

BARMOUTH



Newsletter



Summer 2013



No need for a quotation this year – the weather says it all!

In the 2012 Summer Newsletter we were bemoaning the fact that we were being battered by wind and rain but the recent sunshine has certainly made up for it. I've been enjoying myself far too much in the water and on the beach opposite my house, so I'm sorry if the Newsletter is a little late this year.

Hope this weather lasts for our July Walk!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A message from Alan Vincent

Newsletter time again, and once more I am not getting this to Norma as promptly as I should. Do I have a good excuse this time? No – I could, of course blame the weather – after being far too cold during the winter and far too wet during spring, it's now far too hot for summer. At least that's what a lot of people I meet up with seem to be saying.

Just this morning I have read an article on the BBC website entitled "**10 ways the UK is ill-prepared for a heatwave**" It includes the following quotes:

"The UK is a country of radiators, not air conditioning." and **"There are even fears that homes insulated under the government's Green Deal could actually lead to deaths."** Sometimes you just can't win!!

For Geraldine and I, the heat is good training in preparation for a family wedding in August which takes place in Savannah, USA and which, according to my brother-in-law, is likely to be "Hot as Hades". At least, in the US they have plenty of air conditioning, which compensates in some small way for me having to wear a suit AND tie in August.

For our U3A group, August is a month that has few activities but as we go into Autumn we hope to increase the numbers of groups operating. Maybe History, maybe Writing, but we do need a small core of people to get any new group off the ground, so, please if you are interested in these subjects, or any others, do let us know.

The North Wales Association's Annual Study Day is this year being presented by the Bangor branch, and will be held in Llandudno on Wednesday 23rd October. The theme for the day is "**The Secret Lives of our Planet from the Land to the Ocean**".

Barmouth will again run a trip to the event, full details of which are in the separate booking form accompanying this newsletter. We only have a maximum of 20 places available to us and a number of names are already on the list following announcement of the event at the July Monthly Meeting, so if you are interested in attending please get your form returned to Evelyn as quickly as possible.

MONTHLY GATHERINGS

From: Evelyn Richardson, Meeting co-ordinator

Once a month we all have the opportunity to meet in the comfort of the Arts Room at Theatry Ddraig.

With a bit of luck you will be able to meet friends, make new ones and listen to, or participate, in a presentation of some kind or other. But how does it all come about?

Well, months ahead, someone will be liaising with speakers, juggling the dates and letting members know what is coming over the next few months. Nearer to the time, the Speaker for that particular month will be contacted to see if they are still available and if they need any particular provision or directions to the venue. It is also important to liaise with the theatre to ensure that there is no clash with other activities there.

On the day of the meeting, we need to ensure that drinks, biscuits, milk and tea towels are all available and that there are enough helpers to meet and greet, manage the drinks, look after the speaker, see to the sales table and do the raffle (if there is one) and ensure that any newcomers feel welcome and comfortable.

We try to vary the activities so that everyone will find something to suit their particular taste and interest – and they may even find a new interest!

It's not easy to please all of the members all of the time, but we do try. If we don't, then please feel free to suggest new topics, speakers, activities or even volunteer to organise something. We are delighted when people do.

And how much does this cost? Yes, you're right. Just £1.00. Unbelievable in this day and age.

After the meeting we clear up and leave the room as we found it, sincerely hope that the members have found the session stimulating and worth the effort of turning out. We check to see if we have covered the expenses and turn our thoughts to the next meeting when we do it all over again!

Look out for the next meeting in September, you will get all the information in the monthly diary. See you there!!

BOOK READING

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

Our May book 'The Daughter of Time' by Josephine Tey, was really topical, as it related to Richard III. Our history books have always maligned him as being the instigator of the murder of the two little princes in the Tower.

The principal character of the book, a policeman recovering in hospital following an accident with plenty of spare time, decides to investigate the truth of the matter and comes up with some exceedingly interesting discoveries, most of which totally discredit everything we learnt at school. A fascinating book, giving the reader plenty to think about.

Our June book - 'Defending Jacob' by William Landay- gave us plenty of scope for discussion. A well-constructed book with some twists to keep the reader interested.

A rather different 'story' in July: 'The 100 year old man who climbed out of the window and disappeared' by Jonas Jonassun. How this book reached the best-seller list is a great mystery. Very 'far-fetched', totally unbelievable and boring. It took a lot of will power to finish it.

... and from Evelyn Richardson.....

I found 'The Book Thief' by Markus Zusak quite strange initially as I couldn't quite sort out who was the narrator. It took me a while to realise that it was actually Death who was telling the strange and moving story of Liesel, a young German girl who is sent to live with step-parents just before the second world war as both her parents are at risk as they are Communists.

Liesel's brother dies on the outward journey and at his funeral she steals a book called 'The Grave Diggers' Handbook' which she avidly reads and which starts her off as a regular stealer of books which is the only way she can get hold of them. She is taken in by Hans and Rosa Huberman a rough and ready couple who care for her. Her subsequent experiences form the body of this moving and beautifully written book and gave me a new perspective of the lives of the many ordinary

Germans who did not subscribe to the philosophy of their Nazi rulers. It is a book that I feel the need to read again and a bit more carefully to get the full feel of its message and humanity, I also learnt a few German swear words which may have a use when I next visit there!

One of the benefits in belonging to a book club is that it widens and embellishes one's reading matter and mine has certainly benefitted from belonging to Barmouth U 3A book club so ably run by Rachel.

Some of the books I dislike and find either boring, trite or too intellectual and obscure for me. But it sometimes is worthwhile persevering with these just to help analyse why you don't like it, to listen to the discussion and to hear out those who do.

I liked the March book, *The Strange Pilgrimage Of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce, although it isn't the type of book I would have previously chosen to read.

The book is about Harold Fry, who one morning impetuously decides to walk from Kingsbridge to Berwick on Tweed, a distance of 600 miles, to visit an old colleague and friend who is terminally ill and who he hasn't seen for many years. Harold makes absolutely no preparation for this epic walk, not even informing his wife, and is quite unsuitably dressed for the journey.

I found the book extremely moving as he progresses through the British countryside, coming to terms with the stresses and strains of the journey, his own inadequacies and the somewhat soured relationships, both now and in the past. He ultimately comes to terms with many aspects of his previous life and gets to make new relationships with strangers. He also gains an acceptance and new perspective of the meaning of love, friendship, the kindness of strangers and how some try to use others to their own ends.

I would heartily recommend both these books to you and would be interested in what you thought of them and perhaps more members might join us at the monthly meeting of the book reading group.

Evelyn Richardson

The Book Group has a break in August. Our September choice is *'Murielle's Angels'* by our very own *Mary Howell*.

U3A STROLLERS

From: Patricia Percival, Strollers' Co-ordinator

APRIL BUFFET LUNCH

In place of the usual Tuesday Strollers' Walk, in April we opted for the Buffet Lunch at Dolgellau College, later in the month, followed by a short walk in the area. The first year students at Dolgellau College again put on an excellent Buffet Lunch.

Following the lunch the planned walk was the new Foel Caerynwch path from Brithdir (also known locally as the Pimple Walk), a two mile circular walk which has only been open for twelve months. The route was said to offer striking panoramic views of Meirionnydd together with exceptional wildlife. Unfortunately, on our visit, the views were obscured by the low cloud.

Starting from Brithdir Village Hall we followed the well-signposted route hoping that the mist would clear. The path ascended quite steeply to the peak from where we should have been able to see the wonderful views as far as Snowdon and Bala. Coming back down the path was more gradual, taking a total of just an hour and a half back to the Village Hall.

Although we enjoyed the walk, we were disappointed that on this occasion we had to use our imagination for the views and it was agreed that it would be nice to repeat the walk on a clear day.

MAY STROLL AT CAERDEON

The poor weather forecast did not deter our Strollers for the May walk at Caerdeon and they were rewarded with quite reasonable weather and clear views.

After parking the cars at the forest car park above Caerdeon, we first went to look at the tadpoles in the attractive manmade lake.



We then set off across the road and onto the forest path passing a newly refurbished house, which was a burnt out shell only a couple of years ago.



The path led over fast-running streams and over stiles before dropping down onto the road with views over the Mawddach Estuary.

A short walk down the road brought us to Tyddyn Pandy farm gate. We walked down the farm drive as far as the farmhouse then turned left through a field where the bluebells were just beginning to appear. The next gate led into a field of friendly horses which came over to say hello, finally leading over a stile onto the road.

From the road we took the forest path which would lead back to our cars. A stack of logs proved ideal seating for us to stop and have our picnic.



The more energetic members of the party then decided to take a detour to a viewpoint overlooking the Mawddach Estuary - well worth it for the wonderful views looking down on Farchynys. We retraced our steps to join the others at the car park. The GPS indicated that we had walked 4.83 miles.

JUNE STROLL - TONFANAU FOOTBRIDGE

After a week of very hot weather, the day of our walk was cooler and more pleasant for walking, just a gentle breeze and dry.

We all met up on the train, getting off at Tonfanau Station from where we started our walk. The walk mainly followed the Welsh Coastal Path which now crosses the newly constructed Pont Tonfanau Footbridge, said to be the longest span 'Vierendeel truss bowspring'* footbridge in the UK.



A short walk along the road from the railway station brought us onto the new Welsh Coastal Path, the new footbridge soon coming into view alongside the old Cambrian Railway Bridge. It was very impressive, with a span of 50 metres over the Afon Dysynni, linking the Tywyn Bridleway with Tonfanau.

From the bridge, our route took us along the Broad Water where we saw cormorants, gulls and swans and Dave pointed out the rare 'ragged robin' plant. We could clearly hear the swifts which were nesting in the grass. A gentle flat walk, which brought us out at the Magic Lantern Cinema in Tywyn. Across the road from the cinema was the White Hall Hotel where we had lunch; fish and chips being the favourite of the day.



Refreshed after our lunch and having a further hour to wait for our train, we decided to do another short walk. This walk took us back over Morfa Army Camp Site to the dykes, returning along the promenade where Dave pointed out the thrift, better known as sea pink growing on the foreshore. A short walk from the seafront brought us to Tywyn Railway where we caught our return train.

* I could resist finding out more about the word 'Vierendeel' and Wikipedia tells me it is named after –

'Arthur Vierendeel (10 April 1852 – 8 November 1940) who was a civil engineer born in Leuven, Belgium. He had a career as a university professor, and civil engineer. The structure known as the Vierendeel truss is named after him.'

Who says there are no famous Belgians, eh?
Editor.

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

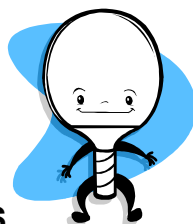


TABLE TENNIS

From: Geraldine Vincent

Table tennis is still going well. We have been fewer of late due to holidays, sickness, and other commitments, but we can still cover two tables with doubles each week.

Only a couple of weeks to end of sessions until after summer break. Thanks go to the Leisure Centre Staff for setting up and taking down equipment. I think we only managed to wreck one ball. Many the group have been praised by their families for their efforts – even if it means saying 'Granny you played Ping Pong'.

We are the Silver Servers.

Hope everyone comes back refreshed in September and ready to 'spin that ball'.

SINGING FOR FUN



From: Evelyn Richardson, Group Co-ordinator

Singing For Fun

We sing songs
We sing sad songs and happy songs
We sing funny songs and serious songs
We sing songs.

We sing songs
We sing difficult songs, we sing easy songs
We sing songs.

We sing songs
Sometimes the songs make us cry
Sometimes they make us laugh
We sing songs

We sing songs
We love to sing songs
The singing is enough to lift our hearts and spirits
We sing songs.

We sing songs
We sing songs of love and songs of anger.
We sing songs.

We sing songs.
Together we raise our voices as one and enjoy the togetherness.
We sing songs.

We sing songs
We sing about the rain and the sunshine, the cold and the hot.
We sing songs.

We sing songs
We sing and smile and make friends and learn.
We sing songs.



DISCUSSION GROUP

From: Peter Leyden

Due to a sloppy piece of editing, I omitted to include the topics discussed by the discussion Group at their winter meetings, so here it is. Apologies to Peter.....! Ed.

Over the winter we had some good topics to debate:

The Origins of the British

British prehistory will have to be re-thought. Stephen Oppenheimer's work gets rid of the history myths we were taught at school.

Anglo Saxon invasions contributed to only 5% of the English gene pool. Two thirds of them reveal an unbroken line of generic descent from south-western Europeans arriving long before the first farmers. Most of the remaining third arrived between 6,000 and 3,000 years ago as part of long-term north-west European trade and immigration especially from Scandinavia.

As for the Celts - the Irish, Scots and the Welsh - history has traditionally placed their origins in Iron Age Central Europe. Genetics shows the majority came via the Atlantic coastal routes from Ice Age refugees, even the Basque country, with the modern languages we call Celtic arriving later. The divide between the English and the rest of the British is many thousands of years older.

Consumerism

Consumerism has become the new religion in society. This development has meant the erosion of traditional values and attitudes of thrift and prudence. What we now have is a throw-away society that is 'costing the earth'. Jimmy Carter, as President of the US, noted that 'Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns'.

We are not much happier with all this so-called wealth; in fact it is making people more unhealthy. We have more debt and work longer hours to pay for a high consumption lifestyle.

If we want to live in a sustainable society, then it is necessary to have basic comfort rather than to accumulate possessions. 'Co-operation above competition', will undermine the motivation to consume too much.

And from their Spring meetings they discussed:

The European Union, Mental Health and The Role of Religion in Society.

Two extracts about religion give it some context,

'We each exist for but a short time, and in that time explore but a small part of the whole universe, but humans are curious species.

We wonder, we seek answers.

Living in this vast world that is by turns kind and cruel.

How does the universe behave?

What is the nature of reality?

Where does all this come from?

Did the universe need a creator?

Most of us do not spend most of our time worrying about these questions, but almost all of us worry about them some of the time.

Stephen Hawking. 'The Grand Design 2010' page 5

Men and women started to worship gods as soon as they became recognisably human; they created religions at the same time as they created works of art. Like art, religion has been an attempt to find meaning and value in life, despite the suffering that flesh is heir to...'

Karen Armstrong 'History of God' page 9



WALKING GROUP

From: Carolyn Evans

It was my turn to lead the walk on Monday 29th April and eleven of us met up at the car park by the old bridge in Llanelltyd at 10.30am. The weather was cloudy and sunny, but not too cold.

We started off through Vanner Caravan and Camping site, admiring the remains of Cymer Abbey, surrounded by daffodils. The path through the site is a permissive path which follows the River Mawddach and has lovely views. It eventually climbs back up to the road

to Tyn y Groes and this was a bit of a scramble!

We walked along the road, with lovely views over the river which would be even nicer when all the trees are in leaf. After finding a place to stop for our morning break, we came upon an ornate tree trunk carved quite spectacularly by someone skilled in the use of a chain saw.

Keeping left at the next two junctions, we passed picnic areas and a secluded car park to take a riverside footpath on the left, coming across 'The Champion', the tallest tree in Coed y Brenin. The tree with the widest girth, the 'King', was a sorry sight, lying down in pieces, its heartwood rotten.

Just past this is a wooden seat-like structure at an angle on which we are told to lie and look up at the tree tops. With the wind blowing gently through the top branches to a view of the sky beyond, it was most relaxing - a bit like being on a hypnotist's couch (we tried to take Ian back to his childhood, but without success!)

We lunched at the Tynygroes picnic site. It was very civilised to have tables and seating provided for lunch!

Crossing the main road, we took the small road by the cottages near Tynygroes and the footpath behind the National Trust workshop. We followed a stony track to Tyddyn-bach, crossing the field to a gateway where we discovered a mine opening in the rock face. It was suggested, because of the weight of surrounding stones, this was probably a former manganese mine. We joined a faint uphill track before cutting off left, until we reached a bend in the wall and a sheep fold, where the path was a little more distinct and provided great views. From here the track loops round and back on itself and passes through two walls together, where it was sheltered. We made this an afternoon brew stop, admiring the views.

At the waymark we took the right hand path and began a steep descent, the path becoming quite narrow in places over Bryniau Glo but with good views along the valley and across to the Precipice Walk opposite. After a couple of stiles the path enters the tranquillity of a forest.

We reached the Bro Cymer road returning by the footpath alongside the church to our starting point by the old bridge in Llanelltyd, ending a good walk of about 7 to 8 miles, which everyone seemed to enjoy.

Yes, a great walk, and I heard my first cuckoo of the year! Ed.

MAY WALK

From: Norma Stockford

Estelle kindly offered to lead the May walk when we met in fine weather near the primary school in Brithdir.

We began on the Torrent Walk. I have lived here all my life and I'm ashamed to say this was a first for me. (I learn so much from the U3A!) The river Clywedog was in full spate as we sauntered past acres of wild garlic, sorrel, wood anemones and carpets of bluebells and cowslips.

Originally, the path was built by Thomas Payne and his son, also the designer of the Cob across the river Glaslyn in Porthmadog, the work being commissioned by Baron Richards of the mansion Plas Caerynwch. (The late Commander R.M. Richards was a recent President of Barmouth RNLI.)

At one time the banks of the river Clywedog were bursting with industrial activity. There was once a fulling mill, smithy, woollen mill and an iron furnace here.

We passed a bench commemorated to Mary Richards, the botanist who used to live at Plas Caerynwch. Estelle told us that she was responsible for bringing many striking plants back to the gardens.

Estelle led us back through Brithdir, passing the Roman fortlet to Y Foel Caerynwch (another first for me!) where we were treated to a 360 degree view. With Bwlch yr Oerddrws in the east, Talyllyn pass to the south and Dolgellau behind us in the north, we had a 'bird's-eye view' of the extensive roadworks at Maes yr Helmau.

We returned to Brithdir passing the beautiful gardens of Ty'nllidiart with their spectacular display of azaleas, finishing with a tour of St Mark's church.

Many thanks Estelle, for a lovely walk.

BARMOUTH RNLI TALK

You may remember that last September, I held a talk on Maritime Barmouth in the Dragon Theatre.

I plan to hold a similar event in aid of the RNLI on the evening of Tuesday 17th September. The topic will be *The Royal National Lifeboat Institution, its formation and history*, with especial reference to the Barmouth Branch and some of the characters who helped shape the branch.

There may be one or two amusing stories too!

Please make a note in your diary and look out for the posters nearer the time.

Norma Stockford

BARMOUTH FESTIVAL OF WALKING

The 11th annual Barmouth Festival of Walking takes place between 14th and 23rd September 2013 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

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There will be no diary dates for August. However the September diary dates accompany this newsletter because holiday commitments required that we produce them earlier than usual. 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: 20th September please