
News and Views

CHAIRPIECE

This has been a difficult year for everyone no less than for U3A. Our members include some of the most vulnerable in society and we have worked well together trying to involve everyone and check on those who may be alone at this tough time. In addition we have used technology to try to keep some groups going. I am involved in the Italian group and they have used Zoom to hold their sessions. You can read elsewhere in the newsletter about what other groups are doing.

Our AGM will certainly not be taking place in June, and even arranging it for September may present difficulties but your committee is looking at how to do this best, to involve as many people as possible and to act in a fair way.

The future is uncertain but I would ask you to check on people in your groups who may be alone or vulnerable. U3A is not just a learning organisation but a supportive one, and this year has brought out the best in us.

Mike Head
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NOTICEBOARD

Friends of Penrith and Eden Museum

You may have seen the recent Herald article 'Museum wants your Pandemic Pictures'. I am sure during this time of lockdown you, and your family have taken pictures of the situation and of activities we have all been getting up to. Do consider sending them to the Museum for their collection, so in the future people will be able to look back and say.....? Remember if you send items in you are giving permission for them to be used in displays and exhibitions etc.

The museum has a display recalling the life of Percy Toplis, 'The 'Monocled Mutineer'. The centenary of his shooting at Plumpton was on 6th June, and this article may be of interest.

<https://www.cumbriacrack.com/2020/06/03/percy-toplis-the-monocled-mutineer-centenary-of-shooting-at-plumpton-june-6th-1920/>

REPORTS FROM GROUPS DURING LOCKDOWN

ARCHITECTURE 2

The group has continued with something like its usual pattern of operating but without meeting together. Happily, each of the group has a computer. We had decided on a topic, 'The changing architecture of churches', for which Josie Dunlop had prepared an introduction and sent this round to each of our members before 'lockdown'. Individuals then started their own research on specific buildings drawing on their own knowledge, sometimes from visits already made, from their own books or from the internet. As people delved more deeply, the topic broadened into 'places of worship' and also into 'sacred spaces'. Each member, as they completed their investigation, e-mailed it round the group which made for very interesting reading. One member is working on a PowerPoint presentation which we can look forward to when we can meet face to face. Enthusiasm has led to some pursuing more than a single example. Places so far covered, or are in the process of research, include a wide range:

St Andrew's, Grinton, "the Cathedral of the Dales"

All Saints Church, Bolton near Appleby

Kirkandrews on Esk church

Greensted Church, Essex

Lindisfarne Priory

Kilpeck church, Herefordshire

St George's German Lutheran Church, London

Coventry Cathedral (and as an aside, Basil Spence's University of Sussex)



Hagia Sofia, Istanbul

Hagia Sofia in Istanbul, cathedral/mosque

Cordoba mosque/cathedral

Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna

One member of the group, David Occomore, has also been working on a book, soon to be published, It is, "The New Railway to Scotland" and describes the building of the Settle and Carlisle Railway. We are looking forward to celebrating its appearance with a party, when this is allowed!

GERMAN

A group of seven now meets regularly online every other Tuesday using Zoom and plans to continue until 14th July, taking our usual summer break after that. Whether we will be able to meet in members' homes in September, as we would all like to do, is uncertain but enthusiasm for learning German is undiminished and will continue one way or another.

Watching a recent news item from our regular German TV station *Deutsche Welle*, we came across one of the language's famed coined long words, "*Brotwüstenexpeditionsfahrzeug*", which describes an ex-(Swiss) army mobile bakery that provides proper fresh bread in an area of Brandenburg devoid of traditional bakers. Picking through the details of this article and answering questions in German took half of our most recent meeting before we completed our reading of a Heinrich Böll short story, *Mein Onkel Fred*.

In a previous meeting we had discussed, in German, the gist of this story, which describes family life in a heavily bombed city in the months immediately after the end of the second world war. We then took a short section each to translate and together read the story right through together in both German and English. Both these activities worked well in an online meeting.

What does not work so well are informal off the cuff conversations, partly because of the slight delay in transmission and initial uncertainty about who is speaking, but also because in our experience speaking spontaneously works better when we divide into pairs or threes. However ... *wir retten was zu retten ist***.

* *Eine Wüste* is a desert, so the word reads as bread-desert-expedition-vehicle.

** (Loosely) We do what we can/ make the best of a bad job.

GEOLOGY

Our last sessions were on March 11 and the following week we were isolated, some more so than others. However, determined not to deprive the 50+ members of either the Beginners or Advanced group of their monthly ration of matters geological, we settled on a pattern of occasional worksheets e-mailed or delivered to everyone. Under the title MGM (Maintaining Geological Motivation), 5 sets of questions, tasks and research suggestions have been sent out at roughly 2 week intervals, covering a wide range of topics. After about 10 days, an answer/ comments paper is sent out and members who have attempted the "homework" can check their efforts. We are hoping to continue this process for as long as restrictions on actually meeting last.

Of course, for those able to take advantage of the long spell of good weather, places to see geological features have been recommended, concentrating on very local sites. The reduction in traffic and dry conditions have made this much easier as good exposures tend to occur in road cuttings, stream beds or around lake edges. (The road closure associated with the Pooley Bridge construction site has been particularly useful). The internet has been utilised for investigation and a number of top-quality web sites have been suggested. Finally, trawling through the more informative television schedules has revealed some excellent documentaries giving a view of spectacular landscapes both near and far.

We are hoping that before too long we can carry out one or two field trips before the autumn return to inside sessions but that depends on national policy. Fortunately for geologists, features of interest tend to remain pretty much the same in our part of the world, so what we miss now will still be there next year.

In the normal course of events, the two-year Beginners' programme would end in November and a new one would start in January, with any Beginners who wanted to join the Advanced Group. We may have to revise timing in light of circumstances but we have every intention of getting back "on the rocks" as soon as possible.

John Rodgers Convenor, Geology Group.

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

The group didn't manage to have its first meeting before the Covid restrictions came into force. When polled, few members showed any interest in any form of video meeting, so we have not followed this avenue of establishing the group. However, in order to maintain interest in the subject, a quiz, with multiple-choice answers, is emailed to every member once a fortnight; the answers are then sent each intervening week. There has also been an article on a textile mill, written by one of the members, which has been circulated. Additionally, members are emailed tips on which relevant websites and videos, such as those in the British Film Library, might be of interest to members.

SCRABBLE

The group meets monthly, averaging 11.5 participants, not including our dog, Douglas. We have settled into the Lowther Street, United Reformed Church hall, where the tables and chairs are very comfortable, most conducive to playing scrabble. The room is spacious, at just the right temperature and kitchen facilities are first rate for the essential cup of tea mid-way through the meeting. The group are so keen that we meet all year round, with no summer break. Only a world pandemic can halt the Scrabble Group meetings!!

Members are keeping in touch with one another, but this has been a hard time for many members who are "shielding," for those who live alone and those with extra responsibilities at this time of crisis. Some continue to play scrabble online, with family and some are having a complete break. One member has a game set up for people to play against themselves, playing both sets of letter tiles alternately!!

The group would like to take this opportunity to convey to the U3A Committee their grateful thanks for granting the funding to purchase scrabble boards. Previously the Group played with members personal boards. Sadly we only got to use the new scrabble boards once before "lockdown." The scrabble boards were purchased from the National Royal Institute for the Blind, and are well designed and VAT free. A special thank you to Denise Walker, our treasurer, for ably assisting in their procurement.

We all look forward to meeting again and to welcoming new members, if anyone is interested to come along. There is plenty of room in the group for expansion. Meantime we keep safe and wish all the other U3A Groups well in these strange times.

THE SKETCHING GROUP

The group continues to be busy with pens and pencils and has a monthly sketching challenge, with images being shared by email or at the Zoom meetings. These meetings take place once a month, with a facilitator ensuring that everyone has a chance to talk and to show their sketches. After 40 minutes of catching up with what members have been doing, there is a break for half an hour or so, during which tea is consumed and a quick sketching challenge (set by a member) is undertaken. This is followed by getting together again on Zoom and seeing the results.

Those members who are not able to participate in Zoom meetings are kept up to date with regular emails. Members are also sharing information on helpful YouTube and other internet videos, together with details of various art-related programmes that are coming up on television. Some members have even reported an increased level of enthusiasm for sketching during lockdown!

POTTERY GROUP

The pottery group hasn't been able to keep going via Zoom but we are in touch via email and WhatsApp as well as the occasional socially distanced catch up. We are all pretty much up to speed with what each other is doing and how we all are which is good. And we hope to be able to reconvene at some point once Mary at the pottery has worked out how to run her classes safely - then we can follow suit, should people feel confident to take part. Everyone has had the opportunity to buy clay and to borrow tools if they want so they can work at home.

Several convenors of other groups have been in touch to say how their groups are faring during the present difficulties.

Both **Art Appreciation** groups have kept in contact with members. Mike Fossey's group has continued with discussions of a selection of paintings and is just starting to look again at members' favourite paintings, with opportunities to discuss them via an email thread. Diana Smith's group has floated the idea of having a meeting somewhere like Tullie House when it re-opens.

Kathy Taylor has successfully mounted two Zoom meetings with members of **Book circle 4** and a third is booked. They have been limited to a 45 minute slot but she says that, "in truth it ensures we keep to the task in hand". It is hoped that it may be possible to meet in a park or garden by July if the lock down eases further: if not, it will be back to Zoom again.

It goes without saying that opportunities for continuing in some meaningful way during lockdown are all but non-existent for some groups. For example, Rose Johnson comments that **Folk dancing** and social distancing are clearly incompatible so meetings are likely to be off the menu for some time.

Denise Walker reports that the **Tuesday table tennis** group has not been able to play and have fun at Penrith Leisure Centre. They eagerly await the day when its doors open again and they can meet up, play a few games and enjoy the usual banter. When restrictions are more relaxed they hope to meet socially but meanwhile contact details are shared so people can keep in touch.

The **Badminton** Group held its last session on Friday 13th March, although Howard Simpson says they didn't know at the time that it would be the last one of the season. The group normally has a summer break from early May until September. The plan is to start weekly Friday afternoon sessions again on 11th September, but at present nobody can be certain that this will happen. All members will be contacted by early September to let them know what is happening.

Renewals

Thank you very much indeed to everyone who has renewed their membership this year despite the lack of meetings. The faith that you have shown in a restoration to 'normal' in the near future is appreciated, especially as U3A still has some hefty bills. Normally we would hope that everyone would renew by the end of June, but about 130 members still remain on the renewal list. Beacon will automatically lapse these memberships at the end of the month, which will mean newsletters and TAM will no longer be delivered.

If friends complain to you that they have stopped receiving these, failure to renew may be the reason.

If you wish to renew by cheque, BACS or Standing Order, please get in touch with Lesley Hall by e mail on lesley_hall79@hotmail.co.uk or by phone 017684 83394.

Lesley Hall

Copy Deadline for next issue - Monday 10th August

If you would like any part of the Newsletter in LARGE PRINT, please contact the editors

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Contents

Chairpiece, Noticeboard	1
Reports from Groups During Lockdown	3 - 6
Renewals, Contents	6