



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE



PRIFYSGOL Y TRYDYDD OED

# Barmouth U3A Newsletter Autumn 2016

Welcome to the Autumn issue of our newsletter

Sitting here putting together this Newsletter I am feeling rather well refreshed having had a lie in as a result of the clocks going back 1 hour. This event used to involve going from room to room resetting clocks but now my phone, tablet and PC and even the radio all manage this change automatically thus minimising the effort involved. But where does this come from; an article from The Telegraph on the internet tells me:

A man called William Willett introduced the idea of British Summer Time, also known as Daylight Saving Time, in 1907. He wanted to prevent people from wasting valuable hours of light during summer mornings.

He published a pamphlet called 'The Waste of Daylight' in a bid to get people out of bed earlier by changing the nation's clocks.

Willett proposed that the clocks should be advanced by 80 minutes in four incremental steps during April and reversed the same way during September.

Willett then spent the rest of his life trying to convince people his scheme was a good one. Sadly, he died of the flu in 1915 at the age of 58; a year before Germany adopted his clock-changing plan on April 30, 1916 when the clocks were put forward at 11pm.

Britain followed suit a month later on May 21.

By then Britain and Germany had been fighting each other in the First World War (1914-18), and a system that could take pressure off the economy was worth trying. The Summer Time Act of 1916 was quickly passed by Parliament and the first day of British Summer Time, 21 May 1916, was widely reported in the press.

Back then the hands on many of the clocks could not be turned back without breaking the mechanism.

Instead, owners had to put the clock forward by 11 hours when Summer Time came to an end on October 1 2016.

The Home Office put out special posters telling people how to reset their clocks to GMT, and national newspapers also gave advice.

I have one clock that I don't wind backwards but always put on 11 hours for Summer Time—this is a 1880's fusee movement clock that my Dad left to me in pieces but which I had restored by Peter James in Barmouth. Looks great now.

*Alan Vincent*



# Strollers Group

## August: Barmouth

The Strollers had no walk planned for August as this is when we usually take our summer break. Since the weather forecast was good Trish decided to have a local walk around Barmouth with the added incentive of homemade cream cakes and drinks at "Tan y Bryn" following the walk.

Starting from "Tan y Bryn" we walked through Wern Mynach, passing the football ground and the sculpture by Joney Easterby of a Tall Ship, as once built in Barmouth, before crossing the railway line and walking into the town. Here we met up with members arriving on the



10-00am train. From the Station we walked through the harbour, with a brief stop at the "Dolphin Fountain", and continued to Aberamffra Harbour. Crossing the road, we entered Orielton Woods, passing the stainless steel sculpture by Jim Sadler showing a fossil of a Trilobite (one of the earliest forms of life in the area) and followed the steep winding path with steps and bridges to the Bird Hide and picnic tables at the top where we had a drinks stop allowing us to catch our breath after the steep climb.



Emerging onto Panorama Road we continued our walk with the popular Panorama Walk, continually stopping to take in the wonderful views of the Cader Idris range of mountains to the South across the Mawddach Estuary and of Barmouth Bridge. For several of our Strollers this was the first time that they had done the Panorama Walk and they were most impressed by the views.

Back on Panorama Road we stopped at "Gwastad Agnes" once the home of John and Daphne Dix who were members of the Barmouth U3A for many years. The site has now become the "Bunkorama", a bunkhouse and campsite. As we passed, the friendly present owner invited us all in to look at the conversion of the building to a bunkhouse which was very impressive.

Further along the path we passed the "Slabs", well known by outdoor activity groups in the area for rock climbing and several groups were climbing as we passed. Our

next brief stop was at a holiday cottage having a "horse turntable" in the garden where horses once walked in circles to generate power to drive a grindstone in an adjacent building.

Continuing our walk above Barmouth brought us to the ruins of "Gell-Fechan", a farm which had been run as a bed and breakfast business until the 1950's. We stopped here for our lunch with views overlooking the sea. A short distance from Gell-Fechan, along a very overgrown path, brought us to the flag and "Monument to the Birmingham Soldiers" with a plaque dating back to 1st July 1916. Our final section of the walk brought us down the Mynach Steps to "Tan y Bryn" where Trish treated us all to a Cream Tea, as promised, to bring an end to a most enjoyable day.



### September: Bedgellert

For September, due to popular demand, we will be repeating the walk from Rhyd Ddu to Beddgelert which we combine with a ride on the Welsh Highland Railway. Meet at Porthmadog Ffestiniog Railway Station for the 10:45am train on Tuesday 20th September. Obtain a return ticket to Rhyd Ddu.

The 8:45am number 39 bus from Barmouth or 8:55am number T2 bus from Dolgellau are convenient public transport to Porthmadog in time for the train. Remember your Residents Rail Card for use on the Welsh Highland Railway and bus pass if travelling by bus. If you don't have the Residents Rail Card contact Porthmadog Station or as Trish for details (you will need a passport size photograph)

### October: Ffestiniog Railway

For our October Strollers Walk we are planning a full day out which will include a ride the full length of the Ffestiniog Railway, a walk in the woods at Tan y Bwlch and a meal at Wetherspoons in Pwllheli (steak day) returning on the 8-12pm main line train (free with a bus pass). Of course any members may join us for the full day or any part of the day as they wish. The actual walk will start from Tan y Bwlch Station on arrival of the train at 12-05pm (ask Trish for other times if joining us for part of the day).

Meet at Porthmadog Ffestiniog Railway Station for the 10-05am train on Tuesday 11th October. Book return tickets to Blaenau Ffestiniog (we will break our journey for the walk on the return journey from Blaenau Ffestiniog).

Following the ride on the Ffestiniog Railway, for anyone who wishes to join us, we will be catching the number 3 bus to Pwllheli for our meal at Wetherspoons to return to Barmouth on the 8-12pm train (9-30pm in Barmouth).

Bring a packed lunch and both bus passes and your Residents card for use on the Ffestiniog Railway. If you don't have a Residents Discount card for the Ffestiniog Railway either inquire at Porthmadog station or ask Trish for details.

*Editor's Note: Because John and Trish are having trouble with their computer we don't, at present, have their normal excellent report on the walks for September and October. We have therefore included the original "call" notices so that all members can see what the Strollers Group have been doing.*

## Personal Musings—Analysis – Who needs it?

The traffic lights are on red so there is a pause in my hectic schedule of about 60 seconds.

My thoughts are wandering; I'm thinking about nothing and everything. In no particular order, "did I remember to get the chicken out of the freezer" "did I lock the front door" "I wonder why that woman coming out of the newsagents looks so tired and unhappy" "will I look like that in a few years time" "I wonder what will happen if our planet does get barged into by an asteroid as was predicted on TV last night" "why does the argument between scientists and religious theorists about our genesis still rage. Was the big bang responsible, did we emerge from the slime or did God create us after all."

Wearily I ask myself why my thoughts can't be orderly and useful. Why can't my analytical brain take a holiday and just let things be. The answer comes fast and short. "it can't." Maybe the definition of "analyse" in The Free Dictionary is true; "to examine in detail in order to discover meaning"

The lights change to green and my journey resumes but the analysis continues. Why was I blessed with this trait of having to analyse everything. What did I do to deserve it? Sometimes I think it's a curse and sometimes I can't tolerate other people who haven't been endowed with it. My earliest playground memories featured the five year old me wondering why "Sandra" had beautiful golden curls and walked like a ballerina and I was blessed with a dead straight basin cut and sturdy legs. Was it because she was better at sums or because her mum loved her better?

Now, one of my favourite but feared subjects is wrestling for space in my brain, demanding my analytical attention.

Injustice and how do we explain it? Geographical lotteries decide whether we live or die because of availability of food or medicine, biological and physiological lotteries dictate whether we are fat or thin, beautiful or ugly, able or disabled, talented or untalented, pleasant or simply wicked. Thank goodness there is also the human desire for self preservation which helps us deal with the horrors and debris which, with no apparent rhyme or reason, life throws at us .

No-one prepares us to deal with the seemingly haphazard tragedies meted out to even the best of us. Happiness, or the lack of it for reasons beyond our control, is surely the biggest injustice of all. The unbelievable courage of people who face and deal with what we think of as our worst nightmare leaves us all gaping with admiration.

We gaze at total devastation around the world caused by earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions and deliberate warfare and marvel at the endurance of the suffering survivors and truthfully we wish we could help but at the same time we're glad we're not there!

Last errand for today; walking around the supermarket is not the environment where people usually debate the problems of the world or the meaning of life. But not so for me, the analysis continues. "Why is that supervisor wearing a headscarf peasant style on her head, has she had chemotherapy or is she perhaps Polish?

Why is that elderly man serving at the next checkout? Why isn't he at home basking in his garden, with a G & T, enjoying retirement? Maybe he's fallen on bad times, had his identity stolen and lost all his money, or did he just not plan ahead enough with his pension contributions.

Analysing my own grandchildren is another matter. To say that communication is difficult is an understatement. Conversation is impossible because at all times they

are connected, either by one ear or two, to an electronic gadget of some sort, playing games and listening to music; singing along and/or shouting and gesticulating through the car window to friends, and with every word trying to shock.

However, I know that this troubled world will be the world that these children will inherit and I comfort myself that, in time, they will find the solutions to problems that have so beset our generation. One of my granddaughters has definitely inherited my analytical trait. Her analysis "hobby" is worse than mine in every respect; she analyses and finds solutions to problems even before they emerge and is already planning how she will deal with events maybe 10 years in the future.

There is no hope for us two but I have just had a giant brainstorm. In future instead of cluttering my brain with all this irrelevant or otherwise nonsense I will write it all down!

*Chris Kingshott*

## Singing For Fun

I hope that many of you read the excellent piece in last months Journal of the benefits of singing. This is an area of considerable research which shows the physical , emotional, cognitive and social benefits of singing.

Everyone should have a little sing each day, you don't have to be a "singer" all you need to do is to take a deep breath open your mouth and let the notes ring out. It helps if you know a few songs of course but you can just hum if you don't. You'll find the mundane tasks of life seem less arduous.

So have a try, if nothing else you'll have a good laugh ! If you want to sing songs and get to know the words and tunes then why not join and have a go ! I can promise you a laugh and a cuppa as well.

*Evelyn Richardson*

## Walking Group

The Walking Group, in August, visited the Harlech area with a 4 mile walk around various historic sites and then followed that up the next week with a further 4 mile walk around Bala.

The planned September walk had to be cancelled because of the weather but the same walk was completed in October. This was Bontddu back to Barmouth via the old gold workings, Pont Hirgwm and the Panorama walk.

## Good Health Day

As we have in previous years Barmouth U3A had a stand at the Dolgellau Good Health Day run by Mantell Gwynedd on 14th October

As always we chatted to plenty of people at what is a popular event with more than 240 visitors attending and more than 100 representatives from organisations and agencies on the stalls.

## Home Town Research

The members are slowly acquiring information about their selected towns and like me will be wondering what to leave out as much as what to put in. I now have a specific plan of what I am doing and have started what to me is the harder part.

i.e. Getting it down in a reasonable form with the minimum of grammatical errors. I find typing on the computer harder than actually writing it myself but at least spell check helps. The research is interesting; both that of the town itself and its environs but also about the growth of the cotton industry in and around Manchester, which was the centre for the growth and mechanisation of this industry.

One of the other aspects of doing the reading is how little I knew of my hometown and how little of it I actually experienced of it as a child and teenager. Another thing I have noticed is how various memories have been triggered by my cogitations, must get some notes down before they disappear again.

We meet after the monthly meeting to share notes, ideas and difficulties, I suspect that the tempo will hot up somewhat next year as our deadline approaches. We hope to produce some kind of a display at the time of our celebration of completing the first 10 years of Barmouth U3A.

*Evelyn Richardson*

## Barmouth Bridge

### Save the Date!

2017 sees the 150th anniversary of the opening of Barmouth Bridge.

Over the weekend of **14th/15th October 2017**, there'll be events held in Barmouth to celebrate this iconic bridge.

We will keep you up to date with the details as they are published, but for now just put it in your diary!





## Digital Media Group

The Digital media group have now met twice and both sessions have been really interesting. Led by Alan Vincent they are aimed at helping members become more comfortable in their use of PCs, Tablets, Smartphones and other electronic devices. Information on security, password management and backup of data together with advice on applications, particularly email, help us become a bit more expert in

this changing world.

We expect to cover the use of on-line purchasing and social media in future sessions.

Alan non only tries to answers all the queries, but also ensures that his audience are beginning to understand how they can use the internet to build their knowledge.

## North Wales Association of U3As Theme Day

On 5th October Abergele U3A hosted a successful study day entitled The Maritime Heritage of North Wales, which was attended by members of the N Wales U3As including 4 members of Barmouth U3A

Dr John Jones Morris spoke on the History of Porthmadog 1820 – 1914; Meinir Pierce Jones on the Menai Strait Logboat Project and the Nefn Museum; Peter Day on the Wreck of the Royal Charter and Deanne Groome spoke about the North Wales Offshore Archaeology.

They all contributed to a varied and interesting day, enhanced by a tasty lunch provided by a local caterer, Mrs Buffet. Two volunteers provided a display table on behalf of the RNLI.

This annual study day is always well supported and is an ideal opportunity for local U3As to meet up and was particularly enjoyed by the Barmouth contingent. Many thanks to all involved especially members of Abergele U3A.

## Discussion Group

With no meeting in August and then the September meeting cancelled because only a couple of members turned up the Discussion Group have had a quiet time recently.

However they had a lively and enthusiastic chats in October about "Culture" and their subject for November will reflect some of the activity "across the pond" with discussions about "American Politics, Elections and Democracy"



Why not go along and have your say!! 4th Thursdays  
The group are particularly keen to see more Ladies joining them.

## Table Tennis

We are currently having 12 people to play on a Friday. We have three tables for one hour. There is a great competitive spirit between some of the players, whilst others of us just play and chat too much. It is good to see the Leisure Centre such a hive of activity. Apologies to other users, we are a bit noisy at times and our balls go astray.

Its good fun physically and keeping the score is even more of a challenge...

We have the kit, just come along.

*Geraldine Vincent*



## Monthly Meetings

### September

Rob Booth from The Wildlife Trust was our very engaging speaker in September. He is the Living Landscape Officer for Conway and Gwynedd.

He began by telling us that the North Wales Wildlife Trust is one of 47 Wildlife Trusts across the UK and one of six in Wales. It is dedicated to conserving all habitats and species and provides opportunities for everyone to discover the outdoors first-hand.

Rob manages eleven sites; one of them is Gwaith Powdwr, which was once the biggest explosives works in Europe. It was donated to the North Wales Wildlife Trust by ICI in 1998 and is now a nature reserve.

Rob was pleased to report that the reserve is now home to a whole host of wildlife including two or three pairs of nightjars, adders, common lizards, frogs, toads and newts. Beautiful dragonflies and damselflies can also be seen adjacent to the pond.

The seven species of bats that inhabit the area are well provided for as they have a special maternity building (called a maternity roost), which was specially built for the mother *bats* that gather together for a few weeks in the summer to rear their young.

The clearing of the encroaching scrub and reinstating sheep into the area (no more than twenty) is protecting the heath land. A mix of coppicing and the planting of new trees all helps to encourage the wildlife to thrive but the area can never be fully restored to how it was originally and is a job that is never ending.

Rob's illustrated talk was extremely interesting, very informative about nature conservation, environmental education and the importance of preserving our landscapes for future generations. It gave us much food for thought as we should be helping whenever and wherever we can take to care of and respect our environment.

### October

Our very own Danny Jones was the guest speaker at the October meeting and what a lovely afternoon we all had.

He began by telling us about the origins and history of the blues and how slavery on southern plantations in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed to the development



of the music with the slaves singing as they worked in the cotton fields. Rhythm and music was very important to the Africans and their work songs became known as the blues.

Danny went on to explain about jazz, a subject about which he is very knowledgeable and he was brave enough to involve the audience, although the results were perhaps not quite as he expected. (A little more practise maybe?)

Again, this music originated from the African American communities in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has evolved over the years to include a very wide range of music, harmony and improvisation. He said that jazz musicians have to 'get it right' first time with the musician improvising being in harmony with the people behind.

We were entertained by Danny playing some music himself on his trombone and recordings of some of his favourite artists to explain the points he was describing to us.

The afternoon ended with a recording of the South African composer and pianist Abdullah Ibrahims playing "Blue Bolero". A peaceful end to a very entertaining and educational afternoon.

*Jacqui Puddle*

## Bridge Groups

We have two highly successful clubs running. A beginner's class and the more advanced. Both clubs are ably run by Brian Williams and Christina Cooke. There is great hilarity, but now we have to use Bidding Boxes and not speak. (Not so easy for some of us!). Both sessions are over too quick. Tea, biscuits and cake to replenish us at half time. Maximum cost £2.00. Come on over to the Bowls Club. We will really make you welcome.

*Geraldine Vincent*

*Editor's Note: No, I didn't know what a "Bidding Box" was either. So I asked my resident Bridge expert. At a high level Bridge is played silently and players use a card from their "Bidding Box" to indicate their bid. See the picture below:*



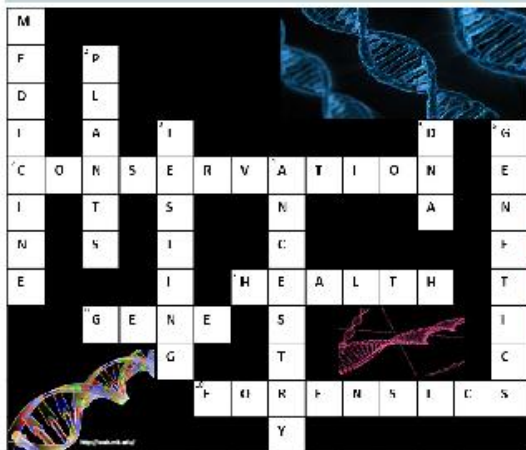


## Genetics and Genomics for the 3rd Generation (3G) conference

An exciting new public event about DNA, genetics and genomics

Tuesday 29th November 2016, 12.30pm-4pm

The Racecourse Ground, Wrexham, LL11 2AH



Like to learn more about the fascinating field of DNA, genetics and genomics and discover how it affects our everyday lives? **Join us for the first ever Wales Gene Park 3G conference in North Wales!** Hear experts talk on:

*'How to Clone a Prime Minister'*    *The HealthWise Wales project*  
*The North Wales DNA project & historical genetics*    *Genetics & health*  
 And more.....

Join us for the whole event or drop in for any of the talks! There will be a 5 minute break between talks to drop-in or out. There will also be stands showcasing some of the latest projects in Wales. The event is primarily aimed at members of the public over 50, but everyone is welcome!

Attendance is **FREE** but you must register to attend via Eventbrite:

<http://ow.ly/kNX3304UD8K>

**Refreshments and lunch provided!**

For further information please email [walesgenepark@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:walesgenepark@cardiff.ac.uk) or phone 02920 746940



This event is sponsored by the Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund and Cardiff University

## Book Group

Book Club Reviews: No meeting in October



### August: The Muse by Jessie Burton, (2016)

The book was 'The Muse' by Jessie Burton (2016) an author whose first novel we had previously enjoyed. 'The Muse' has recently been serialised on Radio 4's Book at Bedtime. So we knew it must be worthy of our close scrutiny! It moves between 2 alternating time zones (As many novels do these days) and begins in 1967 London with Odelle, a young woman from the Caribbean working in Dolcis (Nice touch) shoe shop. There she encounters a customer with toe-less feet – what a way to start a story.

Odelle's flat mate moved to London with her 5 years previously and they live in comfortable companionship, speaking the wonderful dialect of their home. However, when Cynthia marries and moves across London. Odelle, now rather lonely and needing a better wage to pay the rent, obtains a secretarial position at an Art Gallery under the supervision of the enigmatic Miss Quick. It is here that the mystery begins when a young man arrives with a painting recently left to him by his mother. The provenance of this painting (See Fake or Fortune, currently on BBC1) is central to the story as it is believed to be the lost companion piece to one painted in the 30's by a noted young Spanish artist who subsequently disappeared. Hence the second time zone, 1936. – Andalusia, near Malaga, where a family has just rented a villa. The father is an International Art Dealer, the mother an English heiress and the young daughter, a would-be artist. With a local brother and sister meeting all their needs, the story of the painting begins to take shape, against the backdrop of the growing unrest between opposing factions in Spain at that time.

We all enjoyed this beautifully written book with its emotion, violence, mystery and history. We enjoyed discussing our individual take on who the muse actually was and

looked at pictures of paintings mentioned in the text (Thank You Geraldine). And we felt that there as definitely another fascinating story to be told about the years between 1936 and 1967 when one of the characters is last heard of and then re-emerges. Anyone ? .....

### September: The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox, by Maggie O'Farrell (2006)

This proved to be a very popular choice despite it being centred on an elderly woman being released from a defunct mental institution after many years of incarceration.

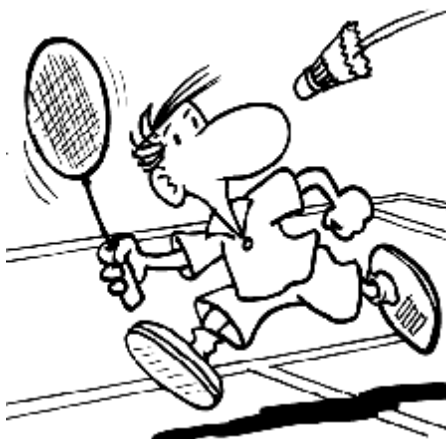
We are first introduced to her as a young girl in Colonial India, living a fairly unsophisticated life with her elder sister and her very correct parents. The description of her surroundings – the smells, sounds, and textures are very evocative. Esme is an inquisitive, sensitive, imaginative child, misunderstood by her parents who favour her studious sister. In tragic circumstances the family relocates to Edinburgh to live with extremely straitlaced Victorian Grandparents who take a dim, view of Esme's scatty attitude, a complete contrast to the compliant sister Kitty. A traumatic event leads to her father dumping her, aged 16, at the door of a mental hospital where she spends the next 60 + years, unacknowledged by her entire family. She had to all intents and purposes vanished.

Forward to 1988 and the Institution is closing, so Iris, her only available next of kin, is given the responsibility of making arrangements for her Great Aunt, whose existence she knew nothing of. Iris is a modern independent and caring young woman whose back-story we gradually learn about. We felt the two were alike in some ways but Esme had been born a generation too soon. It was also suggested that perhaps she had some form on Autism which wouldn't have been recognised in the early 1900's. It is disconcerting to think how easily people could be 'sectioned' until quite recent times. Fallen women, errant wives, and daughters – how easy it was to get rid of them! (Apparently even J M W Turner had his mother 'put away' because she was regarded as something of a loose cannon with a very bad temper when he was making his way in the art world).

We liked the device used by the author where various voices were used in successive paragraphs; it really brought the characters alive. This story was perplexing and upsetting at times, especially the very dramatic conclusion which none of us had anticipated, but we all enjoyed it very much.

*Sylvia Heyworth*

## Short Net Tennis / Badminton



Time to say hello again to our Tennis and Badminton players. After a busy summer we are all pleased to be back to our sports. It's good to see our special member (Jo Jo) every week. She is a real star and so patient with us when a soft ball goes her way. As Christmas is just around the corner, it is nearly time to book our Christmas get-together, which will be held at Indiana Cuisine, Fairbourne this year. (Details later). Many thanks for your continued support.

*Wendy*

*Editor Note: For information Jo Jo is a beautiful dog.*

## **CASTING CALL FOR FABULOUS PENSIONERS!!**



Are you aged 65+ and living a wild, extreme, controversial or extraordinary life?

Perhaps you are (or you know) a pensioner who's doing an unusual job, enjoying a newfound creativity, growing old disgracefully or maybe living totally off the grid?

TV channel More4 is looking for amazing, sparky seniors to star in a new series about alternative ways of growing old.

We can't wait to celebrate the UK's most amazing pensioners - so if you ARE one, or if you KNOW one, please get in touch!!

**For more information:**

**Email: [casting@libertybell.tv](mailto:casting@libertybell.tv)**

**(or)**

**Call: 02075987358**

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The Winter newsletter will be published end of January.  
Please submit your contributions by **10th January**