



UP2DATE



NEWSLETTER JULY 2024

Our newsletter has been printed by Marple Hall School since long before I began to produce it but unfortunately the edition which came out in June 2023 was the last that they were able to produce. Their price was very fair and it has been impossible to match it. As you all know we always have a copy of the newsletter online, but we appreciate that some of you have no access to the internet and therefore we will continue to have a certain number printed.

I have taken the opportunity to change the months when the newsletter comes out to fit my year rather than the school year and hopefully, if I get enough copy sent in, the magazine will now appear in July, November, and March.

However, I cannot produce this newsletter without you sending articles so please keep up the good work. Articles can include photos and descriptions of trips and holidays you have experienced, both with the u3a and on your own. Maybe you have had a once in a lifetime experience as Janet did in twelve months ago with her description of a short voyage on a tall ship or taken up, on retirement, a new hobby of venture. Are you a poet? A keen gardener with a new project? Have you seen an exhibition or play at the theatre which you could tell us about?

Maybe you are a keen photographer and have a friend happy to describe the experience to produce a combined piece. If you are unable to produce illustrations for your article, don't worry I can usually find something suitable. So please dig deep and send me your material, I enjoy producing this newsletter, have done it for ten years **BUT** I cannot do it without your contributions.

My contact details can be found later in this issue.

THANKS TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS

Joan Davies and all the Committee would like on your behalf to thank all the volunteers who make Stockport u3a such a successful group. Because everyone who plays an active role in the running of the u3a or who has played an active role in its organisation in the past is a volunteer. And this also includes the members of the Committee themselves. Without these volunteers Stockport u3a would cease to exist.

Some volunteers give us the benefit of skills which were part of their working lives. Some share hobbies which they are passionate about and of which they are eager to share. Some groups meet weekly, others fortnightly and others once a calendar month. All groups require the commitment of the group leader, in fact now many groups have a shared leadership so that if one person is away there is always someone to fill the gap.

Some are prepared to go beyond their comfort zone and volunteer to give a talk to a group, to lead a walk or to arrange an outing either near to home with the Amblers or further afield on a coach as with the History group. (And with this group always the worry, "Have I still got 35 on the coach or have we left someone behind?") The people who take us on holiday are not holiday reps, they have no training yet take on the responsibility of steering a group of us through the complex demands of a holiday with multiple destinations.

And there are those who are simply there, the tables and chairs are always out. The coffee, tea and biscuits always appear, as do the people ready to "Brew Up".

We need to value all the people who give their time to Stockport u3a because without them there would be no Stockport u3a.

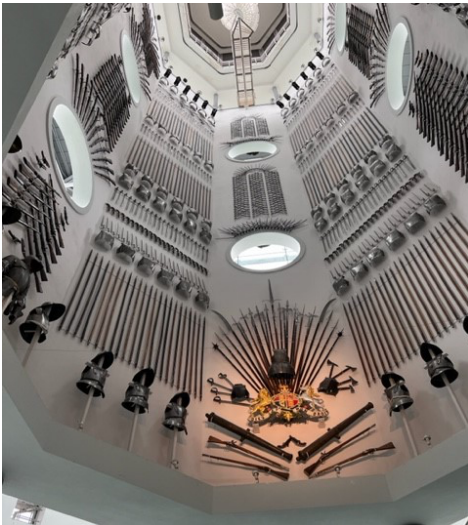
VISIT TO LEEDS ARMOURIES

On the 1st August 2023 the History Group arranged a trip to the Armouries. We were due to leave the 'Park and Ride' at 0900 but due to it being the school holidays we were assembled by 0840. We arrived in Leeds at about 1100.

As usual on arriving anywhere is a comfort stop and the café.



There are many notices explaining the lay out of this 5-storey building and also special events happening on this particular day.



Starting at floor 1 you see the 'Tower of Steel'.

Using the lift, you arrive at Floor 2 with exhibits of jousting and chainmail and armour. Henry VIII can be seen in armour with an unknown female wearing chainmail and helmet known as a Bassinette.



Moving on we get a little more modern with a Bren gun and .303 rifle which I was taught to play with when I joined the navy. A plaque showing the amount of weapons made in 1945 was surprising as this was post war.



In 1945
Britain made:

3,919,991

Submachine guns

2,488,697

Rifles

369,813

Machine Guns

99,748

Grenades

There were active displays to watch. A jousting arena outside of the complex showed off horses and riders but no actual jousting. Inside the complex were two combatants having a fight with poleaxes, described as armour piercing, can openers. The combatants stopped to address the crowd, explaining what they were doing. One a rather large man the other, surprisingly a charming young lady.



I touched on just a little of what is on offer. Most wars have been touched on regardless of their geographical location. The transport, or lack I have of it, shows soldiers on foot, on horses, on elephants and of course, all forms of wheeled transport.

The dress worn by combatants is also well displayed, armour in all its different forms, Indian and other far eastern garb, European dress including kilts.

A fine example of an elephant.



No trip is complete without a photograph of many of the attendees.



This is just a taster of what is on offer. A very good and enjoyable trip to be recommended if you are looking for somewhere to visit especially with young family.

Photographs by Ron and Vivian. Many thanks to Vivian Bath for her organisation.

Ron Emerson

www.u3asites.org.uk/stockport

Don't forget you can always check out activities and keep up to date if you use our website. The monthly diary and the magazine are also here.

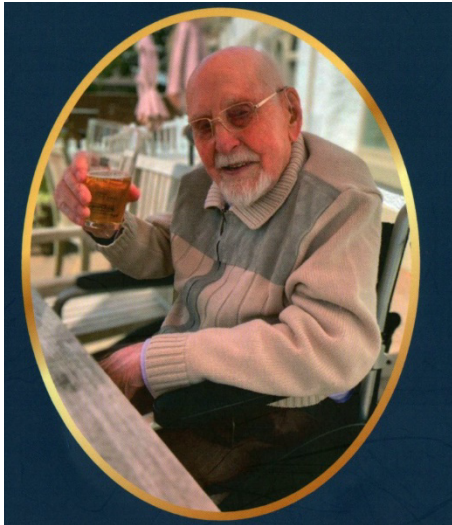
Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter.

Deadline for the next issue is 30th September 2024 to the below addresses.

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“100 NOT OUT”

On this very special occasion we celebrate Geoff’s 100th birthday.

Geoff was born on the 21st April 1924 in Barnsbury, (near Holloway and Finsbury Park) and spent most of his childhood in the Greater London area, moving later to Totterbridge. He finished his education at Willesden Art

College. He began his working career in the newspaper industry before being called up to the Royal Navy during World War 11.

The following article was one which Geoff wrote for one of the newsletters we produced during the Covid pandemic and tells of his time in the Royal Navy. This will be the first time he has seen it in print as those magazines were online only.

MY INTRODUCTION TO THE MANCHESTER THROUGH THE NAVY

As one of the older members of Stockport U3A, I was ninety-six on the Queen’s birthday in April 2020. My introduction to the Manchester area in 1942 was via the Navy after spending some weeks at HMS Royal Arthur at Skegness which was originally a Butlins holiday camp and had been taken over by the Admiralty for ‘square bashing’ and physical training. Skegness was a very cold place in November, especially in shorts and vest at 6am with a very cold wind coming off the east coast of England.

I eventually ended up Lowton St Mary’s, a small village just outside Warrington. The camp was a series of H block constructions. Here we

were taught coding and decoding of radio signals from ship to shore. Also, at this camp were a group of WRNs being taught signalling with flags and lights ('bunting tossers') and also Morse code via radio ('sparklers'). Of course, us lads eyed up all the new ladies arriving at the camp. I remember betting a Welsh mate that I would take out the little blond who had just arrived. I shouldn't have made bets like that as I finished up marrying her! It was a good gamble, and we did most of our courting by mail. She was a Leicestershire girl, and I was from Hertfordshire, so neither of us knew much about Manchester. In those days, the only means of travel was by train to reach places like Manchester and surrounding towns or by hitch hiking on the back of coal lorries. This was not very good because this area was still a coal mining area, and trains were filled with coal dust. This didn't improve the look of your white shirt fronts in your uniform on arrival at your destination!

After completing my training, I got a draft chit to Devonport which was my port division. This was to pick up a frigate which was designed to protect convoys being built in Boston Massachusetts USA. We think it was still on the drawing board when we arrived. We spent a couple of months apple picking waiting for the ship. We finally got aboard and then we took convoys from England to Gibraltar, the entrance to the Mediterranean. We also went U boat hunting in the North Atlantic which could be quite hairy.

A picture of the frigate HMS Antigua, this is the



ship I joined in the USA. The ships were all named after Caribbean Islands

After VE day, our frigate was decommissioned and returned to the USA. My next craft was a FDT (Fighter Director Tender) which was a converted tank landing craft fitted out with radar aerials and manned by the Royal Air Force, but the Royal Navy supplied the crew to operate this strange craft. The idea was that we would be employed to go in advance of the invasion of Singapore. Thank goodness this never happened as America dropped the atom bomb which brought an end to the war and our services were not required; otherwise I wouldn't be here to relate some of my memories of World War 2 and the 75th Anniversary of VE Day. Geoff Blanchard

Geoff married his wife Vera in 1945 and after his demob in 1946 he restarted his working life in a variety of studios including one on Shaftsbury Avenue designing record sleeves. His working life was artistically based, working both for advertising companies and as a freelance commercial artist. He and Vera had two daughters, Gillian and Adele.

After retirement and a time living in Devon the couple finally moved to Romiley in 1996, and it was then that they joined Stockport u3a. They were part of many of the groups including the Art Club, the Choir, Food Appreciation and the Travel Club, (even travelling to Canada with the u3a). People have commented on Geoff's support in the Art Club (now known as Craft). As a relatively much newer member to the u3a I remember seeing Geoff in the Choir. Unfortunately, Geoff is no longer able to attend any meetings, but he has been made a life member. We would all like to send Geoff all our best wishes as he enters his 101st year.

THE COFFEE MORNING



Our first Coffee morning on 29th May was attended by over 60 people. A great success. Looking forward to the next one.

THE POETRY GROUP

I am a member of the Poetry group and have been for the last seven years. When I first joined, we met in Romiley, then at St. Peter's and now we are at my house. Our numbers have fluctuated from ten to three and now we are seven, which is great.

I have written poems since I was ten years old and used to send contributions to the Stockport Junior Express, then Stockport High School Magazine and now to church magazines. This is one of my latest efforts!

“THE DENTIST”

Oh! How I going to the dentist!
Alas! It's come round again.
I panic just thinking about it.
I'm sure there will be lots of pain!

My dentist is quite young and handsome,
but that doesn't help me today.



I lie flat with heart wildly thumping,
and wish I was ten miles away!

I envy the T.V. and film stars
with teeth all so even and white.
I'm struggling to keep my few relics,
I soon won't be able to bite!

I dread all the water that gushes
in a torrent and whoosh down my throat.
I always feel that I'm drowning,
So please, someone, keep me afloat!

Because of the lockdown and Covid,
my teeth have had less t.l.c.
I'm dreading being told, "This is hopeless –
three extractions for you it will be!"

Just leave me a few teeth, dear Dentist,
so that they will show when I smile.
Farewell to the crunchy and chewy,
I may have to drink soup for the while!

But, maybe, if I'm very lucky
"A deep clean today," he may say.
So- I'll suffer the prodding and chipping,
Just to take all my teeth home today!

Article and poem by Margaret Morris-
Jones





TO BRINNINGTON RISE – A BUS RIDE by SARA STABB

shuffles along looking neither right nor left
to know?” Outside a man carrying multiple bags
“ Hey luv, are you a writer, my daughter wants
“ Don’t bloody ask ME! You ask ‘er! says mum
conversations about other customers;
take up their stations carrying on loud
In the chemist a small mum with two tall daughters
deep in debate walk out of the post office.
the ground flattens out. Two youngsters
taking the bend like a galleon. At the top of the Rise
of the 325 Brinnington Circular lit up like a living room on wheels
followed after an interval by the steady chuntering
chasing emergencies as yet unknown
tear up the hill to the shopping centre
followed by another police car followed by a van
whilst in the opposite direction a police car
A no hands on biker navigates down the hill

THIS POEM ONLY MAKES SENSE READ UPWARDS !



UGANDA AT THE DOUBLE

My Travel Group talk early this year was intended to view Uganda in a range of contexts: historical (based on our life there in the early 1970s), cultural and touristic. I planned it as a virtual tour, from the north west on the Congo/Sudan border (our home for 2 years) and travelling in a clockwise direction into the isolated Karamoja region, before moving south through a range of experiences: from mountain and waterfalls; to Jinja, the source of the Nile; and a halt in the capital, Kampala; then finally out to some of the tourist experiences in the western highlands and game parks.



We experienced a diverse life over our 4 years living in the country and during many later visits.

Only 2 months after this U3a sharing, Jeanette and I set off again for one of our regular visits to a country that is now very close to our hearts. Forever Friends of Uganda, the charity we founded 20 years ago, came about as a total accident, all caused by listening to Woman's Hour on Radio 4. It was a piece about a shared charity initiative in isolated villages on the far shores of Lake Victoria.

We were due to return to the country for a first visit since our departure 25 years earlier. Being a pushy sort of bloke, I of course contacted the people concerned and offered to call into the villages and offer our encouragement. That was all. After all the reason for the visit was to celebrate our 60th birthdays.

It was a holiday that changed our lives. Instead of touring the country as intended, we spent a great deal of our time with our soon-to-be colleagues.

Anyway, back to our visit in 2023. We were only going to be there for 17 days, so what we could do would be limited. And most of that time was to be visiting

the schools and meeting the children we support. Another time-consuming task was the purchase of the crafts that we sell as part of our fund-raising (some of you have visited our stall).

Away from this work (enjoyable as it is), we had planned two other distant visits for our own pleasure.

The first of these was to stay on the farm of a remarkable young friend on the edge of Queen Elizabeth National Park. He Teddy “escaped” city life to oversee the agricultural project that he founded some years earlier. He now works with going on 400 small farmers to grow moringa trees and he now has a production line of cosmetic oil products and powder for health purposes, with the remainder used as fertiliser. It was a lovely, relaxing and stimulating two-day break.

But then there was the long wished for return to the school where we had both taught more than 50 years previously. In those days, there was nothing in Koboko. It was just a dusty (or muddy depending on the season) outback straddling the Congo border. Its only claim to fame was that it was the birthplace of the infamous Idi Amin Dada.

We had no electricity, there were none of what we would call shops and we had to travel 30 difficult miles to the small town of Arua even to fill the car up with petrol. In fact, the nearest tarred road was at Gulu, some 200 miles away. This year’s start to the journey there (across the national park) was far from perfect. 50 years ago, it was a murrum (earth) road. Now it had been officially tarred, but the appalling potholes - in places there were more of these than there was of tar - made the old surface seem infinitely more desirable.

We booked into our hotel in Arua (there had been no accommodation available there in the 1970s) to discover that this sleepy little town that we remembered was now a busy regional metropolis.

The next morning, we set off for Koboko, full of fears for the road ahead. It turned out to be a wonderful journey on a newly tarred surface.

Our day at St Charles Lwanga College was a truly delightful journey down memory lane. We were warmly welcomed and given a tour of a bigger campus than in our time there. The downside was seeing the buildings damaged by the

bush war at the end of the last century, something from which the school has not fully recovered.



We then took a walk through the teachers' accommodation. The whole set-up looked so different - well, more than 50 years will do that, won't it? We did find our old house however and were delighted to be photographed sitting on the step just as we had been when our two boys were little ones. After addressing (separately) both staff and pupils, we were invited to be part of a WhatsApp group exploring the history of the school.

Apparently, we are the longest (known) surviving members of staff from the early 1970s.

The next day we braced ourselves for the return crossing of "the road to hell". Ironically, we had left that behind by the time we reached Karuma Falls where the Amin regime was reputed to have fed opponents to the crocodiles.

Article and photographs Keith Mills

NEW MEMBERS JUNE 2023 TO JUNE 2024



We would like to welcome all the people who have joined us over the last twelve months, since our last newsletter was published. We hope you have all settled in well. With three editions a year this list is much longer but at least the wonderful Beacon system we use enables Ken to send me the

names already in alphabetical order.

Gillian Abrahams

Judy Bannister

Wendy Bailey

Imelda Blackburn

Vivienne Bloor

Eunice Coe

Helen Colton

Cathrine Costello

Andrew Critchlow

Heather Dashtgard

Maureen Davies

Sandra Edwards

Michal Fallon

Sue Flood

Gwen Forrester

Chrisine Grimshaw

Helen Hallworth

Ruth Hambrey

Elizabeth Hirst

Jeanne Hobson

John Holgate

Pat Hughes

Debbie Jenion

Susan Kirkman

Ian Littlechilds

Jean Lynch

Barbara McCartney

Mandy McGoldrick

Dianne McMunn

Paddy McPartland

Myfanwy Montgomery

Glenys Obrien

Gillian Phillips

Bob Pigeon

Anne Pimblett

Susan Ross

Maureen Seddon

Patsy Shephard

Christine Smith

Gilbert Smith

Martin Stuart

Pauline Taylor

Sue Tetlow

Lynda Thopson

Susan Thorley

Christina Tierney

Lynda Topley

Roger Topley

Anne Tuson

Betty Warren

Jean Wilkes

Lesley Williams

Stephen Wood

THANKS

Again, many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter, keep the items coming. Also, an apology to those who have sent items as yet unpublished. I hope to include these in later editions. Have a lovely summer.

Ruth Faulkner