



Chat from the chair

Stay safe! Stay healthy! Stay at home!

Hello everyone and welcome to this special May edition of our Newsletter! With no usual announcements to make during the lockdown the decision was made to ask members to submit their own news for this edition and we've been delighted with the response.

I heard from one member who, due to some pain from a medical condition, was in the habit of sleeping in late. His curtains were closed late in the day alerting his neighbours that something wasn't quite right.

The neighbours made enquiries amongst themselves and were able to identify a phone number for the gentleman, they checked up on him and all was well. That member was so moved by his neighbours' kindness that he wanted to share this with you all. This is exactly the type of positive action we can all take to ensure we all get through this together!

Stay safe! Stay healthy! STAY AT HOME!

Linda Shutt

Thank you to all our lovely members who have renewed their membership. Your new style membership cards will be distributed as soon as we get to meet up again. I would like to welcome our new members who have joined us despite there being no meetings or group activities; when we do get together I'm certain it will be a memorable occasion.

Jane Atkins

Membership Secretary

Finished at last, thanks to lockdown!

U3A members who have been following Jane Freeman's reports on the craft group will be aware of the problems Janis Bye has had in knitting the jumper pictured.

"Namely a cat, who, by magic, appeared as soon as I started knitting," explains Janis.

She continues: "Over the years I have managed to get some of the jumper done during the craft sessions and now during this period of enforced isolation I have actually managed to finish it, mostly sitting on the edge of the bath (clearly Bertie the cat doesn't like to be near water!) Only taken me five years!"



Janis Bye

Current affairs by email

On 8 April at 10.00am (our usual meeting date and time), four members of the Current Affairs Group met 'virtually' to discuss a range of subjects by email. There were some hiccups but generally it worked OK. Obviously slower responses than in our usual discussion group, but one thing we have at the moment is time! Some topics discussed were - inequalities in pay between less needed occupations e.g. footballers and those we all rely on e.g. nurses and care workers; why are Screwfix and B&Q still open; what should be done about the TV Licence and should the BBC be preserved; how are we spending our time, have we started new hobbies? Just a flavour of the diverse subjects we discussed which is a reflection of the variety at our usual meeting.

We did miss Desley's cake though!! We all appeared to enjoy this way of keeping things as normal as possible in these strange times and agreed to have another go next month.

New editor

New member Helen Riby has taken on the editor's job and given the Forest Town & District



Helen Riby

newsletter a bit of a facelift to boot.

Helen explains: "My working life has been spent in marketing, public relations and magazine publishing so volunteering for this role was a bit of a no brainer! Some of you may have spotted I have the same surname as your treasurer and rambling group leader. It was via my husband, Andy, that I knew Steve Evans was looking to step down. Steve's done a great job. It's not easy producing a monthly newsletter, believe me I know!

"I'm also looking forward to joining in the U3A activities. Before the lockdown I did manage to get on a couple of the rambles but there was no time to join anything else.

"As Linda has mentioned because of the lockdown, this edition is a bit different but I hope you all enjoy the read and I look forward to meeting you properly when we can."

Sometimes its good to slow the pace

First of all I acknowledge that unlike many people I am very lucky – I have a husband at home, a nice garden to spend time in, enough money for food, chocolate and red wine and we are both generally healthy (touch wood). So my experience will not reflect that of many others. However.....

The first surprise I had was the realisation that I felt less stressed and rushed; I no longer checked the diary once or twice a day – after all there's nothing to do – no meetings, appointments, child minding or school runs. It has felt really quite relaxed. No rushing from place to place.

The second thing that struck me was how much I was enjoying "just being at home". Yes, I miss my kids and especially the grandchildren, but with WhatsApp, Zoom and FaceTime there are plenty of contact opportunities.

I set the grandchildren an Easter Junior Bake Off challenge and e mailed them the task and the rules. It

was great fun and enabled the cousins to keep connected too. Just wish I could have tasted the results, they looked amazing.

We've participated in our local pub quiz via Facebook, together with two friends using WhatsApp, however we missed the sandwiches at half time!

The garden is looking fabulous, but not much house cleaning taking place though. I've completed a 1000 piece jigsaw and actually quite enjoyed it too.

I took up sewing after my retirement and through a lady I know who runs our regular "faffing sessions" I learnt how to make a face mask, and was asked to sew "scrubs" for the NHS. I've made several sets now and it has been such a rewarding activity, to feel I am doing my bit to help out.

Make do and mend...



Thanks to Gill & John Kirk for this bit of timely advice! No masks to be found? Use your BRAin and get two for the price of one!!

I've saved a small fortune on hair/nail/chiropractic costs, so good news there. I see more of my neighbours when we gather in the cul de sac every Thursday evening to clap and catch up on each other's news.

Life is certainly different and I wouldn't want this to go on for ever but it's felt like quite a luxury to slow down and have this time to just do the things that bring me pleasure. I guess it's a bit about re-evaluating what you enjoy most and to me that is the most positive thing.

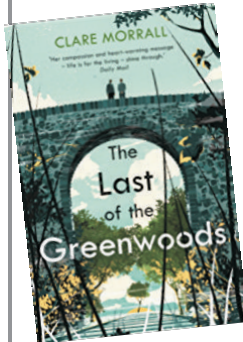
Jane Atkins

Pull yourself together

The following story has been circulating on social media but for those who haven't seen it we hope it raises a smile.

People are going crazy from being in lockdown! Actually I've just been talking about this with the microwave and toaster, while drinking coffee! All of us agreed that things are getting bad. I didn't mention anything to the washing machine as she puts a different spin on everything. Certainly not to the fridge as he is acting cold and distant. In the end the iron calmed me down as she said everything will be fine, no situation is too pressing. The Hoover was very unsympathetic... told me to just suck it up, but the fan was more optimistic and hoped it would all soon blow over! The toilet looked a bit flushed when I asked its opinion and didn't say anything but the door knob told me to get a grip. The front door said I was unhinged and the curtains told me ... yes, you guessed it to pull myself together!

Read any good books lately...



The Last of the Greenwoods by Clare Morrall was the book given at the March meeting. We were a bit underwhelmed with the look of the book but it turned out to be a pleasant read though Ruth thought the pace slow and drawn out. (Which some reviews of the book agree.)

The Greenwood brothers, living in two dilapidated railway coaches, avoiding each other wherever possible, have their lives turned upside down when postman Zohra delivers a letter from sister Debs who had been presumed dead for half a century. Is it really Debs back or not? Most of us agreed that it was Debs. Ann V. felt that it didn't really matter because she brought the brothers back together. The brothers' memories of their past life changed over time and Anne felt that was true to life. We give this gentle undemanding read a thumbs up.

Join us on Facebook

The Book Group is now on Forest Town and District Facebook. As a way of keeping in touch we are downloading extracts from a variety of books as supplied by Inspire, the Nottinghamshire Library Service. There will be a new extract every week for you to read and then comment on. Did the extract make you want to read more, was it exciting, gripping or totally boring?

To access the page. Go to facebook.com and type @Forest Town & District U3A in the search box. Look for the U3A symbol and click on it and we should be there! The first extract is Nineteen Minutes by Jodie Picoult

If you are not on Facebook but would like to read the extracts email me annstanford1@sky.com

Ann Stanford

Bird watching but at a distance

On our normal meeting day I set the challenge for everyone to do some dedicated bird spotting in their own locality and send in the results.

It was a beautiful morning and I found birds out plentifully singing and flying about looking for nesting materials or food for their young. Sitting on a bench I observed a Blue Tit flying backwards and forwards and disappearing into a crack in a barn wall down near Bridleways.

Interestingly, during lockdown, when out for my permitted daily walk I've always had my binoculars with me, yet I did notice the difference that morning when I was more focussed on making as many bird sightings as possible. My diligence paid off – I spotted no less than 29 species of birds. The most exciting was of a pair of House Martins – my first sighting of the year (incidentally I spotted my first Swallows yesterday 13 April).

I am pleased to say that everyone in the group took part, be it in some cases, from the comfort of their own garden. In total we spotted 34 different species.

The most common were Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Goldfinch and the dreaded Wood Pigeon. More unusual ones included Grey Heron, Pied Wagtail, Yellow Hammer, Willow Warbler, Skylark, Chiffchaff, Wren, Lapwing, Mistle Thrush, Jay, Collared dove and Long-tailed Tit – so a good spread.

New member – maybe!

When out I also met another keen birdwatcher (at the prescribed distance of course). He saw me searching through my *Little Gem Bird Identifier* and proceeded to confirm my sighting. He was obviously very knowledgeable. I shared with him that I belonged to the U3A Bird watching group and he seemed interested – so who knows, we may have another member in the offing. Hope so as he would be a great asset to the group.

Lynne Cooper



Collared dove

The phantom diarist (week 1 of self-isolation)

Tending the garden: digging out clover (and moss) from the lawn with an old pair of scissors. The yellow, blues, pinks and purples of spring flowers cheering me up enormously.

Received phone call from sister-in-law, enquiring after my well-being. She and my brother in lockdown also in London; doing well, gardening, cooking good food. She has packed a hospital bag each ("just in case")!

MUSIC! Classic FM on all day, as usual. Comforting music, reassuring, pleasant, softly-spoken presenters.

Following the news (radio, internet, TV) when necessary. Don't want to get downhearted. Reading: 2 or 3 books on the go.

Crosswords: The Times (challenging!)

Emailing friends: good for the soul; humour and sharing.

Knitting: simple things for charity. Can be done while watching TV or waiting for meal to cook.

Made a batch of weird scones! Half gluten-free plain flour and half gluten-free s/r flour (all I had) + bicarb. Didn't rise much but proved quite edible.

Ramblers now social media junkies

With the Coronavirus lockdown having put paid to the group's walk programme, we set up a WhatsApp chat group to keep in touch and help prevent members feeling so isolated.

Our rambling group is fortunate in that all members have access to the internet. While it's not everyone's cup of tea, more than half of the group belong to it. That includes former die hard critics of social media like me.

As well as postings about what we're getting up to, we swap amusing clips, share notes on local walking routes with photos, post the occasional recipe and book recommendation, pictures of cakes we've baked, tips on where to find stage shows to view free on YouTube, quizzes, addresses of online keep fit demonstrations and even volunteering opportunities.

We recently circulated an invitation to join a virtual pub quiz using the Zoom video conferencing app. Some of us

were brave enough to try it and we enjoyed a great couple of hours meeting new people and challenging our brains. Nobody commented on our increasingly unkempt hair. After all, we're all in the same boat.

We're always looking for new ways of keeping ourselves amused. I'm currently investigating using the free app "Words With Friends 2" which allows you to play a Scrabble type game with a friend remotely. We're always open to new ideas.

So are we turning into social media junkies? Some of us maybe, but for most it's just a comfort to know there's life outside your own home, that members are OK and coping with the crisis, or indeed to know that support is available if they are not.

So will our WhatsApp group continue once lockdown finally ends? Probably not, but for now it serves a very useful purpose.

Andy Riby

A funny thing happened to me...

Hi Everyone,

How's it going? I hope you're staying sane if you live alone, or haven't started looking for things to throw, if you live with someone else. Challenging times, but the best way to get through it is to remember that none of us are truly alone, we're all in it together so take heart from the little moments that lift our spirits, and believe me, there are plenty of them if you just take the time to look.

It's not my intention to become a self help guru, if you want that I'm sure there are plenty of online sources much better equipped than me to help you out. I'm getting through it all by looking for the humorous, or quirky side of things, so come down and join me on the floor in the comic book section. Hopefully I can make you smile and, if that happens, then my work here is done!

Parents shoulder much of the blame

I blame my parents for the way I turned out, my mum would talk to anyone she met. She'd be in animated conversation with someone on the street, or in the supermarket and when you asked 'who was that' she'd shrug and say, 'Dunno, never seen them before in my life!'

My dad had a Morecambe and Wise sense of humour. He loved practical jokes, not all of which went to plan. I remember, as a child, him offering my much older cousin what looked like a glass with a small amount of wine in it, betting her that she couldn't drink it all. It was in fact a trick, double skinned glass with red wine coloured liquid between the skins. My cousin was understandably dubious, she didn't know it was a trick glass and was wondering what Uncle Jack was giving her. After several minutes of dithering, my mum, who knew about the trick glass, snatched it off her and threw 'the contents' in her face, what we didn't know was that dad had filled the glass to the level of the encased liquid with water. My poor cousin stood there, utterly shocked, water dripping off her face. Boy, did my dad get it for that one!

Anyway, onwards and upwards. Got to keep the family tradition going. I live on my own and can't see my family for a hug, but this girl has now learnt to Skype. It's all still a bit of a mystery to me how we get connected, but we do. I've spent a happy half hour admiring my six year old grandson's latest Lego creation and papier-mâché Easter egg, and looking at the three year old's eye and up his left nostril! I've also been 'taken up the garden' by my son to get my opinion on whether droppings found in the shed belonged to rats or mice. It's been great to see them all.

Who'd have thought...

In 2020, the start of a new decade, who'd have thought that instead of driving flying cars we'd all be learning how to wash our hands, the wheelie bin would get out more than we do and the cat now asks if you want the radio leaving on when he goes out!

When I do go out I usually end up chatting with various people while waiting in the queues at the supermarket /chemist etc. You can still chat even at the recommended

distance. So far, conversations have included the toilet paper crisis, myself and several others I've spoken to are now eagerly awaiting the imminent publication of '101 ways to use Toilet Paper' or

even the 'Toilet Paper Cookbook'. Well, what else are they using it for? Also on the agenda has been whether the Metro newspaper, CHAD, or one of the Nationals has better absorbency if the worst comes to the worst and we have to resort to the old fashioned way of cutting it into squares. This approach does have the added advantage that you're never short of reading material while 'on the Throne'!

At the chemist, bets are laid as to how long it'll take to get through the door and whether the one out, one in means you have to tether your husband/wife/ partner or whoever you came with outside, and if so, did you bring their lead?

Just try talking to folk

Honestly though, if you're able to get out, just try talking to folk, it's amazing how far a smile and a hello will get you, I consider it to be part of 'doing my bit'. It stops me from feeling alone and if it helps someone else it's all to the good. Remember, you may be the only one that person has spoken to all day.

If you're self isolating, all's not lost. I've chatted to my neighbours over the fence, the postman asked me to say one for him when he saw me weeding in the front garden, and now is a great time to use the phone to catch up with those friends or family you may not have spoken to in ages. It all helps to keep us connected.

Share anything amusing that has happened to you, it doesn't have to be much. Have any of you tried online shopping for the first time, if so, how did it go?

Have you taken up any new hobbies? If it's DIY please remember though that if you've never done arc welding or other such hazardous activities before, then perhaps now is not the best time to take them up. Believe me you don't want to end up in A&E at the moment and they won't be overjoyed to see you either!

What about learning a new language, or brushing up on an old one? How about something really off the wall, like Klingon or Vulcan? Other Inter Galactic languages are available.

Stay safe, well, busy and connected as best you can. The time will pass and hopefully we can all get together again in the not too distant future.

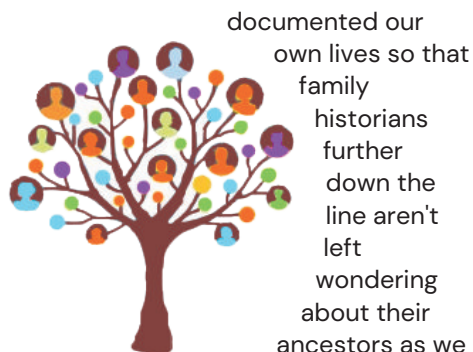


Jenny Wright

Document your life to help future family historians

Is it really only a month since I was writing about our last meeting before lockdown started? Has anyone else noticed how time seems to be expanding and contracting in a very extraordinary fashion at the moment? My days seem to go by quite quickly, but it seems like a lifetime ago since we last met, or is that just me?

At our last meeting, Ann shared a project that she'd been doing on her own life. We are always saying that we should make sure that we've



often are. The trouble is, we seldom get round to it.

Would your family know where you were born, what schools you attended, what games you played, or who your friends were, where you lived, or what your house was like? Did you have a bathroom and indoor toilet, or the luxury of toilet rolls? What work did you do, did you have to clock on and take your snap with you, or was there a canteen?

What did you do for entertainment, did you have a radio, or even a TV, and if so what programmes did you watch/listen to? Did you go to the cinema, or to dances in your teens?

They may know when you married, but would they know when and where you met the love of your life? Would they know what your interests were, or what achievements you've had?

Probably not, after my mum died I

realised I knew hardly any of this, not even what her mum, my gran's maiden name was!

Dad had tried to be helpful and wrote the names of family members on the back of some photographs; however, writing 'Jen's great grandma' doesn't help much when I had two sets of great grandparents on his side, plus two more on my mum's side.

Taking our lead from Ann, and knowing we wouldn't be meeting again for a couple of months at least, we decided to write our own stories during the lockdown.

This is something that may also be of interest to you, even if you don't do Family History. Don't have a computer? No problem, write it down on paper, or make a scrapbook.

You may also want to sort out those boxes and albums of photos. Don't forget to write the names of people on the back and also when and where they were taken, if you know. Your children and grandchildren may thank you for this.

Jenny Wright

Keeping occupied & coping

One of the nicest things to happen in the early days of self isolation was a note through the door offering help with shopping. I was moved to tears because I had never spoken to this young lady. She and her family had only lived on the street a few months and there had never been the opportunity to communicate. We are now friends and she has helped us with basic shopping.

My next tearful moment was when our great nephew in Rotherham, who we have not heard a lot from, emailed to see how we were. He also offered help with shopping. We decided to let him help with a big shop so we emailed a list (no toilet rolls needed I might add), however he did phone me from ASDA to ask if I really wanted 23 tins of tuna? It should have said 2/3 tins! It was sad not to be able to give him and his wife a hug when they brought our shopping, they just put it inside the door and stayed outside and we chatted from a distance.

Those of you who know Malcolm and I will know we use computers a lot, however, attempting to do online grocery shopping was a new venture and took us two hours. We managed to get the last 'Click and Collect' slot three weeks hence, then kept wondering how we did this. In the end it was quite easy and we won't be worried about doing it again, if we can get a slot.

Online drawing

Another new adventure has been joining an 'online drawing group'. Our daughter in Edinburgh encouraged me to do this. A different task is given each week and you can send your drawing via WhatsApp each day or every few days, whichever suits you.

Now, I have only recently gone up market with a mobile phone so still have the L plates on. I did my first drawing and after a struggle sent it off via WhatsApp only to receive a message which said I had managed to change their logo! Now how did I do that? I bet I could not do it again!

Thank goodness for modern technology so we can keep in regular contact with our family and friends. And what a blessing we have a garden. Malcolm and I are finding plenty of outdoor jobs to do while we are enjoying this lovely weather.

Pauline Marples

No Table Tennis

by Marilyn Refern

No pitter or patter of ping pong balls

No puffing and panting, or 'good shot' calls

No nattering, chattering or coffee break news
Or swapping of banter with which to amuse

No slipping and sliding or slicing through air
Or wafting of bat (though done with such flair)

No reaching out with arms flapping wide
Just missing the ball as it rolls by my side

I'm missing the fun, can't wait for the day
When we're all virus free and then I can say
The tables are booked. Look out for my name
on message to you with a date for a game.



Thank the Lord for technology...

I hope you are all managing to find purposeful things to do with all the time you have on your hands during this unprecedented lockdown. I have been just as busy as usual, but in a very different – and, in many ways, a more purposeful way.

I have found myself talking to God more and more throughout each day but, in addition, I have joined two actual prayer groups – The Mansfield Prayer group and Skegness Baptist Prayer group.

I never thought I would sing the praises of technology but I am so glad to have it and to be capable of using it (as so many families, social groups and businesses must be).

Mansfield Prayer group is an ecumenical group of Christians from the locality – we meet, using Zoom, to pray together each lunchtime, Monday to Friday, and have done so since the start of the lockdown. The group is growing and getting more powerful.

Skegness Baptist Church has set up a WhatsApp group and I was invited onto this as that's the church I attend when I go and stay at my caravan. We get together for an hour every Friday morning and conduct a prayer session just by texting backwards and forwards with short sharp thought prayers.

I enjoy both tremendously and feel prayer is vital in these critical times.

On Good Friday, Christians nationwide were called to go outside at 3pm (the time at which Jesus gave up His life)



Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered his Easter sermon from his kitchen

and pray and sing/play Amazing Grace. I did this using a music programme called Spotify which is on my phone, projecting it through my new sound bar. My neighbour said it was lovely (they obviously didn't hear me singing in accompaniment!)

Besides prayer there are lots of other opportunities to engage with or seek God via online resources such as Bible studies, worship song videos and Sunday services. There has never been so much opportunity to consider the big questions about life.

Thank the Lord for technology – it is really coming into its own during such a time as this.

If anyone wants to know any details or talk about anything in this article please do not hesitate to get in contact.

God bless you all.

Lynne Cooper



Every day is not good, But there's good in every day by Marilyn Refern

On my solitary daily walk I see
The soft pink blush of anemone
carpeting the woodland ground
With speckled sunlight all around

The pinnate leaves protect and cling
To treasured flowers, every spring
Delighting all whose eyes alight
Upon this glorious, timeless sight.

A suburban garden during lockdown by Kay Toy

Furled and unfurled primeval green fronds,
Cherry blossom confetti gently falling, gently falling.
I watch as orange-tip butterflies dance together
in a pretty fandango
And large, soft bumblebees dart and hover over
feasts of flowers.
Fussy, quarrelsome sparrows argue over mates
And make a ruckus in the laurel,
While the alpha male struts his stuff on the willow arch.

The stopping of our "normal"
Has not been noticed by Nature.
I rejoice in that.

Your Executive Committee

Forest Town & District U3A couldn't run without the hard work of its Executive Committee. Everyone gives their time freely. Welfare officer, **Kelvin Foster** has been keeping in touch by email but for members who do not use email he's keen to emphasise that any member who needs help should contact him by phone on **01623 422251**. All executive committee members can be contacted via the website at <https://u3asites.org.uk/forest-town/contact>

The members are: Linda Shutt (Chair), Michael Lyall (Vice chair), Sue Harkin (Business secretary), Andrew Riby (Treasurer), Marilyn Refern (Assistant treasurer), Anita Adlard (Groups' coordinator), Steve Evans (Assistant groups' coordinator), Jane Atkins (Membership secretary), Kelvin Foster (Welfare officer/Assistant membership secretary), Susan Carlill & Denise Whitsed (joint Social secretaries) and Desley O'Leary (Speaker seeker).

Next issue

Please send contributions for the next issue to Helen Riby by email ftu3anews@gmail.com or by post to 5 Fal Paddock, Mansfield Woodhouse NG19 9RW **by Friday 22 May please**

Please visit our website for the latest news: <https://u3asites.org.uk/forest-town/>

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