



SOURCES

An Educational Bulletin

Three issues annually

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WELCOME to Issue 22 of SOURCES, the U3A Educational Bulletin, which was billed as having Politics, Current Affairs and Law as the main theme. I am sure that subscribers will be reading with great pleasure our front-page article, generously contributed by a busy insider. Thank you to all our other contributors, whether you have chosen to write on the main theme or to stimulate us in other areas.

Editor

THE SECOND CHAMBER IN THE 21st CENTURY

For the first time in fifty years, reform of the House of Lords is likely to be a prominent issue in a General Election. Traditionalists, who include most Conservatives, will adopt the standard position of “if it ain’t broke, why fix it?” Radicals, including most Labour and Liberal



supporters have always found the hereditary feature of the House unacceptable. Thus, David Lloyd-George in 1910, Clement Attlee in 1948 and Tony Blair in 1999 reduced the

powers of the Lords and in the last case, changed its composition. The Labour Government in its first term struck a deal for phase one reform in which 92 hereditaries would remain, thus creating the interesting anomaly that the only Peers subject

to any election are these remaining hereditaries. Phase two of reform has proved problematical. Labour, like all political parties, is divided over whether the House should be all elected, all appointed or an amalgam. Those favouring an elected House find one question difficult to answer. How to avoid a fully elected House being a direct and increasing threat to the power of the Commons; those favouring an appointed House in part or in whole are challenged by the questions, who gets appointed and by whom? – the famous charge of cronyism.

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In truth, the issue has always been as much about powers as composition. At last both factors are in the forefront of national debate. The most

significant power of the House of Lords is the capacity to hold up Government Bills for a full year. In the year prior to a General Election, which in modern times is increasingly only three years after the previous one, the elected House faces a potential veto over contentious Bills. A democratic administration answerable to its hard won majority in the House of Commons understandably finds this unacceptable. Or more accurately, a Labour Government does. Throughout its modern history, the House of Lords has proved infinitely more obstructive to Labour (and before that, Liberal) Governments than Conservative. In the days of over a thousand hereditary Peers, the Conservative Chief Whip had to do little more than whistle in Belgravia and in the shires and a majority would emerge to back its position. In this day and age it is not so easy.

Yet Labour is hugely disadvantaged. It commands less than 27% of the House, perhaps to edge up to 33% with the next tranche of life Peers. Conservatives are the largest single party, as they have always been; this is quite extraordinary given that in the elected Commons they have only 165 MPs, a quarter of the House. Moreover, Crossbenchers, a substantial proportion of whom are south of England establishment figures of comfortable means, break roughly three to one in the Conservative cause on contentious votes. Thus the Labour Government has largely given up on two constitutional Bills in the face of sustained Conservative and Crossbench opposition. Finally, most of the House is of pensionable age. Our generation, with all its many virtues is generally not expected to be at the cutting edge of modernity!

Yet the House has some positive features. Its Question Time is superior to the Commons, save the weekly tourney of Prime Minister's Questions. The Commons has problems of lack of topicality. Questions are tabled days in advance. Each Ministry faces the fire once a month when often the most controversial issues have passed on. The Lords have four or five questions each day. Any department may face questions. The "topical question", one a day on the first three days of the week must be answered within two days of tabling. Thus Question Time is relevant and current. The House is also thorough as a revising Chamber. There is extensive experience on hand and the well-qualified elderly certainly have that in abundance. Party members are less committed to the "party line"; after all there is no one to whom they are answerable for their views and votes.

What is more, Peers, when in the House, have fewer calls on their time. There is no Constituency correspondence, emails and phone calls; no public and Party meetings to address; no massive lobbying interests to entertain; all activities which dog the life of the MP.

The House of Lords has no timetable motion on Government Bills, no guillotine. The House is self-regulating with no Speaker to call Peers to order. They can speak as often and as long as they like on Committee stage of Bills, a length on Report and Third readings and can make the same speeches on all three occasions- and sometimes do. The openness of the Lords Order Paper means that Peers can easily secure a one-hour debate on any subject under the sun or beyond it! Only in the Lords has Government policy on dealing with large meteors potentially heading straight for planet Earth been questioned. The answer was suitably optimistic and reassuring!

But equally the formula allows peers to hit the nail on the head. The surgeon suspended for the extra croutons had his case debated in the Lords. Most often, however, the House speaks largely to itself and to the Government. The Government takes the House seriously on legislation but less so on political issues given its starkly unrepresentative nature. As a Minister replying frequently to questions and debates, I am briefed as fully as any Commons Minister. It's rare to have any wider audience. My last headlines, page 15 of the Daily Mail, was my response to snow clearing and the legal obligations of householders- nil if you do nothing, significant if you clear carelessly and render the pavement more dangerous!

The only senior Ministers in the Lords are The Lord Chancellor, The Leader of the House and the Chief Whip. The Government answers through Junior Ministers and the Whips, the latter acting as Ministers with full responsibilities in Debates and at Question Time. The House of Commons of course bemoans the almost total lack of media coverage of most of its activities; the House of Lords in extenso.

What is to be done? That increasingly looks as if it is for the electorate to decide. The Government will certainly take its case to the country, intending to reduce the power of the House of Lords to frustrate an elected Labour Government to the extent that it does. Conservatives and Liberals will probably argue for changes to its composition although the electorate may find aspects of that debate no easier than the House of Commons has done. Clearly majority

opinion favours a relevant Second Chamber, able to revise legislation, able to force the Government to reconsider, whilst not being a direct rival to the elected House of Commons. How to achieve this remains a challenge!

*BRYAN DAVIES, Lord Davies of Oldham
Government Deputy Chief Whip in the House of Lords*

IN THIS ISSUE

We would have to say that more contributions would have been welcome for this issue. We are aware that readers of SOURCES enjoy browsing the contents of each new issue but the Editorial Team can only come up with the goods if readers become writers occasionally. Please do not be bashful about sending something in. The worst that can happen is that requirements of space prevent us from publishing. If your contribution is lively, informative or inspirational we would very much like to see it in print – and we will tamper very little with your style. Every contributor should have a chance to speak with his or her own voice.

ALL CHANGE

[This article represents a personal point of view and is aimed at inspiring debate in U3A groups. Composed earlier this year, it contains references to issues that are changing all the time. The author is National Network Coordinator for Law and Government and would be very happy to make contact with other interested groups.]

There can have been no government of the United Kingdom as committed to change in our institutions as the present one. Indeed, our present situation has been called “an upheaval”.

The tremendous reorganisation involved in the attempted abolition of the post of Lord Chancellor and reassignment of his duties resulted in the temporary appointment of Lord Falconer to sit as the presiding officer over the House of Lords, for it was discovered too late that every assembly of people needs a Chairman.

The functions of the Lord Chancellor were always wide-ranging, for example in the times of Sir Thomas

More and Wolsey, and the powers of the occupant of the post have undergone changes and growth as he came to be part of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

A Department of Constitutional Affairs is to be established for a Constitution that has never been written but always fragmented. This Department is also expected to administer the Law Courts. There may be a Judicial Appointments Committee to appoint judges in all courts (Magistrates', County Court and High Court). There is currently an assessment of the duties, with a possible relocation, of the highest court in the land, namely the Law Lords sitting as the final court of appeal in this country.

The Lord Chancellor will cease to be a Privy Councillor although he has been active as such since the Norman Conquest, and further reform of the House of Lords itself will take place, with new ideas for its membership.

LEGAL ISSUES

Further, there is a proposal to change the law relating to the length of time a prisoner can be held in custody without a charge being preferred against him. The Habeas Corpus Act 1679 originally fixed two days as the maximum, but with an extension to this, and permission under the Terrorism Act to lock people up **before** they have committed a crime, we are fast losing our ancient rights. Indeed, this has already taken place in respect of Al-Qaeda suspects, fourteen of whom are, at the time of writing, being held without charge in maximum security prisons and hospitals in Britain (not to mention others being held – again at the time of writing – by the US at Guantanamo Bay, despite the US Constitution).

There are suspicions that people are being denied entry to certain professions because of unfounded accusations, whispers and rumours – which the police cannot confirm. The case of Huntley, in whose previous history were accusations of child abuse and who went on to murder, is not good grounds for saying that unproven accusations should always follow people wherever they go. It has also been suggested that past misconduct, even including acquittals, as well as previous convictions, should now be revealed to a jury during a trial.

What is known as the ‘double jeopardy rule’ may soon go. It has long been recognised that only in dictatorships are persons harassed after they have been found not guilty in a trial. There is a proposal now that, where new evidence has come to light, a suspect should be tried a second time for the same crime, with no time limit specified.

Finally, trial by jury is to be severely restricted. Trial by jury is part of our national heritage but it is to be permitted for many fewer crimes.

IMMIGRATION

It is proposed that immigrants who decide to stay in Britain and obtain naturalisation or indefinite leave to remain are to be required to learn about the constitution and our system of law and government. They will be asked about the roles of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Civil Service and the Law Courts. My experience is that many British people today know little of these matters and when they vote, if they do, are ignorant of the powers now in the hands of Members of Parliament and



Members of the European Parliament, and what qualifications they possess.

THE CHURCH

Some people are troubled by the possible accession of Prince Charles to the throne, thus becoming Head of the Anglican Church. Should the Church be disestablished? We do not know the consequences, nor how we should amend our current blasphemy laws which are so inappropriate to our multicultural society and therefore rarely enforced.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The adoption of the Human Rights Act and our membership of the European Union have put enormous strains on our institutions as the laws adopted by the EU have primacy over the laws of member states. Whereas the EU was founded for economic purposes, there is a continual intrusion of matters completely extraneous to the original vision. The harmonising across all member states of family law (marriage, partnerships, divorce, custody of children and testamentary dispositions) is now projected.

Whether regulations are pushed through in Brussels or in London about the shape of bananas or the temperature of our bath water, we are more regulated than ever before. The more we are taxed to pay for members of both Parliaments, the less democratic we are. Indeed, democracy is dying because of the way legislation is pushed through the system.

The EU has not balanced its budget for several years and the member countries of the European currency do not abide by their own rules under the Stability and Growth pact. The shenanigans surrounding the Convention on the proposed Constitution of the European Union have been revealed in the Fabian Society's pamphlet by Gisela

Stuart and are symptomatic of the conduct of government affairs.

But we have been congratulated by Jaques Delors for not adopting the Euro as our currency. At least we got something right! Because we did not change.

Elizabeth Thomson

National Network Coordinator for Law and Government

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

I have been running a group on Government & Politics at Leatherhead U3A for the past 5 years. I wonder if there are similar groups in other U3A Branches. My idea, as an ex-senior civil servant, was to give people an insight into how Government works – both in theory and in practice – rather than just discussing current affairs and politics. Members of the group have been keen to know how our system of government has developed and what the Executive and Parliament can or cannot do, how and why new laws are passed and the sheer scope of modern government.

We started with the basic constitution, namely the monarchy, parliament, the executive, etc, and after three years we started going round again but adding other aspects so that we are not repeating ourselves. We have also looked at the EU and our relationship to it, which is both complex and contentious, as well as the similarities and differences of the US Constitution. Comparisons with other countries provide a useful perspective on government in the UK and de-bunks the myth that ours is the only, or best, system. The discussions are now much more lively, which I like to think indicates that members have taken much on board and are now better able to see behind the news. They have more confidence in forming their own views in spite of the bombardment they receive from both the media and politicians.

I think politics is important because it affects everyone's lives more than they realise, but democracy cannot work effectively without an informed and engaged electorate. I would urge more U3A groups to examine how we are, or should be, governed to help offset the current trend of cynicism and disengagement.

Denis Fairmaner

Leatherhead U3A

EUROPEAN STUDIES

European Studies in U3A, as elsewhere, can mean different things. In some groups the approach is essentially historical; in others the emphasis is on European culture. For the most part,

however, the focus is on the European Union. This is strictly the realm of *Contemporary European Studies* although allowing for the predecessors of the EU - the ECSC and the EEC there is, of course, already more than fifty years of history!

Studying the EU involves, among other things, large doses of politics, law, government and current and international affairs. The potential scope is vast and the flow of information - not to mention opinion - is almost frighteningly voluminous. And, given the peculiar nature of the relationship between the UK and its continental neighbours, there is always a risk of generating more heat than light.

Despite such possible hurdles U3A European Studies can be very rewarding. They are: important as they affect you, your children and grandchildren, veiled in fog with complex institutions and procedures and often subject to wildly distorted reporting and, above all, stimulating - there is never a shortage of subjects for discussion and debate!

*Derek Stroud
National Network Coordinator*

THE PARAMETERS OF A DISCUSSION GROUP (A useful structuring model)

By way of background, Ringmer U3A, in East Sussex, is quite small, with about 75 members (out of a population of about 3500). I am the Convenor/Leader of Current Affairs which is one of 7 groups and has a nominal membership of about 20. About 2 years ago, I thought it would be helpful to review how the group operates. I drafted the statement below. The group discussed it **and agreed the wording** 'nem con', although some reservations were expressed about A5. New members are given a copy on joining.

Perhaps I should mention that the statement was NOT triggered by acrimonious disputes in the group, but one or two members did sometimes tend 'to go on a bit'!

RINGMER U3A CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

A - The PURPOSE of the group

1. To CLARIFY our own views on important topical issues:
?? by listening to the views of others
?? by having an opportunity to express our own thoughts.
2. To BECOME better informed in a rapidly changing world.
3. To KEEP our minds active and alert.
4. To PRACTISE the art of listening.

5. Occasionally to INSTIGATE or support a campaign for change or correction or improvement in a matter of local or national concern.

B - Recommended PROTOCOL and procedure

1. Whenever possible, one member of the group will have offered, or will have been asked in advance, to introduce the first topic for discussion after having investigated the background facts and figures, e.g. from Press cuttings.
2. After the first item, those present will be encouraged to raise matters they consider most topical and worth discussing. The convenor / chairman will have a reserve list of subjects.
3. Discussion can be free and open, with no topics barred. Politics and religion will inevitably intrude, but party politics should be avoided as far as possible, and religious bigotry will not be tolerated!
4. The chairman is responsible for keeping order, encouraging everyone to take part, ensuring nobody 'hogs' the conversation, and terminating the discussion when appropriate and necessary. Only one person should be speaking at any one time, otherwise the discussion quickly becomes chaotic.
5. Speakers must be aware that some members have hearing difficulties, and they should therefore speak clearly and at a reasonable level of sound and speed.

It would be interesting to know if other Current Affairs groups have found it necessary or desirable to agree a modus operandi along similar lines.

Gordon Harvey, Ringmer U3A

WILD TALK

Ernest Scott's piece "In Defence of Discussion" (Issue 21, p.6) prompts me to report our experiences at the East Berwickshire U3A 'Chat Room'. We muster about fifteen at each fortnightly meeting and invariably our conversations are very lively; mainly because the discussion topics emerge spontaneously from current affairs and are allowed to meander just as the spirit moves. If conversation flags, someone slips in a new topic and off we go again. Here is a very truncated summary of just one 90-minute meeting:

The challenge that faced us around Burns's Day was to define what it meant to be Scottish (or English or any nationality), was it place of birth, nationality of parents, cultural inheritance or something acquired by residence. Our sentimentality was brought up short by the remark that just being born somewhere was not a sensible reason for pride in that place.

This led us to consider the nature of classification in general. We noted five different determinants of gender and how there always seemed to be hard cases sitting just about the middle of every divide, cases that became the source of much heated argument and, in the case of gender, much moralising. One such division is that between those who can and those who cannot vote. Although masculinity, property and educational attainment were once the criteria, age is the main qualification these days. We considered whether or not it would be wise to allow the vote to those who were born yesterday. Should those who do not vote forfeit the moral right to criticise governments? Should voting be compulsory? How should voters be informed about what they were putting their names to? How can we learn to distinguish the truth from political 'spin' - 'lies' in any other language? Should head, heart or plain self-interest rule one's political choices?

Concurrently with the debate on anti-terrorism legislation, we considered in turn some of the issues raised by detention on suspicion, on hearsay evidence, without trial, without access to evidence or legal advice. Like many other countries we had suffered terrorism; had terrorism really changed so much that civil liberties might have to be sacrificed?

From this discussion we moved to the topic of immigration, population profiles, are the elderly really the drag many think they are, and the comparative benefits of new settlements and tourism to the economics of our area. We considered whether the conception of children for the purpose of supporting their parents is really an outdated and inhumane form of moral slavery.

These and many other burning issues raised the temperature and enlivened our debates.

This fashion of conducting a conversation among a comparatively large group has the merit of offering everyone a chance to engage in argument or express an opinion on whatever catches their interest. There are mood changes too, passions are aroused and strong opinions are voiced, but always with the best of humour. We find this free-running kind of conversation enlivening, interesting and informative and we have adopted it in our Science, Technology and Society Group as well. We can commend it to others with confidence.

Fenton Robb, East Berwickshire U3A

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of SOURCES (No.23) will be mailed to those on the database in November 2004. The special theme for this issue will be **PHYSICAL AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES** of all kinds and the way they impact on the spiritual and intellectual wellbeing of the individual. SOURCES hopes for contributions from the whole range from Tai-Chi and Yoga to Rambling and Dancing.

Please submit contributions to SOURCES via the National Office (see back page for address) or

by email to mikandel@tesco.net not later than 31st August 2004.

Looking ahead to Issue 24 (March 2005), the focus will be on SCIENCE. Contributors may interpret this as widely as they wish. The hope is to demonstrate the eclectic nature of U3A studies and to get an overview of the whole range.

Despite the fact that SOURCES is always declared as having an overarching theme for any given issue, prospective contributors should not feel discouraged from sending in other offerings. The Editorial Board welcomes articles of interest that will serve to vary the diet on offer and make each issue a little more wide-ranging than the thematic approach might imply.

U3A members may receive SOURCES at home, free of charge, by completing an official subscription form (obtainable either through their local Committee or from National Office) and submitting it to National Office. Please mark the envelope 'Sources Subscription'. As an experiment, it is also possible to subscribe online at u3a.org.uk

For technical reasons, the Editor will be more than grateful for contributions that take the form (in order of preference) of (a) a file on a floppy disk (b) an email (mikandel@tesco.net) or (c) clean typescript suitable for scanning – but please do not feel bashful about submitting other forms of contribution. It may not always prove possible to send out an acknowledgment, though every effort will be made to do so. Contributions are considered for inclusion by an Editorial Panel (including the Editor!).

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Everything! "Exploring Music" instead of "Music Appreciation" gives a whole new dimension to a music group. Music Appreciation is a long established tradition and seems to suggest the need for a certain amount of musical knowledge, especially in its leader. Sometimes a change of name creates a new image and renewed interest.

This was my aim two years ago when I hesitatingly offered to re-establish the music group at our U3A after an interval of 2 years. I had no real knowledge (childhood piano lessons being my only claim) and I certainly had very few resources, maybe 20 assorted CDs, a few tapes and records. Exploring Music meant we could play anything and everything! It also seemed to attract the attention of U3A members who were not serious music lovers but were willing to give it a go and, for the first time in their life, were interested in exploring and understanding music and, above all, really learning to listen. I was hoping for a good mix of

members - some who were music enthusiasts and others who were newcomers.

In the beginning, the problem was how to produce programmes with few resources and limited knowledge. My "best buy" was the Collins Encyclopedia of Classical Music (from a Book Club at a bargain price). But how to present an interesting, integrated programme? I needed something to concentrate the mind. The answer - a NAME or TITLE. Each programme, since day one, has had a theme. It is amazing how well you can integrate a wide variety of music into a programme as long as there is a connecting thread. It really is very easy and very worthwhile. I am sure many of you already use a similar method but for those who have not tried it, I recommend it to you.



The very first programme was "The Eras of Music". Sounds very highbrow - not really! Armed with my new encyclopedia, I discovered that music was divided into eras and I was able to find music to illustrate each one from The Renaissance (starting in 1475) to the 20th Century (ignoring Medieval). It was a good start. Simple themes such as the Seasons and other times of the year, like Easter, Christmas, New Year and Valentine's Day, also special events and National days, all provide inspiration. When resources were limited, one theme was "A swarm of Bs" - music by composers whose names started with the letter B. There is music from other countries with its characteristic style and rhythms and also film music, which could become the classics of tomorrow.

As your enthusiasm and knowledge expands, so does your collection of CDs. Many of mine are budget priced, like the Naxos label - excellent recordings for £4.99. A subscription to Classic fm magazine or BBC Music Magazine will bring a new CD (sometimes two) to your door each month and so with more choice programmes can become more exciting and adventurous.

Because I have to make notes for myself, I now produce a printed programme with notes for each member and they keep them in a binder for future reference. The first year produced a membership of 22, meeting in my lounge/dining room but soon there was more demand. So a year later, I started a second group with 24 members meeting at a venue in the town.

Themes used in the past have included: Russian Music; All things British; From Harpsichord to

Pianoforte (using CD/tape from Finchcocks Music Museum, Goudhurst, Kent) Lets Fly Away (holidays); French Discoveries; Chamber Music; A Christmas Celebration; Golden Age of Viennese Music; Valentine's Day; Scandinavian Highlights; In Praise of Spring; Stars and Stripes (American Music); Invitation to Dance; Viva l'España; The Concerto; The Symphony; All Creatures Great and Small (a musical menagerie); Romantic Spirit (Bicentenary of Hector Berlioz); A New Year Hope for Peace (using extracts from The Armed Man plus appropriate music); Romance (music with this title); Shakespeare in Music, and the list goes on and the ideas are endless.

Theming has had hidden benefits. It has provided a structured learning pattern; it makes for a very interesting programme; it offers an opportunity to introduce unfamiliar music and works by little-known composers, and it has given me a brand new hobby.

Angela Newport, Market Harborough U3A

HELP SPREAD THE GOOD WORD

If you are the only person in your U3A (or one of very few) to be receiving this Educational Bulletin, you may well be aware that this is the case. **SOURCES** would be grateful for your assistance in bringing it to a wider audience. When publicising, please be kind enough to mention that applications should be made on an individual, not a block, basis and that the official subscription form is available from National Office. U3As might like to distribute photocopies of the form locally.

BATH U3A ANGLO-SAXON GROUP

When as a proud young father I contemplated the purchase of a pram, I had occasion to discuss the matter with a colleague whose erudition lay in tongues. He curled his lip disdainfully, "Perambulator"? he mouthed in evident disgust, "An alien word, that! It is a *scufanwægen!*"

Suitably chastened I moved away; the *cradolcild* (infant) Soar met his world within what the *unrede* would have called a pram, and my colleague beamed upon him.

Fast forward fifty years, and with my membership of U3A the chance to study learn and enjoy the origins of our modern English in company with others, vastly more erudite, but scarcely more dedicated to knowledge than myself,

The Bath Anglo-Saxon Group meet fortnightly within the serenity of Partis College to study Old English and to read and interpret, with expert

guidance, amongst other literary pleasures the superbly heroic language of the early epic *Beowulf*. There have been many translations of this poem over the years of course, and there can be few of those that enjoy narrative verse who are unfamiliar with the gruesome activity of Grendel in the mead-hall of Hrothgar, and who do not savour the feats of hero Beowulf as he avenges the death of Aeschere; slaying first Grendel and then, later, his dreadful mother, after an homeric battle in her cavern below the water. How satisfying it is to read it word for word in the original and to relish nuances of the tale as tension builds and the sequences unfold.

In contrast to *Beowulf*, we have translated extracts from the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* and amongst other matters know at first hand the outcome of the battle of Hastings from the succinct account contained therein. '*Daer weard ofslagen Harold Kyng, Leofwine Eorl, his brodor, Gyrd Eorl, his brodor, and fela (many) godra manna*'. It scarcely needs translation; and this is the beauty of Anglo Saxon prose. So many words reveal their modern counterparts once pronunciation is mastered for, unlike modern English, in its earlier form each letter of the word was pronounced.

The letters 'j', and 'q' do not exist in Old English, whilst k, x, and z are rarely found. Our ancestors used the 'th' letter d (thorn), and its partner the P similarly pronounced. The sound of 'q' is spelt 'cw', whilst 'c' itself as pronounced as 'k', never as 's'. (Glasgow's 'Seltic' football team would have met short shrift from its Anglo Saxon neighbour).

Within our Group we have familiarised ourselves with '*The Ruin*', an early poetic account of a desolate city which from the evocative description many think was Bath, and we have appreciated the poet's crisp alliterative style. Forthcoming Projects include a reading of the *Battle of Maldon* the crowning indignity of 'unrede' (unwisely counselled) king Æthelred's reign, (where Ealdorman Byrhtnoth seriously misjudged the opposition) and we are dedicated to completing *Beowulf*.

There is *micel* to do, and much to be enjoyed. Thus, if it is your wish to learn something of the early origins of our living language and to do so in the congenial company of fellow U3A's, then why not join us? You will be welcomed. *beon hæl!*

Hugh D. Hewitt Soar. Bath U3A.

PORTHCAWL U3A CONVERSATIONS GROUP

This group has been running for nigh on 2 years and topics have been wide, varied and always producing much discussion. The group considers topic suggestions on roughly a monthly basis and someone volunteers to lead the discussion. The leader will then present the topic, taking approx 10

minutes and thereafter it is open for discussion with the leader attempting to act as chair and ensure that all have the opportunity to have their say. We have conversed on topics such as 'Does the Monarchy have a role in the 21st century?', 'Truth and Reconciliation or Revenge and Retribution', 'The good, bad and the ugly - life in Britain today', 'There is no such thing as Welsh culture' and a future subject will be 'A woman's place... ..?'. Discussion is always lively and the session lasts approximately 2 hours with a short tea-break during which time the talking doesn't seem to stop.

Invariably opinions will clash but no meeting has ended on a disagreeable note and it seems that our age group has learnt to be tolerant of the opinion of others. I think this group has certainly taught others (and me) that there is more than one way of considering a subject and that other points of view are just as valid as one's own. It has also had an educational purpose as the 'volunteer leaders' have to educate themselves on the subject in order to present to members of the group the relevant facts, and they in turn have usually learnt something new.

Margaret Williams Porthcawl U3A

COOKERY CHAT GROUP

A few months ago, I happened to mention to the editor of our local U3A Newsletter how interested I was in all aspects of cooking and wondered whether I dare try to form a little Chat Group to explore aspects of Food and Cookery, since I am not a professional cook. I am a keen computer user



and am a frequent visitor to a number of websites, British and American, which offer not only recipes but all kinds of information on various aspects of Food and Cookery. During my professional life, I travelled fairly extensively and had my taste buds educated in the process. The editor promptly asked me if I could supply a recipe for our Newsletter and so far two of my recipes (for 1-2 people) have been published. The members who have tried them have been very pleased with the result. Soon I had enough members to have a meeting in my home.

Before we met, I drew up a list of ideas and typed them out. At the first meeting, there were four of us

(two could not make it) and we looked through my list and added more suggestions. I had on display various new acquisitions to my kitchen and talked about how I use them. So far we have decided that each of us will bring "something to show and/or eat" to the meeting. I have an Aga, a gas cooker and a microwave, so warming or even cooking food, is no problem. At the first meeting, we did not discuss the possibility of one of us demonstrating a meal. I doubt whether people would want to eat much from 2-3.30pm anyway, but we remain open to suggestions

Among the six people, we have a retired teacher of domestic science, who is interested in the history of food, and one retired country pub owner, who, we found, not surprisingly, is immensely knowledgeable about cooking meals. One person wanted to know more about cooking with alcohol and which wine to drink with specific meals. Two of us are computer literate and are only too willing to download and print out information for everyone to have. The emphasis of the group is on the practicalities of meal making, especially for one and two people. We commented on how few interesting recipes there are for one/two rather than four/six people, although I was able to point out that the BBC Food web site has a database of nearly 400 recipes on the theme of *Cooking for Two*.

We found we had various interests in common. All of us wanted to try the new alongside the old, and not just British either. We are interested in cooking with herbs and spices, and indeed, we wanted to know more about the history of how herbs and spices came to the UK in the first place. Again I was able to point not only to books I have, but also to websites where such information is readily available.

During the foot and mouth epidemic, our area of the Yorkshire Dales was particularly badly hit. We very much want to use local produce where possible, so when I said I had worked out very successfully a recipe for lamb shoulder stuffed with Wensleydale Cheese with Cranberry, everyone wanted to copy it down and try it out. Indeed, in the last recipe in our Newsletter (for mini quiches), I pointed out how well Cheddar went with Ribblesdale goat's cheese. Next month, by the way, there will be a recipe for Omani Spicy Rice to accompany the quiches. We also had various ideas about visits and inviting local cookery experts to demonstrate and talk to us. One, perhaps particularly Yorkshire, idea was to visit several supermarkets and compare prices and products!

After the meeting, I rang the National Co-ordinator and discovered that there is at present no one to co-ordinate Cookery groups of various kinds. I was promptly invited to fill the gap! At first, I refused. However, I talked to the chairman of our U3A branch who pointed out that with the material I had already supplied to those interested in the local group, I was well on the way to composing a Start-Up leaflet. This I have done and will submit it to National Office. The leaflet (both sides of one A4, that is, 4 x A5 pages) is

intended to be supplementary to the excellent *Cookery in England*, available from National Office. There is no book list in my leaflet for a *Cooking Chat Group*, but a fairly extensive list of web sites instead.

Kathleen Kinder, Settle Area U3A
National Network Coordinator for Cookery

RUN A FAMILY HISTORY GROUP WITHOUT BEING AN EXPERT

Lesley Pinchbeck and I are joint leaders of the Sleaford U3A Family History Group; we are both keen and enthusiastic family historians but neither of us is an expert. Without an expert a lot of interaction is required from the group and some study by the leaders.

What Lesley and I do is research a topic and prepare it for presentation to the group - this is followed by questions and discussion. We had our first monthly meeting in November last and topics have included "Starting Out", "Keeping Records", "Surnames", "Where to look", "Civil Registration - Births, Marriages and Deaths", "Censuses". Future topics will include "Parish Registers and the IGI", "The Internet and useful Websites", "Wills", "Poor Law and Settlement" and "Military Records". The more experienced members of the group are encouraged to give considerable input to the discussions and our findings are that they are more than willing to help the beginners and less-experienced as a group bonding develops.

Time is set aside at each session for members to tell of their own research and breakthroughs and to seek advice when they are "stuck".

We have created a file containing the leaders' research and presentation notes on each of the topics discussed. Also contained in the file is a list of books/CDs/fiches which members are prepared to loan on request. In addition we have a book-box containing books donated to the group by members on a permanent basis. We are currently constructing a list of members' interests (names and areas) to give members with like interests the opportunity of linking to pool their knowledge and research.

Visits are essential from time to time to escape the meeting room. We have visited the local library for instruction on their fiches-readers and computers and to be shown what other resources are available. We have plans to visit Lincoln Central Library to be informed about the Local Studies and Reference sections, Lincoln Archives and the LDS Family History Centre. It is hoped that later in the year a coach trip to The National Archives at Kew can be arranged in conjunction with our Gardens Group and Stamford U3A's Genealogy Group.

Outside speakers are not so readily available for free but we have in the pipeline a talk on one-name studies to be given by the Secretary of the Bliss Group of One-Name Studies.

Our group ranges from those with 20 years experience to absolute beginners. Those that did not own computers signed up for a U3A computer course and will have access to the Internet at the local library. The format seems to be working and everybody is keen to help everybody else - which is what the U3A is all about! We have 20 members and a waiting list.

It is possible that a new "Beginners Only" group will be formed towards the end of the year with a more firmly structured format.

Dave Houghton, Sleaford U3A

WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE WOKING U3A GENEALOGY GROUP

The Woking U3A Genealogy group was started by John and Dorothy Mitchell, a husband and wife team who wanted to share with others their experiences of researching their own family histories. When I joined them in their second year I had already been researching my own family history for a few years. Genealogy involves searching for your own ancestors, starting with yourself and working backwards into the past. The information is there if you know where to look. We use the International Genealogical Index (IGI) made by the Mormons which indexes names from parish registers throughout the country as far back as 1558; and the General Register Office (GRO) which has recorded all births, deaths, and marriages since 1837 and from whom copies of certificates can be obtained; and the Census Returns for the whole country which have been taken every 10 years since 1841, to mention just a few sources. Members are helped to use these sources and shown how to record their findings and how to draw up their family trees.

I soon became aware at the monthly meetings that there were members of the group who were absolute beginners and had no idea what IGI, GRO, and Census Returns were all about, so I suggested that I take a class of these beginners in my own home and lead them through the basics of family history research. This offer was warmly welcomed and for the next two years in the Autumn Term I held small group meetings for beginners at my home. I had six people at a time and it was easy enough to obtain Birth, Marriage and Death certificates and other documents from my own collection and to pass around for people to look at whilst I was talking. Two groups each coming at fortnightly intervals meant that I was involved every week for about 10 weeks.

I took one aspect of family history research at each session and progressed through the Civil Records, Parish Records, IGI, and Census Returns until the basics were covered, and then we explored other sources.

In a small group there was time to get to know individuals and their family histories, and to make time for questions to be asked and answered, and the group soon became interested in each other's research and began to offer helpful suggestions.

The beginners also attended the monthly group meetings and as they became more knowledgeable they were able to get more from these meetings, as well as being able to talk with the more experienced members.

When John Mitchell left to start a group at another U3A, I became a joint leader with Dorothy. Having two leaders is definitely to be recommended!

As there were too many beginners the following year for me to do the home groups, each of our monthly sessions started with a talk for the beginners. By that time I had found that I could prepare acetate slides of my certificates for use on the overhead projector so that I could still offer some visual aids. And the other group members said they enjoyed the revision.

Dorothy and I planned and conducted the meetings together, always taking on board suggestions from our members. Each year we wanted to offer something different, and outings were arranged to the Family Records Centre and the London Metropolitan Archives in London and to the National Archives at Kew.

Actually looking at indexes and records for themselves gave our members a real boost to their research, and the staff were most helpful in each place.

Within the group we had not dealt with computers although we knew that some members made good use of the Family History Programmes available on CD. But more and more information was being released on the Internet and we felt the time had come to address this side of our subject. So last September 2003 arrangements were made with our local computer centre to have eight sessions for our members showing people how to access the Internet and to look at, and use, websites of interest to family historians. The more computer literate of our members were there to help. This moved a lot of people forward in their research and encouraged others to get to grips with computers!

In January 2004 we decided to do some transcribing for our County Records Office. We took copies of the 1901 Census for the nearby villages of Wisley and Ockham, and arranged two extra meetings in Dorothy's home for those who wanted to help. The 1901 Census was on microfiche at the local records office and photocopies were taken of these. The sheets, handwritten over 100 years ago, are often difficult to read so members worked in pairs sharing a sheet, and then made clear copies onto a printed form. Later on other members checked these transcriptions.

We also made a slip-index of names as we went along and this became a classified index of all the families in the two villages. This is a most useful list for local historians as well as family historians and the local history society funded the project. They have asked us to do the other past censuses for these same two villages so we shall have a project in hand for our next term. The results will be available in hard copy and on CD for the public to consult at the Surrey History Centre, Woking, and at the Send and Ripley History Society's Museum, in Ripley.

We feel proud that we have now 'given something back' for we have all enjoyed the fruits of others' labours in our own researches.

Working together like this has created a warm feeling of friendliness in the group and members are looking forward to working on the next project. It has also given members more confidence to present their own family history at the meetings and to share their ideas for further research.

Sheila Brown

THE LANGUAGE SPOT

The march of English as the dominant world language goes ever on. We are told that half of the currently existing spoken languages of the world will have disappeared by the year 2100. Is there much chance of saving any of these? How would you **feel** if **your** language was dying out? Especially if it possessed such riches as the verb *egthu*: 'to create a pinching sensation in the armpit' and the verb *gobray*: 'to fall into a well unknowingly' (from Boro, a language of northeastern India).

Editor

PIONEERING WORK IN HEALTH CARE RESEARCH

[Thanks to Salisbury's U3As for this report.]

Salisbury's three U3As, Salisbury, Sarum and Spire, are breaking new ground with the setting up of a Health Care Research Group working in co-operation with the local Health Care Trusts. This pioneering development fits neatly into the development of shared learning projects being promoted at a national level.

The aims of the new Group are: 1) to assist in the improvement of local health care 2) to draw the attention of local health authorities to areas of public/patient concern 3) to contribute to research into areas of local public/patient concern and 4) to arrange for the feedback of information relating to the activities of local health services.

The formation of the Group has been stimulated by Anne Gould, chairman of Salisbury's Spire U3A, and her husband Eric who is leader of the Group. Both are members of the Salisbury Health Care NHS Trust's Patient and Public Involvement Steering Group.

This is an ideal time to begin co-operative ventures with local health trusts because it is now the law for the National Health Service "to involve and consult patients and the public in the planning of service provision, the development of proposals for change, and decisions about how services operate".

At their inaugural meeting, the Salisbury Health Care Research Group identified two areas of public/patient concern on which to concentrate: the increasing prevalence of MRSA ("the superbug") and poor communication with patients. Discussions are being held with the Research & Development Support Unit for South Wilts to see the best way to progress these lines of research.

The Group is also preparing a survey of Salisbury U3A members to identify the main areas of patient health care concern. At their first meeting Eric Gould borrowed architects' plans and impressions of the new £5.7 million wing planned for the local hospital and explained details of the project to the Group. Arrangements are being made for local health specialists to talk at future meetings of the Group about specific subjects of concern.

Commenting on this development, Eric Gould says: "I feel that more emphasis needs to be given to outward looking activities. If U3A members can make a real contribution to the betterment of society, as well as looking after our own educational needs, it can only be to the good. The development of shared learning projects offers great potential and we have certainly found that the co-operation and, indeed, the enthusiastic encouragement of our local health trusts has been tremendous."



FRIENDS OF PERTH U3A

Prompted by the recent Development Sub-Committee report on "Fourth Agers", Perth U3A decided to build on an existing project "Friends of Perth U3A" which keeps in touch with housebound former members. After a meeting with some former members now in residential

accommodation in Perth, it was agreed to offer a U3A meeting fortnightly for them and any other residents who might wish to attend.

The first "term" consisted of some group leaders from Perth U3A giving short "tasters" of the type of programme they provide for members. These ranged from music appreciation to poetry and a fascinating history of the house where they now live. The response was very encouraging to the extent that the "U3A meetings" had to be moved to the largest public room in the home to accommodate all those wanting to attend.

After consultation with the residents, it was agreed to continue with a spring term but constructed round a theme for, as one resident put it "...we'll maybe learn something".

The theme adopted was "This Was Our Century" based on the idea of sharing with the residents (most of whom are octogenarian and nonagenarian) our experience of the last 100 years. Meetings explored such topics as Turning points in History, Significant Scientific Discoveries, Inventions, Poetry, and Changing Fashion. Subjects were illustrated with sound recordings, vintage newspapers and magazines.

All who have taken part in the project have had a most enjoyable time. Residents who sat very quietly at the beginning ended this session by being actively involved in the discussions that were integral to the various presentations. They contributed a great deal by sharing experience and knowledge.

Discussion continued over cups of tea served at the close of each meeting and, according to the staff, throughout the week. There was a unanimous wish that their U "Four" A should continue in the autumn.

Karen Cannon, Perth U3A

[If you or your U3A are involved in projects or activities of the kind featured in the preceding two articles, SOURCES invites you to share your experiences with others and write and tell us about them.]

SOURCES ONLINE

For those of you with access to the Internet, you may find it useful to know that back numbers of Sources can be viewed online, and printed off or bits copied and pasted into your word processor. Visit the Third Age Trust's website at www.u3a.org.uk and click on **Sources Online**. More recent issues require Acrobat Reader which can be downloaded from the website.

SOURCES PAST

The following appeared in Issue No.5, August 1999 in an article entitled 'An Introduction to Opera'. The thought expressed may give someone somewhere an idea.

"Opera offers considerable scope, ideal as a medium for involving different study groups when seen from an inter-disciplinary point of view."

EXPERT ADVICE FROM THE PROFESSIONALS

Fifty U3A members from around the country enjoyed a challenging day in Harrogate on 9th March when they attended a Creative Writing Study Day which had been arranged by Maggie Smith, the Subject Network Co-ordinator. As well as having valuable opportunities to share information, the group were fortunate in receiving advice on 'How to Win at Competitions' and 'How to get your Manuscript accepted by an Editor'. Beryl Fleming (U3A Short Story Competition winner from Sussex) stressed the need to hook the reader with the first line and advised members to limit a story to three characters if it is to be read aloud on radio. She also mentioned that an unusual plot, well-presented, gave the competitor an additional advantage.

Tony Thornton amused his audience with accounts of his own experience as well as giving many valuable hints on the best way to approach a magazine editor. "Before submitting an article," he said, "it's vital that prospective contributors should contact the Editor with a synopsis of the intended article including, where applicable, the number of drawings and photographs that can be supplied if needed."

Another important step before starting to write is to obtain the 'Writers' Guidelines' for that particular magazine. These guidelines give the accepted magazine style and it will obviously make the work of preparing copy for the printer easier if all contributions conform. Common requirements for all publications are that double line spacing should be used throughout, paper clips not staples must be used and you should never forget to include a short covering letter and a stamped addressed return envelope.

Also included in Tony's presentation was a valuable insight into magazine terminology in common use today such as The Caption, The Kicker and The Sidebar. "If you want to be a professional," said Tony, "you need to know the language."

Peter Hinchcliffe, a journalist from Huddersfield, supplied the group with an interesting website that he has set up and for which he acts as Editor. At www.openwriting.com you can get a glimpse of

journalism on a global scale. Peter stressed that he has regular contributors sending articles from far-flung corners of the world but would welcome some additional material from the UK. An open invitation to some U3A writing enthusiasts perhaps?

As always with a well-organised Study Day, it was the group work that offered opportunities for the inexperienced member to benefit from conversations with the experts. New Group Leaders clearly gained much valuable information and increased confidence from their more experienced colleagues. Hints for starting and running Writers Groups, together with how best to give constructive feedback and how to tackle the problem of continuing when ideas dry up, were all issues that were eagerly debated at intervals throughout the Day.

A vote of thanks to the DfES for funding the Study Day and thank you, Maggie, for organising it.

Rosemary McCulloch, Stamford U3A

AN OVERSEAS DIMENSION

The International U3A Congress 2004 in Shanghai, Oct 12-15 The Amazing Universities Of The Third Age In China Today

Which country has the largest number of U3As? The answer is clearly China, with more than 19,300 U3As and 1.81 million members.

The movement began in the 1980s, about the same time as in the UK and ten years later than the founding of AIUTA (International Association of Universities of the Third Age) in France. The increase in life expectancy and the new social role of older people encouraged the government, the Communist Party of China, to set up a Pensioner Affairs Bureau to look after the interests of older people. In conjunction with the army, big companies and mines, universities and other organisations, a wide variety of U3As have been set up, supported by government help with funding and premises. The government has a long-term development plan and is currently drafting guidelines for the management of U3As.

A non-governmental organisation, the China Association of Universities for the Aged, (CAUA) has an important role in developing U3As. It promotes the importance and benefits of U3As to the general public, and to older people themselves, and supports new ventures by gaining government funding. At national and provincial level it has supported local efforts to set up U3As.

With 200 million old people aged 65 and upwards, this was a challenging task. With wide disparities between rural and city areas and a vast range of

educational levels, U3As have to be flexible to meet the needs of the people. The range of provision runs from primary education (for those who have missed out on the educational reforms) to post-graduate courses.

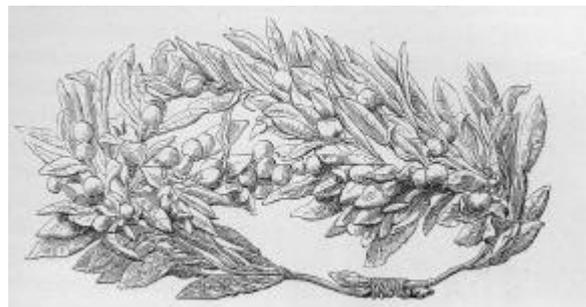
Great efforts are made to stimulate the special interests of the members. In general, they are not interested in qualifications or vocational training, so the emphasis is on learning, life enrichment, promotion of good health and service to the community.

There are normally seven types of course: health care, physical exercises (including Tai Chi) study courses, (including literature, history, geography and foreign languages) skills (including computer skills, finance, cookery, and gardening) arts (including calligraphy, painting, music and dancing) and hobbies, (including travel, photography and stamp collecting) and political topics.

Courses may be short-term, or run for one to three years. Teaching is very relaxed and flexible, to suit the students' needs. New methods are constantly being tried, including providing information and setting up discussions on current events, supplying magazines and newspapers, organising study tours and visits, using modern facilities and running exhibitions and competitions. The CAUA is co-operating with the Central Radio/TV University to set up special courses, while new textbooks are being prepared in Cupertino with national publishers. All these efforts are providing inspiration for older people to learn more and to have a better quality of life. Their health improves, as do their communication skills. The senior students can now participate in the development of both traditional and modern culture. Why not see this for yourself?

China is a faithful supporter of AIUTA and sends delegations to all the biennial Congresses. Now it is the turn of China to host the AIUTA International Congress in 2004. They will be welcoming colleagues and friends from all over the world at their modern conference centre in Shanghai. There will be opportunities to meet their U3A members and share ideas, along with U3A members from around the world. Find out more on their web site at www.worldu3a.org Click on Shanghai World Congress in 2004.

To make the most of this rare opportunity, the Travel Network is organising a 10 day study tour, to



include Yunnan and Beijing (the Great Wall too) as well as the Congress itself. This will give an opportunity to have an insider's view of China's

modern and traditional culture. For further information on the tour, please send a SAE to Margaret Ward at 33 Masons' Ryde, Pershore, WR10 1JG.

For anyone joining the tour who wishes to learn some Chinese first and know more about this amazing country, join my course on 'China: language and culture,' at the U3A Summer School 2 in Cheltenham, July 20-23. (If you can't go on the tour, you are still very welcome on the course)

Finally, from our Chinese friends in their own words: 'We warmly welcome the foreign friends to visit China and our U3As. Let us learn from each other, work hand in hand in order to make all the elderly people of the world to have a colourful and happy life.'

*Jean Thompson, Reading U3A
jean.thompson@pop3.hiway.co.uk*

DIGITAL CAMERAS

[The article in Issue 21 entitled "A SNAPPY IDEA" brought several responses from readers, two of which are reproduced below.]

In late 2003 the Kodak Corporation announced that it was to discontinue manufacture of 35mm film cameras world-wide. The digital era had arrived.

A group that uses photography as part of its activities, may well be used to presentations with the aid of a slide/movie projector or epidiastope and will be faced with the problem 'How does one display digital images?' The following is a simple run through of the methods available and a look at the shortcomings and possible remedies.

Many digital cameras come with an AV socket and cable. This is a possible answer, providing the group has a modern TV or VCR with a set of AV sockets using 3mm jack plugs identified with a yellow [video] and white [audio] collar.

The disadvantage of direct camera connection is the high battery consumption, therefore it is desirable that the camera is connected through a suitable power unit to the mains supply. Not all cameras have this facility. The answer here could be a digital viewing device. There are several makers involved in these and they are sold both in high street shops and by mail order. Some brands to look out for have web sites; here are three for a start.

www.avermedia.com
www.dazzle.com
www.belkin.com

They cost in the region of £60 or so. These devices take a variety of flash media cards as used in cameras. They are relatively easy to use and have a built-in slide

show facility. All that remains for the user to do is to order the desired image sequence for presentation.

Ordering images and making a full slide show will mean using a computer and suitable image editing software. If you or a member of the group has this facility and is adept at the use of one or more of the imaging packages available then you have a head start.

Putting images into a computer from some brands of camera can, however, give rise to problems if the intention is to upload the new sequence of edited images back into the camera card for use through the camera as a 'projector'. This is because some cameras generate a modified JPEG image file called EXIF.

This file contains the image plus the camera data and a thumbnail image.

Earlier computer/software set ups [Win98 family] do not know about XIF and will simply offer a plain JPEG file which the camera and some viewing devices will not recognise. This problem is well known and answers to it exist. Two of these take the form of downloadable shareware programs available from

www.xat.com
www.tvwriter.com

In each case a full [paid for at about £15] version is available that will make slide shows and in the case of XAT burn VCD and DVD's and add sound tracks - voice and music.

If the PC editing route is chosen, then it is possible to add extra images in the form of scanned maps and illustrations from printed sources via a scanner, and for the more adventurous to make up title slides and caption photos using your favourite imaging package.

Some possible queries:

The TV does not have the suitable AV jack socket (it is not possible to use the aerial [RF] to display digital images). The possible answer is, if it is equipped with a SCART socket, then SCART plugs with the AV/audio leads socket built in or on fly leads are available.

The TV has only one SCART and we need to use the video also. The answer is there are available multi-SCART connectors switched and non-switched - check out your Argos catalogue.

John Ash, Dartford U3A

Most DVD players will accept digital photo (JPEG) images on CDs and give you better definition pictures on your TV plus the ability to run as a slide show or individual images **and** also be able to zoom the image and hence do justice to your high definition originals. DVD players seem to be quite robust and are quite lightweight and can therefore be easily transported, and of course the CDs themselves are very convenient to use and are easily burnt-in on most modern computers.

Peter Cowley Wirral U3A.

THE HISTORY OF COMPUTING

I was new to the U3A and, therefore new to our Science and Society group. At my first meeting our convenor was looking for topics and for presenters. Having been captivated with computers since owning a BBC micro I suggested I could offer The History of Computing, for a date in three months time. However, at the next meeting I became more aware of my colleagues' backgrounds and that some of them knew more of some of the subject than I did. To create a broader interest I made a decision to interpret "computing" in a very wide sense and start with the abacus and end with cosmic ray attacks on the tiny transistors in current integrated circuits. (When I asked my daughter if going back several thousand years to discuss the abacus was a good idea she looked at me as though I had lost the plot and said "What about fingers?")

Covering 5000 years of number and calculating machines in one and a half hours seemed a recipe for boredom and the idea of stopping along the way to look at several topics in more detail and with appropriate demonstrations appealed to me as it allowed me to talk about things I fully understood and to only lightly touch others where my knowledge was somewhat basic. This was my first attempt at any kind of historical investigation and the journey was fascinating. We have a super library service in Suffolk and the Internet is a U3A presenter's dream as long as you are a sceptic and prepared to disregard many things as a possible re-write of history. (Getting Americans to believe that the UK did anything useful to advance the cause of computing is impossible. In part this is because the Official Secrets Act was treated with much more respect during WWII and for several decades after than it is today. Therefore documents are scarcer.)

Then I discovered the Resource Centre and the series of 10 audio tapes "Pioneers of Computing" (Catalogue 00001644 to 00001653). They are a historian's dream as they include interviews with the scientists and engineers who developed electronic calculating devices during and immediately following the war. No more having to read a biography and trying to decide if an anecdote is true - hear it first hand. I was only able to borrow five tapes as the others were on loan (but I am advised I was unlucky, as these tapes do not get the circulation they deserve).

These inspirational tapes I used as a source in their own right, as ideas for further investigation, but best of all as several three- or four-minute inserts for my presentation to illustrate particular points. Together with a practical demonstration of Napier's Rods, a photograph of The First Computer Bug (a slight history re-write, but declared as such and still a bit of fun) and an



extract from a wonderful letter in the New Scientist about the shortcomings of Microsoft, the tapes gave me huge pleasure and certainly added to the quality of my morning. Go get them.

*Mike Holland, Bury St Edmunds U3A
mikeholland@waitrose.com*

CATCH UP ON YOUR LISTENING

The BBC tell us that there are now four ways to listen to radio. These are:

- via AM/FM
- via DAB digital radio
- via digital TV
- via the Internet

What is rather exciting about the fourth of these – listening to radio via the Internet – is that it we are now no longer constrained to listening to a radio programme at the time of transmission. (I am disregarding, for the purposes of this argument, the facility we have always had for recording a radio programme onto audio cassette). Not only can one listen to a live broadcast over the Internet, but the BBC also make it possible for us to catch up on (or listen again to) programmes that we may have missed. In other words, beginning to appear on an increasing scale are programme archives, which provide us with a valuable library and resource for our U3A learning researches.

Visit the BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk) and click on Radio. Thereafter, you will be able to follow the links for all the different radio channels, of which Radios 3 and 4 probably represent the best hunting ground for us U3A folk. It should not prove difficult to find your way to a list of the week's programmes and the particular programme you may have missed. Within Radio 4 you can search by genre, e.g. Science, History, Current Affairs and so on. The Science section, I discovered, has archived interesting programmes going way back, not just the past week.

In order to hear radio through your computer's speakers, your computer will need to be equipped with a 'player' such as Real Player or Windows Media Player, though I believe that the BBC, for their own programmes, will connect you to a BBC Radio Player. Your local U3A computer guru will probably be able to advise you.

When you have developed some skill in tracking down BBC radio programmes and listening in over the Internet, you may like to branch out and consider tuning in to radio stations around the world. The true magic of this is that it is FM radio we listen to over the Internet, that is to say high quality, well-tuned broadcasts, not crackly shortwave stuff. Normally FM

radio has a very circumscribed catchment area for a given frequency but Internet radio allows us to tune in to FM radio from Barbados, Latvia, New Zealand – and the rest. You don't have to know the frequency, nor do you have to operate any tuning mechanism. Just click on a choice and away you go! To get the feel for this, visit www.comfm.com/live/radio/ and click on Europe (noting some rather delightful variations on country names as you study the map). Then have a go at listening in to some Spanish, Italian, Greek or whatever takes your fancy.

Finally, going back to the mention earlier of radio via digital TV, if you are able in some way to receive digital TV (Sky, Freeview, cable, etc.) then poke around channels 851-855 for BBC radio stations 1 to 5 and channel 865 for World Service. You get digital quality sound of radio coming through your TV speakers. Live broadcasting here, though, no archives. But, who knows, maybe one day soon we'll be able to dial up somehow any programme we like from any week of the year.

STOP PRESS

There's a fascinating corner of the BBC's website at www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/audiointerviews/ where you can access all manner of archived interviews with writers, artists, religious leaders, musicians, broadcasters – the list goes on (get an alphabetical list at www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/audiointerviews/a-z/).

The Editor



WEBSITES

Recommendations from readers on useful websites. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information. Apologies for any errors that may have crept in.

NEW CONTRIBUTIONS ALWAYS WELCOME

Please share your interesting discoveries with the rest of us!

COMPUTERS

www.sophos.com/virusinfo/hoaxes/

Information about virus and other hoaxes that can be consulted before circulating false scare news (which is what the hoaxers want after all).

GOVERNMENT

www.pro.gov.uk/

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/

Both these links lead to the National Archives, the new inclusive name for the Public Records Office.

www.ukonline.gov.uk

The easy way to government info and services online, including an A-Z of government and an A-Z of local authorities. Much more besides.

LANGUAGE

www.yourdictionary.com/languages/germanic.html#english

If words and languages grab you, you should get stuck in to this website. Lost for a meaning? Consult 870 dictionaries at once! Find dictionaries for all major languages. Speciality dictionaries (*Lexique de la bière*, anyone?) Travel dictionaries, e.g. Swedish-French.

Go to www.yourdictionary.com/languages and choose your language.

MISCELLANEOUS

www.howtocomplain.com

How often have you intended to complain about something but never got around to it? Well now you can easily and effectively. Rather fun.

www.ukstudentlife.com

Interesting light shed on UK customs, people, food, institutions, etc. compiled for overseas students

www.timeanddate.com

A fascinating website where you can look up the current time in hundreds of cities or print out calendars or look up dates way into the future.

SENIORS

www.seniors-international.net

Read all about the new Senior Citizens' Party. All kinds of useful links, too.

www.seniornetwork.co.uk

This is a one-man private initiative but may yield some useful information.

TRAVEL

www.seat61.com

For armchair travellers and others, this is one man's guide to travelling by train and boat all over the world. Five or ten minutes simply browsing here is a wonderful escape.

www.specialplacestostay.com

Anyone familiar with Alastair Sawday's accommodation guides will be delighted with this well-presented website. You can book online, too.

SOURCES PUBLICATION DATES

Sources currently appears three times a year, with publication dates in November, March and June. A subscription to SOURCES is free of charge. Please contact your local Committee or the National Office for an official subscription form.

LANGUAGE STUDIES

[Gloria Blackburne, Subject Network Co-ordinator for Languages, has sent in this email from the BBC which should be of interest to most language groups.]

In May 2004, BBC Worldwide will be launching completely new interactive Get Into French and Get into Spanish beginners courses, and in June and July we will publish completely revised and updated new editions of Deutsch Plus 1, Italianissimo 1, French Experience 2 and Suenos World Spanish 2. For the first three of these courses there are also accompanying TV series on the Learning Zone on BBC Two and online activities on www.bbc.co.uk/languages.

BBC Worldwide are committed to the continuing commissioning, development of new language learning materials for self-study and for classroom use, as well as to refreshing and updating our existing courses. Languages is a core part of BBC Worldwide's Learning business, and we will maintain our support for the teaching of languages with additional materials for tutors, attendance at exhibitions and conferences, and regular email newsletters via the BBC Languages E-Mail Club. BBC Worldwide will also continue its languages publishing activities for schools.

The overnight service on BBC Two, The Learning Zone, continues to broadcast language programmes for 5 hours per week (except over the Easter holidays and Christmas/New Year). In 2004, as well as the existing programmes, this will include a new series on Chinese (Mandarin) language and culture, and a new series on Greek in May.

Having invested heavily in language programmes over the recent years, there is a strong bank of multimedia resources available. A wealth of material is now available on www.bbc.co.uk/languages and this expanding online provision is proving increasingly attractive to both teachers and learners alike. You may be interested to know that last month our language site www.bbc.co.uk/languages reached 400,000 unique users - an increase of 150% on the same period a year ago.

LANGUAGES ON SKY TV

While back we reported on the existence of a French language television channel (TV5) available to those with Sky TV subscriptions. It is with pleasure that we can now announce the appearance of a German language channel (DW-TV) and a Spanish one (TVEi). All three provide round-the-clock programmes of a generally serious nature (news, documentaries) mixed with a few more light-hearted ones. Best of the bunch in my opinion is the French, followed by the Spanish, then the German (because half its output is in English). These channels broadcast on a European basis, that is to say the programmes transmitted are compiled from national channels for the benefit of a European audience.

Here are the details:

Channel 825 TV5 (French)

Channel 834 DW-TV (German)

Channel 835 TVEi (Spanish)

For those with access to the Internet, one way of getting at programme information (there must be others) is at the following websites:

www.tv5.org/TV5Site/programmes/guide_programmes.php (French)

www.dw-world.de (German)

www.rtve.es/tve/programa/avan3/tv3_fr.htm (Spanish)

Editor

THE STANDING COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

When, after the York Conference in 2003, Keith Richards invited me to chair the SCE, I was very pleased to accept, having enjoyed membership of this Sub-Committee of the NEC for some time. Now, several months later, I find myself faced with questions from the membership, one of which is outstanding:

“What is the SCE?”

I found that I was not altogether sure when and how it had started. However, I knew who could enlighten me; I turned to Len Street, who was able to provide the answers to my questions. In 1996, when he was first a member of the NEC, he felt a deep concern about the lack of discussion about U3A learning. Conference in those days concentrated on matters of Constitution and all its attendant debate, while purely educational matters were seldom discussed by the NEC, absorbed as they were by other issues. Len, with NEC and other colleagues, formed the Standing

Committee for Education, with the agreement of the NEC. Its declared role was:

- To make recommendations to NEC on implementation of educational policy
- To provide support to the U3As in their educational role

At the 1996 Edinburgh Conference the newly-fledged SCE circulated a paper outlining its role, its progress to date and requesting conference delegates to give their views and suggestions., which, with their usual enthusiasm, they did.

In December 1996, the SCE agreed its Mission Statement:

The Standing Committee for Education seeks to act as a focus for the educational activities of the whole Third Age Movement and, in so doing, help U3As provide a full range of learning opportunities for their members.

It will do this by:

- providing 'back-up' resources at the National Office
- distributing information about sources and courses
- organising workshops, training programmes and field days
- issuing guidance notes
- disseminating good practice
- acting as a source of advice
- developing links with other educational organisations and
- continuing support for the existing Networks and encouraging new ones to be formed.

From these beginnings came the Resource Centre, now so well-used by U3As all over the UK, the growth of the Study Group Networks (now the Subject Networks), to a list of over forty subjects, the creation of annual Summer Schools, at first tutored by Study Group Network Co-ordinators, who are now joined by other U3A tutors, all volunteers, Study Group Leader support days, run by the Network Co-ordinators, the publication of Sources, On-Line Courses, shared with U3A in Australia, the Shared Learning Projects in London, now spreading out into other localities in the UK, the Learning Support Network and the pilot project for a Virtual U3A. The SCE's input to Conference has grown and is appreciated by the membership; our links with other educational organisations are strong; there is always discussion of educational matters at NEC meetings.

There is a small working group responsible for each one of these components of the Learning Support "Package" offered by SCE. In addition, SCE members are available to offer help, when required, to U3As or Regions who are planning their own Study Days and similar events.

In all these activities, the SCE strives to offer support of a practical nature, which is appropriate to the needs of U3As, their Group Leaders and their learners. The results of the current Survey of Learning,

when they are available, will be invaluable to us: they should give us an up-to-date insight into the different learning modes currently used in U3As and will help us to continue to "encourage individual members to further their learning as far as they wish – emphasising *how to learn* rather than *what to learn*", as the very first SCE expressed it back in 1996.

Finally, the Standing Committee for Education exists to support members of all U3As; I am proud to have been asked to chair the SCE, which will continue its work as enthusiastically as ever. I hope that the question "What is the SCE?" will become less necessary as a result of this article.

Shirley Thew
Chairman, SCE

RESOURCE CENTRE NEWS

We have two items that may be of interest to U3A committee members. The first is a thirty-minute video from the Charity Commission on the role and responsibility of charity trustees. It comes with an accompanying booklet and is entitled 'It's a question of trust'. For new committee members it may be a helpful introduction to the range of responsibilities they have taken on.



useful hints and tips.

The video runs for 29 minutes and was first shown as a BBC television programme.

Groups studying current affairs have shown considerable interest in the videos we have on Islam. As our lives are increasingly affected by threats of terrorism it is clear that many people want to know more about the religion and its history. With this in mind I have bought the BBC series of six videos 'Living Islam'. This deals with the faith and culture of Islam and focuses on what it means to be a Muslim today.

We already have videos on the history of Islam in the 'Long Search' series and 'The Triumph of the

West' series. For a full list of all our stock on this subject please contact the Resource Centre.

OPERA

Over the past year I have been buying operas on DVD at the request of various opera group leaders. I still have our wide collection on video and will continue to purchase these but I know that many people prefer DVD, not least because they are guaranteed English subtitles. I have the Ring Cycle in both formats but most of the DVDs in the collection are not duplicates of the videos we hold.

PHILOSOPHY

The BBC 'Great Philosophers' series of videos is very heavily borrowed so, to avoid waiting lists building up, we now have a second copy of every video. We also have new philosophy videos on Existentialism, Krasny and a two volume set on the scientist-philosopher Albert Einstein.

We also have a double audiocassette pack by Alain De Botton entitled *Consolations of Philosophy*. In this he interprets contemporary problems through the thoughts of various philosophers from Socrates to Nietzsche, and relates their thinking to everyday aspects of modern life.

LANGUAGES

It is often difficult to find language-teaching videos suitable for adults as most material is made for use in schools. However, a U3A Spanish group have highly recommended the Channel 4 series for older teenagers known as EXTRA. The programmes are similar in content to the American comedy 'Friends' and the group have found them both amusing and instructional. There are 3 videos in Spanish and two each in French and German and each video contains four 25-minute programmes.

The language learning is structured and the level would probably be suitable for intermediate groups rather than complete beginners. I have also bought extra copies of our very popular 'Talk French' and 'Talk German' packs as these are suitable for adult beginner use and are always in high demand from our borrowers.

ANTIQUES

We have a new set of six antiques videos. Each lasts for 60 minutes and covers one subject in detail. They include silver, clocks, glass and furniture. Sotheby's experts explain how to recognise quality and how you can afford to collect interesting and unusual items. With slide sets and videos we now have 25 items on our antiques list and a copy will be sent to any group leader who contacts the Resource Centre.

USER SURVEY

Our User Survey was mentioned in the February issue of SOURCES. Very many thanks to everyone who returned completed forms with their loans. The information we were able to gather on the type of media preferred and the way people like to order from us will be relevant in future planning of staff and purchase of stock. For the first time we were able to discover how quickly our parcels arrive after they are sent out and to our astonishment we found that 63% arrived within 2 days and 94% had arrived by the fourth day. As we send everything second class, to save money, this seems to be wonderful service from the Royal Mail. We also asked how valuable the material borrowed was for group study, 80% said it was either excellent or very useful with only 3% of respondents claiming it to be of little use.

We asked if our users had any other sources of non-book resources available to them and discovered that a third of them had nothing at all. Less than half had public libraries that supplied anything other than books.

We asked users to add further comments relating to any other specific problems they had. One of the most common complaints was that we often have only one copy of an item available for loan. This is mainly due to the very high cost of some educational videos and we are doing our best to buy second copies of all the most popular material while we have three years of funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

One final point; some of you may have seen the poster sent to all U3A Business Secretaries advertising the Resource Centre, with information on the back about SOURCES and the Subject Networks. We have extra copies of the poster and if any group leaders would like a copy to display at their meetings or to keep in an information file they can apply to the Resource centre at the address below.

*Elizabeth Gibson, Resource Centre Manager, Third Age Trust
The Old Municipal Buildings, 19 East Street Bromley Kent
BR1 1QH
Tel :020 8315 0199 (Tuesdays and Thursdays only)
E-mail: resource.centre@u3a.org.uk*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SCIENCE

Seminar: Science, Transport & Trade (Abergavenny)
 Mon 21st to Thurs 24th June 2004
 Details: Ken Bates 0115-9241156

SUMMER SCHOOLS 2004

University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham
 I. Tuesday 20th – Friday 23rd July
 II. Tuesday 27th – Friday 30th July

On Summer School I only there is some accommodation available for people wishing to explore Cheltenham
 Details: National Office

RIDINGS REGION OPEN DAY

Askham Bryan College
 5th August 2004
 Contact: Dave Horner 01482 847307

UK U3A ONLINE COURSES 2004

Full details and application forms can be found on the National U3A Web site at www.u3a.org.uk/~courses/online

TUTORED COURSES [Fee £10 per course]

These have 8 Units issued weekly in which participants need to work at least 5 hours each week, in collaboration with each other and the tutor.

From 19 Sept	ITALIAN ART 1400-1600 VENICE AND HER ARTISTS WRITING FOR PUBLICATION (2-weekly)
From 26 Sept	VISITING ARTISTS IN ROME WRITE TO GOOD EFFECT
From 3 Oct	DIGITAL IMAGING [New] GARDEN HISTORY [New]
From 17 Oct	CREATIVE WRITING - POETRY

CREATIVE WRITING – FICTION
 CREATIVE WRITING – SHORT STORIES
 DESIGN IN YOUR LIFE
 ARTISTS OF SPAIN

UNDERSTANDING COMPUTERS [this has a tutor for discussion only]

COURSE FRAMEWORKS [Free]

These are topics suitable for group study but in note form only. Suggestions are given on how to search the web to fill out the details.

GENETICS
 LIGHTHOUSES

UNTUTORED COURSES for Individuals or for Group Leaders [Fee £5 per course]

The courses are written for tutoring, so include questions to students which require interaction and response. They are available for downloading only in their original form.

The two new courses can be downloaded as they are being issued at weekly intervals. The others above are available at any time as well as the following:

The Third Age Trust holds the copyright of all the above courses; they must not be circulated without permission.

LINKS TO OTHER Free COURSE MATERIAL

WARTIME REMINISCENCES
 MEDIEVAL TIMBER-FRAMED HOUSES
 VICTORIAN ART

AUSTRALIAN ONLINE COURSES

**Five places are reserved on each for UK members of U3A.
 Apply as above.**

Course	Numbers	Start	End	Units	Course Leader
Religions of the World	5-15	7 Jun 2004	18 Sep 2004	8	Gwen Banks
Autobiography and Journalling	10-15	5 Jul 2004	16 Oct 2004	8	Cate Russell

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