

# BARMOUTH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

## Newsletter



*Summer 2014*

I have made many delightful friends since I first joined the U3A, but one of my absolute favourites is Jack Richardson. I first met him through our walking group and it was easy to warm to this likeable and friendly man. Jack was an accomplished artist, and I spent many a mile on our walks, picking his brain for tips to improve my painting skills. He was even persuaded to provide the illustrations for our first U3A publication, an anthology of work from our Writing Group 'Joined up Writing'.



A keen cyclist and fell walker, Jack was a member of our Walking and Strolling groups and an ardent fan of Danny's Fourth Friday Jazz nights at the Dragon. He uncomplainingly (?) allowed Evelyn time to come over to Barmouth to take part in the many time-consuming roles she has had with the U3A. I wonder if he ever saw her when she was Chairman, organising our study day, but I do know he was very supportive and proud of all she has achieved. So it is with great sadness that I write of his sudden and untimely death and our thoughts and prayers are with Evelyn and her lovely family at this sad time.

He was loved by many and will be missed by all who knew him.

*Norma Stockford, Editor*

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

*A message from Alan Vincent*

First can I welcome Jacqui Puddle and Geraldine Vincent who were confirmed as new members of the committee at our AGM in May. I know they had both been active in their new roles before then but it is nice to confirm things formally.

Looking back to last year I see that I told you about our holiday in the USA, so, not wishing to change a habit of a lifetime (or 12 months actually) I thought you might enjoy some highlights from this year's venture.

We had decided to do a rail trip, with my sister and her husband, through France and Germany, particularly aiming to visit a town called Bacharach on the Rhine as we have a diary written by my Dad (Len) in 1937 about a trip he took in July of that year. Amongst the photos in the diary is one of "Len in front of the village pub". Through research we had established that the "village pub" was in fact a famous old (parts of it possibly dating back to the 14th century) building known as the Altes Haus (Old House). As the building still exists the aim was to have our photo taken at the same spot as my Dad was pictured 77 years ago.

So - online to book train tickets and hotels for Paris, Monte Carlo, Lyon, Strasbourg, Koblenz and Brussels. This was all successful and we eagerly set off from Chester via London to Paris. However our arrival in Paris on Eurostar is greeted by the announcement of a French Rail Strike!!!

Two days in Paris planned so hope it will be all over after the weekend. Then blow number 2 - I lose my wallet! Time spent calling back to UK to cancel cards etc. irritating but an afternoon in the Louvre and then a trip on the river brightened things up.

Monday morning - rail strike still on - is our train down to the South of France running? NO! Still we do manage to get another one later. As you can imagine not a very comfortable six hours with passengers from two cancelled trains joining those already booked on this third train.

A great weekend in Monte Carlo improves our lot, particularly a walk round the F1 route.

Onwards to Lyon – train running - NO! – This time no alternatives either so we have to hire a car – four hour drive not the same as a restful trip on a train!

However from Lyon we are heading towards Germany and the German trains are running to time (don't they always?) so the rest of the trip becomes very relaxing. We complete our boat trip on the Rhine and our visit to Bacharach is a great success as we take photos outside the Altes Haus and then go inside and have a meal – it's now a restaurant – the owner is really interested in my Dad's diary and brings out lots more old photos of the building for us to look at.

Despite the issues it was a great holiday and justified the time spent online putting it all together. In fact my sister wants to do another next year – although Geraldine is not so sure – having to manage her own suitcase can be a bit tiring.

Anyway, if any of you want to plan something similar I can give you the details of the web sites we used – just give me a call.

## STROLLERS' GROUP

*From: Patricia Percival, Strollers' Group co-ordinator*

### APRIL WALK at TAICYNHAEAF

We have often commented on how few people we meet on our Strollers Walks and our April walk at Taicynhaeaf was no exception, we did not see a single person from start to finish. The circular walk of about six miles started from the forest parking area after climbing 1.3 miles up the most attractive narrow road off the A496 opposite Penmaenpool Bridge.

Shortly after passing through the gate to the forest we were made aware of the devastation caused by recent gales. Although the paths were clear, many trees had fallen. On reaching the cross-roads we took a slight detour to see the mountain views. While we had our drinks, Roy passed on his considerable knowledge of the geology of the area and named the distant peaks.

Thank you Roy.



Retracing our steps back to the cross-roads, we continued on the path until we reached Llyn Mynach where we had planned to have our lunch. However, we found a "Path Closed" notice at the start of the track down, because of fallen trees. Our determined group decided not to let a few fallen trees stop us, and battled through them down to the lake. Here we enjoyed our picnic lunches while we looked out across the lake, viewed the masses of frog spawn at the side of the lake and watched a couple of Canada Geese swimming in the distance.



After lunch we had to force our way again through the fallen trees back to the main path. This led us to the narrow road which we followed down to our parked cars and the end of another enjoyable Strollers Walk in fine weather.

### MAY - BARMOUTH TO PENRHYN POINT FAIRBOURNE

Local walks around Barmouth are usually popular, but it was a surprise when a total of twenty one strollers joined us on a rather dull, cloudy morning for our May Walk from Barmouth to Penrhyn point at Fairbourne. The flexibility of the walk allowed participation in sections without having to walk the full distance, coping with all abilities. This proved an added attraction.



Starting from the park opposite the Last Inn on the harbour, we walked over Barmouth Bridge, stopping several times to admire the wonderful estuary views, to Morfa Mawddach Station. Just before reaching the station, the train passed us bringing one additional stroller to join us, together with others who had parked their cars at the station.

We had a quick look at the station shelter, which has been decorated with poems and pictures by the school children of Ysgol Friog, then we followed the newly constructed dyke footpath into Fairbourne. This path follows the route of the old path, but is wider, has a good surface and the old stiles have been removed making it suitable for cycles and horses which we saw en route.



After passing Fairbourne Golf Course, we turned right and followed the miniature railway line towards Penrhyn Point, while four of our strollers turned left to take the next train back from Fairbourne to Barmouth. At Penrhyn Point the weather brightened up and we found picnic tables where we could enjoy our lunch in brilliant sunshine looking across to Barmouth harbour.



After lunch, four of our members decided to take the easy way back to Barmouth and caught the ferry, while the rest of us walked on the beach round the point, over the sand hills and across the fields to join the footpath back to Morfa Mawddach Station.

The return walk over the bridge brought us back into Barmouth. A nice flat walk of almost seven miles.

## **JUNE - TANYGRISIAU and the FFESTINIOG RAILWAY.**

For the June walk we arranged a short trip on the Ffestiniog Railway followed by a walk at Tanygrisiau. This proved very popular with members of the Strollers group and it is hoped to arrange a similar walk, combined with a railway trip, later in the year.



Most of the group met at Tan-y-Bwlch Station to catch the 10-50am train to Tanygrisiau. After the pleasant railway journey we arrived at Tanygrisiau to find several more strollers waiting for us who had travelled by car.

Although the weather forecast had predicted heavy showers, we set off under blue skies following the rather steep path running alongside the river,

leaving the wonderful views across Tanygrisiau reservoir behind us. The river was a continuous series of magnificent waterfalls to the left while the slate mine workings were to the right of the path, an interesting feature being a picture of a climbing man set into the slate waste, possibly made by the miners. A garden area on the other side of the river was no longer accessible due to the poor condition of the bridge across.

We soon approached Llyn Cwmorthin where we had a drinks stop while exploring the ruins of thirteen mine workers' cottages, some built of slate and some stone. Continuing along the left side of the lake, past a large patch of water lilies, brought us to a ruined Chapel and a large house, thought to be the Mine Manager's residence.



Past the end of the lake, near more cottage ruins, we found a sheltered area to stop. Here we had our lunch, sitting on convenient stones, with views of the lake and directly opposite a spectacular waterfall starting from the top of the mountain.

Following lunch we retraced our steps and explored more ruins and gated mines before walking over the top of the slate spoil heaps back into the village. A slight detour through the village brought us back to the railway station. Since we had half an hour to spare before the train was due we had a quick drink at the Lakeside Cafe before returning to Tan y Bwlch on the 15-05pm train.

As we boarded the train the predicted heavy showers arrived. Once again we had managed a dry and enjoyable walk despite the forecast.



## TABLE TENNIS

*From: Geraldine Vincent*

We have had a fairly successful few months.

The new table is useful as it can be folded in half and used by one person as a practice surface.

There is still much hilarity but we are becoming more accurate and there is less chasing of errant balls.

Two new members have joined us and we are a healthy (in numbers!) eleven. Everybody is welcome to join us. We have all the kit and it is only £1 for an hour. Fridays at noon.

Give us a try.

## BOOK READING

*From: Geraldine Vincent*



Over the past few months we have read and assessed a variety of books. Sylvia Hayworth has been kindly hosting at her home in Talybont, and keeping up Rachel's tradition - the biscuits are good!

As well as discussing the books, we enjoy a mixed bag of conversation over many topics. We digress frequently and often wonder how we arrived at a discussion on toilet seats when discussing Jane Austen.

The books we have chosen are always on the website, so if you would like to try our suggestions please feel free.

We have one new member latterly and everybody is welcome. We meet on the first Wednesday in month at 2 pm, but you will have to check the venue from diary.

## U3A WALKING GROUP

*From: Norma Stockford*

### APRIL – LLWYNGWRIL TO BARMOUTH

As per Peter's instructions I set off to catch the 11.02 train from Barmouth to Llwyngwril. With plenty of time to spare, I chatted to the man in the ticket office, and took a leisurely stroll to the platform only to find myself waiting on the wrong platform! I knew there was something amiss when I spotted a group of walkers 'of a certain age' sitting in the train on the opposite station. 'That one looks a bit like Alan' I thought.... and, of course, it was.

Hotfooting it out of the station, with rucksack on my back and sticks under my arm, I ran across the line (no bridge now) and arrived, breathless, but with just a minute to spare. Needless to say, I had my leg pulled that day.

We collected more U3A walkers at stations en route until there were 16 of us arriving at Llwyngwril. Peter led us through the village, past the Garthangharad pub and after a steepish ascent we were rewarded with lovely coastal views.



It was a very pleasant, easy walk of about six and a half miles along ancient tracks marked by standing stones before descending down into Arthog, past the cenotaph and crossing the road to Morfa Mawddach, finishing with a stroll across the bridge.

This was the last walk I had with Jack and I couldn't resist including a picture of him and Evelyn.



### MAY WALK – LLANELLYD

*From: Peter Leyden*

More than ten members gathered on a warm June day for a walk above Llanelltyd. The path took us on forest tracks up to Llyn Tan y Graig. The views from here of the Mawddach and Cadair Idris were spectacular. We did a bit of exploring and went off track once, but soon got back on the correct trail. It turned out that we had the best of the day as it started raining as we returned to Llanelltyd.

### JUNE – CADER IDRIS

*From: Norma Stockford*

On what was forecast to be one of the hottest days this year, eleven intrepid U3A walkers met at the car park near Talyllyn to take the Minffordd path to the summit of Cadair Idris.



Due to its less accessible location this path is much quieter than the more popular north route up the Pony Path from Ty Nant car park on the Dolgellau side. It is over ten years since I last climbed Cadair via this route and I am convinced it has definitely got higher, steeper and the terrain much more difficult since then. The Snowdonia National Park website describes the route as a 'hard mountain walk of six miles ascending 2585 feet and taking an average of five hours'.

Because of the heat, we started at a slow and steady pace on the first leg of the walk up steps beneath the welcome

shade of a woodland path past the tumbling waters of Nant Cader.

As we reached the lake, Llyn Cau, we came across fine examples of glacial moraine - huge pieces of debris left behind by the retreating glacier that once shaped the landscape in the last Ice Age.



The largest of these had been described to me by a mountain guide many years ago as a 'roche moutonnée' because, I was told, its shape resembled a sheep's back. However, I have since discovered that a French Alpine explorer coined the term in 1786 because he thought they resembled the wavy wigs popular in that era and which were slicked down with mutton fat. Ugh! Thank goodness we have more fragrant alternatives to keep our hair in place now!



We stopped for lunch overlooking the beautiful waters of Llyn Cau, surrounded by a huge amphitheatre of rock. A tame seagull soon joined us and helped himself to Carolyn's lunch, happy to eat from her hand!



The weather was as warm as forecast, but we were grateful for the occasional cloud cover that made our ascent a little easier. The path towards the top has been

badly eroded with large and small rocks scattered on the path to prevent further damage. The uneven surface made it hard going and we didn't reach the summit of Penygadair until 3 pm! We stopped again for a snack and to appreciate the stunning views down the Mawddach - and it was getting hotter!



Our descent took us along a ridge walk to Mynydd Moel from where we descended back to Minffordd to complete the horseshoe walk. This steep descent on rock and shale again made it hard and slow going, and we were glad to eventually reach the slate bridge over the stream where we joined the easier path down to the car park. We had said that we would take our time in the heat, and it was almost 6 pm by the time we got down; taking almost two hours longer than planned!

Nevertheless, it was a beautiful and challenging walk, and thanks Peter, Kevin and Ian for your patience, but next time, I'll opt for the easier path from Ty Nant!

## **GROUP CO-ORDINATOR**

*From: Geraldine Vincent*

All groups appear to be sustaining members. After the successful application for the table tennis group I am now endeavouring to get funds for the Bridge Group.

The strollers and walkers are really going from strength to strength and their numbers are impressive. The Singing for Fun now has male members so their repertoire can be enhanced. More males are wanted though!

Some groups will be taking a break until September but the diary will be issued. A photographic group is in the pipeline. More information on this once I have confirmed all details.

The newest group 'Silver Surfers' Thursday has been well received and we have so far shown four films.

I welcome any ideas for new groups and will happily research their viability. You can contact me on 01341 247415 or email [geraldine@t4alv.com](mailto:geraldine@t4alv.com)

## DISCUSSION GROUP

From: Peter Leyden

### **April - The Big Bang Theory.**

It seems that scientists have made a new breakthrough concerning the Big Bang Theory. Scientists at the BICEP2 telescope in Antarctica have detected primordial gravitational waves, ripples in space time which Einstein predicted. This, it is claimed, is the earliest light some 380,000 years after the big bang, which happened 13.82 billion years ago. But the whole issue raises more questions:

- Was there a Big Bang?
- Has the universe been around forever?
- Is there such a thing as a multiverse in different dimensions?

One thing that many of us can agree on is that we came from the stars and one day when our sun and solar system dies we will return ..... as stardust.

In **May** we had a debate about the banks and the crisis of 2008 which saw the worse run on banks since the 1929 depression. *'The 2008 Moment'*, notes political economist Yanis Varoufakis.

The certainties that decades of conditioning had led us to acknowledge were suddenly gone, along with around \$40 Trillion of equity globally, and \$14 trillion of household wealth in the US alone.

*The Global Minotaur, 2011.*

The financial crisis of 2007 manifested in the run on Northern Rock, the first run on a substantial British bank for 141 years - was a direct consequence of the pervasive and orthodox Anglo-American ideology that the liberalisation of global financial markets is both intrinsically good and unstoppable.

*Robert Preston: Who Runs Britain? 2008.*

Since that date the whole world has paid the price for their greed. The welfare state is cut back to the minimum and whole sectors of the economy are being privatised, with wage cuts, zero hours contracts, and increased housing costs. We are paying for a debt that the bankers and the city have caused, the rich now have more of the national wealth since before the First World War. Christine Lagarde, IMF Managing Director said at the Mansion house meeting of business bigwigs who manage £17.8 trillion, that she feared that *'Massive excess rising social tensions and growing political*

*disillusion'* were costing trust in leaders, in institutions and in the free market itself'

It seems that the Ghost of Karl Marx has come to haunt them.

### **June - Housing.**

This is a topic on which everyone has a view. Britain has the most serious crisis in housing since the 1920's.

We have over one million houses empty, with five million on waiting lists, and rents becoming so high that people are leaving London. There is overcrowding in many areas and young people are trapped with their parents because they cannot afford to move on due to low wages and unemployment. Danny Dorling's book *'All That is Solid'* gives a very detailed account of the housing crisis in Britain today.

Housing is a need not a commodity, only rent controls and control of building land for social housing will help the situation.

## ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

Would you like a trip to the playhouse where Shakespeare wrote many of his greatest plays?

If we can get 15 people together we can enjoy a visit specially tailored for U3A groups.

The Elizabethan experience is available between October and February Admission £19 per person

## EXPLORING ELGAR



**The U3A are organising a visit to Elgar's Birthplace Museum in Worcester on Wednesday 15th October, 11am to 3.45pm. Cost £17.00 further details available from the Secretary.**



## BADMINTON GROUP

*From: Wendy Bramley, Badminton Group co-ordinator*

Firstly I would like to say a big thank you to Geraldine Vincent for getting us a grant that enabled us to have ten free badminton sessions and ten free training sessions. The free badminton sessions finished on the 13th June but we still have eight sessions of free training left. These will start again in September and I would like to thank Craig for his patience and the badminton skills he is trying to pass on to us.

Not everyone needs it as much as I do, as we are a mixed bunch. We are also a very happy bunch and enjoy our games and our two hours spent together and I would like to thank all the members who have supported the Badminton Club over the last six months. We shall be closing down for the six weeks of the school holiday, plus one week due to prior commitments so start again on Friday 12th September 2014, 2 - 4 p.m. in the Leisure Centre. We are always looking for new players, so please come and give us a try, you will be made most welcome.



*I've been promising to try badminton for years and didn't get around to it until a few weeks ago. I still don't understand the rules properly, but everyone has been so patient with me and it's been FUN! They are a great crowd, so if you feel tempted – come along, you can always borrow a racquet and have a go. Then I won't feel such a rookie.*

*Ed*

## Barmouth U3A Officers 2014

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**The autumn newsletter will be published for October. Please let me have your contributions by 20<sup>th</sup> September.**