

# *In Contact*

*January, 2007*

The newsletter of Durham U3A

*Here we go again*

**S**o it's all over once more. The tree is down, the baubles packed away and most of the pine needles hoovered. Not all of them, of course. The Christmas cards may have already been despatched to the recycling bin, but there's the remains of the cake and you can't think of any more ways of using the cold turkey. There are still a few thank you letters to write and some of those family saga letters to read and stow away for next year's riposte. But, let's face it – the year 2007 has arrived and it's time to plan the holidays.

Our speaker finders, Connie and Pat, have delivered a varied and interesting programme of speakers and topics for the monthly meetings and I hope to see you at most of them. The conveners of the study groups are planning their own programmes.

Make the most of your U3A membership. Let us have suggestions for more groups and help the committee to set them up

On July 19 the region will be organising an activities day at New College. Book it in your diary and look for further details.

Meanwhile – best wishes for 2007!

Derek Sowell

## *A new year beckons*

**It's a change of sex** for Durham U3A (in the best possible taste, of course). After quite a few years with a woman at its head, we now have a male chairman, Derek Sowell. He has held that position before in the early life of our branch. His election was warmly welcomed by members at the annual meeting in November. We look forward to an interesting year ahead.

In her report for the past year, our retiring chairman, Janet Murrell gave us her views on our place in the local and national set up.

She pointed out how many special interest groups are being run, covering a wide range of subjects from French to poetry and from music to walking and still more would be welcome if that is what members want.

Responses to the proposed reorganisation of the U3A had to be in by the end of November. Janet felt the plans were too fragmented and complex. "We need to accept that we belong to a national and international movement." She said.

She thanked the committee for their support, especially Joy Davison and Tommy Grimson; Eric Brookes for his work in arranging speakers (now to be succeeded by Pat Johnson and Connie Stone); the technical team had given sterling service as had the "smiley ladies" who welcome members at the doors. The staff of the Bowling Club were always helpful.

Derek Sowell thanked Janet for her sterling work as chairman for the past three years

The treasurer, Ruth Withers, presented the accounts and pointed out that the monthly meetings showed a deficit as a comparatively small number of members attended, but the

group could afford to subsidise this loss. Susan Fraser was thanked for her help with the accounts.

Peter Withers presented the new constitution, which was agreed. The officers and committee were elected with the addition of the two new committee members, Gillian Owens and Richard Wood.

Professor Paterson, a senior lecturer in ancient poetry at Newcastle University, rounded off the meeting with an illuminating talk on the role of wine in the ancient world.

**Pam Edwards**

### **Officers and Committee of Durham U3A**

<b>Chairman</b>	Derek Sowell
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Pam Edwards
<b>Secretary</b>	Peter Withers
<b>Treasurer</b>	Ruth Withers
<b>Asst. Treasurer</b>	Eileen Sparham
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Joy Fallon
<b>Committee Members</b>	Eric Brookes Margaret Hazelton Eileen Sparham Richard Wood Gillian Owens

*Let's shake off the dust*

*Some practical advice from Bowburn, Shincliffe and Elvet Methodists, passed on by Sybil Staveley.*

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better  
To paint a picture or to write a letter,  
Bake a cake or plant a seed,  
Ponder the difference between want and need?

Dust if you must, but there's not much time,  
With rivers to swim and mountains to climb,  
Music to hear and books to read,  
Friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must, but the world's out there  
With the sun in your eyes, the wind in your hair,  
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain,  
This day will never come round again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind,  
Old age will come and it's not kind,  
And when you go – and go you must,  
You, yourself, will make more dust.

## *Talks to look forward to*

**January 11 Mrs. M. Hawgood (ex-Mayor of Durham)**

### **Fifteen years as a City Councillor**

Mrs. Hawgood read French at St. Mary's College, Durham where she was president of the Women's Union. She taught in France and at the City of London Freeman's School and Durham Girls' Grammar School. She has been a writer and presenter at Radio Durham and Newcastle. She has been involved in numerous voluntary activities in the Durham area, where she has now lived for 50 years, including 15 years on the City Council, acting as Deputy Mayor and as Mayor.

**February 8 Mr. M. Hughes**

### **Durham University Botanic Gardens**

Mike Hughes has worked at the garden for over 20 years and his talk will cover both the history and future plans of the garden.

**March 8 Dr. Bob McManners**

### **Mining Art & Interpreting the Art of Tom McGuinness**

Bob McManners is a medical practitioner in Bishop Auckland with a life-long interest in art as well as being an artist himself. He has a particular interest in mining art and has had books on art published. He will give an insight into the meaning behind the fantastic art of Tom McGuinness.

## *Treasures*

Have you got a treasure? I have three –  
Not antiques or gold but of great value to me.  
The first is very modern  
In trim cream shorts with T shirt to match  
As she dusts and hoovers or bends to some task  
The subtle tattoo moves in time on her back  
Instructions are not needed,  
She does what is required.  
The coffee break chat and cuppa  
Is all that is desired.

The second of my treasures  
Arrives in spotless white  
With stripper or brushes at the ready  
To decorate for my delight.  
He's not averse to moving things  
Or fixing this or that.  
"No probs" is his favourite answer –  
What more could I ask than that?

My third is a long time treasure.  
He leaves my milk every day,  
Through a family line for 45 years  
Whatever the weather he always finds the way;  
On pay day we linger on the step  
And put the world to rights.  
This summer he sported a panama hat:  
It was an impressive sight.

**Connie Stone**

***If you ever go across the sea....***

**We did.** We flew into Kerry airport in the far south-west of Ireland. There were ten of us plus an infant to enjoy a celebratory weekend to mark our daughter's fiftieth birthday. Our destination was Dingle.

Dingle is a joy. It is a small fishing town set at the head of a natural bay, complete with a long-term resident dolphin, Fungie, who accompanied us on a boat trip around the harbour much to the delight of the grandchildren. The streets are narrow and the vibrant colours of the houses and bars present a kaleidoscope of hues from burnt sienna to blush pink. There are no chain shops.

The bars (every other house is a bar) are small and apparently belong to O'Reilly or O'Connor or O'Shaunessy. At night they pulsate with live music and live musicians. They are crowded with people of all ages, yet no sign of binge drinking. Guinness drinking, yes! The notice in our hotel read "*There is a Residents' Bar. Please note that this will definitely close not later than 3.30 a.m.*"

East of the town lies Inch Strand, famous for scenes in "Ryan's Daughter". A wedding party arrived to have the photographs taken. In the other direction are the beehive huts – igloos built from overlapping stones and inhabited as late as 500 A.D. Everywhere there are empty beaches of fine sand, off-shore islands, looming mountains and stupendous skies.

Go across the sea to Ireland. Go to Dingle.

**Derek Sowell**

## *Silence*

### **My father used to say**

“Superior people never make long visits,  
Have to be shown Longfellow’s grave  
Or the glass flowers at Harvard.  
Self-reliant like the cat –  
That takes its prey to privacy,  
The mouse’s limp tail hanging  
    down like a shoelace from its mouth –  
They sometimes enjoy solitude.  
And can be robbed of speech  
By speech which has delighted them.  
The deepest feeling always shows  
    itself in silence.  
Not in silence, but restraint.”  
Nor was he insincere in saying “Make  
    my house your inn”.  
Inns are not residences.

**Marianne Moore**

**The next issue** of In Contact will come out in April. The deadline is February 28. Please send your contributions to me at Rosings, Austen Way, High Farm, Crook, DL15 9UT.

**Pam Edwards**