



WELWYN-HATFIELD  
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE  
NEWSLETTER

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May 2011 Issue 37

## We met the Groups

The last meeting of the Spring term, “Meet the Groups”, on 13 April at Ludwick Hall, offered a splendid display. Many of our Groups had set up stalls round the rooms setting out their products or resources.

In the entry room were stalls of groups with their own visually appealing creations to show: the Photography and the Art Groups, both with much set out for our admiration, and displayed above – Photography on the left, Art on the right. The Multimedia Group had on its table works including appliqué, collage and papier maché. The Antiques Group’s stall boasted a quite delightful dolls’ room with miniature furniture of various periods, including a Victorian brooch of tiny glass pieces transformed by Barbara Kinghorn-Dickinson into a table complete

with tiny, working, decorated drawers. “I wish we could collect real antiques, but we don’t have the room, so I make miniature ones”, she said. The fortunate dolls’ room, carpeted, also included a Knoll settee, torchères, a French commode and an Italian cupboard fronted with marble pictures.

The Walkers displayed a large map showing routes, with guides, a pair of stout boots and a cap.

In the main hall were more works of art: the Greetings Cards Group showed their hand-made cards of various types: découpage, stepper, peel-off, easel, bookmarks, recycling, Iris folding, teabag folding ... The Creative Writing Group had copies of their latest booklet, *Whatever It Takes*, and sample pages of their prose and poetry pinned up.

The German Group showed German





books and poems; the Italian, a pictorial map of Italy and guide books, with red, green and white predominating; the Latin Group, Roman histories; British History, a display of appropriate books; World Affairs, newspaper cuttings from various nations. Computer Discussion showed two laptops, one set up for Windows, the other for Linux, with discs of the programs. Three more very attractive displays were those of Wildlife Watch, with its photographs and leaflets; Gardening, with plants and pictures; and Architecture, with large photographs showing the places they had previously discussed, and several of the places they most recently visited, Rochester.

The Family History display was fascinating, showing a large sample genealogy with relevant certificates; a large family tree; old photographs; pages from the census of 1841 and of 1911; and an

apprenticeship document of 1788.

The palm for the most animated display must go to the Line Dancing Group, six of whose valiant members performed three demonstration dances. Sandy Pizzey explained, "We enjoy line dancing because it is good fun and keeps us fit. Research has shown that dancing is good for you – learning new steps keeps your brain active and the movement helps with co-ordination and balance."

Altogether, the diversity of lively stalls all showing enthusiasm and expertise indicated a U3A group with very active brains..

*Photographs all by Ken Wright. Above: left, the dolls' room of the Antiques Group; right, the Family History Group's display. Below: left, the Gardening Group's display; right, the Line Dancers.*



## **Celebrating Hertfordshire's Millennium: A thousand years of History**

This full-day meeting on 6 April, held in Woolmer Green village hall, was enjoyable and worthwhile. Initiated by Herts Network, it was well organised from the time we were directed to a car parking space to the end of the last lecture

We heard how the first documented evidence of our shire was in 1011 when Swain Forkbeard, the Viking, was making his presence felt in the area, and how Wheathampstead received its charter from Edward the Confessor in 1060. Documents tell us that 911-913 brought fortification to Hertford, and A.D. 11 saw the beginning of Verulamium. Hitchin was important during the Anglo-Saxon period, and Alfred the Great's son, Edward the Elder, was in the area when he led an army which conquered Mercia (902-921).

The Black Death, of the 14th Century, while it brought great devastation among the general population, nevertheless proved a boon to labourers: so many had died that those remaining were able to demand better wages. This led to the Statute of Labourers of 1351.

Tudor Hertfordshire was greatly affected by Henry VIII's church reforms, when much church land was sold. Ralph Radcliffe acquired Hitchin Priory in 1544. He contributed £20 when men from all areas were called to arms when the Armada threatened us in 1588. George Clifford, a larger-than-life Hertfordshire character, was a courtier in Elizabeth I's court and a privateer. Slavery began in Tudor times; Maurice Thompson of Watton-at-Stone was mentioned in this regard.

At this point we broke for lunch, which was delicious and a welcome respite. Most of us ate outside, enjoying the glorious

sunshine. The afternoon session began with a talk on how much information can be acquired by examining church registers, wills and probate etc. A book has been published on this subject, mostly dealing with St. Albans.

Next we heard of witches and how poor old women were often accused of witchcraft and tried by ducking, with their thumbs tied to their toes: if they floated they were guilty, if they sank, they drowned! Jane Wenham of Walkern was found guilty and sentenced to death, but she was reprieved by the intervention of Lord Cowper and received a pardon from Queen Ann. She spent the rest of her life on Lord Cowper's estate, and her funeral was mentioned in Lady Sarah Cowper's diary.

We heard an informative lecture on the 18th-century gardens of Hertfordshire. It is surprising how they can be traced from documents in the archives. It was very hot in the hall and the afternoon cup of tea was gratefully received. Later we heard how much child labour was used on farms to help get local-grown watercress to London markets, as well as barley for beer. Many accidents happened to children: one was killed by a horse and there were numerous accidents with machines.

Our final talk concerned the Aircraft Industry in Hertfordshire. It was very well presented, we heard about both Handley Page and De Havilland through their histories. Excellent slides and a very knowledgeable speaker.

We staggered home trying to digest such a cornucopia of information. It had been a very worthwhile day.

*Myrtle Pit-Keathly*

*We plan to include in each edition of our newsletter a profile on one of our members, beginning this time by featuring long-standing, popular member –*

## Ona Glover

Ona Crook came from a Lancastrian family. As her engineer father was sent to Ulster, she was born there in 1918 and grew up by the sea in Bangor, County Down — a delicate only child, spoilt, she confesses, by doting parents. She attended a school for young ladies there.

The family moved to London when Ona was twenty-one, and she planned a career as a music teacher, playing the organ; but with the outbreak of World War II she was called up to work as a relief nurse. This took her to a mental hospital workhouse, a desolate place, where only one visitor called during all her time there – a sailor come to identify his dead grandfather. She encountered patients such as the 90-year-old woman who constantly tried to escape down the fire-escape in her nightie to make it into the men's ward — swearing mightily when prevented — and prostitutes giving birth and abandoning their babies. It all provided an eye-opening contrast to her sheltered upbringing. “By Jove, it grew me up!” she says. Her parents would beg her not to recount the day's events to them until after dinner.

On marrying her first husband and becoming pregnant, Ona had to leave nursing and work in censorship, deleting over-informative items in wartime letters.



Her husband, an actor (Kenneth McClellan), discharged from the army on grounds of ill-health, formed a company to entertain the troops, under the auspices of the Council for Encouragement of Music and Arts. Ona joined the company, playing small parts. They toured the UK, Ireland and Scotland, then Italy for a year (always opera houses!). The company offered six plays for performance; always,

the comedies were chosen. The audiences were often unfamiliar with theatre: it was hard to sustain comedy when a sergeant would bellow “QUIET!” if the troops laughed.

After six years Ona left her husband, who was too entrenched in the theatre to sustain a marriage, and with her small son joined her parents in the large, Victorian family home (seven bedrooms, four cellars!) in Liverpool. After her divorce she married again, a teenage friend from Ireland, Jim Glover, and produced her second son.

Having served six and a half years in the army, Jim was in poor health. They sold the Victorian house, Ona being the last of her family, and moved back to London. There

she trained for retailing, and became a buyer for John Lewis, which then had 26 stores, six in Canada. The advent of computers entailed more training; and Ona took on the training of others, eventually gaining a seat on the board.

Jim's poor health brought them to Welwyn Garden City with its clear air, on doctor's advice, twenty years ago. Together they joined the newly starting Welwyn-Hatfield U3A. Jim died two years later, leaving Ona not only grieving, but her occupation gone — "Looking after him was a full-time job". U3A then, she says,

was "Such a help". She joined several of the groups to fill her lonely time — drama, Italian and Science.

Now Ona runs the play-reading group, which meets weekly in her home, with a membership of eleven and a waiting-list — sure signs of success!

Her two sons have provided her with five grand-sons, and the great-grandchildren are starting to make their appearance — four so far ...

*Hazel Bell  
Photograph — Ann Tillotson*

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## Festival of Words



On 19 March the Festival of Words was launched to a flying start. Sixty-two children took part in the speech competition on the day, and twelve took part in the writing competition, all aged between seven and 16.

It was a magical day, watching children have the confidence to walk up onto a platform and recite a poem or read a piece of prose, in front of an audience and an adjudicator. All the competitors took home

a certificate of performance and a personal, handwritten adjudication, and the winner in each category took home a trophy as well, which they will hold for one year.

Among the sponsors was the Welwyn Hatfield U3A. We were most grateful for the donation, which helped to fund the festival. We also had a great deal of practical help from U3A members, who volunteered to act as stewards, clerks and scribes. I got the impression that although they were given jobs to do, everyone seemed to have enjoyed the day — and most have already volunteered their services for next year.

We are currently in negotiation with Jack FM Radio, who are hoping to sponsor us by providing larger premises, as we feel that we could double the number of competitors next year. That would require double the volunteers too, so watch this space!

The photograph shows a group of children who entered the writing competition.

*Jean Hughes  
Photograph — Irene Droemert*

## EXPLORING LONDON

All who went on our trip to “The Old Palace Quarter” had a most enjoyable day. The tour guide was very knowledgeable and gave us a two-hour tour round the lesser known areas of St James’s.

Our next trip is to the Bank of England on 20 May. It will consist of an audio-visual presentation, followed by a visit to their museum. It will start at the Bank of England at 12.00 noon and last approximately two hours. This trip is free, except for the travel, which as usual will be from either WGC or Hatfield station, unless you prefer to travel independently.

We hope in the future to take a trip down the River Thames, which will include a buffet lunch and a commentary called “The River Thames Murders”; to visit the Globe Theatre; and to enjoy further guided walking tours around London, including, nearer Christmas, the Charles Dickens Christmas Carol tour, which unfortunately had to be cancelled last year because of the snow.

*Bridget Durham*

## CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

The Creative Writing Group are pleased to say that they have raised £250 for the Motor Neurone Disease Association, through the sale of their third anthology of stories and poems, *Whatever It Takes*. They send a big ‘thank you’ to everyone who supported them.

The book makes 39 pages, and costs £1.00. A small sample is this limerick by Harry Smith:

A feisty young woman called Marge  
Has spent all of her life on a barge.  
And she went on a spree  
With a fellow bargee  
Now her foredeck’s begun to enlarge.

## ADVANTAGEOUS DRIVING

Nineteen people attended a recent Road Safety in Hertfordshire Driving Advantage Course. Among the group were drivers who have been driving for over fifty years as well as some who were a little less experienced.

The aim of the course was to remind us of some of the every day hazards we face on the roads and to test us on our knowledge of signage. We were given some useful tips on how to deal with certain situations. There was an opportunity to test reaction time on a driving simulator and a talk by a physiotherapist about posture and mobility.

At the end of the course we were given the opportunity to have a driving assessment at a later date. This is an accompanied hour-long drive with a trained advisor. If there are any more courses organised I recommend you sign up for one.

*Jean Davis*

## CONSIDERING DEMENTIA

Five U3A members responded to the plea from Frances Bunn and Katie Sworn of the University of Hertfordshire to attend a focus group there. They are researchers in the University’s Centre for Research in Primary and Community Care, funded by the NHR Research for Patient Benefit Programme, and are currently conducting “An exploration of patient experiences around diagnosis and treatment of dementia”. They are holding a series of focus groups to help draft key recommendations for practice and future research, and present a report to the National Institute for Health Research.

It proved a most interesting discussion, feeding harrowing personal experiences of the effects of dementia on both the patient and the family, and the terrible strain on carers, into scientific research findings. We discovered fears both personal and social.

Alzheimer's dreadful disease had at some point touched us all — and it seems unlikely that any will in future be free from the widespread impact of its devastation.

### **SUMMER GARDEN PARTY – BE HATTED!**

The Summer Garden Party will be held on 20 July at the Isobel Hospice Garden. Please bring finger-food for the buffet. Wine and soft drinks will be available.

The theme this year is *HATS*, both ladies' and gents'. Remember the adage – 'If you want to get ahead, get a hat'. Go on, go for it!

### **A PLEA TO PAY BY S. O.**

Your committee is made up entirely of unpaid volunteers who work hard to give

our members the maximum opportunity to stimulate their minds and further their interests. Our major workload is the annual collection of subscriptions. This could be

*Hazel Bell* made so much easier if all members were to

pay future subscriptions by standing order. We will shortly circulate standing order forms to groups and at our Wednesday meetings. If you have not already used this system then please complete a standing order form. Full instructions are on the forms. Thank you!

*Mike Dorrington, Treasurer*

### **'ASSOCIATE MEMBER' (A.M.)**

This term designates those who pay full membership to another U3A (including the capitation fee to National Headquarters) and therefore pay less to their second U3A

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## **SUMMER 2011 PROGRAMME**

*11 May, Hatfield*

The History of the Palace Theatre  
Watford – Ian Scleater

Ian was a member of the Board of Directors of the Palace Theatre Watford. After he retired he was appointed Honorary Archivist to the theatre.

*18 May, Ludwick*

Butterfly World — Angela Harkness  
Angel joined Butterfly World as Senior Commercial Director in 2007. She spearheaded the Atlantic Appeal and helped secure £10m in Funding.

*25 May, Hatfield*

The Sky's the Limit – or is it?  
— Peter Gamby

An illustrated talk beginning with some historical astronomical landmarks. Then we shall look back to the early Universe, consider lightheartedly the Law beyond Earth and see what else is "out there".

*1 June, Ludwick*

The history of 3D Photography —  
Bruce Piggott

A brief history of the development of 3D (stereo) photography and a demonstration of 3D pictures via the PC projection and anaglyph (red/blue glasses), which you may take home.

*8 June, Hatfield*

Southwark Cathedral, history,  
architecture plus – John & Jo Brewer

They are both qualified Cathedral guides for St. Paul's and Southwark. They are donating their fee to the Friends of Southwark Cathedral.

*15 June, Ludwick*

The University of Hertfordshire  
— Trevor Harrison

After a distinguished career in ICI, Trevor became a member of the Board of Governors of the University. He retired last year but remains on the University Council.

*22 June, Hatfield*

Thirty Years a BBC Reporter  
— Brian Curtois

Brian was first a BBC general news reporter and eventually became a senior political correspondent at Westminster. He helped set up the BBC's televising of parliament.

*29 June Ludwick*

Women and the South Sea Bubble  
— Anne Murphy

Anne works at the University of Hertfordshire, lecturing in early modern

history, and researches the development of London's financial markets. This talk will consider the little-known story of the women who became involved in this famous stock market bubble.

*6 July, Hatfield*

A Tribute to a Master Gilder  
— Phillip Wolff

Phillip worked most of his life in his father's gilding business (J. Wolff & Son, Carvers and Gilders), taking over the business in 1955.

*13 June, Ludwick*

Restoration of Copped Hall  
— Sylvia Keith

Sylvia and her husband have been involved with the restoration of Copped Hall, a Georgian Mansion near Epping, since the start of the project thirteen years ago.

*20 June, Hatfield*

Garden Party

Please bring along finger-food buffet and garden chairs. Wine and soft drinks will be provided.

*Next Term begins 14 September, Ludwick*

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

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