



Fleet and District U3A

ANNUAL REVIEW 2009

INTRODUCTION	5
ART	7
<i>ANYONE CAN PAINT BETTER.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>ACRYLICS.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>WATERCOLOUR</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>PAINTING TOGETHER IN WATERCOLOUR</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>DO YOUR OWN THING</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>EXPLORE WAYS TOGETHER.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>TAKING RISKS</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>NEW PAINTERS</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>LEARN TO DRAW.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>WATERCOLOUR PAINTING</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>WATERCOLOURS – INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>MOVING FORWARD FROM BASIC WATER COLOUR.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>PAINTING STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUES</i>	<i>14</i>
COMPUTING	14
<i>FAMILY HISTORY ON THE INTERNET</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>PC FOR BEGINNERS</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>PC FOR IMPROVERS</i>	<i>15</i>
CRAFTS	16
<i>CALLIGRAPHY – I</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>CALLIGRAPHY – II.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>FLOWER ARRANGING.....</i>	<i>17</i>
DANCE.....	18
<i>BALLROOM DANCING.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>BELLY DANCING</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCE</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>LINE DANCING</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>SALSA.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>TAP DANCING</i>	<i>21</i>
EXERCISE.....	22

KEEP FIT.....	22
PILATES.....	22
TAI CHI.....	23
GAMES	23
BRIDGE – ADVANCED.....	23
BRIDGE – BEGINNERS.....	24
BRIDGE – IMPROVERS.....	25
CARD GAMES.....	26
MAH JONG.....	26
PUB QUIZ.....	26
SCRABBLE.....	27
GARDENING	27
GENEALOGY	28
FAMILY HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS AND FAMILY HISTORY WORKSHOP	28
LANGUAGES	29
FRENCH – ADVANCED.....	29
FRENCH – INTERMEDIATE.....	29
SPANISH ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS AND SPANISH BEGINNERS.....	30
LITERATURE.....	30
READING FOR PLEASURE.....	30
SHAKESPEARE.....	32
MISCELLANEOUS.....	33
CREATIVE WRITING.....	33
CURRENT AFFAIRS.....	33
EUROPEANS.....	34
FINANCIAL AFFAIRS.....	35
HISTORY.....	35
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.....	36
STEAM AND TRANSPORT.....	37
TRAVELOGUE.....	37
WEEKENDERS.....	38
MUSIC.....	39

MUSIC APPRECIATION.....	39
TRADITIONAL AND MODERN JAZZ.....	40
OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES.....	40
VISITS.....	40
WALKING.....	41
PHOTOGRAPHY	42
PHOTOGRAPHY.....	42
SPORT	43
BOWLS.....	43
PETANQUE.....	44

Introduction

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Welcome to the Annual Review 2009!

Within these pages you will find contributions from some of the members or Group Leaders of the various activities that form the basis of the Fleet and District U3A programme. Whether you are a new member or are rejoining you will find help with your choice of topic for the coming year.

We are a non-formal learning organisation which means that the members of a learning group are responsible for, and accountable to, themselves, without the restrictions of external control, pre-set syllabuses, or assessment for accreditation. Our aim is to deliver learning opportunities by shared learning with each member of the group being both a learner and a teacher. [This is an edited version of a quote by Meg Shaw a former Trustee of the Third Age Trust.]

For Fleet and District U3A this means that we provide three types of learning opportunities. A majority of our activities can be classified as shared learning, but some, such as languages, bridge and calligraphy, require some "tuition" from a member. With dance and exercise we require expert tuition from a qualified professional tutor.

In the Annual Review this year I have grouped the activities under common headings such as exercise, dance, languages and computing. I have added a contents page and an index. I hope this helps you to find the activity in which you have an interest.

We have a total of 86 groups run by 61 Group Leaders. The activities range from art to science and technology, from family history to walking and from dancing to scrabble. We

continued this year with our partnership with Calthorpe Park School and provide a range of computing topics. In the autumn term the Science and Technology group had the highest average attendance of 60, closely followed by Gardening, 55, Travelogue, 44. History, Financial Affairs, Music Appreciation, and Bridge Improvers averaged around 40 attendees. But there are smaller groups such as the art and language groups. The number of attendees is determined by the activity with smaller numbers required where there is a need to provide support to individual members.

None of these groups would be possible without the voluntary help and support from our Group Leaders, plus Group Secretaries and the helpers and tea makers! I would like to personally thank them all for making such a variety of topics available to the members.

For obvious reasons we cannot guarantee that you will be able to join the group in which you have an interest. The Group Leaders do encourage those in "beginners" groups to move on to the next group to allow new members to join each year. So my advice is come to the enrolment early to give you the best opportunity to sign up with your favourite activity.

If you cannot find the activity within our programme that would interest you, or the activity you would like to join is fully booked, why not consider starting such a group? The Committee and fellow Group Leaders are always willing to offer support and advice. You do not have to be an expert – the ethos of U3A activities is that we all learn from each other through the guiding hand of a Group Leader. My e-mail address is at the top of this page.

Art

Anyone can paint better

Art is a very popular and important part of U3A, particularly in Fleet where there are 13 classes, ranging from absolute beginners to very proficient. . All mediums are represented, but watercolour seems to be the most popular. It is difficult to overstate the enjoyment and satisfaction participants derive from these classes. The joy of having one's eyes opened to seeing the world entirely differently and the satisfaction gained from slowly improving techniques in such a friendly atmosphere has to be experienced to be believed. The leaders are artists, most of who exhibit locally and derive much satisfaction from helping others develop their skills and perception of what makes something quite commonplace into a picture.

This write up is by **John Lawes** who, together with his wife joined the New Painters group, then went on to the Drawing Group and is now in his second year in the Anyone can Paint Group In the back of my head I have a dream of helping people who since their school days have wanted to draw and paint -just like me. Now, given time and opportunity they bloom in the most exciting way - not easily - not quickly, but with increasing satisfaction. To share this experience with friendly, laughing people is a privilege thanks to U3A Fleet. We learn together.

Desi Mills

Acrylics

Firstly, a few words about acrylic paint. It is made with a polymer (compound) derived from acrylic acid (Latin – pungent liquid). However, I assure my fellow acrylic painters that it is harmless and soluble in water, unless, as we know, you let it dry on your hands and clothes – basically like emulsion paint. Our acrylic painters, though, are not available for home decorating!

We have continued to develop our talents this year as we encourage one another with a variety of techniques including abstract pictures, portraits and colour perspective, although foregrounds are always a challenge.

With nineteen painters sharing a wealth of friendly banter and advice Monday afternoons are most enjoyable.

John Scarborough.

Watercolour

Our group meets on Mondays in the Baptist Church Hall, Church Crookham, where we spend enjoyable afternoons "painting for pleasure". Most of the group work on their own personal projects and there are many individual and varied styles. The atmosphere is friendly, supportive and encouraging, and group members are happy to share their knowledge and expertise, and make helpful comments and suggestions.

There is no permanent tutor but, at least once a term we have a demonstration from an expert U3A artist. This always proves to be very interesting and provides us with many tips and advice on skills, techniques and different aspects of painting.

Lynne Ryder

Painting together in Watercolour

Last year, after we lost our esteemed Course Leader, when Geoff Jennings had to re-locate to the North of England, our Group went from "Painting Together in Watercolour" to "Clinging Together in Confusion" but swiftly got a grip of things and emerged, in what was dubbed a mutual self-help society, with a new Group Leader and a fully retained class-list. Rumours of vultures being seen on the roof of the WICC hut were un-founded. Weekly classes continued routinely and the Group's sense of identity was exemplified by the decision to produce a display for the Summer Art Exhibition of each individual's interpretation of the same subject; a ploy that was so successful that a similar venture is under discussion for the 2009 show.

Much credit must go to John Maguire the leader round whose feet we sit each week to be told afresh about the fire-exits in the BCCC hall to whose pine-clad splendour we moved after the rustic charm of the WICC hut. He has organised a programme of lectures/demonstrations to bring fresh ideas, and a chance to progress, to all in the Group. In the past year we have had demonstrations from Peter Forey, Tony Yates and David Hancock; an illustrious group who all possess the ability to take the reaction of a watching class in a two hour demo from "I could never tackle that" to "I think I will have a go". Our gratitude to them is enormous.

On non-demo weeks we paint and, in the tea-break halfway through, stroll round, chat, advise and comment on each other's efforts in an atmosphere somewhere between a Workers' Co-operative and a Dilettantes' Society. After tea the class resumes in, for long spells, the total silence born of concentration. We all know that while the quest for improvement is endless, the room for it is infinite.

George Fergusson

Do Your Own Thing

I joined "Do Your Own Thing" last September with some trepidation. As I expected, there were many talented artists within the group. What I didn't expect, having attended various evening classes over the years, was the warm, friendly welcome, and the immediate feeling that you are among friends. People concentrate on their own favourite subject matter, such as landscapes, flowers or animals, mostly through the medium of watercolour, but with occasional forays into acrylics, gouache etc. There is plenty of opportunity to wander round during the coffee break to look at and admire other people's work, and to filch their ideas. There is no tuition as such, but our group leader Ron is always available to help sort out problems and to encourage us. Sometimes all that is needed is a fresh eye to see where an improvement can be made. Gwen and Bill help ably with the organisation of the group, which currently meets in the Cricket Club. The two hour session passes in no time, and it always comes as a surprise when someone realises that it's time to pack up.

Margaret Keeley

Explore ways together

On Tuesdays a group of serious painters meet, working quietly together with the more experienced sharing their expertise and knowledge. There is often a common theme for some consecutive weeks and in the last twenty minutes the group put up all the work for open, free discussion.

Val Fulker

Taking Risks

Sadly we lost our mentor, Bob Perry, when he died in April. We all miss him very much, he was such a help, a fine artist and a real gentleman.

The Group's activities, ably led by Simone Tyson, followed much the same pattern as last year, namely, "doing your own thing" and "set subjects" on alternate weeks.

The set subjects were

- Portraits
- Painting without a brush
- Composition from several photos
- Texture
- Autumn leaves

We were also treated to three excellent demonstrations

- Portraits (Brian Fox)
- Pen & wash (Tony Yates)
- Abstract landscapes (Linda Adams)

Two of the Group had attended some tutored art holidays and attempted to pass on some of the techniques and tips which they had been shown, this seemed to be appreciated. We have all made some progress and enjoyed the company of a very sociable Group.

Alan Denten

New Painters

If you are new to painting and are looking for expert tuition, encouragement and group support with a good dose of laughter, (mixed with the occasional sigh of frustration), then this is the class for you. It may not always be relaxing, but it is certainly addictive. From the mysteries of producing spectacular washes, to learning to paint something that eventually resembles a tree, this class has it all. You may not be producing "concertos" at the end of the year but you will be well past the "chopsticks" stage!

Diana Megson

Learn to Draw

If you're a beginner or already do some drawing and would like to learn more, this is the group for you. Putting the first line on a blank piece of paper can be very daunting for new students, but Desi is always there with her enthusiasm and expertise to guide and encourage you to take the plunge into the unknown. We progress from small, precise drawings, to free flowing sweeping sketches, drawing everything from animals and still life to churches. If you would like to try to draw, join this class and enter a world of fun and enjoyment with limitless horizons. You'll be amazed what you can achieve with Desi's inspirational support.

Sue and Audrey

Watercolour Painting

Our group has grown in numbers this year and also in ability. Among the subjects we have tackled so far, apart from the usual flower paintings, are snow scenes, there was plenty of incentive for that subject and some amazing results too. The group has also produced some wonderful animal portraits as well as landscapes.

One subject we tried which put a totally different slant on the normal paintings was to paint on tissue paper, the results were very interesting because it meant moving away

from the usual comfort zone and that's always a learning curve. It's very encouraging to see the results of some lovely painting at the end of the session, as well as fun being with a great group of people.

Janice Edmunds

Watercolours – Intermediate and Advanced

Under the excellent care, tutorage and encouragement of Peter Forey our group leader, we continue to flourish. Our meetings, on Monday afternoons in the Victoria Hall Hartley Witney, exude an air of quiet concentration as we work on our varied subjects of choice.

Although our subject-matter is varied, we do all tend to paint in a style that reflects realism rather than impressionism or, dare I say it, abstraction.

Whilst there is (as in all U3A groups) the value of regular social contact, I get the feeling most members, if not all, are there to improve their painting skills. Well, thanks to Peter, I think that's happening.

Ron Clements

Moving forward from Basic Water Colour

A friendly group with diverse skills and styles who enjoy painting a wide variety of subjects which are either set by the tutor or of our own choice, and this year we have painted landscapes, buildings, water, flowers, animals, to mention just a few. These are highly enjoyable sessions, with the occasional demonstration from our tutor or the occasional visitor, as well as a welcome cuppa and chat.

Chris Hindle.

Painting structure and techniques

David makes our class interesting and enjoyable. We are a relaxed and mixed ability group who look forward to the weekly challenges that are set for us, such as perspective, using understanding and mixing colours, also recognizing and defining shapes even painting them upside down? Making pencil drawings of each other was fun. Each week we have a different subject to draw and paint, therefore experiencing many topics covering all aspects of painting and drawing.

Miriam Barber

Computing

Family History on the Internet

This five week course is aimed at those who are familiar with a computer and the internet and wish to pursue, or begin, their family history research on-line. The topics covered include searching for births, marriages and deaths after 1837, the censuses from 1841 to 1911, parish records before 1837 and a variety of other useful websites. The final session covers the recording of the research information using computer software. The format of each session is a demonstration of how to access the various on-line sources followed by time for individual research of the member's family history.

Anthony Trice

PC for Beginners

A group of computer learners meet once a fortnight, at Calthope Park School, on either Tuesdays or Thursdays, under the friendly and efficient leadership of Sue Copley. With her help we are attempting to master word-processing, the internet, spreadsheet and the joys of E-mail. Since the first week we are generally more confident, no longer so wary of the computer and realising just how useful the

course has been. Our original doubts have been quelled, and everyone now seems enthusiastic to learn more. Sue has produced useful sheets of information to which we still regularly refer and she can always find an answer to the mysteries and complications which we experience.

A group member

PC for Improvers

Using the facilities of Calthorpe Park School, the PC for Improvers courses have provided the opportunity for anyone with just a basic knowledge of computers to consolidate and expand their skills in the use of word processing and spreadsheets, and so give them the confidence to exploit these skills at home.

The feedback we have received from our students on all these courses is encouraging and is best reflected in the following note from one of our regular students, **Colin Thomas**:

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of myself and the other attendees that I consulted, for the very informative, interesting and enjoyable PC Courses which we attended. I suppose I am your typical U3A member who has retired, plays a bit of golf and has time to pursue lots of other interests. Although I have been a computer user for over 10 years, my skills were limited to creating standard letters in Word and using the Internet for booking holidays and electronic banking. It was therefore very useful for me to progress and be able to utilise Word much more fully. Features such as copying, moving and deleting text within a document, setting up margins, creating headers and footers including page numbering, as well as inserting graphics and clip art have now enabled me to utilise Word much more fully and effectively. I also found the session on Excel extremely interesting and valuable enabling me to create spreadsheets for Accounts etc.

"The File Management sessions were again excellent, providing discussions and information on storage devices and understanding their capacities and capabilities. This introduced me to the many benefits of using USB memory sticks which I found to be extremely valuable.

"In conclusion, I benefited hugely from the sessions I attended covering Word, Excel, and File Management

"It is also worth mentioning that the quality of the handouts issued after each session was excellent and ably complimented your professional presentation style. Each course was further enhanced through your clear descriptions of each session's content as well as our understanding at each session end. Additionally, by frequently checking whether students had any additional requirements, you kept the whole course dynamic and totally pertinent to our collective requirement."

Peter Haver and Denise Fielding

Crafts

Calligraphy – I

Calligraphy: "The Art of Fine Handwriting", a skill within the scope of anyone willing to practice and persevere. Last September twelve of us set out, paper, pen and inkpot to hand.

Calligraphy proved a progressive and enjoyable learning curve. We started with the rounded Foundational hand, step by step, letter by letter. Sheila Williams is a firm and encouraging tutor, and by Christmas we had progressed far enough to produce gift-tags, thank-you notes, and simple Christmas cards.

New Year found us learning 4th Century, Uncial script, brought to this country by St. Augustine, and much used in Church manuscripts of that time. The Spring Exhibition

loomed, and we honed our newly acquired skills to produce examples to put on show.

Calligraphy is an absorbing, calming, occupation. At times, in class, you could hear a pin drop; but there are also moments of stifled hilarity over the results when attempting a new letter form! Definitely a life enriching skill, with the added bonus that it brings pleasure to others. There is still much more to learn, Italic, Copperplate, Gothic Calligraphy II beckons.

Jenny Bond.

Calligraphy – II

Calligraphy is a fascinating and absorbing skill, which is as fresh and inventive today, as it was at the time of its origin in the earliest human civilisation.

I am in my second year of the U3A calligraphy class and find it both an interesting and enjoyable subject. We have been introduced to Foundation, Uncial, Italic and Copper-Plate scripts, and at present we are preparing a piece of work in Copper-Plate script for display at the U3A exhibition of work. Several members of the class have been attending for a number of years and are working on individual projects. This involves writing a small journal on a chosen subject (e.g. poetry, proverbs, quotations, family history, etc..) using one of the above scripts. Such work can become an inspiring project when one adds creative designs to your calligraphic skills.

Philip Day

Flower Arranging

We meet the second and fourth Thursday in the month at Basingbourne Baptist Church from 10am to 12noon. There are about 12 to 14 each session depending on holidays and "grandchildren" and we thoroughly enjoy ourselves. Three of us take it in turn to demonstrate an arrangement then we all set to and do our own interpretation of the arrangement.

Amazingly they are all different at the end, and all are very good. We all help each other with extra foliage etc or advice.

Once a term we have an outside Demonstrator to give us an extra dimension to our work. We have a few vacancies so if you are would like to give it a whirl why not join us.

Kit Neville.

Dance

Ballroom Dancing

Tuesday is Ballroom Dancing day for some 48 keen enthusiasts who, whilst not necessarily as fit or agile as the contestants on "Strictly Come Dancing", are nevertheless realising the pleasure of learning some of the techniques which have been displayed to such dazzling effect on the TV on a Saturday evening!

There are now two classes running at the Crookham Memorial Hall under the excellent tutelage of James; beginners and improvers. He had to take time out for an operation on his foot just before Christmas, but left us in the safe hands of his colleague Chris - who also performed a couple of demonstration dances for us with his partner, Sarah, at our Christmas Party in December.

This event was once again organised by Iris Martin who has been the Group Leader for both groups since their inception but has now sadly had to stand down due to ill health. All members of the class wish her well. Philip Crane and Marilyn Robson have taken over from her.

The more advanced class - now in its third year - has been well grounded in the basic steps of the Waltz, Quickstep, Foxtrot, Jive, Tango, Rumba, Cha-cha-cha and Samba in their various forms and this year has embarked on some more adventurous steps. James allows us to work at our

own pace and some of the more complex steps may take several weeks to perfect.

The beginner's class is following in their footsteps - literally! The slightly smaller group means that James is able to give more individual attention where required so progress has been remarkable. Since September we have mastered the basics in seven different dances and can now hold our own at any function.

Ballroom Dancing can be competitive - witness "Strictly Come Dancing" - but it is also a thoroughly enjoyable way of getting that much needed exercise in a relaxed and social atmosphere. Above all it is FUN!

John Paine

Belly Dancing

Instructor and choreographer Ulrike White teaches Fusion belly dance. Fusion simply allows different styles and flavours to mix and although the basis of her teaching is primarily Egyptian belly dance, Fusion has aspects of Arabic, Turkish, Indian, Bollywood, Spanish, Modern Western and even a touch of Burlesque. As you can imagine it is a fun class and a fantastic way of keeping fit. It also promotes stamina and good posture. Come and join our friendly class.

Maureen Burbridge

International Folk Dance

The International Folk Dancing group began the year on a very sad note with the death of our former group leader Michael Clark and when we danced the Israeli Dance for Peace at the celebration of Michael's life, it was a moving tribute to him and his passion for dance.

His wife, Jane is our group leader and under her excellent tuition, the group has steadily grown in confidence. We have had several new members this year and they have easily integrated into the group.

The dances are from all over the world and they are taught or revised at each session. It is such fun – it is good exercise, keeps our brains active and we enjoy the beautiful and varied music. We are a friendly group, meeting on alternate Friday mornings at Crookham Memorial Hall. Do join us.

Eileen Bishop

Line Dancing

This has been another successful year for both line dancing groups and was described by one member as: "A perfect way to kick-start Monday morning"

Line dancing is an excellent way to exercise both mind and body in a friendly and non-competitive atmosphere. The catchy country music tunes coupled with a variety of dance steps from waltz, cha cha cha, merengue and salsa all combine to provide us with a challenging and entertaining session.

We are constantly being urged to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle as we get older and line dancing is acknowledged as a great way of doing this. It encourages us to use "our little grey cells" in memorising the sequence of the steps and helps with rhythm and coordination.

As always our thanks go to James Montgomery, our tutor, who unfortunately had surgery on his feet in December and this has prevented him taking our classes this term. However, Chris Bates has taken over as our instructor and we are very grateful to him for enabling our group to continue in James' absence. Both of them are very enthusiastic and encourage fun and fitness through dance. I invited comments from the group and I've included a few below:

"More than just exercise – it's a liberation of semi-seized muscles, coupled with good music and a lively atmosphere."

"Line dancing for old people proves age is no barrier to a healthy and active lifestyle."

"Best form of keep fit I know."

New members are assured of a warm welcome so hopefully I will see some more of you at enrolment in August.

Jenny Webb

Salsa

Tap Dancing

Hop, Spring, Brush, Drop, Step-heel, Heel-step, Pick-up, Cramp roll – sounds like some difficult gym exercises? No – just some of the steps used in Tap Dancing.

Tap Dancing is an enjoyable class that has been running since September 2008. A good time is had by all with the timeless toe-tapping music and easy-to learn steps, which are joined together to make simple routines. The classes are suitable for men and women and all you need to begin are some hard shoes and a sense of fun! A great way to get fit.

Jean Stephenson

Exercise

Keep Fit

Want to keep old bones at bay?
Then join Keep Fit – the happy way
To trim those thighs and shape that waist
It's great to move and get the taste
For fitness fun – and you will spend
A lively hour, you can depend.
Jolly music, march and curl
Bend and reach and do a twirl
Grape vine here and heel dig there
Practise stretching on a chair
Improve your balance – tummy in
Abs held tight – hold up your chin
Box step left and leg curl right
It oils the joints and helps the fight
Against old age – so come this way
And join Keep Fit at U3A.

Davena Lawrence

Pilates

Pilates has been running at Fleet U3A since January 2005. The well-established classes run four times a week with both morning and afternoon classes to keep up with the ever-popular demand. The mixed ability classes are suitable for men and women of average fitness and focus on balancing mind, body and spirit with gentle to challenging mat exercises.

Pilates is well-known for re-aligning the body and helping posture, strength, flexibility and breathing. The tutor combines classic Pilates exercises with yoga and relaxation to provide a well-balanced class in a friendly, non-competitive atmosphere.

Jean Stephenson

Tai Chi

The practice of Tai Chi offers many potential benefits. Physical benefits may include improved flexibility, balance, muscle tone and even lower blood pressure. Mental benefits may include a calmer mind and lowering of stress and anxiety levels.

The Friday morning Tai Chi group has continued to flourish over the past twelve months, and it is rare for a member to leave. As a result the waiting list of potential new members kept growing. Therefore it was decided that a second Tai Chi group should be established. This group, which meets on Wednesday mornings, was launched in January 2009 with 18 members and is settling down well. James Langcake is the instructor for both groups.

Both classes begin with a series of gentle warm-up exercises. We then focus on "the form" which is a well-established, precise and flowing sequence of movements, practising a particular posture or series of postures before bringing together all the movements which have been "mastered" to date. Why the quotation marks? Because gaining expertise takes time and regular practice, and "mastery" may prove rather elusive!

Irene Bye

Games

Bridge – Advanced

If you are a keen bridge player or if, as many of the current members of the Group are, a 'graduate' of Fleet U3A's excellent *Bridge Beginners* and *Bridge Improvers* classes, then you should seriously consider joining the Advanced Bridge Group on a Thursday afternoon (2.00 to 4.30 pm) to play duplicate bridge. Please do not be put off by the word *Advanced* in the Group's title. The 50 or so members who meet up weekly are a very sociable crowd, and the sessions,

although taken seriously, are always played in a very well organised and friendly manner, with some time still being given over to discussion and improvement.

As the Group plays duplicate bridge, anyone considering joining should preferably come along with a partner. If you do not have a partner then consider joining the *Bridge Improvers* group for a year, where you are likely not only to find a partner but also get acquainted with the bidding systems used by members of the Fleet U3A Bridge Groups.

The experience gained during these sessions will enable the participants, should they so wish, to go on to join local Bridge clubs.

A Member of the Group

Bridge – Beginners

For anyone who enjoys card games, the game of Bridge presents a new option. Outdistancing other card games in complexity, the game provides a brilliant opportunity to challenge oneself mentally. However, one need not be intimidated if one has no experience at cards. The game is taught from base zero, so the playing field is levelled for all comers.

U3A Bridge is the duplicate version, meaning that each table of four players plays the same hands. This allows for the hands to be pre-determined and structured around the current lesson, giving the players immediate experience in each session's lesson. The teacher, Mike Brown, is extremely well-organised, presents the material in a logical sequence, and follows with numerous examples. He is patient with and respectful of all questions. Each lesson is followed by a practical demonstration, and then a chance to actually play bridge.

While Bridge is a social game, one should not underestimate the level of concentration required. The game can be played on many levels, so there is constantly the opportunity for

additional learning and challenge. Continued practice and study will lead to success, as well as - hopefully - mastery of an exciting a vocation!

SU3An Lowe

Bridge – Improvers

Joining the *Bridge Improvers Group*, having attended the *Beginners*, is definitely the way to proceed - such a route ensures that one's bidding is clear and is readily understood by all your fellow players. The *Improvers* revisits all the aspects learned in the *Beginners* and expands, enhances and reinforces that knowledge as well as extending the techniques and etiquette required to play the game and not embarrass oneself or one's Partner.

Each session comprises an interactive tutorial on a specific bridge bidding topic followed by Duplicate Bridge play. The latter, as well as developing bidding skills, also enables practice in the use of the bidding boxes and the correct completion of the travelers. Luckily Mike and Sylvia are to hand to advise on the bidding and help all to develop their confidence as to bid selection and the ultimate contract.

I would suggest that the Improvers Group would also provide an excellent form of refresher course for those who have had a break from playing or wanted to undertake a revision.

If you are intending to learn bridge then it is definitely beneficial to attend Mike Brown's Beginners Group and then progress to the Improvers Group.

Sandy Redman

Card Games

A small group of approximately twelve meet once a month on Fridays at the Fleet Football Club to play cards.

Whist has been the most popular game though we have been introduced to a couple of variations of the game.

The atmosphere is very relaxed and friendly.

Olive Steele

Mah Jong

Play this fascinating game which is very popular in the East - many of our twenty plus members played it in different countries during there stay there and our fortnightly meetings remind them of their happy times abroad. However, detailed tuition is given to the beginners when we start again in September. We play both Chinese and Western style and mix partners making sure everybody gets a good game. We are a friendly group and always welcome new players.

Vlady Kell

Pub Quiz

This is by no means Mastermind or University Challenge. Questions come from a variety of quiz books and magazines and are light-hearted. We meet once a month on the second Wednesday afternoon of the month in the autumn and spring terms and I'm pleased to say we have averaged nineteen attendees since September. All comers are made to feel welcome. Cards are drawn to decide seating arrangements so we do not encourage "winners" to share tables with other "serious" quizzers. I think everyone would agree that it is a pleasant way to spend a couple of hours now and then.

Carol Noad

Scrabble

There are about 16 of us now most weeks and we all enjoy playing each other and either winning or losing as the case may be.

About twice a year all the Scrabble groups in the South West get together for a big Scrabble Jamboree. We had one here last year which was a great success and in March 2009 eight of us will have trekked to Hindhead for the latest battle of the Scrabblers. There are some very good players and some very very good players about, (we are usually somewhere in the middle). We have a few vacancies so if you want to give your brain an extra airing why not join us you will be very welcome.

Kit Neville.

Gardening

The Gardening Group has continued to flourish this year with over fifty members at most monthly meetings. We had a chilly March outing to Kew gardens with plenty to see in the glasshouses. In May we enjoyed an outing to Loseley with afternoon tea and had a glorious sunny day at Mottisfont Abbey in June to enjoy the rose garden. Visiting speakers have entertained us on topics such as 'Conservatory and House Plants', 'Vegetables for a Small Garden' and 'Japanese Gardens'. Our Christmas Quiz challenged our brains as usual and our members have inspired us with illustrated talks on their own gardens or those visited abroad.

Mary Simpson

Genealogy

Family History for Beginners and Family History Workshop

The interest in tracing your family history grows every year and Fleet is no exception. We have two family history groups. The beginners meet during the autumn term. There are six meetings in the "classroom" to discuss some basic research techniques and a session afterwards in the late afternoon on the computers at Calthorpe Park School to put the theory into practice.

The Family history workshop group has members who have just started to search, right through to people who have been looking into their families for many years. We meet throughout the year and once the beginners have finished their course they are welcomed into the workshop sessions to continue their search into the past. We are a lively group with many family stories to tell. Amongst our members there is a wide range of knowledge and people are encouraged to ask for help and tell the group of the families they discover. We have also had talks on using wills and leases to help in research, collecting postcards, and birth and baptism in the 1800s.

The coffee break is always a lively time and it gives an opportunity for people to have a chat about their research. Family history is not just about building a tree it is about widening your knowledge of local history, occupations, the life of our ancestors at different times in the Country's history and if you are lucky finding an ancestor who "comes to life" through all the research you do.

Rosemary Mist

Languages

French – Advanced

We have 13 members enrolled this year and the average attendance each week is 9 or 10 people. This number is just right to encourage participation by everyone and lots of fun and chat...nearly all in French. All enjoyed a New Year Lunch at L' Auberge at Hartley Wintney and we will be exchanging news of our holidays as the summer approaches.

Leadership of our classes is shared between our French Tutor, Annie Beunier, Marion Turner and me. Annie helps us to remember points of grammar with its application as well as giving us French expressions such as "Politiciens parlent la langue de bois" (they repeat unimportant things many times). Marion brings along items for us to read and translate which then lead on to some interesting discussion amongst members. For my sessions, I make much use of La Vie Outre-Manche (a bi monthly magazine for Francophiles). As well as reading articles from this magazine we have dictation, vocabulary and number tests.....some members aren't very happy doing this!!!

Ray Oldham

French – Intermediate

Many of the group have been together for several years now, but in September we had several newcomers, who are now well integrated into the group. Our Monday morning lessons are always friendly and enjoyable with a minimum of grammar to tackle! Annie Beunier comes twice a term. She keeps our spoken French up to the mark in her classes which are both useful and fun! Thank you Annie. Thanks too to Rosalind who puts so much work into each class, and also invited us to her home to watch "Les Choristes", "The Chorus" which is a lovely film.

At Christmas we had a lovely social occasion when we went for lunch to L'Auberge at the Cricketers in Hartley Wintney. We ate wonderful French food and drank French wine, and had a marvellous time, (although we weren't chatting in French!).

Barbara Lyons

Spanish Absolute Beginners and Spanish Beginners

In the absolute beginners we have been working our way through the BBC Talk Spanish 1 book and CDs and have progressed from "¡Hola!" to "¡Hola! Buenos días" in a matter of months. This is the second year that this class has run and of necessity, numbers are limited to twelve people, all of whom are keen to learn more than the book offers – which keeps this leader on her toes.

When I thought about progressing to Year 2 this year, I thought that the class would consist of members from the Absolute Beginners sessions held last year. In fact, other members have joined too, who have learned Spanish previously and want to brush up their knowledge. We are following BBC Talk Spanish 2 and the CDs with lots of additional information thrown in to the advantage of those who began their Spanish twelve months ago.

Both groups have been fun to run

Carol Noad

Literature

Reading for pleasure

Two years ago the idea of setting up a U3A Reading Group was proposed. The plan was to read a different book each month and to meet with other like-minded members who had a love of reading and a desire to have a good discussion on the merits or otherwise of the chosen book. Because I

was already a member of another reading group, I was approached to try and get it "off the ground". At our first meeting in September 2007 we had 21 members and a suggested reading list of one book!

We have since then read a wide variety of books; some brilliant, some good, some not so good, but always the subject of lively and often far-ranging discussions. However, rather than let me chatter on, why not let some of the comments made by Group Members speak for themselves.

"Never fail to be amazed that a group of (probably) like-minded people see so many different aspects to the same words that I have read".

"A stimulating and thought-provoking discussion about the book we have just read its author, and how much we may have enjoyed it."

"The group has pointed me in the direction of books I would never have considered and which have given me considerable pleasure."

"We can often learn something new, not just from the book, but from the discussion that follows."

"How rewarding to not only be encouraged to read a good book outside of my usual 'comfort zone' of authors, but also the opportunity to share and enjoy that experience with others."

"From the enormously challenging 'Midnight's Children' by Salman Rushdie, to the intensely moving 'The Boy With No Shoes' by Michael Horwood, this year's Reading Group selection has catered for all tastes. We have enjoyed the classics, most recently 'Wives and Daughters' by Mrs Gaskell and been disturbed by the newer publication '19 Minutes' by Jodie Picoult. Our

monthly meetings are consistently well attended, with absentees e-mailing views and opinions - a testament to the pleasure we all have in sharing lively discussion about our current reads. So enthusiastic are we that we are even thinking of meeting over the summer holiday!"

"It is a pleasurable experience to be a member of the reading group. The wealth of knowledge and depth of our discussions are invigorating."

Jean Stephenson

Shakespeare

Our group has enjoyed another fantastic year due in the main to SU3An d'Andrade's leadership. She has the ability to engender terrific enthusiasm for the Bard, bring his writing to life and aligns it to modern day life. The reading is often accompanied by a CD and DVD of the play under discussion.

Our membership and attendance has increased during the year and we have read so far, *Hamlet*, where we attempted with great hilarity to enact the play within the play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Othello*. The latter was greatly enhanced by listening to a radio programme featuring Lenny Henry and how he had approached playing the part.

The highlight of the year has undoubtedly been our visit in September to the Courthouse at Stratford to see *Hamlet*. All agreed that it was a breathtaking performance, beautifully acted and staged, so much so that the matinee we attended received a standing ovation.

Still to come is the reading of *Romeo and Juliet* and a visit in May 2009 to the Globe to see the live performance.

Julie Hunter Clarke

Miscellaneous

Creative Writing

We were shocked and saddened at the loss of our leader, Mike Cox, in October. An invaluable member of any group, he will be remembered by us for his help, encouragement and the pleasure of his stories and articles over the years. Under Kate, our new leader, we have continued to enjoy our writing. Which is what we do. *We* write – about what, and when, and how the mood takes us – for although a different ‘theme’ is suggested for each meeting, it is more to stimulate thought than a directive. We write prose, short stories, essays or poems. If anyone is reluctant to read out their work other members are always pleased to do so. We continue to learn from each other through constructive criticism and have occasional visits by outside speakers giving us fresh ideas on making what we say more effective.

The group continues to offer the opportunity to meet lively like-minded people, fascinated by the way in which jotting down a single memory can give rise to so many more

“Because of your years
You may speak but none
Listens, Fool ‘em – and
Write it.”

John Greasley

Current Affairs

The Current Affairs Group meets generally on the first Monday of the month to examine, often in considerable depth, matters that have been recently in the news. The group includes individuals with a wide range of interests and expertise ensuring a brisk exchange of views, which only rarely reaches the level described in diplomatic circles as a ‘full and frank exchange of views’.

Jim Russell

Europeans

We are a small and friendly discussion group pursuing one or two themes for the year and also taking stock of news and events arising between our fortnightly meetings.

Under our first theme of “media, myths and meddling” we have focused this year mostly on the ways in which the EU is covered in UK and other media; some well worn but often recycled myths; and the many lobbying organisations represented in Brussels. We studied in particular the peculiarities of media ownership and influence in the UK noting one commentator’s observation that “in no other European country is it acceptable for leading journalists to report tendentiously on, or even lie about, the EU.”

Our second main theme has been the European Parliament and the forthcoming elections (in June this year). This included a talk by Jonathan Fryer, a candidate for the London region which, although highlighted in the Monthly Newsletter, attracted a disappointingly small audience. The event was, nonetheless, very worthwhile, providing useful insights into: the workings of the Parliament; issues such as the long running “sore” of meetings in Strasbourg as well as Brussels; and a range of questions about the current and potential role of the EU - in the present economic crisis, in climate change and in combating international crime while protecting civil liberties. Jonathan answered a wide range of questions from the group in what one participant described as “a most considered, thoughtful and helpful” manner.

Derek Stroud

Financial Affairs

I joined this group two years ago and can honestly say I've never had so much fun discussing money and associated topics. We are a very mixed bunch - from people who seem to have lived their lives according to the Stock Market to people like me who are aware of the value of the pound but have too few of them to live the high life.

In general it is a topical finance discussion forum dealing with points raised by us all. We try to get a guest speaker each term who is often charming, witty, erudite and artistic; illustrating financial matters sometimes to the point at which I took an interest, for example, in inheritance tax!

I love attending this group and regret the odd Monday mornings when I cannot be there.

A member of the group

History

History matters, pass it on; we need to remember, we mustn't forget,
Mistakes endured, triumphs secured: we must consider the debt
Our forebears left us; in strength, knowledge time and chance.

Our History group U3A enjoys meetings where we consider our past,
We attend to our speakers, we listen aghast
To past lives and events. We know what to expect in advance

As David Lawrence our Leader has kindly stepped to the fore,
When our group was collapsing and was destined to be no more.

We have heard of the Tower of London, strange stories from there,
The Berlin Airlift; a side result of this were plans to keep us safe in the air.
AA Milne, Christopher Robin and Pooh; a rather sad life that didn't really win through.
The Titchbourne Claimant, a riveting tale of place and chance,
And General Monck, a great soldier of the realm, not remembered as he didn't win a battle against France!

Diana White

Science and Technology

The Science & Technology Group is now in its 12th year, and is blossoming. We now have 109 members on the books and, whereas average attendance in 2007-8 was 40, the 2008-9 season has so far averaged 55.

We have been successful in continuing to find new topics – or new angles on old topics – for our meetings, presented by good speakers, drawn both from within our number and from outside. The topics have covered a wide range of interest embracing most of the areas covered broadly by the group name. These have included large aircraft maintenance, model aircraft, jet fuel, nuclear and wind energy, cracking the Enigma code, small satellites, chain ferries and computers. Biological, medical and evolutionary topics are included in the remainder of the 2008-9 programme.

We are currently planning the 2009-10 programme. Several promising subjects are already on the table at this early stage, and we are continuing to seek new ideas.

The S & T Group members have, between them, a wealth of valuable expertise and experience in the real scientific world. As a branch-out activity this year, we are therefore also in discussion with Courtmoor School, who approached us with a view to identifying opportunities for using this

experience to help enthuse and encourage students to follow scientific careers.

The S & T Group continues to meet on the first Friday in each month in the Fleet Football Club premises, which provide excellent video projection, car parking and refreshment facilities.

Peter Histon

Steam and Transport

This group has continued to grow and consolidate during the year. The group meets on Wednesday afternoons once a month at the Fleet Football Club. There has been an average attendance of 25 members out of a total membership roll of 45 – many members from previous years but several new ones joining during the year.

The group is fairly railway biased but during the year we have had a talk on Transport in Art by Peter Webster (a U3A member) and two other talks by members of the group. A talk on the Kennett and Avon Canal broke the railway mould in January.

A small group went on a very enjoyable visit to the Pendon Model Museum in November, stopping for lunch at an excellent pub in Long Wittenham. There is a planned visit to the Fawley Hill Museum and Railway on Sir William McAlpine's land at Marlow in late June. We hope for good weather for this because travel round the site is in open wagons.

Brian Armes

Travelogue

The class meets at Fleet Baptist Church on a Monday at 2pm at which Martin Bennett gives us very varied holidays places to visit.

Since the beginning of the 2007/08 session we have been to Cuba, the Ukraine travelling on a boat to many interesting places, Tasmania and Cost Rica where we saw many species of animals, butterflies and exotic flowers. We walked through the forest but fortunately did not encounter snakes but did see poisonous frogs. Martin had the privilege of holding a humming bird which had stunned itself. The commentaries by Martin are lively and informative.

In December one of our members, David Maddock, took us around Easter Island seeing the stone images which occupy many areas.

We have been to Wisley Gardens and had a look at the various flowers and plants. Cricket St Thomas had lovely gardens encouraging us to visit.

We really enjoy experiencing many parts of the world giving us a taste of places we would like to visit.

Pauline Fisher

Weekenders

Currently this group is concentrating on playing *Rummikub* at weekends. However, the idea is that this group could provide opportunities for those who are on their own to get together at weekends when their other friends may be busy with family or other activities. It is hoped that with the coming of summer this group will arrange some short walks, visit some local places of interest or just meet for afternoon tea and a chat.

The Group Leader is **Jo Preece**.

Music

Music Appreciation

An average of 45 members meet on alternate Thursday afternoons in Fleet Methodist Church and enjoy listening to music. In fact we do more than just listen; we also 'appreciate' the music through learning something about its composer and their background, and about the music itself. We try to cater for all tastes, from the 16th to the 21st century, from solo voice to full orchestral, not forgetting chamber and ballet music along the way.

2008 & 2009 have been particularly busy years for celebrating 'musical anniversaries'. This year the most noteworthy are those of Handel, Haydn and Mendelssohn, all of whom have had programmes dedicated to them and their music. (We covered Purcell a year or so ago and are not including him this year.) We have also noted 150 years of the Halle Orchestra. During last year we celebrated anniversaries for Rimsky-Korsakov, Puccini, Vaughan Williams, Messaien and Leroy Anderson in a compilation programme.

Next year will see some changes. After ten years of joint leadership, the last two commuting from Devon for each meeting, Brian has decided to stand down. His commitment and the effort he has put in, which he will say has been a labour of love, are greatly appreciated and will be sorely missed (not to mention his large collection of CDs) - thank you Brian. In fact he has promised to continue to do individual programmes for us each term and we are grateful for that. Alec will continue as joint leader and will be joined by class member Gilbert Rowland – thank you Gilbert.

So with Alec, Gilbert and our nucleus of visiting speakers, which in future will include Brian, we look forward to many more hours of appreciating our rich heritage of music.

Alec Robinshaw

Traditional and Modern Jazz

How do you like your jazz; hot or cool? Do you prefer New Orleans style or Chicago? Main stream or modern? Or possibly free form? Whatever your preference, it will be satisfied at the Jazz Appreciation Group. (Well maybe not free form).

At our fortnightly meetings our members make wide-ranging presentations about their special jazz favourites. We've had sessions devoted to Louis Armstrong's early years, prominent tenor sax players, jazz vocalists, international influences, big band specials, and oh so many more. We also have occasional outings to local jazz venues to enjoy the thrill of a live jazz band.

So, regardless of *your* particular taste, we can guarantee you will find our sessions illuminating and enjoyable.

Ron Clements

Outside activities

Visits

During the year we said, "au revoir" to Brian Garrod who, sadly, has had to resign from our team due to ill health. Barbara Lyons and I thank him for all his hard work and wish him a speedy recovery. You will soon become acquainted with Graham Hall who has kindly agreed to join the team.

Visits and short breaks continue to be popular and are, on the whole, well supported. Keeping costs within reasonable limits is a continuing problem. In particular, coach hire seems to get more expensive all the time. You can be sure, however, that our visits always represent good value.

The group that went to Madrid at the beginning of October 2008 was smaller than usual, but this worked well and we all had an enjoyable and memorable time. Madrid is a beautiful city, very elegant and well laid out with wide avenues and magnificent buildings. There are many cultural opportunities and we had a very good guide to some of the paintings in the Prado. Another highlight was the visit to the very old city of Toledo. All rather weary after walking around the narrow, cobbled streets of Toledo we were taken to the lovely Parador Hotel which is in a perfect position on the other side of the river, and has wonderful panoramic views of the old city. We soon recovered after a good lunch in these lovely surroundings! If you have not done so already, have a look at the photos on the website.

At the time of writing 26 members are eagerly anticipating a five day trip, travelling by coach, to Antwerp, to include a visit to the world famous Keukenhof Gardens in the Netherlands. Other visits during the past year include our annual short break in June, which this year was in King's Lynn, taking in tours of Sandringham and Holkham Hall and a varied programme of day trips to places including Beaulieu, The Queen's Gallery, the American Museum near Bath, Battle Abbey, two visits to the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the Waitrose Leckford Food Festival.

Check out our new programme for 2009 - 2010. There is bound to be something of interest to you.

Barbara Lyons & Don Watson

Walking

We are halfway through programme No 22 that has been most successful and included a look at the Guildford end of the Hindhead Punchbowl tunnel. Due to sickness etc we have lost some of our regular Leaders, but have gained a few more to save a difficult situation, more leaders would be very welcome to give our faithful regulars a rest. Come and give it a try you will enjoy the challenge and make a lot of friends. You will be given lots of help.

Programme 22 reminds me that Fleet Walking has been going for 13 years and I have been directly involved for 12 years. During this time I have met many lovely people and seen some glorious countryside. We were fortunate some years ago to gain three lady leaders who always turned out in rain or shine. They were of course Vera, Shirley and Audrey. To the dismay of us all Audrey became ill in early 2009 and passed away, she is sadly missed by everyone. Others who have sadly left us include Mike Cox, Malcolm Reeves and Richard Stringer.

On a more cheerful note programme No 23 will be out in mid July, with lots to look forward in the Autumn and Winter. We welcome our regulars and all new members. I was reminded recently of a great character who with me and Len was a part of the Last of the Summer Wine, he is remembered by many for his " muddy endeavours " but John (Miles) is also remembered for his kindness and companionship keep smiling John.

See you on some walks

Bill Ralph

Photography

Photography

We are a friendly group, which meets monthly. We have talks and discussions on various aspects of photography to help us advance our skills, and throughout the year we go on trips and then bring the results of our photographic endeavours to share with the group. As you might imagine there are a variety of interpretations on the same subject and it is very good to see the different pictures and to learn from the more experienced members how to improve one's pictures.

We appreciate the time Carole Brownlee puts in to organising the meetings, and the outings she arranges. Visits have been to many places including Milestones Museum, Savill Garden, The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Waverley Abbey, and Farnham. The outings are also a social event and coffee and lunch are highlights of the day.

Each year we have a summer challenge, when we produce a panel of four photos on a given subject - last year it was the "Flora and Fauna of Britain"; and we also exhibit at the Yateley Camera Club spring exhibition. Then there is the competition with Guildford U3A when we challenge each other with 24 photos a side. As many people as possible submit photos and so far we have always beaten Guildford by a whisker. Thanks must also go to Ted Clark - we would not be where we are without his help and guidance. So thank you Ted.

Pat Wheeler and Rosemary Mist

Sport

Bowls

Another successful season for the Fleet and district U3A. New members have been an asset to the group and although at times we were a bit overwhelmed Richard as usual kept his head "when all about etc". Our Christmas feast at *al Fresco* went down well. It was a bit of a jumble on entry with over 40 senior citizens all anxious to start enjoying themselves – the place was buzzing.

This season some of us played in the Rushmoor Indoor League. Our first match gave us heart – a draw. The next ten or more demoralised us; we were thrashed – then we won one!. So we went to the pub to celebrate. With our hopes running high the following week we met a team of octogenarians plus. No problem we thought, even if they are good, age SHALL weary them. Two hours later we

scurried from the green paying homage to the victors who scored 34. Us? Best not to ask! "If you can meet with triumph and disaster." Please give us triumph every time. Happy bowling!

Anonymous

Petanque

This group plays the French game of pétanque (boules) at the Bowenhurst Golf Centre on the terrain belonging to the Crondall Pétanque Club. Every other Monday morning, depending on the weather, somewhere between 8 and 16 members gather to play a few games of this addictive and fascinating sport. Pétanque is an ideal sport for those of us in later life; it is skilful and competitive, but does not demand great strength or stamina. Gentle exercise is good for us all and we would very much welcome new members to the group. No previous knowledge is required. All equipment is provided and all we ask is that you wear sensible footwear, such as trainers.

Colin Philip

Index

A

Acrylics 7
Anyone can paint better 7

B

Ballroom Dancing 18, 19
Belly Dancing 19
Bowls 43
Bridge - Advanced 23
Bridge - Beginners 24
Bridge – Improvers 25

C

Calligraphy 16, 17
Card Games 26
Current Affairs 33

D

Do Your Own Thing 10

E

Europeans 33
Explore ways together 10

F

Family History for Beginners 28
Family History on the Internet 14
Family History Workshop 28
Financial Affairs 6, 35
Flower Arranging 17

French – Advanced 29
French – Intermediate 29

G

Gardening 6, 27

H

History 6, 35

I

International Folk Dance 20

K

Keep Fit 22

L

Learn to Draw 12
Line Dancing 20

M

Mah Jong 26
Moving forward from Basic Water
Colour 13
Music Appreciation 6, 39

N

New Painters 7, 12

O

Orchestra 39

P

Painting structure and techniques 14
Painting together in Watercolour 9
PC for Beginners 14
PC for Improvers 15
Petanque 44
Photography 42
Pilates 22
Pub Quiz 26

R

Reading for pleasure 30

S

Science and Technology 6, 36
Scrabble 27
Shakespeare 32
Spanish Absolute Beginners 30
Spanish Beginners 30
Steam and Transport 37

T

Tai Chi 23
Taking Risks 11
Tap Dancing 21
Traditional and Modern Jazz 40
Travelogue 6, 37

V

Visits 40, 42

W

Walking 41
Watercolour 8, 9
Watercolour Painting 12
Watercolours – Intermediate and
Advanced 13
Weekenders 38