

Newslink

Buxton & District



u3a
learn, laugh, live

Issue 80 – Autumn 2020

Editorial

We now have the belated, non-standard AGM well out of the way. Hooray!

Welcome to the new chair and a largely new committee. Your editor applauds Fiona (Chair) and the others who have come forward to serve us. May they steer us to new heights! Meet some of them in the following pages.

We owe a great debt to the outgoing committee, especially Chairman Lynn & Business Secretary Gill who negotiated their way to an acceptable way of implementing the AGM and handover in these strange and troublesome times.

Observant folk will have noticed that the logo and fonts have been changed at the request of the Third Age Trust. I have mainly conformed but have had to tweak a few things to fit all in.

Many of you will know that my wife Alison had to stand down as editor in chief owing to ill health. She died at the end of July having previously been a treasurer and a committee member. As editor, and with your committee's blessing, she perpetuated the policy of having no obituaries in Newslink, just the occasional thanks for a departed Group Leader. I will continue with this policy. I may be accused of cheating slightly by including the start of a 55 year love story instead. At least it links to the Archaeology & History Group and the Country Dance Group, both of which Alison led! Our remarkable member Sheila Cooper is also remembered.

May you all keep Covid-19 free! Hands, knees and no bumps-a-daisy

Thanks to the Short Story & Poetry winners. Other submissions will follow in later editions of Newslink.

Please read the u3a business bits too!

Editor: *John Crowther*

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Gift Aid – Free money to reduce your subscription increases

If you are a taxpayer and have not signed a gift aid form (and there are over 100 members who have not signed a gift aid form), PLEASE consider doing so now. This will enable our Treasurer to reclaim an extra £8.75 per member from HMRC.

It costs you nothing and helps your u3a.

If every member who has not signed a gift aid form would do so, it would raise about £1,000 extra per annum for Buxton u3a; this in turn would help to reduce your subscriptions increases.

From the Chair

Dear Members,

Welcome to the first newsletter after the appointment of the new committee. It has certainly been an interesting start for us, not least as six of us are new to the committee. However, the good news is that we have developed a great 'esprit de corps' and are all committed to seeing Buxton & District u3a through these challenging times. I can't go any further without acknowledging the sterling job of the outgoing committee. We extend our grateful thanks for their commitment and hard work over the past 3 years.



Since we began in late August, there have been mixed messages from the government and from the Third Age Trust (TAT) This has made it difficult at times to understand, implement guidance and apply it in practice. To be frank, not a lot can happen with the present rules in place and most of us find ourselves still unable to meet our friends and fellow group members in the usual way. Zoom has become a lifeline for many, not just within the u3a but with our families and friends across the world and even around the corner here in Buxton and surrounding areas. It has also kept quite a few groups up and running to a degree and as restrictions continue to be imposed, I think we have to accept the situation is here to stay for some time. For those of you who have the internet, have a PC, laptop, tablet or even just a smart phone, it is worth checking out the Buxton u3a Website, there is a new TAB called ZOOM and there are links to training videos which will help you get started.

Of course, I am not forgetting the members who do not have access to the internet. The committee have been discussing ways to keep you in touch with our u3a community during this time. We appreciate that some of you still feel vulnerable about getting out and about, or maybe have to continue shielding because of underlying health conditions. We want to stay in touch with you and will continue to send you written copy to keep you up to date with what is happening.

We held a Zoom meeting for Group Leaders which went very well, and I was pleased that most leaders, although keen to start again, are being very cautious, and it is unlikely that many groups will start again face to face for some time. The Walking and Croquet groups have started up again as allowed, and I just hope we get a mild winter to help them continue.

We are delighted that we will be bringing back our monthly meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month by Zoom or YouTube. There is a list of speakers and dates for your diary in this newsletter. For those of you who do not have the internet, maybe you could go to a family member's home and watch it with them? An email address would need to be provided if this is something that might work for you.

It may seem a strange time to talk about recruitment, but TAT reminded me that sadly, there are going to be many people forced into early retirement because of the job situation in the country. If you know of anyone in that situation, please spread the u3a word. Maybe some would have skills that would enable them to lead a new group. We should not be discouraged by the present situation. It would be good to get new groups starting up as we now have more free time and we should look to the future.

Fiona McIntosh

Newslink 80

Spot (some of) your Committee

Fiona McIntosh – Chair

I am originally from Fife and moved to Buxton 11 years ago. I joined the u3a 5 years ago and I run Book group 5. I also attended the brilliant introduction to Family History Group a few years back. I retired from full time work 7 years ago but continued to work in a freelance capacity until early last year and I am now fully retired. However, being Chair of the Buxton u3a at this time is certainly filling my days and hours. I am a keen walker and a bad golfer and have coped well in lockdown as I have been able to continue with both of these hobbies. I am now extremely familiar with all the walking routes around Buxton – what a fabulous place we live in! I am also a Trustee for Music in Hospitals and Care, a charity passionate about improving the health and wellbeing of children and adults through live music. I am honoured to be your chair and hope to fulfil the job with energy, enthusiasm and good humour.



Joe Brown – Treasurer

I was elected Treasurer in May 2019.

My role includes monitoring the bank balances, processing and paying invoices, submitting the gift aid claim to HMRC, reconciling members' subscriptions, dealing with the Examiner of the Accounts, ensuring reserves comply with the Third Age Trust requirements, financial forecasting, banking money and other matters.

I attend the croquet and board games events.

Gwyneth Rees – Membership Secretary

So this is me, Gwyneth Rees your current Membership Secretary (in this photo sporting a very youthful pre-Covid hairstyle).

When not at home in Whaley Bridge I am often found walking in circles around the High Peak with husband Stephen. We both joined u3a in 2016 as we embarked upon the journey into our Third Age. Being active people we were drawn to the table-tennis and badminton groups; ten-pin bowling, theatre and cinema trips with our new found U3A friends soon followed. This year has charted a different course for us all and our journey is paused in a strange virtual reality. It's a one way ticket so every port of call is one to be savoured. My message to you is Buddy-up, Tune-in, or Zoom out to see the bigger picture – whatever it takes to (covid-securely) Live, Learn and Laugh your way out of lockdown. I am!



Tineke Bosma – Web Master

I am Tineke Bosma and the new Web Master. I am the one who sends out all those emails and keeps an eye on the website. I have only just joined the u3a last March as I have recently started to work part-time. I was thinking about joining a book group or an Italian group as I love language. I am Dutch and have lived in the UK for 32 years and in Whaley Bridge since 2006. I am a keen walker and play the violin for fun. You may have seen me playing in the Buxton Musical Society concerts ☺



Jean Evanson – General Meetings Organiser

Jean needs no introduction to most of you
She continues as before.



Margery Sherwood –Occasional Helpers

Born in Stoke on Trent in April 1938 I came to live in
Ladmanlow in 1940. My dad was working on the
tunnels at Harper Hill being built to store bombs
during the war.

I started school in 1943 in Burbage then in 1949 to
Silverlands secondary Modern

My main and longest job was with Marks and spencer in Spring Gardens
Buxton 1969–1989. I was a full-time sales assistant mainly in the food department.

After the death of my husband in March 1987 I felt I needed something to help fill my time when
I wasn't working, so I went as a volunteer at the Devonshire Royal Hospital. I joined the fundraising
committee of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council for Research (ARC) and the Hospital Radio
and Television team. I had my own radio Programme a few evenings a week, television was every
other Sunday and ARC met once a month. I was a 'Camera Man" for television ... behind it of
course not in front of it!!



Sue Vernon – Business Secretary

There was an old lady from Bullocks Smithy
Who gaily told the committee
Yes I'll be business secretary
And regrets has she nary
And will meet you in due propinquity



Andrew Matthews – Group Leader Support

In primary education for 44 years, teaching mainly
in the Cambridge area but spells in Germany and
New Zealand before retiring from primary adviser
work in Peterborough. Joined u3a when Mary and I
moved to Buxton 9 years ago and found the
organisation a great way of meeting new people
and learning new skills. Before lockdown was a keen
supporter of table tennis, bridge and ukulele groups



and continue to enjoy the u3a croquet sessions which sadly finish at the end of October.

Andrew with Speckles, unsuccessful entrant in World Hen Racing Championships

ALSO

Zan Hurst – Vice Chair

Mary Matthews – Ad Hoc

Updates Keeping in touch

Many members of our u3a have managed to keep in touch. Some took sandwiches to the Pavilion Gardens and sat on adjacent benches within shouting distance. Some of the more adventurous walkers took photos during their solitary wanderings and emailed them around their Walking Group. Untrodden paths have been discovered close to home. Walkers have recently been able to air themselves by bubbling along in groups of up to 6 and with large distances between bubbles. (A Gloup?)

The Croquet Group gelled – literally and frequently.

The Country Dancing Group took advantage of some better weather to dance in the open in the Pavilion Gardens. Keeping 6 feet apart posed some interesting problems. Some of the dance moves took twice as many steps as normal, travelling at speed over grass! Leader Helen had to choose slower music and discard some moves so as to make dances fit the timing.

Science Zoomed along, discussing Nuclear Energy and 'hot' million-year waste among others.



Book group 5 update

I was very disappointed to find out that Buxton library was no longer issuing multiple copies of books that all our book groups have relied on in the past. The solution that my group found was to check out the half price book of the week in WH Smith, and our first Zoom meeting was to discuss John Le Carre's "Agent Running in the Field" It was a great success – after a little blip getting 2 of the members set up with the technology. Only one of us had read a John le Carre novel before and although most of us quite enjoyed it we decided not to pursue other spy novels – too many characters!! One of our group got a free download of the novel from the Library – this is a great resource and free to all library members.

Two other ways to keep your group going could be to read a classic novel – so many available in the charity shops, free online and generally much better written! Or to pick an author and each member read a book of their choice by that author – this makes an interesting discussion and it is often easy to pick up cheap copies in charity shops if the author is well known. I hope your group manages to keep up with their reading and discussions in some form, I know I get such a lot from my group and it encourages me to read books I would not have considered reading before.

I think all our book groups are full at the moment but if you are interested in being in a new book group, and can meet by zoom, please let Andrew Matthews know. If there is enough interest, he will put you all in contact with each other. The group leader only has to keep the register and run the meeting,

Fiona McIntosh

Recommended reading from Book Group 5:

Victoria Hislop – Those who are loved

Ken Follett – Pillars of the Earth It was first published in the 1990's but is still a great read

Ken Follett – Winter of the World First World War society and politics of the time.

Armistead Maupin – Tales of the City 4 or 5 in the series – endearing characters of all sorts.

Steve Cavanagh – FiftyFifty A whodunnit/courtroom.–The ex mayor of New York has been savagely killed and his two daughters are arrested, accusing each other of his murder.

The Allotment

Short Story winner

Dennis's wife passed away just months before his retirement and now he had empty hours to fill. He needed something to do between breakfast and bedtime; he considered various hobbies but none appealed to him.

The solution came to him one spring morning: an allotment. He had fond memories of helping his grandfather with his vegetable patch so he rang the Council and was in luck: a plot was available. Feeling better than he had for a long while, Dennis visited it as soon as he could. It wasn't too overgrown with weeds and there was a nice, roomy shed. Most of the tools were gone but he looked forward to buying his own; whilst B & Q proved to be a good source for most of his gardening needs he disliked the modern wheelbarrows.

At a local farmers' auction he found a large, sturdy wooden wheelbarrow, the sort his grandfather had used. Because there was a problem with its provenance, he got it for a fair price and arranged delivery. When it arrived he propped it against his shed wall and noticed a line of writing roughly carved on its underside: "When I'm empty face me down and you will never wear a frown, when I'm full face me up and you will always win the cup".

"Odd thing to put on a wheelbarrow," he thought.

His allotment flourished. He put in a lot of spadework and dug in barrow-loads of well rotted manure. He used the barrow to move his plants and seedlings over the plot and all his vegetables produced impressive crops that he reckoned could win prizes. His neighbours on the allotment eyed his success with envy and asked for advice.

"I just do my best", he replied.

But his modesty hid the truth. He had discovered that plants placed in the wheelbarrow flourished, whereas plants he carried by hand did not. The secret was the barrow. Obeying the advice in the verse on its base, he always left the empty barrow either turned upside down or propped up against the wall, wheel side out.

"It's like magic." he thought.

He entered local garden shows. His vegetables won first prize time after time. Then he decided to enter the big county allotment show and spent a week going round his plot making sure everything was perfect. The evening before the show he was exhausted. Perhaps that was why he just wheeled the barrow into the shed and locked it up.

The next morning he opened the shed door and screamed. Monsters were sitting on and around the now splintered wheelbarrow: massive six-foot long grey-black things that stared at him malevolently from their eye-stalks. They must have slithered into the barrow overnight and it had worked its magic on them.

They moved very quickly for slugs, heaving their bulk eagerly towards the open door, squashing Dennis and covering him with silver slime as they squelched their way to his prize vegetables and breakfast.

The Allotment was written by *Kate Briant*

Love at ~~first~~ second sight

I was at a Saturday folk dance at Cecil Sharpe House in Camden and there saw two redheads and a dark haired girl together with no partners visible. One redhead was an exceptional dancer so I asked her to dance the next square dance with me. The caller on the stage told us what to do and we got through an exciting dance ending in a long swing. My new partner, like me, could spin round three times for most people's one or two so we ended giddy but triumphant, laughing, and clinging on to each other. The call ended....

"That's all there is, there ain't no more, so take your partner off the floor.

Take her to an easy chair, I don't care, anywhere – and kiss her if you dare."

It seemed a good instruction to me so I kissed her. To my amazement I did not get a slap in the face, she just kissed me back! Her sisters say we left the room hand in hand. We sat on a bench in the garden under a tree and after missing a dance or two we paused for breath. I asked would she let me have a favour. She would! So I said "What's your name?" "Alison" she replied.

She was an expert on King John so we agreed to next meet at Runnymede on Tuesday 15th June 1965 where she and her youngest sister would be costumed and eating a medieval banquet in the field celebrating the 750th anniversary of the signing Magna Carter there.

I was on morning shifts maintaining the Atlas computer so it was agreed that I would take my sleeping bag into work on Tuesday and that the two girls would drive me into London University after the festivities at Runnymede had ended. They would then go home to Potters Bar.

It didn't quite work out as planned. By the time I had got to Runnymede the banquet had started so I couldn't speak to Alison. The feasting was very protracted and continued into sunset. Alison had decided that Plantagenet ladies did not wear glasses and ended up losing a contact lens in the grass while in the changing tent. Her younger sister hit the mead hard. In the photo her sister is in the big hat and Alison to her left (our right).



We eventually met up, collected sister's mini car and set off for London.

While passing Heathrow on the main A30 sister happily went through two sets of red lights without even slowing down. A change of driver was called for! Alison only had one contact lens and couldn't see. I ended up in some back streets learning to drive a mini with a clutch that was either on or off and my knees splayed wide either side of the steering wheel! I continued learning round the North Circular (now at about 11pm) and out to Potters Bar.

Once there, Alison and I tanked up on black coffee, she got her glasses, and then we proceeded in her mini, me driving, to Gordon Square, Euston. We said a quick goodnight and Alison set off back home to Potters Bar. It was then about 2am and I needed my wits before a 7.15 shift start.



A year later we had been married for 7½ months and lived in a top flat opposite London Zoo. It was only a few yards walk to Cecil Sharpe House for dancing. (The hall is used for Strictly Come Dancing practise now too. Recognise it?)

We later discovered that it was NOT LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT. We remembered seeing each other in displays at the University Folk Dance Festival in Leeds in 1971, four years previously. Alison had danced solo with in Nottingham, in a green Ukrainian costume with her waist length red pigtail. I was in a dance we wrote in Manchester and named "Lady Chatterley's Fancy". I was a "Lord" dancing with a "Lady" and a "Gamekeeper".

John Crowther

The Brig "Favourite" – Almost sunk

Alison's great great grandfather Robert Kirkaldy owned this brig for a while. Alison inherited the log covering almost two years of voyages. These final (edited) log entries show just how dangerous a 24 year old leaky ship could be 177 years ago. She was to carry a cargo of Sulphur (sic) and lamp black [constituents of gunpowder] to Dunkirk but lived up to her "E" insurance category at Lloyds (the worst), i.e. the brig was **not** watertight.



She was built in 1817 in Gainsborough on the Trent of all places. 192 9/94 tons capacity
Painting "Favourite", Peterson Jacob 1774-1854, Sunderland Museum

Brig Favourite from South Shields George Roddam Master

31st May 1841 got ready for sinking her [just after high tide] ... 8pm let water in the Ship. 2 carpenters employed for the Tides work [to repair hull during low tide].

1st to 8th June loading many keels of sulphur [keel – 2-man rowing lighter, remember singing "weel row the keel row" at school?] and many bags of lamp black. Pumped 30 ins water.

9th to 15th moored, pumping up to 4 feet of water a day from ship.

16th after customs clearance & pilot – set sail for Dunkirk.

17th off Whitby. Pumped ship once an hour.

18th Ship sprung a leak off Flambro. Keeping hands constant at pumps. Crew gave up. Ship bore away to the Northward.

19th Off Whitby. Constant at pump. Making 3½ feet an hour.

20th Sunderland Boat came alongside. Employed 2 men to pump. Proceed to Sunderland Harbour. 5pm employed 2 men to pump. 6pm employed 2 men to pump. Ship making 3½ feet water an hour. Moored ship "of[f] the Bottle Houses" [Sunderland's glassmaking kilns]
[Here a page has been cut out of the log – I wonder what had been written.]

21st Discharged 4 men from pumping and set 2 new on. Making 2½ feet an hour.

22nd Discharged the man employed to pump. Making 2 feet water an hour.

23rd 16 ins per hr. **24th** 12 ins per hr. **25th** 6 ins per hr.

.... **27th** sea water going.

28th Began discharging cargo [obviously NOT in Dunkirk] 25 ins water

29th Employed 2 Man to assist Discharge of cargo. Pumped 20 ins water.

[Log ends with next 16 pages cut out]

Imagine pumping for days on end just to keep afloat!

In contrast, Alison's great great grandfather John Willis had A1 vessels then.

Website Update – from your Webmaster

Some changes made. Later the look will change to meet the new u3a brand style.

- The new tab on Covid-19 - updates from the Third Age Trust and any other information that might be of interest regarding the virus.
- News/events tab – Zoom meetings and some interesting links to cultural events. If you know of any other interesting links please let us know. Keep us cheerful!
- The new tab Zoom – informing you about courses organised by the Third Age Trust and any other issues related to Zoom.

Any suggestions from you are very welcome. Please email the Webmaster on:

banddu3awebmaster@gmail.com

The Singers

Poetry winner

Road narrow as a knife blade,
Sinuous as a snake.
We reached our destination
High in the Corsican hills.
Stressed from the drive
We lay down in a cool shuttered room,
Felt the tension drain from our limbs,
Drowsing in the warm afternoon.
Until, from somewhere below
The sound of men's voices
Singing, harmonising, rich and deep,

And I was moved to tears.
We rose from our bed,
Wandered along corridors,
Following the sound.
Then, in a dim room,
Four men sitting round a table
Singing.
Harmonies woven into beauty.
Singing as natural as breathing.
Corsican polyphony.

Singing was written by Maggie Hale

GENERAL Zoom MEETINGS 2020/21

Physical monthly meetings are not possible. Sorry.

At the moment there are some Zoom meetings planned. Most will be at 10am on the second Monday in the month – just as our physical ones were.

All talks will last approximately one hour and there will be opportunities for questions.

The zoom link to the talk will be forwarded to all members on the Thursday prior to the talk.

The Zoom licence allows up to 100 people to sign into the event and it will be run on a first come first serve basis. We will ask the speaker for permission to record the lecture and if we get their agreement, we will also make it available on the website for a limited time.

9th Nov – The Million Woman Study: the first 20 yrs.

Jane Green, Prof of Epidemiology University of Oxford

14th Dec – 'A Fifth Crusade Veteran and his Faith: Geoffrey of Dutton, Norton Priory and a Relic of the True Cross.'

Dr Kathryn Hurlock Reader in Medieval History Manchester Metropolitan University

21st Dec – Christmas Special 10am

Fakes & Fortunes, Art & Antiques, Forgers & Dealers'

Chris O'Grady

11th Jan – Title TBC

Emma Smith, Professor of Shakespeare Studies Hertford College University of Oxford

8th Feb – Witches in History'

Professor Susanne Kord, Chair of German. School of European Languages, Culture and Society (SELCS) University College London

Another message from our Treasurer

EXACT SUBSCRIPTION AMOUNT – Please WRONG AMOUNT = Pain + Extra WORK

Please tender the **exact** subscription amount. I need to reconcile the subscriptions.

Reconciliation is a process of dividing the subscription income by the annual subscription; this is a necessary control for both myself as Treasurer and the Examiner of the Accounts. However, this is always complicated by all the members who pay the wrong amount of subscription; so, if all members would kindly ensure that they pay the exact subscription this would make both mine and the Examiners voluntary tasks a little easier.

If even one member underpays, this provides a perennial problem to both me and the Examiner.

Sheila Cooper – nee Gray

Not just Maths Teacher – more Polymath and “National Treasure”

On 1st October an impressive number of u3a members plus others clapped the funeral cortege of Sheila Cooper as she went from her home to her rest. She had such wide interests that most of your memories of her will differ markedly from mine which I summarise here.

Sheila and I enjoyed chatting while in the Walking Group, starting over 20 years ago. She was interesting and knowledgeable on a much wider range of subjects than I was. Needle sharp. I wish I had asked more about early background then.

She in 1954, and I much later, had worked for Ferranti on computers. I discovered more when we went together, with daughter Julie, to a meeting of the Computer Conservation Society in Manchester to a talk on the Ferranti Mark 1*, the very first commercial computer in the UK. Sheila was the Guest of Honour and described as a “National Treasure”. In 1954 she had joined a small team of brilliant, strong minded, female mathematicians as a programmer. Most were working in research or defence but Sheila was based at AVRO, on her own, as one of the first ever commercial programmers in the world and the only female professional grade member of staff in the company.



The Ferranti group then also included programmer Mary-Lee Woods (joined 1951) who married fellow worker Conway Berners-Lee (she was called “Lee squared”). You have probably heard of their world famous son, Tim, another programmer.

Sheila was recorded for posterity at Bletchley Park last year. I have not yet found the recording.

The picture is a still grabbed from an archive film on the Avro Vulcan bomber – that beautiful delta.

It is most probably Sheila.

John Crowther