New Mills and District U3A

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

August 2018

Le Club Francais took advantage of the sunshine with a wonderful bring and share lunch at Bob and Christine Wass's house.

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Read the Newsletter in colour on the website: www.newmillsu3a.org.uk

Fulfilling the U3A's triple aims

WELCOME to our Summer newsletter which I hope you will enjoy and from which you will gain some insight into the current activities of our organisation.

Our U3A has continued to function successfully throughout 2018, thanks to the enthusiastic commitment and support of members who volunteer their skills and services in many different areas – as evidenced by the reports and articles in this newsletter. We have 600 members – including 35 who have joined in the last few months – with around 55 groups covering a wide variety of topics, which are continually changing and evolving as new groups start up.

The publicity leaflet produced in August 2017, which was distributed to libraries, surgeries, CABs and other venues, was a great success and an updated version is now being produced.

Our Groups Display Meeting (where we showcase our activities to the local community) is now a regular feature in the New Mills Festival programme and as such is an 'Open' meeting which has successfully attracted new members. This event will take place on September 18 in New Mills Town Hall.

Finally - an invitation to members to attend our AGM on November 20. We have changed the format to make it more 'people friendly'. Please come along to hear a review of the last 12 months and our plans for the future on fulfilling the U3A's triple aims of Learning, Recreation and Companionship.

From the CHAIR

by LESLEY MASON

French for fun

WHY not join us? We are the French Conversation Group and meet on the first and third Thursday of the month at New Mills Golf Club.

Our members range from fluent to "getting by" fairly well. We take it in turns to provide an article to read and translate from a variety of sources. In the past we've read about the strike on the French Railways, discussed the pros and cons of driverless cars and then went on to think about first names and whether they affect your character. An eclectic mix!

We're a sociable group; why not give us a try?

Wendy Cheshire

A photograph of one of our strolls in Etherow Country Park. We had a prosecco at Neil Baker's memorial bench

STROLLERS

"A word about our Strollers
We're a jolly little Group
We stroll along life's highways
and talk and walk (more talk than walk)
as on the way we troop

Then a stop for coffee and refreshments
just to get over the strain
and on the fourth Monday of every month
we will do it all over again"

Wendy Woollas

Andy plays to a a very appreciative audience

AT July's Monthly Meeting Andy Smith treated the members to a wonderful trip down a memory lane of songs from the last hundred years with at least one item from each decade. We listened to live music from the songs of the Beatles, Buddy Holly, Joe Brown and Adele to name but a few. Guitar or ukulele music accompanied everything with the addition of audience participation. A happy and fascinating morning enjoyed by all.

Christine Wass

Memories of Jay

James Turner, who died towards the end of last year, was a U3A stalwart for many years ...

BIRDS AND BOTANY

JAMES (Jay) Turner was a founder member of the New Mills U3A Birds and Botany Group with Patrick Anderson.

For many years he led this small group up hill and down dale in all sorts of weather looking at plants and birds.

He was extremely observant and knowledgeable and often able to add a little anecdote about the English country names of plants that he knew by their proper Latin names.

Affection

Millers Dale was one of his favourite places and on one of his last outings to this dale he was hoping to find the elusive Grass of Parnassus at Priestcliffe Lees. The final rise up to the meadow was too much for him, so we went looking by ourselves. Alas we didn't find any of those beautiful flowers on that occasion.

On previous outings to Millers Dale we had spotted bee orchids. We also found Jacob's Ladder and Mullein in Lathkill Dale and Enchanter's Nightshade in Taddington Dale. I shall always be grateful to Jay for opening my eyes to some of Derbyshire's rarer plants.

He was a butterfly enthusiast and many of his group will remember seeing him on his knees in a limestone meadow with dozens of tiny black Chimney Sweeper moths fluttering round his head!

Jay was also good on birds. I remember with affection when, to his delight, we saw a Bearded Tit and a Kingfisher on the same day at Carsington Reservoir. He was always pleased to hear Jays in the Fernilee Valley, to spot Dippers in the Wye below Monsall Head and Pied Flycatchers in the woods at Coombes Valley.

Jay was always highly thoughtful in his choice of walk, timing them with the seasons to give the best opportunity for observation.

He also loved ice cream, and at the end of walks to his beloved Lathkill Dale I remember him sitting on the village green outside the cafe in Monyash enjoying a rum and raisin cornet.

He was a learned man, an academic, sometimes a bit tetchy, fiercely independent, but he seemed to enjoy sharing his love of birds and flowers and the countryside with us, often with a wry smile on his face.

Thank you Jay.

Liz Wilson

Jay Turner pictured on one of our U3A holidays

SPEAKERS

OUR forthcoming Monthly Meeting speakers and events are as follows:

September 18
This meeting will be our annual groups display. Everyone always enjoys watching demonstrations from the various groups and looking at the displays around the room. We have some vey talented people in our U3A.

October 16
Joy Wilcox will present her work with the Donkey Sanctuary. She will talk about her involvement, historical and present day with the donkeys.

November 20
AGM time. At this meeting we will look at the previous 12 months of our U3A, and will look forward to the next year.
There will be an election of officers and committee members. We hope that U3A members will consider joining the committee to help in its running. This is such a vital part of our success.

December 18
It's the famous Christmas Quiz! We are fortunate to have one of our members, Maggie Evans, who prepares the quiz for us. It is a real fun-filled morning with coffee and mince pies as well as prizes for the quiz winners. A great morning to end the year.

Mavis Worthington

Back in time at home with the ancestors

GENEALOGY

IN May the Genealogy Group had a change from our usual monthly meetings in New Mills Library Lecture Room. We went instead on a voyage of discovery into 15th-century Stockport to learn how some of the ancestors we have discovered may have lived their lives.

Staircase House has stood in Stockport's Market Place for over 500 years. It was the home of various families of merchants, including at one stage members of the Shallcross family from Whaley Bridge.

Surprising

Tree-ring dating on timbers in the original cruck frame pinpoints the winter of 1459/60 as the year the oak tree that formed it was felled.

Over the centuries the house grew in size, and thatched roof and wattle and daub walls were replaced by slate and brick, but some of the original structure remained as interior walls.

The house was badly damaged by fire in the 1990s, and rescued and restored by the council to become part of the Stockport Museum service. For those who have not been it is well worth a visit. It is surprising to find such an old building surviving in the midst of a busy town, and the council have done an excellent job on restoring the hall and presenting its history.

Parts of the original structure have been saved, and there is a most interesting patchwork quilt of a wall where different ages of building materials and styles can be identified. The rooms have been restored to reflect different periods in the life of the building, so you wander through from the 1600s to the 1940s, listening to recorded commentary about everyday life.

We learnt a lot about the types of food available, how it was stored and prepared. One room was dedicated to how rush

LEFT: Lots to learn in the 17th-century parlour

RIGHT: Hard at work in the Counting House

LEFT: Listening to commentary in the kitchen

BELOW: The ancient exterior of Staircase House

lighting was prepared and used. In another we could try our hand at writing with a quill pen.

Unlike many stately home visits, Staircase House offers the chance to touch the exhibits, sit on the furniture and get a better feel of the place. It also gives a good insight into the lives of the local middle class families rather than the landed gentry.

The house takes its name from the magnificent carved staircase running up the middle of the building.

This was built in 1618 and though badly damaged in the fire some of the original newel posts can be seen. Craftsmen were brought in to rebuild the parts that could not be salvaged, so the staircase now has a two-tone look with the dark old wood and the pale newer panels.

The visit was much enjoyed by all the group, and gave us plenty to discuss over lunch at the Plaza, on our bus ride home, and at our June meeting back in New Mills looking through the photographs taken by members. We all felt we came home much wiser about the everyday lives of our ancestors, and keen to make similar voyages into the past over the coming months.

Margaret De Motte

THE Solstice Stones stand on Goytside Meadows adjacent to the Peak Forest Canal at Newtown. They stand along the line of the two degrees west meridian which passes through New Mills Town Hall. We are eight minutes behind Greenwich time, hence we saw the solstice at 13.08 (British Summer Time). Note the shadow on the mark. The winter solstice can be seen high up on the furthest stone.

Derek Brumhead

GEOLOGY

THE Geology Group earlier this year had a series of lectures from their tutor, Pete Webb, on the Geology of the Peak District.

They learned about conditions at the time the varied rocks of the Carboniferous System were laid down, between 360 million and 300 million years ago, when our area lay at the equator!

The rocks include the Carboniferous Limestone, laid down in a warm, clear, shallow tropical sea, and which underlies the White Peak.

Mountain chains were then uplifted, and sand and clay were deposited in deltas, forming what we now know as the Millstone Grit of the Dark Peak. A coastal plain then developed, on which grew the vegetation that was buried, and hardened, and became the coal seams of the Goyt Valley and elsewhere.

We followed up these classroom activities with several field trips this summer, to look at all of the rocks outlined above.

We also looked at rocks of the Permian System, bright red sandstones that were laid down in a hot desert, because by then (300 million to 250 million years ago) our region had drifted northwards and was suffering a dry desert climate.

Future topics will include fossils, minerals, and the geological history of our region.

Pete Webb

Who's won this one then?

BOULES

THIS summer a small group of Francophile sportswomen and sportsmen have gathered at 2.30 on Monday afternoons at the Memorial Park in Marple to play pétanque/boules.

If you're not certain what pétanque is, it's like lawn bowls on gravel. The games have been most enjoyable, conducted with stereotypical English decorum without any of the volatile excitability sometimes encountered in French contests.

Bob Wass

Gallery diary date

'UNRAVELLING the Whitworth' at Manchester's Whitworth Art Gallery is a National Third Age Trust event open to all U3A members.

The Whitworth holds one of the largest global collections of textiles and wallpapers dating from the first century AD to the present day. U3A members will hear from curators and experts and learn about creative processes, methods and ideas behind some of the work. There will also be a tour of the highlights of both the exhibitions and the building itself as well as a hands-on, have-a-go session facilitated by an artist.

The event takes place on Thursday, October 4, from 10am to 4pm. It costs £27.50 and is for U3A members only. There are refreshments on arrival.

New Mills U3A is not planning a group visit but interested members are welcome to make their own arrangements.

It may be worth pointing out that of the eight National autumn events in 2018, one is held in Bristol, one in Cardiff, this one in Manchester with the remaining five all in London.

Online booking is available at www.u3a.org.uk/events or call the National Office on 0208 466 6139

All details are available online and on the information table at our monthly meetings.

Christine Wass

A fan of Facebook?

I COPIED this from an issue of the Third Age Matters magazine. It was sent in by a Martin Whillock of Easingwold U3A. I suspect it will strike a chord with many of our members!

I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook's online empire while applying the principles it uses.

Therefore every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom.

I give them pictures of my family, my dog, and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what everybody does every day.

I also listen to their conversations, give them the 'thumbs up' and tell them I like them, and will share.

And it works just like Facebook.

I already have four people following me: two police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.

Susan Wyatt

OUTINGS

IN June this year our U3A holiday was spent travelling beautiful South West Wales visiting the Mumbles, Gower peninsula, St David's and Tenby. We enjoyed the added bonus of lovely sunshine and (*right*) it appears that a good time was had by all.

Our holiday for 2019 will be to Norfolk. Five nights (six days) with B&B and evening meal.

Itinerary includes visits to Fakenham, Cromer and Sheringham, Sandringham Estate and Blickling Hall. There will also be time in Norwich.

There's a steam train journey on the Poppy Line and a cruise on the Broads from Wroxham. The cost is £429 (Single Supplement £50).

Please note members are welcome to invite partners or friends who are not members of the U3A as we do not travel under the U3A insurance. You are advised to arrange your own if required.

There is still the opportunity to join the trip to see the Thursford Christmas Spectacular on November 30 for two nights, staying at the Burlington Palm Hotel in Great Yarmouth. The show is a fast moving celebration of the festive season and a truly magical experience.

Cost of £259 per person (single Supplement £20) includes B&B, three-course evening meal and ticket to the show.

Email outings@newmillsu3a.org.uk for details of both these breaks.

Barbara Matthews

OUR U3A coffee morning takes place once a month on the last Tuesday of the month at the Providence United Reformed Church on Mellor Road in New Mills from 10.30am to noon. During the morning some members (left) enjoy playing Mahjong while enjoying their coffee and biscuits.

Christine Wass

Could you help us out?

HAVE you ever wondered how on earth anyone finds the time to keep our U3A running? Because for certain you're thinking you're so busy that you couldn't spare a minute!

However, there's a dedicated team of people, who all lead very busy lives, who DO find an hour or two here and there to make sure the organisation runs smoothly.

You'll know all about our Group Leaders, who take time to prepare and host their various sessions, and you'll also probably know that we have a Chairman and a Committee.

There are also two 'officers' who are not actually committee members but who report to the committee, the website organiser and the Groups Co-ordinator, and it is this latter person who is the focus of this article.

We need to recruit someone to initially work alongside the present Groups Co-ordinator with a view to taking over. This isn't an onerous task by any means, certainly no more so than any of those mentioned above, and every support necessary is provided by the committee. It's a very social role, having contact with all the group leaders, so it would suit someone with an outgoing personality. It does require some organisational skills of course, but most U3A members will have those in abundance!

Without someone performing this vital role, the whole system of running our U3A could fall apart - and we wouldn't want that to happen.

Therefore we are appealing to members to think very carefully about offering to help in this way. We're all very keen to take advantage of the huge choice of groups to which we can belong, but someone needs to pull all the strings together.

Could it be YOU?

(*For further information contact any committee member*)

Susan Wyatt

Thanks from the Treasurer

THIS year's renewals went fairly smoothly – so thank you to all those who paid up promptly. Apologies for a couple of delays in dealing with your renewals, due to holidays, medical issues and the stress of trying to arrange my daughter's wedding!

At the end of June we decided to issue reminders to those who hadn't yet renewed, and I hand-delivered these to about 60 households. Unfortunately, several people who had already paid got reminders and these were almost entirely people who hadn't submitted their original renewal form at the time.

I need to devise "a system" to deal with this, but it really would help if you kept your form in a safe place for when you renew. In addition, it is important that the data we hold on our records is accurate and returning the form is an ideal way of checking what we hold about you.

The other major category of reminders was to people who had already decided not to renew – mainly due to moving out of the area. It really would save time and effort if you could tell us if you are not renewing rather than waiting to get a reminder.

A personal plea – I am amazed how many doors I delivered to that had no numbers to identify them. This meant me walking up and down the street to find a door with a number in order to work out which one to deliver to.

I still have lots of cards for people who have paid but not collected them. You will need to show these to your Group Leaders when they conduct the annual audit, so please make arrangements to collect them at a monthly meeting or coffee morning.

Enjoy your year with New Mills and District U3A.

Margaret Weaver

THEATRE MATINEE

ARE you a Theatre goer? Would you be interested in arranging bookings for the Theatre Matinee Group at the Royal Exchange, Manchester, or other theatres locally? The Theatre Matinee Group is looking for a Group Leader who would be able to book and distribute tickets for performances.
For further information please contact the Groups Coordinator
groupscoordinator@newmillsu3a.org.uk

MANY thanks to all those members who have pitched in to this edition of your U3A Newsletter. Email articles and pictures for inclusion in the next edition to: newsletter@newmillsu3a.org.uk Please understand that contributions may be edited.