

Group news from Jan Bundy, Groups Co-ordinator, 01875 341022

A great start to the new year

It's good to be able to announce that the **Astronomy, Wine appreciation, Exploring philosophy, Current affairs** and **Recorder** groups are now off to a fine start as is the **Beginners Bridge** second group.

New leaders needed for Friday walking group. This well established group has had a lot of sustained energy and input from the co-leaders Ann Harper and Marjory Wilson. I am sure all those who have walked with this group in the past will want to thank them for their contribution. They feel it is now time to pass on the baton and they will be more than happy to help a new person continue the group by giving advice and detailed information on walks. Although occasionally the Wednesday group does a shorter walk, the Friday group caters specifically for those who do not want to tackle strenuous walks. It would be a pity to lose this group so if you are interested in keeping trim by walking on Fridays (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and could give some time to organising this, please let me know, and hopefully the group can start up again soon.

Gentle exercise group. We are fortunate to have a leader come forward who has been teaching this in Edinburgh, who has relocated to East Lothian and wants to share her skills with East Lothian members. She describes her classes as "Exercises to music at your own pace, to help maintain flexibility and mobility" and adds that "the exercises are chair based". I think this might appeal to those of us who are not looking for hefty, combatant aerobics! Please let Jan know if you are interested.

Italian and German language groups for beginners and those wanting conversational experience. At last, an experienced former teacher, and member of our East Lothian U3A, has offered to run these groups. We know there is an interest in this, and a few of you have given your names just in case, but now is the time to consolidate on the interest so if you would like to join either the Italian or the German language group, please let Jan know soon.

Vacancies for a few more members

Beginners Bridge second group. This new group has started well and there are vacancies to form another table of players. Expert tuition provided! Try your hand... Contact Jane de Busk 01620 843 944

AGM and new committee (See our website for information about the committee: www.eastlothianu3a.org.uk/Committee.htm)

The **Annual General Meeting** 2007 will be held on 20 June. Three of the present committee are due to retire so we are starting to look for replacements and are appealing for volunteers and nominations in good time.

It is vital to the successful running of East Lothian U3A that we have an enthusiastic and capable committee.

Creative writing. Explore your potential. Our small, informal writing group meets monthly on Monday afternoons, to enjoy exploring the art of creative writing. New members are very welcome. Please contact Monica Rushforth 0131 258 1396

Recorder playing This group has had its inaugural meeting and would be happy to have new "rusty" or "beginner" recorder players join. It meets on a Friday afternoon twice a month. Come and harmonise: Contact Nicky Bolton 01875 833667.



Members of the new recorder group tune up at their first practice session.

Current affairs. This newly formed group has had its planning meeting and will be meeting monthly on a Wednesday afternoon. They began tackling in earnest the tricky issues of our time on 14 February and would be very happy to welcome a few more members. Please contact Christine Meacock 01620 890504 for further details.

Astronomy. This group has just begun, exploring all aspects of this fascinating subject with an experienced leader. Spaces are available for a few more members so, hesitate not, please contact Ronald Crawford on 01620 880536 for further details.

Notice to all group leaders

The next **group leaders meeting** will be held at 2.15pm on **Friday 4 May** — venue to be announced.

Do not be put off from volunteering if you have never been on a committee before. Many of our most successful members have been beginners, learning on the job with plenty of willing helpers, discovering hidden talents and enjoying being involved.

Please get in touch with Sally Cummine on 01620 890756

Open Lecture

Death in suspicious circumstances

by Professor Anthony Busuttill

The Town House Haddington 2 pm 21 March 2007

A date for your diary

The next **Open Lecture** will follow the AGM on 20 June

It will be given by Dr David Simpson on
The water industry in Scotland

Full details in the next newsletter

Members' lunch

The members' lunch held on St Andrew's day was in many ways a great success. Norah Coutts and her team had transformed the Scout Hall with suitable decorations, Lionel Gliori came as a guest and entertained us with Scottish fiddle music, the food and wine were good and everyone mixed, met new people and enjoyed themselves in a convivial atmosphere.

However it was very disappointing that comparatively few people attended. As a result the event ran at a loss.

Lionel Gliori entertained U3A members as they arrived at the Scout Hall for the St Andrew's Day lunch.



Open Lecture report

The Open University in Scotland - Past, Present and Future was the title of December's Open Lecture given by Peter Syme, Director of Open University in Scotland.

The talk covered the development of the Open University movement. The Open University movement gained its Charter in 1969, under Harold Wilson's Government. Since that time the organisation has expanded until it now has over 200,000 students nationwide and provides some 600 courses. The great majority of its students are in full-time employment and within the age group 25 to 40, although the oldest student is over 80. In Scotland there are over 15000 students, served by 550 tutors. East Lothian itself provides some 250 students on a 60/40 female/male split.

Whilst previously study courses were principally provided in conjunction with the BBC television, most courses are now accessed on-line through the Internet. The communication with OU students depends increasingly on the ability of students to make use of new operating systems.

Peter Syme went on to discuss the funding of the Open University, which in Scotland is provided through the Scottish Parliament. Full-time students are fully funded whilst, somewhat controversially, part-time students have to meet their own fees.

The aspiration of the Open University movement is to lead the Learning Revolution and give everyone the opportunity, regardless of age and past examination attainments, to develop their full educational potential, whatever that might be.

Peter Syme answered questions from an appreciative audience which was left pondering the thought that perhaps their formal education had still some way to go.

Bill has joined the online community

Bill Cuthill is the first member to sign up for our **Joining the on-line community** scheme. His computer was installed in November by Lothian Computers. With a bit of help from other U3A members he's now fairly competent in browsing the web and sending emails. Bill has been heard to say: "I don't know how I lived without it". Anyone interested in finding out more about the scheme should contact Richard Morton on 01620 825979



Family History group – final report

The Family History group, which is winding up, met for the first time on 28 May 1999, just six weeks after the inaugural meeting of the East Lothian U3A. Over the years, twenty people have been members of the group, with four who were at that first meeting – Duncan Cummine, Audrey Milan, Audrey Paterson and Jim Redmond – active to the end.

Over the years we visited more than a dozen official organisations including Register House, The Scottish Genealogy Society, The National Archives, The Mormon Family History Centre, Scottish Life Archives, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland Lothian Family History Association Library, and Haddington Library Family History Centre.

Speakers at our meetings included experts on deciphering old handwriting, gravestones, Scottish history, family history research, recording research findings, East Lothian archives, and archaeology.

We spent many fascinating hours searching old documents – birth, marriage and death certificates, census returns, wills, church registers and so on – but the rapid growth of genealogy material on the Internet has changed the way much research is now carried out.

Inevitably we have become drawn into social history. Group members in turn have led discussions on their particular interests such as mining, crofting, schooling, farming, the cotton industry, housing in North Berwick, and the Poor Law.

This has led us to realise that we, ourselves, have lived through a fascinating period from before the Second World War, through times of unprecedented technological change. We now have opportunities undreamt-of by earlier generations: for world-wide travel and communication, health care, access to information, and leisure time in which to enjoy our U3A, and other activities. Some of us in the group have therefore started to write up our own life history.

Bravely, in the last four summers, we set forth on our 'Picnics with a Purpose'. On the first one we took part in a National Survey of Scottish Graveyards by visiting and surveying Garvald Church graveyard. Then we tackled a derelict cottage in Over Hailes, recording and researching its history. In 2005, we discovered certain features on what was thought to be a peasant's cottage in East Adniston, which means that it is more likely to have been a laird's house. Our most recent mapping was of the remnants of a long-gone coastal village at Bilsdean. Producing these last two illustrated reports has given us quite a sense of satisfaction, as on a visit to the archives of Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland we found that both places were unrecorded. By depositing copies of our reports with them we feel that we have made a small contribution to the archives of Scotland, in return for all that we have gained from them.

Audrey Milan, Group Leader