

USK U3A NEWSLETTER MAY 2016

Chairman's Report May 16

It was great to see so many of you at the AGM and I hope you found the venue satisfactory. As this is my first entry as Chairman into the newsletter I must first again thank Keith for his stewardship over the past 3 years and also David for his role as treasurer and web administrator.

With the exception of the photography group, that unfortunately closed due to lack of support, our other groups move from strength to strength. This is certainly true of the French conversation group and walking groups that I attend (though the latter could use more people willing to lead walks).

There are some exciting prospects for the coming session, the culture group are promoting local theatre trips (the first shortly to see an Alan Ayckebourn play) and there is the possibility of a new gardening/horticulture group, a preliminary meeting date to be announced shortly.

We are still without a vice chairman. If anyone out there is interested in this post (it's not onerous) please let me know. One of his/her functions was to hold convenors meetings. Convenors receive minutes of our committee meeting and in the absence of a vice chairman we are proposing that convenors have an open invitation to committee meetings in order that they can air any problems they may have.

Meanwhile, as I find my feet as chairman, I hope you all have a great summer and holidays.

Reg Darge. (01291673242 / jandr.darge@ypostoffice.co.uk)

Art Group

This band of artists formed just six months ago but already we have established a lively and dedicated group. All ladies at present but gentlemen are welcome too! We meet [from 10-1pm](#) every Thursday in Llangybi Village Hall. £3 per session with tea and biscuits. On average our attendance is a respectable 12-16 members each week, everyone coming with different levels of experience. Total newcomers would not feel out of place as each member is more than willing to share their knowledge and ideas.

A different topic is tackled each week in a wide variety of media. Topics are set in advance so class members can plan work beforehand. Themes have ranged from Clowns to Cakes, from Churches to Owls. Something for everyone. Convenor Sue Morgan is an experienced art teacher and is on hand to advise and to give out tips and tricks. A lovely creative way to spend three hours a week in pleasant surroundings and in friendly company. For more details phone Sue on [01633 450209](tel:01633450209).

Scrabble Group

We have had a successful year being joint winners of the Usk U3A quiz and having a few winners of the 7 letter word prize. Two new members have joined and I have had enquiries from 3 others, at present about 10 or 11 people regularly attend each meeting.

During the year we have played games at the home of one of our group, overlooking Llandegfedd reservoir and enjoyed an afternoon tea at Usk Garden Centre after a friendly game with members of Monmouth U3A Scrabble group. Although cries of "Who's had all the vowels?" and "Are you sure all the letters are here?" are heard, we continue to be a very sociable group playing quite competitive but good natured games. If you would like to join us you can be assured of a warm welcome.

We have an average attendance of about 10 women and men who meet fortnightly on Wednesday afternoons from 2 - 4. We have a break for tea and biscuits for which there is a charge of 50p., and play at least 2 games each session. We do not stick too rigidly to the time rule and have a very large Scrabble words dictionary to check any queries. If you would like to join this friendly sociable group, even if you haven't played Scrabble for a while, you can be assured of a warm welcome. Please phone Rosemary [01291 672276](tel:01291672276) for further information.

Reading Group 1

Reading Group 1 is currently full with 11 members. We meet on the third Thursday of each month from 2 until 4 p.m. and the venues are our own homes decided a month in advance.

If you would like to go on a waiting list then please contact one of the convenors.

Last year we started with Hilary Mantel's 'Bring up the Bodies' and finished with Kate Atkinson's 'Life after Life'. In between we read two classic books by George Elliot and Arnold Bennett and a range of topics from more current authors.

Discussions this year have been very lively and it is sometimes interesting to note that a book that very few like can generate the best discussions.

Our Christmas meeting was our lunch with everyone presenting a Christmas story from their past.

Very enjoyable and one that we might repeat.

This year we started with Donna Tartt's 'The Goldfinch' and followed this with Kate Grenville and Colm Toibin. America, Australia and Ireland. Where will we go next.

Convenors Alma Jones [01291 671379](tel:01291671379) Margaret Hatfield [01291 65297](tel:0129165297)

Reading Group 2

Over the past year we have continued to meet regularly, usually on the first Thursday morning of each month. We remain a small group of 8, meeting in the comfort of each other's homes. The social aspect of our gatherings remains important while the focus of our meetings is of course on the book we have been reading. We have recently welcomed one new member who is filling the place of one of our group who withdrew as she is now spending more time abroad than here in Usk.

Everyone happily contributes to the discussions and our scoring system for appreciating and enjoying the books makes for an interesting read in itself. By bringing our own questions and opinions a lively debate inevitably ensues and we are no longer surprised by how polarised our views can be! Once again we have chosen our list of twelve books for 2016 using a well tested democratic voting process. We will be continuing the tradition of our December meetings by watching the DVD of a book title, followed by lunch made up of contributions of festive food!

Any of us would be happy to help set up a third U3A reading group if enough people are interested.

Rosemary Cochrane March 2016

Culture Group Report April 2016

The Culture Group has been well supported this year with attendance at meetings around 25 – 30 each time. We have had talks on a broad range of topics, including Newport poet W.H. Davies, Wales Millennium Centre, the man behind the folk song Joe Hill and the history of homicide law. We have visited the National Gallery in Cardiff, seen the Welsh National Opera in Sweeny Todd, had a visit from the Newport U3a Choir and a summer trip to Lacock village and abbey. We are replacing coach trips to Cardiff theatres with an informal group of members attending our excellent local theatres. Using a system of car sharing will mean that we do not need large numbers to make theatre trips viable. Initial response is positive with a good number of people prepared to drive and offer lifts. We hope to have our first trip in May.

Other activities coming up are:

29th April The Llanybi Murders – a talk by David Husband

27th May The Library of The National Museum, Cardiff – a private visit behind the scenes (a few places left)

24th June BBC Wales Through The Ages—a talk with film clips by Edith Hughes, Manager Research & Archives for BBC Wales

14th July Coach trip to Art In Action, Waterperry House & Gardens, Oxford £25 (includes coach and entrance fees)

I'd like to remind everyone that all Culture Group activities are open to all the members of Usk U3A and it is quite OK to 'dip in and out' of events as they appeal to you.

For more information contact: Maggie Corke by email maggiecorke@btinternet.com or phone [01633 430237](tel:01633430237)

Photographic Group

After a successful first year we have now had a very poor year. Due to member's ill health, holidays and other commitments we have not generated sufficient numbers to gain any momentum at meetings. The meeting date was changed from the second Friday of the month to the third Friday of the month to suit the convenor but I do not think this has affected the situation. We do not have sufficient regular members to make hiring a room for meetings cost effective and I have run out of ideas as to how to proceed. Our group was never intended to teach people about how to use their cameras. It was to try and encourage us to increase our knowledge and pleasure in using our cameras in a social situation. Monmouthshire Community Learning has a one day course on Digital Cameras and blocks of 10 week courses on Photography and Graphics. Details can be found in the Usk Library. We have had some very memorable meetings and the photographs taken on our trips have been very good. However, I feel the Photographic group cannot go forward as it stands. Photography has changed so much in recent years with phones and tablets taking over from cameras so if someone else in U3A has any suggestions on how to proceed and would like to become convenor please make yourself known.

Margaret Hatfield

Proposal for a U3A Gardening Group

A number of members have been making enquiries about a gardening group. I have been told that Gardening Clubs have been closing down and it is difficult to find one local to Usk. Usk does have a branch of the Hardy Plant Society but that does not necessarily cover the range of plants and problems a gardening group would tackle. Some suggestions that have been made for meetings are:

Visiting other members gardens both large and small to find out what they have achieved
Visiting as a group, by appointment, National Garden Scheme gardens
Practical sessions such as pricking out and sharing seedlings, taking and potting cuttings, how to collect and store seed from your garden, preserving fruit and veg
Research historic gardens in the area and visit them

Sharing knowledge on fruit, veg and plants and gardening books and tips
Plant swops
If anyone is interested in starting or joining a group as suggested could they please leave their name, telephone number and email on the form before they leave. If there is sufficient interest a meeting will be arranged to discuss how we might proceed. At present no one has volunteered to be the convenor but this would be discussed at the initial meeting.

Margaret Hatfield

Usk U3a Walking Groups – Report April 2016

The walking groups continue to thrive with an average of 10 walkers each time. Unfortunately this year we have had to cancel a few walks due to the very wet, cold and windy weather. We have however still managed to enjoy ourselves, exploring the local countryside in very convivial company, and look forward to the summer. We are now into our 9th year and although sad to have lost a few members, I was very pleased to welcome three new members who regularly walk with us. Due to changes in the bus timetables we will have to rethink the coffee walks but I am sure we can still enjoy our monthly stroll and chat over a coffee and cake.

I would be very pleased to help anyone who could lead an occasional walk, either coffee walk or gentle walk. Everyone is welcome to join us, please see me or another walker to check which is suitable for your needs. Please see new programme and times for future walks. My contact No is [01291 673377](tel:01291673377)

Myra

Parlons Francais

Attendance has been excellent this year with a good average of 8, sometimes 10 regulars. It pleases me to see people coming along on a fine day when gardening, golf or walking could be beckoning. Considering the busy lives retired people lead it's nothing short of a miracle.

Atmosphere. The Museum continues to be an excellent venue, very quiet during the winter months though a little noisier when there are visitors crossing the courtyard. Two people in the group have lived and worked in France and one has family there and is therefore a frequent visitor. These three are often my prompts for colloquial French. I don't (and can't) do grammar – it's complicated and, frankly, boring. I try to introduce new phrases and with a little bit of repetitive work hope that they “stick “. We read and listen, talk, analyse poetry, listen to French songs and I too am learning all the time.

Participation And Progress. As the months go by I am seeing more and more willingness on the part of the participants to have a go at speaking French. Much appreciated recently by all of us was a talk in French by Janice on her recent holiday in Cuba. This required a lot of preparation and many questions were put to her. By today we will have had a talk by Reg on his trip to Marrakech. We have also had a presentation by Eifion Breeze on « The most kissed woman in France ». No, it wasn't Bridget Bardot, but a poor young woman who was drowned in the Seine in the 19th century and whose beauty inspired many artists and whose face today serves as the model for the « Kiss of Life ». We are looking forward to a short talk in French by Rob Atkins at the end of April on his trip to Calais to take gifts to the migrants. (Some of you may have seen his article in the March edition of the Usk and Raglan Diary.)

By the way, I don't like to call what we do a “Class” that feels schoolish. I tend to call it a “Session” but if anyone can come up with a more suitable word, I'd be delighted. Any suggestions? Thank you for listening. Sheila Shepherd .

Can you help to make us more efficient?

Would you like to help Usk U3A streamline its admin and record keeping and improve communications with members? The Committee is looking for one or two extra members to join a small working group to explore a possible new computerised system to replace our manual arrangements for managing membership and finance records. Another aim is to find ways to help Convenors keep in touch with their groups.

Please contact the Treasurer Mel Witherden at mel@sunlea.org.uk, tel 01495 769000 if you would like to know more.

Mel Witherden, 26.4.16