

# U3A East Lothian Newsletter

## Summer 2010

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### Group news

For information on individual Groups contact the Group Leader. For general Group information contact Edna Milne, Groups Coordinator - [groups@eastlothianu3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@eastlothianu3a.org.uk) or telephone 01620 820835. See also the yellow 'Leisure and Learning' booklet and the website [www.eastlothianu3a.org.uk](http://www.eastlothianu3a.org.uk) for latest Groups information and updates between newsletters.

**Folk music singing and playing** re-starts in September, Tuesday 14th at Bridge Centre, 2-4 pm Bring your voice or any instrument you can play. Robert Russel, group leader 01620 860702

**Ceilidh Dancing** The third winter session of this group will begin on Tuesday 5th October at 11.30am in the Bridge Centre, Haddington. The class has grown steadily and we feel that we have achieved our initial aim which was to give people enough confidence to join in the dancing at social functions. Many friendships have been formed and often groups arrange to meet at local ceilidhs where they participate fully and get the benefit of exercising at the same time. So although we will still enjoy many ceilidh dances we will probably progress to more simple Scottish country dances as the term goes on. Sheila Sergeant 01620 825127  
[sheilasergeant@hotmail.com](mailto:sheilasergeant@hotmail.com)

**Recorder Group Two** The second recorder group, which started up at the beginning of the year, has vacancies for new members. Anyone interested should be at 'post-beginner' level. Contact group leader Celia Coulson if you would like to know more: 0131 665 3779 Email [cmcoulson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cmcoulson@hotmail.co.uk)

**Digital Photography Group** This group will be starting again on Monday 4 October. Following the success last year of running the group as three one day workshops, group leader Richard Morton, is planning to repeat the format again this year. An introductory two-hour meeting at 2 pm on Monday 4 October will be followed by meetings from 10 am to 3 pm on 1 November, 6 December, and 10 January. All the meetings will be at the Bridge Centre.

**PhotoForum** The first meeting of the PhotoForum will be at the Bridge Centre at 2 pm on 18 October, and on the third Monday of each month thereafter. The group will again look at a range of topics including some of the more advanced aspects of digital photography. An opportunity for members to offer their own photographs for review by the group will remain a central feature of the programme. Please contact Richard Morton if you are interested in joining either of the photography groups: 01620825979 Email [ramorton@f2s.com](mailto:ramorton@f2s.com)

The **Italian Group** has changed its format and is now less formal and more democratic, with greater emphasis on conversazione - but still some grammar! We meet in each other's houses, still fortnightly at 2.30 on Thursdays. Enquiries to Rosemary Brannan, 01620 825208, [rosemary.brannan@ssesurf.co.uk](mailto:rosemary.brannan@ssesurf.co.uk)



The new committee at its first meeting in the Bridge Centre. From the left Donald Leckie (*Treasurer*), Edna Milne (*Groups & Vice-Chairman*), Liz Lockwood (*Secretary*), Ken Stirling (*Chairman*), Gabriele Smith (*Lectures*), Maggie Sherwin (*Catering*), May Dickson (*Membership*), Bill Rarity (*Publicity*); Ann Etherington (*U3A Scotland*) not present

**AGM News** - an appeal had been sent out for members to put themselves forward for the vacant position of Chairman. Two nominations were received, for John Holcolombe and Ken Stirling. The well-oiled U3A electoral machine swung into action. Imagine the tellers' surprise when the count revealed a dead heat - total votes cast for both candidates were identical. While members' thoughts ranged from coalitions to penalty shoot-outs, outgoing Chairman Roy Hannah acted decisively and used his casting vote in favour of Ken Stirling. As well as Roy, other committee members standing down were Treasurer Robin MacEwen and joint Groups Coordinator Liz Reid. Donald Leckie was elected as Treasurer.

### *Letters to the Editor*

Dear sir,

I was very pleased to read Liz Strachan's letter in the Spring Newsletter regarding the 'feelings of exclusion' that can arise when an **over emphasis** on the use of computers and in particular email is adopted by a U3A.

I was also pleased to read the editor's response and to know that this issue is being addressed.

Being able to cut costs using modern technology is most certainly a big advantage but I know from experience how easy it is for computer people to get carried away with their own enthusiasm and forget that there are still many members who either do not or cannot use computers. It would be a sad day if those members decided that the U3A was not for them because of this. They must not feel left out.

May I suggest that other members who note something in our East Lothian communication literature which they would like to comment on, take the opportunity to draw the attention of the committee to it via our EL U3A newsletter. It's your chance to share your views.



Margaret Gordon

## Hunting Taiga in Siberia

In our April talk, retired headmaster Ian Brown told the story of his extraordinary experience in traveling for over four weeks in Siberia, one of the least-known and least-visited territories in the world, in the company of native Russians.

He introduced his account by describing the background to the area, explaining its size, remoteness and sparse population. He outlined the unusual aspects of his journey and explained the significance of taiga\* showing views of the city of Krasnoyarsk and its close neighbour Divnogorsk, where his visit was based.

He went on to describe the four excursions which he and his companions made from this base. Firstly, they journeyed southwards towards the Sayan Mountains, where they camped in yurts close to the geographical centre of Asia. En route, they visited the living museum of Shushenskoe, where Lenin spent some years in exile, and the gigantic Sayano-Shushenskaya Dam, the largest in Russia.

He then described an overnight journey on the legendary Trans-Siberian Railway, sharing an unsegregated dormitory car with 51 other passengers. He spoke about the awe-inspiring Lake Baikal, the oldest and largest lake in the world, and explained why it is regarded as one of the continent's great sacred places.

The third excursion was to Sharipovo and the Siberian Lake District, a popular area for Russians to camp during their summer holidays. Here, he recounted the significance of dachas. Finally, he spoke about the importance of rivers in Siberia and, in particular, the "father" of all Russian rivers, the Yenisey, perhaps the world's longest river and described a voyage to the historic town of Yeniseysk.

Throughout his talk, Ian introduced his Russian travelling companions and also several of the local people he met along the way; this personalised approach was well received by the audience. He summarised his experience as "a superlative journey and a journey of superlatives".

*\*Taiga is the world's largest land biome, and makes up 27% of the world's forest cover; the largest areas are located in Russia and Canada. The taiga is the terrestrial biome with the lowest average temperatures after the tundra and ice caps.*

### The Festival and King's Theatres Edinburgh

#### Diary Dates

Emma Robertson, Education and Audience Development Officer for The King's and Festival Theatres will talk about both of these venues in terms of past, present and future. With over 60 shows a year across the two venues plus many tours, workshops and other projects, the theatres are a huge part of the Edinburgh cultural scene! This talk will include the opportunity for you to ask those 'how do they do that?' questions.

**Wednesday 15th September 2010, 2:30 Town House, Haddington**

**A Short History of Beekeeping (+ honey tasting)** 17th Nov Mike Bain



*Ian Brown with his Russian travelling companion*

### Talk on Chinese Jade

Following the AGM business meeting on 23rd June, Jan Chapman, former Far Eastern Curator in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, gave a very interesting talk on Chinese Jade.

She explained that Jade, or yu, has been revered by the Chinese for 6000 years; Emperors sent relays of men to gather Jade, which entailed a trek of about 2000 miles across the Gobi Desert and Takla Makan to the area south of Kirgiztan, where Jade was found.

It was either embedded in rock or found in river beds in small or large "rocks", which were transported back to the Lapidary department of the Palace. Jade is extremely hard and cannot be cut; it is "worn down" and polished and shaped using carborundum tools - diagrams drawn on the Jade indicated the shape to be produced.

Jan illustrated her talk with numerous slides demonstrating the beauty, delicacy and colours of Jade - greenish-white and various shades of green, white, pink and lavender. Sometimes brown markings within the jade are produced by part of the rock surrounding the Jade being incorporated during the polishing process.

Owing to the rock-hard quality of Jade, the Chinese believed it could ensure everlasting life, and it was frequently incorporated with the corpse in burial casks; it was used to keep the human spirit within the corpse; wealthy families might even order a Jade suit to be made to measure for a family member, thus ensuring that the body spirit would be "captured" for ever. The suits were meticulously made out of small squares of Jade, held together with pure gold clips.

Real Jade is as valuable as diamonds but many glass copies are produced. Real Jade is usually recognised only by experts using X-Ray and crystallography technology. Chinese Jade became extinct by 1720 - the Jade now produced comes mainly from Burma.



**Coffee Morning** 10-12:00 23rd October 2010  
St Andrew Blackadder Church, North Berwick