


Newsletter No.43 – Winter 2018

Happy New Year everybody!

Hard to believe that we are already nearly at the end of February, and so much looking forward to signs of spring, with lighter nights and hopefully more warmth and sunshine. Louise's poem says it all!

Spring is a time of new beginnings – how about trying an activity group that is new to you, or even setting up a group that is new to Wolverhampton U3A? * Di Tordoff, our Groups Coordinator, will be delighted to hear from you and to give you all the help and support you need.

*Also see Neil Moreland's information on page 4 about enquiry and research based learning projects..



Fragile fronds fringe the frosted blades of grass,
Feathery filaments of frozen mist
Held fast by the biting chill.

Bulbs buried beneath, on the brink of breaking free,
Bulge, waiting to burst their buds into the brightness
Of white winter sunshine.

Presently pale primroses parade their petals,
Ebullient birds display and preen their plumage,
As all obey the surging certainty of Spring.

Louise Henly

Round the groups

A full list of all the interest groups appears on our website <http://u3asites.org.uk/wolverhampton>, and a printed list is available on request

Art Appreciation

Another year of variety in 2017, ranging from El Greco and still lifes to textile and street art. Our programme also tied in with 2 local exhibitions. We had a session on 'Art on tiles' from Mediaeval churches to Spanish wall decorations via the C19 work of William de Morgan now displayed at Wightwick Manor. Another session was on the art of medals, from classical portraits and Olympic Games to the Ron Dutton abstracts which were on show at Wolverhampton Art Gallery. As usual, members turned up with fascinating examples for us all to enjoy.



The photograph shows members with some of their 'art finds' in December. The U3A projector and fast broadband at TWI also allowed us to see much more, including stained glass in Scotland, museums in Norwich, and a portrait in Ireland.

U3A members are welcome to attend an occasional session which appeals to them. The programme is on the website, or phone for information if you lack computer access.

Margaret Barr (01902) 843536

Art Practical

Our group, which started in 2011, continues to thrive with a core of around ten members. We produce a wide variety of art works from still life and landscape paintings to mixed media abstract designs using watercolour, oil and acrylic. At our first couple of meetings in 2018, Gill Stevens introduced to us the technique of decorating glass using lead strips and various types of bric-a-brac. Participants had a very enjoyable time choosing and producing a design on paper, cutting and sticking lead strips to the glass and deciding on which infill colours and textures to use. This technique lends itself particularly well to art deco designs and the end result gave an amazing variety of colourful stained glass effect work as areas were delineated with lead, then later filled in with coloured beads, sequins, tissue paper, sparkles and paints.



We are always looking for new ideas/techniques to share at meetings and always find time to have a natter, usually a topical discussion and of course a cuppa and a biscuit. New members are welcome to join us - no artistic experience is necessary - just come along and give it a go!

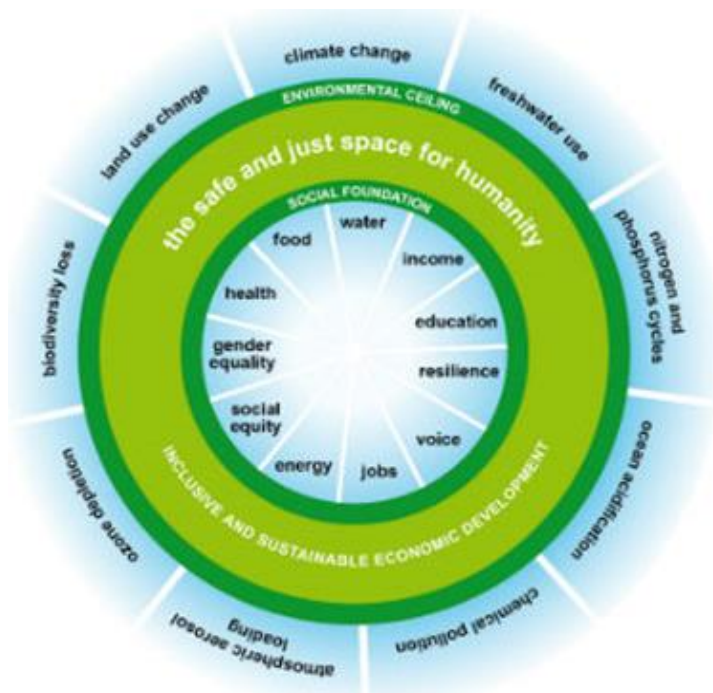
Di Tordoff



Capitalism (Advanced studies)

Reading the newspapers in the early part of January 2018, when this report is being written, a great deal of concern has been expressed in the UK over the decision by China to stop importing certain types of plastic waste. At the same time the government has been floating a proposal of making customers pay for their plastic/paper cups. These two examples are current instances of what the Capitalism group has been studying and discussing in the last year, i.e. what is now often referred to as the Anthropocene era. The Anthropocene era is a proposed epoch dating from the commencement of significant human impact on the Earth's geology and ecosystems, including, but not limited to, climate change. Besides changing the weather systems of the world, leading to increasing numbers of exceptional weather events, (storms etc.), concern is being expressed by scientists over what is often described as the excessive misuse, degradation and loss of biodiversity in the resources of the earth as a result of man's exploitation of such resources.

Leading on from this, the Capitalism group currently is considering the socio-economic theory of Kate Raworth of Oxfam, who has developed what is called the 'doughnut' diagram (see below) to



assist the understanding of, and actions towards, a sustainable planet and social equity within an Anthropocene era, itself closely linked to capitalism as a worldwide economic reality. Discussions within the capitalism group are ongoing about the model and its implications for capitalism in the UK and elsewhere. If you are interested in such discussions and/or would like to join the capitalism group, please get in contact with me in person or via the website.

Neil Moreland

Computing



Since my last article (newsletter 40) we have had a fascinating mix of topics in the group. Some have been run of the mill queries, some useful hints and tips and one quite lengthy discussion on computer coding. We've had a couple of "Why has it done that?" queries. One member found that his whole display suddenly turned upside down and another that

the text in his emails became too small to read. Thankfully in each case other members came up with a solution. "How to" queries have covered topics like transferring and then editing photos from emails, copying a contacts list to a new account and printer wireless connection issues.

The coding topic mentioned above arose from a query about typing French or other accents in MS Word. In Word you can type any accented letter or symbol by finding it in the symbols list and clicking on it, by typing Alt + the character code, or using the built-in shortcut. These methods are tedious and not easy to remember. We discussed how to reprogram the key presses to suit yourself. For example, if you set ALT + a vowel to produce an acute accent, ALT GR + a vowel for grave and CTRL + a vowel for circumflex this is very easy to remember. You could also use Alt + c for ç. If anyone would like more details please email u3awolves@gmail.com. This then led on to a wider discussion on the history of key press coding in ASCII and Unicode, different keyboard layouts and some keypress combinations for special characters, symbols and functions.
Geoff Williams

Classical Music

The group has had a full monthly programme of meetings over the past year. As well as meetings devoted to individual composers - Prokofiev, *Poulenc (our fourth meeting listening to his music!) and Verdi - we have listened to Scottish and Spanish music. We have also been taken on several musical journeys: geographic (around Britain), through time (Masters of the Monarch's Music) and through the mind (Dreams, Reveries and Nightmares).
*Click on this link to see a performance of Poulenc's "Sinfonietta"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBEb6HVr_6Q
New members are always welcome. We meet on the third Tuesday of the month and if you are interested in joining the group, please contact me on 593392 or at sheard56@talktalk.net
John Sheard

Craft

We are currently a small group, now in its second year, which meets once a month, in members' homes, to learn a variety of new crafts. New members would be welcomed.



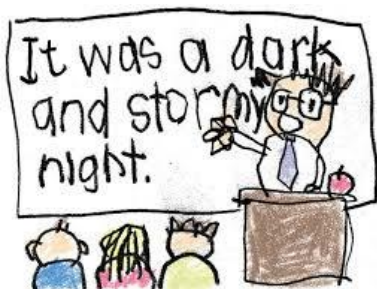
In the past year our efforts have included fabric dyeing, marbling, jewellery making, printing on fabric, Christmas cards, embroidery weaving, book folding, bag making and macramé.

We have a range of crafts planned this year using everything from lace, Christmas cards and nail varnish to concrete !!

Pauline Cuthbert

Creative Writing

I set up the creative writing group because I got tired of waiting for someone else to do so!



Ten years later here we are, a small group that squeezes around my dining table at 2pm on the second Thursday of every month.

We begin the meeting with members reading their responses to the 'trigger' of the previous month. At the end of the reading members

write brief comments (all criticism must be constructive) which can be taken away and read at leisure. There are many different styles of writing: historical, humorous, romantic and often some poetry, all from the same trigger! Time permitting we may do a short writing exercise or even play a game such as 'Ex Libris' or 'Consequences'. Discussion and chat continue over the tea break: members are very sociable and there is a lot of laughter too.
Gerry Mills

'The Summer Schools are a wonderful example of self-help learning, with all the tutors being U3A members who give up significant amounts of their time to provide attendees with an enjoyable and participating learning experience'. U3A website.

Gerry Mills writes:

I have been attending summer school for the past nine years; this year I made two visits. The first was held at Harper Adams University, Newport. I could have easily attended daily but I chose to stay on site, enjoying the social life of the evenings. The course I chose was 'Cryptic Crosswords for Beginners'. Both the tutor, Henry Howarth, and the course were excellent. My second school was in September. 'Exploring English' at Royal Agricultural University Cirencester. This was a fascinating course following the development of the English language from Saxon times to looking at the future. These two courses were chosen from the wide range on offer including music, drama, languages, sciences, architecture and archeology to name a few. I shall be going again this year; it would be good to meet another member of Wolverhampton U3A whilst there.

Food

'Sugar and spice and all things nice', - as well as nutritional matters - that's what the Food Group programme aims for. Our summer party, much anticipated for the contributions of delectable food, was held in Eileen's lovely garden but unfortunately the Christmas party had to be cancelled due to snow. However some members rose to the challenge of the hat competition, of which



Angela Horton was the clear winner. We've had discussions comparing food prices at various supermarkets and the difference between branded and equivalent but cheaper own brand products, as well as a chance to taste kefir brought to us by Ruth Byrne. A highlight in November was a talk entitled 'A Day in the Life of a Tudor Housewife'. The speaker came attired in Tudor costume and let us sample biscuits and sweets of the period, as well as original

mincemeat containing beef as well as dried fruit - it was delicious! Our programme for 2018 includes the use of microwaves and slow cookers, trying unusual fruit and vegetables and guided visits to Wightwick Manor vegetable garden and Essington Farm.

Louise Henly

French Improvers



This group gives people who have some knowledge of French – acquired at School or Adult Education College or Further Education College etc – the opportunity to improve their French. The group meets

fortnightly, currently at my house (address on website).

We use varied material on France & French life (e.g. the uses of coffee grounds in the home and areas of Paris) This information is distributed by me in the form of emails containing internet links to printed text and oral equivalents read by native or fluent French speakers. The material can then be downloaded from the internet before it is used in the next meeting. At a meeting, we normally listen to a paragraph before taking it in turns to read it ourselves and translate it into English.

Sometimes material on French grammar (e.g. usage of pronouns as sentence objects) is distributed before everybody attempts an exercise on it.

Please feel to contact me if you wish to join or just turn up at a meeting.

John Rose, john.aaron.rose@gmail.com

Intermediate French



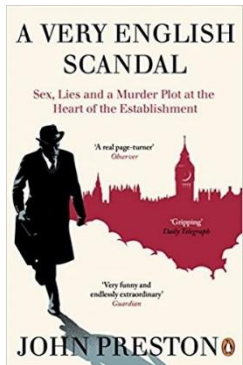
Group members continue to keep their knowledge of the French language up to date by working through various innovative exercises, quiz, anagrams (with answers!), plus CDs to ensure our pronunciation is correct. We have also read and discussed topics ranging from the development of a 'Mechanical Zoo' theme park in Nantes, the latest theories about 'The Man in

the Iron Mask', the government's new labour laws etc. There is always something of interest to stimulate us.

We were very sad to lose one of our group members, Jim Sadler, who died recently. He was greatly valued by us all for his contributions. In particular, for the way he corrected our mistakes in his quiet, humorous way. He knew French grammar better than any of us. We will miss him.

Judith Rose

Contemporary History



The History Reading Group has been meeting once a month since December 2016. We've got through a great variety of books, sparking off endless discussions, drawing on the different backgrounds and experiences of the group. Members take turns to put forward a book to be read, and then introduce it briefly at a later meeting. The great advantage of this system is that we're all forced to get into new areas we might not have paid much attention to before. So it's been mind-expanding, mind-blowing,

sometimes devastating - or for some occasionally just annoying – but, whatever you think, unmissable.

History has a way of suddenly being very up-to-date, and all year we seem to have been just one-step ahead of the news, whether it's about the rise of the Holy-Land-obsessed religious right in the USA (The Last Crusade), international organised crime (McMafia – the non-fiction version), nuclear war (Hersey's Hiroshima), or the future of South Africa (Mandela's Long Road to Freedom, Johnson's How Long Will South Africa Survive?) For our meeting last June (on election day) we read David Cannadine's new book on Margaret Thatcher. We're now reading a biography of Silvio Berlusconi as he aims at yet another political comeback this March.

It's a lively and friendly group, and we're keen to welcome new members.

Neil Malcolm

Enquiry Based Learning and Research: The Essence of the U3A

I recently finished my preparations -mainly critical reading – on the topic of 'The Northern Powerhouse' for a session that I am about to lead for the Social Issues Interest Group. From the booklet 'Getting Involved in Research' recently published by The Third Age Trust, I



read that my reading-up for the session is an example of a literature review that draws upon primary sources (e.g. Government publications) as well as secondary sources (commentaries upon those primary sources). As many of the materials were new to me, it was obvious that I was involved in a form of research.

In November 2017, moreover, I attended two research-focused conferences in Birmingham on behalf of Wolverhampton U3A. The first conference was a national one convened to launch the Third Age Trust booklet 'Getting Involved in Research'. I have some copies of the booklet available. The authors of the booklet were at this conference, and explained that it was written in order to encourage research activities of various sorts, including surveys and/or interviews which often are seen as what research is all about.

The second conference I attended was a West Midlands Regional Research Conference that was focused upon encouraging and supporting research activities in the region, including Wolverhampton. Experienced research 'ambassadors' in the region have been identified (of which I am one) to act as a resource, willing to help and assist U3As members and groups who have ideas for research that they might like to have some help with to sort out. In U3A terms, this is 'Enquiry-based Learning'!

At each conference, we were treated to presentations upon completed U3A research activities covering such diverse topics as the researching of buildings in the central streets in Uttoxeter, surveys of garden birds in Birmingham, and the nature and extent of loneliness in rural communities in Herefordshire. Listings and summary accounts of such research projects and their researchers are gathered together in the U3A Research Database available on the U3A website at www.u3aresearch.org.uk. The database allows you to browse U3A projects from all round the UK to see what has already been researched elsewhere, and to stimulate ideas for research in Wolverhampton. Why not have a look, or talk to me about possible research ideas, or read the booklet?

Neil Moreland

STOP PRESS We are hoping to set up a new Country Dancing Group for beginners, on either a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday morning from 10am-12noon, for those of you who are "light of heart if not of foot". If you are interested in joining, please contact the coordinator, Faith Russell, 01902 256241 faith.russell1@hotmail.com with your preference. There is likely to be a small charge depending on numbers and venue.



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