

Newsletter No.51 – Spring/Summer 2020

Hello to all our members!

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our excellent Newsletter. My thanks to our editors Margaret and Di. Hope you have managed the summer without Covid 19 upsetting too many plans. The way things are going we still have to be careful and stay safe until we have a vaccine. We are told that restrictions could be in place for the next 6 months. While we are still unable to meet monthly at the 'Friends Meeting House', many of our groups have been active via Zoom or planned outdoor meetings. This has helped many of us with the enforced isolation caused by the pandemic. Remember that if you do want a chat or more info you can contact me (01902 420695) or Tess Fitzsimons (01902 262004). Our AGM has been postponed until **February 2021** when we hope we will be able to resume meetings on a monthly basis (subject of course to Covid rules). All the committee will be up for re-election at that meeting; you'll get more details nearer the time. Your current committee has continued to meet (Virtual/Zoom) about every 6 weeks throughout the summer and managed to keep up the running of our U3A.

Please make contact with any committee members if you need any help or support.

I am in regular touch with U3A management in London to keep up to date, particularly on the latest pandemic news. The Third Age magazine also contains useful information. We are in touch with other local U3A's via our link committee member Neil Moreland.

As you know all fees are suspended until 2021 when we hope we can reorganise for the rest of that year.

Please keep in touch and support each other.

Chris Collins (Chair)



Dawn chorus v sun rise

I have always wanted to take part in a group appreciation of the dawn chorus. Different groups such as RSPB and Kingswood organise groups around May Day. However, May Day weekend is the annual holiday of a walking group of which I have been a member for a number of years, so I have always missed the May Day Dawn Chorus. However, this year we were on lockdown and, at last, I could experience the May Day dawn chorus, on my own though... I prepared well. Got up at 3.30 am, packed a banana and a bottle of water and headed for the Tettenhall old railway track. It was dark and cold, and disappointingly, very quiet... I ventured a few yards down the track but I was frightened and returned to the car. I think the birds were still shaking off their slumber and their singing was quite muffled. The scene was not wild and alluring and definitely the streetlights dissipated the mystery of dawn.

I headed for Tettenhall Green but it was still dark and the streetlights made it rather urban. The birds were very urban indeed, maybe busy with their routine morning ablutions... nothing like the explosion of the dawn chorus that I expected.

Obviously, I had started too early and chosen the wrong location, so sheepishly I went back home. By then, the sky was milky with dashes of red but the birds were only emitting their usual civilised urban chorus.

This was a disappointment compared to my experience of a sun rise the previous summer.

Around the summer solstice I decided to witness the sun rise. I left the house just as light broke. The sky was milky blue with dramatic red dashes. I drove to Tettenhall Green. The mist from the paddling pool created a line of grey floating over the dewy grass. I felt as if I was walking on clouds. The trees etched their magnificent shapes over the pale blue sky and the moon was still visible. I walked east of the golf course towards St Michael's church and then.... it burst into flames! the yellow ball of the sun appeared blinding the eye and burning the lingering mist. It felt as if a dragon had just wakened up and exhaled its fiery breath to announce its presence. It was exhilarating, heart-warming and invigorating. I sauntered leisurely for a while, feeling the warmth until my eyes started to itch demanding some more sleep.

I went back to bed with a wonderful sense of achievement. I would repeat the experience any time!

About the dawn chorus, I am not so sure...

Mercedes Fonfria

Round the groups

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

Poetry 3

The group continues to meet regularly, now on Zoom. We are a new group but vibrant and full of life. We read and discuss poems chosen by the members. Both poems and discussion vary from meeting to meeting: sometimes we are profound and erudite, sometimes we are convivial and playful. We cover British and World poetry from a wide range of literary movements and historical periods. We welcome new members: we meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 2 pm.

We will leave you with this delightful poem:

the pebble
is a perfect creature

equal to itself
mindful of its limits

filled exactly
with a pebbly
meaning

with a scent that
does not remind one of anything
does not frighten anything away does not arouse desire

its ardour and coldness
are just and full of dignity

I feel a heavy remorse
When I hold it in my hand
And its noble body
Is permeated by false warmth

---Pebbles cannot be tamed
To the end they will look at us
With a calm and very clear eye



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Kamyk (Pebble)

by Zbigniew Herbert, 1924 Ukraine – 1998 Warsaw

Science & Technology

Pleased to report the Group is 'Zooming onward and upwards'. The lockdown wasn't a problem for the group and its members. Just the opposite as our meetings (Zoom based from early April 2020) are now every two or three weeks instead of monthly and our membership has increased by over 20%. It is further pleasing to note that two of our newer members have already given presentations to the Group.



The range of subjects we cover are quite eclectic, from the erudite through to some bordering upon the bizarre, with the worlds of science and technology giving us enormous scope for learning.

More serious matters have included *Climate*

Change, Gravity, Carbon footprints of food & drink, Growing Green Food in Space, Recycling of Plastics, The World of Insects, plus the lives and achievements of such as Galileo and Thomas Telford. We have also heard about *Percy Shaw & Cats Eyes, Science of Soaps, Showergels & Shampoos, Why are keyboards QWERTY?* even going as far as *Is poo brown no matter what we eat?* Added value of the Zoom sessions, on top of the learning aspects, has been the socialisation, which has been of benefit in particular to those members living alone.

David Tordoff

Breaking the boredom of lockdown.

Recognising that U3A members would need 'mental stimulation' during the lockdown David and Diane Tordoff devised a number of weekly quizzes (twelve in all) which Geoff Williams kindly arranged to be emailed to all members. (*Another one appears below; answers elsewhere...*)

DO YOU KNOW WOLVES AND AREA ?

1. What started as Goldthorn FC ?
2. What does 'lizard' mean in Weston under Lizard ?
3. Where do you see the logo 'Fide et Fortitude' ?
4. From what plant does Bilbrook derive its name ?
5. The initial prosperity of Wolverhampton was based upon what ?
6. Which local village's name means 'royal hill' ?
7. Who was first to go 200mph in a Wolverhampton car ?
8. What wild animal did Sir John Giffard of Chillington shoot ?
9. Where near Wolverhampton was the last stand of the Gunpowder Plotters ?
10. How long is the South Staffs Railway Walk ?
11. In which century was WGS founded ?
12. What nationality of troops were housed at Wrottesley Park in WWII ?

Hopefully they helped in breaking the boredom and some were shared with members families and friends. In fact copies were also sent to the Settle U3A in Yorkshire and the Collingham U3A near Newark for distribution to their membership and we know that copies were even sent onward to Australia, Canada, USA etc. Donations were made by some recipients which have gone to help the valuable work being done at Compton Care.

Social Issues

Through the year, group members suggest relevant topics to consider and discuss, aiming to reach some sort of roughly agreed concord on the topic in question, often with a view to possible actions afterwards, such as further investigation, or writing to MPs and local councillors.

Interesting sessions were held, before the Coronavirus lockdown that disrupted the group between March and June 2020, on topics such as educational policy, especially with respect to early years and primary education; and paying for social care. The latter topic gave rise to the first 'Zoom' based group session over the Internet in July 2020. The Social Issues group prides itself on the interactive nature of their sessions, but tried out a new approach on the topic of 'Should there be a National Care Service?' 15 members attended the session; ground rules were agreed and the process was managed by Neil Moreland, the current convenor of the Group. Consensus was that this worked very well, with good levels of interaction, discussion and contributions by members..As always, some preparatory reading of 'stimulus materials' was required, which included a list of problems with social care as it currently stands, such as:

- Inadequate overall funding;
- Differing sources of funding;
- Unfairness in individual requirements to pay for care;
- The privatisation of care from Local Authorities to market providers;
- Health Care is free at point of use but Social Care is means and needs tested
- Lack of staff in social care and the related lack of qualifications and status; and the thorny issue of care homes versus home care, and the differential treatment involved.



Underlying such direct surface issues lay important philosophical and ideological debates and positions. All members in attendance were encouraged to contribute and make whatever points they

wanted to make. Some consensus was reached, in some cases confirmed by a show of hands. The outcomes of the meeting were that:

- There should be a National Care Service; though the discussion on the nature of the relationship with the NHS (integration and/or coordination at national, regional and local levels) was inconclusive;
- That the service should not discriminate between social care provided in care homes and that provided within people's homes;
- That social care should be free at the point of delivery; and be based upon need, not the ability to pay;
- Clear staffing levels and related levels of qualification should be defined and utilised to create career structures in Care to match those in the NHS;
- The preference was for a 'Big Bang' approach, though members were aware that this might require a change in government to achieve such an approach;
- The brief discussion on how the country might pay for A National Care Service was underdeveloped, though there were points made in favour of a wealth tax and/or reducing the influence of tax havens; and
- There was no overall consensus about what members might do to bring about such changes, but a first step might be communicating with local MPs about such matters.

The meeting agreed, too, that with no clear mandate for the resumption of face to face meetings, that Zoom based meetings be agreed for the rest of 2020, and reviewed thereafter. The topics for these future meetings are all provided on the Social Issues web page. Please contact me if you would like to take part in those meetings.

Neil Moreland

Spanish Improvers



Until March of this year, the Spanish Improvers group had been making steady progress in its learning of the language, with a mix of activities including conversation,

reading, translation, games and 'noticias' (news). The group paused its meetings in mid-March and, until recently, has only had informal contact via 'WhatsApp' messages. We had our first 'Zoom' meeting in mid-August and are trialling this as an alternative means of learning. Some of our members have kept up their learning during the weeks when we've not been meeting. Here are two examples:

Wendy says "During lockdown I particularly missed the camaraderie of our Spanish group and have tried to keep my brain ticking over by reading a couple of short books in Spanish and using the internet to revise verbs! I also kept a diary, written in Spanish, of the things I had done for the first few weeks of lockdown listing the jobs completed around the house and the daily walks. It was wonderful meeting the Group again recently in West Park, (socially distanced of course), and we are looking forward to resuming our regular Spanish lessons on Zoom. A test run went well and we are optimistic we will soon pick up where we left off, hoping that we haven't forgotten too much in this long break during these strange times."

and *this from Bob*: "I have really missed our weekly classes during lockdown. However, I have tried to maintain our standards by mainly reading aloud at every opportunity, whether that be for 10 minutes or 2 hours, and believe that 'speaking and hearing' the words has helped, particularly in regard to speed and pronunciation. Also, as I have only supermarket shopped once a week (and my memory being not as sharp as it was), I have found it necessary to compile a list, so I thought... why not in Spanish?! Needless to say, I have on occasion found myself standing in the aisle in Sainsbury's, staring at my list, scratching my head and trying to figure out what the dickens it was I was intending to purchase?"

Tim Jevons

Ukulele

Well after so many weeks with only Zoom meetings, which in the absence of anything else, has given us the chance to 'meet' although it has its limitations, we thoroughly appreciated the chance to meet as a group, albeit an outdoor socially distanced meet. Nearly 20 of the group met on that occasion and had 2 hours playing and enjoying each other's company.



Everyone really enjoyed it so much that we have decided to make it a weekly event. Hoping for good weather!! We must take this opportunity to thank The Kingswood Trust for allowing us to use an area with a sideless marquee; however we didn't need it this morning!! Hopefully the volunteers working at the Trust that day enjoyed the entertainment. 🎸🎵

Gill and Roy Stevens

Brush up your Shakespeare



This group hasn't been meeting during the pandemic but we have had the opportunity to enjoy several plays on TV from the RSC or National Theatre Live and on BBC4, Sky Arts and Netflix. There's still plenty of Shakespeare out there if you look for it or why not try an online course? There are loads of free courses available - check out the 'Self Study' page on the U3A website for more details

I'm going to wait and see what people want to do in future but don't currently plan to meet again this calendar year. Please let me know via the Shakespeare website page if there is still demand for this group after that. I'm wondering about looking at the sonnets for a while rather than another play but always open to suggestions.

Ben Whitney

Walking Group

Twelve months ago some members of the walking group were walking around Bridgnorth on our annual Treasure Hunt in the pouring rain. Little did we know this was going to be a feature of many of our walks for the next six months.

September began with a walk in Sedgley, followed by walks from Trysull and a little further away in Newport Shropshire.



In October we were travelling further afield to the delightful village of Clapham, North Yorkshire for our annual walking holiday. We took over the New Inn in the village. Over 30 of us stayed for three nights and were well catered for. We are fortunate that members of the walking group are willing to organise these holidays and others were willing to visit the area to look for suitable walks to offer on the holiday. The holiday always starts with a walk

on the first day so everyone can stretch their legs after their journey and see the local area. A choice of walks were available for the next two days and for some there was a bus trip to Settle for a river walk and some retail therapy.

November began with a delightful walk in Alvechurch, Worcs, but it followed days of torrential rain. We walked through lots of mud and flooded fields - but spirits weren't dampened, especially as at the end of the walk we sat in a pub enjoying a hot lunch.

Many attempts were required to provide a suitable ramble near Brewood for the Christmas walk. Fields and paths were flooded and footpath access blocked by locked gates. A walk was found, although with lots of mud, but there was beautiful sunshine which added to our enjoyment. It was followed by our annual Christmas lunch at the Oakley Arms - a lovely way to end the walks of 2019. We accomplished six walks in 2020 before lockdown: a short one around Turl's Hill and the Sedgley Beacon with historical references. Other well attended walks took us to Wombourne, Aldersley & Pendeford, Cressage, Shifnal and Wordsley.



Then lockdown stopped all our planned walks to August. I know many group members took advantage of the beautiful weather at the beginning of lockdown maintaining

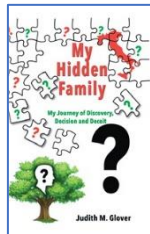
their fitness and mental health by going on their own walks. Some have also indicated they have been on walks which may be suitable for the group.

Many have missed the companionship of the walking group, and as soon as we are given the go ahead a programme of walks will be offered again - we hope to see you there.

If you are interested in joining us keep an eye on the website for news of the walking programme and contact me on 01902 339894.

Linda Moreland

Did you know that Wolverhampton U3A has an Author in its midst?



Judith Glover has recently published her book "My Hidden Family". She writes:- *This is the biography of a Long Lost Family to explain a lifetime's work to discover who I was and where I came from. The discoveries were only completely made when at the age of 68 I found documentation to confirm I exist. It was a childhood dominated with secrecy*

and deception, but I was rewarded with an amazing outcome when eventually my birth roots and identity unfolded."

If you would like to obtain a copy or find out more, Judith will be pleased to hear from you on 01902 926878. or email judith171.snowy@gmail.com

1. Wolverhampton Wanderers
2. Leper (known as lazards)
3. On Banks's Brewery products
4. Watercress
5. Woollen trade
6. Kinver (from Chenevare)
7. Sir Henry Seagrave (in a Sunbeam)
8. A panther (escaped from Chillington Castle)
9. Holbeche House (near Himley)
10. Five & a half miles
11. Sixteenth (1512)
12. The Royal Dutch troops (in WWII)

Answers to quiz

There are some projects you may wish to get involved with to relieve 'lockdown isolation'

***Project Molineux** A project to get our views on the Doctor/Patient/New Cross Hospital/medical services links. For details Phone committee member Carole Johnstone 07808041555

***Project Mental Health support.** All support material that is available, from Neil Moreland 01902339894

***Project Wolverhampton as a learning Global City.** An interesting University based Global Link Project to show how we and others get our learning and to perhaps contribute to the project with short articles/videos/audio recordings to link our City with this Global Project. Have a go! more details from Chris Collins 01920420695

And finally.....

MATT



'It's the new tracing app. It tells me if I'm near anyone who understands the latest rules'