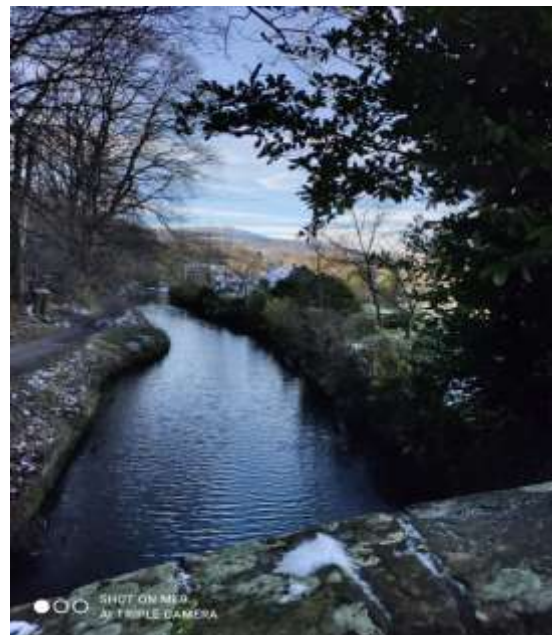


ABERGAVENNY U3A WINTER MAGAZINE

January 2024



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QUOTE from Henry Ford

“Anyone who stops learning is old whether at 20 or 80.
Anyone who keeps learning stays young.
The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young”

Note from Editor

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE

Any New Year resolutions ? Let me suggest a few.
Many of our volunteer Committee Members are well past their recommended 2/3 year tender. They need a break!
In the coming months you could shadow them and probably find you could easily take over for a while. Committee meetings are held once a month on a Tuesday morning, usually about an hour long.

As with the group leaders it would be much easier for them if they had back up, a deputy , a wing man.

In particular we need a new Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary and will be hoping they can take over at the AGM in March. Not wishing to be a scare monger but an U3A not too far away has had to fold as no one would step up to volunteer on the committee.

Our lot are a friendly bunch and will support newcomers till they find their feet. Please consider this as your resolution for 2024. Contact: abersec21@gmail.com

The Annual General Meeting will be March 22nd.

Contributions for April Newsletter Send to
marilynjbcampbell@icloud.com

Looking Back

Quote from Doris Lessing

“ The great secret that old people share is that you really haven’t changed in 70 or 80 years. Your body changes but you don’t change at all. And that, of course, causes great confusion”

Memories of Shirley Shirley

In the current u3a membership those who remember Shirley Shirley are in the minority. However, Shirley was a long-term active member of our u3a. She took over the reins of running the Social History of Abergavenny (sadly no longer one of our groups) when the previous leader left Abergavenny. Her sessions were always informative and lively with much input from the group. At the same time, Shirley also led Play Reading. This group only folded when getting hold of scripts from the library became problematic. Our AGM would often, after the buffet lunch, be followed by an enactment of one of these plays with much laughter from the membership, a memorable one being Dylan Thomas’s “The Outing”. So many images come to mind of these, too many to mention, except for the one of Nancy Nethercott being wheeled out in a wheel barrow with arms and legs flaying. If only I could remember which play that was!

Another memory of Shirley is of a session she did talking about aspects of clothing and demonstrating, with the help of a volunteer, how to wear a Roman toga. Her enthusiasm for the subject being obvious to all.

Shirley had led a rich and colourful life living and working in Natal, South Africa, for many years before returning to the UK and settling in Abergavenny. She was unable to attend u3a for the past 3 or 4 years and died recently at the age of 96.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend her memorial service so offer this as my tribute to a remarkable person.

Thank you Shirley.

Jenny Farnol

LUNCH and a CHAT

This successful group was started by our former member Val Stowell. When she left we were very grateful to have Linda Buckley take over.

Since March Linda has organised a different venue every month and members have signed up for her lunch and a chat.

March, The crown Pantygelli

April, The Grofield

May Cripple Creek

June. Amo's

July. Clytha Arms.

Aug The Sushi House

Sept. Fox hunter

Oct. Manor House Crickhowell

Nov Greyhound Vaults

All are welcome and lifts are offered for out of town , there is always a different mix of members to talk to.

A new member Megan would be happy to return to The Crown, The Clytha Arms or the Sushi House.

Lynne says her favourites were probably the Grofield, Amos and the Sushi House.

Gill says that she enjoys the relaxed atmosphere, being able to talk over food and meet people that she wouldn't normally have the opportunity to talk to. From her visits she would chose the Crown for the best food.

So why not join in one month, who knows who you will have as your fellow diners, maybe you will try a restaurant you have never visited.perhaps you could suggest somewhere to try. If you can only join them once or twice a year Linda would love to hear from you.

FISH and CHIP LUNCH

On November7th the fish and chip lunch was a great success and well attended.

Well fed the teams competed in a quiz compiled by the leaders of our various interest groups. There was a lot of laughter and sometimes confusion in this lighthearted event.



Discussion group

Rosemary introduced the subject: "Should we expect the BBC to be impartial?" at our October meeting. It generated plenty of lively discussion though we were generally pretty positive about the BBC's efforts at impartiality. Our November slot was pinched for the fish and chips lunch. In December John presented an excellent case for animals being able to think. Discussion ranged far and wide with a lot of humour.

We won't meet at the beginning of January.

In February, Marilyn will present her case for the proposition that we should scrap testing in schools because of the stress and harm it causes children. In March the group will tackle news items of the day that members bring to the table, which went down well when we tried it back in the summer.

Gardening group

In October the Gardening group visited two gardens. First up was Jo Cutting's lovely retreat in Glangrwyney where she has packed so much into a tiny space. Then we went on to Crickhowell to see Kate Faulkner's landscaped gardens. These are large and must take a great deal of time to maintain them, though we did admire the robot mower that trundled obediently over the perfectly trimmed swirls and glades of lawn, as we ambled around the beds.

We returned to the Community Orchard by Mill St for our November meeting, this time to learn more about pruning fruit trees in discussion with the experts. Everyone was able to practise their skills. There are at least monthly community work days, open to anyone who wishes to lend a hand. Richard can provide contact details.

Our December meeting was an indoor event at the stadium clubhouse. It featuring an illustrated talk on rewilding your garden by Sue and Ian Maberly, about their RHS- registered Nant y Bedd garden and their rewilding practices. The 10 acre garden includes high conifer and broadleaf forest, river, swimming pool, flower and vegetable beds

mixed with wild flowers. A visit to the RHS Award winning garden is planned for the summer.

There won't be a meeting in January. For our February meeting we will return to Linda Vista gardens for training in rose pruning. The programme for March is to be determined but April will probably be a return visit to Growing Space gardens in Mardy.

We have plenty of space in the group for new members to come along.

The last gardening group looked like a Santa look alike competition.(Marilyn)



CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The annual Christmas Lunch was held at the Monmouthshire Golf Club on December 14th. Our group filled up four tables with diners and the meal was followed by a fundraising raffle.



LOOKING AROUND

Quote from Terry Pratchett

“Inside every old person is a young person wondering what happened”

GOOD OLD ‘POWERPOINT’

By Ken Farnol

My first introduction to Microsoft PowerPoint was over 20 years ago when working as an aircraft landing-gear inspection engineer. No meeting was complete without at least one PowerPoint ‘Pie Chart’. However, a very shiny and mysterious “PC” landed on my desk one day and I became a dubious convert to the age of computers. These seemingly fiendish machines were wonderful for technical writing and communication at work - just as long as someone who understood their intricate inner workings was responsible for their health and welfare. On retirement there have been times when I have frankly wanted to consign my own computer, printer, mouse and all, to the skip. Yet, when my daughter Helen, made me a humorous (and extremely disrespectful) PowerPoint presentation entitled ‘The Story of Ken’ I was hooked. Here was a powerful way to present, learn and share Art and Design concepts in particular. Indeed, this was a worthy successor to the wonderful History of Art ‘transparency’ slide-shows which I had seen at the College of Art at Cheltenham so many years ago.



I still continue my lifetime habit of being essentially ‘self-taught’ for which PowerPoint is so eminently suitable. By ‘Copy and Paste’ you can ‘rob’ the Internet of some wonderful pictures and learn accordingly. You can, in effect. go to any Art Gallery in the World. What an educational tool! My favourite site is the Web Gallery of Art. This is where I found the above emotive paintings by a favourite Renaissance artist known as Antonella da Messina (1430-1479). So, if you are kind enough to come along to an Art and Design presentation, please do not thank me, I am just the one who presses the button for Mr PowerPoint to show his incomparable pictures. Just look at them!

Reflections on life in Liberia after a military coup

CDC's West Africa Regional Office was established in Lagos, Nigeria, where CDC had major investments in Savannah Sugar Company and other projects. When both working and living conditions in Nigeria worsened early in the 1970s, CDC looked around for a new location for the office and chose Liberia as, although not a member of the Commonwealth, it had a history of stable government and a good economic environment for CDC investments. There were however rumblings of discontent amongst the indigenous population which led to the "Rice Riots" in April 1979.

At the time Liberia was ruled by President William Tolbert, leader of the Americo- Liberians, a distinct ethnic group of African Americans who emigrated to Liberia during the 19th century with help from the American Colonization Society. Following the Declaration of Independence in 1847 the True Whig Party took political control of the country and prospered whilst the native tribes languished in poverty. Education and health were especially poor compared to other West African States.

I was recruited as Regional Agricultural Officer West Africa designate and began work in HO in September 1979. There were a number of promising agricultural projects for CDC investment in French speaking Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroun, as well as Liberia and Sierra Leone. These included rubber, oil palm, coconut, limes and forestry estates, mostly with outgrowers supplying additional crops for the processing factory. There were both buyers and sellers in the CDC office: Don Byers was Regional Controller whilst Charles Seller was Executive Assistant. Ted Pearson was RHF and Irving McLean Regional Executive.

In December 1979 I went out to Sierra Leone on a mission to appraise a rubber project and despite taking prophylactics I developed

malaria after I returned to UK. The parasite did not show up on microscope slides and I was shipped off to isolation hospital in Birmingham on Christmas Day with suspected Lassa Fever. This was all rather distressing for my newly-wed spouse, Rohan, who was entertaining a house full of people including my parents and two former Nepali colleagues/ friends from my previous job. I recovered after New Year and soon was on a B Cal flight to start my new assignment. Rohan followed a week or so later.

Monrovia



We soon swapped accommodation with Charles Seller and moved into his spacious flat. This was on the 3rd floor of a large apartment block in Sinkor, a suburb of Monrovia. Our large balcony looked over coconut palms to a wild sea beyond. The constant salty sea breeze kept mosquitos away but quickly rusted everything made of iron and so damp that we had to keep a lightbulb on in our wardrobe otherwise all our clothes and shoes went mouldy. Monrovia is a vibrant, noisy, dirty city of concrete, rusty iron sheets with many half-built houses and apartment blocks. The rainy season lasts about 7 months with rarely a peep of sunshine but the dry season weather, hot, humid and dusty is worse; not a good climate for Europeans.

Other than a few locally grown vegetables, most were in very short supply. So we paid the security staff to collect sand from the beach, wash out the salt and carry it upstairs in buckets on their heads where we placed it on plastic sheets laid over our concrete balcony. Some veg grew very well despite the salty spray and a passion fruit vine grew

down the outside wall to the balconies 2 stories below. They were delighted to have the flowers and fruits.

It was quite lonely for Rohan at first when I was away on missions elsewhere along the coast. But she got to know people quickly and we soon joined Monrovia Players & the squash club and made frequent trips to Cooper's Beach, a few miles along the coast. We were discouraged from driving ourselves but had our own driver, John, who was available all hours for work, shopping or leisure, and took good care of us.



OUR FELLOW MEMBERS

I thought it would be interesting to find out a little more about some of our members. Lindsay suggested I ask Anne Wilde for an interview and she kindly agreed.

Anne was born in Abergavenny but grew up in Blaenavon. She retained happy childhood memories of the town and always enjoyed her return visits, especially on Market days. Following graduation from University she spent her working years in London.

When she and her husband approached retirement they decided to move back to live in Abergavenny. They joined our U3A just after Covid. They were attracted by the Science and Around the World groups to widen their knowledge and interests. However Anne's first love is in literature and poetry and also enjoys the art talks.

Recently she has not been able to participate as much as she hoped being busy with other things. In May Councillor Tony Konieczny handed over to Councillor Anne Wilde to become Mayor of Abergavenny 2023/24.

In her acceptance speech she said,

“I count it as a huge honour to be elected as Mayor of Abergavenny. Its such a great town to live in with its attractive town centre, vibrant cultural scene and caring community.”

The aim of any local authority is to improve the social ,cultural, environmental and economic well being of the town.They also represent Abergavenny at County level.There are seventeen local councillors who work together despite different political persuasions for the good of the town.

The Mayor is the Chair of the council supported by three working committees. The Mayor also represents the council at public meetings or town events.

The Mayor can bring focus to and help raise money for their chosen charities. Anne is particularly interested in Abergavenny as a town of Sanctuary, supporting refugees forced to leave their homes for political or religious reasons. By helping them integrate with local language, culture and education they can become independent and part of our community. She is concerned for the locals struggling to cope with the rising cost of living and supporting our community food banks. She is also concerned with residents suffering with mental health problems in these difficult times.

As you can see she is kept rather busy. She had the pleasure of distributing Science kits to local schools to enhance their STEM work.She has opened events such as the Greener Abergavenny Fayre and the switching on of the Christmas lights.

We hope next year, after May, when she ends her tenure we may see a little more of her at our U3A.



Looking Forward

Quote from Maurice Chevalier

“ You don’t stop laughing because you grow older, you grow older because you stop laughing”

Monthly Meetings

We must thank Jan Budden for stepping up to organise Speakers for our monthly meeting. So far she has done a splendid job and is well organised for the coming year. She has a list of interesting speakers penciled in .She promises Malclm Meadows on Discovering the Dordogne, a representative from the War Graves commission to talk about their work , and a glimpse into the Dangerous Life of Renaissance Italy featuring Machiavelli (not as a guest appearance!)

A Social Walking Group .

Is your New Year Resolution to become more active and meet new people?

Last January in response to queries we tried to start our own local walking group with no success.

I am willing to try again.

On Wednesday 31st January meet in the Bus Station by the coffee hut 10-00 for a gentle stroll through the meadows and Coffee at the Trading post. we can see who turns up , chat about suitable times and days for a monthly walk. Decide on our mutual limitations and make a plan. My husband and I will happily do this on our own but it would be nice to have company. Send me an email if interested but can’t make that date and share your input. I will be happy to organise February from Llanfoist car park along tramway and back via canal Distance to be decided.

marilynjbpcampbell@icloud.com

SPECIAL EVENTS

Quote from Mae West

“ If I had known I was going to live this long I would have taken better care of myself”

FILM SHOWING

The January monthly meeting will be a special event.

On January 30th there will be a showing of the 2015 Swedish bitter sweet comedy,

“A MAN CALLED OVE” based on the 2012 novel by Fredrik Backman.

This is a recommended read from our book group.

Film with refreshments at 1-30 pm Pen y Pound.

BRING AND BUY

On Friday February 23rd there will be a fundraising sale in Pen y Pound. Details to follow. Just in time to pass on those unwanted Christmas gifts , start a spring clean, or begin downsizing !

PHOTOMARATHON

Please sign up for this fun event to be held on Wednesday February 28th in Abergavenny town centre. All you need is the means to take six photos.

Come as an individual or with a friend. We will meet in the Kings Arms for coffee and you will receive your first three titles and off you go. You can join us back there for lunch or take a break elsewhere before handing in your mornings work and getting your final three challenges. When done, return you interpretation of our subjects to us to be printed off. The photos will be displayed anonymously at our March AGM .Fellow

members will vote their favourites and a trophy for overall Abergavenny U3A photographer awarded.

It is all just a bit of fun and hopefully raise our profile in the community.

As long as you can take the photos we will organise the technology of having them printed

Please register entry ASAP
marilynjbcampbell@icloud.com
or phone 07895054605

REMINDER

The Abergavenny u3a AGM will be held on
March 22nd {details to follow}

AND FINALLY

QUOTE FROM MARK TWAIN

“Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind , it doesn't matter”

JOKE shared by Derek Pope



PHOTO found by Kate Lamb

