

BARMOUTH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter



Autumn 2011

**... AUTUMN IS THE
MELLOWER SEASON, AND
WHAT WE LOSE IN
FLOWERS, WE MORE THAN
GAIN IN FRUITS.**

~Samuel Butler

Well, here we are again at the end of the tourist season, the majority of holidaymakers have left and those visiting now are nearer our age group!

And what a beautiful Indian summer we had to ourselves in late September. It was a shame this was marred by one dreadful wet week in October, but since then it has been variable and there have been some very pleasant days.

I'm going to let Evelyn tell you about our study day but can't help being very proud of us all – it was such a wonderful day. A fuller account, for those unfortunate enough to have missed it, is towards the end of the Newsletter.

Many local people, non-members of the U3A, have heard of its success and suggest we might put on a repeat performance for them!

Norma Stockford

CHAIRLADY'S REPORT

A message from Evelyn Richardson

Norma agreed to hold the front page until after the study day so we could give you some feedback on how it went. Well, as half the Barmouth U3A membership attended it and half of those volunteered to help, many of you already know. For those who don't it was successful beyond our most optimistic expectations!

When we were planning the study day, we hoped to get in the region of 100 to 120 delegates. As we are so distant from some of the larger North Wales Association U3A groups, it is a long journey for most of them. However they came in large numbers and, together with our own 50-plus members, we almost filled the 186-seat auditorium. The logistics of serving coffee and lunch to 180 delegates called for thorough planning. Much time was devoted to this and it was well worth the attention.

What heartened me was the good wishes which accompanied the bookings. It made me feel that we were truly part of a wider membership. One of the hardest tasks was telling people that we couldn't take any more and so a considerable number were disappointed. It was the one problem we hadn't thought about.

We were pleased to welcome the Mayor of Barmouth who opened the day, and from the very start everything went wonderfully. We were blessed with excellent speakers who had obviously worked hard to give us such stimulating presentations. Their enthusiasm for their subjects was apparent to all. The lunch from Murray's was super.

The staff and volunteers of the Dragon theatre also gave their help and expertise in a pleasant, professional manner, making the tasks of our own volunteers easier. I probably had the easiest job welcoming people into the theatre. I was glad that I wasn't scheduled to monitor the car park in the rain!

I have had many emails from other U3A groups all saying how well they had enjoyed the day, there is a quote from one at the bottom of this report.

As Arnold Jones said in his closing thanks, next year's study day will be hosted by Flint U3A. I hope that we will need to hire a coach to take Barmouth U3A members to that in October 2012. We will keep you posted about it.

I feel truly proud of what we have achieved from our beginnings in 2006. Norma mentioned the friends she had made since joining and the stimulus she has got from the groups she attends. I think that applies to all of us and this of course is what the U3A is all about.

When one embarks on trying to give a flavour of the area in one day it is inevitable that we leave out lots of other aspects which are worthy of study. Perhaps this is something we can consider in the future.

Hope to see lots of you at the Christmas party.

Best wishes, Evelyn

And a message from Anglesey U3A:

Dear Evelyn,

I am writing to let you know how much our members enjoyed the study day at Barmouth. The subject matter and speakers were excellent, but what really made the day for us was the friendly support and informality throughout the venue. This was down to your volunteer helpers and members.

I had some misgivings about the logistics of 180 people at the Dragon Theatre as you know, but because everyone was in good spirits and enjoying the day, the occasional queue or wait didn't seem to matter.

Many congratulations to you and the 'team' for making it such a successful experience.

With best wishes,

Gill Winter
Anglesey U3A



SINGING FOR FUN

From: Evelyn Richardson

We started up again after the Summer break on 21st September - 16 of us eager and ready to raise our voices. We welcomed Nicky, a new Barmouth U3A member, and hope that she enjoyed herself. Rosemary, one of our regulars, is recovering from an illness and we hope that she will soon come back as she is a lively and vocal member (much like the rest of us if the truth were known).

We tried two new songs, fairly obvious choices - "The Sound of Music" and "Climb Every Mountain" both relevant to our situation. As it was the appropriate month we sang "September Song". I have just come across the original French version so I think we may have a go at it and bring out our hidden Gallic tendencies. We also sang "Isn't it a lovely day to be caught in the rain" which I feel will become one of the favourites.

As Christmas is looming we are thinking about what to do at the Christmas party as the customary community singing. We will be open to suggestions of suitable songs!!!

We have a couple of gigs coming up: November leading Fairbourne W.I. in a Singalong and a similar songfest at the Fairbourne Speakeasy Christmas show; and of course our own Christmas party. So, a fairly busy time ahead. If any U3A member wants to contribute to the musical extravaganza contact me. Soloists, duettists - now's your chance! Or, if you are prepared to make a spectacle of yourself, you could relieve Rachel and me of the responsibility of what I fear, is becoming our usual fixture. I already have some ideas but think that

Rachel's getting cold feet! Well, it was her idea in the first instance so she's only herself to blame.

Come and join us if you like a lot of laughter, singing and some super piano playing....

(The group meets on the third Wednesday of the month at the Dragon theatre)

WALKING GROUP

June *From: George Mandow*

The June walk was a 'three for the price of one' outing: Welsh Highland Railway, ospreys and the walk from Beddgelert to Pont Croesor through the Aberglaslyn pass. After the deluge at Bala the month before, we were due for some sun and that's what we got.

The Welsh Highland Railway runs from Porthmadog (or Pont Croesor, after the first train each day, until the station at Porthmadog is finished) to Caernarfon. It is a wonderful journey through the Snowdon National Park, taking about 2 hours, one way. If you want a shorter trip, you can get out at Rhyd Ddu and catch the train in the opposite direction, or get a bus back. The walking group started at Pont Croesor and got out at Beddgelert 25 minutes later. The path back follows the river downstream through meadows to the Pass where the path becomes rocky but spectacular, the cliffs on the left, the torrent on the right, the sun sparkling in the water.

We had our picnics by the river, some on rocks in it, conversation made difficult by the noise of the waterfalls. Jack & Evelyn's garden raspberries tasted pretty good. At Nantmor, where there is a train halt, we made a pretty diversion to avoid the main road and then followed the line of the railway until the footpath veers off to go close to the osprey nest. Here, despite having gained the approval of the RSPB at Pont Croesor for our safe passage, we were given a hard time by the footpath guards. We were allowed, however, to look through the telescope and could see the nearly fully grown young in the nest. As we walked on,

one of the adult ospreys gave us a flying display. A good day out!



Overtaken by the Welsh Highland railway at Aberglaslyn!

July

For the July walk we chose a fairly gentle circumnavigation of Foel Ispri, which includes the New Precipice Walk with its wonderful views of the Mawddach Estuary and the confluence of the Wnion and Mawddach. We started above Llanelltyd, at a footbridge over the Afon Wnion, headed northwards through woods and meadows, then turned south west on moorland, through a mature forest which is not marked on the map, to the pretty lake below Mynydd Foel-uachaf. Then on to the start of the New Precipice and back through the forest.

September *From: Julie Hodgson*

At the end of the Dysynni valley, past Bird Rock and Castell y Bere, is the old church of Llanfihangel y Pennant, otherwise known as Mary Jones' church.

We met in the carpark opposite the church and followed the stream up a fairly gentle path. As the path got steeper the stream became a spectacular waterfall.

It was a gloriously sunny day, and as we walked across the moor at the top we were glad of hats and water bottles. After a brief rest with a view down into the Abergynolwyn valley our route led east through a long stretch of woodland ending in a climb to spectacular views down on to Tallylyn lake. Here we stopped for lunch.

After another short climb we started on the long walk back. Here the path goes across open moor-land. Did I say path? It is clearly marked on the map, and to start with it is obvious, but then boggy streams intervene.

Much rain had fallen during the past week, and George was often mentioned in our conversation... 'Wouldn't George have loved this?' we said as we squelched into yet another muddy, boggy bit up to our ankles! Luckily one of our select group had a GPS with him, and with his help we kept to the path.

As we came back towards the Dysynni valley we were rewarded with magnificent views of Bird Rock and the sea beyond. A bit of a slither down on to the track, and then a gravel path would have led us down to the road and back 'home'. But we opted for the fun way back and struck off on to a footpath. Against my better judgement I was persuaded to take a short cut and we ended up scrambling over fences, and tip-toeing across boggy fields. This was not a route for the faint hearted! But we all got back safely and it was certainly one of the most enjoyable walks I have done.

STROLLERS

From: Trish and John Percival

SEPTEMBER

Following a day and night of gale force winds we thought that many of the Strollers' group may have been put off by the weather for their first walk after the summer break. So it was nice to see eleven join us at Barmouth Panorama Walk car park as the skies began to clear, although it was still rather windy.

Leaving the car park, we walked down the road past the start of the Panorama Walk to a footpath on the right taking us across fields with lovely views of the Mawddach Estuary. A slow gentle climb then, with wonderful views all the way to the Slabs where a youth group were practicing climbing and abseiling on the rock face. While we had a rest and the climbers entertained us, some of the

"fitter" members of the group continued up the hill to view a holiday cottage. On their return we walked back down the road to our cars.

After retrieving our picnic lunches from the cars we started the Panorama Walk and had our lunch at the top of the hill overlooking Barmouth Bridge and the Estuary, slightly breezy, but worth it for the view. Then back to our cars to end an enjoyable walk.



OCTOBER

Rather a dull day, but at least the rain kept off for our October Strollers Walk at Ynys. We welcomed several non U3A members who joined us, including visitors to our area.

From the lay-by at Glan y Wern we crossed the main Harlech road to join the footpath to Ynys following the Afon y Glyn on our left. Walking along the embankment and over several stiles brought us to the railway crossing where a well timed train passed in front of us. The village of Portmeirion and the Dwyryd Estuary then came into view as we turned left and crossed the footbridge over the river. Continuing along the other side of the river to Ynys we approached a tall building which was originally a warehouse for the port of Harlech.

We then crossed the road and headed inland along a walled track, passing an unusual three-way stone stile to St Michaels-on-the-shore Church at Llanfihangel y Traethau, which, it is said,

was probably on an island when first built.

We had a short break within the walled grounds of the Church while we viewed a twelfth century pillar gravestone, before continuing uphill, with lovely views across the estuary. We passed a concrete structure on the left, thought to be the access point to an underground reservoir.

Reaching the foreshore we found that although the tide had receded it had unfortunately left the ground rather muddy and slippery. We slowly made our way over this slippery section before finding a suitable spot for our lunch break facing Portmeirion with views as far as Borth y Gest and the Moelwyn mountains.

Refreshed after our lunch we continued along the foreshore to Ynys and back along the opposite side of the river to our cars at Glan y Wern.

Coffee at the nearby Estuary Lodge brought an end to an enjoyable walk.



ART GROUP

From: Norma Stockford

The art group had a break during August, but many of us continued to paint at home!

We have now learned that, because of personal reasons, Marion will not be coming back to tutor the class, but we are fortunate that Valerie Land has stepped in. Valerie is chairman of the Merioneth Artists and provides lively tutorials on the first Tuesday of the month. The group still continue to meet fortnightly in Parlwr bach and the support we get from one another is good.

We have been learning the fundamentals of drawing, and about figure drawing and portraiture. We are hoping that the more we draw, the keener our perception will become.

Valerie paints in a number of media, so I am hoping that we too will soon be proficient in many other media.

However, we do need more members if we are to continue to be a viable group. So if you have a yearning to draw or paint – in any medium – please contact Val Smedley on 01341 247 009 or email her at treva-l@hotmail.co.uk

Tell your friends - you will be amazed how enjoyable it is.

BADMINTON

From: Wendy Bramley

After a long rest of seven weeks (due to the school holidays and it being virtually impossible to get into Barmouth in under an hour) we started Badminton again on September 9th, 2.00 – 4.00 p.m. in the Leisure Centre.

So anyone who has fond memories of hitting a shuttlecock around a court, come and enjoy some fun and exercise with us. We need new members and a warm welcome is extended to anyone who would care to join us.

I know that Badminton clashes with creative writing every alternate Friday, so why not exercise your body one week, and exercise your mind the alternate week? Think about it!

Looking forward to seeing old and new members.

Friday Bridge Group

From: George Mandow



The group has met fortnightly throughout the summer at George's house. When only a few members have attended they have to work harder but are not accruing a rent bill, so it has worked well. We have studied defence and weak twos, both of which will improve our games, if we can persuade our partners to co-operate.



Book Reading

From: Rachel Cleaver

Our July book was ‘Aberystwyth Mon Amour’ by Malcolm Pryce.

Surprisingly (to me) mine was a lone voice in the wilderness, as I was the only member to enjoy the book. Although I had to concede that it was very ‘far-fetched’, it made me laugh. Not many books can do that these days. There were some excellent descriptive paragraphs and I loved his use of local places as names for his characters. I haven’t confessed to the group that I have now read another of Malcolm Pryce’s books – the Unbearable Lightness of being in Aberystwyth. I guess my secret is now out and they will be shaking their heads in disbelief.

We had a break in August and reconvened on 7th September, everyone having selected a book of their own choice. What a wonderful variety that produced. Lynda la Plante, Cathryn Aird, Kate Mosse, Winifed Watson, William Fiennes, Philippa Gregory and Mary Ann Shaffer. Some authors familiar, some not. An extremely interesting and lively afternoon.

Due to several of our merry band being unavailable on 5th October (including myself) it was agreed that our next get together would be on 2nd November, when we will be discussing Myths and Legends.

Discussion group

Peter Leyden will be holding the first meeting of the Discussion Group on Thursday 27th October from 2 to 4 p.m. in the room behind the Revelation Bookshop in Park Road.

Topics for discussion will be decided by the group, but to start, they will be discussing Palestine/Israel issues.

Pete: 01341 281 172

MONTHLY GATHERINGS

From: Bronwen Dorling



July's Monthly Gathering took the form of an “Any Questions?” session, in which the panel, consisting of Norma Stockford, Danny Jones, Rod Bramley and Sue Leyden, gave their views about a wide range of questions submitted by members.

Matters as varied as the upgrading of the A470 and the famine in East Africa were discussed. Members of the audience contributed keenly, and each question was given a thorough overhauling.

A strawberry and cream tea followed, a fitting end to a lively meeting.

Many thanks to our panellists and members.

At our Monthly Gathering on September 14th we were delighted to welcome members of Machynlleth U3A, who had been invited to present a play, “Broken Threads”. This had been written by members of their Creative Writing Group, and was read to us by members of their Play Reading Group.

The play was set on the day of a family funeral and as it progressed, layer after layer of family secrets were exposed. The tension rose as the discussion grew fiercer over the funeral tea; from squabbles over who was to inherit the Portmeirion dinner service to shock revelations about the parentage of a family member.

The reading was followed by an account of how the members of the writing group were able to embark on and develop so successfully such a complex joint

project, and a lively question session ensued. The members of Machynlleth U3A were warmly thanked for providing us with such an interesting afternoon.

Bronwen has some interesting speakers lined up for forthcoming gatherings. We can learn about aromatherapy in November, then there's the Christmas party in December and in the New Year we can look forward to hearing speakers from the Samaritans, the RSPB, Snowdonia National Park and Barmouth Heritage Group.

So keep an eye out for details in the monthly calendars. Ed.

Craft Group

Several members took Jean Wilde up on her offer of hosting a Craft Group at her house at Merrog, Ffordd Glanymor, Talybont, (01341 242 664) and it seems to have taken off rather well with nimble-fingered folk learning to crochet and cross stitch. We are looking forward to seeing the results of their efforts.

Quiz

1. Michael Sata, a former porter at Victoria Station, became the president of which country in September?
2. A portrait of David Dawson and his whippet, Eli, was the last known work by which artist?
3. How did David Walliams say he would be celebrating after swimming the Thames?
4. Who was formerly the husband of Diandra Luker and is now married to a Welsh actress?
5. What alias did Superman adopt on Earth?
6. Who played the role of Superman in four films in the 1970s and 1980s?
7. What was the surname of the shopkeeper played by Ronnie Barker in Open All Hours?
8. What male voice comes between a tenor and a bass?
9. In medicine, what is an epistaxis?
10. In Greek mythology, ambrosia was the food of the gods. What was their drink?
11. Which artist had two of his paintings hung upside down in the Tate Modern?
12. A word much beloved of scrabble players, what sort of animal is an 'ai'?

Answers at end of newsletter:....

Website

Have you visited our new look website yet? It is well worth a visit. Alan Vincent has worked so hard in bringing it up to date.

I am *extremely* impressed. He has included links to every organisation in and around Barmouth you can think of, including the local surgery, Health Board and Gwynedd Council. You can even get current tide tables, the weather in Barmouth and bus and rail information from the links provided. So add it to your favourites and click on the links - you won't need to go anywhere else.

www.barmouthu3a.org.uk

Christmas Party !



The U3A Christmas party will be held on **Wednesday 14th December** in the Arts Room, starting at 6.30 p.m. If you want to let that latent exhibitionist streak reveal itself – please let Evelyn know if you have an (*appropriate!*) party piece you would like to perform for us.

Evelynrichardson73@yahoo.com or 01341 250428

North Wales' Study Day

From: Norma Stockford

The Dragon Theatre was full to overflowing on 12th October when we were fortunate to host the North Wales Association of U3As' tenth study day. The theme of the day was 'Landscape and People of the Mawddach'. Almost 180 delegates from across North Wales enjoyed talks from eminent speakers.

The day began with George Mandow's excellent DVD of the river Mawddach, from its source in the moorlands of Waun y Griafolen above Dolgellau, to Barmouth.

Frances Lynch, a retired lecturer in archaeology from Bangor University and expert on the prehistory of north Wales, spoke of the Bronze Age funerary and ritual monuments along the Ffordd Ddu on the south side of the Mawddach and the political and spiritual reasons for erecting them.

John Sam Jones, whose ancestors have lived on the banks of the Mawddach for more than 300 years, gave us 'Postcards from Barmouth' uncovering stories of the people who had helped to shape the town, from Fanny Talbot who gave Dinas Oleu to the National Trust, her friendship with John Ruskin to stories about John's Uncle Will and Auntie Gwen who lived on the quay.

Dr Rob Haworth reminded delegates of Barmouth's maritime history. We learned that Barmouth was once one of the most important shipbuilding ports in Wales, until the arrival of the railway in 1867 spelled the demise of Barmouth as a port. Dr Haworth's talk covered the fishing boom in Cardigan Bay in more recent times and the enduring and important role of the RNLI in Barmouth for almost 200 years.

Derek Gwilliam, chairman of the North Wales Association, congratulated Barmouth U3A on hosting a very successful study day providing differing views of the fascinating history of our small south Meirionnydd town.

The whole team worked so hard to make this the success it was, and George's video was wonderful - I am so proud of us all.

Putting Barmouth on the Map

Evelyn, Alan and Norma recently attended a meeting with Communities First, the Barmouth Heritage Group and other Barmouth groups to explore the possibility of producing an '*historic town trail*' for Barmouth, similar to the one that was produced for Dolgellau a few years ago. This very attractive publication is available from the Dolgellau Tourist Information Centre.

Working together with other organisations is a fundamental ethos of the U3A so it would be good if we could help out with this. It is anticipated that grant-aid will be available to fund the project.

If you would like to become involved, say in helping to produce the art work for it (pictures of historical buildings in and around Barmouth), or researching and providing the background information about places of historical interest, please contact Norma Stockford – stockford@btinternet.com or telephone 01341 280 742

WRITING

The writing group meets on alternate Fridays in Parlwr Bach. We have had one or two new members and recent meetings have been most enjoyable.

We intend to look at poetry next – and if we are any good, we might treat you to a performance at the Christmas Party!

We are keen to enlist new members – the more the merrier, just come along and join us.

Answers to Quiz

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Zambia | 7. Arkwright |
| 2. Lucian Freud | 8. Baritone. |
| 3. With half a shandy | 9. A nosebleed |
| 4. Michael Douglas | 10. Nectar |
| 5. Clark Kent | 11. Mark Rothko |
| 6. Christopher Reeve | 12. A three toed sloth! |

Evelyn Richardson, Chairlady, evelynrichardson73@yahoo.com
01341 250 428

Norma Stockford, Editor, stockford@btinternet.com
01341 280 742