

From the Chair

Where have the weeks gone since Enrolment Day? It is true what they say - "Time goes fast when you are having fun!"

Our membership is growing. At the last count we had two hundred and twenty-five members, a figure which will probably be out-of-date by the time you are reading this.

Our interest groups continue to go with a swing, thanks to our group leaders once again. Not everybody feels able or is prepared to lead a group but there are other ways of becoming more involved, such as assisting a group leader or joining the committee. Although it is four months until our AGM in April 2009, it is perhaps time to point out that we will need volunteers. By next April, I will have completed my third year as chair as has Helen Grahame as vice-chair. Therefore, according to the constitution, we must stand down. This means replacements are needed. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in office - never a dull moment - but, thanks to the friendship and support of all of you, I can recommend it to my successor. It should be pointed out that anyone volunteering need not "sign up" for the full three years, a year at a time would do. Please think about it!

In the meantime, on behalf of the committee, best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a healthy and rewarding New Year!

Louise Goldsack

U3A in Scotland



During the last year the number of U3As in Scotland has grown from twenty to twenty-eight and there are likely to be several more coming into being in 2009. For this we have to thank Robina Hutton, who for the three years until September of this year represented Scotland as a Trustee on the Third Age Trust (the British body to whom in the UK we are all affiliated). That post is now held by Bill Waugh of East Lothian U3A (formerly founding chair of Lochaber in the Fort William area). Robina, a founder member of Tweeddale U3A is continuing the good work as Development Officer in Scotland, having obtained funding from the Third Age Trust to make this possible.

In early November a retirement Show was held in Glasgow, which Louise and I attended to help at the U3A stall.

We were privileged in meeting Barbara Lewis, one of the two Third Age Trust Vice Chair Persons. She was suffering from a recent bad fall but that did not prevent her from taking a lead in the recruitment drive. We spoke to a large number of visitors many of whom had not previously heard of the U3A. The Glasgow U3A 'folded' last year because it represented a city area from which most residents had moved but it was encouraging to speak to a large number from the greater Glasgow area who were keen to join our ranks and who have signed up to attend a meeting in Glasgow in January. From this it is envisaged that there will be a cluster of new areas, perhaps under a centralised committee, which will offer the kind of activities which we enjoy here. East Kilbride and East Renfrewshire are among the eight new U3As mentioned above and we enjoyed meeting some of their committees along with members from Edinburgh who were on the same mission as we were. Our wish wish to extend to others the benefits which we take for granted, justifies our membership of U3A in Scotland. Perhaps we should be contributing more than the fifteen pence per member which we contribute each year from our subscriptions.

Ian Goldsack



Eyemouth Lit & Art

As many of you will be aware, the Literary and Arts Society was unable to form a committee at its Annual General Meeting in April or its subsequent Extraordinary General Meeting in September. Their decision was to pass on to us their share of the equipment owned jointly with the East Berwickshire U3A and their remaining funds. After certain commitments have been met, this amounts in round figures to about £1.000.

The committee expresses its gratitude to the former Literary and Arts Society, many of whom are U3A members, for putting their confidence in us. We have decided to use a portion of the funds to purchase equipment which would allow Power Point Presentations at U3A meetings (restricted to trained users). We will keep the remainder as a designated fund to enable an Open Meeting to be held at a time of the year when, with lighter nights, members would feel willing to attend in the early evening. A modest entrance fee would be charged thus maintaining the possibility of this becoming an annual lecture by a speaker of national standing.

Would members please suggest suitable speakers and the best time of year. The Secretary would also like to hear from volunteers to be in charge of Power Point Presentations.

Ian Goldsack

RUSSIA 2008

I came away from my first visit to Russia with such mixed feelings. Like most of us, I was delighted when the Berlin Wall came down and even more when Russia announced Perestroika. At last, I thought, Russia can join the rest of us in a civilized and peaceful Europe. By the end of my trip on a riverboat from Moscow to St. Petersburg I realised that things are nearly as bad as ever.

The only Russians we talked to at length were our guides, and there were different ones at all the places we visited on our river journey. They were all women, very highly educated and speaking perfect English. Several were university lecturers. When questioned, we learned that their monthly salary was £250 and that providing food for their families was difficult without constant trips to their “dachas” in the countryside where they can grow their own vegetables. At one point I nipped into a local (very ordinary and non-tourist) restaurant and saw that the menu for lunch cost ten pounds in our money. How on earth are they managing?

But it was the often expressed resentment against the West that was the biggest surprise. “Why is the West so against us?” we were asked. It is only when one takes on board the fact that all the information they are receiving through television and the newspapers is government controlled that this makes sense. Communism is still very much alive and kicking in Russia today.

Yes, they resent the new rich of whom we saw plenty of examples when we visited the Chinese Circus in Moscow. This group live in palatial houses on the Finnish border or else have emigrated to London! In contrast the educated classes are dreaming of owning their first car whilst still living cheek

by jowl with hundreds of families in vast concrete blocks fifteen storeys high with no trees or greenery in sight. The roads – narrow and full of potholes – are frequently grid-locked as motorists travel too and from work. And to add insult to injury, everything must come to a stop when one of Putin’s ministers leaves work with motorcycle escort and sirens screaming in order to go home for lunch. Our bus took three hours to make the short journey from the airport to the riverboat.

What were the good things? First of all, the women guards sitting in the exhibition galleries at the various museums are well dressed and pleasant. I remember how it was in East Berlin twenty years ago with guards in cheap uniforms and all uniformly grim-faced. Big efforts are being made to bring all the tourist destinations up to European standards. Plenty of good clean loos are to be found nowadays.

Best of all, at each destination, groups of singers came out to entertain us. The unaccompanied singing is as marvelous as ever, especially so when it takes place in a renovated church setting so that one can hear gorgeous music whilst enjoying the serene beauty of the icons in the luminous gold that surround you.

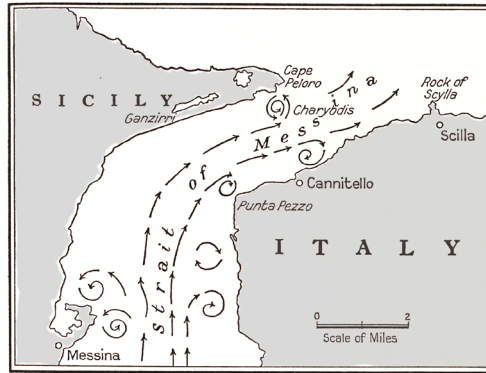
Jan Conway



Ships That Pass In The Night

Most people will be familiar with the expression - "between a rock and a hard place" which is a modern take on the phrase "between Scylla and Charybdis", twin dangers the legendary Odysseus (Ulysses) was warned about on his ten year journey back home to Ithaca after the Trojan War. Scylla refers to the hazardous rocks on the 'toe' of Italy and Charybdis is a whirlpool opposite, on the Sicilian side of the Messina Strait some two miles wide at its narrowest point. Up to the late eighteenth century, the whirlpool was a real menace to shipping and it must have been terrifying to superstitious seamen well over three thousand years ago.

This summer we were on a cruise that was to take us eventually into the Black Sea. After a day in Naples, we left on the Friday evening, our next port of call being Thera (Santorini) on the Sunday, which meant we had a relaxing Saturday at sea ahead of us. However, on the Saturday morning (long before sunrise) awakened by our alarm clock, we were up on deck because our ship was due to pass through the Strait of Messina and we wanted to be part of it. Only one other passenger it seemed had decided to do the same. We were hardly in the same situation as Odysseus and his companions as we were wonderfully protected in our large vessel with powerful engines compared with a boat powered by oarsmen but we still needed a pilot on board to complete this section. The ship had come to a halt awaiting the pilot's arrival. We gazed



ahead trying to make out from the lights where the passage between Sicily and Italy lay. At last, we were moving again and as we approached the Strait we could see strange lines of ripples spreading across the channel and the surface of the water had a broken or "tidal" look about it. This area is actually one of the very few places in the Mediterranean where a marked tidal action is experienced. This must surely have added to the terror of Odysseus and his men. We stayed up on deck for quite some time,

indeed until the pilot left our ship, and we left those on the bridge to continue with their work unsupervised.

Some twelve days later, on the third last day of our cruise, we were making for Palermo. Somehow we had thought in advance that we would come round Sicily clockwise but it seemed the quickest route was via the Strait of Messina. Our approach was again at night but on the respectable side of midnight. The decks were crowded with passengers. Heading north, we sailed close to the Italian coast, aware how steeply the land rose from the sea. Again, it was a fascinating experience shared with so many this time. We wondered how many on board were thinking about the legendary sailor and his perilous voyage more than three thousand years ago.

Now, reading "The Odyssey" in our Classics in Translation class, I am reminded of two very memorable nights this past summer.

Louise Goldsack

Digi Switch or Did You Switch ? The Big Analogue Digital Switch Off !

By the time you read this, the great analogue TV switch-off will have taken place and you will know whether or not you have been affected. Here I hope to clarify some issues we discussed in Michael Moore's Digital TV Forums and which arose in the debate that he initiated in Westminster Hall 14th October.

Why the change? This, the 'Analogue Sunset', is a worldwide operation. Analogue terrestrial TV, for example from the Selkirk or Ayton transmitters, occupies a wide range of radio frequencies. Digital TV provides as good, or even better services, using only a very narrow band of frequencies. The main reason for the switch-off of analogue TV is to make way for more terrestrial communications services, but it is not yet known exactly what those might be. The Government will auction off the vacated frequencies to any who can make use of them, usually for commercial purposes and it is expected that the emergency services will also benefit from the change-over. The revenue will go to the Exchequer. Every analogue TV set and video recorder has to be provided with a special box or replaced in order to receive digital signals, whether from terrestrial, satellite or other transmitters, such as cable. Ofcom estimates that about 10 million households in the UK will be forced to make the change; but the cost is incalculable.

We live in the first large area in which analogue TV has been switched off and where almost everyone other than those already receiving a digital signal, has been affected. While those receiving digital signals from Selkirk get the full range of 48 channels, Ayton will provide only 20 channels,

what Michael Moore has dubbed "Freeview Lite". You may remember being invited to sign his petition to Government protesting the unfairness of this – but to no avail. Government and Ofcom are committed to ensuring that the digital coverage for public service broadcasts at least matches that of the current analogue services, but, apparently, is in no position to compel commercial broadcasters to cover the entire country. The loss of Borders ITV News is another example of where commercial considerations override the public

I need not describe the help available to eligible people because all should have received at least one or even three, mail shots from the Digital Help Scheme. A special Act of Parliament was passed last year allowing individuals' social security information to be passed to the BBC and 'related parties' to enable this contact to be made. Some people are eligible for free equipment and help for a year after switchover, while others can get the same for a fee of £40. Freeview boxes are available retail for as little as £18 and, unless one needs help in installing or retuning the box from time to time, this may be the preferred option. The Help Scheme is funded by the recent increase in the TV Licence. As of 12th November, the take-up of the Help Scheme has been below expectations. Over 16 thousand people in the Borders Region are eligible for help, but only 2.5 thousand have elected to receive help.

Sky TV was awarded the contract to run the Help Scheme in the Borders but the next contract, to provide help in the West Country, will go to Freeview. While on the subject of Sky TV, the Minister, Barbara Follett, has made it very clear that recipients of help from the Digital Switchover Help Scheme will not receive marketing material from Sky TV unless they have requested it. The Sky offer includes a free

trial of programmes in addition to the standard set. People who elected to receive help from the Scheme and choose Sky will be asked if they wish to subscribe to the additional programmes at the end of the trial period and, unless they agree, the additional programmes will be withdrawn and there will be no additional subscriptions. The arrangements for others buying Sky TV are different, they will be presumed to want to continue to receive the added programmes and will be charged unless they decide to opt out.

The Minister has promised that, if anyone eligible for the Help Scheme finds that their existing digital boxes become obsolete or stops working, they will be able to get a box either for £40 or for free.

Parallel to the Switchover Help Scheme, there is a voluntary support scheme, called "Digital Outreach", set up by Age Concern, Help the Aged, and Community Service Volunteers, to provide free advice and help to anyone not covered by the Digital Switchover help Scheme. BAVS supports this in our area. The whole operation is being monitored by the Scottish Consumer Council who have appointed a researcher to collect viewers' experiences so that lessons of this operation are made available to those organising the next switch-off.

FFR



Christian Hospital, Quetta, Pakistan

I arrived in Pakistan in 1967 and joined the local Christian Hospital where I worked for the following 23 years. The hospital was founded in 1886 but was destroyed in the earthquake of 1935. Subsequently it was rebuilt and reopened in around 1940. It is one of several hospitals in the town, situated in the province of Baluchistan and 75 miles from the Afghan border. Quetta lies at 5500ft in a valley and is surrounded by four mountains each reaching 11,000ft. The countryside is arid and agriculture is possible only where tube-well water is available.

Weather was delightful in spring and autumn, summer was hot and dry and winter was bitterly cold with snow and icy winds. There was very little rainfall.

The hospital served the poorer local people and the nomadic tribes who travelled from the north of Afghanistan to the Indus valley in southern Pakistan for the winter months and returned for the summer. They moved in camel caravans and made their camps in the barren countryside around the town, accompanied by their flocks of sheep, goats and poultry. They were courteous, dignified and were a pleasure to treat.

The hospital was a two-storey building in the town. It had over one hundred beds and about 20 detached private rooms. The latter each had a small walled courtyard where the whole family could stay. Outpatients were seen daily except Sundays and work finished when everyone had been attended to, so from morning till early afternoon the men were seen by male doctors and the women and children by female doctors. Similarly men were nursed by male nurses and women and children by female nurses. The wards were

spartan but clean - with concrete floors. Beds were metal with only a mattress, pillow and quilt - no bed linen. Food had to be brought in by relatives as none was provided by the hospital. As there was no heating, during my early years there, the hospital closed for the winter months and the staff moved down to the warmer plains of Sind Province. There "eye camps" were held and everyone developed some skill in performing eye operations, mainly the removal of cataracts.

My work was concerned with women and children. I saw outpatients, did ward rounds and carried out any surgery for which we had facilities. The nurses, though fully trained, were kept up-to-date with revision lectures.

Conditions seen were not dissimilar to what we have here. Cancers used to present usually in the advanced stages. TB in the infectious stage was treated at the two sanatoria in the town but we saw the chronic stages of the disease which largely affected bone with overlying abscesses. Children were seen mainly with diarrhoea and vomiting but there was a high incidence of urinary bladder stones, some of which were at least the size of a golf ball.

There was a pharmacy, an X-ray unit and a basic laboratory and with this set-up quite major surgery was carried out in the two operating theatres. The patients were robust and the success rate good, considering the facilities available. Surgical dressings would be removed to show off the wound and stitches to visitors and even this did not seem to increase the rate of post-operative infection!

We ran an ante-natal clinic but most deliveries were at home, conducted by the midwives. Only cases for Caesarean operations would be admitted. Among the nomadic tribes hospital admission was possible only if it did not inter-

rupt the movement of the tribe. Any disability causing lack of mobility could not be tolerated.

Nursing staff were almost entirely from Punjab province as in Baluchistan the Christian population was a tiny minority. The nurses were accommodated in quarters at the hospital where they had full board and lodgings.

The hospital had a chapel where prayers would be said each morning before work began.

After 24 years in Quetta my husband retired and we moved to the UK, settling in the Borders. I hear that the Christian Hospital has increased in size due to the influx of Afghan refugees but is still functioning and busy.

S.C. Patel



GEOLOGY GROUP

The climate of the Earth is always changing. In the past it has been altered as a result of natural causes over millions of years as in the movement of the tectonic plates and the formation of new continents.

On the other hand, changes can take place over a much shorter period. Such a case was when the cataclysmic impact of a meteorite known as K-2 created the huge crater at Chixilub, in Yucatan, Mexico, at the same time as there were massive volcanic eruptions happening in the Deccan region of India. Both these catastrophes would have generated huge earthquakes, tsunamis and acid rain contributing to darkened skies and pollution of the Earth's atmosphere and caused temperatures to fall. These events, which happened 65 Million years ago, are said to have hastened the extinction of the

dinosaurs and many other species.

The earth too, has undergone long periods being covered partially with ice sheets. The most recent Ice Age came to an end ten thousand years ago although the effect of this enormous ice-sheet is still being seen today. Parts of the Highlands of Scotland are rising by about 3mm. per year as a result of post-glacial rebound.

The results of these Earth movements and climate changes are at the forefront of our discussions during the geology group field trips. All around us we can see the power of the natural forces which have changed our planet over billions of years. When we walk round the cliffs between Eyemouth and Burnmouth we see rocks (formed under a long lost ocean) which are contorted and set upright by the force of two plates colliding.

Ancient volcanoes and lava flows are evidence of catastrophic incidents in the distant past, whilst red sandstone rocks are indicative of arid, hot deserts and a totally different climate. The boulder clay topping the cliffs and forming the mud slides seen all around the coast are the remnants of the last 'Ice Age'. We can see too, the evidence of the constant erosion of the land by the sea and storms without leaving the confines of Eyemouth

On our many trips over the Border, to Berwick, Cocklawburn and Spittal, we have found evidence of a time, the Carboniferous Period, when the land was experiencing an Equatorial climate. During this period, over three million years ago, the great limestone beds and coal seams were being formed. We have marvelled over the traces left of strange marine fossils found in the numerous limestone strata and the fossilised roots of gigantic trees which are among the numer-

ous plants which created the coal seams.

However, we are made very aware by newspaper reports and the media that since the Industrial Revolution, human activity and the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, gas and oil have sadly depleted these resources and had an increasingly detrimental effect on the Earth's atmosphere... Although global warming may make catastrophic changes happen more rapidly, there is no doubt that Planet Earth will continue to undergo changes to its climate. Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions will still occur, glaciers may retreat or even disappear and sea levels will continue to rise.

In 1785, James Hutton, who is known as the founder of modern Geology, presented his treatise "The Theory of the Earth" in which he stated that the Earth was of a great age with no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end. This theory was contrary to all biblical teaching of that period and was held in ridicule by many of his peers who still believed that the planet was only 6000 years old and that fossils were in the rocks as a result of The Great Flood in the Bible.

However, Hutton did not have the benefit of the Cambridge University computer program Time Trek which has been devised to predict the tectonic plate movements of our planet. According to this program, the Atlantic Ocean will continue to widen, the Mediterranean Sea will close and 200 million years from now, Antarctica will straddle the Equator. Many million years later the Earth may lose its dynamic drive and start to 'die' becoming as inactive as Venus or Mars. It is unlikely that Homo sapiens will be around then.

Despite these prophecies of doom and gloom, our Planet Earth remains a magical place, full of natural wonders,

fascinating scenery and for the Geology Group, great rocks.
Why not join us when we go on the trail of fossils next Spring?

Jenny Dougal



Summer Memories

This year we spent our holiday based in a chalet at Kinlochleven with our dog. The weather was very mixed during the first week but the second was beautiful and warm, although it was in September. We had breakfast on our verandah with a view of the Paps of Glencoe and in the evening we enjoyed our wine and cheese with biscuits there. There was a most beautiful sunset one evening as we looked up towards Fort William. We took the opportunity to walk part of the West Highland Way in the part of Glencoe known as "The Devil's Staircase". It was a busy walk as we met all kinds of people enjoying the scenery, most of them young, doing the full distance and eager to know how much further it was to the top.

Now we are back into the full swing of U3A activities, enjoying meeting up again with our friends and catching up on their memories.

Margaret Wood

DIY

JH. The week we came back from our honeymoon and were living in my parents' flat I went to a house agent to get something of our own. They were distinctly unfriendly. "Have you nothing at all?" I asked. "Well, there is a house near the World's End, not in very good nick".

So we became the owners of an 1850s 4-story terrace house, two rooms on each floor with a kitchen and bathroom stuck out at the back. No electricity. Outside loo. Unoccupied for two years with the junk mail stretching to the end of the passage. Half the doors used as darts boards. Planning blight. Clearly a case for DIY after we found a builder to do the basics.

CH. *My mother-in-law Hilda came down from Lochaber to see the house, before the work was done, on a dark and foggy November day. Never have you seen a mother more shocked at what her daughter had let herself in for; but Jeannie and I were starry-eyed and blissful. When the builders came in and Jeannie put a shilling in the meter to get gas for a cuppa and some light it ran out in two minutes. The pipe was broken under the floor. I was lucky to have a very practical wife!*

JH. After the builder had repaired the roof and the plumbing, and concreted the rotting basement floor, and removed one of the outside doors from the 7'6" by 6'6" kitchen, but before they had finished, we moved in.

CH. *There had been so much rubble in the bath that neither the surveyor nor the builder could see if it was usable. It was.*

JH. So I started my new job. Christopher bought paint, brushes, sandpaper, scrapers and wallpaper. I sanded and scraped away, and asked for tips at the tea-breaks. I became very good at removing door handles and then keeping a large

screwdriver in my overall pocket to get in and out. In the spring the builders left but my job was far from done.

CH. *There were sixteen traceable layers of paint, varnish and wallpaper on the passage wall and it was a mammoth job to get them all off. When a friend in the next street stripped their wall bare all the plaster fell off and two months' work was wasted but Jeannie was much too good a workman for anything like that to happen if I did not interfere too much.*

JH. Two years later so much was done that we thought we could get a carpet, a nice new carpet, for the stairs and the by now L-shaped living room but there was a problem. The "Income Tax" caught up a year, so it was another year before we had the magic silence of a carpeted floor but my mother now thought it a very nice house, and it was.

CH. *Some of the same carpet is on the floor in our third house, nearly fifty years later. Normally when Jeannie is painting she has a liberal sprinkling of paint on her overalls from head to foot, but when we were selling our first house (and the carpet was only four years old) she decided to repaint the ceiling without putting down dust-sheets. She had learnt to paint at Art School and she didn't spill a single drop.*

JH. After seven years at the World's End we moved to Wimbledon. We bought a large red brick Victorian house with no two windows alike to share with my parents-in-law as we did not think they should be all by themselves any longer. My mother-in-law christened the house "Sleeping Beauty's Castle" (much more romantic than "The Laurels") and it needed a lot of work. Deep brown varnished wallpaper and black paint. The in-laws were very tolerant of my choice of wallpaper and of course the woodwork was my baby again. White paint instead of black cheered it up a lot.

CH. *Jeannie alarmed many by traversing the scaffolding outside the house in the manner of a gibbon, but fortunately she was very sure footed/handed. There were many squirrels around the house who found some carpet felt we had in an attic very useful bedding. After I had retired I was up a long ladder putting a wooden end plate on an eave when I saw felt inside. With a long spinnaker pole I pulled out a sackful, ending with a bikini of Jeannie's that had disappeared twenty years before.*

JH. Lastly, as some of you know, we found our current Georgian house, whin with sandstone trimmings. It's our occupation for life trying to put it back in reasonable order and guess what I do – painting of course! Christopher has got rather better at taking windows out and putting them on an easel to make the job easier. With the pavilion and the garage that's about 450 panes done - only 250 to go - - -

Chris and Jeannie Heywood



And So to Australia

The Highlights of our trip to Oz (apart, of course, from visiting the family in Melbourne) was the week we spent in the "Red Centre" visiting Alice Springs, Kings Canyon and Uluru. We flew from Melbourne to "The Alice" (as we locals call it!) and collected our hired car at the airport.

The first thing that hit us was the heat, 39 degrees centegrade. The second was the discovery that the hire car was an automatic. Neither of us had ever driven

an automatic. A few trial circuits of the car park were necessary before we headed cautiously for the town.

The old telegraph station outside the town (next to the pool which gave the town its name) recreates the settlement's earliest years. The oldest building in the town itself was the "old town gaol" dating from 1909. The day we visited we were greeted by the guide resplendent in a Liverpool football shirt! Aussie born and bred, he had visited Britain on several occasions playing amateur rugby, particularly in Hull which he was careful to pronounce "ool". He told us that he was also the Alice town crier, which we found only too believable when he suddenly hailed a friend across the street. Another memorable visit was to the Royal Flying Doctor Service visitor centre (remember the "flying Doctor calling the Wallamboola Base" on the old steam radio home service?).

Leaving Alice Springs for our next stop at Kings Canyon we drove for about six hours along a dead straight road with unchanging scenery of red earth and spinifex as far as the eye could see. With uninspiring car radio and no tapes we were reduced in desperation to playing I-spy (sample I spy W.L. = white line) till we came at length to Kings Canyon Resort.

The big attraction here is the mighty Kings Canyon itself. Just before sunset we joined the other tourists making their way along the boardwalk to the viewing platform to see the canyon highlighted before us in the rays of the sun setting behind us. We watched in silence, the only sound being the whirring of cameras.

The next morning, we were up at dawn to drive

out of the canyon. One can either undertake a spectacular walk around the canyon's rim (six kilometres beginning with an almost perpendicular ascent) or, for the more elderly and infirm amongst us, an hour's gentle stroll along the valley floor and back. Guess which we did!

A notice at the start of both trails solemnly advised against starting without lashing on sunscreen, donning headgear and carrying litre bottles of water. An emergency telephone there served as an object lesson in heading the advice.

The grand finale of our journey to the Red Centre was the Kata Tjuta National Park, in which are Uluru (Ayer's Rock) and Kata Tjuta (The Olgas). This is the most visited site in Oz and if you are wondering whether it is all it is cracked up to be, yes it is. No photographs, however good, can prepare you for the experience of actually seeing for yourself the huge monolith rising up out of an empty plain, changing colour at every moment in the rays of the setting sun, while all around is empty desert and utter silence and stillness. Driving back along the interminable road to Alice, we were constantly craning our necks for a last glimpse.

Richard says, "Don't mention the flies", and I haven't even started on Singapore, Melbourne and Victoria yet! (Watch this space. Ed)

Pat Oldale



Lunch Club

Our thriving Lunch has a loyal following, our venues well received and the food good. With the change of date we no longer have to feel pressure to finish early. We are all looking forward to our Christmas gathering at Marshall Meadows, having already sampled their fare, we are expecting the same high standards again.

Would members please phone a week before the date of each meeting to discuss numbers and menus as the group has become too big to phone everyone individually.

Helen Grahame



**“Oh, - Shoes, To Set My Feet A Dancing, Dancing,
Dancing All My Cares Away”.**

We started the season off at the beginning of October with small classes due to late holidays etc. but now we have a regular 20+ at the Ceilidh Class and 18 - 20 at the Scottish Country Dancing. The emphasis again is on enjoyment and exercise, good for both body and mind. Laughter is the best medicine; the dancing is extra. Margaret Wood has proved her ability to take the Ceilidh Class by choosing her own selection of programme and music. John Armstrong is always on hand helping with the music player and helping new folk through dances. My personal thanks to both.

One of our new members attends an English Country Dance Class and we are hoping she will tutor us in the slightly different English Set Dances at the Ceilidh Class. Variety is the spice of life so if any of you feel like joining us, please do so or just come and watch.

My best wishes to everyone for a Mery Christmas and a Happy New Year. Yours in step,
Margaret McGovern



Table Tennis

Our two hour sessions in Hall Two of the Eyemouth Community Centre at 4,00 pm each Wednesday are great fun and keep us running around the tables. It is a moot point whether the standard is to be admired or deplored. Some manage a lively rally, and some of us indulge in very basic ping-pong – just getting our “eye in” you understand. Nevertheless it is always enjoyed by all and the level of hilarity generated is testament to that. Keeping the ball on the table can sometimes be a challenge and more effort seems to be used chasing round the room. Like the ball, hand and eye co-ordination can easily go astray. Perhaps you would like to join us?

Helen Grahame

Morning Rag

We've had a wonderful start to the new class of rag-ruggers in Burnmouth this autumn. Four interested ruggers have joined in sharing their knowledge and good ideas. A rug of some proportions is being created. This is a farmyard picture of a goose running through grass and flowers. It is being made from rags only. A particular husband whose identity will be kept a secret is still looking for his favourite shirts! Local charity shops are under pressure to produce good quality ladies tights! Is there no end to this madness?

On a more sober note, I have become a U3A resource user. I can access information which will help us in the group to extend our knowledge in all sorts of rug- making. I quote from the paper work sent to me.

The Resource Centre in the National Office in Bromley has a collection of non - book material available for all U3A groups to borrow free of charge, except for the cost of return postage. There are slides, videos, audio - cassettes, CDs and DVDs available in many subject areas. Lists on all subjects are available on request. This resource is priceless. There is such a great deal of knowledge out there from which we can all benefit. Being a new group leader, I feel supported by this Centre.

Anyone wishing to join our happy group please phone Maureen on 018907 81622 or 077486 74591. Bring your old man's favourite shirts to cut up into strips for weaving !!!!!

Maureen McLinden

Bird-Watching Group – Autumn 2008

We normally meet for bird-watching on the second Friday of each month at the Co-op car park in Eyemouth at 9.30 am (weather permitting). Before we set off for our trip in October, we saw gannets diving for fish and eiders in full winter plumage in Eyemouth Bay. Six of us went to Dundock Wood, in the grounds of The Hirsell. The weather was unpromising, but the rain stopped by the time we reached Coldstream. A cormorant and heron were sitting patiently by the side of the lake. There were many swans on the water and around twenty little grebe, fourteen of which were on a raft of weed in the middle of the water. We also saw tufted

duck, mallard and pochard. There were some pheasants and many of their chicks around in the hedgerows and on the paths. Some blackbirds and robins were about, and we heard long-tailed-tits. In addition to birds, we saw a grey squirrel in the woodland. There were many interesting fungi, including a white fungus covering a tree stump – it looked like foam.

Fourteen of us went on our November trip to Paxton House. We divided into two groups, and between each group we saw nuthatch, blue tits, great tits, coal tits, chaffinch, robins, wrens, dunnocks, goldcrest and woodpigeon from the squirrel hide. Along the Tweed we saw four little grebe, over twenty mallard, a goosander and a lone mute swan. There were fewer birds to be seen by the river than we would have expected, as the weather was stormy.

Our next outing is planned for Burnmouth (weather permitting) on Friday 14th December, meeting at the Co-op car park, Eyemouth at 9.30 am or the upper car park at Burnmouth around 10,00 am.

Ernie Cox

CHEAP RAIL FOR U3A

Tom went to look at a composting and recycling site in Golspie (Sutherland) last week. The return train fare from Edinburgh to Brora was £13. The reason for the cheapness is that Scotrail has a special fare for the over 55s between 20th October and 31st March next year at £15 to anywhere in Scotland. Since Tom has a senior railcard the cost to him was £13. You can book at 08457 550033.

Have Your Say

I listen regularly to Radio Scotland's Breakfast Programme and am tempted to take part but the probable effort has always put me off until recently. The debate was on hospital hygiene and I wanted to pass on my experience. Imagine my surprise when the phone was answered immediately by a charming operator, who asked me for my name, town and comments. She told me to wait a few moments. The presenter introduced me as Jim of Eyemouth and after panicking for a second I gave him my opinions. He then asked an ex-nurse what she thought. Kirsty was very supportive but I put the phone down before the presenter could say 'follow that'.

My simple comments on hygiene were that (a) no one seems to take charge, or responsibility, (b) pedals on the waste bins are not used, and the lids are lifted by possibly dirty hands, passing on infection and (c) the present preferred method of opening and shutting taps spreads infections. An easy experience, so let's have lots of participation from the "Jeans and Williams of Eyemouth".

Jim Robertson

Here is a tip from Janet & Malcolm Pattinson.

Beware of companies and organisations which advertise telephone numbers to themselves and charge you premium rates for the privilege. It is often possible to telephone them more cheaply, if you know the right number to use. These days,

working out the charge for a call almost requires a degree in Astrophysics but here is a web site that gives you the alternative, less expensive numbers, if they are available.

saynoto0870.com

As featured on BBC's Working Lunch TV programme, BBC Radio 2 and in The Guardian, Which Magazine, Readers Digest, and many more.

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Copy for the next Newsletter

Copy to me by the first week in March 2009 to be certain it is included in the Spring edition. email - jabobo@btinternet.com or 018907 52573

My thanks to all who contributed to this edition.
John Armstrong - ED.

Our thanks to **FANTASY PRINTS** for printing this News Letter



