

## PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES.

### Principles

1. The Third Age Trust and the U3As recognise the immense resources of skills, experience and enthusiasm possessed by older people who are no longer in full time employment.
2. Individual members are both learners and teachers, giving their services freely. All contribute to any eventual costs of using educational or cultural facilities.
3. Membership is open to all irrespective of religion or ethnic origin. No educational qualifications are required or given.
4. Whilst subscribing to the guiding principles of the Trust, each U3A is independently managed by its own members.
5. As far as is practicable U3A members are willing to help other members of the elderly population to organise themselves to achieve similar benefits to those enjoyed in existing U3As.

### Objectives.

1. To encourage those older people no longer in full-time employment to engage in educational and cultural activities.
  2. To find and help such people use their skills to teach and learn.
  3. To provide affordable education for all members.
  4. To make the population, as well as educational establishments, aware of the existence and aims of U3As.
  5. To encourage people of all cultures to participate and both give and receive the benefits of mutual experience.
  6. To seek to include the housebound and the disabled in the educational and cultural activities of the U3As.
  7. To ensure adequate recognition of the abilities of the elderly.
  8. To obtain access to, and the use of, facilities for the activities of the U3As from National and Local Government and other organisations.
  9. To actively demonstrate the continuing contributions made by third agers to the wellbeing of the community as a whole.
- Revised October 1998

From the U3A News:-

In the year to 31st March 2007 the number of members was 185,749, and there are 629 U3As up from 582 last year. We are in good company!

Next year's conference is to be held at Swansea University.

Have a good Christmas! See you next term!



# PORTSMOUTH

## NEWSLETTER

### Autumn 2007

### Officers and Committee for 2007—2008

Chairman	Freda Forcey	9242 3976
Treasurer	Arthur Ayshford	9287 0806
Secretary	Ros Slade	9282 5193
Membership Secretary	Anne Westcott-Porter	9282 5739
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Social Secretary	Carol Jones	9236 3752
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Publicity Officer /Web site Programme / Newsletter /	Aileen Loughran	92827826
Group Co-ordinator	Sonja Baxendale	9273 1816

### TERM DATES

The school spring term is very difficult to follow this year. Good Friday falls on 21st March, and Easter Monday on 24th March. Both of these are Bank Holidays. We have our usual six weeks before half term, but for the school term to finish as usual on the Friday before Good Friday would give a second half of only three weeks.

Therefore the Education Authorities have extended the term until April 4th.  
First half:- 7th January—15th February. Second half 25th February—4th April  
BUT closed on Good Friday and Easter Monday.

Our website address is:- [www.portsmouthu3a.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthu3a.org.uk) and it has had over 400 visits.

Thank you all for giving me your support and voting for me again to be your Chairman at the AGM in September, I will try with your help to make this my second year to progress our U3A. I can announce that we will be having an Archaeology group starting in January due to the kindness and enthusiasm of Glenn Dunaway and also an extra French beginners class. We are truly indebted to George Jenkins for volunteering. Brian Greener has said that he will run a Science Group (if there is enough interest) so in the New Year there will be a notice put on the board for members to sign.

The vote was for a summer Fayre in July so this is a reminder for you to start collecting for it. The local radio station Express FM has just interviewed me again to talk about our U3A, and his first words to me were Good Morning, Freda is here to speak about the University of the Third Kind. !!! I did correct him and when I got home had a little chuckle, I think that we can all say we are of a Kind.

Do come along to the Christmas Meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> December when the Poems & Plays group will be entertaining us. Also I have invited Stella Porter from Arun U3A who is the Network Co-ordinator to say a few words about Storytelling. She has been asked by National Office to promote this art. If you look at the November Sources magazine there is an article by her on the art of story telling. We will also have mince pies to go with our cup of tea.

It doesn't seem possible that I'm wishing you all a Very Happy Christmas the time goes so quickly. See you all in the new year. Freda Forcey

## NOTES ABOUT THE SPRING PROGRAMME

### NEW MEMBERS MEETING

Not on your original programme because we did not think about it in time, a meeting has been arranged for new members on **Thursday January 31 Room 1, 2pm.**

I am sure you will agree that people join our organisation, not only to attend a class that interests them, but also to widen their circle of friends. So many people comment on how the friendship and support systems they found within U3A have made a difference to their lives.

It behoves us all to welcome new people and so I hope many will find it possible to come and make our new members welcome.

### TRAVEL TALKABOUT

Daphne Fry has encouraged, cajoled or persuaded the following people to provide our Travel Talkabout programme for the next term. We are dependant on our U3A members for this group, so if you have had an interesting holiday and would like to share your memories and photos, even if you do not usually attend out meetings, you would be

Our UIA friends have requested that their visit begin on Monday 5th May instead of the usual Tuesday start, so that they can have a coach trip to London on Friday 9th May. This is slightly complicated by the fact that this is Bank Holiday. However, since their first day is spent mainly in travelling, we have agreed to this.

Below is the preliminary programme we have suggested and with which they are happy, but, it will, of course, need fine tuning.

Monday 5/5 (Bank Holiday) UIA Group arrives early afternoon. Drivers needed to take them to the Ibis Hotel (Winston Churchill Avenue). Afternoon free for shopping Dinner at Wetherspoons.

Tuesday 6/5 City Tour by bus (guided by Ann Agar) including Fort Nelson for visit and lunch. Afternoon presentation by City Council, welcome by Lord Mayor. Dinner Kitsch n d'or.

Wednesday 7/5 Coach to Winchester. Visit Cathedral. Lunch. Visit Winchester College Dinner 'en famille'.

Thursday 8/5 Coach to Portchester Castle. Lunch at Port Solent. Southwick museum and Map Room. Dinner Highbury (the new building in Winston Churchill Ave.

Friday 9/5 Coach to London. There will be space for our members to join this, but the day has not been planned yet.

We hope many of our members will join in these trips. Lists with more details will be put up in the Community Centre during next term so that you can indicate the activities you would like to join. Caen Sub Committee

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My thanks to all those who have contributed articles for this Newsletter. I hope you find it of interest. Any mistakes are entirely my fault. I'm sure there are some, so I ask pardon.

If you have any thoughts, good, bad or indifferent about the Newsletter, please let me know. It is very strange working in a vacuum.

The plan, at the moment, is that there will not be a Newsletter at Easter, so the next one will be in the summer, which would be too late to remind you that we are planning a Summer Fayre similar to last year's. It was such a success, both socially and financially and our expenses are not going to get any less. Sonja Baxendale

had to ask the deck steward or go to one of the lounges for refreshment and this meant quite a few stairs to climb before finding what was wanted.

I am told that this short cruise was nothing like the real thing where everyone is looked after superbly so maybe first impressions are not always correct. Val Pettitt

#### VISIT TO ST ANN'S CHURCH IN PORTSMOUTH DOCKYARD.

The church's Georgian brickwork glowed in the sparkling autumn sunshine when we visited this largely unknown architectural treasure this November, but the interior was even more dazzling, filled with light and gleaming white paintwork.

Building began here, on the site of the original Dock Chapel, in 1784 but progress was so slow that Thomas Telford, already on site supervising the building of the Commissioner's House, was brought in to oversee the church as well. He employed a local firm of builders and between them the job was finished in 8 months and under budget for £1850. The dockyard workers all contributed to the cost by having two pence a month deducted from their pay and were happy to do so, evidently.

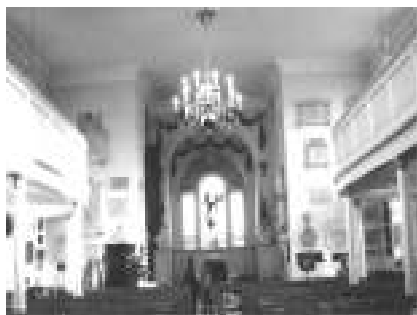
The design is typically Methodist, a long rectangular inclusive space with a three sided gallery. The east end is divided into three sections with the chaplain's living quarters to the left, the vestry to the right, effectively making between them an apse for the altar. A visitor once described the style as Venetian but that's probably due to the striking Palladian window over the altar and the similarly round topped windows on the other three sides.

Sir John Betjeman suggested the present colour scheme of white, blue and gold when the church was restored in 1956, after considerable war damage. The blue and gold is used to pick out the sunburst and swags over the east window, the capitals on the slender columns and most impressively the magnificent plasterwork around the central chandelier. The effect is delicate and delightful. The altar window, also restored after the war shows a fascination aerial view of the dockyard, executed by Hugh Easton, who also designed the Remembrance window at Westminster Abbey.

The church has over 80 memorials, including two to Jane Austen's seafaring brothers, a V.C. holder, Sir J Gommarell and numerous tribute to the bravery and tragedy that, sadly, fill naval history.

This church has such a welcoming atmosphere as you step inside and this is exactly echoed by the warm welcome extended to us by the Chaplain and our really informative guide.

Gilly Zeffertt.



given a warm welcome and a guaranteed attentive and appreciative audience.

**January 15th** 'Photos of Madrid' by Mike English  
**February 15<sup>th</sup>** 'A Cruise on the Q.E.' to the Caribbean' by Olive Lindsay  
**March 4th** 'Moscow and St Petersburg' by Freda Forcey  
**March 25th** 'Quirky Quiz' by Jean Poar.

What better way to spend the dull days of winter than in pleasant reminiscence.

#### LOCAL HISTORY MEETINGS

These dates and speakers have been announced already, but just a reminder:-

**Jan 8 - Bob Hind from The News with his book "City of Gallant Hearts".**

**Jan 29 - Outside visit to the Conan Doyle exhibition at the City Museum.**

**Feb 26 - Trevor Bassett James "The History of Southampton"**

**March 18 - Outside visit. "Return to Farlington Marshes with John Goodsped"**

#### DISCUSSION GROUP

Lin Sharpe has managed to do a reorganisation so that the Discussion Group can use the Albert Stanley Room and so will not have to climb the stairs.

#### FRENCH EXPERIENCE (1)

George and his group of beginners feel the need of more frequent meetings in order to make significant progress. These have been arranged for:-

**Wednesdays 10.00 - 12.00 :- Jan 16 30 Feb 13 Mar 5 19 Apr 2. ANNEXE Bonne Chance!**

#### THE NEW ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

Mr Glenn Dunaway, who holds an MA in Marine Archaeology and who gave us a most interesting talk at a General Meeting on the subject of

'Archaeology - The Basics',

has kindly offered to run a group on Archaeology. A goodly number of people have expressed interest in this and so it has been arranged for

**Friday 2.00-4.00:- Jan 18th Feb 15 Mar 7th Apr 4 in ROOM 1**

#### SPRING TERM FILMS

We now have the necessary licence and so can publicise the names of the films chosen for next term:-

Jan 16<sup>th</sup> "LE BONHEUR EST DANS LE PRE" Dir Etienne Chatiliez France 1995 106 min Colour

Starring Michel Serrault, Eddy Mitchell, Sabine Azema, Carmen Maura.  
An unhappy factory owner leaves home to start as new life with a Spanish woman whose missing husband he resembles.

Feb 13<sup>th</sup> “84 CHARING CROSS ROAD” Dir David Jones, GB, 1986, 97 min, colour.  
Starring Anne Bancroft, Anthony Hopkins, Judi Dench.  
A New York woman conducts a long correspondence with an antiquarian bookseller in London. From the book by Helena Hanff.

Mar 5<sup>th</sup> “THE CRANES ARE FLYING” Dir Mikhail Kalatozov, USSR, 1957, B & W.  
Starring Tatiana Samoilova, Alexei Batalov.  
When her lover goes to war, a girl refuses to believe later reports of his death even though she has suffered much, including marriage to a bully, in the interim.

Apr 2<sup>nd</sup> “DEATH IN VENICE” Dir Luchino Visconti, Italy, 1971, 128 min, T/colour  
Starring Dirk Bogarde, Bjorn Andresen, Silvana Mangano, Marisa Berenson.  
In a lush Venetian hotel one summer in the early years of the century, a middle aged German composer falls for the charms of a silent young boy, and stays in the city too long to escape the approaching plague.

**PROMPT START AT 1.30 DUE TO THE LENGTH OF THIS FILM.**

## 25 GLORIOUS YEARS

This year we are celebrating the Silver Jubilee of U3A. When it was first set up by a group of academics, who would have thought that in 25 years there would be over 600 branches throughout the country, serving all types of communities, all types of people in their later years, and with one thing in common. They were not satisfied with putting their feet up and letting the world pass them by, but realised that retirement was a time for rejuvenation, for taking on new interests and having the time to do all those things which they had always wanted to do but had not had the time for.

They wanted something more stimulating than the conventional “bingo” and “sing-song” of world war songs which were usually on offer.

U3A is a unique concept which is kept going by the enthusiasm of the members and the willingness of members to take responsibility for their own learning activities and making it work.

A brief survey of some of our members in Portsmouth has revealed just what U3A means to them and how much it has enhanced their lives. Here are a few of their responses

“I was in at the start of U3A in Portsmouth and was pleased at how active it was.

## CRUISING WITH U3A

In September 2006 I was lucky enough to be invited to share with a friend from Waterlooville U3A a cabin aboard the good ship Van Gogh. This seemed a good idea as I had never been on a cruise before and three days was just about right to find out what cruising was like, so I accepted and on Thursday the 13<sup>th</sup> September this year we left Portsmouth for The Lizard where we were staying before boarding the ship at Falmouth.

Up bright and early on Saturday we were packed and ready to go by 10am. It was only a forty-minute drive to Falmouth and we arrived in time to find out where to go for boarding the ship and have some lunch. It was obvious that many people had had the same idea and we could easily recognise other U3A members strolling around Falmouth waiting for 2pm when we could drive to the car park and board ship.

After a long and dusty wait and the car safely parked we boarded the ship. However these days the fear of any infection is strong and after showing our passports and tickets we had to have our hands sprayed with disinfectant before moving on.

This happened before every meal and when leaving and returning to the ship. Our cabin was comfortable with two portholes that we could open if needed or we could rely on the air conditioning.

Having a conference on board a ship is not as simple as it appears. The main events of the conference were held in the ballroom where the seating was largely settees with fixed tables in front for drinks and snacks. There were movable seats but space was limited so unless you arrived very early for the session it was difficult to see the screen and to hear the speaker and there were many cries of “I cannot see” or “I cannot hear”. Also, and we all thought this funny, as the ship rolled the speaker’s microphone slid along his table and he had to move after it or wait for it to come back to him. However, much interaction was happening among the passengers, ideas exchanged and new friends made.

We had an afternoon in Le Havre and then on to the Scilly Isles. Unfortunately the weather changed dramatically on our return to the ship and as we cruised to the Scilly Isles the wind became very strong, so strong that it was difficult to stand on deck or even move away from the rail without finding something to hold on to. This meant that when we arrived at the Islands we could not land. The tender needed to ferry visitors from the ship to the island could not tie up as the waves were six feet high or even higher and nobody felt inclined to jump from the deck onto the tender so the visit to the Scilly Isles was off. A great pity as this was really the main attraction of the whole cruise. In spite of the wind the weather was sunny and clear and the Scilly Isles looked so beautiful that many promises were made to return and explore this amazing place.

I did enjoy the experience very much and the conference itself was informative and interesting, but as to going on another cruise I will probably not do so again. The Cabin facilities were sparse unlike an hotel room. For a cup of tea or a hair dryer we

the size of the house and grounds, that we really were not aware of more than a few other people at any one time.

As the sun was still shining, if a little more hazily by now, Joan, Daphne and I decided to start our visit in the grounds. We were a little disappointed that the autumn colours were not yet at their best, but agreed that the park was truly magnificent and the gravel paths were a joy to walk on. Two of the group were even able to visit everywhere using motorised scooters! We aimed for the Japanese garden which was very pretty, and also saw the Fernery, the Cedar Walk and the Lady's Walk. We admired the vistas across the park from afar.

#### JAPANESE GARDEN



All this walking gave us an appetite for lunch which we took in the old stables. This was a real pleasure, not only was the food very good, but the stables had not been gutted to provide space for a restaurant, instead tables were installed in the old loose boxes, complete with their mangers.

After lunch we found that the sun had disappeared and that we were right to leave our visit to the house until the afternoon. There was so much to see in the house that one could easily spend a whole day just looking at pictures. In all there are three floors, the third being the nursery floor, less grand than the others but with an interesting display of models of the house as it changed over the ages. In the other rooms there were many pictures but sadly it was not possible to really see all of them due to the subdued lighting, meant to protect them from fading. There was also beautiful furniture, chandeliers, and porcelain. The ceilings also were magnificent.

After this we returned to the stables for welcome refreshment and then paid a visit to the shop where I bought my first Christmas present! We returned to the coach at 4pm and arrived back in Portsmouth by 5.30 after a very enjoyable day. Thanks again to Freda for organising it.

Valerie Pornicott

#### COMPUTER GROUP

We are fortunate to have as our tutor Aileen Loughran who headed a College Computer Department when working. Her expertise encourages even those with no experience and the eight participants at each session realise it is not as difficult as they thought to become computer literate. The number of computers available enables Aileen to give individual tuition and each group member can feel the pleasure of a new skill acquired.

Ruth Everitt

I have made lots of friends and I think it is a wonderful force for good for older people. It satisfies my urge to learn." Alma.

"U3A has been an important element in my life. When my wife died it became the mainstay of my life and the main source of support and stimulation." Jim.

"I was very thankful to be introduced to U3A. It is a great organisation and has been a great inspiration." Daphne.

"When I retired, friends told me to put my feet up. What a bad idea! I joined U3A instead and I have always been grateful for the variety of classes and the friendship Ruth.

"Having come from living abroad for many years, I found there was a big space in my life and I am grateful to U3A for filling it." Lesley.

"After a long spell in the wilderness, following the death of my husband, and as a fairly new member, U3A has restored my confidence and I enjoy coming". Janet.

"I joined U3A when I retired and found it was the ideas place to meet people who shared my enthusiasms. I have not looked back since." Alan

I think these comments speak for themselves!

We celebrated the occasion in Portsmouth by holding a bumper Summer Fayre to raise more funds which will enable us to carry on the good work.

Here's to the next 25 years!

Eunice Butler

#### FRENCH: BEGINNERS AND INTERMEDIATE.

The renewed bout of enthusiasm for the French language, generated by the last visit to Caen, is still evident here and there in our classes, I'm pleased to announce. Whether 'cause and effect' applies here or not, it is a fact that the lessons are still well attended and that several newcomers – encouraged by our established students – have made and are making their appearance. So far we have been able to carry on and function quite comfortably in the Annexe, but it's occasionally something of a squeeze – and there was yet another telephone call a day or two ago.... 'I'm sorry to bother you, but I've been told that you are running French classes in the Community Centre..' etc. Well, far better that they should be coming rather than going, of course!!

The 'Beginners' group soldiers stolidly on, suffering my occasional flarings of impatience stoically, heads bowed until the storm passeth... I love them all, but some

have been ‘beginners’ since Genesis Chapter 1 and I wonder if we should not find a more descriptive name for the group. During the lessons their enthusiasm and love of all things French is always obvious, but this class suffers particularly from the fact that we can meet only once a fortnight. Follow-up work between lessons is what is needed, of course, if sustainable progress is to be made, but – with two or three notable exceptions – this is not always evident. Well, this is a lot to ask, I know, and, yes, I’m very much alive to the fact that there are many more important things in their lives than George Jenkins’ French lessons!! Their acknowledgement of my efforts and their support have always been rock-solid, evidenced in things like the gifts and impromptu classroom parties at the end of term, for example. I’d like to be able to find a way for us to meet weekly rather than fortnightly, to devote the extra lesson to basic grammar, perhaps, something of that sort. I’ll have a word with ‘la gestion’.

Ah. do I take it all too seriously?

The ‘Intermediate’ group could also undergo, quite reasonably, a change of title since there are dotted among its shining faces an increasing number whose owners speak really good and fluent French, and who love a no-holds-barred conversation in that language. This encourages the others – not as fluent, maybe, but whose faces shine with an equal radiance – to exert themselves to keep up, with a very positive approach. We have slogged through our ‘French Experience 1’ and have now decided to go on to the follow-up book; we’re having to but these ourselves this time but all seem ready to do this. We have also reached the last chapter of the story of Charles’s adventures in France; he is coming to the end of his stay with the Barbier family and has he made a move towards Louise yet? Not on your nelly, not our uptight 1950s Englishman. I’m considering adding another chapter myself to dissipate the clouds of frustration engendered in the classroom by all this. On second thoughts – it would make a good homework project..... Speaking of which, one of the highlights of last term was the response to my request that the class should go home and translate the following poem by Christopher Isherwood:

The common cormorant or shag  
Lays eggs inside a paper bag  
The reason you will see no doubt  
It is to keep the lightning out!  
But what these unobservant birds  
Have never noticed is that herds  
Of wandering bears that come with buns  
And steal the bags to hold the crumbs.

The results were amazingly good.

George Jenkins.

#### SUMMER LUNCH

What a shame the Summer Lunch was not better supported! Those of us who were there had an excellent lunch, a cold salmon salad, followed by a selection of

then costs only £3.00 pa to join. There are also social events e.g. an Xmas dinner and trips out. There is always a speaker on a topic of relevance to pensioners and a chance to meet some of the other 34,000 pensioners on Portsea Island. Peter Evans

#### TAXI I HAVE KNOWN

I jumped into the taxi and to my horror realised I only had £3 in my purse. Panicking, I said to the driver, “Don’t take the long way round, driver.” With that he erupted like a volcano.

“How dare you say that to me! I have never been so insulted”, he screamed and shouted

Me: “I was only panicking because I have no more than £3.....”

Driver: “No-one has ever insulted me like this. Who do you think you are?” A stream of invective followed.

Me: “But...” I weakly tried, “You have obviously had a long and exhausting day.”

Driver: “There you go again!” he screamed. And off he went swearing and cursing.

Me: “But I didn’t mean...” And to my shame I burst into tears.

Driver: “Go on cry, I don’t care” he yelled, “I am so angry – What kind of person are you!”

Me: “I have never had a taxi driver like you”, I sobbed, “and I hope I don’t again”.

Driver: “And I hope we never meet again”, he screamed at me.

Me: “Here is your money, it is usually about £3”, I hiccupped.

Driver: “Hah!” he yelled triumphantly, “someone has cheated you, it is only £2.60. And I don’t want your money! Keep your money and go!”

With that, the last straw, I fled, ran into the house, sat on the naughty step and howled. It was not long before laughter (or perhaps hysteria) bubbled up in me and I thought, “Why the poor man is simply having a bad day like me!”

Yesterday my taxi driver was utterly charming. We had a wonderful conversation on Pat Metheny (jazz musician, I did not know – marvellous on his tape), Vivaldi and even Dolly Parton. He was so full of joy and enthusiasm about his music.

“It lifts the soul, I love sharing it”, he said as he wrote down a name for me.

Taxi drivers – I do love them!

Irene Macmillan

#### GARDEN APPRECIATION GROUP VISIT TO KINGSTON LACEY Oct 24th

Despite a gloomy weather forecast the coach left Southsea under blue skies and bright sunshine. The journey took one and a half hours and we arrived at Kingston Lacy somewhat surprised to see the car park full of cars. Of course it was half term. My heart sank a little at the thought of visiting among crowds of other people, but such is

In the afternoon we were led by our chaperone to No 1 Parliament Street across Parliament Square to meet and lobby Mike Hancock our MP for Portsmouth South. Those from Portsmouth North went into Westminster Hall to meet their MP Sarah McCarthy-Fry. The area around Parliament Square is always exciting, hundreds of tourists and even some protestors (for change in Burma and Iraq) have been allowed. It must be a basic democratic right to allow such protests. Unfortunately we had only a short time with our MP, as he was "called away to a vote" (it was Prime Minister's Question Time), and many of our questions remained unaddressed.

We were led from No 1 through to the new Parliament Building, Portcullis House, (the one with the egg box roof). This has an amazing tall glass roofed atrium, with tree-like columns, and even (very expensive?) real trees, with many cafés and counters, much like a shopping mall. This huge atrium, it seemed to me, was possibly a luxury in Central London. It was buzzing with activity, and there were a surprising number of children eating at the tables (it was half term). We were then led via an underpass under Westminster Bridge Road to the ancient Westminster Hall in Parliament. This was filled with a large number of pensioners awaiting their MPs and this year it had been heated. This, thankfully, also has an excellent (but expensive) café for refreshments.

Some pensioners went to the Commons Gallery to watch the debates. The atmosphere of the House remains essentially one of a free parliament despite the ever increasing security "needed" today. It appears anyone can go into Parliament to lobby their MP, and also to the visitor's galleries in both the Commons and the Lords (why not arrange a visit for your group?).

There appear to me to be a continuing need for pensioner pressure groups to remind their "elected representatives" of the needs of the increasing number of pensioners. Pensioners do make up a considerable amount of the electorate who do bother to vote, and maybe have been considered of little consequence in the past, but they must not remain "invisible" nowadays.

The debate must be raised on how this society is going to cope with an increasing number of elderly people. The debate at the conference covered many areas. Housing was one of importance. Do we need far more reasonable priced sheltered and other housing schemes which may release housing for the young. How is medical and social care to be provided and allocated, and by whom? Has this society gone down the wrong route where pensioner "independence" has produced too many older people isolated from their families and society. All these problems must be settled without alienating the young who appear to be having their own difficult time at present, with overpriced housing, loss of job security, the reduction and disappearance of pensions in old age and the possible lessening of the Welfare State umbrella.

A very interesting day leaving us with much to think about.

If you are interested in coming along to a meeting of the Portsmouth Pensioners Association, we meet in the Council Chamber at 1400 on the first Monday of the month (or Tuesday if there is a Bank Holiday). The first taster meeting is free and it

desserts to die for! Then there was cheese and coffee to finish.

The "home-grown" entertainment to follow was in the best traditions of U.3.A. ie. recitations and readings from a variety of sources. Jim Shaw gave a rendition of one of Stanley Holloway's famous monologues. Ruth Everett, Sonja Baxendale, and Joyce Walters amused us with readings from their favourite poetry and prose, and George Jenkins read a passage from "Pride and Prejudice", with which we were all familiar. We all departed having enjoyed a very pleasant lunch hour (or two). Many thanks to the cooks and to Irene Macmillan for all the organising. Olive Lindsay

## SUNDAY STROLLERS

We walk fortnightly during term time using public transport, generally four or five miles and as our name suggests we don't stride out, but get there at a gentle pace taking in coffee shops (and the occasional pub) on the way.

This follows a meeting at the beginning of term when we plan our walks.

Wet weather doesn't usually put us off unless the forecast is really bad, the decision being made by the walk leader.

At the moment we have ten members, usually six or seven on each walk. Sadly we find, for various reasons, our numbers are reduced by one or two each year and enough new members are not coming forward to keep the numbers up, particularly not men. We have one brave man who joined us this term and was not daunted by the female majority as some have been.

The walks programme is on the notice board. Call me if you think our group is for you.  
Barbara Pennekett (9283 2635)

## LOCAL HISTORY REPORT

The June meeting saw us at the City Museum viewing "The People's Choice", which as its name suggests, was an exhibition of artefacts from the collections chosen by local people. A large proportion of the museum's collection is rarely seen because of lack of space, so this was a chance to see some favourite objects. The result was an eclectic selection, ranging from Roman jewellery, a rabbit skin coat and items of early sanitary fittings!

In early June we joined with the Travel Talkabout group for a Quiz, which proved informative and entertaining, testing our memories of previous meetings.

The autumn term began with a talk by Wendy Smith, entitled "Portsmouth's Hidden Jewel", the Dockyard church of St Ann. We have since visited the church and an account will be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

We had a return visit from Andrew Whitmarsh in October. Andrew is Military

History Officer and came to talk about his recent publication, "Portsmouth at War". His anecdotes concerning some of the illustrations were very interesting, especially to those members who had experience of those momentous years in the city.

As we go to press, we look forward to the last meeting of the term, which will be held at the Portsmouth Sailing Club, where we hope to learn something of the history of this Old Portsmouth building, and more about the club's first Commodore, W. L. Wyllie, the renowned Marine Artist.  
Olive Lindsay

### VISIT TO CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE

This is a truly local theatre, being the dream of a retired Chichester councillor, Mr Evershead Martin and realised by the generous donations of the Chichester citizens. The eventual cost was £100,000 and the building was designed by the prominent partnership of architects Powell and Moya.

The theatre and its materials are as simple and as functional as they could make it, with a "thrust" stage projecting into the auditorium of 1000 seats in much the same way as the ancient Greeks used. As you look up, all the rafters and roof structures are visible, with steel girders criss-crossing the hexagonal shape of the entire building.

However, there are disadvantages to this open plan. Rain on the roof can sometimes drown out the actors, and certain lighting cues can only be operated by someone perched aloft on a rafter, like a lonely pigeon.

Sir Laurence Olivier, the first director of the theatre, was extremely keen to have this open, audience-friendly stage shape. To this end the Canadian Royal Shakespeare Company sent a gift of maple planks with which to build it.

We were also shown the technical and practical parts of the theatre, such as the sound and lighting boxes, hot and cramped and packed full of the latest gizmos and the distinctly un-starry dressing rooms in basic concrete, reflecting the egalitarian ethos of the theatre's set-up. The star dressing room differed only in having its own loo and shower – necessary, but hardly Hollywood!

Chichester has had its highs and lows, strategically and financially but nevertheless, we are so lucky to have a theatre in our area that continues to provide West End standard production

Gilly Zeffert



### PORTSMOUTH PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION – INVASION OF WESTMINSTER.

The National Pensioners Convention(NPC) held a day of lobbying Members of Parliament on Wednesday 24.10.07, to seek some redress on matters of importance to British pensioners.

These include:-

- 1) Why do we have among the lowest Old Age Retirement Pension in Western Europe (which is below the Government own estimate of a minimum income)?
- 2) What is to be done to give those who do not have full National Insurance Contributions a pension on which they can live reasonably?
- 3) How is the state going to provide the increasing resources for care, and medical help, for a growing number of elderly?
- 4) How can the state provide reasonable accommodation, and resources for the older citizen etc, et cetera.

On a cold winters day 22 members travelled by minibus to Westminster, stopping for a "comfort break" at the impressive Guildford Cathedral, arriving outside Parliament at 11.15. Here some of us became "invisible" and walked across Parliament Square to the Methodist Hall, getting an acknowledgement from John Prescott on the way, and passing a barrage of "the press", only my second experience of our "free press" at work – ouch.



There were a large number of pensioners from all over Britain already there, and many made their way to The Central Methodist Hall on the western side of Parliament Green. This impressive Victorian building has several very large halls, a chapel and a small Museum of Methodism as well as some wonderful decorations. It also, thankfully, has an excellent cheap and clean restaurant in the basement. It must be one of the cheapest places to eat hot meals in Central London. There were many MPs, Trade Union leaders and NPC officials on the platform, and informative debates ensued. This year there were even more pensioners than on previous years, and some could not get into the enormous hall because of crowding. There was also support from our fellow pensioners organisation in Europe. The level of debate was excellent, the most passionate being from the Chairman of the PCS Trade Union. It surely is a sign of a civilised society that it does care for its older (and younger) citizens. There was agreement from the platform, and from the floor, that this society must start to address the changes in demographics of the population now.