



At the **Art and Crafts exhibition** held at Ludwick Centre on 12 September, the Greetings Cards, Multi-Media Art, Photography and Watercolours Groups displayed their work. Our photographs show: top left, the Photography Group setting up its stall (by Ron Benfield); top right, the group's central panel display of its work (by Shirley Benfield); bottom left, "Artists at Work" the Watercolours Group; bottom right, "Two Heads are Better Than One", showing Barbara Kinghorn-Dickinson with her sculpture (both by Ron Benfield).



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

Notes from the Chair

By the time you read this, Christmas and the New Year will be just a memory. However, I do hope that it all went well and that you are looking forward to longer days and warmer weather. Our Celebration Year has now finished, with the final event being the Celebration/Christmas Lunch in December. I am sure you would like to join me in thanking Phyl Grainge and Elaine Evans for the time and effort that they have put into organising the three special events that we held to celebrate our 25 years. It has been very good working with them, and it is great that the events went so well and were so enjoyable.

We have a term of excellent speakers lined up, thanks to Sandy Pizzey and her Speakers' Committee. The term ends with Meet the Groups on March 20th.

The New Members coffee morning in October was very successful; the next one will be on Monday February 25th. Thank you to Marion Sklar for organising these and to the committee members who assisted. If you are a new member, I would like to welcome you to our U3A and hope that you will make new friends and enjoy exercising your little grey cells.

If you remember, we asked if anyone would like to attend a committee meeting as an observer. So far five members have done so, and seem to have enjoyed the experience!



We are working through the list of interested members: if you wish to go on the list, please let me know.

We belong to the Herts Network of U3As. Jack Wood and I attended the last meeting, in November. The new National Chairman, Barbara Lewis, attended and gave a brief report. (Barbara is married to the Network Chair, Stewart Lewis.) The Network Quiz was a success (Welwyn-Hatfield came 7th out of 19 entrants); St Albans will host the next one, in 2013. New U3As are in the process of being set up in Radlett and Redbourn. I have volunteered us to make the tea/coffee at the next meeting in March.

I hope that the approach of Spring is putting a spring in your steps!

U3A AGM

This September I attended the U3A's annual AGM and associated events at The Royal Agricultural College Cirencester, September 11th-12th 2012.

On the 11th, Tuesday, there was a **workshop on education**, during which several aspects of the Third Age Trust's initiatives were outlined. The first was about the online courses that may be followed by

members; the second concerned shared learning projects between members and an institution such as a museum; and the third, a plan to set up in-depth study groups, probably across several U3As, for members who wish to study a topic more deeply than they are able to do in their groups.

Before the AGM on the Wednesday we had an interesting lecture on **Dementia** by Doctor

Llewellyn, who is part of the research team at Exeter University. He made the following points:

The brain needs a plentiful blood supply so that it receives a lot of oxygen. It costs the economy more than cancer and heart disease combined; yet there is only about 10% of the research funding available. It is not inevitable. In Alzheimer's the brain has plaques and tangles: gradually the neurons die and that part will shrink. The temporal lobe is usually affected, resulting in memory loss; but older memories are often preserved. Vascular Dementia, also common, is the result of strokes caused by a blockage or a bleed. Many cases are a mixture of Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia. The brain uses other areas to compensate. Drinking red wine is no help.

What can we do? There is no simple answer. We need to protect the brain and keep it supplied with all it needs. Eat more rice and bread, and loads more fruit and vegetables. Oily fish is very good, as is the Mediterranean diet and olive oil.

Smoking, obesity and drinking a lot increase the risk, as do Type 2 diabetes and uncontrolled high blood pressure.

Vitamin D is associated with lower levels of dementia; Dr Llewellyn recommended taking a supplement of 1000IU daily, but not

the form with calcium.

Keep mentally and socially active. On five days a week do 30-minutes exercise so you are slightly out of breath – which is easier to do if with others rather than alone.

The AGM

The new Chairman is Barbara Lewis from South West Herts U3A; new Vice Chairs are Beryl Mellish from Christchurch U3A and Janet Whitehouse from Roding Valley U3A. The new Treasurer is John Ellison from Lancaster and Morecambe U3A.

There were 2 Resolutions:

1. That election of officers should be done under the direction of the Electoral Reform Services Organisation.

This was defeated

2. That the trust should regularly review and update the website.

This was resoundingly accepted. The process has already started.

All in all, it was a very interesting and useful event. I discussed U3A matters with members from many different U3As. Each U3A does things in its own way, but all groups were keen to follow the U3A's aim of self-help study.

Judy Grant, Chairman, Wel-Hat U3A



**The Royal Agricultural
College
at Cirencester**

Dynasties of Hertfordshire



On Wednesday 26 September, Herts Network of U3As put on a history study day in the beautiful old barns of Knebworth House, which several of our members, attended. Fittingly, we learnt about the five-hundred-year history of the **Lytton family**, and **Knebworth House**. The speaker was Clare Fleck.

In 1490 Robert Lytton bought the manor, a red brick house. Gradually the house expanded to a quadrangled design and home improvements were done. Later descendants added their own name to “Lytton”, such as Robinson-Lytton, Warberton-Lytton and Bulwer-Lytton. Elizabeth Bulwer-Lytton shrewdly knocked down three wings of the deteriorating house, leaving a quarter of the building to which stucco was added.

Her son Edward, who was a significant author of his day, later embellished the house with turrets and figures.

Edward’s son, Teddy, became Viceroy of India and the 1st Earl of Lytton, and *his* son Victor employed Edwin Lutyens to redesign the interior of the house and the gardens. Eventually the house passed to the Lytton-Cobbolds who commercialized the house when the National Trust were unable

to take it over, as it did not have enough land and was in a deteriorating state.

In the 1980s the Knebworth House Educational Trust took on the upkeep and restoration of the house. The current residents are Henry Lytton-Cobbold and his family, the 19th generation of Lyttons to live there.

The day continued with an account of the **Halseys of the Great Gaddesden Estate**. The speaker was Susan Flood who also covered two more of the lectures.

In 1520 John Halsey was the farm tenant of the Rectory lands of Great Gaddesden, which were owned by the Prior of Kings Langley. Following the closing down of the priories, the Halseys approached Henry the Eighth in 1545, and he sold them the house and 200 acres of land for £174.13s.4d.

By the 17th century the Halseys were wealthy enough to have the confidence to register their coat of arms. Sir John Halsey, despite being a royalist, came through those puritanical times unscathed, when many families were very affected by national events – especially if they were on the wrong side.

In the 18th century Gaddesden Place, a great Palladian villa, was built by Thomas Halsey. Though gutted by fire in 1905, it was rebuilt and survives today. Halseys through the years have been MPs, clergymen, lawyers, and have served in the Royal Navy. In 1950 the family returned to the former family house, the “Golden Parsonage”. The present head of the family is the Rev. Brother John Halsey of the Community of the Transfiguration, while his cousins Nicholas, Viola and Guy Halsey live at the Golden Parsonage and care for the estate.

The **Delme Radcliffe family of Hitchin Priory** came next. We learnt that the Priory was given to the Carmelite friars by Edward II in the 14th century and sold to Ralph Radcliffe in 1553. He ran a school in Hitchin,

and made a home for himself in the Priory, building a stage to allow his pupils to put on plays.

The family continued to live in the house, which was improved with a red brick frontage and colonnade in 1679, and later the park was extended. Eventually a John inherited and married Frances Howard, of Castle Howard so the family was *made!*

In 1965 a Milicent inherited the Priory. The stone was crumbling at this time. She sold it to Herts County Council, and since then it has been sold again to an insurance company.

Dorothy Abel Smith then spoke about her family at **Watton Woodhall** (Watton at Stone). The history of this large family and all the properties they owned at different times – in Stapleford, Waterford, Sacum, Bramfield, Aston, Datchworth and others – was complex.

Samuel Smith, a forebear of the family, bought Watton Woodhall where Smiths

continued to live for generations. In the depression, money was scarce and the house was leased out to Heath Mount School. In 1955 the Abel Smiths did a stables conversion into a Georgian house where they lived.

The final subject was the **Grenfell family of Taplow and Panshanger**. Taplow Court is a large Victorian house in the village of Taplow in Buckinghamshire. In 1852 it became the home of the Grenfell family. William Grenfell, the 1st Baron Desborough, excelled at everything he did, mixing with poets and well known people of his day. His son Julian helped plan the Olympic Games of 1908, and married Pamela Manners. They both lived at Panshanger, which was demolished in 1954.

Taplow House is now occupied by the Soka Gakkai Buddhist organization.

So this very informative and entertaining day ended with a satisfying cup of tea.

Elaine Evans

Photographic memories

Congratulations to Photography Group member *Ken Wright*, whose photographs of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City in the last century, taken when he worked for the Development Corporation in the Engineer's department, then the Commission for the New Towns, were exhibited for five weeks in The Maynard Gallery at Campus West in September and October, titled, "Memories". His photograph on the right shows traffic congestion at Bridge Road East,



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>

Discussion Group

Our meetings are held weekly in a comfortable room in the OAP complex, Wickfield Road, Woolmer Green. The group consists of nine members.

We discuss current affairs and local issues: any topic suggested by the group. Recent subjects discussed range from the siting of a new airport – when the consensus was that it is one of those impossible decisions to make which makes us glad not to be in government; appreciation of the fact that we, as members of the European Union, are pleased to have had our achievements recognised by being

awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; and how we would feel on being interviewed by John Humphries, who showed George Entwistle no mercy and contributed to his departure from the BBC.

We have one ardent left-winger in our group who speaks up manfully in heated discussions with the rest of us who are not politically on his wavelength; but it is all taken in good part (mostly).

If you are interested in joining us please do contact me.

Helen Verdier

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Explore London Group

As a new member of the U3A it was with a certain amount of trepidation that I went on my first visit with the Explore London Group on November 30th. I needn't have worried – everyone was welcoming and friendly, and the tour of the Albert Hall was a really interesting experience. It started, as all good visits do, with cups of coffee or tea in the café with what they described as mini-pastries. These turned out to be full-sized delicious Danish pastries, which set us up very well for the tour.

Thirty of us were put into two groups and went in opposite directions. Andrew, our guide, was very informative with lots of amusing anecdotes. He was full of enthusiasm and obviously enjoyed his job. We watched sound engineers busy setting up the system for a Jules Holland concert, looking like little ants scurrying around. Andrew explained that after the lottery-funded renovations (1996-2004) there was as much of the building used

underneath the floor as above it. This included underground car parking and a delivery area for the HGVs bringing equipment needed for the different shows. They unload it onto an enormous hydraulic lift which raises it all to floor level. We saw it bringing up more of Jools Holland's gear.

The foundation stone for the hall was laid by Queen Victoria in 1867; it was completed in 1871. The designers were influenced by the ancient amphitheatres. When it was finished the acoustics were not so good and there was a noticeable echo. The Queen's Box (not to be called the Royal Box!) is off-centre because of this problem. They experimented with all sorts of solutions including a canvas canopy but nothing much worked really well until in 1969 they put up the fibre glass 'mushrooms'.

We went into one of the boxes which are privately owned but available for hire at a small fee! We were only allowed to look into the Queen's box, but Andrew did take us into the Royal retiring room where the Royals and

entourage go before an event. We saw some stunning hospitality rooms and restaurants. The walls were full of portraits of the famous artistes who have performed here. I could go on but won't!

All in all this was a fascinating look behind the scenes of an iconic building. I really enjoyed it and look forward to the next outing with the group!

Ann Davies

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Family History Group

Television programmes such as “Who Do You Think You Are?” and “Heir Hunters” have increased people's interest in learning who their ancestors were, where they came from, what they did for a living and so on.

Once we start to be curious about our family ancestors we are ‘bitten by the bug’ and the inner Miss Marple or Poirot takes over.

In my case I started with my paternal Grandfather, who was killed in WWI. I knew very little about this brave man; as my Father was only seven years old when his father died, there was little information regarding his family. It has been a pleasure to research this side of the family, with the aid of the website, ‘Census’. I realise how relative [excuse the pun!] ‘Genes’ are to the way we are.

Coal miners, Carters and a Farmer appear in my paternal ancestry side, I can understand how my Dad, who was a Carter, same as his father and grandfather (also a Miner), loved

to help on farms, especially at ‘Hay-making time’ ... myself, I would rather ‘dig’ the ground than plant flowers ... ‘must be the genes?’

Our Family History Group meets once a month. Members have many stories to relate regarding their genealogy findings. So far no one is related to Royalty; though the findings of some relatives can raise the eyebrows!

Members who have been researching for a number of years are a ‘mine of information’ and so helpful on how to proceed with the inevitable ‘brick walls’ we often encounter. We have a varied programme at our meetings: a monthly topic, which may be a talk on the Town Where We Lived. One member presented a talk on her ancestor's occupation as a ‘Bodger’; another on the ‘Hell Fire Club’. Recently we viewed a DVD on Hatfield. There is always a Question and Answer time to discuss any problem or query.

Researching is much easier these days with the aid of computers and the various Family



The photograph of the Family History Group display at Meet the Groups in 2011 (by Ken Wright) shows a sample genealogy with relevant certificates, a large family tree, old photographs, pages from the census of 1841 and 1911, and an apprenticeship document of 1788.

History sites online, which avoids the hours of travelling to towns to look at Parish records, or visits to the National Archives.

If you are thinking of 'Starting with your Genealogy', speak to as many relatives as you can NOW, make notes, collect photographs, and don't throw away any newspaper cuttings you may find when clearing out cupboards and drawers – it could be a 'link' to your finding out more!

The new London History Group is an

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Photography Group

Meetings of the Photography Group now include a "quiet corner" for one-to-one problem solving. This term they have continued to learn about Photoshop Elements; been instructed in using cameras for night photography; considered cropping; held a workshop on colour enhancement; set up displays to photograph; and shown their own slide shows.

offshoot of the Family History one, as from his researches with it Gerry Newnham learned that one side of his family had lived in London since about 1760. This gave him the urge to discover more about how his ancestors lived and worked – and led to the realisation that London is the most exciting, interesting place with a huge wealth of records waiting to be researched.

F/History Co-ordinator, Pat Pike

Silence reigns monthly on a Thursday afternoon in the lounge of Verulam Close, except for murmurs of "Oh dear, I've got all the vowels"; "Bother, I was planning to use that space"; "That's not a word!"; "Where's the dictionary?" – and the chatty tea break. Groups of two, three or four members are crouched round separate tables, heads down over printed boards and sets of little plastic tiles,

The Scrabble Group was

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From the Photography Group:
above, "Autumn Scene" by Jane Westoby;
right, "Working Late" by Anita Hoyle.



recently started by Hetty Martin. She writes:
“I really love Scrabble, but don’t get to play on a regular basis, so with all the activities enjoyed by U3A members, I thought this one might go down well. I put out a sheet with the notices at Wednesday morning meetings for interested people to sign on, and got about nine people interested. Judy Grant, as Groups Organizer, helped us

find a venue and a time, compatible for all those who wished to play – difficult. with so much going on each week in W-H U3A groups! At last we settled at Verulam, with a slot for every first Thursday, 1.30-3.30 pm. It’s a great afternoon! We look forward to welcoming anyone who enjoys Scrabble, or would like to learn, to come along and join in.’

* * *

Tai Chi

Tai Chi is a slow, gentle exercise routine with many health benefits — especially suited to older people. Research has shown that it can improve balance, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness. It also reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, and can enhance mood. It stimulates the memory, aids co-ordination and activates both left and right hemispheres of the brain. This is all quite surprising for what looks like a slow elegant dance. Yet Tai Chi’s gentle, low-impact movements burn more calories than surfing and nearly as many as downhill skiing!

It originated in China hundreds of years

ago as a martial art. Over the centuries it has developed into five separate styles which look quite different from each other. The martial arts aspect of Tai Chi has fallen away and now it is mainly practised for its physical and mental health advantages. It is recommended by doctors; many claims have been made for it in terms of health maintenance and recovery from illness.

In Welwyn-Hatfield we teach the popular Yang style form. This takes about four minutes to complete. It has the effect of clearing the mind, similar to meditation, but it is achieved not through stillness but using smooth relaxed movement.

Most people find it calming and uplifting



to watch. It is different from most other forms of exercise which can require strength, endurance, speed and stamina. This is slow, soft, gentle and soothing; all quite surprising, given its origins.

Why not pop along to a class at Ludwick Family Centre on a Thursday at 2pm and see

for yourself? You may even decide to have a go; then you could be surprised by the amount of exercise you are getting by doing very little, and in a relaxed way. If you have any queries then ring me on 01707 258686.

Don Busolini

* * *

Theatre Group

The U3A Theatre Group travelled to Newbury by coach on 22 September, to see the last matinee performance of the Watermill's summer musical, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.

The stage show had its origins in the 1967 American film of the same name, which had music by Andre Previn and starred Julie Andrews, Beatrice Lillie and Mary Tyler Moore. The Watermill's production had a new musical score and lyrics, with the actors also playing most of the instruments.

In the roaring 1920s Millie Dillmount arrives in New York from rural Kansas, and steps off the train into a city full of speakeasies and the sound of jazz. Millie's plan is to become thoroughly modern, to work in a typing pool and to marry the firm's wealthy boss. Things don't go entirely as planned and her various adventures include the unmasking of a white slave racket in a Chinese laundry.

The stage setting was quite spectacular and we were sometimes left wondering where the next actor would appear from! All good fun and typically Watermill.

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Then, during the morning of 5 September the Group boarded the coach en route to the National Theatre in London to see *The Last*

of the Haussmans at the Lyttelton. This was a new play, his first, by Stephen Beresford, featuring Julie Walters (making her first appearance on the NT stage for more than ten years. Among her other activities during that decade were appearances in six of the Harry Potter films.)

She played the part of a high-society dropout reluctantly waking up not only to the realities of her rebellious past but also those of a mother coming to terms with the consequences of a misspent youth, who, while growing frail with advancing years, still held court in her old home, where she was visited and challenged by her wayward offspring.

I am probably not the best person to comment on the performance we attended, which, after a time, I found a bit wearisome. But I was clearly the odd one out and my more enlightened U3A companions had no such problems. Like most of the audience they found the play both funny and touching.

All else apart this was another sociable and enjoyable trip to London, particularly when being driven at comfortable leisure through the West End on a busy Saturday afternoon.

Thanks again, Margaret (Hakansson)!

Harry Stull

The fourth in our series of profiles of distinguished members features —

Stuart Barker

Born and raised in Walthamstow, Stuart attended Sir George Monoux Grammar School and went on to study Natural Sciences at St John's College, Cambridge, obtaining a degree in physics. This took him to work at ICI in Welwyn Garden City, which has been his home town ever since. His work at ICI took him all over the world, instigating a great love of travel. This is shared by Daphne, whom he married in 1957. The marriage has resulted in four children and twelve grandchildren, who play a big part in their lives. Family reunions are joyous occasions.

Stuart took early retirement from ICI in the 1980s. Since then he and Daphne have enjoyed many holidays in exotic places: Stuart has visited more than a hundred and twenty different countries in all. They have many fantastic memories.

It was such notable travels that brought Stuart to U3A. In 1998 he and Daphne enjoyed a cruise on a square-rigged boat around the islands of Vanuatu in the South Pacific. Telling his friend Vernon Higgins, a Wel-Hat U3A member, about it, he was asked if he would give a talk to U3A. He did so on March 3rd 1999, liked the people he met, and joined U3A himself, with Daphne becoming a member soon after.

Stuart first joined the Italian Group, then the Science Group (which he ran for several years), Architecture and Play-Reading.



Daphne joined Play-Reading, World Affairs Architecture and the Book Group. She started and still runs the Chamber Music Group. Stuart joined the committee – on which he has now sat for eleven years – and became our Chairman in 2008-9. He is now the Keeper of our Archives.

Recently Stuart has set up our new mailing system, Mailchimp. He remains a regular attender at Wednesday morning meetings; and his four groups. Friday is his non-U3A day! Stuart says that U3A is “a great thing in my life – a wonderful organization!”.

Hazel Bell

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Wednesday meetings –Spring 2013

JANUARY

9, Ludwick Family Centre, WGC:

Julia Ladds: 'Tall Ships and the Jubilee Sailing Trust'. The Jubilee Sailing Trust, based at Southampton, promotes the integration of people of all physical abilities through the challenge and adventure of tall ship sailing.

16, Breaks Manor, Hatfield:

Bernard Lockett: 'Social and Political Satire of Gilbert and Sullivan'. Bernard is a Trustee of the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival. He is an author, with four books published, and has also been on radio and television.

23, WGC, Chris Lund: 'Crusaders Ancient and Modern'. Chris is a retired GP from Welwyn Garden City and will talk about The Order of St. John – The St Johns Ambulance.

30, Hat, Anne Murphy: 'Military Wives in the 18th Century'. Anne is a senior lecturer in early modern British history at the University of Hertfordshire. Her research primarily focuses on economic and financial matters but she also teaches courses on social and military history.

FEBRUARY

6, WGC, Mike Barnes: 'Three months as an Ecumenical Accompanier in Palestine'. Mike visited the West Bank as part of an international programme aimed at helping to end conflict in that area and sponsored by the World Council of Churches. He lived in local communities and worked with Peace Groups.

13, Hat, Linda McArdell: 'Creating Woodland Together'. Linda is a volunteer at Heartwood Forest, near Sandridge, and will tell us about The Woodland Trust, the More Trees More Good campaign and the Jubilee Woods Project.

20, WGC, Maggie Radcliffe: 'Legendary Films of the 40s, 50s and 60s'. *Singing in the Rain, Casablanca, The Ten Commandments, Gone with the Wind, Cleopatra* and many more. An illustrated talk in which we will discover unusual facts and myths generated by these films over the years.

27, Hat, Daphne Knott: 'Treasures of the Hertfordshire Archives'. Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, based at County Hall in Hertford, is a specialist centre for the discovery of Hertfordshire history from 1060 to the present day.

MARCH

6, WGC, Annual General Meeting followed by readings from the Creative Writing Group

13, Hat, Tony Furse: 'St Albans South Signal Box'. The St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust was set up by volunteers to restore and preserve this Grade 2 listed signal box, which contains rare equipment, as part of our railway and architectural heritage. We will hear about the development of the railway, the preservation of the signal box and the work of the signalmen.

20, WGC: Meet the Groups

Next Term Starts on 17 April at Breaks Manor, Hatfield