

Stray Bits – February 2021

Welcome to the New Year where not a lot has changed as we are still in Lockdown 3! I do hope everyone is keeping well and taking care to keep their distance from friends and family. It is very sad that we have to take all these precautions – but it is in our best interests.

The Committee meanwhile have been meeting on Zoom, which I know many of the groups are doing too. It's been a quick, steep learning curve for us all. But it has allowed us to continue connecting with each other. Our Chairman, Richard Cyster, has arranged the Open Meetings to be two a month by zoom for the time being, *and* there is a coffee zoom each month too. Thank you Richard, for all the work you are doing behind the scenes on our behalf. Now for some of our group activities.



U3A Painting for Pleasure 2020

The painting group restarted at Bilton Community Centre in September and we managed to keep going until the restrictions and then the lockdown brought it to a close. It was well organised with appropriate hand sanitisers, masks and other social distancing measures in place. The group could accommodate a maximum of 16 in the hall space which gave everyone the 2m distance required. At first it was like being back at school everyone in rows facing frontwards. The most important aspect was the social interaction that everyone enjoyed again, meeting painting friends again after a long lockdown. After the lockdown group members are keeping in touch with each other in various ways. Juliette our creative director has been busy in her garden creating fairy glens and glades. At present she is busy crafting Christmas items, painting, and also assisting the oil group members through social media. Janet has been busy getting her new house in order and painting walls not pictures. Molly has also managed to produce some paintings despite her move to her new flat. Sheila has produced snowy scenes paintings to create Christmas cards. Jean kept in touch with Juliette to keep her newfound talent of oil painting going. A few other members have also been busy but like most of us not doing much art work. This is why it is so important to get back to group painting again, where you can have a couple of hours to yourself painting and socialising. Let's hope that 2021 we can reunite our groups in Harrogate U3A which is a valuable source for our mental and physical wellbeing.

Liz Frederiksen U3A Painting for Pleasure.

Sheila Dean's

NEW GROUP

Exploring Yorkshire's Heritage:

Where did the inspiration for the US flag come from?
Where is the longest railway bench in the world?
There are 4000 of these in the Yorkshire Dales – what are they?
Which town was once "Britain's equivalent of Hollywood"?
What does Alice falling "down, down, down" have to do with a religious building?
Why do we thank Yorkshire for our Easter holidays?
What is a stanza stone?

If you know the answer to all these questions, this group is not for you; otherwise, this new group will provide answers to these questions and more as we explore Yorkshire's heritage. This will be a small group of no more than 20 members, visiting various local sites of interest, mainly by car but also public transport, with occasional outside guides and members of the group will hopefully contribute with ideas etc. Inevitably, there will be some walking but this will be limited to no more than 4-5 miles. This group will start as soon as Covid restrictions permit but please register your interest to the group leaders, Phil and Cheryl Johnston, on pcjudlow@yahoo.com.



THE NATURALISTS GROUP invite any U3A members who are interested to join our Zoom meetings presentations.

Tuesday 9th March at 2pm - 'A year in Lockdown' with Anne Hopkins

Please contact me for an invitation on: issybeard@hotmail.co.uk Isobel Beard



Three German, one Greek and one Russian..... These groups, run by Evelyn Thompson, are enjoying meeting on Zoom each week. Hard work and lots of concentration is required!

-----This means – 'I need the Spring' in Russian!



Tai Chi 2 and Exercise & Fitness – these groups are on hold at the moment, but **Tai Chi with Breffni has restarted via Zoom**. After a couple of weeks, I think we are beginning to get the hang of it, but we all want to go back to the **real thing** as soon as possible. Meanwhile, please everyone, have your Covid jabs as soon as possible both for yourself, and to protect others.

Reading Group 3

In August some of the group met for an appropriately socially distanced tea at the Cairn, half-price thanks to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Needless to say, the conversation was lively, and such was the spirit of optimism that one member offered to look into re-establishing real meetings. However, with the incidence of positive cases on the rise, it was back to Zoom.

The reading list has a different feel this year after a majority of the group argued that we needed a change from fiction. The choices have proved stimulating and we are getting better at using Zoom.

The year started in September with *Shadow of the Silk Road (2007)* by the well-regarded travel writer, Colin Thubron (b.1939). We were less than enthralled, with one member of the group admitting to having given up a long way before the end of this 7000mile journey from China to the Mediterranean. A post-modern travel book? None the less, the book was considered worthwhile for the lively descriptions of the people the author meets against a background of appalling poverty.

The thing about December (2013) is the first novel, but the second published (2013) by Irish novelist, Donal Ryan (b.1977). Set in Co. Tipperary at the height of the Celtic Tiger, this short book (pp.205) describes the final year in Johnsey Cunniffe, a simpleton with a desirable asset, his father's farm. Like all the best novels. it left us divided over the author's achievement but none the less stimulated by his inventiveness and verbal felicity.

The November book was *Hidden Lives (1995)* by Margaret Forster (1938-2016), a prolific novelist and biographer. This book is the biography of three generations of the working class women in Carlisle, the author, her mother and her grandmother, contrasting the wasted lives and drudgery of the latter with the opportunities that access to higher education offered the author in the 1950s. The theme is not unfamiliar, but well-handled here, although given the level of detail, there was some concern that the line between fact and fiction had been crossed.

Which one would I recommend for a post lockdown Christmas? Undoubtedly the third with its spirit of optimism.

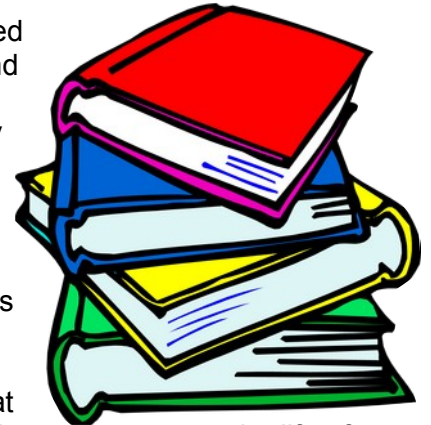
Peter Hirschmann

A Dog's Duty

Christmas, with family allowed, came and then went
And all the New Year celebrations were a non-event
We were in Lockdown again because the virus is bad
So, all good doggies, be sure your people are not sad
You must make a fuss of people in your little bubble
And be sure to behave very well - keep out of trouble

Then things got better when we had some good snow
My family took long walks, and how their faces did glow
The children made snowmen that looked really nice
With carrots for noses and black buttons for eyes
And any park or area that had even a little hill
Saw children out sledding, as all children will

Then came the rain, then more snow, again and again
The rivers became flooded with far too much rain
The spread of virus filled people with gloom
But the rollout of vaccination was starting to boom
Spirits were lifted and people much better did feel
Until new mutations threw a spanner in the wheel



the life of



cont..

With all the ups and downs and changes of mood
We doggies must help to make our people feel good
We snuggle up to them when it's pouring with rain
Let them take us for walkies when it's better again
But doggies, please be sure for the sake of the nation
That your people do go and have the virus vaccination.

If you are a people, I want you to know that your dog
Tries to make you feel better through rain, snow or fog.
Dogs know that you love us, and you know we love you
That is why we are trying to keep you from feeling blue
And if you are a doggie, one of my furry, four-legged pals
Make sure to keep looking after all your guys and gals
- Poem by Doggerel Dog

Painting for Pleasure. Group Leader, Peter Kearney



Painting offers total relaxation and distraction from current anxieties/ boredom!. Peter Kearney's painting group hold weekly Zoom meeting which attract about a half of the members . While the important social side is

contained, there is the opportunity to say Hello and chat. Painting during the meeting is not practical so we present our paintings of the topic which has been set. It is interesting to see the wide interpretations produced by members in isolation. Peter comments on each painting and offers suggestions where helpful. A large number of paintings have been completed during the past three months and we anticipate a crowded post lockdown display at the AGM or other suitable location. - Brian Graham



(Painting - Cityscape by Marie)

Looking at Churches

Our group has several good Zoom talks planned for the year, with a mixture of members and guest speakers lined up. We are hoping that we can have group visits to churches in the summer months, but that is a little uncertain at present. In the event that we are not able to do group visits, we have the flexibility to continue our monthly Zoom meetings.

Our "Information Exchange" - led by Peter Hirschmann - has highlighted a number of interesting and relevant Zoom meetings that we have been able to join. Several of our members have taken advantage of these opportunities.

All in all, the group is keeping actively Zooming, and we will continue to do so until we are able to return to our regular in-hall meetings again.



Watch out for these phone calls which seem to be on the increase again. I have had several - one which said that £600 had been taken from my Mastercard account. Then asking me to press 1. At which point I put the phone down and phoned my bank - **but ON ANOTHER PHONE/mobile; that is important.** And No - my money was secure. But don't fall for these phone calls which predominately target older adults. So, do be very careful Others profess to be from Amazon, the tax office, the Council or BT saying that your internet will go down. If you make a note of the number and then try ringing back - its unobtainable! There are also ways in which these calls can be blocked. Just go into Caller Blocking and there is plenty of help.

Advice from SAGA - 'if you get a call or text, out of the blue, from someone you do not know, assume they are a thief and hang up.'

COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Website address- <https://u3asites.org.uk/harrogate/home>

Group Leaders - please give updates to Webmaster, Chris Rush at: webmaster@harrogateu3a.org.uk

Stray Bits for your immediate notices and information. Copy by 14th March 2021 please to:

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