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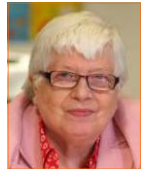
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Letter from the Chair

Meryl Kempster



By the time you read this we will be well into the New Year, forgetting snow-blocked roads and icy pavements, and looking forward to warmer weather.

2011 is an important year for Edinburgh U3A: in February we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of becoming members of our umbrella body, the Third Age Trust. In 1991 our membership was 48. From these modest beginnings our numbers have now grown to almost 1,200. The founder members were far-sighted in their belief that retirement from paid employment meant time to explore new and creative ways to enjoy our lives. Through the U3A many people have found new interests and at the same time formed enduring friendships, both of which, I believe, are particularly important in our third age. So many of us welcome the companionship as well as the opportunity to learn which membership of the U3A provides.

For this celebration year we wanted to organise events with a very wide appeal and we welcomed your suggestions. It has been agreed that the main event should be a tea party in central Edinburgh. This will be held at the City Chambers in June. Because of the numbers involved and the capacity of the venue this has in fact become three tea parties! I am sure these will be very special and memorable occasions and hope that as many of you as possible will be able to come. On pages 4-5 you will find details of this and the other suggested celebratory events. We are trying to include events which encompass the wide and varied interests of Edinburgh U3A, and to keep charges reasonable.

The new Open Meetings venue at St. Cuthbert's is proving to be well liked, and as well as the excellent programme of speakers at these meetings, the opportunity to socialise and relax with tea or coffee after the meeting in comfortable surroundings is also extremely popular. May I take this opportunity to thank Frances Clark and her team who so ably and cheerfully provide our tea and coffee.

Our Singing and Recorder groups held their Christmas Concert in the Lindisfarne Room at St. Cuthbert's. We all enjoyed it enormously. Thank you to Elisabeth Hutchings and Alison Cunningham for organising this joyful occasion which is fast becoming an annual Edinburgh U3A event.

Our programme of meetings to familiarise new members continues. We have held three meetings at the Quaker Meeting Hall since last September at which new members have been able to meet and talk with group leaders and committee members.

Our groups are flourishing: several new groups have started this year but more are always welcome. 140 people have become members since the beginning



of this session and of course new members mean a continuing need for new groups and new group leaders. If you think you can start or host a group please get in touch.

Many of you will know that Barbara Clarke is standing down as Editor of The Clarion after five years and ten issues. Under her leadership the magazine has continued to thrive and develop imaginatively. In addition to the text version she has produced the innovative Clarion online. Mary Walker and Rosemary Miller are also retiring from the Clarion team after many years' service. On your behalf I thank them for their enthusiasm and commitment. Barbara remains responsible for U3A Publications and will be on hand to offer any advice needed by a new Editor and Clarion team members.

I have been fortunate to act as your Chair for several months now. This somewhat daunting task has been made much easier by the dedication and hard work of the Committee who are always most supportive and willing to take on the many tasks that fall to them despite their already busy lives. This is much appreciated.

I hope you continue to enjoy your U3A activities and look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our 2011 Celebrations.

Meryl Kempster, Chair

Your Edinburgh U3A Committee 2010-11

Meryl Kempster *Chair & Secretary* • Dianne Fraser *Treasurer* • Margaret Farish *Membership* •
 Pauline Cairncross, Rachel Frith, Jeff Middlecote, Christine Hawkridge *Group Coordinators* •
 Helen Steuart *Co-Vice Chair* • Frances Clark *Hospitality* • Jenny Cowper *New Members* •
 Pat Cattanach *Welfare Liason* • Stewart Emm *Technical Support* • Barbara Clarke *Publications &*
Co-Vice Chair • Elisabeth Hutchings *Publications* • Isabel Fogarty *Minutes Secretary*

Third Age Trust AGM, Cirencester, September 2010

TAT, the umbrella body for Britain's 767 U3As, held its AGM at the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester. Representatives from 120 U3As attended. Dianne Fraser and Stewart Emm went as delegates from Edinburgh together with Morag Tamisari, Aberdeen, and Graham and Linda Clark from Inverness and Black Isle. Graham is the Chair of U3A in Scotland, and Linda is one of the U3A Development Officers for the North of Scotland. Morag was duly elected as the new Regional Trustee for Scotland, responsible to TAT for what goes on up here!

The opportunities and benefits provided by TAT to the U3A movement are considerable and include: the website; U3A News—4 editions p.a.; Sources—3 editions p.a.; funding of 2 regional meetings p.a.; National Conference every 2 years; AGM annually; 2 regional summer schools; online courses; insurance; licences; Resource Centre; free legal advice online and free advice on charity law and finance.

Of particular interest to our groups: TAT now has an agreement with the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) for multiple photocopying and digital

copying of original print material – books, journals and magazines – for educational purposes. This licence is paid from our subscriptions. Unfortunately it does **not** cover sheet music reproduction. We will circulate to all groups the relevant details of the CLA licence.

Dianne and Stewart returned from Cirencester enthused about the U3A movement and with many ideas to mull over.

*Dianne Fraser
Stuart Emm*





20th Anniversary of the Establishment of Edinburgh U3A

We plan to celebrate with a variety of events during the spring and summer of 2011.

Some of the dates below are still provisional, some are firm. A leaflet will be posted to all members towards the end of March setting out in detail what is happening and how to get your tickets.

APRIL

Our Dynamic Earth

A talk by a science specialist, and a tour

Possible date: 1st, 6th, 8th or 15th April

MAY

Poetry Library

An evening visit with readings by a poet

Firm date: Monday 9 May

Ratho

Two afternoon barge trips on the Canal, tea on board

Provisional dates: Wed 11th and Wed 25th May

Botanic Gardens

Seasonal Highlights Tour of the Garden followed by tea in the John Hope Gateway

Firm date: Thursday 19 May 2.00pm

JUNE

City Chambers

Three afternoon tea-parties, with celebration cake and special guests

Firm dates: Mon 6th, Thurs 9th and Tues 14th June

South Leith Church Hall

Edinburgh U3A Entertainment, with contributions from as many Groups as possible (eg Singing, Recorder, Line Dancing, Scottish Dancing, Play Reading, Poetry, Creative Writing)

Firm date: Wed 29th June

Botanic Gardens

A tour of the Library looking at the restoration of old books and the recently acquired *Highgrove Florilegium*

Date: last week of June

JULY

Flotterstone Inn

A meal for members of Walking Groups and others. Walks to venue of varying distances.

Date: to be arranged

OTHER EVENTS

- Groups are invited to stage their own championships. Winners will receive their certificates at the tea parties in June. Chess and Scrabble 3 are up and running. Croquet is hoping to take part, and invites players to join them. Contact Jonathan Stuart (see Groups Booklet).
- Cartoon Competition: contact Stewart Emm for details (see back of membership card).



Edinburgh U3A Memories Book

To remember and celebrate the lives of U3A friends and colleagues

The Committee has agreed to establish a Memories Book which will be on display at each U3A Open Meeting. This will contain printed contributions and photographs, as well as handwritten thoughts that individual members can add themselves.

The impetus to write an entry will come from individuals and groups – the Committee will not initiate tributes. Thus it will be a book for the membership to use and develop. In time it will become an interesting record of U3A life in Edinburgh.

The Memories Book starts in 2010. If you would like to include a tribute, please contact a member of the Committee who will put you in touch with whoever is looking after the Book. Your tribute and photographs can be printed nicely and pasted in for members to read and add to at the Open Meeting. There will be sufficient space for handwritten thoughts and memories.

BC

Clarion News

New Editor appointed!

The Committee is pleased to announce that Liam McDowell has accepted the position of editor.

Liam is very well qualified to take over the Clarion and Clarion online. He has recently retired from 40 years' service in the University of Edinburgh, latterly working in IS Applications and looking after that division's website. He was also responsible for the University IT planning website and produced or edited most of the top level content for that. Liam joined the U3A in May last year. Those of you who walk might have met him in Mary Hayward's group.

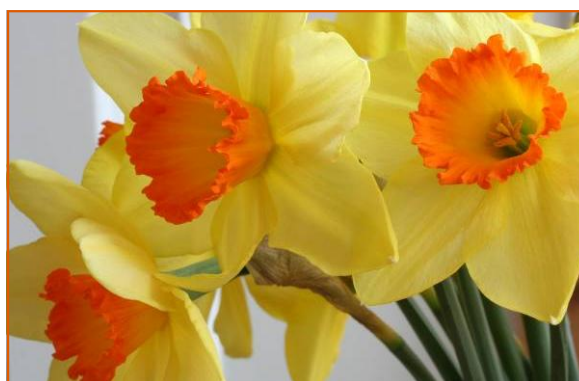
We also welcome 3 new members to the Clarion team: Kay Clive, Rosie Dodgson and Ann Inglis join Elisabeth Hutchings.

With this rich mix of skills and talent I feel reassured that The Clarion will carry on safely in interesting directions.

And say farewell to Rosemary Miller and Mary Walker who have retired after very many years on the Clarion team. We will miss their ideas and written contributions. Rosemary also produced the sketch of the castle that is used on the Clarion cover.

Mary has given us much pause for thought with her introductory essays ranging through Keeping the mind alive; Twenty-first century grandparenting; The transition into retirement; Volunteering; Happiness and, in this issue, Friendship. She's an inspiration for us all and I thank her along with all the other members who have contributed to making my time as editor an interesting and fulfilling one.

Barbara Clarke





FEATURE

Friendship

Mary Walker



Without friends life would be colourless, lonely, and empty. Everyone knows the old saying: We can't choose our relatives but we can choose our friends. But what exactly is involved in friendship?

A definition is often a useful starting point. The COD defines a friend as a person one knows and likes but who is usually not a relative; or a helper, support, or sympathiser. The definition also includes patronage, for instance to charities, galleries, museums or gardens, which is a less personal relationship and can involve a monetary gift. Clearly the notion of friendship is wide-ranging in its meaning, value and interpretation.

Friendship has interested philosophers throughout history. The classical views of friendship come particularly from Aristotle and Cicero; among the more modern commentators are David Hume, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and C.S.Lewis. Current academic study into the theory of friendship spans sociology, social psychology, social psychiatry, anthropology, philosophy and zoology. For serious research there is no shortage of sources to explore!

Graham Allan, a sociologist, provides a useful overview of how notions of friendship have evolved in *Kinship and Friendship in Modern Britain* (OUP, 1996). The first problem, he notes, is that there is a lack of firmly agreed and socially acknowledged criteria for what makes a person a friend.

Allan reviews what Aristotle had to say: the traditional idea of friendship has three components – friends must enjoy each other's company, they must be useful to one another, and must share a common commitment to the good. He distinguishes between what he sees as genuine friendships and two other forms: one based on mutual usefulness, and the other on

pleasure. These two latter forms only last for as long as utility and pleasure are enjoyed, whereas genuine friendship does not dissolve. Aristotle's view chimes with what many of us feel defines a good friend:

'And it is those who desire the good of their friends for the friends' sake that are most truly friends, because each loves the other for what he is, and not for any incidental quality.'

The other major classical treatment of friendship comes from Cicero. His laws of friendship might seem demanding by today's standards:

'Ask from friends, and do for friends, only what is good. But do not let us wait to be asked either: let there be ever an eager readiness, and an absence of hesitation. Let us have the courage to give advice with candour, in plain-spoken terms, and even with sharpness.'

However Cicero was convinced that true friendship, based on mutual honesty and trust, was the happiest and most fully human of all loves and critical for a fulfilled life:

'If we lose affection and kindness from our life, we lose all that gives it charm...'

It does seem, then, that many of these classical notions are still factors in our own evaluation of friendship. But how do we choose *new* friends? Nowadays friendship between adults is generally seen as voluntary, informal and personal. In spite of the world being full of people we could potentially be friends with, it is our own social, economic and cultural circumstances that dictate who we will meet. The people we are most readily drawn to are those that share similar views and enjoy similar activities. In ethnically diverse ►



communities it is still the similarity of attitudes and interests that creates the strongest likelihood of friendship developing.

And we do need friends. Friends are of practical, emotional and social advantage to us. We help each other in so many ways: listening, giving time, special attention, respect, dependability and acceptance. To my mind, there is a degree of duty involved in being a good friend. I suspect duty is easier to manage in the context of friendship rather than family.

A moving and beautifully written account of a friendship comes in Jane Miller's recent book *Crazy Age – thoughts on being old* (Virago, 2010), where she describes an enduring relationship with Mary, a friendship that began in their first year at Edinburgh University. Sadly the friend now has dementia; the author visits her and recalls the lifelong experiences and memories they have shared.

There is a different but rewarding kind of friendship worth mentioning: it is that of the devotion given and received from pets. Among the most popular are cats and dogs (man's best friend). Other less domesticated animals, for example horses, ponies and birds also give pleasure and interest to pet lovers. Dogs demand exercise and need to be taken out in all weathers, providing the spin-off of fresh air and exercise for their owners. A fine example of utility!

Members living in retirement may have joined U3A after loss of workplace friends, and changes in close relationships because of illness and death – among the saddest of the experiences of living a long life. We all benefit from the opportunity to make and enjoy new friendships in the ideal conditions of time and common ground.

MW

Friendships far and wide

Elsbeth Crawford

My three sons live in different parts of the world and I find myself for quite long periods of time in China and New Zealand as well as in Edinburgh. One reason behind living like this is a belief that my grandchildren, when young, can only know me if I am actually present. However, I have also discovered needs of my own: in particular I miss my friends. But I have also found unexpected friendships, and have had time to think about how many different kinds of friends there are and how many different kinds of friends I have already, each unthought until found, then invaluable!

One of my newest friends, in U3A Manawatu, New Zealand, has remarked how 'it just happens'. There we are, drinking coffee, and talking about family, politics, work, retirement, religion, money the world, no topic not OK, and all of it still to be cried over or laughed at again and again. This friend is quite a bit older than I am, and she also talks of friends lost, especially those who knew one for so long that they held much of one's own history. Not one like me, making new history, as we have only just met. I have old friends too, maybe a year or years will pass before the Christmas letter, or the apology that one did not get sent, but when letter or geography lets us get together again, the words are shorthand. Brief expressions recall a whole year when we were students together, inept young mums, whatever. Both long-time, short-time and in-between-time friends make life whole, each carries

things for me, I hope willingly. Who was the first person I phoned, after my son phoned me to tell me there was a grandchild expected? A friend!

And, as others have, I have lost friends, both 'timely', 'at a good age', and untimely. As I write this I think of Jean who died 30 years ago, our friendship had been 20 years long. What would she have made of facebook and skype? Would she have 'twittered'? Sometimes she is in my dreams, laughing and encouraging still. It is her voice in my head which said 'Go on. Write.'

I have heard it said: *You can't own people*. Well, I know what is meant, we cannot have exclusive possession in the same way as we own furniture or other stuff. But I disagree, I feel we do own people, because friendship does not happen with everyone or anyone, however much people are nice people or have things in common. However long or short the time, friends are in each other's lives, touched, held, owned. Loves and hates, likes and dislikes are exchanged, they become known to each other and feel with each other. I never knew you were there, or that I wanted to be friends with you, until we met, and continued whatever kind of meeting our lives allowed. And we are still friends, however often or however long we are apart. I do own my friends, and hope they feel they own me. I say MY friend and I am YOUR friend, because it is YOU with whom I am friends.

EC



FEATURE

RZSS and the survival of the Amur Leopard

Fiona Begg

Fiona Begg, Penicuik and District U3A, is organising a Study Day at Edinburgh Zoo on 8 June 2011.

This is an article Fiona has recently published in Cupar U3A Newsletter.

*Going, going, gone ... ?*

Who would choose to be ugly and foolish if offered the chance of being beautiful, intelligent and having magical powers. Yet these gifts have been a curse for the big cats. For centuries they have been the status symbols of the rich and powerful and are used for entertainment in life and for decoration in death. The decline in the tiger population of India is well known but other less familiar species of big cats are also under threat such as the Amur (formerly Siberian)* tiger and Amur leopard. There are more Amur tigers in zoos than in the wild. It has been said there are more big cats being kept as private pets in the USA than there are living in the wild. If so, why not release some of them back to reserves?

The problems are complex. Cute cubs which have been bottle-fed may have had canine teeth and claws removed to ensure they remain cuddly. As they grow separated from their own species, they do not learn the behavioural signals to interact appropriately with other members of the same species, their own feline 'etiquette.' Encounters can result in serious attacks rather than mating and if pregnancy does occur, the infants may be ignored or killed. Camera footage demonstrates that not all chases end in a meal even when the predator has been born and lived in the wild. Captive born predators may die of starvation

because they have not learned the skills of stalking and hunting. Even if these problems are overcome, not every human community is enthusiastic about having large carnivores reintroduced to its area. The problems of habitat loss and poaching which caused their decline may still be present. Should we accept that the only future for the survivors is to be on show in selected zoos as living museum exhibits? Is too late and too dangerous to risk the reintroduction of endangered animals?

This view is being challenged by an international project team which has the support of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. This team has started the first tentative steps towards the eventual reintroduction of what is probably the world's most endangered big cat.

The leopards that live in the valley of the Amur River in far eastern Russia near northern China are categorised currently as 'critically endangered' (IUCN).* The next step could be IUCN category 'extinct in the wild' and only a small population existing in zoos but the next and final category is 'extinct.' It is estimated there are now less than thirty Amur leopards in the wild. Loss of habitat through aggressive logging and farming practice creates isolated pockets of animals which are separated by roads, railways and human habitation. In addition,





RZSS and the survival of the Amur Leopard cont.

there are natural hazards such as forest fires and disease. The remaining small groups of animals may interbreed and produce unhealthy or infertile offspring. The pressure on the species causes it to progress along the IUCN continuum of risk and disappear completely.

Successful reintroduction is a long-term and multi-faceted approach. It requires an internationally designated area which is secure from poachers and whose guards and local communities can see more advantages in retaining the animals than killing them. This is a considerable financial challenge when the local wages are poor and body parts including even whiskers are valuable. There needs to be protection for the prey animals themselves such as the sika and roe deer so they can survive in enough numbers to feed the leopards who will then be less tempted to prey on the deer which are bred for meat and antlers by neighbouring farmers. Finally there needs to be a core of health young Amur leopards with hunting skills and an interest in the opposite sex which will be the basis for the next generations.

These young leopards could be provided by those zoos which co-operate in the breeding programmes designed by the keepers of the international studbook*. If the cubs can be reared in a suitably large enclosure with natural cover and minimal human contact then their chances of survival increase. It may seem too ambitious but before World War Two, there were about only forty Amur tigers left and that population has recovered to about 400 which remains fragile but is hopeful. The measures being taken to protect the Amur tiger such as reserved geographical areas and antipoaching legislation will support the Amur leopard which shares its range. The tiger can take larger prey such as buffalo and cattle and the lighter leopard avoids it by keeping to higher ground. The health of the existing populations of tigers and leopards in the area is being assessed by snaring and sampling for feline diseases such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus or Feline Leukaemia by specialist vets such as Dr John Lewis, veterinary director of Wildlife Vets

International. Additional training is made available to young Russian wildlife vets to develop local expertise*.

RZSS plans to develop a specially-designed enclosure for Amur leopards at the Highland Wildlife Park at Kincaig. The animals are well adapted to the northern environment.. They grow a very thick pale coat in winter and have longer legs which may help them walk in snow. At present, a male, Skodje, and female, Kane, live separately at Edinburgh Zoo. These young leopards were captive born at Berlin and Helsinki zoos respectively. It is hoped that when the new enclosure is created, they will transfer to the Highland Wildlife Park and be able to rear young in surroundings similar to their natural habitat. The offspring of these leopards are a high priority for reintroduction. If the international project in the mountains of the Russian Far East is successful, the future generations of these Scottish leopards will be able to enjoy a freedom which is not possible for their parents.

FB

* IUCN International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

* The term 'Amur' which is a geographical description is preferred to 'Siberian' which is a political boundary. There are no tigers left in Siberia.

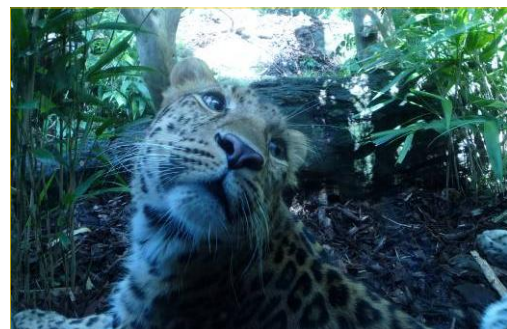
* The Zoological Society of London and Moscow Zoo hold the studbook for the Amur leopard.

For more information about where you can see Amur tigers and Amur leopards in Scotland, visit the website of www.rzss.org.uk

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland is a Scottish charity which owns and operates Edinburgh Zoo and the Highland Wildlife Park.

Thanks to Joyce Kennedy, Editor, Cupar U3A News, for permission to reproduce this article and for the image on p.7 of a male Amur tiger.

▼ Amur leopard, Fiona Begg





FEATURE

Creativity

One of the themes for this issue is creativity and how we discover unexplored talents in our third age

A Garden Challenge for Gladys Hart

When I came to Edinburgh some years ago I took on a garden unexpectedly long (30 metres) in proportion to the house I had bought. It was derelict, neglected, a broken down wall at the back, two swathes of grass separated by a forlorn, unplanted patch of earth.

Here was a challenge, I thought, 'Keep it low maintenance'. The wall was replaced and the first swathe of grass slabbed over, though I did leave some space for planting.

I read the books, studied other gardens. Best thing, I thought, was to break it up into 'rooms'. No planning on paper, I did it a bit at a time, tweaking here and there. Not that 'tweaking' begins to describe the hard labour involved. It took me years to get to the front garden and then I gave in to the easy way and filled it with gravel. Gravel can be arranged attractively you know!

I discovered I loved plants too much. I couldn't resist them. They give me ideas, demand my attention, surprise me, disappoint me, and when they burst through the earth in Spring, fill the garden with colour in summer, turn gold or bronze in Autumn, even shimmer in the light after the rain, look magical in the snow, they delight me.

At certain times of year the work is intensive, but tilling the earth is an instinctive human impulse. I go out to pull up a weed or two. Hours later I'm still there, totally absorbed, time forgotten. When the sun shone recently I hurried out to do some planting. The spade plunged into the earth. Suddenly a crescendo from the orchestra: There's a worm! Years ago I dug over every inch of earth, double dug it and never saw a single worm. 'Stay little man and bring your friends!'

All year the garden is home to many creatures. I once caught sight of a dormouse, standing on its hindlegs, contemplating, unperturbed by my presence. It was a moment from Beatrix Potter. Then there are visitors like the grey cat who comes to roll in the mint, falling off the step in ecstasy oblivious to the magpies chattering angrily at him from the treetops. Best of all are those long summer nights, 'sae warm and sae still' when I stand in the garden uplifted by a deep sense of oneness with nature and the earth.

GS

Yvonne Stables finds a talent for the craft of card making

My introduction to card making came about quite by chance. I was flicking through the television channels and came across a demonstration of card making. I was completely mesmerised by what could be achieved and suddenly wanted to be able to produce these things. Having discovered many years ago that I would never be any good at drawing or painting, but longing to be able to do something creative, this seemed like the answer. The drawback was, I didn't know how I could go about getting involved with a craft group to get the necessary teaching, so just continued to watch these weekly demonstrations.

By this time I had joined the U3A and noticed that there were two craft groups in which one could learn many card making techniques. At the next Open Meeting I approached Moira Peter who ran these groups. By this time the session was well under way, but luckily for me there was indeed a space and thus began my card making adventure.

I have now been a member for almost four years and have enjoyed every moment from starting as a complete novice to someone who has learned a great deal and I even ventured to sell some cards for charity! It was, and still is, quite a learning curve: there are many techniques I have yet to try but by now I know the ones I really enjoy and those which are just not for me. Not always renowned for my patience, some of my friends were amazed that I could have the patience for this, but knowing what the end result could be made me try even harder.

Being a member of a craft group makes all the difference. The camaraderie is good and at times our tongues work as hard, if not harder, than our fingers, passing on all sorts of useful information amid a relaxed and happy atmosphere.

For me, this has been one of the best things I have done since retiring and I am sure that fate was looking over my shoulder the day I was flicking through the television channels.

YS



More Creativity

A Creative Collaboration with unexpected visual appeal!

Elisabeth Hutchings

The 2010 Christmas Celebration took place in the spacious, attractive Lindisfarne Room at St Cuthbert's on Wednesday 15 December. It followed last year's successful recipe, whose main ingredients were community carol singing, performances by the Singing and Recorder Groups, and tea with mince pies and stollen. This year's new contributors were Dianne Fraser who compèred the occasion with enthusiasm; Jo Butt, well-known amongst the Poetry and Playreading groups, who entertained and amused us with his renderings of Joyce Grenfell's 'Nativity Play' and W. D. Cocker's 'The Bubbly-Jock'; and twelve members of Antonia Stirrat's talented Art Group, who produced bold, colourful visual aids for the singing of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas'.



We spent a happy afternoon singing and playing, listening and laughing, eating and drinking and socializing; and many expressed the hope that the occasion would be repeated next year. Thanks are due to all who helped to make the Celebration such a success, in particular to Alison Cunningham, the Singing Group's Director, who devised the programme and accompanied the community carol singing as well as the Group's performances. *EH*

Christine Hawkrige confesses to The addictive pleasure of Creative Writing

The Edinburgh U3A Creative Writing group meets once a month to share our latest work. We are all amateurs and of varied experience, as you would expect. Some of us have been compulsive writers since childhood; many have kept a diary at some time in their lives and some still do; others took up writing as a hobby on retirement.

We usually write to a title given by Helen, our group leader. At our meetings each member reads out their writing and receives feedback from the other members. The set title is not compulsory. If inspiration eludes, a member may choose to read something on another topic. We write about our lives and

experience. Sometimes we write pure fiction. Often we mix fact and fiction. Some writers interpret the title in unexpected ways. That is the necessary salt in the broth. The aim is to entertain our fellow writers and satisfy our urge to write.

All of us write in prose; about half of us also write poetry, some occasionally, some addictively. Some of us have had a few pieces published in magazines or anthologies; one has had some children's stories published and another had a short story on radio. One of us 'would like to write a great novel one day'; another wishes she could find a publisher for her magnum opus, currently festering in the proverbial ►



More Creativity

suitcase under the bed. Most of us have no ambition to be published, but we all want to improve our writing skills. We are a good-natured lot: we welcome constructive criticism and helpful feedback.

Speaking personally, since joining the Creative Writing group I have discovered a hitherto unexpected knack of making people laugh – not all the time or on every subject, that would be inappropriate. If ever you see me on a bus smiling

into space, or walking down a street giggling to myself, don't think I've lost my marbles – not yet, anyway! Probably I've just thought of a funny scene or phrase and am anticipating trying it out on my peers at the next meeting.

If any of you have the itch to write and share your writing with others, don't fight it! Come along and join us in the Creative Writing group. You will be most welcome!

CH

GROUP NEWS

Local History Group 2 visit Perth Museum

In November 2010 we had a most enjoyable visit to the archaeological exhibition, *Skin and Bone: Life And Death in Medieval Perth*. This was part of Perth's celebrations marking the 800th anniversary of the charter granted by King William the 'Lion', and confirming the town's royal burgh status. The exhibition charted the archaeology and history of the town from the 11th to the 16th century. Many of the wide array of exhibits had been recovered from excavations in the town over the past 40 years. Other significant loan items on display included a 14th century copy of the 1210 charter.



Of particular interest to me were eight wooden panels, six of which have been analysed via dendrochronology, showing that they came from the same oak tree in the Eastern Baltic, felled between circa AD 1508–1550. If they didn't reach Scotland as completed panels they probably arrived as part of a batch of prepared



planks or boards, ready to be worked and used as liturgical furnishings. There are parallels in Scotland, England and Wales. By the end of the 15th century Perth had a number of monastic houses, hospitals and chapels for which such pieces would have been appropriate.

Much of this was swept away by the Reformation. The panels appear to have been amongst the items saved from this destruction. They were discovered in 1849, during the demolition of a plaster wall that was part of a building that must originally have faced onto Skinnergate.

Barbara Clarke



Group News cont.

Talking French in Lyon

Eight members of the réseau français spent the first week of September 2010 visiting members of the Université Tous Ages in Lyon. What made this such an excellent holiday? I can only speak for myself but I think the others would mostly agree. First was the warmth of our welcome. We were each allocated a 'peer' (their word) who would pay particular attention to our needs. When the direct flight from Edinburgh arrived in Lyon there were our hosts ready to greet us and drive us to our first engagement. This was a buffet supper in the rooms of the UTA where we met other members of the organisation. UTA, unlike U3A, has classrooms, paid staff and runs formal courses for its students. Only after this were we driven to our various destinations, two in a hotel, four in self-catering accommodation and the remaining two with French hosts.

The warmth and generosity of our hosts were evident throughout. They had devised a full programme for us, usually starting with a coffee at Café Bellecour, facing the huge Place Bellecour in the very centre of the city. Our hosts arranged our travel permits, explained how to get around and several were always on hand as our guides and on occasion invited us to their homes. We had plenty of opportunity to talk French!

The sense of being in France, talking French with French people and to a degree taking part in their lives was a second reason for enjoying the trip. Every second day our programme included a picnic out of doors. Each host prepared a picnic for their peer. From this you can deduce that we had glorious weather, warm and sunny, and it was remarkably pleasant to eat while sitting on a bench, gazing, for example, at the panorama from Mount Fourvière in the shadow of the 19th century basilica. When it did rain – only on our last full day – it did so with a vengeance. The heaviest rain for 50 years with floods along the Saône! But our hosts kept to the programme and drove us into the countryside as arranged.



A third source of pleasure was Lyon itself. I had not expected such a fine city, situated between the Rhone and the Saône, with extensive promenades along both rivers. Like Edinburgh it has an old, medieval quarter and, again like Edinburgh, extensive 18th century architecture. There are broad boulevards and impressive squares. There is much of historical interest including a Roman amphitheatre and museum. It was the home of the Lumière brothers and a more modern attraction is the Lumière museum which gives a fascinating history of the development of cinema. On our last day as we were returning to collect our luggage we were approached by a group of veterinary students celebrating the start of the new academic year. This seems to be rather like our university 'rag' week with the chance to dress up. They asked us to join them in a dance! So two seniors from Scotland are recorded for posterity on film as they jig around and wave their arms in the centre of Place Bellecour! Finally we await a further benefit in the shape of a reciprocal visit from UTA sometime next year when we hope that Edinburgh will be equally welcoming.

Dorothy Buglass



Next page for the
Réseau programme!



Group News cont.

Réseau Français

The réseau français or French Network is an association of Edinburgh U3A members who have an interest in French language and culture. We have regular monthly coffee mornings to keep in touch and make arrangements for events and activities.

Friday coffee mornings at the Filmhouse café, Lothian Rd, 10.30am, 4th Friday in the month.

Dates for winter/spring: Feb 25, Mar 25, Apr 22, May 27, June 24.

Coffee mornings at the Café Rouge, Frederick St, 10.30am 2nd Thursday and 4th Monday each month.

Contact Rachel Frith for information (see back of membership card)

Dates for winter/spring: **Thursdays** Feb 10, Mar 10, Apr 14, May 12, June 9 **Mondays:** Feb 28, Mar 28, Apr 25, May 23, June 27, 2011.

Dorothy Buglass, Mary McKemmie (see Groups Booklet)

Good Companions

This is a new group, mainly for members who live alone and would like company for various activities, or are new to Edinburgh and haven't had time to make friends. Unlike most groups it doesn't have regular meetings but communicates through email, (something of a problem for those not very computer literate).

We started in late September with a meeting at my flat in order to introduce ourselves and find out what we wanted to do in the group. There were twenty of us and more members have joined since then.

The aim of the group is to bring together small groups to have a meal, go to an exhibition, a play, visit another town, a holiday etc. Of course there are already U3A groups that cover some of these activities but

many members are not aware of them or do not wish to participate on a regular basis.

To date we have had an Italian lunch, three coffee mornings (more popular than I had expected), lunch at The Tower restaurant (many did not make it because of the weather but it was wonderful to see the rooftops picked out by the snow), and a visit to the theatre in Glasgow which was also difficult because of the snow.

Members have asked for activities at the weekend when, of course, U3A groups do not meet. Unlike most groups, many of which are full, we do not have to limit numbers and do not have to find a suitable venue.

How this group develops will depend on the suggestions of the members and their willingness to take on the occasional responsibility for an arrangement.

If you are interested in finding out more, my email address is in the Groups Booklet.

Alison Howard

John Shaw — 'A Fortunate Apprentice'

John Shaw, a long-standing member of Helen Steuart's Creative Writing group, has recently published a memoir, A Fortunate Apprentice. Two members of the group give their reactions:

John Shaw has written a most fascinating memoir – interesting on so many different levels. There are wonderfully vivid descriptions of early childhood in India, of life as a medical student in London during the Second World War, and the combination of factors that led him to neurosurgery and to Professor Norman Dott's unit in Edinburgh.

John writes in a very accessible way about the pioneering neuro-surgical work being done with such courage, skill and dedication. It is easy for us to forget how much was novel and untested at that time. He quotes Professor Dott's words when he was given the freedom of the City of Edinburgh in the Usher Hall in July 1962.

"We pay insufficient homage to the great courageous pioneering patients who, with implicit faith and unfaltering courage, have ventured with me into the unknown."

What could have been a heavy and technical professional memoir is light with quirky humour, humanity and charm.

While doctors may be disappointed by the book's lack of technical detail when dealing with Dott's surgical expertise, the reader must realise that John Shaw and Christopher Rush together wrote the definitive biography of Norman Dott, *With Sharp Compassion*, in 1990. This is the story of a neurosurgical apprenticeship with John Shaw centre stage and Norman Dott in the wings.

The book will be of interest to, but not only to, those with a medical background. It can be recommended as a thoroughly good read.

Kay Clive

John Duncan

A Fortunate Apprentice is published by
The Memoir Club



Group News cont.

A Chance to help Scientific Research Online, and a possible new science forum

Online projects, collectively Citizen Science, require observers to classify data. Your observations (generally collected and averaged out) are as good as those of a trained scientist or a computer program.

The observations are collated by trained researchers from Universities and Research Institutions in the UK and elsewhere. Current projects are in astronomy, (from distant galaxies to our satellite the Moon), and meteorology (with a sidelight into maritime history of WWI). More projects are being added at intervals. Online tutorials are available to get you started.

Typically you get yourself a signon ID and password and can then access the sites in your own time. The images of galaxies are wonderful to view, the detail of the Moon's surface is incredible, and the weather site lets you sail in cyberspace around the maritime world of 1914-18! All on your computer screen.

Some websites to look at include:

www.galaxyzoo.org latest observations from Hubble

www.moonzoo.org detailed look at moon craters

www.oldweather.org transcribing weather from digitised ships' logs from ca.1914-20

You can do this independently, but the following suggestion may give a Forum within U3A for discussion of results.

Science Forum

It would be good to have an occasional morning meeting, a Forum, to discuss scientific topics informally, along the lines of the successful Réseau Français run by the French groups. If there is enough interest we could propose a new group to our Committee.

We could meet at intervals to discuss, amongst other things, any web-based research you have been involved in (see above), recent TV Science-based programmes, the most recent Thursday evening lecture of the Science Group and so on. Another idea would be 'Ask the Experts' sessions, in which we can ask expert members of Edinburgh U3A about scientific, engineering and medical topics. There is no shortage of experts within the local U3As.

Depending on interest we would need to find a cafe suitable for the numbers. All suggestions for this would be welcome.

Contact [Joyce Holt](mailto:Joyce.Holt@ed.ac.uk) (see Groups Booklet p.18) with your email username.

Venite Cantate

As members of the U3A Singing Group, we were invited to take part in a 'Come and Sing' event in the Magnusson Centre at the Edinburgh Academy. This was in aid of a school tour to Barcelona. Never having taken part in such an event before, we had asked ourselves whether or not we had the vocal stamina and ability to participate. But the idea of a challenge grew – it would be good for us to be stretched! Perhaps resting the voice beforehand or gargling might help us to cope.

At last the day arrived. We were warmly welcomed at the Centre by the conductor, Philip Coad, who handed us our music for the day. We were very pleased to spot two other U3A members. The decision to leave the first row to more confident singers was quickly taken and we moved into the second row, where we found two seats positioned well to the side! The conductor explained that we would be singing nine opera Choruses, some familiar ones such as the Anvil Chorus and March of the Toreadors, and some less well known ones like the Chorus of Scottish Refugees by Verdi. We were eased gently into the first Chorus. Our confidence began to grow as we became aware of some very strong and gifted singers amongst us –we were directly behind the lead soprano– and realised that if we did flounder they would carry us through. By lunchtime we had rehearsed for three hours! We were grateful to our conductor for building on our strengths and not labouring over our weaknesses.

At 2.30 we returned for the final Chorus and a complete run-through of the evening's programme. By 4:30 we had rehearsed for five hours, but somehow we didn't feel as exhausted as we had expected, and our voices were still intact! This left just enough time to return home, change, and be back for the start of the concert at 7.30pm. Our dark trousers and skirts and self-coloured tops gave an informal and bright effect. Suddenly, facing a growing audience, we felt nervous. But then the performance began, and we went from strength to strength. The audience was showing its appreciation. An encore followed, and we felt a real sense of achievement. Later, over a glass of wine in a nearby classroom, we decided it had all been very worthwhile, and we would certainly be up for the challenge should another opportunity arise!

Jenny Cowper and Hilary Middlecote



Geology Trip to North Antrim

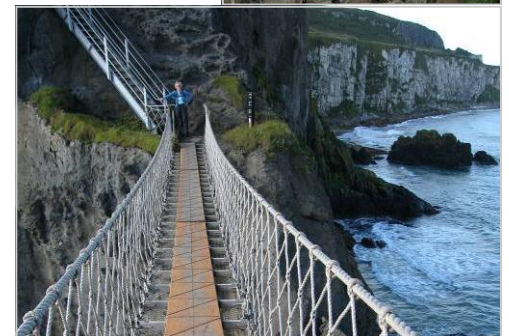
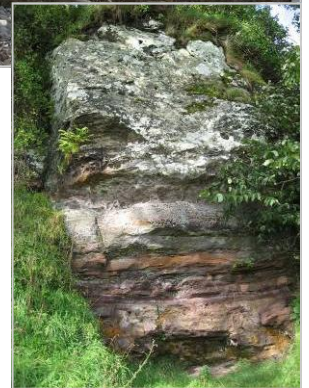
The U3A Geowalks holiday in September last year took us to the beautiful North Antrim coast of Northern Ireland. Admirably led by Angus Miller we walked, talked and looked at rocks. We had four days along the coast between Murlough Bay in the east and Portrush in the west. Although the purpose of the holiday was to study the geology of the area there were many opportunities to look at the flowers and birds and to under-stand something of the history of this part of the UK. Ballycastle, where we were staying, provided a convivial hostel and delicious fish and chips.

The first day we walked down to Murlough Bay where we saw three layers of rocks: metamorphic (schists), sedimentary (sandstone) and igneous (dolerite, basalt). Like much of Argyll and Perthshire the schists were formed when supercontinents collided over 400 million years ago. We weren't to see these or the sandstones (which were over 200 million years old) for the rest of the week, but rather the younger rocks overlaying them. Walking over Fairhead (a dolerite volcanic intrusion) and along the beach to Ballycastle we found a mixture of rocks including shale and coal and the chalk and limestone we were to encounter later. We also came across the local U3A Nordic pole walking group out doing some serious practising!

On the second day the ferry took us to Rathlin Island noted for the first transmission of radio waves across water by Marconi from Ballycastle, and also Bruce's cave (where he saw the spider). But the island has several other attractions. We walked over beautiful heather, furze and bright blue scabious-carpeted hills to the north coast where we were rewarded by a magnificent view of Scotland including Islay and the Mull of Kintyre. We visited the small museum where we all held a stoneage porcellite axe head made from the rare metamorphosed inter-volcanic deposits found in the centre of the island. Apparently Rathlin was a centre of trade at this time and axe heads have been found as far away as Greece. It was the wrong time of year to visit the RSPB bird sanctuary, but nevertheless, as on other days, the bird watchers amongst us were not disappointed.

Thursday took us to the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge – quite an adventure as it spans the hole left by a volcanic plug and leads to a well trodden basalt outcrop. The original bridge was made to take fishermen to their nets but has since become a considerable tourist attraction. Further along the beach we encountered a chalk quarry with many flints. This chalk/limestone layer was formed before the basalt about 90 million years ago when the land was further south and covered by warm sea. From there we walked past the little church where swallows were gathering for migration to the pretty harbour at Balintoy where the dolerite and chalk met. Walking along the beach to

Leonora Harding





Geology Trip to North Antrim cont.

White Park Bay (a raised beach) we saw many volcanic intrusions forming lumpy mounds and eroded mudstone layers where we found fossil shells. The sea shore was quiet and beautiful (although dangerous because of the rip tides) and we saw Redshanks and Wheatears too.

The culmination of the holiday was the visit to The Giant's Causeway, a world heritage site, known for its basalt columns formed at the same time as Fingal's cave on the island of Staffa across the water in Scotland. The basalts were formed in eruptions about 60–65 million years ago and intruded through the other earlier layers of rock. We approached the Causeway by a splendid walk along the cliffs from Dunseverick castle. We saw magnificent volcanic columns and sea stacks which many declared were better than the Causeway itself. The volcanic eruptions in this part of Ireland took place in two pulses and during the quiet period between the lava eroded to form red laterite soil which was plainly visible. The Causeway itself is somewhat overshadowed by the size of the bay although, standing below the Organ Pipes and eating lunch perched on a column, it was all most impressive. The columns are mainly hexagonal in shape formed by the rapid cooling of lava along the lines of least resistance.

Our final step on this day was to the coastal seaside town of Portrush. Close to the promenade there is an area of scientific interest – a layer of very hard mudstone baked by the heat of an adjacent volcanic sill. It used to be thought to be of volcanic origin and confused early geologists as it contains many ammonites and, yes, we found quite a few! And the birdwatchers were also rewarded by Sandwich Terns (rare in this part of the world) and the Ringed Plover. Basking in the sunshine outside the Arcadian café, a refurbished 1930's building, we reflected on our good fortune to have such a fascinating (and inexpensive) holiday. LH



The 2011 Geology trip is to Lochaber and Skye, 6–11 June

There are still some places. You need walking boots and a reasonable level of fitness.

Mon 6 June – depart Edinburgh by minibus to Glencoe, accommodation in Glencoe or Fort William (small rooms, self-catering, possibly a small bunkhouse); **Tuesday** – explore Glen Nevis; **Wednesday** – spend the day exploring Glen Roy and the Road to the Isles, ferry from Mallaig–Skye late afternoon; **Thursday** – boat trip from Elgol into Loch Coruisk, Skye Cuillins; **Friday** – explore north Skye including lava and dinosaur footprints, Torrinn museum; **Saturday** – travel home.

Contact Angus Miller, Geowalks: 0131 555 5488

angus@geowalks.demon.co.uk





NOTICES

Lunch Club 2010–2011

There are a number of new members joining, so here are the guidelines.

- The time is 12.15 pm for 12.30 pm.
- You should pay for your drinks as you get them.
- Payment for the meals varies – the money may be taken at the table (if it is a fixed-price menu) or individually at the till. Keep a note of the cost of your meal. It is your choice whether to give a tip.
- Book the next meal at the previous lunch, at an Open Meeting or by telephoning Pat Thomas **667 8992**.
- Remember to cancel by phoning Pat Thomas – even on the morning of the lunch. The answer phone will always be checked.
- The lunch is always in the first week of the month which includes Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Tuesdays are usually less busy.
- Note we are offering a lunch in August for the first time.

Please do not telephone the restaurant to book or to cancel.

Our thanks are due to the organising committee members: Pat Thomas (convener), Tony Helby, Ann Pippet, Jimmy Scott, Dianne Fraser, Jenny Di Rollo, Arthur Bourne, Delma Dewar, John Wilkinson, Penni McCallum and Constance McArthur.

Lunch Venues 2011

February	La P'tite Folie
1-2-3	Tudor House, 9 Randolph Place
March	Bar Napoli
1-2-3	75 Hanover Street
April	Mussel and Steak
5-6-7	West Bow, Grass Market
May	Chez Jules
3-4-5	109 Hanover Street
June	First Coast
7-8-9	97–101 Dalry Road
July	Borough Hotel
5-6-7	80 Causewayside (Meadows end)
August	Lauriston Farm, Toby Carvery
2-3-4	69 Lauriston Farm Road. Buses 37, 16, 27, 129, 29

Summer Visits 2011

After a most successful series of visits last year we are offering another selection for your enjoyment. These take place monthly, May to September inclusive. At this time it is not possible to give prices.

A flyer, with details of the visit, will be available for each trip as booking commences. Please read the flyer carefully as departure times vary. Cheques are not cashed until after the visit. Refunds depend on the notice given, the waiting list situation and any non-refundable prepayments.

Booking begins at the Open Meeting two months before the visit, on the bus during a previous trip, and thereafter by phone (Pat Thomas 667 8992). Cheques are preferred otherwise please have the *correct* money. Prices are likely to increase this year but will still be good value.

Thank you to the committee members who arrange the visits: David Richardson, Sheila Macdonald, Delma Dewar, Pat Cattanach, Maureen Dalrymple, Elsie Oliver and Pat Thomas.

Visits leave from Waterloo Place using Abbot's coaches

MAY	Tuesday 10th	Drumlanrig Castle Dumfriesshire
JUNE	Wednesday 1st	Mount Stewart, Isle of Bute
JULY	Monday 11th	Holmwood House, Glasgow NT
AUGUST	Friday 11th	House of Dun, Montrose Basin NT
SEPTEMBER	Friday 9th	Innerpefferay Library/Crieff



**Notices cont.****Special offer to U3A from King's Theatre!**

The King's Theatre would like to continue our support for Edinburgh U3A by offering you up to 50% off theatre tickets.

U3A members can get a special **£12.50 ticket price** on our **King's Spring 2011 Drama Season**. Seats in the Stalls and Grand Circle.

Shows included are:

Masterclass starring *Stephanie Beacham*

(Tue 8 – Sat 12 February)

Richard III and The Comedy of Errors presented by all-male company *Propeller*

(Tue 22 – Sat 26 February)

Charles Dickens' The Haunting (Mon 28 Feb – Sat 5 March)

Yes, Prime Minister (Tue 8 – Sat 12 March)

R.C. Sherriff's Journey's End (Tue 15 – Sat 19 March)

Tom McGrath's The Hard Man (Thu 31 Mar – Sat 9 April).

Offer excludes Friday and Saturday evening performances

This offer is available in person at the Festival Theatre box office or by phone on **0131 529 6000** Just quote '**U3A Offer**'.

Please mention any special requirements when you book.

For more information on these shows and others please pop in to the Festival Theatre for a brochure or check out our website: www.fctt.org.uk

Emma Robertson

Education and Audience Development Officer

EDITOR'S NOTE

As ever, I am most grateful to the editorial team: *Rosemary Miller, Mary Walker, Sue Mallick and Elisabeth Hutchings* for their ideas and support; and to all our contributors to this issue. Thanks, too, to Neil Duffy our webmaster.

This is my last Clarion as Editor. Mary and Rosemary are also standing down after contributing for many years. We have all enjoyed working on the Clarion and encouraging people to write. Personally, I have found it a very enjoyable way to get to know a wide cross section of U3A members and many of their secrets – which remain so!

The new Clarion team begins work immediately on the next issue. I wish them all well and I am confident that Liam, our new editor, will continue to persuade many of you to get your thoughts, ideas and experiences into print.

Barbara Clarke