

Issue No. 100



Summer 2021

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Hello Everyone

The sun is shining and lockdown has been partially lifted so we can mix a little bit more. I hope you have all had your second COVID-19 vaccination. I know that the hall at Stoke Mandeville is booked by the NHS until the end of August so hopefully we may get in there in September. We will, of course, let you know and by then we may not have to wear a mask and can sit together but I doubt it.

It is very worrying when you hear about people who refuse to have the vaccination so I would like to tell you about my sister-in-law who is 86. She had her first vaccination in January and in February had to be admitted to hospital for a bowel operation. Whilst there her operation was cancelled but two people in her ward got Covid so they sent my sister-in-law to a nursing home to isolate. Sadly she caught the virus and luckily survived. The nurse told her that if she had not had the vaccination she would likely to have been on a ventilator and would probably not have survived. She had it mildly and recovered completely and then sent home. So it just goes to show that even one jab was effective.

Now I have to bring up the AGM again. I know its boring, but this year at the AGM in October there will be 5 vacancies on our Committee. I was hoping to do another year but unfortunately I have had health problems so will have to give up the Chairman's role. I have enjoyed being Chairman but cannot risk it at my age. I must stress that if these vacancies are not filled our AVu3a will have to close. The Treasurer, Membership Secretary, and I will have completed 3 years and the Group Co-ordinator and Social Activities Co-ordinator have both completed 4 years. All the vacancies are being advertised on our website and in this Newsletter. Please do seriously consider putting yourself forward for one of these roles and "do your bit" for the benefit of keeping our u3a alive. The current incumbents will do what they can to assist you with a proper "handover".

Some of the outdoor groups such as walkers and bowls are now able to meet which is good news. And Zoom has been a Godsend although I find it disconcerting at the General Meeting because I am looking at myself on the screen and, of course, the microphones are switched off so there is no reaction but perhaps it is just as well.

Recently I had an argument with a small cupboard door which smacked my cheek bone resulting in the most glorious purple and black eye! Needless to say nobody accepted that it was the cupboard door – I say no more!

Ken and I have recently become Great Grandparents again – another little boy and he is lovely. I wish I could give him a cuddle but of course right now it's just "look through the window". I think its time I made a cup of coffee so I will say goodbye for now and take care of yourselves.

**Sheila Satterthwaite**

## AYLESBURY VALE U3A COMMITTEE VACANCIES

After 3 years existing committee members usually stand down and are replaced. Without these replacements we will not have a U3A so it is vital to have a committee full of members!

Current vacancies are: –

### **CHAIRMAN U3A**

•The main duties of this role are:

- Set the Agenda and Chair monthly Committee and general meetings.
- Take the chair at the AGM and deliver an annual report to the members.
- Give the casting vote at any committee meeting and AGM when necessary.
- Confirm regular duties of Committee Members early in the U3A year.
- Represent AVU3A at Thames Valley Network (TVN), other U3As and local organisations.
- Provide a report for the quarterly Newsletter.
- Plan for the future of AVU3A including the succession of Committee Members.
- Act as a signatory for the AVU3A bank account.

The Chairman is supported by a Vice Chairman and other Committee Members. Please contact Sheila for further information at [chairman@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:chairman@avu3a.org.uk)

### **TREASURER**

•The Role of Treasurer can be summarised as follows: –

- Manage our 3 Accounts and report on them regularly to the Committee
- Manage receipts of monies, and ensure payment of our bills
- Manage accounts with event's organisers (trips, functions, etc.)
- Complete the annual HMRC Gift Aid Reclaim
- Provide data for annual 'Third Age Trust' and 'Charity Commission' reports.
- Do End-Of-Year Accounts for approval by our Auditor for the AGM

If anyone is interested in taking on this role, please contact Mike Park at [treasurer@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@avu3a.org.uk)

### **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

- The role is not particularly onerous although you will have to be competent with basic IT. It really only gets busy during the renewal period which we have now spread over 3 months.
- There is also a requirement to be a member of the AVU3A Committee which meets on a monthly basis, currently the first Thursday in the month.

If you are interested in knowing more, please do not hesitate to contact Ken Roberson by email [membership@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:membership@avu3a.org.uk)

### **•GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR**

- Groups Co-ordinator is a very rewarding role. Yes, there are some challenges but finding solutions have been so worthwhile. After all, the groups are the heart and soul of our U3A.
- Most of the time our Group Leaders are very efficient and need little support. Helping to set up a new group is very satisfying, and you also get to know so many more members.
- As a Committee member you are never on your own; you will always have their support. I have enjoyed every minute of being part of the committee and, whenever one needs help, support or just advice they are there for you.
- The monthly committee meetings are also very enjoyable.

If you are interested in knowing more, please do not hesitate to contact Jane Trow by email at [groups@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@avu3a.org.uk)

### **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES CO-ORDINATOR**

- The duties of this role include
- Attending the monthly Committee meeting, organizing a bi-monthly coffee mornings at a suitable venue, and providing, for example, mince pies at the Christmas monthly meeting.
- Other social events can be organized as decided throughout the year such as Chinese lunch, Quiz with Fish and Chip supper, Christmas Lunch. The current incumbent is happy to assist with making these arrangements.

This post is ideal for anyone who is new to our U3A as you will soon get to know lots of people especially our members who enjoy these social occasions.

For more information contact Mary Singleton at [social@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:social@avu3a.org.uk) or call on 01296 428569

**Here a few one-liners thank you Derek!**

Why did the scarecrow get promoted? Because he was out standing in his field!

What did one ocean say to the other? Nothing, they just waved.

I gave up my seat to a blind person on the bus. And that's how I lost my job as a bus driver.

Our computers went down at work today, so we had to do everything manually. It took me 20 minutes to shuffle the cards for Solitaire.

When I am asked who is to be notified in case of emergency, I always write, "A very good doctor".

What did the full glass say to the empty glass? "You look drunk."

A woman shouting into an envelope was asked why – she said "I am sending a voicemail"

I've reached the time of life when my train of thought leaves the station before I do!

I had a hen who could count her own eggs. She was a mathemachicken.

I can't find my allotment. Have I lost the plot?

During a recent password audit at the Bank of Ireland in Strabane it was found that a customer was using the following password:  
MickeyMinniePlutoHueyLouieDeweyDonaldGoofyDublin.

When the customer was asked why he has such a long password he replied: "Oi was told me password had to contain at least 8 characters and include one capital."

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

Following an extraordinary year for our U3A the time has come to forecast our probable expenditure and set the membership fees for the coming year. To do so the committee have taken into account the fact that for the year 2020/21 we had anticipated that, because of the increased cost of hiring the monthly meeting venue, currently £386 per month, membership fees would have to increase.

The fees for the Third Age Trust, insurance, the cost of supplying the Third Age Matters magazine to those members who enjoy it, and access to the Beacon software system still have to be paid annually amounting to £5 per member per year.

Because of the Pandemic restrictions and lockdowns, the costs of hiring the monthly meeting venue have obviously not been incurred since March last year.

As a result, the committee have agreed that the annual renewal fee for 2021/2 for existing members will be held at £15.00. However, the committee have also agreed that for new members and returning members from previous years, the membership fee will be £19.50 for 2021/22. This takes into account our hope that we will be returning to Stoke Mandeville before the end of this year.

The annual renewal process will begin from the first of May and as usual early payment would be appreciated in order to spread the admin process.

Renewal forms are available from our website or by using the following link.  
[https://www.avu3a.org.uk/wordpress/membership\\_1](https://www.avu3a.org.uk/wordpress/membership_1)

**Ken Roberson**

## **MEMBERSHIP**

We currently have 458 members of which 426 are on email.

We welcome two new members: John Aldous and Sarah Wybrow

**Ken Roberson**

## MATTERS OF INTEREST GIVEN BY OUR SPEAKER ON CYBERCRIME

A well-known speaker on cybercrime who works closely with fraud squads and Essex police force, gave us some useful information with regard to cybercrime in his talk to our AVU3A members at our May monthly meeting. I am sure you are aware of some of this but I thought it would be a useful reminder for everyone to help us all stay safe by sharing this information.

Since the beginning of our first lockdown criminals have increased their activities to one of the highest rates ever seen. They have cashed in on our vulnerability. Most cases are from abroad and often out of the jurisdiction of our police forces. The plan is therefore to educate as many people as possible about the threats.

**Free Wi-Fi** We have probably all relied upon free Wi-fi when out and about and away from home. Many free systems are secure eg NHS hospitals and doctors' surgeries, airports. However, there are many out there that are not secure. Criminals are therefore able to log onto your phone or laptop whilst away from home – they may be in a parked vehicle, café, or public space and you will not know they are there. Once you have logged on, they are clever enough to gain access to your accounts or anything stored on your phone. The advice is, when out and about, turn off the Wi-Fi on your mobile or laptop unless you are in a safe place.

### E-mail attachments and texts

If you receive a text or email from someone you don't know which asks you to click on 'I' or a website for more info, do not do this and delete the text. If you do they could have instant access to the details on your phone. These fraudsters tend to play on one's curiosity, fear or even excitement, eg "you have won a prize—click for more info", "your bank account has had a large withdrawal click on the following for more information as soon as possible", "you are owed a sum of money – click here". **Don't click on any link.**

### WhatsApp

Delete any strange WhatsApp messages if there is an unknown sender or even if it has come from a person you know that appears out of character – ring them and check it is them.

**Be very wary of any emails** from a company when they address you as Dear Customer or Client or have used poor English. This is likely to be a scam – often there may only be a single word which is not quite right. Check the website or email address carefully—it might say it's from Amazon, BT, Virgin, etc – hover over the link and you are likely to see the name Amazon, BT etc but the website has additional letters or numbers. Often only one digit may be incorrect.

If you are asked **to take part in a survey** by a firm you have dealt with, do not do so until you have checked by clicking on the **name** to check that you see the proper website. Often a single digit or letter is not correct.

If paying someone online through a money transfer system or credit card always make sure there is a **padlock sign** – if not do not do it. Ring the Company and check it is genuine first.

We all receive **phone calls** where the number is withheld or a false number comes up—it is so you can't trace them. Advice is if you do not know the number do not answer. Popular ones purporting to be Amazon, BT or your Bank; recently there are more coming in from Royal Mail about parcels waiting to be delivered. If you are caught by one of these calls and they ask you to open your laptop – **DON'T!**

There are many scam sites on 'Google' – we probably all use this site for information. Be careful – hover over the name of the website and you may see it's not what it should be. If you receive a call to ring your bank because of a suspect transaction, always respond to the number on the back of your bank card **BUT** do not use the same phone – criminals may keep the line open and intercept the call easily.

If when out shopping, you pay with your card, as we all do, and the assistant says the machine is not working and then hands you another machine **DON'T USE IT – HOWEVER DESPERATE YOU ARE FOR THE GOODS YOU ARE BUYING.** They may clone your card details. Unfortunately this is becoming a more common occurrence..

CONT

We probably all use **cash machines**. When you are in front of the machine check for signs of a change to the layout or glue around a fixing particularly over the part you put your card in. This is becoming a more common scam. The criminals replace an identical part with a system that records your card details – run your hand around all parts. Banks are now checking their cash points daily.

**Facebook** is a popular site for fraudulent behaviour. Limit your contacts to friends and family. If you write your passwords down somewhere, perhaps in a book, do not leave this book in the same room as your laptop etc. Burglars are now stealing laptops and then searching for the book of passwords. Keep it somewhere safe, somewhere unusual.

**Passwords** are easy for criminals to work out if you do not use complex ones. They can work them out in less than an hour if a simple one.

**Rule 1** is to use lower case letters + capital ones

**Rule 2** always use your capital letter in amongst the word and not at the beginning as most people do.

**Rule 3** use 2 symbols but not commonly used ones eg /or # or ? or !. Criminals can decipher your password in less than 3 hours if it is simple.

Change your email password straight away to one as above – this is the most common way criminals access your data including bank details.

Another trick being used by many criminals is to switch on your laptop camera without you realising. Watch for the light coming on and, if it does, turn off your computer straight away and leave for some time before checking again.

I hope this has all helped and not scared you too much. It's worth being aware and staying safe. If you have any doubts – **DON'T!**

**Jane Trow**

## CAN YOU RELATE? BBQ Rules

We are about to enter the BBQ season. Therefore it is important to refresh your memory on the etiquette of this sublime outdoor cooking activity. When a man volunteers to do the BBQ the following chain of events are put into motion:



1. The woman buys the food.
2. The woman makes the salad, prepares the vegetables, and makes dessert.
3. The woman prepares the meat for cooking, places it on a tray along with the necessary cooking utensils and sauces, and takes it to the man who is lounging beside the grill – beer in hand.
4. The woman remains outside the compulsory three meter exclusion zone where the exuberance of testosterone and other manly bonding activities can take place without the interference of the woman.

**Here comes the important part:**

**5. THE MAN PLACES THE MEAT ON THE GRILL.**

6. The woman goes inside to organize the plates and cutlery.

7. The woman comes out to tell the man that the meat is looking great. He thanks her and asks if she will bring him another beer while he flips the meat over.

**Important again:**

**8. THE MAN TAKES THE MEAT OFF THE GRILL AND HANDS IT TO THE WOMAN.**

9. The woman prepares the plates, salad, bread, utensils, napkins, sauces, and brings them to the table.

10. After eating, the woman clears the table and does the dishes.

**AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL**

11. Everyone **PRAISES** the **MAN** and **THANKS HIM** for his cooking efforts.

12. The man asks the woman how she enjoyed "her night off" and, upon seeing her annoyed reaction, concludes that there's just no pleasing some women!

*Mary Singleton*

## **ZIPP-A-DEE-DOO-DAH?**

Recently at many street corners in Aylesbury a new sighting was beheld. Lots of yellow pavement markings and some e-scooters parked on them!

These e-scooters come from Zipp Mobility, an Irish company, who are piloting e-scooter operations in three towns, Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Taunton, enabling them to grow their staff by 20 in Ireland and in the UK. The 12-month trial started before Christmas with Buckinghamshire Council backing the trial to promote short urban trips without a car.

Yes, Aylesbury is a lead town and I guess that most people don't know much about these new arrivals. The emphasis on these e-scooters is their green zero carbon credentials. The scooters have electric motors and direction is made through the handlebars instead of the pedals we are all used to. Basically, you ride from one place to another at a maximum speed of 15.5 mph and leave the scooter at your destination parking bay. The scooters have advanced technology to deter riders from going on pedestrian areas or major roads. How? The speed is reduced automatically!

Being so hi-tech means that Zipp offers education and training sessions as well as a test drive before you get going. Once you are familiar with the scooter you can hire one. You need a driving licence, provisional will do, and some form of ID check. Scooters are hired using the Zipp mobility 'app' and off you go.

A new feature is that Zipp's e-scooters have been equipped with anti-viral handlebar wraps that kill 99.98% of coronaviruses to help eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Naturally Zipp has also implemented a strict daily disinfection regime for its e-scooters.

I have not seen any U3A members on these e-scooters when I go for my daily walk and wonder if a photo competition for most suitable rider would be of interest?!!  
I will start you off....

Richard Clark



The two groups I normally attended have been closed because of COVID-19: Psychology and Military History. The military history group normally takes it in turn for its members to give a presentation and I was given the date of 3-6-2020, which turned out to be in lockdown! I had part finished when lockdown began, so I thought it may be postponed by a month or so, so I completed it, more leisurely. The lockdown lasted longer than I had predicted, and in the meantime I resigned. This was partly because of my age [86] and partly because of the effects on me of lockdown. The result of all this is that I have an unused presentation which I am unable to now give. The subject is 'The Future of the United Nations'. If you are interested let me know.

I am still a member of the Psychology Group

**Ed Schoon [past Chairman of our u3a]**

## The Door

He turned the iron handle  
and leaned on the heavy oak door.  
After all these years it just wouldn't budge  
so with his shoulder he barged once more.

Stepping back and with a shoulder charge  
his frail body connected with a thud.  
By the frame a crack, then an arc appeared  
in the untouched mud and crud.

He squeezed through into the gloom  
and an overgrown world of thorns  
and briars and nettles and entwined ivy  
and sunlight that forever mourns.

He pushed ahead with all his strength, piercing his clothes and skin  
beneath the arch beside the fence  
and there, against the wall he glimpsed  
the bench, their bench.

It was here that she waited for him amongst the roses  
and where they held hands and kissed.  
Here they met in smart new uniforms.  
A lifetime ahead that would be forever missed.

He braved the trenches and the shells  
and he survived.  
She saved lives on those desperate wards  
but she died.

On the other side of the wall  
beside the tower in God's Acre  
she still waits for him but soon they will be together,  
as he meets his Maker.



**Richard Stevenson**



## OLDER THAN DIRT!

Someone asked the other day 'What was your favourite fast food when you were growing up?'

'We didn't have fast food when I was growing up,' I informed him. 'All the food was slow.'

'C'mon, seriously. Where did you eat?'

'It was a place called home,' I explained! 'Mum cooked every day when Dad got home from work. We sat down together at the dining room table, and if I didn't like what she put on my plate, I was allowed to sit there until I did like it.' By this time, the kid was laughing so hard I was afraid he was going to suffer serious internal damage, so I didn't tell him the part about how I had to have permission to leave the table.

Here are some other things I would have told him about my childhood if I figured his system could have handled it:

Some parents NEVER owned their own house, wore Levis, set foot on a golf course, travelled out of the country or had a credit card; most didn't even have a bank account.

My parents never drove me to school. We didn't have a car. I walked or caught the bus. I eventually had a bicycle that weighed probably 50 pounds.

We didn't have a television in our house until I was 10. It was, of course, black and white with just one channel and the station went off the air at 10 pm after playing the national anthem and a poem about God. It came back on the air at about 9 am – there was usually a locally produced news show.

I never had a telephone in my house, let alone my room. The only phone was in a kiosk some distance away. A few houses had a party line – before you could dial, you had to listen and make sure some people you didn't know weren't already using the line.

Pizzas were not delivered to our home... But milk was.

All newspapers were delivered by boys or girls. My brother delivered newspapers seven days a week. He had to get up at 5 am every morning.

There were no movie ratings because all movies were responsibly produced for everyone to enjoy viewing, without profanity or violence or almost anything offensive.

If you grew up in a generation before there was fast food, you may want to share some of these memories with your children or grandchildren. Just don't blame me if they bust their gut laughing.

Growing up isn't what it used to be, is it?

### MEMORIES :

My Dad is cleaning out our house and he brought me an old bottle. In the bottle top was a stopper with a bunch of holes in it. I knew immediately what it was, but my daughter had no idea. She thought they had tried to make it a salt shaker or something. I knew it as the bottle that sat on the end of the ironing board to 'sprinkle' clothes with because we didn't have steam irons. Man, I am old.

How many do you remember?

Trouser clips for bicycles without chain guards. Soldering irons you heat on a gas burner.

Using hand signals for cars without turn signals. I passed my driving test using hand signals. Head lights dimmer switches on the floor. Ignition switches on the dashboard,

cont overleaf

## Older Than Dirt Quiz:

Count all the ones that you remember, NOT the ones you were told about!  
Ratings at the bottom.

- \* Liquorice root
- \* Juke boxes
- \* Home milk delivery in glass bottles
- \* Party lines on the telephones
- \* Newsreels before the movie
- \* TV test card that came on at night after the last show and remained there until TV shows started again in the morning. (There was only 1 channel if you had a TV)
- \* Pea-shooters
- \* Andy Pandy
- \* 45 RPM records
- \* 78 rpm records
- \* Long playing records 33 1/3 rpm
- \* Marbles
- \* Blue flashbulb
- \* Cork popguns
- \* Morris Minors
- \* Wash tub wringers or MANGLES

If you remembered 0-3 = You're still young

If you remembered 3-6 = You are getting older

If you remembered 7-10 = Don't tell your age

If you remembered 11-16 = You're older than dirt ! THAT'S ME ! I remember them all, therefore I'm nearly dirt, never mind older than dirt.

I might be older than dirt but those memories are some of the best parts of my life .

***Contributed by Margrit Kenney***

## AVU3A ROCK'N'ROLL CHRISTMAS PARTY

As you will have guessed, the Summer Rock'n'Roll party will not be happening this year due to the ongoing and uncertain COVID-19 restrictions, and the fact that our monthly meetings at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium will not be taking place to sell tickets.

I sincerely hope that by December we can get back to normal so I am proposing Thursday 9th December 2021 for our next Rock'n'Roll party. Please put that in your diary. By then I think we will all need a good knees-up on the dance floor or just come down and listen to your favourite tunes. The licenced bar, raffle and mince pies are all worth coming for.

As before, if you have purchased tickets for the Mid-Summer party keep hold of them and you can exchange them for the Christmas party or ask for a refund.

Any enquiries about this event please contact John Wilford by email: [sound@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:sound@avu3a.org.uk)



## AWAKENING

'Twas a Covid winter  
We had to stay at home,  
'Twas a Covid winter  
Never felt so alone

Fear stalked the streets  
Not safe to go out,  
Few daily treats  
Full of trepidation and doubt

But, and we knew it would change,  
Gradually the clouds parted  
We morphed from strange  
Into lighter-hearted

We must still take care  
But we can meet up with friends.  
The get-togethers will not be so rare  
As the nightmare slowly ends

Look up to the sky  
Appreciate the dawn breaking in  
Normal summer is nearly nigh  
As we enjoy the Awakening

Phill Rance  
April 2021



This photo was taken by Jenny Corton whilst walking along the Wendover Canal

## ON SHEEP—A NON-FARMER'S VIEW



Swaledale Sheep Cumbria

It might be easy to take sheep for granted. They have been domesticated for centuries, are inoffensive, rarely bother humans, and when in fields generally behave in an unspectacular way, shunning attention, eating grass and feeding their lambs. In exchange for their farmers' care, they have given back to us wool for clothing, and meat for the table. But there is more to this remarkable creature that has become our quiet friend.

Of course the countryside is full of animals, usually safely fenced, but when we drive over a cattle grid, we have moved into roving sheep land. Now the gloves are off, the hooves are down, or however you like to put it, the sheep is in her own territory, and we are not the boss. Drive round a corner – a huge flock, all over the road, standing still, just staring at you, like they are modelled on Wallace and Gromit, and in the evening maybe laying down, absorbing the heat from the tarmac. Car slows, sheep blink. Eventually sheep start to move, half one way, half the other. But there is the one in the middle, the mint sauce candidate, who just hasn't quite learnt about cars, makes us slow to second or first gear before reluctantly moving, maybe then changing her mind when on one edge of the road, turning and making a suicidal dash for the field opposite. Some farmers say if a sheep gets knocked down by a car, it is often the biggest and best one of the flock.

But sheep are not unintelligent within the animal kingdom, being held approximately as intelligent as cows and pigs. They could probably hold their own in an animal memory game, if one existed, as they can recognise fifty other sheep and humans, and this memory stays with them for years. Each herd has a social hierarchy with a leader (like in the film *Babe*). A mother sheep can recognise her lamb's call within a bleating herd, and summon it to her, and some of us humans can't do the latter in a quiet supermarket with our own nine year old. Ear positions communicate emotions to other sheep, French researchers have postulated – backward sloping means fear, forward means attentive to surroundings. So, emotions like humans.

English language has the word "sheepish". But have you ever seen a sheep look sheepish? No. (The definition of sheepish is a look of embarrassment about having done something wrong). We may have seen a sheepish looking dog when he has scooped food from the table, but never a sheepish sheep.

Sheep have a place in art, including some fetching petroglyphs (scratched drawings on cliff rocks), Salvador Dali efforts and street art. They appear in church stained glass windows (check out Ludlow Parish Church if you are passing). And the most famous sheep classical work is the Ghent Altarpiece, named *The Adoration of the Lamb*, painted by Van Dyck in the 15th century, and is so good it has been repeatedly stolen. If non-religious, and middle aged, you might think Pink Floyd's "Sheep" and Genesis' "The Lamb Lies down on Broadway" more noteworthy, but whatever the latter is about, I guess no one really knows.

In the scientific world, sheep are used in the production of snake antivenom, and this has saved many lives abroad. Dolly the sheep (named after Dolly Parton, honestly) was the first cloned mammal, in 1996, and this certainly gave sheep a prominent place in history, but research has stalled a bit since – how are we humans to manage future developments? The thought of cloned "great and good" humans can only fill us with horror and lead to demands for an ever larger sized House of Lords.

The Internet has recently given us sheep herding with the sheep covered in Christmas lights (search You Tube "What Welshmen do when they're bored"), and a bit of debate about whether sheep really do roll over cattle grids: summary – no clear evidence or film of such, but some people remain suspicious. I know one farmer who has witnessed sheep jumping over the grid to the other side though.

Cont overleaf

So with this admiration in mind, I asked a sheep farmer if she would allow me to join her in the lambing shed this year. What did I learn? Well, some sheep psychology to start with. Because sheep are docile by nature, they stay close together for protection – it's not an unthinking behaviour, and when in the wilds, are not inclined to roam far from their home territory. They have better hearing than eyesight. Sheep pregnancy lasts five months minus four days (like humans, this is not an exact time estimate). The lambs can stand within a couple of minutes of birth, and when they first arrive into the world, are covered in a mucousy, sticky membrane-like substance. This can prevent the newborn breathing, and it is remarkable to see the mother set to work, licking this substance away, starting at the head, assisting the newborn immediately and as best she can, even if a second lamb is in the process of delivery. If assistance is required, the sheep rarely contests the advance of a hand up the birth canal, or even two hands when required – one for the head, the other to grasp both front legs.

The beautiful lambs are physically steady within minutes – can be picked up by the front legs safely and without distress, and moved to a single pen in the lambing shed with the mother, who follows along behind dutifully, although I understand there are occasional exceptions to this, when the mother becomes alarmed and biffs (“bunts”) the farmer's legs. The farmer's skill now involves ensuring each mother can give adequate milk, or topping up if not, looking for and treating infection, docking tails and testicles, and ensuring the lambs don't escape and then go back to the wrong pen, where they will be rejected and not receive milk.

After perhaps a day or two the lambs and mothers go to pasture. They will receive their mother's milk for about four months. Early on they are vulnerable to predation by foxes, crows, magpies, and more recently there have been reports of deaths caused by ravens, now increasing in numbers as they are a protected species. This is causing substantial problems, as shown for example in a TV documentary focusing on the crofting farmers of Caithness, Scotland.



In the fields, sheep and lambs may get a stone or a clod of mud trapped between their cloven hooves, or an infection, causing a limp, which may require attention with cleaning, in some cases disinfectant foot baths or even antibiotic spray or injection. Infection with Orf (a virus found in the ground) can make the lips of lambs swell, and eating becomes difficult, and this infection is occasionally passed to the farmer, where it shows as a blistering

infection on the skin, although heals within three to six weeks. A sheep presenting with droopy ears is a warning sign to a farmer that something is wrong, like an infection. If a sheep lies down, and inadvertently rolls onto its back, it may not be able to right itself, especially if it has rolled into a dip, or has a thick coat. This “cast ewe” will rapidly die, because of intestinal complications, unless assisted back to all fours. Some farmers say their sheep have “an ambition to escape or to die,” but some show a huge resilience in denying the Grim Reaper.

Later farmers' work includes ensuring a balanced diet (for example feed augmentation with minerals in some parts of Buckinghamshire), and worming, maybe three to six weekly, using medicine similar to that used in humans. Sheep bottoms need shearing, called “dagging” to keep the wool clean and for hygiene reasons, preventing infestations as a result of “fly strike”. June and July is sheep shearing time, a task often contracted out as it is a specific skill, and then there is sorting of the flock for market. Those sheep that did not produce offspring might get a second chance the next year, but otherwise they too will go to market.

So now, when I pass a field of sheep, with their lambs, I am filled with admiration for the animals and their farmers. They all serve us well. And long may they continue to do so, with all the complexities their lives and their work entails. May our fields remain, like the name of the J S Bach musical composition, a place where sheep may safely graze.

**Author** – Stephen Logsdail

**Acknowledgement:** with grateful thanks to Helen Hedges, farmer and tutor.

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

See Group Information at [www.avu3a.org.uk](http://www.avu3a.org.uk).

Jane Trow advises that the Write and Ramble Group has been discontinued.

Jane can be contacted on [groups@avu3a.org.uk](mailto:groups@avu3a.org.uk).

### GERMAN CONVERSATION GROUP

Joining a foreign language group can be far more rewarding than you may think. Of course there is a real 'buzz' from being able to make yourself understood in a foreign tongue, but it is always more than just that.

Learning a new language teaches you just as much about your own. Translating from one to the other is rarely straightforward but you learn a lot about how other nations 'tick'. For example, the Germans have ten words for 'the mind', which explains why they have produced so many great philosophers. They have adopted hundreds more words from our language than we from theirs which can sometimes cause confusion. For a German, 'Bodybag' is a harmless shoulder bag, and 'Tripper' is ..... well, suffice to say that if you board a 'Tripper- Klipper' you are going on a sex cruise! Proverbs, too, can tell you much about other cultures. Germans have quite a lot of 'Wurst' and 'Bier' in theirs. We have also discovered that the German language has changed quite a lot since our schooldays! (Are we really that old?)

We are currently researching famous Germans. Did you know that Rudolf Diesel (of car fame) vanished at sea, or that Ludwig II, the castle-building Bavarian king, liked dining alone while holding imaginary conversations with French kings?

Our members have a wide variety of backgrounds and interests and there is always much to discuss. We follow the U3A motto – we learn a lot, laugh just as much, and we'll live again when we can return to our leader's house and taste her legendary biscuits!

Gay Hancock



The **LOCAL WALKS GROUP** has resumed their monthly walks following lifting of lockdown restrictions. On Monday 19th April 2021 thirteen members of our walking group walked a 2.5 mile stretch of the Phoenix trail and then we retraced our steps back to our starting point.

The Phoenix Trail is a 7-mile cycle and walking path from Princes Risborough to Thame using the track bed of the Thame to Princes Risborough disused railway. Our starting point was at the Phoenix trail carpark located near Longwick. The weather was fine, warm and sunny. The elevated railway track offers pleasant views of the local area including the Chiltern Hills. Relics of the old railway can be seen along the route including a platform and old railway station which has been converted into someone's home. We also saw a number of artworks inspired by the old railway environment and the local landscape of the Chilterns – there are 30 in total along this stretch. Although we did not venture all the way to Thame, the existing railway platform there can still be seen.

After 2.5 miles we stopped and, maintaining social distancing, enjoyed a chat and refreshments before returning along the track to our starting point.

This was a good start to our monthly walks programme enjoying the company of friends so missed over the past few months of lockdown. After the walk a few of us enjoyed a picnic lunch next to the Chinnor to Risborough preserved railway taking in views of the Chiltern hills near to Chinnor.

Our next walk will be Monday 10th May, led by Heather and Steve Edwards at Ashridge where we hope to see lots of bluebells.



Thame railway station was a station on the Wycombe Railway serving the town of Thame in Oxfordshire. It was opened in 1862 as the terminus of an extension from High Wycombe via Princes Risborough. The station was built with a train shed over its platforms. The cost of construction of the station building was £2,201 1s 5d; additional general works were £2,137 8s 8d. In 1864 the line was extended from Thame to Oxford.

See more information at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix\\_Trail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenix_Trail)

Roger Fox

## LOCAL WALKS

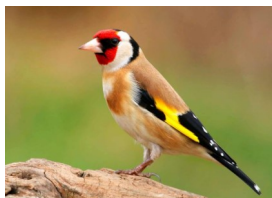
Heather and Steve Edwards organised this month's local walk a week earlier than normal so that we could get the best possible view of the bluebells up at Ashridge. 18 of us met at Ivinghoe Beacon car park at 9.45 am on Monday 10 May and walked just under 5 miles through the woods. We split into 3 groups of 6 and remained socially distanced throughout the walk. We were lucky to see lots of beautiful bluebells. The weather was mainly good with spells of warm sunshine, the odd light shower and moderate winds. Most members of the group ate a picnic lunch after the walk and enjoyed the wonderful views over Hertfordshire.



Mary Singleton

### PUZZLES (answers in next issue)

#### 3 Garden Birds, what are they?



#### ANSWERS to last puzzle

- 1) Huddersfield Railway Station
- 2) St Pancras Railway Station with John Betjeman looking up
- 3) Waddesdon Manor

Last date for copy for the Autumn 2021 Newsletter will be **1st August 2021** so please send any items you may like to share with us to [newsletter@avu3a.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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 OWB.**