

U3A Sources

An Educational Journal

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Languages



Lytes Cary, Somerset

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In the next issue

The theme of the next issue in January 2010 (No 39) will be Family History & Life Stories/Local History. For Issue No 40 in June 2010, the focus will be on Health and Well-Being. This includes exercise, aerobics and dancing etc.

Contributions are considered for inclusion by an editorial panel. For 39, please submit them not later than the end of November – via the national office or direct to the editor at:

Gelt Mill House, Castle Carrock, Brampton CA8 9NQ

You can send them by e-mail to tony.thornton@virgin.net (preferred), on disc or cleanly typed suitable for scanning. Every effort will be made to acknowledge them. **Contributors are advised to discuss their story with the editor before submission or request a copy of our writers guidelines.**

How to receive Sources

Sources is published in January, June and October. Back numbers can be viewed online and printed. Visit the Third Age Trust website at www.u3a.org.uk.

More recent issues require Adobe Acrobat Reader, which can be downloaded free from the website.

Feedback

If you have any comments on topics in this issue, please write to the editorial panel, c/o U3A National Office or e-mail the editor at: tony.thornton@virgin.net Tel: 01228 670403
Note that the views expressed within are those of the contributors and not those of the Third Age Trust.

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In my view

Tony Thornton

Editor

At the conference, a startling statistic was revealed – that 71% of ordinary members hadn't read Sources. A pity, because they have missed the SLP reports and new acquisitions from the Resource Centre.

Also at conference my readers had the chance to quiz me during two seminars. It was pointed out that, if readers weren't interested in the current theme they wouldn't bother reading any of it. This might explain the low interest.

A further survey is to take place soon, this time of group leaders. This should return a lower figure because they probably get more out of it.

Although the latest topic might not be to your taste, you can view back issues and find one that is. The U3A website lists all 38 editions that you can readily read or download.

If you still can't get excited then why not suggest a theme close to your heart that hasn't been done.

The next two issues feature

themes we have not covered before. No 39 for January 2010 deals with Family History & Life Stories/Local History. This is clearly a popular choice because contributions are already arriving steadily. If you are planning to send something then please do it soon.

For next June we are inviting submissions on Health and Well-Being. This includes exercise and dancing but not walking.

I can send you a copy of our writers and image guidelines to help you prepare your material to best fit our editorial requirements, just send me an e-mail.

Meanwhile, I hope the 29% enjoy this issue which is packed with jolly good stories. It's full of useful information that will help those of you who run a language group or who may be thinking of starting one.

The National Language Network



Joyce Gibson: National Coordinator for Languages North Down and Ards U3A

As National Coordinator I'd like to say a few words of welcome to readers of this special edition of *Sources* dedicated to those of us interested in the study of Languages.

As you probably know we're a large group – languages have been to the fore in U3A from the beginning and interest is growing.

During the three years that I have been 'in the job' so to speak, I have had almost 600 enquiries, ranging from simple requests for newsletters to more complicated questions on problems concerning setting up groups, methods, materials or trips abroad.

I am delighted to say that we now do have a National Network enabling members to be put in contact with other learners, to tell them about their experiences and to compare notes.

The range of languages studied is surprising. As well as the usual French, Spanish, German and Italian learners, I have heard from groups studying Russian, Arabic, Latin, Ancient Greek, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese, Welsh, Irish, Dutch and others.

And so you may ask, do you speak all those languages? Well the truth is of course I don't. I have barely scratched the surface. I have though, like many other U3A members, lived a long time, learned and taught languages for almost as long, and in that time picked up a certain amount of expertise in the way things might be done.

This covers teaching methods and practice, the use of materials or the psychology of dealing with adults. It is these skills that I hope to pass on to others, answering questions if I can and if not, referring them to those who might know better. I relay plenty of practical information filtered through to me in the e-mails, phone calls and letters which I have received.

How do I do this? Largely through a collection of advisory papers which I add to, revise or rewrite as often as possible

and which I send out to support my answers to the queries received. These include hints on teaching and learning languages, recommended books and materials and a start-up leaflet. Any member wishing to receive these should get in touch, preferably by e-mail which is cheaper and easier to cope with.

National office recently published an advice booklet entitled *Time to Learn* which was sent to all U3As. (Ask your committee to show you a copy if you haven't seen it yet.)

In it, Ian Searle, one of the editors, put together some of the information given in my papers into one article which you may find useful.

Especially interesting has been the link made two years ago with Susie Jones of *BBC Active*. Susie offered to write a newsletter for the U3A, as opposed to the one already in existence for teachers, giving us news of current developments in the BBC Language world.

The newsletter deals with details of events, books and programmes which Susie considers to be of interest to our type of learner. Out of politeness (and friendship) she first sends them to me for my perusal and it is a long time since I commented unfavourably on any of the content. You'll be pleased to hear that she never mentions anything like job training programmes or examinations. She now knows her market well and we are grateful to her.

Another recent contact which I am exploring is an exchange programme to



At the French Summer School

enable U3A learners to visit the countries of their respective languages, to practise speaking to the people and to get to know them personally.

A lot of work remains to be done and it may come to nothing but on the other hand this could be an interesting development, so watch this space. By that I mean e-mail me to sign up for my next newsletter (and for Susie's) in which I'll tell you if any result has been achieved.

Other services which coordinators provide include study days, and this year I enjoyed four days at the Northern Summer School in Shropshire where I led a French study group (see the report on the next page). We certainly had plenty of fun and spoke a good deal of French, which we all appreciated.

Happy language learning!

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I have recently returned from a scintillating experience and would like to pass on the lessons to be learned from it (apologies for the cliché) before the bubble bursts and my enthusiasm wanes.

For four days I led a French group at the National Summer school held in the Harper Adams College in Shropshire. We had a ball!

I met 16 charming and enthusiastic people and we went on a journey of exploration together, admittedly largely sedentary and in one room, but a journey all the same. It was called *La Belle France* to give us plenty of scope.

We 'travelled' to Paris and Provence; we went shopping and chose an apartment; we followed the idyllic life of Marcel Pagnol and sympathised, or otherwise, with Louis XVI and his unfortunate Queen Marie Antoinette, on their escape from the Tuileries. What rotten luck to be caught at the border and think what happened as a result.

We also explored the Vaucluse and mused on our supposed reactions to winning 'le loto'. To relax we puzzled over crosswords and quizzes and even produced little plays. It was great fun!

One highlight was our trip to Shrewsbury where we posed as French tourists. We spoke French to each other

To relax we puzzled over crosswords and quizzes

and to anyone willing to respond to us. One keen gentleman even booked a holiday at the tourist office assisted by a French speaking tourist adviser who broke off his telephone conversation with a local landlady to ask: 'Une nuit ou deux, monsieur?'

So how was this 'journey' to France organised? The course was practical and cultural. We started on Monday evening and by Wednesday hoped to have aroused enough linguistic memories to achieve some conversational fluency, vital for our foray to Shrewsbury.

The level had been advertised as lower intermediate so all could take part in the opening ice-breaker, a simple exercise in getting to know each other.

This was followed by a look at the map and a dip into our course book *Living French* by TW Knight. In one chapter he gives an excellent overall look at France

Lessons to be learned

The National Summer School in Shropshire

combined with a good rapid revision of the French numbers, always useful if you're going shopping.

(In addition to providing amusing anecdotes, Knight formed a good grammatical backup throughout as he sets things out so clearly. Don't be put off by appearances – this is an excellent reference book.)

The next day we practised shopping. My recent weekend in Nice paid rich

Everyone was into the French speaking mode

dividends. I had advertising leaflets from Monoprix and brochures from an estate agent. We spent a talkative hour discussing shopping, meals and new apartments for a fictitious 'niçoise famille Martin' and their relatives.

I had achieved my aim because by this time everyone was into the French speaking mode. Here however a note of caution. Role playing exercises require a lot of preparation and can be difficult to organise. But when they work they are invaluable. They encourage conversation and break down the barriers which are inevitable in any language group.

The second strand, parallel to the practical conversation, concerned French culture. For each of my chosen regions, the scene was introduced by coloured slides gathered during years of visiting France. The texts that followed were mostly taken from magazines, largely *Rendez-vous* and *La Vie Outre-Manche*, both published by Champs Elysées, Tel: 01622 749167 but I could equally have used *Bien Dire*, www.biendire.com.

Articles were accompanied by a CD or tape and were short, topical, interesting and covered cultural, geographical or historical themes. Vocabulary was conveniently listed to save constant searching in the dictionary.

I used as many 'tricks of the trade' as possible to illustrate how to use the text to facilitate learning. We used gap-filling, sequencing (cutting up a story and putting it together again) and in small groups describing chosen aspects of a geographical area in our own words.

The article on le loto was even easier

to adapt – it had been drawn from street interviews, each person answering the question 'Et si vous gagniez au loto?' (And what if you won the lottery?).

Some writers give points 'for and against' which would have been another possibility. Crosswords were popular as time-fillers, as were a couple of the excellent vocabulary quizzes (choose one of three meanings) and also a children's quiz book picked up in a French supermarket.

Telling a story from a set of pictures is always a good ploy to fall back on. An old book *racontez-moi* by HL Meehan and CL Walker published in the 70s by Pergamon Press, employs an ingenious system to encourage story telling. All the student needs by way of vocabulary and idiom is set out. The task is to put it in order and decide on the verb tenses. If you can pick up a copy in a second-hand bookshop do so with alacrity. The book has long been out of print. This is a pity. It is the most thought provoking and interesting teaching aid I have seen.

The activity most acclaimed was prepared by the students. Four cartoons from the two magazines were distributed and volunteers appointed to act as

The most interesting teaching aid I have seen

producers for four groups of aspiring actors. The resulting playlets, adapted from the cartoons, were acted out in turn, complete with props. They were received with much hilarity at our closing session and made a fitting ending to an enjoyable three days.

I hope you have gained something from this article. I wished to record a most memorable 'holiday', to remind myself of the friends I met and of the discoveries we made, but most of all, and this in my capacity of national coordinator for languages, to pass on ideas and teaching methods which we found enjoyable and beneficial.

I hope that other U3A linguists, both leaders and 'the led', may find them useful. On the back page you will find a list of the materials we found helpful.

Joyce Gibson

When I had the idea of offering an introductory course in linguistics to members of North London U3A, I consulted an old friend, the late Harold Rosen.

He suggested that I should begin by telling the group a little about my language experiences and invite each member to do the same.

These improvised linguistic autobiographies have proved to be a great success, for it turned out that people bring with them an extraordinary range of language experience.

For many years one member had organised a language school in the Philippines where incomers were taught the local language Tagalog, which has some fascinating and unusual characteristics. Others were fluent speakers of Italian, Spanish or German or had spoken other languages during childhood such as Hungarian or Bengali.

Several had an interest in language because of having worked in psychology or psychiatry. One was able to tell us about, and illustrate, the sign language Makaton, which is taught to handicapped persons. Each year there is an impressive display of the riches of knowledge and experience that U3A members bring to our activities.

The course makes no claim to be exhaustive. I choose material because it interests me and is likely to catch members' attention. A few items refer to grammar, and many are taken from socio-linguistics and psycho-linguistics.

Members of the groups have been interested too in material taken from the developing area of pragmatics, which deals with the way in which our ability to mean and understand depends as much on what we know already as upon the words used. You might call it 'How we read between the lines'.

To avoid lecturing as much as possible, I try to base the study on material that can be put in front of the group for them to work on and discuss. For example, in the first session, members study sets of examples to work out the rule for processes such as turning a singular noun into a plural or changing a statement into a question. The purpose is to help them realise how much grammar they know without having been taught it.

No one can speak a language without a massive tacit knowledge of grammar, for the rules that govern speech are logical.

Of course, the material is chosen in the

How Language Works

hope that they will come up with the insights I am looking for, though there are often divergent views that need to be discussed. I try not to be dogmatic. I encourage all members of the groups to join in, and I ask the quieter ones directly for their opinions.

This approach through examples for discussion does somewhat constrain the range of topics that can be dealt with.

At every one of the 12 meetings, I hand out several sheets of prepared material on which the session will be based. Although the first handout includes a list of recommended books, there is no requirement to buy any of them. Indeed, I do not know of any introductory book that would match the course well. Even *Language Myths* (Bauer and Trudgill, eds. Penguin 1998), which is appropriate in tone and level, deals only with a few of the topics.

The topics include dialect and register, and this leads us to consider the way in which our sense of appropriateness in language depends upon the match between situation and use. It is also important for members to see that those low-status uses of language that are linked to social class are systematic and not made up of random errors, and have a role for their users in sustaining group membership.

I also explain to them the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive grammars, so that we can discuss the value implications of the two approaches.

These are topics about which there are powerful – and often, in my view, mistaken – views current in the community so I am eager to throw light on them by discussion.

Members are always interested in differences between men and women in the use of language. (One group debated whether the topic should be called 'The language of sex' or 'The language of gender'.) Other sessions deal with the meaning of 'meaning', values in language, the structures of conversation, and how young children learn to speak.

We also look at evidence for the truth or otherwise of the assertion that the language we speak constrains what we can think and say – which perhaps more



Douglas Barnes
North London U3A

often refers to what someone else can think or say – an issue that might carry important educational implications.

Many of the sessions include themes that are heavily value-laden and demand serious consideration. Language seems to generate its own powerful mythologies, no doubt because it is so important to all of us in forming and maintaining our individual identities and in our behaviour as members of various social groups.

In the three annual courses so far, I have touched only on the history of language by spending part of a session on the traces of Indo-European in various contemporary languages, but I am aware that there are a number of other U3As that offer full courses on the history of the English language, and I wonder whether they manage to do it without lecturing.

I have tried to persuade members to contribute part of a session using their own experience, and some have done so. Many are hesitant, in spite of all they have to offer, and it would be useful to hear how other group leaders have managed this.

I would be interested to hear from other group convenors who are dealing with language in general as I am (rather than the use of a particular language) to hear what they cover and how they manage it.

Perhaps we could exchange material.
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Language and Languages

A linguistic U3A course

Robert Mathews: Canterbury U3A



Learning one language is interesting. Learning a second or third is even more fascinating. Then we see links. We notice the same things occurring in different languages. We start to perceive patterns between languages and a new study emerges. Our group in Canterbury took a step back from just learning one language and tried to get more of an overview.

People are fascinated by the languages we speak – it is a vast topic. We looked at what phenomena are to be seen in languages and asked why. The story of what has happened and is happening in English, is a good starting point, but there are more exotic topics as well. Languages change considerably across the miles or years, and you inevitably ask how and why.

Most members of such a group will have some language experience – most likely French, but any other language is useful. The range of language knowledge represented contributes a great deal to discussions.

These are some of the topics which we have tackled, but they may be supplemented with newspaper articles of linguistic interest, and excerpts from radio programmes.

Identifying languages. I take some news item or topic and find from the internet a three or four-line newspaper excerpt about it in many languages. Members try on their own to name the languages, then in pairs, then discuss as a group.

Changes through time. We listen to an English recording from the 1950s or earlier and identify sounds or vocabulary that have changed since then, discussing reasons (social change, foreign influence, etc.).

Language families. We look at the basic numerals from about 40 languages, some Indo-European, some not. From this we can spot which languages are closely or more remotely related, decide which ones are odd men out, and discuss relationship of languages. Then we can discuss similarities and contrasts, leading on nicely to sound changes.

The sounds we use. Using a diagram of the mouth we learn how sounds are formed and described, basing it mainly on English. This may sound dry, but it helps to make sense of many other things, such as:

Regular Changes. We look at sound changes between related English words. Or between languages, e.g:

English t / German z (*twenty* / *zwanzig*)

English sh / Swedish sk (*ship* / *skepp*)

Latin c / Romanian p (*octo* / *opt*)

Dialects. The above can be linked with regular dialect changes, which develop into separate languages in time. What is the difference between dialects and languages – comprehensibility, politics?

There is lots of work that can be done with dialects.

Loan Words. Most words in modern English are borrowed from other languages. Why does this happen? How do languages react to foreign words?

Changes in the Forms of Words. These will yield a huge amount of fascinating material. This includes:

Glide Sounds (*Ham* + *tun* = *Hampton*)

Assimilation (Latin *octo* = Ital *otto*)

Dissimilation (Latin *marmor* : Fr *marbre* : Eng *marble*)

Haplology (*Englaland* = *England*, or the current ‘libry, deteriate, Febury’)

Umlaut not just the German sign ‘’ but a change of sound caused by a following *i*. Cf *woman/women*. Also seen in *long/length, geese* etc.

Apocope *Canter(bury trot)*

Aphesis (*with*)*drawing-room, (peri)wig*

Metathesis (transposition of two sounds:

Sp mosquito / *Fr moustique*)

Folk Etymology, where an unfamiliar word is changed into one that appears to have more sense, as in *bridegroom*

Back-Formations, where what looks like the original word is made from a longer one, e.g. *edit* from *editor*

Analogy (vastly important!)

Amelioration (a word rising in rank: *lady*)

Pejoration (a word falling in rank: *paramour*)

Portmanteau Words (mixtures of two words in one: *motel, newscaster*)

Narrowing of Meaning (*fowl, hound*)

Changes in Stress (*prótester* or *protéster*)

Semantic Change as in *silly* or *nice*.

There are dozens of other topics such as:

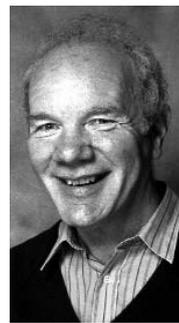
English Spelling reform. Is the apostrophe worth keeping? Creoles and Pidgins. Children’s language mistakes – is there a pattern?

What annoys you in people’s speech today? (guaranteed to raise the blood pressure!) Neologisms during the last 100 years. The idea of a world language. Origins of language. Was there ever a single human language? Celtic languages (there are bound to be Celts in the group!) How ancient, unknown languages were deciphered (Egyptian hieroglyphics, Babylonian cuneiform, Linear B). Place-Names.

There are many enthralling websites, and local libraries often have some excellent books on this topic.

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Russian and Italian on the Internet



Roy S Walker: Buckingham and District U3A

The language groups of the Buckingham U3A have thrived since its inception 12 years ago, but in the Russian and Italian groups we still have the perennial problem of how to access authentic, everyday language to improve our conversational skills.

This is particularly so with Russian. There is rarely an opportunity to come into contact with a Russian national. However, we have discovered ways of solving the problem.

One answer lies with the Internet.

For some years now I have corresponded with a Russian doctor, exchanging e-mails on all kinds of everyday topics.

Vladimir comes from the town of Oryol, which lies to the south of Moscow, and is prepared to share his experiences with me: family news, holiday outings, problems at work, personal opinions, and aspirations.

We have formed a friendly relationship, consolidated last year by a personal meeting in Moscow. I share the e-mails with our Russian group, and thus we have authentic, even colloquial,

Russian to read, digest and discuss.

Failing a personal contact, there are websites from which topical material can be gleaned, though your keyboard needs to be set up to type in Cyrillic script before googling the Russian Federation. This is no great obstacle with the use of Help, nor is the use of a dual-language keyboard which has keys that carry English and Russian letters.

An example of a newspaper site is the Russian Gazette, *Российская Газета* available at www.rg.ru where you can click on *государство* (nation), *политика* (politics), *в мире* (world), *культура* (culture), *спорт* (sport) to obtain relevant articles, dealing with topics such as president's recent pronouncements.

There is an English version of the website to keep you abreast of Russian affairs at <http://rbth.ru/> (Russia Beyond the Headlines).

Easier materials can be downloaded from the BBC Languages site at www.bbc.co.uk/languages.

Click on 'Quick fix' or 'Other languages' at bottom left of the homepage, then choose the language you want.

Finally of course, there is Skype. You can download this to your computer free and speak to people, so long as they also have it, and see them face to face. You need webcams to see each other but these are inexpensive.

Millions of internet users avail themselves of the service, hence many countries can be reached. In our Italian group we use Skype for conversational purposes. One of our members has an Italian daughter-in-law, and Francesca is willing to speak to us and encourage us to speak too.

We need to decide how often and for how long our sessions should be, how they can be used in addition to conversation, and how many can take part at a time. Judging from our first attempts, it could prove worthwhile.

Valerie Hodges Cheltenham U3A

I have been a member of a U3A Italian group for more than 20 years and I have started four groups. I suggest that language groups need a teacher or something like one. Sharing interest and experience in the true U3A method is slow in a language. And there is a pleasure too in deliberately learning.

We have a 90-min session twice a month with homework. Large groups tend to make slow progress if members take turns at reading so because our groups are small the action is more intensive. We like to lighten up with a game towards the end of a session.

These are a few we play:

Dominoes: naming the numbers as you play, 6 and 4, for example.

Hangman: using prepared lists of words on a particular subject such as parts of the body or fruits.

Newmarket: naming the suit and the number you play.

Happy Families: with families of professions and appropriate names like Dr Henry HERNIX, Mrs Henrietta HERNIA, Hermione and Ernest HERNIA in whatever language you need.

Goods On The Table: for pretend shopping (kilos, packets, tins) and making meals. Or matching the names of the items to a prepared list of adjectives. Each will fit only one of the things on the table, such as leather, dirty, red, upside down, broken, old.

Guessing Games: where each is a person or an animal to be identified by questions – how many legs? where does it live?

Miming: to save time, have two lists of possible actions for each team to choose from – laughing, stamping, running, aching. The winner is the team that says the right word for the action.

Past Tense: couples mime something that has happened – they have had a baby, she has cooked something horrible, he has bought a pup.

For advanced, needing more speaking: Give each an advertisement cutout.

Italiano

They prepare the text and read it at the next meeting. Others say what is being advertised.

Give each a picture postcard. They prepare a description. At the next meeting the cards are put in the middle of the table. Each card must be identified. Describe a journey and how you got there. Tell a stranger how to get here, or to a shop, toilet or police station.

Wherever you go in another country, contact the nearest U3A. They will give you practice in learning the language and they may well ask you to offer them some English.

There is a need for aural sources. We have worked through two language course sets of CDs. We do not need any more artificial conversations, but more practice with natural dialogue and readings from books at all levels by native speakers.

We had a tremendous response to my article in the last issue of *Sources*, with a great many people contacting the Resource Centre to ask for more information on items that I had written about.

We did have problems however, with people who e-mailed us for lists and loans who did not include the information we needed to deal with their requests. When e-mailing us please include your full name, address, phone number and the name of your U3A. This saves the staff so much time in dealing with enquiries and means you will get a faster response to your request.

Science

We have a variety of new material on science and technology. Firstly a DVD entitled *Ten Easy Ways to Help Improve Your Memory*. This 57-minute long film has information on understanding memory, and techniques to improve recollection as well as looking at the benefits of exercise, stress reduction and meditation.

If you are one of the people who find themselves in a part of the house with no idea why they are there, or who cannot remember where they put their glasses or keys which they had in their hands just minutes before (something I do all the time), then this DVD is worth viewing.

Grow Your Own Drugs – easy recipes for natural recipes and beauty fixes was a BBC TV series and has now been released on DVD. The presenter, James Wong, is an ethnobotanist who shows how to make simple creams, salves, teas and so on from flowers, roots, fruit, trees and herbs that are all around us.

The preparations can be used to treat common conditions such as acne, anxiety, cold sores and he also has ideas for beauty fixes such as bath bombs and face masks. He discusses ways of growing the ingredients needed to make these items so the DVD would also be of interest to gardening groups.

Quite a number of U3A groups study Transport and I am always pleased when I can add something new to our stock on this subject. Our latest acquisition: *Airships, Giants of the Sky* is a DVD divided into three episodes. It tells the story of the largest flying objects ever built, both in peacetime and in war. It brings the story right up to the present and even claims that more airships are flying today than ever before.

Resource Centre News

Elizabeth Gibson reviews the latest acquisitions

Eyes On The Skies is a DVD and musical CD pack from the European Space Agency about telescopes and the technology behind the latest developments. We have several DVDs on astronomy so please contact Resource Centre staff for a list of our material.

Finance

In 2008, Channel 4 produced a documentary series on the financial history of the world, introduced by Niall Ferguson, who is Professor of History and Business Administration at Harvard University. It covers the financial world from the 14th century to the present day and explains how finance rose to play such a dominant role in our lives.

The DVD set of this series that we have added to stock is entitled *The Ascent Of Money* and is available on two DVDs each containing three parts of the six-part series. Each disc runs for 143 minutes. Non-book material on subjects such as finance is hard to find so I am pleased to offer this series for loan and I suspect there will be many groups that will be interested in the subject matter.

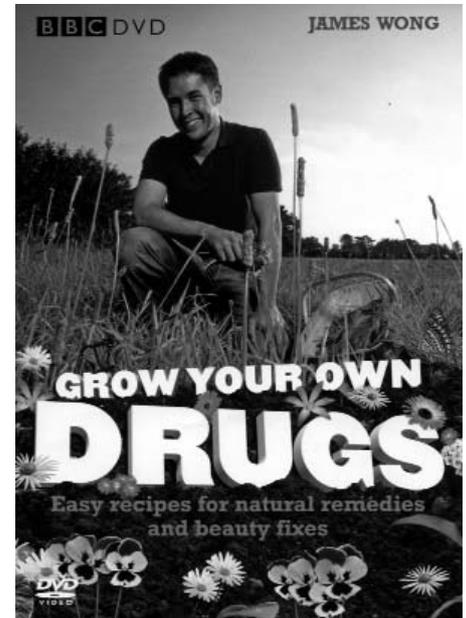
Poetry

U3A member Peter Brown has created a course on reading and understanding poetry. This is available from the Resource Centre on CD-Rom. We have also purchased two CDs of Carol Ann Duffy, the new Poet Laureate, reading her own poetry. These are *Selected Poems 1985-1993* and *Rapture*. We have other recordings of poets reading their work so if you would like a full list of our poetry stock please contact us.

History and Biography

We are often asked for material on women and their achievements so I am happy to report we have two new items. The first is a biography of the fashion designer Vivienne Westwood and the second is a study of women at war entitled *On the Battlefield, Amazon to Squadron Leader*. Both items are on DVD and run for about an hour.

The Lost World of Communism is a social history of daily life behind the Iron Curtain. This disc has rare footage taken in East Germany, Romania and



Czechoslovakia during the Cold War. Many of the people interviewed remember their lives under communism as perfectly ordinary and even hanker for the security that it seemed to offer them. The film was made by the BBC reporter Peter Molloy in 1996 but has only just been released on DVD.

I wonder how many of you watched and enjoyed the TV series *The Victorian Farm* which is still being shown on some channels. We now have a two-DVD set of the series and it is well worth viewing. Two men and a woman who are experts on the period live and work on a farm for a year, as Victorian farmworkers would have done. Although they are experts on the theory it is fascinating to see them discover the realities of Victorian life.

Jeremy Paxman has also been looking at the Victorian era and his series *Victorians, Their Story in Pictures* is now available for loan. Jeremy looks at Victorian Life through their paintings so this series might also be of interest to Art History groups. There are two DVDs, parts 1 and 2, and each lasts 120 minutes.

Elizabeth Gibson

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Update



Jenny Clark: Regional SLP Coordinator

How satisfactory it is to report that this update is talking about implementing the plans that I wrote about last time I reported to Sources in January

I said that we were hoping to have SLP contacts in place by this September in as many regions as we could – and this has now been agreed by the Third Age Trust.

The SLP contacts are now in place, as a team. Each one will act as part of the Regional Team, and will be the contact for those interested in finding out about or starting a Shared Learning Project.

They will publicise the SLPs whenever and wherever they can, and also support the projects when they are up and running, travelling if necessary and if possible.

The SLP contacts so far enlisted are shown in the panel above. They are your local contacts for ideas and information, and they will be happy to talk about possibilities. As I said in January, they are the people who know their area. They know which institutions might be welcoming, which buses go where, and what funds might be available.

We have no one in place yet in the Midlands, in Yorkshire, or in Wales, but when we do, Sources will be the first to know.

The Third Age Trust is providing the funding for this team of SLP contacts to meet face-to-face annually, to share

The team of SLP contacts			
South East	Ursula Steiger	01227 711 536	ursulae@btinternet.com
South West	Fran Elkin	01749 670735	frances@derecottage.plus.com
London	Jennifer Anning	020 8330 6931	jennifer.anning@btoopenworld.com
East	Shirley Thew	01268 761 613	shirleythew@aol.com
Northumberland	Joyce Watts	01890 840494	lorbottle@tiscali.co.uk
North West	Mary Ann Renton	01200 422062	maryann.renton2@btinternet.com
Northern Ireland	Joyce Gibson	02891 46 2043	jhe.gibson@virgin.net
Scotland	Robina Hutton	01721 722455	maryrhutton@hotmail.com

what is happening across the country, and what is planned. The first meeting will be in March next year.

Exchanging ideas and making plans is what keeps the SLPs developing and growing. I am delighted and grateful that such a valuable meeting has been funded and I am sure that it will bear fruit.

If you would like your SLP contact to bring up any particular subject at that meeting, please get in touch with whoever is nearest to you.

Having an enthusiastic and experienced team in place all over the country should make it easier for information to reach more U3As more quickly, so that we can know what is happening everywhere.

An example: I have just received an update from Barbie Thompson about the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery SLP. Opposite is a short extract.

Do let me know what is happening in your area. I know that there is a lot going on, and it is a pleasure to share it with U3A members everywhere.

Jenny Clark
Tel: 0208 346 3751
E-mail: jennal@talktalk.net



“Our small group flourishes.

“At the end of each research session, members of our group gave a lunch-time talk to the public supported by PowerPoint presentations, to highlight the results of our research project. Local history talks are popular and some have been repeated. There have been requests to extend some of these talks to other groups within the larger community, with firm bookings through to spring 2010, and the possibility of one in the future.

“We also delivered a ten-minute address in September to the South West Area Conference of the British Association of Friends of Museums (BAFM), regarding the U3A Shared Learning Project and our links with the museum. This was a wonderful opportunity to promote SLPs to museum professionals and other Friends of Museums in our area.

“2010 will be another exciting year at the museum. They will be celebrating a centennial. We hope members of the group will choose a special object or favourite painting from within the collections to put under the spotlight.”

Barbie Thompson (far right)

Nancy Langmaid
Somerton U3A

At one of our monthly meetings at Somerton U3A, the chairman asked if anyone was interested in archaeology at Lytes Cary. I put up my hand, having worked in museums 40 years ago. Lytes Cary is only four miles from my home.

A group of members from Somerton met members of the Wells and Cheddar U3As, led by Fran Elkin who is a room steward at Lytes Cary.

The house belonged to the Lyte family from about 1250 until the family went bankrupt in 1755. It was restored by Sir Walter Jenner in the early 20th century and has been in the ownership of the National Trust since 1947 when he died.

The room stewards wanted to know more about the Jenners and about the original family to help make the house interesting for visitors. Estate manager Simon Larkins hopes the estate around the house can be made more available to visitors, and asked if this new group could complete a report for the National Trust about its landscape and history.

I suggested that we should invite The Charltons Historical Society to become involved because I knew they had done some of the groundwork and were familiar with the history of the area.

I became chair of the group and decided we should work separately on different aspects of the research, meeting once a month to keep each other up to date. The start was rather slow. There was reference to an unfinished report that had been started a few years ago, but at first only parts of it could be found.

National Trust regional archaeologist Martin Papworth gave us a formal brief which looked rather daunting, but we decided to do the bits we could and think about the rest later.

He arranged for Lytes Cary document boxes to be brought to Regional HQ at Warminster and we made several expeditions there, listing and recording every scrap of paper that might help us.

LYTES CARY

A Shared Learning Project



The house belonged to the Lyte family for 500 years

While one member investigated the Roman aspects (the Fosseyway forms part of the estate boundary), others collected stories from former house residents and workers on the estate. They chased air photographs, organised formal field walking, and searched for clues in the local history archives.

We took photographs, examined the old farm buildings, and studied hedge lines and field layouts. During the summer, geophysical surveys were carried out on parts of the estate.

My main task was to transcribe the documents preserved from before 1800. First I taught myself to read old handwriting. At the Somerset Record Office I was allowed to photograph all 84 pages of the *Commonplace Book* of Thomas Lyte, so that I could transcribe them at home on the computer.

Between 1610 and his death in 1638 he had recorded information about the estate: how to calculate 'kingsilver' or land tax, tenants and their rents, field

boundaries, field names, acreages, and other property details.

He listed every document in the house, going back to 1256. It was an adventure to read each page and discover new aspects of the family and the growth of its wealth and influence during 300 years.

The most exciting section of the book relates to the field which lies between the manor house and the road. It is full of humps and bumps and the air photographs show shadow patterns and, in drought conditions, the foundations of old walls and houses. It has never been ploughed.

Thomas Lyte in 1610 was anxious to establish beyond doubt that he had outright ownership. The field, now called Cowleaze, was formerly the village of Tucks Cary. In the early 17th century some buildings were still standing and others were in ruins – a settlement in the process of becoming a DMV (deserted medieval village).

Pioneering Women in Archaeology

A Petrie Museum Shared Learning Project

Lilias Gillies: Wandsworth U3A

Seven members of U3As in and around London met at the Petrie Museum of Egyptology, University College London (UCL) on six occasions between January and March 2009. They met with Education Officer Dr Debbie Challis to study and record the lives of two women, not well known outside archaeology, but who made outstanding contributions to the study of Ancient Egypt.

Amelia Edwards was a novelist and travel writer who, following a visit to Egypt, set about raising money to improve the standard of excavation and recording of the ancient tombs and temples. She founded the Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society). Margaret Murray was a student of Professor Petrie in the newly-founded Department of Egyptology at UCL and spent her working life there as a lecturer writing books on Egypt.

Some of us knew a little about biographical research, about Egypt, and about the subjects of our research, but all of us learnt a great deal in our studies of their lives and their writings. They were pioneers in Egyptology and also as women active and speaking up in ways women did not do in their time. Both supported women's education and suffrage in principle and were not bothered about the disapproval of society when they acted in ways considered unbecoming for ladies.

The team read the writings of the two women and researched in the archives of the Petrie Museum and UCL. Biographies of Amelia Edwards and Flinders Petrie and an autobiography of Margaret Murray were helpful.

Visits were paid to the Folklore Society for Margaret Murray's letters and papers on witchcraft, and to Somerville College Oxford where Amelia Edwards's paintings are held. Petrie's correspondence with Amelia Edwards was fascinating and has been recorded for the Petrie archives. The fortnightly meetings were opportunities for exchange of information and Debbie Challis kept us on track to prepare the report on time.

Amelia Edwards died in April 1892. She was well off for a single woman who had kept herself by journalism and novels. She had spent time campaigning for the Egypt Exploration Fund and for a while was its administrator claiming little in expenses. Her estate was valued at £8,448 which equates to £0.5 million in today's terms. In her will she bequeathed most of her money and most of her collection of antiquities to UCL apart from small bequests to friends.

The bulk of her estate was to go into a trust for the 'founding of a professorship of Egyptian Archaeology and Philology, including the deciphering and reading of hieroglyphic and other ancient scripts or writings'. She also made conditions that no official of the British Museum should be appointed nor any man over 40 years of age, seemingly tied to her wish that Flinders Petrie should be appointed.

Amelia's Egyptian antiquities became the founding objects for the museum now called the Petrie Museum. Flinders Petrie was duly appointed Edwards Professor of Egyptian Archaeology and Philology.



Amelia Edwards and Margaret Murray

During his long tenure until 1932 he excavated annually in Egypt and Palestine adding greatly to the Museum collections.

Margaret Murray came to the department as a part-time student of Egyptian hieroglyphs. She became so proficient that before long she was teaching others and in 1905 she published *Elementary Egyptian Grammar*. Professor Petrie was away half the year excavating and Margaret Murray became responsible for organising the teaching and arranging the syllabus. She was part of the excavation team in 1901 and 1902 and showed her aptitude for accurate transcriptions of tomb inscriptions.

Margaret Murray was always interested in finding out how the people lived and described herself as an anthropologist as well as a teacher of language. She became interested in witchcraft around the time of the First World War, having seen Egyptian elements in the stories of the Holy Grail.

She published on that in 1916, and in 1917 published her first paper on witchcraft in Great Britain. She followed that with books, *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* in 1921 and *The God of the Witches* in 1933. Her theory that witchcraft was a relic of an ancient religion attracted many followers and she was the author of the entry on Witchcraft in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from 1929 until the edition of 1969. Her views were therefore considered authoritative and were quoted widely. After her death in 1962 her views were challenged by some authors and are disclaimed in many writings by followers of witchcraft.

Margaret Murray lived to the age of 100 and was honoured by a festschrift published in *Folklore* in 1961. The following year her 100th birthday was celebrated with a lunch at UCL and the presentation of a citation. She ordered a hat from Norman Hartnell especially for the occasion.

The report of our findings was presented at the Petrie to an audience of staff of the museum and other museums in UCL. We thank the Petrie Museum for hosting the research and to the staff for putting up with us in their limited office space. We hope they can use our research to publicise the lives and the contribution of these two remarkable women.

We would like to express our thanks to Dr Debbie Challis for her enthusiasm and for her unstinting support in our, sometimes amateurish, research efforts. We also thank Jennifer Anning of U3A, responsible for developing Shared Learning Projects in London, who coordinated the beginnings of this project.

From A-Z

Marlene Chase
Horsham U3A

Have you wondered why some letters of the alphabet are pronounced one way in one country, and in a different way in another?

For example: why does the letter j as pronounced in the UK sound more like h in Spain and like y in Germany?

Some answers to these questions are given in an intriguing and thought-provoking book by **David Sacks**.

The UK title is *The Alphabet* for hardcover and paperback.

(Published by Arrow, 2004
ISBN 0 09 943682 5)

I found the book fascinating and thought it would appeal to anybody interested in languages. You may wish to look at the review on the web address below or at the Amazon website for further information.

Language is a fascinating subject in its own right. The ability (and necessity) to communicate and be understood, how it has evolved and how it represents thousands of years of culture and history. These concepts are covered in this book.

The author explores the topic 'from the ground up' by looking at the letters of the alphabet as the basic building blocks of language, devoting a chapter (biography) to each of the 26 letters used in English today and showing how these letters gained their special properties.

So before you tackle the next U3A language conversation session or perhaps a more formal language course, you may wish to spare some time to go back to basics with this amusing book, back to the letter A, and journey happily along to Z.

<http://thebestreviews.com/review22589>

A part of the review is recorded here alongside.



Starting a Latin Group

Ann Kent: North Wilts U3A

Before I moved to Calne in 2007 I was a member of Welwyn & Hatfield U3A. My husband offered to tutor a Latin group and within a week we had a full house of ten members. The group thrived and due to his vast knowledge of the ancient world and his command of the Latin language we enjoyed the sessions.

When I joined the North Wilts U3A I suggested that a Latin group be started but no tutor was available so it was agreed to try a self-help type session.

The group soon filled up. This time there were members who had some knowledge of the language from school, and several members who had never learnt Latin but were eager to do so. Most had some knowledge of a foreign language which helped.

For some weeks we went along this path, learning from each other and with the guidance of one member who had reached O level standard.

Then the group had a lucky break. A vacancy occurred that was filled by a languages graduate with some teaching background who had passed S level Latin. Gradually she was coerced into the

role of co-tutor and we benefited from the combined knowledge of them both.

The sessions are not all verbs and nouns. We discuss the impact of Latin on other languages, how English is derived from Latin and the fact that, much as we decry the modern usage of English, it is only by this that the language survives.

A lesson learned from the demise of Latin as a spoken language is that it was not allowed to expand and evolve, and our members say that now they look at English in a different way.

The book we use in Calne is *Beginners Latin* by GDA Sharpley and is a *Teach Yourself* publication. It comes with two CDs that give the pronunciation of the translation passages, but one drawback is that there is no included English translation within the book. However, translations are available at:

www.lingua.co.uk/latin

With our tutors we have not needed to use the translations because they talk us through the passages. If we had continued along the original way we would have had to access them.

A review by Norman Goldman

Readers are taken on a wonderful journey of discovery from ancient Egypt when the alphabet was believed to have originated, up to the present.

David Sacks says the 26 letters have personalities of their own. He illustrates the significance of each one or as Sacks terms it: 'its personality, as expressed through speech or visual media'.

As an example, if we look at the chapter pertaining to the letter F, we notice that it has been saddled with an obscenity or it can be comical just in itself. Another element of its personality is that this letter, and not the letter E that precedes it, has often been associated with failure.

If we contrast the personalities of F with A, we recognise how the first letter of the alphabet is associated with beginnings and superiority. Sacks tells us that this letter has travelled first class throughout history. Most alphabets start with A or its near equivalent.

The Phoenicians around 1000 BC named A the first letter of their alphabet and the Greeks followed around 800 BC. Today, it is commonly associated with excellence pertaining to products such as meat, success at school, grading of stocks, as well as top service.

We are informed that an alphabet is a writing system based on letters, which by definition symbolise phonemes only. A phoneme is the smallest phonetic unit in a language capable of conveying a distinction in meaning.

Letters are used in combination to show words of a particular language that a writer shares with the reader. We must have enough letters with the right and essential sounds to adequately represent a particular language. Surprisingly, the number of letters needed is small, 'fewer than 30 for most languages'.

These are some of the revelations exposed in this thought provoking reference book wherein readers are apprised of how languages and their letters interact and change over time.

Becoming Bilingual

I have 40 years experience of speaking German. I know the ups and downs and the feelings of frustration. I also know it can be done – that an adult can become bilingual, can even dream in a foreign language.

Language learning can be compared with climbing a mountain. Just when you are nearing the top you realise it is just the shoulder of the mountain and the summit is still far away.

Like mountain walking, a spell on one level helps you get your breath back before you climb again. Once arrived at the language summit, the exhilaration compensates for the hard work.

When I met my German future husband I had two years to learn German and, highly motivated, I swotted up verbs and grammar for 12 hours per week. I wrote occasional short letters in German. I also wrote to my future parents-in-law, longer letters that took me several hours to complete.

When I arrived in Germany in 1969, I could read simple German and say what I needed to say when out alone without my husband. The attitude to foreign languages is different on the continent. At least two foreign languages are required for a good CV. People have to apply themselves to learning languages and I profited from this attitude.

Learning a new language as an older person is a constant fight with the short term memory. It is easier to relearn a language you learnt at school where words and grammatical structures are embedded in the long term memory.

A new language can be learnt in a new environment, as long as the hearing is still good and where speaking to the native speaker is combined with a bit of old fashioned swotting at home.

Exchanges are good for practising the foreign language, and a trip to the country of your choice is always beneficial. Get away from your hosts and go out alone and open your mouth. Try not to say you're English. That is often the end of all hope of practising your newly acquired language skills.

Tips for the beginning. Keep to basics and analyse your speech patterns.

Don't speak in metaphors and refrain



Margaret Braendle



The Rotherham German Group

l-r: Marjorie Walkham, Alan Lester, Margaret Charlton, Beryl Depledge and Eileen Kirk

from wanting to talk about what you think. Thoughts and opinions need complicated advanced grammar, so keep to what is and what you want to do, buy or see. Learn to filter your complicated English into simple English and then translate that if you need to translate.

Learn to make do with few words until you get more fluent and try to get the tenses of your verbs correct – mistakes can lead to misunderstanding. Use public transport and go to little shops.

Translate this sentence, learn it off by heart and use it: 'Please can you speak more slowly.'

Vocabulary will increase only through practise. Translation, although satisfying on one level, does not carry the learner much further but glues him or her to their own language.

Keep your goals realistic. Language learners remain the people they are. Talkers will talk and readers will read. If you are a quiet person you will not say more in French or Spanish than you would in English, so perhaps reading will be more satisfying.

I am an associate U3A member.

Unfortunately I have no group to attend, and envy those in the UK who enjoy that companionship.

From my vantage point in Germany, I support the Rotherham U3A German group which is coordinated by my sister-in-law, a regular visitor to Germany. I send newspaper cuttings mostly about events such as golden weddings, where there is a lot of text to do with daily life, together with tips on how to work through the text and use it for speaking practise.

I also send letters and when I am in Rotherham, we have a meeting and talk.

I have taught German in Stockport England, and to Americans in Germany, as well as English to Germans for more than 25 years.

So if you need help with a German course I am willing to help anyone and do what I can. I am also available for help and advice if you plan a trip to Germany.

Don't hesitate to contact me.

**Margaret Braendle, Pfitznerweg 36
74523 Schwaebisch Hall, Germany
mmbraendle@web.de**

Dick Chapman: Watford U3A

Every last Friday of the month you may meet a group of walkers in the Chilterns and be surprised to find they are talking in German, yet they are not German tourists.

How have these (up to 17) people who can walk ten miles and talk in German been brought together? The U3A of course!

But you're right. No single U3A is likely to have more than two or three members with those combined abilities and that is why seven of the U3As in and surrounding the Chilterns make up the 'Anglo-German Walking Group'.

It works because of e-mail contact and the knowledge of the Chilterns held by leader Dick Chapman who has walked the Chilterns all his life.

Dick, who knows two-years worth of ten-mile walks, e-mails the starting point and directions to it. Car sharing takes place where possible and walks start at 9.30.

Dick Chapman: "There are three German ladies amongst the 17, but otherwise we are simply Brits of both sexes with an interest in the German language for a variety of reasons.

"We do most of the walking before lunch, which we have in a pub en route, and where we exhaustedly finish our German for the day."

Dick belongs to Watford U3A with Bushey, Sarratt, Marlow, High Wycombe, Chesham and Dacorum U3As each contributing members.

Walk 'n' Talk in German!

How to bring together seven U3As



The summer house in Tring Park. Picture taken by Mike Young (co-founder of the group). Dick Chapman is third from the right.

It started in November 2006 with just two members (Dick Chapman from Watford and Mike Young from Bushey) and is going from strength to strength.

It is a good way to practise a language, whilst enjoying the

tranquility of beechwoods, thatched cottage villages, wild flower meadows, and fantastic views in the Chilterns.

Do other groups combine language with walking?

dick.chapman@ntlworld.com

Sophie Dodds

Evesham & District U3A

The group has been thriving for the last eight years with 22 members, ever since the Evesham U3A was established. I have



four brave members who started from scratch. I am privileged to say that I have been the leader of these lively, enthusiastic and dedicated people, who get together twice a month in three groups, according to their experience.

(We even worked through the summer months without taking a break.)

German Conversation Group

It is the aim of the group to provide a social gathering in a relaxed atmosphere, without pressure and no examination.

At the same time the members put in as much work as they need to enhance their knowledge and even learn this difficult language.

They have been encouraged during the years to write stories on subjects of their choice. Because many of them were so fascinating we decided to collate them.

The first one was called *Along The Write Lines* and now we are in the process of publishing our second booklet.

Zur Adventszeit halten wir unsere jährliche Weihnachtsfeier, lassen uns Kaffee und Weihnachtskuchen und natürlich auch Glühwein gut schmecken. Wir versammeln uns ums Klavier und singen unsere schönen, alten Weihnachtslieder von früheren Zeiten und lesen Weihnachtsgedichte und Geschichten vor.

Wie hätten wir uns je getroffen, wenn es die U3A nicht gegeben hätte. Die Möglichkeiten sind endlos!

On learning Latin

Latin classes for mature students are proving popular at a Somerset U3A

Lingua Latina non est mortua, sed viva apud Crewkernenses floret.

Latin is not dead but alive and well in Crewkerne.

Latin lovers in Somerset are leaping into classes given by Crewkerne and District U3A.

When our tutor David Newman volunteered to give the classes he did not expect 10% of the membership to beat a path to his door. Yet there is a new interest in Latin nationally, both in and out of school. Teachers are hard to find and lessons expensive, so we are blessed indeed. David started learning Latin from his aunt when he was eight and went on to study at Oxford.

Some members come to the lessons having studied Latin at school (not always willingly) but are now recharged with the enthusiasm of free will. Others have found their way to Latin out of curiosity, or perhaps a love of English or another language.

We are fascinated by the history that comes with Latin, and most of us share a curiosity about the origin, construction and meaning of words. In both regards Latin is deeply satisfying. There is a tangible element of 'discovering'.

Discovering, for example, that English is largely a Latin tongue. Strange but true: 80% of the words in an English dictionary are borrowed, and most come directly or indirectly from Latin.

Now that I think of it – and I didn't when writing the words in the strap beneath the headline of this article – classes, mature, students, proving, popular, pupil and the abbreviated university are all of Latin origin – half the sentence.

But a Latin tongue? In deepest darkest Somerset this was not easily believed. Surely 't isn't so, I thought.

Taste the word cider. Roll it around your tongue, accent and all. Clearly it comes from Middle English – so there you are. But hold you hard. We learned it was borrowed from the Old French *sidre*, and ultimately from the Hebrew *sekar* meaning strong drink. Not Latin then, but we took the point.

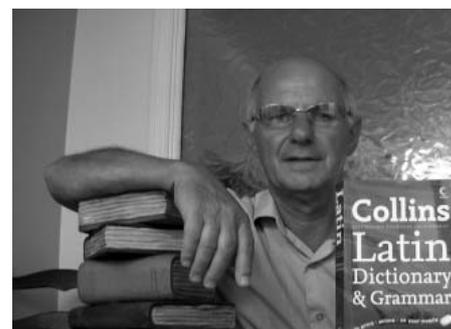
For the putative (putare) Latin scholars among us it came as a spur to discover that most of us had reserves of Latin unconsciously learned. We could translate *Regina Angliae Londinium habitat* (The Queen of England lives in London) without a Latin dictionary, and I dare say most people could do the same. Mind you, I was foxed by *Nauta feram sagitta necat* (The sailor kills the wild beast with an arrow).

A little learning can be a dangerous thing of course, but highly amusing at times. *Carpe Diem*, we learned, did not mean fish of the day, and *agricola* was not a new brand of Coke.

But it is a constant delight to discover that given the Latin origin of a word, many of its spin-offs come to mind like light bulbs turning on. So, Duke is from the Latin *Ducere* (to lead) and among its many derivatives are conduction, induction, conduit, conductor and deduction, leading on to seduction.

Most Latin words came into English because they were needed, and together with our borrowings from 50 other languages and our Anglo-Saxon and Germanic origins, they helped make English the precise, powerful and flexible language that is now the lingua franca of the world, spoken by an estimated 1,637,286,153 people. Sounds like a lot, whatever its accuracy.

The grammar's another thing, of course, even for the best of us. It's not English, is it? Winston Churchill on



David James: Crewkerne U3A

struggling with his Latin cases was instructed by his teacher, by way of example, to think of addressing a table as O table!

"I am not," responded the young Winston sourly, "in the habit of addressing tables." Touché! For all that, the great man did not hold to the view that 'a gentleman need not know Latin, but he should at least have forgotten it'. But he came to consider it an honour to learn it.

Certainly, Latin commands respect. It is an elevated and dignified language as befits the linguistic currency of the law and religion, science and medicine.

Should our class numbers have fallen off as a result of the influenza virus we would at least have had the consolation that both influenza and virus are Latin in origin – and in contemporary use, like so much Latin. One reason, perhaps, why Latin is cool with the video-disco generation.

Latin is also sonorous. The Romans so revered the sound of their language that they took pleasure in its pronunciation. *Et tu, Brute* – orators all. And it helps. Our lessons are held at our tutor's house, and the echoes of our conjugations ringing out must sound to neighbours like rehearsals for *Up Pompeii*.

After the lessons, homework is expected but, thankfully, we are not threatened with *detentio*, which would surely be on the cards had we to follow the Roman practice of writing in Caps and without punctuation and spaces between words.

So learning Latin is fun, and having found such pleasure in discovering the Latin in our language, I am taking an interest in the other borrowings of the English. I am keen on the Scandinavian languages. They are less lofty than Latin – more of the dollop and muck variety – but aren't they simply wonderful words too?

Sharing an enthusiasm

Margaret Dews: Stratford-upon-Avon U3A



Sharing an enthusiasm must rank as one of life's greatest pleasures, and one of my great enthusiasms is for the Latin language. So in 2006, when I retired from York to Stratford, a town I'd loved ever since schoolgirl theatre visits from nearby Dudley, I offered to lead a U3A Latin group.

Stratford U3A already offered French, German and Italian, but I had no idea whether there would be any interest in a 'dead' language. I put a note into the newsletter advertising Latin for Pleasure and waited. Within a few days I had received enquiries from no less than 14 people. They filled in a short form explaining their interest and mentioning any previous studies – and from these it became clear that two groups were needed: beginners and 'brushers-up'.

I use the same book with both groups: Rhoda Hendricks's *Latin Made Simple*, but this is merely the home base from which we launch ourselves into all sorts of voyages of discovery, linguistic and otherwise. The joy of exploring a language with a U3A group is in not having to worry about following a syllabus, meeting targets or preparing for exams. The book is great for introducing new grammatical points and providing exercises for homework (usefully self correcting, with answers in the back) but most of what we do is off at a tangent, frequently unplanned – and all the more rewarding for that.

Occasionally it's something in the book which diverts us: one Martial epigram led to our seeking out a clutch of others and to one member of the group producing her free and amusing verse translations which, we all agreed, rivalled any by Robert Herrick.

Almost anything can lead us astray, even the weather. The great rains of 2007 came as we first met the imperfect tense, so 'pluebat, pluebat et pluebat' was a wonderful excuse for a diversion into Winnie Ille Pu.

The news of the day can also play a part, and the

Finnish *Nuntii Latini* website is a treasury of useful texts: from the 75th birthday of Tarzan's chimp Cheeta to Barack Obama's election, we have read about it in Latin.

But usually it is the students who provoke our most unexpected and interesting diversions. They bring in Latin tombstone inscriptions, ask about choral works in Latin, collect press cuttings, dig out books on Roman themes in charity shops...and so on.

We have followed instructions in Latin to make a toga, led Latin carol singing, worked our way through the Bayeux Tapestry, visited a Roman villa, devised new Latin-based trade names (based on the likes of Bovril and Vim) and called on such diverse learning resources as William Shakespeare, Carl Orff, Jacques Brel and Boris Johnson.

From one press article we discovered that the Metro station map at WallSEND on Hadrian's Wall, had been reproduced in Latin. So, with Boris Johnson still in mind, we had a go at the London Underground map with the aim of offering him a Latin version.

Through Latin for Pleasure we are constantly discovering more about our own language. We are also learning all sorts of other things from group members with their particular passions.

Sharing an enthusiasm is infectious. Three years on we are still going from strength to strength and proving that studying Latin can indeed be a pleasure. We have a lot of fun – and a waiting list!

The Latin Underground Map



Virtual U3A



Clockwise from top left: Chris Salter, Cecilia Norman, Linda Clark, Mike Williams, Peter Johnston, Paul Baron

What is Virtual U3A?

A group of U3A members has been working for some time on the concept of a U3A which operates online to reach out to those who are isolated by location, disability, health or other reasons.

Please look at the vU3A website (<http://www.vu3a.org>) and tell anyone you know who can't participate in regular U3A activities what is on offer – an opportunity to engage in social and learning experiences similar to those in 'terrestrial' U3As.

To participate, a computer and some basic skills are required, along with a connection to the Internet. As the Virtual U3A becomes populated, interest groups will arise, such as gardening, reading, family history and photography. And this is not restricted to the UK. There are international members involved.

Please help spread the word

A warm welcome is extended to new members. Applications can be made online at the website. There is a variety of interesting subjects, from the social to the educational and we hope members will take part in as many activities as possible – just by adding a comment, or by sharing knowledge, experiences and friendship.

Those willing to lead groups are especially sought after. The more involvement from members, the more enjoyment and new, interesting opportunities there will be for everyone.

vU3A is affiliated to the Third Age Trust. The current membership fee is set at £12 per annum. Enquiries to:

Paul Baron: pbaron1@btinternet.com

Mike Williams:

mikandel@btinternet.com

French without tears

An Edinburgh Network

It is not surprising that foreign language groups are popular with U3A members. A language can be put to use on foreign holidays, its study often revives long lost skills and gives entry to other cultures.

A regular group has many strengths, not least the bonds it forms between members and the sense of common purpose it generates.

Sometimes, however, a newcomer to U3A may find that the language groups are full – in some cases with membership unchanged for years – or that there is no group at the appropriate level.

Without use language declines. Some people wish to maintain their expertise without needing a study programme. We wondered if there was some other way in which an interest in a particular language – in this case French – could be met in a more flexible way. Thus the Réseau Français was born!

This local French Network is a list of people (name, email and/or phone number) who have an interest in French language and culture and would like to meet on a more occasional basis to talk French or take part in some activity with a French flavour.

It is meant to supplement, not to replace, existing groups. It allows people with common interests to meet without making a regular commitment and without a designated leader.

Our Network was formed in the autumn of 2008 and has 37 names on the list. Language levels vary from intermediate to excellent.

The Network includes, for example, a couple who lived for many years in Brussels, and a woman born in France but long resident in Edinburgh.



Dorothy Buglass & Mary McKemmie
Edinburgh U3A



Scrabble group l-r: Martine Price, Kathleen Allanach and Margot Montgomery

We hold a monthly coffee morning in a central venue where we talk French, exchange news and make plans. Our attempt to talk French to the serveurs was frustrated by the fact that they mostly come from central Europe, belying the French name of the restaurant.

Around 10-15 members come to these meetings. The occasional lunches are popular with up to 20 people present. Sometimes we go to French films and discuss them afterwards. Edinburgh is fortunate to have excellent cinemas where foreign films are shown. We also arranged a stroll in the Botanic Gardens on a remarkably fine day.

Réseau Français is intended to be member-led. It is open to any member to contact others and suggest an activity.

As a result, sub-groups have emerged. One plays French scrabble, another meets for informal conversation in a member's house and yet another takes the form of a cercle littéraire where members read and discuss books by French writers. Mauriac and Pagnol are among the authors featured.

Perhaps the sub-groups will eventually mature into fully-fledged U3A language groups, or perhaps not.
Tel: 0131 447 2804
buglassdorothy@hotmail.com

Holiday French in Bristol

I had been retired for nearly a year and had never heard of the U3A. A friend suggested it to me as a means to keep me busy. I needed something new to be involved with and she thought I might find some interesting courses to attend and broaden my horizons.



Hilary Munt: Bristol U3A

It was the beginning of the last academic year and I went to my first U3A meeting in Bristol where course leaders were looking for members and signing up newcomers. I had no sooner mentioned to one of the leaders that I was a retired French teacher when I too suddenly became a course leader and people were approaching me, offering a venue and signing up to 'my' group.

Now I was within my comfort zone – organising, planning and evaluating the pros and cons of different levels of teaching and learning. There was a gap in the Bristol U3A for Beginners French and so *Holiday French* was conceived.

Having recently left the confines of a large state comprehensive, the three-part lesson was still foremost in my mind plus variety in resources and teaching methods – you can't bore the pants off adults any more than you can children and variety is essential to maintain interest and encourage learning.

A small group, mainly from a waiting list, initially met at a member's house and although abilities were varied, we got on well, worked well and had many successes along the way.

Lack of confidence with oral work and speaking in front of each other was the first hurdle, but some fun activities such as 'Fastest Finger First', anagrams, and using simple 'gros mots' added to role plays, soon broke down barriers.

The interactive whiteboard and PowerPoint presentations were out, but we used role play, group work, pair work, games, crosswords, an old OHP and even homework to enhance learning. We have not used a text book as a basis for meetings so far, but this is being considered now to provide a greater variety of reading passages and a learning tool for members once back at home.

Many topics have been covered: Buying food at the market, At the restaurant, In the café, Buying train tickets and so on. Grammar has been avoided but transferable structures have been learned: à quelle heure ouvre? Est-ce qu'il y a? Avez-vous? Je voudrais. Qu'est-ce que c'est exactement?

We planned and held a debate on 'Pour ou contre la ville ou la campagne' where two teams planned verbal ping-pong arguing their point of view in French, throwing in the odd 'patate' or 'imbécile' along the way.

Another time, with a quantity of material from the Brest Syndicat d'Initiative, everyone planned a short presentation on one aspect of the town. 'On peut, vous pouvez and les touristes



Carol Strange, Patricia Bowles, Claudia Behr and Margaret Townsend - 'le quatorze juillet' garden party

peuvent plus' infinitives formed the basis of the speeches which were creative and stretched members' knowledge of vocabulary.

Numbers, which are necessary for time, prices and quantities, cause problems so we play Lotto and other number games in odd minutes at the end of sessions.

When the group had been publicised in our U3A newsletter, more members wanted to join us. Unfortunately, we could fit in only two or three new people but they came and stayed.

Our 'fête pour le 14 juillet' was a great success with kir royale, French food and drink and pâtisseries. I managed, with little effort, to get the group singing 'Buvons encore une dernière fois à l'amitié, l'amour, la joie...' with gusto and even La Marseillaise was heard floating over the gardens of Bristol.

Mérites and some books on France were awarded for spurious distinctions throughout the year to the amusement of all. With a couple of native French speakers invited along as well, the group members became more fluent as the evening wore on.

Several members have been to France for short breaks since we started and have commented on their improved performance and confidence with everyday situations in the foreign language (avoiding the 'gros mots' of course). Others are either planning a visit or simply want to firm up half-learnt French from their younger days.

Medical science has reported that keeping both sides of your brain active through speaking a foreign language helps keep dementia from the door, so we have been positively keeping the grey matter alive as well.

These are valid reasons for joining a group and the Bristol U3A threw us together serendipitously yet successfully. I have not broadened my horizons yet by joining another group but I shall continue next year with more Holiday French, sneaking in some grammar now and then, more role plays and developing French accents with like-minded people from Bristol.

hillyarea1@googlemail.com

Online Courses



Our courses include many Writing and Art courses, as well as others such as Digital Imaging
Available at:
<http://onlinecourses.u3a.org.uk/>
More courses to come.

For **£10** enrolment fee you can now get access to all the **UK** online courses for 12 months.

Just **AU\$25** for access to all untutored courses by U3A Online in Australia. Enrol direct on their website.



Many other Courses are available from the U3A Online in Australia website at:
<http://www3.griffith.edu.au/03/u3a/>

MANY OF THE COURSES, BOTH UK AND AUSTRALIAN, RUN AS TUTORED COURSES AT TIMES DURING THE YEAR. YOU MAY TAKE A TUTORED COURSE FOR A SMALL ADDITIONAL FEE. SEE THE RELEVANT WEBSITE FOR TUTORED COURSES ON OFFER

Useful Internet sites from Robert Mathews page 6

<http://library.uncg.edu/news/> Newspapers worldwide
<http://www.livejournal.com/community/linguaphiles>
<http://byki.com/fls/> free vocabulary software for 32 languages
www.aboutnames.ch/index.html Personal names: origins and different forms
<http://www.downloadalanguage.com>
<http://www.rinkworks.com/words/linguistics.shtml> glossary of linguistic terms
www.ilovelanguages.com/ Search engine for material on languages
www.american.edu/tesol/wpkernelcavella.pdf History of the apostrophe
www.viking.no/e/england/e-viking_english.htm Scandinavian words in English
<http://www.wordinfo.info/> Latin & Greek words used in English
<http://www.answers.com/topic/english-language> Overview of English development
<http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/nonerrors.html> Discusses 'errors' in English
http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/wells/accents_spellingreform.htm English spelling reform
<http://web.ku.edu/idea/> International Dialects of English Archive
<http://www.etymonline.com/> Online Etymology dictionary
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/eng1401/> Old English, with specimen texts and readings
www.askoxford.com/?view=uk Fascinating page from the OED team
www.tiscali.co.uk/reference/dictionaries/difficultwords
<http://www.worldwidewords.org/weirdwords/index.htm>
<http://www.melbpc.org.au/pcupdate/9100/9112article4.htm> Hyphenation

Congratulations!

Stella Porter the National Storytelling Subject Coordinator wrote in to thank us for the storytelling article in the June issue of *Sources*.

Stella says: "It's amazing how many U3A members have contacted me. I'm delighted to tell you I have received (and accepted) an invitation to speak on Storytelling at the U3A World Conference-2010 in India."

Topics For Discussion Groups

Last year, Don Drew of Carmarthen U3A sent a list of 200 ideas for discussion topics to those discussion group leaders whose addresses he had. A second list of 70 topics was recently sent to those who are in his e-mailing group. Don is grateful for the assistance of DG leaders in providing the material.

Please contact Don for copies of either or both lists. Perhaps anyone who is not on-line could get a fellow member to act for them.

dondrew@tiscali.co.uk

Books used or referred to on the French Summer School

- *Living French* T W Knight
pub: Hodder 2009
 - *Talk French 2* BBC 2008
(for long-term groups without a tutor)
 - *Racontez-moi* (Out of print)
H L Meechan and C M Walker
pub: Pergamon 1975
 - *Rough Guides to Paris and Provence*
DK Eyewitness Travel Guides
Paris / Provence, Cote d'Azur
 - Magazines: *Rendez-vous* and *La Vie Outre-Manche*
pub Concorde French Language Publications
www.concordefrench.com
Tel: 01622 749167
 - *Bien Dire*
www.biendire.com
- Other recommended publications*
- *French Language Builder*
Michel Thomas Pub Hodder
(for long-term groups without a tutor)
 - *Ça Va* Mary Glasgow (leaflets)

Joyce Gibson