

# STOWMARKET AND DISTRICT LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN RETIREMENT



( UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE) Registered Charity No. 1002987

Newsletter No 33 March 2013

## Chairman:-

Firstly, and with apologies for not being with you for the January meeting, I'd like to thank everyone for all the get well cards (collective and individual), emails and phone calls following my hospitalisation in that month. All these are much appreciated and certainly a measure of all the good friends one can make through membership of the U3A.

I would like to welcome all our new members who have joined since the AGM and I've been encouraged how quickly they've got involved and contributed to our extensive range of group activities (see Tony Taylor's note below). The very latest figures show a membership of 199, an increase of more than 30 over the previous year.

Since the last Newsletter there have been two meetings of the new Committee and I would like to thank *all* the Committee Members for their contribution to looking after the interests of the wider Stowmarket U3A community. Some new roles have already been taken on, e.g. thanks to Ian Hooper for assuming responsibility for the organisation of the seating at the monthly meetings (always difficult to find volunteers for this) and Jenny Burgess for doing some publicity work and arranging our summer outing (see information on this elsewhere in the Newsletter). The Committee has also agreed that we will once again hold the 19 June Garden Party at Elm Farm Stonham Aspal, the AGM/Groups Day at Hillside, 18 September, and the Christmas Lunch at the URC on 18 December. All dates for your diary!

Still on Committee matters I'd like to make an early reminder to members that Jenny Lawler will be finishing her term as Treasurer at the AGM and we are on the lookout for someone to take on this important role. Also, and repeating my appeal in the last Newsletter, it's no secret that the post of Secretary can be the most demanding of the Officer roles but it is also the most rewarding so I was very pleased when Joyce Kay agreed to take on the job, albeit on the condition that it's for one year only. With this in mind, we need urgently to begin searching for an 'Assistant Secretary' who would be prepared to take on the job at the 2013 AGM. He/she would, ideally (but not exclusively!), be recently retired, have a background in business, be computer literate and, most of all, be happy to become involved in almost every aspect of the U3A activities. Please let Joyce or myself know if you would like to take on this challenge.

Peter Dakeyne peter@dakeyne.com 01449 781 562

#### GROUPS COORDINATOR'S REPORT

It has been an exciting time for the Group's Coordinator. No, not Christmas, birthday or Winter holiday! It is the fact that a number of new groups have started or are about to start in Stowmarket U3A.

Readers will be aware that groups now meet to learn **BRIDGE** (BEGINNERS), **ARCHITEC-TURE and GEOLOGY** – contact Freddie Davies (01206 391219), and that a **BEGINNERS FRENCH** group is well established – contact Marion Brown (01449 676533). There is also now a **CLASSICAL MUSIC** group – contact Ian Hooper (01449 770179).

If you are interested in **ART APPRECIATION**, a second group is planned to start in March contact Anna Bradshaw (01449 745829) or in **PAINTING FOR FUN** - contact Joselyn Horstead (01449 722430).

While we are on a roll, please let me know if you have any further ideas.

Please note. A Study Group Coordinators' Meeting for members of of the Suffolk and District Network which had been planned for next month has, unfortunately, had to be cancelled due to lack of interest from other U3As.

Later in the year I hope to organise a local session for all our Group Convenors / Hosts here in Stowmarket. Watch this space.

Tony Taylor 01449 258 192

Since the last Newsletter:-

October:-

Mrs Jean Smith's account of '17,000 miles Cycling Art Appreciation: Solo' was inspirational and a wonderful tale of exploration.

#### November:-

Unfortunately Mr Terry Mackley's performance. "Composers and Songs of the 30s and 40s", did not resonate with many of our members, though this may not have been entirely his fault.

#### December:-

The Annual Christmas Luncheon proved once again not only to have been most excellent, but thoroughly enjoyed by all/

# January:-

Mrs Jane Parker gave a very professional account of the work and duties of the government department dealing with 'Hatch, Match and Dispatch' or in other words the three most important recorded events in our lives.

#### February:-

Peter Minter gave us a very interesting and educational view into 'Traditional Brick Making', it's involvement in Abbot's Hall and much, much more.

Still to come :-

#### March:-

'Frock Horror - Confessions of a Costume Designer'. Surely all our lady members will find this absorbing.

# April:-

'London Olympics - History & Future' after last summer this should prove to be very informative.

#### May:-

'East Anglican Social History of Victorian Times' and how different those days were to what we experience today.

#### June:-

At the Summer Garden party this year we hope to repeat last year's event which was such a great success. More news later.

#### July:-

'An Indian Experience' as related by Mr Peter Baker

The original Stowmarket Art Appreciation Group - known as SAAG

for short – has been meeting for many years with a full complement of members. The group can't be any larger without changing the format and character of its studies. Various attempts to encourage a second group have not been successful, but now, as can be seen in the Group's Coordinator's report, a second group is about to get under way.

**SAAG 1** will be looking at the works of **Rem**brandt, Giotto and David Hockney this year as well as tackling the History of Flower Painting, a meeting with Artists' Wives, and the Art In Suffolk Churches. It looks to be set for another interesting year. Our best wishes to the second group. If we can help at all, please let us know.

Tony Taylor:-

01449 258 192

# **Bridge for Beginners -**

I must confess to complete bias. I have been a Bridge player since my university

days (a couple of years ago ②) and I love the pastime – notice I didn't say 'game'. Our group has 11 registered members and they have already discovered the rudiments of Bridge and are playing at a very basic level and,



I understand, having a very enjoyable time doing so. Our formal meetings take place at Stowmarket Com-

munity Centre, Hillside on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 2.00pm. But we also meet at other venues (such as members' houses) at least three more times each month, usually in the afternoon, making it a generally weekly event. These extra meetings are arranged 'as we go along', therefore they are informal, but I almost always attend in order to give tips and guidance. I am delighted to be teaching and leading such an enthusiastic group of people and thoroughly enjoy witnessing the fun the group members have in learning and playing this great pastime. Why not come and join us? You would be more than welcome to learn and join in an activity that can so radically broaden your social horizons.

Freddie Davies fjd8@btinternet.com 01206 391219

# **Computer group:-**

Just to remind you we meet in the afternoon of the second Wednesday of each month at Stowupland High School. Since the last Newsletter we have welcomed several new members and had a varied series of discussions and presentations. In October



and for our topic of the day, several of our members introduced us to one of their favourite websites and each explained why they find it so useful or interesting. This was truly fascinating and clearly demonstrated the wide range of interests within our group. It also showed the benefit of having ready access to the internet at our own workstations in the ICT suite at the school.

In November we looked at 'Online Genealogy' and how online resources can help with your family history research. Marian Brown introduced us to many and varied web sites for this comprehensive coverage rain and snow, but we did make the best of the dry days of our topic for the day.

Thanks very much to Pam Webb for December's topic – 'Making Posters'. Pam started by showing us examples of posters she had prepared for a variety of Rugby club. Eleven of us made the best of Buxhall occasions. She then went on to show us how to construct one from scratch, in Word, with a Christmas theme. Whilst in January, for our first meeting of the New Year, Peter Filby gave us 'An introduction to spreadsheets'. As examples, he covered not only the basics (using the times table), but managing a bank account, monitoring petrol usage and even buying a new car.

In February, Frank Lewis was brave enough to share his experiences as a new user of Windows 8. Whilst he is coming to grips with it, few if any of the other members seem ready to abandon, just yet, their current XP or Windows 7 operating systems. For March I took the group behind the scenes of our web site, www.u3astowmarket.org.uk and gave an introduction to 'Wordpress' on which it is hosted.

As always, we want to encourage beginners and the more experienced alike and to help this along all meetings start with 'Agony Corner' when members can raise any computer related issues or problems for discussion. If you go onto the Computer Group page on the web site (above) click 'Groups' then 'Computer' and you will find links to notes for all meetings back to November 2010.

Please note that due to the school's half term, the April meeting will be at Woodfields Bowls Club, Monday 8th April, 10am for 10.30am start.

Peter Dakeyne peter@dakeyne.com 01449 781 562

## **Country Strolls:-**

Longer:-

The weather has certainly affected our walks. We had to cancel one in January because of the ice and

snow. Fortunately we have been able to re-schedule that walk - from the Flying Fortress pub east of Bury St Edmunds' Moreton Hall Estate and it was not as muddy as it might have been. Back at the beginning of De-



cember we did get snowed on and very muddy but as it

was our Christmas Lunch walk, fourteen of us braved the weather and worked up a good appetite around Woodbridge - a really lovely walk including several steep inclines and interesting back lanes. One that will be worth repeating in the summer. We have also had a great countryside walk from Gt Finborough through wooded lanes and across open fields.

Andrea Burton

01449 774 869

Shorter:-

Some testing times this year for walks with all the in September: Agela and Barbara led a walk at barham with a very enjoyable tea at the café in Claydon.

October, Elizabeth kindly led a walk around the tea-room before Berris closes for the winter and after a walk at Onehouse. A big thank you to Elizabeth and Carol for leading the walk at Gipping, most enjoyable.

Lets hope for dry, sunny, warm days for our Spring

Helen Mead

01449 673 660

# **Discussion Group:-**

Whilst we are not a big group yet we are very active and discuss a very wide range of subjects. Fortunately we are a friendly crowd and while our chat is very forthright and expresses our personal

stand points, yet it is done with the best of good humour and understanding. We will be pleased to welcome some



more new members. So feel free to join us in our deliberations.

Philip Weir

01449 676 528

## Gardens and Things:-

The season started on the 17th January with a get together lunch at the Chestnut Horse in Gt Finbrough when 23 followers had a belated Christmas meal and talk about our forthcoming year.

February was left dormant this year as we have covered most of the possible sites and the weather was not too promising.

March. Nowton Park near Bury St Edmunds will be viewed, we hope, with the host of golden daffodils, for which the area is renowned. Leaving Solar at 10 am followed with lunch at the much favoured Rushbrook Arms.

April. We will be viewing the anticipated spring display at the renowned Bury gardens. Followed with a visit to the Moyes Hall museum in the market place, and a lunch at the Cathedral Restaurant.

If you have found the above interesting and would like to know more about our future activities which include some five other diverse range of outings,

watch the notice boards at our monthly meetings or have a word with the undersigned.

Harold Turner 01449 676 882

## Geology for the Curious -

We have a small but enthusiastic group of 8 members who, at present, are dis-

covering the whole history of our planet and how the continents (and the good old UK) have come to be where they are on the globe we call Earth. They are discovering how



continents move about on the Earth's surface; what causes earthquakes and volcanic eruptions; how tsunamis, ice-bergs and glaciers occur and the effects of each. Soon the group will commence the fascinating journey of discovering the rocks and other geology of Great Britain and how we have come to be the beautifully scenic group of islands that we live on. Field trips to places of geological interest around Suffolk and the neighbouring counties, during the spring and summer months, will add a visual 'hands-on' experience to complement the slideshows and talks that I give at our monthly meetings. Our meetings are held at Stowmar-

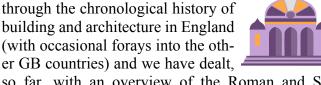
ket Community Centre, Hillside on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2.00pm. If you like rocks – do come and join us?

Freddie Davies fjd8@btinternet.com 01206 391 219

#### Historical Architecture -

There are 17 enthusiastic members registered in this group. They are 'working'

building and architecture in England (with occasional forays into the oth-



so far, with an overview of the Roman and Saxon periods. There is much to come in what is a fascinating and enjoyable story of how we have around us the wonderful architectural heritage that is so admired throughout the world and which gives us our protected Myths & Legends:-Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and tourism hotspots, in addition to some of the best 'modern' architectural triumphs in the world. I give an illustrated talk (with additional 'hand-outs') each month and during the spring and summer months there will be field visits to places of historic architectural interest. Our meetings take place at Stowmarket Community Cen-

tre, Hillside on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month at **2.00pm**. If you'd like to know more about your historic heritage, come and join us!

Freddie Davies fjd8@btinternet.com 01206 391219

No: 1 LUNCH CLUB

2013 Another year for the number one lunch club. It is going very well and we are still finding different places to visit for a meal. At some of the places that we visited last year,



"The Lost Anchor" Ipswich for exmple, the sun came out; sitting ou and lookingat the yachts made it a most enjoyable lunch, "Suffolk Food Hall" - on this visit we were lucky to watch a collection of large boats and yachts making their way towards Ipswich, The Cock Inn at Stanton, Ski Centre Ipswich, White Horse Stoke Ash were amongst many more. As a group we always manage to fill the 10 months of the year, with suggestions of places to visit on our last meeting in November. There is now a **Third Lunch Club** which will meet on the 4th Thursday of the month. We had a meeting at the Gladstone Arms, and I am very pleased to say that it went very well, 10 members came, and Brian O'Shea has volunteered to keep them in order and print out were they will be meeting for the months to come. His telephone number is 01449-614129. Two more people to join them would be most welcome.

Angela Bentley

01449 780 274

# **Memoirs Group:-**

The group has settled back again with just the original members and continues to produce some interesting work. Our numbers did increase after the AGM last year but unfortunately the newcomers did not stay the course. We would very much like to welcome anyone to join us who would be interested in writing about their early mem-

If you are interested please ring me, Pat Smith - Stowmarket 675568. Our group meets at 18 Edinburgh Close Stowmarket IP14 5AR on the second Thursday of each month at 2.30pm

Pat Smith 01449 675 568

Unfortunately this is a very small group and struggles to keep going. Yet we continually find new things to discuss a and at the moment are exploring the origins and creation of the myths and legends that we encounter every day. If you wished to join us you would be made ever so welcome.

Philip Weir

01449 676 528

# Play Reading Group:-

The play reading group meets on the second Monday in the month at 2pm. Recently we have read 'She Stoops to Conquer' by Oliver Goldsmith. This is a very funny play which, although written in 1773, still felt very fresh today. Next we enjoyed 'Dancing at Laghnasa' by Brian Friel; this play written in 1990 is set In The Irish



village of Ballybeg in the summer of 1936. It is the story of the five Mundy sisters (Kate, Maggie, Agnes, Rosie, and Christina), and their recently returned missionary brother. All the drama takes place within the sisters' cottage, with events outside being reported, either as 'they happen or as reminiscence, by Michael the illegitimate son of Christina who narrates the play from the side of the stage.

We are currently reading Twelfth Night' by William Shakespeare and enjoying getting our tongues around the early seventeenth century language.

New members will are always very welcome Helen Freeman 01449 613 060

# **Poetry Group:-**

At our twice-monthly meetings of up to thirteen enthusiasts, our programme is agreed in advance. Either a particular poet may be introduced by someone or a theme picked that can be illustrated by po-



ems found by everyone in the group and read out. Recently we have covered 'Peace' and now look forward to 'Beginnings', to be followed later by 'Goodbyes and Endings'. We enjoy poets from all ages but in coming weeks the more modern poets R S Thomas and Ogden Nash will be studied. Sometimes the poems prove 'challenging', others inspiring or moving, and everyone contributes to the lively and fun discussions afterwards.

Marion Weir has kindly offered to lead a second poetry group as we are at present full to bursting. A number of potential poetry readers have said they are interested in joining a new group but a few more would be enable one to be formed. If you are interested please contact Sheila Dobey for further information on 01449 677265.

Jenifer Adams

### Scrabble Group:-

This seems to be a popular and enjoyable brain teaser and social occupation. Flexibility and Group size is key and groups work things out as they go along.

Besides a number meeting informally there are six regular sets of players meeting respectively in the Semer Close (Combs Ford), Old

School Mews, Thirlmere Drive and Onehouse. Two members from Mendelsham and Debenham travel monthly to join the Semer Close contingent so interest in that area could lead to a further three or foursome. Groups consist variously of 4, 3 or 2 Players according to preference.

Sessions usually last about 2 hours with a break for coffee/tea and chat. Meetings are in the afternoons by agreement but at the moment Mon., Tues. and Wed, are popular. Levels of interest and experience varies and we enable newcomers to choose their preferred level.

We really don't want a fun lover or beginner - or anyone for that matter - to be stuck with the few addicts among us; but some people do like serious play, while others just like a sociable game and chat.

Once each year we plan to bring all players together for a mega "Scrabblethon" and Social – this usually takes place in May or June.

So if you are interested we would love to hear from you. Just phone or Email me at 01449 677 265 or dobey 795 @btinternet.com

# Town and Village History:-

Unfortunately Mollie and I were unable to attend the programme meeting in February but thanks to

to the guidance of Angela Bentley and the help and cooperation of the members an excellent, varied, and extremely interesting programme has been produced covering all but the last two months of our normal "visiting year".



At the time of going to press Jaquie Durrant has already led the group on a superb visit to Abbot's Hall which in many ways was a follow up to the main U3A meeting on brick making. We are are now looking forward to April when Harold is taking us to somewhere that will conjure up memories for our more senior members.

I cannot thank Angela enough for what she has done for us during what I hope is a temporary absence on my part. She has already circulated the full programme to most members, more copies will be available at our monthly U3A meeting, and has also put the details on the website.

Terry Potter

01449 770 256

Please see the next page for a full list of current Interest Groups, together with times and contact details

U3A Suffolk & District Network: :-Sally Taylor 01449 771 168

Philip Weir 01449 676 528



#### **U3A Central Office:-**

Recent post brings two things to mind!

First is the annual Photographic Competition of which details are posted on the wall, but entries must be received by the 10th of May.

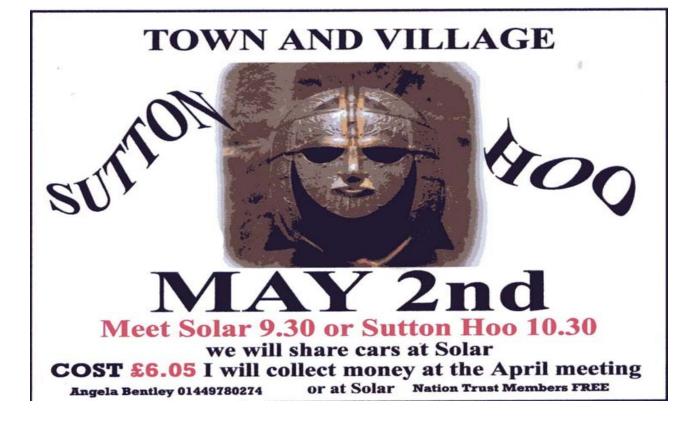
The second is notice of the Summer Schools, one at the Royal Agricultural College in Circnester from 19th to the 22nd of August and the other from 15th to the 18th July at The Harper Adams College. Full details on the main U3A web site (www.u3a.org.uk), and I am told that they are of excellent value.

Joyce Kay

01449 676 852

STOWMARKET U3A, ACTIVITY & INTEREST GROUPS, 2013. Please contact the Leader/Convenor for more information. New Groups

| ART APPRECIATION           |               | 2/Month: 1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays | HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE      |               | Monthly: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday                   |
|----------------------------|---------------|---|----------------------------|---------------|--|
| Tony Taylor                | 01449 258 192 | 9.30am  | Freddie Davis              | 01206 391 219 | 2.00pm   |
| ART APPRECIATION (2)       |               | TBA - Inaugural meeting,                            | KEEP FIT CLUB              |               | Alternate Tuesdays                                   |
| Anna Bradshaw              | 01449 745 829 | Monday, 21/01/2013                                  | Pauline Taylor             | 01449 678 954 | ,  |
| BOOK CLUB                  |               | Monthly: Last Monday                                | LUNCH CLUB (1)             |               | By Arrangement                                       |
| Mary Bradley               | 01449 775 628 | 2.00pm  | Angela Bentley             | 01449 780 274 |  |
| BRIDGE BEGINNERS           |               | Monthly: 4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday                  | LUNCH CLUB (2)             |               | By Arrangement                                       |
| Freddie Davies             | 01206 391 219 | 2.00pm  | Pauline Taylor             | 01449 678 954 |  |
| CANASTA                    |               | Weekly: Wednesdays                                  | LUNCH CLUB (3)             |               | Monthly: 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday                    |
| Hazel Burl                 | 01449 615 581 | 9.30am  | Brian O'Shea               | 01449 614 129 | 12.30pm  |
| COMPUTER                   |               | Monthly: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday                  | MEMOIR WRITING             |               | Monthly: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday                    |
| Peter Dakeyne              | 01449 781 562 | 1.30pm  | Pat Smith                  | 01449 675 568 | 3.00pm   |
| COUNTRY STROLLS Longer     |               | 2/Month: 1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> Fridays  | MUSIC – Classical          |               | Monthly:- 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday                    |
| Andrea Burton              | 01449 774 869 | 10.30am (variable)                                  | lan Hooper                 | 01449 770 179 | 10.00am  |
| COUNTRY STROLLS Shorter    |               | 2/Month: 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> Fridays  | MYTHS, STORIES AND LEGENDS |               | Monthly: 1 <sup>st</sup> Monday                      |
| Helen Mead                 | 01449 673 660 | 1.00pm  | Philip Weir                | 01449 676 528 | 2.30pm   |
| CRAFTS                     |               | Weekly: Tuesday                                     | PHOTOSHOP WORKSHOPS        |               | By Arrangement                                       |
| Magda Christie             | 01449 673 438 | 2.30pm  | Roy Fidler                 | 01449 672 123 |  |
| DISCUSSION                 |               | Monthly: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday                    | PLAY READING               |               | Monthly: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday                      |
| Philip Weir                | 01449 676 528 | 10.00am   | Helen Freeman              | 01449 613 060 | 2.00pm   |
| FRENCH CONVERSATION        |               | 2/Month: 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesdays | PLAYWRIGHT STUDY           |               | By Arrangement                                       |
| Andrea Burton              | 01449 774 869 | 10.00am   | Helen Barrett              | 01449 676 491 |  |
| FRENCH CONVERS'N Beginners |               | 2/Month: 1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays | POETRY                     |               | 2/Month: 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> Thursdays |
| Connie Harford             | 01449 774 557 | 10.00am   | Sheila Dobey               | 01449 677 265 | 2.00pm   |
| GARDENS & THINGS           |               | Monthly: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday                   | SCRABBLE PLAYING GROUPS    |               | Several - By Arrangement                             |
| Harold Turner              | 01449 676 882 | 9.30am (variable)                                   | Sheila Dobey               | 01449 677 265 |  |
| GEOLOGY FOR THE CURIOUS    |               | Monthly: 1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday                  | TOWN & VILLAGE HISTORY     |               | Monthly: 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday                    |
| Freddie Davis              | 01206 391 219 | 2.00pm  | Terry Potter               | 01449 258 523 | 9.30am (variable)                                    |



**MOOCS** So you don't know what **MOOCS** means? - let me translate and explain. What it says is 'Massive Online Open Courses' and is very similar to 'Futurelearn' and involves short FREE university courses covering a wide range of subjects. Whilst I have not done any of these, if Universities such as Reading, Edinburgh or others from around the world are prepared to put their names to the courses, surely they must be good.

If you hunt down Google for 'moocs' and persevere you may find a free course to stimulate your current interest or maybe even a new one.

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#### Free courses reach their critical mass

Moocs are bringing education to a wider audience. Back in the Fifties, pundits were fond of predicting that we'd all be wearing silver jumpsuits, travelling in fly-my cars, and popping pills instead of meals by the Seventies. Equally fanciful arc current predictions that massive online open courses (Moocs) will do away with traditional universities by offering free programmes to whoever wants them. "Contrary to predictions, radio didn't destroy newspapers and television didn't destroy radio," says Dr Alan Cann, an education researcher at the University of Leicester. "And Moocs won't destroy universities".

After several years being pioneered in the US, Moocs are finally being offered by UK institutions. The British Library and 17 universities are in the throes of designing their first tailor made online courses, which they will make freely available to the public this autumn. Meanwhile, this month another five institutions joined forces with the Open University (OU), which has drawn on decades of distance learning experience to launch FutureLearn, a company offering free, open courses on a single online platform. The University of Edinburgh has already tested the waters to offer Moocs via a US-developed platform.

Free specialist courses will certainly appeal to debt-laden graduates seeking to distinguish themselves in a busy jobs market, but in such early days it's hard to predict how much kudos a Mooc - usually a four to eight week modular course - will carry with employers. The vast majority of such students worldwide are graduates or mature students, according to University of Reading research. "They might eventually be graduates looking to up-skill, take a refresher course or expand their knowledge base." says Professor Gavin Brooks, pro vice-chancellor of teaching and learning at the university. "Maybe a Mooc will make graduates more attractive to employers."

Moocs have already garnered a poor reputation for low rates of completion; just eight per cent of those who enrol on some US courses complete them. "We want to find the right, course we know will appeal to the mass market and benefit students and our institution." gays Brooks. The gain from providing this service is complex: there's no clear business model, although corporate sponsorship might be a possibility, say universities, pointing to US Mono platform

Udacity, which is collaborating with the likes of Google. Moocs fit nicely with universities' outreach initiatives and offer academies the chance to teach a far wider audience, as well as showcase a university's offering under a single UK banner.

A Mooc isn't a degree, although it could form part of a composite degree. What it does offer is a taster of a subject, or an opportunity to swot up on a specialised area. "We are working hard to create courses rather than isolated chunks of learning. Continuity is really important," says Dr Mike Sharpies, professor of educational technology and lead academic for FutureLearn. "Though these aren't in any way expected to compete with paid for courses from the OU or other universities," he adds.

Moocs offered by FutureLearn will have a curriculum and probably a fixed time-frame to encourage students to see the course through - interest tends to wane after eight weeks. "It's important that learners experience working together," says Sharples.

All those involved admit that they need to crack how Moocs might be assessed and accredited - its unrealistic to expect individual attention from academics when student numbers are so high, While more scientific subjects might lend themselves to multiple-choice assessment, this clearly isn't suitable for arts and other disciplines.

"Perhaps Moocs will act as a reminder of why universities charge fees," says Cann. Students on US programmes have shared horror stories of peer assessment, and lack of any contact with academics.

While British universities acknowledge this is is a murky area, they say potential students won't be left in the dark. "We are certainly not proposing that peer assessments will count towards accreditation," says Sharpies. "We want groups to work together and support each other - the OU has a lot of experience in delivering learning at scale and creating supportive environments." British Moocs will award some sort of certification, and individual universities will determine how courses are accredited,

"Moocs won't revolutionise education," says Brooks, "They are just a different way of reaching a greater number of students and making education more widely available."

# **The August Outing**

The outing this year will be to CAMBRIDGE on Wednesday the 21st of August.

A visit to KINGS COLLEGE giving a chance to see the chapel from where the Christmas Carol Service is filmed. Whilst no lunch is to be arranged there will be plenty of time to organise your own, or even a picnic by the river or a bit later when we visit the BOTANIC GARDENS.

The pick-up at 2.00pm will take us to the gardens where you can walk around and explore their wonderful collection of plants from all around the world or, if you prefer, to sit and enjoy the view and others passing by. The facilities there include a tea room. We plan to return late afternoon and be back not later than 6.00pm. We hope that many of you will join in to make this another very successful day.

The total cost, which will include entrance fees and transport will be £ 17.00 per person. Monies will be collected in July (as much has to be paid in advance).

There will be a notice on the board for you to sign to show your wish to come on this outing. Further details will be announced later.

Jenny Burgess



# Deadlines for the next issues :-

30th June for the July copy and 30th September for the October copy.

Edited by Philip Weir Produced by The Copy Centre, 37 Stowupland Street, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1EG Tel. & Fax 01449 775 166 www.u3astowmarket.org.uk