

COVENTRY SHERBOURNE U3A FEBRUARY 2021

Check out our website: u3asites.org.uk/coventry-sherbourne

Due to Covid, u3a face to face activity is suspended

January started with real hope that better times were within reach. However, my optimism was short lived as the pandemic statistics soon looked worse than ever.

A friend of mine became ill, although not showing any of the usual accepted symptoms of Covid. As she has no relatives living locally, we did our best to help with shopping and cooking meals, together with other friends and neighbours.

The doctor was called who also did not identify the illness as Covid. However my friend's condition deteriorated and an ambulance was called. Covid was diagnosed at the hospital, which was a shock for us all. So into isolation we went, before taking a postal diagnostic test which luckily came back negative.

It makes you take stock. Did we do the right thing? We tried to keep socially distanced. Would we do it again? The answer to that is "yes", but be aware that Covid does not necessarily manifest itself in the expected way.

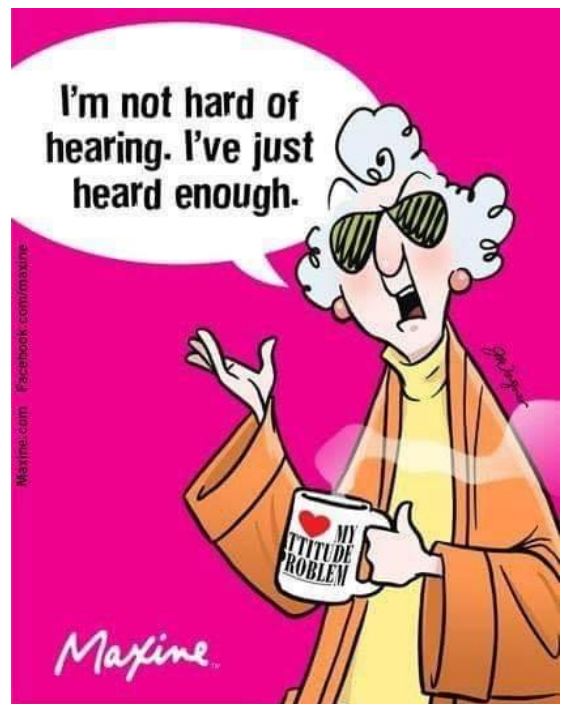
Our friend is well on the road to recovery, thanks to our wonderful NHS and is expected home soon with a care package.

I have now had my vaccine, which was painless with no side effects, so my positivity is recovering, especially as the gardens are getting ready for spring. Snowdrops are showing themselves and

the birds are starting to build nests. Like nature we will carry on and I am hoping for a better few months for us all.

Please email your contribution for the March edition to me at:

tonessa.makepeace@ntlworld.com



I received this note from a member, which gave me a real boost:

I am sure that, apart from me, there are other members who would like to give a vote of thanks to the very dedicated people who have contributed to the u3a newsletter and kept it going all these months. Articles have included interesting life stories, recipes, quizzes, and anecdotes. Thank you to all of you who have contributed.

Carole Smith

Bill Day Explains Window Wanderland



A u3a member recently asked me if I could provide an update of City of Culture news. The City of Culture year now does not start until May and there will be announcements nearer the time. However, the events taking place in the earlier months are being planned to be socially distanced and compliant with Covid safety guidance.

As a taster in advance of the May curtain raisers, the City of Culture are sponsoring 12 areas, covering most of the city, in a community project which aims to have fun with enchanting, illuminated window displays. Events will take place over 4 weeks during February and March with 3 areas simultaneously staging their events each week. Residents will be able to see the addresses of the local displays plotted on an online map and then plan a route for their socially distanced exercise. Many of our members are in the extensive Stoke/Wyken area where several walking trails will be created over the dates 13th-19th March. I am organising displays in the neighbourhood of Ravensdale Road, but there will be others spread across the district. To locate displays in your area and find out the dates that they will happen, go to:

<http://coventry2021.co.uk/windows>

Should you wish to find out more information or perhaps even take part by creating your own display (we need households or individuals to get involved), you will need to register your address (free) on the online map using the same link.

We have received this letter from Andrew Browning about King Lear Prizes:

I'm writing on behalf of King Lear Prizes, the national creative arts competition for older people during the COVID-19 pandemic. I wanted to inform you about the latest round of the competition, which has just opened to entries, and is running from January to 19th March 2021.

Your U3A members may be interested in hearing about the competition, which is specifically for amateurs and beginners who are over the age of 65. You will know better than me which of your groups might be interested!

The competition accepts entries in poetry, real stories (short stories from people's lives), art and musical performance, and there are over £2,000 of prizes on offer. The winners will be picked by our panel of expert judges including Gyles Brandreth, Kate Malone, Julian Lloyd Webber, and Mary Jean Chan.

Our website gives more information about the competition and the organisation which runs it:

<https://www.kinglearprizes.org.uk>

Walking Britain - What Happened Next,

by Janet Foot

Having finished our North, South, East, West Challenge we decided that walking all of the rest of the National Trails would be a suitable goal and also the Coast-to-Coast walk. Little did we know what a challenge this would eventually become!

We had already walked quite a few of the trails and decided the most sensible way to tackle the rest was to start with the more difficult ones. As well as those during our End to End we had already walked the Yorkshire Wolds Way and a circular walk round the Cleveland Way which used the final stages of the Coast to Coast to join it together. We had also walked Lady Anne's way from Skipton to Penrith – this joined the Pennine Bridleway at Kirkby Stephen, all important in our later plans.

During the winter of 2011-12 we walked the Oxford Canal Walk as it was local.

The Southern Upland Way was the hardest walk we had left as it involved sleeping in bothys and was very hilly and was long- 242 miles in 16 days! We set out in May 2012 and this was the hardest but one of the most enjoyable walks we did. Then in September we attempted the Wainwright Coast to Coast, but this was fated from the start as the trains were delayed, connections missed so that we arrived very late with 5 miles to walk. Next we were hit by a storm and were unable to get to Honister so ended up returning to Ennerdale and getting a bus the next day to catch up. Then finally coming down to Patterdale Derek slipped and broke his wrist and after a very convoluted journey ended up in Carlisle hospital, so that was the end of that part.



In the meantime, we had decided that walking the southern trails would bring us to Dover, so we looked at walking the 'Other Diagonal' to Dover and Cape Wrath! The winter 2012-13 was taken up with walking locally along canals and paths to Parsley Hay – the start of the Pennine Bridleway which we walked in three sections from September 2013 to March 2014. During this time, we also walked the Speyside Way, went back, and completed both St Cuthbert's Way (part of which formed the South Scotland Link) and the Coast to Coast.

2014 the challenge was to continue our journey north. In March we went from Penrith to Beattock using the Annandale Way. From here we had already walked to Fort William and due to a lack of alternative routes decided to carry on from there but took a long detour to Ardnamurchan Point – the most westerly point and the only one not previously visited. Then finally in May and June we tackled the Cape Wrath Trail, back to wild camping, bothys, no paths and a very large

military training ground to cross, not to mention the problems of getting back again! This was another amazing experience.

We then turned our attention to the south and easier walking. We walked the Thames Path to the barrier – again in three sections between July and November 2014 and linked to the North Downs at Box Hill. For 2015 we had the North Downs Way and Hadrian's Wall planned. Derek had also now retired and although it was obvious that something was wrong health wise he wanted to carry on. In April we completed the North Downs and reached Dover after a Herculean effort on his part. Finishing our 'Other Diagonal' walk. Then in May we went to Hadrian's Wall- planned as a much more leisurely walk. This unfortunately ended with an air ambulance ride and me with a dislocated ankle.

That was the end of any walking for two years as Derek's illness sadly became terminal.

It was not the end of the story though. In March 2017 I completed Hadrian's Wall with my daughter. I was then determined to finish the rest of the National Trails. In September I walked the next section of the South West Coast Path with friends. Then in May and June 2018 I completed it along with my 535-mile challenge.

That only left three National Trails. The South Downs Way – which I walked in 2019 and the Ridgeway and Peddar's Way/ Norfolk Coast path both planned for 2020.

Then Covid!

These will get done and in the meantime I am very pleased to have walked my 1000 miles this year all from my house, much harder than going somewhere to do it!

What will the next challenge be?

Watch this space....



Can you help us with ideas for virtual u3a activities?

Meet us on Zoom on 15th February at 10.30am. Invitations will be issued close to that date.

Zoom Mini History Talk

The Early History of Coventry

To be given by Mike Copeland at 2pm Thursday 11th February 2021 (host Bill Day). Invitations will be sent. All are welcome.

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It's hard to believe that it will be the anniversary of lockdown next month, so I would like to feature in the newsletter items that you've made or projects you have completed in the last year. Please e-mail details and photos to me.

MARITIME WEAR - a journey through knitwear by Robert Nash

An article about Guernsey's Gansey in a boating magazine, made me look in my wardrobe and dig out a Gansey, I bought in Guernsey some five years ago.



from a cooperative in St Margaret's Hope. Both sweaters used wool from local sheep.



Then I looked at other items that had a maritime theme. The first item, I came across was a bobble hat bought on a trip to Fair Isle, in 2011. I had the pleasure of a week with that lovely community in August of 2011. The island, which lies between the Orkney and Shetland Isles, is now home to around 55 people. Alas the shop had had a run of knitwear after the tall ships called in to their north harbour and all that was left were two bobble hats.

Orkney Sweater



Shetland Sweater

Fair Isle Bobble Hat

I have been fortunate to visit the Orkney and Shetland Isles on a few occasions. On separate visits I purchased two wonderful sweaters. I visited the well know Anderson's shop in Lerwick where I bought a sweater knitted by a co-operative. The individual knitter was a man! On another visit to the Orkneys, I bought a sweater

My third item was an Aran sweater that was knitted for me by a friend's good lady, almost 50 years ago. The sweater originated from Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland. Originally the islanders used un-scoured wool that retained its natural oils. I believe, like the Gansey, individual patterns were knitted into each sweater that often sadly identified fishermen, who perished at sea.



Aran Sweater

Middle Eastern Chickpea Stew **(Vegetarian)**

Ann Karabinas has sent in this recipe which makes 4 – 6 helpings and freezes for up to 3 months.



Ingredients

Sumac powder (optional) can buy from ASDA, Tesco or Sainsburys

White wine (optional)

Harissa paste or powder can buy from the supermarkets above.

Preserved lemons – totally different from fresh lemons and can buy from the supermarkets above.

2 tbs olive oil

1 red onion finely chopped.

Freshly ground black pepper

½ tsp ground cinnamon or to taste.

½ tsp ground cumin or to taste.

½ tsp sumac or to taste (optional – but good with)

2 – 4 garlic cloves crushed.

1 large aubergine chopped into bite sized pieces.

1 courgette chopped into bite sized pieces (optional)

½ cup/4 fl oz white wine (optional)

2 x 14oz cans chickpeas drained and rinsed.

14oz/400g can chopped tomatoes.

1 – 2 tsps. harissa paste or powder, depending on how spicy you like it.

2 preserved lemons, cut into quarters, pips removed then chopped (optional – but good with)

1/3 cup/small handful dried cherries or dried cranberries

3 cups/24 FL oz hot water

1 Knorr Stockpot

Small bunch fresh coriander, rinsed and chopped, keeping the chopped stems and leaves separate.

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large heavy based pan or tagine over a medium heat, add the onion and cook for 3 – 4 minutes until soft. Season with pepper (plenty of salt in Knorr Stockpot), stir in the cinnamon, cumin, sumac, garlic, aubergine, and courgette if

using, and cook for 5 – 8 minutes, stirring, so it is all coated and the aubergine starts to turn golden brown.

2. Add the wine and let it bubble for a minute to evaporate off the alcohol, then add the chickpeas, tomatoes, harissa, cherries, and preserved lemons, if using. Stir well, pour in the water, add the Knorr Stockpot and the chopped coriander stems. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, partially cover with the lid, and cook gently for an hour, stirring occasionally.

3. Taste and season if needed, stir in more harissa if you like it hot. Stir in most of the coriander and ladle into shallow bowls, sprinkle with the rest of the coriander. Serve with warm flat bread, pittas or couscous and plain yoghurt on the side.

Ann has advised that it is equally as good with chicken, if you are not a vegetarian.

Below is this month's extract from Joseph Connell's book "A 1940's Childhood".

It started life as an Anderson shelter. Later it was designated as my centre of activities. The coal man would hoist a sack of coal onto his shoulder, trudge down the entry, through an interesting area we called the garden, and hurl the sack through the doorway of the shelter. Tipping coal out of the sack, he closed his eyes to the dust, and so presented an interestingly dark complexion with two circular white patches around the eyes. Empty sacks were counted, and rewarded with Co-op tokens, purchased previously.

The floor of the shelter lay about two feet below ground level. I was entrusted with the heavy responsibility of organising its storage and arranging stock movement. On one side, the larger pieces, used to

maintain the domestic fire, which was the source of hot water and toast on a prong. On the other side, smaller pieces used when lighting a fire. The centre was my working area for riddling the smallest pieces (slack), into old buckets. This was used to back-up fires overnight and was very wet. I should confess control of slack was never really successful; it appeared from nowhere and supply easily exceeded consumption; the floor level gradually rose to meet ground level.

Dead fires also came into my remit. Riddled, large pieces of non-burnt coal were recovered, and the remaining ash (surprisingly fine, like flour) went to numbers 35 & 16, with their civic pride. I was allowed to construct new fires, which was quite an art (modest cough). Screwed newspaper, a grid of firewood, supported so as not to collapse too quickly, and pieces of coal individually positioned, of increasing size. I was not alas, sanctioned to provide the spark of life to my creation. It rankles still....

My involvement with the solid fuel industry knew no bounds. My grandparents lived several streets away, and behind their home ran a railway line from the colliery to a marshalling yard with the LMS railway. Grandfather had several friends at the colliery, and it was quite amazing how many lumps of coal fell off trains at the bottom of his garden. Step forward one solid fuel consultant, bucket in hand.

If you want to improve your Zoom skills, the u3a are currently taking bookings for free online Zoom tutorials to the end of February . You can register here: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/online-events>

Please be aware that places fill up quickly.

The **Hosting Meetings For Groups** tutorial runs on a **Monday** and **Thursday**, and **Introduction to Zoom** sessions run the rest of the week.

A new FAQ page on Zoom is now available at:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/covid-19-advice-on-u3a-activities/962-video-conferencing-faqs>

In addition to the newsletter, a quiz is attached to this month's email. This was kindly sent in by Sue Grute, one of our members and is entitled **Sixes and Sevens** as all the words have 6 or 7 letters. It is sent as a separate document, so that it is more convenient to print separately, if you wish.