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October / November 2020

Newsletter 174

News and Views

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I would first like to echo the words of thanks, expressed at our on-line AGM and elsewhere in this newsletter, to Ian Forrest and Mike Head for their exceptional contribution to our U3A. The Committee particularly will miss their commitment, wise counsel, and leadership, though happily, both are continuing as Group Convenors.

I take over the role of Chair in very different circumstances from when I first took on the role in 2016. Then PNLU3A was celebrating its 20th Anniversary and looking forward optimistically to the future. No-one then would have predicted that in 2020 we would be living through a global pandemic with all its attendant risks and disruption to our daily lives. Lockdown has been followed by trying to navigate a return to a degree of normality while living with a degree of risk, presently made more difficult with rising numbers of infections.

The Third Age Trust has produced several versions of guidelines in an attempt to help groups who wanted to re-start, initially with outdoor activities then indoors in "Covid secure venues". Some of our groups did tentatively start to meet up in groups of six. Unfortunately, we are currently living through a rapidly changing situation, with frequent changes in National & local guidance, local lockdowns, and restrictions and different cross Border rules. At the time of writing the Third Age Trust appears to have taken down its most recent advice from their website, perhaps finding it difficult to keep pace with the changes! We on the Committee have certainly been kept on our toes, particularly with the late announcement on 1 October advising that in Cumbria, no more than two households should meet together, effectively meaning that any of our groups of six from different households could no longer meet.

Some of our groups have continued to meet virtually over lockdown and beyond, and though this is not the ideal meeting environment, it has enabled those participating groups to continue their activities on-line. One of the disadvantages is the need for a degree of technical ability, particularly in those setting up the meetings. The Third Age Trust has set up tutorials in the use of Zoom and there is also a guide on how to use Zoom on the TAT website as well as the company's own. Google Meet is also supposed to be simple to use. Members with skills in this area could perhaps offer help to other group members or the Committee could help to put people in touch. Some of the speakers scheduled for our monthly meetings have said they would be able to present their talks using Zoom and Sue Tomlinson is looking at re-starting these meetings in a virtual form.

Other groups have simply used e-mail to share ideas about activities or projects. The architecture group I belong to, for example, decides on a topic, members volunteer to research an aspect and produce a word document that is shared – pictures are optional or

links can be given to other sources to illustrate a topic. This is relatively simple and allows for subsequent comments and discussion and keeps people in touch.

I realise that many of the alternatives to meeting up in person involve the need for some form of technology and access to Wi-Fi, and so on behalf of those of you reliant on our newsletter by post to keep in touch. Before lockdown, we published reports from groups in which members' activities and projects were described, and I would appeal to members of groups to resume the submission of such articles of interest to the wider membership.

Group leaders over the summer have suggested outings and itineraries connected with their subject and even in autumn and winter, there are opportunities for individuals, household members, or those in a social bubble to undertake drives or walks with a purpose. Look up 'The Solway Military Trail' for example, which gives four trails around the Solway exploring the history of the area from the American War of Independence, through two World Wars to the Cold War and beyond. You could even do it in your armchair by reading, with the addition of a little imagination or memory or Google Street View! NB during lockdown when I longed to visit further afield, I would use the latter to visit favourite places virtually!

Many of you might have used lockdown and beyond as an opportunity to catch up on all those jobs needing to be done around the home and in the garden. You have perhaps revived old skills or developed new ones be it in craft, art, creative writing, cooking, woodwork, etc. so please share any ideas or photographs to inspire others. With autumn for example I am always reminded of the way the doorsteps of New England homes are decorated by displays of chrysanthemums and pumpkins etc. Even a jam-jar on a windowsill with sprigs of rowan berries, rose hips, blackberries & simple daisy-like garden flowers can look seasonal, as too later Christmas displays - and on the doorstep would at least help to cheer up the postman as well as visitors or passers-by and more importantly ourselves.

I know that whilst some have admitted to quite enjoying lockdown, this last year might not have been easy for many of you. Even the most optimistic of us can feel down at times especially on a wet day. It's important then to remember that there will be better days, that though we are experiencing a second virus wave we are in a better position from that in March. PPE and testing and tracing are improving. Science is making advances all the time, particularly with the development of a vaccine and also treatments. Meanwhile, try and enjoy the things we can do and take pleasure in small things – perhaps easier for our generation that had simple pleasures growing up. We are perhaps much more resilient than we sometimes think.

Take Care and Stay Safe.

Josie Dunlop
Chair

U3A email being junked

Just a warning that you may need to check your Junk Mail now and again, as some of the emails from Penrith and North Lakes U3A have been going into people's Junk mail.

Some email servers do not like emails that have a lot of addresses - bulk emails - and send them straight to Junk. With so many members most of the emails from Penrith and North Lakes U3A are sent this way, and it appears that some people did not receive the AGM email. It's worth checking your Junk box as other emails can end up there when they shouldn't.

WELCOME TO THE NEW COMMITTEE

A new Executive Committee was elected at the AGM on 17 September 2020 and at its first meeting the committee elected the officers below:

Officers

Chair: Josie Dunlop
Vice-Chair: Sue Tomlinson
Treasurer: Denise Walker
Secretary: Andrea Willett

Full list of committee members

Alan Beale: Josie Dunlop: Lesley Hall: Jo Laycock: Maggie Neale: Jane Stables:
Sue Tomlinson: Denise Walker: Andrea Willett

There are of course many other people who help Penrith and North Lakes U3A to operate but it is the committee members named above who have executive responsibility and are the trustees of the charity.

New committee members are always welcome. If you think you would be interested in being on the committee then do get in touch. You can sit in on a couple of meetings and see if you think you would like to join. We can co-opt people onto the committee during the year in between the elections at the AGM.

The committee is always pleased to hear from members about any issues or queries. If you would like to contact us please contact the Chair and she will reply to you directly or forward your comment/question on to the relevant committee member. Email is easiest for us to deal with as others can access the email if Josie is away but you can also write or phone.

Contact details are:
Josie Dunlop, The Hollies, Wordsworth Street, Penrith, CA11 7QZ
Telephone: 01768 892690
pnl3achair@gmail.com

Farewell to two longstanding committee members

At the AGM on 17 September 2020 two of our committee members, Mike Head and Ian Forrest retired.

Our first retiring committee member was also our Chair, Mike Head. Mike first joined the committee 12 years ago as Development Officer; he has also held the office of Secretary. He has been instrumental in improving the website and our use of IT and the internet generally, which has been invaluable as our membership has grown. He has also worked across the county and in the North West Region.

But of course, the most important role on the Committee is that of Chair and altogether Mike has held this role for many years. This is a role that he has carried out diligently and expertly both within the organisation and in his contacts with other bodies. He has been excellent at chairing meetings striking that difficult balance between letting everyone have their say and pressing forward for a decision. Not easy!

We will miss his wise and unflappable approach to everything he deals with.

Our second retiring member, Ian Forrest had been a member of the committee for 5 years. We often say that the groups are the most important part of the U3A and during those years Ian has been the Groups' Co-ordinator which means he has been the first port of call for any group convenors needing advice, he has organised two meetings a year for them and he has led on revising and expanding the convenors' handbook. He has also helped to set up new groups.

Apart from his main role he has also been an invaluable member of the committee with responsibility for the equipment used at monthly meetings and lent to groups. He has also helped with the website and the annual Open Day.

Ian has been a very valuable member of the committee addressing every issue with thoughtfulness and kind consideration.

Mike and Ian will be very much missed as committee members and we wish them many more enjoyable years in the future as individual members of Penrith and North Lakes U3A.

NOTICEBOARD

Friends of Penrith and Eden Museum

The Museum is open again and the exhibition has some interesting photos and exhibits of Penrith in former years.

NEWS FROM GROUPS

It remains unlikely that groups will be able to meet in-doors in the normal way before Christmas, particularly considering the age distribution of our members. The recent advice that in Cumbria, no more than two households should meet, effectively meaning that any of our groups of six from different households could no longer meet is likely to limit activities further. However, many groups continue to stay in contact through email and Zoom etc, and by phone.



Iron Bridge, English Heritage

The **Architecture 2** group has resumed activities after a longish summer break. Members continue to research an agreed topic and send round by e-mail to other members of our group the results. The current topic is 'bridges' and a wide variety of examples are being studied from Millau viaduct to the Union chain bridge near Berwick, with Iron Bridge, the Severn bridges, the Humber bridge, and Pooley Bridge, too.

Art Appreciation 1 members are presenting mini exhibitions online for the group to visit and comment on. The challenge is to curate an exhibition of 10-12 artworks on a subject of the

curator's choice with an introductory paragraph and short labels for each of the works. The first exhibition was on Sorolla, a Spanish artist who died in 1923 known as a Spanish Impressionist and painter of light. The current exhibition is on the work of Dora Carrington and Leonora Carrington, contrasting artists linked only in their surname. Exhibitions last for three weeks and we have plans which stretch to mid-March.



The Cycling Group between Orton and Shap

The **Cycling Group** was able to resume by dint of dividing into small groups and was recently able to take advantage of some excellent early Autumn weather.

The **Photographic Group** has met several times since the lockdown eased. They have been to a variety of places including Wetheral, walking along the River Eden past The Flight of Fantasy stone seat and Corby Castle. Then on to the Monks cave's (St Constantine's) then on to the Priory Gatehouse. An amazing walk with so much to photograph is a short easy walk. Low Force, the Ponies at Askham Fell plus Clifton Hall and Appleby have also provided the group with a great variety of subjects and technics for different locations.



Photographic Group - Alan Beale's photo of Catbells and Derwentwater

The **Spanish Groups** have been meeting every week using Google Meet. They have found this a great platform for a group session. It is not time-limited and can be used online if you do not have a Gmail address. You just need to put 'meet.google.com' into the address bar and follow the instructions. The groups have been doing a variety of exercises each week allowing members to stay in touch as well as learn, in one case while a member had coronavirus.

Hasta luego cuidata

The Tuesday **Table Tennis** group is having discussions with the Penrith Leisure Centre, combining their rules and those of the U3A on the feasibility of restarting the group.

Possible new group

There was an article in the recent TAM (page10) of Pauline Leeney who had just joined Lancaster and Morecambe U3A and had instantly set up a Nordic walking group. If there is any enthusiasm in our U3A to do similar, please contact Roger Burgin rogerburgin4@gmail.com or 01768 894107.

For further information on groups please visit the Penrith and North Lakes U3A website.

Copy Deadline for next issue - Monday 7th December

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

Editor

Chris Wilkinson,
10 Hall Grange, Bolton, Appleby CA16 6WA 01768361819,
07986003551 Cwilkins0n@aol.com
(Please note the '0' in Chris's surname is a zero!)
Or Chriswilkinson48@gmail.com

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