

## **GROUP LEADER'S REPORTS 2019**

### **ART            Chris Driver**

We have had a good year with many new people trying us out and /or joining. This is a fun group whereby I encourage, cajole and nag in about equal measure and it remains unproven whether much of this helps.

Nevertheless, much commendable work is produced from essentially beginners who mostly work in watercolours, the most difficult of mediums.

Many members have been unwell over the past few months, so attendance has necessarily been sporadic I hope we all recover nicely over the summer.

We are grateful to Cartref Cynnes for the continuing use of the Craft Room.

### **ART APPRECIATION        Marie Geary**

This year we have had between 9 and 18 people viewing our DVDs on a wide range of art, from as old as Egyptian Art to as modern as Opie. Favourites were Edward Burra, an almost ignored English artist of huge talent, Degas, Whistler and many others. Occasionally the film sends viewers to sleep, we never know how interesting the subject will be until the actual viewing.

We moved this year from the Mind Centre to Y Atom and it seems that everyone is happy with the change. Everyone has the opportunity to select 3 DVDs from an enormous list provided by U3A Resource Centre. Choices are made in September.

### **CREATIVE WRITING        Mhari Dobson**

Member numbers continue to ebb and flow, and we currently have two available slots for anyone wishing to write. Details can be found on the U3A website, or at the end of the meeting reports in the U3A monthly News Magazine.

We continue to produce lengthy pieces of writing two of which are currently going through an initial editing process. A number of our writers produce short stories, covering a variety of subjects, and these provide pleasant details to chat about in our tea break. In the past we have produced a play script, poetry and a children's picture book and this variety caters for all tastes and often provides inspiration for others.

As ever I must thank Hazel Drew for hosting our writers throughout yet another year, as her home provides an excellent and accessible meeting place for our members.

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS          Chris Driver**

This has been a tumultuous year for news at all levels. Where has sanity and a bit of brainpower gone, we ask. As usual we have discussed a plethora of subjects with analysis, agreements and differences of opinion. All the fun of armchair critics. I am now standing down as leader of this group and I wish the group well for the future with increasing membership.

## **DISCUSSION          Ray Garner**

I am very pleased to report that our group is flourishing with a register of seventeen people who all enjoy a good, meaningful and deep discussion. As a result, we have a regular turnout of a dozen. We have delved into a diverse range of subjects from the extremely serious to the light-hearted when a number of people almost had to be helped the laughter was so intense. When we discussed, "Political Correctness" we learnt what the Q stands for in the acronym LGBTQ. This shows we also learn as we discuss. The group was not afraid to tackle the difficult and emotive subject of, "Assisted Suicide". It was dealt with very sensitively and provided a rare opportunity for most of us to open up about an often-taboo subject. We all left that meeting feeling far better informed about end of life choices.

As always at our discussions there is no judgement, mockery, condemning or condoning. We endeavour to examine our subjects in the greatest depth. By using respect, tolerance, ethical, moral, and philosophical practices, along with a good measure of common sense and our own collective knowledge and wisdom, we are able to accept that multiple choices can have a place and it becomes acceptable to change or temper our viewpoints. Every person that attends feels secure in the knowledge that their expressed opinions will not and do not leave the meeting room.

The group leader would like to thank all of you that have turned up at any of our meetings. Without your support, ideas and interaction the group would flounder. You are the people that make our group so great.

## **GARDENING          Angela Pennell**

Over the year we have again visited some very interesting gardens, some of which are not open to the public, including John and Mhari Dobson's last May. On our regular trip to the National Botanic Gardens in January we found snowdrops and hellebores in abundance. In February we visited a private garden at Porthyrhyd which had greenhouses full of unusual plants. As we were leaving, we were each given free hellebores and potted snowdrops to plant at home. In March at Aberglasney the snake's head fritillaries were wonderful. They kindly gave us a group discount, although there were only 9 of

us. It's a pity that numbers attending have dwindled, as a lift to the garden is available each time and tea and cakes complete our afternoons very pleasantly.

### **HISTORY     Mike Perry**

The history group have had a good year. We have had memorable talks from Mary Thorley who has kept us informed about the research she is doing for her book on the women in Carmarthen who were important in the Suffragette movement in the first years of the 20th Century. These women who have been neglected by history but not any longer! We have relied heavily for speakers from Swansea Historical Association, we were informed about the Rebecca Riots, the Mabinogion the benefits of the Norman Conquest and the women in rural areas of West Wales during the 19th Century. The speakers are all academic historians and I know how much the group have appreciated their talks. They have requested a contribution to their travelling expenses and our Committee have agree to paying up to £80 for the next year. In the future we may not be so lucky and if we want to continue with these quality speakers, we may have to contribute.

### **JAZZ APPRECIATION     Terry Cook**

We began this group in June 2014 and last month was our 50<sup>th</sup> meeting. We celebrated by listening to a selection of our favourite tracks from the past 5 years. The result was a very varied and enjoyable session.

Jazz and jazz influenced music covers a wide range of music from the very old to the most modern and from the serious to the amusing, not to say funny.

We meet on the second Tuesday of most months at my house at 2pm. We listen to 8 tracks, stop for refreshments and then hear another 8 tracks.

Because my lounge is not very large, we have to restrict the membership to 10. At the present time we have one vacancy so if someone would like to join us please let me know on [terrygcook@outlook.com](mailto:terrygcook@outlook.com).

### **LITERATURE     Patrick Thacker**

We continue to hold our meetings in Maire Descan's house, instead of paying for other accommodation.

Unfortunately, one of our members has had to leave, due to ill-health. But we have also recruited a new member recently.

We have read many short stories and extracts from books this year. In addition, we have shared many poems from a wide variety of authors. We are still experimenting with the format of the meetings in order to discuss a wider range of literature and the topics raised in our meetings each month.

### **MUSIC APPRECIATION    Betty Marshall**

This small group have been meeting on the last Sunday of the month since 2000, At first Dr Howard Jones, who held classical music meetings at his house on the first Sunday of the month, asked if people would enjoy music by Frank Sinatra. I readily agreed to meetings at Llest to which he gave fascinating illustrated musical talks. As Howard's health became a problem, we carried on these monthly meetings, later at Melod we then squashed in at 8 Devereaux Drive. Hazel very kindly took pity on us and so we now enjoy great comfort monthly at Rhoslan. Patrick plays the tracks that members have brought along. Peter notes the guesses that we make of the donors. With a break for tea and cakes, what more could we ask of a monthly Sunday afternoon?

### **PHILOSOPHY            Charles Griffin**

The first Philosophy Group came to an end in February. We had spent a year or so looking briefly at a number of topics, mainly circling around the crucial, if almost unknown, Materialist/Idealist split. We then also looked at how a little Yogic philosophy offers a fresh and comprehensible alternative to the confusing and contradictory theories presented by our western philosophers, and even allows for a path to reconcile science, in principle, with religion, in principle. All we need to do is drop all the dogmas, not just in religion, but in science too.

I hope the meetings helped to boost everybody's confidence in assessing the various pseudo-philosophical diktats we are bombarded with by various branches of Big Religion and Big Science. We must take back our confidence in our own judgements!

### **POETRY READING        Terry Cook**

We meet at Hanover Court, Russell Terrace on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Tuesday of most months at 2pm. We each bring a few of our favourite poems to read to the group in the hope that everyone else will also like them. The choices are, therefore, varied and interesting. Occasionally someone brings in some of their own work which is always welcome.

Hanover Court has a large lounge with very comfortable chairs and can accommodate many people so, if anyone would like to join us please do.

### **SCRABBLE                Judy Taylor**

There isn't much to say about the Scrabble group. We are a very small group, but enthusiastic. We learn a lot of new words and the more able members help those less able.

## **SUNDAY LUNCH    Ann Davies**

The lunches take place on the third Sunday of each month (nothing in August) with an average attendance of 14 people. Each person in turn organises where it will be and sees how many are coming. It is a good way to get to know each other and it has proved to be very popular. We welcome any new members who wish to join us.

## **WALKING                  Eric and Jenny Anscombe**

The walking group have had an interesting year and enjoyed exploring many footpaths and seeing glorious views both coastal and countryside. We are well on our way to completing our Welsh Coast Path project walking around The Gower from Lougher Bridge to Swansea. Apart from this we have had walks in the Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire countryside appreciating the nature, history and geography along the way. We had to cancel a couple of walks due to inclement weather and a health issue affecting the leader. Most of the time we have managed to find pleasant places for refreshments at the end of the walks. The average number attending the walks was usually between 8 and 12 members. Special thanks to Angela and Maud for their contribution to the walks programme. We would welcome new members to the group and suggestions for new walks in the future.

## **WEBSITE    Peter Loughran**

The website is regularly updated especially towards the end of the month when there is a new monthly newsletter which is added to the Newsletter section and the Newsletter archive adjusted. Pages with changeable information such as the next speaker for the general meeting get updated as does the venue and arrangements for the Sunday lunch.

We try and have regular posts of new information such as events offered by outside organisations like Oriel Myrddin (thanks to Mike Perry for that). Photos from group leaders and others are most welcome and we try to capture special events like the Christmas lunch, the Spring Coffee morning and of course the ever-popular AGM.

Suggestions are most welcome as to how your U3A website experience could be enhanced. I am pleased to say that Eric Kitchen, a fairly new member, has volunteered to help with the website. He brings lots of sound digital skills to the task!

There has been a suggestion that the website could be augmented by social media specifically Twitter and Facebook. The latter may be more relevant and useful for the U3A client demographic group. Twitter is a good way of promoting the group to other organisations and spreading the general message.

There is a concern that members are not making sufficient use of the website - even perhaps members of the committee and group leaders. Going forward, as they say, we need to be persuaded that the website is a worthwhile investment. We need your support and encouragement as we try to broaden our appeal, strengthen our digital footprint and engage with the wider community.

**WELSH      Mike Perry**

A small group of us continue to meet at Yr Atom on a Tuesday morning. The group consists of Welsh speakers, others that have learnt more recently but are fluent. People like myself that still, even after 40 years, find the language difficult. It was unfortunate when Angharad, who had led the group, left Yr Atom to take up another post; her replacement Carys, has been most welcoming. We are relying at the moment on Sandra Steel, who has helped us to continue to keep in touch with the Welsh language. We are a very informal group and would welcome others to join us.

**ORIEL MYRDDIN      Mike Perry**

U3A have continued to liaise with the Gallery who have done their best to include us in their talks. This month we heard a speaker address a small group of U3A members and others in Yr Atom, the Gallery paid for this. The members who went, enjoyed the talk on the artist James Dickerson Innes who lived in Llanelli but did his initial art training in Carmarthen at Oriel Myrddin 1904-05 before being accepted by the Slade. It was interesting to see his detailed paintings of views of Carmarthen, although there were many more views of Llanelli. After leaving the Slade he became a companion of Augustus John and together became intrigued with a mountain in Mid Wales, Arenig. In my opinion some of his best paintings are from this period, where his Post-Impressionist style matured.

We will continue to liaise with the Oriel but it would be good to see more members at the talks. Maybe it is the fact they have been in the morning that have kept members away. I would love to hear what you think.