



## Llandrindod Wells and District

Dear Llandrindod U3A Member

### Welcome to our July 2021 Newsletter (number 14)

First I must apologise that I did not write a Newsletter in June but it has been a busy month for u3a activity, which I am now in a position to share with you through this Newsletter.

- We held our Virtual **Annual General Meeting** ... it is a relief to be "legal"! I've included a summary below.
- We have held a "real" **meeting of Interest Group leaders** ... I came away very much heartened and uplifted by this very positive meeting. I'm including Stephen Ashley's introduction to the Interest Group leaders meeting and his summary report verbatim, as I could do no better.
- I held my own **thank-you garden party** for the committee members, special advisers and their partners for all the work and support they have given over the last very difficult 15 months. The sun finally shone and we all ate too much of the wonderful bring and share food. It was lovely just to be together outside, a taste of normality.

### Resuming u3a meetings

We are still not sure what the legislative issues will be concerning social distancing for meetings indoors by September. It remains likely that the refurbished David Spencer Suite at the Metropole will be unable to accommodate our usual meeting numbers, but a provisional booking for meetings from September to December on the usual second Monday of each month has been made.

We may have to consider splitting the meeting into a morning and afternoon session and possibly ask members to book in to sessions. But our options are being considered as are the costs which are still very hard to predict at the moment.

Please look out for the August Newsletter and help spread the latest news to members who may not have email addresses.

### AGM Report

As you all know the belated Annual General Meeting of the Llandrindod Wells & District u3a was held virtually on Monday 14th June. Over 20% of the membership returned voting forms and I'd like to take this opportunity to report back to you all.

1. Chairman's report: This took the form of the major part of my last newsletter published in June which summarised the time since we had the last AGM. In the light of no further comments this was deemed to be approved.
2. Motion to approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 10th March 2020 – approved
3. Motion to receive the examined financial statements for the year ending 31st January 2021 – approved. No comments or questions received.
4. Election of Officers and Committee members for 2021-2022 (these being the only nominations received negating the need for a competitive election process) – approved with one abstention. The existing Committee elected for 2020-2021 with one resignation moves forward for 2021-2022
5. To appoint Martin Nosworthy as Auditor – approved. Our thanks to Martin for his continued professional oversight.

I would like to thank all those involved both in the organisation of, and the response to, this unusual meeting. It is anticipated that the next AGM will take place as normal in March 2022.

*Karen Latham, Chairman  
Kathie Richards-Jones, Committee Secretary*

## **Thank you!**

To **Cheryl Davies** who has decided to step down from the Committee. Cheryl has been a much valued member we will all miss her considered and level headed input which has been much appreciated. Mary Davies remains a valued adviser to the committee because of her long term involvement and experience. We all recognise that any organisation needs new blood to move forward, but in my experience people are often shy at promoting themselves. Please let us know if you are interested, or indeed think someone you know who would be a great addition to the committee (ensure you speak to them first, but then do please get in touch with one of the committee members).

Our thanks also go to **Eirlys Hodges** who has run the Welsh Group for the last 10 years. Personal circumstances means Eirlys will be unable to carry on but we hope someone else will come forward to take over. Also to **Jane and Roger Malvern** who have run the successful Film Group for many years. So we are also looking for a new leader to take over from them.

We also send best wishes to our previous Secretary **Sue Parsons** and her husband **David** who are moving to be closer to family. I will certainly miss you on Charabanc outings but I am sure our loss will be another u3a's gain.

Finally to **Margaret Mason** our editor in chief of **Borderlines**, who has with regret resigned her position as she cannot continue as editor. The magazine has provided a wonderful record of the interest groups and special events and activities of our u3a over the years. Looking at back copies brings back very happy memories of individuals and events. Borderlines provides a very special archive of material and has also been invaluable in giving new and potential

u3a members an insight into the activities of our u3a. I am sure the whole membership will join in congratulating Margaret on her achievements which have always been carried out with unfailing humour and patience.

So we are now looking for someone who might be able to take over the editorial role of Borderlines. Help and assistance will be provided as necessary and there is time to get to grips with the role before the next issue. If no one comes forward Borderlines may have to cease which would be a great pity. Volunteer for this interesting and important job please!

## Welcome!

To Lynne and Jack Frost our latest new members. We look forward to meeting in person all the new members who have joined during this time of suspension of the main meetings.

## Interest Group News

Many of our Interest Groups have managed to continue operating in one form or another during the pandemic, and others are resuming activities as the restrictions are relaxed.

For information about which groups are now operating or have plans to resume activities please [check the website](#).

On the 24th of June we had a meeting of the Interest Group leaders at the Metropole Hotel, what follows is the Introduction and Summary of that meeting from Stephen Ashley, our Interest Group Co-Ordinator.

### Introduction to the Interest Group Leaders' meeting

Hello Everyone, Well done and thank you for making the effort to come here today. Two leaders are on holiday, but almost all of the rest of us are here; which is excellent. The purpose of this meeting is to bring us all up to speed on where we are with the u3a interest groups and what we need to do.

The Interest Groups are the heart and soul of u3a and operate without regard to the plenary monthly meeting. I know of 3 groups that have ceased during lockdown (Film / Welsh conversation / Landscape History). We have 2 possible new groups and, if I have counted right, Jan Willsher is now leading 4 groups – we really do need to give her an extra Weetabix.

Please can all leaders check the current list of Interest Groups and the information provided on the current website and let me know of any errors or changes prior to updating the new website.

It has been a much too long time but we are approaching a time when we will be back in full swing. But it won't just happen we have to make it happen.

And there will inevitably be some changes, some casualties, some new ideas, some new rules.

Hopefully, this meeting will allow us to start the ball rolling again, learning from those who have kept going and gaining ideas on how to proceed.

It is a participation meeting, not a listening meeting. Some of the issues that I hope we can swap notes on include: how to reawaken interest, marketing, leader support, updates on venues and costs, new IT opportunities, opportunities for new groups, and how to attract new leaders for groups in abeyance. Even if we can't cover all of these this morning they are the sort of topics that should be wafting around leaders' minds over the coming weeks.

Karyn will brief us on Covid updates and Data Protection issues

Nick will brief us on the new website.

To get the ball rolling it would be good for each group to give us few minutes to bring us up to speed on current thinking and activity of their particular Group or Groups.

OK. That is enough by way of introduction. While you are thinking about what to say I will update you on Virtual Travel

We were rolling nicely with 20+ people meeting 9 times a year at Celf-o-Gwmpas. For the first few months of lockdown we sent out videos and links to YouTube stuff but this effort fell away over time and nothing has happened now for 9 months or so. We did consider Zoom but a snap survey suggested that the social chitchat over coffee aspect of the meetings was important and that we would not get many people turning up to Zoom. So we didn't. Social distancing has made gatherings of 20 people nigh well impossible but we are hoping to start up again in September. If this is to happen we recognise the need to start again from scratch by organising a speaker programme and marketing to the u3a membership as a whole. Jenny and I recognise that, if we are to restart in September, we need to start thinking about it now.

Stephen Ashley

## Report back from the Interest Group Leaders' meeting

We had 20 people in the room (socially distanced of course!)

The first thing to note is that out of 29 Groups, only about half are "in abeyance". Three of these are because we need to find a new leader and the rest are Covid-restrictions related. We have a new leader for the French Conversation Group and a new Geology Group. (See below)

It was so encouraging to get so many positive vibes from people wanting to get back on track. Many Groups have made a success of Zoom – especially Groups such as the book readers and creative writing (but not those into music). Others, such as the Walkers, have taken advantage of the "outside meetings" rules and commenced, others have been small enough to keep within the rules.

It was clear that Groups are starting to get organised for a Summer, or September, restart; we await further Covid relaxations. But it was also clear that, if a September start is planned, then the groundwork of planning and marketing needs to start now as we may well need to reactivate the u3a habit.

The Commodore is emerging as a favoured interest group venue (free room as long as participants buy drinks). The Rock-park cafe has moved into the main building and this is not so good as it is the only access for non-meeting members to get to toilets etc. Celf-y-Gwmpas and the Thomas Shop remain well supported venues. However, the point was made that it is good practice for u3a to spread our "business" around the town. The Grand Pavilion and other venues should also be researched.

Normally, the loss of existing members over the year, for whatever reason, is roughly balanced by the gain of new members. This has not happened this year with notable exceptions and so overall membership is down. It was noted more than once during the meeting how important the social interaction aspect of u3a is and how much people have missed it.

As was the concern for members who do not have or only have limited IT skills

As many members do not get involved with the interest groups (while others only join u3a to be a member of a particular group) there was some discussion on how the main meeting may restart. A need for additional marketing and communication channels was noted.

### **Data Protection Legislation**

Leaders must be careful with the personal information they collect and hold, keep it up to date and destroy it when no longer relevant. There is no escaping two aspects of data protection that we simply have to follow.

First is that we need to take care that photographs of members are only published with the consent of those in it. So if a group picture is wanted for Borderlines or the website or whatever, group members should be informed of this and given the opportunity to stay outside the shot.

Secondly for health and safety purposes we also have to have a list of emergency contacts for any event outside the normal base – such as a charabanc, rail riders trips, garden visits etc. For data protection purposes this information must not be retained once the event is over. This was debated in committee at length before the interest group leaders meeting. The solution proposed is for participants to have a credit sized card, with their name and u3a number on one side and for them to add their emergency contact details on the reverse. To protect privacy, cards will be collected at the beginning of the trip and put into an envelope then handed back at the end of the trip thereby negating the necessity to collect, record and then destroy the information after every trip! HeyHo. The Committee will action this – watch this space.

## **Meeting and travelling safely**

With our groups beginning to start up again it is VITAL that all Interest Groups conduct the relevant Risk Assessment before starting in order to protect yourselves, and others. Please keep up with the every-changing Welsh Government advice and regulations, not forgetting that the English regulations apply if we cross the border. Zoom is ideal for planning meetings and talks. Car sharing is now an option as long as face masks are worn. Weals Wheels, local coach company, is able to accommodate 18 people on a coach trip maintaining relevant separation. We will have to keep up with this somewhat fluid situation for some time to come.

## **Website updates**

Nick Talbott has been working hard on a revamped website that will now be much easier to use and to maintain and which will be much easier to use on smartphones and tablets. We saw a demo and it looks very good indeed. One advantage will be that Group Leaders will be able to update their own page. To this end Nick put in a plea for Group Leaders to check and update their introductory text. Some are years out of date – not good for the Group or for u3a. Nick will still be available to do the updating for those not confident of doing the updates themselves.

Thanks for your continued interest and commitment. Let us hope that by this time next year we will have left the pandemic far behind.

*Stephen Ashley*

## **New Geology Group and a new leader for the French Group**

New u3a member Michelle Thomas would like to start a Geology Group and is also keen to revive the French conversation group which is really good news! Michelle writes ...

### **Geology Group**

I would like to start a new interest group: Geology. Anyone is welcome, whether you are a beginner or a professional or in-between! Initially I would like you to let me know how many members maybe interested. How much you already know about geology, any areas of specific interest (if any), and any activities you would like to do. My first thoughts are:

- Basic geology course for beginners including rock identification.
- Field trips outside to locations of geological interest; locally – Llandegley, Shakey Bridge, Elan Valley; further afield – Aberystwyth, Hergest Ridge, Brecon Beacons & Fforest Fawr Geopark, Rodney's Pillar near Welshpool.
- Talks either on Zoom or at a venue
- Museums and other places of interest – Radnorshire Museum, National Museum of Wales Cardiff geology section, Silver Mountain, Dolaucothi Gold Mines, Blaenavon Ironworks, coal mining experiences.

- Building stones tours – various towns

These are just thoughts. Please feel free to let me know yours! As usual, any costs involved would be shared equitably by the group.

If you are interested please contact Michelle, email [michelle@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk](mailto:michelle@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk)

### **French Group**

Salut! I would like to restart the French Group.

I am a graduate in French Studies from 1982, so nearly 40 years ago. I spent one academic year in French-speaking Switzerland (Suisse romande), as part of my degree. I never used my degree for a career, so I am woefully out of practise. I used to be fluent, but would consider my skills have dipped to intermediate some time ago. I work part-time in accounts these days.

Initially I would like to understand what you would like to do in the group, what you hope to achieve, and at what level you are comfortable – basic, intermediate, or advanced. It would also be useful to know if you have any books and/or DVD's in French.

There may be enough interest to have 2 types of groups...

- One group which concentrates on day-to-day conversation where we could practise our French to use in shops and restaurants for example, we could look at French menus and learn a bit more about French culture and etiquette, and maybe practise some simple recipes! We could practise French expressions used whilst travelling by bus and train, which could lead to exploring French towns and holiday destinations on the internet.
- And another group to look at more advanced aspects – discussions in French about novels, poetry, art, cinema, theatre, music, current affairs, listening to radio and TV programmes, etc, etc. I have a small library of very old French novels, plays and poems used in my French studies. I have recently been given a DVD of cult film noir "A bout de souffle", which might be a good place to start. Plus I have some Jacques Tati videos.

These are just thoughts. Please feel free to let me know yours!

If you are interested please contact Michelle, email [michelle@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk](mailto:michelle@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk)

More information on Michelle's not inconsiderable background and experience can be found [on the website](#).

### **The film group needs you!**

After many successful years, Jane and Roger Malvern would like to pass on the organisation of the Film group to a new leader (or leaders). The group used to meet at CELF and has good equipment and had a regular audience of at least 25 members. Please contact Roger if you

would like to know more about what is involved and let Stephen Ashley know if you would be prepared to help run the group. Email Roger: [roger@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk](mailto:roger@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk) or Stephen: [steve@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk](mailto:steve@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk)

## Updating your u3a contact details

Please remember to let the membership secretary Janice Horne know if there are any changes to your contact details, address or email account. Email [janice@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk](mailto:janice@u3a-llandrindod.org.uk)

## National Online Events

A number of workshops, webinars and interactive sessions for members, mostly accessed using Zoom, are regularly updated and listed on the [National u3a website](#).

The 2nd of June u3a publicity day did not seem to reach the National press but many u3a's did try and do something "special" on the day. The outcomes can be read in the National Newsletter which is now also being produced in a bite sized format.

## Aberystwyth u3a online talks

The fact that many u3a's have opened up their online talks and even interest groups to other u3a members out of their normal catchment areas has been one of the positive outcomes of the Covid restrictions. There will be just 3 more Tuesday talks from Aberystwyth u3a before the summer break. If normality returns these may be the last.

- July 6th: Iwan Lord on "Mining in the Ystwyth Valley".
- July 13th: Barry Eveleigh on "The Lost World of the Welsh Chapel".
- July 20th: Nigel Humphreys on "The Paintings and Life of Edouard Manet"

More details on these talks and a full list of past talks can be found on the [Aberystwyth u3a website](#). Please contact [Roger Boyle](#) of Aberystwyth u3a for information and Zoom links.

## Once Upon a Time ...

Once again our Creative Writing group have come up with a short story for you. "Once Upon a Time" accompanies this newsletter.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all again at our monthly meetings. Let's hope that by the time of the August newsletter I'll be able to announce our first meeting of 2021!

Keep smiling!

**Karen Latham**

Chair, Llandrindod Wells and District u3a

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The contact information for all Interest group leaders is available on the [Llandrindod U3A website.](#)