



HALESWORTH U3A NEWSLETTER

1. A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN of Halesworth and District U3A

Into an increasingly virtual world....

The first easing of the COVID 19 lock down is very welcome, however it is unlikely that 'business as usual' for indoor U3A activities will resume until the autumn.

The committee met recently on Zoom and, considering its limitations and our inexperience, we were able to reach some decisions. I was delighted to see and hear my Committee colleagues once again.

We reviewed our constitution and the guidance received from the U3A Trust and we have decided to postpone our AGM until December. Currently we have no information as to when our usual hosts at The Cut will be opening their doors again and with what limitations. We will keep the situation under review and will decide on a date for the AGM later in the year.

Halesworth U3A has paid the per capita subscription to the U3A Trust for 2020. In return the Trust provides us with insurance, advice and website support and the quarterly magazine for members. We expect to end our year with a larger financial surplus than planned due to the cancellation of monthly meetings and our annual coach trip. This additional unexpected financial cushion should enable Halesworth U3A to hold the current subscription (£15.00) for the foreseeable future and also enable us to increase our subsidy for Coach outings and other 'open to all' social events during 2021.

Your committee also agreed to reimburse reasonable subscription fees to group leaders to pay for software such as Zoom to enable groups to keep in contact. In these exceptional times we are keen to

support interest groups so, if you require funds for a subscription please contact the Treasurer using the link on the Halesworth U3A web site.

In the meantime we have been approached by Tony Diamond who has given us a couple of monthly talks at The Cut. Those who have heard Tony speak will recall his engaging and upbeat delivery. Tony regularly gives talks to U3As and other organisations and he is putting some of his new talks on line. If you are interested, his first illustrated talk (about 25 minutes) about the life and times of the poet John Betjeman can be downloaded here by clicking on this link.

I have tried this on my PC which worked easily and then again on an Android tablet which took a little longer to configure: just follow the onscreen prompts.

<https://wetransfer.com/downloads/5efef4ad7e01b7492e6aeb3ed475a1e120200528211532/e00de3a36a1e9c17e279ca51db0ea77d20200528211532/dd4eff>

So, all but 3 months since U3A came to a shuddering halt, we find we have a number of groups continuing to meet by remote contact, and others keeping in touch by phone, text and even distanced over garden gates.

My thanks to everyone who is keeping our U3A alive and upbeat in these difficult times; especially our hard working committee and, of course, our group leaders.

So please, let us all stay safe; let us keep our distances; and continue as and when we are able to Live, Learn and Laugh with U3A.

Best Wishes from Martin Stevens,
Chair Halesworth U3A, June 2020

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NB The "lockdown" is likely to be advisable for vulnerable and also older persons for some time to come. We urge all groups to adhere to the government guidelines for physical distancing and also to abide by all other regulations that may be put in place.

Failure to abide by legal restrictions whilst participating in U3A activities of any sort will invalidate the Public Liability Insurance cover provided by the U3A.

Here is one member's garden looking lush! Can you do better?



Halesworth views (1)



Photo Jan Athis

The path from Chediston Street to Mill Lane looking splendidly floriferous!

2. HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Some of our members, having the benefit of a garden, have been keeping busy in the sunshine. Whilst Halesworth does usually have a Front Gardens competition, back gardens are not on show. So we thought it might be interesting and fun to see what wonders there are in U3A back gardens.

If you have achieved great things, grown some absolute stunners or gone in for a spot of "re-wilding" **please email us a photo**. We will publish some pictures in the next newsletter and also put all the pictures up on our web site. [*To ensure privacy the pictures will not be attributed unless you specifically write in your email that you are happy for your name to be included, however your village or street name would be useful.*]

Please send your garden photo to uthreeamembers@gmail.com with

"My Garden photo" in the subject line.

We look forward to seeing your back garden next month!

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3. GROUP NEWS

It is very encouraging to be able to report that 18 of our groups are functioning in SOME form. Of course some will be "in abeyance" for a while yet (eg Country Dancing, New Members Coffee Morning, Lunch on Friday, Walking), but we are grateful to all group coordinators for the efforts they are making to keep their groups going, where at all possible. Many groups are using Zoom and Ken Derham informed us that for those concerned about security, as from 1st June Zoom will be upgraded to version 5.0 and all video meetings will be encrypted.

Bridge: (Sharon Collins): Using Zoom for socializing, but not (yet?) for playing bridge

Church Crawlers: (Jan Derham): occasional email contact

Discussion group (Jill Daines) are now Zooming fortnightly and "debate is good and lively as ever!"

Vegetarian cooking (Nina Warwick) carries on as they follow recipes in a book

Scrabble: (Helen Chillingworth) has the option of going online as HC has several years' experience using online Scrabble.

Mahjong: (Mike Oldfield): MO has tried to find a suitable online alternative, but what's out there is not really good enough.

Theatre Discussion (Mike Oldfield): going well on Zoom, "so well in fact that we are having weekly meetings every Monday afternoon in place of our previous monthly meetings. There is such a lot of high quality theatre being streamed online

on YouTube at the moment from the National Theatre, The Royal Court Theatre, and many others".

Recorders (early stages and experienced) (Diana Furness): have not met to play but five new pieces of music for people to try out have been sent round as they needed something new to whet their appetites. There may be an for a small group to meet whilst keeping to the regulation distance.

Exploring the Novel: (Lynette Muddeman): have now had several meetings on Zoom. Group members have overcome connection problems to gain more reliable participation. "We find this works very well for a discussion group up to 9-10. The limitations are, of course, only one person speaking at a time and the difficulty of picking up the signals as to who wishes to speak. Therefore we are being a little more formal than usual with a 'chair' to call speakers. Overall the system is proving successful- but we do miss the homemade cakes with usually accompany a meeting!"

The ComTech2 (Malcolm Ballantine): has been communicating successfully using Call Group which MB prefers to Zoom. At present this system works only with PCs, laptops and Apple Macs - not Android or iphones, MB is sure this will change in the near future.

In the programming sessions, the Comm Tech group has been looking at a new programming language, 'Processing'. Malcolm Ballantine says "Although we have been using it for other purposes, this language was devised for beginners to programming whose main interests are in the visual arts. We would be very



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interested in collaborating with others with an interest (and talent!) in this area for our mutual benefit.

French Conversation: (Jane Stennett): plans to explore using "WhyPay?" which allows many people to talk via the ordinary i.e. landline telephone, as not all group members use computers or Smart phones. We look forward to hearing how successful this may be.

Shakespeare: (Marie-Claude Foster): will re connect when they can with the unfinished programme but meanwhile are enjoying several plays on line (two members have already watched 16 Shakespeare plays since the lockdown in March and have 8 more available at present online and on the BBC),

French literature: (Marie-Claude Foster): when able to re-convene will re-visit Albert Camus' La Peste which the group has already studied "but this time to have a discussion about the issues raised by Camus in view of our own experience and personal reflection about coronavirus"

Chanson Française :(Marie-Claude Foster): is following how chanson Française is being used in France during lockdown mainly to connect people and create social interaction as well as to encourage people to follow the official guidelines to deal with Covid 19. As many writers point out the notion of "social distancing" is a problematic one, we refer "physical distancing". In France, social connection is being maintained and new connections created through the medium of the classics of chansons Française, for example France Musique (the equivalent of Radio 3) organised a highly successful

nationwide project singing Serge Gainsbourg's "La Javanaise" with Jane Birkin. All of these are available on YouTube and members are being encouraged to follow the development.

Illustration (Diane Fernando): When social distancing permits Diane would welcome new members; contact details are on the U3A web site.

Bird watching (Chris Gardam): has been keeping in touch by email, reporting any bird sightings from members' walks, taking part in a picture quiz and using YouTube videos to help improve bird song recognition. "Not as good as meeting in person but every little helps". Birds seen by members locally include Ring Ouzel, Black Redstart, Lesser Whitethroat, Peregrine, Grey Wagtail, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, lots of Buzzards and Swallows but "we have also held a successful Zoom meeting, with 20 members taking part, on 'Identifying and learning bird song'. We just need to practice more! We have another Zoom meeting planned for June".

Ukulele: (Ian Clampin): Continues to enjoy using Zoom as illustrated last month.

Music appreciation: (John Tredway): 2020 is the centenary of the first performance of "The Lark Ascending" and John is planning to celebrate this with the group during the month.

Wine Appreciation (Tony Langford): The group have moved on from quizzes and Tony is now providing a weekly comment on a couple of wines that are readily available locally. (*Cheers! Ed*)

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4. ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR SUCCESSFUL REMOTE MEETINGS.

The Committee have agreed that Halesworth U3A will support groups meeting remotely by helping to pay subscriptions for technical solutions such as ZOOM. Group Coordinators who have obtained, or plan to purchase, software may contact the Treasurer to explore the possibility of reimbursement. Contact: Christine Billingham through the U3A website or via email to contact@uthreemembers.co.uk

TO ZOOM OR NOT TO ZOOM?

Not so long ago, if you wanted to use your laptop to set up a video call to talk to the grandchildren in Australia or the cousins in Guildford there was only one choice: *Skype*. Such was the extent to which this system dominated the video communication world that the name itself became a verb – as in ‘I’ll Skype you at the weekend’. Then, out of the blue, *Zoom* appeared, and *Skype* now seems to have been almost forgotten.



But, is it as simple as this? Are these two systems the only ones? In the ComTech2 group we have been looking at this and

discovered that there are literally hundreds to choose from. Anyone who is anyone in the world of IT has created their own system and they promote and market them in a multitude of ways. Here is just a brief selection:

- 8x8
- Adobe Connect
- Amazon Chime
- BlueJeans Meetings
- Cisco Webex
- ClickMeeting
- Google Meet
- GoToMeeting
- Zoho
- Microsoft Teams

How on earth do you find your way through this video jungle? There are three ways of looking at it: Who is the system aimed at? How does it shape up technically? And, of course, how much does it cost? Looking at the first, it’s fairly simple: some systems are aimed, for example, at business users and it’s very difficult for people like us to get in. If you try to sign up for *Microsoft Teams* (currently much advertised on network television) and you can’t supply a company name, you are swiftly diverted to the *Skype* website (Microsoft recently bought *Skype* and are now aiming it at ‘consumers’ rather than business users).

The technical aspects give us insight into why and how so many systems can have appeared so rapidly. In 2012, the great and the good of the IT world – Microsoft, Apple, Google and others – formed a consortium to get some sense of order into things. They stopped short of creating actual videoconferencing systems but created technical standards and software ‘building blocks’. What they had in mind were systems which were easy to use and technically reliable (no picture



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break up, good quality sound...) and, above all, no apps to download. Systems would work within web browsers such as Microsoft Edge, Apple Safari and Google Chrome – and also with Android and Apple smartphones and tablets.

To design an actual system, designers would need to keep to the standards and then assemble their system from the 'building blocks' provided. This initiative was called 'Web Real Time Communication' or 'WebRTC' for short.

Today, almost all video call systems keep to these standards and use the 'building blocks'. The exceptions? Well, the older systems which started before WebRTC – you guessed it, *Skype* and *Zoom*.

In the ComTech2 group we have tried some of these systems but so far only a few. *Houseparty* is worth a try but aimed at very informal settings, perhaps too informal for us. *Google Duo* is very easy indeed to use but was devised for one-to-one conversations. Our favourites are *Google Meet* (which until recently required a Google 'G-Suite' account) and *Call Group*, which is very new and, at present, free to use without time limits. For now, *Call Group* only works with PCs and laptops but Android and iPhones will be included soon.

Our view is, if you want to use *Zoom*, that's fine. But we would urge you not to use it just because everyone else seems to be using it. It's been designed to be easy to get into but once you are in, it's

not the easiest system. And then there's the cut-off after forty minutes unless you pay. What we suggest is that you explore and find one which suits you best. When you've found it, do let us know.

Malcolm Ballantine, Group Leader

5. OTHER NEWS

- ❖ This month our participative ventures feature digital photography and gardening. Next month we will be looking for your inner artist in conjunction with Diane Fernando.
- ❖ Don't forget to look at our web site from time to time and also the Third Age site <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>
- ❖ You can sign up for the U3A Trust newsletter which is a very uplifting read with plenty of articles to keep you informed. If you do not yet receive the Trust's email magazine you can register to receive it using this link: <https://u3a.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=656ad5962b370cc9e2731d1ed&id=56e8ad64e0&e=c83d59c329>

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Halesworth views (2)

DOWN MEMORY LANE



Jan Athis

The Town River in May 2020

And finally:

- ❖ This newsletter is longer than usual; however if you know of U3A members who do not use the internet, please consider printing a copy to share. It is so important to keep in touch while the local Community News is not printing. We hope that we will all be able to resume U3A activities in some form before too long but in the meantime:

Stay Safe and Stay at Home!