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NEWSLETTER Autumn 2020 Issue 65

U3A goes Zoom!



photo © courtesy of Tom Way

This image of a buzzard in full sloop, from the talk on Wildlife Photography given by Tom Way (see pages 5-6), is an appropriate opening to an issue of our newsletter which is chiefly devoted to accounts of how, in this period of restricted socialisation, U3A is managing to proceed with many of its customary activities – both Wednesday morning meetings and some Groups – by dint of the use of Zoom.

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Notes from the Chair



What extraordinary times we have been living through. None of us expected that this strange situation would have lasted. But here we are six months later and little chance of very much change for us. Instead, we have had to change to adapt to “the new normal” and learn many new things. The sight of people shopping wearing masks; meeting friends “at a distance”; limited travel and no foreign holidays; none of the summer events we would normally look forward to in large gatherings; shopping on-line for all sorts of things; no pubs and restaurants are some of the things we have accepted – but then there was ZOOM! And what a boon this has turned out to be. Even if, like me, you were reluctant at first, we have learnt to embrace the technology and learn a new way to be in touch with friends and family and a new way for U3A to function. I would like to offer a huge vote of thanks to Ann Davies, Jill Longman and Tony Tutton for their endeavours in getting this off the ground and now offering us a programme of U3A Wednesday events as well as Zoom meetings for some of the study groups. So, well done all of you who have taken the plunge to embark on this new venture; if you haven’t, do give it a go if at all possible. Obviously, this depends on access to technology, but this seems to be a fact of life today.

In giving thanks, I should also mention Roger Swaine, who has kept the website up to date with fresh information and has regularly posted my blog, each week at first, then each fortnight when the content became longer. This is now paused as we have begun regular Wednesday activities and I am once again engaged in childcare. But do check out the website regularly. I should also thank our Secretary, Marie Scales, who has regularly forwarded updates from the local Network and the National Association. We are also indebted to Hazel Bell, Editor of this Newsletter, for her sterling work in maintaining this invaluable resource and means of communication. Peter Fox, too, has been active in maintaining an up-to-date register of members and their contact details – vital when we are trying to reach all of our membership. He also initiated a plan to try to contact members without email by telephone.

My personal foray into Zoom meetings began with meeting with some of the committee near the end of May. Before that I had kept in contact with people via Facebook and phone calls. I watched YouTube videos of theatre on television but my only contact with U3A was via our What'sApp group and emails. Then, on 17 June we had a Committee Meeting, which was very productive. Decisions were made to institute a programme of "virtual" meetings and online coffee mornings and to begin these in the period when we would normally have a break from U3A. I had a brief "coaching" meeting with Jill and Ann as I would be "hosting" the meeting and then, on 8 July we had our first presentation by Zoom. This was Tom Way presenting a talk with photographs on Wildlife on Your Doorstep. It made an excellent beginning for our talks. We have had Tom Way come to talk before about his wildlife photography around the world but this was focused on this country. It was absolutely fascinating; Tom is an excellent speaker and spoke knowledgeably about the art of photography as well as his subjects. It was interesting how many issues concerning our wildlife arose when viewing the images of foxes, badgers, deer and hedgehogs. I hadn't realised that hedgehogs were an endangered species until this. I subsequently found a hedgehog in my garden so that's a good excuse to leave an area of my



The Committee meets by Zoom

garden to go “wild”. Needless to say, the images were stunning [see his photo of a buzzard swooping, reproduced by permission on page 1] and I could only wish I had a larger screen on which to watch this presentation. Tom is obviously experienced in the use of the media so everything ran smoothly and we were able to ask questions at the end.

This was an excellent start to our programme of “speakers” and was followed two weeks later by “something completely different” in the shape of Fool’s Gold, a folk singing duo who have also visited us before. They entertained us with songs and images about the mining industry and a medley of Music Hall songs. This was very informative as well as entertaining and there was plenty of opportunity to join in without embarrassment! The next speaker, two weeks on, was Amber Tallon, Sonja Park’s granddaughter, giving a presentation on “Women of Bloomsbury”. Having met Amber on Exploring London visits with Sonja, I felt sure it would be another excellent talk. And it didn’t disappoint. Indeed many people were extremely enthusiastic about the presentation and quite rightly so. It was very informative

and entertaining. It was well presented by Amber and varied with little video clips of Amber on location. It was all very professional and with plenty of images of the area and the people mentioned. I am really looking forward to the programme that Jill Longman has put together for us and very grateful for her efforts. And, of course, on alternate Wednesdays we have our coffee and chat sessions with the chance to talk to a smaller group of people in breakout rooms. I can’t believe how conversant we are all becoming with the new language.

So, at the time of writing there are still many unknowns. But it doesn’t look like we will be able to meet in the usual way this side of Christmas but we continue to keep aware of advice from the national association. At present we are able to meet with



Mary Ward, who founded an educational settlement at Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury, and wrote novels under her married name as Mrs Humphry Ward.

some family members and friends and I am heartily glad to be able to see my grandchildren again after a three-month break. By September children should be able to return to school. Let's hope that the lifting of restrictions may continue without ill effect. I look forward to the time when we can meet again in person but, until then, stay well, stay in touch and I anticipate quite a party when we meet again! Love and Peace (as we used to say in the sixties).

Pamela Williams

Notes from the Secretary

1. After much consideration we have been able to reduce the subscriptions for 2021.

Please amend your subscription as soon as possible.

Subscription due 15 January 2021

Subscriptions – Full Membership £20
Associate Member £16

2. Due to Covid 19 the November Dance and Christmas Lunch are cancelled for this year. We are in the process of refunding the Dance money.

3. The latest Covid Guidelines from U3A Trust are available on their website. It is updated as soon as The Government release an update.

4. Next term's Wednesday Meetings will have to continue virtually for the present time.

5. We are hoping that some study groups might be able to recommence meeting during the Autumn Term. Joan Scales is in the process of contacting group leaders to see whether their groups would be able to recommence, following the Guidelines. We are looking for other venues, because currently those venues attached to sheltered housing groups are not available.

Marie Scales

Herts Network

The Herts Network are planning a speaker at a Zoom meeting on 20 November, 10.00 a.m.

Details of how to book will follow and will be available on the U3A Herts Network website:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/hertsnetworkofu3as/events>

or via a link on the Welwyn Hatfield U3A site.

Magical, Mysterious: A Talk to Mark the Centenary of *The Lark Ascending*

Poll after poll in many countries shows Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* to be a cast-iron favourite of music-lovers. Yet almost nothing is known of why it was written and what the music 'means'. Writer and broadcaster Andrew Green has made a special study of the work ... and has much to reveal which will enhance the listening experience.

Participation from Tasmania

Who would have thought it? There we were, back in August 2019, heading off for our adventure of setting up a second home in Tasmania, so we could have perpetual summer. – But, thanks to the pandemic, we're now experiencing winter here instead of summer in the UK!



Suzanne Brown

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John's birthday this year will certainly not be forgotten. We had gone up to Launceston (pronounced LaunCESton here), for a long weekend to celebrate it. We were staying in a beautiful heritage (built c. 1879) Bed and Breakfast, and we had lots planned. We enjoying exploring the city, surprisingly different to Hobart with a population of around 100,000, and we walked miles.

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Cataract Gorge is a wonderful piece of wilderness bush, just on the edge of town. We had booked a four-hour boat cruise on the River Tamar, complete with lunch and cheese-and-wine tasting. However, we didn't get to go, as on Sunday Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that lockdown would begin from lunchtime the next day.

We left our BnB host nearly in tears as we were her last guests, with no further bookings. Our planned boat trip cancelled, we headed home. On the way we decided to visit Ben Lomond National Park, dominated by a huge plateau over 1500m. It's a pretty hairy ride up, but the views are breathtaking. There is a ski village on the top, which looked a bit sad without any snow; we were alone except for a group of inquisitive wallabies and a couple of eagles overhead. We spotted a sign outside a closed café on the way home: 'No toilet rolls kept on the premises overnight', presumably supposed to be humourous – perhaps a sign of things to come – little did we know ...

Life in Lockdown in Huonville honestly did not feel very different to usual life here. There is a population of around 2700 spread over a wide area in the Huon Valley – by 9pm it is not only dark, it is dead! We have no streetlights at our home and the sky is so clear, that stargazing is just magnificent. We missed seeing our children and grandchildren, of course, and the many friends we have made here. However, our daily walks were enjoyable, the Huon River is a constant source of enjoyment and the subject of many photos.



The view from the bridge over the River Huon. Suzanne and John live ten minutes walk away on the left. *Photo by John Brown*

We had already been speaking with our children in the UK on WhatsApp; however, at some point Zoom was mentioned and pow, did we learn to use it with gusto! Why on earth hadn't we spoken with friends during our previous six months here? That soon changed, every evening catching up with friends and relatives, what fun it was chatting and seeing everybody, it was wonderful!

During a Zoom chat with Ann Davies back in England she mentioned a weekly quiz with the Computer Study Group. Immediately after the call Tony Tutton was emailed and our invite arrived for the next one! How good it was to see people we hadn't seen for so many months and the quiz caused much laughter and frustration over the answers, it was such fun! Sadly, we haven't been able to join in with other study groups we used to attend in person, as their virtual meetings are scheduled in the afternoon and, much as we'd love to join in, 11pm is a bit late for us!

Then we heard that a Wednesday morning virtual presentation was planned – wow, what a great idea! 'Of course we'll be there' was emailed to Jill Longman. What a delight it was to see so many familiar friends appearing on the screen. How endearing it was to hear, 'there's Suzanne & John!' exclaimed by folks. We really felt we were only down the road, not the other side of the world from you all. The presentation from Tom Way was marvellous – what a great presenter he is, as well as a brilliant photographer, and everything went so smoothly. Jill, Ann and Pam must have been so pleased and no doubt relieved, how well it went.

At time of writing, we've had a virtual coffee morning and a musical morning with Fools Gold – more meetings are planned and eagerly looked forward to by us. Very many thanks to those who have been working hard on our behalf to get these virtual meetings organized, well done all of you, there are two people in Tasmania who are thoroughly enjoying attending them and we guess a lot of people nearer to home are too.

Look after yourselves everyone and keep well. We look forward to catching up with our U3A friends in person at some point in 2021, gosh that seems a long way off ...

Suzanne Brown

Garden of the World

Welwyn Garden City is celebrating its centenary ...

and the U3A led the way!



Image credit: Kadam Dance

2020 is the centenary year of the establishment of Welwyn Garden City, the most perfect example of Ebenezer Howard's plan for urban living.

Kadam Dance, an enterprise funded by the Arts Council, had hoped to present a day's events with a "Garden of the World" theme to take place in the town centre. Covid 19 put paid to that.

But the enthusiastic organisers planned for presentations to be "zoomed" over evening sessions, and for the third, "Gardens in Poetry", WelHat U3A led the way.

On Tuesday 28 July at 8pm readers from the U3A Poetry, Play Reading and Shakespeare Groups opened the centenary celebration programme. Those who joined the event were treated to a bounty of poetry, prose and song ranging from the Garden of Eden to Gethsemane, from the flowering trees of China to the mountains and rivers of India and of course to our own English gardens.

I would like to mention each of the readings and readers. But I will limit myself to the opening item from *Genesis*, so beautifully read by Diana Holt (the only non-member of U3A but a most welcome guest); a prose extract written by Monty Don, read by David Steed, which brought me to tears; and fittingly a poem by U3A member and long-term WGC resident Jon Westoby, read by Hazel Bell. "The Garden" [printed on page 12] describes a garden through its seasons, with the last line – "The Beginning's in the End" – providing a powerful reminder of the garden's magical ability for renewal.

David Steed gave the final touch by singing a light and lovely rendering of "The Rose", the flower without which no English garden is complete.

It is hoped to make a YouTube version of the session – 35 minutes of unadulterated pleasure. Please, please do not miss it!

Jo Roscoe

The Garden

The garden's winter-dead and cold.
A pseudo-death of plants now old.
The dead of winter, so it's said,
Spring far away, tools in the shed.
Dormant, but living still.

The gardener isn't needed now
But plants are stirring, under snow.
Snowdrop, crocus, tiny dreams
Braving frost and icy streams.
Delicate, but tough!

Here comes Spring in all its glory.
Now the gardener joins the story,
He weeds and trains, imposing order
On all the flowers in every border.
New life from old.

Really? Is he really needed?
Who cares if rose beds are un-weeded?
Nature's rule's not too unruly;
Let it be, enjoy the truly
Wondrous riot of colour.

Summer's come and living's pleasure.
Enjoy the garden at your leisure.
Give no thought for our tomorrow.
Autumn's threat's no cause for sorrow.
Oh, look. A fallen leaf.

Winter's here, an end of seasons.
The plants retreat, they have their reasons.
Dormant again, to rise next year.
The rise and fall, now gone, then here.
The beginning's in the end.

– by *Jon Westoby*



**Pam Williams, Sanjeevini Dutta, Hazel Bell, Maryam Rodway,
David Steed, Sam Segar, Jill Longman, Bisakha Sarker
and Diana Holt reading poems in turn at the Gardens in Poetry WGC Centenary evening**

Coffee with Zoom

One result of the current pandemic is that, like it or not, technology has become more important in our lives. Fortunately the U3A has a nucleus of competent I.T. users who have shared their expertise with everyone and made possible virtual meetings of study groups and U3A members keen to maintain outside interests whilst being in various stages of lock-down and isolation.

I found Jill Longman's invitation to a virtual coffee morning using Zoom so intriguing that I had to accept. The only certainty was that I had to provide my own coffee and biscuits. With the potential for a hundred participants all having something to say, I thought this could be challenging.

In the event, some twenty seven U3A members attended and after a short initiation into the process, our host, Ann Davies, explained that Zoom would sort us into randomly constructed groups of five or six to introduce ourselves and have a brief chat. Those within a group could opt to remain together or be regrouped to talk to other people. Initial



A gaathering at one of the randomly-assigned Zoom coffee rooms

feedback was that each session needed to be a bit longer and so Ann adjusted her stopwatch accordingly.

As the groupings are random, the dynamic of each group varied. In one group we were mostly strangers and so the discussion involved what individuals' interests in the U3A were. In another more people were known to each other and the talk was more personal about our recent experiences. It was a real pleasure to meet other members with different interests for the first time and to renew conversations with more established friends.

I should like to thank Jill, Ann and all those involved in this idea. Technically it worked well and provided an enjoyable, valuable activity for us all. Here's to the next time I can have my coffee and biscuits at the ready!

Ann Coulthard

Group News

Book Group (2)

Well, on 30 July we held our ACTUAL book group meeting in Val's magical garden, under the trees, dappled sunlight, chocolate birthday cake and the scalpel-sharp *Cousins*, by Salley Vickers. The birthday cake was for the birthdays missed during lockdown.

The last time we'd actually met, to discuss *The Binding*, was on 26 February, little knowing that it would be five months before we would do so again. OH, THE JOY OF REALLY MEETING!

Our first virtual meeting took place, chaotically, on WhatsApp, when nobody had heard of Zoom, and we all talked at once, so heard nothing of what we each thought about Heather Morris's *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*, although subsequent discussion revealed we thought it a powerful tale, of course, but not very well written.

Then we all retired to our sunny gardens to read *The Bees*, by Laline Paull, made all the more interesting by being able to watch them going about their pollinating business. By the time our next meeting was due, Ann Davies had very impressively organised Zoom, whereon we muted ourselves, lost connection, turned upside down and left the



room, but persevered until we were using it quite efficiently, with one or two exceptions – me being one of them.

We always meet in Marion's house, so although we might have known whatever we chose to disclose about our grandchildren, gardens, holidays, etc. we hadn't, until now, known that one of us glories in a Farrow and Ball Sulking Room Pink dining room, one has a Kandinsky on the wall, or that another has a copy of *Fifty Shades of Grey* on the book shelf. We watched each other, and ourselves (uncomfortably) on Zoom, as our hair grew longer and greyer. And occasionally a stranger (to us, presumably not to the householder) would make a brief screen appearance to deliver a cup of tea.

In between book meetings we Zoom-met for afternoon tea and cake, which occasionally resulted in a bit of cake envy, and there were a couple of afternoons when a non cake-maker opened her front door to find a slice of the coveted cake generously left on her doorstep! And, along with the whole nation, we entertained each other by forwarding comic videos that we'd all seen before!

Whatever we initially felt about Zoom, we all agree that it has been something to look forward during lockdown, reflecting on the fact that a few years ago it would not have been an option. But the real heroes of lockdown, for we belongers to book groups, have been the books that have offered respite from the tumult of the outside world. In addition to the aforementioned titles, we lost ourselves in John Le Carre's *Legacy of Spies*, a real page-turner, and were mesmerised by John Fowles's *The Magus*. Hooray for books and book groups!

Carol Bush

Computer Discussion Group

In the previous newsletter I wrote that one of the activities I would miss about U3A during self-isolation was Tony Tutton's Computer Discussion Group.

Tony contacted the Microsoft and Apple groups to gauge interest and consequently set up Zoom meetings on Thursday mornings. There were 17 in the Microsoft meeting and 25 in the Apple meeting including Suzanne and John from Tasmania. At first the Zoom time was restricted to 30 minutes but Ann Davies obtained a professional Zoom licence for longer. As usual Tony answered questions with other knowledgeable members adding comments.

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Tony's mantra has always been that no question is a stupid one.

It was suggested that we study a few topics in detail with one volunteer leading the meetings. Editing and manipulating photos using GIMP was most illuminating. Ann Green taught us to use Calendars so that regular meetings, birthdays and anniversaries were recorded and therefore less likely to be forgotten .

Microsoft Excel, led by Tony, was one area with which I was familiar having used it in my teaching career for making lists of marks graphs and pie charts. More useful to all of us, we were shown how to use data efficiently: e.g. to work out household expenses, weekly, monthly and annually.

Another suggestion Tony had was for a quiz for which we again welcomed Suzanne and John from Tasmania. Some days we were in flowery cotton shirts and they were huddled up in thick sweaters.

The quizzes were enormous fun and caused much merriment. We took it in turns to be quizmaster; some were elaborate power point presentations while others were simpler.

We all learned many useful and not-so-useful facts. I now know who was number one in the charts in 1968 with 'God of Hellfire'. When asked what we liked about the Zoom meetings, answers included: looking forward to seeing friends, getting to know people better, having a fixed point in the week, putting a date in the diary, enjoying oneself and having a laugh.

On behalf of the Computer group I would like to thank Tony for organising the Zoom sessions and for his good humour and unfailing patience.

Thank you to all the members who have contributed to the meetings and made them so enjoyable!

Gillian Simpson

Creative Writing Group

You would think, wouldn't you, that with all the extra time we have on our hands at the moment, we in the Creative Writing group would be producing literary masterpieces daily? But no; almost without exception, the creative juices our members need to summon up interesting ideas seem to have somehow temporarily dried.

Maybe we all have so many things to think of and worry about which consume our energies.

However, when Jacky sent me her inspirational poem, I just had to

share it with you, as it is so pertinent to the unusual events we are living through. I think it also gives us hope for the future.

Ann Madell

Let's not complain
Enjoy the Summer and remember
How lucky we are compared to thousands.

Let's not complain
Staying in but with food, drink and life

Let's not complain
Roomy houses, gardens and open spaces

Let's not forget those who grieve alone

Let's not forget those whose jobs are at risk
Who have no money to feed their family

Let's not forget the abused
Confined inside with their abuser

Remember
Be aware of others

Remember
Stay at home if you are sick

Remember
Not to be frightened of the outside world.

Be prudent, but remember that the media is all about sensation
And that life is for living

1939-1945 people feared for the lives of themselves and their dearest every day. They were brave. They carried on. We must do the same.

Jacky Morrison

Family History

The Family History Group zooms ahead

Once upon a time, as the story goes, the Family History Group would meet at 2pm on the third Monday of each month in a place called Mead House. Room conditions were ideal with a large screen television, an active WiFi and some rather (some would say *too*) comfortable armchairs for members who arrived early.

We were able to talk on a wide variety of topics associated with family history and the social history that influenced and controlled the lives of our ancestors. Talks were usually backed up with a computer linked to the TV via its HDMI connection. We also had discussion sessions to help solve members' 'brick walls' with Ancestry and other web sites literally 'on-tap'.

Then the lockdown came ...

After almost three months of emptiness, realising this was not going to be a brief interlude, Joan Scales contacted me and asked if I was interested in using the Zoom conferencing facility that WH U3A had licensed. Giving the opportunity some thought, we realised that the Family History Group meeting structure was ideally suited to Zoom.

Although the Monday afternoon slot was being used by the French and Spanish Groups, we were able to take over the afternoons on the third Tuesday in each month. With Ann Davies' training and patience, we held our first Zoom meeting at 2pm on Tuesday 16 June with a PowerPoint talk on old handwriting. Afterwards, we shared an old Will on-screen and we all had great fun trying to interpret it (in fact we collectively did well!).

For the July meeting we set the topic as workhouses. We started with a video of the 2018 Channel 5 programme on Southwell Workhouse, followed by members' photos taken at both Southwell and Ripon workhouses. The Session ended with a live demonstration showing us what we could find by delving into the www.workhouses.co.uk website that is freely available to all without subscription.

In view of the success of the two Zoom meetings held so far, we will be holding, for the first time, a virtual FHG meeting in August. Here we will attempt to shed some light on DNA. So, why not Zoom along with the FHG at 2pm on the third Tuesday of each month ...

Brian Bolton-Knight

Photography

The online subgroup of the U3A photography group

Like many other U3A groups, the U3A photography group has spawned a subgroup that is meeting online.

A number of members of the photography group have managed to carry on with their photography and continue to meet online, using zoom and the U3A unlimited time subscription that was organised by Ann Davies. This allows us to meet up and chat about various things photographic (or maybe not photographic) for a two-hour session every two weeks. In this way we can retain a sense of camaraderie in the socially isolated state we find ourselves in at present.

We use some gallery software to categorise and store the images online. All members of the sub-group are able to upload their submissions to the gallery prior to the meeting. We usually have a



An annotated image from an interactive zoom meeting

different theme for each session, which attendees can either choose to attempt, or not, and then submit their images online.

After taking a photograph many people move on to post-processing to "improve" what they have captured on their camera. There is a lot of free software for this if you are starting up and don't want to spend a lot of money in the first instance. Alternatively, you can be like me and do all your image processing with free software as some of it is very good. We also do a bit of tutoring within the group and some members have progressed from simple "snappers" to quite sophisticated "developers".

Zoom is particularly suited to this form of interactive meeting as any attendee is able to draw on the shared screen to point out where the photographer has managed to achieve some creative effects or how they might have improved the image. If you look at the screenshot above (an annotated image from an interactive zoom meeting) you will see how it is possible to identify areas with rectangles, circles and arrows to highlight the subject under discussion. This leads to a lot of discussion because what one person thinks is an improvement another person will think is deterioration. This only goes to prove that we all have different ideas of what is a good photograph and this discussion is a wonderful way of seeing your creations from different, less biased, viewpoints.

Some of our attendees were initially rather wary of using this method of communication and presentation, but we have developed a set of documents to guide you through the process. So, if you are interested in joining us, please contact the U3A groups coordinator (groups@u3awelhat.org.uk) who will direct you to us.

Henry Brzeski

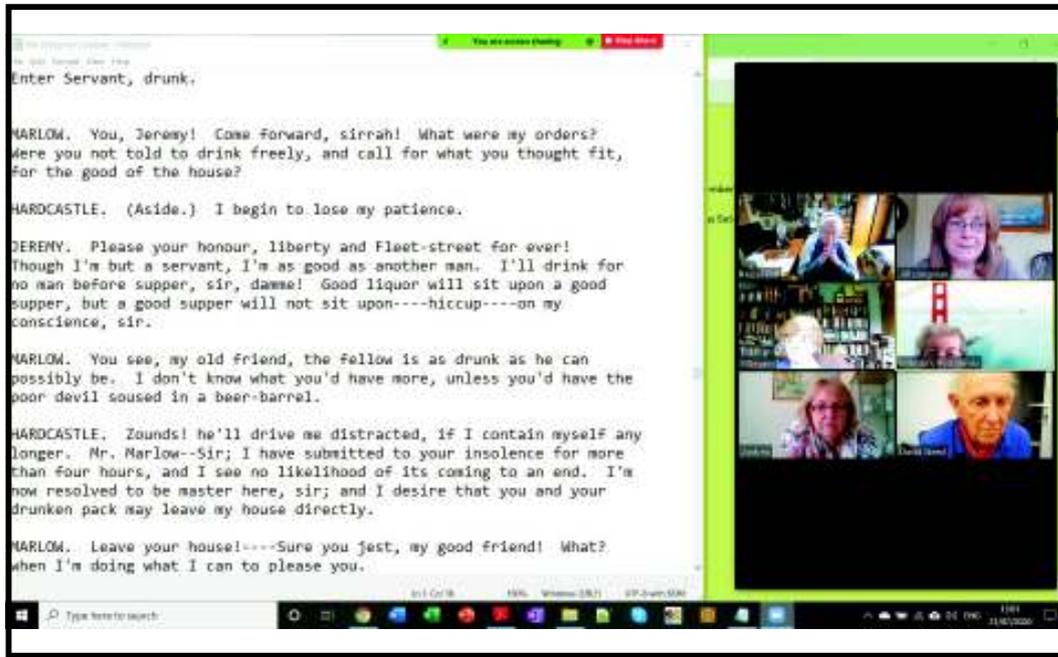
Play Reading Group

The Play Reading group met on Tuesday 21 July to read Oliver Goldsmith's satirical comedy, *She Stoops To Conquer*.

There we were, six of us, individually isolated in our own homes but connected by ZOOM!

All sitting in front of our own iPad or Laptop, ready to try and connect with the Internet!

(Note to myself ... try and tidy up the book shelves behind me!)



The script of the play being read (*She Stoops to Conquer*) shown on screen together with the readers.

She Stoops to Conquer was first performed in 1773 and, surprisingly, read extremely well in the Zoom meeting, not just because the readers/actors read well but because of the clever innovation of having one half of the screen displaying the script of the play and the other half of the screen showing all the readers. This led to a surprisingly fluid read.

We were all impressed with the expertise of Jill Longman, our technical expert; this usage of a split screen added much to the enjoyment of the day. I may even get to like ZOOM!

Maryam Rodway

Shakespeare Group

To Zoom or not to Zoom?

This was the question for the Shakespeare group after the lockdown date of 23 March when our world changed.

People everywhere were talking about Zoom meetings, and as I



King Henry VI shown on the Zoom screen beside his audience

really wanted my French and Spanish groups to continue I began to look into what this meant, how it works and what it can do. I held several weekly language meetings via Zoom so by the time 22 April (our next Shakespeare session) came along I had become a little familiar with how this very clever technology works, and we held our first virtual reading.



Ann Davies

In the ‘old normal’ we would read an act or a few scenes, then watch them on the BBC Shakespeare DVDs (lent free by U3A Resources). This helped to clarify what we’d read. The series we watch was filmed in the ’70s/’80s; it is great fun spotting young actors who are now well known (as well as older actors). We’ve spotted Julia Foster, Bernard Hill, Alan Rickman, Celia Johnson, Roger Lloyd-Pack, Trevor Peacock and too many more to mention.

At the moment we are reading the King Henry sequence of plays (the "Henriad"), chronicling the complicated history of the

Wars of the Roses – so we were reluctant to let months go by without watching the DVDs and forget all we knew. I did some research and by the time 27 May came round, with a great deal of patient help from one son, I had managed to sort out how to show the relevant scenes via Zoom.

We have done four Zoom sessions now and despite technical issues at times I'm pleased to say that our 'new normal' is very similar to the old one – but we don't have to get in our cars and venture out! I'm still, however, looking forward to the day when we can gather together again at Hazel Bell's, whenever that may be.

Ann Davies

Group Membership Analysis

As I have had more time on my hands at the moment, I thought I would use some of my skills from my working life and produce an informal analysis of Welwyn Hatfield U3A Group Membership! At the time I started the process, we had 901 members on the membership list. We have 65 Study Groups listed on our website, led by 56 members of our U3A. I asked Group Leaders for lists of their regular members and received replies from the majority of them.

Some Groups are open to any member, such as Travel and Online Google help, so there are no lists of regular participants for these. Some, such as the Exploring London and Walking Groups, have a very large mailing list of around 45-50, but people don't tend to take part in every outing. Seventy-seven members of our U3A are keen gardeners, according to the Garden Group membership list!

Of our 901 members, my analysis shows that 343 do not appear to belong to any Study Groups. See the Table below for numbers of Members belonging to Groups.

At the time of writing, several Groups are managing to hold regular Zoom meetings, with some members being able to take part in Zoom sessions who hadn't been able to travel to meetings recently – in two of the language groups two people have been able to join in who hadn't been able to attend in person, whereas two to three have been unable to use Zoom, so it's "swings and roundabouts".

Psychology 2 has had a change of leader; many thanks to Raul Curiel for his time as leader; thanks to Brian Connelly for taking over. Brian reports:

Re using Zoom, although this was new to most of us, we have had no problems with adapting to it and all 12 members have taken part in our fortnightly sessions. Although there is a loss of the spontaneity, dynamics and 'fun' moments that can occur at face-to-face meetings,

Members attending Groups	Numbers of Groups regularly attended
343	0
298	1
136	2
72	3
34	4
11	5
5	6
1	7
1	10

we structure our sessions tightly and the Zoom format has not detracted from this. Indeed, for some sessions, such as when a Powerpoint was being presented, the Zoom format has been possibly more useful than face-to-face. This does not mean though that we are not looking forward to returning to personal meetings when safe.

The Photography Group have told me that of their 19 members nine are regularly taking part in Zoom meetings. Spanish Conversation Zoom sessions are regularly attended by seven to eight of the full membership of 11. Of the Play Reading Group membership of eight, six take part in Zoom; Poetry, eight out of ten; and Shakespeare, nine out of twelve. By the very nature of the Groups, Tony Tutton's computer Zoom Meetings have been well attended! Tony also runs quizzes for his Groups.

Some Groups are occasionally meeting in Groups of up to six outdoors under the current Covid 19 guidelines.

Joan Scales, Groups Coordinator

Happy birthday, NHS!

A tribute by Val Fieth

I am three years older than the NHS and had little need of it until I was 21. Since then, together and hand in hand we have achieved a lot, and to the NHS I owe my life. Not just an ordinary life but a special one.

At 21, in 1966, I was sick in Canada and looked after there while World Cup was on. The nurses decorated my room with football posters and memorabilia.

Back to London and the NHS and I continued working in my great NHS hospital, The Hammersmith Hospital. The neurologist there looked after me. From then on, on drugs. They warned me that I would have no life and would live in an institution – which I found unacceptable. I have too much electricity in my temporal lobe, which can provoke epileptic fits, and did, with dramatic results: cardiac arrest with status epilepticus. I was on duty at the time in a hospital, in uniform and was resuscitated. Some ambulance rides – but these are in the past. Effective drug control enabled me to work and have choices. I ran three London Marathons; one of them was for the school for children with epilepsy in Much Hadham. I took the then chairman of the Council, who had epilepsy and didn't drive. We met the children wearing crash helmets. There is a very fine line between them and me.

I have two NHS hearing aids too.

I spent twenty years working in hospitals and eighteen years working for the Local Authority in Leisure with a pleasing, creative and rewarding job. I love to travel – and I did, taking my daughters with me. I have been to great places!

I would not have stayed alive without the NHS, so I give back and work with marginalised people and I don't complain. I don't like being labelled disabled.

Thank you, NHS! Happy birthday – and long may you be effective.

Val Fieth



The twenty-seventh in our series of profiles of distinguished Welwyn Hatfield U3A members features ...

Tanya Turton



Tatiana Rubinsky was born in Beirut, Lebanon, the third child of White Russian émigrés. Her father, Ivan, was Professor of Engineering at the American University of Beirut. She grew up there, attending the American Community School, then, after finishing twelfth grade, the American Junior College.

In 1939 Ivan Rubinsky went to Massachusetts Institute of Technology for his sabbatical year; the family travelled there through Europe. They were back in Lebanon throughout the second World War. In 1949 Tanya left to attend Wellesley College in Massachusetts, where she gained a BA in history and English composition; also attending Harvard Summer School in 1950.

After graduation, in 1951, Tanya worked in the United Nations Secretariat in New York. She met [Cecil] Nigel Turton there; in 1955 he brought her to England, and they were married in Kensington. Nigel obtained a position at AERE, the atomic energy establishment in Harwell, and the couple went to live, first, in the village of Chilton. Together they also worked as Freelance Translators. Four children were born.

At the end of the '60s Nigel was seconded to the ICI Plastics office in Stamford, Connecticut, and the family of six spent three years there, during which Tanya took correspondence courses in writing. Before returning to the UK, she writes, "we packed up and piled into our second-hand Oldsmobile station wagon for a trip across the states. What exciting and wonderful weeks those were! ... And back by another route."

Back in England, they lived in Harpenden. Tanya taught Art in Hertfordshire schools, part-time. Nigel died in 1975. Tanya then became a Medical copywriter with Smith Kline & French until 1981,

then Public Relations Officer of the National Pharmacological Association in St Albans, and a Member of the Institute of Public Relations; then Development Officer for the National Association for Colitis and Crohn's Disease.

Tanya has always loved to travel. She writes: "My holidays have taken me around Europe and further afield. I met relatives for the first time in Moscow. I greeted our present century in New Zealand. Before that, I clambered up some of the steep steps of the Great Wall of China. The mist had just lifted when I looked down into the Grand Canyon in Arizona."

Tanya retired in 1991 – and, of course, joined U3A. She became tutor for the Art group: one of its early members, Ann Smith, remembers "I was astonished at what I could achieve under her tuition". Tanya also joined the Walking Group, and World Affairs – to which, from her global experience, she has been able to make many contributions.

"The Terribly Talented Tanya" (Ann Smith's epithet for her) excelled as writer, painter and photographer. Her first solo art exhibition was held in Darien, Connecticut in 1970, followed by an exhibition in Borlase Gallery, Blewbury, Oxfordshire in 1994, and others in Boxfield Gallery, Stevenage, in 1995 and 2003. She joined a Clay Sculpture class in Stevenage and produced prize-winning work; attended a writers' week in Norfolk; and joined the Maltings Writers' Group in St Albans. This changed to become the Aspiring Writers' Group, meeting at Tanya's home in Welwyn Garden City. As a freelancer, she has contributed many articles to local publications – fifteen to the *Welwyn Hatfield Times*. In 2010 she edited, wrote and revised her own material for [The Phoenix Rises: Medley of Prose and Poetry](#), published by Trafford Publishing. This book contains 16 short stories and 20 poems by Tanya, with 18 memories recorded, each illustrated by one of Tanya's own paintings or photos.

In Tanya's studio in her home in WGC, there are many pictures on hinged 'doors' hung on the wall. A number are sheets of plywood that she had scrutinised carefully and picked out shapes she could see. She then highlighted what she had identified with paint, giving them an

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other-worldly air. An example is “Inspired by Orchids!” in pastels on plywood, shown above.

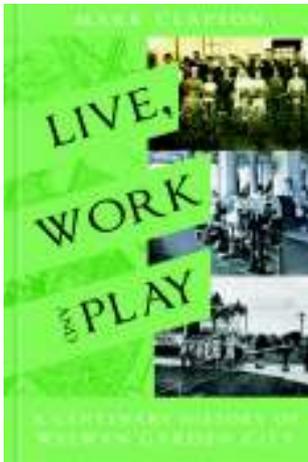
Sadly, the onset of Alzheimer’s disease has now curtailed many of Tanya’s interests, but she still takes part in the World Affairs group and continues to host the Aspiring Writers Group, and to enjoy her participation in U3A.

Hazel Bell

Review

Live, Work and Play – A Centenary History of Welwyn Garden City by Mark Clapson: History Press, 2020. Hardback, 240 pages. ISBN: 978-0750994019. £20.00

Commissioned by 29-30 Welwyn Garden City Heritage Trust and timed to coincide with the celebration of 100 years of WGC, this book sets out to cover the history of the town, not only as the embodiment of the Garden City ethos of its founders, but also as a significant influence on town planning, nationally and internationally. This is achieved with detailed reporting of facts and figures, timelines, lists of businesses and institutions, and quotes from eminent sources, but also with many personal recollections and opinions of residents of the town, gathered by WGC Heritage Trust.



The author, social historian Professor Mark Clapson, juggles all this information into a format that is broadly chronological but within chapters sub-divides to look at different aspects such as the economy, social life, worship or politics. This can result in some feeling of déjà vu when reading about, for example, the various youth groups provided in different periods. However, any dryness is very much off-set by

insights into some of the pioneering characters involved in the early days of the Garden City, and by the reminiscences of early residents. Some of the quotes illustrating differing views of the Garden City way of life are extremely entertaining, such as this from George Orwell, who felt that the town was giving socialism a cranky image:

If only the sandals and the pistachio-coloured shirts could be put in a pile and burnt, and every vegetarian, teetotaller and creeping Jesus sent home to Welwyn Garden City to do his yoga exercise quietly.

That's us told, then.

As someone who has lived in WGC a mere 27 years, I had plenty to learn about its history. What I did already know was supplemented by much interesting background information about the sometimes fraught relationships between the major figures involved in the development of the town, and about the transition from Garden City to New Town. It was also fascinating to read about the place of WGC in the "national and overseas impact and legacy of the Garden City movement." Also, the author's speculation on whether

as Welwyn Garden City celebrates its centenary, will it remain such an attractive and influential exemplar for new community planning? How – or will – its garden city qualities persist over the remaining decades of the present century?

There are perhaps fewer pictures and maps than I'd have liked (although those included are interesting and there is a stunning photo of Birkin's 'Le Mans' Blower competing in the 2019 Mille Miglia). But any dissatisfaction I might feel with the experience of reading this book is probably a result of my having failed to get hold of a physical copy. It is on my birthday list.

Jill Longman

Autumn Term 2020 – Wednesday Meetings

All meetings are currently held via Zoom. You need to book a place each week; booking opens on Fridays for the following Wednesday. Speaker meetings will be held fortnightly, as listed below, and if attending you will need to be online by 10:25 am for the meeting to begin at 10:30.

On the intervening Wednesdays, when there is not a speaker, we hold a “virtual coffee morning”. These run from 10 am – 11 am and we simply break into groups of five or six to chat for 10 minutes, then shuffle into different groups and repeat!

Talks booked for the rest of this year are:

Sep 2nd “Thrills and Spills at Northolt” – Colin Richards

Colin Richards is a member of Watford & District U3A and has an interest in, amongst other things, local history. His talk – Aerial Thrills at Northolt Airport – a not too serious look at the history of Hillingdon’s ‘other airport’, including two World Wars, on site filming and some near disasters.

Sep 16th “Vancouver to Niagara” – Pauline Martindale

Pauline has previously visited us to tell us of her 23 years as a prison officer. This time we will hear, and see, her recollections of a trip to a spectacularly picturesque part of the world.

Sep 30th “Bob Brand – the Banker Who Wanted to Blow Up Hitler” – Graham Harrison

Forgotten by history, Bedfordshire banker Robert Henry Brand was involved in almost every major event in the first half of the 20th century; from the creation of the Republic of South Africa to the founding of the United Nations. He led a fascinating life and his friends included Nancy Astor, John Maynard Keynes and Lawrence of Arabia.

Oct 14th “At the Drop of a Hat – Lives & Music of Flanders and Swann” – Tricia Thompson

Tricia presents lively, interesting and fun talks on a variety of subjects. Last year we heard about seaside towns of the UK and now she brings us a flavour of this famous comedy duo of the 1950s and 60s.

Oct 28th “Queen Victoria’s Kids – Birth & Childhood in Victorian Times” – Ian Waller

Prior to retiring, Ian was a professional genealogist. He now lectures and runs workshops for family history societies, U3As and other groups interested in local and social history. This talk examines the various rituals associated with confinement and childbirth in the Victorian period and what happened after the birth including birth

registration, baptism traditions, farming-out of children and how the unwanted child just vanishes off the face of the earth as far as officialdom is concerned.

Nov 11th “Clement Attlee – Labour’s Greatest Reformer”

Francis Beckett

Francis Beckett is an author, journalist, biographer, and contemporary historian. He has written biographies of Aneurin Bevan, Clement Attlee, Harold Macmillan, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. He has also written on education for the *New Statesman*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* and was, for over 20 years, the editor of the National U3A magazine, *Third Age Matters*, until he retired last November.

Nov 25th “Elizabeth Barton – the Holy Maid of Kent”

Melanie Gibson-Barton

In the 16th century, this young visionary was so dangerous to Henry VIII, Ann Boleyn and Catherine of Aragon that she had to be executed. We will hear why, in this illustrated talk, which includes the work of artist Lauren McMahan.

Dec 9th “A Remarkable Story of Care & Hope – GOSH”

Clive Mear

Clive is a Volunteer Community Ambassador for Great Ormond Street Hospital’s Children’s Charity. He will talk to us about the history of the Hospital, from the founder Dr Charles West in 1852 to the present day, including stories of how GOSH saves lives and the work that needs to continue to support families when a child is admitted to GOSH.

Welwyn Hatfield U3A does not endorse any products or services offered by speakers.

The first meeting of 2021 will be on 13 January.