

A warm welcome to
new members

Shirley Millington, Ken Williams,
Sheila Williams, Linda Murphy,
Diane Everton, Anna Greenway,
Xena Bellfield

Happy New Year



Dear Members,

Thought for the day: Frame every so-called disaster with the words 'in five years' time, will this matter?'

I wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

I will start the year with a riddle just to get our brains working: What's the difference between a cat and a comma?
Answer at the end of this epistle.

First, I would like to extend my thanks to Carole Smallwood for her excellent organisation of the Christmas Lunch at The Pear Tree Inn on December 13th 2021. It was very well attended with over 110 members present and for me it was a joy to see so many members together in one place. I know there were a number of members who had not ventured out into large gatherings before and I trust that you felt comfortable at the venue and enjoyed the experience. Thanks must also go to the Wind Instrument Group for their musical interlude pre-lunch and the Hand Bell Group for their post-lunch entertainment. Sincere apologies to the Singing for Pleasure Group that you were not asked to perform until many members were leaving; entirely my fault as I inadvertently delayed the start of the carol singing - I hadn't anticipated how long everything would take or that there were so many raffle prizes to be drawn. I hasten to add I am not complaining as I thoroughly enjoyed the event.

As I enter the last six months of my three years tenure as Chair I think back on what a strange and unusual time it has been to be in office; nothing has been as I was anticipating with a quiet time after the worry of GDPR and registering as a charity – how wrong can you be? One of my intentions on entering office was to visit all groups and meet as many members as possible. This was simply intended as a way for me to engage with as many members as possible that in the ordinary course of events I wouldn't get to meet. After all, with a membership of over 450 there isn't a hall in Droitwich large enough to accommodate us all. I really enjoyed meeting members in the few visits I managed in those first months with the others planned over the following months and years.

Then the rumours started of this illness in Wuhan and suddenly it was spreading much closer to home – we are all too well aware of what happened next. It seems strange looking back as in late February 2020 we, my husband and I, were on a cruise chasing the Northern Lights when we first really became aware of the seriousness of the situation when not allowed to dock in Tromsø due to their first case of coronavirus in the city. What a lot has happened since then!

It wasn't until the pandemic struck and our freedoms were severely curtailed that many of us came to understand how much the u3a means to us with group activities and the monthly meeting punctuating our days; for many of us it can be the backbone of our social life. Fear was the overriding emotion at that time, fear of the unknown as little was understood about this new virus, how long would it last, fear of catching it and most importantly the loss of face-to-face contact with family and friends. What were we going to do without the pick and mix opportunities on offer from our u3a?

Luckily, many of you might say unluckily, I was bombarded with emails from the Third Age Trust with advice about government regulations and guidance as well as the many activities available through their website. Every scrap of information from newspapers and other u3as about free plays, concerts, classes and other activities was passed on for your consideration to try and make the long days of isolation more bearable and to give members something to look forward to. Organising quizzes and later the talks by members also provided some distraction for those so inclined. Getting the monthly meetings organised on Zoom was initially way outside my comfort zone and even now the thought of organising hybrid meetings causes me a sleepless night or two and hours of frustration when bits of technology just won't talk to each other as expected. 2020 was a very strange year without our usual Strawberry Tea or Christmas Lunch to look forward to and even though we gained some limited freedoms that summer they were soon taken away.

Having survived the various lockdowns and thanks to vaccinations and boosters we are in a much better place with life returning to something like we remember 'normal' used to be with a Strawberry Tea and Christmas Lunch last year 2021, although I am acutely aware that this is not the case for all members. As I write, omicron, although much more transmissible, does not seem at the moment to be as serious as the preceding delta variant and we look to be entering calmer times.

The committee has decided to continue the monthly meetings at the Norbury Theatre from January and planning is underway for our 10th Anniversary celebration later this summer. I am expecting our the Anniversary celebration to take place in July which of course follows the Annual General Meeting normally held at the start of our June monthly meeting. This being the case it would be really beneficial if a Vice Chair were in place ready to replace me when the time comes as the celebration will take place under their watch and it would be good for the post holder to be involved in the planning and preparation of the event.

In other words I am asking for a member to consider putting themselves forward to be co-opted to the committee now and to take my place come the AGM in June as without a Chairperson there will be no Droitwich Spa u3a. My time as Chair has been exceptional and in my defence I can only say I did what I thought right at the time to provide a service for members. Some u3a Chairs have been more proactive but many did very little, effectively mothballing their u3as for the duration. I would not anticipate any incoming Chairperson to face a similar situation as we learn to live with this virus – but what do I know! I shall be returning to this question in later newsletters if there are no applicants – we are allowed to have two Vice Chairs – what luxury! I appreciate that we all think we have done our bit with other organisations that we may have belonged to in a past life but without Executive Officers there will be no u3a – now we know what we would miss - we wouldn't want that would we?

Answer to the riddle: A cat has claws at the end of paws; A comma is a pause at the end of a clause.

No doubt, like many others this year, we have been isolating as our daughter turned up on Christmas Day only to be informed on Boxing Day that she was Covid positive from a test taken the previous Tuesday!

Lots of negative lateral flow tests later we know we have kept others safe while we were sorry to have missed all the events we had planned over the holiday and New Year's Eve – such are the best laid plans of mice and men!

Keep well and safe.

Should you wish to contact me on any matter I am available through our website:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/droitwich/contact> or by phone on 01905 778743

Gay Enoch

Chair



New Year message

Dear members

I hope that by the time you read this you will all have been able to enjoy Christmas with your family and friends, despite the more recent concerns about the Omicron variant. Now let me wish you all a happy and above all a healthy New Year.

This year will be a special year for Droitwich u3a as it will be a celebration of our first ten years. In August 2012 we held the inaugural meeting at the Community Hall in the centre of town. Steve and I with the help of a few other interested folk and with guidance from the national organisation had no idea how many people, if any, would turn up. So we were quite taken aback when 150 people were found to be queueing down the street to come in and register. Thankfully we also had about 10 or 12 people ready and willing to offer various activities to get us started, which included Walking, Handicrafts, German, and History. Since then our membership has risen to about 480 and we have some 50 or more interest groups. I often hear people saying how they have made many new friends or have renewed old acquaintances from around the town, and what would they have done with their spare time if it wasn't for u3a.

So I believe that takes some celebrating and I would therefore urge you all to think about how we can do that and how you and your particular group can be involved. I hope that once more we will have at least 150 of you queueing up to be included in some way or another.

Happy New Year everyone



Val Hawley - Honorary President

Groups' News



Growers

meet on the third Thursday afternoon of the month, February to November from 2.15-4pm. We enjoy all aspects of a garden which includes vegetables, fruit and flowers. These are just some of the garden things we are interested in. There's lots more interests such as herbs, pots, greenhouse, pollinating insects, composts, harvesting, storage, diseases, remedies etc. During the summer months talks and visits are arranged to places which members have shown a particular interest in. This increases all our interests in exploring a wider part of growing.

Our first get together of 2022 will be on Thursday 17th February with a 12.30 lunch at The Old Cock Inn in Droitwich (subject to confirmation from the pub), this will be followed by a planning meeting. Numbers for the lunch are needed by the end of January. Do come and meet us, we would love to see you.

Would you like to join us? If so, please contact Sheila Baskeyfield, Group Leader of Growers via the Beacon website or Sue Howarth, Existing Groups Coordinator.



New Art Group

After a long time of trying to set up the Art Group it is now on track to start on 21st January with 12 keen members. Many thanks to Peter Bassano and Derek for working so hard to find a suitable venue and arranging a schedule. Hopefully, in the next groups' update, we'll have a couple of photos showing our progress.

Dorothy Colman



Calendar dates

Monthly meetings held at The Norbury Theatre 2.15 for 2.30pm

Monday 17th January - speaker from Avoncroft Museum

Monday 21st February - talk on wines by Tom Boddy

Monday 21st March - talk on the Mayflower/Pilgrim fathers by Howard Robinson

Friday 4th Feb - Anne Owen - *The Inventions of Pioneering Lunar Men – and the legacy they left in Birmingham and beyond* via Zoom, all welcome, sign-in details nearer the date

Other news

Murder Mystery meets Coincidence!

"I went to a Murder Mystery Weekend and bumped into Pattie and Richard Leach (from our canasta group), the first evening. We were dressed in our costumes! The theme was 'W'. I was Weed from Watch with Mother, Pattie was the Scarecrow, and Richard the Cowardly Lion from Wizard of Oz. We had no idea we were going at all let alone to the same weekend in Oxford."

Thank you to Pam Douglas for this article. What an incredible coincidence!



Christmas Lunch at the Pear Tree

"There was a really good atmosphere in the room, with most people having arrived in good time to get a drink before lunch was served. It was clear that the Pear Tree was suffering from staff shortage difficulties, as are many similar businesses, but they very quickly rustled up sufficient bodies to run the bar and to serve our food on time. Jill & I really enjoyed our food and the general camaraderie on our table. Congratulations are due to Carole Smallwood who looked after all our bookings, menu choices, & liaison with the Pear Tree. A fine example of really good communications and attention to the finest details - including a reminder of what we had ordered!"

Happy New Year to everyone.

Thank you to Peter Bassano



Remembrance 2021

*Thank you for reading this edition of the newsletter. In particular, thank you to everyone who contributed articles. The next newsletter will be published in March so please submit any articles/photos to the editor via the website by **Friday 4th March 2022.***

And finally.....a Grammar update! ?????? Enjoy!

Everyone can use a little "grammar" update now and then so here's yours for today.

Is it "complete", "finished" or "completely finished"?

No English dictionary has been able to adequately explain the difference between these two words - "Complete" and "Finished".

In a recent linguistic competition held in London and attended by, supposedly, the best in the world, Samdar Balgobin, a Guyanese man, was the clear winner with a standing ovation which lasted over 5 minutes.

The final question was: 'How do you explain the difference between COMPLETE and FINISHED in a way that is easy to understand?'

Some people say there is no difference between COMPLETE and FINISHED.'

Here is his astute answer:

"When you marry the right woman, you are COMPLETE.

When you marry the wrong woman, you are FINISHED.

And when the right one catches you with the wrong one, you are COMPLETELY FINISHED!"

He won a trip around the world and a case of 25 year old Scotch!

Thank you to Gay for this amazing nugget of knowledge.

