

# Borderlines

Winter 2017

The Magazine of Llandrindod and District U3A





## Introduction from the Editor.

Hello and welcome to the Winter edition of Borderlines. In the past I have dated the issues for the month in which they were produced, but this has led to some confusion, with members thinking they have missed a month. Borderlines is produced quarterly so I hope the name change reflects this more accurately. I have also had to reduce the font to 12pt. I am very sorry about this, as a survey showed that many people preferred 14, but it was either that or slashing the articles drastically.

My thanks to the contributors - you will notice some new names, which is good. Berwyn's offering has led me to reflect on my own linguistic pet hates. Like him, I find a split infinitive intensely irritating. The other things that worry me are the (mis)use of "hopefully", and the substitution of "of" for "have" as in "I would of sent you a Christmas card". I have a suspicion we may have to devote an entire edition to this subject. I realise, moreover, that Berwyn and I have set ourselves up and are going to be inundated with comments pointing out our own linguistic lapses!

Thanks to Kathie, who has collected the copies from the printer and distributed them as I can't be at the December meeting.

A Very Merry Christmas to everyone, and a Happy New Year.

Margaret

## Welcome

The following new members have joined (or, in some cases, rejoined) Llandrindod U3A.

September: Christopher Carpenter; Brandy Clark; Stella Clifford-Jones; Gabrielle Duncan-Lade; Martin Jones; Karen Le Roux; Heather and Trevor Lewis and Bob Shorter

October : Michael Pace.

November: Diana and Eros Iasillo; Gail and John Tighe; Gillian Wall and Eva Watts.

We hope you enjoy your time with us.

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**Cover photo by Tony Hodges:** Eirlys and Adele walking in Bryan's Ground

Clive Barrett focuses on

## The Botany group.

The Botany Group is a newly formed interest group. The leader is Lucy Housden B.Sc., and her aim is to teach members to identify wild flowers in the field. The group studies specimen plants with the aid of a botanical hand lens, looking closely at the plants constituent parts such as the leaves and petals. The “hands on” members also cover plant function, herbal medicine, the folklore of native plants, plant evolution, and the history of plant collecting. In the study sessions Lucy has also tried to teach the students the fundamentals of identifying plants including the complex vocabulary used by botanists, the family groupings of different plants, and the importance of habitat.

Interestingly I recently attended the last class for 2017, when instead of the usual format of looking at live wild flower specimens, the class of normally ten (and myself) were treated to a slide show lecture of wildflowers in Britain and Europe. The mature students seemed very enthusiastic about their studies as they questioned Lucy about the plants, and she explained about the different plants featured in her slides which included buttercups, daisies, poppies, rock roses, lilies, orchids, violets, violas, wild pinks, sweet williams, gladiolas, champions, lords and ladies, and snapdragon. Whilst some of the plants in Europe mentioned were flax, wood cover wheat, and pinks in France. Lucy also explained how some plants attract pollen making insects e.g. bees. She also spoke about the different varieties of orchids such as bee, gray winged woodcock, monkey and lady. The mechanism of evolution is exemplified when the brown and yellow orchid get together to produce a hybrid, other examples being the lizard, fly, and mirror orchids. An excellent example of observing beauty is the Scottish wild rose. To sum up my impressions, I thought this class as well as being enjoyable was thoroughly instructive and educational.



## Mind Your Language

I remember my O/Level English Language paper very well. In one section I was presented with a prose passage which I had to analyse in minute grammatical detail. Fortunately I liked grammar, its logic and quirks, so I had no trouble spotting possessive pronouns, gerunds, adverbial phrases, adjectival clauses or subordinating conjunctions. I had full mastery of the pantheon of grammatical labels. Not surprising then that I became a linguist and, latterly, a language pedant.

I'm one of those people who get upset if someone splits an infinitive, confuses "less" and "fewer", says: "the team *are* playing well" or "for my friend and *I*". Then there's different *to* instead of *from*, fed up *of* instead of *with*; and there's a growing fashion for using verbs as nouns and vice versa. I really don't want to receive an "*invite*", and I'm certainly not going to "*action*" anything as long as I live. And then there's ending a sentence with a preposition.....\*

I know there's no point in fuming about these departures from the straight and narrow. They don't cause misunderstanding, and anyway they've already become firmly entrenched in everyday communication. Language is constantly evolving, whether I like it or not, so I'm going to hang up my Pedants' Club cap and take life as it comes. But before I do, here's one last fling - 3 challenges for you:

1. Put this sentence into correct English: "What are they ploughing the field we play football in up for?"
2. Can you spot an adjectival phrase in this article?
3. What grammatical label would you give to "and"?

**Berwyn Woolnough**

## New Members' Meeting

Following a successful meeting of new members in the early Spring of this year, the Committee decided that this should be a regular occurrence. Invitations were issued to all those who had joined since February to attend an informal gathering at the Herb Garden cafe on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September. The purpose was to welcome and offer them an opportunity to meet some of the Committee. Thank you to the few recently joined members who attended; there was a useful exchange of ideas and suggestions, and we enjoyed a bit of a chinwag over a cup of coffee in the newly refurbished cafe, with thanks to Sally and the crew at the Herb Garden.



Thanks to Nick Talbott, a new welcome brochure has been produced, giving general information about the U3A as an organisation along with details specific to our branch. If you have joined recently and haven't been given one of these, please ask at the desk.

**Text Eleanor Cuddy (Membership Secretary). Photo Penny Everett.**

# Kingfishers, The Essex Serpent and the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain: Three good reasons to join the U3A.

Thanks to joining the U3A I had a wonderful time last night listening to the amazing Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain. They had nothing to do with the U3A of course, but I wouldn't have heard about the concert if I hadn't been chatting to others at the U3A new members' meeting. Since then I've been asked to write a few words about my experience of joining the U3A so to put this in context I'll tell you a bit about myself.

My husband, Martin, and I moved to Llandrindod Wells in April, from the Isle of Mull. We took early retirement and moved to The Isle of Mull, in the Inner Hebrides, to shake ourselves up and kick start a new life in retirement. It was one of the best decisions we ever made as we developed new interests and honed old skills, making lots of good friends in the process. However, the draw of family persuaded us south so we found ourselves in mid-Wales starting on another adventure. We decided to join the local U3A having been members on Mull where I really regretted not having joined sooner and done more.

On Mull we greatly expanded our knowledge of birds and wildlife, which combines well with our love of photography. We photograph everything; wildlife from fungi to eagles, as well as landscapes, seascapes, and night photography. We like to be inspired by others and to share knowledge and experiences so the U3A Photography Group was an obvious starting point. It was with some trepidation that I arranged for us to attend our first meeting. Fortunately, the Photography Group is relatively small and we found it to be a friendly and informal group. I think it's potentially difficult integrating into an established group like this as you don't know where everyone else sits in terms of their experience and expectations but Martin offered to lead a session on composition in photography for the next group session and this was gratefully accepted and well received.

During our first meeting one of the members mentioned his love of photographing birds but also fungi so I introduced myself during the tea break and by the end of the meeting we had agreed a fieldtrip to visit one of his favourite spots to watch wildlife. This was the first time that Martin and I had got further than the Lake and so we were delighted to find that there are such fantastic spots to watch kingfishers, otters and dippers so close to home.

Also as a result of going to the new members' meeting, I joined The Readers, one of the two book groups. They were reading *The Essex Serpent* and when I visited the Amazon Book Store on my Kindle it came up as the first book 'recommended for you', which I took to be a good sign. I loved the book which I doubt I would have chosen myself. It's good to get out and meet people that you probably wouldn't meet otherwise. I'm sure book groups vary but in my experience it isn't an academic endeavour but a social gathering prompted by the shared experience of the book which then leads to conversations around themes stimulated by the book. The Readers is just such a group and I look forward to future meetings.

I've not yet been able to join all of the groups that I wanted to as life gets in the way, but I look forward with far less trepidation to expanding my horizons in the New Year.

**Stella Clifford-Jones**

## U3A Geology Field Excursion: Silurian Rocks of the Area South of Builth Wells

On Monday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> a small party from Llandrindod Wells U3A travelled to meet, Dr Robert Owen, Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Natural Sciences, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, with his two companions, Nigel and Brian from the South Wales U3A Geology Group, at Cwm Graig Ddu, near Garth.

Apparently, trips to places north of Brecon are not particularly favoured by the members of the South Wales Geology group, so they were particularly pleased to see us!

Dr Owens explained to us how the rocks – siltstones and muddy siltstones - were first described by Shaw in the 1930s. We were standing roughly on the boundary between a shallow sea to the east and the deeper Welsh basin to the west. The Church Stretton fault which runs down as far as Llandovery, was active during the Silurian period and ran through this area. We examined the older rocks at Cwm Graig Ddu first, some 430 million years old, then walked up hill with the rocks becoming progressively younger and saw several different areas of slumping and curving, which had taken place when the rock was in a semi-consolidated state. The outcrops' ages could be differentiated by the types of fossils found within them. We reached the quarry and were told that, rarely, fossils of land plants (*Cooksonia*) had been found at this location, perhaps washed into the sea during storms. They are tiny, looking just like a short pencil mark on the rock. Humph turned over only three stones before finding one!



We then went to Llangammach Quarry, below Cwm Craig Ddu and examined the oldest rocks we were to see that day. Here the sea had been deep and we found fossils of graptolites and cephalopods.

The next stop was the bridge at Llandewi'r Cwm. Very few fossils were found at this site, despite sterling efforts by group, but there were some lovely examples of slumping.

We had our packed lunches on the picnic tables by the Lion Gallery at what used to be the Erwood Craft Centre. The weather had improved and we enjoyed sitting at a table chatting, while some members also took the opportunity to have a quick look at the beautiful items in the gallery.

Our last stop was at Trericket Mill. We walked on to Llanstephan bridge and learnt about the ferry crossings in the area and the work of the geologist, Murchison. It was Murchison who in 1831 recognised the transition between the Old Red Sandstone and older rocks subsequently included in the Silurian system.

We could not find Llanstephan quarry, despite Karen accosting a farmer on a quad bike, but we did have a pleasant walk up to Llanstephan House and found some good fossil examples including seashells in rock outcrops, which were of the same rock as the quarry.

Every one expressed pleasure at what had been a very interesting day. Dr Owens is obviously an expert in this field and he explained the rocks and processes clearly, answering all our questions. Brian and Nigel were very helpful sharing their knowledge and their hand lenses with us. We appreciated seeing the countryside from a different perspective, collecting fossils and the beautiful scenery as we drove between sites, along roads that most of us did not know. We all hope they will arrange more trips in our area.

**Text Janet Edmonds, Photo Humph Morgan.**

# The Rosemary Maling Lecture Day

Brecon 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017

A few members of Llandrindod U3A attended the Rosemary Maling Lecture Day in Brecon.

The attendance was down on previous years although over 20 U3As were represented. The organisers thought this was due to the scientific nature of the day.

The first lecture was given by Prof. Alastair Sloan of Cardiff University on Stem Cell Research. It was excellent, both informative and amusing! Some of the exciting aspects of this research are the use of stem cells in Parkinson's Disease and spinal cord injuries. More mundane perhaps, but very important to many people, is growing cartilage, thereby avoiding joint replacements.

The afternoon lecture was given by Prof. Lyn Evans, the project leader of the Large Hadron Collider, 'LHC', built by CERN, The European Organisation for Nuclear Research, near Geneva in Switzerland. He works with people from 25 different countries from across the world. The LHC is a particle accelerator; it is a 27km long, ring shaped tube set 100 metres below ground. It is made of super-conducting magnets that guide the particles around the ring. The particles are fired in opposite directions, to create a collision. The scientists and engineers are studying what happens at the time of collision. He said "Anyone who says they understand Particle Physics is being 'economical with the truth'. No-one, not even he, fully understands Particle Physics".

This lecture was equally as good, even if he lost me on times!

As always, a very good day.

Karyn Evans

## Wanted: Interest Group Coordinator.

After years of being the Interest Group Coordinator, leader of two interest groups and host to another, Martha has decided it is time to cut down a little and is resigning as Interest Group Coordinator. If anyone is interested in taking on this role, would they please contact a member of the committee? Our thanks and best wishes for the future to Martha.

## Christmas Carol Risk Assessment

Taken from the Health and Safety for Beginners website

"God rest ye merry gentlemen Let nothing you dismay"

The word merry could be taken to imply the consumption of excessive Alcohol and therefore this could be seen as an endorsement of binge drinking. The second line however demonstrates the overconfidence induced by excess alcohol consumption. The carol is therefore potentially educative if linked to appropriate educational material. It should not however be used in other settings.

"Good King Wenceslas looked out etc"

This is a seriously irresponsible carol encouraging senior managers to leave their posts during a major adverse weather incident in order to embark on a dangerous quest to rescue a single individual, putting a member of their staff (the page) at risk in the same ill-founded endeavour. Had Wenceslas attended properly to his duties he could have arranged for the clearance of snow from the forest roads allowing social security officials to reach the poor man in the normal way. This carol must not be used except as a negative example in a training exercise.

# Garden Visiting Group trip at the end of July to Beili Neuadd, St Harmon, and Bryan's Ground, Stapleton near Presteigne.

Text and pictures by Tony Hodges.

At the end of July, Margaret Eastal organized a trip to two interesting gardens with a lunch in The Elan Hotel, Rhayader. Despite the sunshine being mainly of the liquid variety (drizzle) we had very interesting visits to both gardens.

Beili Neuadd was a revelation. St Harmon has a reputation for being extremely cold, so I wondered what sort of garden we would find. In the event, the garden and grounds are relatively sheltered, and the owners are developing the garden they took over about seven years ago. The owner, Alison Parker, was kind enough to give us a conducted tour, starting with the more formal areas and then the wilder newer sections, before we had a chance to wander around on our own.

Following a good lunch at the Elan Hotel in Rhayader, the group went to Bryan's Ground at Stapleton near Presteigne. There we met other members who had not been on the morning visit. We were given a quick introduction to the garden and then we separated to find our way round the gardens which are split into formal areas (garden rooms) and less formal areas in the arboretum.



The liquid sunshine was more prominent than in the morning, but did not prevent us from seeing most of the gardens before adjourning for our cream tea before home.

Given the opportunity both gardens are worth another visit, possibly at another time of year in the case of Bryan's Ground. I should also point out that the gardens open under the National Gardens Scheme which operates to raise money for medical charities particularly the nursing charities such as Macmillan.

Above: Fay and Didi relaxing after the tour of Beili Neuadd.

Right: The metal sculpture of a kite in the meadow.

