

UPA report

News from Unilever pensioners across the UK

Anglia

UPA Anglia was formed exactly one year ago and has gone from strength to strength. Each month we see an increase in its membership, which now stands at 288. The response to the trips that were organised has been very encouraging. In May three coaches of members visited the Spalding Flower Festival and in June, two coaches went to London for a day out, with members going off to see various shows.

Following our Turkey & Tinsel weekend at Folkestone in November, there will be two visits to the Thursford Carol Spectacular in December. However, due to lack of numbers a shopping trip to Lakeside had to be cancelled.

In May the Officers of the Club visited Unilever UK's Head Office in Leatherhead for a meeting with the representatives of the other UPA regional groups, where we discussed what goes on in our area together with what happens in the other counties. Our thanks go to Cynthia and her staff for their hospitality over the two days.

It is the general feeling that the club will progress. The feedback from members that have been on and indeed already booked to go on future trips is very encouraging. The Club's AGM will be in February 2011. The venue has yet to be decided, but there will be a guest speaker and a buffet. We hope that a large number of members will attend, showing the Committee just how much they want the Club to succeed and that their efforts are all worthwhile.



Spalding Flower Festival.

Ashford

Here in Ashford our year has been going well, thanks to all the hard work put in by some of our committee. Having finished 2009 with a day trip to France and a very successful 'Turkey and Tinsel' pre-Christmas break in Eastbourne, we took 84 over to the Isle of Wight for a 6-day holiday in May.

This year is an educational year – to date we have run day trips to London (museums), Bateman's (Rudyard Kipling's home), Hever Castle (Ann Boleyn) and Hatfield House (Elizabeth 1), and have others booked for Arundel Castle (the Dukes of Norfolk) and Bletchley Park (Enigma). We have also had another Fish and Chip Supper on the Kent and East Sussex Railway.

At the end of September, 49 of us went on another holiday, this time to Warner's Littlecote House Hotel at Hungerford. We are also booked for another 'Turkey and Tinsel' at the end of November, this time in Weymouth.

On top of all this we have our Club House meetings, Luncheon Club, and Knit, Stitch and Natter get-togethers, which are all well supported. Our Club Meetings have really taken off this year after changing venue, with attendance well up on previous years.



A pre-lunch Kir at Memere Harle's near Boulogne.

Plans for next year are well underway, and we are already taking bookings for two holidays next year: seven days in Torquay during May, and in August/September a river boat cruise on the Rhine. Among the comments from our elder members are 'We prefer taking our holidays with you because we know that we will be well looked after'. How's that for a recommendation?

Colworth

At our AGM in March our treasurer recorded a net loss of £1.91 on a turnover of nearly £35,000 in 2009. Perhaps we should blame the recession! Our membership had increased (yes we can blame the recession!) and stood at 915 with an age range of 50 to 97. This huge membership shows the value of our bi-monthly newsletter for keeping ex-Colworthians in touch and we are indebted to our editors, writers, printers and website administrator who make this happen.

A core of about 200 members are active regulars on our events. 2009 saw our first attempt at a December short break (from the ardour of retirement). Winter in Bournemouth was marvellous with the Christmas theme livening the long dark evenings together with our special find – a coach driver-cum-banjolele player. Beaulieu Abbey warmed by fires in the massive hearths and dressed for Christmas was a delight we will remember as well as the classic cars.

Many 'Crawlers' continue to walk five miles; 'Boots and Socks' 12 miles and the true 'Anoraks' again had a full week in the Lake District in March. They are all so fit now, they go cycling for good measure. Others settle for pub lunches to fill the gaps between the AGM lunch, our Colworth Supper and Christmas lunch. Our committee also had lunch – with UPA Gloucester again, but this time on home turf when Gloucester returned from the Thursford Christmas spectacular. Colworth kindly arranged a brief tour for us, and our guests saw the ice cream pilot plant that some never knew existed while they were working in the factory.

Our varied programme continues to include fascinating talks and theatre shows; gardens and arboreta; dogs or horses; trains or boats; city tours and country houses; high days and holidays. What really matters is what brings us together: the camaraderie we found in Unilever and now cherish in UPA.

Gloucester

In June this year, 25 of us finally embarked on our long-awaited holiday to Austria and Germany (originally booked 2 years ago). The weather was not kind to us – lots of rain and on Midsummer's Day, some of us were even playing snowballs on top of a nearby mountain.

After spending 3 days in Austria at our beautifully situated hotel in the small village of Wangle, we then travelled to the pretty little Bavarian town of Oberammergau with its lovely frescoed houses and flower filled balconies. The town is, of course, most renowned for its world famous Passion Play, which was going to be the highlight of our holiday.

The play, which has been staged and performed solely by the citizens of Oberammergau for over 370 years, commemorates the last week of the earthly life of Christ. It takes place only once every 10 years, running from May to October with five performances a week each lasting 5 hours (with a 3 hour break) and with attendance of 5,000 people at each performance. The massive 150ft wide stage is open to the sky and the mountains beyond form its natural backdrop. The settings, especially the 'living tableaux' music, singing and acting were faultless (only the live animals sometimes forgetting themselves).

The emotion felt in the theatre was almost palpable and it is really indescribable how it felt to be there. The whole experience can almost be likened to a 'pilgrimage' although we looked like drowned rats most of the time. Spirits were high and everyone agreed that this was one holiday never to be forgotten.



Outside our hotel in Wangle.

'Christmas' in Bournemouth.



Cheery walkers in the Lake District.



London

It has been another busy year for the Club, and we have, as usual, held our very popular lunches at the Drapers Hall in December 2009, June (AGM) and September 2010. We arrange morning visits to places of interest before these lunches and over the last year have had the chance to see the Cartoon Museum, the Houses of Parliament, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Tower Bridge and in September the Imperial War Museum and the historic St Bride's Church with its long association with Unilever. These were very well attended and with an excellent lunch provide a great opportunity to meet old friends and socialise.

Our first day trip of 2010 was our annual Day at the Races, and once again we went to Folkestone where we had an excellent day – sunshine and good racing, with a very generous buffet lunch to get us all going! Our 'dining suite' offers an excellent view of the course with good access to all the facilities. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day, especially those who managed to make a profit.

Leeds

In the past year, UPA Leeds has continued the tradition of providing first class and thoroughly enjoyable events for its members. Our event organisers are always seeking new ideas for outings/events, which are usually innovative and entertaining for those attending. Our most popular events seem to be lunches, which always allow members to relax, chat and enjoy good food with former colleagues, in a pleasant and agreeable atmosphere. On average, we aim to organise at least two events each month which will cater for the wide range in interests and varying ages of our members.

We have recently returned from our annual European city break, which this year was to Cologne in Germany. We stuck to our popular winning formula of the overnight return ferry from Hull to Rotterdam, followed by a short coach ride to our destination. The journey included a break in each direction, firstly in Arnhem, Holland on the way out, and at the De Hoge Veluwe national park close to Arnhem on the return journey. The park visit gave our members the opportunity to practice their cycling skills, which turned out to be quite an amusing and enjoyable experience for all.

As usual, our most popular event in the past year was the AGM and lunch. The guest speaker was Susan Hickson Marsay, England's only female Humber pilot launch coxswain and Hornsea inshore lifeboat crew



In the De Hoge Veluwe National Park, Holland.



member. Her absorbing talk gave us an insight into her training and many experiences since becoming a coxswain.

In addition, UPA Leeds has a core of members addicted to outdoor activities, and regular walks are organised throughout the year. Other activities have included theatre visits, river cruises, an annual bowls tournament and a quiz and social evening.

Looking to the future, UPA Leeds is already planning new and exciting events for 2011, in which we hope many more of our membership will feel tempted to participate. If you would like to renew old acquaintances, enjoy a chat over a pleasant lunch or a gentle walk in the countryside in the summer; join us by contacting Cynthia Elliott, the Pensioners Liaison Manager at Unilever UK Pensions.

Then in April, we had a short break to Bath and Bristol which was a very interesting, action-packed and enjoyable trip. We had a blue-badge guide of Bath itself, with an opportunity later on to visit the Roman Baths and the Abbey. On our second day, we visited Cheddar Gorge, including the caves, and an interesting coach trip round the Mendip Hills – sadly without the lovely weather we had been experiencing earlier. Our visit concluded with an excellent tour of the SS Great Britain.

A day trip to Rye and the Romney Marsh – that mysterious and enchanting region of Kent – entertained and sustained (fish and chip lunch!) a full coach of members and guests in September.

Join us for one of friendly events during 2011 and if you have not done so before why not start by joining our Christmas lunch at Drapers Hall.



On our trip to Bath.

Surrey

Our Association has gone from strength to strength this year, and we now have 200 members from various companies within the Unilever Group. Our two main get-togethers have been our lunches at the Oatlands Park Hotel in Weybridge in November and April, and again we have attracted over 100 members to those functions.

In addition, we have organised three other events this year. The first was a theatre trip in January to see A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Rose Theatre in Kingston-upon-Thames starring Dame Judi Dench, which was very amusing and lively.

The next excursion was a coach trip to Exbury Gardens in May. The gardens looked magnificent with the azaleas being at their very best.

Then in July, 50 members enjoyed a coach trip down to Maidstone, where we joined the Kentish Lady for a lovely cruise on the River Medway. We were given a very nice picnic box lunch on the boat, and could relax and watch the wildlife for a delightful three hour cruise. Kingfishers, swans and beautiful butterflies were there in abundance! En route back, our driver took us on the scenic tour along the more country roads in Surrey.

The next lunch is scheduled for Monday 29 November at the Oatlands Park Hotel, and we hope also to organise an autumn trip to somewhere exciting! Details will be in our Newsletter.

Please do contact Cynthia Elliott or her team if you would like to know more about the Association.



Cruising along the Medway.

Azaleas at Exbury Gardens.



Warrington

UPA Warrington has now been going for 8 years and has gone from strength to strength. We regularly organise lunch venues, theatre trips and days out as well as organising a week's holiday in the summer.

Our recent activities have included:-

- A theatre trip to see a fantastic performance of 'Hairspray'. Michael Ball was amazing and the cast was extremely fit. The dancing was very energetic, typical of the 1960s and to be able to sing at the same time was incredible.
- Seven days in Killarney which were excellent – it didn't rain once whilst we were there! We had excursions to the Ring of Kerry, the Dingle Peninsula, Blarney Castle, a ride through the National Park in Killarney followed by a cruise on the lake and time in Dublin on the way home.



In the hotel grounds prior to a jaunt ride through Killarney National Park.

- In August, 43 members and friends visited the Lake District. The trip included a coffee break at Carnforth Tea Rooms (of 'Brief Encounter' fame), Brockhole Visitors Centre, a cruise on Windermere to Lakeside and the steam train to Haverthwaite Station. To round off the day we enjoyed an excellent 3 course dinner arriving back in Warrington around 9.30. This was without a doubt our best 'Day Out' so far.

Still to come are lunches at three new venues, including the East Orient which is our first venture as a group into Chinese/Asian food. Our AGM is in October and we have our Christmas Lunch at Statham Lodge. This is the highlight of the year with over 100 members and guests sitting down to an excellent three course lunch. Last but not least is a visit to Liverpool Philharmonic Hall for a concert of carols and Christmas music, 'The Spirit of Christmas', with Lesley Garrett both presenting and singing.

Wirral

Having returned from our Lake Garda, Venice and Verona holiday, it was back to our regular events to round the old year off. In early November a party of 40 members and guests enjoyed a day at Boundary Mill for some early Christmas shopping and to partake of Banny's famous fish and chips.

The AGM at the Gladstone Hall was again well attended. The New Year began with a visit to the Palace Theatre in Manchester to enjoy 'The Sound of Music' closely followed in February for a return trip to see 'Les Miserables'. Later in the month we were given an insight into the James Bulger murder by the former Chief Superintendent of the Merseyside Police. November also saw visits to Chester Cathedral and Capesthorpe Hall near Macclesfield.

Spring brought us a 3 day walking holiday along the Gritstone Trail, swiftly followed by a four night break enjoying the natural beauty of South Wales, but the highlight of the year was our 10th Anniversary Lunch at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, attended by over 250 members and guests.

Latterly we have visited Harewood House, Leeds, Shugborough in Staffordshire, Sizergh Castle in Cumbria and we recently enjoyed our continental holiday on the Dalmatian Coast at the end of September. The regular luncheons, quizzes and talks continue to attract large audiences.



Our visit to Harewood House.

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**.