

BUDE AND DISTRICT U3A

23rd October 2008

Chairman's Report

First of all want to say thank you to all our past committees and members who have made our U3A what it is today. We are now entering our 8th year with a membership total of 160 members and I think there are two members who have moved away this year - Pearl Flower moved to Bristol to be closer to her family and Wendy Smith has moved to Cyprus. Before she left she had already located a U3A over there which had a very extensive programme and list of groups so I am sure the U3A will help her make new friends and to settle in her new home.

We began our year with a rather shaky start because of not having a chairman. However we managed OK for about 4 or 5 months with a "revolving chair" but it was becoming a little problematic and in March the committee persuaded me to become chairman.

Our Christmas Lunch which took place last December at The Falcon was hugely enjoyed as usual - a very successful raffle which raised £92.00 following ticket selling by Pat Netherton and myself and entertainment provided as usual by members - particularly the Singing for Fun Group. The arrangements for the lunch were handled superbly as usual by Audrey Armitage with her roll of wallpaper and with a little help from Mary Dobson who sorted out the details with The Falcon. We were very thankful to Jo Arnold as well, who proved once more that she is an excellent Master of Ceremonies.

News reports of our OGM's in the Bude and Stratton Post are now organised very efficiently by Lucille Opie with a list of who is responsible for reporting each meeting on our web site. A big thank you to Lucille.

The National AGM was again held within spitting distance in Swansea (Falmouth in 2007 when two representatives from Bude attended) but nobody went from Bude this year. In future if anybody from the committee would like to go to the National AGM to represent Bude and District U3A there is funding available for them to go so that their travel expenses are covered and they are not out of pocket .

We have enjoyed a lively year with a few changes and developments as we try to lever ourselves into the technological age. We now have our web site up and running very efficiently and we owe Mike Roper, our web master, a huge debt of gratitude for setting it all up, and thanks also to Eric French and Sue Evans for all their help and input. Don't forget there is free access in the Library for those of you who don't have a computer at home and help is available on a Monday and Tuesday morning to get you started. The web site address is up on the sheet behind me and it really is worth a look.

Eric French who is also our newsletter editor is doing his bit for the environment (ie: saving trees) and is now set up to send the newsletter electronically to all our members who are "on line" with an e mail address and if you receive it this way it can now come to you in colour with photos from our various groups where appropriate. But I would like to reassure those of you who do not have access to a computer that there will still be copies printed for you to collect at the open meetings. If you would like to have it sent on line you need to make sure Eric has your e mail address. His e mail address is in the newsletter. A huge thank you to Eric for all his hard work producing our quarterly newsletter and thanks to all of you who send him articles for it.

Because the committee decided after much discussion to absorb the cost of posting the National Magazine straight to your homes out of our funds most of you should now have received your first copy in this way and also a copy of the Source Magazine which is published three times a year.

I would like to express our huge thanks to Linda Bunker for sorting out the data base so that we can receive the magazine through the post. The addresses are updated every quarter so if you do not want the magazine you must let Linda know.

As I get to the bit about reporting our open meetings it is a good opportunity to acknowledge the huge debt of gratitude which we owe to Hazel Cook and all her tea ladies for so efficiently providing the refreshments at the end of our monthly meetings.

This year we have enjoyed a very varied selection of speakers including contributions from two of our own members - Jill Davies in May talking about The Story and the Storyteller and Iwan Davies in July telling us about the Greek Tragedies and how drama all began . They both shared their insight and enthusiasm for their chosen subject and they also brought some of their book collection and photographs for us to browse through at the end of the afternoon.

At the beginning of the year we had an inspiring talk by Brian Morgan and Jenny Campbell about the Children of Chernobyl who are brought over here every year to enjoy the pure air of Cornwall and the hospitality of the Cornish people - some of them members of our U3A. Their visit enables the radioactive count in their blood to be greatly reduced.

Following that we heard from Michael Axworthy about the history of Persia - a huge subject about which he was very knowledgeable having lived in the country for some years as a teenager with his parents, spending holidays there and also having worked in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as Head of the Iranian Section prior to his retirement.

We had a very entertaining talk by David Snelling in March about his travels with a hinney called Henry following one of the pilgrim routes to Santiago di Compostela in Northern Spain in the millennium year.

In April we learnt about women in Kenya knitting very ethical toys and handicrafts - a talk given by Sandy Boycott. Many of us bought items from her after her talk at the end of the afternoon.

We also had our usual Plant Stall at this meeting organised by Marion Hall and her growers and helpers. This year she raised £67.20 for our funds - thank you Marion.

At our June meeting we had a marvellous update on the Bude Canal Regeneration a talk given by Andrea Vaillaincourt Alder who works on the Project.

and
In August Jacky Derham came to tell us how to write our life stories and with her encouragement I think quite a number of us went away inspired to actually have a go!

At our last meeting in September we welcomed the well known local author E V Thompson who gave us a very interesting talk about Cornish families in History and in fiction.

My thanks to Mary Dobson and Hilary Workman for organising our speakers and my particular thanks to Hilary as well for being my vice chair and an endless source of information as to how things should be organised.

Bude and District U3A interest groups now number 18.

Our two Scrabble Groups run by Sue Evans and Gill Gilkes continue to have fun (most of the time) although it does sound as if things can occasionally get a little hairy but everyone seems to take it in their stride. I can fully recommend the reports from Scrabble 2 in the Newsletter - they are wonderful, Sue - they always make me laugh.

The Cinema Group unfortunately got off to a bad start as The Rebel decided to close immediately after the group had been set up. Not very helpful. The Google Group which Marilyn Daly cleverly set up to contact members about forthcoming films is now defunct through lack of use but people are now going to The Memorial Hall in Holsworthy to see films on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month - a film group which is actually organised by one of our members.

By contrast the Bridge Group goes from strength to strength. Definitely no longer Bridge for Beginners but it sounds as though they have a lot of fun. Richard Evans would be glad to assist anyone wishing to start a new Bridge Group for Beginners.

The Singing for Fun group also have a good time and keep not only themselves entertained but also the old people in a couple of residential homes who welcome them for singalongs on a regular basis. And of course we hope we can look forward to them entertaining us old folk at the Christmas Lunch in December.

Our other musical group - Enjoying Music - is compered, if that is the right word, by Iwan Davies. Music is listened to, usually around a theme, and discussed if it proves controversial enough. Numbers vary and Iwan would be able to accommodate a few more on a regular or occasional basis he tells me.

Jill Davies continues to chair our Philosophy Group. Members study the thoughts and ideas of various philosophers and are still striving towards wisdom although Jill tells me the attainment thereof seems to elude them somewhat. However they enjoy their time together studying, discussing and arguing.

The more energetic members who walk twice a month have extended their repertoire this year by undertaking three longer walks. These are around 5 or 6 miles in length and include a lunchtime picnic. The afternoon rambles are shorter and are always a good opportunity to get out in the fresh air for some exercise and conversation and often finish with the reward of a cream tea if there is a handy cafe. We are grateful to Sally Bannister and Trish Parsons who organise the walks including a recce to make sure they know the way and that it is a suitable walk for our members. They would be very happy to welcome more walkers - the walks are not too strenuous and they always ensure people can keep up.

Our thanks go to Carolyn Merrett who instigated the new History of Art group last year. It continues to thrive and all the members have been enjoying the study of 20th Century artists from the Impressionists onwards, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the great painters (as well as some lesser known ones)

You may have seen June Cann's description in the newsletter of the Holsworthy Miniatures Group which operates under the auspices of the U3A. Their work is incredible with amazing attention to detail. This summer their theme was The Beach with people decorating beach huts in various ways. I would recommend you reading June's account in the Summer Newsletter but it is also worth going to one of the local shows when they are exhibiting to have a look at the final display.

The Theatre Group continues to be enjoyed by a huge number of our members with visits to most of the theatres in

Cornwall and a few in Devon. Thank you to Mary Dobson who continues to gather the information for us and organise coaches, collect ticket money, book seats and generally give our members an opportunity to enjoy an afternoon of excellent entertainment. Their visits sometimes include a little spare time for shopping as well!

Mary also hosts the Play Reading Group which meet in The Falcon fortnightly. They cover a wide range of plays, metaphysical, murder and mystery, autobiographical, comedy and farce. It sounds as though they have a lot of fun most of the time, providing they understand the play!.

Discussion 1 has enjoyed another year of stimulating sessions, wrangling with various topics ranging from politics in various forms, the secularisation of society and whether Judas did betray Jesus, abortion and stem cell research and today's class system. The topics are chosen by the members and they take turns to introduce the discussion with the opportunity always to ditch the chosen subject and go for something more topical instead at the last minute. Our thanks to Jo Arnold for hosting the meetings and for keeping everyone in order.

Discussion 2 is being disbanded unfortunately because Jenny Leyland has decided with regret that because of changed circumstances she cannot continue to host it. Thanks to Jenny for starting this group - if anyone would like to take over from her please contact me or Elizabeth Whattler our Group Co-ordinator

Marion Hall runs the Garden Group which meets monthly - usually to visit either gardens open to the public or private gardens opened to us by special arrangement and occasionally visits to nurseries. A visit to RHS Rosemoor is often included in the programme each year because, as with all gardens, it changes with the seasons so no two visits are ever the same. Their visits sometimes start with lunch and usually finish with tea and cakes. Tips and expert knowledge are widely shared as are seeds and young plants surplus to a member's requirements at a lunch time soup and plant swap meeting at the beginning of the year. Marion's hospitality is also enjoyed at the yearly planning meetings.

Sharing Poetry 1 has now been one of our interest groups for four years and thank you to Linda Farmer who hosts it. Usually a theme is alternated with free choice which allows a wide range of styles. It also means many previously unknown poets (unknown to the group, that is) are discovered and enjoyed. The number of poets read is very varied, ranging from Roald Dahl to Wordsworth and many in between with the beauty of the language always appreciated even if the poem is not fully understood.

Peggy Timms runs Poetry 2 in a similar way but with the added interest of members sometimes reading their own poetry. Both the groups feel a benefit from the poems being read aloud - a very different experience from reading to yourself. Poetry 2 has room for two more members.

Serendipity 1 continues to thrive under the friendly eye of Elizabeth Whattler. The group usually meets at Elizabeth's house but sometimes there are visits to places of interest and in the summer there is often a meeting at her beach hut on Crooklets Beach. Serendipity 2 meet on the same afternoon each month so there is the opportunity of combining the groups when appropriate. A talk and guided walk along the canal was enjoyed by both groups and also a visit to Cowslip Workshops at Launceston.

Linda Bunker runs Serendipity 2 and she does have room for more members. Some of their outings are very adventurous ranging from Castle Hill House near Barnstaple to Trelissick and the King Harry Ferry down near Falmouth. In September both groups combined again to visit Carole Vincent's garden and studio in Boscastle - Carole was the artist who made the Bude Light. She specialises in coloured concrete. The visit was organised by Lucille Opie, one of the members of Serendipity 2, in Linda's absence.

Our latest group is Canasta run by Christine Davies and we wish her every success with this new enterprise. Christine would be happy to welcome a few more people.

Lastly I would like to say a big thank you to all your committee members who conspire to make my job quite a lot easier than I thought it would be way back in March. Two of our committee members resigned earlier this year - Pat Holdcroft (although she still does a grand job meeting and greeting) and Celia Sousek who ran out of space in her diary. Thanks to both of them for their time on the committee. We always welcome new members on the committee and today we are delighted that Melda Wilkinson has offered to join us - the more new blood we can attract the better.

I echo Jo's words of last October - the more you put in the more you get out.

I now have to ask you - is it your wish to adopt this account of our year's activities as an accurate record.

May I have a proposer and a seconder.

Thank you everyone.