



MAY 2021

Hi Everyone,

As the nation said its farewell to the Duke of Edinburgh on Saturday, April 17, whatever one's view of the monarchy, one could not fail to be moved to see Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth 1st, sitting alone in her pew, in St. George's Chapel. This stark image of our widowed Monarch sitting alone, without her beloved Philip, was a solemn reminder that grief and loneliness are no respecter of persons. Millions of our Citizens have and are experiencing such, having lost their loved ones to Covid-19 during the past year. Sadly, in our own u3a we have had to say our last `farewell` to members who have died in the past year and our thoughts and prayers are with the families that are left behind.

Gyles Brandreth, writing in a national newspaper, said, "The Queen may seem alone, but she'll never be lonely" and goes on to justify his statement in his article. Yet, loneliness and isolation are by no means fringe issues, as they cross all boundaries of young, old, social class, race, gender, financial status and geography.

Research has found that loneliness has an effect on mortality that is similar to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. It is associated with poor mental health, hypertension, dementia, and depression. Whilst it may well be true that in our nation, loneliness has reached epidemic proportions due to the curtailment of our freedoms and lockdown, but at least, we do seem to be beginning the journey towards relational freedom again, where we can meet up with friends and family members.

Certainly, one of the strengths of the u3a has been voiced by many members, that the organisation has helped them to meet new friends, develop new interests, and encouraged them to keep learning! One of the dangers we all face as we get older is that `we get set in our ways`. Embracing new ideas, and new ways of working, are often resisted because our personality type is one that likes things to `continue as they are`, resisting innovation. We are people of routine, life's rhythms, and rote, and we feel comfortable and safe when people stick to the routine. I used to find when I would visit my aged mother, that although she was always glad to see me, she was also glad to get back to her routine when I left. I have to admit that I tend to feel a little bit like that, the older I get!

Yet, I have been very encouraged to find that some of our more senior members have refused to be `stereotyped` and have embraced new technology and been open to innovation. If you are unable to access Zoom, you can listen to the Zoom Discussion Group and the lectures on your phones by dialling 01314601196. You will be asked for an ID, which is 3567544645 and a passcode, which is 554294.

It is hard to believe that we are already in the month of May, with almost half of the year gone. Now that the Welsh Government has set out a road-map for near-normal-service being resumed, how are we going to respond, as the u3a?

Without question, the last few months have been very challenging for us as an organisation. As with other organisations, things have been on hold, and now we face the challenge of beginning again. Although our new beginning will be tentative at first, with some of our outdoor groups recommencing, others have to wait until we are able to meet indoors again. These were the issues we sought to deal with in our recent Committee Meeting. Now that more than 30 people are allowed to meet outdoors there was no reason why our Boules Group, led by Julian and Maria Chidzoy (phone 07745 938889 / 01554 752374), Walking Group, led by Keith Vincent (phone 01554 753221), and our Cycle Group, led by Paul Cullen (phone 01554 775844) could not resume. We hope to hold a Zoom Coffee Morning on the 1st June at 10.30 am where we hope to have more information to share with you about our future programme.

The challenge we face, as Llanelli u3a, and I suspect it will be a national issue too, is that we may have become so accustomed to not going out and meeting people, that we have become reluctant to do so, or lack the confidence to meet in our groups again. Surely, this is just the time to reclaim our long-lost freedom and make up for lost time!

The success of your u3a is dependent upon you; dependent upon you to become a participator, and not just a spectator! We need members who will be willing to join the Committee when positions become vacant at our AGM in September and as conveners of some of our groups. So, our organisation will either rise or fall by your willingness to take up positions of responsibility and embrace the u3a ethos, which is to learn, laugh, and live; to continue learning, using our minds and imagination, helping us to ward off dementia; laugh, enjoy learning together, helping us deal with loneliness and isolation, and live. In the third age of our life, the u3a mission is to help us enrich this time of our life with interests and pursuits that we may not have had time for before we reached this third age. So, if you have a particular interest and would be prepared to find four or five other members who share that same interest, then commence a group.

On the issue of being willing to take up responsibilities, may I gently remind members who did not pay their membership fee at our last coffee morning in March 2020, that you need to let our Treasurer Keith Vincent have your fee of £10, please.

Finally, let me say a big thank you to Michael Morris for his work on the Committee, his enthusiasm and humour will be really missed. As a Committee we wish you and Marion all the best.

Keep well, Keep safe,
John (Chairman)

*O'r diwedd, rydym yn cael ychydig o rhyddid oddi wrth cyfyngiadau i wneud a Covid.
Mwynhewch eich rhyddid, ond byddwch yn ofalus. Cadwch yn iach. Pob bendith. Sandra
(Trust Volunteer)*