



September Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Greetings Fellow U3A Members.

It is some time since we were able to meet up on a Thursday morning, though this does not mean that our treasured U3A has been entirely without activity. The Deeside and Wirral U3A Network, of which I am nominally Chair, has continued to meet through Zoom and the committee of our own U3A has recently held a Zoom meeting with another to come before very long. There are some important issues to discuss before our Annual General Meeting in October.

We are legally obliged to hold an AGM this year before memberships are due for renewal in November. You will be notified about this by email in greater detail a little further down the line. Four of our committee are coming to the end of their terms of office and you will appreciate the difficulties with which this presents us at this present time, when it is no longer possible for us all to meet.

Fortunately the committee members now due to retire, have all agreed to stand again but we will need to have enough votes from our membership in order to secure their continued service; as few as thirty-three should do it. In the interest of securing a future for our U3A I am sure you will appreciate the expediency of voting in favour of these present committee members continuing to serve and I now urge you to do so when given the opportunity.

Sandra will be taking care of the technicalities involved in holding a virtual AGM. It is proposed to do this as a Zoom meeting for which we will need a minimum number of members to be present so if you are accustomed to attend such gatherings please

be assured that we would greatly appreciate and indeed, need your presence, as our future as a U3A depends on this. The AGM will be held on 22nd October at 10.30 am. You will receive all necessary documents before then.

Our aim at the moment is to try to maintain our U3A in what might be considered a semi-dormant state until such time as it can be brought back to full, waking consciousness. Some groups continue to meet on line and all have this option, if that is what members and group-leaders wish. The appetite for engaging on-line speakers is lacking at the moment and as there is currently no possibility of renting a space in which to meet we will suggest at the next AGM that we reduce the membership fee to 'maintenance level'.

With a new academic year before us I wish that I was in a position to give you some indication as to how it might unfold. There is a considerable degree of doubt and uncertainty in this area at the moment but I will certainly keep you posted as and when we have any concrete information.

Though there is some degree of relaxation in the way we are now able to circulate, indications are that in some cases the relaxed measures are somewhat premature and of course, when it comes to our own U3A membership, many of us are in the 'highly vulnerable' category and even if we were able to organise some sort of social distancing when we meet this would be at the cost of denying access to members above a certain number.

For now we are giving these matters some serious thought and considering ways of coping in this novel and perplexing situation.

Uncertainty is seldom a welcome guest but we are all having to learn how to live within its aegis. This may well force us into areas of experience and creative adaption that we would never have voluntarily ventured to attempt. I know that some of us have found this process to be surprisingly liberating, to the extent that they would not want to return to the way things used to be.

I am also aware that many have been driven into areas of loss and deprivation that are a severe test of will and integrity. When one's whole way of functioning and ordering one's life seems to be, not only invalid but turned on its head, what is one to do? How does one live a life that seems to have lost its value?

In such a case I find the image and example of water enormously helpful. It is totally passive; has no mind or will of its own and yet, without it, there would be no life on this or any other planet. Tonnes of it can float in the clouds, vast tsunamis can wash away humanity and we can have it entirely at our disposal for washing and drinking.

Water always finds a way, simply by being passive and receptive within the greater ecology.

It may not always be appropriate to open up new channels, to grow extravagant or necessary crops or to create an elaborate water-feature or even to add it to a tot of whisky. Even so, it is amazing what water can achieve by just staying in one place and evaporating.

How might that translate to the human psyche, one might well ask?

Evaporated water sheds most of its impurities and becomes its pure-state. We can sit still and take the time to let go of all fearful, fretful, anxious and unnecessary thoughts and emotions, if only for a few seconds; we might see them as pollutants. Free from these encumbrances we might experience something of the power and integrity of pure water, free as air and weightless, until such time as it is appropriate to come down to earth again.

If you have nothing more important to do, it might be worth giving it a try.

Brian Gill – Chairman

Unfortunately due to the Corona Virus we are unable to hold our fortnightly meetings at our usual venue until further notice and are trying to work out which of our groups might be able to continue in some way during this difficult time. The Committee are also meeting to try to organise our AGM on line.

Members will shortly be sent minutes of the last AGM, Financial Report and the names and roles of Committee members, including the four who are up for re-election who are all willing to remain in place for the moment. These are: Evelyn Felton, Gwyneth Williams, Barbara Lloyd and Eliane Davie who are willing to stay in place until the following AGM which will be due in April 2021. The AGM will take place by Zoom on October 22nd at 10.30am and members will be required to vote on the above prior to the Zoom meeting. Sandra Lakin can arrange the AGM so that up to 100 members can take part but only the Committee may speak. We need a minimum of 33 votes to be quorate.

We propose to lower the membership fee, due in November, to £5 until such time as we can offer normal activity. This will enable the Group to continue to exist until things return to normal. Dues will be payable by cheque to Gwyneth or by electronic transfer to Ken.

It would be helpful if members who have used Zoom before could let the Committee know whether they will attend the AGM, enabling us to provide the essential quorum.

WELL DONE CORINNE!

Congratulations are in order to Corinne Whitham, a talented member of our U3A, whose picture “Art in the Time of Lockdown,” has been accepted by the Victoria Gallery for an online exhibition.

Some of her sketches were featured in our July Newsletter and it was clear that she has been producing a good deal of lovely work during *Isolation*

CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP! (Practising dialogue) July 2019

Summer had arrived and the difference it made was tangible. The shopping precinct had acquired quite a Continental air with tables outside the smallest restaurants full of smiling, chattering customers sporting their brightest summer apparel. Instead of the usual frowns everyone seemed to be relaxed; it was a real 'good to be alive' day! Perhaps it was in part due to the general atmosphere that the unexpected meeting occurred.

She was heading towards me, a broad smile on her face which looked vaguely familiar. "Hi, it's ages since I've seen you! Must have been before Jim went off. We must have a catch up, have you got time for a coffee?" She looked at me expectantly.

I thought rapidly, trying to place her, then it came to me; it was my neighbour from my previous house. We'd moved several years ago and try as I might to remember it, her name still escaped me. As anyone who knows me could tell you, I'm hopeless at remembering names, so I did my usual thing of simply not using one. "Yes, of course," I spoke with more confidence than I actually felt, "Did you say that Jim had *left*? What happened? You always seemed so good together."

"Oh it's a long story – let's find somewhere we can have a coffee and I'll fill you in." And taking my arm she led me towards the nearest cafe where we duly sat at the tables outside. "Coffee, or would you prefer a glass of chilled wine or fruit juice? I'll get them, you save the seats."

"Oh thank you, a glass of chilled fruit juice would be lovely in this heat." I was *almost* sure that her name was Edna but not sure enough to address her as such. She would be about fifty now, I supposed, only a few years older than myself. John and I were newly married when we had moved to the house a few doors away.

She reappeared with the drinks and I thanked her as I accepted the proffered glass. Edna, (had I got that right?) was talking to me. "Do you remember when you were dancing with Ted and I got insanely jealous and we had a blazing row? I was sure you were having an affair but apparently you were actually cousins." Her words took me completely by surprise.

My head started to spin; I scrambled wildly for answers, all the time nodding sagely as though I knew what she was talking about but in reality I was completely at sea. I tried again, "You were going to tell me about Jim leaving you – you must have been devastated."

She was looking at me very strangely, "Well not really, he was eighteen and going to university; it was expected. He came home in the holidays."

Panic was setting in, "I'm sorry, I must be getting the names mixed up, I thought you were talking about your husband.....I seemed to remember that he played a mean game of golf – at least that's what John said. I haven't got a cousin called Ted."

This wasn't working out well, she was looking quite cross! "Who's John? So Ted *wasn't* your cousin, I was right! You *were* after him *and* you had *another* bloke on

the go. My husband went off with another tart when Jim was only a baby and good riddance. That was well before I met you. Well they say leopards don't change their spots! And there was I thinking that I had misjudged you Daphne.”

My head shot up – oh lord this was all wrong, “I'm Gina not Daphne, my husband is John, I don't know a Ted and you can't be Edna who lived in Sycamore Drive at number 8 – so where *do* I know you from?”

Her face was a picture as realisation came, “I'm Jean, nee Thomas, and my ex was Bryan. Goodness what have I been saying! We'd better start again. Shall we have another drink?”

It suddenly came to me; Jean had taught me Spanish in the Fifth Form at school. “You were my Spanish teacher at St. Andrew's School; I'm Gina Barlow (now Slade). *That's* where I remember you from – you must have been newly qualified then.” I burst out laughing, “In answer to your question, yes, I would like another drink but make it a wine this time and *I'll* pay.”

Jean stared at me wide eyed and reddened, “And I've practically told you my life story; how embarrassing is that. You won't tell anyone else will you? *Please.*”

I laughed again, this time in sympathy, “Of course not it was light years ago. I mistook you for a neighbour I hadn't seen for several years and was so busy trying to recall her name that it took ages before the penny dropped. Let's have that drink anyway; it will be good to chat about old times. I'd love to hear how your son is getting on at Uni. Where are you living now? Did you ever marry again?”

I never did discover who Daphne was but it was the start of a very rewarding friendship and we laugh about that day a lot.

The above is complete fiction of course but I remember many years ago when playing juvenile leads in Repertory, that although I could remember reams of lines, names escaped me – a problem in plays when the play rehearsed in the morning was different to the one we performed in the evening and the romantic lead characters changed, as did their names!

Eliane Davie

BRIDGE GROUPS

Tony Swarbrick would like anyone interested in joining on-line Zoom groups for Bridge during this time to e-mail him at: groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk this works quite well and started up during lockdown; Tony will explain and advise on how to go about it.

ART APPRECIATION GROUP

Bernadette has recommended checking out the National Gallery on line: nationalgallery.org.uk where there is a choice of virtual programmes and some interesting talks about a selection of paintings and painters to be found.



Speaking to her yesterday about how we might continue to visit some galleries, Bernadette said that she is willing to lead two or three separate groups of six, (maximum allowed under Covid rules) to visit some exhibitions in Liverpool and will shortly contact members of her Group with this in mind.

We do realise sadly that those shielding will be unable to take part in outings but really recommend the above internet link

Ed.

THEATRE OUTINGS - SOCIAL OUTINGS EVENTS

As you all know our outings for the near future have had to be cancelled as well as the Speakers who were to have addressed some of our fortnightly meetings. Hopefully next year the situation might improve if a suitable vaccine is found and we can return to our usual busy diary. In the meantime if any of the Group Leaders have ideas of ways in which we can continue activities, albeit with limited numbers, Please let Tony Swarbrick (Group Co-ordinator) know. Obviously these would have to follow Covid rules

TONY SWARBRICK: (Group Coordinator)

e-mail groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk



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Gerry Leads the Way!

Gerry Riley, who leads the Walking Group and the Debating Group, has successfully run a few debating sessions on Zoom during lockdown. Perhaps not for everybody but for those who took part it proved an enjoyable and novel experience.



He recently had an inspired idea that it might be combined with the Walking Group (as some were members of both groups) and proposed a seven mile walk from Thornton Hough to Parkgate and back with a stop to eat our picnics at Parkgate.

Tuesday August 18th started out with heavy rain,(oh dear) but by the time the four of us met up at Thornton Hough the rain had cleared and it remained dry and later sunny throughout the day. What a pleasant walk it turned out to be and lovely to see friends for the first time since lockdown. Walking in pairs and changing places every now and then, we debated informally on several topics with many diversions. Part of the walk was across fields which were a bit muddy; I was glad of my boots. The countryside looked lovely and the view from Parkgate front where we enjoyed our picnics was great.

For someone who has of necessity been mostly walking alone during lockdown it was a treat to have company! Many thanks to Gerry for organising it.

Eliane Davie - Ed.

A small selection of photos from Lockdown walks



Geese and Swans with their young in

Birkenhead Park



Isolating on the Wirral Summer 2020

Thurstason Common July 2020-08-19
2020-08-



Caldy Hill July



Bidston Hill
2020-08-23



Harrison Drive July 2020-08-19- Ed.

Regional Web site: 
www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events
For regional news and events.
Registered Charity number 1159091

And finally.....

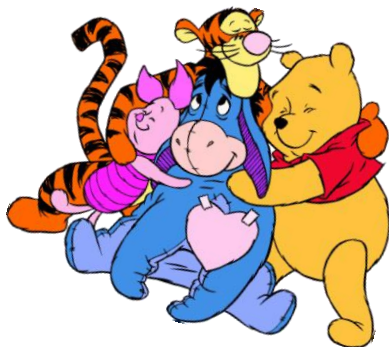
I do hope that many of you have been able to enjoy a meal (or three) out since the relaxing of lockdown. To me it was so good to be able to relax with a couple of friends after so much isolation! We are trying to think of ways to keep at least some of the groups going during these Covid times and would ask all group leaders to let the Committee know if they have any ideas.

For those shielding it can only be on line unfortunately and for others, as we have to stay within Covid rules, leaders would have to arrange small groups, (maybe several), of no more than six people. As I mention elsewhere, Bernadette is thinking around some Gallery visits for the Art Appreciation Group. The Walking Group could maybe try doing a couple of smaller groups for walks if two leaders could be found. Lunch Groups could try different groups of six several times a month. If the Cabin becomes available, groups like Music, Books, Scrabble could probably manage to have limited numbers within the rules. Of course in this case we would have to be responsible for wiping surfaces and supplying hand gels etc. There is a lot to think about and it will be a challenge though hopefully only a temporary one!

I'm sure you all, like myself, miss our U3A and look forward to the time that we can resume our normal activities. You will be getting further communication regarding our U3A on October 22nd, which of course should have taken place in April. If you are comfortable with Zoom please try to take part and let the Committee know that you will be there on line.

On an optimistic note, some of the vaccines being worked on are looking very hopeful!

With all best wishes,



Eliane Davie - Editor

