

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

By the time you read this another successful year will have come to an end; a year in which we continued to go from strength to strength.

As we grow, so do our problems. An outstanding one is that of suitable accommodation at the times required and we do need a central office where we can hold our equipment etc.

On a positive note it is pleasing to report that we have a few more people volunteering for jobs, such as running the Trade Table, taking over Theatre Visits and assisting with Visits in general. We always require more volunteers especially where groups are over subscribed and there is a waiting list. If you have been a member of such a group for some time, do think about forming a separate group, or consider leading a beginners' group. You can receive help in setting up and leading a group from myself, from other committee members and from Headquarters.

All I need do now is to wish all of you 'Happy Holidays' and I look forward to renewing acquaintance in September.

Janet Pulley

ART TWO

Difficult question; What do you do after you have attended Brian Fox's 'Anyone Can Paint' course?

Easy answer; you join this group and, under the enthusiastic leadership of Desi Mills, learn to improve your observational and drawing skills.

This group is an excellent bridge between being an absolute beginner and the difficult step of sitting in a group as a self-sufficient and competent painter.

Each week Desi creates still life set-ups with specific aims in mind: how to deal with difficult shapes, how to represent textures, how to add vibrancy through tones and shadows, and so on. She spends time with each person and is generous with her advice, lavish with her praise and forthright in her criticism.

In the two years of this group's existence each member has made real and observable progress. However Desi does not expect us to stay any longer in the safety and security of her artistic nest. At the end of the summer session she expects us to be confident enough to leave this group and accept the challenges

of a new step and a new direction in gaining other skills and competencies as artists.

This does not mean we will be cast adrift, and Desi has thoughts of initiating a monthly discussion group where we can give and receive a critique of our work. It also means a new group of hopeful improvers can gain the benefits of Desi's tuition.

Ron Clements

ART GROUPS FOR NEXT YEAR

The Art Group Leaders, having read Ron Clements contribution as above, and noting that there are five painting groups with a waiting list, held a discussion to plan what to do next year.

The first decision was that there should be a written programme of outdoor painting afternoons throughout the coming summer, to cover the period from the end of June until September so that people do not get out of practice. These outdoor sessions will take place on Wednesday afternoon. The programme will be given to existing members of Art I and II and anyone Can Paint I, II and III, but if anyone else in Fleet U3A wishes to have one and to join in they may apply to

Brian Fox on 01252 613147 for a copy. For the year beginning September 2000 it is proposed to offer groups as follows:

Art I. Leader - Barry Jamieson.. Wednesday afternoons. This is intended for painters who wish to do their own thing and there is no formal course - though guidance from the more experienced painters will be available and there is a certain amount of tuition.

Art II. Leader - Desi Mills. Monday afternoons. This is for those who have some experience (such as having completed the 'Anyone Can Paint' course, see below). Desi will have a structured course designed to emphasise 'Looking and Seeing' in order to improve one's painting skills.

Anyone Can Paint I. Leader - Stella Bennett. Monday afternoons. This is intended for complete beginners. It will be a structured course aimed at introducing beginners to drawing and then going on to watercolour painting, with the intention of giving beginners confidence to go on to more advanced courses either within the U3A or run by professional painters.

Anyone Can Paint III. Leader - Brian Fox. This will be similar to Anyone Can Paint I, but will take place on Wednesday afternoons.

Anyone Can Paint II. Leader - Morley Glover. Monday afternoons. This is intended to follow on from I and III, to build on the initial course and to offer the option of painting from still life subjects or painting from one's own sketches or photographs with advice from the tutor.

Art III. Leader - Brian Fox (but see below). Venue and time to be decided. This will be a new group aimed at widening the horizons of those who have some experience, by using watercolour, oils, acrylics, gouache and mixed media in a more experimental way. It is intended that leaders of other painting groups will take this group in turn, with a pre-arranged programme designed to stretch the imagination and encourage innovation.

In addition to the above it is hoped to arrange some occasional workshops and critiques, depending on whether suitable facilities can

be provided. Enrolment for the groups will take place at the September monthly meeting.

COOKERY FOR MEN

An outline of the course was given in last year's review. Briefly it aims to build confidence in relative newcomers to cookery by making simple savoury dishes. It is run at Courtmoor School in fortnightly sessions. Numbers can be a problem. There is room only for 12 or so. It would hardly be worth running for fewer than four. Eight is an optimum number.

In the first session the Group Leader brings the ingredients. Subsequently the members bring the ingredients and containers listed in the Notes issued at the previous session. The Notes are posted on if someone misses a session. There is collective purchase (cost 50p) of commonly used items or those used in small quantities - oil, salt, herbs etc. Members also pay 50 p for the U3A. Courtmoor provides everything required by way of cooking utensils, knives, etc, but members are encouraged to bring their own.

As well as the notes, members receive 35 pages of recipes covering the items they have cooked as well as a range of related dishes.

Chris Garnett

CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Current Affairs Croup meets once a month to discuss topical issues of common interest. Sometimes a group member prepares a presentation, such as when Jim Russell gave an informed, and informative, background and look into the future of Farnborough Air Field. Other members then contribute their own thoughts and insights.

On other occasions we discuss topics raised from newspaper articles collected prior to the meeting. In February we had feedback and individual reactions from six group members who had participated in the U3A visit to the Millennium Dome.

I personally find the most valuable factor is the wealth of varied background knowledge brought to the discussions by individual members. Instead of relying on newspaper

and radio (often 'mis') information, we can offer collectively decades of day to day experience working in, say, the transport industry, manufacturing, education or the health service. We all have different life experiences and these can add great perspective to our debates. We are a friendly and receptive group, usually about 15 in number and everyone's contributions are welcome.

Anne McKinnon

DANCE AND TONE

As the members' level of expertise has grown since we started in January 1999, we now have two groups, Beginners for newcomers without experience and Intermediate for more advanced work. Both groups meet weekly on Wednesday afternoons at Velmead Community Centre. They are open to men as well as women but unfortunately the men seem reluctant to join. The movement we do is a mixture of keep-fit and dance steps. We use various styles of music from shows, jazz, swing, big band, country, latin, ballroom, calypso, classical and pop. At the Monthly Open Meeting, members from both groups demonstrated a basic warm up routine and then each group performed the dance routine they had been learning this year. The Beginners performed a latin routine and the Intermediate a Charleston style routine. I have very much enjoyed leading these groups and I believe members have enjoyed our meetings too.

Jill Evans

FRENCH CONVERSATION

The group has grown in numbers over the Winter and in March we had to "close the door" because too many members makes the learning process difficult and limits each members contribution to group discussions. We now have 16 members, all with an average to good fluency in French, so it has been possible to read and discuss many topics in some detail whilst having some good

laughs at our own and other peoples' mistakes.

We have continued the extra tuition by a young French lady, which we started last year. She comes to the group meeting about once each month and is very helpful with improving our accents and extending our vocabulary, especially in the way words are used in different situations. During the last two months we have also welcomed back Frank Pezzey who was the full time group tutor for the first two or three years of its existence. He still has his great sense of humour but, with other commitments, he will only be leading the meetings about once a month. All the other meetings have been led by different members of the group, using published books, magazines and audiocassettes.

A new venture during this session has been a once per month meeting in the Lounge at the Methodist Church. We have used the TV and Video to watch and learn from BBC Language Zone Programmes and also spent one afternoon looking at an enjoyable film called Trois Couleurs - Rouge. We all get on so well in the group that our final Easter "Meeting" will be lunch together - at a French restaurant of course!!!

Ray Oldham

FRENCH INTERMEDIATE

We have continued to follow the French Experience 1, covering all aspects of transport, hotels and holidays, lifestyles and household chores. Members have given, received and refused invitations, written about their leisure pursuits and designed enticing For Sale notices for their own houses. Above all we try to communicate on day-to-day issues.

The new magazine "Le Rendez-vous francais" has proved a mine of valuable articles, grammar items and puzzles.

Now we have progressed half way through the course book, there is an air of confidence in the group. Perhaps we shall finish it next year!

Rosalind Kemp

GARDENING

We are a small but select group of friendly gardeners sometimes, but not always, looking for an easier way of gardening. The recent purchase of the video means that we can cover the art of propagation by way of close - up filming and detailed step-by-step tuition through the principals of seed sowing, taking of cuttings, division and budding. We have also welcomed some excellent speakers such as Jim Hawkett, perhaps the most knowledgeable chrysanthemum grower in the neighbourhood and John Pauling who gave a most interesting talk on Streptocarpus, Gloxinias and African Violets. We hope to visit the gardens of West Green House quite soon; and perhaps the garden at Upton Grey designed by Gertrude Jekyll in 1908. I very much enjoy leading the group and look forward to the next 12 months.

Len Wilson

GERMAN CONVERSATION

What do we know about the downfall of Helmut Kohl or the state of the German economy? What problems are there concerning immigration or refugee families in Germany and how do they compare with this country? How do Austrians feel about being ostracised following their recent elections?

If you are interested in any of these questions and can converse in fairly fluent German, or if you like occasionally to watch German T.V. news or plays, do come and join us.

Above all if you know any good jokes you will be most warmly welcomed.

Lachen ist gesund!

Janet Pulley

HISTORY

The general theme this year is the '20th Century'. Peter Smith started the first session by briefly reviewing the talks that took place in the previous year. He then presented an

overview of one major event for each year from 1901 to 1999.

Bill Ralph gave three interesting talks; German Zeppelin Airships in WW1; History of Airships during the 1920s and 1930s; WW1 'K' boats, these were steam powered submarines fitted with a fired boiler and funnel, hardly intrinsically safe. Neil Paxton gave a fascinating talk on Fighting Women, who masqueraded as men so that they could go to war. Neil's second detailed talk was on the Korean War, which included his own personal experiences. Philip Gething gave a most intriguing talk about the Russian spies Peter and Helen Kroger, and how they were detected and caught. Ellsie Russell gave a factual and humorous talk on the history of Christmas. Ellsie's second talk was about the Life of Amy Johnson and included a detailed account of her solo flight to Australia in 1930. Peter Smith gave a presentation on the causes of the First World War and the Second World War. Jim Russell presented a very detailed and interesting talk on the history of the Jacobites. Kristina Humphreys gave a very interesting talk on the background history of her native country, Finland, giving us her personal feelings about the invading Russians. Outside speakers included, Edna Millington who gave a talk on Pub Signs, Mike Padmore who gave a talk entitled, Memorials to the Raj, relating British historical events during their occupation of the Indian sub-continent. Future talks include the Berlin Wall by Peter and three guest speakers; a District Officer talking about the Mau Mau in Kenya, an Army Officer about his survival from the Battle of the Imjin River in Korea, and the History of the London Fire Brigade.

We have a very enthusiastic history class, which now has 75 members. As group leader I wish to thank our member speakers for their professional presentations, always complemented with that essential touch of humour, and those members who provided all the comfort back-up services. Finally my thanks to Bryn Brassington for his sterling work as secretary, and Neil Paxton who voluntarily came forward to lighten my load,

for which he has been promoted to Deputy Fuhrer.

Peter Smith _____

ITALIAN

We are a small group, of varied experience in Italian, but with the unfailing patience and humour of our group leader, we are making progress in reading and translation (using newspaper articles) plus listening to audio tapes and more recently watching "Italianissimo" a BBC television production. The T.V. series has proved to be particularly useful in showing everyday life in Italy, in "Cultura e parole" and our conversation has improved using the audio tapes on travel, shopping and eating out. Grammar is covered in a relaxed way, and at each session we are given some useful colloquial phrases.

Pat Davis _____

As a complete beginner joining the group mid-term, I have found the relaxed, informal and friendly guidance most helpful.

Ruth Hudson _____

PHOTOGRAPHY

After a fine start under the leadership of the late Gordon Lodder, the group has since struggled under a succession of leaders. At one stage we were almost disbanded.

Happily, last year, our prospects improved when the vastly experienced Ted Clark, associated for many years with the Yately Camera Club and currently its President, offered to help us. Salvation!

Now in his second year, we are fifteen strong with an average attendance of twelve. We have a great atmosphere at all our meetings and the time passes much too quickly.

Ted has a genuine ability to pass on to us in lay terms just sufficient technical knowledge to enable us to become better and more confident photographers, regardless of talent or equipment.

Outings to Greywell and the Basingstoke Canal have enabled us to compare results to look for ways to improve.

Every member submitted prints for the Open Day and in making our selections for display, we were so impressed we decided to take part in the Annual Exhibition of Yately Camera Club this year.

We are most grateful to Ted and hope he enjoys working with us as much as we do with him. Michael Jones has provided sound support for the leader and kept him familiar with the idiosyncrasies of the U3A and its members. His work in maintaining contact between meetings has been much appreciated. Many rolls of film will be exposed during the summer break to enable us to impress our leader and fellow members when we return in the autumn.

Bert Jennings _____

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

I have often wondered if our title intimidates some potential members: it certainly should not do so, as the range of our group stretches the interpretation to its limits. We have had talks and presentations as diverse as botany on the one hand to the finer points of aerospace welding techniques on the other. We have 'lived' the life of a submariner, we have admired the intellectual struggles of Einstein during his work on the speed of light, and conversely enjoyed a site visit to Fleet Sewage works and admired the techniques employed to safeguard public health. Another outside visit gave a fascinating insight into the workings of a large church organ, followed by a pleasing musical demonstration. We try to be eclectic in our selection of topics, many of which have been provided by our own members. Suggestions for and contributions to our discussions are always warmly welcomed.

John Davis _____

VISITS

This year we have visited a number of private houses, marvelling at the priceless pictures,

porcelain, and wonderful craftsman-made furniture and listening to the fascinating family histories. We saw the Hindu Temple at Neasden and marvelled at the size of the buildings, every inch covered with intricate carving carried out in India, the blocks of marble then being assembled in remarkably short time to create in London a temple destined to last for centuries.

The Van Dyke exhibition at the Royal Academy enabled us to see a wide range of wonderful paintings gathered together and to learn of the artist's short but prolific life.

We visited Leighton House - insignificant outside, but providing an insight into Middle East mosaics - even a pond and fountain - on the inside. We continued to the Chelsea Hospital where a lively Chelsea Pensioner gave us a tour interspersed with historical anecdotes and descriptions of life now for the pensioners. The panelled dining room in particular gave us food for thought when we saw the list of battles in which the British Army was engaged - especially when we realise that many of those countries are still in turmoil.

The New Year showed how Millennium conscious we had become, for no less than 208 members journeyed to the Dome. A survey at the end gave a general consensus that it was better than the adverse media coverage had led us to believe - but like the curate's egg, it was good only in parts.

Woburn Abbey in April should have been bright and springlike - but we had snow just before leaving Fleet. However, the house was warm and full of interest. The history was quite absorbing, and though we could not enjoy the gardens we found plenty of unexpected treasures to admire - not least in the sixty antique shops in the Antique Centre adjoining the house.

Planned visits are; the Foreign Office, twice to Lambeth Palace (one combined with Kew Gardens), Charleston House (centre for the Bloomsbury Group), Berwick Church followed by lunch at Firle Place and a walk along the Sussex Coast ending with a harbour cruise. So much to see, so much to learn....

WALKING

From October 1st until April 28th we arranged and completed 16 walks at two a month. Each walk was between 4.5 and 5.5 miles in length so that anyone taking part in them would have covered about 80 miles in the lovely Hampshire/Surrey countryside.

Normally between 35 and 40 persons join us for each walk although on one occasion we were pleased to see 54.

All walks are chosen to be as varied as possible and during this period we visited Eversley, Winchfield, West Green, Odiham, Hindhead and Thursley. These walks are an obvious social event with walkers greeting friends and exchanging views on all sorts of topics - including the depth and quality of the mud! Each walk leader, where possible, also talks about the history of the area at the 'banana break' (halfway mark).

The May until October programme includes a London and a South Coast walk.

Bill Ralf

YOGA

The Yoga Group started in October last year, with fourteen members taking part. We have since changed venues for our weekly sessions and our members have levelled out to ten ladies. We would welcome men to join our select band as we do laugh a lot and the relaxation and meditation that we start and end each two-hour period with would perhaps be of benefit. We all leave the class at the end of each session with a wonderful sense of well being.

Anyone can practise Yoga, even those of us that are perhaps not as mobile as we would like to be. The art is to find your own level and build on that.

The Lion, Cobra, Sphinx and Child poses all sound quite daunting if not amusing (some are, and this can be where the laughter enters the class), and imagine trying to stand as tall as a tree, on one leg, this too can cause giggles. The important thing is we are all there to learn this fascinating art which has been practised for thousands of years. Yoga

means "union", bringing the body, mind and spirit together in harmony. We are all trying to achieve this at our own pace.

Tonie Parker and Anne Toner