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**THE UNIVERSITY  
OF THE  
THIRD AGE  
SETTLE  
DISTRICT**

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Dear Friends  
Out on a U3A walk a few weeks ago someone commented that male reindeer do not have antlers and that therefore Santa's sleigh must be pulled by female reindeer. I just had to check this and it would appear that male reindeer shed their antlers around Christmas time so maybe the sleigh team are females. Isn't it amazing what you learn through joining U3A! I decided to have a look at some other interesting facts and legends about Christmas time and here are a few I found. I hope you find them as interesting and amusing as I do:-



2012

In Poland, spiders or spider webs are common Christmas tree decorations because according to legend, a spider wove a blanket for baby Jesus. In fact, Polish people consider spiders to be symbols of goodness and prosperity at Christmas. Bolivians celebrate "Misa de Gallo" or "Mass of the Rooster" on Christmas Eve. Some people bring roosters to the midnight mass, a gesture that symbolizes the belief that a rooster was the first animal to announce the birth of Jesus. In Germany, Heiligabend, or Christmas Eve, is said to be a magical time when the pure in heart can hear animals talking. Robins on cards were a joke 150 years ago when postmen wore red tunics and were named after them. Returning to the theme of reindeer, perhaps someone should tell Norwegian scientists who have hypothesized that Rudolph's red nose is probably the result of a parasitic infection of his respiratory system, that red nosed Rudolph was invented for a US firm's Christmas promotion in 1938!

Please note that on 23<sup>rd</sup> January new members are invited to afternoon tea and cake with the committee in the Friends' Meeting House between 2.30pm - 4.30pm. The committee hopes this will be an opportunity for us to introduce ourselves, answer any questions and listen to any ideas you may have.

I wish everyone a very happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you again in 2013.  
Nita

*Merry  
Christmas*



## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS



**ART APPRECIATION:** At the November meeting Sue Simpson gave us a fascinating account of the work produced by Charles Rennie Mackintosh when he lived in France. His landscapes were very distinctive and quite different from his better-known architectural earlier work. For some of us it provided an insight into a part of his work we knew nothing about. Our next meeting is on 8th January when Frank Gordon will be talking about his own work entitled "A Life Spent Watching Paint Dry".  
**Kate Helm**

**GEOLOGY & LANDSCAPE GROUP:** Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 18th December at 14:00 - we will be in the Castleberg Room at Victoria Hall. The talk will be given by Josephine Drake who will lead us through "Some Colourful Geology in Anglesey". After this we are having a Christmas get together which will take the form of a Jacob's Join - finger food only please.  
**Paul Cochrane**

**GREAT LIVES:** We are not meeting in December - too near Christmas, but will resume on Jan 16th 2013. The meeting will start at 11 a.m. This time the subject will be "Napoleon". May I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and I look forward to seeing you all in January.  
**Jean Imrie**

### SIR JOSEPH BAZELGETTE

November's Great Life was presented by Dorothy Hemsworth & was a lesson to us all that we owe as much of our good health to engineers as to medical science. One of the greatest civil engineers was Sir Joseph Bazalgette who, as Chief Engineer of London Board of Works in the 19th century, was responsible for the building of London's subterranean sewage system which consists of over 1000 miles of tunnels. Still in use today, because of Bazalgette's foresight in designing the tunnels more than twice as large as necessary, they would have overflowed in the 1960s. Dorothy neatly pieced the story together for us by first relating the story of the horrific death toll due to cholera in towns & cities, especially London, in the 19th century. This culminated in "The Great Stink" of 1858 when Parliament was forced to act as Westminster had to be closed down for a while. We learnt of Dr John Snow who had proved that water contamination, not miasmas (bad smells), caused diseases such as cholera earlier in the 19th century but this had not been readily accepted. He died in the year of the Great Stink but he was vindicated when after the sewerage system became operational deaths due to cholera dropped dramatically.

Bazalgette was responsible for many other great engineering works including the London Pumping Stations, one of which was known as "a cathedral to sewage" & another, now a listed building. Dorothy summed up by saying that no one individual had done more to change the face of London or the health of Londoners. We were also fascinated to hear of three notable lives from among Sir Joseph Bazalgette's descendants. In the jargon of today, 'five for the price of one' was more than a bargain it was a real treat.  
**Vanessa Stone**

**HERALDRY:** There will be NO beginners group in January. The next class will be Thursday 7th February in the Victoria Hall at 10.30am. The continuation group will start again after Christmas and our first talk will be on Thursday 17th January in Victoria Hall at 10.30am when I will be talking on "The Heraldry of the Battle of Bosworth" - all being well! Peter Marshall will be coming to give his annual talk in February and, hopefully, Alan will talk in March. But more news of them later. In the meantime it just remains for me to wish you all a very happy Christmas and I will see you all in the New Year.  
**Hilary Baker**

### The U3A's Inaugural Founders' Lecture

This will take place at 2.00pm on Tuesday 9th April 2013 at the Friends' Meeting House, 117 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ (opposite Euston Station). Entitled "Schooldays Stories, Educational Failure and the U3A Ideal", it will be given by Eric Midwinter, one of U3A's three founders. He will explain how schoolboy books and comics contributed to the creation of a secondary school system that is unfit for purpose. If you would like to attend the lecture you will need to apply to the National Office (19 East Street, Bromley BR1 1QE). Admission is £5 and cheques should be made payable to The Third Age Trust.

### In Depth Study Groups

The Third Age Trust's Education subcommittee would like to set up some in-depth study groups for those members who would be committed to studying a subject in depth over a period of time. The planning process is at an early stage and would obviously depend on there being people willing to lead such study groups or to participate in one. The range of possible subjects is very large and could include some with a limited appeal such as quantum electrodynamics. The Third Age Trust would like to hear from any U3A member (giving the name of their U3A): a) who is interested in becoming a member of an Internet based in depth study group, stating the preferred subject/subjects, or b) who has the enthusiasm/expertise to lead an Internet in depth group. If you are interested please email the National Office at [nationaloffice@u3a.org.uk](mailto:nationaloffice@u3a.org.uk) with 'IDS Groups' as the subject.

If you would like the full text of this information, please contact Kate Helm on 01274 482495 or [kate.helm1@btinternet.com](mailto:kate.helm1@btinternet.com)

### Regional Summer School

The details for the YAHR Summer School are now being finalised. It will take place at Wentworth Castle 5th – 8th August 2013. A range of topics will be available and full information will be ready early in January. Members will be able to book places from February. To keep up to date with this you can go to the YAHR website from the link on our own website.

### National Summer Schools

**Summer School 1:** 15th – 18th July at Harper Adams University College nr Telford. Courses available are on Art, Cinema History, Current Affairs, Design Principles in Art, France, Geology, History, Poetry, Recorder Ensemble Playing.

**Summer School 2:** 19th – 22nd August at The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. Courses available are on Architecture, Digital Photography, Drama, History, Literature, Music, Short Stories, Singing for Pleasure, Theatre History

Bookings are now taking place for these summer schools. Full details can be found and booking forms downloaded from the members area of the national U3A website (linked from our own website) or from Kate Helm (01274 482495 or [kate.helm1@btinternet.com](mailto:kate.helm1@btinternet.com)). A few copies will be available at the monthly meetings.

### ILKLEY PLAYHOUSE

Please book as soon as you can for Woody Allen's "Play it again Sam" on Wednesday January 23rd, as we have tickets to spare. Contact me on 01729 840882 to reserve your seat.

Attractions for the New Year

Janet and I would like you to express an interest in the following visits so that we can gauge whether or not to book them.

April: A Tour of the BBC studios at Media City Salford (see the website). Also on that day if possible we could go to Manchester airport for a tour of Concorde.

May: The play Warhorse is coming to the Alhambra.

If you are interested in either of these events will you please let me know, as they have to be booked well in advance for parties. My e-mail address is

[s.wolfenden835@btinternet.com](mailto:s.wolfenden835@btinternet.com) or you can write to Smithy Croft, Rathmell, Settle BD24 0LA

Hoping to hear from lots of people.

**Shirley Wolfenden**

### ALL IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS!

Do you remember last year's variety show? A few members of the audience gave scores to the acts just like 'Strictly Come Dancing'. Afterwards Chris Petrie came up to me with these extra meanings of the scores.

The score of 10 could mean 2 in Binary. If held upside down - 01 - it could mean 1 in anything. On its side - 0 - it means definitely 0. And held 180° the other way it could mean minus zero.

Finally 8 = eight, but lying on its side it equals infinity.

Food for thought?

**Debi Burridge**

### JANUARY MEETING

#### "THE BIRTWISTLES"

**Tony Stephens**

Thursday 10th January 1913

Victoria Hall 10.30am

*(Coffee from 10.00am)*

### NATIONAL AND REGIONAL NEWS

(Please see insert for details of forth-coming events). Remember the Summer Schools book up early!

For further details please contact

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**Friday 4th January** e-mail: [susanmsimpson@btinternet.com](mailto:susanmsimpson@btinternet.com)

(Tel: 015242 41271) Copy received by e-mail will be acknowledged.

### AUTUMN THEATRE TRIP

(A Personal Review of Great Expectations at the Theatre by the Lake)

Once again, thank you to Janet and Shirley for organising a theatre trip to Keswick. We had a delightful coach journey and all enjoyed the countryside painted in glorious autumnal colours. As usual we stopped for coffee at Grasmere and then had a couple of hours to enjoy Keswick. The weather was kind and although the fells were topped with looming cloud at times, we were spared the rain that usually accompanies us on these trips.

I wondered how a two and a half hour stage production would cope with the passage of time in the book and how a small stage would manage the range of sets needed to tell the story. Neil Bartlett's excellent adaptation answered those questions by employing a lot of narration from a mature Pip as he fights with his memories, fears and expectations.

An interesting single backdrop of Miss Havisham's dilapidated home became, in itself, one of the main protagonists. The action changed from "indoors" to "outdoors" frequently. There were numerous doors and windows around the set and the cast moved on and off stage and between roles at great speed. They acted as scene shifters and Greek chorus too. I thought at one point that it was "Charles Dickens meets Brian Rix" which brought lighter moments and black comedy to relieve the intensity and sadness of the plot.

The special effects were well received and the moment when Miss Havisham's desiccated wedding dress caught fire and she returned to the stage, was quite spine tingling. It was a stylised production but none the worse for that.

Today I read a review of the production and found that much of what the critic didn't like made it more interesting for me, but I am no purist. As a girl I saw a more traditional Great Expectations at the Bristol Old Vic and since then I've watched it as a film, as TV dramas, and a memorable performance by the Northern Theatre Ballet. The story is well known to me. This production will stand happily with those other adaptations of what is a sad, complicated and dense tale.

I will agree that the ending was rather too enigmatic for my taste but the acting carried me along and left me quite mesmerised as Pip wept real tears and we felt his turmoil.

Another lovely journey home through Cumbria and the Dales finished a very happy day.

**Wendy Newby**

### BBC CHILDREN IN NEED

Wendy Newby, who leads the U3A card making group, very generously brought a supply of her beautiful cards to the Circle Dance session on Nov 16th.

Members of the group eagerly purchased the cards and in doing so raised over £150 for Children in Need. A big thank you to Wendy and all the dancers for giving so generously to such a worthy cause. Who could fail to be moved by the courage and determination of those children with special needs who so bravely pedalled the rickshaw through all weathers and difficult conditions.