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# *U3A in Ludlow*

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*Newsletter 99*

*November 2020*

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So, this year has not quite gone as we expected. As a youngster, I devoured science fiction and was particularly fascinated by tales of a dystopian future. Here we are, in a dystopian present with little but a dystopian future in front of us - though one where the authoritarianism is accompanied by crass amateurism. There is no doubt that the coronavirus is a menace that poses a threat to certain people, but the facts suggest that it is not a great risk to the vast majority. Eighty percent of those testing positive at the moment are asymptomatic. The median age of those who have died with the virus (not necessarily from the virus) is 82; average life expectancy in the UK is 81. Now we are faced with marshals wearing body cameras and huge fines in the biggest deprivation ever of liberties by diktat driven by a handful of unelected 'experts' in whose professional fields disagreement is rife. Ah well, may you live in interesting times says the (supposed) old Chinese curse.

Meanwhile, in rural Shropshire, life goes on much the same as it always did. I don't see as many people as I did, but am still able to get out, go to restaurants and bars, and experience the immeasurable joy of being able to look at paintings in the National Gallery without peering over other people's shoulders. However, the excuse of the virus has rendered standards of service from service organisations, government departments and local councils as abysmal and there is no sign of the eye clinic resuming. "I wish you had come earlier, Mr Hodge, we could have treated that!" Hmmm. But it did only take 72 hours to receive my new passport - which, by the way, is definitely dark blue - though it is of little use as foreign travel has been made very difficult, if not impossible.

Still, always look on the bright side of life. My garden is benefitting from my attention, I am fitter than normal, my Zoom-based Latin group is thriving, and I am learning ancient Greek. Is life beautiful?

*Dr Robert Hodge, Chairman*

Rage? Well, perhaps that is a little bit extreme so let's settle for annoyed. The Covid 19 lockdown was a frustrating, confusing, and often fearful experience, but it also provided me with an excellent opportunity to carry out extensive research amongst fellow U3A members (actually, my wife and I). Determined not to 'suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' in silence, here are some of the things that have really annoyed us and alas continue to do so:

- hearing 'Your call is important to us, you are currently number 29 in the queue waiting to speak to one of our co-workers.'
- people who walk straight at us on the pavement, assuming we are either invisible or the ones who must step out of the way.
- hours spent on the Internet tracking down items on display, only to discover at the end of the process that whatever you are looking for is now 'out of stock'.
- emails asking you to review items you still haven't received.
- being stuck in the middle of a long queue at the supermarket checkout when they open a new till point that you can't get to.
- phone calls, always during a mealtime, telling us that our Internet is about to be disconnected if we don't ring a certain number straight away. We don't - and we are still connected.
- the media's obsession with celebrities: people we have never heard of and wouldn't want to either.

I could go on but I'm forgetting a salutary lesson taught me by a Jamaican colleague many years ago. *'Whenever you point the finger of blame at someone else, you will find there are always three fingers pointing back at you.'*

So, after all that ranting could it just be me becoming increasingly grumpy and intolerant. And if that is the case, how annoying is that?

*David Pritchard*

Reflections on a saying by the Buddha:

No one saves us but ourselves.

No one can and no one may.

We ourselves must walk the path.

Draw breath and walk silently into the mysteries of a silvered dawn's lighting sky. The joys and small warmths all rested. The lesions and wounds of a long journey no longer trouble. For friendship, for touch, for love, for kindness, for compassion, there is longing, but they are made to wait. The ugly colours of life's hurts diminish but not yet quite vanish in the glow. The far distances of perception tease and flirt with real time. Soon all is transitory in the thickening haze. Time stutters, step by step.

Draw breath and march confidently into the reach of a coppered midday's azure light. Efforts and energies yet to be summoned. Surface wins and deep losses to be enjoyed and endured. For dread distemper, for selfish fitfulness, for fickle fortune, for inconstant chance, for malicious caprice are not to be held back; despair ever prodding to prevail. Optimism, hope, fortitude, forbearance are the ethereal seals to contain such fearsome ways. Time stutters, step by step.

Draw breath and crawl timidly into the ebony dust of a bright moon's dappled dusk. The silenced lace wings of approaching darkness beat seductively gentle. Now is all opaque, form overtaken by shadow. For sight, for light, for colour, for time, for certainty, all slowly shallow and dim. Patience, mercy, charity, renunciation, forgiveness, are presently burdened but never vanquished. Balance must steady, and reason give way to belief, as rationality to spirituality, as unenlightenment to wisdom. For some, time will forever still. For some, time stutters, step by step.

At the beginning I really got caught out with lockdown, because my husband Brian was whisked off from Ludlow Hospital to Churchill House, without being tested, of course. There he created a lot of trouble and stress for the staff for many days, but is now settled and quoting Chaucer! I wasn't allowed to see Brian, and phoning him seemed to upset him, and to upset me too. Eventually I took to writing letters and including cartoons and articles from the newspapers. Friends and relations got on board with letters and cards too. Meanwhile, I have been supported by phone calls, by emails with and without pictures, and by lots of U3A friends. There were plenty of things to laugh at. This has now calmed me down; have we got used to the lockdown, I wonder?

I was contacted by Richard Harding who is a member of U3A and who is collecting lockdown experiences for an oral history of the time. He had lots of interviews to do; so his history should be interesting when it is available. Hands Together Ludlow contacted me but I felt I didn't fit in with their activities, and so I thought: what can I usefully do? In the end I picked up my address book and my email address book and started writing to people beginning from Y, because so often the end of the alphabet gets forgotten. The responses were very varied. I had people phoning me for an hour at a time; I had the complete opposite from one couple, both with arthritis, who said they did not need to be in touch with me. I wondered what I had done wrong. The phone calls felt helpful. Some people have been keeping in regular touch since, sometimes just to see if I am all right. Emails have been easier because we can use the 'reply' system. I couldn't work Zoom because my iPad keeps saying that the UK/USA systems are not compatible, I suppose I could have Skyped, but no one suggested that.

I've been lucky so far. My only health problems have been suddenly going deaf in one ear (not Covid related) and having to have a very rotten tooth out. Oh, and I've got fatter. I have been going out daily and have met lots of new people in Ludlow during my walks. I did not do much gardening at first. Then the grass got knee high, which is when I gave up, but now I have got to doing a bit of weeding, and someone else mowed the lawn. The roses have been splendid.

Writing this has left me feeling nostalgic for the last hundred days because we knew what to do, but now so many of the regulations seem contradictory and even daft; who thinks them up? Perhaps it is like the Blitz; you manage to remember the good things. I find the next months and years rather frightening.

*Elizabeth Owen*

## **Middle East Matters**

Our group (small but perfectly formed!) began life more than two years ago but, as with so many others, came to an abrupt halt in the spring of this year. Monthly meetings in members' homes had to stop and attempts to meet electronically or by email have not met with success. But interest in what the U3A Ludlow website describes as "exploring the history, culture and current affairs of the Middle East" cannot be extinguished so easily, and we look forward to meeting once again in each other's homes, as soon as it's sensible to do so.

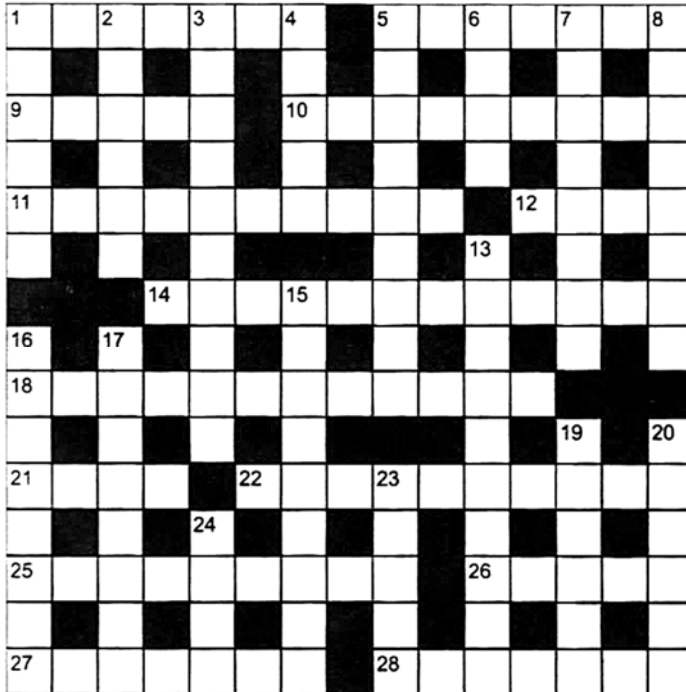
The past few months have been a trying time for all of us, for some more than others, but I would hazard a guess that most of our difficulties and distress have not come anywhere close to those experienced by many populations, on a regular basis, in the eighteen countries of the Middle East region. Of course, lives there range from unimaginably rich and privileged (the Gulf States, Saudi Arabia) to unimaginably poor and violent (Yemen, Iraq, Syria), with most people at the lower end of the prosperity spectrum. And the challenges faced by all of the region's countries range from climate change allied to exploding populations, the Ethiopian dam on the Nile (the GERD - if you haven't heard of it yet - you will) to Israeli plans for the West Bank. These challenges do not encourage an optimistic view of the future. And foreigners of every stripe, as we have seen so often in our own lifetimes, have brought misery to many. The richness and civilising influences of long-past centuries must be of little consolation now.

But in spite of an often negative view of the Middle East, I think it has been the experience of group members generally that our examination of a number of countries and questions has provided some clarity, even though we find that answering questions usually produces a longer list of unanswered ones and a feeling that we have barely scratched the surface of a fascinating and complex region. Is oil a blessing or a curse? Would democracy smooth the path to peace? I'll leave those questions for you to ponder.

*Stuart McLarin*

Each clue is to a film adapted from a famous novel of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century. The initial letters of the words in the clue are the same as those of the words in the film title. For example, 'Georgia Woman's Tough War' could be the clue to 'Gone with the Wind'.

1. A Timely Wager is Executed Daringly
2. Treville's Tough Men
3. That Gorgeous Guy
4. The Klan Attacked Me
5. Toff Saves People
6. Gone Touring
7. Laurie's Welcome
8. Adventures of Ginger Girl
9. All Afternoon It's Weird
10. Farming Folk Try Meeting Covertly
11. Watching Henry
12. Joined Eventually
13. Take Little Object to Rid
14. Sisters Aren't Similar
15. Booze Job Diet
16. This Human's Going to Taste Gargleblaster
17. There Something Grows
18. To Lucy to Wonder at the Winter
19. Orphan's Tale
20. Vacuous Fun
21. The Necessity of Listening Discreet Africans
22. Their Meander is Around Berkshire
23. Tall Dangerous Otherworldly Things Terrify
24. Laura Relates this Countryside
25. Trains Rarely Come

**Across**

- 1 Account transferred and inherited (7)  
 5 Fifty in support of suggestion (7)  
 9 There's nothing in jar I made for wine (5)  
 10 Some may grow better than others (9)  
 11 Staggering boxer is hit by showers (10)  
 12 Malcolm partly upset by shellfish (4)  
 14 A nude's memoir - perhaps minor transgressions? (12)  
 18 No garage exit organised - that's an over statement (12)  
 21 I possess, it's said, a Scottish Island (4)  
 22 Forgiveness? A second-grade answer (10)  
 25 Discover sectarian differences (9)  
 26 Hog's back in Ambridge (5)  
 27 Put up with Editor outside Crete ruins (7)  
 28 Going down to remove odour (7)



**Down**

- 1 Pilots remain flying (6)
- 2 Dress fabric, last of bale (6)
- 3 Entry to the castle is a bit up and down (10)
- 4 Number from the 50s and 60s. Understand? (5)
- 5 Trim off a mess. About right? Certainly not! (3,4,2)
- 6 Lions' city? (4)
- 7 Slip up at horror hotel (8)
- 8 Speed up to reach national memorial (8)
- 13 Works after guy pulls strings (10)
- 15 Local fixture? (9)
- 16 Offer daughter iced tea concoction (8)
- 17 Sailor Bill seen clinging to the ship's bottom (8)
- 19 Hotplate no good. That's a problem (6)
- 20 Put away? Just teasing, we hear (6)
- 23 Had admitted (5)
- 24 At first blustery, rain, unstable, thunderstorms,  
becoming dry (4)

*This crossword is provided by John Wittering's Cryptic Crossword group.*

**Seasonal quiz**

Which is the odd one out, and what is the hidden message?

Wren

Bates

Leavis

Brunel

Lowry

Eliot

Forster

Wainwright

Gilbert

25.01.2021	<b>Barrow to Baghdad and Back Again:</b> Author of the Jack Castle series of novels, Philip Caine, will tell us about his adventurous life in the oil industry in distant places, which provided the inspiration for his adventure/thriller novels. <b>Zoom presentation</b>
22.02.2021	<b>Music in Art:</b> Professional musician Sophie Matthews will explore the links between the visual and the aural, drawing on the works of great painters. <b>Zoom presentation</b>
29.03.2021	<i>To be confirmed</i>
26.04.2021	<b>My Death, my Decision:</b> Phil Cheadle, from the campaign group MDMD, will explore some of the complex ethical questions regarding how much choice we should have in deciding the manner and timing of our death.
24.05.2021	<b>The Work of a Practising Homeopath:</b> Jeremy Derrick will talk about his personal and professional experience of homeopathy, explaining how its approach may help and why it is valid for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century.
28.06.2021	<b>Rolls of Rolls Royce:</b> The biographer of Charles Rolls, Bruce Lawson, will tell of Mr Rolls - 'a brilliant man'; 'the Richard Branson or James Dyson of the Edwardian Age'.
27.09.2021	<b>The Gardens of E L Lutyens:</b> The subject of Richard Ralling's illustrated talk highlights this leading architect's buildings and his collaboration on gardens with influential horticulturalist Gertrude Jeckyll.
25.10.2021	<b>Canals and Crime Fiction:</b> The backdrop of author Andy Griffie's talk is our 2200 miles of canals and how they can be the perfect setting for the crime novel.
39.11.2021	<b>Albania - the Country Cut off from the World for 41 Years:</b> John Butterworth will give an illustrated talk on the amazing history of this isolated state and compare life under a dictator to the freedoms of today.

*Subject to change*

**A note from the Treasurer**

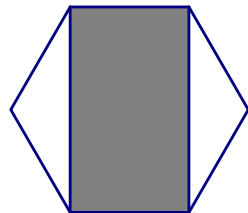
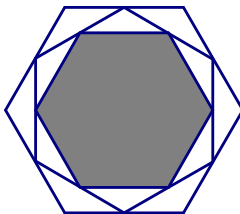
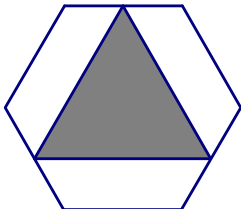
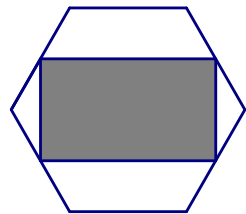
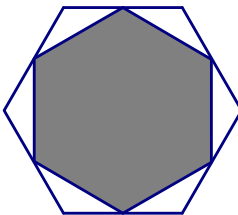
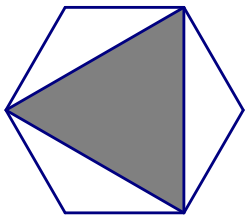
It is customary with this newsletter to include a Pink Membership Renewal slip with a request for membership subscriptions to be paid by 2nd January.

The Committee has agreed that in the strange circumstances that we find ourselves, 2020 membership of U3A in Ludlow will be extended to 31st July 2021 without charge.

Hopefully by May/June next year we will be more clear as to what activities can be arranged and how membership can be renewed.

**Shapes puzzle**

What fraction of each of these regular hexagons is shaded?



<b>U3A in Ludlow Committee for 2019/2020</b>			
Chair	Dr Robert Hodge	01299-270047	info@u3ainludlow.org.uk
Secretary	Deborah Gentry	01584-876926	sphinx@waitrose.com
Treasurer/ Membership	David Hatchell	01584-890664	david@hatchells.co.uk
Study Group Adviser	Peony Carpenter	01584-872872	peonycarpenter@hotmail.co.uk
Monthly Meetg Organiser	Sue Billing	07710-756093	sueatmill84@yahoo.com
Committee member	Janice Haines	01584-878794	janhaines@clara.co.uk
U3A+/U4A	Peter Law	01584-877012	peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com
Shropshire Network	Stuart McLaren	01584-874622	themclarens@me.com
Committee member	Barbara Ball	01584-879180	barbara@ludlowballs.force9.co.uk

The above will change at the AGM to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> November.  
For up-to-date information see the website: [www.u3ainludlow.org.uk](http://www.u3ainludlow.org.uk)

**CROSSWORD ANSWERS:**

**Across:** 1 acceded; 5 flavour; 9 Rioja; 10 gardeners; 11 exhibitors; 12 clam; 14 misdemeanor; 18 exaggeration; 21 Iona; 22 absolution; 25 ascertain; 26 ridge; 27 erected; 28 descent

**Down:** 1 airmen; 2 clothe; 3 drawbridge; 4 digit; 5 far from it; 6 Aden; 7 overlook; 8 Rushmore; 13 manoeuvres; 15 dartboard; 16 dedicate; 17 barnacle; 19 riddle; 20 ingest; 23 owned; 24 brut