

Kingston U3A Newsletter

Winter 2020 Volume 10 Issue 8

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www.kingstonu3a.org.uk

No sooner do we catch up with one set of restrictions than we have to readjust to the next ones. I'm sorry to have to advise you again that groups cannot meet indoors. But it's not all doom and gloom and many of you are still managing to pursue your interests. The Online Learning group, for example, has already covered many topics and Bob Higgins tells us all about his group's Wine Tasting online.

Suzie Vernel has organised speakers for the 2021 meetings with topics as wide-ranging as the Bayeux Tapestry and the History of Pantomime. Meanwhile Gisela Zürcher-Feiß and her team are only able to look forward to the day when they can get back to their work of planning the outings and holidays for members.

Chris Cheek, who's been getting to grips with the database, introduces himself and Tony Cartwright talks about his new book on the history of the medicines we take, bringing us up to date on the search for a vaccination against Covid-19.

Finally a big thank you to Art Group 5 for allowing us to include some of their work in our newsletter.

Do take care!

Linda Foreman
Chair



AGM: Chair's Report on Kingston U3A 2020

I have pleasure in presenting this report for an extraordinary year, having been asked by the Committee to become Chair in May 2020.

Ireni Esler began the year as Chair in November 2019 and was in New Zealand when the Covid-19 lockdown started on 23 March. On 27 May Ireni decided to remain in New Zealand with her family and resigned as Chair. We send her our best wishes and grateful thanks for her service as Chair for over two years.

All U3A face-to-face events had to be cancelled from 23 March, including group meetings in houses and halls, and all outings. In Kingston we follow government rules as they evolve, with advice from U3A National Office on how these should be applied to our members, many of whom are in vulnerable categories.

We have experimented with videoconferencing using Zoom, Skype and other facilities via the internet. It is good that these have enabled many groups to continue in a revised form and there is the benefit of enabling members with more limited ability to participate. Groups have explored the many learning facilities available on the internet. We keep in regular contact with other U3As to exchange ideas.

When it became possible to meet outdoors in groups of up to six people, some walking and cycling restarted, and

groups have been meeting in gardens. Between 14 September and 16 October it was possible to restart groups indoors with up to six people, after risk assessments had been undertaken by the group leader and the participants. Now that all London boroughs are in Tier 2 for Covid Risk, the indoor groups have to pause again.

The halls which we used to hire have been closed for most of the time since March. Those which have opened have vastly reduced permissible capacity and this is unlikely to change in the near future. We have started, therefore, to hold monthly meetings using Zoom with an excellent selection of speakers.

I would like to thank the committee who have been so supportive during this difficult time: Lorraine Hellen, Joy Garvey, Shirley Miller, Gisela Zürcher-Feiß, Jane Hoyland, Diane Wilson, Susan Hinchsliffe and Suzie Vernel. Thanks to the group leaders, especially those who have found imaginative ways to continue. Thanks also to the group coordinators, contributors to the printed newsletter and the email bulletin, and the teams who have given expert help with new procedures and computing facilities.

We look forward to the next year with less certainty than we are used to but with a determination to continue the U3A motto: Learn, Laugh, Live.

Linda Foreman

Group News

We've recently phoned all the groups and were happy to find that, although some are inactive for the moment, many were in touch using Zoom, WhatsApp or email.

Unfortunately we are no longer allowed meetings indoors but can still get together in groups of up to six people outdoors, with continued restrictions on spacing, refreshments and car sharing.

We've tried to indicate what is happening in each group in the Groups & Contacts section schedules in the centre of this newsletter. We apologise if there are any inaccuracies.

- **Pilates** classes are available on Zoom. If you're interested, please contact:
rebeccahorner@me.com
- **Croquet** will resume in the spring.
- We have only two closures: **Ukulele** and **French Conversation 1**
- **Wine Tasting & Food Pairing** will now be led by Bob Higgins

Obviously, there is little point in arranging new groups at the moment but perhaps some of you may be thinking up new ideas for the future. Hopefully by next summer there may be a glimmer of light.

Shirley Miller: 020 8940 8573
shirley.miller4@btinternet.com

Opera Appreciation

This has been a very popular group but we now need a new venue. Can anyone offer hospitality for us, maybe not immediately but in the future? Suitable equipment is needed for watching videos. If so, please contact Claire Bletcher: 020 8398 7107
c.bletcher@btinternet.com

Gentle Walks

In our photo below taken from one of the October Gentle Walks are Maureen, Lizzy, Jill, Shirley and Joan from my group. This month we went to the Terrace Gardens on Richmond Hill next to Petersham. In the second photo (overleaf) you can see the café where we managed to have a socially distanced cup of coffee out on the terrace. We have two outings each month, in order to restrict our numbers to six.



One member commented, 'The gardens seemed to be in a much better shape than I remembered, so thanks to the Borough's team of gardeners. The





time spent in the café added to the enjoyment of the walk. I'd never been under the tunnel from the garden to the river, so that was another new experience.'

Just so everyone knows, I do lead a 'repeat walk' each month so that everyone who wants to can come along.

Jan Goodyear

Online Learning

Recruiting for members

Back in the mists of time, before lockdown, we started a new group for Online Learning.

We're using resources, known as MOOCs or Massive Open Online Courses, with professional presenters from top universities in the UK and around the world. We choose free short courses from the site FutureLearn:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/>

There were three original members of the group (Linda Foreman, Fiona Tolmie and me, Helene Hill) and we had time for just two meetings at Linda's house before lockdown in March.

The concept works well, however, in the new circumstances in which we now live. We meet on Zoom every fortnight to

discuss progress and choose the next course – naturally we also get side-tracked on to other (usually related) issues of interest.

After a couple of months, a fourth member, Moira Shearer, joined us and we'd welcome even more participants. The requirements are a PC, laptop or tablet and a few hours of private study most weeks. And, as we meet via Zoom, there are no restrictions on numbers.

The list of courses available makes us feel like kids in a sweetshop. So far, we have completed courses on:

- Hadrian's Wall
- Understanding Biological Energy
- Working Lives in the Factories and Mills
- The Tudors
- The History of the Book 1450-1800
- The Genomics Era: the Future of Genetics in Medicine

And we are just about to embark on Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology which should take us through to the end of November.

We'd be happy to hear from a few other members who'd like to join and help us choose the next course. If you're interested please contact Helene Hill:

helene.hill@btinternet.com



Wine Tasting

New group leader, Bob Higgins, talks about Rieslings under restrictions

Pre-Covid our group met in our homes for tastings and food, or in local wine stores for guided tastings. Lockdown has changed many aspects of people's lives. We miss our enthusiastic and knowledgeable group leader, Pascale Strudwick, who's taken a short break. I'm now the leader for the group and we're finding Zoom enables us to continue our tastings, learn and, of course, have fun.

Zoom is easy to use and the quality is good. Our biggest challenge is distributing the wines in small quantities to the group's bubbles: we've arranged a socially distanced 'milk round' of the wines we'll taste that evening.

It's been fascinating to find that some expensive wines are not to everybody's taste and that the same grape from Australia or France can taste very different. We've all sampled wines we'd



In September we all enjoyed a Zoom event hosted by Avery's Wine Merchants. Their experts chose four different wines, explained how they were made and what this could mean for the contents of the bottles. Our October meeting was the second stage of Italian red grapes of which there seems to be a limitless supply. One day I might know what to order in an Italian restaurant.

never have selected for ourselves and have learned to compare the colour of the wine, its smell and then taste. I think we all have different scoring systems and different views on value!

I don't feel confident enough to blind taste and guess with any certainty what a wine might be but I've got more trust now in what I like and what I don't. One evening, when tasting a selection of

Rieslings, the host added a blind tasting of Blue Nun. We were all surprised by this. People of a certain age might remember this wine with love or loathing. I actually thought it was OK!

I've also learned that it's much easier to complement cheese with white and rosé wines than with red.

It will be great to return to outings and face-to-face meetings when we can but, in the meantime, Zoom and the internet provide masses of opportunity for discovery.

The group can accept more members and, if anyone is interested, please contact me: 07557 099030

bobhiggins@virginmedia.com

GAS Outings and Holidays

One of the most frustrating aspects of the Covid-19 restrictions has been the cancellation of the holidays and trips organised by Gisela Zürcher-Feiß and her team. Gisela is growing concerned about the number of people contacting her to ask when trips will be resumed and if there are any holidays planned.

Unfortunately, under the present circumstances and with the future so uncertain, it just isn't sensible or viable to start planning anything. But Gisela would like to say: 'Rest assured, once we have the all clear, my team and I will resume our work, plan the outings and holidays and advertise them in the newsletter as soon as possible afterwards. We're really looking forward to being able to do so!'

Dealing with Data

Chris Cheek talks about learning to manage U3A Kingston's database

Chris has recently begun helping Linda Foreman to process the details you give us so that we can organise your membership, the groups you belong to and the news bulletins and newsletters we send out to you.



Why did you volunteer to help?

I thought it would be nice to help and this seemed like a job that was pretty routine, requiring time but not too much thought. I'm a trustee of another charity in Kingston and that takes quite a bit of head scratching, so I'm hoping this won't.

Have you had previous experience of using databases?

No, none, so it's a chance to learn something new.

How's it going? What have you already learned to do?

Well, I seem to have mastered membership renewals data entry. Maybe they haven't told me about the difficult tasks yet.

What's the next thing you're hoping to learn?

To quote Donald Rumsfeld, this is a 'known unknown'.

How long have you been in Kingston U3A? Why did you join?

Three years, I think. It was put to me that if I was going to continue coming to meetings, I really ought to pay my subscription.

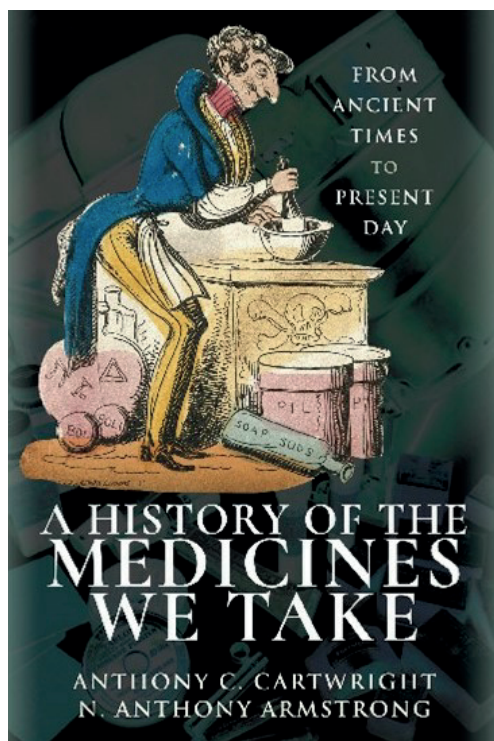
Which groups do you belong to?

I'm secretary of the New Malden Reading Group, which has become something of a monthly highlight for me. And I belong to the Science Group, which is such a delight – I learn so much. Everybody in the groups is such a pleasure to know.

How are you coping with the lockdown restrictions?

I live next to Waitrose in New Malden and we used to say in our street that you don't need a fridge, just pop round the corner. I used to go twice a day but now I limit myself to one visit every nine or 10 days. And I've only been to other shops a few times for real necessities.

My wife and I used to go out for coffee several lunchtimes each week. Now we haven't been for seven months. I miss seeing the wider family and friends and going to choir, concerts, lectures and National Trust places. But I'm lucky I have a garden and close family that I see all the time. And thank you Zoom!



Tony Cartwright, Kingston U3A member, tells us about the recent publication of his book

My new paperback book, *A History of the Medicines We Take*, was published by Pen and Sword in May. It's an account of the development of medicines from traces of herbs found with the remains of Neanderthal man to pure drugs extracted from plants in the nineteenth century to the latest biotechnology antibody products. It describes the development of the preparations that patients take and their inventors, such as Christopher Wren who gave the first intravenous injection in 1656 and William Brockedon who invented the tablet in 1843.

The book's themes are relevant to today's events. We're all anxiously

awaiting the availability of a vaccine against Covid-19 and over 200 separate ones are now in development. Likely priorities for vaccination are care-home residents and staff, people over 80 and health and social care workers. I trace the development of vaccines from the first smallpox vaccine treatments using cowpox by Devon farmer Benjamin Jesty in 1774 (over 20 years before Edward Jenner's experiments).

I look, too, at the 'repurposing' of existing drugs. It takes 12-15 years to develop and get approval for a new drug and costs up to \$2 billion. It makes sense to check if old drugs can be used for a new condition, as they can be clinically tested in patients and approved much more quickly and cheaply. The Gilead antiviral drug Remdesivir, used to treat President Trump for Covid-19, was originally developed in 2009 to treat hepatitis C and then investigated against the Ebola virus. Found to cut the length of illness in hospitalised patients with Covid-19, it has now been approved in the UK and is available in the NHS for use in selected patients.

The steroid dexamethasone is another old drug now being used to treat Covid-19 patients in hospital who need supplemental oxygen. Used to treat many conditions since first marketed in 1961, it was tested in UK RECOVERY, one of the largest trials of potential Covid-19 treatments, and was found to reduce the number of deaths.

I look then at the early development of monoclonal antibodies in 1975 by the

Nobel prize winners Cesar Milstein and George Kohler. Many monoclonal antibody products are now approved for a variety of conditions including arthritis, organ rejection, leukaemia, melanoma, breast cancer and multiple sclerosis. A number of pharmaceutical companies are now developing and testing these products to treat Covid-19. REGN-COV2 is a combination of two experimental monoclonal antibody products made by the US company Regeneron. It, too, was used to treat President Trump recently. The combination targets two different sites of the spike protein found on the surface of the Covid-19 virus.

Researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston have launched a trial of this combination treatment for preventing Covid-19 illness in individuals who have had sustained exposure to someone with the virus, such as a household contact. It is now being evaluated in the UK RECOVERY clinical trial.

If you would like to know more about my book, please contact me at tony.cartwright@globalregulatorysolutions.co.uk





I started my art journey nearly four years ago after my husband died. Initially I joined Maureen Hall's Sugarcraft classes and enjoyed making sugar flowers so much that I thought I'd like to learn to paint them. So I joined the Art group and have learnt so much, both from tutors and fellow members. We've worked in several media, all finding our own favourites. I started with a cheap set of watercolours from Tiger and have gradually moved towards artist-quality brushes and paints. The group has continued to flourish throughout the last few months via Zoom, enjoying each other's progress.

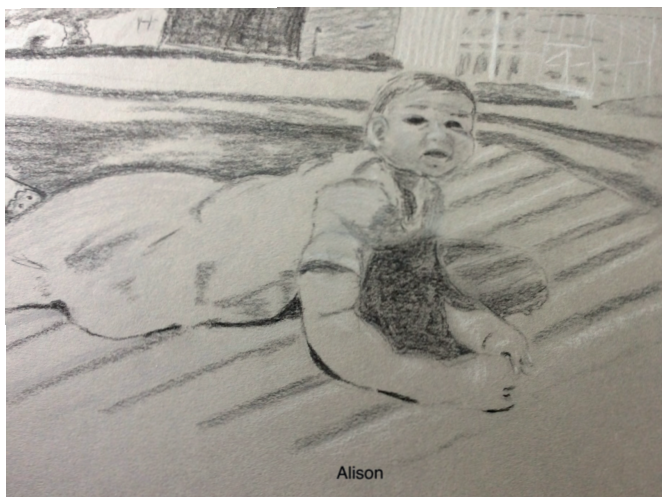
June Court-Smith

For this painting I used watercolours. The focus of the exercise was to demonstrate a visual sense of depth through composition, brush strokes, tones, cool and warm colours. I've overlapped the mountains, lighter values and cooler colours to push items to the background and warmer and darker ones to bring items to the foreground. The trees and mountains furthest away are smaller in

scale and painted with less detail. In order to soften the large area of green I've used some strokes of a warmer, darker mix of yellow ochre and crimson.

Jan Wijayaratne





This drawing is in charcoal. We were looking at tonal values and I was inspired by a photograph of my

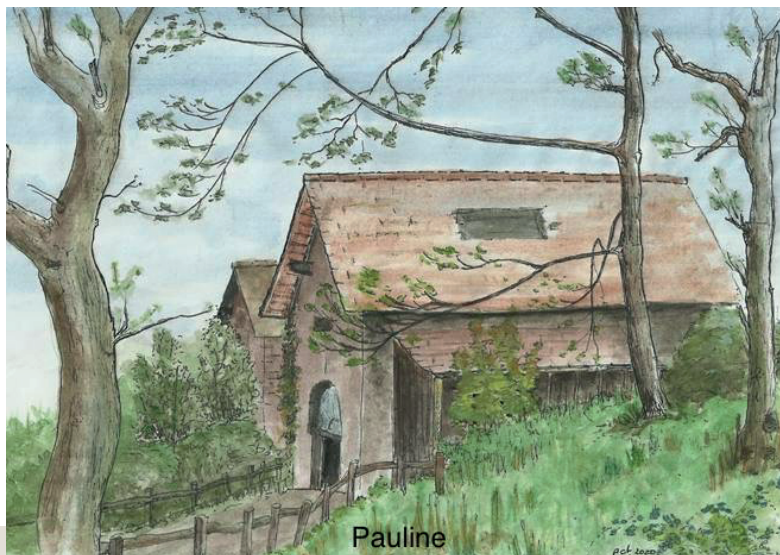
granddaughter. I joined the group when it started and have learnt so much through trying different media (my favourite medium is pen and ink with watercolour washes) and techniques from other members of the group and our various teachers. Art via Zoom works really well: guidelines and sharing ideas at the start, an hour offline drawing or painting, then

sharing work and feedback at the end. It's so rewarding!

Alison Lee

You don't have to produce a perfect drawing. Embracing imperfection creates unexpected, exciting results

Jan



I originally created this as a black and white drawing many years ago. It's a scene near Quarry Bank Mill in Cheshire. I'd always liked drawing but couldn't paint. On joining the Art group last year, I looked out the watercolour box not used since schooldays and

added some colour to my picture. I love seeing everyone's work during Zoom sessions but it will be so much better when we can meet up in Kingston again and I can learn by watching other people working.

Pauline Theobald

Monthly Meetings 2021: dates, topics and speakers

Here are the dates for next year's monthly meetings. More information about each talk will be given closer to the date. Until such time as we can resume our meetings at the United Reformed Church, the talks will take place online via Zoom.

Recordings

We asked the speakers who have been guests at our meetings if we could record their talks, maybe for a royalty, but none of them agreed to our doing this.

Annual quiz

You will notice from the table below that our annual quiz, usually held during our January meeting, is not taking place. The Executive Committee agreed that, in view of the current uncertainty, it would be better to cancel it and invite a speaker instead. Last year's winning team, who were scheduled to set the questions, have agreed to prepare a quiz to include in our next quarterly newsletter in February.

Date	Topics/Speakers
4 Jan	You're Never Too Old to Rock 'n' Roll – Vince Eager
1 Feb	The Bayeux Tapestry – Imogen Corrigan
1 Mar	Where Do Novelists Get Their Ideas? – Bobbie Darbyshire
12 Apr	The House of Romanov – Siobhan E Clarke
10 May	Footsteps in Summer: John O'Groats to Land's End – Russell George
7 Jun	Baked Alaska or Mexican Chilly?: Climate Change Explained – Nick Cook
5 Jul	Changing World of Broadcast Media – Pat Mitchinson
2 Aug	Witty Ditties: 400 Years of Comic Songs – Sophie Matthews and Chris Green
6 Sep	The Weird and Wonderful World of the Law – Dave Allen
4 Oct	The Antarctic Adventures of Sir Ernest Shackleton – Rodney Paul
1 Nov	AGM/Codes and Ciphers in the Two World Wars – Baldwin
6 Dec	A History of Pantomime – Peter Allen

Kingston U3A Executive Committee 2019/2020

Registered Charity No. 1011295

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Change of Address

Please send updates to:

Linda Foreman, Database Manager,
54 Berrylands Road, Surbiton

KT5 8PD or email her at:

database@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Newsletter Contributions

Tell us what your group has been doing or about the visits and holidays you've enjoyed. We'd also like to receive stories, poems or short reviews of books, plays, films or exhibitions. Contributions should be no more than 500 words but there's always room for smaller items too. Photographs always

help to illustrate your contribution but don't forget to send the names of people shown in them. Photos need to be in .JPG format and need to be sent as separate files and not embedded in a Word document. Please send your contributions and photos to:
communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk

Distribution

The newsletter is posted out in early February, May, August and November. If there are any problems concerning the newsletter, please contact Susan Hinchsliffe at:
communications@kingstonu3a.org.uk