

BARMOUTH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter



Spring 2013

*Nostalgia isn't what it
used to be!*

Anon

My predecessor always used seasonal quotes to begin the Newsletter, but as the seasons seem to be very *unseasonal* this year, I thought this would make a change!

Despite the cold weather, we have had good attendance at all the different groups and it was delightful to walk above the snowline with the walking group in March. By the time you read this I hope that Spring will have sprung.....

Most of our members receive this Newsletter by email and those without access to email receive a hard copy. In a bid to try and reduce our postage and stationery bills, would any of those receiving hard copies of the newsletter and diary dates have anyone who would print it off for them?

If you do – please let Alan know. 01341 247 415

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A message from Alan Vincent

This is my fourth newsletter piece and therefore the end of a year as your Chairman. I have enjoyed it immensely and am really pleased to see that Barmouth U3A continues to go from strength to strength.

We added 28 new members during the year and have justifiably moved our monthly meetings into the Arts Room, with attendances regularly over 40 members.

Hopefully we will make as much progress again this year.

Whilst we have, for now, closed down a couple of groups over the last twelve months others have gone from strength to strength. Particularly I'm told, by someone close to me, Table Tennis.

Personally, the walks with the Strollers and the Walkers have been my highlight of the year – they have taken me into areas of this region that I had often not been to before and just strengthen my conviction that we live in the most beautiful part of the UK. Also, and I guess this is part of the ethos of the U3A, these walks have given me the confidence to go on longer treks on my own, partially because I now have a better understanding of the routes, but also because I am confident I can now walk 5 – 8 miles and therefore be happy I will get back home again!

I read an article the other day about digital inclusion which reported the fact that the government expected 80% of its transactions with the public to be completed on-line by 2017. It interested me, in that our own membership, which I think is a good cross section of the population, has only a 67% on line element. It seems to me that the government has its work cut out, not just to persuade people to use on-line services but also to get them connected in the first place.

For me they should focus on mobile phone signals – then I could use my phone at home!!

SINGING FOR FUN



From: Evelyn Richardson

It would seem that all our efforts on Wednesday to encourage Spring to come, failed. We sang three songs welcoming Spring, two which we enjoy singing each year about this time: Spring, Spring, Spring from the show "Seven Brides For Seven Brothers", and "It Might As Well Be Spring" from "State Fair". Both of these are lively and tuneful with witty lyrics and could be called relatively modern.

We also sang a song from an old school song book which one of the singers had picked up at a table top sale, this is called "Spring Is Coming" and is from the 17th century. Many of you may have sung it in school as youngsters; it is a lively and charming addition to our repertoire.

Thankyou Rosemary for bringing it to our attention. We will have to try a bit harder next month!

Attendance has been good over the past few months and we now regularly cover the costs of the sessions with a bit over, of course we would love to see a few more men who have the courage to sing with us and who would give Martyn and Peter a bit of support. We would give you an unqualified welcome. As it says on the label - it's '*Singing for Fun*' and we probably spend as much time laughing as singing. Thank you to all who come and make it such an enjoyable afternoon.

"Scarborough Fair" and "Greensleeves" have been requested for the April session and we will probably also sing "All In The April Evening" and "April Showers" along with some of our regular favourites. Biscuits and tea as usual to round off the session, the former sometimes homemade and delicious! If you are interested in swelling our ranks even more, then come along you won't lose anything by giving it a go!

BARMOUTH U3A MONTHLY GATHERINGS.

From: Evelyn Richardson

The move to the arts room seems to have stimulated more members to attend the monthly meetings and at the March meeting there were over 40 which was good to see. We try to vary the content of the meetings in order to find something to interest all the members at various times. No mean task, as I'm sure you can imagine.

The larger and more convenient room inevitably costs more but we feel it is worth it and having the more informal arrangement of seating makes social contact easier and as far as I'm concerned, safer when moving around with hot drinks. I hope that you like it as well and if you have any suggestions as to how we can improve the sessions, then please let us know. It is only by getting feedback from you that we can continue to improve.

In January we had an informative and useful input on hearing loss, how it affects individuals concerned and their social contacts. We were shown an array of devices to help with the condition and how to access services.

February was a lively and entertaining presentation on Love Spoons, their history and their wide geographical spread and their significance in courtship rituals. (In my opinion far better than the texts and twitters of modern day life.)

March found us walking in spirit with the pilgrims who sought spiritual enlightenment and forgiveness on the pilgrimage to Santiago. We were very ably escorted on this journey by Mary Howell who has walked the walk twice.

All the talks have something to offer the membership in various ways and from my own experience I have sometimes found that the ones I am not initially interested in turn out to be the most stimulating.

If anyone of you would like to talk on a subject or if you know of someone or some activity which might be of interest, then please contact me on 01341 250 428.

STROLLERS' GROUP

From: Patricia Percival, Strollers' Group co-ordinator

January 2013



The planned January Strollers walk, which was to have been a walk from Tonfanau to Tywyn, had to be cancelled due to a delay in the construction of the new bridge. This was replaced with a walk at Aberdovey.

Although we had good directions for the walk, known as "Panorama Walk", it hadn't been possible to check it out before the day and so the Strollers had to become *the Explorers*.

Due to illness and a bad weather forecast only seven brave Strollers met up on the 8-45am train from Barmouth to Aberdovey's Penhelig Railway Station. True to the weather forecast, it was raining when we got off the train and this continued throughout the walk.

Leaving Penhelig Railway Station we walked towards the town, taking a path on the right which led us on to Copperhill Street. After passing under the railway bridge a path to the left took us high above the town, across fields, over styles and through deep mud, made worse by the wet weather. Since the rain continued, it was then decided to shorten the walk and head back into town down a farm track which led us to the Golf Course. A short walk across the Course brought us to the Dovey Inn where we stopped for our lunch, hot soup being the favourite of the day!

After a warming meal we walked to Aberdovey Railway Station where we caught the 1-10pm train back to Barmouth and, in spite of the rain, everybody had an enjoyable day.



As an extra to the usual walk we went to Dolgellau College for a buffet lunch on 16th January, followed by a short walk. This was the third time that the Strollers had enjoyed the lunch at the college and the First Year students put on as good a spread as ever.

After eating we changed our shoes and set off on our walk following the path round the back of the college, past the greenhouse leading onto the Mawddach Trail. This took us through a tunnel under the Dolgellau Bypass and over the new river bridge. We followed the path between the river and the playing fields, with views of the snow covered Cader, then into the town.

From the town we walked up Maes y Pandy following the river to the end of the road at Pandy. Here we crossed the bridge and followed the footpath along the other side of the river back towards town with many lovely distant views. This brought us out through Coed Aberneint woods near to the hospital and Community Gardens.

The walk back across the town took us through the park where our Strollers couldn't resist a detour to play on the outside Adult Gym equipment. We then retraced our steps along the river bank back to our cars at the College.

February



The February Strollers Walk at Dyffryn was led by Dave Rowley with contributions from the other Strollers. The aim of the walk was to see the Snowdrops at Cors y Gedol Hall and we couldn't have chosen a more perfect time to view them in full bloom.

Meeting at Dyffryn Railway Station, some members arrived on the 10-15am train, some by car and others on foot to make a total of fourteen Strollers.

From the Station we headed uphill, crossing the main road by the Post Office, until we joined a footpath which took us high above the village, passing through muddy fields and finally coming out onto Cors y Gedol Drive. Walking up the Drive we passed white carpets of snowdrops under the trees on both sides, lining the drive to the house. From the Hall we descended towards the main road passing through the woods and down Bellaport Farm Drive where we passed a field of rare Alpacas and bungalows where we stopped to admire the garden with a pond and wooden bridge (nice garden Alan!).

Now back at the main road, it was decided to follow the Coast Path route back. This took us past a field with Welsh Blacks chewing the grass and then in the next field two sheep, each with their new lambs (spring has arrived!). Still following the Coastal Path, through open fields, over styles, across the railway crossing and through the woods brought us to the Cadwgan Hotel where we had our lunch before going our separate ways.

We were surprised to learn that, according to Vic's GPS, we had walked 4.83 miles. Not bad for the Strollers.

March



We all wrapped up warm for our March Strollers Walk to Shell Island on what was probably the coldest day of the year, although in brilliant sunshine.

Starting from Llanbedr Railway Station, Vic led the well-supported walk, heading towards Shell Island. Just before the start of the Causeway we took the footpath to the left. This formed part of the Wales Coastal Path and was well surfaced (no mud today). When the sea came into view, it was commented that from the shade of turquoise we could have been in the Mediterranean (if the temperature had been twenty degrees warmer!) Snowdon and the distant mountains showed a sprinkling of snow on their peaks, not quite so much as seen on the Strollers' previous visit to Shell Island in 2009 when the weather was similar but the same mountains were covered in snow.

We returned to Llanbedr along the causeway for a well-deserved lunch at the Victoria Hotel before heading home by either train or car.

WALKING GROUP - WINTER WALKS

From: Norma Stockford



For our January walk, Mary promised us a 'good eight-ish mile undulating leg stretch with one stiff ascent and descent following the Nantcol valley floor to Mynydd Llanbedr along the ridge and back along Cwm Nantcol to our start point.' She said it could be shorter, if the weather was inclement.'

Well, the weather was certainly inclement, with storm-force gales rocking the cars when we parked in the layby that serves as a car park. The forecast for the day was torrential rain and this, coupled with the wind, was enough to send us running for shelter in the Coffee Bar of Dyffryn's Community Centre. We drank our coffee and ate delicious cake while watching the rain stream down.

So Mary, as promised, rearranged the walk for March, first with a viewing of Bron y Foel Isaf, the Snowdonia House described by Peter Thompson in his talk to the Monthly U3A meeting in Autumn 2012. Those who wanted to view the house were to meet at Bron y Foel Isaf at 10.am. They then planned to walk up to the Cwm Nantcol car park at 11.30 to meet those who just wanted to do the walk.

No rain this time, but a cold easterly wind and lots of snow on the tops. Five of us turned up to view the house. A typically Snowdonia House built in 1580, Bronyfoel was Nedw Gruffydd's childhood home, and he was there to meet us, as was Peter Thompson to show us around.

What a fascinating place it was, nestling under Moelfre, with its own waterwheel outside and a roaring log fire inside. It made us realise how self-sufficient they were in those days. Although it seems isolated and deserted now, Nedw reminded

us that centuries ago there would have been plenty of passing traffic as it was built alongside the main drovers' road from Harlech to London.



We were so intrigued that we lost track of time until Mary reminded us that we were to meet other U3A walkers at 11.30. We walked briskly back over the fields, but were VERY late arriving at the parked cars (none of which we recognised). Thinking that no-one had turned up, we carried on with our walk around Moelfre above the snowline – it's surprising how many people you meet from the other side of the country in these remote areas. But they were all strangers, we met no-one we knew.



It was not until our return that we discovered that one or two of our fellow U3A walkers *had* turned up at the allotted time, waited over half an hour in the cold easterly wind for us, and then went on their own walk –obviously on a different route from us. So may we make a most humble and public apology to them now? ***We are so sorry to have missed you.***

It reminds me that, for convenience and for safety, we really should have each other's mobile telephone numbers on these walks. Mine's 07917 245 882 – What's yours?

BOOK READING

From: Rachel Cleaver



The January meeting was sparsely attended due to illness, but the four hardy survivors enjoyed our very informal gathering.

The books under discussion were very varied and led us, as so often happens, on to other related (and sometimes non-related) subjects.

Our February book *The Welsh Girl* by Peter Ho Davies (Welsh father, Chinese mother) was set in a small village between Pwllheli and Caernarfon during World War II.

The author captures the resentment felt by the locals for the intrusion of the English soldiers and the evacuees into their normally quiet lives.

Discovering that a prisoner of war camp is opening and Germans are being introduced into their community becomes the cause of much discussion and, of course, interest, especially amongst the village children.

An excellent book with many different strands to follow. Highly recommended.

The March book will be 'The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry' by Rachel Joyce.

and

From Geraldine Vincent:

For the past year the Book Reading Club has been enjoying a transatlantic association with a similar club in Atlanta, Georgia.

One member, who has relatives there, wrote to them and suggested books for their group to read. This has now become a regular correspondence and both groups are enjoying an exchange of book ideas.

Due to the American influence we were introduced to *The Help* and more recently *The Kitchen* (not yet read). Both of these books relate to black people in service/slavery. Atlanta has responded by reading at least three 'British' novels including *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*, and *The Thread*.

The book for June is '*Defending Jacob*' by William Landay and is a recommendation from across the

pond. It will be interesting to read and compare notes.

It has given the Book Reading Club an extra literary dimension."

TABLE TENNIS

The Friday table tennis sessions are going from strength to strength. We have more joining our group each week and we now have 11 'regulars'. So far we have managed to not wreck many balls –yet!

Such is our enthusiasm for the games that some members have even bought their own bats – one member however is convinced the Leisure Centre bats (with flapping playing surfaces and well-battered) are better than the very expensive aerodynamic, spin inducing, all-weather bats purchased.

The Leisure Centre is trying to source us a third table which would be great.

Most Fridays at noon - £1. **Best Value in Town!**

PUZZLE CORNER

Answers on page 7

1. Whose last words were "I am just going outside and I maybe some time"?
2. Which chemical element has the atomic number 1?
3. What was George Orwell's real name?
4. What is the capital of Kenya?
5. What is the name of the pub in Treasure Island?
6. Who was the first man in space?
7. Whose performance during Comic Relief received over 2000 complaints?
8. Pope Francis was recently elected – but what is his real name?
9. Which is taller – the Shard in London or the Empire State Building in New York?
10. When did Cadburys make their first Easter egg?

LUNCH GROUP

From: Marie Thomas

Lunch Groups at the College are still popular, well attended and good value for money -

Book soon for May!

BADMINTON GROUP

From: Wendy Bramley, Badminton Group co-ordinator

Well, another three months have sped by and we are still meeting each Friday to play and enjoy our Badminton. I know sometimes, when the shuttle never seems to connect with my racquet, I feel I should just go home again, but by and large we have great fun and good exercise. I wish to thank everyone who turns out, every Friday or just occasionally, for coming along and helping to keep our U3A Badminton Group alive. Hope you all had a Happy Easter despite not being able to play on Good Friday!

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 or Local History group.

Mary had been contacted by Peter Thompson about his ideas for local history projects. He mentioned three possible strands of research:-

- Census material in Barmouth
- The built fabric and urban development of Barmouth
- The 1638 rent rolls of Llanaber

Sounds fascinating - would you be interested?

We would also like to 'resurrect' the Writing Group that used to meet on alternate Fridays. Would you like to record your autobiography for posterity?

The U3A do a good Short Story Writing course which we could pursue, but we need at least half a dozen to make the group viable. Give it some thought and let me know (my contact details are at the end of the newsletter).

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Don't forget the AGM on the 8th May. It starts at 1.30 prompt so be early!

If you have not yet renewed your subscription (only £10) then please do so as soon as possible.

Alan will be handing out your new membership cards so do try to attend. As an added incentive – we will be serving wine and snacks before we enjoy our entertainment.

Ed.

PUZZLE CORNER answers.

1. Captain Lawrence Oates
2. Hydrogen
3. Eric Blair
4. Nairobi
5. The Admiral Benbow Inn
6. Yuri Gagarin
7. Rowan Atkinson
8. Jorge Mario Bergoglio
9. The Empire State Building (443m) (Shard is 308m)
10. 1875

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**The summer newsletter will be published for June or July.
I will send out a reminder nearer the date**