

Dressed to Impress!



Tony Lammiman's photographs of the Garden party at Roe Hill Hall on 25 July say it all.

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

Notes from the Chair

Hello everyone! I hope that you have enjoyed the summer and that the groups that have had a pause are ready to get going again. We are now in the middle of our Celebration Year, and about 140 of us enjoyed a celebration tea party at Roe Hill Hall in July. I would like to thank everyone who helped to make it such a success. The final event will be the lunch in December at Beales Hotel in Hatfield.

It was good to meet New Members at the coffee morning in June. The next one will be on 22 October. We now have a rota of members acting as Welcomers at our Wednesday meetings, so thank you to those of you who have joined that. Marion Sklar is coordinating this.

Also, we now have a rota for doing all the Front of House tasks before and after our Wednesday meetings, so thank you to the men who are doing this. Phil Hembrow is the

coordinator.

Les Barker has recently retired from organising our sound system at Wednesday meetings. I am very grateful to him for the time and effort he has put into this. Barry Jackson remains involved in this, and I am assembling a rota of members to join him.

In response to a recent Mailchimp message, several members have expressed an interest in observing committee meetings, so I will be contacting them in due course.

Marjorie Gladwin has been shadowing me since March in my role as Groups' Coordinator; she takes over in September. There will be a Group Coordinators' Meeting on 24 September; she will be contacting Group Coordinators about that.

Happy studying and best wishes,

Judy Grant

Circular emails

We have signed up with the rather curiously named American company "Mailchimp" and most of you who are into emails will have received messages from "Welwyn Hatfield U3A", displaying our logo and mentioning "Mailchimp" in the small print.

However I am aware that a small number of members are not receiving them. If you are not receiving any messages yet think we should have your address, please contact me at dandsb@ntlworld.com. Frankly, tracking down the cause of non-delivery is very difficult. The problem is at your end. I can offer the following ideas:

Ensure that our address is in your address book: mail@u3awelhat.org.uk

Look in any folder you may have labelled 'Spam' or 'Trash' or something similar.

Contact your ISP provider and the provider of any Spam filter you may have signed up for and ask how mail@u3awelhat.org.uk might be 'whitelisted'.

If any member who is successfully receiving the emails has any other suggestions, please contact me at either of the above addresses.

Stuart Barker

GROUP NEWS

To read groups' details and future plans, click on their names on the list on the website – <http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk/groups.html>

The **Creative Writing Group** has had another success at the Wharfedale Festival of Performing Arts. Catherine Foster was placed 2nd in the original poetry class; in the traditional poetry class, Robert Harrison was placed 3rd and Jean Hughes 1st. Three winners from our small group is really encouraging and we are patting ourselves on the back!

The **Explore London Group** visited The Old Jewish Quarter in May. The walk traces the history of London's Jewish community in the East End. It's a story that embraces the poverty of the pogrom refugees and the glittering success of the Rothschilds; the eloquence of Disraeli and the spiel of the Petticoat Lane stallholder. We visited Bevis Marks and another synagogue (never previously visited by Gillian, our excellent guide) in the area of the sweatshops and soup kitchens.

In July our largest group ever visited Historic Greenwich, starting with a boat trip, with full commentary. We boarded at The Tower and passed Tower Bridge and Docklands, disembarking close to the newly refurbished Cutty Sark, the hauntingly beautiful old tea clipper. Our guide gave us the history of Greenwich, including the Queen's House, Old Royal Observatory where we saw the ball drop at 1.00pm, Royal Naval College, and the world's largest nautical museum. We entered the beautiful Painted Hall, followed by a walk through Greenwich, with its crooked lanes, bric-a-brac shops and bustling antique and flea markets. The damp weather did not mar our day with Katy, our eloquently enthusiastic guide.

In the autumn we are planning a walk in the Westminster area and a tour of The Albert Hall.

Dennis Edwards & Bridget Durham

Photograph of 34 members of the Explore London Group enjoying historic Greenwich by Tony Lammiman.

The **Google group** is an on-line members-only group. It can be accessed any time, at

<http://groups.google.com/group/welhatu3a>

To join, email its Co-ordinator, Val Fieth, at valwgc@hotmail.com.

The newly formed **London History Group** has already had a wide range of talks, covering such themes as The Great Beer Flood, Wartime Bombing experiences in South London, "Tales of the Office" and London Coffee Houses.

The group has embarked on a major project: researching the Inns of Court. A tour has been arranged for members, to familiarise them with the origins and extent of this important area of London and to suggest research topics.

If you are intrigued and inspired by London and would like join us, please contact the



Group Leader, Gerry Newnham, email gerrynuk@gmail.com

The **Photographic Group** during the Spring term learned about Photoshop Elements, Macro & Close-up photography, and made Out and About trips to Whipsnade Zoo, Broxbourne Woods' Sculpture Trail, Hemel Hempstead Grand Union Canal and Hitchin Lavender. They concluded with a social meeting with buffet lunch, at which they had difficulty identifying each other from their pictures as babies.

Their photographs shown below are "Where be moi cows?" from the Sculpture Trail and a macro photograph of a penny, both by Ron Benfield, and "Cattle Egret" at Whipsnade by Pat Ellis.

Play Reading Group 2 read a short comedy, *The Little Heir*, to the Visually Handicapped Club in Welwyn Garden City, which was well received.

If you have a scientific or engineering background, or are generally interested in such topics, there are several ways in which you can pursue your interests within U3A.

Welwyn Hatfield U3A has a **Science and Technology** Group. It meets at Springfield House in Welwyn Garden City, on the first and third Tuesday of every month at 2pm. Meetings include talks from members and DVDs of interest.

The U3A nationally holds two annual meetings in collaboration with renowned scientific centres. There is a day of lectures at the Royal Institution in London, usually in the spring, and in the autumn there is an afternoon of lectures at the Medical Research Council in Mill Hill. Dr Mike Sergeant, who organises the latter, is coming to our Wednesday meeting on November 7th to talk about "Why humans live so much longer than chimpanzees". Highly recommended!

The Institute of Physics holds monthly lectures at the University of Hertfordshire on Wednesday evenings. They even had Professor Brian Cox before he became such a well known TV celebrity! Details of the Autumn Programme will be posted on the Notice Board page of our web-site when available.

Lectures at the Royal Society and Royal Institution in London are mostly open to the public, as is the Royal Society's Summer Exhibition. Details appear on their websites.

Dick Grainge is the S&T group's coordinator. Contact him on 01707 880443 for further details.

Stuart Barker

The **Strollers** make walks of about 3/4 miles in around 2 hours, not hurrying, and always stopping to look at any places or things of interest, finishing with a pub lunch. Their recent walks include –





JANUARY: A short stroll over Brocket Park, followed by a visit to Lemsford Bird Sanctuary where we were able to observe egrets, herons and kingfishers, followed by lunch at the Sun Pub.

MARCH: A pleasant stroll across the rolling pastures of Tewin, seeing snowdrops and visiting the church of St Peter which has some very interesting history, followed by lunch at the Plume of Feathers.

APRIL: A stroll around High Cross and Wadesmill, passing the Victorian house of one of the three people who have received two Victoria Crosses (V.C. and bar), plus strolling through Youngsbury (a Capability Brown Parkland), and lunch at the White Horse.

MAY: A very pleasant stroll around Sandridge, with beautiful views over the countryside; also seeing the wonderful bluebells in the Heartland Forest, followed by lunch at the Queens Head.

JUNE: A stroll around the pastures of Standon, passing The Lordship, the Elizabethan home (dated 1546) of Sir Ralph Sadler, who was in service to Henry VII as a Privy Councillor. He was also Keeper to Mary Queen of Scots and was a Knight of the Privy Council at her trial and execution. The Lordship, a beautiful Elizabethan house, and

the village of Standon, a lovely hamlet with many buildings of interest, made it a walk to remember. This was followed by a lunch at the Star Pub.

The photograph shows the Strollers near Little Hadham.

In the Autumn term they will visit Stanstead Abbots, Wareside, Tewin, Burnham Green and Standon. For more information please phone me, 01707 339526.

Beryl Sharp

The **Theatre Group's** second visit of the current season was again to the Watermill near Newbury, to see Ben Hur – a play hitherto judged impossible to stage.

The Watermill's production was an adaptation of the semi-biblical novel by the American general Lew Wallace (1827- 1905) which was filmed as a silent movie in 1925 followed by the famous sound version in 1959. This film involves 50,000 extras, 100,000 costumes and 300 sets – which might explain why a stage version was thought to be out of the question.

But such things always present a challenge to the Watermill. The play we went to see on 23 June had a cast of four, making considerable demands on both the imagination and sense of humour of the audience.

As written, this Roman epic was based on the story of Jewish-born Tudor Ben Hur, whose childhood friend Messala had grown up with a strong allegiance to Rome which eventually turned him into a dangerous enemy. Arrius, a Roman consul, adopted Ben Hur after he had survived some years as a galley slave, while romantic interest was provided by Esther, a wily and beautiful Arabian seductress. The Watermill's version was directed with a very light touch, while the audience also played its part in an energetic production. Some of those in the front row were invited to hold the lengthy reigns of

restless but invisible horses, while others further back in the auditorium needed to take evasive action when the chariot race thundered past. Others feared they might get wet when the galley slaves rowed through rough seas. And each time the seductive maiden emerged from her embraces with Ben Hur it was noted that her hair had changed colour!

Those who might have expected to see a play based more closely on Lew Wallace's book will perhaps have been disappointed. The majority of the audience were still laughing for some time after the show.

Thanks, Margaret, for arranging the visit.

Harry Stull

Our trip to U3A summer school.

It was a Monday morning in July when Sue King and I headed up the motorway to the U3A summer school. The windscreen wipers were on monsoon and visibility was nil, but by the time we reached Harper Adams Agricultural University at Newport, near Telford, the weather had cleared, and it stayed reasonably fine for the three days of our visit.

Our accommodation was single en suite rooms with six sharing a kitchen for tea on demand. We were lucky to have with us Martin Lloyd Withers (who came to Hatfield a few weeks ago to speak on passports); he kept us entertained with his stories.

Later that evening at the drinks reception we met our own Jack Woods. Jack was tutor for his own, very successful, music appreciation group which ran for the three days.

Sue and I joined the cinema history group run by Alan Colson. Alan certainly knows his subject and took us through several genres of 20th-century film clips. We saw wartime,

costume melodrama, crying, horror, and were brought up to date with Nick Park and Wallace and Gromit. The whole course was entertaining and informative although it was strange to be sitting in a cinema at 9.30 in the morning.

Before dinner each evening we walked around the University farm and saw animal and Plant research undertaken by students.

All the food was delicious, with some of the meat provided by the farm, and we had entertainment each evening – and we certainly used the student bar afterwards!

There were about 150 U3A members from all over the country. Sue and I concluded that we were lucky in that our own committee is almost unique in providing us with weekly meetings, as most have monthly speakers.

Will we go next year? You bet! Maybe next time we'll try Cirencester for a change.

Jan Smith

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The third in our series of profiles of distinguished members features –

Myrtle Pit-Keathly



Myrtle King was born and brought up in East Anglia, the youngest of seven sisters (with one brother to follow). Much of her childhood was spent playing outside in the fens, but she was also an eager reader, and lover of the wireless (nostalgically she murmurs, “Anne Shelton! Vera Lynn!”).

She decided early that she wanted to teach, and followed her desired career path, winning a scholarship at the village school that took her to grammar school; then attending Balls Park Teacher Training College in Hertford.

She taught in a variety of schools: first a large junior school in Leicester, where the headmaster encouraged the children to work the land and learn about farming, and kept a herd of goats. Myrtle added to her skills goat-milking and cheese-making. After six years she moved to a school in the New Town of Stevenage. She married fellow primary

school head teacher, Malcolm Pit-Keathly, in 1961.

Myrtle went next to teach at Stotfold village school. There, she was persuaded to apply for the headship of the Stevenage village school at Watton-at-Stone. She hardly took this seriously, as it was then so unusual for a woman to be a school Head; but Myrtle, rather than the men who were also interviewed, was appointed to the post.

After 18 years there, resenting the overwhelming bureaucracy creeping into education (“I couldn’t see the children over the rubbish on my desk!”) she took early retirement, having taught for a total 36 years.

Then, of course, she joined U3A, having heard of it at a head teachers’ lunch, and traced it through her library. After only six months the qualities that had made her a headmistress were recognized, and she was asked to be Vice-Chairman. Then, abruptly, the illness of the Chairman precipitated her into that post, which she held from 1993-6. Subsequently she has been our membership secretary, treasurer, on the speakers’ booking team, and Chairman again 2006-8. She now runs the British History group.

Malcolm joined U3A a year after Myrtle, and was our Chairman 1998-2000. He now runs the German group, and belongs to the Architecture, French and Science groups; together they also attend the Gardening, Play-reading 1 and Music for Pleasure groups.

Myrtle finds U3A “A fantastic organization; it’s vitally important to keep alive the caring side so that people living alone know that there are many others, many friends on hand if they need them. People”, she maintains, “are the most important things”.

Hazel Bell

Wednesday meetings - Autumn 2012

SEPTEMBER

12, Ludwick Family Centre, WGC:
Autumn Art and Craft Exhibition

19, Breaks Manor, Hatfield, Mike Ruff:
'Court Entertainment to Ceilidh'. Mike is an accordionist, and dance and music expert. His illustrated talk will cover the development of English Country Dancing in its historical and social context.

26, WGC, : 'The YMCA in Central Herts'.

OCTOBER

3, Hat: Ken and June Brazier of Princes Risborough U3A. : 'Mercy Ships'. These provide medical help and 'hope and healing' to some of the poorest countries in the world. The talk includes a ten-minute DVD.

10, WGC, John Tunesi: 'Heraldry and the tomb of the 7th Earl at Hertingfordbury' - John is a genealogist and researcher.

17, Hat, Roger Gibbons: 'Butterflies of Britain and Europe'. Roger lives in Hatfield and spends time in France where he enjoys photographing butterflies and has set up a web site for butterfly enthusiasts.

24, WGC, Jon Westoby of W-H U3A:
'History and work of the Blue Cross'. Dedicated to the health and happiness of pets since 1897, the Blue Cross is involved in animal welfare.

31, Hat, Paul Whittle: 'Steam to Mandalay'
Paul is a Freeman of the City of London

with a background in banking. He has had many years service in the Royal Corps of Signals TA. His illustrated talk will take us on a 1,200 mile tour of reclusive Myanmar, Burma, by vintage steam train.

NOVEMBER

7, WGC, Michael Sargent: 'Why do humans live so much longer than chimpanzees?' Dr Sargent is based at the National Institute for Medical Research, Mill Hill. His research subject is 'ageing'.

14, Hat, Eileen Wallace, Archive Education Officer at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS): 'Children of the Labouring Poor in 19th Century Herts'.

21, WGC, Susan Brunskill: 'Educating Children in Nepal'. On visiting Nepal twelve years ago Susan was horrified at the poor quality of life of some of the people she met there, and set about raising money for an education project.

28, Hat, Graham Marett, Chairman of The South West Herts Astronomical Society: 'The Life and Science of Galileo'.

DECEMBER

5, WGC, Christmas Party, with Quiz at 10.30 am. Please bring finger food: drinks provided.

12 Anniversary Christmas Lunch at Beales Hotel, Hatfield. Speaker – Keith Baldwin.

Next Term begins 9 January 2013 at WGC.