

JULY 2020 NEWSLETTER ISSUE 59



Editors Comments,

What a strange world we are living in! At the time of our last issue we had just gone into lockdown and now it appears we are now coming out of it, albeit very slowly, but as far as the U3A is concerned ‘normality’ seems a long way ahead.

However, we must try to ‘look at’ the positives, and many of us have had opportunities to catch up on hobbies, enjoy nature, walking and the lovely sunshine we have been experiencing.

None of us know, at the moment, how life is going to progress into the Autumn and Winter of 2020/2021 but we at the U3A will keep going and look forward to more ‘normal’ times.

Our front page photo depicts Sidmouth promenade during lockdown, which for several weeks was extremely quiet.

Thank you to the few members who sent in their photo of the view from their window. They are much appreciated.

Best wishes

Chris and Janis

CAN YOU HELP US? SIDMOUTH U3A NEEDS YOU

We are now recruiting for a new **TREASURER** and a new **SECRETARY** to take up their roles on the Committee at the next **AGM** in March 2021. If you think you might be interested in taking on one of these vital roles, **PLEASE** get in touch with Sarah or David, our current trustees. (See pages 2 and 3 for full details)

Words from the Chairman – Janis Huntley

I hope all of you have stayed safe during the last few months and will continue to do so in the future. Fortunately, I have not been confined to home and have been able to get out in the good weather, birdwatching and enjoying nature, as well as finding more time to relax with my favourite hobbies. My vegetables in the garden have never looked so well ‘nurtured’ but despite all these positives I do miss the activities (particularly the social aspects) of the U3A and cannot wait for it to get back to ‘normal’.

Our programme of events has gradually diminished as the virus continues to make its drastic effects on our lifestyles and economy. We still have speakers booked for our monthly meetings from September, but until we hear from the Government that larger groups can go ahead, and what action will have to be taken to keep them safe, both from the U3A viewpoint and the meeting venues requirements we are unable to say with any certainty when ‘normal’ will return. We are making every effort to do what we can to help our U3A thrive, and our Groups are a shining example of what can be achieved in these difficult times. Our Groups Co-Ordinators and Group Leaders are becoming ‘experts’ in managing Zoom and finding other ways to keep our members occupied.

Some good news is that we have recently had the accolade from U3A HQ that we are one of the most successful U3A’s in the South West - our main claim to fame being our continuously growing membership for the last five years and the high number of groups, all helped along by a very innovative committee. HQ will now be using several of the most successful U3A’s including ourselves for their promotional programmes. Thank you to all of you for helping to make us so successful.

We are still actively seeking committee members for 2021. We have been very fortunate that volunteers to take over the roles of Membership Secretary and Groups Co-Ordinator have come forward, but we still need successors for our Treasurer and Secretary. Full details about these two vital roles follow on from this report.

TREASURER:

Since joining the committee as Assistant Treasurer in 2017 I have seen Sidmouth U3A Membership increase year on year and interest groups have also grown - at the last count we had 60! It has been very rewarding to be part of the success story. However, my three year term of office will come to an end in January 2021 and so the committee are looking for a successor.

The work is not arduous and takes just a few hours a month recording transactions on uncomplicated spreadsheets. We use online banking for making payments and quick access to the bank statements means that reports can be updated promptly. We normally have committee meetings bi-monthly for which I produce a brief report. The busiest time is at year end (January) but I have streamlined reports so that it is mainly a reviewing process. The final task is producing a report for the AGM in March.

Sidmouth U3A is in a healthy financial position and has a thriving membership. The new Treasurer will play a valued role in the continued success of our branch. You do not need to have any accountancy qualification but will need to enjoy simple figure work. By working alongside me during the coming months you will be able to prepare for taking up the role in February next year. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested in finding out more.

Sarah

SECRETARY:

Main Description: To issue agendas for and maintain record of all official meetings of Sidmouth U3A including the Annual General Meeting. To be the main point of contact with the Third Age Trust.

Duties: To issue the Agenda for the bi-monthly Committee Meetings of Sidmouth U3A and to record in the form of minutes the issues discussed and decisions taken. To issue a copy of the approved minutes to all committee members together with other related reports and to file copies of the minutes when signed by the Chairman.

To give written notice to every Sidmouth U3A member of the AGM and to issue the Agenda agreed by the Committee. Prepare and have signed, proposed and seconded nomination forms for Committee vacancies for approval by the membership. Prepare, for subsequent approval, the minutes of the Annual General Meeting.

To give written notice of any Special or Extraordinary meetings which are called in accordance with the rules set out in the Constitution.

Ensure that the Constitution is updated as necessary and has the approval of the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

To be Sidmouth U3A's main point of contact with the Third Age Trust and to distribute to Committee members all information received from them. To prepare and submit to Third Age Trust the Sidmouth Annual Return. To maintain a database of members who have paid for Third Age Matters and to submit the database to Third Age Trust during each of their "windows", via their secure portal.

To generally keep abreast of legislation, particularly that related to Charities, and U3A specifically and ensure that Sidmouth complies.

David

WARNING

There are many scam e-mails circulating at the moment, mainly to do with COVID, but we have also received several which SEEM to relate to Sidmouth U3A activities asking us to open a 'link'. Always check who the e-mail is from before opening any attachment or link even if it seems a genuine U3A communication. E-mails regarding our Newsletter or Newsletter Bulletins will always come from us, either at chrisandjanis@btinternet.com OR janisdh21@outlook.com

NEWS AND EVENTS

ALL OF OUR SUMMER EVENTS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED OR CANCELLED. GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AND U3A GUIDANCE WILL NEED TO BE CONSIDERED BEFORE OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS AT STOWFORD RISE COMMUNITY CENTRE AND OUR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME CAN CONTINUE.

The Annual Luncheon booked for 29th September at the Belmont Hotel, will obviously depend upon whether the Belmont is able to make arrangements to accommodate large group luncheons such as ours under the new restrictions. We will inform you whether this is going ahead when we hear from the Belmont.

Most of you will be aware by now that Sidholme Hotel is up for sale, with local organisations and residents endeavouring to save it. Our continued use of Sidholme for future group meetings, new member's meetings and Committee Meetings is, sadly, now very much in doubt. As at the time of writing we have no news as to whether any progress has been made concerning Sidholme's future, but we wish them well.

National U3A Day which had been postponed from June 2020 until October 2020 has now been cancelled completely for this year and will hopefully take place in June 2021.

If you are still looking for something to occupy your time at home, the U3A website offers lots of activities online with something to interest everybody. Go to the 'Learning' section on the U3A website – u3a.org.uk

GROUP NEWS

Over 25% of our groups are now organizing other methods of communicating with their members, some by e-mail, but mostly on Zoom, which has proved an excellent manner by which group members can communicate and keep in touch.

Currently the following groups are all holding regular Zoom meetings:-

AVIATION,	COOK and SHARE	GARDENING TOPICS,
GEOLOGY,	NATURE WALKS,	QUIZ GROUP
3RD AGE BOOKWORMS	WELL PRESERVED GRP	WINE APPRECIATION
20TH CENTURY HISTORY	SCIENCE, ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY	
SIDMOUTH NATURE EXPLORERS		

For more information about these groups contact the Group Leader (details on the Group Listing) . If you are a Group Leader and would like to start up a 'Zoom' group contact your Group Co-Ordinator (Janet or Jill) for guidance and help.

Aviation Group:

Our group continues to meet by Zoom on the 34rd Wednesday of each month with typically 17 participants in the video meetings. In May the main presentation was by Brian Portch on the interesting subject of the TSR2 (an advanced British military aircraft under development in the 1960s which was controversially cancelled by



Harold Wilson's government in 1965). In June's meeting Peter Fraenkel, an invited speaker from the Chiltern Aviation Society gave a Zoom presentation on "Aviation in the Falkland Islands" including the "air bridge" between the UK and the Falkland Islands. By coincidence the week before saw the record for the fastest flight time between the Falkland Islands and the UK broken by an A300 Voyager with a non-stop time of 13hrs 22 minutes. Cabin air quality was also discussed in June's meeting with Keith Symes providing an overview of the key issues and the effectiveness of onboard cabin air filters.

Anthony Derrick

Exploring Art:

We have been working at home on a couple of topics during lockdown, and sharing our work via e-mail. First we did "making something small into a big picture" and at the moment we are working on "artwork based on your garden". Group members have also shared picture of their own ideas which they are working on at home, ranging from very accurate and detailed drawings, through to experimental paintings using credit cards and clingfilm. We have also acquired a new group member during lockdown, and if anyone else wants to join in and share their work with us they are welcome. (Details on Group Listing page) *Maureen Hawkrigde*

Birdwatching:

We have organised 'Birding' Quizzes on e-mail, a garden birds survey and have also asked our members to choose their top ten favourite birds., resulting in the following with some of the members comments about why they like the bird.

1. **KINGFISHER** - a beautiful bird to watch as it darts by
2. **LONG TAILED TIT** - cute little bundles of joy
3. **ROBIN** - bold and cheery little bird⁴.
4. **GOLDFINCH** - Pretty little birds
5. **BLACKBIRD** - for their melodious companionship
6. **NUTHATCH** - smart bird with beautiful colour combinations
7. **BARN OWL** - silent power
7. **BULLFINCH** - beautiful bird with a lovely mournful song
9. **PEREGRINE FALCON** - quickest bird on the planet and fabulous looking
10. **CURLEW** - I love the sound of this bird



Chris Huntley and Janet Fernley

Geology Group Report

To cope with the demands of the COVID restrictions, the Geology Group has been meeting twice monthly on the second and fourth Thursdays. We meet "virtually" via the Zoom facility. It took some practice. Conversations would start with, "Can you hear me? Can you hear me? I can hear you" or, "I can't hear you. Unmute yourself. The bottom left-hand corner - click on the microphone!" Once we got the hang of it, the meetings have been very successful.

Of the 29 membership, up to 20 attend the virtual meetings, with group members making short, 20-30 minute, presentations on topics of geological interest related to our theme of 'The Development of Life on Earth'.

So far, to the end of June, we have enjoyed seven individual presentations:

Colin Boynton: "Life in the Cretaceous period", highlighting three marine groups, the fossil evidence of terrestrial life and Cretaceous fossils of the Jurassic Coast.

Carol Pearce: "K-Pg Extinction" and its aftermath, wiping out 70% of life on Earth and marking the end of the Cretaceous Period and of the Mesozoic Era.

James Wright and Madeleine Collie: "The origin and continuing mutation of viruses". (Fascinating and scary in the context of the current Corona virus.)

Roger White: "William 'Strata' Smith". A portrait of one of the founders of modern geology and his 'map that changed the World'.

Carol Pearce: "The Evolution of Bats", completing Carol's excellent series on the evolution of avian creatures.

Heather Smith: "Adaptive Radiation". Evolution and radiation of species in response to changing environmental conditions, illustrated by studies of "Darwin's finches" in the Galapagos Islands and introducing the concepts of rapid evolution and epigenetics.

John Ayres: "The formation of our Chalk cliffs" - how minute particles of planktonic material settling through the Cretaceous seas over tens of millions of years could build hundreds of metres of chalk.

We plan to finish for the Summer after the next meeting in July, restarting in September.

A View From My Window

Thank you for sending us your photos.

Heather Smith



Brian Hoepelman



John Oxley



Chris Huntley



Colin Boynton



John Oxley



Maggie Symes