

BARMOUTH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter



Spring 2012

Spring is the time of the year when it is summer in the sun and winter in the shade.

— *Charles Dickens*

CHAIRLADY'S REPORT

A message from Evelyn Richardson

I was walking along Fairbourne beach this evening with my son and he was amazed that I had been your chair lady for three years. To me as well, it has passed very quickly and this is the last time I will write to you in this role.

I looked at the newsletter for Summer 2009 to see what I had written then. Understandably I was rather apprehensive at what I had volunteered for and wondered if I could cope and provide the leadership required.

The message was couched in rather light hearted terms but underneath was a genuine concern to do what I felt Barmouth U3A deserved. All I can say is that it has been a most enjoyable experience and a big learning curve for me.

I have been more than ably assisted by a super committee who work well together in a professional and friendly manner. The truth is, they shouldered much of the work and were always quick to offer help or undertake different tasks as they arose.

I am sure that whoever follows me will elicit the same spirit of cooperation and support. I would like to thank the membership for their support and enthusiasm for Barmouth U3A and also for their friendliness, long may it continue.

Evelyn Richardson

Evelyn, having served for three years as Chairlady, has to stand down. A new chairperson will be elected at the AGM on May 9th. See page 7.

Editor

SINGING FOR FUN



From: Evelyn Richardson,

I'd like to say a big thank you to Bobbie Cartmell who kept the SFF going during my holiday in NZ.

We are once again singing some songs to welcome Spring, as we do most years, and now have quite a large repertoire as on average we try at least one new song a month. The old favourites get regular airings and we have a few songs which we sing in parts.

It's a pity that no men have the courage to sing with us but we don't really miss them do we girls? Do I hear a chorus of OH YES WE DO!!!!!! Well you can't have everything.

What we do have are lots of laughs, a wide variety of songs and the physical and mental benefits that singing provides.

Not to mention the psychological and social benefits, cups of tea and occasionally homemade biscuits - and all for £2.50 once a month - on the third Wednesday 2 to 4pm in the Parlwr Mawr ...

AMAZING!

BARMOUTH U3A MONTHLY GATHERINGS.

January Gathering

At our first Monthly Gathering of 2012, we were delighted to welcome Islwyn Humphreys, an ex-Barmouth resident and former NatWest Bank Manager, who now lives on Anglesey.

For the last ten years Islwyn has been a member of the Samaritans, and in his talk he gave us a wonderful insight into that organisation. He described the history and evolution of the movement, supplied some impressive statistics, and then moved on to describe the excellent training and support network provided to members.

Islwyn's obvious dedication to his work as a Samaritan came over most clearly, and listening to his talk was a moving experience.

February Gathering

Did you know that it was a “polite” campaign against ladies of fashion wearing birds' feathers in their best hats in the late nineteenth century which led to the founding of the RSPB? Well, that was one of the many interesting things we learnt at the February Monthly Gathering from Beverly Dimmock, an RSPB worker, who gave us a fascinating presentation on the work of the RSPB at their reserve at Ynys Hir, just south of Machynlleth on the Dyfi estuary.

The amount of work which has been, and is being, done at the reserve to make it more bird-friendly and at the same time public-friendly was most impressive, and it was interesting to learn what a large number of volunteer workers the reserve – and RSPB in general – is attracting.

Beverly's slides of the reserve in its setting, surrounded by magnificent scenery, and of the birds in it, were a great pleasure to watch, and, coupled with Beverly's lively presentation, they made for an afternoon of great enjoyment. And what a place for a visit in the months to come!

March Gathering

We were looking forward to a presentation on the old buildings of Barmouth from Peter Thompson, but unfortunately Peter had to attend a funeral on that day. He would like to give his presentation at a date to be arranged.

It was decided to use the meeting to consider how well monthly meetings were suiting members' interests, and to this end Evelyn presented everyone with a questionnaire as a basis for discussion. The discussion was lively and wide-ranging, and here is the outcome:

Results of a Discussion held at the Monthly Gathering of Barmouth U3A on Wednesday 14th March 2012

1. Social time before meeting

Most members felt that there was enough time before the meetings to socialise; a few did not. It was agreed in future to leave the room arrangements intact for 20 minutes after the formal session had ended to allow more chance to chat informally.

Everyone felt welcome at the meetings.

Some members felt that the arrangement of seats was too formal, but it was hard to see, given the limitations of the room, how the arrangement could be different. If numbers increased, we could think of returning to the Arts Room.

The difficulty of learning and remembering other people's names was raised; at future meetings stick-on name tags will be available as people arrive for those who wish. Some members without their own transport found it hard to get to meetings. In the next newsletter, people willing to give lifts will be asked to contact George Mandow, who will prepare a list of members' names, addresses and phone numbers, with asterisks against those willing to give lifts, to be circulated with the subscription renewal form. People in need of lifts can then make contact with drivers who live nearby.

2. Presentations

Many possible future topics were suggested: pottery, art, music, history of North Wales, history of politics, flower arranging, reports from group leaders, national news, medicine, life stories, ecology, wine tasting, cookery, religions, health topics relevant to our age bracket, the Romans in Wales, gardening, the theatre, antiques, cookery, make-up, quizzes and games. What an interesting and diverse lot we are!

Some possible future speakers were suggested: a National Trust Officer, Lesley Tarleton of Freshfields Animal Rescue, chairpersons of other local groups e.g. Lit and Deb, W.I., Brian Paul on

“Madoc's Cob”, an archivist from Dolgellau library, John Smith (return visit).

The overall standard of presentations was felt to be very good. A majority of members did not want more “academic” presentations, but did want more interactive sessions, and would be interested in learning specific skills. Three people would be willing to give presentations – names to Evelyn, please! Half those present wanted to know more about the wider U3A scene, half did not. The presentation was considered the most important part of each session, very closely followed by social time.

In future, the speaker will be asked to speak up, and the attention of members will be drawn to the loop system.

3. Practicalities

The present choice of day, time and venue were found acceptable by most people; one or two would prefer a different day of the week or a later time but it was felt that it would be very hard to make changes which suited everyone.

The possibilities of arranging meetings in venues relevant to the subject in hand, such as Dolgellau Archives, and arranging outside trips to places such as National Trust properties, were discussed; these may involve the hiring of coaches or possibly joining up with Porthmadog U3A.

A big thankyou to all members who contributed to the discussion on Wednesday. Much valuable information was gained, which will be acted upon in the future. If anyone who was not at the meeting but has ideas which they would like to contribute, contact Evelyn. Tel:01341 250 428

NEEDLECRAFT

From: Wendy Bramley

We meet twice a month and each individual brings along some work of their own to do. We enjoy swapping ideas about needlecraft and other various subjects.

Some of us have learned to crochet and are quite pleased with ourselves. Jean makes us a lovely cup of tea and the afternoon passes most pleasantly. Jean does the most amazing work and is always willing to pass her skills on to us. Thank you Jean for starting up this group: it has re-kindled my love of knitting, etc. and I'm really sorry when I have to miss it because I am away.

STROLLERS' GROUP

From: Patricia Percival, Strollers' Group co-ordinator



January 2012

The damp dull start to the day resulted in an extended coffee break at Tan y Bryn. Once the rain had stopped, we put on our shoes and started the walk to the Old Barmouth Town.

From Tan y Bryn we walked down Mynach Road and then up the steep Gellfechan Road with lovely views over the town. From Gellfechan Road the path passed St John's Church took us to the Dinas Oleu Viewing Point. We then descended the steps through Old Barmouth past local sculptor, Frank Cocksey's home and the many quaint houses built into the rock, to the Last Inn.

Through the Harbour and past Frank Cocksey's Carrara marble sculpture and the Dolphin Water feature brought us to the Bar, passing the “Wooden Man of Barmouth” in the sand dunes on Ynys y Brawd. From there we walked almost the full length of the beach before crossing the promenade and up to the main road along a narrow lane. Then back to Tan y Bryn for a further coffee and sandwiches.

The earlier threat of rain had come to nothing and it had remained dry for our pleasant local walk.

February 2012

This was the first time the Strollers had used the train for transport and it proved popular with fifteen members joining the train at various points along its route to Porthmadog. The weather was kind and warmer than recently experienced.

From Porthmadog main line railway station we set off down a side street to join the footpath over the dykes, passing the water control station and leading on to the harbour. Following the harbour we passed the Harbour Master's office to the

square where it was decided to take "the high road" to Borth y Gest. The 83 steps to the top road presented no problem to our Strollers group, although we were grateful for a rest at the top while we admired the wonderful views over the estuary and harbour with Harlech Castle in the distance.

Then on to Borth y Gest, walking across the front and a short distance along the coastal path, watching canoes below and with more lovely views before turning back, this time taking the lower Oakley Wharf path back to Porthmadog.

Lunch at Spooner's Restaurant at the Ffestiniog railway station ended the day for several of the group while others extended the walk by walking the length of the Cob following the Ffestiniog Railway Line to Boston Lodge Works, and returning to Porthmadog along the other side of the Cob.

March 2012

To show that Aberystwyth has more than shops and the university, our March Strollers' Walk took us to the Wellington Monument, then to the south of the town, travelling by bus to Aberystwyth.

Some of us braved the very crowded 8.25 am school bus from Barmouth, while others joined us at Dolgellau for a quick coffee before catching the 9.20 am X32 bus for Aberystwyth. A very pleasant bus journey, arriving at Aberystwyth at 10.40 am in time for a bacon roll and coffee at Wetherspoons before starting our walk.

After a short walk through the town, we crossed the River Rheidol footbridge to join the footpath up to the Wellington Monument where we had a brief rest. Despite the rather hazy weather the high position offered excellent views over the town and harbour. After our rest we started the descent on the sea side of the hill down to the harbour and stone jetty where dolphins are often seen. We then had a walk along the south coastal path running between the river and the sea until the path turned inland. Back then along the river with distant views of the Wellington monument, over the River Rheidol road bridge and across town back to Wetherspoons. A late fish and chip lunch before catching the 3.40 pm bus back home brought an end to a very enjoyable day.

STROLLERS' BUFFET LUNCH

As a trial in February, in addition to our normal monthly Strollers' Walk we invited our regular strollers to a Buffet Lunch at Dolgellau College followed by a short walk.

The Buffet Lunch was a recently introduced addition to the usual lunches provided by the catering department at the college consisting of two courses followed by coffee for a very reasonable £5.00.

After the very enjoyable lunch, seventeen of us drove the short distance to Precipice Walk car park from where we walked round the lake in lovely sunshine, hoping to walk off some of the calories. The day proved so popular that we repeated the event, with a different walk, on Wednesday 18th April

WALKING GROUP - WINTER WALKS

From: Mary Howell

January -A circuit of Moelfre

Snow greeted us (David Dorling, Meena, Norma, Dave Rowley and I) when we drove up the lanes behind Dyffryn; a complete surprise and a delight. Snow is always a surprise and a delight. The white world is stiller and quieter than you remember, the cold is colder and the sparkle still takes your (visible) breath away. Even if we were to go again, retracing our route and looking at our own footprints and the strange round holes made by David's walking stick, it would still be the same.

We blustered into more layers, scarves, hats or buffs or both and even all three, tense with the knowledge that snow also kills.

Wrapped up warmly we descended to Nantlle Valley and relaxed to the rhythm of walking and ceased to worry of the cold and the dangers of snow. We were cheery and chatty and glad to have decided at last on a walk that would satisfy all. Not the high ridge of Llanbedr Mountain, facing into the piercing south westerly, just the circuit of Moelfre, *just in case!*

The view was rosy - a superb floating of snow-covered mountains and hills. Dulux should try to market 'sunlight on snow' for our living room walls.

There was time to stand and stare, identify mountains and hills (could that be the Nantlle Ridge?) and remember other walks. Our eyes were truly lifted up to the hills.

The uphill stretch that, without snow takes forty

five minutes, took double that and then some. The wind was so cold on our faces we did not stop for lunch. No, everyone was fine without a stop. But by the time we had descended towards Pont Scethin, slithering through inches of fresh snow and leaving the only foot prints for miles around, and found the Taith Ardudwy that would take us back to our start point, suddenly there was hunger and time allowed for a picnic taken propped against a sheltering wall. Fingers nipped without gloves.

When David looked at his GPS we found we had walked only five miles in three hours and for one of those we had been stationary, simply taking in the scenery.

And in the cafe afterwards with cheeks glowing and the need for something truly hot and then truly sweet satisfied (a surfeit of lamphreys from which we do not die), we congratulated ourselves on a rather nice day, all told.

February - Llawlech

From: Norma Stockford

Mary again led and organised the February walk. We were to do 5 or so miles in the hills behind Bontddu, crossing the slopes of Llawlech, and seven of us met in the fog at the small car park at the end of the road at Hirgwm.

The walk is described in the Kittiwake book on Walks around Barmouth and the Mawddach Estuary as '*a walk in a delightful upland area utilising two old green mountain roads and enjoying panoramic views*' but we were denied the panoramic views – we saw varying shades of grey.

For the previous week the weather forecast had been for clear warm weather everywhere except for our area of Wales when we were shrouded in mist for days. Monday 27th was to be no exception but we plodded on. You don't realise how important the view is when walking until you don't have one. The mist was so low and dense that we had to constantly check our bearings – Mary making periodic compass checks on her map. Eric's GPS confirmed that we were on track, but there was just nothing to see – we even lost one of our members and began to turn back - and that's a first for this walking group. (He wasn't lost at all as it turned out – but walking ahead of us in the mist!) Conversation lulled as we traversed the steep slopes of Llawlech and my suggestion that we play 'I Spy' wasn't very successful because we could only see as far as the next person's rucksack.

Again I could not find the '*superb high-level green highway*' described in the guide book; neither could I '*.... follow a delightful green track enjoying views of Cadair Idris*'. The cross-country motorcycles had gouged out huge troughs in the path. I know we are all entitled to use and enjoy the hills but it seems criminal that these ancient tracks should be vandalised in this way. We ploughed on through deep, ankle-breaking terrain (George was in his element!) stopping for a coffee in the swirling mist. It was more like an experience of the trenches than Wales' green and pleasant land, but, as we knew the view so well, we could imagine where we were. Seriously, it does make one realise how disoriented one can become in poor visibility and it is thanks to Mary's keen map-reading skills that we kept on track and found our way back to the cars. Many thanks Mary, for arranging all the walks in George's absence.

Sunny Day in March

From: George Mandow



It is not often that pictures of the Walking Group have shadows in them. The steepness of the hill is not uncommon. Indeed the February walk, led by Mary, was almost as steep as the March one, but thanks to the swirling cloud we could then only see a few yards around us. On one

of the frequent pauses to study the view, a suitably University type activity which has become more necessary as the years slip by, I reflected that instead of choosing the day of the walk by the calendar, it would be better to select the first sunny Monday in the month.

There would be something to be said for this, but on further consideration, the long range weather forecast is not yet that accurate and, more importantly, we should have missed that early Beddgelert walk, notable for heavy rain compensated by the river in superb flood. And those intrepid few who loyally came on the Bala walk, heavy rain turning to a deluge, water pouring into ones' wet weather clothes, would we have missed the experience and the joy of the bath later?

Over the years, many of the Group have led us on their favourite walks and ventured on to little

known footpaths, panted up hills, slid down stony tracks, savoured our picnics with wonderful views. Aren't we lucky!

BOOK READING

From: Rachel Cleaver



As I was unavailable for both the January and February meetings, I would like to express my appreciation to Doreen for hosting them both in my absence.

Our March selection 'One Day in May' by Catherine Alliott, was received with mixed comments from the group. The book began somewhat mundanely, but became more interesting with various twists and turns as the story developed and the choice for the title became apparent.

It was agreed to have a murder story in April. We chose 'Past Reason Hated' by Peter Robinson, who can always be relied on to supply a good detective novel. Plenty of red herrings, but the truth will out in the end!

BRIDGE GROUP

From: George Mandow, Bridge Group co-ordinator

Since our winter break, we have been reminding ourselves of the basics: how to open the bidding, what to lead, when to cover an honour. We have welcomed some new seekers after enlightenment (well, I hope they feel welcome) and have missed some regulars. If you want to brush up your bridge, it is a pleasant way to do it.

LUNCH GROUP

From: Marie Thomas

If you haven't yet come along to one of the monthly lunches at Coleg Meirionydd, perhaps you might be tempted by the following sample dishes from the three-course lunch menu. These are just a couple of choices for each course, taken at random from the selections on offer – usually four or five choices for each course.

Starters: *Smoked haddock fishcakes with a red pepper sauce OR Glazed goat's cheese and beetroot with a herb salad and beetroot dressing.*

Main: *Chicken breast stuffed with Stilton-flavoured couscous, wrapped in pastry and served with a red wine jus OR Steamed steak and mushroom pudding with a rich gravy*

Dessert: *Apple tart tatin OR Chocolate roulade with fresh cream*

Book soon for May!

PUZZLE CORNER

Answers on page 5

1. Which football team play home games at Stamford Bridge?
2. Which king won the battle of Stamford Bridge?
3. Who was formerly the husband of Diandra Luker and is now married to a Welsh actress?
4. What alias did Superman have on Earth?
5. Who played the role of Superman in four films in the 1970s and 1980s?
6. What was the name of the shopkeeper played by Ronnie Barker in Open All Hours?
7. Who played Tom and Barbara Good in the TV sitcom the Good Life?
8. What is the city of Madras now officially called?
9. Which perennial poisonous plant is also known as belladonna?
10. Which European country had three kings called Leopold?
11. Who was the first person to appear on a postage stamp?
12. Which motoring aid was invented by Percy Shaw?

Answers on page 7.

NORTH WALES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL STUDY DAY

The 11th North Wales Association of U3As Study Day is to take place on 9th October at Clwyd Theatr Cymru and is being organised by Flintshire U3A.

Tickets are £12 per person, including coffee and lunch and are limited to 20 per U3A. If we get enough uptake, we could order transport to take us. Many delegates from Flintshire attended our study day last October, so it would be good to support them by attending theirs. Please let Evelyn know, if you want to go.

BADMINTON GROUP

From: Wendy Bramley, Badminton Group co-ordinator

We are still enjoying our Badminton, and Friday afternoons are usually fun, entertaining and tiring. We welcome Val back into the fold, after undergoing a cataract operation. Good to have you back on board.

We also welcome three new players Neil, Elaine and Pat, who have swelled our ranks which allows us to have two courts going. (That's why it's tiring - there's not much time to sit out.) Pauline has not been able to attend for three weeks so it is good to have her back too.

I do hope our new players enjoy playing with us and we welcome them to the U3A

NEW GROUPS

From Norma Stockford

We are always interested to know if anyone would like to start a new group. It has been suggested that we might start a History group. Would anyone be interested?

Sally Kirkham will be talking to us about Drama in September, perhaps this could be another group.

Let me know if you are interested (my contact details are at the end of the newsletter).

Toad Watch

Why the chicken crossed the road may be a source of speculative mirth but for toads it is a simple matter of preservation. Toad numbers are declining in Britain. An estimated 20 tonnes of toads are squashed by vehicles every year in Britain, most during the breeding season. Road deaths are considered one of the biggest reasons for the decline.

Early each year they wake from hibernation and head straight to a pond to mate, crossing busy roads as they travel up to 1½ miles in search of water. Toads prefer to move just after dusk, when road traffic can be at its heaviest. You will notice them on warmer wet evenings in spring.

You can help their cause by setting up a "Toad Patrol" of your own. If you live near a road by a pond or lake keep an eye out for toads crossing. They can be picked up with gloved hands (fabric gardening gloves for example) or with a plastic beach spade and carried safely across the road – in the direction of the pond remember! Consider your own safety first; wear hi-viz clothing and carry a torch.

Female toads need at least a foot depth of water in which to lay their eggs, which are laid in strings. Clearing the pond is also helpful at this time of year. Cutting back bushes and overhanging shrubbery also increases sunlight and general pond health.

Toad Facts

- The first toad crossing was created at Llandrindod Wells in 1984. It is used by 4000 toads annually
- Many toads will breed only in the pond where they hatched
- Toads are regarded as the gardener's friend because they eat slugs and insect pests
- Toads release a "toxin" from glands on their head making them undesirable to even the most enthusiastic of Labradors.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Don't forget the AGM on the 9th May. It starts at 1.30 prompt so be early! There will be several positions up for re-election including the posts of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary (which Sue McCulloch assures me is not an arduous task). If you would like to stand for one of these posts or would like to nominate someone, contact Evelyn Richardson.

evelynrichardson73@yahoo.com

Tel: 01341 250 428

George will be handing out your new membership cards so do try to attend. As an added incentive – we will be serving wine and snacks at 2pm before we enjoy our talk on bees. (Not the birds as well unfortunately!

Ed.

PUZZLE CORNER answers.

1: Chelsea. **2:** Harold II Godwinson **3:** Michael Douglas. **4:** Clark Kent. **5:** Christopher Reeves. **6:** Arkwright. **7:** Richard Briers and Felicity Kendal. **8:** Chennai **9:** Deadly nightshade. **10:** Belgium. **11:** Queen Victoria **12:** Cat's eyes.

Barmouth U3A officers

Chairlady: Evelyn Richardson Tel: 01341 250 428

Vice chair: Rachel Cleaver

Treasurer: Christina Cook

Secretary: Sue McCulloch

Groups Co-ordinator: Sylvia Vannelli

Newsletter Editor:

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BARMOUTH, Gwynedd, LL42 1LX.
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The summer newsletter will be published for July. Latest copy date: 10th of June.

Badminton

Leisure Centre, Barmouth.

Fridays 2.00 to 4.00pm

May 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th

Contact Wendy Bramley 01341 242 706

Book Reading

'Pedair Derwen' Dyffryn Ardudwy

1st Wednesdays 2.00 - 4.00pm

May 2nd 'The Thread' by Victoria Hislop

June 6th 'We Are All Made of Glue' by Marina Lewycka

Contact Rachel Cleaver 01341 247 698

Friday Bridge

Alternate Fridays 2.00 - 5.00pm

May 11th, 25th

Coach House Penmaenpool

Contact George Mandow 01341 422 946

Discussion

Room at back of the Revelation Book Shop,
Park Road, Barmouth.

4th Thursdays 2.00 - 4.00pm

May 24th 'Giving up bad habits'

Contact Peter Leyden 01341 281 172

Lunch

Coleg, Dolgellau

Thursday May 17th 12.30pm

Contact Marie Thomas 01341 247 247

Needlecraft

Merrog, Fford Glanmor, Talybont.

May 7th, 21st 2.00 - 4.30pm

Contact Jean Wilde 01341 242 664

Scrabble

For venues days and times

Contact John Maitland 01341 280 612

Singing for Fun

Parlwr Mawr, Dragon Theatre,

3rd Wednesday 2.00 - 4.00pm

May 16th

Contact Evelyn Richardson 01341 250 428

Social Bridge

Parlwr Bach, Dragon Theatre, Barmouth All

Wednesdays in May 6.00 - 9.00pm

Contact Christina Cook 01341 280 374

Strollers

The May Strollers Walk will explore the footpaths
in the woods behind Plas Tan y Bwlch.

Date: Tuesday 8th May

Time: 11.00 am

Meet: in the parking area on the left on the
road from Oakeley Arms to Tan y Bwlch
(Ffestiniog) railway station, just past the road off to
the station.

Bring a picnic lunch.

We hope to continue with the popular "lunch and a
walk" at Dolgellau College but of course we have to
fit in with the college. Next month they will be on
exams followed by holidays. We expect to return in
September.

Contact Trish Percival 01341 280 225

E-mail strollers@barmouthu3a.org

Walking

A walk suggested by Brian Williams

Date: May 28th

Time: 10.30

Meet: Layby on A496 at Cutiau (OL23 634 172)

Walk: A figure of 8 route to the north and east in
woods and along paths and lanes, ending with
views of the whole Cadair Idris range, the Arans
and Rhobell Fach (I think). About 4 ½ miles. Quite
steep in places.

How to get there: from Barmouth, just under 2
miles towards Dolgellau, unmarked layby on the
left before the road to Cutiau and Glandwr Mill.

Writing

Parlwr Bach, Dragon Theatre, Barmouth.

Alternate Fridays 2.00 - 4.00pm

May 4th, 18th

Contact Norma Stockford 01341 280 742