

KANUTA



The Newsletter of the Knutsford and District **u3a**

November 2020

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From the Chair

A big thank you to Christine for being Chair for the last four and a half years.

On a more personal note I must thank Christine for staying on as Chair for a fourth year so that I could learn the role. She has been an invaluable source of support and advice over the last 18 months. The original plan was further complicated by the arrival of Covid-19 and the delay of our Annual General Meeting (AGM), and hence the handover, from our planned date in July to November.

In this edition of Kanuta we report the results of our AGM which was conducted by post and email. Thank you to all of you who voted; a record breaking 23% of the membership. The Committee is taking the opportunity of the present lull in U3A activities to modernise our administrative procedures. We are planning to move our bank account to a different provider and to use Beacon - a software package developed by the U3A National office - to streamline our membership renewals process. We aim to bring this new system on line before our next renewals scheduled for April 2021. This will mean that we will be encouraging renewals online, although alternative methods of payment will still be accepted.

Sadly, our monthly meetings in Knutsford Methodist Church and our usual theatre and outing trips have had to be cancelled because of the present situation. Now that we have at least 3 vaccines with positive 3rd stage trial results and the start of mass testing the outlook for next year is much brighter with strong hopes that we can return to something approaching normality by the summer.

In the meantime we do have a program of monthly meetings held at the usual time (second Thursday of the month at 2pm) by Zoom (see below). For the November meeting we had a very enjoyable talk on the History of Gin provided by Helen Naylor who will also be hosting a Christmas event on December 21st. Several activity groups are continuing to operate using Zoom or similar technology and hopefully the walking groups will be able to restart in the Spring as restrictions are lifted.

Finally I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their continuing enthusiasm and hard work. Also thanks to Terry Griffiths who has taken over the job of producing this newsletter and Tony Roberts who has done much work on the website. Details of the new Committee are provided in this Kanuta.

Wishing everyone a safe and Happy Christmas and renewed hope for 2021.

Mark Barley

From the retiring Joint Chair

I've been Chair for too long! It's been four and a half years since I took over as Chair of the Committee from Lynda Harris. After my first 3 years, with nobody else ready to take it on, I agreed to do one more year with Mark becoming a very active Vice Chair. Then along came Covid-19 and the first period of lockdown, making a handover difficult and the issues for the Committee complicated. So for the last few months Mark and I have been Joint Chairs, as a temporary measure.

I have enjoyed my time on the Committee and being Chair has always been interesting and mostly rewarding (though the last few months have been hard for us all!). I want to thank Mark for being the 'new' Chair, he's doing an excellent job and will lead our U3A into a more forward-looking organisation, well placed to recover and flourish next year.

I want to thank all my current and previous Committee colleagues - a great team to work with and to learn from. Thank you to all those members who also put in time and effort for our U3A; the Co-ordinators, members of the sub committees and teams and individuals who give extra skills and time.

Finally, thank you to all Knutsford U3A members, for supporting the Committee, taking part when possible, and holding on for a more active U3A in 2021! I shall be staying on the Committee for a while and look forward to things getting more positive next year.

Cross everything for the vaccines!!!

Christine Jones

Knutsford & District U3A AGM – held by post and email – 12th November 2020

The Committee would like to thank those members who voted in this year's virtual AGM, either by email or by post. All the proposals put forward were approved unanimously by the 23% of the membership who voted with the exception of the adoption of the new constitution where there was one abstention. The elections to the Committee and the adoption of the new model constitution have therefore been approved and will now be implemented.

The formal minutes of this meeting will be circulated prior to the 2021 AGM.

The new Committee consists of the following members:

Name	Role
Mark Barley	Chair
Sue Allan	Secretary, Membership Secretary, Speakers Committee Chair
Stuart Allan	Groups Supporter
Barbara Arnell	Link with Outings & Speakers Committees, Accessibility Officer
Adrian Long	Treasurer/Activities Treasurer
Roger Brown	Publicity
Irene Hardy	Events co-ordinator
Robert Watson	
Christine Jones	
Veronica Gordon	

Virtual Members' Meetings

2nd Thursday of the month at 2.15pm via Zoom
(log on from 2.00pm)

2020

Thursday 10th December

Kevin Little will give a Zoom talk on **'Fishy Tales'** – A talk describing incidents from his 54-year career as a fishmonger, as well as eccentric customers, stories of his travels and his rescued animals on his Somerset smallholding.

2021

Thursday 14th January

Jacqueline Hyman will give a Zoom talk on textiles entitled **'Therapeutic handicrafts in times of conflict'**.

Thursday 11th February

Travels and Travails - Himalayan Foothills to Yorkshire Dales – a talk by **Ranjit Arora**. She will talk about her life in India before migration to UK and her experiences of working in the UK as an independent Education and Management consultant.

Thursday 11th March

'Fool's Gold' – acoustic music from this entertaining duo.

Their shows combine stories - that's the stories about the songs - live music and projected visuals with live performances of the songs. All the shows feature a mixture of original and well-known music, joining in is virtually mandatory!



An extra Seasonal Members' Meeting

Come along to join in our light-hearted festive get-together.
Helen Naylor will give a presentation by Zoom on
"A History of Christmas Celebration"



Monday 21st December at 5pm
(log in from 4.45pm)

This will be an illustrated look at Christmas traditions.
It starts with the mid-winter festivals at the dawn of time, moves on through different eras up to modern times with our traditions such as our joyful but meaningful carols.
There will also be a quiz and opportunities to chat with friends.

The start time is 5pm - a good time to relax with mince pies, Christmas nibbles and maybe a glass of wine close by

Survey of Groups' Activities and Use of Zoom

Prior to the November lockdown a survey was undertaken to establish how each group was operating during the pandemic. The results were as follows:

Outdoor groups (13)		Indoor Groups (43)	
Operating	6	Operating via virtual meetings (Zoom or similar)	12
Not operating	7	Operating by other means (phones, email, texts, Facetime etc.)	9
		Not operating	22

Use of Zoom

It is encouraging to see from the survey that 12 of our indoor groups are using virtual conferencing, predominantly Zoom, to maintain their activities and a further 3 groups are considering it. The initial confidence in using Zoom varied significantly amongst the groups and some got up to speed more easily than others. In some cases the earlier users helped and supported the latter converts. Overall, it is clear that all users are happy to use the technology while face to face meetings are not possible.

One of the later groups to use Zoom was Advanced Spanish and their experience is probably typical. Their Co-ordinator has provided an account of their experience:

At the onset of Covid in March our group was unable to use the Methodist Church for our meetings. Our members were keen to continue to meet so, at the suggestion from one of the group, we started to meet via Zoom and have continued to use this facility since.

Our 'host' sends out the invitation via email each week. We usually have two sessions, this way we can have our full hour of meeting but still benefit from the 'free' Zoom offer.

On the whole we have coped very well with the new format. Any problems we have encountered have been technical but overcome quite quickly. Our members are using a mix of PCs, iPads and iPhones.

We are a sociable group and enjoyed going for a 'post class' coffee together. Clearly this has stopped but by using Zoom we have been able to maintain social contact as well as continuing our learning of Spanish. Whereas this is not ideal, until we are able to meet up again in the Methodist Hall, we are happy to continue to use Zoom. Not bad as most of us hadn't heard of Zoom before the lockdown and were certainly not confident in using it.

Whilst Zoom is not suitable for all groups it is clear that, where appropriate, it provides an effective way of maintaining groups' activities whilst Covid-19 continues to blight our lives, potentially for some time to come.

The Committee are keen to see Zoom used as widely as possible and for those groups that wish to start using it help is on hand from Robert Watson (rw.knutsfordu3a@gmail.com 01565 633147) and Mark Barley (mhbarley@waitrose.com 0161 929 9438) who are happy to provide one-to-one support. There is also comprehensive help available on the Knutsford U3A website.

Stuart Allan

News from the Groups

Bridge Club

Bridge Clubs the country over have been hard hit by the pandemic. Nothing could be worse than handling cards that everyone in the room handles also sitting quite close to each other. Reducing the number of tables playing to keep a safe distance would only work with clubs with large rooms as overheads would price it out of existence. Fees would have to go up and then you have to choose which folk can play in any one session. Very unsatisfactory!

Knutsford U3A Bridge Club is a group of around 60 members and we have over 40 playing on line every week. We have been playing with just tables of 4 on BBO (Bridge Base Online) but a new system called YBCOL – yourbridgeclubonline – has started up.

BBO, which we have used since March, gives a chance to play bridge in our 4's which has kept us in contact with one another but the scoring puts us against other tables we cannot see made up of people from all over the world. Some of these are 'experts' and can be very challenging when different levels come into play. However, this new site gives the chance for clubs to set up again and play against the members they are used to, a far better situation for our club and one they have taken on board with enthusiasm. This means that they can set Friday mornings aside as they have in the past and not worry about how they can find a time for all 4 to agree to.

This is as near as we can get to playing normal bridge, which seems now to be many moons ago. Having said that, this is enabling us to keep in touch with one another and, hopefully, keeping that grey matter working! Fingers crossed that a vaccine will be found so that we can get back to normal next year.

Jenny Matthews

Writing for Pleasure

The Writing for Pleasure group started in January 2009, meeting each month in member's homes. However, throughout the pandemic activities have continued. We cannot meet now - so stories are exchanged on line, based on a new topic each month. Recent subjects have included: a Fantasy story; Obsession and the Trial.

The fact that we now exchange stories, rather than read them out changes the group dynamic. Hearing authors read their own stories allows them to interpret their words. On the other hand, being able to read each piece oneself enables some light critical comments to be circulated.

The group currently has eight members and we have room for two more. If anyone would like to get involved please contact me on 01565 651717 for further details.

Michael Goldman

Scrabble

The group has not been able to meet as their usual venue, the Library, is a no-go area and Scrabble is too close contact a sport. I simply send best wishes to all former and potential players – hoping they will be able to play again soon.

Avril Slade

Jamming Group

The Jamming Group started up again at the beginning of July. You can get a taste of our repertoire by following the italics. We have a detailed Code of Conduct to ensure members *Ain't Misbehavin'* and follow Government Guidelines. Each week I looked at the weather forecast to see if it would *Bring Me Sunshine* and tried to pick a day when it wasn't raining. Luckily I live *On the Sunny Side of the Street*. It was an unusually windy summer and members made full use of pegs to keep their music on their stands. As the *Autumn Leaves* started to fall we continued playing in the carport and passers-by would *Smile* seeing us standing socially distanced each on a blue cross chalked on the floor. Now *It Doesn't Matter Anymore*; sadly coronavirus has a *Wooden Heart*. All was going well *'Til There Was You* and *Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered*, although we hoped *There Will Never Be Another You*, we had our last meeting just before lockdown. *I Imagine* and *Dream a Little Dream, Every Time We Say Goodbye* that we will meet again soon. For now we shall just *Let It Be* but hopefully *The Times They Are A-changin'* and we will soon be back *In a Sentimental Mood* making music together *Here, There and Everywhere*.

Helen Smith

Proposed new group – Quilting and Sewing

Lynn Spence has offered to set up and co-ordinate a Quilting and Sewing Group once the Covid 19 situation allows. A suitable venue would be hired and the intention is for the group to meet weekly or fortnightly with members bringing their own sewing machines and other equipment. Lynn has experience of operating such a group and the intention is that this new group would be run on a 'sew and chat' basis but she is prepared to run tutorials if there is enough interest. The aim is to have an inclusive group whose members' ideas are taken into consideration and for them to enjoy the creative process with like-minded people.

If you are interested in this new group or would like further details please contact Lynn at lspence357@gmail.com

U3A National Learning Programme

The U3A website has a page dedicated to offering ideas to keep learning during these strange times. The website contains "a mixture of suggestions from members and quizzes, challenges and projects from our subject advisers, members and other Trust Volunteers. Some are one-off events and others ongoing over a period a time. All of which are supported by members like yourself. Get involved!"

It goes on to say "Don't forget to look at our accompanying Online Events for an exciting range of workshops, webinars and interactive sessions delivered by members for members, which are free to join.

The National Learning Programme can be found here: www.u3a.org.uk/learning/national-programmes.