

March 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

March 2022 has come upon us suddenly and Church Stretton is coming alive again after a difficult 2-3 years. We have several new groups up and running, interest in others and some waiting for the opportunity. Some of the problems we face, not just in the u3a, are the lack of individuals to lead groups and indeed sit on our committee. The one thing that lockdown has shown us is that the u3a is an important provider of social and educational activities for many people and it cannot exist without help and support. I would like to urge anyone to come forward to assist us, you don't have to be an expert in anything, new ideas would be welcome. Thank you to everyone who has helped to get things moving again.

Best wishes, Lesley Dench

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME AGAIN:

Renewal Subscriptions for Church Stretton u3a are due on 1 April 2022.

The annual subscription remains at £10 per person (£4 for full members of other u3a Branches) for the coming year.

Payment details can be found on our website at

<https://u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/page/80196>. *(Posted newsletters will have a form enclosed which gives details of how to pay and where to send your payment.)*

If you are paying with cash or cheque please complete the form and return it with your payment.

If you choose to pay by Bank Transfer please ensure you quote your Surname and First Name. This reference is absolutely vital. Without it we will not know that you have paid! There is no need to return a form but please email the Membership Secretary with any change in your details - address, phone number etc - lesleymb.brown@btinternet.com.

Note: you can also drop-in to our Coffee Hour session to pay your subscription – see details below.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

General Meetings

- **Wednesday 23 March 2022** - 'Dawn Patrol - Air Combat Over the Western Front 1914-18' by Tim Barney.
Where there is no precedent, pioneers are forced to make up the game as they go along. The early history of flight was a classic case, at once comical, frustrating and tragic. The Great War was the first conflict in which aviation played a major role, and at first no-one was quite sure how to go about it. This talk describes the many perils of military aviation in the early days, and discusses some of the larger-than-life characters and inspired inventions that within a few short years, were to transform air combat from an eccentric charade into a deadly serious contest.
Website: speakernet.co.uk/talk/3377/dawn-patrol-air-combat-over-the-western-front-1914-18
- **Wednesday 27 April 2022** - 'News from the National Trust, Shropshire Hills'.
Peter Carty, Countryside Manager for South Shropshire and Kinver Edge, will tell members and their guests how the National Trust in Carding Mill Valley managed over the lockdown and give a general update on what's going on.
- **Wednesday 25 May 2022** - AGM plus speaker.

Meetings are held at the URC Hall and will have an attendance charge of £2 towards the cost of hiring the hall.

Information about meetings will be sent out by email, and will be on the website.

Coffee Hour with Church Stretton u3a

These events have been very successful and provide Church Stretton u3a with a public face. As a result, the committee proposes to continue the drop-ins held on the 2nd Monday of the month from 10am to 11am at the Health and Wellbeing Centre, Easthope Road.

New members have come along to introduce themselves and find out what we are about, old members have stopped by to catch up on the proposed new groups and others just stop for a chat!

Membership renewal fees can be delivered here during this time.

GROUP NEWS:

After 2 years of very little activity it is good to see our groups, old and new, getting together again. Here is news from a few of them. Contact details are further down this newsletter.

French Conversation Group is now billed as 'Rusty French' - for those who learned some French a while ago, and would like to practise this skill again in a friendly, informal way.

History of Plants & Gardens

Our very first meeting was held in January when we all enjoyed introducing ourselves along with consuming coffee and biscuits. It was decided to each write down a topic, then everyone should find out information and the person whose topic it is would start the discussion.

February saw out the second meeting and our very first topic which was 'Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens'. Dates and details, explanations, books, pictures, quotes and readings were brought along - a meeting in which everyone participated, and I believe was enjoyed by all.

The topic for our March meeting is 'Walled Gardens'. Future topics will include 17th century gardens, botanical illustrations, Capability Brown, ferns and more.

There is room for 1 or 2 more people if anyone is interested.

Sue Clifford-Webb

New Experiences The inaugural meeting of the NE Group was a great success. There were 18 people present - held in the Loft at the Kings Arms. Carol and Dave have arranged 3 outings - the first one being Laserquest in March. They had loads of ideas and passed around sheets for people to express initial interest.

Singing for Pleasure is restarting after quite a long break. The first session will be on Tuesday 15th March starting at 2:15pm, Parish Centre and go on until 4:00pm. It will be 'back to normal' except there will be no refreshments yet - hence the slightly shortened session. Please bring your own drink and snack.

All being well, we will then continue on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month except for Tuesday 19th April (Easter week).

Climate Conversations

One way of engaging young people is to invite them to lead as guests. We know that young people have strong views on climate change. Younger generations have more to gain than any other generation. Climate conversations are enriched when young people wax with passion on the subject.

2nd Longmynd Scout Group led the climate conversation in February by sharing 7 commitments from UK Scouts as a whole movement and offering 7 suggestions on what we all can do locally. Scout Alex Berry shared the information after consulting other scouts on a weekend camp during half term. Alex also invited his Mum and two younger brothers to join in.

The conversation in the Scout Hut that followed Alex's introduction revealed a further depth to scout thinking. It was a joy to learn that Alex and Freddie Westall are two local scouts who have been chosen to attend World Scout Jamboree in South Korea, 2023. A theme in Korea is to be climate change which is a reason why Alex had been invited to lead.

The March conversation will centre upon 'How to make climate change happen'. An original and fun way will be offered at The Yew Tree on 21st March at 2:45 pm. In April, we are at Church Stretton School where senior students will start the conversation. Term and timetabling dates mean a slight change - 1:30 pm start on Mon 4th April. Guests & new members welcome.

Barrie Oxtoby

Mahjong

Peter Toghill has contributed this piece on Mahjong. At the moment the u3a Mahjong group has around 12 members of various levels of skills, including one complete beginner, who is learning very fast. And it has room for about 4 more. A discussion is currently underway to decide whether this is a winter-only activity, or whether some players will continue all year. For more information you can contact Peter - see contact details further down this newsletter.

Mahjong, or, Mah-jongg, is a game which convention says was invented in China in the late 19th century, and then became very popular all over the world in the 20th century. It is played with 144 tiles which in older sets are made of bamboo and ivory. Modern sets are often made of plastic, but that doesn't stop you having a good game.

The 144 tiles comprise three suits called bamboos, characters and circles and there are 1 to 9 of each of these suits. There are also four wind tiles, N, S, E and W, and three dragon tiles, red, green and white. There are four copies of every tile, ie 4 of 9 circles, 4 west winds etc. Finally there are 8 bonus tiles called flowers and seasons. Special counting sticks for scoring are provided and you can gamble if you want to. In many parts of the world gambling at mah-jongg is a popular sport but in this country we tend to play just for pleasure.

In older sets tiles are beautifully made and decorated with Chinese symbols and half the pleasure of playing the game is handling these beautiful tiles.

There are many variations of the game but the standard game we play at u3a involves tiles being dealt out and then collected to make threes and fours of particular tiles. Collecting 3 identical tiles is called a PONG, and collecting 4 is called a KONG. Different tiles have different bonus values.

4 people play around a table, the tiles are shuffled face down, players build a four-sided wall of all the tiles. Each player is then dealt 13 tiles. The idea then is to discard and collect identical tiles and shout PONG or KONG!, and get rid of all your tiles and then you've gone MAHJONG!

This in a nutshell is how to play mah-jongg, but there's much more to it than this, and people can get very addicted to the game - it's great fun.

Current Groups

Group	Coordinator
Art 1	Daphne & Stuart Rankin
Art 2	Still in the planning
Art History	Vivienne Thorpe
Book Group 1	Susan Lees
Book Group 2	Barbara Thurston
Bridge	Eric Brown
Classical Music	Ian Templeton
Climate Conversations	Barry Oxtoby
Cryptic Crosswords	Margaret Ramage
Family and Social History	Peter Thorpe
French – Rusty	Jean Cuthbert
Hill Walking	Roger Spittles
History Of Plants & Gardens	Sue Clifford-Webb
Mahjong	Peter Toghill
New Experiences	Dave Lyons
Opera	To be agreed
Philosophy	Paul Eade
Poetry Appreciation	Margaret Ramage
Popular Music	Trevor Halsey
Scottish Country Dancing	Alison Bradley
Singing for Pleasure	Margaret Sinden
Writers' Group 1	Lesley Dench
Writers' Group 2	Jenny O'Shea

Art 1, Book Group 1 and Popular Music are FULL.

Proposed New Groups

We still have a list of suggested new topics. Some already have 1 or 2 names against them, and a couple need better weather before starting. Please keep showing your interest as it only takes 3 or 4 to get a group going.

- A Good Read
- Appreciating Folk Music & Stories – some interest but needs a leader
- Board Games
- Card Games
- Literature
- Petanque – possibly for summer months. Terrain already in place.
- Scrabble
- Short Stories Reading Group – take turns to read sections of the text followed by discussion of each story

If you are interested in any new or existing groups please get in touch in the usual way

- through our website <https://u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/contact>
- by email [strettonu3a at yahoo.com](mailto:strettonu3a@yahoo.com)
- by phone 01694 724330

NATIONAL and WEST MIDLANDS:

There is a wealth of news and information about u3as across the UK – with 1,057 u3as and over 450,000 members. These two websites will give you access:

u3a.org.uk/

u3asites.org.uk/west-midlands/home

YOUR COMMITTEE:

Chair – Lesley Dench

Treasurer - Grahame Hurst

Business Secretary - Jenny O'Shea

Membership Secretary - Lesley Brown

Web Manager – Sylvia Davidson

CONTACT:

Contact any committee member via the website
u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/contact

Updates and news from groups and comments on recent events from members are always welcome, and should be returned to
Lesley Brown, [strettonu3a at yahoo.com](mailto:strettonu3a@yahoo.com), 01694 724330. Your input will be appreciated.

Keep up to date with what's going on in Church Stretton U3A by checking the website at:
u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/home