

# COVENTRY SHERBOURNE U3A DECEMBER 2020

Check out our website: [u3asites.org.uk/coventry-sherbourne](http://u3asites.org.uk/coventry-sherbourne)

## A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and Happy New Year!

### Due to Covid, u3a face to face activity is suspended

Who would have thought that I would still be editing this newsletter in its present form in December? It has been an eventful few months with two lockdowns and everyone lives changing, as we've become more reliant on the internet for social interaction and shopping.

We have all learned to carry on, with some taking up new hobbies. I am learning Spanish [very badly] on Duolingo, as recommended by Chris Porch who, in better times, runs the Study Group.

With Christmas rapidly approaching it will be a different Christmas for all of us. This year, like many other people I will not be seeing my grandchildren, who live away. However, with a vaccine imminent, things will improve in 2021, but meanwhile, if you know of any members who are on their own, please get in touch with them. A Christmas card pushed through their door can mean so much.

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the newsletter over recent months and in this edition we have a lovely recipe from Ann Karabinas for an Armenian soup. It is very tasty, freezes well, and could make a great starter for Christmas dinner (I know because I have made it). Janet Foot, our craft guru, explains how to make a Christmas card, while Joseph Connell gives us a Christmas snippet from his book "A Childhood in the 1940s". Also, Phil Stebbings has sent in a poem and our Chairman, Bill Day, shares his thoughts.

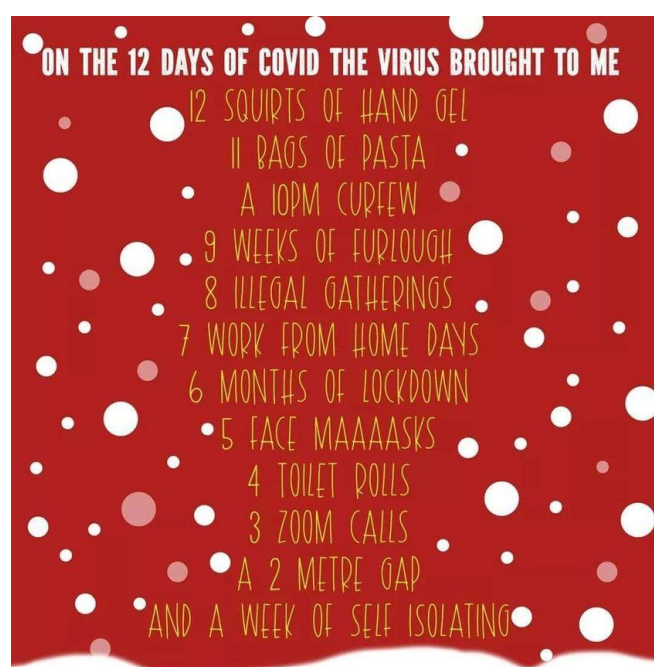
We have Quiz Supremo Anne Tithecott to thank for contributing A Bumper Christmas Quiz, which should keep us busy over the holiday period. In

our family, we always have a quiz after tea on Christmas Day. The answers to the quiz will be printed in the January edition of the newsletter

I hope that you enjoy this Christmas edition of your Coventry Sherbourne u3a newsletter. Keep safe and well and I'll see you all in the New Year – Ness, Newsletter Editor.

PS: Stamps are going up in January, so why not buy a few extra now.

Please email your articles for the January edition to me at: [tonessa.makepeace@ntlworld.com](mailto:tonessa.makepeace@ntlworld.com)



- ❖ What is the best Christmas present?  
A. A drum, you can't beat it!
- ❖ Why are Christmas trees really bad at knitting?  
A. They keep dropping their needles!

## Christmas Musings From The Chair

My first year as your Chairman has been unforgettable, for reasons I could never have imagined when I was elected, back in February. This "annus horribilis" (I hope I've spelt it correctly - it is quite important that I have!) has produced unprecedented challenges for the u3a.

Although, regretfully, our face to face activities have been minimal since the first lockdown, we have made communication with our members our top priority and I hope that you feel that this has been successful to at least some extent. The key to this has been our newsletter, which has evolved and expanded into a mini magazine format to meet the changed circumstances. This would not have been possible without the content generously contributed by you, the members. And that, in a nutshell, is what the u3a is all about - members coming together to contribute knowledge about subjects which they might take for granted, but which others find enlightening or entertaining. When mentioning the newsletter, I must thank our wonderful editor, Ness, without whom it simply wouldn't happen. Not only has the length and scope of the letter increased, but during the first lockdown it was published twice a month.

I would also like to thank those who contributed to our Facebook pages, website and interest group activities on Zoom and would particularly single out Mike Copeland, Michael Field and John Karabinas.

Through the year, your committee have continued to meet regularly on Zoom and toil behind the scenes. Although we were extremely constrained in the activities that we could offer our members, we continued to wrestle with the latest advice from the Government and the u3a National Office, as we sought a safe way to resume at least some of our activities. So who are my hardworking and conscientious fellow committee members? By way of a reminder, they are Ann and John Karabinas (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), Joy Copeland (Bookings Secretary), Ness Makepeace (Newsletter Editor), Maureen Day (Secretary) (she's my favourite!), Pip Friel, Chris Porch, Jenny Smith and Anne Tithecott.

It only remains for me, on behalf of the committee, to wish you a Merry Christmas and A Happy and Healthy New Year!

## Janet Foot has sent in details of this card which you can make



### 3D Christmas Tree Card

#### YOU WILL NEED:

Blank card and Christmas paper.

#### METHOD:

1. Cut an 8" square of patterned paper. Cut this in half diagonally to form 2 triangles. You will only use one of these.
2. Fold the two-pointed ends into the centre to form a 4" square.
3. Turn to the other side and with the folded point at the top, fold the two sides into the middle to form a kite shape.
4. Turn to the back, open the side pieces, and fold the points up about  $1\frac{3}{4}$ " along the central kite shape.
5. Then fold the side points of the kite shape into the centre.
6. Turn up about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of the bottom point.
7. Close the sides.
8. Turn over for your tree. Stick onto a card and add a star and greeting.

Janet still has craft items for sale with all proceeds going to Myton Hospice, so for Christmas gifts, please phone her on 76612691.

❖ Why does Santa have three gardens?

A. So he can, "ho, ho, ho"!

This tasty and simple vegetarian soup recipe from the Cranks Cookbook has been sent in by Ann Karabinas, our Treasurer. I shall double the quantities the next time I make it, so I can freeze some for cold winter days:

### Armenian Soup

#### Ingredients

2ozs of Red lentils

2ozs Dried Apricots roughly chopped

Large Potato peeled and roughly chopped

Lemon Juice from half a lemon

Parsley 3 tbsp chopped

1 Knorr vegetable stock cube

2 pints of boiling water

Salt and pepper to taste

#### Preparations

The red lentils should be rinsed in running water before use. Place the lentils, apricots, and potatoes with all the other ingredients into a large saucepan, pour in the boiling water with the stock cube.

#### Cooking directions

Bring to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes with the lid on the pan.

Allow to cool. Ann puts the saucepan in the sink and fills the sink with cold water up to halfway on the saucepan to cool quickly

Blend in a blender or food processor until smooth

**Note:** It will taste bitter until liquidised which brings out the sweetness of the apricots.

#### Serving notes

Reheat to serving temperature, adjust seasoning to taste and add fresh parsley. This soup benefits from being kept overnight before serving and will freeze well.

Phil Stebbings has sent in this poem by Lynette Collins. At this time of year, we often spare a thought for those who are no longer with us.

**Dear Santa,**

**I'm writing you this letter as I'm feeling a little blue,**

**so, I hope you don't think I am asking too much of you.**

**You visit every year and leave everyone such wonderful things,**

**but I'm wondering if you also visit our loved ones who have wings.**

**I know you must be busy, so much to do in just one night,**

**but could you please make an extra trip to the stars that shine so bright?**

**You see we all have special loved ones - too perfect for life on earth,**

**no presents could we send them to truly show their worth.**

**So, could you please leave them all a gift and put a stocking on their cloud, filled full of precious presents from their loved ones on the ground.**

**Please stroke their sleepy heads, tell them their families love them so,**

**that their hearts ache with sadness and their tears just seem to flow.**

**If you could do this for me Santa, their families might be able to smile,**

**even if it is just for a tiny, little while.**

**So thank you very much Santa for everything you do,**

**after all it is Christmas, up in heaven too**

### **Coventry Sherbourne U3A Chatterbox,**

Our Facebook group is a great way to

catch up with U3A friends. It is easy to

join, just go on facebook search for

Coventry Sherbourne U3A chatterbox and

request to join

Anne Tithecott has sent in this Bumper Christmas Quiz. Answers will be printed in the New Year edition of our Newsletter.

Why not challenge your friends and family face to face or online, but no Googling the answers. Have fun!

## A Christmas Quiz

### Round 1

#### Christmas Facts

1. What Christmas drink is also called "milk punch"?
2. What traditional Christmas decoration is actually a parasitic plant?
3. What well known Christmas song became the first song ever broadcast from space in 1965?
4. In what modern-day country was St Nicholas born?
5. Which country donates the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square each year?
6. Who invented the Christmas cracker?
7. Which monarch made the first Royal Christmas day broadcast?
8. Who banned Christmas carols in 1647?
9. Which was the first country to issue Christmas stamps?

10. Which country has the tradition of filling children's shoes with sweets and treats?
11. When was the first Christmas card sent? 1840, 1848, 1843?
12. What Roman holiday inspired Christmas celebrations?
13. Stollen is the traditional fruit cake of which country?
14. The poinsettia is a traditional plant at Christmas. But where did it originate?
15. Which fast food chain has become a popular venue for Christmas in Japan?

### Round 2

#### General Knowledge

1. Parker and Barrow were the surnames of which famous American couple?
2. In which city did Anne Frank live and write her diary during the Second World War?
3. From which nut is marzipan made?
4. In which sport is a foil used?
5. In which country was the Klondike gold rush?
6. Launched into orbit in November 1957, what was the name of the first dog in space?

7. The bed of a snooker table is made from what material?
  8. In the fairy tale Cinderella, what was the pumpkin transformed in to?
  9. What name was given to the First World War German airships?
  10. "Iris", "Thistles" and "Haystacks in Provence" are all works by which artist?
  11. "We're all going..." are the opening lyrics of which song from the 60s?
  12. Setanta, Pink Fir Apple and Arran Pilot are all varieties of what?
5. The film "Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street" centres on what real life department store?
  6. If you received all the gifts sung in "The 12 Days of Christmas" how many gifts would you receive?
  7. Donald Trump made a cameo appearance in which Christmas film?
  8. According to a children's book, who wants to steal Christmas?
  9. What is the biggest selling Christmas song of all time?
  10. In the poem "The Night before Christmas", which of Santa's traditional nine reindeer are not mentioned?
  11. Which Charles Dickens character says, "God bless us, everyone"?
  12. In the song "Good King Wenceslas" what 3 things were going to be taken to the poor man?

### Round 3

#### Christmas Entertainment

1. Who played George Bailey in the Christmas classic "It's a wonderful life"?
2. Which of Santa's reindeer shares a name with a famous symbol of Valentine's Day?
3. What Christmas themed ballet premiered in St Petersburg, Russia, in 1892?
4. In Charles Dickens' "Christmas Carol", what was Mr Scrooge's first name?



Do you remember doing your party piece at family gatherings? My gran always recited "The Wreck of The Hesperus" and I contributed "I Wouldn't Leave My Little Wooden Hut".

### Joe Connell's festive contribution from his book "A 1940's Childhood"

On Christmas Eve, all available extended family members gathered at the grandparents' house in Masser Road, sharing rations and under-the-counter parcels for a joint celebratory dinner. This was followed by a concert presented in the 'best parlour' by the grandchildren. An event approached with mixed feelings and several bottles of dark liquid for Granddad.

Cousin Mark could be relied upon to present his usual shadow creatures; intertwining his hands between a screen made from a bedsheet and a strong table lamp. I could never recognise the 'proud giraffe' or the 'hand thrown water jug' myself, but the performance always received a storm of applause led by his mother, Aunt Jessica. His father was a Chief Petty Officer, somewhere in the North Sea and this fact was probably not unrelated to the degree of appreciation expressed. (Sniff)

Ringlets, my sister, was a member of a Gaelic dance group. Her contribution, hands on hips, clad in a heavily embroidered green waistcoat, spindly white legs flashing, was an impossible blur of syncopated high kicks accompanied by the ever-willing Alf's accordion music. Shameless exhibitionism.

My humble presentation was undoubtedly the high spot. An enthusiastic rendition, con brio; 'Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules ...'. Obviously, a bravura

performance since tears could be seen in the eyes of all music lovers. I had intended a surprise innovation to be a subsequent solo performance on Jew's Harp; but following an unfortunate mishap requiring a memorable visit to the dentist this item was withdrawn on parental instruction.

Since the event was traditional, nobody objected to Cousin Thomas yet again reciting the tale of Young Albert being eaten by a Lion; Uncle Percy sharing his impressions of 'Bird Calls We Know and Love'; or Cousins Martha and Lucy reflecting 'Hits of the Andrews Sisters'. During the concert, Great Aunt Alice (bless) would hold spontaneous conversations with the spirits, but this behaviour was easily ignored by everyone without any embarrassment.

Following the concert, artistes retired to the 'living room' for analysis of audience reaction and to allow female artistes to remove the apparently mandatory facial make-up. Behind us, those adults still awake played Newmarket for pennies and drank sweet sherry.

On the big day, the whole family assembled - Grandpa's home was basic, warm, and never without visitors. There was no concept of generation difference; participation in activities was expected from everyone, regardless of age. After the toast (toasting fork and an open fire) and dripping sandwiches (with those lovely brown swirls) the table was cleared, the fire backed up, and out came the racing game.

A piece of green canvas, marked out in lanes, was stretched tightly across the table, and securely clamped. One end of this canvas incorporated a handle; at the

other end stood six horses with jockeys, facing said handle. Turning the handle rotated a crankshaft, causing the canvas to vibrate and the horses to move slowly and sporadically across the table, toward the handle and the finishing line.

Each participant, of whatever age, was issued with farthings to invest; the maximum wager being one per race. Total money gambled was awarded to the winning punter - no reward for places. Any fallers were of course (pun) out of the running. Despite the horse figurines having no integral base, standing balanced on four outstretched legs, they were surprisingly stable (sorry). The basis for selecting the overall winner varied, depending probably on course politics, but all monies were returned to the course clerk, Mr Toby Jug for another year

A critical necessity for success in this activity was a reliable power source. (modest cough) As with silent film cameramen, best results were obtained with a constant speed of rotation, but a finishing spurt was appreciated and expected by an excited field.

There were a few house rules, surprisingly omitted from those printed inside the box lid. Grandpa always had the green horse. Any fallen horse backed by Great Aunt Alice (bless) was immediately reinstated. Course knowledge was beneficial. The horse with no tail had no advantage in weight. The going in the outside lane could be made heavy by surreptitious scratching of the track surface with fingernails during the race.

This experience stood me in good stead. In later years, as an engineering apprentice, when acting as a bookie's runner, I was never tempted. I had

learned to recognise a randomly based activity.

