



Distantly Strolling



Up to the middle of December, the Strollers group met every first and third Tuesday, typically at a designated pub, pre-booked, so they could use the pub's car park, then walk approximately three and a half miles and return to the pub for lunch. This allowed members to socialise as well as exercise – particularly good for those that live alone. They tend to stay in the Hertfordshire area, occasionally asking members to lead a walk in the area where they live. Obviously, with the Covid virus, they had restrictions in place; but they kept walking, adhering to latest Government and Ramblers Association guidelines on safety, as shown in the photograph above, taken by Peter Fox in happier days, near Tewin Bury Farm in September. Alas, all Welwyn Hatfield u3a's Walking and Strolling Groups are now on hold, due to Tier 4 restrictions. They look forward to resuming walks when we move out of Tier 4.

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M.C. Tony Tutton in charge of it all from his luxury ski-chalet

Christmas Party 2020

“We were there and we weren’t square!”

On 16 December, more than 60 Wednesday regulars (and possibly one or two irregulars) Zoomed together to enjoy the u3a Christmas party of 2020. As at any good party there was laughter and chatter, with mutual admiration of party hats and Christmas jumpers.

Master of Ceremonies Tony Tutton (every good party needs a Tony

Tutton!) called us to order to announce the first item of the day: Maryam Rodway and David Steed's brilliant performance of John Julius Norwich's version of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. It was very funny: “Emily” was so pleased with her partridge in a pear tree, and the two turtle doves were charming; she was a little



David Steed as Edward

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Maryam Rodway as Emily

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Jill Longman singing to Santa Baby

puzzled by three French hens, quite put out by four geese-a-laying, but highly delighted with *darling* Edward's five gold rings! "Edward" should really have stopped there, he'd reached the winning post; but no: Edward continued to pile it on. By the tenth day, Emily's mother was taken to the asylum and on the twelfth poor Edward was being served with a solicitor's notice and all his presents were returned. I will never be able to sing that song again without thinking of Emily and Edward. I wonder if Emily regretted returning the five gold rings (if she did)? So gentlemen, beware of overdoing it or, like Edward, you will get your come-uppance.

Then followed a version of Mastermind with Christmas Quizmaster Tony in the chair. A good mixture of questions compiled by Tony covered famous landmarks, Top of the Pops and some Eleven Plus (remember those days?) IQ questions. Jill Longman proved the winner with 50 points. Mercifully we weren't asked to reveal our



Ann and Roy Madell in their festive wear

personal score – my own did not require the fingers of two hands. Jill won a fantasy bottle of Bollinger.

But it is my belief that the fantasy Bollinger was shared well before Jill struck a note on her ukulele for the final item of the party: a star performance of “Santa Baby” (with no need for apologies to Eartha Kitt).

A second virtual bottle was awarded to Ann and Roy Madell as winners of the best Christmas outfits and background.

Everything went with a swing and a good time was had by all. It only remained to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Text by Jo Roscoe; images are screen captures during the event.

Notes from the Chair

Well, who would have thought that we would still be battling Covid 19 at this end of the year? But here we are – it’s not going away and we are all facing the prospect of a very different Christmas this year. Though, by the time you read this, Christmas will have come and gone and we will be looking forward to our vaccinations that will keep the virus at bay. So I hope you managed to find different ways to celebrate this year; a year which has certainly focussed our minds on what is important to us, even if we can’t have the hugs from family that we would have liked.

We have all been concentrated on activities much closer to home. If you are fit and the weather has been kind, walking in the surrounding countryside has been a restorative to the spirits. As the year has gone on we have been able to take more shopping trips and visits to friends with caution. I have only managed one meal at a pub in this time, but a few friends were able to make distanced visits in the garden and then indoors before restrictions were tightened. Gardening has been popular and general clearing out has been possible with the additional time at our disposal. But, as winter has drawn on, I’ve thoroughly enjoyed



indulging in some good books for a long, undisturbed read and finding good films and plays to watch on streaming services in the evenings.

Through all this Welwyn Hatfield u3a has flourished, against the odds. We have been most fortunate to sustain a programme of fortnightly speakers and alternate coffee mornings. In this we are rare among u3as; others may manage only one Zoom meeting per month. Of course we have to thank for this our members Jill Longman and Ann Davies who manage the technical and administrative side of the Zoom meetings, and all the members who have conquered their qualms about using the technology to participate in the Zoom meetings and chat rooms. It is always lovely to see so many faces on a Wednesday morning and, for me, it has become part of the weekly routine. Of course there are also those study groups who have still managed to meet via Zoom.

As usual, the Wednesday speakers have been varied and interesting. I won't outline them all but mention the ones I particularly enjoyed. I found the little known story of the banker, Robert Brand, who wanted to blow up Hitler, particularly fascinating. By contrast, the Lives and Music of Flanders and Swann was most entertaining. The talk on Birth and Childhood in Victorian England was a sobering account. On 11 November we were able to have an appropriate tribute to Remembrance Day in a change to the schedule. The talk on Elizabeth Barton, the holy maid of Kent was very informative, and we finished the programme with a talk about the work of the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, which was most affecting. The term ended with our Christmas Party, as described above. We all looked very festive and many people sat by their Christmas trees, all suitably attired!

It just leaves me to mention the sterling work of the committee who have worked behind the scenes to maintain the work of our u3a. I must mention especially Marie Scales, Secretary, and Sue Talbot, our Treasurer. Roger Swaine deserves special mention for keeping the website up to date and for communicating with members in these difficult times, and Hazel Bell, Newsletter Editor, for producing this newsletter. But all the committee have assisted in keeping us running under challenging times.

I wish you all a very happy new year and hope it may be better than 2020. I look forward to the time when we can meet again in person and enjoy again some of the activities we enjoyed so much in the past.

Pamela Williams

Notes from the Secretary

As you are all aware that the rules for Covid are changing rapidly as a result I shall not be telling you the latest rules, because by the time the newsletter is published they will be out of date.

You all will have probably noticed that the u3a logo has been altered. It is now in lower case, as [u3a](#) – as shown at the top of this newsletter, and of our website.

The trust has informed us that we can continue to use the title, [University of the Third Age](#), and our bank details do not have to be changed. The committee decided that we would use the new logo. The Trust have held their AGM and earlier this month held an EGM, so that in future they can continue to hold AGMs online if it is necessary.

Since our last newsletter, I have received a survey from u3a Trust, asking us how we have managed to run our activities since March. With the help of some of the committee I completed this survey. It covered such items as the number of members, whether we have had a reduction in our membership or had any new members since March, and whether the committee was meeting regularly. I was able to say that group meetings using Zoom commenced as early as April, and that we have been holding weekly meetings via Zoom alternating as coffee mornings or with a speaker.

For the first time this year the Trust are running a Winter School: those of you who use Zoom may be interested. All the activities that the Trust are organising are in the Trust's newsletter: Roger Swaine, our webmaster, puts the link on our website, on the home page, so all of you with Internet access can read it.

Herts Network have also been busy during the pandemic, holding online talks, as well as sending out regular updates which are now fortnightly; again, Roger has been putting the link on our website.

Finally, we are planning to hold our AGM in March and I shall be sending out the papers electronically in early February. To comply with the law, those of you who do not have Internet access will receive hard copies by post.



Marie Scales

Our Archives

The Welwyn Hatfield u3a archives were started in 1986 by the founder-Chairman, Joan Bensley. She compiled a large binder labelled “Reference file”, which includes our constitution, our affiliation agreement, prospectus, Objects and Principles, Companies Act Memorandum of Association, Standing Orders, Charity Commissioners Registration, Responsibilities of Trustees, Covenanting, Resources, Liability Insurance, and much besides.



Joan Bensley

In 2006, when Brian Kent, who currently held the collection, was about to finish his term as Chairman, it was agreed that Joan Bensley and Ona Glover (Chairman 1996-8) “would update the book with photographs etc. and this Archive would be made available at the AGM etc.”, according to the Committee minutes for June 2006.



An early display of the archives – perhaps in 1996



Michael McCardle's 80th birthday, celebrated on a trip to Cyprus in 1998

Joan moved away from the district in 2008, and the collection was taken over by incoming Chairman Stuart Barker, who continued to update it, adding appropriate items as they became available. At his death in 2013 the collection passed to Judy Grant (Chairman 2012-14), and in 2015 to Myrtle Pit-Keathly (Chairman 2006-08), who continued to make additions.

The archives now comprise:

“The beginning”: a large red ledger containing handwritten lists of names and addresses of those attending meetings

Joan Bensley’s original **“Reference file”**, a black arch binder

An orange arch binder labelled **WELWYN / HATFIELD ARCHIVES** containing papers about anniversary celebrations, and photographs, mostly of exhibitions, also of trips and travel up to 2005; membership lists with addresses for 1987-2001



Malcolm and Myrtle Pit-Keathly with the Archives at Meet the Groups, 2019

Photo by Peter Fox

U3A! U3A!
 For over fifties work and play,
 with different subjects, day by day.
 No limit's set to what we do,
 Our courses we pursue;
 and every week we join to meet the local u3a.
 U3A! U3A!
 So join the U3A!
 You'll make many friends that way;
 and every week you'll learn some more
 for that is what the Groups are for:
 To bring more joy to the day of all in U3A.
 U3A! U3A!
 You'll hear the members say:
 "We never guessed what fun it would be
 to join the Group." All agree,
 You're welcome in U3A.
 So come and join the fun:
 There's something here for everyone
 to pick and choose – you can't lose!
 So come along, come along, come along;
 Join the U3A!

Discovered in the archives – *U3A Song*
 words by Diana Reddaway, with music by D. Watt

PHOTOGRAPHS 1988-2005 in a red album
 HSBC booklet, *The Future of Retirement*
 Third Age Trust Directory of Services
 Trustee Information Pack: Herts CVS, 2006
 Seven ring binders of minutes of Committee meetings and AGMs,
 with indexes
PROGRAMMES 1985-2020 in a black ring binder
 A folder of National u3a / TAT papers, mostly 2006-7
 A folder of Regional (Herts Network) papers, mostly 2005-7, and a
 disk, "How do we manage our finances?"

Membership lists with full details in plastic doc. wallet

1 new members' pack, 2008

Exploring London: Highlights from 2010 to 2013 by Tony Lammiman: photographs of trips organised by Bridget Durham and Dennis Edwards.

Three "Chairman's Newsletters" 1990-91; then a complete run of the u3a Newsletter starting with Issue No. 1, April 2000.

Anthologies of stories and poems published by the Creative Writing Group:

"All Sorts of Literary Sweetmeats", published 1994, profits going to the Local Hospice.

"Whatever", an anthology consisting of ten short stories (one by each member of the group). Published 2009. £150.00 was raised and donated to the National Autistic Society.

"Whatever it Takes", published 2011, 40 pages, cost £1.00, in aid of Motor Neurone Disease Association.

"Voices", published 2012, costing £2.00, in aid of the National Deaf Children's Society.

MISSING from the Archives are –

The first Chairman's Newsletter, 1990

Newsletter No. 26 (if it existed)

The first anthology published by the Creative Writing Group: "Autumn Leaves", published before 1991, when they were planning a second, to be sold in aid of Arthritis Research. The second: date and title unknown.

Our archives should remain complete and up to date. Please, if you know of anything (such as published material about Welwyn Hatfield u3a) suitable for inclusion, send details to Hazel Bell – hkb@aidanbell.com.



Booklets published by the Creative Writing Group, 1994-2012

u3a's High Street Project

The autumn 2020 edition of *Third Age Matters* reported on a national project, 'Mapping the Future of our High Streets'. Originally intended to compare today's high streets with those of the past, this ongoing survey now aims to look at the state of high streets before and after the pandemic struck.

u3a members across the country were asked to record details of their high streets: all shops or premises providing services to the general public in a defined area as of last September. In eighteen months time they will note changes that have taken place. The work is intended to form a landmark report by the Third Age Trust in 2022, helping to raise the u3a's profile in its 40th anniversary year.

Members from Hatfield, Welwyn and Welwyn Garden City have noted some of the main shopping and services available in their areas.

Hatfield

Spotting a High Street in Hatfield is difficult. According to local historian Brian Lawrence:

For most of the 20th century what may be considered the High Street moved from Fore Street in Old Hatfield to the Great North Road, and then to the St Albans Road in Newtown; but none of them became established as a lasting High Street. The siting of the Town Centre was a major dilemma for the planners of the 1948 New Town of Hatfield. They considered three sites, and finally settled on St Albans Road; but, as with so many schemes of that type, the money was re-directed elsewhere and the planned facilities never fully came to fruition.

The Borough Council have done their best to encourage a market and High Street atmosphere, but it is a battle still to be won. Local giant Simons is a welcome and well used presence, but the last years have seen the demise of the Co-op store, and its eventual successor Peacocks has recently gone into administration. Pharmacies, opticians and Iceland thrive as essential services, but the giant Asda at the end of the pedestrianised area is the main stopping place for shoppers. A welcome break at a coffee shop has become the town centre norm. It was not always thus:

In the midst of times past, after the Romans had been and gone, the Great North Road to London led up the hill of what was to become



The Great North Road at Brewery Hill in Hatfield, 1950s

Fore Street and across Hatfield Palace parkland. By the 18th century and the Georgian era until the mid-19th century, Fore Street, supplemented by shops on Duck Lane (now Park Street), with two grand coaching inns, was a bustle of trade selling everything from the proverbial butcher, baker and candlestick-maker: providing all that a busy little community and traveller might need, including at least one front parlour ale house, the Eight Bells tavern and the Horse and Groom Inn.

The laying of the Great Northern Railway and the re-routing of the Great North Road in the 1850s effectively cut off the old from the rapidly developing new town, later boosted by the arrival of the de Havilland aircraft company. Old Hatfield became a distinct and separate area of Hatfield town; no longer was Fore Street the busy thoroughfare it had been. The coaching inns were badly hit and were the first to close. Trading dwindled, but the shops and taverns continued to serve the everyday needs of the local community until the early post-WW II period. The street with its variety of architectural styles and sizes became a prime residential area, with several houses accorded Listed Building status.

Postwar development at the west end of the old town provided a parade of sorts, largely occupied by services rather than retail. A baker and a butcher's shop survived into the 1990s and a newsagent-cum-minimarket still survives, as well as a more modern version of the

same, recently opened within the station precinct. A substantial refurbished building on Salisbury Square, rumoured to be a potential supermarket, stands empty and forlorn awaiting its post-covid, increasingly online shopping fate.

Old Hatfield serves perhaps as an example of how changes in lifestyle affect our High Streets. The difference now is in the rate of change and its radical effects.

Jo Roscoe

Welwyn

This photo of Welwyn Village High Street, taken on 10 November 2020, shows: along the left – a florist; a Chiropodist; a ladies clothes and accessories shop; a bespoke cake shop with a tea room; an archway (probably intended for a coach to enter the courtyard); two private houses; an estate agent; a fascinating, old fashioned looking shop specialising in the sale and repair of stringed instruments and bows [*ah, remember Eric Hill? – Ed.*]; a bakery and pastry shop. The Wellington Inn is number 1 High Street (possibly a Mediaeval Hall House in the 11th century, then in the 13th, the Swan, in the 14th, the Boars Head: the date AD 1352 is on the frontage). St Mary's Parish church is at the far end of the High Street.



Welwyn High Street

Along the right-hand side, from opposite the Wellington: an Indian restaurant; a charity shop supporting the local respite care centre / neurological centre; estate agents; wine merchants (not an off licence) advertising 'Chilled Champagne'; The Tavern pub; Estate agents; Restaurant; Tesco express with a cash machine. (A very recent acquisition: after Barclays closed their branch last year the villagers had no means of obtaining cash and so

Tesco requested permission to have an ATM); Undertakers; Post Office/gift shop; Card/gift shop.

These facilities are not shown in the photograph, but lie behind it, still part of the High Street but dissected by the River Mimram and the car park. They include the surgery/pharmacy, two dentists, a barbers, a nail bar (a newish addition) another restaurant , another bakery and another pharmacy.



So if you live in Welwyn, in your High Street you can easily buy a house, a dress, or celebration cakes; find gifts and greetings cards; eat and drink (with a great deal of variety); you can have your teeth, feet or nails done and your health checked; and arrange a funeral. This list does not include having your cello bow repaired and/or buying a new violin or cello.

I really enjoyed having a proper look at the High Street and I've discovered some hidden gems.

text and photos by Ann Davies

Welwyn Garden City

As you can see from the street plan, Ebenezer Howard didn't actually design Welwyn Garden City with a High Street: he went for more of an avenue approach, with shops mainly focused around Howardsgate, Stonehills, Fretherne Road, and Wigmore's North. The shops currently focus on those things that you can't get online – such as haircuts and eye tests. So, there are seven hair salons plus three designated barbers and five opticians. Eateries of varying cuisines and coffee shops have proliferated over the years with 19 in total, including some chains (Bill's, Cote, Nero's) and takeaways such as Greggs and Subway. The fish-and-chip



shop, which has been in Stonehills for years, is still doing great business and the fisherman outside still holds his fish! The Two Willows and The Doctor's Tonic also do a good line in fish and chips, I hear!

The bakers, Simmons, and Lamberts, the flower shop are two of the longest surviving independent businesses in the town, along with Godshaws the jewellers.

There are still seven banks, including Barclays in the Howard centre, which is quite significant given the current trend to close down many branches. If you want to spend some money to buy a house, the town is well stocked with estate agents – eight in total. On the home front, you now have three specialist shops to choose from if you need new carpets.

Three supermarkets support the community but, most commonly, one comes across charity shops – eleven in total plus three discount stores. New arrivals in town include several gaming shops, a pawn shop and Vape Jungle. We have a couple of Chinese Therapy establishments along with several beauty spas and nail bars. Messages, the party shop, is a real treasure trove of brightly coloured goodies to suit every celebration imaginable.



Of course, the flagship store is John Lewis at the top of Parkway – long may it continue! In addition the Howard Centre, in front of the station, houses most of the familiar high street names such as M&S, Boots, WH Smith, Dorothy Perkins, Clarks, Monsoon, and Goldsmiths. It also boasts a fitness centre, the shoe repair shop to complement Timpsons in Fretherne Road and Starbucks along with two more hair salons, a couple of phone shops and some other smaller enterprises.

There are two dry cleaners in the town and a Superdrug. Blacks, the outdoor fitters are always on the brink of closing but the shop remains open at the moment. We



The Howard Centre, Welwyn Garden City

now have a Travelodge over the shops in Fretherne Road which apparently is doing well. Waterstones, the book shop has been a welcome addition to the town, neighbouring the more established Holland and Barrett health food store. McColls is not only a newsagents but now houses the post office.

Of course, Welwyn Garden City is experiencing the same challenges as High Streets all over the country. The old, substantial, post office building is still boarded up after many years and Debenhams, also in a prominent position in the town, is now empty. They have recently been joined by Halfords which closed a few months ago. Zizzis restaurant is empty and is up for rent. In the Howard Centre, Carphone warehouse, a jewellers, a second e cigarette shop and two travel agents have closed. Given the uncertain future of the Arcadia group, some of those familiar names in the centre may also be at risk.

However, we have to look on the bright side and ensure that we all support our town centres as much as we can. This has not been the celebratory year anticipated for the town's hundredth anniversary, but the support of residents is vital if the centre is to continue to thrive.

text and photos by Jean Mackie

Group News

Book Group (2)

Well, we had our brief moment in the sunny garden, twixt lockdowns, then Covid regulations shut us in again, to Zoom. In the three months since, we've escaped by reading three tremendous books from the USA, all chosen long before Covid appeared.

The first of our American trilogy, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, is the debut novel of Delia Owens, a retired zoologist, who explains the title and sets the tone for the book:

I learned from a book that crawdads don't really sing. But I learned from my mother that if you go far enough into the wilderness, by yourself, and there's nothing but you and nature, you will hear the crawdads sing.

1969, and a young man has died in a North Carolina swamp. As the story unfolds, back to 1952 and forward to 1970, we follow Kya from age six to 25 as she learns to survive alone, the 'swamp girl' rejected by the nearby townspeople. Racial and social division and the complexities of nature are major themes in this beautifully written book that combines murder mystery, survival and coming of age. We were absorbed by the exquisitely detailed descriptions of wildlife and what she learned from it. We could almost taste what she ate, feel what she felt. And we were startled by the dénouement. Highly recommended!

An American Marriage, winner of the 2019 Women's Prize for Fiction, is Tayari Jones's first UK novel. This book, too, speaks to race and class.

Central to the plot is an appalling miscarriage of justice which we found deeply shocking and inexplicable, but the characters in America's deep South appear to take it as read that a black man found to be in the wrong place at the wrong time has little hope of justice. Jones doesn't elaborate on the process, or the trial, she intends us to concentrate on the marriage that was ripped apart and the years of separation that followed.

Roy and Celestial are young, upwardly mobile and black, and have been married just eighteen months when he's sent down and we read the story through their letters, as they try to keep love alive, while

wondering if their marriage will survive. As does the reader, never really knowing the answer until the end of this deeply moving and powerful book. Again, highly recommended.

And, finally, *The Giver of Stars* by Jojo Moyes, set in 1930's poverty-stricken East Kentucky, and based on the fascinating, and largely unknown, true story of the Pack Horse Library initiative, introduced by Eleanor Roosevelt, that ran from 1935 to 1943.

Desperate to escape her suffocating English family, Alice Wight marries a handsome American whom she barely knows and moves to his home in small-town Kentucky. Frying pan and fire are the words that come to mind as she is ignored by a husband, who has his own demons, and bullied by her father-in-law. Until, never having ridden, she saddles up and joins the group of women who ride out into the Appalachians to deliver books to isolated cabins, whose inhabitants are often semi-illiterate and sometimes dangerous. And she discovers the liberating power of women's friendships.

Themes of class, race, poverty and violence are set against the rural Kentucky landscape, detailed and beautifully drawn.

The first time they ride through the mountains together, Alice asks one of the librarians, who's never left Kentucky, how she knows so much about animals in Africa:

'Margery yanks her mule to a halt. "Are you seriously asking me that question?" she demands.

The answer, of course, is because of books that brought stories of Africa to Appalachia – and books that bring us all a slice of the world, when we're locked down in WGC! This one is an anthem to women's friendship and love of books, with the bonus of horses, if that's your thing! Highly recommended.

Carol Bush

Exploring London (3)

After spending our time in lockdown and various other restrictions, we were able to organise a Zoom trip with our group at the end of November. This was titled "The Virtual Lure of the Underground" and run by London Walks.

We had around twenty members able to join us and were treated to a fascinating study of the London Underground, its beginning and history, its many lines and stations and buildings and styles of

architecture, including its headquarters at 55 Broadway SW1 which has now been sold and is going to become a hotel. The tour included a virtual visit to various stations across many of the 11 lines which cover a total of 402 km. A lot of these have similar architecture, including large glazed arches for light and a tower for ventilation These were designed by Charles Holden in the 1920's and 30's in an art deco style and are still heavily used today.

We also learned more about the iconic underground map created by Henry Charles Beck in 1931, which has been adapted and copied all over the world. Apparently, he never copyrighted the design, just sold it to London Underground for 5 or 10 guineas.

A wealth of information was fed to us, including the longest escalator on the underground at Angel on the Northern Line, and the fabric used for the train seating which has a bespoke design incorporating four different London Landmarks and is actually a form of hardwearing carpet material. Our guide Fiona, held our attention for over an hour, allowing time for questions afterwards.

We felt this was a success for our first virtual outing and are now busily planning our next event, entitled "The Virtual Christmas Lights of London", on 30 December.

Sue McLellen & Tony Dodd

Family History Group

We've been running the Family History Group via Zoom for seven months now, since June 2020 without the usual August break, and the experiment has been a success. Although a few long-standing members have, alas, not joined our Zoom meetings, new ones have come along, and the number of participants each month has remained much the same as before the first



lockdown – perhaps because, with most of us being extra vigilant in 2020, we have had more time to reflect on our ancestors and their lives in, perhaps, even more difficult times. We now have the time to research our families, whereas previously we've never got round to it. And, to be frank, for u3a members new to family history, it's become so much easier with digitisation of documents by subscription companies such as Ancestry and Find my Past and access to free sites such as FreeBMD and FamilySearch. So, most of the donkey work can be carried out at home during these dull winter days.

As I commented in the last u3a newsletter, the meeting format we used at Mead House is ideal for the FHG via Zoom. Our meetings are an eclectic mix of social history and family history with formal lectures using YouTube (Aug 2020: DNA for Beginners), talks given by members (Sep. 2020: Heraldry, Oct. 2020: organising your FH data and Nov. 2020: Using FreeBMD) and group help sessions where members try to breakdown the 'brick-walls' other members have hit while trying to go back in time for their family.

Before we started the group participation sessions, I was concerned that it would be chaotic. Fortunately, everyone in the group uses the video and audio links on their computers so we can view each other. Everyone is very patient. The biggest risk is controlling the enthusiasm of members wanting to help someone who is stuck. I am aware that some u3a groups have yet to restart, venturing into Zoom. I can only recommend that you give it a try!

Brian Bolton-Knight

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The Family History Group in happier times, at Meet the Groups 2019. Photo by Peter Fox

u3a W-H Newsletter No. 66, Spring 2021

Poetry

Julia Kampmeier of the Poetry Group has written this poem, inspired by the new circumstances we live in.

Overcoming Covid 19

How little did we dream this time
Of loss and limitation!
Our lives were full of vibrant days,
And ordinary frustration ...

While living out the human dream,
We'll always have some strain,
Friend and family sharing this —
Absorbs the sharper pain.

But distanced as we find ourselves,
— Cut off from warm embraces —
Masks rendering anonymous
— Debarred from reading faces ...

We work to stay above the tide
Of gathering fear and panic,
Cling to most hopeful thoughts
Like survivors of 'Titanic'.

My heart misgives to know the flood
Of problems now endemic,
The thoughts of pain and homelessness
Brought on by the pandemic.

We should be kinder than before,
Ensnared in family 'bubble'
With gardens to give breathing space,
Distancing from trouble ...

And, thankfully, one sees and hears
Of selfless acts of healing,
As seen in walks of Colonel Tom,
For charity appealing.

Words cannot tell our gratitude
That in our Nation's trial,
For all the Front Line workers,
And their dauntless self-denial.

Swallowing our own desires,
Enlarging acts of giving,
We pray that this appalling time
Teaches new ways of living.



The twenty-eighth in our series of profiles of distinguished Welwyn Hatfield u3a members features ...

Jill Longman

Jill Gore was born in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, of a long line of maternal antecedents there, and attended the County Grammar School. With no clear idea of what she wanted to do as a career, she saw no point in going to university, and planned to get secretarial or clerical work after the summer break; but her headmistress, as Jill tells it, “phoned the County Council’s Education Office and pretty much bullied them into giving me a job. She was a formidable lady and there was little chance of them, or me, saying no to her. I started there straight after leaving school”.

Jill joined the Bury St Edmunds branch of 18 Plus, and soon became the group’s secretary. The Chairman was Andrew Longman ... they married before Jill’s twentieth birthday.

Jill’s first job led to her becoming Secretary/Clerk for the Suffolk County Council Youth Service, then working in the advertising department of the local newspaper until the first of her three children was born. When they went to school Jill worked in the same schools, as general classroom assistant, or supporting children with special needs; later as School Secretary, in St. Edmundsbury Primary School. In 1993 the relocation of Andrew’s employer brought the Longmans to WGC, and Jill worked at what was then Tewin Water School for hearing impaired children (it later moved to new buildings at Monks Walk School and is now known as Knightsfield School).

When the children were old enough for Jill to work full-time she went to work for the Consumers’ Association – *Which?* Magazine – in their customer service centre in Hertford, first dealing with a truly vast array of members’ queries herself, then training others to do so, and devising systems to help them to do so efficiently. When a company restructure meant that she would be required to spend some days each week in the London offices, she looked around for something nearer home. As she lived only a ten-minute walk away from the Shire Park complex of offices, that wasn’t difficult, and she went to work for

Tesco, in their Personnel department, and helped to set up their Alumni group for retired senior executives.

On taking early retirement from Tesco, Jill found that she knew very few people locally. One day, someone on a Hertfordshire Health Walk with her mentioned that they had just joined u3a. Three of the group said "Oh I thought about doing that but I haven't got round to it ..." so they decided to get round to it together. Jill became a member in 2017 and joined the Exploring London, Gardening, London History and Playreading Groups; later, when it started in 2019, also the Ukulele Group.

After such a career in organisations, Jill had filled in her New Member's Skills Sheet offering support with administration. This was quickly fastened on, and soon Jill was standing in for Jill McKinnon as New Members' Secretary while Jill M. was away for a few months. Thus Jill L. was co-opted onto the committee while still a new member, and has remained on it. She joined the Speakers Team and became Programme Secretary; then took over as leader of the Speakers Team not long before lockdown, so had to postpone all the bookings when all our physical meetings had to be suspended. When Ann Davies offered to act as host for virtual meetings via Zoom, Jill found "this was a chance to get back to some form of Wednesday morning programme, and I now look for speakers who can deliver in that way, until such time as we can return to filling a hall – whenever that might be".

Having arranged speakers and thrashed out, online with Ann Davies, how to organise and run meetings via Zoom, Jill then needed to encourage as many members as possible to give them a try. Some were up for it straight away, but others were very dubious. She writes:

For the first few weeks, I offered tasters and tuition in the use of Zoom to any u3a members who wished to take the plunge. For some people all that was needed was to provide a safe, calm opportunity to click that link for the first time, and more than one person greeted me online with words to the effect, "Oh, is that all?" For others, there were more hurdles to leap. It is not easy getting to grips with unfamiliar technology when the person who is trying to help you can't actually see what you can see and can't lean over your shoulder and point to the right button to press! But we all get better with practice and the numbers attending our virtual meetings have risen steadily. There is room for more, though, and anyone who is still considering it and would like some help getting to grips with Zoom is welcome to get in touch.

Further talents of Jill's were revealed at the 2020 Christmas party, when she proved the winner of Tony Tutton's Quiz, and also delighted us by singing "Santa Baby", accompanying herself on the ukulele.

Jill says of u3a that it is "the best thing to do with whatever time you have spare!" She still fits in other activities besides u3a: singing in a choir, reading for the local Talking Newspaper, Health Walks, Zumba and Folk Dancing, plus spending time with her five grandchildren.

Hazel Bell

Obituary: Susan King 1947 - 2020



Sue was one of those special people who touched many people's lives to their benefit whilst involving herself in numerous activities, such as badminton, keep fit, theatre, cinema, holidays and walking.

It didn't stop there she was a Tree Warden, a Dog Trainer and went to the major Dog Shows, loved watching horse racing (without ever having placed a bet) with an interest in an ownership syndicate.

Sue was a very active member in our u3a having been Treasurer, a group leader in Arts Appreciation and a member of The Garden Group, Wild Life Watch, Holiday Group and Exploring London. She never wasted a single moment: there was always something else to see just around the corner; hence, when on any coach trip, she was always the last person to get back on the coach and often the first person off. As you can imagine, when you tried to phone her during the day she was never there.

Sue grew up in Letchworth and moved to Hatfield where she attended Onslow School. Her working life of 30 years was spent with Barclays Bank from whence she retired early to enjoy all her many interests. She brought up one son, Colin, who lives close by with his family.

She will be so sorely missed and always fondly remembered by so many people.

Tony and Helen Bristow

Spring Term 2021 – 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 ten minutes, then shuffle into different groups and repeat!

Jan 6 Coffee morning

Jan 13 “British Comedy Greats” Bob Harding-Jones

Bob is a humorist, raconteur, poet, writer and speaker who will entertain us with his presentation on some greats of British comedy.

Jan 20 Coffee morning

Jan 27 “The Painted Hall, Greenwich” Michael Rodway

The Old Royal Naval College is the architectural centrepiece of Maritime Greenwich and is home to Britain’s answer to the Sistine Chapel – the Painted Hall – recently restored as part of an award-winning conservation project.

Feb 3 Coffee morning

Feb 10 “Hatchments and Hedgehogs – Heraldry All Around Us” Chloe Cockerill

Heraldry is everywhere, with Royal Arms on official documents, Team Arms on Football shirts, School blazers proudly displaying their Arms, etc. Chloe introduces us to this little-known subject.



Feb 20 Coffee morning

Feb 24 “Votes for Women” Roger Mason

Roger will tell us about Adela Pankhurst, the youngest daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, founder of the Suffragettes. Emmeline and Adela’s political views diverged sharply and in June 1914 Emmeline paid for her one-way ticket to Australia, where Adela became a founder member of the Communist Party. She developed sympathies for the Japanese and was interned in Australia after the attack on Pearl Harbour until the end of World War II.

March 2 Coffee morning

March 10 “Wardrobe and Lifestyle of the Windsors”

Janie Ramsay

Back in August 2020, Janie gave one of the first talks we had via Zoom, captivating us with her insights into the fabulous jewels of the Duchess of Windsor. You were all keen to hear more, so here it is! Janie will tell us about the wardrobe that went with that extraordinary jewellery and also go further into the lifestyle of this iconic and controversial couple.

March 17 Coffee morning

March 24 “History of Black Immigration to London”

Stephen Brown

Stephen leads our London History Group. Last year he gave us a fascinating presentation based on ten historical maps. This time he is covering a subject that we could all benefit from knowing and understanding more about – how and when black immigrants settled in London.

Welwyn Hatfield u3a does not endorse any products or services offered by speakers.

The first meeting of the summer term will be on April 14.