



In this issue:

COMMITTEE NEWS

- 1 [Letter from the Chair](#) >
- 2 [Tweeddale Study Day](#) >

FEATURES

- 2 [Did you hear that?](#) >
- 4 [Audio Describing](#) >
- 4 [A Genealogical Puzzle](#) >
- 6 [Cambodian Challenge](#) >

GROUP NEWS

- 5 [Craft](#) >
- 7 [Scottish History](#) >
- 8 [Group Updates](#) >
- 9 [Geology Trip](#) >
- 9 [Science & MIG](#) >
- 10 [Creative Writing](#) >
- 11 [A Good Read](#) >

NOTICES

- 2 [John Murray Archive](#) >
- 3 [Deaf Awareness](#) >
- 11 [Summer Visits](#) >
- 11 [Lunch Venues](#) >
- 12 [Every Little Helps](#) >
- 12 [Endnotes](#) >

Don't miss ...

- P.5 Mary Walker looks at the [challenges of hearing loss](#) >
- P.8 Frances Clark on [painting in words for the visually impaired](#) >
- P.10 May Fenoulhet traces an [ancestor through a painting](#) >
- Pat Clark on [2 years as a VSO in Cambodia](#) >

Letter from the Chair



Marjory Langdon

Welcome to the first issue of Clarion online!

It is a pleasure to write the opening contribution to the excellent online version of our magazine. We will continue to publish the print version: so many of our members, especially those not able to get to meetings on a regular basis, value this medium for keeping in touch with local U3A affairs. However, our web site is now flourishing and an increasing number of members are comfortable reading online.

2007 was the year of celebrating 25 years of U3A in the UK. We marked the occasion at our November meeting with a [celebration cake](#) > which was cut for us by Janet Clark, who was secretary in the early days of Edinburgh U3A. The cake was afterwards enjoyed by all who were present.

The theme of this issue is concerned with sensory loss which can affect so

many of us as we get older. I know from personal experience that this is something which one puts off doing anything about; in my case I have been hard of hearing since my teens and vanity deterred me from going ahead and seeing about getting a hearing aid until I retired and then realised how much I had been missing. I would commend the planned 'Deaf Awareness Meeting' (see p.3) to all members and especially to group leaders so that they may be able to give support to members of their group.

As this is our last issue before our AGM can I ask you to give consideration to the vacancies which will have to be filled on our committee. Some of these positions require special skills and amongst our 860 members there must be people with experience from their 2nd Age!

Vacancies on Committee: AGM June 2008

There are four positions to be filled at the AGM:

- Chair
- Business secretary (secretarial and computer skills if possible)
- 2 members of the committee

For the future, the committee is also discussing the co-option of someone with spreadsheet and data entry experience to help compile updated lists of membership, including e-mail addresses. Please identify yourself!

Please ask me or any committee member for details of any of these positions, or of the work of the committee.

Marjory Langdon



Tweeddale Study Day, 5 September 2007

Seventeen of our members set off from Edinburgh in beautiful sunshine to make our way by various methods to the Tweeddale Study Day at Peebles. The largest group went by bus and we all met up at the Burgh Chambers for a cup of coffee and a chat with other U3A members from as far afield as Lancashire, Cumbria, Co. Durham and Aberdeen.

After the official welcome, the first presentation was on Border development through the ages from prehistoric to Roman to the establishment of the abbeys, border warfare, and on to the agricultural and industrial phase which had been very dependent on water power.

Following this interesting introduction we then split up into our pre-chosen groups and I went off on the Architectural Walk round Peebles with our architect guide, who pointed out the original buildings in the High Street before we went off to see the mill-workers' cottages, then the managers' houses and the various examples of houses showing an international influence.

We returned to do justice to a very good buffet lunch before splitting up into our afternoon groups. This time I had chosen, with another 20 people, a presentation on 'Notable Borderers' including John Ainslie, Mary Somerville, Sir David Brewster, Sir William Fairbairn, William Chambers and Sir James Murray.

This led quite nicely to the final presentation when we all met up together for 'The Borders – The Future' which I found extremely interesting. The re-introduction of the railways will again open up the Borders for business, housing and development.

I think I can speak for all of the Edinburgh contingent when I say this was an exceptionally well organised and interesting day spent with our friendly U3A neighbours in Peebles.

Iain Langdon



Iain Langdon



Edinburgh U3A and the

John Murray Archive

The latest update from the Curator of the John Murray Archive at the National Library is that the proposed plans for starting in January have had to be held back because of the interest shown and the amount of work to be undertaken. At present they are trying to get funding to employ a manager or coordinator specifically to oversee this task and to train volunteers. I shall let all of our volunteers know as soon as I get word of the scheme starting.

Marjory Langdon

Did you hear that? Mary Walker

As members of U3A we aim consciously to grow older with purpose, intelligence, grace, and humour. When our senses and our joints begin to provide challenges, we need all of the above to accept the changes and seek remedies.

We think of our human senses as five: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Each sense requires a specific sensor: eyes need light sensors; ears, sound sensors. The nose and tongue have chemical sensors, giving senses of taste and smell. Skin has at least five different types of nerve endings to identify, for example, heat, cold, pain, itch and pressure. Skin also reveals emotion, when we blush or blanch. We also sense hunger and thirst and receive 'messages' about excretory functions.

In middle age our senses often lose their acuity to the point where we realise something must be done. Many people

accept that they need spectacles when the telephone directory becomes a blur or when they fail to recognise friends across a room. Glasses provide accurate correction of some visual changes. And it is quite acceptable – indeed almost fashionable – to wear glasses.

But does the same level of acceptance hold for the loss of the sense of hearing? Do we, individually and collectively, work hard enough to understand and accommodate hearing loss? For this article I am going to concentrate on the loss of this sense, including some of my own experience of the disappointment and frustration that it brings.

In the UK, nine million adults between the ages of 18–80 suffer from hearing loss. Some loss is almost inevitable as we get older, and hearing loss is currently the most common chronic condition in older people after arthritis and high blood pressure. There are 2 million hearing aid ►



users in UK according to the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID), a further 3 million who could benefit from them.

In my late fifties I became aware that I was not catching conversational sounds accurately at distances of 15–20 feet. I would move towards speakers, whenever possible, to overcome this. For a while, it worked. One evening, while watching University Challenge on TV, I realised something had to be done when the music question was answered without my hearing a single note!

We may have taken for granted the ability to go to the theatre or meetings, to listen to the radio and TV, to have discussions in a crowded noisy place and still hear everything perfectly well. But then there is an imperceptible increase in the number of people who mumble or don't speak properly, or have 'difficult' accents. Young people seem to speak sloppily, politicians ought to have elocution lessons, sound tracks on films are poor... Many of us are probably denying the early signs of hearing loss because there is quite a stigma attached to being deaf. Consequently we procrastinate and delay having that all-important hearing test. And in doing so we delay the process of adjustment and of learning to make the best of our loss.

One of the frustrations of becoming deaf is that even the most up-to-date digital aids, though very good, do not restore hearing to normal. But they *do* help. In my experience, daily life is significantly improved once you have accepted that you will get used to wearing a hearing aid. There are, of course, personal choices to be made about the quality of life in relation to waiting lists and the more expensive aids.

I have found it useful to join the RNID. They publish a good journal and sell technology specific to problems of hearing loss.

So what are my frustrations, even with a good aid?

Difficulty on the telephone is one. This can be reduced with phones that provide amplification. (British Telephone Communications rent and sell good sets.)

Background noise in public places cancels out the clarity of speech and hearing becomes impossible. In large rooms with high ceilings speech is not easily heard, even when only one person is talking.

'What tall people say passes not only over my head, but also over my hearing aid.'

In the theatre and cinema, when voice and music compete, the result is merely a jumbled, uncomfortable cacophony. In the theatre, good aids are available from the booking desk and the best place to maximise theatre pleasure is in the front stalls. But avoid sitting under the canopy of the upper circle. Hearing in the cinema is difficult, especially with modern American productions and sometimes with British ones, too. However subtitles are a boon and I feel fortunate to be able (at very moderate cost) to frequent the Filmhouse where a plentiful supply of foreign films is shown with sub-titles. I am a member of the film group (led by Rosemary Miller) which gives me great pleasure and interest.

TV viewing can be difficult, especially if the sound is too loud for others listening with you. Clarity of sound and speech on TV is greatly helped by using sub-titles which are available for many programmes.

In my case, being fairly short brings the frustration that what tall people say passes not only over my head, but also over my hearing aid.

The last frustration I will mention might surprise you. Deaf people rarely understand jokes because it is in the nature of telling a good joke that one's voice drops, or changes pitch, when delivering the punch line.

For our U3A interests, hearing is the sense we rely on most. It is therefore vital that we make all the individual effort we can to improve our hearing, but it is also crucial that group leaders and members are sensitive to the needs of the hard of hearing and do all they can to alleviate and accommodate this deficit. ■

Deaf Awareness Meeting

The U3A Committee, with the help and support of Edinburgh RNID, is planning a meeting for all members on **Tuesday April 29th at 2.00-4.00pm** in St Peter's.

There will be two strands to the meeting: first, how to recognise and cope with acquired hearing loss. Secondly, and of particular interest to Group Leaders, how can we run our activities so that deaf and hard of hearing people can participate as fully as possible?





Audio Describing – the art of painting pictures with words

When you next watch a film or a play, close your eyes. You can hear the actors speak and the tone of their voices gives some idea of what is happening. But who are they, where are they, who else is in the room? What is causing the long silences, the unexplained noises, or the audience reactions? You are experiencing some of the frustrations felt by those with visual disability.

For eighteen years I have been an Audio Describer, working in theatres throughout Scotland and now largely in Edinburgh. This service for blind and partially sighted people started in the US and came to Edinburgh about twenty years ago. Scotland leads the world with the amount of audio described shows that are available. In fact all shows that have a run of four or more nights are described. We work in all the theatres providing the service and also a 'touch tour' before the performance to feel the set, props and scenery which enhances the description.

Audio Describers prepare for the show by first reading the script, watching the show at least three times where we take notes and annotate the script with brief prompts before doing a rehearsal and then going live.

Our theatre-goers are given a headset by theatre staff. The describer is in a soundproof box somewhere in the theatre talking to them through a microphone. Before

the curtain goes up we give an eight minute introduction to the set, the characters and the costumes. Then as the play begins we describe the action, being careful not to speak over the dialogue. We don't interpret, and never censor, so we must have the courage to say exactly what we see. It is important that we don't talk too much – the dialogue must be left to express the mood and awkward silences must be kept.

Some shows are reasonably easy to prepare, others are challenging, for instance, 'Nicholas Nickleby', which had a six-hour run, took thirty two hours of preparation. Over the many years I have described drama, farce, musicals, Shakespeare and pantomime. The latter can be fun as the script changes constantly and the actors ad lib a lot. But my favourite drama has to be 'Black Watch' which was first performed at the 2006 Edinburgh Festival and is now playing to packed audiences in New York. I was lucky enough to go on tour with it round Scotland and never tired of watching it.

I feel I have been privileged to be so involved in this service and it has given me a great deal of pleasure and fulfilment. To hear our theatre-goer say 'I don't even hear the describer's words, I just see the picture being painted' is reward enough. ■

Frances Clark

A Genealogical Puzzle

May Fenoulhet

There are more ways than one of skinning a cat, so they say, and my introduction to genealogy was not by any wish to trace my ancestors, but through a painting. It was a portrait of a lady, head and shoulders, who was wearing a rather ridiculous hat, and the artist was Sir Joshua Reynolds. An engraving of this portrait sat on my mother-in-law's piano, and I would gaze at it reflectively because I could see a distinct resemblance in the sitter's features to my husband – or so I thought. The lady, to my eyes, was no great beauty, and her hat, which closely resembled a lampshade, hardly enhanced her, but as I later discovered, contemporary sources described her as 'tall, genteel and elegant in her person, vivacious and communicative.' She certainly was elegant, in a beautiful gown with long sleeves, draped from the elbow down with magnificent lace.

But who was she? How did she come to be painted by a famous artist – one of the most famous of his day in England and first President of the Royal Academy after its inauguration in 1768. His

clientele were wealthy or famous people of the day, so where did this sitter fit into the ancestry of an ordinary sort of family in Edinburgh?

Received wisdom from the family informed me that she was called 'Lady Fenoulhet' and that she was the wife of Sir Peter Fenoulhet (no one knew who he was either) and that the Fenoulhets were descended from Huguenots. Full stop.

Having made my way to the public library, I discovered that the portrait had been painted in 1757/60, and was so popular that no fewer than four engravings had been made, and that it had even been painted on to glass, a vogue at the time. Eventually I traced the original oil portrait to the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, USA, where it is still in the collection.

As for the lady herself, the *Town and Country Magazine* of Nov. 1770 reveals that she had started life as a poor country lass known as Anne Day – but things improved. She caught the eye of the ▶



Who was she? How did she come to be painted by a famous artist – the first President of the Royal Academy after its inauguration in 1768.



local landowner, Lord Edge of Mount Edgcumbe near Plymouth, who 'felt a strong penchant for her'. At about eighteen years of age she took up her abode at Mount Edgcumbe and his lordship always behaved generously to her, as well as to her relations. He never married, and when he died he left her a very handsome settlement.

The colourful description in the magazine continues:

'Miss Day now repaired to the Metropolis, where she constantly resided; she had presently many suitors, and among the rest Peter Fenhoulet [sic], Esq, then an Exon of the yeoman of the guard. She was advised by many of her friends to accept his hand, as it would place her upon a respectable footing, and at length, with reluctance, she yielded to their entreaties. Soon after their marriage, upon his present majesty's coming to the throne, he was knighted as eldest Exon, thereby she obtained the title of lady. But this titular distinction, though it might flatter her vanity, did not administer any gratification to some other passions which reigned predominant in her breast; and a discovery Sir Peter made brought about a separation. Her ladyship has since taken up her residence at Calais, with her two daughters, where she passes her time very agreeably and much to her satisfaction, among the French and Irish officers.'

This extract is colourful, a bit like a tabloid report, and in the same way it isn't completely accurate. First, it is incorrect that Peter was knighted after their marriage which was in July 1762, as he was honoured on the occasion of the Coronation of George III in Sept. 1761, the year before their marriage. Secondly, an earlier part of this account (not quoted) states that she had two daughters by Lord Edgcumbe – the two mentioned above – but in fact they had four children. Another account describes the children as being one boy 'Richard' and three daughters. The son, of course, being illegitimate, did not inherit his father's estate or title. Those went to Lord Edgcumbe's brother.

My in-laws were not amused by these revelations. It

was one thing to have a 'Lady' in the family who had been painted by a famous artist but quite another to find that she was 'no better than she should be' with a clutch of illegitimate children. The engraving was removed from the piano.

Information about the lady's husband was more acceptable. His knighthood gave him a coat of arms with a demi-pegasus regardant, motto 'Industria et spe' issued in the name of 'Fenoulhet of London', and he seemed entirely respectable. He had been married to another lady before he married Anne Day by whom he had a son. She died, and the son eventually grew up and married, but no record has been found of any further issue. Sir Peter had no children by Anne Day, consequently the idea of my husband having any facial resemblance to Lady Fenoulhet was entirely a figment of my imagination! She was neither a blood relative nor did she spawn any further Fenoulhets. I later discovered too that Sir Peter was not in the direct line of my husband's ancestors – he was a great-great-great-great uncle to my husband.

In the Public Records Office in London, I obtained access to Wills, which proved to be a wonderful source of information about many members of the Fenoulhet family. The first one for which I applied was that of Lady Fenoulhet. From it I learned a great deal about her life style in some detail, down to an inventory of her possessions which runs to six pages. At the end of her life she had moved to 'Montreuil-sur-Mer' as it is called in her will. She appears to have been living in the Abbaye Royale de St. Anstroberte – although hardly as a nun, I wouldn't think! She cites Madame Sainte Ursule à Brun as her good friend there. Her three daughters, all named, have all been married to Frenchmen, also named, and she leaves her daughters one shilling each. The bulk of her estate goes to grandchildren. She requests that her body be returned to the English mainland for burial under the rights of the Anglican Church. It is interesting that one of her executors is a Richard, Lord Edgcumbe, a nephew of her lover.

Here her place in the genealogy of the Fenoulhet family ends. ■

A Craft Session we won't forget!

An unexpected phone call from the BBC London towards the end of October last year led to two short live broadcasts from our Thursday 8 November Craft Group on BBC News 24. These went out during their week-long topic, 'The Future Family'. Initially I had no idea why Edinburgh U3A or the Craft Group had been chosen. It turned out, quite simply, that Nick Tarry, senior broadcast journalist BBC TV News, knew about our movement from his parents, Edinburgh is outside London, and 'craft' an interesting background.

Caroline Hawley, News 24 Special Correspondent, interviewed our Thursday crafters together with Paul, the expert on family life. When the first four were being interviewed the other members watched the live broadcast in the room next door. I don't think any of us completely realised what was happening. It wasn't until the BBC unit arrived that morning that we were told it would go out live. A third session was recorded and broadcast later. Everyone was very friendly and professional which made it an interesting experience for us all. Though not a lot of craft was done that day!

Moirra Peter, Craft Leader



Cambodian Challenge

Pat Clark

Working with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) as a 'Golden Oldie' put the final full stop on my CV, after a lifetime in education. Like many who choose to leave the profession ahead of schedule, I felt that there had to be another life where one could apply all the skills and experience acquired over the years, before settling to a life of pleasure! I also felt that there is an imbalance of opportunity across the world and this would be my chance to do something concrete, personal and tangible in the Third World – to make a difference, no matter how small, to the inequities between our wealth and the very real poverty that is the reality of day-to-day life for millions.



Having passed the assessment, survived the many vaccinations, read a great deal, packed for 2 years away, said my 'au revoir till 2006' to all who knew me, set up my hotmail account and spread my belongings in lofts throughout Louthian, I flew out to Phnom Penh, on my 56th birthday! That was to be start of the most fulfilling, strenuous, challenging, and life-changing 2 years of my life to date. VSO try to prepare you for life in a different culture, climate and totally different working environment. I had opted for Cambodia, one of the poorest countries in Asia, drawn to its history, appalling suffering under Pol Pot and richness of culture. I chose the placement of Education Advisor with a Cambodian NGO, based in Kampong Cham, a small provincial town beside the Mekong and near to Vietnam. My work colleagues were all Khmers; the language of the office was a mixture of Khmer and English, so weekly language lessons were essential to all aspects of life and work, especially for the frequent and much-needed bicycle repairs!



Our work was focused on helping the poorest children, particularly girls, stay in education by providing 'scholarship' assistance, in the form of uniforms, materials, meals and bicycles. In rural Cambodia these are essential since they often provide the only means of transport. I was also asked to work on a national scholarship project, using EU funding and to monitor implementation and impact.



I consider myself truly blessed to have known the Khmer people I worked with, since they made me feel loved and welcomed. Everyone of them had lost family in the Killing Fields and Cambodia is still a traumatised society, beneath the happy surface that greets the tourist to Angkor Wat. Since the 1970s the Khmer people have experienced a bitter civil war, American bombing, the genocide of the Khmer Rouge and ten years of Vietnamese occupation. This society had lost its intellectual and social cadre in every field, teachers, doctors, religious leaders, poets and dancers. Wearing spectacles or having soft hands could lead to an early death at the hands of the Khmer Rouge.

My colleagues would tell me of their experiences and it was particularly poignant to see faded old school photographs, with so few survivors. The after-effects are still evident – often secondary headteachers had barely completed their own primary education, when their lives had been forced back to the Khmer Rouge Year Zero. Yet my fondest recollection is that we shared much laughter and fun. For instance, a cultural exchange of Scottish country dancing for elegant Cambodian dancing – no mean feat!

Being immersed in a Buddhist culture, surrounded by a strange language, eating different foods and learning to integrate and win trust all posed their own challenges, coupled with the climate and health hiccups that can happen when you live amid poor sanitation – I am now an expert on hookworm, since they lived in me for a while, but I was lucky since I could access medical help, unlike the poor.

I still keep in touch with my former colleagues and friends, as well the VSO friends who shared these challenges – our Cambodia Club has already had a reunion in deepest Lincolnshire. My lasting memories are of smiles, laughter, gentleness, kindness and humanity set against a backdrop of unbelievable poverty that is outwith our sheltered imagination. Returning to the UK posed its own challenges, since it was very difficult to fit back into a First World bent on selfish acquisitiveness. Even the plethora of choice on the shelves of M&S was just overwhelming. Living and working in Cambodia for 2 years has changed my outlook on life and I would recommend VSO to any U3A member who would like a post-CV challenge! ■

There are more of Pat's Cambodia photographs [in the gallery on the website.](#) ➤





Recollections of a 'Lumberkid'

Joyce Holt Scottish History Group

My forestry career ended abruptly on a lovely August day in 1951, when I turned a beautiful cartwheel over the handlebars of the bicycle on which I had travelled from Dunoon to work that summer. I bent the front forks and had a lot of bruises. I was just 19.

The career began in 1945, in the interim between VE Day and VJ Day. I was disconsolate that the usual companions of my school summer holidays had found 'jobs' at the Forestry Commission Nursery at Uig, Benmore, Argyll. My mother permitted me to acquire a pair of dungarees and to join them. There was no compulsion to join, we went voluntarily. We seemed to be a children's squad, as you can see.

Every day, the Dunoon contingent caught the High Road bus to the Sandbank Terminus at Broxwood, where we waited for the Sandbank children to join us, and a lorry carried us to the Nursery. En route, in the lorry, we sang the usual songs, such as 'She'll be coming round the mountains' or 'The quartermaster's store' or 'Tipperaray', some of which were standard choice on Sunday School outings, but others which would have made our mothers blush.

We carried with us our 'pieces' for the day, in haversacks, with a bottle of fizzy lemonade. Flavours were lemon, lime, cola, or – much-prized – American Cream Soda, and the drink was known as 'scoosh'. We certainly all knew how to make it scoosh, by shaking up the stoppered bottle to a froth of bubbles, which scooshed out when the bottle was opened. We all wore dungarees and had waterproof clothing against the Benmore rains, which in that sheltered valley of the Eachaig tended to be heavy. Old shoes or wellies completed the picture – and a few were lucky enough to have boots. You can see some of the footgear in the photo. (Clothes rationing was in force long after the war ended, and much that we wore would be hand-me-downs from older siblings, cousins etc.)

I was 'signed on' on my first day in 1945 by the foreman. The real boss was the forester. The young ones were paid by the day, but weekly. If you were late, you could be 'quartered' which meant your day's pay was docked by a quarter. In those days, the Forestry Nursery was desperately short of hands, and in summer gave employment to groups of schoolchildren from Sandbank and Dunoon. The money was probably a godsend to the mothers – it certainly was to mine. Children from Sandbank tended to be even younger, some probably 11. I do remember a certain rivalry between the children from Sandbank and those from Dunoon – sometimes surfacing as warfare at breaktime. In addition there were older children, whom I remember as quite senior at Dunoon Grammar (the only secondary school in the area, which all the children there eventually attended) – I now realise they were all of 16 or 17, but I thought them very grown up.

Then there were the permanent workers, working winter



summer, the real lumberjills and lumberjacks, who had helped the war effort. In 1948, when it became compulsory at 15 to have a National Insurance card which identified you, things were tightened up, and I believe you had to be 15 to do the work. I went each summer to this job, until my forced 'retirement' in 1951.

On payday (Friday afternoons, last thing) we broke early, lined up outside the office and went in to sign for our pay packets when our names were called. I gave it all to my mother, who gave me a nominal amount in pocket money, and to save, while most went on the housekeeping (those bottles of scoosh for example!) but also my clothes for the next school year. How my mother managed to produce pieces for me every day (since rationing was with us, as late as 1954) I cannot imagine, but she and the other mothers achieved it.

The valley of Loch Eck and the Eachaig (you pronounce it 'echy' with a real Scottish 'ch' sound) lies between Loch Fyne and the Firth of Clyde, sculpted by glaciers out of the rock. The Eachaig pours out of Loch Eck and runs through the Benmore policies, between hills then heavily wooded by forestry as it runs to the Holy Loch at the edge of the Firth. The valley floor is flat, with a gravelly, sandy base, which made good nursery ground (as well as being the basis for the famous gardens at Benmore House). Few are granted the chance to spend their summers in such surroundings, in such company, and to be paid for it!

What did we do? In those early years, we were employed to weed the seedling trees – mostly the first year seedlings, and usually Sitka Spruce. Weeding second or third year seedlings, you might get Sitka rash when the needles pricked your hands and lower arms. The seedlings were laid out in slightly raised beds (you can just see examples at the feet of the children in the picture) separated by alleys (which got very muddy when it was rainy). The gaffer (usually an experienced lumberjill) would allocate us to sections of the bed we were to weed. We worked in pairs, sitting at either ►



end of a wooden bench, about 8 inches from the ground. These benches straddled the width of the beds, with their legs in the alleys. We had a 'topee' – presumably desert army surplus – in which to place the weeds. When your topee was full, you carried it to the heap at the end of the bed. It would be searched for 'accidentally weeded-out tree seedlings' and woe betide you if you had too many in your topee.

Since I subsequently became a professional chemist, with hindsight I can say that the seeds had originally been coated with a bright orange substance, which I believe was red mercuric oxide – now known to be extremely poisonous if ingested. I wonder how much of it we got on our fingers? The said fingers were of course very, very dirty at the end of a shift. At break time we proceeded to the only piped running water, an outside tap by the office, where we queued to rinse (not really wash) our hands before we ate our pieces, usually in the old green shed (still, I think, standing, at Uig on my last drive past). Since there was no running water, there were of course no wcs, only earth closets, one for the girls and one for the boys, in the woods behind the old green shed, separating the nursery from the Eachaig. This was a severe shock to most of us.

First break was about 10 am, second and longer one at about 12 noon and one later, before we went home on the lorry around 3:30 pm. Saturday was a half day. The older workers shared the green shed, where they set a wood fire and boiled their billycans. We husbanded the pieces and the scoosh to last till third break. We also repaired to the shed when it rained heavily, as it did quite often. We often sang there. I

can still remember some Aussie songs taught us by an Aussie lumberjill who had spent her war at Benmore – 'Suvla Bay' and 'The Brave Engineer'. (From her I first learned of the ANZAC preoccupation with Gallipoli. She did not believe my father had been wounded there in 1915 – for to her only Turks and Aussies had fought there.) If the rain set in for the day, we were sent home early. Of course there were wonderful sunny days as well. In the open all day, we competed to take a tan – those with the fairest skins lost out and went red and peeled. There was no such thing as suncream – but no hole in the ozone layer either. Two sisters with Mediterranean complexions and Italian forebears rubbed themselves with olive oil to help them bronze even faster.

I enjoyed the work, the sun, the company, and was sorry when my vacation stints at 'the forestry' ended. I learned without realising it, simply through the chance to talk, much about real life, about getting on with people, and about nature. It was a rich experience, one which young people nowadays probably miss out on, with their motorised transport and foreign holidays. It was also healthy, and obesity was not a problem! I smile when I wonder what the Health and Safety people and other nannying agencies would make of it today?

This piece is an extract from a personal memoir written for my son. It is an indication of the type of story which the new Scottish History group might produce concerning the wartime experiences of Scottish children–evacuees were particularly of interest for future work of the group.

JH

Groups Update

BOARD/CARD GAMES DAVID RICHARDSON
Tel. 653 2008 New group proposing to play all types of board and card games not already covered.

BRIDGE (Complete Beginners) JOHN McINROY
Tel. 01968 670155 Mon 10am–12 noon, Newington.

GALLERY VISITS
MICHAEL McBRIEN (group co-ordinator).
Tel. 445 1918 It is hoped to restart this group in 2008.

GARDENING 3 FREDA FROEHLICH
Tel. 441 1016 Proposed new group to meet Mar–Oct.

GREEK MYTHS ANN McLEOD
Tel. 440 1676 Course of 6 fortnightly meetings looking at Greek Myths in art and pottery.

HARDANGER EMBROIDERY PAT THOMAS
Tel. 667 8992 A repeat course for beginners and others.
Tuesday 10.30–12.30. Commencing 1 April for 6/7 weeks.

PHILOSOPHY (Fundamental) JIM CLARK
Tel. 337 2922 Monthly, 2nd Thursday 10.30–12 noon.

SCOTTISH ANCESTRY RESEARCH ANN PIPPET
Tel. 667 6720 Help on genealogy on individual basis.

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCE MOIRA LEITH
Tel. 664 1930 Fortnightly, Tuesday 10.30–12 noon, St Serfs Hall, Ferry Road. All levels from beginners.
New members always welcome.

SHARED LEARNING PROJECT MARJORY LANGDON
Tel. 667 2515 A project with the **National Library of Scotland** which involves transcribing to PC material in the John Murray Archive. Starting early 2008.





Assynt - a geologist's paradise

Jean Playfair & Chris Dickson Science Group

In August last year a group of U3A members set off by bus with Dr Angus Miller for a geology trip to Assynt – an area of North West Scotland of spectacular beauty – to see rocks which have formed over millions of years. We made the Lodge at Inchnadamph our base.



The first day was clear and sunny as we set off for Knochan Crag. Here the Moine Thrust is clearly visible. When two continental plates collided, rocks were squeezed and crumpled into a mountain range.

The puzzle was why old rocks were sitting on top of newer ones. There was a spot on the visitors' trail where you could span 500 million years with your hands – two hands painted on the Thrust show the break and the sequence of the rocks.

Jean and Chris puzzling...

We then climbed into a limestone valley to the Bone Caves, so-called after the discovery of bones of bears, reindeer and wolves. In this lovely glen some climbed the steep path to enter the caves; others viewed them from afar and meandered in the sunshine along the rocky paths among the heather.



From there we drove to Loch Assynt to look at the schist, passed Ardreck Castle – a McLeod stronghold until 1691 and stopped briefly in Lochinver. We continued to the beach at Altmelvich to see the best exposure of Lewisian gneiss and marvel at the magnificent pinks and greys of the rocks and the white shell sand on the cliff tops – the machair.



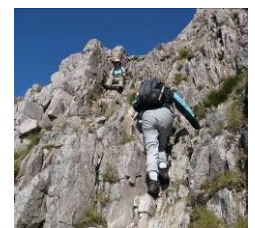
Next day the mist cleared to warmth and sunshine and the midges disappeared as we walked from the Lodge up Traligill Glen to explore the limestone landscape with its underground river system, where rivers suddenly disappear into caves to emerge lower down the valley. Three people set off to climb Conival in one of the wildest parts of the Moine Thrust; others picnicked by a lochan and then tramped over heather and peat bogs, crossing burns to find more disappearing rivers.

Mist, rain and midges dampened our enthusiasm somewhat on the third day. We paused to look at the Sole Thrust en route to Kylesku where we boarded the Statesman to sail up Glencoul with the highest waterfall in Britain, into Loch Beag. We were off-loaded backwards down a metal ladder onto a slippery seaweed covered jetty, to the consternation and amazement of a group of Italian tourists on the boat. From there we walked across to a bothy and past boarded-up Glencoul House then continued on a rough track towards the Stack of Glencoul to see the Moine Thrust. We boarded the boat again at the same jetty. This was less hazardous as the tide was in. Diverting slightly on the return sail we saw seals on the rocks and the Kylesku Bridge and arrived back at the Lodge, damp and eaten alive!



We learnt so much over the three memorable, fascinating and enjoyable days and spent the last evening all together trying to memorize, in song, the rock sequence of Assynt!

Anita Cutting's photographs from the Assynt trip are in the [photogallery on the website](#) ➤.



SCIENCE GROUP - SCIENCE GROUP - SCIENCE GROUP - SCIENCE

New Location: Staff Room, Drummond Community High School, 41 Bellevue Place

New start time: 7.15pm, 3rd Thursday of the month

Plenty of parking around school, or in staff car park – enter from Bellevue Place

Programme on website: www.edinburghu3a.org.uk

Contacts: David Richardson 01620 843416; Rita Cameron 334 2407

MOVING IMAGE GROUP-MIG-MIG-MIG-MIG-MIG-MIG-MIG-MIG-MIG-MI

Thanks to the generous grant from Awards for All, MIG now has a fine set of video making equipment for the use of members. This includes a Sony Digital Camcorder and an AppleMac Pro Laptop loaded with Final Cut Pro.

The group meets twice a month: Thursdays 10am–12 noon. One meeting covers the history of film; the other covers using the new equipment, location work and editing the results. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Stuart Emm: emmedin@btopenworld.com Tel. 447 7900



The Christmas Dance

Kay Clive

Creative Writing Group

Last night I heard 'The Scottish Soldier' on the radio and in an instant I was back at the Craigs Christmas dance. It was 1958. Snow was falling as we walked over from the nurses' home and already the surrounding hills were white. There was a sense of expectancy in the air, partly the weather, partly seeing neatly uniformed staff transformed into party people. Matron stood expansively by the door of the community hall, positively swelling out of the little black dress that so cruelly exposed every generous contour. She had dabbed rouge rather too generously on her cheek bones and looked strangely feverish. It was rumoured that she had hosted a sherry party in her rooms beforehand, senior doctors only and any of their wives brave enough to accompany them. Now they all stood clustered together, admiring the paper decorations, the freshly cut holly and the festive table laden with soft drinks, the whimsical hedgehogs pierced with sticks of pineapple and cheddar and the sensible ham sandwiches.

Some of the boyfriends had braved their way through the winter countryside and were shaking the snow from their jackets and edging closer to the paraffin heaters. But a group of us student nurses were unaccompanied and we began chatting to the boys in the band.

'Be sure to play 'The Scottish Soldier'. I know none of you are Andy Stewart, but I'm sure one of you can sing.'

Marie's tone was teasing. She had put her unruly auburn hair into a neat chignon and her brown eyes were sparkling. The first dance was a Dashing White Sergeant and almost everyone was swept up onto the dance floor. Marie and I were sandwiched with Martin from Pharmacy who came over as churlish and awkward at work but proved to be a confident and oddly animated dancer. The band were getting into their stride – quicksteps and waltzes interspersed with Gay Gordons and Strip the Willows. Martin was in the process of attaching himself rather too firmly and I was starting to feel claustrophobic. Eventually I made an excuse and made my way to the far end of the hall where a large packing case offered the perfect hiding place and yet offered a clear view of the dance floor.

I didn't notice the man with the khaki trousers taking his place by the band but the way he stood, relaxed and at ease with himself was familiar. His face was shadowed, features indistinct. At first I thought he must be the singer but it was Mike the drummer whose deep voice filled the hall:

*'And now this soldier, this Scottish soldier
Who wanders far no more and soldiers far no more
Now on a hillside, a Scottish hillside
You'll see a piper play this soldier home.'*

There was thunderous applause, hardly a dry eye in the hall.

It was the supper break and the band crossed over to the laden table where everyone was gathering. However the man with the khaki trousers was not with them. I assumed he must have gone outside. Intrigued, I left my hiding place and went out into the frosty night. The snow had stopped and it was eerily quiet. The white hills were mesmerising in the moonlight. I was searching for fresh footsteps in the snow when suddenly I felt a cold hand on the back of my shoulders and I turned round in fright. 'Just me – thought I'd lost you,' boomed Martin. 'You almost have,' I retorted, shaken. 'Anyway, I'm off to bed. I'm absolutely shattered.'

Waving him off as he went reluctantly back into the hall where the band was starting up again, I stood for a few moments listening to the sounds of merriment and looking at the cluster of long huts joined together by the covered walkway where food trolleys trundled and patients lay swaddled in layers of blankets en route for theatre or x-ray. Originally a military hospital, Craigs had been converted into a general hospital after the war. It was impossibly remote, inconvenient, unwieldy and yet we all loved it.

When I reached my room I opened my window so that I could hear the distant beat of the music and I lay looking out at the stars. I heard the final Auld Lang Syne, the cars crunching in the snow and the girls clattering and chattering their way down the long corridor of the hut. It seemed no time at all until the morning bell echoed out and we were all frantically pulling on starched caps and aprons, glad of our warm red capes as we shuffled through the snow, which had turned into slush overnight.

Marie and I made our way to the male surgical ward where we were both working. Sister Shields was standing grimly at the door and I saw at once that she had left her party persona far behind. 'Five minutes late,' she thundered as she studied the no-nonsense watch, strapped to her uniform, 'And not the first time either.' We followed her silently into the ward, smarting with the pettiness of the attack. And then we saw the empty bed at the far end of the ward, chastely covered by its white counterpane. Sister Shields seemed to follow our eyes. 'Captain Sims, I'm afraid. Quite suddenly.' The hectoring tone was now quite gone. We had all had a soft spot for Captain Sims – stoical about the ever-painful war wound that needed yet more surgical intervention, unfailingly cheerful, teasing us all about the hospital dance. I did not need to ask the time of death. ■





A good read... suggestions from our seven Book Groups

- 1** *The Siege* by Helen Dunmore This is a beautifully written story of the siege of Leningrad in WW2 described from the point of view of a civilian family, their friends and neighbours.
- The Good Doctor* by Damon Galgut A disturbing story of medical doctors working in a clinically unchallenging, poorly staffed hospital in South Africa. The work can be viewed as a parable or a lament for S A and its people.
- 2** *In Another Light* by Andrew Greig This is a son's quest to discover something of his father's life in Malaya and it made an intriguing mystery. The parallel narrative alternates between 1930s Penang and present day Orkney.
- The Tenderness of Wolves* by Stef Penney Another mystery; here a crime has been committed and a mother sets out to clear her son's name on a hazardous journey through the icy waters of 19th century Canada.
- 3** *Shalimar the Clown* by Salman Rushdi A long but beautifully written book, complex and multi-layered.
- Star of the Sea* by Joseph O'Connor We thought this was a superb book. It is fictional but based on historical fact with a surprising ending.
- 4** *Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, tr. Lucia Graves This book is a mystery, a romance, a thriller and a history lesson in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. Set in Barcelona.

Diplomatic Baggage: the Adventures of a Trailing Spouse by Brigid Keenan An undemanding and amusing light read describing the trials and tribulations of life as a diplomatic wife.

5 *The Siege* by Helen Dunmore A stylish, concisely written novel. The overall message is one of hope at the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

Digging to America by Anne Tyler Explores – from the points of view of two very different families – the impact of the arrival and addition to their homes of two Korean babies.

6 *House of Stone* by Christina Lamb An account of the catastrophic decline of Zimbabwe since the initial prosperity after Independence degenerated into conflict.

Madam Secretary by Madeleine Albright The interesting and well-written memoir of a woman who, despite the disadvantages of her early life, rose to become the US Ambassador to the United Nations and then President Clinton's Secretary of State.

7 *The Secret River* by Kate Grenville This dramatic historical novel tells the story of a Thames water-man sent with his wife to the penal colony in New South Wales in 1806.

My Cousin Rachel by Daphne du Maurier Intrigue, jealousy and suspense in nineteenth century Cornwall, with an enigmatic ending that left us all guessing. ■

LUNCH VENUES 2008

MARCH	Tues 4th, Weds 5th and Thurs 6th Mussel and Steak Bar, 110 West Bow
APRIL	Tues 1st, Weds 2nd and Thurs 3rd Circus Wine Bar/Grill, 58A North Castle Street
MAY	Tues 6th, Weds 7th and Thurs 8th Fenwicks, 15 Salisbury Place
JUNE	Tues 3rd, Weds 4th and Thurs 5th Restorante La Partenope, 96 Dalry Road
JULY	Tues 1st, Weds 2nd and Thurs 3rd Dunstane House: to be confirmed

Places may be booked at the preceding Open Meeting, at the previous lunch or by telephoning Pat Thomas: 667 8992.

SUMMER VISITS 2008

FULL DAY VISITS

May	Monday 12th Culzean Castle
June	Wednesday 4th Highlands Folk Museum
July	Tuesday 15th Kinross House and Castle
August	Thursday 14th Cragside

AFTERNOON VISITS

September Wednesday 10th Skaterdaw by Dunbar

SCIENCE VISIT

June Tuesday 17th Science Museum (Glasgow), and STV

These visits may be booked at the Open Meeting two months before the event or by telephoning Pat Thomas: 667 8992. A flyer with all details will be available. Please note departure times carefully.



Every Little Helps!

Mony a mickle maks a muckle, as we used to say in Scotland.

The back cover of your last Clarion featured a few suggestions of things to do free in and around Edinburgh. Here are some more ideas, from Rosemary Miller, one free and all inexpensive. Further contributions from members for future issues would be welcomed by the editor.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND on George IV Bridge offers an interesting programme of free events and activities. To be added to the free mailing list for the **What's On** leaflet, **Discover NLS** magazine or their **e-mail newsletter**, email: marketing@nls.uk or call in or write to Marketing Services at NLS, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EW. The magazine is first class, and will tell you about other websites to visit.

GET UP + GO Programme of activities for older people in Edinburgh is run by Edinburgh Leisure. A full brochure can be found in local libraries, health centres and local council offices, and there is a helpline at 529 7844. To pay the concessionary rates you need to first obtain an Edinburgh Leisure Card: for the over 60's this lasts for life and currently costs £13.60. With this card you can book activities in advance and just pay when you get there. Get a form at any Leisure Centre. Lots of physical activities on offer and some more social ones too.

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH would welcome your support by becoming a member/friend. The Annual Concession Rates for Senior Citizens over 65 are £20 for an individual and £30 for a couple. With the card, however, you can offset your subscription cost by obtaining free entry to the Edinburgh Glasshouses, the other botanic gardens at Dawyck, Logan and Benmore, and discounts in the shops and Terrace Café. You will receive a fine free magazine, and a What's On brochure listing events and activities. The Botanics run a variety of classes, also available with a discount for Friends.

FILMGOERS FLOCK to FILMHOUSE on FRIDAY afternoons to enjoy the Bargain Matinee price of £2 for Senior Citizens. On other days the concession price is £3 up to 5pm and £4.50 later. Filmhouse prints a full brochure of the programmes for each month so that you can plan well ahead, and the accessible and inexpensive Café Bar is a good place to meet your friends.

Programme info. number is 228 2689. The brochure can be picked up in the Foyer. ■

'It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.' Confucius

Endnotes

New Speakers – of the inanimate variety

Edinburgh U3A has recently purchased a set of speakers to go with the laptop computer and data projector. These will enable the sound track on videos and CDs played on the laptop to be easily heard by the audience. Mary Christie is responsible for ensuring that everyone borrowing the equipment is comfortable with using it. Contact her on 336 4662 or by email: marychristie@hillpark15.freeserve.co.uk

Editor's note

The Clarion editorial team of *Rosemary Miller, Mary Walker* and me (*Barbara Clarke*) are looking for one or two more people to join us. The job: thinking of interesting themes and content for future issues; encouraging members to write; scouting around to see what groups are up to, and attending two planning meetings a year. Fun and not too onerous. Email me if you'd be interested.

As ever, I am most grateful to Rosemary and Mary for their helpful ideas, support and willingness to write; and to all our contributors who have produced some extremely interesting pieces for this issue.

Clarion Online

Neil Duffy, our webmaster, is helping develop this **Online** version of *The Clarion* for you to look at and download as a PDF. The print version will continue to be mailed. However there may be members who are happy to read *The Clarion* in full colour online.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our first attempt and we welcome your comments and suggestions.

Please note that the Autumn issue of *The Clarion* will be available in early August 2008. Deadline for copy is 15 May 2008.

Contributions should be typed and sent by post or email to:

Barbara Clarke

Flat 5, 1 London Street, Edinburgh EH3 6LZ

Tel: 0131 556 9417 Email: beclarke99@gmail.com

With any contribution include your name, phone number and address, and please keep a copy.

