

What makes you MAD & what makes you GLAD!

inside you say

American Friends of the
British Museum
Walter and Leonore Annenberg
Asahi Shimbun

U3A News

Spring 2008



Report from the Chair

In this edition of the Magazine you will read Jan Conway's account of the trip to see the Terracotta Warriors in London. Ian and I were part of the group and were very impressed by the exhibition. Those of us who went on the Thursday rather than the Wednesday were lucky as it was less crowded than the previous day and we felt that we had time to see everything on display and take our time doing so. I thought the conversion of the Reading Room to house the exhibition was amazing, since nothing had been removed but simply built over so that the wonderful figures and artefacts on display (which themselves had been excavated) were above the now entombed tables, bookcases etc. Where next, Jan?

Fenton Robb suggested that people could write about what made them mad. Mad is perhaps too strong a word for me here but I get annoyed that I cannot fit into the week all the activities (U3A rather than housework!) that I would like. If I could have a wish, I would have more than five weekdays. This is something I would not have wished for pre retirement. I wonder how many of you feel the same?

This year we have seen the addition to our programme of two language groups, Italian and Spanish, and the Environment Group. And still the suggestions keep coming.

Maria Chester, the leader of the Spanish Group, has come up with a number of ideas such as the History of Art (starting with Cave Paintings), Pre-Colombian Culture and Tropical and Caribbean Dancing – which would need a large room for obvious reasons!

Tom Conway is keen to give a series of talks on the early days of WW2 and he is also willing to give from four to six illustrated talks on World Religions to continue where he left off a year ago. He also mentions a Beach Group, which would be concerned with everything to do with pollution of the

ocean and its beaches and would of course involve periodical clean-ups. Cath Paxton is still looking for players for whist or other games. Finally, there is a suggestion of a Travel Group giving advice on travelling in different parts of the world. We would like some feedback from our readers on the viability of these proposals. Time being limited it might be necessary to restrict such groups to meeting fortnightly or monthly.

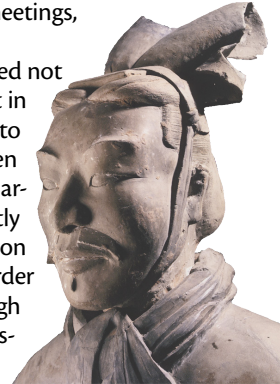
In conversation with Brian Bailey after his fascinating talk about Seretse Khama, Brian mentioned 'a close shave' on a flight during his and Ellie's time in Botswana and so I persuaded him to write about it. The African theme is continued by Eileen Anderson's very interesting account of her years in South Africa. Our thanks to all those who have given us articles and to John Armstrong of course for his expertise. Remember, the Magazine does not belong to the committee or group leaders but to all of you. So please contribute to our future editions.

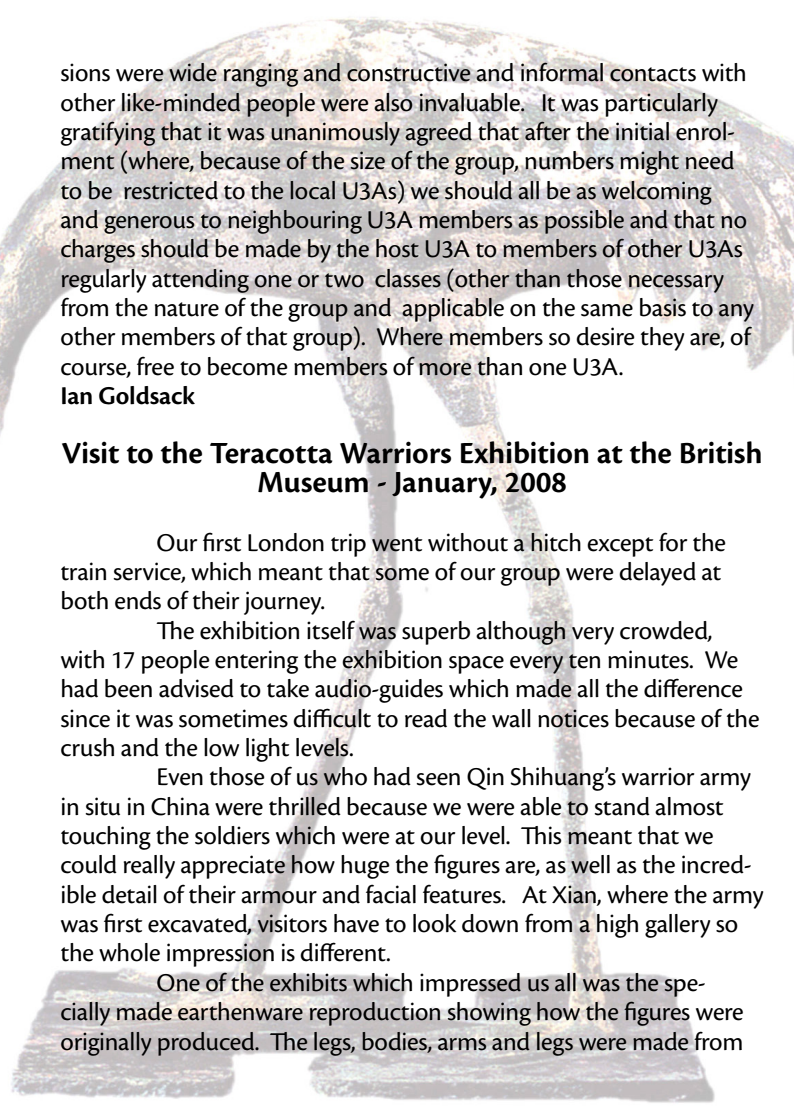
Louise Goldsack

U3A in Scotland - www.u3ascotland.org.uk

East Berwickshire U3A sends a delegate and an observer to U3A in Scotland which under its present constitution must meet at least twice a year in addition to organising an AGM. The committee of U3A in Scotland is elected at one of these meetings, traditionally at the close of the AGM.

At the October meeting it was decided not to meet centrally for our February meeting but in areas so as to allow more members than usual to be present and to facilitate discussions between neighbouring U3As on matters appropriate to areas rather than nationally. The new U3A recently set up in Galashiels kindly hosted our meeting on 25th February and were joined by the Four Border Abbeys (based in Kelso), East Lothian, Edinburgh Tweeddale (Peebles U3A) and ourselves. Discus-





sions were wide ranging and constructive and informal contacts with other like-minded people were also invaluable. It was particularly gratifying that it was unanimously agreed that after the initial enrolment (where, because of the size of the group, numbers might need to be restricted to the local U3As) we should all be as welcoming and generous to neighbouring U3A members as possible and that no charges should be made by the host U3A to members of other U3As regularly attending one or two classes (other than those necessary from the nature of the group and applicable on the same basis to any other members of that group). Where members so desire they are, of course, free to become members of more than one U3A.

Ian Goldsack

Visit to the Terracotta Warriors Exhibition at the British Museum - January, 2008

Our first London trip went without a hitch except for the train service, which meant that some of our group were delayed at both ends of their journey.

The exhibition itself was superb although very crowded, with 17 people entering the exhibition space every ten minutes. We had been advised to take audio-guides which made all the difference since it was sometimes difficult to read the wall notices because of the crush and the low light levels.

Even those of us who had seen Qin Shihuang's warrior army in situ in China were thrilled because we were able to stand almost touching the soldiers which were at our level. This meant that we could really appreciate how huge the figures are, as well as the incredible detail of their armour and facial features. At Xian, where the army was first excavated, visitors have to look down from a high gallery so the whole impression is different.

One of the exhibits which impressed us all was the specially made earthenware reproduction showing how the figures were originally produced. The legs, bodies, arms and legs were made from

separate moulds before they were joined together by the workers in what was probably the world's first production line more than two thousand years ago. Each warrior had a unique face - the theory being that the faces were all modelled from life.

We particularly liked the newly excavated figures of a wrestler and an acrobat together with a life-like full-size bronze heron with a fish in its beak. The famous half-size bronze model of the war-chariot in which Qin Shihuang rode to battle is too fragile to travel outside China, but a reproduction was on display together with four of the original half-size horses.

We had booked tickets before the exhibition opened. Thank goodness we did so, since all the advance tickets were sold out by the end of November though the exhibition will continue until 8th April.

Many of the party took the opportunity to stay a few days in London, and now that we have discovered some cheap hotels near the British Museum we are hoping to make another U3A London trip in future.

Jan Conway

Great company and great fun.

For me the timing of this visit was spot on, coming as it did immediately after the enforced jollifications and shut-downs of the Christmas and New Year holidays. All my dark winter blues were blown away completely. In London you are spoilt for choice. The organised London Walks I went on (www.walks.com), the British Museum, stuffed full of priceless objets d'arts, were great and the shopping is to die for but London prices - phew!

John Armstrong



Things that Make Us MAD & Things That Make Us GLAD

I get annoyed whenever I see people dropping litter in the street, especially when there is a rubbish bin nearby. I have seen adults as well as children (both rich and poor) {How do you tell? Ed.} doing this without a care in the world, - this appears to indicate a yobbish attitude and lack of consideration for others and certainly no care for their surrounding environment. Just think how much more inviting Eyemouth and other towns and cities would be if there was no litter.

I enjoy the Ceilidh class and John's films and feeding Bobo the dog { He's not a dog - he's a little boy - I keep telling you! Ed. } Keep it up U3A.

I hate piles of paper and other bumph that lie about the house, only to end up on the floor, and my having to bend down to pick them all up again - especially TAX papers!

Endlessly repeated TRAILERS on the BBC make my blood boil!

It is very easy to find things to complain about but when I walk along Eyemouth beach on a sunny day, I feel so happy and thankful I live in such a beautiful place.

What I am writing about is Dundee, where I was brought up, but the same can be said of most of our cities. Why have the planners permitted the mass destruction of the old buildings to be replaced by ugly nondescript monstrosities and forgotten the interests of the residents? All the Dundee Corporation buses used to leave from covered concrete stances on the south side of the Caird Hall building in sunny Shore Terrace and just in front of the City Arcade. This was the hub of the city. You could get a bus to any part of town from there. Now buses leave from streets all over the centre. When the new Tay Road Bridge was built in the 60s, the approach roads for the bridge needed space. At that time Dundee Docks came right up to Dock Street, which ran parallel to Shore Terrace, so they were filled in. The new

Regional building, Tayside House, as it's called, is Dundee's most hated building and casts its shadow over that part of town. That at one time happy hunting ground for so many shoppers is now a cold, dark wind-tunnel where no one goes willingly. Now I hear they are thinking of demolishing it. Is it all to do with big bucks and career politicians making a name for themselves? Do planners just make sure that the statutory rulebook is kept to and think of nothing else? The old buildings in the centre of Dundee, the ones that are left standing that is, are beautiful and rival those of London or Paris but they are not being made the most of. Is there no room for the aesthetics of the everyday living environment of ordinary people? Quite obviously the planners' idea of beauty is not the same as mine. Those new giant bronze statues in front of H. Samuel, at the foot of Reform Street, of Desperate Dan and Dennis the Menace are an embarrassment!

Well in the great scheme of things, more grumpy than mad: Why isn't 'The News' 'The News' anymore? George Alagiah tells you the news, he hands over to a reporter who tells you what Alagiah has just told you, then Alagiah asks him 'live' for the latest update - which isn't more than he just told you, usually against a night-time, totally dark (Film Noire?) background: usually New Scotland Yard, but too often somewhere like the Bahamas. Then you get a 'reaction' from some guy who may live close by, or a rent-an-expert type gets trotted out to discuss the implications based only on what we already know, then Alagiah asks the reporter to assess the 'mood of the community' no doubt based on a chat with some guy from The Sun in the Holiday Inn bar - - Aaaaargh! And if perchance the original bit of news was Scots - born, then just wait until 6.30 and a whole new team of people employed by BBC Scotland will do it all over again - - - Aaaaaaargh! PS, I suppose a wee increase in the licence fee is out of the question? And don't get me on to the misuse of 'decimate'!

I'm mad as Hell and I won't put up with this anymore! 'Spin' and the practice of duplicity that now pervade all aspects of modern life! My objection is not that spin is likely to mislead anyone. No one in his right mind, and out of the crèche, would believe a word of the rubbish that swills about in the media, the press releases, junk-mail, official statistics, the whingeing of the 'servants of the people'. What makes me mad is the brass neck of those who think that I, and the rest of the world, are so thick as to be taken in by the so transparent evasions, denials, window-dressing and patent lies that they dish out. It makes me even more mad when sycophantic hacks fall in behind these corrupt and corrupting people, and add their own gloss when retailing the lies to what they assume to be a naïve and gullible public. Spinning is now a required skill of everyone in public life, whether politician, civil servant or professional adviser in any field of pretended expertise. Knowledge and facts are just too old hat; what we are spoon-fed now, with appropriate background noise and atmospheric racket, are tinsel town fictions, 'wow' and 'feel good' factors and the populist spoofs that pass for 'scientific' evidence. All these corruptions are just signs of the times and we should be able to resign ourselves to them. Yes, I can put up with the lies, their shallowness, even their potential to mislead the innocent and I do not envy the cash, power and 'honours' that these liars aggregate, it's the insult to my intelligence that makes me 'mad as hell'

Further,

We don't like:

long faces
other people's grouses
gale force winds

We do like:

smiles
when flowers begin to bloom
silhouettes of trees in winter
lengthening daylight
when plans come together

when the electricity bill is less than expected
the smell of
new cut grass
wood smoke
newly brewed coffee
sawdust
the interior of wooden houses
the taste of
the first cup of tea in the morning
rice pudding made with clotted cream
A ring do-nut or a meringue? No seriously BOTH – preferably together!

PS I make delicious rice pudding in the bed you know! – It doubles up as an hot-water-bottle! - I must give you the recipe sometime! Ed.



Birdwatching Group – Feb 2008

Our first trip this season was to Dundock Wood and The Hirsle on a mild, somewhat misty day in October. Robin, wren and nuthatch were seen in the woods and there were many dozens of young pheasant in the set-aside fields nearby. Mute swan, little grebe, tufted duck, a goldeneye, mallard and two grey heron were present in the pond and we had two sightings of kestrel and partridge on the way home near Whitsome.

The November trip to Paxton House was on a sunny autumn day, when we had the good luck to see a red squirrel just below the big house. Many woodland birds were around, including blackbird, wren, chaffinch, great-, coal- and blue-tit. One jay and several nuthatch were seen at the squirrel hide. Along the Tweed we saw at least five great-crested grebe, some little grebe, including two juveniles, who were diving together like synchronised swimmers,

wigeon, mallard, tufted duck, a black-throated diver, cormorant and heron. Several skeins of pink-footed geese flew over towards the Northumberland coast. In one skein we counted some 60 birds.

January's outing was to Berwick-upon-Tweed, at low tide. We spotted heron, oystercatcher, goldeneye, tufted duck and mallard, as well as catching a good sighting of no fewer than three gosander swimming and feeding in the torrents below the old bridge.

February saw us in Eyemouth, on a mild if overcast day, walking from the harbour to the grounds of Netherbyres. As usual there were greater black-backed, herring and black-headed gulls as well as cormorant and eider duck in the bay, swimming with several grey seals. A dipper was seen in the Eye Water from the river walk just below Victoria Road. At Netherbyres we saw song thrush, a heron, greenfinch, goldfinch, tree creeper, blue tit, great tit, wren, blackbird and two great-spotted woodpecker. A pale cock-pheasant was seen nearby and we saw our first primrose in bloom and butterbur, aconite and snowdrop.

Ernie Cox

Dancing Classes



“Step we gaily, on we go”, sums up our ability at both the Ceilidh and the Scottish Country Dancing classes.

Twentyish dancers keep turning up for each weekly class and have a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. I can assure you again of a warm welcome, good company, good exercise and plenty of laughs as you see from our Christmas photographs.

There is still time to come and have a taste of what goes on. Non-dancers are welcome – even to sit and listen to the music. Hoping to say “Hello, come on in!”

Margaret McGovern – 018907 50350

The Discussion Group

Proceedings in the Discussion Group have been far too chaotic to report in detail, but the Northern Rock situation got a good going over once again. This situation, we saw, threatened to undermine the Government's resolution to contain the level of public borrowing (the PSBR) and we detected, in the attempt to sell off that Bank with Treasury-backed guarantees, a similar kind of 'off-balance sheet' trading that had got Northern Rock into such trouble. Opinions were divided between those who thought that, like any other company that could not meet its obligations to its creditors, it should have been put into administration, and those who felt that the Government had a duty to protect the interests of depositors, if not of investors. It was noted that the promised legislation to protect bank deposits at least to a higher level than at present has yet to be enacted.

This discussion led to a return visit to the topic of usury and the problems it generates – such as evictions of people for bad debt and house owners finding themselves with 'negative equity' in their homes. We noted that several faiths that opposed usury had little compunction about charging non-believers usuriously! We reflected on the economic outlook gloomily and considered that the recent rapid growth of personal debt was highly inflationary, that although the Bank's response to this should be an increase in interest rates, such an increase would have a depressing effect on the economy generally, and that it could exacerbate greatly the plight of

those who buy property more as an investment than as an abode. All this was against a clamour from trade and industry to reduce interest rates to stimulate the economy. In short, the danger is the old enemy 'stagflation', rising costs and falling productivity.

A frequent topic in the press is the issue of unruly children and the apparent failure of some parents to care for the moral development of their offspring. This led to a suggestion that, as in the 'public school' tradition, children should be removed from their families to be brought up within a strict disciplinary code in a residential institution in which self-reliance, self-discipline and the taking of personal responsibility were the rule, rather than the exception as it is alleged to be in many modern families. Associating such a regime as elitist, the group all but rejected it out of hand until it was pointed out that such a Spartan up-bringing was likely to better fit its victims for the real world than current State school systems.

At our most recent meeting, we were prompted by the most entertaining and interesting talk by Col. Furness on Gungreen House to consider tourism and the protection of historical buildings, both of which were often taken for granted to be 'good things'. We tried to discover the benefits accruing to communities where tourism had become the primary industry, only to find that these were likely to be confined to the catering and souvenir trades, and that they could be very transient. However, tourism could be a catalyst to settlement and that could have long term economic benefits. As to the value of historic houses, our morning's speaker had indicated that the serious interest in these was confined largely to the specialists and that the appeal of tales of smuggling would be of much greater public interest in the 'House of Secrets'. The growth of this 'Historical Thing' seemed unstoppable. Without decrying the efforts of conservationists to preserve parts of the past for the interest of future generations, some felt that perhaps this was getting a bit out of hand and absorbing more of the taxpayers' money than was really justified.

Carried away by all this legal talk, one member

retailed once again, his advocacy of the 15th c. Acts of Lawburrows of our James I to 'terrify evil doers...' who might threaten violence against others and 'put them in fear'. This is summary justice dispensed by a Sheriff as a civil action, the level of proof being on the balance of probability, no witness other than the pursuer is required. As soon as the Sheriff receives the writ from the pursuer, he is obliged to have it served immediately on the defender and to fix a date for a hearing. The pursuer may speak for himself without legal representation, neither the police nor the Procurator being involved. If the action is successful, the sheriff may require the defender to pay a surety into court against future bad behaviour. If the pursuer is again put in fear by the defender, the Sheriff may deliver half the surety to the Crown and half to the pursuer. The Sheriff may regard the repetition of the offence as a contempt of court and invite the Procurator Fiscal to pursue criminal proceedings. This is a cheap, very rapid and possibly more effective remedy than ASBOs and criminal proceedings. It was misapplied in recent times and failed because the pursuer failed to persuade the Sheriff that he had been put in fear by the defender.

The discussion turned to questions about the origins and need for law and the respective roles that conscience and moral advisors play in daily life. In absence of solidly based divine law of guidance, it was suggested that the 'Golden Rule' (do unto others...) provided a universal ethic that is accepted by most, if not all, faiths and by secularists world wide. Despite the Enlightenment, faith and the law have become increasingly entangled in English law. This now raises the questions about which faith and which laws, and the potential for further divisions forming in an already pluralist and divided society. We did not explore these issues further, but will no doubt return to them in later meetings.

Wisdom such as this, and more, is distilled in the Fishermen's Mission 1.30 on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays each month until 9th April. Light lunches are taken in the Mission by some at 12.45 or so. **FFR**

French Conversation ... et cetera

Remember cassette players? BBC Active at <http://www.bbcactive.com/languages> is selling off a whole range of languages cassettes, principally French, German, Italian and Spanish, but also some of the less popular languages at a 50% discount.

For those of you who want to assess your language skills the BBC website at <http://www.BBC.co.uk/languages> will do just that. Once you are in, enter the language of your choice and look for 'guage'. The rest is up to you.

The BBC 2 Learning Zone remains a great resource for those insomniacs among you or those who have never yet learned how to set the VCR. Pearson Books at <http://www.pearson-books.com/voucher> will get you a 50% discount off some books - I note that applies to the BBC Spanish course 'Suenos World Spanish' and maybe others too. You will need to enter Voucher code VR0025.

I have just found out that the French news channel France24 is available on channel 517 on Sky. It broadcasts both in French and English.

Another U3A has recommended highly a German website, [dradio.de](http://www.dradio.de) at <http://www.dradio.de> which provides news, culture, texts and other information.

As for French Conversation, the group will continue to meet at TEDDA at 2.30pm on Tuesday afternoons until Easter or thereabouts. We are persevering with and enjoying the challenge of discussions chosen by members or the group. We discovered last week that most of us have or had pets that have caused the odd bit of excitement or amusement. Recent topics have included youth hostelling, alternative medicine and authors/novels we particularly like. Plenty of variety there!

George Russell

Lunch Club

This group just goes from strength to strength with more foodies streaming into the diningroom all the time. Our Christmas lunch at Churches Hotel was excellent value and enjoyed by all. The January venue was at Reston, offering us very nicely cooked food and the latest lunch at the Craw was quite delicious. My rice pudding made with clotted cream, was to die for. Sheer indulgence {Yes! Ed.} We plan to keep it up all year. I have already been given an interesting list of venues. {By whom? Ed.} We are unlikely to need to repeat any this year with so many establishments out there to tempt us.

Helen Grahame

Music Appreciation

Well, time again to hit the computer keyboard and bring you up to date with our group. The January meeting was held late in the month in order to get over Christmas and New Year. It also got rid of most of January--not the best month of the year! As has been mentioned, the current theme of our Season is Folk Dance Music and Song of various countries. In January, Mary Tait presented a programme of German origin and Pat Oldale gave us a very interesting talk with musical demonstrations of old English Folk music. Both were much appreciated.

For our February meeting, the best attended this season, we were very happy to have our second "live performance" when Geoffrey Emerson, the leader of The Yetholm Sinfonia, came to give a talk about his life, both musical and otherwise; interesting and very entertaining. He brought with him a french horn, a trumpet and an original trumpet (without valves, a most difficult instrument to play). These he passed around the audience and many unmusical sounds were produced. He interjected his talk with tracks from sixteen CDs which kept me busy.

On March 20th. Brian Bailey will 'take us' to Russia, and with George MacNair we shall 'visit' Hungary. The final gathering will be on April 17th, when Janette Chisholm will give us a whole

programme on Norway, Sweden and Denmark, thus bringing to an end an interesting and enjoyable musical season. Anna May and I wish you all a very happy and healthy summer.

Tony Nott



EYEMOUTH BOMBED - January 31st 1942

It happened in the early evening, around 6pm. Mum, my sister Elma and I were sitting round the fire in the kitchen. I had recently come home from work and was knitting a white cardigan - I can't remember what my mother was doing. Daddy was at the kitchen sink shaving because he was getting ready to put on his uniform. He was a member of the Royal Observation Corps who acted as lookouts, though his normal job was as the butcher in the shop now belonging to Trotter's in the Square. I was 21 years old and a very proud member of the Land Army, working seven days a week from early until dark at Hallydown Farm, which belonged to Mr. Purdie. I was the first girl in Eyemouth to join the Land Army. Prior to this I had wanted to join lots of my friends who had gone to munition factories in Glasgow and sent back letters telling us what a great time they were having but my father would not hear of it because he said it was too dangerous.

As we sat there chatting about what we had done during the day, there was a noise of an aircraft in the distance which gradually grew louder and louder as it approached. Suddenly Daddy threw down his razor and raced across the room shouting to Mum, Elma and me to get under the table. Because of his training he knew that it was a German aircraft flying in very low. We were all under the table with our hands over our ears when the bomb fell. The noise was indescribable. All the windows of the flat were blown out and the fire whooshed up the chimney. The bomb missed us by only a few feet and dropped into the yard behind the flats making a large deep crater. The flat we lived in was on the corner of Manse Road

and Church Street where the launderette is now. Still under the table we could hear a second bomb going off and then the noise of the bomber continuing south. We discovered later that a third bomb had been dropped on The Avenue but it failed to go off.

In a moment or two we crawled out from under the table and daddy suddenly realised that my other sister was not with us. "Where's Betty?" Daddy asked. I replied that she had gone to the cinema. He rushed out into Church Street and ran down towards the cinema where to his relief he saw that those in the queue had not gone inside but were still in the road. They were waiting to see Greer Garson and Walter Pigeon in "Random Harvest". Daddy grabbed my sister and they both ran back to the flats to see if anyone had been injured. There were six families living in the six flats round a communal courtyard. By some miracle no-one had been hurt but of course the mess was indescribable. Glass everywhere and everything covered with thick ash. We had to live in darkness for days because all the windows had to be boarded up - and the cardigan I was knitting was never seen again.

The next morning, when Daddy went to work at his shop, he was amazed to discover a big piece of wood in the window that had been blown there from the harbour. The second bomb had been a direct hit on a brand new, just launched fishing boat. Once again no-one was injured since the boat was unmanned. However, we had a good laugh that evening when we listened in to Lord Haw Haw on the radio who announced that "the gallant German airforce had bombed harbour installations in the South East of Scotland".

Perhaps some good came out of the experience because Rob Wood came to the house to see if he could help and he and I went out together to look for our dog which still hadn't returned. (The poor soul returned two days later still shaking!) That was our first 'date' and we were married in 1943 with our daughter Sheila being born on VJ Day in 1945.

Barbara Wood

A Personal Memoir of that Long Hot Summer of 1940

We had been ordered to France but every day it seemed that another port where we could land was captured by the extraordinary fast Panzer columns – Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe, St Valery (where the 51st Highland Division was captured), Le Havre and then Cherbourg.

In any case it looked as though the Nazis were coming to us rather than us to them. Our rifles were taken from us to help re-equip and reform those streaming back from Dunkirk, who had left everything behind in France and Belgium.

On June 4th, Churchill made his great fighting speech: “We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender -” and so we were set to dig. It wasn’t “Dig for victory”, which had been on posters for months. It was last hope digging. We soldiers were taken daily to the chosen sites in an old furniture van. There was no machinery, no bulldozers, the JCB had not been invented and we had left all our heavy plant on the other side of the English Channel. All through that long hot summer we dug deep anti-tank trenches, from seven in the morning until late evening. The unskilled, as I was, dug while the more skilled built pillboxes and dug cellars under innocent looking dwellings to house machine guns and the few anti-tank guns we had left. All signposts were taken down and some of us built obstacles on every plot of open ground to prevent airborne landings. Rumours spread fast and furious. One such was that German parachutists had been spotted in the Low Countries dressed as nuns! We had one ear open for the sound of church bells, which were to announce that the Germans had landed. In fact they did ring out in many parts of the country in mid September but happily it was a false alarm. We heard on the radio that the invasion barges in the

Channel ports were being bombed daily. What effect that had on our digging, I do not know. I doubt if we could have worked harder.

Later that exceptionally hot summer, we saw the smoke trails in the everlasting blue sky; evidence of the great aerial battles taking place above our heads. In the House of Commons, on the 18th of June, Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, “The Battle of France is over. I expect the Battle of Britain is about to begin...” Occasionally a flaming plane would fall out of the sky but we went on digging into the early autumn when the immediate danger was considered over. By then the Luftwaffe had turned from trying to destroy the airfields and the RAF and were concentrating on crushing civilian morale by bombing London and then other cities.

So ended my digging summer; one of the most eventful summers of the long history of these islands.

Tom Conway

South Africa - A Flying Experience

Botswana in Southern Africa is about the size of France. In 1975 it had only 10 kilometres of tarred surface, so that travel by road was a hot, dusty, bumpy, exhausting experience, particularly in the rainy season. A journey by plane was a welcome alternative. I had to visit the small town of Maun (700 kilometres by road) to make arrangements for our Mission Maternity Hospital to be transferred to Government administration. I was to be accompanied by our Synod Finance Secretary, who amongst other things, held a Pilot’s Licence. He suggested that it would be worth our while to hire a Cessna four-seater aircraft from the Flying Club of which he was a member, conditional on securing two other passengers to share the cost. We soon secured our two passengers, one being the Principal of our Ministerial Training College wanting to hold some tutorials in Maun, and the other the Administrator for U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers in Botswana wanting to visit his staff in Maun. It was to be a five day trip, flying up on the Monday and returning home on the Friday.

We left Gaborone on the Monday morning in perfect

flying conditions – clear skies, good visibility, light easterly winds. We flew north following the main north/south road for about 100 kilometres, then turned North West across the edge of the Kalahari Desert, where we saw great herds of zebra and wildebeest. We arrived at Maun in time to have lunch with the Hospital Matron. It was very hot and dusty in Maun which was a common precursor to the arrival of the rains. Tuesday was sweltering and the evening was broken by a violent thunder storm. It rained quite heavily through the night, and it continued on and off during Wednesday. Thursday was very overcast, and we wondered whether conditions would be safe for our planned return flight on the Friday. Our Pilot telephoned the Flight Controller at Maun Airfield first thing Friday morning to be told there would be no aircraft movements that day. We had finished our work on the Thursday, so we had a leisurely day on Friday, which was much cooler after the rain. Saturday was overcast, but we thought we had heard the sound of aircraft during breakfast. We gave hesitant farewells to Matron, half expecting to have to return to her generous hospitality. On arriving at the Airfield, it was confirmed that one aircraft had taken off for Gaborone, so our Pilot felt it was worth following suit, despite a rather low cloud cover. We decided to wait for about an hour to see if the weather might improve, and by 10 o'clock it had brightened up a little. We decided to take off and were airborne by 10.30. Much of Botswana which includes the Kalahari is on a plateau around 1000 metres above sea level. Partly due to this height, the cloud base can reach down to the ground, causing a kind of fog. We soon encountered this phenomenon which totally blotted out our visibility. Unfortunately our Pilot did not have

instrument-only qualifications for blind flying. He tried to get above the clouds, but our single-engined Cessna carrying four passengers was unable to climb very high. We thought about turning back, but conditions seemed just as bad behind us. Our Pilot decided to press on through the clouds which bounced us about like a shuttlecock. He decided that we must reduce height and attempt to break through the cloud base. We looked for black holes in the clouds



below us which might indicate sight of land. I kept watching the needle on the altimeter as it gradually gave us our reduction in height, and at around 400 feet we saw the land, and how it suddenly fell away from the edge of the Kalahari escarpment, below which we could see a village of rounded huts with a rectangular church/school. From studying our map we had a fair idea that this was one of the satellite villages scattered around the large tribal centre of Serowe. The major concern was that Serowe was surrounded by rocky hillocks, some rising to a few hundred feet, which we could easily hit in low clouds. The Pilot felt that our safest option was to try to land if a suitable field could be found. After making a number of circuits around the village, we spotted a field which didn't seem to have been ploughed for sowing.

Our Pilot did a few more low passes over the land, and then brought our plane in for landing. It was a little bumpy, and we were greatly relieved when the plane came to a halt.

Most of the village came out to see us led by the School Master to whom we explained the reason for our landing and how important it was to report to the Police, since it would have been realized in Gaborone that we were overdue and possibly missing. The only transport in the village was a tractor (supplied by Christian

Aid) which was fitted with a trailer, and the School Master found a driver and fuel. He told us that there was a man who owned a 'bockie' (small pickup van) in the next village 5 kilometres away which would get us to Serowe. We then had a very uncomfortable ride on this trailer to the next village and found the 'bockie' and its owner in a high state of inebriation – it was Saturday evening! The 'bockie' owner explained that he didn't drive and had his own driver, who was away drinking in the village somewhere, and he would not allow him to drive us to Serowe. I tried to hire the 'bockie' from him, so that I could drive us to Serowe, but he firmly refused. At that moment two Police Troopers arrived on their bicycles, having ridden on patrol from Serowe, where they had been informed of our possible loss in the Kalahari. They subsequently ordered the 'bockie' owner to drive us to Serowe without delay, a distance of 25 kilometres. The driver was eventually found, and as expected was a little the worse for beer. What followed was the most hair-raising journey I think I have ever experienced. The driver took the instruction to go without delay quite literally with one foot firmly down on the accelerator and the other on the clutch pedal rather than the brake. We travelled along sandy tracks which twisted and turned, up and down into dry river beds, some not so dry, and eventually arrived at Serowe Police Station somewhat battered and bruised. We gave our report to the Police, who radioed the details to Gaborone. They arranged for us to be collected by one of our Mission colleagues in Serowe, who took us to his home where he declared, "You four need a brandy each". He later transported us to the nearest railway station 40 kilometres away where we caught the overnight train to Gaborone. Our respective families were very relieved to see us the following morning!

Brian Bailey

My Time In South Africa

On the 15th of August 1969 I sailed from Southampton on the SA Vaal with my husband Bill and two small sons. We were travelling to Durban, South Africa to make a new life in Johannesburg.

Looking back I didn't know what to expect but what I saw shocked me. Very few of the white population seem to care what happened to black people. It was a regular occurrence to see a police van on the streets and lots of policemen running around rounding up African men and women to check if their passes were in order. If they were not they would likely spend a night in jail before being returned to their homeland. Eventually there was an amnesty and most black Africans living in Johannesburg were given passes that allowed them to stay there. This was at the height of apartheid when John Vorster was Prime Minister.

My sons eventually started school much later than they would in Scotland, they were both over six years old. The boys attended a private school so they were able to avoid the political propaganda given to children in state run schools. Later on, their school started to admit children of all races before it was actually lawful to do so. Our third son was born in South Africa. By the time he started school, he had children of all races in his class, while our eldest son had only whites in his class all through school.

It was a good life for us. We travelled extensively around SA and I will never forget my first trip up Table Mountain looking down on Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned at the time. I visited Robben Island after it was no longer a prison for political prisoners. It's hard to imagine how these men felt looking over a short stretch of water to Cape Town.

For the twenty years out of the twenty-two years I spent in SA I had the same maid Miriam. She was a married lady but was not allowed to sleep with her husband in our domestic quarters. One night they were found together and arrested. She was clever and had several passes, although I do not know where she got them from. The pass that was stamped by the police when she was arrested she burnt and started with a fresh one. She and I are the same age but, unfortunately, she still has to work to finance her grandchildren's education as their parents died of Aids. This seems the norm nowadays in SA. It is very hard on the grand-parents, who, at their

age, really should be back in their own villages enjoying retirement. I don't know if there is any U3A in SA!

I'm very happy to be back in Scotland but adjusting to the weather has taken some time.

South Africans in the main are nice people but I think they see race relations from a different angle from us. Things are changing however.

Eileen Anderson

Organic Gardening

After training in organic gardening at The Ryton Garden Centre in Coventry, I decided to pass on my skills to children in primary schools. There is a great deal of talk in the press about healthy living. The National Curriculum encourages schools to enhance the child's knowledge of good food and exercise. Organic gardening in primary schools is a fair way of reaching today's young minds. Therefore I took it upon myself to start teaching the subject and am now in my first year here in Scotland. I have taught children in England the method and found it to be, not only beneficial to the child, but also extremely enjoyable.

I offer six two-hour sessions to each school. The first session encompasses a presentation to the children followed by on site discussion. If the school garden needs preparing, which is often the case, then I promote a no-dig policy. The children are primary age and therefore would not have the strength to dig the soil for planting. A no-dig policy is a good answer in this situation because the children will be involved in collecting various forms of organic matter such as leaves and bracken, straw and loose seaweed. Seaweed attached to stones or rocks is a living plant!

The children love to hear how their own hair and nails can be used in the compost heap! One child brought in a roll of hair which her mother had brought in from the hairdresser's. Although there was great amusement all round, because it looked like a dead rat, this is not to be encouraged! Raw vegetable scraps from home

and the school kitchen are of great value in the compost heap. The children need to realise that they must not add processed food to the heap as this encourages vermin. After sheets of card are placed in position a thick layer of mulch, leaves and vegetation is scattered over and left to settle. Depending on the condition of the ground, after time the land is ready for planting. The children are shown how to push their trowels through the mulch and cardboard into the soil below and plant their fruit and vegetable seedlings.

Raspberries are a firm favourite and yield good crops throughout the summer and autumn. I will be uprooting canes from Bedrule near Jedburgh this month. Potatoes are relatively easy to grow. This year I hope to collect some varieties from BOG, the Border Organic Garden group. Their potato day is on Sunday the 9th of March. It is essential for the children in each school to decide what they would like to plant in their gardens. This will ensure that the food they plant and care for can be enjoyed.

I have created gardens in schools in The Borders and East Lothian and hope to extend into Midlothian and Northumberland this year.

Maureen McLinden

Chicken Run

When a friend suggested I keep a few chickens, my first thought was "What a good idea". I was instantly excited. Doubts sneaked in when I thought of the responsibility, the cost of feed, vet's bills, what the neighbours would think and the problems of foxes, cats, not to mention avian flu. Being totally negative gets you nowhere so I turned to the positive: fresh eggs for breakfast – what a joy – birds that would definitely become pets, company in the garden and an all-round pleasure. What a great idea.

My friend lent me some books on the subject so, burning the midnight oil, I've been taking in all the relevant aspects of poultry science. There is more to keeping chickens than meets the eye, although I'm sure many will have done it already and are highly

amused at my excitement. The books seem to cover every aspect of poultry husbandry. I am fascinated by the variety of breeds you could have; they seem to come in all shapes, sizes and colourways; truly striking! My next task is to build a suitable coop and prepare the part of the garden where I want them to live. Watch this space.

Helen Grahame

Gungreen House

Those who attended the February Open meeting were enthralled by the entertaining but at the same time informative presentation given by Lt Col Simon Furness on the history, reconstruction and future of the grade one listed building, Gungreen House. We asked in what way the U3A might help in this worthwhile local initiative. One way is to become 'A Friend of Gungreen'. Another would be to volunteer to become a Guide. Yet another would be to help with research into aspects of the house itself and its previous inhabitants or to interview local people with family connections with the house. Tape recorders have already been purchased for this purpose. Those volunteering to do this might well go on in due course to revive the local history group of the U3A by setting up a data base containing information of all the local families and their diaspora. Any one interested should get in touch with Fay Waddell.

Ian Goldsack

Fork 'Andles! Four Candles? Ye, Fork 'Andles!

Please don't throw away bits of candles. Marian Birch, a keen candle-maker herself would like to have any you could pass on to her. Bring your 'dead' or 'dying' candles to any open meeting and Marion will resurrect them!

FREE Cavity Wall and Loft Insulation Grants

Available to those aged 70 or over OR anyone in receipt of certain benefits, tax credits or allowances.

These grants are part of the government's new Carbon Emissions Reduction Target. The major utility companies (British Gas, npower, Powergen etc.) have to meet targets to reduce carbon emissions by paying to insulate domestic properties.

You can apply through a utility company (not all are currently offering grants) or from EnergyLink Ltd, freephone 0800 5200527 and online at www.freeinsulation.co.uk



Eyemouth Community First Responders

On the weekend of 26th & 27th of January, I with another seven volunteers, attended training by the ambulance service in the Eyemouth Community Centre. Trainer Bryan Finlay took us through the practical aspects of basic life support such as CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) with added oxygen and the use of an Automated External Defibrillator. I found this easy enough to pick up but patient assessment and the theory behind all this is another matter.

The idea of First Responders, if you don't know, is to provide a first response service, in conjunction with the Ambulance service, in the case of sudden heart attack or collapse. It is very important in such cases for the person having the heart attack to be helped by someone trained in what used to be called 'artificial resuscitation' as quickly as possible. Time is of the essence. A First Responder, who lives locally, will probably be on the scene before an ambulance can get there, ideally within the first five minutes.

Another training weekend is planned this month for the trainees who were unable to get to the first. It is hoped that we should be up and running by the early summer.

John Armstrong



The Third Age Trust



2008 U3A PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION
Theme
Images of Water



From torrents to trickles, pools to puddles, drips to downpours, raging seas to tranquil lochs - the choice of watery image is all yours.
RULES - Landscape photographs, of min. size prints, 7" x 5". Digital images on a CD (300 dpi) saved as JPG + a good colour print. A covering note with title, entrant's name, U3A, address, tel. no. and e-mail address, PLUS a label with this information stuck on the back of each picture.

Do not write on the back of the picture. No entries by e-mail please. Maximum of three entries per person **by Fri. 9th May.**

Prizes - The 12 winning entrants, who will be selected by independent judges, will each receive **6 calendars** free of charge.

The winning pictures will be featured on the U3A website and announced in the Summer issue of U3A News.

The winning 12 pictures will go into a new U3A Engagement Calendar for 2009 - on sale to U3A members from July 2008. { How much? Ed. }

Entries to - The Third Age Trust, 19 East Street, Bromley BR1 1QE

Anyone for TABLE TENNIS

Those of you who would be interested in joining Helen Grahame and others in the Eyemouth Community Centre, starting on Friday, 28th March, please contact Helen on 018907 71112. Could this be an enjoyable way of keeping fit over the summer?

Where did that ball go?

Environment Group – Late News Flash

The following are winging their way to the third World literally as you read this:

21 pairs of discarded spectacles

300 used stamps

15 boxes of assorted books

tools of all sorts – saws, planes, etc. and a sewing machine!

Free Computers - First Come, First Served

Thanks to Jan and Tom Conway, I have three more old computers, in working order, to give away to anyone who wants one. These would suit a beginner. Don't be shy - come and try! - Ed.

Copy for the next Newsletter

Copy to me by Mon. August 4th to be certain it is included in the Autumn edition.

Photographs too please - Let's see if we can use them here.

email - armst.jon@bigfoot.com

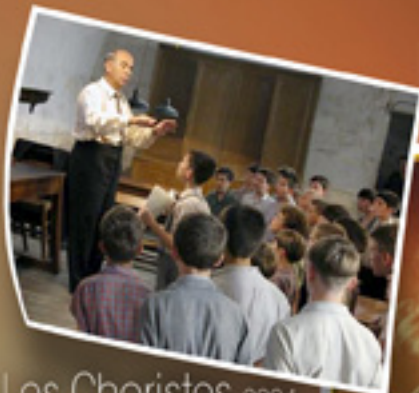
or 018907 52573

John Armstrong - ED.



The Painted Veil 2006

FILMS GROUP



Les Choristes 2004



The English Patient 1996



coming
on 25th March

At A
CINEMA
Near You



Iris 2001

Das Leben der Anderen
The Lives of Others 2005



Rio Bravo 1959



High Society 1956

