



the EYE



Issue 5



News and views from across Ilkley & District U3A



Graphic: Karolina Madej

Our U3A at your fingertips

by Stuart Campbell

Love it or loathe it, information technology is going to play an increasingly important part in our U3A.

This can be a difficult concept to sell to a significant proportion of our members. You may fear you have been left behind by the breathtaking rate of change in the IT world over the past 50 years, but it is never too late to take advantage of the many benefits IT brings us.

Take one everyday example – your supermarket shop. Do you remember the long checkout queues as the assistants manually accounted for each of your items? Until the early 70s, that is, with the arrival

Our revamped website has extra features to interest all members

of the barcode which speeded up our shopping experience. Today, we rarely give a thought to the ubiquitous barcode which pervades so much of modern life.

Bulky desktop computers with their clunky daisywheel printers made their appearance a few years later, bringing the internet into our lives with a growing range of messaging systems such as email, Skype, etc. that today we take largely for granted.

Then, exactly 40 years ago, the visionary Tim Berners-Lee delivered a quantum leap forward by inventing the World Wide

Web, putting each one of us in reach, via the internet, of a veritable cornucopia of knowledge from right across the globe.

The nerve centre of many companies back in those days was a slightly forbidding air-conditioned computer room, off-limits to all but specialist staff, containing rows of huge grey cabinets, whirring away quietly. Today, we hold in the palm of our hands considerably more computing power than all those cabinets put together in the form of smart phones, which allow us to do everything a desktop computer does and even make telephone calls!

Knowledge

Information technology is now the main way we keep our huge and diverse membership informed, via emailed News Flashes and our comprehensive website. Both require the dedicated attention of a small team of volunteers who spend many hours ensuring they are as attractive and user-friendly as possible.

To make their efforts worthwhile, it is important that members view our website as an increasingly important feature of Ilkley & District U3A, visiting it on a regular basis for important information and knowledge and to keep in touch with what other groups are doing.

You can also play an important part in improving the efficient administration of our large and growing membership by embracing paperless transactions.

● Continued on page 3

Ensuring technology meets our needs

The IT team is constantly working to ensure the website and all our information technology serve us well.

Webmaster Paul Dobbin, who co-ordinates the volunteers who work on all aspects of IT for us, told The Eye: "I am here to help anyone who is using the web software and also to maintain the existing website by creating new pages and updating existing ones. We are trying to keep the website interesting by adding features as well as providing important U3A information for new and existing members."

In support is Eric Craigie, whose principal role is updating group descriptions on the

website, with the help of Jackie Green, and ensuring these and the printed programme coincide.

"The membership benefits from having accurate details of each available group so they can choose which is of specific interest to them," said Eric.

"I am also looking at the possible role of social media for Ilkley & District U3A in the future."

Roger Sadgrove is responsible for almost everything that appears under the Events tab on the website, plus events input into the Summer Programme, including online booking arrangements.

"I maintain the groups once Eric has set them up," said Roger, "keeping up with a year-round trickle of changes fed by group leaders."



Anne is celebrating competition success – read her winning short story on page 2



Photo: Marekullasz

Anne's delight as her story wows our competition judges

Her entry shone out as the winner in our short story competition – but victory came as a complete shock to Anne Hodgson.

"I never thought I would win," she said. "It's a wonderful surprise. I just hope U3A members enjoy reading it."

Anne's entry, called *The Playmate*, was the unanimous choice of our judges, who praised its imaginative subject, use of evocative language and unusual twist. Anne, a long-time U3A member, is a retired field studies teacher. She wrote *The Playmate* after a book club to which she belongs read a series of short stories by a well-known author.

"I wasn't impressed and thought I'd give it a go to do better," she said. "The *Playmate* was the result. I read and re-read it, taking out any words I thought



Winning writer, Anne Hodgson, is presented with her prize by chair, Sue Butler

surplus to requirements, and showed it to my sons.

"When the competition was launched I thought, why not send it in?"

Anne, a member of several U3A groups including Art Appreciation, Science &

Technology and Hike To Lunch, was presented with her prize, a £25 voucher for The Grove Bookshop, by our chair, Sue Butler.

There was a tremendous response to the short story competition and the judges thanked everyone who took time to enter. The standard was extremely high and it was a real pleasure reading so many entertaining stories.

The success of that competition has led us now to launch a new writing challenge – this time for a poem. See below for full details.

- Listen to Anne reading her winning story in a special feature on our website. See our article "Website extras" on page 3 to find out how.



I can hear them coming, laughing and shouting and I swirl to meet them tickling their toes and patting their ankles. They run shrieking to greet me, teasing 'catch me', calling and running, and I try to catch up while they jump in and out. They pat me gently and kick me into bubbles. I gurgle with delight.

I share my treasures, look here's a shell and waving wrack, a darting fish, see they're for you. They collect me in buckets and try to keep me in holes but I pour away. They dig canals and moats but I slip away from them. Come nearer to catch me. Come see, just there, that little pink shell, that floating weed, another step. See I am hiding between the rocks, in the channel, can you find me? Look I'm here and now I've slipped backwards, come try to catch me again.

But these little ones are watched. Not too far out now, it's getting too deep, time to come back. And they sit together wrapped warm and watch me as I crest and roll for them. See how lovely I am, how kind, how benign, the perfect playmate.

There's another, older one, sitting apart from the others, not watching me but looking at a small screen. I let the sun pick me up and breathe me on to it. I see shapes,



The Playmate

by Anne Hodgson

hear sounds. I watch as fingers move the pictures around, how easy it is to slide into them, become one too.

The fingers slip into my cool water as it laps against them. A little more now, come a little further, let me take you deeper. See how easy it is to ebb away. Let me hold you and wind the weeds round as the fish come

to play. How you twist and turn but I keep you, your perfect playmate.

Now I hear calling and shouting, people running, boats racing. Noise and confusion . . .

Later someone picks the screen from the rocks and wipes the salt from it. A wave swirls across, ebbs and dies.

Poets, your words could win you a prize

The short story competition has shown just what a talented bunch of writers we have in our U3A. Now we are giving you the chance to prove your prowess with words once again – with a poetry competition.

The competition is open to all members and the subject matter and format can be whatever takes your fancy. Each poem must be an original work and be no more than 350 words. The entries will be judged by members of our

communications team and the winner will receive a £25 book token. The successful poem will be published in the next edition of *The Eye*.

Entries should be sent by email to editor@ilkleyu3a.org by September 30 2019. If you do not have access to email, handwritten or typed entries may be sent to Poetry Competition, Ilkley & District U3A, c/o The Clarke Foley Centre, Cunliffe Road, Ilkley LS9 9DZ to arrive by that date.



PHOTO: ALEX ISHCHENKO

Our cups runneth over

Every now and then, The Eye likes to turn the spotlight on the work of those members, our unsung heroes and heroines, without whom our U3A simply would not function. These members – Barbara Wells, Lorelie Fox, Bonnie Fourie, and Eileen Dockray – are one such team. These ladies churn out between 80 and 120 cups of tea and coffee, accompanied by biscuits, at the monthly Saturday talks at the Clarke Foley Centre in Ilkley. Well done, ladies – and thank you!



High Point, Bradford



The Walkie Talkie, London



Olicana House, Bradford

Unloved blots on the landscape

The Carbuncle Cup is an architectural prize given to the “ugliest building in the UK completed in the last 12 months,” writes *Architecture Appreciation Group* leader Bruce Speed.

The cup, given annually by *Building Design* magazine, is the award nobody wants to receive. The Prince of Wales used the term carbuncle about the winning design for the extension to the National Gallery by Ahrends, Burton & Koralek, saying: “What is proposed is like a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved friend.”

The *Building Design* winner in 2018 was the town centre regeneration in Stockport, selected from a shortlist of developments and individual buildings, including 20 Ambleside Avenue, London, by Pace Jefferd Moore Architects, described as looking more like an electricity substation than a home; and 69 Highgate Street, London, which was waved through on appeal by the same planning inspector who approved the 2013 Carbuncle Cup winner.

So there is a rich seam out there which group members tapped for our equally light-hearted attempt to find buildings and developments that offended our artistic sensibilities.

We were permitted to select from the

Wells Court, Ilkley, was originally intended to be several storeys higher



whole world, not just what had been built last year, and the 16 described drew plenty of comment.

We were shown buildings in Leeds, Bradford, York and Ilkley and a development of 732 Disney-like properties in Turkey built in 2007 and still unoccupied.

We also learned some interesting facts. Did you know that the Walkie Talkie in London, which won the Carbuncle Cup in 2015, was intended to be 40 meters taller? Or that Wells Court was also intended to be several storeys higher than it is?



The Kunsthau, Graz

From a show of hands, High Point, Bradford, came second and the Walkie Talkie, London and Olicana House, Bradford, equal third. First place was awarded to Kunsthau, Graz, by Peter Cook and Colin Fournier, described as like a blue submarine that has been smuggled ashore.

Next year members will select their most beautiful building.

Embracing new technology

From page 1

Our IT team and other dedicated volunteers are making sure our systems will meet all the needs of the next generation of members for whom information technology will be a normal and essential aspect of their lives.

We want to assure members concerned

about the security of their data that we do not share your personal information with any other organisations.

As Canute found when he got his feet wet, we cannot hold back the tide of IT progress, but must embrace and refine it to be a welcome adjunct to our lives in the 21st century.



Website extras

As you read this edition of The Eye, you will come across a few articles with a small smiley-face graphic (shown below). This indicates there is additional content available when read on our website. So, for instance, you can hear the winner of the short story competition read her entry or watch a video of the visit to Parliament.

If you already use our website, just sign in as usual, look for news, find this edition of The Eye and select or click anywhere on the article.



Members with a smart phone or tablet can open the camera on their device and point it at the QR symbol in the top left hand corner of the front page. This will take you to the website page where this and previous issues of The Eye can be found. Open this edition of The Eye (Summer 2019) and select or click anywhere within the article.

Performances to be proud of

Since 2017, thanks to a link between Leeds Beckett University and our U3A, members have taken part in Cinage live – a performance group for people over the age of 65.

They have collectively produced scripts about what it is like to be over 60 in the UK at present and have performed in Leeds, Liverpool and at the Edinburgh Fringe.

This year as part of the Leeds International Festival in May they have worked with young Performing Arts students, on inter-generational performance.

One of the members involved, Ann West, said they'd had glowing reviews. "Audiences have been moved to tears," she said. "Each one of us has developed confidence and a way of expressing who we are, and who we are not. So thank you, U3A, for the chance to find new horizons. Come and check us out – you will not be disappointed."

Memories recalled

Our founder member and five of the earliest pioneers share their memories in a new sound archive available to members on the Ilkley & District U3A website.



Alan Kay and Pam Rae with chair, Sue Butler (centre)

You can hear Alan Kay recalling his inaugural meeting at the Clarke Foley Centre in Ilkley in 1997 in a series of interviews including Irene Booth, John Dixon, Pam Rae, Jim Butterfield and Ann Johnson, all still active in the U3A today.

Simply log into the Home page and click on "Founder Interviews" to hear how it all began.

• You can also scan the QR code on page 1 to access the recordings. Read our article "Website extras" on page 3 to find out more.



Essence of U3A

A man in his 80s, who joined Voyagers just this year, was heard to say: "What a great outing – I've learned so many things today that I never knew."

Busy but rewarding – the life of a new trustee

Steve Moorcraft tells us what being a member, and now a trustee, of Ilkley & District U3A has been like for him

I retired at the end of May 2017 and joined the U3A soon after. I had a plan about the things I wanted to do in retirement but I wasn't sure how to go about it.

A friend had told me about U3A so I attended a drop-in session to learn more. I was particularly attracted to the Wine Group. Unfortunately, it was full. Ten years ago I took a wine course so, having a little experience in the subject, I decided to bite the bullet and agreed to start and lead a new wine group.

It had its first session in January 2018 and runs every two weeks during the year except over the summer. I've really enjoyed it so far and have joined other U3A groups since then. It's a great way to learn more about your own interests and make new friends.

I also helped out in the Summer School last year by leading some wine tasting sessions and also some sessions on basic IT skills.

In early autumn I was asked to become a trustee and I was formally elected at the November AGM.

Informative

I really had little idea about being a trustee in a local charity like the U3A. But while I was apprehensive to begin with, I received great support from my fellow trustees. I attended a trustee management meeting as an observer before starting and also attended an induction event in January this year hosted by the Yorkshire & Humber Region U3A. It proved very helpful and informative and it was great to meet new and more experienced colleagues from across the region.

We have nine trustees, all with varying backgrounds, work experience and skill sets. This helps enormously with the different roles and responsibilities within the charity as the management is divided between the trustees. While some roles involve formal responsibilities like the chair, treasurer and secretary, others involve managing the website and the membership, setting up groups, overseeing social and caring responsibilities in the community and our channels of communication.

There are the annual and summer programmes of events to work out and, as a charity, we also have to abide by the rules of the Charity Commission and ensure that our policies meet its requirements. We meet



Steve Moorcraft says he enjoys making his contribution to the life of our U3A

every two months as a rule (sometimes more frequently) to discuss business and we publish the minutes of each trustee management meeting on our website.

As a "newbie" I don't yet have formal allocated responsibilities and so, to help understand how the charity works, I've been helping other trustees set up groups and with financial matters. I have also recently joined the strategy group which is looking at our priorities over the next three years.

All the trustees help out with the monthly drop-ins and Saturday talks and I have really enjoyed meeting new and potential new members.

Contribution

I also organised the annual Thank You Supper for the group leaders, co-ordinators and volunteers who help to make our U3A a great success.

As you can see, I've been busy since becoming a trustee but not so busy that it has taken over my life. I still find time to be with family and pursue my own interests within and outside the U3A.

U3A is a great organisation for helping people to pursue and develop their interest and to make new friends. I've really enjoyed my small contribution to the organisation and the community so far. I wouldn't hesitate in recommending the role of trustee to anybody willing to commit some of their spare time to helping others.

Recognise this?

You might have driven by this numerous times without really seeing it. And even if you did notice it, you might not have known what on earth it was.

We thought it would make an interesting item to get you thinking. And for those of you baffled by the photo, you can find the answer on page 7. If you have any ideas for future Recognise this? features in The Eye, please email editor@ilkleyu3a.org We'd love to hear from you!



Mastering mahjong

What do you think of when someone says "mahjong"? writes *Helen Stevens*. A fast-paced game played in China? A set of beautiful tiles? A game of solitaire you can play online?

For me it was all these things. And when I was given a beautiful mahjong set for Christmas, I decided it was time to learn the game.

The Mahjong Group meets at St John's Church, Ben Rhydding, on Thursdays from 2pm to 4pm. From my first visit – in January this year – I was made very welcome and was reassured that I would pick up the game in no time, despite the fact that I had no idea how to play.

During my first session, Pat, one of the group leaders, played my rack of tiles with me and showed me the ropes. By the second session I was able to play with my own rack of tiles, and I now feel I have a good grasp of the game.

Mahjong is based on a similar idea to the card game rummy, in which players collect sets or runs in the same suit. In mahjong, a run (three tiles of the same suit and

consecutive numbers) is a "chow", a set of three identical tiles is a "pung" and a set of four is a "kong". Players (three or four in each game) take turns to pick a tile from either the wall or the discard pile, and then throw a tile away.

The winner is the player who collects a combination of chows, pungs and kongs, plus a pair. This is a "basic hand".

There are also "special hands" in which different combinations of tiles are permitted.

Although the official mahjong rules include a complicated scoring system, we don't keep score

at the group. The winner of each game is simply the person who collects one of the permitted tile combinations and can thus call "mahjong"!

I'd encourage anyone interested in learning mahjong, or who's played before and wants to pick it up again, to join us. I'm certainly looking forward to many more afternoons of friendly competition, deep concentration and clicking tiles – plus the challenge of mastering more of those "special hands".



The Shed Group is just the job

Thinking of repairing that wonky chair but haven't got the right tools? Then our new Shed Group may be just the answer for you.

Its members have workbench space to spare at their workshop in Railway Road, Ilkley, with a useful range of woodworking tools.

For more ambitious projects, a table saw, router, lathe and drills are available, all under the expert eye of the workshop manager who is always on hand to provide help and support. Examples of the group's prowess are two scoreboards made to help our Boules Group keep score, and much appreciated by the players this season. The Shed Group sessions are held on Thursdays and Fridays from 9.30am to midday and from 1pm to 3.30pm and each costs £5 including refreshments. A sociable tea break allows members to review individual progress and develop new ideas. You can attend as many sessions as you need.

To find out more, why not drop in for a coffee and a chat or email stephen.walker34@btinternet.com



The Shed Group organiser Steve Walker with one of two scoreboards created for the Boules Group

Parliamentary privilege



Twenty-four members visited the Houses of Parliament following an invitation from Ilkley MP John Grogan.

They travelled by train and underground to Westminster, where after airport-type security checks they were allowed into the beautiful building.

Mr Grogan met the group personally and after the customary photo shoot led them into the inner sanctums.

The visit coincided with a crucial

Brexit debate and members were privileged to sit in both the Commons and the Lords to hear several MPs and peers deliver their for or against arguments. Afterwards the group enjoyed a drink on the terrace, making the most of that spectacular view of the River Thames.

• Watch a video of the visit – see article "Website extras" on page 3 to find out how.



Protecting our wonderful wildlife

There was a full audience for a WestNet event on North Yorkshire's Operation Owl. Members were keen to find out more about the work of the RSPB and North Yorkshire Police in preventing rural crime, especially against wildlife and raptors in particular.

In addition to the beautiful photography of wildlife, the audience at the Clarke Foley Centre in Ilkley was shown some very disturbing images of the results of criminal activities persecuting such stunning creatures.

Members were impressed by the lengths police will go to to pursue criminals through the justice system and were given advice about what to look out for when on countryside walks.

Hopefully, such advice will help people stay on the lookout for evidence of illegal trapping, poisoning, shooting and so on. With five U3As and a number of conservation organisations present at the talk, their message really came across to a very supportive audience.

ANGIE GRAIN

Enjoying la dolce vita

Delizioso! The new Italian Nights Group has got off to a mouth-watering start since it was set up at the end of last year.

Every month, members have been tucking into their meals with gusto at Italian restaurants in the area.

They've enjoyed sampling restaurants they haven't been to before and also returning to some old favourites. It has proved a great way to meet people and enjoy a relaxing evening chatting with new friends.

The venue is chosen each month by an individual group member, spreading the organisational load. If you fancy setting up a similar group – a curry night, perhaps? – contact our groups co-ordinator Mary Podesta.

Summer treats

This year's Summer Programme has a wonderful variety of activities and events. The theme in this 200th anniversary year of the eponymous queen's birth is the Victorian era and we start and finish with two major events – a Victorian Era Study Day on June 5 and a Victorian Music Hall on August 25. Full details on our website.

Summit number 25 for fell walkers



From left, Julie Stober, Phil Forth, Gill Fox, Stan Robinson, Mike Pilling and Gordon Coventry at the summit trig point. Photo: Alan Kay

The Fell Walking Group ascended Water Crag, one of the more remote of Yorkshire's 2,000ft summits, in April. No-one can agree on the number of 2,000ft summits in Yorkshire – should those transferred on April 1 1974 to County Durham be included, or those in Cumbria but within the recently extended boundary of the Dales National Park? Fell Walking Group members, being strict "traditionalists", follow the pre-1974 list of 36 hills, and to date have ascended 25 of them.

Working together to spotlight growing threats to our world

In August last year, 15-year-old Greta Thunberg sat outside the Swedish Parliament building with a hand-written poster, writes Dr Gwen Pilling, of Ilkley & District U3A Environment Forum.

Greta went on to inspire climate protest strikes in schools in many countries. (You can watch a moving talk she gave in November by typing her name and "TED talk" into your browser). Her continued actions contributed to the Extinction Rebellion protests in London over the Easter weekend.

Extinction Rebellion is a socio-political movement which uses non-violent resistance to avert climate breakdown, halt biodiversity loss, and minimise the risk of human extinction and ecological collapse.

You may have watched Sir David Attenborough's "call to arms" programme recently on BBC1. Together these events have raised awareness of these issues in the media and among the public in general.

Climate change and loss of biodiversity are topics that have occupied us this year in

the Environment Forum.

At our April meeting, one of our members, Geoff Howard, updated us on progress in the Global Biodiversity project. This is a vast undertaking to monitor how the populations of known species are changing. The results so far show that most populations are either declining or staying the same: relatively few are increasing.

The causes of decreasing biodiversity are varied and complex, though climate change plays an important part, as do changes in land use and farming methods.

At our meeting in March, another member, Peter Riley, described how he has been monitoring bird populations weekly in the Washburn Valley since 1995 and has noted significant changes.

The protests in London and elsewhere are calling for committed action from governments, which is urgently needed, but there are also things that we can do to help mitigate the problems.



Think energy, think waste

We can all reduce our energy consumption in the home with proper insulation, cutting unnecessary heating and lighting, reducing the use of electrical appliances, such as tumble driers, where possible and sensible, and using an energy supplier offering 100 per cent renewable electricity.

We need to think about how we travel. For example, is a car journey always necessary and do we have to make so many, or even any, trips by air? When buying a new car, why not consider buying an electric or plug-in hybrid?

We can reduce the amount of meat in our diets and shop wisely – look for food produced in this country and not flown across the world.

The Environment Forum is not a campaigning group. Our aim is to inform and educate each other. But there are local campaigning groups that you could join, such as the recently-formed Climate Action Ilkley, by emailing climateactionilkley@gmail.com or Wharfedale Tackles Plastic, via Facebook.

GWEN PILLING

Everyone wins with our Reading in Schools project

by Alison McCloy

Everyone – schools, volunteers and especially the pupils – benefits from the Reading in Schools project.

The initiative, which was set up and mentored by U3A member Geoff Howard, is now in its second year and running well in seven Wharfe Valley primary schools. It currently involves 14 U3A volunteers going into the schools to help pupils with their reading and comprehension skills.

The project was approved by the trustees in early summer 2017 via an item in the News Flash and Geoff was asked to explore the possibility of a project under the Ilkley U3A Social Responsibility initiative. Initially he looked into operating within the structure of a highly reputable, well-established charity already making this provision nationally.

Guidance

However, although at least one of our U3A members had already volunteered for this charity, it became clear that the charity had not yet established a presence in Wharfe Valley schools. As a result of a direct mail shot to local primary schools, there were positive responses from four: Ashlands and Sacred Heart in Ilkley, Burley Woodhead and Addingham.

In January last year the first volunteers started in these schools. By the Easter, Moorfield preparatory school had joined and by the end of 2018 so had All Saints primary. Ben Rhydding primary joined in January 2019 with its volunteers starting after Easter, giving us a total of seven schools.

To gauge how the scheme is working I talked to a headteacher and a volunteer working in one of the schools.

Sacred Heart head Alixena Lubomski praised the scheme. "It is a regular reading session which is lovely, and the volunteers are given guidance about the sorts of



PHOTO:TIM MACPHERSON

questions to ask so that the children can have a really good conversation about the books they are reading," she said.

The school had noticed tangible improvements in the reading ages of participating pupils, who had gained in independent reading ability, she said, and welcomed the fact that the U3A volunteers were bringing a new interest and an older age group from the community into the school.

Sue Bevington, one of the volunteers at the school, is working with three seven and eight year olds from Year 3. She was attracted to the scheme because she enjoys helping the children and feels that she is giving something back.

Confidence

She thinks it is important to take a long-term view because it takes time for the children's reading and comprehension skills to improve. But she says it is very rewarding and you can see the pupils grow in confidence and ability.

Success comes in different guises. Both schools and volunteers agree that the Reading in Schools project is a success for the pupils. Increased confidence in reading, understanding, and in their own abilities, is a positive result for all concerned.

Abbey alive with dancing

The two Circle Dancing groups in our U3A were well represented at a wonderful day of circle dancing at Selby Abbey. The 12 dancers enjoyed meeting others from all over the north of England, and danced to beautiful music by John Rutter.



Making most of new equipment

The latest addition to our equipment store is a portable projector stand and a self-standing projector screen.

While many venues provide these facilities, some do not and it is hoped the purchase will provide flexibility for groups to utilise a wider variety of venues across the region.

We have a range of equipment that groups can borrow including digital projectors, laptops and speaker systems, all of which will be familiar to anyone who has attended a Saturday morning talk or other U3A presentation.

A variation of these projectors is a visualiser. Imagine you have a diamond ring and you want to show a friend how the light reflects on the stones. Placing the ring under the camera of the visualiser enables such a demonstration to be given to a whole room as the image is projected on to a large screen.

It is especially good for 3D artefacts such as pottery, so might prove useful in demonstrating craft skills to a whole audience.

The Art Appreciation Group has used the facility to project images from a book, zooming in to highlight aspects of a painting rather than passing the book between all the members.

Steve Crossley-Smith looks after the U3A store of equipment.

If you need further information on the kit available for use on U3A activities, please go to our website where Steve's contact details can be found.

Otley, anyone?

Our trustees are keen to increase the number of activities based in Otley. If you live in that part of the district, please do consider setting up an interest group there.

Groups co-ordinator, Mary Podesta, is always happy to advise and the workload never falls on just one person's shoulders. If you have an idea for a group in Otley, or anywhere else within our "patch", email her at groups@ilkleyu3a.org

Recognise this?

Our photo on page 5 shows the "Nail" in Kirkgate, Silsden. It marks Silsden's illustrious past as a centre for nail-making, which saw at its height some 250 nail-making forges in the town.

Picture of a genuine gricer

Never heard of a gricer? The Oxford Dictionary definition is a “fanatical railway enthusiast”, writes *John Hancock*.

The expression dates back to a time when many a young lad – and maybe a few lasses – had hours of fun spotting train numbers in post-war Britain using their Ian Allan locomotive books to keep an accurate record.

Ken Wardell used an impromptu talk at a Railway Group meeting to reveal his unusual approach to this popular hobby. Ken used his loco spotting books to help track down photographs of every single locomotive that was running on the tracks at the time of railway nationalisation on January 1 1948. That is more than 23,000 different numbers to spot!

Over the years Ken has located photos of every single one, all carefully logged as to when and where the picture was published. Well, not quite all. There are eight that still elude him.

Ken would be delighted to complete his collection. So if you have any old railway books, do have a look for the following: 44120, 49519, 49632, 49651, 52326, 52467, 65084, 5381.

For anyone wondering why the last locomotive has only four digits, I am reliably informed that this locomotive was withdrawn from service in November 1948 and so was never allocated a full five-digit British Railways number. In its previous existence it was LNER 7874. Not a lot of people know that!

Railway tales

Bill Smith retired after 36 years on the railway when his signal box at Ilkley was closed in June 1994.

Now, as an active member of Ilkley & District U3A, he chose a meeting of the Railway Group to launch his book, “Railways in Wharfedale: A signalman’s reflections”.

At nearly 200 pages long and with a multitude of photographs, it proved to be a good read with plenty to interest not only the enthusiast but anyone who has ever caught a train at Ilkley station.

The Railway Group has now reached 90 members and to celebrate, it ran a competition on our website to win a copy of Bill’s book. Bill drew the winning name at a group meeting. The winner did not want any publicity.

- The book is available from The Grove Bookshop, Ilkley, price £12.95.



A click back in time for members

Do these computers dating back to the 1980s and 1990s bring back memories? Well they did for those participating in a group visit by the Science & Technology (Tuesday) Group to The British Library at Boston Spa, near Wetherby.

This facility stores books, documents, newspapers and much more in conjunction with the main library building near St Pancras station in London. The task was complicated enough when everything was on the printed page. Now, however, the library has a remit to archive digital content.

And to do that, it needs a range of computers capable of retrieving the original material. Most of these computers have been donated but the project leader admitted that many a promised item had

failed to arrive. Their owners cannot resist one last go at Space Invaders or Manic Miner and the love affair starts all over again.

It was a fascinating visit that covered digitising images of newspapers for eventual search online, the huge automated storage facilities and the work of the document supply service.

- If you have an hour or two before catching your train back from Kings Cross to Leeds, it is worth popping along Euston Road to see the Treasures of the British Library, a free permanent display at the library’s St Pancras site. Here you can see a copy of the original Magna Carta, first editions of many classic books, the original handwritten lyrics of “Ticket to Ride”, and much more. The cafés are also first-class.



Behind the scenes at the mill

If you have ever taken the road from Otley toward Pool in Wharfedale, you will have passed the signs saying Weidmann Whiteley. But do you know what happens beyond the boundary wall? Members of the Science & Technology (Tuesday) Group were privileged to be invited for a tour and it proved to be a real eye-opener.

This is a paper mill which can trace its origins on the site back more than 200 years and still relies upon the River Wharfe for its essential water supply. These days, however, the company is pleased to report that the water it takes from the river is recycled back to its source cleaner than when extracted!

Now part of the Swiss-owned Wicor Group, the facility in Pool is one of a



handful of paper mills in the UK equipped to produce specialised paperboard used as insulation in high-powered electrical transformers and in other industrial applications.

More than 120 staff are employed there and the products produced are used in the UK and exported to a variety of customers in Europe and North America.

Just who came up with Brexit?

Ever wondered how some expressions came about?

For example, who first used the term Brexit?

You can find the answer at <http://bit.ly/brexitU3A>

And how about Bob’s your uncle?

Go to <http://bit.ly/uncleU3A>

If you have any suggestions for snippets on the origins of commonplace expressions do let us know by emailing editor@ilkleyu3a.org