



Monday 3rd November at 1000hrssn
Shropshire Seniors on Town Walls

Minutes

- **Introduction**

Phil and Graham sent their apologies. Vivienne thanked Harold for chairing the last meeting and Mike for writing up the minutes.

- **Matters Arising**

We completed the list of members as requested by Marjorie who oversees all the U3A groups and counted 16 members including Sue Johnson who came for the first time today.

- **Discussion Topics**

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

How should we respond to ISIS?

- First we tried to define ISIS and we were able to say that it is an Islamic organisation seeking to rule over religious, political and cultural matters in an expanding area of the Levant, or Middle East.
- Some members of the group could well understand that young Asians in the UK, who are often subject to racism and bigoted assumptions that they must perforce be terrorists, might be attracted by the idea of going to fight for an ideology they think is righteous – rather like young men did in the First World War.
- There was a unanimous agreement that non-intervention should prevail. It seems that after every episode of interference, as in Afghanistan, Iraq etc. the people and politicians in the UK agree that it was futile, expensive and possibly harmful, but that when another situation arises, it is always pronounced as different and one in which we have no choice but to intervene.

If we ran a newspaper, what would its values be?

- At the moment, most people agree that the values of a newspaper are those of its owner. For as much impartiality as you can get, the newspapers **I** and **The Independent** were given as the best. For a condensed overview of the news, there is **The Week**.
- The advent of the internet, the tablet and even TV has multiplied our channels of news so that people use some or all of these channels for different reasons. Everybody in the room still buys a paper albeit maybe once a week. The different reasons given were: national news is best from TV or internet (for impartial global news, the Al Jazeera site was recommended), local news from

a local paper, gossip and 'celeb' news from magazines and entertainment (crosswords, Su Dokus from a newspaper). Probably the choice of newspaper was more to do with the puzzles we like than the politics it represents.

Does modern life make us happy?

- Pam eloquently introduced her subject, explaining that despite the simplicity of life back in the fifties, she thought the world a more contented place then. In those days, she continued, the UN had just been formed and there was an optimism that is not in the air these days.
- The group agreed that in the 'good old' days there was also little unemployment, but was this looking back merely nostalgia for our own youth? One or two members declared themselves happier now than ever they were in their youth.
- There are now so many things to do with the advent of the internet, the mobile phone and the accessibility of consumer goods. This can be very good for some but can induce a withdrawing from the community outside, so that more people nowadays have little or no contact with neighbours, friends or family (apart from on Skype) so loneliness is much more prevalent.
- Another factor in the happiness stakes is that, with the ubiquity of advertising telling us what we should aspire to but cannot attain, and being judged as either an 'achiever' or a 'loser', it is not surprising that depression is more prevalent than in the past.
- As usual, it seems that a recipe for happiness is to enjoy the attributes of modern life whilst appreciating the simple pleasures of the past.

Other than the UK, which country would be the best to live in?

- This subject moved no-one to offer an immediate rush for the channel, in fact one member would advocate never crossing it at all! We all appreciate our home country so much that no other can hold a candle to it. By 'home country' England was meant – certainly not Scotland as one member (the same), proposed that people who live in Scotland should be paid to live there, battling with the awful weather as they do.
- However, if pressed, one (other) member thought she could live in Denmark in view of the straightforwardness and humour of the Danes. Even New Zealand, that emulator of England in the fifties, was ruled out because of the catastrophic fires it endures.
- The chairman used this subject as a ruse to introduce her newly-published book 'Comme Ci, Comme Ca' in which she compares the French and English ways of life – available on Amazon and in the Pergwyn book shop in town.

● **Future Discussion Topics**

- **Should we restrict immigration from the EU?**
- **Should we leave the EU?**
- **Is Christmas over-commercialised?**
- **How do we find an impartial national chairman on child abuse?**
- **How can we do without Amazon?**

● **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 1st December 2014 at 1000hrs** at Shropshire Seniors on Town Walls. Since it's our Christmas meeting, shall we all go to the pub afterwards for a pint and chips – or whatever?

