

UPPER BANN U3A NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2018

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MONTHLY GET-TOGETHER

(Report and photographs Ruth McKinley)

Thirty eight members gathered in the Hub, Craigavon, on Monday, 17th September to hear Alex Barr, a new member of the Committee, give a very interesting and informative talk on her visit to the Antarctic.

We were treated to scenes of majestic icebergs and wildlife which varied from penguins to whales. There was even a photograph of some 'human' wildlife in a volcanically heated jacuzzi!!

Most, if not all, were really envious of her initiative and zest for a challenging holiday. 'Not too late' she assured us but

Afterwards members had the opportunity to catch up with each other over a cup of tea/coffee. Alex even supplied Penguin for all!

Next month the Get-Together will be on Monday 15th October when Lorna Liggett will be the speaker. The title of her talk is 'Memories of a Nursing Student'.



BRIDGE LESSONS

Tom plans to recommence Bridge Lessons for improvers on Friday 5th October at 9.30 am. Lessons for beginners will begin in January 2019. More information to follow.

NATURE CORNER (Pat Flowerday)

The Nature Group was due to go on its first outing of the season on the third Wednesday of the month, but Storm Ali had other ideas and we were forced to cancel the trip. The following Wednesday was kinder, and a trip to Strangford Lough was organised.



From a vantage point near Newtownards Airfield we spotted newly arrived Brent Geese on the water and listened to their gentle humming and mumbling sounds as they communicated with one another while feeding on the eel grass, their favourite food, which is in plentiful supply in Strangford Lough. The mudflats here too provide a rich supply of food for herons, egrets and numerous wading birds. The airfield's Cloud Nine cafe was very convenient for our small group of four to adjourn to for a warming cuppa and a bite of lunch.

Future nature trips will include Belfast Harbour Reserve, Portmore Lough, Oxford Island and an evening outing to see one of nature's greatest spectacles, a murmuration of starlings. Watch out for details in forthcoming emails.



Do come along and join us.

LONG LOST FAMILY

(Report Yvonne Jennings)

Two years ago I wrote in this newsletter about how Geraldine McIvor, our U3A Genealogist, had helped me locate a first cousin in America whom I had never met. Well, to follow on from that, I would like to tell you about my experience this summer of meeting this cousin in Reno Nevada! What an experience it was!!

My father's brother Brendan had emigrated to America in 1927 aged 17 with his brother Jack who was 2 years older. They joined their eldest brother Owen who had emigrated several years previously. None of them returned to Ireland except Jack who came for 3 weeks in 1947, a year before his mother (my grandmother) died. Uncle Brendan had one daughter Penny – she was my long lost cousin. I flew to San Francisco on 6th August where I was met at the airport by Penny and her husband Hans, just like 'Long Lost Family'. We recognised each other from photos. There followed 12 days of sharing our stories and getting to know each other. When we arrived in Reno I was presented with this suitcase belonging to Uncle Brendan filled with letters, photos and memorabilia which had been preserved by him through the years. He kept all the letters from his mother, brothers, sister and nieces.



These were a veritable treasure trove which I spent days perusing. The letters from his mother were so poignant. All the letters contained news from home, but each and every one always finished with the same wish to see her sons again before she died. She wrote regularly in beautiful handwriting and it was a privilege to read them but the sadness at the loss of her sons shone through them all. Another very moving letter was written by Jack to Brendan after his return from his only visit to Ireland. He recounted the nights all the family sat up talking, singing and reminiscing about their childhood days. Grandmother, although she was quite ill, stayed up late as she didn't want to miss a moment. Her eyes filled with tears as she recalled the 2 sons who were missing. Jack said that he felt they were actually present although thousands of miles away.

A really beautiful letter, 6 pages long, was written by her son Gerard who was living at home, describing the last few days of his mother's illness and her death. The details must have been heart rending for her absent sons and yet comforting. Gerard wrote, "Mother took my hand and said, Gerard, look after Owen, Brendan and Jack, write to them". Her last words on her death-bed were "Owen, Brendan, Jack. Jesus mercy, Mary help" and then she went unconscious and died a short while later. I learned so much about this woman whom I had only met as a very young child and I came to understand her strength and great faith in the midst of suffering and loss.

This is just a sample of the numerous letters that filled the suitcase. I also learned a lot about my Uncle both from letters and his daughter Penny. He was in the American Army and after Pearl harbour he was sent to China as part of a special mission to liberate the Japanese civilian internment camps there. He was awarded a certificate and medal for meritorious service which are displayed in pride of place in Penny's house. She told me her father never lost his Irish brogue, quick wit and sense of humour and remained true to his Irish Catholic faith. I'm so sorry I never met this remarkable man but yet I'm grateful to have got to know him posthumously through 'his suitcase'!! It's great to have linked up with Penny, her husband Hans and also their son, Steve, his wife and 3 lovely children.

They hope to come to Ireland next year. I scanned a selection of letters and photos into the computer and brought them home on a USB Flash

Drive. Since I returned I have been visiting family and cousins here with copies of the same. I will be forever grateful to Geraldine for setting me off on this journey with her discovery of my long last family through her genealogy search. THANK YOU!



Tom's team take to the hills (David Armstrong report, Dean Woods photographs)

Easy Riders may be their name - but easy riding it isn't!



Tom Young's Wednesday marauders are stretching their legs - and their imagination.

Not content with having two highly successful trips to Westport, the Easy Riders went further this year and headed for picturesque Peebles in the Border region of Scotland. The verdict after four glorious days in some of the most dramatic countryside in Scotland - we want to go back!

Tom's weekly travels round the County Armagh countryside stood the eight-strong group in good stead as they tackled hills and vales - and a glass or two of wine, with only one puncture on the way!



That came only a mile or two into the first day's cycling in the lovely old town of Innerleithen, the puncture having been quickly repaired the group adjourned to an upmarket (it had to be upmarket, of course) coffee house where the group prepared themselves for an eventful day's riding in the rolling hills round about Peebles.

Off the road cycling took on a new meaning when the group found themselves hawking their bikes through thistle and rocks bordering the salmon filled rivers, the map-reading having gone slightly askew, but it all added to the fun - and the blisters on the backsides!

Heading for the hills at Yarrow Feus two intrepid cyclists warned the group not to take that route, because of the steep incline, but Tom sometimes has selective hearing(!) and it wasn't long before the group found themselves in remote countryside in pouring rain which, thankfully, didn't last too long.



Tales, sometimes exaggerated(!!!!!) were exchanged long into the night in the very comfortable Peebles Hydro Hotel, and the stage was set for the second day's cycling which took the group into villages such as Traquair, Cardrona and Stoba,

Tom's hearing had corrected itself this time, Valerie having had a not-so-quiet word in his ear, and stops along the way included coffee in the lovely Dawyck Botanical Gardens. Again, the countryside was stunning, especially round Edderton Manor, and the group, not having been in the area before, vowed to return. Tom, as usual, had done a tremendous amount of work organising the trip - doesn't he apply the same rigorous detail to everything he does?

Having been forgiven for taking the group through mountain passes that wouldn't have been out of place in a good Western, he was unanimously elected to start planning for the next trip. This report can be verified by those who made the trip - Tom and Valerie Young, Dean and Joan Woods, Gerry and Lilian Southwell and David and Barbara Armstrong - they have been warned that any libel actions will be thrown out by the courts!

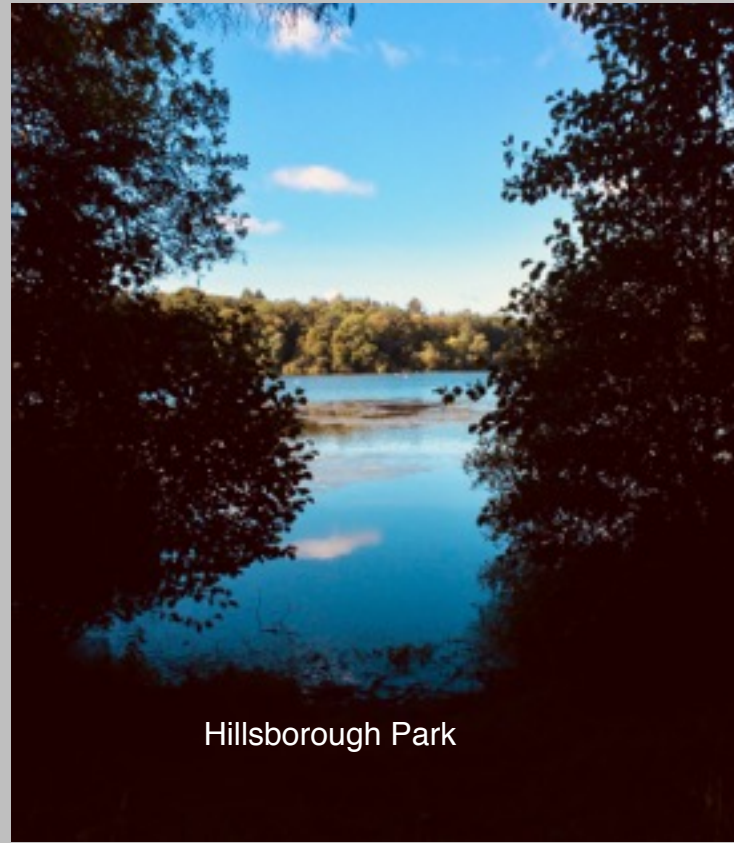


Delighted to report that Tom is recovering after he came a cropper near Loughgall, badly injuring an elbow. He has had some trouble convincing his son, Duncan, now a doctor in Scotland, that it was a cat that toppled him off his bike. It was! And there are no reports of the local police searching for a wildcat!!

STRIDENT STROLLERS

(Report and photographs by Pat Flowerday)

The Strident Strollers continued strolling throughout the summer months. Our first stroll in September was in Hillsborough Forest Park. We arrived in Hillsborough to find the bunting out, the streets immaculate, flower displays in tip top condition and police everywhere. What a welcome! No, not for us, but for Princess Anne who was attending a Garden Party at the Castle. Nevertheless, we enjoyed a lovely stroll through the trees and by the side of the lake on a very pleasant day. Our next walk was in the very different terrain of Peatlands Park. Being a peat bog, it is home to a rich variety of flora and fauna and is a designated Site of Special Scientific interest. We just enjoy the tranquility of the place. Coffee in Ellie Mo's was made more special when we were joined by Teresa and Jim Corr, both looking very well. Dungannon Park was next. The rain kindly stopped as we arrived and we stayed dry for the gorgeous walk around the lake. The Linen Green afterwards holds more than good coffee for some. The final walk of the month takes place in the Armagh Palace Demesne. We love to see new people in the group, so do some along. The first



Hillsborough Park



Hillsborough Park



The Linen Green

Breathe and Relax (NO 2)

(WENDY ALEXANDER)

We know that relaxing the body improves sleep and reduces stress, allowing us to heal. Last time we learned how to deepen the breath in order to relax the body (see September newsletter). Now we are going to use the imagination to relax the mind.

Where

In a comfortable, quiet space or with gentle music playing, eyes closed. Lying on a bed (or yoga mat), legs bent or stretched out. Or sitting in a chair, with your back supported so you can breathe easily. Wear a flexible waistband.

When

In the morning before you get up or just before you go to sleep, or even during the night if you wake and can't get back to sleep. Any time that you feel tired or stressed!

How - Stage 1

Bring your attention to your breath without trying to alter it; just watch your natural breathing rhythm. Watch the ebb and flow of the breath as it enters and leaves your body. If your attention wanders just gently bring it back to focusing on the breath.

As you breathe in imagine the breath filling the lungs from the navel to the throat, as you breathe out see the breath leaving the lungs from the throat to the navel. Feel the breath rising up the spine as you breathe in, sinking down the spine as you breathe out.

Now see your breath as a wave coming onto the beach and returning to the sea. As you breathe in see the wave coming up a gently sloping beach. As you breathe out see the

wave receding back down the sand. See each wave being replaced by the next in a steady, unceasing rhythm. Breathing in as the wave races up the beach, breathing out as the wave retreats back down the sand. Notice that your breathing has become calmer and deeper.

How - Stage 2

Picture a wave, starting far out at sea as a gentle swell. See the wave race up the sand then fall back towards the sea, to be replaced by the next wave. Synchronise your breath with the waves as they flow and ebb. Breathe in as the wave advances up the beach. Pause as the wave reaches the dry sand. Breathe out as the wave retreats back down the slope. Pause again and wait for the next wave, breathing in an unceasing, timeless, natural rhythm just like the sea.

Now imagine yourself on a beach (it can be any beach you want); be there with the waves. You are walking along the wet sand with bare feet. See the foam as the water surges up the sand. Feel the cool water curling around your toes as the wave swirls around your feet. Hear the sound of the water on the shingle further along the shore. Hear the seagulls calling as they wheel high overhead. Feel the sea breeze on your cheeks. Taste the salt spray carried on the wind. Smell the seaweed lying on the shore. Be there in the moment, happy and content, in tune with your body, in perfect harmony with nature.

Notice how you feel. If it feels good try this again tomorrow.