

BARMOUTH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter



Winter 2012

***“PEOPLE DON’T NOTICE
WHETHER IT’S WINTER OR
SUMMER WHEN THEY’RE
HAPPY.”***

Anton Chekhov

Did he really say that? Well I must be miserable all the time if it’s true! November was mild and I felt happy then, but the December greyness and the January wind – oh the wind! I daren’t visit my poor greenhouse. Perhaps it’s time to buy my tomatoes this year.

Someone else said that winter always looks worse through a window, so in December I thought I’d join the U3A walk – but you can read about that later!

I do envy those who can read this in the sunnier climes of the Southern Hemisphere. The only good thing about winter for me is that it is followed by spring – and that there’s more room to park in Barmouth! But while I wait for spring, there’s always the luscious Professor Brian Cox to watch on the box. He makes the whole world more interesting!

Editor

CHAIRLADY’S REPORT

A message from Evelyn Richardson

Well, the first day of 2012 has passed without anything untoward happening, hopefully it will continue.

I hope that you all had an excellent Christmas and are now eagerly awaiting all that this Olympic year has to offer. Has anyone been asked to carry the Olympic torch yet? Was that a resounding **NO**? Well who wants to run around holding up a flaming torch anyway?

We hope that this year will be a successful and interesting one for our members. I feel that last year we excelled ourselves because of the enthusiasm and commitment of our members and hope that this same feeling of involvement will carry on throughout the coming year.

Could I remind you to look at our website which is so ably maintained by Alan Vincent and which has lots of information on the various groups:
www.barmouthu3a.org.uk/

I am off tomorrow for a brief sojourn in New Zealand to see my daughter and family who, after much heart searching, decided to stay despite the earthquakes. Let’s hope I don’t need to see how I would cope in the same situation.

Rachel Cleaver will take over the duties of Chair in my absence.

Until mid-February then,

Best wishes, Evelyn



SINGING FOR FUN

From: Evelyn Richardson

As usual we led the singing at the Christmas party and we had most of the rest of you singing along with us. The previous week we had visited Hafod Mawddach for their Christmas party and spent a joyous hour singing with the residents, with some of the staff and helpers also joining in.

It would be great if we could go more often as they seem to get a lot of pleasure in singing or just moving to the music. We also visited Fairbourne W.I in early December and led quite a number of people from the village in an afternoon of singing.

Thanks to all the singers who put themselves out for the two occasions with their usual good grace and enthusiasm.

I would like to extend our repertoire of songs in Welsh over the next year and do a bit more part singing, trying to maintain the balance between making progress and still retaining the “fun” element is a challenge. I resist being called a choir as I think this puts pressure on the singers and may put off those who enjoy the afternoon for what it is - a time to enjoy singing together and sharing the pleasure it affords.

We have been asked to sing with two W.I. groups next year, so life will be quite busy again. As I am off to visit my family in New Zealand for six weeks Bobby Cartmell will arrange the sessions whilst I am away with, I am sure, enthusiastic support from the regulars.



ART

From: Norma Stockford

I am sorry to report that the Art group had its final session in December.

It began as a Watercolour Group for beginners in 2008 and was grant-aided, which meant we could enjoy fortnightly classes under the tutorship of Marion Telford for several years. At first, classes were held in the old Youth Centre – a huge light room which was used (and loved) by many art groups. When this was no longer available, we moved to the Min y Mor and eventually to the Dragon theatre.

Members came and went over the years, as is usual in these sorts of classes. Earlier this year, Marion, through ill health and family commitments, could no longer continue with the group.

In February 2011 Valerie Land took over as tutor and we learned about gouache, line drawing and portrait drawing which was enormously enjoyable. By now some of the members were confident enough about their skills to join other local art groups and eventually numbers attending got so small that the class became unviable.

The last day was a sad day, but on occasions these groups do have a ‘shelf life’ and the fact that some of us are still painting is proof of their worth.

For my part, I am grateful to Marion, Valerie and all the friends I have made through the group for their support and encouragement. I paint or draw whenever I can find the time and it has become an essential part of my retirement. The U3A classes have given me the courage to join other groups and I am contemplating enrolling for the Summer School in Telford in July. Anyone want to join me?

And who knows, if there is a need, we may start a new group one day.....!

THE STROLLERS

From: Patricia Percival

For most, the November Strollers' walk started with a train journey from their local railway station to Morfa Mawddach. Here we met up with others who had already started their walk by walking across the bridge from Barmouth.

Ten of us set off from Morfa Mawddach Station along the road, past the muddy fields of Sue and Jim Alger's pig farm, to the War Memorial at Arthog.

A few yards along the main road brought us to the start of the footpath leading up the hillside. Although the rain kept off for our walk, the recent rain resulted in the path being rather muddy and slippery in places but we all got through. The path over the hill, through fields and forest areas offered views over Fairbourne and the Mawddach Estuary through the trees. A fenced grass mound and door were thought to be access to an underground reservoir. The path finally dropped down into Friog at Panteinion Waterfalls.

Following the road down from Panteinion Waterfalls a short distance brought us to a footpath which led us to the back of Evelyn's house where we were kindly invited in for tea and coffee and allowed time for a social chat before catching the 1.40 pm train back.

The weather forecast had predicted gales for the day of our December Strollers' Walk at Portmeirion, but the rain kept off and due to the sheltered location of Portmeirion we were protected from the strong winds and even enjoyed some blue skies and sunshine.

This was the fourth visit of the Strollers' Group to Portmeirion, but we still found

new territory to explore. Fifteen of us started the walk along the woodland path where the camellias were in flower and trees full of berries. Although the weather was calm at our level, the dramatic sound of the high winds in the trees above was always with us. The path down to the view point proved to be very wet and slippery due to the recent heavy rain, it was said almost rivalling that on many of George's walks! The view point was exposed to the high wind and so only allowed a short visit, before returning to the village through the Pet Cemetery, round the Japanese lake and past the lighthouse.

Lunch at the Town hall Cafe followed by shopping for some, while a few of us had an extended walk along the coast path to the look-out at the top of the village, brought an end to an enjoyable day at Portmeirion.

Hoping for another return visit next year.



Strollers at Portmeirion



Bridge Group

The Friday Bridge Group has not met recently as George has been away, but that hasn't stopped the enthusiastic Social Bridge group from meeting and playing weekly.

WALKING GROUP

Autumn 2011

From: Mary Howell

A few stalwarts braved the winter wind in November to take a look at the Iron Age hill fort at Pen y Dinas just above Tal y Bont. The Bronze Age circle and signs of settlement were impressive too, though not as well known or as grand as the circle above Harlech.

The study day inspired the choice of walk: the most interesting talk about the dawn of history in Merioneth. The hills are strewn with remains that we can simply wonder at, and the mid stone of the circle lined up with Bardsey, inviting us to theorise about the Bronze Age mindset.

There is a wild walk along the Fford Ddu that must wait for longer days and better weather.

We followed the old green lane back to Dyffryn, with a splendid view of sea and mountain, looking forward to the well earned tea and cake.

Sadly, the proposed walk for December,* up the back of Llawlech Ridge, was rained off and coffee in Davy Jones' Locker proved a far better option.

In the interests of getting to know the January walk backwards (literally), in preparation for the group walk at the end of the month, I walked again beside the River Llugwy in Betws y Coed.

The highlight of the walk should be a picnic on a bench sited above Swallow Falls in weak but pleasant sunshine. The low light and, to my way of thinking, positive drawback, was not just the detritus strewn the path after recent flooding making the going difficult, but

the actual breakdown of the path in one place.

Heavy rain and storms over the festive season had caused a slip of boulders and mud and trees some thirty metres above the river that breached the protecting fence.

As I negotiated the hazard with some trepidation with the river in full spate below, stumbling over on all fours, a fell runner and her dog spirited past, barely touching foot to sod, with the speed of the proposed new express rail link to Birmingham.

So, erring on the side of caution, I would propose a steady circular walk that climbs from Dyffryn over to Cwm Nantcol for the end of January. I cannot promise no mud but, almost certainly, no landslides.

Perhaps tea and cake would induce some takers?

While George has been enjoying a New Zealand summer the U3A walks that he has organised for years have continued, albeit only three in total and so far only one actually walked, due to inclement weather. I would just like to issue a big thank you to him. Not that the walks are in any way onerous but the responsibility for ensuring a 'good' walk and also the safety of the walkers is not to be underestimated.

**Five of us did make the effort to turn up at the start in December, but the sound of the continual and relentless rain on the roof of the car tempted us to resort to talk instead of walk!*

I always think that the best part of the walk is the sociable chat we have with fellow members, so in December we had the gain without any of the pain! I will make that January walk.....

Ed.

WRITING GROUP

From: Norma Stockford

The Writing group meets on alternate Fridays and for the past month or two have been studying and writing poetry.

We have read the poems of Byron, Dylan Thomas and RS Thomas; and have looked at rhyme, line and meter. Studying poetry can be a bit daunting when you are bombarded with technical terms which are, quite literally, all Greek to me, but poetry is an entirely different way of using words. There was almost a tactile pleasure in hearing RS Thomas read some of his poems on a CD which one of the members brought in. We haven't managed any literary masterpieces ourselves yet, but we did have fun with a few amusing Christmas poems and limericks.

Our group is small, especially with two members away for the winter months, so we would welcome new faces if anyone would like to join us.



BADMINTON

From: Wendy Bramley

We have enjoyed another three months of Badminton. We welcome Alan and Mark to our little band and hope they enjoy being with us. It's just the input we need as we were able to have two courts on several occasions when everybody was in attendance. We also enjoyed a Christmas get-together at The Captain's Table. An excellent meal with excellent company, I believe everyone who came enjoyed it. Thanks to all our members for turning up most Fridays, and may I wish you all A Happy and Healthy New Year.

OUR WEBSITE

From: Alan Vincent

The Barmouth U3A website continues to attract new visitors with the total of unique visitors reaching 419 by the end of December. These visitors accessed the site more than 7,300 times generating a total of over 20,800 page impressions.

To explain these terms, when a web user comes to the site for the first time, the unique count climbs by 1, each subsequent visit increases the access count and every page that is viewed is included in the page impressions count. So, on average, each visitor has returned more than 17 times and looked at up to 3 pages each visit.

Have you visited the site recently?

As well as U3A information we also have a lot of general local information available on the "Barmouth & Local Links" page. Check it out! For instance this month we have added the T5 Summary Railway timetable which can be printed out on a couple of pages. Much easier to manage than the full timetable booklet.

We will start to add sites for Fairbourne, Talybont and the other local villages shortly and, as ever, if any of our readers find a site that they feel would be useful for other members, then please email the details to myself –

alan.vincent@barmouthu3a.org.uk

MONTHLY GATHERING

From: Bronwen Dorling

At the Monthly Gathering on Wednesday November 9th, we welcomed Alison Smedley to lead an Aromatherapy Workshop.

Alison, a newly qualified aromatherapist, first invited us to name the oils as she passed them round, then she explained their purposes. Next we worked in pairs to mix the oil we wanted to work with, and used it to massage each other's hands following Alison's demonstration. This was a most interesting and invigorating experience, and we were very grateful to Alison for sharing her expertise with us.



The Christmas Party

Well! What a party it was! Numbers first – there were between 40 and 50 people present, nearly half our membership. And I'm sure that all of you were glad you turned out, with so much entertainment on offer.

The "Keep Fit" ladies started us off with a very polished dance routine, then Evelyn and Rachel surpassed themselves with a splendidly raunchy number - "Come to the U3A!" (with apologies to Lisa Minelli). We shall never forget those tights, ladies, or the legs in them! Norma's quiz was most intriguing; there was much debate on our table about the exact construction of a Cornish pasty. Nearly every table coped with the trick question on Bronwen's picture quiz; yes, it was Meryl Streep, not Margaret Thatcher.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the magnificent and varied buffet, and to those who joined heartily in the sing-a-long as Jack Richardson put up the words of the songs on the screen – an excellent innovation. Thanks also to the Dragon staff for the festive decorations in the room, to the "Singing for Fun" ladies for their splendid raffle, and to our very own M.C., the one and only Rod Bramley. We must not forget our

excellent resident accompanist, Martin Barrow, and how nice it was to have Liz and the four lovely Barrow children with us. Well, I think I've covered everything, but apologies to anyone I've missed out – see you all again – and more of you – in December 2012.

Quiz

1. From which language does the word anorak come?
2. What is the colour of the bottom stripe of the US flag?
3. In the game of Monopoly, how much does each player pay you if it's your birthday?
4. How many standard glasses can be poured from a magnum of champagne?
5. What type of toys would an arctophile collect?
6. George Vth reigned from 1910 to 1936, what great change did he make to the monarchy?
7. What are the three primary colours?
8. Of which bird is the collective noun an unkindness?
9. Of what is gynophobia an irrational fear?
10. What relation was Richard II of England to his predecessor, Edward III?

Answers on the next page

U3A Summer Schools

From: Norma Stockford.

Have you ever thought about enrolling for one of the Summer Schools run by the U3A? This year they are being held at Telford and Cirencester and cover a host of topics.

From **Monday 16th to Thursday 19th July 2012**, at the Harper Adams University College Newport, Telford, the topics are: Cinema History, Design Principles in Art, France, History, Music Appreciation, Philosophy, Poetry, Recorder Ensemble playing and Writing Fiction, and

From **Monday 20th to Thursday 23rd August 2012** at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester they are running courses on:

Drama, History, Literature, Needlepoint Lace-making, Philosophy, Psychology, Singing for Pleasure and Website Design.

Full board for a residential delegate in en-suite accommodation costs £315 per person and for day delegates, including lunch, the cost is £118 per person.

Further details of the courses and booking forms can be obtained from Norma Stockford on 01341 280 742.

Let the train take the strain

From: Irene Doody

Irene sent the following which she thought might be helpful if you use the train.

After complaining to Gwynedd Council because she and Evelyn had to pay on the 14:56 this information was subsequently published on the Arriva Trains Wales website.

Cambrian Coast – free travel to Gwynedd Bus Pass holders

This scheme is available to holders of a Concessionary Travel Pass from Gwynedd Council. This period commences from 3 October 2011 and terminates 30 March 2012. But, please note:

During school terms there will be some restriction of travel on the following (school) trains.

06.10 Pwllheli – Machynlleth between Barmouth and Tywyn

07.34 Pwllheli – Machynlleth between Penrhyndeudraeth and Harlech.

12.56 Machynlleth – Pwllheli between Harlech and Penrhyndeudraeth

14.56 Machynlleth – Pwllheli between Tywyn and Barmouth

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Use it or Lose it!

**Make regular use of your library in 2012!!
Join your local library for a chance to win an iPad**

By joining your local library, picking up a loyalty card and borrowing books three times between 4 February and 23 April you could win an iPad. The campaign is open to everyone, if you are already a member just ask at your local library for a loyalty card.



Life in Wales 1939 – 1945

An email has been received via the web site from the TV company, Cwmi Da. (<http://www.cwmnida.tv>). They are looking for people interested in contributing to a Welsh language programme about life in Wales during the war.

If you have any memories, photographs or any other memorabilia that you think may interest them, please contact mali.parry-evans@cwmnida.tv or Cwmni Da, Cae Llenor, Lon Parc, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 2HH.

Answers to Quiz

1. Eskimo.
2. Red
3. £10
4. 10
5. Teddy Bears
6. He changed their surname to Windsor
7. Red, Green and Blue
8. Ravens
9. Women
10. Grandson

Editor: Norma Stockford
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In case you missed the Christmas party, here are the lyrics of the song performed by Evelyn and Rachel. Take note, excellent advice. To the tune of 'Come to the Cabaret'.

What good is sitting alone in your room
Don't sit around each day
You have a life to live old chum
Come join the U3A
 Pick up some painting, play bridge, sing a song
 Make time for some fun today.
 Listen to speakers, learn a lot.
 Come join the U3A
 Come trace your folk, Read a good book,
 Come write a poem, Start integrating
 Right this way a group is waiting.

I know we're getting a little bit older
It's time to grasp each day
Life can be so much fun old chum
It's great in the U3A
 Go for a stroll, walk in these hills
 Come out for lunch, start celebrating
 Right this way a place is waiting.
No use permitting some prophet of doom
To wipe every smile away,
Life is a splendid thing old chum I mean a splendid thing old chum
 Come to the U3A