



FLEET AND DISTRICT REVIEW 1999

Welcome to the latest issue of Fleet and District's Review of Group Activities to years end 1999. There are currently 56 activities offered by the Groups of which 19 report here. The Review is biannual and all Groups should ideally report each year, however the dynamic nature of U3A means that new groups form and other groups close, every term. Please watch out for new groups and support them as you will. Remember it is probably more worthwhile to try something completely new rather than stick to the subjects you already feel confident about. If you do not exercise the mind, then like any other body function, it will deteriorate. We all know how easy it is to function while physically unfit, we can use our cars, telephones and household appliances, but there is no substitute as yet for a poorly functioning brain. Of course with cycling, dance, badminton and walking available, you can also keep in trim. So get motivated, check what is available and start something new in the New Millennium. Meanwhile....best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Brian Greener, Editor

ANYONE CAN PAINT

The original Anyone Can Paint Group which started three years ago has spawned two more groups - and we still have a waiting list. One sceptic, Ron Clements, who joined the original group just to prove that the title was misguided, has this year won the first prize in the National U3A painting competition - a free painting course with the internationally acclaimed tutor, Ron Ransom and £50 of art materials.

Anyone Can Paint II is devoted to those who have been through the initial course or have some previous experience of painting. These 'improvers' find themselves painting still life subjects devised in the imaginative mind of Morley Glover - Halloween was, appropriately enough, the inspiration for a fiendishly difficult arrangement.

This years beginners, in groups I and III, have been laying the foundations by learning to look at familiar things through new eyes, practising the rudiments of contour drawing and seeking out negative shapes and tones.

Brian Fox

ART APPRECIATION

This is a very friendly group led by Sheila Williams with obvious enthusiasm for the subject. The meeting can take the form of a talk with slides, illustrating the work of a particular artist, or a specific art form, mosaics, portraits or frescoes.

On other occasions each member is asked to illustrate their opinion on a painting of their choice or on a subject such as the painting of hands by various artists. Outings were

arranged to the Exhibitions of John Singer Sargent, Monet and Van Dyke. Visits to Historic Houses arranged by Betty Fox, gives us the opportunity to view their renowned collections.

Thora Hyatt and Angela Swetenham

ART I

I have heard it said that 'everyone has at least one book in them'. Well, I don't know about that but I would like to think, along with the rest of the Wednesday class, that we have at least one good painting in us! Happily there is no deadline for the production of a masterpiece so we start our pleasant afternoon meetings believing that this might turn out to be the great day! Later in the afternoon, of course, we have modified our views; but there is no doubt we have all improved and benefited from the class. We all owe much to the advice and encouragement of our previous group leader, Rona, who led ART I from the beginning. Sadly for us, Rona has recently moved with her family to Norfolk. However, the group has now acquired its own momentum and each Wednesday we see a regeneration of the friendly informal atmosphere which is ideal for learning more about drawing and painting.

Barry Jamieson

BADMINTON

The badminton group is limited to twelve members and we have one court per fortnight. We try to strike a balance between the fun of games and the benefit of coaching.

Having only one court is a serious limitation. With more courts we could offer more variety in games and more effective exercises. This would attract more members and allow us to aim towards the critical mass of numbers necessary for long-term viability. One alternative being investigated is Calthorpe Park School inner hall. Although there is only one court, there is some room around it which would allow practising of strokes while the court is in use. If any member has knowledge of a large hall or hangar in the district, we would be pleased to know.

John Davis

BIRDWATCHING

Six meetings were held during the spring, at fortnightly intervals from late March to early June. The first meeting was held indoors as an introduction to the course. Thereafter, the meetings were outdoors, comprising four morning walks and one evening walk. Each walk lasted about 2 hours.

Initially, it seemed that the course would be over-subscribed. In the event, however, an average of twelve people attended, an ideal number for this kind of activity.

The weather was kind to us on the whole, the postponement of the first meeting by one week being the only concession that we had to make; not bad considering what the weather was like this spring! We saw and heard a good variety of species, some 73 in all.

I thoroughly enjoyed leading such a friendly and knowledgeable group and I would like to thank my wife, Maureen, for acting as Secretary.

Gilbert Rowland

CALLIGRAPHY 1

At the beginning of the year, all those who had mastered the basics of the art in the previous session were promoted to the glories of Calligraphy 2. We therefore set off as twelve complete novices under the guidance of Sheila Williams (the name Sheila we see defined from the Greek, very suitably, as "one who commands") to master "Foundation" script and various alternatives up to "French Ronde". Calligraphy proves to be a difficult but satisfying art which we all enjoy and are now capable of producing Christmas, Birthday and Easter Cards and even edifying framed homilies! We all look forward to next year.

Peter Jaggard

CALLIGRAPHY 2

Calligraphy 2 is still thriving and proving as popular as ever, thanks to the excellent tuition of Sheila Williams. Such is our enthusiasm

that most members arrive early at Velmead Hall and "champ at the bit" until the Calligraphy 1 class departs and we can begin our own session.

We have learnt many styles and techniques including gilding, Gothic script and cursive, Carolingian and French Ronde and this enabled us to show a very wide selection of our work at the U3A Open Day. All these new skills have made it possible for members to produce their own birthday cards and celebration cards in their own individual style and no doubt many members are now in the process of designing their own Christmas cards, a practice encouraged by Sheila. The class gives such pleasure and satisfaction to all its members - long may it continue.

Heather Fermor and Brenda Evans.

CIRCLE DANCE

The Circle Dance Group had another enjoyable year. We have an experienced group but new members fit in very well. Kathleen Hall shares the teaching and we both aim to do dances that are not too complicated with music that is always compelling. We now have a repertoire of about 100 dances. It is interesting that over half of them are new choreographs from teachers and musicians in the network, especially composed for Circle Dancers.

Because of commitments we can only offer sessions once a month. We therefore welcome the addition of International Folk Dancing to the programme. I have attended their evening classes in Fleet and have enjoyed them immensely. What is the difference between International Folk Dancing and Circle Dancing? Very little: many of the dances are exactly the same but Circle Dancing is unique in that we do the new dances mentioned above. The two groups complement each other very nicely.

We had 30 at our first session and would welcome more new members.

Janet Davies

COMMUNITY

We met on four occasions and discussed various activities. One on-going activity is providing business experience to 'Young Enterprise Schemes'. Jim Denley and Tony Bristow are assisting with their vast business expertise and it is proving to be a learning experience for them and the students. There is a competition in May 2000 so we will see whose team comes out on top. Other schools would like this kind of assistance as well. In addition there is a requirement to help with teaching basic skills in English and Maths at

Secondary school level. We are hoping to get a small team together to run a monthly quiz evening in Retirement Homes in Fleet. If you have any ideas or would like to help, please let us know.

June Walsh and Ian Stephenson

COMPUTER WORKSHOP

We started this Workshop, in September 1998 with 15 members and now we have more than 75 who wish to attend. After Easter we will split the group into two 'Beginners' and an Intermediate Class with a maximum of 20 in each. We have been fortunate in persuading Pat Wilson-Grey and John Davis to lead Beginners Groups. The Intermediate Group will have two leaders, Ian Stephenson and Lynne Gould. This will mean that we can help up to 40 Beginners and 20 'old hands'. Farnborough College of Technology has donated five computers and two members have donated their old computers, for use at home, on hire, for £5 a month.

A small team, sponsored by 'Help the Aged Millennium Awards' is designing Web Pages for local charities.

Jean and Ian have been asked, by the U3A to write a "Beginners Guide to Word" for year 2000 - more hard work ahead for both of them.

Ian and Jean Stephenson

CREATIVE WRITING

At our last meeting, it was suggested that reading our prose or poetry out aloud to the other members of the group, was akin to attending a therapy session.

This is really what the Creative Writing Group is all about. We go away from each class with a suggested theme, on which to produce a poem, or a story containing about 1500 words or less. Then armed with our individual efforts, they really are individual, we read them to our eager listeners.

Humour, tragedy, poignancy, you name it they will all be there in the interpretations of the suggested theme. They all, to my relatively limited ear, have richness, variety and entertainment, which makes being a member of the group very enjoyable indeed.

Mike Cox

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Over the years this group has enjoyed many novels, plays and short stories from Nathaniel's *Scarlet Letter* to Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

This year we are looking at short novels by Henry James and *Cranford* by Mrs Gaskell. During each meeting we read extracts from the

chosen book to show character, scenes, and dialogue or to move on the story. We are not experts but enjoy reading and one or two members agree to lead us through each book.

You may well ask 'How do we choose a book?'

This is done by democratic voting and partly determined by the titles available in the Wordsworth or Penguin Classic series for a mere £1. This enables everyone to have their own copy and follow the page numbers.

We meet regularly in the Methodist Church Lounge in Reading Road South at 2 p.m. on the fourth Monday of the month. We break for tea and biscuits and finish at 4 p.m.

Helen and Betty

FAMILY HISTORY

The Family History Group met monthly throughout 1999 year at the Methodist Church in Reading Rd. Basic areas of research were covered such as Census returns and Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates. Small groups visited the County Record Offices at Reading and Winchester, the Family Record Centre in London and the Church of Latter Day Saints in Aldershot. Also used were County Record Offices (giving access to Parish Registers), Trade Directories, historic maps and plans.

Several members contributed towards the display at the April meeting - Joyce Avey in particular made up a very interesting display board. We also welcomed the Family History Leader from the Camberley U3A who has researched her ancestors back to William the Conqueror!

We run an informal and friendly group and new members are welcome to join at any time.

Dorothy Brookman

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

The Group averages 25 to 30 members, meeting every fortnight. The range of topics continues to be varied, largely based on topical finance issues in the Money sections of national newspapers, but also on traditional matters. Controversy on any subject is welcome.

Members of the group play an active part in presenting and debating many issues, using examples of their own experiences to guide others. Typical subjects from two meetings in the Autumn Term included:- commercial lettings, new data protection act, property abroad, capital gains tax, company share news, changing banks, protecting your plastic cards, still leaving a dozen items for next time. We try to keep it light-hearted, but hope that members will leave with one or two profitable ideas.

Speakers are appreciated and currently we are looking forward to a professional presentation on savings and investments by the Millfield Partnership.

Brian Robinson

MUSIC APPRECIATION

Bach to Bartok, Weber to Webern, G&S to jazz; you hear it all with this group. Although our collective taste tends towards the more serious end of the spectrum, last term we had a session on the development of traditional jazz and there is a session on Gilbert and Sullivan coming up in the New Year. This term we had an illustrated talk on 'variations', describing how composers and performers have transcribed and arranged original works for other instruments and how different conductors perform the same work in varied ways. There was a talk on the life and music of Carl Maria von Weber and another on 'these colourful Russians'. The term ends with a selection of Christmas music chosen by members and a fiendishly clever musical quiz.

We meet alternate Thursdays at 1.45pm in the Methodist Church in Reading Road South and would welcome new members.

Alec Robinshaw and Brian Smith

PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is sometimes defined as the use of reason and argument in seeking truth and knowledge about the causes and nature of things. This sounds rather dry but in practice for us it has been more about wonderment and curiosity; raising questions about what we normally take for granted, like our own existence. Over the last year a dozen or so of us have had many interesting talks and discussions, mostly on aspects of religion but also on relativity, cosmology and code breaking. Many of our discussions deal with perhaps the greatest mystery of all; does the mind emanate from matter destined to perish with it, or is it an entity of itself that merely uses matter as a means of expression?

We are continuing the search for answers this year with topics such as the relevance of miracles to philosophy, and in December talks on 'Medical Ethics' and 'Philosophy and Poetry'. Topic suggestions for next year are very welcome.

Dave Clayton

SCRABBLE

The Group averages 14-16 enthusiastic members and we welcome people of all playing abilities to the meetings. Beginners are given plenty of help and it does not take very

long for them to become proficient. Reckoning up the scores sometimes presents difficulties but people soon learn to count up the full score for the move and their partner will always help and check the score! At the other end of the scale a number of the longer standing members are becoming adept at achieving "bonus" words: that is words formed using all the tiles on the rack at one go! These words get you an extra 50 points and they are often greeted by admiring and congratulatory remarks from the rest of the room!

High spots aside though, we all enjoy ourselves and have a pleasant social afternoon on Tuesdays, fortnightly, at Reading Road Methodist Church.

Peggy Gauchie

THE EUROPEANS

This is a new group, sub-titled "the ins and outs of the European Union", which is grappling with the history, institutions, law and policies of that fearsome subject which is never far from the headlines.

Our aim is to learn more about the EU, a large task, and by doing so we hope to strip away the usual rhetoric and shed some light while avoiding excessive heat.

Each session explores a particular aspect of the EU (e.g. the Treaty of Rome); that is followed by a discussion (usually vigorous) of the previous two weeks "European" events and how earlier history illuminates them. We have got as far as "the single market" and the Single European Act, 1986.

Some specialist speakers are to be invited for later sessions and we hope to make a trip to Brussels, perhaps in the Spring, to see some of the action "on the ground".

Derek Stroud

TRAVELOG

The Group continues to thrive with an enthusiastic team of some 40 "travellers" each session. During the past year, using video, slides and films, we have visited France, the Isles of Scilly, Morocco, Gibraltar, Spain and the Hebrides on a cruise. In January we toured Israel with husband and wife guest speakers. We toured Southern Ireland staying in B&B's. We heard from Gerard about the joys and problems of buying and modernising a property in France. We visited the Canadian Rockies, Madeira, Sicily, Lipari and Vulcano. We went on a safari in Kenya and then to the magical Seychelles. We visited the Baltic States and Moscow and St Petersburg. We finally travelled around the beautiful Scottish Highlands by coach and train.

I hope to see all the familiar faces again and
new ones too and thank you for all the support
I have received during the past year.
Martin Bennett _____