

Group News

From Jan Bundy, Groups Co-ordinator 01875 341022

All groups continue to provide stimulus, knowledge, fun and social contact for members. The new groups started last autumn, namely Re-reading Shakespeare, Mah Jong, Creative Writing, Biology as though life matters, and the Computer Support Group (see below) are thriving.

Additional members are sought for **Creative Writing** so contact Monica Rushforth 01875 340998 if you would like to give your latent creative abilities a chance.

Congratulations to the Wednesday Walking Group, led by Ken Stirling. They anticipate celebrating their 200th walk in August 2006. The Friday Walking Group, facilitated by Anne Harper and Marjory Wilson, which formed in July 2000, has also been meeting regularly once a month, since then, and is going from strength to strength.

Proposed new Groups

Scrabble A member is keen to start a Scrabble Group. So if you want to have fun, keep the brain active and meet new friends, please give your name and phone number to Elsie Oliver on 01620 824284 with a view to having a preliminary meeting in the early autumn.

Spanish Conversation I have names of people interested in having a group to practice Spanish. If you would be interested in attending a preliminary meeting to discuss this in the autumn, please give me your name and phone number, and I will contact you further.

Computer Support Group

Margaret Gordon reports:

Our CSG is now up and running with 22 members. There are no regular meetings involved and communication is mainly by email - so not for the faint-hearted! Setting it up has proved to be quite complicated but once members become more familiar with using it we hope it will provide a useful resource for individual members in the form of contact and mutual self-help support. Although it is obviously intended to help, particularly, those just beginning to make more use of their computers, it is also good to have some more experienced members. We find that as well as giving help even they can benefit from the occasional tip/suggestion/advice shared by others.

Scottish Genealogy Group

Joy Dodd reports:

As well as continuing to research our own family histories, the group took as a project this year the Farm Horse Tax that was levied in 1797 on all working horses. We started with some instruction from Rosemary Bigwood on reading early Scottish handwriting. Copies of the records for East Lothian

were acquired from the National Archives of Scotland and we each took a parish to transcribe. The records give names, locations and number of horses and how much paid. Maps have helped us to locate the farms around at that period and which ones survive today. A group visit to Register House explored other taxation records and documents relating to the late C18, to find out more about the period. This has been a very interesting project and we have learnt more of the history of the area we live in. A copy of our transcription of the Farm Horse Tax for East Lothian can be consulted at the Local History Library in Haddington.

Open Lecture

Report by Roy Hannah

The State of World Hunger was the title of the lecture given by Bruce Crawshaw in the Town House, Haddington, on 19 April.

To capture the attention of an audience on the subject of world hunger when our personal preoccupation is more attuned to the problems of over-eating and reduced consumption, can be a daunting task. Our Speaker, Bruce Crawshaw, an academic environmentalist who originates from Melbourne, Australia certainly rose to this challenge, having spent the last 10 years working as a consultant with the World Food Organisation.

Mr Crawshaw outlined the problem in a wide ranging talk supported by statistics. He said there are no easy answers to relieving World Poverty and its associated curses of chronic hunger and malnutrition. It is vital nevertheless that continued assistance is given to allow the possibility of more food being grown in adverse environmental conditions. Improved safe access to troubled areas is essential. Ultimately only through improved education and the development of wealth production will hunger and malnutrition be overcome. That however is a long way off and today's Hungry will continue to depend on the compassion and generosity of the more affluent world if they are to overcome their chronic deprivation.

After responding to some searching questions from the audience, Margaret Gordon thanked Bruce Crawshaw for his conscience provoking address.

Dates for your diary

27 September 2006: Open lecture by U3A member Professor John Dale on the refurbishment of tapestries at Stirling Castle. Full details to follow.

30 November 2006: St Andrews Day Members' Lunch. This will be a plate lunch to be held in the Scout Hall Haddington from 12 noon. Full details will be in the next Newsletter.

Annual General Meeting

The **Seventh Annual General Meeting** of East Lothian U3A will take place at **2pm on Wednesday 21st June 2006** at **Holy Trinity Church, Church Street, Haddington**. (Papers for the AGM are enclosed with this Newsletter)

The AGM will be followed by a **Musical Interlude with movements from masterworks written in the 'golden period' of chamber music, performed by four local musicians: Philip and Bridget Taylor violins, Frank Bigwood viola, and Raymond Dodd 'cello.**

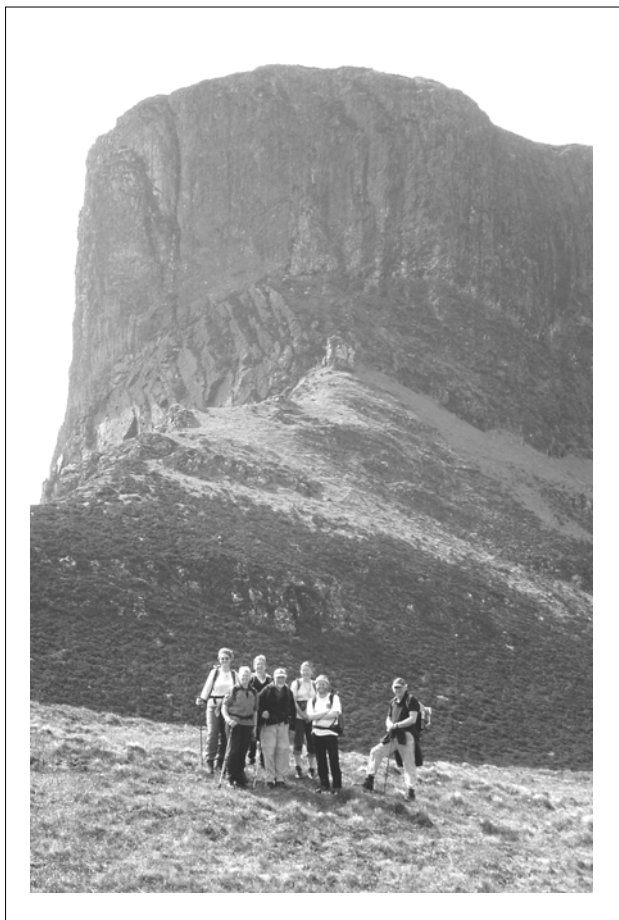
The Geology of Eigg

Report by Richard Morton

A joint expedition with members of the Edinburgh U3A Science Group and the Borders U3A Geology Group – 19 people in all – took place in the first week May to the Hebridean island of Eigg. The aim of the trip was to give an introduction to Eigg's geology. Eigg is a landscape created by extensive volcanic activity. It provided a fascinating contrast to the more familiar geology of East Lothian.

Angus Miller of Geowalks ran the trip for the U3A. Angus has been leading geological guided walks and residential trips for many years, and has organised several other trips for U3As.

Photographs of the trip can be seen at <http://u3aeiggtrip.blogspot.com>



Eileen and Ian Turnbull with Angus Miller and Richard Morton and three members of Edinburgh U3A (back row) prior to climbing the Sgurr of Eigg.

Edinburgh U3A outings

East Lothian members are most welcome to join the Edinburgh U3A on the various outings. The cost per visit is £11 to £12 (transport and entrance fees) except for the one to Ceres

15 June Ceres, Fife, and the Secret Bunker – £21 inc. lunch.

10 July Floors Castle.

9 August Hillhouse and Loch Lomond.

14 September Duns Motor Museum and Manderston House.

Ring David Richardson on *0131 653 2008* for more details.

Three Harbours Arts Festival

2nd June sees the start of this festival about art in unusual places. It will involve over 80 venues throughout Prestonpans, Cockenzie and Port Seton with 135 artists exhibiting a selection of 750 artworks as well as a series of walks, talks and trails. Several U3A members will be participating so why not take a look.

All information is available from the box office Prestoungrange Gothenburg, Prestonpans 01875 819922 or www.prestoungrange.org.

Letters

More news from Athelstaneford Graveyard

There must have been something creative in the air at Athelstaneford in the 18th century. Jeanette Redmond's interesting experience at the grave of the artist Archibald Skirving (*see Winter 05 Newsletter*) reminded me of a rather different one of mine.

On a cold dreary day some years ago I was on an Antiquarians' outing and we were being taken round the graveyard by Dr Islay Donaldson (an authority on East Lothian gravestones) when we came to the grave of a minister and poet, buried there in 1746, Robert Blair. He was a notable contributor to the graveyard school of poetry, author of a long lugubrious poem called "The Grave", very popular in its day. I knew the name well because every student of Eng. Lit. of my vintage was supposed to read it as a significant work, but I never knew anyone who actually did.

However, to our great delight, Dr Donaldson intoned a great chunk of it at the graveside while we paid our respects to the great man and listened to the doom-laden words as we shivered in the cold misty wind.

Liz Strachan