

u3a

Wolverhampton

learn,
laugh,
live

u3a

Newsletter No. 54 – Autumn 2021

Hello to all our u3a membership. I hope that in this ever changing world you are all keeping safe and enjoying some of the freedoms allowed by the current rules relating to Covid 19.

An update for you on how your committee is managing a gentle return to the so-called ‘new normal’ is as follows. We have been meeting on zoom until last week and have now met ‘face to face’ as have the group coordinators at a meeting at our new venue held on October 14th.

**Springdale Methodist Church Hall
Warstones Rd
Wolverhampton
WV4 4LF**

The outcome of these meetings is **that we will have a General Meeting** for all on **October 26th** at the new venue from 2pm till 4pm. You are all welcome to attend. A £2 fee will still be payable on entry along with an attendance check as numbers are limited to 50 (Covid rules) and a membership check.

There will be an entertainer and Covid rules will be followed. Tea and biscuits will be available at the end of the meeting as usual. The large spacious hall will be well ventilated and masks need to be worn until you sit down. You then have a choice to continue wearing or not. Hand sanitiser will be available along with wipes in the toilet areas.

Note that the whole procedure will also be on Zoom for those of you who are unable or are unsure Covid-wise to attend. Details of ‘log in’ to come.

The November meeting will be on 23rd at 2pm and will follow a similar pattern.

The Christmas party meeting will be on Friday December 17th and will also follow our traditional get together.

From January 2022 Springdale has agreed for us to hold a regular general meeting on the **4th Tuesday of the month**. I hope we can see the end of this really difficult time by seeing and meeting each other as before.

Chris Collins (Chair)



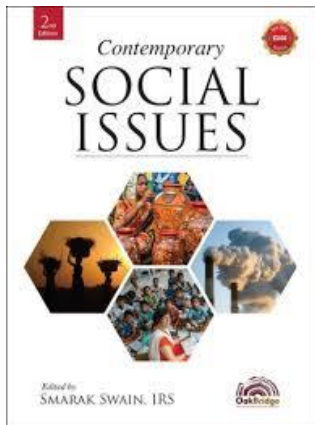
Answers to Covid Quiz
1. A disease.
2. 82.4
3. False (if it has 60% plus alcohol content)
4. Thursday 8 pm.
5. December 2019.
6. 2.5 others
7. Reproduction.
8. Wuhan City.
9. 353341
10. Asymptomatic

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

Social Issues

Before I present an account of the highlights of the last year for the Social Issues Interest Group, it is worth first of all reminding ourselves what we mean by the term Social Issues. **A social issue is an issue that relates to perceptions of what is influential or interesting in or to the personal lives of group members.** Different group members, because of their personal histories and experiences tend to have, to varying degrees, different perceptions both of what is 'normal' or 'abnormal/contentious' behaviour and/or views compared to other societies or social groups, and wish to discuss and examine such behaviours and views. The definition of Social Issues thus relates directly to the concerns of such members, which means that those members have a responsibility to define the issues, over time that they wish to consider and discuss, usually under a session leader who provides any stimulus materials as well as some overall organisation of the thrust of the discussion. My job as Coordinator of the Social Issues Group thus is to help elicit those issues, order them into a programme, and assist the leader of each session in whatever way necessary in order for each session to achieve an open and fruitful conclusion.



Initially, when the Pandemic first got under way (March 2020), the Social Issues group decided not to meet face to face, and indeed has maintained that position to date, though discussions are ongoing on whether or not we will meet face-to-face from September 2021. We began to use Zoom to meet online from autumn 2020 onwards, and have had some interesting sessions on a variety of topics, including:

- The aftermath of Brexit;
- The state of the Constitutional Settlement;
- Antisemitism Today;
- Paying for Social Care;
- Surveillance and Big Tech, and
- The recent Government sponsored Race and Ethnic Disparities Report.

In all cases, the live Zoom sessions tried to consider a range of points of view (i. e. It is not all a left or right wing conspiracy!) Though the advent of driver shortages leading to disruptions to supermarket, industry and public transport had not made itself clear at the time of the group discussions, group members were still concerned with the failure of the Government in the aftermath of Brexit to reach out to Remainers to any extent, and that this is likely to lead to problems in the future. Indeed, one of the problems that Brexit has raised is the status of the current constitutional settlement, which the Scottish Devolved Government would like to revisit as the Scottish people overall voted to remain in the EU as did Wales and Northern Ireland.

In another session, the Zoom Group considered the issue of Antisemitism, and remained concerned at the recent rise in prejudice and discriminatory behaviours experienced by Jewish people in the UK. Vigilance and continuing education is required to combat such discrimination, and indeed all discrimination on the basis of colour, ethnicity or religion.

Paying for Social Care has been a topic for several years now, so it was not surprising that the discussions meandered a little, though stout efforts by the session leader ensured that we considered each proposal on merit, though we all still await the Government decision on the issue, which focuses upon how much an individual – or their family – have to pay to get good, decent care for vulnerable people.

The session on surveillance was both factually rewarding, and problematic. It is a bit of a stretch from realising that every time we switch on our mobile phones organisations such as the police have the capacity to know our whereabouts fairly precisely (which opens up images of Orwell's Big Brother state), to knowing that many Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems now have the capacity to remotely read emails, and switch on microphones and cameras to enable snooping, which in posh terms is surveillance. J. S. Mill was relevant here with his concepts of positive and negative liberty!

Our latest session was a consideration of the Government sponsored Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities 2021, which was Chaired by Tony Sewell. **(For the report see: [Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)** The Commission comprised 12 members, of which 11 were from ethnic minorities, all of whom were high achievers in their fields and thus less likely to have experienced or recognised significant racism. The Commission Report was criticised by members for cherry picking data and findings from other studies, taking the findings of such studies out of context, and consequently misrepresenting the lived realities of many ethnic minorities, whose experiences suggest that racism is still endemic in British Society. It was suggested that the report was emblematic of the ongoing 'cultural wars' in society that spreads over to many aspects of society. At the same time, the group recognised that white working class underachievement remains an issue, and needs to be addressed.

Finally, the programme for the rest of 2021 has been agreed, and involves, amongst other things, a consideration of current crisis issues such as adaptation to climate change. If you like a lively but respectful atmosphere, an opportunity to contribute to topics as well as help decide them, then Social issues might be the Interest Group for you! Try us out! Contact details are below:

Neil Moreland

n.moreland@blueyonder.co.uk Tel 01902-339894

Ukulele

Despite lockdown we have had a very interesting and fun last 18 months. A fair sized group of us, around 25, have zoomed twice a week throughout and hopefully people have enjoyed themselves checking in



each Monday and Friday, or at least they said they did!!
 Eventually as the restrictions lifted for outdoors and the weather behaved for Britain, I approached The Kingswood Trust, Rachel Wells in particular, to see if we could get together and play outdoors, Rachel very kindly allowed us to do this for several weeks whilst she had fewer bookings, and provided us with a marquee roof to play under. The group donated a small amount each week to Rachel towards the Trust, which was well received. To get together was much appreciated by all the group and preferable to sitting alone in your lounge/ bedroom singing and playing the ukulele!

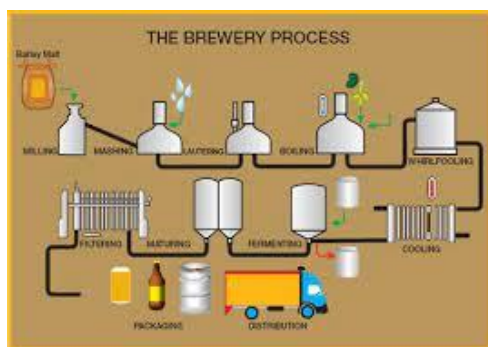


(Painted by Jane Price, a talented artist and u3a member)

The same brave few are meeting again and a small group played a gig on Saturday 6th August actually at Kingswood Trust for their camping weekend, and we have just been approached by the committee of the Codsall Christmas Fair to play for them there in December NEARLY BACK TO NORMAL !!!,
Gill and Roy Stevens

Science and Technology

It continues to amaze me how eclectic is the range of subjects the Science and Technology Group had for our sessions this year - The Science of Brewing;



Animal Pupils;
 Genetically Modified Crops and Favourite Inventions to name but a few.

We are continuing to include external presentations in our new programme by experts from other u3as, broadening the range of our learning. Zoom continues to be our mainstay although we are looking toward "face to face" sessions w.e.f. Autumn.

Our attendance numbers continue to be healthy but we will still welcome any new members to join us. We recommend you look at accessing the u3a Communities web site which provides free, easy to join, excellent presentations via Zoom. Some of our group members have joined those around Science and Technology and other interest areas include - Climate Crisis; History; Philosophy and Books.

David Tordoff

Walking

The walking group restarted on the 1st July 2021 with a two month programme of walks after all activities had been suspended due to the pandemic. Our last walk had been on 11th March 2020.

After the long interruption short walk dates were included to encourage walkers who have not been able to do much walking during the pandemic and due to COVID-19 a booking system for walks was implemented and a limit of 18 walkers per walk. This will be reassessed at the end of the current walking programme in light of changing government advice.

Our first walk, and longest so far, was eight miles, around Lyth Hill, Shrewsbury. The walk leader called the five walkers on the walk as 'pioneers of u3a Walking group, 2021 season' and enjoyed a varied and beautiful walk in lovely sunny weather.

The first short walk of three miles was in Wombourne and went along the old railway track and a lane connecting with the Staffs and Worcs canal to the Bratch Locks and



back to the Railway Cafe for lunch. A good turnout of walkers who not only enjoyed a walk but also the rekindling

of friendships with lots of chat over lunch.

Compton canal and the railway track have always been a popular starting place for walks as it is flat walking on good footpaths. Two of our other walks began in Compton. One headed out along the canal to Mopps Farm and then crossed a couple of fields to Langley Road to take the railway track back to Compton and lunch at the pub. We reached the maximum of 18 participants on our walk going out the other way from Compton. This walk took us along the railway track towards Aldersley stadium and the junction of canals. From here we walked back to Compton alongside the canal either to return home or partake in lunch at the pub.

Another popular starting place for walks is Trysull. A short walk here of 4 miles was attended by 17 walkers. This walk took place just after the hot spell of weather and the weather forecast was for rain which was much anticipated to help bring down the temperature. However, the rain didn't materialise and it was a lovely summer's day walking through fields of growing crops. It was warm enough to have an ice cream in Seisdon, if you wanted one!

A longer walk that took place was a six mile circular walk through the countryside around Claverley. It was a gentle, fairly level walk through open countryside giving views of South Shropshire.

Our final walk of the season was from Lower Penn going through Dimmingsdale and Orton. This four and a half mile walk was not as flat as the previous walks with a short rise and steps.

Planning is taking place at the moment for the September to December walks and more volunteers are always needed to make the programme complete. If you are able to offer a walk, long or short, please consider doing so as our pool of walk leaders are diminishing and some walk

dates may have to be abandoned. The finalised walking programme will be on the Wolverhampton u3a Walking Group web pages soon.

If you are interested in joining the walking group please get in touch with me at walkinglinda2017@gmail.com or call or text me on 07763051929.

Linda Moreland

Country Dancing



The good news is that Country Dancing has started up again at Bradmore Community Centre from mid September. All existing members are invited back and a warm welcome to any new members who may wish to give it a try. Please note that there are NO current kitchen facilities so bring your own refreshments.

Faith Russell faith.russell1@hotmail.com

Understanding Opera

Sadly this group is facing two crises which could be terminal. The first is, of course, Covid. Our 'raison d'être' has been to study operas which are being performed locally in either the theatre or in cinemas. Although these are now gradually returning the second crisis is more serious.

We depend on members volunteering to present programmes and there are now only a few members who are willing to do this. Several of our stalwarts have either left the area altogether or have health or family problems and so are unable to offer presentations. This leaves just a few people willing or able to present programmes and this is, regrettably not sustainable.

Andrew Milligan

Computer Group


The Group itself has not been meeting recently, but it doesn't seem five minutes since we were discussing and advising about the pros and cons of installing Windows 10. Members asked: "Why should I bother? How is it better than Windows 7? Does my current machine match the minimum system requirements? Shall I be able to carry on using all my programs? Is it easy to install? How long will Windows 7 be supported? etc. etc." Now it's all starting again. Windows 11 is coming our way, probably this autumn, so it will be decision time again. As with the introduction of Windows 10, there's no immediate rush. Windows 10 will be supported until 2025 but, as has been found by some people who have stuck to Windows 7, third party developers won't necessarily support their own software till that date.

Microsoft's blurb claims:

Windows 11 provides a calm and creative space where you can pursue your passions through a fresh experience. From a rejuvenated Start menu to new ways to connect to your favourite people, news, games and content, Windows 11 is the place to think, express and create in a natural way".

What that means in practice, I've no idea. One thing we'll notice immediately is a new user interface, i.e. nothing on your desktop is where it used to be. They also promise

loads more widgets. One good thing I've noticed though is that when the inevitable updates come along they will tell us how long they will take to install.

If you want to know more there's a good summary on Wikipedia and a more complex evaluation on Tech Radar, and if you feel really bold you can  **Windows 11** download a beta version now.

As if that's not enough, users of iPhones and iPads can now enjoy coping with iOS 15 as well.

Geoff Williams

Brush Up Your Shakespeare

We restarted on September 7th, 10.15 - 12.00 at the Tettenhall Institute. We're returning to 'Measure for Measure' for a few sessions and will then move on to a new play before Christmas. Details are on our page on the website. New members always welcome.

Ben Whitney

French

After a long summer break the group is starting to get back together again. We used to meet regularly every week. During lock down we corresponded with one another on various topics via email. There were some really interesting, creative contributions. Many of us found composing these emails improved our French considerably. This is why we now plan to meet face to face every second Tuesday afternoon and circulate emails during the intervening weeks. The Group continues to use a bi-monthly magazine, Bien-dire Initial, to stimulate conversation and topics for our email correspondence. The edition we are currently reading includes topics such as: Amiens the capital of Picardy, the Bay of the Somme and its bird population, holiday time in France - where to stay plus much more.

Judith Rose

Covid Quiz

1. Is Covid-19 a virus, a syndrome or a disease ?
2. What is the average age of Covid-19 labelled deaths in UK 62, 72 or 82 ?
3. Hand sanitiser does not kill coronavirus because it is antibacterial not antiviral . True or False ?
4. On what day and time did we clap for NHS carers ?
5. The earliest Covid-19 fatality in UK was an 84yo from Kent. When did he contract it Feb 2020, Jan 2020 or Dec 2019 ?
6. One infected person infects about how many others ?
7. In the R Number what does R stand for ?
8. What city had a wet market identified as a possible origin for Covid-19 ?
9. A study June 2020 showed how many mutations of SARS Covid 2 had been detected , was it 6, 178, 12119 or 353341 ?
10. People who show no signs of a given disease are unsympathetic, asymptomatic or unsymptomatic ?

Ride an Electric Bike for Pleasure and Fitness!

I have had an Electric Bike (Ebike) since 2017, long before they became hugely popular, and have found using it a boon. This is not because I am an extreme cycling enthusiast, or wish to do excessive things like triathlons! I did have a non-power assist bike before then, which I bought when I retired to keep fit and active. The initial purchase post-retirement was to gain and retain some level of fitness and reasonable body shape, but before long I became involved with a friend in planning and undertaking long multi-day cycling trips such as Land's End to John O'Groats (LEJOG).

Though I have had periods of not using my bike or Ebike due to health issues, I have always been fully supported by the doctors, nurses and physiotherapists encouraging me to use cycling to keep active since my cardiac arrest in 2012 and subsequent additional physical health problems. When I am given the go-ahead, I try to go out for rides in the countryside surrounding Wolverhampton 2-3 times a week. Rides do not have to be long, though my shortest favoured route is 12 miles, and longer ones average 20-25 miles once I have built up my stamina again, usually following yet another medical procedure. Ebikes, because of the engine and battery, generally are heavier than ordinary bikes, but Ebikes are getting lighter in weight too, and most new Ebikes now have a facility called Walk Assist, which does what it says on the tin – you are able to use the engine to help you push the bike whenever you have to (though not when the battery has run out!)

Though you can ride an Ebike without the engine on, most ebikes have 2+ levels of assist. Engines on Ebikes only operate when you peddle, and cease working by law when you stop peddling or free wheel, or go above 16 mph. These aspects stop Ebikes becoming mopeds! The benefits of having engine assistance are threefold: they make cycling easier, especially up hills or inclines, they allow you to go further if you wish, (though this is affected by how far your ebike battery allows you to ride at each level of assist) and they put the pleasure back into riding bikes! My current Ebike has 4 levels of assist, though to give myself some exercise I usually stay at the lower two levels, which generally caters for the hills hereabouts!

There are folding Ebikes too, which are useful for around town work, especially if you have pannier bags to put your shopping in! Such activities benefit the environment as well as yourselves!

I end with an offer: If there is any Wolverhampton u3a member who is thinking of buying an Ebike, but are worried about the pros and cons of Ebikes, or what Ebike to buy, or the cost of them, then I am willing to meet and talk with you to identify, clarify and fulfil your cycling needs.

Neil Moreland (n.moreland@blueyonder.co.uk)