



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE



PRIFYSGOL Y TRYDYDD OED

# Barmouth U3A Newsletter Winter 2017

Welcome to the Winter issue of our newsletter.

Well I say Winter—but I think that was a couple of weeks ago — certainly it seems to have been a very short season, but maybe there is more to come in February.

Always interested in prevarication, I was surfing the internet—when I was supposed to be finishing this Newsletter—to see what had happened on my birthday (12th of this month) in previous years. Whilst doing this I came across a site (it could only be American) which had a calendar of National days! - I now know that I share my birthday with National Curried Chicken Day, National Marzipan Day, National Pharmacist Day and, most intriguingly, National Kiss A Ginger Day!

This last one has been in existence since 2009 and was founded by a guy called Derek Forgi. There is even a Facebook page!. Geraldine intends to dye her hair next year!

Given my interest in trains something else caught my eye:

*In the echoing train shed behind the grimy Greek façade of London's Euston Station, Driver Ambrose Grant climbed into the cab of locomotive Number 5508. The bells of London joined the shrilling of train whistles to welcome a new year. Guard Arthur Smith switched his lamp from red to green, waved the "go ahead" to Driver Grant, and swung into the guard's van. At two minutes past midnight, Number 5508 chuffed out of the station for the run to Crewe. It pulled the first nationalized train to leave London.*

This piece was in Time Magazine published on 12th January 1948—my actual birth day although the event described was on New Years Day that year.

*Alan Vincent*

## Subscriptions for the next membership year.

After many years with the subscription rate unchanged at £10 the committee has had to recognise the realities of inflation etc. and have determined that our subscription rate should rise to **£12** for the new membership year, starting on 1st April this year.

Over the last 4 years our reserves have declined by almost £1000 and we have to ensure that this decline is, at least restrained. For information, this £2 increase will raise approximately £250 additional income each year.

We do have a couple of "associate" members (i.e. those who also belong to another branch) – their fee will also rise by £2 to **£8**.

*Alan Vincent, Chairman*

# Strollers Group

## November: Llanbedrog to Pwllheli

Not a good weather forecast for our November Strollers Walk but at least it wasn't raining as we started our day with the train journey to Pwllheli. As usual on arrival at Pwllheli, our first stop was to call in at Wetherspoons for morning coffee before catching the number 18 bus for the short journey to Llanbedrog, surprising the bus driver with our party of twelve in addition to his one additional passenger.



Arriving at Llanbedrog we walked down through the interesting village to the beach. Unfortunately the weather forecast proved correct and as we reached the beach the rain started. Walking along the beach the

light rain continued to come and go, but didn't detract from the lovely cliff and sea views with St Tudwal's Islands in the distance.

At the end of the beach a flight of steps took us up onto the coastal path following the route of the horse drawn tramway which once ran from Llanbedrog to Pwllheli. The Tramway was opened in 1894, initially to carry stone for construction purposes.



It later became a passenger carrying service but was destroyed by a major storm over North Wales in 1927 and never reopened.

The coastal path took us past Pwllheli Golf Course, until we came out along the front at Pwllheli promenade. As we walked back through the town the rain came on slightly harder but on reaching Wetherspoons we soon dried out with a hot meal, managing to get two vacant tables for our group which had now expanded to fourteen with two additional members joining us for the meal.

Most of us took advantage of it being Tuesday Steak Club Day with the alternative

of a special offer on Fish and Chips to bring an end to a most enjoyable day.

## December: Criccieth

For our December Strollers Walk we took the train to Criccieth Station where twelve of us enjoyed our first break with home made mince pies kindly provided by Dave while Misty, our visiting dog for the day, watched in anticipation of any left overs. Our walk then started by walking a short distance along the high street to join a bridleway which took us onto the coast path. Here we stopped





briefly to admire the interesting gardens and lovely sea views from a newly built house.

The footpath finally came out onto the north promenade where, after stopping to admire the art in a shop window and the ornate tiled frontage of what was the Chapel of Art (now a private house), we went down to walk along the beach. Misty enjoyed a run on the beach until we came to a steep drop.

Two brave members of the party managed to climb down, but the rest of us retraced our steps to take the easy route up the steps. Continuing along the promenade we came to the Castle.

Lyndsay and Trish had planned our second treat of the day with Mulled

Wine and more Mince Pies to be eaten at the Castle. Unfortunately on arrival at the castle we couldn't open the gate until we were told the technique by other visitors – a good kick at the base as it sticks in damp weather. After enjoying our feast we spent some time exploring the Castle ruins and grounds before continuing along to the South beach and into town for our lunch.

On finding the Cafe where we had planned to eat rather crowded, we found the "Lion Hotel" which had a reasonable menu and plenty of room where we could have a chat before catching the return train.

### January: Bala

Since Trish wasn't available to lead the January Strollers Walk, Louise and Eric kindly offered to repeat a walk at Bala which we last walked in June 2015. This walk proved very popular at the time and has since been done by other walking groups in the area. This was a great opportunity for any of our members who missed the walk last time and well worth repeating by those that had done it previously. It was nice to see two new members, Steve and Pat, joining us for the walk. We hope that they will become regular members of our group.



The most interesting walk included the river walk from the end of Bala Lake to the junction of the River Dee with the River Tryweryn, a visit to the top of "Tomen y Bala", one of the largest medieval mottes in Wales, and the extensive, but relatively unknown "Bala Caves". This time there were no volunteers to walk through the caves.



Thank you Louise and Eric for leading the walk.

*Editor's Note: the photo on the left shows that the group did enter the caves last time they visited this area in June 2015.*

## New Writing Group

We are hoping to set up a writing group later in the spring so anyone who is interested in this would you give your name to Evelyn Richardson or Chris Kingshott.

The idea is to have an eight session introduction to writing consisting of two sessions per month beginning in April and up to and including July.

The days, times and venue will be decided depending upon the requirements of the members. So if you are interested could you contact either of us and let us know when it would be convenient for you to attend so we can sort this out before we start.

We will provide an outline of the eight sessions at the beginning of the group and outline what we hope to achieve.

If this group is successful we will then consider following it up with another eight sessions which will build on the skills and knowledge developed in this first group.

The group will be open to any U3A member whether they have or haven't any previous experience of writing. The main aim of the group is to develop ones writing skills in a cooperative and supportive environment.

*Evelyn Richardson (01341 422125) Chris Kingshott (01341 251357)*

*Editor's Note: As Evelyn is away for part of February, try Chris first.*



## Singing For Fun

Nine years ago I ,with some trepidation, was trying to compile a programme of songs for the first Singing for Fun in February 2008.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think that in 2017 I would be beginning its 10th year. How I got landed with the task lies hidden in the mists of time but here we are still, singing, laughing and enjoying each other's company. The general pattern for the group hasn't changed over the years, sometimes I feel I should shake it up but then other times why fix it if it isn't broke.

It is hard to choose between custom and innovation. Perhaps some of the singers could put forward some ideas as to how we move forward. One thing I felt from early on was that we are a group not a choir, there are plenty of choirs around and to be in one requires dedication and quite often a lot of hard practise especially if they intend to perform.

You also need a knowledgeable and trained musician to lead them which I most definitely am not. One person we do have and who has been with us from the beginning is Martyn our pianist who is both knowledgeable and skilful and who has supported us with great technical skill and humour.

So onwards we go into our tenth year, in good shape, good attendance and good humour. Some of the singers have been regular attenders from the beginning, others have joined at various times throughout the years, we all contribute in different ways.

Keep on singing, you know it's good for you, all you need to join is to enjoy lifting up your voice with others. A great pastime and pick me up.

*Evelyn Richardson*

## Walking Group

The December walk was around Llanbedr with 12 people and three dogs coming on the trail. The walk started at Capel Salem and around the Afon Artro valley, there was some fine views and good company on the walk.

Thanks to Roy who made us stay on the right path.

The next walk in January around Glyn Aran is one that has been done in the past two years is a nice wooded walk at the back of Dolgellau. It will have been completed when the newsletter is produced.

*I would Like to inform walkers that in the coming months others will have to take on the role of walk organiser due to family matters. I may not be able to do recci's and sometimes even the monthly walk.*

*Pete Leyden*

## Barmouth Bridge

### Save the Date!

2017 sees the 150th anniversary of the opening of Barmouth Bridge.

Over the weekend of

**14th/15th October 2017**

there'll be events held in Barmouth to celebrate this iconic bridge.



We will keep you up to date with the details as they are published, but for now just put it in your diary!

## Discussion Group

The group has remained small but very loud in the various talks, we had a debate about culture a few months and the events in Europe have shown how much of an issue it is, for example.



Edward W Said noted that *'No one today is purely one thing --- Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively white, or black, or Western, or Oriental'*

Now that quote is something to think about!

The American election system and democracy was another topic and with the so-called election of the 45th President who did not win the vote on a majority of the popular vote, it says something about American politics.

The January meeting will have come and gone but we will be talking about a subject that concerns us all 'Money and Society'

*Pete Leyden*

## Home Town Research

We seemed to have reached a plateau with our research the past couple of months, probably due to Christmas festivities and flu which has laid low some of our members. Still a new year beckons and I m sure we will get down to some serious research and recording of the same.

One of the major difficulties is not so much what to include but what to leave out. I have more or less settled on looking at New Mills as I experienced as a child and it's life as a cotton town. One thing I have noticed is how little of the town I actually experienced a pattern emerging of the boundaries of home school church and the journeys between those places.

Many of the shops and businesses of the town were never entered by any of our family. My mother having very specific places that she patronised and those she would never enter. Her reasons lost in the mists of time. I enjoy doing the reading and thinking but show a marked reluctance to get it written down an attitude which has followed me for most of my life. Time to change and grasp the nettle so to speak. Well maybe tomorrow!

*Evelyn Richardson*

## Group Co-Ordinator

I am delighted to be able to report that we shall be having more groups opening in the coming months. The newest group, to start in April, will be a Writing Group, managed by Evelyn Richardson and Chris Kingshott. Full details elsewhere in this newsletter.

Currently we have 13 groups, not a lot compared with some branches but all have stood the test of time. Singing for Fun is in its tenth year. Digital Media, the newest of our groups is proving very popular and the range of queries is wide, but Alan's not daunted. If he doesn't know, he makes sure he does by the next meeting.

Book Group, always digressing from the subject had a wonderful lunch at Glenys Lawson's; three courses and wine. The book did get a mention.

Many of the groups are now self running, and have a core of regulars, Walking, Strolling, Lunch Group all keep going by the hard work of their respective leaders.

Watch out for new groups. If there is something you would like let me know and I will look into it and try and find numbers, resources etc.

*Geraldine Vincent*

## Short Net Tennis / Badminton

Just a short message to all our Short Net Tennis Players and Badminton Players.

Wishing you all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

May the light always find you on a dreary day.

When you need to be home may you find your way.

May you always find courage to take a chance.

And never find frogs in your underpants!

*Keep smiling, Wendy Bramley.*



## Book Group

### Book Club Review of "The Girl With The White Flag" By Ed Penney

We read and reviewed this book in November. Ed, the author was , in the past a member of Barmouth U3A and I remember his ironic and amusing offerings in the early days of the writing group and wishing I could produce similar excellent pieces.

Consequently I was happy to recommend his first published novel to the book club and why incidentally I somehow was inveigled into writing up the review.

One of the aspects of books which we have become increasingly aware of over the years is the many genres of books available and how different they are in many aspects.

The general consensus of the group was this was a "man's book" and not a book that we particularly enjoyed reading but which we could see would appeal to readers who like a bit of fighting and *derring-do* in their reading material.

The book was well written and flowed through its many twists and turns seamlessly.

I personally thought in places was a bit cliché ridden. i.e. The warm hearted tart who would occasionally give of her services to certain men, namely our hero for nothing. The man who however much he was drunk, overhung, short of cash for some strange reason had beautiful women falling at his feet and lastly that ex wives were mean and vindictive always after money with which to support the hero's neglected offspring and that all an absent dad had to do was to turn up occasionally to a school production to satisfy his fatherly duties.

Still we could see this appealing to certain men and maybe some women and the denouement with guns a blazing and the anti hero overcoming evil had enough action to satisfy any inner action aspirations one might have.

Good luck with the next book Ed, I'm sure our hero can stay sober enough to save another day. By the way the intriguing title relates to a tragic incident from the hero's army career which leads to some PTDS and his alcoholism and is sensitively handled.

*Evelyn Richardson*

## Barmouth Lifeboat History

Almost two centuries of bravery, rescues and tragedies have been collected into a new book on the history of Barmouth lifeboat.

From the awe-inspiring bravery of a Barmouth man who saved seven lives after a shipwreck in 1825, to the story of a binocular glass brought all the way back to the station from Canada 120 years after being awarded to a Barmouth Coxswain, the book charts some of the fascinating tales from the years of saving lives at sea in the town.

The book was written by U3A member Norma Stockford, whose family have served on Barmouth lifeboats since 1939, and David Baily, who retired from the sea as a Master Mariner in 2009 and is the station's Lifeboat Operations Manager. Norma now holds the post of Lifeboat Press Officer.

As well as the factual details the book gives particular focus to portraying the lives and experiences of the people involved in the station's creation. It covers each of the named coxswains from Humphrey Jones in 1866 to today's present Coxswain, Peter Davies. It also outlines Barmouth's heritage as an important shipbuilding centre and tells of shipwrecks and rescues from the nineteenth century, covering heroic stories and tragedies. The book tells of brave volunteers, past and present.

The book, which costs £8.95, is available from the local RNLI shop in Barmouth or from Norma herself (01341 280742 or email: [stockford@btinternet.com](mailto:stockford@btinternet.com)) and all profits will help the RNLI charity to save more lives at sea.



## Digital Media Group

We started again in January with a few attendees, but a lot of apologies (so interest is still there).

Another “freewheeling” session covering, in particular, moving images from camera cards to your PC.

Back again on the 22nd February.

Note also that there are formal courses running locally on PC and tablet usage—details on back page.

*Alan Vincent*

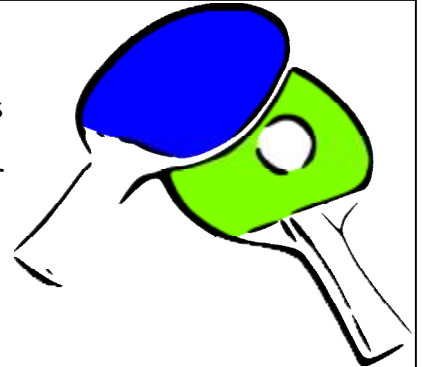
## Table Tennis

Another successful few months. We have had new members join us and we are regularly 13 players. The three tables are much in demand with a mixture of 2, 3, or 4 players per table. The biggest problem is not the playing of the ball as keeping the score!! It's all very amicable and great fun.

It makes the big hall in the Leisure Centre come alive and it is a joy to see. You can imagine the looks on the faces of some of the younger generation Barmouth lads passing us on the way to the gym. Sometimes they stop and can't believe that we are really quite good. 'We ain't past it yet lads'.

Fridays at noon in the Leisure Centre. Everybody welcome. Plenty of kit and no experience necessary.

*Geraldine Vincent*



## Lunch Group

Yes, we are 'still here'. Unfortunately we have lost a few regulars for personal reasons and we miss them. But I'm happy to report that we've also gained new members and about a dozen of us dine once a month.

We normally eat at Bwyty'r Gader at Coleg Merion Dwyfor, where we enjoy very interesting food, well cooked, well presented and very reasonable.

When the college cannot cater for us we visit other eateries in the county from Llanuwchllyn to Talybont and had a cream tea at Penmaenucha.

Do feel free to join us – we'll be delighted to see you and would give you a warm welcome – we're a friendly bunch.

Look forward to hearing from some of you soon.

*Rhiannon Roberts*

## Why not join our committee?

It is likely that at our AGM in May we will lose another couple of members from our committee. Have you thought about joining to help us with the organisation of Barmouth U3A.

We meet every second month, meetings take about 90 minutes, typically covering finance, groups, upcoming events and issues arising from the North Wales Network (of which we are a member) and from the National Third Age Trust.

If you are interested give Alan a call on 01341 247415 to find out more about this vital role in the operation of our U3A.





## Sources magazine

The educational publication of the U3A edited by Phyllis Hughes.

### The Editor would like to hear from your U3A

A variety of subjects will be covered by Sources Magazine during 2017 and editor Phyllis Hughes would like to hear from your groups specialising in these areas.

The summer edition will cover food and drink appreciation, antiques and international exchanges.

The autumn edition will look at the different ways of running a creative writing group.

Please let relevant group leaders know that these topics are coming up and encourage them to contribute their articles and pictures to the magazine.

### Journalists & photographers wanted

Once again photographic groups may like to submit pictures relevant to these areas, or indeed any shots they are particularly proud of.

If there are other activities or items that you think are interesting then they would also be welcomed. In the forthcoming new year edition there is an article about Historic England's search for information about some of their iconic buildings and another about cinema organs for instance.

## HealthWise

One of our members, Martin Hughes, recently attended a HealthWise training afternoon at St Asaph for people interested in championing it.

It's a Welsh Government funded initiative, described as the first of its kind in Europe, and hopes to collect information from 260,000 people.

The aim is to build an in-depth picture of the health of the nation, using the data to plan NHS services in future. Anyone over 16 can take part and the Welsh government has assured that the data is anonymised and will only be used for research.

Having attended the training he is now interested in opportunities to talk to people about it, though only in small groups.

If any of you are interested in the project and would like to get involved then you are welcome to contact Martin to have a chat.

The website is at: **Join HealthWise Wales:**

[www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/join-healthwise-wales](http://www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/join-healthwise-wales)

*Martin Hughes 01766 780540*

# Monthly Meetings

## November: Joyce's War

The speaker in November was Rhiannon Evans talking about Joyce's War: The Second World War Journal of a Queen Alexandra Nurse, written by Joyce Ffoulkes Parry.

Professor Emeritus Rhiannon Evans is the eldest of Joyce Parry's four children. Until her retirement in 2009 she was Pro Vice-Chancellor at Edge Hill University

The journal came to light after Joyce's death in 1992 and it gives us a valuable insight into the conditions she endured as well as social aspects of this era.

Rhiannon told us about her mother Joyce who was an Australian nurse who came to the UK in 1937 to find her roots in Wales and Liverpool.

On the outbreak of war she signed up as a Queen Alexandra nurse and served for four years with the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (Reserve) where she nursed aboard ambulance trains, hospital ships such as His Majesty's Hospital Ship Karapara and in hospitals such as the 47th British General Hospital in Calcutta and she described in detail, working in various specialities which provides us with a wide range of insight into nursing techniques of the day.

Joyce Parry tells a vivid, compelling and honest story of adventure, bravery, friendship, homesickness and wartime romance. Her observations about everything from the bureaucracy of the army to how poetry and shopping helped sustain her through four difficult, sometimes dangerous but extraordinary years until she left India to begin her married life in Wales, give us an invaluable understanding about World War Two activities in these regions thanks to the discovery of the journals after her death.

Due to her evading the sharp eyes of the censors we are fortunate to learn about nursing practices; care and treatments, lack of pay and also political events and the changes in the war.

It was a very interesting and educational afternoon enjoyed by all present and the book is definitely recommended reading.

## December: Christmas Party

The Arts Room was decorated by a dedicated group of members, with candles, table decorations, soft lights and Christmas Carols playing quietly ready to welcome everyone to the party.

After the guests had arrived and Alan had welcomed everyone; the soup and rolls were served, crackers were pulled, party poppers were popped, drinks were sipped and mince pies were munched.

After the meal everyone concentrated on the picture quiz, which this year was not straightforward, it had a twist that made it more difficult but very enjoyable.

A beetle drive followed, some laughter some uncertainty as not all present had taken part in a beetle drive before. Alan's films were next, (fast becoming a regular part of our Christmas celebrations) and then Geraldine gave out the raffle prizes to the lucky winners.

To round off the afternoon Evelyn's singing for fun ladies entertained us and brought the party to a close.

A huge thank you to the following for making the afternoon such a success:

Everyone that prepared the Arts Room, served the food, washed up

Evelyn and Danny for preparing the delicious soup, Evelyn, for the scrumptious bread rolls

Bronwen and David for the challenging picture quiz

Alan for trawling through the internet to find films to entertain us

Geraldine for sourcing the raffle prizes

Evelyn and singing for fun ladies

## January

This month's speaker was Adrian Edwards who came with his 'Lady' and a delightful barn owl.

All fully dressed in Medieval costume and armoury. A delightful talk, illustrating all the facets of warfare and the types of weapons used.

Many questions were asked and the speaker was accomplished in replying. It was an entertaining hour and fully enjoyed by all who attended.

There was some audience participation as you can see from the photograph.

*Jacqui Puddle*



Sir John de le Puddle



## National U3A Summer Schools for 2017

**17th - 20th July at Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire**

Cryptic Crosswords; France; Globalisation; History; Literature; Maths; Recorders; Sexuality in the ancient world.

**14th - 17th August at Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester**

Creative Writing; Garden History; Latin; Literature; Music; Poetry; Shakespeare; Singing.

**11th - 14th September at Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester**

Art history; Drama; Exploring English; History; Music; Opera; Russian Revolutions; Spanish; Writing.

**BOOKING IS OPEN**

Contact the Summer School team on 0208 466 6139 for more details.

# Local IT Courses

These are weekly, free courses and are open to all abilities and ages;

## Dragon Theatre, Barmouth

Mondays - 10:00 - 12:30. Basic computers (Laptops provided)

Mondays - 1:00 - 3:00. Get to Know your Tablet (iPad and Android) Bring your own device or Samsung tablets provided)

## Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Dolgellau

Tuesdays - 12:30 - 3:00. Basic computers (held in IT suite, Business Point building)

Wednesday - 1:30 - 4:00. Intermediate computers (same as above)

## Porthmadog Football Club

Tuesdays - 12:30 - 3:00. Basic computers (Laptops provided)

Tuesdays - 3:30 - 5:30. Get to know your Tablet (iPad and Android) Bring your own device or iPads provided.

Tuesdays - 6:00 - 8:30. Intermediate computers (Laptops provided)

We are also collecting names for Bookkeeping and Spanish courses to be held in Dolgellau from February. These will be held on a Thursday evening for 10 weeks and cost £60 for each block of 10.

Full details from the venues or contact:

Wendy Cleaver, ACL Co-ordinator/Tutor. [W.cleaver@gllm.ac.uk](mailto:W.cleaver@gllm.ac.uk)

01341 422827 ext:8418

## Barmouth U3A, Officers 2016/17

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### Treasurer

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The Spring newsletter will be published end of April.  
Please submit your contributions by **10th April**.