



HANDS FACE SPACE

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

REGISTERED CHARITY NO 296975

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AUTUMN NEWSLETTER - GUILDFORD AREA u3a

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear GU3A members,

Or gu3a members should I call you now? At the National AGM on 29th September TAT unveiled its new branding and logo. This included lower case lettering which is bold and progressive, they say, to attract the next generation of members. So don't reach for your red pen next time you see it; it is done on purpose!

We have also had a lot of communications from National Office about Covid guidelines, too. It is a pity that you have received contradictory interim newsletters from me but I am just passing the news on as it comes to me. Things do seem to have settled into the Rule of 6 now but I am sorry if some of you had gone ahead and made arrangements to restart group meetings which had subsequently to be abandoned. We are lucky to live in a part of the country which is not too badly hit by an increase in infections but at our age we must be very careful to keep safe.

I hope you have renewed your membership for this year. We operate what we call a "grace period". It usually runs until the end of the first week in October. It means that you have until then to renew your membership. You will still receive newsletters and other communications from us. At the end of this time we send out a reminder to renew and it is only if there is no response to this that your membership is considered to have lapsed. Because of the exceptional circumstances this year we have extended the "grace period" to 16th December 2020. However, if you wish to attend group meetings before then do please renew your membership. I am delighted that so many of you have renewed, even with the diminished programme.

Thank you for the many voluntary donations we have received. They are very much appreciated and help gu3a weather the current storm. I have written individually to all of you who have contributed. A donation may be made at any time by sending a cheque with a note to our Membership Secretary: Mrs Sue Watson, 12, Mandeville Close GU2 9YA.

Do please check your email inbox. Our Beacon database tells us whether the mails we send you have been opened. I sent emails to all new members since November 2019 inviting them to a New Members' Meeting and about a third of them have not been opened.

Your continued support is heartening. As we head towards the shorter days, keep making those phone calls, stay in touch and be there for each other. We are a self-help organisation; the definition of help is rather wider than usual just now.

With all good wishes,

Julie Beattie

Guildford Area u3a Annual General Meeting

Normally at this time of year, we would be sending you details of our Annual General Meeting. This is a note to remind members that our AGM has been moved later to Monday 25 January 2021 and will take place by Zoom. The AGM papers will be sent out to you, with our Annual Report for the year up to August 2020 and a full set of Accounts, just after Christmas. This will include instructions for all members on how to participate. *Please note that should you wish to make a voluntary contribution to GU3A funds this may be done at any time during the year.*

Sonia Ashworth MBE Secretary

U3A Radio

Episode 1 of U3A Radio, the first ever official u3a radio was officially launched on 29th September directly after the Third Age Trust national AGM. The national office learning team have been working with member volunteers who are skilled in broadcasting and you can keep listening to u3a radio wherever you are as it is delivered as a recorded podcast. This pilot will feature a series of interviews and features from across the movement – find the podcast on YouTube.

VIRTUALLY THE SAME

“It’s a U3A, Jim, but not as we know it!”

Spock’s alleged words would have rung true had Enterprise landed in Guildford earlier this year and now seem likely to remain valid for months to come. With the closure of village and church halls during the pandemic, most groups have had to look at alternative ways of meeting and many have moved online. Zoom, which few if any of us had heard of this time last year, is now a household name.

Of course, it's not just at U3A that things have changed. There is talk of radical change to our town centres and ways of working. Will pubs and clubs ever get back to being the crowded social venues they were? How many people will be allowed to watch live sports and will we ever shake hands again? Social distancing, working from home, ordering groceries online; all these are becoming the 'new normal'.

Addressing this is a major challenge and with so much change to be expected, it is only right that the Executive Committee ask itself:

- a) "Are we maximising everything for members at present?"
- b) "What will U3A be like in two years' time and what will be our new normal?"

The committee has set up a working group to look for answers. To ensure the outcome is what members want, the working party is keen to know members' views and you might receive a questionnaire in the near future seeking your help on this. This is your opportunity to guide the decision making, so please respond. If you have urgent suggestions you may send them now to thefuturegu3a@guildfordu3a.org.uk or by post to the Secretary at The Black Cottage, Newlands Corner, Guildford GU4 8SE, so don't feel you have to wait.

Even before Covid there were issues that needed to be addressed. The cost of venues had risen steeply and other costs also were increasing; time to assess whether our historic operating model is right for 2022. Hopefully by then our venues will be fully open and we shall be meeting together as before, but perhaps online meetings will also become a regular GU3A feature. Some groups have already found them very satisfactory and perhaps they do have a place in the regular GU3A offering. It's surprising what can be done on Zoom; language classes, yes, but Card Making and Chi Gung are two groups that not many of us would have listed as online friendly.

Our future new members will have grown up more digitally involved than much of the existing membership. They will be increasingly happy in the virtual environment and we should be paving the way for this without excluding our present members by virtue of any digital limitations. We must remember that we have a number of loyal members who do not have access to the internet and online meetings. We must not push them aside without consideration. Perhaps another member of their group could invite them to share a screen for online meetings or can we find some other way of keeping them involved?

For many members, the social contact provided by GU3A is also important. How much have you missed chatting to others at the regular group meeting? Perhaps you are happy with social media contact or perhaps you have replaced these contacts with other forms of social activity. Will five years actually find us in a U3A, but not as we know it? The ability to predict the future is granted to very few but that should not prevent us from looking at what GU3A can offer members in future and how, remember this is your U3A, your views will help us shape it to best suit you in future. If it's not going to be GU3A as we know it, let's make sure it's GU3A as we want it to be!

David Pearce

MONTHLY MEETINGS

I would like to report that two of our speakers are able to give their presentations by Zoom, but unfortunately the October talk will be changed. I am pleased to say that Alan Jones will give us a talk entitled, It's not what you say. In these Covid times Alan will discuss how we interpret people's body language – difficult to do when using Zoom or other electronic means to communicate. Our November talk from Susan Corr from Wisley will go ahead and, if we still need to use Zoom in the New Year, David Williams has confirmed he too can give his talk, Lawrence of Arabia, by Zoom.

You should register for the talks in which you are interested in order to receive an invitation at monthly@guildfordu3a.org.uk

Jennifer Margrave – Organiser

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

CARDMAKING & PAPERCRAFT



The two groups have had Zoom meetings over the last six months, and, now that we're into the new U3A year, more members are joining in. We've looked at demonstrations of new techniques and YouTube videos, which have given us ideas for new cards. We're now into making Christmas cards for October and November.

Moira MacQuaide

CHAMBER MUSIC

I thought that we would have to postpone our meetings until the Spring but I am very grateful to Steve Moore for offering to find a way to produce music on Zoom. We started on **Tuesday 13 October** at 2pm when there were 2 parts with a short break between. The next meetings are on **10 November and 8 December** at 2pm. I understand that the first 3 meetings include music for harp, Beethoven plus and woodwind. For details on how to receive Zoom please contact steve_moore7@btinternet.com. I do hope you will try to join us.

Iris Hawkins

CORONAVIRUS CONCERT CHOICE (or how I learned to Zoom)

Concert Choice plays music described as “classical” but with an eclectic range from Vivaldi to Vangelis. It has long been a favourite amongst the U3A members with the *regulars* coming along in all weathers over many years. When in March the lockdown abruptly terminated the 2020 programme it was a devastating blow. Still reeling from the shock and feeling singularly detached from the everyday world, the suggestion that we might go for *shared listening at home* - perhaps a concert broadcast on Radio 3 or later, the truncated Proms season - seemed a good idea. It fell on stone deaf ears. Members made it quite clear that they came to the group *to sit together, chat together and listen together* to the music.

So we took a different approach (fearfully on my part) : we would try a Zoom Concert Choice. At least we would reach out to our members with access to the internet. Having sat through committee meetings held by Zoom I was acutely aware of how tiring it was - staring fixedly at a smallish screen. Quite why this is so is unclear but it seems to be a common experience, so we decided to plan a programme that filled two 40 minute Zoom slots with the customary 10 minute tea break in between.

That was how I came to spend many hours trawling through YouTube to find works that would make an interesting programme within the time constraints of zoom. Having compiled a list, it was time to hand over to my *techno meister*, Steve. There were a good many unexplained glitches - glitches being a particular feature of the internet - but with tweaks and trial-and- error he succeeded in overcoming them. After a couple of rehearsals, we were ready to....Zoom!

We started the session as planned in the Prospectus: Friday 2 October 2020 at 2 p.m. At 1.55 as I was trying to figure out the best place to *blutak* my “script” to the screen, my camera dislodged itself. For a hairy few minutes our Host was left wondering whether the *presenter* would present herself ! All was going fine, and the Moscow City Orchestra came into view conducted by the mighty Jurowski. But there was no music. Patiently the small audience of Zoomers waited for the problem to be resolved. It wasn’t, and as time was precious we moved on to the next item.

The rest of the programme went off successfully. What became obvious was the extra pleasure to be enjoyed from *seeing* the performers in close up - particularly in a complex piece (such as Shostakovich 7 Symphony) where the phrases are tossed from one instrument to another. The biggest plus was seeing the conductor, (in the concert hall with his/her back to the audience) working the orchestra. Jurowski is a minimalist - one can barely discern the beat as his baton quivers; Valery Gergiev eschews a baton and instead favours a flat-of-hand technique - often with all ten digits fluttering independently. Sir Simon Rattle smiles encouragingly and blows kisses...

It may not have been flawless but it was a very rewarding and enjoyable afternoon. Whilst we would all prefer to meet in person we certainly had the feeling of *coming together* for our first Zoom meeting.

Margaret Westwood

The next *Concert Choice* will take place on Friday 6 November 2020. For further information e-mail westwood.m@talktalk.net

FACEBOOK



This Facebook group was set up in August this year and, so far, has 66 members. It is hoped that members will post things, such as what's going on in their groups, interesting facts, funny images, ideas for the future, as well as asking questions, offering somewhere to discuss issues about U3A and where we are at present. All you need to do is:

- a) Have a Facebook account
- b) Search for Guildford Area U3A
- c) Ask to join – give your membership number

As soon as we've checked that you're a bona fide member of our U3A, then you will be approved and can join. All GU3A members are welcome.

Moira MacQuaide

GENEALOGY

The Genealogy group has been meeting via Zoom since April this year and will be meeting this way for the foreseeable future. This term we're looking at the three big Genealogy websites, Ancestry (Sept), Find My Past (Oct) and The Genealogist (Nov). Now that we can look at them live, online, it gives the opportunity for members to use their own ancestors' details to work through what each website can offer. The new BBC series of Who Do You Think You Are will raise the profile of Family History again. Life has been very strange over the last six months, and we haven't been able to visit places such as The National Archives for research or the big shows. However, there have been online Family History Shows, which have been very interesting.



Moira MacQuaide

Jazz Concert Group - Tim Downing's Retirement

Tim Downing took over the leadership of the Jazz Concert Group in 2008 and had run the show virtually single handed for the last 12 years. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus we had to cancel the last two concerts in March & April. Due to this abrupt end, Tim did not get the customary Tribute & Presentation.

At that time, I promised Tim that we would have a retrospective Tribute & Presentation following our October concert. Sadly, as the new leader, I had to cancel our first four concerts in October, December, January and February. However, I shall be monitoring the situation and hope that we can hold the March & April meetings. This has been a very difficult decision to make, but the harsh reality is that to comply with social distancing requirements, it would drastically reduce our ticket sales income by circa 50% and we would be unable to pay the bands.

However, my main concern is to protect the health of our members - let's face it, we are in the vulnerable category, even without underlying health problems. Bear in mind that we would be sharing an indoor space with wind instruments & vocalists. The recommendation is to have windows open, but I don't think that would be welcome or practical through the winter months.

Coming back to Tim Downing, I hit on the idea of organising a small get together with Tim and his wife Judy and also Jackie Ring who has joined me to run future concerts. However, I had to consider the logistics: raising cash to finance the event; finding a way for members to be involved; finding a suitable venue. After much thought, I came up with the following plan and I am pleased and relieved to say that it worked well: an email was sent to all Jazz Group members, whose number is currently nudging 200, inviting them to contribute. Members' contributions by cheque were sent to Jackie who entered their names and comments in what has become known as the Mega Thank you/Leaving Card.



Tim and

Judy Downing, Jackie Ring and Piers Parsons enjoying the event

Finally after much searching for a suitable venue, in early September I reserved a table in the Courtyard of the Kings Arms, Guildford. It seemed a good idea at the time. To allow members to experience and be part of the event, I hired a professional videographer to record the whole event. Unfortunately, 24 September was probably the worst day I could have chosen, with thunder and torrential rain. Fortunately, the pub was empty so we were able to move inside. This video has been uploaded to YouTube and can be viewed by using the link shown below. Running time is approximately 30 mins. Should you have access problems, select YouTube, then search for Tim Downing Tribute & Presentation. <https://youtu.be/3DgW2EXLxEA>

Piers Parsons – Leader

Russian Intermediate

It seems an age ago now that I would have said should I have been asked that Zoom was something more likely to be relevant to the Photography group than to a Modern Languages group! How things have changed this year! The Russian Intermediate group after a brief hiatus resumed sessions at the start of the summer and we meet via Zoom. We have continued with translation practice, grammar and usually some other lighter activities: These have included quizzes, practising tongue twisters, crosswords and more. We look forward to continuing our meetings in the world of cyberspace at least during the Autumn term. The group is for those who already have some knowledge of Russian and are keen to brush up their skills and exercise their knowledge of the language and new members are always welcome.

Tony Rummery

SINGING ON ZOOM

Yes, I know – you can't! Everybody's internet connection works at slightly different speeds, and the result is a cacophony. Despite this John Varney has been offering very successful fortnightly Zoom sessions for the Monday Singing Group 1 and Wednesday Singing for Pleasure groups. Using the resources of Youtube it is possible to convince oneself that one is producing the sound of the Philharmonia Chorus, or The Sixteen, and only the cat or long-suffering partner knows that it is not true. Just remember to Mute.

Caroline Sawers

All-Day Walking

The groups have re-started their schedule, though we were restricting our numbers to the extent that the individual leaders felt comfortable taking responsibility. September went very well with outings based on The White Horse at Hascombe and the October walk centred on The Cyder House at Shackleford.



As a 'designated outdoor activity' we hoped to start to walk with larger numbers, in two smaller groups, properly distanced. However, the more recent stringent restrictions have curtailed us even more. It is important that we keep active and enjoying the countryside, but having regard to safe practice, for all our sakes. Each walk usually brings a new delight, something we haven't seen before and, unlike the signpost, we rely confidently on our walk leaders to guide us. We look forward to welcoming back our existing members and any new ones who have become more interested in walking since the confinement of the Big Lockdown.

Elisabeth Markwell and Janis Payne

CONCERT VISITS

I am disappointed that the C.19 situation has not allowed concerts to start in London yet and so it looks as if we cannot plan any visits until the Spring when we should also have details of transport. Those of you who had booked for the Beethoven concert on 15 March should have now received a cheque refund for the ticket as I felt it was too long to wait up to 6 months for another proposed booking.

Lastly, may I thank all those members and friends who sent me letters and sympathy cards on the loss of my dear husband Bill at the end of March. I am finding it hard to adjust to my new life with few relatives and friends not allowed to visit me. I never seem to complete the day's work I intended! ***Iris Hawkins***

OUTINGS AND VISITS organised by Ann Elms and Jackie Ring Directly government regulations permit, Ann and Jackie will be back with an exciting programme for you to enjoy. We have already had a planning meeting to discuss what is possible and when we will put on our postponed outings. We can't wait to put on interesting things but we are constrained at the moment and really miss organising visits for your delight!

POEM CONTRIBUTED BY ANN BOXELL of Painting 1 Group

TV Lockdown

I've eaten my dinner that came in a van,
I've paid down my cash for a funeral plan.
The boiler man comes if I get into trouble
And a cute little gadget gets rid of my stubble.
I'm sitting in comfort in my lovely recliner
Contemplating a cruise on a luxury line.
With my new hearing aid and my anti-age creams
If I'm lucky I'll meet with the man of my dreams.
The lawyers will help me if I should fall over
The vet will insure me for Kitty and Rover
But before I get older and I get too tottery
To fulfil all my dreams all I need is the lottery!

Can we help you?

Many things have 'gone digital' in recent months and not all of us are finding this easy. GU3A has set up a **digital help line** to support members. Initially targeted at those struggling with Zoom, we are expanding this to cover all aspects of using the internet and related devices.

If you want help of any kind, please contact us at zoomhelp@guildfordu3a.org.uk or via your group leader or any committee member and we will put you in touch with someone who can help.

Can you help us?

If you are willing to be a Digital Buddy and help fellow members, please let us know at zoomhelp@guildfordu3a.org.uk. Let us know what you feel happy helping with and we will ensure you are only asked to help on these topics.

THE DEADLINE for the **SPRING 2021** newsletter is **12 MARCH** please send your contributions to the editor at any time before then. **However, anything sent after the deadline will be held over until the next newsletter** – if it is still relevant then. Preferably please submit your contribution by email as a **Word.doc or compatible** in Calibri font, single spacing. **Photos as individual jpg files** please.