



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

## **SARUM U3A NEWSLETTER**

Website: [www.salisburyu3a.org.uk](http://www.salisburyu3a.org.uk)

September 2013

Number 217

### **CHAIRMAN'S NOTES**

Dear Members

First I would like to thank Keta Moggeridge for her good work over the past year as our "Welcomer to new members" - meeting and greeting them at Coffee Mornings, helping them to find their way around, and make new friends among existing members. Thank you also to Pam Robinson, who will be taking over from Keta and reinforcing our members' reputation as greeting new members with open arms. Although I was unable to be at the New Members Coffee Morning, I understand it was a lively and enjoyable event. Thank you Linda and all the other Committee Members who made it such a success.

Many members have spoken to me about reinstating our programme of visits, and I would like to ask members if there is anyone who would like to act as visits co-ordinator so that we might be able to put together a programme of visits for 2014. Ideas of places to visit would also be welcome. Do please speak either to me or to any member of the Committee.

Best wishes,

Jenny

### **COFFEE MORNINGS**

*Please note that coffee is served from 10.00am*

#### **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September**

David Fletcher is going to speak to us about his adventures working as Base Commander and Field Operations manager for the British Antarctic Survey. He has been an Expedition Leader for several Adventure Cruise Ships, he also works for an organisation called Students on Ice. He has been awarded The Polar Medal and the Fuchs Medal.

#### **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October**

Steve Oakes from the RSPB. His talk is on the Miracle of Bird Migration.

Viv Johnson

### **GROUPS**

#### **From Mick Watts, Groups organiser :**

Please see Appendix 11, showing groups which still have vacancies.

#### **New Group**

I have recently moved to the area and am interested in starting a new group " ITALIAN CONVERSATION " at intermediate level, **not beginners**, to be held in Salisbury weekly or monthly on Monday or Friday mornings or any weekday evening. Minimum group size 5.

If any members are interested in joining me my e-mail address is :

[kathleen\\_l\\_lewis@hotmail.com](mailto:kathleen_l_lewis@hotmail.com) or 01722 349938.

#### **Walkers**

##### **Thursday September 26th**

The walk will be in Newton Toney, about 4.5 - 5 miles.(but there are 2 opportunities to shorten the walk if you wish. Ask for details when you phone) If coming from Salisbury please turn off to Newton Toney opposite the Old Inn on the A338. Park at the RSPB Winterbourne Downs Nature Reserve Car Park which is on the left just before the village sign and where the road starts to descend into the village. (Ex 131 SU 216 402) Please be ready to start the walk at 10.00 and lunch will be in the Malet Arms afterwards. There are no stiles and only gentle uphill stretches.

Please phone Janet Death on 01722 333064 by Tuesday 24th if you wish to come on the walk and let her know if you wish to stay for lunch.

#### **Striders**

##### **Thursday October 3rd**

Please meet at Farley Church (OS map 224296) for a 10am start.

A walk along good tracks through parts of Hound Wood, Coalpits Copse and Barnridge Copse.

Please contact Brenda and Mike on :

(01722 320 210) if you would like to join us by Tuesday 1st October.

Pub lunch details to be confirmed as local pub not due to reopen until later this month.

## Strollers

### Thursday September 26<sup>th</sup>

We will meet at the Green Dragon, Alderbury, GR 182275, at 10.00am for a three mile stroll through fields and lanes. Lunch will be at the Green Dragon.

Please contact Gwyn Doran on 01722 710124 if you will be joining us.

### From Linda Farrow:

#### Talk on Elizabeth's Women, The Hidden Story of the Virgin Queen

Tracy Borman, Interim Chief Curator for Historic Royal Palaces, will give a talk based on her book about Elizabeth I.

When: Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October at 7 for 7.30pm.

Where: Dinton Hall.

Price: Tickets £10 each, include a glass of wine. Cheques payable to Fovant PCC

Tickets from: Felicity Pinder, Pippins, Mill Orchard, Fovant, SP3 5JS. Send SAE.

### From Maureen Pardy:

Sarum U3A's next wine tour is a six day visit to the Loire Valley in France in September 2014.

We travel overnight by ferry from Portsmouth to Caen and will be staying in a 3\* hotel in Saumur.

The trip will include many visits to wineries and some sightseeing.

The cost for a group of 30 people will be approx. £625 per person.

If you think you may be interested please let me know on 01722 504295 or at [mpardy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mpardy@hotmail.co.uk).

### Also:

You will find attached to this e-Newsletter a copy of an article about Sarum U3A's experience of studying online courses. Due to print costs a hard copy will not be sent through the post, but will be available to read at the Notice Board at the Coffee Morning on Wednesday next, September 18<sup>th</sup>. The article is to be distributed to delegates at the U3A National Conference in September. A shorter pared down version will appear in the September edition of Sources which comes with the U3A magazine Third Age Matters. Enjoy!

Maureen Pardy

## Theatre Discussion Group

The Theatre Discussion Group meets bi-monthly on a Wednesday afternoon at my house in Mill Road. Most of our discussions are about the play on the main stage in the Playhouse; i.e. in September we will talk about "On Golden Pond", and in November "The Recruiting Officer". We expect the members of the group to have seen these, but no such requirement is made for other productions in the Salberg Theatre or the Arts Centre. In this coming season that might be "The Three Musketeers" and "Call me Merman", or "The Hood Taster Session" at the Arts Centre, in September, and "1984" and "Ghosts" and Alan Bennet's "Bed Among the Lentils" at the Arts Centre, in November. Sometimes members go further and talk about plays they have seen in Bath, Bristol, Chichester or London. Our first meeting this term is the 25th September at 2 30 pm. Do think of joining us, the room is big enough for several more and the discussion is always lively.

Robina Hattersley

Tel: 01722 322212

## Science & Technology Group

*This group meets informally on the last Monday of each month at Harnham Memorial Hall, Watersmeet Lane, at 10.00am. There is a small charge of £1 to cover hall hire, etc. Just turn up!*

### Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September

"Can we measure what we see"? With Mike Pointer.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions for the October Newsletter should reach me no later than midday on **Tuesday October 8<sup>th</sup>**

Frank Doran,

Editor

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## APPENDIX 1

### ONLINE COURSES

One of our recently retired members, to fill in some free time, started browsing through the U3A website [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk) where she found a list of online courses. Curious about what they were like, she decided to tackle a British course on **China** which had been specifically written for U3A members. She said: "As this was a tutored course, each week I had to provide answers to questions posed at the end of each unit. The tutor then gave me feedback. The whole course was completed in eight or nine weeks and I became an expert on China!" Independently, another member who was under the weather and confined to home enrolled on a British online Course called **Garden History**. This she completed in her own time and without a tutor. This shows a second way of tackling an online course.

Sarum U3A is always looking for new activities and so we decided to take an online course and run it as a group activity. We chose **Renaissance Italy** from Griffiths University in Australia, advertised it in our annual programme to all our members and a group was formed with one of us acting as a facilitator. There were seven of us in the group and we met in each other's homes. As online courses are generally divided into eight units they lend themselves very well to studying a unit per month. This is the third way to approach a course and has proved to be by far the most popular way for us.

The course on **Renaissance Italy** was an eye opener to those of us whose knowledge of the Renaissance was primarily as an artistic movement. Right from the start we were encouraged to consider what had been reborn. Units covered the humanists and many of the political and philosophical movements as well as looking at art and architecture. Units on Pico Della Mirandola, Savonarola and his Bonfire of the Vanities, Machiavelli and Castiglione, as well as the rise of the Medicis and the Pazzi conspiracy, gave us all a much broader understanding of the period. So much so that a group is now going to focus on the powerful families such as Medici, Borgia, Visconti, Sforza and Gonzaga and try to chart their rise and fall without the help of course material. We want to know more!



**Boticelli : La Primavera**

Likewise, the course entitled **An Introduction to Western Philosophy** sparked a group to download a series of challenging lectures from an American University to further their study.

We have run two groups studying **Kings and Queens of England** which has ten units from pre-Conquest to the present day. Many of us felt that our school history left huge gaps and little sense of continuity. The units are very well written with hundreds of hyperlinks so that one can read up on minor characters as well as studying the main text. It starts with Saxon and Danish kings, the Aethelwulfs and Aethelberts (whose bones are in caskets in Winchester Cathedral) who were locked in a power struggle with each other as well as the Vikings before England existed as a country. We took it in turns to present different units; we supplemented the given materials with information from the hyperlinks and by reading other accounts (Starkey, Sharma). At each meeting some of the group widened the focus by researching their interest in topics such as contemporary science, medicine, language, literature, social history or costume. We discovered all sorts of fascinating and sometimes horrifying facts. The first group had the huge benefit of a member who was a historian and who put the events in a wider European context and provided many scandalous details.



AETHELBERT

Two groups have studied more modern history. A member of the group studying **China from Mao to Now** commented on the luxury of being able to take this new approach to learning and choose a course outside his comfort zone without now having to consider whether it would be career enhancing! Asked for an example, he commented that he was amazed to learn that Mao's China increased functional literacy in ONE generation from 15% to 80-90% by the mid 1970s.



Chinese propaganda poster from the Cultural Revolution: "Destroy the old world. Forge the new world." A Red Guard crushes the crucifix, Buddha, and classical Chinese texts with a hammer; 1967.

Another participant commented: "My most recent course **Russia** re-kindled an interest in a country which had burned strong in my youth so much that I booked a holiday to Russia. I know I got so much more from the tour thanks to the newly acquired knowledge from my online course. Earlier trips to Italy had benefitted from the course on the Renaissance."

We had a less happy experience with **Practical Psychology for Relationships**. Unfortunately, many of the course units were not a good match to the interests (or age) of the group. We judged it to be written for people looking to form or in the early stages of relationships and that was not us. However, it spurred us on to form a study group we called *Introduction to Psychology*. We adopted a pick and mix approach using some of the elements of the online course and introducing our own materials from a range of sources. We also took turns to research and present topics such as Memory, Conformity and Happiness and Wellbeing.

The group leader of **Religions of the World** felt that as a whole the course was illuminating: "It began with a look at beliefs through time (the writer seemed rather pre-occupied with belief in spirits), but units on each of the world's major religions were very detailed and informative. The unit on the history of Christianity was particularly good. Like many other of the courses you were invited to put your thoughts on the online notice-board."

Probably the toughest course was **The Physical Sciences since 1800**. A participant wrote: "It was divided into a couple of units on Chemistry and the rest on Physics involving quite a lot of Maths. It set the scene by establishing the history of scientific discovery including the discoveries of Newton, Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler. Most of our age group had learned about their discoveries at school. We then found out about the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics and about the people who discovered them. We discovered what photons, quarks, bosons and hadrons are. This was the challenging part of the course; we all found the detail difficult and yet were mainly people who had studied science to A-level and then specialised in science or maths afterwards. We shared out the contents of each section for individual members to research. As you can imagine, plenty of tangential questions arose for further study. I enjoyed the course very much despite its difficulty; it was worth the effort involved."

**The Evolution of Life on Planet Earth**, a Griffiths University course, was studied by one of our groups last year. This was a wide reaching topic which led to many interesting discussions and diversions. Some examples:

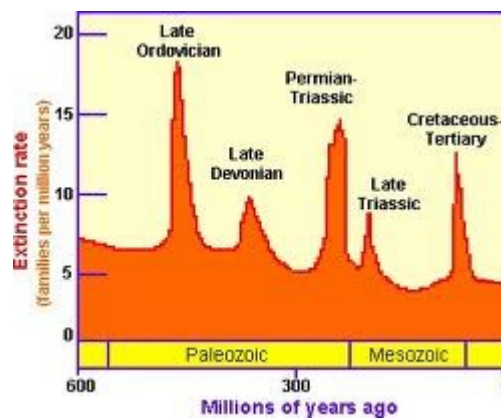
Snowball Earth was a theory that for millions of years Earth was entirely covered by ice.

Did we think this happened? Some did and said the proof lay in the positioning of drop stones.



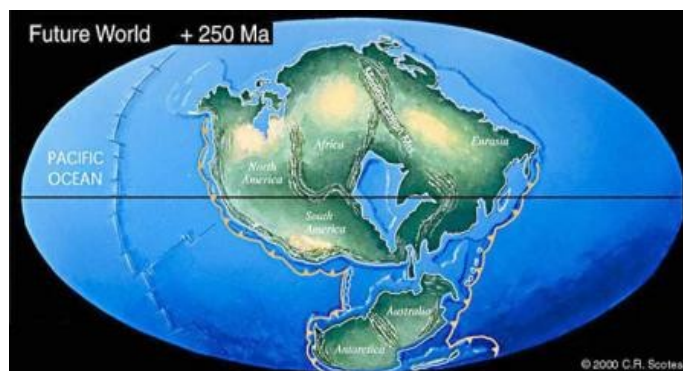
Snowball Earth

We learnt that in the Paleozoic Era, 300 million years ago when the level of oxygen was 50% more than today, dragonflies had wingspans of three feet. Timelines have shown us that homo sapiens had been on the Earth for only 0.004% of Earth's history. Looking at mass extinctions, we learnt that there have been five massive occurrences which have wiped out at least half of all of the species alive at the time. The most well-known extinction caused the death of the dinosaurs 66 million years ago, but a larger one took place at the end of the earlier Permian Period when 96% of all species perished.



Mass Extinctions

Looking forward, present day continents are slowly converging. In 250 million years' time Africa will have merged with Europe, Australia migrated north to merge with Asia, and the Atlantic Ocean completely closed up. This represents a return to the situation 250 million years ago when the Earth consisted of one supercontinent called Pangea. The future landmass has already been named Pangea Ultima.



Studying this subject provided the inspiration for the purchase of some very different Christmas presents - we now own many fossils! A member of the group said that they particularly enjoyed this subject as it covered studies they had completed sixty years ago and that much thinking has changed since then.

While most of us choose courses which engender our interest, there are other benefits in doing online courses. One online course enthusiast remarked "Not only have I learned an awful lot from the courses but I have enjoyed the interaction with a wide group of people, some of whom are now good friends. The research requirements have helped me to avoid becoming too mentally lazy in my retirement years and have honed my googling skills no end!"

Currently, we offer at least three courses each year from either Australia or UK. It means we have a wide range of topics to choose from and it has extended the scope of our activities. Australian designed courses tend to give a lot of background information whereas British ones guide members through a programme of personal research on the set topic. It goes without saying that group members need ready access to IT both for downloading the material and for research.

The courses have been great fun to do and have triggered all kinds of incidental learning. Some parts are new to individuals, other parts may overlap and this reinforces our learning so that it sticks in our memories and hopefully we can recall it later! Course leaders are facilitators; they do not need any previous knowledge as the group study the material together and learn together.

As one member said, summing up many views "I would heartily recommend the courses to anyone who wants to keep those little grey cells on their toes and to meet new people in new situations".

#### SARUM U3A

Maureen Pardy, Linda Farrow, Jean McFarlane, Viv Johnson, Brian Capel, Viv Spencer, John Staley, Judith Copeland, Norah Ash, Ann Patterson, Barbara Last.