

NEWSLETTER

Here's to a Good New Year

By Margaret Thompson Editor

ANOTHER YEAR older and deeper in debt! I hope your debts aren't too big but it is easy to get carried away at Christmas. It's back to all those expectant little faces I mentioned last month. Never mind England Expects! It's grandchildren. I hope you have all had a good Christmas and are now raring to go with U3A activities. There is certainly plenty to do as you will see when you turn to pages 5 & 6 of this Newsletter and read the Study Group Synopsis which Dennis Fitton our Study group Coordinator has put together.



A truly festive spirit got the Christmas season off to a good start Photos J Morgan /MCT

Everybody who was able to see the first WU3A pantomime, Cinderella, at the December Monthly meeting had almost as much fun and enjoyment as did the cast in rehearsal. 'Oh Yes you did!!' It was judged by all a great success despite the many 'wobbles' and senior moments! A lot of the credit must go to the Creative Writers Workshop who came up with such a good script; also to very enthusiastic actors who had rehearsed since August; the Needlecraft Group who shortened Cinder's frock and made some of the other wonderful costumes for the Ugly Sisters; backstage staff who whirled props about; techy anoraks who downloaded scenery slides and projected them or edited digital recordings, faded mikes and flashed the spotlights and not least to Jacqueline Godfrey who managed to stay a calm, exemplary director throughout! Well done folks.

Very many thanks from Celia to all those, (Singers and extras) who were able to participate in the Carol Singing for Oxfam at the Harlequin, on Thursday 14th December. All thoroughly enjoyed the occasion and obviously made an impressive sound, judging from the number of compliments they received!

Photo Diane Livesey



Make sure you keep it for reference.

On Thursday December 7th The Metropolitan Police Club was the venue for our Excellent U3A Christmas Lunch. A super Christmas Menu with Desserts to die for! The inches are already creeping back onto my hips. Thanks are due to John Carleton our Vice President for all the arrangements.

Study Group Topics

By Dennis Fitton

Study Group Coordinator

THERE will be a meeting for Associate Members at Hollytree House on January 4th at 2.30pm. All SGLs and committee members are welcome to attend. It will be very helpful if a number of SGLs are prepared to briefly outline the activities of their group. Our object as always is to welcome Associate Members and introduce them to the groups to which they now have access.

Yvonne and I were fortunate enough to spend November in Australia. The U3A attended by our hosts has a Study Group on Belly Dancing and another one on Laughing. Any offers?

The Study Group Synopsis is included in this Newsletter. I recommend that you study it carefully and then keep it in a safe place. It is a very handy reference for all the goodies that we have to offer in our U3A. You might like to use it to update your Study Group Diary.

For those of you who can attend the Monthly Meeting I always display an up to date version of the diary on the Notice Board. I hope that everything is correct on this edition of the Synopsis. I really do try very hard to keep it accurate and up to date but it does prove to be quite difficult.

www.watfordu3a.org.uk the Watford U3A website is a mine of useful information. When you look at you will see on the left hand side LINKS. Below this is Contacts. If you click on this you will be able to contact committee members, me, SGLs and the newsletter editor for anything you wish to put in the newsletter.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

A meeting has been arranged at **Hollytree House**, Gammons Lane, Watford for Associate Members on **Thurs January 4th at 2.30 pm.**

You will be able to meet Members of the Committee and Study Group Leaders who will be pleased to answer your questions and tell you more about our U3A.

BUTTONS: YOUR ON!

D:-Buttons, it was your idea to do a pantomime, so what gave you that idea?

B:- I've always loved Panto but my wife, Emi, doesn't like to go with me because I embarrass her



Now our play is over! The final curtain

Photo Ian Charteris

D:- So you gave yourself a leading role!

B.Not exactly. I had always fancied acting in a Panto, and was pleased to be able to take part. I did *ask* to play the part of Buttons, but as far as I know, no-one else was itching to play that part. The Director, Jacqueline Godfrey, decided who should play which part, so perhaps you should ask her about that! But, believe me, if she hadn't thought I could do it, she'd have been quick to say so!

D.You say you'd always *fancied* acting in a Panto. Does that mean you hadn't acted in one before?

B:-That's right. In fact that was the first time I've been on the stage, although, through working as a lecturer and teacher for some years in my working life, I'm used to standing up before an 'audience'.

D:-Well, you seemed very confident. What gave you that confidence?

First of all, practice. We had an excellent, experienced, Director who put us through our paces at rehearsals, and emphasised that until you know your lines, you can't act them. I found myself waking up early of a morning acting through the panto in my head (and I know others did this too). Some needed more practice than others, but the end product has to be that you know your lines, so that you can act them.



Cinderella (Margaret Thompson) meets her Prince (Peter Andrews) Photo Ian Charteris

brilliantly, with the audience noisily sympathetic!!

Thirdly, the reaction of the audience when I first went on to encourage them to participate. If they hadn't shown such enthusiasm, I'm sure my confidence would have disappeared quicker than Cinderella at the stroke of midnight.

D:-It sounds as though it was a lot of hard work. Was it worth it, just for one performance?

B:- For me it was because, as I said, I'd always fancied acting in a Panto, and so I liked the challenge. Besides, rehearsals were such a hoot! I think everyone found it worthwhile, simply to be at the rehearsals! With feedback suggesting the Panto was a resounding success.

D:-what plans are there for 2007? Will you consider involving grandchildren next time?

B:-The Panto Group will meet to review the situation in January and we'll have to see what everybody wants to do. We didn't involve grandchildren this time, because the whole thing was experimental, but I'm sure the possibility will be discussed, should we decide to attempt another Panto in the future.

Dick, you know what they say when we start talking to ourselves! Ed.

Interviewer Dick Chapman

with my enthusiasm. So I hadn't been for many years before last Christmas, when my son and daughter-in-law took me to see Cinderella at the Palace Theatre. Looking around, there were clearly lots of grandparents and grandchildren sharing the pains and joys and I thought 'well, why don't we (U3A) put on a Panto, by us and our grandchildren, for us and our grandchildren.'



Dandini (Monica Creegan) remonstrates with the Ugly Sisters (David & Mike) who are sure the slipper will fit them! and Stepmother Flora (Pat Lucas) photo Ian Charteris

Secondly, the system used for attracting the prompter, should we forget our lines. We would simply say ' I'm having a senior moment', and the prompter knew when to come in. It worked

Who Said History Was Boring?

Interesting facts about 16th Century England reported by Trevor Evans-Lutterodt sent in by Peter Andrews

MOST people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children - last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it - hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

Houses had thatched roofs - thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the dogs, cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof - hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs."

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could really mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts. And a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

COMMITTEE NOTES

By Joyce Hoffbrand

1. There are 404 full members including 5 honorary members and 63 associates. This month has shown the biggest increase in associate membership since the scheme began.

2. The Study Group Organiser gave a very comprehensive report and the committee discussed the following groups - Anglo-German Cycling, Snooker, Card Making, Cryptic Crosswords, and Antiques

Cinderella by Jacqueline Godfrey

When Dick Chapman floated the idea of a Pantomime at Christmas there were cries of 'Oh no we can't'. However a few foolhardy diehards decided in true U3A spirit, 'Oh yes we can' and so from the flowing pens of the



Jacqueline receiving flowers and chocolates from the cast
Photo Ian Charteris

Creative Writing Group a script appeared and Cinderella, U3A-style was born.

Many have helped with this production; too many to name here but their hard work has been unbelievable.

Due to holidays and busy schedules we only achieved one

full cast rehearsal before the actual performance. Were we attempting the impossible? 'Oh yes we were.' But once again, in true U3A style, the impossible was achieved. It gave me great pleasure to work with such an enthusiastic and talented group of people 'Oh yes it did.' My sincere thanks to you all.

The Ugly Sisters Petal & Pollen (David Helliwell & Mike Dix) furious when the slipper fits Cinderella (Margaret Thompson) photo Gerry A.



U3A singers performing music and Carols in the Pantomime led by Celia Jackson
photo Gerry Adams



Walking Essentials by John Grainger

IN THE January edition of Country Walking Magazine is an article on kitting out walkers on a budget of £100.

They visited 4 outlets; Millets, Blacks, Yeomans Outdoors and Cotswold Outdoor. There was a general agreement that the most important item was Walking Boots. Get these right before anything else. Boots give you ankle support and grip and you can walk through puddles. Fit is more important than looks or cost. If you have to spend more to get a good fit, then do. Don't forget the importance of good socks too. Boots can cost from £40 to £90.

Once you have sorted out your feet next is a waterproof jacket and trousers. The name that came up regularly was Regatta Packaway. Cost between £25 to £30.

If you don't have a rucksack these can cost you £12.99 upwards.

Check your wardrobe before you go shopping. Dig out that old waterproof or rucksack and use them to get started. Put your money towards something else, and upgrade to more technical gear in a few months time.

If you've only got jeans, get some lightweight trousers. They're easier to walk in and much more comfortable if you get drenched. Check out charity shops, too. It's amazing what Christmas gifts will turn up in January.

One very important item is a hat. In winter 1/3 of your body heat can be lost through your head, and in summer you need to protect your head. This could be put on your Xmas list.

Later you can choose Base-layers to wick away body moisture and help to keep you warm and body warmers or Gillets to wear under your Regatta top.

STUDY GROUP NEWS

Please keep Study Group Synopsis for Group Leaders contact numbers, times and Group venues, published in this issue.

Anglo-German Walks

Unter Wags!! Time & day TBA

On Friday 24th November the first walk of the newly-formed walking group 'Anglo-German Walks' was a circular ten miler starting from the car park in Wendover Woods. There is a cafe there, so one can start and finish with a cup of tea or ice cream, depending on the weather. There were three of us (out of a potential five), all English with different reasons for having an interest in German, and perhaps more perfect walking weather.

From Wendover woods one has good views in winter across Wendover and the Aylesbury plain and we made our way from there to the Boer War memorial on Combe Hill from where you also get a good view of Chequers, the Prime Minister's country house. Dropping down the hill into Wendover for lunch, I noticed quissical looks on faces of walkers com-

ing in the opposite direction when these 'foreigners' broke off their nattering to greet them in perfect English. How can those foreigners always speak such good English? I think they may have been asking themselves! Anyway, we had a snack lunch in the Red Lion and gave up our German on the walk back along the disused Wendover arm of the Grand Union Canal, now more like a bird paradise, which took us back to our starting point. and a welcome cup of tea!

Antiques

Well, after several years at the helm, and with diminishing numbers, obviously all my group now know everything about antiques so it is time to call it a day with this group. We have had fun over the years, learning about the history, geography, social and fashion details of antiques, from furniture to tea-cups and tea-caddies. We have seen (several

**The Peace Hospice
Gardens need YOU
2 to 3 hours to spare?
contact Maggie on
335348**

times!) interesting videos on various aspects of this fascinating subject and discussed different items in members' collections, and visited places of historical interest. I wish to thank all my members who have given me their interested support over the years and look forward to seeing them in other groups and at the monthly meetings.

Art Appreciation

At our Christmas meeting, Colin Richards gave a formidable presentation on Piero Della Francesca. We studied just a few paintings in depth, looking particularly at their political and religious significance and the mathematical aspects of their composition. A tour de force of PowerPoint presentation! This was followed by a splendid buffet lunch provided by all the members. An earring and pendant were found on the floor and two umbrellas by the door. Apply to Dorothy.

8 Jan Dorothy Steele on Juan Miro.

Tues 9 Jan Visit to Velasquez National Gallery. Exhibition.

Better Photos

22 Jan 10.30am Meet National History Museum, Cromwell Road, London Wildlife Photographic Exhibition.

26 Feb 10.00am Gerry's house to discuss activities for 2007.

Chess

Chess is supported very well by a group of players whose strengths are improving all the time. If you are a little rusty but want to start up again, please come along. Tuition is on hand at every meeting if needed and we play to ENJOY.

Classics

15 Jan 2.15pm 44, Avenue Rise We are starting a new topic and looking at daily life in ancient Rome. Newcomers very welcome.

Cryptic Crosswords

We are now in the process of compiling another cryptic crossword for the Newsletter and, currently, this is the way we go about it. We "borrow" a 13 x 13 light grid from a book of crosswords and use the same answers. Please note, we definitely do not use the same clues! After that we all go away and try and make up clues to fit those answers. About half the

group contribute suggestions. One or two stalwarts provide suggestions for all the clues in the crossword. Perhaps as many as 10 suggested alternatives are received for some particular clues. Finding an apt clue for some answers can be difficult and then only a couple of alternatives are forthcoming. Eventually all the suggestions are gathered together and included on a list so that a little group of the more experienced cruciverbalists can select the best clues for the final puzzle. Together with a copy of the grid, this is then sent off to the Editor for publication. Who knows? One day we may graduate to a 15 x 15 light grid or a jumbo. We might even aim for the national U3A News.

5 & 19 Jan and 2 Feb Next meetings.

Current Affairs

10.00am at Hollytree House, Gammons Lane.

The November discussion ranged widely: from foreign owners of our utilities and the possible purchase of the London Stock Exchange to decisions on allowing 22-week old premature babies to survive: from secularisation of Christmas to proposals to rebuild Watford College and the traffic chaos it would cause in our near-gridlocked town.

Cycling

Our meeting days will remain as the **3rd Wednesday** and from time to time the **1st Monday**

17 Jan 10.00am Watford Met. Mystery tour ending up with homemade soup and bread chez Y & D.

25 Jan 10.00am Watford Met. I shall be celebrating my 70th birthday in my favourite lanes around Flaunden and will be pleased to have any of my cycling friends join me.

Exploring

London

Exploring London had a memorable outing for their Christmas special. Some visited the Royal Academy and experienced the Rodin Exhibition whilst the others went on a

guided walking tour around the area of St James. After an enjoyable meal in Covent Garden we walked to Somerset House and watched the ice skating in the fresh night air. However, none of our group participated! The highlight of the evening was enjoying mince pies and sherry in the Hays Galleria. This was followed by carol singing around the Christmas tree which attracted some young art students who sang with us making a joyful sound. On the way home the coach driver took us along Regent Street and Oxford Street to see the lights which we all agreed were quite impressive and was a lovely end to the day.

Jan, Feb & Mar No Meetings

Apr There are plans to travel to Norfolk for a few days. Please contact Jackie Connal for further details.

Food & Nutrition

23 Jan 2.00pm Talk and demonstration from Karina Pickering on sausages; how to make them and suggestions for use. These will be for sale at the end of the meeting with proceeds to the Peace Hospice.

Gardening

18 Jan We have managed to persuade the Blue Check Restaurant to repeat the lunch deal which we have had for the past two years. £11.00 for starter and main course or main course and dessert, plus coffee. This also includes the gratuity. The nice thing about the deal is that we can choose on the day and we don't all have to have the same thing. We should also like to invite non-garden group members who have supported our trips on a regular basis to join us at the Blue Check, the more the merrier. Christmas and New Year wishes to all our friends, thank

you for supporting the group and making it so successful.

Greetings Cards

Hollytree House NB different day, times and venue.

11 Jan 10.00am-12.15pm and 1.45-4.00pm We will look at using tags and mounting pictures/patterns to make more varied cards: 'men', 'children', 'moving house' and 'get well'. Please bring anything appropriate that you think might be useful. There is a charge of £1 each per session to cover materials + 50p to Hollytree House for refreshments.

History

At our December meeting we all enjoyed our Christmas quiz and the usual festivities.

Jan/Feb No Meeting.

12 Mar Next meeting.

London Theatre Group

15 Feb 2007 Our next proposed outing is to 'Coram Boy' adapted from a novel by Jamila Gavin, at the National Theatre. Tickets for the matinee performance next February will only be held by the Theatre until the first week of November so will only be on sale at the November monthly mtg. If you are an **Associate Member** please telephone

MoneyMatters

We had a small and select meeting, one member braved the torrential downpour and arrived half an hour late, soaked to the skin but still said, after the meeting, that he was glad he came as it was such an interesting meeting. No doubt one reason for the smaller turnout was that the U3A Christmas lunch was on the same day. We all expressed the wish that the lunch was a great success.

4 Jan next meeting.

Music Appreciation

Jan 2007- Berlioz

Needlecraft

2nd and 4th Mon each month at Combewood Senior Citizens residence in Garston and every year we hold a Coffee Morning to say thank you to the residents and management staff to thank them for giving us such a light, comfortable room for our meetings. This year the coffee morning was held on 4th December and we all raised funds for the Peace Hospice. The cake stall and raffle held by staff and residents raised



Sherry & Mince Pies Hays Galleria photo JM

£39.00 and £31.75 respectively, whilst the Group's sale of work raised £75.40, making a total of £146.15 which was sent to the Peace Hospice.

22 Jan 10am programme planning for the year to include a visit to a Stitch and Craft Exhibition in February at the Excel Centre in London. We are a full group at the moment as the space we have is just adequate for our needs but does not allow us to take on any new members. This need not be a reason for not starting a new Group.

Opera

8 Jan To start the New Year after enjoying the frivolities of 'La Centerentola' in December we look forward to something a little more serious, the DVD of Giordano's 'Fedora' starring Placido Domingo.

New members welcome.

Pathfinders Group

23 Jan Shorter Walk and Planning Meeting.

I regret this group is full.

Personal Development

15 Jan 2.15pm 'Forensic Forum' with Catherine – bring your questions and she will try to answer them.

Poetry Read & Study

New members welcome. Non-group members welcome if the subject interests them.

Jan: Edward Lear

Feb: own choice

Mar: Marriage, separation, divorce, widowhood.

Return to Cycling

Short rides in the Watford area based on Watford Council map. It was a foul, wet and windy day and it coincided with the Christmas lunch but three intrepid souls did turn up for the first ride. However one was the Study Group Leader and the other two were already members of the cycling group showing up to give support. Thanks. I look forward to seeing a group of you in February as I am sure that you will be pleasantly surprised at the useful paths that I can show you and the delightful areas that are a stone's throw from the centre of the town on traffic free paths. So come and join me. I didn't really expect to see anyone in December given the conditions. I'm told that not everyone is prepared to go out in all conditions for the sheer joy of riding a bike. There are dark

inferences about my mental condition but we will ignore them.

1 Feb 2.00pm Cassiobury Drive, adjacent to the hospice and park entrance.

1 Mar 2.00pm Pump House Car Park, Local Board Road

Science Interest

Due to Library refurbishments the next 2 meetings will be at Bushey and Oxhey-Methodist Church.

Our Christmas Quiz meeting was most entertaining and we thank John Britten for his expertise and skill at putting together such a varied set of questions! Did you know that an earthworm had a multiplicity of 'hearts' or did you have a certain degree of certainty about which country Werner Heisenberg was born in?

15 Jan Roller Bearings; Peter Tindale.

19 Feb Commercialisation of Scientific Research; Mike Barnes.

19 Mar Internet Security – Colin Richards
New members very welcome!

Shakespeare

Last Wed 2.00pm

31 Jan A showing of 'Much Ado About Nothing'. Come and enjoy, but phone first.

28 Feb We read and discuss the play, with its many subtleties, and continue on **28 Mar**.

Newcomers welcome. If you are thinking of joining us, now is a good time, but please phone first.

Snooker

1st and 3rd Mon 11am - 1pm A snooker group is proposed. Play would be at the Watford Town and Country Club, Rosslyn Road, Watford and open to those who have played some snooker before i.e. it may have been many years since you played, but you know which way to hold the cue, and won't be ripping up the cloths! Sufficient cues and chalk will be made available. Cost will be £5 per person per session, payable on the day. Three tables will be reserved for our use and so the numbers joining will be limited and offered on a first come, first served basis (plus reserves). There is parking in the public, Rosslyn Road CP, adjacent to the club. Coffee can be ordered, but other bar facilities are not available. Please put

your name, and contact details, on the displayed notice at the monthly meeting, or contact Dick Chapman for further details.

Sporting Forum

Our December meeting had a festive theme as members enjoyed a social afternoon with some tasty refreshments, and an even tastier sporting quiz.

Happy New Year to you all.

16 Jan 2.00pm Will Hayler, Racing journalist, London Evening Standard

20 Feb 2.00pm Clark Carlisle – Watford FC player

20 Mar Visit to Lords Cricket ground.

Strollers

9 Jan NB 11.00am. Planning mtg at 'Peggy's'. Please let Peggy know if you expect to be there as she will make a booking for us for lunch at the Essex Arms.

Thirsty Walkers

25 Jan Planning Meeting at my house, at 10.30am. Followed by lunch at the Southern Cross. Please attend if you can! For new members please phone Watford 223883 for details.

Tuesday Trekkers

9 Jan 9.45am Croxley Green Car Park off Barton Way adjacent to library. Lunch at the Coach and Horses. New members always very welcome.

U3A Singers

15 Jan Monday 12.30pm New Year Lunch (a change of plan) at the Essex Arms, Langley Way, followed by coffee and a planning meeting at Celia's. Please contact Cynthia Morgan to confirm your attendance and choice of menu.

5 Feb Meeting as normal.

Walking

Most walks start at JS A41.

Eight miles

10 Jan 9.30am Berkhamsted

14 Feb 9.30am Harpenden

14 Mar 9.00am London Meet Watford Met Station
Six miles

24 Jan 10.00am St Albans

28 Feb 10.00am Bushey CP

Chiltern Ave K. George Rec

28 Mar 10.00am K.Langley

Wine Appreciation

Last Friday in the month.

26 Jan More wine tasting. New members very welcome.

WitKnits

10.00am 1st Monday in the month.

Writers Workshop

Come along and develop your skills. New members welcome.

U3A RAFFLE

The Christmas raffle raised £309. In addition there were donations from European Studies, Family History, Pathfinders, Poetry and WitKnits, as well as other donations. We are delighted to be able to present Jill Crowson, Community Fund Raiser of the Peace Hospice, with a cheque of £1,050 Thank you all for your very generous contributions to the raffle and donations from the various groups this year.

We are very pleased to tell you that as from 2007 the raffle will be run by John and June Baughen. We hope you will continue to give them your support with raffle prizes and donations.

John and Cynthia Morgan

TALKS PROGRAMME

2 Jan 2007 Gerry

Williams

'Jazz; we call it music'.

6 Feb Roger Martin:

'The Pump House'.

6 Mar Performing Arts Group 'Entertains'.

5 Apr Robert Lancaster:

'Pull Yourself Together Girls'.

4 May: A G M

Speaker Secretary

David Helliwell

Material for the
February Newsletter

MUST be received by:

20 January

For Written contributions see Study Group Diary or the website contact details.

E-mail copy to:

editor@watfordu3a.org.uk