

## **Newsletter No.72 October 2020**

### **Editor's Update**

Hello everyone and welcome to the second edition of the newsletter for October. Well the clocks have gone back, Covid cases continue to rise and we have a new u3a logo which I hope you have noticed! Looks more contemporary I think.

Halloween this weekend reminds me of a few years ago when 2 of our children were living in the USA. We visited our daughter in Lexington, Massachusetts and every year all the shops and businesses were expertly decorated with the usual pumpkins, ghouls and ghosts and they had sweets packed up all ready to give to each child as they came in. Imagine how much you could collect by going into every store? A child's dream come true!! Fortunately, our daughter's dentist had a great plan. He would take any sweets the children brought in and pay them a dollar. A case of win-win!!

Another time when we were visiting our son, their school however had other plans for Halloween! Members of the PTA would drive their cars into the school carpark and every boot was filled with candies, crisps, cans of soft drinks etc which they literally threw at each child as they ventured forward. This was sugar heaven for those children, secretly I think for many of the parents too!

Jane Barker has sent me this suggestion which I am taking forward. How many of you have signed up for the newsletters from the Third Age Trust? Very informative for keeping us in touch with other U3As around the country and all the events you can join so there will be a section in our newsletter each month dedicated to Third Age Trust news! Below is the first of these updates.

Bearing in mind the toll the pandemic is having on many people's mental health, U3A members are invited to join our weekly mindfulness sessions hosted on our YouTube Channel and run by mindfulness Subject Advisor, Nancy Taylor <http://u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/mindfulness>

### **Monthly Meeting**

The guest speaker earlier this month via Zoom was Barrie Twyman, a Director at Amersham Auction Rooms and he gave us a fascinating insight into a 'normal working week' in the life of an auction house. I think many of us will now look at having a sort through our attics for some 'hidden gems' or maybe just to have a clear out!!

The speaker for our next monthly meeting via Zoom on 11 November at 2pm is Michael Brook. He started life shelving books in libraries around the country and ended his career as Chief Librarian. He has been a speaker for 11 years and has varied interests including amateur dramatics, cricket, and history.

His talk entitled "Top of the greasy pole" is an entertaining collection of anecdotes about many of our Prime Ministers, mainly from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and earlier but stopping well short of current controversies! It is a funny and light-hearted look at them as people. Find out which PM was "too big for his boots"? Which one was lethal with a shooting pistol? And which one might have invented the pub quiz! Login details will be sent out as usual 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Active Covid-19 cases in South Bucks are now **356** up 91 from last week .As highlighted below do join the COVID-19 Study. A reminder to those of you who haven't already done this. Covid 19 monitoring is being carried out by King's College, Guys and St Thomas 'Hospitals in partnership with ZOE Global Ltd a health science company. Download the Ask Zoe/Covid-19 app and report daily, any symptoms including 'none' will help them track the path of the disease particularly among the elderly. It now has **4.346 million** subscribers so let's hope you are one of them.

The new NHS COVID-19 app has now been launched. This is the 'official' NHS Test and Trace app designed to track the virus and to bolster the Test and Trace system. People with smartphones will be able to download and use the app on a voluntary basis if their phone's operating system supports it. It will mean you can get an alert if you've been near another user who's tested positive for coronavirus. You will

also be able to log symptoms, book a test if you need one and will get advice on whether you need to isolate if you've got symptoms or have been in contact with someone who's tested positive. Users will also be able to use the app to 'check in' at any venue they visit, such as a pub, restaurant, or a church. The app works on an anonymous basis – it tracks the virus, not the user, using Bluetooth technology. You can find out more at [www.covid19.nhs.uk](http://www.covid19.nhs.uk).

**Chalfonts U3A Facebook Group** . Our group has been quite slow to get to the magic number of 100! We are now up to 98 members who do a great job keeping us posted on events in their locality and giving suggestions for us to consider eg cultural activities, places to visit etc. There is a link on the Website's home page to the following page: <https://chalfontsu3a.org.uk/cu3a-facebook-group/>. There you will find a link to the PDF with instructions on how to join Facebook and the CU3A group. Gary Tomlin our webmaster can help where there are any questions or issues you may have in creating a Facebook account or joining the group. He has also set up an email address [facebook@chalfontsu3a.org.uk](mailto:facebook@chalfontsu3a.org.uk).  
**Computer Issue?** If you are having any problems with your computer please email [support@chalfontsu3a.org.uk](mailto:support@chalfontsu3a.org.uk) You can also post your questions on the Chalfonts U3A Facebook page.

**Local news update.** This is a new section where I would like any members to contact me with relevant local news items for inclusion.

Debbie Tomlin forwarded information re a weekly newsletter about village news which she has been receiving for some time now and wondered if it would be of interest to our members.

It covers County news of relevance to the local area (such as the coronavirus updates) and news from local villages. This can be a bit sparse sometimes but nevertheless interesting and she appreciates being informed of anything going on.

Unfortunately it is only available via email, but it is free to subscribe to at [www.localnewsbyemail.info](http://www.localnewsbyemail.info)  
The first edition of 'Your Buckinghamshire' -your magazine from Buckinghamshire Council arrived on my door mat this weekend and it is full of news about what's happening around our county. Councillor Martin Tett Leader of Buckinghamshire Council has been updating us regularly through the pandemic via a newsletter and this magazine is an extension of that but also letting us all know what we can do to help each other and take part in many of the initiatives that are happening around the county.

**Speak up for our Planet.** This initiative from The Rotary Club of Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter may be of interest, certainly some important topics covered. Why do bees matter? Fiona Matheson from Chalfonts Beekeeper's Society will help us to understand the vital role of bees and how we can support them. Register here: <https://speakupforourplanet.com/2020/08/15/why-bees-matter/> This will be screened on 4 November and the link will be sent out prior to the event. If you missed Penguins in Peril please feel free to watch the recording on YouTube <https://youtu.be/usKuCFgmF0w> There are links to recordings of all the events that have taken place on the <https://speakupforourplanet.com//events> page.

Continuing the wildlife theme Ruth Corner sent me this piece about The Rhea – they have been seen by many walkers lately in our local fields and Ruth saw one opposite her house near Roberts Woods.

A white one can be seen in the fields from St Peter to St Giles by the back of Carden's wood supplies. A lot of people have not heard of them and confuse them with an Ostrich!! A Local farmer rears them and they keep escaping!

### **Existing Groups.**

**Bird Watching** 6 intrepid birdwatchers under the guidance of Dennis Hotten and Tony Micallef visited Otmoor RSPB site near Oxford with the main aim of catching sight of a murmuration of starlings. Last year we arrived in October looking forward to seeing them only to be told on our arrival that we had missed them as they had flown the nest the previous week! However this year we timed it just right and had an amazing view at dusk when they were settling down to roost. Approximately 5000 starlings kept us mesmerized, quite a sight and Tony took a video which is on our Facebook page. As with all our outings we had a very pleasant evening in the Abingdon Arms ,it just happened to be pizza night with their newly installed pizza ovens in full swing!

**Garden Visits** Group convenor Jane Barker reminds us that Sarah Pajwani, the owner of St Timothee's near Maidenhead, who opens her garden as part of the National Gardens Scheme will be giving a presentation via Zoom on Wednesday 18 November at 4pm . She will be talking about the "Winter garden". She donates her charge for the talk to the National Garden Scheme so the money goes to charity.

There are also details of a couple of Zoom talks which may interest you. They are being given by Kay from Church Gardens in Harefield. Some of you will have visited this garden with the group a couple of years ago - it is a magnificent restoration project .

On the 3rd and 4th December, there will be an illustrated talk on the 25-year restoration of Church Gardens and Kay will share her family's personal story of rescuing a historic landscape from dereliction. There will also be a Q&A with Kay, Patrick, and the girls at the end of the talk.

So far, this talk has been very well received by Horticultural Groups, so we wanted to offer it to all of the friends of Church Gardens. If you are interested **please arrange to purchase your own tickets from the website** <https://www.churchgardens.co.uk/virtual-talks>

**New Experiences** Several members of the New Experiences group took part in a Covid friendly Old Beaconsfield treasure trail in early October. After one postponement due to very adverse weather, we were blessed with a beautiful sunny day for our amble around Old Beaconsfield. With teams setting off at 5-minute intervals there were 52 observational clues to answer en route. After some debate about alternative answers they felt should be acceptable, 4 teams managed full marks. Everyone enjoyed the walk, seeing parts of Beaconsfield they didn't know existed. There was also the opportunity to see people we hadn't seen for months, while still following the rules.

**Theatre Group Update** :Firstly apologies for an error in the information I gave you in the previous newsletter re this group and any inconvenience it caused our group convenors Sheila and Danny. In respect of our theatre visits to see Pretty Woman on the 30 November and 15 December, the latest news is that the show is cancelled until the 27 November 2020. This means that the Ambassador Theatre Group are dealing with exchanges and refunds up to this date.

We are in regular contact with the booking office but in reality, all we can do at the present time is to monitor the situation and keep you advised of any changes as and when they occur.

We are, of course, missing our theatre outings with you and send our very best wishes to you all in these very uncertain times. Sheila and Danny, theatre group convenors.

### **Dovedale Peak District Walking Weekend 9-12 October**

Colin Smith sent in this report from their walking weekend.

The Dovedale 4 (not to be confused with the Birmingham 6) all arrived as planned at Dovedale on the Friday for a late check in. The procedures HF had put in place at the hotel, the Peveril of the Peak, were reassuring for the more nervous. Surprisingly, the place was full, and it appeared that any lost places from U3A were more than filled by other intrepid walkers; the limiting factors as to numbers from HF's point of view were the dining arrangements and the estimates were that there were 44 diners. Taking off the 3 guides and us, the remaining 37 must have booked once our cancellations were known. As usual food and service were very good, and the bar did a more than steady trade. The choice of wines was varied and of good quality.

As to the walks these were impressive with lovely countryside. Not too hilly although given the location of the hotel there is always a climb at the end, the guides were knowledgeable and had varied interests and impressive local knowledge. We all opted for the short walks, although the 7 to 7.5-mile walks did usually stretch to just over 8 miles. There were opportunities, which were taken, to stop en route at various places, and even a pub garden, the Okeover Arms; these provided a welcome interlude on the way home and could accommodate all of us outside. Each group of walkers was limited to 15 per guide and the

numbers worked out pretty much to perfection; on each short walk we were divided into the weekend walkers and the 1-week walkers. The longer walks did not need this. Given the different backgrounds of the walkers there were some interesting discussions during the walks and generally a really good mix of people.

All in all an excellent weekend and well worth it. I think we can all recommend the place for next year.

### **Now over to our 'Members' Musings'**

For Members' Musings I have received many stories and poems and some fun encounters with the public! Susan Shaw sent me this one. A random act of kindness today Saturday: While shopping with our granddaughters Emily 8 and Eloise 6 in Sainsbury's, High Wycombe looking for Halloween outfits I was stopped by a woman who thrust several Lego cards into my hands. I was a bit startled but the girls were very pleased as unbeknown to me they collect them. That small act gave me a warm feeling and put smiles on the girls' faces.

This next one will amuse you from Carolyn Edwards, and I have a husband who has experienced the same situation many times with his specs!

Last week we visited a large store to obtain craft supplies for our granddaughter. We chose a time that we considered would be less busy, so we could socially distance, we sanitised our hands and put on our masks. So far so good. In order to read the instructions on the supplies I had to take off my glasses as by now they were steaming up. I put them on the shelf decided what I needed, picked them up and prepared to proceed to the till. Where are my glasses? I checked my pockets, checked my head - no luck- then my husband suggested I checked my bag, which was duly done emptying the contents in the middle of the store! Still no luck. A very helpful young mother asked if I had lost something and I duly explained. She looked at me and said, "You have got them on". Great hilarity especially as my husband hadn't even noticed!

Ruth Corner sent this apt poem from the silver surfers website

### **Back Home ( Author unknown)**

If I had the power to turn back the clock  
Go back to that house at the end of the block The  
house that was Home when I was a kid  
I know that I'd love it more now than I did

If I could be back there at my mother's knee  
And hear once again all the things she told me,  
I'd listen as I'd never listened before,  
For she knew so well just what life had in store  
And all the advice my dad used to give  
His voice I'll remember as long as I live  
But it didn't seem really important then What  
I'd give for the chance I once had  
To do so much more for my mother and dad'  
To give them more joy and a little less pain  
A little more sunshine – a little less rain

But the years roll on and we cannot go back  
Whether we were born in a mansion or a shack  
But we can start right now- in the hour that's here  
To do something more for the ones we hold dear And  
since time in its flight is travelling so fast  
Let's not spend it regretting that which is past

But let's make tomorrow a happier day  
By doing our 'good unto others'-today

## **Hope from Sheila Ross**

**2.9.20**

Hope, like the Butterfly that is unique  
Aimlessly fluttering - in the ripe corn  
Whenever we search in vain, or we seek  
An answer, an explanation; this Morn - An  
understanding of what has occurred  
An acceptance of how it is the present We  
cling, hold fast now to a fluttering bird And the  
butterfly as well. Our intent?

Chorus:

Drift and sail, sail, and drift Like them  
both –take the gift.

## **Nightingale Nurse turns Garden Guide at Highgrove House, family home of The Prince of Wales.**

I thought this might be of interest to all our garden lovers writes newsletter editor Eileen Powell. I had the privilege of training as a nurse at St Thomas' Hospital in London in the swinging 60s, so many good times but more of that another time! Once you had completed the 3-year 9-month training and passed all your state and hospital exams you were awarded the Nightingale Hospital badge and deemed to be a 'Nightingale' in respect of Florence's association with the hospital. There were 52 in our intake and 4 intakes per year. Each set had to elect a rep who would attend meetings with the Senior Sisters and Tutors giving us an opportunity to air our views/gripes and get updated on important directives!! Somehow I got elected as the set representative and I still do that job 50 years on, but now I arrange outings and don't have to deal with stiff and starchy Sisters! The story below is about one of my set, Ginny who is now a garden guide at Highgrove and last year we arranged to get our own private tour from her.

It was a dull January afternoon when I first went to Highgrove for an interview as a garden guide. A friend had persuaded me to apply for the position although, as I kept telling her, I am not a horticulturist, or a very good gardener, and didn't know all the Latin names. Don't worry she said, you will soon learn them! Having been retired for five years I was not as confident in this as she seemed, but I certainly liked the idea, I love gardens and this one is certainly very special.

After a few questions I was taken to a nearby walled garden and asked to identify any plants I knew. In January? When everything is bare of leaves? Fortunately, I recognised a tree, and then a few shrubs, and I was told they would let me know.

This was five years ago, and after a thorough training over three months, and then a chance to follow other guides around watching their techniques, I set out with my first group of 26 visitors, giving them the history of the development of the garden, and how the gardeners keep to organic rules for slug and pest control. Each year His Royal Highness will take us around telling of the new plans he has and the changes that will happen. Also the Head Gardener and each of the heads of departments will give us training on how they achieve their results, and we can fire them with all sorts of questions we know our visitors will be interested in. How did you grow a delphinium nearly 10 feet tall? How is water distributed around for irrigation? How do you stop slugs on hostas?

The garden has a national collection of hostas, and beech trees and a 4-acre wild flower meadow which is the Coronation meadow for Gloucestershire. A stumpery, cottage garden, arboretum and nearly everything has been created since His Royal Highness moved in in 1980, under his direction, his ideas, and a lot of his own work. With garden designers contributing to produce a varied and very personal garden. It is not only the Guides who contribute to a visit to Highgrove, but the Welcome team, the restaurant staff and the shop staff selling plants, Highgrove honey and specially designed gifts, it all makes for a special day out.

Each year varies with the weather that changes the tone of the garden, for instance the length the blossoms stay on the trees. Each day varies with the group of visitors you take around, a 2-hour tour gives you time to talk to them and discover their particular interests or their gardening experience, it never becomes repetitive.

Last year they celebrated 25 years of the garden opening with profits going towards the Princes Trust that does so much good for young people. This year celebrates 40 years since His Royal Highness moved in and started the mammoth task of cultivating 15 acres that make up the garden.

One special group last year were from St Thomas' Hospital 1966 January set. These are friends I trained with and we have a very active reunion group. It was suggested that we could use Highgrove as a venue to meet up, enjoy a tour and lunch together in the restaurant. We soon had a full group of 26 friends and husbands, and the day was a great success, a chance to catch up with friends made so many years ago!

### **This final musing is from Howard Dell.**

At the bottom of my garden I have a magnificent oak tree, tall and wide and healthy. In the summer I estimated its age guided by a simple procedure on the Woodland Trust's website: the answer came out at 105 years old. Later that day I came across what was said to be an Amish proverb, "It takes a century to make a sturdy oak." Glad we agree!

Over the thirty-five summers I've watched it, the tree has each year has produced a modest crop of acorns which made a bit of a mess on the lawn but the lawnmower, autumn lawn-raking of leaves and the squirrels more or less cleared them up reasonably effectively. However, this year's bizarre weather which has resulted in bumper crops of apples and plums has had a similar effect on the oak – the carpet of acorns has to be seen to be believed; it's looking more like a shingle beach than a lawn.

A couple of weeks ago I thought it prudent to make a start on clearing them up before the leaf fall and I found that in the absence of a herd (or is it a drove?) of pigs that the most effective tool was a hard yardbroom. It was hard work, sweeping and shovelling them into the green wheelie bin, but it didn't take long to fill it to near the brim. As a measure of the quantity, that binful was only from about 12 sq.m. of grass – not much different from the area of a small bedroom. I know how to calculate the area of the circle of the whole tree but I'm not sure I want to know the result. To make the pain worse, a few days later I noticed that acorns were still falling and that cleared patch was no longer apparent!