

*'The lyf so short, the craft so long to learn': Anton Chekhov*

# The Arts And Crafts Movement

Sculptors, potters, woodworkers, architects, artists, embroiderers, book illustrators, metal workers, jewellery engravers, stained glass makers, garden and textile designers – they all used their artistic skills during the late 19th century to embody the spirit of the Arts and Crafts Movement.



**Pauline Stuart: Macclesfield Rural U3A**

What exactly was the spirit of the Arts & Crafts Movement? It's difficult to define and probably easier to say what it was not.

It wasn't about mass production, involving the division of labour as typified by the Industrial Revolution, but rather a coming together of minds and hands to use materials creatively and with pride, producing objects to be looked at and loved.

Of course, this doesn't describe it adequately. From my point of view, and to put it crudely, looking at objects made under the Arts and Crafts banner ticks all the boxes – visually and spiritually.

Visually, not just because of the flowing lines and often rural aspect of the objects, but also because of the thought and care taken – right down to the last keyhole or door hinge.

Spiritually, because of the connection to the values of John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris (1834-1896), two of the 19th century's most influential commentators on contemporary society.

Ruskin, and Morris who was influenced by him, shared certain values in common. Both wanted a return to the skilled

craftsmanship used in the production of goods, pre-Industrial Revolution, and both shared a deep love of nature. It was Morris who said: 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful'.

It's almost as if they are compelling others to stand still and see the natural world around them, and to appreciate the ways in which natural resources such as wood and stone, can be worked to express this same feeling of wonder and perfection. The influence of The Movement can be seen throughout the country.

Here in Macclesfield, we are lucky to have a fellow U3A member who, with her husband, has written a book on the subject, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the North West of England* (Armstrong, Barrie and Wendy – Oblong Creative Ltd). Their remit includes Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire and parts of Staffordshire.

It's a fascinating and substantial book in which the enthusiasm and passion of its authors is obvious and transfers to the reader. Without it I wouldn't have known that our church in Sutton

Pauline Stuart was born in Surrey but migrated north to Macclesfield 37 years ago with her husband's work. She became a mature student at Manchester University, but instead of teaching she became involved in combating the use of illegal drugs and managed the local community drug team for 20 years. She has been retired for four years and is the secretary of Macclesfield Rural U3A. Her interest in the Arts and Crafts movement is shared by her husband and they pursue this in the United Kingdom and abroad.

contains embroideries originating from the Leek Embroidery Society. This Society was established by Elizabeth Wardle, wife of Thomas Wardle.

William Morris lived with the Wardles from the summer of 1875 to spring 1878, staying at their house in Leek at least five times, learning the techniques involved in dying cloth using vegetable dyes, a process used extensively in his subsequent work.

He inspired Mrs Wardle and provided her with designs for the Society's work. Our church also has stained glass windows by Burne Jones and Morris – but I knew that!



William Morris

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### In the next issue

The next issue of *Sources* (No 33) will be posted to those on the database in March 2008. The theme will be Gardening.

Contributions are considered for inclusion by an editorial panel. Please submit them not later than 18 Jan – via the national office or direct to the editor at:

Gelt Mill House, Castle Carrock, Brampton CA8 9NQ

You can send them by e-mail to [tony.thornton@virgin.net](mailto:tony.thornton@virgin.net) (preferred), on disc or cleanly typed suitable for scanning. Every effort will be made to acknowledge them. Contributors are advised to discuss their story with the editor before submission or request a copy of our writers guidelines.

For Issue 34 in June 2008, the focus will be on Geography.

### How to receive *Sources*

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### Feedback

If you have any comments on topics in this issue, please write to the editorial panel, c/o U3A National Office or e-mail the editor at: [tony.thornton@virgin.net](mailto:tony.thornton@virgin.net) Tel: 01228 670403

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## In my view *Tony Thornton*

**Editor**

delivered by older people'.

As a writer and tutor of one of the courses, I can recommend them, especially to those who cannot get to a regular U3A. There is an astonishing variety to choose from, as you can see from the list on the back page.

The next issue of *Sources* focuses on gardening. This will be the tenth anniversary of

our magazine so we will be marking the event with a bumper edition.

The theme provides a glorious opportunity to feature some fine gardening pictures. In particular we are looking for a portrait style image – one that depicts a tree to signify our growth.

So, please pick up a pen (or mouse) with those green fingers and send your stories.

On the U3A conference cruise, I counted 20 occasions (mealtimes, seminars, coach trips, social events) when I was seated next to someone different.

Each time the conversation turned to: "And what do you do at your U3A?" Thus I learnt more about the grass roots than at all the previous conferences put together.

Intended or not, this was a master stroke by the organisers whose diligence made the cruise a fitting climax to the 25th anniversary year.

During an on-board presentation, Ian Serle referred to the online courses and how the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education has awarded us a Fred Moore Institutional Award for 2007. The awards are made to organisations for 'working sensitively with older people'.

The letter of notification stated: 'We felt that your application was extremely strong and covered all the areas stipulated in the criteria. The judges liked the fact that the courses are written and

## Continued from page 1

With the book as a guide we have enjoyed many outings. Whilst in The Lake District we tracked down the beautiful little church of St Kentigern's at Crosthwaite whose interior contains some wonderful work by the Keswick School of Industrial Arts (KSIA).

This was started in 1884 employing artists and craftsmen as instructors in woodwork, leather work, enamelling and metal work. When I later chanced upon an antique shop in Keswick selling work by the KSIA I understood its origins and why the pieces were so expensive.

The museum at Keswick also contains work by the KSIA and a collection of Ruskin memorabilia including a pair of his shoes, which I found moving.

As well as numerous churches we are lucky to have equally numerous private houses, public buildings and gardens dating from that period. Amongst the most visually pleasing I would include Blackwell at Bowness on Windermere; The John Rylands Library, the Victoria Baths in Manchester; and numerous gardens throughout the area laid out by Thomas Mawson and others.

Blackwell is a gem. It was designed in 1899 by M Ballie Scott as a holiday home for a Manchester business man, and the only one of his houses permanently open to the public.

It occupies a commanding position with magnificent views over Windermere and a small garden designed by Thomas Mawson, one of several in the area, (although perhaps his best is at Graythwaite) also in the Lake District.

The fairly recently restored interior contains an abundance of Arts and Crafts features in wood, glass, metal and ceramics. It's a treat not to be missed.

The John Rylands library in the centre of Manchester has recently reopened. It was built around 1900 and once described as 'one of the finest buildings in England'.

This Neo-Gothic masterpiece contains fine stained glass windows, sculptures and floral designs. It also holds the books published by Morris's Kelmscott Press and countless books illustrated by artists associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The Victoria Baths, another public building, built in 1906 in Manchester is an exuberant and luxurious expression of The Movement. The colourful use of stained glass and tiles used to portray the flowing motifs of the time, combine to



St Kentigern: detail of reredos by Keswick School of Industrial Arts

make this the most 'splendid municipal baths in the country'.

Another favourite of ours, a hotel in The Lake District called Holbeck Ghyll, is reserved for special treats. We hadn't seen the Armstrong book when we visited and delighted in discovering the small details. The lovingly made lock plate on a door, the tulip motif that appeared in unlikely places, the light switches and bell pushes made in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Although it was built in the early 19th century, it was 'modernised' around 1900 by an unknown architect and these features were incorporated.

Such examples are to be found around the country, and countless museums contain artifacts from the period.



Victoria Baths Manchester  
A panel from the Turkish Baths

The extent to which the movement has influenced us today is open to debate but it must be enormous.

Men and women have always expressed their artistic tendencies in one way or another and the numerous artistic groups to be found in the U3A movement are proof of this. Whether or not we can paint, sew, embroider, craft wood and metal, we still have eyes and a soul to appreciate the legacy left by countless craftspeople before us.



# ORIGAMI

The blurb for my Origami for Beginners course says: 'Origami is the Japanese art of paper folding. Learn to make models to entertain your grandchildren, or just enjoy this absorbing hobby for its own sake'.



Joan New: Salisbury U3A

People look at me oddly when they hear I teach origami and try not to laugh, but the course, which has been on offer every year for the last ten years, is usually full and those who come on it want to come back for more.

When I ran the first course, I didn't think I knew enough to teach more than four sessions, but this soon extended to five and then six, which is how it has remained.

This gives me time to teach the basic folds: mountain, valley, inside and outside reverse, squash, petal, sink – and the main initial sequences or bases: preliminary fold, blintz, bird base, waterbomb base, fish base and frog base (lovely evocative names).

Sometimes I run a continuation course, or a one-off session: *Origami Extra* or *More Origami*. It's something that people like to do with others, and that's part of its attraction.

Numbers are restricted to six so that I can keep an eye on everybody. People's ability varies so some race ahead while others are still struggling with some initial fold. But this encourages the more able ones to help the others – all part of a 'bonding' process that seems to occur naturally within the group.

I teach from diagrams (my own) and this has been a central principle of the course – to teach not just the folds but the notation used in books, so that members can if they wish, go away and fold on their own.

Teaching purely by demonstration cannot give the same independence. I set homework, which causes some alarm at first, but in the following lesson the models made at home without help are brought in and displayed with pride.

After the last-but-one session of the season, I invite each member of the class to choose and take home one of my collection of origami books and make something from it.



Mary May (left) and Gemma Coles

Origami must be one of the cheapest crafts there is. All you need is paper. I do provide proper Japanese origami paper for some of the models. It can be disappointing trying to produce a good result if the paper is too thick or thin or won't take a good crease.

But often we can get excellent results with typing paper, gift wrap and all sorts of scrap. My secret weapon is a good paper cutter with a scale. During the years I have prepared hundreds of squares.

People sometimes ask me: "What is the use of origami?" I could give a variety of answers, but I think they are irrelevant. Origami gives the satisfaction that any creative activity brings. It demands concentration and accuracy, the discipline of following instructions, and the joy of success.

It also brings lots of laughter and companionship. Of course, it can be useful as well, but it doesn't have to be.

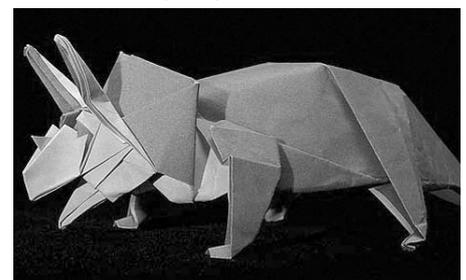
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Jo Smith (left) and Olga Illston

Triceratops by Fumiaki Kawahata



# Printing digital photographs on to fabric

May Pearce  
Cottingham U3A

I was astonished by the interest created at our U3A Open Day by the cushions that I made as a kind of patchwork, using photographs of flowers taken in the Botanic gardens here in Cottingham.

I have been sewing from a young age, and have always been interested in all kinds of crafts.

I eventually did the City and Guilds embroidery course at Bishop Burton College when I was 55, following on with doll-making, patchwork and quilting. On retirement I became interested in the computer, and since then I have been what my children call 'snappy'. Digital photography was next.

From printing digital photographs to printing my own fabric was quite exciting, limited only by the A4 size of the printer. It's simple to iron the fabric on to a piece of A4 size freezer paper, or smooth it on to an A4 label, and then print it as you would a photo.

But should the finished object require washing in the future, the fabric must be



treated, depending on the type of ink used. A laser printer for instance, produces a fast colour but the resulting image must be ironed over paper until the toner stops coming off on the paper.

An inkjet printer uses a dye-based ink, which will wash out unless the fabric is treated first. I use a solution called 'Bubble Jet Set 2000' in which the fabric is soaked, dried, and then ironed on to a piece of freezer paper cut to A4 size. This goes through the printer just the same as printing a photograph.

If this sounds ridiculously easy, then that's because it is. The Bubble Jet

solution is recommended only for 100% cotton or silk.

Peel off the paper and set the colour by washing in a weak solution of detergent. Ready prepared fabrics are obtainable, but I have no experience of those. Pictures can also be applied to fabric using transfer paper – again, a technique I have not used much.

The cushions that were on show at the U3A Ridings Open Day at Askham Bryan were the preliminary to a patchwork quilt I am planning, using some more of my flower photos – a project for the future.

## U3A Textile Groups

As the new textile network coordinator, I would like to introduce myself. I'm a retired teacher – but not of textiles!

I did a lot of embroidery in my late teens but then there was a long gap. After I retired, I saw details of an embroidery course, joined it and never looked back.

After a year on this course I enrolled for the City & Guilds Embroidery course at a local college. I enjoyed this enormously and it opened up several interests for me. One was design and painting that terrified me but which I now enjoy at our U3A Painting Group.

After finishing Parts 1&2 of the C & G course, I thought I would like to share my interest with others. I started a textile crafts group in 2003 by having an exhibition table at our U3A AGM to

show possible ideas and projects.

I was overwhelmed by the response and wondered how I was going to fit 17 people into my house. I needn't have worried – only eight people came.

Since then, I've had a nucleus of seven or eight around which others come and go for a year or so. I couldn't cope with more than a dozen – they need individual attention. We meet in a hired room and I make a charge to cover the rental.

As network coordinator I want to:

- Help with problems – but I don't have all the answers.
- Help those who are starting a group. I made mistakes and still do – so at least I know what not to do.
- Share projects that we've found successful. This isn't a one-way street. I need input from you. So if you've done

something that worked well, please tell us about it.

■ Share information about organisations to do with textiles, courses and sources of help.

■ Meet some of you. I know this isn't feasible nationally, but where there's a will...

What would you like from the network? Please tell me.

I don't have a list of Textile Group leaders and I need this to continue sending a newsletter. Would you please let me know who you are? You can get in touch by post, phone or e-mail.

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# Lovingly handcrafted

**Roberta Hagan:**  
**North Down**  
**And Ards U3A**

I am not an expert craftswoman but I am interested in all types of craft and take great pleasure in encouraging others. I love colour and design and it gives me great satisfaction to see a project completed.

In 1999 some members from North Down & Ards U3A attended a local exhibition of Patchwork and Quilting and were so impressed with the display that they formed a small group that met in the home of one of the members.

As interest grew it was necessary to move to a larger room in council premises. Here we have space to spread our work on large tables. We can see demonstrations by our members or invited guests and there are facilities to make that welcome cup of tea or coffee.

The types of crafts which we have pursued are:

## ■ Patchwork and Quilting

There are many traditional quilt patterns but modern bold designs are also popular for lap quilts or bed coverings. Colour combinations are unlimited.

## ■ Tapestry & Cross-stitch

There are so many applications for these skills – pictures large and small, foot stools, fire screens and inserts for personalised greetings cards.

## ■ Card Making

We make cards for every occasion using computer effects, découpage, stamping, embossing and some other techniques.

## ■ Beadwork and Jewellery

We use weaving and stringing techniques to make brooches, bracelets and necklaces. Christmas decorations were made using wire and pliers.



Some of the work created by the North Down and Ards Craft Group

During the years we have had several themed projects:

## ■ Christmas

We made decorative bows and decorations for Christmas trees, table mats and toys.

## ■ Button Project

The idea here was to make anything and incorporate a button. We had small purses with button fastenings, buttons on bags and necklaces, and buttons creating the effect of a pearly moon in a fabric picture.

## ■ Pin cushions

This project was challenging but produced some bright ideas. There were fabric wrist bands, work tidies for the arms of chairs and some decorative cross stitch designs.

## ■ Bag Making

We designed our bags to carry our craft work or knitting, books from the library or swimming gear. They replaced our use of the plastic bag helping to make us more environmentally friendly.

On several occasions we have joined with the art and photography groups to mount exhibitions in our Heritage Centre and these have been well received.

Have you thought about starting a Craft Group in your U3A? Well, Go for it!

It is amazing how much hidden talent there is among the membership. The sharing of ideas with new friends makes it well worth the effort. And the things you make come in useful too.

# Storytelling

**Stella Porter: Arun U3A  
Network Coordinator Storytelling**



**S**torytelling is as old as mankind. Stories are part of our psyche. Listening to and delivering the spoken word have a magical quality.

Stories change when told, they need the human voice to come alive, and without a listener they have no existence in our world.

Let us be their keepers and not lose this art that has been passed down through time, and which is still so much part of our history – not forgetting that Films, TV, Soaps and Dramas are part and parcel of storytelling.

After working for a multinational company for some 25 years, I moved to Sussex and entered the Probation Service. On retirement in 2003 I joined Arun U3A, with a membership of just over 100 and some 16 groups. By April 2007, Arun U3A proudly boasted a membership of 500 plus and some 55 groups including Storytelling, and a superb website – [www.arunu3a.co.uk](http://www.arunu3a.co.uk).

It was at one of our regular new members introduction meetings that my dream became reality, when Nova Brookes, a new member spoke of her involvement in storytelling.

With Nova as the convenor, we soon had a storytelling group, and at last I had a chance to fulfil the deep rooted desire – to once again hear a spoken story – and a chance to tell the fascinating myths and stories of India.

The Storytelling Group has grown steadily. We have attended summer schools and workshops, and held our own public storytelling meetings, where each member concentrates on their individual style and story content.

Nova Brookes tells of Welsh myths and legends; Mary Love tells local tales and hearsay; Phillippa Bower's stories are of ghosts and beasties; and my stories are from the Indian sub continent.

The U3A Storytelling Group has also been invited to participate in local festivals and events and to tell our stories at WI and other organisations meetings. Yes – groups need listeners too. They are as important to a group as the tellers.

**My fondest memory growing up in India during the final years of the British Raj, was sitting with my siblings and our nanny (ayah) under the spreading Banyan tree. We were at the feet of the old storyteller who appeared out of the blue to tell his stories while we listened in rapt fascination to the myths and legends of India.**



Tall tales from l-r: Nova Brookes, Stella Porter, Mary Love & Phillippa Bower

**M**y ambition as the Network Coordinator is to promote this ancient art form, so that more U3A members can enjoy the magic of storytelling and listening.

## **My plans for Storytelling**

To continue in summer schools and be involved in the evening entertainment.

To arrange exchanges between neighbouring U3As, and consider international exchange.

To produce a Newsletter. Please let me have your news and views for the first issue. We will be performing at U3A

Open days and Arts & Crafts Festivals.

Possible involvement in Virtual U3A.

May I take this opportunity to thank Howard Sherman for his support and acknowledge his role as Network Coordinator for the past eight years. He will be a hard act to follow.

More information and Start Up leaflets from National Office or from:

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**Audrey French**  
Lytham St Annes U3A

# Rising To The Challenge

In February, members of the Lytham St Annes U3A were invited to take part in a research programme from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) concerning 'the effects of ageing on different intellectual abilities'.

This was in the form of a test lasting three hours, to be held in the Psychology Department of Preston University. As a reward for volunteering we were offered £20 and some chocolate biscuits.

They were seeking people aged 60 and over. We were well qualified.

Unable to resist the temptation to do something different, three of us, my husband and I plus Margaret a close friend, duly applied, stating which day and time we would like to attend. We were accepted and set off for Preston looking forward to... well, we had no idea what to expect.

Feeling somewhat like schoolchildren waiting for an exam, we were shown into a room mysteriously labelled Imagery Room in the Psychology Department, and led to a long desk where three piles

of paper and three pens awaited us. A young lady called Laura put us at our ease and told us not to get worried.

She then explained that we were to work our way through this pile of tests. Some were timed and some we could work on at our own pace, omitting anything we did not wish to do.

We began. Four hours later we laid down our pens, exhausted. How many years was it since we had taken a four-hour exam?

However, the exercise was absorbing, mind-stretching but fun to do. The exercises were varied: some logic, some knowledge, some common sense, some word or letter-orientated, some using numbers and some using mathematical formulae. (The latter had me foxed. Maths and I have never seen eye-to-eye.)

The atmosphere was full of concentration but also relaxed – we knew we were there voluntarily under no pressure. Laura had said that we could chat to each other but we were too busy.

In addition I think we were anxious to prove to ourselves that we could achieve unaided what was expected of us.

Individual results will not be released but the project will be collated by a certain Dr Fisk, who will then publish a thesis on the subject. Different age groups are to be involved.

We can guess at some of the interesting conclusions reached. For example, although the older brain may be slightly slower, it might in some instances be more thorough, partly due to greater experience of life, and partly because, in the case of mental arithmetic, many young people rely on calculators and so do not use this practice any more.

This was an enjoyable and satisfying experience and we learnt that we can still rise to a challenge when the opportunity is offered.

It left us with the positive feeling that we still have capabilities that we may have forgotten about, but which are still there waiting to be rediscovered.

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## Creative Crochet

I became interested in creative crochet after I retired. I found that needlework was a bit trying on ageing eyes and that knitting was too restrictive.

Wool and a hook was the answer for me.

I was never interested in anything fiddly in cotton or silk, or making something to wear. I liked the challenge of loads of different yarns in many weights and textures.

I collect bags of wools in the same colour and enjoy using them in various ways.

Like Paul Klee, who took his pencil for a walk, I do the same with wool, creating interesting fabrics that I use to make cushions, bags or even wall hangings.

There is no end to the imagination.

I also like making gifts in wool: scarves, afghans, pram blankets and Christmas stockings.

For people who like to follow a pattern I have books on making toys, clothes, blankets – anything that you might expect to knit. Sometimes the pattern is just a starting off point and the work turns into something else.

Sitting together and crocheting is a sociable and comforting thing to do. In the hour or so I have available every fortnight I would welcome everyone, with whatever work they want to do. I hope there will be some experienced crocheters who will help me to help those learning the craft.

The group has just started and I want to see what the members want before I start dictating what we are going to do. I find the group often makes the running.,

**Jill Frankel**  
U3A in London



I see myself as a resource, helping beginners get started, telling them where to order wools, letting them photocopy any patterns they want and sorting out any problems. I hope it will be fun and relaxing – but who knows?

That is the joy of the U3A.

**jill@frankel.tv**

# The Christmas Tree

I joined Newport U3A six years ago looking for something to do in retirement. I was on the committee within six months and now book monthly trips for the History Group.

I am membership secretary for up to 380 members and we run 32 classes in rooms rented to us at Shaftesbury Methodist Church. My favourite job is convenor of the Craft Group. I have done this job for more than three years and it gets better and better.

I am not trained, but my love is knitting. Most members of the class bring their knitting with them, and then drop it if a project comes along.

We do a lot for charity, and have raised £1,000 for an eye clinic in Nepal; £1,000 towards two classrooms in Africa; and made thousands of chicks for Velindre Cancer Hospital that they sell for £1 each towards their funds.

The latest request was for hats for the foreign seaman coming into Newport Docks. I asked the class and within a few weeks 70 were made.

We have a Christmas Fayre every year and we usually raise around £450 to be shared between local charities.

## Pat Fackrell: Newport U3A

One of our members saw a 25-foot knitted Christmas Tree in Somerset. I said why don't we make a 6-foot one. It started with a small green triangle multiplied by 650, lots of trimming, decorations and toys, and 20 happy ladies making something beautiful.

Eddie Needs is an 86-year-old gentleman in our Saturday walking group. He is clever with his hands and he made a revolving frame that folded down like an umbrella when not in use.

One of our members Rae Jones had an empty garage, and said that she would like to sew the triangles on. What a wonderful job she did of it, and this is the tree that you see in the picture.

Mrs Jones said: "At first we couldn't picture how it would turn out. Every week we saw it taking shape and getting bigger. Everyone was shocked when they saw it finished. It's marvellous."

But nobody had room to store it, so we donated it to the Father Christmas Grotto run by the local St Annes Hospice. They were delighted. It will come out annually on show.



Clockwise: Arlene Williams, Stephanie Sims, Irene Lau, Meryl Gumbleton, Pat Fackrell, Rae Jones

As you can imagine, a project like this promotes teamwork and gives the ladies a group objective. It makes them feel they belong to something worthwhile and that they and their work are appreciated. It produces a team spirit which is what U3A is all about.

In our group, we agree an objective, or goal, or project, and the members respond. Most importantly they contribute according to their ability, and often show surprising levels of skill and ingenuity in their work.

# Drawing on a Hobby

## Mollie's love of art helps others to discover their talent

Mollie Haynes joined an art group when she was 16. When she was 41 she began a course at college and found where her passion for art lay.

Mollie: "It was a hobby class where I took up pastels. They are quick and immediate. You can walk away and not worry about the paint congealing."

She then enrolled at university as a mature age student. At 57 she retired and began drawing and painting. Her exhibits received high commendations.

Her life took a different turn when she was asked by Eastlakes U3A to start a class teaching members how to draw.

"It runs for two hours each Thursday morning. I get companionship and it's rewarding to see their drawing improve."

"The class has an average of ten students with a waiting list. They say they enjoy two hours of thinking of

nothing but drawing and I suspect, the exchange of conversation.

"It is my belief that everyone can draw – children draw before they write. You learn as you go along – your eye, arm and hand become coordinated. I ask new students do they like to draw. Often they say, 'Yes but I am not good enough.'

"I ask them: if someone looking over the shoulder of the man who left drawings on the caves in France had said, 'That doesn't look like a bison.', was the artist upset enough to scrub it off? There is no room for shrinking violets in any art. You can't be timid especially on the stage, or likewise exhibiting your art.

"Even though I have 23 years experience in life drawing, I don't classify myself as a teacher, more of a coach. The talent of my class already exists. I point out and emphasise that still life objects are three dimensional.



## Mollie Haynes

### East Lakes U3A NSW Australia

They have perspective – lines that are lost and found (lines that disappear around curves: lost, and re-appear going another direction: found).

There is the importance of: texture, weight, light and shade, and character such as hanging coats, ladies shoes, gents riding boots, and driftwood in its strange shapes. And the contrast of a shabby handbag to the delicacy of flowers, from the edibility of fruit and vegetables, to an unrolling toilet roll which has wondrous curves of light and shade.

# Foundling Museum

## A U3A Shared Learning Project



In January I was fortunate to take part in a U3A Shared Learning Project at the Foundling Museum in Brunswick Square near the British Museum. The project was popular and attracted more than 50 applicants. 12 were selected to take part.

### Story and pictures

#### Anne Laver: Beckenham U3A

The Foundling Museum opened in 2004 on the site of the original Foundling Hospital. The Hospital was the first home in England for abandoned children and was established by Royal Charter in 1739.

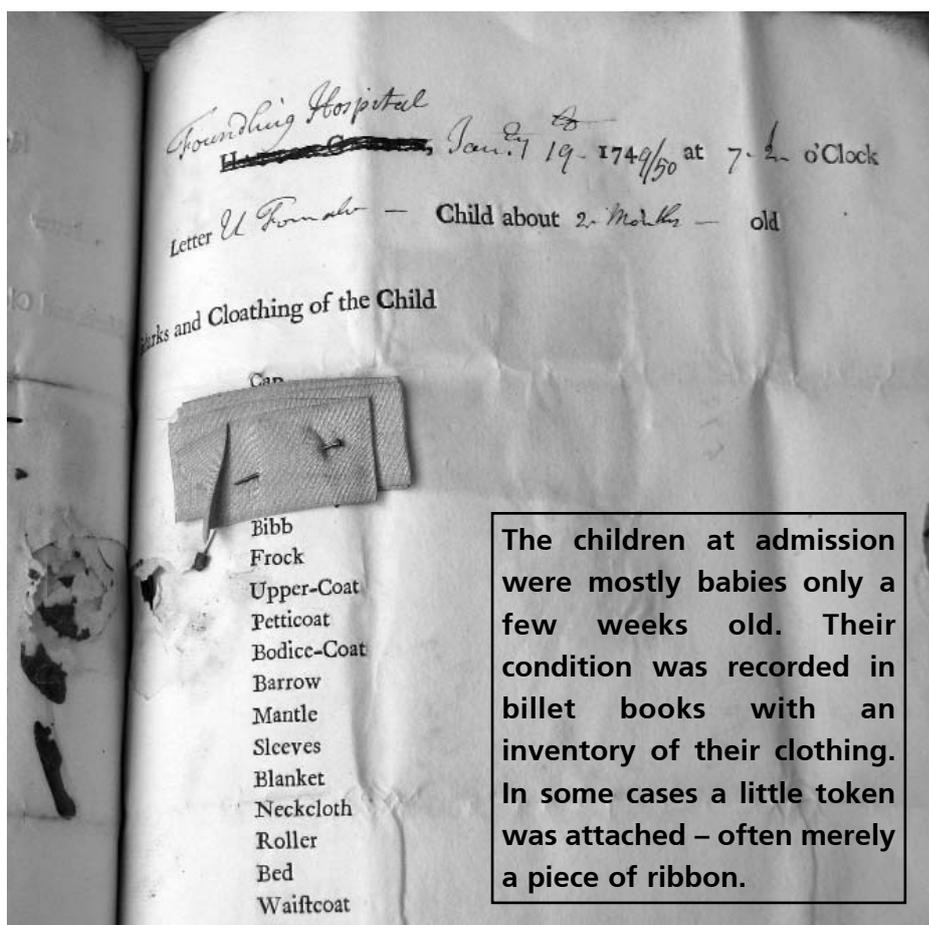
It opened its doors in 1741 after years of campaigning by Thomas Coram, a shipwright and man of humble origin, who through hard work and imagination had fought for this noble cause.

Alison Duke, the Foundling Museum coordinator, chaired our first SLP meeting in January when we met our fellow team members from various U3As, and our Project Leader Jill Moore from Merton U3A. Jennifer Anning, the U3A's SLP London coordinator was also present at this initial meeting.

The SLP involved the earliest leavers from the Hospital from 1751 to 1760, and entailed recording details of their time from entry as babies, through their care and education towards their subsequent discharge and apprenticeship to suitable trades or masters, generally at around ten years of age.

We were provided with lists of 208 children to be traced and these were divided among the group. We met fortnightly at the Foundling Museum and in the intervening weeks carried out research, primarily at the London Metropolitan Archives in Islington where the original records of the Foundling Hospital are stored.

Staff members introduced us to the Museum, with its fascinating exhibits, art collection and moving history of the Hospital, showing the involvement of leading figures such as William Hogarth and George Frederic Handel, both major



The children at admission were mostly babies only a few weeks old. Their condition was recorded in billet books with an inventory of their clothing. In some cases a little token was attached – often merely a piece of ribbon.

benefactors. We were also introduced to the London Metropolitan Archives and its helpful staff.

Alison Duke arranged for related speakers to address the team at our fortnightly meetings. One speaker of particular interest was Lydia Carmichael, a friendly, spirited individual and former pupil of the Foundling Hospital in the 1930s when it had moved to Berkhamsted. She gave a frank and detailed account of her personal experiences within the disciplined regime, mostly lacking in love and

affection – a regime that had obviously changed little since the 1700s.

We worked in pairs, my partner being Barbara Penney from North London U3A. We delved into masses of records at the London Metropolitan Archives, including registers with details of admission, baptism and indenture, hospital logs, minutes of meetings, agreements and inspection visits.

The documentation was so vast that we needed to keep focused. It was easy to become sidetracked by the interesting facts that we uncovered.

Often there were inconsistent handwritten records with conflicting information. It was inevitable that we would draw blanks, therefore it was welcome having a partner with whom to discuss and share views.

Using the records proved to be a moving experience, and particularly poignant were searches through the 'billet books' containing information about the foundling children at admission who were mostly babies only a few weeks old.

Their condition was recorded in these books together with a detailed inventory of their clothing. Sometimes the name of a parent was written, with the child's name and a baptism date.

In some cases a little note or token was attached. Tokens were often merely a piece of ribbon or a button. A variety of tokens left with foundling babies during the years can be viewed in a cabinet at the Foundling Museum.

All babies on entry were issued with a number, baptised and named, usually after persons of fame or note. The first two foundlings were named after Thomas Coram and his wife Eunice.

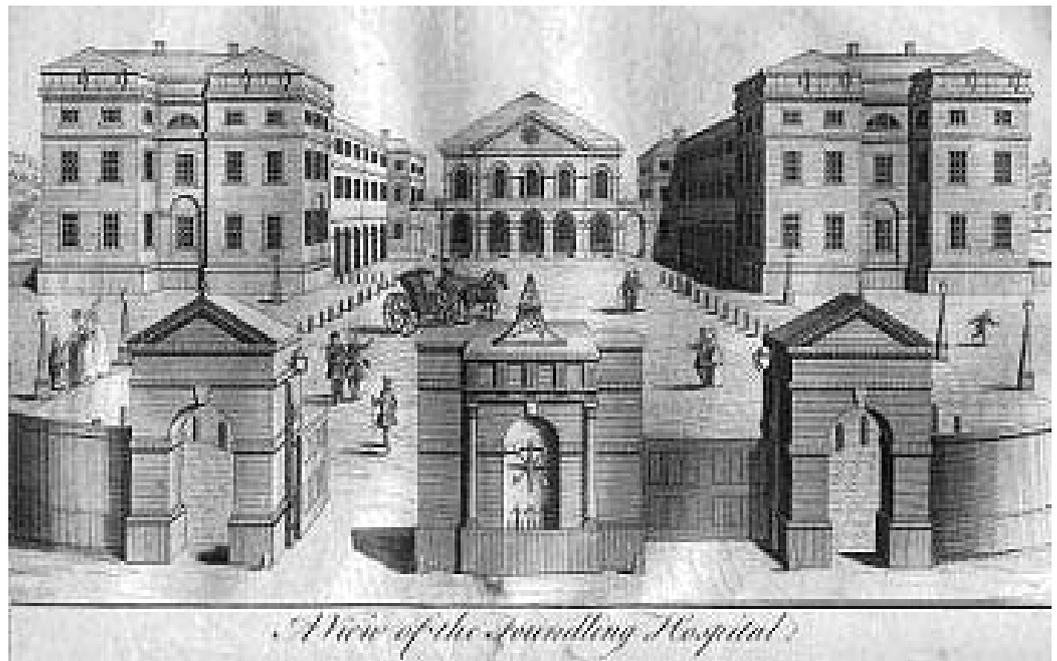
The act of abandoning babies to the Foundling Hospital by mothers was one of love and not callous indifference or neglect, but a last desperate attempt to secure their child's well-being.

As the project progressed I was unprepared for the strong sense of personal involvement with 'my particular foundlings', a feeling also shared by other team members.

Alison Duke guided our research towards concentrating on the nature of the trades and apprenticeships the children entered. This widened our research considerably and led to using internet records, and those in other institutions, libraries and museums specialising in trade archives and history including the Guildhall.

Little information was available on the progress of the foundlings in the various trades and apprenticeships entered into, so we had to make assumptions as to their tasks and condition when in the service of their master or mistress.

There was an amusing testimonial for one boy from his employer, a Victualler, which read: 'Is now honest but pouting and idle when sent of an errand. Mistress



has hardly resolution enough to chastise him, the Master ill in bed'.

The majority of boys went into Sea Service and girls to Household Service, a fair number of boys to Husbandry and Gardening, and 13 girls were apprenticed to work in a Bleaching and Calico Printing Works.

Of the numerous other trades, the more unusual ones included Peruke and Mantua Maker, Stocking Presser and Trimmer, Lace and Fringe Maker, Brickmaker, Combmaker, Cordwainer, Heel and Patten Maker and Staymaker. Work was no doubt hard and hours long.

Many babies died at the Hospital through common diseases of the period.

Two of 'my' foundlings sadly died during their apprenticeships. One, originally indentured to a Lace and Fringe Weaver, transferred to Sea Service, then died on the coast of Guinea in 1770. Another aged 18, while apprenticed to a Felt Maker, was run over by a broadwheel wagon and died sometime in 1767.

More fortunate children were apprenticed to governors of the Hospital or other prominent figures. One boy who I researched was apprenticed to work on the vast Yorkshire Estate and possibly the stud farm, of the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham, Charles Watson-Wentworth, who became Prime Minister in 1765.

Another girl was employed in Household Service to Dr William Cadogan, a governor and physician to the Foundling Hospital, famous for his

'Essay upon Nursing and the Management of Children from their Birth to Three Years of age'. He is still remembered today as an eminent pioneer of child health care.

We made a presentation of our findings to the Foundling Museum on 7 June this year and these were included in an illustrated publication that we hope will be useful to the Museum.

We gained a sense of achievement from this project – how could we fail to be moved by such an emotive subject?



Foundling children by Hogarth

Team member Wendy Mott from Hounslow U3A deserves a tribute for her hard work in putting the project publication together. Without her expertise the final document would not have been achieved in such a professional format. The document and a CD Rom are available from the Resource Centre.

# The shared learning projects are changing shape

This has been the year when the idea of the Shared Learning Projects (SLPs) has spread all over the country. Projects are under way in Edinburgh, Hoddesdon, Bangor and Chelmsford, and there are potential projects in other places.



**Jenny Clark**  
**National Coordinator for**  
**Shared Learning Projects**

Here is an example of how these projects develop. This spring, John Addy of Teign U3A in Devon proposed a Heritage Study Day in September based on the issues found within the catchment of the river Teign.

The Teign Estuary Partnership ([www.teignestuary.org](http://www.teignestuary.org)) had identified several areas that could provide launching points for SLPs.

**Hedgerows:** charting and mapping changes during the years – the environmental impact of change.

**Cider Orchards:** mapping the change and decline of orchards and production.

**The Estuary:** mapping changes using newly found charts and maps.

**Brunel's railway:** mapping the effect on the estuary environment.

**The port of Teignmouth:** a study for the museum there.

**The Town Quay at Newton Abbot:** assisting the redevelopment by research and the presentation of history-based information such as the Newfoundland cod trade.

**Thomas Luny:** working towards an exhibition of the work of this celebrated marine artist in 2009.

**The Templar Way:** refurbishment of the route from Hay Tor to Teignmouth. This would include research for information boards at 12 new waypoints on the route, and a possible audio guide for the trail.

So throughout this year, Teign U3A has been working towards a Study Day and possible SLPs.

Another fascinating project I have heard about this year, also in the West Country, is on medieval archaeology at Lytes Cary Manor, a National Trust (NT) property in Somerset. Archaeological questions there included:

- Was there a Roman villa nearby?
- Can a medieval village be identified in the grounds and is there a relationship with the 14th century chapel?
- There is a drove road dating back 1,000 years. Where are the other hedges?

Three U3As are involved (Cheddar valley, Somerton and Wells), together with the staff of Lytes Cary Manor and the Charltons Historic Society (CHS). (The Charltons is a group of villages near the property.)

Fran Elkin writes about this project: "At the initial meeting on 15 June we met with the property manager – who was most enthusiastic that we were prepared to undertake the project – and the NT archaeologist for Wessex, who gave us a: 'Brief for an Archaeological and Historical Landscape Survey of the Lytes Cary Estate'. They agreed to source the relevant documentation on Lytes Cary held by the NT, and to assemble it at the Regional Office in Warminster, where we can access it.

"It was fortunate that we discovered that a Somerton U3A member was a trained archaeologist, and had recently been involved with a project in the neighbourhood. It was she who invited the CHS to join the group.

"At this meeting we looked at the documentation available, and the two members of the CHS showed us the title maps of 1809 relating to the property. This was also the point at which Nancy Langmaid undertook to lead the group.

"We next met on 31 July when we walked round the estate, found the old drove road and identified where old hedges had possibly been removed.

"It was a beautiful day and we saw several hares, butterflies, wild cornflowers and teasels.



"Back at the house we were shown copies of *The Common Place Book of Thomas Lyte 1611*. Each member of the group had been given a copy of *The Lytes of Lytescary* (1895), which contains extracts from the *Common Place Book*.

"We allocated areas of responsibility – some recording, transcribing and summarising documents, some undertaking oral histories, and others accessing existing records, maps and field names (one person was keen on the Romans).

"A project website is up and running at <http://lytescary.charltons-mackrell-adam.org.uk>."

This is hands-on archaeology.

The project running at the London Archaeological and Archive Research Centre (LAARC) at the Museum of London in Hackney is slightly different. It involves identifying, researching into, and repacking finds and documents to current standards for excavations at one site in Limehouse. This team will receive training from conservators, archivists and other LAARC specialists.

These are examples of one historical discipline, but if you like the idea of working with other people on research of any kind, why not get hold of a copy of the Shared Learning Projects Start Up Leaflet No 2, which is available from National Office, and talk to your friends about what you could make happen in your part of the world?

The SLP website should also be available to you now. Log on to the U3A website and follow the directions.

**Tel: 0208 346 3751**  
**jenmal@onetel.net**

# Resource Centre News

## Manager Elizabeth Gibson announces the latest acquisitions

At the moment the Resource Centre and the National Office are still in temporary accommodation in small offices just outside Bromley in Kent. We hope to return to our rebuilt East Street premises in central Bromley at the end of this year.

This will mean that the service will close for a while to allow us to move and reorganise our stock. We shall not be moving back into the same rooms that we left, but will be in a different part of the building to allow us more room for storage and expansion.

We hope that with careful planning we can avoid major inconvenience to our users and ensure that all the pre-booked items for the period when we have to close are sent out well in advance.

Once we know our closure dates we will put messages in parcels and letters to our borrowers and the information will also appear on the U3A website.

One of the main disadvantages of our temporary accommodation is the lack of storage space for new stock, but in spite of that we have still managed to add more than 200 new and replacement items to our collection during the last few months.

Wherever possible we have replaced well-used items lost in the fire with replacement videos or, more often, DVDs. We have also added a great many new items to the collection and produced new printed subject stock lists which were released at the National Conference in September.

### Handicrafts

We have new DVDs on textile crafts such as Embroidery, Patchwork and Quilting. These are each about 50 minutes long and are ideal for beginners. They introduce the craft, indicate the equipment needed to get started and then explain the basic techniques in a clear and easy-to-follow manner.

For those groups interested in painting and drawing we have replaced many of the videos we lost in the fire with DVD versions.

We have been given a generous donation to buy more of this type of material so if any of our users have requests for material on particular drawing or painting techniques, please contact me with details of what you need and I will do my best to obtain relevant resources.

### Global Warming

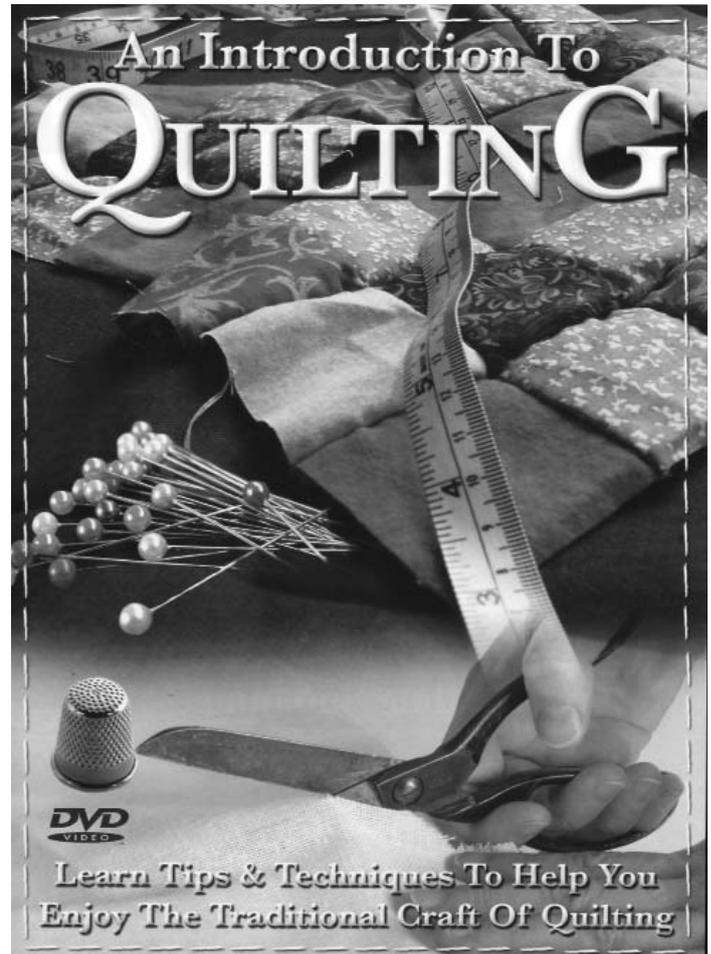
A number of U3A groups are studying climate change and the possible effect on our environment in the future. We now have quite a few items which are relevant to this study.

The well publicised film by Al Gore *An Inconvenient Truth* has been requested from us by a number of users but we also have material on solar cells and wind power and how they can be used to produce domestic energy.

*Global Dimming* a BBC Horizon DVD on the effects of air transport on our atmosphere is also well worth watching.

### Biography

Our Biography section was badly damaged by the fire and we lost some heavily used videos. However, I am pleased to say that we have replaced



most of them and added many new DVDs to our collection, especially relating to music composers, where we now have an excellent selection.

For the first time we have biographies of the writers JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. We also have a new biography of Charles Dickens and some historical characters which we have never had before such as Attila the Hun and Ivan the Terrible. For a full list of our biographical material please apply to the address below.

### Masterpieces of the British Museum

This was a six-part BBC series which appeared in 2006 and which has now been made available for purchase by the British Museum.

The items featured are regarded as supreme treasures of their collection and are from widely different cultures and periods. I do not have space to list them here but would be happy to send a list to anyone who would like one.

Lists of the subjects we cover in our collection are available free from the Resource Centre. Please contact us at the address below for information on any of the material mentioned above.

Elizabeth Gibson  
Resource Centre Manager  
Third Age Trust  
Unit 3 Carpenters Court  
4A Lewes Road, Bromley  
Kent BR1 2RN  
Tel: 020 8315 0199  
(Tues and Thurs only)  
resourcecentre@u3a.org.uk

## The Shock of the New?



Many an Art Appreciation or Art History group arranges its studies by taking a particular period, be it prehistoric cave paintings, ancient Greek classical works, or the Renaissance with its enormous influence.

After a period of time, dependent upon the groups' levels of study, and by progression through centuries and locations, the end of the 19th century may be reached.

Certainly, some groups adopt a different approach, through themes for instance, unrelated to specific times or schools or movements. Some, fortunately situated, can base their meetings on visits to historic buildings and exhibitions, which supply material for follow-up discussions.

These forms of study are likely not to be time-specific, but the members may still find themselves facing something they dislike and do not understand. Then the art of the 20th century can be the next logical period to study.

Is it surprising to find that prejudice still exists with regard to 'modern' art? To begin with, the ways we learned to look at and describe paintings start to be inappropriate. How can you apply a consideration of perspective to a Cubist work? Where does understanding of the light source help in the consideration of an abstract work? Can the appreciation of the skilful use of colour to enhance skin tones or fine fabrics, help when we look at a Fauvist painting?

So, while not forgetting these valuable insights into understanding fine art, a new approach to looking is required, with a new vocabulary to describe the works and an understanding of why the fundamental changes occurred.

Before the successful developments into photography, artists were the only image creators, employed to illustrate, to glorify, to enlighten, to flatter and delight, often to bring great beauty to their world.

Photography could not replace them altogether but artists began to rethink their role and a few began to make fundamental changes to their work, also to accommodate the changing needs and tastes of patrons. They began to abandon the Renaissance tradition of art as an imitation of life.

The first bold leaders had to make changes that were viewed with horror, changing the technique of applying paint, as van Gogh and Cézanne did, using colours in an indiscriminate way – as seen in Matisse's 'Green Line' on the face in the portrait of his wife.

This developed further into the use of intensely vivid colours, unlike the reality of the subjects, causing the artists to be named 'Wild Animals'. Then perspective was banished by Gauguin. There were changes in the choice of non-European subjects, influenced by Japanese prints and primitive societies.

Later, multiple viewpoints made Analytic Cubism's images appear fractured and unreadable. Sticking cut pieces of paper, or collage, on to a canvas introduced some 'real life' into an imaginary work, confusing the viewer.

Later still, paintings had no obvious subject and were given made-up words for titles and Abstraction had begun. Some sculptors also followed the abstract style, abandoning their traditional monumental role.

With the coming of Surrealism, there was a welcome return by some to fine art techniques, but the irrational content so depicted challenged the viewer's understanding of the subject. Incongruity was a deliberate ploy to unsettle, even suggesting that the artist's unconscious had conjured up the images.

Artists' personal response to their experiences of war and political systems, though not entirely new, introduced Expressionism, often with subjects of a deeply shocking nature.

Other disciplined styles with highly

idealist motives, thought to change and improve society with their strict formality, contribute to the rebuilding of a new society, or to shock its values by the anarchic assault of the arts in performance and constructions.

Later in the century, post WWII, Pop Art brought the culture of comic strips and consumerism – quasi-photographic techniques were used.

Minimalism returned to geometric formality as a reaction, before Performance Art once more attempted to shock and bewilder as entertainment.

The movement away from the concept of Art as paint on canvas has seen other systems used, photography having a certain history as an Art form, but video and digital images made the century end in this age of pluralism.

Much was derived purely from the artist, as the collection of eight pints of his blood, then frozen, was carved in the likeness of his head. That must be the most personal of artistic statements.

While such a list of modern art's forms and expressions is rather daunting, it cannot be said to be boring in its great variety.

A new descriptive language came into being, derived from art historians and critics, whose function was to interpret strange new works to the rest of us.

We have become accustomed to reading (even saying) such expressions as deliberate disharmonies, decorative abstraction, reductive stylisation, random arrangements, geometric restraint and dynamic forms.

Even these seem inadequate to cover all that the 20th century produced.

Personally, I find it at least as interesting as the preceding centuries, if not more so, in its vast variety. Do not be afraid to try. Plenty of authors are there to guide and enlighten us.

*The Shock of the New* is the title of Robert Hughes' lavishly illustrated book, published in 2000

During my time in the army I presented classical music gramophone concerts at the Aldershot NAAFI Club, using discs borrowed from the library there.

I tried to inject my audiences with an enthusiasm for the music with which two of my teachers at Grammar School had inspired me: the music teacher, whose lessons were what I came to understand as 'music appreciation'; and my English teacher who ran the after-school Record Club, and encouraged us to play our chosen records and say a few words about each.

In the mid-60s, my career as a graphic designer took me into the record business. By now, the record collection was quite large, but my time in the music business swelled it beyond my wildest expectations. I kept on collecting and on retirement I possessed about 2,500 LPs and a small number of CDs. Retirement was filled with all sorts of activities, but I occasionally wished that I could share my love of music – and my collection of records – with like-minded people.

When I joined the Welwyn-Hatfield branch of U3A, I realised that I could. At a Wednesday morning meeting I announced the formation of a new group (named after the first record company I worked for: Music For Pleasure). That evening six people signed up, and by the end of the week, I had 16 members.

I wanted to have the sessions at my home using my sound system. I could accommodate no more than eight people in comfort, so the 16 were split into two eights, meeting on two afternoons a month, listening to the same programme. To take another four applicants, another two chairs for each session were squeezed in. Three seasons later I am at a full strength of 20.

But what to play? I stared at the rows of records on my shelves (containing some 3,500 pieces of classical music) and wondered where to start. My gaze fell upon my small bust of Shakespeare and Tchaikovsky's *Fantasy-Overture to Romeo and Juliet* came to mind, and my first programme started to take shape: music inspired by the works of Shakespeare. I had my method of programme selection: thematic.

The themes I choose are flexible, just hooks on which I hang a varied programme of good music, some well-known, some perhaps new to my audience. For example, there have been

# Music For Pleasure

Jack Wood: Welwyn-Hatfield U3A

**I went to my first classical concert when I was 16. As a result I started collecting classical 78s, receiving my first Long-Playing vinyl disc (a 10-inch one) for my 21st birthday.**



We are classical music lovers first and foremost but a little intrusion now and then from other areas goes down well, such as Stephane Grapelli's *I Got Rhythm* and tap-dancing by Fred Astaire.

'national' programmes: Italian, German, Russian, Spanish, French, central European music – not necessarily *from* those countries, but mixed in with works inspired by the country (the German Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony and the Russian Tchaikovsky's *Italian Caprice* were alongside Vivaldi, Respighi, Rossini and Verdi in the Italian programme).

Other titles have been *Themes and Variations* (which included Stephane Grapelli's *I Got Rhythm*); *Dance and Dancing* (this had early music dances, a Strauss waltz, dances by Mozart, Arnold and Dvorak as well as a recording of tap-dancing by Fred Astaire); and *Animal, Vegetable and Mineral*, in which we heard Delius's *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, the Flower Song from *Carmen*, and *Pacific 231* – which is a steam engine! – by Honegger.

I include the occasional piece of jazz or light music in my programmes. I believe that good music is good music, and while I and my group are classical music lovers first and foremost, a little

intrusion now and then from other areas seems to go down well.

All 20 of us squeeze in together at Christmas time. Tina supplies mince pies and mulled wine, and the programme is always a light-hearted pot-pourri.

Never forgetting that the U3A is based on a learning concept, each piece of music is introduced by a couple of minutes information about the composer, the circumstances under which the music was written, and anything that should be listened for in the work – just the sort of information that my old music teacher gave us before he played his records. A printed programme is provided, containing details of the recordings, and a digest of the introductory notes.

So if you have a variety of good recordings, something decent on which to play them, and a room big enough to accommodate enough people to make it worthwhile, I'm sure you will find a demand in your U3A for a study group in which Music is played For Pleasure.

I promise you that you will find it rewarding. (The cakes are popular too!)

# Listening to Music

When I joined the Sheffield U3A in the late summer of 2001 it was to take part in a Music Appreciation Group. These are called *Listening to Music* groups but I think the word 'appreciation' suggests an onward and upward striving to discover more about composers and their work.

There were three flourishing music groups in Sheffield, but with the keen interest in music in the city these were full. The coordinator suggested that I should start a new one.

I have spent many decades enjoying music and being curious about works and composers I did not know. In recent years I have collected a substantial number of CDs, often featuring the obscure, but I have never thought of establishing, let alone directing, a group of this kind.

I chatted with coordinator Ray Cottam of Listening to Music II who runs his group effectively. I said that I would like to run a group that was a mix of entertaining and educational – enjoyment of course, but also for people to feel a broadening of their awareness of composers, their times, their music, how it came to be written, and why it sounds as it does.

He said this was his view too. He also said that I could not be responsible for people liking everything I played: "Nobody can like everything equally."

He explained that he gave what he called 'artistic direction' by selecting, but

still listening to suggestions, the music to be featured. My experience during the years showed that he was right.

I bore these points in mind. I also reflected that for a group to function well, the coordinator needs to have a genuine liking for people, to value them and derive an equally genuine pleasure from bringing music to listeners who are approaching music from different levels of knowledge, and even, dare one say, different levels of tolerance.

One lady who joined us told me she knew nothing about classical music and asked if this mattered.

I told her that an open mind and heart, and a healthy curiosity, were all that mattered. She is now one of our regular members and derives at least as much from our activities as any other member.

The group is six years old, the membership is three times what we began with, and there is a waiting list. We meet in members' homes, and their openness and hospitality is a vital ingredient in the working of the group. We are not so much group members as 'friends in music'.

We began in 2001 by listening to short pieces and movements – snippets – but I wanted to move on to the appreciation of complete works. Rachmaninov's 18th Variation in *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* is fine, but what about the rest of the work? The piece sounds so much better when appreciated in context, as part of the whole.

David  
Andrews:  
Sheffield U3A



The opening of Beethoven's monumental *Fifth Symphony* is shattering, but what of its context, its relevance to the rest of the composition?

Only by asking ourselves these questions and seeing the work in this way is it possible to appreciate the music and its composer. For some years now it has been a rarity for us to have short extracts in our music afternoons.

The level of involvement of my friends in the group, the level of open-mindedness, and their willingness to listen with intelligent commitment to the music, are aspects of our times together that will live with me always.

We enjoy, from time to time, old favourites, and I try to shine light into the corners of some of these pieces to illuminate facets of the work that some, perhaps, had not noticed.

On the other hand we play less well-known composers or often, interestingly, some music by a well-known figure that is atypical of his or her work or simply neglected for no clearly definable reason.

Programmes often feature a mix of these elements. If say, we are having a Russian afternoon, we might well have some Tchaikovsky, but also Taneyev, Arensky or Kalinnikov.

Education and entertainment. Or vice versa – take your pick!

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The meetings are held in my house, and therefore the group perforce has to be no larger than ten members. We meet, as do most groups in Ealing, once a month.

When I started the group I chose randomly, about 20 postcards from the National Gallery. At the first meeting I asked everyone to choose a card, and we worked out a programme. Two people at each meeting would talk about the painting, the artist, and why they had chosen it. I gave out some guidelines on what to look for and what questions to ask. We then, for the final half hour, watched a video of an art history course on European Art.

## Art Appreciation

Ella Marks: U3A Ealing

The group were happy with this format. Some were far more knowledgeable than others, but all contributed.

After we had exhausted this first round we discussed our future format. Initially everyone brought a favourite painting and then subsequently it was decided that each time we would have a theme, keep to the format of having two people to speak to particular paintings, and continue with our video course or see

some other relevant video. We have since considered landscape paintings, portraits, the golden age of Dutch painting, and 20th century painters.

We try to limit ourselves to paintings that can be seen in London, and at the beginning of each themed series we each know what the paintings will be, and we try to go to see them prior to the discussion. This becomes a bit hit and miss, but the intention is there.

During the years a few members have dropped out and been replaced, but we are learning something from each other in the true spirit of U3A. What is more, we are thoroughly enjoying looking at old favourites with new eyes.

# Singing Together

Towards the end of 2004 I was asked by Mr Derrick Scampion, chairman of Ilkley and District U3A, to form a singing group. After a great deal of persuasion I agreed to lead a group with two main aims.



Honor C Farrell  
Ilkley and District U3A

My first aim would be to gather a group of people that loved singing irrespective of their musical training. It must be a joyful enterprise. There would be no auditions, no age limit nor requirement to read music. The only criterion would be a love of singing. In this way I would attract those lacking the confidence to join one of the well-established choirs in the district, but would nevertheless enjoy the opportunity to meet others and sing together in a relaxed atmosphere.

My second aim was to revive our wonderful heritage of National Songs and Ballads which I felt were in danger of being forgotten. Singing them in my school days gave me great joy, and it was likely that others might remember them with nostalgia and pleasure.

To add interest I proposed to tell the story behind the song, including mini-biographies of the collectors of folksongs, such as Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams.

I would play recordings of professional singers performing the songs we were about to learn. Artists such as Kathleen Ferrier, Kenneth McKellar, John McCormack, Janet Baker, Thomas Allen and the Cambridge Singers, have made such a great contribution to the folksong genre. Their performances would give pleasure and set fine examples of expression, breath control, good vocal tone and perfect diction.

I also planned to demonstrate how composers used folksongs in their orchestral works, by playing examples of works by Vaughan Williams, Percy Grainger and Henry Wood among others.

I hoped to use the New National Song Book published by Boosey and Hawkes in 1900, and revised in 1958, but found it difficult to obtain copies. I went to a school where I taught before I retired, to see if we could borrow a few of the 40 copies that were then in the music cupboard. I was horrified to learn that



Honor leads the Ilkley U3A singing group

they had been thrown out because 'they were not needed for the National Curriculum'. We bought a few on the Internet and in charity shops, but not enough for our purpose. If anyone has an old copy to donate...

My friend, Mrs Myra Johnson, kindly agreed to provide the accompaniment for our songs and ballads. This would free me to teach, conduct and establish a face-to-face relationship with the group.

There were to be six fortnightly meetings from 14.00 to 15.30 during each of the spring and autumn terms.

We started in January 2005 with 11 singers. Many were unsure of what to expect and few could read music, but I reassured them that this was to be a joyful experience, and that no one should feel inadequate. Everyone can sing!

I began by explaining the tradition of folk singing, originating among the common folk who were uneducated and without musical training. Their songs illustrated their everyday lives and were spontaneous utterances passed on by oral tradition from one generation to another. We would try to learn one song from each of the four countries of the British Isles at each meeting.

Our first song was Billy Boy which everyone knew – a Northumbrian Shanty

collected by Sir Richard Runciman Terry. This was followed by Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms, Ye Banks and Braes and The Ashgrove. Everyone went home smiling!

Since then the group has grown to 33 singers, and we have built up a repertoire of more than 80 songs and many unusual carols. While still enjoying simple, familiar folksongs we have also progressed to rounds, madrigals, enchanting arrangements by John Rutter from his collection of folksongs *A Sprig of Thyme*, songs in four-part harmony and songs with descants.

The singing has given great joy to all concerned and many new friendships have been formed. Some members are in their 80s and 90s and though enthusiastic, find it tiring to sing for an hour and a half, so we established a 15-minute tea break, and during this time friends enjoy catching up with each other's latest news.

The aim of the course – to give enjoyment – has been achieved through the wonderful traditional folksongs and ballads of our isles. Although it does not fall into either category, we have adopted Martin Shaw's 20th century 'Song of the Music Makers' as our theme song and signature tune.

# Speakers: to have or not to have

**Are you tired of looking for good speakers? Do you want to try something different and cut down on expenses? Try it. You might like it, and if not always, then every second month or once in a while.**

**W**e choose not to have speakers at our monthly meeting which we call our Coffee Morning. In 15 years, we've never had speakers. Why? We prefer getting to know one another and communicating - especially with the interest groups.

On the last Friday of the month about 80-90 (out of 200) members gather in a hall, for coffee, tea and biscuits at 10:30 - although they start arriving at 10 and they chat, chat, chat. The chairman chats with everyone, especially the new members or those who are visiting and might like to join. If the chairman is occupied, we have a team of three ladies who help. We introduce the person(s) to the coordinators of groups they are interested in.

At about 11:00, the chairman makes announcements (it takes about 15-20 minutes), including Group news, U3A news (ours and TAT), member news as well as what is happening in the community. We have a lending library, a notice board and often some of the

groups meet afterwards to make plans.

It is a chaotic time. Everyone loves it and can hardly wait for the next coffee morning. We do not feel that we have time for a speaker - we prefer talking about U3A activities.

The chairman has attended U3As where they have speakers at their monthly meeting and there is not the same camaraderie. The committee and coordinators (group leaders) did not have time to talk among themselves and with the members. That's not to say that those U3As are not successful.

We do have our yearly Lecture Day in February where we have three good speakers talking on a variety of subjects. This year we had Elayne Hoskin for South West TV & Film Archive; Lord Tyler of Lincolnhorne on Parliament in the 21st century; and Allan Eastwood, OBE, former Chairman of the Police Federation for England and Scotland. He spoke on Public Service.

Meetings of Group Leaders

The other thing we do is have a

**Brenda Hooton  
Launceston & District U3A**

meeting of coordinators (six per year) the day after our committee meeting (seven per year). It gives the chairman a chance to tell the 28 coordinators what the committee has decided and they can then share the news with members of their groups. They also get to know one another, compare projects, and iron out any problems they might have. It is hosted in a member's home. We have coffee and it only lasts about an hour but we cover a lot of ground.

Other events throughout the year

We have a Christmas party with entertainment by the various groups, a New Years Lunch, and various coach trips. Last year it was Hartland Abbey and Gardens, Tapeley Park and Gardens, and a canal boat cruise from Tiverton. Impromptu events were a visit to St Ives then a night performance at the Minack Theatre, and canoeing on the Tamar.

Our Travel group organises 1-2 trips abroad. In the summer we hold a Welcome Party for the new members which has proven successful. They get to know the committee and the group coordinators (the full membership is not invited).

A full calendar!

Most U3As I've spoken to about 'no speakers', panic at the thought of having nothing to do and I've assured them - there is!

## Quilts for Children in Hospital

**T**he Penelope Quilters came together as a group with little experience of quilt making. Few of them had ever made such a thing. I had helped them to produce various learning blocks and followed this up with the suggestion that these be put together and made into quilts for the children's wards of our hospital.

We dyed fabrics, choosing bright as well as gentle colours, and used five inch squares of fabric to produce 28 quilts, learning the various techniques a step at a time. We presented 25 quilts to the hospital at our September 2007 monthly meeting - one for each year of U3A/UK.

Each quilt is backed with cosy fleece and will be given to a child in need of a

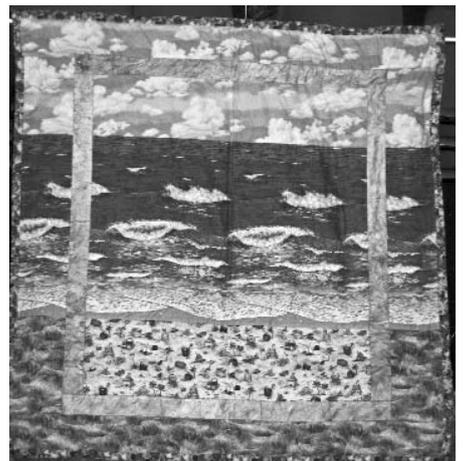
comfort 'blankie', as a permanent gift to take home when discharged.

The 25th quilt, a beautiful seascape (pictured), was designed and made by one group member specially to be displayed in the children's department of Basildon Hospital. With Matron's permission, the hospital staff want to hang it in the treatment room where it will be a focal point for therapeutic conversation with young patients.

Three quilts remain to start us off again. We hope for feedback from the hospital to tell us which quilts are the most popular, so that we can continue with the project, with the old hands helping newer group members.

This project gave the group an achievable goal. It was a considerable

**Eva Jackson  
Basildon & Billericay U3A**



learning experience for group leader and for novice quilters. We thoroughly enjoyed making our quilts - had great fun. At our meeting we saw them presented to representatives from the children's wards with the contented feeling of a job well done.

# Writing Small

In November 2005, Maidstone U3A held a brainstorming session for ideas for Special Interest Groups. I suggested we try writing 'small' and form a Magazine Letter Writing Group, with the aim of getting published. The first meeting was held the following month.

At the first meeting I explained to the five members present: "You don't have to be an experienced writer to submit letters, tips and other items to magazines and newspapers. Editors publish this kind of material regardless of who writes it.

"But you do have to understand what the market requires, how to angle your work towards the most suitable publication, and how best to present it."

We decided that the purpose of the group would be to:

- Study the market by analysing the letter requirements of four or five publications each month.
- Discuss possible ideas for submission to these markets.
- Write the items (usually 75 words or fewer) in our own time.
- Read these items at the next meeting for discussion and/or criticism.
- Submit them to which publication the group considered to be most suitable.

Everyone was surprised when the first few letters were published. We began looking for new themes. Such as: remarks heard at a check-out ('He stood there in all his refinery'); quirky signs seen in shop windows ('Now is the winter of our discount tents'); funny things that children say ('Look Grandma, I've got a kitten cat'); and simple observations ('Why is it that so many public timepieces do not work?').

However, the magazine market is highly competitive, and members found that not every letter submitted was published. Those that did were often cut to fit the style or wordage requirements.

Here are some of the letters that found their way into print:

**The trouble with rubble** - When I moved into my newly built house ten years ago, the front lawn was already in situ but the

grass never prospered. This year I decided to replace one section and opted to dig it out to ensure the new turf was laid on a good base.

What I found, however, was that just a thin layer of soil had been laid over a base of builder's rubble and hard core – the grass had never stood a chance. Why isn't a building site manager responsible for leaving a garden, like the house, in a 'fit-for-purpose' condition?

John Dyer

*Amateur Gardening* £5 Voucher

**Perfect Gift** - I bought my three-year-old grandson James lots of small toys for Christmas. To transport them with ease, I put them in a bucket and wrapped it up. When he opened it he squealed: 'Look, a fireman's bucket!' He tipped the toys out and played at being a fireman all day. I was glad he liked my gift so much.

Joan Butcher

*Take a Break* Christmas Issue £50

**Ramsay's right** - The recent series of Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares on Channel 4 was cracking. Not only was Gordon justified in reducing some of those appalling restaurant staff to quivering wrecks until they accepted his constructive criticism, but he made us shockingly aware of the risks of food poisoning. His rages, also, made great entertainment.

Mervyn Coverdale

*TV Choice* - Star Letter £10

**Alien world** - I thought the Martians had landed when I saw an advert in a newspaper which read, 'Green ladies bicycle for sale'.

Joan Butcher

*Yours Magazine* £5 Voucher



Mervyn Coverdale

Maidstone U3A

**It's all in the name** - I was amused by the entrepreneurial spirit of a young gardener who pushed a leaflet through my door. He was offering to aerate the lawn before Christmas. What made me laugh was the name of his business: The Rake's Progress!

Mervyn Coverdale,

*Amateur Gardening* - £5 Voucher

Members have also been paid for items published in *TV Quick*, *TV Choice*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Sun*, *Amateur Gardening*, *Women's Weekly* and *Yours Magazine* (a favourite because they publish so much reader material).

In the non-payment (but often more prestigious) field, letters have been published in *The Daily Telegraph*, *Mature Times*, *The Times*, *U3A News*, and in the Winner's Dinners column of *The Sunday Times*.

Two items have also been published on the Internet. One was a letter, and the other a restaurant review.

Okay, I hear you say, but is this 'proper' writing? Yes it is, because writing Letters to the Editor is not only one of the simplest ways to develop your writing skills, it also requires ideas to be presented in a precise and succinct manner.

Although the composition of the group has changed during the last 15 months, it has never had more than five members at any one meeting.

People say they would like to join the group but that they can't think of anything to write about, without realising that they have a lifetime of experience on which they can draw.

However the enthusiasm is catching and we hope to expand our horizons during the coming year and attract new membership.

## U3A Online Courses

The courses listed are available online. Visit the website, [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk) and click on the link to Online Courses.

The copyright to the courses is owned by the Third Age Trust or by U3A Online Inc in Australia.

### Course Titles

#### Tutored courses (£15)

- Introduction to Astronomy (Aus)
- Saving the Soil (Aus)
- Online Genealogy (Aus)
- Maintaining Independence (Aus)
- Introduction to Western Philosophy (Aus)
- Ageing and Retirement (Aus)
- Food for Thought (Aus)
- The Romans (Aus)
- Renaissance Italy (Aus)
- Religions of the World (Aus)
- Design in your Life (Aus)
- Autobiography and Journalling (Aus)
- Writing Family History (Aus)
- China: An Introduction
- Visiting Artists in Rome
- Digital Imaging
- Creative Writing: Short Stories
- Writing for Publication

#### Untutored Courses (£8)

- Artists of Spain
- Italian Art
- Venice and Her Artists
- Visiting Artists in Rome
- Great Northern European Artists
- Creative Writing: Fiction
- Creative Writing: Poetry
- Writing for Good Effect
- Writing for Publication
- Writing Family History
- Digital Imaging
- Garden History
- Understanding Computers
- Introduction to Astronomy (Aus)
- Saving the Soil (Aus)
- Online Genealogy (Aus)
- Maintaining Independence (Aus)
- Introduction to Western Philosophy (Aus)
- Ageing and Retirement (Aus)
- Food for Thought (Aus)
- The Romans (Aus)
- Renaissance Italy (Aus)
- Religions of the World (Aus)
- Design in Your Life (Aus)
- Autobiography and Journalling (Aus)
- Writing Family History (Aus)

#### For details check the websites:

- [www.u3a.org.uk/online\\_courses](http://www.u3a.org.uk/online_courses)
- [www.u3aonline.org](http://www.u3aonline.org)

Courses available only to U3A members. Tutors and writers are unpaid volunteers.

# U3A Study Day: Creative Writing

## *"Take the lift to the 5th floor!"*

Our spirits rose with the lift and we found ourselves in a room high above the Grays Inn Road on a hot, humid morning in June.

Our aspirations to be Creative Writers were not as grand as the cathedral spires of St Pancras and Kings Cross, just visible through the shutters. But we were ready, willing and optimistically able.

The Study Day was one of those well-organised treats when fellow enthusiasts from U3As meet to feed on discussion, diversion and debate.

There was, of course, noise from the busy traffic outside, but apart from the police sirens, the sound barely matched the noise in the room.

The only time the indoor hubbub stopped was during the 15-minute writing exercise. It was hot outside and sometimes heated inside, but never too hot to handle.

We were led energetically by Maggie Smith, the U3A National Coordinator for the Creative Writing Subject Network.

"Who," she asked, "are U3A writers?"

Most of us there were leaders and members of writing groups. We represented a range of people: those who write after a lifetime doing other things; people who have always enjoyed writing – whether poetry or prose; members who write for therapeutic reasons; non-fiction authors who are trying their hands at creative fiction; and so on.

"Why do we write?"

It seems that many thirdagers write for the sheer pleasure alone, whereas others want to get into print as well.

As one guy said fervently, "I don't want my writing to end up in the necrophilia skip!"



Max de Boo

As the morning progressed, we tackled questions about leading groups and associated problems, such as: 'How do we get constructive feedback?' and: 'What can we do with obstructive group members?' Solutions and suggestions were offered, and how the Network could help. We covered a lot of ground round the tables and also during the buffet lunch.

In the afternoon, we were led by poet, tutor and critique consultant Doris Corti, now a U3A group leader. Out of the kaleidoscope and concertanti of her poems and recollections, I gleaned (amongst other things) and, following our venture into haikus:

Music, witty words

Metaphor, muse and meaning

Slim, trim poetry

So, to the latent Austens, Asimovs and Audens out there, I urge you to put pen to paper, join a group or start one yourself, not forgetting to join the Subject Network. There is shared pleasure, fun and challenge just waiting there for you to begin.

## A new publication

The EU-funded eLse online course (Learning for Seniors) has been piloted and tested in several European countries. It may soon appear in book form. This course provides seniors who are relatively new to computing to acquire the basic skills of word processing, e-mailing, and the Internet. The language of the course is simple and straightforward and the book is designed to lie flat on the desk alongside a laptop or PC keyboard.

This book (along with the possibility of a companion CD) should be available early in the new year at a reasonable cost. Look out for further information in National Office business mailings or the U3A website [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk).

## Advance notice

### U3A Study days

These will be hosted by The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham.

They are unable to fit us in to the schedule this year but will be hosting an event on 15 April 2008 that will be repeated on 17 April.

If you want to get on to the mailing list to receive further information when available please contact Lucy Dagger:

Tel: 0121 414 6985

[events@barber.org.uk](mailto:events@barber.org.uk)

Details of the current programme can be obtained from their website:

[www.barber.org.uk](http://www.barber.org.uk)