



Issue No. 99

Spring 2021

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Fellow Members

Here we are again into a New Year and there is a glimmer of hope for the future with the vaccination programme. However the various strains of the virus are a worry. At this time of the year the weather tends to be cold and wet! I hope nobody was flooded out with the heavy rain. And, at the time of writing, we have had snow followed by ice. In the past I have broken my arm and both wrists, not at the same time I add, so I do not venture out.

I would like to thank Derek Ayshford for putting together the "Christmas Show" for the Zoom December Meeting which was marvellous. I also thank all those who took part and took time to make their little videos. Derek has been working really hard during lockdown keeping our U3A alive by technology - the website content, tuition, monthly Zoom meetings (including working with the speaker), individual group Zoom meetings (he actually stays by his computer for nearly 2 hours for some group meetings). We all really appreciate you going the extra mile, Derek.

We, that is Jane Trow, Chris Lowe and me, have recently telephoned those members not able to use internet to see if they are coping OK. I must say my group were and all but two had had the vaccine along with Ken and I. I must say it is very well organised where we went at Stoke Mandeville in the hall we use for the u3a meetings. Perhaps we shall get back there for our meetings later this year. Let's hope it won't be too long before everyone is vaccinated against this awful disease.

I hope some or most of you have been able to meet by 'Zoom' with the groups who are using this facility. I must say it has been a godsend for a lot of people. We were fortunate enough to get in touch with Ken's relatives in Australia recently linking up also with his sister in Gosport and Charlotte, our daughter in Cheddington. The only problem is that everyone tries to talk at once. At committee meetings I ask everyone to raise their hand if they want to speak which works very well.

It is surprising what you can do to fill the time stuck indoors like clearing out drawers and cupboards which my other half is doing but it can be boring. Or perhaps you have found new hobbies or revived some. At the moment I am just finishing off a cross stitch picture of a steam engine for my brother's 80th birthday in September. I have also started knitting again and have got a sewing job to finish which I keep putting off. How about writing a piece for the Newsletter about what has kept you occupied during the pandemic?

Do watch out for scams! My son has just telephoned me to say he was caught by a person purporting to be from Virgin who changed everything on his laptop and then it went wrong. So the person asked for his bank details to reimburse him and that is when he realised it was a scam because Virgin would already have these details. He notified Virgin who have now got to put it right.

That is all, folks, for now. I hope to see you at the next monthly meeting on Zoom.

Sheila Satterthwaite

MEMBERSHIP

Current Membership 454

RIP

Sadly since the last Newsletter the following members have passed away:

Jean Chappel, Tom Chesworth, Tony Davis, Betty Hampton, Sue Riche,
Alan Robinson, Pete Woodman, Val Young

ASSISTANT WEBMASTER

April Truscott Smart has kindly come forward and volunteered to help maintain our website . She would be interested know whether there would be any interest in setting up an Aylesbury Vale u3a Facebook group. We seem to be one of the few u3as that have not yet ventured into this area of modern technology. If you might be interested please just email webmaster@avu3a.org.uk so that we can judge whether there is sufficient interest.

Message to anyone who is interested in family history research and in normal times use the Modern Records Office in County Hall for research:

If you are a member of Buckinghamshire County Library, you can still access the Ancestry site for free. This is usually a quite-pricey, subscription-only site so proves a very valuable and free tool for us, especially in these housebound days. If you want to use the Ancestry facility go into the Buckinghamshire County Council website first and then into Modern Records.

Jenny Corton

AVU3A GROUP DETAILS—FEBRUARY 2021

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>GROUP LEADER</u>	<u>TEL:</u>	<u>E MAIL</u>	<u>ACTIVE GROUPS</u>
Bridge for Improvers	Bob Burr	01296-381804	extra@rburr12.plus.com	
Camping & Caravanning	Lynne Dawson	01296-489578	lynnedawson6@hotmail.com	YES
Canasta	Ann Walker	01296-486683	rogannwalker@yahoo.co.uk	
Crafts	Heather Edwards	01296-431372	craftgroupu3a@gmail.com	YES
Creative Writing 1	Viv Makin	01296-420639	viv.makin7@google.com	YES
Creative Writing 2	Bobby Cadwallader	01296-485195	bobby@cadwallader.org.ok	YES
Cribbage & Dominoes	Alan Brialey	01296-482922	pandaby@hotmail.co.uk	
Current Affairs				
Gentle Walks	June Thomson	01296-337288	junethomson@sky.com	YES
German Conversation	Margrit Kennedy	01296-630515	margritkenney@aol.com	YES
History	Paul Rosentall	01296-237721	prosentall@btinternet.com	
Ladies Cards Group	Daphne Shearer	01296-424464	Tel: only	
Lets Talk French	Pat Skeggs	01296-434435	pmsk@icloud.com	YES
Mah Jong	Dan McGregor	01296-582054	danmcgregor1@sky.com	
Military History	Ken Satterthwaite	01296-583578	ken.satterthwaite@hotmail.co.uk	YES
Music I like	Gerard Boyle	01296-631667	gerardboyle2@btopenworld.com	
Opera Appreciation	Lois Robinson	01296-487803	loishzlr@gmail.com	
Out and About	Jean Coussens	01296-422325	jcoussens37@gmail.com	YES
Painting	Sue Goodband	01296-487285	suegoodband@btinternet.com	YES
Photography for Pleasure	Dan McGregor	01296-582054	danmcgregor1@sky.com	
Play Reading	Cherry Jefferson	01296-682256	jeffersoncherry13@live.com	YES
Poetry 1	Jenny Corton	01296-426535	jenny@corton.net	YES
Poetry 2	Sue John	01296-486682	susanftee@gmail.com	YES
Psychology	Lynne Dawson	01296-489578	lynnedawson6@hotmail.com	
Quiz Group	Mike McCabe	01296-398278	quiz@avu3a.org.uk	YES
Railway Group	Chris Lowe	01296-415129	chrislowe614@btinternet.com	
Readers Circle 1	Jean Hennessy	01296-580484	readerscircle1@avu3a.org.uk	YES
Readers Circle 2	Brenda Daniel	01296-612546	brenda45@fastmail.com	YES
Readers Circle 3	Joy Neave	01296-681551	joyneave@hotmail.co.uk	YES
Scottish Dancing	Sheena Swinburn	01296-321055	sheenaswinburn44@gmail.com	
Scrabble	Ann Walker	01296-486683	rogannwalker@yahoo.co.uk	
Sounds of the Sixties	Phil Davies	01296-415022	phildavies1@live.com	YES
Sounds of the 50's & 70's	Phil Davies	01296-415022	phildavies1@live.com	YES
Spanish	Sheila Page	01296-422001	shepage503@gmail.com	YES
Summer Bowls	Elinor Paterson	01296-486294	paterson_ep@outlook.com	
Swimming For Pleasure				

Cont overleaf

GROUP DETAILS CONT

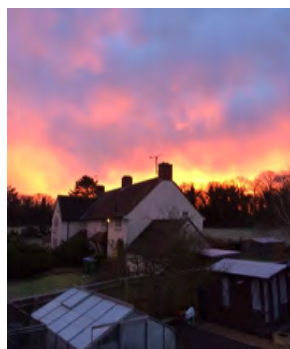
Tai Chi	Joan Lewis	01296-482241	taichi@avu3a.org.uk	
Ten Pin Bowling	John Harwood	01296-485452	bigrola@hotmail.co.uk	
Transport	Roy Knight	01296-481434	knightfamily219@gmail.com	
Ukulele	Andy Carter	01296-483384	acarter.ac57@gmail.com	YES
Walks exploring London	Peter Harding	01296-655576	phar920960@aol.com	
Local Walks	Roger Fox	01296-485185	roger.fox2@outlook.com	
	Roger Walker	01296-486683	rogannwalker@yahoo.co.uk	
Wine Appreciation 1	Michael Meacham	01296-614197	mandjmeacham@gmail.com	
Wine appreciation 2	Dorothy Chater	01286-424499	wine2@uvu3a.org.uk	
	Jenny Corton	01296-426535	wine2@uva3a.org.uk	
Write and Ramble	Phil Rance	01296-428721	writeramble@uva3a.org.uk	

Due to the pandemic this year, not all groups have been able to meet up. However, there are several groups that have done so, using Zoom, e-mail, and YouTube. This situation may well change and we will keep everyone up to date on a regular basis

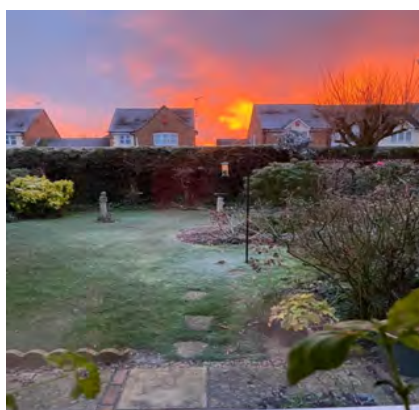
Any changes please let me know straight away: Jane Trow: jane.trow@yahoo.com

Our swimming group are looking for a new Group Leader—for when they can re start. If anyone is interested please get in touch. This group has always been popular and managed for many years by Pat Tomkins - which has been much appreciated our thanks go to Pat.

SUNDAY 24TH JANUARY 2021



Rita Black captured the a-maz-ing sunrise when the sky seemed to be on fire.



These two pictures were taken by Sheena Hudson with a 2½ hour difference on the same day



MY MODEL RAILWAY

When we went into the first lockdown I went out to my railway shed after my annual visit to the Glasgow Model Show and took a long look at my model railway which has evolved over the last few years. The result was that I was not happy with what I saw and resolved to make changes and I have not stopped since!

I sat down with a kit kat and coffee and made a plan. I cleared the station area and visualised what I thought could be there and what buildings would complement the trains.

The station is based on a real place in Ayrshire (Muirkirk) but the name has been changed – modeler's licence! My train services would be able to run from Glasgow, Kilmarnoch, and Ayr. The era I model is the late fifties through to the sixties which means I have steam and early diesels with rolling stock to match plus road vehicles that complement the scene. The buildings are a mix of craftsman and card kits with individually painted figures which are being added all the time. Figures are 3D models of real people and are very effective and are great fun to paint. The building kits are wooden and when assembled are detailed with a variety of wall finishes and even curtains are fitted where required. I use kits from a company that I first saw at a model railway show in the Midlands and I have since become good friends with the owners.

The layout has the station to one side and the town on an upper level with a variety of houses and shops plus a pub (a much-needed facility). There are also allotments with various types of vegetables being grown tended by their dedicated owners with a shed for them to escape to. There is a large shed for Wesley Pegden to muck about with cars in; he is seen outside with Compo Clegg and Foggy with Edie roaring into the yard in her Triumph Herald. I know they should be in Yorkshire but I like "The last of the Summer Wine" – previously the layout was set in the north of England.

Trains run to timetable and that makes for added interest. The first train is the newspapers and parcels train; also included is an express train to Perth. This is an excuse to run larger locomotives which gives an added bit of operation as just locals can be boring. Added to this is a regular freight train which is shunted and then heads back to Glasgow.

I have been involved in railway modelling as a hobby since I was six. I have also been interested in real railways. It keeps me sane! I modeled USA trains for a while but returned to British models mostly on the old LMS. I was a member of the Risborough and District MRC for about twenty years and started the Railex exhibition and ran it for ten years. The show is still going strong and I visit every year. Railways, buses, planes and World War 2 all keep me interested plus of course my work for the RNL which I am dedicated to. I am always learning something new. If any member would like see my railway you are welcome when we return to normal times.

Chris Lowe

HOW WE SPEND OUR TIME!

With lockdown and tiers in place for much of the last 10 months we have all found many ways to entertain ourselves. Clearly reading, writing, craftwork, baking, painting, gardening as well as loads of box sets on TV have been popular but let's look further afield!

With a computer so much more can be explored to manage our needs. Whether big PC or small tablet we can do so much more. Many of us use this to do our online shopping and pay bills as well as ordering household clothes etc. We are familiar with Zoom which is ideal for regular meetings both for U3A groups and also family quizzes and social virtual get togethers.

As well as Zoom many virtual entertainments exist mostly free! You can play Solitaire, Chess, Cribbage, Dominoes, Tetris video game and do online jigsaws. Surprisingly 10 pin bowling, bowls and other games can also be played online!! Of course YouTube and the ever changing AVU3A website under the stewardship of Derek Ayshford have many great sections to explore.

Frances has been renovating small household chairs and garden tables with chalk paint. She has now moved on to watercolour painting currently copying the RSPB survey of popular birds and is finding it very relaxing especially when it's snowing outside!

Frances and I enjoy the free weekly talks on Mirthy (Mirthy.co.uk); there are others which cost £2.99. For me playing bridge has always been a hobby and weekly club trips have been replaced by sophisticated online systems that allow a basic 4 to play up and to competitive tournaments that feel like a typical club evening. For us about 80 people take part. With the wine flowing we hope our partners are rescuing the mess we have got in. Come the new normal it will be interesting to see how many people return to the club in all weathers!

Two main bridge programs are used, BBO and RealBridge at the moment with BBO being the main program. A typical BBO screen looks like this:-



Most of us never expected to play like this but the ease of playing anytime without travelling has become attractive.

Richard Clark

BIN MEN

The Bin Men are incentivised
They run around like blue-arsed flies
Bleeping, flashing, turning, dashing
Weaving in and out with passion

Slow lane, fast lane, backwards, forwards
Always cheerful, never doleful; ever onwards
Sod the weather, quick quick hurry,
Stay the distance, do not flurry

Colour coded, fully loaded
Overfilled, a few get spilled
What's the matter, just a splatter
High Viz Wizz, no sweep, no natter

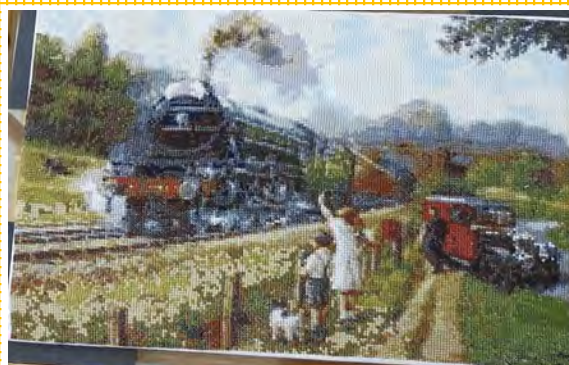
Return to the depot, leader board time
A quick splash splash, get rid of grime
Satisfied job well done; it's been such fun
Where to next. Bring it on! Bring it on!

We can now relax and think of all those poor
people who have to go to work.

Cyril Reed

My brother volunteers on the (GWR) Gloucester & Warwick Railway at Toddington in the Cotswolds. My family on both sides all worked on the railway and it's where my Mum and Dad met – he was a shunter and she was a clerk. My brother was an electrician before he retired and it is only since then that he has been volunteering so I thought it was appropriate to do a cross stitch of a Steam Engine for his 80th birthday this year. I started it in January 2020 and finished January 2021 – I did not know how long it would take.

Sheila Satterthwaite



Shopping by Cyril Reed

Low on milk, bread down to a crust
Can't avoid it, shopping is a must
Fuel on reserve, best fill up on the way
Must park handy; 'twixt store and trolley bay'

First pick has a wheel spin, a mind of its own
The next two are twinned stuck
Then one has a squeak and one sullied with litter,
I'm right out of luck. Would 'online' be better?

It's started to rain. A sharp tug does the trick
Put on a spurt, I need to be quick
To the covered front area, plants on-the-cheap
Through to the shop proper, with offers piled deep

Save! Save! Save! Big offers; wave after wave after wave
Three for two, special purchase, half price, limited edition, reduced to clear
Be of good cheer buy top brands of beer; in multiples of four
You save even more

Where are the dried figs? They've moved things around
Search aisle after aisle, temptations abound
At last I have found them. I've covered the ground
With an overfilled trolley, it's time to check out

Club card points, up the spend – dual redemption coupons
And would you believe, an overspend loyalty bonus.
How did that come about?
Confused dot com. Well I worked it out.
I handed over a bit of plastic and got £50 real cash retrieve

(What would mother have said? With Dad away in the Royal Navy during the Second World War. Rationing and acute shortages on-going. As a treat, instead of powdered egg, which was more readily available, I shared a real chicken's egg with my 11 year old twin sister.)



Once was the time when we 'zoomed off' somewhere. Who could have imagined that one day Zoom would be the only thing to write on our calendar!

Stuck at home and, particularly for those living alone, it has been a lifeline as we struggle to learn this new technology. A weekly family Zoom call has meant the whole family can meet up and chat much more often than we did in normal times when it was often difficult to all get together.

We can still have our monthly U3A meetings and through them Mirthy also offer us free talks keeping us informed and learning more on diverse subjects. There is the U3A coffee morning on Zoom and some groups are managing to keep going remotely. For those of us who belong to the Bowls group, Aylesbury Town Bowls Club have a weekly coffee morning for both full and social members with the occasional wine evening.

No, it isn't the same and will never replace human contact and it does leave out many of us who are not "online" but with infection rates so high we must obey the rules. Hope is on the horizon and vaccination has started in Aylesbury. As I write the over 80's are being called alphabetically to get their jab at the Guttman centre, a place we know well. If only I had kept my maiden name. But my time will come and, with most of the over 50's expected to get the vaccine by this summer, we should all be able to feel safe again.

Telephone calls have enabled us to keep in touch and I think we have become a more caring society. Spring and better weather will allow us to get outside more and see other people albeit from a safe distance. What a difference a smile and greeting with maybe a short chat can make to our day.

We are so lucky to belong to our U3A. I am sure we all look forward to being able to meet again and begin to resume a normal life, social closeness not distance, perhaps holidays rearranged – so much to look forward to. Until then, keep safe.

Mary Rogers

HISTORY OF COALMINING

Since the first lockdown I decided to get back into my family history and search for family especially those connected to me by my DNA. I came across a lady called Sheron Whahl in Maine USA, who is connected to the Sneddons and the McNeils who emigrated to the USA in the early 1900's.

It turns out she has been writing and producing a five part YouTube documentary on the Scottish Mining Industry and its connection to both families. She was in the middle of producing part 3 and needed a Scottish lady to do the voiceover, rather than use her own American accent.

I put her in touch with Sheena Swinburn, who is now the Group Leader of our Scottish Country Dancing Group, and both ladies agreed to work together.

Part 3 has still to be released but I know that Sheron was delighted with Sheena's work.

If anybody is interested in the History of Coalmining they can view the YouTube videos by looking up Sheron Wahl – History of Coalmining.

Greig Sneddon

LET'S ALL DRINK TO LOCKDOWN by Jan Beaumont, New Zealand

I'm normally a social girl, I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here, we can't go out the gates.
You see, we are the 'oldies' now, we need to stay inside.
If they haven't seen us for a while, they'll think we've upped and died.

They'll never know the things we did, before we got this old,
There wasn't any Facebook, so not everything was told.
We may seem sweet old ladies, who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s – if you only knew the truth!

There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll, the pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied and were quite outrageous flirts.
Then we settled down, got married and turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then nana, who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead, is like red rag to a bull!
So here you find me stuck inside for four weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again.....then I had to close the door!

It didn't really bother me, I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family, but I've got no bloody flour!
Now Netflix is just wonderful, I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris or some random sexy killer.

At least I've got a stash of booze for when I'm being idle
There's wine and whisky, even gin if I'm feeling suicidal!
So let's all drink to lockdown, to recovery and health
And hope this bloody virus doesn't decimate our wealth.

We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!

Sent in by Ron Adams who says: "She has a Facebook page, Jan Beaumont Poetry, well worth a look.

This poem is often attributed to Pam Ayres, which caused her a bit of annoyance."

CHRISTMAS 2020 IN DUBAI

As my Christmas trip to Krakow was cancelled by a reputable travel company my son, who works and lives in Dubai, suggested I spend three weeks with him and his family. Flights were booked as was the COVID-19 test (costing £168) and the cat into the cattery. I was unable to settle until I had received my test results. The result was negative, so I was set to go.

Terminal 2 at Heathrow was chaotic with so many people wanting to get away. By the time I had dropped off my bags and cleared security it was time to go to the gate. No time for breakfast in the lounge or shopping but, once on the plane with a glass of champagne in my hand, life was great.

Even though this was my fourth visit to Dubai, there were still tourist sights to visit such as the gold Frame with its glass walkway across the top and the wetlands just outside the city centre with flamingos who have special food delivered to them in huge bags.



One evening we watched the sunset from the rooftop bar of Hotel V (Five) and later saw the Moon with Mars nearby and Jupiter and Saturn exceptionally close together in the clear sky.



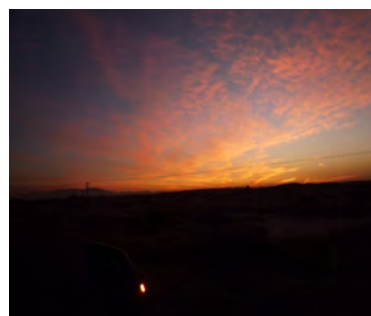
We visited the garden souk on the edge of the desert where there must have been more than 50 nurseries all selling the same plants – definitely not like our garden centres. All we wanted was a specific plant and some stones but, no, couldn't find what we wanted!

We did normal family things like food shopping at Waitrose and M&S, visiting the vet for the dog's rabies injection, an optician to get my glasses mended, and "tut" shops to get even more Christmas decorations.

On Christmas Day we had the traditional turkey for lunch with all its trimmings and veggies, and an M&S Christmas pudding which I took with me due to its alcohol content. We were in the garden at 26+ degrees. This was followed by the Queen's speech and a Christmas film in the evening.

On Boxing Day we had brunch at one of the big hotels on the beach. The most bizarre thing that day was seeing people having lunch in a carrier suspended from a crane.

Just before I left, we went into the mountains near the border with Oman and watched the sunrise. The adults, neither me nor the grandchildren, went on the longest zip ride in the world which was the reason for the trip. In the evening we went back to the beach to watch a fantastic drone light show. No, they don't live by the beach but in an expat village with schools, shopping centre, swimming pool and restaurants.



My Impressions:

As Dubai is a Muslim country there was just a nod to Christmas in the malls and Christmas Day and Boxing Day are normal working days, so you need to book holiday time.

Roads have 7 lanes in both directions, appalling driving, going round in circles in the city centre and suburban roads .

Anything and everything including petrol can be delivered to one's home. We ran out of Sellotape, so an email was sent and it arrived within the hour.

The majority of residential houses are painted in varying shades of sand.

Everyone was wearing a mask!

If one went to a restaurant or bar, you took your own car and when ready to return home, a 'phone call was made and a man appeared to drive you and your car back. Cheaper than a taxi. Very good idea but would not work in the UK due to insurance issues.

Didn't want to come home to the cold and lockdown. The A380 aircraft (double decker) was virtually empty, and Heathrow was like a ghost town at 6.30 pm on New Year's Eve. I had a great time and can't wait for my next trip later in the year.

Sheena Hudson

OUTINGS

This is a general statement regarding the "Outings" which I prepared last year. Because of the Corona Virus, it should be obvious that I had to postpone all the trips organised for 2020, until 2021. I contacted all the Houses, both NT and others, and they all agreed that it was a sensible move as all of them were closing anyway for the time being. This also included Motts coaches.

Now that we are into 2021, it is clear that our membership won't be able to assemble at the Stoke Mandeville Bowls Hall for our monthly meetings until at least September, by which time hopefully, all the vaccinations being done there will have been completed. This means that I won't be able to make lists and take monies for the trips.

With this in mind I have decided to postpone for another year, until 2022, the trips organised and insert some new ones for the early part of that year. When we eventually start using the Bowls Hall again, I shall make my usual statements regarding those Outings. I shall be asking the Webmaster to list all those outings on our website for all to see. The Newsletter will also list all the trips for 2022 so anyone not on the internet will be able to take part. The usual procedures of announcements with lists and posters 3 months in advance, and payments made 2 months in advance will take place. Anyone not able to attend the relevant meetings will be able to contact me directly by e-mail, or phone for those without computers.

I realise that it will have been a lean 2 years by the time we are all able to get together again but I very much look forward to seeing all my "regulars" and anyone else wanting a good Outing!! Hoping you have all been keeping safe, be well,

Dan McGregor

What is a Chiasmus?

The first part of a phrase or sentence is inverted in the second part.

A fine example is from JFK

When he spoke, from his heart.

Ask not what your country can do for you.

Ask what you can do for your country.

And he also said

Mankind must put an end to war or

War will put an end to mankind.

But one of the worst was from Sir Bruce Forsyth.

Nice to see you

to see you nice!

Some are really quite profound but can be used every day.

Don't count the days.

Make the days count.

And

All for one and one for all.

Trust Churchill in the dark days of the War to say

It is not the end,

it is not the beginning of the end

but it might just be

the end of the beginning.

And again from Churchill with impunity

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every

opportunity

but an optimist sees the opportunity in every

difficulty.

Off course we must have a food and wine chiasmus on this page.

Wine improves with age and

age improves with wine.

And the very shrewd

Serve simple wines with complex food

and complex wine with simple food.

Whilst an Italian sings

Barolo, the King of wines

and the wine of Kings.

And as for love, Mae West, is simply the best.

I'd rather be looked over

than overlooked.

And

A hard man is good to find and

a good man is hard to find.

and also Mae West said

way back when

It's not the men in my life

but the life in my men!

And her advice to younger women

Never let a fool kiss you

or a kiss fool you!

And which cynical woman could have said

Single women look in the fridge and go to bed.

Married women look in the bed and go to the

fridge!

But I say to thee

Tea for two and two for tea

Me for you and you for me.

Or to quote the Great Bard

What's mine is yours and

what's yours is mine.

The best sports coaches go the extra yard

Train hard and fight easy or

train easy and fight hard.

Or

To finish first,

first you must finish.

Or

Winners never quit and

quitters never win.

Or

When the going gets tough

the tough get going.

Or

Fail to prepare then

prepare to fail.

Look to Croesus for the philosophical ones

In peace sons bury their fathers but

in war fathers bury their sons.

And Gandhi did say

Live simply

so that others may

simply live.

Which is similar to Cicero who wrote

Eat to live not

live to eat.

Or in a thrice

Nice to be important but it's

important to be nice.

Or another from the Bard – his advice

The foolish man may think he is wise

but the wise man knows he is foolish.

And

Learn to listen and

listen to learn.

Great if you have something to say but

If you have

nothing to say

say nothing.

Richard Stevenson

ON BECOMING A MAMIL (Middle Aged Man in Lycra) and the London to Brighton Bike ride

“Dad, do you want to join us on the London to Brighton charity bike ride this year?” This is a call to arms for any potential Mamil – the wilting middle aged male, exercise tolerance falling, tennis slowing, even failing to take all the bags from the car to the house in one go after a supermarket shop.

The Mamil, so called because of the clothing worn, emulates the great Bradley Wiggins, when he won the 2012 Tour de France. It’s the body hugging, aerodynamic lycra, which on the middle aged male looks ahem.. a little extravert.

But for the true Mamil there is more – he talks enthusiastically and at length about cycles, gears, training schedules and demands a diet modified to enhance exercise durability, whatever the cost. True devotees may have a personal trainer and the lycra matched upper and lower (although I note socks are usually a bit naff).

In these circumstances I bought a £35 bike from eBay, and had to renew so many bits the children called it “Triggers Bike” (Only Fools and Horses reference). My son became chief cycle technician, and a young assistant in the Milton Keynes Decathlon shop provided specialist repair tools when required, and inspired me with his stories of cycling over continental mountain ranges.

I learnt that the optimal number of bikes for a Mamil was $n-1$, where n was the number needed to precipitate divorce proceedings. I stuck with just the one.

The family gave me guidance on training for the 54 mile ride – basically starting off at five miles, then gradually increasing to 40 miles and easing off a bit the week before. I was instructed to eat carbohydrate and protein (aka energy bar and half a chicken breast) after each training session, otherwise the usefulness of the the effort was reduced within the body.

When training I tried to be Britain’s most polite cyclist, having seen and heard London cyclists’ poor behaviour. This sometimes led to stand offs with pedestrians, each party insisting the other should go first. Dinging the bell on shared walkways didn’t alert older pedestrians whose hearing range seemed to have left those frequencies behind, so I slowly stopped and waited. I complemented all dog walkers on their pets, but avoided doing so to mothers of young children, for fear of misunderstanding. Almost everyone smiled or said hello, except those of any age wearing headphones, who despite walking in lovely countryside were intent on inhabiting their own inner world.

A friend gave me a Mamil top with the Pink Floyd light prism on it. This led to spontaneous admiration from one pedestrian, although I suggested to her I felt more like Buckinghamshire’s oldest male stripper when wearing it.

Cont overleaf

So come the day of the Bike Ride to Brighton we all assembled in our waiting pens on Clapham Common, to be released at the regulated time, depending on estimated competence/fitness. I was in the second to last pen, children charitably with me. I was warned that half the cyclists would have no spacial awareness despite the plethora of bikes clearly costing more than a thousand pounds and to be careful. Undaunted I, children and Trigger the bike set off. Being on roads that are closed off to cars through South London gave a feeling of importance and grandiosity, but that was balanced by the fear of effectively cycling in a bike rush hour – bikes two to three feet away on either side and fast down hills where there were hay bales on corners. Inevitably there were accidents and I was surprised to see significant amounts of blood, prostrate cyclists and ambulances, and on one occasion the air ambulance.

Cheering and applauding spectators were a huge boost (to my surprise), and a couple had hoses spraying cold water on passing participants, most welcome as the temperature was well into the 30's (centigrade) for much of the day. One Church passed out energy drinks for free: God bless them.

I was told there was just one big hill on this route, near Brighton, called Ditchling Beacon, the London to Brighton cyclists' nemesis. If you believe there is only one big hill, you will also believe in the Tooth Fairy. It's a big porky. There are many hills, before and after Ditchling. However, approaching said hill, I remember getting my head down, lowest gear, and gritting my teeth for the approaching Mamil stress. I wondered if Dante felt like this going through the gates of Hell. Then another Mamil streamed past, a mane of black hair flowing in the wind like the bottom of a sporran from a virile Scottish clan. I need not have felt worried though, around the next corner there were so many slow riders that everyone had to get off and walk to the top, even sporran bottom.

Eventually Brighton came into view, my children appeared from nowhere: we cycled together at the sea front down Marina Drive to the finish line, collected our medals and recovered on the beach. There was food and water along the way and catering at the beach covered all tastes. My wife provided transport home, some went back in pre booked coaches. We can only imagine the cyclist smell on that journey back to London. I bet the driver had the aircon on full the whole way.

So what do I think? It was worth doing, at least once. I was mainly worried about hitting another nearby wobbly cyclist, and this combined with a general lack of views (hedges allowed just brief glimpses) kept my focus on the job in hand. There were stops to drink, eat and socialise, these are probably the places to relax. Would I do it again? No, but the medal is on the wall along with a finish line picture with the family. We still talk about it. Next year I will be in the back up team.

Stephen Logsdail



Joke.

A Mamil was walking down the road one day when his friend, another Mamil, rode up on an incredible shiny new bicycle.

The first Mamil was stunned by his friend's cycle and asked, "Wow! Where did you get such a nice bike?"

His friend replied, "Well, yesterday I was walking home, minding my own business, when a beautiful woman rode up to me on this bike. She threw the bike to the ground, took off all her clothes and said, 'Take what you want!'

The first Mamil nodded approvingly, "Good choice. The clothes probably wouldn't have fit."

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Hi Everyone out there in AVu3a land,

It's your old mates Lockdown Lily and Andy saying we hope that you are all staying safe and well because I have three good reasons for you to be cheerful:

1. Spring is on the way.
2. You have had your vaccine, or soon will have.
3. You have incredibly clean hands!

Call me a cock-eyed optimist if you like but I have already booked the hall at Stoke Mandeville for the resumption of AVu3A Strummers Ukulele meetings in 2021. So, as soon as we get the word, we will start meeting again every 1st and 3rd Wednesday in the month from 1.30pm—3.30pm.

I am going to welcome newcomers again into the group. To help get you started I am going to make a series of short videos entitled "Ukulele for Absolute Beginners (the fun version)" so please look out for them.

Finally, I am going to lay down a challenge to AVu3A that we lay on the biggest, gull-darned dat-burned shindig once it is safe to do so and make up for some of the precious time we have lost. We have the talent and the organisational skills, so let's do it.

Cheers and stay safe.

Andy and Sandra
AVu3a Strummers



READERS' CIRCLE 2

As you can imagine, not a lot has changed here with regard to Readers' Circle 2. We are still surviving via e-mail and have got together a new programme to take us up to and including April. We did change our choice of book for January to a more light-hearted one in view of the present situation and which I'm sure a lot of people would enjoy reading, especially if they like penguins! It's called 'Away with the Penguins' by Hazel Prior, a story of an intrepid 85 year old woman called Veronica.. It's available in paperback from WHSmith, Amazon (boo), Waterstones and other places, so is easy to acquire. Apart from that the Group is still reading, stitching and baking together with other interests and generally keeping occupied and optimistic which is no mean feat at the moment as some of them are living on their own.

We still have a monthly virtual date by which each person sends me their opinion on the month's book which I then collate and send round to everybody. It's not as good as meeting up and each person voicing their opinion and being able to add something they've just thought of, but it keeps the Group going for the time being.

Brenda Daniel

Leader: Readers' Circle 2

A lovely, friendly group of women.

PS Camilla, eat your heart out, we did it first!!



Jill Gray from the Craft Group has made this amazing handbag from card. It opens out into a photo album. Jill is very talented at scrapbooking and paper related crafts and has run "how to" workshops for the group.

Heather Edwards



Hi Everyone

I hope you have all been coping as well as possible over the past year and those eligible have had their COVID-19 vaccination. I am pleased to say I had mine a week ago and was very impressed with the organisation.

This past year has been a mixture of joy and worry. The first item of good news came last Christmas when I was informed that my third great grandchild was due in May. At about the same time my grandson announced his engagement followed a few weeks later with the date of their wedding which was to be in October. Baby Elliott arrived safely but, due to the lockdown, we have had to rely on photos and videos of him; nevertheless he is doing well and is a handsome little fellow. The lockdown also impacted on the wedding which had to be postponed to this year but they have since announced that they too are to have a baby this May. The sad thing that happened was the re-occurrence of my youngest daughter's cancer. She is currently undergoing treatment and the family are all giving her a lot of support.

With the birth of a new baby and the birthdays of my other two great grandchildren, I made them all cards as I was unable to find any decent ones at our local shop. With the help of Hobbycraft online I was able to obtain stickers for new born baby, of princesses, dinosaurs, Peppa Pig, farm machinery and footballers. They were very well received and I was quite pleased with myself.

I have been able to get out between lockdowns and visit garden centres with my friend Jill and on occasions met up with various members of my Group "Out and About". I have kept in touch with them through emails and 'phone calls.

Many years ago my uncle, who I looked after for many of his late years, gave me a big biscuit tin which was full of old coins. These were all done up in various packages and boxes and I had just left them in my wardrobe. I had started to sort them a little while ago but during lockdown I have picked this up again. I couldn't believe just how many there were. So far I am on my fourth album putting them in date order. Sometimes I have found some that should have been put in earlier! My oldest coin is an old penny dated 1789. Most of them date from Queen Victoria's time but I found a Queen Anne coin. Goodness knows when I shall complete the task. Still, it keeps me out of mischief.

I also have a box which belonged to my grandmother and was given to me after she died. It contains all the letters my two uncles sent home during the war. The youngest, Peter, died in India in 1944 aged just 20yrs. I have been sorting them out – it takes time reading through them all.

During the first lockdown, like many others, I took to planting several kinds of seeds – this was my first attempt. I was quite impressed just how many grew and gave me quite a lot of colour throughout the summer. Just one plant I wouldn't grow again and that was a nicotiana plant. I planted it near my back door. Instead of it being just a normal sized plant, it grew to nearly 7 ft tall and kept on flowering into November when I finally cut it down. It had masses of little flowers and its stalk was so thick I had to saw through it.

Best wishes to you all and let's hope we will be able to meet again soon.

JEAN COUSSENS

Group Leader—Out and About Group

Fraud: Banks reveal the 10 coronavirus scams to be wary of

Fraudsters are using the pandemic as an excuse to trick people out of their cash

UK Finance has warned that scamsters are preying on consumers' financial fears and has named ten Covid-19 scams the public should be wary of.

"Criminals are impersonating trusted organisations like the NHS or HMRC to trick people," the trade body said. People should stay alert to avoid falling for the sophisticated schemes, it said.

Local councils have recorded a 40% increase in reported scams since the start of lockdown, while Citizens Advice reckons one in three people have been targeted by a COVID-19 scammer eg Scam warning over NHS test and trace, Fake lockdown fines and invitations for vaccinations.

Some scams manipulate their victims by urging people to invest and "take advantage of the financial downturn". Others impersonate well-known subscription services to trick people to part with their cash and personal information. Some criminals even pose as representatives from the NHS test and trace service to fool people into giving away their personal details.

"We urge people to follow the advice of the 'Take Five to Stop Fraud' campaign to keep their money and personal information safe from fraudsters," said Ms Worobec.

The campaign encourages people to be suspicious of any unsolicited contact and "Stop, Challenge and Protect" when they receive any messages out of the blue.

The ten scams to be wary of:

Covid-19 financial support scams

1. Fake government emails, which look like they are from government departments offering grants of up to £7,500. The emails contain links which steal personal and financial information.
2. Scam emails offering access to "Covid-19 relief funds", which encourage victims to fill in a form and hand over their personal information.
3. Official-looking emails offering a "council tax reduction". The emails contain links that lead to a fake government website, which harvests personal and financial information.
4. Benefit recipients are offered help in applying for universal credit, but fraudsters grab some of the payment as an advance for their "services".

Health scams

5. Phishing emails claiming that the recipient has been in contact with someone diagnosed with Covid-19. They lead to fake websites that are used to steal personal and financial information or infect devices with malware.
6. Fake adverts for non-existent coronavirus-related products, such as hand sanitizer and face masks, which simply take the victim's cash and send them nothing.

Lockdown scams

7. Fake emails and texts claiming to be from TV Licensing, telling people they are eligible for six months for free because of the pandemic. Victims are told there has been a problem with their direct debit and are asked to click on a link that takes them to a fake website, which steals their personal and financial information.
8. Emails asking people to update their TV subscription services payment details by clicking on a link which is then used to steal credit card information.
9. Fake profiles on social media sites are used to manipulate victims into handing over their money. Criminals will often use the identities of real people to strike up conversation with their targets.
10. Fake investment opportunities are advertised on social media sites, encouraging victims to "take advantage of the financial downturn". Bitcoin platforms are using emails and adverts on social media platforms to encourage unsuspecting victims to put money into fake companies using fake websites.

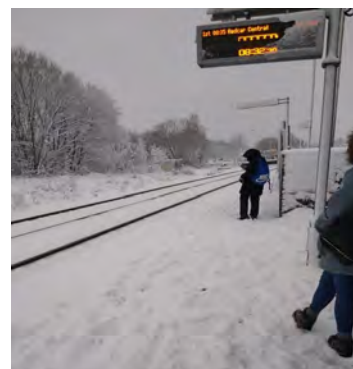
TRUSTED TRADESPEOPLE



June Thomson holds a list of tradespeople who have been recommended by our members so if you are looking for someone to do 'that' job it might be worth checking with June. Whilst neither the U3A or the recommending member can guarantee or accept responsibility for the work carried out, it is useful to gain from other people's experience. If you give June the type of work you wish to be done she will provide you with details of members who have recommended a tradesperson with those skills. It is then up to you to contact the member and seek their advice. This scheme can only work if members are prepared to spend a few minutes to pass on their recommendations to June and are prepared to talk to other members about their recommendation. If you use any of the tradespeople recommended it would always be useful to have feedback – good or bad!

Here are just some of the trades on June's current list:
Builders, Computer Repairers, Electricians, Handyman (or ladies!), Oven Cleaning, Plasterers, Plumbers, Tree Surgeons, T V repairers, Washing Machine Repairers

There may be more so ask. Needed – Any more of the above and any other skills including Gardeners you can email June at trusted@avu3a.org.uk or her telephone number is in the current directory



Sunshine over the Aylesbury flood defence (dips) and West Yorkshire snow on 2nd February 2021

Sent in by **Richard Clark**

PUZZLES (answers in next issue)

WHERE AM I?



ANSWERS to last puzzle

1. Hockey
2. Wimbledon Tennis
3. NFL

Last date for copy for the Spring 2021 Newsletter will be 1st May 2021 so please send any items you may like to share with us to newsletter@avu3a.org.uk. Thanks as always to all of you who contribute to our newsletter. Please continue to send in news of your activities within the U3A and for any other items which you feel might interest our readers. Our very productive photographers are reminded that under the new Privacy Laws, members featuring in the very welcome photographs submitted for publication should have given permission for their image to be so used. If you do not want your photo reproduced please make that clear! Our thanks go to Derek Ayshford for his ongoing support! Don't forget to look at our website avu3a.org.uk where you will find up-to-date news and details of all our activities.

If you do not use internet/email then please send your contribution, either typed or handwritten, by post to Mary Singleton, 6 Redwing, Aylesbury HP19 0WB.