann all the best in her new role.

At the end of term, after her four years in office as Treasurer, Sue Talbot stepped down. Sue has successfully managed our finances through some very difficult periods, not least when some of the groups had to begin paying for meeting venues. This created a huge amount of additional work, which Sue managed very efficiently under very difficult circumstances. I should like to thank Sue for all her hard work in keeping our finances in such good order over this period and ensuring that we are in such a strong financial position going forward.

Beryl Whyatt has very kindly stepped up to become our new Treasurer and I should like to extend to Beryl a very warm welcome to the Committee and to thank her for taking on this essential role within our organisation. With Beryl's help we will also be adopting a new finance package which should help to further streamline our finances.

Looking forward to next term we have another busy time ahead of us. We resume our Wednesday meetings at Breaks Manor on 6 September, with our Open Day planned for 4 October when once again we will showcase our u3a to the wider public. On 18 November we have our Autumn Dance with most tickets already sold, and in December we will have a new format for the 'Christmas Party' in the form of a pantomime. You will hear more about this in the Autumn Term. As usual we will end the year on 13 December with the Christmas Lunch, which this year will be held at the Mill Green Golf Club, WGC.

Once again a full agenda to look forward to, to help us Learn, Laugh and enjoy Life!

Steve Hall

Hatfield Community Fair



**Joan Scales, Adrienne Nix and Steve Dringer
at the Welwyn Hatfield Community Fair stall**

We were among over 30 organisations taking part in the Hatfield Community Fair on Thursday 27 July. The Mayor and several councillors toured the stalls, which ranged from sports to housing help, police, etc. The Community Fair was a family event, with lots of free activities for children, who of course were often accompanied by grandparents whilst Mum and Dad were at work, so an ideal audience for us! It was an opportunity to spread the word about our u3a and what is on offer for people who are no longer in full-time employment.

Some of the Welhat Ukes Group were on hand to entertain us, which was very well received. It was great to have people helping out on the stall who are not



committee members; thank you very much to Sue, Lynn, and Helen, as well as committee members Colin, Adrienne, Eileen, Dave and Steve. With so many of us, it meant we could have a rota of three at a time for a couple of hours each. We handed out previous newsletters, colourful flyers, and our latest Autumn Programme, and chatted to people about what we enjoy about being a member of our u3a. Most people we spoke to were surprised to learn how many different Groups are available. Several people said they would definitely come along to a future Wednesday meeting to try it out, so if you are one of them reading this, welcome!

Unfortunately, we didn't have a gazebo, so we had to shelter under a neighbouring stall at times – perhaps one of our members has a small, lightweight gazebo they no longer need, which could be used for future events?

Joan Scales, Groups Coordinator

Group News

Strollers



The Strollers Group meet twice a month to complete an approximately 3.5-mile leisurely stroll in the countryside followed by lunch at a local pub. Here are some of the Group at Gustard Wood following such a walk.
Peter Fox

Travel Group

Sussex by the Sea – East Sussex Tour

A visit to Eastbourne in the middle of May was most appealing and proved very successful. The sun shone most of the time and, although a little breezy, the skies were clear and our hotel was situated right on the promenade and within sight of the pier.

Day 1 included a visit to Knole House (NT) en route. It took me some time to recall that I had visited the house before on



a U3a Trip but another visit was well worthwhile. This historic house was first mentioned in the 1290's but the current house is mostly 15th century with many royal connections but before this, it was known as the Archbishops' Palace. Elizabeth I gave it to Robert Dudley and there was a long association with the Sackville family. The house contains many significant paintings by artists such as Van Dyck, Gainsborough, Sir Peter Lely, Sir Godfrey Kneller and Sir Joshua Reynolds. The grounds are extensive and contain a beautiful deer park. After the visit it was on to our hotel – quite small but with well-decorated reception rooms and conservatory facing the sea.

Day 2 began with a visit to Brighton to experience the BAi360 viewing tower. This was quite an experience with extensive views all around. It was bright and sunny and we could see for miles. After this experience it was good to relax over coffee at the base and watch the world go by for a while. The plan was to return to the hotel for an early lunch and free time prior to our evening visit. I took the opportunity of the free time to visit an old friend in Hove with the aid of my bus



The Observatory Science Centre at Herstmonceux

pass and railcard to return! I arrived in time to catch the coach for our evening visit to The Observatory Science Centre at Herstmonceux. This was probably a highlight for me and quite unexpected. We had a private tour of the telescope domes and a planetarium presentation. The guide, Jeremy, was excellent and we learnt so much about the history, construction and use of the centre. We had a demonstration of the working of the telescopes including opening the roof and the raising of the floor – quite impressive! We learnt about the reflective and refractive lenses and saw each demonstrated. Then, after our planetarium experience, we explored the science exhibits near the entrance which had many opportunities for children (and us!) to experiment.

This was very impressive and highly recommended.

Day 3 began with a trip to pick up the famous Bluebell Railway for a return journey through the stunning Sussex countryside by steam train. After this we spent some time exploring the historic town of Lewes. From here we travelled



on to the picturesque village of Alfriston with its medieval high street and imposing St Andrews Church. We returned along the coastal road with its views of Beachy Head.

Day 4 was the day scheduled for a tour of the Hidden Spring Vineyard with an opportunity to taste the wine. The afternoon was for free time so, once again, I took the opportunity to meet up with family at The Towner Art Gallery. The Towner is a lovely gallery with a large collection of paintings by Eric Ravillious. In September it will be housing the long list of entries for the Turner Prize. We had lunch there in a very smart new restaurant. It was a beautiful afternoon so I took a stroll along the promenade all the way back to the hotel and past the pier with a stop for tea halfway.

Each evening at the hotel there was some entertainment, either musical or a quiz so this made for some pleasant evenings and it was good to have the services of our guide whom we had met in Lincoln last year.



At the Secret Vineyard doing the tasting!

Day 5 came round very quickly but on the way home we visited Nymans Gardens (NT). The gardens near the ruined house were exceptional and seemed to be very sheltered. They looked stunning against the background of the ruined gothic walls. There were a few rooms remaining which were inhabited and interesting as the home of Anthony Armstrong-Jones and family. A couple of us managed to hitch a buggy ride which explored the woodland walks with an informative guide. So then it was back home via the M25 which was navigated by our coach driver and we returned in good time.

So, once again, it was thanks to our leaders, Kathy Dugan and Jean Davis, who ensured that all went well and another successful holiday was enjoyed by the travel group.

Text and photos by Pamela Williams

Walkers



The Walkers (Longer Walks) Group comprises walkers who enjoy social company, convivial chat, fresh air and healthy, if not overstraining exercise. Hertfordshire is a wonderful county to explore and we sometimes pass some surprisingly remote rural areas. We may occasionally include out-of-county and London walks. Just about all our walks are circular.

We meet about twice a month (fewer times in the depth of winter!) for walks of about 4-5 miles (2-2½ hours), usually starting at 10:30 and finishing close to a place of light refreshment! We sometimes attempt longer walks (up to 7 miles). Of course walkers can pick and choose which walks they have time to go on.

The East of England Region u3a has published a booklet called *Walks In The East Of England During September 2022 In Celebration Of Our 40th Anniversary*. This included contributions from Essex,

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk u3as.

Our own small contribution was as follows, with the photograph above:

“Fifteen of our group explored the five waterways at Hartham Common, Hertford today. (Rivers: Bean, Rib, Lea, and other waterways: Lea navigation and ‘New River’).

“We walked five miles in doing so, ending up at the Old Barge pub for lunch.”

If you would like to see the whole publication, here is a link: www.u3asites.org.uk/east-of-england. It is the first item under “publications”.

John Horsford

History of the Welwyn Hatfield u3a Website

In April 2002, our Newsletter Issue No. 8 included a “Message from Stuart Barker”:

Should we have our own web-site [sic] on the Internet? More than eighty U3A groups in the UK already have. It would list all our meetings, study groups and information on membership for any potential new recruits. Stuart Barker is looking into what is involved but his experience of such things is limited. If you have any experience of preparing web sites and would like to assist in this project please contact Stuart.”



Stuart Barker

This appeal was followed in January 2003, in Issue No. 10, by a longer item headed “Calling Silver Surfers”, which began:

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You probably know by now that we have a web site at <http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk>. You can get a broad picture of U3A activities from other web sites. The Harrow U3A [*url given*] is well worth visiting if only because it provides links to more than 250 other U3A sites in 17 different countries. The Third Age Trust are at [*url given*]. Stuart Barker is organising an e-mail [*sic*] circulation for members. He is also on the e-mail circulation of the Dacorum U3A.

The message encourages “more wired-up members” to have their names added to the list. and specifies the various ways in which “the web could be very useful”.

The Welwyn Hatfield u3a Website was launched in 2005 , and the url given in Newsletter Issue 18. Issue 35, in 2010, bore a large notice on its front page, “*FROM THE COMMITTEE*”. This began “For those of you who have the use of a computer . . . ” and announced, “The Committee, led by our Webmaster Roger Swaine, have recently changed the website”, enabling immediate notice of changes or cancellation to the programme. It appealed, “Please, if you are fortunate to have a computer, share this information with friends and other U3A members”; and thanked Tony McGinn “who was instrumental in establishing the original website, maintaining and upgrading it for many years”.



Roger Swaine

Roger continued to serve on the committee as our official Webmaster. In January 2012 he provided an article for Issue 39 of the newsletter, giving the history of the World Wide Web, how to navigate it, and the contents of our own Welwyn Hatfield site. Sue Kershaw, then Chair, added a note about the Third Age Trust’s website and all that was available in the Members’ Area there –



“Indeed, a whole New World!” Roger has also demonstrated the website and its contents at every New Members’ Welcome meeting.

In 2015, in his Chairman’s Report at the AGM, Jack Wood thanked Roger:

Who has designed and maintains undoubtedly the best U3A website of any that I have logged on to. It’s attractive, informative, and accurate, and Roger himself is always ready to help; you ask him to put something on the site and you stop thinking about it – because the following morning, there it is.

Roger wrote another article of instruction about using our website in Issue 56 of the newsletter, in 2017.

Still our Webmaster, as he has been since 2010, he continues to update pages of the site – Stop Press messages, the General Meetings Programme, details of each Study Group, the weekly calendar of Group meetings, the Overview of Outings, the Notice Board. Such a mass of information to keep current – Roger urges members to let him know when something becomes out-of-date or wrong, and asks group leaders to check their group’s web-pages regularly.

Do visit our website,

<http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk/index.html>

You will find it indeed most attractive and informative, as Jack Wood described it. Learn, enjoy, be impressed, and grateful to Roger Swaine!

Hazel Bell

*The thirty-second in our series of profiles of distinguished Welwyn Hatfield u3a members features . . . **Dee Thomas***



Dee was born in the Wirral, on Merseyside, and spent her early years moving between there and East Anglia because of her father's work – attending six primary schools in the process. One in Norwich excelled in teaching music, and there she learned to play the clarinet. She writes, "Since it was not long after the war, we had proper bells and mouthpieces, with a piece of waterpipe in between with holes at strategic intervals". Back on Merseyside, at a Liverpool Philharmonic concert, aged twelve, she first heard the oboe – and was hooked. She used to Ferry 'Cross the Mersey to music lessons in Liverpool and has played in various orchestras ever since. She particularly enjoys shows, from *Oklahoma!* to *Annie Get Your Gun* to Gilbert & Sullivan.

Shortly afterwards, she acquired a penfriend in Norway as a Girl Guide and was invited to stay with her in Stavanger, after working her way up to Lesson 29 in *Teach Yourself Norwegian*.

She attended school sixth form in Newmarket, and became a keen cyclist, even cycling to visit family in the Wirral. On leaving school she attended Cambridge Tech, taking a linguist-secretarial course before working for a year in the department. In 1966 she became a student at Newcastle University, doing Scandinavian Studies which included a year abroad – spent in Norway.

After graduation Dee worked at Imperial College, London, doing secretarial work in the College library. David Thomas, who worked in administration at the College, was a regular user of the library and they married in 1972.

Dee then took a catering management course at the former North London Polytechnic, and became a deputy catering manager in Imperial College refectory. Subsequently she worked for ILEA school meals as Head of Kitchen at six schools in Hammersmith & Fulham, with twenty staff, providing 600 meals a day.

Meanwhile David was taking evening classes in Norwegian, hoping to apply for a job at the new university that was opening in Tromsø, and his tutor asked Dee to take over his classes since he was being posted to Bergen.

In 1980 Dee began teaching Norwegian at the Mary Ward Centre and Morley College in London. Her son was born in 1981, and she turned freelance, as a self-employed commercial translator of Norwegian / Swedish / Danish into English. She also took the exams of the Chartered Institute of Linguists and the Institute of Translation and Interpreting.

In 1986 David lost his job. Together, and with help from friends and colleagues, they wrote and self-published seven language guides, illustrated in comic-book style under the series title, "Instant...", and the imprint, dot Publications. In the succeeding 25

years 80,000 copies of the books were sold.



In 1988, by which time David was in poor health following a medical accident, the family moved to the Scottish Borders, where Dee became a member of the Children's Panel dealing

with children's welfare as well as minor offences. Then in 1991 they moved to Tyneside, where she resumed teaching evening classes. David died in 1994. In 2001

Dee returned to Herts, retiring from teaching and translation in 2010. A small amount of editing and proofreading (and easier deadlines) followed, but in 2015 she decided enough was enough.

A keen traveller, Dee has been to Greece and northern Norway on a scooter, losing the windscreen and her slingback sandals in a ditch near Narvik "in the days before tarmac". Since then, she has been to the Arctic Circle five times and all over Europe by campervan (warmer and dryer). Also to Siberia, which she describes as fascinating but bleak.

Dee joined the u3a in 2011 – first St Albans u3a, as they had a Russian group, but it grew progressively harder so she left. Meanwhile St Albans' Architecture group was full, so she joined WelHat's group – an excellent choice, she says. She became leader of the Architecture group, and a participant in the chat sessions of the Thursday Zoomers, as well as playing the oboe briefly with the ukes. She joined the Committee in 2022, and is now our Deputy Chair.

In between all this, she enjoys arm-wrestling and playing Uno with her son and grandchildren – but they usually win!



**Dee in Siberia with a bear
(certainly dead!)**

Autumn Term 2023 – Wednesday Meetings

Doors open at 9.45am. Tea and coffee are served from 10.00am to 10.30am. The meetings start at 10.30am with notices, followed by the talks. Bring your own cup or mug for free tea or coffee.

We are now making recordings of talks delivered at our Wednesday morning meetings, whenever speakers are willing for us to do this.

We are making these recordings without investing in expensive new equipment or requiring a lot of technical knowledge, so the results are not perfect, but improving, and a number of members are now benefitting from the opportunity of watching talks that they were unable to attend in person.

If you would like to receive recordings whenever they are available, please email video@u3awelhat.org.uk

SEPTEMBER

6, Breaks Manor, Hatfield

Steve Dimmer – “After Walt – the Disney Story Continued”

*In September 2022, we learned of Walt Disney’s struggles before he finally achieved success. By popular demand Steve now returns to continue the story, again illustrating his talk with clips from landmark films, this time including *The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast* and *Frozen*.*

13, Ludwick Family Centre, Welwyn Garden City

Tracy Mackness – “Turning My Life Around – The Giggly Pig Co.”

Tracy Mackness is an Essex bad girl turned good. She is now the owner of the successful “farm to fork” Giggly Pig Company, with its distinctive pink and black vans, and its slogan “No fat or crap in our sausages!”

20, Hatfield

Alan Gilmore – “Nelson’s Navy”

Alan is a retired Army Major who served in Military Intelligence in the Middle East, Russia and Cuba. He is fluent in 12 languages, putting these to good use in both his Military and civilian occupations.



27, Welwyn Garden City

Jo Laurie – “My Cousin Henry from Ardbeg to Antarctica”

Jo Laurie, a relative of Henry “Birdie” Bowers, will talk about how and why Birdie became an invaluable asset to Captain Scott and his expedition party. From Birdie’s school days to naval training, to Burma and finally Antarctica, you will learn of, quoting Scott, Birdie’s “indomitable character” and “inexhaustible humour”.

OCTOBER

4, Hatfield MEET THE GROUPS

The annual occasion when our groups display their products and illustrate their activities.

11, WGC

Elizabeth Gowing – “The Rubbish Picker’s Wife”

In 2016 the President of Kosovo awarded Elizabeth the Mother Teresa medal for her humanitarian work; in 2018 the new Kosovan President conferred Kosovan citizenship on her; and in 2021 Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti appointed her to his cabinet as adviser on community affairs.

WANTED: Marion Cleveland is asking for used spectacles (in any condition) – to go to The Lions Charity . They will be sent to Liverpool, reconditioned if need be, and sent to where needed. She is also still collecting stamps, towels, sheets, coins, plastic bottle tops and bras for The Dogs Trust.

18, Hatfield

Geoff Bowden – “Noel and Ivor”

Noel Coward and Ivor Novello were successful composers, actors, film stars and playwrights as well as being friends and rivals. Ivor’s musicals include *The Dancing Years*, *King's Rhapsody* and *Perchance To Dream* whilst Noel wrote *Bitter Sweet*, *Private Lives*, *Hay Fever* and *Brief Encounter*.



25, WGC

Tony Tutton – “That’ll Be The Day – The Life, Music & Influence of Buddy Holly”



Tony will take us on a journey through the short musical career of Buddy Holly from his early beginnings in the small town of Lubbock Texas to his huge influence on the world of popular music from the 1950s to the present day. Tony’s talk will include video & audio clips of Buddy’s greatest hits (that he hopes you will sing along to !!).

NOVEMBER

1, Hatfield

Dr. Bill Block – “Operation Tabarin”

We will learn of the operation to secure British Antarctic Territory in WW2.

8, WGC

Anne Lawrence – “Life of a Counter-Terrorist Detective Inspector”

Anne Lawrence QPM is a retired DI having spent thirty three years in the Metropolitan Police Service. She will share her experiences of life on the Counter Terrorism Command at New Scotland Yard.

15, Hatfield

Peter Waine – “A.E. Housman – the Poet and the Man”

A long list of literary luminaries regarded A.E. Houseman as the best; TS Eliot said we would all write like Housman if we could. Peter is chairman of the AE Housman Society and author of his biography. He will give us a taster of this fascinating man whose poetry is so memorable and has never been out of print.

22, WGC

Jeff Lewis – “History of Smallford Station and the Hatfield and St Albans Railway”

Jeff is the Chair of SSAWHS – the Smallford Station & Alban Way Heritage Society. Jeff’s talk will cover how the society started, what they have undertaken over the years and their collaborative community project to improve the environment around Smallford Station.

Saturday 18th November

Supper Dance

At Ludwick Hall WGC



Featuring Tony Tutton’s “Simply 60s” Band

Tickets £15 including Fish & Chip supper.

29, Hatfield

Andy Thomas – “Christmas – a Festive History”

In an uplifting presentation, Andy uncovers the long and intriguing background to the festive season. From the ancient celebration of light in the winter darkness, to the marking of the birth of a messiah, Andy shows how we can still find meaning in Christmas today.



DECEMBER

6, WGC CHRISTMAS PARTY & PANTO.

Tickets on sale from 1 Nov: £2 including mince pie & drink.

13 CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Mill Green, WGC – tickets on sale from September.

Welwyn Hatfield u3a does not endorse any products or services offered by speakers.

Spring term starts on 10 January 2024 at Welwyn Garden City.