

Charity No. 1083274

Leicester Newsletter

February 2021

u3asites.org.uk/leicester



Photo 'Bounce' by Cliff Ault

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to 2021 and a Happy New Year to everyone. The good news is that the Government has said that it aims to have vaccinated everyone who is vulnerable or over 70 by the middle of February. This will come as a relief to u3a members who are all likely to be included in that group. The not so good news is that it is only proposing to relax the lockdown gradually as more and more of the general population get their shots. This means that we are still some way off from being able to return to having regular monthly meetings at Christchurch. Fortunately, there are other ways of dealing with this. Some groups have been able to carry on meeting courtesy of Zoom and the Committee has been looking at ways of using Zoom for general meetings. We are hoping to be able to arrange for the first such virtual meeting, with a speaker, in March. Details of this, including instructions on how to join the meeting, will be circulated nearer the time. It is likely that we shall continue to use Zoom even after normal meetings have resumed. This would allow anyone unable to get to Christchurch for a meeting to still watch what was going on and listen to the talk in the comfort of their own home. Despite its advantages Zoom does, however, have one major drawback. There is a substantial number of members who cannot make use of it because they do not have an internet connection. We do not want them to feel isolated or cut off from u3a activities. This is one of a variety of considerations, some of them technical, that will need to be taken into account with regard to the AGM where a greater degree of member participation and interaction is needed. We have therefore decided to delay this year's AGM until May. This will provide time to make arrangements for the advance circulation of reports and questions by post and for ensuring that postal votes will be available for those that need them. A delay will also, of course, increase the chances of being able, after all, to hold the meeting in Christchurch as well as on line if lockdown restrictions have been eased. Finally, there are a few things to say about the Committee, which has been under strength for the past year or more. As you may know, the situation has sadly been made worse by the passing, earlier this year, of Elisabeth Somogyi, who had been such a hardworking and valuable member of the Committee and will be sorely missed. We have co-opted two new members, Henry Paulinski and Keith Pyne. Henry has particular expertise relating to Zoom



and has also agreed to be Vice Chair. Keith has been speaker finder. However, we still need more new blood so please consider putting yourself forward. Tony Davison (*Chair Leicester u3a*)

Obituary: Elisabeth Somogyi

Elisabeth Somogyi, a much valued and respected member of Leicester u3a Committee, sadly passed away on 8th January in the Leicester General Hospital. Elisabeth was from Hungary and had no relatives living in the UK. She was a very active member of our u3a and as well as serving on the committee ran the Little Theatre Group. She was our Research Ambassador and managed shared learning projects between Leicester u3a and Leicester University. She was involved with groups as varied as Architecture, Bones for Life, Mah Jong, and all the History Groups. Elisabeth will be missed for her amazing knowledge of so many subjects. A family and close friends funeral service was held on 3rd February at Countesthorpe Crematorium.

NEWS FROM THE THIRD AGE TRUST

If you have friends and colleagues who may not know about the national newsletter, or even u3a, but would enjoy being part of our newsletter community, please encourage them to sign up and try it. As you know - signing up is easy. [You can sign up via our website.](#)

Our First u3a Day – Wednesday 2nd June 2021

Whether you decide to plan for a physical event or keep it virtual, we hope that our first u3a Day will showcase the social and learning opportunities on offer.

Join our u3a Facebook Groups

Facebook groups are a great way to connect with u3a members across the movement, supporting each other and sharing ideas.

[u3a Keeping In Touch](#)- a Facebook group for the movement to connect with each other through photos, pictures and stories.

[u3a Day](#) - a place to share ideas on how you are planning to promote your u3a and share the messages of the u3a movement for our upcoming u3a

Day. (Leicester u3a has a u3a Day Sub Committee, unfortunately severely disrupted by lockdowns. It will meet again and it would be very happy to hear any ideas, physical or virtual, members might have. Contact Neil Taylor, Groups Coordinator at groups@leicesteru3a.org.uk)

u3a In My Own Write - our latest Facebook group is an adaptation from the u3a Facebook page we ran for several years. This group is a place for u3a writers to share their work and discuss writing.

Become a Social Media Volunteer

Are you a social media whiz? Would you be interested in helping us run and moderate our u3a social media groups? Get in touch by emailing communications@u3a.org.uk

NEWS FROM THE REGIONAL TRUSTEE – Jean Hogg.



We now have someone in the region who is hoping to help us all to raise the profile of the u3a in the East Midlands. Chris Hartny-Mills has agreed to take on the mammoth task of Public Relations Advisor for our region and will be working closely with me to increase general awareness of the u3a. Chris has wide knowledge and experience in PR and marketing; he understands the workings of u3a committees and has been playing a key role in working groups looking at retention and recruitment.

We are all on a mission to spread the benefits of membership of our amazing organisation with its inspiring strapline - Learn, laugh, live. We are also aware of the need to address the diversity of our membership. Following on from the recent rebranding exercise, we want to ensure that the u3a becomes more widely recognised as a force for good, by being more proactive in the media. The more of us who get involved in this the better! It is quite alarming when we look outside of our organisation just how many retired people have not even heard of the u3a. We have so much to offer, we might even be regarded as one of Britain's best kept secrets!

Leicester u3a has been asked to nominate a single person on our committee who will act as Chris Hartny-Mills' point of contact. This will be discussed at our next Committee Meeting (by Zoom) on 9th February.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR

New Year New You to coin a phrase, and picking up on the great idea, described elsewhere in this Newsletter, of Richard Taylor and the Digital Imaging Group, what new way can you think of to create interest within your group?



Architecture and Design are of course having speakers, as advertised in the Newssheet, and it is the leading light in Leicester u3a's response to the National u3a's initiative the High Street Project.

Natural History tell me they are having a Quiz. Could you each bring a book on your subject to read and discuss? If you were a writer, which author would you be? Write and share a Blog as History do superbly. And send each other jokes as French Advanced Conversation do; and Bard themed humour as our Shakespeare group does.

I've been watching the Lockdown Learning on TV (recorded, you understand...not live in the afternoon...) and the brilliant programmes for children and teenagers are a lesson to us all. I'm struck by the way the programmes start with a surprise, get your attention, look at a commonplace thing differently, then show the surprise again, this time explaining it. And at the end they have a roundup of what's been shown. Do try a different way of doing, or talking about, your activity, and to coin part of another phrase, "Learn" by all means, but "Laugh" as well. Please feel free to contact me at any time with news of what you're doing and to ask questions about any problems you may be having. I personally enjoy hearing from you, and I need to know of any issues in order to advise on different learning strategies and approaches; and also, if any of our members are feeling down or isolated. I'll also be in touch regularly with suggestions.

And of course, we are open for new Activity Groups. Do get in touch if you have an idea.

Take care,

Neil Taylor Groups Co-ordinator

MEET THE CONVENOR – Angie Barnes Gardening group

Q: Are you originally from Leicester?

A: Yes I have lived in Leicester City most of my life apart from a brief sojourn in Mountsorrel.

Q: What brought you to Leicester u3a?

A: I heard about it from my sister-in-law who is in u3a in Portsmouth.

Q: What did you do before you retired?

A I was a plant manager in a garden centre but after I was made redundant I took an office job with the company Dave worked for.

Q: What made you join Leicester u3a, & when?

A: When I retired Dave was still at work and I was tearing my hair out with boredom. I wanted to join a gardening club so I joined the gardening group in Leicester U3A in April 2018

Q: What groups did you join to start with?

A: Since joining the Gardening group I have also joined Ukulele and Family History groups. I also belong to Orienteering (for the tea afterwards) Parks & Tearoom Strolls, and Petanque.

Q: What's your TV guilty pleasure?

A: Coronation Street

Q: What was the last book you read?

A: I no longer read many books due to poor eyesight but was given a Phillip Schofield Autobiography for Christmas which I do intend to read.

My grateful thanks to Angie for her time. (Editor)

REPORTS FROM THE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Creative Writing – Final entries from last year’s competition

My Boys *by Steph Smith*

My boys,
I would die for you.
Save me or my boys in a blaze?
Save them.
Last life jacket on a sinking ship?
Save them.
The last drop of water in the desert?
It’s theirs.
The mother’s ‘choice’ is no choice.
Mothers made this choice today
I’ve been lucky,
I’ve never had to.
But I would, like a shot,
Though my boys are boys no more,
They are men,
With sons of their own...
Their boys,
My boys,
I would die for you.

Shopping in North Carolina August 2016 *by Cherry Stephenson*

We were in North Carolina, visiting my husband’s feisty Aunt Evelyn, and I wanted to sharpen my drawing pencils with a penknife. Normal sharpeners have a habit of breaking the lead, just as it reaches the desired point. Knives give graphite a much sturdier and more satisfying point. Aunt Evelyn suggested Walmart, with the same confidence that we refer to Google when we’re on a quest. If you’ve never been to America you need to know that Walmart can best be described as a hyper-hyper-market, where every need of the modern American, whether city dweller or farmer, is housed under one ginormous roof.

Picture me, a petite English woman, standing in a single storeyed, vast, shed-like building, gazing up at an exceedingly tall, lean, black man, as he puzzled over my request to locate a penknife.

Realisation dawned 'Y'all mean a pocket knife?'

'Yes! - with a bradawl & cork screw, please.'

'Ya mean a MULTIE (he pronounced it like necktie) pocket knife?!'

I nodded.

Inspiration struck. – 'Ya tried the guns & ammunition counter?'

I looked at him dumbstruck.

With a long, sinuous, sinewy arm, he signposted that department, across acres of stands and displays, in the far reaches of the store.

Off I set, feeling small, vulnerable and under-equipped, without a provisioned haversack, or hiking boots, (all of which I could easily have purchased without leaving the store). I strode, with more outward confidence than I felt, past the lowlands of outsize t-shirts; round towers of Back to School exercise books; woodlands of paper, folders and files; through the bushy tundra of luridly coloured dresses and fluorescent jackets labelled XXXL and EXTRA XXXXL; past boulders of sit-on lawn mowers and electric golf carts; through tall avenues of shelves stacked high with bulk-buys of dry foodstuffs that would last an average family an entire year; giant sacks of seeds and fertilizers and gleaming farm tools, until - I arrived, with some trepidation, at the G & A department, nestling between pet foods and the gardening centre.

It was set out like a jewellery department in John Lewis or Selfridges. Polished glass cabinets proudly displayed individual Berettas, Lugar Pistols and Browning Automatics. On one open glass counter top, a gleaming mini Gatling gun, its necklace of shells coyly looped around the stand like precious pearls stopped me in my tracks. There were no visible security chains; no locks on the cabinets. Everything was out in the open, free to be touched and handled, as if it were just a collection of scarves or handbags or harmless gloves.

My blood ran cold. I felt sick to my stomach. It was so alien - to stand amid so many untethered weapons of destruction, coming from a land where schools can no longer use starting pistols without a licence at sports days, and even fireworks are kept under padlock. This was a shock to my English constitution. I had to steel myself to continue the search – I had come so far.

Thankfully, I turned to the section of knives. My heart was no longer in it, but I forced myself to keep looking with diligence. Even here, I was overwhelmed by the range of lethal looking blades, from delicate, razor

sharp surgical ones to whale hooks, cleavers and hatchets. I scoured every display. There were bowie knives and drop points, gut hooks and caping knives; blades for elk hunting, wild jungle survival and, I quote, ‘for ripping fierce big game’; but they were all out of MULTIE pocket knives - though they did have a good line in bear skinners. I passed on those.

Diary of a Plague Year

by *Henry Paulinski*

(with no apologies to Daniel Defoe, Bridget Jones, Mr.Pooter or Adrian Mole)

A few months ago I wrote about my busy “virtual” life online. Here is a summary of some of my activities during 2020, which includes the weeks of freedom before and during the lockdown.

Number of video conferences: 118

Online food shopping: 27

Quizzes: 39

Online bridge sessions: 39

TV football matches: 44

Days out (more than 5 hours away from home): 23

Books read: 4 Books partly read: (blame free Kindle samples) 108

Virtual concerts: 6

Scrabble games: 7

Online surveys: 2

New hobbies: 1

Offline surveys on the internet: 1022

New walks discovered: 8

Learning languages: 11 hours of Swedish, Hindi and Arabic

Exercise: cycling and jogging around Victoria Park: 168.39 km; Wii Fit sessions: 83

Visits to chiropractor: 4

Bottles of wine: 54 Beers: 213 Takeaways: 4

Days ill: 2

Weight gained 1.8 lbs.

Funerals: 2

Friends lost: 3 Friends rediscovered via social media: 4

Fun fact: I have had the same tenner in my wallet for over 7 months.

Digital Imaging Group

Applaud; Ask; Abandon; Ascend. Bounce; Bubble; Bloom; Bask.

What could possibly be the connection between all these different actions (photographic examples of which were shown at the January Zoom meeting of the Digital Imaging Group)? It lies not in the actions themselves, but in their initial letters, A and B.

This year, the group has set itself the goal of creating and sharing images based on the letters of the alphabet. Each month we plan to produce images of verbs, or actions, starting with one of two (or sometimes three) letters of alphabet, in sequence. The photo on the front cover is a composite picture of a bouncy ball rolling around in a shallow bowl.

Aim

*Photo by Richard Taylor
Convenor of Digital
Imaging Group)*



Slinky/Bounce

Photo by Cliff Ault (Member of Digital Imaging Group)



Truck Life

Before 1972 there was no such thing as an HGV driving licence. If all you had ever legally driven was an Austin Mini you were quite entitled to get behind the driving wheel of the biggest leviathans of Britain's motorways.

In 1967 I had to fill in a few months of money earning before I came to new lecturing job at the Scraptoft College. I filled that interval by registering with something called the Drivers Bureau in South London, an agency which then hired you out to other haulage companies as a relief driver for temporary work. The largest commercial vehicles I had ever previously driven were three tonners but I was making myself available for the big beasts ten times that weight.

I survived without any accidents - but there were some eventful things I have written about in my memoirs, hopefully to be published later this year. Every job was different, every vehicle was different, every journey was different, and I was expected to cope with a myriad of differences. Techniques such as roping and sheeting of the cargo on flatbed trucks were something the driver had to figure out effectively, otherwise his load might fall off at a roundabout.

That was still the era of the Inner London Docks, before the world of container ships. Consequently I had on numerous occasions to negotiate these crowded areas. I am still haunted by one area which still seemed medieval: it was an external yard space owned by a business called the Sheppey Glue and Chemical Company and I had to deliver sizeable containers of acid. The space was full of large animal carcasses heaped on the ground, and I had to drive between them to make my delivery. Overhead was a cohort of large birds, many of them seemingly in feeding heaven. Some of them must have been too fat to get out of the way of vehicular passers-by and their baleful eyes stared up at you from the mud. Presumably they added themselves to the company's resource of raw materials.

(Mike Westmoreland – Member)

PUZZLE CORNER

Sudoku

(created by Cryptic Crossword 2 Group)

8			1		9			3
		6					8	9
2	3	8	7					
1			2		5			4
3	2	9				8		
				2	8	7		
			9					

Sudoku Solution

8	5	2	1	7	9	4	6	3
4	7	6	5	3	2	1	8	9
9	1	3	8	4	6	5	2	7
2	3	8	7	9	4	6	5	1
1	6	7	2	8	5	9	3	4
5	9	4	6	1	3	2	7	8
3	2	9	4	5	7	8	1	6
6	4	1	3	2	8	7	9	5
7	8	5	9	6	1	3	4	2

About the Newsletter

Delivery

The newsletter is currently not being printed, and is only being delivered to members by email as a pdf file.

Contributions

The deadline for items to be included in the March newsletter is Tuesday 23rd February 2021. Contributions (from convenors and members) should be sent to the editor at: newsletter@leicesteru3a.org.uk

If you want to submit your entry as hard copy, please contact the Editor, or the Membership Secretary for the postal address.

We are always pleased to receive brief reports from groups about their recent activities and extend our thanks to all the authors who have done so. Please keep them coming. The occasional picture would be welcome as well. Please keep all articles to a maximum of about 350 words. If you have a story or a report that is considerably longer than that, we can edit it into two (or more if it's very long!) shorter articles to be published in subsequent newsletters if we are short of space.

When the current restrictions are lifted Leicester u3a will resume its meetings on the second Tuesday of each month (except August and December) at Christchurch, Clarendon Park Road, LE2 3AH, and many special interest groups will then continue to meet regularly in members' homes and elsewhere.