



UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

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**NEWSLETTER January 2016 Issue 51**

The full colour version of the newsletter is on our website at

<http://www.u3awelhat.org.uk/newsletters.html>



The Christmas lunch on Wednesday 9 December, held again at Homestead Court, was well attended and much enjoyed, as our photographs (by Celia Boccacci) show.

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**U3A Welwyn-Hatfield NEWSLETTER**

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Edited by Hazel K. Bell

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## From the Chairman

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**Chairman Jack Woodenjoying the Christmas lunch,  
flanked by Suzanne Brown and Jean Mackie**

I really can't believe that two years have passed since I wrote my first "From the Chairman"! Well, of course, they haven't, not quite; but this really is the last "From the Chairman" that I shall write, because by the time the next Newsletter (after this one) is published, you'll have a new Chairman. I'm writing this on 16 December, and the AGM is only eleven weeks away. And what happens at the AGM? Well, lots of things, but the most important, perhaps, is the voting in of either existing or new officers. And you will be voting for a new Chairman, because, whether I like it or not, our Constitution says that the Chairman must stand down after two years in office.

So what's happened in my (nearly) two years in office? Well, I've got to be careful here, because if I remind you now of all those notable things, I won't have anything to say at my final address during the AGM! And if I don't, then you won't know about those notable things unless you come to the AGM! Anyway, here goes ...

The most notable – and tangible – thing was probably that splendid addition to our assets, the electrically operated screen at Ludwick (unofficially known as ‘The Tonylam Screen’). To be truthful, there haven’t been too many “notable things”, apart from that one, to report (here’s where I get a flood of emails reminding me of all those events and things I’ve forgotten!). All the regular events (the Art and Photographic Exhibitions, ‘Meet the Groups’, the New Members’ Coffee Mornings, the Garden Parties, the Quiz parties, and, of course, the splendid Christmas Luncheons have all gone smoothly and well, and I thank everyone involved in the preparation and management of those events. They were enjoyed by many hundreds (altogether) of our members.

Two of those members left us at the last AGM – well, they didn’t leave the U3A, but left the offices they had held in our branch for many years, between them. There was Arseven Gumush, our Treasurer, who kindly stayed on after his ‘retirement’ to see his successor (Judy Grant) firmly settled in his chair, and there was Phyl Grainge, who had planned to retire this year but stayed available throughout, making sure that everything at the various catered-for events went like the clockwork to which we have become accustomed. It proved impossible to replace her for a long time, but eventually four people have been found to take her place, thanks to a lot of badgering, persuasion and arm-twisting by Ann Davies.

Committee Meetings have gone smoothly and no-one has ever had to raise their voice in protest, or thump the table! Reports are submitted by the various Heads of Departments, read, discussed if necessary, and acted upon. Other items have been discussed, quietly

and carefully, and actions taken. It all runs like a well-oiled machine, and I’ve had the privilege to be at the head of this organisation for (nearly) two years, and never heard a cross word. People say to me that it must be a burdensome task to Chair such a large



**Arseven Gumush**



**Phyl Grainge**

organisation (nearly nine hundred members). Well, believe me, with the individuals and teams we have: Front of House, Lighting and Sound, New Members Administration and Welcoming, Finance, Co-ordination of nearly 70 Study Groups, Secretarial Duties, the Finding-and-Booking-a Speaker Team, our Webmaster and the Editor of the magazine you hold in your hand, the job of Chairman is a doddle: the only time I have to do anything is the odd decision on the odd problem that arises. And believe me, that's been very rare.

The office I haven't mentioned is that of Vice-Chairman, and I've left her till last because I – and you – owe her special thanks. I've recently had an eye problem – nothing serious, but a difficult cataract removal led to a swollen macula, with eye-drops to remove the swelling (three a day) since the middle of September up to (at least) Christmas. Not in itself much to shout about, but it's meant no new glasses – and, therefore, no driving my car! Jean, my Vice-Chairman, took over the Wednesday Meetings several times at the beginning of all this, when I was at hospital appointments, and so on, and when I *was* able to come, she brought me to Meetings and took me home, several times. As, with other engagements I had, did Ann Davies, Brian Milburn, Nicola Clark, and the Higginses, Penny and Vernon. My sincere thanks to you all.

By the time you read this, I hope to be wearing my new glasses and driving myself once more, and I shall be looking at the next three months with a mixture of enjoyment (for what I and we will be doing, one way or another) and sadness, when I see the remaining eight Wednesday Meetings go by, bringing me ever nearer to my exit from high office. But be assured, I shall be expressing my thanks for these two years very fully at the AGM, when I make my closing speech before handing over to my successor. For those of you who won't be at that AGM, this is more or less what I will say:

"I look forward to many more years with you as a member of the Welwyn-Hatfield U3A. For the warmth you've shown me and the support you've given me, as your Chairman, my deepest and sincere thanks."

*Jack*

## **Summer School 2015**

Monday 17 August dawned and off John and I headed to the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester, with eager anticipation and some reservations, to U3A Summer School. Would we find it interesting? Would we learn anything? Would we be out of our depth? We hadn't been in a 'classroom situation' for many years, would it be enjoyable or totally boring? Well, at least, we thought, it would be a few days away together in beautiful surroundings with food and drink provided.

So we found ourselves sitting in the sun, sipping coffee, awaiting registration, like a couple of nervous students outside the Head's office, making small talk with other first-timers, putting on a brave face.

What were we concerned about – it was a wonderful experience and most enriching few days!

My Music Appreciation course introduced me to – or in some cases revisited – music I knew, from all round the world. The lecturer provided interesting historical information which helped give context to the music we were listening to.

John's Garden Design course included outside activities as well as classroom. Unfortunately he soon realized he had as much knowledge, gained through many years as an amateur, as the lecturer. Especially proven when the teacher suggested 'getting a man in', to do any hard landscaping, when John is the man in our garden who does just that!

We both thoroughly enjoyed the extra-curricula activities; the quiz on the first night, the musical evening with a string trio on the second and the final evening's short concert in the chapel provided by the Singing for Pleasure course. When we adjourned to the bar after the concert, the impromptu singsong accompanied by ukuleles was wonderful fun.

Despite John's disappointment on the course content – there's a lesson in itself: to check that more thoroughly before choosing – we both enjoyed our first Summer School; meeting lots of U3A-ers from around the country, enjoying stimulating discussion, eating far too much excellent food and sharing wine with our esteemed Chairman, who happened to be my course tutor.

If you're dithering about attending U3A Summer School, don't – give it a go, it's great fun!

*Suzanne Brown*

Next year's **National U3A Summer Schools** will be held at The Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester.

Courses for the first school, 8-11 August:  
The Americas; architecture; creative writing; drama; early Church and the Roman Empire; folk art appliquéd; France; literature; and recorder ensemble playing.

For the second school, 15-18 August:  
Cryptic crosswords; garden design; geology; Italia; maps; music; history of ideas; Shakespeare; and singing.

Full-board Residential Delegate in en-suite accommodation, £285 pp.

Full details are available from national office and on the members' area of the national website:

<http://www.u3a.org.uk/members-area/summer-schools.html>



### **Herts Network Quiz**

On Wednesday 19 August eleven of us travelled to St Clement Danes School in Chorleywood for this year's quiz. We were in two teams, Welhatonians 1 and 2, hoping that an afternoon of discussion, guesswork and fun awaited us. We were not disappointed.

The first nice thing was that tea and coffee were laid on before the quiz. This was especially welcome to those, like me, who had set off happily along the M25 only to be stuck in a traffic jam caused by road works about half a mile from the school. There were 29 teams in all, from all over Hertfordshire, and generally teams had 6 members. The organisation by Chorleywood U3A was superb. Each table had the answer sheets already numbered and labelled, so were the four Table Quizzes; and there was an order form for half-time drinks. Each table also had flowers on it – a lovely touch!

There were 8 rounds, all 5-year sections from the 1900s: i.e., Round 1 was 1945-50, Round 2 was 1950-55 etc. The questions were general

knowledge ones from the times. It made a change from the usual topic titles, but we did have to discuss when to play our joker! Did we remember more from our teenage years, young baby years or were the more recent times fixed more clearly in our minds?

The Quizmaster was Gillian Hill, who played the part with aplomb. Each question was clearly read over the PA system, then appeared on the screen. Answers were given in the same way. The questions provoked discussion and laughter. One that needed lateral thinking was 'What got rid of Manchester in 1959?\*' Our team was very admiring of our member who got that one!. We were not so good at remembering the sequence of Elizabeth Taylor's husbands or where the 1968 Olympics took place. The whole room knew who enlisted in the US Army in 1958!

We answered the four Table Rounds as the main quiz progressed; they were taken in during the interval and scored separately. We did well on anagrams of book titles but were not so successful at children's cartoon characters.

The main quiz was won by The Potters (of Potters Bar) with 78/90 points. Our two teams were 6 and 5 points behind them, so we acquitted ourselves creditably. The Foxton Fizzers won the Table Quiz with 38/40. (They were second in the main quiz and The Potters were second in the table quiz) This time we were 7 and 6 points behind the winners. We would like to thank Hazel Bell for her organisation of the teams and ensuring an enjoyable afternoon.

\* Answer: *The Manchester Guardian* lost Manchester in 1959 to become *The Guardian*.

*Judy Grant*

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## Group News

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### **Art and Photography exhibition**

The exhibition of the products of our Art and Photography groups held at Ludwick Hall on 18 November was attended by more than a hundred members. Four exhibiting groups each displayed their products along one side of the hall, with groups of chairs in the centre to allow rest and chat while drinking coffee.

**MultiMedia A**, Art group, displayed paintings and pastels, both already created and undergoing creation. This group will be showing

an exhibiton throughout January at the Dutch Nursery, Great North Road, Hatfield.

**MultiMedia B**, Art and Craft, as well as paintings, pastels and pencil sketches, showed festively decorated hats, tapestry, and a major ongoing work: a huge quilt sewn by Joyce Faldo. **Watercolour Group** members also continued to paint beside a display of their pictures.

The **Photography** Group's display, organised by Tony Lammiman, was divided into examples shown in albums, their 'Out & About' visits shown on two laptops, and large prints mounted on boards.



**Jean Copeland with the MultiMedia B, Art and Craft, display.**

*Photograph by Tony Lammiman*

We can indeed be proud of our artistically creative groups.

**Dorothy Banks observes Linda Collins and Mike Harding at work in MultiMedia Art A's display**

*Photograph by Gerry Newnham*





**Products of MultiMedia Art A.** *Photograph by Tony Lammiman*



**One of the screens displaying large photographs.** *Photograph by Tony Lammiman*

## Creative Writing

*This was a response to the Creative Writing Group being set as their subject – writing a possible reply to a personal ad.*

Dear Box 726

You are a lucky man indeed! Only because an over-zealous Librarian popped a copy of the *Mature Times* into my environmentally friendly Hessian bag, did I ever get to read your advert. There I was, leafing idly through, at first finding little of real interest until I came to the ‘Connections’ section. What an eye-opener! So many people out there looking for someone to share their lives that I decided there and then to ‘take the plunge’ so to speak and put my belief in Fate to the test.

So, here I am, wondering what I should reveal to you about myself that you would find of interest. Having decided you do not need to know that I passed the 11+, spent a year on the front line at Greenham Common and failed to make the mark with either of my husbands, I decided it more appropriate to concentrate on my recent past.

Now happily divorced I have lived the last 7 years in contented solitude with my books, piano, 3 Persian cats and Tonto, my African Grey parrot, who tends to be very possessive of me and aggressive towards visitors. Should you ever have the good fortune to come to my home I will make sure he is in his cage!

I expect you are curious as to what drew me choose you Box 726. Well, I spotted straight away that you enjoy conversation. Thank goodness for that I thought! Otherwise I could see our first meeting being a bit difficult and one sided! I also noted with great relief that you are educated and refined. Well who wants to be embarrassed by being with someone who drops his aitches and doesn’t recognise a fish knife when he sees one? No, I guess it was all the things you didn’t say, such as not professing to be a non-smoker and drinker, (well just how boring can you get?) and thank goodness no sign of you having a GSOH. I think we’ll find that out when we meet.

I have to admit that I was puzzled by your request for a photograph whilst at the same time you claim that age and looks are unimportant to you. I can only assume it to be a printing error.

I can’t wait to begin enjoying those ‘special times’ together, Box 726. I am looking out my “Girls just want to have Fun” T-shirt in anticipation of our first meeting.

*Rosemary Tillyer*

## Exploring London

### *A fascinating visit to BBC Broadcasting House*

On 9 October thirty-two members of **Exploring London Group 1** went to Broadcasting House in Portland Square. We had a great visit led by very informative guides.

After going through stringent security, we met inside in the Media Café. There was the Tardis to our left as we walked in and a Dalek on the right – what a photo opportunity!

Our guides split us into two groups and we all had to wear smart labels. We overlooked the enormous newsroom. It was so interesting to watch the journalists buzzing around! It really did look like a hive of activity. It's the biggest in Europe and approximately 6,000 people work there! I spotted Fiona Bruce looking casual in jeans with her hair tied back. The news studio is on the far right of the area and the weather studio on the far left. People were walking up and down beautiful spiral staircases. A huge oval red carpet is in the centre of the room, denoting the area visible from the studio. The journalists are told to behave themselves if they move onto it – e.g. don't play computer games or watch unsavoury websites!

We went outside onto the piazza – the large open space linking the various buildings, with names of places on the flagstones. The paving installation, 'pavement art' by a Canadian artist, Mark Pimlott, is called 'World'. It represents an imaginary world reflecting the global outreach of the BBC, with narrow steel bands representing longitude and latitude.

Then we went to the One Show studio. How small it is, and how shabby the glass table – actually





Exploring London Group 1 reading a radio play.

Photograph by Marion Sklar

made of plastic and very scuffed. The sofas were filthy, too – they had covers which are removed before the programme is aired. We were told that it is kept grubby deliberately as the studio lighting would make it too reflective and spoil the broadcast.

Finally we were taken into the original Broadcasting

House, an iconic 1930s Art Deco building. The restored reception area is a beautiful example of Art Deco with its subtle lighting and wooden cladding. An impressive statue by Eric Gill, 'The Sower', represents the seeds sown by the work of the BBC. We also saw a tapestry called "*Le poète*" which was presented to the BBC by the French as a thank-you for the broadcasting support during the war.

Finally we were taken to a mockup of a tv studio and a radio studio, and asked to volunteer to read the news from an autocue and to do a weather forecast. I did the weather and to my horror there was no autocue; only a map facing me with weather fronts and temperatures moving across. I had to make it up! Somehow I got through it. The short radio play we read was great fun, with lots of sound effects.

After the 90-minute tour we returned to the café, where we were offered interesting canapés that were being tested out for a function. They were very tasty – what a bonus!

We all enjoyed this visit very much and highly recommend it. Our thanks go, as always, to Bridget and Dennis for organising another fantastic trip.

Ann Davies

On Thursday 3 December seventeen members of **Exploring London Group 3** went on a Christmas Carol Walk – Charles Dickens' London, with the London Walks company. We had a very good guide, Richard, whose knowledge of Dickens' novels was second to none. Starting at Tower Hill, we visited lots of lovely old buildings, the outside of several old pubs, and ended up at St Paul's cathedral, where some of us had a lovely lunch.

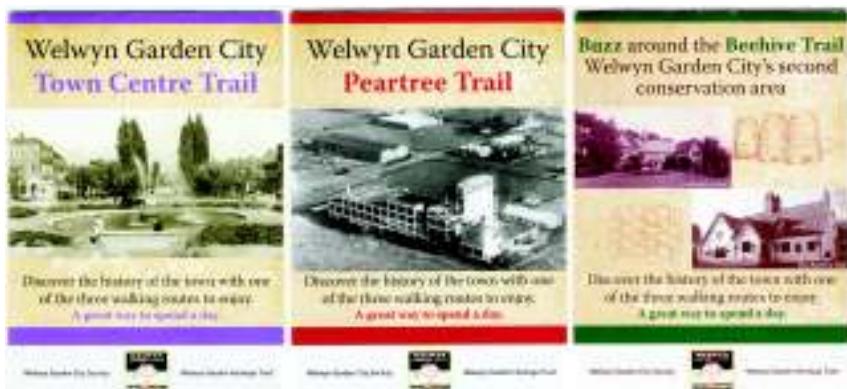
Tony Dodd  
photograph by Elizabeth King



## Strollers 2

*The Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust has published three Town Trails – walking tours of WGC. Each comprises a street map with historical information about the area covered and special features noted, on a sheet of plasticised paper 30 cm x 120cm folded to fit into a 15cm x 11 cm plastic pouch. (£1.00 each or £2.50 a set.) The Group Leader of Strollers 2 tried them out.*

A newcomer to Welwyn Garden City, I was delighted to be asked to review these Town Trails. On a lovely Autumn day I tried out the first *Town Centre Trail*, a one-mile walk starting from the Campus West Library. This led me into a pretty residential road full of flowering



gardens and lovely mature oak trees; the houses were a mix of 1960s houses and bungalows with some infilled houses, and a mixture of no boundary fencing and high boundary hedges, perhaps reflecting on the residents who have lived there since they were built and the incomers. I soon found my way around and arrived back at Campus West in time for a cup of coffee and a look at the art exhibition there. For those who are not walkers, this is a good start to being more active, since it is quiet but not off the beaten track.

The second *Town Centre Trail*, two miles, followed a route round early WGC. I looked at the architecture, and think young people today would be lucky to start their married lives in the beautiful houses provided for workers in the Youngs Rise area. Along the route there were a number of trees I had not expected to see – a still-flowering Magnolia Grandiflora and several Indian Bean (Catalpha) trees. There were newly planted rose beds on Meadow Green and a useful noticeboard showing the different houses which went to make up the Ideal Homes. Some of the Oaks had been lopped and some replanting had taken place. We are lucky to have a Town Council that looks after our green spaces so well. I had trouble locating the brass plaque denoting the former site of the Lawrence Hall, as it is in the front garden of a pair of newly built houses. There are several places of interest; the walks leaflet is very informative about them. This walk ended back in the town centre near the Fountain.

On another sunny autumn day I walked the two-mile *Peartree Trail*, starting from the Town Centre. I used the underpass to get to Bridge Road and I could write a sonnet about the wild flowers and trees growing on the Bridge Road bridge (Hunters Bridge) and in the



Beneath the white bridge north of Campus West

Photograph by Roger Swaine

factory sites along the side of the road.

The housing here is more utilitarian than previously seen and there are probably six flats where there were previously a pair of semidetached houses. It is still quite wooded. I struggled to find some of the points of interest suggested in the

leaflet. A signboard in Peartree Lane would have been interesting if it had not been so dirty. I could not find a signpost for the footpath into Moatwood.

In Broadwater Road there are lots of new flats and I presume Otto Road is named after the architect, but is the building which fronts the road No. 40? There is no signage to give a clue, but the building has an Art Deco look to it. Along Broadwater Road I noticed the vacant factory sites and the plethora of wild plants growing there, and the cultivated gardens which have gone wild.

It was an interesting but curiously disappointing walk, perhaps because what was once industrial is now mainly residential; but in this Town designed for Healthy Living, there was an aura of decay and the wilderness was beginning to creep in.

The *Beehive Trail* starts near the QE2 Hospital and along Beehive Lane, I am again struck by the amount of woodland around this area. Shortly after the start of the walk is the George V Playing Field. I am a bus user so I kept to the path and didn't venture into the park: with hindsight, a mistake. I am sure there are really pleasant grassy paths which would have enhanced the walk. I stuck to the marked walk on the brochure which was on the roads within the Conservation Area, but I saw many little stretches of woodland which would yield a

better walk. Again the architecture is so interesting, the mix of executive homes with semi-detached houses and blocks of four houses together with generous gardens. All the roads were tree-lined with wide frontages and footpaths which contribute to the conservation area of this lovely part of the City. Following the main walk led me round Beehive Green, and I looked for interesting trees and the gardens with dahlias in and landmarks which were not on the map, and wondered where this public footpath went and why it had no end-destination on the signpost. Finally I came out back in Moorland Road.

If, like me, you are a newcomer to the Garden City and have never tried these trails, they are a good way of getting to know your area. If you are a hesitant walker, then try one of them to improve your fitness. If you are a history lover, there is plenty to keep you researching, and a nature lover will find lots to keep them interested. Whatever your reason for trying out these trails, I am sure you will find something to interest you. Happy meandering!

*Hilda Goddard*

## **World Affairs**

Up to thirty of us gather every Monday afternoon to solve the world's problems. Well, not 'solve' exactly; the reality is that we learn about world affairs through in-depth presentations and discussion.

Our discussions range widely. Since September we've had sessions on the P5+1/Iran nuclear agreement, women and equality, Israel and the Palestinians, the history and religion of Japan, the British Constitution, Cuban and US Relations, the circumstances surrounding the death of weapons inspector David Kelly, and Eritrea, amongst other topics.

Most of our two-hour sessions begin with a well-prepared presentation or paper by one or other of the group's members. The rest of us then dig into the presentation with questions and comments. Speakers can expect their ideas to be vigorously challenged, but it's a ground-rule that this should be done in a civil manner.

Not infrequently the topic of the day can fill the whole two hours, but we usually have press cuttings (paper or electronic) on standby to fill the gaps, if need be.

Needless to say, the group's greatest assets are its members. Since I joined the group in 2014 I've never ceased to be amazed at the diverse

backgrounds, lives and knowledge of my fellow students. We've lived and worked in many parts of the world across a wide range of interesting jobs and professions – and we bring all of this to bear on our discussion of the issues of the day.

We're a friendly bunch. We can be serious, but we laugh a lot. We've even been known to be mischievous – but in the nicest possible way.

I've long been interested in current affairs and I look forward to my Monday afternoon opportunities to learn more and get engaged in the discussions.

*Barney Leith*

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*The twelfth in our series of profiles of distinguished Welwyn Hatfield U3A members features ...*

## **Peter Lomer**

Peter was born and grew up in Par, Cornwall on the beautiful St.Austell Bay. He read Physics at Exeter University, gaining a B.Sc. after which he stayed on doing research which led to an M.Sc. He then went as a research scientist in the Ministry of Defence to the Services Electronics Research Laboratories, Baldock, working on specialised components and equipment for the Services. There he met Pat, an Irish medical student, who came to SERL as one of its first woman scientists – a novelty! They married in 1955. Peter remained at SERL for twenty-eight years, working on radar devices, nuclear-related components and lasers.

For the last ten years of his career Peter worked in London, including some five years in the Department of Scientific and Technical Intelligence (DSTI). Throughout his career Peter made frequent visits to the USA, leading to various adventures, including an



invitation to ride on horseback in the Independence parade in Albequerque, and – more spectacularly – to ride on a mule called Salem from the rim of the Grand Canyon to the River Colorado.

He retired in 1988 and soon got embroiled in the local branch of the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship. There he met Harry Stull, retired from his own career in the Inland Revenue, and together they organised Fellowship trips to gardens, houses and other interesting activities, Peter himself driving the council minibus. The numbers declined over the years as the U3A provided a much broader range of activities and was open to the whole of society.

Peter first heard about U3A when he attended a U3A Open Day at Campus West at the end of 1989. He found it interesting, and joined in January 1990, as our 325th member. He wanted to join the French Group, and despite its being full, managed to squeeze his way in. Over the years, he has belonged to the Architecture, Gardening, Opera, World Affairs and, of course, Sci-Tech groups. Peter and Pat both joined the Bridge Group and, after many enjoyable years of play, Pat set up a Beginners Group.

Peter was our Chairman, 2002-3. The growth in membership and the changes in technology were major issues at that time. The technology problem was solved by successfully applying for a lottery grant which enabled modern digital projection equipment to be purchased. The growth in membership has continued; but it was agreed at that time not to put a cap on it.

During the period of Peter's Chairmanship the Newsletter, which had been started by Rosemary Mitchell assisted by Pat Pike, received its first attempts at desk-top publishing, with an improved layout and with pictures! Peter continued to edit the newsletter until 2008, when he passed on the job to Phyl Grainge.

Peter's wife, Pat, died in 2010. She was remembered by Sue Kershaw in the newsletter as a well-known and active member of Wel/Hat U3A for over twenty years, and as a brilliant Bridge teacher.

Peter very much supports U3A, thinking it – *a great organisation, and the Welwyn-Hatfield one particularly successful* [Peter's emphasis!].

*Hazel Bell*

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## Book Reviews

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***Hatfield Answers the Call 1914-1919: Comrades in Arms at Hatfield***  
written by Brian G Lawrence, researched and compiled by Christine and Derek Martindale. Hatfield Local History Society, 2014. 72 pages, illustrated. ISBN 978-0-9928416-3-8. £7.50.

In the year commemorating the outbreak of the First World War, it was fitting that the Hatfield Local History Society published this comprehensive record of Hatfield's role in the conflict. This slim volume is a fine demonstration of how diligent work by a local history society can spread knowledge of our heritage.

The population of the Hatfield Parish in 1914 was about 5000. More than 800 men went off to war from Hatfield and the human toll of the war was devastating. The book details a number of heart-breaking cases. 172 of those who went to war were killed, and often several were lost from one family. The Stallon family of Roe Green had four sons and a son-in-law, all of whom served in France. The eldest son and probably the son-in-law survived the war, but the three other sons were all killed in action. The town's most prominent family, the Cecils, also suffered losses. Lord William Cecil, a younger brother of Lord Salisbury, was Rector of Hatfield until 1916, and had four sons. Three were killed in the war and the fourth was wounded.

On the home front, the departure of so many men had a significant effect on local businesses. There was a demand for women to fill gaps in the labour supply, in roles that were previously considered unsuitable for them. Many worked on the land, but some also worked in the production of munitions at Waters Garage, and the local dustman was, temporarily, a 'dustlady'. People coped with shortages in ingenious ways; potatoes were substituted for flour in bread, and even conkers found a role in making munitions!

The end of the war brought a great feeling of relief and outpourings of joy. Those who did not come back were not forgotten; War Memorials were erected in Hatfield and surrounding villages.

The meticulous work carried out by the authors shows throughout. Every point is well supported, and the generous illustrations give faces to the names. This reviewer can without hesitation recommend the book to everyone who wants to know how Hatfield coped with, and was changed by, the First World War.

*Jack Kampmeier*

*Garden Cities – The British example* by Gergely Nagy and Károly Szelényi; The Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust, 2013. 112 pages. ISBN 0992763606 / 978-0992763602. £15 plus post & packing.

This is a somewhat curious book, but the better for it. I found it to be a very rewarding review of the Garden City movement in Britain. I also found it timely, given the resurgence of Garden City rhetoric emerging from Government quarters. A curious book because it was originally written in 2008 by two Hungarian academics to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Wekerle, a Garden City on the outskirts of Budapest inspired by the British example. The book has been revised and translated into English.

The book starts with the visionary efforts of three early schemes to provide good quality housing for workers: Cromford, Marple and New Lanark; it moves to cover the better-known examples of Saltaire, Bournville, Port Sunlight and New Earwick, and culminates on Ebenezer Howard, the Garden City movement and a review of both Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City. Along the way, it also covers Bedford Park and Hampstead Garden Suburb.

What strikes the reader initially is perhaps not the most obvious physical aspects of the schemes (planning and architecture). Some were clearly innovative, but what is most remarkable about them is the spirit that inspired them: a humanistic desire to better the life of the poor by improving the quality of the environment in which they lived. Many were built by industrialists with a social conscience, financed and surprisingly often subsidised by them: profit was not the driving force. Even later on, forms of tenure were designed to eliminate speculation and allow the initial ideals to be sustained. The thread that runs through many of these initiatives is that they are invariably the inspiration of a visionary benefactor; often these are powerful and moneyed industrialists (Salt, Akroyd, Cadbury, Lever), but sometimes they are charismatic individuals who are able to articulate ideas whose time has come (Ebenezer Howard). They buy the land, they hire the planners and the architects and they establish the business model. More importantly, they oversee with enormous commitment the development of these settlements.

It is intriguing that many of the early pioneers were Quakers, and maybe this is reflected in an ambition to create a kind of Garden of

Eden on Earth. The emphasis on fresh air, sunlight and particularly on gardens and open space *for everyone* reveals a vision that is maybe idealised, maybe even quixotic, but certainly egalitarian: we are *all* God's creatures. Yet at the same time, these visionary benefactors, many highly successful industrialists, were also practical men who built ideas to outlive them.

On reading a compact book such as this, it is not just the well-known virtues but also the flaws of the Garden City movement that become more visible: there is a strong romantic streak that runs throughout these schemes, where architectural styles mean to project a certain kind of "image". Initially (neo) Gothic, then Arts-and Crafts and in the case of WGC (neo) Georgian, the adoption of a specific historical period betrays a belief, typical of the time, that the style "makes the man". Yet it needs to be remembered that some of these garden cities (those from the early twentieth century) were being designed at the same time that the early Modern Movement in Germany was revolutionising art and architecture, so they are sometimes escapist, picture-book creations offering an idealised vision of the past. Another problem that the Garden City movement presents to us today is the low urban densities of these schemes – how to emulate them without encroaching on the Green Belt or using good quality agricultural land remains a problem.

But these are quibbles, for the overwhelming impression of this book is that these Garden Cities represent outstanding achievements in terms of creating high-quality open spaces and dignified living conditions. The scale of the ambition in these schemes is overwhelming and often humbling. More importantly – and more poignantly –, what impresses most is the humanist spirit that inspired them. Where are now the far-sighted inspirers of such schemes, the altruistic financiers and the public-spirited tycoons that have the vision to imagine this kind of undertakings and the courage to see them through?

Perhaps this is the most unforeseen reflection that this Hungarian-authored book has provoked in me as an architect and masterplanner.

*Raúl Curiel RIBA*

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## Spring Term 2016 – Wednesday meetings

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*Doors open at 9.45; tea and coffee are served from 10.00 to 10.30 a.m.; the meeting starts at 10.30 with notices and then the talk.*

### JANUARY

*6, Ludwick Family Centre, Welwyn Garden City*

**‘Your Army Today’ – The Army Engagement Team**

S. Sgt Anthony Burrell and Major Lucy Smith will tell us of the role of the British Army, how it functions, training and its future role. Anthony has served for fourteen years and Lucy for nineteen years.

*13, Breaks Manor, Hatfield*

**Jack Wood: ‘Excuse Me – You’ve Dropped a Name!’**

During Jack’s career as a Graphic Designer, he worked with The Lords Taverners, the Music Industry and West End Theatre, meeting on the way many well-known – even famous – people. In this talk, he shares some of his experiences among the stars!

*20, WGC*

**Pauline Martindale: ‘Behind Closed Doors – The Life of a Prison Officer’**

Pauline Martindale started life as a shorthand typist. She enjoys choral singing, photography and volunteering.

*27, Hatfield*

**Linda Scoles: ‘Name that tune’**

Linda Scoles is an American who grew up in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State. Her love of music, of all kinds, is a constant source of enjoyment, and she likes to share that music and her stories with others.

### FEBRUARY

*3, WGC*

**John Neal: ‘Talking Statues’**

John was in the Metropolitan Police for many years and knows London well. He leads walking tours of London and is a Blue Badge Guide.

*10, Hatfield*

**Damien O'Dell: 'The History of Chicksands Priory'**

Damien is a historian and author. Today we will hear 1,000 years of history – from a medieval monastery to the Osborn family home to a top-secret military base. Secrets revealed and myths broken!

*17, WGC*

**Anthony Poulton-Smith: 'The Origins of Place-Names'**

Anthony Poulton-Smith is a freelance journalist and author, having written more than fifty books, many articles, crosswords, puzzles and quizzes. He has been interviewed several times on the radio and has appeared as guest speaker at many events.

*24, Hatfield*

**Tony Eaton: 'Failed to return – Amy Johnson & Leslie Howard'**

We welcome Tony back again. He has a particular interest in unravelling some of the hitherto unresolved air mysteries.

## **MARCH**

*2, WGC*

**Annual General Meeting**

Followed by the Creative Writing Group reading some of their work.

*9, Hatfield*

**Paul Whittle: 'Secret Siberia'**

Paul is a Freeman of the City of London with a background in banking. He served in the Royal Corps of Signals TA and is interested in military history and heritage transport. This illustrated talk will cover areas of Russia at its most remote.

*16, WGC*

**Meet the Groups**

Where all our groups can display information about themselves or demonstrate their skills and where members can meet Group Leaders.

**Summer term starts 13 April at Welwyn Garden City**