

HIGH LANE U3A NEWSLETTER

www.highlaneu3a.org.uk

Editor

Jean Drinkwater - newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk

March 2011



AGM Highlights

Steve Reynolds welcomed over 130 members to the 2011 AGM held at the Village Hall on Wednesday 9 February 2011 at 2pm

The Chairman's & Secretary's Reports are reproduced below. During the Chairman's report there was a presentation to Margaret McDermott to mark her 10 years' service as membership secretary.

Treasurer Derek Hill presented the Accounts for 2010 and reported a surplus for the year, with a free bank balance. We had absorbed well the increase in capitation fee from the Third Age Trust and he was pleased to announce an unchanged annual subscription of £7 for 2011.

The following officers were elected for 2011:

Chairman Steve Reynolds

Vice Chair Louanne Collins

Secretary June Gibbs

Treasurer Derek Hill

Committee Margaret McDermott, Brian Burke, Derek Jones, Pat Christopher, Walter Mason and Sue Harlin.

To be co-opted Richard Clark

Editor Jean Drinkwater

Auditor Peter Collins

Steve thanked Brian Farquhar for his work on the Committee and Brian assured the meeting his would only be a short term absence.

After an extended tea break to allow subs to be paid, the meeting resumed with Group Leaders giving reports of their activities for 2010. Members were asked if there would be interest in forming a Ballet Appreciation Group, and a good response was received.

Louanne reported that all 48 seats for the 10th anniversary lunch on the East Lancs. Steam Train had been taken and there was now a waiting list.

Derek Jones gave an update on preparation for the Open Day on March 9 (11 to 3.30). A lot of planning is going into this event and to date there has been an enthusiastic response from Group Leaders and members wishing to take part. Let us hope the great High Lane older generation turn out in force on the day. Please spread the word!

The meeting closed at 4.30pm

Chairman's Report 2011

A Chairman's annual report is an opportunity to review the achievements of the previous year and to set out goals for the following year.

The monthly meetings and the Interest Groups are very much the heart of our U3A. I think that in 2010 we had a very interesting range of speakers and subjects and I know that Walter Mason puts a lot of thought into the type of speaker and subject that will interest members. I'm sure you will not be disappointed in what he has arranged for 2011.

The Interest Groups continue to offer a wide range of subjects for learning & discussion. The new Art Group is under way with Brian Chadwick and we're hopeful the proposed Engineering & Science Group under the leadership of Chris Gibson will be able to start in 2011. The existing Groups continue to be well supported on the whole, even flourish in some cases with the Table Tennis Group under Mike Snape considering a second session on Tuesday afternoons.

However, although we have excellent Group Leaders it is inevitable that some Groups will stagnate or even close. That is why it's so important for you as members to come forward with suggestions for new Groups.

In terms of membership our numbers remain stable or even perhaps slightly down at around 320 compared with 2009. This overall figure includes a number of new members (which is good) but also means we are losing a number each year. Your committee is always interested to know why this is so, and how we can improve what we offer. Whilst on the subject of membership, this is a good time to mention the contribution of Margaret McDermott, membership secretary since we started, and to thank her for all the work she does for our U3A.

Our finances remain healthy as Derek Hill will reveal shortly & we continue to play a part in Pennine Link. Its future looked a bit uncertain at one stage but all the local U3As with the exception of Marple Bridge want it to continue. One idea is for Pennine Link to arrange a waterways based event in 2012 to coincide with the Olympic Games.

We took part in the National Survey organised by the Third Age Trust and it will be interesting to see what transpires from that. Our overall view was that National Office does a very good job and that membership of the U3A remains very good value for money.

A number of U3As nationally have very good links with their local councils and art galleries/libraries. They undertake joint research projects and I believe that's an area we can develop ourselves in the future. Marple had its first Arts festival in 2010 and I have been asked if we would be interested in taking part in 2011. It's probably a bit soon for us yet but maybe one for the future.

So far in 2011, our 10th anniversary year, we have already had a very successful lunch organised by Sue Harlin. The next big event is our own Open Day on Wednesday March 9 which I know you will do your utmost to support.. It is partly a celebration of what we do in the U3A and what we have achieved in 10 years but, just as importantly, this is a recruitment drive for new members so please try to bring potential members along.

I hope you all feel that you are kept well informed about what's going on within our U3A. As well as the monthly meeting we also have of course the bi monthly newsletter and website. Jean Drinkwater as editor of the newsletter and webmasters Peter Kress & Richard Clark all do great jobs for which we thank them, but they do need good copy so please keep them well supplied.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow committee, group Leaders and all members for making my first year as Chairman such an enjoyable one. In particular thanks to Louanne for taking more than her fair share of work as Vice-Chair, and to June for her sterling work as secretary.

Steve Reynolds

Secretary's Report from AGM

It has been another busy and enjoyable year for the Secretary, handling correspondence from National Office, ordering and distributing the U3A magazines and submitting information to the Charity Commission

Attending regular meetings of the Village Hall Management committee regarding the Village Hall; and also Stockport College helping to plan the Summer School Programme for 2011.

--ooOoo--

Reading Group Book Review



Beatrice and Virgil by Yann Martel (author of Life of Pi)

The theme of January's book was the Holocaust, but it had it a most unusual approach. It proved a very challenging read and not very popular with the group. Only three of the ten members at the meeting were glad that they had persevered to the end and ultimately found it very thought provoking and quite disturbing. Unfortunately, no one felt that they would recommend it to a friend. A reviewer online wrote "A pretentious and humourless follow-up to his 2002 Booker-winning Life of Pi"

Wolf Hall by Hilary Mantel

February's Book was Wolf Hall. This is a very wordy book containing over 650 pages, the cast list alone taking up five pages, some members of the reading group completed it but for others it proved to be too long and did not hold their attention enough for them to continue to the end. Surprisingly, this novel has had the most sales of any Booker winner in the history of the prize. Did all who bought the book read it or is this the power of advertising? Set in the sixteenth century the surprising fictional hero of this book is Thomas Cromwell, the chief minister to Henry VIII who oversaw the break with Rome and dissolution of the monasteries and who was widely hated in his lifetime. However this did not come over in the book and Cromwell was portrayed as one of the most appealing and, in his own way, enlightened, characters of the period. This is a marathon read, those of us who had persevered were glad to have read Wolf Hall, and certainly learned more about the history and intrigues of that time. Would we recommend it, some definitely would but others certainly would not!

<<<>>>

Men can read smaller print than women can; women can hear better.

Discussion Group



On the 27th Jan 2011 we discussed "Prisons and their inmates", introduced by Irene Bentley. The latest figures show approximately 80,000 people incarcerated in Britain's prisons out of a total national population of about 60 million. This is a ratio of one in 750 of the population. We didn't know how this compared with other democratic nations but it is comparable with the U.S.A. What is the ratio of male to female prisoners? We did not know but thought that it was heavily skewed in favour of more males than females because the type of crime committed by males is, by and large, different from that committed by females. Male crime probably involves more violence and aggression. A quote from a group of prison Governors was to the effect that approximately half of all prison inmates should not be in prison; they should undergo a different regime of punishment. It costs about £800 a week to keep an offender in prison and it is ludicrous to think that a cheaper more effective punishment cannot be found. The total costs of dealing with offenders is about £64,000,000 per week! A substantial number are in prison for what is termed "petty crime". Obviously they must pay for their crimes but make it so that the punishment really does fit the crime. And what is prison really for? Punishment yes, but would it not be better to attempt to rehabilitate those who are capable of being taken back into normal society rather than operating the revolving door principle? For some of those being 'inside' is much better than being 'outside'. They cannot cope with normal society. Being 'inside' costs the tax payer more than it would to send them to the best private schools, so what is the solution to this problem? Please send your ideas to the Justice Minister, c/o the Houses of Parliament, London and don't forget the S.A.E.

The topic of Public Libraries was introduced by Jim McDermott on the 24th Feb 2011. The discussion was " In view of the fact that we now have access to various sources of information and books are available cheaply from places such as Amazon, charity shops, second hand bookshops, Tesco etc., and most books borrowed from libraries are in the genre of crime and thrillers, do we really need Public Libraries?" It was pointed out that Libraries now fill a variety of functions such as access to computers, introducing infants to books, dissemination of items of local interest, acting as a source of information, stocking of non fiction books not readily available elsewhere, being a focal point for the local community etc. It was then mentioned that the impetus for closing libraries was coming from the financial constraints being imposed by the Government and closures and redundancies were inevitable. Some members of the group thought that redundancy was not such a calamity and the work (if any) could be done by happy smiling untrained literate volunteers who have a spare morning or two and are only too glad to make a contribution to the Big Society.

Jim McDermott.

=====

"Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older, it will avoid you."

- Winston Churchill

GERMAN GROUP



The German group continues to meet on most Fridays. Recent items read and discussed have included the sad story of two sisters separated by the iron curtain and the beneficial uses of nutmeg. In recent weeks, certain members of the group have been distracted by the antics of our two new cats who are suddenly losing their shyness.

NEEDLEWORK GROUP



The needlework group has been busy preparing items for our open day which will include greetings cards and scarves available for sale on the day. On Monday 21st March we have invited a guest speaker, Barbara Holland who will be talking about patchwork and quilting. Anyone who is interested can join us at 10 o'clock at June Gibbs' house.

WALK REPORTS – JANUARY 2011



Tuesday 11th January

14 joined Roger and Jean Drinkwater for the inaugural Tuesday walk. From the Miners Arms on Wood Lane North we followed the lane to Lockgate Farm, then continued to the Shrigley Road and the chapel by Lyme West Parkgate. The walk skirted Green and Throstlenest Farms, and bridged the canal for a coffee stop.

An attractive shaded path led to the considerably refurbished Hagg Farm, and a tricky section through to Poynton Coppice, and an easy stroll to Wards End, to return on the far side of the Coppice, and the lane back to the Miners.

It had been cool and dull, but dry and brightening later, although rather damp and muddy underfoot. We had encountered other walking groups on the way, from AstraZeneca Pensioners and Age Concern, with some walkers that some of us knew – popular sport walking!

The pub gave us a room to ourselves, with plenty of reasonably priced typical pub food, so we thanked Roger and Jean for their well judged walk and thoughtful organisation, which made a good start for our first Tuesday walk!

Wednesday 26th January

Allison Allerton greeted us, and took a party of 19 on a 5 mile part of the new “Ring of Trees” walk which now encircles Buxton. From Gadley Lane, the route traversed the Cavendish golf course in benign sunshine, with golfers already out and about, before turning at Watford Farm steeply up to The Beet, and then gradually down to Bishop’s Lane with outstanding views over Buxton. There were intriguing glimpses of imposing houses and the line of the former rail line from Whaley Bridge to Ashbourne. As we circled round from Plex Farm and Shay Lodge towards Burbage, the sky became more grey, but that mattered little in the woodland paths of Grin Plantation, where imposing trees disguise the vestiges of 17C and 18C quarries and lime burning kilns. A quick descent past Poole’s Cavern, down imposing avenues, and through the Pavilion Gardens, led our group to the cafe where Brian was waiting to meet us (his injured knee playing him up a bit). A very pleasant meal was the ideal conclusion to our first trip to Buxton – thanks Alison and Brian.

23 February 2011

Overnight rain had ceased as a group of 22 walkers set off from the Royal Hotel, Hayfield along the attractively wooded Sett Valley Trail, led by Sam and Irene Chappell. Our route skirted the peaceful lower mill reservoir, nowadays reserved for fishermen, and rose towards Lower Cliff, with one particularly muddy stretch to negotiate.

Shortly we climbed up below Upper Cliffe Farm, when our scenic coffee stop was rudely curtailed by a renewal of rain, which intensified as the walk continued, and left several stretches quite slippery. At Little Hayfield a few peeled off on field paths by badger setts on an easier return route, whilst the hardy majority took the steep path from Park Hall up the thick wetting bracken of Middle Moor, before returning on the Snake Path to the Royal Hotel. There was a pleasant room reserved for us, with some generous pensioners specials, so that the rain and mud were soon forgotten as we thanked Sam and Irene for their somewhat challenging, but very interesting walk.

Walter Mason

Dining Group



30 members of the Dining Group enjoyed a superb meal at The Bridge in Prestbury. Fine dining at its best, three courses followed by coffee and a chocolate left us all replete. We are looking forward to a different experience in April when we shall be dining at The Plaice in Bollington. Book your place now by speaking to Margaret Meekley or Jean Drinkwater.

Please let the editor have all contributions for the next newsletter by the 30th April.