



UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

[www.u3awelhat.org.uk](http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk)

NEWSLETTER September 2013 Issue 44

*The full colour version of the newsletter is on our website at*

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

## Garden party at Breaks Manor



Our first Garden Party at Breaks Manor was held on Wednesday 16 July, in splendid sunny weather – indeed, a heat wave. Perhaps indeed too hot for some – but the unexpectedly extensive grounds behind the manor provided ample shade for all the 104 members who attended. Several distinct groups sheltered coolly under the



many trees, as our pictures, taken by Gerry Newnham, show. The theme this year was topical – red, white and blue. Plentiful and delicious savoury and sweet food, and drinks, were on hand in the hall, with the tombola.

Phyl Grainge organised the catering effectively and we appreciate the efforts of her and her team of Celia Boccacci and Cathy Holmes on the day. Many thanks should also go to Dick Grainge for organising and serving the drinks. Sheila and Barry Haywood ran the Tombola, which made £80; £40 to go to The Isabel Hospice and £40 to the Breaks Manor Youth fund.

Altogether this was a very enjoyable event.



## Notes from the Chair

Hello again to everyone, I hope you have had a good summer and are ready for an Autumn Term of learning, activities and enjoyment.

The end of our Summer Term coincided with a heat-wave so we were glad that Breaks Manor, the venue for our successful Garden Party, provided plenty of shade. Photographs and a report are included in this Newsletter.

Many groups have been out on trips and we do thank the organisers. Their efforts and involvement enable many of us to visit new places and add to our knowledge and interest. It is good if group members can assist where possible.

The Wednesday meetings continue to be enjoyable and well attended. There are several teams of members who help to make them such a success and you may be able to contribute to one of these. Please contact the organiser if you can help as the more members who are involved the better.

The Speakers' Committee book and organise the Speakers. (Sandy Pizzey chairs this – 01707 275037.)

There is a Tea and Coffee Rota. (Christine Savage organises this – 01707 274585.)

Our Front of House Team gets out the equipment, puts up notice boards, reserves a parking space for the speaker and clears up after the meeting. (Phil Hembrow organises this – 01707 891171.)

Our Sound Team connect up the sound equipment, mike up the Speaker and keep an ear on the sound levels. (Richard Griffiths organises this – 01707 265476.)

Our Welcomers Team is on hand to help New Members feel at ease. (Marion Sklar organises this – 01707 324402.)

The next New Members coffee morning will be on Monday 25 November.

I do hope that many of you will volunteer to help in the above ways or will consider starting a new group. Doing this with a friend is often a good way to do this and it adds to the enjoyment.

Best wishes to you all,

*Judy Grant*



**Group Coordinators' meeting at Verulam Hall, 10 June.**  
*Photograph by Marion Sklar.*

## Group news

### Consciousness Studies

My original impetus for starting this group occurred sixteen years ago, when I had a recurring vivid dream/nightmare in which my husband, Bill, in a state of great distress, kept telling me that he had to leave me, ending with me standing in my front porch looking down the drive in a state of overwhelming distress, saying, “this is not a dream – this is really happening”.

A year later Bill had a sudden massive, fatal heart attack, and I did indeed find myself standing in my front porch, heartbroken, watching the ambulance drive his body away, as I repeated to myself, “this is not a dream – this is really happening”.

In the ensuing months I had some fascinating, inexplicable experiences, together with more dreams, offering me help and insights into my new life as a widow. It made me wonder – are precognitive dreams really possible? Is the future predetermined? Is time *not* the linear sequence of events that science assumes it to be? Can one human consciousness connect and communicate with another by sharing aspects of an event in a non-verbal, subconscious space – in a dream or telepathically? Also, where had Bill gone? Had he really disappeared into nothingness?

I decided to investigate the mysteries and the anomalies of human consciousness. I felt that the church could not provide me with the answers I needed; nor could conventional mainstream, materialist science. Then I discovered the Scientific and Medical Network, which, through the medium of scientific and philosophical discourse, aims to explore and expand the frontiers of science, medicine and spirituality. I also encountered the research work of Lynne McTaggart, an investigative journalist, and was fascinated by her book *The Field* and the associated conferences in London which



**Sue Dorrington at the Consciousness Studies group's 'Mad Hatters' tea party at the end of the summer term.**

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explored the frontiers of our knowledge concerning human consciousness.

These conferences featured cutting-edge scientists, who possessed in equal amounts, impeccable scientific /academic credentials together with the courage to challenge the orthodoxies of our existing mainstream materialist science. We must be mindful of the fact that the history of science has been driven by such people.

When I discovered that these presentations were now available for free on YouTube I decided to share this material with like-minded spirits in the U3A, and started the first Consciousness Studies group.

Each of our sessions commences with a 30- or 45-minute YouTube presentation, followed by tea and coffee. We round up the session with a group discussion where the convinced and the sceptical exchange views and reactions.

My first question in this field had been, can science prove that some people have genuinely precognitive dreams? Dr. Gary Swartz, Professor of psychology at the University of Arizona and the director of its

laboratory for advances in Consciousness and Health, has explored this area. We watched his experiments with fascination, and the lively discussion which followed strayed into the philosophical implications of such a notion – is the future predetermined, do we have free will to create and possibly alter our future?

We also watched with great interest Dr. Rupert Sheldrake's experiments on human/animal telepathy. He maintains this is fairly common between individuals with a strong emotional bond.

Next term's programme includes footage of Prof. Gary Schwartz's "Afterlife Experiments", in which he explores the possibility of contact with the beyond under controlled laboratory conditions.

Other topics which we have already or will cover are: Poltergeists, physical mediumship, telekinesis, energetic healing, remote viewing, reincarnation, past life regression, life between lives, global consciousness and much more.

If you want to explore open-mindedly Who and What you really are, and the awesome mysteries and potentials of human consciousness, then consider joining our study group. My existing groups will continue into a second year, and I intend to start a new group if I find sufficient interest.

*Andrea Steverson*

### **French Group**

French Group No. 1 (of our current three) was started by Annie-Claude Prevost in 1998 or '99, after she came to England in 1995. The Group meets every Friday at Barndicott Hall, as French Group 2's meeting finishes. It is a Conversational Group, very lively, with *conversation* starting even before everyone is there, and continuing until the end. It is basically unstructured. No English is allowed; Annie-Claude keeps the flow going by helping with missing vocabulary (there is a lot of this) and repeating phrases

correctly that have been mangled in our attempts to get an opinion across. Sometimes she will introduce a topic so that specific vocabulary will be needed; the aim of the group is to enlarge useful vocabulary, improve comprehension of speech from a French speaker, and encourage skills in expressive language. We also gain a lot of knowledge about French culture, politics, geography etc. Annie-Claude makes it all enormous fun, and there is always a lot of laughter.

*Judith Thomas*

### **Multimedia Group**

This group is for people who are interested in painting and drawing using various art materials and artistic methods and styles. Pictures are produced using watercolour paints and pencils, acrylic and gouache paints, charcoal, pencils, pastels and collage. Frequently a mixture of two or three of these media are used for one picture. We do not have a tutor but rely on self-help among the members, some of whom attend art workshops and tutorials in the area.

Our work has been on display at the U3A 'Meet the Groups' exhibition in January each year, during which members have demonstrated their painting skills and various techniques, for visitors to observe.

*Mary Price*

### **The Consolations of Philosophy**

The title above is borrowed from the eponymous book by Alain de Botton (2000), who in turn borrowed it from Boethius (523). It expresses the message that philosophy, often seen as a dry, dusty and abstruse archaeology of ideas, ought to be the lively, vibrant and even controversial actuality of thought. This is what we are hoping to do in our budding Philosophy Group II.

We started to meet only a few weeks ago; some members have some philosophical training but most have none – all are



The Multimedia group at work during the September 2012 Art and Crafts exhibition.  
*Photograph by Ron Benfield.*

animated by a spirit of enquiry and not a little curiosity. We are all hoping to learn about the lives and times of key philosophers (in the Western canon) and how they have dealt with the so-called “problems of philosophy”: Is the world divided into mind and matter? Has the universe any unity or purpose? Are there really laws in nature? Is there a way of living that is noble and another that is base, or are all ways of living merely futile?

During our first meetings we discussed how to approach this vast subject: should it follow a conventional chronological approach? Should it be a history of ideas and thinkers? Should it follow recurrent themes through the ages? At last the Group concluded, in a democratic fashion, that it should be a mixture of all of those, and members are choosing subjects that they feel passionate about and preparing presentations about them. So far we started with a general Introduction to the Study of Philosophy, and presentations are being prepared on the Pre-Socratics; the Humanists, Existentialism, Pragmatism, etc.

We have a long and exciting journey ahead!

*Raúl Curiel*

### **Photography group**

Through the summer term the group studied the effect of aperture and shutter speed changes on exposure; wildlife photography; raw format; production of collage; light and composition; and nature photographs and the use of Photoshop.

A competition, “Nature large or small” was won by Ron Benfield with the picture of a cricket on a rotting log shown opposite. We also show Jean Tookey’s collage, “The Garden”, and her Flower picture, “Looking Up”.

The group was also featured in *U3A Sources*. Congratulations to Anita Hoyle, programme planner of the Photography Group, on having a full-page article in the *U3A Sources* issue No. 49, June 2013, page 4. She gives an account of the group’s membership, meetings structure, outings, and selected themes, with accounts of some



recent meetings, and future plans. One of Anita's photographs taken on the groups' London Eye visit, and one of the group with tripods taking portrait shots, by Ron Benfield, secretary of the group, were shown; we reproduce the latter below. Another photograph by Ron, "Derwentwater", is featured on *U3A Source's* back cover.

The photograph below of a happy Anita, reproduced also in *U3A Sources*, was taken by her granddaughter, Charlotte Douglas.



*The sixth in our series of profiles of distinguished Wel-Hat U3A members features*

## **Jack Wood, Vice-Chairman**

Jack was born in Catford, in south-east London, moving to Beckenham in Kent later, where he attended the Beckenham and Penge County Grammar School for Boys. In World War II he was evacuated for 18 months to East Anglia; then, when doodle-bugs started coming over, the whole school was evacuated to a little mining village in Yorkshire.

Jack left school at 16 and started work as a wages clerk at the Head Office of J. Sainsbury Ltd in London. Two years later he did his National Service in the Army, qualifying as an Instructor, after his basic training. During his last weeks, not having enough time left to take another 8-week course, he painted signs and training aids. After demob he returned to Sainsbury's, working in their merchandising and publications department. His work was spotted by a freelance designer who introduced him to a major American advertising agency.

His most interesting work, during the next twelve years, was designing all the advertising and publications for the Lords Taverners, which led him to meet many sports and show business people (as well as HRH The Duke of Edinburgh). From there he moved into publishing, designing high quality 'coffee-table' books for Paul Hamlyn, while jointly running a studio of sixty designers. When Hamlyn collaborated with the record company HMV to form Music for Pleasure, Jack's knowledge (and love) of music led to his appointment as Head of Creative Services for the company.

After thirteen years in the music business, during which he designed over 300 LP sleeves, Jack was head-hunted by a publisher producing theatre programmes, which Jack designed, along with special



'souvenir' programmes, for the last eight years of his "second age". The particular career Jack followed brought him into contact with many interesting people and involved him in unusual – often funny – situations, on which he now gives a talk entitled "My Art On My Sleeves". He has given this to more than a dozen U3As and other groups in the last few years.

Jack moved from Kent to London in 1979; ten years later, tired of town life and wanting more countrified surroundings, he moved to St Albans. A keen Thespian, he joined the Company of Ten there, but after retirement in 1994 moved to Woolmer Green to be nearer to Welwyn Garden City and the Barn Theatre (which he had also joined, in 1989). In 2005, he came to WGC itself, to be nearer still, and nearer to Hertford, where he is also a member of the Company of Players in Bengo. The same year, Jack joined the Welwyn-Hatfield U3A.

He wanted particularly to join a U3A music appreciation group, but the three then in existence were all full; so he started his own, running it in his home for the next seven years. He has 22 members, but can squeeze only eleven comfortable chairs into his lounge, so he holds the meeting twice a month, each eleven receiving the same programme. He's presently taking a break,

but hopes to start again next February. Each session consists of a themed concert programme, chosen from his own collection of more than 2000 LPs and CDs, each item being given an informative introduction. In the interval there is a general discussion.

In 2010, Jack attended a U3A National Summer School, and afterwards (having discussed at some length with the National School organisers his approach to “music appreciation”) was asked to be a tutor on the subject the following year. This Jack did, his course on “Making Friends with Music” proving popular enough for him to be invited

back the following year, and to be ‘booked’ for next year (2014). He repeated these two courses at the Barn theatre the following Januarys, for groups from the Barn Theatre and many local U3As, raising over £2000 towards the Barn Theatre’s Youth Theatre building project.

Jack is also a member of one of our play-reading groups, and is our regular quizmaster at the Christmas parties, having devised and delivered the questions for the past five years.

*Hazel Bell*

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### **Wednesday Meetings**

Our Speaker Booking Team occasionally has to cope with the inability of an advertised speaker to turn up on the day. Sandy Pizzey reports – “We were disappointed that Joan Lilwall-Smith could not come in June to talk about ‘Japan’ as she had had a fall and was unable to travel. Martin Lloyd stepped in, at very short notice, and gave us an interesting and amusing morning with his talk on ‘Becoming a Famous Author’.

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#### *A recently joined member gives her first impressions of Wel-Hat U3A:*

I joined U3A as I felt in need of mental stimulation and I was not disappointed after attending two Philosophy sessions organized by Raoul Curiel. ‘What relevance does Pythagoras have for us today?’ and ‘What is meant by Transmigration of the soul?’ were

two of the questions posed for discussion after an introduction to the Pre-Socrates era.

My husband and I have only been to two Wednesday morning meetings yet. One was David Rolfe on ‘Aviation Fellowship Mission’. He was a very good speaker and as my husband is passionate about aircraft it was a good choice for our first meeting. We also attended ‘My Life as a Freelance Comedy Writer’ by Nick Thomas and laughed the whole way through.

We went to the Garden Party, in a shady oasis of calm in the grounds of Breaks Manor yards from the desert of Hatfield Town centre. This was most enjoyable; the food was delicious and varied and many members spoke to me as well as taking my photo.

So first impressions so far: the talks are interesting, the members are friendly and my grey cells are working overtime at the Philosophy afternoons.

*Gillian Simpson*

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The Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust is running a project, ‘Where Do You Think We Worked?’ looking into the industrial history of WGC between 1920-1960. If you, a relative or friend, worked for a WGC company during that time, could you share your memories of working there? Have you any memorabilia from your working lives, such as photographs, packaging, publicity brochures, souvenirs or even products? If so, do get in touch. Their email address is [industry@welwyngarden-heritage.org](mailto:industry@welwyngarden-heritage.org); ring or text on 07580197160.

## Obituaries

### **Daphne Barker**

Daphne died on 10 April 2013, three months after her husband, Stuart. She was an active member of our U3A who ran the Chamber Music Group for many years. She provided much enjoyment and interest to members. She was willing to share experiences with others and she contributed to Wednesday mornings – together with David Steed in ‘Spread a little happiness’, and Daphne Barker and Friends in ‘The Life and Songs of George Gershwin’. Also, together with Stuart, she gave an illustrated talk on ‘The Panama Canal’ after one of their holidays. Daphne was a keen member of several groups, a charming person, she was always very welcoming and involved in what was going on. She clearly enjoyed being a member. We have happy memories of her and she is sadly missed.

### **Leslie Barker**

Les (not related to Stuart and Daphne) died in May. He was very involved in our U3A. We appreciate the many years he organised the sound at our Wednesday meetings. Before we had the fixed speakers in our venues this involved bringing in the large speakers and the technical equipment every week. He presented excellent Mornings of Music from time to time at our Wednesday meetings. He enjoyed sharing his knowledge and love of Music and ran the Music Appreciation Group, which was greatly enjoyed by its members. He was also a keen member of several groups. A quiet man of great integrity, we value his contribution and he is sadly missed.

*Judy Grant*

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## **The Herts Network of U3As**

has 30 members, the mostly recently formed being Redbourn and St Albans. Their website,

[www.hertsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.hertsnetwork.org.uk)

lists the members, providing access to all their websites, and includes a regular newsheet, “Sharing news from around Herts”. Forthcoming events currently listed there are:

*Wednesday 16 October 2013*

### **Music Study Day:**

“Who’d want to be a Composer?” Music and Composers from the Baroque to the 20th Century

Presented by Dr John Winter at Woolmer Green Village Hall, SG3 6XA. 10am-3pm. Cost £9 including buffet lunch

There is a link to an application form on the Notice board section of Wel-Hat U3A website.

*Wednesday 30 October 2013*

### **The Herts Network Quiz 2013**

at Marlborough School, Watling St, St Albans. AL1 2QA. 1:45pm for a 2pm start.

Teams of six people. Each U3A can enter a maximum of two teams. We have one full team entered from Wel-Hat U3A; if you would like to be in a second team, or a reserve, tell Hazel Bell: 01707 265201 or [hkb@aidanbell.com](mailto:hkb@aidanbell.com)

## Wednesday meetings – Autumn Term 2013

### SEPTEMBER

*11, Ludwick Family Centre, WGC*

Art and Photo Exhibition and Demonstration. Our creative groups show their productions.

*18, Breaks Manor, Hatfield*

Chris Conway: 'Planning in Wel-Hat / Development of Hatfield Town Centre. Chris is a Director (Strategy and Development) of Welwyn-Hatfield Borough Council.

*25 - WGC. Thea McIntyre: 'The Roly Polys - How it all began'. The history, from audition and rehearsal to full production, of The Roly Polys, a dance troupe of overweight, middle-aged ladies, formed in 1980, who first appeared on television and went on to great success.*

### OCTOBER

*2, Hat. Alistair Bayford: 'A Walk in the Park and its Future'. Alistair is a landscape gardener and Manager of the London 2012 Olympic Park. He will talk about his work on it, and the future development of the area.*

*9 - WGC Jo and John Brewster: 'Sir Christopher Wren – his life and work'. We are pleased to welcome Jo and John back – their first talk was about Southwark Cathedral. They are both qualified Cathedral Guides for St Paul's and Southwark.*

*16 - Hat. Stephen Poulter: 'Hertfordshire Through Time'. A journey through the County's towns and villages showing period photographs and their modern equivalents. Stephen is an author and has chaired many events and 'Meet the Author' interviews*

*23 - WGC Linda Scoles: 'Journey to Citizenship'. A lively and humorous presentation by an American who came to England with her husband, an American Air Force Officer, and settled with her family in a small Suffolk village.*

*30, Hat. Clare Fleck: '500 years of Knebworth House'. Clare worked at Luton Museum and then at Knebworth House as a House Guide. This job evolved into the role of part-time Archivist, responsible for the care and maintenance of the Lytton family archive, Clare carries out research and is involved with the conservation of items in the House.*

### NOVEMBER

*6 - WGC Georgie Perrott: 'My thirty-six years at Covent Garden'. We welcome Georgie back to tell us more about her time at Covent Garden Opera House where she was behind the scenes in charge of costumes and props.*



## NOVEMBER

13 - *Hat*. Gillian Fairbrother: 'Sailing round the World in a Catamaran'. Gillian, a dance teacher and examiner, took part in a circumnavigation of the earth in a 44-foot catamaran with three other crew members. She is using her trip to raise funds for a number of charities..

20 - *WGC* Harvey Ward: 'The History of Brass Bands'. Harvey plays trombone with the Potters Bar Town Band and the North London Sinfonia. His talk will cover the range and source of brass band music and the composition of different sorts of bands. We will listen to a variety of brass band music.

27 - *Hat*. Richard Furnival-Jones: 'The Palace of Knightsbridge - A History of Harrods'. Richard worked for this great institution for over forty years until his retirement in 2004. We will hear about its history, from the nineteenth century to the present day, including fascinating anecdotes.

## DECEMBER

4, *WGC* Christmas Party. Quiz at 10.30 am - drinks provided. Please bring finger food.

11 **Christmas Lunch**. Homestead Court Hotel, WGC.

**Next term starts on 8 January 2014 at Hatfield.**

### U3A Welwyn-Hatfield NEWSLETTER

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