

New Mills and District



December
2015



Happy Christmas everyone!

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WEBSITE: www.newmillsu3a.org.uk

Thank you for all the help

From the
CHAIR

by ANN APPS

OUR well-attended AGM was held on October 20 in New Mills Town Hall, during which elections for the 2015-2016 committee were held.

Because there were no nominations for a new Chair, I will continue as Chair for another year. There is a list of the new committee on page 12 of this newsletter.

Thank you to members who have retired from various roles: Lin Thomas who has served on the committee for three years and as our Deputy Chair for the last two; Chris Bond who has served on the committee as a non-voting member for the last four years and who acted as our 'external liaison', maintaining our contacts with neighbouring U3As; Angus Munro for the time he was able to serve on the committee; and Jan Pool for arranging some interesting speakers.

Also thank you for those members who helped the U3A in many ways but who have sadly died during the year. And thank you to everyone else who helps out in any way, in particular the group leaders.

Our U3A continues to be successful with a membership of 588, and 61 groups listed on our website, with several new ones started during the year.

Some of our new groups have originated from ideas received from the membership survey we held. Our groups cover a wide variety of topics, enabling the sharing of

skills and knowledge to fulfil the U3A's aims of learning, recreation and companionship.

Our finances are healthy and the financial report was accepted by the meeting. We successfully changed our membership year to run from the beginning of April, to make accounting easier. Consequently we changed the groups' membership audit to the end of July. This audit is necessary for insurance purposes to ensure that all people attending our groups are paid up members of our, or a neighbouring, U3A.

We have continued to maintain links with other U3As through the Pennine Link and the Derbyshire Network. Two of our committee members represented us at the East Midlands U3As annual conference and AGM in July.

Thank you to everyone for being such enthusiastic members. We now look forward to another successful year for our U3A.

Vacancy

We still have vacancies for committee members. In particular we have a vacancy for a Deputy Chair, who could learn about running our U3A with a view to becoming Chair in a year's time. So please think about whether you would be willing to help to run your U3A. Please ask me, or any committee member, if you would like information about what being a committee member entails.



Sheila Hibbs...she and Sally Auld have led the dancing group for many years

Dedicated to dancing

SHEILA Hibbs has been leading the Country/International Folk Dancing group along with Sally Auld since it started in 2006.

She devotes many hours to arranging the sequence of dances we are to do at the meetings, gathering the right music on cd and tape and practising the steps at home. In this she is often helped by Sally or her much-loved granddaughter Emily to whom she has passed on her love of dance.

Emily has appeared as a Sugar

Flower in the recent production of the Nutcracker at the Opera House, Buxton, and Sheila is rightly very proud of her.

Sheila gives us lots of praise, always tells us how much we have improved since last time and, along with Sally, she always makes it a happy and fun group to attend.

All round Sheila does so much more than 'play the music' for us. Well done Sheila and Sally.

Sue Rivers

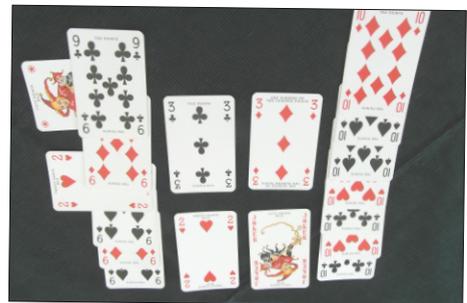
CANASTA

OUR beginners group is taking shape and fortunately we have three players who have played before and they give much needed guidance.

The games are played with good humour and hilarity. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month at Footsteps, Market Street, Whaley Bridge and the third Thursday at the Adult Education Centre, Spring Bank, New Mills.

New members are always welcome whether they are beginners or have experience of playing.

Pam Hartley



BIRDS AND BOTANY

AN earlier than usual 9.15am start saw nine of our group assemble at the Co-op car park for our last scheduled meet of the season. We were to travel to Parkgate on the Dee Estuary, described as the only seaside resort in Cheshire, for a special event organised by the RSPB.

The information said a high spring tide would flood the salt marsh and drive the waders and waterfowl up towards the sea wall promising spectacular views.

Leaving New Mills, the rain had stopped and the sun was peeping through but as we drove along the M56 we ran into heavy rain, not at all what we wanted. Fortunately, the Met Office forecast proved reliable and by the time we arrived at Parkgate promenade the rain had stopped and the stiff south westerly breeze would help increase the height of the tide.

I think most of us recognised it would be a good day's birding, as within the first five minutes and while we were still putting

The early birds catch the tide

on extra layers of clothing against the chill wind, we saw a short-eared owl being buzzed by a crow and a great white egret flap leisurely across the marsh.

Once a bustling 18th century port, the silting of the Dee and the growth of grasses on the mudflats means that Parkgate promenade is now several

'I think most of us recognised it would be a good day ...'

hundred yards from the sea, separated by marshes that are owned by the RSPB. Walking towards the RSPB gazebo we passed the impressive building of the former Mostyn House School, now converted into apartments.

By 11am quite a crowd had built up round the RSPB tent to watch the sea swirl in over the marsh in the next hour to high tide.

Fortuitously, the RSPB had chosen a location opposite the Little Teahouse, where we were able to refuel with coffee and a selection from their vast array of home-made cakes. I can vouch for the pear, ginger and treacle sponge – delicious.

The creeks and lagoons in the marsh contained teal and mallard, coot and lapwing, together with black-headed gulls, minus their distinctive dark chocolate-brown skull caps at this time of year. Also collecting together were a number of little egrets among which stood two great white egrets, their much larger size, similar to that of a grey heron that was also visible, made them an easy spot.

Right: Living dangerously on a trip in August to Longshaw Estate near Hathersage, 1600 acres of moor, gritstone edges and extensive woodland
Below: Wandering back to the cars from the Dee Estuary



Further out large numbers of waders probed the mud or flew back and forth along the estuary. Too far away to be identified with our binoculars, we were able to see they were flocks of redshank and black-tailed godwit through the RSPB telescopes. One of the 'scopes was focussed on a branch sticking out of the mud upon which sat a pair of

peregrine falcons, presumably treating the hundreds of waders that formed a backdrop as a take-away buffet!

The flooding tide drove a flock of several hundred redshank into the air where they wheeled and turned like a mini murmuration of starlings. The creeks and lagoons were disappearing as they were engulfed by the

rising tide, driving voles back towards the sea wall. One was snatched from the water by a black-headed gull which was then mobbed by its fellows as they tried to bully it into giving up its prey. By noon and high tide, the marsh had been inundated and the sea was swirling against the sea wall as we sat on benches in the now warm sun to eat our sandwiches while the short-eared owl once again quartered the marshes in search of its own lunch.

Afterwards we travelled to RSPB Burton Mere, a wetland environment of

Continued on page 6



The flooding tide drove hundreds of birds into the air where they wheeled and turned

Continued from page 5

freshwater scrapes, reed beds and farmland. Several hundred teal were dabbling in the lakes or roosting on the islands along with shovellers and shelducks. Among the flocks of lapwings and golden plovers was a diminutive curlew sandpiper that we would have missed had not one of the regulars pointed it out.

Further out on the meadows large flocks of pink-footed geese were

grazing and the feeders were attracting the usual great tits and blue tits along with a nuthatch and the first bramblings of the season.

In the other direction we saw several common snipe camouflaged in the vegetation on the reed bed scrape as a kingfisher flashed by.

While waiting for a glimpse of an elusive jack snipe that we were assured had been visible a few minutes before we arrived (isn't that always the case?), we were treated to

the call of a Cetti's warbler.

Described on the RSPB website as a skulking bird rarely seen and usually identified by its loud call, the warbler did put in an appearance scrambling about through the base of the reeds for several minutes.

A personal first for me, as I'd heard this little bird several times previously but had never managed a glimpse before.

So, a perfect end to a splendid day.

Although named Birds and Botany we have catholic tastes and are interested in all varieties of flora and fauna. Should you be interested in joining us on our safaris, the programme for Birds and Botany 2016 will be on our webpage in the new year.

***Fred Pickering
(Joint Coordinator with
Dave Pierce)***

THE Singing For Fun group is flourishing but the tutor, Moira Hill, has retired. We now have Rose Hodgson who teaches in the same way, with bags of enthusiasm. The group usually meets on the first Monday of every month at the Providence Church, Mellor Road, 1.15-3.15pm. An exception will be on January 11, 2016, which is the second Monday.

Once upon a time

THE two geology groups started the new session with a study about calculating geological time...

James Ussher, Irish Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland (1581-1656), was a 'Creationist'.

He began his calculation of the age of the earth by adding the ages of the 21 generations of people of the Old Testament, beginning with Adam and Eve. This took Ussher up to the first destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem during the reign of Persian king Nebuchadnezzar.

Ussher tied the date of Nebuchadnezzar's death (562 BC) to the modern Julian calendar. Once the date of 562 BC was calculated, there remained only the simple matter of adding 562 years to the 3,442 years represented by the generations of the Old Testament up to that time, giving 4004 BC.



James Ussher:
Would you Adam and Eve it?

The deciding factor for Ussher came from Genesis. When Adam and Eve found themselves in the Garden of Eden, the fruit was invitingly ripe. Ussher reasoned, therefore, that it must have been harvest time, which corresponded with the autumnal equinox.

The Sunday in 4004 BC which came nearest the autumnal equinox, was October 23. So he calculated that the world was formed on Sunday, October 23, 4004 BC at 9am.

We have since come on a bit further than that. The latest calculation by radiometric dating of the age of the oldest rocks is 4.7 to 5 billion years. But that is only the date since the rocks cooled.

We probably have to add another 4-plus billion years back to the formation of the molten ball.

Derek Brumhead

Prospective members

A reminder that a non-member is allowed to attend a meeting, either group or monthly, once, as a taster. But if they wish to attend further meetings, then they must join our U3A. This applies to all groups, including the Outings group.

Royal progress to Leicester

OUTINGS

ON an October morning that broke our run of good weather on our trips 45 members of the Outings group patiently waited in the rain for a coach to take us on a journey back through history to the reign of Richard III.

Unfortunately not only was the weather against my plans but the traffic was too with our coach arriving over half an hour late for an extremely tightly planned day. For the organiser it was a nail-biting journey while our time at the Bosworth Battlefield Visitor Centre was ticking away. At that moment I was wishing Richard III back under the carpark.

So, time was limited at this excellent battlefield interpretation centre, which covered all aspects of the battle that took place on August 22, 1485, when the last

Plantagenet king lost his crown. Displays included armour, artefacts from the battlefield and details of the research to pinpoint the actual location of the battle.

On the top of the hillside flies the standard of King Richard alongside the memorial sundial which commemorates the battle and

all those who fought and died there.

To my knowledge only one lady managed to walk the mile and a half Battlefield Trail.

After lunch it was back on the coach on our way to Leicester. Driving through the tranquil Leicestershire countryside it was hard to imagine such brutal warfare taking place.

The King Richard III Heritage Centre is located on the site of the medieval Greyfriars Chapel where the late King was originally buried. Our tour began in the Throne Room where various characters spoke up for Richard, including his wife

Anne Neville. They were projected onto the wall giving me the feeling I had walked into a Phillipa Gregory book.

The ground floor of the centre covered the life and death of

Richard with the first floor explaining the science and technology involved in the discovery of his body and the proving of his identity. The actual grave can be viewed under the car park floor where an image of the skeleton showed his curved spine.

Our last place to visit was Leicester



Richard's final resting place in Leicester Cathedral



The Heritage Centre is fascinating ... a facial reconstruction (above) was done of Richard III after his skeleton was found

Cathedral, conveniently situated opposite the Centre. Here Richard's bones were finally reinterred earlier this year under a block of pale Swaledale fossil limestone. This stone bears a deeply incised cross symbolising that light can flood through and death is not the end.

It stands on a plinth of Kilkenny marble bearing the King's name, date, motto and coat of arms. I was particularly interested in seeing this, as a friend's son-in-law had carried out the carving.

There was one last thing to see, the funeral pall which had covered the King's oak coffin.

This exquisite piece of embroidery is the work of one lady, Jacquie Binns. On a black background 18 figures in groups of three represent the past and present. On one side there is Queen Anne Neville in heraldic

robes, a knight, a medieval bishop and a friar.

The modern side includes people from Leicester City Council, the archaeologist and osteology expert holding the skull, the bishop from the Cathedral and members of the Richard III Society. Six Seraphim separate the groups of figures with a Crown of Roses embroidered at the head.

The red/green shot silk used for the figures acknowledges the colours of Leicester City Tigers rugby team.

At the end of the day we were left to decide whether Richard was the villain he was made out to be by Shakespeare. Was he responsible for sending the Princes to the Tower?

In Leicester they are now trying hard to create a better image of the man.

Barbara Matthews

Visit from a piano virtuoso

ON a wet Wednesday afternoon early in October several members of New Mills and District U3A attended an excellent piano recital in High Lane Village Hall, which certainly brightened up a dismal day for us.

The audience were enraptured listening to the piano playing of Andrew Wilde, who is a celebrated, international concert pianist. Andrew's classical music repertoire included works by Chopin and the well known Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata.

Andrew also talked about his music, as well as answering

questions from the floor about his life as a pianist and how he manages to memorise many pieces of music.

This concert was organised by Marple and District U3A for members of the Pennine Link U3As. The profits from the concert were donated to the North West Music Trust who supported and sponsored the concert as part of their Outreach Programme. The Pennine Link is a local network of neighbouring U3As, to which we belong along with High Lane, Marple, Marple Bridge and Mellor, Romiley and Tameside U3As.

Ann Apps

THE First East Midlands U3As Summer School will be held in August, 2016, at Nottingham Trent University, Brackenhurst Campus (right) beginning with dinner on Tuesday evening, August 16, and running until lunchtime on Friday, August 19.

The plan is to run courses on the topics listed below. The final selection will depend on registered student interest. Too few students will mean a course won't run.

Below Stairs In Country Houses.

Churches: Their architecture and



changing function.

Digital Scrapbooking: A way to share photos.

Encouraging

Participative Learning.

Environmental Studies.

Gardening: The ultimate downsize.

Lawrence, Landscape and Literature.

Walking and Wildlife.

Delegates will be asked

to indicate their preference for the course they wish to attend. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis on receipt of a completed application form and deposit.

More information can be found on the East Midlands Association of U3As website.



Our pre-Christmas lunch

PYRAMID ARCHAEOLOGY

Something to celebrate

EARLIER this month we held an 'End of Term' lunch at the Ram's Head, Disley, where all the group meetings have been held.

It celebrated a course of study which has included the Lambayque Valley, Peru, where there are 250 pyramids – one of the most stunning pyramid sites in the world. Archaeological excavations are ongoing in this valley and more pyramid complexes are still being uncovered.

Three ancient cities were built in succession in the valley: Pampa Grande, Butan Grande and Túcume. For some

reason each was abandoned before a new one was built.

We visited pyramids at Chichen Itza in Mexico along with the Teotihuacan pyramids and, of course, we had to study the Great Pyramid at Giza built for the Pharaoh Khufu, as well as the Red Pyramid at Dashur built for the Pharaoh Senefru. The amazing thing was, we uncovered the architects for these pyramids (Nefermaat and Imhotep) built nearly 5,000 years ago, yet finding architects for the later pyramids proved almost impossible.

We studied pyramids as far away as China, Cambodia and Italy. We also looked at building materials and how each country's methods differed, some built in mud which deteriorated, others in granite or stone, plus some pyramids had been covered with a type of plaster or limestone.

In the end our conclusion was that Erik Von Daniken was incorrect in thinking that our ancestors were visited by aliens who influenced early human culture, resulting in the building of pyramids.

Sue Boothby

FRENCH CONVERSATION

PARLEZ-vous français? Then come and join us on the first and third Thursday of the month at New Mills Golf Club, 10.15–12.15.

We're a friendly bunch with a range of abilities and the coffee is great! We take it in turns to provide something to read to start us off and that will, usually, spark off a conversation. Contact me if you want more information about the group.

Wendy Cheshire

New Mills and District U3A Committee 2015-2016

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MANY thanks to those of you who have pitched in to this edition of your U3A Newsletter. Email articles and pictures for inclusion in the next edition (March, 2016) to: newsletter@newmillsu3a.org.uk

Please understand that contributions may be edited.

Mike Perry