

MANSFIELD & DISTRICT



## NEWSLETTER



(photo sent in by Ken White)

## MAY 2021

Website: [www.u3asites.org.uk/mansfield/home](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/mansfield/home)

Flickr: [www.flickr.com/photos/mu3a2016](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mu3a2016)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/349190408987691/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/349190408987691/)

## **Words from Madam Chair: Amanda Kingswell**

I know I've said this before about other months but HOW!! can we be in May already? The easing of restrictions has been most welcome, to be able to get to the hairdresser was wonderful. There are a couple of bank holidays in May, so a chance to get families together... weather permitting. Hopefully 2nd COVID vaccinations have been received by most of you, we're not due until the beginning of June. Let's hope that getting together indoors for larger groups of people, not only families, is on its way. It's always lovely to see you when you join the group meetings via Zoom but it will be even nicer to see you all in person...on that note, please stay safe and well.

Amanda x

## **Words from the Editor: Bill Harrison**

By now I feel that most of our members will have had their first vaccinations, with some having had the second, as we move towards easing of lockdowns as the light at the end of the tunnel is appearing. We look forward with immense excitement at the prospects of the u3a once again gathering at the 1861 Suite, Mansfield Town Football Club One Call Stadium.

No doubt, many of our members were truly saddened by the passing of Prince Philip, and shared the sorrow for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a great loss to our nation, but one we can all feel proud to have shared in the memories of his amazing life.

Once again, our members are taking to the Zoom meetings, so nice to see so many of you participating and enjoying the online talks/quizzes, could this be the norm?

Many thanks to Alan Miller for his contributions to learn, laugh, live

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome five new members to the Mansfield u3a:

Wendy Owen  
Victoria Burgess-van-Grieken  
Jayne Norwood  
Chris Neighbour  
David Evans

We wish you many years of enjoyment with the Mansfield u3a.

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# MANSFIELD & DISTRICT



## **u3a Day**

**Wednesday 2 June 2021  
St Philips Church Hall Car Park  
Chesterfield Road South  
Mansfield NG19 7AB**

**10.00am - 12.00 pm**

The Third Age Trust (TAT) wants all u3as to go ahead with organising this event, which has been rearranged from last year. Concerns have been raised that it is too early, but the TAT still wants to go ahead.

If any Group Leaders would like to bring any items to go on a table to promote their Group that would be wonderful. Please contact either Lynne Payne or myself on [Businesssec.Mansfieldu3a@gmail.com](mailto:Businesssec.Mansfieldu3a@gmail.com)

The event is being held to promote u3as and to attract new members. If you have any friends that wish to join then please tell them about this day, or better still please call in and see us and bring your friend(s).

If lockdown continues as expected, then we are allowed no more than 30 people in an outside space, so we will monitor it accordingly.

Thank you

**Carole Harrison  
Business Secretary**

## **Dates for your diary:**

### **Thanks to Philp Tucker.**

**18 May** Steve Robson Fool's Gold. "Dark Light." The superb music duo we heard and enjoyed before.

Email is [foolsgold2009@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:foolsgold2009@hotmail.co.uk)

### **Mansfield u3a Bowls Group: Dave Drew**

Mansfield Bowling Club Hire

Due to continued lockdown issues the earliest the pavilion will be available for group hire remains **21 June** unless guidance changes.

### **Mansfield u3a Tai Chi Group: Lorna Pye**

The Tai Chi group continues to flourish; we are starting a new term with 20 participants and all getting used to using Zoom.

This term goes on up to **28 June 2021**, by which time we are hoping to be together in the flesh at St Johns Centre.

Meanwhile if any u3a member would like to join us, please contact myself Lorna Pye by email [harry.pye@ntlworld](mailto:harry.pye@ntlworld) and I would be delighted to introduce you to our expert tutor.

The sessions are on a Monday morning at 10.15am and cost £20.00 for the term.

### **Writing for Pleasure: Hilary Miller, Sue Ford**

Our group members have carried on writing for the pleasure of it from the first lockdown in March 2020 exchanging our offerings via email. This kept us in touch.

When Zoom became available some of our members started to meet on-line once a month and as this wasn't a familiar way to meet, we, like everyone had our little teething problems but very soon it all became clear.

It has been quite a privilege to receive so much good writing over these many months, some sad, some funny, some with those unexpected endings we all like. We passed some of our pieces on to Bill for the newsletter and we hope you enjoyed reading them.

It is good to put pen to paper whether it be fiction or our thoughts about the last year. Maybe in the future we can look back and reflect on how we all got through it together.

Enjoy getting out and about this spring and let's hope it will be in the sunshine.

## Strollers: Susan Howlett

On 14 April it was the most beautiful spring morning for our first stroll since last October. The sky was blue with white fluffy clouds and there was a fresh but cool breeze.

Three groups set off at quarter-hour intervals to follow a two-and-a-half-mile circular route through the Edwinstowe forest. It was pleasant enough to stroll at a gentle pace and enjoy the scenery and wildlife.

We discovered, when talking to a volunteer working on new fencing, that in late May they introduce cows to graze the land so the area needs to be secure. You may like to check this out in later months.

People enjoyed seeing each other and having the opportunity for a good chat.

Our next stroll is planned for 12 May at Rufford Park when we hope the bluebells will be in full bloom. We will contact members to arrange times for groups of 6 as we will still be in Covid regulations. Let's hope the weather is just as kind to us.



## QUIZ NIGHTS: Yvonne Kennison

Zoom Quiz night 14 April 2021

Our Zoom quiz eggheads from the recent online quiz were:

Ken Gilbert 47 points, well done Ken

Sue and Bob Longdon 41 points, well done Sue & Bob

Hilary and Alan 39 points, well done Hilary & Alan

Jean Hatton read out the Quiz questions

Wednesday 12 May at 7.00pm David and Janet Clarke Zoom Quiz night

One of the great joys of belonging to Mansfield u3a has historically been the social gatherings and the highlight of every year was always the Quiz Night, put together meticulously by Pauline and Ian Boucher. The food never disappointed. We took our own drinks and settled into a night of good humour and gentle rivalry.

It was always, until the last meeting we managed, enhanced by the beautiful surroundings of Queen Elizabeth's grand hall. Of course, this dreadful pandemic put an end to this year's meeting, along with most of our usual activities, but with the magic of Zoom, we have been able to enjoy one another's company and revive some of that competitiveness with our monthly Quizzes.

On average forty or so of us have gathered each month to stretch our dulled brains over the most diverse and interesting questions put together by our expert quizmasters. I think we can safely say it has been a huge success.

The results of the quiz aren't that important, although we are always eager to know who won! I think I can safely say it isn't going to be me any time soon, in fact I do worry about my ability to answer the questions. I am a bit like that Two Ronnie's sketch where they give the answer to the previous question to the current one.

I need time to rummage through my brain to find the result I need (which isn't necessarily correct) and by that time the quizmaster has got through two more questions! I've noticed a distinct lack of retaining information on my part. This has been proved by Mick and I watching quiz programmes on TV like Richard Osmond's House of Games which are repeats from only a few months ago.

We have obviously been given the answers the first time, but I don't remember a lot of them. I do hope we can manage to keep them going throughout the Winter/ Summer months especially, but I will still look forward to meeting up again in person – enjoying a sandwich, a drink and good banter with everyone. Hopefully Pauline and Ian will be up for organising it.

I won't mention our annual lunch that we have historically enjoyed in December each year, but it is booked for 2021! Fingers crossed.

## Zoom: Quiz Night / Track of my Years 28 April

The recent Zoom meeting was a combined Quiz night and Tracks of my Years, hosted by Yvonne and Mick Kennison.

The Quiz masters for the nights brain tingling workout, were Carole and Bill Harrison. Questions on offer were Musical Song Titles, General Knowledge, Sporting Moments, Film Quotes, Famous Quotes by Famous people. And the nights specialist subject was Two Hundred and Forty days until Christmas Pantomime Quiz.

With ten points on offer for each category, so seventy points on offer. With yet another great turnout, Carole and I thank you for supporting/taking part. There seems to be a few master minds amongst the u3a members, as this was not an easy peasy quiz, I hosted this quiz, compiled the questions and I only got thirty-five correct.

Our u3a Master Mind members on the night were:

Ken Gilbert 58 points (well done Ken).

Jean Hatton 53 points (well done Jean).

Terry Whitehead 49 points (well done Terry).

And so, after all the deep thinking, it was time to relax, with the Track of my Years.

This was hosted by Yvonne and Mick Kennison, a couple so devoted to each other, that it was reflected by the choice of their music.

A trip down music memory lane, as we enjoyed such wonderful tracks such as:

Bill Haley & The Comets, "See you later Alligator", The Platters, "Only You", Duane Eddy, "Rebel Rouser", Frankie Valli & The 4 Seasons, "Oh What A Night", a track that celebrates the date upon which Yvonne & Mick first met 23 Dec 63, with this line included in the song. Simon & Garfunkel, and the harmonic voices of "Bridge Over Troubled Waters", these were the tracks chosen by Mick.

Yvonne, cast our musical minds back to the days of Mario Lanza singing "Golden Days", we then were treated to the King himself Elvis Presley with Fever. The tempo was lifted slightly as our ears blended into the rock classic that was Free & Company singing All Right Now. To finish our night of entertainment the penultimate track was the Bee Gees with Yvonne's favourite film in mind, the track--- How Deep is your Love, a fitting tribute to the bond between them both.

The finale was performed by the Legend that is Sir Cliff Richard with the song "Miss you Nights". This was certainly a trip down memory lane with some fantastic choices by Yvonne and Mick. We thank you for taking the time and trouble to piece together the Track of your Years.

The next Quiz/Track of my Years, will take place on the 12 May 2021 at 7.00pm and the quiz will be hosted by Janet and David Clarke, and Tracks of my Years by Carole & Bill Harrison. We certainly hope you can join us.

## **Holiday to Thursford: Yvonne Kennison**

Denise Whitsed of Sherwood u3a has asked me to let our members know of a holiday they have booked to Thursford 16 November to 18 November 2021 staying at Cayley Hall BB NS EM £289 - no single supplement.

Day 1 travel to Thursford for 2.00pm Show arriving at approximately 12 noon for lunch break or tour of the Christmas Extravaganza. Travelling onwards to our hotel for evening meal.

Day 2 Free Day in Norwich

Day 3 return home with a stop at Holt.

Any member wishing to book, please call Denise on 07791941502 to confirm availability. Once confirmed send a cheque by post payable to Skills Holidays to Denise Whitsed, 28 Farm Croft Road, Mansfield Woodhouse, NG19 8 QT  
There are 42 front stalls booked (three u3a's are being invited).

**I HAVE CONFIRMED WITH JACQUI THAT MANSFIELD u3a WILL BE LOOKING TO BOOK THURSFORD HOLIDAY FOR 2022 NOT 2021.**

## **Family History Group: Valerie Wood & Ken Gilbert**

I'm pleased to say Ken and I are now in a position to go forward with our first Zoom meeting. Ken is contacting Yvonne to arrange this online meeting.

Members share their family history research, photographs, maps and artefacts. Advice and support are offered to new members. We will also guide members to which websites to use to do their research. Our group's usual meetings are held at 10.00am on the 4th Tuesday of the month at the Stanhope Centre. However due to present circumstances we are meeting via Zoom.

Date for the next meeting will be Tuesday 25 May 2021.

If you are interested in joining our group, please contact Ken or Valerie.

Valerie Wood, email [v.a.l.woody11@gmail.com](mailto:v.a.l.woody11@gmail.com)

Contact Ken Gilbert, email [kattaria@gmail.com](mailto:kattaria@gmail.com)



## **Gardening Group: Marilyn Dibble and Janet Whitlam**

### **Subject: Plant Hunters Fairs 2021 for clubs and societies**

Dear (Mansfield u3a Gardening Group)

Please see below for details of the Plant Hunters' Fairs 2021 calendar. If you are still able to keep in touch with your Garden Club members, we would be grateful if you could please pass these details on to them.

We really hope you will be able to come along and support our independent nurseries who under lockdown rules will have been closed until 12 April and are keen to bring you some wonderful, traditionally grown plants.

Our plant fairs are also valuable fundraisers for our venues, who again will be able to start serving teas, snacks and cakes etc. for outside dining after 12 April. Every penny of the entrance fees to our plant fairs goes to the venues to help them keep going after these tough times.

Thank you so much for your help, it's very much appreciated.

Spring is a wonderful time of hope, growth, and change, let's hope it's a good one this year!

Best wishes,

Janet & Martin

Janet & Martin Blow

Plant Hunters' Fairs,

Phone: 0771 699 0695 Email: [janet@planthuntersfairs.co.uk](mailto:janet@planthuntersfairs.co.uk)

Full details of all our events are on our website: [www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk](http://www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk)

### **Garden Visit trip to Floral Media, Caunton, Tuesday 6 July**

A fabulous day out using own transport

Talk by Steve Routledge and flower arranging demo by Paula Routledge,

Tour of their amazing 5-acre garden, plant sales and lunch, cost £20.00.

Open to all u3a members.

Please e-mail Marilyn at [dandmdibble@gmail.com](mailto:dandmdibble@gmail.com) for further detail and add your name to the list.

## **April's Garden Group Zoom meeting.**

What a fabulous talk by Steve and Paula Routledge from Floral Media.

Steve began by showing us around their lovely, huge 5 acres of gardens, explaining the changes they have made over the last year and the plans they have for the future.

They have erected a large grain hopper and made it into a gin/coffee house, amazing! They got the idea from the Chelsea Flower Show the year before. During lockdown they have expanded their business and included delivering flowers by post.

Looking forward they hope to start a pick-your-own flower farm. Composting was an interesting topic; they have experimented with sheep's wool from their local farm mixed with pig's manure! also composting garden waste obtained from Veolia waste recycling garden bins.

Paula showed us how to make some beautiful Spring flower arrangements of her individual design; they were stunning.

Paula and Steve hold many events, including this Zoom talk, in aid of different charities, the money they have raised has gone towards Breast Screening equipment in Nottingham and Newark.

The Garden Group are visiting Floral Media in July for a guided tour, flower arranging demo and lunch, we are sure to get a very warm welcome.

### **Gardeners Diary:**

**Tues 4 May** the best of British Gardens, a Zoom talk by Darren Lerigo.

**Tues 1 June Garden** trip to Felley Priory, plus lunch or coffee (if required) outside in the open fronted marquee.

Following Government guidelines on size of groups. Own transport.



Hello everyone,

I hope you are all keeping well and have had one, or better still, two covid vaccines? Fingers crossed that the situation will gradually start to improve from now and we can gradually get out more to visit gardens, nurseries and garden shows safely.

For the time being though, most garden clubs and other groups are not meeting in village halls just yet and from what I'm hearing from several groups it will be September before group meetings start up again. Our small garden club in Rainton where we live are continuing with Zoom meetings for a couple more months and then hopefully, we'll have three outdoor garden visits during the summer, before starting speakers in person in September.

Since the March newsletter was sent to you, Jill and I have now moved to a new house. We'd been at Thornycroft for exactly 12 years to the day and during that time created the garden from scratch, which many of you have visited over the years. It was sad in one way, but exciting in another because we both feel it's time for a new project. We are still in Rainton in a rented house while we search for our next property/project.

It's business as usual though! The rented house we're in only has a small garden, but the views from my office makes up for that as I look west over the fields towards the Yorkshire Dales in the distance. Fortunately, I have the use of a large vegetable garden in the village and Jill and I have been busy creating a new 'Potting Shed Studio' for our Zoom talks that have become very popular.

Hopefully by the time you read this the blast from the Arctic will have calmed down a little and we can look forward to some better growing and gardening weather through the rest of April.

### **The Gardener's Diary with Martin Fish**

Once we get into April there's plenty to be getting on with in the garden and Easter is traditionally the start of the gardening year for many. However, the recent spell of weather from the Arctic has slowed everything down a little! When the weather does settle down, we can often get some lovely, warm sunny days that make us feel that summer has arrived. Don't be fooled by the sunshine though as April is a month when we often get frosty weather that damages new shoots, fruit blossom and seedlings. When planting or sowing, always check the forecast for a few days ahead first!

Finish the spring clean of borders to make sure they are weed free and tidy and as new seedling weeds appear, chop them off with a hoe.

If the weather stays dry make sure that plants growing outside in containers are watered regularly as they soon dry out, especially in breezy weather.

If not done yet, finish pruning hydrangeas, dogwoods grown for their winter stems and evergreens to tidy up any long shoots.

There is still time to apply lawn sand thinly and evenly over the lawn to help control areas of moss. The moss will blacken and can then be raked out. The iron in the lawn sand will also help to green up the lawn.

As early daffodils start to fade, remove the old heads and add to the compost heap. Don't cut down the leaves though for another six weeks to allow nutrients back into the bulbs.

Hardy annuals such as larkspur, nigella, cornflower, calendula and cosmos can be sown directly into prepared soil where you want them to flower in summer.

Have some garden fleece handy to cover over plants with lush foliage or delicate blooms that might be damaged in frosty weather.

Early potatoes can be planted into the garden. Plant the tubers around 10cm (4in) deep and 30-35cm (12-14in) apart in a row. Alternatively plant a single tuber in a large pot of compost.

Plant onion sets 10-15cm (4-6in) apart in rows and sow carrots, parsnips, beetroot, lettuce, chard, summer cabbage, leeks and spring onions directly into prepared ground in shallow drills around 1.5cm (1/2in) deep.

Plant pot grown strawberries into the garden and keep them watered until the roots establish. If you have a greenhouse, you could plant a few strawberry plants in large pots for an early crop.

Prick out seedlings of tomatoes and peppers sown last month individually into small pots of compost and grow on in a light frost-free place.

For more weekly gardening tips and advice from Martin visit "Pots & Trowels" on Facebook or subscribe on YouTube for free.

Best wishes and keep safe.

Martin & Jill

**Happy gardening**

Martin Fish. [www.martinfish.com](http://www.martinfish.com)

## WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE:

Just wanted to run this by our members. I was thinking of the u3a and what it stands for: Our schooling years. Our working years. Our retirement years.

With this in mind, my thoughts were drawn towards the members of these years: As a child in your schooling years. As an adult in your working years.

As a senior citizen in retirement. A photograph of each of these three stages of u3a: A photo of you as a child at school. A photo of you in your working life. A photo of you now in retirement/ semi-retirement. If you feel like contributing, please send me a photo of yourself as a school child, and let's get you guessing. Then maybe we could do a profile of a member with all three pictures and a brief description of them. So, to get the ball rolling.

Sadly, the response was very poor, with only one member, guessing three correct.



Yvonne Kennison



Carole Harrison



Mick Kennison



Bill Harrison

## **BRING ME SUNSHINE: Zoom talk by Stephen Short**

One of the bonuses of being able to meet up on Zoom has been that we have been able to find speakers who would not normally want to travel so far to Mansfield to give their entertaining talks and Philip, our Speaker Finder, has done a brilliant job locating these people and securing their services to lift our spirits for a short while during this pandemic and today's speaker, Stephen Short, did not disappoint with his detailed description of the life and times of our best loved double act, Morecambe and Wise.

Eric and Ernie, as most of us affectionately referred to them, were friends from their teens, and encouraged by Eric's mum began their double act in 1941 aged 15 and 16 – touring the country and learning their craft.

What impressed me most about Stephen's talk was learning about the depth of their friendship which lasted until Eric's untimely death at the age of 58. We learnt that in all the years they spent working together they never had a written contract which proves the depth of their trust and understanding of each other.

The only dispute they ever had was after being invited to the USA and becoming a great hit on the Ed Sullivan show, they appeared 12 times between 1963 and 1968 – Ernie wanted to pursue a more lucrative career in America, but Eric, having two small children, didn't want to go down that road and I think you will agree, we benefited greatly.

I think we all have fond memories of gathering around the TV on Christmas Day and sharing the laughter and silliness with our families. Who can forget them making fun of Shirley Bassey, Glenda Jackson, Elton John and Andre Previn to name a few?

It was a sign of the great affection in which they were held that such stars queued up to be made fun of and we loved it and the incomparable double act that was Morecambe and Wise.

The finale to Stephen's talk was a video of the pair of them singing Bring Me Sunshine which they sang at the end of each show and it left us feeling sad and optimistic in equal measure.

Yvonne

## **Pathfinder and Birdwatching Groups: Ken White**

Outings for the u3a. My contact details below if anyone is interested.

### **10 May Monday Pathfinders Walk Hardwick Estate Area Circular Walk**

Terrain Type: Open countryside, B Road, bridleways and country footpaths

Difficulty: Moderate

Distance: 5.9 miles Duration Approx. 3.5hours

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### **13 May Thursday Birdwatching Outing Whisby near Lincoln**

In search of the Nightingale and other wildlife at this fabulous nature reserve

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### **Thursday 19 May Pathfinders Walk Ashfield Literary Landscapes Circular Walk**

Why not take a walk around part of the historic Annesley Park estate, ancestral home of the Chaworth-Musters family. These really are literary landscapes and a major inspiration for both Lord Byron and D H Lawrence, two of the county's most famous sons.

Terrain Type: Open countryside, bridleways and country footpaths

Difficulty: Moderate

Distance: 3 miles

Kind regards,  
Ken

email: [ken@atrain.org.uk](mailto:ken@atrain.org.uk)

Tel: (01623) 617 136

Mobile: 07973 31 50 50

### u3a Walk - Alfreton Park to Bluebell Wood 12 & 19 April

We had two groups undertaking this lovely walk, the distanced walked was around 6.5 miles and on both days the weather remained dry and bright if a little cool.

We began our walk at the Alfreton Park Cricket Ground and walked through the woodland to St Martin's Church, through the churchyard and out into the countryside which gave us extensive view across the valley towards Crich Stand sitting on the hilltop opposite.



From here we entered the grounds of Alfreton Golf Club and then through the peaceful Oakerthorpe Nature reserve heading towards the footbridge over Oakerthorpe Brook, a tributary of the River Amber. Heading through the grounds of Hollybank House Nursing Home, we followed the path, which climbs and then falls in a series of dog legs alongside Shaw Wood.

On entering the wood from the footpath at the top of David's Hill we turned left to descend through Shaw Wood, also known as Bluebell Wood.



Exiting the woodland, we see the impressive ruins of Wingfield Manor on the hilltop where Mary Queen of Scots was held prisoner by Elizabeth I. A short walk along the road brings us to All Saints Parish Church, South Wingfield, through the grounds of this old church then a climb up the hill to the Peacock Inn, the oldest Inn in Derbyshire and where it was reputed that Dick Turpin stayed during his travels up to York.





From here the walk returns to Alfreton Park up and over the fields for about 1.5 miles giving us lovely views over the countryside.

A super walk that everyone enjoyed immensely.



A poem by AH, attached to a tree.

Shaw wood is a favourite place of mine  
Where birds sing next to the railway line  
Zoom come the trains, the pass me by  
As I look up at the bright blue sky.

Following the path which climbs through the wood  
Bluebells and Campion's all under foot  
Eventually reaching the stile at the top  
I rest a while and take a look.

A beautiful blue carpet in front of me lies  
The best ever annual surprise  
An aroma surrounds me I just can't describe  
It makes me feel so very alive.

Descending David's Hill through the knee length grass  
I remember my visits as a wee lass  
My Mum and Dad would take me you see  
And I built up some wonderful memories.

It's not a place of extravagant things  
There's no comfort, mod cons or bling  
But if you come with me  
You too would see Shaw Wood is a beautiful place to be.



Our next walk is around the surrounding countryside of Hardwick Hall  
If you wish to reserve a place on our next walk or require further information, please contact **Ken White**, (email [ken@atrain.org.uk](mailto:ken@atrain.org.uk) or Tel 07973 315050) or **Val Hart** (email [valerie.hart@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:valerie.hart@hotmail.co.uk) or Tel 07745 2082



The Mansfield u3a Birdwatching Group had a fruitful outing to the Idle Washlands on Thursday 8 March. The six members were led expertly by Tony Wardell and although it was a cold, bright day we had 42 species of birds in our list when we finished at the end of the day. We also saw our first clutch of 12 young Mallard ducklings being rounded up by Mum!

Many thanks to you all for making it such a good day with special thanks to Tony for his expert guidance and great company.

Our next outing will be to Whisby Nature Reserve near Lincoln on Thursday 13 May where we hope to locate and listen to the Nightingales amongst other birds and wildlife.

### **Birds Walking on Stilts: by Neville Davies** **Our man in Mallorca**

With a confident walk, long legs and an elegance that catches the eye - sounds like a profile for a dating site, but if there was such a thing in the avian dating world, this would be what a **Black-winged Stilt** could sound like. They are indeed eye catching and do walk with elegance on long legs.

Every time I watch a stilt at the nest site, about to sit on the eggs, I laugh as they have to literally bend their legs which look like they are about to snap. Even when sitting, the legs look long and a funny shape. My first ever stilt was in Norfolk in the 1980s where one frequented a reserve there for some time and affectionately became known as 'Sammy the Stilt'.



But back then I was just starting out and the views were not the best. Fast forward to my time on Majorca and I have enjoyed innumerable sightings of these stunning birds.

The **Black-winged Stilt** (*Himantopus himantopus*) is a widely distributed very long-legged wader in the avocet and stilt family (Recurvirostridae). The scientific name (*Himantopus*) comes from the Greek meaning 'strap foot' or 'thong foot'. In some regions it is also called the Pied Stilt. They are great fun to watch and walk gracefully with delicate but long steps.

They have the longest legs proportional to their size of any bird. Its long slender bill is used to snatch at tiny insects in the air and amongst the surrounding vegetation.

They prefer areas with high invertebrate populations, so it is not surprising to see them frequenting habitats such as the Albufera and Albufereta Marshes and the salt pans at Sallinas de Llevant in good numbers.

They do not tolerate human disturbance, but they will accept the presence of visitors who do not interfere with them, and this can be shown when sat in a hide quietly watching them, where they can feed close in allowing for some excellent views (and photo opportunities).

Varied and short 'nasal' calls can alert one to their presence, and despite being a medium sized bird they can be well hidden behind Sedges and tall grasses on the marshes. They have a length of 35 - 40cm and a wingspan of 67 - 83cm with a weight of 140 - 220g. Coastal lagoons, shallow lakes and salt pans also form their varied habitat where they will nest either solitary or in small colonies - sometimes with **Avocets**.

The nest is a simple bare spot on the ground near to water where four smooth pale brown eggs are laid (with black blotches and spots). Small aquatic invertebrates form their diet and are picked up from the sand, on the ground or from the water itself. Black-winged Stilts were high on my 'to see life list' when I first visited Majorca, and on day two of my first ever visit the Albufera Marsh was our destination.

It was from the CIM Hide close to the reception that I saw my first ones and I was overjoyed. They looked exactly like I thought they would only prettier with a deep red eye, and those amazing legs gave them an almost comical-like appearance. I also noticed they were quite a nuisance to the smaller waders who fed too close, shoing them out of the way.

It is an unmistakable bird identification wise, being predominantly black and white (or pied). The wings and mantle are black and the underside is white. The black on the head can be variable in some birds. In flight, the white rump and the long white wedge on the back show clearly - as do the trailing long pink legs. The head may be all white or show varying amounts of black. Both sexes are similar except that a breeding female usually shows a pure white head and neck. Juveniles are paler on the mantle than the adults.

The **Black-winged Stilt** for me is one of those birds that no matter how many times you see them, you find yourself watching them for a while, and sat either in the Bishop 1 hide or the CIM hide at the Albufera (my two favourite hides on the reserve) have given me many hours of relaxing birdwatching, where not only the stilts are active, but there are a host of other species to watch as well.

A typical April morning for example could see **Shoveler, Mallards, Gadwall, Moorhen, Coot,** with **Purple Gallinule** along the edges if you're lucky), **Grey Herons, Cormorants,** perhaps some early tern species on migration and a mix of waders such as **Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers,** or a **Marsh sandpiper** if you're there at the right time, **Wood Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Common Redshank, Spotted Redshank** a possibility and who knows what else may turn up? I do get a kick out of being in the hide with someone else and they ask what a particular bird is. It is a good feeling teaching someone what is out there and seeing their face if it is a species new to them.



**Purple Gallinule**

Evening visits to the viewing platforms at the edge of the Albufera and the nearby S'Illot site have given me some great moments watching the stilts as they start to settle down for the evening. At the S'Illot waterworks site, artificial rafts have been placed on some of the lagoons which is a great conservation effort by the park wardens and waterworks staff.

Here, several pairs of stilts can be seen at the nest sites on these rafts which gives a chance (with a telescope) to see the eggs and chicks as the adults come off the nest - and also gives you a giggle as they sit back down again, bending those long legs in a way that always looks like they are about to snap.



**Black-winged Stilt**

The next time you see a Black-winged Stilt, check out that deep red eye.

## **Bugs, early purples and sword lilies by: Neville Davies - Our man in Mallorca**

We have looked at several orchid species this year in my recent articles, including Bumblebee, Pyramidal, Mirror, Bee, Man and Naked Man Orchids. April will see a few more specialties coming into flower, with the Bug Orchid being one of them, along with the beautiful Little Early Purple Orchids and a slight change with Wild Gladioli which are coming into flower now, all adding a touch of dark colours to the woodlands and open fields. It is certainly that time of year when the flowers begin to show off their multitude of colours and when the birds are singing their hearts out to claim both a territory and a mate. It's a busy time for nature and a good time for us nature lovers with plenty to see and photograph.

### **Bug Orchid**

My first Bug Orchid was alongside the main path leading into the Albufera Marsh, where I was guiding a group of birdwatchers from the u3a in England. We had stopped to look at some roosting Night Herons in the Tamarisks along the opposite bank when I noticed the orchid right by my feet. I had almost stood on it as not only was it small but it blended in well with the grasses. A Cettis Warbler was calling alongside us in the vegetation but just wouldn't show itself. This orchid gets its name from the odour it exhales, supposedly reminiscent of bed bugs.



**Bug Orchid**

Grassy areas, maquis and open woods are where they flourish, where the 2 - 4 leaves taper to a lance shape. The pointed sepals form a beaked hood and the flowers can be brownish, red or green. What struck me most about this orchid was although once seen it was obvious and eye catching, prior to that it was blending in so well with the other plants. The group certainly liked seeing it too and in fact it was a new species for all of us. This is what I love about the orchids, when you specifically search for them, it is exciting when you actually find them, but when you stumble across some by chance it is equally as exciting.

## Little Early Purple Orchids

A walk along the edges of the Holm and Turkey Oak woodlands, sunny hillsides and open slopes will reveal a lovely orchid species that can either be found growing solitary but more often in groups. One year I counted 93 growing on one open bank. Nothing looks more pretty amongst the different greens of the trees and the darker colours of the woodland floor than a group of these dainty orchids growing, and if the sunlight is poking through the canopy, they look magnificent. They are a perennial herbaceous plant with stems up to 10 - 25cm in height, green at the base and purple on the apex. The root system consists of two tubers. The leaves (grouped at the base of the stem), are oblong-lanceolate, pale green and sometimes with brownish-purple speckles. They can produce around 6 to 20 flowers gathered in dense cylindrical spikes. The flower size is about 1 inch and the colour varies from pinkish-purple to a deep purple. They bloom from April to June adding a splash of colour wherever they grow.

This orchid attracts pollinating insects such as Bees and Wasps of the genera *Apis*, *Bombus*, *Eucera*, *Andrena*, *Psithyrus* and *Xylocopa*. On occasion, Beetles can be attracted too with the appearance of its flower which mimics other species. Nicole T Benitson has written a great book on the Orchids of Majorca which forms part of my reference library.

Of course, the woodlands in April don't just entice me in for orchids, there will be bird song too, and nothing beats looking on the ground for orchids and other plants and being serenaded as you go along by songsters such as Blackbirds and Nightingales, with the softer calls of the Great Tit and Chaffinch, and the Blue Tit (if you are at a higher altitude than normal). Woodland glades are also home to the dainty little Speckled



## Speckled Wood Butterfly

Wood butterfly too, and if you're really lucky, you may have stumbled across a woodland pool which attracts Crossbills down to drink.

## Wild (field) Gladioli

Now, I know what you're thinking, the Gladioli is not an orchid, but on occasion I have been shown pictures by people who had mistaken them for marsh orchids. Besides, they are in flower now and are a delightful plant adding a splash of colour to the fields and edges.

Gladiolus (from Latin, the diminutive of gladius, a sword), is a perennial cormous belonging to the iris family. It is sometimes called the '*sword lily*'. Gladioli grow from round, symmetrical corms, (similar to crocuses) that are enveloped in several layers of brownish, fibrous tunics.

The genus *Gladiolus* contains about 300 species. Their stems are generally unbranched, producing 1 to 9 narrow, sword-shaped, longitudinal grooved leaves, enclosed in a sheath. The leaf blades can be plane or cruciform in cross section (see the close up shot courtesy of Lesley Atterwill - @LesleyAtterwill)



## Wild Gladioli

They will flower from March to June, sometimes longer and can occur in large numbers.

I recall one year down at S'Illoot waterworks where the surrounding fields planted with crops had an abundance of Gladioli growing as well, it was a sea of green interspersed with deep pinks.

The flowers of unmodified wild species vary from very small to perhaps 40 mm across, and inflorescences bearing anything from one to several flowers. The flower spikes are large and one-sided, with secund, bisexual flowers, each subtended by two leathery, green bracts.

The sepals and the petals are almost identical in appearance, and are termed '*tepals*'. The flowers are variously coloured, ranging from pink to reddish or light purple with white, contrasting markings, or white to cream or orange to red.

### **Field of Wild Gladioli**

Where the Wild Gladioli grow, birds feed, as both do well in the open fields and plains.

The Corn Bunting will be present, perched at the top of a tree to give out its' *'jangling keys'* like call, and groups of white Cattle Egrets will be feeding amongst the tall plants searching out food. In the more open areas, a Thekla or even a Short-toed



Lark may be feeding with Red-legged Partridges scurrying about here and there, and the ever present little chattering groups of House Sparrows never far away.

Turtle Doves passing through on migration will be perched up on trees or fences. One thing for sure, is that orchids and other plants mean one thing - you have to be outdoors in different habitats to find them, which is good for your wellbeing.

For me, the open plains offer the chance of seeing Wild Gladioli in good numbers, and where I know that the breezes will be moving across the fields and through the crops, where I will be looking out for a number of bird species as well.

The wooded areas on the other hand, offer the chance to be alone, surrounded by trees and shrubs. Serenaded by bird song and looking around on the ground for a splash of colour or for an orchid that lacks colour such as the yet to flower Bird's Nest Orchid, and all the while watching where I am going.

I still have the memory of walking once into a low branch and seeing stars not orchids.





### A Prickly Encounter: by Neville Davies - Our man in Mallorca

There may be snow in 'them there hills' at the moment, but elsewhere on the island, the plants continue to make their presence known. This is a good time of year to take a closer look at three pretty and characteristic plants - the **Balearic Foxglove**, **Bird's Nest Orchid** and the often-overlooked **Prickly Pear**. My first ever Balearic Foxglove was from the gorge leading to the entrance of Ternelles Valley on the Pollenca road. I have visited this spot hundreds of times but only three years ago did I actually take a closer look at a lone



#### **Balearic Foxglove**

Foxglove growing amongst the limestone boulders up to my right. I could see the flowers were lighter in colour to the 'Digitalis purpurea' form I grew up with in the UK - and after checking in a local book I was delighted to learn it was the endemic Balearic Foxglove. I now find myself purposely looking for them. Majorca certainly throws up many surprises. *Digitalis dubia* can sometimes be found in colourful groups, with the pink bells, spotted inside quivering on the slightest breeze.

At this gorge I spend several hours scanning above the high ridges for **Black Vultures** and **Booted Eagles**, and on occasions I have been lucky enough to see the pair of **Egyptian Vultures** that frequent the north of the Tramuntana Mountains. There is a nice low wall which I lay down on scanning overhead. All around are the calls of **Great Tits**, **Sardinian Warblers**, **Nightingales** from the nearby wooded areas and the **Blackbirds** and occasional **Blue Rock Thrush**. The local **Goats** will be clambering amongst the rocks defying the laws of gravity and making your heart miss a beat as they walk perilously close to sheer drops.

I also know from experience to turn my car in the only spot possible in this narrow gorge which granted involves more than a three-point turn. I also get a sense of naughtiness when I see someone else who has driven up and realise it is a dead end, then discretely watch as the partner gets out to signal how far the driver can go forward, then moving to the rear of the vehicle to signal, or rather shout 'stop' when the car is too close to the rocks. In front of them the little wall reveals a steep drop over the other side, and the sheer concentration on the drivers face and white knuckles do give me a chuckle - I know that feeling, I've been there and done that. But with all that aside, the Foxglove sits nestled away about ten foot up amongst the rocks, so a bit of careful climbing is needed for a closer look.



### **Birds Nest Orchid**

That's one thing I like about the flora of Majorca, there are some great endemic plants, with several of interest in the Boquer Valley too - including the **Hedgehog Plant** and **Balearic St John's Wort**.

The **Holm Oak** forests are an ideal habitat in which to search out this colourless orchid, but it can take some finding and is easy to walk past. It can blend in very well with the leaf litter and soil cover. They can grow to 16 inches tall and each shoot can carry up to 60 flowers. Their nutrition derives from a mycorrhizal fungus found in the soil and the leaf litter, which in turn derive their nutrients from the trees.

As I say, they lack any colour generally found in orchids, with plants being beige-brown and occasionally having yellowish or even white forms.

The Latin binomial *Neottia nidus-avis* derive from a comparison of the tangled roots of the plant to a bird's nest hence why it gets its name.

They will flower around May to June but the shoots should soon be protruding from the forest floor. They require deep humous and shady places. Small flies will visit the plant but it mainly relies on self-pollination. It is believed to be able to flower, pollinate itself and even produce seeds underground.

The flowers themselves require you to crouch down and look closely, then you will appreciate the helmeted little figures with clown-like upturned legs. Nothing looks more magical when looking at this plant than when the Sun penetrates the canopy and they gleam an eye-catching gold colour. This is the one orchid I really enjoy seeing, partly because it can be so hard to spot and partly because it has no colour yet has a beautiful look to it in its own way.

Of course, finding this elusive orchid requires going into the deeper parts of the forests, where around you there will be some bird song to motivate you as you search. **Chaffinches** and **Blackbirds** will always be giving out their territorial songs, but listen closely for the call of the **Firecrest**, the tiniest resident bird on the island weighing less than a bag of crisps. The **Nightingale** will serenade you as you go by and May can be the time when a **Golden Oriole** passing through may have stopped off to feed and occasionally give out their distinctive song. On occasion I have heard the soft purring of the **Turtle Dove** on the edges of the **Holm Oak** forests, and every now and then a **Speckled Wood** butterfly will drift past.



**Golden Oriole**

Now may well see some early migrants, so it is worth looking for **Chiffchaffs**, **Wood Warblers**, **Bonelli's Warbler**, **Pied** and **Spotted Flycatchers**. Besides, if you are finding the day a little hot, then this can be a good time to go into the forests in search of the **Bird's Nest Orchid** - and take advantage of the shade and cooler air.

#### **A prickly encounter.**

Well, it is true, the **Prickly Pear** does indeed hurt when you get too close to it. Flowering from April to July, it was introduced into Europe as a hedge plant, animal feed and a source of fruit after the discovery of America.

It has however since become naturalised in certain areas, and rocky sites close to urbanisation are good places to see them. What I love about these plants are their bright eye-catching flowers which can be red or yellow or a mixture of both. I also like seeing how they grow out of the cracks of boundary walls adding a splash of colour to the local rocks. Derelict buildings or little storage stone buildings in the middle of a field nearly always seem to have one growing on or around it.



**Prickly Pear in Flower**

What I don't like about them is getting too close when looking for butterflies or insects and forgetting they have tiny thorns on them . I have (not so) fond memories of this when walking along the narrow path to a viewing platform at S'Illot near the Albufera, where a **Wall Lizard** was basking on the low wall behind a **Prickly Pear**. I moved closer trying to get a decent picture of it, which I did, but when it disappeared amongst the rocks, I edged closer thinking for some daft reason it would still be visible. Then the plant reminded me of the spikes, and with a sudden sharp pain I stood bolt upright rubbing my leg, much to the amusement of several in the group I was guiding at the time.

The fruits are edible but care is needed when peeling them. The numerous flowers are 5 - 10cm across with the spines up to 2.5cm in length, and yes, they do hurt. At the Albufereta Marsh in the north, there is one large **Prickly Pear** that grows out of the top of the dry-stone wall made from the local volcanic rock, with another large specimen growing at the base of a stone building, and almost every time I go to look at it, there is either a **Stonechat** or a **Sardinian Warbler** around it, no doubt picking at insects, but it is always the same, some bird or another will be there. This particular spot I actually love, as **Clouded Yellow** butterflies are always around here and the resident **Corn Bunting** uses the tops of the **Tamarisks** to give out its 'jangling keys' song. Hydrobia **Snails** litter the ground and this is a favourite spot for me to search out both the **Giant Orchid** and **Barbary Nut Iris** at certain times of the year.



**Barbary Nut Iris**

So, looking for orchids can be exciting in many ways, from their beautiful colours, or lack of them, to their strange shapes and scents, and taking a closer look at the endemic plants is always a nice feeling and listening to the bird song abounding in the same areas, and taking a closer look at the beautiful flowers of the Prickly Pear - but not that close.

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learn, laugh, live

Behind every great man  
there is a great woman 🤪



A PESSIMIST sees a dark tunnel

An OPTIMIST sees light at the end  
of the tunnel

A REALIST sees a freight train

The TRAIN driver sees 3  
idiots standing on the tracks.



EVIDENCE SUGGESTS SHE WAS WORKING ON THE PUZZLE, GOT UP TO MAKE TEA, HUSBAND ENTERS AND PUTS LAST PIECE IN...



NEVER BE AFRAID TO  
TRY SOMETHING NEW.  
REMEMBER, AMATEURS  
BUILT THE ARK;  
PROFESSIONALS BUILT  
THE TITANIC.

## Holy Humour

GOD ENJOYS A GOOD LAUGH!

So, she does. This is offered in the interest of not neglecting a sister observance.  
It's an EEOC (Equal Easter Opportunity Celebration) Offering

There were 3 good arguments that Jesus was Black:

1. He called everyone brother.
2. He liked Gospel.
3. He didn't get a fair trial.

But there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was Jewish:

1. He went into His Father's business.
2. He lived at home until he was 33.
3. He was sure his Mother was a virgin and his Mother was sure He was God.

But there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was Italian:

1. He talked with His hands.
2. He had wine with His meals.
3. He used olive oil.

But there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was a Californian:

1. He never cut His hair.
2. He walked around barefoot all the time.
3. He started a new religion.

But there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was an American Indian:

1. He was at peace with nature.
2. He ate a lot of fish.
3. He talked about the Great Spirit.

But there were 3 equally good arguments that Jesus was Irish:

1. He never got married.
2. He was always telling stories.
3. He loved green pastures.

But the most compelling evidence of all - 3 proofs that Jesus was a woman:

1. He fed a crowd at a moment's notice when there was virtually no food.
2. He kept trying to get a message across to a bunch of men who just didn't get it.
3. And even when He was dead, He had to get up because there was still work to do.



## IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION FROM YVONNE KENNISON

First of all, here's hoping that everyone is keeping safe and well. If anyone is struggling or needing any help in any way, please don't hesitate to let me or any of the Committee know. We will do our best to help in any way we can.

Email [treasurer.mansfieldu3a@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.mansfieldu3a@gmail.com) or [businesssec.mansfieldu3a@gmail.com](mailto:businesssec.mansfieldu3a@gmail.com)

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Cheques payable to *Mansfield and District u3a*

**The Membership Renewal Form** can be downloaded from the website or will be available from the Treasurer at the monthly meetings.

**Please Note:** All current members must complete all sections of the Membership Renewal Form to comply with Data Protection laws when paying their subscriptions. Thank you.

**Online Banking** is now available to members to pay their subscriptions online. As publishing details for this facility has compromised its security, members are asked to apply to the Treasurer.

[treasurer.mansfieldu3a@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.mansfieldu3a@gmail.com)

### **Event and Visit Payments**

Members are reminded that deposits and payments for events and visits organised by Mansfield u3a and its interest groups are non-refundable, but places may be offered to others.

Please note: if you go on a trip/visit organised by a company, cheques for the event must be made out to the company, not Mansfield u3a.

**Changes of Address, etc.** Please contact the Membership Secretary, Jean Hatton on (0793 5707582) if you've changed your address, phone number or email recently so that she can update our records.

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Please send contributions for the next issue to [bill20newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:bill20newsletter@gmail.com) or by hand to Bill Harrison as soon as you can and by the 1st of the month at the latest. Thanks!

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