



News and views from across Ilkley & District U3A

Plugged in to the future

Stuart Campbell meets members who switched to driving electric cars

It took the passion and determination of a Swedish teenager to create new clamour for action to save the planet. Most of us, whether we believe or deny the reasons for global warming, are increasingly aware of the risk of failing our grandchildren and future generations. Every conscious act, from fitting LED bulbs at home to taking fewer trips by air, makes a measurable difference to the rate of climate change.

One of the fastest growing trends is ownership of battery-only electric cars as prices come down and their variety and range goes up. So we decided to find out how four electric car owners in Ilkley & District U3A are getting along with their 21st century means of transport.

Ideal

All said their decision to go electric was on environmental grounds but they are completely sold on their quiet, nippy cars which cost "peanuts" to run and require negligible maintenance compared to diesel and petrol models. They all agreed the main downsides with existing battery-only cars are their higher initial cost and limited mileage on a full charge, which can lead to "range anxiety" on a long run. For local journeys they are ideal.

Maureen Smith tried hybrids before settling for her present BMW i3 and is looking to replace it with a Nissan Leaf with a 200-mile plus range. In common with other owners, she charges her car on



David and Gwen Hewitt say their electric Citroen makes an ideal second car



Maureen Smith would like to see more charging points for her BMW e-car



Sue Ridley believes e-cars are the way of the future



Nick Pearce with his Nissan Leaf says his next e-car will have a greater range

a home charge point obtained with the help of a government grant. She uses her car mostly for local running.

"I can go to Harrogate and back comfortably but it can be difficult finding charging points out and about," she said.

"Driving to Bridlington was difficult, having to spend 20 minutes at service stations recharging the battery. I think hospital car parks should have charging

points." Asked for her verdict on electric cars she said: "They are fantastic to drive, cheap to run and keep their value. I will never have another petrol or diesel car now."

Sharing her point of view, **Nick Pearce** described his second-hand Nissan Leaf as performing like any five-door hatchback. But he also found the range restrictive,

● *Continued on page 3*

Don't forget! Our website has lots more extras



Our revamped website has a host of new features, including content to complement this issue of The Eye.

For instance, you can listen to the winning entry in our poetry competition and watch videos from events held in our Summer Programme.

Visit the website, look for news, find this edition of The Eye and select or click anywhere on articles showing the smiley face graphic (shown right).

Members with a smart phone or tablet can open the camera on their device and point it at the QR symbol (shown left).

This will take you to the website page where this and previous issues of The Eye can be found.

Open this edition (Winter 2019/20) and select or click anywhere within the article.



Poem's powerful message

It was a really tough decision – but the judges in our poetry competition have made their choice.

The winner is Street Kid, written by Steve Singleton, who said he was shocked but “naturally pleased” to have been chosen.

The judges thanked everyone who entered the competition and said the standard of entries was very high. Street Kid won the day, they said, through Steve's clever format and precise use of language. The poem's moving message was clear but subtly made.

Steve, who has been a member for 14 months, writes poetry regularly and said he was inspired to create Street Kid by two events.

First, he saw the film *Lion*, which tells the true story of a homeless Indian boy adopted by a family in Australia who, 25 years later,

sets out to find his Indian family. The film shows children in India living in cardboard boxes, struggling to simply survive.

Secondly, while on jury service in Bradford, he witnessed a teenage defendant turn up at court carrying a supermarket bag with his possessions because he thought he was going to be locked up (though eventually he walked free).

“I know we all get exposed daily to the dispossessed through the media, although here in Ilkley we are somewhat removed from them, but those two things crystallised the idea for the poem in my head,” he said.

Steve wins a £25 book token.

• Hear a recording of Steve reading his poem on our website by following the instructions on page 1.



Photo:AHPhotoswpg

Street Kid

Sleeping under cardboard
In Mumbai
Shivering on a beach
In Libya
Picking over rubbish tips
In Lagos
Stealing cars, smoking weed
In Leeds
Same look in the eyes
Washed up, but rarely washed
Wasted, like anyone cares
Existing, for today at least
Invisible; so far off piste
Ghosts in plain sight

Meanwhile

The privileged decide what's wrong and right
Those for whom it's no surprise
To be around tomorrow
For another sunrise
Pushing past the begging hand
Everyone a winner
Saving the moment for an amusing dinner
Whatever that is

Meanwhile

The street kid pauses
Delivering his verdict with his eyes
Knowing; sad for us both
Losers and winners
Caught in a web of lies
Picking up his World in a bundle
He looks back with pity
We both know, but for fate
It could easily be me
Just another lost soul
In a dog eat dog city

© Steve Singleton 2019

Trips back in time

In 1903 the North Eastern Railway built two experimental railcars, powered by petrol engines which generated electricity to drive the carriage motors. The railcars ran between Harrogate, York and Scarborough until 1931. It was the world's first use of an internal combustion engine in a passenger-carrying rail vehicle.

The body of railcar 3170 was sold and used as holiday accommodation until the Autocar Trust was formed in 2003. In September the Railway Group invited the wider U3A to a presentation on the restoration project. Members then went to Bolton Abbey station for a special run of Autocar along the tracks of the heritage railway.

* The group also visited Crich Tramway Village in Derbyshire, home to more than 60 trams built between 1873 and 1982.

• Visit this page of The Eye on our website to see photographs of the railcar visit and watch a TV news report on it. You can also see a seven-minute video of the Crich visit.



Do you recognise this?



You might have walked past this many times – but do you know what it is and why it is there?

We thought it would make an interesting item in this issue of The Eye. If you're truly bamboozled, you can find the answer on page 5.

If you have any ideas for future Recognise this? features, please email editor@ilkleyu3a.org

Members give their verdict on their switch to electric cars

● From page 1

especially on a run to the West Country and Wales, which required four service station stops and the use of a smart phone to recharge the battery.

"We would hire a car now for a long-distance journey," he admitted. "Our next car will be a more modern model with a greater range."

Nick and his wife, Pam, who recently moved into a new eco-house, said the additional advantage of having solar panels is being able to charge your electric car at no cost, under the right conditions.

Two members drive compact models which are virtually identical, but sold under different brands.

Sue Ridley says the advantage of

her eight-year-old Mitsubishi MiEV is its compact size, making it easy to park. It has the renowned electric car acceleration that can see off any competition at traffic lights.

Driving in hilly Wharfedale presents no problem as the car regenerates electricity going downhill. But with a limited range she advised planning a journey carefully if going further afield. Using air-conditioning, for instance, can drop the range by five miles.

Asked if there were any downsides, Sue said: "At first I was being bullied by drivers of bigger cars as if I was in a Noddy car, but I learned to adapt my driving. Young children can be a worry if they are unaware of the car as it is so quiet. But it is the way of the future –

experiencing it is the tipping point."

David Hewitt worries about the future of the planet. His second-hand Citroen C Zero, which he uses mainly for journeys around Ilkley, is the rebadged Mitsubishi.

He says this would suit 95 per cent of users but he would hire a car for longer distances. A journey to Huddersfield required two 30-minute recharging stops but cost only £5 for the return journey.

He suggested a need for more charging points at supermarkets, like the ones at Booths in Ilkley. "An electric car should appeal to people who have children or grandchildren and want to avoid creating fumes outside schools – an ideal second car," he said.

Calling our keen photographers!

The Eye's poetry and short story competitions have both been a great success. Now here's a competition for the photographers among us.

We're searching for the best local landscape photo. It can be of our lovely towns and villages or the beautiful Dales and Moors countryside, the choice is yours.

The closing date for entries is February 28, 2020. Entries must have been taken between October 1 this year and the closing date. Photos can be colour or monochrome

but must not be manipulated. Only online entries will be accepted (no prints please).

All the entries will be published on our website after the closing date and members will then vote for their favourite. There will be a prize for the most popular entry.

Please email your photo (only one entry per member) to editor@ilkleyu3a.org, giving your name and contact details and stating where and when the picture was taken.

Good luck, everyone!

Gorgeous pictures wow the judges



Andrew Bennett's Hello Gorgeous was declared the finest photo in the exhibition

Our members put their creative skills on show when the Ilkley & District U3A's first photographic competition opened to the public at the Manor House, Ilkley.

Twenty-four members submitted photographs under one or more of six themes: Hill and Dale, Reflections, First and Last Light, Gates and Stiles, Red and Abstract. The judges looked at more than 100 images and chose 66 for the exhibition. Despite some of the participants being new to photography, the standard of images was very high.

The winning image, Hello Gorgeous, was taken by Andrew Bennett.

Our U3A has three separate photography groups. They cater for both members who are just beginning to develop their photographic skills and the more experienced photographers who are interested in learning more advanced techniques.

• Visit The Eye online to see a video of Alison McCloy's interview with Neil Stevens, one of the competition judges. See the panel on page 1 to find out how.



Members of the Weekend Walking Group on Wansfell Pike

Top of the Lakes

The Weekend Walking Group spent a very enjoyable few days in May at Monk Coniston Hall. The weather was extremely kind, and the Lake District looked very beautiful with colourful azaleas and rhododendrons in profusion.

The walking catered for all levels, with the group splitting and members choosing to do as many or as few miles as they wished. There was also a mix of other activities during the day – visits to a garden, museum and historic house and a boat trip. The evening entertainment included a quiz, with wide-ranging questions put together by joint effort, and skittles, in which the leader kept changing the rules as the game went along!

Are you receiving News Flash?

It seems some members are not receiving emails from us, including News Flash. There are two possible reasons – the message isn't being sent or it's arriving in the wrong place. Perhaps we have an old email address which needs updating or the messages are ending up in your Junk or Spam folders.

If you aren't receiving News Flash, please ensure your contact details are up-to-date. Go to our website, log in and select your name at the top of the page. This will take you to "My Profile". Choose "Edit" and check your details. Save any changes. You can also contact membership secretary Anne Eady on 01943 608823 or by email at membership@ilkleyu3a.org. She can check we have your correct details.

If everything is set up properly at our end, it is likely our emails are going into your Junk or Spam folders or possibly your InBox is full and rejecting them. Open the Spam or Junk folders and just check the senders and email headings. Do not open individual emails at this time.

There will probably be several dozen to review and possibly many more. Move genuine emails to the InBox. Your usual email program will then pick them up. Moving emails from Spam and Junk to the InBox should help educate the filter program over time as to what is genuine and wanted email. You can also help the process by adding IlkleyDistrictU3A@wildapricot.org to your list of contacts.

Focus on peace

Member Richard Thackrah is organising a ten-week course in 2020 on peace and peacebuilding.

The course will comprise a series of discussions and participants will be able to bring their own ideas about topics to be covered and possible solutions to the issues raised.

Richard said: "The seemingly intractable nature of political definitions may be at the root of the problem of achieving global peace and community cohesion.

"As we enter a new decade, long-held beliefs have to change. We have to show restraint, co-operation, generosity, honesty, openness, responsibility, respect, trust and goodwill as never before. We must invest in peace."

Adventure across Europe

by Liz Beardsley

In July my husband, Geoff and I flew to Pisa with 30 other bikers to spend a week touring Tuscany. Bikes and luggage came overland by truck. The rest of the group flew home after seven days but we had planned to ride home to Ilkley on our Triumph Tiger 800, taking as much time as necessary!

We headed off to Malcesine on Lake Garda. It was a long hot ride until an hour from the town when ominous clouds brought torrential rain. We arrived at the Baia Verde Hotel soaked, but three idyllic days here gave us ample time to recover.

The next leg of our journey was a 200-mile ride into Austria, to Zell am See. Geoff had spent time there with the Scouts in 1959 and wanted to see it again. This proved to be a very long day: 200 miles became 260 as we got hopelessly lost a couple of times. At least the temperature got progressively cooler.

We arrived, shattered, at the Hotel Alpenblick at about 8pm. Outside on the terrace about 100 tipsy holidaymakers were enjoying their last night to ear-splitting Tyrolean music. Oh no! They all left the following day and the hotel proved to be a good choice, with a 30-minute walk or



It's important to know where you're going – Geoff Beardsley consults the maps



Liz and Geoff Beardsley love exploring on their motorcycle

short bus ride into Zell am See.

The lake is beautiful, surrounded by the Alps. We took the gondola lift up to 1,800m in thick cloud. It was 7C at the top. Though the view must have been stupendous, we couldn't see a hand in front of us and stayed only long enough for a bowl of goulash soup. Our comprehensive bus pass included ski lifts and a relaxing boat trip round the lake. My only regret was that we didn't have time to swim at one of the lakeside lidos. Perhaps next time.

Our next ride was shorter but eventful, to Niederau, with a detour up the highest mountain pass in Austria, the Grossglockner, rising to 2,600m. What a stupendous ride! Looking up, there was the glacier, then after more hairpin bends, looking way down we saw the same glacier.

At the top there was the finish of one day's racing of the Tour de Austria, with

Members drink in the delights

A visit to the home of the soft drink Vimto was one of the highlights of Northern Towns Group's outing to Manchester and Salford Quays.

Members enjoyed a tasting session of the drink, which was invented by John Noel Nichols in Manchester in 1908. It was designed to give "vim and vigour" and to reduce the high consumption of alcohol in the city.

The trip organiser had sourced an amazing guide, who gave members a potted history of Manchester from Roman times to the present before leading a

walking tour. Did you know, for example, that the name "Manchester" derives from the Latin word "mamucium" (meaning breast-shaped hill!) or its variant "Mancunium"? Citizens of Manchester are called Mancunians to this day.

The group then drove to Salford Quays where members had the opportunity to have lunch, visit The Lowry, Media City, the Imperial War Museum or have a little retail therapy.

The trip, the group's final outing of 2019 proved a great success with members saying it had been a brilliant, well-organised day, "the climax of another excellent Northern Towns season."

Europe on two wheels

Get on your bike!

Geoff Beardsley is a member of our Motorbike Group, which meets twice a month for trips out and about.

Members like the open roads of the Yorkshire Dales and Moors but do head for the coasts, east and west. They ride twice a month all year, unless there is snow or ice. The group, led by Norman Jones, has 21 members and sadly is now closed to new applications as riding in larger numbers is not practical.

If you're inspired by Geoff and Liz's endeavours and fancy setting up another bike group, contact our groups co-ordinator Mary Podesta at groups@ilkleyu3a.org

accompanying razzmatazz. So much for the silence of the mountains. A bowl of soup at the visitors' centre was welcome, followed by a fascinating hour or two learning about the area's climate, flora and fauna. The information and graphics were superb. I would recommend this trip to anyone – and you can go by car!

Then followed an 80-mile ride to Niederau and the Wastlhof Hotel. Having been here recently with the U3A Circle Dancing Group I was keen to show it to Geoff. This area, known as the Wildschönau, is a paradise for winter skiers, summer walkers and, for the more adventurous, paragliding.

We had two full days here. The first was spent taking the Markbachjoch gondola up to 1,500m, this time in sunshine. We enjoyed magnificent views of the Wilder Kaiser mountains and watched paragliders launch into the sky; rather like ungainly swans taking off but, once in the

air, so graceful. Back in the village we were once again treated to the Tour de Austria circus, this time passing through Niederau.

Day Two we spent resting, making use of the hotel pool and, for me, there was a neck and shoulder massage, in preparation for once again donning crash helmets for the next day's long ride over the border to the Black Forest. As a member of our Motorbike Group, Geoff rides regularly at home. His neck and shoulder muscles are well developed!

Leisurely

Our next stop, Bad Urach, near Reutlingen in the Swabian Alps, is an area bordered by the Black Forest and infant Danube to the south. After 200 miles of pleasant though often wet riding, we booked into the Hotel Graf Eberhard; large, quite elegant, a little down-at-heel but very comfortable.

We followed two days' rest there with an easy, dry three-hour motorway ride to our hotel in Boppard. Once there, we took a leisurely Rhine cruise to the famous Loreley Rock.

After just short of a month on the road, our last stop was in Oosterbeek, near Arnhem, and the Sandton de Roskam Hotel. Our final day was spent at the Airborne Museum, Hartenstein. The villa was the headquarters of the British Airborne Division during the Battle of Arnhem in 1944 and vividly tells the story of those disastrous days. Today it sits within peaceful forest.

Arnhem is a mere 100 miles from Rotterdam, the penultimate ride of our journey. Inevitably we met other bikers on the overnight ferry to Hull. Two not-so-young men from Otley had travelled to the north of Norway, covering 2,000 miles in two weeks! With a combined age of 148, we were happy with our 1,500.

Gift Aid helps us keep fee low

Gift Aid is an important part of our income and helps to keep our membership fee as low as possible, writes membership secretary Anne Eady. We can claim £3.38 per annum per member who Gift Aids his or her fee.

Many of you will be aware we recently changed the way we collect Gift Aid information. This made it easier for us to administer, provides the necessary audit trail required by HMRC, and is simpler for members. A single paper declaration stands until cancelled by the member.

You can log into your membership profile on our website at any time to tick or untick the Gift Aid box. Please inform us if you decide to untick the box, especially if you have previously completed a new Gift Aid declaration. It is also important to tell us if you no longer pay sufficient tax. To update your Gift Aid status, contact me on 01943 608823 or at membership@ilkleyu3a.org.

Finally, a big thank you to all of you who completed the new form. If you'd like a Gift Aid form, contact me or download it from our website.

Recognise this?

Our photo shows the site of a 19th century spring used for its curative powers by visitors of the Grove Hydro in Ilkley, which was later known as the Spa. It is in The Grove opposite some shops.

Election poser

Ever wondered why elections in the UK are usually held on a Thursday? Go to <http://bbc.in/2qbngln> to find out.

of Manchester

In the summer, the group visited a much-overlooked gem, Cliffe Castle in Keighley.

The rooms are impressive as are the museum exhibits. These include one of the most extensive natural history collections anywhere in the UK, Roman artefacts and the Silsden Hoard, 27 first century gold coins.

The café is a superb recreation of a Victorian glasshouse, with a linked passageway to a cactus house.

- Watch a video of the Cliffe Castle visit – see our panel on page 1 to find out how.



Programme draws the crowds

This year's Summer Programme proved a huge success, with 737 members making the most of a range of activities, visits and events all linked to era of Queen Victoria, born 200 years ago.

Almost 90 per cent of the available places at 30 events were taken up, so well done to the organisers!

The final event, a Victorian concert called Home Sweet, Sweet Home, was organised by our Singalong 4 Fun

Group and more than 80 members joined in singing favourite songs from the era. By the way, visitors to the fascinating presentation on Maritime Victoria, part of the Summer Programme, discovered where the word yacht comes from. If you'd like to know go to <http://bit.ly/yachtU3A>

• See a video of the Victorian Concert on our website by following the instructions on page 1.





Sue Butler explores The Gallery on the Green

Fascinating finds on history trail

Settle U3A hosted the annual Westnet History Trail this year. Teams from all over the district turned up on a beautiful June evening to compete in an entertaining treasure hunt around the ancient town of Settle. Peter Butler wrote the following report.

The history trail consisted of a treasure hunt with a quiz sheet asking you to identify sites of historical interest in Settle, where there is little that is new. The buildings are old – all grey roofs and white walls – and there is fascinating history everywhere you look.

In Settle Parish Church, Q6 asked us to look at the gravestone of Luke Ralph, d. 1849. His inscription states: "My sledge and hammer both declined, My bellows they have lost the wind."

I wonder what his profession was!

In the centre of the town, Q13 asked us for the "unsuitable name for a solicitors". The answer was "Goad and Butcher" – just the lawyers you want on your side! Nearby, we passed the birthplace of the Rev Benjamin Waugh, who founded the NSPCC.

The treasure hunt led on to Castlebergh Lane. This is now a side street but long ago it was a main road that connected Kendal and Keighley. Here, an old milestone told us that it was 236 miles to London.

The furthest point of the trail was an old red phone box, now The Gallery on the Green, one of the smallest art galleries in the world.

The trail ended, as it had begun, at Victoria Hall, where we ate delicious pie and peas and the answers to the trail were revealed. Congratulations went to the winning team from Ilkley, led by Andy Botherway.

Making the most of superb resource that is our U3A

Trustee Peter Mate says he is busier now than he was when he worked full-time!

I came across Ilkley & District U3A four years ago following my retirement as a prison governor.

After dipping my toes in the water on a couple of groups, I was surprised to note there was no group for guitar and took advice on how one might start a new initiative. Support was readily available.

We began with half a dozen other guitarists, very much experimenting and learning together, in what I now recognise as the best U3A tradition. That group is now 15-strong and includes bass, banjo and fiddle. It also spawned a beginners' group and a specialist 1960s music group, resulting in a network of musicians.

I regarded U3A as a superb resource for our older and retired population in Wharfedale and loved the spirit of shared and mutual learning. With time on my hands, I seized an opportunity to become a trustee at the 2016 AGM. I felt I could offer skills in business practices, and in particular, leading on media and promotion. That became a team initiative, reviewing our regular newsletter and twice-yearly publication, *The Eye*, renewed work on the website and promotional activity across our area.

In recent times, and with a change of role, I now lead on social action. This team looks to link U3A with other interests



Peter Mate now leads on social action, linking up with other charities in the area

and charities in Wharfedale and supports volunteering opportunities.

Alongside my U3A work as a trustee, I am a committed Rotarian and was recently elected to Ilkley Town Council.

Through my work with U3A colleagues, my retirement has opened up a new world in this wonderful area and life is probably busier now than when I was in full employment.

A fresh look at travels abroad

The Armchair World Tour, held as part of this year's Summer Programme, attracted nearly 60 people to the small hall at the Clarke Foley Centre in Ilkley. The format was simple but highly effective – get 14 members to talk about each of five pictures taken on their travels and limit the explanations to just a minute per image.

It was a stroke of genius that kept the evening fresh and interesting. Through the wonders of computer technology, the picture show kept to the one-minute time slot and so the presenters were forced to keep pace.

Well done to Lorelie Fox, Sue Butler and Philip Robins.

• If you would like to relive the evening, or indeed see the images for the first time, visit *The Eye* online and turn on the volume. Pictures and music take about 15 minutes to play and you can pause at any time.



Drop in for a chat

If you have friends and acquaintances who've expressed an interest in joining U3A, do invite them to call in for a chat at one of our regular drop-in sessions.

Existing members with questions or suggestions are also welcome to go along to meet trustees and group leaders.

Sessions are held at the Clarke Foley Centre, Cunliffe Road, Ilkley on the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month between 10.30am and midday.

Drop-ins are also held regularly in Otley.

Members and guests can also find out more at www.ilkleydistrictu3a.wildapricot.org



It's up to all of us!

The article below by Eric Midwinter, founder of the U3A, was published earlier this year in *Third Age Matters*, our national magazine.

Its message of "mutual aid" – in which members are invited to contribute to the activities of the organisation in order to help it operate and flourish – is something our Ilkley & District trustees want to emphasise.

That's why we are printing an abridged version of Eric's article in *The Eye*. We hope it will inspire members to not just leave things to a selected few but to step forward and take on some of the responsibilities themselves.



In founding the U3A in the UK the principal motive was to make a civic, one might even say, a political, statement.

Society was faced with the unprecedented challenge of a large post-work population – but still clung to the traditional notion that older people were over the hill, senile, geriatric. Oldness was illness.

The U3A was to be a practical demonstration that older people had the skills and resilience to run their own affairs and in so doing "invent their own destiny".

Thirty-seven years and 1,000 U3As later, the point has been very successfully made. The pioneer third-ager is an active citizen, not a passive social casualty.

The self-mobilising qualities of mutual aid, amply illustrated in the U3A interest group, are beneficial in terms of health and wellbeing and social companionship – but the prior cause was the attempt to shatter

the myth of ageism.

An aspect of this that has always concerned me is the need to ensure our recruitment is nuanced. Over the years I have often worried when committee members have grumbled about getting people to "volunteer" to do tasks.

The U3A is decidedly not a service charity. We must never get to the point where a small elite is providing for a large, supine clientele. Not that the new member should be expected to become treasurer or whatever overnight, but the mission statement must be lucid and exact.

Ours is and must be a participatory membership.

That should be instilled into new members on induction and up-kept by encouragement and support, helping members to build their confidence and hone their skills.

This has been demonstrated thousands

of times, with people coming to the self-realisation that they could contribute more actively. Let me remind you of the two principles in the Third Age Trust litany:

- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a U3A

- Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a U3A can do so. That is and was deliberately intended to be explicit. It does not say U3A committees should do these things – it says "members".

It might, on occasion, be worthwhile for members to be reminded that they signed on the dotted line and accepted these responsibilities.

- To read this article in full, go to *The Eye* on our website. See the panel on page 1 for full details.



Photos courtesy of Peter Alvey and Mark Thomas.

Memories of a childhood in wartime London

They say that there's a writer in us all and member Joyce Todd has proved it. She has had "Blitz Baby" published, the story of growing up in London during the Second World War as seen through a child's eyes.

Joining the Ilkley U3A Writing Life Stories Group in 2000 was the catalyst for the project. "I thoroughly enjoyed hearing other members' memories and I was stimulated by the encouragement we all received," she said. "After being a member for three years I tucked my notes away and joined other groups."

"Then one day I sitting with my granddaughter who was eating a banana. 'Do you know,' I said, 'I was six years old before I tasted a banana.' She looked horrified. 'Oh Gran, were you very poor?', she asked. 'Oh no,' I replied. 'It wasn't like that . . . you see there was a war on . . . we couldn't get bananas . . .



Joyce Todd as a child during the war

and they don't grow here'."

Joyce said the exchange made her realise how different her granddaughter's childhood was to her own.

"So I looked out my U3A notes and knocked them into a small book describing what it was like to be born into a war environment," she said.

"I lived in London throughout the whole of the war and had a happy

childhood in spite of air raids, rations, no sweets and few toys."

This year "Blitz Baby" was published by Amazon. When Joyce gave her grandchildren a copy they enjoyed reading it, laughing and seeing the fun side of it.

She had help from her niece, an author, to arrange publication, but Joyce says it cost her nothing as it is all done online, and only those who order a copy need to pay.

Joyce would encourage other members to have a go. She describes herself as being quite a shy person and says: "If it wasn't for the U3A I would never have got around to writing my book. Thank you, Ilkley U3A."

- Copies of "Blitz Baby" are available through Amazon at £3.02.

They rose to the challenge

It's all change at the sharp end of our organisation, with three hard-working trustees relinquishing their positions.

Sue Butler and Alison McCloy are stepping down as chair and secretary respectively and treasurer Hugh Bevington has handed the finance reins to Steve Moorcraft. We are sure all members will want to thank them for their outstanding work on our behalf.

Here the three reflect on their time in our top team.

Sue Butler writes. . .

Goodness, the last three years have hurried by, since I became chair of our U3A. When I think of U3A I think of Learning and Friendship and these were what I found when I joined in 2011, have continued to discover in our groups and at our events ever since, especially since I became chair three years ago.

That sense of discovery, of sharing, of being able to take part doesn't come out of the blue, of course. It is dependent on members' generosity, enthusiasm, willingness to support and take part, so I would like to thank every one of you for the contribution you make.

When I first took up a trustee role it was clear our U3A was growing steadily due to the enormous enthusiasm and hard work of our founder members and their immediate successors, many of whom are still members. Go to our website to hear their fascinating reflections on those early days.

What was also clear was that we were becoming too big for the trustee team to

manage without more help. Any U3A role should be a pleasure, not a burden so, in the spirit of the U3A principle of mutual aid, I set out with the trustees to establish teams of helpers to ensure that we can support our membership and their activities efficiently and continue to develop. Look what they achieved: The Eye, already doubling in size and available online; events so that those in their fourth age can stay connected to us; our Summer Programme; the number of groups now nearing 140; a new set of colourful publicity materials; and, in the background, help with the necessary and less glamorous tasks such as bringing our Gift Aid records up to date and writing policies.

What a privilege and a pleasure it has been to see and be part of all these exciting developments.

I often hear members say they don't feel confident to take up a role in a group or more widely. I can understand that because I felt daunted when I became chair. But so many people generously shared their knowledge within our U3A, the Westnet network and the Third Age Trust and so



Sue Butler has enjoyed her time as chair

many others offered moral support and good wishes that my confidence grew in leaps and bounds until not only could I chair a trustees' meeting, I could stand up in the packed Clarke Foley Centre hall and lead the singing (you really don't want to hear me sing alone) in my pyjamas and dressing gown at our Christmas concert!

I send my best wishes to my successor and am sure you will support him or her as well as you have me. Thank you – and now I look forward to spending much more of my U3A time enjoying learning and friendship in various groups.

Hugh Bevington writes. . .

I became treasurer shortly after becoming a trustee, a major step for me as I was an engineer in real life and used to the support of accountants when it came to managing large amounts of money. The role represented a real challenge, but fortunately it came with help from the previous treasurer and the advice of a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. With this support I was fairly confident I could do the role without bankrupting the U3A. So how did it go?



Just to make life interesting, the Third Age Trust threw in some changes to the financial processes. These represented a challenge to some of our groups if they were going to continue to operate without major changes. With the help of the Voyagers Group we found a way round and all these groups are still going strong.

There were other helpful factors. I found that balancing the accounts each month end is much easier when your wife was a bank cashier. TSB changed its system but with the help of local branch staff, we got through it. We also switched to online banking, which did away with about 20 cheques a month and associated costs. I discovered that group leaders are very careful with other people's money!

As a result the group finances are very healthy and ensure we will be able to operate successfully for the foreseeable future.

I have had the pleasure of handing over the treasurer's position to a finance person who I am sure will further adjust the accounts to manage the growing membership and group numbers. So, if you have ever thought of becoming a trustee but don't think you have the skills, think again, there is lots of help and support out there.

Alison McCloy writes. . .

It has been a privilege to be secretary of our U3A. Always in the middle of things, the role is never dull as he/she keeps the wheels of the organisation turning.

More active as a backroom girl than front of house, I have enjoyed this role and the way it has brought me in touch with so many members.

As the committee organiser I have been the person most involved in the practical running of the U3A and team working with my fellow committee members, particularly the chair.

Stepping down as secretary, I am looking forward to having more time to join other U3A interest groups and to continue my involvement with the communications team.

