

BARMOUTH



Newsletter



Summer 2011

***"Summer afternoon - summer afternoon;
to me those have always been the two
most beautiful words in the English
language."***

- Dame Edith Wharton

Although some of the groups will not be meeting in August, the coming months with Barmouth U3A look quite exciting. The monthly gatherings continue to be interesting and enjoyable and we are to be the proud hosts of the North Wales U3A Study Day in October.

There have been some changes to the committee this year. George Mandow has retired from the post of Treasurer and handed over to Christina Cooke, and Alan Vincent has kindly taken over as webmaster. Some of you may have seen Alan helping out in the Arts room – he makes a very good barman. Others might know him simply as Geraldine's husband! Alan explains what he is doing further on in the newsletter and I would urge those of you who are computer users to visit the site.

CHAIRLADY'S REPORT

A message from Evelyn Richardson

It was good to see so many turn out for the AGM although it didn't seem a year since my last report. This year we have 95 members enrolled. We are in a stable financial position with 13 viable interest groups.

It would be good if more members attended the monthly meetings. It is an excellent chance to meet and to find out what is happening in other groups. Bronwen took over the arranging of these gatherings and has continued the excellent work which Wendy did previously.

An aspect of our functioning during the last year has been 'linking with other organisations', which is very much the ethos of the U3A, for example, taking activities to those who, for various reasons, cannot get to meetings.

The Singing for fun group sang with the residents of Hafod Mawddach at their Christmas party, and was well received, the residents joining in with enthusiasm. They also sang with the Bermo Arts group at one of their productions. Martin and I went to Barmouth WI and had a singing for fun evening with their members. The creative writing group also visited Hafod Mawddach and read to some of the residents. Some members of the bridge group introduced bridge as an activity at the bowling club resulting in new members joining in with the social bridge sessions. A small number of committee members put together and manned a stall at Gwynedd's 'Keeping Healthy For Elderly People' held in Dolgellau last autumn.

During the next year Barmouth U3A will be hosting the North Wales Association study day which takes place on 12 October (more details in the Newsletter). All aspects of the running of the day will be our responsibility, from the organisation of the content to the arranging of catering and general management of the day. We hope to have at least 100 delegates attending and would welcome our own members' support. This is quite a challenge for a small branch but we are capable of rising to it and making a good job of it.

I have learnt a great deal about many aspects of the U3A in the Study Days I have attended across North Wales. Networking with older, more established groups has been particularly useful. Hearing that the problems we have are also experienced by others, and through talking with them, I have learnt ways of overcoming some of these concerns.

Finally I would like to thank George Mandow, who has retired from the post of Treasurer. Sylvia, George and I are part of the original committee who formed Barmouth U3A and he has been a stalwart support at all times, willing and highly competent in the tasks he has undertaken and always ready with sensible advice and guidance.

Thank you for your hard work George, it has been greatly appreciated by us all.



BOOK READING

From: Rachel Cleaver, Book-reading Group co-ordinator

As I was away attending an all-day Bridge session, the meeting to discuss our April book – *Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont* by *Elisabeth Taylor*, was held in Geraldine's house.

This book, written in 1971 and shortlisted for the Booker Prize, is set in a Retirement Hotel and takes a humorous but compassionate look at the small world of those for whom there is a long past, but little future. Well written, very readable but something one hopes never to experience!

In May we read *The Help* by *Kathryn Stockett*, set in Jackson, Mississippi in 1962, where black maids raise white children but are always under suspicion if anything goes missing. It is also deemed necessary for white peoples' bathroom. It is a story of extreme racial prejudice, fear, the compassion of one white woman to attempt to change the system and the bravery of some of the black workers.

June's book was *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* by *Helen Simonson*. It tells the story of an unlikely friendship developing between the retired widower and Mrs Ali, the widowed village shop keeper. In this small English village racial prejudice rears its ugly head, the worst offender being the vicar's wife. An excellent book enjoyed by all.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

From: Bronwen Dorling

The Annual General Meeting of Barmouth U3A was held on Wednesday May 11th.

Evelyn Richardson was re-elected as Chairlady, Rachel Cleaver as Vice Chair, and Sue McCulloch as Secretary. George Mandow resigned as Treasurer, and Christina Cook was elected in his place. George was warmly thanked for all his hard work for the Branch. Danny Jones, having served three years on the committee, was re-elected and Christina Cook elected. In addition, the following members will continue to serve on the committee: Bronwen Dorling, Peter Leyden, George

Mandow, John Percival, Patricia Percival, Norma Stockford and Sylvia Vannelli.

Evelyn reported on a successful year for the branch, especially in the field of forming links with other organisations. The Branch looks forward with confidence to next year, and in particular to October 12th when we host the North Wales U3A Study Day. The Treasurer's report was accepted, and everyone thanked for their hard work.

After the business part of the AGM was over, there was a welcome glass of wine, accompanied by delicious cakes, and a highly successful AGM was brought to a close.

MONTHLY GATHERINGS.

From: Bronwen Dorling

April Gathering.

Well! What a stunner this monthly gathering was! We met in the Theatre instead of the Parlwr Mawr so that our guest, Martin Barrow, could use a piano worthy of his talents, and it was a good thing that we did use the theatre since word had got round and about sixty people, double our usual number, were in attendance. Martin led an enraptured audience through the history of the piano, playing an accompanying piece of music for every developmental stage he discussed, and passing round illustrations of early pianos and forerunners of the piano. A feast for the ear and for the mind as well!
Thank you Martin.

May

After the AGM was over, it was the turn of members of the Writing Group, led by Norma Stockford, to talk about the inspiration behind their work, and to read pieces of prose and poetry they had written.

These ranged from the poignant to the comical, and it was surprising how varied were the different pieces of work, even on the same theme; one member actually illustrated each piece of his work.

The audience was warmly appreciative of all the items (though one member was heard asking for the meaning of '*a Brazilian*'!).

They encouraged other U3A members to join the Writing Group – and one already has!

June's Monthly Gathering was led by Irene Doody and members of the Family History Group. In a truly wonderful presentation, Irene led us through all the official documents which are available to us when we set about looking into our heritage, with details of how they have changed and increased over time. We gleaned fascinating morsels, such as the fact that at one time

people were legally obliged to be buried in wool, or their relatives could face a fine of £5 – a huge sum at the time.

It was pointed out that we may come across information we would have preferred not to know – there are, after all, black sheep in many a family – and Irene gave us a slogan – “If you don't want to know, don't look!” The slides which accompanied Irene's talk were very elegant, and their presence made it much easier to follow all the details. The talk raised great interest, as witnessed by the many questions asked, which continued after the formal meeting ended and people had a chance to look at the “Show and Tell” material provided by group members. Altogether an afternoon to be remembered. I've signed up for the next Family History Course already!

U3A STUDY DAY

From: Norma Stockford

Evelyn worked hard at convincing the North Wales U3A Association that Barmouth would be a good venue for the Autumn Study Day and her persuasive powers paid off, she was successful! The event will take place at the Dragon Theatre on Wednesday 12th October 2011 and the theme is ‘Landscape and People of the Mawddach’. A small group of members have been meeting regularly since February to plan and ensure the day's success.

The day will start with coffee and registration at 09.30 and begins with a showing of George Mandow's excellent DVD tracing the Mawddach from its source to Barmouth, highlighting the social, industrial and agricultural history of the area and its people.

Frances Lynch, a retired archaeology lecturer at Bangor University, will present her talk: ‘Walking up the Mawddach in Prehistory’ for the second part of the morning.

After a break for lunch from 12.30 to 2.00 p.m., Barmouth resident, John Sam Jones, will look at the early history of Barmouth and some of the people who helped to shape the town.

The final session will look at the maritime history up to the present day. The speaker will be Dr Rob Haworth, a retired general practitioner and Chairman of the Barmouth Branch of the RNLi, who has been actively involved in many aspects of this important part of Barmouth life.

We are expecting around 100 U3A members from around North Wales to attend and would like to see as many of you as possible support this important event.

The cost for the day, to include lunch, will be £10 and tickets will be on sale from mid-September.

WALKING GROUP – SPRING WALKS

From George Mandow

April - to Bryn Cader Faner

There is something in the old saying ‘If you want something done properly, get someone else to do it.’ That doesn't sound quite right, but it came to mind during the April walk to Bryn Cader Faner, the Bronze Age stone circle in the hills above the toll bridge to Penrhyndeudraeth. Estelle Patrick had appeared out of cyber space, offering to lead a walk as part of her training for a Mountain Leader qualification and when your fairy godmother appears offering to take you to the ball, you say please and thank you.

I seem to remember that the sun shone, but walking with Estelle makes you feel happy and cosseted so maybe it just felt like a sunny day. She led us at an unusually smart pace along roads, tracks and moorland, uphill (and no-one complained), naming the mountain ranges, and points of interest, until suddenly there was Bryn Cader Faner ahead and it was picnic time. We ate in a circle, in the Circle, a perfect social arrangement.



Later we found our way (well, Estelle found our way) back to Llyn Tecwyn Isaf where we had left our cars to enjoy the view and went to have a coffee or beer at the local motel which Estelle had established was open for us even on a Monday or perhaps it, like the whole day, was a happy, fairy illusion.

Thank you Estelle and please come again.

May hill walk from Bala lake at Llangower

Some of you will remember the Beddgelert walk years ago. I still maintain that it stopped raining as we started the steep climb from the lake, just after having to go round the flooded path. I now maintain that the weather forecast for May 23rd was for light rain, and it was sort of lightish as the very few, intrepid walkers (thank you, thank you for coming) huddled by their cars to boot-up, the spray from the waves breaking on Bala lake just out of range. In my defence, if the forecast was for heavy rain, I

would have brought waterproof trousers (probably, well possibly). And that is what the rain became as we climbed - heavy. We could see it sweep across the lake in horizontal sheets, water seeking its own level under our waterproofs, the wind gusting round corners. Why, you must wonder, did we not just go home. I did say once 'We don't have to do this.' (Yes, I did) but the group was probably too wet to think clearly and who was to be chicken? Maybe the rain would ease off, or it would be sheltered on the other side of the hill. Anyway, we set a precedent by completing the walk at a ferocious rate, seeing none of the wonderful views that I had promised from my previous reconnoitres. I hope I didn't say what I was thinking as we forced our way into the wind and rain that I was enjoying it! Years ago in Greece with my 15 year old daughter, we walked three miles to a beach in the middle of the day. It was hot, hot, very hot. I said then that I was enjoying it and a look of pure hatred passed across her face.

And where did we stop for lunch? Nowhere. I had mine in a very hot bath with a glass of wine. It tasted wonderful.

No formal walk in August

STROLLERS' GROUP

From Patricia Percival, Strollers' Group co-ordinator

April Walk to the Blue Lake.

Starting from Fairbourne Railway Station with the arrival of the 11.00am train we set off past Friog School and across farmland to the start of the path to Blue Lake.

Since many were not familiar with the Panteinion Waterfall, we first took a slight diversion before starting the upward climb. With several stops en route to admire the scenery, we all made it to the tunnel entrance. Fortunately, due to the recent dry weather, the path through the tunnel was not too wet and we all made it with dry feet. Although one or two heads suffered from the low roof.

We relaxed by the *very* blue lake in lovely sunshine, watching the RAF cadets abseiling down the rock face while we ate our picnic lunch.

After exploring the surrounding area and viewing the lake from above, we walked back down the hill to Evelyn's house where she kindly provided afternoon tea with homemade cakes in her garden (thank you Evelyn and Jack). Home then on the 3.40 train to our various destinations.

May walk - River and forest garden at Pandy

The weather forecast said 'sunshine and showers'. Unfortunately, on this occasion - we got the showers! Eight of us braved the rain for our river walk to the Copper Mine at Pandy near the Precipice Walk. This was followed by a return visit to the nearby Forest Garden, across Deer's Leap Bridge, which was previously visited on a winter walk when there were no leaves on the trees. This time the trees were in leaf and it looked quite different.

After the walk we found a picnic table under the trees, which was still dry, and enjoyed our picnic lunch. As we were all a little wet we then decided to call it a day.

June - Bus trip to Llandudno

Only five strollers managed to get up in time to join us for our early start to catch the 7.30am number 38 bus on this warm sunny morning.

The day didn't start quite according to plan as, due to hold ups on the way, we missed the 8.40am X1 connection at Blaenau Ffestiniog to take us to Llanrwst. This gave the opportunity to find a cafe for a coffee break before catching the next bus at 9.40am.

At Llanrwst, we walked along the recently improved river bank walk to the next bus stop where we intended to catch the number 19 bus to Trefriw. Here a very helpful lady informed us that, due to a recent change to the bus timetable, we would have a long wait for the next number 19 bus. However she happened to be waiting for a newly introduced local service (not yet in the bus timetable) and would take us to our destination. When this arrived it was a smart twelve-seater minibus. We travelled in luxury to Trefriw where our helpful lady acted as our guide to the start of the Fairy Falls walk.

The good path followed the waterfalls down to the Trefriw Woollen Mill where we took the most interesting and informative self guided tour of the working mill. After a quick look around the shop we were soon back on the bus through Conway to Llandudno.

Getting off the bus in town, we walked the full length of the promenade and to the end of the pier in lovely sunshine before going back to Wetherspoons' for a late lunch, fish and chips being the favourite of the day.

That left just enough time for a walk along the main street before catching the 4.10pm bus for our return journey home.

We now have a good group of friendly regulars on the walks and welcome anybody wishing to join us, just for lunch if strolling is not for you.

PUZZLE CORNER

Answers on page 6

1. On a standard Monopoly board, what square lies diagonally opposite 'Go'??
2. In the Chinese Zodiac which sign comes between the rat and the tiger?
3. In the Highway Code what shape are the signs that give orders?
4. In which English county is the Queen's private residence, Sandringham House?
5. What form of sentence was introduced to the UK by the 1972 Criminal Justice Act?
6. With which religion is the book the Koran associated?
7. Fat Tuesday is another name for what event?
8. The condition Scriveners' Palsy is more commonly known as what?
9. A wooden anniversary is celebrated after how many years of marriage?
10. Who was the "Time" magazines man of the year in 1938?
11. In which castle was Princess Margaret born?
12. What was the first name of Winston Churchill's wife?
13. From which creature was sepia originally obtained?

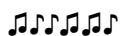
SINGING FOR FUN

From Evelyn Richardson,
Singing for Fun Group Co-ordinator



The last two sessions of the group have exceeded my expectations in two ways. Firstly, the numbers are up which is always reassuring. Secondly, I have been bowled over by the enthusiasm and liveliness shown by the participants.

Long may it continue!! Thanks group for making it so enjoyable.



LUNCH GROUP

'I never drink coffee at lunch. I find it keeps me awake for the afternoon.'
Ronald Reagan

We shall be having a break in July and August to get into trim for the new term in September. This means that the next lunch group will be the third Thursday in September.

Contact Marie Thomas on 01341 247 247.

BADMINTON GROUP

From: Wendy Bramley, Badminton Group co-ordinator

The same faithful members still play Badminton every Friday. Numbers vary between four and seven.

I have not played for four weeks as I have been away at my daughter's. I would like to thank Peter for looking after things in my absence. Anyone wishing to join us would be made most welcome. We will not be meeting up for the month of August as the Leisure Centre is usually unavailable.

We shall start again in September.

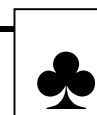
The Bone Hunters!

Irene Doody, who gave a most interesting presentation at the recent Monthly Gathering, has issued the following plea:

We need a fluent Welsh reader! My bone hunters have copied the headstones and registers at St. Philips, Bontddu and we need someone who can read Welsh to look over our work and make sure that it makes sense and that we have copied it correctly.

I can take the work to them if necessary, or they could come to one of our meetings (we meet at Marie Thomas's in Talybont). They could also come to my house in Harlech – we are flexible. We are pretty desperate as previous appeals have not come up with anything.

You can contact Irene on 01766 781 021 or email: k.doody074@btinternet.com



BRIDGE GROUP

From: George Mandow, Bridge Group co-ordinator

Friday Bridge

It has been a dour time for Friday bridgers. Bridge, like trench warfare, is sometimes attack and sometimes defence. The former feels exciting and you are the one with the strength, the latter promotes feelings of inferiority and powerlessness, one switches off and hopes for better things in the next hand.

Unfortunately, defence is just as important and we have been studying how to improve our play in this area. It requires lots of thought and imagination, and information from one's partner about his/her cards. It is amazing, when you investigate defence techniques, how much information the play of one card can give. Like walking in the rain, I am not sure they all enjoy it!

Meetings in August (5th & 19th) at George's house

Watercolour group

From: Norma Stockford



The watercolour group continues to meet fortnightly with Valerie Land providing her tutorial once monthly. We have, quite literally, gone 'back to the drawing board'. Valerie has been telling us about 'Drawing on the right side of your brain'.

We all know that the left brain is our verbal and rational brain. The right brain is our nonverbal and intuitive brain; it thinks in patterns, or pictures. Learning to draw using the right side of the brain means learning to see things differently - in ways not frequently used in ordinary life. We have been copying from pictures placed upside down trying to ignore what the image actually represents and just reproducing the lines we see. Try it - you will be amazed at the results.

We are hoping that the use of this technique will give us greater confidence and enable us to draw more skilfully.

The group will not meet in August, the next sessions with Valerie will be on the 6th September.

NEW GROUP?

Are there 6 or 7 nimble-fingered Members in the U3A who would like to join a 'Busy Bee' group - to meet in my house in Talybont on alternate weeks? Each person bringing their own handicraft and willing to teach others. I'm thinking of knitting, crochet, cross stitch, patchwork, quilting, needlepoint, drawn thread etc. And, if anyone can tat, I have shuttle - please teach me!

Jean Wilde, Merrog, Ffordd Glanymor, Talybont, LL43 2AR
01341 242 664

BARMOUTH U3A ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

From: Alan Vincent 01341 247 415

I have taken on the task of managing and further developing the Barmouth U3A web site. At present there is a holding page on the domain www.barmouthu3a.org and a small site with basic information held under the National U3A group web pages. It is this second site that is currently getting visitors who follow the link from the National information pages.

The intention is to build on the existing pages under the domain www.barmouthu3a.org.uk and once a suitable level of information is achieved, update the National Site information to point enquiries to our new site.

The web site will include news, diary and event details, information on the various groups and contact details for both the interest groups and the committee. In addition, because I firmly believe that the internet is very much a visual medium, we will be adding photo galleries, showing the various group activities and visits, which together with the textual information will present to the outside world what an active and enjoyable group Barmouth U3A is.

Any information or articles for the website can be emailed to me at: alan.vincent@barmouthu3a.org.uk ; for those readers who do not have access to email, documents and/or photos (I can scan and return them) can be left for me at the Communities First Office.

You can monitor our progress by regularly checking the web site - www.barmouthu3a.org.uk and any comments would be welcome to the above email address.

For anybody interested, my own personal web site can be found at www.t4alv.com

PUZZLE CORNER answers:

1. Free Parking
2. The Ox
3. Circular
4. Norfolk
5. Community service
6. Islam
7. Mardi Gras
8. Writers' Cramp
9. 5
10. Hitler
11. Glamis
12. Clementine
13. Cuttlefish

NO WORRIES

After a fairly stressful start to my year caused by building work, my older sister who never seems to have a care in the world, handed me this tip:

*'Worry is like a rocking chair.
It gives you something to do
But it doesn't get you anywhere.'.....!*

Diary dates

There will be no diary dates for August. If in doubt about your groups' meetings, contact the group co-ordinator.

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The autumn newsletter will be published in October.
Latest copy: 10th September please