



December Newsletter

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It seems extraordinary to be approaching the Winter Solstice after all the political, health and social issues with which we have been beset over the past year. The greater astronomical order provided by the movement of the sun, moon and stars, not to mention our own planet, helps to get things into some sort of perspective.



Within the context of all these events our U3A continues to function, if only in a semi-dormant mode. We had a committee meeting via zoom in November, shortly after our zoom AGM, for which we have to thank all those who responded to our emails by recording their votes and zooming in on the day. We had more than enough to constitute a quorum so we are set fair to survive for another year until our next AGM in April 2021. All memberships have been renewed, with the exception of two people who have moved out of the area.

Some of our groups continue to function. Members play Internet Bridge and at least one book-club meets via zoom and I understand that walkers continue to meet when we are not actually in lockdown. There may be others but the leaders of groups that might still be functioning have been slow to inform Tony, our group's co-ordinator.

Of course the restrictions imposed in order to mitigate the effects of covid19 affect us all in such different ways and with varying degrees of severity. Some are having to endure extremes of hardship and suffering whilst others seem hardly to be affected at all. I, for now, fall into this fortunate category. I do not normally frequent nail-bars, betting shops, or any other sort of shop if I can help it; I do not eat out or

frequent public houses or sporting events, but I did miss my cup of tea out when we were in lockdown. I do however feel profoundly sorry for all those whose livelihoods depend upon providing these facilities.

I am currently haunted by the old Appalachian folk song which we tend to know as 'Lord of the Dance' but came originally from a religious group; the Shakers perhaps? 'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free, 'tis a gift to come down where you want to be...' It certainly seems to me that the less we ask of life the more of it there seems to be. It is a matter of learning how to look; and having fewer requirements helps enormously in this respect. 'When true simplicity is gained, to bow and to bend we shall not be ashamed,'

Certainly our U3A has had to simplify and it is impossible to know how it will be in the future. We are being assured that we will soon be able to get ourselves vaccinated against the virus and it has been suggested that those so treated might carry passports to that effect. These will allow us access to places prohibited to the untreated. Well now! What a prospect!

With the passing of the Winter Solstice the year turns and, slowly at first, the days begin to lengthen. Of course the worst of the winter is yet to come but the steady increase in solar energy is a fact. Our ancestors certainly seemed to know and appreciate this. In truly harsh conditions one can hold on only to that which is essential. For some this can be nothing more than their innermost core of being. I wonder what it will take for humanity as a whole to realise that simplicity brings freedom. We may never get there collectively but there is much that can be done (or undone) by individuals.

We live in momentous times. May we each find the courage, wisdom, peace, friendship and support to see us through.

Please do not hesitate to let myself or any of the committee know if there is anything of interest to the membership that you would like to question or share.

Brian Gill - Chairman

NEWSLETTER A LITTLE LATER THAN USUAL

It seemed sensible to wait until we came out of the recent lockdown before sending out the December Newsletter, to see what changes awaited us.

Obviously the good news is the likely start of vaccine distribution next week; in due course it should make a huge difference to the way we have been living our lives this year. I'm sure that we would all raise a glass to that in 2021! We are so fortunate to have so many wonderful scientists round the world who are working so hard to deliver vaccines for distribution to all. We can be proud of the part our own U.K. teams are taking in this amazing, concentrated effort.



With so many restrictions Christmas will certainly be different for many this year and probably quieter than usual. It will be a time to be cautious, remembering that if some of us are unable to spend the time with family that we would wish to, there is always Easter ahead when things should be easier.

We would love to hear from any of you as to how you have been coping with lockdown; any new hobbies, skills, special walks etc. that you have enjoyed. Anything you have found particularly difficult? Any suggestions for things we could arrange to do with our U3A before the way is open for our return to normality?

Our next AGM should take place in April 29th 2021 by which time the way ahead should be much clearer and any changes to the Committee can take place. Ed.

Fund Raising For Motor Neurone Disease Association.

A Big Thank You to all the friends at U3A who generously contributed to support me on my sponsored walk for the MNDA Mission 5000 Appeal.
The "Team" raised over £5,200; my contribution was over £1,700.
Thank You.

Tony Swarbrick

Cancelled Coach Trips.

Some time ago I attempted to refund all deposits paid for the cancelled coach trips to Bowness and Blackpool.

Most people have been refunded, but there are 1 or 2 who have not contacted me to arrange their refund.

If this is you, please contact me (groupcoordinator@oxtonu3a.co.uk) .

Let me know which trips you booked and what payment was made, together with your bank details.

I will then arrange a refund by bank transfer.

Thanks Tony.

Important Message to Group Leaders.

Most Groups have been in hibernation since April due to you know what!!

Some, however, have managed to keep going in a limited way using technology, or social distanced meetings.

I would like to update all members via the next Newsletter with information about groups. If your group is still operating, please let me have details for circulation.

If you have not been operating, could you consider restarting in a limited way using Zoom or other technology. Help and advice will be available to setup – just ask.

Although there is light at the end of the tunnel with the advent of vaccination, it may be some time yet before we can restart normal meetings. Please keep me informed of any plans you have to restart your Group.

Thanks Tony Swarbrick – Group Co-ordinator



PAULINE HORNER FOUND A LIFESAVER IN PAINTING

Painting has been my lifesaver since Lockdown began in March. I was so shocked to see a DONOT ENTER sign on my Doctor's surgery that I did the sketch when I came home. It's by no means a work of art but it expressed my feelings at going into Lockdown.

I am fortunate to belong to several art societies and some of us have kept together online with weekly challenges. The pictures *Crossing the Sands*, *Heather in the Mist* and *Parkgate* were all inspired by challenges.

Last year I attended several workshops with Sharon Wagstaff, an artist from Mold, and during Lockdown she has offered some workshops through Zoom. Once I got my head around signing in and stopped worrying about what my hair looked like, I really enjoyed the sessions and the virtual company. The pictures *Cherries* and *Winter Scene* were produced at these workshops.

I was fortunate enough to get away on a short break in Northumbria in between Lockdowns. The focus was Saxon and Viking Northumbria but I took the opportunity to do some sketches during our day in Lindisfarne and when I came home I did the two paintings of *The Castle* and the *Ruins of the Priory*.

I also did a couple of paintings for friends. My neighbour loves walking down the unmade part of our road so I did *Nocturnum Lane* for her and my cousin posted many photographs on Facebook of her walks in Sefton and I did the composite picture for her called *Lockdown Walk*.

Heather in the Mist



Crossing the Sands



Cherries



Winter Scene





Lockdown Walk



Noctorum Lane

Ruins of Lindisfarne Priory



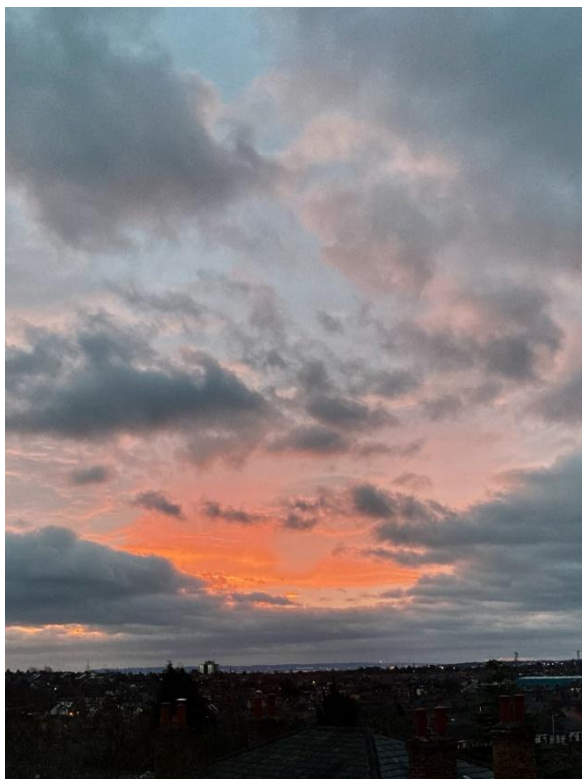
zed The Lindisfarne Castle

March Lockdown



Beautiful dawn skies taken by Corinne Whitham

View from Oxton Village



Birkenhead Park early morning



More Lockdown Activity! Photos by Corinne Whitham

Corinne, Val Edwards and Judith Wheat take regular lockdown walks in the park.

Val always takes birdseed for the birds.



Sometimes the weather was just gorgeous!

Val & socially



Corinne distant!

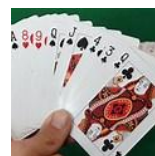
Judith did her Community Service

keeping the drain clear in Ashville Rd.!



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.



BOOK GROUP

Monica Price is still running her book group on line.

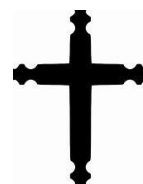
ART APPRECIATION GROUP

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

nationalgallery.org.uk/events/courses



It is with sadness that we heard that one of our members, Kevin Nelson, passed away with Covid. We offer our sincere condolences to his wife, Irene, who also contracted the virus but is now recovered.



Kevin's funeral will be held at Landican next Wednesday, December 9th at 11a.m.. Due to Covid mourners will be limited and men have been requested not to wear ties. No flowers please but donations to a Parkinson's Charity.

www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west/events Regional Web site:



Registered Charity number 1159091

And FINALLY.....

It seems like such a long time since we were able to meet our friends and plan our events and activities. What a strange, surreal time it has been; a desperately sad time for those who have lost loved ones. Thankfully now that a vaccine is tested and becoming available, there can be hope for happier times ahead and by next spring we should be able to meet freely. A start can be made on rebuilding lives and businesses after the damage that Covid has wreaked.

With this thought in mind may I wish you a happy, peaceful Christmas and a much better 2021 on behalf of myself and the Committee. May we soon be able to resume our meetings and friendships!

Take care, my very best wishes,

Eliane Davie - Editor



