

November 2009

UPA report

News from Unilever pensioners across the UK

Ashford

For UPA Ashford, 2009 is best described as "The Year of the Holidays".

In April, Allen Benfold took a party of 85 down to Ilfracombe in Devon for six days. In September, 49 were on a 13-day cruise to the Baltic and St Petersburg thanks to Doreen Evans. Then at the end of November, Maureen Cox is taking 53 on a five-day "Turkey and Tinsel" pre-Christmas break. On top of all that, we are already taking bookings for next year on the Isle of Wight.

We have of course been able to fit in other things as well, like "Carousel" and "The King and I" in London, a trip to Steeple Bumpstead to visit "The Chocolate Lady", Marle Place and Scotney Castle, the Hampton Court Flower Show, and Parham House – and not forgetting fish and chips on the Tenterden Railway in August.

In October we had the return of our day trip to France to the popular Meme Harle Restaurant at Wirwiges near Boulogne. This was fully booked in spite of the exchange rate!

The Luncheon Club and our Knit, Stitch and Natter sections are still running well.

Colworth

2009 has been another successful year – in terms of our social events and from an administrative standpoint as well. A couple of years back the Committee recognised the need to increase its 'manpower'. Most of the members had multiple roles and our ability to maintain the programme was being questioned. Since then we have welcomed four more Committee members. In John Martin we have a new Membership Secretary, Geoff Telling has organised a very well supported Luncheon Club, Thiru (Ambalavanar Thiru) is our Minutes Secretary and Toni Smith helps with events and excursions. We have also continued to promote our website and now communicate with a third of our members electronically. This is a huge saving of time, effort, and money. To send 150 newsletters at the press of a button is very satisfying.

Apart from our monthly events and walks, we have again been successful with our holiday plans. The Patterdale walkers took to the hills again in March, but this time under wonderful sunny skies. Last autumn we went to the northern border of Wales for a superb education in narrow boats at Ellesmere Port, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, and the Anderton Boat lift. One wonderful afternoon was spent visiting Port Sunlight, hosted by our Wirral colleagues. When our Ireland holiday hopes fell through, we 'did'

Currently we are looking at a new venue for our regular meetings. We are trying the British Rail Club, which is just off the Ashford Ring Road and therefore handier for members who have to use public transport. We are using this for our Christmas Lunch, and it has the advantage that it can sit all those who usually come to this event in one sitting.

Lastly, we must say "thank you" to Allen Benfold who has retired from the committee. The Ilfracombe Holiday was a brilliant swan song for him.



Members being greeted at Marle Place by the owner.

the southern Welsh border instead and were astounded by what Cardiff had to offer. We saw gardens and castles, went down the 'Big Pit', and had a banquet in Cardiff Castle. So on our return, in steaming July heat, we just had to visit our Gloucester colleagues for some welcome ice-cream with lunch! See you soon UPA Gloucester, on your return from Thursford.



"What a shower!" (At the Big Pit, South Wales.)



Members at Cardiff Castle.

Gloucester

In March, 210 members attended our reunion lunches, and our Travel Club goes from strength to strength, with waiting lists for all this year's events.

In April, 52 members enjoyed a Mystery Trip – more of a mystery than planned, thanks to our driver, who explored some narrow country roads with amusing consequences. Finally, we continued unscathed to the Hop Pocket Craft Centre and the cathedral city of Hereford.

On a hot July day, UPA Colworth visited us on the way back from their Welsh holiday. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet other Unilever pensioners and we all enjoyed their time with us – especially the excellent lunch.

For our main holiday, 50 of us journeyed to North Wales for five days. Excellent hotel, great camaraderie, but the weather left a lot to be desired. Nevertheless we are not deterred by a drop of rain (or monsoon). We enjoyed three railway trips – one in a windowless carriage with umbrellas up – and a ride on the Llangollen canal, over the country's biggest navigable viaduct, then gentle sailing through beautiful countryside in the sunshine. We spent our final day in the historic city of Chester and that evening we were splendidly entertained by the Cymau Male Voice Choir.

In September we visited the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, and in November 45 members will travel to Norwich for a four-day break (including the famous Thursford Christmas Spectacular). We hope to call in on UPA Colworth on the way back. Our AGM was in October and our Speaker was from the County Air Ambulance Trust. Our year will close as usual with our Christmas lunches.



Members on the Chester trip.

Leeds

About three-quarters of our 200 members are pensioners of the Leeds toiletries company known as Soapy Joe's, Gibbs, Elida Fabergé, Lever Fabergé, or just Unilever, depending on how long you've been retired! Our other members are from some 15 other companies. Some are local, others have moved to the Leeds area since retirement – all are intent on having a good social life together.

Our 12-strong committee meets monthly to discuss issues, arrange our programme and of course, catch up on tales and banter!

By the end of 2009, we will have had 24 events. Most of these involve a meal – many of our members' favourite pastime. This has normally been part of an interesting visit, such as a rhubarb farm, RAF base, Council nursery, a tour with Leeds Civic Trust and shopping at Boundary Mills. Our major expedition was to Flanders and Brussels for five nights and June – a great success. Towards the end of the year, we are going to Bath for three nights.

Next year's programme is well in hand, and as well as repeating some firmly established favourites, we are working on a London visit, a number of day coach outings and as our major event, a five-night trip to Cologne.

Many of our members enjoy our outings, but even more like to keep in touch by receiving our quarterly newsletter. This reports on recent exploits and details forthcoming events.



Members on the Flanders trip - outside the Royal Delft Pottery.

London

Our 2009 activities have included days out, lunches in London after morning visits to places of interest and – later in the year – will include a weekend break to Harrogate. This will be the first of our short break trips which, for the time being, are intended to replace the holidays we have previously arranged. Our planned holidays to East Anglia and Tuscany unfortunately had to be cancelled through lack of support – victims of the ‘credit crunch’?

Our day trips have been very successful. The first was our usual “Day at the Races” at Folkestone. We enjoyed a beautiful day out with exciting racing; with the benefit of being rather profitable for a number of our members. In June we had a day “Cruising in the Chilterns” which was our most successful trip for some years – a complete ‘sell-out’. It was a lovely summer’s day and we enjoyed a leisurely trip on the Grand Union canal including an excellent ploughman’s lunch followed by an afternoon driving around the beautiful countryside and exploring the local villages. Our final trip of the year was to Denbies Vineyard in September – which was just in time for the harvest.

Our meetings in London have again been well attended and during the morning before them we have run trips to the Wallace Collection and the Museum of London. We have also visited the Handel House and London Fire Brigade Museums. These have all been most enjoyable and the ideal place to get together and catch up with old friends.



Cruising on the Grand Union canal.

SUPA

A new Association has been formed to bring together Unilever pensioners who live within the Surrey area. It is open to anyone with at least ten years’ Unilever service in any company, and who retired within ten years of normal retirement age.

The first meeting was held in April 2009 at the Oatlands Park Hotel in Weybridge, after a very pleasant lunch. Over 100 members attended – many being members of the previously well supported Unilever Ice Cream and Frozen Food Pensioners’ Club, with some welcome additions from other Company pensioners. We hope to attract members retiring from the new Leatherhead office, as well as any others who are interested in meeting within the Surrey area – all will be welcome. There is a one-off joining fee of £20, and we shall aim to keep the functions we run as reasonable as possible in terms of price.

As you will see from the photograph, the first gathering was a very popular and jolly affair!

We plan to hold our next lunch meeting again at the Oatlands Park Hotel on Monday 23rd November 2009, and if possible we shall arrange some smaller and less formal gatherings between our main six-monthly meetings.



Members at Oatlands Park Hotel.

Warrington

UPA Warrington is still going strong, despite falling numbers of new members since the sale of "Crosfield".

Our monthly lunches are most enjoyable and we are looking forward to our annual Christmas lunch at Statham Lodge (attended by over 100 on the last two occasions).

Our regular theatre visits included "Mary Poppins", "Calendar Girls" (with some shopping at the Lowry Centre), "Singing in the Rain" and in October we went to see "Two Pence to Cross the Mersey". We have also booked for a Christmas Carol Concert at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall in December which with the Christmas lunch will get the festivities off on the right footing. Sometimes we have to book well in advance and we already have tickets to see "Hairspray" in July 2010!

Sadly, our holidays for both 2009 and 2010 have been cancelled due to insufficient support - possibly due to the current financial situation - but our day trips have carried on. Our first of the year was to Harrogate Spring Flower Show. The weather was good and the exhibits were excellent. The icing on the cake was dinner at the "Calf's Head" on the way home. Our second day out was in August to another flower show, at Shrewsbury. Despite a rainy forecast, it remained dry and warm all the time we were there. An assortment of

plants and garden equipment found their way onto the coach home. Neither of these events was supported as well as expected - but were very enjoyable nevertheless.

A pre-Christmas shopping trip to Boundary Mill, a large discount store, is planned for November. Members enjoy the extensive choice of goods, all under one roof.



Listening to the band at the Shrewsbury flower show.

Wirral

Our autumn 2008 schedule began in September, with a five day trip to Brighton which took in visits to Eastbourne and Portsmouth. This was followed up in October with an eight day holiday to the historic island of Sicily. Although we were limited to 40 places, the holiday was an overwhelming success - borne out by the many letters of appreciation we received. We are repeating this format again in the autumn of 2009 with a visit to Lake Garda.

An unlikely day out took place later that month with visits to a Hindu Temple and Jewish Synagogue in Liverpool. In December, 40 members enjoyed a four day trip to London to take in visits to the BBC studios, Covent Garden, the London Eye, and many other attractions. We also repeated our annual visit to the Grassington Dickensian Festival.

The New Year began with a visit to see the musical "Mary Poppins", and to get the blood moving again after our winter hibernation, ten-pin bowling was on the agenda. A day out to Armathwaite Hall and Keswick went off smoothly - swiftly followed by visits to the RHS flower show, the National Slate museum in Llanberis and a short break to visit Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, not forgetting 100 Victoria Embankment!

The usual walks, monthly luncheons, quizzes and film matinees still attract many members.



Members about to enjoy lunch at Plas Hafod.

If you would like further information on the Unilever UK Pensioners Association, or on any of the clubs featured, please contact **Cynthia Elliott, Pensioners Liaison Manager on 01372 945665**, or email **Cynthia.Elliott@unilever.com**.

Coming soon: invitations to UPA Anglia.