

## Group Co-ordinators Report 2010/2011

Hello Everyone, Is it really AGM time again! The year has simply flown by, but you know what they say, "If the time flies then you must be enjoying yourself."

All in all I can report a 'solid' year with some positive outcomes in various areas. One major development has been the acquisition of the Guildhall Computer suite which, after much deliberation finally got underway in January 2011. This has given us a lot more scope with regards to Computer related activities /studies and I am confident that it will grow and continue to flourish during the coming year.

Also new during this year is our Chess group run by Mike Griffin, an additional Arts group lead by Vivienne Cowie and a Reading for Pleasure group headed up by Lesley Hall. These together with Chris Washington's Stargazing group, for those of us who relish the delights of a clear night sky, have contributed towards an ever increasing variety of activities on offer.

Earlier during the year Janita Plant handed over her Digital Photography class to Ruth Mellor and more recently Helen Whittingham handed over her Craft and Indoor Games group to Brenda Oxley and Margaret Joyce. After 10 years in the saddle Colin Hopkins has "retired" from leadership of the Cycling group and so we are looking for someone to take over this group which runs from May to October each year.

On February 16th the Group Leader's and Executive Meeting was very well attended and a series of constructive and helpful discussions took place on a number of issues. This was followed by a superb Buffet Lunch prepared by members of Dawn Maley's sugar craft group leaving everyone well satisfied.

Once again I would like to thank everyone past and present for their dedicated hard work and support throughout the year and look forward to another successful term ahead. *Richard Moore*

### **IT Co-ordinator's Report - Phil Boyer**

Many of the executive committee were involved in the negotiations with the Cheadle IT Group who owned the equipment and the Guildhall and in particular Richard Moore, who liased with the Guildhall Committee. It is a very nicely appointed suite of 8 desktop PCs in two separate units together with a broadband internet connection. The upstairs room is rented from the Guildhall for fifty weeks of the year. Most of the technical and practical alterations have been carried out by Walter Jaggli, whose experience with computer systems has been invaluable, and George Legg, our Webmaster. To these gentlemen, on behalf of the committee, I would like to express our gratitude for their tireless work and enthusiasm. There are now seven IT based activity groups, previously based at Moorlands College, using the suite, the Family History and French Beginners groups are making use of the broadband internet connection.

### **Cheadle U3A & Sudbury Hall Shared Learning Project**

Cheadle U3A & Sudbury Hall are working on a Shared Learning Project which is now in it's second year. We usually meet every other month at Sudbury Hall. Six members of the U3A, including two from Leek are working on this project. We have been researching into the Vernon Family who lived at Sudbury Hall for 300

years. The family over the years has become very diverse. The records of the family are located in various records office around the country. There are also quite a number of records kept at Sudbury, which need to be

reviewed. We have been researching the wills of some of the family. The servants who worked at the hall., The craftsmen who helped to build the hall particularly local ones. A book as recently been published by a former curator of Sudbury Hall which is providing a wealth of information. We are examining a copy of George Vernon's daybook during the building of Sudbury Hall. We are going to look at the person who was George Vernon who built the house in 1660. We are going to examine an inventory of the hall from 1851 & try & identify the rooms then with the current rooms. We now have a copy of the memorial inscriptions in the cemetery of Sudbury church, which needs to be checked for servants of the hall. A volunteer is interviewing local people for their memories of the hall. If you would be interested in joining this project please contact Vernon Elkin on [Vernon@vernonelkin.plus.com](mailto:Vernon@vernonelkin.plus.com)

### **Coffee Mornings Dawn Maley**

When I started the coffee mornings in June 2008, I never realised it would be the success it is. This is due to the numbers of helpers who turn up each month with a cheery grin to do all the work. Without them it would never happen. I must give them all a big thank you. We all enjoy being there and meeting our fellow members as well as welcoming prospective members who drop in to see what we are all about. All the stalls we have at these mornings only sell for charity.

## Annual Reports from Group Leaders

### **Art Club** Group Leader - *Viv Cowie*

Often housework and sundry jobs come before the pleasure of putting paint on paper and many aspiring artists lack the motivation to set aside dedicated painting time. Hence the Club was born in November 2010. We met as a group of like-minded artists who quickly settled on the name 'Cheadle U3A Art Club' as being most appropriate for a self help group which shares ideas and encourages one another. We meet on Friday mornings at the Guild Hall with sessions divided between the Main Hall and Oakley Room and are making ourselves at home with lots of space and lovely big tables to work on. Three trips out are planned for this year.

### **Badminton** Group Leader - *Margaret Prince.*

We've had a good attendance this last year, with 23 on the register. There has been an average of 16 attending regularly. Some weeks we have had a few too many with some having to sit out and wait longer for their next game. So our group is full at the moment. We had a very enjoyable New Year lunch in February, at the Queens, Freehay with 16 members attending.

### **Ballroom Dancing** Group Leaders - Liz, Sue and Dave

sessions have had another successful year. Sue Dave and I have introduced several new dances. 3 Sequence Dances and progressed to more advanced steps in the Ballroom and Latin dances. We have also enjoyed visitors from the Stone u3a dance members. We still have a shortage of male dancers, hence several of our ladies unable to continue, so please contact me if you would like to come along and see what enjoyment we have during the afternoon session. In April we changed the sessions to run from 3 to 5 pm on a Monday afternoon. Next September we may change to an evening class but this will be announced well before we start again in September.

### **Beginners Badminton** Group Leaders - *Pat Oakley and June Jackson*

We now have 9 members. The original 6 are progressing and our 3 new members are fitting in well. There is a good 'esprit de corps' and they are all very keen. We even have one player who now plays left-handed after she injured her right arm having been told not to play and she has now reached a good Standard. We held our Xmas lunch at the Queens at Freehay, a most enjoyable occasion.

### **Bird Watching** Group Leader - *Sue Fraser*

We had 12 field trips in 2010 and one indoor meeting. 37 members and 10 visitors participated in one or more events. We saw 76 species of birds in total. Places we visited were: Park Hall Country Park, S-O-T; Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve, Lancs; East Wall Farm, Oakamoor; Coombes Valley RSPB Reserve; Carsington Water, Derbyshire; Rutland Water; Blithfield Reservoir; Martin Mere Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

Reserve, Lancs; Gigrin Farm, Rhayader, Wales; Belvide Reservoir, W.Midlands. We rounded off the year with a Christmas lunch at Carsington Water. The indoor meeting was a talk by Martin Godfrey, Staffordshire Organiser for the British Trust for Ornithology.

So far this year we have seen 42 species of birds. We have had one indoor meeting: a talk by David Tideswell, well known ornithologist and broadcaster, which we shared with the Gardening Group, and three field trips. 18 members have participated in one or more events. Places visited this year are: Doxey Marshes, Stafford; Pennington Flash, Lancs; Conwy RSPB Reserve, Wales.

Field trips for the rest of this year will be to: East Wall Farm, Oakamoor; Paxton Pits, Cambridgeshire; Blacktoft Sands RSPB Reserve, Humberside; Dovedale or Lathkilldale, Derbyshire; Brandon Marsh, nr. Coventry; the Inner Dee Estuary; Ladywalk Reserve, Warwicks; and Aqualate Mere, Shropshire.

### **Bowls - Indoor (9.00 - 11.00)** Group Leader - *Michael Prince.*

There are 27 members in the group plus 2 members from Stone U3A. 24 is the maximum amount that we can play at any one time, we average 20, Sept to April. During the summer the numbers are reduced to an average 14. Anyone wishing to play will be put on a waiting list. The weather in 2010 had an adverse affect on indoor bowls (getting to the sports centre was the problem). The group is well set up for equipment for the next 2 to 3 years. A New Year dinner was held at JCB Lakeside club in January, this was a new location for us. 32 people had dinner which was enjoyed by all. As group leader I have had to step back from the mat

since January, owing to illness. I would like to thank the members and especially Andrew, for keeping the show on the road.

**Bowls - Indoor (11.00 - 1.00) Group Leader - Dawn Maley**

We meet at Cheadle Leisure Centre the Bowls Mats are out when we get there as our first team has used them earlier. At the moment attendance is not as good as usual due to different problems some of our members have. We are a friendly group who play more for pleasure than competition. Some of the members from both groups went to Nottingham, a great day was had by all. We also had a tasty Christmas dinner together, which was arranged by Elizabeth. We thank her for doing this each year.

**Bowls - Outdoor (last Thursday in the month April - September.) Group Leader - Michael Prince.**

Outdoor bowls runs with an arrangement with Checkley Bowls Club. To play you need to be an associate member of the club. The fee in 2011 will be £7.50 and £1 per session. In 2010 we increased our numbers to 9. The arrangement with Checkley has been very successful for both U3A and Checkley, not just for the bowling, but also for outings and holidays. Plenty of room if anyone wishing to give outdoor bowls a try (bowls are provided).

**Cheadle U3A Art Groups Group Leader - Ken Bradshaw**

The initial three groups had register numbers of 14, and an average attendance of 11 members, meeting at the Cheadle Cricket Club, on Wednesday am, and Thursdays am & pm. During summer of 2010 from July to September we met each Thursday at various venues in Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire, painting '*En plein aire sur le moly.*' These were great social gatherings of like-minded people. To reduce a waiting list a 4th group was started in September on Wednesday afternoons. Members of the group designed and produced heraldic decorations for Croxden Church Festival, and were used at Christmas and will be used again in summer 2011 for a pageant. We also displayed work at the AGM and at Blythe Bridge Library for the 2011 Spring Exhibition; followed by taking part in further exhibitions during the Cheadle Arts Festival March 12th

– 20th 2011, both in the 'High Street Gallery', and the Showcase day on Saturday March 19th 2011.

**Calligraphy Group Leader - Barry Bevington**

All members are enjoying their sessions. This class is continuing with an average attendance of 10 budding monks! We are at about the limit of numbers, to be comfortable in our room at G14 in the Sixth Form College. Have enrolled 2 new members, who are getting into the swing of things!

**Card Craft Group Leader - Stella Heritage**

Another successful year in the card- making department. We have tried several new ideas and produced many varied and interesting styles of cards. We have continued to make cards in our spare time and sell these at the Coffee Mornings to raise funds for the Douglas MacMillan Home. I went to an open day to see the 3 new Community Lodges which provide a home-like situation for families to stay with their loved ones separate from the wards. Up to press we have sent them £1,540. We do appreciate the support of everyone who pass on their old cards and trimmings for recycling and of course those who purchase them.

**Chess Group Leader - Mike Griffin**

This small group of between 4-6 members has been meeting regularly through the winter. We would like to expand and will be recruiting new members during the summer ready for the start of the autumn sessions. Look out for our adverts at coffee mornings and in the E-newsletters for details.

**Cinema Group Leader - Andrew Bull**

After a somewhat disappointing 2009-2010 season, we have seen improved attendances since September 2010 as the films available have generally been more to the taste of members. We had almost 100 viewing "Made in Dagenham" and in February we had just over this number viewing either "Black Swan" or "Never Let Me Go". However in January, we had the most successful film ever - the multi-award winner, "The King's Speech" when over 350 attended two showings of the film although, unfortunately, some members were disappointed at the first showing as it was a sell-out.

**Computing for Absolute Beginners/Pot Poree Group Leader - Peter Lamb**

This year has seen an increase in the number of people wanting to know about computers. So much so there are now 3 classes running on Tuesdays in the computer suite at the Guild Hall. Our move into the computer suite has been welcomed by all. The times have been brought forward into mornings and afternoons so that our members are not leaving in the dark as was the case when we met at the 6th Form College. Parking of

cars is also a big improvement on what we had. Going back to the classes, we now have 1 beginners class that will run for about 6/7 weeks this comprises of 7 members. Then we have 2 more classes (pot pouree). These have advanced from the beginners and are now starting to enjoy themselves after going through the rigors of file managing etc. Numbers in these classes are 7 & 9 respectively. At this moment in time all classes are full and there is a waiting list of 7 wanting to start. I am negotiating with a member with a view to him starting a new beginners class in the near future. Finally can I say a big thanks to all members & the committee for the work that went into getting the suite up and running. Also to my lady helpers Pauline Ord & Rosemary Henderson without whose help I couldn't manage.

#### **Computer Photography Group Leader - *Barry Bevington***

Response has been most favourable from members to the move from G14 to the new I.T suite in the Guildhall. Now each member can sit at their own PC monitor, (limit of 10 members at any session). There are vacancies available in both the Beginners Classes Friday's at 11.15 - 1pm and 1.15 - 3pm. These classes are catered to your own specific requirements, be it, card making, scrap-booking or restoring old family photographs etc. Tell me your requirements and I will do my best to accommodate you.

#### **Country Dancing Group Leader - *Ced and Jean Wilkinson***

We had to cancel the last 3 sessions just before Christmas because the wintry conditions made Dilhorne Village Hall inaccessible. However, since early January we have met 13 times. We have 50 active members and the average weekly attendance is 36. As a group, we enjoyed the whole of the Performance Evening in March, doing two dances ourselves and one for everyone to join in, before being able to relax and enjoy the rest of the evening. Our group was shocked and saddened to learn of the unexpected death of Ada Allen ('little Ada') who had been a regular and enthusiastic member until just before Christmas.

#### **Creative Photography Group Leader - *Ruth Mellor***

Since taking over the computer photography group, the attendance is still good. We have had a few not coming every week as they have had family illness or not been well themselves or they could not get out due to the bad weather, but on the whole it is good. Everyone going seem to be enjoying the group and we all get along very well. We all help one another, if someone gets stuck with what we are doing. We have done quite a few new things and have learned a lot. For example, creating a photo out of three different landscapes, also making stationary cars look as if they are travelling at sixty miles an hour and much more. Looking forward to the next term.

#### **Crafts & Indoor Games Group Leader - *Brenda Oxley and Margaret Joyce***

Helen Whittingham wrote this report for us as we have only recently taken over as Joint Group Leaders. Brenda and I are settling in and working together well. Next year we will be able to do the report!

*(Margaret)*

"We have had another enjoyable year meeting at the Cricket Club on Tuesday afternoons. Once again we have concentrated our efforts on behalf of the Special Care Baby unit at the University Hospital of North Staffs. A member's daughter kindly delivered eighteen blankets, thirty four jackets, forty four hats and other oddments for us. Three new members have been welcomed. Knitters not engaged on personal projects are making 'Teddies for Tragedies.' We celebrated Christmas with a good lunch at The Master Potter. The Scrabble players occupy a quiet corner of the room and dominoes are now available too."

#### **Cycling (May - Oct.)**

This group is currently looking for a new leader.

#### **Dining Club Group Leader - *Mavis Williams***

We are a small group between 8 and 10 members attend on average. We go to different places, recommended by members of our group, within a reasonable distance from Cheadle for lunch once a month. For example The Ashbank, The Greyhound at Saverley Green, The Dog and Partidge at Tean and The Raddle at Hollington. The only one cancelled this year was in December because of the bad weather. We welcome new members, if someone hasn't transport we will try and arrange a lift for them.

#### **Easy Exercise Group Leader - *Kath Watson***

#### **Family History Research Group Leader - *Andrew Bull***

This is the fourth year in which this course has run, assisting members to unravel the lives of their forebears. The Group has recently moved from the Moorlands College to the Computer Suite in the Guild Hall. The real benefit of this is the availability of the Internet which now allows all members of the group to use the computers there to access the many free sites that can help in their research. This more hand-on approach will assist members to gain experience of using relevant sites and, as a result, they should find it easier to further their research on the Internet at home or elsewhere.

**French Group Leaders - Margaret Vaughan (Intermediate), Barry Barnett (Beginners Plus) Alan Lewis (Absolute Beginners).**

All three French groups have continued to flourish during the winter months. The **Intermediate** Group has met weekly from September to early April 2011. Attendance has been consistent: on average 8-9 at each meeting. There will be no meetings over the summer but from September 28th the group will split into two. The first will meet on Wednesdays from 2.00 to 3.00 pm and will be a continuation of the present intermediate group. The second, meeting for an hour from 3.15 pm will be for those already much at ease with the language. Newcomers will be welcome and are invited to sit in on a 'taster' session.

The **Beginners Plus** group has also met over the same period with an average attendance of around 8 people. This group has concentrated on the practical everyday situations which many of us find when travelling in France and the language necessary to cope with these situations. We have talked about ourselves, our interests and hobbies, our families, our homes, how to ask for directions, the weather, possible health emergencies, shopping etc but we have also tried to grapple with talking correctly about the past and the future as well as the present. Many of the group will visit France at some point for holidays though we are trying to have just a few meetings during the Summer term to keep our interest going. New members are always welcome to see if this level is for them.

The **Absolute Beginners** group has now moved its parameters slightly beyond the designated title since we have now progressed almost to the end of Talk French Book 1 and our small group is now contemplating starting Book 2 next autumn. Readers should not assume from this that we are now becoming fluent in the language but rather that we could probably just about sustain ourselves in terms of food and drink, would not get lost in a French town and could probably board the correct bus or train. We now sometimes use the computer suite which has added another dimension and enables us to listen to the language as it should be rather than our mangled version ! To paraphrase a recent TV advert our philosophy remains *du français, du anglais, du divertissement*.

**Gardening Group Leader - Doreen Tildesley**

The gardening group enjoyed a varied programme in 2010. As well as a variety of speakers we enjoyed a visit to the City of Stoke-on-Trent's Nursery and visited Wild Acres in Consall to view the rhododendrons and enjoy the cream teas provided by Sue Wardle. Our 2011 meetings opened again in February with a presentation by David Tideswell entitled "The Robin in your Garden". On the U3A gardening website you will find a programme in place listing the speakers and the dates of the meetings. We continue to have 30/40 members who come along once a month to the Cheadle Cricket Club to listen to the various speakers. Most of the talks are accompanied by an illustrated presentation, with time at the end of the meeting for questions. All U3A members are welcome to come along to any of the meetings.

**Geology Group Leader - Andrew Lingham**

The Geology Group have continued to meet on the 4th Wednesday in the month, usually in Room G14 at the Moorlands College, with some outside visits in April, May and June.

The Group has an average number of around 10 per meeting, and were lucky with the weather for the field trips. Last April the Group walked the second half of the Churnet Valley Geotrail, mainly in and around Dimmingsdale. In May we visited the National Stone Centre at Wirksworth, which in addition to the splendid examples of dry stone walling of many different rock types and construction methods from all over the British Isles, now has a new outside display of rocks from all of the geological periods in the form of a rock staircase. In June, on a very hot day, we visited Brown End Quarry and the southern part of the Hamps and Manifold Valley Geotrail. During the last few meetings we have looked at the geological history of the British Isles, and have seen how the current geological events worldwide have been the sort of events in the past that would have shaped the British Isles we see today.

**German Group Leader - Irmgard Freeston**

As in other years gone by, actually about 12 of them, here is my annual report. Our membership does fluctuate at times. At present we have 8 (4 ladies and 4 gents) all of whom enjoy their Monday morning, 11/2 hours endeavouring to improve skills in a language which is not all together easy to learn. We mix the lessons with reading, engaging in German conversation and translating a lesson from the board or from a handy duplicated sheet prepared by myself. Needless to say there is some happy banter during our 15 minutes coffee break, laughter or sometimes also a bit of sadness is involved. To sum up, I am rather pleased with everybody's progress and very much hope all of them feel the same.

**History of Architecture** Group Leader - *David Slade*

The History of Architecture group has now studied the Medieval Period covering Gothic architecture with its churches and cathedrals, the Tudor period of the 16C with the growth of fine domestic timber framed buildings, the Jacobean and Baroque period of the 17C reflecting the influence of Renaissance architecture on Indigo Jones and Sir Christopher Wren. We will now be looking at the development of the European Baroque into the beautiful and refined Georgian architecture of England. Soon we will be looking at the dynamic upheaval of the Industrial Revolution that started in England and changed the world, but at what cost to the working people of England? We will no doubt be spending a concentrated study of the Gothic Revival period which will include Pugin and a visit to St Giles.

**Line Dancing** Group Leader - *Jean Fallows*

During the last twelve months the class has learnt many new dances, both classic and new ones. However the class has halved and I have mixed abilities. So to encourage more people to join I introduced a few absolute beginner dances for the first half hour and finally a couple of improver dances hoping more people will enjoy the health and social benefits of line dance. Fortunately, I have a few experienced line dancers who are willing to help and my husband helps with the music. Every dance is different and some of the improver dancers are a challenge but everyone has improved considerably. Everyone is very sociable and friendly.

**Maths** Group Leader - *Barry Crown*

**Modelling/Model Making** Group Leader - *Allan Webster*

Our group is now in it's third year and continues to meet on a bi-weekly basis at the Fire Station. A small group of modellers with varied interests provides interesting meetings as members can call on the skill/expertise of others when engaged on a project outside of their normal area of expertise. A number of visits to large modelling exhibitions (Harrogate and Leamington Spa) reveals that the standard of work being turned out by members of our group is very high. More importantly, all of the members are enjoying themselves and are immensely proud of their work. Another visit to Harrogate is planned for their exhibition (May 13th, 14th & 15th). the members of our group will travel from Blythe Bridge by train as there is a free bus service from Harrogate station to the exhibition site. In conclusion, I would like to add that while we are a small group we have made our mark in the U3A while giving full support to the organisation.

**Musical Movement** Group Leader - *Chris Jackson and Jean Shenton*

Our class is very popular and we have a short waiting list at the moment. Everyone is very supportive of each other. We still enjoy the benefit of our exercise to music and the laughter this brings.

**Not Strictly Barbershop** Group Leader - *Sarah Williams*

Eight years and we're "still rolling along." New members have quite a task to learn our repertoire which we add to every year. However, it's all done gradually and it's amazing how quickly they pick things up and take on the challenge of their first gig! The emphasis of our group is having fun, doing something we enjoy (barbershop and close harmony with the occasional classical piece!) We also have a mini production team who prepare short sketches for the longer programmes. Our gigs so far this year have included Caverswall WI, Denstone Tuesday Group and our very enjoyable U3A Performance Evening. In the autumn we look forward to 3 public concerts at Ball Green, Central Hall, Longton and Alton Village Hall. Details of which will be published closer to the time for those who wish to support us.

**Parchment Craft** Group Leader - *Chris Heath*

The classes continue to flourish. The members of both groups are enthusiastic and always willing to try new techniques. We have had some wonderful results and displayed these at various venues throughout the year. We are friendly groups and have welcomed 4 new members this year. The year has been up and down with

some members having long illnesses, but all are now on the mend and we look forward to welcoming them back when they are able to join in again. My thanks to all the ladies for their continued commitment and approach to new ideas. We always welcome new members. So why not come along and 'hooked'

**Photo Media Group** Group Leader - *Phil Boyer*

Last autumn I took a series of three monthly sessions for members carrying on after completing the basic course the previous year. Since the acquisition of the IT suite, a new beginners group began in January using the marvelous new system together with a later version of the software designed for making photo slideshows. It is now so much more effective than how it worked at the college. We have also benefited from the visual networking connection from the main PC so that all can follow my mouse movements on their screens. Finally the recent acquisition of headphone sets means that all can select their music to accompany their slideshows. Members will then produce a DVD which can be played both on Computer and TV.

**Pub Strolls** Group Leader - *Ron Cooper*

All monthly walks for this period went ahead without a problem. Generally the pubs chosen provided good food. We had one cancellation for weather{rain}. People numbers are good 20/30 each walk. I would like to compliment Margaret Plant for organising the December walk and the Christmas lunch it was excellent. We have dates up to September.

**Ramblers** Group Leader - *Bill Locker*

The group continues to be well supported although some of our companions are no longer able to join the weekly walks due to the affects of advancing years, which is most unfortunate, but we do continue to have new members joining the group. Weekly attendance varies between 20 and 40 depending on the nature of the walk and the weather, only two walks were cancelled during this winter programme. There have been concerns about Health and Safety with the group's activity but each participant must decide if rambling is suitable for them and accept responsibility for themselves if they choose to take part.

**Reading for Pleasure** Group Leader - *Leslie Hall*

**Short Walks** Group Leader - *Ken Mainey*

The Short Walking Group continues to be popular and, out of the seventy or so members who are currently on the register, an average of over thirty enjoy the walk each week. We meet on Monday mornings, except on holidays, at the Harborne Road Car park at 9-45am for a ten o'clock start. Transport is then shared for the drive to our starting point and usually takes less than 30 mins. We have a team of nineteen leaders (or pairs ) who take turns to plan and then lead a walk of their choice. Each walk tends to be between four and five miles long over a great variety of ground and scenic views. We have recently purchased a Walky Talky set and a First Aid Kit to help meet the introduction of a U3A Health and Safety Policy. On this subject we are currently introducing some guidance notes of advice to both our Individual Walkers and the Walk Leaders. An updated list of walks can be found on the Website. New members are always welcome and will find that we are quite a friendly bunch.

**Silk Craft & Ribbon Embroidery** Group Leader - *Margot Colgate*

**Stargazing** Group leader - *Chris Washington*

With Britain getting cloudier and Cheadle being – it seems to me at any rate – even cloudier, the Stargazing group only met four times this past year. To increase the number of meetings, I've changed from a fixed weekly meeting day to any clear night when I'm at home. Nevertheless, we had good views of the swirling hydrogen clouds of the Orion Nebula, the ever-changing cloud belts on Jupiter and the fascinating craters and rugged mountain ranges on the Moon. Other objects which came into the eyepiece of my 8-inch telescope last year included several star-crowded open clusters and a variety of double star systems. Hopefully, we will get a few more clear skies this year!

**The Sweet Melody Dreamboat Band** Group Leader - *Chris Latham*

The Sweet Melody Dreamboat Band has continued to expand its repertoire and has been consolidated into ten members. The band has played for Cheadle, Stafford & Uttoxeter U3As and for various other charitable groups, over the period, and will play for Lichfield U3A later this year. The band is now equipped with professional music stands and can be seen on 'You Tube' by searching the full band name.

**Sugarcraft** Group Leader - *Dawn Maley*

I still enjoy taking the group. We have been going since Cheadle U3A began in 1997. We now have 25 people on the register with an average attendance of 18 each week. I have had to split the group into two parts. We have a beginner's section which, when she is able, Val, one of our more senior ladies, helps to supervise. Pat helps me with the other more advanced members. We still have only 1 gentlemen who attends our group. (I think he enjoys the attention he gets!) At the moment we are into flower making. Over the last 6 months, however, we have produced some lovely teapots. These went on show at a coffee morning and at Cheadle Arts Festival 'Create Day.'

#### **Tai Chi** Group Leader - *Grace Hughes*

It has been a productive year for our group. The established Thursday class has 14 regular members, some of whom began in 2004 when Don Richardson took us for our first lesson. We continue to make good progress and are a close knit group who help each other with the exercises and when any health issues arise. At the end of July 2010, with a long waiting list, I decided to start a beginner's group. 38 people 'had a go' and we now have a class of 26 on a regular basis. I am very grateful to my volunteer assistants, Janet, Jean, Jenny, Joan, June, Kathryn and Pam who have helped me during the last eight months. The class is now two-thirds of the way into the Tai Chi Short Form following the teaching of Cheng man Ching. Constant feedback is showing the benefits of the practice. Some pupils joined following advice from local GP's and staff at Cheadle Hospital. I recommend anyone to try out the DVD "Move for Your Life," by Angus Clark. His exercises are designed to increase energy levels, loosen muscle and joints and to decrease stress.

#### **Tap Dancing** Group Leader - *Doreen Ball*

The classes are very popular, and everyone seems to enjoy them very much. We are a very friendly group, and very helpful to each other. My thanks go to Joyce Plant, who helps with the administration and kindly phoned group members to inform them of the cancellations in December caused by the icy weather.

#### **Travel and Landscape** Group Leader - *Phil Boyer*

This last year, our **6th**, has been another successful one maintaining an average attendance of 15 members at our 6 monthly meetings. We have had a few theme meetings, South & East Africa, North America and the Alps. Again several members have given a visual presentation of their trips and we have also enjoyed more video format thanks to a new member's expertise. In one of our first meetings **next autumn** we will be having a feature on **New Zealand** where 2 sets of U3A member couples were visiting their relatives during the period of the Christchurch earthquake. I hope that other U3A members will come and join us then.

#### **Trips & Holidays** Group leader - *Margaret Plant*

Some very successful trips and holidays have been planned by a small committee Dawn Maley, Pat Bullock & Betty Carnwell led by Margaret Plant. Firstly to Cosford Air Museum in March, Blists Hill Victorian Museum in April, Llangollen Railway & Canal trip in May. June took us to the beautiful gardens at Bodmin & in July we had a wonderful seaside trip to Southport. In August we had a wine tasting trip to the Vineyard at Wroxeter and then went on to Shrewsbury. September brought a return cruise on the Manchester Ship Canal from Seacombe to Salford Quays and in October we took an interesting trip to Rowsley & on to Chatsworth. 2010 trips ended with a mystery shopping trip to Cheshire Oaks.

**Holidays** took 21 members plus 5 from Leek & Alsager U3A's to Austria, staying in Kirchberg and taking in the sights of Trazberg Castle, Rattenburg, and Kitzbuhel. A rail & lake trip at Achensee, the home of Mozart & Sound of Music, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Berchtesgaden to see the retreat home of Hitler called the Eagles Nest. A very enjoyable time was had by all even though we had very mixed weather. We then moved in to Germany to the beautiful town of Oberammergau to see the passion play that only takes place every 10 years. The group was split up into private accommodation so some got to meet and stay with the actors in the play. November brought our popular Tinsel & Turkey holiday, with 48 going to Bournemouth where we visited Christchurch for the Market, Salisbury, and Sandbanks & Poole.

#### **Verse or Worse (Poetry)** Group Leaders - *Alan & Barbara Lewis*

The group continues to meander informally amongst poets both famous and less famous. We have not yet looked at any infamous poets but we don't rule them out! As ever all of the group have made their contribution, an integral and important part of our monthly meetings. Poets looked at included 'the people's poet' 'W H Davies "What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare," to the very interesting life and beautiful poetry of the American poet Robert Frost whose life and work was a surprise to most of us. The very popular Roger (The Scaffold) McGough provided a more light hearted session. We had

another highly amusing visit from local poet Paul (JCB Laureate) Fox whose poetry was also the comic side of our gig at the recent performance evening.

**Writing for Pleasure.** Group Leader - *Joan Barrow*

Since September 2010 the group have been involved in Creating Moods and Atmosphere and also Creating Characters and Choosing names. Various exercises were chosen which the group tackled with gusto and some interesting writing was achieved. Our next topic is Memories of our Childhood and, at the moment I feel there could be far more writing achieved than the usual A4 sheet! The years span from 1940's to 1950's with some experiences from the war time years from members who lived in the areas that were badly affected at the time, such as Liverpool and London. One of our members, Roy Hedges, has written a play which involves five characters at a committee meeting, and is likened to a 'Vicar of Dibley' style meeting. We are reading the play at our last meeting in April which I am sure will create some laughter. We are also bringing our files along to re-read some of our favourite pieces of work again. We continue again in September 2011 still with a full membership.

**Yoga** Group Leader - *Chris Hartley*