

Magazine 58 – Spring 2023

As another year unfolds, let's hope it brings us all health, happiness and enjoyment with our friends in the u3a. Why not try joining another group; starting up a new one; becoming a group or deputy coordinator or a member of the committee. You will be made very welcome. Without people like yourselves making a contribution, however small, our Wolverhampton u3a Group would not be able to function and be as successful as it is.



Chairman's Report

Happy New Year to all our Members and I hope the Festive season went well. Mine was a little spoilt by Covid the week before Christmas but with some small adjustments we coped.

The end of November finally gave us our tree planting ceremony which went well. Next time you are at the church have a look at the plaque commemorating the 40th year of u3a and an acknowledgement that it was planted in the 70th year of Queen Elizabeth II.

The December Christmas Social had a good turnout of Members in spite of the dreadful weather. The Festive food and entertainment went down well. My thanks to all involved especially Eleanor Dunnett for the catering and David Tordoff for the table quiz and the new "Majority Rules" which were a great success. Our live entertainment was cancelled at the last minute due to Covid but u3a member, Crispin Ridge, stepped in to give us entertaining readings from Charles Dickens. We have a busy new year to come with general meetings in January (24th) and February (28th). This will be followed by our AGM in March (28th). Save these dates.

More details will be sent out to you but the AGM has a special relevance. I will be retiring as according to the rules I should only be Chair for 1 year but because of the 'lost 2 Years of Covid' I have served 3 years – well beyond 'my best before date'! Many other long serving members are also retiring so we must have a new committee which means I am asking you, the membership, to urgently consider joining the committee because without a committee and officers the whole of our u3a is in jeopardy as viable institution

Ring me if you wish to know more. My Number is on the membership card.

Once again my thanks to our Magazine editors, Margaret Taylor and Di Tordoff for an informative and entertaining round up of our many group activities.

Chris Collins

ROUND THE GROUPS

Art Appreciation

We began the year looking at lesser known women artists and also women artists at Wightwick Manor led by Margaret Barr. The next interesting theme was Art made from or about natural materials. This included work by Andy Goldsmith and Benin ivory carvings. Brenda Jones brought in a quilt she had made and Eileen Bayliss brought a table cloth embroidered with wildflowers.

David Tordoff gave us a talk about Grayson Perry and his tapestries and other works. In May our leader Margaret Barr became unwell and I took over as I was the deputy.

In June we started some topical themes beginning with Royalty and explored paintings of Kings and Queens from different places and times. This was followed by a Commonwealth theme when each member chose a country and introduced us to its art. This included Kenya, Australia, Canada and Belize.

Paintings based on the Commonwealth Games followed including cricket, bowls and football.

In September I did a talk about Music in Art showing different instruments and times.

Ronnie told us about a Synagogue with Stained Glass representing the 12 tribes of Israel which was very interesting. We finished the year with David Tordoff's talk about Art in Architecture which included several stations.

We welcome any new members and I really need a deputy.

Sheila Moore



Chess

The chess group is getting going again in 2023 with our first meeting on 10th of January at 2pm. We are hoping more people will consider joining us to learn this fascinating game. This group is aimed at beginners or those who haven't played for a long time. Chess is indeed a complex game to learn but it is possible to have an enjoyable time just knowing the basics. Complexity and strategy can come with practice!

Please contact me if you are interested.

Josie Turner



Classical Music

The group only met eight times in 2022 due to presenters being ill or on holiday, but the meetings we had were as varied as ever. One session was devoted to an individual composer, Maurice Ravel (who wrote much more than "Bolero"!)

and two to Rhapsodies by composers as disparate as Delius and Bartok. One meeting explored the viola (pictured) in classical music – from Mozart to Martinu – and another consisted of extracts from operatic works. The remaining three meetings centred around a theme which was really an excuse to play a wide variety of music: near Valentine's Day romantic tracks, a session on dance and in December a programme of past masters (some of whom were women, but "mistresses" doesn't quite sound right!).

If you would like to join us, please contact John Sheard at sheard56@talktalk.net. You would be most welcome.

John Sheard



Computing

I decided some time ago that the Computer Group needed a new direction. We have not had a face-to-face meeting since I ran a course on PowerPoint before Covid, and computers are so complex and varied these days that finding topics of interest to everyone has proved very difficult.

I have however continued giving advice on an individual basis, not just to members of the group, but to u3a members in general. This seems to be the way forward. You can get some idea of the range of topics we have covered in the past by clicking on "Some Previous Topics" on the Computer Group web page.



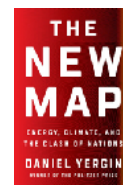
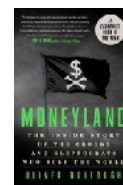
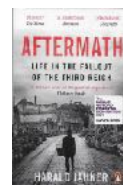
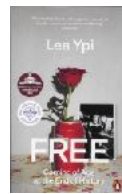
The Computer Group is now no longer a group in the traditional sense. Instead it provides a support service available to all Wolverhampton u3a members in coordination with the drop-in centre run by Frank Lewis and others at Bantock Park. Frank is happy to act as coordinator of our computer group and at the same time make the drop-in-centre available to u3a members. In future if anyone has a computer, phone or tablet problem or who would like guidance on using Word, Power Point or any other App or procedure, they can contact Frank personally for advice and/or pop down the the drop-in centre. Sessions are held in the Tractor Shed at Bantock House on alternate Tuesday mornings and afternoons.

Geoff Williams

Contemporary History

We kicked off the last twelve months with the first of a number of books looking at the roots of the emerging crisis in British politics. This one was written by the distinguished *Daily Mail*, *Spectator* and *Telegraph* journalist, Peter Osborne (*The Assault on Truth. Boris Johnson, Donald Trump and the Emergence of a New Moral Barbarism*). Osborne argued passionately that his ex-colleague Johnson's project was far from the harmless fun it sometimes seemed. In January and May 2022 we continued our exploration of the dark side, and our historical reflection on today's political battles, with Wulfrunian novelist and *Times* journalist Satnam Sangheera's *Empireland*, and Oliver Bullough's *Moneyland*. The second of these, highlighting how the UK and its offshore dependencies led the pack in servicing the world's oligarchs and moneylaunderers, was simultaneously serialised in May on Radio 4 (*How to Steal a Trillion*, still available on BBC Sounds). Recently we had the chance to read more about the growth of what foreign observers christened "the British disease", in Andy Beckett's book, *When the Lights Went Out. What Really Happened to Britain in the 1970s*, and in *Financial Times* writer Simon Kuper's *Chums. How a Tiny Caste of Oxford Tories Took Over the UK*. We got to know Anne Applebaum's view of the worldwide rise of populism in her popular book *Twilight of Democracy*.

Of course in a reading group everyone chooses their own titles, and so in addition to these pressing political topics we ended up dealing with a whole range of subjects, times and places. Examples included two books on postwar Germany's recovery from ruin, one by Harald Jahner (*Aftermath: Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich*), and one by John Kampfner (*Why the Germans Do It Better*), also Jim Wilson's hour-by-hour story of how Britain veered near the brink of nuclear war during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (in April 2022!), a book on the collapse of Communism seen through the eyes of a teenage Albanian girl (Lea Ypi's *Free*), and *The New Map* by Daniel Yergin on the transforming of global energy supplies since the beginning of the century.



If you're interested in trying out the Group, or perhaps in borrowing one or two of these titles to have a look at, get in touch with the Coordinator, Neil Malcolm (n.r.malcolm@blueyonder.co.uk)

Creative Writing

The group reconvened in March 2022 after a two year hiatus because of something called "Lockdown" - do you remember all that? It seems like a lifetime away now, but I digress.

The group meets at Gerry Mills's home in Penn, as it has done for the previous ten years or more. Although Gerry is still a superb host (and baker) she is no longer coordinator. That role has been picked up by John Ellard and Tess Fitzsimons, we have a hard act to follow.

The group carried on from where it had left off in early 2020, and virtually all members rejoined. A number of new members have also joined since Lockdown, and have fitted into the group very well.

We immediately regained our composure and confidence, and were able to share our writings easily and comfortably.

A topic suggested at each meeting for presentation at the next meeting. We like to limit the length to 500 words, just to allow everyone to have a chance at reading (plus it allows us to do justice to Gerry's cakes !)



Just recently a number of poems have been written, which provides a good mix. This, coupled with styles ranging from humour, personal memoirs, family memories and ancient history, makes for a regular and enjoyable second Thursday of the month.

John Ellard and Tess Fitzsimons

French

Our last meeting of 2022 focussed on Christmas. We raised glasses of mulled (non-alcoholic) wine accompanied by mince pies, chocolates etc. while watching a film of Dickens Christmas Carol in French. The film was enjoyable and required a lot of concentration!

Our meetings take place every two weeks on Tuesday afternoon and usually consist of:

- conversation on various topics
- a session revising and improving points of French grammar. This is with the help of an excellent TV broadcast by Ann Williams Phd, Ontario University, who is very clear and effective. Her 'lessons' are nothing like those we had at school!
- reading and translating articles from a bi-monthly magazine 'Bien-dire Initial'
- improving our listening skills by watching extracts from French feature films or documentaries. There is plenty of choice.

Judith Rose

Games

"Another year over. Group members seemed to have survived COVID and it was great being able to meet again. Thanks to members who provided venues, tea, chat and putting the world to rights. We did play games as well! Old favourites like Yahtzee and Rummikub. Members bring games with them so there's always a surprise, not to mention the arguments about rules! If all else fails we all know how to play 'Mexican Train'.

Charity shops have been searched. Finds included 'Snake Oil' (selling silly products) and 'Water Works' (trying to build a water system whilst other members try to sabotage you). It's sometimes easy to understand how these games ended up in charity shops. At least we had a good laugh.

It's a relaxing few hours in the month. We would welcome new members so come and give us a try."

Sue Stephens

Gardening

We resumed our meetings in April with several meetings at members' gardens, a very popular activity with the group. The amount of variation in these gardens is extraordinary and the visits give us the opportunity to discuss gardening issues and appreciate the expertise and imagination that goes into creating these gardens. We were so lucky with the weather too - what a difference it makes.

One of our trips out was to the Moat House Project near Albrighton.



This is a wonderful place which acts as a centre for people with learning disabilities. It is a very peaceful place with a large pond for fishing and level pathways to explore the grounds. It's possible for members of the public to visit by arrangement, their website has details. A very worthwhile and enjoyable place to visit.

Our most recent trip was to Bodenheim Arboretum when again we were very lucky with the weather. Our visit coincided with the half term holiday, so apart from enjoying the amazing Autumn colours, we also enjoyed the pumpkin trail which was brilliant! I've included a photo to give some idea of the kind of things on offer - gruesome at times, but the children loved it.

Our final activity this year was for a group of us to plant a Mountain Ash tree at Springdale Church Warstones Road to celebrate the u3a 40th Anniversary.

I am currently finalising the programme for next year.

Jeanette Black



BEACON OVERVIEW

Our Group has recently joined the **u3a Beacon Computer System** to make it easier for us to keep a record of our current membership and to have a more secure way of sending emails to members. It is hoped all group coordinators will have been trained on the new system by the end of 2022. In future only fully paid up members will be on the mailing list to receive group's information, u3a updates and copies of our Magazine either by post or email. Please notify your Group Coordinator or a the u3a Membership Secretary of any changes to emails or new email addresses, asap.

You can rest assured that Beacon - used by over 500 u3as - is very secure, more so certainly than the personal computers formerly used by committee members and group co-ordinators.



PHOTO COMPETITION

It has been suggested that we run a **Photo Competition** to be judged in the Spring. We invite members to submit their entries via email to u3awolves@fastmail.com by Easter 2023 and hope that the winners will be announced and published in the next edition of the Magazine in May. The only stipulation being that **photos should be taken by the individual member** on their own choice of subject matter. Get snapping everyone & good luck!



In order to enhance your Magazine, we would like to hear from members who may have a **personal story, experience, quiz or puzzle** to share with others. Please send your contributions to the editors for inclusion in future issues.

COMPUTER HELP GROUP

We have developed links with **Bantock House, Tractor Shed, Computer drop-in sessions** via Frank Lewis. (See Computer Group). All u3a members are welcome to go along to either alternate Tuesday Morning (17th/31st Jan) or Afternoon (24th Jan) sessions to improve their computer skills or solve any problems they may have with their equipment. Take a look at this website - <https://smartdeviceyoga.uk/>

Walking Group

Our Christmas walk and dinner this year took place on 7th December starting and finishing at the Woodman Inn, Claverley, with some less hardy walkers joining us on the way by the village school. The weather



was very kind to us, being cold but sunny as we enjoyed our delightful walk around the Shropshire countryside, taking in the lovely views and engaging in the usual chit chat among friends. Everyone was ready to tuck into a very tasty Christmas meal and beverage at the end. Thank you to our leader, Linda Moreland for organising everything.

Di Tordoff

One of our members, Carol Chappell, has recently taken part in a TV quiz show which she would like to recall and share with you.....

EGGHEADS

Being on telly isn't as glamorous as it might seem, but it IS interesting, and a great experience.

I'm in a weekly pub quiz team that decided to apply for Eggheads during lockdown. After jumping through a few hoops - including each of us recording a video of ourselves speaking about our lives and interests! - we were invited to film an episode.

Channel 5 paid for our travel to/from London, hotel accommodation for two nights, food allowance and taxis to/from the studio. Although the four of us were together in London, Channel 5 insisted on transporting us in four separate taxis due to COVID regulations at the time!

We were a bit worried that we were cursed on the journey to London: Wolverhampton station closed as our train was due because of a possible unexploded WWII bomb that they'd found, and then the train we managed to get on in Birmingham was stopped for a long time because someone had jumped off a bridge onto the line!

When we arrived at the studio in London, we were led through a maze of corridors, and spotted Kevin (the super-clever Egghead!) waiting to go on set. Although I was pleased to meet him, we knew we were unlikely to win with him on the opposing team!

Hair and makeup were interesting as the staff weren't allowed to touch us so could only talk us through what to do. We then changed in four separate dressing rooms (!) and were finally led through to the studio. The bit you see on TV looks quite pristine but the bit you can't see is a mass of jumbled cables snaking around the floor, lots of lights and cameras and several technical staff. We were talked through exactly where to sit and how to move around when one person was in the 'famous question room', which is a VERY untidy neighbouring studio where you sit on a box to answer questions!

Then the Eggheads came in - including Kevin! They all stopped to have a chat with us as they came past and were all very friendly. Finally, Jeremy Vine arrived and was also very pleasant, chatting to us and the Eggheads for a while before filming began.

We did quite well - two of us beat our opponents in the initial rounds - but Kevin won his match, which essentially meant that we lost overall. We MAY have won (but probably wouldn't!) if we'd had the other set of questions in the final round, but in the end they triumphed.

It wasn't aired until 6 months after filming but it's still available on 'catch-up': series 22, episode 3, if you'd like to see it.



Carol Chappell

BRING A FRIEND

Don't forget you can **bring a friend** along to 2 u3a general meetings and they pay just £2 before they need to join.

Members' Corner

...now this is where you can have your say - on any u3a topic you feel needs airing or sharing, or maybe to suggest a new group or activity... Please send us your comments!

- **Art Appreciation is in need of a Deputy Coordinator. Are YOU able to help?**
- **Coordinators are still needed to re-start the Lunch Club; Local History; Practical Art and Food Groups - all very popular in the past. Are YOU the person we are looking for?**

Forthcoming speakers at General Meetings 2023

24th January, Niki Gardiner "Tax, Care and the New Guy" Niki, from *Silvertime Legal*, will briefly cover recent *Inheritance Tax* changes, the topic of care, long term care fees and options available to prevent individuals from selling their homes to pay these fees.

28th February, Max Keen "Alfred the Great: a King who Rode Good Fortune?" A teacher and avid historian, Max brings King Alfred to life in glorious costume.

28th March - AGM "Five Rivers Fostering" How you can support this charitable fostering agency.

25th April 2023 - Emma Pursehouse "Making a living as a writer" Once Poet Laureate of Wolverhampton, Emma now makes her living as a writer and speaker. She will talk about her life and read some of her poems.

LIST OF INTEREST GROUPS AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBERS (If you are interested in joining a new group, please contact the Group Coordinator - see Wolverhampton u3a Website for more information)

Reading 1	Food
Reading 2	How to Read Music
Play Reading 1	Ukulele
Play Reading 2	Classical Music
Play Reading 3	Jazz Appreciation
Poetry Appreciation 1	Understanding Opera
Contemporary Poetry 2	Contemporary History
Poetry 3	Chess
Shakespeare	Philosophy
Creative Writing	Social Issues
French	Science & Technology
German	Computing
Italian	Self-Study Resources
Spanish	Gardening
Latin	Art Appreciation
Walking	Craft
Table Tennis	Board Games

YOUR COMMITTEE

Shirley BOLAND	COMMITTEE MEMBER
Chris COLLINS	CHAIR
Eleanor DUNNETT	GROUPS COORDINATOR / MEETER & GREETER
Mercedes FONFRIA	SECRETARY
Julia HOOD	MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY / NEW ENQUIRIES
Mo JOHNSON	COMMITTEE MEMBER
Neil MORELAND	EXTERNAL LINKS
Yvonne RICKARD	TREASURER
John SHEARD	u3a BEACON COORDINATOR
Margaret TAYLOR	MAGAZINE EDITOR
Josie TURNER	SPEAKERS SECRETARY
Diane TORDOFF	VICE CHAIR/MAGAZINE EDITOR
Mary WARWICKER	MINUTES SECRETARY

Editors: Margaret Taylor & Di Tordoff