

2023

JULY NEWSLETTER

Leigh & District u3a



Dear Friends

As this is the 10th Anniversary newsletter of Leigh & District u3a I must start by thanking all our Committee members and Group Facilitators (past and present) for all their hard work in keeping our u3a so successful for the past 10 years. Of course our groups are nothing without the support of our members and my thanks goes to everyone for their continued membership.

At our AGM in June several new Committee members were voted in and Iain East, our long standing Chair has stepped down. Thank you Iain for all you've done. It's impossible to list everything but, we're all extremely grateful for your hard work over the last few years, especially during 2020/2021 when you were the driving force to keep our u3a active while others were closing. You can now take a well deserved holiday without being asked how to work Dropbox or sort out problems with Beacon or the website.

In this newsletter we have several articles written by some of our founder members. Reading their recollections of how Leigh & District u3a started is so interesting and we owe them all thanks for what has been achieved in the past 10 years. We now have a membership of 400+ and around 30 different interest groups. Life would be very different without our

favourite groups, trips or socials to attend each month.

We are always looking to extend our range of groups and would like to know if any members have an interest they'd like to share with others by forming a new group. This can be anything from Archaeology, Coffee and Chat, Geography, Photography Cycling, Walking ... or anything else you're interested in. If this is something you'd like to do, can you please contact me and we'll see how many of our members would like to join you. We'll also help you start the group on a day and time to suit yourself and give any training you may need.

Enjoy reading the newsletter and let me know if there's anything particular you'd like to see in future editions.

Best wishes,

Keith (Chair)



Leigh & District u3a Early Days by Ann and David McCarthy, member nos. 3 and 4

Anne and I saw a notice in Morrison's in Leigh about a proposal to launch a new u3a. We decided to go along to the meeting being held to discuss the proposal. We remember that there were about 20 to 30 people there including members of other u3a's attending in support. I volunteered to join the steering committee and for some strange reason, offered to be Treasurer! Some of the other first committee members along with Lesley Bates, Chair, were Gill Fisher, Secretary, Tony Ashcroft, Jane Stephens, Joyce Timms, and Mary Greenhalgh.



At the first meeting to sign up members it was pandemonium as we tried to fit everyone in. When we began the process of signing people up, Jane Stephens, the membership secretary, Anne and I tried to keep up but it was mad. We ended up with a pile of forms and cheques and money but somehow it all balanced miraculously!

We put out sheets with proposed groups so that people could register their interest as well as indicating if they were prepared to be Group Facilitators. We suggested a Canasta group but had no takers. We joined the Family History group, Walking Group and Singing for Fun. I did Spanish and Anne joined the Reading Group. We also enjoyed the days out and the Speaker meetings.

In March 2014, Andy Burnham, the local MP at the time, visited us and spoke of the importance of u3a's in keeping people healthy. When he arrived, Lesley and I greeted him and he asked me how many members we had and I told him that we had been going less than a year and had around 120 members. He replied by saying that the Labour Party in Leigh was over 100 years old and didn't have that many members! We celebrated the First Birthday with a special cake or two and here's a photo of the occasion in 2014.



I have to say it was all very challenging at times, but also very rewarding, especially things like registration as a charity and gift aid etc. from my perspective as treasurer. It's amazing how far we've come and makes us very proud to have been part of it all.

Reflections on 10 years of Leigh & District u3a by Mary Greenhalgh, member no. 10

It was during a work related study day in the 1980s that I first heard about the University of the Third Age. I was researching what leisure activities were available to older age groups after retirement. Originating in France in the 1970s it was and still is in France aligned with academia. Hence the name. I learned that the first age was the time when we are dependent on others for our care, the second age is when we are the caregivers and the third age is the time to develop our own interests. With the mantra of life long learning this was just up my street.

When the concept came to Britain in the 1980s it was changed to being a more self help organisation with no formal academic input. The idea was that this age group had a lot of knowledge and experience which could be shared with others who were keen to keep on learning whilst at the same time having fun. Members gained friendships and companionship in small groups dedicated to a diverse range of subjects, all provided free of charge with leaders sharing their particular knowledge learned in their world of work or even their hobbies and interests.



The British version is led by a governing body, the Third Age Trust which in turn oversees regional committees and then there are local groups led by committees.

By the time I retired in 2000 I was aware of u3a groups in nearby towns from some people from Leigh who travelled to them. I subsequently attended a couple of taster sessions at the Ashton in Makerfield group and looked into starting up a Leigh branch. However, I was very involved with other activities at this point and couldn't spare the time to setting up a new group. It was therefore left to someone else to do this in 2013.

Due to very poor publicity our first meeting at Leigh Miners was poorly attended and in fact everyone at that meeting became committee members. Publicity was very dependent on local newspapers and was decided on whether it was a good news week. So different today with dedicated publicity officers and the help of social media.

Numbers did improve week by week, mostly by word of mouth and within one week invitations being sent out to other organisations in the town such as Soroptomists International and even the local MP. I and a couple of others attended the first of the annual Leigh heritage days where we distributed leaflets and gave out information to visitors. This of course has evolved into our u3a having a publicity event in the Spinning Gate shopping centre and other venues all manned by members.

Interest groups in the early days were started with much anticipation and eagerly attended. We were lucky with the leaders who brought various skills to share with members. For instance, trips organised by Pat who had experience of doing the same with the NHS social club. Tony on Local History with connections to Leigh Archives in the Town Hall. Terry sharing his experiences and exceptional knowledge of genealogy were among the first along with the luncheon club with Al. Also, the forerunner of the iPads and iPhone groups which is still functioning. Tai Chi was among



these and several others joined very soon after by the ever popular Crime and Punishment led by Barbara and Brian Joyce. Some of the groups I attended included Tai Chi, book reading and poetry as well as crown green bowling and the happy ukulele band where the lovely Les Harris taught us beginners basic chords which enabled us to sing and play mainly old songs which of course we knew all the words to. These early groups have now grown to include many diverse subjects which appeal to a great number of people.

Highlights over these years have to include the lasting friendships I have made and the friendships I have seen others make, including at least one wedding when Barbara and Brian tied the knot in their beautiful 50s themed wedding to which several u3a members were invited.

Another highlight has to be the beautiful quilt made by our talented team of stitchers depicting Leigh history and presented to the newly refurbished archive section in the town hall where it is proudly displayed for all to see.

My 80th birthday bash, a charity day at which the ukulele group, in their very first gig provided entertainment is also one of my highlights. We also raised nearly £3,000 for the local hospice which was a bonus. A couple of trips were also rather special, the 125th anniversary of Port Sunlight village and the visit to the National Arboretum were two that I particularly enjoyed.



There are so many memories but safe to say my experience has been and continues to be one of positivity, friendship and happy times. Oh, of course, one of learning, which after all is what attracted me to the u3a in the first place.

I hope the next 10 years will see the continuation and development of what we began and that present and future members will get as much enjoyment from u3a as I do.

Leigh & District u3a Early Days by Gill Fisher, member no. 11

I heard about the u3a when I was Head Teacher of a Primary School in Tyldesley – some pupils had become involved in attending events organised by them. So, after retirement in July 2012, spotting an advert for a new u3a in the local paper I decided to contact the organiser who was called Lesley. She had experience of u3a's in Parbold and had already negotiated a venue at Leigh Miners.



Soon a small committee was formed – I was the minuting secretary – to set up our new u3a and a publicity campaign launched. Our first public meeting was organised and relatively well attended. I became membership number 11.

Without sounding too rude, I recall looking around at this meeting and thinking to myself, “No, I’m too young for this,” but I soon realised actually this is going to be a good thing for the local community. Some members, even in the early days describing it as, “a life saver.”

The speaker meetings were well attended but the social meeting, less so. I then introduced a quiz during this meeting and it improved attendance. Groups and trips were now underway and groups leaders would sit behind their table in the lounge at the Miners to advertise their group – it was a bit chaotic.

Crime and Punishment was, and still is, very popular, alongside Women in History—so effectively run by the then Barbara Samson, now of course, Barbara Joyce. There was Knitting, Play Reading, Shakespeare study, Art Appreciation, Local History (very popular), Water Colours, Painting, Scrabble, the Luncheon Club – also very popular amongst others.

I started the walking group, helped by Frank, just shortish local walks. Like Peter Kay in one of his famous sketches referred to when a dinner lady shouts to the children, “ it’s spitting, everybody in!”, because as soon as this happened nobody turned up – discouraged I stopped the group.

I still attend and thoroughly enjoy, Crime and Punishment, Women in History, Play Reading, Shakespeare, Bowling – indoor and outdoor even in the rain!!!

Leigh & District u3a Early Days by Barbara Joyce, member no. 27



On a very hot day in July 2013 I braved the kamikaze roundabout and joined a meeting to learn about the newly created Leigh & District u3a. I had only recently moved to the area (hence the novel roundabout experience), but had been a member of u3a in Saddleworth, Oldham.

The meeting at The Miners was very well attended and chaired by the mercurial Lesley Bates. Lesley had already established a committee and a venue and at the meeting we were encouraged to sign up for membership and express an interest in the available groups.

By September 2013 I was facilitating the Crime and Punishment Group to be followed shortly after by Women in History. Both groups survived and thrive and have now entered a new phase by moving to a new venue. I also facilitated a Church History group but after a year still could not get another member to take it over so sadly had to let it go. Both the Women in History and Church History Groups were suggested by the late Tony Ashcroft.

I joined the Family History Group which was facilitated by the late Terry Creaney. He was inspirational and it was such a loss when he died in 2016. The group was taken over but is now sadly defunct.

In 2015 Brian joined (readers, I married him in 2018) and whilst I would not advocate u3a as a substitute Tinder facility I do believe that it is a great way to find like-minded friends. It is also a place to learn new things, challenge your beliefs, increase confidence and enjoy a good laugh. I think that the most successful sessions are those where we have found something not only interesting but amusing.

So here's to another decade of enjoying our membership of this wonderful organisation.

FRIDAY SOCIALS

7th July 1pm 10th Anniversary Party

Bar, buffet and entertainment. Tickets are £3 each.



21st July 1pm Tales from the Crypt

One of our u3a members, Frances Raftery, will be giving this talk. Those members who have heard Frances before will know what a great speaker she is.

4th August 1pm John Sterling, 'From Toy Town to Buckingham Palace'

John has been in the film and television industry organising series, etc. behind the scenes. His work and experiences are extensive and he has many funny and interesting tales to tell. One not to be missed!

1st September 1pm Ray Jefferson, 'The Building of the Octagon Theatre, Bolton'

Most people have heard of this theatre in Bolton and probably have seen a play or musical there. So Ray will tell us about the renovation of this building, how it was achieved, the cost and how long it actually took to finish it.



6th October 1pm Kevin Siddall, "Sinatra – The Life & Times of Ol' Blue Eyes"

Love or hate him, Sinatra is an enigma. We take a look at the man behind the dazzling tapestry of his career. Stories about significant milestones in his life and sing songs that have special meaning for him and others. Even if his music isn't of interest, his story might be. NB This is not a tribute act.

3rd November 1pm Steve Williams, "Unsung Lancastrians"

Steve will tell us about all the famous local people that we actually don't know about. You will be most surprised at his knowledge and of the people he has researched to bring us an afternoon of entertainment and interest. These are people who are, and have been, in the background of our society but have made a difference to the lives of people, both locally and just a little further afield.

TRIPS AND DAYS OUT

LIVERPOOL BAY CRUISE Sunday 30th July

I have provisionally booked 35 places on a 3hr sightseeing cruise around Liverpool Bay with a couple of hours free time in Liverpool One. This is the same cruise that we went on last year and it proved very popular.

Coach will initially take us to Liverpool One for a couple of hours free time for shopping/sightseeing/lunch and then collect us to take us to Pier Head to board our cruise. Experience Liverpool's historic coastline and sail into Liverpool Bay on 3 hour sightseeing cruise.

Panoramic views of River Mersey with commentary from a blue badge guide about the fascinating history and geography of Merseyside. A licensed bar and servery are available on board but if you wish to take your own picnic lunch then that is fine. Entertainment will be provided by The Shanty Kings again, a very enthusiastic, enjoyable group of gentlemen who sang lots of sea shanty songs.

Cost for cruise is £22.00 (normally £25.00) Cost for coach is £12.00 approximately

Therefore total cost is £34.00 for cruise and coach. A £10.00 deposit will secure your place.

Jenny Allen

HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Since we started the History of Medicine group in March this year we have covered topics on medicine during historical periods (Pre-History, Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Medieval up to now). These are accompanied by looking at the work of doctors and discoverers etc, plus an outline of various diseases (we have covered smallpox and necrotising fasciitis - the flesh-eating bug already).



The July session will include a history of Dentistry and Scurvy. PowerPoint presentations are shown on a big screen and comments and contributions are always welcome from members. The programme until September will include a history of Prosthetics, the strange story of Incubator Babies, Florence Nightingale and Malaria.



I always bring interesting books as suggestions for further study for those who wish to find out more.

Sessions are held monthly at the Miners from 1-3pm on the last Friday of the month. Everyone is welcome to attend. Please ring me if you have any questions about the group on 07969 259078.



Regards, Frances

MIXED CRAFTS GROUP

Although there are different crafts in evidence at the Mixed Craft group: cross stitch, knitting, crochet and even jewellery making, as well as paper crafts, several of the members recently enjoyed my demonstration of the techniques of stamping and stenciling. The end result was a birthday card suitable for a male.



If you'd like to join us, we meet at Leigh Miners Welfare at 10am on the 1st Monday of each month.

Jackie Anderton

ACOUSTIC GUITARS / VOCAL GROUP



Since the success of the showcase of Acoustic Guitars in March, the Committee were approached by some members of the discontinued singing group. It was suggested that we have a trial period singing/playing together. This is developing really well and we are performing at the party on 7th July.

We are not a performance led group, and we do struggle to practice and perfect ten plus songs (approx 30 mins of entertainment). PRACTICE does not make PERFECT, it makes IMPROVEMENT, the stage we are now at! Our 'choir' is blending seamlessly with the guitars, and Linda and myself are trying to encourage more input from our members, in terms of song choice and direction. All in all, we are having a good laugh on the way, wherever that is!

We meet at 10am on the first and third Thursdays of the month at the Family Welfare Centre. If you'd like more information please contact Linda Worswick.

DaveOLDshep and Linda W.

MATHS GROUP

We have been working hard in the maths group with keen attention, lots of group participation, bright eyed and bushy tailed. It is lovely to work with such a group of enthusiastic budding mathematicians. This is especially so as maths is far from a popular subject. WHY NOT? IT'S IMPORTANT AND THE QUEEN OF THE SCIENCES.

I do hope more u3a members will pluck up the courage to join us. We are not a bit frightening and lots of help is available (even 1-1 if that's needed).

Lately we have covered the following topics:-

| | |
|---|---|
| Curved graphs and Calculus | Pythagoras and Trigonometry |
| Sequences | Transformations and matrices |
| Probability | Calculating interest |
| Classifying numbers | Solving quadratic equations by 3 different methods |
| Loci | How the ancients solved square roots (long before calculators or even logarithms) |
| Doing calculations in other number bases instead of 10. | |

Most of the topics have been from the GCSE syllabus but we have sneaked in a little A-level, heavily disguised and doable! Still to come are lots more algebra, converting between different weights and measures, geometric shapes (no "proofs" promise!), perhaps some statistics (but I'm not keen), trial and improvement and lots more.

We meet at the Family Welfare Centre at 1pm on the 4th Monday in the month. Do come, you will be heartily welcomed

Take care, Pat

NEEDLEWORK GROUP

The Needlework group have been very busy this year. Our Christmas competition was held in January due to missed group meetings. Bernice and Heather won the prizes, but it was a difficult vote because everyone was a winner.



Ten years of our u3a prompted an idea from the group of making buntings to drape across the tables on party day and other occasions; made in the traditional colours of the organisation of blue and yellow. One drape was used at the AGM and it looked good and everyone was pleased with the outcome.



Our group is a small and friendly group and our sewing is varied, from hand embroidery to machine embroidery. We also make quilts, all kinds of bags from shopping totes to posh bags. Some of our items are

steeped in history from hand quilting and hand made Dorset buttons or soft toys for new grandchildren, fabric butterflies and kitchen items,

So, if you fancy learning a new skill, join our group and you won't be disappointed. We meet at 1pm at Leigh Miners on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Lillian Lockwood

QUIZ GROUP

Our regular monthly quizzes are still going strong. Les presented his first quiz for us (five rounds of 20 questions) and we had six teams answering questions across various categories including a pop music round where he played part of a song and we had to guess the artist and title. That was challenging! As usual it was a very close run thing between all the teams.

My own quizzes are usually six or seven rounds of 10 questions but the format can vary. Now that we're meeting at the Family Welfare Centre we have the option to use the large screen TV if we want to do any visual rounds.

The schedule for the rest of 2023 is as follows:

- 13th July - by Chris
- 10th August - by Iain
- 14th September - by Geoff
- 12th October - by Les
- 9th November - by Iain
- 14th December - Christmas Quiz

We meet at 1pm on the second Thursday of the month at the Family Welfare Centre. Please take a look at the Quiz Club page on our website for more information. If you haven't managed to take part yet, please get in touch with me, join the group and hopefully we will see you at the next one.

Everyone welcome!

Iain East



ITALIAN GROUP

Our Italian group has changed format and members over the years. It was started by Steve Fletcher, then we worked together and more recently he passed it over to me. It is a friendly group who always have a laugh together.

With the passage of time it has become intermediate level and our oldest member, dear Ethel having reached the age of 94, is hoping to get back before our celebration lunch at Don Alberto's at the end of June when we hope to welcome back other members too. Due to grandparent duties we break up for the summer holidays on the second week of July and start again on the second Wednesday of September at 10am at the Family Welfare Centre.

Our Italian Group have written a poem about what the u3a means to them. The translation is alongside.

Imperare l'italiano e

Tanto divertente

All'u3a di Leigh, dove

Lezioni sulla cultura e la gente

Ispira il student

Anche rende la lingua interessante

Nei riguardi a 'La Dolce Vita'

O in inglese Life is Sweeter

Learning Italian is

Much fun

At the u3a in Leigh, where

Lessons about culture and people

Inspire the student

Also make the language interesting

With regard to la Dolce Vita

Or in English Life is Sweeter

Krystina Meinardi Rimmer

LOCAL HISTORY

With the Local History group meetings being on the first Monday in the month, 2023 has seen the group miss two months of meetings due to the New Year and then the three Bank Holidays in May. Having the missing months didn't, I'm glad to say, stop the group members from attending our other meetings.

In February we looked at the origins of local street and place names, along with what our even older Leythers were eating way back in the day. Who could forget the lard soaked bacon shape butty for kids we found out about. In March we went down memory lane by looking at the old outside Leigh market which we used to have on the church square, and the businesses and shops that surrounded it.

We arranged to visit Winwick Church for our April meeting and the church warden gave the group a history talk and tour of the church. Did you know the church organ came from Atherton Hall, and the Captain of the Titanic was married there? It was a visit highly enjoyed by the members that attended, and I would recommend a visit to the church on its next open day this summer.

For our June meeting we looked at the Turnpike in Leigh and the reason we had it; we also looked at the building of Holden Road and how the area along its length began to change with houses & businesses.

Regards, Keith Anderton

WOMEN IN HISTORY AND CRIME & PUNISHMENT GROUPS

Women in History

This group looks at the role women have played in history. We have a mix of ways in which we look at our topics. There are full presentations by members and some sessions where a number of members bring information on the topic. It is, of course, not compulsory to bring research although many members contribute with information from their own experience or that of their female family members.

We meet on the 4th Monday of the month. The venue is Kingsleigh Methodist Church Community Centre. The Centre is on King Street, Leigh and is directly opposite the bus station. There is a car park which is accessed from Cook Street. It is immediately left through the gates just past Platinum House.

Each meeting looks at one topic so members can dip in and out as they please. The topics for the remainder of 2023 are as follows:

24.07.23 Presentation by Barbara - women who have produced work that a man has been given credit for.

28.08.23 (Bank Holiday) - Presentation by Kath - The lives of the Burrows sisters in 19th Century Liverpool.

25.09.23—Women Artists

23.10.23 - Presentation by Chris - Women and Healthcare - the case of the wandering womb

27.11.23 - Presentation by Sue - Christmas Customs

A good number of men attend the group and all members are welcome. There is no need to book, just arrive at either the morning session, 10.15am, or the repeat on the same day at 1pm. The morning session will always finish sufficiently early enabling members to attend any afternoon group at the other u3a venues. You will be made very welcome if you decide to attend and I can guarantee some learning but also some fun.

Crime and Punishment

We look at topics which illustrate all aspects of the criminal justice system. The group takes the form of presentations by various members with an opportunity for contributions and questions.

The group meets on the second Monday of the month. The venue is also Kingsleigh Methodist Church Community Centre. The morning meeting starts at 10.15am and is repeated on the same day at 1pm. We commit to finishing sufficiently early to enable members who may be attending other u3a groups in the afternoon to arrive at their venue on time.

Presentations for the remainder of 2023 are as follows

Monday 10th July—Robert Freegard—conman and fantasist

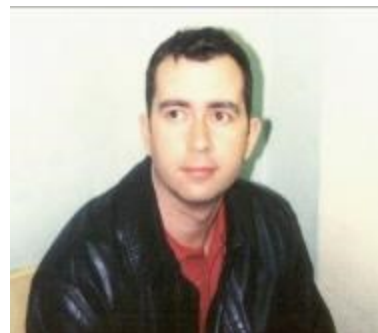
Monday 14th August—Murder of police officers

Monday 11th September—Mad or Bad? Psychotics and Psychopaths

Monday 9th October—The Brides in the Bath Murders

Monday 13th November—Operation Yewtree and its outcome

Monday 11th December—Snowden Dunhill and his family—transported



All members are welcome with no need to book and no obligation to attend each meeting. You are welcome to just attend the sessions that engage your interest. I hope to see you there and you will be made most welcome

Barbara Joyce

UKULELE GROUP

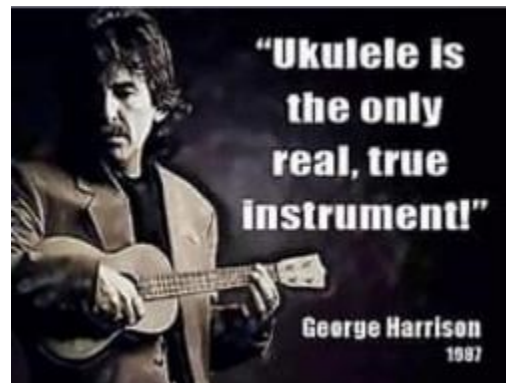
Well what a few months we have had. Business as usual on Monday mornings with excellent set lists from Donna, Dave Tarry, Paul, Brian, Don, Terry, me and of course Mel who has also enhanced our sessions with his excellent lead ukulele performance. Not forgetting Dave Smith on bass and Chris Watson on the box drum. If you haven't joined us for a good old sing along, what are you waiting for? Ukulele not required. We meet at 10.30am at the Miners every Monday.

Outside of the Monday mornings at t' Miners, a number of our members have formed a band and have been entertaining for local charity fundraisers and at Nursing Homes. We're just waiting for a u3a record producing group to form and no doubt, we will be their first customers.

A spin off group of Ukulele beginners attracted a surprising 17 members, most of whom have continued to develop their skills and with the closure of the group they have joined the Monday morning session. Well done to all of you, I am so proud that you put in the practice and are now enjoying the instrument. We may start another beginners group at the end of this year.

Not forgetting the u3a events that we have performed at, we are now of course rehearsing for the 10th Anniversary Show. Pheeew, it never ends. Aren't we lucky? Great talent, great music, great friends and a big thanks to Mark at the Miners for making rooms available.

Alan Murphy



LINE DANCING



The Line Dancing group has now been running for a year and half and we meet in the ballroom at Leigh Miners on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month, from 10.30am to 12.30pm. We have maintained a high level of attendees and also attracted a number of new members.

The class is led by trained line dancer Ray Sims and

his wife, Mildred, who also run the Line Dancing group at Ashton in Makerfield u3a. Ray stands on the stage and Mildred at the back of the room, so there is always someone to follow. Every dance is walked through, step by step, before we dance to the music, so new members are not left behind.

We have made good progress, learning new dances most sessions and even moving on to more intricate routines, with different dance steps. We started with absolute beginner classes and are now graduating to improver level dances.

Line Dancing is a really good way of exercising and keeping the mind alert remembering the different routines. It's also a great social opportunity for meeting new people with like-minded interests, especially if you come to the classes on your own.

At Christmas and Easter we had a party theme and a Jacob's table where members brought food which was set out on tables and we then share during the interval. This has been a great success on both occasions, with lots of food. We will be having another line dancing party at Christmas and possibly Halloween, with optional fancy dress.

Some members of the Line Dancing group have danced to numbers played by the u3a Ukulele group at our Christmas party and other events. We will shortly be dancing with them again at the 10th Anniversary party which is an excellent way to promote our group.

A big thank you goes to Ray and Mildred for all their hard work and help in making the group such a success. If you require any information about the Line Dancing group please contact Jackie Anderton whose number is on the website.

We look forward to the next 6 months, learning more new dances and possibly attracting some new members.

Jennifer Peters

ASTRONOMY GROUP

When we look up into the sky, we are looking back at 13.8 billion years of history, since the supposed time of the Big Bang. When we look in any direction, the expanding Universe takes us to 46 billion light years, over 90 billion light years side to side. The figures involved have always fascinated me, they are just incredible. Given that light travels at 186,000 miles each second (300,000 kms if you're a young 'un), that means light travels just short of 6 trillion miles each year (5,865,696,000,00 to be precise about it). The next nearest star system to our own Sun, is Proxima Centauri, 4.2 light years away, that's over 25 and a half million, million miles.

If the vast figures involved don't fascinate you, then the absolute beauty of the cosmos will. We will have seen frequent images of distant planets, nebulae and galaxies, each one a treat to behold. Since the group began, I have my daily blogs saved to prove it, we must have researched pretty much every aspect of the subject. But it is still advancing, and new discoveries are made every week it seems.

We have looked at the history of astronomy from the ancients, through the renaissance with **Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, Brache**, etc and then to the modern astronomers and physicists of the 20th century **Einstein, Sagan and Hawking** and the like, and into the 21st. There have been some very influential female astronomers, including but not limited to, **Caroline Herschel**, who discovered several comets; **Vera C Rubin** who contributed to the knowledge of how galaxies rotate and looked into dark matter (a large telescope under construction in Chile is to be named after her) and **Nancy Grace Roman**, "the Mother of Hubble" Chief Scientist at NASA, and for whom a new infrared space telescope due to launch in 2027 and designed to look for dark matter and exoplanets, has been named.

We have looked at the Solar System in some detail, the Sun, the Planets and their moons, the asteroid and Kuiper belts. We've studied comets, meteors, meteorites, comets, asteroids, pulsars, quasars, magnetars, nebulae and galaxies. The history and the expansion of the Universe has been looked at from the Big Bang and to theories on how the Universe may end. Our Solar System is 4.6 billion years old, and current estimates state that there is another 4,6 billion years to go before our Sun dies, expands engulfing Earth, and turns into a white dwarf surrounded by a planetary nebula. However, before that date the Milky Way is expected to merge with the galaxy Andromeda, which is moving towards us at 68 miles per second, in 4.2 billion years. *Milkodromeda*, will then contain Andromedas 1 trillion stars and the Milky Way 300 billion. Big numbers again. The Universe doesn't do things by halves. The chances of some other extra-terrestrial life in that lot, must be very, very high. So, SETI, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, is not to be mocked at.

In looking at the Universe we have crept into the wider world of science: definitely some physics, certainly some chemistry and occasionally some biology. To understand how the Universe works we have looked the natural of light (a wave and a particle), some quantum theory (sub-atomic particles, neutrons, proton, electrons, quarks and that ghost particle the neutrino). We have looked at where all our 92 natural elements have come from, by studying the life cycles of different types of stars. We really are made from starlight. An acquaintance with the electromagnetic spectrum is essential to appreciate how Earth-based and Space telescopes work and what they image. From radio waves, through microwaves, infrared, the visible range, to ultraviolet, x-ray and gamma rays.

We begin each first meeting of the month with a 20 to 30 minute look at the night sky for that particular month. I wondered when the group began how to cover each meeting, and produced a PowerPoint presentation of all things space related that had occurred since we last met. This is generally no longer needed on a regular basis, but to provide continuity and the history, I have kept it going. I always ask what would interest the members and based on those suggestions, we discover the answers together, usually provoking some interesting discussions.

No prior knowledge is necessary, we're all on a learning curve, I was very interested, but knew little when I first started the group in January 2019. So please come along, let us know what you want to learn about, if we've covered it, a recap is no problem, there's always something that's been missed or needs looking at again. If you're can't join us at 1pm every 2nd and 4th Friday of the month in the Family Welfare Centre I don't mind including you in any updates or to merely solve a query. It may spark an interest elsewhere.

Steve Fletcher.

GROUPS AND FACILITATORS (as at June 2023)



*Group meets at Family Welfare Centre

** Group meets at Kingsleigh Methodist Community Centre

† Group meets at Leigh Miners Welfare

†† Group meets at Compassion in Action

***Acoustic Guitar:** Linda Worswick
guitar@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10am-12noon. 1st and 3rd Thursdays in month

***Astronomy:** Steve Fletcher 01942 538545
astronomy@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm-3pm. 2nd and 4th Fridays in month

***Book Reading & Armchair Critics:** Christine Lovelady
books@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 1st Monday in month

†Bowls (Indoor): Gill Fisher 07931 725160
bowls@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10.30am-12.30pm. 2nd & 4th Fridays in month (Oct-Mar)

††Creative Writing: Joy Smith 01942 676127
writing@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. Last Friday in month

****Crime & Punishment:** Barbara Joyce 07516 225608
crime@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10.15am-12.15pm. 2nd Monday in month
Repeated 1pm-3pm on the same day

***Egyptology:** Maureen Lewis 01942 740269
egyptology@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 2nd Wednesday in month

***French (Intermediate):** Steve Lyon 07815 707816
french@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10am-12noon. 1st & 3rd Tuesdays in month

†History of Medicine: Frances Raftery 07969 259078
medicine@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm-3pm. Last Friday in the month.

***iPads and iPhones:** Marje Judic 01942 729560
ipads@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm-3pm. 4th Wednesday in month

***Italian:** Krystina Meinardi Rimmer 07590 489478
italian@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10am-12noon. 2nd and 4th Wednesday in month

†Line Dancing: Jackie Anderton 07530 010157
linedancing@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10.30am-12.30pm. 2nd & 4th Tuesdays in month

***Local History:** Keith Anderton 07855 995586
localhistory@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 1st Monday in month

Luncheon Club: Al Foy 07885 165807
lunch@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm Meet. 2nd or 3rd Tuesday in month

***Maths:** Pat Todd 01942 799188
maths@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 4th Monday in month

†Mixed Crafts: Jackie Anderton 07530 010157
crafts@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10.30am-12.30pm. 1st and 3rd Mondays in month

†Musical Instruments: Brian Brittain 07990 587523
musical@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm-3pm. 2nd & 4th Tuesdays in month

†Needlework: Lillian Lockwood 01942 259013 & Jill Bowker 01942 679686
needlework@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 4th Thursday in month

***Play Reading:** Kathleen Smith 01942 604790
plays@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 2nd Friday in month

***Poetry Appreciation:** Jane O'Rourke 01942 517862
poetry@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10am-12noon. 2nd Thursday in month

***Quiz Club:** Iain East 07966 172601
quiz@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 2nd Thursday in month

***Relaxation/Support:** Christine Hart
relaxation@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10am-12noon. Last Thursday in month

***Shakespeare:** Sue Fowler 07860 353304
shakespeare@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
1pm - 3pm. 1st Thursday in month

Trips/Days Out: Jenny Allen 07502 006384
social@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
Monthly. Please contact Jenny for further details.

†Ukulele: Alan Murphy 07768 842730
ukulele@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10.30am - 12.30pm. Every Monday

****Women in History:** Barbara Joyce 07516 225608
women@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk
10.15am-12.15pm. 4th Monday in month
Repeated 1pm - 3pm on same day

Please contact Group Facilitator before attending a group for the first time.

Registered Charity No 1158866

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Chair: Keith Anderton
07855 995586

chair@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk

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07886 332089
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07860 353304
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Committee member: Kathy Hopper
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committee@leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk

U3A Websites



leighanddistrictu3a.org.uk