

DECEMBER 2020 BULLETIN

I hope each and every one of you has had a peaceful, healthy and warm Christmas. I know the late lockdown instructions meant rapid re-arrangements had to be made by many people. However people seemed happy to make the adjustments necessary in the hope that all this will soon be a distant memory.

LOOKING BACK

At this time last year Towcester u3a was a vibrant popular organisation which played such an important part in so many of our lives. COVID 19 changed how we live our lives and how we communicate. Somehow we learned to manage that change and we have held on to the very best things about our u3a. We have navigated our way through lockdowns and tiers and our lives have at times revolved around our technology.

We have been flexible, adaptable and displayed positive thinking skills in abundance. Our groups have emerged with new skills and embraced different ways of operating.

As a committee we have been delighted that our members have shown such support for our u3a and we will continue to do all we can to support our members as we move forward.

COMMITTEE NEWS

The first meeting of the committee following the AGM took place at the beginning of December
The following Officers were re-elected.

Chair	Carol Lucas
Vice Chair	Ray Paice
Treasurer	Terry Goldfinch
Business Secretary	Jeanette Waite
Penny Bennett	will continue as Membership Secretary.
Kate Bartlett	as Group Liaison.
Jenny Carter	as New Members' Liaison

In addition Amanda Campbell will continue to multitask as a General Committee Member and we were delighted to welcome Andrew Bell as a new committee member
Full contact details for the committee can be found on the website.

CO-ORDINATORS CHRISTMAS MEETING

Following the committee meeting Co-ordinators were invited to join Kate Bartlett for a Christmas get together via Zoom Thanks were expressed to our co-ordinators for doing so much to support our members during this difficult year. Kate also provided a Christmas quiz which was well received.

ZOOM

I would really appreciate it if our group leaders would confirm their Zoom bookings with me for 2021. I am getting more requests for the use of Zoom and anxious to avoid any clashes

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

The Third Age Trust continues to use the National Newsletter to keep members informed on the latest government advice concerning corona virus. It is also filled with information, stories, and advice from across the u3a movement on how to keep both safe and occupied during these difficult times

All members are encouraged to sign up to the newsletter

www.u3a.org.uk/newsletter

CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER CALLING ALL QUIZZERS !!

Those of you who have already received the Christmas newsletter will have no doubt seen the bumper Christmas Quiz. Our ever resourceful Group Liaison Kate Bartlett has suggested that we might have a little local challenge. You can e mail your answers to the quiz to Kate. Her email address is Kate Bartlett katebartlett@btinternet.com
All entries should be received by January 5th at the latest and the winner will be declared after Jan 6th when the answers are published on line.

The quiz can be found at

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes/weekly-quiz/christmas-bumper-quiz/download>

The word search is not included in the local challenge

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Theatre Visits

I am sure Marion will have reached all her theatregoers but in case anybody missed her final communication which came very near Christmas "Grease" has now been postponed until August 25th.

Marion also has seats reserved for "My Best Friend's Wedding" in January 22 and "School of Rock" in Feb 22.

Seasonal Special; London's Christmas Lights! From Jim Lynch

The London Explorers 2 and 3 joined forces for another virtual visit to the Capital, hosted by Christine Russell and Blue Badge Guide Caroline Piper. We were treated to London bedecked in all its Christmas splendour. At this time of the year local communities decorate their neighbourhoods and shops fill their windows with extravagant Christmas displays. As we were guided around London, we saw the best Christmas trees, the best streetlights, the best shop window displays, and the best Santa's grottos from London 2020. At the same time as enjoying the stunning lights and decorations we learned about the themes of the displays and

Henri de Toulouse Lautrec
Bilbao – Guggenheim and Museo de Bellas Artes
Spain 1900 – The Modernista Movement / Joaquín Sorolla
The Art of Australasia
The Art of Australasia 2

With the benefit of Zoom our group has stayed together and, albeit that we cannot physically travel at the moment, we have visited some of the most well known art galleries in Europe, looked at the art of Australasia and have revisited the lives of some very interesting artists. It has been great fun and we have learnt a lot!

Drawing

Zoom has enabled us to converse with and to encourage each other to continue drawing. We have covered subjects such as:

Drawing the Figure
Portraiture
Still Life
The Landscape in winter
Perspective
Wild Life and Animals

We continue to explore all the main elements of drawing i.e. line and tone, creating depth, space and highlights, alongside the use of varied drawing tools and materials.

Art Appreciation

A bad year started badly for us when our much-loved co-ordinator Laura Lindsey-Clift succumbed to a particularly nasty cancer. She had guided us through all sorts of art, pictures, sculpture and design, always very quietly but thoroughly. We miss her. But she had already asked Denise and me to look after the group while she was in hospital, so we have been able to carry on fairly seamlessly.

Denise's role was to look after the coffee and biscuits side of things, and regrettably she has been unable to find a way of doing this via either email, which was our first resort, or zoom, at which we are getting ever more proficient. We've welcomed three new members during the year, all of them adding experience and new points of view to the group. I can't quite remember how a virtual tour of the Lucas Cranach exhibition at Compton Verney led us into mid-20th century American art, but we've enjoyed a few months in the company of Messrs Warhol, Pollock and others. We're now planning a few more virtual exhibitions at the start of the year, to be followed we hope by getting to some real ones!

Our **Italian group** remains in suspense apart from virtual coffee mornings once a month.
Richard Bird

Boys Toys – Annual Review.

After a promising start to the year, like all groups, we were thrown into stalemate with the virus and had to do our lockdown time.

As soon as we could meet outside our venue shifted from the White Horse at Silverstone to the meadow on Northampton Road where, in small groups, some of us at least could sit in our chairs, drink our teas and coffees from our flasks and plan events for August! (I wonder why someone christened the groups "the covens").

Well August didn't happen but the long period of good weather meant we could meet fortnightly, exchange magazines, and enjoy each others company for an hour or so.

When the pub reopened we met in their garden under their canopy and planned a visit to The British Motor Museum at Gaydon. The members who did go to the museum travelled in their own cars and then abided by the masks, spacing, gelling and hand washing rules. We had been before but it was at least somewhere to go and lunch was good.

A bit more relaxation of the rules allowed some of us to watch a video on the Dakar rally in the pub under their covid rules if we had a meal, which was excellent.

Now the seasons have changed we are looking at more creative ways to meet and the hardier are still happy to choose the meadow once this current upsurge is over.

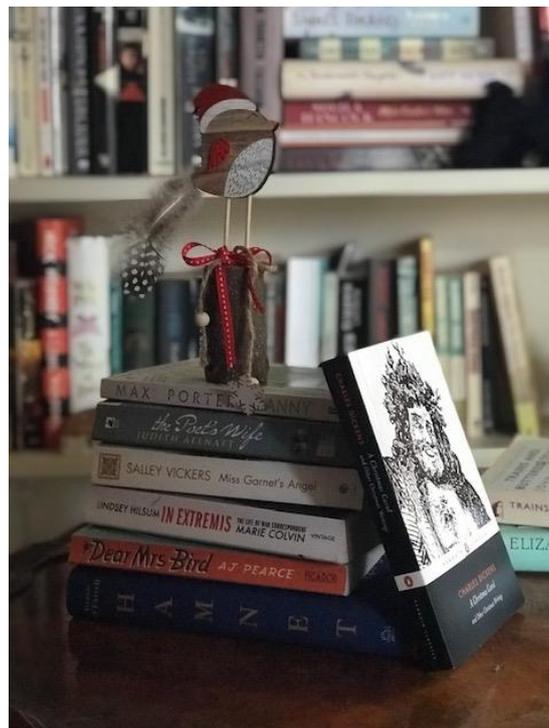
To our group members who have been shielding or not attending 'the covens' and the hardy group who sat in the rain, may I wish you a Merry Christmas and a much better 2021.

Ray Paice

Striders

“A small but dauntless group of four of The Striders completed a five mile walk on Wednesday 23rd December in what turned out to be significant rain! Luckily our walk guide, Peter Warden, was able to shorten the original circuit, which had been about 8 miles, or we might have dissolved completely! Walking from Towcester, we circuited the racecourse, found good views of Easton Newton House, and through Hulcote Village before heading back into the town. We mooted going to the gardens of Towcester Village for a coffee but decided in the end we were rather too soggy by that time! Never let it be said that members of Towcester u3a are faint-hearted!”

The Book Group by Eileen Gold



A little tree of some of the books we've read this year, plus A Christmas Carol for obvious reasons, and a rather strange hybrid Robin* with guinea fowl feathers on top!! Thank you for all your help and support during this rather strange year. It's been appreciated.

We are looking forward to meeting each other again face to face in 2021 but we've managed to keep sharing our reading and views by email even if the tea and cake is missing!

AND THEN THERE WERE 3 THE NOT THE u3a UKULELE GROUP



Music for Pleasure

The **Music for Pleasure** group had a very jolly meeting before Christmas chatting about the very varied selection of musical items that we'd chosen, many with a Christmas connection. We discovered how often the Sugar Plum Fairy has been used and here's one rather clever version on the glass harp.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdoTdG_VNV4



Photosharing Facebook page

My thanks to all who have posted or commented over the last month, in fact since we began earlier in the year. All things Christmas will continue until the New Year when we will come up with a new set of challenges. Contributors also love to have feedback on their posts so feel free to comment, perhaps you have been to the same place, been on the same visit, tried the same technique. The photosharing is not about the perfect photos, just a way to have some fun and a reason to look through all those photos stored on the computer or phone or take a new shot. Janette Waite

Virtual Mixed Craft

December has seen our group working on blue and yellow, and the results will be posted at the end of 2020. The month of January is named after the Roman god of doors, Janus because this is the door into the New Year so our prompt for January will be doors.



Alternative Poetry

Their chosen poem for this month is the very famous poem by Clement Clarke Moore. Many of us can remember the first few lines of this poem but they feel the whole poem is well worth a read. And it is even better if read out loud so read and enjoy!!

*"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring,
not even a mouse;*

*The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that St. Nicholas soon would
be there;*

*The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in
their heads;*

And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap, had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow, Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,

When what to my wondering eyes did appear, but a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,

With a little old driver so lively and quick, I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came, and he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:

"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now Prancer and Vixen! On, Comet! On, Cupid! On, Donner and Blitzen!

To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall! Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, when they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;

So up to the housetop the coursers they flew with the sleigh full of toys and St. Nicholas too—

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof the prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

As I drew in my head, and was turning around, down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot, and his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;

A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, and he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His eyes—how they twinkled! His dimples, how merry! His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!

His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow, and the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, and the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath;

He had a broad face and a little round belly that shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf, And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head. Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work, and filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,

And laying his finger aside of his nose, And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, and away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight—

"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

Finally

In the year when we have so missed our family and friends my final message must be one of optimism. We look forward to life returning to normal and the social interactions that make life so enjoyable.

I cannot let the opportunity pass without saying a huge thank you to all who have helped maintain our u3a in 2020. Not least our Interest Group Leaders who have been amazing and risen to the challenge of keeping groups in touch.

Thank you to all who contribute to these bulletins. Over the year we have had a wealth of diverse articles.

Thanks to all those who contribute to our Facebook and Photo sharing page. It has been so well maintained by Ray Paice and Jeanette Waite that interest has been sustained and it has never lost its momentum

May I echo the many words of appreciation I have received and thank the committee for their work this year. They have been wonderful! Each one of them fulfilling their own individual roles but most importantly when the situation has demanded it coming together and working brilliantly as a team!

So we go into 2021 and with the advent of the vaccines, we have hope!

One thing for sure We went into this together We are going through it together and most importantly we will come out of it together.... perhaps even stronger !

However we must remain cautious and not relax now... so stay safe take care and I wish you all the very best for 2021

Thank you for your unfailing support

Carol x

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Towcester U3A is a registered charity number 1155428