

BARMOUTH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter



Winter 2011

***“There are two seasons in
Scotland – winter and July!”***

Billy Connolly

**Well it's been a bit like that in Wales this year too!
I hope you have all stoically survived the sub-zero
temperatures and will begin to feel invigorated
again once we have passed through the darkest
time of the year.**

I have resolved to join in with more of the walking group activities this year – each winter I feel a little less fit. The weather has put me off venturing out in the past few months. But, to quote Billy Connolly again (and George would agree with this):

“There is no such thing as bad weather – only bad clothing!”

My second resolution is to join the Singing for Fun Group. I've not much of a voice but I could do with some of the physical benefits associated with singing

So..., welcome to my second newsletter and many thanks to all who have contributed

Norma Stockford

CHAIRLADY'S REPORT

A message from Evelyn Richardson

The post-Christmas torpor is gradually lifting and life is resuming its normal tenor, if somewhat husky. The inclement weather of December did its utmost to thwart the planned activities of the U3A but the majority went ahead as planned although with reduced numbers.

Today I start attending the "Introduction To Family History" group which sounds challenging but which I am sure will be rewarding. If I find out that there are too many skeletons in the family closet I will reveal all, maybe they could form the basis of a story for the writing group!

So my grey matter is getting back in gear, it's all the other bits that now need attention, maybe a diet to get rid of the culinary excesses of Christmas and new year.... or maybe not. I suspect that many of us are thinking along similar lines but don't worry, the thoughts will soon dissipate along with any new year intentions and then we will really be back to normal.

Whatever you do I hope that it will be a good year for you all, I feel that the friends I have made through the U3A will play a large part in making it interesting and pleasurable and I hope that the same applies to you all.

If you are one of the many members who attend just one group, then maybe checking out what goes on at some of the other groups may be worth a try. You never know, you might find something which is challenging and life enhancing. All the phone numbers of group leaders are on the monthly diary sheet and I know from experience that they will welcome any enquiries.

Best wishes to you all from me and the rest of the committee. See you soon!

SINGING FOR FUN

From: Evelyn Richardson



2010 had a big kick in its tail causing havoc to many planned festivities. The Singing for Fun group was affected but we managed to fulfil all our commitments albeit with reduced numbers.

Despite the fewer members attending the Christmas party the community singing was full voiced and enthusiastic (at least from where I was standing). We sang folk songs from the British Isles followed by a variety of other songs, finishing with a medley of old favourites and some Christmas songs to round off the evening. Thanks to Peter for his solo which is always worth hearing.

I will quickly pass over the offering from senior committee members apart from saying it brought quite a lot of laughter.

The following week we went to Hafod Mawddach for a sing-song before they had their Christmas party, here again we were joined in with, enthusiastically and tunefully, by the residents.

This was a new venture for us and hopefully we will repeat it in the near future, taking some of the U3A activities to those who, for various reasons, can't get to the scheduled meetings, this is very much part of the ethos of the U3A.

I am at present planning the next session, hopefully the 'flu and weather problems will be over and we will have a good turnout.

Best wishes to all the singers and those who we hope will join us this year.

(The group meets on the third Wednesday of the month at the Dragon theatre)

Badminton

From: Wendy Bramley

We have had some happy times this last three months playing and enjoying our Badminton. We have had some people missing from time to time, either snow bound, health bound, visiting family or working away. But in spite of this we usually have enough people turn up to get some good games and for one of us to catch our breath in between.

Raj has joined us and although he can only stay for an hour because of school commitment, we hope he enjoys it as much as we enjoy his company.

Alison Woodbridge has now finished her chemotherapy and we look forward to her joining us again as soon as she feels able. May she continue to improve and keep well.

I would like to say A Happy and Healthy New Year to all our members, may we long continue to enjoy our Badminton in 2011. I would like to also thank the staff at the Leisure Centre for all their help.

Lastly, anyone out there who is thinking of giving Badminton a try and hasn't already done so, come and enjoy you would be most welcome.

Thanks to all the team for turning out most Fridays.

SCRABBLE

Things have been getting a bit quiet on the Scrabbling front. The group is still meeting each Friday but numbers are small so new members are needed. I understand that John Maitland is leaving the area shortly and Marie has agreed to be the contact person.

If you would like to join them, you should call her on 01341 247 247. Marie tells us that Fridays are not set in stone – they could change the day if that would help prospective scrabblers.



WATERCOLOUR CLASS

From: Norma Stockford

Marion has been back with us as our tutor since September and the group numbers steadily increased again.

We are now covering 'perspective in landscape' and will be moving on to work with a variety of media as well as watercolour in the next few weeks.

Marion will be tutoring another ten to twelve sessions which will take us up to June when we will then assess the needs of members and make a decision on the way forward.

Some of the comments by members who have been with the class since its inception include:

"Without the tutor's enthusiasm and patience I would never have started painting again. She has completely reawakened my enjoyment of painting and I have learnt so much about planning a good picture and practicing many new techniques. She has also given a huge amount of information about paints, brushes and paper that help to achieve good results. I now paint regularly, sometimes daily if time allows, and enjoy every minute - even the failures teach me something new about my own impatience or use of technique.

Having sold some pictures at a local exhibition I now have much more confidence and am not quite so critical of myself!

"Learning to paint watercolours has opened up a new horizon in life for me. I have improved much over the last three years and exhibited and even sold a painting recently! Also it helped by giving me the opportunity to meet new people with similar interests and develop a whole new social life."

"I have always wanted to paint. I started thirty years ago and abandoned it because of work commitments. I took it up again when the U3A Watercolour Group was set up and found it most relaxing and a great way of de-stressing. I am told that watercolour is the most difficult medium to learn and I have many failures and setbacks. But occasionally a minor miracle happens and I produce something worth framing. I get lots of encouragement from fellow U3A members and painters and this has given me the confidence to join another Art Group which I would never have done before. I haven't sold anything yet, but have given a couple away as gifts. I think my work might be improving - so who knows?"

WALKING GROUP

November 2010

From: George Mandow

There weren't too many on the November walk above Llanfachreth. The change of date, to fit in selfishly with my abandonment of frozen Wales for warm, sunny New Zealand, should have been more adequately signalled. I'm sorry not to have done so. I did consider a warning email but never quite got round to it. The Nanny State has entered my soul and, in future, you can expect daily reminders!

I was pleased to be there on the day as the walk is a pleasant wander through the hills, occasionally steep and very wet underfoot but if it wasn't like that members would require another warning. I can hear the complaints muttered in the pub afterwards: 'Hate dry feet', 'Didn't get out of breath once' 'George has gone soft..... not surprising at his age'.

There was the usual time for intellectual conversation and witty repartee but I was not close enough to hear it and was happy with a gossip.

So thank you for your company, you eagle-eyed who came, and sorry to those who didn't.

December 2010

From: Evelyn Richardson

Instead of snow covered hills and fields the view which greeted the nine intrepid walkers on the 27th December was one of soggy green countryside, sheets of treacherous ice and a persistent drizzle from above. Enough, you might think, to deter even the most enthusiastic pursuer of outdoor activities. You have reckoned without the steely determination of those, who for several years now have endured even worse conditions on the monthly walk, it was as if this was the day we had all been training for.

So with much merry laughter, the donning of waterproofs and, to a great degree, the promise of a bowl of Bronwen's homemade soup to be followed by mulled wine and luscious cakes, we set off. We skirted Fegla Fawr tramping through large puddles, skidding on hidden ice up over Arthog bog and through eventually to Arthog waterfall which David assures us the day before had been a veritable organ of icicles but now was back to its usual mode of trickling down to the Estuary. (We believed him implicitly because he is a doctor and we always believe what they tell us.)

It was quite tricky ascending to its summit but even more hazardous descending as the path and steps were liberally coated with ice. I must confess that at this stage the smiles were looking a bit fixed. But despite the conditions we all descended safely and, just as the rain started getting a bit fiercer, we had arrived at the Dorling residence out of which was spilling delicious odours of homemade soup and mulled wine.

Shoes and waterproofs off, we soon warmed up and devoured several helpings of the aforesaid soup and wine. We even managed to make substantial inroads into a delicious trifle and cakes. (Well, just to be polite of course, as it was obvious that a lot of effort had gone into their making.)

As ever the companionship was lovely, we encouraged and helped one another; a fitting end to a year of walks which have given the participants a variety of locations, walks of different degrees of difficulty and the chance to experience the beautiful country we live in.

Thanks to David and Bronwen for the day which I feel encapsulated all that is great about being part of the walking group and thanks also to the other walk leaders over the past year.

Writing Group

The Writing group meets on alternate Fridays – and would also be happy to welcome new writers. Some of the topics we have covered recently have been Short Story writing and Writing for Children. We took another slant on autobiography when we were asked to “Write a letter to yourself” (at any age). For instance, we

were asked give advice to our much younger selves. Perhaps to let our 8 year old selves know that, in spite of bad experiences, we'd grow up to be confident adults. Or make a promise to our 80 year-old selves to remind us to carry on enjoying life. It provided some interesting and amusing work!

We are now considering our New Year Writing Resolutions which we hope will lead towards publishing some of our writing again.

Quiz:

1. Two of Jane Austen’s novels were published posthumously. One of them was “Persuasion”, which was the other?
2. In Verdi’s opera “Otello”, how does Otello die?
3. Where would you be if you landed at Hellenikon airport?
 - a. Crete
 - b. Kos
 - c. Corfu
 - d. Athens
4. In 2010 which part of England was voted one of the world’s top 12 holiday spots?
5. Who has been awarded the .cym internet address?
6. What is “gymnophobia” a fear of?
7. Which international airline uses the tagline `Every time feels like the first time`?
8. How many yards long is a furlong?
9. In slang, how much money is a monkey?
10. Lending her name to a famous brand, who was the Greek Goddess of Victory?



Strollers

From: Trish Percival

November:

Despite a bad weather forecast the November walk was well supported. Starting at the Precipice Walk car park, we walked around the lake joining up with one “fit” member, who had decided to also walk the full Precipice Walk path, at the half way point. After taking in the estuary views from the viewing point we walked back along the other side of the lake. Since the weather was still fair we decided to have a second walk and investigate the Forest Garden at Pandy nearby where we had our picnic lunch. None of the group were familiar with this walk, but found it most interesting and we hope to pay a return visit when the trees are in leaf. The well-timed rain started just as we came to the end of our walk.

December:

We chose the best day of a very wet week, and the sun shone on us for the December Strollers’ Walk, which was well supported. Starting from Tal-y-Bont car park we followed the river through the woods, down Cors y Gedol Drive and past the Ancient Burial site to Dyffryn. After a leisurely lunch and chat at the Cadwgan Hotel, we walked back to our cars at Tal-y-Bont via the beach.

January :

First a coffee at Tan y Bryn, then we set off for a town walk around Barmouth. Up the steep Gellfechan Road with the wonderful views over the town and beach, past the Church and on to Dinas Oleu. We then descended through the Old Town to the Harbour. From the Harbour we walked the full length of the Promenade, finally crossing the railway line and back, making an enjoyable circular walk.



Book Reading

From: Rachel Cleaver.

The Reading Group are delighted to welcome Geraldine, a new member, not only for us, but to the U3A.

Our October read was ‘The Shadow of the Wind’ by Carlos Ruiz Zafon. I found it somewhat long and unbelievable.

The November book, ‘Written in Bone’ by Simon Beckett was quite interesting although somewhat medical, as the title implies. However, the ending was so implausible that the book lost all credence.

Our last book for 2010 was ‘From a Clear Blue Sky’, by Timothy Knatchbull, a member of the Mountabatten family. Timothy’s twin brother was killed at the tender age of 14 in an IRA atrocity, as were other members of his family. He writes very movingly of his loss.

So, once again, our choices have been varied, as have the comments.

One person’s interest in another person’s boredom!



Family History

The interest in genealogy is really flourishing with Irene Doody now running three groups.

The first group is still working on the headstones and parish registers of St. Philip’s Church, Bontddu. There is no set time and date for the project, most of which takes place outdoors, and completion of the task is dependent on the weather. The group is carrying out the work in conjunction with Gwynedd Family History Society and when finished, will submit their work to them to be included in the archives.

The second group has now finished and some of these people will be linking up with the first group - they have all enjoyed the classes so much that they wanted to meet up for some workshops. These are to be arranged.

Irene is starting a third family history group on January 10th at The Old Library, Harlech at 2.00 to 4.00pm.

We are grateful to Irene for her continuing enthusiasm and the hard work she has put in to organising this group and for 'spreading the word' of the U3A to non-members.

Anyone interested in joining should contact Irene Doody on - 01766 781021 or k.doody074@btinternet.com



Bridge

The extremely enthusiastic and successful social bridge group continue their weekly meetings co-ordinated by Christina Cook every Wednesday – they even met in the week between Christmas and New Year!

George's Friday group will reconvene when he returns from New Zealand.

MONTHLY GATHERINGS

Barmouth to Fort William Three Peaks Yacht Race

From: Danny Jones

Norma Stockford addressed the U3A in November and gave an extremely professional, entertaining presentation on the Three Peaks Race... its history from when it was set up, to the present day, with its logistical, financial, & administrative complexities.

An idea thought of by two local GPs over 30 years ago and inspired by Bill Tillman the explorer (who happened to live locally) has continued to provide motivation and an example to thousands of sailors and to bring the little seaside town of Barmouth to the attention of the international yachting world.

At the end of Norma's presentation, questions were searching and varied, but were fielded by her with efficient good humour.

Members enjoyed an interesting, lively afternoon, and added to their knowledge of the traditions and history of the locality.

The U3A Christmas Party.

From: Bronwen Doring

In spite of the wintry weather a good crowd of members and friends turned out for the Christmas Party on December 8th. The Arts Room looked nice and festive, and everyone arrived looking ready to enjoy themselves.

The evening's entertainment kicked off with our very own, inimitable, Evelyn and Rachel – not as ageing fairies this time but brilliantly got up as a couple of toffs in white tie and tails! Their music-hall song-and-dance routines were greatly enjoyed - and we were left wondering what on earth they will appear as at the 2011 party! Top this year's if you can, ladies!

The Singing for Fun group then entertained us with a medley of sing-alongable-to songs (is there such a word?) and we joined in with gusto, especially with the Twelve Days of Christmas, where there were several schools of thought about how many pipers piped or lords a-leaped. Thank you Evelyn and Group for providing such a lively collection of songs, and thank you also to Martin Barrow at the piano – we are very grateful to you Martin for coming each year and accompanying so brilliantly.

By this time we were more than ready for the excellent buffet, which was kindly provided by members, and then came the cerebral bit of the evening – Norma's quiz and Bronwen's pictures of the great and famous (or infamous) had people scratching their heads, and when the answers were read out, competition for top table was tight.

Altogether a splendid evening – if you couldn't make it this year, don't miss it next year!

(and of course..... a big 'thank you' to all committee and members for their hard work.)

New Zealand –

January's Monthly Gathering opened our eyes on New Zealand – as experienced by Evelyn Richardson, our Chairman, and her husband Jack in the winter of 2009 – 2010 or rather, the summer over there, (lucky people!); when they flew out to visit their newly-emigrated daughter and family for six weeks.

With the help of excellent slides, Evelyn brought the country alive for us in many different ways. We went from scenes of magnificent snow-capped mountains to a shot of the wonderfully old-fashioned school uniform worn (compulsorily) by Evelyn's granddaughter. We were shown the newly opened fissure in Evelyn's daughter's garden, a result of one of New Zealand's rare earthquakes, which succeeded in draining the swimming pool. And we were treated to a vision of Evelyn lounging seductively (trainers notwithstanding) on the bed in a very voluptuous B and B.

The slides, coupled with a most interesting commentary, told us more about New Zealand in an hour than any geography book could hope to do.

Thank you, Evelyn.



LUNCH GROUP

From: Marie Thomas

The U3A Lunch Group meets on the third Thursday of the month at the College in Dolgellau. About twelve members gather for some fine dining at a bargain price - currently £10.50 for three courses, including coffee. For those feeling less hungry a two-course option is available. The menus are varied, at least three or four choices per course, and the food is delicious and attractively presented - well up to Masterchef standard. The students who cook and serve are being trained to a high standard and, although the service may not be as slick as in a professional restaurant, the students are always pleasant and helpful.

Anyone who hasn't yet sampled the experience should really give it a go. It is great opportunity to get to know other U3A members in a leisurely setting while enjoying the highest quality restaurant food and supporting the local students.

There is usually car parking space at the college, and it is also easy to get to by bus - X32, 35, & X94 stop right outside.

Contact Marie Thomas on 01341 247 247

On the 9th February, local artist Valerie Land will show paintings, hot off the easel, which look at many ways of interpreting a single image. Her theme will be 'Interpretations' and she will discuss what inspires her, the materials and techniques she uses, sprinkled with amusing yarns along the way.

All you watercolourists take note!

U3A Study Day

We are proud to have been selected to host the U3A Study Day in October 2011. This will take place in the Dragon Theatre from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. on 12th October 2011. The cost will be £10 and a buffet lunch will be provided. We hope to have a large group from Barmouth U3A attending.

Meetings of a small committee set up to finalise details of the day are already being held, but if you have any important issues you think would be appropriate, please let Evelyn know on 01341 250 428

Editor's note

I spoke of a '*sprinkling of tourists*' in the November Newsletter. Rod and Wendy Bramley came up with a few collective nouns of their own:

- A litter of tourists
- A grockle of tourists (with respect to our English coast cousins!)

and for the U3A

..... *A Gathering of New Tricks* (with apologies to BBC1)!

...and finally...

Have you ever thought about printing off the newsletter and sharing it with a friend?

Encouraging others to read about our activities and to read a copy of the U3A News is a great way of letting others know about our wonderful organisation.

Answers to Quiz:

1. Northanger Abbey
2. He stabs himself
3. Athens
4. The Kent coast
5. The Cayman Islands
6. Nudity!
7. Virgin
8. 220
9. £500
10. Nike

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'Diary Dates' will now be produced by Sylvia Vannelli. The spring newsletter will be published for April. Latest copy date: 10th of the previous month.