

## 2011 Ri lectures for the U3A

On the 29<sup>th</sup> March the Royal Institution presented their three annual lectures for all the UK U3As. As usual, the lecturers were eminent experts in their fields and their well chosen subjects were of considerable interest to the still enquiring minds of the U3A members. A summary of the presentations is as follows:-

### Professor Roger Pertwee (Aberdeen University) - Therapeutic Potential of Cannabis Derivatives

The effects of Cannabis have been known for about 5000 years but serious research into its possible applications to medicine only began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It was discovered that the human brain has two receptors which react like a lock and key to different cannabinoids (cannabis derivatives now also manufactured synthetically).

Although there can be downsides, fine tuning of drug and individual can potentially provide significant benefit to sufferers of Parkinsons Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Depression and many other serious illnesses. Progress has understandably been slow and cautious, the drug and its' derivatives being totally banned until 1982 when a licence was issued to use of one of the cannabinoids for certain ailments. Considerable worldwide efforts are continuing to find and prove other safe applications.

### Professor Chris Bishop (Microsoft Research) – Secrets of the Web

Each day millions of people send confidential information to web sites around the world. As its security is of primary importance to us all, Professor Bishop explained how this is achieved with today's computers.

Simplistically, the secure transmission of confidential information between two parties can be achieved on a 2 lock and key system - e.g. Person A padlocks and sends a package to person B; B adds his padlock and returns the package to A; A removes his lock and returns the package to B; B can then remove his lock and gains access to the package – thus a secure transmission process.

The principal is known as the Diffie-Hellman Key exchange (DHK), established in 1976 and it is applied digitally to all computer security systems. The lock and key digits are established in many ways but they are always astronomically large numbers, virtually impossible to hack into by any outsider. Quantum Key exchange is a new system currently being introduced. It is impossible to infiltrate this and if anyone tries, the operator is immediately advised.

### Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock (Astrium Ltd) – The Final Frontier

Astronomy is the oldest science – most of the ancient monuments, including the pyramids having an astronomical basis.

Our galaxy contains 200 billion stars and has a diameter of 925,000 billion kilometres. World famous astro physicist, Edwin Hubble established the distances between the galaxies and demonstrated that they are receding from each other, which seems to prove the 'Big Bang' theory for the creation of the universe.

As the sizes of optical telescopes have increased over the last 50 years, the magnification has

improved significantly. Today, 42metres diameter is the biggest but another with a diameter 102metres, is being built. With the additional input from radio telescopes, the light spectrum of each star identifies its chemical composition and with the improved optical magnification of the larger ground and space - based telescopes, it is possible to identify stars with planetary systems. The space agencies have set up the Keppler Mission to find any earth - like planets of over 100,000 stars.

This was a most interesting lecture by Maggie who, throughout the presentation, somehow managed to hold and play with her two year old child without the slightest detriment to her delivery.

Mike Snape

--ooOoo--

### **Ballet Appreciation**



The Ballet Appreciation group is now up and running. There have been so many wishing to take part that two groups have been formed.

It is intended that each group meets monthly, Wednesdays 1.45 - 4.00pm, at Sheila Hall's house, 3 Larchway, High Lane, with a two week's gap between the groups. Group 1 started on 20th April 2011 and group 2 will be starting on 18th May.

Please check with Sheila for the next meeting dates.



### **GERMAN GROUP**



It was with great sadness that we heard that Charles Whittaker had passed away on March 6th. Charles had been a member of the German group since we started in 2001 and we have missed his presence at our meetings in the past year. He was a gentleman, in every sense of the word, with a dry sense of humour and a fund of good stories. He was an enthusiastic traveller and enjoyed trips with the group to Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne and Forchheim. Good food and drink meant a lot to Charles and he was always the first to suggest meals out at Christmas and other times of the year. He will be much missed and we will drink a toast to him at our next meal out.

Our meetings in the past few weeks have been a bit sporadic, mainly because of Bank Holidays falling on 2 Fridays. After our next meeting on the 6th May there will again be 2 weeks when I am away, but from the 27th May we should have a pretty clear run into the summer.

Marlene Brookes

## NEEDLEWORK GROUP



We had a very successful time at the U3A Open Day with many people showing interest in the items on view. We managed to sell quite a few cards, Easter chicks, a stuffed tiger and scarves and offers were made on the items that were not for sale. If any of the visitors who showed interest are now members, they can come and join us at our next meeting on Thursday, 19th May at 10 o'clock.

On Monday 21st March we met at June Gibb's house to hear a talk given by Barbara Holland on patchwork and quilting. Barbara brought with her many examples of her craft and we were quite astounded by the beauty and the skill shown in the various quilts, jackets and pictures she had made in the last fifteen years or so since she first started. It was truly inspirational to those who have dabbled in this field of needlework in recent weeks.

On Tuesday 29th March we finally went out for our belated "Christmas" meal, this time at the Farm restaurant on Jackson's Lane in Hazel Grove, where we had a lovely lunch with particularly delicious desserts.

Marlene Brookes

## READING GROUP



In March we held our meeting at the Village Hall, just before the start of the open day. Our book this month was *THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS* by the Irish author, John Boyne, a book which has received quite a lot of critical acclaim in recent years and from which a film was adapted a couple of years ago. It tells the chilling story of Bruno, the 9 year old son of the camp Commandant of Auschwitz, and his friendship with a boy, Schmueel whom he meets while out walking along the perimeter fence, but this boy is wearing striped pyjamas and is confined to the other side of the fence. We learn about Bruno's family and the strains within it but very little about what goes on in the camp until we reach the horrific conclusion.

Most members of the group were moved by the story but were critical of the depiction of Bruno. As a 9 year old in Nazi Germany, he would have been well aware of anti-Semitism which would have been drilled into him in the junior branch of the Hitler Youth; he would have known what an important man the Fuhrer (Hitler) was, and as an inquisitive and adventurous boy, would have asked a lot more questions.

John Boyne, however, calls the story "A Fable" and apparently wrote it in a weekend as an introduction to young readers of the horrors of the Holocaust, and as such it succeeds in its aims.

## Table Tennis Group



We meet every Tuesday morning from 10.00 am to noon at Woodside Tennis Club in High Lane.

The subscription is £2.00 to cover the use of the clubhouse, their table tennis table and the cost of refreshments. We have our own bats and balls and our own table which we store at the club.

We are an assorted group of men and women with a wide range of abilities. Most of us had not played for many years when we started the group in January 2008 but we feel that our performance has improved over the period and we all thoroughly enjoy the sessions.

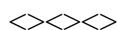
Indeed by December 2009 our numbers had grown to a point where the two tables were clearly inadequate and with no more available space we had to close the membership. Since then we have built up a substantial waiting list and whilst the Tuesday morning group remains full, we are now able to start a second group.

This new group will meet at the Brabyns Recreation Centre, Marple Bridge between 1pm and 3pm on a Tuesday afternoon starting on 3rd May 2011. Initially, the meetings will be on a fortnightly basis but it is soon expected to change to weekly.

At the Centre we will have the use of four tables so we can welcome players of very different abilities and we can play a reasonable mix of singles and doubles. As the Centre is operated by Stockport Council it is desirable for everyone to have one of their Leisure Key Discount Cards.

If you are interested in joining; and your name is not already on the waiting list, please contact the leader, Brian Burke.

*Mike Snape and Brian Burke*



I don't feel old. I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap.

- Bob Hope

## Churches and Pubs

### Visit to St Mary's, Wirksworth on Wednesday 6 April 2011



49 members set off on our first visit in 2011. There were welcoming refreshments when we arrived at St Mary's and our host, Don Hughes, spent the first few minutes talking about the town of Wirksworth and its strategic importance through the years. The church itself dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century although the tradition of clypping (forming a human chain circle around the church), which is carried out every September, probably goes back even earlier.

St Mary's is quite a large church with the nave and chancel being roughly of equal proportions. The roof was raised in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by George Gilbert Scott giving an even bigger impression of size. There are numerous Saxon and Norman carvings on the walls including the 8th century Wirksworth Stone. This is a coffin and skeleton (perhaps of Betti, an early missionary in these parts), with an upside down lid telling the story of the life of Christ.

Unusually, there are 2 fountains. One is Norman and huge, the other 17<sup>th</sup> century. The vicars in the 18<sup>th</sup> century must have been rather better off than their modern day counterparts as they received 1/40<sup>th</sup> of the lead that was mined locally, worth about £1000 a year.

There are several tombs and memorials for the Gell family who built the churchyard almshouses and the road past Cromford mills -Via Gellia. Don told us the amusing history of the Wirksworth Volunteers flag which hangs in the nave. Apparently it dates from Napoleonic times and the volunteers were a sort of Home Guard defending Wirksworth against the invading French.

The day of our visit coincided with the official opening by the Duke of Gloucester of the Duffield to Wirksworth extension to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, so there was just time to see a steam train arriving at the station before leaving Wirksworth.

We travelled the short distance to the Knockerdown , a 17th century inn overlooking Carsington Water where we had lunch in a very pleasant and convivial atmosphere.

This was an excellent start to the Churches and Pubs season, a big thank you to Paul for organising such an interesting and enjoyable day out for so many of us.

Steve Reynolds

## Family History



The family history group will not be running through the summer as holiday commitments mean that there are not enough people to make it viable.

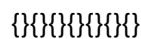
We intend to restart in September with a slightly different format; two house meetings, four or five meetings in the computer room at Brookside Primary School, High Lane and possibly a trip out to a research facility. We will still mainly be focusing on internet based research which is useful to those whose families are not local.

Our meetings follow a structured programme to lead you through the wealth of information available in various forms. Topics vary from 'Getting started' to 'Storing information and producing family trees'. We look at census information, parish records, military records and many more. Studying family history can be a frustrating hobby at times but the excitement when a breakthrough comes is very rewarding.

We will welcome both returning and new members and are always open to suggestions to improve the help we provide at all stages.

The cost of room hire has increased significantly but, given sufficient numbers we are hoping to keep our charges at £14 for the term. For this you will get the use of a computer, the ability to print information (small charge), internet access, the use of a fiche reader and help from us

Pat Christopher, Sue Harlin, Jean Drinkwater



## **Forthcoming walks**



Tuesday 10 May - meet 9.30 at Village Hall with packed lunch. John and Barbara McCartney will lead a 5 mile walk to Cracken Edge and Chinley Churn with excellent views, some climbing, a short muddy stretch and some stony tracks, with 4 mile alternative available.

Wednesday 25 May - Peter and Louanne Collins will lead a 5.5 mile walk from The Knot Inn, Rushton Spencer. Meet 9.30 at Village Hall for a walk in the Dane Valley with lovely views, three climbs, and some stiles. Meals can be taken at the pub, with £6 meal deals and bar food available.

## Tuesday 8th March 2011 Walk Report



Spring was in the air as 16 walkers joined David Lloyd at the Butley Ash, for his 5 mile flattish walk. Pleasant field paths interspersed with glimpses of the rivers Bollin (in Prestbury) and Dean (nearing Bollington), surprisingly attractive stream valleys cheek and jowl with the Silk Road, and avenues of tall trees.

The sun had swept away the early frost, and buzzards and new lambs made their presence felt, as we left the imposing dwellings of Prestbury and made our way towards the older more typical houses of Whiteley Green and Butley Town, there graced with a multitude of spring bulbs.

Much of the walk was easy going, as the ground had dried well. A few stretches of narrow roads were the only blemish on a lovely walk.

In common with other pubs, the Butley Ash gave us reasonably priced and nice food, but also like others had difficulty in coping with our varied demands – time for packed lunches on our next walks??

## WALK REPORT – 30th March 2011

16 walkers, including 4 new members from the Open Day, joined Pat and Noel Christopher in Tideswell Dale, on one of the most attractive Derbyshire limestone walks. The 5 ½ mile route passed through 7 dales, with an initial short excursion into the former dolerite and basalt quarry of Tideswell Rill. Then it was gently downhill and along the river Wye, turning into a longish section up Cressbrook Dale, before we climbed out to Litton village. Then it was all downhill back to our cars!

The walk was full of interest. Discreet relics of former industry were everywhere – converted old mills, lead mine spoil heaps, mill dams, water leats, and old cottages. Nature was showing signs of Spring – toads were unashamedly mating by the banks of the river Wye, and various spring flowers were starting to show an appearance (arabis, butterbur, wood anemone), but new leaves on the trees hadn't yet hidden the many and varied views.

For a long time the threatened rain held off, but in the latter part of the walk, light rain started to make the limestone greasy, and some paths became a little tricky. But nothing detracted from what was a lovely walk through the differing delights of Tideswell Dale, Millers Dale, Water-cum-Jolly Dale, Cressbrook Dale, Ravensdale, Tansley Dale, and Litton Dale, for which we all thanked Pat and Noel.

## April 27th 2011 Walk Report

Lovely weather and a lovely route were enjoyed by the 29 who came with Gerry and Jan Chartres. From Hague Bar car park we made the short climb up to the High Peak canal, followed by a steady walk along the towpath in warm sunshine with the surrounding greenery and pleasant views at their springtime best.

After a coffee stop, we passed Carr Farm (being renovated), bridged the River Goyt, admired the Llamas at Goytside Farm, before reaching the confluence of the Rivers Sett and Goyt, and the magical world which lies below New Mills town centre. Bridges, viaducts and mill ruins now add fascinating charm to the formerly heavily industrialised gorges, and provided attractive surroundings for our packed lunches. Although electricity is not currently being produced by the much vaunted archimedial screw system, the earlier Millenium bridge was still going strong and quickly transported us to the thickly wooded river banks beyond. The paths were dry, the river was low but sparkling, stiles were easy kissing gates, and a gentle stroll soon brought us back to our cars, with lots of praise to Jan and Gerry for their choice of walk.

Walter Mason

## HOLIDAYS GROUP



### **NORMANDY    SEPTEMBER 9th to 13th**

Coach from High Lane to Portsmouth.

Ferry crossing to Caen. Four nights Half Board at the Hotel Mercure Cote de Nacre, Caen.

Included visits to the Bayeux Tapestry, Caen Memorial, Monet's Garden and possibly a Calvados Distillery.

Approximately £338.            Single supplement   £70.

### 2012 CRUISE.



ICELAND AND NORWEGIAN FJORDS ON P & O ORIANA.

August 18th 2012 for 14 nights.

Own coach from High Lane to Southampton.

Ports to be visited are:

DUBLIN, REYKJAVIC, ISAFJORDUR, AKUREYRI, ALESUND, OLDEN, FLAM, STAVANGER.

Any ladies who would like to share a cabin, and anyone interested in joining the group on either of the above holidays please contact:

Margaret Mc Dermott

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- > The English language is a strange thing!
- > If you take an Oriental person and spin him around several times, does he become disoriented?
- >
- > If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren't people from Holland called Holes?
- >
- > Do infants enjoy infancy as much as adults enjoy adultery?
- >
- > If a pig loses its voice, is it disgruntled?



## DISCUSSION GROUP.



The topic for discussion on the 23 March was "Inequality in society between the sexes" introduced by Marlene Brookes.

Inequality of course exists in various guises e.g. inequality of opportunity, parity of earnings, inequality of responsibility in society etc. Some religious groups have inequality built into their structures and equality is just not acceptable: it would mean a fundamental realignment of their values, as was the case in the U.K. many years ago. It was accepted that the law is now biased in favour of equality between the sexes but legislation does not necessarily mean acceptance. There are now women in the armed forces, (even flying fighter planes), the judiciary, the police force, the medical profession, politics, academia, science etc., but not many at the very top. Surprisingly, some of the women members of the group accepted that there should be limits to female aspirations and that some things should be left to men i.e. the top decision-making jobs in industry, in commerce, in government and in society in general. One reason given was that women have to have time off to have children.

What, no father involvement? One parent families? Or is it parthenogenesis? They accepted and even welcomed the "Glass ceiling" concept where women can see the next logical step up the ladder but can't reach it. So it seems that men and women are equal but men are more equal than women.

On the 20th April Jim Summers introduced the subject of 'The Post Office: does it have a future in the UK?'

The origins of the Post Office and its history up to the recent past were mentioned; how it was originally combined with the nascent Telephone and Telegraph services and was called the G.P.O. It was part of the Civil Service with its own Minister, The Post Master General. It was eventually divorced from the Civil Service and from the Telephone and Telegraph arm, the latter becoming B.T. The Post Office today has had to diversify, with its thousands of branches in towns and villages in decline and struggling to survive. They have had to accept new business such as acting as agents on behalf of some of the major banks, the Ministry of Transport, Passport Service and other Government Departments. Unfortunately this is not enough and many have had to close.

Because of the pressure created by rival means of communication such as Fax, e-mail, Skype and texting on mobile phones, the branch of the postal service handling letters is under threat and the Government has been searching for a potential buyer but with little success. Paradoxically the WWW has increased business for the parcel service branch which is in profit and therefore saleable. So what does the future hold for the Post Office mail service? Looking forward ten or twenty years with our best highly polished crystal ball tuned in, we agreed that technology will probably advance to the detriment of the Mail Service but there will always be a requirement for private correspondence, e.g. Passports, documents which require personal attention i.e. a signature, highly confidential letters etc, recorded delivery, registered mail etc. Perhaps technology will find a way around these problems. We simply cannot see what will happen in the future otherwise it would happen now. The most likely probability is that the Post Office will shrink to a fraction of its present size, it will be privatized and most of its present indispensable functions will be reorganised and/or replaced by technologies which haven't been invented yet. Whatever happens we will just have to accept and adjust to it as we usually do.

Jim McDermott.

## Dining Group



The Dining Group enjoyed a traditional meal of fish and chips (other items were on the menu for those who did not want fish) at The Plaice in Bollington. All who went agreed that this was an excellent venue (apart from the parking), reasonably priced, and first-rate food.

Our next venture will be on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June at 6.30 p.m. to The Pack Horse in New Mills. The price will be £21.00 for a three course meal. Please book with Margaret or Jean at the next U3A meeting.

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'I felt like my body had gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for pensioners. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotard on, the class was over.'

*Never be too open minded your brain may fall out.*

*Remember-- once you get over the hill, you'll begin to pick up speed.*

*If you look like your passport you probably need the holiday.*

*Junk is something you've kept for years and throw away two weeks before you need it.*

*By the time you can make ends meet, they've moved the ends.*

*Just going to church doesn't make you a Christian, no more than standing in a garage makes you a car.*

Message from the Editor:-

As so often happens there is a large space to be filled at the end of the Newsletter which I struggle to fill with witticisms – could you fill this space with an item from your group? Features regarding forthcoming events would be marvelous! Please submit your articles for the next newsletter by Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June. Thank you.