



Oswestry U3A News

November 2020

Message from the Chair

Welcome to our third news-sheet and my, how the world has changed since March when we went into the initial Lockdown. We greet each other from a distance and looking over the edges of face masks when we would really like to give each other a big hug. We have to count numbers so we conform to the "Rule of Six" when we would like to be going out to lunch with a big group. We talk through Messenger and Facebook when we want to have face to face chats. All so different from seven months ago. But it means we are doing our best to keep others, our families and friends and ourselves safe. Well done to us all. As I sit here listening to the rain and watching the leaves drift down, I feel sad that we seem to have lost a precious year and I look forward to some normality, maybe starting early next year.

We must remember the here and now. November will be our AGM (do I hear a concerted groan!!!). We will need new Committee members including a new Chair and Assistant Programme secretary. For a final time I am saying, "come forward and keep your U3A going or it will be no more!!" Please read the AGM notice that came out with this Newsletter and act. Take the plunge. Keep your U3A going for the brighter days ahead. There is always support and help at hand; you will not be thrown in at the deep end. Hopefully there will not be the deafening silence that has greeted previous pleas, **YOUR U3A NEEDS YOU!**

I have enjoyed my time as your Chair and a very supportive Committee has made it a happy time. In spite of my looking harassed for various reasons on a Tuesday morning, you have been so positive when I made my blunders, wonky introductions and

either deafened you or couldn't make myself heard. I would like to also thank all on my Committee - they are the backbone of our U3A. My best wishes and thanks go to Helen who has been such an excellent Programme Secretary; all her hard work for this year will be carried forward to next year for the new Programme Secretary. Also, we owe a debt of thanks to Rose, who along with Margaret, stepped in to take on the Treasurer's role a few years ago, then continued as Assistant Treasurer. She has done a brilliant job but her term of office has sadly come to an end.

Lastly my thanks go to Liz for collating this and previous news-sheets, wonderful job done. Thank you to those who have taken the trouble to supply articles, photographs, poems and funnies. We would like to hear from more of you!

My best wishes to you all, stay safe, enjoy what we are allowed to do and I look forward to hearing that our U3A is in good heart and in new hands.

Thank you so much!

Marjorie



Helen is also stepping down this year. She writes, 'Tuesday mornings have been very different for me since the end of March. As Programme Secretary I've always enjoyed planning and meeting our speakers, so it's been a bit sad having to cancel them all. Since I took over the role in January 2016 we've had a huge variety of talks, many of them suggested by our members. Some of my most memorable speakers include Flowa Houldsworth, who in 2017 came all the way from Devon to talk about Medecins Sans Frontieres and Father Michael who told hilarious stories under the title 'Seven Deadly Sins'. Then there was Sarah Gathercole (Art History), Dorothy Nicolle (Shropshire history) and various wildlife speakers. Carol has been a great help over the years; she was Programme Secretary for a year in 2018 and fortunately has agreed to resume the role after the AGM.

I also coordinated speakers for Members' Mornings in 2018 and 2019 when I was Vice Chair. Three of these talks were about canals, which were of great interest to me, as I have volunteered for the Canal and River Trust for the last 7 years. A group of us work anywhere on the Shroppie or Monty canals every Friday, hacking, painting and clearing. The work is never ending, and I'm sure we've sometimes been mistaken for community sentence workers, but the company's good and it's fairly rewarding. Volunteering with CRT restarted in July, followed in September by my Red Cross volunteering work. Both have now had to stop after my husband's recent heart attack Thankfully he's recovering well. Here's hoping our Tuesday mornings can restart some time in the New Year.'

Helen



Helen (second from right)

Three members have had to step down from the Committee this year as they have come to the end of their tenure.

Rose has played a key role in finance, initially as Treasurer then Assistant Treasurer. Always unassuming, Rose has worked meticulously to ensure takings are banked, speakers paid and all cash accounted for.

Programme Secretary, **Helen** has helped to ensure the continuing popularity of Tuesday morning meetings by securing a seemingly inexhaustible supply of excellent speakers.

Finally where would we have been, especially this year, without **Marjorie**? She has supported and led the Committee through various challenges and developments and ensured that our organisation is represented at Regional and National levels of the U3A movement. Her friendly disposition and can do attitude has helped to make Oswestry U3A a thriving organisation and a place of welcome for all.

Also let's not forget Committee members who are staying on this year and those who will hopefully volunteer to join them.

On Behalf of us all a big THANK YOU !

Once the lockdown restrictions were eased a number of our members managed to get away to see family and enjoy some beautiful scenery in various parts of the Country.

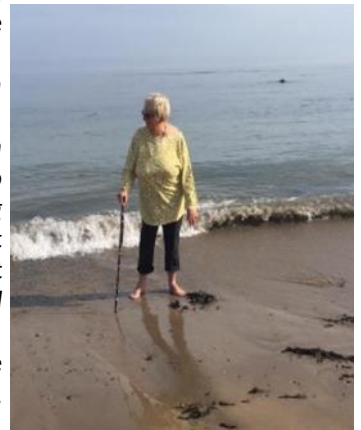
Marjorie spent a week with her daughter, Judith, and son in law, Mark, based in Alnwick, Northumberland, in a lovely Georgian house in the centre of the town. She recalls, 'Over the week we visited Bamburgh Castle and were stunned by the contents and the restoration done for Sir William Armstrong the great entrepreneur in the 19th century. We watched a cricket match and games of croquet in the wonderful grounds below the castle and walked on the magnificent beach.



Judith, Mark and dogs

Alnmouth was another lovely beach; Mark went snorkeling over the reefs at high tide but didn't manage to find us a lobster. I had a paddle in the chilly North Sea! From Craster, famous for kippers, we walked the coast path to Dunstanburgh Castle and back in beautiful sunshine reflecting on a blue, blue sea. We also visited Warkworth Castle, another great ruin but with enough stonework standing to clearly show its history relating to the Percys, a great noble family. The oddest castle we visited was Chillingham Castle. Going back to the medieval period, it houses a very eclectic collection of oddities. Sadly we didn't see the famous wild white cattle.

We visited a nature reserve on Druridge beach, not far from Amble, where we saw teal and coots. We also saw eider ducks, curlews, redshanks, turnstones, oyster catchers and herons in various harbours; even a seal in Craster harbour!



Of course we had to sample the seafood on offer and had several meals out that were very good.

All too soon I was heading back down the M6, thinking everyone over 55, the world and his wife plus dogs had also been on holiday!

Janet had an early Christmas in Devon. 'As I gradually regained the confidence to travel beyond essential shopping in Oswestry, my stepson and his wife were eager for me to join them somewhere for a week in a self-catering cottage. A cottage was duly booked in Beeson, near Salcombe which meant a 240 mile journey to meet up with them and braving motorway service stations if only for 'the facilities'. It was an area of Devon which I hadn't explored much before and we planned to visit several National Trust properties as well as enjoying coastal walks. My youngest granddaughter who has just gained her aeronautical engineering degree joined us for a few days and her older sister who is a meteorologist in Exeter lives 45 minutes away and was also able to meet up with us for Sunday lunch. We were all on tenterhooks in the week prior to departure waiting for Boris's announcement on further restrictions. We thought at one stage that we might have to cancel at the last minute so it was a real bonus to be together. Indeed, we decided to make this our Xmas 2020 celebrations as there seems little chance that we will be able to meet again this year.

After our 'early Christmas lunch' we went to Beesands for a bracing walk along the coastline where we took our Xmas Family Photo! Our cottage was in a small hamlet approached by single track roads and as we explored we decided it was not a place to visit at the height of the tourist season! I particularly enjoyed Dartmouth and our ferry trips which were used to get from Dartmouth to Kingswear.'

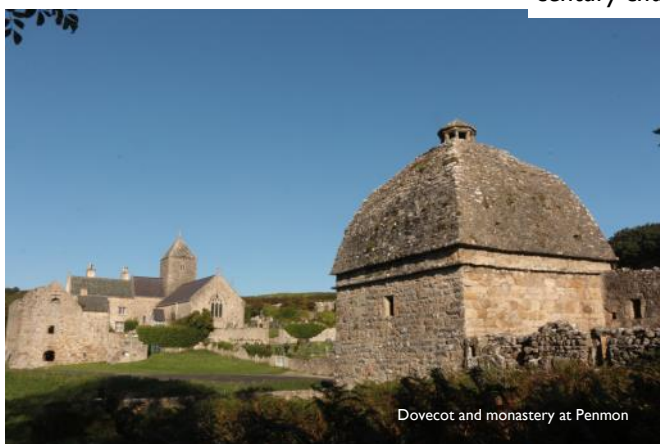


Family Xmas photo



At the start of the second week of September **Alex and Camilla** stayed with their elder daughter at Y Felinheli, overlooking the Menai Strait. During their visit Alex took these beautiful photos from their house.

Before returning to St Martins they decided to re-visit Penmon. On the south-east tip of Anglesey, Penmon is the site of a historic monastery, associated 12th century church and a lovely beach.



Dovecot and monastery at Penmon



Penmon Point Lighthouse and Puffin Island

John and I recently took part in the High Street Project – the largest project undertaken nationally by U3A members. Over 550 from coastal, market town, suburban, urban and village locations signed up as Surveyors. It involved completing a form giving details of all buildings in a shopping area, together with photos which will be used to create a database. We will revisit the same places in 18 months time to note any changes. We walked into town early one Sunday morning so that John could take the photos without too many pedestrians.



I had never really looked in detail at the buildings along Church Street, especially the upper floors. It gave me a whole new view of Oswestry!

Jill



First painting since lockdown by Eileen. Beautiful. Let's hope it's the first of many.



'Home Alone' has particular resonance for **Richard**. He was required to shield during lockdown and still needs to exercise caution in his interaction with others because of health concerns. Thankfully, being an outdoor person, he has been able to spend lots of time in the fresh air-but of course winter with its lack of daylight hours will soon be upon us.

Although he has support from his family and is grateful to be part of a 'bubble family' he misses the human interaction and camaraderie he used to have from our U3A meetings and his involvement in LADS. He suspects that he is not alone! He has therefore come up with the great idea of forming a mutual support group specifically for singletons in our U3A, **SAS** (Single and Supportive) and is inviting others to join him. Initially the idea is to chat to each other over the phone in the evenings but maybe, when it is safe to do so, meet for coffee/ beer and banter. If you would like to find out more please contact Richard by email: ou3a_social@aol.com



Mary keeps herself busy! 'Following the lifting of lockdown restrictions, we have had a few group gardening days at church (socially distanced of course). The first time we did this, nine of us gathered to cut back shrubs, tidy borders, clear weeds from the patio area, and reshape the willow wigwam. All quite exhausting but satisfying. Since then we've had a couple more gardening days before the cafe re-opened. I tidied the topiary snail and have cut back lots of lavender.'

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Richard has been entertaining the crowds at the doctors, "I was standing in a long queue, for my Flu jab when a Nurse came out and asked for a 'Mr Jones.'" I said, "Which Mr Jones - Jones the Milk; Jones the Bread; Jones the Coal or Jones the Death (Undertaker)?"

Living in a Welsh Border Town there are loads of Jones's. It was lovely to turn around and see so many smiling faces behind their masks!!!

After the government began their COBRA meetings to solve the Country's problems, we decided that we also would have emergency meetings every week to solve our own household problems.

What should we call our meetings? Thinking of a snake like a COBRA, should we choose grass snake, adder or smooth snake? They all sounded a bit fierce (maybe they needed to be). We settled on Slow Worm – because it looks like a snake but is really a legless lizard – we both like them and they don't sound so alarming.

Our Slow Worm meetings are on Mondays. If there is any stress during the week, or any disagreement, any plans or good ideas, we put them on the Agenda and forget about them until Monday.

I am Secretary and Chair (someone has to do it). My husband has the casting vote! I record all decisions for the week.

When we are worried, we say to each other, 'We'll solve that at our Slow Worm meeting.' And that's what we do, sometimes we even find that the problem has sorted itself out and we go seamlessly onto the next Agenda item.

Vicky

The morning dawns bright and fair
 We are pleased with our form in the mirror there
 No wrinkles we see in our reflection
 We can regard ourselves with satisfaction
 Life is strange now for all of us
 With winter coming and the dreaded virus
 But we staunch stalwarts of the U3A
 Will endeavour, come what may,
 To still look good with each year that passes
 So long
 As we don't
 Put on
 Our glasses!

Anne





The **Photographic Group** has taken the opportunity of the fine late summer and autumn weather to get together, have a chat and a slow amble and of course take photos. Members have been to several locations locally including Aston Locks, The Old Racecourse, The Hill Fort, Dolgoch Quarry and Ellesmere. Even the recent 'Rule of Six' has not deterred them as the largest number of members attending has been 4!

The group welcomes new members. **John** the group leader says, 'fancy cameras are not necessary, great photos can even be taken these days on phones.' If you would like to join contact Ou3aso-cial@aol.com



David taking a close up



Hello everyone in the **Travel Group**, I hope you have been keeping well during the past 8 months or so. Normally the time would be approaching to hold our AGM but as we are still unable to meet in person it has been decided by the Committee to try to do it in February 2021 but of course that will depend on the situation at that time.

Jim has prepared the Accounts but while an AGM is not necessary just to agree them, you have the right to change the Committee if you so wish. So, if any member wishes to stand for the Committee please let myself, Jim or Anne know. Meantime we are all prepared to remain in post until we can hold the AGM. Unfortunately there is no activity at present so members are not missing anything. We will let you know when things change

It has been good to have had the opportunity to speak to a few of you on the phone or in person when we have come across each other in town.

So, I wish you all a Happy Christmas even though it might not be in the normal fashion for you. Hoping also that 2021 will be a happier time and we can start thinking about events in the coming year.

Best Wishes to you all.

Jenny

The **Walking Group** have continued to meet regularly with only one occasion being cancelled due to heavy rain. The season of Autumn brings with it changes of colour and scents as well as the appearance of some interesting fungi. We are still travelling to walk locations individually so need to plan ahead with enough car parking space in mind. In recent weeks we have been to Selattyn, Weston Rhyn and Chirkbank but had to postpone a route from Chirk Castle due to the new Covid restrictions in Wales coming into force on October 1st.

Today's walk (12th Oct) took us to Llanymynech following reports of salmon leaping upstream. We were thrilled to witness several large fish flying through the air above the thundering water of the weir. The group continue to gain great pleasure from our Monday morning meetings, not only because we appreciate being out in our lovely local countryside, but also the companionship and moral support given and received along the way.

Di



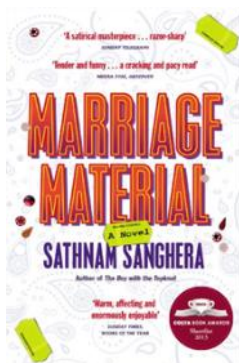
Photo John

Reading Group 2 managed to meet on 24th September.

Unfortunately, we were down to only four members but fortunately that complied with the latest Government guidelines! The group discussed books they had been reading during lockdown and collected the book to be discussed at the October meeting, "**Marriage Material**" by **Satnam Sanghera**. Taking inspiration from Arnold Bennett's classic novel *The Old Wives' Tale*, *Marriage Material* tells the story of three generations of a family through the prism of a Wolverhampton corner shop – itself a microcosm of the South Asian experience in the country.

We will find some way to discuss this, even if further lockdown measures are imposed. It was certainly good to catch up with one another and discuss something non COVID related!

I'll keep you posted as to our views on the book. **Lynne**



The Birdwatching Group resumed its monthly meetings in September when we went up to Oswestry Racecourse. Twelve people met up (two groups) and we saw and heard a lot of birds including a flock of Goldfinches feeding on seedheads. October's meet was at Ellesmere where we saw lots of water birds on The Mere including a Goldeneye and woodland birds in the Cremorne Gardens.

Christine

