

BARMOUTH



Newsletter



Summer 2012

***It's midsummer's day, midsummer's day
Yes, it's midsummer's day and it's
blowing us away.'***

- Norma Stockford

*I simply could not find an appropriate summer quote
to go here to match the season this year!*

Although some of the groups will not be meeting in August, there has been plenty going on since Spring.

We've had our AGM, a new chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary and Evelyn has taken over from Bronwen arranging our monthly gatherings.

These monthly meetings continue to be interesting, extremely varied and enjoyable. I don't know how they do it!

The Strollers' Group has been very active, exploring various parts of our countryside - each time I read an account I wish I had been there.

The shuttlecocks are still flying over the badminton court but Rod and Wendy have asked for a little help from the writing group in finding something interesting so say about the sport - see further on.....'

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A message from Alan Vincent

The requirement to write this, my first piece as your new chairman, has immediately impressed upon me that with high office comes responsibilities, particularly that of meeting deadlines. My excellent qualifications in procrastination and 'manyana' are not going to be much use this time. Only a day late in sending this to Norma means I am making progress.

I take over an organisation that is in excellent health thanks to the efforts put in by my predecessor Evelyn Richardson who, together with her Vice chair, Rachel Cleaver and Secretary, Sue McCullough, have really worked tirelessly over the last three years. The Study Day was a particular 'Tour de Force'. Well done to them.

As an initial thought, I decided to tell you what the U3A means to me personally.

Before I joined I was well known in the town as 'Geraldine's Husband' due to my habit of staying at home playing with computers and only coming out, under sufferance, to the occasional social event. Joining the U3A changed all that. The Monthly Meetings, Strolling, Walking and even playing Badminton has meant meeting lots of new people, talking to them and teaching myself what a lot of pleasure can be gained by becoming involved.

To find myself, as at the last meeting, introducing a Beatles number and telling a room full of people about my first dance with a real (i.e. one I was not related to) girl, was an experience for someone who was previously quite shy and reserved.

I hope that during my time as Chairman, I can persuade existing members to stay with us and new members to join, so that you all enjoy the multitude of benefits that belonging to, and taking part in, the various activities of our U3A bring.

MONTHLY GATHERINGS.

From: Bronwen Dorling

The guest speaker on Wednesday April 11th was Mr. Caerwyn Roberts, chairman of Snowdonia National Park Authority.

Mr Roberts described all aspects of the valuable work done by the Authority since its founding 60 years ago, and accompanied his talk with a wealth of slides highlighting the repair and restoration to land and buildings which has been regularly undertaken. Mr. Roberts stressed two of the Authority's recent important achievements; the completion of Hafod Eryri, the visitor centre on the summit of Snowdon, and the purchase of Yr Ysgwrn, home of the poet Hedd Wyn. We were most grateful to Mr. Roberts for making us aware how much hard work goes into protecting our heritage.

The Annual General Meeting of Barmouth U3A was held on Wednesday 9th May. Our Chairlady, Evelyn Richardson, spoke of the aims of the U3A, and the way in which the organisation had worked together to fulfil them. 2011–2012 had been an interesting and eventful year, not least because of the successful Study Day in October 2011 supported by so many.

After three years in office Evelyn, with the Vice-Chair Rachel Cleaver and the Secretary Sue McCulloch, had come to the end of their terms of office. They were warmly thanked for their hard work. In their place were elected Alan Vincent as Chairman, Peter Leyden as Vice-Chairman, and Bronwen Dorling as Secretary.

After the AGM, wine and cakes were served. Then Paul Aslin, supported by his wife Pauline, gave a fascinating talk on the life cycle of the honey bee, bringing our attention to many intriguing aspects of bee-keeping. Paul was accompanied by a lively squad of bees, who needed a few drops of water from time to time. After Paul's excellent talk, members were able to buy honey and tempting beeswax products from his sales table.

In June we had a Monthly Gathering with a difference - 'Desert Island Discs', kindly compered by Danny Jones in his brilliant palm-tree-decked shirt.

Evelyn started the ball rolling by introducing us to two pieces of plain-song, church music sung in Latin and Greek, and she gave us a glimpse of her childhood as one of a family of six children, brushed and dressed in their best for the walk to church on Sunday mornings.

Val Vine described her early adult life as a children's nanny, in uniform, pushing her two charges out in the park in their high pram every afternoon dressed in their Harrods' clothes (M&S in the mornings). She played us 'They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace' - as witnessed, of course, by Christopher Robin and his nanny, Alice.

Bronwen Dorling recalled early memories of her father singing the song 'Myfanwy' around the house – learnt in his college days from Welsh-speaking fellow students during Saturday night sing-songs. 'Myfanwy' is a moving account of love and rejection, and it was sung by Côr Meibion Dolgellau.

Rachel Cleaver focussed on bears; she played us 'The Teddy Bears' Picnic', then read the A.A. Milne poem 'A bear however hard he tries'. Rachel described her embarrassment when she presented these pieces a few years ago at a meeting following several 'high-brow' presentations – then found herself thanked for the pleasure her more down-to-earth choices gave.

Sue Leyden played us Pachebel's 'Canon', which was played in church on her wedding day. On the way to church her father kept asking, 'Are you sure?', and after Peter left the ring at home then sneaked off to watch football when he should have been leading Sue out for the first dance she must have had her doubts. 'A funny day' Sue called it – but obviously she has no regrets!

Jack Richardson recalled his National Service days, and remembered hearing through the wall of the billet next door the same piece of music being played over and over; this piece caught his imagination and was the start of his love for saxophone music. Jack chose 'Loverman', played by Charlie 'Bird' Parker.

Norma Stockford's husband used to spend his winters in Massachusetts (and his summers in Barmouth) and one year he brought back an LP called 'An Evening Wasted'. This was the work of Tom Lehrer, a Harvard maths professor some of whose songs were banned in America. Norma chose 'The Masochism Tango'.

Peter Leyden looked back forty-four years to the first anti-war demonstration he attended, held in Melbourne against the war in Vietnam. Peter reminded us that in the years since 1945 Britain has been at war in every year but one, and he himself has been involved in many a demonstration. He chose 'Green Fields of France', which was composed during the First World War as a lament for the writer's dead friend.

Alan Vincent remembered how as a young man he overcame his timidity at a big dance in Chester and asked a girl to take the floor with him. The group 'Black Abbots', was playing Alan's favourite song 'I saw her standing there' by the Beatles, no less, but sadly the girl vanished after the dance.

Grace Guthrie-Jones played Alan Sherman's hilarious song, 'Camp Granada', which concerns a young American boy complaining bitterly to his parents about Summer Camp – until the sun comes out! Grace traced the development of the tune from a nineteenth century ballet via Walt Disney's 'Fantasia' to its present form.



BOOK READING

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

Our choice for May was 'The Thread' by Victoria Hislop. Members who had not read her previous two books, 'The Island', set in Crete, and 'The Return' about the Spanish Civil War, expressed enjoyment and found it a very good read.

However, those who had read both books found 'The Thread', set in Thessaloniki, very drawn out, too predictable and somewhat boring. It certainly caused a lot of very interesting discussion which is, of course, the whole purpose of the group.

The book for the June meeting was 'We Are All Made of Glue' by Marina Lewycka. It is always interesting to note the different interpretations of a story. This one was no exception, producing a very lively discussion.

The story revolves around Georgina, recently separated from her husband, and befriending Mrs Shapiro, an elderly lady of Eastern European descent. Several twists and turns keep the reader involved in the story.

Our July meeting will be held in Doreen's house (tel: 01341 247 149). The book under discussion being 'Family Reunion' by Carol Smith.

There will be no meeting in August, and the September book will be an Historical book of our own choosing

NEEDLECRAFT

From: Jean Wilde

I now look forward to alternate Mondays with great anticipation.

It is the day my like-minded friends bring their handicrafts (crochet, embroidery, quilting, etc.) to my house, and we enjoy learning from each other, and having a good gossip. Long may it continue!

BADMINTON

From: Wendy Bramley, Co-ordinator

We welcome John to our U3A Badminton Group; it is good to have another player. If we get eight or more, we usually manage to get some good games, and our weaknesses don't show up too much! We are able to have two courts, which keeps us well exercised. This is a mixed blessing when it has been as hot as the last two weeks! We are missing Geoff and Pauline and hope they will be able to join us again after the summer recess. Get well soon Pauline.

After 13th July we shall start playing again on September 7th 2012.

Rod and Wendy - you asked us to write about Badminton - so here's the first:

A spectator's love song *by Norma Stockford*
.....*With apologies to John Betjeman*

Miss Wendy B, Miss Wendy B
I've watched you play badminton, down by the sea
Your tall slender figure when you dance round the court
Sets my heart all a'flutter as you lithely contort

Miss Wendy B, my dear Miss Wendy B
Won't you please come outside and join me for tea?
For months I have watched you from here by the door
As you play every Friday from 2 until 4

Backwards and forwards the birdie is soaring
To-ing and fro-ing while I stand adoring
My heart's in my mouth as you follow that shuttle
So lissom and sylphlike so slender and supple

You snake through the court like a slithering reptile
Then leap in the air for that feathered projectile
With forehand and backhand you slice and you spin
Your absolute loveliness I can hardly take in

Scoring point after point in mixed doubles or singles
My hair stands on end and my skin fairly tingles
Very soon I just know I'll go down on one knee
To ask for your hand my most dear Wendy B

As soon as game's over I'll ask you Miss Bramley
To come home with me and meet all the family
But what's that you cannot return all my kisses?
Your title's not Miss but you're **Rod Bramley's Missus!**

U3A STROLLERS

From: Patricia Percival, Strollers' Co-ordinator

March

To show that Aberystwyth has more than shops and the University, our March Strollers' Walk took us to the Wellington Monument to the south of the town, after travelling by bus to Aberystwyth. Some of us braved the very crowded 8.25am school bus from Barmouth, while others joined us at Dolgellau for a quick coffee before catching the 9.20am X32 bus for Aberystwyth. A very pleasant bus journey, arriving at Aberystwyth at 10.40am, in time for a bacon roll and coffee at Wetherspoons before starting our walk.

We had a short walk through the town before crossing 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 seaward 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 3.40pm bus back home brought an end to a very enjoyable day.

April

Following the success of last month's trial 'Lunch and a Stroll' at Dolgellau College, it was decided to repeat this for the April Strollers' Walk, but with a different walk.

After an enjoyable lunch at the college, we drove the short distance to the car park by the river at Llanelltyd near Cymer Abbey. After walking over the old road bridge, a footpath running by the side of the river brought us up past the Grade II listed parish church of St Illtyd to the main road. Across the road, a series of steps took us up to another road with lovely mountain views, including Cader Idris, with the green valley below. This was the starting point for our forest walk.

The forest track was a gradual incline leading us up into the hills with wild violets, wood anemones and primroses at the side of the path. Finally a rather steep section took us up onto a tarmac road which provided an easy decent, again with wonderful views, back to our starting point.

The weather had been kind to us and everybody enjoyed the walk and lunch. We hope to repeat the

'Lunch and a Stroll' theme after the college return from their summer break.

May

The May Strollers' walk took us to Plas Tan y Bwlch to explore the tracks and footpaths through the woods above the hall, taking in the three lakes, Llyn Mair, Llyn Hafod-y-Llyn and Llyn Trefor. Little did we know what was in store for us!

The intended gentle stroll turned into more of an Assault Course! The recent high winds had uprooted trees in the woodland, many of which had fallen over the footpaths. We climbed, ducked and fought our way through the foliage.

After a short break at Trefor Lake we continued to fight our way through the fallen trees to the view point where we were rewarded for our efforts with fantastic estuary views to Porthmadog, Portmeirion and Harlech Castle in the distance. Here we sat at the picnic table, kindly provided for our use, and had our lunch. The return walk proved no easier with an unbelievable number of fallen trees blocking our way.

Due to the problems we decided to cut the walk slightly short missing out Llyn Mair. When we got back to our cars we drove the short distance to Llyn Mair and sat at the picnic tables, watching the ducks while we recovered from our day's experience.

Some described it as 'A Stroll to remember' others as 'A Stroll they would never forget'. Not exactly the intended gentle stroll, but all said they had enjoyed their day.



JUNE

We had perfect weather for the June Strollers' Walk to Arthog Waterfalls led by David Dorling. Eleven of us met at Morfa Mawddach Railway Station, most arriving on the 11.00am train from Barmouth. David pointed out the interesting plants, such as fennel, still growing at the station, probably planted by a Station Master from the past.

After leaving the station we made our way along the estuary, noting the wild Iris and stopping to admire the old sentry boxes which were used by the military during WW2. We then followed the road

and footpath past the Victorian Mawddach Crescent, to cross the Mawddach Trail by the river bridge, finally coming out onto the main road by St Catherine's Church at Arthog.

Rather than climbing the steps to Arthog Waterfalls, David led us by an alternative easier route past Arthog Hall with its eagles on the gateposts. Upwards we walked following the river and magnificent waterfalls in full flood due to the recent heavy rain. Reaching the interesting stone footbridge across the river, it was decided that this was a good place for our lunch break, where we sat on the convenient rocks in the sun.

After our well deserved rest David led us back down the other side of the waterfalls to his home where we had a tour of his most interesting garden followed by Bronwen inviting us to tea and homemade cakes on the lawn in the lovely sunshine.

We then said our farewells to Bronwen, and David led us back to the station in time for the 3.45pm train back to our various stops.

Thank you David and Bronwen, for a lovely day.

There will be no Strollers' walks during July and August; the next one is planned for September

PUZZLE CORNER

Answers on page 8

1. In the U.S.A. , what is celebrated on February 2nd and is also a film?
2. In what profession would you use the acronym 'SOCO'?
3. What is the official national anthem of the USA?
4. The blue cornflower is the French equivalent to what in England?
5. Which weather phenomenon translates from the Spanish for 'little boy'.
6. Ambassador to the Court of Saint James is the official title for Ambassadors of which country?
7. Which castle is on the island of Anglesey?
8. Which N. African seaport's name is Spanish for white house?
9. Which is the only vowel on a standard keyboard that is not on the top line of letters?
10. What's the world's most popular Non Alcoholic Drink?
11. What letter is given to a car number plate when the age or identity of the vehicle is unknown or if it may have been built from parts?
12. In which street is the Bank of England?
13. Globe and Jerusalem are types of what?
14. In the drink, what are the components of a Screwdriver?

SINGING FOR FUN



From: Evelyn Richardson, Group Co-ordinator

It's Saturday 16th June and I'm sitting at my computer. I have two tasks to do by the end of today. To write this report and to select songs for the next singing session.

These are not in themselves particularly difficult jobs, but as I look out at the horizontal rain, the little hill opposite shaking like a dropped green jelly; the grasses in the field doing their best to emulate storm-tossed waves, the tasks seem rather harder than usual.

I try to link some of the songs to the time of year. For example, love songs around St.Valentine's Day and maybe some traditional Welsh ones near St. David's Day. Later on maybe a theme of winter or autumn - *Autumn Leaves* one of our favourites, and so on.

So what leaps to my mind now that Summer is officially with us? Oh yes! *Summertime* from 'Porgy and Bess', a lovely song; or perhaps *June is Busting Out all Over*, or even *The Sun has got his hat on*. But, somehow, none of them seem quite appropriate when I view the weather outside and read of floods.

The train yesterday was almost full of holiday makers on their way to the Lleyn peninsula, and as the train made its way across the bridge to Barmouth all one could see was clouds and rain. In the distance towards the sea, boats could be spied trying to get into the harbour in readiness for the Three Peaks Race. All the beautiful hills were obscured by low cloud. I have plenty of songs about rain but do I want to depress the singers even more? Some songs welcome rain, as do we gardeners but we can have too much of it!

We all seem to like *Singing in the Rain* and *Isn't it a lovely day to be caught in the rain*, a sweet love song. Perhaps I could find the words and music to *Muddy Water Blues* and we could have a go at that.

One thing I do know is that at the Singing Group I go to on Wednesday evening we will sing for water, as part of the proceeds goes to the charity that attempts to bring the luxury of running water to parts of the world where there is never enough of the wet stuff.

So I think I will do a mixture a bit about rain a bit about sunshine and try to cover every eventuality. Oh yes, I am also planning to have a go at *In the Mood*. Most of us know the tune but the words are rarely heard, that should get us off to a good start. Whatever we sing we will have an enjoyable afternoon singing a wide variety of songs which reflect different feelings and emotions. It's Sunday now and the sun is shining. **HURRAY!!**



DISCUSSION GROUP

From: Peter Leyden

This group has been going for over six months now, with a dedicated attendance of four to six people.

Subjects covered have been

- The Israel Palestine Conflict
- Going green ongoing environment issues
- Travellers and the Roma people and the conflicts with the settled community
- Immigration and Migration its benefits and costs
- The Media, in all its forms, and who controls it

Last month the topic was devolution and how it would affect the Union of Britain, also the benefits that it has given to Wales and Scotland over the last ten years.

The format of the group was to be a one hour main topic, a short break and then a look at the day's Newspapers. In reality, the main topic has gone on for two hours with all its diversions!

The group meets on the fourth Thursday of each month in the meeting room Revelation bookshop Park Road, Barmouth at 2.00 pm.

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 Alan know, if you want to go.

Alan Vincent: 01341 247 415

e-mail: alan.vincent@barmouthu3a.org.uk

WRITING GROUP

From: Norma Stockford, Group co-ordinator

Earlier this year, we received an inquiry via the website from Gordon Powell, a mature student doing a photography degree. He had chosen the River Mawddach as his topic and asked whether our Writing Group had written anything on the Mawddach that he could use to put together with his pictures.

That set us all off in poetic mood, we all produced a poem, each of varying length and mood and sent them off to Gordon. We were delighted that he chose Meena's poem to accompany his pictures in his book - and here it is in all its beauty:



For you, Mawddach, a beautiful maiden

Born of restless earth many eons past
Whence volcanoes breathed fire
Like a youthful maiden you writhe
Through valleys lush and green
Tip-toeing thro' the whispering woods and the sleepy meadows

You have been used and abused
Your body and soul raped wantonly
As you wander innocently on a bed of stones
Generous in your gift of life
Sustaining the very beings who maligned you

Many a relic strewn on your banks, a spectre of races ancient
Rampaging through the ages like shadows in the curtain of time
Your banks reverberated with sounds of mountains tall in pain
As the human greed laid the beautiful land barren and dismal
Until there was no more

Adored by the bards and the travellers alike
Resting on your banks awhile, lost in reverie
Marvelling at the mysteries
and the memories your waters hide
As you flow eternally on a quest unbridled

Passion vanquished at the journey's end
As you embrace the never ending ocean blue
Surging and ebbing
Thus beginning the cosmic journey of the perpetual rain drop
that assuages your thirst

WALKING

From: George Mandow

After the very strenuous March walk in wonderful warm sunshine – remember snoozing after lunch on the slopes of Craig-y-Llan? - the April and May walks were gentler affairs in familiar surroundings.

Feinting as if taking the Fox's path up Cader by parking in the Ty-nant car park, we made the circuit north of the Gwernan Lake (where there is a new short circular path round the lake, dry underfoot in case anyone would fancy that) to Gellilwyd Fawr, up the slope to what some think is the drovers road but others a double wall along a disputed boundary. The path there seems to have had a small army of motor bikes conducting races or perhaps manoeuvres, recent rain making it impassable: we take a high moral attitude to such vandalism. At Kings we enjoyed the Afon Gwynant (the sight of it: we did not swim or drink) before linking up with the path back to the carpark. The paths here do not seem to conform to the map so it was good, during the reconnoitre, to find the way at the third attempt.



Dappled sunlight, Afon Gwynant

The May walk was close to Barmouth, a familiar area but the paths we took not known to everyone: indeed there is a jumble of green lines on the map, criss-crossing among the trees. Starting at Glandwr Mill, we passed some lovely houses of all sizes, with views across to Cader and up and down the Mawddach estuary, south facing and sunny. Our picnic was at a lake dug by the owner to encourage wildlife. We saw lots of tadpoles, birds and a small aquatic mammal. It was quiet and peaceful. My previous visit had been different. When half a mile away I heard the cries of small boys, apparently rioting. Disgraceful, I thought with a tinge of envy, they did seem to be having a good time. When I got to the lake it was full of wild life, as the owner hoped: small boy males in canoes, finishing a game of canoe polo. When called to order by their instructor, they fell silent and lined up to receive instruction, still having a good time. It turned out that they were spending a week at Caerdeon Hall, outdoor adventure centre.



Peaceful wild life feeding

The June walk, planned to take place in July on a Tuesday, co-incidentally with a Roman flavour, had to be postponed because I brought back an Italian bug and was not well – nothing to do with the rain. We'll do in another day. Intrepid members of the walking group did a walk anyway over the hills at Barmouth.

BRIDGE

From: George Mandow

The Friday bridge group has continued to run. We tend to have a different topic each week, studying hands on a computer programme, then after a cup of tea and a biscuit, we play hands. It is surprising that each hand seems to have its own point of interest – even more than one. Very enjoyable.

MARITIME BARMOUTH

From: Norma Stockford

George's film of the Mawddach and the talks on Maritime Barmouth were so enjoyable at our Study Day in October 2011 that many non-U3A members said they wished they could have attended. I am therefore planning to hold some of these talks again in the Dragon Theatre as a fundraising event in aid of the RNLI on the evening of Tuesday 18th September.

So if you didn't get the chance to attend last October, make a note in your diary and look out for the posters nearer the time.

BALLROOM & SEQUENCE DANCING

Shortly after the Barmouth U3A was formed, Dennis and Margaret Finch started a Ballroom and Sequence Dancing group as an interest group within the U3A. This was held every fortnight at what was then the Youth Centre in Barmouth.

For various reasons, the group broke away from the U3A, but continued to be run by Dennis and Margaret as an independent dance group.

This group are still going strong, now meeting weekly for an afternoon Tea Dance every Friday at 2.00pm in Dyffryn Village Hall.

Although this is not now a U3A group, several U3A members still attend and anyone wishing to come along will be made most welcome.

BARMOUTH'S FESTIVAL OF WALKING

The 10th annual Barmouth Festival of Walking takes place between 15th and 24th September 2012 with ten days of guided walks around the Mawddach Estuary and Southern Snowdonia. You can select walks to suit your ability. Grades, distances and times are provided in

the information booklet which can be picked up at the Tourist Information Centre in Station road in Barmouth.

Further information can be found at www.barmouthwalkingfestival.co.uk

PUZZLE CORNER answers:

1. Groundhog Day
2. Police Work - Scene of Crime Officers
3. Star Spangled Banner
4. Red Poppy
5. El Nino
6. UK
7. Beaumaris
8. Casablanca
9. A
10. Coffee
11. Q
12. Threadneedle Street
13. Artichoke
14. Vodka and orange juice

Barmouth U3A Officers 2012/13

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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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