



## **FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

We are approaching the end of yet another good year for Fleet U3A. The year has had its difficulties particularly with the EGM and the committee's proposal to devolve from the Third Age Trust. This is now all water under the bridge and I am happy to say that all problems have been resolved and we are functioning as a unit again. Partly as a result of this I am pleased to be able to tell you that we have resurrected our association with Yateley U3A, whereby the members of either U3A can attend each other's meetings without signing up for dual membership.

Membership during the year has increased at a greater rate than any time previously but I am very disappointed that with over 900 members we are struggling to raise a committee.

Remember people cannot go on forever, two of the retirees have each served more than six years and they need a break. I thank them for their unfailing commitment.

Many of our newer members may not be aware of U3A News, which is a national publication from the Third Age Trust. We have had difficulties in the distribution of this magazine in the last few years. For next year Janet Davies has kindly offered to organise the receipt and distribution. I hope all who are new to this will find it of interest

Finally my thanks go to all who have continued to devote time and effort for the furtherance of our organisation, the committee, the group leaders, the ladies catering group and all who have supported our various endeavours.

Gerard Walton  
Chairman

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## **DEVELOPMENT OF NEW GROUPS**

One of the reasons that Fleet and District U3A is successful is due to the variety and number of Groups that we can offer. Currently we have more than 50 Groups. This is due to the work of the Group Leaders, assisted by Group Secretaries. We would like to increase the number of Groups that we offer. Guidance and support is provided to potential Group Leaders from setting up the Group to assistance in finding additional material. A Group Secretary takes care of the finances for the Group. The Accommodation Secretary will take care of the room requirements. The day and time in the week are flexible but the Group should preferably be held in the daytime.

Some examples of possible new Groups are:

History of Art, Needlework, Talking about Music, Modern Novel, Book Club, Poetry, English Classics, Putting on a Play, Archaeology, Opera, Philosophy, Psychology for everyone, Weather, Fun Maths, Local History, Sailing, Spanish, Military History, Line Dancing, Wine tasting, Yoga, Motorcycling, Darts, Table Tennis, Mah Jong, Whist, Movement to Music, Running, Swimming, Tennis, Woodcarving, 'University (of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age) Challenge', Arranging quizzes (or other) competitions within Fleet U3A, against local Schools or other U3As, etc.

If you have a particular interest to develop any of these new Groups, or have other ideas, please contact me and we can discuss it further.

Ian Stephenson  
Vice Chairman

## **MEMBERSHIP**

There has recently been a change of Membership Secretary – David Wimpenny having taken over from Peter Weeks on 9 April 2003. On behalf of all members, the Committee wish to record their thanks to Peter for all the hard work he put into the streamlining of the administration of the membership procedures over the last year. With his help, the membership of the group has again grown during the year 2002-03 and on 16 April 2003 stands at 919 members.

584 members kindly completed Gift Aid forms for the tax year 2002-2003, which will enable the Treasurer to claim back the tax deemed to have been paid on their subscriptions. Thanks to all members who assisted in this scheme.

Following the success of the revised arrangements for processing membership renewals for this year, renewal forms for membership in 2003-2004 are enclosed with this distribution. A Gift Aid form is attached to the renewal form for the use of those members who wish to join the Gift Aid scheme. However, those members who completed a “continuous” Gift Aid declaration last year need not complete another form this year.

If you renew early, your membership card together with the programme for 2003-2004 will be sent to you in June.

Remember, to make your life easier and to save time queuing to renew your membership on enrolment day, Wednesday 10 September 2003 at the Harlington Centre, Fleet, please do not wait until September but complete and return your renewal form NOW together with your remittance only (NO SAE REQUIRED).

Your cooperation regarding early renewals would be appreciated. Any queries to me, please.

David Wimpenny, Membership Secretary Tel: 01252 615286

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## **GROUP REPORTS**

### **ART GROUPS**

ART is popular in Fleet because Brian Fox started a group called "anyone can paint" - and we do, with ten groups running offering help at all levels. Only this week I heard a lady say that it had taken her a long time to find the courage to join but she wished she had done so earlier. You can come too. There is a list which clearly explains how the groups differ, offering everything from the simple to the seriously hard work!

At the end of our year, in June, we hope to have an exhibition of all the work in the United Reform Hall in Kings Road. Do come and support us -and find out what you might do too.

Desi Mills.

### **BRIDGE**

If it wasn't for my wife I wouldn't be sitting here on a cold windy Saturday afternoon, writing an update on the current state of the Bridge Group. She probably accounts for the popularity of the Group, as she is so enthusiastic. Of course she is not alone in this. The two Mikes, Dobie and Brown continue to give strength to the running and teaching within the Group. I am only there for the money; collecting it, that is. This is not as easy as it sounds, as we are quite a large group. A £1 coin isn't very heavy. Multiplied by forty it is a bit heavier. When some of them are made up of a multitude of small coins (shrapnel) it becomes quite a weight. I had to alert the members to a directive from the Club treasurer, which states, “please do not submit coins of

small denomination". I thought this should be revised by adding, "no foreign coins, and no wooden nickels" (an American phrase). But an astute person – there is always one – found a way round that. One week I found an interesting looking donation – A Krugrand? -. No such luck. On closer inspection it looks like German milk token. Never mind, the shortfall will be made up from the "contingency fund". Maybe I listen to Gordon Brown too much.

As always this friendly group offers a welcome to new members of all grades, from absolute beginners, improvers, and those with some experience who need playing practice.

A well-presented description of the weekly activities of the group, prepared by Mike Dobie, previously appeared in the Summer 2002 Newsletter.

Dennis O'Connor

## **CHESS GROUP**

Up to 8 people have been meeting once a fortnight for informal games of chess.

We don't continue in the summer term, so we have now completed our third year of existence. As our numbers remain small, we have decided to meet in private houses next autumn. Please contact me nearer the time if you need details. Tel: 01252622420

Phillip Gething

## **CREATIVE WRITING**

Don't be put off by the title. We have discussed a change but like most of our discussions we have a surplus of proposals and not enough agreement. Writing For Fun is probably more apt but at least half the Group won't agree. We meet on alternate Tuesday afternoons at the Methodist Church in Reading Road South where we swap our fortnightly masterpieces for acclaim and analysis. Occasionally we have professional writers visit and talk about their successes. Some members enter competitions and some win them. We have a subject to write about for each meeting and most follow this but any original contribution is acceptable. Themes last term included a fifty-one word mini saga and a

hundred and one word literary story that included puns on five authors names. Titles have included, The Spelling Mistake, The Word Processor, The Wax Jacket and Any Animal Story. You don't need a story to join. Why not come along just to listen and see if the bug bites?

Brian Greener

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

The Current Affairs group meets every four or five weeks. Although the main topics discussed at each meeting are usually selected from news bulletins or newspapers in the period since the last meeting, members are free to raise any other subject of interest. These can include home affairs, world news, or historical items, e.g. where papers, hitherto secret, have been released. Recent meetings have been dominated by the issue of Iraq with the focus being on three areas: (1) the pros and cons of the invasion, (2) the current situation, (3) the future government and stability of Iraq. Other topics covered include local matters, e.g. traffic problems in Hart District, congestion charges in London, the NHS, and problems associated with the increased numbers of those seeking asylum in the UK. There has been an occasional month in the past when news has been sparse but this is no longer the situation.

Brian Evans

## **CYCLING**

The cycling group started in the summer of 1998 and so has now been 'pedalling' for 5 years. The pattern established then continues today with gentle rides of approximately 10 miles, which start and end at the Reading Road Canal Wharf, often making use of the canal towpath to get away from the built up area of Fleet. (Typically from 5 to 10 riders turn up to ride.)

More than a dozen basic routes (with many variants) have been worked out, reaching out to the towns, villages and countryside around Fleet in all directions. Members often express surprise at how many quiet routes and new places they have come across on our rides, despite living in the locality for many years. They also remark

that we nearly always seem to be provided with good weather. (Fingers crossed while writing that!) The members are a sociable crowd, and the 'coffee stop' always breaks out into lively discussions.

In summer we hold a day ride, which allows us a more extensive route, typically 20 miles, fortified by a picnic lunch. Last year we followed part of the Blackwater Valley Path (reached by the canal towpath) from Gold Valley Lakes round to Blackwater, then returning across Yateley and Hawley Commons. The 12 riders enjoyed the pleasant summer weather, and the pleasant and varied fragments of countryside the route runs through, contrasting with some short sections in industrial or built up areas, or road crossings (usually by bridges and underpasses). Cycling with the group is a great way to get to know the area we live in and explore its quieter and more beautiful corners and its nature and wildlife. New riders are always welcome.

Terry Klaschka

## DANCE AND TONE

This group has been running since January 1999 with a break of two terms from Autumn 2000 to Spring 2001. We still have a number of members who joined when the group first started and many who have joined us at various times since then. We are a mixed ability group and the type of movement we do is a fusion of keep fit and dance movement from various styles of dance. The format of our sessions is four parts: (1) warm up and stretch, (2) toning exercises, (3) a dance routine, (4) cool down and stretch. Last year we introduced exercises with stretch bands into our toning section. The other part of the toning section is floorwork. Members who might have difficulty in doing floorwork can sit on a chair, or stand using a chair for support, to do alternative versions of the floor exercises. We use different styles of music and have used jazz, swing, rhythm and blues, reggae, country, latin, ballroom, pop music, show tunes, ethnic music and classical music. We usually learn our dance routine over a period of two terms using one piece of music then in the third term we change to a different style of music so that we can see how the steps remain basically the same but the style of performing them changes to suit the style of music.

Jill Evans

## ENGLISH LITERATURE

We are getting a really good attendance to this group now.

Two of us went to a U3A Study Day for English Literature and found out what is available from the Resource Centre and how other groups fare in obtaining books to read in bulk. We are lucky in Fleet because the Library is really keen to support Reading Groups and make some titles available in multiple copies.

In the autumn we looked at a very politically incorrect story set in the 1930s in America - *TO KILL A MOCKING BIRD* by Harper Lee.

After Christmas we studied the winning book in the 2002 Orange Prize for Fiction *BEL CANTO* by Ann Patchett. This was a fascinating story of an attempted kidnapping at an international party in a poor Latin American country. The person whom they wished to kidnap had not attended so the whole party was held captive for several months. We follow the effect of this siege on both the hostages and their captors.

In the summer session we are going for a very light humorous book - *SLEEPING BEAUTIES* by Mavis Cheek.

Helen Gething

## EUROPEANS

This year we have concentrated mostly on the Convention on the Future of Europe, which, after much deliberation, is now producing a new draft Treaty. We have also looked at the negotiations on enlargement of the EU and considered its likely implications for the UK. But we have not forgotten the euro and the outstanding event of the year was a talk in February by Chris Huhne MEP. He set out very clearly the economic arguments for and against adoption of the euro by the UK. The evidence since the introduction of the euro in 1999 on trade, investment and relative prices, in his view, suggests that we should be positive. But he acknowledged that the principal economic argument against is: one size (i.e. one interest rate) does not fit all. Essentially therefore, we in the UK had to weigh up the balance of advantage and disadvantage.

There were many questions from U3A members with both EU enthusiasts and sceptics finding the meeting informative and free of the over-blown rhetoric that so often surrounds these subjects.

Derek Stroud

## **FINANCIAL AFFAIRS GROUP**

The Financial affairs group continue to meet on the first and third Monday morning of each month. As the programme, the venue now is the United Reformed Church Hall, which provides the space to accommodate our group. Many helpers erect the tables and put out chairs to get the meeting off to a good start, and the coffee team always receive our thanks for the halfway refreshment.

The meetings are kept fresh with lively discussion by the group resulting from articles, comments and information brought to the meeting by members. Much of the discussion is based on topical items reported and commented on by financial writers in the current money sections of weekend newspapers, other journals, radio and TV information and general knowledge. These inputs give up-to-date information on money affairs, provide interesting topics and involve many aspects of finance including investments and savings, insurance matters, financial products and related items.

An outside speaker is normally invited to address the group at one meeting during each term session, and may deal with, for example, financial, retirement planning or care issues. This gives the group experienced information on the particular topics, and gives the opportunity to ask questions to help decision-making.

Brian Robinson

## **MUSIC APPRECIATION**

The Music Appreciation Group continues to meet on alternate Thursdays. Meetings are well attended but we have plenty of space and all are welcome.

In February we started a long-term project with the first of six illustrated talks on the history of the symphony. We heard examples from some of the very early 18<sup>th</sup> century symphonies and then explored the contributions made by Mozart and Haydn to what was then a new art form. At the rate of one a term, the series will last until the Spring of 2005. During the summer term we shall look at the symphonies of Beethoven and in the autumn we shall move on to the romantic symphonists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

We already have the programme for our autumn term planned and it includes such diverse delights as the story of the organ and a programme of classical music in jazz arrangements. Surely something for everyone. We should love to welcome you!

Alec Robinshaw  
Brian Smith

## **PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP**

This friendly Group now has 24 regular members (a record since the Group was formed) and usually meets on the third Friday of each month at the WRVS building in the Harlington Centre. We now have just two meetings (May 16 & June 20) to bring to the end another season. New members are welcome. Why not come along to one or both of these meetings to decide if this is one of the Groups you would like to join next September?

Existing members cover a wide range of ability (beginners and experts) and equipment (Kodak Brownies and Hasselblads ). New members are all received with a warm reception and assurances that the main objectives of the Group are simply to enjoy our meetings and to strive to become better photographers through the exchange of opinions and experiences with other members.

Important discussions before the end of the year will be the need to resolve the means of satisfying the increasing interest in digital photography (with or without computer editing and enhancement) without neglecting the interests of the less ambitious "steam and mirror" fraternity, still trying to get the most from their existing equipment who, at this moment at least, are in the majority.

Michael Jones

## **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.**

In March it was decided that the group would hold all future meetings at The St. John's Ambulance Hall in Clarence Road. The hall has excellent facilities and ample car parking.



A meeting of the Photographic Group exploring portraiture.

We normally have an average attendance of around thirty, but would be delighted to see this figure nearer forty. Ladies where are you?

During this session we have experienced a wide range of topics from our speakers, from Laser Eye Treatment, The Comet Investigation and Health of the "Elderly Adult" which have all met with the unanimous approval of all members present.

It is our intention to continue arranging a full programme of subjects over the coming months, which will be extremely varied, and of interest to all. Remember we do have the capability to increase our numbers, and look forward to welcoming you to the meetings, which are held on the first Friday of each month at 2.00p.m.

Rod Parker.

## VISITS

We are nearing the end of our programme with only two more visits to go.

On Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup> of June we visit Kew Gardens (bookings commenced in April).

In July there will be a day out for walkers to be organised by Betty Fox (bookings commence in May).

We hope to arrange a visit to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in July or August and details will be announced in May.

Would members please note we are now taking payment with bookings, cheques only please, payable to Fleet U3A.

Don Watson

Any comments or suggestions to the Editor Brian Greener on 01252697250 or [briangreener@ntlworld.com](mailto:briangreener@ntlworld.com)