



HALESWORTH U3A NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Summer 2020 Halesworth and District U3A Newsletter

Fellow members, I extend my greetings to you all, in particular those of you receiving our newsletter for the first time.

We are aware that despite some easing of the COVID 19 restrictions, some of our members have only recently emerged from an extended period of shielding.

Although far from business as usual, your U3A continues to offer a range of activities and opportunities to meet, (sometimes on a screen) share and learn. Hopefully a fuller calendar of 'in person' events will emerge over the coming weeks and months when social distancing restrictions are reduced.

About now in previous years we would have been planning for our AGM in September and our annual renewal of memberships. As you may know, we have postponed our AGM provisionally until December (as permitted by our constitution) when we hope that we will be able to meet together in some face (or will it be mask?) to face way.

First, the not unexpected bad news, that there will probably be no 'open to all' speakers arranged until December unless guidance changes and The Cut reopens. We will be speaking with our colleagues at The Cut again shortly to discuss this.

The good news is that a fair number of our groups have found ways to continue their activities despite the lockdown measures.

This newsletter contains all the information you need to renew your membership. To summarise if you currently already pay by standing order, do nothing. However, for those paying by cash or cheque please read and take note. I would encourage those not currently paying by standing order and who feel confident to do so to consider paying by this method for the future. With no bricks and mortar banks remaining in Halesworth I know this would save our Treasurer and Membership Secretary a considerable amount of time and work each year.

Our membership fee for the coming year 2020 /2021 will remain at £15.00 despite an expected increase in our U3A Trust affiliation fee. We have not increased our membership fee since 2010. Our intention is to use any 'Covid windfall surplus' to continue to hold down membership fees and to provide an increased subsidy to all 'open to all events' that we hope will take place during 2021.

Our committee continues to work behind the scenes to ensure the essential tasks are done. We thank them and the coordinators of all our groups for ensuring that the U3A ship remains afloat and ready to sail off fully prepared and bound for the 'new normal' world as soon as is possible. As always, I am more than happy to take any queries or suggestions via the link to me on our website.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/halesworth/mailin/g/c:24491>

Best wishes to you all – Stay Safe

Martin Stevens (Chair) August 2020



HALESWORTH U3A NEWSLETTER

1. THE NEW U3A YEAR AND YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Halesworth U3A membership year begins on the 1st September. In this very unsettling year you may be forgiven for considering value for money. I hope that the contents of this newsletter will convince you to persevere and renew as there are still a good number of groups meeting and the potential for more groups to reconvene as the Covid lockdown moves into a new phase.

Membership renewal works as follows:

1. In person or by post

If you usually renew your membership in person or by post, you will find renewal forms enclosed with this newsletter. Please complete the forms and deliver or post them to the address on the form together with a cheque.

*[If you wish to pay by cash then please **do not** post your renewal. You are welcome to deliver your completed renewal form plus subscription to my house. Please see address on the renewal form.]*

Please also enclose a stamped addressed envelope which will be used to send you the membership card for 2020-21.

2. Standing order payments.

Members who pay by standing order need do nothing. Your membership card will be sent to you in September as soon as our bank has confirmed receipt of your payment.

3. On-line readers

Members who receive this newsletter via email will find the renewal forms attached to the email. If you pay by cash or cheque please see 1) above. If you pay by Standing Order you need do nothing.

If you wish to change to payment by Standing Order please complete the mandate form. Send the bottom half to your bank and enclose the top part with your renewal form.

Please note: *Your Halesworth U3A membership number is the reference number used by us and by the bank.*

Please call me on 01986 872206 If you have any concerns or questions about your renewal. Monica

2. GROUP NEWS

Despite the restrictions on gatherings and events, Halesworth U3A has continued to provide entertainment, learning and companionship to many members.

Some groups are still not able to meet because of the requirement for social distancing or the closure of venues. However our members are resourceful and a number of groups have developed the skills to enable us to participate in meetings in our own homes by using new technology.

In this newsletter you will find much mention of "Zoom"; this is a piece of technology that enables computer users to see each other on a computer screen and to hold conversations with each other. There is no limit to the number of people who can "meet" by computer without leaving their homes. Zoom is free to use for up to 40 minutes per session. However for any group that would like to subscribe to the full version (which allows for longer meetings) Halesworth U3A will pay the fee while the group is unable to meet face to face.

Bridge Group Halesworth U3A having funded their Zoom subscription, the group have mastered the technology to play bridge on-line. The group are playing every Thursday morning and generally there are enough players for 2 tables. In addition the Group meets on-line socially on Thursday afternoons to keep in touch and exchange news.

HALESWORTH U3A NEWSLETTER

Discussion Group Our Discussion Group is still meeting fortnightly. Of particular interest we have had a series of discussions with younger folk ranging from 16 to 40 years of age. They have been sharing their ideas, views, thoughts and feelings under the heading 'The New Norm'. It has been a most enjoyable, productive, heart-warming, encouraging experience for us giving us great hope for the future of our country. They found us very welcoming and were pleased to know that some older people wanted to hear from the younger generation. We return to our usual format at our next meeting with a discussion entitled 'Wishy, washy Socialists'.

Halesworth Strummers Ukulele Group are meeting every week on Zoom with up to 17 enjoying making music as evidenced by the photo above.



Here is a photo of the Halesworth Strummers in May, demonstrating musical social distancing using Zoom.

[A U3A member is contemplating starting another ukulele group when Covid restrictions permit. If you are interested in joining the new group please let our Group Coordinator Jan Athis know via the link on our web site.]

Wine Tasting The wine group are enjoying participating in instructive wine tastings in their own homes. They are meeting monthly using computer video technology (Zoom) to discuss and compare selected wines. The most recent meeting tasted a selection of very good Portuguese wines obtained directly from Portugal at an astoundingly reasonable price of £5 per bottle.

Portuguese Group – The group leader is taking advice from another U3A that runs several Portuguese language groups and expects to resume meetings in some form shortly.

Recorders The recorder group has been reconvened successfully for three meetings now. We sit at a social distance in an airy space. Numbers have been between two and three, at most four. The group has been divided into two so each group meets fortnightly.

Exploring the novel - This group now meets on-line as do the **French conversation** and **Scrabble** groups

Walking – The group hope to start distanced walks in October. The plan is to walk in groups of 6 walkers with each including a leader. The spaced walks will be followed by an optional spaced meal. The October walk will be around the Dunwich area and most likely familiar to many. New members are welcome; please make contact through the U3A web site.



Dunwich Heath in the height of summer

Real Ale –This group has resumed meetings at local pubs which have gardens and at which distancing is possible. In July the group visited the

HALESWORTH U3A NEWSLETTER



Real Ale group in the Triple Plea garden, their first meeting post-lockdown

Triple Plea in Halesworth and in August they were pleased to visit the "garden bar" of the Star at Wenhaston. A visit to the Rumburgh Buck garden is being arranged.

Shakespeare the group has a new leader and will be resuming their study of the Bard's plays during the autumn. New members welcome.

The Birdwatching Group

The Group hope to restart activities in October with a socially distanced walk in small groups. This will depend on the advice and guidelines in place at the time. In the meantime members are reporting sightings from their own walks to share with the group.

Computer Technology

During lockdown **ComTech2** became very active, meeting twice a week using the 8x8 video-conferencing system. This was primarily a period of revision of past projects. The group are now moving to a new phase and plan to meet by whatever means in September.

Science Group – We continue with our programme of monthly virtual meetings using Zoom video.

Please note: The topic for our meeting on 27th August will be an "Overview of Risk Assessment" presented by Brett Edmonds.

If any U3A members who are not in the Science Group would like to join, please contact Ken at

U3Ascience@btinternet.com



Here are the members who attended the August Zoom meeting at which "Recycling" was the topic discussed.

Local History Contact is being maintained and it is hoped that the group will start activities before long.

~~~~~

Other groups that require a specific venue or close physical contact await the easing of restrictions before they can resume activity (e.g. dance, illustration, craft).

**NB** We ask that groups please contact our Groups Coordinator Jan Athis when planning to restart activities post-lockdown. Jan can provide all the latest advice and guidance from the Third Age Trust on Covid secure meetings in compliance with government regulations.

# HALESWORTH U3A NEWSLETTER

## HOW DID YOUR GARDEN GROW?

I make no apology for including a couple of photos from our [lockdown garden feature](#) in July for those who did not receive the previous newsletter.



"Lockdown Hair" Sent by HF, Holton



Lockdown gardening brings results! TL Halesworth

## U3A News

### Covid-19 and Risk Assessments

The Third Age Trust advises us all to remain alert and vigilant to sudden regional variations during this period of transition out of strict lockdown. We must be prepared to extend, or return to, restrictions where and when required.

Any U3A wishing to restart activity must carry out a [risk assessment](#) to ensure the activity is safe for their members' participation. The outcome of the risk assessment will determine what must be done to make the activity safe; or may conclude it is not yet safe to restart even with mitigation in place. Government guidelines are central to any risk assessment and must be adhered to. Each U3A activity, venue and circumstance is different and must be assessed on its own merits.

Whilst lockdown restrictions have been eased recently it is clear only limited outdoor U3A activity can even be considered at present. Individual members should always consider whether or not it is sensible to run or take part in an activity depending on their personal circumstances.

The Risk Assessment Checklist is obtainable from the Third Age Trust web site and from your Halesworth U3A committee.

Please don't forget to look at our web site from time to time and also the Third Age site

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

In the meantime we hope that you enjoy reading our latest news and we look forward to receiving your membership renewals very soon.

Monica Edmonds  
Halesworth U3A Membership Secretary  
Athene Cottage, Wissett Road,  
Halesworth, IP19 8PS

Tel: 01986 872206

# HALESWORTH U3A NEWSLETTER

Finally, some intriguing news from our Technology Groups coordinator about one of their recent projects:-

## "The Internet of Things" (IoT)

Six years ago, when we started the U3A Community Technology group, we realised that the components we were using were intended to be used to create 'the Internet of Things'. This ambitious enterprise aims to connect anything and everything to the internet. It's been a bit slow to take off and it has been subjected to jokes along the lines of enabling your fridge to e-mail you to tell you that you are running low on milk. At that time, we never imagined we would actually be able to do such things.

Recent developments have not only brought the Internet of Things a lot closer, we in the Halesworth U3A can now aspire to creating such systems. The most significant development is the availability of a new microcontroller computer, the ESP32, at amazingly inexpensive prices, together with technical support through the Internet. The ESP32 is similar to the Italian-made 'Arduino' devices we started with but is much more powerful. Not only that, it can be programmed using the Arduino software with which we are already familiar and, most important, it has WiFi and Bluetooth built in. This enables us to create projects which we can control at a distance through, for example, our mobile phones.

So, what do we intend to do? Right now we are developing the skills to be able to make use of this new technology. We intend quite soon to move on to work on practical projects for which designs are available. Then we will move on again and aim to create our own projects, as we

always intended for the benefit of the community, particularly older people.

A published project we have found is quite appealing for the intermediate step – to fit a small greenhouse with lighting, heating and irrigation to optimise the growth of whatever we plant within it. The lighting can be varied in brightness, colour and daily duration. The heating can be controlled by measuring temperature and humidity and the irrigation by measuring soil moisture. One of the appeals of the published project, because we like South Indian food, was that the designer chose to use curry leaf plants for the trials. The greenhouse was quite small – about 50cm long, and cost £12 from IKEA. And the ESP32 computers? Less than £3 each.

If we come back and read this in just a few years' time it will look very strange because ESP32s will be everywhere. Perhaps in our fridges to tell us we are low on milk. But then again, perhaps we won't even be aware that they are there. In the meantime we would really appreciate some advice on how to grow curry leaf plants.



And here is the dinky little automated greenhouse....!