

Welcome to the Autumn 2023 Newsletter

It was with some trepidation that both Carol Chapple and I peeped our heads above the parapet expressing an interest in helping to continue to produce this Newsletter in future. Wow – talk about having our arms snatched off! After a few phone calls and emails then a meeting with Marg and Di, outgoing co-editors – we were hooked.

But what a hard act to follow. Marg and Di have worked tirelessly hard in producing this publication for the members over many years. A big thank you to you both for your support, guidance and encouragement in this transition. Thanks too to all the Group Leaders and other contributors in submitting their reports so promptly. It's really helped.

We wondered if the new format now needs a 'name', rather than just Newsletter? Something suitable perhaps to reflect the ethos and mission of the u3a movement? So – over to you the members to send us your thoughts. Possible titles mooted are: *In Touch, Active, Reach Out, In Company, Connect*. So, get your creative juices flowing and send any other ideas for a title – and any other thoughts for the Newsletter format for future issues. Direct to me and I'll submit to the Committee.

Mike Clack, Magazine Co-Editor mjclack54@gmail.com

From the Chair . . .

This summer has been clouded by the sad loss of our previous chair, Chris Collins. I very much echo the warm tributes written by other members. I think that the best tribute to Chris must be to continue his work and redouble our efforts to re-invigorate our Wolverhampton u3a.

And an example of this is this very newsletter, the work of our new editors, Carol Chapple and Mike Clack. They have a wealth of experience and enthusiasm, so I am sure our publication will go from strength to strength.

On the other hand, we are seeing interest groups folding or not starting for lack of a co-ordinator. Perhaps it should be remembered that co-ordinators don't have to do all the work in groups, they literally co-ordinate: link together the group members!

It is true that we live in difficult times, but this country has a long tradition of volunteering in charities which offer services to the wider community. u3a is a different, unique type of organisation which doesn't offer a "service" to members; rather, it offers a setting in which people can meet others by attending, supporting and helping to run our activities ourselves. In the winter '22 issue of Third Age Matters magazine (TAM), one of our Trustees reassured us that we are not alone in our difficulties finding members willing to help running the organisation. He reminded us that the core principles of self-help learning and mutual aid mean that members must step up and be active for the Movement to survive.

In TAM's Spring '23 issue, the inimitable Eric Winter – u3a founder – shared with us: *"I am pragmatic enough to recognise that some will do more than others, but I am idealistic enough to claim that everybody should be doing something."*

And it doesn't have to be hard work. It is enjoyable! Volunteering enriches the lives of individuals by working with others to achieve shared goals, developing new skills, making and strengthening friendships, gaining a sense of achievement and having fun!

We are social creatures and we thrive in company. I experienced this at the West Midlands first conference with the new Trustee, Jean Jackson. It was a delight to be there. The meeting was full of positive energy from Jean. Also from Allan Walmsley, Trust's Vice Chair, who is promoting a new Council to deal with the life and growth of our movement, from Sue Russell, Chair of Networks Link and the indefatigable Jean Soper, chair of the Sutton Coldfield u3a which was celebrating their 40th anniversary with a spectacular cake. Did you know that Sutton Coldfield has 1,400 members?

See report: u3asites.org.uk/files/w/west-midlands/docs/wmidsu3aregionupdateaug2023.pdf

I came away with the feeling of "yes, we can": together we can thrive!

Look out for more news about the Trust on www.u3a.org.uk: AGM on Wednesday 18 October, plus regional study days and subject advisers' news.

Our next recruitment project is around Perton and Codsall, please contact me if you want to get involved; fonfria@virginmedia.com

Mercedes Fonfria, Chair

In this issue . . .

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Round the Groups

Creative Writing

April meeting

Ruth Parker was a guest at the April meeting of the Creative Writing group. Ruth is a member of the British Haiku Society.

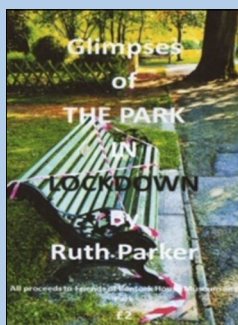
Ruth explained the format of haiku (haiku is intense Japanese poetry, capturing the moment, very often about nature. The standard format is to use 3 lines and 17 syllables). She illustrated her points by reading out a few poems by Basho, Japan's "Shakespeare of haiku"

Ruth shared a few of her own works with us too, many of which are inspired by visits to Bantock Park. Ruth proved to be a very interesting and informative guest, and was a stimulating facilitator.

She very generously left several copies of the Haiku Society's journal with us.

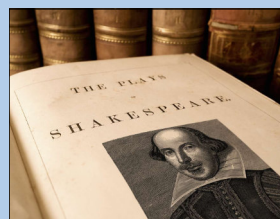
We then composed some of our own haiku, which were shared with Ruth and the group.

John Ellard



Brush up your Shakespeare

The group has studied two plays in the past year: 'The Winter's Tale' and a quick romp through 'The Comedy of Errors'. During our meetings, we read through the text and discuss it together and watch performances on DVD.

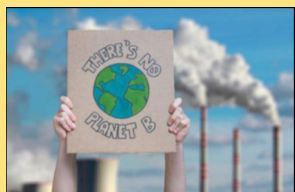


For our new play from September, we have chosen 'Cymbeline': one of Shakespeare's lesser known plays set in Ancient Britain and Rome. Theoretically the group is full for the number who can comfortably meet in my house in Newbridge – but we could probably squeeze in one more as not everyone is able to come every month. We normally meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 10.15. I am the only man!

Ben Whitney (Group Coordinator)

Science and Technology

The Group continues to prosper, with its membership of around 12 people signing in monthly to our Zoom-based sessions. I as coordinator am still amazed at the eclectic range of subjects we delve into and enjoy. (If you are interested in what these are just look at our u3a website page.)



In the past year we have had group member contributions on Fracking, the Colours of Hydrogen, Ears and Hearing, Our Scientific Heroes, the Naming of Plants, 'How long is a piece of string!', & a wide range of choices as to 'My Favourite Element'.

We were very fortunate to obtain an excellent external speaker from Birmingham University BiFOR (Birmingham Institute of Forest Research) team, who spoke about their world-leading project, in Staffordshire, on assessing the future effects and impact of CO2 on forested areas – a significant climate change factor.

A further initiative is to have visits to local industrial locations, with the latest scheduled to be at Warburton's bakery plant, which operates from Wednesbury.

We still have good links to the 'u3a Communities Group' on Science & Technology which has included two contributions from our group membership to their national Zoom sessions, one on 'Body Clocks' and one on 'Genome Editing'.

David Tordoff

Spanish Improvers

On occasions when our mentor (Christine) is not available, it falls to the group members to come up with ideas, games or other activities which we hope the rest of the group will find interesting and enjoyable.



It may be something like a simple game to act as a warm up to the session – Hangman, Word Ladders and Word Circles are regular choices.

Someone may provide an item of interest from a magazine or tour guide which we can use as a translation exercise, discuss or basis for questions. One of my personal favourites was an article, unsure of the date of publication, but given the subject and illustrations possibly produced between the wars. The story was about a family's journey to a continental holiday via the 'boat train' and ferry, and the father's attempts to conceal his trepidation at the sight of the rough weather in the Channel, while asking himself 'Why they never got round to building that tunnel?'

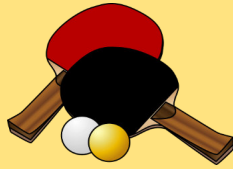
At other times someone may have taken time to provide handouts taken from online articles or sample test papers from other textbooks. Occasionally these may have come from American publications, using Latin American Spanish vocabulary and phrasing, as opposed to the Castilian with which we are more familiar. This results in some light-hearted 'differences of opinion' as to the meaning or context, and without our mentor to adjudicate, we find ourselves reaching for a variety of dictionaries and grammar books before we can agree a consensus.

All good fun and just some of the reasons why I enjoy Spanish Improvers group.

Bob Satterthwaite (Group member)

Table Tennis

This group is in grave danger of folding due to a serious lack of participants. I'm fairly sure that all levels of competence are welcome, so why not give it a go?



It happens every Thursday from 11.00 to 12.00 and costs around £2 – depending on number of participants.

Venue:

Bob Jones Community Hub, Bromley Street,
Off Upper Villiers Street, Blakenhall,
Wolverhampton WV2 3AS

Faith Russell (group coordinator)

Ukulele

The Ukulele Band has grown by four new members.

Band events this year and some still to come, all of which have generated – and will continue to generate – money for charity.

Upcoming events:

- Sept 20 Shifnal
- Sept 25 Lanesfield Church harvest festival
- Sept 30 Party
- Oct 11 Beechwood Court, Tettenhall
- Oct 20 U3A multi-band meet in Kinver
- Nov 26 Penkridge Victorian Market
- Dec 1 Codsall Christmas Fair
- Dec 6 Lodge in Dudley

Gill Stevens



Walking



In the past year, the walking group has continued to explore the areas surrounding Wolverhampton. We are so lucky to be able to access many interesting areas nearby and also a little further afield.

Walks have taken the group to Norbury Junction, Shropshire, Ludlow, Walsall, Cannock Chase and the many villages around us. The distances we walk averages 5 miles which is lower than in previous years; maybe a sign of the ageing of the walkers and the walk leaders! The walks aren't possible without the volunteer walk leaders who always manage to fill the walk dates.

The autumn/winter programme begins with walks in Codsall Wood, Compton, Dudmaston and Brewood. In December we end the walk programme with a walk and meal in Wordsley.

All the planned walks up to the end of 2023 can be found on the u3a Wolverhampton website.

If you are interested in joining a walk please contact me through the website and I can send you an email with the full details of the walk a week before the planned date.

Linda Moreland, Walking Group Coordinator

Gardening Group

We started our year with three monthly meetings at Bradmore Community Centre. Previously we have met in various houses, but with the expansion of the group, it's no longer possible. It was a good opportunity for new members to get to know existing members and to discuss a variety of gardening topics.

Our first 'outdoor' meeting was in March to Pillaton Garden Centre in Penkridge, which unfortunately has recently been given a makeover. One of our members suggested we also paid a visit to C. Piper and Sons Ltd. Watling Street Stafford. This is an excellent plant centre with a great variety – several plants were purchased!

In April we enjoyed a visit to Hillview Hardy Plants where we had a talk – with slides – about Autumn Colour in the garden, followed by coffee and cake. Ingrid and John Millington of Hillview are highly regarded plant people, who show at Chelsea and other notable events. They also have a lovely



selection of excellent quality plants – not a scented candle in sight!

Following on from this, our next three meetings took place in members' gardens. This is always such a joy as each garden is unique and gives us the opportunity to get ideas, ask advice and bring along excess plants to share. In addition, on each occasion, we were blessed with good weather – hard to credit with the amount of rain we've had recently. The hot

Gardening – continued

topic at the moment, which we have given much thought to, is the issue of re-wilding. Even a suburban garden can be made more bee and insect friendly. I have planted a bed with plants such as Monarda, Salvia, Sedum, Lavender, Alliums, Verbena Bonariensis and Scabiosa, offering a bee friendly environment for a large part of the year. I also took part in 'no mow May' and have decided to leave part of the grass wild. Other people in the group have also been doing their bit for diversity. There has been much interest within the group in the idea of growing wild flower gardens and I look forward to seeing the results. Environmental questions are of paramount importance and we all need to engage in discussion about how we can do our bit to help, and educate ourselves about these important issues.

For the rest of the programme, we will be visiting professional gardens – including Arley Arboretum – with fingers crossed for more good weather.

Our programme for 2024 will be decided at our November meeting.

Jeanette Black (Group coordinator)



End u3a week with Alfresco in Autumn



u3a are launching a new event for u3a week, Alfresco in Autumn, which is an opportunity for members to take the fun and learning of their u3a outside.

Alfresco in Autumn is part of u3a week, which runs between 16 and 22 September.

More info:

www.u3a.org.uk/latest-news/end-u3a-week-with-alfresco-in-autumn

Walking Group Annual Treasure Hunt Walk



The Group's annual jaunt had in the past years enjoyed the local villages & towns of Wombourne, Tettenhall, Codsall, Pattingham, Albrighton and even further afield to Penkridge.

This year's walk, organized by Diane & David Tordoff was for two miles around the town of Shifnal, visiting the old town streets, alley ways, churchyard, Millennium Garden plus other thoroughfares. The seven groups competing had to solve over 30 clues on the way whilst having to collect a number of 'treasures'. These included 'Lions teeth' (dandelion), diamond shaped beer mats, a bird's feather, some poppy seeds and 'Woof, woof' (some bark!)

A beautiful day for ambling around the town, finishing at a local hostelry for refreshment (which ranged from beer and nachos, to coffee and cake – and even ice cream sundaes).

The winners were Graeme and Chris Kerr who were awarded the wine, with the 'largest leaf' prize (what a whopper!) going to Sheila Moore, Mo Johnson and Mary Warwick.

Well done everybody, trust you enjoyed exercising your bodies and little grey matter.

David Tordoff (Walking Group member)



Remembering Chris Collins

Memories of Wolverhampton u3a

I have been a member of Wolverhampton u3a for many years holding a number of posts including the Practical Art Group Coordinator until the group folded; then after joining the committee, Groups Coordinator, Magazine Editor and latterly Vice Chair under the leadership of Chairman Chris Collins, who sadly passed away on 19th July.

I feel honoured and privileged to have served on the Committee alongside Chris. He was helpful, always jolly, reliable, kind and a stalwart of the u3a, leading us through the Covid epidemic to enable the Wolverhampton group to bounce back strongly. He also steered us through the successful move of our General Meetings to Springdale Methodist Church; planting the memorial tree for the 40th Anniversary of the Group there.

I am proud and grateful to have had Chris as a friend and been able to share many happy times with him and his wife, Pauline, socially and particularly on u3a walking holidays where he was always prepared to participate in the organisation of walks and evening entertainments. Chris was also a valued member and deputy coordinator of the Science and Technology Group where he was always willing to contribute his vast knowledge to topics and put forward new ideas. He will be sadly missed by us all.

Having moved to Shifnal four years ago, I decided to resign from the Committee this year but still remain a member and to also join the local Wrekin u3a Group where I hope to meet new friends, leaving space for 'new blood' to take over the reins in Wolverhampton. I know our new chair, Mercedes Fonfria and the new committee will serve us well and ensure that Wolverhampton u3a goes forward from strength to strength.

I would encourage anyone thinking of joining the committee or becoming a group coordinator to give it a try – they are a friendly bunch! A u3a group is only as strong as its members – and remember the whole ethos of the u3a is that members have to be prepared to contribute to, as well as take advantage of, what the organisation has to offer to make it successful.

Best wishes to all

Di Tordoff

Chris had a zest for life and that zest certainly came to the fore during the Covid period. He doggedly kept our u3a active, determined that we would keep going and emerge at the end of it a fully functioning u3a. Thanks to him we did.

I had the privilege of being on the committee with Chris for many years. When he became our Chairman he bestowed various duties on me, some of them not my first choice but it was out of loyalty to Chris that I accepted them and did them to the best of my ability. No one on the committee wanted to let Chris down. He was an inspired leader.

Eleanor Dunnett



Geoff Williams remembers . . .

As I said in my email to members, Chris did more than anyone to hold the u3a together during Covid and to get help to people who were isolated, but I shall remember him most, I think, from the Walking Group holidays. Even when he found walking difficult in the latter years he always volunteered to lead a group of "strollers" to make sure no one was left out, and of course there were the memorable music quizzes which he did with John.

As Chairman of the u3a Chris could always be relied on to handle crises calmly and with good humour, whether it was speakers not turning up or problems with the venue. I am also aware of the huge amount of work he did behind the scenes for the u3a.

I can also say that, as a non-scientist I have learned a lot from Chris's contributions to the Science and Technology group: always interesting and informative.

Geoff Williams

Chris was a regular member of the u3a Jazz Group since its foundation in 2009, bringing to its meetings not only programmes (autographed, of course!) from concerts in the 1950s and 1960s, but also his forthright comments and opinions. He will be sadly missed.

John Sheard

Ever since I joined Wolverhampton u3a I've known Chris. First through the Jazz, Science & Technology and Walking groups, then even more closely on the Committee, especially when he became Chair. I've always so appreciated his energy and good humour, his knowledge and intelligence and loved and valued his friendship. He was a star. I mourn our loss.

Margaret Taylor

Rare 17th century book returns to Wolverhampton

A rare 17th century Roman Catholic missal (or prayer book) has recently been auctioned and was purchased by The National Trust. It is now on display at Moseley Old Hall.

The Missal was bought in 1950 from a secondhand bookshop in Liverpool – for sixpence! The purchaser lived on the Wirral and the missal sat on his bookshelves until 1957 when its history was discovered.

The Missal was printed in Paris in 1623 and had been owned by Father John Huddleston who was clandestine chaplain to the Roman Catholic Whitgreave family, owners of Moseley Old Hall. Father Huddleston personally attended the fugitive King Charles II when he hid at the Hall following the Royalist defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

After the Restoration, Father Huddleston was appointed chaplain to Queen Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II. The priest was present when the king became sick in 1685 and reputedly received the dying monarch into the Roman Catholic Church.

The Missal bears Father Huddleston's signature as well as details of the families he ministered to, and "can be safely assumed" to have been with him throughout his ministry.

But don't take my word for it – come and see our Missal for yourselves at Moseley Old Hall (and treat yourself to a book from our well stocked secondhand bookshop at the same time).

John Ellard,
Moseley Old Hall,
bookshop volunteer



Potential new Groups

Foraging

Hi all. I've had an idea for a group and I'm wondering what interest there might be for it. Foraging. All the rage lately. And I know there are a few people in our U3A who are very knowledgeable about what grows in the local area.



I was thinking we could go out once a month to discover what is in season – nettles, elderberries, mushrooms, herbs – anything really. If there are months, particularly in the winter, where it is not seasonal, then we could discuss how to use what we harvest – elderflower wine, nettle soup, herbal concoctions etc.

Anyway, I'm also open to ideas as to what we can do and how this can be organised.

Please get in touch with me if such a group is of interest to you. I'll then set up a planning meeting.

Josie Mobyjosky@icloud.com

Local History

Many thanks to Alan Marriott and Malcolm Brookbanks who have researched and established that about 30 people are interested in being part of a local history group within Wolverhampton u3a. The response is very encouraging.

What we need now is a Group Leader to get it off the ground. Alan feels that he lacks the experience and time to take on a coordinating role with such a large group. Alan and Malcolm are looking forward to being active members but not in coordinating roles.

So – it is established that there is great interest – let's hope an experienced member will step forward.

Please contact Mo Johnson.



Forthcoming Events and Speakers

Tue Sep 26th	David Moylan Funny Turns – a celebration of the entertainment of days gone by
Tue Oct 24th	Fran Standham Doctor Livingstone I presume – the story behind the legend
Tue Nov 28th	Andy Griffiee Canal Noir – a light-hearted look at the backdrop of canals in crime fiction
Fri Dec 15th	Christmas Party Please note, this is a Friday
Tue Jan 23rd 2024	Roger Brown The Story of Tin Pan Alley – performance as it used to be

Your Committee

Mercedes Fonfria	Chair
Mo Johnson	Vice Chair/Groups Coordinator
Mary Warwicker	Secretary
Yvonne Rickard	Treasurer
Julia Hood	Membership Secretary
John Sheard	Beacon Coordinator
Josie Turner	Speakers Secretary
Margaret Taylor	Committee Member
David Ashworth	Committee Member
Carol Chapple	Magazine Co-Editor
Mike Clack	Magazine Co-Editor



Your u3a needs YOU!

Group Coordinator appeal

Hello to all members of Wolverhampton u3a.

As the newly volunteered Groups Coordinator and Vice Chair I thought it may be helpful to inform members of the current and concerning situation regarding the lack of group coordinators and the consequent depleting number of interest groups.

Sadly one of the reading groups coordinators has after many successful years taken the decision to no longer continue.

Also, and again sadly after many successful years, the coordinator of one of the play reading groups has also decided she can no longer continue.

In the recent past we have had successful Food, Lunch clubs, Coach trips, Singing, Practical Art and local History groups which due to lack of support from people offering to take on the role of coordinator and or deputy, have regretfully all been lost.

Currently there is a great deal of interest and enthusiasm to re establish the Local History Group, however unless someone comes forward to take on the role of coordinator and deputy this unfortunately cannot happen.

The Art Appreciation Group is also under pressure to avoid closing, desperately needing a deputy and also help with technical matters i.e. Zoom and PowerPoint etc.

The whole ethos of a successful u3a is that people are prepared to contribute to, as well as take advantage of what the organisation has to offer.

It will be so sad to lose yet more groups and very disappointing if the Local History Group cannot proceed.

Therefore I am sending out this request for help to all Wolverhampton u3a members to consider if they feel able and willing to give it a go, alone or shared with someone to coordinate either of these roles mentioned or indeed start a new group of a topic that interests yourself.

I am sure we all deeply regret the loss of any group and it will certainly be extremely concerning to lose more. Groups are at the heart of your u3a and without them we would not have a Wolverhampton u3a.

I look forward with everything crossed, to a positive response from members willing to come forward to their groups and give it a go.

Warm regards,

Mo Johnson Groups Coordinator

Members' Corner

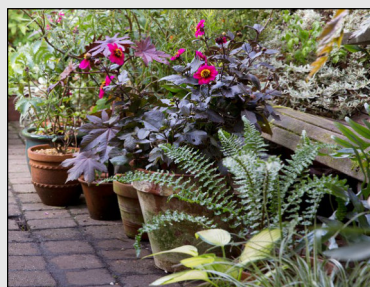
Plants for your gardens

u3a member Marian Graceson has numerous plants (mainly perennials) in her garden which would benefit from new homes. They are mainly very

easy-to-grow living plants which can be dug up and replanted for flowering next year and beyond.

She also has some dried seed heads (on stalks) – mainly poppies – which would be useful for indoor arrangements/Christmas decorations etc. These also contain seeds for scattering, which would grow next year.

If you would like to go to have a look, please telephone her on 01902 765567 for more information.



Interest Groups at Wolverhampton u3a

If you are interested in joining a new group, please contact the Group Coordinator – see Wolverhampton u3a website:

www.u3asites.org.uk/wolverhampton/home

- Reading (2 groups)
- Play Reading (3 groups)
- Poetry (3 groups)
- Shakespeare
- Creative Writing
- French
- German
- Italian
- Spanish
- Latin
- Walking
- Table Tennis
- Food
- How to Read Music
- Ukulele
- Classical Music
- Jazz Appreciation
- Understanding Opera
- Contemporary History
- Chess
- Philosophy
- Social Issues
- Science & Technology
- Computing
- Self-Study Resources
- Gardening
- Art Appreciation
- Craft
- Board Games