



WELCOME to the Spring issue of UPDATE. I have a jam-packed edition for you this time thanks to a number of members who answered my plea for contributions along with several Group Leaders, reminding us how active our u3a has become again. I'm sure you'll enjoy reading Pam's account of the result of changes to her garden, with a couple of glorious pictures, Norman's very interesting account of his time in Patagonia and John's schooldays tale. After reading these perhaps you may be inspired to write something yourself. A huge thank you to all contributors for taking the time to write for us. Closing date for contributions to the June issue is Friday, May 27th.

A Message from the Chair

It has been a delight to see so many members attend our monthly meetings since we re-started following the pandemic. To the new members who've joined, may I offer a warm welcome, and hope that you all find something within our activities that benefit you.

The planned trips are well supported and will go ahead, with spaces available on all at the moment except Cardiff. We would like to see a few more join us on April 21st to Salisbury, so if you're interested but unable to make the meetings contact me via the website or on 01452 857831.

We have been grateful to St John's Church for the use of their hall during the closure of the Community Centre Association hall due to the vaccination programme, but we will return there from April onwards.

Once again may I remind you that three members of your present committee have indicated a wish to step down at the next AGM, having given a lot of energy and time over the years to build our u3a to what we have today. Can you, and will you, be prepared to come forward and join the committee? Specific roles are undertaken but supported by everyone; committee meetings are held quarterly and we aim to keep these

short so not too demanding. Please contact myself or any present committee member for more information.

I look forward to enjoying your company on the trips and meetings during the coming year, with very best wishes, **Paul Grierson**

MEMBERSHIP – Joyce Winwood

I am happy to welcome the following 14 new members to Churchdown u3a and can report that our membership has now reached a record 234. I try to welcome new members at each Monthly Meeting and I hope that they have found that we live up to our reputation for being a friendly u3a and have all the information they need to make the most of their membership. Our Group Coordinator and various committee members are always on hand at these meetings to help with any queries. A very warm welcome to:

Celia Gordon-Smith
Suzanne Villiers
David Fullerton
Anthony White
Carole Murrie
Maggie Richards
Hema Patel

Wynne Watts
Linda Bolton
Wendy McQuiston
Christine Fullerton
Catherine Pugh-Wood
Joan Adam
Ann Smith
Stella Cannock

HOW TO AVOID: Telephone & Email Scams

Roger Streatfield, Data Protection Officer

Most of you will be fully aware of this problem and take appropriate actions. However, I thought it might be worth re-stating the most important aspects. You may have recently received a postal communication from the Gloucestershire Constabulary and in particular from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Gloucestershire. If you, or perhaps a friend, have not seen this, I summarise the main points as follows.



Regarding scam telephone calls, your bank or the police will never:

1. ask you to transfer money from your account.
2. send someone to your house to collect cash, bank cards, etc.
3. ask you to purchase foreign currency, gold, jewellery, etc.
4. ask you to withdraw cash.

If you receive a telephone call from someone claiming to be from your bank, the police, HMRC or some other agency, you should immediately be suspicious and hang up. If they suggest that you ring them back this is also suspicious as they can remain connected on a land line, and you simply get them again. If you wish to ring them back, either find a number for the organisation that they purport to represent or ring them back on a different telephone e.g., landline or mobile.

If you do not hang up, they will probably tell you one of the following:

1. A purchase has been made at Sainsbury, Tesco etc, or money has been removed from your bank account with your card and someone has been arrested. I had experience of this one and they will ask if you have your card with you. If you answer yes, they will probably ring off. Of course, if you have lost your card, you will have immediately informed the bank to have it cancelled. If you need a friend to shop for you with your card, it is better for them to go to a cash machine and pay for the shopping in cash.
2. In addition, the caller may say that they are conducting a covert investigation and need your help. They may then go on to ask you to do one of the four items above and offer to send a courier to your address to collect or meet you at a suitable location for reimbursement. Do not respond to this request, never reveal your home address, there would not be any reimbursement.



Email scams: Unless you recognise the person or organisation sending the email do not open it, discard it and do the same for any repeats.

Finally, if you have any doubts about a telephone call or an email, consult a friend or family member before taking any action. If you think that you may be a victim of fraud or asked to do any of the above telephone the police on 101. You can also report a scam or fraud to The Fraud and Cyber Crime Reepportorting Centre (ActionFraud) on 0300-123-2040 and www.actionfraud.police.uk. The latter web site has a large amount of useful information and advice.

GROUP NEWS

LOUISE KEELING – Group Coordinator



The Wine Appreciation Group has now met three times on the first Tuesday of the month, 7-9pm at Churchdown Club. This is a very light-hearted group, with all members learning together and no previous knowledge needed.

The Industrial Heritage Group will meet for the first time on Wednesday, April 27th. If you are interested there will be an informal meeting on Wednesday March 23rd, 10.30 at the CCA coffee shop, to plan future meetings. Contact details for all groups can be found on the last page of this newsletter and more information for any group can be found on the relevant group page on the website. Alternatively, for any further information email louise.keeling1@btinternet.com

Theatre – Joyce Winwood

A Matthew Bourne ballet has drawn 20 of us to the Millennium Centre in Cardiff to watch Nutcracker! on 24th March.

Our summer outing will be to Stratford on Avon to see an evening performance by the Royal Shakespeare Company of War of the Roses on Tuesday 17th May. A mini bus will leave the Community Centre at 2pm giving time to shop, sight see and enjoy a pre-theatre supper. Sounds like a good day out in May, fingers crossed for good weather.

Family History – Di Medland

The Family History group has restarted and will meet on the 3rd Monday of the month. Our first meeting was very successful with 12 members sharing their progress, problems

and brick walls. We hope to help each other with our research and are planning a visit to Gloucestershire Family History Society at the Heritage Hub in the next couple of months. At the moment there are 15 members on the list and so, unfortunately, the list is closed. If you are interested then please email the group leader and you will be put on the waiting list.

Cribbage – Diana Sinden

The cribbage group was launched in January 2020 but sadly we only met four times before the pandemic struck. Once the restrictions about meeting indoors were eased, we restarted in September 2021 and several new members have joined, so that as at the end of February 2022, we are a group of ten.

Cribbage is an adaptable card game as it can be played by 2, 3 or 4 people together. The group meets at the Methodist Church in Chapel Hay Lane on the first and fourth Tuesday of each month, from 2 – 4pm. We have a break during the afternoon for a cup of tea and a biscuit – a chance to have a chat and get to know each other better.

We are a friendly crowd, so if you fancy a game of cards and can count to 31 – come and give us a try!

Spanish – Maggie Thomas

In December, our second meeting went quickly, with members learning how to talk about families and jobs people do. In role plays with prompts members spoke to others in the group to reinforce their skills. We also heard a carol in Spanish and read the words as they were translated. One member talked about her experience of spending Christmas

in Spain, and we heard and read in Spanish about the different traditions there.

In future meetings we will be refreshing and applying our knowledge, on the topic of families, and jobs, by chatting and listening in Spanish and watching a video. We will also be learning how to say where we're from, practise asking each other questions, and answering them. We'll have some fun with numbers and spellings, using the Spanish sounds, with role plays and games. We'll learn a little grammar too, such as verb endings and gender agreement, to express ourselves more easily.

Members enjoy using materials online, from their favourite websites for practice during the weeks, and they also use activity worksheets sent for practice, and self-checked, before they return to the next sessions.

Italian – John Hawkswell

We have now been going for some years and continue to meet weekly at the Caffe & Vino restaurant in Tewkesbury. We went back to the Zoom format briefly after Christmas when local infection levels were high but I am pleased to say we are now back in person for our meetings.

Have the group participants improved their Italian language skills? I expect they have but it is not something that we obsess about. The main thing is that people socialize and have fun so we try to vary the programme each week and sometimes we play games such as fortune teller, bingo, hangman or "What is my line?" This exposes everyone to lots of new

vocabulary some of which is retained but above all folk who are quite naturally shy about speaking a foreign language gain self-confidence and "have a go".

Just before the Christmas break, I was challenged to write a panto that we could perform at one of our weekly sessions. In early December the curtain went up on the premiere. There were some great performances and everyone entered into the spirit of it. Amongst the cast we had the obligatory wicked stepmother, a couple of dwarfs and a very convincing parrot who shared a starring role with a beautiful Princess.

Of the plot I will only say that the wicked stepmother got her just deserts in the end.

Garden Interests Group - Ann Knight

Handy Tips: Sweet Peas can be sown now; they need heat to germinate but should then be moved to a cool greenhouse. They have deep roots so need deep pots. Beetroot, spring onions, spinach and lettuce can all be sown now in trays indoors. Now is the time to start feeding plants and shrubs in the garden. Tomato Food is a good option or make your own from nettles: Scrunch nettles into a bucket or other container and add water. Weight the nettles down with a brick, leave for 2-3 weeks then strain the liquid into a bottle and label. Use diluted 1:10 nettles to water. This is a strong feed not suitable for young plants.



Garden Visits – Jane Moore

The Garden Visit Group runs monthly on the third Tuesday. We aim to visit relatively local gardens with the occasional foray further afield, and most times, finish with a delicious lunch, either at the venue or a nearby pub/cafe. If the weather is too inclement to wander, we have an alternative arrangement to have coffee in a local garden centre.

We have had a chequered couple of years as has everyone, but after the first lockdown we regrouped in July 2021 with a visit to Kiftsgate Court Gardens near Chipping Campden. It was one of the hottest days of the year, but we were very pleased to see that the owners had organised a one-way route through. It meant that everyone felt safe and a bonus was that you were sure you hadn't 'missed a bit'.



This year we started at Painswick Rococo Gardens in January. The snowdrops were in bud but not quite fully out. We did however meet Natasha Housego, a local sculptor who has been

commissioned to create carvings from the ash trees that have had to be felled because of ash die back. In February we wanted to visit Croombe Court, a National Trust property that we have been to before, landscaped by Capability Brown. However, it was forecast bad weather, so we ended up having coffee and snacks at Norton Garden Centre, listening to the wind and rain. Finally, in March we have our 'Christmas 2021' meal, postponed from December, as understandably, members were reluctant to risk their family Christmases with the Omicron variant so prevalent. We have other venues planned for 2022, including taking the coach trip to Birmingham Botanical Gardens in July and supporting the National Gardens Scheme. We are a friendly, sociable group and if you are interested you would be very welcome to join us.



Angels' Fishing Rods (*Dierama*) at Kiftsgate Court

Film and Cinema Group

The next meeting of this group will be at the CCA coffee shop on Friday, March 11th at 1.30pm. Please note the earlier time. All members welcome.

Walking Group Dates for March and April

Tuesday, March 22nd The Malverns led by Paul
Tuesday, April 12th Andoversford led by Sylvia
Tuesday, April 19th Elmley Castle and the
Combertons led by Paul

All welcome but please contact Mary White in the first instance if you'd like to join any of the walks.

ROBOT CONSTRUCTORS' CHALLENGE

26th October 2022

Churchdown Community
Centre

You may have seen this in the latest u3a National Newsletter. Our very own Keith Bostock runs the Electronics Group for Gloucester u3a and is organising this event. If you are interested in taking up the challenge or, importantly, are able to help on the day, Keith would very much like to hear from you. Get in touch on:

kb.teach@blueyonder.co.uk



SPEAKER PROGRAMME to June 2022

16th March Queen Katherine Parr – Mike Bottomley
The Life, Love and Times of the Last Wife of Henry VIII

20th April National Garden Scheme
Colin and Verena Olle

Colin and Verena are Churchdown u3a members and additionally are Gloucestershire representatives for The National Garden Scheme

18th May Bletchley Park – Peter Day

Peter was for many years employed at Bletchley Park and will narrate the inner workings and stories of the famous establishment. Excellent preparation for our visit on Thursday 9th June.

22nd June AGM + Ghosts, Royals and Ferrymen
Brian Margetson

Includes an immensely varied collection of strange craft, interesting individuals and unusual locations. Along with the weird and wacky stories that go with each of these ferries.

Read on to hear about Pam's garden surprise, John's stoicism and Norman's very exciting trip following a u3a Monthly Meeting. I know there are more stories amongst you so please email them to me: suegrierson@gmail.com or get in touch for a chat first, by Friday 27th June please. All Group information is on the last page.

Birds in our Garden - Pam Bryant

Although I am a very keen gardener our main passion is wildlife, in particular birds. During winter lockdown, it was so important, mentally, to engage even more with the 'home' species. Last year we decided to get rid of the pond (oh no! I hear you say) but it was leaky, over 40 years old and now difficult to manage. So, we built a small stream instead but would it be successful?

From completion we have recorded 15 species visiting, both for drinking and bathing. It's certainly entertaining and very rewarding.

Recently, we had 17 species in the garden in a day, considering it is only a small garden on the edge of an estate we feel very fortunate.

Here are just two images of many that Frank, my husband, took through our patio doors.

Anyone with a good caption? Sorry, no prizes available. With all the wildlife enticing plants in the garden, we are very much excited about all the insects we get too, roll on Spring!

All good wishes for an exciting year ahead!
Pam Bryant.



Starlings in the bath



Blackbird about to take a dip

John Walton – Be Careful What You Wish For?

Being raised in a village in West Sussex and having two much older brothers, one a Royal Marine Commando and the other an engineer in the Navy, I realised there was not a future in the village unless I wanted to be a farm labourer or a builder so thought the Navy would be a future.

It was 1952 and I was 13 years old, when I bumped into a boy I knew and he was wearing Naval uniform. On chatting to him I found out he was at a Sea Training School and how great it was, so obtained the address off him and wrote to the Captain expressing a wish to go to his school. Imagine my father's surprise

when he received a letter from Dr Barnardo's telling him I wanted to go to their school.

I had no idea that it was a Barnardo's Home having only heard that Dr Barnardo's homes were orphanages for orphans. Although the vast majority of boys came from one parent families, I told my parents that I still wanted to go and after some negotiations between my father and Barnardo's it was a signed deal. My parents had to pay a weekly sum for me to go and my father took me by train to Parkstone Sea Training School, a beautiful site between Bournemouth and Poole. There were large grounds, a main building with a clock tower and a small lake in front, a parade ground,

its own chapel, three large accommodation blocks a swimming pool and separated education blocks for both seamanship and the 3Rs. My father was taken off to the Officers' Mess and I was taken away to be kitted out. First impressions - I HATED IT. However, I was resigned to the fact that it was my fault I was there. I had to write home three days after arriving, a letter I still have having found it in my mother's effects and it states how great it was there. I hated it with a vengeance but not able to say.

All actions were dictated by the bugle, reveille, sunset and meals they could even call all individuals by bugle. We had a full Brass Band with an ex Royal Marine Bandmaster, a very smart officer in his doe skin uniform and the pristine white handkerchief tucked up the sleeve of his jacket. The age of the boys was from 11 until 15 and the band was very popular in the local district for carnivals. I know this, as being over six foot tall was very quickly grabbed by the bandmaster as his big drummer, something which I remind my music teacher grand-daughter that it is where she gets her musical talent from.

In 1953 the band was invited to be ships band for HMS Illustrious, a Fleet Aircraft Carrier for the Coronation Revue of the fleet at Spithead. Ships from around the world assembled for the revue and we were on Illustrious for a week. Sleeping in hammocks was an experience, as in those days your hammock had to be stored in the bowels of the ship and given out each evening for you to find hooks to sling it on to. As hooks were on the Bulkheads (ceiling) they were difficult to get into particularly for the smaller boys. My first night was permanently interrupted because I had a Tannoy loudspeaker close to my hammock which would bellow out announcements all night.

The sailors on board were very welcoming to us and even offered me a sip of their rum ration, probably because at over six foot I looked old enough.

It was a memorable period of my life at a school I learnt to appreciate. It was a hard but interesting life of amazing highs and great lows. The one thing I always had over my brothers was that they went to Portsmouth with my parents and paid for a boat ride among the ships while me, as a 14-year-old, was actually on one.

The outcome of my two years at Parkstone? I failed the medical for the Navy so I joined the Army instead!



Visit to the Welsh Community in Patagonia – Norman Davies

I have always wanted to visit Patagonia. Why? Well, I was aware of an attempt in the late nineteenth century, by a group of my Welsh forefathers and mothers, to establish a settlement in Patagonia which would actively promote Welsh language and culture. I found the prospect of conducting conversations with Patagonian Welsh native speakers, thousands of miles from Wales, fascinating. How I came to realise this ambition owed a lot to U3A.

What or where is Patagonia anyway? Basically, it is just over one million sq.km. of South America which makes it about fifty times the size of Wales. Bounded on two sides by the South Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, it incorporates parts of Chile and Argentina.

Early in 2018, I attended a talk organised by the u3a in Farnham, Surrey given by a young couple who had been on several excursions to Patagonia organized by a travel company based in Aberystwyth. After further investigation, I signed up for a trip which would mean spending a few days in El Calafate, in Southern Patagonia, two weeks re-tracing the steps taken by the Welsh colonists 140 or so years previously and a couple of days in Buenos Aires.

So it was that I joined a dozen complete strangers (albeit that they were Welsh speakers) on a chilly Sunday evening in November 2018 at Heathrow Airport. Ahead of us lay a fourteen-hour non-stop flight to Buenos Aires, a two-hour minibus transfer to another Buenos Aires airport and a three-and-a-half-hour flight to El Calafate. Its proximity to the Southern Patagonian Ice Field makes El Calafate an ideal stopping place for visitors to the Los Glaciares National Park, home to the massive Perito Moreno Glacier. Having spent two days glacier spotting we were sorry to leave them behind.

However, the main reason behind our Patagonian adventure lay a 90-minute flight northwards – to Trelew. This was named for Lewis Jones a leading figure amongst the group of settlers who sailed from Liverpool on the converted tea clipper *Mimosa* in May 1865. The English translation for Trelew is Lew's Town. After two uncomfortable months at sea, 150 or so colonists arrived in Puerto Madryn, two months after they had set out from Liverpool. They found very little available of what was required to establish a viable settlement and were forced to shelter from the harsh Patagonian winter in caves. However, things could only get better. They managed to establish colonies inland in the fertile Chubut Valley on land granted by the Argentine government. They maintained good relations with indigenous tribes from whom they learned crop selection. They also applied their engineering skills to improve irrigation and eliminate flooding. Their success created a demand for more land to grow more food and feed more people.

With this in mind, a group of thirty Welshmen led by the first Governor of Chubut province, Luis Fontana headed west across the prairie towards the Andes. Even today, the prairie is probably unchanged since those days. It is best described as a perfect setting for a John Ford Western from the 1940s or 50s. Los Rifleros, as the explorers came to be known, were in search of a golden valley, thought to exist beyond the prairie based on information gathered from itinerant,

indigenous peoples. Eventually, Los Rifleros discovered Cwm Hyfryd or Beautiful Valley in English.

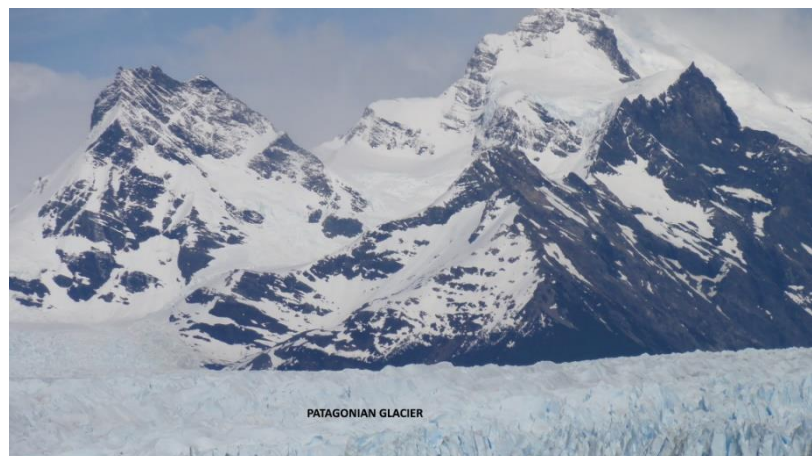
How did our group of 21st century travellers experience Welsh Patagonia? This was in two parts. Firstly, the succession of schools, chapels and Welsh community organisations we visited revealed enthusiasm and commitment hard to imagine. Personally, I found the effort to preserve what it means to be Welsh, especially among young children, moving and awe inspiring. The reinvigoration of Patagonian Welsh language and culture will not fail for want of trying.



The second part of our Wales in Patagonia experience started with two days in a minibus on dirt-track roads, crossing the prairie, following the route taken by Los Rifleros on horseback. We were also guests of honour at a commemorative lunch outside Trevelin and invited to climb a nearby summit with spectacular views of Cwm Hyfryd. The climb is an annual event as is the parade through Trevelin the next day, both of which express gratitude to Los Rifleros and by association, Wales and the Welsh.

The only cloud on the horizon during the whole of that celebratory weekend was the odd reference in some of the speeches at the parade to the Falklands War and the continuing occupation of the islands by the British. Any potential animosity towards our group was quickly dissipated when the Argentine military band struck up the Welsh anthem, *Hen Wlad fy nhadau*.

In addition to all we experienced relating to Wales and Patagonia, other aspects of our trip that merit a mention include, an authentic Buenos Aires tango, Asado at a private family dinner - the best barbecue in the world, socialising at Gaiman Rugby



Club in Welsh and wildlife watching at close quarters, Condors, Armadillos, Penguins, Pink Flamingos and Whales to name but a few.

Current Group List

Please contact the leader if you wish to join a group or for more information go to our web-site: <https://u3asites.org.uk/churchdown>

Group Coordinator: Louise Keeling: louise.keeling1@btinternet.com

Group	Leader	Telephone
Archaeology	Liz Harris	Contact via web page
Art History/Appreciation	Martin Bowden	01452 854007
Badminton	Eamonn Doherty	07946 341270
Book Club/Literature	Joyce Winwood	01452 715099
Bridge for All	Emma Fletcher	01452 712336
Cookery	Eve Anstis	01242 235833
Crafts	Wendy Martin	01452 714049
Cribbage	Diana Sinden	01452 698713
Family History	Di Medland	Contact via web page
Film and Cinema	Norman Davies	07957 994390
Gardening	Ann Knight	07770 599744
Garden Visits	Jane Moore	07950 705993
Italian Appreciation	John Hawkswell	01452 730528
Lunch Club	Tom Arnot	01452 498934
Meditation	Sue Grierson	01452 857831
Petanque	Brian Keeling	01452 712753
Photography	Ann Knight	07770 599744
Politics	Roger Streatfield	01452 713498
Singing Together	Alan Winwood	01452 715099
Table Tennis	Syd Leuillette	01452 857039
Spanish (Language & Culture)	Maggie Thomas	01452 676751
Walking	Mary White	07817 007706
Wine Appreciation	Louise Keeling	01452 712753
Yoga	Sue Grierson	01452 857831