



the EYE



News and views from across Ilkley & District U3A

Connecting with our community

Working together to tackle social isolation and loneliness

Now in its 21st year, Ilkley & District U3A is coming of age, writes *Stuart Campbell*.

Having achieved record membership and a wide variety of interests we are increasing our social responsibility role in the wider community.

Much of the groundwork was created by dedicated efforts to make our organisation Dementia Friendly, increasing awareness of this growing problem among an ageing population. As a result, more men and women with the condition are being helped to enjoy near-normal everyday living for many more years.

The legacy of murdered MP Jo Cox brought new focus to that other blight of the 21st century – loneliness, or social isolation, which is believed to seriously affect mental health and longevity.

To draw attention to the many social opportunities across the Wharfe valley, members, led by Steve Walker, organised a well-received Working Together exhibition in the Winter Garden, Ilkley attended by 30 charities representing a huge range of activities.

Thanking Ilkley U3A for its initiative, Ilkley Parish Council chairman Steve Butler said loneliness and isolation could have a detrimental effect on people's



Ilkley Parish Council chairman Steve Butler with Town Crier Isabel Ashman, who helped publicise the Working Together exhibition, and U3A chair Sue Butler.

physical and mental health.

"A big issue is that many people living alone don't think it is right to seek help, especially if it means going to a charity. We should try to get rid of that perceived stigma."

He drew attention to the coming idea of social prescribing, in which family doctors recommend work done by charities to aid patients' wellbeing.

He hoped the U3A might become involved in the future in the form of "community connectors".

Meanwhile, a new Sheds Group is on

the stocks to attract males who are often reluctant to take advantage of charity activities.

With the aim of further extending the U3A's reach into the community, a group of volunteers is currently exploring the possibility of setting up an interactive Care Homes Group.

We already enjoy use of facilities at the Audley Clevedon retirement village in Ben Rydding and have received positive interest regarding our offer of visiting arts and entertainment provided by our talented members.

* Photos by Mary Podesta

A positive response

Thirty organisations took part and several took the opportunity to give feedback on the event

- "Excellent, very well organised, thank you for inviting us."
- "Always glad to collaborate."
- "Good networking and contacts made."
- "Venue was perfect and in a good location."
- "Generally good range and number of exhibitors."
- "Event exceeded our expectations."
- "Should be held every year."



Charities taking part in the exhibition were pleased to highlight their activities to visitors.

Don't forget to renew your Ilkley U3A membership



Funghi on a tree, photographed by Peter Robinson.

How to take that perfect photo

Love taking photographs but unsure of what all those dials and settings on your camera mean? Want to know more about aperture, shutter speed and ISO?

The Beginners' Photography Group has been helping U3A members find some answers.

It was set up this year by Peter Robinson and now has 18 members who meet fortnightly.

Most are enthusiastic photographers unsure of some of the technicalities but keen to learn more, though some are beginners just starting out with a camera.

Peter had expressed an interest in joining a U3A photography group last year but after speaking to Mary Podesta, who leads the advanced group, realised he didn't have the level of knowledge required for that group, the only one running at that time.

With Mary's support and encouragement he launched the beginners' group.

Peter said: "Mary has been true to her word giving me lots of ideas for group sessions and providing us with two of her presentations.

"We are slowly getting to grips with the mystery of digital photography and we are having lots of fun (most of the time!) learning together."

The group, which meets at the Horse and Farrier in Otley alternate Wednesdays from 2-4pm, will take a summer break from the end of June, with sessions restarting in September.

Starting a group

Our wonderfully-creative members are constantly coming up with ideas for new interest groups but there is always room for more!

If there is something you would like to pursue, get in touch with groups co-ordinator Mary Podesta at mezzapod@gmail.com

She's always happy to talk through any suggestions and offer advice to anyone wanting to add to the 160-plus groups already running!

Stalwarts step back

Two long-standing members have decided to take a very well-earned rest from group leadership.

Pamela Rae and Alan Kay, both founder members of Ilkley & District U3A in 1997, have decided to step back a little, but will continue as enthusiastic and dedicated members.

Over the past 21 years Pam has led groups in Writing Your Life Story, Family History, and since 2003 to the present day, in Philosophy.

A wartime graduate of Glasgow University in English and Philosophy, she interrupted her studies to spend three years in the WRNS as a radar mechanic.

"Rather a different kind of study!" she said, "but just as absorbing."

Pam spent her working life as a freelance journalist, writing extensively for local and national publications and ran her own syndicated feature service for the regional press. Her book, "Turtle At Mr Humble's", tells the true story of an 18th century Yorkshire businessman and his family, whose lively letters between Bradford and Charleston, South Carolina, she found in the Bradford Archives.

Since retirement the U3A has been a major part of her life.

"Ilkley U3A is a tremendous success, with more than 1,600 members and an immense variety of groups of all kinds," she said. "It



Alan Kay and Pamela Rae with Ilkley U3A chair Sue Butler, centre.

has been a privilege and also great fun to lead the groups and I shall still attend as a member in the future."

Alan Kay has decided to step down as joint leader of the Science & Technology Group after more than nine years.

At the last study session of the 2017/2018 season, there was something akin to "This is Your Life" as Alan was reminded, in a surprise presentation, of the many talks and visits he had organised over the years. There was delight all round as Alan and group members recalled those many happy memories.

What started out as the Science & Engineering Group in 2009 now has so many members, a second group is to be launched this autumn.

It means U3A members will have the opportunity to indulge their passion on either a Tuesday or a Wednesday, twice per month.



Tales from one side of the tracks

Members of the Railway Group were invited for tea and a chat with Alan Sutcliffe, a resident of Homecroft Care Home in Ilkley.

Alan is a retired senior manager for British Railways. Unfortunately he is restricted in his ability to attend U3A meetings but members found his mind was as sharp as ever.

He was clearly delighted to be given the opportunity to share his experiences. For their part, his visitors said it was a privilege to hear first-hand accounts about managing the railway when some of them were still in short trousers with their engine number notebooks!

- For the past 12 months the Railway Group has been selling rail-related second-hand books to members at their regular Tuesday meetings. The proceeds raised £109.60 for the Beamsley Project and £83 for Oxfam.

Spreading the word in Otley

Ilkley U3A is keen to expand our activities in Otley and another drop-in session will be held there this summer.

It will take place from 10.30am to midday on Friday, August 31 at Otley Core resource centre, in the Orchard Gate shopping area, close to the bus station.

The last Otley session proved very successful and the organisers were kept busy dealing with inquiries, both from existing

members and would-be recruits.

"Current members are always welcome and it is good to bring friends –or potential members – along to meet us," said Angie Grain, who will again be helping to man the fort.

Drop-in sessions will, of course, continue to be held regularly in Ilkley. They take place on the first and third Fridays of the month from 10.30am to midday at the Clarke Foley Centre.

Wine lovers find much to savour!

Steve Moorcraft, who leads the popular Wine Circle 2, selects a coveted Californian McManus Petit Syrah 2012 from his extensive cellar rack.

"Our group is about exploring different wines and meeting socially to talk about them," said Steve, a former manager with HM Revenue and Customs.

"Our themed fortnightly meetings at each other's houses range across



countries, wine regions, varieties, wine with food and members' favourites, accompanied by blind tastings."

Wine grown and made in Yorkshire is on the agenda for a future visit.

Helping children to reach their potential

The new Reading Helpers Group is among the latest examples of Ilkley U3A's ongoing efforts to develop our social responsibility activities.

Group members go into primary schools in the area to offer literacy support to pupils.

The group is led by Geoff Howard, who took forward the initiative. He recruited and visited the schools which signed up, recruited and met members who volunteered, paired them with schools, arranged familiarisation visits, organised safeguarding clearances and sorted visit arrangements and support structures.

The group mirrors the work carried out nationwide by Beanstalk, a charity with strong links to Yorkshire.

It too organises regular visits to schools in which volunteers spend 30 minutes twice a week with three children whose teachers say would benefit from one-to-one time spent

reading.

Beanstalk says the relationship its volunteers establish with the children helps to build each child's self esteem and confidence.

"The encouragement the children receive encourages them to improve their literacy skills and find their own motivation to read for pleasure," it says.

Ilkley U3A member Eileen Green is in her second year as a Beanstalk volunteer and says it is immensely rewarding.

"Seeing a child grow in confidence and ability is wonderful," she said.

"It is a privilege to be able to help children develop skills they need to help reach their potential."

Beanstalk offers training and support for all its volunteers and has staff members in the Ilkley area. To find out more go to www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk

Beanstalk
Read • Grow • Succeed

Uplifting work on dementia

Ilkley U3A is working hard to become a Dementia Friendly organisation and as part of those efforts, the Saturday talk in February took dementia awareness as its theme.

Coincidentally, during February and March, West Yorkshire Playhouse (WYP) staged Every Third Minute, a festival of "theatre, dementia and hope".

The festival took its name from the stark statistic that every three minutes someone in the UK begins living with dementia.

The guest speaker at the talk was one of the festival organisers, WYP older people's programme manager Maggie De Ruyck.

She described how the Playhouse's creative engagement team had involved people



living with dementia in both the planning and performance stages of the festival and her enthusiasm for this pioneering work was both inspirational and uplifting.

She explained that in another innovative project, WYP was taking dementia-themed drama into the community. In March "Three", a triple bill of short plays co-written by people living with dementia, toured care homes and community centres in Leeds, using drama to illustrate some of the highs and lows of dementia.

Following Maggie's talk, the audience participated in a dementia awareness workshop delivered by Jean Smith and Fiona Throp.

More workshops and a screening of the film Still Alice are scheduled and members are encouraged to attend to improve their understanding and awareness of dementia.

Share your stories

The editorial team is grateful to those members who submitted articles or ideas for The Eye as we want to spotlight the huge variety of activities achieved.

If your group has something to shout about do let us know by emailing info@ilkleyu3a.org

Everything under the sun this summer

This year's Summer Programme promises a wonderful range of opportunities to enjoy.

As always, members have come up with a great range of activities. Wine tasting, board games, getting by in Italian (or German or French) while on holiday, table tennis, badminton, racket ball and more.

There's even a revival of "The Lion in Winter" if you didn't get a chance to see this award-winning film first time round.

One group had a look back over the last year and has offered one of its talks so that more members can experience it.

Ilkley U3A chair Sue Butler said that sort of response was something all members might consider over the coming year.

"This year's Summer School really does have something for everyone to enjoy," she said.

"A huge thank you from me to everyone who contributed. Perhaps the best way to thank them will be to enjoy the activities they offer."

Details of the Summer School can be found at ilkleydistrictu3a.wildapricot.org and in the printed programme for those members who receive it by post.

Fascinating factory visit

The working life of a factory and its fascinating history were explored by Science and Technology Group members on a visit to Mansfield Pollard in Bradford.

The company specialises in air management, covering all aspects of air conditioning, ventilation, refrigeration, acoustic control and so on.

The owner's mother, Lilly Pollard made the initial approach to the group, and member Norman Jones then organised two visits.

Group leader Bill Jones said it had been an excellent educational experience.

"Norman said it was amazing what's on your own doorstep and I could not agree more," he said.

During the second visit to the factory, there was some discussion about old railway lines discovered there.

The site was originally part of Bowling Iron Works and John Hancock, who is also a member of the Railway Group, investigated further afterwards.

A narrow gauge railway was used to move material within the works, and a line to the Great Northern Railway was used to ship the products. A network of tramways brought minerals from the pits to the works, with wagons pulled by wire ropes powered by stationary engines. Four large pumps were used to keep the mines dry, with some of the water used in the ironworks.

To find out more go to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowling_Iron_Works



A beautiful exhibit at the Meissen porcelain factory.

It wasn't the best of starts – a four-hour delay at Manchester Airport left the Travel Group with only a fleeting visit to the Czech capital Prague before transferring to Dresden in former East Germany.

But group committee member Ann Holmes said the beautiful river setting of the German baroque city with its stately buildings, some rebuilt after WW2 bombing, lived up to expectations.

A knowledgeable guide made the most of the visit, with frequent stops for "kaffee und kuchen". However, even the most enthusiastic members of the party were flagging a little after the umpteenth eierschecke (delicious egg custard cake), the speciality of the region.

A visit to the Dresden Panometer was a novel way of showing 24 hours in the life of the city in 1756, its heyday. The Bundeswehr Military History Museum, reopened in 2011, focused on the human aspects of

war and technology.

The hugely varied programme also included the Palace of Pillnitz on the banks of the Elbe, the former summer residence of the Saxon royal court which was built to rival Versailles.

A different insight into the region was provided at the Meissen porcelain factory during a talk about its history and processes, all complemented by an exhibition room filled with beautiful pieces.

On to Colditz, now a museum, where the group was impressed by the remoteness and austerity of the imposing castle, scene of many famous escape attempts by Allied officers.

In Leipzig, members focused on the city's musical heritage. From their base, the wonderful old Art Nouveau Victor Residenz, visits included Bach's Haus and St Thomas' Church, home of the famous boys' choir, leaving

All together now . . .



Some of the members who took part.

Ilkley & District U3A has two Circle Dancing groups and members from both came together to learn from visiting teacher Judy King, from Shropshire.

It proved to be a wonderful time to try new dances and also to meet up with friends from both groups.

The two teachers of the Ilkley groups, Janet Lockwood and Sarah Berkoff, enjoyed sharing their dance experiences and it was a marvellous opportunity for seasoned dancers with years of experience and those with less experience to learn together.

Making music - and friends

"Singing for Pleasure is brilliant," writes Fran Valiant. "I've been a member for more than two years and loved every minute of it. I joined the group on the final Tuesday session in December, 2015, was immediately invited to the Christmas lunch being held after rehearsal that day – and was singing in the concert four days later."

There are no auditions and the choir is very welcoming. It meets every Tuesday morning from September to April at St John's Church in Ben Rhydding and there are about 50 singers in total.

Some members can read music and have sung before, but many have no formal training and benefit from the "listen and repeat" method, which introduces new material. The choir usually warms up with a few vocal exercises and rehearses particular pieces for the first hour, then

sings members' requested favourites after a refreshment break.

Choirmaster Brian Mason is an accomplished musician with long experience of leading choral groups. Myra Johnson accompanies on the piano so that he can focus on conducting.

The emphasis is on enjoyment, though some of the pieces are quite challenging. The choir has tackled everything from classical works to musical theatre, madrigals, folk songs, sacred music and modern pieces.

It also participates in the Summer School, encouraging potential members, especially men, to join. Membership is open all year.

Members eagerly anticipate Tuesdays for making music with like-minded people, Brian's banter, and the cordiality of coffee time. Singing for pleasure? Does what it says on the tin.

Trip was well worth the wait



Kaffee and kuchen proved popular with group members

enough free time to explore the city. Simply Groups looked after them throughout and the trip ended on a high note with a refund for the Manchester delay, thanks to its efforts.