



December 2020

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News from the Chair

"When a day you happen to know is Wednesday starts off by sounding like Sunday, there is something seriously wrong somewhere." This opening line of John Wyndham's famous book, *The Day of the Triffids*, could aptly apply to life during 2020.

As I write this, it is just a year ago that we heard and read of a virus emanating from a Chinese market. How far away that seemed and how long ago.

Although identifying certain days of the week has at times become more problematical, U3A has undoubtedly provided a certain rhythm to life. In the spirit of learning new skills members have taken to FaceTime, WhatsApp and Zoom, while others have remained in touch by phone. I recall earlier this year sitting in a Zoom 'meeting' receiving phone calls from others who wanted to know why I was in a meeting all on my own! I learned once again U3A educates while providing friendship and much laughter.

We are only too aware there are members without access to online technology and we have been seeking ways to improve communication across our U3A. Thanks are due to two particular committee members David Peters and Pam Elderkin, for many hours of work to ensure we moved to a new software system called Beacon. Their combined effort means we can now – at the press of a button – mail this newsletter electronically or provide envelope labels for posting to those members without IT.

Thanks to all who took the time to return the AGM voting form by post or email, ensuring our U3A met its legal obligations with the Charity Commission.

I look forward to the time we can meet each other face to face. Meanwhile, if you have a story to tell or item you think would be of interest to members please consider sending it to our newsletter editor for the next edition.

With warm good wishes for good health, a peaceful Christmas and a happier New Year.
Sue Long

TRIPS, WHAT TRIPS? I SEE NO TRIPS! (with apologies to Admiral Lord Nelson)
What a year this has been! When I took over the role of Trips Co-ordinator, I did not envisage that, having arranged our four trips for the year, none of them would be able to take place. With the news of a possible vaccine being available at the end of this year, perhaps we can look forward with some hope and positivity to booking trips for next summer and beyond. Watch this space. Very best wishes to everyone for a better 2021.

Carol Clay

U3A Gardeners Unite – Gardening Group

As a fairly keen but frequently unsuccessful gardener, I thought I would try to glean information as to how to be a better gardener by starting a gardening group this year. I also love touring around gardens large and small to marvel at what can be achieved. Luckily for me I discovered there is a wealth of information within the U3A membership and like-minded people to share information and experiences with. Initially, we met as a small group at the height of summer, in sizzling heat, in my back garden. We put together a few ideas as to how to progress and managed to visit two gardens – Chilham Castle Gardens in September and Godinton House Gardens in October where two visits were arranged to accommodate numbers of group members wishing to attend while still complying with rules for groups of no more than six. We hope to keep in touch during the winter months via email – sharing gardening problems and solutions – and to arrange further gardening trips once spring arrives. If you would like to know more about the group please email me. Lynnesaunby@gmail.com or call 01233 663775 (between 5–6PM please).

Lynn Saunby



Socially distancing members of the Gardening Group at Godinton House



Play for Today?

We had our second 'Meeting' for the Play Readers on November 4 on Zoom with eight members reading a play called 'Day of Reckoning' while Barry (Andrews) and I both watched and listened.

Everyone got 'connected' without much trouble and we were all the right way up! The play by Pam Valentine was a mixture of comedy and pathos. There were some slightly 'naughty' phrases but it had everyone laughing several times.

Now we are back in Lockdown a trip to the library for something our Group could do in the two-hour meeting slot will not be possible. So back to the 'script cupboard' at home!

Barry and I have performed several things, having been involved in organising entertainment for large parties. Everything from short pantos, even sketches from 'The Glums' for those old enough to remember the 'Take it from Here' radio shows. But we are having to put our thinking caps on to find suitable material. Not only because we are Zooming but taking into consideration the time available plus the number of copies we need for members (two couples and eight individuals).

Zoom meetings were planned for November and early December with a play in November and the final December meeting including an 'Anything Goes' challenge just for fun with everyone 'performing' something to the rest of us.

We have spaces for more members particularly men, as is the case with all Drama and Play Reading Groups. We would love to welcome you to our friendly group. Just contact me on maureen.grassals@outlook.com

Maureen Andrews



U3A Art Group in Lockdown

We are 23 amateur artists of varying art experience. Some members have painted for many years, while others have not picked up a paint brush since their school days. I would call our group very close and those with more experience gladly and generously offer advice to those with less. During lockdown we used WhatsApp, keeping our spirits up with jokes and family updates and sharing news of TV programmes and concerts/operas with our Art Group friends. However, as we were yearning to see each other face to face, we arranged to meet in a big field. We sat on our own chairs eating/drinking our own refreshments but taking care to keep to the two metre distance. It was so lovely.

When we had to be no more than 12, I divided the group in half, which meant that we could only attend sessions every second week. When it went down to six I asked the hall manager to add another three hours to the day and so six people could come in the morning and six every other afternoon. So far it has worked and it will hopefully stay like that until this nightmare is over and we will celebrate being together again. However, we cannot take any more members until some of the group drop out for one reason or another.

As this year should have been our U3A's 10th anniversary we would have had an art exhibition in one of the many empty shops in the town centre. Because this is not possible until next year, I am including some of our artists' works. I hope you are suitably impressed....

Ursula Peters

Pictures : John Lennon and Horn and Teasle

Cellar Dwellers - U3A wine tasting

Due to the Public Health situation we have not yet been able to get together as a group in person but were, at the time of writing, due to have our first meeting in November using Zoom.

An unusual situation but we hope, by getting together and sharing our tasting experience, we will have fun. Hopefully along the way we will learn a little about the skill of producing wine, along with information about its variety, history and the best foods to eat while savouring the wine. We hope in 2021 we will be able to meet in person and raise a glass together.

If you would like to know how we got on and think this might be a group for you do email me Lynnesaunby@gmail.com or call (01233 663775 between 5 - 6pm please)

Lynn Saunby

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Coffee Mornings

From January our 'Coffee Morning' presentations will be via Zoom at 11am. The programme until August is:

January 27 – **THE MAKING OF WAR HORSE** – Andy Robertshaw
February 24 – **TRAVELS WITH MY GUITAR** – Richard Durrant
March 24 – **A CONSPIRACY HISTORY OF THE WORLD** – Andy Thomas
April 28 – **MAD MUSIC AND CRAZY DANCES** – Alan Haines
May 26 – **SAS** – Guy Bartlett
June 23 – **AIR AMBULANCE**
July 28 – **GREAT BRITISH ECCENTRICS** – Paul Robbins
August 25 – **GREAT DIXTER** – Chris

To participate in any of these talks, download the Zoom app, if you have not already done so. Log in details will be sent to you a few days before the presentation. On the day of the presentation you simply click on the Zoom app and enter the log in details that were sent to you.

Anne Fuggle

Talking for pleasure (Current Affairs)

Let's see – Trump, Syria, NHS, Ashford expansion and much more. In fact, nothing is off the table in our monthly current affairs group. Well, that's not really true. At the beginning of Brexit and with conflicting opinions in the mix, it was decided that in the interests and safety of the group's blood pressures we should steer away from that issue.

Although everything is up for debate, since early in the year we have tried not to discuss the pandemic subject. However, no gathering has been a Covid-free discussion as the subject had a way of creeping in.

There is a positive point that comes out of every problem and so when the virus began to spread our group was forced to find other ways to communicate. That's when the Internet came to the rescue. I doubt more than a few of our members had ever heard of Zoom before the pandemic but determination overcame fear of technology and we were soon up and running to share our opinions.

As I write this, the news is that we could be facing another lockdown. But I am sure we can get through it, with the help of our regular Zoom 'get together', until things are back to normal.

And remember the message of the BT adverts of the 1990s – **It's Good to Talk**
Ernie Mirfin

A gentle reminder: if you pay your U3A annual subscription by Standing Order – have your remembered to amend the subscription date from 1st December 2020 to 1st June 2021 in order to gain your six months free membership?

PS If you have created or amended your email address during lockdown please let the Membership Secretary know: u3amembershipashford@outlook.com or 01233 331583

Programme Updates for 2021

Goodness knows what the restrictions will be in January with regard to Coronavirus! Therefore, the programme remains much the same as the printed version sent out to members in late August. All of the groups on Zoom have continued to run, as have almost all the other groups in the first section of the programme (up until the latest lockdown). Thanks go to those group leaders who have managed to adapt where necessary to comply with all the rules. Updates to the programme are as follows.

Computer Share and Learn - dates for 2021

6pm to 7.30pm on the following Mondays:

March 22,

April 12, 19, 26

May 10, 17, 24

The purpose of these sessions will be to help with operational queries for devices such as mobile phones and computers and also queries regarding a limited number of software products such as Facebook, email, etc, for those who are apprehensive or frustrated with technology and do not currently have access to someone they can ask. The aim is to give members more confidence in using technology in a friendly, informal environment.

If members can email their questions ahead of the session it will help us cover as much as possible in the time available. The group members need patience while we try to answer everyone. Attempting this by 'Zoom' is quite difficult but we will do our best. If you would like to join the 2021 group for Computer Share & Learn and you have access to Zoom then please contact Shaun by email at shaunhardwick@gmail.com or by text to 07738 965 248 and there will be a response as soon as possible.

History sessions extra

Five Zoom sessions will take place in the new year run by Edward Towne. The subject will be "The Weimar Republic in Germany and Hitler". This is not a U3A course but Edward has kindly suggested if any Ashford Wye and District U3A members would like to attend they would be very welcome. The dates are January 6, 13, 20 and 27 and February 3 – all Wednesdays and from 3pm-5pm. For more details please contact Edward Towne on 01634 402509 or email e.towne@btinternet.com.

New leaders please

Guitar Group

Janine Hardwick has stepped down as leader.

Wednesday Walking Group

Judy Hargroves has stepped down as leader.

Grateful thanks and appreciation go to both Janine and Judy for their efforts. If anyone would be willing to take over either of these groups, please contact Bernie Rogers on 01233 642133 or bernierogers@hotmail.com

Being optimistic

With the arrival of vaccines, we should all be able to swing into normal action again at some point in 2021. If you have ideas for starting any new groups I am all ears! If you would like to join any of the existing groups please register your interest with the leaders so that they can contact you when they start up again.

Bernie Rogers - Programme Manager

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Seenager

I just discovered my age group! I am a Seenager (Senior teenager).

I have everything that I wanted as a teenager, only 50 - 60 + years later.

I don't have to go to school or work.

I get an allowance every month. I have my own iPad.

I don't have a curfew.

I have a driver's license and my own car.

I have ID that gets me into bars and the wine store. I like the wine store best.

The people I hang around with are not scared of getting pregnant, they aren't scared of anything, they have been blessed to live this long, why be scared? And I don't have acne.

Life is Good! Also, you will feel much more intelligent after reading this, if you are a Seenager.

Brains of older people are slow because they know so much.

People do not decline mentally with age; it just takes them longer to recall facts because they have more information in their brains.

Scientists believe this also makes you hard of hearing as it puts pressure on your inner ear.

Also, older people often go to another room to get something and when they get there, they stand there wondering what they came for. It is NOT a memory problem; it is nature's way of making older people do more exercise.

SO THERE!!

I have more friends I should send this to but right now I can't remember their names.

So please forward this to your friends; they may be my friends, too.

So near and yet so far

In early September, **Weekenders** were looking forward to their first social Sunday lunch since January 2020.

The group is aimed at people who may live alone and centres around a once-a-month Sunday lunch. Of 24 members 15 people booked to go for a carefully planned, socially distanced lunch at the Footprints Café Bistro at Singleton Environment Centre.

When the rules were tightened again the September 27 booking had to be cancelled.

Group members and the café were understanding. And members can rest assured that our first back-to-normal Sunday outing lunch will be booked at Footprints.

Any questions to Adrienne Lowing 01233 611175 or Sylvia Millard 01233 610944.