AGM Reports 2025 – 2026

Chair Report – Richard Swann

The AGM is upon us as we look back over the year and perhaps as importantly we look forward to the future. As you will see in the Membership Secretary's report we have several new members, so welcome to them. However the state of our u3a is not measured by membership numbers alone.

The central part of the u3a is the coming together of a large number of members at the Monthly Meeting. At the last AGM we said a big thank you to Kate as she stepped down as Speaker Secretary. We now say a big thank you to Eleanor who has stepped into the role and arranged a year of varied, interesting and stimulating speakers with more to come next year.

In the Group Co-ordinator's report, Ann has written about the success of our groups, which are the key to the wellbeing of our u3a. Following the receipt of a "health check" from the u3a Trust the committee is looking at whether we are stuck in a rut and how we can move forward and develop. We can't do this without your help. As I have repeatedly said that if you have any comments, positive or negative, please do not hesitate in letting me know in person or contact me richard@carmarthenu3a.co.uk

Carmarthen u3a is a team including all of us – NOT us the committee and you the members.

Rosemond organised an event to Tren y Cardi Bach. Keep your eyes on the Newsletter for further one off events. Nor should we forget the Christmas lunch organised by Shirley, Eleanor and Ann Tyson.

On the theme of team work, the committee is keen that groups continue to develop along the lines of e.g. History, Walking, Gardening and Discussion where the organisation is shared by several people. So please don't hesitate if you think you can help or have an idea for a new group; you won't be on your own and plenty of help is at hand on several levels. So a big thank you to all Group Leaders and their teams.

At meetings at the bowling club there are so many people to thank for keeping the wheels rolling smoothly. To Juliet for arranging the refreshments, the many people who then made the teas, coffees etc, Jackie and Frances on the registration desk, Carole and Fred who for a long time ran the raffle and to Shirley for taking over. Juliet for meeting and greeting and all who have put out chairs and put them back at the end of meetings. Not forgetting Peter and Ann Tyson for setting up the IT.

And last, but not least, to the committee for their hard work and in particular to the Officers, Eric (Treasurer and Membership), Susan (Secretary), Les (Vice-Chair) alongside Peter and Ann, plus Anne Priest (although not a member of the committee she sits patiently through our meetings taking the minutes).

Treasurer – Eric Kitchen

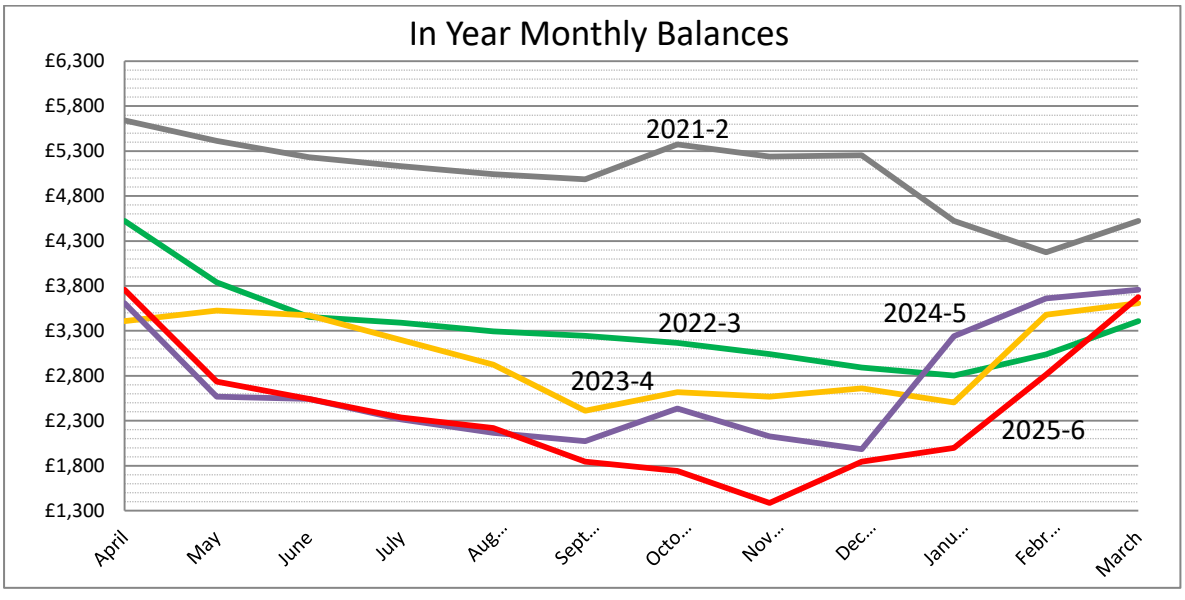
Attached are the accounts for the year 2025/26 as approved by Stephen Earles, the Independent Examiner along with the Asset Register.

The u3a started the 2025/6 year with a balance of £3,757 ending the year with £3,697 – what the u3a pays out is well matched by its income.

With respect to the expenditure in the 2025/6 year it totalled £4,109 with the largest cost being £2,531 for the hire of venues. Other notable costs included u3a Trust capitation £648 (£4 per member), the Beacon administration system £158 (£1 per member), hospitality £190 (tea, coffee, biscuits and wine for presenters) and stationery £117 (primarily associated with printing and postage).

Income in the year totalled £4,030 from 3 primary sources; membership £3,024, Gift Aid £491 (generated by ⅔ of our members) and raffles £250 (after paying prizes).

Something the committee has been mindful of is the level of the money held on behalf of the membership over the course of the year. The chart below shows how the u3a has year on year reduced this level by adjusting the annual fees from £25 in 2020/1 to £12 in 2021/2, £15 in year 2023/4 to the present £18 in 24/25. Also prior to 2021 the membership year ran from September to August. At the 2022 AGM it was agreed for the year to extend to April 2023 and thereafter match the financial year of April to March. In that year the fees covered the extended period of 18 months.



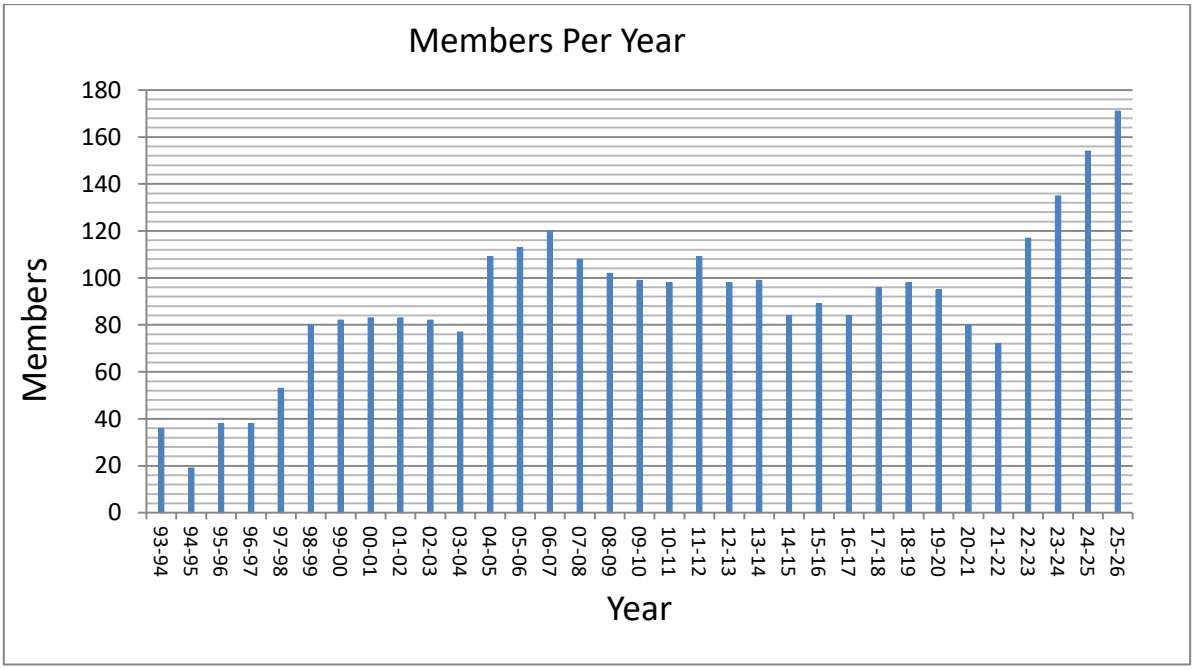
As the u3a's finances are in balance there is no proposal to increase the fees for 2027/28 from the current £18. Although this seems a long time off it is something in our constitution that would have required approval at this AGM.

Membership Secretary – Eric Kitchen

Last April membership stood at 156 topping out at 171 as at 31st March this year. In this there were 35 new members and 20 leavers. However as at the end of March there remained 25 that had not renewed and would have until this AGM to continue their membership.

I know we all love graphs so here's another one showing the membership each year from Carmarthen u3a's inception in 1993 till now. From less than 40 members to the highest 171, the 30 plus years of its development and success is built on the commitment of numerous committee members, group leaders and many other volunteers. We owe a debt of gratitude to them and it will be for present (perhaps drawn from the 35 referred to above) and future members to continue what has been created.

It's interesting to note the peaks and troughs over the years, the impact Covid had by 2021/22 and how membership has increased in the years since.



Group Coordinator – Ann Kitchen

What is the role of a Group Coordinator?

Briefly it is:

1. Setting up and supporting new groups.
2. Providing support for existing groups.

3. Encouraging and assisting group leaders to share and advertise their groups with other members and non members through the Newsletter which in turn feeds into the website.

As we all know the u3a is unique, as it's made up of a variety of different interest groups all run by our own members. All our Group Leaders can't be thanked enough for their hard work and dedication. I'm sure we are all appreciative. At the end of the day we are all volunteers working for the benefit of us all.

My role as the Coordinator is to make sure all the groups follow u3a guidelines for good practice. This is coupled with support for the Group Leaders to make sure it all comes together each month.

One thing that has worked well during the year is sharing the leadership of some groups as this takes the pressure off the individual leader each month. The Discussion, History, Walking and Gardening groups are examples of this. This is done under the umbrella of a Leader which brings that group together and is the first point of call.

I'm pleased to say that another success this year has been new Group Leaders emerging trying out new groups and also taking over the reins of established groups when others step down. All of this can be measured by reading the numerous new names that have emerged.

It so much easier dipping your toe into unchartered waters when you are only looking at a small section and not been overwhelmed with the whole.

Giving something back to the organisation which gives you so much pleasure is very rewarding and pleasurable. It's good to see new names emerging.

Could you be a Group Leader? Could you lead a walk, a garden visit, facilitate a discussion, organise an event or activity? We mustn't rest on our laurels, that's how things stagnate. Get in touch; I or any one on the committee would love to hear from you. It can be fun I promise!!

One aspect of the role which unfortunately we haven't carried out this year is to hold a Group Leader meeting. At such meetings Leaders can share good practice and talk over any issues which have cropped up. Hopefully this will be rectified very soon and there will be cake (as an incentive to attend).

I've now given you an insight into what I get up to under the title of Group Coordinator. It is very much about establishing and following recommended good practice and keeping all members safe and enjoying their time in the u3a.

Once more a huge thank you to our Group Leaders it's my pleasure to work alongside you. Diolch o galon.

Event Coordinator – position vacant.

Although currently there is nobody carrying this role last year I was very enthusiastic when I received £1,700 funding from the Pendine Enterprise for a variety of activities. The next event was to have been a photographic workshop in the autumn but sadly this did not take place for reasons out of my control.

Newsletter Editor – Ann Kitchen

Our monthly Newsletter continues to thrive and be delivered to your inbox or letter box. This in turn feeds into our website courtesy of Peter and Phillippa and thank you to them. By popular request the Newsletter now contains far more photographs of what we have been doing out and about. Not only does it give our members an overview of what is happening across all the groups but it's our window to promote Carmarthen u3a.

It's your Newsletter so if you want to include anything of relevance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Speaker Secretary – Eleanor Baird

Monthly Meetings are always a good opportunity for members to socialise and listen to visiting speakers give talks on a wide variety of topics, from medicinal maggots to singing celebrants (later this year!). The best bit of my job as Speaker Secretary is getting to meet some interesting people.

Suggestions for future speakers always welcome.

Film Group – Carole Sapsford

Over the last year there has been a steady group of film goers. With the help of the library I have chosen a variety of different films and this will continue for the coming few months. In March we will have 'Stan and Ollie' and for April we will be entertained by 'Mr Burton' (Richard) with 'Salt path' in May about a couple on a long trek but with twists and turns to the story. In June it will be 'Paddington 2' to find out what adventures that famous bear will have.

So I hope there's a good choice and look forward to seeing you - we meet downstairs in the library at 2:00pm on the second Monday of the month.

Scrabble group – Angela Pennell

We have been meeting every month in the library. Usually there are 5 or 6 of us, using 2 boards. It's very sociable and we don't take ourselves too seriously. We would welcome more members, come along and try it out.

Backgammon Report – Kate Waldron

Our group has continued to be small in numbers, but it's still as enjoyable and fascinating as it's impossible to predict what the dice will show, and what moves can challenge an opponent. New members in the next year will be very welcome.

Philosophy – Chas Griffin

We have pondered many things over our dozen meetings, beginning with how important it is to distinguish between 'believing' something to be true, and 'knowing' it. Confusion of the two leads to delusion and lies behind hysterical terrorism.

The next Biggie was to examine Scientific Materialism as a concept. It claims that Matter (i.e. 'Big Bang chemicals') created your mind, your empathy, and your sense of humour(!) out of itself alone. In other words, it claims that you are nothing but a small pile of worthless chemicals. Many find this philosophy questionable!

The alternative to Materialism is 'Idealism' (M/I) - sorry about the confusing names - which claim that we need some sort of Mental input to account for, well, our remarkable mental capacities, empathy, love, sense of humour, etc, etc... chemicals just ain't up to the job.

This M/I dilemma can be hard for many people to grasp, because our culture and educational system has been drenched in Materialism since the rise of science 2-300 years ago.

Idealism leads to many interpretations, obviously including multiple religions. We've begun looking at a couple of them, for example the Hindu-Buddhist view that we choose to incarnate in order to achieve personal goals... which always aim at improving our character. Hence, we reincarnate over and over until we get it right! Then as perfected ('Christed'?) Beings, we move on to greater things... or so they say!

We'll be looking a little deeper into these philosophies over the next few meetings. Please feel free to join in! Fun for all the family!

Coffee Morning – Chris Driver

After the January's snow 'no show' the February meeting had exemplary attendance and this despite the enaction of a new somewhat complicated car park set up. A £2 ticket pays for two hours and there is a capability of return of the £2 from the hotel if drinks to the value of just under £5 are purchased upon presentation of parking ticket to the bar.

Unfortunately there is already a problem as one couple from the February meeting have already received a £100 fine despite having stayed only one and a half hours. Whilst this is under appeal the parking firm have provided very poor contact details for cancellation/appeal. Further watch out for similar oncoming algorithmic problems in other areas of life. (I have already met one in relation to home energy use).

Regular members are discussing the possibility of finding another venue. A rushed decision will not be made but exploration of potential venues will keep us out of mischief for a while.

Digital Group – Ruth Morris

The digital group has carried on being a popular group and it has been a joy to see everyone growing in confidence to do the tasks they want to do on their devices.

We now have 24 members who have accessed the group with up to 15 to 20 members attending on any given month at the Learning Centre in Carmarthen.

Last September Tiff Phillips a member of staff from the Learning Centre has taken over leadership of the teaching sessions to the group.

In our structured learning session, part of each group meeting, we have covered a whole range of topics decided on by members, including, looking at Google Maps, and plotting journeys. We also explored the NHS app and found out, depending on your surgery, it doesn't do as much as we would like it to do! At Christmas we visited Cofio Lounge again to order food and drinks using QR codes.

On the safety side of things, we had good discussions about what to do if bank cards got stolen or our phones and what security we could set up so no one could get into our phones. We discussed our internet browsers saving our passwords - so we never had to remember one again and how secure those passwords are.

We have also explored learning about what exactly files and folders were and how to organise them in the context of photos. Tiff taught people about 'albums' and how Folders and Albums can be used to organise files and photos so that you can find them and spot duplicates. Finally, we have looked at a free app for getting printouts of your pictures.

We continue to work on skills to keep ourselves safe, including exploring the latest scams, computer/tablet/phone security and how to spot fake emails/texts. We have also explored buying and selling safely through Facebook.

Over the next few months we are hoping to explore plant, gardening and weather apps, visit S4C in Carmarthen and our last session, before summer will be a drop-in session.

Can I say a big thank you to all the members for their attendance and to our volunteers who give members individual help. We have lost a couple of our volunteers, but we have at least 4 of us who regularly attend to help members with their individual queries, including, Peter Loughran, Phillippa Verity Davies, myself and Patricia Campos (a member of staff from the Learning Centre). Can I also thank The Learning Centre who have continued to give us a room for this group every month and provide us with a tutor for free.

Margaret Nolan will now take over the role of Coordinator of this popular group. Thank you to her for stepping up and allowing this group to continue.

World Faiths – Andrew Padfield

The April meeting looked at the 4 Gospels. As the people who had known Jesus Christ were dying it was felt necessary to have a written account of Jesus` life and teaching. Mark`s was the first Gospel and Matthew and Luke probably used it as a basis for their gospels. John`s differs from the others. John`s aim was to show how Jesus` divinity was revealed by his actions.

At some stage nearly all religions experience serious dissentions and in the 3rd century the Christian Church experienced dissent from a group called the Gnostics, so called because they claimed to have special insight into the meaning of "Son of God". Gnostics objected to Jesus being called "Son of God" because God is indivisible. Therefore Jesus was in effect a lesser god. Another heresy claimed that as a Son of God Jesus had 2 natures, a spirit, so divine nature and a physical nature as a human. As God cannot die so the spirit left Jesus before he was crucified. Both heresies were firmly rejected at the Council of Nicea in 323.

The third matter looked at was Bible translation which covered several sessions. in the 16th century the old Bible was the Vulgate, a Latin translation written over 600 years earlier. The Roman Catholic Church, supported by most European monarchs, was opposed to a translation into ordinary language because of the fear that such a version might give ordinary folk ideas above their station. A major change came when James I in 1608 authorised an English translation, the famous Authorised, or "King James" version. Interestingly, the Bible had already been translated into Welsh by William Morgan in 1580 who drew on, and improved, a New Testament in Welsh written by William Salesbury (at Abergwili) in 1567.

In November and December the topic was the Baha`i faith. There are 2 central characters to Baha`i, namely the Bab, who was the Herald of God, and Bahau`llah. The Bab was renowned for his integrity, piety and generosity and attracted many followers. This alarmed the religious establishment and so he was executed in Persia in 1853 though the first attempt failed. Bahau`llah was a prominent follower. Due to family connections he was imprisoned not executed.

In 1863, during his exile, he announced that he was the Promised One foretold by the Bab. His final exile was to Acre and there he wrote his Most Holy Book which laid the groundwork of Baha`i. After his death in 1892 he was buried in a small house adjoining where he lived. For Baha`i believers this is now the most holy place on earth.

The topic for February and March was Islam which means submission to God. Basically, everything that happens to us has been pre-ordained by God so believers can only escape that fate by obeying the 5 Pillars, or basic tenets of faith:
belief that there is one indivisible God and that Mohammed is his prophet; prayer 5 times daily; giving of alms; fasting during Ramadan; and pilgrimage i.e. to Mecca. Some say there is a 6th Pillar i.e. Jihad. This means "struggle" and can mean Holy War and/or struggles to remain faithful. Islam is based on a series of visions which Islam says were given to Mohammed by the Angel Gabriel over a 20 year period. Mohammed was illiterate so the account of the visions is based on what Mohammed

later told or dictated to close family and friends. When he died Mohammed did not name a successor so his successors (called "Caliphs" or "Disciple") were men who had been close to him, the 3rd and 4th being his sons-in-law. After the death of the 4th caliph Islam split into two factions: those who wanted a continuation of the bloodline i.e. descendants of the 4th caliph. They called themselves "Shia Ali" (the Party of Ali, the 4th caliph) and Sunni i.e. those who gave priority to the Sunnis or teachings of Mohammed.

Park Walkers – Pat Hodkinson

Which I think should be re-named the Walkers and Talkers!

We are a smallish group who enjoy seeing our friends on a Tuesday morning, weather permitting. We all walk at our own pace and complete as many laps as we want – 3 seems to be the length that most of us find comfortable. An easy introduction to walking for those of us who are aware we don't walk enough.

Come and join us now the better weather should be arriving! You will be very welcome.

Art Group – Chris Driver

Attendance over 2025 remained steady and over the past few months new members have joined both from the u3a and Cartref Cynnes. The room is currently restricted to use by twelve participants and ‘the books are currently closed’. The group remains participatory by all members and is enjoyed by all.

Charabanc – Ann Kitchen

This group has been dormant for such a long time so I have decided it was time to regroup. This is now not only an opportunity to use bus and rail passes but will also include car sharing. These days the cost of coach hire is outside our budget.

The initially event was to the National Woollen Museum.

Garden Group. – Kathie Wareham (Coordinator)

This is written on behalf of Kathie who is still in the early days of finding her feet.

Angela’s stepping down was a difficult task for anyone to re-establish this popular group. Following on my report earlier I was so pleased when Kathie contacted me offering her services to coordinate this group, so well done Kathie. Others including Maud, Rosemond, Heather, Suzanne, Ann, Anne, Juliet and Susan swiftly came forward to offer their services as Leaders. The Garden Group is now well and truly back up and running and I’m sure everyone who attends is very grateful to all of them.

Spice up your life – Kam Winchester

Written on behalf of Kam who is already putting her own stamp on to this group.

After months of nothing happening I was pleased when Kam offered to take this group off my hands. You could tell by the buzz the first time we all met up again that everyone was so pleased to be back.

Music Appreciation – Richard Swann

This group has continued throughout the year with a slight blip in the autumn when I was in hospital. However I am now raring to go and we have had a few successful meetings since then trying to vary the meetings month by month with themes such as film music and music from musical theatre, with mixed success and further discussion will take place.

The main idea of the group is for members to choose a piece of music from any genre to share with the group and say a few words about it, e.g. something interesting about the artist or composer or the piece itself, or perhaps what you like (or dislike) about it, or what emotion it evokes in you which often leads to an interesting discussion.

You can bring your choice of CD or electronically or you can tell us what it is and we can probably find it on YouTube or Spotify and play it through a Bluetooth speaker.

If you like music of any genre do come along to a meeting and see if you like it. You won't know if you don't try and you are not committing yourself to anything. I have been surprised that I have sometimes come away from a meeting having learnt something about a piece of music I didn't previously really like but was able to listen to it in a different light, and others have made similar comments It has certainly broadened my musical tastes.

We meet on the last Wednesday of the month at 2:30 in the CAVS building, The Mount in Queen Street on the corner near County Hall. You will be very welcome.

History Group – Judith Holland

Written on behalf of Judith.

Our year began with Peter continuing to educate us with excellent historical speakers. From the beginning he always said this was to be a temporary role but he gave it his full dedication and made it into the flourishing group we have today. I know we all want to thank him for everything he did.

In November we were fortunate to have Judith take this group over. She is well known in local historical circles and has already put forward an interesting programme including field trips. I'm pleased to say the future of this group is in safe hands.

10 Pin Bowling – Ann Kitchen

You can imagine our dismay back in the autumn when the Excel Bowling Club decided to close on a Monday. The group suddenly was no more and not because of the lack of enthusiasm from its members. We all like a happy ending and we are back despite the later time and also with new members. This is such fun, would you be interested in coming along and joining us?

World Food – Kam Winchester

This group is basically an off-shoot of Spice up your Life exploring different cuisines from all over the world. A bit of a challenge in rural Wales! Once the curry night has re-established itself this can come back into action as an alternative some months.

Sunday Lunch Group – Chris Woodward.

Written on behalf of Chris.

When Fred announced one Sunday he was giving up this popular group how pleased everyone was when Chris offered to take it over. Another hard act to follow but Chris has already shown she has new ideas with different venues for this group to explore.

Book Club – Ann Kitchen

Can I thank the entire group to keeping everything ticking over this year. A special thank you to Pat for looking after the relevant paper work and keeping me informed each month.

Yet again this year our reading has been varied and often taken us out of our reading comfort zone. A large range of topics have been covered from mystery, historical, fantasy, crime, travel, short stories, essays and even a psychological thriller.

A visit which we shared with the Film Group to see Hamnet was also well received. An enjoyable afternoon.

We would love new members to join us, if you enjoy reading why don't you give us a try.

Knitting and Nattering – Ann Kitchen

The ladies have continued to knit although I bring nothing to this group regarding knitting but I do enjoy their company!!

Knitting for charity has been predominant again with blankets for the Food Bank and cardigans and hats for older babies and toddlers in Uganda.

In between the knitting they still find time to exchange patterns and share their skills. It's an education in itself to listen to them.

If you would like to join this friendly group please let me know and we would love to meet you.

Discussion Group – Peter Loughran

We meet at the Mount building in Queen Street, Carmarthen once a month. We usually have a particular topic which is introduced by a member of the group or by the Group Leader.

Over the past year we have discussed the following topics:

- Is the House of Commons fit for purpose?
- The UK citizen test?
- What is Charity and does it still begin at home?
- Is it still a man's world (if it ever was!)?
- Who likes paying taxes and are we happy with them?
- What constraints should there be on an individual's freedom?
- Slavery - past, present and no doubt into the future
- Immigration and migration - what is the real problem
- Settlers and nomads - who do we think we are!
- Should we sacrifice our ancient jury system? How do other nations do justice
- If it takes a village to educate a child, what does it take to lead a citizen down the path of criminology
- Human rights and the Universal Declaration and the European Convention

There is no shortage of interesting topics – so no risk of the group coming to an end any time soon!

Do come and join us for a lively discussion. Everybody welcome.

Poetry Group – Pat Hodkinson

It has been another enjoyable year for the poetry readers. We are constantly amazed by the wide range of poems that we read from 4th century right up to the present day. And we are lucky enough to have poets in the group who share their work with us.

I know we all feel the second Tuesday in the month is an afternoon well spent. New members would be made very welcome.

Literature Group – Pat Thacker

We have been meeting in the Ivy Bush, as usual, each month of the last year. There have been many cases of non-fiction books, which have been read and extracted.

Then the discussions have centred on the way the books have been presented.

Start Speaking Welsh – Frances Thesiger

This group started just over a year ago to provide an opportunity, and the skills, for people to begin speaking in Welsh who perhaps have some knowledge of the language from a long time ago, or who have recently begun learning but who lack the ability to put it into action.

We are grateful to Rosemond who leads the group, providing instruction and modelling the language. We practise written dialogues, sing songs, and play games such as Wordsearch and Hangman. It is a small, mixed-ability group that meets twice a month, usually on the first and third Friday, in the afternoon, at the Wesley Methodist Church. It is relaxed and friendly. Each session lasts an hour. Newcomers always welcome. Croeso i bawb!

Coffi a Clonc – Peter Loughran

The group has been meeting each month at the Ivy Bush hotel in Carmarthen.

We are a mixture of fluent Welsh speakers and a variety of fairly 'advanced' learners. We usually discuss for a while as a whole group but then we split off into twos and threes for a more 'focussed' conversation. This is a better arrangement for the less confident.

We meet in the hotel lounge which creates an informal and friendly environment. As always, we would welcome new members to enliven our discussions. We talk about current affairs, health, family, holidays and all manner of topical and sometimes more historical issues.

Do you come and join us? Croeso cynnes i bawb

Short Mat Bowls – Eric Kitchen

At the instigation of Kathie this group established itself earlier last year at the Bancyfelin Village Hall. Attendances have varied over the year and if you've not seen or had the opportunity to give it a go then this is your time as we would welcome others to join us. Whilst it's essentially a social occasion a competitive element does sometimes creep in!

Walking Group – Eric Kitchen (Coordinator)

An enjoyable year of walking with thanks to the various leaders – Eleanor, Nigel, Liz, Suzanne, Huw, Maud, Angela, Chris, Andrew, Mike and Peter. Walks were typically less than 4 miles, on firm ground with the option of enjoying a light lunch at various eateries at the end. Locations included in and around Llansteffan, Burry Port, Colby Wood, Swiss Valley Reservoir, the Welsh Coastal path at Pembrey and Morfa Wetlands, Amroth, Carmarthen town, Laugharne, Kidwelly and along the new cycle path to the museum.

We're always pleased to welcome suggestions for new walks and those who might lead on occasions – don't be shy.