

**Newsletter No.45 – Autumn 2018**

At the end of this magnificent summer we look back at activities and events - and parties - we have enjoyed, and look forward (with a certain amount of trepidation in these challenging times?) to another U3A action-packed year.

\*A reminder that our AGM is on **Tuesday 25 September at 2pm**. Hope to see you there.\*



## 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

### Playreading

There are three play reading groups of about 10 members each that meet monthly at members' houses. We read a mixture of plays which we obtain from Staffordshire library as Wolverhampton Library has no sets. We have obtained a list of the play sets kept at the library which has helped us to find some more unusual plays



including *Female Transport* by Steve Gooch about people transported to Australia. Casting is done before the meeting and different parts taken..

Plays we have read recently

include *Wyrd Sisters* by Terry Pratchett, *Love on the Dole* by Ronald Gow and Walter Greenwood, *Can't pay Won't Pay* by Dario Fo and *Midsummer Mink* by Peter Coke.

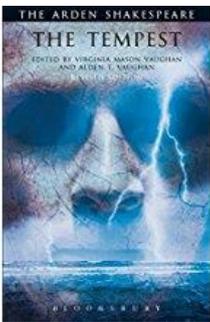
Each group has different opinions about the plays read. We discuss the plays and have a break for tea.

**Sheila Moore. Margaret Barr. Ruth Byrne**



### Brush up your Shakespeare

This group has so far studied *Love's Labour's Lost*, one of Shakespeare's most enduring romantic comedies and, currently, *The Tempest*. (It's not too late to join in this term).



We all use the same version of the text, published in the ARDEN series, all easily available from Amazon second-hand. We read the Introduction like a book club, then read through the whole play out loud, taking our time and talking about it as we go along, exploring the meaning of any unusual phrases and making sure we've got the plot!

We also watch performances on

DVD, especially from the RSC. No-one has to be an expert and it's not too serious, I promise! It's amazing how many common phrases and ideas come from Shakespeare without you realising it.

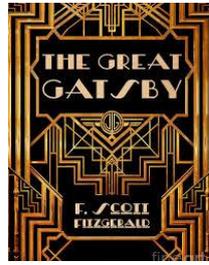
We meet for up to 8 sessions WEEKLY on Tuesdays at 10.15 till 12.00 in school term-time only, with a break over half-term, (no meeting on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>). Venue is either the Tettenhall Institute if we have enough members to cover the cost, (£2 each per session) or alternatively my home in Newbridge. We'd love to welcome some new members so please let me know, either via the website or by phone if you're planning to come.



The Spring term play is likely to be *Troilus and Cressida*.. There's a live relay at the Lighthouse on November 14<sup>th</sup> if you'd like to take a look before joining us. The likely dates for the new term are January 22<sup>nd</sup> to March 26<sup>th</sup> with a 2 week break on February 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>

**Ben Whitney 01902 561749**

### Reading



Members of Reading Group 1 have had another year of fascinating reading. The range of authors has been diverse - Chinese, English, Welsh, American and Turkish and Irish, with a wonderful variety of writing. Those of us who had already read *The Great Gatsby* when younger, discovered we felt differently about it, having read it again. The sad death of Helen Dunmore prompted the choice of *Exposure*,

with some of us also reading *Birdcage Walk* - two very different, but enjoyable novels. We also had some of her beautiful poignant poetry. She posthumously received the Costa Prize 2017 for her last book of poems, *Inside the Wave*.

As always we find that reading a book is only one part of what we do, as the discussions we have are so interesting and stimulating it's hard to fit everything into the time.

We took the decision this year to have a break in August in order to catch up with other reading, and meetings were resumed on 6<sup>th</sup> September. On the U3A website is a list of the many books we have read, so if you are stuck for an idea of what to read try some of our choices; you may or may not like them, but you won't find them boring!

**Jeanette Black**

Reading Group 2 has been running for over ten years and still has several of its original members. We meet on the afternoon of the first Thursday of the month.

Books to be discussed are chosen by members of the group and range over a variety of titles including *Little Exiles* by Robert Dinsdale (a harrowing tale of children sent to Australia after WW2)

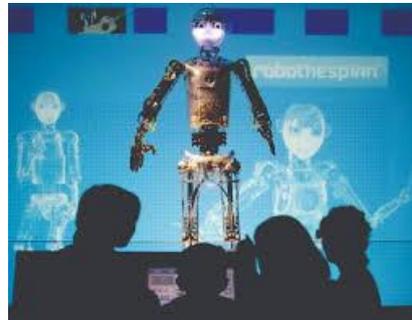
*The Road to Little Dribbling* by Bill Bryson, *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* by Alan Sillitoe, and classics such as *House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton and *A Handful of Dust* by Evelyn Waugh.



The book is introduced by the member who chose it, and discussion follows with all encouraged to take part. It is rare for us all to agree on the quality or interest of a book so discussions can be lively. The meeting concludes with refreshments and a more social chat!

**Gerry Mills**

### Science & Technology



Whether you are curious, enquiring or just plain nosey we feel you would enjoy our educational and sociable S&T Group. We meet at 2pm on the second Thursday each month, normally at members' homes but have had two successful external visits: to the Think Tank

Birmingham and Veolia's Energy Recovery Facility at Four Ashes. We are eclectic in the subjects presented by group members, from the more profound Epigenetics, Body Clocks, Dark Matter, Nanorobots and Gravity through to the more prosaic such as Driverless Cars, Fracking and Nature vs Nurture. Some sessions have even discussed the not too erudite 'Why are chilli peppers hot to taste?', 'How do fish & penguins see underwater?' and even 'The art & science of dunking biscuits'.

The future programme will cover several aspects of Oceans and of Space - so why not consider joining us?

**David Tordoff**

## Social Issues

Are you concerned about current issues and developments, such as how Life might be outside the EU?



Do you want to develop an informed and reflective perspective and position on this and other social developments? If so, the Social Issues Interest Group should appeal to you! The group meets on the fourth Thursday of each month (but not in December!),

and focuses upon topics that are both current and interesting, being suggested and led by group members. Most sessions are stand-alone sessions, though once or twice a year we tend to deal with topics over several months. A recent example of topics that spanned several sessions focused on the issue of privacy and surveillance by the use of social media companies such as Facebook. Not everyone sees the ubiquitous nature of social media as a good thing; for whilst such programmes may help families and friends as well as followers to keep in touch or up-to-date, the social media companies themselves use the information for their own purposes, such as to attract and focus advertisements. In addition, such companies can and do sell your data on to other companies (remember Cambridge Analytica?) - mostly without your knowledge and agreement. Given the current concerns expressed in the media about the social role and influence of alternative religions to Christianity, another recent session was on the existence, role and activities of Islamic Sharia Councils, which some people call Sharia courts. Sharia law is a central facet of Islam, designed to provide the guidelines for the way Muslims are expected to live wherever in the world they find themselves. Whilst Sharia laws and pronouncements are not recognised within the English legal system, a recent parliamentary report that was discussed in a meeting suggested that Sharia Councils, (sometimes called Courts), should be legally registered and recognised. Most of the work of Sharia Councils focuses upon Islamic weddings and divorces. Both currently have no status in British Law, so the Parliamentary Report proposed that it should be a legal requirement for such Councils to ensure the registration of Islamic marriages within English law. Any Islamic divorces too should be carried out under English law.

Future Social Issues sessions are varied in their focus. Currently, future sessions in 2018 and early 2019 will be on topics such as gender harassment (including the 'Me Too' movement); how far past Observer newspaper predictions about Britain in 2020 are becoming reality (or not); poverty and the welfare state; and the future of work. If these topics and others interest you, perhaps you should come along to contribute, but also to ensure that topics that you would like the group to discuss and reflect upon are scheduled? In either case, contact me for further information.

**Neil Moreland**

## Walking

Our yearly programme of walks began in August 2017 with a Treasure Hunt around Pattingham and a bit of head scratching to find some dastardly clues. We also did a Treasure Hunt in July 2018, this time around Wombourne. As usual walks have been as short as a few miles on the Flower Walk to nearly nine miles on more challenging walks.

We have walked in a variety of familiar areas including Cannock Chase, Much Wenlock, Kidderminster and Worfield. A new walk near Shrewsbury proved interesting as it included part of a road older than the Roman roads by 100 years, and a group of fossilised tree stumps.

[Don't laugh! - Ed]



The weather has played its part. A walk in Sheriffhales was cancelled as it was windy, freezing and snowy with a temperature of  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  and a wind chill of  $-11^{\circ}\text{C}$ . We also had a very wet walk around Shifnal but no one was downhearted - the upbeat group reflected more on the first dry hour rather than the drenching two hours, and as always, an enjoyable meal and drink at the pub revived us all. During the heatwave in July we walked around Ombersley, Worcestershire, where fortunately there was a lot of shade on offer. There have been problems with pubs not providing expected food; a fire in a kitchen, one pub being closed and the alternative pub not able to offer food as promised as they were having repairs done in the kitchen!

The comprehensive programme of walks, roughly every two weeks, is thanks to our enthusiastic group members. Living in the Wolverhampton area we are fortunate to have such wonderful countryside nearby and also a good road system that can get us a little further afield.

If this has whetted your appetite and you would like to join the walking group please call me on 01902 339894.

**Linda Moreland**

## Spanish Improvers



I was scratching my head about what I could say in this year's newsletter article about 'Improvers' Spanish' that would be any different to what I wrote last year - 'we meet weekly, enjoy learning, progress slowly with new grammar and vocabulary..' - when Bob, one of our newer group members, sent me his thoughts and experiences of joining and being part of a U3A group. I am pleased to share his observations more widely:

"Upon my retirement in April 2017, I resolved to revive my interest in Spanish, having previously done a couple of years' study at Old Hall Street, one night per week, under the Adult Education Scheme some twenty years earlier. However, initial investigations revealed that adult education, along with most other things in life, had not stood still in terms of cost, which it appears had gone up in the region of a factor of twelve. My initial enthusiasm had therefore to be parked while I considered my options.

On a visit to Central Library, a notice for U3A caught my eye. I had no previous knowledge of the organisation's existence, but logged onto the website at the earliest opportunity and realised that this may be what I was looking for.

My only concern surrounded the word 'university'. My sole academic achievement is an ONC Business Studies certificate, awarded around the time that Bobby Moore was collecting the World Cup at Wembley. Would I be out of my depth? Having spoken to both Tim and Christine by phone I felt some reassurance, but still approached my first session with some trepidation.

On meeting the group I realised my fears were groundless. They were (ARE) all delightful and friendly people and much to my relief, once I had dusted off the cobwebs, my grasp of the language appeared not too far removed from everyone else.

Classes are held in a very relaxed atmosphere, subjects vary week to week but are always informative and enjoyable, and at a cost per week equating to less than half a pint of lager and a packet of crisps. Most importantly it's good fun, and has become a highlight of my week. Thanks U3A and to my fellow estudiantes."

**Tim Jevons**

### Table Tennis

Ping - pong, ping - pong. It has a lovely rhythm about it that's quite mesmerising. Somehow the 'ping' has a higher note than the



'pong'. Why, I wonder? Laughter. Lots of it. Punctuated by 'oops' or 'sorry'. Much chasing of wayward balls which seem to have a life of their own, their aim being to hide under chairs.

Our little group has metamorphosed into a bunch of delightful friends, sharing problems, confidences and life events, in between bouts of frenzied activity.

Two of our members confessed to actually enjoying making cakes. Mistake. We challenged them to a duel, and the following week we were all seen to be partaking of the most delicious scones and sponges. We declared the contest a draw.

Table Tennis has been acknowledged as one of the best forms of exercise for the third generation, keeping body and mind fit and alert. It's also GREAT FUN.

**Faith Russell**

### Ukulele



Another great year for this ever growing group: we have a new member most weeks. Different groups have been out for gigs in Davenport House, in Albrighton and at the Blind Institute where we joined the Wulfruna Ladies Choir. A small group played for a dementia group, another for a group at St Philips Church. We have gigs to look forward to in Worfield for a 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party this month, a U3A event in October, a group at St Aidan's Church in November, the small dementia group again for Christmas songs and our usual slot for Codsall Christmas Fair in December.

A lovely way to raise money for a variety of charities. JOIN US!

**Gill Stevens**

**HELP!!** Our well established **Practical Art** Group which caters for a wide range of artistic abilities has been running without a teacher/mentor at the helm for a number of months now. We are therefore looking for an artist who would be willing to fill this role and give help and advice to other members. If you have taught art in the past or are a practising artist, **you** could be the person we are looking for.

Please contact Di Tordoff [xbun80@hotmail.com](mailto:xbun80@hotmail.com) for more info.

## Growth and publicity

**Mercedes writes:** This is my new role after being treasurer. I thought it would free some time for hobbies, but I am working harder now than before!

Let me tell you our latest activities:

We have started advertising in community magazines in these areas: Perton, Patingham, Codsall, Bilbrook, Wombourne, Tettenhall, Finchfield, Compton and Castlecroft.

We have strengthened our leafleting in the Bilston area and made contact with the Prouds Lane Community Centre. It houses a very active Community Association and about 30 organisations use the premises, including the Hindu Society. They invited me to one of their committee meetings and gave me a very warm welcome.

See <http://bilston.org/about.html>

The Bilston Magazine published an article about Wolverhampton U3A in their June/July magazine. It was a one and a half page article with three attractive photographs of our interest groups. (Please let me know if you would like to see a copy)

At present our presence in the East of the city is thin and we are keen to attract members from **Bilston, Wednesfield and Coseley**.

These communities have very rich histories and active groups such as the Bilston Writers Group, the Bilston Historical Society and Friends of the Town Hall. There are many lively community associations and libraries in the area. However, in the present climate of financial constraints these facilities are being curtailed.

This is sad, but it might be an opportunity for all of us to pull together. I firmly believe that U3A could make a significant contribution to enhance local communities and in return, U3A would be enriched by new members.

We are pleased to announce that we have organised a **Public Meeting in Bilston, on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October, at 2pm, at the Bilston Community Centre, 1, Prouds Lane, WV14 6PW. The City Mayor and the local MP have been invited.**

Its purpose is to introduce U3A to the Bilston community and to hear their views.

It is interesting that when I attended the Community Association's meeting, they, unprompted, asked me whether we could **show** the public meeting what our interest groups do, rather than just *telling* them. I think it is a very good idea and we could use some of the exhibition boards from the anniversary celebration. That will help show some of the activities of our interest groups. In fact, we have invited the ukulele group to perform during the latter part of the public meeting, whilst we are having refreshments.

I would be very interested to hear your views on this. In any case, we will need the help of the interest groups in the preparation of this event. I shall be writing to the group coordinators and if you can lend a hand, please contact me .I'll keep you posted!

**Mercedes:** 01902 827357, or [fonfria@virginmedia.com](mailto:fonfria@virginmedia.com) or any member of the committee.