

BARMOUTH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Newsletter



Winter 2015

'Every mile is two in winter.'

George Herbert

Well, I think our U3A walkers would disagree, we have been lucky so far with wonderful walking weather, despite a few 'iffy' forecasts.

I spent Christmas in Switzerland and it was interesting to see how the season is celebrated elsewhere. Celebrations start with processions on 4th December – St Nicholas' Eve and their main meal is held on Christmas Eve when the tree goes up and presents are distributed. (The tidy Swiss don't like pine needles around for weeks.) There certainly did not seem to be the consumerism frenzy in the shops that we see here.

It was unseasonably warm for December. We had to venture to the tops of mountains by gondola and cable car to find any decent snow. Since I've been back there has been plenty (here and in the Alps). But, for those who don't like the snow, don't worry - by the time you read this, spring will soon be here!

Editor

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A message from Alan Vincent

Sitting here, as always a day late with my submission for Norma, thinking about what I can put into my piece for the Newsletter, a view of a beautiful sunset reminds me once again why I love living in this part of the country.

Many of you, I know, have lived around here all your lives and at times I think to myself how nice it would have been to grow up around Barmouth and the Mawddach.

These musings lead to me remember the other places that I have lived, which, although there have been a few, two in particular have been very important to me.

From the age of four until I left home at age 21, I lived in the village of Upton-by-Chester. In those days it was a village and not, as it is now, a suburb of Chester. My childhood was happy and memories of open fields with ponds to fish in and lanes that led out into the country are strong. Of course Chester Zoo was always part of growing up – stories of escaping Lions and Monkeys – some of which might have been a bit exaggerated – were often heard in the village shops. Also my first opportunity to earn money was selling ice-cream at weekends in the zoo.

Obviously then, the zoo was much smaller than it is today, and you could always look over the fences at some of the animals – actually you can still do that today – if you visit the zoo you will notice that there are a couple of bridges over a bridle path – that bridle path was one of our favourite lanes as you could go down and feed some of the deer and antelopes through the wire. For many years George Mottershead, the zoo owner, battled to get that path closed, but, because of local objections he never achieved it and in the end built the bridges and left the lane to the locals.

My second place of great memories is the village of Sixpenny Handley in Dorset. I had moved down south in 1983 for work purposes, subsequently met Geraldine and we set up home in the village in 1988, living there until we moved here to Talybont in 2006.

The name comes, not from an association with money, although it was often written as 6D Handley in the past, and even appears that way on local signposts,



but is derived from the two medieval hundreds of Sexpene and Hanlege, which individually mean 'the hill of the Saxons' and 'the high wood or clearing'.

Situated in the Cranborne Chase AONB the village is not your normal pretty thatched cottage village with village green and duck pond. Most of the original buildings had been destroyed in a major fire in 1892 and therefore the heritage of the place is somewhat limited, but it is surrounded by beautiful countryside with, like here, many ancient sites.

In Talybont I can walk ten minutes to stand on the beach, in Handley I could walk ten minutes to stand on Ackling Dyke, the Roman Road that runs from Old Sarum, Salisbury to Badbury Rings near Blandford, and another 5 minute walk would take me onto the Dorset Cursus.

So thinking about it again I remind myself that although I have not lived here all my life, I have lived my life in some wonderful places. That is enough.

As a post script to my piece last time about my orange/EE mobile phone signal, Vic Court tells me that he has a similar solution from "3" mobile in the form of an App called "in Touch" which enables you to connect to the Three network via Wifi. So if you are in an area of poor/no Three network reception, but have access to Wifi you can use it to access the Three network.

If you have poor mobile phone reception it seems that solutions are available out there.

Alan Vincent

STROLLERS' GROUP

From: Patricia Percival, Strollers' Group co-ordinator

OCTOBER - RHYD DDU TO BEDDGELELT

For our October Strollers Walk we combined a trip on the Welsh Highland Railway with a walk back between stations from Rhyd Ddu to Beddgelert.



The recently constructed path between Rhyd Ddu and Beddgelert, known as the Lon Gwyrfai, has an excellent surface for the full length and in the direction in which we walked it, is generally downhill. Again we managed to choose the best day of a week of rather changeable weather for our walk, the sunshine and blue skies lasting throughout the day.



After parking our cars at Porthmadog, we met on the Platform of the Welsh Highland Railway where we purchased our tickets to Rhyd Ddu. The enjoyable train journey took us past green fields, mountains, rivers and lakes. At Rhyd Ddu the path started through an ornate gate just across the road from the station. The path led around Llyn Gader crossing bridges and passing through the old quarry workings.

NOVEMBER - WALK AT PWLLHELI

The November Strollers Walk at Pwllheli was another attempt at the walk which had been planned to coincide with the opening of the new Wetherspoons Pub at Pwllheli last year. This had to be postponed due to transport problems, with the train not running as a result of severe weather damage to the track. The train is now back to normal and we were able to take advantage of the free train travel offered again this year.



We found an attractive spot by the water to stop for our lunch break, finding convenient rocks to sit on. After lunch under the brilliant sun we continued on our way into the forest, crossing the line of the Welsh Highland Railway and getting a better view of the scenery that we had passed through on our train journey.



About half way along the path brought us to the entrance to the Oriel Hafod Ruffyd Gallery. Due to time restrictions we decided not to visit the Gallery. From here the land opened out, with distant views of the Snowdon Mountain Range as we continued, crossing more bridges and generally following the route of the Welsh Highland Railway.

Arriving in Beddgelert, we had just enough time to spare for a quick drink at a local cafe before walking back to the station to catch the 15-40pm train back to Porthmadog, where we were lucky to get a complete carriage for our party only.

A full day out with a relatively easy but pleasant walk which we all enjoyed.



As we waited for the 9-58am train on a wet Tuesday morning at Barmouth Station comments were made that we couldn't expect many Strollers to turn out in such awful weather. Those that did were rewarded with an enjoyable day out. Between Barmouth and Portmadog twenty one strollers joined us in the front carriage of the train which was also occupied by a large group of well behaved Barmouth Schoolchildren who were on a day's outing to the Lloyd George Museum at Llanystumdwy, Criccieth.

On arrival at Pwllheli it was still raining so we called in at Wetherspoons for a coffee while we discussed if we should continue with the walk. On checking outside the weather appeared to be improving and so the decision was made to go ahead.

Shortly after starting the walk the rain stopped and kept away until we were on our way home.



The walk took us down to the beach where we noted the large Clam Shells rarely seen on our shores. At the end of the beach we made our way onto the footpath through the Dunes. We then headed back toward the town, taking a detour through the Nature Reserve where we stopped to feed the ducks and swans with our emergency rations which wouldn't be needed today.

Back at Wetherspoons we had an enjoyable lunch, Tuesday being 'Steak Day', and Wetherspoons coped very well with such a large party arriving together. After lunch we had an hour to spare before our train arrived so some of us had an extra walk around the Marina. Catching the 15-37pm train back home brought an end to a very enjoyable day.



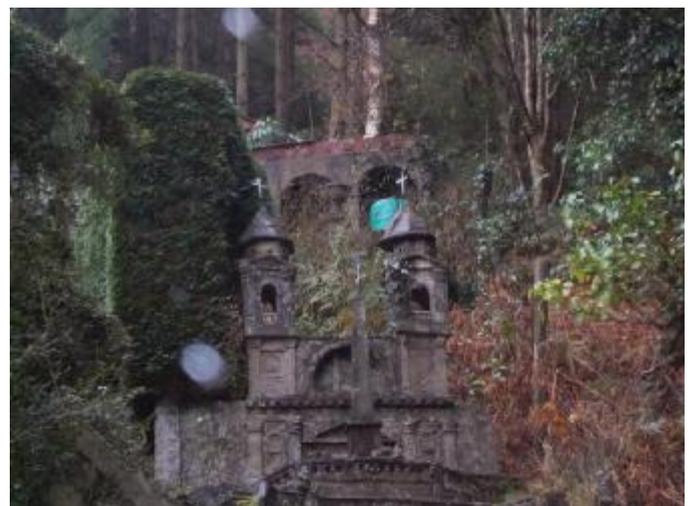
N.B. The Clam Shells were in fact large scallop shells. Dredging for scallops is restricted to designated areas in Cardigan Bay, to protect marine life from damage. Huge fines apply to owners of boats who dredge outside these areas. One boat was recently fined £42,000 for fishing in a restricted area! Ed.

DECEMBER - WALK AT CORRIS

Our December Strollers Walk at Corris was led by Eric and Louise with thirteen members (plus Patch the dog) meeting at the Corris Craft Centre on a dull rather wet morning.



Hoping the weather would improve, we set off down the winding path to Corris Village, coming out near the Railway Station and Community Cafe, where we had a quick drink and learnt of the village history from the friendly Postmistress, before continuing on our way. Eric led us through the village to the river, where we walked along the river bank. We then headed back through the graveyard and along the old disused railway track which dated back to the 1880's.



Passing another ancient cemetery on the side of a hill, we followed a forest track until we came to a most interesting house known locally as "Little Italy". The tiered garden of the house contained about thirty miniature buildings spread over a large site together with a large collection of bricks from various manufacturers. The site was built in the

1970's by Mark Bourne and based on photographs that he had taken while on holiday in Italy. Sadly Mark Bourne died in 2009 and the house and gardens are now falling into disrepair but are still well worth viewing.



Unfortunately the rain continued, but we managed to remain reasonably dry while we ate our lunch under the shelter of the fir trees further along the track. We then continued through the ruins of the old mine workings, stopping to admire an impressive waterfall, and made our way back down to our cars at the Craft Centre.



Despite the rain we all enjoyed a most interesting walk. Thank you to our guides Eric and Louise.

Editor's note:

I feel I must offer a vote of thanks to John and Trish Percival who have planned and arranged these strolls so meticulously over the past 5 years or so. They are so well organised and enjoyable, I'm always mad when I have had to miss one – like this!

How many of us knew that dreary old slate-grey Corris held such hidden jewels!

U3A WALKING GROUP

From: Norma Stockford and Peter Leyden

OCTOBER:

Nineteen members took part in the October walk around Dolmelynllyn estate.

Peter led the walk which took the group past the waterfalls of Rhaeadr Ddu (Black Falls in English), two spectacular waterfalls which cascade over 60ft and are said to have inspired generations of artists and writers.

The walk continued and led to the remains of the 19th-century gold workings at Cefn Coch, one of the richest mines in the Meirionnydd gold belt, an area known at the time as 'New California'.

An enjoyable walk with views of Coed-y-Brenin and the Arenig Mountains.

NOVEMBER:

24 walkers met at Cymer Abbey car park, Llanelltyd on 24th November for a walk led by Carolyn Evans. After crossing the road past Carolyn's house we had a most delightful walk around Bryniau Glo, Llanelltyd. The path was narrow and similar to the precipice walk on the opposite side of the valley.



It was a splendid crisp day with occasional breaks of sunlight and beautiful views down to the Mawddach estuary winding its way between the rugged valley sides.

!



We walked amongst fallen autumn leaves through pleasant wooded paths and took a diversion past the lake at Foel Ispri coming down into Llanelltyd village – a most enjoyable five mile walk.



Bryniau Glo translates as ‘hills of coal’ – and I wondered why, as there had never been any coal mines there. I was to discover later (thanks to good old Google) that, thousands of years ago, much of this area used to be covered with woodland spreading high up into the mountains. As a result of climate change and the influence of people, the old woodland shrank substantially. The trees were used for the old Mawddach shipping industry, for the coal mines in the South, the bark was collected to be sold to the Irish tanneries and charcoal was made for the iron industry which existed here. The name of the land above the village of Llanelltyd – ‘Bryniau Glo’ refers to the old trade of *making charcoal*, not coal mines. So there we are, I’ve learned something new again thanks to the U3A.

DECEMBER:

Our last walk of the year was from Barmouth to Cerrig Arthur, said to be the remains of a Bronze Age circle. Only three stones remain standing today.



There is an old local myth that says that this was intended to be the site for a church, but each time the building began, the stonework would be demolished. One of the workmen stayed overnight at the site and was woken by a dream-like voice calling ‘*Llanaber! Llanaber!*’ This was taken as a sign to re-site the church in Llanaber, where it stands today. Peter led the walk over Bwlch y Llan (the pass to the Church) leading to St Mary’s, the 13th century church in Llanaber.

It is good to see that the Strollers and Walking group are attracting so many, and that these walks are still so popular with our members.

MONTHLY GATHERINGS.

From: Jacqui Puddle

November

Bronwen Dorling gave the talk in November. Her subject was “Researching Arthog School” and she certainly had worked hard, discovering different sources to complete her study and her presentation.

Using historical documents and photographs, some of which were on display, Bronwen provided an intriguing insight into the education system during the period covered by her research. It was a very enjoyable and informative afternoon.

December

Entertainment at the Christmas Party was provided by members themselves. There was singing, poetry, readings and a Christmas quiz, but the star of the show was definitely the Barmouth penguin who delighted all present by distributing chocolate biscuits. *Thank you to Evelyn who organised the event and all who supplied the refreshments.*

The speaker in February is Jean Napier a professional photographer, author and outdoor pursuits leader specialising in outdoor skills training and walking in Snowdonia. Her subject is The Dyfi and Mawddach. Please come along.

DISCUSSION GROUP

From Peter Leyden

Our September topic was 'Immigration and migration and its effects on population'. Among the questions considered, was: Does immigration benefit Britain? It was suggested that mostly, it does. People come here to do the jobs that locals don't want to do; it has been the same for centuries.

The issue of housing was discussed and we heard that very few new arrivals are given council or social housing. The only area where real problems exist is the south-east of England, and that has always been the case. People go where the work is.

Migration from Britain may have slowed down with the financial crisis, but millions of Brits live abroad; over one million live in Spain. The free movement of labour is the right of every worker, capital moves from one country to another, and so should workers.

Our next topic was 'Morals', a subject that many confuse with religion. Although many go by the codes of many different faiths, moral codes go back to early humans, and the society they lived in. If they broke these codes, they would be cast out. The laws of early Celtic society would not permit the execution of a person for murder. Killing was only allowed in battle

It was the Age of Enlightenment, the era from the 1650s to the 1780s in which cultural and intellectual forces in Western Europe emphasized reason, analysis and individualism rather than traditional lines of authority, or 'morals' that changed things.

We have a long way to go, but it can be said that we are more 'moral' today than one hundred years ago.

BADMINTON

Fancy a game of Badminton? Why not join us on a Friday afternoon 2 - 4 p.m. in the Leisure Centre?

Want to know more? Ring Wendy on 01341 242706 or just turn up any Friday.

U3A SUMMER SCHOOLS

The U3A are running two national summer schools during the summer of 2015 at the Harper Adams University, Newport, from the 13th to 16th July 2015 and the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester from the 17th to 20th August 2015.

There are dozens of interesting topics from Music, Art History, Writing, Philosophy and Literature, Drama and Theatre, to Garden Design and Recorder playing!

Full board, en suite, costs £285 and the day delegate fee is £107.

Have a look at www.u3a.org.uk for more details

PUZZLE CORNER

Answers on page 8

1. How is the speed of one nautical mile more commonly known?
2. Sarajevo is the capital of which country?
3. Which Welsh-born (b1872 – d1970) philosopher, historian, social critic and political activist said 'The stupid are cocksure and the intelligent full of doubt'?
4. Brahmans are a priestly caste in which religion?
5. Which country's flag consists of a blue Scandinavian Cross on a white background?
6. During which century did the landscape gardener Lancelot 'Capability' Brown live?
7. Who had a 1960 hit with the song Only the Lonely (know the way I feel tonight)?
8. Caused by the Epstein Barr Virus, and mainly affecting adolescents and young adults, how is the disease mononucleosis more familiarly known?
9. What sort of creature is a boomslang?
10. What name for a large cemetery came from the Greek and means 'City of the Dead'?

GROUP CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

From: Geraldine Vincent

When checking after Christmas I am delighted to see that we now have 12 groups running. This number has crept up over a time and I am still happy to arrange more if we have sufficient numbers of interest.

Some of the groups may be as small as 5 at a session, others as many as 27! I am sure you will all agree that all groups are giving interest to a number of people. We are engaging our brains and our bodies – with fun and laughter. This is the ethos of U3A.

LEARN, LAUGH AND LIVE!

Walking, singing, reading, eating, crafts, together with all the rest of the groups are flourishing. Thank you to all the group leaders. We have a variety of locations for our activities from hospitality in homes, to Village Halls and Leisure Centres.

If you would like to see development of existing groups through additional resources – perhaps you would let me know and I will go through the funding route again this year. The groups are the life blood of U3A and new friends and skills are at your fingertips.

PUZZLE CORNER answers.

1. 1 knot.
2. Bosnia and Herzegovina.
3. Bertrand Russell
4. Hinduism
5. Finland
6. 18th.
7. Roy Orbison.
8. Glandular fever (kissing disease).
9. A snake.
10. Necropolis

Barmouth U3A Officers 2013

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The spring newsletter will be published at the end of March. Submissions by 15th please.

Winners of the

Choir of the Year 2014

Côr CF1

from Cardiff

Performing in Barmouth

at St. John's Church

Saturday 28th February 7:30pm



Tickets £12.50

from The Dragon Theatre

01341 281697