

WOODSIDE U3A NEWSLETTER FOR APRIL 2021
MEETING ONLINE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

<https://u3asites.org.uk/woodside>

Charity Reg.: 1182140



Hi Everyone

Welcome to the April newsletter for Woodside u3a.

I hope you are doing well and enjoying the Spring weather. We're still in lockdown but I'm feeling optimistic that we're coming through the pandemic. All being well (politics aside) we will be offered our second vaccination in the next few weeks. It may be that we won't be allowed to go abroad this summer but perhaps we should explore our wonderful British countryside, history and traditions. I'm planning to visit Warwickshire, Suffolk, Oxfordshire and Sussex. Short breaks it's true, but a whole lot more interesting than the supermarket and my local park.

Our March General Meeting via Zoom was a fascinating talk by Dr Sue Stuart-Smith presenting her book, *The Well Gardened Mind*. This combines horticultural therapy with gardening and the appreciation of gardens. Certainly a beautiful garden is a pleasure to see and great satisfaction for the gardener to see the results of all their efforts.

Also this month your committee have been logging in to u3a meetings on your behalf. The local cluster group (groups in the Watford area) and an East of England zoom meeting attended by over 130 people to discuss the u3a Open Day plans for Wednesday 2nd June. We'll keep you posted on our plans.

This month, our group project is on Iceland (not the supermarket). Next month takes us to France. Please send your contributions to Val May who is co-ordinating this fun project.

Be well and stay safe

Barbara Elman
Chair

General meeting on 20 April

Our General meeting will be on zoom on Tuesday 20 April at 10.00am. You will be able to access the meeting by clicking on the link in my email sent on 16 April. Our speaker will be Paul Robbins who will be giving a light hearted presentation on 'Great British Eccentrics', just what we need after the doom and gloom of the last few months. Any difficulties joining the meeting through the link then just go to zoom and enter the information: Meeting ID: 920 2952 6216 Passcode: 370558

Lesley

Seed exchange idea from Laila

The seed exchange is a simple idea whereby spare seeds are titled then placed in small packets to be placed on the Seed board. The board is placed outside my house for the public to take and if possible leave more seeds to replace those they have chosen.

Please text me for address details if you would like to check out what is freely available. Hope to keep the board going throughout April.

Laila N

My mobile is 07500008851



U3a Open day

We will be taking part in the u3a open day on 2 June. All are welcome to join us - members and interest group leaders.

We'll meet outside Henderson Hub in Abbots Langley at 11am and by the Garston Bus Garage at 2.30pm. It should be good weather in June, so come and join the Committee in raising awareness of our Woodside u3a group. Remember to wear blue and yellow - the u3a colours and you can bring blue and yellow balloons to hold if you wish. We want to raise awareness and hope to get some new members.

Walkin' back to Happiness

Last week six members of the U3A met in the village of Studham to do a recce for an official future U3A walk when hopefully, we are allowed to have bigger groups. Studham is a hidden away village South East of Whipsnade which offers beech woodlands called Mason's Plantation, and large open fields. The plan was to enjoy the countryside as well as spotting some wild life when our path took us around part of the perimeter of the Zoo.



The day started quite chilly and overcast but was no deterrent after weeks of adhering to Covid Lockdown conditions. This outing brought back memories to me, of the weeks of pent up excitement and anticipation as a child when the annual Summer school trip finally came around..... There were no picnics or pub lunches this time but the Bell and the Red Lion look likely contenders for our custom in the future.

Terrain was dry and easy to walk with not many uphill paths. Stiles were few and far between. The six mile ish

route took us across open fields, and then by a golf course where lots of excited golfers were enjoying their game whilst waving us through safely on our route. As we passed the Wildlife Park, we spotted deer, camels and what I thought was a group of large rabbits hopping around. I have already booked my Specsavers appointment when Ruth kindly pointed out these animals were in fact Wallabies! We meandered on, checking and rechecking our maps and eventually made full circle back to our start point. It felt good to reconnect in real life and enjoy open air conversation with friends again.

Mary

Message from Lesley Eldridge

Hi, I am a U3A Woodside member and my friend runs a carers group in Abbots Langley. She is looking for somebody to help and wondered if any members might be interested. This is what she sent to me.

'ABBOTS LANGLEY CARERS NETWORK

Abbots Langley Carers Network are currently looking for someone who would like to undertake some very simple bookkeeping for no more than an hour a month, as due to other commitments our present Treasurer will have to leave us.

Most of this could be done from home, although if anyone is interested in visiting our monthly Coffee Mornings when we are able to resume things, they would be very welcome.

Please message jan.sands@virginmedia.com if you are interested.'

Lesley Eldridge

*Adiós España y gracias por un viaje glorioso por tu país.
Halló samferðamenn og velkomnir til Íslands.*

Well after a successful journey through the wonderful sights, tastes and smells of sunny Spain here we are at the arrivals lounge in Reykjavik. I'm looking forward to seeing what experiences this leg of our journey brings - thank you everyone for your fantastic contributions.

So let's grab our bags off that luggage rail, get ourselves through customs and be on our way - have a great time xxx Val

Iceland is known as one of the youngest landmasses on the planet and was one of the last places on earth to be settled by humans. Over 1,100 years ago Vikings from Norway discovered Iceland by accident.

Barbara - Chair

A famous Icelander

Leif Ericson was born in Iceland in 970 A.D. His father, a Norseman known as Eric the Red, was an explorer who having been found guilty of manslaughter was exiled from Norway. Eric spent some time in Iceland before he returned to the sea. This time travelling west where he discovered Green Land. He established the first permanent settlement there in 986 A.D.

Leif meanwhile was raised by an Icelandic family where he was very well educated. He spoke several languages and was taught various trades and weaponry.

Leif later joined his father and together they explored Denmark and other northern islands.



Leif returned to Iceland where he established a settlement. He also spent time in Norway where he was highly considered. It was there that he was baptised as a Christian and he took Christianity with him to Iceland and Greenland. Once again setting sail he happened upon North America. Leif is reputed to be the first European to ever set foot there 500 years before Christopher Columbus did. There is an impressive statue of Lief Ericson in Oslo, Norway.

Jan Roberts - History group

Quiz - How much do you know about Iceland - from Sue at the Quiz Group
Answers at the end of the Virtual Tour.

1. What is the capital city of Iceland? A) Akureyri B) Reykjavik C) Vik D) Kopovogur
2. What language is mostly spoken in Iceland? A) French B) English C) Icelandic D) Spanish
3. Which one of the following is the main tourist attraction in Iceland? A) Northern Lights B) Rock Pool C) Pool Resort D) Blue Lagoon
4. What is Iceland's major export? A) Machinery B) Fish C) Auto parts D) Beverages
5. Iceland has never won the Eurovision Song Contest since they first entered in 1986. True or False?
6. What is the name of Iceland's main currency? A) Icy Dollars B) American Dollars C) Icelandic Krona D) Euro
7. On 17th June 1944, Iceland proclaimed its independence and finally broke away from which country? A) Sweden B) Norway C) Denmark D) Finland
8. Blaa Lonid is a popular tourist attraction on the Reykjanes Peninsula. What would you expect to do there?
9. What is the name of the airport for Reykjavik?
10. Many Icelandic place names end in "foss". What natural feature would you expect to find in these places? A) A Thermal Spring B) A Volcano C) A Waterfall D) A Glacier
11. What continent is Iceland located in?
12. The native puffin is a familiar sight around Iceland - where would you most likely see one in the centre of Reykjavik? A) In the park B) On the menu C) On a plinth in the main square (a statue) D) In the Zoo

13 . Iceland has about 18 "active" volcanoes since the land was settled in 871AD approx. True or False ?

14. What does the Icelandic word "lopapeysa" mean in English ? A) Icelandic lamb soup B) Icelandic painting tradition C) Icelandic wool sweater D) The National Day of Iceland ?

15. Glaciers cover around how many percent of Iceland ?

A) 15 % B) 20% C) 11% D) 8%

Hope you did well Sue x

The Flora of Iceland



Arriving in Iceland you might think you have landed on another planet seeing the lava landscape surrounding the international airport and wonder how anything, let alone people, can survive on this rock in the middle of the Atlantic.

There are not many trees in Iceland but including fungi and Lichen there are between 5,000-6,000 known plant species fighting for survival in this challenging environment. The few trees are generally very small. In recent years considerable efforts have been made to re-cultivate woodlands. Over 85 foreign species have introduced including Sitka Spruce, Black Cotton Wood and Lodgepole Pine. Common native plants include Downy Birch, Roman and Tea-leafed Willow.



The Mountain Avens is the National flower of Iceland. It is a beautiful white artic-alpine flowering plant that flourishes in every region of Iceland. Artic Thyme with its pretty purple flowers can be found across the island thriving on the sandy, gravelly soil. The most controversial plant is the Lupine introduced to Iceland in 1945 to tackle topsoil erosion but it has spread all over the country and poses a threat to a number of indigenous plants including some moss species, although many people love the beautiful colour purple it has added to the countryside. Forget me not is probably the most romantic flower in Iceland.

There are numerous gardens and parks where many flowers and plants are carefully cultivated including plentiful varieties that we would recognise from our own gardens such as peonies, poppies, roses, dianthus and many more.

Val Woodgates - Gardening group



The Land of Fire and Ice

Iceland is famous for being called the Land of Fire and Ice because of its volcanoes and glaciers. It is dotted with natural wonders such as The Blue Lagoon and Dettifoss Waterfall. Iceland is also known for its rich cultural history, Norse mythology, folklore, and having no official family names!

Most Icelanders do not have a family name or surname; they take on their father's name. So if the father is called Jakob, the daughter is given a first name for example Eva and then the father's name with an added -sdottir and is then called Jakobsdottir (Jakob's daughter), so we would call her: Eva Jakobsdottir. For sons they just add -sson: thus they would call Adam, their son, simply: Adam Jakobsson.

Even with fearsome Viking ancestors, it's possible to become a peace-loving nation. Iceland is known for being one of the most peaceful countries in the world. Iceland has no official army or Ministry of Defence and even the police force isn't armed with weapons. The last war that Iceland was officially involved in was the Iraq war of 2003 - where they contributed two Icelandic troops.

Icelanders prefer to deal with conflicts through discussion, peaceful protests and deliberation. If you do manage to anger one however, they may give you an ominous threat for revenge: "Ég mun finna þig í fjöru" or "I'll find you at the beach".

Located in the south-west of Iceland, the name Reykjavík translated means Smoky-bay. It's believed to be the first settlement of anywhere in Iceland and has a reputation for being one of the greenest, cleanest and safest cities in the world.

There is a lack of greenery around Iceland. Contrary to popular belief, trees can grow there - the Vikings just chopped most of them down. Reykjavík has made strong efforts to increase its greenery, despite being one of the cloudiest capital cities with some of the coolest temperatures.



Iceland is famous for being the last Nordic country to stop worshipping Norse gods, and at [Goðafoss](#), the Waterfall of the Gods, you can see the final resting place of Icelandic Viking pagan beliefs. Goðafoss is one of Iceland's most significant historical landmarks and is nothing short of spectacular. Legend has it that chieftain Porgeir threw his statues of the Viking gods into the cascading water to mark the beginning of Christianity in Iceland.

Almost all of what we know about Viking beliefs and Norse mythology comes from Snorri Sturluson's poetry anthology, *The Prose Edda*. Iceland is known for its connections to Viking history, and Snorri's poems are still analyzed by historians and writers today. Without Snorri, we wouldn't know about Loki's drunken tricks or Odin's quest to steal the mead of poets. If those aren't familiar to you, Chris Hemsworth might never have played Thor! There are seven of Snorri's manuscripts remaining intact today. The most complete version is held in the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík.

All Icelanders are well-versed in Snorri's stories - and if you want to be too, read Neil Gaiman's book *Norse Mythology*. Kári Gíslason and Robert Fidler's book *Saga Land* tells the real-life story of one of Snorri's half-Australian descendants who goes on a quest to Iceland. Marie Welsh

Icelandic dance



Mythological creatures in the waters of the Blue Lagoon, a soccer match enacted in dance, the philosophy of open source digital software translated into performance - the Icelandic dance scene embodies energy, innovation and creativity, and the dancers, companies and choreographers have been receiving lavish acclaim on the international stage for many years.

With allusions to the traditional 'vikivaki' dances found as far back as the medieval sagas, dance has been a crucial part of Icelandic society since its earliest times. Classical ballet, though, is a relatively late arrival, pioneered by a group of young women, trained abroad in Europe and the USA. Bernice Caffrey - Eastern Exercise Group

Just a little tale that might amuse!

At the end of November and into December 1959 I was aboard HMS Armada patrolling off the coast of Iceland as part of the Fishery Protection Squadron during the first 'Cod War'. This coincided with my twenty-first birthday. Not exactly the best way to celebrate coming-of-age, the Arctic regions can be a bit unpleasant at that time of year.

Many years later one of my grandchildren asked me where I had spent my twenty-first. "Going round Iceland" I told her

"What....shopping?" she replied
Ian Woolcott

FAMOUS ICELANDERS

Halldór Laxness (1902 - 1998) is Iceland's first and only winner of a Nobel Prize. The Icelandic writer, poet and playwright won the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1955.

Dagur Íslenskrar tungu

The Icelandic language day is celebrated on 16 November, the birthday of 19th-century writer Jónas Hallgrímsson, to symbolise the importance of protecting the Icelandic language.

One of the most famous persons of today is Björk, singer and actress, who also played the leading role in 'Dancers in the Dark'. And then of course, there is Arun Gunnarsson, the captain of the national football team.

The world's first democratically elected female president was an Icelander. Her name is Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. She was president of Iceland from 1980 until 1996.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND MODERN-DAY TRADITIONS

Bóndadagur

The first day of the ancient Norse month of Thorri begins with bóndadagur, or 'husband's day'. On this day, which usually falls in late January, women give gifts to any significant men in their lives, and often feed them traditional food, related to the Thorri festivities.

Thorrablót

Roughly coinciding with mid-January to mid-February in the modern calendar, the ancient month of Thorri is the time for Thorrablót, or Thorri feast. Traditional foods, conserved in the traditional manner, are consumed and most Icelanders attend at least one Thorrablót feast, where there is much merriment and drink. The cuisine is definitely an acquired taste; delicacies include smoked lamb, seared lamb's head, putrefied shark, ram's testicles and flatbread, all washed down with Icelandic spirits.

Konudagur

The month of Thorri comes to an end with 'wife's day', a day to celebrate women. This time men do the treating, buying flowers or other traditional gifts for the significant women in their lives.

Sumardagurinn fyrsti

In First Day of Summer is celebrated in Iceland with a holiday on the third Thursday in April. Traditionally, the weather is anything but summery.

Verslunarmannahelgi

This bank holiday, the first Monday in August, celebrates shopkeepers and other merchants. Numerous outdoor festivals take place around the country, and many people leave the capital area for a weekend at their summerhouses or camping..

Dagur Íslenskrar tungu

The Icelandic language day is celebrated on 16 November, the birthday of 19th-century writer Jónas Hallgrímsson, to symbolise the importance of protecting the Icelandic language.

Marie Walsh

Knitting



Knitting was introduced to Iceland by German or Dutch Merchants in the late 15th- early 16th Centuries . Nearly all Icelandic garments were knitted in the round on 5 needles. Such beautiful designs, I think you'll agree. Apparently the jumper left can be knitted in one day !!!!!

Gloria Barber - Crafters Group

Icelandic Language

Whenever you visit a foreign country it's always good to know a few basic words in the language. Even though we are learning Spanish we have looked at a few Icelandic words which might come in handy on a trip to Iceland:

Hello.....Hallo

Goodbye.....Bless

Yes.....Ja

NoNei

Thank youPakka pér Fyrir

Ok.....Ok

My name isÉg Heiti

I'm from EnglandÉg er frá Englandi

Does anyone here speak English Talar einhver hérna ensku

I don't speak any Icelandic.....Ég tala ekki Íslensku

We hope that one day you might find this useful.

Carol, Penny, Robin, Sue and Tom - Spanish Group 1 .

Icelandic food

Icelandic cuisine has a long history. Important parts are lamb, dairy and fish, the latter due to the fact that Iceland has traditionally been inhabited only near its coastline. The population eat mostly haddock, plaice, halibut, herring and shrimp. Because of the history of settlement in a harsh climate, animal products dominate Icelandic cuisine. Popular taste has been developing, however, to become closer to the European norm. As an example, consumption of vegetables has greatly increased in recent decades while consumption of fish has diminished, yet is still far higher than any other developed country at about quadruple the average.

Cheese was made from goat and sheep milk as well as cow's milk. Skyr a soft yogurt-like cheese eaten with spoons, was originally a tradition brought to Iceland from Norway. The whey left over when making skyr was made to go sour and used for storing meat.

Modern Icelandic bakeries offer a wide variety of breads and pastry. The first professional bakers in Iceland were Danish and this is still reflected in the professional traditions of Icelandic bakers. Long-time local favourites include cinnamon roll, usually topped with a glaze or melted chocolate. One of the Traditional breads, still popular in Iceland is rye bread, this contains a large amount of fibre and a small amount of fat, compared to some breads such as white bread.

Anne Mitchell - Curry Group

Icelandic Rye bread

In a small town in Iceland the proprietor of the geothermal baths has become a national icon for his Icelandic Rye bread. He has prepared loaves for countless visitors including the current president. His bread is made more special by adding more sugar than most have. By adding extra sugar this results in a consistency more like that of cake. Unlike most bread he bakes his underground, buried in a bubbling geothermal pit, for 24 hours.

Penny Emery - Curry Group



Answers to the Icelandic quiz questions

- 1) B - Reykjavik
- 2) C - Icelandic - 97% of people speak this language
- 3) D - Blue Lagoon
- 4) B - Fish
- 5) True - No Eurovision wins so far
- 6) C - Icelandic Krona
- 7) C - Denmark
- 8) You would Bathe - better known as the Blue Lagoon
- 9) Keflavik Airport
- 10) C - A Waterfall
- 11) Europe
- 12) B - on the Menu (sadly)
- 13) True
- 14) C - Iopa means wool , peysa means sweater
- 15) C - 11%

Well what an amazing and fascinating country Iceland has proved to be - never again will I think of it as just white and cold. The landscape is so interesting and it's clear they make good use of their natural resources. However I'm not sure saying I'm off to the beach has the same meaning as it would have done in Spain!!!! I'm off to seek out a few recipes - I hope some of you are inspired to do the same.

So once again my suitcase is packed and my passport is tucked safely in my bag as we head towards our next destination- France. So bon voyage mes amis.

Perhaps a journey through this vast Gaelic country may encourage those of you who have yet to contribute any facts or anecdotes to do so. Photos of holidays passed or places you feel are a must see are also very welcome.

Val x

WANTED: NEWS & PHOTOGRAPHS

suitable for publication please send to The Webmaster, Andrew Cummings at andrew.cummingsu3a@btinternet.com

AND FOR THE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter is available online at <https://u3asites.org.uk/woodside>

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