

## Meopham U3A Write Your Life Story 2016-17

Eight U3A Members were registered for the 'Write Your Life Story' Group, of which 5 attended the first meeting of the new U3A year on Mon 12 Sept 2016 at Meopham Library. The 'trigger' word for the fifteen-minute writing session was 'Slippers'.

Five people attended the meeting on 24th October 2016. It was a very productive meeting with discussion about different ways of writing about our lives. We talked about having a deadline, which helps to concentrate the mind, & how 'trigger' words are helpful for releasing thoughts & memories. With that in mind we each wrote for 15 minutes on 'Gardens' & how they have been part of our lives.

It was agreed that we would write for 15 minutes at home on the topic of 'Entertainment', & bring this along to the next meeting.

On 28 November 2016 four people read out their memories of 'Entertainment' when they were children, including outdoor games, parents' parties, dancing lessons & outings to the local cinemas & theatres. No meeting was held in December 2016.

On 23 January 2017 five people discussed how the 'Write Your Life Story' Group could be presented at the Monthly Members' Meeting on 11 July 2017.

January's 15-minute writing topic was 'The best holiday of my childhood'. Stories of caravan holidays, flying alone for the first time, & going to the same venue every year, produced some surprise feelings when unexpected memories popped up. These memories pointed the way to further writing on this subject.

On 27 Feb 2017, six members enthusiastically ran a prototype presentation for the AGM on 11 July 2017 - initially 250 words each, about an episode of their life, using a Power-Point framework provided by Elaine.

The trigger words selected for our 15-minute writing session on 27 March 2017 were 'School or college holiday jobs' & five of us wrote enthusiastically about jobs in shops, cinemas, on the beauty counter in a department store & working as a Christmas-extra on the post.

Each person had brought additional contributions for discussion including: baby gloves stored for over two generations; how new family members had been discovered through a link with the Canvey Island floods; extra pages written at home; update of a Power-Point page; a jigsaw which jogged memories about life in the 1950's.

We agreed to do another trigger word for homework: 'Smells of childhood'.

On 24 April 2017, following the theme of childhood toys, two members had ferreted in lofts to bring us

their particular treasures including farmyard animal models & three string puppets, at least one still in its original box.

It is interesting the way the work we have done in Group sessions has expanded into other areas, eg one member had given an impromptu presentation to a local ARA after working on it in one of our Group sessions.

Seven of us worked on new trigger words 'Books from childhood loved or disliked' then discussed this topic alongside homework done on 'Smells of childhood'. One person brought a beautiful pair of leather gloves which had evoked memories of her father's business.

In preparation for our meeting on 22 May 2017 we agreed the topic of 'A religious festival' eg Ramadan or Easter. Five of us discussed the experiences we had brought along, & then wrote on this session's trigger word 'Pets'.

A marathon 3hr session on 26 June 2017 was very productive. Six members ran through a 10-minute Power-Point presentation for the AGM on 11 July 2017.

We also prepared our page for the Meopham U3A 2016/2017 Review which, together with a photograph of the Group at work, was sent to the Group Co-ordinator.



We then wrote on the trigger words: 'Phrases & sayings that I remember my Mum & Dad using', followed as usual by reading aloud & sharing experiences.

The final meeting of this year for this Group was on Monday 24 July 2017. The trigger word for the writing session was 'Cousins' a surprisingly emotive subject as five of us remembered childhood associations with cousins, and/or being in touch with them in more recent years.