

# NEWSLETTER EXTRA – JULY 2020



[www.readingu3a.org.uk](http://www.readingu3a.org.uk)

*This is an edited version of our usual newsletter, produced to give prospective members an idea of our activities*

## CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Hello to all our members, I do hope you are well and enjoying the new (limited) freedoms we now have. A recent special treat for me was some night sky watching when I spotted the newly arrived Neowise comet. It is a fuzzy smudge with a vertical tail low in the northern sky – on view until the end of this month.

Virtual meetings of many groups have proved very popular, with over 60 people joining the Members meeting on 9 July.

My best wishes to you all – we all hope that the U3A can provide support, interest and entertainment as this challenging time continues. Thanks to all Newsletter contributors and editors.

### Reading U3A Annual General Meeting

**Monday 28 September 2020 at 2.15 pm using Zoom**

Due to the current restriction on the numbers of people who can meet together, this year our AGM will take place as a virtual meeting using **Zoom**. We are obliged by the Charity Commission to hold the meeting to present our finances to you, the members, and to elect a new Committee.

### Members Meeting – by Zoom!

Following the success of the first virtual Members Meeting in July, we are pleased to announce that another of our members will give us a talk on Thursday 13 August at 1400. The subject will be **Edith Morley**: “Edith was the first female professor in England, here at Reading. But more than this she was a suffragist, a member of the Fabian Society, an early tutor for the WEA, and one of the founders of Reading Refugee Committee. Feisty and sometimes aggressive, she fought throughout her life with courage and passionate sincerity for human rights and freedom.”

### U3A Online

Don't forget that the U3A's national website is an excellent source of information, entertainment and education. Have a look at **[www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)** - you are sure to find something of interest.

### Alternative Theatre Group

One thing for now and one thing to look forward to.....

**For now:** Reading Rep Theatre is involved in mini plays on YouTube about Reading and other areas, called 'Come to where I am'. You can find it from the Reading Rep site or just by googling direct.

**For the future:** Reading Rep has taken over the old Salvation Army building near Reading College, Kings Road and is converting it into a 150-seater theatre. It hopes to have it open in the summer of 2021, so we should have a new venue to look forward to.

### Birdwatching

We are planning to do a small group 'distance' birdwatch at Theale on Thursday August 27<sup>th</sup> at 10.0am. Details will be emailed to regulars.

### **Collectables**

Zoom meeting at 2.30pm on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August for one hour (max.). Topic will be 'Clocks' – possibly more suited to Zoom than attempting to bring a fragile clock to the group meeting!

### **Computer Group**

The Computer Group is holding meetings via Zoom on the first Wednesday of the month, and any Reading U3A member is very welcome to join in. If any member has a specific problem or topic they want to discuss then we are willing to give it a go.

### **Current Affairs schedule**

After three months of fortnightly Zoom meetings we are now back on our normal schedule (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at 10.30), so our next Zoom meeting is on 13 August – for those who would enjoy the chance to reflect on and discuss key issues in the news.

### **French Conversation**

Six of us met up outside for a lively and interesting get-together. For those who had been in self-isolation alone it was a very welcome social exchange. We are looking forward to our next get-together when we hope we can all meet up outside. We will each be taking an object to talk about with the group and are hoping the weather will be fine.

### **Photography Group**

We are continuing our Zoom meetings until Greyfriars Centre re-opens, and these sessions take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month at 10.30. All are welcome to join us.

Our July Zoom is on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup>, when we will look at our new project photos 'Photographing the alphabet letters A-D'.

On Wednesday 26 August we continue with the alphabet theme, this time looking at letters E-H.

### **Quizzing**

Our email quiz group is continuing to be very popular. Any member can be added to the mailing list to receive a monthly quiz by email, full of intriguing questions and links. You can play as an individual, or make up a team – it's up to you.

### **Science & Technology Topics**

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 28 July at 1400 via Zoom, when the talk will be on the subject of 'Radioisotopes and their uses past and present'.

### **Singing for Pleasure Dates**

As usual, we will take the whole of August off, and plan to return to the fray in September - perhaps coming together in a socially distanced group or continuing via Zoom.

On behalf of all our Singers for Pleasure, I would like to send our convenor **A Very Big Thank You** for everything he has done to keep us sane across the lockdown weeks! Roll on September!

### **Spanish Conversation**

We continue to meet via Zoom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of the month. Zoom is proving very successful, but we obviously all look forward to returning to our usual meeting place at the RISC offices on London Road.

Reading and translation exercises from our 'Short Stories in Spanish' book are proving very useful, as well general conversation in the Spanish language. Previous meetings have included regional food and wines, history of Spanish cities, as well as phrase book, vocabulary and grammar.

Viva España, viva U3A!

### **Thames Valley Network (TVN)**

At the TVN Committee meeting last week, the inevitable decision was formally made to cancel all the 'face-to-face'-TVN events scheduled for 2020. It is a huge disappointment to everyone, of course,

because a great deal of work and planning went into this year's programme, and it is sad that we cannot deliver what we promised.

However, all is not lost, because the Committee and the Events Team are determined to find a way to carry on in these uncertain times. So we are hoping to hold three 'study days' via Zoom this autumn – the format will be different, the programmes will be shorter, and some may be divided into two separate events (still working on it!). The topics, if all goes to plan, will be Quizzes (September), Understanding Historic Buildings (October) and Biodiversity and Climate Change (November). At the time of going to print with this newsletter, we have not sorted out the details, nor confirmed the dates.

So what about 2021? Well – who knows? We have a provisional programme in place, but of course we don't know what will be possible. What we can say is that we will have an Events Programme, and we will try to adapt to whatever this crisis throws at us.

Please do keep an eye on our website for updates - <http://u3atvnetwork.org.uk/> .

### **U3A Region Autumn Gathering – 4 November 2020**

The Thames Valley Network was due to host the SE Region Spring Gathering at Benson in May, which had to be cancelled. We have now heard that the Autumn Gathering – entitled 'Back to the Future – Normality Restored' - will go ahead, via Zoom, on Wednesday 4 November. We will let you have details of how to register when available.

### **Woodley/Earley Lunch**

Our group hasn't been doing a great deal during the current month. Several members joined two Zoom meetings hosted by David Morton at which post-lockdown lunch venues were suggested. The Waterside Inn or Bull and Chequers in Woodley are favourites. One of our shielding members has been following seated exercises on TV.

A handful of us (maximum 6) intend to meet for coffee and a sandwich in Laurel Park, Lower Earley next week, keeping well apart.

### **ZOOM ADVICE**

As you will see in this newsletter, many of our groups are using Zoom to continue their activities, and we are all learning how to manage the technology – making some mistakes along the way, but getting more proficient as we go along. Here are some snippets of advice which may prove helpful.

#### **Zooming? – tell us who you are!**

When you set up your Zoom presence you are asked to register a name which appears under your picture on the screen. If you are attending a large meeting, and just use your first name, then it can be difficult for everyone to know who they are talking to – and even more difficult for the person keeping the attendance list. So next time you are at a Zoom meeting, click on your photo and you will see the option to edit your name for that meeting. For some meetings it might be a good idea to add the name of your U3A – for example I might add Reading, or Thames Valley Network, next to my name if it would be useful for the other participants to know this. And if your name is registered as 'iPad', please change it – there are so many of you!!

#### **Zooming – to mute or not to mute?**

If you are attending a Zoom meeting, it is up to the convenor and/or speaker whether you are 'muted' – that is, your microphone is turned off so you can't be heard. Some speakers like to leave your microphones on, so that they can have a bit of feedback, and some meetings are more interactive, but at larger meetings you are more likely to be muted. But please remember that you can mute yourself too – so if there is any extraneous noise going on where you are, or you want to have a conversation with your partner, or next door's dog is barking, or you are stirring your tea vigorously (oh yes, we can hear that too – clink, clink!) then switch yourself off by clicking on the microphone symbol on your screen. And remember that if a mobile or landline phone is close to your computer, consider putting them on silent as well.

### **Zoom Meetings – sound quality**

One of our members has been in touch with us about the issue of sound quality in Zoom meetings: The sound quality from PCs is often pretty bad, I don't know how you've found it - mine is very "tinny" so to improve the sound quality I link up an external speaker to the computer by using an audio cable connecting the earphone socket on the computer to the earphone socket on the speaker, these sockets are commonly known as auxiliary sockets. You can also connect your laptop to the television by using an HDMI cable, but older televisions may not have HDMI sockets. You must remember that the camera is on the laptop so that still needs to point at you even if you are looking at the television.

### **Zoom Training Resources**

There is a webpage with links to various training resources for U3As who are using Zoom – find it at <https://zoomu3a.weebly.com/>

### **Reading Central Library – reopening!**

Good News – Reading Central Library is set to reopen at the end of July (all branch libraries will remain closed). The services it can offer will, of course, be very limited; you can find information here:

<http://news.reading.gov.uk/reopen-libraries-and-museums-safely/>

or by calling 0118 937 3787.

## **Members' Snippets**

### **My Personal Project In Lockdown (PPiL)**

As a retired electronic engineer, my own PPiL has been to update myself on car electronic fuel injection by identifying the components and correlating with circuit diagram on a 20-year old Citroen. My techno fear is now much lower!

### **Size Matters**

#### **(Subtitled 'Lock Down Disasters' causing great amusement to family and maximum embarrassment to me)**

1. At the beginning of lockdown I was desperate for tinned tomatoes. I found 6 tins on-line for £16. Well, I thought, I know prices have increased but.....! However, when my order arrived it was 6 huge catering size tins!
2. (Again on-line) and looking for garden wall plaques, I was fascinated by the green man legend and thought this would be something to display. When it came, 'Yes', it was pretty but 'No', it was only 3 inches high instead of the 12 inches or more that I had assumed. I had to order another - at least I now have a Mr and a Mrs.
3. This time from a catalogue I was bowled over by the Tree of Life wrought-iron open work illustration. That's the one I triumphed, BUT when it arrived it was so big and wider than the wall it was intended for. No wonder it was in the sale!  
This time I got the last laugh because, after my practical son worked his magic erecting it, it was stunning and so appropriate and hopeful at this time.

**Moral:** As my son said "For a clever woman Mother, you don't do sizes do you?"

**Measure:** Top of my Christmas list is an imperial/metric measure.

### **Bits and Pieces**

In the spirit of tidying things up while I have all this time on my hands (huh!) - I finally got round to tackling the box on my shelf marked 'Bits'.

In it I found some scented candles, mostly burned down, my old camera, some unidentifiable cables, some key rings, a box of four 'crystal place card holders' which I appear to have bought from a charity shop (why?), a Samsung DVD writer, still in its box, which I apparently bought new (again, why?), several rubber bands, some 'dead' printer cartridges, 30p, various small plastic bags, a yellow clothes peg, a lot of dust, and a single silver stud earring.

It's like some bizarre version of 'Kim's Game'!

There are some other boxes, mostly unmarked, but one of them says, rather ominously, 'Miscellaneous'. I think I will save that pleasure for another day.

## Poetry please.....

### During Lockdown

I've made many new friends during lockdown  
And feel blessed that they've chosen to call  
At a time when life's footfall is silent  
And there's hardly a car out at all.

With the peace and the quiet surroundings  
There are eerie strange forces at play,  
For an otherwise busy location  
Now experiencing calmness each day.

Out our back is a family of blue tits  
And a blackbird's nest opposite there.  
With the sparrows in their nest under the eave  
Of our workshops - it's busy out there!

The resident pigeons are managed  
Quite well by the rest of the clans.  
They think they've control, but they haven't  
The others love thwarting their plans!  
Occasional red kites swoop low here.  
The magpies high out of the way.  
Thus with constantly frenzied activity  
Morning chorus lasts all through the day. What bliss!!

According to whichever on-line page you read, this untitled poem is **either** a famine poem written by Kathleen O'Meara in 1869 and reprinted during the 1919 pandemic **or** was written in March 2020 by Kitty O'Meara, a retired teacher and chaplain from Madison, Wisconsin.

Either way, its sentiments certainly ring true.

And people stayed at home  
And read books  
And listened  
And they rested  
And did exercises  
And made art and played  
And learned new ways of being  
And stopped and listened  
More deeply.  
Someone meditated, someone prayed  
Someone met their shadow  
And people began to think differently.  
And people healed.  
And in the absence of people who  
Lived in dangerous ways  
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,  
The earth also began to heal.  
And when the danger ended and  
When people found themselves  
They grieved for the dead  
And made new choices  
And dreamed of new visions  
And created new ways of living  
And completely healed the earth  
Just as they were healed.

## READING U3A GROUPS TIMETABLE (ZOOM MEETINGS) as at 20.7.2020

		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>ONE</b>	<b>AM</b>			COMPUTER GROUP	ITALIAN LEVEL 1	GERMAN IMPROVER
<b>WEEK</b>	<b>PM</b>				BOOKS MADRIGALS (not August) ITALIAN LEVEL 2	SINGING FOR PLEASURE (not August -see newsletter)
<b>TWO</b>	<b>AM</b>		POETRY		CURRENT AFFAIRS	FAMILY HISTORY
<b>WEEK</b>	<b>PM</b>	CLIMATE REPAIR	SPANISH CONVERSATION	TOWN STUDY	MEMBERS' MEETING MADRIGALS (not August)	SINGING FOR PLEASURE (not August -see newsletter)
<b>THREE</b>	<b>AM</b>	WOODLEY, SHINFIELD & EARLEY LUNCH CLUB		AMBLING		GERMAN IMPROVER PLAY READING
<b>WEEK</b>	<b>PM</b>	COLLECTABLES			MADRIGALS (not August)	SINGING FOR PLEASURE (not August -see newsletter)
<b>FOUR</b>	<b>AM</b>		PHILOSOPHY	PHOTOGRAPHY		CIRCLE DANCING
<b>WEEK</b>	<b>PM</b>	p	SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY SPANISH CONVERSATION		MADRIGALS (not August)	SINGING FOR PLEASURE (not August -see newsletter)

THIS IS A TIMETABLE OF THOSE GROUPS WHO HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY ARE HOLDING MEETINGS USING ZOOM