

# Sources No 9



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## **Sustainable Development and Biodiversity**

Sustainable development - using resources to meet our own needs without jeopardising the needs of future generations - is the aspiration of all who wish to see both progress and an improvement in living standards, but without the environmental damage and the threat to environmental systems that has characterised so much of man's relationship with the natural world. Key to the success of sustainable development is the maintenance of biodiversity, the living web around which the biosphere evolves.

Biodiversity has been severely damaged by the widespread clearance of forests, the loss of hedgerows,

the drainage of wetlands, and other changes which have followed the development of agriculture, particularly where this has involved modern commercial farming with its emphasis on pesticides, insecticides and monoculture. Urbanisation has likewise destroyed much of the natural world, and with growing populations and rising expectations this is set to increase. Industry often pollutes the environment and the disposal of waste products has far reaching consequences for life in our rivers and seas. Climate change, largely brought about by the release of carbon dioxide from motor vehicles, is putting pressure on natural ecosystems and species diversity is very much under threat in vulnerable areas such as the tropical rainforests and the tropical coral reefs.

U3As are in a strong position to encourage sustainable development by promoting among their members everyday measures that minimise waste, reduce pollution and promote species diversity. These can include such things as sharing cars, using public transport, using less packaging, recycling waste, planting trees, and growing plants that attract insects and butterflies. By focussing on environmental concerns, such as the GM debate, in study groups or through visiting speakers, members can become more aware of the importance of biodiversity. Interest groups can also add to our knowledge of the natural world by carrying out surveys of plants and wildlife, by undertaking a hedgerow survey, by watching birds or recording wildflowers, or simply by walking in the countryside.

Nationally U3A is working closely with Going for Green to help raise awareness of the issues surrounding biodiversity and the care of the environment. For the past two years April has been designated Biodiversity Month and members have been encouraged to help their grandchildren appreciate the need for environmental conservation.

For those interested in exploring sustainability and biodiversity, two Government publications *Sustainable Development; the UK Strategy* (Cm2426) and *Biodiversity; the UK Action Plan* (Cm2428) both published by HMSO in 1994 provide good starting points. There are also the Reports of the British Panel on Sustainable Development, available from the Dept. of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Marsham St, London. 0181 6929191. An Earthscan publication *State of the World* is the flagship publication of the Worldwatch Institute and reports annually on progress towards a sustainable society.

Charities such as The World Wide Fund for Nature and CPRE are also useful sources of information and in the case of CPRE their Hedgerow Action pack is ideal for groups who wish to become more involved in protecting and preserving the character and diversity of the British landscape.

Here are some useful websites:

[www.envirolink.org](http://www.envirolink.org)

[www.learningedge.sympatico.ca/search](http://www.learningedge.sympatico.ca/search)

[www.lib.kth.se/~lg/envsite.htm](http://www.lib.kth.se/~lg/envsite.htm)

[www.sage-rsa.org.uk](http://www.sage-rsa.org.uk)

**John Turley**

*U3A Environment Network Co-ordinator*

## **Environment Group**

During the winter our group continued our biodiversity studies with a detailed investigation of lichens as indicators of environmental pollution. We were fortunate in one of our members, Peter Swire, being an enthusiastic and knowledgeable member of the British Lichen Society. Following a detailed look at the nature, characteristics and life cycle of lichens, species gathered in the field were first of all identified and then grouped according to their ability to tolerate sulphur dioxide pollution.

Our spring programme commenced with two woodland walks in early and late May. These were located on the southern slopes of the Towy Valley overlooking Dryslwyn and Dinnefwr castles. The mature woodlands, had been originally planted by the Vaughan and Cawdor estates and comprised oak and birch with associated rowan, small leaved lime, holly, hazel and hawthorn, a beech wood and several plantings of commercial conifer plantations. To add to our interest some mature deciduous woodland and conifers had been harvested over time leaving land in various stages of re- colonisation.

Our first walk in early May coincided with the pre-vernal flush of bluebells at their best and these, with a liberal sprinkling of red campion, stichwort and some sweet woodruff, was a delight to the eye. The wild flower enthusiasts amongst us had a field day to remember. On our second visit the bluebells were disappearing and foxgloves were coming to the fore. Both visits enabled members to appreciate many aspects of the woodland ecosystem. Canopy, shrub, herb, and ground layers were looked at and the woodland cycle of renewal well illustrated. The importance of conservation of our remaining woodlands was brought home to all when it was revealed that around two thirds of our breeding birds and nearly half our butterflies and moths were associated with our woodlands and a sixth of our flowering plants were woodland species.

In June we plan a visit to Worm's Head, Rhossili on the nearby Gower, to look at cliff and limestone fauna and flora and to focus again at the pressure exerted by visitors to this unique and precious landscape and habitat. In July we are once again off to look at mountains and moorland but this year to include a detailed look at a raised bog at the headwaters of the River Teifi at Tregarron in Cardiganshire. Fungi and lichen forays are yet to be finalised for the autumn and early winter.

We stick to our formula for visits by starting at a suitably sited pub for lunch and finishing off with a cup of tea.

*Jim Hitchings, Carmarthen U3A*



## **Outdoor and Physical Pursuits**

### **Hessle U3A**

We have a number of groups that engage in physical activities. They include walking, gardening and bird watching. The one I shall highlight is our cycling group. The group has six members, three of whom are life-long cyclists. Ann and Brian Railton are the enthusiasts who persuaded three others, including myself, to rescue neglected bikes from the cobwebs at the back of the shed and re-introduce them to the road.

Fear of motorised traffic is what had put we three novices off using our bikes. We find that it is that fear which prevents many others from joining our jolly group. Confidence has grown and we no longer allow traffic to confine us to the outer six inches of road where potholes, broken glass and other debris lurk. Assertive we now are, without pushing our luck too far. Ann and Brian were kind in their selection of routes and distances in the early days, allowing we newcomers to gradually overcome the breathlessness, tired legs and fiery posteriors which attended our first rides. Distances gradually increased from 15 miles to 25, to 30 and then 40 miles. A cycling holiday in Normandy last year increased our stamina further.

Rides up to 75 miles are now undertaken and thoroughly enjoyed. I would not have believed that I would ever be able to ride such distances, enjoy the experience and still have plenty of energy at the end of the ride.

The average age of the group is 65 and it is apparent that you are never too old to start cycling. The benefits are enormous. Fitness levels have improved out of all recognition. You see and hear the countryside in a way impossible in a car or bus or train. We don't have to spend time and money finding a parking space in town centres. The car stays in the garage much more nowadays, saving costly fuel. There are gains all round.

It would be good to hear of other U3A cycle groups. If your U3A has not yet got one, inspire the others by going to meetings on your bike. Encourage one or two others to do the same and, before you know it, we'll be meeting up for a U3A cycle rally, all kitted out in our strident lycra gear! We are looking forward to meeting you.

*Eric Crowther*

### **Leighton Linlade U3A**

Looking down our list of group activities it would appear that we have a healthy outdoor section enjoying various sports. In the bowls section there are two groups playing outdoors in the summer on a weekly basis. On the other hand Gentle Keep Fit is only practised indoors during the autumn and winter as the participants find more vigorous things to do in the warmer weather.

The yoga group practice weekly all year indoors. They need the privacy to concentrate on complicated postures. The swimming group also meet weekly in the indoor pool to encourage each other to swim just one more length. Dancing also takes place indoors and throughout the year. There are four varieties to choose from, ballroom, old time, square and a tap and exercise routine. Five gardening groups meet all year but concentrate on visiting other gardens in the summer sometimes combining to hire a coach for visits further afield.

Three walking groups ramble over the fields and woods all year averaging five miles, probably longer during the summer. The strollers only stroll in the summer. There is some movement between walkers and strollers depending on the urgency of a hip replacement. Perhaps more cerebral than physical is the outdoor sketching group, although carrying chair and painting equipment from a car park to a scenic point is quite taxing.

In the sports section there is croquet where we have the use of a member's small court and two brand new full size lawns provided by the Town Council after negotiations by U3A members. I have already mentioned bowls but not the indoor and short mat varieties which group meets weekly. And the snooker players say they are active too all year. All these groups are led by enthusiastic amateurs to whom all participants are indebted.

*Pam Hall*

### **Taunton U3A**

We formed our gardening group in June 1997. It is surprising how much ground we cover at our indoor meetings, without doing any digging. Recently we brought samples of the different hebes we grow, which we feel are good value shrubs as they are evergreen and trouble free. We have used videos from the Resource Centre during the winter months, have problem solving sessions and exchange cuttings.

We are embarking on an in-depth study of irises. They are so varied in their requirements and structure. All the members of the group make a positive contribution from which all benefit.

*Audrey Babington*

### **St. Neots and District U3A**

Our Gardening Club meets once a month under the guidance of Maureen Woodward. Each meeting discusses the do's and don'ts in the garden and the activities for the month. Excursions are organised to such as Wisley, Beth Chatto and the Swiss Gardens at Old Warden, Beds.

*Christine Mizon*



## Walking Groups

### Farnborough U3A

We have two flourishing groups of walkers, one group known as Walkers, who aim to walk from five and a half to six miles once every two weeks, the other known as Amblers, spawned by the Walking Group some years back, who aim to walk not quite as far and at a more leisurely pace. Both groups have also taken to organising short breaks away from our home ground so that new territory can be explored.

These activities are well supported; the Walkers, for example, often have as many as forty five to fifty members walking. Such numbers are not without problems, when it comes to parking arrangements at the start of our walks, maintaining appropriate control during a walk (vital for safety reasons) and finding the much to be desired public house big enough to take most of us for lunch at the end. But we usually manage and the general view is that these groups are a welcome addition to the extensive programme of our U3A.

Indeed, I would go further. I believe that having a lively walking group can be seen as a useful supplement to and even an extension of the rest of a U3A programme. Quite apart from the companionship engendered by walking in the country with U3A colleagues and the physical exercise involved, discussion and experiences during such walks often adds to and picks up on ground covered in other U3A groups.

For example, we have had walks that included local historic sites - Iron Age Forts, Roman Roads, castles, the remains of a medieval village, ancient churches and villages and all these fit in to and illuminate studies elsewhere in our curriculum. Industrial Archaeology sites are always of interest - canals, now disused railways, a defunct gunpowder factory and Medieval and Victorian lead workings have all featured. And, of course, there is the natural world around us; animals, birds and flowers spotted on a walk are all part of our interest as a U3A.

In our experience a walking group can be a mobile discussion group. Politics, economics, current affairs and literature are often discussed during a walk. There also seems, in our case, to be as much discussion of I.T. during our walks as there is in our formal computer groups.

Now this is not an attempt to justify the inclusion of walking in a U3A curriculum. Walking as a physical and recreational activity needs no justification in my view. My purpose is simply to argue that those responsible for organising walking as an activity within the U3A should, in addition to planning a walk in such a manner as to look after the well being of the walkers, also make it a positive objective to find walks that, among other things, illustrate aspects of our wider interests.

This can be done by studying books of local walks, the best of which already mention appropriate points of interest. But even a careful examination of the local Ordnance Survey map will be helpful; the Explorer range of maps is excellent in marking such features as dismantled railways, the ruins of old castles, ancient earthworks and the sites of Roman villas, for example.

*Ivor Manley*

### **Halesowen U3A**

Our Rambling Group has been running for several years and meets for a 5 mile (8km) walk on alternate Thursdays, ending with a pub snack or lunch. Our members take turns to organise and lead a walk involving our local hills of Clent, Lickey, Wast and Kinver Edge or use parts of our national footpaths e. g. Monarchs Way, Severn Way, North Worcestershire Way, Heart of England Way, Arden Way and the start of the Staffordshire Way. In very muddy conditions we can substitute for a planned walk one using harder surfaced paths, such as canal towpaths along our many canals or using disused railways. Apart from seeing the seasons change and appreciating all the wild life and flowers, we also find a path through a garden gazebo and past disused water mills for paper making, scythe and sickle making, corn mills and over old Abbey fields with ruined fish ponds.

The number taking part is usually 12 but we also have a Strollers Group which starts half an hour later for a gentle 3-3.5 mile walk at a slower pace, again with a refreshment stop at the end. We all enjoy our company, our countryside, and this way of keeping active and healthy.

*Arthur James*

The Strollers Group has been going for over a year now and is very popular. We already had a Ramblers Group, but a small group of members decided that they would like to do walks of a shorter distance and set a more leisurely pace.

We meet once a fortnight and thoroughly enjoy our strolls, usually walking about three miles. We take time to look around us and have shared some special moments - finding the first primroses in spring, listening to the joyful song of a lark, trying to identify an unusual butterfly, watching a family of ducklings on the canal. Most of all we enjoy the chatting and the companionship, not forgetting, of course, the welcome meal at the end of our walk at some convenient public house. I think being out in the fresh air as a group, enjoying the countryside and the changing seasons is a very worthwhile activity. Long may we continue our strolling!

*May Brock*

### **Spire U3A Salisbury**

Our monthly walks fall into a category between strolling and rambling. Neatly arranged to take place on

Thursdays in the same week as our U3A meeting, we try to use local country bus services for travelling out of the city and back. There are downland and woodland walks within easy striking distance of our starting point in South Wiltshire. We average six miles with a halt for light refreshment and numbers vary between six and ten. There is a good pooling of knowledge which ranges from local history, flora and fauna to changes in farming.

We enjoy revisiting the same area at different times of year but occasionally in summer decide to do a coastal walk for a change. For me nothing beats the freedom and peace of the wide downland views, the privilege of coming across some increasingly rare plant or bird, and to be able to explore in good company is a bonus.

Most of the routes are walked in advance by our group leader whose general knowledge of the area is awesome and who also sees that the timing allows us to reach our country bus stop in reasonable time. Other members occasionally take the lead if they have suggested a particular route. Because we are lucky enough to live on the edge of Hardy country, re-reading some of his books set in this area becomes a source of fresh interest, especially as some of our members also belong to a group which meets to study his work. Local landmarks often lead to a follow up back at the library.

I hope I have given a flavour of an activity which means a great deal to me and which offers so much more than the physical well being that it engenders. And so far the weather has co-operated with us more than one could possibly expect by the law of averages!

*Iris Finn*

## **Harrogate U3A**

We have a flourishing walking group with 26 members although they do not all come on every walk of course, particularly if the weather is inclement but there have only been two or three occasions in the past six years when the walk has been cancelled. The walks are on the first and third Tuesday afternoons each month throughout the year.

We meet at Harrogate railway station at 1300 hrs and usually catch a bus or train to the start of our 4-6 mile walk. We are fortunate in Harrogate to have a good variety of footpaths in the area and using public transport enables us to do linear or circular walks and it is certainly greener than using cars. Once a year we hire a small bus to take us further into the Yorkshire Dales, last year to Grassington and this September to Pateley Bridge.

A number of the walking group members were particularly interested in the flowers, birds, fungi, etc. that we saw on our walks so a naturalist group was formed, meeting on the second Tuesday each month. A programme is planned for the year for visits to various nature reserves and areas of interest. We do need to share cars to access these.



Last year we went with Ring Ouzel Tours to see the wonderful gannets and puffins at Bempton Cliffs RSPB reserve and this year to see the avocets and many other species at Blacktoft Sands. December to January are indoor meetings. We share each other's knowledge and make good use of reference books but we are always pleased to have expert guidance from reserve wardens or members of the Harrogate Naturalist Society.

*Daphne Fisher*

### **Peterborough U3A**

When I remember my school days, and recall my absolute hatred of gym, games and all sports, it seems strange to see my name in print, as a leader, under the heading of physical pursuits. O.K. It's only walking, but it keeps me fit and active, along with about 130 others. We have three walking groups, with about 40 to 50 members on each register. Two of the groups walk about five miles each week and our stroller group walks about half that.

We walk throughout the year. Huddled in our waterproofs, we struggle through the muddy winter and haul one another across slippery ditches. In the summer, the sun-block is applied as we strip off as far as we decently dare and trample down the stinging nettles.

Peterborough is well placed for easy walking. We have the flat Fenland to the east and the gentle hills of Lincolnshire and Rutland to the west. Northamptonshire has a wealth of pretty stone villages to explore. Sometimes we go further afield. Twice a year we hire a coach for an all day walk in Norfolk or Derbyshire. This year, in May, we had a weekend away in the Cotswolds. We gave it the title "Walking for Softies".

We have our social times as well, with a summer get-together and alfresco buffet. At Christmas time we meet for a lunch with all the trimmings. Many of our members round off their weekly walks with a pub meal and a pint.

We end our walks physically and mentally stimulated. What had seemed daunting as we struggled with our boots in the biting December wind in a car park proved easier than we feared. The continuing chat, or even serious discussion, as we walked had opened our minds to new ideas and interests.

*Jean Matthews*

### **Abergavenny U3A**

Our group, now nine years old and with 40 members, meets on alternate Sundays throughout the year to walk mainly in the Brecon Beacons National Park with its miles of public rights of way. All our walks are tailored to suit varying tastes and ability, from the challenge of Pen y Fan (2907 ft), the highest point in South Wales, to less arduous walks along river and canal bank paths.

The geographical features of this beautiful countryside include ancient hill forts, reservoirs, standing stones, flora and fauna, and concentrated areas of the former coal mining and iron industries. These all make for discussion and further study. Together with the exercise we all enjoy, this really satisfies, we feel, the aims of U3A – to encourage our remaining fitness in both body and mind.

John Vaughan

## **U3A Walking Network**

Walking is one of the most popular outdoor pursuits. There are more than 200 U3A walking groups, from the smallest with less than a dozen members to the largest with over 100 walkers. Some call themselves Ramblers, say 7 –10 miles, and some are just Amblers, say 3 – 6 miles. Whatever the name or the walk, it will keep you fit. A recent survey found that 50% of women can expect to experience a fracture by the age of 70 due to osteoporosis. Walking not only strengthens the bones, it keeps the muscles around the limbs and spine healthy too.

On Sunday, 1 October, over one million people in 100 countries will join in a chain of celebration and walks around the globe. The Worldwide Walks Global Embrace 2000 is the brainchild of the World Health Organisation. The UK leg is being co-ordinated by Help the Aged and sponsored by Stannah Stairlifts. If a group would like to participate, contact Worldwide Walk Office, Help the Aged, Freepost, St. James' Walk, Clerkenwell Green, London EC2B 1JY (020 7254 2926)

If your U3A does not yet have a walking group, obtain a Start Up leaflet from National Office and start one. Wherever you live there are miles of country paths waiting to be explored and with the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill due for implementation, this is just the time to start.

*Bob Boyd, U3A Walking Network Co-ordinator*

## **Bird Watching Groups**

From May 9-11 nine members of the Birdwatching Network assembled in York for three full days of avian delight. Based on some of the guesthouses near Joy Soanes' flat, they went out, sharing cars, to a different destination each day. Our final total of species seen was 74 of which many were seen at two or more of the sites we visited.

On Day 1 the destination was the R.S.P.B. reserve at Fairburn Ings where a total of 47 species was noted including whitethroat, ruddy duck and goldfinch amongst the less usual birds. A pair of great crested grebe treated us to a view of their courtship dance, something not very often seen as well as we saw these.

Day 2 found us going to Blacktoft Sands. This is almost always a very rewarding site to visit. We noted

51 species altogether and the highlight was the two-day old avocet chick which bravely left its parents side to investigate the water lapping its little island. It had a brief paddle but then retreated back to Mum, (or was it Dad?) and burrowed its way back under the parental wing. We also saw kestrel and marsh harrier. There was some debate over another harrier that was, I was certain, a hen harrier. The Warden, when consulted, had not seen it and, whilst not ruling it out altogether, said rather doubtfully that the hen harriers had left about a month previously, although it had been known in previous years for the odd one to pay a brief visit after leaving. I checked it out carefully later and I am absolutely certain that it was indeed a hen harrier. It was included in the "official" list for the day.

Finally, on Day 3 Bempton Cliffs was the destination. This is a quite different type of reserve, it being the breeding place for several thousand sea birds and houses the largest inland breeding colony of gannets. What magnificent birds they are, with their huge wingspan and lovely pale orange heads. Kittywakes were abundant and the cliffs resounded with their cry of "kitty wake, kitty wake!" Puffins were there, if not quite in the numbers that would become apparent during the following couple of weeks. They are, at least for me, a delight to watch and one can well see how they earned their other name of sea parrots.

I must add a word of appreciation to the members of the York group who helped. Indeed, without their help I might well have had to cancel the event since I was recovering from a bad fall.

*Joy Soanes,*

*Bird Watching Network Co-ordinator*

### **Peterborough U3A**

The decision to form a birdwatching group came about through joining the U3A Tuesday Walkers. As a keen birdwatcher I was often asked to identify birds and birdsong. Starting a group seemed to be the next natural step. Birdwatching can be frustrating when faced with seemingly empty woods, fields and lakes. As the course was to be field-based and not in a classroom, it was imperative to have plenty of birds to view.

The initial course covered six monthly visits to Eyebrook Reservoir near Uppingham. This site is brilliant for waterfowl, and the adjacent fields and woods hold a variety of other species. The programme was designed to cover the transition from summer to winter, allowing the group to get to grips with the ever changing plumage of the huge raft of duck present.

Migrants appeared such as smew, goosander and red necked grebe. Passage waders were added to our checklist. Many of our members had never seen so many birds in one place. We were often cold from the biting wind but never bored.

We now visit a different site each month to see the best of birds throughout the year. Our beginners have

become confident birdwatchers. One has developed the skill to identify unusual birds with jack snipe, canvasback, water rail and short eared owl to her credit, while others help to identify wildflowers and butterflies. We are a small and enthusiastic group, always open to newcomers to explore the wonderful world of birds.

*Bernard Dawes*



## **Resource Centre News**

When you receive this issue of SOURCES, the Resource Centre and the National Office will both have re-opened, following extensive building work. After a period of closure in June, when everything had to be put into storage for several weeks and staff were not allowed access for safety reasons, we were finally able to move into our new offices in July.

The National Office working area and the Resource Centre are on the first floor of the building with much more room than we had previously. There is a pleasant meeting room on the ground floor and a small second meeting room in the basement, as well as considerable storage space. After almost a full year of disruption, due to the construction work happening all around us, it is a great relief to have moved at last. The Resource Centre loan and enquiry service will resume on Monday, 14 August and all items loaned to U3A members during the summer will be due back on that date.

## **Gardening**

This issue focuses on outdoor activities undertaken by U3A groups. These are many and varied, and by their very nature do not often require back-up material from the Resource Centre. However we do hold material which is used by many groups in the winter months when they are unable to meet outdoors. Some of the most popular items we have are the gardening videos and slides which groups all over Britain use as part of their winter programmes.

These resources are of two kinds: those that explore gardens and give background information on their history and design, such as "The Gardens of Cornwall" or "Journey through Kew Gardens", and those that explain gardening techniques such as: "Vegetable Growing" or "Water Gardening".

I have recently bought the four videos by the RHS that make up the series "Wisley through the Seasons" after many requests from groups. A full list of all gardening material is available from the Resource Centre.

## **Walking**

The U3A has many walking groups and at the request of Bob Boyd, the Network Co-ordinator, we have obtained videos of popular walks which groups sometimes use at preparatory sessions, or in the winter when the weather is too bad for them to go out. The videos cover either a well-known walking area such as the Lakes or the Peak District, or a particular route like the South Downs Way.

## **Sport**

In the last few months U3A members have asked the Resource Centre to acquire videos on croquet and bowls. If your group know of videos on a sport that you are learning and would like us to obtain them, please let me know.

Recently, details were sent out to all groups from the U3A National Office giving information on the activities of the three bodies: Sport England, Sport Scotland and Sport Wales. These organisations make grants from the lottery fund to support all kinds of sport in their local area. They also have a large number of publications, which are either free or available for a small charge, on running and organising sports groups. Although I do not hold this material in the Resource Centre I do have catalogues and can give titles of useful pamphlets.

If you would prefer to obtain your own copy of the catalogue please write to: Information Centre, Sport England; 16 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0QP.

## **Anthropology**

Until very recently we had no information on anthropology in the Resource Centre. However, quite a number of U3A groups study it and, on their behalf, I have acquired several sets of videos. We have the television series "The Making Of Mankind": seven programmes presented by Richard Leakey on the development of man based on fossil research. We also have the two Richard Attenborough series "Life on Earth" (13 videos) and "Living Planet" (12 videos) which between them trace life on this planet from the beginning and show how mankind has adapted to its varied surroundings. These videos may be of interest to science and history groups and perhaps those studying geography and geology as well.

## **History and Biography**

The BBC have produced two sets of videos on the lives of famous people called "Great Britons" and "Late Great Britons", between them they cover many periods of British history with biographies of Henry VIII, Oliver Cromwell and Queen Victoria. Politicians are included such as Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George. There are also videos on Charles Darwin, Horatio Nelson and Florence Nightingale. We have a series of videos on the lives and discoveries of ten of the world's greatest explorers, including Christopher Columbus, Captain James Cook and Henry Morton Stanley, most of them filmed in the places made known to the west by their exploits.

## **Obtaining loans and subject lists**

All the items I have described are available on loan for three weeks. There is no charge to the borrower except payment for postage when the item is returned. All Resource Centre subject lists are free. They are regularly updated and include all media types such as slides, videos, audiocassettes and CDs in each subject area. The following lists are available:

Architecture Languages

Art & Painting Literature

Biography Music

Foreign Films Natural History

Gardening Ornithology

Geography & Travel Philosophy

Health & Human Biology Religion

History Science - general

Please contact the Resource Centre to request any of the material mentioned in this article.

*Elizabeth Gibson, Resource Centre Manager  
U3A National Office, 26 Harrison Street,  
London WC1H 8JG (020 7837 8838)*



## **Minimus: the Latin mouse**

*Minimus: starting out in Latin* is the title of an amusing textbook written by Barbara Bell, a classics teacher, to introduce young children to Latin and an appreciation of language. It tells the story of Minimus, a mouse who lives near Hadrian's Wall in the time of the Roman occupation. Lunchtime and after-school clubs have been formed in primary schools have proved popular among 7-year-olds as they solve the riddles of language, study simple cartoons in Latin and learn the parts of speech.

It is with the voluntary help of thirdagers who once knew their Latin and want to pass on their love and understanding of language that these primary school clubs are multiplying. Training days for volunteers have been arranged in London, Newcastle, Bristol and Nottingham.

Contact Barbara Bell, 82 Swiss Drive, Ashton, Bristol BS3 2RW or e-mail [bmbell@aol.com](mailto:bmbell@aol.com)

## Exercise through Dance

The class was started three years ago and meets weekly to perform and enjoy dances from Eastern Europe, Israel and Japan. A bonus is that this group has joined other dance societies for an evening of Greek feasting and dancing at a taverna. The group, about 25 members, also runs evening ceilidhs for Buxton U3A. The following was written by our teacher, Mrs. Pat Phillips, and is reproduced from our Buxton U3A NewsLink.

Several of the U3A Exercise through Dance group recently attended a course at Chapel to experience the dances, mainly Armenian and Turkish, of Eastern Europe. Undoubtedly these dances are men's dances requiring strength and agility, and it would be most unwise to suggest to the men of these countries that they are in any way effeminate because they dance. They are often keen footballers and indulge in many sports, but do not consider dancing as an unmanly activity.

Perhaps the attitude prevalent in our schools today is the reason why we, as a nation, have a very negative attitude to dancing. In some schools, not all, it is considered to be one of the frills in the curriculum along with music and art, but very useful for packing 100 kids into the school hall during a wet lunch break. If we look back in our history it was not always so; the Tudors regarded music and dance an essential accomplishment for all educated people. In subsequent centuries a similar attitude prevailed and the dancing master was a highly respected citizen.

Dancing is indeed the complete exercise for it stimulates the whole being, physical, mental and emotional, the last meaning being the most important as all other forms of exercise are not concerned with that dimension. Miss Milligan, who established the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, always encouraged her dancers by saying, "Dance with your soul." I don't know whether the pun was intentional! Dance is not about performing intricate patterns with the feet, nor prancing madly around the ballroom. It is the sensitive and emotional response to the rhythm of music and poetry. It has the power to make you feel good, look a good and to move effectively and gracefully. Professional footballers have been urged to dance, for a graceful movement is always more effective, and the rhythmic and agile movement is essential in a team game.

There was an article in one of the national newspapers entitled 'On the Hoof to Heal' which said that rhythmical exercise reduces anxiety and relieves tension and stress. Dance is a fundamental language that we have forgotten to use; as a society we have opted for the logical and intellectual. Dance is the way of expressing other parts of ourselves that get ignored or suppressed and can lead to stress, tension and depression.

In our Monday afternoon sessions we have chosen to study folk dances of the world. These are part of the cultural heritage of every nation and reflect every aspect of their way of life. Their dances express

the whole range of human emotion with which we can identify. Their dances draw together all members of their community to experience the joy of collective movement.

*Harry Phillips, Buxton U3A*

## **St. Neots and District U3A**

We have a lively line dancing club. Started last year, we have up to 25 regulars who strut their stuff twice a month. The group, led by Brian Jakes, has mastered twenty line dances. So far, public performances have only stretched to our own U3A Christmas parties, but who knows what these over 55's may get up to in the future.

*Christine Mizon*

## **An experience of Yoga**

Trust, that is what it is all about. Five years ago, aged 55 and retired, I had heard that the U3A yoga teacher was "very good". I had never done any yoga and was only mildly curious to try it. Five years on and it is a highlight of my week in term time and I miss it during the holidays. All of 25 of us in our group trust our teacher for her expertise, based on experience of her dedication, care, gentleness and strength as she leads us to well-being.

Three months ago she consented it to represent the U3A on the Community Health Council. She takes health seriously and has had her share of deep suffering. She imparts, through the teaching of yoga, the glow of healthiness, strength of character and discipline. She teaches us consistently how health of mind, body and spirit, requiring a holistic attitude, benefits from coordinated daily exercise.

Suppleness and awareness of how muscles, joints and bones need yoga and how to listen to our body, mind and spirit answers our holistic needs as nature intended. Yoga, she says, is for everyone, all ages, all sizes, regardless of fitness, condition, or mentality, gender, or weight. This is holistic health care.

*Ann Dore, Wakefield U3A*



## **Wandering the web at Whickham**

To some Whickham thirdagers, web now means more than something connected with spiders. An oral history project has brought together a group of Whickham U3A members interested in the history of the old Whickham Urban District Council from 1900 to 2,000.



The project evolved on 19 February 1999 from a desire to give a new direction to the existing history group and to introduce our members to new skills. The aim is to collect information by just chatting to anyone who enjoys a trip down memory lane, through interviews, and by visits to the various archives and libraries to research appropriate books, journals, maps etc. in order to show how much life styles have changed in the 20th century.

By creating a web site, producing CDs, booklets and, ultimately, a book, we hope to make the results of our research accessible to as many people as possible in an entertaining, interesting, informative and educational way.

In order to do this, some members are busily mastering a variety of computer skills. They vary in their ambitions, some aiming to find their way around the Internet, others to master word processing, even desk top publishing, and a few brave souls are actually learning to design and create web sites. The drama group will also be involved in making an audio CD for the use of the blind and partially hearing.

The project has certainly grown since its inception. The first obstacle was a secure space for our equipment which we overcame by persuasion and perseverance and the willing help of U3A members who were not part of the project. Members of the community, of all ages, with an interest in the history of Whickham are involved in the project, individuals, schools and other community groups.

The group is supported by the Kellett Fund (set up in 1995 with the purpose of enabling the education of senior citizens in Tyne and Wear), the Millennium Awards for All, and Whickham U3A. The money has enabled the purchase of the required equipment and some tuition from Gateshead College. The group has raised money themselves to cover day-to-day expenses. Members also pay all their own expenses including the room rental for meetings. Our group has a membership of fourteen, with help from others who do not wish to make a regular commitment but are willing to support when required.

When completed the project will have recorded how our fellow citizens were educated, lived, worked, worshipped, and spent their leisure time over the last hundred years. It will show the dramatic changes in life-style from the rural views to urban sprawl, major industries disappearing, from shank's pony to two car families and from small shops in the front room to the massive Metro Centre. The web site will be up and running shortly.

*Margaret Minns, Whickham U3A*



## **Studying the Media**

Media studies has become an increasingly popular subject for GCSE, A level, and degree courses as the demands of the communication industries have increased. Television and cable channels feed more and

more information and entertainment into our homes, and newsagents shelves get longer and longer as magazine titles, from cars to computers, from knitting to karting, multiply.

With this cacophony of sound or vision bombarding our senses, are we "media literate"? When a child learns to recognise a pattern of words and sentences, then understands their meaning and can reproduce the ideas in an essay, we say he is literate. It could be that some third agers, though literate in that sense, cannot recognise the patterns of the media, misjudge the meaning of the message, and have difficulty in saying what it is all about.

For example, in a half hour news bulletin on television, there may be twenty separate items, the longest taking only five seconds. The editor chose the commentary and that particular clip of film to be broadcast. Why those words and that film? What was the editor's intention? To inform, to influence, to shock or to amuse? Everyone will have his own perception and that makes for a vibrant U3A group studying the media.

Consider these headings:

- (i) circulation and readership of national newspapers and magazines – how many read the *Sun* or *The Daily Telegraph*? What sort of people are they?
- (ii) ownership of the press and broadcasting - does ownership influence free expression?
- (iii) self regulation and laws governing the media - should investigative journalism be restricted by law?
- (iv) economics of the press and broadcasting - how much do advertisements in the media cost?
- (v) freedom of expression and freedom of information - liberty or licence?

If your U3A can find a group leader with experience in the media, a journalist or broadcaster, editor or publisher, they will lay their hands on facts and figures. The local public reference library will have media directories with details of ownership and circulation etc. The Press Complaints Commission, the Advertising Standards Authority and the Broadcasting Standards Commission will supply reports and their codes of practice.

"But I read it in their paper, it must be true" or "you can't believe what they say in the press" - which phrase have you heard used most? Studying the media would make a good subject for your next study programme.

Useful websites:

Newspaper Society: [www.newspapersoc.org.uk](http://www.newspapersoc.org.uk)

Press Complaints Commission: [www.pcc.org.uk](http://www.pcc.org.uk)

Advertising Standards Authority: [www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk)

Broadcasting Standards Commission: [www.bsc.org.uk](http://www.bsc.org.uk)

## Network for European Studies

A member of the Gosport U3A would like to contact other members or groups who are interested in European Studies and concerned that they should be better informed on all aspects of European geography, history, languages and culture, including post-war institutions.

Mrs. Pat Wharton, a retired teacher, is a member of the UK branch of the European Association of Teachers which is affiliated to the AEDE, a non-political charity to promote understanding and co-operation in Europe through education. If others are interested in forming a U3A network, please contact Pat Wharton on 02392 529202 with a view to arranging a meeting in London.



## In the next issue

The next issue of SOURCES will be mailed to U3A members on the database in November. The subjects of study in focus will be **religion** and **philosophy**. There will be bible study groups and some looking at comparative religion. There will be some examining the theories of particular philosophers and some discussing the meaning of words or reality. How are these subjects tackled and what are the best materials to use in the learning process? Other U3As would be interested to know and may even be encouraged to start a new subject on their programmes.

Contributions are required by **30 September** and should be sent to SOURCES at U3A National Office, 26 Harrison Street, London WC1H 8JG.

