



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

# Jottings

## The Newsletter of Church Stretton U3A December 2018



### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

Good news, Lesley Dench has volunteered to take on the role of Groups Coordinator. Many thanks Lesley. Group leaders should be hearing from Lesley shortly.

This is the last Jottings for this year so I will wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and I hope to meet many of you at the Christmas General Meeting. Our meetings so far have been well attended but the more the merrier. **Grahame Hurst**

### URGENT VACANCIES

#### GENERAL MEETINGS ORGANISER

We are looking for a replacement to take on these roles. The new programme started in October this year and we have already have speakers through to September 2019. Anyone interested in this activity please contact the Chair in the first instance for further information.

Role of the General Meetings Organiser - includes:

- Locate potential speakers and topics (10 talks per year)
- Create a programme for the next year (October to September following year)
- Following approval by the committee, confirm bookings with speakers
- Provide details for printing the programme and publicity

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

**December 2018 General Meeting** - Wednesday, **12** December 2018, 2pm at United Reformed Church Hall, on the High Street.

**"History of Music at Christmas" by Cecil Hayward.** We have already been entertained by Cecil with his two presentations on Brass Tube Pipes. Not to be missed!

**January 2019 General Meeting** - Wednesday, 23 January 2019, 2pm at United Reformed Church Hall, on the High Street.

**"New Orleans to New York" by Roger Browne** - Musically illustrating the influence of jazz on the musical theatre.

**February 2019 General Meeting** - Wednesday, 27 February 2019, 2pm at United Reformed Church Hall, on the High Street.

**"Botswana" by David Maddocks** - The landscape of the Kalahari Desert and the Okavango Delta and their wildlife.

## **PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**

### **September 2018 meeting**

#### **“New Challenges to Human Rights” by David Howard**

David is a member of Church Stretton U3A and an active campaigner for Amnesty International. His thought provoking talk was questioning how Amnesty fits into the modern world. He summarises the talk as follows:

“Human rights organisations such as Amnesty International are having to face a number of new challenges, both political and cultural. The rise of populist, authoritarian governments represents a threat to ideals of democracy and individual freedoms, as minority and dissenting views are suppressed by rulers who claim to speak for “the people”. At the same time, objective standards of truth and accuracy are being undermined by a flood of “alternative facts” and fake news. Looming over these trends is the growing economic power of China, which has a different tradition of governance, emphasizing conformity at the expense of individualism, and which is prepared both to censor dissent at home and to use its influence to shape attitudes in other parts of the world, particularly developing countries. Human rights organisations need to continue to stand up for ideals, while at the same time opening new ways of dialogue with states that are resistant to a movement which, since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, has brought so much progress to the world.”

### **October 2018 meeting**

#### **“Guide Dogs, Facts and Fallacies” by Meredith Vivian OBE**

Meredith has been a resident of Church Stretton for five years and can often be seen walking around town with his guide dog, Victor. He has spoken to many Church Stretton organisations about guide dogs but this did not prevent a large turnout of U3A members coming to hear a very entertaining and informative talk.

The cost of training and owning a guide dog is an amazing £56,000. This is funded mostly from public donation. Meredith’s contribution was the princely sum of 50p – a sum kept low so that there is no financial barrier to having a guide dog.

Victor is Meredith’s fourth dog and he has had him for seven years. Specifically bred for the job, guide dogs begin their life with a puppy walker whose role is to toilet train, establish boundaries and to ensure the dog is socialised. The dog then begins the training to become a guide dog. When ready, ownership is transferred to the blind person. It takes an intensive two weeks to break the bond with the trainer.

Meredith described the relationship he has with Victor. Victor is an ‘ordinary’ dog until Meredith holds the handle of the harness. He enjoys running around Rectory Field just like other dogs and I am sure for many of you, this is a familiar sight. Once working, the relationship changes. Meredith likened the partnership to a ship’s Captain and Pilot – Meredith, the Captain, gives the orders but has to rely on the skills of Victor, the Pilot, to carry them out.

What sort of life is it for a guide dog? Meredith summed this up by saying “Dogs that are trained to do a job want to do it. If not, they are likely to get bored”. Victor certainly looked quite content! **Lesley Brown**

## November 2018 Meeting

### “Dignity in Dying” by James Howley

James travelled from Birmingham to give his views on Assisted Dying due to his partner, Helen, having to suffer a very difficult end of life experience. James acknowledged that Assisted Dying is a very difficult, controversial subject and he would not try to indoctrinate his views on those attending.

The main aspect of his talk was about his partner of 33 years, Helen, which he was still very emotional about all the challenges she had to face during her illness. She was diagnosed in 2004 with A1ATD, a lung condition which James had considerable knowledge about. Apparently there is replacement therapy in Bulgaria costing £35,000 a year just for treatment twice a week but that treatment is not available in the UK.

As she deteriorated, Helen wanted a peaceful and painful end to her life. She was already finding life very hard due to the considerable pain she was in. So she chose to go to Dignitas. It took months to be accepted, as medical records have to be obtained and affidavits provided plus many stipulations with a cost of around £10-12,000. After Helen died in 2016 James came back to the UK and was under police investigation for around 7 months. Dignitas were able to help as there is an insurance element to the fees. The matter was finally resolved without charge.

Assisted Dying has been in the news due to the campaign supported by Dignity in Dying in the case of Noel Conway who was recently refused to take his case to supreme court. James compared Assisted Dying to when an individual is being treated and due to their illness there is a withdrawing of treatment or the application of drugs during which time the patient could be in extreme pain/suffering and not having a dignified, peaceful and pain free death.

It was a very emotional talk and death is a subject that most find hard to talk about but unfortunately it is the one certainty in life. **Julia Felton**

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS:

### Singing for Pleasure – dates of meetings

Tuesday, 4 December 2018

Tuesday, 15 January 2019

The group meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month in the Parish Centre from 2:15pm to 4:15pm and is open to all .



### New Groups

If anyone would like to join or start a new group please contact the Groups Coordinator via the website [u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/contact](http://u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/contact) for further details.

Contact a coordinator through the Church Stretton U3A website via the website link [u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/groups](http://u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/groups), then select the group page.

Select the link next to the text send a message and complete the form. This information will only be seen by your choice of message receiver.

If you do not have an email address you can still get in touch by typing none@none.com in the email line and some contact details in the message section.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
Art – drawing and painting	Daphne and Stewart Rankine
Art History	Sue Toghill
Book Group	Susan Lees
Book Group 2	Margaret Haynes
Bridge	Eric Brown
Classical Music	Ian Templeton
Family & Social History	Peter Thorpe
Hill Walking	Pat Holbourn-Williams
Landscape Archaeology	Ian Dormor
Philosophy	Bryan Pryce
Popular Music	Trevor Halsey
Scottish Country Dancing	Alison Bradley
Singing for Pleasure	Margaret Sinden
Writers' Group	Lesley Dench
Writers' Group 2	Jenny O'Shea

## **Your Committee:**

Chair - Grahame Hurst  
Vice Chair - Colin Carson  
Treasurer - Ben Hilliard  
Secretary - Jennifer O'Shea  
Membership Secretary - Lesley Brown (01694 724330)  
Groups Coordinator – Lesley Dench  
General Meetings Organiser - Vacant  
Newsletter Editor - Julia Felton  
Webmaster – Sylvia Davidson

Updates and news from groups and comments on recent events from members are always welcome, and should be returned to me, **Julia Felton**, via the website [u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/contact](http://u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/contact). Your input will be appreciated. The next Jottings is scheduled for March.

Keep up to date with what's going on in Church Stretton U3A by checking the website at:

[u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton](http://u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton)

## **National Events:**

Please go to [u3a.org.uk](http://u3a.org.uk) for more details of National Events (You will have to create a login account to access pages for members) or the magazine Third Age Matters. If you have no access to the internet you may contact a committee member to help you.

