

## NEWSLETTER

August 2011

### NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE

The Committee met on the 17<sup>th</sup> May. The main item for discussion was the problems created by the lack of a Secretary and also a Co-ordinator of Speakers as from September 2011. It was agreed that the Chairman should write to members who had joined within the last three years to try to elicit volunteers. In the meantime Joan Airey will continue as Business Secretary. The Programme Planning Panel, under the chairmanship of Irene L the Committee for their hard work. There had been 34 talks in the past year. Peter Wilkinson has taken over the organisation and production of the Newsletters following Irene Lusted continues to operate and the programme for 2011-2012 is now almost complete and will be distributed with this Newsletter.

Mary Greaves  
Chairman

### MEMOIRS OF A CO-ORDINATOR OF SPEAKERS

About four years ago I was one of those U3A members who came to Rewley House most weeks in term time and periodically moaned that people weren't friendly. Then I received a letter from the then chairman, Albert Eastham, in which he said he was writing to all newish members asking for their help to keep U3A going.

I replied to this, pointing out that although I was keen to help U3A, a) I was deaf which already made the phone difficult and might do the same with committee meetings and b) that we were often away at weekends which could also prove an issue. Neither problem, I thought, would prevent my stuffing envelopes when required.

Albert responded immediately and persuaded me that the job was do-able, that there would be lots of support, that it could be interesting; and he almost persuaded me that I, and only I, could do it anyway.

Indeed there was help from my predecessor, Jean Mitchell who was always there with suggestions and practical and moral support. Albert himself was a model of how a good leader should encourage his staff and Joan Airey, the secretary, seemed to do the vital but easily overlooked things need doing when setting up meetings.

Friends and relations rallied round with suggestions for speakers; I read the Oxford Times regularly and it came up with several ideas. I learned that most Oxford academics were quite pleased to be asked and that most of them would come although the fee we offered was not large. Because my own interests are largely literary and artistic, I was aware that there might be huge gaps in the programme – the sciences, medicine, natural history, music for a start – and was particularly grateful for the suggestions that U3A members are asked to send in at least once a year, or when they have heard a good speaker elsewhere.

I had had no experience relevant to finding a number of speakers to enlighten and entertain a discriminating audience, but was able to draw on my background of experience, and after a while I found the job was enjoyable and interesting. Isn't this why we have all joined U3A? Yes, it takes time, but never full time, and there is all that help.

An unexpected bonus is that, when you are doing the job, you can't help but make U3A friends and before long you are smiling at most of the Thursday afternoon audience and that they are smiling at you. Go on! – what have you to lose?

Clare Currey

The post of Co-ordinator of Speakers is currently vacant. If, having read Clare's report above, you feel inspired to have a go then please contact Irene Lusted who is Chairman of the Programme Planning Panel.

### FOUR OPERA MASTERPIECES

A Study Day to explore opera, its artistic rationale and background and development through the ages up to the present time, looking at Gluck's *Orfeo et Eurydice*, Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, Verdi's *Othello* and Puccini's *La Boheme*, will be held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011 in Rewley House. Speakers will be from Oxford University and, in addition, it is hoped to involve U3A members to give talks on various operas. The Study Day fee of £12.50 includes participation in the full programme plus coffee/tea on arrival and mid-afternoon. A baguette lunch with fruit and juice will be available for £6.00.

Details will be on the notice board at the back of Rewley House Lecture Theatre or information can be obtained from Anthony Burdall, tel: 01367 240713.

### WALKS IN AUTUMN

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September** – Meet at 11.15 am on south side of Folly Bridge. This walk follows towpath to Osney then through Osney to Willow Walk, thence to North Hinksey where a drink/lunch can be obtained at The Fishes pub. After lunch we return along Willow Walk and then across fields to Botley Road for buses into town. Please contact Irene Lusted for more information.

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> October** – Meet at 2.00 pm at entrance to the Botanic Garden in High Street for a walk round the gardens and then into Christ Church Meadow, following the river walk through the meadows to St. Aldate's. We have free admission to the Botanic Garden, courtesy of Timothy Walker, Director of the Garden. This walk is led by Betty Lewis.

If the weather seems uncertain please contact the appropriate leader to check that the walk is going ahead.

### SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS UPDATE

**Churches and Pubs II** Unfortunately Moza Williams feels unable to continue to organise the Group and it has therefore been disbanded. In the past fourteen and a half years the Group has seen and admired 167 churches and enjoyed a varied assortment of pub lunches. Moza hopes that someone will start another group, for Oxfordshire is a very good hunting ground for interesting churches. Thank you, Moza.

**Drawing Cartoons and Writing Comic Poetry for Children** Proposed new Group by Sally Car to meet on possibly the first Friday of the month at 11 am at her address. Bring some blank A4 paper, an HB pencil, an eraser, a small ruler and enjoy a peaceful and amusing hobby. Please ring Sally for more information.

**Philosophy** With from effect from June 1<sup>st</sup> John Spencer has resigned as Convenor of this Group which he has led for some 26 years, and Michael Walker is taking over in his place. We wish to record our grateful thanks to John for this long stewardship.

**Understanding People** Thanks are also due to Ann Sants who has led this Group for many years. Ann now feels it is time for her to hand over to someone else and wonders if there is a psychologist among our members who might be prepared to take over this Group.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE INITIATIVE IN JAPAN

**Introduction** Those who were members of Oxford U3A in 2007 may remember that in that summer our chairman, Albert Eastham, was contacted by the Director-General of Age Concern Japan, Mrs Akiko Tsukatani MBE, who was visiting England with two colleagues. They came from Osaka and, in addition to meeting representatives of Age Concern UK, London U3A and the International Association of U3As, they wanted to visit Oxford to explore the possibility of setting up a friendship agreement between our U3A and Osaka. Albert and Irele Lusted received the visitors for lunch at Albert's home when questions were answered and some of our literature was handed over.

Since then we have kept in touch with Mrs Tsukatani by sending copies of our newsletter and receiving from her copies of the developing Osaka U3A curriculum. In May this year Mrs Tsukatani kindly sent us a report headed 'U3As in Japan' with a paper 'The University of the Third Age Initiative in Japan', the latter listing friendship ties with various bodies including Oxford U3A. What follows is an edited version which we hope may be of interest.

Graham Weston and Albert Eastham

### U3A in Japan

Apart from the facts that Japan has a drastically falling birth rate (1.37 in 2009) and globally the greatest life expectancy, it currently has the fastest rate of ageing anywhere in the world.

According to a recent investigation Japan has already become an ultra-ageing society in which the number of people aged 65 years and over is over 29 million. It is expected that its present rate of increase will reach 34,560,000 in 2020 and nearly 83% of those would be physically healthy seniors.

Japan's long-lasting economic decline and maintenance of the social welfare system will continue to be an ongoing and inevitable burden for society and Government, and caring for the elderly both medically and socially is a major issue for all members of Japanese society. Under these circumstances it is essential that older people can and will actively continue to contribute much to society and the economy, by self-help participation in society without relying too much on Government welfare. They can keep themselves health both physically and mentally and help each other in creating new communities and a new social infrastructure by sharing their accumulated knowledge, skills and experiences. This can be achieved by U3A-type life-long learning organisations.

Some reliable statistics show that of most Japanese seniors over 50 and retired from full-time employment, 38.7% still continue to work until the age of 65 years or more, while 21.4% take part in life-long learning organisations, 6.6% do volunteering work, and the remainder simply idle away their time "feeling useless and dissatisfied" without any participation in or contribution to society.

Over the last 30-40 years, life-long education in Japan has been offered by (1) private companies (culture schools), (2) private groups of citizens/NPOs (so-called U3A-type gatherings), (3) local

government agencies (senior colleagues), (4) open university-type education by universities, and (5) on-line education by the Japan Broadcasting Association. Most of these are by one-sided teaching, which means teachers are professionals and are supplied to learners by organisers often with rigid regulations and limited terms for learning, say 6 months to 3 years at most.

The first Japanese life-long learning organisation for older people, of the U3A type on the British model, was begun in 1985 by a group of citizens of Shizuoka City. This is the citizen-driven, self-help life-long learning organisation, where members would be teachers as well as learners, since they have a lot of expertise, skills and experience, accumulated through their occupations and hobbies. It is said that there are now about 100 such life-long learning organisations having the same concept, though all carrying different names.

In April 2009, NPO Age Concern Japan (which in 2006 concluded a partnership agreement with Age Concern England, now called 'Age UK' after a merger with Help the Aged in 2009), established the Japan U3A Federation with a registered Japanese U3A logo, and opened the first self-help type U3A Osaka, directly operated by Age Concern Japan, on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009. After one year's operation it now has 31 classes and 203 members (teachers and learners). Recently a Tokyo life-long learning group joined the Federation. Settsu U3A is expected to open in April 2012 in Settsu City, Osaka prefecture, directly operated by Age Concern Japan to start with. The self-help life-long learning organisation carrying the name of U3A in Japan has just started and is expected to spread throughout Japan in the years to come.

Japanese-style U3As which Age Concern Japan has been developing have the following three major characteristics: (1) a wide range of classes, not only university-type lectures, but also cultural, outgoing, exercise etc. (2) creating a senior platform by networking among U3As at home and abroad (3) creating some volunteering work through the extension of classes and community businesses will be born by taking advantage of the outcome of the classes to discuss the problems and needs which communities are facing.

Akiko Tsukatani, MBE  
Director General, NPO Age Concern Japan  
31 December 2010

#### **ERIC DYKE OBE**

Eric Dyke OBE has died aged 95. A long-standing member of the Oxford U3A he was also national chairman of the U3A in the late 1980s. After a distinguished war career he moved to the Oxford area in 1950. He worked for Oxfordshire County Council from 1950 to 1976 as Further Education Officer, later Acting Deputy Director of Education, and received his OBE in 1976.

#### **INFORMATION ON SPEAKERS**

The Programme of Talks for 2011-2012 is circulated with this Newsletter. There are three dates which, at the time of writing, have yet to be confirmed. Details of these will be given in future Newsletters.

Further information on the first speakers of the new season are given below. Again information on later speakers will be given in future Newsletters.

#### **8<sup>th</sup> September – D R Thorpe**

The revised and updated paperback edition of his biography *SuperMac: The Life of Harold Macmillan* is to be published on 1<sup>st</sup> September. He will bring copies to the meeting.

**15<sup>th</sup> September – Chris Warrick**

Since 2010 he has led the Communications Team at Culham Centre for Fusion Energy (CCFE) with particular responsibility for education and public outreach.

**22<sup>nd</sup> September – Mark Hempself**

He is an aeronautical engineer working with a team at Research Engines Ltd, Culham Laboratories, on the Skylon space travel project.

**29<sup>th</sup> September – Helen Rappaport**

Her new book on *The Death of Prince Albert and its impact on Queen Victoria and the Monarchy* is being published in November 2011.

**6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September – Susan Griffiths**

She is employed by the University of Oxford as Museums Community Outreach Officer.

**FROM THE EDITOR**

The next Newsletter will be published in October. I always welcome contributions (by the middle of September please) by post or email, or by hand at the talk on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

Peter Wilkinson